SFI Research Centres Phase 2 Programme 2018 5 x 2013 Research Centres ADAPT, CONNECT, CÚRAM, iCRAG and Lero

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Last Updated 15th November 2018

Questions in red have been added since the last FAQ released in July 2018

Queries should be directed to: Centres@sfi.ie

Terms of Reference

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Co-funded by the Irish Government and the European Union

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

Q: Under the SFI Research Centres Programme - Call for Submission of Proposals for Phase 2 Funding, what is the definition of a lead applicant?
A: 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 3 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.

Q: 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?
A: Yes, that is the case

Q: Is a Co-PI equivalent to a Co-Applicant?
A: 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.

Q: Is there a goal/ % gender balance guideline that needs to be achieved?
A: There is no goal or target set by SFI. However, the Centre should be addressing any imbalance as this will be considered as part of the Phase 2 review. Refer to the SFI Gender Strategy for more details.

Q: Can we include letters of support from other institutes/centres etc. that we are planning to work with in Phase 2 of the Centre?
A: Letters of support from the Research Bodies of the Lead 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. Unsolicited letters of support are not permitted and may deem an application ineligible.

Q: Do we need to add all our current industry members under the Collaborators tab?
A: 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 but can be referenced in the body of the proposal (See Section 4: Industry Engagement for further details).

Q: What are the page limits for the Lead Applicant and Co-Applicants' CVs?

A: The Lead Applicant and Co-Applicants' CVs must not exceed the **seven**-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 and **one** page for Section 3 (**Time Commitment Statement and Conflict of Interest Declaration)**. Note that Section 3 is a new section within the standard CV template and must be completed. The new CV template must be used by all Lead and Co-Applicants of Phase 2 applications.

Q: 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?

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

Q: Does the qualification for official co-supervision of a PhD student count toward the eligibility criteria for a Funded Investigator under the 2013 Research Centres Phase 2 programme?

A: Co-supervision of a PhD student is accepted as evidence of having the experience, capability and authority to mentor and supervise postgraduate students and team members, provided that the co-supervision is officially recognised by the Research Body in which the postgraduate student is registered.

Q: Could you please let me know whether an academic who has helped secure an IRC Postgraduate Scholarship for a student is eligible to apply as a Funded Investigator (FI) in a Phase 2 Research Centre? This is the only research award the potential FI holds. The potential applicant fulfils all the other FI eligibility criteria.

A: The IRC Postgraduate Scholarship is not an eligible award to apply as a Funded Investigator (FI) in a Phase 2 Research Centre.

Q: For current and prospective FIs, whose contract, at this point, will not extend through the duration of Phase 2, are they eligible to be included in the proposal submission?

A: Funded Investigators included in the application for Phase 2 funding must have an employment contract which covers the duration of the project which they will manage in the proposed Phase 2 SFI Research Centre.

2. ELIGIBILITY

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

A: Only one submission per Centre is allowed. Only the 5 x 2013 SFI Research Centres are eligible to apply to the Phase 2 2018 programme.

Q: How does SFI define a senior author?

A: 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.

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

A: 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.

Q: Can someone be Co-Applicant in two Research Centre applications for Phase 2 funding?

A: Yes, provided they are not a Co-PI in another SFI Research Centre. 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. Co-Applicants must provide a statement of current commitments/workload as part of Section 3 of the CV template.
If you have specific queries on Co-Applicant eligibility and their involvement in other Research Centres, please contact centres@sfi.ie.

Q: Can someone be Lead Applicant on one application while being a Co-PI/Co-Applicant in another Research Centre?

A: No. Centre Directors/Lead Applicants can be a Funded Investigator or collaborator in other Research Centres. However, they cannot be a Co-PI in a second Centre. Co-PIs/Co-Applicants – can be a Co-PI in a maximum of one other Centre (subject to assessment/review of workload), or can be a FI/collaborator.

Q: Is there a minimum % time commitment specified for the Lead Applicant?

A: Yes, the Lead Applicant minimum % time commitment is 40%.

Q: Is there a minimum % time commitment specified for the Co-Applicants?

A: No, there is no minimum % time commitment specified for the Co-Applicants. However, in all cases the Co-Applicant's current workload and commitments will be evaluated.

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

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

Q: Should CVs be uploaded to SESAME for all Funded Investigators?

A: 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 defined in the call document by the closing date for submissions of the proposal. A table with FI eligibility details must be provided as an Appendix to the proposal (Appendix G of the call document) and the Letters of Support from each Research Body must confirm the eligibility of the Co-Applicants and Funded Investigators from their Insitution.

3. FUNDING

Q: 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?

A: 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/)

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

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

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

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

Q: Can a Co-Applicant salary be paid from the Centre?

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

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

A: 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.

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

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

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

A: Yes, it is possible to request funding to cover the travel costs of the Scientific Advisory Committee. Such requests should be included within the Operations section of the Budget.

Q: The budget tables require that the Spokes budget is broken into projects. Given that the projects will not be defined at application stage how can this information be provided?

A: Detailed budget breakdowns for Spokes projects are not required at the application stage. However, an estimation of the number of Spokes/Targeted projects the Research Centre anticipates carrying out and level of budget which would typically be required from SFI to run each project should be provided. Such details should be based upon the experience gained in the last four years. It should also be aligned with activities outlined in the business plan.

Q: Is clinical buyout an eligible cost?

A: Clinical buyout is an eligible cost for Centre Directors only and, if applicable, should be included within the Operations section of the Budget.

Q: What size of a discretionary fund is acceptable relative to the overall SFI request?

A: No guidance will be provided. It is up to the Centre to request an appropriate discretionary fund to support the needs of their Centre. Requests for a discretionary fund should be included within the Operations section of the Budget, must be strongly justified and must be within the allowable limits of the Operations component of the Centre Budget. See Section 7.1 of the call document for details.

Q: 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'?

A: In the case of working visits of applicant or team members, the rates sought for subsistence and other allowances 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.

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

A: Yes, as previous.

Q: How do we account for research that we include in our overall Centre Strategy and our associated research plan but envisaged to be funded through NE-NC sources (e.g. European Framework Programmes)?

A: The research programme of the Phase 2 proposal (Section 6 of Proposal template) should describe the Platform Research of the Centre. 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. Within Section 8 (Business Plan) of the Phase 2 proposal, the Centre must describe its plans to secure major wins in European Framework Programmes and other NE-NC sources.

Q: Is there a maximum % on funding which can be allocated to the Platform Budget?

A: There is no limit on the percentage budget that can be allocated to Platform research. Applicants may define the split between Platform Research and Targeted Projects/Spokes ensuring an appropriate level of balance between the core research programmes within the platform and the industry collaborative projects within the Spokes. The Operations component of the Centre Budget must be capped at 20% of the SFI budget plus the projected industry cash cost share.

Q: What guidelines should be used when budgeting for travel and material costs?

A: The guidelines provided in the SFI Grants Budget Policy should be adopted for all categories of the Centre Budget. A list of eligible costs for the Research Centres Phase 2 call is described in Section 7.5 of the call document.

Q: With regard to EU projects, are there requirements on the number and type of EU projects that must be targeted in order to achieve the NE-NC Target?

A: The guidance provided in Section 8.1.2 of the Business Plan business plan should be considered when describing the funding from NE-NC sources. There are no specific requirements on the number and type of projects which must be targeted.

Q: Budget justification: What level of detail should be provided in the budget justification section (Section 13 of Phase 2 Proposal)?

A: A high-level overview of the research and operational staff required to run the Centre is required. SFI acknowledges that, as targeted 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 Centre 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.

Q: In the previous iteration of the Phase 2 Programme, budget tables were required to be included within the budget justification section of the Phase 2 Proposal. Is this still a requirement?

A: The budget tables must be included as an appendix to the Phase 2 proposal (see Appendix H). It is not a requirement that these tables be included within the main body of the Phase 2 proposal (Section 13).

Q. In addition to the conference allowance travel of €1,500 per year for each staff member, can we include additional travel costings for meetings related to Centre activities?

A: Travel costs associated with Centre meetings can be requested provided the meetings are required in order to deliver on the Centre objectives and the Centre programme of research. Such costs must be strongly justified in the Budget Justification section of the Phase 2 Proposal.

4. INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT

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

A: See section 7.4.1 of the Call Document for the industry cost-share definition.

The overall Centre Budget for Phase 2 comprises a maximum 33% contribution (direct costs) from SFI with the remaining 67% coming from both industry (cash plus in-kind) and NE-NC sources (cash only).

20% of the total Centre Budget must come from industry sources and 20% must come from NE-NC sources.

The remaining 27% can come from either industry cash, industry in-kind or NE-NC sources (direct costs only). Of the 20% that is required from industry, at least 16.5% of the total Centre Budget must be from industry cash.

For example, as shown in Figure 1 below, if the SFI contribution is €7M per year, at the end of the Phase 2 funding period (years 7-12), the total SFI investment will be €42M. For this €42M, there must be a minimum total amount of industry cash leveraged which is equal to €21M by the end of the 6-year period.

	Yr 7	Yr 8	Yr 9	Yr 10	Yr 11	Yr 12	Total
SFI (33%)	7	7	7	7	7	7	42
CASH	1	2	3	4	5	6	21

Figure 1. Phase 2-Cost Share model

It should be noted that the full cost share model, inclusive of NE-NC targets must be met by the end of the Phase 2 funding period.

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

A: 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.

Q: What is eligible as in-kind contributions?

A: Eligible in-kind contributions include personnel, equipment, student placement with industry partners, software, materials, data etc. Please refer to the SFI Grant Budget Policy located at the following webpage for details: http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/budget-finance-related-policies/

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

A: 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.](mailto:centres@sfi.ie)

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

A: 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.

Q: 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.

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

A: No. 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**.

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.

Q: Section 8 (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*".
It has been indicated that overheads returned to the Centre from wholly funded collaborative research projects can be counted towards cash contribution. This seems to conflict with that position.

A: Any overheads returned to the Centre from a wholly or partially 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.

Q: '*Cash projections presented in the business plan must be provided in direct costs*' – is this also the cash for wholly funded collaborative research projects?
A: Yes

Q: Can testimonials be included from industry partners who have collaborated with the Centre, through for example H2020 projects, but not through a targeted industry project (i.e. research supported by SFI funding)?
A: No, the testimonials should be provided by industry partners directly involved in targeted projects funded through Phase 1 of the Centre.

Q: Can we include a quote from an industry partner in a case study?
A: 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.

Q: There is no overall page limit for Section 9.2 – Industry Partner Case-Studies in the Phase 2 Proposal. Can clarification be provided?
A: In this section, the Centre must provide **a maximum 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 9.2 other than the case studies. Any additional text provided will not be shared with the review panel.**

Q. Industry support letters outlining cash and in-kind commitments are not required for the Phase 2 submission. Where can reference to new potential industry partners be made?
A: Provision of industry support letters will make the application ineligible. 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."*

Q: Regarding Industry Partners to be added - are these only partners who have already signed CRAs?
A: 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 but can be referenced in the body of the proposal (See Section 4: Industry Engagement for further details).

Q: As there are no Letters of Support from Industry, what is the eligibility criteria for Industry Collaborators?

A: 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.

5. REMIT

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

A: 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 and underpin delivery of the Centre's core objectives.

6. IMPACT

Q: What is impact?

A: 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[1] for additional details.

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

A: Impact will be a key evaluation criterion of both the progress report and the Phase 2 proposal. To be considered for funding, proposals must achieve an appropriate level of excellence in both the scientific/technical and impact evaluation.

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

[1] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/award-management/research-impact/

A: Only proposals achieving excellence in both (scientific research and impact) will be considered for funding. Please refer to Section 6 of the call document for a detailed description of the review criteria.

7. APPLICATION SUBMISSION PROCESS

Q: Is there a template for the abstract?

A: Yes, a template is available to download from the Phase 2 webpage and must be used. The abstract template contains a cover sheet and guidance on the information which is required.

The abstract must be submitted via email to centres@sfi.ie no later than August 30th, 2018, 13.00h Dublin Local Time.

Q: Can additional FIs or PIs be added to the Full Proposal Submission in addition to those listed in the abstract submission step?

A: The purpose of the abstract submission step is for planning purposes only. We request that each of the 5 Centres submits as complete a list as possible of current and prospective co-PIs and FIs. If there is a deviation between the abstract list and that submitted on the full proposal, this will not deem the application ineligible. However, we do encourage all Centres to minimise any deviation given that panels for each Centre will be in place by the time of full proposal submission.

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

A: The application is currently available on SESAME. Full proposal submission will only be accepted via SESAME and this should be submitted no later than November 30th, 2018, 13.00h Dublin Local Time.

Q: Under which SESAME profile should the full proposal be submitted, the Lead Applicant or the Research Centre's SESAME profile?

A: Only the Lead Applicant will be able to submit the Full Proposal on SESAME.

Q: What size font should be used?

A: All text should be provided in Times New Roman font or similar, with minimum font size of 12, and at least single-line spacing as well as a minimum margin size of 2.5cm. Text in diagrams may be in any clearly legible font.

Q: What font size is required for Tables which are used within the application?

A: All text should be provided in Times New Roman font or similar, with minimum font size of 12, and at least single-line spacing as well as a minimum margin size of 2.5cm.

For narrative that is provided in a tabular format, for example, to present a summary of platform or targeted projects, text must be provided in Times New Roman font or similar, with minimum font size of 12, and at least single-line spacing. Text in diagrams may be in any clearly legible font.

Q: Can 2 Co-Applicants input their information into SESAME at the same time or will one's information override the other?

A: Co-Applicants can view the application at the same time but when editing the fields, the application will not permit a draft to be saved if more than one applicant is logged in.

The Lead Applicant will not be able to submit the application if a Co-Applicant is logged in as the application will appear as 'this record is locked'.

The Lead Applicant is responsible for coordinating the Co-Applicants' input to the application in SESAME and internal deadlines for this activity to be completed. Given the large number of Co-Applicants in each Research Centre, it is the responsibility of the Lead-Applicant to ensure that this activity is co-ordinated well in advance of the submission deadline

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

A: 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.

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

A: 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 commences (2021). 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, it is only required to complete the Ethical Issues table which can be downloaded from the Phase 2 application page on SESAME. Detailed information regarding the study design is not required for the Phase 2 submission in November but will be requested at a later stage.

Q: 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?

A: 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.

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

A: 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.

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

A: 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*”.

Q: What’s the difference between Academic and Funded Investigator in the collaborator dropdown?

A: 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.

Q: In the call document checklist, it is indicated that the SESAME fields word limit for the scientific abstract and lay abstract is 250 and 150 words respectively, but in section 8.4.5 of the call document,

the word limits are 200 and 100 words respectively for these fields. Can clarification be provided on the correct word limits?

A: The correct word limit for the Scientific Abstract is 200 words.

The correct word limit for the Lay Abstract is 100 words.

The checklist in the downloads section of the Phase 2 webpage and the call document was updated on 12th July 2018 to reflect the correct word limits.

Q: Please can you provide a copy of the Ethical questionnaire document for the Centres application?

A: Please refer to the Ethical Issues document at the following link:

http://sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/ethical-and-scientific-issues/

Q: Is the research area primary & secondary currently aligned with centre meant to appear automatically or do you type this in?

The Priority areas, primary and secondary fields should be completed - these replace the NRP fields and relate to the refreshed priority areas published by DBEI recently. In addition, the research areas (primary and secondary) must also be selected. These are dropdown menus in the application in SESAME.

Q: Can you clarify if the Spokes or US Ireland C2C projects should be included as an Appendix to the Progress Report document?

A: Please follow the flow of the Progress Report template. The US Ireland C2C and Spokes sections should be inserted as appendices after Section 12.

Q: Does the ORCID profile have to be fully up to date for each applicant?

A: SFI strongly encourages you to ensure that the ORCID profile is up to date for each co-applicant such that the information in the ORCID profile represents all their publication outputs to date.

Q: Can the style of the progress report and proposal document be in a designed format or does it need to be in a standard format?

A: Please refer to the call document; Appendix C - Progress Report Template for detailed guidance on how to complete the Progress Report. It is up to the applicant to decide the best way to present the information requested. If non-typical format (e.g. tabular or other) is used to present the information, please ensure that all text is provided in Times New Roman font or similar, with minimum font size of 12, and at least single-line spacing.

Q: How should we deal with a glossary of acronyms in the Progress Report and Proposal documents?

A: All Research Centres must include a table of contents and a glossary of acronyms at the beginning of both the Progress Report and the Phase 2 Proposal documents.

8. SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

Q: There is no mention in call document or template of need to describe plans for 2019- end 2020 just progress from 2015-end 2018?

A: That is correct, the review panel are tasked with reviewing progress from the start of the Centre to the date of submission (November 30th, 2018). As stated in the call document, page 32, "*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 2019 – end 2021, if appropriate.

Q: In the research programme section of the Progress Report (Section 6), there is no page limit for the references sub-section. Can publications generated by the Targeted Projects, associated projects and platform projects be included in the references sub-section as these are very space consuming when listing as project outputs in the main body of the research programme section?

A: Yes, publications generated by the Targeted Projects, associated projects and platform projects can be included in the references section. 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

Q: How will the Industry Cost Share score be devised?

A: In advance of each site review, SFI will conduct a review of the industry cost share results for each Centre. The Cost Share review is based on: 1] the pipeline of activity in terms of cash and in-kind commitments from industry partners, and 2] the actual cash received (cash in bank) and in-kind amounts delivered. The cash and in-kind figures (both committed and received) are verified through an audit process which is carried out by the SFI Finance Team.

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

- Committed total Industry Cost Share (cash and in-kind) relative to the minimum 30% target after 4 yrs (i.e. up to end H2 2018)
- Committed Industry Cash relative to the minimum 10% target after 4 yrs (i.e. up to end H2 2018)

- Achieved cash in bank plus in-kind, relative to the minimum 30% target – cumulative figures
- Achieved cash in bank, relative to the minimum 10% target – cumulative figures

Q: What KPI results will be used for the postal stage and the site visit stage of the review?

A: For the **postal review stage**, SFI will provide the table of validated KPI results up to the end of H1 2018. The validated H1 2018 KPI results must be included as an appendix to the progress report. Any outputs from H2 2018 can be described in the narrative of the progress report. The deadline for H1 2018 KPI reporting is 31st August 2018. The H1 2018 industry cost-share reporting deadline for the 5 x 2013 RCs is 14th September 2018.

In advance of the **site reviews**, SFI will provide the table of validated KPI results up to the end of H2 2018. In order to have these KPI results validated in in advance of the site reviews, the Centre Research Profile on SESAME must be updated by 31st January 2019. In addition, the industry cost share reports for H2 2018 must be submitted by January 31st, 2019. The financial audits for each of the 5 x 2013 RCs will take place in February 2019.

Q: Will the scoring for the Progress Report and Phase 2 Proposal follow the same breakdown as the 2012 Centres Phase 2 call i.e. a mark of 1 to 5 for each of the evaluation criteria?

A: The evaluation criteria will remain the same as for the previous iteration with a weighting of 40% for Progress,40% for the Phase 2 Proposal and 20% for Industry Cost Share performance. The scoring for each of the review sections of the postal and site review forms will be **a** mark of 1 to 5 for each of the evaluation criteria as per the 2012 Research Centre renewals call. Further information will be provided in the site review terms of reference document which will be shared with the Centres later this year.

10. HOST INSTITUTION SUPPORT

Q: As the Research Centres Partnership Agreement is not published, how can this be referenced?

A: The RCPA is at the final stages of drafting and it is anticipated that the RCPA will be published in early Q3 2018. We will keep the Research Centres apprised of pertinent developments in this regard.

11. EDUCATION AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Q: What are examples of eligible Education and Public Engagement (EPE) costs?

A: 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.

Q: What does the term '*an engaged public*' refer to from SFI's perspective?

A: 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.

Q: What audiences should the EPE activities target?
A: 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.

Q: Who is responsible for the EPE programme of a Research Centre?
A: 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.

Q: How should the Research Centre EPE programme align with the SFI EPE programme?
A: 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.

Q: Should the logic model outline the entire Education and Public Engagement programme, or the Public Engagement activities only?
A: The logic model can apply to each activity, but the review process will examine how the strategy for the EPE programme is activated by the sum of the activities.

Q: For the reference to the growth in Public Engagement experience of staff, does it need to be specified for each proposed activity or the programme as a whole?
A: As for the growth in people – that should be at a programme level and the experience and expertise of the team managing, creating and driving the EPE strategy should be highlighted, including how the centre is accessing and harnessing greater expertise through partnerships and benchmarking.