



Netherlands Genomics Initiative

Booster Grants for Public-Private Partnerships in the Life Sciences



Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research

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Content

1	Introduction	3
2	Aim	4
3	Guidelines for applicants	5
	3.1 Who can apply	5
	3.2 What can be applied for	5
	3.3 When can applications be submitted	5
	3.4 Drawing up an application	5
	3.5 Specific conditions	6
	3.6 Submitting an application	6
4	Assessment procedure	7
	4.1 Procedure	7
	4.2 Criteria	8
	4.3 Composition of committee	8
5	Other information	9
	5.1 Contact	9

1 Introduction

The Netherlands Genomics Initiative (NGI) is a temporary taskforce set up in 2002 that focuses on encouraging excellent research and state-of-the-art technology infrastructure, and creating added (societal/economic) value from genomics research and application. NGI is a proponent of an incubator model in which new public-private partnerships are created, financially stimulated during a certain period and then successfully embedded. In the past, NGI has made three booster grants available for the formation of consortia in certain areas: Healthy Ageing, Metabolomics and Toxicogenomics.

In 2010, NGI is organising an open call to encourage public-private partnerships in the life sciences. The submission of grant applications will have two phases: an initial round with brief proposals (so-called preproposals) and a round for full grant proposals. Applicants may only submit full proposals if they have submitted a preproposal in the initial round. A total of € 3 million is available for this funding round. Based on the advice of an (inter)national evaluation committee, NGI will award two to three proposals.

NGI calls upon researchers from knowledge institutes together with companies to submit preproposals for booster grants aimed at public-private consortium formation. In this call you can find more information about the background, the method of submission and the procedure.

2 Aim

The aim of the booster grants is to facilitate new sustainable partnerships between knowledge institutes and the private sector. The emphasis of the new public-private partnerships is the optimal clustering of the relevant existing research initiatives and resources (public and private). By bringing together participants who hold a leading national and international position in the research field, the consortium must be able to acquire follow-up funding and to continue after the conclusion of the booster grant in 2013. Although a financial contribution from companies is not a requirement in the booster phase, the explicit interest of companies must nevertheless be demonstrated.

The booster grants are clearly intended to unite important societal themes and emerging technologies.

The proposals must focus on one of the following three themes:

Development of diagnostic tests for personalised health

This theme focuses on acquiring knowledge about factors that can be used for the diagnostics of disorders or health risks. The longer term objective is the development of diagnostic tests which can provide a basis for an individual treatment or advice.

Development of sustainable biobased chemicals, materials and energy

This theme focuses on acquiring knowledge about factors that can be used for improving the biochemical conversion of biomass into chemicals, materials or energy. The longer term aim is the efficient, cost-effective and sustainable conversion of biomass into biobased products.

Increasing food security by improving crops yields

This theme focuses on acquiring knowledge about factors that play a role in increasing the yield of plants. In the longer term, the aim is to develop crops that are capable of providing a higher yield, thus making a contribution to the increasing demand for food.

For each of these themes, the leading technology for the approach should be: epigenomics, next generation sequencing, or synthetic biology, or a combination of these technologies.

The grants encourage consortium formation by funding precompetitive life sciences research at universities and knowledge institutes that provide possibilities for economic activities, as a result of knowledge dissemination and implementation of research results. The maintenance and expansion of national and international networks is an essential aspect of this.

3 Guidelines for applicants

3.1 Who can apply

Professors who are employed by a Dutch university or research institute (eligible for funding by NWO) can submit a preproposal as the main applicant. The applicant will act as the official secretary of the proposed consortium and as the sole contact person in all correspondence. All other participants of the proposed public-private partnership are co-applicants and must also sign the proposal.

3.2 What can be applied for

In the preproposals a grant of € 1 million can be applied for, and the required matching (own contribution from the consortium) is also € 1 million. The budget may cover the following costs (over a period of two years, starting in 2011 and finishing in 2013):

- Personnel costs of the management and coordination activities of the consortium (max. 10%)
- Personnel costs of postdoc researchers and analytical personnel (costs in accordance with NGI regulations; at least 60%)
- Part of the costs for dedicated equipment
- Costs of materials and consumables
- Contribution to communication costs involved with valorisation and delivery of results to stakeholders, to a maximum of 2% of the requested budget

3.3 When can applications be submitted

Preproposals should be submitted NWO no later than **14 October 2010**.

3.4 Drawing up an application

Interested parties can submit a preproposal by means of a special form. You can find the form on the NWO website. Unless you submit a preproposal you cannot be eligible for the submission of a full proposal.

When completing the form, the following aspects are important:

- The composition of the consortium is very important and therefore the signatures of all participants (public and private) are required.
- The coordination activities of the consortium must be clearly described.
- The research plan in the preproposals is brief (see Booster grant preproposal form), and in the full proposal it is more detailed.
- It must be clear which current initiatives (national and international) the proposal relates to and what possibilities there are for the consortium to continue after the booster grant funding period has ended.
- In the preproposals the budget per grant is € 2 million, of which € 1 million can be financed from the NGI grant and € 1 million will be contributed by the consortium participants.

All preproposals will be evaluated by an international evaluation committee. Only applicants of preproposals selected by the evaluation committee will be invited to submit a full proposal.

The expected submission deadline for full proposals is **15 December 2010**. The information needed for the full proposals will be supplied when the preproposals for elaboration have been selected.

3.5 Specific conditions

Not applicable.

3.6 Submitting an application

Applications can only be submitted using a booster grant form and via the electronic application system Iris. To gain access to the Iris system the main applicant must request an access code via the NWO website. Further information about Iris can be found on the NWO website. For technical questions please contact the Iris helpdesk (www.iris.nwo.nl). The application form for the booster grant should be uploaded in Iris as a PDF document. The original documents (with signatures) should be sent within one week of the submission date by post to the Netherlands Genomics Initiative (the postal address is given under 5).

4 Assessment procedure

4.1 Procedure

Admissibility

Once the submission date for proposals has passed, the admissibility of each proposal in relation to the formal requirements will be tested. Only applications which satisfy all of the conditions will be processed further by NGI.

Preproposals

The proposals will be evaluated in a national competition. NGI works with an independent evaluation committee of scientists, who will comparatively evaluate the preproposals using the criteria and will subsequently prioritise these according to their chances of success, without making use of external advisers. When doing this, the evaluation committee will attempt to realise a spread across the three themes stated in the brochure (see 2.). Applicants of the **eight** proposals with the greatest chance of success will receive an invitation to submit a full proposal before the deadline. Applicants with less of a chance are strongly advised not to write a full proposal. As it concerns an advice, there is no possibility to submit a formal appeal or objection.

Full proposal

The full proposals will be submitted to external advisers for evaluation. The main applicant will then be given the opportunity to respond to the anonymised advices (so-called rebuttal). The committee will take due note of the referees' opinions and the responses of the applicants, will prioritise the full proposals, and then submit these to NGI's Supervisory Board. The committee would prefer a spread across the themes, but ultimately the quality of the proposals will be the decisive factor. The Supervisory Board will subsequently take a final decision about the awarding and rejection of the proposals.

Settlement and reporting

After the decision, the practical settlement of the award or rejection will take place. If a grant is awarded, an award letter from NGI will follow that states the conditions of the grant.

Preliminary timeframe

Announcement call	1 st week September 2010
Deadline submission preproposals via Iris	14 October 2010
Selection 8 preproposals by committee	2 nd week November 2010
Announcement outcome preproposals	2 nd week November 2010
Deadline for full proposals	15 December 2010
Consulting advisers and response of applicants to advices	up to 10 January 2011
Prioritisation advice by committee	end January 2011
Awarding decision by NGI's Supervisory Board	February 2011
Announcement of outcome	February 2011

4.2 Criteria

All of the preproposals will in any case be evaluated against the following criteria.

Satisfy the general objective:

- Appropriateness within a given theme and making use of the technology/technologies indicated
- Extent to which the consortium represents an optimal clustering of the relevant existing research initiatives and resources (public and private)
- Degree of coordination of activities that facilitate the synergy within the consortium
- Prospects of continuation after booster grant: apparent from interest from government ministries, knowledge institutes, top institutes, private parties or international initiatives
- Compulsory own contribution (at least 50% of the total project costs)

Scientific quality:

- Scientific quality of the participating research groups according to international standards
- Scientific quality of the proposed projects¹
- Evidence of international connections (collaboration, platforms, etc.)

Societal/economic valorisation:

- Societal relevance of projects
- Prospects for economic valorisation (product orientation)
- Involvement of companies in the short and long term (contribution to the project, adopting the results)

The three main criteria shall carry equal weighting in the evaluation and each of the main criteria must be evaluated as at least 'very good'.

4.3 Composition of committee

The committee will have an international composition and contain at least six members. The composition of the committee will be announced after the selection of the preproposals.

¹Aspects of this are question/hypothesis, originality/innovativeness, approach, effectiveness.

5 Other information

5.1 Contact

If you have any questions about the submission of a proposal for a booster grant please contact:

- Dr Tonnie Rijkers
- Email: rijkers@genomics.nl
- tel. +31 70 344 0519 (Monday and Wednesday)

Postal address

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