



SFI COVID-19 Rapid Response Call Phase 2 – All-Island research initiative

Guidance for applicants

The following document provides additional guidance on submission of collaborative applications between researchers in the Republic of Ireland (RoI) and Northern Ireland (NI). For further details please contact covid19@sfi.ie

Participating Funders:

RoI: Science Foundation Ireland

NI: [Department for the Economy Northern Ireland \(DfE\)](#)

How the initiative operates:

Each collaborative proposal must have a minimum of one applicant from each jurisdiction and significant research participation. The work proposed for each jurisdiction must add significant value so that the overall programme of research goes beyond what might be achieved by either of the PIs working alone and must demonstrate an all-island need, urgency, relevance and impact.

Applicants can submit proposals for new collaborative projects under the thematic areas outlined in the call document, or proposals that build on awards made in Phase 1 of the call through the addition of partners in Northern Ireland¹. All-island collaborative proposals will be submitted to SFI and will be evaluated through the same SFI peer-review process as non-collaborative submissions. DfE has agreed to accept the decision of SFI with regard to the suitability of funding of individual proposals where they have confirmed agreement of the proposed costings with both SFI and the applicant NI institutions.

DfE will only fund proposals which clearly meet DfE's policy remit. In the event that proposals sit with the policy remit of another Department or agency such as [HSC R&D Division Northern Ireland](#), DfE will pass the proposal to the relevant Department/Agency for their consideration to fund.

Funding for awards extending to 31 March 2021 may be requested for applicants in NI.

Applicants:

The terms lead applicant and co-applicant are interchangeable and will receive equal evaluation. The scientific lead of the project may be a co-applicant from NI. For the purpose of submitting an application under the partnership, the lead applicant must be from an eligible Research Body in the RoI and satisfy eligibility criteria outline in the call document¹. The host institution for applicants from Northern Ireland must be either Queen's University Belfast (QUB) or Ulster University (UU).

¹ Call documentation and a list of awards made in Phase 1 are available on the call website: <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/funding-calls/covid19-rapid-response/>

Pre-approval:

Co-applicants from Northern Ireland applying under the call must obtain pre-approval from a NI Department/Agency prior to the SFI deadline. The Research Offices of QUB and UU will submit project summaries and indicative budgets for all of its institution's proposals to DfE no later than **24th July 2020** using the standard table issued to the Vice Chancellors by DfE (for template see Appendix 1). DfE will support the projects that align with DfE's remit and will engage with the relevant Department/Agency in relation to proposals outside DfE's remit for their consideration to support such proposals. Pre-approval for proposals outside DfE's remit will be required from the relevant Department/Agency.

Duration:

For projects falling under DfE's policy remit, DfE will fund the eligible costs for the NI element of successful projects **up to 31st March 2021**. It should be noted that **no-cost extensions** for DfE-funded awards are **not permitted** under this call. The overall project duration for the NI partner may extend beyond this date should an alternative funding source be available to the University. While the DfE funding of the NI partner is limited to the end of March 2021, the RoI PI can request an award duration extending to the end of 2021 with appropriate justification.

Budget:

Applications submitted under this programme should represent meaningful partnerships between the two jurisdictions and the budget allocation should reflect the relative contributions of each partner to the programme of research. Applicants are advised to ask only for what they realistically require to achieve all the deliverables within the indicated timeframe.

For DfE-supported projects, eligible costs will be exactly the same as those currently admissible for NI universities under the US-Ireland R&D Partnership and will therefore cover:

- **Staff** (i.e. costs for additional staff, such as postdoctoral researchers, specifically hired to carry out work on the project or whose contract under another project has finished or been temporarily suspended, for example, due to the pandemic. Costs for permanent staff employed by the university will not be funded).
- **Equipment** (excluding the purchase of large items of equipment of value >£20k).
- **Materials/Consumables**
- **Travel & Subsistence**
- **Other** (including an overhead allowance of up to 40% of staff costs).

The NI universities are asked to complete the official DfE partner costs table (for template see Appendix 2), which will be available via the SFI website, and submit this to the RoI lead partner for uploading to the SFI portal as part of the overall joint application.

Further detailed information on DfE's budget policy can be found at:

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/economy/US-Ireland-R-and-D-Partnership-Programme-Budget-Policy.pdf>

For collaborative proposals, the RoI applicant must complete a single Budget Table in SESAME (using € amounts), outlining the budget and duration for the RoI applicant only. The NI co-applicants must complete a separate Budget Table in PDF format using the DfE Budget Template (using £ sterling amounts. This budget template can be found in Appendix 1 of this document). A separate budget

justification must be uploaded for RoI and NI components of the project. The NI budget and budget justification should be appended to the application form uploaded to SESAME.

Added-value statement:

In addition to standard documentation required for the submission, detailed in the call document, applicants for collaborative proposals are required to submit a DfE R&D Budget as specified above, and an “Added Value” statement (1 page). This should include an outline of how the work proposed for each jurisdiction adds significant value, so that the overall programme of research goes beyond what might be achieved by any one PI working alone. The need and importance of the solution in all island context should also be provided. This statement should be appended to the application form uploaded to SESAME.

A CV for the NI co-applicant will be included as part of the application. This must be prepared using the CV template available on the call website. This will be uploaded to SESAME as part of the application process.

Submission process:

Applications will be submitted to SFI through SESAME by the Lead Applicant based in the RoI Research Body. All documentation requested above should be appended to the application form uploaded by the RoI lead applicant to SESAME.

Applications that pass eligibility criteria to progress to review will be shared with the relevant NI Department/Agency.

Review process:

Collaborative proposals will not undergo a separate review process and will be peer-reviewed alongside non-collaborative submissions to the current call.

Review criteria will be the same as for the non-collaborative projects, but the added value, merit and strength of collaboration will be assessed.

Award management:

The progress reporting requirements for awards made under the SFI COVID-19 Rapid Response Call are inclusive of Final Reports, completion of the annual stocktake of SFI Research Outputs and the completion of a Researcher Snapshot (See Section 8 of the call document). Reports will be shared with the NI partner agencies.

DfE will require claims to be submitted by the NI university on a quarterly basis and these will be paid in arrears. Typically, this will mean two sets of claims per project covering November to December 2020 and January to March 2021. Payment of the final claim will be subject to sample vouching and the provision of a Project Report to be received by 30 April 2021.

Appendix 1: SFI COVID-19 Rapid Response Call Phase 2 – pre-approval template for NI applicants to be submitted to DfE by the Research Offices of QUB and UU no later than 24th July 2020.

Principal Investigator (Name, Email & School/Department)	RoI Partner (Name & Institution)	Call Theme(s)	Project Title	Budget Estimate Nov'20 – March'21 (£000s)	Project Summary (200 words max)

Appendix 2: Budget table template for NI applicants



DFE COST TABLE FOR NI UNIVERSITIES

Applicant Name:

<<Insert>>

NI Institution:

<<Insert>>

Proposal Title:

<<Insert>>

RoI Partner: (include name of Principal Investigator & institution):

<<Insert>>

Notes:

DfE will fund the eligible costs for the NI element of successful projects up to the end of March 2021. As the funding is only available for this financial year, requests for no-cost extensions cannot be considered.

Applicants are therefore advised to ask only for what they realistically require to achieve all the deliverables within the indicated timeframe.

Only additional costs are eligible. Further information is contained in the Departmental letter to your Vice Chancellor dated 30 June 2020.

The Department's budget policy under this initiative is identical to that used for projects supported under the US-Ireland R&D Partnership. For detailed guidance, please see:

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/economy/US-Ireland-R-and-D-Partnership-Programme-Budget-Policy.pdf>

Please complete all the tables overleaf in sterling to the nearest £1.

SFI COVID-19 RAPID RESPONSE CALL (PHASE 2) ADDENDUM (modified 30 June 2020)

Summary	Amount Sought
Staff	
Equipment	
Materials / Consumables	
Travel & Subsistence	
Other	
TOTALS	

Staff Required – Description	Amount Sought
Total Staff Costs	

Equipment - Description	Amount Sought
Total Equipment Costs	

Materials / Consumables - Description	Amount Sought
Total Materials / Consumables Costs	

Travel & Subsistence - Description	Amount Sought
Total Travel & Subsistence Costs	

Other Costs - Description	Amount Sought
Total Other Costs	