Corona: Fast-track data

(Please note that the Dutch version of this call is the leading legal document)

Call for proposals
1 Introduction

The corona crisis poses many new questions for society. There is an urgent need for research across the entire spectrum of disciplines, ranging from medical and healthcare research to research in the humanities, behavioural sciences, physical and natural sciences, and engineering. Research that is essential to build a knowledge base for political and general decision-making. The resulting decisions will be crucial for society, both in the short term – to combat the corona crisis – and in the long term – to navigate the post-corona era.

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) and the Dutch Research Council (NWO) are jointly providing €15 million (OCW €2 million, NWO €13 million) for urgent medical, social and societal research. Various types of research are required both in the short term and the slightly longer term. Potential research topics include the fight against the pandemic, drug development, improvements in current care, population behaviour and behavioural changes in the Netherlands, and their impact on the spread of the virus. Other topics include social and economic consequences and the impact of measures on the well-being of the Dutch population. A broad spectrum of research is possible and necessary in this context, ranging from research relating to the virus itself to research into its spread and effective suppression, as well as research into the effects of social isolation. From the total of €15 million, NWO is providing €1.5 million to fund data monitoring and analysis.

1.1 Background

NWO and the Netherlands Organisation for Health Research and Development (ZonMw) facilitate research funding for researchers who are able to make a meaningful contribution based on their expertise. Besides the possibility of conducting research under their regular funding instruments, NWO and ZonMw make funding available for:

- research to provide knowledge that is needed now, at the height of the corona crisis, or research that can only be conducted during the crisis, and
- research to provide knowledge that is or might become relevant in the course of the pandemic: research that can be conducted in the slightly longer term (and for which NWO will issue a special call at a later date).

This call for proposals focuses on research to be conducted now, i.e. at the height of the corona crisis, and specifically research into issues, other than medical and healthcare issues, that arise in society during the crisis.

Many data monitoring and data analysis projects are already in progress to gather essential information that can only be collected now. This call is intended to support these existing projects, but grants may also be requested for projects that have yet to begin.

ZonMw has made funding available for research into creative solutions required for practical technological issues in healthcare, including hospital care. Examples include research into medical devices and solutions that help to deliver the right care and support for vulnerable groups, their careers and health professionals. More information on this funding instrument is available (in Dutch) at https://www.zonmw.nl/nl/actueel/nieuws/detail/itemextra-geld-voor-creatieve-oplossingen-coronavirus-covid-19/. 
1.2 Available budget

NWO is providing a maximum budget of €1,500,000 for this programme. NWO’s Executive Board has not fixed the distribution of funds between disciplines or sub-disciplines nor the number of grants to be awarded. Proposals will be assessed and funding awarded in accordance with the assessment procedure set out in Section 4. Only applications that meet the criteria will be eligible for funding.

1.3 Validity of the call for proposals

This call for proposals is valid from 3 April 2020. Applications can be submitted on a continuous basis until 14:00:00 CEST on 1 September 2020 in accordance with Section 3.1. However, if the grant ceiling is reached before 1 September 2020, the period for submissions will be closed sooner.
2 Aim

This instrument is intended solely for research into issues arising in society during the corona crisis. The research:

- must be relevant to the learning capacity of society during the corona crisis or to the management of the crisis, and
- must require the gathering of real-time data that can only be collected during the crisis.
3 Guidelines for applicants

3.1 Who can apply

Full, associate and assistant professors and other researchers\(^1\) with a comparable appointment can submit an application provided that they:

- they are employed (i.e. hold a salaried position) at one of the following organisations:
  - universities established in the Kingdom of the Netherlands;
  - university medical centres;
  - NWO and KNAW institutes;
  - the Netherlands Cancer Institute;
  - the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen;
  - the DUBBLE Beamline at the ESRF in Grenoble;
  - Naturalis Biodiversity Center;
  - Advanced Research Centre for NanoLithography (ARCNL);
  - Princess Máxima Center.
- and have a contract of employment (duration of appointment) for at least the duration of the research for which funding is requested. Personnel with a zero-hours appointment are excluded from applying.

Additional conditions:
- an applicant may submit a maximum of one application;
- there is no possibility to add co-applicants.

3.2 What can be applied for

Medical and healthcare research projects are excluded from participation.

A maximum of € 50,000 can be requested for a research proposal in this round. NWO does not impose any requirements on the form of the research and there are no restrictions on the type of costs for which funding can be requested. However, the allocation of the requested funding must be broken down in a realistic budget accompanied by an explanation geared to the project. Funding may be requested for short-term personnel appointments, material costs, and travel costs for experiments to be conducted at a different location.

The grant will take the form of a lump sum awarded at the start of the project.

The project must start within one month after the grant is awarded and the maximum project duration is six months.

3.3 When can applications be submitted

Applications can be submitted via ISAAC on a continuous basis until 14:00:00 CEST on 1 September 2020. However, if the grant ceiling has already been reached, the period for submissions will be closed sooner. The NWO Office will process applications in the order in which completed applications are received. If your application is complete, NWO will notify you whether your application has been successful within ten working days.

\(^1\) In this Call for Proposals, "researchers" refers to both women and men.
If your application is not complete, you will be notified as soon as possible. In this case, you should complete your application within one working day, and NWO will then re-assess its completeness. You do, however, have the right to withdraw your application.

PLEASE NOTE: Applications will be processed in the order in which complete applications are received. This means that, if you are asked to complete a submitted application, the original time of receipt will cease to apply and the new time of receipt will apply instead.

3.4 Drawing up an application

– Download the application form from the ISAAC online application system or from the NWO website (at the foot of the web page for the relevant funding instrument).
– Complete the application form.
– Save the form as a pdf and upload it to ISAAC.

3.5 Funding conditions

NWO sets a number of additional conditions for funding.

Result sharing

NWO considers it important that the results of all Fast-track projects are shared, including those of projects that do not yield the expected results. A public summary of each current project will be published online and NWO will request a short report at the end of each Fast-track project. Data and research results (ideally including an initial or final analysis) should be made publicly available within one month after the end of the project, or sooner if possible. See https://www.nwo.nl/en/news-and-events/news/2020/03/nwo-urges-covid-19-and-related-research-to-be-made-open-access.html

Open Access

As a signatory to the Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities (2003), NWO is committed to making the results of scientific research funded by NWO freely accessible via the internet (open access). NWO is therefore implementing the Dutch government’s policy to make all publicly funded research open access. All scientific publications resulting from research funded by awards under this call for proposals must therefore be made open access immediately (at the time of publication). NWO accepts different routes in this regard:
– publication in an open access journal,
– deposition of a version of the article in a repository, or
– publication in a hybrid journal in accordance with a deal between the VSNU and the publisher. See https://www.openaccess.nl/en.

Any costs of publishing in open access journals may be included in the project budget. NWO does not reimburse the costs of publishing in hybrid journals. These conditions apply to all forms of scientific publications resulting from this call for proposals, including scientific monographs, edited volumes, proceedings and chapters. For a more detailed explanation of NWO’s open access policy, see: http://www.nwo.nl/openscience-en.
Data management

It must be possible to replicate, verify and disprove the results of scientific research. In the digital era, this means that both publications and research data should be as freely accessible as possible. NWO expects research data that emerge from projects funded by NWO to become freely available, as much as possible, for reuse by other researchers. In this regard NWO applies the principle: “as open as possible, protected if necessary”. Researchers are expected to publish at least those data and/or non-numerical results that underpin the conclusions of works published within the project at the same time as the publication itself. Any associated costs may be included in the project budget. Researchers must state how data resulting from the project will be managed; this must be stated in the data management section of the research application and in the data management plan after funding has been awarded.

1. Data management section

The data management section is part of the research application. Researchers are therefore asked to consider, even before the research starts, how the collected data should be organised and categorised so that they can be made freely available. Measures will often need to be taken during the production and analysis of the data to make their later storage and dissemination possible. If not all data resulting from the project can be made public, for reasons of privacy, ethics or valorisation for example, the applicant must state this in the data management section.

2. Data management plan

After an application has been approved, the applicant should elaborate the data management section into a data management plan. In the plan, the researcher describes whether existing data will be used or whether this is a new data collection, and how the data collection will then be made FAIR: Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable. Prior to submission, the data management plan should be agreed with a data steward or comparable officer of the knowledge institution where the research is to be conducted. The plan must be submitted to NWO via ISAAC within four months after the award of funding. This is an obligation associated with the grant. The plan can be adjusted during the research.

For more information on the NWO data management protocol, see: https://www.nwo.nl/datamanagement‐en.

Nagoya Protocol

The Nagoya Protocol became effective on 12 October 2014 and aims to contribute to 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 resources from the Netherlands or abroad for their research should familiarise themselves with the Nagoya Protocol (www.absfocalpoint.nl). NWO assumes that researchers will take all necessary actions with respect to the Nagoya Protocol.

3.6 Submitting an application

Applications may be submitted exclusively via the ISAAC online application system. Applications not submitted via ISAAC will not be considered. Applicants are required to submit their applications via their personal ISAAC account. Applicants who do not have an ISAAC account should create an account at least one day before submitting the application. This is to ensure that any registration problems can be resolved in time. If the applicant already has an account with NWO, there is no need to create a new account in order to submit an application.

For questions of a technical nature, please contact the ISAAC helpdesk; see Section 5.1.2.
4 Assessment procedure

4.1 Procedure

NWO processes applications in the order in which complete applications are received and aims for an assessment period of four working days starting from receipt of the complete application.

The first step in the assessment procedure is a test to check whether the application can be accepted for processing. An application will be considered if it meets the conditions set out in Section 3 of this call for proposals. NWO will not consider applications that do not meet the conditions.

NWO will not seek outside opinions in order to assess a fast-track application. The NWO Office will assess applications on the basis of the criteria set out in Section 4.2. NWO’s Executive Board has mandated the Domain directors to decide on applications in an individual capacity.

All persons involved in the assessment and decision-making process are bound by the NWO Code for Dealing with Personal Interests (www.nwo.nl/en/code).

If funding is awarded, the Dutch government’s Grant award regulations will be followed. The grant will then be determined immediately. The grant award will allocate a maximum amount of funding based on the cost estimate in the application. The grant award will state the date by which the activities must be completed. Grants are also subject to the following obligations:

a. applicants must inform NWO in writing as soon as it appears likely that the activities for which the grant was awarded will not be carried out, or will not be carried out on time or in full, or that the obligations associated with the grant will not be met, or will not be met on time or in full; and
b. if asked, applicants must provide evidence, in a manner previously specified by NWO in the grant award, that the activities for which the grant was awarded have been carried out and that the obligations associated with the grant have been met.

4.2 Criteria

Applications will be examined on the basis of the following criteria:

1. Relevance:
   - Is the proposed research relevant to the management of the corona crisis or will it enable society to learn from it?
2. Urgency:
   - Does the proposed research require real-time data gathering, i.e. the collecting of data that can only be obtained under the current crisis conditions?
3. Expertise:
   - Does the application demonstrate that the applicant has relevant expertise in the field of research in question?
4. Added value:
   - Does the proposal avoid duplication of other research already funded or in progress in the context of the corona crisis, e.g. within the current programme or under other NWO or ZonMw funding instruments set up for this crisis?
5. Feasibility:
   - a) Is the proposal realistic in terms of approach and intended result?
   - b) If the data collection has not yet started, is it likely that the research can begin within a month after the grant is awarded?
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Only applications that meet all of the above criteria will be considered for funding, as long as the budget allows.
5 Contact details and other information

5.1 Contact

5.1.1 Specific questions
For specific questions about Corona: Fast-track data and this call for proposals please contact:
Erica van Liempt
Tel.: +31 (0)70 344 0944
Email: fast-track-corona@nwo.nl

5.1.2 Technical questions about the electronic application system 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 CE(S)T on +31 (0)20 346 71 79. However, you can also submit your question by e-mail to isaac.helpdesk@nwo.nl. You will then receive an answer within two working days.
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