

# Call for proposals: Pilot KIN Hubs – Regional drivers for just climate transitions

## Background

The transition to a climate-proof and just future requires a fundamental reorientation of how we conduct and apply science. The Dutch Climate Research Initiative (KIN) aims to strengthen cooperation between knowledge institutions, policymakers and social partners in order to accelerate regional climate transitions.

The traditional approach to research – characterised by disciplinary specialisation, competition between consortia and fragmentation of knowledge – falls short when it comes to tackling complex transition issues. Science often lags behind what is already happening in practice, or it is difficult to come up with solutions that offer people practical prospects for action. To make just climate transitions a reality, we need to build a new scientific practice that is sustainable and focuses on collaboration between different actors, values different forms of knowledge, and fully embraces and facilitates transition thinking. KIN is convinced that with an extra boost, methodical support, and connection to national knowledge infrastructures, the effectiveness of regional initiatives can be strengthened. This will allow valuable local insights to be better utilised and expertise to support transitions to be systematically built up.

That is why KIN is developing the concept of KIN Hubs: regional hubs that work in a transition-oriented and transdisciplinary manner on equitable climate challenges. At the end of 2025, a pilot phase will start in which three to four knowledge institutions will be selected to further develop and test this concept together with KIN.

## What is a KIN Hub?

In our current concept, a KIN Hub is a regionally based organisation or partnership committed to accelerating equitable climate transitions. The KIN Hub works in a transition-oriented and transdisciplinary manner, connecting knowledge, practice and policy at the local level – with translocal exchange. It is a physical place where people, resources and methods come together to take collective responsibility for regional climate challenges. Each KIN Hub functions as a regional centre of expertise by bringing together expertise within the parent organisation(s) and is a hub within a national KIN Hub network that is to be formed. The various KIN Hubs act as the central points of contact for effectively supporting, coordinating and accelerating specific climate transitions. They strengthen local transition movements and contribute to national coordination and knowledge sharing. The aim is to reinforce what already works well, build what is needed, and accelerate progress through connection, capacity building and coordination. In addition, a Hub contributes to a better dissemination of successful working methods between regions and recognition of regional knowledge centres and people as drivers of transition.

A KIN Hub fulfils three core functions, either now or in the future:

- **Transdisciplinary networking:** The KIN Hub brings together actors from science, policy, practice and society in a regional network. This network works collectively on specific climate transitions and forms the basis for cooperation and shared ownership.
- **Capacity building for transition-oriented working:** Knowledge about transitions and transdisciplinary working within the organisation(s) and region is brought together and further developed within the KIN Hub. In addition, through training courses and fellowships, the KIN Hub is better equipped to increase the

transition mindset and skills of those involved. This contributes to sustainable institutional anchoring and future-proof collaboration.

- **Pooling, applying and disseminating knowledge:** The KIN Hub ensures that existing and newly developed knowledge does not remain on the shelf, but is actively applied in policy, practice and science, and that the working methods of the actors involved are aligned to make this possible. Furthermore, the KIN Hub systematically collects insights into how climate transitions can take shape locally.

Together, the Hubs form a learning translocal network that is closely linked to the KIN and in which regional experiences are shared and analysed. This network makes it possible to:

- Gain insight into shared substantive barriers, preconditions and success factors;
- Scale up local lessons to other regions;
- Improve national coordination;
- Develop an integrated approach where necessary.

#### **Inclusivity, fairness and sustainability**

Fair climate transitions are central to the KIN Hubs' approach. This is ensured by:

- Working from the KIN values;
- Actively involving various stakeholders, including underrepresented groups;
- Applying participatory methodologies and shared ownership;
- Monitoring social impact, sustainability and justice as part of evaluation;
- Training and guidance in the field of inclusive transition practices.

### **KIN Hub pilot 2025/2026**

For an initial pilot phase, KIN is making €500,000 (including VAT) available for three to four pilot KIN Hubs (between €110,000 and €150,000 including VAT per KIN Hub) to jointly develop, test and implement the KIN Hub concept. At least €10,000 of the allocated amount must be reserved for hiring experts to set up an overarching governance and training programme.

#### **What are we asking for?**

We invite knowledge institutions (individually or in partnership) to submit a proposal **by 1 December 2025 at 14:00 CET** via email to [s.holst@nwo.nl](mailto:s.holst@nwo.nl) in which they:

- Explain why their organisation(s) is/are suitable to function as a KIN Hub;
- Describe how they intend to further develop and implement the concept of KIN Hubs together with KIN;
- Describe how they intend to contribute to setting up a training programme for transition-oriented working and developing a governance structure and long-term strategy;
- Indicate the extent to which the institution will contribute its own resources to the development and implementation of the KIN Hub and any substantive programmes (in the long term);
- Share their vision on the role of their organisation in long-term regional climate transitions;
- Draw up a budget with supporting documentation.

Through this KIN Hub pilot, KIN aims to support relevant regionally anchored knowledge institutions in their ability to use, disseminate and embed knowledge in a transition-oriented manner. In doing so, KIN wants to strengthen their role as key players in tackling (regional) transition challenges

challenges. KIN facilitates this through institutional support and capacity building, aimed at developing the necessary transition mindset and skills. By recognising pioneering knowledge institutions as KIN Hubs, KIN aims to support and legitimise them and connect them in a national network. In this pilot phase, KIN wants to focus on capacity building through training programmes and on unlocking and disseminating existing knowledge. The idea is that after the pilot phase, the KIN Hubs will also be able to independently carry out transition analyses for regional climate transition issues and potentially start up Knowledge-in-Action programmes (optional/with co-financing from the region).

With this pilot, KIN is taking an important step towards structurally embedding regional transition capacity. Participating organisations will have the opportunity to strengthen their role as drivers of transition and work with KIN to build a future-proof knowledge infrastructure.

### **Why participate?**

Participating organisations benefit from:

- National recognition and visibility;
- Start-up funding for the development of a local KIN Hub;
- Capacity building through training programmes and mentoring, and access to expertise;
- Effective methodologies and tools for transdisciplinary collaboration and effective knowledge sharing for the benefit of transitions;
- Guidance on institutional embedding of transition practices and governance, with a view to further development into an independent KIN Hub;
- Connection to a translocal network, in which local lessons are shared, scaled up and utilised for broader impact;
- Opportunities for (co-)financing by KIN for substantive programmes;
- Acceleration of local transition movements;
- Social impact and strategic positioning.

### **Preconditions**

An organisation or partnership is eligible for this pilot assignment if the following conditions are met:

- In this initial pilot phase, only NWO-accredited knowledge institutions may submit a proposal. Participation may be extended to other types of organisations at a later stage.
- The submitting organisation(s) endorses/endorse the values of KIN and commits/commit to the KIN Pact.
- The organisation(s) works/work in a mission-driven and transdisciplinary manner on regional climate issues, in collaboration with social partners.
- The organisation(s) is/are regionally rooted and has/have a relevant network (which may be expanded) of regional knowledge institutions (such as universities and colleges) and social partners (such as NGOs, companies, municipalities, provinces, safety regions and cultural institutions).
- A minimum of 0.4 FTE is available for the development and implementation of Hub activities during the first pilot year.
- The organisation(s) has/have a physical location(s) suitable for local collaboration, meetings and community building and, preferably, makes/make these available free of charge for KIN Pact activities when they are not booked.

- The activities and substantive themes of the organisation(s) are in line with the priorities and themes of the KIN.
- There is a demonstrable willingness to structurally embed the KIN Hub in the region, including governance and strategy for further development into an independent KIN Hub.
- The organisation(s) demonstrates/demonstrate the intention to make resources available within its/their own institution(s) or through external partners for (future) participation in substantive KIN programmes, such as the deployment of KIN fellows or the establishment and implementation of Knowledge in Action programmes.

### **Budget and payment**

For each selected pilot, between €110,000 and €150,000 including VAT is available for one year, of which

€10,000 must be reserved for the establishment of an overarching governance and training programme. Selected parties will be announced in the week of 1 December.

The General Government Conditions for the Provision of Services (ARVODI) and the code of conduct for scientific integrity apply to this assignment.

### **Expected results of the pilot phase**

The pilot phase of the KIN Hubs aims to achieve concrete results in terms of both organisation and content. Participating institutions are asked to:

- Primary objective: To develop and implement, in collaboration with KIN and the KIN Hubs, an initial version of a training programme for transition-oriented working, focused on capacity building within the institution and region.
- To set up an (experimental) regional KIN Hub, including a physical location and network, and to share lessons learned about the working method and requirements with KIN.
- Collect and share lessons learned and tested working methods for transition-oriented and transdisciplinary working.
- To deliver a proposal for a governance structure and long-term strategy for the KIN Hub, including anchoring within the institution(s).
- Collect and share initial insights into regional transition practices, including barriers, success factors and scalable working methods.
- Contributing to the learning translocal network through active participation in joint reflection, knowledge sharing and coordination.

### **Role of KIN and coordination**

KIN will play an active and facilitating role during the pilot phase. This includes:

- Coordination and guidance of the pilot process, including support in method development, governance and capacity building.
- Facilitation of the translocal network, including organisation of joint meetings, peer review and knowledge exchange.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the progress of the pilot, in collaboration with the participating institutions.

### **Mandatory coordination meetings with KIN include:**

1. Kick-off meeting (January/February 2026) – joint start of the pilot with all selected KIN Hubs.
2. Regular check-in moments focused on exchange, reflection and coordination, frequency to be determined jointly.

3. Final meeting and reflection (December 2026) – presentation of lessons learned, results, evaluation and exploration of follow-up.

In addition, each KIN Hub is expected to actively contribute to the joint learning process.

## Selection criteria

Proposals will be assessed on the basis of:

- 25%: Alignment with the mission and conditions for KIN Hubs;
- 25%: Potential to play a regional role in climate transitions.
- 25%: Degree of own contribution and long-term commitment of the institution;
- 25% Extent to which the proposal implements inclusive transition practices, sustainability and justice.