

Stichting Journal of Trial and Error

Policy Plan

Name: Stichting Journal of Trial and Error

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Contents

Nonprofit Description	2
Execute Summary	3
Objectives and Activities.....	4
Financial Plan	5
Operations Management.....	8
Financial Record Keeping Policies.....	9
Board of Directors.....	10
Conflicts of Interest.....	11

Nonprofit Description

The Journal of Trial and Error is a Netherlands-based *algemeen nut beogende instelling* (ANBI), translated as a Public Benefit Organization (PBO). To receive ANBI status, an organization must be recognized as being almost entirely committed to the public interest. To read a comprehensive list of what conditions must be met in order to be considered an ANBI, you can make reference to the Dutch government's [webpage](#) on the topic. Some highlighted conditions:

- (1) No natural person or legal entity may dispose of the institution's assets as if they were its own
- (2) Directors and policymakers may not have a majority say in the institution's assets
- (3) We may not hold more capital than is reasonably necessary for our work, i.e. equity must be limited
- (4) Remuneration for policymakers is limited to an expense allowance or minimum attendance fee

As an ANBI, we experience a number of tax [benefits](#):

- (1) We do pay inheritance or gift taxes on inheritances and gifts used for the public interest
- (2) If we make a donation for the general interest, the recipient does not have to pay gift tax
- (3) We are eligible for a refund of energy tax
- (4) Donors can deduct their gifts from income or corporate tax

In order to maintain our ANBI status, we regularly update our files and ensure our continued compliance with all conditions and regulations.

Execute Summary

The Journal of Trial and Error (JOTE) is a non-profit organization dedicated to reshaping academic and research practices by promoting transparency, openness and a culture of embracing failure as a part of the scientific process. Our organization is dedicated to addressing systemic issues in academia, such as the positive publication bias and the publish or perish attitude, by providing innovative platforms for sharing and reflecting on the research process and the challenges we encounter as researchers.

Our flagship initiative, the Journal of Trial and Error, focuses on the publication of negative and null results, methodological failures, and failed replication studies i.e. we publish good science that did not result in a positive result. By highlighting these examples of meaningful negative results we aim to promote institutional change that prioritizes efficient knowledge production.

As the Center of Trial and Error, we offer further resources for researchers including trainings, publishing assistance and software development assistance. We give particular attention to the training and empowerment of Early-Career Researchers, creating spaces for these researchers to explore alternative, value-driven models of academic work. Ultimately, we hope to contribute to the development of a more efficient and open system that benefits researchers, companies, the public and the overall quality and robustness of our scientific knowledge.

Objectives and Activities

At JOTE, we have four primary objectives:

- (1) **Promote Transparency and Accountability in Research:** We seek to foster a culture of openness in academia, ensuring that research processes – including failures and errors – are shared and valued. This objective aims to challenge the current system that often exclusively rewards and recognizes positive results and overlooks the valuable lessons learned from unsuccessful endeavors.
- (2) **Empower Early-Career Researchers:** We aim to create supportive platforms where ECRs can explore alternative academic models, including the development of academic community platforms that support ethical and transparent research and publication processes.
- (3) **Facilitate Institutional Change:** We seek to drive systemic reform in academic infrastructures by promoting policies and practices that prioritize collaboration, transparency, and openness. We already put these values into practice at JOTE, positioning ourselves as a leading example of how you can create such a value-driven culture in the academic landscape. We challenge traditional elements of the scholarly systems that ultimately hinder innovation.
- (4) **Encourage Reflection on Academic Culture:** We aim to provide a space for ongoing critical reflections on the structures of academic education, research and politics. By connecting scholars and institutions committed to change, we work to address fundamental issues in how knowledge is produced and shared.

These objectives inform the main activities that we participate in:

- (1) **Publishing:** At the Journal of Trial and Error, we publish research articles that focus on negative and null results, methodological challenges and rejected grant applications. We operate with a fully open peer review system and are constantly involved in discussions related to reimaging academic publishing. At the Journal for Reproducibility in Neuroscience, we focus on addressing the replication crisis by publishing attempted replications. We also serve the larger academic community through the production and publication of Open Textbooks. In 2024, we started working with Registered Reports, strengthening our commitment to normalizing the discussion of error in science.
- (2) **Training and Workshops:** We provide training sessions, workshops and education resources aimed at opening up our knowledge base on open science practices and transparent methodologies to the larger academic community. These activities are designed in order to equip researchers with the skills and knowledge necessary to develop their own innovative initiatives.
- (3) **Development of Open-Source Tools:** We assist in and independently develop software and digital platforms that promote open research, collaboration, and transparency. This includes working with open-access tools and platforms, such as PubPub, that allow for wider dissemination of research.
- (4) **Collaborative Research Initiatives:** We facilitate cross-disciplinary research collaborations focused on exploring the systemic challenges within academia. These initiatives encourage researchers from various fields to engage in open discussions about the role of failure in scientific inquiry.
- (5) **Advocacy for Policy Change:** We actively advocate for policy reforms within academic institutions, pushing for changes that promote openness, ethical research practices and institutional transparency. This includes developing partnerships with academic organizations and funders to influence higher education policies and practices.

Goals

We understand that science has failure built-in to its fundamental functioning. Scientific investigators go about testing a large variety of potential solutions to a given problem in order to eventually find the correct one. Current scientific publications and practice focus nearly exclusively on successes, distorting our understanding of reality and hindering our progress.

In the upcoming three years we have three primary goals that we would like to focus on:

- (1) Increase the Publication and Visibility of Research Failures
 - a. We aim to increase the number of issues we publish in a given year. Right now, we publish one annual issue and typically produce one additional special issue. We ultimately aim to expand our publication rate to 12 issues, published once a month. In the next three years, we aim to increase our rate of publication to 3 issues, published once every four months.
 - b. We would like to achieve a higher annual readership by expanding our distribution efforts through partnerships with research institutions and libraries.
- (2) Enhance Public and Scientific Acceptance of Research Failures
 - a. We aim to establish a society for Scientific Failure that is dedicated to researching failures in science, managing the journal and hosting a biannual conference on scientific failures. With this increased collaboration with key actors, we aim to contribute to the establishment of an environment that fosters greater participation in the sharing of failed scientific experiments and pays greater attention to the need for robust meta-scientific research, including replication research.
 - b. We would like to expand our current collaboration with the Museum of Failure to create a permanent traveling exhibition sharing instances of scientific failure with a larger audience. It is important that we foster a community understanding of science as successful and unsuccessful experimentation, leading to a stronger sense of trust in the scientific process with the public.
- (3) Increase our Impact Through Partnerships and Innovation
 - a. We aim to strengthen our current collaborations and increase the number of relevant actors with whom we are closely working. We understand that to make an impact, we must find and foster relationships with sympathetic parties who share our values and feel the need to positively impact the scientific enterprise.

Financial Plan

This financial plan outlines the project expenses and income sources to support the operations of the Center of Trial and Error, with a focus on ensuring transparency, responsible use of resources and long-term sustainability. A detailed report of our current expenditures can be found in the appendix.

At the Journal of Trial and Error, we have five primary expense categories:

- (1) Stichting Costs
 - a. These are the costs incurred by maintain our legal status, including banking, administration, representation and our board remuneration.
- (2) Personnel Costs
 - a. This can be further broken down into: project management, public relations and social media, outreach and workshops, IT & Development, and the editor in chief role.
- (3) Journal Requirement Costs
 - a. These are the costs associated with maintaining the minimal set of resources and services to be an indexed and archived academic journal that creates high-quality publications, including website and digital platform maintenance, CrossRef membership, typesetting, copy editing, and printing.
- (4) IT Costs
 - a. These are the costs associated with maintaining our IT environments, including infrastructure, communication, and applications.
- (5) Publishing Costs
 - a. These are the costs associated with running our ancillary publishing activities, including project management, design, copy editing, IT and development, typesetting, and printing costs.

At the Journal of Trial and Error, we have four primary income categories:

- (1) Funding
 - a. This revenue source comes from educational institute endowments. Our previous partners have been Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Universiteit Medical Center Utrecht, Erasmus Universiteit, and Utrecht Universiteit.
- (2) Donations
 - a. As a tax-exempt ANBI, we welcome donations in order to keep our services at low to no cost. We have started fundraiser through donations in the fiscal year 2024 for the first time and have seen promising success.
- (3) Revenue
 - a. When we provide out of house publication services, we invoice for these services. As a result, we generate a small amount of revenue that can be used to mediate the financial impact of offering a majority of our services for free.
- (4) Investment
 - a. We are able to reinvest some of our revenue from one year to another. We are a very lean organization and as such have been able to generate a small amount of revenue that we can invest back into the organization.

The Journal of Trial and Error offers a majority of our services completely for free. We run Diamond Open Access journals, i.e. we do not charge authors to submit with us and we do not charge users to read our content. This means we have had to develop innovative strategies for maintaining our

financial health. To do so, we have taken advantage of strategic partnership with academic institutions, we apply for grants and we are open to receiving donations from various entities.

As a result, we have successfully diversified our income streams. This allows us to be adaptive and agile and does not make us entirely dependent on any one source of income.

We operate with a very lean overhead. We benefit from volunteer work and collaborative work to minimize costs. Where necessary, we work with hired professionals to achieve our goals and ensure our long-term commitments are achieved.

Operations Management

At the Journal of Trial and Error, we have a two-tiered management organization.

The Board

The Board of Directors is responsible for ensuring the long term strategy and development of the organization. As Board Members, we receive updates from daily managers that inform our strategic developments and functional organization. The Board is responsible for the financial and legal health of the organization.

Section Leads

For the primary sections of our organization, Publishing, Journals, Education, IT, and Outreach, we have section leads. Section leads are responsible for managing daily communication with their section members. Depending on the size of the section, this might range from one (1) to ten (10) members, and thus the details of how often meetings must happen and the nature and structure of the meetings are section-specific. Section leads are responsible for keeping track of stress points and limits to development that can then be communicated to the board for consultation and remediation.

Due to the collaborative nature of our work at the Journal of Trial and Error, there are sometimes sections that are only temporarily existent. In this case, a section lead is assigned for the specific project and the responsibilities for the section lead are preformed as usual.

Financial Record Keeping Policies

As an ANBI, we are required to make our financial information easily accessible to the public. To do so, we feature our policy plan, remuneration policy, and financial statement on our website updated annually.

All of our financial records are thus accurate, complete and reflect the true nature of our transactions. They are recorded promptly to ensure that they are up-to-date. Financial transactions are back by supporting documents when relevant, such as receipts, invoices, grant agreements or contracts.

All of our financial records are maintained securely with limited access to confidential information via restricted access systems and password protections.

Records Maintained:

- (1) Income Records: donations, grants, sponsorships, revenue, fundraising
- (2) Expense Records: operational costs, program expenses, administrative and overhead costs
- (3) Bank Statements
- (4) Payroll Records
- (5) Tax Documentation

These records are maintained for a minimum of seven (7) years, in compliance with Dutch tax law.

Board of Directors

Chair: Stefan Gaillard, one of the co-founders of the journal. He is a PhD candidate in 'Philosophy and Science Studies', studying the role of promises in science, as well as project coordinator at the interdisciplinary platform 'The New Utrecht School'. In addition, he is active in the municipal politics of Utrecht.

Secretary: Jobke Visser (aka Alex Visser) is the Secretary, managing editor, and copy editor at the Journal of Trial and Error. Alex is a graduate of Utrecht University (BA Philosophy, especially political philosophy and ethics) and Maastricht University (MSc European Studies, exchange semester with Sciences Po Grenoble). Alex Visser works as a consultant for public affairs and has previously worked as research assistant and debate trainer/moderator for political, student and business audiences. As managing editor and copy editor they are actively involved with the editorial process within JOTE.

Treasurer: Marcel Hobma is a freelance science- and investigative journalist based in Utrecht. He has a background (rMsc) in history and philosophy of science, and writes mostly about the (bio)medical sciences. As a board member of JOTE, he is vice treasurer and responsible for the social media and the Blog of Trial and Error.

General Board Member: Thomas F. K. Jorna is the IT Director and Production Editor for the Center of Trial and Error. They have a background in physics and philosophy of physics. They currently work as a software developer at Knowledge Futures developing the open publishing platform PubPub, which the Journal of Trial and Error has been using as their main publishing platform since its inception.

General Board Member: Maura Burke is a PhD candidate in the philosophy of science at Utrecht University, focusing on the conceptual foundations of lawhood in the natural and legal sciences. She has held multiple positions across her 5 years at the Journal of Trial and error, but currently serves exclusively as a board member.

Conflicts of Interest

The purpose of this COI statement is to ensure that directors, staff and volunteers of the Journal of Trial and Error act in the best interests of the organization, uphold its mission, and maintain its integrity. The policy is designed to avoid an conflicts of interest that could improperly influence or appear to influence decision-making and operations.

(1) Definition of COI:

- a. A conflict of interest occurs when a person's personal, professional, or financial interests interfere, or appear to interfere, with their ability to act impartially in the best interests of the organization. This can include situations where:
 - i. Personal interests conflict with the organization's objectives.
 - ii. A financial or other significant interest in a transaction or decision could lead to personal gain.
 - iii. A family member or close associate stands to benefit from the decisions made by the individual in question.

(2) Individuals Covered by Policy:

- a. This policy applies to all members of the Board of Directors, officers, employees, and volunteers of the organization.

(3) Disclosure of Conflicts

- a. All individuals covered by this policy are required to disclose any potential conflicts of interests as soon as they arise.

(4) Managing Conflicts

- a. Upon disclose of a potential or actual conflict, the Board of Directors will review the circumstances and determine whether a conflict exists.
- b. If a conflict is identified, the individual involved must recuse themselves from participating in discussions or decisions related to the matter.

(5) Failure to Disclose:

- a. Failure to disclose a known conflict of interest may result in disciplinary action, including removal from a position of authority within the organization. In severe cases, it could lead to legal repercussions.