

Multi-year policy plan Foundation Green Labs NL (2024-2026)

Version 1, July 2024

1. Who are we?

Green Labs NL is a bottom-up initiative that was founded in 2021 by members of the Dutch scientific community, with a passion for sustainability and planetary health.

1.1. Vision

Green Labs NL strives to accelerate the transition towards a just and sustainable laboratory environment and scientific landscape in the Netherlands and beyond.

1.2. Mission

Green Labs NL works on embedding just and sustainable scientific practices into the science and laboratory community by running local and (inter)national projects, and through knowledge and movement building. In addition, it is our mission to equip current and future professionals with knowledge, skills, and reflective capabilities needed to minimise the negative social and environmental impacts of scientific research and laboratory work through educational innovations.

1.3. Identity

Green Labs NL was founded in 2021 to connect and support the growing number of local grass root initiatives, such as laboratory green teams. Green Labs NL has built expertise and network to progress the green science movement at national and international level.

2. What do we do?

To commit to our mission with increasing success, we have selected three focal points for the next two years:
Focal points 2024-2026

2.1. Community building

By expanding our network on a national and international level, increasing our outreach through social media and website, creating a community platform and hosting regular community meetings.

2.2. Accelerating transition towards just and sustainable science

By educating the current and future professionals of our community, by continuing the roll-out of nationwide lab accreditation programs such as LEAF, analysing waste patterns and promoting best-practice for laboratory circularity, by giving topical talks and workshops, by dissemination of insights and fundings to the community through (scientific) publications, by establishing goals and guidelines for sustainable lab practices and by advocating for sustainable lab practices to become integral part of the scientific (funding) landscape.

2.3. Professionalisation and consolidation of the foundation

GLNL is working towards becoming financially independent and shifting away

from voluntary-based positions. By doing so, GLNL looks to hiring professionals to assist in structuring the organisation and for acquisition to effectively achieve and consolidate its mission.

3. Activities 2024-2026

3.1. Community building

- 3.1.1. **Building the network.** We work on creating a platform where green teams from Dutch scientific institutes and individual scientists can connect and share knowledge, expertise and resources. Through this platform, we will map out where our community is active and unite in ongoing projects. We will also look to expand our community to clinical laboratories, universities of applied sciences and companies. Green Labs NL members attend national and international meetings and events to extend our green science network, seek for new Green Labs NL core and project members, seek for interesting collaboration partners, actively connect people and initiatives and stay up to date with knowledge and developments.
- 3.1.2. **Active outreach through various communication channels.** We have social media working groups that perform active outreach through our social media channels by posting relevant news and events. We strive to expand our reach and boost our visibility on social media. Our primary platform is LinkedIn (>800 followers), followed by X and Instagram. Another working group is responsible for website updates and maintenance and keeps the resources page up-to-date. We currently make use of Slack for direct communication between the community members. For the coming years, we will explore different options for such a community platform to improve its longevity. Furthermore, we plan to share relevant information with our community through a regular newsletter.
- 3.1.3. **Hosting community meetings.** Green labs NL is hosting themed community meetings several times per year to connect people and share knowledge and experiences with the green science community. Set-up and frequency of the meetings will be adapted to needs in 2024-2026. Community meetings can support running national projects such as LEAF and green science education or put a more general topic in the spotlight.
- 3.1.4. **National and international collaborations.** We are active in setting up new collaborations or extending existing collaborations within the Netherlands, as well as abroad. We are part of the green science and healthcare movement by being associated with the 'Groene Zorg Alliantie' and are represented in the Sustainable European Laboratories Network (SELs). Other former or current collaboration partners include The University Medical Centre Utrecht, The Princess Maxima Center for Pediatric Oncology, EMBO, The knowledge Centre for Global health (KCGH), The 3 R's centre, among others.

3.1.5. Community engagement activities. Besides our online community meetings, we aim to organise in-person engagement activities for our community (e.g. Green Science festival) to improve the connectivity of our community, create new opportunities to share knowledge and further inspire the green science movement.

3.2. Accelerating transition towards just and sustainable science

3.2.1. Education. In order to work towards more just and sustainable science in the Netherlands, it is imperative to educate the next generation of scientists. Our aim is to continue efforts to expand available resources for planetary health education in science education. We aim continue developing educational materials in collaboration with the UMCU and support and take active part in the national community Planetary Health In Science Education (PHISE) that we launched together with The Radboud UMC and PHIT of the UMCU.

3.2.2. Science practices

3.2.2.1. Laboratory accreditation

We utilise LEAF as an accreditation tool to promote sustainability and efficiency of lab practices. Since 2021, we have been working on the implementation of the LEAF tool in (non-profit) laboratory environments in the Netherlands, such as universities and diagnostic labs. In 2023, we aimed to register all Dutch UMCs for the program. As a result, all UMCs in the Netherlands are now actively working with LEAF. We continue to support existing members of the program and host meetings between all parties involved for knowledge sharing. We aim at signing up more labs to systematically drive sustainability in research environments, rather than having a certain accreditation level as a goal. Progression through the LEAF accreditation is supported and encouraged, but not driven by Green Labs NL.

3.2.2.2. Waste reduction and recycling/waste management

Dealing with waste remains challenging, in part due to the lack of know-how on what goes where. We work towards developing national guidelines for improved waste separation in labs alongside waste prevention where possible. We do so by consulting waste contractors and suppliers of Dutch research institutes. These guidelines include information on the material in question and its impact on the environment, together with best-practices on promoting circular use of consumables in labs, such as reusable or more environmentally friendly alternatives, more sustainable in-lab practices, and guidelines for optimising waste separation and recycling.

3.2.2.3. Freezer and Data Challenges

We actively invite research and diagnostic labs to participate in a Freezer Challenge, with the goal to improve sustainable practices of cold storage management (with a focus on Ultra Low Temperature (ULT) and -20°C freezers). As a result, unnecessary storage of samples will be actively cleaned up to free up freezer space, resulting in improved freezer inventory maintenance and a reduction of energy consumption by freezers, with associated savings regarding CO₂-emission and costs. We provide resources and best practices concerning the Freezer Challenge and cold storage maintenance to share with the community on our website.

Similar challenges will be organized focused on cleaning data storage and reducing the production of unnecessary files using greener computing algorithms. Similar to the freezer challenges, the impact of these challenges will be measured and shared and new knowledge and best practices will be shared with the community.

3.2.3. **Funding landscape**

In September 2023, Green Labs NL organised the event ‘Sparking Green Movement in the funding landscape’ that convened grassroots initiatives, funders, and planetary health experts to discuss how funding organisations can support the transition toward just and sustainable (lab) research practices.. Green Labs NL is part of national and international focus groups working on advancing the movement by developing principles, frameworks and goals, and participates in communicating insight and outcomes to the wider scientific community in the form of posts, reports or publications.

3.2.4. **Advocacy.**

To strengthen the voice of our community, we aim to continue to advocate for a just and sustainable transition in science by interacting with ministries, funding agencies and corporations such as Dutch Federation of University Medical Centers (NFU), and by participating in (inter)national events and focus groups, to put relevant topics on the agenda at various organisational levels.

3.2.5. **Talks, workshops & interviews.**

We continue to give talks and workshops to relevant audiences, as a way to educate and expand our community, and to provide them with the relevant tools, the latest knowledge and best practices in laboratory sustainability.

4. **Professionalisation and consolidation of the foundation**

4.1. **Institutional memory**

Green Labs NL is a young organisation in an upcoming field, and the foundation is growing steadily. In order to make this growth sustainable and resilient, we aim to work on our institutional memory. We work on designing a

structure that allows for easily accessible documents on decisions and financial reports for future Green Labs NL members and board members.

4.2. Working structure core group

We aim to evaluate our current working structure and to make a plan for the next years on how the Green Labs NL team manages projects and collaborates.

4.3. Financial stability

In order to fulfil our goals and maintain growth of our foundation, we need to consolidate and perpetuate our financial well-being. In the coming years, we will apply for grants to obtain subsidies to further consolidate and financially support our foundation's endeavours.

4.4. Sustaining contribution of team members

Green Labs NL core members contribute to our foundation mostly on a voluntary basis. In the next few years, we aim to explore how we can acquire funding to reimburse the efforts of our core team members to a certain extent.

4.5. Advisory board

We are currently in the process of appointing an Advisory Board, which will provide solicited and unsolicited advice on administrative tasks and other matters.

5. Our organisational structure

Green Labs NL is led by a core team. The core team consists of the management board of the foundation (formed by a chair, secretary and treasurer) and regular members. The core team is responsible for defining and implementing the vision and mission. For the execution of specific tasks and projects, the core team is supported by project groups which are formed by members of the core team together with other project team members.

5.1 Core Team

Green Labs NL core team members are persons who have pledged their dedication to the running of the foundation Green Labs NL. New core members are admitted based on their relevant knowledge, experience and/or motivation through open interviews. The core team meets online bi-weekly to discuss projects and foundation administrative topics. Twice a year, the core team meets in-person to re-evaluate the mission, vision and goals, to assess the progress on focal points and activities, as well as to create a plan for the coming six months.

5.2 Board

The board consists of three people: the chair, secretary and treasurer. A board member is appointed by a vote of the core team for a period of 1 year, with two possible extensions.

The current board consists of:

Chair: Rolf Slaats

Secretary: Gabriela Dankova

Treasurer: Marit de Kort

5.3 Network / The Dutch Green Labs community

Green Labs NL has a growing community. We get their input and ideas in regular community meetings, which are then discussed during bi-weekly meetings and new tasks are taken up by the core team.

5.4 Collaborations

Green Labs NL aims to work closely with other like-minded parties and, in its way, contribute to a larger social movement. To this end, we are part of alliances such as the Groene Zorg Alliantie (GZA) and Sustainable European Laboratories network (SELS). See 3.1.4 for current and previous partners.

6. Finances

Green Labs NL is a not-for-profit foundation. Participating parties can use (almost all) our meetings and services without paying membership fees.

Since the foundation of Green Labs NL, the foundation has received funding from the ministry of 'Volksgezondheid, Welzijn en Sport' to run the LEAF in NL projects, from the Knowledge Center of Global Health (KCGH) for, From NWO for organising Sure Symp 2022 and as part of a collaboration with the UMCU for development of e-learning. . In the coming few years, Green Labs NL wants to expand their activities (see focal points and activities) and to achieve this we strive for additional and more structural funding.

6.1. Income

Green Labs NL derives its income mainly from income from activities (such as workshop or lecture fees), subsidies or donations. We do not have any sponsors at the moment, but we are open to sponsorship if approached. A precondition is that the potential sponsor does not engage with any activities that conflict with the vision and mission of Green Labs NL.

6.2. Rewards and reimbursement

Green Labs NL does not make (profit) distributions to its employees. Core members may receive reimbursement of expenses.

6.3. Profits and assets

Green Labs NL has no profit motive and does not seek to build up assets. Ideally, income and expenditure are equal, unless capital needs to be built up for a specific purpose, in which case a positive balance sheet should not exceed €15,000 on an annual basis and €75,000 over a four-year period. In case of (unexpected) dissolution of the foundation, the liquidation balance will be transferred to the foundation Groene Zorg Alliantie or foundation Milieu Platform Zorgsector in view of the corresponding mission.

7. Our details (contact and financial)

7.1. Contact details

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7.2. Contact person

Gabriela Dankova (secretary)

7.3. Post Address

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7.4. Financial information

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