Call for proposals

Applied and Engineering Sciences
Health Research And Development
Science
Social Sciences And Humanities
Contents

1 Introduction 2
   1.1 Background 2
   1.2 Available budget 2
   1.3 Validity of the call for proposals 2

2 Aim 3
   2.1 Vidi target group 3
   2.2 Promoting female researchers 3
   2.3 Aspasia 3
   2.4 Knowledge utilization: background of the Impact Outlook Approach 4

3 Guidelines for applicants 5
   3.1 Who can apply 5
   3.2 What can be applied for 6
   3.3 When can applications be submitted 6
   3.4 Preparing the application and the embedding guarantee 7
   3.5 Specific conditions on granting 8
   3.6 Submitting an application 12

4 Assessment procedure 14
   4.1 Procedure 14
   4.2 Criteria for the proposal 16

5 Contact details and other information 18
   5.1 Contact 18
   5.2 List of institutions 19
1 Introduction

1.1 Background

In 2020, NWO will convert the Innovational Research Incentives Scheme to the NWO Talent Programme. The programme covers three grant categories (Vidi, Vidi and Vici).

Each category has one submission round per year. Assessment procedures may change, depending in part on the results of interim evaluations and/or on unforeseen and disruptive circumstances like the COVID-19 crisis.

Each grant category has a separate call for proposals.

NWO is structured into four domains:

- Science;
- Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH);
- Applied and Engineering Sciences (AES);
- Health Research and Development (ZonMw).

Please note: the Vidi round will be conducted in four procedures corresponding to the NWO domains. If applicants are unsure about which domain is best suited to their application, they should contact NWO in good time before submitting it (see 3.6).

1.2 Available budget

The overall budget for the NOW Talent Programme funding in 2021 is 150 million euros.

1.3 Validity of the call for proposals

This call for proposals is valid until the closing date of 2 November 2021 at 14.00 hours (CET).

This call for proposals and any decisions based on this call are subject to the NWO Grant Rules 2017 (NWO Grant Rules 2017).
2 Aim

The aim of the NWO Talent Programme is to promote innovation in academic research and to provide encouragement for individual postdoctoral researchers at various stages of their careers. Providing creative opportunities for adventurous, talented, pioneering researchers to do research of their own choice and to encourage them to make a permanent career of academic research are therefore key aims of the NWO Talent Programme. With a personal grant, researchers have the opportunity to develop their own, innovative line of research which could be structurally embedded in a research institution. Moreover, the NWO Talent Programme offers Vidi candidates the opportunity to build up or expand their own research group.

2.1 Vidi target group

The Vidi target group consists of excellent researchers with a striking and original talent as well as a considerable fascination for doing challenging and pioneering research. The focus of the Vidi proposal is on innovative and curiosity-driven research.

In view of the programme’s aim, candidates must be clearly capable of independently formulating and realising a line of scientific research. Therefore candidates must already have demonstrated their ability in their discipline. The candidates have carried out several years of postdoctoral research after their PhD and have demonstrated the ability to independently generate and effect innovative ideas.

The Vidi grant is intended for researchers whose qualities clearly exceed what is customary within their international peer group. They are expected to convince others of the quality and impact of their work and the originality and potential of their ideas.

Researchers working at a foreign institution may also submit an application. The project to be funded must be carried out at an institution in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, that is recognized by NWO.

Researchers of all nationalities and from all research fields may submit a Vidi application.

2.2 Promoting female researchers

We explicitly invite female researchers to apply. The representation and advancement of women in academia are unfortunately far less than those of men. NWO and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) are working together with the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW), the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU) and Dutch universities to rectify this situation; the aim is that the percentage of female applicants will ultimately be at least equal to the percentage of female researchers in the target group.

NWO strives to ensure that the success rates for female applicants will be at least equal to those for male researchers on average and in the medium term. In the event that two or more applications are rated equally, preference will be given to the proposal submitted by a female applicant.

2.3 Aspasia

The Aspasia premium scheme is linked to the Vidi round of the NWO Talent Programme. Through this scheme premiums of 40,000 euros are made available to university executive boards who promote female Vidi laureates to an associate professor within one year of the grant decision. Aspasia is also open to female applicants who were qualified as very good or excellent in the interview phase, but who ultimately did not receive a grant. Executive boards receive a premium of 120,000 euros for promoting these applicants. The specific conditions for the awarding of the premium can be found on the Aspasia website (www.nwo.nl/aspasia). Female laureates and candidates who are eligible for the premium will be informed of this by NWO after the funding allocation. After the Vidi grant decision, NWO will contact those candidates who may be eligible for an Aspasia grant. If the candidate
agrees, NWO will recommend promotion to her University Executive Board. Candidates who are already associate professor will not be approached.

### 2.4 Knowledge utilization: background of the Impact Outlook Approach

Not every financing instrument focuses to the same extent on increasing the chance of social impact. NWO applies three approaches to do justice to the various expectations in the area of societal impact. These focus in varying and proportional ways on stimulating knowledge utilisation. The three impact approaches are the Impact Outlook, Impact Plan and Impact Focus approach. Within the approaches different activities fit from the beginning of the research formulation, during the implementation and after the research.

The Impact Outlook Approach has been developed for research that primarily focuses on scientific impact, which is not necessarily linked to a societal issue. With this approach, NWO facilitates the discovery of (unforeseen) opportunities for societal impact and stimulates opportunities to monitor these. The approach explicitly offers room for fundamental scientific research. The approach is a strategy that focuses on discovering and monitoring (unforeseen) opportunities for knowledge utilization and societal impact during all phases of the research. These opportunities may have been foreseen at the start of the research, but may also arise during the research.

The **Impact Outlook Approach in the research process**

The assessment criterion of the impact outlook approach is the possible scientific and/or societal impact of the research. This criterion will be explained in more detail in paragraph 4.2 (Criteria). The applicant has the choice to focus on one or both forms of impact. Even if an applicant does not opt for a focus on societal impact, it is requested to indicate how attention will be paid during the research to discover opportunities that have arisen and to take these a step further.
3 Guidelines for applicants

3.1 Who can apply

Applications can be submitted by candidates who have obtained their PhD, irrespective of whether they hold tenured positions and of whether they come from the Netherlands or abroad. The appointment will be at one of the host research institutions. NWO will ask candidates for an ‘embedding guarantee’. (see 3.5.1).

3.1.1 Career deadline

Vidi applicants must have obtained their doctorate within the last eight years. The 2021 Vidi round is open to researchers who meet this criterion on 1 October 2021.

3.1.2 Extension clause

In the case of care responsibilities, pregnancy, illness or training to become a clinical specialist, it is possible to receive an extension to the number of years after the PhD graduation. An applicant who wishes to request an extension must always contact the Talent Programme coordinator (talent@nwo.nl) before the application is submitted. A request for an extension will only be considered if it is accompanied by the required formal documents.

Parents can obtain an extension if they are caring for a child. An extension on the grounds of childcare should be supported by the signed parent-declaration form (parent-declaration), in which the applicant declares that the child or children are part of his or her household.

The maximum extension that may be granted to any particular applicant is five years.

Further information about extensions is provided in the Frequently Asked Questions section online. If you wish to apply for an extension, please contact NWO before submitting your application (see Section 5.1).

3.1.3 Compensation scheme Parental leave

Applicants in this funding round can make use of the NWO Compensation scheme Parental leave. If you would like to make use of the scheme, please submit an e-mail request to the relevant programme secretary for your round and/or panel within the Domain you are applying for.

3.1.4 Additional conditions

The following additional conditions apply to the assessment of applications:

a. Applications must be submitted by individual researchers (not by pairs or groups of researchers or by research teams).

b. A candidate may:

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1 The call of 2021 is also accessible for those candidates whose duly motivated request, submitted in 2020, to make use of the access to the 2021 Vidi round has been granted. This one-off measure was taken due to the exceptional circumstances as a consequence of the COVID-19 crisis.
submit a maximum of one application in the Vidi 2021 round;
enter the application process for the NWO Talent Programme for no more than one type of grant at a time;
submit a Vidi application no more than twice (If an application that has been admitted to the selection process is withdrawn by the applicant, this submission still counts towards the maximum number of submissions per applicant).

c. Researchers who have previously received a particular type of grant under the NWO Talent Programme may not apply again for the same kind of grant.

d. A researcher in receipt of a current award under the NWO Talent Programme may submit an application for a following type of grant no more than 24 months before the planned end date of the current grant.

3.1.5 Institutions

Approved host institutions are those universities within the Kingdom of the Netherlands whose terms of reference include the conducting of research, the KNAW and NWO institutes, and a number of other institutions.

A list of approved host institutions you can find in paragraph 5.2

3.2 What can be applied for

The maximum amount for a Vidi project is 800,000 euros for a period of five years. If the proposed research is of shorter duration (in months), the maximum amount will be reduced accordingly.

The budget estimate submitted with the application must be based on eligible direct staff costs and direct non-staff costs. The calculation of the staff costs must be based on actual gross salaries and associated costs as specified in the current Agreement for Funding Scientific Research (http://www.nwo.nl/salary-tables), with the exception of indexation and end-of-project payments. The amount of these payments for the Vidi 2021 round will be based on the standard rates in the Agreement.

Applicants who will devote no more than 25 percent of their Vidi contracted working hours to non-research activities (e.g. teaching, administration, management) and the other 75 percent to research for their Vidi project may charge their entire salary to the project budget. The term “direct non-staff costs” means general non-staff costs plus the costs of knowledge transfer and realising scientific and/or societal impact (knowledge utilisation) and internationalisation. Infrastructure costs (accommodation and office automation) and other overheads are not eligible for funding.

The proposed budget will be assessed by NWO. If it exceeds the maximum amount of the grant, the application must be accompanied by a letter from the prospective host institution or a third party (co-funder) guaranteeing to cover the excess costs requested from NWO. This guarantee must be signed by the dean/manager of the institution or by a person with authority to sign on behalf of the body issuing the guarantee.

For further information and explanation of grant-eligible costs, see the document “guidelines for design of expenditures financial accounting reports” on the Vidi funding page of the relevant domain.

3.3 When can applications be submitted

The deadline for submitting applications in all domains is November 2, 2021, 2:00 PM CET.

When submitting your application in ISAAC or Mijn ZonMw, you must also enter data online. Entering this information and uploading your application may take longer than you expect. You should therefore start submitting your application at least a few days before the deadline of this call for proposals. Applications submitted after the deadline will not be considered.
3.4 Preparing the application and the embedding guarantee

The forms for the Vidi grant application and the embedding guarantee for the call of 2021 will be available on the NWO Talent Programme website at least two months before the submission deadline.

- Download the application and embedding guarantee forms from the electronic application system ISAAC or from NWO’s website (on the grant page for this programme).
- Complete the application form
- After the discussion with the host institution complete the embedding guarantee form with the signature of the dean and make a scan of the document.
- Complete your ISAAC/MijnZonMw account with the actual contact details (phone numbers and mail address)
- Save the forms as pdf files and upload them separately in ISAAC (www.isaac.nwo.nl) or in MijnZonMw [https://mijn.zonmw.nl] for the Medical Sciences (ZonMw).

Vidi grant applications must be written in English and must include:

- an outline of the research proposal including a motivation for the choice of the institution (max. 4,000 words, including in-text references);
- a completed section on realising scientific and/or societal impact (max. 1,000 words);
- a completed data management section;
- a budget estimate;
- A candidate’s curriculum vitae, consisting of the following two sections (see 3.4.1):
  - A description of the candidate’s academic profile (max. 1000 words);
  - A description of the candidate’s key output (max. 10 items, min. 400 to max. 700 words).

The Vidi embedding guarantee must be completed and signed by the dean of the institution in which the research will be conducted (see 3.5.1.) and must be uploaded via ISAAC at the same time as the application.

3.4.1 The narrative CV has two parts:

1. **Narrative academic profile**: a narrative description of the candidate’s academic profile. In this the candidates are free to decide what they consider relevant to state in their CV.

   This part is a narrative in which applicants explain what type of researcher they are: what is the research focus, agenda and vision of the researcher? What have they done to realise that vision? In principle, applicants can use this section to state all information they consider to be useful/important and which demonstrates their qualities, for example in relation to the discipline and to the specific proposal. In the case of a Vici proposal, for instance, stating previous experience with supervision, training and leadership qualities would be more important than in a Veni proposal. Grants or prizes obtained may be stated, but a complete list of these should not be given. If such a statement is made, then candidates are requested to indicate what they did with the opportunities that the grant obtained afforded them. Important keynotes, academic “service”, contributions to teams, outreach, etc. can also be included in this document. Claims about publications, grants, conferences etc. are meant to emphasize the explanation why a certain research is so important and why it contributes to the quality of the researcher. For transdisciplinary research, the candidate could place extra emphasis on collaborations in other projects. However, the experience relevant for setting up an important database is entirely different. In brief, it is up to applicants to demonstrate what makes them good and suitable. In all cases, the context should be described. Finally, this part contains a motivation for the proposed research and room to explain the researcher’s suitability for the specific research.

2. **Key Output**: a list of at most ten key outputs with an explanation as to why the applicant considers these to be the most important output. This part, in which applicants demonstrate their research output, also has a narrative
character. Candidates are no longer required to provide a full list of publications but can instead selectively choose the output they showcase. The term output is broadly defined: peer-reviewed articles, preprints, Open Access data, software, presentations, contributions to popular media, etc. All types of output that are relevant for the candidate’s profile, the discipline, society or the proposal can be stated. By limiting the number of outputs, the focus shifts from quantity to quality and the impact of the contributions. A maximum of ten outputs may be stated; candidates may also choose to state fewer than ten outputs. They can demonstrate what they consider to be important and by doing that make a link with part 1, the academic profile. For each output, the candidate is requested to state the role/contribution they played (in the team), the output’s impact, its relationship with the proposal and/or why it uniquely shows the quality of the candidate.

**Guidelines for the use of quality indicators**

In the motivation for the choice of output, reference can be made to certain quality indicators, but not to additional output. The guideline for these indicators is as follows: all types of quality indicators may be stated, as long as they only relate to a single output item.

Both quantitative and qualitative indicators that satisfy this guideline are permitted. For instance, the number of times a dataset is downloaded may be stated, or the impact of a certain article on policy. NWO encourages stating several quality indicators per output, so for example the use of the results presented in professional practice as well as a sentiment analysis of the citations or the number of citations for that one output. It is therefore possible to state the article was cited exceptionally often or has led to changes in textbooks, but also, for example, that this collaboration resulted in a successful H2020 application. Applicants are requested to explain why the chosen indicators are relevant; how do the indicators chosen in this specific case provide insight into the quality of the work and/or the applicant?

All indicators that do not satisfy the guidelines above are excluded. For instance, this means that journal impact factors (JIF) or any other indicator that refers to a journal, publisher or publication platform may not be stated. This rule applies not only to quantitative indicators but also to qualitative descriptions of reputation. Therefore, terms such as “top journal” and “high-quality university press” may not be used either. H-indexes and sums and averages of citations may also not be stated as these indicators do not just refer to the specific output concerned.

### 3.5 Specific conditions on granting

The NWO Grant Rules 2017 and the Agreement on the Payment of Costs for Scientific Research apply to all applications.

**The San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)**

NWO is 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, journals and other organisations.

DORA aims to reduce the uncritical use of bibliometric indicators and curb 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. For NWO this means that committee members and referees are requested 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. When assessing the scientific track record of applicants, NWO considers a broad range of research outputs. In addition to research publications, applicants are encouraged to include other scholarly outputs such as datasets, patents, software and code, etc. in their applications.

For more information on how NWO is implementing the principles of DORA see: [www.nwo.nl/en/dora](http://www.nwo.nl/en/dora)
Open Access
As a signatory to the Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities (2003) and a member of cOAlition S (2018), NWO is committed to making the results of research funded by NWO openly accessible via the internet. NWO is thus fulfilling the ambitions of the Dutch government to make all publicly funded research openly available. Scientific publications arising from projects awarded on the basis of this Call for proposals must therefore be made available in open access in accordance with the Open Access Policy Framework.

Scientific articles
Scientific articles must be made available 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 immediately (without embargo) depositing of at least the author accepted manuscript of the article in an open access repository registered in OpenDOAR;
- publication in a journal for which a transformative Open Access agreement exists between VSNU and a publisher.
For further information see: www.openaccess.nl.

Books

CC BY licence
To ensure the widest possible dissemination of publications the Creative Commons (CC BY) licence must be applied. Alternatively – in case of serious objections - 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 project proposal 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 special NWO Open Access Books Fund is available.

For more detailed information about NWO's open access policy, see www.nwo.nl/en/open-science

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 freely accessible. As much as possible, NWO expects that research data resulting from NWO-funded projects will be made publicly available for reuse by other researchers. “As open as possible, as closed as necessary” is the guiding principle in this respect. As a minimum, NWO requires that the data underpinning research papers should be made available at the time of the article’s publication. The costs for doing so are eligible for funding and can be included in the project budget. In the data management section, and in the data management template if the project is awarded funding, researchers explain how they plan to manage the data expected to be generated by the project.

1. Data management section
The data management section is part of the research proposal. Researchers are asked to prospectively consider how they will manage the data the project will generate and plan for which data will be preserved and be made publicly 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 from the project can be made publicly available, the reasons for not doing so must be explained in the data management section. Due consideration is given to aspects such as privacy, public security, ethical limitations, property rights and commercial interests.
2. Data management plan
After a proposal has been awarded funding, the researcher should elaborate the data management section into a data management plan. In this plan, the researcher describes 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. The data management plan must be completed in consultation with a data steward or equivalent research data management support staff at the home institution of the project leader. The plan should be submitted to NWO via ISAAC within four months after the proposal has been awarded funding. NWO will approve 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.

Further information on the NWO data management protocol can be found at https://www.nwo.nl/research-datamanagement.

Nagoya Protocol
The Nagoya Protocol became effective on 12 October 2014 and 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 (www.absfocalpoint.nl). NWO assumes that researchers will take all necessary actions with respect to the Nagoya Protocol.

Allocation of IP rights
The following applies with respect to making agreements about intellectual property rights and publication (IP&P): for projects awarded funding by NWO SSH, ZonMw and NWO Science, the project leader is responsible for the allocation of IP rights to the project results.

For Vidi applications funded by the domain AES, both NWO and the institution share the property and the IP rights on the project results which are generated by the institution. More information: https://www.nwo.nl/en/applicant.

After the proposal has been awarded, the NWO domain AES will contact the user/users to make agreements about the allocation of IP rights and about publication, with due consideration for the “Guidelines TTW User Committee”.

The NWO conditions with respect to IP rights and the publication procedure are stated in Chapter 4 of the NWO Grant Rules 2017.

User committees
After funding has been awarded, for projects for which project management is handled by the NWO domain AES, NWO will appoint a user committee (as described in Article 3.3.2a of the NWO Grant Rules 2017) in consultation with the project leader, to facilitate the actual and effective transfer of knowledge from the research to the users. The user committee’s main task is to advise the project leader about the direction the research should take to maximise the application of the research results. How the user committee works and its tasks are stated in the “Guidelines TTW/AES User Committee”. Membership of the user committee is at the invitation of NWO domain AES. By agreeing to participate, the members commit themselves to the rules stated in the “Guidelines TTW User Committee”. Costs related to participation in user committees cannot be part of the budget.

3.5.1 Embedding guarantee
NWO asks Vidi candidates for an “embedding guarantee”. This means that researchers can only submit applications for Vidi funding with the support of the institution where they intend to conduct their research. The embedding guarantee should be laid down in the relevant Vidi embedding guarantee form and must be signed by the dean of the institution. This form is available at “embedding guarantee”. Also see 3.6. Submitting an application.
Choice of institution

Candidates are free to choose an approved institution (as listed in Section 5.2) in which they plan to conduct their research, but the embedding within the institution should be arranged by signing the embedding guarantee before submitting the application. The embedding guarantee is an expression of the agreements made between the Vidi candidate and the institution about career prospects. The hosting institution states that a Vidi candidate will be offered either a tenure track appointment or a permanent appointment if the Vidi proposal is awarded. And if the tenure track ends during the Vidi research, a permanent contract will be offered. In consultation with the host institution in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, part of the research may be conducted abroad. The applicant’s plans for achieving institutional integration may be a subject of discussion during the assessment.

Coordination

In all cases and before submission of the Vidi application, the embedding of the proposed research must be coordinated in a discussion between the candidate and the intended supervisor at the hosting institution. The information in the Vidi embedding guarantee form will play no role in the selection process.

Appointment

The appointment at the host institution and arrangements for integration within it must always be completed before any grant payment is made by NWO.

3.5.2 Ethical aspects

Any research proposal that raises ethical issues must be carefully considered in advance. Certain research projects require a statement of approval from a recognised ethical review committee, medical ethics review committee (MREC) or the central animal experiments committee (CCD). Such committees may advise researchers on matters such as the use and handling of patients, subjects and laboratory animals, possible risks of disclosure of data, use of human tissue, risks to the environment or cultural heritage, and possible conflicts of interest. Their recommendations may or may not be binding. In addition to ethical review by an ethics committee, some research proposals require a licence under the Population Screening Act (WBO). More information on medical ethics review committees is available from the Central Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (CCMO), while the Dutch Association of Animal Experiment Committees (NVDEC) can provide information on animal experiments committees, and the Health Council of the Netherlands can advise on the WBO.

Vidi applicants are responsible for determining whether their research proposals raise possible ethical issues. If so, they are also responsible for obtaining any necessary statement of approval from the appropriate ethics review committee and/or licence under the Population Screening Act.

NWO subscribes to the Dutch Freedom of Information on Animal Experiments Code (Code Openheid Dierproeven) and the Biosecurity Code. Vidi applicants must subscribe to and comply with the prevailing codes.

Vidi projects must commence within six months of the grant award. Research projects requiring a statement of approval and/or licence under the Population Screening Act may not start until NWO has received a copy of the relevant statement and/or licence. NWO expects candidates to pay attention to the timetable for the Vidi assessment procedure and take account of the time required by ethics review committees to conduct project assessments or for the Population Screening Act licence application procedure to run its course. Where an application raises complex ethical issues, NWO reserves the right to seek external advice.

Research Integrity

It is of essential importance that scientific research which is carried out with finance of NWO is in accordance with the leading national and international principles of scientific integrity – honesty, care, transparency, independence and responsibility. The Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (2018) forms the guiding principle for NWO’s integrity policy. Everybody who submits an application to NWO must state that they are familiar with the code and that they are complying with it. Also after an application has been awarded funding, NWO requires researchers to state in the progress reports that they are adhering to the Code. More information: www.nwo.nl/en/scientific-integrity
3.6 Submitting an application

Applications can only be submitted via the online application system ISAAC. Applications for the domains Science, SSH and AES not submitted via ISAAC will not be considered. Applications to the Medical Sciences Division can only be submitted via the Mijn ZonMw application system, which can be accessed via the website of the Netherlands Organisation for Health Research & Development, ZonMw.

Applicants must submit their application via their personal ISAAC/Mijn ZonMw account. If the applicant does not yet have an ISAAC/Mijn ZonMw account, it should be created well in advance of the application deadline, to ensure that any registration problems can be resolved in time. If the applicant already has a NWO account, then he/she does not need to create a new account to submit an application.

When submitting your application to ISAAC/Mijn ZonMw you will need to enter additional details online. You should therefore start submitting your application at least a few days before the deadline of this call for proposals. Applications submitted after the deadline will not be taken into consideration.

During the assessment procedure NWO will be in contact with the applicants by making use of the contact information in the candidates’ profile in ISAAC or Mijn ZonMw. Therefore, it is crucial to update the information in the profile such as correspondence details, telephone number and email address.

For technical questions, please contact the ISAAC/Mijn ZonMw helpdesk (see Section 5.1.2).

3.6.1 Choice of NWO domain

NWO has four domains: Science, Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH), Applied and Engineering Sciences (AES), and Health Research and Development (ZonMw).

Vidi candidates should submit their applications to only one domain. As from September 2019, all Vidi applications will be assessed within one of the domains. If the proposed research is cross-domain in nature, the applicant should choose the domain that best suits the application.

Please note: NWO recommends that applicants consider in good time which domain is best suited to their application. If you are not sure which domain is best suited to your application, we urge you to contact NWO. NWO may be able to offer advice on this matter; the ultimate decision is up to the applicant. Please find the contact information here.

If, after submission of the application, the secretariat of the chosen NWO domain is of the opinion that the application would be better assessed by a different assessment committee, NWO will contact the applicant to discuss the possibility of transferring the application to a different NWO domain.

Annexes

NWO asks Vidi candidates for an “embedding guarantee”. The Vidi embedding guarantee form is available online.

The embedding guarantee form should be uploaded as a separate PDF document via ISAAC/MijnZonMw upon submission before the deadline. The embedding form will not be sent to referees or committee members and will not be taken into consideration when assessing the applications.

Co-financing for applications in the domains of Science, SSH and ZonMw

In the event of a contribution by the research institute and/or a third party, a ‘Statement exceeding maximum funding, signed by the co-funding party, must be uploaded with the full proposal. These statements are not forwarded to referees and committee members at NWO Science, NWO SSH and ZonMw and are not part of the assessment of the proposal.
Co-financing for applications in the NWO AES domain

If the maximum budget for AES applications is exceeded, the host institute must guarantee that it will pay for the exceeded amount, by means of a ‘Statement exceeding maximum funding’. If parties other than the host institute make an "in cash" or "in-kind" contribution to the project, the AES-specific format "Letter of support” should be used. At AES, co-financing statements in which third parties commit to in cash and/or in-kind support are sent to referees and committee members.

Please note: for co-funding statements, the domain-specific form must be used, which can be found on the funding page of the relevant domain.
4 Assessment procedure

4.1 Procedure

The first step in the assessment procedure is to determine the admissibility of application. This is done using the conditions stated in Chapter 3 of this call for proposals.

The NWO Code for Dealing with Personal Interests applies to all persons and NWO staff involved in the assessment and/or decision-making process.

The data management section in the application is not evaluated and hence is not considered in the decision on whether or not to award funding. However, both the referees and the committee can issue advice relating to the data management section. After a proposal has been awarded funding, the applicant should elaborate the data management section into a data management plan. Applicants can make use of the advice from the referees and committee, if available, when they write the data management plan. The project can start as soon as the data management plan has been approved by NWO.

Vidi applications are assessed in a national competition. The assessment of Vidi applications takes place within the four NWO domains. This means that applications from different disciplines will be compared within each domain in a competitive procedure. The domains use broad-based committees of academics to advise on the merits and prioritisation of the applications. This should be taken into account when writing the application. The application must also be accessible to committee members from other scientific disciplines within the domain. Where domains use multiple assessment panels, the (disciplinary) composition of these panels is explained in more detail on the domain page in question.

NWO gives all Vidi proposals a qualification. The applicant is informed of this qualification when the decision about whether or not to award funding is announced.

NWO gives all full proposals a qualification:

- excellent
- very good
- good
- unsatisfactory

For further information about the qualifications, see: https://www.nwo.nl/en/apply-funding-how-does-it-work.

4.1.1 Eligibility

NWO screens applications to ensure that they comply with the formal requirements of the scheme (see Chapter 3). Only those proposals that meet the conditions are eligible and will be taken into consideration by NWO.

4.1.2 Pre-selection

If after the applications are submitted it is determined that the total grant amount applied for exceeds the total available domain budget by more than four times, NWO may decide to implement a pre-selection process for all submitted (full) applications. Otherwise, all applications are sent to external referees without pre-selection. Pre-selection is used because otherwise the number of referees to be consulted becomes too large and the chance of success for many candidates very small.

Pre-selection is based on the three Vidi selection criteria for proposals (see Section 4.2). In the event of pre-selection, the committee will assess all applications globally and comparatively and rate them in terms of their chance of success, without making use of external referees. Candidates whose applications are judged least likely to be awarded grants will be notified that the committee does not intend to select their applications for further consideration. If candidates have legitimate grounds to object to the committee’s decision, they may send a
reasoned response to the domain handling the application. On the basis of this response, the committee may change its decision and select the application for further processing after all. Otherwise, a formal decision letter rejecting the application will be sent to the applicant.

4.1.3 Hearing and rebuttal

All proposals (or, if applicable, those successful in the pre-selection round) are submitted to external referees for their consideration. Candidates will then be given the opportunity to respond with a rebuttal to the anonymised referee reports.

It is possible to indicate up to three non-referees. Candidates can submit the names of non-referees via ISAAC/MyZonMw when they submit their application. NWO will not approach these non-referees to assess the application as external referees. Even if ISAAC offers room for more non-referees, candidates may not indicate more than three names.

4.1.4 Interview (selection)

The proposals, referees’ reports and rebuttals are presented to the relevant assessment committee. The assessment committee selects a number of candidates for an interview or an alternative way of rebuttal. The selection committee makes its own consideration based on the referees’ reports received and the candidates’ responses to them. The highest-ranked candidates are then invited for an interview or an alternative way of rebuttal.

During the interview, the assessment committee has an opportunity to ask questions, including new ones not yet raised by the referees. The candidate can respond to these during the interview discussion with the committee. This again provides an opportunity for a hearing and rebuttal. The interview is an important part of the assessment and can result in a review of the assessment and the proposal’s score to date.

4.1.5 Decision-making

After the interviews, the assessment committee formulates its funding recommendation and submits it to the relevant domain board, which then takes its decision. The final number of grants to be awarded to applications with a minimum qualification of “very good” depends on the funds available in the round. Once the relevant domain board has taken its decision, the result is announced.

4.1.6 Arrangements and reporting

Once the relevant domain board has announced its decisions, arrangements are made for each award. Successful candidates are awarded contracts of employment with the intended institution of their choice and arrangements are made for final reporting and for any necessary supervision by the domain concerned (see also Section 3.5.1). Vidi projects must always start within six months of the grant being awarded. The projects awarded funding will be managed by one of the NWO domains.

4.1.7 Indicative timetable

NWO aims to complete the entire selection procedure for the 2021 Vidi round within eight months. The indicative timetable for the 2021 Vidi round (the exact timetable varies according to the domain) is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applications</th>
<th>Deadline for submission of Vidi proposals via the ISAAC system/Mijn ZonMw</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 November 2021 by 2:00 PM CET*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through to the end of March 2022</td>
<td>Consulting of referees and candidates’ rebuttals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April/May 2022</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2021</td>
<td>Decisions by NWO domain boards and notification of the decision to applicants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1.8 Adjustments to the procedure

It is possible that NWO may deem it necessary to make adjustments to the procedure as a result of unforeseen, disruptive circumstances such as Covid-19 pandemic. Any adjustments to the 2021 Vidi procedure will be published on the NWO website. Please check the website regularly for accurate information.

4.2 Criteria for the proposal

All proposals will be assessed against the following criteria:

1. Quality and innovative character of the proposed research (see Section 4.2.1) (40%);
2. Scientific and/or societal impact (knowledge utilisation; see Section 4.2.2) (20%);
3. Quality of the researcher (see Section 4.2.3) (40%).

4.2.1 Quality and innovative character of the proposed research

- Challenging content;
- originality of the topic;
- (elements of) scientific innovation;
- aimed at building up a new line of research;
- potential to make an important contribution to the advancement of science;
- effectiveness and feasibility of the proposed research;
- international importance of the proposed research area.

4.2.2 Scientific and/or societal impact

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

Scientific impact includes, among others:

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

Societal impact includes, among others:

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

Besides impact, the assessment committee, as part of this criterion, will also weigh:

- the motivation for the focus on scientific impact and/or societal impact;
- the degree of the presence of processes, factors, or plans to enhance (unforeseen) chances on the not-chosen focus of impact during the runtime of the project.

It is possible to achieve a good evaluation for this criterion if the focus of the proposal lies on scientific impact, societal impact, or a spread across both forms of impact. The score of this criterion is independent of the chosen focus; one form of impact is not better or worse than the other.
4.2.3 Quality of the researcher

- Fit in terms of profile in the target group;
- Showing qualities which clearly exceed what is customary within their international peer group, which can be seen in the quality and impact of publications and/or other scientific output;
- Academic excellence as demonstrated by e.g. the PhD thesis, publications and/or other scientific achievements;
- Inspiring enthusiasm for research and/or technology and in general and for the execution of the research idea in particular;
- Persuasiveness;
- Clear indication(s) that the researcher has a striking talent for doing scientific research;
- Clear positioning of the researcher’s work with respect to scientific and (where possible) public themes or questions;
- (Inter)national visibility and embedding;
- Indication(s) of independence and/or independent research line(s);
- Indications of other academic activities, including contributions to Open Science, ‘academic citizenship’, education and the linking of these to science;
- Clear alignment of the candidate’s profile with the research idea, or clear vision of how this alignment will be achieved;
- Ability to translate the output of scientific research for the benefit of potential knowledge users outside of the own academic work area as well as within society;
- Demonstrably capable of generating innovative ideas and independently developing these successfully;
- Capable of leading and supervising other researchers and staff;
- Indication(s) of collaborative abilities.
5 Contact details and other information

5.1 Contact

5.1.1 Specific questions

The latest information about the NWO Talent Programme can be found on [https://www.nwo.nl/en/researchprogrammes/nwo-talent-programme](https://www.nwo.nl/en/researchprogrammes/nwo-talent-programme). A document with answers to frequently asked questions can also be found under the division specific funding instrument. Candidates are advised to check the website before contacting NWO. Questions about the NWO Talent Programme can be directed towards the central coordinator of this grant programme at NWO or to the coordinator of the relevant NWO domain. Contact details can be found at [https://www.nwo.nl/en/researchprogrammes/nwo-talent-programme](https://www.nwo.nl/en/researchprogrammes/nwo-talent-programme).

Questions about current Talent Programme projects should be posed to the coordinator of the NWO domain or the unit for project management handling the project concerned. The contact details for the project management unit are mentioned in the letter received on the grant decision (for further contact details of the NWO domains please see: [https://www.nwo.nl/en/researchprogrammes/nwo-talent-programme](https://www.nwo.nl/en/researchprogrammes/nwo-talent-programme)).

Central coordinator Talent Programme

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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 (see [https://www.isaac.nwo.nl/en/help](https://www.isaac.nwo.nl/en/help)) before consulting the helpdesk. The ISAAC helpdesk can be contacted from Monday to Friday between 10:00 and 17:00 hours CE(S)T (tel: +31 20 346 7179). You can also submit your question by email to isaac.helpdesk@nwo.nl. You will receive an answer within two working days.

Technical questions about the use of the Mijn ZonMw application system can be addressed to the helpdesk during normal office hours (tel: +31 70 349 5178) or by email: servicedesk@zonmw.nl.

5.1.3 Privacy statement

The personal data that NWO receives in the context of this round will be processed in accordance with the NWO privacy statement ([https://www.nwo.nl/en/privacyverklaring](https://www.nwo.nl/en/privacyverklaring)).

5.2 List of institutions

Grants may be requested by researchers from the following Knowledge Institutes:

– Universities established in the Kingdom of the Netherlands;
– University medical centres;
– Institutes affiliated to the Academy (Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen (KNAW)) or NWO;
– the Netherlands Cancer Institute;
– the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics, Nijmegen;
– the DUBBLE Beamline at the ESRF, Grenoble;
– the Naturalis Biodiversity Centre;
– the Advanced Research Centre for NanoLithography (ARCNL);
– the Princess Maxima Centre

A list of approved knowledge institutions is given below. Applicants are encouraged to contact the institution of their choice in good time, in order to obtain the compulsory embedding guarantee.