SFI Agenda 2020
Excellence and Impact

1. To be the Best science funding agency in the world at creating impact from excellent research and demonstrating clear value for money invested.

2. To be the exemplar in building partnerships that fund excellent science and drive it out into the market and society.

3. To have the most engaged and scientifically informed public.

4. To represent the ideal modern public service organisation, staffed in a lean and flexible manner, with efficient and effective management.
Impact and Excellent concept

Ensuring Quality/Excellence both of the person and of the proposed programme via International Peer/Merit Review

Increase focus on applicants demonstrating and delivering impact from research due to an absolute need to demonstrate to government and the public, the value to the Irish economy and society of public funds spent on research.
What is Impact?

Impact can be described as “the demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to the economy and society”.

- Short-term or Long-term
- Far-reaching
- Economic / Non-economic
- Difficult to measure
- Not linear
SFI describe impact in different categories

- Health & Wellbeing
- Economic
- Professional Services
- International Engagement
- Human Capacity
- Environmental
- Policy & Public Services
- Societal
For many SFI programmes *scientific excellence is both necessary and paramount but is not sufficient; applications must also demonstrate potential impact*. SFI emphasises the importance of the Impact Statement in submitted proposals.

Impact embraces the **diverse ways** in which research-related knowledge and skills benefit individuals, organisations and nations by:

- Powering an **innovative and enterprising economy**
- Creating **high value jobs**
- Attracting, developing and nurturing **businesses, scientists** and **talented people**
- Increasing the **effectiveness of public services and policy**
- **Enhancing quality of life, health and creative output**
- Developing the **country’s international reputation**
- **Educating and training** the population
- **Solving major national and global problems and challenges**, such as food security and world hunger, climate change, energy security, ageing population, rural sustainability, and other sustainability challenges
Inputs, Outputs, Outcomes, Impact…

**Inputs**
- Funding/Support
- Hosting/Admin
- Facilities

**Activities**
- Awards granted
- Teams established
- Research undertaken
- Education
- Tech Transfer

**Outputs**
- Publications
- Networks
- Pre-Commercial Outputs
- Funding diversification
- Events

**Outcomes**
- Research capacity/leaders
- Research quality/productivity
- Sustainability
- Recruitment of graduates
- Industry more competitive

**Impact**
- Increase RTDI capacity
- Established international STI profile
- Transformational change in research by industry (directly and in collaboration with academia)
- Contribution of research to economic and social development
- Improved international competitiveness
- National economic employment and growth

Though not necessarily linear!
Impact Review Criterion

- The **impact review criterion** is:
  - Quality, credibility and relevance of the impact statement, including the likelihood, scale and value of societal and economic effects on Ireland as a result of the proposed research.

- The impact statement should answer the following questions
  - **Who** will benefit from this research?
  - **What plans** will you put in place to **increase the chances of economic and societal impacts** from the proposed research?
  - Over what **timeframe** might the benefits from your research be realised?
Examples from High Quality Impact Statements

- Clearly delineating the **beneficiaries**
- Outline how the research will impact the beneficiaries including **specific deliverables** e.g.
  - **H2020 bids**
    - past success and what is proposed
  - **Industry**
    - industry collaborators engaged officially, meaningful LoS
    - the benefits to the researchers and the industry clearly explained
    - target IDF's, patents
    - new industry engagement;
  - **High level job creation**
    - size of the sector, predicted market growth
    - better healthcare products in various sectors – market share and expected growth;
  - **Better informed public**
  - **Realistic timeframes** – dividing into short to mid-term, and then longer term
Examples from High Quality Impact Statements

• **Mechanisms for achieving impact** with specifics:
  » **Publications**: increased visibility and research leadership – influencing industry e.g. in conjunction with IDA by hosting MNCs
  » Active in **setting standards, developing policy** (area specific) – influencing
  » **Licenses/patents** – route to commercialisation
  » **Trained researchers**: developing human capital
  » **Outreach activities**: *public interest and engagement in science*
Common Characteristics of High Quality Impact Statements

• Good knowledge of the relevant beneficiaries of the proposed research and the NEEDS of this sector
• Clear description of how the applicant intends to reach and engage with the beneficiaries of the research, including clear deliverables and milestones
• Genuine inclusion of appropriate collaborators in the research programme, especially in the application area of the research if interdisciplinary in nature
• Involvement of beneficiaries and end users from the outset taking this input into the design of the research programme. Industry collaborators may not be a requirement but where appropriate is encouraged
• Brief description of track record and relevant accomplishments for training researchers, knowledge exchange and impact-generating activities in the context of the proposed research project
• Good knowledge of national priorities and activities in the relevant areas
• Applicant demonstrates clear commitment to maximising the impact of their research
  — CREDIBLE implementation plan – ‘PATHWAYS to IMPACT’ including realistic timelines and stakeholders
Common Characteristics of Poor Impact Statements

- Statement is **vague, lacks specificity** and clear deliverables
- **Activities are not project specific**, but are **routine** activities for academic research positions
- **Lack of inclusion of appropriate collaborators** in the research programme, especially in the application area of the research, if interdisciplinary in nature. Vague, non-committal letters of support
- **Too much focus on track record** rather than what will be done as part of the proposed project
- **Lack of knowledge of beneficiaries, likely impacts** and **appropriate mechanisms** for realising the potential impacts
- **Too focussed on outputs** for their own sake **rather than their contribution to impact generation**
- **Unrealistic expectations** (not to be confused with setting ambitious goals)
  - **LACK of CREDIBLE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**
Impact - in summary

- Remit is broad – assessing research from oriented basic research to more applied
- Short-term and long-term impacts are acceptable – clarity in relation to timelines
- Economic and non-economic: societal, health, environmental, public policy and services, professional services impacts valued
- SFI aiming to have a balanced portfolio in terms of types of impacts
- Impact can be local (Ireland) or global. If global, likely to have a knock-on impact locally
- Official collaborators including industry are possible – letters of support should contain proof of meaningful collaboration / genuine commitment
- **Credible implementation plan** with clear pathways to impact and realistic timelines with the involvement of beneficiaries
Thank you

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