Impact Explorer
Exploring opportunities for societal impact

Call for proposals
1 Introduction

This Call for Proposals explains the submission procedure for the Impact Explorer funding round. This Call for Proposals falls under the responsibility of the Dutch Research Council (Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek, NWO).

This Call for Proposals gives information on the aim of the programme (Section 2), the conditions applying to funding applications (Section 3), and how the applications will be assessed (Section 4). You will need this information in order to correctly submit a funding application. Section 5 describes the funding obligations that apply if the request is granted. Section 6 gives the relevant contact details, and Section 7 contains the appendices.

1.1 Background

The NWO strives to promote not only scientific impact but also social impact.

From the standpoint of their knowledge utilisation policies, NWO and ZonMw examine the ways research can contribute towards the resolution of societal issues. This Call for Proposals has been made in order to stimulate ideas surrounding societal impact, and thereby increase the societal impact of research.

The aim of this Call for Proposals is to explore the opportunities for societal impact that arise out of curiosity-driven research. This concerns opportunities and ideas that were not envisaged in advance, when the project plan was being drawn up, but which arose over the course of the project.

The funding is intended to validate and support the practical activities undertaken to explore the potential social impact of discoveries in curiosity-driven research carried out within the Talent Line and Open Competitions in NWO and ZonMw.

This 2023 round is a pilot instrument. On the basis of its results it will be decided whether this Call for Proposals will be given structural form in the future, and its conditions amended if necessary.

1.1 Available budget

The funding limit for this Call for Proposals is €1,000,000. Applications may be for a minimum of €20,000 and a maximum of €30,000.

1.2 Submission deadline(s)

This Call for Proposals will open on 1 May 2023 and will stay open until the funding limit has been reached, or otherwise until 2pm (CEST) on 30 April 2024.
2 Aims

This chapter describes the programme’s objective and societal impact.

2.1 Aims of the programme

The Impact Explorer programme is aimed at exploring the societal value of an unexpected scientific discovery or insight, so that the results and insights arising from scientific research having a potential for societal impact are not left unexploited.

This concerns potential societal impact in its broadest sense: for instance, by taking the first steps towards positive societal change, societal awareness, innovation development, generating new perspectives or approaches (this could mean innovative ideas, but also new queries about the status quo). It is precisely in the context of curiosity-driven research that an exploratory (knowledge utilisation) instrument is desirable – one that examines the potential value of a discovery or finding from a new perspective.

Curiosity-driven research is a vital link in the long chain of knowledge that leads to innovation in our society. This could be societal or technological innovation, for instance, but it could also be a disruptive product, process, model or service, a societal debate, or new policy based on altered legislation or regulations. The Impact Explorer programme functions as a starting point for possible follow-up research. The funding is intended to help establish whether, and how, a potential path to societal impact could be created in the wake of an unexpected scientific discovery or insight.

At the start of a research project it is often impossible to say what might be possible. The Impact Explorer programme is therefore intended to enable extra steps to be taken wherever opportunities for societal impact gradually emerge: steps that were unforeseen in the initial project design.

A variety of different parties in society, often outside the scientific community, are needed for critical reflection on the status quo and the path towards the further development of results and insights emerging from scientific research. They are needed to ensure that any identified potential solution approaches are actually followed up, often in dialogue with science fields that deliver more applied results. For this reason the Impact Explorer programme requests collaboration between the researcher and a (self-chosen) impact partner, to jointly explore ways of increasing societal impact and validating a route to its realization.

The result of this exploration may be the analysis of a potential market, identifying and contacting stakeholders, or a sketch of the possible societal value of the research discovery and the path or route by which the intended impact could be achieved. These deliverables are not, therefore, scientific knowledge products. The results of the exploration should, however, allow a strategic decision to be taken on the next step to be taken by the researcher and/or others, and whether this should take the form of further research or a development path.

The Impact Explorer programme is expressly not intended to fund the continuation of scientific research (such as data collection, analysis and publication). Neither does it in any way replace the efforts being devoted to knowledge valorization which have already been budgeted and included in a project application.

2.2 Societal impact

Depending on the aim of the funding instrument, NWO will select an approach that supports the greatest likelihood of societal impact. The primary purpose of the funding instrument determines the choice of approach that NWO will employ to promote knowledge utilisation in the different phases of the project (application, execution, follow-up) and the efforts demanded of applicant(s) and partners.
Hoofdstuk 2: Aims /

The programme will employ the Impact Focus approach, with NWO facilitating projects that take at least one clear step towards bringing their research results towards application(s) in society. For the Impact Explorer programme this means that account is taken of the following principles:

- The primary focus is knowledge utilisation, founded on scientific quality and impact.
- A project begins with a research result and a concrete idea for its practical application. The central question is: what/who is needed to turn this result into practical value?
- A project is directed towards the transition from the research world (control, output) to the stakeholder world (influence, outcome): this means taking one or more steps on the path from output via outcome to impact.
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 submit an application 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 Center.

*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.

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. The only exception are applicants with a current VENI grant, they may apply. In that case, employment may end before the planned end date of the Impact Explorer project. In that case, applicants attach a statement from their employer, in which the organisation concerned guarantees that the project will be adequately carried out for the full duration of the project.

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.

Supplementary conditions applying to the lead applicant and impact partner:

- Applications can be submitted only by a researcher with a current Veni, Vidi or Vici grant from NWO or ZonMw and/or a researcher with current funding from the Open Competitions of NWO or ZonMw. The application must arise out of this ongoing research project. ‘Current funding’ means projects that have been approved, but which (at the moment of submission) have not yet received the final grant determination.
Hoofdstuk 3: Conditions for applicants

- The lead applicant must carry out the relevant research in the time that they work for the knowledge institute. If this is not the case, the lead applicant must supply a waiver from the other employer, so that the knowledge institute’s intellectual property is safeguarded.

- An application must always be submitted by a single lead applicant and at least one impact partner. An ‘impact partner’ is a party that explores the unexpected potential societal impact together with the lead applicant, and who possesses the necessary complementary expertise to perform this task. Examples of impact partners could include substantively informed experts or process experts, such as the business development advisors of a KTO/TTO; venture capital organizations; certification experts; (biotech) security advisors; and parties having expertise in the field and sector in which a potential application might be created (e.g. in the water board, education or agriculture sector). An impact partner can operate independently or from within an organization or institute constituting a stakeholder in a field (the practice & innovation ecosystem). Impact partners may be attached to a different organization than the knowledge institute in which the lead applicant is working, but both may also work for the same organization.

3.1.1 Applicant

The applicant submits the application via ISAAC, NWO's electronic submission system. During the assessment process, NWO communicates with the lead applicant. After allocation of an application, the applicant becomes project leader and contact point for NWO. The main applicant’s (knowledge) institution is main beneficiary and contact.

3.2 What can be applied for

An application in this Call for Proposals may be for a minimum of €20,000 and a maximum of €30,000. The maximum running time of the proposed project is 12 months. Only the Knowledge Utilisation (Kennisbenutting) budget module is available for this Call for Proposals. For fundable activities we adhere to the European Commission’s definition of ‘knowledge transfer’, as laid down in the Community’s Framework for State Aid for Research, Development and Innovation (2014/C 198/01).

Since exploration in different fields of science can take many different forms, it is up to the applicant to specify which costs are involved. Specify only those costs which are essential to carrying out the project. A few examples of budget requirements are given below (this is not an exhaustive list):

- The facilitation of specific knowledge utilisation activities by (intermediary) parties, such as knowledge platforms, that are not funded within the project. These activities could include such things as joint learning activities, training courses, and communication activities;

- Involving stakeholders: organizing activities aimed at involving stakeholders, such as consultation workshops, expert meetings, round-table meetings, etc.;

- Communication: activities organized by the applicant such as national or international learning events, developing videos, blogs, newsletters and other media statements. It could also include the hiring of communication experts;

- The cost of third parties carrying out project activities assigned by the applicant, to a maximum of €125/hour. These costs are understood to mean the costs incurred to obtain certain services from specific persons. These may include the services of commercial organizations, coaches, consultants, business developers and/or freelancers. The costs of hiring impact partners can also be reimbursed, provided the current legal tendering rules are followed;

- Personnel costs for the appointment of non-academic staff, in accordance with current UNL rates;
Hoofdstuk 3: Conditions for applicants

- Replacement of the applicant: this covers the cost to the employer of the applicant concerned of relieving the applicant of certain tasks. The applicant must devote their freed-up time entirely to work activities within the framework of the project. NWO will fund this replacement on the basis of the salary tables that apply at the moment of funding ([www.nwo.nl/salaristabellen](http://www.nwo.nl/salaristabellen)) for a senior scientific member of staff (scale 11.0);

- A feasibility study of application options, or the cost of obtaining advice for a patent application;

- Travel and accommodation expenses;

- Work visits.

Basic facilities within the organization (e.g. laptop, office equipment), maintenance and insurance costs are not reimbursed. The application may not include expenses incurred before the application itself. Funding must be in accordance or in line with the European regulations for state aid and tenders.

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 attachment(s): budget (based on compulsory template), a letter of support from the impact partner.

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, must be submitted as PDF files (without encryption). The budget 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.

An application can only be submitted via the web application ISAAC. 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 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 applicant should have informed the organisation where she/he works about the submission of the application and the organisation should accept the grant conditions of this Call for proposals.

3.3.1 Advice about substantive suitability
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 meet the conditions stated in Section 3.1;
- there is an impact partner within the project (see section 3.1);
- 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 most 12 months;
- all of the required annexes are, after a possible request to make additions or changes, complete and filled out according to the instructions.

3.5 Conditions on granting

The Agreement on the Payment of Costs for Scientific Research are applicable to all applications.

3.5.1 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.

3.5.2 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. 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.

3.5.3 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.
4 Assessment procedure

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

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 jury 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 Procedure

The application procedure consists of the following steps:

- submission of the proposal;
- admissibility of the proposal;
- jury and decision-making;
- decision-making.

Due to the expertise present in the assessment committee and the small 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, to assess all applications without involving referees.

4.1.1 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.

4.1.2 Admissibility 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.
4.1.3 Jury, reaction and decision

Your application will then be presented to jury members for consideration. Jury members are drawn from a variety of sectors of society: universities, large knowledge organizations, the business community, and others. Jury members provide a written substantiated and reasoned comment on the application. They formulate this comment with respect to substantive assessment criteria, and accord a numerical score to each assessment criterion. Jury members are also each given a single opportunity to ask written questions of the applicant. The applicant then has five working days to react to these questions, and jury members may modify their assessment accordingly. Scoring follows the NWO scoring table (a scale of 1 to 9, where a 1 means ‘excellent’ and a 9 ‘inadequate’). The procedure is entirely in writing.

4.1.4 Decision-making

Finally, the NWO Executive Board will assess the procedure followed and the advice from the jury. It will subsequently determine the final qualifications and take a decision about awarding or rejecting the proposals. The proposal has to at least score the qualification ‘very good’ on each individual criterion to be eligible for funding in this grant.

4.1.5 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 be informed about this in time. Depending on the time of application, the procedure takes two to three months.

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<tr>
<th>Aanvragen</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 may 2023</td>
<td>Open for applications voor aanvragen</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contin</td>
<td>Applications are possible as long as there is budget available Indiening mogelijk zolang het budget niet is uitgeput</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 april 2024, before 14:00</td>
<td>Latest deadline, in case budget is still available</td>
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4.2 Criteria

4.2.1 Substantive assessment criteria

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

1. Appropriateness to the aims of the programme (see Section 2.1) (1/3)
   a. Societal relevance of the exploration
   b. Degree to which exploration is based on new insights and possibilities

2. Quality and feasibility of the project plan (1/3)
   a. Quality of design, approach, and feasibility of the impact exploration
   b. Degree to which the plan contributes towards the aim(s) of the project
   c. Effective utilization of the budget

3. Quality of the team (1/3)
   a. Appropriateness and expertise of the team members
   b. Added value of the collaboration
   c. Motivation and ambition level of the team
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.

5.1.1 Conditions subsequent to grant allocation

Latest start date: within 3 months of grant allocation.

Accountability and project conclusion: the project concludes with a final report, employing a format supplied by NWO. This report describes what the project has substantively delivered. The grant is issued in the form of a lump sum.

Evaluation: to obtain a clear picture of the results and proceeds of the instrument, NWO will hold a survey among participants in this pilot instrument.

5.1.2 Intellectual property

Any agreements on intellectual property related to the Impact Explorer programme may not obstruct existing agreements related to the original project concerned.
6 Contact and other information

6.1 Contact

6.1.1 Specific questions
For specific questions about this Call for proposals, please contact: impactexplorer@nwo.nl

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 deemed authentic. For legal interpretation the text of the Dutch version will be decisive.

NWO processes data from applicants received in the context of this Call in accordance with the NWO Privacy Statement, Privacy Statement | NWO.

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