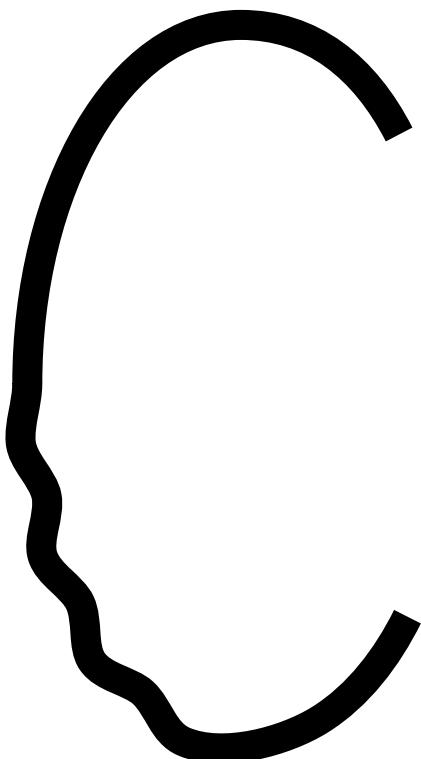


# Open Call Professionalisation and Practice Development



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*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.*

**For individual makers or temporary or long-term 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 develop new work forms, reflect on your position as a designer or work with others on shared issues within the design practice? Do you want to further develop your business operations or entrepreneurship? The Creative Industries Fund NL is inviting designers and makers to submit a project proposal to the Open Call Professionalisation and Practice Development. This call offers scope for both collaborations and individuals, with the focus on strengthening the professional basis of your practice: from positioning and business operations to collaboration and knowledge sharing. The call emphasises exchange, peer learning and strengthening the collective intellectual capacity within the creative industry.

To be eligible for a grant through this open call, you have until 8 October 2025 at the latest to submit a proposal.

*Please note:* The Open Call Professionalisation and Practice Development is open at the same time as the Open Call Game Sector Professionalisation and Practice Development. You may submit an application for only one of these two open calls.

### **in summary**

- For individual professionals or temporary or established collectives active in the field of design, architecture or digital culture and any crossovers between them
- Contribution per application: a maximum of € 24,500 per application (see 'grant amounts and division' for an explanation)
- The grant period is a maximum of 12 months
- Total available budget: € 200,000
- Deadline for submission: 8 October 2025, 16.00 hours CEST
- Announcement of selection: on 26 November 2025 at the latest

### **what is this call's objective?**

With this open call, the Creative Industries Fund NL is offering designers and makers in the Netherlands and the Dutch Caribbean the opportunity to strengthen their practice by working on a distinctive strategy for a future-proof practice. The call focusses on reflection, positioning and development - the role you want to take up in your area of expertise and the strategy you need to strengthen or redefine your position. It encourages both individuals and collectives to apply, with special attention given to the changing design practice, in which themes such as collectivity, shared learning and interdisciplinary collaboration plays an increasingly large role. With this open call, the Fund contributes to promoting one of the Fund's objectives, namely a healthy, reflective and innovative design infrastructure.

### **who is this open call intended for?**

This open call is intended for makers and designers in the Netherlands and the Dutch Caribbean with their own practice in design, architecture or digital culture and any cross-overs between them. By this we mean garden and landscape architects, graphic designers, urban designers, product designers, interior designers, fashion designers, digital storytellers, sound designers, jewellery designers and illustrators and makers in many other subdisciplines.

Applications may be submitted by makers who have had their professional practice for at least three years - you can show this through the CV and/or portfolio. You can apply individually, as a duo or as a cooperative venture, such as a temporary or established collective, with one of the participants acting as the main applicant.

If you are an individual applicant, you have to provide an extract from the Chamber of Commerce that shows that you are registered as an independent entrepreneur. If you want to register as a duo, you can submit an application based on a joint Chamber of Commerce extract or you can each provide your own extract. In the case of a temporary collective - a temporary collaboration of independent makers on a shared issue or development goal - then **each of the participants needs to prove that they are established in the Netherlands or the Dutch Caribbean**, by submitting their own extract. For existing collectives that are registered as such, a joint Chamber of Commerce extract will suffice.

*Please note:*

- Within this open call, no grants will be awarded to designers or design studios that received individual support after 2020 under an edition of the Open Call Professionalisation and Deepening of the Practice and the Open Call Professionalisation and Practice Development, unless, as part of a collective, they are now pursuing a clearly different development goal.
- Furthermore, grants will also not be awarded to designers who at the time of submission already have another funded application in progress with the Creative Industries Fund NL.
- If you receive support under this open call, then for the duration of this grant period, you won't be able to submit an application under the Talent Development Grant Scheme, the Open Call Emerging Design Practices ABCSSS or the Open Call Self-taught Designer.
- Within this open call you can be involved in only one application.

## which projects are eligible for a grant?

This open call focusses on designers who want to deepen, position or renew their practice, by working on their professionalisation. You can do so individually, but the Fund explicitly encourages collaborations: duos, temporary collectives or other forms of joint learning. The call offers scope for makers to set up processes to work on shared issues, exchange knowledge and explore strategic or artistic directions.

Applications can focus on various forms of professionalisation, such as:

- repositioning your practice towards another target group or sector;
- developing a long-term collective vision or strategy;
- setting up an interdisciplinary cooperative venture around a shared theme;
- strengthening your network and visibility;
- exploring new revenue models;
- delving deeper into your working method by means of reflection, coaching or sharing knowledge with others.

For the implementation of your plan, you have to engage at least two advisers or mentors, who could be business coaches, artistic coaches, financial advisers, impact strategists or branding experts, to name but a few. Curators, intermediaries or other designers could also play a role. Clearly motivate in your application who you are going to engage, why you chose them and how their expertise will contribute to your development goal and long-term vision or to those of the collective. The maximum duration of the project is 12 months.

The Fund's contribution is meant to give designers time, scope and resources for their professional development. The contribution could be used, e.g. to cover:

- the hours needed to work on the professionalisation process;
- engaging specific knowledge or guidance;

- travel expenses;
- costs of sharing or documenting the knowledge gained in the professionalisation process, such as a publication, a podcast or a presentation.

What will not be compensated:

- regular or recurrent operating costs, such as the rent for a studio or an office;
- standard corporate identity development or building a website that is clearly not part of an inventive professionalisation process;
- legal advice;
- the development or production of specific design or creation projects.

The plan needs to give clear insight into the central professionalisation issue, how this will be approached and the division of tasks within any collaborations.

*Please note:*

- The terms of the Open Call Grant Scheme apply to this open call. For example, you may not apply for a grant for activities that have already been implemented, nor for an item that still has a value after the project.
- This open call is also not meant for the development or production of specific design or creation projects - projects that are exclusively geared at the realisation of an end product such as designing a furniture collection, a jewellery collection or an exhibition object - are not eligible for a grant. For those types of projects, it would be better to submit an application within the Design Grant Scheme, the Architecture Grant Scheme, the Digital Culture Grant Scheme or the Creative Industries Kick-start Grant Scheme. This open call explicitly focusses on strengthening the practice itself: the strategies, skills and collaborations underlying the practice.

## grant amounts and division

As the Fund wants to promote collective professionalisation and collaboration with this open call, a fixed allocation method has been drawn up on how the budget is to be divided amongst the parties involved.

We believe in the notion that designers stand stronger together and that shared processes offer scope for exchange, reflection and a more efficient use of resources. At the same time, individual applications can still be submitted, as some professionalisation questions would benefit more from an independent approach. For collective applications we use a fixed allocation method per participant, ensuring transparency and clarity about everyone's share in the budget, contributing to a considerate collaboration.

The allocation method is as follows:

- individual designers can apply for a maximum of €8,250;
- duos can apply for a total maximum of €9,500;
- three designers or more: the first designer receives €5,000, every next designer €3,250;
- the maximum amount that can be applied for is € 24,500, based on a collective of seven designers. Larger collectives can still take part, provided that the plan and the formulated problem is manageable. However, collectives of more than seven people cannot apply for more than the maximum grant of € 24,500.

Only one applicant can be linked to the application, meaning that if you are part of a temporary collective, one designer has to submit the application on behalf the collective.

## what is assessed?

Grant applications are assessed by a committee of independent advisers on the basis of the Open Call Professionalisation and Practice Development and the Open Call Grant Scheme. The advisers base their opinion on the following criteria:

**a Relevance and acuity of the professionalisation issue:**

The committee assesses whether the selected issue is clear and current in relation to the practice of the applicant(s). Is it demarcated well, urgent and relevant and is it clear why this issue should 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 objective, 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 industry:**

In assessing this criterion, the committee looks at the vision underlying the practice of the applicant(s). How do this vision and positioning stand out? To what extent is the practice original and distinctive within the creative industry? 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 division of tasks, and the mutual interactions. Is the work based on complementarity, shared commitment, and clear agreements?

Each file will be assessed by the advisers individually based on the four criteria stated above., giving scores using the following five-point scale: 1. highly unsatisfactory; 2. unsatisfactory; 3. satisfactory 4. good; 5. very good. The applications will be ranked on the basis of the average final score the committee gives to the proposal.

## how do you submit an application?

Applications can be submitted up to Wednesday 8 October at 16.00 hours CEST via the Fund's application platform. Select the "Open Call" grant scheme and then the "Open Call Professionalisation and Practice Development".

*Please note:* make sure you create an account for the application platform in good time, as it takes one working day to activate a new account.

The application should consist of:

- 1 a fully completed application form
- 2 a project plan (no more than 4 A4 pages in PDF, 8 MB), in which you set out the following questions:

**a profile and positioning:**

Give a brief description of your practice as a maker, studio or collective, setting out your design vision, your objectives and how you position yourself within the broader field of design. Elaborate what makes your work stand out and which developments you anticipate.

**b professionalisation process and plan of action:**

How do you envisage the future of your practice or collaboration and which question underlies this vision? Describe the professionalisation issue you have chosen, indicate which activities you want to do in that respect and why you have chosen this approach. Appoint 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 individual or collective practice, taking into consideration positioning, visibility, working methods or new strategies? How does this contribute to a future-proof practice and what do you actually expect to gain from it?

**d collaboration forms and parties involved:**

If applicable: who are the other makers you are working with? Indicate why you are involving these people, which role they play and what the collaboration looks like;

- 3** a schedule (no more than 1 A4 page in PDF, 4 MB);
- 4** a balanced budget, including a funding plan, (no more than 2 A4 pages in PDF, 4 MB);
- 5** CV(s) (no more than 1 A4 page in PDF per person involved, 4 MB);
- 6** portfolio(s) with recent and relevant work (no more than 10 A4 pages in PDF, 12 MB);
- 7** collaboration agreement for duos or collectives, specifying clear agreements on the secretary's role and the financial compensations within the project;
- 8** one or more certified extracts from the Chamber of Commerce in the Netherlands or from a Commercial Register in the Dutch Caribbean (issued no more than one year ago; see the explanation at 'who is this open call intended for' where the requirements per type of application are set out);
- 9** letters of intent from advisers or coaches (optional, no more than 4 MB).

Only complete applications that meet the above requirements will be substantively assessed.

**grant procedure**

- The assessment is similar to a tender - this means that within the budget available, the applications with the highest assessment will be supported.
- The submitted proposals will be assessed based on the criteria described above, the terms and entry requirements - see 'what is assessed'.
- A committee of independent advisers issues a substantive advice to the Fund's board for each application.
- The committee assesses the applications within the context of this open call, which does not cover the realisation of a specific object or creation project, but does cover the strengthening the applicant's own design practice, by means of reflection, strategic development and/or collaboration.
- Only positively assessed applications will be eligible for a grant. The processing and assessment is done on the basis of the Fund's Open Call Grant Scheme.
- The expected number of projects that can be supported depends on the number of individual, duo or collective applications. The budget available for this open call is € 200,000 in total.

**acknowledgement of receipt and announcement of the selection**

The applicant will be informed about the processing of the application no more than three weeks after the closing date. The applicants will be informed of the decision on the proposals selected via the application platform by 26 November 2025 at the latest, where a general selection report and individual scores can also be found.

**contact**

For questions about the open call and the procedure, please contact Tibor Bijl or Kiki Lennaerts via [professionalisering@stimuleringsfonds.nl](mailto:professionalisering@stimuleringsfonds.nl) or call +31(0)10-4361600.