Dutch National Research Agenda (NWA) – Research along Routes by Consortia

Executed by NWO on behalf of the ministry of Education, Culture and Science

What is it?
The NWA - Research along Routes by Consortia programme is focused on the themes of the 25 NWA route and aims to facilitate research in the form of collaboration within the entire public knowledge chain as well as between the knowledge chain and societal partners. To achieve this 10% co-funding by external partners is required. It also means that part (approximately 20%) of the budget should go to universities of applied sciences (Hogescholen) or TO2 institutes. Please note that in this third call there are both changes and clarifications to the second call.

Why is it of interest to me?
The NWA - Research along Routes by Consortia programme can be a way of starting or consolidating a research consortium which is cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral, and to propose long-term innovative collaborative research projects of up to 10M€ (minimum size is 500 K€). It is suitable for doing fundamental research, but with a substantial element of societal relevance (impact outlook) and/or societal impact (impact plan). Actively giving back results to society, by contributing to answering one of the 140 cluster questions is one of the key criteria. All of these questions require an interdisciplinary approach.

Who can apply?
One main applicant submits on behalf of a consortium. Eligible main applicants are:

- Researchers connected to a Dutch University, Medical Centre, NWO or KNAW institute, University of applied sciences or one of the NWO approved institutes.
- Researchers that have a permanent position as (assistant, associate or full) professor or have a tenure track position or lectorship.
- A main applicant can only apply as main applicant once. Successful main applicants from 2018 and 2019 cannot apply as main applicant. Both may, however, act as co-applicant for one other consortium.

The consortium composition is an important criterion, with respect to interdisciplinarity as well as involvement of partners in the entire knowledge chain. The partners are complementary in their contributions and by working closely together are expected to create synergy. Other than main applicant, other participants in the role of co-applicant, co-funder (see FAQ) and cooperation partner are possible.

How much funding can I expect?
In this round, applications can be submitted in the following budget ranges for the contribution of NWO:

- 0.5 – 2 M€
- 2 – 5M€
- 5 – 10M€

When can I apply?
The deadline for submitting initiatives is 1 October 2020, at 14:00 CE(S)T.
The deadline for submitting pre-proposals is 14 January 2021, at 14:00 CE(S)T.
The deadline for submitting full proposals is 24 June 2020, at 14:00 CE(S)T.
Both submitting an initiative announcement and attending a matchmaking meeting, as well as submitting a pre-proposal is compulsory. The pre-proposal advice is in the 2020/21 call not binding.

What is the duration of a project?
The project must be between 4 and 8 years.

What can be applied for?
This is a NWO programme that requires 10% co-funding. The requested budget from NWO funds 90% of the project and the remaining 10% is provided by co-funder(s).

NWO funds project costs within the standard building blocks, the so-called modules.

The co-funding can be in kind or in cash, but the co-funder cannot receive partial funding from the subsidy provided by NWO. All financial means are permitted as in-cash co-funding with the exception of previous funding awarded by NOW and PPP allowance.

How do I apply?
In the first stage applicants need to submit their initiative through an online form. This submission will be public and serves to attract new participants for the consortium. This is obligatory. The pre- and full proposal need to be submitted electronically via isaac, NWO’s electronic grant

21 July 2020
application system. The application consists of a main information sheet and the application form. For the pre-proposal the obligatory annexes are:

- signed form "Confirmation by administrative body of submission of pre-proposal". This is a statement that needs to be signed by the Board of the main applicant (template).
- A joint declaration of intention of all applicants and co-funders (no template yet).

For the full proposal the obligatory annexes are:

- Letter(s) of support (use template NWO) from the co-funder(s) expressing their support for the project, confirming the co-funding pledge, and agreements on IP and publications.

Frequently asked questions

Do I need to go to a matchmaking meeting?
Yes, this is compulsory. This a place to meet potential partners, you are required to pitch your project to the route board and NWO will explain the different approaches to knowledge utilisation.

Who should be the Co-funder(s) and how much co-funding is required?
Co-funders are public and private organisations that participate in the consortium and:

I. Do not receive any funding
II. Provide in cash and/or in-kind co-funding

Other universities cannot be co-funders, but TO2 institutes can. The co-funders jointly contribute at least 10% of the total budget for the research, but maximally 49%.

Are there specific requirements for knowledge utilisation?
Yes, it is essential to the project that ‘productive interactions’ with society are created. At least 5% of the total budget requested from NWO must be reserved for activities related to knowledge utilisation. You must also include a user committee. You may propose members yourself.

How are Intellectual Property Rights & Publications (IP&P) arranged?
IP&P rules of NWO are explained in the NWO Grant Rules 2017 which provide possibilities for the applicants to acquire intellectual property (IP) rights. For publications open access is the norm. These matters need to be agreed upon in the obligatory consortium agreement.

Do I need to hire a project manager?
Yes. This can be funded from the project under project management. You can also include costs for a business developer under knowledge utilisation.

Is incorporating citizen science required?
Including citizen science in the project is encouraged, but not compulsory.

How is the proposal evaluated?

- Pre-proposals will be ranked by a selection committee, they will give a not-binding advice for further submission. If you still want to submit, you have to notify NWO within 4 weeks.
- Pre-proposals will be assessed for 75% on the fit of the proposal with the NWA programme priorities on connection to a NWA route, interdisciplinarity and involvement of the knowledge chain. Scientific impact and breakthrough character only count for 25%.
- Full proposals will be peer reviewed by at least two independent (inter)national referees.
- Full proposals will be assessed equally against the following three criteria: quality of the research proposal, quality of the consortium, potential scientific and/or societal breakthroughs.
- After the customary NWO rebuttal phase, the selection committee will propose a ranking per budget range based on the proposal, the referee reports, the rebuttal, and the interview.
- The programme committee will on the basis of the advice of the selection committee and policy considerations come to a final decision on the ranking. These considerations might include: spread of proposal over the routes, diversity, and over the budget ranges.

When will I know the outcome of my proposal?
This is a lengthy 3 stage procedure. After full proposal submission in June 2021 rebuttals will have to be submitted in September 2021, followed by a possible interview in December. The results will be communicated in January 2022.

Further information
NWO NWA-ORC call page
Luris NWA-ORC funding calendar page
NB. The NWO information is always leading!

Luris
Leiden University Knowledge Exchange Office Luris connects Leiden academics with the market and society at large, in order to make the most of their scientific knowledge. We can help you prepare your proposals and your rebuttal, practice for a potential interview and negotiate with partners on the agreement.

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