



## Unconventional Information Processing Technologies: Cooperation Japan-The Netherlands, Call for proposals, Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek

2025

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## 1 Introduction

In this Call for proposals information is provided about the application procedure for the “**Unconventional Information Processing Technologies**” funding round. This Call for proposals falls under the responsibility of the Dutch Research Council (NWO) and the Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST).

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

Please note that JST has additional requirements for applicants based in Japan. Japan-based applicants should also consult the guidelines published by JST.

### 1.1 Background

This funding opportunity arises from a shared vision of fostering international collaboration in research that addresses global challenges and to further strengthen the relationship in the high-tech field and stimulate the formation of new transnational networks. The partnership between the Dutch Research Council (NWO) and Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST) supports innovative research aligned with their strategic goals. It fosters societal and scientific progress, builds international research networks, and enhances international mobility of early-career researcher.



## 1.2 Available budget

Within this Call for proposals it is expected that a maximum of four proposals will be awarded funding. The available budget from NWO for this Call for proposals is **€ 4,650,000**. The budget available from JST for this Call for proposals is **769,230,769 JPY** (up to 1,000,000,000 JPY including indirect costs which are 30% of direct costs).

## 1.3 Submission deadline(s)

Applications should be submitted to both NWO (via ISAAC) and JST (via e-Rad). When you submit your application in ISAAC and e-Rad, you will also need to enter some details online. Therefore, please start submitting your application at least five days before the deadline of this Call for proposals. Please also submit any requests to add organisations in ISAAC at least ten days before the deadline. Applications that are submitted to either funding agency after the deadline will not be taken into consideration.

The deadline for submitting full proposals is **September 9th 2025, before 14:00:00 CEST** at NWO, and September 9<sup>th</sup> 2025, before 14:00:00 JST **at JST**.

## 2 Aim

This Chapter describes the aim of the programme.

### 2.1 Aim of the programme

The “Unconventional Information Processing Technologies” programme aims to advance the frontiers of computational science by exploring unconventional approaches to information processing. The programme seeks to:

- Foster innovation in computational technologies that address complex global challenges.
- Strengthen research networks between the Netherlands and Japan, promote international talent mobility, and train early-career researchers who may become future leaders by connecting top researchers.
- Deliver societal and scientific impact by translating unconventional methods into practical solutions.

Example of scientific research directions are:

- Quantum information processing: Investigating new methods and applications for quantum algorithms and systems.
- Neuromorphic computing: Developing systems that emulate neural architectures for energy-efficient and scalable computation.
- Bioinspired algorithms: Drawing inspiration from biological processes to design novel computational paradigms.
- Integrated approaches: Combining interdisciplinary insights to tackle challenges in data processing, communication, and machine intelligence.

### 2.2 Thematic focus

Japan and the Netherlands have a long history of relations in the fields of trade, medicine, literature and science. Since the strong rise of the high-tech sector, both countries have played a world-leading role in this area. To further strengthen the relationships in the high-tech fields and stimulate the formation of new transnational networks, JST and NWO have decided to launch a joint research program in the field of semiconductors, photonics, quantum and neuromorphic technologies.

Nowadays, computer manufacturers are pushing the boundaries of what is feasible in e.g. clock speed, chip-size and -packaging, bandwidth, and latency to meet social demand and industrial needs in processing power, data crunching, and data transmission. At the same time, high-tech devices and facilities, such as smartphones, computers and datacentres, consume a huge amount of power and scarce materials causing a major impact on the environment. Meeting the increasing demand for computing power while simultaneously reducing the negative impact on the environment is a significant challenge of our time.

JST and NWO emphasize the need to develop new materials and building blocks for unconventional information processing technologies. These should contribute to the ever-increasing need for processing speed and power, while addressing challenges such as energy consumption, substitutes for rare materials, and environmental footprint. In these unexplored, innovative research areas, competitive solutions can be found as an alternative for, or addition to, conventional information



processing technologies (i.e. digital computing, silicon-based, CMOS technology).

With this programme we want to stimulate transnational research collaborations between Japan and the Netherlands. Both our countries have partially overlapping, but also complementary, expertise and experience in the high-tech areas mentioned above. Cooperation between both countries is therefore an important and essential part of intended joint research proposals in order to make optimal use of the strengths of both countries.

In this call for proposals, we invite researchers from Japan and the Netherlands to develop new, unconventional research ideas that address the above mentioned bottlenecks such as computational speed-up, energy consumption, environmental footprint, latency times, etc. Research projects submitted to this call aim to solve bottlenecks by working towards competitive alternatives to conventional information processing hardware. This program focuses on the semiconductor field with extensions to (integrated) photonics, quantum and neuromorphic computing. The program mainly concerns hardware from the materials, to the device and architecture level, possibly combined with co-designed software and (learning) solutions. Also welcomed are research ideas that focus on new combinations of conventional and unconventional technologies (e.g. combination of electronics and photonics) or different combinations of unconventional technologies (e.g. quantum computing and neuromorphic computing). A typical target group for this call are researchers working on topics such as quantum computing, brain-inspired/neuromorphic computing, solutions for green ICT, etc.

### **2.3 Stimulating researcher mobility and international collaboration**

An important aspect of a research project is training early career researchers (ECRs) who may be the future leaders in their fields by connecting excellent researchers and promoting international talent mobility through innovative, collaborative research projects between the Netherlands and Japan. ECRs are considered to be students enrolled in an advanced degree course, PhDs, postdocs, and researchers who have obtained their final degree less than 15 years ago and are conducting research activities at universities, public research institutions, etc. This call also expects researchers in both the Netherlands and Japan to consolidate the cooperation in the research communities and to contribute to building world-class international networks of researchers.

Research proposals must include a feasible plan outlining how they will achieve these objectives effectively and efficiently. For example, it is expected that the application will reflect the results of careful consideration of how the role of ECRs in the Netherlands and Japan will have a positive impact on their careers, and how they will be coached to facilitate their research and daily life in the destination country.

### **2.4 Equitable cooperation, integrated approach and international cooperation**

Proposals should be characterised by equitable partnership and sustainable collaboration among the partners in the consortium and with relevant stakeholders<sup>1</sup>. Evidence of such active engagement will be an element in the assessment of project proposals.

Applications should furthermore be characterised by equitable partnership and sustainable collaboration between the Japan-based and Netherlands-based partners. This includes inter-institutional cooperation, a balanced contribution to the proposed research, and frequent exchange between the partners, including exchange visits by both senior and junior researchers. The number of (co)applicants in both countries should be roughly equal. The workload on both sides should be equally balanced. Projects should budget for this accordingly.

The challenges addressed in this call are interrelated and multi-scalar, and to reach impact require a holistic approach that spans the entire research and innovation chain. The consortia should crosscut scientific disciplinary boundaries (interdisciplinarity) and integrate scientific and practitioners' knowledge in joint research (transdisciplinarity). Research should focus on the entire knowledge chain, from fundamental to applied and practical research. The proposed research itself should be characterised by integrated perspectives. It should evolve in a process of co-creation with different partners: researchers from both countries and societal partners from public, semi-public and/or private organisations should be actively involved throughout the entire project, in (advising on) defining and conducting the research as well as in communicating the progress and results, in order to jointly produce a mutually valued outcome.

To increase the potential for impact of the programme as a whole, identifying overlap and potential

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<sup>1</sup> NWO adheres to the *Research Fairness Initiative* of the Council on Health Research for Development (COHRED).



cooperation between the funded projects is essential. As a part of this, projects will be expected to attend joint kick-off and mid-term workshops, as well as a final conference. These meetings will be held in person, alternating between the two countries. Projects should budget for this accordingly, using the NWO budget module “Knowledge Utilisation” or “Material” or via the budget applied for at JST. Consortium members on both the Netherlands-based side and the Japan-based side of the consortium are expected to participate in these events.

## **2.5 Scientific and societal impact**

New knowledge and insights from scientific research can make an important contribution to developing solutions for the various issues society faces, including, amongst other things, the energy transition, health and care, or climate change. By facilitating greater interaction and alignment between researchers and potential knowledge users, the chance of knowledge utilisation increases, as well as the likelihood of generating societal impact. Societal impact here stands for changes that (partly) result from research-generated knowledge and skills. These changes contribute to the well-being of people, planet and society for this and future generations. NWO and JST promote the potential contribution that research can make to societal issues by encouraging productive interactions with societal stakeholders, both during the development stage and the subsequent implementation of research. NWO and JST encourage researchers to reflect on the potential desired and undesired impact of their research from a broad perspective.

In this programme, the Impact Outlook approach is applied. Here, researchers can choose which type of impact (scientific and/or societal) they want to specifically focus on, while proportional consideration is also given to what can be done for the remaining impact.

NWO offers an e-learning module that can help interested parties via NWO Impact - Online workshops. For more information on our policy on impact, please visit the website: Knowledge utilisation | NWO.

## **3 Conditions for applicants**

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

### **3.1 Who can apply**

Consortia in this Call must meet the following minimum requirements:

#### **Dutch side:**

- a main applicant who meets the criteria for Netherlands-based main applicants in 3.1.1.

#### **Japan side**

- a main applicant who meets the criteria for Japan-based main applicants in 3.1.1.

The number of (co)applicants in both countries should be roughly equal. The workload on both sides should be equally balanced.

#### **3.1.1 Main applicants (Principal Investigators)**

The Netherlands-based main applicant submits the proposal via the NWO web application ISAAC. The Japan-based main applicant submits the proposal to JST via e-Rad. During the assessment process, NWO will communicate with the Netherlands-based main applicant and JST will communicate with the Japan-based main applicant. Main applicants are expected to inform each other and the consortium of any necessary steps regarding the application.

After a proposal has been awarded funding, the Netherlands-based main applicant will become the project leader and point of contact for NWO and the Japan-based main applicant will become the project leader and point of contact for JST. The research organisations of the main applicants are the main beneficiaries and will become the official secretaries for their respective grants.

#### **Main applicants (Principal Investigators) based in the Kingdom of the Netherlands**

Researchers 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 research organisations:



- Universities and universities of applied sciences (UAS) as referred to in Article 1.8 paragraph 1 of the Higher Education and Scientific Research Act and the universities listed in the Policy Rules for Universities located in the Kingdom of the Netherlands;
- university medical centres by which is meant academic hospitals as referred to in Article 1.13 paragraph 1 of the Higher Education and Scientific Research Act;
- 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.

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

It could be the case that the applicant's tenure track agreement ends before the intended completion date of the project for which funding is applied for, or that before that date, the applicant's tenured contract ends due to the applicant reaching retirement age. In that case, the applicant needs to include a statement from their employer in which the research 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 (embedding guarantee).

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

#### **Main applicants (Principal Investigators) based in Japan**

Researchers that are conducting research at a research institution (university, independent administrative institution, public experimental research institution, public-interest corporation) within Japan are eligible to apply. Researchers at a private company, etc., other than the above research institutions are not eligible.

Researchers and research institutions applying must register with the "Cross-Ministerial Research and Development Management System (e-Rad)" prior to application.

The Principal Investigator (PI) is a researcher who is directly supported by JST, represents the overall research team in Japan, and is responsible for directing the research project as a whole.

The Japanese budget for this Call comes from the ASPIRE programme. Applicants (main applicants and co-applicants) may only apply to one of the ASPIRE 2025 Call for Proposals. This includes the Japan Agency for Medical Research and Development (AMED) ASPIRE 2025 Call for Proposals.

Applications from PIs or Co-PIs currently supported by ASPIRE:

- PIs or Co-PIs currently supported under an ASPIRE Joint Call for Proposals may not submit applications.
- PIs currently supported by the ASPIRE Call for Japan Based Researchers may submit an application, but if the proposal is selected, the existing ASPIRE-supported project will be terminated.
- Co-PIs currently supported by the ASPIRE Call for Japan Based Researchers may submit an application. However, if their proposal is selected, they must withdraw from their existing ASPIRE-supported project. The project that the Co-PI withdrew from will undergo a re-assessment, including a review of the resource allocation and research plans.

Note: If you are a PI or Co-PI currently supported by ASPIRE and are considering submitting an application, please contact JST via email in advance (please see contact details in Chapter 6).

#### **3.1.2 Co-applicants (Co-Principal Investigators)**

Co-applicants have an active role in realising the project. The (sub)project leaders and beneficiary/beneficiaries are jointly responsible for realising the entire project.

#### **Co-applicants (Co-Principal Investigators) based in the Kingdom of the Netherlands**

The same conditions apply for co-applicants as for main applicants. Including one or several co-applicants is optional.

#### **Co-applicants (Co-Principal Investigators) based in Japan**

The Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI) is a researcher who is directly supported by JST and collaborates with the PI in conducting the research project. Including one or several Co-PIs is optional. The same



conditions apply for co-applicants as for main applicants. Only the rules for (co)-PIs currently supported by ASPIRE differ between PIs and Co-PIs; as stated above.

### *3.1.3 Research participants (Japan side only)*

Research participants are researchers, technicians, research assistants, students and others who are part of the research project under the direction of the Principal Investigator (PI) or Co-Principal Investigators (Co-PIs) but are not directly supported by JST.

### *3.1.4 Cooperation partners*

The consortium may include practitioner partners as cooperation partners. Cooperation partners are closely involved with the research and the route to impact. Cooperation partners cannot receive funding from NWO and JST.

#### **Cooperation partners for the Netherlands-based part of the consortium**

Cooperation partners could for example be a business, (local) government, or non-governmental organisation. Please note that these organisations are excluded from payment of any costs from the NWO grant, unless they are hired through the NWO module material costs – work by third parties (see 3.2. What can be applied for).

#### **Cooperation partners for the Japan-based part of the consortium**

Researchers from research institutions, such as private companies, who cannot be a main applicant, co-applicant, or research participant on the Japan side of the consortium, can become cooperation partners if based in Japan or the Netherlands.

If the Japan-based applicant wants to include a researcher based in a third country other than Japan and the Kingdom of the Netherlands as a cooperation partner, the Japan-based applicant must contact JST in advance (please see contact details in Chapter 6).

### *3.1.5 Co-funders*

Co-funders are consortium members that provide co-funding to the research project. All applications are subject to the below co-funding rules.

Co-funding is not mandatory in this Call for proposals. However, it is possible to add co-funders in the proposal. Note that in cash co-funding is not allowed in this Call. The maximum amount of in-kind co-funding allowed in this call is 20% of the total project budget. Co-funding provided by Japan-based organisations must be accounted for by the Japan-based project leader to JST. Co-funding provided by other organisations must be accounted for by the Netherlands-based project leader to NWO.

#### **Additional definitions:**

- Co-funding in-kind: capitalised personnel and/or material contributions from organisations that are not allowed to apply in this Call as main or co-applicants. The maximum amount of in-kind co-funding allowed in this call is 20% of the total requested project budget (meaning the total project costs on the Dutch and on the Japanese sides combined).
- Co-funding in cash is used to cover part of the total project costs. Note that in cash co-funding is not allowed in this Call.

#### **The following principles apply to co-funding:**

- in-kind contributions will only be accepted under the condition that the portion contributed by the co-funder is integral to the project activities and can be tracked or designated as identifiable effort. In case of questions, NWO or JST may request further justification and evidence of the rates used and also adjustment. In addition, any in-kind contributions in the form of services and know-how may not already be available or in place at the applicant's knowledge institution(s);
- fixed integral hourly rates are used to capitalise the human contribution (work hours) to a project on the Netherlands-based side. For rates, see the Government Tariffs Manual (HOT), Table 2 under 2.2 'average total labour costs per pay scale', column 'Hourly rate productive hours, excluding VAT'. The rate closest to the actual labour costs should be used here;

#### **Not eligible as co-funding are:**

- grant provided by NWO or JST;
- co-funding may not come from parties that according to this Call for proposals can apply for funding to NWO or JST.



- costs related to overhead, guidance, consultancy.

### **Co-funding declaration of participating co-funders**

In a co-funding declaration the co-funder expresses support for the project and confirms the co-funding promised. Co-funding declarations from co-funders, which are mentioned in the application, are compulsory as attachments when submitting the proposal. The co-funding declaration must be signed by an authorised signatory of the co-funder. NWO provides a compulsory format for the co-funding declaration to the Netherlands-based applicants on the funding page of this Call for proposals on the NWO website and in ISAAC. JST provides a compulsory format for the co-funding declaration to the Japan-based applicants. The Japan-side applicants need to contact JST to receive this format.

If the application is awarded, the co-funder must confirm its contribution(s) in the consortium agreement. This agreement also contains further agreements between the co-funder(s) and the applicant(s) (see Section 7.2.7 for the Netherlands-based side and Section 7.1 for the Japanese-based side of the consortium).

### **3.2 What can be applied for**

Different costs can be reimbursed from the NWO and JST grants. The application form allows you to specify which funding organisation you would like to cover a certain cost. You should complete two budgets, one specifying the costs to be covered by the NWO grant and one specifying the costs to be covered by the JST grant.

Appropriate budget needs to be reserved to fund the organisation/attendance of the kick-off meeting, midterm meeting, and final closing meeting of this research programme. These meetings are to be held in person, alternating between Japan and the Netherlands.

#### **3.2.1 Reimbursable costs at NWO**

Per project, a grant amount of at least € 800,000 and at most € 1,150,000 can be applied for. The minimum duration of the proposed project is 48 months, and the maximum duration is 60 months/ 5 years. The main applicant and co-applicants may include costs for personnel, material, and knowledge utilisation. The available budget modules (including the maximum amounts) are listed below. Apply only for funding that is vital to realise the project. The rates and an explanation of these budget modules are given in annex 7.3.

One of the goals of this Call for proposals is the strengthening of research networks between the Netherlands and Japan and promoting international research mobility. Therefore, all early-career researchers working on the project (PhDs and postdocs) are required to spend at least 20% of their total employment time on the project in Japan for an extended research stay. The research stay can be scheduled in one continuous block, or in shorter visits throughout the project, as seen fit by the applicants. Appropriate budget needs to be reserved to fund these extended research stays. This budget can be requested via the budget module "Material", see Section 3.2.1.2 and annex 7.3.2. For an indication of the amounts to be budgeted for these research stays, you may for example look at the NWO Rubicon 2025 Call text<sup>2</sup> as a guideline. Examples:

- A PhD employed on the project in the Netherlands for 4 years should spend at least 42 weeks in Japan working with the Japan-based researchers.
- A postdoc employed in the Netherlands on the project for 1 year should spend at least 10 weeks in Japan working with the Japan-based researchers.

#### **3.2.1.1 Personnel**

Funding may be requested for salary costs of personnel contributing to the project. The amount depends on the type of appointment and the organisation where the personnel is employed.

#### **Personnel at university in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, university medical centre or other research organisation**

For personnel working at a university in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, university medical centre (umc) or another research organisation, as referred to in Article 1.1, first paragraph, subparagraphs c to h of the NWO Grant Rules 2024 salary costs can be claimed for the following positions: PhD

<sup>2</sup> See: <https://www.nwo.nl/en/researchprogrammes/rubicon>



student, Engineering Doctorate, postdoc, physician-researcher, non-scientific personnel (NWP) and for research leave of the applicant(s).

Research leave can be requested for up to 5% of the grant amount.

Funding for the Engineering Doctorate (EngD) position can only be applied for if funding for a PhD student or postdoc is also applied for on the Netherlands-based side of the project.

### **Personnel from universities of applied sciences**

It is possible to claim salary costs of personnel of universities of applied sciences.

#### **3.2.1.2 Material**

Funding may be requested for all project-specific material costs. These costs are subject to a maximum of 50% of the NWO grant amount allocated for personnel costs.

NB: The material budget includes travel budget, extra costs for accommodation/sustenance in Japan, and budget for the in-person kick-off, midterm, and closing meetings.

#### **3.2.1.3 Knowledge utilisation**

Funding can be requested for activities that promote the use of knowledge from the research,<sup>3</sup> in order to increase the societal impact of the research.

Impact Outlook: A maximum of 5% of the NWO grant amount can be used for this module. It is not mandatory to make use of this module

#### **3.2.1.4 Programme management**

A maximum of 5% of the NWO grant amount can be used for project management. It is not mandatory to use it.

### **3.2.2 Reimbursable costs from JST**

Per project, a grant amount of at most 250,000,000 JPY (including indirect costs which are 30% of direct costs) can be applied for. The minimum duration of the proposed project is 48 months, and the maximum duration is 60 months/ 5 years. Projects can apply for direct and indirect costs, as specified below.

One of the goals of this Call for proposals is the strengthening of research networks between the Netherlands and Japan and promoting international research mobility. Therefore, the Japan-side team should include outgoing researcher(s) who fall under either (i) or (ii) to be eligible. The outgoing researcher(s) will conduct research activities in the Netherlands for about one year. There is no limit to the number of outgoing researcher(s), and they can be the principal investigator (PI), Co-PI or research participants of the project.

(i) Students enrolled in an advanced degree course (i.e., master's or doctoral course)<sup>4</sup>

(ii) Researchers who have obtained their final degree less than 15 years ago and are conducting research activities at universities, public research institutions, etc.

#### **3.2.2.1 Direct Costs**

Direct costs encompass expenditures that are directly essential for the completion of research, as outlined below:

- a. Travel Expenses  
Travel and accommodation expenses for researchers going abroad and for research participants described in the research plan.
- b. Personnel Costs  
Personnel expenses for research participants described in the research plan (PI and Co-PI)

<sup>3</sup> All activities applied for under this budget module must fit within the definition of "Knowledge Transfer Activities" used by the European Commission in the Framework for State Aid for Research, Development and Innovation (OJEU 2022, C 414).

<sup>4</sup> Students who are enrolled in a master's course, doctoral course or transitioned to a postdoctoral researcher position upon completion of their doctoral course are required to obtain prior approval from the project PI or Co-PI and the research institution to which they belong to in order to use ASPIRE funds.



personnel expenses and teaching buyout policy may apply). Personnel expenses for administrative staff necessary to coordinate the researchers' travel and their personnel related procedures.

c. **Facilities, Equipment and Consumables**

Purchasing research equipment, books, reagents, materials and consumables, etc. Research expenses of researchers abroad.

d. **Miscellaneous**

Necessary costs for the research and development (cost for organizing and hosting events for research dissemination, equipment leasing costs, transportation costs for equipment used for the research project).

### **3.2.2.2 Indirect Costs**

Indirect costs refer to funds which go directly to the research institution for administrative overhead costs.

### **3.2.2.3 Points of Caution**

Participants are to allocate around 70% of the total direct JST cost to activities that further ASPIRE's objectives of (1) building and expanding international research networks that foster cutting-edge research and development (2) laying the foundation for long-lasting relationships and continued involvement in the international research community by promoting international talent mobility and providing research opportunities to early career researchers.

The above-mentioned research expenses reserved for promoting international networking and fostering future generations of researchers may cover the following expenses related but not limited to:

- holding workshops to develop and strengthen relationships among researchers
- travel expenses for the researchers going abroad to the partner country and the expenses incurred during the stay
- personnel expenses for administrative staff that coordinate the travel of outgoing researchers and their personnel-related procedures.

Please note that employment, procurement of equipment, etc. purely for the purpose of conducting research does not count as a part of the 70%.

## **3.3 Preparing an application**

The Netherlands-based and Japan-based teams must submit their applications by parallel submission, using the designated application form to draft a joint proposal in English and submitting it to the application websites of their respective countries. All applicants need to have informed the research organization where they work about submitting the application and that the organisation accepts the grant conditions of this Call for proposals.

### **Webinar**

An online webinar will be held, in which further information is provided about the Call for proposals, the admissibility process, and the assessment procedure. Further details about the webinar can be found on the web page of this Call for proposals on the website of NWO and JST.

### **Application to NWO**

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 annexes:

- budget form
- statement by the applicant
- in case of co-funding; a declaration from the co-funder
- in case it is needed (as specified above): embedding guarantee

The proposal and the appendices must be drawn up in accordance with the template provided by NWO.



Annexes must be uploaded in ISAAC separately from the application. The budget must be submitted in ISAAC as an Excel file. All of the other annexes, except for the budget, must be submitted as PDF files (without encryption). Any annexes other than those stated above are not permitted.

### **Submitting your application to NWO**

An application can only be submitted to NWO via the web application ISAAC. Applications that are not submitted to NWO via ISAAC will not be taken into consideration. As main applicant based in the Netherlands, 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).

Does a main and/or co-applicant or collaboration partner work at an organisation that is not included in the ISAAC database? You can report this via [relatiebeheer@nwo.nl](mailto:relatiebeheer@nwo.nl) so that the organisation can be added. This will take several days. It is therefore important that you report this at least one week before the deadline. Please note that the Japan-based main- and co-applicants and any collaboration partners must also be added under the tab 'co-applicants' in ISAAC.

### **Application to JST**

The steps involved in writing your application are:

- download the application form and compulsory annexes from the JST web page (on the grant page of the funding instrument concerned);
- complete the application form and compulsory annexes;
- merge the application form and compulsory annexes in one PDF and upload it to e-Rad;
- fill in the requested information online in e-Rad.

Compulsory annexes:

- annexes for Japan-side (subsidies under other schemes, Confirmation letter)
- Completed questionnaire for research security
- in case of co-funding; a declaration from the co-funder

The annexes must be drawn up in accordance with the template provided by JST. Annexes must be merged with the application and uploaded as one PDF file (without encryption) in e-Rad. Any annexes other than those stated above are not permitted.

### **Submitting your application to JST**

The main applicant based in Japan must submit the application to JST via e-Rad. Applications that are not submitted to JST via e-Rad will not be taken into consideration.

As main applicant based in Japan, you are required to submit the application via your own personal e-Rad account. When submitting an e-Rad application, information relating to research integrity must be registered by a main applicant and co-applicants in e-Rad. Please register in advance.

Cross-Ministerial Research and Development Management System (e-Rad)

Call Title

(Japanese): 2025 年度日蘭共同公募「革新的な情報処理技術のための日蘭共同研究」

(English): Japan-Netherlands Joint Call in Unconventional information processing technologies

Applications submitted after the deadline will not be taken into consideration by JST. For technical questions, please contact the e-Rad helpdesk, see contact (Chapter 6).

#### **3.3.1 Formal conditions for submission**

NWO and JST will assess your application against the conditions listed in this Call for proposals, including the conditions listed below. Your application will only be admitted to the assessment procedure if it meets these conditions. After submitting your application, NWO and JST request 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 applicants, co-applicants, research participants, co-funders, cooperation partners as well as the composition of the consortium as a whole, meet the conditions stated in Section 3.1;
- the application complies with the DORA guidelines as described in Section 4.1;
- the application is submitted to NWO via the ISAAC account of the main applicant based in the Netherlands;
- the application is submitted to JST via the e-Rad account of the main applicant based in Japan.
- the application is received before the respective deadline by both NWO and JST;
- the application is written in English (except where there are explicit instructions to write in Japanese);
- the application budget is drawn according to the terms of this Call for proposals (using the format made available which includes the most recent rates);
- the proposed project has a duration of minimum 48 months and maximum 60 months/ 5 years;
- all required annexes, after a possible request for additions or changes, have been completed and submitted completely and according to the instructions and in accordance with the terms of this Call for proposals.
- NWO will check whether the budget requested from NWO adheres to the conditions stated in Section 3.2.1, and JST will check whether the budget requested from JST adheres to the conditions stated in Section 3.2.2.

### **3.3.2 Data management**

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

#### **Data management Section**

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

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

### **3.4 Conditions on granting**

The NWO Grant Rules 2024 and the Agreement on the Payment of Costs for Scientific Research are applicable to all grants awarded by NWO. The JST rules are applicable to all grants awarded by JST. For details on the conditions for granting, see annex 7.1 and 7.2.

#### **3.4.1 Research security measures on Japan-side**

In this Call, research security measures will be taken in consultation with the Japan-side Principal Investigator and their research organisation. When submitting an application in e-Rad, the Japan-side Principal Investigator must fill in the questionnaire on research security and submit it together with the application form specified by JST. The content of the questionnaire includes questions concerning the Japan-based research team as well as the Netherlands-based research team, which should be answered in consultation with the Netherlands-based research team. Depending on the nature of the research and the answers to the questionnaire, you may be asked to take risk mitigation measures.



The questionnaire can be found through the following link: [https://www.jst.go.jp/aspire/en/program\\_e/announce\\_e/announce\\_aspire2025\\_nl\\_e.html](https://www.jst.go.jp/aspire/en/program_e/announce_e/announce_aspire2025_nl_e.html)

### **3.4.2 Compliance with the Nationale Knowledge Security Guidelines in the Netherlands**

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

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

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

## **4 Assessment procedure**

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

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

NWO and JST strive to achieve an inclusive culture where there is no place for conscious or unconscious barriers due to cultural, ethnic or religious background, gender, sexual orientation, health or age<sup>5</sup>. NWO and JST encourage referees and members of an assessment committee to be actively aware of implicit associations and to try to minimise these. NWO and JST will provide them with information about concrete ways of improving the assessment of an application.

### **4.1 The San Francisco Declaration (DORA)**

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

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

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

NWO<sup>6</sup> and JST request committee members and referees not to rely on indicators such as the Journal Impact Factor or the h-index when assessing applications. Applicants are not allowed to mention these in their applications. You are, however, allowed to list other scientific products besides publications, such as datasets, patents, software and code, et cetera.

<sup>5</sup> Diversity and inclusion | NWO

<sup>6</sup> For more information on how NWO is implementing the principles of DORA, see DORA | NWO.



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## 4.2 Procedure

The application procedure consists of the following steps:

- submission of the statement of intent; Not mandatory
- submission of the proposal;
- admissibility of the proposal including research security check on Japanese side;
- pre-selection if applicable (more submissions than 5 times the amount to be granted);
- peer review by referees;
- rebuttal;
- assessment committee meeting;
- decision-making.

An external, independent assessment committee will be assigned for this Call for proposals, consisting of representatives from science with knowledge of the field.

The task of the assessment committee is to assess the applications and the relevant documents that are submitted, in conjunction with each other and with regard to both the respective merits of each application and the assessment criteria outlined in this Call for proposals.

### 4.2.1 Submission of the statement of intent

With a statement of intent, you indicate that you intend to submit an application for this Call for proposals. Submitting a statement of intent is not compulsory if you want to submit an application in a later phase.

The statement of intent allows NWO and JST to establish the expected number of applications. You may submit your statement of intent before the deadline via email to [nwo-jst-joint-call@nwo.nl](mailto:nwo-jst-joint-call@nwo.nl) and [aspire-nl@jst.go.jp](mailto:aspire-nl@jst.go.jp). All statements of intent submitted to NWO will be shared with JST and vice versa. Include a list of the names of the main applicant and co-applicants and cooperation partners if applicable. Also include your area of research and the tentative title and topic of your project proposal.

### 4.2.2 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 and on the JST 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 respective deadline via ISAAC and via e-Rad (see Section 1.3). After this deadline, you can no longer submit a proposal. After submitting the proposal in ISAAC, the Netherlands-based main applicant will receive an automated confirmation of receipt from NWO.

### 4.2.3 Admissibility of the proposal

As soon as possible after you have submitted your proposal, the Netherlands-based main applicant will hear from NWO whether or not your proposal will be taken into consideration. The Japan-based main applicant will be able to confirm it via e-Rad. NWO and JST will determine this based on several administrative-technical criteria (see the formal conditions for submission, Section 3.3.1). The check for admissibility also includes the research security measures on the Japanese side, as explained in Section 3.4.1. NWO and JST can only take your proposal into consideration if it meets the specific budget requirements for each country stated in Section 3.2, the general conditions stated in section 3.3, and the research security conditions stated in Section 3.4.1.

Please bear in mind that within two weeks after the submission deadline, NWO and JST 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 two opportunities to make the corrections. The first time you will be given five working days to do this, the second time you will receive two working days to make any necessary adjustments.

Next to the administrative corrections, within maximum two months after the application deadline you may be asked to take risk mitigation measures by JST depending on the nature of the research and the answers to the research security questionnaire.

For the Japanese side, JST will conduct interviews with Japan-based main applicants during the assessment process to verify that the proposed research project aligns with the goals of the Japanese



ASPIRE program. The applicants will be notified by email and interview dates are arranged on an individual basis.

#### 4.2.4 Pre-selection

If NWO and JST receive so many proposals that the total amount of funding requested is five times or more greater than the total available budget for this Call for proposals (as stated in Section 1.2), then NWO and JST can decide to conduct a pre-selection of the proposals. In the event of this, the assessment committee will conduct a general assessment of all proposals based on the assessment criteria (see Section 4.3.1). You will subsequently be given ten working days to respond to the provisional assessment of the assessment committee. Taking this information into account, the assessment committee will then advise NWO and JST to reject those proposals that have the least chance of being awarded funding. The other proposals will be considered further.

#### 4.2.5 Peer review by referees

Prior to the assessment committee considering your proposal, NWO and JST will request input from at least three external referees. These are independent advisers who are experts in the subjects of the proposal. They will assess the proposals based on the assessment criteria outlined in the Call for proposals (Section 4.3).

A maximum of three non-referees can be registered. Applicants can register these non-referees in ISAAC when submitting the proposal. The Netherlands-based and Japan-based applicants need to confer about these non-referees and decide on one set of maximum three non-referees together. It is not obligatory to submit non-referees. NWO and JST will not approach these non-referees to assess the proposal as external referees.

#### 4.2.6 Rebuttal

The main applicant based in the Netherlands subsequently receives the anonymised referee reports, and should share these with the Japan-based main applicant and the rest of the consortium. The consortium then has the opportunity to formulate a rebuttal. You will be given ten working days to submit your rebuttal via ISAAC. If you decide to withdraw the proposal, then you should do this as quickly as possible by sending an email stating this to the Call secretariat (see Chapter 6. Contact) and withdrawing the proposal in ISAAC. The Japan-based main applicant should send an email to state this to JST and withdraw the proposal in e-Rad. If your rebuttal is received after the deadline, then it will not be included in the rest of the procedure.

#### 4.2.7 Pre-advice assessment committee

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

Score	Qualification
1.0–1.4	Excellent
1.5–3.4	Very good
3.5–5.4	Good
5.5–9.0	Unsatisfactory

#### 4.2.8 Meeting of the assessment committee

The committee will make its own assessment based on the available material. Although the referees' reports will 'guide' the final assessment to a large extent, it will not be blindly accepted without question by the committee. The committee will consider and compare the arguments of the referees/pre-advisers (also amongst each other) and examine whether the rebuttal contains a well-formulated response to the critical comments from the referees' reports. Furthermore, the committee, unlike the referees, will assess the quality of all the proposals and rebuttals submitted. Therefore, the committee's assessment may differ from that of the referees.

Following the discussion, the committee draws up a written recommendation addressed to the NWO Executive Board and the Executive Board of JST about the quality and ranking of the proposals. This recommendation is based on the assessment criteria. The proposal must receive an overall qualifica-



tion<sup>7</sup> of at least “very good” (score not higher than 3.44) to be eligible for funding. The proposal must also receive at least the qualification “good” for each of the individual assessment criteria.

If, after the discussion of the full proposals, two or more of the full proposals cannot be distinguished from each other based on their weighted total score, then this will result in an ex aequo situation (see Section 4.2.9).

#### 4.2.9 Ex aequo

NWO and JST understand ex aequo to be a situation in which two or more proposals based on their weighted score cannot be distinguished from each other. An ex aequo situation is relevant with respect to the limits of the available budget or the selection limits. The existence of an ex aequo situation is determined as follows. The starting point in this process is the ranking drawn up by the assessment committee, with the final scores rounded to two decimal points. The reference score here is the score of the lowest-ranked proposal within the limits of the available budget or the selection limits. All proposals with a score that is within 0.05 or less of the reference score will be considered. In this way, the proposals that are equal within a score of 0.1 will be selected. If an ex aequo situation occurs at the limits of the available budget or the selection borders, then the proposal with a better score pertaining to the criterion 3 (Quality of stimulating researcher mobility and international collaborations) will end as the highest. If the proposals subsequently still remain tied, then the assessment committee, with the help of an (anonymous) majority vote, will determine the ranking (in accordance with Article 2.2.6, Section V of the NWO Grant Rules 2024). If this vote also fails to provide a resolution, or if it is deemed to be undesirable to vote, then the ex aequo situation will be sent onto the NWO Executive board and Executive Board of JST.

#### 4.2.10 Decision-making

Finally, the NWO Executive Board and Executive Board of JST will assess the procedure followed as well as the advice from the assessment committee. They will subsequently determine the final qualifications and make a decision over awarding or rejecting the proposals. The decision is final when both organisations have come to the same decision.

#### 4.2.11 Timetable

Below, you will find the timetable for this Call for proposals. During the current procedure, NWO and JST might find it necessary to make further changes to the timetable for this Call for proposals. You will be informed about this in time.

<b>Statements of intent (optional)</b>	
31 July 2025	<b>Deadline</b> statements of intent
Proposals	
14:00.00 CEST, 9 September 2025 14:00.00 JST, 9 September 2025	<b>Deadline proposals at NWO</b> <b>Deadline proposals at JST</b>
September/October 2025	Admissibility of the proposal including research security check
November 2025	Outcome pre-selection (if applicable)
October/November 2025	Referees consulted
December 2025	Applicants can submit a rebuttal
January 2026	Assessment committee meeting
March 2026	Decision by NWO Executive Board and Executive Board of JST

### 4.3 Criteria

#### 4.3.1 Substantive assessment criteria

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

1. Quality and relevance of the research content and plan
2. Quality of the consortium

<sup>7</sup> For more information about the qualifications, see <https://www.nwo.nl/en/apply-funding-how-does-it-work>.



3. Quality of stimulating researcher mobility and international collaborations
4. Scientific and/or societal impact

Criteria 1 and 3 each carry a weight of 30% and criteria 2 and 4 each carry a weight of 20%. The assessment criteria are further operationalised below:

- 1) **Quality and relevance of the research content and plan (30%)**
  - a) Alignment with the aim of the call
  - b) Clarity of the proposal
  - c) Scientifically innovative and/or groundbreaking elements of the research proposal
  - d) Suitability of the proposed approach and methodology
  - e) Appropriate allocation of the budget for the research and international mobility activities
- 2) **Quality of the consortium (20%)**
  - a) Appropriate expertise of consortium members
  - b) Quality of the consortium members' academic profile and achievements
  - c) Added value of the international collaboration between Japan and the Netherlands
  - d) A clear division of tasks and roles within the consortium with respect to the execution of the research and the governance of the project.
- 3) **Quality of stimulating researcher mobility and international collaborations (30%)**
  - a) Track record of the consortium members in promoting international mobility activities and supervising early-career researchers (ECRs) through international talent mobility.
  - b) Concreteness and relevance of plans for building and expanding international research networks in the relevant research community.
  - c) Stimulating international mobility activities of ECRs:
    - Contribution of international mobility activities to skills and knowledge development in ECRs.
    - Appropriateness, clarity and feasibility of the goals for international mobility activities. This includes the roles, length of stay, and number of ECRs involved in the international activities, and support and supervision they will receive
    - Expected impact of these activities on ECR careers
- 4) **Scientific and/or societal impact (20%)**
  - a) Scientific impact: vision and strategy for the dissemination and/or implementation of research results for one's own discipline, related discipline(s), and the wider scientific field.
  - b) Societal impact<sup>8</sup>:
    - the added value of the project for societal impact;
    - potential for societal impact in the short and long term;
    - a vision of the way(s) in which the consortium will work towards societal impact.

In addition to the above, the assessment committee, as part of criterion 4, will also weigh:

- the motivation for the focus on scientific impact and/or societal impact;
- if the focus is primarily on scientific impact: how proportional attention is given during the course of the project to increasing (unforeseen) opportunities for social impact;
- if the focus is primarily on societal impact: how proportional attention is given during the course of the project to increasing (unforeseen) opportunities for scientific impact;
- Sufficient attention to the key risks of undesirable societal impact and the proposed measures to prevent or mitigate this and increase the chance of desired impact.

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.

## 5 Obligations for grant recipients

This Chapter details the various obligations that – in addition to the conditions stated in Section 3.4 – apply after funds have been awarded.

### 5.1 Start of the project

The Netherlands-based project leader and the Japan-based project leader are responsible for ensuring the necessary documents for the start of the project are submitted to their respective funding organisation, so that the project in its entirety can start on time.

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<sup>8</sup> Cultural, economic, industrial, ecological or social changes that are entirely or in part the consequence of knowledge and expertise generated by research. These changes contribute to the well-being of people, planet and society for this and future generations.



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## **Starting the project at NWO**

The project should start within six months of the project being awarded. At least one researcher must be appointed to the project at the time of its start. If the project has not started within six months, the NWO Executive Board can decide to revoke the granting decision.

### **Start documents to be submitted to NWO**

The project can start if the following documents have been approved by NWO:

- A start form with information of project staff;
- A data management plan;
- A consortium agreement, signed by all consortium organisations;
- (If applicable) approval of relevant ethics committees.

## **Starting the project at JST**

The allocation of funds to projects will start in June 2026 and project should start at the same time.

### **Start documents to be submitted to JST**

After the notification of the granting decision, the Japan-based project leader will receive detailed information on the start documents from JST. Follow the instructions and submit your start documents by the deadline.

## **5.2 Reporting**

### *5.2.1 Regular reporting*

#### **Reporting to NWO**

The project leader must submit a written report (in English) every 12 months depending on the results in the project to inform NWO on the overall project progress, experiences and output. The project leader will receive instructions and a format for this report in advance.

#### **Reporting to JST**

The project leader must submit a written report (in English) at the end of each fiscal year depending on the results in the project to inform JST on the overall project progress, experiences and output. The project leader will receive instructions and a format for this report in advance.

### *5.2.2 Mid-term report*

Each project will also be evaluated at about the mid-term of the projects' running time by a self-assessment. This includes a workshop, organised by the consortium, in which results are shared and discussed with stakeholders from outside the project team. Consortia should include this workshop in their budget. The mid-term report will include the research results presented and conclusions of the workshop, including a reflection on and, if required, revision of the working plan. If deemed necessary, some members of the assessment committee, created by JST and NWO, will be asked to evaluate the progress of the projects based on mid-term reports submitted by the consortia, and to give recommendations to the projects based on their evaluations.

The mid-term report of each of the projects need to be prepared jointly using the prescribed format and submitted before the joint mid-term workshop and will be used as input for organising this mid-term workshop. Both the Netherlands-based and Japan-based members of the consortium are expected to contribute and participate in the mid-term workshop.

### *5.2.3 Final Report*

A substantive final report should be submitted within three months after the project has ended for both sides of the consortium. This report needs to be prepared jointly using the prescribed format and detail the research done and the achieved results, as well as a reflection on the project's working plan and its indicators. As part of this, projects will be asked to again complete a self-assessment, and hold a final workshop, with optionally a discussion with stakeholders from outside the project team. The final substantive report might again be evaluated by some members of the assessment committee, created by NWO and JST. The final workshop should again be taken into account in the consortium's budget.



## 5.2.4 Final Accountability to NWO

Simultaneously with the final report, the Netherlands-based project leader and the controller/financial manager of the Netherlands-based project leader's institution should submit a signed financial end report, organised according to the budget lines of the approved NWO budget. The report should detail, among others, the effective duration (period) and size (fte) of the personnel appointed to the project, and, if applicable, how eventual replacements were arranged. The realised in-kind co-financing should also be accounted for.

If the Netherlands-based project leader is not based at a knowledge institution that is subject to the education accountants protocol of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, an external audit report must also be submitted. NWO reserves the right to conduct an external financial audit.

NWO reserves the right to externally evaluate projects financed under this call. The project ends with the issuing of the grant settlement decision. This decision is taken after approval of the final document(s) by NWO.

## 5.2.5 Final Accountability to JST

The final accountability of the Japan-based project leader to JST are further specified in Annexes 7.1 from JST.

## 5.3 Additional terms and conditions

For additional terms and conditions for grant recipients, see annex 7.1 and 7.2.

## 6 Contact and other information

### 6.1 Contact

#### 6.1.1 Specific questions

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

<b>NWO:</b>	+31703494594
Rosanne van Beek, Programme Officer	
Emma Winkels, Programme Officer	+31703494310
Paul Schuddeboom, Programme Officer E-mail: nwo-jst-joint-call@nwo.nl	+31306001269
<b>JST</b>	+81(0)362611994
ASPIRE Coordination Group	
Email: aspire-nl@jst.go.jp	

#### 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 (0)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.

#### 6.1.3 Technical questions about the web application e-Rad

For technical questions about e-Rad please contact the e-Rad helpdesk. Please read the manual first before consulting the helpdesk. The e-Rad helpdesk can be contacted from Monday to Friday between 9:00 and 18:00 (JST) hours on 0570057060 or +81(0)366310622 (direct line).

### 6.2 Other information

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.



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## **7 Annexes:**

### **7.1 Japan conditions on granting**

For the conditions for granting on the Japanese side, see the JST Call text on this website: [https://www.jst.go.jp/aspire/program/announce/announce\\_aspire2025\\_nl.html](https://www.jst.go.jp/aspire/program/announce/announce_aspire2025_nl.html).

### **7.2 Netherlands conditions on granting**

The NWO Grant Rules 2024 and the Agreement on the Payment of Costs for Scientific Research are applicable to all grants awarded by NWO.

#### **7.2.1 Scientific integrity**

Projects funded in this programme 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, the applicants should immediately inform NWO of this and should submit all relevant documents to their respective funding organisation. More information about the code of conduct and the policy regarding research integrity can be found on the website: <https://www.nwo.nl/en/scientific-integrity>.

#### **7.2.2 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. The absence or presence of an ethical statement or licence at the time of the application process has no effect on the assessment of the application. If an ethics statement or licence is required for (part of) the research, the project leader must provide a copy of this statement or licence to NWO after the project has been awarded, and in any case no later than before implementation of the part of the project for which the statement is required starts. The part of the project requiring the statement and/or licence can obviously not (yet) be carried out as long as no statement or licence has been provided.

It is the responsibility of the main applicants, in conjunction with their institutions, to ensure that all research activities comply with the laws and regulations of the country in which the research activities are conducted.

Applicants have to act in accordance with the nationally and internationally accepted standards of scientific activity, as set out in the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and the TRUST Code - A Global Code of Conduct for Equitable Research Partnerships.

For complex questions related to ethical issues, NWO and JST reserve the right to consult an external adviser. If after consulting the adviser, NWO and JST are of the opinion that an ethical assessment is needed for the application, then the applicants are obliged to take the necessary measures for such an assessment. If the applicants fail to obtain the necessary statement of approval from an ethics review committee then the grant shall be immediately withdrawn.

#### **7.2.3 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.

#### **7.2.4 Co-funding justification**

All applications are subject to the NWO Co-funding Rules.

The ratio of in-kind co-funding of the Netherlands-based part of the consortium to the grant provided by NWO in this Call for proposals, applies from submission of an application until the grant is determined.

One-off indexing (see Section 7.4) due to other applicable rates after submission does not affect the



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ratio and co-financing requirement for the NWO contribution. For this, NWO assumes the ratio in the application budgets accepted by NWO.

After determination of a project the final grant amount is settled on the basis of the final report, the financial conditions and the co-funding ratio as present in the application budget.

At all times NWO must be notified of problems in expected co-funding. In addition to financial implications for a project, NWO may also require adequate changes to a project as a change request so that research can be continued as best as possible.

#### *7.2.5 Data management*

After a proposal has been awarded funding, the project leader should elaborate the data management Section into a data management plan. For this, applicants can make use of the advice from the referees and committee. The applicant must describe in the plan whether existing data will be used, or whether new data will be collected or generated, and how this data will be made FAIR: Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable. Before submission, the data management plan should be checked by a data steward or similar officer of the research organisation where the project will be realised.

NWO will check the plan as quickly as possible. Approval of the data management plan by NWO is a condition for disbursement of the funding. The plan can be adjusted during the research.

More information about the data management protocol of NWO can be found at: Research data management | NWO.

#### *7.2.6 Intellectual property and consortium agreement*

With respect to intellectual property (IP), the NWO IP policy applies. This can be found in Chapter 4 of the NWO Grant Rules 2024.

Applicants must carry out a project funded by NWO during the time that they work for the research organisation. If an applicant or a researcher funded by NWO is appointed by more than one employer, then the other employer should relinquish any possible IP rights that emerge from the project of the applicant. Japan-based project leaders should furthermore ensure that any IP emanating from JST funding is managed in accordance with JST guidelines.

After a proposal has been awarded funding, the conclusion of a consortium agreement is one of the conditions for starting the project. In this agreement, arrangements are made about intellectual property and publication, knowledge transfer, confidentiality, co-financing payments, progress reports, and final reports. Uploading in ISAAC is required before the project can start. The responsibility for arranging the consortium agreement lies with the applicants.

The responsibility for arranging the consortium agreement lies with the consortium. NWO and JST do not sign the agreement. A model Consortium Agreement can be found on the funding page of this Call for Proposals. This model Consortium Agreement may be modified with regards to intellectual property, including JST's IP Policy, publication and confidential information to the extent that any modifications to be made shall fit within the framework of NWO Grant Rules 2024 and European legislation on state aid. The model consortium agreement provides for this.

#### *7.2.7 Socially responsible licensing*

The knowledge that emerges from the project could be suitable for use in society. When agreements about licensing and/or the transfer of research results developed under this Call for proposals are made, due consideration should be given to the ten principles for socially responsible licensing, as stated in the NFU factsheet [https://www.nfu.nl/sites/default/files/2020-08/19.4511\\_Ten\\_principles\\_for\\_Socially\\_Responsible\\_Licensing\\_v19-12-2019.pdf](https://www.nfu.nl/sites/default/files/2020-08/19.4511_Ten_principles_for_Socially_Responsible_Licensing_v19-12-2019.pdf).

#### *7.2.8 Open Access*

NWO and JST are committed to making the results of the research they fund openly accessible via the internet (Open Access). Scientific publications arising from projects awarded on the basis of this Call for proposals must therefore be made available in Open Access form in accordance with the Open Access Policy.



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## Scientific articles

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

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

## Books

Different requirements apply to scholarly books, book Chapters and edited collections. See the Open Access Policy Framework at <https://www.nwo.nl/en/open-science>.

## CC BY licence

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

## Costs

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

For more detailed information about NWO’s Open Access policy, see <https://www.nwo.nl/en/open-science>.

## 7.3 Budget modules and rates at NWO

### 7.3.1 Personnel

#### PhD student

A PhD student is appointed for 48 months for 1.0 FTE at a university in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, umc or research organisation as referred to in Article 1.1 of the NWO Grant Rules 2024. The equivalent of 48 full-time months, e.g. a 60-month appointment for 0.8 FTE, is also possible. It is possible to apply for a shorter appointment period in special situations. This must be properly justified. This will be assessed by the assessment committee. If a project lasts less than 48 months, it is necessary for the dean or institute director to provide a written commitment to fund the remaining part of the PhD trajectory. It is not possible to apply for funding for a PhD student who started the project to be funded before the grant is awarded.

Please use the rates of a PhD student in the salary tables of UNL and NFU. A one-off personal bench fee of € 5,000 is available for each PhD student to stimulate the scientific career.

#### Engineering Doctorate degree (EngD)

An Engineering Doctorate (EngD) is appointed for a maximum of 24 months for 1.0 FTE. The EngD is employed by the applying research organisation and may, during the research, perform work at an industrial partner for a fixed period of time.

Funding for the appointment of an EngD may only be requested for if funding for a PhD student or postdoc is also applied for. It is not possible to apply for funding for an EngD who started the project to be funded before grant is awarded.

Use the rates of a PhD student in the salary tables of UNL and NFU. A one-off personal bench fee of € 5,000 is available for each EngD to stimulate the scientific career.

#### Postdoc

A postdoc is appointed to a university in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, umc or research organisation as listed in Section 3.1.



Use the rates of a senior academic employee in the salary tables of UNL, and the rates of a postdoc at an umc in the salary tables of NFU.

It is not possible to apply for funding for a postdoc who started the project to be funded before the grant is awarded.

Only a postdoc position with an appointment of at least 12 months for 0.5 fte qualifies as an appointment for which a one-off personal benchfee of € 5,000 is available to boost the scientific career.

### **Physician-researcher**

Funding may be requested for the appointment of a basic physician or physician-assistant as a physician-researcher to conduct scientific medical research at an umc. A physician-researcher is appointed for 1.0 FTE for a minimum of 36 and a maximum of 48 months. The equivalent of 36 or 48 full-time months, e.g. a 48 or 60-month appointment for 0.8 FTE, is also possible. It is possible to apply for a shorter appointment period in special situations. This must be properly justified. This will be assessed by the assessment committee.

It is not possible to apply for funding for a physician-researcher who started the project to be funded before the grant is awarded.

Use the (medical) researcher rates in the NFU salary tables. For each physician-researcher, a one-off personal bench fee of € 5,000 is available to stimulate the scientific career.

### **Non-scientific personnel**

Funding may be requested for non-scientific personnel (NWP) needed to execute the project. These may include, for example, programmers, technical assistants, analysts or project leaders. The use of NWP must be described in the proposal.

The duration of the appointment cannot be longer than the duration of the project funded by NWO. Depending on the job level, a choice is made from the UNL or NFU salary tables for NWP-mbo, NWP-hbo and NWP-academic. No one-off personal benchfee is available for NWP.

### **Research leave**

This budget module allows funding to be applied for the costs of research leave for the main and/or co-applicant(s). This allows the relevant applicant's employer to cover the costs to relieve them from teaching, supervisory, administrative or management duties (not research duties). The applicant may only use the time released by this research leave for work on the project. The proposal must describe what project-related work the applicant(s) will perform during the exempted time.

NWO will fund the research leave on the basis of the salary rates of a senior academic employee (UNL) or postdoc (NFU) applicable at the time of the decision date.

### **Personnel of universities of applied sciences**

Funding may be requested for personnel of universities of applied sciences. The rates are determined using the Government Tariff Manual (HOT), Table 2 average total salary cost per salary scale, column 'Hourly rate productive hours, excluding VAT'. The salary scale of the requested position determines the rate from the HOT table.

For organisations that do not use the CAO of the Government of the Netherlands or similar (such as the CAOs of hbo, mbo, secondary education and local authorities), the following salary scales from the HOT apply: Project assistant: scale 6. Junior (researcher): scale 10. Medior (researcher): scale 12. Senior (researcher): scale 13. Director: scale 16.

### **7.3.2 Material**

Funding may be requested for all project-specific costs relating to, among others, consumables, purchase of services, materials, small instruments, access to (inter)national facilities, software and research resources that have no economic value after use. Travel and accommodation costs (national and international) for all people working on the project incl. foreign guest researchers, costs for the organisation of (international) workshops and symposia, costs for data management, publications, and costs in the context of citizen science also fall under this module. Up to 50% of the material budget requested from NWO can be used for work by third parties (e.g. laboratory analyses, data collection, etc.).



Travel expenses (national and international) will only be reimbursed on the basis of second class/ economy class fares. For publications, the provisions in Section 4.5 Open access apply. Costs for an audit statement can only be claimed for organisation that are not subject to OCW's education audit protocol for a maximum of € 5,000 per audit statement.

It is not permitted to include costs for:

- organisational infrastructure and overhead, including a fully functioning workplace, accommodation, office automation, personnel administration, commuting expenses, training, facilities, HR advice and business care, documentary information provision and home office allowance;
- the use and maintenance of in-house developed scientific infrastructure;
- regular teaching activities.

### *7.3.3 Knowledge utilisation*

The budget requested should be adequately specified in the proposal. To determine the rates, use the provisions of Personnel and Material.

It is possible to use up to 5% of the grant amount for this module. There is no obligation to use this module. Examples of possible costs, but not limited to, are the creation of a teaching curriculum, a feasibility study on application possibilities, costs for filing a patent application or engaging a business developer.

### *7.3.4 Project management*

The Project Management module offers the opportunity to request a project management post up to a maximum of 5% of the NWO grant amount. The main applicant must adequately justify this post. Project management includes the following: optimising the organisational structure of the consortium, supporting the consortium and the main applicant, safeguarding the coherence, progress and unity of the project, and coordinating between the sub-projects within the project. These tasks may also be carried out by external parties if they are not available within the main applicant's knowledge institution. Research organisations should take account of public procurement rules in the tender procedure for selecting a third party and, where appropriate, follow a European procurement procedure. The activities of main applicants and co-applicants themselves in relation to the project or project management may not be funded under this budget module. The budget to be requested for project management can consist of material or implementation costs and personnel costs. For personnel costs, a maximum rate of € 121 per hour can be claimed. The hourly rate of personnel to be appointed must be based on a cost-covering rate and is calculated on the basis of the standard productive number of hours used by the organisation.

The cost-covering rate includes:

- (average) gross salary corresponding to the position of the employee who will contribute to the project (based on the collective labour agreement grade of the employee concerned);
- holiday allowance and 13th month (if applicable in the relevant collective labour agreement) in proportion to the FTE deployed;
- social security charges;
- pension costs;
- overheads.

Project management tasks may be carried out by external parties, but the part of (commercial) hourly rates that exceeds the rates stated is not eligible for funding and therefore cannot be included in the budget.

## **7.4 Indexing**

The rate at the time of the decision date applies. NWO will, if necessary, apply a one-off indexation of personnel costs when awarding the grant. The date on which the rates take effect is used for this purpose. If the date of publication of the fees is later than the effective date, the date of publication is used. The tariffs of the Universities of the Netherlands (UNL) usually take effect on 1 July, of the Dutch Federation of University Medical Centres (NFU) on 1 August and of the Government Tariffs Manual (HOT) on 1 January.

The on-off indexation does not affect the grant ceiling and the maximum grant amount to be applied for. The grant ceiling and maximum requestable grant amount remain unchanged during the assessment procedure. If awarded, one-off indexation will be applied to the grant amount.



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If co-funding is required or permitted, the one-off indexation does not affect the requirements for own contributions and co-funding, nor the IP rights that may result from the co-funding.