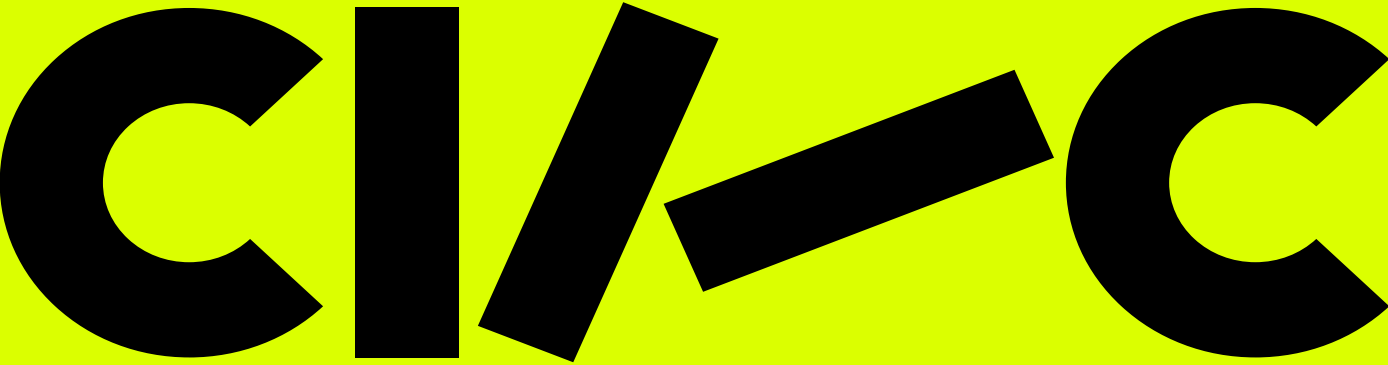


Q&A: IX LABS



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IX Labs Q&A (English)

This document contains an overview of all submitted questions and corresponding answers submitted in preparation for the opening of the CIIC IX-labs scheme. Please note that the final text of the call has not yet been published. These answers have been formulated with the utmost care; however, they may differ from the final call text/conditions.

Party Registration

What evidence does the committee require for consortium capacity: reference projects (½ A4), facilities list (1 A4), CVs (max. 3)—are templates available?

This follows upon registration; it serves as a qualification requirement.

Assessment

Are there guidelines for CO₂/e-waste sections (XR/AI energy use, scarce metals, hardware circularity) and what substantiation is 'sufficient'?

This is one of the aspects included and scored in the assessment model; this will be clear when the final call is published. Regarding sustainability of IX labs, reference is made to the resilience/self-sufficiency of an IX lab in the future, especially when support from CIIC ends because the CIIC program has concluded.

How is inclusive participation tested (target group diversity, accessibility, test panels beyond the 'usual suspects')?

This is one of the aspects included and scored in the assessment model; this will be clear when the final call is published. Regarding sustainability of IX labs, reference is made to the resilience/self-sufficiency of an IX lab. We also refer to the Code Diversity & Inclusion (<https://codedi.nl/>) for inspiration.

How should risks (technical, organizational, public values/regulations) and mitigations be quantified to qualify as 'robust'?

In the assessment of proposals, risk management is requested among other things; the better a party has developed and substantiated this, the higher the rating will be; the final assessment can be found when the call appears.

What is meant by 'effectiveness' in scoring: % occupancy, cost per reached user, private leverage, ratio new vs. existing assets?

Parties will realize a facility based on a plan for which they request a cost contribution. That facility must be operated long-term for a target group; effectiveness is assessed through criteria including "Sustainable Business Model" and "Effectiveness of Financial Deployment"; the impact goal of the CIIC program is that the facility is used to support the IX community in developing solutions for societal issues and contributes to the earning capacity of parties providing these services and products based on public values principles; The sharper the picture of which investments and activities are needed to support these parties in a targeted manner, the better the effectiveness of deployed resources will yield; we therefore expect parties to invest and develop, make available and promote facilities in a targeted manner so that they are actually used and continue to exist, even when the CIIC program ends. The assessment follows from the assessment model.

Can you confirm the threshold and weighting methodology (6 main criteria, total threshold 60%, minimum score per criterion)? How is ranking done with >5 proposals?

The final assessment criteria will be established in the call; If there are more than 5 proposals, the proposals are expected to be ranked based on their proposal scores from high to low (proposals must have achieved at least the minimum scores on the components); based on the first possible five proposals that can offer all desired functions & activities and form a national network of IX labs (starting with forming with the highest scoring proposals); this aims for a balanced network without duplication.

AI applications in IX: what is (a) prohibited (emotion detection workplace/education, social scoring/manipulation), (b) high-risk and CE-mandatory, and (c) 'other with transparency requirements'—how does the committee process this in assessment?

This call enables a cost contribution for investing in and operating IX labs. An important starting point is endorsing Public Values in word and through activities. The risk for operation based on AI technology is for the operator itself and is expected to be included in its target group, function, business plan, risk management and ethical frameworks. The various assessment criteria (including scope/objective, sustainable business model, impact & societal embedding) provide guidance for the evaluation committee to assess proposals that fall outside the desired scope differently. For reference to the Public Values guideline: see <https://www.ciiic.nl/stories/renewed-guideline-and-self-test-public-values-in-immersive-experiences>

How is complementarity across the 5 selected labs maximized in selection (coverage of framework functions; regional specializations)?

The final assessment criteria will be established in the call; If there are more than 5 proposals, the proposals are expected to be ranked based on their proposal scores from high to low (proposals must have achieved at least the minimum scores on the components); based on the first possible five proposals that can offer all desired functions & activities and form a national network of IX labs (starting with forming with the highest scoring proposals); this aims for a balanced and distributed network without duplication.

How heavily do cultural and societal functions weigh compared to technical facilities?

Environment and Circularity (and also sustainability/energy consumption) are included in the assessment methodology under Impact & Societal Embedding - they are an integral part of the assessment. The specific weight of these criteria in the total assessment will be made known when the final scheme is published.

CIIC

Which impact indicators (economic/ technological/societal) weigh most heavily, and how do we make the chain activity→output→outcome→impact testable?

The specific weight of these criteria in the total assessment will be made known when the final scheme is published.

Call

What are the correct documents? And what is the exact timeline? Can you publish an overview of this on the CIIC website?

This follows on the CIIC website; the expected launch date of the call is mid-October 2025.

A template would be provided for the application. Such a template is a strong guide for filling out the application and helps enormously with completing the application. When can we expect this template?

This follows on the CIIC website; the expected launch date of the call is mid-October 2025.

Co-financing

During the Q&A, the AGVV came up in relation to co-financing. Your colleague indicated that 50% private investment is needed. This seems to exclude consortia with one or more non-private parties because each must bring in their own co-financing. Given the scope of the call, this doesn't seem to be the intention and I wondered if you could clarify the rules?

Because financing of eligible costs is not complete (those percentages were explained in the sheets/consultation meeting), it is necessary that additional financing is secured by participants themselves or by third parties; being the co-financing. Co-financing may be in-kind and in-cash (funds). Co-financing may contain public money within the frameworks of the AGVV, but the total aid must meet the conditions of the General Block Exemption Regulation (AGVV) and national state aid rules. It is crucial that the advantage received by the company does not exceed the maximum aid intensity and that the aid contributes to the AGVV policy objectives. Because the maximum aid intensity is 50%, public funds can only be used very limitedly (the difference between 47.4% and 50% aid). In our view, we do not exclude anyone from participation: participants who do not bring in private investments in cash can still contribute in-kind themselves. A common practical example: if a participant participates for 100 hours according to an allowed hourly rate in a relevant activity, then 47.4% of those costs are reimbursed by CIIIC AL3.1. The participant bears the other costs themselves. Then this participant meets the co-financing conditions with an in-kind contribution, even without a private investment. The AGVV exception and thus co-financing is only necessary for the economic part of the activities.

Do in-kind and in-cash contributions from universities and colleges count as co-financing for the labs, or not? And in-kind and in-cash contributions from Beeld & Geluid? And in-kind and in-cash contributions from MBO?

At its core, activities or parts eligible for reimbursement are partially subsidized - the part that is not financed must be provided through own

contribution. That part cannot be compensated by other activities. The question is mainly what the co-financing is provided for; in principle, it is important to provide the in-kind contribution for the activity carried out under the subsidy (and not through other activities not eligible for subsidy in this scheme).

The frameworks/regulations relevant for CIIC IX labs are the conditions of the National Growth Fund <https://www.rvo.nl/subsidies-financing/subsidy-scheme-national-growth-fund/conditions> and General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER), particularly paragraph 27, which regulates the possibility for aid to operate innovation clusters. The GBER applies exclusively to so-called 'economic activities'. The purpose of the GBER is to safeguard aid to economic activities, so they don't necessarily have to be considered state aid and European member states are encouraged to promote economic growth. Non-economic activities, such as typical government tasks or purely social services, fall outside the scope of state aid rules and thus also of the GBER. Expanding and operating IX labs in CIIC is an economic activity, and the GBER allows a maximum aid intensity of 50% (maximum half of eligible costs may be financed with government money). That's what this is specifically about. 'Government money' means the subsidy that CIIC makes available, but also any supplements from other sources that are government funds. In other words, stacking government funds (subsidies or other 'tax money') to more than 50% is not allowed by the GBER. We interpret the whole as follows (with a reservation: we provide clarity after confirmation by our state aid specialists): Every organization, both public and private, can contribute in kind to participation in CIIC AL3.1. We expect this form to be chosen frequently. A private organization can also contribute its own resources (cash) to cover its own costs. We expect this form to be chosen limitedly.

Examples of acceptable co-financing (in-cash vs. in-kind) and the evidence per type?

This is explained in the requested substantiation of own contribution and supporting documents can be added:

- In Cash co-financing: (1) own resources, 2) private investor, 3) Loan (without state aid), 4) Pre-financing based on contracts
- In Kind Co-financing: (1) labor, 2) use of equipment, 3) use of buildings, 4) unpaid student deployment, 5) Materials or raw materials

General requirements for evidence:

- Objective value determination: via market-conform rates, valuations or benchmarks.
- Verifiability: everything must be verifiable for the subsidy provider or audit.
- Project-related: the contribution must be direct and exclusively for the project.
- No double financing: the contribution may not already be covered via other aid.

How exactly may co-financing be contributed:

- May provincial contributions count under GBER (Art. 25/26/27)?
We believe this should be possible, it's not all economic certainly not our educational institutions

Under GBER 27, no more than 50% aid may be provided; this call reimburses 47.4%; so there is (some) room to reach 50% state aid from other programs/public sources. Note: for example, Horizon funds are also public funds. The GBER makes it possible for member states to provide aid for innovation, environment and training, among others, and this aid can in certain cases be combined with funds from Horizon programs, provided that the applicable rules for state aid and double financing are met.

Are contributions from universities/colleges (staff, facilities) allowed as in-kind?

Contributions from universities and colleges in the form of staff and facilities can be listed as in-kind co-financing under certain conditions within a project falling under GBER Article 27 (regional investment aid). This is permitted, provided the general requirements of the GBER are met (Max 50% aid). Under GBER 27, no more than 50% aid may be provided; this call reimburses 47.4%; so there is (some) room to reach 50% state aid from other programs. Remember that all in-kind contributions must be:

- Objectively determinable (e.g., via market-conform rates or valuations)
- Verifiable (e.g., via contracts, registrations, agreements)
- Project-related (exclusively for the subsidized project)
- Not previously subsidized via other aid measures

If the university or college is a public institution, it must be verified that the contribution does not constitute indirect state aid to the company carrying out the project. This is usually not a problem if the contribution is valued at market rates and accounted for transparently. Record all contributions in a cooperation agreement or memorandum of understanding. Use a valuation methodology that aligns with common rates (e.g., hourly rate for researchers, rental value for facilities). Ensure accounting separation between educational activities and project contributions.

How is stacking of subsidies assessed, e.g., when partners also have ERDF, MIT or Horizon projects running?

Under GBER 27, no more than 50% aid may be provided; this call reimburses 47.4%; so there is (some) room to reach 50% state aid from other programs.

May rent for a new lab location count as co-financing?

Rental costs can be included as eligible costs under certain circumstances. In the context of investment aid, rental costs of real estate may be eligible, provided:

- The rental term is minimum 5 years for large companies, or 3 years for SMEs
- The rented real estate is used exclusively for the project
- No ownership transfer takes place (so no purchase option)

Not eligible if...

- The rental costs cannot be directly attributed to the project
- It concerns operational costs outside the context of a recognized aid measure
- The rental costs are covered by other forms of aid (cumulation limitation)

A rental discount that a company receives from the property owner in the context of a project for which the company wants to use GBER Article 27 (regional investment aid) can be considered co-financing under conditions - but this requires nuance.

All eligible costs (such as rental of real estate) must be made objectively determinable and verifiable. The aid intensity (the

percentage of eligible costs covered by government aid) may not be exceeded. Contributions from third parties (such as a discount from a landlord) can count as private co-financing, provided they are demonstrable and do not contain another form of state aid.

When does a rental discount count as co-financing? A rental discount can be considered co-financing if the following conditions are met:

- The discount is transparent and recorded in writing in the rental agreement.
- The discount is market-conform and not the result of another (hidden) form of state aid.
- The discount is granted by a private party (the landlord) and not by a government institution.
- The discount does not reduce the eligible costs but is considered a contribution from third parties to the project.

How can existing labs be included (for example digital twin lab, existing studios) where CIIC activities are carried out. Can these be included as co-financing?

At its core, we are looking for new IX facilities; that is the scope of this call; Investment and support in operation can be made in these; existing facilities already exist and have already been financed - and fall outside the scope of the call. Various other CIIC programs and calls will be started in the coming period that can make use of these and existing facilities; the point is that the operation of the new facilities becomes healthy.

- Depreciation of existing assets is not eligible under Article 27.
- Double financing (for example, previous subsidy on the same building) is not allowed.

Under Article 27 of the GBER, existing facilities (such as buildings or installations) can only be included as eligible costs under specific conditions.

1. Existing facilities as part of an investment Existing facilities can be included as:
2. Purchase of existing real estate (such as a building or land)
3. Rental of existing real estate (such as business premises)

But only if:

- The facility is used exclusively for the project for which aid is requested
- The facility has not been previously financed with government aid, unless that aid has been fully depreciated
- The costs are market-conform and can be well substantiated
- Specific conditions for existing assets For the purchase of existing buildings or installations:
- The purchase price must be determined based on an independent valuation
- The assets may not have been previously financed with state aid, unless this has been fully depreciated
- The assets must be technically suitable for the project

For rental of existing buildings:

- The rent must have a minimum term (5 years for large companies, 3 years for SMEs)
- The rental costs must relate exclusively to the project
- Renovation or reuse of existing facilities If an existing facility is converted or adapted for the project, the adaptation costs may be eligible, provided:
- The adaptation leads to a sustainable improvement of the facility
- The costs are demonstrable and directly attributable to the project

Is it correct that municipalities and provinces cannot directly contribute in cash to co-financing (because otherwise the 50% share of state aid would be exceeded?).

Under GBER 27, no more than 50% aid may be provided; this call reimburses 47.4%; so there is (some) room to reach 50% state aid from other programs.

Could municipalities and provinces in principle contribute if they obtain that money from Europe (via an EU subsidy project)?

No, that is also a form of state aid. To clarify; those are also public funds and to that extent not co-financing.

Is it correct that co-financing (in cash) can come from universities, other colleges, industry, (groups of) private investors?

Yes, that's correct.

From the meeting transcript it seemed that all partners have the same co-financing ratio. Is that correct? Is it correct that this also depends on how the collaboration is configured? In the case of a consortium that is so, in the case of a single applicant (with cooperation agreements) not?

The way the consortium is configured and which parties it consists of is not relevant for this call; since the type of activity determines the amount of the subsidy; this is the same for everyone and set at 47.7%.

When we rent a location that is offered below market price. Can this difference be listed as co-financing?

A rental discount that a company receives from the property owner in the context of a project for which the company wants to use GBER Article 27 (regional investment aid) can be considered co-financing under conditions - but this requires nuance.

All eligible costs (such as rental of real estate) must be made objectively determinable and verifiable. The aid intensity (the percentage of eligible costs covered by government aid) may not be exceeded. Contributions from third parties (such as a discount from a landlord) can count as private co-financing, provided they are demonstrable and do not contain another form of state aid.

A rental discount can be considered co-financing if the following conditions are met:

- The discount is transparent and recorded in writing in the rental agreement.
- The discount is market-conform and not the result of another (hidden) form of state aid.
- The discount is granted by a private party (the landlord) and not by a government institution.
- The discount does not reduce the eligible costs but is considered a contribution from third parties to the project.

If the landlord is a government institution, the discount itself can be considered state aid, which can create cumulation problems. The discount may not lead to exceeding the maximum aid intensity.

Clearly record the rental discount in the project administration and ensure that it:

- Is verifiable for the subsidy provider
- Does not lead to double subsidization
- Fits within the aid intensity limits

Can the depreciation of investments in buildings and technical infrastructure be listed as co-financing?

Depreciation of existing assets is not eligible under Article 27.

Can students, in experience positions but unpaid, be listed as part of the in-kind co-financing?

Including students in experience positions (unpaid) as in-kind co-financing under GBER Article 27 is not excluded, but requires careful substantiation.

Students in experience positions may possibly be listed as in-kind contribution if:

- The students' activities are directly and demonstrably connected to the project for which aid is requested.

- The value of their contribution is objectively determinable, for example based on a market-conform hourly rate for comparable activities.
- The deployment is well documented, for example via time registration, internship agreements or supervision reports.
- The students are not listed as costs elsewhere (for example via another subsidy).

Points of attention and risks:

- Because students are not paid, there is no direct cost price. The value must therefore be estimated, which is vulnerable during inspection.
- The European Commission states that in-kind contributions are only eligible if they are verifiable, transparent and market-conform (see Article 7 GBER).
- If students are deployed via an educational institution, it must be verified that this does not lead to hidden state aid to that institution.
- Use a conservative estimate of the value (e.g., minimum wage or trainee rate).
- Record student deployment contractually or administratively.
- Include the contribution as private in-kind co-financing, not as eligible costs for the aid intensity.

Can purchase of infrastructure based on an EU subsidy (e.g., Horizon Europe) be listed as co-financing?

Under the GBER (General Block Exemption Regulation), clear rules apply for maximum aid intensity and cumulation of aid, also when there is co-financing via EU subsidies such as Horizon Europe. So no more than 50% subsidy may be provided in total. Purchase of infrastructure based on an EU subsidy, such as via Horizon Europe, can be listed as co-financing under conditions within a project using GBER Article 27.

According to the GBER extension in 2021 and 2023, it is possible to:

Combine national aid with EU subsidies from programs such as Horizon Europe, InvestEU and Interreg, without notification requirement to the European Commission. Infrastructure purchased with EU funds may be listed as in-kind co-financing, provided:

The infrastructure is used exclusively for the subsidized project.

- The value of the infrastructure is objectively determinable (e.g., via invoices, valuations).
- No double financing occurs for the same costs (cumulation prohibition GBER Article 8).
- If the EU subsidy has already financed the purchase, it may not be listed again as eligible costs under GBER. However, the value may be used as in-kind contribution in the co-financing mix.

The infrastructure must:

- Be traceable in the project administration
- Be attributed to the GBER project
- Not be previously depreciated or out of use

Incentive effect required The GBER requires that the aid has an incentive effect: the infrastructure must contribute to new economic activity in the aid area.

Can purchase of infrastructure based on direct financing from the HBO institution or as a subsidy from OCW be listed as co-financing (I suspect not but want to have it clear).

Infrastructure purchased with direct financing from a university of applied sciences (HBO institution) or via a subsidy from the Ministry of OCW can be listed as in-kind co-financing under conditions within a project falling under GBER Article 27.

Permitted contribution as co-financing: Direct investment by HBO institution If a university finances infrastructure itself (e.g., laboratory equipment, buildings), and this infrastructure is used exclusively and demonstrably for the GBER project, then the market value or depreciation value may be listed as in-kind co-financing.

OCW subsidy for infrastructure If the infrastructure is financed via an OCW subsidy, then:

The subsidy may not already be designated as state aid for the project for which GBER aid is requested. The infrastructure must be objectively valuable and verifiable in the project administration. No double financing may occur for the same costs (see GBER Article 8 on cumulation).

Important conditions:

- Economic activity required: The infrastructure must be used for an activity falling under the GBER, such as regional investment aid, innovation or training.
- No fundamental research: Pure academic infrastructure without economic application falls outside the GBER.
- Transparency and documentation: The value of the infrastructure must be substantiated with:
 - Purchase invoices or valuations
 - Use agreements
 - Accounting processing

If this is asking about the possibility to use purchases as co-financing if that purchase is financed from the lump sum? Those are public funds.

What form of guarantee will have to be provided for the co-financing (in cash or in kind).

The subsidy provider has clear requirements for the evidence and reliability of co-financing, both in-cash and in-kind. In the context of the GBER, "guarantee" mainly means:

1. Demonstrability and verifiability

The co-financing must be objectively determinable. There must be documentation confirming the value and deployment. For in-kind contributions: valuation must be market-conform.

1. Attributability to the project The contribution must directly and exclusively benefit the subsidized project. There may be no double counting with other aid sources.
2. No dependence on uncertain factors Co-financing may not depend on future, uncertain income. Only already committed or realized funds are allowed.

This evidence must be able to be submitted to the subsidy provider upon application and must therefore be sufficiently available or clear that it will become available within the foreseeable term during assessment.

Can income streams from the new lab (which cannot be guaranteed but can be forecasted) be used as co-financing?

Income streams that are forecasted (i.e., expected but not yet realized) cannot simply be listed as co-financing under GBER Article 27. The GBER sets strict requirements for the verifiability, transparency and certainty of co-financing. Why forecast income is problematic as co-financing:

No realized value Forecasts are based on assumptions and scenarios, and thus do not constitute hard financial contribution.

Not verifiable The European Commission requires that co-financing be verifiable upon inspection. Projected income is not.

No in-kind or cash contribution Co-financing must consist of:

- Own resources (cash)
- In-kind contributions (such as labor, equipment, buildings)
- Private contributions from third parties → Forecast income falls outside these categories.

Already committed contracts or assignments (e.g., letters of intent with customers) can sometimes serve as substantiation for the viability of the project, but not as co-financing. Pre-financing based on expected income can be used, provided the risk lies with the applicant and the financing is demonstrable.

May part of government money be used? This question was asked at the online meeting but unfortunately has not yet led to clarity. As you know, we from the Province of South Holland and the Municipality of Rotterdam are working on co-financing from other sources to give the SHINE community a solid foundation. This construction is based on previous conversations with you. Can you provide more explanation about this?

There are different ways in which government money can be used, but the space for this is limited (given the stacking of aid up to maximum 50%).

Can know-how also be translated into wage costs?

No, know-how is not a value that is eligible as an activity.

To what extent may existing facilities be contributed as in-kind contribution?

Existing facilities can be contributed as in-kind co-financing under GBER Article 27, provided a number of strict conditions are met. The GBER provides scope for such contributions, but requires transparency, verifiability and project-relatedness.

Permitted contribution of existing facilities as in-kind co-financing
Examples:

- Buildings: existing laboratories, workshops, office spaces
- Equipment: machines, measuring instruments, ICT infrastructure
- Installations: energy supplies, networks, technical systems

Conditions according to the GBER

- Objective value determination The value of the facility must be determined via market-conform valuation or depreciation schedule. The valuation must be based on use for the project, not on book value.
- Project-related deployment The facility must be used exclusively or demonstrably largely for the subsidized project. Temporary or shared deployment requires proportional attribution of value.
- No previous state aid The facility may not have been previously financed with state aid, unless that aid has been fully depreciated.
- Verifiability There must be documentation: ownership certificates, use agreements, valuations, depreciation schedules. The subsidy provider must be able to verify and audit the contribution.
- No double counting The value may not be listed as both eligible costs and co-financing.
- Specific attention for public institutions If the facility is owned by a university, college or other public party, it must be demonstrated that:

- The contribution does not constitute indirect state aid to the company.
- The valuation is market-conform and does not lead to exceeding the aid intensity.

Consortia

Can consortia with federated models participate just as well as one physical location? So multiple locations.

This is possible.

Consortium

To what extent is the applicant/lead partner assessed? We have larger and smaller parties in our consortium, does it matter who is lead partner in the assessment?

The proposal is assessed; the model for this is described in the assessment criterion (team, organization and cooperation) (which appears upon publication of the call).

Consortium/Parties

Is private participation and co-financing mandatory within a consortium? As in: can a consortium of only knowledge institutions receive funding (of course if they meet all co-financing rules)?

There is no restriction on the type of participants. A consortium of only knowledge institutions can also meet all conditions for participation. However, keep in mind that economic sustainability of IX labs is considered (these are economic activities being performed). It could be that this is more challenging for a knowledge institution such as an MBO/HBO or WO institution without (cooperation with) a private party.

Dialogue Phase

Complete timeline and intensity of the dialogue phase (Nov–early Jan) including interaction moments and expected hours commitment?

The dialogue phase is a phase in which coordination can take place in various ways with TNO and other parties (depending on need); The dialogue phase ends when parties are able to make a good proposal; we expect that in the dialogue phase joint and individual coordination must take place to arrive at a good basis and confidence in the proposal and the network of IX labs - and perhaps clarity must be provided from TNO about how all mandatory components must be completed. (For many parties it is the first time such a process is gone through); we therefore ask and expect commitment from participating parties to arrive at a good proposal; the estimated coordination with TNO is approximately 1 half-day per week (apart from the substantive development of the proposal by parties themselves) - we expect parties to make sufficient substantive progress in developing and coordinating the plan. At the same time, we want to give parties the space to make their own considered choices. The process formally ends when everyone is able to arrive at a full proposal. We then provide a deadline for submitting the final plans.

Dialogue Round

What exactly is the approach of the Dialogue rounds?

In the dialogue round, parties can engage in conversation with TNO, but also with each other; to prevent only isolated plans being made by submitters and ultimately insufficient coordination taking place to realize a national network of complementary IX labs, it is important to explore expectations about cooperation between IX labs. In doing so, we from TNO do not direct what everyone should do, but we do facilitate that exchange between parties. In addition, the cooperation agreement is coordinated, parties are supported in completing their proposal/filling in the templates - it is a constructive phase in which the selected participants thus still in 1-1 dialogue with TNO, but also with others; can develop and sharpen their plans.

Various (financing & parties/ consortium)

Is *** (organization name) eligible under this call/invitation?

Matching funding => Is it possible to use existing (purchased) equipment as matching funding? What qualifies as co-financing? What is financed by this call? Hardware, software, people? Thematic labs => Are thematic labs welcome? Is it wise to emphasize the (thematic) strength of the region? How important is it to have makers and/or companies in the consortium? They belong to the target groups. What position would a municipality have in the consortium? Is it mandatory? Does it make the consortium stronger, or is it better to focus on technical infrastructure partners and have the municipality function as a supporting party?

Yes. Not impossible, but quite difficult; in principle we are looking for (new) investments in new facilities. See the presentation we showed during the consultation for details on this subject. We see diversification as an advantage (rather than duplication of the same IX lab facilities). The actual thematic labs are the subject of AL3.3 (thematic IX labs) - the AL3.1 calls focus on expanding existing, larger facilities to a network of regional IX labs. The intended users of IX labs are not eligible for funding; this only applies to owners or operators of IX labs. However, it is a strength if market parties/potential users are willing to invest or use the lab at market prices; this shows that you understand their needs and can build a sustainable business model. A municipality would not be a logical partner; only owners or operators of IX labs are expected (because they are the only parties eligible for funding).

Operation

Which evidence for market validation weighs most heavily (LOIs/contracts, price models, occupancy rate, recurring revenue via services)?

The IX lab must be able to develop a demonstrable business case to continue to exist in the long term. The substantiation of this is assessed by the evaluation committee and weighs into the assessment of the proposal. It must be clearly substantiated what market-conform (cost)

price is foreseen for the use of IX labs and based on which assumptions a turnover expectation is estimated for the operation of the IX Lab.

How is 'able to exist independently after CIIC' tested—do you require scenarios/sensitivity analyses and multi-stream income (public/private)?

Participating parties are expected to be able to make a realistic turnover budget and operating budget, so that it can be demonstrated that after CIIC ends, the IX Lab remains sustainably available for the sector. Part of this includes being able to determine rates for access to the IX lab and insight into expected use.

What requirements apply for the sustainable business case after 2029 (thresholds, payback model, minimum own income)?

The IX lab must be able to develop a demonstrable business case to continue to exist in the long term. The substantiation of this is assessed by the evaluation committee and weighs into the assessment of the proposal. It must be clearly substantiated what market-conform (cost) price is foreseen for the use of IX labs and based on which assumptions a turnover expectation is estimated for the operation of the IX Lab.

Financing

What is the minimum subsidy per party? In the preliminary announcement you mention an amount of 125k (± 250 k project size). Do you mean 125k per year or for the entire duration? I assumed the former but don't see this clearly reflected in the text.

The 125K subsidy applies as a lower limit for all participants (individually) during the entire program. Note: in the event that the entire CIIC program would have to stop after 3 years (and thus the last 2 years would not receive GO from the National Growth Fund), this applies unchanged. This implies that each participant submits an accountant's check upon completion. This audit statement confirms compliance with the subsidy conditions. Given the ambition to achieve

a nationally comprehensive network of IX labs, the expectation is that this lower limit will be easily achieved.

What is the maximum subsidy that each type of participant in an IX Lab can receive? For example, are there different maximum percentages for large and small companies?

The maximum aid for this call is 47.4% regardless of the type of applicant.

It has been emphasized that this call is not for research, but for infrastructure and operation.

→ Can we get clear examples of eligible/ineligible activities? (e.g., hosting events, guidance of external projects, tech challenges). With in-kind hours, this will have quite an impact if no substantive programs can be done.

This call excludes research; consider that in the CIIC program more than 30 short-term practice-oriented research projects for SMEs, 200 short-term practice-oriented research projects focused on methods and applications, 5 sub-programs in collaboration with artists and researchers, 360 feasibility studies and 180 prototype projects, 30 training modules and programs (with 10,000 training vouchers) and 12 learning communities will be started; All these programs, research and studies and communities can use the IX labs & facilities and can contribute to make them of added value. In the call, four types of activities will be eligible for reimbursement: 1) management & organization 2) marketing, 3) cooperation (with other IX labs) 4) knowledge transfer (aimed at awareness of the IX lab).

In the SIA NWO scheme for universities of applied sciences, companies also contribute in-kind and in-cash under the SPRONG scheme, universities receive the subsidy. How does this relate to CIIC AL3.1?

We don't know all the details of other schemes, but the starting point of CIIC AL3.1 is GBER 27. According to that framework, it is not allowed to provide an aid intensity from public funds above 50%.

Registration/Application

What are the exact submission requirements: registration form + export restrictions, 'no undertaking in difficulty', mandatory Public Values Self-Test? (Checklist desired.)

This is correct; final requirements follow in the call. The public values self-test can be found at <https://www.ciiic.nl/over-ciiic/publieke-waarden>

Templates available for: facilities list (1 A4), reference project (½ A4), CV set (max. 3), co-financing declarations?

Final requirements, templates and forms follow in the call. The public values self-test can be found at <https://www.ciiic.nl/over-ciiic/publieke-waarden>

Other

What level of concretization does the committee expect for 'The Bus', 'The Showcase', stages/stadiums and residency/tech-challenges (KPIs, reach, protocols)?

In general regarding KPIs, reach (impact) and protocols, the final call text will provide clarity. Specific affinity with "the bus" or "the showcase" does not apply.

What are expectations around DSA/NIS2/CRA compliance for portal elements or customers in vital sectors (supplier agreements, security measures)?

The expectation from CIIIC is that labs comply with all relevant regulations, including those in force in relation to cybersecurity.

How to deal with hardware from large foreign tech companies (privacy, EuroStack)?

It is up to the applicants to make a proposal for this in line with the principles of Public Values. It is not excluded to use this hardware, but it's about the overall picture and the considerations made therein.

Form requirements for reservation/use agreements within the federative model (SLAs, rates, priorities)?

The requirements for the use of a facility are up to the owner and operator. CIIC requires that offering takes place on the basis of market conformity and non-discrimination.

Is it expected that labs have already taken concrete measures regarding GDPR/AI Act/DSA/CRA, or is a plan of action sufficient?

From CIIC we ask that labs conform to public values (<https://www.ciic.nl/over-ciic/publieke-waarden>) and that they act at all times in line with all relevant requirements and applicable frameworks. So a plan of action and timeline of implementation is part of the plans being developed.

Parties/Consortium

Proven participation in a consortium leaves less room for starting parties while innovation and growth can come from there plus you stimulate growth in the sector even faster than when you heavily weigh established parties that can already largely support themselves is my first impression. I understand it for the stability of the program and the certainty around the expenditure of taxpayer subsidy. But would then weigh team very heavily.

This call AL3.1 is intended for the formation of a national network of IX Labs that must support the industry/parties in their growth ambitions &

knowledge/skills development. We are looking for partners who understand what is needed to be able to do this and can also shape this together. Starting IX labs have a place in AL3.3 where smaller/thematic labs can be set up. The final picture from the CIIC program is that you need both - the choice is to start with the larger labs as a basis. In the next phase of the CIIC program, Action Line 3.3 will also be opened, in which smaller and starting labs are asked to submit their plans.

The strength of the Triple Helix model shows that innovation is most effective when these 'three' parties work together intensively, partially overlap in roles, and take joint responsibility for economic and social progress. Is there also a weighting of this, or am I reading over it?

The IX labs call follows the line of innovation clusters and their composition can be tailored to the need; so there is a possibility to secure and connect it from a triple helix model; keep in mind that this call is intended for investments in facilities and their operation in order to obtain a sustainably functioning IX Lab; cooperation and responding to needs is therefore crucial for the long term. The way in which a participant wants to do this is free.

Is it correct that within an IX Lab proposal the following participants in the IX Lab proposal can receive subsidy:

- Operator(s) → management and organization.
- Knowledge institutions → expertise, engineers, infrastructure, frameworks.
- Companies as structural service providers → technology/ services as part of the facility.
- Educational institutions → training and education linked to the lab.
- Public/cultural organizations → activities that increase accessibility and social value of the lab.

In theory this is possible; this call gives the operator/owner an opportunity for subsidy for investment costs and operating costs; this leaves uncertain that each of the aforementioned and possibly other

organizations can take up that role; it is up to you to clarify who takes up which role and activity, brings in the co-financing and how the governance is arranged, the opening of the IX Lab and the business case is organized.

Planning

In the timeline, a 'Coherent program for 2 + 3 years; Phase 1 (2025-2027) & Phase 2 (2027-2029) (after converting conditional approval)' is mentioned. 2025 – 2029 is 4 years. Can the planning be clarified?

CIIC as a program has a duration of 5 years; Phase 1 runs from 2025-2027. Phase 2 runs from 2028-2029. Because the program started in 2025 and we expect the IX labs not to be known before the end of 2025; we therefore expect a program for the IX labs of 2+2 years.

Process

Publication and handling of Q&A: where, when, how is confidentiality secured?

Questions can be asked via Q&A; in principle, all questions with their answers are published and visible to everyone; only when it concerns a confidential question can TNO answer the question without informing the other participants; TNO itself assesses whether this does not harm the information position of other participants. If admitted as a participant to the Dialogue Phase, the answers are published in a non-publicly accessible manner (for all participants). The names of persons and organizations that have asked questions are not published.

Program

How detailed should we describe the relationship between conditional and supporting functions (incl. measuring/monitoring/portal connection)?

You must include the conditional functions; the other supporting functions are choices you can make and that you can fill in when developing your plans; you can make your own setup for your IX lab with which you think you will be of added value for the sector in the long term. As a program, we would like five IX labs that are complementary as a network and not copies of each other - which is also taken into account in the final selection of labs (when the final call text appears).

Public Values

How does CIIC expect us to operationally secure the seven Public Values in lab processes and test design (intake, design, test, operation)?

This is one of the aspects included and scored in the assessment model; this will be clear when the final call is published. It is up to the organization itself to develop a vision on PV and where and how these PVs are applied. There is a minimum on PV deployment.

How does the committee integrate the PV Self-Test: once at application or continuously per project phase (intake, design, test, operation)?

Public Values are tested in advance by means of a self-declaration; in the elaboration of your proposal it is clear in what way you will apply Public Values yourself in the elaboration of your plans; this is weighed in the assessment of the theme "Impact and Social Embedding", and in the execution of your activities you can choose to further secure and follow this up. CIIC sees Public Values as one of the unique opportunities along which IX activities can develop as distinctive in the (world) market.

How strict is the Public Values Self-Test assessed? Is it just a format or also a selection criterion?

Public Values are tested in advance by means of a self-declaration; in the elaboration of your proposal it is clear in what way you will apply Public Values yourself in the elaboration of your plans; this is weighed in the assessment of the theme "Impact and Social Embedding", and in the execution of your activities you can choose to further secure and follow this up. CIIRC sees Public Values as one of the unique opportunities along which IX activities can develop as distinctive in the (world) market.

Cooperation

How explicit must federative agreements (shared facilities, planning/reservation rules, test protocols) be in scope to count as a coherent network?

This question includes various sub-questions that require further explanation: The five IX labs must cooperate; the IX labs themselves can be a collaboration of different participants; it can concern technical cooperation (resources/connections) / organizational cooperation / financial coordination for cooperation) and includes joint tasks (reproducibility / test protocols); it is up to the participant to come up with a proposal on how to organize their own cooperation, market it and operate it and how they will cooperate with the other IX Labs. It is good to consider that Public Values (cooperation, opening) are important here and that in Phase 2 a joint research program will also be started in Action Line 3.2 for joint issues in cooperation between IX labs.

Cooperation with other IX labs

What agreements about knowledge sharing to the national network (format, frequency, portal) are expected?

IX labs become part of a national network; cooperation between the labs is important and will be further developed in the dialogue phase.

Cooperation Agreement

How specifically must federative governance be elaborated (decision-making, escalation, IP/ data sharing, quality assurance, open access rules)?

A draft cooperation agreement will be shared with parties intending to join the national network of IX labs; this will be provided in the dialogue phase and is open for comments and feedback. Parties must have signed a cooperation agreement prior to submitting the subsidy application to the Ministry of OCW. If parties submit an application as a collaboration for one of the IX labs, they will also have drawn up their own CA upon submission (which is not in conflict with that of the national network of IX Labs).

Scope

How does ClIIC define 'significant size' for a regional IX-lab in AL3.1, and which functions from the 'Content framework' must be minimally visible?

ClIIC's ambition is to offer the Dutch VR/XR/MR sector & its stakeholders the opportunity to work on solving social challenges and to grow as an industry, taking into account Public Values. That growth therefore happens first from the mass within the program (the amount of programmed calls for research, skills and creative opportunities). This call supports the establishment of crucial links: the IX Labs in which by guaranteeing their availability; the sector can get to work; those investments take place in a focused manner; in some places - without duplication - to support parties from the sector - to have capacities and skills available and thus create incubators where parties can take steps. In the intended network of cooperating IX labs, functions and activities are not duplicated but set up as complementary. We require three necessary functions and activities that must be present in every IX lab and leave the choice to determine which additional functions & activities parties want to develop also because parties themselves invest >50%.

What weight is given to connection to the CIIC innovation agenda compared to our regional focus 'Sustainable Employee Productivity' and cultural/social use-cases?

The CIIC Innovation Agenda is constantly developing and a first version has been published online. The CIIC program has the objective of contributing to sufficient quality professionals who become available in sufficient quantity for the sector; these activities are housed in other Action Lines of the CIIC program.

What exactly is meant by a "large lab"? (FTEs, size of facility, investment volume).

CIIC's ambition is to offer the Dutch VR/XR/MR sector & its stakeholders the opportunity to work on solving social challenges and to grow as an industry, taking into account Public Values. That growth therefore happens first from the mass within the program (the amount of programmed calls for research, skills and creative opportunities). This call supports the establishment of crucial links: the IX Labs in which by guaranteeing their availability; the sector can get to work; those investments take place in a focused manner; in some places - without duplication - to support parties from the sector - to have capacities and skills available and thus create incubators where parties can take steps. In the intended network of cooperating IX labs, functions and activities are not duplicated but set up as complementary. How large such an IX lab should be depends, among other things, on the expected demand/attractiveness of the lab and the intended operation; it is up to the participant themselves to make a trade-off here, since they also invest >50% and contribute to the operation - the party must make that risk assessment themselves.

The size of a lab is determined from the budget and the scope of the offered capacities.

Do regional specializations (Breda/Tilburg/Den Bosch/Eindhoven) demonstrably count as complementarity within one proposal?

The core of the national network of IX labs is that it becomes a nationally comprehensive network in which complementarity between the IX Labs is pursued; that this is already present within a region can therefore be both an advantage and a disadvantage. An advantage because everything 'in miniature' already exists, a disadvantage

because everything already exists in miniature, but nowhere is a focus chosen.

What degree of iterative approach/ experimentation is expected per work package (milestones, go/no-go, TRL/MRL)?

No research/experiments are subsidized in this call; however, a clear planning with work packages is needed for setting up and operational management/marketing of the IX lab; with clear milestones/events etc.

Selection

Why can't the required documents be submitted after selection to avoid unnecessary time pressure and stress? Many applicant parties internally deal with slow procedures regarding gathering the right documents and signatures.

Thanks for the suggestions; we ask for the minimum commitment for registration and only ask parties to qualify; we do not ask for a proposal, but work towards it; in this way we limit the administrative burden to a minimum and keep parties that endorse the principles and qualify as IX lab party; this prevents parties that do not seem to have a chance of arriving at a proper proposal from spending time on this process.

State Aid

How strictly are state aid frameworks (GBER) applied and how do we demonstrate that activities are 'new/additional'?

The state aid frameworks are strictly applied; the risk that you as a party have to repay money later is prevented in this way. We invest in new facilities and activities; not in existing (already financed or otherwise financed with support/subsidy facilities).

Rates

What hourly rates apply when facilities are contributed in-kind? (is there a fixed system?)

We use the EZ framework regulation with three cost systems:

a. Integral Cost System (IKS)

This method is intended for organizations that have an established Integral Cost System. Direct and indirect costs are allocated to cost carriers, such as labor hours, based on verifiable allocation keys.

Conditions for using IKS include:

- The rates are determined by the Ministry of EZ or RVO
- The system used is applied internally for, for example, cost allocation, project calculations or management information.

b. Wage costs plus fixed markup system (+50%)

Here, the annual salary of project employees is divided by the number of productive hours per year (for example, 1,650 hours) to arrive at an hourly rate. A fixed markup for indirect costs may be applied to these wage costs.

c. Fixed hourly rate system

With this method, a fixed hourly rate of €60 per hour applies. This method is particularly suitable for self-employed persons and organizations without a cost system.

Test Protocols

Are there requirements for harmonized test protocols between labs and for data capture/metadata for the national portal?

Since this is not part of the call, this is not relevant; we expect this to play a role in AL3.2; it is foreseen that the IX labs will make their wishes for coordination/research known there.

Distribution of Costs

How to deal with shared assets between hubs in the federative model (cost allocation, internal settlement, SLAs)?

A clear investment and operating budget with the various cost items must be provided. Material and immaterial assets can be included and allocated therein. Remember that only the owner or operator of the IX lab can receive subsidy.

Conditions

I have had a lab/hub in the past, but it has since closed and is no longer operational. If I have a plan for new facilities/labs, can I still apply, or do I now need a truly operational IX lab to be able to enter AL3.1?

Everyone is free to participate in the Call; the starting point is that we want to set up a network of national IX labs; it helps if there is a proven track record with parties that are able to run an existing IX Lab organization and that we can build on existing facilities, knowledge and networks to maximize the chance of sustainable expansion and guarantee accessibility from an already existing organization.

Templates

Are there best-practice formats for cost price models per facility/slot (hourly rates, cost coverage rate, indexation)?

A template will be provided upon publication of the call.