



Reducing Drug Harm

Towards effective social interventions

Call for proposals

2026



Content

1	Summary and introduction	2
1.1	Brief summary	2
1.2	Introduction	3
2	Aim and background	4
2.1	Aim of the programme and the round	4
2.2	Background	6
2.3	Background	9
2.4	Consortium formation	11
3	Preparation and submission	12
3.1	Timeline	12
3.2	Who can apply	13
3.3	What can be applied for	18
3.4	Fases	20
3.5	Requirements for consideration	24
4	Assessment	26
4.2	Procedure	28
4.3	Guidelines and frameworks for assessment	32
5	After the grant award	34
5.1	Start of the project	34
5.2	Monitoring and project management	35
5.3	Guidelines and frameworks for project execution	36
5.4	Completion	37
5.5	Research results – Open Science	38
5.6	Evaluation	38
6	Contact	39
7	Annexes	40
7.1	Explanation of budget modules	40
7.2	Indexation	46
7.3	Validated research organisations	46
7.4	Figure of the process steps	47

1 Summary and introduction

This chapter contains a brief summary of the round and an introduction.

The whole text of this Call for proposals has been published in both Dutch and English. The Dutch version is deemed authentic. For legal interpretation the text of the Dutch version will be decisive.

1.1 Brief summary

Title

Reducing drug harm: Towards effective societal interventions

Aim

To contribute to the development of knowledge about the (societal) mechanisms through which drug(-related) harm arises, and how this harm can be sustainably reduced.

Budget

The maximum grant available per project is €4,270,951. No more than 1 proposals are expected to be awarded funding in this round.

Submission deadlines

The deadline for submitting a request for review of organisations based in the Netherlands (see Section 3.2) is **23 June 2026**, before 14:00:00 CEST.

The deadline for submitting a request for review of foreign organisations (see Annex 7.1.3) is **23 June 2026**, before 14:00:00 CEST.

The deadline for submitting pre-proposals is **7 July 2026**, before 14:00:00 CEST.

The synergy workshops will take place between November 2026 and February 2027.

The deadline for submitting a request for review of organisations based in the Netherlands (see Section 3.2) is **16 March 2027**, before 14:00:00 CET.

The deadline for submitting a request for review of foreign organisations (see Annex 7.1.3) is **16 March 2027**, before 14:00:00 CET.

The deadline for submitting full proposals is **30 March 2027**, before 14:00:00 CEST.

More information about the synergy workshops can be found on the programme page of this Call for Proposals.

Procedure

This programme consists of two phases.

In Phase 1, applicants are asked to submit a pre-application aligned with one of two themes (see Section 2.2.3). Based on the advice of an external, independent assessment committee, two pre-applications per theme will be selected. A maximum of four pre-applications will then receive a positive decision from the NWO Executive Board.

In Phase 2, three synergy workshops take place. Facilitators contracted by NWO guide the formation of the consortium and the integration of the pre-applications into a single full proposal. This proposal must incorporate both themes and the programme objectives.

Afterwards, the proposal is submitted to several members of the assessment committee (the pre-advisors) for comments. The pre-advisors provide written, substantive, and well-reasoned feedback on the proposal. They also identify which elements require clarification, explanation, or further elaboration during the interview.

During the interview, the assessment committee has the opportunity to ask questions. The applicant may respond to these questions during the discussion with the committee. Based on all available information, the committee forms its own judgement.

Following the discussion, the committee prepares a written recommendation to the NWO Executive Board regarding the quality of the proposal. This recommendation is based on the assessment criteria. In the case of a recommendation not to award funding, the consortium is given a one-time opportunity to submit a revised proposal.

Finally, the NWO Executive Board reviews the procedure followed and the committee's recommendation. The Board then establishes the final qualifications and decides whether the proposal will be awarded or rejected.

1.2 Introduction

This Call for proposals describes the application process for the “Reducing drug harm: Towards effective societal interventions” round and consists of five chapters. This Call for proposals falls under the responsibility of the Dutch Research Council (NWO).

The [NWO Grant Rules 2024](#) and [Approval of Funding for Scientific Research](#) apply to all proposals (above €50,000).

NWO processes personal data it receives in the context of this round in accordance with the [NWO Privacy Statement](#). NWO notes which personal data it shares with ZonMw on the funding page.

The NWO Executive Board is the decision-making body of this NWA Call for proposals. The call procedure is managed by ZonMw.

2 Aim and background

This chapter provides information about the aim and background of the programme and the round.

2.1 Aim of the programme and the round

The NWA programme entitled 'Reducing drug harm: towards effective social interventions' aims to enhance existing knowledge concerning the societal mechanisms that generate drug(-related) harm and to identify sustainable ways of reducing this type of harm. This knowledge could help to improve health and safety within Dutch society.

The objectives of the programme are as follows:

1. To develop new insights into behavioural (and other) mechanisms that contribute to the sustainable reduction of drug-related harm. This entails harm to 1) health, 2) the economy (whitewashing, undermining, and policy costs), and 3) society (violence, corruption, and intimidation).
2. To develop evidence-based and evidence-informed policy tools and interventions for reducing drug-related harm.
3. To improve the monitoring of policy (and other) objectives and interventions – and their impact – in order to reduce drug-related harm.

The knowledge gained from this programme should be adaptable to changes over time and in society. It will explain why an approach works, for whom, and in what context. The results will therefore remain useful even as markets shift and trends in substance use change.

The research questions relevant to this Call for proposals are as follows:

- What behavioural (and other) mechanisms are involved in causing or reducing drug-related harm, and how can they be addressed? This concerns harm to health, the economy, and society.
- How do national and local governmental policies relate to factors that contribute to the emergence or, conversely, the reduction of drug(-related) harm?
- How can health, well-being, and safety be effectively safeguarded and systematically monitored for Dutch society?
- How effective is existing policy, and are we seeing long-term behavioural change in society?

This Call for proposals fits within the [NWA -Routes](#) 'Towards resilient societies', 'Between conflict and cooperation' and 'Prevention and healthcare research'. This Call for proposals invites knowledge institutions and societal parties to form consortia for the development of research proposals aimed at the theme drug harm. The consortia are required to work in an inter- and transdisciplinary manner and should have a knowledge-chain-wide composition (see [Collaboration in research NWO](#)). Knowledge-chain-wide implies that proposals connect fundamental, applied and practice-oriented research. Interdisciplinary research involves collaboration amongst researchers from a variety of academic disciplines. Transdisciplinary work entails transcending disciplinary boundaries and involving stakeholders from outside the academic world in the project.

Involvement of citizen is an important aspect of this programme. Examples of people who can be included are people who are using or have used drugs and their loved ones, people who come into contact with drug use, people involved in the logistics and trafficking of drugs, healthcare professionals, and law enforcement officers. A stakeholder-mapping of the local and national stakeholders in the Dutch drug-prevention system was previously conducted in the Trimbos Institute's [Notitie Lokaal drugspreventiebeleid](#) [Memorandum on Local Drug-prevention Policy] (2022)¹ and [Notitie Mapping van het Nederlandse drugspreventiesysteem op nationaal niveau](#) [Memorandum on Mapping the Dutch Drug-prevention System at the National Level] (2022). Ways of involving these stakeholders include 'learning labs' and 'living labs', action research, field experiments, a focus on 'citizen science', and the establishment of planning groups as described in 'Intervention Mapping'.

New knowledge can be developed within the consortium, and existing knowledge can be further refined. A transdisciplinary approach could generate verifiable insights and workable solutions in practice, with a view to ensuring their sustainability. The call for proposals invites professionals and members of the public to contribute their own strengths and become involved.

¹ See also the accompanying [stakeholder chart](#), which provides inspirational examples for local-level partners.

2.2 Background

2.2.1 Societal issue

The use, production, and trafficking of drugs affect health, the economy, security, and the environment, and these areas are constantly influencing one another. In the Netherlands, a wide range of drugs are readily available and transported rapidly, fuelled by major logistics hubs, advanced digital infrastructure, and stable demand. Public attitudes towards drug use and the harms associated with it vary widely, and they are highly changeable, depending on age, personal experiences with drugs, marketing (and other) trends, news consumption, and social influence (both online and in person).

Since the 1970s, drug policy in the Netherlands has focused on harm reduction, with the highest priority assigned to protecting public health. One key feature was the distinction between hard and soft drugs, which was introduced in 1976 following an amendment to the Opium Act. Although coffee shops brought calm to the foreground, they left the back door open. Meanwhile, synthetic drug production, cocaine imports, and international distribution grew at the hands of organized crime. The authorities (including the judiciary and investigative services, public administrators, and politicians) and the citizens who came into contact with them or had expectations of them were thus faced with complex challenges. In the current situation, drug(-related) harm is placing a strain on public health, the economy, security, and the environment. This can manifest itself in such areas as damage to soil and water quality caused by industrial waste; the vulnerability of young people to criminal exploitation; fire and explosion hazards, odour pollution, and illegal dumping in residential areas; and spikes in excessive consumption around events and among vulnerable groups, as reflected in the health and education sectors.

The task of reducing drug(-related) harm and developing a comprehensive policy to address it is complex. At the government level, policy-making is complicated by the widespread availability of various types of drugs and a rapidly changing and growing supply. At the individual level, contributing factors include the social acceptance and/or normalization of drug use, the fact that the environmental and other harms are not immediately apparent, perverse financial incentives, and differing attitudes towards drugs.

Furthermore, measures designed to minimize damage may have undesirable side effects. For example, stricter enforcement of the ban on certain drugs could lead to them being replaced by other substances, which could potentially be more harmful. The choice of words in policy and the approach to reducing drug-related harm also matter. For example, an overly threatening or stigmatizing approach by the government does not appear to be effective, and it could even provoke resistance within the target group. At the same time, however, a lack of communication could provoke resistance among parents. There are also significant geographical differences. Ports and border regions, university towns, and rural areas each have their own unique dynamics. The factors driving the use and trafficking of drugs vary depending on context, subculture, and substance. Close-knit communities and meaningful, purposeful activities can protect against drug-related harm, whereas a lack of prospects, debt, and unemployment increase the risk of harm.

Due to this complexity, it remains unclear which policy instruments and interventions are effective in reducing drug(-related) harm. This is exacerbated by the complexity of society's wider responsibilities, which call for policies developed in dialogue with citizens. Given that various organizations across the Netherlands are working to reduce drug-related harm, it is important to ensure that their objectives and actions are aligned. This raises questions concerning what is effective, for what type of damage, for which target group, and at what point in time?

2.2.2 Intended impact of the programme

The intended impact of this programme is to reduce the harm caused by drugs. This includes harm to health, the economy, and society. The reduction of such harm will allow citizens to experience greater well-being, safety, recovery, and trust.

The following examples illustrate the intended impact:

1. Health and development

There are fewer emergency admissions due to acute drug-related incidents. There is also a reduction in permanent health damage and deaths caused by contaminated or excessively potent substances. Young people start using drugs later and engage in less risky behaviour. People whose education, housing, or employment are held back by debt receive support sooner, enabling them to get back on their feet more quickly. Examples could include a decline in emergency-department visits per 10,000 inhabitants, higher age at first use, and reduced strain on mental health and addiction services.

2. Safety and quality of life

Neighbourhoods experience fewer disturbances on the streets, at school, and at events. There is a decline in violence and intimidation linked to the supply and trafficking of drugs. Young people are less likely to become involved in criminal networks. Residents and staff feel safer. This is reflected in fewer reports of nuisance, fewer violent incidents at hotspots, and an improving score for perceived safety.

3. Nature and the environment

The illegal dumping of chemical waste is becoming less common. This reduces the cost of remediation and improves the quality of soil and water. There is a decline in the consumption of water and energy for drug production. Signs of environmental damage are identified earlier and addressed through targeted measures. Regional authorities report fewer incidents, lower levels of pollution in surface water, and better compliance with environmental regulations.

4. The economy and chain integrity

There is a decline in systemic leaks² (for example, in the logistics, construction, and hospitality industries). Corruption and bribery among civil servants are declining, thereby also reducing information leaks. Employers are seeing fewer staff absences due to substance use. There is a decline in the societal costs associated with healthcare, crime, surveillance, and enforcement. Organizations operate more consistently by defining clear tasks, carrying out inspections, and setting better priorities. Audits result in higher integrity scores, and the speed of follow-up on reports has increased.

5. Administration, trust, and society

Alerts regarding an increased risk of drug-related incidents (due to use, trafficking, or production) are displayed more promptly and in clear language to both users and non-users. Citizens know the possible courses of action, and they act accordingly. The social norms that influence the success of drug policy are well-known. Citizens report problems sooner and help find solutions. Tangible results are enhancing trust in the government and societal partners. The time from signal to warning has been reduced, the reach and understanding of messages has increased, and legitimacy ratings have improved.

² 'Leaks' refer to specific vulnerabilities in the system (such as unauthorized access, shared access cards, or unexplained stock discrepancies), which the illicit trade exploits to infiltrate legitimate business operations.

2.3.1 Insights from research on drug-related harm: two themes, one core

This Call for proposals aims to achieve its objectives and generate social impact by comprehensively addressing the issues presented above. Applicants must submit a pre-application that relates to one of the two themes outlined below.

Although a great deal is already known about the harms caused by drugs, in terms of both health and safety, a holistic perspective has yet to be developed. Such a perspective focuses on societal, cross-sectoral collaboration (by, between, and with public authorities, citizens, and researchers) and the mechanisms underlying drug-related harm. The focus is therefore on the systematic and sustainable translation of existing knowledge about the use, trafficking, and production of drugs (and related societal norms) into policy. At the same time, the focus is on new research on effective policies that could help to prevent and reduce drug-related harm. Effective knowledge transfer also calls for considering the feasibility of measures, interventions, or policy instruments. This issue requires ongoing attention within the research projects.

To prevent the excessive fragmentation of knowledge, this call for proposals focuses solely on some of the most commonly used drugs: MDMA, cocaine, and new psychoactive substances (NPS).³ Any deviation from these drugs should be clearly justified in the proposal.

For each theme, the focus is on clarifying the complex system underlying drug(-related) harm and identifying potential areas for intervention. Knowledge is to be acquired regarding the active mechanisms of potential policy instruments and interventions. By taking a practical approach, these insights can be put into practice. Monitoring both the ultimate goals and the interim targets yields lessons that remain valuable even in changing situations.

Theme 1: Market and infrastructure (reduction of supply and reduction of demand)

This theme focuses on reducing the trafficking and production of drugs and the harm they cause. It entails transit and distribution, as well as crime that arises directly or indirectly from these activities. Studies within this theme clearly identify mechanisms that help to reduce the harm caused by the production and trafficking of drugs. Attention is directed towards how these support mechanisms relate to the frameworks established by legislation and regulations, as well as local, national, and international policy. Investigations could explore the scope provided by legal and policy instruments for steering the illegal drugs market towards lower returns. Research within this theme addresses the influence of society and the potential normalization or de-normalization of drug use on reducing the production and trafficking of drugs.

Theme 2: Use, direct harm, and its prevention (harm reduction)

This theme focuses on reducing drug-related harm through a preventive approach. In contrast to Theme 1, this theme approaches the issue more from the individual's perspective. For example, this could include delaying or preventing first-time use and trafficking. Support to help people decrease or stop their use and dealing is also important.

³ In the Trimbos Institute's [National Drug Monitor](#) (reference year 2024), cocaine and MDMA (ecstasy) are listed as the second and third most commonly used drugs. The drug 3-MMC, [one of the substances regarded as NPS](#), is listed in fourth place.

Within this section, it is important to consider the role that drugs play in the lives of people who use them. If drug use is a symptom of underlying issues (such as loneliness, illness, stress, unstable housing, or a lack of prospects), the best approach to harm reduction could be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

The ultimate aim of this initiative is to reduce drug(-related) harm by adopting a preventive approach to the underlying issues. The implementation and consolidation of the knowledge gained will be mapped out, and cooperation between public authorities and citizens is important to ensuring the long-term sustainability of the results.

2.3 Background

What does the Netherlands want to know? This was the idea behind the creation of the Dutch Research Agenda (Dutch acronym NWA). The NWA has been created by an innovative process with input from scientists and citizens: the Dutch general public was invited to submit questions about science online. This Call of proposals yielded an impressive 11,700 questions about a wide variety of subjects. These were consolidated in 140 big issues, the so-called 'cluster questions'. Around these cluster questions, researchers and societal organisations formed 25 networks that were given the name NWA routes. These networks were given their own route management and, inspired by the cluster questions in the NWA agenda, they develop knowledge agendas and organise meetings and communication activities. The 25 NWA routes and the associated cluster questions can be found via Routes|NWO.

Cooperation between researchers from different disciplines, on the one hand, and knowledge organisations and societal (public and private) organisations, on the other, has added value for the complex issues that are part of the NWA. In these collaborations, new knowledge flows from researcher to user, and new questions from professional practice and from society find a way into new research. In the conviction that people can achieve more together than they can individually, the NWA programme therefore encourages collaboration between different partners.

The key elements of the NWA programme are:

- the Dutch Research Agenda that consists of 140 cluster questions and 25 routes;
- knowledge-chain-wide⁴ and interdisciplinary consortia, in which researchers from different disciplinary backgrounds, knowledge and societal (public and private) organisations and, where relevant, citizens collaborate on complex issues;
- societal organisations, society and citizens have a clear role in the research;
- giving back the results to society through dialogue and interaction.

In 2018 the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (Dutch acronym OCW) entrusted NWO with implementing the Dutch Research Agenda.

The NWA comprises four programme line⁵s:

4. [Research along Routes by Consortia \(ORC\)](#);
5. [Thematic Programming in consultation with government bodies](#);
6. [Innovations and Networks](#);
7. [Science Communication and Outreach](#).

⁴ The broad knowledge chain comprises a diversity of the public knowledge institutions: universities of applied sciences, universities, NWO and KNAW institutes, university medical centres and TO2 institutes.

⁵ More information about the different programme lines is available at Dutch Research Agenda (NWA) | NWO.

The Call for proposals is being realised in the context of programme line 2. The Ministry of Justice and Security and the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport are the initiators of this Call for proposals.

2.3.1 Societal impact of research

New knowledge and insights from scientific research can make an important contribution to developing solutions for the various issues society faces. By facilitating greater interaction and alignment between researchers and potential knowledge users, the chance of knowledge utilisation increases, as well as the likelihood of generating societal impact. Societal impact here stands for changes that (partly) result from research-generated knowledge and skills. These changes contribute to the well-being of people, planet and society for this and future generations. Through its policy on impact, NWO promotes the potential contribution that research can make to societal issues by encouraging productive interactions with societal stakeholders, both during the development stage and the subsequent implementation of research. It does so in a manner that is in accordance with the aim of the particular funding instrument. NWO encourages researchers to reflect on the potential desired and undesired impact of their research from a broad perspective.

In this programme, the [Impact Plan](#) approach is applied. With this, NWO facilitates the development of an integrated strategy that will enable researchers and partners to purposefully increase the likelihood of achieving the desired societal impact.

NWO offers an e-learning module that can help interested parties via [Online impact workshops | NWO](#). For more information on our policy on impact, please visit the website: [Knowledge utilisation | NWO](#).

2.3.2 Impact Plan approach in the NWA

In NWA the programmes focus on complex issues where coordination and cooperation has added value to realise scientific and societal breakthroughs. NWA stimulate the cooperation between different partners, making the whole is greater than the sum of its parts and stimulating that new knowledge for societal issues is developed.

[Impact Plan approach](#)

Societal impact is never solely the result of knowledge and insights gained from the research. To increase the chance of the research's societal impact, demonstrable involvement is needed from important stakeholders from the moment the consortium is formed until the completion of the project and beyond. Societal impact is often realised in the years after a research project has been concluded. By ensuring continuous alignment between researchers and possible knowledge users from the start of the research articulation (co-design) and when carrying out the research (co-creation), the chances of productive interactions, and finally impact, will increase.

Consortia draw up an Impact Plan together with stakeholders as part of the proposal. The Impact Plan describes how the consortium expects to realise societal impact and the role that productive interactions play in this. It shows how achieving the expected impact has been integrated into the research design and what role consortium partners and stakeholders from the fields of policy, practice and industry play in this.

2.4 Consortium formation

To increase the research's potential for impact, collaboration is essential between researchers, with researchers from other disciplines, and with societal partners, such as companies and social organisations. In this call for proposals, NWO supports consortium formation by organising synergy workshops. This method is briefly explained below. More information about consortium formation can be found at [Consortium formation | NWO](#).

2.4.1 Synergy workshops

The goal of the synergy workshops is to create a new interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary consortium that develops a single proposal drawing on various fields of knowledge and expertise, in order to achieve maximum results and impact. Selected existing or new partnerships that have submitted a preproposal are brought together in the synergy workshops. During the workshops, the available knowledge is shared on as many aspects of a complex issue as possible. Facilitators hired by NWO give guidance on forming the consortium and integrating the pre-proposals into a single proposal to be submitted. Participation in the synergy workshops is organised through a selection based on the preproposals; see Sections 3.6 and 4.3. For more information on the synergy workshops, see subsection 4.2.4. In appendix 7.4, a supporting visualisation of the consortium formation process is given.

3 Preparation and submission

This chapter contains information on how to prepare and submit a proposal. The term ‘proposal’ also refers to a letter of intent or pre-proposal, insofar as these items are applicable for this round.

The use of generative AI when preparing a proposal is not explicitly prohibited as long as this happens responsibly. For guidance, see the [NWO policy on the use of generative artificial intelligence \(GAI\) | NWO](#).

3.1 Timeline

The submission deadlines and a timeline for the entire assessment procedure for this round are given below. NWO reserves the right to make adjustments to this timeline in the course of the procedure if needed. These will be communicated to the main applicant. Proposals submitted after the deadline will not be taken into consideration by NWO.

The deadline for submission of requests to assess (foreign) organisations (see subsection 3.2 and subsection 7.1.3) is **23 June 2026**, at 14:00:00 CEST.

Request to assess (foreign) organisations

23 June 2026 before 14:00:00 CEST

Deadline for requests to assess (foreign) organisations for the pre-proposal

16 March 2027 before 14:00:00 CET

Deadline for requests to assess (foreign) organisations for the proposal

Pre-proposals

7 July 2026 before 14:00:00 CEST

Deadline pre-proposals

August 2026

Assessment committee assesses pre-proposals

September 2026

Applicants will receive a decision by the NWO Executive Board for/against participation in synergy workshops

Synergy workshops

November 2026

Synergy workshop 1

January 2027

Synergy workshop 2

February 2027

Synergy workshop 3

Proposals

30 March 2027 before 14:00:00 CET

Deadline for proposals

April 2027

Pre-advice by assessment committee;

May 2027

Interview

August 2027

Decision by the NWO Executive Board

3.2 Who can apply

Pre-proposals and proposals are to be submitted by the main applicant on behalf of the consortium. The main applicant (or a replacement) has participated in all synergy workshops (see paragraph 2.4.1 and 4.2.4).

There are four categories of participants within a consortium:

- main applicant;
- co-applicant(s);
- cooperation partner(s);
- co-funder(s) (optional).

A consortium should consist of at least a main applicant, a co-applicant and cooperation partner. The conditions for each type of participant are explained in more detail in the following sections.

Main applicants

To be eligible to submit a proposal, researchers must be employed for an indefinite period (with the associated employment contract) or have a tenure track appointment at any of the following research organisations:

- universities and universities of applied sciences, as described in Section 1.8, subsection 1 of the Dutch Higher Education and Research Act, or universities referred to in the [Policy Rules for Universities](#) in the Kingdom of the Netherlands;
- university medical centres, as described in Section 1.13, subsection 1 of the Higher Education and Research Act;
- [KNAW institutes](#) and [NWO institutes](#);
- TO2-institutes;
- public knowledge institutions (RKI's)⁶ **
- Netherlands Cancer Institute;
- Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen;
- Naturalis Biodiversity Center;
- Advanced Research Centre for NanoLithography (ARCNL);
- Princess Máxima Center.

Individuals with a zero-hour or fixed-term employment contract (other than a tenure track appointment) cannot submit a proposal. Applicants with a part-time appointment must ensure adequate supervision of the project and all project members for whom funding is requested.

* Lectors employed at a university of applied sciences and researchers employed at a TO2 institute may also submit as a main applicant provided that they have at least a salaried position for a limited period of time.

⁶ For an overview of all public knowledge institutes see (only dutch): [Rijkskennisinstituten \(RKI\) | Rijksoverheid](#).

**** Public knowledge institutions may only act as main applicant, provided they meet the cumulative requirements for recognition as a research organisation after assessment by NWO. An overview of previously assessed and recognized public knowledge institutions can be found in Appendix 7.3.**

Persons with a zero-hour employment agreement or with a contract for a limited period of time (other than a tenure track appointment and the above mentioned exemption for lecturers and researchers at a TO2 institute) may not submit a proposal.

It may be that the main applicant tenure track employment contract ends before the intended completion date of the project for which grant funding is being requested, or that the main applicant's tenure agreement ends before this date due to their reaching retirement age. In such cases, the proposal must include a statement from the employer. In this statement, the research organisation in question guarantees that the project and all project members for whom funding is being requested will receive adequate supervision for the full duration of the project.

The main applicant employed by a university of applied sciences, TO2 institute or Public Knowledge Institution whose employment ends before the intended completion date of the project for which the grant is being applied for must also attach such a statement. Applicants with a part-time contract should guarantee adequate supervision of the project and all project members for whom funding is requested. Main applicants may be affiliated to public knowledge institutions not already listed in Appendix 7.3, provided they meet the cumulative conditions below.

Co-applicants

In this Call for proposals, two types of co-applicants are allowed: co-applicants affiliated with research organisations and co-applicants affiliated with societal organisations. Co-applicants affiliated with societal organisations can only act as co-applicants under the application of the de minimis Regulation⁴. Voor medeaanvragers verbonden aan onderzoeksorganisaties gelden de hieronder beschreven voorwaarden over onderzoeksorganisaties (en eventuele toetsing). Die is niet van toepassing op medeaanvragers verbonden aan maatschappelijke organisaties.

Medeaanvragers aan onderzoeksorganisaties

Co-applicants may be affiliated to the research organisations listed in this section, the research organisations listed in Appendix 7.3, and other research organisations as referred to in Article 1.1, paragraph 4, of the NWO Grant Rules 2024, and which meet the following cumulative conditions.

The organisation must:

- be established in the Netherlands;
- or an organisation or body established and governed by public law (in Dutch: publiekrechtelijke rechtspersoon) (all other legal forms, including private and public limited companies, are excluded);
- have as its primary goal the independent conduct of its own fundamental research, industrial research or experimental development or with widely disseminating the results of those activities through teaching, publications or knowledge transfer;
- be able to state that the organisation keeps separate accounts with regard to economic/non-economic activities and that undertakings with decisive influence on the organisation do not enjoy preferential access to the organisation's results.

Note: Prior to submission of a pre-proposal and/or proposal, NWO will assess whether an organisation complies with Article 1.1, subsection 4 of the NWO Grant Rules 2024 and is thus eligible to participate as co-applicant based on the above conditions. This assessment also helps to ensure NWO's compliance with regulations prohibiting state aid.

To enable the assessment to be carried out, the intended co-applicant's organisation must submit the following documents by email to nwa-dstd@zonmw.nl no later than ten working days before the submission deadline (i.e. by **23 June, 14:00:00 CEST**):

- a recent extract from the Chamber of Commerce;
- a deed of establishment and/or current articles of association;
- the most recently available annual accounts, including an audit report⁷;
- a completed Research Organisation Statement, which is available on the funding page of this Call for proposals.

Documents must be in English or Dutch. Other relevant documents may also be included. NWO and ZonMw may also request additional information if the above documents do not allow for adequate determination of the organisation's eligibility to act as co-applicant.

If the intended co-applicant's organisation has already been assessed and found to comply with these conditions as part of a different NWO programme, please contact NWO and ZonMw at the above email address well before the applicable deadline to determine whether further assessment is necessary.

If the intended co-applicant's organisation fails to submit the documents required for assessment on time, NWO and ZonMw will not accept the organisation as co-applicant.

If the proposal adds further co-applicants to the consortium who are not affiliated with any of the research organisations listed in this subsection, these new co-applicants must be assessed based on the same conditions. Again, the intended co-applicant's organisation must submit at least the following documents by email no later than ten working days before the submission deadline (i.e. by **16 March, 14:00:00 CET**):

- a recent extract from the Chamber of Commerce;
- a deed of establishment and/or current articles of association;
- the most recently available annual accounts, including an audit report¹;
- a completed Research Organisation Statement, which is available on the funding page of this Call for proposals.

Documents must be in English or Dutch. If a research organisation was already assessed and approved as a co-applicant before submitting the pre-proposal, there is no need to have it assessed again for the submission of the proposal.

Co-applicants affiliated to societal organisations

This Call for proposals also focuses on knowledge from and for the benefit of municipal practice.

Societal organisations that provide support and/or build expertise with regard to drug(-related) damage can act as co-applicants under the de-minimis Regulation (see below). This includes, for example, lived experience groups, centres of expertise, (voluntary) initiatives, and interest groups, whose practical knowledge and research-related activities are essential for conducting fully-fledged research. The application must justify the substantial, active contribution that the societal organisation makes to the research. This will be assessed by the assessment committee under the criterion of the quality of the consortium (see Section 4.1).

⁷ No audit report is necessary for organisations not legally required to have their annual accounts audited. However, such organisations must be able to provide proof of exemption from this legal requirement.

De-minimis threshold for societal organisations

Societal organisations acting as co-applicants will receive the grant from NWO via the main applicant, in compliance with the de- minimis threshold set out in the de- minimis Regulation (Regulation (EU) No. 2023/2831 of the European Commission of 13 December 2023). According to the de minimis Regulation, a consortium partner may receive a maximum of €300,000 in de- minimis aid over a period of three years.

By completing the de-minimis aid declaration, societal organisations confirm that the allocation of a grant by NWO will not exceed the de- minimis threshold for the organisation in question. If a societal organisation finds that the NWO grant would cause the de-minimis threshold to be exceeded, the main applicant cannot apply for a grant for this societal organisation from NWO. The main applicant must therefore take this into account when preparing the project budget and must verify for each societal organisation wishing to act as a co-applicant that the requested grant amount does not exceed the de-minimis threshold. The de-minimis aid declaration filled out separately by each societal organisation is part of the application.

3.2.1 Additional conditions for main applicants and co-applicants

Different conditions apply to main applicants and co-applicants during the pre-application (phase 1) and the application (phase 2).

Phase 1

Main applicants

The main applicant submits the proposal via the ZonMw web application Mijn ZonMw. During the assessment process, NWO will communicate with the main applicant.

After a proposal has been selected, the main applicant will become the point of contact for NOW and ZonMw. The knowledge institution of the main applicant is the main beneficiary and will become the official secretary.

Extra conditions:

- the main applicant may submit only one pre-proposal in the role of main applicant;
- the main applicant may participate a maximum of one time as co-applicant in another pre-proposal.

Co-applicants

Co-applicants have an active role in realising the project. The (sub)project leaders and beneficiary/beneficiaries are jointly responsible for realising the entire project.

Extra conditions:

- a co-applicant can participate in up to two pre-proposals in that capacity;
- persons with a zero-hours contract are excluded from submitting as a co-applicant;
- a co-applicant must have at least a master's degree or equivalent qualification.

Phase 2

Main applicants

The main applicant submits the proposal via the ZonMw web application Mijn ZonMw. During the assessment process, NWO will communicate with the main applicant.

After a proposal has been awarded funding, the main applicant will become the project leader and point of contact for NWO. The knowledge institution of the main applicant is the main beneficiary and will become the official secretary.

Extra conditions:

- The main applicant of one of the selected pre-proposals is required to participate in all synergy workshops if they wish to be the main applicant of the proposal as well.
- If a main applicant is unable to attend, for example, due to force majeure as defined in the NWO Force Majeure Compensation Scheme, a co-applicant of the pre-proposal in question must have attended all the synergy workshops at which the main applicant is unable to attend.

Both main and co-applicants with a part-time contract should guarantee adequate supervision of the project and of all project workers for whom grant funding is being requested.

Co-applicants

Co-applicants have an active role in realising the project. The (sub)project leaders and beneficiary/beneficiaries are jointly responsible for realising the entire project.

Extra conditions:

- persons with a zero-hours contract are excluded from submitting as a co-applicant;
- a co-applicant must have at least a master's degree or equivalent qualification.

In this Call for proposals, two types of co-applicants are allowed: co-applicants affiliated with research organisations and co-applicants affiliated with societal organisations. Co-applicants affiliated with societal organisations can only act as co-applicants under the application of the de minimis Regulation⁸.

3.2.2 Cooperation partners

Cooperation partners are mandatory in this Call for proposals, because active involvement from societal stakeholders is of great importance to share knowledge about challenges and possible solutions. Civil society stakeholders include both public and private organisations, and where relevant, citizens or a representation thereof. The organisation of a civil society stakeholder is not a main or co-applicant or co-funder.

A cooperation partner is actively involved during the whole process, from the formulation of research questions and development of the project (co-design) to the implementation of the research and/or knowledge utilisation (co-creation). A cooperation partner can be included in the advisory committee.

⁸ Commission Regulation (EU) 2023/2831 of 13 December 2023 on the application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to de minimis aid. See: Regulation - EU - 2023/2831 - EN - EUR-Lex | Europa.eu.

Please note: no funding may be requested for salary or research costs as a main or co-applicant for personnel of organisations that participate as a cooperation partner in the consortium. However, it is possible to remunerate costs by hiring in these organisations as third parties via the modules ‘material costs’, ‘knowledge utilisation’ or ‘project management (see Section 3.3 and Annex 7.1).

3.2.3 Co-funders

Co-funding is not compulsory within this Call for proposals. Co-funders are organisations that participate in the consortium and contribute to the project in cash and/or in kind. Co-funders do not receive any funding from NWO. The conditions regarding co-funding are specified in Section 3.7.1.

Organisations whose researchers are permitted to act as main applicants in accordance with the description given in Section 3.2 may not participate as co-funders in this Call for proposals. An exception will be made for TO2 institutes. They may participate in a consortium as co-funders, unless they also participate as a main applicant or co-applicant in the same consortium.

3.3 What can be applied for

Within this Call for Proposals, a maximum of four pre-applications will be selected. This corresponds to a maximum budget of €1,067,737.75 per pre-application.

The available budget for this Call for proposals is €4,270,951. The project’s proposed duration cannot exceed 5 years. The applicant and co-applicants can include costs for personnel, materials, investments and knowledge utilisation. The available budget modules are given below.

Request only the amounts of funding necessary to complete the project. Rates and explanations of these budget modules are given in Annex 7.1.

3.3.1 Personnel

It is possible to apply for funding of the salary costs of personnel contributing to the project. The amounts depend on the type of appointment and the organisation employing the personnel in question.

[Personnel at a university in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, university medical centre or research organisation](#)

For personnel employed by a university in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, university medical centre or other research organisation as referred to in Article 1.1, first section, subsections c to h of the NWO Grant Rules 2024, salary costs may be included for the following positions: PhD student, Engineering Doctorate, postdoc, physician researcher, non-scientific personnel and research leave(s).

An unrestricted number of positions can be requested for this type of position.

Research leave can be requested for up to 20% of the grant amount.

Applying for funding of an Engineering Doctorate (EngD) position is only possible if also applying for funding of a PhD student or postdoc.

Personnel at universities of applied sciences, educational institutions, TO2 institutes and other organisations

It is possible to include salary costs for personnel at universities of applied sciences, educational institutions, TO2 institutes and other organisations. An unrestricted number of positions can be requested for such positions.

Students

Costs for students can be included as material costs, as long as the students are working on the project and study at one of the research organisations listed in subsection 3.2 (see subsection 7.1.2). There is no maximum number of students who may work on a project.

Scientific personnel at foreign research organisations

It is possible to include salary costs for scientific personnel at foreign research organisations who are co-applicants.

A maximum of 25% of the grant amount may be requested for personnel of foreign research organisations.

Note: Prior to submission of the proposal, NWO will assess a foreign organisation's compliance with Article 1.1, subsections 4 and 5 of the NWO Grant Rules 2024 (see subsections 1.3 and 7.1.1).

3.3.2 Materials

All project-specific material costs are eligible for funding. Funding for such costs cannot exceed 25% of the NWO grant amount. A maximum of 50% of the material budget requested from NWO may be applied to work by third parties.

Up to 25% of the grant amount for materials may be requested for foreign research organisations.

3.3.3 Investments

Funding may be requested for investments in equipment, infrastructure and other research resources that will retain economic value after use or can be re-used. Salary costs for personnel to set up equipment, infrastructure or other research resources may *not* be included as part of the investment. The Personnel rates and conditions apply and these costs must be included as Investments. Investments are only possible at research organisations listed in subsection 3.2.

A maximum of €500,000 may be requested for investments.

3.3.4 Knowledge utilisation

Funding may be requested for activities that promote the use of knowledge generated by the research⁹, increasing the research's societal impact.

⁹ All activities included in this budget module must fit the European Commission's definition of 'knowledge transfer activities' in the State aid framework for research and development and innovation (OJ 2022, C 414).

It is mandatory to allocate a specific amount for knowledge utilisation. These costs must be between 5% and 20% of the grant amount. Up to 5% of the grant amount for knowledge utilisation may be requested for foreign research organisations.

3.3.5 Projectmanagement

It is mandatory to apply an amount for project management. A maximum of 5% of the grant amount can be used for this module.

3.4 Fases

This Call for proposals has two phases:

- submitting a pre-proposal;
- if the decision is positive: participation in synergy workshops and submission of a joint proposal.

3.4.1 Preparing and submitting a pre-proposal in My ZonMw

The submission of a pre-proposal is compulsory for this Call for proposals. A pre-proposal is a shortform proposal that outlines the research questions the applicant, co-applicants and partners would like to address and how they will contribute to the in the Call for proposals described goals and impact. The pre-proposals makes addresses 1 of the 2 themes described in Section 2.2.3.

The main applicant submits the pre-proposal via [My ZonMw](#). Start preparations for your My ZonMw pre-proposal submission in good time.

- If you do not yet have a My ZonMw account, it must be created in time to prevent any potential registration issues.
- For more information, please check the [My ZonMw manual for applicants](#).

Pre-applications submitted after the deadline will not be considered by ZonMw. For technical questions, we kindly ask you to contact the ZonMw Service Desk; see Contact (Chapter 6).

Does a main and/or co-applicant work at a research organisation that is not included in the My ZonMw database? If so, you can report this via servicedesk@zonmw.nl so the research organisation can be added. This process takes several days. Therefore, it is important to report this no later than one week before the deadline.

To draw up your pre-proposal, follow these steps:

- download the pre-proposal form;
- fill in the pre-proposal form
- save the completed pre-proposal form as a PDF file and submit it in My ZonMw;
- in My ZonMw, fill in all the requested information;

The following mandatory annex must be uploaded in My ZonMw along with the pre-proposal:

- budget

Always use the templates provided by ZonMw for all annexes. Annexes other than those listed above are not permitted. All attachments, with the exception of the budget, must be submitted as PDF files (without security). The budget must be submitted as an Excel file in My ZonMw.

3.4.2 Preparing and submitting a proposal in My ZonMw

The proposal may only be submitted by a main applicant who submitted a pre-proposal in phase 1 that was selected by the Executive Board of NWO to proceed to phase 2. The main applicant may not be changed between the submission of a pre-proposal and the submission of a proposal.

The main applicants of selected pre-proposals are required to participate in synergy workshops. If a main applicant is unable to attend, for example, due to force majeure as defined in the NWO Force Majeure Compensation Scheme, a replacement must have attended the synergy workshops. Co-applicants and cooperation partners of the selected pre-proposals are also invited to participate. During the development of the application, the consortium in the making will decide who will act as the main applicant and submit the application.

In My ZonMw, you must your previously submitted pre-proposal will be converted into a proposal automatically. Start preparations for your My ZonMw proposal submission in good time and use the [My ZonMw manual for applicants](#) if necessary.

The steps involved in writing your application are:

- create an account or update your existing account details if necessary;
- use My ZonMw to download the proposal form and required formats for annexes;
- save the completed proposal form as a PDF file and submit it in My ZonMw. Submit any annexes separately;
- in My ZonMw, fill in all the requested information, including the research fields [NWO research fields](#) | [NWO](#) and a summary for non-experts in Dutch and English;
- NWO and ZonMw will publish this summary for non-experts along with the press release about the grant awards. It should have a length of 50–100 words and be written for a general audience. Due to intellectual property concerns, no scientific summary is published;
- the proposal is in Dutch.

It is mandatory to upload the following annexes to the proposal in ISAAC:

- budget (Excel file);
- generic expenditure plan, if applicable;
- declaration knowledge security (see paragraph 4.3.5) (PDF);
- declaration co-funding (PDF);
- confirmation of contribution to investment (mandatory if applicable, see paragraph 7.1);
- letter guaranteeing the continuity of the project supervision (compulsory if applicable, see paragraph 3.1);
- declaration of Support NWA (without co-funding) (PDF);

Optional annexes only:

- institutional commitment letter

Always use the templates provided by NWO and ZonMw for all annexes. Annexes other than those listed above are not permitted. All attachments, with the exception of the budget, must be submitted as PDF files (without security). The budget must be submitted as an Excel file in My ZonMw.

Documentation including proposal submission formats is also available on the funding page for this round on the NWO website.

An application submitted after the deadline will not be considered by ZonMw. For technical questions regarding the use of My ZonMw, you can contact the My ZonMw Service Desk. Please consult the manual first before requesting assistance from the helpdesk. The My ZonMw Service Desk is available Monday to Friday from 10:00 to 17:00 at the telephone number +31 (0)70 349 51 76.

3.4.3 Co-funding

The [NWO Co-funding rules](#) | NWO applies to all proposals.

Additional definitions:

- co-funding contributions in kind: capitalised personnel and/or material costs paid by users;
- co-funding in cash is used to cover a portion of the total project costs, and together with the grant provided by NWO constitutes the financial resources necessary for the project.

For this Call for proposals, co-funding is not mandatory. However, co-funders may be included in the proposal. NWO distinguishes between co-funding in cash (received by the main applicant), which covers the budget for the project activities described in the proposal, and co-funding in kind, which may consist of personnel and/or material resources contributed by the participating organisations.

Co-funding is subject to the following principles:

- NWO is the proposal's main funder. Proposals for projects where co-funding exceeds 49% of the total project costs will not be considered;
- contributions in kind will only be accepted provided that the co-funder's contribution forms an integral part of the project activities and can be traced or designated as an identifiable commitment. In case of uncertainty, NWO may request further explanation of and documentation for the rates used, and can request an adjustment of these rates. Additionally, any contributions in kind in the form of services or know-how must not already be present or available at the research organisations of the applicants;
- for the capitalisation of time spent on a project by personnel (personnel hours), fixed general hourly rates apply. For rates, see the [Manual tariffs Dutch Government \(HOT\)](#), Table 2, under 2.2 'Average total salary costs per salary scale', column 'Hourly rate for productive hours excluding VAT'. Use the rate that most closely approximates the actual salary costs;
- co-funding in cash is the net amount the applicant receives from a co-funder. The applicant invoices the co-funder for the in-cash co-funding amount and any applicable VAT.

Not permissible as co-funding in cash or in kind¹⁰:

- grant support provided by NWO;
- co-funding cannot be contributed by parties eligible to submit their own proposal to NWO as part of this Call for proposals;
- costs of overhead, supervision, consultancy services and/or participation in the supervisory committee.

¹⁰ The NWO Co-funding Scheme, Article 6 describes which types of co-funding are not permitted.

Co-funding declaration of participating co-funders

The co-funding organisation commits to financial support for the project and confirms the specified amount of co-funding in a co-funding declaration. It is mandatory to include co-funding declarations of every co-funder named in the proposal as annexes to the submitted proposal. The co-funding declaration must be signed by an authorised signatory for the co-funding organisation. The required format for the co-funding declaration can be found on the funding page of this Call for proposals on the NWO website and in ISAAC.

If the proposal is awarded funding, the co-funder must confirm their contributions in the consortium agreement. This agreement also contains details of any further arrangements concluded between the co-funders and the applicants (see subsection 5.1.3).

Accountability of co-funding in cash or in kind

The percentage of co-funding, both in cash and in kind, compared to the grant awarded by NWO in this Call for proposals applies from the time of a proposal's submission until the grant has been determined. Co-funding in cash affects the grant amount provided by NWO, as both NWO's contribution and the co-funded cash are being used for the same project-specific costs, unlike co-funding in kind.

Official indexation (see annex 7.2) due to the applicability of other rates after submission will not affect the percentages or co-funding requirements for the NWO contribution. These are calculated based on the percentages in the proposal budgets approved by NWO.

Once a project has been completed, the final grant amount is determined based on the final financial statement, the financial conditions and the co-funding percentages included in the proposal's budget.

In case of partial in-cash co-funding payments due to unexpected events such as bankruptcy, NWO will base its contribution on the originally awarded grant, taking into account the co-funding payments received and any applicable minimum co-funding requirements.

Calculations of the co-funded percentage compared to the grant awarded by NWO will also take any in-cash co-funding in excess of requirements into account. In the event of a project with co-funding in cash in excess of the co-funding requirements and partially received co-funding payments at the time of determination, NWO's contribution will never exceed the original amount awarded in the grant. In that case, the percentage contributed by NWO will be limited to the maximum amount dictated by the co-funding requirement.

NWO should always be notified of any problems regarding anticipated co-funding, in cash and/or in kind. Along with financial consequences for a project, NWO may also ask for sufficient changes to be made to the project to enable the research to continue as well as possible by means of a change request.

3.4.4 Declaration of support of cooperation partners

In a declaration of support (without co-funding) a cooperation partner states their support for the project and describes their role within the project. Declarations of support can only be submitted with a proposal. NWO and ZonMw will make a format available on the funding page.

If the proposal is awarded funding, the cooperation partner must confirm their contribution in the consortium agreement. This agreement also contains details of any further arrangements concluded between the co-funders and the applicants (see subsection 5.1.3).

3.4.5 De-minimis aid declaration

For societal organisations funded under the de minimis Regulation (see Section 3.2), the de-minimis aid declaration is part of the application. The application will be awarded on the condition that the de-minimis threshold for the societal organisation in question is not exceeded at the time of award.

3.5 Requirements for consideration

Where in this paragraph reference is made to 'application', this refers to both the pre-proposal and the proposal.

NWO and ZonMw check that a proposal meets all the conditions applicable to this Call for proposals, including those set out below. A proposal must meet these requirements to be taken into consideration.

Conditions:

- the pre-registration addresses 1 of the themes described in Chapter 2;
- the mandatory pre-proposal was submitted before the deadline;
- the proposal was received before the deadline;
- the main applicant and co-applicants meet the conditions stated in subsection 3.2 and subsection 7.1.1;
- the co-funders meet the conditions stated in Section 3.6.3;
- the proposal complies with the DORA guidelines described in subsection 4.3.4;
- the proposal has been prepared using the forms provided in ISAAC and on the NWO website's funding page (web page) for this round;
- the data management section (showing how the applicants will handle data generated by the research) has been completed;
- the proposal form and the required annexes are, after a possible one-time request to make additions or changes, correct and complete and have been filled out according to the instructions;
- the proposal has been submitted via the main applicant's ISAAC account;
- the proposal is in Dutch;
- the proposal meets the page count and word limit requirements;
- the budget for the proposal has been compiled according to the requirements of this Call for proposals, using the provided format with the most recent rates;
- the co-funding, after any request for additions or changes, has been correctly and fully committed through declarations of co-funding;
- the proposed project has a duration of at least 4 and at most 5 years.

The pre-proposal and proposal form may include additional requirements, explanations, procedures and questions necessary for the form's correct completion.

Consideration of proposal and administrative corrections

After submission of the required documents, the applicant receives notice of whether NWO and ZonMw intend to take the proposal into consideration as soon as possible. Be aware that NWO and ZonMw may contact applicants for up to two weeks after the submission deadline to request any administrative corrections required to allow the conditions for submission to be met.

The applicant is given one opportunity to make these corrections, and must do so within five working days. If the corrected documents remain incomplete and/or incorrect, NWO and ZonMw will not take the proposal into further consideration.

Notification of own research organisation

NWO and ZonMw work on the assumption that applicants have informed the research organisations where they are employed about the proposal submission, and that these organisations have accepted the grant conditions pertaining to this Call for proposals. During the application process, NWO and ZonMw will communicate with the main applicant.

4 Assessment

This chapter contains information on the assessment procedure for a proposal.

4.1.1 Substantive assessment criteria pre-proposal

The pre-proposals submitted within this Call for proposals will be substantially assessed on the basis of the following criteria:

Phase 1 – pre-proposals:

- Problem definition and analysis (40%)
- Envisaged impact and route to impact (40%)
- Quality of the consortium (20%)

Problem definition and analysis

- The problem definition has been clearly formulated.
- The proposed research method describes just one of the themes.
- The project aligns with and contributes to the objectives of the Call for proposals.
- The preproposal addresses resulting knowledge questions that fit the objectives of the Call for proposals and that align with one of the themes formulated in the Call for proposals.

Intended impact and route to impact (project approach)

- The intended scientific and social impact is clearly outlined and follows logically from the problem or question identified.
- The route to impact is logical and clearly outlined.
- The outcomes and output relating to the envisaged impact and the theme addressed have been clearly and logically defined.
- The opportunities for collaboration with regard to the themes not addressed in the preproposal are clearly described.
- Quality of the main aspects of the research method.

Quality of the potential consortium

- The composition of the potential consortium is logically designed to support the intended approach described in the pre-proposal.
- Expertise and interdisciplinarity of the consortium members and potential members presented in the pre-proposal.
- Potential for collaboration across the knowledge chain.
- Potential for collaboration with relevant social stakeholders and/or citizens.

4.1.2 Substantive assessment criteria proposal

The assessment is based on substantive assessment criteria and commences once a proposal has been taken into consideration. Proposals are substantively assessed against the following criteria:

- Problem definition and analysis (20%)
- Envisaged impact and route to impact (20%)
- Quality of the consortium (30%)
- Quality of the research (30%)

The following specific aspects of the four assessment criteria will be assessed:

Problem definition and problem analysis

- A clearly formulated problem definition and the resulting research questions, along with their logical connection and contribution to the objectives outlined in the Call for proposals.
- The social and scientific/scholarly urgency and relevance of the problem definition.
- The interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary nature of the problem definition and the knowledge questions.

Intended impact and route to impact

- The intended scientific and social impact is clearly outlined and follows logically from the problem or question identified.
- The Impact pathway describes a clear route towards societal impact, including the role of the partners involved.
- Appropriate strategic activities for achieving the intended impact, such as stakeholder engagement, communication, monitoring and evaluation, and capacity development.
- Sufficient attention to the most salient risks regarding undesired social impact, measures proposed to prevent or mitigate such impact, and opportunities to increase the desired impact.

Quality of the consortium

- The composition of the consortium is logically designed to support the intended approach described in the proposal; It is interdisciplinary, with participation by relevant social stakeholders and/or citizens. and it consists of organisations from across the knowledge chain.
- The quality of the consortium members as concerns the knowledge, skills and expertise required to carry out the research.
- Active involvement of the consortium members in developing the project (co-design), from articulating the problem definition and identifying the research questions to implementation (cocreation).
- Clear division of tasks and roles within the consortium, both in conducting the research and in governance.

Quality of the research

- The scientific question posed follows logically from an analysis of the problem and is original and innovative within the disciplines involved.
- The proposed approach and methodology are suited to achieving the concretely formulated objectives and finding a solution to the problem. In the implementation of the project, the consortium follows an approach that involves fundamental as well as applied and practice oriented research.
- The integrated nature of the interdisciplinary research.
- The structure of the proposed research plan is separated into: 1) clearly described work packages with a logical coherence; 2) a fitting, properly justified budget; 3) a risk analysis and (optional) a back-up plan.

The ‘Problem definition and problem analysis’, ‘Intended impact and route to impact’, ‘Quality of the consortium’, and ‘Quality of the research’ criteria are each assigned a score. Scores are determined based on the NWO score table using a scale of 1 to 9, where ‘1’ is excellent and ‘9’ unsatisfactory.

All proposals are given a weighted average total score for the 'Problem definition and problem analysis', 'Intended impact and route to impact', 'Quality of the consortium', and 'Quality of the research' criteria and then ranked based on this score. For rounds with five or more proposals, the assessment committee members' scores are standardised for ranking. NWO performs this standardisation based on the median and average deviation.

A proposal must achieve an overall rating of at least 'very good' to be eligible for the grant. Additionally, the proposal must qualify as at least 'very good' for the "Problem definition and analysis" assessment criterion, and at least "good" for each of the other individual assessment criteria.

For more information on the qualifications, see [Applying for funding, how does it work? | NWO](#).

4.2 Procedure

The assessment procedure for a proposal consists of the following steps (see timeline in subsection 3.1):

Phase 1 – Pre-proposal

- online information meeting;
- submission of the pre-proposal;
- admissibility of the pre-proposal;
- assessment and selection of the pre-proposal.

Phase 2 - Drafting and submitting of the proposal

- participation in synergy workshops;
- submission of the proposal;
- admissibility of the proposal;
- pre advice assessment committee;
- interview;
- assessment committee meeting;
- decision-making.

An external independent assessment committee will be appointed by the NWO Executive Board for this round. Members are drawn from science and society – including societal stakeholders and representatives of the target group – who have knowledge of the topic. It is the assessment committee's task to assess the proposals received against the assessment criteria. Each proposal is assessed on its own merits.

Given the special nature of the call for proposal and the expertise present in the assessment committee, NWO has opted to apply the provision in Article 2.2.4, subsection 2 of the NWO Grant Rules 2024 for assessment of applications without involving referees.

4.2.1 Information meeting

NWO and ZonMw will organise an online information meeting prior to the submission deadline for pre-proposals. At this meeting, further information will be communicated regarding the proposal and assessment process, the synergy workshops and the Impact Plan approach (see also Section 2.3). This meeting will also offer an opportunity to network and investigate potential collaborations for pre-proposals.

4.2.2 Assessment and selection of the pre-proposal (phase 1)

The assessment committee assesses and prioritises the pre-proposals based on the criteria described in Section 4.1. The assessment committee will make its own assessments based on the material available, and assigns a numerical score to a pre-proposal for each of the assessment criteria. The NWO score table will be used for this purpose (on a scale of 1 to 9, where '1' is excellent and '9' unsatisfactory). The pre-proposal in its entirety must achieve an overall rating of 'good' to be selected for phase 2.

The provisional ranking per theme will be established based on criteria 1 to 3 as outlined in Section 4.3 – Phase 1 Pre-proposals. The two highest ranked proposals for each of the two themes will be nominated for selection.

In its advice, the assessment committee justifies its observations regarding the quality of the preproposals and makes recommendations for developing a pre-proposal with other selected preproposals into one single proposal.

The assessment committee prepares a written advice for the NWO Executive Board based on its deliberations. The NWO Executive Board then makes a decision and selects a maximum of four preproposals, two for each of the two themes as described in Chapter 2, based on the assessment committee's advice. NWO invites a maximum of four main applicants who have submitted a preproposal to participate in phase 2. Applicants who have not been selected will receive a rejection for their pre-proposal and cannot make submissions in phase 2.

If no pre-proposal within one of two theme's with at least the rating 'good' is submitted within one theme, the provisional rankings of the other themes will be merged into one ranking. The highest-ranked pre-proposal or the two highest-ranked pre-proposals from that combined ranking with at least the rating 'good', regardless of the theme, will be nominated for selection.

If in phase 1 only one pre-proposal is selected or if the pre-proposals selected are only from one theme, phase 2 cannot proceed and the Call for proposals will be closed. For more information about ratings, see: Applying for funding, how does it work? | NWO. In all cases, pre-proposals will only be eligible for funding if they meet the criteria set out in Section 4.1.

If, after discussions on the pre-proposals, it turns out that two or more of the pre-proposals cannot be differentiated in terms of their weighted total scores, this will result in a tie (or ex aequo situation, see subsection 4.3.7).

4.2.3 Ex aequo

NWO defines ex aequo as a situation in which it is not possible to distinguish between two or more pre-proposals based on their weighted scores. An ex aequo situation is relevant when approaching the limits of the grant cap or selection threshold. The existence of an ex aequo situation is determined as follows. The starting point is the ranking by the assessment committee, with final scores rounded to two decimal places. The score for the lowest-ranked pre-proposal within the limits of the grant cap or the selection threshold is used as a reference score. All pre-proposals with scores within 0.05 of the reference score are taken into consideration. The result is a selection of pre-proposals with scores within 0.10 of each other. In the event of a tied ranking at the limit of the grant cap or selection threshold, the proposal with the highest score for the 'Problem definition and analysis' criterion will receive precedence. This criterion is considered first because of its central role in assessing the relevance and urgency of the proposed research and its connection to the theme. If this results in another tie, the pre-proposal with the highest score for the 'Quality of the potential consortium' criterion will be given precedence. This emphasises the importance of a well-composed and fully collaborating project group, which is in line with the objectives of the Call for proposals for which collaboration and interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research are essential. If this does not resolve the situation, the pre-proposal with the highest score for the 'Envisaged impact and route to impact' criterion will be given precedence. If this still does not resolve the situation, the assessment committee will determine the ranking by a majority vote, which may be anonymous, in accordance with Article 2.2.6, fifth subsection of the NWO Grant Rules 2024. If this vote also fails to break the tie, or is deemed unacceptable, the ex aequo situation will be passed on to the NWO Executive Board.

4.2.4 Participation in synergy workshops (phase 2)

During phase 2, a consortium made up of the main applicants selected and other parties involved in the pre-proposals selected will work on developing and submitting one single pre-proposal. In doing so, the ideas proposed in the selected pre-proposals will serve as starting points and will then be integrated into one single project proposal which makes use of the systematic Impact Plan approach (see also Section 2.3).

The details of setting up collaborative partnerships and integrating pre-proposals will be worked out through synergy workshops. A number of sessions will be organised for the period from November 2026 to February 2027, led by an external, independent facilitator appointed by NWO. Main applicants whose pre-proposals have been selected are obliged to take part in the synergy workshops in phase 2. Additional participants, including stakeholders, can be invited if the selected applicants decide to do so. The purpose of the synergy workshops is to support the elaboration of the proposal. Applicants are also expected to reserve sufficient time and capacity outside the workshops to further develop the project proposal, coordinate efforts and draft the full proposal.

One of the main applicants whose pre-proposal was selected will serve as main applicant for the proposal.

If it becomes apparent during or after the synergy workshops that necessary expertise or consortium members are lacking, collaborative partners or co-funders can be added to the consortium, provided this is properly substantiated in the proposal.

4.2.5 Pre-advice by assessment committee

The proposal is shared with the assessment committee for review. Preferably, at least two pre-advisers should be appointed for each proposal. The pre-advisers provide written, substantive and reasoned responses to each proposal. They formulate these responses based on the substantive assessment criteria (see subsection 4.1) and give the proposal numerical scores for each assessment criterion. Scores are determined based on the NWO score table using a scale of 1 to 9, where '1' is excellent and '9' unsatisfactory. A proposal's data management section is not assessed and does not affect the decision on whether to award funding. However, the assessment committee may still provide advice on this section. The pre-advisors also identify which components need to be clarified, explained, or explored in more depth during the interview.

4.2.6 Interview

The interview is an opportunity for the assessment committee to ask any questions it may have. These can include new questions not raised by the referees. The consortium can discuss these questions with the assessment committee during the interview. In this way, both sides are given an additional chance to be heard. The interview is an important part of the assessment process and can result in adjustment of a proposal's previous assessment and score.

4.2.7 Assessment committee meeting

The assessment committee makes its own assessment based on the available material. The final assessment is guided to an important degree by the pre-advice, although the assessment committee will not necessarily adopt these in full. The assessment committee will consider the arguments put forward by the pre-advisers, weighing them against each other, and determine whether the rebuttal constitutes a proper response to the points of criticism raised in the pre-advice. Unlike the referees, the assessment committee also has insight into the quality of the various other proposals and rebuttals submitted. Consequently, the committee may differ from the referees in its assessment. The assessment committee assigns the proposal a final score, rounded to two decimal places.

Following their deliberations, the assessment committee prepares a written advisory report for the NWO Executive Board concerning the quality and ranking of the proposals. This advice is based on the assessment criteria. A proposal must achieve an overall rating of at least 'good' to be eligible for the grant. Additionally, the proposal must qualify as at least 'good' for each of the individual assessment criteria. For more information on the qualifications, see [Applying for funding, how does it work? | NWO](#).

Opportunity for revision (phase 2)

In cases where the assessment committee advises against approval, it can provide a written explanation of which elements were insufficient and suggest ways of improving them. A consortium will have one opportunity to submit a revised proposal that addresses the points for improvement. The main applicant will have two months from the date of the request to submit the revised proposal. If the assessment committee puts forward the inclusion of one or more co-funders or collaboration partners in the consortium as a point for improvement, the main applicant will be given three months to submit the revised proposal.

After receiving the revised proposal, an interview with a number of representatives from the consortium will be scheduled with the assessment committee to discuss the proposal. Following this interview, the assessment committee will make a final recommendation.

4.2.8 Decision-making

The procedures followed and the assessment committee's advice are assessed by the the NWO Executive Board. It determines the final ratings and makes a decision on whether to award or reject each proposal. Following this decision, NWO informs the applicant of their proposal's award or rejection. The applicant also receives a letter (by email) with the decision.

4.3 Guidelines and frameworks for assessment

The following guidelines and frameworks apply during the assessment of a proposal.

4.3.1 Code for Dealing with Personal Interests

The [NWO Code for Dealing with Personal Interests](#) applies to all individuals and NWO and ZonMw employees involved in the assessment and/or decision-making process.

4.3.2 Generative AI

The use of generative AI to assess proposals is completely prohibited. More information about NWO's policy on the use of generative AI can be found on the website ([NWO policy on the use of generative artificial intelligence \(GAI\) | NWO](#)).

4.3.3 Diversity and inclusion

NWO and ZonMw strive to achieve an inclusive culture in which there is no place for conscious or unconscious barriers based on cultural, ethnic, or religious background, gender, sexual orientation, health or age ([Diversity and inclusion | NWO](#)). NWO offers assessment committee members guidance on how to ensure an inclusive written assessment and assessment committee meeting ([Inclusive assessment | NWO](#)).

4.3.4 Broad definition of scientific output (DORA)

When assessing the scientific track record of applicants, NWO and ZonMw apply a broad definition of scientific output.

NWO and ZonMw ask assessment committee not to rely on indicators such as the Journal Impact Factor or the h-index when assessing proposals. There should be no mention of such indicators in the proposal. It is, however, permitted to list other scientific products besides publications, such as datasets, patents, software and code.

NWO is a signatory to the 'San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment' ([DORA](#)), on which this policy is based. DORA is a worldwide initiative that aims to improve the ways in which research and researchers are assessed. DORA contains recommendations for research funders, research organisations, scientific journals and other parties.

4.3.5 Knowledge security

Together, the Dutch knowledge sector, including NWO, and various branches of government have created the National Knowledge Security Guidelines as guidance on how to weigh opportunities and security risks for anyone involved in international collaboration at research organisations. The approach to knowledge security in the Netherlands relies heavily on self-regulation by the knowledge sector.

NWO and ZonMw expect applicants to adhere to the research organisation's knowledge security policy. In case of signs that a proposal or awarded project may present risks to knowledge security, NWO and ZonMw can ask the applicant or project leader to provide insight into risk mitigation measures. Additionally, NWO may impose further conditions to protect knowledge security in the award letter.

The National Knowledge Security Guidelines are available on the central government website at: [Home | National Contact Point for Knowledge Security](#)

4.3.6 Compensation scheme

[Force majeure extension scheme](#)

Applicants who are prevented from providing necessary input within the allotted time during the assessment procedure have recourse to the [NWO force majeure extension scheme](#).

5 After the grant award

This chapter lists the conditions and obligations that apply once the grant has been awarded. As such, it is mainly relevant to applicants with approved proposals.

5.1 Start of the project

Once a proposal has been awarded funding, the main applicant automatically becomes the project leader and point of contact for NWO and ZonMw. The project leaders' research organisation is designated as the main beneficiary and becomes the grant administrator. The project leader and grant administrator share joint responsibility for the execution of the entire project. Co-applicants also play an active role in the project's execution and are project co-leaders.

The project leader for the project receives an award letter on behalf of the NWO Executive Board. This letter also notes any specifically required forms and guidelines. The start form, data management plan and consortium agreement must be submitted before the project's start. Without these documents, work on the project cannot start. The grant will be paid out in instalments once all start-up requirements have been met.

5.1.1 Start form

A start form must be used to indicate the start of the project. The project leader receives this start form along with the award letter. Project leaders can authorise others to carry out administrative tasks relating to their project in the ISAAC system. For more information about the authorisation scheme for project leaders, go to: [Authorisation scheme for project managers | NWO](#).

5.1.2 Data management plan

Good research goes hand in hand with [responsible data management](#). Before the start of the project, the project leader must elaborate the data management section into a data management plan. If the referees or assessment committee offered any advice on data management, this may be included. In the plan, the project leader indicates whether use will be made of existing data or whether new data collection will be involved, and how this collection will then be made FAIR, i.e. Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable.

The data management plan should be checked by a data steward or similar officer at the organisation where the project is to be carried out. The data management plan must have been submitted to NWO via ISAAC before the project start date. NWO will assess the plan. The grant's award is conditional upon approval of the data management plan by NWO. The plan may be adapted in the course of the research.

5.1.3 Consortium agreement

The consortium agreement specifies the terms for intellectual property and publication, knowledge transfer, confidentiality, co-funding payments, progress reports and final reports. A NWO consortium agreement is available in [Dutch](#) and [English](#). The consortium agreement is concluded by all project partners and signed by authorised signatories for the relevant organisations. It must be submitted in ISAAC before work can be started on the project. The applicant is responsible for setting up the consortium agreement.

NWO endeavours, on the one hand, to ensure that research results from projects funded by NWO are made publicly available, and on the other hand, to promote further development of the results by enabling parties to profit thereby. This can make it desirable to transfer or license the use of intellectual property rights to one or more private parties involved in a project. The basic premise is that all research results may be published, with due consideration for agreements concerning publication procedures. The terms are defined in the consortium agreement.

5.2 Monitoring and project management

The project leader must keep NWO informed of the project's progress throughout. This is achieved in several ways.

5.2.1 Accountability during the project

During the project, the main applicant is responsible for reports on the project's progress. With a view to monitoring project progress, NWO may request interim reports on a project's content and finances, as well as an account of co-funding provided. More information about this will follow in the grant award letter.

5.2.2 Supervisory committee

To strengthen the monitoring and to increase the support for the realisation of the projects, a supervisory committee will be appointed. The committee will monitor the connection between the different themes, the progress of all projects and the results achieved with a focus on knowledge transfer, knowledge utilisation and the application of the results. Regular follow-up meetings will be organised. Representatives from all consortia will be asked to provide input and to take part in the meetings of the supervisory committee. Whenever that is desirable, additional experts will also be invited to the meetings.

5.2.3 Research output

NWO wants to be kept abreast of all the output resulting from the research, both scientific and for a wider audience. The [NWO website](#) offers more information on various forms of output. Project leaders can use the ISAAC system – the electronic application system of NWO – to submit such output.

5.2.4 Project changes

In the event of any changes occurring in the course of the project compared to the approved proposal and budget, the project leader must submit the changes to NWO for approval in advance using a [request for change form](#). See also Article 3.4 of the NWO Grant Rules 2024.

5.3 Guidelines and frameworks for project execution

The following describes the guidelines and frameworks applicable to the project's execution.

5.3.1 Compliance with the National Knowledge Security Guidelines

As with the assessment (see subsection 4.3), the National Knowledge Security Guidelines apply after the grant award. NWO expects project leaders to adhere to the research organisation's knowledge security policy. The grant award letter may contain further conditions to protect knowledge security. The National Knowledge Security Guidelines are available on the central government website at: [National Contact Point for Knowledge Security](#)

5.3.2 Ethical statement or licence

It is the project leader's responsibility to determine whether execution of the proposed project requires an ethical statement or licence. The presence or absence of an ethical statement or licence at the time of application will not impact the proposal's assessment. If an ethical statement or licence does prove necessary for all or part of the research, the project leader must provide NWO with a copy of this statement or licence once the project has been approved and before starting work on the relevant project components. Naturally, the statement or licence must have been issued to be able to work on these components.

5.3.3 Scientific integrity

Research must be conducted in accordance with the standards set out in the 2018 [Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#). In the case of an actual or suspected violation of these standards, the project leader must immediately inform NWO and submit all relevant documents to NWO. Researchers can also report complaints to their research organisation's Scientific Integrity Committee or to the [NWO Scientific Integrity Desk](#).

NWO places a high value on the scientific integrity of the research it funds and exerts itself to prevent and detect any integrity violations. Research irregularities can cause damage directly, for example to the environment or to patients, and prejudice public trust in scientific research as well as trust between individual researchers.

5.3.4 Principles of socially responsible licensing

A project may generate knowledge that is applicable in society. When entering into licensing or transfer agreements for research results developed in this funding round, due consideration must be given to the ten principles of socially responsible licensing provided on the [UMCNL](#) website.

5.3.5 Genetic resources and the Nagoya Protocol

Researchers must take whatever measures are necessary to ensure compliance with the Nagoya Protocol. The Nagoya Protocol aims to ensure fair and equitable sharing of benefits from the utilisation of genetic resources and traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources (Access and Benefit-Sharing; ABS). Researchers who make use of such resources, including in or from other countries, should familiarise themselves with the tenets of the Nagoya Protocol ([ABS Focal Point](#)).

5.3.6 Intellectual property

NWO's policy on intellectual property (IP) can be found in the NWO Grant Rules 2024.

Project leaders must execute a project funded by NWO during their period of employment with the beneficiary research organisation. If a project leader or researcher funded by NWO has multiple employers, the non-beneficiary employers must waive any IP rights arising from the project.

5.4 Completion

Project leaders must submit a substantive and a financial final report to NWO within three months of the project's completion. Failure to submit these reports or to submit them in time can lead to the grant being reduced or withdrawn altogether. The project leader will receive a request by email, along with the relevant deadline. Templates for a basic final report and a financial final report are available at: [Completing a project | NWO](#). If a different final report template applies for the project, the project leader will be provided with this information in due course.

After approval of the substantive and financial final reports, the final amount of the grant (and co-financing) will be determined.

5.4.1 Independent auditor's report on financial statements

To obtain the necessary assurances on the grant's proper expenditure, NWO requires an independent report from an external auditor to arrive at its decision in the following cases:

- the beneficiary of a project grant is not subject to the Education Audit Protocol of the Ministries of Education, Culture and Science and of Economic Affairs (OCW/EZ) and the grant exceeds €125,000;
- a project funded by NWO involves a different provider of public funding than the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) and this provider requires an auditor's report. In such cases, applicability of the Education Audit Protocol is not pertinent.

The OCW/EZ Education Audit Protocol applies to legal entities funded by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science in the following sectors: primary education, secondary education, secondary vocational education and training (MBO) and higher education.

The grant administrator is responsible for arranging an auditor's report within the appropriate time frame. This responsibility remains fully applicable even if the grant administrator has spent part of the grant on another party. Arrangements with the external auditor should be made in good time.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, contact NWO well in advance (see Chapter 6), preferably at the start of the project.

5.5 Research results – Open Science

Open Science is the movement aimed at more open and collaborative research practices in which publications, data, software and other types of academic output are shared at the earliest possible stage and made available for reuse.

Scientific publications about the project must be made available in an Open Access format in accordance with NWO's Open Access Policy Framework. See the NWO website for a list of options to provide open access to various types of publications such as scientific articles, books or book chapters and dissertations. More information on the use of licences is also available on the NWO website. Any costs for Open Access publication should be included as part of the proposal's budget.

NWO-funded research can lead to publications or other relevant research output. If so, the grant administrator must note NWO's funding in the acknowledgements.

5.6 Evaluation

NWO and ZonMw may approach applicants or project leaders to ask them to complete an evaluation of the procedure and/or research programme.

6 Contact

Questions about the funding of proposals

For more information, see [Applying for funding, how does it work? | NWO](#).

Technical questions about the ISAAC electronic application system

For questions about My ZonMw, please consult the [My ZonMw manual for applicants](#). You can also contact the My ZonMw helpdesk. The My ZonMw helpdesk can be reached Monday to Friday between 10:00 and 17:00 CET/CEST at +31 (0) 70 349 51 76. You can also submit your questions by email to servicedesk@zonmw.nl. You will receive a reply within two working days.

Questions about the content of this round

For substantive questions about this round, contact:

Emma Passchier (programme manager at ZonMw)

+31 (0)70 349 54 70

nwa-dstd@zonmw.nl

Technical questions about the ISAAC electronic application system

For questions about ISAAC, use the 'Help' button in ISAAC to consult the ISAAC manual. You can also contact the ISAAC helpdesk. The ISAAC helpdesk can be reached Monday to Friday between 10:00 and 17:00 CET/CEST at +31 (0) 70 34 40 600. You can also submit your questions by email to isaac.helpdesk@nwo.nl. You will receive a reply within two working days.

7 Annexes

7.1 Explanation of budget modules

For applicable salary tables and rates, see [Salary tables | NWO](#).

7.1.1 Personnel at a university in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, university medical centre or research organisation

For personnel employed by a university in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, university medical centre or other research organisation as referred to in Article 1.1, first section, subsections c to h of the NWO Grant Rules 2024, salary costs may be included for the following positions.

PhD student

A PhD student is appointed for 1.0 FTE for a period of 48 months. An equivalent of 48 full-time months is also possible, e.g. an appointment for 0.8 FTE of 60 months. In exceptional cases, a shorter appointment may be requested. This must be properly justified.

It is not possible to request funding for a PhD student who was already working on the proposed project before the grant award.

Use the rates for PhD students from the UNL and UMCNL salary tables. There is a one-off personal bench fee of €5,000 available for each PhD student, aimed at promoting their scientific career.

Engineering Doctorate

An Engineering Doctorate (EngD) is appointed for 1.0 FTE for a maximum of 24 months. The EngD is employed by the research organisation applying for funding and can carry out work at an industrial partner as part of the research for a specified time.

Applying for funding of an Engineering Doctorate (EngD) position is only possible if also applying for funding of a PhD student or postdoc. It is not possible to request funding for an EngD who was already working on the proposed project before the grant award.

Use the rates for PhD students from the UNL and UMCNL salary tables. There is a one-off personal bench fee of €5,000 available for each EngD student, aimed at promoting their scientific career.

Postdoc

A postdoc is appointed for a specific time and FTE.

Use the rates for senior scientific personnel from the UNL salary tables and the rates for postdocs at a university medical centre from the UMCNL salary tables.

It is not possible to request funding for a postdoc who was already working on the proposed project before the grant award.

There is a one-off personal bench fee of €5,000 available for postdoc positions with an appointment of at least 12 months and 0.5 FTE, aimed at promoting their scientific career.

Physician researcher

Funding may be requested for the appointment of a Doctor of Medicine or physician assistant to carry out medical research at a university medical centre as a physician researcher. A physician researcher is appointed for 1.0 FTE for a minimum duration of 36 months and a maximum of 48 months. An equivalent of 36 or 48 full-time months is also possible, e.g. an appointment for 0.8 FTE and 48 or 60 months. In exceptional cases, a shorter appointment may be requested. This must be properly justified. The assessment committee will assess the request.

It is not possible to request funding for a physician researcher who was already working on the proposed project before the grant award.

Use the rates for researchers and physician researchers from the UMCNL salary tables. There is a one-off personal bench fee of €5,000 available for each physician researcher, aimed at promoting their scientific career.

Non-scientific personnel

Funding may be requested for non-scientific personnel required for the project's execution. Examples include programmers, technical assistants or analysts and project managers. Non-scientific personnel's deployment must be described in the proposal.

Depending on the job level, a choice is made from the UNL or UMCNL salary tables for NWP-mbo, NWP-hbo and NWP-academic. No one-off personal benchfee is available for NWP.

Research leave for applicants

This budget module can be used to request funding to cover the costs of research leave for the main applicant and/or co-applicants. The applicant's employer can use the funds to cover the costs of relieving them from educational, supervisory, administrative or management tasks (not research tasks). The applicant may only use the time thus freed up to work on activities relating to the project. The proposal must describe which project-related activities the applicants will carry out in this additional time.

NWO will fund the research leave based on the salary tables for senior scientific personnel (UNL) and postdocs (UMCNL) applicable on the decision date.

7.1.2 Personnel at universities of applied sciences, applied research institutes, Public knowledge institutions educational institutions and other (research) organisations

Funding may be requested for personnel at universities of applied sciences, applied research institutes, Public knowledge institutions (RKI's) other educational institutions and other (research) organisations.. These rates are determined based on the Manual tariffs Dutch Government (HOT), Table 2, under 2.2 'Average total salary costs per salary scale', column 'Hourly rate for productive hours excluding VAT'. The salary scale for the position requested determines the HOT table rate.

For organisations that do not use the Dutch government's collective labour agreement or an equivalent, e.g. collective labour agreements for universities of applied sciences, secondary vocational education and training or local government, use the rate that most closely approximates the actual salary costs.

7.1.3 Scientific personnel at foreign research organisations

Funding may be requested for salary costs of personnel at a foreign research organisation contributing to the project. The foreign research organisation must comply with the definition of a research organisation as referred to in Article 1.1, subsections 4 and 5 of the NWO Grant Rules 2024 and with the cumulative conditions listed under 'Conditions for foreign research organisations'.

Compelling justification is required, demonstrating how the researcher at the foreign research organisation contributes specific expertise to the project that is not available at the required level in the Netherlands. The assessment committee will evaluate the justification as part of the quality of the research criterion. No justification is required if NWO has concluded a bilateral 'Money Follows Cooperation' agreement with the national research council of the country where the foreign research organisation is located. The [NWO website](#) contains an overview of research councils that have such an agreement with NWO. NWO will not award funding to co-applicants in countries subject to national or international sanction legislation and rules.

The main applicant receives the grant and is responsible for transferring grant funds to the co-applicant's foreign research organisation and for the financial reporting on the use of the foreign portion of the grant. The exchange rate risk is borne by the applicant. Gains or losses resulting from currency fluctuations are not eligible for funding.

Use the UNL rates, multiplied by the [correction coefficients per country](#). These are the maximum rates. No personal bench fee is provided.

If more than €125,000 is requested per organisation within this budget module, the final financial statement must be accompanied by an audit report.

Conditions for foreign research organisations

The organisation must be:

- a foundation, association or an organisation or body established and governed by public law (in Dutch: *publiekrechtelijke rechtspersoon*), or at least its equivalent in the country of establishment of the foreign organisation (all other legal forms, including private and public limited companies – or at least its equivalent in the country of establishment of the foreign organisation – are excluded);
- be principally engaged in conducting fundamental research, industrial research or experimental development independently or in the broad dissemination of the results of its own research activities through education, publications or knowledge transfer;
- be able to declare that the organisation keeps separate accounts with regard to economic/non-economic activities and that companies with decisive influence on the organisation do not have preferential access to the organisation's research results.

Note: Prior to submission of a proposal, NWO will assess whether the foreign organisation complies with Article 1.1, subsections 4 and 5 of the NWO Grant Rules 2024 and is thus eligible to participate as a co-applicant based on the above conditions.

This assessment also helps to ensure NWO's compliance with regulations prohibiting state aid.

To enable the assessment to be carried out, the main applicant must submit the following documents for the foreign organisation (or organisations) by email to nwa-dstd@zonmw.nl no later than ten working days before the submission deadline (i.e. by **23 June 2026**, 14:00:00 CEST):

- a recent extract from the Chamber of Commerce or from an equivalent register in the foreign organisation's country of establishment;
- a deed of establishment and/or current articles of association;
- the most recently available annual accounts, including an audit report¹¹;
- a Research Organisation Statement completed by the foreign organisation. This statement is available on the funding page of this Call for proposals.

Documents must be in English or Dutch. Other relevant documents may also be included. NWO may also request additional information if the above documents do not allow for adequate determination of the organisation's eligibility to act as co-applicant.

If the intended co-applicant's organisation has already been assessed and found to comply with these conditions as part of a different NWO programme, please contact NWO at the above email address as soon as possible to determine whether further assessment is necessary.

If the main applicant fails to submit the documents required for this assessment on time, NWO will not accept the organisation as a co-applicant.

If additional foreign organisations are added to the proposal as part of this budget module without having been assessed as described above, these new organisations must also be assessed based on the same conditions. The main applicant must again submit the following documents for the foreign organisation (or organisations) by email no later than ten working days before the submission deadline (i.e. by **16 March 2027, 14:00:00 CET**):

- a recent extract from the Chamber of Commerce or from an equivalent register in the foreign organisation's country of establishment;
- a deed of establishment and/or current articles of association;
- the most recently available annual accounts, including an audit report¹²;
- a Research Organisation Statement completed by the foreign organisation. This statement is available on the funding page of this Call for proposals.

If a foreign organisation was already assessed and approved before submitting the pre-proposal, there is no need to have it assessed again for the proposal's submission.

7.1.4 Materials

Funding may be requested for all project-specific costs pertaining to such items as consumables, purchasing of services, materials, small instruments, access to facilities in the Netherlands or abroad, software and research resources with no economic value after use. This module also covers national and international travel and accommodation costs for everyone working on the project, including visiting researchers from abroad, costs for the organisation of (international) workshops and symposiums, data management costs, publications and costs in the context of citizen science. A maximum of 50% of the material budget requested from NWO may be applied to work by third parties such as laboratory analyses, data collection, etc.

¹¹ No audit report is necessary for organisations not legally required to have their annual accounts audited. However, such organisations must be able to provide proof of exemption from this legal requirement.

¹² No audit report is necessary for organisations not legally required to have their annual accounts audited. However, such organisations must be able to provide proof of exemption from this legal requirement.

Students may contribute to the research. If the students are contributing as part of their curriculum, the standard internship allowance rate of the research university or university of applied sciences applies. If they are contributing as paid student assistants alongside their studies, the applicable rate is determined according to the Manual tariffs Dutch Government (HOT), Table 2, under 2.2 'Average total salary costs per salary scale', column 'Hourly rate for productive hours excluding VAT', scale 1.

For national and international travel, only the costs of second class or economy fares will be covered. For publications, see the provisions on Open Science in subsection 5.5. Costs for an audit report may only be included for research organisations not subject to the OCW Education Audit Protocol and for up to €5,000 per audit report.

Costs cannot be included for:

- organisational infrastructure and overhead, including a fully operational workplace, accommodation, office automation, human resource management, commuting expenses, training, facilities services, HR consulting, health and safety, documentary information services and working-from-home allowance;
- use and maintenance of internally developed scientific infrastructure;
- regular teaching and educational activities;
- members of the supervisory committee.

Note: If funding is being requested for the above-mentioned project-specific costs at foreign organisations, these organisations must be assessed in accordance with subsection 7.1.1, *Scientific personnel at foreign research organisations*.

7.1.5 Investments

Funding may be requested for all project-specific resources for the purpose of research and costs relating to the establishment or further development of scientific infrastructure that will retain economic value after use or can be re-used. The beneficiary will own the research resources after the project's completion. If the beneficiary achieves profits through the beneficial ownership of the research resources, these profits must be invested in the beneficiary's primary activities as referred to in Article 3.1.4, subsection 2 of the NWO Grant Rules 2024. This concerns purchases of equipment that will remain valuable for the conduct of research and investments in the establishment or (further) development of scientific infrastructure.

If equipment is not used for the research project for its full service life, only the depreciation costs corresponding to the research project's duration, calculated in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, will be eligible.

Costs for investments must be adequately specified and motivated in the proposal.

Eligible for funding:

- costs for investments in scientific equipment;
- costs for investments in datasets;
- salary costs for employees with essential technical expertise necessary for the development or construction of an investment.

Not eligible for funding:

- costs for infrastructural facilities that can be considered part of the standard infrastructure, such as a fully operational workplace, accommodation, office automation, human resource

- management, commuting expenses, training, facilities services, HR consulting, health and safety, documentary information services and working-from-home allowance;
- data collections and any associated software and bibliographies that are already available in other ways;
- other personnel costs, including personnel costs required to operate a facility and to use it for research;
- costs for the maintenance and use of the equipment in a project. Costs for the use of equipment in a project can be included via the material budget.

7.1.6 Knowledge utilisation

The budget applied for must be adequately specified in the proposal. Use the provisions for Personnel and Materials to determine the correct rates.

It is mandatory to include this module when preparing a proposal and to allocate between 5% and 20% of the grant amount.

This project budget module should be used for costs for at least the following activities:

- specific activities to promote knowledge utilisation by (intermediate) parties that are not funded through the project, such as knowledge platforms. Such activities can include collaborative learning, training sessions and communication activities;
- stakeholder involvement: activities organised by the consortium aimed at involving stakeholders, such as consultation workshops, expert meetings and round tables;
- communication: activities organised by the consortium such as national or international learning events, the creation of videos, blog posts, newsletters and other media. This can include the hiring of communication experts;
- skills development: Activities aimed at skills development beyond the levels of the individual students, PhD students or postdocs, such as designing courses for stakeholders or Master's students;
- monitoring and evaluations addressing knowledge utilisation as a topic, e.g. interim evaluations and committee meetings.

Note: If requesting funding for the above-mentioned project-specific costs for foreign organisations, these organisations must be assessed before submission in accordance with subsection 7.1.1, *Scientific personnel at foreign research organisations*.

7.1.7 Project management

The Project Management module offers the opportunity to request a project management post up to a maximum of 5% of the grant amount. The main applicant must adequately justify this post.

Project management includes the following: optimising the organisational structure of the consortium, supporting the consortium and the main applicant, safeguarding the coherence, progress and unity of the project, and coordinating between the sub-projects within the project. These tasks may also be carried out by external parties if they are not available within the main applicant's knowledge institution. Research organisations should take account of public procurement rules in the tender procedure for selecting a third party and, where appropriate, follow a European procurement procedure. The activities of main applicants and co-applicants themselves in relation to the project or project management may not be funded under this budget module.

The budget to be requested for project management can consist of material or implementation costs and personnel costs. For personnel costs, a maximum rate of €121 per hour can be claimed. The hourly rate of personnel to be appointed must be based on a cost-covering rate and is calculated on the basis of the standard productive number of hours used by the organisation. The cost-covering rate includes:

- (average) gross salary corresponding to the position of the employee who will contribute to the project (based on the collective labour agreement grade of the employee concerned);
- holiday allowance and 13th month (if applicable in the relevant collective labour agreement) in proportion to the FTE deployed;
- social security charges;
- pension costs;
- overheads.

Project management tasks may be carried out by external parties, but the part of (commercial) hourly rates that exceeds the rates stated is not eligible for funding and therefore cannot be included in the budget.

7.2 Indexation

Applicable rates are based on the date of the decision. If indicated, NWO may conduct an official one-time indexation of salary costs when awarding a grant. This indexation is based on the date on which the rates go into force. If rates are announced later than the date of entry into force, the announcement date is used. Generally speaking, rates go into force on 1 July for the Universities of the Netherlands (UNL), on 1 August for the University Medical Centres of The Netherlands (UMCNL) and on 1 January for the Manual tariffs Dutch Government (HOT).

The official indexation does not affect the grant cap or the maximum amount per proposal. The grant cap and maximum amount will remain unchanged during the assessment procedure. The grant amount is indexed at the time of the award.

If co-funding is required or permitted, the official indexation will not affect the requirements regarding supporting contributions and co-funding, nor any IP rights arising from the co-funding.

7.3 Validated research organisations

The public knowledge institutions listed below may act as main applicants in a consortium. The check mentioned in section 3.1.1 is **not** required for these organisations.

- KNMI - Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute
- RIVM - National Institute for Public Health and the Environment
- CBS - Statistics Netherlands

The research organisations listed below may act as co-applicants in a consortium. The check mentioned in Section 3.1.1 is **not** required for these organisations.

- IHE Delft Institute for Water Education
- Waag Futurelab
- Institute for Road Safety Research (SWOV)
- IMEC-NL
- Nivel
- NLDA - Nederlandse Defensie Academie
- AMS Institute
- Trimbos Institute

- Biomedical Primate Research Centre
- CMO STAMM
- Control in Food & Flowers
- Instituut voor de Nederlandse taal
- Koninklijke Nederlandse Centrale Vereniging tot Bestrijdingder Tuberculose
- Centre of Expertise Water Technolog
- Mijn Data Onze gezondheid
- Mulier Instituut

7.4 Figure of the process steps

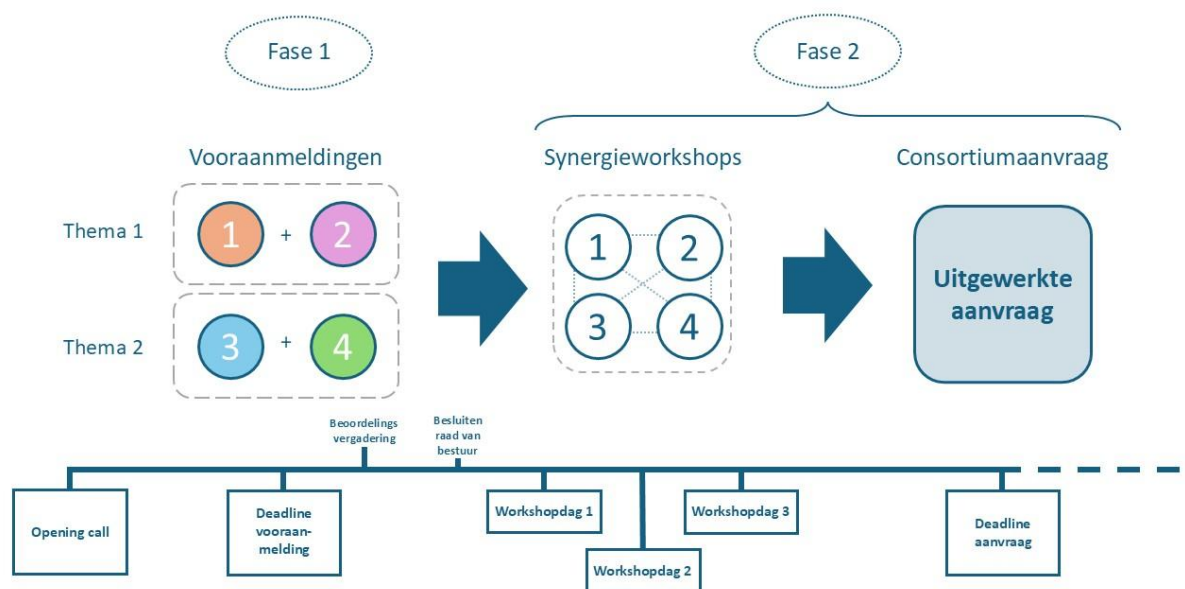


Figure 1: The image above visualises the process steps of this call. In Phase 1, the pre-applications for Theme 1 and Theme 2 are submitted. In Phase 2, the synergy workshops take place. During these workshops, the four selected pre-applicants jointly develop a consortium application in which both themes are integrated.

At the bottom of the image, a timeline is shown, starting in Phase 1 with the opening of the call, followed by the pre-application deadline and the assessment meeting. Between Phase 1 and Phase 2, the decision of the NWO Executive Board takes place. After pre-applicants have been informed whether their pre-application has been selected, three workshop days take place in Phase 2. Finally, the deadline for the full proposal follows. The timeline then continues as a dotted line without further concrete milestones. This indicates that additional steps occur after the application deadline that are not shown in the image. These steps concern the assessment of the consortium application.

Publication: April 2026

Dutch Research Council

Visiting address:

Location The Hague

Laan van Nieuw Oost-Indië 300

2593 CE The Hague

Netherlands

Location Utrecht

Winthontlaan 2

3526 KV Utrecht

Netherlands

Cover image: Shutterstock

Dutch Research Council | NWO

