SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme 2021 FAQs

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Terms of Reference

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APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

Q1a:  Are SFI Research Centres PIs and co-PIs eligible to apply for this call?
As with the 2020 call, SFI Research Centre PIs and Co-PIs may apply to the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme 2021 call at any stage of their grant and once all other eligibility criteria are met.

However, all individuals managing other/multiple SFI grants must provide justification and rationale for how they would manage two or more major SFI grants under the heading: “Management of More Than One Major SFI Award” as part of the information concerning scientific overlap (see Section 3.5 of the call document for further details).

Q1b:  I am a Funded Investigator in a SFI Research Centre – am I eligible to apply?
Holding the position of Funded Investigator in a SFI Research Centre does not impact eligibility to the programme. You may be eligible to apply, subject to all other eligibility criteria being met.

Q1c:  I am a Research Fellow whose salary is funded through a grant in my name, am I eligible to apply to the Frontiers for the Future Programme?
As stated in Section 2.5.1 of the call document, Applicants to the programme must be members of the academic staff of an eligible Research Body (permanent or with a contract that covers the period of the grant), or a contract researcher with a contract that covers the period of the grant, who is recognised by the Research Body as an independent investigator at proposal submission and will have an independent office and research space at the host Research Body for which the researcher will be fully responsible for at least the duration of the SFI grant. Applicants must obtain their salary either from an award in their own name (excluding fellowship-type awards) or be salaried by the host institution. Research Fellows are not eligible to apply to the Frontiers for the Future Programme if their fellowship only provides funding for their salary. However, where a fellowship granted in the Research Fellow’s name provides funding for their own salary, consumables and the salary for an FTE team member, the Research Fellow may be eligible to apply to the programme subject to all other eligibility criteria being met. A letter of support from the Research Body of an applicant should detail the employment status of the applicant, including how the applicant meets the eligibility criteria for this call as detailed in Section 3.11 of the call document.

Q1d:  Are Academic staff on contracts of indefinite duration eligible to apply to the Frontiers for the Future Programme?
As stated in Section 2.5.1 of the call document, Applicants to the programme must be members of the academic staff of an eligible Research Body (permanent or with a contract that covers the period of the grant), or a contract researcher with a contract that covers the period of the grant, who is recognised by the Research Body as an independent investigator at proposal submission and will have an independent office and research space at the host Research Body for which the researcher will be fully responsible for at least the duration of the SFI grant. Applicants must obtain their salary either from an award in their own name (excluding fellowship-type awards) or be salaried by the host institution. If the staff member is an independent researcher and funded either through the host institution or a grant in their own name, that is not a fellowship-type grant, and the grant covers consumables and salary for a FTE team member, they may be eligible to apply to the Frontiers for the Future Programme subject to all other eligibility criteria being met. A letter of support from the Research Body of an applicant should detail the employment status of the applicant, including how the applicant meets the eligibility criteria for this call as detailed in Section 3.11 of the call document.

Q1e:  I am in the process of moving to an SFI Eligible Research Body to take up an independent research position but have not yet signed a contract of employment. Am I eligible to apply?
If an applicant is in the process of moving from another organisation, it is mandatory that an employment contract with the new host institution, covering the duration of the grant is in place (and signed) at proposal submission. Should the application be successful, the applicants must have taken up their independent position at their host institution before a grant can commence. All other eligibility criteria outlined in the call document must be met.

Q1f: Are postdoctoral researchers eligible to apply for this call?
No. Postdoctoral researchers (or equivalent) are not eligible to apply to this call. The Lead Applicant and any Co-Applicant must be members of the academic staff of an eligible Research Body (permanent or with a contract that covers the period of the grant), or a contract researcher with a contract that covers the period of the grant, who is recognised by the Research Body as an independent investigator at proposal submission and will have an independent office and research space at the host Research Body for which the researcher will be fully responsible for at least the duration of the SFI grant. Applicants must obtain their salary either from an award in their own name (excluding fellowship-type awards) or be salaried by the host institution.

Q1g: I am currently a postdoctoral researcher but have been promised a lecturing post if my application to the SFI Frontiers to the Future Programme is successful. Is this ok?
No. Applicants must have an independent position and a contract of employment to that effect at proposal submission in order to be eligible to apply to this programme. Those employed as postdoctoral researchers (or equivalent) at proposal submission are not permitted to apply to this programme.

Q1h: I am currently a Starting Investigator Research Grant (SIRG) award holder – can I apply to the Frontiers for the Future Programme through the Emerging Investigator category?
Yes, provided you are in the last 24 months of your award and subject to all other relevant eligibility criteria being met. Holding a SIRG award does not preclude you from applying under the Emerging Investigator category.

Q1i: Can a MD/Professor, but not a PhD, working in a hospital apply to the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme if they hold an affiliate position with an eligible Research Body?
A Lead Applicant and any Co-Applicant without a PhD must refer to SFI’s PhD equivalence policy to establish if they are eligible to apply under this criterion (http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/eligibility-related-information/PHD-equivalence-policy_September_2018.pdf).

Regarding an affiliate position, the applicant must liaise with the Research Office of the Research Body with which they hold an affiliate position to determine if they can support an application and supply a Letter of Support for the candidate. It is important to note that applicants to the programme must obtain their salary either from an award in their own name (excluding fellowship-type awards) or be salaried by the host institution.

MDs applying specifically to the SFI-CHF initiative within the FFP 2021 call, should consult Appendix B of the call document for eligibility requirements.

Q1j: I am currently a Technology Innovation Development Award (TIDA) holder – can I apply to the Frontiers for the Future Programme through the Emerging Investigator category?
Yes, subject to all other eligibility criteria being met. Holding a TIDA award does not preclude you from applying under the Emerging Investigator category.
Q1k: I am the corresponding author on a number of publications where I am not listed as first or last author. Is being listed as corresponding author enough to prove senior authorship for the Frontiers for the Future Programme?
For the purposes of eligibility for the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme, being listed as corresponding is not sufficient as evidence of senior authorship (See Section 2.5.3 of the call document for details).

Q1l: Do abstracts, patent applications, or invention disclosures count as publications for the senior author publications requirement?
No, they do not. Only original research publications (and depending on the field peer-reviewed conference papers) are acceptable.

Q1m: Applicants who hold certain SFI Awards can only apply to the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme within the last 24 months of their existing awards. Does this 24-month period apply to the proposal submission date or the start date of the Frontiers for the Future Programme grant?
The relevant date here is the proposal submission date. SFI awards are scheduled to conclude at the end of a given month. Investigators currently funded by SFI as either a Principal Investigator (PI) or co-Principal Investigator (co-PI) on certain grants (see Section 2.5.4 of the call document for details) may only apply to the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme 2021 call if the proposal submission date is less than 24 months before the expiry date of their current award.

Q1n: If I hold a joint appointment or a non-Full Time Equivalent (FTE) contract with the host research body, am I eligible to apply to the Frontiers for the Future Programme?
Applicants who hold joint appointments are typically ineligible to apply for SFI awards (excluding Research Professorship). Applicants should consult with their host research body’s research office with respects to eligibility, and must contact ffp@sfi.ie to disclose joint appointments. Contract researchers are eligible to apply but must have a signed contract in place on the date of proposal submission to SFI. This contract must cover the period of the grant, and the contract researcher must be recognised by the Research Body as an independent investigator and will have an independent office and research space at the host Research Body for which the researcher will be fully responsible for at least the duration of the SFI grant. Upon submission of an application (and not before), SFI will perform eligibility checks which include assessment of commitment to an award (The time committed should reasonably reflect the amount of funding being requested.). SFI reserves the right to make any application ineligible where the employment status of an Applicant/Co-Applicant is unclear or unsatisfactory, or where commitment levels are deemed insufficient.

Q1o: I am a contract researcher with a fixed date contract. What date should I use/assume as a start date for FFP-Projects so that I can check my eligibility?
Please assume a start date of October 1st 2022, when calculating eligibility with respect to contract length being in place for the duration of the requested grant.

Q1p: I am a CHI based investigator who will be applying to the SFI-CHF co-funding initiative. Am I eligible to apply for other SFI awards?
As CHI is not an SFI-eligible research body, this will preclude a CHI staff member from applying to most SFI awards. However, if an applicant is also a contract researcher at an eligible research body, or holds a full time permanent joint position at an eligible research body, they may be eligible. Potential applicants must consult the relevant call documents for full eligibility requirements.

Q1q: When are applicants that were unsuccessful to the FFP 2020 Projects or Awards eligible to apply to the FFP 2021 Awards programme?
Applicants who were unsuccessful in the 2020 Projects stream are eligible to apply for the 2021 Awards stream of the programme when it opens. Applicants who were unsuccessful in the 2020 Awards stream (and those currently under review) must wait until at least six months after the notifications on the outcome of the review process have been released (Section 2.5.4).

**Q1r:** *Can you apply as an Emerging Investigator to Projects or Awards?*

An applicant can apply to either Award or Projects streams as an Emerging Investigator applicant as long as all eligibility criteria are met.

**Q1s:** *Publications in some fields of research typically have author lists in alphabetical order. Mathematics is an example of such a field. How do applicants in these fields handle the senior authorship eligibility criterion for the Frontiers for the Future Programme?*

In such circumstances, applicants should present in their application three publications on which they are the key author. From the call document section 2.5.3: “applicants should be able to convince and reassure reviewers that they are the key author on these publications”. There is no requirement to include detailed additional information in the application. A statement to the effect of “My field uses alphabetical ordering for author lists; I was senior author on the following publications” has sufficed previously/historically. SFI reserves the right to follow up with the applicant to obtain more information.

**Q1t:** *How do no cost extensions (NCEs) affect eligibility for current award holders?*

For applicants who currently hold an FFP Project or Award with an approved NCE on the current award at time of submission, the extended close date (NOT the original close date) is the one which is used to determine eligibility for a 2021 FFP application.

From section 2.5.4 of the call document, applicants who hold a previously granted Frontiers for the Future Project may not apply for an Award or Project unless they are in the final 12 months of their current Project at date of submission. Applicants who hold a Frontiers for the Future Award may not apply for an Award or Project unless they are in the final 24 months of their current Award at date of submission.

**Q1u:** *If applying via the SFI-CHF co-fund as an Emerging Investigator do you have to have a joint appointment with CHI and an SFI eligible research body?*

Yes, if you are applying as an Emerging Investigator via the SFI-CHF co-fund you MUST have a joint appointment with CHI and an SFI eligible research body.

**APPLICANT/CO-APPLICANTS, COLLABORATORS & MENTORS**

**Q2a:** *Can researchers in Research Bodies outside the Republic of Ireland be Co-Applicants and Collaborators on SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme grant?*

Researchers in Research Bodies outside the Republic of Ireland cannot be Applicants or Co-Applicants but can be listed as Collaborators on SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme proposals. However, you may have a Co-Applicant who is in a different Research Body to your own within the Republic of Ireland.

**Q2b:** *Can I have a Mentor from a different Research Body to my own on an Emerging Investigator application to the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme?*

No, Mentors are established researchers within the host institution who will give advice and guidance to the award holder and associated team.
Q2c: **Is it possible for Collaborators on the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme to receive funding from the grant?**

Only Academic Collaborators based in an SFI Eligible Research Body are eligible to receive funding through the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme grant. The funding allocated should reflect the supporting role that such Collaborator(s) are expected to play in the research programme. Clear indication should be given where funding is apportioned to Collaborators. Please note that Collaborators outside the Republic of Ireland or those not located within eligible Research Bodies in the Republic of Ireland are not eligible to receive funding through the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme.

Industry Collaborators may not receive funding from the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme grants, regardless of their location (see Section 6 of the Call Document for State Aid Policy).

In exceptional cases, a project may require the use of facilities or services not available in Ireland. Funding for such a request may be considered, subject to a detailed justification for the funding being provided upon application.

Q2d: **In a SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme application, is it ok to request funds to support a postgraduate student who will be based in the lab of a named Academic Collaborator on the proposal?**

Yes, as long as the Collaborator is based in an SFI Eligible Research Body. Academic Collaborators may not be the primary supervisor/mentor of postgraduate students, postdoctoral researchers or research staff enrolled on the grant, but may be the local supervisor if these team members are based in a different institution to the Lead or Co-Applicant. CVs must be provided for Academic Collaborators at proposal submission. Academic Collaborators intending to act as a local supervisor to team members should be able to demonstrate a competitive track record of achievements and must have previously held a supervisory role in research programmes.

Q2e: **Is it mandatory to include a Co-Applicant on Frontiers for the Future proposal?**

No, inclusion of a Co-Applicant is optional. Applicants applying under the Emerging Investigator category cannot include a Co-Applicant on their application.

Q2f: **How many Co-Applicants are permitted on a Frontiers for the Future proposal?**

There is a limit of one Co-Applicant on SFI Frontier for the Future proposals. As outlined above, inclusion of a Co-Applicant is optional. Applicants applying under the Emerging Investigator category cannot include a Co-Applicant on their application.

Q2g: **How many Collaborators are permitted on a Frontiers for the Future proposal?**

There is no limit on the number of Collaborators, however, Applicants must make sure that the role of any listed Collaborator fits the description available in the call document (section 2.4).

Q2h: **Is it mandatory to include a Collaborator, either industry or academic, on Frontiers for the Future proposal?**

No, inclusion of a Collaborator is optional.

Q2i: **Can an individual be a Collaborator on multiple applications to the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme?**

Yes, an individual may be named as a Collaborator on more than one proposal to the Frontiers for the Future Programme.
Q2j: Can a named Collaborator (or Mentor) on one proposal, be a Lead or Co-Applicant on another proposal?
Yes, a Collaborator (or Mentor) can be an Applicant (Lead or Co-Applicant) on another proposal.

Q2k: Can an Applicant (Lead or Co-Applicant) be a Collaborator on another proposal?
Yes, an Applicant (Lead or Co-Applicant) on one proposal may be a Collaborator on another proposal.

Q2l: If two Academic Collaborators are in the same unit and will offer the same support to the project, is one letter with two signatures, OK?
No, a separate letter of support should be provided for each Collaborator.

Q2m: In the "Research funding history" section, it states that only grants where you are PI or Co-PI should be listed - can "funded investigator" status be included here, as this involves direct receipt of funding?
Holding the position of “funded investigator” is not currently an option for inputting the position held on an award. Only grants where the applicant is listed as a PI or Co-PI should be listed in the application form.

Q2n: Who should provide letters of support for CHI co-applicants as part of the SFI-CHF co-fund?
All CHI applicants must provide a Letter of Support from the CHI Research and Innovation Office.

SUBMISSION

Q3a: How many applications can an individual submit to the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme?
Individuals may only submit one single proposal, as Applicant or Co-Applicant, to the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme 2021 call. Applicants and Co-Applicants are not permitted to have an Award and a Project application under review at the same time.

Q3b: Can a Lead Applicant of one Frontiers for the Future Programme application also be a Co-Applicant on a second one?
No. Individuals may only submit, as Lead Applicant or Co-Applicant, one proposal to the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme. If a Lead Applicant or Co-Applicant submits more than one proposal to the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme, both applications will be made ineligible and will be returned without review. It is permissible, however, to be a Lead Applicant or Co-Applicant on one proposal and a Collaborator on other proposals to the same call.

Q3c: Can I submit two proposals, one under the Award and another under the Project component of the Frontiers for the Future Programme?
No - individuals may only submit one single proposal (either a Project or an Award), as Applicant or Co-Applicant, to the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme.

Q3d: Can I submit a proposal to the SFI Frontiers for the Future Awards stream if my Project proposal is declined?
Applicants whose proposal to the 2020 Frontiers for the Future Projects stream was declined can apply to the 2021 Awards stream of the programme, but cannot apply for both within the same year’s call.

Applicants must declare whether a new submission relates to a previous unsuccessful application to any SFI scheme. If the application is a resubmission, a statement referencing the previous application and explaining the differences must be provided and must make reference to reviewer comments where relevant. This statement will assist SFI Scientific Staff in the assessment of the eligibility of a
revised application and will not be shared with reviewers. See SFI’s Resubmission policy for further details (https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/eligibility-related-information/).

**Q3e:** Can I submit a proposal to the SFI Frontiers for the Future Projects stream if my Award proposal is declined?
Applicants whose proposal to the SFI Frontiers for the Future Awards stream has been declined cannot apply to the Projects stream of the programme until at least six months after the notification of the outcome of their application.

Applicants must declare whether a new submission relates to a previous unsuccessful application to any SFI scheme. If the application is a resubmission, a statement referencing the previous application and explaining the differences must be provided and must make reference to reviewer comments where relevant. This statement will assist SFI Scientific Staff in the assessment of the eligibility of a revised application and will not be shared with reviewers. See SFI’s Resubmission policy for further details (https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/eligibility-related-information/).

**Q3f:** Can an eligible researcher re-submit an unsuccessful Frontiers for the Future Programme 2020 proposal to Frontiers for the Future Programme 2021 call?
Yes, an Applicant who was unsuccessful in the Frontiers for the Future Programme 2020 call may resubmit their proposal to the Frontiers for the Future Programme 2021 call, providing all eligibility criteria are met.

Applicants must declare whether a new submission relates to a previous unsuccessful application to any SFI scheme. If the application is a resubmission, a statement referencing the previous application and explaining the differences must be provided and must make reference to reviewer comments where relevant. This statement will assist SFI Scientific Staff in the assessment of the eligibility of a revised application and will not be shared with reviewers. See SFI’s Resubmission policy for further details (https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/eligibility-related-information/).

**Q3g:** Can I submit an application to the Frontiers for the Future Programme 2021 if I was on the reserve list for funding under the Frontiers for the Future Call 2020?
Yes, though if the application submitted to the 2021 call is a re-submission of the application submitted to the 2020 call, this should be declared as indicated in Q3f and Q6a.

**Q3h:** Can I submit an application to the Frontiers for the Future Programme 2021 if I currently have a Frontiers for Partnership Awards Programme application in review?
Yes, Applicants or Co-applicants currently under review for the Frontiers for Partnership Awards Programme are eligible to apply under the 2021 FFP Projects or Awards stream. The application should not be a resubmission of the Partnership application currently under review.

**Q3i:** Is it possible to include figures/tables in the CV template?
No – please conform to the template requirement of the DORA CV – provided in the Downloads section on the Programme webpage.

**Q3j:** What is the process for proposals on paediatric topics where the clinical lead is not CHI affiliated?
Paediatric research-based proposals from applicants not affiliated with CHI are welcome and will be reviewed in the standard FFP Projects or Award stream, as submitted.
SALARIES AND BUDGETS

Q4a: Are requests for funding to allow personnel to train at a Collaborator’s lab acceptable?
Reasonable requests for travel costs including accommodation, subsistence and transport to allow personnel to participate in necessary training at a collaborator’s lab are acceptable. A detailed justification must be provided in the budget justification.

Q4b: Are requests for funding to allow Collaborator travel to the lab of the Frontiers applicant an acceptable expense?
Funding requests to bring high-calibre international collaborators to Ireland to work with researchers in the Frontiers applicant’s lab to carry out research for a fixed period of time are acceptable. 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.

Q4c: Is teaching buyout only available to Emerging Investigator Applicants who have taken eligible periods of leave?
No, teaching buyout of up to 50% of teaching load for a period of up to 12 months (Projects) or up to 24 months (Awards) is available to any successful applicant who has taken consecutive documented eligible leave (minimum 12 weeks) since 1st January 2012 and has since returned to work. Teaching buyout is also available to applicants from the TU/IoT sector. Please see Sections 3.9.2 and 3.9.3 of the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme Call Document for further details. Requests for teaching buyout must be included in the requested budget - requests made after receipt of the proposal application will not be considered by SFI.

Q4d: Can budget be requested to send reagents and consumables to a Collaborator based outside Ireland?
If there is appropriate justification that a specific experiment can only be conducted outside Ireland and is needed to advance the project, then requests for an Irish team member to go to that lab to do the work and to provide the necessary consumables will be considered by SFI.

Q4e: What is the latest possible start date for a funded FFP Project?
The latest possible start date for a funded Project is 1st December 2022. For the purposes of assessing eligibility, applicants should assume an earliest possible start date 1st October 2022 for Projects. Actual start dates will depend on the volume of applications received and the time taken to review applications. As Awards are reviewed on a rolling basis, Award start dates will vary, depending on when a proposal is submitted.

Q4f: Is it possible to include costs to recruit one or more PhD students recruited to work on a Project or an Award as part of this funding?
Yes, there is no limit to the number of PhD students which can be added to the requested budget as long as it is justified in the Budget Justification.

Q4g: What salary scale should I use?
All information required to complete the Staff section of the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme budget can be found in Section 4.1 of the SFI Grant Budget Policy (version November 2021: https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/budget-finance-related-policies/SFI-Grant-Budget-Policy-November-2021.pdf) and the associated SFI Grants Team Member Budgeting Scale (version January 2022: https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/budget-finance-related-policies/SFI-Team-member-scales-effective-January-2022.pdf).
Q4h: Are there any particular requirements for budgets for SFI-CHF co-fund applications?
Please account for all costs associated with the collection, processing and storage of biological samples and clinical data in CHI within the budget. Applicants are encouraged to confirm these costs with the CHI Research and Innovation Office early in the course of budget calculation.

Q4i: Can I claim for accessibility equipment in my budget?
SFI will consider requests for any accessibility equipment needed. This should be detailed in the budget justification statement.

REMIT

Q5a: I’m not sure if my research topic aligns with SFI’s legal remit?
Additional guidance on SFI’s Legal Remit is available at this link: https://www.sfi.ie/about-us/about-sfi/what-we-do/.

Q5b: Can SFI fund clinical trials through Frontiers for the Future Programme 2021?
No. SFI only permits early-stage regulated clinical trials (Phase I or combined Phase I/II) and investigations to be undertaken under the scope of the following SFI programmes: SFI Research Centres, Spokes, and Strategic Partnerships in addition to SFI Research Professorship where the successful candidate will become a Co-Principal Investigator within an SFI Research Centre.

Clinical trials and investigations requiring approval by the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) will not be permitted through other SFI funding programmes, including the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme.

Funding requests for early-stage research involving human volunteers and/or human samples that do not require regulatory approval are permitted under SFI Frontiers for the Future 2021. Where there is any doubt, applicants are advised to contact the HPRA prior to submission to ensure eligibility and are required to indicate in their application that the proposed study does not require HPRA approval.

SFI’s Clinical Trial and Clinical Investigation Policy can be found at the following link: https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/ethical-and-scientific-issues/

Please direct any queries you may have to ffp@sfi.ie.

Q5c: Does my research require ethical approval?
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. In exceptional cases where such research may not commence until a late stage of an 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.

Q5d: I am interested in applying to the Frontiers for the Future Programme 2021 call under the SFI-GSI or SFI-SEAI Partnership, but I cannot see how to register this in SESAME. What do I need to do?
It is not necessary for applicants to indicate in SESAME that they are specifically seeking support under the SFI-GSI or SFI-SEAI Partnership. All applications that demonstrate a clear alignment to the themes of interest the co-funding partners (as stated in Section 2.2 of the call document) will have the potential to be funded under the relevant Partnership agreement. SFI and the GSI or SEAI will agree upon which proposals can be supported through these agreements. Any proposal deemed to fall outside of the agreement between SFI and its Partners can still be supported through the Frontiers
for the Future Programme 2021 call; if successful, such a proposal would be funded by SFI in its entirety.

**Q5e:** *I am interested in applying to the Frontiers for the Future Programme 2021 call under the SFI-CHF Partnership, but I cannot see how to register this in SESAME. What do I need to do?*

If you are seeking support under the SFI-CHF co-fund please select the relevant option in the FFP Projects application form on SESAME.

You must also refer to Appendix B of the call document for the applicant and application requirements of this partnership. Any proposal deemed to fall outside of the agreement between SFI and its Partner can still be supported through the Frontiers for the Future Programme 2021 call; if successful, such a proposal would be funded by SFI in its entirety.

In advance of proposal submission, queries regarding this co-funding initiative may be directed to SFI at FFP@sfi.ie; however, full eligibility checks are not conducted before proposal submission.

**Q5f:** *If my proposal is suitable to be co-funded by the programme co-funding partner, is this taken into account in the review process?*

No, proposals falling within the remit of the programme co-funding partner will be reviewed equally to those that fall outside the co-funding remit.

**REVIEW PROCESS**

**Q6a:** *If an application to the Frontiers for the Future Programme is based on a previous submission to SFI, to what extent must the ‘subsequent’ proposal be different?*


Applications to any call that are based primarily on unsuccessful submissions (following peer review) to any SFI programme must demonstrate that the review comments resulting from the initial application have been taken into account in the preparation of the new submission. SFI will not review resubmissions that have failed to take into account the major comments or concerns resulting from the prior review; such proposals will be withdrawn from the review process. Applicants to an SFI call for proposals must declare whether a new submission relates to a previously submitted application to any SFI scheme. If the application is a resubmission, a statement referencing the previous application and explaining the differences must be provided and make reference to reviewer comments where relevant. This information can be provided within the relevant section of the SESAME application. This statement will assist SFI Scientific Staff in the assessment of eligibility of a revised application and will not be shared with reviewers.

**Q6b:** *Will science and impact be reviewed by the same reviewers?*

All eligible proposals will be forwarded to distinguished international peer reviewers for evaluation of scientific excellence and potential economic and societal impact. Each reviewer will evaluate both scientific excellence and impact.

**Q6c:** *If an Oversight Panel is required, who will make up this panel for the Evaluation Process?*

Reviewers on the oversight panel will be distinguished international reviewers with generalist expertise who will oversee the fairness of the written reviews and the applicant response. Panel reviewers will receive the written reviews, the applicant’s response to those reviews and the scores before and after the applicant response was submitted. Panel reviewers will make a funding
recommendation and may modify scores where an application is judged to have been treated unfairly and there is sufficient justification and rationale for doing so.

Q6d: Are the review criteria weighted?
Yes, please consult Appendix A for further details (and Appendix B in relation to the SFI-CHF co-fund).

Q6e: Are Awards and Projects reviewed differently?
Award proposals will be assessed by “postal reviewers” who are distinguished international peer reviewers selected on the basis of the subject area of individual proposals. Each reviewer reviews only a single application. Project proposals will be assessed by a “virtual panel” who are distinguished international peer reviewers selected on the basis of the subject area of a group of proposals. These reviewers would be considered more generalist than the postal reviewers.

Q6f: At the evaluation stage, what is the difference in weighting between the Lead and Co-Applicant track records?
As outlined in the Call Document for the purposes of eligibility, reviewing and monitoring, a Co-Applicant applying for funding under the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme will receive equal evaluation to the Lead Applicant and will hold equal accountability for the delivery of the proposed research objectives.

Q6g: Where applications receive the same final score, will SFI prioritise applications from female Co-Applicants in addition to female Lead Applicants?
No, when ranking applications, in the event of proposals receiving the same final score, SFI will give priority in the review process to applications from female Lead Applicants only.

Q6h: Can an Applicant request the exclusion of a reviewer from a previously declined proposal?
No, Applicants cannot request the exclusion of a previous reviewer of their declined proposal.

Q6i: I am submitting a proposal to the Frontiers for the Future Programme Projects stream; may I request to exclude an individual as a reviewer?
No, excluded reviewers are permitted only for the Awards stream. Awards applicants can select up to three individuals who will be excluded from acting as reviewers of proposals for reasons of competition. This section is not made available to reviewers. Due to the panel nature of the Projects review, selection of excluded reviewers is not possible.

Q6j: How does SFI instruct reviewers to ensure the principles of DORA (San Francisco Declaration of Research Assessment) are realised?
SFI introduced a DORA-compliant curriculum vitae (CV) for the Frontiers for the Future Programme 2020 call. This CV provides applicants with an opportunity to describe their wider contributions to, and outputs from, research. Reviewers are instructed to review all of the information provided in this new CV template when assessing, and arriving at a score for, the applicant. Furthermore, in line with DORA principles, the use of journal metrics such as impact factor and the h-index are not permitted, and reviewers are instructed to disregard this information, should they encounter it, in their overall assessment of the applicant.

Q6k: Beyond the requirement for excellence, do reviewers at any stage of the review process specifically evaluate whether a project is ‘high risk – high reward’ for FFP Projects?
Reviewers are advised of the call description as part of the review process but ‘high risk high reward’ is not a specific metric that is scored. The review criteria are detailed in Section 4 of the call document and more information about the review process is provided in Appendix A.
Q6l: **What actions are taken if an application receives reviews that vastly differ in opinion?**

SFI reserves the right to assess applications with very high standard deviations or vastly deviating reviewer opinions using additional reviewers or review through an oversight panel. Should additional reviewers assess an application, they will review the fairness of the existing reviews and may make a funding recommendation and/or may modify scores where an application is judged to have been treated unfairly and there is sufficient justification and rationale for doing so.

Q6m: **If funding is based on a ranking list, how is the ranking determined?**

For applications that are recommended for funding by the Stage 1 panel (i.e. 2 of 3, or 3 of 3 reviewers recommend the proposal be funded), weighted scores will be rounded to the nearest half point. When ranking applications, in the event of applications receiving the same final score, SFI will give priority in the review process to applications from female lead applicants. Further ties will be decided based on the quality of the proposed research. SFI reserves the right to use additional tiebreakers if required.

SFI also reserves the right to decide tiebreakers using a randomised “lottery” system. SFI reserves the right to adjust the rounding levels, depending on number and quality of applications. Applicants will be made aware of any changes to the review process. SFI will fund down the ranked lists until the programme funding is exhausted.

Q6n: **Will there be additional terms and conditions attached to funded proposals if SEAI or GSI choose to (co)support proposals?**

If awarded, a proposal co-funded by either SEAI or GSI must acknowledge this co-funder in all publications, presentations, reports or media coverage in respect to Grant Funded Activities. Any advertisement or tender notice which is produced must acknowledge the co-funder as a funding source and include the relevant logo of this co-funder. Further details will be provided in any letters of offer.

SESAME

Q7a: **I am requesting funding for 40 months, but the options in the drop-down menu do not allow me to do this. How should I proceed?**

The funding period for a Frontiers for the Future Project is 24, 36 or 48 months, and for a Frontiers for the Future Award is either 48 or 60 months. 40 months is not a valid funding period for this programme.

Q7b: **Will SESAME alert me if the required documents have not been uploaded or if fields have not been completed, as part of my submission to Frontiers for the Future Programme 2021?**

To check that required fields have been completed prior to submission, click “Validate”. Validation will also automatically occur when "Submit" is selected. However, it is important to note that there is no system validation on multiple upload file fields, including for example, letters of support, where required. The number of documents required may vary depending on each application. You must view the PDF of your application prior to submission to allow you to verify content, print or save your application. It is the responsibility of the Lead Applicant to ensure that all documentation is included and that page lengths are not exceeded. Please refer to the checklist in Section 3.16 of the Frontiers for the Future Programme call document.

Q7c: **Can you list the most common issues that researchers have identified when submitting proposals using the SESAME system?**
**Failure to submit before the call deadline:** In all circumstances, you should aim to submit your proposal well before the deadline to have time to solve any problems or omissions with your application. Research Officers will need ample time to review submissions. Please note that SFI will not extend deadlines for system failures that are not its own responsibility. Additionally, applications cannot be submitted after the deadline.

**Issues with PDF generation:** (created with open source software, page count issue, etc.) Please ensure to use unencrypted, non-password protected PDFs with the copying function disabled, developed using either Adobe or Microsoft Word PDF convertor software ONLY. Also do NOT use commas or special characters in the title of your uploaded PDF document.

**Issues with PDF document titles:**
Do NOT use commas or special characters in the title of your uploaded PDF document.

**Password issues/resets:**
If you forget your password, click on the ‘Forgot password?’ link on the SESAME homepage.

**Pop-ups enabled in browser:**
Please ensure that popups ARE ENABLED in your browser configuration.

**SESAME checks word counts and pages queries?**
Yes, SESAME does perform system validation around word/page counts, but it is the responsibility of the researcher/research body to check that the correct documents are uploaded and reviewed within the full PDF prior to submission.

**Single/multiple upload field:**
If you wish to use the multiple upload field, please ensure that you have the Java plugin installed. If you click the “multiple files” button and it does not work, you will see a link to the Java website where you can download the latest plugin.

**Browser “Back” button:**
Please do NOT use the browser “back” button when navigating SESAME.

**Documentation uploads:**
Please ENSURE all documents are uploaded into the correct fields in the application.

**Co-Applicant access issues:**
It is only possibly for one person to work on the proposal at any one time. To allow your Co-Applicant to access the proposal, please save the proposal and close the browser window. Your Co-Applicant will then be able to access the proposal.

**IMPACT**

**Q8a: What is impact?**
Please see the Impact page on the SFI website (http://www.sfi.ie/funding/award-management/research-impact/). Applicants are advised to view the SFI Impact webinar available on the SFI website in advance of preparing their Impact Statements.
NATIONAL FACILITIES

Q9a: **How do I apply for access costs to national facilities costs through the Frontiers for the Future Programme?**

Full details on how to apply for access costs are available on the SFI website: https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/budget-finance-related-policies/

POLICY

Q10a: **Do open access publications refer only to research outputs published in open-access scientific journals, or will deposition in access repositories be permissible as well?**

SFI is a member of cOAlition S and is committed to the principles outlined in Plan S (https://www.coalition-s.org/plan_s_principles/) – that is to make full and immediate Open Access a reality. As such, all outputs arising from SFI funded research must be compliant with SFI’s Open Access Policy (https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/open-research/ SFIs-Open-Access-Policy-V.3.-04.05.2021.pdf) which is aligned with Plan S principles. Depositing in Plan S compliant repositories is permitted and the recent publication of Plan S’ ‘Rights Retention Strategy’ provides detailed information on self-archiving and copyright licensing (https://www.coalition-s.org/rights-retention-strategy/). SFI’s Open Access Policy will be updated regularly to reflect guidance arising from cOAlition S on implementing Plan S principles. Research outputs arising in whole or in part from SFI funded Grants will be monitored for compliance with its policy from 1 January 2021.

Q10b: **Is the sex and/or gender statement only in relation to gender issues in your proposed research i.e. using animals of both gender if relevant etc., or, does it also refer to the gender balance of the research team etc.**

The sex and gender dimension question directly relates to the proposed research programme and not the team conducting it.

All applicants must complete a statement articulating the consideration of biological sex and/or social gender variables in their proposed research programme. Applicants must consider how the sex and/or gender dimension impacts your research. Please consult the Guidance for Applicants on Ethical and Scientific Issues (https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/ethical-and-scientific-issues/) for resources on how to address the sex and/or gender dimension of research in your grant.

An opportunity to describe how you have addressed gender equality, diversity and inclusion in your research team/environment is provided in Section 1B of your CV, should you choose to highlight it.

Q10c: **How should an Applicant prepare a “Sex and/or Gender in Research” Statement for an Engineering Project?**

The gender dimension of a particular research project is one that you, as the Applicant, should consider, perhaps by consulting relevant literature and guidance for the subject matter of your proposed research project. There are a number of excellent papers such as Cara Tannenbaum’s ‘Sex and Gender Analysis Improves Science and Engineering (DOI: 10.1038/s41586-019-1657-6) which describe areas of scientific and engineering endeavour that failed to address the gender dimension, and hence are considered flawed – most notably ‘crash test dummies’ which were developed for an ‘average male size’ - this is an excellent engineering example. You may also wish to consult the ‘Gendered Innovations in Science, Health & Medicine and Engineering’ website (http://genderedinnovations.stanford.edu/index.html) which contains a range of useful resources regarding best practice for sex and/or gender considerations in research.
Q10d: **There are some projects that we find difficult to find a sex and/or gender aspect in the proposal programme. Will a “no” influence the overall scoring and progression within this competitive programme?**

The Sex and/or Gender Dimension Question is a mandatory field and is scored as part of the “Quality, significance, novelty, and strategic relevance of the research plan”. A statement must be provided regardless of whether a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ response is provided. What will influence the overall scoring of this statement is how effectively the applicant justifies a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ response to this question. Please see Q10c on additional information for preparing a response to this question.

**CURRICULUM VITAE TEMPLATE**

Q11a: **How will non-academic publications/career impact be considered?**

The DORA-compliant CV provides an opportunity for applicants to discuss their wider contribution to research under four specific categories: 1. Generation of Knowledge; 2. Development of Individuals and Collaborations; 3. Supporting Broader Society & the Economy and; 4. Supporting the Research Community. Reviewers are asked to assess the applicant based on the detail provided in all of these categories – please see Appendix A ‘Questions Pertaining to Applicant(s)’ in the Frontiers for the Future Programme call document for additional information on how research outputs other than publications are considered.

Q11b: **In terms of the DORA guidelines for the CV is it possible to mention citation numbers of selected publications?**

Citations of publications in the DORA-Compliant CV are permitted as per the instructions provided in the CV template. They may be used to describe the impact and / or reach of your research, in addition to other impacts of the publication. CV templates for Applicant(s) and Collaborators can be found under the Downloads Section of the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme webpage (https://www.sfi.ie/funding/funding-calls/frontiers-for-the-future/index.xml).

Q11c: **Can you help us to understand this change and the reason for this?**

SFI has recently become a signatory to the San Francisco Declaration of Research Assessment (DORA), and as such is aligning its review and evaluation processes with DORA principles. To this end, all types of research outputs are recognised and SFI is committed to assessing the quality and impact of research through means other than journal impact factors with particular importance being placed on the content and quality of publications rather than the publication venue. SFI has developed a DORA-compliant CV template to assist with compliance to DORA principles. The outputs from scientific research extend far beyond the number of publications or journal venue and can take many forms, including: research articles reporting new knowledge, intellectual property; data, reagents, and software; and highly trained young scientists. By implementing a DORA-compliant CV, applicants are being asked to provide examples of their key achievements in multiple categories. As such, reviewers are asked to assess an individual’s scientific contributions by considering a broad range of outputs and to not use journal-based metrics, such as impact factor, as a surrogate measure of quality of individual research articles and by extension a sole measure of an individual scientist’s contributions.

Q11d: **Are all SFI schemes going to use the new DORA CV template from now on?**

All SFI funding programmes going forward will use the revised DORA-compliant CV template.

Q11e: **What specific metrics are on the banned list? E.g. the template specifically mentions H-index, i10-index, G-index, H(2)-index, HG-index, Q2-index, AR-index, M-quotient, M-index, W-index, Hw-index, E-index, A-index, R-index, W-index, J-index but are there other publication metrics such as Citations per Publication allowed?**
In keeping with DORA principles, no journal-based metrics, such as journal Impact Factors etc., will be used as a surrogate measure of the quality of individual research articles, when assessing an applicant’s or co-applicant’s scientific contributions. As such, all journal and publication metrics, with the exception of publication citations, will not be permitted and inclusion of which may result in an application being deemed ineligible.

**Q11f: Can metrics on funding, teaching and innovation be used on the CV?**

Part of the application process mandates that the Applicant’s and Co-Applicant’s (where relevant) provide a report on current, pending and expired research funding. Additionally, in keeping with DORA principles, applicants are asked to describe the wider impact of their research by detailing the significance and/or impact of up to 3 key achievements across four prescribed categories (see DORA-compliant CV Template). This includes but is not limited to, academic activities (e.g. teaching) in the “Development of Individuals” as well as innovation and commercialisation activities (e.g. verified invention disclosures, patents, license etc.) in the “Generation of Knowledge”.

**Q11g: Can collaboration (co-authorship) metrics be used on the CV?**

It is permitted to refer to the contributions an applicant has made to the success of a collaboration(s) as well as describing the significance and/or impact of a collaboration in the “Generation of Knowledge” section of the CV, including but not limited to, publications, innovation and commercialisation activity, software, and open data sets. However, in keeping with DORA principles, referring to the total number of collaborative publications and associated journal and publication metrics are not permitted.

**Q11h: Can links to other information be included on the CV e.g. links to institutional profile; ResearchGate; Google Scholar?**

The use of hyperlinks and URLs are not permitted to provide additional information, which would be necessary for application review. This includes links to applicant’s institutional profile, ResearchGate, Google Scholar etc., which would provide additional information to that already provided in the standardised DORA-compliant CV template used by all applicants. Further information regarding the use of hyperlinks is detailed in the Call Document for Frontiers for the Future.

**Q11i: How will the CVs be utilised in the evaluation process? For example, will the CVs be used to ascertain capacity and experience to carry out the proposed project?**

Reviewers are asked to comment on the quality, significance and relevance of the applicant’s and co-applicant’s (if relevant) key achievements and research track record as demonstrated in the CV(s) provided, commensurate with career stage (see Appendix A: FFP Review Process) with regard to individual categories in the CV(s): 1) Generation of Knowledge; 2) Development of Individuals and Collaborations; 3) Supporting Broader Society & the Economy, and; 4) Supporting the Research Community.

Reviewers are also asked to consider whether the expertise and experience of the lead applicant, co-applicant(s), mentor, and collaborator(s), if relevant, are appropriate given their proposed contribution to the research programme. Furthermore, reviewers are requested to comment on the appropriateness of the skills and composition of the team and their alignment with the proposed research programme. As such, both key achievements and publication details of the applicant’s and co-applicants are used in the evaluation process to assess the individuals track record as well as scientific productivity and competency with regard to the proposed research programme and applicant and co-applicants’ ability to successfully deliver on the proposed project.

**Q11j: Are there any examples of things to avoid?**
In keeping with DORA principles, no journal-based metrics, such as journal Impact Factors etc., will be used as a surrogate measure of the quality of individual research articles, when assessing an applicant’s or co-applicant’s scientific contributions. As such, all journal and publication metrics, with the exception of publication citations, will not be permitted and inclusion of which may result in an application being deemed ineligible. Details of specific examples such as total number of publications and all types of journal and publication metrics not permitted are detailed in the Call Document and DORA-compliant CV template.

**Q11k: What does a ‘Good’ CV look like; How do you distinguish between ‘Good’ and ‘Bad’ CV. What criteria are used?**

We would ask applicants to carefully consider the “Question pertaining to Applicant” on the review form, copied below, when completing their Applicant(s) CV.

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**Question pertaining to Applicant(s)**

SFI is a signatory of the [San Francisco Declaration of Research Assessment](https://sfi.ie/declaration-of-research-assessment/) (DORA). As such, SFI is aligning its review and evaluation processes with DORA principles. To this end, all types of research output are recognised by SFI and we are committed to assessing the quality and impact of research through means other than journal impact factors. Furthermore, in the spirit of supporting open research and as a signatory of [Plan S](https://www.sfi.ie/sfi-and-plan-s), SFI will positively consider where there is a commitment to making data and other types of research open and accessible. Please take these positions into account during your assessment of the DORA-compliant CV(s) submitted by the applicant(s).

Please comment on the quality, significance and relevance of the applicant’s and co-applicant’s (if relevant) key achievements and research track record as demonstrated in the CV(s), commensurate with their career stage and research discipline, taking any periods of leave into account. Please include in your review comments how the applicant(s) has addressed each of the following areas:

1) Generation of Knowledge,
2) Development of Individuals and Collaborations,
3) Supporting Broader Society & the Economy and,
4) Supporting the Research Community.

With your review, please also consider whether the expertise and experience of the lead applicant, co-applicant(s), mentor and collaborator(s), if relevant, are appropriate given their proposed contribution to the research programme.

There are two stages to the scoring of the applicant(s):

First, please score the quality, significance and relevance of the applicant’s and co-applicant’s (if relevant) key achievements and research track record with regard to the individual categories in the CV(s):

1) Generation of Knowledge,
2) Development of Individuals and Collaborations,
3) Supporting Broader Society & the Economy,
4) Supporting the Research Community. Half scores are permitted.

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

Second, taking into account the four categories referred to above, please use your judgement to provide one overall score based on the quality, significance and relevance of the lead applicant’s and co-applicant’s
(if relevant) key achievements and research track record, commensurate with their career stage and research discipline, taking any periods of leave into account. Please consider the quality and relevance of the collaborators and/or mentor, if relevant. This score will be the final score used to assess the applicant(s). Half scores are permitted.

- **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)