



Question and Answers

SBIR in Developing Markets “Innovations for Women’s Health in Africa”
Benin, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Uganda and South-Africa (*to be confirmed*)

Version 1.0, 3 April 2026

This document contains the questions and answers from the information meeting on 31 March 2026, and which were received by e-mail.

	Question	Answer
1.	Is there a specific scope of age of the women?	We look at adult women. It depends on how you frame the specific challenge within one of the three given themes for the solution that you have. It is up to the applicant to decide which age-related problem will be tackled if this applies.
2.	What is seen as personal care products vs. medical products?	In this call we focus on products for women that are related to the health care system in the country e.g. medical treatment, monitoring, better diagnostics, prevention of diseases, etc. “Personal health care products” as mentioned in this call are products for women prescribed by health professionals to treat or prevent ailments.
3.	Is point-of care infectious disease diagnostics more a topic for theme 1?	There is some overlap between the themes. It is up to the applicant to make clear in which theme the proposed idea will fit best. That is how it will be assessed.
4.	Should the solution be hardware projects combined with AI?	We are looking for products, services, and approaches that are innovative. This could include hardware and AI. Please take into account the time and budget given for the type of innovation you are looking at. Any innovation you come up with should be feasible within that time and budget frame.
5.	Is a food supplement (specific for pregnant women) considering a medicine or not and fitting for this SBIR?	See question 2 above. If prescribed by health professionals for individual cases, it is. And if it is difficult to obtain for women. Projects focussed on fortifying food products like bread are excluded. Innovations improving availability and administration of supplements for medical treatments (like iron deficiency) can be included if it is an innovation
6.	Is an innovation overlapping multiple themes seen as an advantage?	No, overlap in themes is not a goal; it’s about the total impact you can make with your innovation.
7.	Within theme 1, how broadly does RVO interpret the concept of a ‘prototype’? Would a validated clinical workflow or decision-support instrument for primary or community care settings be considered a suitable prototype outcome, alongside more tangible medical products?”	The prototype should be a product, process, or service you develop, and test, which can be turned into a business case. Furthermore, the prototype should be something new (innovative), which means that there should be sufficient research and development (R&D) needed, which also implies the possibility of failing during the research and development phase.



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8.	Theme 2 seems to exclude diagnostic innovations for infectious disease, is that correct?	No, diagnostic innovations are not excluded.
9.	Will you also publish the presentation slides of the information session?	Yes, we will share the presentation on Tendered. https://www.tendered.nl/aankondigingen/overzicht/416848
10.	Are the questions from the Expression of Interest form available somewhere outside the form so they can be reviewed and prepared in advance?	Yes, they are available. We will send them with the presentation slides.
11.	Could you clarify whether this falls under the European subsidy regulation (staatssteunregels)?	No there is no "staatssteun", because this is not a subsidy program, but procurement. You will receive a contract from us.
12.	How does the funding work? What types of things are financed and at what percentage subsidy?	SBIR in DM is a procurement; it is not a subsidy program and there is no co-financing. You submit a bid in which you state what you will do against what price. The budget has to be specified so the committee can assess what the price/quality ratio is. And whether it corresponds with your plan (for instance, if you state that local partners are very important, but you do not provide them with a sufficient budget, the committee might conclude that they are not really involved).
13.	Would contextualize and co-creation of a working product/technology/service in the Western setting with a local entrepreneur fit in this call?	It might fit within the SBIR in DM, and this depends on if the idea or proposed innovation still needs research and development. It is up to the applicant to describe what is new and what is innovative.
14.	If a solution is already developed and implemented in a European country but not yet adopted by an African based company, would this also fall under the research and development and innovation definition?	Innovation within SBIR in DM can also mean making an existing innovation suitable in a new context or country. It is important to explain why R&D is needed when an existing innovation needs to be adapted for the context and why there is still risk in doing so.
15.	What kind of applicants succeed in this innovations challenge? What kind of educational background do they have? PhD, Masters, undergrad?	The call is open for everybody who is registered as a company in the Netherlands (or Europe). We have a diverse group in this competition. We are looking for a business case linked to R&D and a new context. Therefore, it is advisable to have an all-round team that can manage all aspects of innovation. These teams have the best results.
16.	Do you offer mentoring for less experienced applicants? And are there opportunities for teaming up with other individuals?	There is no specific mentoring program, but the SBIR in DM approach is to support throughout the trajectory. It also allows you to explore, connect with other entrepreneurs who are in the call with same struggles and issues, and the SBIR in DM team can support networks and some basic questions. Finding new relevant partners is part of phase 1.



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17.	Is a Dutch Research and Technology Organisation (RTO) in combination with an African SME eligible?	Yes. The only obligation is that the bid is submitted by an entity having an EU Chamber of Commerce registration. It is advisable to have an all-round team that can manage all aspects of innovation and business development.
18.	Who should be the main contractor? Is this always the developer/entrepreneur? Can they also form a consortium with research and other (incl. local) partners?	SBIR in DM is a procurement programme, not a subsidy programme. The entity that submits the bid is the main contractor and responsible for fulfilling the terms of the contract (in case this is awarded). The only condition is that this entity has an KvK or EU Chamber of Commerce registration number before the contract is signed for phase 1. The committee would assess if the partners involved are able to successfully implement the innovation offered in the bid. And have a stake in the results. We expect to see co-creation processes in which all partners contribute and benefit one way or the other.
19.	In the SBIR in DM Innovation Challenges, local companies were initially in the lead of the innovation and Dutch companies were linked to them. For this SBIR innovation competition, are Dutch entrepreneurs fully in the lead?	The Dutch or European organization can submit an Expression of Interest and is our formal point of contact.
20.	Can you submit this SBIR if you have been awarded a SBIR contract before?	Yes, this is possible if this is another innovation. Double funding for the same innovation simultaneously is not allowed.
21.	Is it possible to do feasibility in a Western European context?	There are no strict prescriptions on how to do the feasibility study, but there should be clear evidence gathered on the SBIR criteria that will be assessed by the selection committee. It is up to the applicant to provide a convincing plan. Feasibility studies are often carried out locally also for the sake of building on contacts.
22.	Previously, a business model on how to get deployment and scale was very important. Is that still important or is it more about impact and integration in Public Health Systems existing structures because this call is focused on a public domain?	We always work from a societal issue, with a link to the public domain and a viable business case. The economic perspective and the business case are still very relevant. The focus for now is on the procedure of the Expression of Interest and the fit within the framework. We expect that there are no specific details on a business case yet to share. The participants who will receive a bid request will receive all the information about the SBIR in DM. All the information about the business case and how this will be assessed is written in the call.
23.	Where can I find the call, the link to the EoI and accompanying documents on TenderNed?	Link to the EoI: https://enquetes.pleio.nl/index.php/931584 Link to TenderNed: https://www.tenderned.nl/aankondigingen/overzicht/416848 The EoI link is given in the document of the call.
24.	Is there any limit of EoIs per team? Can we apply to more than one theme with different projects in parallel?	Yes, there is a limit of 2 EoIs per applicant. Keep in mind that you need enough resources (capacity and finances) to handle more projects at the same time.



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25.	Is the Expression of Interest round seen as a go/no-go moment?	To enter the SBIR competition, you first need to register your idea or intended innovation with an Expression of Interest. It is a first selection method within the SBIR in DM competition. The best fitting EoI's, with a maximum of 40, will be asked to send in a bid. You can't get a bid request for phase 1 if you don't hand in an expression of interest.
26.	EoI and initial screening: What are the selection criteria for the projects based on the EoI? What is the level of detail you expecting in the EoI? For example, regarding the partners, technical details about the solution and the team involved in the work?	<p>Selection criteria for the EoI: Does the idea fit in the call? Did you select a country and one of the three themes? It should be an innovation requiring R&D.</p> <p>Not much detail is asked. Important to mention: state what you are going to do. Not a high-over analysis of the challenge in general. If you already have partners: name them. If not: just state that you will name them in your phase 1 bid or select them during phase 1. Technical details: very briefly indicate why R&D is still required.</p>
27.	Are similar ideas in the Expression of Interests (EoI's) phase asked to collaborate, or does RVO link to the partners?	No, we look at all the proposed EoI's individually. We don't combine them ourselves. Once the entrepreneurs are in phase 1, they are free to decide to work together in parallel projects.
28.	What happens when there are similar projects from different countries?	Each project will be scored individually and on its own merits.
29.	Does SBIR provide a list of potential partners in the target countries and/or provide help connecting to them?	No, we expect you to find partner(s) yourself, preferably as soon as possible in the process. If you really do not know where to start, please contact us for our networks. Some embassies have contacts as well; we can check that for you. You can use phase 1 to select a partner for the actual R&D in phase 2.
30.	Is it possible to combine multiple themes in one project? If so, is allowed to increase the project budget due to the combination of multiple themes?	You can send in more than one EoI and a maximum of 2, but each EoI connected to one theme. These ideas should all be able to proceed independently. If you are invited to send in a bid for phase 1, you need in addition convince the assessment committee that you have the capacity to implement each of them. The maximum budget applies for each bid. So no combinations.
31.	Should the African partner be an SME, and is full commitment of the African partner necessary at EoI stage?	No. Partners are not mandatory nor the type of partner. The committee will assess your phase 1 and phase 2 bid for your capacity and validation to achieve the intended results. From experience, this is only possible with the right partners. Full commitment is not necessary for EoI. We only assess if the EoI fits in the call, is an innovation and needs R&D.
32.	Is there a minimum and/or maximum amount of funding per project? And is there a minimum co-funding percentage?	<p>Yes, as mentioned in the call. You bring out a bid up to a maximum. There is no minimum.</p> <p>SBIR is not a subsidy programme, so no co-funding required. You compete also on price, so it is advised not to maximise costs.</p> <p>Note: your costs can be higher than the price you offer it for.</p>



	Question	Answer
33.	What are the qualification criteria for companies submitting to the call? Is a specific % NL ownership required for example?	The only obligation is that the bid is submitted by an entity having an EU CoC (KvK) registration. Dutch entities are preferred but cannot be given priority.
34.	Can you tell me more about the selection committee? Will they be constant throughout all phases of evaluation?	We normally aim to have the same committee formation of selected external experts for phase 1 and 2. Usually this works. RVO is chairing the committee and will make sure there is consistency in the assessment and expertise.