

Open Call Self-taught Designer

creative industries fund NL



**creative industries
fund NL**

**design
architecture
digital culture**

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Are you a designer or maker with an emerging practice in the field of design, architecture and/or digital culture and would you like to apply for a development grant from us, but you do not have a higher professional or university degree in the arts? Then submit an application for the Open Call: Self-taught Designer and you might receive an invitation to our live pitch day. On this day, you pitch how you want to develop your design practice artistically and professionally in the coming year in front of a committee.

Registration for the pitch day is open between **Tuesday 10 February 2026, 15.00 CE(S)T (Dutch time) and Wednesday 25 February 2026, 16.00 CE(S)T** via the Fund's application platform. Your application consists of your CV, portfolio and a motivation video or motivation letter. The Fund selects participants per province. The moment of submission therefore plays an important role: the first two complete and valid applications per province will receive an invitation. In total, a maximum of 24 makers will be selected for the pitch days. During the pitch day, you will give a live presentation about how you want to professionalise your practice in the coming year. An independent committee assesses the pitches and will select ten makers to elaborate a development plan in writing in order to be eligible for a € 25,000 grant.

in short

- For starting designers/makers with their own or a collective emerging practice in the field of design, architecture and/or digital culture or any cross-overs between them, who have not completed a higher professional or university degree in the arts in the Netherlands or abroad.
- You can professionalise your practice in different ways. For example, through guidance from a mentor or a coach, by taking workshops to learn new skills or improve them, or by making and presenting new work.
- Ten designers/makers will be selected to elaborate their development plan under the Fund's supervision and will be eligible for a € 25,000 development grant to professionalise their design practice.

important dates

Submission opens	Tuesday 10 February 2026, 15.00 CE(S)T
Submission deadline	Wednesday 25 February 2026, 16.00 CE(S)T
Invitation to pitch day	Friday 6 March 2026 at the latest
Live pitch days	Monday 13 April & Wednesday 15 April 2026
Development plan deadline	Wednesday 24 June 2026

what is this call's objective?

With this open call, the Fund wants to stimulate talent development and enable designers and makers with different social, economic and cultural backgrounds to artistically develop and professionalise their design practice further. This call complements the programme around the [Talent Development Grant Scheme](#). In practice, this means that if you receive a grant within this call, you will follow the same programme as is offered within the Talent Development Grant Scheme.

who is this open call for?

You may submit an application if you are a designer/maker and have developed independently or if you have completed a senior secondary vocational design course. This open call is specifically for starting designers and makers who have not completed a higher professional or university degree in the arts in the Netherlands or abroad. To submit an application, you have to be a starter. This means that you started a design practice no more than four years ago within the areas of design, architecture or digital culture or a cross-over between them, for example in the area of fashion design, animation, comic/graphic novel, game design, or more on the borders of the areas in the disciplines of street art, art direction and styling or city making. Entrepreneurs within

those areas of expertise who focus on issues around the climate, nature, food, heritage or sharing neglected stories are also eligible.

conditions

To apply for a grant, you have to meet a couple of conditions, namely:

- You are 18 years or older.
- You live in the Netherlands.
- For no more than four years you have been active within the disciplines/ subdisciplines of design, architecture, digital culture, any cross-overs between them or you have a practice on the borderline of these.

Applications may **not** be submitted by:

- Designers/makers who have completed a higher professional or university degree programme in the arts. They can apply for a grant through the [Talent Development Grant Scheme](#);
- Visual artists, documentary makers, filmmakers, writers and journalists, theatre makers, musicians and DJs, dancers, photographers;
- Designers/makers who have already received a grant to implement a development plan under one of this open call's previous editions or the Open Call Scout Nights;
- Designers/makers who are based in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. For this target group, a separate open call has been issued: [Open Call Emerging Design Practices ABCSSS](#);
- Designers /makers who are registered or will register during the grant period for a full-time or part-time course at a school accredited by the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders [NVAO] or an acknowledged senior secondary vocational education course.

If you are not sure whether you are eligible for the Open Call Self-taught Designer, then contact the Fund via zelflerendontwerper@stimuleringsfonds.nl. In the [grants archive](#) you can see who we supported before under the Open Call Self-taught Designer.

what can the grant be used for?

From the budget of €250,000, ten makers are supported. You can use the development grant - of € 25,000 - to deepen and professionalise your own starting design practice. This can be done, for example, through guidance from a mentor or a coach, by taking workshops to learn new skills or improve them, or by making and presenting new work. The period in which you implement your plan starts on 1 September 2026 and runs up to 1 November 2027.

You may not use the grant for:

- Standard operating costs, such as studio rent, insurance and the set-up of your workplace or studio.
- Acquiring property, materials or equipment that will also have a value outside the context of the development plan, such as a laptop.

registration

You can submit your application for the pitch day between **Tuesday 10 February 2026, 15.00 CE(S)T and Wednesday 25 February 2026, 16.00 CE(S)T**. You do this via the Fund's [application platform](#). To submit your application, you need an account with which you can log in to this application platform. Create this account in time. It takes one working day before a new account is activated.

Your application should consist of a number of documents:

- A motivation video (max. 3 minutes) or a motivation letter in PDF (3 A4, 4MB, in PDF). In it, you explain in words and/or images:

- What you make: what kind of work do you make and why? What it is you want to say or question with your work? Give a clear substantive description and link this to the work in your portfolio.
- What story you want to tell with your work: which theme or themes are central to your work? Why do you find this theme or these themes important? Explain how you relate to this theme/these themes.
- How long you have had your own design practice;
- Which development question you want to investigate: how do you want to develop in the coming year? What are your development goals and why is this step important right now to further develop your practice?
- A CV (max. 2 A4, 4MB, in PDF), in which you indicate your relevant education, work experience and skills, as well as your email address and telephone number;
- A portfolio with visual material of your work (max. 10 A4, 12MB, in PDF), which may also contain sketches or a link to a website for a video or a sound clip. When providing visual material, refer to the project's title, the year in which it was made and which materials you used. If the project was part of a collaboration, then add your role within the project.

Tips:

- Take your time to elaborate your motivation.
- Ask others for feedback to hone your motivation letter or motivation video.
- The video does not need to be a high-quality production - a video recorded with a smartphone is sufficient. Make sure that the committee can access your video and that it is not digitally locked. If you use a password, then clearly state the password next to the link in the application form.
- Have a look at the [Fair Practice Code](#) and the [Diversity and Inclusion Code](#) for guidance on a fair and future-proof practice.

maximum of 24 pitches

Two designers/makers per province may make a pitch. Only complete applications that meet the conditions and link up with the objectives of this open call get a chance to be invited to the pitch day. When assessing, the Fund checks whether there is a professional practice and whether the portfolio is a match with the areas of design, architecture or digital culture.

If more than two applications from the same province are submitted, the time of submission will be decisive. Only the first two complete applications that meet the conditions and link up with the open call's objective will be invited to the pitch day. If fewer than two applications per province qualify for an invitation, the remaining spots will be assigned to the other applications that are eligible. This is based on the time of submission, regardless of the province from which these applications came.

the pitch day

By Friday 6 March 2026 at the latest, you will receive a message from the Fund whether you have been invited to the live pitch day. During the pitch day, you give a pitch to the committee and other participants. After the pitch, the committee will ask you a number of questions. Everyone gets the same amount of time. Your pitch may last a maximum of three minutes. Answering questions from the committee takes a maximum of five minutes. You may use visual material during your pitch, but this is not mandatory. You will receive more information about how to properly prepare for the pitch by email if you are selected to participate.

what is assessed?

The committee assesses both the pitches and the documents sent with the application. The four committee members have knowledge of informal networks and self-taught practices or previously received the grant themselves. The Fund's Talent Development grant scheme manager is the committee's chair for the day.

The committee issues substantiated advice to the board and assesses each application based on the criteria set out below, which are given the same weighting, and for this uses the following scores: 5 (very good); 4 (good); 3 (satisfactory); 2 (weak); 1 (unsatisfactory).

a. The applicant's artistic and reflective ability

The committee assesses the applicant's ability to reflect critically on their own work. It looks at the innovation of existing working methods, the use of creative or artistic techniques and how the current practice relates to the creative industry. The committee considers the following points:

- The originality and uniqueness of the work;
- The applicant's ability to reflect critically on their own work and to explain the creative or artistic choices made in their work;
- How the projects contribute to current issues or discussions in the creative sector.

b. The applicant's intended development strategy;

The committee assesses how clearly the applicant explains their development question and which concepts or themes are going to be important during the development year. In doing so, the committee considers the following points:

- How well the chosen development question matches the applicant's work, long-term vision and ambitions;
- The extent to which creative or artistic work is being innovated, existing knowledge enriched or new insights developed;
- The extent to which the development strategy is relevant to the broader creative industry.

c. The manner in which new connections are going to be made and outcomes shared;

The committee looks at:

- The manner in which the applicant wants to enhance and/or broaden their own network;
- The manner in which the applicant wants to share the artistic outcomes with an appropriate audience.

The end score of your application is the average score of these criteria. A ranking list is drawn up based on the end scores, with the ten applicants that rank the highest being invited to write a development plan under the Fund's supervision. The assessment procedure is specified in Article 11 of the [Open Call Grant Scheme](#). If, based on the scores, applications end up ranked the same, and the number of available grants is exceeded with these applications, then, for these applications, priority will be given to the one that contributes most to diversity within the selected applications. In that case, the committee gives a supplementary score for this and in doing so it considers: disciplinary diversity, cultural diversity and regional spread.

next: the development plan

If you are selected by the committee during the live pitch day, you will receive a provisional grant and you will be invited to draw up a development plan under the Fund's supervision. The grant will become final as soon as the development plan has been submitted, is complete and meets the requirements. Your development plan is assessed internally by at least two Fund officers. You receive a board decision for a € 25,000 grant to implement your plan, on the basis of the approved development plan. The deadline for submitting a written development plan is 24 June 2026. Plans must be sent in PDF to zelflerendontwerper@stimuleringsfonds.nl.

A written development plan consists of no more than 4 pages (PDF, max. 4 MB). In your development plan, you explain how you want to shape your development year. Explain, as clearly as possible, the steps you intend to take. Describe the form and content of your

research, the methodical development or substantive deepening of your work and explain what you want to achieve in this regard.

In addition to your development plan, you should also submit the following documents. Submit all documents as PDF (except the image) and check the maximum file size carefully:

- A portfolio with relevant visual material that gives insight into your practice (10 A4, max. 12 MB);
- A schedule in which you indicate how much time you want to spend on the various components of your development plan, within the term of the development year (1 A4, max. 4 MB);
- A budget in which you set out the financial aspects of your development plan. You will receive a model budget from the Fund (1 A4, max. 4 MB);
- A digitally certified extract from the Chamber of Commerce [KVK], no more than one year old;
- A representative image of the project, for communication purposes by the Fund, the necessary rights to which are held by the applicant (JPG, preferably at least 150 dpi, max. 4 MB).

The Fund assesses whether the documents it receives are complete and the feasibility of implementing the plan. If you meet all the conditions you receive a positive decision, after which the grant will be awarded to you.

which obligations do you undertake if you receive a grant?

Applicants who receive a grant under this open call participate in the Fund's Talent Development Grant Scheme programme. Basically, this programme consists of::

- A substantive orientation day
- Two theme days/knowledge days
- A progress meeting

formal conditions

This application procedure and the grant provision is based on the [Open Call Grant Scheme](#). For this call, the following articles of the Open Call Grant Scheme are not applicable:

- Article 5(2); (registration with the Chamber of Commerce is only compulsory after selection by the committee);
- Article 9(1b),(1c),(1d);
- Article 9(2).

contact

If you have a question or a comment, then send an email to zelflerendontwerper@stimuleringsfonds.nl. You can also call on 010 436 16 00.