**ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK FOR CO-FINANCING APPLICATIONS NWB FUND**

The assessment framework consists of starting points, criteria and process.

**1. PRINCIPLES**

**Bylaws or Statutes**

The articles of the bylaws are the starting point for the review procedure. It states what the goals and means of the NWB Fund are. Article 2 states:

*1. The objective of the Foundation is to contribute to improved decentralised management and governance of water systems, an improved flood protection and an improved treatment of waste water in the world (Article 2(1)).*

2. *The Fund want to achieve this objective by providing financial contributions to exclusively:*

*Dutch Water Authorities and the Association of Water Authorities, based in The Hague, and for the benefit of:*

*a. promoting cooperation activities between Dutch water authorities and public authorities or*

*institutions abroad;*

*b. conducting research and publishing supporting publications; as well as anything that is related to or may be conducive to the above.*

This means that applications must contribute to the aforementioned goal, that in principle only

funding is provided to the water authorities and the Association, and that applications should focus on 'government to government' collaboration, research and publications. The fund therefore does not finance costs for infrastructural works.

The articles of the foundation also indicate that the programme committee decides on funding applications. Article 10(1) states: *The foundation has a programme committee, which is empowered to decide on the approval of financing applications and the provision of financial contributions to the water authorities or the aforementioned Association of Water Authorities*.

Applications for funding should therefore be prepared and submitted by the Programme Office to the programme committee, which takes a decision on this. The board only decides in special cases referred to in Article 5(2):

*d. To decide on an objection lodged by an applicant against a decision of the programme committee; e. To decide on a request made by the Director in respect of an application for financing.*

Strategy document:

In the new strategy of the fund that was approved on 13 December 2021 for the period 2022-2030, the Focus is on climate adaptation. Quote from the strategy document:

*“Our vision is to reduce vulnerabilities of our local partners (and ourselves) through climate adaptation measures within integrated water management. To achieve this, the NWB Fund has several goals that it aims to achieve in 2030.*

*1. Within the international projects the water authorities want to actively and in an entrepreneurial way work on climate adaptation, resulting in scalable and shareable climate adaptation projects.*

*2. The knowledge and experience on climate adaptation is actively shared and applied within the various international projects of the water authorities – moreover, this should also relate to the Dutch climate challenges and the Knowledge Agenda of water Authorities in the Netherlands.*

*The NWB Fund wants to take on a proactive and stimulating role to make the necessary (sometimes new to develop) knowledge and experience on climate adaptation possible and known within water management and to develop projects that can be scaled up.*

*The NWB Fund is the proverbial outboard engine that can be used flexible, not counter-steers, but adjusts and accelerates if possible (or necessary). The fund uses and stimulates a network approach within the international water authority projects, with the aim of increasing the impact. With this we broaden and deepen knowledge and experience in order to reach scaling up and acceleration. Water is the leverage and the connector. Together we create a promising environment.*

*Water Authorities are and remain the owners of the projects they carry out with NWB Fund Resources. Exchange of knowledge and experience is central, but should be more reciprocal. It should be clear the Water Authorities and its foreign partners both have something to learn. The water authorities work in The Netherlands has major challenges and climate adaptation is also for us “not a piece of cake”. We therefore stimulate a reflective, entrepreneurial and learning attitude.*

This means that funding applications must offer a clear plus with regard to climate adaptation. The strategy document gives a more detailed explanation of this:

*“The fund sets as a framework that we want to work on climate adaptation measures that fits in integrated water resource management and the work of the water authorities, with an emphasis on the development and use of natural solutions (nature based solutions), biodiversity and inclusivity of the local population and their organizations. It explicitly concerns additional interventions, activities, and pilots, things that are additionally needed above the mostly 'grey' infrastructure and organisation with which water authorities work in their DWA and Blue Deal projects”.*

Coherence with DWA vision

In the new vision on international cooperation of the Dutch Water Authorities (DWA vision) more emphasis than before is placed on obtaining knowledge for the own task execution of the water authorities in the Netherlands, in addition to bringing expertise for solving water issues elsewhere in the world. A knowledge agenda will be developed for this purpose. Besides this the DWA vision explicitly also focuses on Europe, in addition to developing countries

**2. CRITERIA**

The above mentioned principles have been translated into criteria. For the assessment of applications, both hard criteria (mandatory requirements) as soft criteria (optional wishes) apply. In addition, there are criteria for processing an application (admissibility test).

Hard criteria (mandatory requirements):

1. The application contributes to the goals of the NWB Fund, namely climate adaptation by means of of integrated water management in the country or region concerned, preferably on a nature- and human-inclusive way. For a more detailed description of these concepts, see the strategy document of the NWB Fund.

2. An application concerns co-financing of a project or an initiative. Financing of the project or initiative from other logical sources has been checked in advance by the applicant and this is not or incomplete possible.

3. An application for a project concerns a contribution of €10,000 to €100,000 per year with a duration of a minimum of 1 year and a maximum of 4 years. The starting point is co-financing. The contribution of the NWB Fund is a maximum of 75% of the total project costs.

4. An application for an initiative concerns a contribution of €5,000 to €25,000 in total and takes less than 1 year. This involves, for example, research into new ideas, carrying out pilots, development of tools or carrying out reconnaissance missions. The NWB Fund co-finances up to 100% of the costs.

5. The applicant must be a water authority or the Association of Water Authorities, or the programme office of the NWB Fund as an intermediary.

6. The project or initiative is primarily carried out by the water authority in collaboration with local partners abroad. The partners have at least one government organisation ('government to government' cooperation). Projects and initiatives are not carried out completely external. Hiring of experts by the water authority is possible under certain conditions, but must be motivated in writing ('comply or explain').

7. The application concerns a developing country outside Europe which is listed as such on the OECD list. Provided well motivated, exceptions can be made. In that case, the application should mention the specific characteristics of a developing country which the country or region in question has.

8. Applications are demand-driven, i.e. the project or initiative meets a need of the country or region concerned. Who takes the initiative is less relevant. There may be an embedding in an existing programme or partnership (such as the Blue Deal); the contribution of the NWB Fund then has an acceleration function. There may also be a completely new project; than the contribution of the NWB Fund has a start-up function.

9. The application shall include an action plan or plan of approach with planning and budget, in addition to the application form. The plan of approach or action plan has been developed SMART: Specific, Measurable, Acceptable, Realistic and Time-bound. In the preparation, a good analysis was made of the socio-cultural context and the political situation. Results and working methods are geared to this and are supported by the partners in the country or region concerned. The proposal is reasonably feasible. The budget meets the requirements with regard to the cost items and reimbursement of hours.

10. The eligible cost items are:

a. research, publications, meetings such as workshops and symposia (100%)

b. if applicable, travel and subsistence expenses (incl. DSA) for outgoing and incoming

missions (100%).

c. (wage) costs of local liaisons and local experts (maximum € 20,000 per year).

d. hiring experts who, other than research, can make an important and necessary contribution to the project (100% with a maximum of € 20,000 per year, maximum € 950 per day incl. VAT).

11. The following shall apply to the reimbursement of hours:

a. The fee (capitalized hours) for the deployment of the water authority is € 650 per day.

This is based on a 36-hour working week (7.2 hours per day).

b. The hours commitment of local partners is not reimbursed (unlike the Blue Deal) and thus also does not count as part of the total project costs.

c. The days worked are working days.

d. The number of budgeted working days should be a realistic estimate and will be based on trust. If the hours are not in proportion to the realized activities and impact, then this will be discussed in the assessment of the reports and can lead to an adjustment.

12. The application shall include how the progress of the project or initiative is monitored and reported to the NWB Fund. The starting point is a progress meeting once a quarter with reporting. Approval of the reports by the programme office is a condition for payment of instalments and final settlement in accordance with the award letter. Reports must meet the requirements and formats set by the programme office.

13. For international travel (missions) a Terms of Reference (ToR) is provided in advance and assessed by the programme office before travelling to the country in question. Afterwards, a Narrative Report (NR) is delivered to the programme office.

14. The resources of the NWB Fund are sufficient to finance the application and the amount requested is proportional to other grants and the contribution to the strategy of the NWB Fund.

15. There are no other decisive reasons for refusing the application.

16. The programme committee is empowered to derogate from these criteria if necessary and provided that this is well motivated and recorded.

Soft criteria (optional wishes):

1. The application has a flywheel effect. There are cooperation partners involved in the project or initiative, increasing the impact ("1 + 1 = more than 2").

2. The application has a learning effect for water management in the Netherlands. A learning question is formulated for the own water authority and possibly other organizations, whether or not linked to the knowledge agenda of the Dutch Water Authorities. A working method has also been developed to address the learning question and to later share the new insights with a relevant target group.

3. The results are scalable, so that the project or initiative has a spin-off. Insights are gained, methods or tools are developed that are also applicable in other locations in the same country or in other countries.

4. The application contributes to innovation in the field of integrated water resource management and climate adaptation, preferably in a nature- and human-inclusive way.

5. The results of the project or initiative are sustained by, for example, management, operation and maintenance of infrastructure or follow-up projects. The financing of this is in the picture at the completion of the project or initiative.

Criteria for examining an application (admissibility test):

1. The application has been discussed/tuned in advance with the programme manager of the NWB Fund.

2. The application is submitted in writing and signed in the required format and provided digitally by email

3. The application is submitted before the deadline for submission (deadlines are set per calendar year determined and communicated via the website).

4. The application is submitted in Dutch and has also been translated into the language of the relevant country or region. The foreign partner has co-signed the application, or has provided a

written statement of support letter in the own language.

5. On request, the applicant shall be present for an explanation at the discussion of the application in the programme committee.

3. PROCESS

The NWB Fund wants to play a facilitating role. It not only tests applications, but also wishes to participate in the preliminary phase and to guide in the implementation. Therefore the procedure has three stages.

The development phase, which starts with an idea. This is discussed by the initiator with the programme manager and possibly presented to a delegation of the programme committee (free format). The approach is to come to an application in co-creation. The duration of this phase is depending on the request itself.

The assessment phase, which starts with a full proposal (fixed format). The programme committee tests this with the criteria and decides whether or not to allocate a budget. The applicant receives a letter on the decision taken. The duration of this phase from the deadline for submission is a maximum of 6 weeks.

The implementation phase, which starts with a decision by the programme committee to allocate budget. During the implementation, there is periodic progress consultation with the program manager on the basis of Reports. This phase is concluded with an evaluation. The duration of this phase depends on the application (initiative up to 1 year, project 1 to 4 years).

A diagram showing all the steps of the process is attached (Annex 1).

A format for applications is also attached (Annex 2).

Adopted by programme committee 16 June 2022