

# Internal Physics-XS grants 2026 – Call for Proposals

Version 1: 22/05/2026

## Introduction

Our department has recently received around **€1.1M from Horizon Europe (HEU) matching funds**. These funds are provided by RVO (*Rijksdienst voor Ondernemend Nederland*) and are distributed as a function of the size of HEU projects awarded to PIs in Dutch Universities and Research Institutes. The goal of these funds is to **support our external funding acquisition activities** (NWO, NGF, EU/ERC, foundations, contract research, etc). These funds can be spent only over a limited period of time (by the end of 2028 at the latest).

In consultation with the Faculty Board, in particular with the Research Vice-Dean Davide Iannuzzi, and after discussion at the Section Representatives Meeting (SRM) of March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2026, the MT would like to propose the first call for proposals for new **Internal Physics-XS grants** supported by these HEU matching funds. The main assessment criterion will be a demonstrable added value of the project towards increasing our external grant acquisition efforts.

## What can be requested

- Between **€25K** (minimum) and **€100K** (maximum) per application, with a near-complete freedom regarding what can be requested.
- This budget can be used *e.g.* for **investments**: equipment, consumables, software licenses, specialised computing equipment.
- If **personnel** is requested: a maximum of 1 postdoc-year can be requested. This could be used to hire a new postdoc, to extend the contract of one of our postdocs for one more year, or to offer a finishing PhD candidate a 1 year of extension as postdoc.
- In the case of finishing PhD candidates: this postdoc extension can only be awarded once they have **submitted their PhD manuscript**.
- The money cannot be used to fund PhD candidates (extensions).
- Is it also possible to request support for travel (*e.g.* short sabbatical), conference organisation, professional grant support, external bureaus, and in general any other activity that is expected to lead to an improvement in our external funding acquisition success.
- Requesting (partial) teaching buyouts is also possible within the restrictions of the call but a clear plan on how teaching activities will be taken care of and on how educational quality will be maintained needs to be provided.

## Who can apply

- Any PI in the department can submit a proposal (at most one per round).
- Joint submissions between 2 or multiple PIs are acceptable (and encouraged if one can make a case that this will be beneficial for future grant application efforts).

- Is it also possible to submit an application together with colleagues from **other Beta departments**, provided the funds (*e.g.* a postdoc hire) are spent in the department of P&A.

### When to apply

- Deadline for a first call of proposals is **August 31<sup>st</sup> 2026**.
- Proposals should be submitted with Karin Colvin: [k.s.colvin@vu.nl](mailto:k.s.colvin@vu.nl)
- A decision will be taken immediately after the summer break, with projects starting as early as **Oktober 2026**.
- Should funds remain after this first call (or additional HEU matching funds are allocated to our department), there will be **new calls in the future** with similar conditions.

### How to apply

- The department has provided an **application template** following the ENW-XS example. It can be found on the NS staff members Teams channel, under *Research/Physics XS grant/2026/applicationformp&a-xs\_26.docx*.
- Following the ENW-XS structure is encouraged since this way the same or a similar proposal can be submitted to an ENW-XS round.
- No budget from Project Control is required, but a **standard costs** of personnel has been provided in the application template.

### Assessment criteria and monitoring

- Main assessment criterion: **demonstrable added value (75%)** of the project towards increasing our external grant acquisition efforts. **Feasibility of the research plan (25%)** is also taken into account in the assessment procedure.
- Applicants should indicate the **explicit grants and calls** (or other funding sources *e.g.* companies, foundations, charities ...) that they will be targeting in the near future, explaining why the support provided by these Physics-XS grants will lead to an increase of the chances to secure this funding. In case of joint applications (two or more PIs): indicate which instrument (ENW-M2, OTP, ENW-XL, ...) being targeted.

We expect the **full commitment of the applicants** with the goals that they state in the applications. The MT will monitor **progress in the agreed upon targets**, and failure to meet them (*e.g.* by not submitting a proposal to a call that was the main target in the project justification) will i) render the applicant not eligible for future rounds of this internal funding instrument and ii) may lead to a decrease of the PI budget for the subsequent year(s).

### Assessment

- Initial ranking of proposals is done in following the ENW-XS structure: all applicants rank the proposal of three others (excluding their section) using the supplied

[assessment form](#) which can be found on the NS staff members Teams channel, under *Research/Physics XS grant/2026/Assesmentformp&aXS2026\_v2.xlsx*.

- Final ranking and awarding is done by the MT.

### **Additional information**

- A fraction (~300 keuro) of these HEU matching funds will be reserved to support **start up packages** of the 3 new PIs that (according to the current planning) will be hired in 2027.
- We also reserve ~**€25k** to purchase **professional GenAI software licences** for our staff. For a pilot period of 1 year, PIs can request to the MT the purchase of a GenAI pro license to support their funding acquisition period (using it *e.g.* as internal expert reviewer, for deep literature searches, and other applications). No need to request hence these licenses via the Physics-XS budget. After this pilot we will evaluate the added value of this investment.
- Budget to be spent before the end of 2028, at the latest.
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