2012 Research Centres - AMBER, APC, Insight, IPIC, Infant, SSPC and MaREI - Call for Submission of Proposals for Phase 2 Funding

Frequently Asked Questions

Last Updated 25th May 2017

Queries should be directed to: Centres@sfi.ie

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1. LEAD-APPLICANT, CO-APPLICANTS, FUNDED INVESTIGATORS & COLLABORATORS

Q1a: Under the SFI Research Centres Programme - Call for Submission of Proposals for Phase 2 Funding, what is the definition of a lead applicant?
It is assumed that the Lead Applicant will be the existing Research Centre Director. If this is not the case, SFI will need to be informed at least 2 months in advance of the submission deadline.

The Lead Applicant will be responsible for the scientific and technical direction of the research programme and the submission of reports to SFI. The Lead Applicant has primary responsibility and accountability for carrying out the research within the funding limits awarded and in accordance with the terms and conditions of SFI.

Q1b: If a Co-Applicant does not meet the standard eligibility criteria but has been pre-approved by SFI previously to act as a co-PI in the Centre, does that mean that they are eligible to apply as a co-Applicant to the Phase 2 proposal?
Yes, that is the case

Q1c: Is a co-PI equivalent to a co-Applicant?
Not necessarily. It is up the lead-Applicant to assign all co-applicants in SESAME. The co-applicants could be a mixture of existing co-PIs and new PIs. It is up to the Centre management team to decide what the applicant group will be for the Centre as it moves into Phase 2. It is important to realise that any existing co-PIs in the Centre that will remain in the Centre for Phase 2, will undergo peer review again.

Q1d: 'The Lead Applicant and Co-Applicants must hold a PhD or equivalent for at least 8 years by the deadline'. Can criteria be specified or do we submit candidates now for approval?
All co-Applicants will be checked for eligibility and their CVs will be reviewed by the international review panel, regardless of whether they have been pre-approved already as a co-PI within the Centre

Q1e: Is there a goal/ % gender balance guideline that needs to be achieved?
There is no goal or target set by SFI. However, the Centre should be setting a baseline form which improvements can be made. Refer to the SFI Gender Strategy for more details

Q1f: Can we include letters of support from other institutes/centres etc. we are planning to work with in phase 2 of the Centre?
No, unsolicited letters of support are not permitted. Letters of support from the research bodies of the applicant, each co-applicant and each funded investigator involved in the Phase 2 application are required,

however, letters of support from industry partners or other partners you are planning to work with are not permitted.

Q1g: Do we need to add all our current industry members under the Collaborators tab?

Yes, all current industry partners, irrespective of whether they will remain as partners in Phase 2, should be added to the Collaborators section of the application page in SESAME. No proposed "new" industry partners should be added to the application page in SESAME. Industry partners who have not yet signed a collaborative research agreement cannot be listed as an industry collaborator on the application page in SESAME.

Q1h: Where should items such as membership of committees, scientific honours etc. be entered within the CV template?

Depending on the nature of each item, applicants can enter the information into either the Career Profile section or the Key Achievements section of the CV template.

Q1i: What are the page limits for the lead-applicant and co-applicants' CVs?

The lead-applicant and co-applicants' CVs must not exceed the **six**-page limit per CV. Within the CV, there is a maximum page limit of **three** pages for Section 1 and **three** pages for Section 2.

Q1j: For co-PIs and FIs added to the Centre after the start date of the award, can their outputs originating prior to them joining the Centre, be included in the Centre metrics?

No. Only outputs which arise as a result of Centre activities can be included in the Centre metrics.

2. ELIGIBILITY

Q2a: How many applications can be made to the SFI Research Centres Programme - Call for Submission of Proposals for Phase 2 Funding?

Only one submission per Centre is allowed. It is assumed that the Lead Applicant will be the existing Research Centre Director

Q2b: How does SFI define a senior author?

A senior author is one who is listed as first or joint first author, reflecting the fact that he/she has provided the greatest intellectual contribution, has held the primary responsibility for collecting and analysing data, and for the writing of the manuscript and associated drafts. The last author will also be considered as a senior author, since this position generally reflects his/her overall responsibility for the study and suggests that a level of mentorship has been provided.

It will be noted that different publishers have differing rules on how the senior authorship is indicated (e.g., by using asterisks, underlining, placing the name first or last in the list of authors, etc.); of overriding

importance however is that the applicant should be able to convince and reassure reviewers that they are the key author on these publications.

Please note that senior authorship does NOT necessarily mean that they were responsible financially for the research that was reported.

Q2c: What qualifies as an independent research grant, as defined by the call documentation?

The lead applicant and co-applicants are expected to have demonstrated research independence through securing at least one independent research grant as lead investigator or as co-investigator. Eligible research grants would be expected to support at least one full-time equivalent, excluding the applicant(s), and include research team costs e.g. materials and consumables. This EXCLUDES smaller awards such as travel grants, equipment grants, post-graduate fellowships, post-doctoral fellowships, and awards of short duration (12 months or less). Laboratory fit-out / start-up funding, and awards that have not been subject to external international peer review are also excluded. You will be required to provide evidence to support the validity of an award if required. If you are uncertain regarding the eligibility of funding you have received, please contact SFI at [centres@sfi.ie.](mailto:centres@sfi.ie)

Q2d: Can someone be co-applicant in two Research Centre applications for Phase 2 funding?

Yes. However, it is important to bear in mind that the evaluation process will examine the commitment and work load of individuals in determining the suitability of such an arrangement.

Q2e: Can someone be lead applicant on one application while being a co-PI/co-applicant in another Research Centre?
Centre Directors/Lead Applicants can be a Funded Investigator or collaborator in other Centres. However, they <u>cannot</u> be a Co-PI in a second Centre. Co-PIs/Co-applicants – can be a Co-PI in a max of one other centre (subject to assessment/review of workload), or can be a FI/collaborator.

Q2f: The eligibility criteria states "10 international peer reviewed articles" - does this include books, editorship, special issue editing, standards, patents?

Eligible publications must be original, international peer reviewed research publications. Review articles, patents, standards, editorship, special issue editing and books are not acceptable.

Q2g: Should CVs be uploaded to SESAME for all Funded Investigators?
There are several Funded Investigator (FI)s already active within the Centre. The proposal allows for addition of new FIs. CVs are not required for new FIs, but if the Centre is funded, more detail on the FIs may be requested by the SFI Post Award team at a later stage. It is important to note that all Funded Investigators, included in the application for Phase 2 funding, must satisfy the eligibility criteria by the closing date for submissions of the proposal as defined in the call document.

3.   FUNDING

Q3a: At the application stage, it is not always possible to know if you will utilise/recruit someone existing in the public sector system or a new person. How is one then to know which scale to utilise?

SFI recognises that the identity of team members may not be known at the time of grant preparation. In such cases grant applicants should request budget contributions for team members using the 'Existing Public Servant' scale. If a team role is ultimately filled by a 'new entrant' SFI will decide whether funds liberated by such an occurrence shall be returned to SFI or can be used productively elsewhere within the grant. Further details about SFI's Grant Application Budget Policy can be found (http://www.sfi.ie/funding/grant-policies/grant-applications-budget-policy/)

Q3b: Does SFI contribution cover the overhead on industry contribution?

No, SFI will not pay overhead on the industry contribution. Overheads will be paid on SFI contribution only.

Q3c: Do postgraduates only fit within platform research or can they be situated within targeted projects?

Potentially postgraduates/postdoctoral research can be recruited to undertake research within both the platform and targeted project components of the Centre.

Q3d: Can a co-applicant salary be paid from the Centre?

No, please refer to the Grant Application Budget Policy available at: http://www.sfi.ie/funding/grant-policies/grant-applications-budget-policy/

Q3e: Can a Funded Investigator's salary be paid from the Centre?

No, a Funded Investigator should be an academic member of staff or an independent researcher employed by an eligible Irish Research Body, who is undertaking a management role in a research project within the Research Centre.

Q3f: Does SFI calculate the industry cash contribution as the total industry contribution or the funding available after the Research Body overhead and VAT deductions?

The industry cash contribution will be calculated as the direct research funding after any overheads, VAT or other Research Body contributions are deducted.

Q3g: Are field work costs allowed and if so, how they be categorised within the requested budget?

All costs for field work must be eligible, reasonable and directly aligned to the research programme. Applicants should strongly justify the requests for such costs including travel-related costs within the

travel section of the budget and any associated consumables within the Materials & Consumables, as separate line items.

Q3h: Is it permissible to request funding to cover travel and subsistence for the Scientific Advisory Committee?

Yes, it is possible to request funding to cover the travel costs of the Scientific Advisory Committee.

Q3i: The Budget tables still have the Spokes budget broken down to individual projects, I thought that it had been agreed that this would not be required as we will not be in position to provide details given the fact that the projects are not even defined at this point.

Detail is not required but you should still be able to give an estimate of roughly how many Spokes/Targeted projects you would anticipate carrying out and how much budget you would typically require from SFI to run each project. This can be based on experience gained in the last four years. It should also be aligned with activities outlined in the business plan.

Q3j: Is clinical buyout an eligible cost?

Yes, clinical buyout is an eligible cost in the Operations section of the Budget.

Q3k: The Operations component of the Centre budget is capped at a maximum of 20% of the SFI component of the Centre Research Centre budget plus the projected industry cash cost share component. This max 20% cap used to be 20% the SFI component + the industry cash + the industry in-kind components. Wondering why the industry in kind component has been dropped from the calculations?

When monitoring the breakdown of the operations budget, it is much more realistic to deal in cash and this is the approach we will take going forward.

Q3l: Any idea of what size of a discretionary fund is acceptable relative to overall SFI request?

No guidance will be provided. It is up to the Centre to request an appropriate discretionary fund to support the needs of their Centre.

Q3m: Can we be given some direction on 'fees' which are acceptable to SFI for the Governance Committee? It is important that the Centres are consistent.

No guidance will be provided on fees. It is up to the Centre to propose a fee structure for their governance committee.

Q3n: Can 'Subsistence' costs also be included for hosting International Researchers? The same question also applies if we send researchers for extended periods to international research centres? Is this what is meant by a 'Travel Fellowship'? We will adhere to

In the case of working visits of applicant or team members, the rates sought for subsistence and other allowances and must comply with the relevant policy of the Research Body and must not deviate from the rates published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. Business class travel is not an allowable cost. In addition, funding requests to host high-calibre international collaborators in Ireland to work with researchers in the Investigator's lab to carry out research for a fixed period of time may be considered.

These collaborators must be prominent high profile international researchers from academia or industry. The visit must encourage further collaborations with world-class centres of research excellence and help raise international awareness and recognition of high-quality research taking place in the Investigator's lab. Funding may also be requested for short term exchanges of team members or summer students.

Q3o: Can we also include a 'Summer Internship' Programme in our operations costs?

Yes, as above.

Q3p: How do we account for research that we include in our overall Centre Strategy and our associated Research Plan BUT we envisage will be funded by H2020 (or other EU) funding?

The Research Programme (Section 6) of the Phase 2 proposal is where the platform research of the Centre should be described. As the Centre moves into Phase 2, 33% of its funding could potentially come from EU funding sources. The platform research, should include a description of all planned research projects, regardless of the funding source. Section 7 (Business Plan) of the Phase 2 proposal is where the Centre must describe its plans to secure major wins in Horizon 2020 and its future equivalent (FP9).

Q3q: Is there a maximum % that can be spent in 'Platform' versus 'Spoke'?

There is no limit on the percentage budget that can be spent on Platform research vs. Spokes budget; however, you do have to ensure that the operations budget is capped at 20% of the SFI budget plus the industry cash cost share.

Q3r: Other than those listed in the SFI Grant Budget policy, are there any revised guidelines in place with regard to budgeting for travel and material costs per headcount category? For example, currently SFI list €1,500 per annum for PI's for the duration of the award and €1,500 for other team members for each year less one of the award. Can we continue to apply these guidelines in phase 2?

Yes.

Q3s: With regard to EU projects, are there any rules covering the number and type of EU projects that must be targeted to achieve the NE_NC Target?

No.

Q3t: Should the Phase 2 budget be updated to reflect the latest public service pay restoration measures as per the Lansdowne Road agreement?

Yes. As the call is still open, the new salary scales should be used when preparing the budget for the Phase 2 application. Refer to the SFI website for the revised salary scales. http://www.sfi.ie/funding/grant-policies/grant-applications-budget-policy.html

Q3u: Can revenue from licences be counted as part of the industry cost share?

No, revenue from licences cannot be counted as part of the industry cash cost share of the Centre.

Q3v: At this stage we cannot validate if all PIs are including or excluding overhead in the total funding allocated to them in an award (in funding diversification section in SESAME). We assume this is ok?

SFI cannot validate the funding allocated to a PI in an external award. It is expected that the amount reported excludes overhead. It is up to the PI to exclude the overhead from the total amount of funding allocated to him/her through an award which they list in the Funding Diversification section of their Research Profile in SESAME.

Q3w: When you say '% of funding allocated to PI' in the Funding Diversification table, how is that calculated?

This information is pulled directly from the PI's Funding Diversification data in their individual Research Profiles in SESAME. The PI enters this value manually upon entering a transaction in the Funding Diversification section. SESAME does not calculate this value.

Q3x: Budget justification: The call document asks for justification of all positions, but there isn't enough space for this in 10 pages, as well as all other parts of the budget justification.

A high-level overview of the research and operational staff required to run the Centre is required. SFI acknowledges that, as target projects are not yet defined, it is difficult to say exactly how many research staff are required. However, based on experience gained through the first four years of operation, a description of the types of researchers required and their salary level should be possible. If the Centres is funded for Phase 2, a more detailed review of the budget will follow. **Increases in the total amount requested will not be permitted following the funding decision**, but a detailed budget allocation across years and categories will be requested.

4.   INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT

Q4a: What is the minimum number of industrial partners required on a targeted project?

Each targeted project must involve at least one industry partner.

Q4b: Can government funded agencies, charities or similar entities, engage in SFI Research Centre submissions?

Yes, where appropriate, however, their participation will <u>not</u> be considered to satisfy the eligibility criterion of industry engagement. Representatives from not-for-profit bodies should be named as official collaborators rather than as lead-, co-applicants or funded investigators and will not be eligible to receive SFI funding. For specific queries please email centres@sfi.ie.

Q4c: Can commercial semi-state organisations engage in SFI Research Centres submissions?

Yes, where appropriate, and their participation will be considered to satisfy the eligibility criterion of industry engagement. Representatives from semi-state bodies should be named as industry collaborators and will not be eligible to receive SFI funding. For specific queries please email centres@sfi.ie.

Q4d: Is it necessary for a multi-national which is a partner on a targeted project to have a base in Ireland?

It is not a requirement that the company has a base in Ireland. However, proposals that involve industrial participants from outside Ireland will need to clearly make a strategic case for their involvement, to demonstrate the potential benefit to the Irish economy or Irish society.

Q4e: How is industry cost-share defined and at what stage is cost-share required?

See section 7 of the Phase 2 Proposal template

Q4f: Is the definition of an SME consistent with EI's definition at http://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/About-Us/Our-Clients/SME-Definition.html?

Yes.

Q4g: Can a Technology Centre be considered as an industry partner in a SFI Research Centre?

Although an EI/IDA Technology Centre is not considered as an 'industry partner', companies who are participating in Technology Centres are encouraged to participate in the SFI Research Centres Programme as industry partners.

Q4h: Can wholly funded collaborative research projects contribute towards the industry cost share?

In some cases, the industry partner stipulates full ownership of the foreground IP and is willing to pay the full cost of the project. Although the industry partner can have automatic rights to own the IP arising from such a project, a Collaborative Research Agreement must still be negotiated and signed by the parties before the research project commences, and the agreement must include a clause describing how the results of the project will be disseminated. This is called a wholly funded collaborative research project. If such an agreement is in place and the Research Centre Director is satisfied that the contribution of the

project towards the goals of the Research Centre is clearly justified, the cash paid (directs costs) and any in-kind contributions made by the industry partner can be counted towards the industry cost share

In all cases, the Research Centre Director must be satisfied (or warrants) that any projected cash contributions from each industry partner are free and unencumbered and have not been used to secure a support grant from EI, IDA or any other agency.

A wholly funded Collaborative Research Project should not be confused with a contract research project. A contract research project involves a company paying a Research Performing Organisation (RPO) to deliver a product or service with a definitive outcome. For this kind of project, a profit margin is normally built into the costs, VAT is applicable and there is no requirement for the RPO to disseminate the results of the project. Cash from contract research projects cannot be counted towards the industry cost share. Although SFI recognises that these are important activities in which the Research Centre can engage with industry partners, they are not viewed as Collaborative Research Projects in which the industry partner is making an intellectual contribution, the research results can be disseminated and new IP can be generated.

Q4i: What is eligible as in-kind contributions?

Eligible in-kind contributions include personnel, equipment, student placement with industry partners, software, materials, data etc. Please refer to the SFI website for details: http://www.sfi.ie/funding/grant-policies/industry-cost-share/.

Q4j: Are cost contributions from public sources recognised as in-kind cost-share?

Contributions, cash or in-kind, from public sources will not be counted as an industry contribution. Specific queries on the eligibility of cash and in-kind contributions should be directed to centres@sfi.ie

Q4k: Is it a requirement that there must be SME involvement in the Centre?

Although not mandating SME involvement, SFI welcomes and encourages the Research Centres to actively engage with SMEs. It is at the discretion of the applicant team to secure engagement from industry partners, large or small, which are best aligned with the research agenda and goals of the Centre.

Q4l: For a possible industry membership scheme, can all cash be for membership – how are targeted projects then defined?

It is at the discretion of the Centre to determine how the membership model is structured and for what purpose the industry funding is used.

Q4m: What is the view of SFI on international collaborators or industry partners that wish to fund quality R&D initiatives in Ireland?

International partners are welcome to participate. However, the Centre should be mindful of the overall programme goal – to provide an economic benefit to Ireland – and ensure that inclusion of such partners will contribute to this goal.

Q4n: What is the expected link (if any) between core research and targeted projects?

It is at the discretion of the individual Centre to determine the structure. We would anticipate that the core research activity would provide background knowledge which is common across a range of targeted projects rather than being tied to any one specific targeted project or company. Targeted projects would then focus on more specific questions and draw upon the findings of the platform research activities.

Q4o: Is there a mechanism for securing funding to support the addition of new Targeted Projects or Spokes to a Research Centre after it has commenced?

New Targeted Projects or Spokes can be added to a Research Centre through the SFI Spokes programme which currently operates on both a fixed deadline and rolling call basis. Please refer to the SFI Spokes Programme webpage for further details.

Q4p: Are letters of support required from each industry partner involved in a targeted project?

In the original Research Centre proposal submission, letters of support from each industry partner were required outlining their intention to participate in the proposed Research Centre and their cash and in-kind contributions. **These are not required for the Phase 2 proposal**. In section 11 of the Phase 2 proposal, case studies of the existing industry partners and their rationale for working with the Research Centres must be provided. The case studies must convince the review panel that the Centre has strength in its existing partnerships and has developed a strong enough track record to meet the increased targets proposed.

Q4q: Section 7 (Business Plan) of the Phase 2 Proposal states that "the Centre budget is direct costs only and does not include the SFI or industry contribution towards the overhead of the Research Body".
We have emails stating that any overheads returned to the Centre from DIFCOs (wholly funded collaborative research projects) can be counted towards cash contribution. This seems to conflict with that position.

You are correct, any overheads returned to the Centre from a wholly funded collaborative research project can be counted towards the cash contribution. However, this should be presented to SFI as a direct cost. What is important is the amount of direct costs that are provided by the industry partner to the Centre to complete the project. If this for example, €100K plus €20K overhead which goes directly to the Centre, this should be reported as €120k direct costs.

Q4r: 'Cash projections presented in the business plan must be provided in direct costs' – is this also the cash for fully funded projects?

Yes

Q4s: What is the definition of an eligible industry partner?

Broadly speaking, an industry partner is a private, research-active, for-profit company located in Ireland or abroad. Although collaborations with government exchequer funded entities such as funding agencies, government departments or other agencies of the state are encouraged, these are not eligible as industry partners for the Research Centres Programme. Likewise, charities and not-for-profit organisations are not eligible industry partners. Commercial semi-state companies such as the group of companies under CIE, EirGrid, ESB, etc. and their similar counterparts worldwide are eligible industry partners. If you require clarification as to the eligibility of a potential industry partner, please email your Scientific Programme Manager or centres@sfi.ie in advance of proposal submission.

Q4t: Can we have targeted projects without industry partners (for example, with EU partners instead)?

No, targeted projects must involve at least one industry partner

Q4u: Can we include testimonials from industry partners that we have done collaborative research through H2020 projects with, but not through a targeted industry project (i.e. supported by SFI funding)?

No, the testimonials should be provided by industry partners directly involved in targeted projects funded through Phase 1 of the Centre.

Q4v: Can we include a quote from an industry partner in a case study?

The primary aim of the case studies is to convince the panel that you have effective collaborations with industry partners and that you are likely to secure the required cash share in phase 2 of the centre. Centres can include a quote from an industry partner in their case study, however, it is important to stress that each case study can only be 1-page maximum and the Centres must address each of the headings provided.

Q4w: There is no page limit for Section 11 – Industry partner Overview in the Phase 2 Proposal.

In this section, the Centre must provide a one-page case study for each industry partner involved with the Centre to date and likely to be involved going forward, describing what 'benefits' they will gain from the Centre both in the near and long term. The number of case studies is going to vary from Centre to Centre and therefore no page limit was defined. **However, please note that no additional material should be provided in Section 11 other than the case studies. Any additional text provided will not be shared with the review panel.**

Q4x: We are developing a Spoke proposal that will be submitted to SFI in the next few months. Should the potential industry partners on the Spoke be included in the list of industry collaborators on SESAME?

You should not be adding the names of the industry partners on the new potential Spoke to the list of industry collaborators on SESAME as they are not industry collaborators yet; i.e. they have not yet formally signed a Collaborative Research Agreement. However, you can refer to potential new industry partners on any new Spokes applications in the narrative of the business plan; see below from Section 7 of the Phase 2 proposal.

"The business plan should include details on the strategy for targeting significant new industry partnerships, re-engagement and upscaling of existing partnerships, the strategy for major wins in Horizon 2020 and its future equivalent (FP9) and other international sources of funding, including charity and philanthropic sources."

Q4y: Should we include an update of Spokes awards that have been offered but are still outstanding due to the state aid questionnaire?

An update on the Spoke project can be included in Appendix (B) of the Progress Report. You can also refer to the new Spoke award in the business plan and refer to potential new industry partners on any new Spokes applications in the narrative of the business plan; see below from Section 7 of the Phase 2 proposal. You should not be adding the names of the industry partners on the new Spoke to the list of industry collaborators on SESAME unless they have signed a collaborative research agreement.

"The business plan should include details on the strategy for targeting significant new industry partnerships, re-engagement and upscaling of existing partnerships, the strategy for major wins in Horizon 2020 and its future equivalent (FP9) and other international sources of funding, including charity and philanthropic sources."

Q. It has been stated throughout the call document and at Directors meetings that industry support letters outlining cash and in-kind commitments are not required for the Phase 2 submission. So, where do we talk about new potential industry partners?

Provision of industry support letters will make the application ineligible. It was agreed very early in this process that industry letters of support are meaningless given that Phase 2 of the Centre will not start until late 2019.

New potential industry partners can be referenced in the narrative of the business plan. They can also be referenced in the narrative of the Research Programme.

"The business plan should include details on the strategy for targeting significant new industry partnerships, re-engagement and upscaling of existing partnerships, the strategy for major wins in Horizon 2020 and its future equivalent (FP9) and other international sources of funding, including charity and philanthropic sources."

5. REMIT

Q5a: Can funding be allocated for PI-led teams looking at areas complementary to science and engineering such as policy, economic analysis etc.?

The principal focus of the research activity should be oriented basic and applied research in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), which promotes and assists the development and competitiveness of industry, enterprise and employment in Ireland. However, SFI may consider funding a component of the research activity in interdisciplinary areas which are complementary to the STEM activity.

6. IMPACT

Q6a: What is impact?

We define Impact as *"the demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy".* Thus, the direct and indirect 'influence' of research, or its 'effect' on an individual, a community, the development of policy, or the creation of a new product, service or technology.

Please refer to the [SFI website](www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-research-impact/)[1] for additional details.

Q6b: Will impact be evaluated as part of the review process?

Impact will be a key evaluation criterion. To be considered for funding, proposals must achieve an appropriate level of excellence in both the scientific/technical and impact evaluation.

Q6c: What if the research is reviewed as excellent but the impact is not?

Only proposals achieving excellence in both (scientific research and impact) will be considered for funding. Please refer to Appendix 1 of the Call Document for a detailed description of the review criteria.

7. Application Submission Process

Q7a: When will applicants be able to access the application submission page on SESAME?

The application will be available on SESAME at least six weeks in advance of the submission deadline.

Q7b: Do the various fields need to be completed chronologically, or can we skip to later sections and come back to earlier section (eg ethics table) later?

The fields in SESAME can be completed in any order. Please ensure to click 'save draft' after editing the application to ensure that no changes are lost. You cannot submit the application until all mandatory fields have been completed.

Q7c: What level of detail is required in relation to the Ethical Issues section of the submission?

SFI will require evidence that relevant ethical and regulatory approval has been granted for studies involving human or animal subjects prior to an award commencing. That is, should a Centre be approved for Phase 2 funding, evidence of regulatory approval will be required before the Phase 2 award starts (2019). If it is the case that such research may not commence until a later stage of the Phase 2 Research Centre award, SFI may permit submission of ethical and regulatory approvals following the award start date but prior to commencement of the research involving animal and/or human subjects. For the purpose of the Phase 2 submission in June, you are only required to complete the Ethical Issues table

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[1] www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-research-impact/

which you can download from the application page in SESAME when it goes live. This table is also included in Section 5 of the [Guidance for Applicants on Ethical and Scientific Issues](#). The more detailed information regarding the study design is not required at this stage for the Phase 2 submission in June.

Q7d: If a PI makes changes to their SESAME Research Profile after they have been aligned to the Centre Phase 2 application and pulled over the relevant data from their profile, will the Centre application automatically update?

If a PI makes a change to a funding diversification transaction on their individual Research Profile after the data has been pulled into the Centre application, the data on the Centre application will automatically update (up to the time and date of submission) as per the new information on the PI's Research Profile. For example, if a PI pulled in a "current" H2020 award to the centre application, and later changes the status of the award to expired on their profile, this update will automatically be reflected on the Centre Application. However, if a PI adds a new funding diversification transaction to their profile they will need to open the Centre application and, under the Research Funding section, click 'Add from Profile', tick the relevant awards and click 'Attribute' to add to the application.

Q7e: Can we use hyperlinks in the Progress Report or Phase 2 proposal?

Hyperlinks and URLs are only allowed when specifically noted in call documents or SESAME guidance/instructions. The use of hyperlinks is typically limited to citing information already in the public domain which is **non-critical to the evaluation of the proposal**. Hyperlinks and URLs may not be used to provide additional information, which would be necessary for application review, and as a means of circumventing page limits. Reviewers are not obligated to view linked sites and are cautioned that they should not directly access a website (unless the link to the site was specifically requested in application instructions). When allowed, you must reference the actual URL text so it appears on the page, for example in brackets or in a footnote, rather than hiding the URL behind a specific word or phrase.

Q7f: Will there be a validation error if a researcher enters the > sign in relation to number of senior publications?

Yes, the 'Senior Author Publications' field on the application page in SESAME is a numeric field. Non-numeric characters will result in the validation error "*Invalid numeric input of Senior Author Publications*".

Q7g: What's the difference between Academic and Funded Investigator in the collaborator dropdown?

An official collaborator may be either (a) an academic member of staff of an Irish or international Research Body or (b) a member of a relevant non-academic institution, such as a Government Agency, who is committed to providing a focused contribution for a specific task(s). The collaborator will serve under the direction of the Lead Applicant or one of the Co-Applicants, and may or may not receive funding through the award. Official collaborators may not be the primary supervisor/mentor of postgraduate students, postdoctoral researchers or research staff enrolled on the Award. An "SFI Funded Investigator (FI)" is an SFI designated title which recognises the level of input of a researcher to a large scale SFI award such as a

SFI Research Centre. An FI is an academic member of staff or independent researcher employed by an eligible Irish Research Body, who is undertaking a management role in a research project within the Research Centre. FIs have responsibility for a research project, budget and personnel within the Research Centre and will serve under the direction of one of the Research Centre Co-Applicants.

8. Scope of the Review

Q8a: There is no mention in call document or template of need to describe plans for 2017-2019 just progress from 2013-2017?

That is correct, the review panel are tasked with reviewing progress from the start of the Centre to the date of submission (June 14th 2017). As stated in the call document, page 33, "*the overriding purpose of the Progress Report is to enable the RCs to provide sufficient information for an international review panel to determine whether the Centre has delivered on undertakings submitted as part of its original proposal and furthermore, if it has surpassed original objectives set including but not limited to cost share targets, targets set against defined Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), leveraged funding etc".*

There is an opportunity in **Section 2 (Progress against Original Objectives)** of the Progress Report to describe if and how any of the original objectives have changed and if any new opportunities have arisen that have resulted in the Centre acquiring or changing objectives. This dialogue could reference plans for 2017 – 2019 if appropriate.

Q8b. In the Research Programme section of the Progress Report, the section has a no page limit references section where we provide a full list of all references including author, title of article, name and date of publication etc. Can we include in this references section the publications generated by the Targeted Projects, associated projects and platform projects? These are very space consuming to include as full references when listing as project outputs in the research programme section.

Yes, you can include in the references section the publications generated by the Targeted Projects, associated projects and platform projects. Please be aware though that the full list of outputs from the Research Profile will be shared to the panel in advance of the postal review. However, if you are referring to a particular paper, or conference presentation in the narrative of the Progress report, it may be beneficial for the reviewer to see the reference immediately to hand. It is really up to you as to how best to "tell the story" but the References section is available to you to add relevant outputs.

9. Review Process

Q9a. Has the Postal review scoring mechanism been dropped? Missing from the document.

Appendix 1, Page 21-28 describes the detailed reviewer guidance and scoring mechanism for the postal reviews**.**

Q9b. Is scoring in each section the same e.g. score of 3 in EPE counts as same as score of 3 in Research?

The scores and commentary for the postal reviews will be provided to each Centre for response. The purpose of the postal review stage is to enable initial criticisms to be addressed at the site review. The site review panel will decide on three possible outcomes; DNF, Fund or Proceed to Open Competition. The weighting on their decision is clearly described in Appendix 1.

Q9c. How will the Cost Share score be devised?

Will the cost share be measured against the 4yr target 10% and/or stretch goal target? What will full marks be given for? Will equal weighting be given for Cash and In-Kind in the cost share scoring (again same question as above in terms of goal)? Will Cash Received also be used as an indicator (10% and/or stretch goal target) for the cost share or just in the KPI score?

The following results will form the basis of the cost share score:

Committed total cost share (cash and in-kind) relative to min 30% target after 4 yrs
Committed Cash relative to min 10% target after 4 yrs
Achieved 30% (Cash in bank plus in-kind) cumulatively
Achieved 10% (Cash in bank) cumulatively

Q9d: What KPI results will be used for the postal stage and the site visit stage of the review?
For the postal review stage, SFI will provide the table of validated KPI results up to the end of H2 2016. Any outputs from H1 2017 can be described in the narrative of the progress report.

In advance of the site reviews, SFI will provide the table of validated KPI results up to the end of H1 2017. In order to have these KPI results validated in time for the review, the Centre Research Profile on SESAME must be updated by 31st August 2017.

10. Host Institution Support

Q10a. Can you give us any more specific information regarding 'As the Centres become more sustainable, the expectations are that they will become more integrated into the operations of the Host Research Bodies'? We just want to ensure that we address this appropriately in the document. Does this relate to 'operations staff' etc?

This is described quite clearly in the bullet points provided in Appendix 4 – Phase 2 Proposal, Section 4-Support from the Host Research Bodies.

Q10b: 'One recommendation from the Governance Advisory Review committee has been the implementation of a Service level agreement (SLA) between the Centre, SFI and the Host Research Body.'

Having the 'Host Institution' only create an SLA does not solve a number of issues highlighted to the Governance Committee regarding 'overhead', 'support' etc? Does the SLA have to be a formal legal document signed ('fully executed) by the host organisation or is this just an SLA template document? Letters of support (fully signed) have been requested also in the document in a separate section.

A SLA is not required for the proposal submission.   The call document states clearly that "The format and implementation of an SLA would be subject to consultation with key stakeholders".   Letters of support must be included.

11.   Education and Public Engagement

Q11a: Could you provide some examples of eligible Education and Public Engagement (EPE) costs?
Examples include: contributions towards the salary of dedicated EPE operations staff (where justified); direct public engagement activity and production costs such as venue, props and equipment, materials and promotion; relevant training and development; and EPE evaluation costs (including formative/development). Budgets should demonstrate appropriate consideration and justification of costs associated with planned EPE activity and management.

Q11b: I have seen reference to the term 'an engaged public' – what does this refer to from SFI's perspective?
SFI defined 'an engaged public' as one which: understands the role of STEM; can judge between competing STEM arguments; encourages young people to study and work in STEM; and feels engaged with STEM research.

Q11c: What audiences should the EPE activities target?
SFI is not prescriptive in terms of defining the target audiences for public engagement activity. More importantly SFI expects that Research Centre applicants will select the most appropriate audiences and present details of the objectives which it aims to achieve, and to outline how this aligns with SFI objectives, how it will be delivered and how it will be measured and evaluated. Some 'publics' have been identified in the Science in Ireland Barometer as less connected to STEM.

Q11d: Who is responsible for the EPE programme of a Research Centre?
Whilst each Centre may request costs towards the salary of an EPE Manager it is imperative that a whole Centre approach to EPE is adopted by the Centre, meaning researchers at all levels are responsible for EPE and should be involved in the planning, development and delivery of the EPE programme of activities. The Research Centre Director should promote the involvement of all researchers in the EPE programme and should provide leadership by example in this regard.

Q11e: How should the Research Centre EPE programme align with the SFI EPE programme?
The SFI core EPE team will liaise directly with the leadership of funded Centres in terms of the EPE operational plan throughout the lifecycle of the Centre. The SFI team will work closely to provide guidance

to each Centre ensuring that the planned EPE programme of activities is closely aligned to SFI objectives and to ensure close collaboration across EPE activities delivered by the Centres.