Stairway to Impact Award

Call for Nominations

Science
Awards for the NWO Domain Science
1. Introduction and goal

Background

The NWO Domain Science has chosen awards that match the goals that the domain has set for 2019-2022 (see strategy manifesto 2019-2022). These awards recognize the achievements of scientists in various areas of scientific research. There is an award for inspirational teamwork (Team Science Award), an award for science communication for a wider audience (Communication Award), an award to foster diversity (Diversity Initiative Award and Athena Award) and an award for the societal impact of scientific results (Stairway to Impact Award). The awards are intended to reward scientists who have contributed in these areas and to inspire others to do the same. All disciplines in the Science domain are eligible for these awards.

Stairway to Impact Award

The NWO Domain Science wishes to promote knowledge utilization. With the Stairway to Impact Award NWO rewards scientists who take effective steps to utilize their scientific findings to tackle a societal problem and/or to make an economic contribution. The path from fundamental research with a low Technical Readiness Level (TRL) to wider societal impact\(^1\) involves many steps. Reaching these steps is crucial in order to achieve the ultimate goal. The Stairway to Impact Award is awarded to innovative researchers who undertake important, innovative or otherwise significant steps in this regard. These steps have demonstrated their impact, even though the ultimate goal may not yet have been achieved. Evidence of this may include a successful start-up or the implementation of research results by a societal organization.

\(^1\) this also includes economic impact
Awards for the NWO Domain Science

2. Requirements for nominations

Who can submit a nomination?

Anyone can submit a nomination. It is possible to nominate yourself for the Stairway to Impact Award. Where similar efforts have been made by more than one person and led to the achievement of the goal, those persons can be nominated jointly for the Stairway to Impact Award.

Who can be nominated?

Candidates for the Stairway to Impact Award
- have not received this award previously.
- are usually researchers working in the fields of science that fall within the NWO Domain Science (Earth Sciences, Astronomy, Chemistry, Computer Science, Life Sciences, Physics, Mathematics) or by teams where the majority of team members work in these fields.
- are usually employed by one of the following knowledge institutions:
  - a university located in the Netherlands;
  - a university medical centre located in the Netherlands;
  - KNAW and NWO institutes;
  - the Dutch-Belgian BeamLinE ('Dubble') project at the ESRF in Grenoble;
  - NCB Naturalis;
  - Advanced Research Centre for NanoLithography (ARCNL);
  - Princess Máxima Centre for Paediatric Oncology;
  - the Netherlands Cancer Institute.

What could the nominees win?

The Stairway to Impact Award is a sum of €50,000. The recipients have ample freedom when it comes to spending this sum: staff, equipment, investment, travel and subsistence costs, guest researchers, knowledge utilization activities, and so on. However, the money must be used to contribute to the goal for which the award has been presented, and a minimum spending plan must be approved by NWO. The award money must be spent within three years.

When can nominations be submitted?

Nominations must be received by NWO by 30 June 2020, 12:00 CE(S)T.

Specific requirements

A maximum of three winners or winning teams are chosen per year.

Drafting a nomination

The instructions for drafting a nomination for the Stairway to Impact Award are enclosed with this brochure.

It is possible to resubmit a nomination that was not previously successful. In this case, the instructions for the year in which the nomination is resubmitted need to be followed.
Awards for the NWO Domain Science

Submitting a nomination

The nominations must be sent to NWO in the form of a PDF file by e-mail (ENWprijzen@nwo.nl).
3. Assessment procedure

Procedure

The first step in the assessment procedure is to check whether the nomination is complete. The relevant requirements are provided in this Call for Nominations.

The NWO Code of Conduct on Conflicts of Interest applies to all individuals and NWO staff involved in the assessment and/or decision-making process.

The nominations are assessed in relation to the criteria by a committee, as described below. The committee advises the board of the NWO Domain Science regarding potential winners, and in doing so will strive to ensure that the nominations are distributed across the science domain with no more than one nomination per (primary) discipline.

The Board of NWO Domain Science will make the decision regarding the winners. In addition to the committee’s advice, policy considerations may also play a role, such as distribution across disciplines. Those who have submitted impressive nominations which have not been selected as winners will be given the opportunity to update their nomination for the next round if they wish to be considered again.

The awards will be awarded at the relevant national (disciplinary) congresses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicative timeline</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30 June 2020, by 12:00 CE(S)T.</td>
<td>Deadline for submitting complete nominations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September / October 2020</td>
<td>Decision made by NWO Domain Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October / November 2020</td>
<td>Award winners announced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020/2021</td>
<td>Awards presented</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Criteria

The assessment committee applies the following criteria:

1. The candidate is motivated to utilize his/her scientific findings to tackle a current and relevant societal problem and/or for an economic contribution.
2. The candidate has taken inventive and effective steps that may lead to a solution to the relevant societal problem and/or economic contribution. The steps taken can be substantiated and are already (beginning to) demonstrate their impact.
3. The candidate has a clear vision regarding the future steps to be taken in order to achieve greater societal impact\(^1\).
4. The candidate creates a connection between science and society on his/her own initiative and is therefore an example for other scientists.

\(^1\) this also includes economic impact
Composition of the committee

The selection committee consists of scientists and experts who have affinity with and experience in the field of the societal impact\(^1\) of scientific findings. The selection committee is made up of scientists and experts, both men and women, both senior and junior, and from various disciplines within the Science domain.

\(^1\) this also includes economic impact
4. Contacting us and other information

Contact

For questions regarding Stairway to Impact Award and this Call for Nominations, please contact: Vera Meester at ENWprijzen@nwo.nl.

Other information

Information regarding the award policy of NWO Domain Science can be found on the NWO website. Information about other awards in the Science domain can also be found there.

This brochure is a translation of the Dutch language brochure. In case of difference in interpretation between the two texts, the Dutch language brochure is leading.
5. Appendices

Instructions for drafting a nomination for the Stairway to Impact Award

The nominations must be written in English. The nomination must make clear why the candidate(s) has/have been nominated.

The nomination must include the following sections.
1. Cover page providing general information about the candidates and the person nominating him/her. The relevant form can be downloaded from the website [www.nwo.nl/stairway-to-impact-award](http://www.nwo.nl/stairway-to-impact-award).
2. The nomination itself; the nominator must comply with the assessment criteria mentioned in the brochure.
3. Supporting documentation, such as a short narrative CV of the nominee containing information relevant to the award and any supporting letters from third parties. The supporting documentation should not exceed 15 pages in length.

Save the form, the nomination and the appendices as a pdf and send these to [ENWprijzen@nwo.nl](mailto:ENWprijzen@nwo.nl), with the words ‘Stairway to Impact Award + [the name of the candidate]’ in the subject field.

It is advisable to take to account of the fact that the selection committee is composed of representatives from across the whole breadth of the domain and that some members may not be experts in the relevant field.