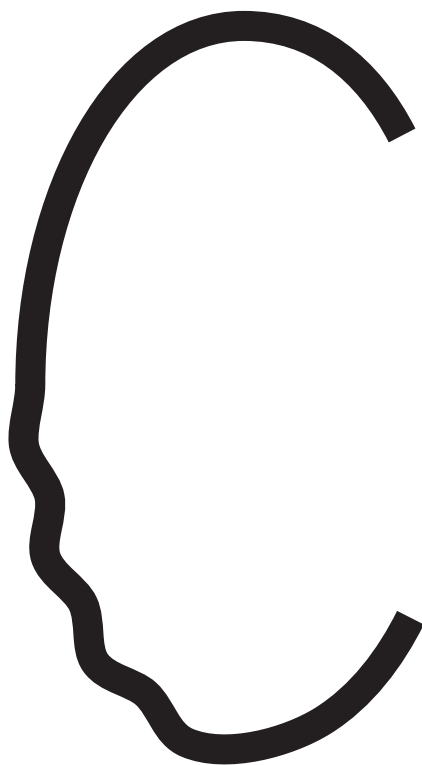


Open Call Professionalisation and Practice Development

This document is a descriptive translation of the original Dutch *Open Oproep Professionalisering en praktijkontwikkeling*. The English translation is provided for reference purposes only, and in all instances the original Dutch text takes precedence. If you would like to report a translation error or inaccuracy, we encourage you to contact the Creative Industries Fund NL.



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For individual designers or (temporary) collectives active in the field of design, architecture or digital culture and any crossovers between them, who want to build a future-proof design practice.

Do you want to work on the future of your design practice, sharpen your positioning, develop new collaboration strategies or strengthen your entrepreneurship? The Creative Industries Fund NL is inviting designers to submit a project proposal for the Open Call Professionalisation and Practice Development. This call offers scope for both individual and collective processes. The focus is on strengthening the professional basis of your practice: from positioning and business operations to peer-to-peer learning and knowledge sharing. The call places emphasis on exchange and on strengthening the collective intellectual capacity within the creative industries.

You can submit a proposal by **17 September 2026** at the latest to be considered for a grant through this open call.

in summary

- For individual designers or (temporary) collectives active in the field of design, architecture or digital culture and any crossovers between them
- Submission opens: 19 August 2026, 15:00 CEST
- Submission deadline: 17 September 2026, 16:00 CEST
- Total budget (grant ceiling): € 300,000
- Maximum contribution per application: € 8,250 for individual processes and € 28,250 for collective processes (see 'grant amounts and division' for an explanation)
- The maximum grant period is 12 months
- Announcement of selection: 25 November 2026

what is this call's objective?

With this open call, the Creative Industries Fund NL is offering designers the opportunity to reposition or renew their practice. We encourage both individual and collective processes (in temporary collectives or other forms of joint learning) in which designers exchange knowledge, explore new strategic directions and work on shared issues around entrepreneurship. What role do you want to take up in your field of expertise, and what strategy do you need to strengthen that position? In this way, the Fund contributes to talent development and to a healthy, reflective and innovative design infrastructure.

who is this open call intended for?

This open call is intended for designers in the Netherlands and the Dutch Caribbean with an independent practice in design, architecture, digital culture, or any crossovers between them. By this we mean, for example, garden and landscape architects, graphic designers, urban designers, product designers, interior architects, fashion designers, digital storytellers, sound designers, jewellery designers and illustrators.

Applications may be submitted by designers who have had an independent professional practice for at least four years (to be demonstrated through the CV and portfolio). This can be done individually, or as a (temporary) collective. One of the participants acts as the lead applicant.

Requirements

Individual applicants and all participants in a collaboration or collective must meet the requirements of the Open Call Professionalisation and Practice Development, namely:

- You have had an independent professional practice in design, architecture, digital culture or any crossovers between them for at least four years.
- If you receive support through this open call, you may not submit an application under the Talent Development Grant Scheme, the Open Call Emerging Design Practices ABCSSS or the Open Call Self-taught Designer during the grant period.

- Within this open call, you may be involved in only one application.
- For individual applications, the applicant must provide an extract from the KVK (Dutch Chamber of Commerce) registration showing that the applicant is registered as an entrepreneur.
- For temporary collectives, each participant must separately demonstrate that they are independently established in the Netherlands or the Dutch Caribbean, by submitting their own extract.
- For existing collectives with a joint registration, uploading the joint KVK extract is sufficient. For collectives with a joint registration — such as a general partnership (VOF), a professional partnership (maatschap) or a private limited company (BV) — all participants in the collaboration must meet the requirements.

The following are not eligible for a grant:

- Applicants who have received support since 1 January 2022 through an edition of the Open Call Professionalisation and Deepening of the Practice, the Open Call Professionalisation and Practice Development or the Open Call Game Sector Professionalisation and Practice Development, unless they are now pursuing a clearly different development aim as part of a collective.
- Applicants who, at the time of submission, are carrying out a project for which they are receiving a grant from the Creative Industries Fund NL and for which accountability has not yet been submitted.
- Applicants who have received a commitment from the Fund for a grant for a project that has not yet started.
- Applicants who received support in 2023, 2024, 2025 or 2026 under the Talent Development Grant Scheme, the Open Call Emerging Design Practices ABCSSS or the Open Call Self-taught Designer.

Please note: In addition to these requirements, the requirements of the [Open Call Grant Scheme](#) apply to this open call.

If you are unsure whether or not you are eligible to apply on the basis of the above, please contact the Fund.

what can a grant be applied for?

The Fund's contribution is meant to give designers time, scope and resources for their professional development. This may include:

- hours to work on the professionalisation process;
- engaging coaches for specific knowledge or guidance;
- travel expenses;
- costs of sharing or documenting the insights gained during the professionalisation process (such as a public publication of best practices or a workshop with fellow professionals).

Your plan must involve at least two confirmed advisers or mentors, supported by letters of intent (see 'how do you submit an application?'). The advisers could be, for example, a business coach, financial adviser or impact strategist. Curators, intermediaries or other designers may also be nominated as adviser or mentor, provided they are not a (co-)applicant. In your application, clearly explain who you are involving, what their role as adviser is and how their expertise relates to the professionalisation issue.

In addition, the plan must give clear insight into the central professionalisation issue, how you are approaching it, and what the allocation of duties is within collective forms of collaboration. The maximum duration of the project is 12 months.

Examples of activities include:

- repositioning your practice towards a different target group or sector;

- developing a collective long-term vision or strategy;
- strengthening your network and visibility;
- exploring new revenue models;
- developing your working method through reflection, coaching or knowledge sharing with others.

View previously supported professionalisation projects in the [awarded grants archive](#) (in Dutch).

What will **not** be compensated:

- regular and recurring operating costs (such as studio or office rent);
- standard corporate identity development or website construction that is not demonstrably part of a distinctive professionalisation process;
- legal advice;
- ongoing activities;
- assets that retain value after the project has concluded;
- the development or production of design or creation projects;
- activities aimed at artistic and content-related development (such as conceptual research or material experimentation).

Please note: This open call is explicitly focused on strengthening the practice itself: the business strategies, skills and collaborations that underpin it. For artistic and content-related projects, an application under, for example, the Design Grant Scheme, the Architecture Grant Scheme, the Architecture Kick-start Grant Scheme or the Digital Culture Grant Scheme would be more appropriate.

grant amounts and division

As the Fund wishes to encourage collective professionalisation with this open call, a fixed allocation method has been established for dividing the budget among the parties involved.

We start from the idea that designers can be stronger together: shared processes offer scope for exchange, reflection and a more efficient use of resources. At the same time, there remains room for individual applications, as some professionalisation questions benefit precisely from a solo approach. For collective applications we use a fixed allocation method per participant. In doing so, we aim to ensure transparency and clarity about each party's share of the budget, which contributes to a considered collaboration.

The allocation method is as follows:

- individual designers can apply for a maximum of € 8,250;
- from two designers onwards: the first designer receives € 8,250, each subsequent designer € 5,000;
- the maximum amount that can be applied for is € 28,250, based on a collective of five designers. Larger collectives may apply, provided that the plan and the problem statement remain workable. Collectives of more than five people therefore cannot apply for more than the maximum of € 28,250.

Only one applicant can act as lead applicant. In a temporary collective, one designer therefore submits the application on behalf of the collective.

what is assessed?

Applications are assessed on the basis of the Open Call Professionalisation and Practice Development and the [Open Call Grant Scheme](#). Grant applications are submitted to a committee of independent advisers for assessment. The advisers give their opinion on the basis of the following criteria:

a Relevance and acuity of the professionalisation issue:

The committee assesses whether the chosen issue is clear and current in relation to the practice of the applicant(s). Is it well demarcated, urgent and relevant? And is it clear why this issue needs to be addressed now?

b The quality of the plan of action in relation to the intended result:

This criterion looks at the degree of consistency between the aim, the activities and the method. Are the chosen forms suitable and feasible? Is the plan clearly set out and are the intended learning or development outcomes realistic?

c Artistic quality and positioning of the practice(s) within the creative industries:

In assessing this criterion, the committee looks at the vision underlying the practice of the applicant(s). How do this vision and positioning come across? To what extent is the practice original and distinctive within the creative industries? The assessment is made on the basis of the portfolios and the explanation in the plan.

d Quality of the collaboration and division of roles:

The motivation behind the choice of coaches will be considered, as well as the way in which they demonstrate expertise in relation to the professionalisation issue. In the case of duos and collectives, the committee assesses the composition, the allocation of duties and the mutual interactions. Is the work based on complementarity, shared commitment and clear agreements?

how do you submit an application?

Applications can be submitted up to 17 September at 16:00 CEST via the Creative Industries Fund NL's [application platform](#). Select the 'Open Call' grant scheme and then 'Open Call Professionalisation and Practice Development'.

The application consists of the following documents. Please pay careful attention to the maximum file size and the maximum number of pages (including images) for the various document types:

The application should consist of:

- 1 a fully completed application form;
- 2 a project plan (max. 4 A4 pages and 8 MB, in PDF) in which you answer the following questions:

a profile and positioning:

Give a brief outline of your/your collective's practice as a designer. What is your design vision, what do you focus on, and how do you position yourself within the broader design field? Explain what sets your work apart and which developments you are responding to.

b professionalisation process and plan of action:

What is your vision for the future of your/your collective's practice or collaboration? What question underlies it? Describe the chosen professionalisation issue and indicate which activities you want to undertake to work on it. Why have you chosen this approach? Name at least two external advisers or coaches and explain the role they will play.

c expected impact on the practice:

What is the intended effect of the process on your practice (individual or collective)? Think about positioning, visibility, working methods or new strategies. How does it contribute to a future-proof practice? What do you expect it to produce concretely?

d type of collaboration and parties involved:

If applicable: who are the other makers you are collaborating with? Indicate why you are involving these people, what role they play and how the collaboration is structured;

- 3 a timetable (max. 1 A4 page and 4 MB, in PDF);
- 4 a balanced budget including a funding plan (max. 2 A4 pages and 4 MB, in PDF).
Use of the Creative Industries Fund NL's budget template (Excel) is mandatory when drawing up your budget and funding plan. The budget template can be downloaded from the grant scheme page;
- 5 CV(s) (max. 1 A4 page per designer involved and 4 MB, in PDF);
- 6 portfolio(s) with recent and relevant work (max. 10 A4 pages and 12 MB, in PDF);
- 7 (digitally) signed letters of intent from at least two advisers/coaches (max. 2 A4 pages and 4 MB, in PDF), containing:
 - a description of the nature of the collaboration;
 - a description of the agreements;
 - a substantive motivation for participation;
- 8 a collaboration agreement (for collective applications) setting out clear agreements on the allocation of duties, the division of tasks and the financial remuneration within the project;
- 9 one or more digitally certified extract(s) from the Chamber of Commerce in the Netherlands or from a commercial register in the Dutch Caribbean (max. one year old; see the explanation under 'who is this open call intended for' for the requirements per type of application);
- 10 a representative image of the project, intended for use in communications by the Fund (max. 1 JPG and max. 4 MB).

If the application does not meet the above description, a substantive assessment cannot take place.

Files that exceed the maximum file size (MB) cannot be uploaded to the application platform. Documents that exceed the maximum number of pages can be uploaded, but this may still lead to rejection of the application during the check on formal requirements.

Would you like to add images and sketches to enrich your plan? Please note that the maximum number of pages is inclusive of images. You may also include links for illustrative purposes, for example to videos or websites. Please ensure that these links are publicly accessible (not WeTransfer or Google Docs) and do not contain any information that is essential for the assessment of your application. The advisory committee must be able to assess your application on the basis of the submitted documents alone.

Please note: Create an account in the [application platform](#) in good time. It takes one working day to activate a new account.

selection procedure

Procedure: The submitted proposals are assessed by an independent advisory committee, in accordance with the [Open Call Grant Scheme](#). The committee applies the assessment method as described in the Advisory Committee Procedure of the Creative Industries Fund NL.

Assessment: In the assessment, the committee uses a five-point scale (5. Very good; 4. Good; 3. Satisfactory; 2. Unsatisfactory; 1. Well below standard). The criteria contribute equally to the final score per application. The committee assesses the applications within the context of this open call, in which the focus is not on the realisation of a specific design or creation project, but on strengthening the design practice itself — through reflection, strategic development and/or collaboration.

If applications are tied in the ranking on the basis of the average final score and the

grant ceiling is reached with these applications, then, in deviation from Article 11.3.d of the Open Call Grant Scheme, priority within these proposals is given to the proposal with the highest score on criterion a, followed by criterion d, then criterion b and then criterion c.

Tender: The assessment takes the form of a tender: applications with the highest assessment will be awarded a grant until the available budget is exhausted. The total budget for this open call is € 300,000.

acknowledgement of receipt and announcement of the selection

You will receive an acknowledgement of receipt via the Creative Industries Fund NL's application platform no later than three weeks after the closing date.

The decision on the selection of proposals, together with a general selection report, will be announced via the application platform by 25 November 2026 at the latest.

Applicants who receive support may be approached for a reflection conversation as part of an impact study.

contact

For questions about the open call and the procedure, please contact us at professionalisering@stimuleringsfonds.nl or 010 436 16 00.