



Development of operations for excellent science

For framework/context: see introductory presentation

Aims of the NWO-I-operations

The aim of the operations is to ensure that employees can carry out excellent science, and enable line managers and administrators to direct and manage the autonomous institutes and the overall NWO-I organisation within the legislative requirements.

Vision on operations – basic premises

Quality

- The quality of the operations is appropriate to the **ambitions, specifications and (environmental) requirements** of NWO-I as a whole. This means, for example, maximum attention for science and the connection between operations and science, being in control of risks and finances and being compliant. It also means that the existing operational systems can intervene in an adequate and timely manner in the case of outages, and that advisers can quickly recruit and appoint employees, and, if necessary, draw up joint policies and apply them.
- NWO-I has **state-of-the-art knowledge and expertise** in operations. This applies to both its own personnel and persons hired in. This requires the standardisation of/a joint view about the necessary expertise, its quality levels, the meaning of state-of-the-art, improvements in professionalisation and sustained feedback.
- The operations need to undergo **continuous development** to maintain their quality and, where necessary, innovate, increase or possibly downscale the operations. Accordingly, feedback loops will be set up and systematically carried out.
- Operational managers¹ of NWO-I must have a vision on their discipline and help to **steer the operations**. They need to be in the vanguard, show what is possible and anticipate future developments. This means that they will go beyond a merely facilitating role and introduce developments and, in consultation, integrate these from the perspective of added value and professional identity, as well as with the appropriate backup.
- Operational managers who work in the same discipline or in joint (integral) processes need to **be connected with each other**. Knowledge, expertise and competencies will be jointly developed and shared. Professionals should provide each other with input and keep each other focused. That requires clarity about the roles and task allocation between institutes and between institutes and the NWO-I Office.
- To **safeguard the continuity**, vulnerability needs to be prevented. Solo positions/roles must be avoided and expertise and knowledge should be clustered where possible.
- Issues are becoming increasingly multifaceted in nature and to provide **integral answers and approaches** the operations need to be managed by means of a vision for the entire

¹ Operational managers can be operations employees from the institutes, operations employees from the NWO-I Office, institute managers, director operations NWO-I, and portfolio holder operations from the board.

organisation and not just a vision for the different pillars within the organisation. Examples are the combined management information of finances and HR, or a relocation in which ICT, real estate and facility management work together. This means that multidisciplinary initiatives are not independent entities and require cross-disciplinary collaboration to strengthen quality and to work in a service-oriented and efficient manner.

- A distinction is made between **dynamic and routine processes** or, if applicable, activities. More space can be created for high-value advisory work by organising routine processes in a proper and unequivocal manner and, as much as possible, opting for a digitalised/automated approach.

Efficiency

- The operations must be cost-efficient. If opportunities arise to realise tasks or processes matched to the quality requirements, but against lower costs, these will be utilised. This means **digitalisation and automation/robotisation of administrative processes, shared back offices (for instance, the financial, personnel and salary administration), the ability to consult and organise one's own affairs directly 24/7** (e-HRM, management information, model contracts), the **joint procurement and tendering of generic resources** if the advantages outweigh the possible disadvantages and, finally, the possible outsourcing of tasks. Ultimately, it concerns striking an optimal balance between the costs of operations and resources for science and, of course, this needs to be done with attention for a proper weighting of efficiency and ease of use against the associated advantages and disadvantages.
- The operations need to be as **'light'** as possible and as complete as necessary, set up in an agile way (and not as a self-perpetuating operation) and genuinely support the business/institutes and the board. This means continuously asking the question: what is really necessary, and what has genuine added value?

Capitalising on the added value of joint efforts, in other words: unity in diversity

- The effectiveness of the separate institutes will be strengthened, and it will be possible to capitalise on the added value of joint efforts.
- Operational managers **will be aware** of the needs, specific context and challenges of **the institutes and the board**. The wishes, needs and expectations will be periodically itemised at the institutes and clear agreements made about service and support.
- Operational managers will represent the research field they work for and function **as business partners**. This means that they will not always be stationed at an institute or need to belong to an institute to be able to properly fulfil their operational role. However, the connection does need to be strong. Issues will be tackled in an integral and multidisciplinary manner and operational managers will coordinate this together.
- Policy will be realised in a joint effort of the institutes and the NWO-I Office. An overarching policy will be drawn up that also allows for additions by the institutes.

- Major policy development processes² and projects need to have a **responsible director or (institute) manager** as well as an operations project leader. A policy will not be developed, or a project started, before a **clear commission** has been formulated for this. The policy cycle has an owner. It still needs to be determined which commissions will be assigned by the board, directors consultation, institute managers' consultation, and whether the Directors of NWO-I can initiate commissions.
- Operation managers as suppliers, and institute managers, directors and administrators as contractors will have to develop a joint and explicit view of their roles, persist in these roles and fulfil them in a resilient way. That means that you will no longer determine how to fulfil your role on your own, solo positions will no longer exist, and there will exist a greater need/obligation to call each other to account and provide accountability.
- Both contractors and suppliers will assume their responsibility. People will be **working together** and take joint responsibility (always and not only in crises). This requires collective management and being able to act in a supplementary and exchangeable manner. This means/requires: 'we, for example, as team Health & Safety, are accountable for ... and ensure that ...'.
- The basic premise is that NWO-I is a **decentralised organisation**. Whatever can be, will be achieved decentral in operations, and what needs to be realised centrally, happens centrally. In carrying out the policy, the NWO-I Office will be responsible for all policy areas for which responsibility for compliancy with legislation must be centrally organised, and for all processes with respect to managing risks where NWO-I is the risk-bearing party, and for all designated services that need to be centrally facilitated. A services catalogue that will also include the agreed-upon quality standards will be provided with centrally facilitated services.
- **The institutes, board and operations** will (if relevant) jointly take decisions concerning strategic plans of the operational domains and the realisation of these, changes in these, determining the areas of expertise and make or buy decisions. They will consider trade-offs between the collective added value and individual interests too.

Accountability and management

- The line is and remains **integral responsibility** for the management of the individual content and operations of one's own institute.
- In addition, we recognise processes and projects that are institute overarching within the pillar of operations concerned. The NWO-I Office will **functionally manage** these processes and projects, and this will be aimed at a uniform approach towards generic operational processes. This means that the ownership is in the hands of the NWO-I Office. At the front end, concrete agreements will be made about ambitions, roles, outcomes, activities and efforts to carry out the required tasks. The owner subsequently has the mandate to manage the agreements and final outcomes, and to call colleagues to account about this. If necessary, interventions can be initiated and/or escalated by the Institute managers' consultation.

² E.g. 'Recognition and rewards' – Michael Wise, 'Scientific integrity' – Peter van der Laan.



This concerns:

- Recurring processes such as the Planning & Control cycle and joint Personnel and Finance administrations for which the NWO-I Office is the process owner and the institutes (in accordance with jointly agreed upon quality requirements and planning) provide their planning and, if applicable, take care of the implementation.
- (Implementing) projects and creating policies for which a project leader manages those involved within quality, time and budget frameworks. Agenda setting and development of projects and policy takes place in co-creation with the institutes.
- Work consultations within the functional pillar and implementations in the functional pillar **are binding**. Actions are followed up to prevent consultations and exchanges being limited to just talking. If necessary, this will be facilitated and supported.
- Institute managers can be the **portfolio holder** for domain-overarching themes aligned with ongoing affairs in the medium to long term, and that periodically change owner (e.g. digitalisation, management/governance information and leadership development).

Scope of the operations

When we talk about the operations of NWO-I, we refer to the NWO-I Office and institutes' operations. This concerns:

- The needs of users (board, institutes and the NWO-I Office).
- Product and services and systems in the area of:
 - o Board Support & Strategy;
 - o Finances, business control, information management and procurement;
 - o Personnel;
 - o Communication;
 - o Real estate and facilities management;
 - o Health & safety and the environment;
 - o ICT (non-research related) and security;
 - o Legal and privacy.
- How these products and services are provided, and the collaboration between institutes, board and the NWO-I Office.
- The operational processes: policy, advice, administration and realisation.
- Employees, (core) competencies, roles (also those of contractor and supplier), attitudes and behaviours and capacities.
- How the operations are organised: which tasks will be allocated to the institutes and the NWO-I Office, and which tasks will be carried out externally or together with others (such as NWO-D).