



Life Sciences Pre-Seed Grant:

8th round Pre-Seed projects

Call for submitting Pre-Seed Grant projects in the Life Sciences field

August 2011
The Hague, Netherlands

Purpose of the Life Sciences Pre-Seed Grant

Valorising knowledge is one of the NCI's main objectives. The purpose of this programme is to support potential starters working at public knowledge institutions on a subject related to Life Sciences in taking their first steps towards commercialising their knowledge.

Life Sciences Pre-Seed Grant financing may be awarded to proposals for applied research where there is a clear intention to found a company. This must be based on the results of the research to be financed with the grant. Pre-Seed Grant projects may relate to determining both the technical and economic potential for setting up a Life Sciences company. In many cases, an industrial analysis study will be necessary to translate the results of technical research into possible applications. One of the objectives of this analysis is to develop an effective business plan. Project funding is not intended for performing fundamental research, as the Pre-Seed Grant project must use fundamental research in Life Sciences performed previously at a Dutch Knowledge institute. The knowledge (patents), on which the Pre-Seed Grant project is based, should be transferred into or licensed to the new start-up company. In general, existing companies are not eligible for the Pre-Seed Grant.

In the first three calls, the programme was aimed at projects from research into genomics/bioinformatics. As of the fourth call, the scope of the programme has been expanded to include the entire Life Sciences field. This has been made possible thanks to an additional financial contribution from the innovation programme Life Sciences & Health (LSH), and ZonMw.

The programme will be organising subsidy rounds for five years. Experience gained as a result of the calls may lead to changes to the programme.

Definition of a Pre-Seed project and Life Sciences

The Pre-Seed Grant projects must be based on the results of fundamental Life Sciences research performed previously. The definitions to which a Life Sciences Pre-Seed project must adhere are as follows:

Definition Pre-Seed project:

A coherent structure of activities consisting of an analysis and assessment of the technical and economic potential for setting up a company. These activities are for the own risk and account of the researcher, include the support of fundamental research conducted earlier, including any related industrial research, and should result in a business plan.

Definition of Life Sciences:

The innovative application of the potential offered by organisms, cell cultures, parts of cells or of organisms, to be used for industrial production and related services, as well as the production of related hardware and software.

Who may apply?

Proposals may be submitted by researchers who hold at least a Masters or comparable degree and who have a fixed or temporary appointment at a university or research institution recognised by NWO, the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research. In those cases where a researcher doesn't have an appointment yet, the application must include a statement that the researcher will enter employment for the duration of the project. The same applies to Dutch researchers with a temporary appointment abroad. Researchers may apply for a grant in no more than two calls.

The projects awarded are subject to the "[Regeling Subsidieverlening NWO](#)" and the "[Bijzondere Subsidievoorwaarden Life Sciences Pre-Seed Grant](#)". For the standard compensation of staff costs, please refer to the NWO website, www.nwo.nl, contract VSNU to 01-07-2012.

What can be applied for?

The maximum grant per project is EUR 250,000 for a period of two years. The committee may decide to allocate a partial (first phase) grant of no more than EUR 50,000 for a period of six months. The projects must be completed within two years.

The only project costs that will be considered are those that are incurred and paid for by the grant recipient and that are related directly to the implementation of the Pre-Seed Grant project once the project has started:

- a. The researcher's salary costs;
- b. The salary costs of the research support staff;
- c. Costs of consumables. These include items that are purchased specifically for the project and that are used for the project and cannot be used once the project has ended;
- d. Costs payable to third parties for providing the researcher with advice, schooling and supervision.

The costs will be reimbursed, including any paid turnover tax, should the grant recipient who incurred the costs not be eligible for deducting the turnover tax.

Researchers with a fixed appointment may only apply for a grant to cover the costs of support staff. These include individuals who are employed by a university or knowledge institution and who will be involved in the technical support of the researcher in implementing the Pre-Seed Grant project for all or part of their working hours. Researchers with a temporary contract may apply for a grant to cover the costs of their own position and that of support staff. The costs of the feasibility study and consulting fees should be of minor importance to the achievement of goals necessary to bring the idea a step forward towards a (fundable) company.

The following are not eligible for grants:

- The costs of a prototype or equipment.
- Infrastructure costs. This relates to the costs incurred by the knowledge institution as a result of providing facilities such as laboratory space and scientific support provided by the staff of that institution.
- Costs subsidised previously or funded otherwise from university or public resources.
- Costs incurred or costs resulting from obligations assumed before the start of the project.

Submitting applications

NGI has already initiated various activities for setting up local valorisation infrastructures and for expanding the valorisation network. These infrastructures are used within the Pre-Seed Grant. Before submitting a Pre-Seed Grant project proposal, researchers are asked to contact the relevant valorisation officer or TTO. They can support the potential entrepreneur in drafting a high-quality proposal. For more information please go to www.genomics.nl/Valorisation/Network.aspx.

Drafting the proposal

There are no pre-applications. The proposals must be drafted in accordance with the guidelines (as shown below) and submitted using the digital application form to ZonMw via ProjectNet.

The application must be drafted in English and include a project plan and a projected budget for the Pre-Seed Grant project. Based on the experience in previous rounds, the committee has drafted a list with additional questions related to IP that has to be included in the application. The application must also include an agreement between the applicant and the researcher involved relating to the performance of the Pre-Seed Grant project as well as any other documents as stated on the form. The agreement must specify at least the following:

- a. The conditions under which, following the completion of the Pre-Seed Grant project, the researcher is granted the applicant's intellectual ownership rights related to the results of the fundamental research, and of the Pre-Seed Grant project;
- b. The ratio between the number of hours that, per year, the researcher devotes to the Pre-Seed Grant project and to other activities in service of the knowledge institution. If the researcher is not yet employed by the university or research institution, the application must include a declaration as to when and under which conditions he or she expects to enter the university's or research institute's employment.

The last page of the original, signed application form and the original signed agreement must be sent by post to ZonMw as a means of verifying the digital submission.

The secretary will check the proposals' admissibility (e.g. who may submit and what can be applied for) and will make an initial assessment as to suitability (definition Life Sciences and Pre-Seed Grant project). Next, the proposals are sent to members of the Pre-Seed Grant committee for preliminary handling. Each proposal is sent to at least three committee members. Based on the criteria applicable for the Grant, the committee members will provide a provisional written opinion. The Secretary will then compile the opinions, which, together with the anonymised questions and comments, are sent by email to the applicant. This will serve as input for the discussion with the committee during the meeting.

Should, after the preliminary handling, the proposal be considered insufficiently promising, the committee may decide not to invite the applicant. The applicant will receive feedback in the form of anonymised comments and an opportunity to respond.

If a proposal is deemed admissible, the applicant will be invited to clarify the proposal verbally in a meeting with the committee. The committee will subsequently assess the projects individually. In the event of a large number of proposals, the committee may decide to prioritise.

The Life Sciences Pre-Seed Grant Committee:

The Programme Committee will assess the proposals as to suitability and quality, and will advise the NGI Director with respect to subsidy applications for a Pre-Seed Grant. The committee will also advise project leaders with regards to proposals and interim reports.

The Pre-Seed Grant committee consists of individuals with experience and expertise in various Life Sciences fields (white, green and red biotech, bioinformatics, clinical development, industry, technology transfer, entrepreneurs, Intellectual Property (IP), etc.). If, when assessing a proposal, the committee is lacking expertise in a certain area, or in cases where committee members cannot participate in the assessment as a result of personal involvement, ad hoc members may be appointed for that particular round. The committee members receive support from a Secretary from ZonMw. Any contact between applicants and committee members takes place through the Secretary.

Suitability criteria

The following criteria are applied with respect to suitability:

- Proposals must fit within the definition of a Pre-Seed project.
- Proposals must be based on fundamental Life Sciences research performed earlier at a Dutch Knowledge Institute, subject to the definition of Life Sciences above.

Quality criteria

The committee will assess proposals based on the following quality criteria:

- The proposal's potential for marketing a product and the economic perspective.
- A clear route towards founding a company.
- Scientific substantiation and technological feasibility.
- The researcher's (project team's) strategy and entrepreneurial qualities.

The committee will turn down a proposal:

- If the proposal does not fit with the objectives of the Life Sciences Pre-Seed Grant.
- If it considers it unlikely that the Pre-Seed Grant project can be completed within two years after the allocation date.
- If there is insufficient faith in the relevant researcher's capacities to successfully complete the Pre-Seed Grant project.
- If there is insufficient faith that the Pre-Seed Grant project will lead to a viable business in Life Sciences.

"Conditional awards"

There are no conditional awards within the Life Sciences Pre-Seed Grant. If the committee assesses the proposal positively, with the exception of one weaker area, the applicant may be given an opportunity to adapt or supplement the area in question within 16 weeks. The Pre-Seed Grant committee will then make a final assessment, based on which the NGI will make a decision.

First phase: partial award

If, at the time of assessment, the committee has insufficient faith in the technical or economic feasibility of the proposal, it may recommend a partial rejection of the proposal, on the understanding that the grant will be allocated for implementing a 'first phase'. This first phase has the character of a limited feasibility study into aspects of the proposal that the committee considers essential for the project to be a success. In its recommendation, the committee will have to describe these aspects and include a recommendation as to the necessary budget and maximum duration of the first phase. No more than EUR50,000 and a maximum of six months are a general guideline. A new proposal must be submitted for the follow-up grant (for a 'second phase'). This is subject to the same procedure as the initial proposal, on the understanding that, should the follow-up application be submitted before the closing date of the first phase, the enclosures submitted with the application form (report first phase, follow-up project plan and a modified agreement if applicable) may be submitted at a later date. The deadlines for this submittal will be set by the Programme Secretary.

Progress control

After a period of 12 months, the grant recipient will send ZonMw a written report describing the performance of the Pre-Seed Grant project, including a comparison of the performance with the implementation of the project plan and the project costs estimate made when the grant was awarded. The researcher will also be asked to give an oral presentation on progress to the Pre-Seed Grant committee.

The grant recipient must submit his or her substantive and financial end report within four months of the end date of the Pre-Seed Grant project. The researcher will also be asked to present the results orally to the Pre-Seed Grant committee. Financial settlement takes place after the approval of the written and oral end reports.

Provisional timetable

11 October 2011	Deadline for submitting Pre-Seed Grant project proposals
October/November 2011	Preparation by committee members
December 2011	Feedback to applicants
January 2012	Presentations applicants and assessment by Programme Committee
February 2012	Draft advice by Programme Committee
March 2012	Final decision by NGI

Submission

The deadline for submission is 11 October 2011 at 15:00 p.m. The ZonMw ProjectNet system – accessible via www.zonmw.nl - must be used for digital submission of applications.

Additional information

You will find more information on the programme on the www.preseedgrant.nl, NGI website (www.genomics.nl) or that of ZonMw (www.zonmw.nl) on the Pre-Seed Grant page.

If you still have questions, you can contact:

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Flow chart of the assessment procedure

