

Dutch Kidney Foundation Innovation Program Procedure

Info sheet 9 January 2012

Program

The DKF Innovation Program (Innovatie Programma) is part of the DKF section Biomedical Research (Biomedisch Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek, BWO). The advisory board for this program is the Scientific Advisory Board (Wetenschappelijke Raad, WR). The board is responsible for the assessment of the scientific quality of projects within the program. The assessment criteria are scientific criteria for appraisal of the scientific quality and relevance criteria set by the DKF.

Scientific Criteria

- Significance (Scientific and Clinical)
Does the project address an important problem or a critical barrier to progress in the scientific and clinical renal field? If the aims of the project are achieved, how will scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice be improved? How will successful completion of the aims change the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions that drive this field?
- Investigators
Are the researchers well suited to the project, do they have appropriate experience and training? If established, have they demonstrated an ongoing record of accomplishments that have advanced their field(s)?
- Approach & Feasibility
Are the strategy, methodology, and analyses well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the specific aims of the project? Are potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success presented? Will the strategy establish feasibility and will particularly risky aspects be managed?
- Inclusion
If the project involves clinical research, are the plans for the recruitment and retention of subjects adequate? Are the plans for 1) protection of human subjects from research risks, and 2) inclusion of minorities and members of both sexes/genders, as well as the inclusion of elderly people and of children, adequate and justified in terms of the scientific goals and research strategy proposed?
- Environment
Will the scientific environment in which the work will be done contribute to the probability of success? Are the institutional support, equipment and other physical resources available to the investigators adequate for the project proposed? Will the project benefit from unique features of the scientific environment, subject populations, or collaborative arrangements?

Relevance Criteria

- Primary
 - Significance for CKD Patients and Prevention
Does the project address, directly or indirectly, progress in treatment and therapies for CKD patients and the prevention of kidney damage and disease in the range from early kidney damage and renal disease to transplantation and chronic transplant dysfunction?
 - Innovation Potential
Does the application challenge and seek to shift current renal research or clinical practice paradigms by utilizing novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions? Are the concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions novel to the renal field or novel in a broad sense? Is a refinement, improvement, or new application of theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions proposed?
- Secondary
 - Cost-Benefit
Are the proposed expenditures proportional to the perceived benefits in a broad sense, given the risk of hypothesis failing and the innovation potential?

- Implementation / Follow-up
Does the application adequately address the implementation and/or follow-up of the projected results? Does the application adequately recognize opportunities for technology transfer?

Funding

The program has at least one annual funding round. The DKF Program Committee will initially evaluate relevance and quality of grant proposals. The WR assesses and ranks the proposals and advises the DKF on the awarding of Innovation Grants. Each funding round of the program is assigned a fixed budget which will be spent in accordance with the decision of the DKF.

Assessment

Each grant application will be reviewed by two referees from the WR. A referee assesses the scientific quality of the proposal along the scientific criteria and the relevance along the relevance criteria. Conflicts of interest are to be avoided in appointing referees. The referees present their reviews in a meeting of the advisory board. Board members involved in a grant proposal on discussion are excluded from discussion and ranking of the proposal.

Ranking

After discussing the proposal, the participating board members will cast their votes in the form of scores (1 to 10) in an anonymous procedure. Scores integrate all the quality and relevance aspects of the proposal. Individual scores of the board members are collected after the last proposal has been discussed. The final score of a proposal equals the mathematical average of the individual scores. The ranking of the proposals is given by the descending order of the corresponding final scores.

Decision

The advice of the advisory board to the DKF on awarding grant proposals is comprised of the final ranking of grant proposals, the grant reviews and the discussion reports. The DKF will base its grant awarding decisions on the advice.

Grant Awarding Rules

- Grant proposals scoring equal to or higher than 7 are eligible for funding.
- Grant proposals scoring below 6 will not be funded.
- If the total budget is insufficient for funding all applications with a score equal to or higher than 7, the final ranking order will be decisive.
- If the total budget is larger than necessary for funding all applications with a score equal to or higher than 7, grant proposals scoring between 6 and 7 will be eligible for funding.
- The DKF decisions on grant awards are based on the ranking.
- In case of close individual grant scores, the DKF may decide to apply small changes to the final ranking based on the relevance criteria.
- Grant award decisions are either positive or negative.

Final Reports

- The final report is submitted using the most recent version of the DKF Innovation Grant final report form.
- Final reports of Innovation Grants are reviewed in an abridged procedure.
- For each report, the WR (vice) chairman appoints two referees from the WR, preferably those who were involved in the application review. Conflicts of interest are to be avoided.
- If both reviews are unequivocally positive the final report is accepted. The report will be added for information to the agenda of the next meeting of the advisory board.
- In all other cases the report will be fully discussed in the next meeting of the advisory board.
- If both reviewers are in favour of awarding cum laude this will be discussed in the next meeting of the advisory board.
- The DKF will base its decision on the advice of the advisory board. The board can decide unanimously to award a final report a cum laude distinction.