STAATSCOURANT
Officiële uitgave van het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden sinds 1814.
Nr. 33261
23 september 2026

Call for proposals Citizen Science Hubs, Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek

Institutional embedding of participatory research

2026

Content

1 Summary and introduction
1.1 Brief summary
1.2 Introduction
2 Aim and background
2.1 Aim of the programme and the round
2.2 Background
3 Preparation and submission
3.1 Timeline
3.2 Who can apply
3.3 What can be applied for
3.4 Preparing and submitting a proposal in ISAAC
3.5 Requirements for consideration
4 Assessment
4.1 Criteria
4.2 Procedure
4.3 Guidelines and frameworks for assessment
5 After the grant award
5.1 Start of the project
5.2 Monitoring and project management
5.3 Guidelines and frameworks for project execution
5.4 Completion
5.5 Research results – Open Science
5.6 Evaluation
6 Contact
7 Annexes
7.1 Explanation of budget modules
7.2 Indexation
7.3 Definition of Citizen Science in this Call for proposals

1 Summary and introduction

This chapter contains a brief summary of the round and an introduction.

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.

1.1 Brief summary

Title: Citizen Science Hubs.

Aim: The aim of this round is to increase the number of citizen science hubs, thereby strengthening institutional support for citizen science and societal engagement.

Budget: The maximum grant available per project is € 400,000. No more than 6 proposals are expected to be awarded funding in this round.

Supporting contributions: In every application for a new hub, a contribution of at least 0.5–1.5 FTE per year (depending on the size of the organisations) must be committed to existing staff for each grant year within the grant period.

Submission deadlines:
The deadline for submitting full proposals is 8 January 2027, before 14:00:00 CET.

Procedure: The application assessment procedure consists of the following steps:
– pre-advice by an assessment committee;
– meeting of the assessment committee;

– decision-making by the Open Science NL Steering Board

1.2 Introduction

This Call for proposals describes the application process for the 'Citizen Science Hubs' round and consists of five chapters. This Call for proposals falls under the responsibility of Open Science NL, part of the Dutch Research Council (NWO).

The NWO Grant Rules 2024 apply to all proposals.

Open Science NL processes personal data it receives in the context of this round in accordance with the NWO Privacy Statement.

2 Aim and background

This chapter provides information about the aim and background of the programme and the round.

2.1 Aim of the programme and the round

Open science stands for an open, diverse and inclusive approach to research and scholarship that also conducts research with and for society. Citizen Science plays an important role in this, as this form of scientific approach has the potential to open up the research process to society.

In this programme, we define Citizen Science as scientific research in which people from outside the academic world – in other words, citizens – are actively involved. This can take place in partnership or collaboration with scientists or professionals, and at various stages of the research process. The aim of Citizen Science is to gain new (scientific) knowledge and insights, and to improve the dialogue between science, society (and policy) (see the definition of Citizen Science in Open Science NL's programmes[1]).

The aim of this programme is to strengthen the knowledge, expertise and support for Citizen Science (including science communication) within Dutch research organisations by establishing Citizen Science Hubs. Citizen Science Hubs act as central points of contact where expertise, resources and infrastructure are centralised to effectively support and coordinate Citizen Science. The necessary expertise include, for example data (management), scientific research (methodologies), dialogue techniques and science communication, design methods, knowledge integration, ethical and legal knowledge, and hands-on experience relating to participation (experiential expertise). In this way, the hubs ensure that Citizen Science is embedded within research organisations.

Aim of Citizen Science Hubs

Citizen Science Hubs are expected to undertake the following activities, amongst others:
- Developing, supervising, monitoring and evaluating Citizen Science projects;
- Developing and delivering training programmes and train-the-trainer courses;
- Providing advice on research methods, data collection and management, ethics and quality assurance;
- Developing and/or providing (digital) tools to support Citizen Science projects;
- Establishing, expanding and deepening networks around thematic or regional issues with partners both within and outside research organisations;
- Making Citizen Science practices and methods visible within research organisations, which is also expected to improve the recognition and rewarding of Citizen Science within these organisations.

Collaboration

Citizen Science focuses primarily on societal issues. For optimal societal impact, collaboration across the entire knowledge chain and with societal stakeholders is crucial. That is why this programme exclusively funds Citizen Science Hubs that are partnerships between multiple (at least two) research organisations. Through this collaboration, organisations can combine their own unique strengths, open up their own networks with partners from outside of research organisations, and thereby offer richer and more diverse support to a wider audience.

[1] Please see Annex 7.3 for further information on how Citizen Science and related terms are defined in the context of this call for proposals.

Own contribution

Setting up and ensuring the long-term sustainability of a Citizen Science Hub also requires effort and expertise from the organisations hosting the hub. For this reason, a contribution from the host organisation is mandatory under this Call for Proposals. For further information, please see section 3.4.1.

Goal of this round

The Citizen Science Hubs resulting from this round will contribute to a balanced thematic and/or geographical distribution, ensuring that, in the future, there is adequate institutional support and capacity available for collaboration with citizens in scientific research.

2.2 Background

The Dutch government has made available substantial funding to support the transition to open science in the Netherlands. The aim of the investment is to make open science the norm.

This call falls within the second work programme of Open Science NL, which covers the years 2026–2027. This work programme addresses a wide range of needs identified by the research community in relation to open science, and provides a solid foundation for the implementation of open science in the Netherlands to grow and flourish. The instruments within this work programme relate to the following priorities:

1. Infrastructure,
2. Capacity building,
3. Empowering communities,
4. Incentives,
5. Monitoring and evaluation.

The Call for proposals for "Citizen Science Hubs" falls under the priority area "Capacity building".

This instrument is intended to fund the development and bringing together of expertise in the field of Citizen Science and Societal Engagement. Support for Citizen Science within academic institutions is still very much under development, and there is a strong need for further capacity-building in this area.

As part of the first Open Science NL Call for proposals for Citizen Science Hubs (2024), five hubs have received funding to act as central hubs for expertise, resources and infrastructure, with a view to effectively coordinating and supporting citizen science activities.

These five funded hubs cover different parts of the Netherlands or have a thematic focus. However, in order to substantially strengthen capacity-building within Citizen Science, Open Science NL's vision is to establish more hubs throughout the Kingdom of the Netherlands, so as to ensure a good geographical spread, and to set up a number of hubs in specific thematic areas.

2.2.1 Societal impact of research

Citizen Science is both a scientific practice and a form of public participation in the scientific process. Through interaction and collaboration between researchers and people outside the scientific community, the likelihood of knowledge being applied increases, and with it the likelihood of societal impact. Societal impact here refers to changes that are (partly) the result of knowledge and expertise generated by research. These changes contribute to the well-being of people, the planet and society for present and future generations.

Through this Call for proposals, Open Science NL aims to build up support capacity for collaborations between science and society by means of Citizen Science Hubs, which can further enhance the societal impact of research. Open Science NL encourages applicants to take a broad view of the potential desired and undesired impacts of their project. Therefore, each application needs to describe the expected impact, and the quality of the plan for achieving this impact will be assessed (see assessment criteria, 4.1).

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

3 Preparation and submission

This chapter contains information on how to prepare and submit a proposal.

The use of generative AI when preparing a proposal is not explicitly prohibited as long as this happens responsibly. For guidance, see the NWO policy on the use of generative artificial intelligence (GAI) | NWO.

3.1 Timeline

The submission deadlines and a timeline for the entire assessment procedure for this round are given below. Open Science NL reserves the right to make adjustments to this timeline in the course of the procedure if needed. These will be communicated to the main applicant. Proposals submitted after the deadline will not be taken into consideration by Open Science NL.

Proposals

8 January 2027 before 14:00:00 CET	Deadline for proposals
February/March	Consultation of pre-advisers
Mid-March	Opportunity for applicants to submit a rebuttal
May	Assessment committee meeting
July	Decision by the OSNL Steering Board

3.2 Who can apply

Applicants may submit an application if they are employed on a permanent contract (with the associated employment contract) or have a fixed-term contract (which is at least as long as the duration of the project) at any of the following research organisations:
- universities and universities of applied sciences, as described in Section 1.8, subsection 1 of the Dutch Higher Education and Research Act, or universities referred to in the Policy Rules for Universities in the Kingdom of the Netherlands;
- university medical centres, as described in Section 1.13, subsection 1 of the Higher Education and Research Act;
- KNAW institutes and NWO institutes;
- National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM)
- Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute (KNMI).

Individuals with a zero-hour employment contract cannot submit a proposal.

It may be that the main applicant or a co-applicant's employment contract ends before the intended completion date of the project for which grant funding is being requested, or that the main or co-applicant's employment contract ends before this date due to their reaching retirement age. In such cases, the proposal must include a statement from the employer. In this statement, the research organisation in question guarantees that the project and all project members for whom funding is being requested will receive adequate supervision for the full duration of the project.

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

3.2.1 Additional conditions

Additional conditions (applicable to both main applicants and co-applicants):
- Each application must be submitted by at least two applicants: a main applicant and at least one co-applicant. Within a single application, the main applicant and co-applicants must not be affiliated with the same research organisation.
- Each research organisation may submit a maximum of one application. Each organisation may therefore be involved in a maximum of one hub.
- If applicants from one institution nevertheless submit multiple applications (as main and/or co-applicants), only the application submitted first in ISAAC will be considered. The other applications will be rejected. Applicants are therefore strongly encouraged to communicate and coordinate on this matter within their institution.
- Applications submitted by applicants employed by a research organisation that has already been

awarded a grant under the Call for proposals Citizen Science Hubs 2024 will not be considered. This concerns the following research organisations (in alphabetical order):

- Amsterdam University Medical Centers (Amsterdam UMC)
- Avans University of Applied Sciences
- Delft University of Technology
- Erasmus University Rotterdam
- Leiden University
- Maastricht University
- Maastricht University Medical Center+ (Maastricht UMC+)
- Naturalis Biodiversity Center
- Netherlands Institute for Sea Research (NIOZ)
- Open University of the Netherlands
- Radboud University
- Radboud University Medical Center (Radboudumc)
- Saxion University of Applied Sciences
- University of Amsterdam
- University of Applied Sciences of Amsterdam
- University of Twente
- Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU Amsterdam)

3.3 What can be applied for

The available budget for this Call for proposals is € 2,400,000. Per project, it is possible to apply for a grant with a maximum of € 400,000. The minimum duration of the proposed project is 3 years and the maximum duration is 4 years. Applicants may include personnel and material costs in their budget. The available budget modules are given below. Only request funding for what is essential to carry out the project. Rates and explanations of these budget modules are given in Annex 7.1.

3.3.1 Personnel

It is possible to apply for funding of the salary costs of personnel contributing to the project. The amount depends on the type of appointment and the organisation employing the personnel.

Personnel at a university in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, university medical centre or research organisation

For personnel employed by a university in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, university medical centre or other research organisation as referred to in Article 1.1, first section, subsections c to h of the NWO Grant Rules 2024 and at the universities in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, as specified in the policy rule on Universities in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, salary costs may be included for the following positions: (assistant) professor, hub coordinator, community manager, communications manager/adviser, Citizen Science adviser, data manager, and other similar roles.

Personnel at universities of applied sciences and other research organisations

It is possible to include salary costs for personnel at universities of applied sciences and other research organisations, for the following functions: professor of applied sciences, (senior) lecturer, hub coordinator, community manager, communications manager/advisor, Citizen Science advisor, data manager, and other similar roles.

Students

Costs for students can be included as material costs, as long as the students are working on the project and study at one of the research organisations listed in subsection 3.2 (see subsection 7.1.2). There is no maximum number of students who may work on a project.

3.3.2 Materials

All project-specific material costs are eligible for funding. Funding for such costs cannot exceed 30% of the NWO grant amount. Of this material budget, a maximum of 50% may be applied to work by third parties.

3.4 Preparing and submitting a proposal in ISAAC

NWO makes use of the ISAAC system. Start preparations for your ISAAC proposal submission in good time.

The steps involved in writing your application are:
– create an account or update your existing account details if necessary.
– use ISAAC to download the proposal form and required formats for annexes.
– save the completed proposal form as a PDF file and submit it in ISAAC. Submit any annexes separately.
– in ISAAC, fill in all the requested information, including the research fields NWO research fields | NWO and a summary for non-experts in Dutch and English; Open Science NL will publish this summary for non-experts along with the news item about the grant awards. It should have a length of 50–100 words and be written for a general audience. No scientific summary will be published.
– if you need to register an organisation that isn't yet included in the ISAAC database, this is possible until five working days before the deadline by email to relatiebeheer@nwo.nl.
– the proposal is written in English.

It is mandatory to upload the following annexes to the proposal in ISAAC:
– budget (Excel file);
– joint statement by research organisations for a contribution of between 0.5 and 1.5 FTE per year for each grant year within the grant period. See section 3.4.1.

Optional annexes only:
– guarantee of continuity in project supervision (where applicable only; see section 3.2).

Always use the templates provided by Open Science NL for all annexes. Annexes other than those listed above are not permitted. All attachments, with the exception of the budget, must be submitted as PDF files (without security). The budget must be submitted as an Excel file in ISAAC.

Documentation including proposal submission formats is also available on the funding page for this round on the Open Science NL website.

For questions about ISAAC, use the 'Help' button in ISAAC to consult the ISAAC manual or contact the ISAAC helpdesk. The ISAAC helpdesk can be reached Monday to Friday between 10:00 and 17:00 at +31 (0) 70 34 40 600. Emails may be sent to isaac.helpdesk@nwo.nl. You will receive a reply within two working days.

3.4.1 Additional submission requirements: own contribution

The currently available seed funding alone is insufficient to successfully establish and sustainably embed a new Citizen Science Hub. Existing staff and expertise within the research organisations are required to embed the initiative, mentor the newly appointed staff, and begin delivering the services described in the project plan as soon as possible. The applicant research organisations therefore commit to jointly providing an in-kind contribution of between 0.5 and 1.5 FTE per year (for each grant year within the grant period) in the form of existing staff with relevant subject-matter expertise in the field. For the stated FTE, these staff members will be released from their existing duties in order to carry out specific tasks set out in the project plan. The minimum contribution per staff member included as part of the organisation's own contribution is 0.1 FTE per year.

As multiple organisations jointly submit the application, the required in-kind FTE contribution is determined based on the combined size of these organisations, expressed as the total number of FTEs employed.
- For organisations with a combined size of fewer than 1,000 FTEs, the minimum required in-kind contribution is 0.5 FTE per year.
- For organisations with a combined size of 1,000 to 2,000 FTEs, the minimum required in-kind contribution is 1.0 FTE per year.
- For organisations with a combined size of more than 2,000 FTEs, the minimum required in-kind contribution is 1.5 FTE per year.

When submitting the application, applicants must state the size of the submitting organisations based on official data from the Association of Universities of Applied Sciences, Rathenau Facts & Figures for universities and university medical centres (UMCs), and/or the annual reports of the organisations.

The supporting contribution will be confirmed by means of a joint declaration from the submitting research organisations, signed by the senior management of those organisations. There is no minimum or maximum contribution per organisation.

Example: If three small organisations submit a joint application and their combined size is less than 1,000 FTEs, the required in-kind contribution for this application is at least 0.5 FTE per year. This

contribution could, for example, consist of two people (employed by two of the three organisations) who will each work on the project for 0.25 FTE per grant year. In this example, the third organisation does not contribute any FTEs.

The expertise and suitability of staff are assessed against the evaluation criteria (see section 4.1).

3.5 Requirements for consideration

Open Science NL checks that a proposal meets all the conditions applicable to this Call for proposals, including those set out below. A proposal must meet these requirements to be taken into consideration.

Conditions:
- the proposal was received before the deadline.
- the main applicant and co-applicants meets the conditions stated in subsection 3.2 and subsection 7.1.
- the proposal complies with the DORA guidelines described in subsection 4.3.4.
- the proposal meets the additional submission requirements as described in section 3.2.1.
- the proposal has been prepared using the forms provided in ISAAC and on the Open Science NL website's funding page for this round.
- the application form and the required annexes are, after a possible one-time request to make additions or changes, correct and complete and have been filled out according to the instructions.
- the proposal has been submitted via the main applicant's ISAAC account.
- the proposal is written in English.
- the proposal meets the page count and word limit requirements.
- the budget for the proposal has been compiled according to the requirements of this Call for proposals, using the provided format with the most recent rates.
- the proposed project has a duration of at least 3 and at most 4 years.

The application form may contain additional requirements, explanations, procedures and questions that are necessary for completing the form correctly.

Consideration of proposal and administrative corrections

As soon as possible after the required documents have been submitted, the applicant will be informed whether Open Science NL will take the application into consideration. Please note that Open Science NL may contact the applicant within two weeks after the application deadline to make any necessary administrative corrections in order to (still) meet the submission requirements.
The applicant is given one opportunity to make these corrections, and must do so within ten working days. If the corrected documents remain incomplete and/or incorrect, Open Science NL will not take the proposal into further consideration.

Notification of own research organisation

Open Science NL works on the assumption that applicants have informed the research organisations where they are employed about the proposal submission, and that these organisations have accepted the grant conditions pertaining to this Call for proposals. During the application process, Open Science NL will communicate with the main applicant.

4 Assessment

This chapter contains information on the assessment procedure for a proposal.

4.1 Criteria

The assessment is based on substantive assessment criteria and commences once a proposal has been taken into consideration. Proposals are substantively assessed against the following criteria:
1. Quality of the team composition (accounts for 30% of the assessment)
   - To what extent do the applicants have the necessary expertise, experience and network to build a successful hub? This applies to both Citizen Science and science communication.
   - To what extent do the applicants have demonstrable practical experience in supervising Citizen Science projects?
   - To what extent do the members added to the team as part of the supporting contribution have relevant expertise? How does their expertise contribute to achieving the objectives?
2. Quality of the project plan (accounts for 50% of the assessment)

- Are the plans and budget for setting up the hub well-founded and realistic? Is there a clear description of the tasks the hub will carry out?
- Are the organisational structure and the long-term integration of the hub within the applicant research organisations clearly described?
- To what extent does the project plan demonstrate an evidence-based impact pathway, clearly setting out how knowledge, interactions and other mechanisms can contribute to change, and how this will be monitored and adjusted during the project?

3. Existing network and network expansion (accounts for 20% of the assessment)
   - Which existing and planned networks (internal and external) will the hub serve? Has a clear communication strategy been formulated for the hub?
   - Are the relevant organisations from civil society involved in the strategy and its implementation?
   - To what extent does the hub relate to the hubs already awarded funding in the first round of grants[2], particularly with regard to any overlap, supplementary nature and complementarity?

The criteria are each assigned a score. Scores are determined based on the NWO score table using a scale of 1 to 9, where '1' is excellent and '9' unsatisfactory.

All proposals are given a weighted average total score for the criteria and then ranked based on this score. For rounds with five or more proposals, the assessment committee members' scores are standardised for ranking. Open Science NL performs this standardisation based on the median and average deviation.

To be considered eligible for funding, a proposal must score 'very good' or higher on each of the criteria. For more information on the qualifications, see Applying for funding, how does it work? | NWO.

4.2 Procedure

The assessment procedure for a proposal consists of the following steps (see timeline in subsection 3.1):
- pre-advice by assessment committee;
- rebuttal;
- assessment committee meeting;
- decision-making.

An external independent assessment committee will be appointed by the OSNL Steering Board for this round. Members are drawn from science and society with knowledge of the subject or the field. It is the assessment committee's task to assess the proposals received against the assessment criteria. Each proposal is assessed on its own merits.

Given the expertise present in the assessment committee, Open Science NL has opted to apply the provision in Article 2.2.4, subsection 2 of the NWO Grant Rules 2024 for assessment of applications without involving referees.

4.2.1 Pre-advice by assessment committee

The proposal is shared with the assessment committee for review. Preferably, at least two pre-advisers should be appointed for each proposal. The pre-advisers provide written, substantive and reasoned responses to each proposal. They formulate these responses based on the substantive assessment criteria (see subsection 4.1) and give the proposal numerical scores for each assessment criterion. Scores are determined based on the NWO score table using a scale of 1 to 9, where '1' is excellent and '9' unsatisfactory.

4.2.2 Rebuttal

The main applicant is provided with the anonymised pre-advice. They may respond with a rebuttal if desired. Rebuttals must be submitted via ISAAC within ten working days of receiving the pre-advice. After this deadline, a rebuttal will not be included in the subsequent stages of the procedure. On receiving the pre-advice, an applicant may opt to withdraw their proposal via ISAAC, in which case they should notify Open Science NL of this decision by email as soon as possible. See Chapter 6 for contact details.

[2] Hubs from the first round of funding are described on CS-NL: Hubs and in Open Science NL's Zenodo folder 'Collection of submitted applications for OSNL funding programmes'.

4.2.3 Assessment committee meeting

The assessment committee makes its own assessment based on the available material. The final assessment is guided to an important degree by the pre-advice, although the assessment committee will not necessarily adopt these in full. The assessment committee will consider the arguments put forward by the pre-advisors, weighing them against each other, and determine whether the rebuttal constitutes a proper response to the points of criticism raised in the pre-advice. The assessment committee assigns every proposal a final score, rounded to two decimal places.

Following their deliberations, the assessment committee prepares a written advisory report for the OSNL Steering Board concerning the quality and ranking of the proposals. This advice is based on the assessment criteria. A proposal must achieve an overall rating of at least 'very good' to be eligible for the grant. Additionally, the proposal must qualify as at least 'very good' for each of the individual assessment criteria. For more information on the qualifications, see Applying for funding, how does it work? | NWO.

4.2.4 Decision-making

The procedures followed and the assessment committee's advice are assessed by the OSNL Steering Board. It determines the final ratings and makes a decision on whether to award or reject each proposal. Following this decision, Open Science NL informs the applicant of their proposal's award or rejection. The applicant also receives a letter (by email) with the decision.

4.3 Guidelines and frameworks for assessment

The following guidelines and frameworks apply during the assessment of a proposal.

4.3.1 Code for Dealing with Personal Interests

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

4.3.2 Generative AI

The use of generative AI to assess proposals is completely prohibited. More information about NWO's policy on the use of generative AI can be found on the website (NWO policy on the use of generative artificial intelligence (GAI) | NWO).

4.3.3 Diversity and inclusion

NWO strives to achieve an inclusive culture in which there is no place for conscious or unconscious barriers based on cultural, ethnic, or religious background, gender, sexual orientation, health or age (Diversity and inclusion | NWO). NWO offers assessment committee members guidance on how to ensure an inclusive written assessment and assessment committee meeting (Inclusive assessment | NWO).

4.3.4 Broad definition of scientific output (DORA)

When assessing the scientific track record of applicants, NWO applies a broad definition of scientific output.

NWO asks assessment committee members not to rely on indicators such as the Journal Impact Factor or the h-index when assessing proposals. There should be no mention of such indicators in the proposal. It is, however, permitted to list other scientific products besides publications, such as datasets, patents, software and code.

NWO is a signatory to the 'San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment' (DORA), on which this policy is based. DORA is a worldwide initiative that aims to improve the ways in which research and researchers are assessed. DORA contains recommendations for research funders, research organisations, scientific journals and other parties.

4.3.5 Knowledge security

Together, the Dutch knowledge sector, including NWO, and various branches of government have created the National Knowledge Security Guidelines as guidance on how to weigh opportunities and security risks for anyone involved in international collaboration at research organisations. The

approach to knowledge security in the Netherlands relies heavily on self-regulation by the knowledge sector.

Open Science NL expects applicants to adhere to the research organisation's knowledge security policy. In case of signs that a proposal or awarded project may present risks to knowledge security, Open Science NL can ask the applicant or project leader to provide insight into risk mitigation measures. Additionally, Open Science NL may impose further conditions to protect knowledge security in the award letter.

The National Knowledge Security Guidelines are available on the central government website at: Home | National Contact Point for Knowledge Security

4.3.6 Compensation scheme

Force majeure extension scheme

Applicants who are prevented from providing necessary input within the allotted time during the assessment procedure have recourse to the NWO force majeure extension scheme.

4.3.7 Ex aequo

Open Science NL defines ex aequo as a situation in which it is not possible to distinguish between two or more proposals based on their weighted scores. An ex aequo situation is relevant when approaching the limits of the grant cap or selection threshold. The existence of an ex aequo situation is determined as follows. The starting point is the ranking by the assessment committee, with final scores rounded to two decimal places. The score for the lowest-ranked proposal within the limits of the grant cap or the selection threshold is used as a reference score. All proposals with scores within 0.05 of the reference score are taken into consideration. The result is a selection of proposals with scores within 0.10 of each other. In the event of a tied ranking at the limit of the grant cap or selection threshold, the proposal with the highest score for the 'quality of the project plan' criterion will receive precedence. If this results in another tie, the proposal with the highest score for the 'quality of the team composition' criterion will be given precedence. If this still does not resolve the situation, the assessment committee will determine the ranking by an (anonymous) majority vote, in accordance with Article 2.2.6, fifth subsection of the NWO Grant Rules 2024. If this vote also fails to break the tie, or is deemed unacceptable, the ex aequo situation will be passed on to the OSNL Steering Board.

5 After the grant award

This chapter lists the conditions and obligations that apply once the grant has been awarded. As such, it is mainly relevant to applicants with approved proposals.

5.1 Start of the project

Once a proposal has been awarded funding, the main applicant automatically becomes the project leader and point of contact for Open Science NL. The project leaders' research organisation is designated as the main beneficiary and becomes the grant administrator. The project leader and grant administrator share joint responsibility for the execution of the entire project. Co-applicants also play an active role in the project's execution and are project co-leaders.

The project leader for the project receives an award letter on behalf of the OSNL Steering Board. This letter also notes any specifically required forms and guidelines. The start form must be submitted before the project's start. Without this document, work on the project cannot start. The grant will be paid out in instalments once all start-up requirements have been met.

5.1.1 Start form

A start form must be used to indicate the start of the project. The project leader receives this start form along with the award letter. Project leaders can authorise others to carry out administrative tasks relating to their project in the ISAAC system. For more information about the authorisation scheme for project leaders, go to: Authorisation scheme for project managers | NWO.

5.2 Monitoring and project management

The project leader must keep Open Science NL informed of the project's progress throughout. This is achieved in several ways.

5.2.1 Progress report

Open Science NL requests updates on the project's progress at regular intervals. The project leader will receive an email with a request to prepare and submit a progress report well beforehand, along with the relevant deadline.

5.2.2 Support committee

Open Science NL has established a support committee to provide guidance and advice on all the Citizen Science Hubs that have been awarded funding (from the 2024 round and this round).

The committee will facilitate the mutual exchange of insights and experiences across all the awarded hubs.

Open Science NL intends to monitor progress, in collaboration with the awarded hubs and the support committee, in a way that suits the hubs. Following the award of funding, further decisions will be taken, in consultation with the hubs and the support committee, on how the hubs can continue to develop and how the support committee can monitor this progress.

The hubs report annually on their progress based on a monitoring framework. The hubs themselves establish a monitoring framework with tailor-made agreements. On the basis of these self-assessments, annual progress meetings take place between the support committee (or its representative(s)) and the hubs.

Successful applicants will receive further information about this committee in the grant award decision.

5.2.3 Research output

Open Science NL wants to be kept updated of all the output resulting from the research, both scientific and for a wider audience. The NWO website offers more information on various forms of output. Project leaders can use the ISAAC system to submit such output.

5.2.4 Project changes

In the event of any changes occurring in the course of the project compared to the approved proposal and budget, the project leader must submit the changes to Open Science NL for approval in advance using a request for change form. See also Article 3.4 of the NWO Grant Rules 2024.

5.3 Guidelines and frameworks for project execution

The following describes the guidelines and frameworks applicable to the project's execution.

5.3.1 Compliance with the National Knowledge Security Guidelines

As with the assessment (see subsection 4.3), the National Knowledge Security Guidelines apply after the grant award. Open Science NL expects project leaders to adhere to the research organisation's knowledge security policy. The grant award letter may contain further conditions to protect knowledge security. The National Knowledge Security Guidelines are available on the central government website at: National Contact Point for Knowledge Security

5.3.2 Ethical statement or licence

It is the project leader's responsibility to determine whether execution of the proposed project requires an ethical statement or licence. The presence or absence of an ethical statement or licence at the time of application will not impact the proposal's assessment. If an ethical statement or licence does prove necessary for all or part of the research, the project leader must provide Open Science NL with a copy of this statement or licence once the project has been approved and before starting work on the relevant project components. Naturally, the statement or licence must have been issued to be able to work on these components.

5.3.3 Scientific integrity

Research must be conducted in accordance with the standards set out in the 2018 Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity. In the case of an actual or suspected violation of these standards, the project leader must immediately inform Open Science NL and submit all relevant documents to Open

Science NL. Researchers can also report complaints to their research organisation's Scientific Integrity Committee or to the NWO Scientific Integrity Desk.

Open Science NL places a high value on the scientific integrity of the research it funds and exerts itself to prevent and detect any integrity violations. Research irregularities can cause damage directly, for example to the environment or to patients, and prejudice public trust in scientific research as well as trust between individual researchers.

5.3.4 Principles of socially responsible licensing

A project may generate knowledge that is applicable in society. When entering into licensing or transfer agreements for research results developed in this funding round, due consideration must be given to the ten principles of socially responsible licensing provided on the UMCNL website.

5.3.5 Transparent assessment procedure

Transparency is at the heart of Open Science. For this funding instrument, Open Science NL will make the details of the successful and unsuccessful applications openly available through the publicly accessible website, on the condition that the applicants give consent to share this information. Whether or not the applicant is willing to share these details is not taken into account in the decision to award funding. Consent for sharing will be requested from the applicants after the decision for funding has been made.

5.3.6 Genetic resources and the Nagoya Protocol

Researchers must take whatever measures are necessary to ensure compliance with the Nagoya Protocol. The Nagoya Protocol aims to ensure fair and equitable sharing of benefits from the utilisation of genetic resources and traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources (Access and Benefit-Sharing; ABS). Researchers who make use of such resources, including in or from other countries, should familiarise themselves with the tenets of the Nagoya Protocol (ABS Focal Point).

5.3.7 Intellectual property

NWO's policy on intellectual property (IP) can be found in the NWO Grant Rules 2024.

Project leaders must execute a project funded by Open Science NL during their period of employment with the beneficiary research organisation. If a project leader or researcher funded by Open Science NL has multiple employers, the non-beneficiary employers must waive any IP rights arising from the project.

5.4 Completion

Project leaders must submit a substantive and a financial final report to Open Science NL within three months of the project's completion. Failure to submit these reports or to submit them in time can lead to the grant being reduced or withdrawn altogether. The project leader will receive a request by email, along with the relevant deadline. Templates for a basic final report and a financial final report are available at: Completing a project | NWO. If a different final report template applies for the project, the project leader will be provided with this information in due course.

5.4.1 Independent auditor's report on financial statements

To obtain the necessary assurances on the grant's proper expenditure, Open Science NL requires an independent report from an external auditor to arrive at its decision in the following cases:
- the beneficiary of a project grant is not subject to the Education Audit Protocol of the Ministries of Education, Culture and Science and of Economic Affairs (OCW/EZ) and the grant exceeds € 125,000;
- a project funded by NWO involves a different provider of public funding than the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) and this provider requires an auditor's report. In such cases, applicability of the Education Audit Protocol is not pertinent.

The OCW/EZ Education Audit Protocol applies to legal entities funded by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science in the following sectors: primary education, secondary education, secondary vocational education and training (MBO) and higher education.

The grant administrator is responsible for arranging an auditor's report within the appropriate time frame. This responsibility remains fully applicable even if the grant administrator has spent part of the

grant on another party. Arrangements with the external auditor should be made in good time.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, contact Open Science NL well in advance (see Chapter 6), preferably at the start of the project.

5.5 Research results – Open Science

Scientific publications about the project must be made available in an Open Access format in accordance with NWO's Open Access Policy Framework. See the NWO website for a list of options to provide open access to various types of publications such as scientific articles, books or book chapters and dissertations. More information on the use of licences is also available on the NWO website. Any costs for Open Access publication should be included as part of the proposal's budget.

Other outputs resulting from this Call for Proposals should also be shared as openly as possible, under an open licence. These may include software, data, presentations, hardware-related materials, reports, training materials, working papers and posters. It is recommended that these outputs be shared via a trusted repository, such as one registered with OpenDOAR.

Does Open Science NL-funded research lead to publications or other relevant research output? Then the lead applicant must mention Open Science NL's funding in the acknowledgements.

5.6 Evaluation

Open Science NL may approach applicants or project leaders to ask them to complete an evaluation of the procedure and/or research programme.

6 Contact

Questions about the funding of proposals

For more information, see Applying for funding, how does it work? | NWO.

Questions about the content of this round

For substantive questions about this round, contact:

Frederike Schmitz, programme leader Citizen Science & Societal Engagement, +31 6 51 38 95 75, CSHubs@nwo.nl

Technical questions about the ISAAC electronic application system

For questions about ISAAC, use the 'Help' button in ISAAC to consult the ISAAC manual. You can also contact the ISAAC helpdesk. The ISAAC helpdesk can be reached Monday to Friday between 10:00 and 17:00 CET/CEST at +31 (0) 70 34 40 600. You can also submit your questions by email to isaac.helpdesk@nwo.nl. You will receive a reply within two working days.

7 Annexes

7.1 Explanation of budget modules

For applicable salary tables and rates, see Salary tables | NWO.

7.1.1 Personnel at a university in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, university medical centre or research organisation

For staff employed by a university in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, a university medical center (UMC), or another research organization as referred to in Article 1.1, paragraph 1, subsections c through h of the NWO Grant Regulations 2024, personnel costs may be budgeted on the basis of the actual gross salaries in accordance with the applicable salary scales and rates, as well as the supplements a, b, and c specified in Article 2.1 of the Agreement on the Funding of Scientific Research, excluding indexation.

For these supplements, the standard percentages laid down in the Agreement apply, in accordance with the UNL and UMCNL salary tables in effect on the date of the funding decision, covering:
- holiday allowance;
- end-of-year bonus;

- compensation surcharge/VALK (employer's social charges surcharge);
- surcharge (including transition compensation).

For subsequent years, it is permissible to take into account the expected periodic salary increments and other salary increases, insofar as these can be anticipated under the applicable collective labour agreement (CAO).

7.1.2 Personnel at universities of applied sciences and other research organisations

Funding may be requested for personnel at universities of applied sciences and other research organisations, specifically KNMI and RIVM. These rates are determined based on the Manual tariffs Dutch Government (HOT), Table 2, under 2.2 'Average total salary costs per salary scale', column 'Hourly rate for productive hours excluding VAT'. The salary scale for the position requested determines the HOT table rate.

For organisations that do not use the Dutch government's collective labour agreement or an equivalent, e.g. collective labour agreements for universities of applied sciences, secondary vocational education and training or local government, use the rate that most closely approximates the actual salary costs.

7.1.3 Materials

Funding may be requested for all project-specific costs pertaining to such items as consumables, purchasing of services, materials, small instruments, access to facilities in the Netherlands or abroad, software and research resources with no economic value after use. This module also covers national and international travel and accommodation costs for everyone working on the project, including visiting researchers from abroad, costs for the organisation of (international) workshops and symposiums, data management costs and publications.

Students may contribute to the research. If the students are contributing as part of their curriculum, the standard internship allowance rate of the research university or university of applied sciences applies. If they are contributing as paid student assistants alongside their studies, the applicable rate is determined according to the Manual tariffs Dutch Government (HOT), Table 2, under 2.2 'Average total salary costs per salary scale', column 'Hourly rate for productive hours excluding VAT', scale 1.

For national and international travel, only the costs of second class or economy fares will be covered. For publications, see the provisions on Open Science in subsection 5.5. Costs for an audit report may only be included for research organisations not subject to the OCW Education Audit Protocol and for up to € 5,000 per audit report.

Costs cannot be included for:
– organisational infrastructure and overhead, including a fully operational workplace, accommodation, office automation, human resource management, commuting expenses, training not related to the project, facilities services, HR consulting, health and safety, documentary information services and working-from-home allowance;
– use and maintenance of internally developed scientific infrastructure;
– regular teaching and educational activities;

7.2 Indexation

The HOT rate applicable on the date of the funding decision will be used. If necessary, NWO will apply a one-time indexation of personnel costs ex officio at the time of grant award. For this purpose, the date on which the new HOT rates take effect is used. If the publication date of the HOT rates is later than their effective date, the publication date will be used instead. HOT rates generally take effect on 1 January.

The official indexation does not affect the grant cap or the maximum amount per proposal. The grant cap and maximum amount will remain unchanged during the assessment procedure. The grant amount is indexed at the time of the award.

If co-funding is required or permitted, the official indexation will not affect the requirements regarding supporting contributions and co-funding, nor any IP rights arising from the co-funding.

7.3 Definition of Citizen Science in this Call for proposals

In Open Science NL programmes, the term Citizen Science is used as an umbrella term for 'collabora-

tive scientific research done by people from inside and outside academia'. Citizen Science initiatives can vary widely, depending on the research domain, the nature of the tasks, the context, and the role of the participants[3].

Citizen Science participants

People of all ages, genders and cultural or social background can collaborate in Citizen Science initiatives. Participants can contribute to different stages of the scientific process, from setting research agendas to co-analysing data and co-creating and communicating outputs.

Citizen Science increases the chance of societal impact

Data and results from Citizen Science are shared openly, respecting legal and ethical standards. But Citizen Science initiatives not only produce scientific results, but they can also offer participants opportunities for enjoyment, learning, social contact, and policy influence. The inclusive approach can help democratise science, promote public engagement and increase the societal impact of research.

The crucial role of communication

Transparent communication about project goals and about participants' roles and expectations is important for effective Citizen Science initiatives. This also includes continuous feedback, fostering dialogue and interaction with participants. Science communication, as 'two-way communication between researchers and society'[4] is therefore also a crucial part of any Citizen Science initiative. In the Netherlands, the English term 'Public Engagement' or 'Societal Engagement' is often used to emphasise dialogue and exchange. These terms underline the use of interactive, dialogue-oriented, and participatory means, rather than one-way communication in the form of sending information ('dissemination').

Overlap with other terminology

As an umbrella term, Citizen Science also has considerable overlap with transdisciplinary research, community-based participatory research, participatory action research, crowdsourcing, and other terms[5]. However, these terms will not be used in Open Science NL's programmes.

What is not Citizen Science?

Any research practice that treats participants outside of academia only as research objects (e.g. clinical studies) or only as data sources (e.g. as subjects, survey participants, etc.), without further actively involving these people in the research (process) is considered outside of scope for Citizen Science in this call.

The definition was co-written by Open Science NL's Citizen Science/Societal Engagement advisory panel

[3] Haklay, M., Motion, A., Balázs, B., Kieslinger, B., Greshake Tzovaras, B., Nold, C., Dörler, D., Fraisl, D., Riemenschneider, D., Heigl, F., Brounéus, F., Hager, G., Heuer, K., Wagenknecht, K., Vohland, K., Shanley, L., Deveaux, L., Ceccaroni, L., Weißpflug, M., Wehn, U. (2020). ECSA's Characteristics of Citizen Science. Zenodo. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3758668

[4] Verkade, A., & Smeets, I. (2023). Nationaal Expertisecentrum Wetenschap & Samenleving – Plan van aanpak. Zenodo. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7763918

[5] For an overview of related terminology see: Wehn U, Ajates R, Mandeville C, Somerwill L, Kragh G, Haklay M. 2024 Opening science to society: how to progress societal engagement into (open) science policies. R. Soc. Open Sci. 11: 231309. https://doi.org/10.1098/rsos.231309