



SSH Open Competition M

Call for proposals

Social Sciences and Humanities

2024



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1 Introduction

In this Call for proposals, information is provided about the application procedure for the SSH Open Competition M 2024 (hereinafter: SSH OC M) funding round. This Call for proposals falls under the responsibility of the Dutch Research Council (NWO).

In this Call for proposals, you will find information about the aim of this programme (Chapter 2), the conditions for the grant application (Chapter 3) and how your proposal will be assessed (Chapter 4). This is the information you need to submit a grant application. Chapter 5 states the obligations for grant recipients in the event you are awarded funding, Chapter 6 contains the contact details and Chapter 7 the annexes.

1.1 Background

The Open Competition of the SSH Domain is subdivided into three separate funding instruments: XS, M and L. These funding instruments respectively provide grant opportunities for promising ideas, smaller and larger grants. The SSH Open Competition is open to research proposals with a research question and/or problem definition within the social sciences and humanities. Within this field, the instrument has no further thematic limitations and in principle the applicant is free to choose the desired form of subsidy.

The instrument is aimed at excellent disciplinary, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research. This certainly also includes fundamental scientific research. Fundamental scientific research forms the basis for understanding the world around us and thus for important new discoveries. That is why fundamental research remains an important focus of NWO.

1.1.1 Changes compared to the previous Call for Proposals

Following the evaluation of the first SSH Open Competition M round in 2022, the following changes have been implemented in this Call for Proposals compared to the 2022 Call:

- A pre-selection will now take place if the total amount of all grants requested is two times greater than the grant ceiling. In the 2022 Call, the threshold for pre-selection was set at four times the grant ceiling.
- In this round, each application may include one co-applicant, for whom the eligibility requirement regarding PhD date does not apply. In the 2022 Call, co-applicants were not permitted at all. This change allows junior researchers, in collaboration with a main applicant from the target group, to be involved in an application if desired.
- Applicants with an ongoing SSH Open Competition project may only submit a proposal if the planned end date of the project is within one year of the deadline of this Call. In the 2022 Call, this restrictive condition applied to all NWO projects; in this Call, it has been adjusted to apply only to the SSH Open Competition projects.

1.2 Available budget

The available budget for this Call for proposals is € 23.500.000. Within this Call for proposals it is expected that approximately 59 proposals will be awarded funding.

1.3 Submission deadline

The deadline for submitting proposals is **October 31, 2024**, before 14:00:00 hours CEST.

When you submit your application in ISAAC, you will also need to enter some details online. Therefore please start submitting your application at least one day before the deadline of this Call for proposals. Applications that are submitted after the deadline will not be taken into consideration.

2 Aim

This chapter describes the aim of the programme and the societal impact.

2.1 Aim of the programme

The SSH OC M funding instrument for free, curiosity-driven research focuses on research projects with a primary social science and/or humanities research question. Proposals with an interdisciplinary or cross-domain character can also be submitted to this instrument, provided that they contain a clear social science and/or humanities component.

2.2 Societal impact

New knowledge and insights from scientific research can make an important contribution to solutions for current and future societal issues. Examples are the energy transition, health and care, or climate change. Through interaction and alignment between researchers and potential knowledge users, the chance of knowledge utilisation increases and with it the chance of societal impact. Through its policy on impact, NWO promotes the potential contribution from research to societal issues by encouraging productive interactions with societal stakeholders, both during the development and implementation of research. It does so in a manner appropriate to the aim of the funding instrument.

2.2.1 Tailor-made impact

Depending on the aim of the funding instrument, NWO will select the approach that has the greatest chance of achieving societal impact. The primary aim of the funding instrument determines the method NWO deploys to facilitate knowledge utilisation in various phases of the project (proposal, realisation, project completion) and the effort required from the applicant(s) and partner(s).

In this programme, the Impact Outlook approach is applied. Here, researchers can choose which type of impact they want to put their own focus on, and proportional consideration is given to what can be done for the remaining impact.

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

3 Conditions for applicants

This chapter contains the conditions that are applicable to your grant application. Firstly, it describes who can apply for funding (section 3.1) and what you can request funding for (section 3.2). Subsequently, you will find the conditions for preparing and submitting the application (sections 3.3 and 3.4) and the specific funding conditions (section 3.5).

3.1 Who can apply

Full, associate and assistant professors and other researchers with a comparable position* may act as main or co-applicant if they have a tenured position (and therefore a paid position for an indefinite period) or a tenure track agreement at one of the following organisations:

- universities located in the Kingdom of the Netherlands;
- university medical centres;
- institutes affiliated to the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) or NWO;
- Netherlands Cancer Institute;
- the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen;
- Naturalis Biodiversity Center;
- Advanced Research Centre for NanoLithography (ARCNL);
- Princess Máxima Centrum.

* A comparable position refers to a researcher that has a demonstrable and comparable number of years of experience in carrying out scientific research and supervising other researchers as a full, associate or assistant professor.

For each application, one co-applicant is permitted but not mandatory.

Persons with a zero-hour employment agreement or with a contract for a limited period of time (other than a tenure track appointment) may not submit a proposal.

It could be the case that the applicant's tenure track agreement ends before the intended completion date of the project for which funding is applied for, or that before that date, the applicant's tenured contract ends due to the applicant reaching retirement age. In that case, the applicant needs to include a statement from their employer in which the organisation concerned guarantees that the project and all project members for whom funding has been requested will receive adequate supervision for the full duration of the project.

Applicants with a part-time contract should guarantee adequate supervision of the project and all project members for whom funding is requested.

Extra conditions:

- Main applicants must have defended their PhD at least 10 years prior to the deadline of submission. The date from which an applicant is allowed to carry the title of doctor serves as the reference date. If there is a gap of more than six months between the defence and when the applicant is allowed to carry the title of doctor, the date of the defence applies.
- Main and co-applicants may only submit an application in one of the SSH Open Competition rounds once per calendar year;
- Main and co-applicants are not allowed to submit an application in consecutive rounds in the SSH Open Competition M/L;¹

¹ Main and co-applicants of the SSH Open Competition L 2023 round are not permitted to submit a proposal for this Call. However, applicants from the SSH Open Competition M 2022 round are permitted to submit. It is anticipated that this submission condition will also apply to the SSH Open Competition L 2025 round. If so, main and co-applicants of this call will be excluded from submitting proposals for the SSH Open Competition L 2025 round.

- Main and co-applicants may submit a new application no more than one year before the planned end date of their last-ending SSH Open Competition project, for which they are the project leader;
- Instruction under paragraph 3.1.1 Main and co-applicants.

3.1.1 Main and co-applicants

The main applicant submits the proposal via the NWO web application ISAAC. 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.

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.

3.2 What can be applied for

The SSH OC M explicitly gives researchers the possibility to request funding for various types of projects and cost categories. Funding can be requested for projects with or without scientific personnel. In addition to funding for various types of personnel costs plus possibly material budget, this instrument also offers the opportunity to apply for specific funding for investments in equipment or databases, knowledge utilization and/or (inter)national collaboration.

The domain board expressly invites researchers to make the best possible use of the various possibilities offered by this funding instrument. It is up to the researchers themselves to determine which type of funding best suits their research ambitions.

For an application in this Call for proposals, a maximum of 400,000 euros can be applied for. The maximum duration of the proposed project is five years. The budget modules (including the maximum amount) available for this Call for proposals are listed in the table below. Apply only for funding that is vital to realise the project. A more detailed explanation of the budget modules can be found in the annexe to this Call for proposals (7.1).

Budget module	Maximum amount
PhD student	1 position, according to UNL or NFU rates
Engineering Doctorate degree (EngD)	1 position, in combination with PhD student and/or postdoc, according to UNL or NFU rates
Postdoc	2 positions, according to UNL or NFU rates
Non-scientific staff (NSS) at universities	€ 100,000, according to UNL or NFU rates, in combination with PhD student and/or postdoc
Other Scientific personnel (OSS) at universities	€ 100,000, in combination with PhD student and/or postdoc
Research leave	5 months, 1 FTE, according to UNL or NFU rates
Material costs	€15,000 per year per FTE scientific position
Investments (up to € 150,000)	Maximum € 150,000
Knowledge utilisation	€ 25,000
Internationalisation	€ 25,000

3.3 Preparing an application

The steps involved in writing your application are:

- download the application form from the NWO web application ISAAC or from the NWO web page (on the grant page of the funding instrument concerned);
- complete the application form;
- save the application form in ISAAC as a PDF file and upload it with any compulsory annexes;
- fill in the requested information online in ISAAC.

Compulsory annexe(s):

- Budget form.

Permitted optional annexe(s):

- Statement co-funding (mandatory if applicable, see paragraph 3.5.6 / 5.1.2);
- Statement appointment and project supervision (mandatory if applicable, see paragraph 3.1).

In case NWO has made a template available, the annexe should be drawn up according to the NWO template. Annexes must be uploaded in ISAAC separately from the application. All of the annexes, except for the budget form, must be submitted as PDF files (without encryption). The budget form must be submitted in ISAAC as an Excel file. Any annexes other than those above-mentioned are not permitted.

You must write your application in English. Communication with NWO will be in English for the entire duration of the round.

An application can only be submitted via the web application ISAAC.

You submit your application to one of the six disciplinary panels through a link provided on the funding page of this Call for Proposals on the NWO website. For the panel overview, please refer to [NWO | Overview panels Domain Social Sciences and Humanities](#).

Applications that are not submitted via ISAAC will not be taken into consideration.

As the main applicant, you are required to submit the application via your own personal ISAAC account.

It is important to start with your application in ISAAC on time:

- if you do not yet have an ISAAC account, then you should create this account on time to prevent any possible registration problems;
- any new organisations must also be added to ISAAC by NWO;
- you also need to submit other details online.

Applications submitted after the deadline will not be taken into consideration by NWO.

For technical questions, please contact the ISAAC helpdesk, see contact (Chapter 6).

The applicants must inform the organisation where they work about the submission of the application, and the organisation must accept the granting conditions of this Call for proposals.

3.3.1 Advice about panel choice / substantive suitability

For this call, it is required that you select the panel to which you will submit your application. You can choose one of the following disciplinary panels:

- Cultural sciences and linguistics;
- Economics and business administration;
- Philosophy, historical and religious studies;
- Behaviour and education;
- Law and public administration;
- Social sciences.

The disciplinary panels have a broad composition. Please decide well in advance which of the six options is most suitable as the panel to submit your application to. After submission, your choice is final and it will no longer be possible to have the application assessed within another panel. If you have doubts about which panel would be most appropriate, for example, because your application has a (partly) panel-overarching character, then you should get in touch with one of the contact persons from the programme well before the deadline. They can advise you about which panel can best deal with your application. Please note that the final choice is yours.

For contact details, please see Section 6.1.1.

For this Call for proposals, your application must fit in the NWO Domain Social Sciences and Humanities. Therefore, please consider well ahead of time whether your application meets the substantive criteria. In the event of any doubt, for instance because your application (partly) encompasses various domains and/or has a ZonMw character, then please get in touch with the contact person for this programme well in advance of the deadline. This person can advise you about the substantive connection between your application and this Call for proposals. Please note that the final choice is yours. For contact details please see Section 6.1.1.

3.4 Conditions for submission

3.4.1 Formal conditions for submission

NWO will assess your application against the conditions listed below. Your application will only be admitted to the assessment procedure if it meets these conditions. After submitting your application, NWO requests you to be available to implement any possible administrative corrections so that you can (still) meet the conditions for submission.

These conditions are:

- the main applicant and co-applicant(s) meet the conditions stated in Section 3.1;
- the application complies with the DORA guidelines as described in Section 4.1;
- the application form is, after a possible request to make additions or changes, complete and filled out according to the instructions;
- the application is submitted via the main applicant's ISAAC account;
- the application is received before the deadline;
- the application is written in English;
- the application budget is drawn up in accordance with the conditions for this Call for proposals;
- the proposed project has a duration of at least one year and at most five years;
- all of the required annexes are, after a possible request to make additions or changes, complete and filled out according to the instructions and the terms outlined in this Call for proposals.

3.5 Conditions on granting

The [NWO Grant Rules 2017](#) and the [Approval of funding for scientific research](#) are applicable to all applications.

3.5.1 Compliance with the National Knowledge Security Guidelines

World-class science can benefit from international cooperation. The National Knowledge Security Guidelines (hereafter: the Guidelines) helps knowledge institutions to ensure that international cooperation can take place securely. Knowledge security concerns the undesirable transfer of sensitive knowledge and technology that compromises national security; the covert influence of state actors on education and research, which jeopardises academic freedom and social safety; and ethical issues that may arise in cooperation with countries that do not respect fundamental rights.

Applicants are responsible for ensuring that their project complies and will continue to comply with the Guidelines. By submitting an application, the applicant commits to the recommendations stipulated in these Guidelines. In the event of a suspected breach of the Guidelines in an application submitted to NWO for project funding, or in a project funded by NWO, NWO may ask the applicant to provide a risk assessment demonstrating that the recommendations in the Guidelines have been taken into consideration. If the applicant fails to comply with NWO's request, or if the risk assessment is in apparent breach of the Guidelines, this may affect NWO's grant award or decision-making process. NWO may also include further conditions in the award letter if appropriate.

The National Knowledge Security Guidelines can be found on the central government website at: [Home | National Contact Point for Knowledge Security \(loketkennisveiligheid.nl\)](https://home.kennisveiligheid.nl).

3.5.2 Data management

The results of scientific research must be replicable, verifiable and falsifiable. In the digital age, this means that, in addition to publications, research data must also be publicly accessible insofar as this is possible. NWO expects that research data resulting from NWO-funded projects will be made publicly available, as much as possible, for reuse by other researchers. "As open as possible, as closed as necessary" is the applicable principle in this respect. Researchers are at least expected to make the data and/or non-numerical results that underlie the conclusions of work published within the project publicly available at the same time as the work's publication. Any costs incurred for this can be included in the project budget. Researchers should explain how data emerging from the project will be dealt with based on the data management section in the proposal and the data management plan that is drawn up after funding is awarded.

Data management section

The data management section is part of the proposal. Researchers are asked before the start of the research to consider how the data collected will be ordered and categorised so that this can be made publicly available. Measures will often already need to be taken, prior to the creation of data and analysis of the data, to make its later storage and dissemination possible. If it is not possible to make all data from the project publicly available, for example due to reasons of privacy, ethics or valorisation, then the applicant is obliged to list the reasons for this in the data management section.

The data management section in the proposal is not evaluated and will therefore not be weighed in the decision whether to award funding. However, the committee can issue advice with respect to the data management section.

3.5.3 Scientific integrity

In accordance with the NWO Grant Rules 2017, the project that NWO funds must be carried out in accordance with the nationally and internationally accepted standards for scientific conduct as stated in the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (2018). By submitting the proposal, the applicant commits to this code. In the case of a (possible) violation of these standards during a project funded by NWO, the applicant should immediately inform NWO of this and should submit all relevant documents to NWO. More information about the code of conduct and the policy regarding research integrity can be found on the website: [Scientific integrity | NWO](https://www.nwo.nl/en/scientific-integrity).

3.5.4 Ethical statement or licence

The applicant is responsible for determining whether an ethical statement or licence is needed for the realisation of the proposed project. The applicant should ensure that this is obtained from the relevant institution or ethics committee on time. The absence or presence of an ethical statement or licence at the time of the application process has no effect on the assessment of the application. If the project is awarded funding, then the grant is issued under the condition that the necessary ethical statement or

licence is obtained before the latest start date for the project. The project cannot start until NWO has received a copy of the ethical statement or licence.

3.5.5 Nagoya Protocol

The Nagoya Protocol ensures an honest and reasonable distribution of benefits emerging from the use of genetic resources (Access and Benefit Sharing; ABS). Researchers who make use of genetic sources from the Netherlands or abroad for their research should familiarise themselves with the Nagoya Protocol ([ABS Focal Point - ABS Focal Point](#)). NWO assumes that researchers will take all necessary actions with respect to the Nagoya Protocol.

3.5.6 Co-funding

Co-funding is possible but not mandatory for applications in this call for proposals. In case of co-funding, the funding requested from NWO must always amount to at least 50% of the total project budget.

In the event of a contribution by the research institution and/or a third party, together with the application, a statement of co-funding, signed by an authorized representative of the co-funding party, must be submitted. It is important that this party explicitly specifies and promises the size of the contribution in this form. The co-funding is collected through the organization of the applicant/project leader. Co-funding statements are unconditional and do not contain any resolute provisions. A mandatory format for the co-financing statement can be found on the financing page of this instrument. Co-funding statements are not forwarded to committee members and are not reviewed.

4 Assessment procedure

This chapter first describes the assessment according to the DORA principles (Section 4.1) and the course of the assessment procedure (Section 4.2). Second, it states the criteria that the assessment committee will use to assess your application (Section 4.3).

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

NWO strives to achieve an inclusive culture in which there is no place for conscious or unconscious barriers due to cultural, ethnic or religious background, gender, sexual orientation, health or age ([Diversity and inclusion | NWO](#)). NWO encourages members of an assessment committee to be actively aware of implicit associations and to try to minimise these. NWO will provide them with information about concrete ways of improving the assessment of an application.

4.1 The San Francisco Declaration (DORA)

NWO is a signatory to the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA). DORA is a worldwide initiative that aims to improve the way research and researchers are assessed. DORA contains recommendations for research funders, research institutions, scientific journals and other parties.

DORA aims to reduce the uncritical use of bibliometric indicators and obviate unconscious bias in the assessment of research and researchers. DORA's overarching philosophy is that research should be evaluated on its own merits rather than on the basis of surrogate measures, such as the journal in which the research is published.

When assessing the scientific track record of applicants, NWO makes use of a broad definition of scientific output.

NWO requests committee members and referees not to rely on indicators such as the Journal Impact Factor or the h-index when assessing applications. Applicants are not allowed to mention these in their applications. You are, however, allowed to list other scientific products besides publications, such as datasets, patents, software and code, et cetera.

For more information on how NWO is implementing the principles of DORA, see [DORA | NWO](#).

4.2 Procedure

The application procedure consists of the following steps:

- Submission of the proposal;
- Consideration of the proposal;
- Pre-selection;
- Rebuttal;
- Preliminary advice assessment committee;
- Assessment committee meeting;
- Decision-making.

An external, independent assessment committee will be installed for this Call for proposals, consisting of representatives from science with knowledge of the field. The task of the assessment committee is to assess the applications and the relevant documents submitted, in conjunction with each other and on each application's own merit, on the basis of the selection criteria given in this Call for proposals.

Considering the expertise present in the assessment committee and the size of the grant, NWO has decided for the assessment of the applications to make use of the possibility given in Article 2.2.4, paragraph 2, of the NWO Grant Rules 2017, and therefore to realise the assessment procedure without involving referees.

4.2.1 Submission of a proposal

For the submission of the proposal, a standard form is available on the funding page of this Call for proposals on the NWO website. When you write your proposal, you must adhere to the questions stated on this form and the procedure given in the explanatory notes. You must also adhere to the conditions for the maximum number of words and pages.

Your complete application form must have been received before the deadline via ISAAC (see paragraph 1.3). After this deadline, you can no longer submit a proposal. After submitting the proposal, the main applicant will receive a confirmation of receipt.

4.2.2 Consideration of the proposal

As soon as possible after you have submitted your proposal, you will hear from NWO whether or not your proposal will be taken into consideration. NWO will determine this based on several administrative-technical criteria (see the formal conditions for submission, Section 3.4). NWO can only take your proposal into consideration if it meets these conditions.

Please bear in mind that within two weeks after the submission deadline, NWO may approach you with any possible administrative corrections that need to be made so that your proposal can (still) meet the conditions for submission. You will be given one opportunity to make the corrections, and you will be given five working days to do this.

4.2.3 Pre-selection

If NWO receives so many proposals that the total amount of funding requested is two times or more the available budget for this Call for proposals (as stated in Section 1.2), then a pre-selection of the proposals will take place. In this case, the assessment committee will globally assess all proposals based on the assessment criteria (see Section 4.3.1). Taking this information into account, the assessment committee will advise NWO to reject the proposals that have the least chance of being awarded funding. The other proposals will be considered further.

If applicants feel they have legitimate grounds to object to the committee's judgment, they may send a reasoned response to the domain handling the application. On the basis of this response, the committee may yet select the proposal. In case the applicant is not selected, the applicant will receive a formal decision letter from the Domain Board Social Sciences and Humanities rejecting the application.

4.2.4 Rebuttal

The main applicant receives an anonymised assessment report. You then have the opportunity to formulate a rebuttal. You will be given five working days to submit your rebuttal via ISAAC. If you decide to withdraw the proposal, then you should do this as quickly as possible by sending an email stating this to the office and withdrawing the proposal in ISAAC. If NWO receives your rebuttal after the deadline, then it will not be included in the rest of the procedure.

4.2.5 Preliminary advice assessment committee

After this, your proposal and your rebuttal will be submitted for comments to several members of the assessment committee (the pre-advisers). The pre-advisers will provide a written substantive and reasoned response to the proposal. They will formulate these comments based on the substantive assessment criteria (see Section 4.3.1) and will give the proposal a numerical score per assessment criterion. For this, the NWO score table will be used (on a scale of 1 to 9, where “1” is excellent and “9” unsatisfactory).

4.2.6 Meeting of the assessment committee

The committee will make its own assessment based on the available material. The pre-advice will to a large extent ‘guide’ the final assessment but will not be blindly accepted by the committee without question. The committee will consider and compare the arguments of the pre-advisers (also among each other) and examine whether the rebuttal contains a well-formulated response to the critical comments from the assessment report.

Following the discussion, the committee draws up a written recommendation addressed to the Social Sciences and Humanities Domain Board about the quality and ranking of the proposals. This recommendation is based on the assessment criteria. The proposal must receive an overall qualification of at least “very good” to be eligible for funding. The proposal must also receive at least the qualification “good” for each of the individual assessment criteria. For more information about the qualifications, see [Applying for funding, how does it work? | NWO](#).

If, after the discussion of the full proposals, two or more of the full proposals cannot be distinguished from each other based on their weighted total score, then there is an ex aequo situation (see the paragraph about ex aequo).

4.2.7 Ex aequo

NWO understands ex aequo to be a situation in which two or more proposals based on their weighted score cannot be distinguished from each other. An ex aequo situation is relevant with respect to the borders of the available budget or the selection borders. The existence of an ex aequo situation is determined as follows. The starting point is the ranking drawn up by the assessment committee, with the final scores rounded down to two decimal points. The reference score is the score of the lowest-ranked proposal within the borders of the available budget or the selection borders. All proposals with a score that is within 0.05 or less of the reference score will be considered. In this way, the proposals that are equal within a score of 0.1 will be selected. If an ex aequo situation occurs at the borders of available budget or the selection borders, then, in order to stimulate the number of females in science, the proposal from a female main applicant will end as the highest. If the ex aequo situation is not resolved with this, then the proposal with the highest score for the criterion ‘Research idea’ will end highest. If the proposals subsequently still remain in a tie, the assessment committee, with the help of an (anonymous) majority vote, will determine the ranking (in accordance with Article 2.2.7, third paragraph, sub a, part iv of the NWO Grant Rules 2017). If this vote provides no resolution either, or it is not desirable to vote, the ex aequo situation will be sent on to the decision-making body.

4.2.8 Decision-making

Finally, the Social Sciences and Humanities Domain Board will assess the procedure followed and the advice from the assessment committee. It will subsequently determine the final qualifications and take a decision about awarding or rejecting the proposals.

4.2.9 Timetable

Below, you will find the timetable for this Call for proposals. During the current procedure, NWO might find it necessary to make further changes to the timetable for this Call for proposals. You will, of course, be informed about this in a timely fashion.

Timeline with pre-selection	
Thursday October 31, 2024, 14.00.00 CET	Deadline proposals
November/December 2024	Preliminary assessment by committee
January 2025	Provisional advice on pre-selection
Late-January 2025	Applicants may submit a response
February/March 2025	Results pre-selection
Mid-March 2025	Applicants may submit a rebuttal
April/May 2025	Assessment committee meeting
June 2025	Decision by the board

Timeline without pre-selection	
Thursday October 31, 2024, 14.00.00 CET	Deadline proposals
November/December 2024	Preliminary assessment by committee
January 2025	Applicants may submit a rebuttal
March/April 2025	Assessment committee meeting
May 2025	Decision by the board

4.3 Criteria

4.3.1 Substantive assessment criteria

The applications submitted within this Call for proposals are substantively assessed on the basis of the following criteria:

1. Research idea (80%)
 - Clarity of the research questions and problem definition;
 - Scientific innovation in terms of theory, methods and/or topic;
 - Quality of design, approach and feasibility;
 - Scientific impact and societal impact.
2. Team, embedding and budget (20%)
 - Quality of the applicant(s);
 - Suitability of the research team;
 - Quality of the institutional embedding of the research project;
 - Suitability of the budget, and the division of tasks and roles within the research team.

Explanation scientific and societal impact

Applicants can choose to focus in their research proposal on achieving scientific impact, societal impact, or a spread across both forms of impact.

Scientific impact includes:

- The potential and relevance of the research results for one's own discipline and related discipline(s);
- The potential and relevance of the research results for the wider scientific field.

Societal impact includes:

- The added value of the project for societal impact;
- The potential for societal impact in the short and long term;
- vision of the way(s) in which the proposed research could lead to societal impact.

Aside from the above, the assessment committee will also consider:

- The motivation for the focus on scientific impact and/or societal impact;
- In case the focus is primarily on scientific impact: in which ways proportional attention is given to increasing (unforeseen) chances for societal impact for the duration of the project;
- In case the focus is primarily on societal impact: in which ways proportional attention is given to increasing (unforeseen) chances for scientific impact for the duration of the project.

It is possible to receive a good evaluation on impact if the focus of the proposal is on scientific impact, societal impact, or a combination of both. The score of this criterion is independent of the chosen focus; one form of impact is not better or worse than the other.

5 Obligations for grant recipients

This chapter details the various obligations that - in addition to the conditions stated in Section 3.5 - apply after funds have been awarded.

5.1 Additional conditions

The latest start date for the project is 6 months after the date of the Grant Award.

5.1.1 Data management

After a proposal has been awarded funding, the researcher should elaborate the data management section into a data management plan. For this, applicants can make use of the advice from the referees and committee. The applicant describes in the plan whether use will be made of existing data, whether new data will be collected or generated, and how the data will be made FAIR: Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable. Before submission, the data management plan should be checked by a data steward or similar officer of the organisation where the project will be realised. The plan should be submitted to NWO via ISAAC within 4 months after the proposal has been awarded funding. NWO will check the plan as quickly as possible. Approval of the data management plan by NWO is a condition for disbursement of the funding. The plan can be adjusted during the research.

More information about the data management protocol of NWO can be found at: [Research data management | NWO](#).

5.1.2 Intellectual property and consortium agreement

With respect to intellectual property (IP), the NWO IP policy applies. This can be found in Chapter 4 of the NWO Grant Rules 2017.

Applicants must carry out a project funded by NWO during the time that they work for the knowledge institution. If an applicant or a researcher funded by NWO is appointed by more than one employer, then the other employer should relinquish any possible IP rights that emerge from the project of the applicant.

In the event of co-funding by a third party, the conclusion of a consortium agreement after the grant award is a prerequisite for the start of the project. This agreement entails provisions concerning intellectual property and publication, knowledge transfer, confidentiality, co-financing payments, and progress and final reports. Uploading to ISAAC prior to the start of the project is mandatory.

The (model) consortium agreement provided by NWO on the funding page for this Call for Proposals should be utilized for this purpose. This model agreement is drafted in accordance with the NWO Grant Rules 2017.

5.1.3 Socially responsible licensing

The knowledge that emerges from the project could be suitable for use in society. When agreements about licensing and/or the transfer of research results developed under this Call for proposals are made, due consideration should be given to the ten principles for socially responsible licensing, as stated in the NFU factsheet "[19.4511 Ten principles for Socially Responsible Licensing v19-12-2019.pdf \(nfu.nl\)](#)".

5.1.4 Open Access

As a signatory to the Berlin Declaration (2003) and a member of cOAlition S (2018), NWO is committed to making the results of the research it funds openly accessible via the internet (Open Access). By doing this, NWO gives substance to the ambitions of the Dutch government to make all publicly funded research available in Open Access form. Scientific publications arising from projects awarded on the basis of this Call for proposals must therefore be made available in Open Access form in accordance with the Open Access Policy.

Scientific articles

Scientific articles must be made available in Open Access form immediately at the time of publication (without embargo) via one of the following routes:

- publication in a fully Open Access journal or platform registered in the DOAJ;
- publication in a subscription journal and the immediate deposition of at least the author accepted manuscript of the article in an Open Access repository registered in Open DOAR;
- publication in a journal for which a transformative Open Access agreement exists between UNL and a publisher. For further information, see [Open Access |](#).

Books

Different requirements apply to scholarly books, book chapters and edited collections. See the Open Access Policy Framework at [Open Science | NWO](#).

CC BY licence

To ensure the widest possible dissemination of publications, at least a Creative Commons (CC BY) licence must be applied. Alternatively – in case of substantial interest – the author may request to publish under a CC BY-ND licence. For books, book chapters and collected volumes, all CC BY licence options are allowed.

Costs

Costs for publication in fully Open Access journals can be budgeted in the application using the budget module for “material costs”. Costs for publications in hybrid journals are not eligible for reimbursement by NWO. For Open Access books, a separate NWO Open Access Books Fund is available.

For more detailed information about NWO’s Open Access policy, see [Open Science | NWO](#).

6 Contact and other information

6.1 Contact

6.1.1 Specific questions

For specific questions about this Call for proposals, please contact:

sgwoc@nwo.nl

Britt Veldman
Policy officer SSH
+31 (0)70 344 0931

Henry Chow
Policy officer SSH
+31 (0)70 349 4166

6.1.2 Technical questions about the web application ISAAC

For technical questions about the use of ISAAC, please contact the ISAAC helpdesk. Please read the manual first before consulting the helpdesk. The ISAAC helpdesk can be contacted from Monday to Friday between 10:00 and 17:00 hours on +31 70 34 40 600. However, you can also submit your question by email to isaac.helpdesk@nwo.nl. You will then receive an answer within two working days.

6.2 Other information

The whole text of this Call for proposals has been published in both Dutch and English. The Dutch version is considered authoritative. For legal interpretation, the text of the Dutch version will prevail.

NWO processes data from applicants received in the context of this call in accordance with the NWO Privacy Statement, <https://www.nwo.nl/en/privacy-statement>.

NWO might approach applicants for an evaluation of the procedure and/or the research programme.

7 Annexe

7.1 Explanation of budget modules

It is possible to apply for the funding of the salary costs of personnel who make a substantial contribution to the research. Funding of these salary costs depends on the type of appointment and the organisation where the personnel are/ will be appointed.

- For university appointments, the salary costs are funded in accordance with the UNL salary tables applicable at the moment the grant is awarded ([Salary tables | NWO](#)).
- For university medical centres, the salary costs are funded in accordance with the NFU salary tables applicable at the moment the grant is awarded ([Salary tables | NWO](#)).
- For personnel from universities of applied sciences, educational institutions and other organisations, salary costs will be funded based on the collective labour agreement pay scale of the employee concerned in accordance with the applicable rate at the time of awarding the grant as taken from Table 2.2, column 'Hourly rate productive hours, excl. Dutch VAT' from the *Handleiding Overheidstarieven* [HOT- Manual Dutch Government Rates] ([Salary tables | NWO](#)).
- For the Caribbean Netherlands, the Dutch government employs civil servants on Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba under different conditions than in the European part of the Netherlands [Employment terms and conditions | Working at the Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland | Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland \(rijksdienstcn.com\)](#).

NWO will apply a mandatory one-off indexing of the salary² costs with respect to:

- UNL rates: for proposals submitted before 1 July and that are awarded funding after 1 July;
- NFU rates: for proposals submitted before 1 August that are awarded funding after 1 August;
- HOT rates: for proposals submitted before 1 January that are awarded funding after 1 January.

The mandatory one-off indexing has no influence on the level of the grant ceiling or on the maximum amount of the grant awarded per proposal. The level of the grant ceiling and the maximum amount of the grant awarded will remain unchanged during the assessment procedure. The mandatory one-off indexing will be applied after the decision-taking about awarding or rejecting proposals has been completed.

If co-funding is required or permitted then the one-off mandatory indexing will have no consequences for the co-funding requirement or the IP rights that can emerge from the co-funding.

The rates for all budget modules are incorporated in the budget template that accompanies the application form. For the budget modules "PhD student", "EngD" and "Postdoc", a one-off individual bench fee of €5,000 is added on top of the salary costs to encourage the scientific career of the project employee funded by NWO. Remunerations for PhD scholarship students ('bursalen') at a Dutch university are not eligible for funding from NWO.

The available budget modules are explained below.

PhD student (including MD-PhD student)

A PhD student is appointed for 1.0 FTE for a duration of 48 months. The equivalent of 48 full-time months, for example an appointment of 60 months for 0.8 FTE, is also possible. If a different duration of appointment is considered necessary for the realisation of the proposed research, then the standard time can be deviated from as long as this is properly justified. However, the duration of appointment must always be at least 48 months.

² 1 July, 1 August and 1 January are the dates on which the relevant rates are generally adjusted, in the case of indexation the date of actual annual adjustment will be taken into account.

Engineering Doctorate degree (EngD)

Funding for the appointment of a EngD can only be applied for if funding for a PhD student or postdoc is also applied for.

The appointment for a EngD position is a maximum of 1.0 FTE for 24 months. The EngD trainee is employed by the institution applying for funding and can realise activities that are part of the research at an industrial partner for a specified time. If the research proposal is awarded funding, then an agreement must be concluded with the industrial partner(s) concerned. The underlying “Technological Designer Programme” must be described in the proposal.

Postdoc

The size and duration of the postdoc appointment is at least 6 full months and at most 48 full-time months.

The size and duration of the appointment is at the applicant’s discretion, but the appointment is always for at least 0.5 FTE or for a duration of at least 12 months. The product of FTE x duration of appointment should always be a minimum of 6 full-time months.

The material budget is available to cover the costs of a more limited appointment of a postdoc.

Non-scientific staff (NSS) at universities

Funding for the appointment of NSS required to realise the research project can only be applied for if funding for a PhD student or postdoc is also applied for. A maximum of €100,000 can be requested for NSS. This includes personnel such as student assistants, programmers, technical assistants or analysts. Depending on the level of the position, the appropriate salary table for NSS at MBO, HBO or university level applies.

The size of the appointment is at least 6 full-time months and at most 48 full-time months. The size and duration of the appointment is at the applicant’s discretion, but the appointment is always for at least 0.5 FTE or for a duration of at least 12 months. The product of FTE x duration of appointment should always be a minimum of 6 full-time months.

The material budget is available to cover the costs of a more limited appointment of NSS.

Other Scientific personnel (OSS) at universities

Budget for OSS such as AIOS (doctor training to be a specialist), ANIOS (doctor not training to be a specialist), scientific programmers or employees with a master’s degree can only be applied for if funding for a PhD student or postdoc is also applied for. For this category, a maximum of €100,000 can be applied for.

The size of the appointment is at least 6 full-time months and at most 48 full-time months. The size and duration of the appointment is at the applicant’s discretion, but the appointment is always for at least 0.5 FTE or for a duration of at least 12 months. The product of FTE x duration of appointment should always be a minimum of 6 full-time months.

Research leave for applicants

With this budget module, funding can be requested for the costs of the research leave of the main and/or co-applicant(s). The employer of the applicant(s) can use this to cover the costs of relinquishing him or her from educational, supervisory, administrative or management tasks (not research tasks). The time that is released through the research leave grant can only be used by the applicant(s) for activities in the context of the project. The proposal must describe which activities in the context of the project the applicant(s) will carry out in the time relinquished.

The maximum amount of research leave that can be applied for is the equivalent of 5 full-time months. NWO funds the research leave in accordance with the salary tables for a senior scientific employee (scale 11) at the time the grant is awarded (www.nwo.nl/en/salary-tables).

Explanation of budget module Material

For each FTE scientific position (PhD student, postdoc, EngD) applied for, a maximum of €15,000 material budget can be applied for per year of the appointment. Material budget for smaller appointments can be applied for on a proportionate basis and will be made available by NWO accordingly. Per 0.2 FTE scientific employee applied for at a university of applied sciences, educational institution or other organisation (with a minimum appointment of 0.2 FTE for 12 months) a maximum of €15,000 in material budget can be applied for per year.

The applicant is responsible for distributing the total amount of material budget across the NWO-funded personnel positions. The material budget that can be applied for is specified according to the three categories below:

Project-related goods/services

- consumables (e.g. glassware, chemicals, cryogenic fluids, etc.);
- measurement and calculation time (e.g. access to supercomputer, etc.);
- costs for acquiring or using data collections (e.g. from Statistics Netherlands [CBS]), for which the total amount may not be more than €25,000 per proposal;
- access to large national and international facilities (e.g. cleanroom, synchrotron, etc.);
- work by third parties (e.g. laboratory analyses, data collection, citizen science, etc.);
- personnel costs for the appointment of a postdoc and/or non-scientific personnel for a smaller appointment size than those offered in the personnel budget modules.

Travel and accommodation costs for the personnel positions applied for

- travel and accommodation costs;
- conference attendance (maximum of two per year per scientific position applied for);
- fieldwork;
- work visit.

Implementation costs

- national symposium/conference/workshop organised by the project researchers;
- costs for Open Access publishing (solely in full gold Open Access journals, registered in the “Directory of Open Access Journals” [Directory of Open Access Journals](#));
- costs data management;
- costs involved in applying for licences (e.g. for animal experiments);
- audit costs (only for institutions that are not subject to the education accountants protocol of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science), maximum €5,000 per proposal; for projects with a duration of three years or less, a maximum of €2,500 per proposal applies.

Costs that cannot be applied for are:

- basic facilities within the institution (e.g. laptops, office furniture, etc.);
- maintenance and insurance costs.

If the maximum amount is not sufficient for realising the research, then this amount may be deviated from, if a clear justification is provided in the proposal.

Citizen science

Involving citizens (citizen science) can contribute to the quality of the research. With the help of citizens, data and insights can be acquired that would not otherwise be available for research. NWO also funds citizen science. Applicants can use the budget module “material, project-related goods/services, work by third parties” to request a remuneration for the involvement of citizens in projects. The budget module offers a possibility and is not a requirement. Applicants are free to decide whether it is worthwhile involving citizens in the project and what exactly they use this budget for (for example, reimbursement of expenses of citizens, skills training for citizens or technical devices for the participating citizen).

Explanation of budget module Investments (up to €150,000)

In this budget module, funding can be requested up to a maximum of €150,000 for investments in equipment, datasets and/or software (e.g. lasers, specialised computers or computer programs).

Explanation of budget module Knowledge utilisation

The aim of this budget module is to facilitate the use of the knowledge that emerges from the research.³ The budget applied for may not exceed €25,000.

As knowledge utilisation takes many different forms in different scientific fields, the applicant needs to specify the required costs, e.g. costs of producing a teaching package, conducting a feasibility study into potential applications, or filing a patent application.

The budget applied for should be adequately specified in the proposal.

Explanation of budget module Internationalisation

The budget for internationalisation is intended to encourage international collaboration. The budget applied for may not exceed €25,000. The amount requested must be specified. If the maximum amount is not sufficient for realising the research, then it may be deviated from if an adequate justification is provided in the proposal.

Funding can be requested for:

- travel and accommodation costs in so far as these concern direct research costs emerging from the international collaboration and additional costs for internationalisation that cannot be covered in another manner, for example from the bench fee;
- travel and accommodation costs for foreign guest researchers;
- costs for organising international workshops/symposia/scientific meetings.

³ In this budget module, the definition for “knowledge transfer” as used by the European Commission in the Framework for State aid for research and development and innovation (PbEU, 2014, C198) applies.

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