



ANNUAL PLAN 2020

1. Introduction:

The SFI Annual Capital Grants Budget for 2020 is €199 million. This budget represents an increase of €10.6 million on the 2019 Capital Grants Budget. Decisions on the specific programmes to include within the SFI Annual Plan 2020 have been taken in consideration of a number of key elements, in particular ensuring a balanced pipeline of research and innovation from individual-led to large scale commitments, including enterprise collaborations, in addition to the commitment to supporting excellent and impactful research and maintaining Ireland's standing as a research and innovation hub of global standing and repute.

2. SFI Annual Plan 2020 Programme Overview

Science for Society

Programmes under the Science for Society Directorate focus on supporting challenge-based and individual-led research, recruitment programmes, international research partnerships, the STEM talent pipeline and citizen engagement. The range of programmes that will run in 2020 are:

Individual-Led Research Programmes:

SFI will deliver a range of competitive funding programmes in 2020 that will support Ireland's top principal investigators:

- The **SFI Frontiers for the Future** programme (FFP) will launch for the second time in H1 2020. Decisions on the successful applicants to the FFP 2019 call will be announced Q2 2020.
- The **SFI Research Professorship Programme** will operate as a fixed call in 2020. This programme is key to establishing national expertise in strategic priority research areas.
- The **SFI Conferences & Workshops Programme** will run in 2020 as a fixed call.
- SFI will continue to support **Maternity Allowance** awards, in line with SFI's Gender Policy. The policy has recently been extended to include PhD students and therefore additional budget has been assigned to the programme from 2020 onwards.

International Partnerships

SFI has several lead agency agreements with UK and other international funding agencies. A focus of the 2020 plan is to continue to support international partnerships that stimulate collaboration between Irish and international researchers.

- The **US-Ireland** tri-jurisdictional schemes, involving Ireland, the US and Northern Ireland include the US-Ireland Investigator calls with the NSF and NIH, and the US-Ireland Centre-to-Centre calls with NSF.
- The **SFI-Royal Society partnership** will continue to support Ireland-based applicants under the **Royal Society University Research Fellowship (URF) scheme**.
- Provision has been made to continue support for Irish based applicants to a wide range of Wellcome programmes in 2020, under the **SFI-HRB-Wellcome partnership**.
- The **SFI-EPSRC co-funding partnership** will continue to support Ireland-based applicants in 2020 under the Standard Research Grants scheme.
- **SFI-NSF I-Corps@SFI entrepreneurial training programme** will be supported in 2020.

Challenge-Based Funding

SFI is currently undertaking multiple, complementary approaches to the development and implementation of challenge-based funding to enhance delivery of societal impact from government-funded research.

A new Future Innovator Prize call will launch in 2020. It is also planned to design and implement a number of top-down challenge calls in 2020, with allocation made for the award of both planning grants and seed funding. Initial focus will be given to challenges that align with the Climate Action Plan, with additional thematic areas to be considered where budget permits.

SFI Public Service Fellowship

As part of the Government's action to promote a culture of innovation in the public service (Action 6, *Our Public Service 2020*), SFI launched a pilot programme in 2019 to place researchers in government departments, agencies and local authorities. Awards will be made in early 2020.

Education and Public Engagement:

In the face of public outcry and concern on areas such as climate action and ethical use of data, it is more important than ever for SFI to drive engagement of the Irish public in STEM. It is critical for Irish society to make informed decisions for the future, and to address key national skills needs. SFI will publish the SFI Science in Ireland Barometer, support increased engagement between research and policy makers and continue its collaboration with the Department of Education and Skills in line with actions under the STEM Education Implementation Plan. SFI will deliver a range of national programmes including Science Week.

- The annual **SFI Discover Programme** will run in 2020, with an objective to grow the numbers of applicants from less engaged communities.
- The annual **SFI Discover Science Week Festivals Programme** will run in 2020, to support broad access to Science Week across the country and drive increased activity in Dublin.
- The **SFI/RTÉ Joint Initiative Agreement** will be continued into 2020, subject to review by both parties.

Science for the Economy:

Programmes under the Science for the Economy Directorate focus on supporting research programmes that drive economic competitiveness and which enhance collaboration between academia and industry. The range of programmes that will be supported in 2020 are:

SFI Research Centres

SFI will continue to develop and support world-class large-scale SFI Research Centres that are co-funded by industry and where world leading research is conducted in key areas of strength and significant strategic opportunity for Ireland. The focus in 2020 will be on the **SFI Research Centres Spokes Programme**.

Enterprise Partnerships

SFI will continue to deliver funding programmes that underpin enterprise competitiveness through enabling the development of strong, mutually beneficial, co-funded partnerships between researchers and industry and other non-exchequer research players. In addition to the SFI Research Centres and Spokes programmes, SFI will support the following range of programmes in 2020 to drive this activity:

- The **SFI Strategic Partnerships Programme** will continue to support co-investment partnerships with the private sector including industry, philanthropy and charitable organisations, in areas not covered by an existing SFI Research Centre.
- The **SFI Industry Fellowship Programme** will continue in 2020 with a plan to run two calls in the year.
- A novel fellowship call in partnership with Venture Capital companies will be launched which will provide a compelling training opportunity for academic researchers.

Overview of 2020 Planned Programme Timelines

The 2020 Science Foundation Ireland programmes fall into four categories as outlined in the tables below:

- Programmes launched in 2019, where a funding decision will be made in 2020
- Fixed deadline calls open in 2020
- Rolling calls open in 2020
- International Partnerships open in 2020

All launch dates provided in these tables are indicative and are subject to change, e.g. in response to alterations in Science Foundation Ireland's annual grants budget, staff resources, other new schemes Science Foundation Ireland may develop and Government policy/priorities.

Table 1. Programmes launched during 2019; funding decision to be made in 2020

Programme	Call Deadline	Award Decision Timeframe
SFI Frontiers for the Future	August 2019	Q2 2020
Future Innovator Prize (Artificial Intelligence for Societal Good Challenge)	Q3 2019	Q4 2020
Future Innovator Prize (Zero Emissions Challenge)	Q3 2019	Q4 2020
Public Services Fellowship	Q4 2019	Q1 2020

Table 2. Fixed Deadline Calls Open in 2020

Programme	Call Launch	Call Deadline	Award Decision Timeframe
SFI Frontiers for the Future (Projects)	H1 2020	Q2/Q3 2020	Q2 2021
SFI Industry Fellowship (2 call deadlines)	Q1 2020 Q1 2020	Q2 2020 (#1) Q3 2020 (#2)	Q2 2020 (#1) Q4 2020 (#2)
SFI Venture Fellowship	Q2 2020	Q3 2020	Q4 2020
SFI Future Innovator Prize 2020	Q2 2020	Q3 2020	Q4 2020
SFI Discover Programme	Q2 2020	Q2 2020	Q4 2020
SFI Discover Science Week Festivals Programme	Q1 2020	Q2 2020	Q2 2020
SFI Research Professorship	Q1 2020	Q2 2020	Q4 2020
Conference & Workshops	Q1 2020	Q2 2020	Q3 2020
SFI Fellowship	TBC	Various	

Table 3. Rolling Calls Open during 2020

Programme
SFI Strategic Partnerships
Frontiers for the Future (Awards) – FFP 2020 call to launch in H1 2020
SFI Spokes Programme
Maternity Allowance

Table 4. International Partnerships Open in 2020. Deadlines as scheduled by Lead agency.

Programme
US-Ireland R&D Partnership Programme
SFI-HRB-Wellcome Biomedical Research Partnership
SFI Royal Society University Research fellowship
EPSRC-SFI Standard Research Grants
SFI/NSF I-CORPS@SFI Entrepreneurial Training Programme