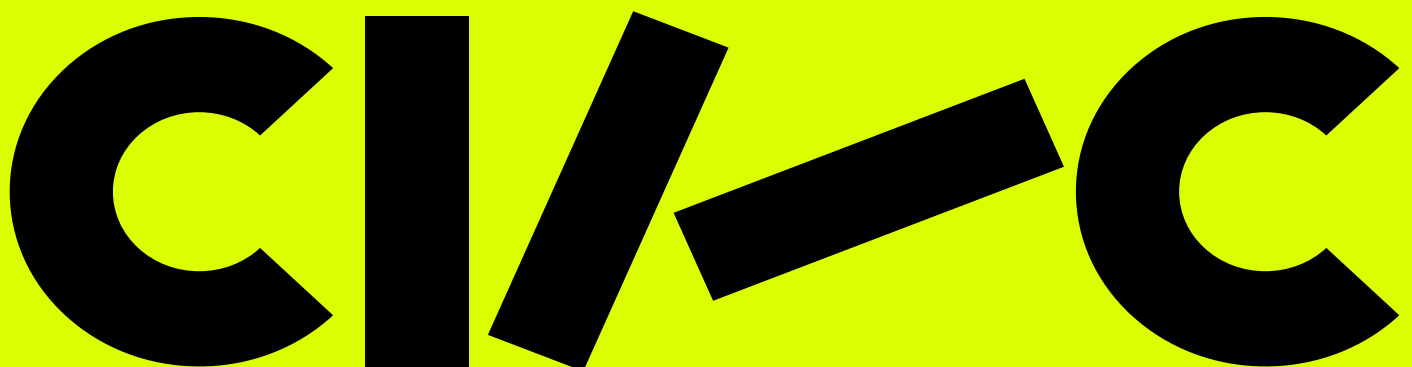


IX Labs - Report meeting 12-11-25

AL 3.1 - Ecosysteem & Faciliteiten

v1.1.1 – 19 november 2025



INHOUDSOPGAVE

Key points

Summary of the meeting

Edited Transcription IX Labs
Digital Walk-in

Detailed summary:

Report summary of IX labs meeting November 12th, 2025

On November 12, a digital information meeting took place with several participants interested in possible participation in the IX Labs call. From the perspective of equal information provision, a report of the meeting is provided below. Important: IX Labs Call AL3.1 was slightly modified on 11/17 (partly as a result of this meeting), see also: Call Update: IX Labs – adjustment of financing conditions

The adjustment of the call as of 17/11 makes it clear that there is a difference between support and public funds. Article 27 AGVV states that the maximum aid intensity for innovation clusters is 50% (for both investment and operating aid). This means that the remaining 50% cannot consist of aid. Contributions can therefore consist of things that come from the financing/subsidizing of non-economic activities as long as they fit within the statutory core tasks of educational and research institutions as explicitly defined by the European Commission in the R&D&I framework.

Key points

- The IX labs call is intended for economic activities, not research.
- There are concerns about the use of public funds (NB this point has been addressed with the update of the call)

- The call requires co-financing of at least 50% equity funding
- A dialogue phase is planned to answer questions and foster collaboration.
- Concerns were raised by some of the parties present about the feasibility of a sustainable operating model without public institutions. (Note this point was addressed with the call update)
- There is a need for clarity on how educational institutions can participate. (Note this point was addressed with the update of the call)
- There are questions about the strategic vision and connection of thematic labs in phase 2.
- A minimum grant of 125k euro per participant is required where there are questions about determination of the amount of this amount....
- There are concerns about collaboration between companies and educational institutions.(NB this point has been addressed with the call update)
- There is a positive view of the potential for public-private partnerships.

Summary of the meeting

- **Economic vs. non-economic activities:** There was discussion about the distinction between economic and non-economic activities, especially in relation to universities and knowledge institutions. This call only funds economic activities. Attendees questioned why the program requirements are more stringent than the application of the AGVV rules requires.
 - Note this point has been addressed with the update of the call
- **Market distortion and pre-competitive role:** The potential market distortion from subsidized IX labs was discussed. Labs should not be in direct competition with commercial providers. The scope of the call is also new facilities
- **Cofinancing and participation:** There is a lack of clarity on how knowledge institutions can participate in IX Lab applications, given the co-funding requirements. Examples of constructions and cooperation between companies and

knowledge institutions were requested. The meeting included parties who do have this already practically set up.

- NB this point has been addressed with the update of the call

- **Assessment of proposals:** There were questions about assessment and participation from industry; how to avoid investing in roles and functions where the market or knowledge institutions already provide.
- **Business model and cost:** The feasibility of a commercially sustainable operating model was discussed, as well as calculating the cost of a lab at 50% subsidy.
- **Accessibility and distribution:** Questions were raised about the distribution of IX labs in the Netherlands, minimum opening times and the possibility of part-time opening.
- **Practical implementation and examples:** Questions were asked about examples from other sectors and how other knowledge institutions approach this.
- **Cooperation between companies and knowledge institutions:** Companies indicated that cooperation with knowledge institutions is difficult if subsidies cannot be combined, while knowledge institutions want to contribute to a stable base for labs.
 - Note this point has been addressed with the update of the call

Edited Transcription IX Labs Digital Walk-in

Present on behalf of the CIIC program: Heleen Rouw (CIIC program director), Joram Nauta - TNO (trigger of the call AL3.1 IX Labs) and Gjalt Loots- TNO (community manager IX labs), Ferry Hogeboom (CIIC community manager).

We are about two weeks before the close of submitting applications for the IX Labs call within CIIC. Along the way, we have had a lot of contact with people who have questions about this particular call. We have collected all the questions as best we can and have also published them in the Q&As on the website.

Previous questions we have tried to answer as much as possible, but still we have also received signals from the community that people are still confused. Or at least have concerns or questions about forming that IX Lab.

We tried as much as possible to share this meeting with everyone, and also those we had approached to ask to share it as well.

There are, of course, other opportunities within the program besides this call to join. We opened the [CIIC Start call](#) for knowledge institutions and research two weeks ago, where you could receive 50,000 euros per application. That closes at the end of January. There specifically researchers can submit applications, and other parties and SME's could join.

The CIIC Core call opens in the first quarter of next year. These calls are available to researchers, in collaboration with SME's, among others, for 300,000 euros per application. We also expect to open the CIIC Pro call of 700,000 euros for research projects later next year.

Meanwhile, we are also setting up the structure for the learning communities. This call is being set up by NWO SIA , with substantive input collected within the Human Capital action line in recent months. In this way, we are trying to bring as much reflection to it as possible. The learning communities call is scheduled to open in the second quarter of 2026.

Within the first ADRIE call, five consortia have been selected that have now completed the research phase. These consortia that have gone through the research phase have now submitted applications for the next phase. There is also a selection process for that, in January the selected consortia will enter the second phase. For next year, there will be a second ADRI call cycle in the first quarter to form five consortia.

Detailed summary:

Introduction and context of the IX labs call

- The call is part of the CIIC program implemented by TNO. TNO is the submitter/pender of the plans to the Ministry of OCW.
- There are many questions about the call, especially about the formation of IX lab applications.
- The call is for economic activities, not research.
- There are other calls within the program for research activities.
- The call requires co-funding of at least 50% of own funds.
- A dialogue phase is planned to answer questions and foster collaboration.
- The call is aimed at creating a sustainable operating model for IX labs.

- There are concerns about the use of public funds and market distortion.

Public Resources and State Aid

- There are questions about what is considered public funds.
- There is a state aid test that determines there is no stacking of aid
- There are concerns about the participation of knowledge institutions in the call.
- There is a need for clarity on how educational institutions can participate.

Operating models and market forces

- There are concerns about the feasibility of a sustainable operating model without public institutions.
- There is a need for an example of an operating model that works without public institutions.
- There are questions about how to avoid market distortion.
- The question is whether there is sufficient need for new, state-of-the-art facilities for the IX community. Parties have difficulty assessing this. The other CIIC calls may not provide sufficient insight into the need for deployment in a specific IX Lab.
- There is entrepreneurial risk associated with running an IX Lab.
- There are concerns about competition with existing commercial facilities.
- There is a need for checks and balances to prevent market disruption.
- There is a positive view of public-private partnership opportunities.

Strategic vision and phase 2

- There are questions about the strategic vision and connection of thematic labs in phase 2 (connecting the national IX Lab Network to the thematic IX labs).
- The vision is to strengthen different aspects of the IX field.
- There is a need for collaboration between companies and educational institutions.

- There are concerns about guaranteeing use of the labs by educational institutions.
- There is a need for clarity on the role of thematic labs in phase 2.
- There is a need for an integrated approach to the various calls.

Application process and requirements.

- Participants must apply for a minimum of €125k in funding for Phase 1.
- There is a public values self-test that must be completed.
- There are questions about the participation of knowledge institutions in the call.
- There is a need for clarity on the role of consortia in the application.
- There is an opportunity to form consortia in the dialogue phase.
- There is a need for clarity on the role of contract research.

1. Use of public funds.

We are getting questions about the use of public funds. We have answered pretty tightly in the way this call is set up. This has to do with the preconditions within which we organize this program, the preconditions from the Growth Fund itself, and also the role that the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science plays in this as grant-giver

The premise of all Growth Fund programs has always been that the government invests and the market invests. It has always been the intention that private funding would be more than half, so that parties' own money is brought in.

Within the design of this call, we are dealing with a certain state aid regulation that says we can give a maximum of 50% state aid on economic activities. We make a call in which we state: we are looking for parties who are going to operate an IX lab in a sustainable way as an economic activity. So that includes risk - risk for an entrepreneur. This could ultimately mean that a company might not make it. We don't want that, of course, but there is also a business risk involved. Hence the focus on a sustainable business model for the IX lab.

Running a lab is an economic activity, it is not a non-economic activity. It is not a form of education that has a different type of funding attached to it.

You also want to avoid potentially having to repay money later. At the end of the day, a grant is made and there is accountability after the

fact for how you spent the funds, and also whether you didn't use improper state aid or other funds for that.

Definition public funds: Public resources are resources that come from the government, from EU funds, from regional grants, municipal grants. These are all resources that are considered public resources.

The adjustment of the call as of 17/11 makes it clear that there is a difference between aid and public funds. Article 27 AGVV states that the maximum aid intensity for innovation clusters is 50% (for both investment and operating aid). This means that the other 50% may not consist of aid. contribution therefore also consist of things that come from the funding/subsidizing of non-economic activities as long as they fit within the legal/core tasks of educational and research institutions as explicitly defined by the European Commission in the R&D&I framework

2. The application process.

We have deliberately chosen to keep the application process very simple. We do get quite a few parties who indicate, "I must already have a complete plan." So that is not necessary.

The application itself is relatively simple: fill out the application form and send along the self-test public values. That's actually the threshold we set up to participate in that first phase. That shows commitment that you are willing to take some steps.

In our estimation, that should be relatively easy. It is mainly: who are you, what do you have and what do you want to do, and approximately how do you want to do it. And are you also active in this field, and what do you already have in place if you are already working in IX.

The follow-up is actually the **dialogue phase**. Our starting point is that we want as many motivated parties in that dialogue phase as possible. That dialogue phase is really meant to start the conversation with each other. The conversation can be one-on-one between TNO and you as an applicant or as a consortium, but it can also be with each other.

We foresee having a number of meetings that we invite everybody to, where we're really going to give explanations: explanations of how you could fill out the Excel, what a business model for an IX lab could look like, how you could operationalize public values as you go about running your IX lab.

We're really trying to help and support you. We're not going to make choices for you, but we're going to try to get you to make the best possible proposal.

One of the topics we can discuss is collaboration. It is important that we are going to organize with each other a collaboration of cooperating IX labs.

We do that every two weeks with a meeting centrally in the middle of the country, and we also provide digital opportunities for you to spar with us in groups, as well as one-on-one. We are working in the background to see if we can also create a platform for that that will be up and running in time to facilitate that exchange and also facilitate information outreach to you as parties.

If you are signed up, we want to direct you to that platform where you can access it, where we can exchange information, schedule Teams meetings, you name it all.

3. Position of creators

We also received a number of questions about the position of creators. This call is intended for parties who are going to operate an IX Lab in an economic way. That means that parties who want to do something in those IX labs are actually also going to pay for access to those IX labs. One of the principles is that it should be possible to charge a market-based price - that parties should pay to use that IX lab.

We of course have other schemes - the ADRIE scheme or other calls from the CIIC program - in which parties can make creative productions or experiment with them. So it means that creators can get a piece of funding through those other programs to use in an IX Lab.

We have given in the call a whole list of research calls and research programs that are going to be ongoing in the CIIC program, so you have a handle on what you can expect to see stimulated from the CIIC program in the coming years.

That doesn't mean that those are all going to end up in your lab one-to-one, but it could very well be that if you are able to set up your lab in such a way to meet the needs of the market - not only in the next few years but also in the years beyond - that you can generate revenue from that.

So the creators are probably not the investors, not the operators and not the owner, but maybe the users of your IX lab.

Discussion

Participant 1 - State support and public funds

Question about knowledge institutions: Is it possible for knowledge institutions to contribute to that 50% where their own contribution comes from public institutions, but it is in both cases own contribution that is allowed within the AGVV?

Specific question: Can a knowledge institution make its own contribution?

Answer: this question is included in the update of the call; so it is possible to co-finance yourself (as long as it is not through other means of support)

- ◦ Clarification on AGVV rules:** For knowledge institutions, research activities are part of their core tasks and therefore a non-economic activity. For core tasks of universities, in principle 100% state aid can be given under the AGVV rules.

Joram: But research is not part of this call. Research activities do not belong in this call. We only fund economic activities, not non-economic activities.

Accountability: Does this mean that in accounting for the in-kind contribution of knowledge institutions, you are going to look within the knowledge institutions to see how that in-kind contribution is funded?

Joram: That responsibility lies with the knowledge institutions to make that clear how they finance their own share.

Participant 2 - Market distortion and competition

Context: Questions from industry/market about precompetitive function of labs and preventing competition between subsidized IX labs and existing facilities.

Question: How do you guarantee that it is precompetitive? How do you ensure that it does not subsidize a facility that offers an offering that a commercial party also offers?

Joram: They are not necessarily precompetitive. They are meant to be an innovation cluster in which eventually a sustainable revenue model for those labs should emerge. We are looking for new, innovative state-of-art facilities that can be the next step for the IX community. If those (open/accessible) facilities already exist so they are the plans are not new

Further question: But the activities there are not activities that are already currently facilitated by commercial operators?

Joram: We are looking for new new facilities.

Complex question about governance: On the one hand: how do you guarantee that activities are not taking place that you can do commercially as well? On the other hand: how do you guarantee that a commercial party will not do the same thing the day after while you are

stuck with expensive depreciation? Are there examples of commercial operating models? And how do the checks and balances work - who controls TNO in this area? To what extent does the industry, especially the facilities parties who also set up these kinds of places, have a say? Is that the advisory board, for example?

Joram: It's mainly about need. How do you demonstrate that your facility doesn't distort the market? This program has been for those needs. The need was identified for new state-of-art IX labs that work with public values and support the development of the creative industries.

We ask parties not only to build an IX Lab, but also to operate it sustainably with an exploitation plan in which they try to indicate for which target groups they offer which facilities and how they can operate it sustainably. There is a certain entrepreneurial risk that we introduce whereby it is up to the entrepreneur himself to demonstrate how his addition to the landscape of facilities that are already there will ultimately be maintained in a sustainable manner.

Ultimately, of course, we ask parties to produce a business plan with an operating plan of their facility, in which they try to indicate for what kind of target groups they offer what facilities and how they can ultimately operate that sustainably. We have a review committee that is well informed about what is going on nationally and internationally, that knows what is already there and what addition you actually want to make to the IX landscape. It is up to them to judge how that plan what is presented by the proposing party is going to work.

Refinement: But by definition not in competition with facilities that are operated commercially?

Joram: Why couldn't it be? You don't get a 50% discount - you have to charge a market rate.

Illustration: You have a gas station and you are also going to open a gas station but you get 50% discount - you can't do that, can you?

Joram: But you don't get a 50% discount here, you have to use a market rate still.

Participant 3 - Collaboration with education/ research

Background: Company that has been doing site operation and also development for 100 years. Saw this grant as fuel to set up a business plan to hedge certain risks and overcome the chicken-and-egg problem.

Chicken problem: All investors and companies ask: How do you have commitment from education and research that they will also use your

services? Once the lab is there, there has to be commitment that there is demand, and you can't base that on potential grants that you might win within the CIIC calls.

Market observation: Small creative creators are not going to pay market rates at all in some kind of premium lab - they don't have the money for that. In the last hundred projects (training for police, Dutch Railways, Boskalis) we haven't needed a lab on any of them because production is everywhere, not concentrated in one place.

Problem: We can count it straight business-wise, but on the demand side we can't get commitment from research and education parties that could give continuity, because they are up against it of "yes, I want to pay 10,000 euros a year to you, but how do I get that back?"

Charging a lab straight with purely current commercial market demand is only possible if ASML is going to fund everything, but that is not the intention.

Joram: This is the entrepreneurial risk you face in this call. If you're going to invest, do you have a market for that? What this call funds is a piece of investment, but you can also develop in your operating activity to get people to your lab. That doesn't mean that you're guaranteed to keep them as customers. It is an incentive scheme to get the lab functionally in order and in terms of operation in the long run.

Follow-up problem: The exploitation depends on your starting condition. If you just start a lab with a few companies, you are missing a very important exponent: research and education. Companies are not going to develop fundamental algorithms themselves - that's not core business. We go to the research field. It is made very difficult as a company to secure that collaboration with educational institutions, for example, because they get bogged down in how to allocate resources, even during the exploitation phase.

Joram: How the program was ever set up and how the elaboration is now in all these different schemes, is that there are all kinds of different puzzle pieces that together should make sure that we can make a nice puzzle. It's only in the calls of the CIIC program itself that you see that that does get chopped up. This is exactly one of those problems you run into. Because we are dealing with certain fragmentation in the calls and regulations per call, it has become quite complicated. That was one of the conditions on the front end of why we were able to get this money.

Possible solution: Suppose an educational institution would say: we have this facility and give operating space to a commercial company under a user license. The entire operation is through a commercial company but through a lease arrangement with an educational institution. Is that performable?

Joram: It offers opportunities. If you're a co-investor in that lab, it offers the possibility of access on other terms. It is also described in the call that different rates can be applied there for parties who also co-invest financially in the lab on the front end.

Clarification: You have a studio that is empty 30% of the time. We agree with an institution that that 30% is given to the commercial operator of the IX Lab with an agreement on allocation and booking. Can an educational institution access the call that way?

Joram: Too complex a construct to say yes or no to right now.

Participant 5 - Non-commercial vs commercial state aid.

First question: Two forms are seen within state aid: non-commercial state aid (educational activities) and commercial state aid. Is there room there to solve this problem?

Joram: I treat this question as whether it is about economic and non-economic activities for which a contribution to costs is possible. This call is only for economic activities. You don't get a grant on non-economic activities. Education, if it is in the context of a regular education program, is non-economic and outside the scope of this call. We are talking about economic activities that parties pay for.

The update of the call on 17/ 11 may also provide the answer for this question.

Second question on strategic vision: The whole vision of IX Labs included the idea of rolling out infrastructure and linking thematic labs to it in phase 2. If IX Labs are operated purely economically, I doubt the connection of thematic labs in phase 2. How do you guys see that?

Joram: Phase 2 takes place around the halfway point. Those are the thematic labs programmatically deployed by NWO/ Regieorgaan SIA, also under AGVV 27.

Heleen: The program tries to serve different aspects of the IX field - research, market, application, artistic - to provide opportunities from all perspectives and to strengthen the earning potential of the sector. The idea is that connections go through those calls from Regieorgaan SIA. That has been the idea of the program, though. Whether that is sufficient for parties that are hesitant, that is then the chicken-and-the-egg story if those calls are not all open yet. This is what you get when you work with schemes. The vision is that it should be interrelated and mutually reinforcing so that all parties work together to make that field stronger. But in practice, those schemes are all just determined by all kinds of rules underneath, so it's not a given.

Follow-up question: What is your plan B? What if there are few applications and it turns out that there is no guarantee of use? Will you make adjustments?

Heleen: Of course these are points that we will feedback with OCW. Of course we will monitor what happens with the submission. But it's very difficult to say on the front end: we're going to stop now, we're going to do it differently.

Joram: At the same time, we also hear a lot of parties who do say that this is workable and possible. We now hear parties saying that it is not a good fit, but at the same time we also hear other parties saying: this is quite doable, we are not running into major problems. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. We have set out this call, we are not going to change it on main conditions. That is no longer possible.

Participant 5 - Multiple locations and collaboration.

Positive reaction: "I'm just positive, because I do see a lot of opportunities." From a campus just above Amsterdam: "This is exactly what we have been doing for years - getting something done between public, knowledge and commercial activities in a healthy operating model. There is part entrepreneurship in that."

Question: Five labs have been conceived and I have three places that would like to join us in one call. Should I submit them separately or with those others as three labs at the same time?

Joram: I'm not going to answer your question because I think you should make that choice yourself - with that I would potentially be steering you.

Clarification: Can it be both? Can it be joint?

Joram: Yes. In the dialogue phase it is still possible to shift between applicants and between parties in the consortia.

Offer: "We work a lot with educational institutions and we do see several possibilities in how you can make a public-private initiative exploitable. I could help you in that if required."

Additional discussion

Participant 3 (supplemental): "I agree with that. There's definitely a revenue model, I can see that too. We've also been doing this kind of thing for years. It's just that, in particular, in my opinion, the collaborative relationship with education and research - that's precisely the opportunity to integrate those and realize other forms of commitment. Purely just commercial is now distinguishedly difficult."

The update of the call on 17/ 11 may also offer more opportunities for this question

Practical Questions

Minimum grant per participant: The call states that participants may receive a minimum of 125k grant. Does this mean that all parties in the IX Lab must apply for a minimum of 125k grant plus bring 150k in co-funding? Also a knowledge institution?

Gjalt: That's right.

Closure

Gjalt: We will take the many questions from the chat. We remain available for questions and answers, not always in a plenary way like this. We are positively surprised by the interest, but at the same time see that it is incredibly alive.

Technical points:

- The public values self-test can be found through another link on the website
- The registration form had a broken link that is being fixed
- There are differences in terminology (self-test vs. self-test) that will be straightened out

Joram: Please know that we are not working on this 24 hours a day, but have very careful and close contact with OCW on how to read and do this.

Conclusion

The program tries to serve all aspects of the IX field - research, market, application and artistic aspects. The vision is that everything is related and mutually reinforcing, but in practice different regulations and fragmentation make this complex.

There are clear concerns about feasibility without the involvement of public institutions and about cooperation between business and educational institutions. At the same time, there are also parties who indicate that it is workable under current conditions. The coming period and final submissions will show how this plays out in practice.

The update of the call on 17/11 is expected to address some of the concerns.