

Content Framework 2025

Version September 2024

Content Framework Grant Scheme OPZUID 2021-2027

Introduction and Background

The content framework forms part of the OPZUID 2021-2027 Grant Scheme and accompanying explanatory notes. It provides all the necessary tools for potential applicants. The basis for this substantive framework is the RIS3 and the OPZuid Programme, both which were previously also published on our website.

The appendices describe the openings. This appendix is yet to be approved and will subsequently be published in the form of an appendix to the Grant Scheme. The appendix explains in detail the two openings within which project applications may be submitted. In this regard, the openings have a different format than in the years 2022 and 2023. In those years, five transitions were opened separately, containing specific themes. By abandoning the classification by transition and theme, it becomes possible to establish cross-connections between the different transitions, allowing the applicant to decide how to respond to the transitions. This approach to openings is similar to the way it was done in the past within the OPZuid programme 2014-2020.

Two times, two openings in 2025

Two rounds of openings will follow in 2025 (one in spring and one in autumn), each of €15 million ERDF/State Contribution and €7.5 million ERDF/State Contribution respectively (€45 million in total in 2025). The two rounds of openings will be identical in content.

These openings align with the two policy objectives (PO for short) 'A Smarter Europe' (PO 1) and 'A Greener Europe' (PO 2):

Spring and autumn:

Opening 1, € 15 million: Promoting innovation with social and economic impact in the southern Netherlands, thanks to the further development, demonstration and marketing of promising technological and non-technological innovations and strengthening of the southern Netherlands innovation ecosystem.

Intended for projects focused on the Climate Transition, Agriculture & Food Transition, Raw Materials Transition and Health Transition.

Opening 2, €7.5 million: Promoting the demonstration, marketing and scaling up of promising innovative solutions that advance the energy transition, in cooperation with SMEs and civil society in the southern Netherlands.

Intended for projects targeted at Energy Transition.

For what purposes are grants exactly provided?

Within one of these two openings, grants may be provided for innovation projects that contribute to one or more of the societal transitions from the [RIS3 southern Netherlands](#) and that are central to OPZUID 2021-2027:

Opening 1, 'Promoting innovation with social and economic impact in the southern Netherlands, thanks to the further development, demonstration and marketing of promising technological and non-technological innovations and strengthening of the southern Netherlands innovation ecosystem', includes:

- [Climate transition](#);
- [Agriculture and food transition](#);
- [Raw materials transition](#);
- [Health transition](#).

Opening 2, 'Promoting the demonstration, marketing and scaling up of promising innovative solutions that advance the energy transition, in cooperation with SMEs and civil society in the southern Netherlands', includes:

- [Energy transition](#)

Type of actions:

For the transitions climate, raw materials, agriculture and food and health, the following types of actions may be eligible:

- supporting living labs and demonstrations in the actual environment, in which companies, knowledge institutions and civil society work together and/or;
- the (continued) development of innovations within and between SMEs and/or;
- the (continued) development of innovative interregional and international value chains of companies.

With regard to the energy transition, the following types of actions may be eligible:

- supporting living labs and demonstrations in the actual environment, in which companies, knowledge institutions and civil society work together and/or;
- the (continued) development of innovations within and between SMEs and/or;
- the (continued) development of innovative interregional and international value chains of companies.
- supporting SMEs in developing business cases, real-world demonstration, pilot production, and first roll-out or initial scale-up of innovations that can contribute to renewable energy production and smart energy systems, grids and storage and/or;
- the local implementing and developing of innovative forms of sustainable energy production and energy systems, grids and storage.

Grant amount

The amount of the ERDF/State grant is 35% of the eligible costs, with a maximum amount per project of €2,000,000.

Assessment criteria

The project will be assessed on the following criteria:

- The project contributes to the objectives of the programme and the OPZuid opening;
- The project contributes to sustainable development and social impact;
- The project has financial and economic future prospects;
- The project is innovative;
- The project is of sufficient quality.

The project scores at least 10 points and up to 20 points on each of the five criteria above.

The total score of the project is at least 70 points in order to be eligible for funding. Applications that meet the assessment criteria as described will be ranked and those projects that fall within the grant ceiling will be eligible for funding.

To be eligible, the following requirements must also be met:

- The applicant is registered in the trade register;
- The project will benefit the southern Netherlands;
- SMEs are demonstrably part of the project.

Target group

A grant may be applied for by a partnership. Such a partnership may consist of parties from business and knowledge institutions in the southern Netherlands (and beyond, provided there is demonstrable added value), governments, citizens' cooperatives and intermediary organisations (ROMs), campuses, valorisation organisations.

Application process

There will be two openings in 2025. The timeframes are as follows:

- Spring: 24 February 2025, 9 AM to 4 April 2025, 5 PM.
- Autumn: 15 September 2025, 9 AM to 24 October, 5 PM

A tender system will be used. This means that, after the end of the application period, applications will be decided on simultaneously, based on a comparison of a number of criteria. For the specific criteria, please refer to the OPZuid 2021-2027 Grant Scheme.

Required documentation

A complete application consists of the following required appendices:

- Project plan (appendix A): The format project plan will be made available via the Stimulus website.
- Budget (appendix B): The format budget will be made available via the Stimulus
 - website. An obligatory format should be used for the budget, including state aid budget.
- Signed statement of no financial difficulties (appendix C) for all applicants: The
 - format for the statement will be made available via the Stimulus website.
- Signed SME statement (appendix D) for each applicant who is an SME: the format for the declaration will be made available via the Stimulus website.
- Partnership agreement signed by all participants (appendix E): The format for the agreement will be made available via the Stimulus website.
- Copy of power of attorney by the sponsor (free format): Only if the application is submitted by an intermediary.
- Co-financing statement from the province of Limburg (if applicable).

Other documents, such as financial statements and a copy of the bank statement, are no longer a mandatory part of the application. If the result is positive, these will be requested by the OPZuid 2021-2027 Advisory Committee during the financial technical review.

Project idea

If you plan to apply, we recommend that you first fill in the orientation form available through the Stimulus Programme Management website and review it with one of the Stimulus Programme Management staff members.

Appendix 1: content framework openings 2025

The ambition of OPZuid is to harness innovation power for economic as well as societal impact. With the ERDF programme 2021-2027 (OPZUID), the southern Netherlands' ambition is to implement the RIS3 priorities, thereby harnessing and enhancing regional strengths in the areas of economy, entrepreneurship and innovation, with social and economic impact as the goal. This involves contributing to innovative solutions relating to five major societal transitions taking place in both the southern Netherlands and globally, and enabling market players to seize (inter)national market opportunities.

The five transitions – energy, climate, raw materials, agriculture & food and health – align with the Green Deal and European and national innovation policies. Technological know-how is essential to achieve breakthroughs, but not sufficient on its own. The challenge is to harness the South's technological and non-technological strengths, through cooperation within the region, but especially across regional borders.

In the ERDF programme, the southern Netherlands shapes this commitment through the policy objectives (PO for short) 'A smarter Europe' (PO 1) and 'A greener Europe' (PO 2). Within this context, the southern Netherlands chooses the following specific objectives (SD) with associated actions:

1. Strengthening research and innovation capacity and introducing advanced technologies' (objective SD 1.1).
 - Action 1: support living labs/demonstration in real environments, where companies, knowledge institutions and civil society work together;
 - Action 2: (continued) development of innovations within and between (SME) companies;
 - Action 3: (continued) development of innovative interregional and international value chains of companies to achieve the marketing of innovations within the transitions;

2. Promoting renewable energy sources (objective SD 2.2) and developing smart energy systems, grids and storage at local level (objective SD 2.3).
 - Action 1: support living labs/demonstration in real environments, where companies, knowledge institutions and civil society work together;
 - Action 2: (continued) development of innovations within and between (SME) companies;
 - Action 3: (continued) development of innovative interregional and international value chains of companies to achieve the marketing of innovations within the transitions;
 - Action 4: supporting SMEs in marketing innovations that can contribute to renewable energy production and smart energy systems, grids and storage;
 - Action 5: local implementation and further development of innovative forms of sustainable energy production and energy systems, grids and storage.

For OPZUID 2021-2027, €105,334,949 of ERDF is available (excluding technical assistance) and €19,640,087 of co-financing from the state. This amount will be distributed over several openings in the period 2022-2025, as approved by the Supervisory Committee. In addition, the three provinces in the south of the Netherlands are making a total of about €45,000,000 available in co-financing.

Two rounds of openings will follow in 2025 (one in spring and one in autumn), each of €15 million ERDF/State Contribution and €7.5 million ERDF/State Contribution respectively (€45 million in total in 2025). Therefore, 2025 has a total of two opening rounds with two identical openings. These openings align with the two policy objectives 'A Smarter Europe' (PO 1) and 'A Greener Europe' (PO 2):

Opening 1 Promoting innovation with social and economic impact in the southern Netherlands, thanks to the further development, demonstration and marketing of promising technological and non-technological innovations and strengthening of the southern Netherlands innovation ecosystem.

The aim of Priority 1 and the specific objective in the field of innovation is to promote innovation in the southern Netherlands, strengthen the innovation system and increase the utilisation of that innovation system. These are innovations that focus on one or more (cross-over) of the four societal transitions and contribute to one or more societal challenges from the RIS.

Target group: natural persons or legal entities (registered in the trade register).

Eligible activities: Grant may be provided for projects aimed at promoting innovation with social and economic impact in the southern Netherlands, thanks to the further development, demonstration and marketing of promising technological and non-technological innovations and strengthening of the southern Netherlands innovation ecosystem.

Grant requirements:

- The applicant is registered in the trade register;
- The project is implemented by a partnership consisting of at least two partners;
- The partnership is set out in a partnership agreement;
- The project will be implemented in the southern Netherlands or benefit the southern Netherlands;
- The project will benefit SMEs;
- The project consists of one or more of the following actions:
 - supporting living labs and demonstrations in the actual environment, in which companies, knowledge institutions and civil society work together;
 - the (continued) development of innovations within and between SMEs;
- The development or continued development of innovative interregional and international value chains of companies;
- The project contributes to one or more societal challenges from the RIS, namely:
 - o Agriculture and food;
 - o Climate;
 - o Health;
 - o Raw materials.

- The project scores at least 10 points up to a maximum of 20 points for each of the following criteria and at least 70 points total on those criteria:
 - o 1° the extent to which the project contributes to the objectives of the programme and the opening of the ERDF programme southern Netherlands 2021-2027;
 - o 2° the extent to which the project contributes to sustainable development and social impact;
 - o 3° the extent to which the project has financial and economic future prospects;
 - o 4° the extent to which the project is innovative; and
 - o 5° the degree of quality of the project.
- With regard to scoring points for any of the above criteria, it is of added value if the project focuses on one of the following innovation drivers:
 - o a. digitalisation;
 - o b. creative design;
 - o c. skills development.

Grant amount: The amount of the grant is 35% of the eligible costs, with a maximum amount per project of €2,000,000.

Type of beneficiaries: Beneficiaries are businesses (SMEs or large companies in collaboration with SMEs) and knowledge institutions. Governments (e.g., water boards), citizens' cooperatives and intermediary organisations such as, for example, ROMs, campuses, valorisation organisations (linked to knowledge institutions) may also play a supporting role, enabling them to act as beneficiaries as well. Projects must be implemented by at least two collaboration partners. Projects should benefit SMEs. For example, this can be achieved through SME participation in the project. Alternatively, SMEs do not necessarily have to participate themselves, but the results of the project are aimed at SMEs.

Type of actions/projects: The projects requested should first of all align within one of the above themes. In addition, projects should meet a certain scale, provide insight into a business case that is profitable within the foreseeable future (4 to 6 years) and be able to generate social impact. A project adds value if it involves the entire chain to create maximum synergy for companies, knowledge institutions, governments and other stakeholders involved. It is also of added value if the project focuses on supporting topics in the system such as digitisation (as an enabler for innovation), creative design and skills development. If technological innovation is involved, it should fall within TRL 6-8.

Opening 2 Promoting the demonstration, marketing and scaling up of promising innovative solutions that advance the energy transition, in cooperation with SMEs and civil society in the southern Netherlands

The aim of Priority 2 is to promote innovation of renewable energy generation and develop smart energy systems.

Target group: natural persons or legal entities (registered in the trade register).

Eligible activities: A grant may be provided for projects aimed at promoting the demonstration, marketing and scaling up of promising innovative solutions that advance the energy transition, in

cooperation with SMEs and civil society in the southern Netherlands.

Grant requirements:

- The applicant is registered in the trade register;
- The project is implemented by a partnership consisting of at least two partners;
- The partnership is set out in a partnership agreement;
- The project will be implemented in the southern Netherlands or benefit the southern Netherlands;
- The project will benefit SMEs;
- The project consists of one or more of the following actions:
 - o supporting living labs and demonstrations in the actual environment, in which companies, knowledge institutions and civil society work together;
 - o the (continued) development of innovations within and between SMEs;
 - o the (continued) development of innovative interregional and international value chains of companies;
 - o supporting SMEs in marketing innovations that can contribute to renewable energy products and smart energy systems, energy grids and energy storage; or
 - o local implementation and further development of innovative forms of sustainable energy production and smart energy systems, energy grids and energy storage;
- The project contributes to one or more societal challenges from the RIS, namely:
 - o Energy.

- The project scores at least 10 points up to a maximum of 20 points for each of the following criteria and at least 70 points total on those criteria:
 - o 1° the extent to which the project contributes to the objectives of the programme and the opening of the ERDF programme southern Netherlands 2021-2027;
 - o 2° the extent to which the project contributes to sustainable development and social impact;
 - o 3° the extent to which the project has financial and economic future prospects;
 - o 4° the extent to which the project is innovative; and
 - o 5° the degree of quality of the project.
- With regard to scoring points for any of the above criteria, it is of added value if the project focuses on one of the following innovation drivers:
 - o a. digitalisation;
 - o b. creative design;
 - o c. skills development.

Grant amount: The amount of the grant is 35% of the eligible costs, with a maximum amount per project of €2,000,000.

Type of beneficiaries: Beneficiaries are businesses (SMEs or large companies in collaboration with SMEs) and knowledge institutions. Governments, energy & citizens' cooperatives and intermediary organisations such as, for example, ROMs, campuses, valorisation organisations (linked to knowledge institutions) may also play a supporting role, allowing them too to act as beneficiaries. Projects must be implemented by at least two collaboration partners. Involvement of (regional) SMEs as participants or contractors/performers is conditional.

Type of actions/projects: The projects that are put out to tender should meet a certain scale (demonstrably contribute to the energy transition by generating impact at least at the local level), contribute to/fit into a roadmap towards a profitable business case that is profitable in the foreseeable future (4 to 6 years) and be able to generate societal impact by demonstrably contributing to the feasibility of the energy transition (feasibility, affordability, inclusiveness, understandability). A project adds value if it involves the entire chain (supply chain and end customers/users) to create maximum synergy for companies, knowledge institutions, governments and other stakeholders involved. It is also of added value if the project focuses on supporting topics such as digitisation (as an enabler for innovation), creative design and skills development.

If technological innovation is involved, it should fall within TRL 6-8. It may be beneficial if the project offers demonstrable added value in terms of one of the other transitions in addition to an impact on the energy transition.