



Co-Centre Programme 2022

Call for Submission of Proposals

Version: 16th December 2022

Terms of Reference

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All responses to this Call for Submission of Proposals will be treated in confidence and no information contained therein will be communicated to any third party without the written permission of the applicant except insofar as is specifically required for the consideration and evaluation of the proposal or as may be required under law, including the Industrial Development (Science Foundation Ireland) Act, 2003, the Industrial Development (Science Foundation Ireland) (Amendment) Act 2013 and the Freedom of Information Acts 1997, 2003 and 2014. Application data will be shared with the Funding Partners to assist with management of the application process. The Funding Partners act as Joint Controllers; decisions are made together, and all Funding Partners share responsibilities in the processing of personal data. The Funding Partners comply with the General Data Protection Regulations 2016/679 (EU) GDPR).

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Key Dates:	
Call announcement	24 th November 2022
Webinar	8 th December 2022, 10:00
Deadline for Abstract Submission	20 th January 2023, 13:00
Deadline for submission of full proposals	16 th March 2023, 13:00
Panel Review	early August 2023
Funding Decision	October 2023

While we will make every attempt to adhere to the timetable and deadlines outlined above, the Funding Partners retain the right to modify the timetable, if necessary, for operational reasons. In such an eventuality, SFI will advise all applicant groups as soon as possible. Note that all times referred to are Dublin, Ireland local time.

1 Introduction

The overall ambition of the Co-Centre Programme is to create a dynamic research partnership across Ireland, Great Britain, and Northern Ireland. This will be led by a cross-jurisdictional collaboration of academic partners working together with industry and other key stakeholders to bring scale, standing and cohesion to the research and innovation ecosystem, whilst also delivering economic, societal, health and environmental impacts.

The Co-Centre Programme is a joint initiative between Ireland, Great Britain, and Northern Ireland (NI) to establish joint, virtual Research Centres focused on high quality research and innovation in areas of mutual economic, societal, health and environmental importance. The Programme includes three Funding Partners that have agreed to provide research funding for participating academic organisations within their own jurisdiction. The Funding Partners include; the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) Northern Ireland, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and Science Foundation Ireland (SFI). The Co-Centre Programme will encourage collaboration between academic and industrial researchers, as well as policy makers and other key stakeholders, and will bring scale, standing and cohesiveness to the research and innovation ecosystem across Ireland, Great Britain, and Northern Ireland. These plans align with the NI New Decade, New Approach deal¹, NI Programme for Government 2021; draft Green Growth Strategy for NI²; DAERA Science Strategy Framework³; the Irish Programme for Government⁴; the Shared Island initiative which aims to support cooperation and greater connectivity across the island of Ireland, which is critical in addressing strategic challenges; SFI's Shaping Our Future Strategy⁵; the UK Integrated Review: Global Britain in a Competitive Age: the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy⁶; UK Innovation Strategy: leading the future by creating it⁷ and UKRI's first five year strategy 2022-2027: Transforming Tomorrow Together⁸.

The Co-Centres aim to exploit opportunities where the complexity of the research agenda requires the advantages of scope, scale, dynamism, synergy, duration, equipment, and facilities that a Centre can provide. The consolidation of research activities across research organisations in individual Co-Centres aims to create a critical mass of internationally leading researchers in strategic areas which become a key attractant to industry, laying the foundation for effective and productive academic and industrial partnerships. Additionally, each Co-Centre is expected to be excellent, relevant, sustainable, and to serve as international beacons for attracting talent and leveraging additional funding sources, including non-Exchequer funding with particular emphasis on industry, EU Framework Programmes and UK-wide sources.

Objectives of the Co-Centre Programme:

- To achieve, maintain and enhance research excellence and leadership.
- To deliver significant economic, societal, health and environmental impacts for challenging problems in areas of strategic importance across Ireland, Great Britain, and Northern Ireland.
- To build strategic multi-institutional and cross-jurisdictional partnerships, developing strong and effective clustering and links between regions.
- To strengthen existing research capabilities, partnerships between researchers, as well as relevant development agencies, non-government organisations, and industry policy makers across Ireland, Great Britain, and Northern Ireland.

¹https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/856998/2020-01-08_a_new_decade_a_new_approach.pdf

² <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-draft-green-growth-strategy-northern-ireland>

³<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/daera-science-strategy-framework-has-been-approved-by-minister>

⁴ <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7e05d-programme-for-government-our-shared-future/>

⁵ <https://www.sfi.ie/strategy/>

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/global-britain-in-a-competitive-age-the-integrated-review-of-security-defence-development-and-foreign-policy>

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-innovation-strategy-leading-the-future-by-creating-it>

⁸ <https://www.ukri.org/publications/ukri-strategy-2022-to-2027/>

- To undertake collaborative research projects with industry, working on challenging problems, facilitating technology transfer and knowledge exchange among the participants.⁹
- To increase the level of industrial and commercial investment in R&D activities with existing companies based in Ireland, Great Britain, and Northern Ireland, to attract large Foreign Direct Investments in corporate R&D laboratories and leverage funding from alternative sources.
- To develop a pipeline of highly trained, well-networked research talent in areas of strategic priority.
- To engage with users, intermediaries and beneficiaries of research throughout the duration of the Co-Centre.

In addition to the objectives outlined above, it is the expectation that each Co-Centre will:

- Ensure full consideration of ethical issues in the planning and co-ordination of research and implementation of an ethical innovation and “do no significant harm” approach.
- Ensure strong research and operational management, including robust financial and risk management, assurance, and governance.
- Improve equality, diversity, and inclusion within the Co-Centre.

The Co-Centre Programme Call 2022 will accept applications in the areas of Climate, and Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems.

2 Definitions

Co-Director	<p>The Co-Directors will serve as the primary point of contact during the review process, and if successful during the course of the award. The Co-Directors will be defined as the Research, Scientific and Technical leads for the proposed Co-Centre, with one based in each jurisdiction on the island of Ireland. The Co-Directors will have equal responsibility for the overall delivery of the objectives of the Co-Centre and accountability for carrying out the research within the funding limits awarded and in accordance with the terms and conditions of the proposal.</p> <p>For the purpose of SESAME, the Co-Director based within Ireland must be assigned as the lead applicant and the NI Co-Director as the first named co-applicant.</p>
Lead Applicant *(Principal Investigator/PI)	<p>The Lead Applicant on the SESAME application will be designated as a Co-Director of the proposed Co-Centre and must be hosted at an eligible Research Body within Ireland. (* To note once funded Lead Applicants will be known as Principal Investigator/PI)</p>
Co-Applicant *(Co-Principal Investigator/ Co-PI)	<p>A Co-Applicant has a well-defined, critical and continuing role in the proposed Co-Centre. A Co-Applicant would be expected to lead one or more Targeted Projects (as defined below), or projects within the Platform Research component of the Co-Centre.</p> <p>For the purposes of eligibility, reviewing and monitoring, <u>a Co-Applicant applying for funding under the Co-Centre programme will receive equal evaluation to the Lead Applicant</u> and will hold equal accountability for the delivery of the proposed research</p>

⁹ The project must have the characteristics of an “effective collaboration” as set out in paragraph 28 of the European Commission’s Framework for State aid for research and development and innovation (2022/C 414/01) (the “Framework”) and satisfy one of the conditions set out in paragraphs 29 and 30 (as appropriate) of the Framework. See also section 4.3 and section 4.4.

	<p>objectives. Co-Applicants can be from any of the jurisdictions involved in this partnership.</p> <p>The nominated Co-Director based within NI must be listed as the first Co-Applicant on the SESAME system and the UKRI-funded lead as the second Co-Applicant. (*To note once funded, all other Co-Applicants will be known as Co-Investigator/Co-PI).</p>
UKRI-funded lead	The second listed co-Applicant on the SESAME application will be designated as the UKRI-funded lead. The UKRI-funded lead will serve as the primary point of contact for UKRI on the award and will be required to upload a successful application via UKRI's funding portal following notification of funding so that UKRI can distribute funding to the Research Organisation.
Funded Investigator	A Funded Investigator is an academic member of staff or independent researcher employed by an eligible Research Body, who is undertaking a management role in a research project within the Co-Centre. Funded Investigators will have responsibility for a research project, budget and personnel within the Co-Centre and will serve under the direction of one of the Co-Applicants. The Funded Investigator designation in a Research Co-Centre should be a reflection of the level of input of the researcher to the research programme.
Official Collaborator	An official collaborator may be either (a) an academic member of staff from an eligible Research Body 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 receive funding through the award where strongly justified. Official collaborators may not be the primary supervisor/mentor of postgraduate students, postdoctoral researchers or research staff enrolled on the Award.
Industry Partner	An industry partner is a company making a financial contribution (through cash or in-kind contribution) to the budget of the Co-Centre, as well as an intellectual contribution to the research agenda of the Co-Centre. Industry Partners are not eligible to receive funding through the award.
Industry Collaborator	An industry collaborator is the lead contact person from an industry partner who represents the Industry Partner in the Co-Centre. Industry collaborators are not eligible to receive funding through the award.
Applicant Group	An applicant group is defined as the set of Lead Applicant and Co-Applicants that submits a proposal for funding under the Co-Centre Programme.
"Co-Centre"	A group funded under this programme will be referred to as a Co-Centre.
Co-Centre Budget	<p>The Co-Centre Budget is defined as comprising three parts: an exchequer cash contribution from the Funding Partners, an industry cash contribution and an industry in-kind contribution.</p> <p>The Co-Centre Budget is considered to be direct costs only and does not include the contribution from any co-funding party towards the overheads of the Research Body.</p>
Platform Research	Platform Research refers to core, non-economic research activities or technologies that are necessary or valuable to the overall mission of the Co-Centre and are deemed to be common across a number of individual Spokes. This includes PhD and MSc training.
Spokes	Spokes are research subtopics within the Co-Centre, each consisting of a collection of targeted projects (TP) co-designed and co-funded by industry and built upon the research undertaken and knowledge generated as part of the platform research.

Targeted Project (TP)	Targeted projects are collaborative research projects partially funded by industry. Industry partners are expected to make both a material contribution (in terms of cash and in-kind contributions), as well as an intellectual contribution to the goals, objectives, deliverables and execution of the project. Each TP must have at least one industry partner.
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3 Programme Details

3.1 Co-Centre Structure

Each Co-Centre has a Co-Directorship model, comprised of one nominated Co-Director based in Northern Ireland and the other based in Ireland. It is the responsibility of the proposed Co-Directors of the Co-Centre to submit the joint application to SFI for review via the SESAME award management system (see “Guidance for Applicants” document on the SFI website¹⁰).

The funded Co-Centres will consist of a number of Principal Investigators from multiple eligible research bodies across all jurisdictions who will co-develop a collaborative work programme. The appropriate number of Co-Applicants and spread across each jurisdiction should be defined by the applicant group. The work programme can be further categorised under the following headings:

- Platform Research: core, non-economic¹¹, cross-jurisdictional research or technologies that consolidate activities within individual research groups. These activities/technologies are considered necessary or valuable to the overall mission of the Co-Centre and are deemed to be common across several individual Spokes. This includes PhD and MSc training.
- Spokes: building upon the research undertaken and knowledge generated as part of the platform research, the Co-Centre will develop a series of targeted projects (TP) co-designed and co-funded by industry. Each TP must have at least one industry partner. Groups of TPs in similar subtopic areas are referred to as Spokes.

The research programme will be supported by an operations team, which may include aspects such as management, administration, business development, marketing and communications, education and public engagement, and IT technical support.

Funding from SFI and DAERA can be used to support all elements of the Co-Centre model. UKRI funding can be used to support research activities within one specific Spoke in addition to platform research activities underpinning the UKRI-funded Spoke and operational support e.g., contributions to salary for administrative and coordination support roles, where strongly justified. These operations costs will be paid to the institution of the UKRI lead but the positions may be sub-contracted to another institution within Great Britain or Northern Ireland. While the Co-Centres are expected to collaborate across jurisdictions, in all instances, funding from the relevant funder can only be used to fund research activities within eligible research bodies within their own jurisdiction.

¹⁰ <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/funding-calls/co-centres/>

¹¹ Within the meaning of the Framework for state aid for research and development and innovation available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C .2022.414.01.0001.01.ENG>

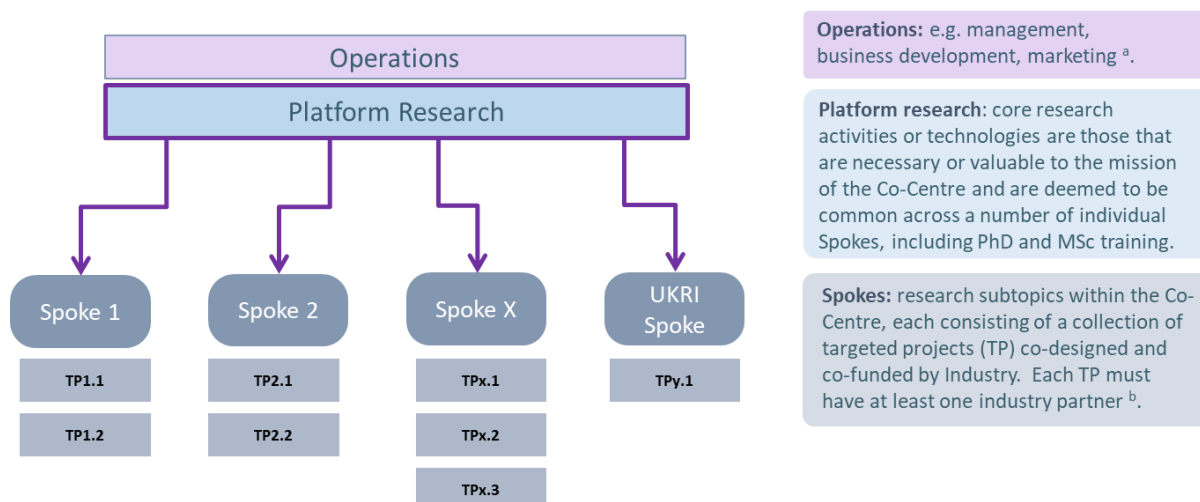


Figure 1. Graphic representation of the funding structure of a Co-Centre.

^a Contributions to salary for administrative & coordination support roles may be supported on awards where strongly justified and will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

^b UKRI funding should be limited to one specific Spoke. UKRI fees and/or stipends associated with Masters and PhD studentships **are not eligible** under this call. Project specific travel and subsistence and research costs associated with students may be included.

3.2 Programme Remit

The Co-Centre Programme will accept applications in the thematic areas defined below and must fit within the relevant funders' legal authority.¹² Applicant groups must be able to demonstrate alignment of the proposed Co-Centre to one of the themes, clearly articulating how their research and its outputs will address challenges and opportunities in those areas. It is recognised that there may be overlap between aspects of these thematic areas, but for the purpose of review, applicants will be required to select the area of primary alignment on the SESAME application (see the "Guidance for Applicants" document on the SFI website¹³ for more details). Applications submitted under each thematic definition should incorporate a STEM-led, multi-disciplinary programme of research and innovation, as required to deliver on the overarching objective of the proposed Co-Centre. This can include an inter-disciplinary research programme including Arts, Humanities and Social Science research and should be informed by a process of stakeholder engagement, including with end-users, policy makers and civil society.

3.2.1 Climate

Climate change has presented an unprecedented need for innovative approaches to address the climate emergency and rapid degradation of the natural environment (air, water, soil and biodiversity). STEM-led, multidisciplinary research is needed to develop climate neutral and resilient economies through resource efficient and sufficient circular economies which are resilient and adapted to the expected effects of climate change and also provide green jobs for globally competitive and resilient industries.

¹² <https://www.sfi.ie/about-us/about-sfi/what-we-do/>; <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/daeras-science-research-and-development-support-and-funding-authority>; <https://www.ukri.org/about-us/>

¹³ <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/funding-calls/co-centres/>

Research and development building on existing capabilities in a systems-based holistic approach is needed in areas such as, but not limited to:

- The important role of agriculture, land use, land use change and forestry
- Transforming transport and mobility
- Sustainable communities, to encompass urban (including cities and regions), rural and coastal settings
- Carbon-neutral industries including carbon capture
- Greenhouse gas removals and establishing sustainable carbon cycles
- Improving water quality (surface and groundwater)

3.2.2 Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems

A sustainable food system delivers food security and nutrition for all in such a way that the economic, social and environmental bases to generate food security and nutrition for future generations are not compromised.

Food systems need to become more sustainable with respect to environmental, economic and social aspects on a global platform. Research and innovation are needed to help deliver a food system that supports animal welfare, a healthy planet, including a climate neutral agricultural sector resilient to external shocks, which incorporates circularity, bioeconomy development and resource efficiency and delivers nutrition for sustainable and healthy diets. The following pathway areas (in no particular order) are examples which could be considered in proposals:

- Food systems and data
- Safe, secure, healthy, sustainable and personalised nutrition
- Alternative proteins and healthy, sustainable dietary shifts
- Sustainable food production incorporating improved resource use efficiency
- Sustainable food processing
- Governance and systems changes
- Food waste and resource efficiency

Proposals must be sufficiently distinct from existing SFI Research Centres and initiatives of scale currently funded by each of the Funding Partners. Opportunities will be available for Co-Centres to collaborate with existing SFI Research Centres and other appropriate initiatives such as through the SFI Spokes programme¹⁴ and co-ordination and support activities (including networking, exchanges, conferences etc.) which are eligible costs within this programme. Applicants will be asked to consider the alignment of the proposed Co-Centre with relevant national strategies where appropriate. Applicants will also be asked to provide details of how the proposed Co-Centre aligns within the current national research landscapes and contributes to increased alignment amongst existing research activities and infrastructure.

Centre Directors of currently funded SFI Research Centres are not eligible to apply to the Co-Centre Programme call as a Lead Applicant or Co-Applicant but are eligible to contribute to a proposal as either a Funded Investigator or official collaborator. Co-Principal Investigators of currently funded SFI Research Centres are eligible to apply as a Co-Applicant, Funded Investigator or official collaborator. Approval for an investigator to engage as a co-principal investigator on two separate SFI funded Research Centres will only be granted in exceptional cases and will be evaluated on an on-going basis during the lifetime of the Research Co-Centre.

4 Funding

Within the joint application, Funding Partners will be responsible for financially supporting the research programme within their jurisdiction. Funding will be provided for a period of 72 months (six years), in line with

¹⁴ <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/funding-calls/sfi-research-centres-spokes/>

the final grant agreements. The total funding that can be requested from this call will be up to 70% of the total direct costs for that Award, in addition to indirect costs as per the conditions of the Funding Partner. Successful Co-Centres will be required to achieve and maintain a minimum of 30% of their Co-Centre budget in contributions from industry sources, with a minimum of 10% of the Co-Centre budget in cash and the balance of the industry contribution being made up from in-kind contributions (see Figure 2).

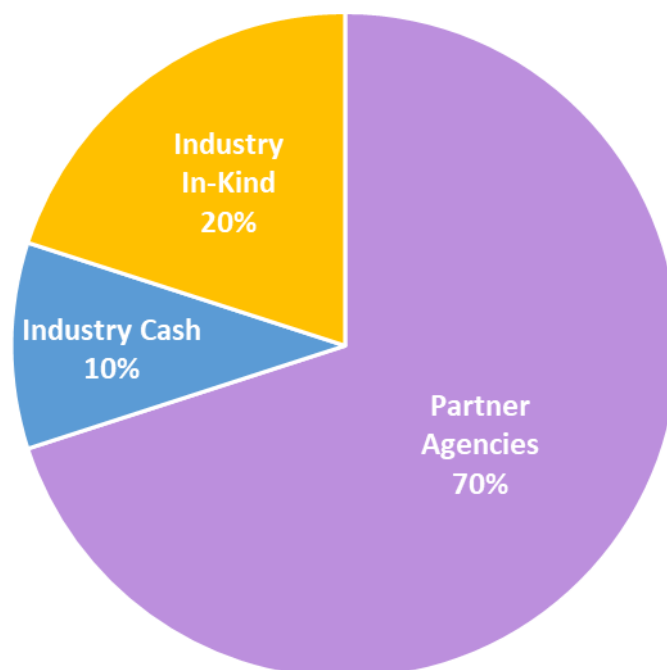


Figure 2. Overview of Total Co-Centre Budget (Direct Costs only – contribution from any co-funding party towards the overheads of the Research Bodies are considered separate and are not included when determining cost share requirements).

Applicant groups that can achieve greater than the minimum 10% industry cash and 30% overall industry contribution to the Co-Centre budget may be evaluated as delivering a greater economic impact to Ireland, Great Britain, and Northern Ireland and hence may be more competitive.

Failure to maintain the industry cost share as described above on an on-going basis may result in a reduction in or termination of the Funding Partners' contribution to the Co-Centre Budget.

Industry partners are not restricted to only collaborating with researchers within their respective jurisdictions. The Co-Centres are expected to collaborate with a mixture of large and small companies, and Co-Centres are given the flexibility to achieve the relative mix of cash and in-kind contributions in whatever fashion is most appropriate for the Co-Centre, the industrial areas and the industry partners to which it will be most closely aligned.

Where a proposed programme of research involves a collaboration with an industry party, the activities must be compliant with State aid and Subsidy control legislation as laid out in Section 4.3 and 4.4

- Proposals may request funding of between **€2M** and **€3.3M** per annum (total costs) over six years from SFI to fund the Co-Centre activities within Ireland.
- Proposals may request funding of between **£1M** and **£1.4M** per annum (total costs) from DAERA to fund the Co-Centre activities within Northern Ireland.

- Proposals may request funding of between **£500,000** and **£1,000,000** per annum (80% of full economic costs) from UKRI to fund research activities within one specific Spoke and supporting operational/platform research costs (based within eligible UKRI research bodies), where justified.

Research Co-Centre proposals are permitted to request funding to support some or all of the operational running costs of the Research Co-Centre. **The Operations component of the centre budget is capped at a maximum of 20% of the centre budget.** Such costs may include, but are not necessarily limited to, personnel such as a CEO/Executive Director (if required), Co-Centre Manager, EU Grant Manager, Project Managers, Business Development personnel, Administrators, Communications, Education and Public Engagement Manager, IT technical support, as well as travel and related business expenses associated with these roles.

4.1 Overheads

In addition to the direct costs, SFI and DAERA will make an indirect contribution to the Host Research Bodies based in Ireland and Northern Ireland to support the indirect costs of the Award which is reflected as a percentage (up to 30%) of the total direct costs less the cost of equipment. UKRI will also make an indirect contribution to the Eligible Research Bodies from Northern Ireland and Great Britain funded via their normal processes based on the Full Economic Cost of the proposed UKRI funded element of the Co-Centre.

The institution of each Co-Director will be asked to clearly describe how they will support the proposed Co-Centre within their Letters of Support.

4.2 Cost Share Model

For the purposes of calculating cost share, the Co-Centre Budget is considered to be direct costs only and does not include the contribution towards the overheads of the Research Body from the Funding Partners or Industry. The cash and in-kind contributions are paid by industry partners collaborating on a Targeted Project.

Each Targeted Project will have at least one, and perhaps a number of industry partners.¹⁵ Industry partners are expected to make both a material contribution to the Targeted Project (in terms of cash and in-kind contributions described above), as well as an intellectual contribution to the goals, objectives, deliverables and execution of the Targeted Project. For each Targeted Project, a collaborative research agreement (or Intellectual Property Rights agreement) must be “agreed” with, or signed, by the relevant partner(s) (Research Body, or Bodies and the Industry Partner(s)). A copy of each Collaborative Research Agreement (CRA) arising from the Grant must be held on file by the relevant Research Body.

The following section details what can be counted towards the industry cash cost share.

Cash (direct costs) and in-kind from partially funded collaborative research

The majority of Targeted Projects in the Co-Centres will be partially funded collaborative research projects, where costs are shared by the Co-Centre and the industry partner. The cash (directs costs) and in-kind contributions from the industry partner can be counted towards the industry cost share. In the case of a partially funded Collaborative Research Project, the IP normally resides with the Research Body and the industry partner usually benefits by way of a licence.

¹⁵ Where multiple industry partners are involved in a collaborative project, it will still be required to satisfy the conditions of effective collaboration and the conditions in relation to the sharing of/access to IPR. A single Industry Collaboration Form (ICF) is required from multi-partner projects.

Cash Donations

Cash gifts/donations in the form of an unencumbered research grant from a company (i.e., without any rights/obligations/advantages attaching to the donation) which are used to support the research activities of the Research Co-Centre can be counted toward the industry cash cost share target.

Cash projections presented in the business plan must be provided in direct costs, i.e., must be net of any overhead paid to the Research Body.

In-kind contributions

Industry in-kind contributions include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following items:

- The cost of industry scientists, engineers and technicians' time while assigned to working on research projects in the Research Co-Centre
- Equipment
- Software
- Materials
- Data

Industry funding that has already been earmarked against an Exchequer enterprise support (such as supports provided by IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, the Irish Research Council or Invest Northern Ireland) or international support programmes may not be counted as a qualifying contribution to the Co-Centre Budget.

Contributions, whether in cash or in-kind from Irish or British Exchequer sources such as other funding agencies, Government Departments, other Agencies of the State or any other Public Authority in the meaning of the UK Subsidy Control Act 2022 cannot be counted as an industry contribution¹⁶. Likewise, funding from charities, not-for-profit organisations or philanthropic donations, while welcomed and encouraged, cannot be counted as an industry contribution. Engagement with such organisations is however strongly encouraged and representatives from such may be included as official collaborators within the Co-Centre application. Furthermore, opportunities are available to expand collaborations with charities and Irish government bodies through the SFI Spoke programme, where exchequer funding may be considered as part of the cost-share.

For the purposes of evaluation of the full proposal, industry funding, both cash and in-kind, must be committed for at least the first 24 months of the Co-Centre, and may be indicative for subsequent years, with the understanding that Co-Centres will be evaluated on a periodic basis (at least every two years), and must maintain their forward commitment at an appropriate level.

4.3 State Aid and SFI/ DAERA Grant Funding

As per SFI's Grant Conditions (inclusive of SFI's General Terms & Conditions, Letters of Offer and SFI Policy documents), all SFI funding granted is subject to, and must be compliant with, State aid legislation based on Article 107(1) of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).¹⁷ Funding granted by DAERA through this programme is also subject to, and must be compliant with, the aforementioned EU State aid legislation.

Where a proposed programme of research involves a collaboration with an "undertaking"¹⁸ or industry party, the activities must comply with the definition of "effective collaboration" and the conditions relating to the allocation between the parties of the results and/or intellectual property rights arising from the collaboration, as per the Framework for State aid for research, development and innovation (2022/C 414/01) (the

¹⁶ Commercial semi-state companies such as the group of companies under CIE, ESB, Ervia, etc. are *excluded* from this definition.

¹⁷ [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52016XC0719\(05\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52016XC0719(05)&from=EN)

¹⁸ The concept of an "undertaking" under EU competition law rules is an entity that is engaged in an "economic activity" regardless of its legal status or the way that it is financed. An activity is economic in nature when it involves offering goods or services on a market

“Framework”).¹⁹ SFI has set out guidance to support how the programme of research or project is developed and undertaken in accordance with these conditions. See “Guidance on State aid for applicants to, and recipients of, SFI Grant funding” for further information.²⁰

Recipients of Grant funding under the Co-Centre Programme are required to demonstrate compliance with the conditions of “effective collaboration” and to support this, SFI has developed an “Industry Collaboration Form” (ICF). The ICF is to assist applicants in defining the relationship with the relevant industry partners in order to comply with the conditions of “effective collaboration” and the conditions relating to the allocation between the parties of the results and/or intellectual property rights arising from the collaboration.

Applicants are required to complete and return the ICF to SFI on or before the date that the Collaborative Research (or Intellectual Property Rights) Agreement (CRA) has been “agreed”, or signed by, the relevant partner(s). For the Co-Centre Programme, the form should be submitted by the Co-Director and uploaded to SESAME, as requested. A download of the ICF and related guidance, inclusive of an FAQ document, can be found on the SFI website.²¹

SFI may request a copy of the signed CRA to be provided (as advised in the Grant Terms & Conditions) and held on file by SFI for audit purposes. Further information on the role of the CRA and SFI’s ex-post State aid verification checks (i.e., on-going checks after the granting of funds / partial funds) can be found in “Guidance on State aid for applicants to, and recipients of, SFI Grant funding” on the SFI website.

Funding leveraged through Targeted Projects will only be counted against Cost Share targets where ICFs are submitted in tandem with CRAs, supporting compliance with the requirements of Effective Collaboration.

Applicants are advised to seek independent legal advice in advance of applying to Funding Partners for funding, where further clarification is sought.

4.4 Subsidy Control and UKRI grant funding

UKRI awards will all be made on the basis of Effective Collaboration under the RD&I framework. As such they are considered No Subsidy under the UK Subsidy Control Act 2022 and No Aid under EU regulations. Applicants will also need to complete the “Industry Collaboration Form” in line with the guidance above. It will be the responsibility of the applicants to make the case that they meet the criteria of effective collaboration as set out in the RD&I framework within the “Industry Collaboration Form.” It will be the responsibility of UKRI to check that they believe the application meets this criteria.

5 Submission of Application

Applicant groups intending to submit an application to the call *must* provide a proposal title and abstract (max. 200 words) to centres@sfi.ie no later than the 20th of January 2023, 13:00 Dublin, Ireland local time. This information is mandatory. Any full proposals submitted where an abstract has not been provided will be rejected without review. The Abstract forms will not undergo any evaluation, and no applicant groups will be eliminated from the process on the basis of their Abstract. The Abstracts will be shared with all Funding Partners. A template for submission of an abstract can be found on the SFI website.²¹

Full proposal applications will only be accepted through SESAME, SFI’s grants and awards management system.²² As part of the application process, applicants will be asked to confirm that they have read and understood the eligibility criteria for the Co-Centres Programme Call. The application cannot proceed until this

¹⁹ [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022XC1028\(03\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022XC1028(03)&from=EN)

²⁰ <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/state-aid/>

²¹ <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/state-aid/>

²² <https://grants.sfi.ie>

acknowledgement is confirmed. The Lead Applicant will then be guided to complete a number of fields on SESAME which are detailed below. They will also be prompted to upload the following documents (templates for which are provided on the SFI website²³):

- Lead Applicant / Co-Applicant CVs in PDF format
- Programme Document in PDF format
- Detailed budget request in Excel format

See “Guidance for Applicants” document on the SFI website²³ for further guidance on submitting applications through SESAME.

The information provided will be shared with all Funding Partners for eligibility checking and to ensure that they are aware of potential budget implications. Therefore, by submitting an application to the Co-Centre Programme, an applicant is accepting that SFI has the right to share information (including the application and any post-award reports submitted to SFI) with the Funding Partners, on a confidential basis, without the need to obtain any further consents from such applicants.

6 Review Procedure and Criteria

Reviewers engaged by the Funding Partners must agree to certify to a declaration of confidentiality (in a Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Statement) prior to conducting a review.

Applications submitted by the deadline will be assessed for eligibility and then forwarded to distinguished international peer reviewers for evaluation under the review criteria outlined below. For each proposal under evaluation, the Funding Partners will solicit between five and seven written reviews (i.e., postal review) from international topic experts who will appraise the quality of the applicant team and proposed research programme. The applicant may specify up to three individuals who should not act as reviewers for their full proposal due to the competitive and confidential nature of the research programme. The application will not be sent to any of these selected individuals. Otherwise, the selection of reviewers shall be at the discretion of the Funding Partners. The Applications will be evaluated and scored on the basis of the following criteria:

Applicant Team: Quality, significance, and relevance of experience and achievements of the Lead and Co-Applicants, commensurate with their career stage and research discipline, the strength and cohesiveness of the Applicant group, including likely synergy in delivering research, potential for international leadership and the quality and appropriateness of the governance and management structures (scored from 1-5; weighting of 25%).

- 1 - Applicant(s) not internationally competitive
- 2 - Applicant(s) track record has considerable weaknesses
- 3 - Applicant(s) track record lacking in one or two critical aspects
- 4 - High quality applicant(s) in nearly all respects
- 5 - Outstanding applicant(s)

Research Programme: Quality, significance, and relevance of the proposed research, including the novelty, timeliness, alignment with the thematic definitions, strategic value for money, the potential to advance knowledge and understanding within its own field or across different fields and the Sex and Gender Statement aspects (scored from 1-5; weighting of 25%).

- 1 - Research proposed is not worthy of funding
- 2 - Research proposed has serious deficiencies
- 3 - Research proposed is lacking in one or more critical aspects; key issues need to be addressed
- 4 - High quality research programme in most respects
- 5 - Outstanding research programme in all respects

²³ <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/funding-calls/co-centres/>

Impact: Quality, significance, and relevance of the proposed research's potential contribution to demonstrably support and underpin enterprise competitiveness and societal, environmental and health impacts across all jurisdictions (scored from 1-5; weighting of 25%).

- 1 - Very low impact potential
- 2 - Low impact potential
- 3 - Good impact potential
- 4 - High impact potential
- 5 - Outstanding impact potential

Execution and Delivery: Quality of plans for execution and delivery of the research programme and Co-Centre goals, including the appropriateness of the proposed milestones and deliverables (specific to evaluation of full proposal applications), the range and level of industry support/ commitment provided and the longer-term plans for how the Co-Centre will move towards a sustainable model (scored from 1-5; weighting of 15%).

- 1 - Plans have serious deficiencies; Co-Centre goals cannot be delivered
- 2 - Poorly designed plans with multiple weaknesses
- 3 - Well-designed plans with a 1 or 2 weaknesses to be addressed
- 4 - High quality plans
- 5 - Outstanding plans

Education & Public Engagement (EPE): Quality, significance, and relevance of the vision/high level plan for Education and Public Engagement including clarity of approach to EPE and how it will be a core part of the research programme; evidence of how the research programme leadership will embed, support and enable the proposed EPE approach; clarity of objectives and vision for impact; appropriateness of target audiences/participants/stakeholders and approaches for engaging them; appropriateness of the expertise and resources requested (scored from 1-5; weighting of 10%).

- 1 – Very low quality EPE plan
- 2 - Low quality EPE plan, with major improvements required
- 3 - Good quality EPE plan, with some areas requiring improvement
- 4 - High quality EPE plan
- 5 - Outstanding EPE plan

Written reviews received from the international peer reviewers will be collated and forwarded to applicants to provide a written Applicant response to the reviews. Applicants will then be invited to attend a full proposal panel where, in addition to presenting an overview of their proposal, they are afforded the opportunity to further respond to the reviewers' comments. The Funding Partners, where appropriate, reserve the right to determine that the score for the Research Programme of the Co-Centre, from the written reviews, is below the threshold (to be jointly decided by Funding Partners) will not proceed to the Full Proposal panel. Those applicants who are not invited to the Full Proposal Panel assessment stage will be declined. No further written feedback will be available to these applicants.

The panel will be comprised of international experts drawn from a range of sectors including academia, industry, entrepreneurship, investment and public engagement. The Panel will be provided with all documentation relating to each application, including the proposal, budget, postal reviews, applicant response and will be tasked with providing the Funding Partners with a list of fundable proposals ranked in order of priority for funding. The ranked list of fundable proposals will inform the final decision as to which Co-Centre proposals are to be funded by the Funding Partners. All funding partners shall have joint decision-making authority with respect to selecting those Full Proposals which are to be granted an Award under the Programme, subject to recommendation by the peer reviewers. **Taking into account the recommendation of the panel, the final funding decisions are at the sole and exclusive discretion of the Funding Partners.**

7 Policies

In addition to complying with Funding Partners' Grant General Terms & Conditions, applicants are expected to be familiar and consult with the policies/positions of each relevant funder and with all relevant national policies when preparing their application. See "Guidance for Applicants" document on the SFI website²⁴ for further details on the policies and positions of each funder.

8 Post Award requirements

8.1 Management and Governance

Co-Centres will be expected to put a sufficient and appropriate management structure in place to ensure the efficient operation of the Co-centre. It is expected that the Co-Directors, the Co-Centre Manager and the named Co-Applicants (or a sub-group of the Co-Applicants) will become the Executive Management Committee of the Co-Centre. The Executive Management Committee will be responsible for the management, administration and financial control of the Centre and furthermore will be responsible for the successful execution and delivery of the research programme, including the public engagement.

In addition to a management structure, funded Co-Centres will need to put in place sufficient and appropriate governance structures including:

- **A Scientific Advisory board**, comprising senior international academics, that advises the Executive Management Committee of the Co-Centre as to the research, technical and scientific direction.
- **An Industry Advisory board**, comprising representatives of the relevant industry, including, but not necessarily limited to the industry partners of the Co-Centre, that advises the Executive Management Committee as to the needs of, and direction of, companies in the industry areas of relevance to the Co-Centre.
- **A Governance board**, comprising representatives of the partner institutions, senior academic and industry leaders, that has oversight responsibility and advises the Host Institution President/Provost and SFI as to the performance of the Co-Centre.

8.2 Reporting

The Funding Partners have stringent requirements for the reporting by Award holders. Award holders that fail to comply with these reporting requirements run the risk of having their grant payments suspended.

Annual scientific reports

Each year, on a calendar year basis, a report must be submitted to SFI by the Co-Directors that summarises the progress, outputs/outcomes and achievements of all components of the Co-Centre award. The purpose of this report will be to capture individual activities relating to the objectives of the programme as described, with input from the industry partner organisations where appropriate. Submission of annual reports will be made through SESAME and shared with the Funding Partners. All named applicants within the Co-Centre will have access to SESAME for the purposes of post-award reporting requirements. Successful co-applicants who receive funding through UKRI will also be required to report annually via the relevant outcomes reporting systems.

²⁴ <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/funding-calls/co-centres/>

Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Targets

Lead Investigators will also be required to submit bi-yearly metrics associated with both near and far term outputs, such as placement of individuals with partner organisation such as Industry, which are in direct support of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

The following categories of KPIs will be used throughout the Co-Centre lifetime:

- Number of Active Spin Outs
- Percentage Trainee Departure from Academia
- Number of Stand-Alone European Research Council Awards or similar
- Percentage of team participating in Education and Public Engagement activities
- Percentage Gender Balance of Co-Centre leadership
- Field-Weighted Citation Index
- Cross-Jurisdictional Collaboration Index (which will be based on a number of factors including number of joint publications, researcher time spent working in other groups within the Co-Centre, PhD student co-supervision etc.)

Please note that targets will be set as part of a KPI setting process between the Funding Partners and the Co-Centres teams that are approved for funding.

Progress against these targets will be reviewed on a six-monthly basis, using information submitted via the Research Profile on SESAME.

A template for the annual report and further guidelines on the reporting requirements will be provided to successful applicants in due course. Reporting will be used to monitor the progress of individual awards against the research programme milestones and deliverables, and the overall objectives of the Programme funding call under which the award was made.

Financial Reports

The Applicant Group will be required to submit financial reports detailing expenditure against the award to relevant funders as per their current reporting processes (and detailed in the individual Grant Agreements). Additionally, the Award holders will be required to submit Industry Cost Share Reports on a six-monthly basis on behalf of the whole Co-Centre. This report documents the cost share (cash and in-kind) received by the Co-Centre from the industry partners.

Budgets and expenditure reports will be submitted in the currency of the relevant funder. However, for the purposes of calculating the cost share requirements and contributions received for each Co-Centre, all Funding Partners Budgets and Industry contributions will be converted to Euros (€).

State Aid

SFI and DAERA will monitor and verify, on an on-going basis and as required, the host and partner Research Bodies' compliance with State aid law. Upon request, the Research Body will provide the Funding Partner with all documentation reasonably required to satisfy that the Research Body complies with State aid law. The Research Body is responsible for retaining such documentary records as are required to demonstrate compliance with State aid law, and ensure, where relevant, that all necessary third-party consents are procured to allow for such documentation to be disclosed to the Funding Partner.

Subsidy control

UKRI will monitor and verify the partner Research Bodies within the UKRI spoke's compliance with subsidy control. Upon request, the Research Body will provide UKRI with all documentation reasonably required to satisfy UKRI that the Research Body complies with subsidy control. The Research Body is responsible for retaining such documentary records as are required to demonstrate compliance with subsidy control, and ensure, where

relevant, that all necessary third-party consents are procured to allow for such documentation to be disclosed to UKRI.

8.3 Progress Reviews

Co-Centres will undergo progress reviews every two years. A review panel of six to eight distinguished researchers, scientists, engineers and individuals with significant commercialisation and translational/applied experiences are convened to evaluate the Co-Centres. One member of each panel will also hold specialist Education and Public Engagement (EPE) expertise.

The purpose of the progress reviews is to allow the Partners to evaluate the:

- Quality of the Research and EPE activities
- Effectiveness of the Co-Centre leadership, organisational and governance structures
- The Co-Centre's performance in achieving KPI and Cost Share targets
- Impacts arising from Co-Centre activities in the last two years
- Progress on the implementation of recommendations from previous review panels

9 Further information

Applicants should carefully review the "Guidance for Applicants" document available on the Co-Centres webpage²⁵ before preparing an application. Applicants must use templates provided and adhere to all guidelines.

For further information on the Co-Centre Programme contact: centres@sfi.ie

²⁵ <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/funding-calls/co-centres/>