

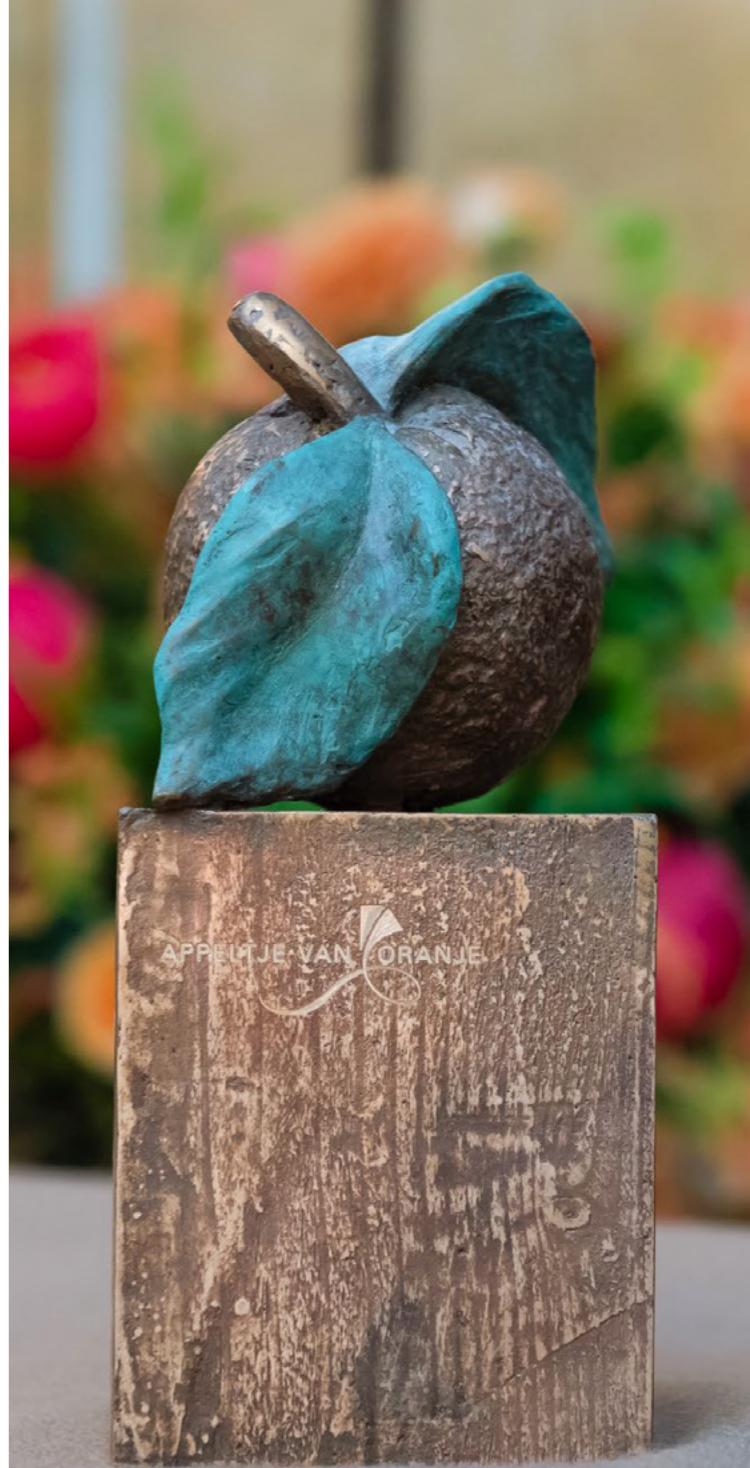
Appeltjes van Oranje 2026

Breaking the cycle of poverty together

Appeltjes van Oranje of Oranje Fonds

A connected society—that is our goal. The thousands of projects we support prove it's possible. Kindness is in our nature. Together with social initiative leaders, we work toward a society in which we care for each other, people have equal opportunities, and feel connected with others in their neighborhood.

Each year we present the Appeltjes van Oranje, THE award for social initiatives. With this prize we recognize and reward three initiatives within the social domain that work toward an inclusive, engaged society. These are initiatives that are unique, creative, and meaningful, and have been successfully active for several years. Their strong results inspire others.





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What does an Appeltje van Oranje mean in practice?

First and foremost, appreciation for the work and commitment of the winning organizations. It is also intended to inspire others. We therefore provide a platform in various ways: for the contenders during the Stemtiendaagse and, around the award ceremony, for the nominees and winners.

Each of the three winners receives a bronze statuette designed and made by Princess Beatrix and a cash prize of € 25,000. The funds may be spent freely within the initiative's objectives. Every year, Queen Máxima presents the three Appeltjes van Oranje at Noordeinde Palace. In anniversary years, King Willem-Alexander presents the prize.

Theme 2026: Breaking the cycle of poverty together

Poverty is a persistent problem affecting people in all parts of our Kingdom. The impact is profound. Poverty is about more than a lack of money; it affects health, opportunities, and the ability to participate. Existing poverty policy is often inadequate or complicated, preventing people from getting the support they need. Social initiatives are therefore indispensable; they work close to people, with understanding and trust, and align with what people need. For the 2026 Appeltjes van Oranje we focus on initiatives that help people make structural progress by building a better future perspective together.

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The numbers show how extensive and urgent the problem is. In the Netherlands, more than half a million people live below the poverty line. Over a million people are just above it but still in financially vulnerable circumstances. On the islands in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom, poverty is also a major issue; it is estimated that 20–30% of households live in poverty. Poverty and debt lead to stress, health problems, social exclusion, and sometimes homelessness. Children growing up in poverty experience the impact daily: more worries at home, fewer opportunities at school, and less room to simply be a child.

Behind these figures are people—people who try to keep their lives on track under great pressure, with resilience, creativity, and perseverance. Yet often with worries too heavy to carry alone. Sustainable solutions are needed, because those trying to escape poverty frequently encounter new obstacles, and existing policy usually targets symptoms rather than underlying causes.

For the 2026 Appeltjes van Oranje, we are looking for social initiatives that help break the cycle of poverty and debt in a sustainable way. Projects that not only provide support but also strengthen people with new knowledge and skills. Initiatives that instill confidence and remove barriers by working in a stress-sensitive way, or by engaging experts by experience or volunteers with a shared (cultural) background. Initiatives that make poverty discussable, contribute to a fairer picture of reality, and show what's possible when people find the right support.

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Criteria

With this edition of the Appeltjes van Oranje, we are seeking exceptional projects. To be eligible, your initiative/project must meet the following substantive conditions.

Your initiative aims to:

- Prevent poverty. For example, by improving financial skills, helping people into education or work, and giving access to schemes and support.

And / or

- Reduce poverty. For example, through debt counseling, improving financial skills, helping people into education or work, or by collaborating with system stakeholders.

And / or

- Empower people living in (imminent) poverty. You strengthen networks, connect people with experts by experience and with each other, and ensure they can participate in society, for example through activities or volunteering. In doing so, you also alleviate the consequences of poverty.



In addition:

- You can clearly explain how your activities help reduce, prevent, or alleviate (the consequences of) poverty and/or debt, and how you strengthen people living in (imminent) poverty.
- You are effective at reaching people in (imminent) poverty and/or with debts, for example by engaging experts by experience and/or focusing on (early) detection.
- You build on people's strengths and encourage them to take charge of what they need to make structural progress. People are actively involved in implementation—beyond mere consultation.

Initiatives that are not eligible:

- Initiatives focused solely on material aid, such as food, clothing, and/or toy banks, exchange shops, etc.—no matter how important—are not eligible for the 2026 Appeltjes van Oranje.
- The same applies to initiatives focused on short-term relief, such as theater visits, personal care (e.g., hairdresser or nail salon visits), etc.

If your organization has multiple locations running the same initiative, apply only once—choose one location's initiative.



Examples of likely contenders

Example 1: A program for individuals and families with (imminent) debts, combining one-on-one financial guidance with pathways to work or study. Through coaching and workshops, participants develop financial and practical skills tailored to their interests and aspirations.

Example 2: Initiatives that help people use their lived experience, such as buddy projects for people living in poverty. By sharing your own experiences, you support another and strengthen yourself.

Example 3: Initiatives that start from participants' strengths—not their vulnerabilities—and encourage them to apply those strengths within the project or organization, with the aim of making poverty discussable.

Example 4: Initiatives that form a crucial link between people living in (imminent) poverty or with debts and the support services—bringing different worlds and systems together.

Example 5: Initiatives that strengthen the living conditions of individuals and families through a mix of educational activities and targeted support on parenting and financial themes.

Example 6: Setting up budgeting courses, savings groups, or peer groups in which people become more aware of their financial behavior and sustainably shift toward healthy, sensible financial habits. This increases financial self-reliance, breaks poverty-related loneliness, and reduces the risk of falling back into debt.

Operational criteria

In addition to the substantive project conditions, we apply several operational criteria for the applying organization:

- The applicant is a legal entity, such as a foundation, association, or cooperative.
- The organization has been active for at least 3–5 years and organizes activities throughout the year. Organizations with one-off, annually recurring activities do not meet the criteria.
- The initiative you submit has been running for at least two years.
- The organization is active in the Netherlands or in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom.
- The organization may operate nationally and/or locally.
- The organization is financially healthy and can continue without the prize.
- The organization has never won an Appeltje van Oranje. An initiative that previously participated in the selection process may reapply if it meets the current guidelines.
- The organization has a social mission.
- Volunteers play an important role in the organization.

Selection process

In October 2026, three social initiatives will receive an Appeltje van Oranje. The selection procedure is as follows:

- These 50 contenders take part in the online Stemtiendaagse from 18–27 May 2026. This gives them a platform and the attention they deserve. The initiative with the highest number of votes secures the first of the 10 nomination spots.
- Next, all 50 contenders pitch to each other and the jury on 12 June (Caribbean) or 13 June (Netherlands) during the Appeltjes van Oranje Pitch Day.
- The jury selects the remaining 9 nominees on this day, bringing the total to 10 nominees: in principle 8 from the Netherlands and 2 from the Caribbean. Votes from the Stemtiendaagse do not count on Pitch Day. The jury applies the criteria mentioned earlier.
- The 10 nominees are visited by Oranje Fonds in June–July. The visit to the Caribbean nominee(s) takes place immediately after Pitch Day.
- In September, the jury selects three winners. The decision is formally ratified by the Oranje Fonds board.
- All three winners receive €25,000 and a bronze Appeltje van Oranje in October.

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How to apply

Applications 12 January to 22 February 2026
More information www.oranjefonds.nl/appeltjes

Of course, you're welcome to point other organizations to the Appeltjes van Oranje—please do! They must however submit their own project themselves.

Questions?

Please contact the Appeltjes van Oranje team at appeltjesvanoranje@oranjefonds.nl.

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voor een verbonden samenleving