



## Call SBIR<sup>1</sup> in Developing Markets

### “Digital solutions to improve access to healthcare and education services for remote groups in the Middle East and North Africa”

- Theme 1. Improve continuity and quality of services in remote health clinics
- Theme 2. Access to healthcare services and improved health communication and dissemination
- Theme 3. Improved quality of and access to education and skills training for remote groups

Opening: **29 January 2021**

Closing date expressions of interest: **1 March 2021 at 10.00 CET**

Budget: **3,9 million euros**

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*Om makkelijker te kunnen schakelen met partners in de doellanden over de thema's is deze oproep deels in het Engels geschreven. Informatie over het indienen en het (beoordelings-) proces is in het Nederlands. Voor deze SBIR geldt een gewijzigde procedure ten opzichte van de SBIR handleiding. Voor deze SBIR dient u zich vooraf in te schrijven via een webformulier waarin u kort uw voorstel toelicht, zie paragraaf 6.*

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This SBIR call is about improving access to two public services: healthcare and education. In the developing markets, access to these services is determined geographically and socio-economically. Geographically: quality and availability of public health & medical services as well as educational & training services are often inversely proportional to the distance from the inner cities. Socio-economically: in the first place, access to healthcare and education is better for those who have the means to pay the fees. But there can be other limitations: insecurity, religious restrictions, taboos, etc. Access is also influenced by the availability and the level of the services.

Groups that have restricted access to healthcare and education cannot fully participate in the economy. Physical and mental health care as well as education are basic building blocks for increasing economic resilience and reducing inequality. At the same time, as in any country private and/or public expenditure on these services is relatively high, it constitutes significant market opportunities for entrepreneurs. Co-creation between those who provide the actual healthcare and education and those who develop the tools to support these services, should improve the accessibility of these services for large groups of the population. Innovative technological and organizational developments enable decentralization of services to the extent that presence and application of expertise do not necessarily have to be in the same place. And this in turn constitutes cost efficiency.

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<sup>1</sup> The abbreviation SBIR comes from the American Small Business Innovation Research program. The American SBIR program is only open to small businesses. The Dutch SBIR program is tailored to smaller companies, but is open to everyone, including large companies. SBIR is a so-called "pre-commercial" procurement. The procurement law does not apply to R&D-services, an SBIR procedure is open, fair and transparent.

Because of COVID-19 restrictions like lockdowns more people, not limited to rural areas, became “remote”. This accelerated innovations that allowed for distant provision of health care and education. In line with the Building Back Better principle of inclusive economic recovery, we want to use these experiences to improve economic resilience by improving access for “permanently remote” groups.

## 1. Objective of this SBIR

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs challenges entrepreneurs and companies registered in the Netherlands (and EU) to submit ideas for innovative products and services that improve accessibility to healthcare and education for those who are geographically or socio-economically restricted. These innovations are to be developed and prototyped in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA region: Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine Ter, Sudan, Tunisia, Yemen).

In the themes below some of the challenges to achieve the objective are described. However, this is not comprehensive. Hence we invite entrepreneurs to provide us with details: what group of healthcare facilities staff, patients, pupils or students do you want to target, what exactly is the challenge they face and how are you going to solve this challenge?

Any product or service to be developed and prototyped is to enable the local providers of healthcare and education to tackle the challenges they are facing. So for instance we do not look for a tablet that contains specific teaching materials, but we are looking for a software tool that allows local education suppliers to develop these materials themselves according to the national curriculum. This also implies that your innovation is based on a sound business case that also may allow local entrepreneurs to start or extend their business. In the end, this SBIR in Developing Markets call is also about strengthening the local economy.

We ask for digital innovations that improve the access to health care and education services. The digital solutions must fit in the local setting where often the internet is not available or scarce. And where mobile phones are common and smartphones an exception. So in areas with little or no digital infrastructure, the innovations must provide a customized digital solution. We are looking for entrepreneurs and companies who are prepared to make a difference locally and who, after the second phase of this innovation procurement, have the drive to market their innovations.

We also appeal to the “unusual suspects”: companies that do not yet have business in the aforementioned countries but are willing to team up with partners who have. Because half the number of staff, patients, clients, pupils and students are female, we specifically encourage female entrepreneurs to give competing in this challenge, serious consideration.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is looking for innovative solutions that:

- deliver a sustainable, accessible, financially viable product or service;
- are new in the chosen country;
- fit in the local circumstances and practices and are rooted in the actual healthcare and education systems;
- are a proven co-creation of the developer and potential local users;
- are based on a prospective sound business case that may create opportunities for local entrepreneurs to start or extend their business;
- have the potential to expand;
- have a digital approach.

and invites entrepreneurs and companies to submit proposals for one of the following three themes:

## 1.1. Improve continuity and quality of services in remote health clinics

*This includes technical support, maintenance of equipment, training of medical and non-medical staff, solution oriented support.*

Health clinics that are able to reach remote groups, face multiple challenges. Both on the maintenance and healthcare side. Maintenance of equipment, medical and non-medical (electricity, water, sanitation, laboratory, etc.), is often cumbersome and expensive, as the few technicians capable to do this are often not situated in remote areas. To maintain or upgrade the level of the health services, support and training are needed. But limited time, shortages of personnel and the need for continuity of the services make this a challenge.

Digital access to further training and support for health and maintenance staff in health clinics can help to improve the service level of these facilities and may prevent temporary shortages of personnel, thus not limiting the accessibility of these services. Instead of long travels and absence for further training in the city centres where the educational institutions and hospitals are located, it would be an advantage if health and maintenance personnel of these health clinics can be trained with the help of digital technologies. Either to practice realistic situations without expensive equipment and materials or to offer specialized solution-oriented support in their daily work.

Potential solutions could entail:

- Providing (digital) health training and support.
- Support for diagnosing and providing medical and follow-up care.
- Digital training simulations that help health staff prepare better for new situations.
- Tools for health workers working with disabled people in villages.
- Sustainably maintaining equipment and facilities with e.g. augmented reality that can give real-time help to maintenance staff for complicated repairs.

## 1.2. Access to healthcare services and improved health communication and dissemination

*This includes availability of treatments for physical health and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), rehabilitation, prevention and access to complete and accurate information, as well as to products and services on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)*

Access to physical and mental healthcare services for patients who are remote from healthcare and city hospitals is a challenge. It makes it difficult to reach out to patients that need to follow-up medical advice, perform simple (rehabilitation) exercises and to help them with healthier lifestyle habits in order to prevent non-communicable diseases like e.g. diabetes and heart diseases.

Dissemination of information on health issues to specific target groups like youth and women is necessary, but can be challenging because of the physical distance and because it is difficult to find the right means to reach them. They are not necessarily patients, this makes it a challenge to provide up to date information about health issues. In addition, (digital) innovations may contribute to reach children, teenagers and

young adults with accurate information about their sexual development, reproductive health and rights. Preferably these solutions connect with existing national learning platforms and tools<sup>2</sup>.

Potential solutions could entail:

- Tools for revalidation and follow-up, like e.g. a serious game as a rehabilitation aid to get people motivated to exercise.
- Tools for information on sexuality and reproductive health and rights, like e.g. an interactive game about love, sexuality and relationships.
- Information on developing a healthy lifestyle. E.g. an interactive game with incentives about healthy eating habits in primary school.
- Information on medical taboos and trauma processing, e.g. the use of VR in trauma processing in specific areas.
- Effective training and advising, including on medical taboos. E.g. interactive information about subjects in the taboo sphere that can be further developed, for example, with local youth.

### 1.3. Improved quality of and access to education and skills training for remote groups

*This includes primary and secondary education, higher education and vocational training.*

Access to facilities and teaching materials for remote pupils and students can help to improve the service levels of educational institutes. Instead of long travels and absence for further education in the city where the educational institutions are located, it would be an advantage if they can be (further) educated with the help of new (digital) technologies. It would also tackle the problem of too few qualified teachers to service all schools and other educational facilities.

The innovations must reach the remote group and strengthen the public service. In many cases the teaching materials are already available, the challenge is to find ways to convey this to the remote and specified target group and/or provide possibilities for local entrepreneurs to use certain digital modules and customize with specific available local education materials. Conditions for effectiveness are that the tools reach and improve the performance of pupils and students, that they are (financially) accessible and that they match the needs of the target group.

Maintenance of school equipment is often cumbersome and expensive, as the few technicians equipped to do this are often not situated in remote areas.

Potential solutions could entail:

- Effective teaching and support on a distance.
- Tools to reach target groups in remote areas who are normally out of reach.
- Sustainably maintaining teaching materials, technologies and facilities.
- Transfer knowledge and skills remotely in settings without or with bad internet connection.
- An instrument that provides tailor-made advice on the personal retraining, that matches with the demand for skills on the labour market, for example to qualify for professions that are relevant on location.

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<sup>2</sup> See for existing national learning platform and tools e.g. <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse/nationalresponses#ARAB%20STATES>

## 2. Conditions for applicants and their subcontractors

### 2.1. Tenders can only be submitted by:

- Applicants that are registered in the professional register or in the trade register in accordance with the regulations of the Member State (EU) where one is established.
- Applicants and their subcontractors that comply with the other conditions mentioned in paragraph 10.1 of the SBIR "Handleiding voor ondernemers 2020".

Applicants for this SBIR in Developing Markets declare that they will conduct their activities in line with the guidelines for Corporate Social Responsibility of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD): <https://english.rvo.nl/onderwerpen/international-enterprise/corporate-social-responsibility/oecd-guidelines>

Applicants need to account for the risks associated with doing business internationally. The IMVO<sup>3</sup> risk checker is a good starting point for identifying the risks, supplemented with other sources, reports and on-site research.

## 3. Minimum requirements

Applicants that don't meet one or more of the minimum requirements as listed below, will be excluded from this SBIR in Developing Markets challenge.

### 3.1. Challenge, themes & countries

The proposed solution fits within at least one of the themes of this challenge and will be developed in one of the listed countries.

### 3.2. R&D services and innovation

The services offered by the applicant have to be within the scope of the definition for R&D services, as mentioned in paragraph 10.2 and 10.3 in the "SBIR Handleiding voor ondernemers".

A product, technique or service is innovative if:

- the product or service is new to the target country;
- it comprises a new technology; or
- it comprises a new organisational method.

The innovation can be hardware, software, a service or a new way of organizing things. This also includes making existing products and services in another country suitable for the target country in an innovative way. Obviously, this still requires R&D and there is a reasonable chance that it is not technically or economically feasible.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ser.nl/nl/thema/imvo/imvo-risicomangement>

## 4. Requirements

The following requirements will be assessed under criterion 1 Impact.

### 4.1. Local context

When developing innovations for emerging economies, you take into account local settings/context of the target group, such as resource constraints (materials, financing, institutions), possible undesirable impact on the environment, cultural and social demands and existing (informal) activities. You work in collaboration and co-creation with local partners, you integrate local knowledge and skills. The innovations you want to develop are certainly not low-tech and are often better than the (more expensive) alternative. And of course you will comply with national legislation.

### 4.2. Important elements in your expression of interest and project plan

We expect you to provide us with a description of the challenge you want to address, including:

- A description of the type of service in the health or educational domain that is in need of your innovation, linked to the country of your choice.
- A description of the remote group of staff, patients, pupils or students you are targeting, explaining the cause and consequences of this group being difficult to reach and the challenges they face.
  - Geographically: remote groups including refugees, pastoralists and people in conflict areas have limited mobility or access to health or education services due to the physical distance.
  - Socio-economically: remote groups such as women, vulnerable groups in the cities have economic limitations such as no money for phone services, internet or transport. Also cultural aspects such as religion or gender based customs make groups remote.
  - Please note: When it comes to refugees, it concerns those groups who do not have direct access to specific services in refugee camps.
- An insight in your local network or a convincing plan to find (new) partners.
- An insight in the digital aspects of your innovation

For phase 2 we also expect you to provide us with:

- An insight in how your innovation will fit in the local digital setting. In areas with hardly any digital infrastructure or internet your solution should use as little data as possible.
- An insight in who are your customers and who will pay for your solution. (This will be assessed under criterion 3 Economic perspective).
- A description of how your innovation in the future can be applied to other customers and users (potential to expand).

### 4.3. Gender equality

Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is a cross-cutting goal. In phase 1 of the project you should pay attention to how women are or will be involved. In phase 2 you must indicate how you will (continue to) involve women and bring the innovation to the attention of this target group.

### 4.4. Clients and (public) buyer

For the innovation you are proposing, preferably, the demand for the solution has been identified and you have a potential buyer and end-user already in the picture. The proposed solution can in the future be applied by (semi-) public organizations or widely accessible for private entities.

## 5. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the theme of innovation

The policy memorandum 'Investing in Perspective' by Sigrid Kaag Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation indicates how the government is tackling international challenges and opportunities: 'The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are an agenda for innovation and offer businesses opportunities to develop innovative solutions for the SDGs to tap into new markets. The SDGs provide for the first time a universal agenda for international cooperation'. In addition, extra attention is paid to deploying the innovative capacity of companies (especially SMEs) that are challenged to apply their knowledge and skills in new products and services, which are tailored to local development challenges.

The SDGs form an agenda for innovation: innovations in technology, working methods and financing are needed to find new, integrated solutions for, for example, responsible use of raw materials. With this call, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs wants to contribute to the following SDGs:



## 6. Procedure

De Rijksdienst voor Ondernemend Nederland (RVO) is een onderdeel van het Ministerie van Economische Zaken en Klimaat en voert de SBIR competitie uit in opdracht van het Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken (BZ). SBIR is een open competitie voor iedere marktpartij die innovatieve (technologische) oplossingen voor maatschappelijke vraagstukken kan ontwikkelen. De SBIR-systematiek kent twee fasen:

- Fase 1: haalbaarheidsonderzoek. In fase 1 onderzoekt u de haalbaarheid om uw innovatie te ontwikkelen en zo nodig aan de lokale context aan te passen, het vinden van (een) betrouwbare lokale partner(s) hierbij en partijen die een testlocatie kunnen leveren voor het in de praktijk testen van het prototype in fase 2.
- Fase 2: prototype-ontwikkeling voor lokale situatie, praktijktesten.

### Stappen

1. Geïnteresseerden dienen een korte beschrijving (A4) in via het webformulier.
2. Experts van RVO en BZ adviseren het SBIR team welke maximaal 60 A4-voorstellen het best passen binnen het doel van de oproep en kansrijk lijken.
3. Indieners van deze kansrijke A4-voorstellen krijgen een uitnodiging voor het indienen van een fase 1 offerte.
4. Een commissie met externe deskundigen adviseert RVO vervolgens welke fase 1 offertes voor producten en diensten het beste aan de criteria voldoen (zie paragraaf 9).
5. De indieners van deze voorstellen krijgen een opdracht voor fase 1.
6. Partijen die het fase 1 haalbaarheidsonderzoek hebben afgerond kunnen een verzoek krijgen een offerte in te dienen voor SBIR fase 2 (het ontwikkelen en testen van de innovatie).

7. Ook bij deze tweede fase zal de eerdergenoemde commissie RVO adviseren over welke fase 2 offertes het beste aan de criteria voldoen.
8. Vervolgens krijgen de ondernemers met de beste offertes voor fase 2 een opdracht om hun innovatie (verder) te ontwikkelen en te testen.

*NB. SBIR vergoedt alleen kosten voor onderzoek en ontwikkeling. Marktintroductie is geen onderdeel van SBIR.*

## 7. Budget

Het Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken stelt voor fase 1 van deze SBIR per sub-thema een budget van € 500.000 (inclusief btw) beschikbaar. Het maximum budget per project voor een haalbaarheidsonderzoek in fase 1 bedraagt € 40.000 (excl. btw).

Voor SBIR fase 2 is per sub-thema € 800.000 (incl. btw) beschikbaar plus eventueel restbudget van fase 1, het maximumbedrag per project is € 200.000 (incl. btw). Alleen de projecten die met goed resultaat het haalbaarheidsonderzoek (fase 1) hebben afgerond, kunnen een uitnodiging krijgen om voor fase 2 een aanbod te doen.

Het budget is als volgt over de drie thema's verdeeld.

	Fase 1	Fase 2
<b>Thema 1</b>	500.000 euro	800.000 euro
<b>Thema 2</b>	500.000 euro	800.000 euro
<b>Thema 3</b>	500.000 euro	800.000 euro
<b>Totaal</b>	<b>1.500.000 euro</b>	<b>2.400.000 euro</b>

Het aantal te honoreren projecten voor de verschillende fasen is afhankelijk van de prijs en de kwaliteit van de best beoordeelde offertes per fase.

Als een van de sub-thema's onvoldoende goede voorstellen ontvangt, kan een deel van dit budget ingezet worden voor projecten binnen een ander sub-thema. Overblijvend budget uit fase 1 kan in fase 2 worden ingezet.

### BTW

Aangezien de activiteiten ontwikkelingslanden betreffen (DAC-ODA lijst) en de resultaten ten goede komen aan deze ontwikkelingslanden, is voor de SBIR opdracht in fase 2 het 0% btw tarief van toepassing voor organisaties die als ondernemer worden aangemerkt voor de btw-heffing en in Nederland gevestigd zijn.<sup>4</sup> Voor fase 1 zal dit 0% tarief niet altijd van toepassing zijn.

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<sup>4</sup> Voor de volledige tekst over het 0% btw tarief, zie <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/stcrt-2015-32147.html>. NB. Bij opdrachtverlening dient u zelf een aanvraag in te dienen bij de belastingdienst voor het toepassen van het 0% btw tarief voor deze opdracht.

## 8. Beoordeling

De beoordeling vindt plaats conform de in de SBIR handleiding (versie september 2020) beschreven procedure en aan de hand van de hieronder beschreven beoordelingscriteria.

*Alleen projectvoorstellen die voldoen aan de minimum eisen (zie 3. Minimum requirements) worden verder beoordeeld.*

Bij de beoordeling (totaal maximaal 100 punten te behalen) is per criterium maximaal het volgende aantal punten toe te kennen:

1. Impact: 40
2. Technologische haalbaarheid: 30
3. Economisch perspectief: 30

*Nb. Alleen projecten die 60% of meer van het maximaal aantal punten op alle drie criteria scoren, worden in de rangschikking opgenomen om voor een opdracht in aanmerking te komen.*

### 8.1. Impact

Voor het criterium Impact zijn de volgende punten van belang:

- a. Mate waarin de innovatie bijdraagt aan het oplossen van het maatschappelijk probleem.
- b. Kwaliteit van de onderbouwing van de impact.
- c. Mate van innovatie: Hoe groot is de 'doorbraak' en hoeveel nieuwe functionaliteit ontstaat voor klanten?
- d. Bruikbaarheid voor gebruikers.
- e. Hoeveel waarde levert het voorstel voor het gevraagde budget ('value for money')?
- f. De mate waarin de indiener op de hoogte is van ontwikkelingen en omstandigheden in het land of de landen waarvoor de innovatie beoogd is en deze kennis heeft gebruikt in het voorstel.

### 8.2. Technologische haalbaarheid

Voor het criterium Technologische haalbaarheid zijn de volgende punten van belang:

- a. Mate waarin het voorstel een technologisch interessante benadering voorstelt.
  - i. Is de benadering veelbelovend?
  - ii. Is de benadering haalbaar?
  - iii. Is de benadering inventief?
- b. Is (Zijn) dit de juiste partij (partijen) om dit te ontwikkelen?
- c. Kwaliteit van de technische onderbouwing:
  - i. Is duidelijk wat het 'technologische startpunt' is?
  - ii. Is duidelijk welk onderzoek men van plan is te doen?
  - iii. Zijn de voorgestelde middelen in overeenstemming met de voorgestelde aanpak?
  - iv. Is duidelijk hoe het voorgestelde onderzoek bijdraagt aan de doelstelling van het project?
  - v. Is het voorstel goed leesbaar door iemand die goed bekend is met de materie maar geen technisch expert is.

### 8.3. Economisch perspectief

Voor het criterium Economisch perspectief zijn de volgende punten van belang:

- a. Geeft het voorstel vertrouwen dat de ondernemer een product en/of dienst ontwikkelt waar klanten voor kunnen en willen betalen? En heeft de ondernemer in beeld wie de betalende klant zou kunnen zijn?
- b. Kwaliteit van de onderbouwing:
  - i. De mate waarin duidelijk is hoe de onderneming geld gaat verdienen.
  - ii. De mate waarin onderbouwd is dat de juiste partijen betrokken zijn.

## 9. Informatie webinars

Op 8 februari en 22 februari organiseert RVO webinar waarin de oproep wordt toegelicht. Geeft u zich graag zo spoedig mogelijk op, via het formulier op de RVO website, met vermelding van uw gegevens. U ontvangt na inschrijving een link naar het webinar.

Het globale programma van de informatiebijeenkomst:

- Eerste uur: Presentaties en gelegenheid tot het stellen van vragen via de chat
  - Algemene introductie en toelichting op het thema (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken en RVO)
  - Toelichting op de (aangepaste) SBIR procedure (RVO)
- Afsluitend half uur: Mondeling vragen halfuurtje

## 10. Informatie en contact

Vragen met betrekking tot deze SBIR-competitie (tot maximaal 10 dagen voor sluitingsdatum) graag sturen naar: [sbir@rvo.nl](mailto:sbir@rvo.nl)

Lees meer over deze SBIR-competitie op TenderNed en vind relevante SBIR documenten op <https://www.rvo.nl/subsidie-en-financieringswijzer/sbir>

## 11. Inschrijven met een idee

In afwijking van de SBIR Handleiding dient u zich vooraf in te schrijven via een webformulier waarin u kort (in het Engels) uw idee toelicht en beschrijft welk probleem dit voor welke doelgroep oplost, uw kennis en kunde op dit gebied aangeeft, in welk land u de innovatie wilt ontwikkelen en wie uw beoogde lokale samenwerkingspartners zijn of hoe u deze partners wilt vinden. Op basis van dit "A4-tje" krijgt u bericht of wij uw idee kansrijk achten en of u een offerte in kunt dienen voor fase 1.

## 12. Planning

<b>Openstelling tender</b>	29 januari 2021
<b>Informatiebijeenkomsten via webex</b>	8 februari 2021 om 10.00 uur 22 feb 2021 om 15.00 uur
<b>Sluiting inschrijven via A4-tjes</b>	1 maart 2021 om 10.00 uur
<b>Terugkoppeling A4-tjes en evt. verzoek indienen voorstel fase 1</b>	9 maart 2021
<b>Sluiting indienen fase 1 offertes</b>  NB. U kunt starten met het fase 1 project vanaf de datum dat de fase 1 offerte bij RVO is ingediend. Let er wel op dat deze kosten voor eigen rekening komen, als de opdracht niet aan u wordt gegund.	1 april 2021 om 16.00 uur
<b>Beoordelingscommissievergadering</b>	eind april
<b>Bekendmaking uitslag</b>  NB. U kunt starten met het fase 1 project vanaf de datum dat de fase 1 offerte bij RVO is ingediend.	begin mei 2021
<b>Opdrachtverstrekking fase 1</b>	medio mei 2021
<b>(Virtuele) bedrijfsbezoeken</b>	zomer 2021
<b>Einddatum haalbaarheidsrapport / Offerte fase 2</b>  NB. U kunt starten met het fase 2 project vanaf de datum dat de fase 2 offerte bij RVO is ingediend. Let er wel op dat deze kosten voor eigen rekening komen, als de opdracht niet aan u wordt gegund.	14 oktober 2021
<b>Beoordelingscommissievergadering</b>	begin november 2021
<b>Bekendmaking uitslag fase 2</b>  NB. U kunt starten met het fase 2 project vanaf de datum dat de fase 2 offerte bij RVO is ingediend.	medio november 2021
<b>Opdrachtverstrekking fase 2</b>	eind november 2021
<b>Deadline eindrapport fase 2</b>	30 november 2023

RVO behoudt zich het recht voor om bijgevoegd tijdsplan indien nodig aan te passen. Dit zal tijdig aan (potentiële) opdrachtnemers worden gecommuniceerd.