

Please note: this call for proposals has changes compared to previous Off Road rounds

Off Road 2026

Date Posted: Tuesday, 27 January 2026

Deadline: **Thursday, 24 maart 2026, 14:00 CET**

Place: The Hague

***NOTE:** This document is a translation of the Dutch version of this document. The following is to be considered an extra service for international applicants at Dutch research institutions. In case of any differences or other inconsistencies between the Dutch text and the English translation, the Dutch text is legally binding and prevails.*

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1. Summary

Who

Off Road targets creative and adventurous researchers (2–6 years after completing their PhD) and challenges them to explore and develop their promising yet risky (high-risk, high-reward), out-of-the-box research ideas into a proof of concept.

What for

As part of the ZonMw Open Competition programme line, Off Road focuses on curiosity-driven, high-risk, high-reward research that breaks through conventional approaches (out-of-the-box) and has the potential to deliver groundbreaking insights in the fundamental biomedical and health domain.

What

The Off Road grant budget for the 2026 round is €2,000,000. In addition, the ZonMw programme [More Knowledge with Fewer Animals](#) is making an amount of up to €600,000 available for the New Approach Methodologies (NAMs) investment module. This amount includes a contribution from the Proefdiervrij Foundation ([The Dutch Society for the Replacement of Animal Testing](#)). The total grant budget for Off Road 2026 is therefore €2,600,000.

Each applicant may request a maximum of €100,000 for a project with a duration of 12 to 18 months. The grant amount can be used for both personnel costs and costs related to materials and implementation. In addition, applicants may request a one-time optional NAMs investment module to cover the extra material costs associated with the use of NAMs (up to €30,000). This amount is added on top of the requested grant amount, bringing the maximum possible grant for applications including the investment module to €130,000.

When

Deadline for submitting grant application	Tuesday, 24 March 2026, 14:00 CET
Receipt committee assessment	Mid-May 2026
Deadline rebuttal	Late May 2026
Decision	Late September 2026
Latest start date	March 2027

*Subject to change. You will be informed in due course about the exact deadlines and timeframes.

2. Aim of the call for grant applications

The Off Road grant tool is part of the ZonMw Open Competition programme line, which offers ambitious researchers the opportunity to conduct fundamental, curiosity-driven, free and independent research within the (bio)medical and health domain. The Open Competition addresses the scientific field in its full range, with grant programmes targeting both early-career and established researchers. In doing so, the Open Competition supports excellent, groundbreaking science.

Through the Off Road grant tool, ZonMw responds to the global need for **high-risk, high-reward, out-of-the-box** research ideas that foster new insights and unexpected breakthroughs in the biomedical and health domain. This Off Road call specifically targets young researchers (2 to 6 years after obtaining their PhD) and gives them the opportunity to explore and develop their promising yet risky, unconventional research ideas into a proof of concept. Off Road thus supports projects situated at the very beginning of the knowledge chain. The outcome of the research may be negative; what matters is that every result, whether with or without effect, helps advance science.

Applications will **not** be considered high-risk, high-reward and out-of-the-box if they:

- Represent a logical next step of existing research;
- Merely apply existing methods, interventions or technologies in a new context;
- Are replication studies or validation studies;
- Lack a clearly innovative concept or radical hypothesis;
- Primarily concern evaluation or effect studies.

3. Conditions and obligations

When applying for a grant from ZonMw, there are rights, conditions and obligations to take into account. These are derived from the [Dutch General Administrative Law Act \(Awb\)](#). Title 4.2 of the Awb contains specific provisions applicable to ZonMw grants. In addition, the [General Terms and Conditions Governing Grants of ZonMw](#) apply.

3.1 Conditions

Your grant application must meet the following conditions in order to be considered for review.

3.1.1 Who is eligible for a grant?

PhD graduates (2–6 years after obtaining their doctorate) may submit a grant application through the host institution, provided they meet all of the following cumulative conditions:

- The researcher's PhD date, as stated on the PhD diploma, must fall within the **period 24 March 2020 – 24 March 2024**. For researchers who have completed two PhD trajectories, the date of the second PhD is considered the reference date for submission. In certain cases, an extension may be granted for this term (see Annex 6: [Extension form](#)).
- The research must be conducted at a Dutch research organisation as defined in EU State aid legislation¹. This includes, at a minimum, universities and University Medical Centres (UMCs) located in the Kingdom of the Netherlands. If you believe your organisation qualifies as a research organization under this definition, please contact the programme team as soon as possible at offroad@zonmw.nl so that compliance can be assessed.
- The applicant must be employed by the institution where the research will take place for the duration of the project. Therefore, submitting an 'embedding guarantee' signed by the

¹Framework for State aid for research and development and innovation (R&D&I Framework) (2014/C 198/01), Section 15(ee). 'Research organisation' is defined as follows: 'an entity (such as universities or research institutes, technology transfer agencies, innovation intermediaries, research-oriented physical or virtual collaborative entities), irrespective of its legal status (organised under public or private law) or way of financing, whose primary goal is to independently conduct fundamental research, industrial research or experimental development or to widely disseminate the results of such activities by way of teaching, publication or knowledge transfer. Where such entity also pursues economic activities, the financing, the costs and the revenues of those economic activities must be accounted for separately. Undertakings that can exert a decisive influence upon such an entity, for example in the quality of shareholders or members, may not enjoy a preferential access to the results generated by it.'

organisation's administrative representative is mandatory for all applicants (see Annex 3: Embedding Guarantee).

3.1.2 Additional conditions

In order for an application to be processed, the following cumulative conditions must be met:

- An application must have one main applicant and **no co-applicants**. The main applicant is also the project leader and principal investigator. The applicant is expected to be able to manage the entire project both in terms of content and organisation.
- A researcher may submit only one application within the Off Road 2026 funding round. However, multiple researchers from the same organisation may submit separate applications through that organisation;
- A researcher must not have previously been awarded an Off Road grant.

3.1.3. Avoiding State aid

No grants will be awarded by ZonMw if this would or could constitute unlawful state aid².

Actual collaboration

If undertakings³ and research organisations collaborate on the project, there is a risk that the grant will be regarded as unlawful state aid. According to Section 2.2.2⁴ of the Framework for state aid for research and development and innovation (R&D&I Framework), there is no unlawful state aid if the collaborating parties fulfil certain conditions. If they fulfil these conditions, there is 'actual collaboration'. See for conditions and an explanation [Annex 1 – State aid – Actual collaboration](#). To meet the conditions of actual collaboration, the project activities can only start after a collaboration agreement has been accepted by ZonMw and signed by all parties involved. Therefore, the project activities may not start earlier.

You can find more information about state aid on the ZonMw web page [State aid exemption](#).

3.1.4 Third-party collaborations and contributions

ZonMw encourages the participation of different partners in collaborative projects. Such projects will, however, not receive a grant if the agreements would or could lead to the provision of unlawful state aid or if ZonMw's [General Terms and Conditions](#) or the conditions of the call for grant applications cannot be met.

Collaboration is not a requirement within Off Road, but it is encouraged. Applicants may collaborate with researchers from the same or other scientific disciplines relevant to the application. Since Off Road does not allow co-applicants, a collaborating (market) party cannot be listed as a co-applicant and cannot receive any part of the grant.

If collaboration as described above is part of the application, the grant application and budget must clearly specify:

- Which party or parties a sponsorship agreement will be concluded with, and what their in-kind or financial contribution will be; third parties cannot claim any part of the grant. Parties that actively contribute at their own expense and risk are also considered part of the collaboration.
- Which parties will be hired, or, if this is not yet known, which activities are forecast as being performed by third parties, plus the related costs that will be incurred (including VAT). For more information and the conditions of hire/terms of contract, see the [ZonMw web page Grants and Collaborations/contributions from third parties](#).

Collaborations and sponsorship must be finalised before presenting the detailed grant application.

Letter of Commitment

Because ZonMw requires assurance that a project party or sponsor will be legally bound to provide the agreed amounts, each project party or sponsor must provide a Letter of Commitment, which is to be submitted together with the detailed grant application. Please use the template [Model Letter of](#)

² Article 107 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).

³ An undertaking as defined under EU state aid legislation means any entity that performs economic activities, regardless of its legal form or means of financing.

⁴ [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52014XC0627\(01\)&from=NL](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52014XC0627(01)&from=NL)

[Commitment](#). You can read more on the ZonMw web page [Grants and Collaborations/contributions from third parties](#).

Collaboration and sponsorship agreement

You can find more information about the various types of collaboration and contributions (sponsoring/assignment) with sample agreements on the ZonMw web page [Grants and Collaborations/contributions from third parties](#) as an aid to drafting the relevant agreement; the accompanying explanation contains the conditions the agreement must meet. The conditions specified on this web page and in the explanation form an integral part of this call for grant applications. Where ZonMw requests draft collaboration and/or sponsorship agreements, it awards the grant on the condition that the agreements are found to be acceptable.

3.1.5 What amount of the grant I can you apply for?

The Off Road grant budget for the 2026 round is €2,000,000. In addition, the ZonMw programme [More Knowledge with Fewer Animals](#) provides an amount of up to €600,000 for the New Approach Methodologies (NAMs) investment module, including a contribution from the Proefdiervrij Foundation ([The Dutch Society for the Replacement of Animal Testing](#)). This brings the total grant budget for this call to **€2,600,000**.

Each application may request a maximum of €100,000 for projects with a duration of 12 to 18 months. In addition, applicants may request a one-time optional NAMs investment module for an extra amount of up to €30,000. This amount is added on top of the requested grant amount, bringing the maximum possible grant for applications including the investment module to €130,000.

3.1.6 NAMs investment module

ZonMw encourages researchers to use animal-free research models wherever possible, also known as New Approach Methodologies (NAMs). These include complex *in vitro* 3D cellular assays using human cells, such as organoids, induced pluripotent stem cells, or organ-on-chips. However, developing and/or using these NAMs can involve additional costs due to expensive culture reagents, human cells (e.g., via [Vital Tissue](#)), plastics, and/or equipment. To support researchers in using NAMs, the NAMs Investment Module covers these extra material costs. Applicants can only request the NAMs Investment Module if the entire project is free from animal-derived materials, including foetal calf/bovine serum (FCS/FBS) and basement membrane extracts (BME) such as Matrigel, Cultrex, or Geltrex. Suitable animal-free alternatives for these products can be found via the [FCS-free database](#) and the [BME-free database](#) of Utrecht University. The use of animals that fall outside the scope of the Animal Testing Act, such as zebrafish, fruit flies, or clawed frogs, is also excluded for the NAMs Investment Module.

3.1.7 Financial conditions

The requested grant amount may be used for (partial) funding of the applicant's position or non-scientific staff, material costs, implementation costs, and any Open Access publication costs. The submitted budget will be reviewed by ZonMw.

All budget items must be proportionate to the research and justified in the application. The budget must be prepared and signed in collaboration with a financial controller from the applicant's institution. All financial conditions must be clearly visible in the submitted project budget.

Personnel costs:

- The applicant must carry out the project (primarily) themselves and dedicate **at least 0.2 FTE** to the project.
- A **maximum of €30,000** may be allocated for supporting non-scientific staff (MBO/HBO) required for project execution.
- The appointment of scientific staff other than the applicant, such as PhD candidates and/or postdocs, is **not permitted** within the project.
- Salary costs must comply with the VSNU and NFU salary tables. The amounts in the budget must correspond to these tables. These tables are available on the ZonMw webpage: [What must I submit? | ZonMw](#).
- If the salary of the applicant or non-scientific staff is fully or partially covered by the institution, this is considered a **third-party contribution**. Such contributions are not mandatory and do

not provide any advantage in the assessment. If applicable, include this as a cost item in your budget and mention the contribution in the embedding guarantee (Annex 3). Bench fees cannot be requested for this programme.

Material costs

- Funding may be requested for all project-specific costs related to, among others, consumables, procurement of services, materials, small instruments, access to (inter)national facilities, software, and research resources that have no economic value after use. Travel and accommodation costs (national and international), costs for organising (international) workshops and symposia, data management costs, and costs related to citizen science are also covered under this module.
- It is **not** permitted to include costs for organisational infrastructure and overhead, such as a fully equipped workstation, housing, office automation, personnel administration, commuting expenses, training, facility services, HR advice and occupational health, information services, home office allowance, or maintenance of scientific infrastructure developed in-house.

Open Access publication costs

- If you publish via the full gold Open Access route, you may include costs for Open Access publications in the project budget, up to a maximum of €5,000. In the budget, list 'Open Access' as a separate budget line. For more information and conditions, see section 3.2 and the ZonMw webpage [Open Access](#).

NAMs investment module:

- The NAMs Investment Module can only be used to cover the additional **material costs** associated with the use of NAMs. It is **not** permitted to use the NAMs Investment Module for personnel costs.
- Use separate lines in your budget for costs that fall under the NAMs module. Clearly indicate that these costs are part of the NAMs module and specify how the additional funds will be allocated.

3.1.8 Submission conditions

An application can only be considered if it meets the following conditions:

- The application is submitted before the deadline (**24 March 2026 at 14:00 CET**);
- The application is submitted via the researcher's personal [My ZonMw](#) account;
- The applicant meets the conditions set out in paragraph 3.1;
- The application form is complete and prepared according to the instructions (in English);
- The budget is prepared in accordance with the conditions of this call for proposals;
- The embedding of the application within the institution has been agreed upon and recorded prior to submission in the mandatory Annex 3 'Embedding Guarantee'. If the salary of the applicant or non-scientific staff for work within this project is paid by the institution, this must also be included in the embedding guarantee form;
- All required annexes (see [paragraph 6](#)) are complete and prepared according to the instructions and conditions of this call for proposals, and signed where necessary. All annexes must be free of security restrictions.

3.2. Obligations upon award

Obligations apply when your application is granted. For this ZonMw follows the [General Terms and Conditions Governing Grants of ZonMw](#).

In addition the following conditions also apply:

- **Open Access**
 - All publications resulting from scientific research fully or partially funded by ZonMw must be made available in Open Access, in accordance with the ZonMw Open Access policy. ZonMw accepts various Open Access routes. In addition to articles, ZonMw encourages researchers to make their results available in other formats via Open Access, such as monographs, books, conference proceedings and grey literature, but also research data and knowledge products for practice-oriented research, such as models, protocols, prototypes, digital tools and demonstrations.
 - For more information about the ZonMw Open Access policy, conditions and opportunities, please visit [our website](#).

- **Conditions for valorisation**

- As ZonMw is committed to making the projects it funds widely accessible, the [ten principles of Socially Responsible Licensing](#) (SRL) should be applied to the licensing of results. Please describe, where applicable, how intellectual property rights will be arranged with partners and any third parties. Also indicate how these parties will comply with the ten principles.

4. Assessment and prioritisation

For the procedures on how to assess grant applications, please refer to the infographic '[applying for funding in 10 steps](#)' and the [procedure for applicants](#) (only in Dutch).

Code of 'Personal interest'

[The Code for Dealing with 'Personal Interests'](#) applies to all individuals involved in the assessment and/or decision-making process, as well as to ZonMw staff members. In addition, ZonMw strives for an inclusive culture, free from conscious or unconscious barriers related to cultural, ethnic or religious background, gender, sexual orientation, health or age; see the ZonMw webpage [Diversity](#).

DORA

On 18 April 2019, ZonMw signed the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA). DORA is a declaration calling for improvements in the way research outputs are evaluated. It adopts a broad definition of 'outputs'; in addition to publications, these include data, reagents, software, intellectual property, and well-trained early-career researchers. Furthermore, DORA emphasises the quality of scientific work and advises against using bibliometric indicators (such as h-index or journal impact factor) that do not directly reflect the quality of individual work when assessing researchers and their outputs. Applicants must therefore not include these indicators in their applications. For more information on how ZonMw implements the principles of DORA, see the ZonMw webpage [Recognition and Rewards](#).

4.1 Assessment procedure

The procedure for submission and assessment of the application consists of the following steps:

1. Submission of the application
2. Admissibility of the application
3. Assessment by the committee
4. Written rebuttal
5. Preliminary advice from the committee
6. Assessment committee meeting
7. Decision

1. Submission of the application

An Off Road 2026 grant application consists of a mandatory online form in [MyZonMw](#) and a separate application form (see paragraph 6). The application must be submitted together with the other mandatory annexes via MyZonMw. The application form must comply with the conditions and procedures stated in the form. The completed application must be received via MyZonMw before the deadline. After submission, the applicant will receive an automated confirmation of receipt.

2. Admissibility of the application

After submission, ZonMw will assess whether the application will be processed based on a number of administrative and technical criteria (see the submission requirements and financial conditions in paragraph 3, 'Conditions and Obligations'). Within **two weeks** after the submission deadline, ZonMw may contact applicants to make any administrative corrections needed to (still) meet the submission requirements. Applicants will have one opportunity to make these corrections within **two working days**. Revised applications that are received by ZonMw on time and meet the requirements will still be processed.

3. Assessment by the committee

For the assessment of applications, the ZonMw Board has assembled a broad and diverse committee consisting of members from various (bio)medical disciplines. Communication with the program committee takes place exclusively through the program office. Submitted applications are reviewed by

several members of the committee. They provide written, substantive, and well-reasoned comments on the assessment criteria (see paragraph 4.2 Criteria). External reviewers are not used. All submitted applications compete with each other.

4. Written rebuttal

The applicant will receive the anonymized assessments from the committee and has the opportunity to submit a rebuttal. This is not mandatory. In this way, the principle of hearing and rebuttal is applied. The rebuttal must be submitted via the online system within five working days. If ZonMw receives the rebuttal after the deadline, it will not be considered in the further procedure. If the reports give reason to withdraw the application, this must be communicated to the office by email as soon as possible.

5. Preliminary advice from the committee

The application, assessment reports, and, if applicable, the rebuttal are submitted for assessment to several members of the committee (the pre-advisors). The pre-advisors provide written, substantive, and well-reasoned comments on the application and assign a numerical score for each evaluation criterion. They formulate these comments based on the assessment criteria (see paragraph 4.2). The pre-liminary advice is used as preparation for the assessment committee meeting.

6. Assessment committee meeting

During the assessment committee meeting, a ranking is established based on the most promising applications. These are the applications that best align with the objectives of this call (criterion: relevance) and demonstrate the highest quality (criterion: quality). The applications are prioritized according to the criteria and the prioritization matrix. The meeting may lead to adjustments in the assessment of the criteria; see paragraph 4.3 'Prioritisation'.

7. Decision

Based on the available information and the grant budget, the program committee makes its own assessment. It then prepares its prioritisation advice and submits it to the ZonMw Board. The ZonMw Board reviews the procedure followed and the advice of the program committee. Subsequently, the ZonMw Board determines the final qualifications and decides whether to award or reject the applications. The funds available for this round determine the final number of grants to be awarded to applications that have received at least a qualification of '*relevant*' for relevance and at least '*very good*' for quality. If a NAMs investment module has been requested, an additional requirement for approval is that the candidate received at least a rating of '*good*' for this module.

Applicants will be informed of the outcome in writing and will receive the qualification of the assessment along with the reasoning.

4.2 Criteria

The applications submitted under this grant call are assessed based on criteria for relevance and quality. The relative weighting of these criteria is determined using the prioritisation matrix in paragraph 4.3.

- **Relevance** concerns the *why*: Does the application align with the purpose of this grant call?
- **Quality** focuses on the *how* and *by whom*: How will the project be carried out, and is the project realistic and feasible in its implementation?

4.2.1. Relevance

The alignment of an application with the objective of Off Road 2026 is assessed as follows:

- **Out-of-the-box character (50%)**
The application describes an original and conceptually innovative out-of-the-box idea that clearly differs from existing research in this field. It breaks through existing frameworks and/or approaches and/or opens new directions.
- **High-risk, high-reward (50%)**
The application deliberately takes risks, where success cannot be inferred in advance from existing knowledge. However, due to these deliberate risks, the proposal has the potential to achieve a significant breakthrough in the scientific, technological, or societal domain.

- *Please note: This does not refer to risks concerning practical feasibility.*

4.2.2. Quality

The quality of an Off Road application is assessed based on the following sub-criteria:

- **Quality of the research proposal (60%)**
 - The proposal is focused and clearly described, with a clear explanation and justification of the research question, hypothesis, and objectives;
 - The proposed methodology is clear, effective, and appropriate for the research question;
 - The proposal is realistic and demonstrates a good balance between challenge (high-risk) and feasibility (despite little or no preliminary data); aspects such as the timeline, budget, risk analysis, and mitigation strategies may be considered.
- **Applicant's expertise (30%)**
 - The applicant demonstrates relevant expertise and access to facilities to successfully carry out the research, or provides a clear vision/approach on how this will be obtained.
- **Knowledge utilisation (10%)**
 - A clear and appropriate strategy for the dissemination and/or implementation of the research results. This includes the dissemination of both positive and negative results.
 - Relevant (internal and external) parties and stakeholders, such as patients and/or end-users, are involved in the project at the right time. This may include consulting, seeking advice, collaborating, and/or allowing stakeholders to (co-)decide on the design and execution of the projects.
 - A clear description of potential pitfalls in the implementation strategy and how to mitigate them.

4.2.3. NAMs Investment module (if applicable)

The NAMs investment module can be requested to cover the costs associated with the use and/or implementation of NAMs. If this module is requested, it will be assessed based on the following sub-criteria:

The application clearly describes:

- The relevance, technical feasibility, and effectiveness of the investment for this research proposal;
- The importance, urgency, and/or innovation of the intended NAMs application within the research field;
- How the investment contributes to the development or implementation of NAMs within the research group, department, or organization.

4.3 Prioritisation

4.3.1. Prioritisation

The relative weighting of relevance and quality is determined using the prioritization matrix below. In this matrix, relevance carries more weight than quality. A grant application must be at least '*relevant*' and of at least '*very good*' quality to be eligible for funding.

	Prioritisation matrix			
	Highly Relevant	Relevant	Low Relevant	Not Relevant
Quality				
Excellent	1	3	-	-
Very Good	2	4	-	-
Good	-	-	-	-
Moderate	-	-	-	-
Insufficient	-	-	-	-

Grant applications are eligible for funding in the order of prioritisation from 1 to 4. Applications in the cells without numbering are not eligible for funding and will therefore be rejected. If, after applying the prioritisation matrix, the number of eligible applications exceeds the available budget, the applications

will be ranked based on their numerical scores for relevance and subsequently for quality. Only the highest-prioritised applications will be awarded funding.

Please note: If a NAM Investment Module is requested, it must receive at least the qualification 'Good' to be eligible for funding. This qualification is not part of the prioritisation but serves, if applicable, as a cumulative condition for funding.

4.3.2. Additional grounds for considerations

If it appears that two or more applications around the borders of the available budget for Off Road 2026 cannot be distinguished based on their numerical scores, additional considerations will be applied. To determine whether these considerations are applicable, the sub-scores for relevance will first be examined. The score of the lowest-ranked application within the borders of the available budget will serve as the reference score. If two or more applications fall within 0.05 points above or below this score, they are considered indistinguishable and will be included in further deliberation. Next, the numerical score for quality will be assessed in the same way. If no distinction can still be made, priority will be given to an application submitted by a female applicant. If this does not resolve the tie, the evaluation committee will decide through an anonymous vote. If that is not possible or desirable, the situation will be referred to the decision-making body.

5. Submitting your application

5.1 Submission via My ZonMw

Grant applications can only be submitted by the main applicant through ZonMw's online submission system ([My ZonMw](#)). The deadline for submitting the grant application is **Tuesday, March 24, 2026, at 14:00 CET**.

Applications submitted after this deadline will **not** be processed by ZonMw. We strongly advise you to start your application in good time. Please also consider the risk of potential technical issues while submitting via My ZonMw. If you have any questions or encounter problems, please contact us as soon as possible.

5.2 Tips and points of attention for submission

- Your grant application should be understandable to a broad group of experts; avoid abbreviations and jargon as much as possible.
- If you have not worked with My ZonMw before, you must first register as a 'New User'. For more information, see the [My ZonMw User Guide](#).
- Ensure that all documents you upload are free of security restrictions. Files that are digitally signed (e.g., with ValidSign) often have automatic security settings. Remove these before uploading, otherwise the file will not be processed correctly in our system. In Adobe Acrobat, you can check this via Document Properties → Security tab. You can also open the PDF in a browser; if the file is secured, a notification bar will appear at the top.

5.3 Substantive questions

For substantive questions, please contact the Off Road program team via offroad@zonmw.nl or by phone at **+31 (0)70 515 03 21**.

5.4 Technische vragen

For technical questions about using My ZonMw, you may refer to the manual '[My ZonMw User Guide](#)' or contact the service desk via servicedesk@zonmw.nl or by phone at **+31 (0)70 349 51 76** (weekdays from 08:00 to 17:00 CET). Always include your phone number in your email so we can contact you if necessary.

5.5 Downloads en links

- [General Terms and Conditions Governing Grants of ZonMw](#)
- [Applying for funding in 10 steps](#)
- [What must I submit?](#)
- [Conditions and obligations](#)
- [The assessment](#)

- [Grants and Collaborations/contributions from third parties](#)
- [State aid exemption](#)
- [FAIR data management](#)
- [Open Access](#)
- [Implementation support](#)
- [Mijn ZonMw user guide](#)
- [Programme page Off Road](#)
- [FAQ Off Road 2026](#)

6. (Mandatory) annexes

This paragraph lists the mandatory and optional attachments for submission. It is not permitted to add any other attachments to your application.

- Mandatory annexes:
 - Annex 1. [Application form Off Road 2026](#)
 - Annex 2. [Budget form](#)
 - Annex 3. [Embedding guarantee form](#)
 - Annex 4. [Statement of agreement to your detailed grant application](#)
- Optional:
 - Annex 5. [Letter of Commitment](#): *mandatory in case of collaboration and/or sponsorship.*
 - Annex 6. [Extension form](#): *mandatory in case of an extension request.*

7. Annexes call for proposals

- Annex 1. State Aid – Actual collaboration

Annex 1. State Aid – Actual collaboration

Actual collaboration must be reflected in a recorded substantive commitment to the collaboration. Participants should be actively involved in the collaboration by having an influence on the design and implementation of the collaboration, sharing the financial risks, being at arm's length (independence) and actively contributing to management of the collaboration. Contract research and the provision of research services – and outsourcing – by their very nature do not qualify as actual collaboration.

Conditions of actual collaboration [Section 2.2.2 Framework for state aid for research and development and innovation \(R&D&I Framework\)](#):

1. This concerns collaboration between
 - a. at least two independent parties;
 - b. of which at least one party fulfils the definition of research organisation⁵ and one party qualifies as an undertaking, which
 - c. pursue a common objective on the basis of a division of tasks (project governance) described in the project proposal, and
 - d. jointly define the scope of the collaborative project and contribute to its implementation, and
 - e. share the associated financial, technological, research and other risks, and
 - f. provide a clear description of the activities of each party involved in the project in work packages and a corresponding clear budget, which clearly indicates which part of the grant is related to which part of the activities and work packages; and
 - g. share the project results, and
 - h. where the activities fall within the primary activities of a research organisation, being:
 - i. educational programme
 - ii. independent research or development.
2. One or more parties may bear the full project costs (including through obtaining a grant) and thereby relieve the other parties of the financial risks associated with the project.
 - a. The envisaged activities fall within the categories of fundamental, industrial research and/or experimental development⁶.
3. The above components must be laid down in a collaboration agreement that meets the above conditions before the project starts.
4. Excluded from this are definitive agreements on the market value of the resulting intellectual property rights and the value of contributions to the project.
5. Contract research and the provision of research services are not considered to be forms of cooperation.

Conditions of the grant application

Your grant application must clearly describe the following aspects. Clearly indicate which parties are participating in the actual collaboration and which parties are applying for a grant for its activities.

Please describe for each party in the collaboration:

- whether it is a research organisation or an undertaking (non-research organisation)
- which roles and tasks the party has within the collaboration.
- which activities will be carried out by each party
- what part of the grant is intended for which party (budget)

AND

- how the activity or main activity meets the criteria of fundamental or industrial research or experimental development.
- in a declaration that the parties are financially and legally independent of each other

⁵ Section 1(3)(ee) [R&D&I Framework](#)

⁶ Section 1(3)(j) [R&D&I Framework](#)

Conditions of the collaboration agreement

To meet the conditions of actual collaboration, the project activities can only start after the collaboration agreement has been approved by ZonMw and signed by all parties involved in the collaboration.

You can find more information about the conditions and a sample agreement on [the ZonMw website](#). We strongly advise that you use the sample agreement, which has been prepared in line with the requirements for actual collaboration.

The collaboration agreement must include, among other things, a provision on intellectual property rights. This provision regulates that:

- the results of the collaboration that do not give rise to intellectual property rights are widely disseminated;
- the intellectual property rights arising from the collaborative project will be allocated to the different parties in the collaboration in a manner that appropriately reflects the work undertaken, on the premise that ‘the inventor is the owner’;
- a research organisation will receive a remuneration for transferring or licensing its (fully-owned or shared) intellectual property rights to the undertaking(s) equivalent to the market price of those rights. A market-based price cannot be determined in advance and should be done at arm’s length conditions.

You must submit for assessment by ZonMw a final, but not yet signed version of the collaboration agreement that meets the conditions .

Project implementation

The entire project must be implemented in compliance with the requirements for actual collaboration. If those requirements are not or no longer met (in full or in part), there is a risk of unlawful state aid being granted to the undertakings concerned and that all or part of the grant may not be awarded or may be withdrawn.

Please note that it is not possible to add new undertakings after the signed collaboration agreement.