SFI Accelerating Research to Commercialisation (ARC) Hub Programme

Call for Submission of Proposals

Version 2: Aug 2023

KEY DATES

Call announcement: 1st June 2023

Webinar: 14th June 2023, 11:30

Deadline for Abstract submission: 21st July 2023, 13:00

Deadline for submission of proposals: 22nd September 2023, 13:00

Version History

Previous Version	Changes to Call Document	Effective Date
Version 1: May 2023	Page 47: • Under 'Budget' heading: Relevant tab name updated to 'Summary Budget for proposal' Page 48: • Checklist Table, Proposal Summary section: 'Title' has been updated to 'SFI ARC Hub for XXXX' from 'ARC Hub for XXXX' Page 49: • Checklist Table, Letters of Support section: page limited for 'Host Research Body of Co-Applicants/Translational Researchers if in a different Research Body' has been corrected to max. 3 pages • Checklist Table, Letters of Support section: 'Collaborator Letter of Support' has been corrected to 'Academic Collaborator'	15 Aug 2023

TERMS OF REFERENCE

While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and reliability of this document, it is provided for information purposes only and as a guide to expected developments. It is not intended, and should not be relied upon, as any form of warranty, representation, undertaking, contractual, or other commitment binding in law upon Science Foundation Ireland, the Government of Ireland, or any of their respective servants or agents. SFI Terms and Conditions of Research Grants shall govern the administration of SFI grants and awards to the exclusion of this and any other oral, written, or recorded statement.

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 Act 2014 and Regulation (EU) 2021-1060[1].

SFI will collect, use and disclose personal data provided in the Application and otherwise obtained under or in connection with the application for processing the application and for the performance of its statutory powers and functions and for the general activities of SFI. Further details regarding SFI's collection, use and disclosure of personal data and individuals' rights in respect of personal data relating to them which is held by SFI are available elsewhere in this Call Document, in the privacy statement on the SFI Website and in reports, documents and other bulletins published by SFI.

During the application process or at any time following the termination of the application process and decision, SFI may contact the Research Body, the Principal Investigator or any member of the Research Team concerning funding opportunities, SFI activities or any events, or for the purposes of monitoring and evaluation including but not limited to collecting scientific data and data related to the applications process. SFI may choose to authorise a third party to contact the Research Body, the Principal Investigator or any member of the Research Team on its behalf.

---

[1] Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy [the "Common Provisions Regulation"]

Contents

1   Introduction

The goal of the SFI Accelerating Research to Commercialisation (ARC) Hub Programme is to establish a new model for regional innovation and entrepreneurial training, that will catalyse a step-change in the translation of cutting-edge publicly-funded research toward impact at a regional level. The SFI ARC Hub Programme will enhance and accelerate the commercialisation of research to create new products, processes and services. The realisation of the programme will be through the establishment of regional SFI ARC Hubs focused on specific thematic areas that will be aligned with the respective regional strategic priorities and the 'National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Innovation 2022-2027' (S3)[2]. The SFI ARC Hubs, as a distributed consortium of Research Bodies, will create regional ecosystems focused on optimising research translation and training future entrepreneurs through establishing new academic networks and bringing together stakeholders, while leveraging existing supports, as appropriate. It is expected that SFI ARC Hubs will foster a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship supported by processes that will operationalise and scale opportunity realisation to deliver transformative new products, processes and services to market.

The SFI ARC Hub Programme is co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Union under two European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Regional Programmes - the Southern, Eastern and Midland Regional Programme 2021-2027 and the Northern and Western Regional Programme 2021-2027. The ERDF aims to promote economic, social and territorial cohesion across all European regions.

As an 'enabling condition' of ERDF funding, Ireland is required to have a Smart Specialisation Strategy fulfilling criteria set out by the European Commission. As such, Ireland published its National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Innovation 2022-2027 (S3) in July 2022. Smart Specialisation is an innovation policy concept developed by the European Commission which aims to boost regional innovation, contributing to growth and prosperity by helping and enabling regions to focus on their strengths. This will promote broader benefits, including innovation-driven growth in regions and the promotion of sustainable growth models. S3 embraces a regional approach to addressing Ireland's RD&I challenges. It will provide a 'bridge' between regional and national innovation strategy building and decision making, bringing coherence to RD&I planning for the benefit of enterprise and advancing the RD&I agenda regionally and nationally. SFI ARC Hubs funded under the ERDF Regional Programmes must be consistent with Ireland's S3.

The SFI ARC Hub Programme is also being developed in alignment with SFI's strategic goals. SFI's 2025 strategy, *Shaping Our Future*[3] sets out the vision that Ireland will be a global innovation leader in scientific and engineering research for the advancement of Ireland's economy and society. The strategy has two ambitions: Delivering Today and Preparing for Tomorrow. The strategy has an ambition that the research SFI funds produces tangible benefits for our society and economy and specifically includes the aim to '*Introduce new programmes to improve SME and entrepreneur engagement'*.

---

[2] National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Innovation 2022-2027: https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/2aa15-national-smart-specialisation-strategy-for-innovation-2022-2027/
[3] https://www.sfi.ie/strategy/

The primary objectives of SFI's ARC Hub Programme are:

- To drive regional development by accelerating novel, cutting-edge research, towards commercial impact readiness, in areas aligned with Ireland's Smart Specialisation Strategy.
- To develop a cohort of entrepreneurial scientists and engineers with the skills to realise commercial opportunities from research activities.
- To enhance and accelerate the translation of research to impact through the commercialisation process.
- To successfully transition SFI-funded research projects into existing national and international closer-to-market supports, as appropriate.

2 Programme Details

2.1 Programme Remit

The SFI ARC Hub Programme will accept applications in the thematic areas defined below and must fit within the remit of both SFI and ERDF. The legal remit of SFI is to promote, develop and assist the carrying out of oriented basic and applied research in strategic areas of scientific endeavour that concern the future development and competitiveness of industry and enterprise in the State.[4] The ERDF Regulation limits the scope of support from the ERDF to activities for applied research and innovation, including industrial research and experimental development.[5]

2.1.1 Alignment with regional priorities/thematic area as per S3

Funding is available for up to three hubs, one under the Northern & Western Regional Programme (covering Galway, Mayo, Roscommon, Sligo, Cavan, Monaghan, Donegal, Leitrim) and two SFI ARC Hubs under the Southern, Eastern & Midland Regional Programme covering the Southern Region (Cork, Kerry, Limerick, Tipperary, Clare, Waterford, Wexford, Carlow, Kilkenny) and Eastern and Midland Region (Dublin, Kildare, Meath, Wicklow, Louth, Longford, Laois, Offaly, Westmeath).

Each SFI ARC Hub will be hosted by a lead Research Body located in the Programme Area, but Hubs are encouraged to be multi-site, involving collaboration with other Research Bodies both in the Programme Area and in other Programme Areas in the Republic of Ireland.

As this is an ERDF co-funded programme, each SFI ARC Hub must operate in a specific thematic area aligned with the existing and emerging sectoral areas of strength of the host region, as outlined in S3. At a high level, these are:

---

[4] https://www.sfi.ie/about-us/about-sfi/what-we-do/
[5] Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund [the "ERDF Regulation"]

Northern and Western Region	Eastern and Midland Region	Southern Region
Sectoral Strengths and Emerging Areas of Opportunity		
Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering	Advanced Manufacturing	Advanced Manufacturing
AgriFood and AgriTech	Audiovisual	Automotive/Aerospace
Audiovisual/Creative	Biopharma/Life Sciences	Design
ICT and ICT services	Engineering	Financial Services
Life Sciences, MedTech and Medical Devices	Financial Services/FinTech	Food/AgriTech
Marine and Blue Economy	Food/AgriTech	ICT
Renewable Energy, Climate Change Mitigation and Sustainability	ICT	Marine/Maritime
		Pharma/MedTech
		Renewable Energy

S3 also identified subsectors and niches within these which are considered to be of specific importance to their regions and areas. These vary by region, dependent on the specific resources and infrastructure available to regions and are dealt with in more depth in the individual regional chapters in the main S3 document. Applicants should give careful consideration to the S3 document and will be expected to articulate how the proposed Hub aligns with a priority sector for the host region, as well as the potential to benefit the region through economic development and innovation diffusion. 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.
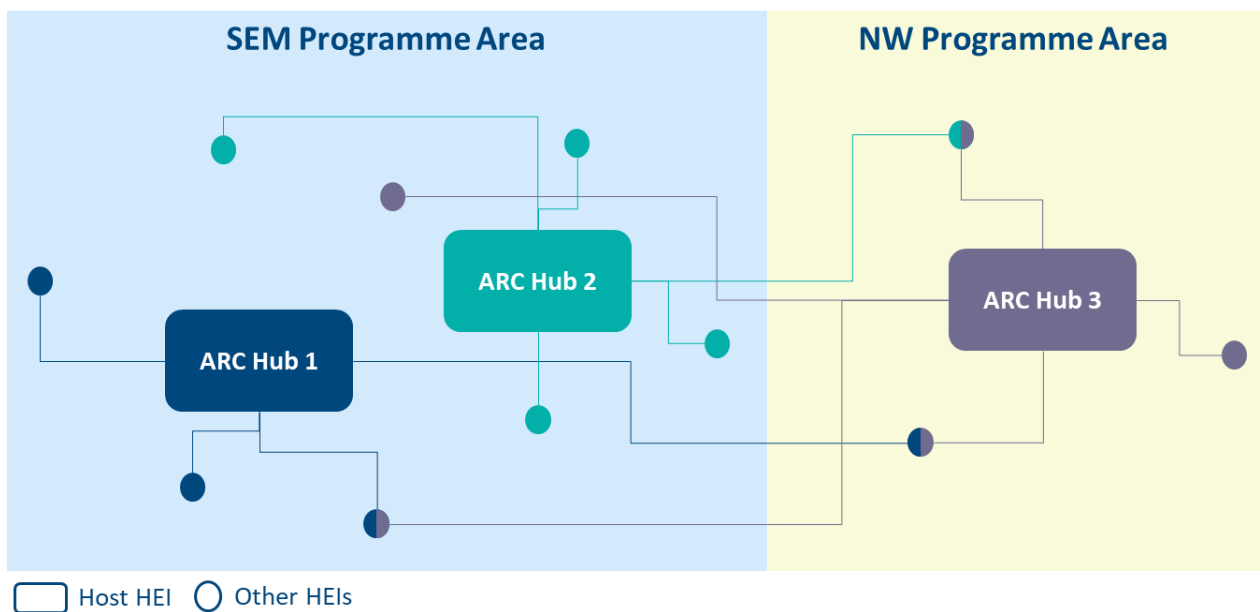

Figure 1: Indicative schematic of Cross-region Hub Collaboration between the Southern, Eastern and Midlands (SEM) programme area and the Northern and Western (NW) programme area.

2.2   Award duration

The duration of each SFI ARC Hub award is 60 months. Awards will begin in 2024 and run to 2029, in accordance with Ireland's regional development programmes (2021 to 2027).

3   Hub Structure

3.1   Hub Leadership

The SFI ARC Hub will be led by a Hub Director (Lead Applicant) located in the Hub host Research Body, with support from a group of Co-PIs (Co-Applicants). The Hub Director and Co-PIs are expected to be experienced researchers, with strong track records in research, particularly in the proposed thematic area, in leadership (including large-scale initiatives), and in entrepreneurship and commercialisation. The latter could include, for example, a proven ability to bring products or services to market through various channels (e.g., licensing agreements, patents), evidence of investment or funding related to research translation/commercialisation, and starting or growing a business venture (e.g., a spin-out company). The leadership team should have the vision and drive to create a culture of innovation that fosters curiosity, an entrepreneurial mindset and agile processes that will enable the Hub to facilitate acceleration of research translation and deliver commercialisation. (Detailed information on Lead Applicant and Co-Applicant eligibility is outlined in Section 9.2).

SFI is committed to increasing the number of SFI grants held by women researchers and in SFI's 2025 strategy, *Shaping Our Future*[6], targets are set for 35% of SFI's funded leadership positions (PIs & Co-PIs) to be women by 2025. Women are strongly encouraged to apply to this funding call, and it is expected that the Hub leadership team will have appropriate diversity.

3.2   Operations Team

The activities of the SFI ARC Hub will be supported by an Operations Team who will be located predominantly in the host Research Body.

The Operations Team will report to the Hub leadership and will work closely with the cohort of researchers funded through the SFI ARC Hub to support and accelerate their translational research journey (see Section 3.4). Their commercialisation expertise, as well as active and expert management and support of this cohort of researchers, will ensure that projects are shaped for success from the earliest stages of the R&D pathway. Among the activities expected to be undertaken by members of the Operations Team will be scouting for new projects, agile project management, understanding and ensuring compliance with the requisite standards, management and oversight of entrepreneurial training, as well as marketing, communications and promotion of the SFI ARC Hub, in addition to administration and reporting to SFI and the European Commission. The Operations team members will support the Hub leadership to actively manage the portfolio of projects, ensuring cross-project learnings.

The exact composition of the Operations Team is at the discretion of the applicants. The individuals recruited are expected to have sufficient expert knowledge and experience in areas such as research, commercialisation, entrepreneurship and project management to be able to undertake the diverse responsibilities required to support successful research translation.

3.3 Management and Governance

The SFI ARC Hubs will be expected to put an appropriate management structure in place to ensure the efficient operation of the SFI ARC Hub.

Executive Management Committee:

It is expected that the Hub Director and the named Co-PIs, together with a senior member of the Operations Team and a senior representative from the Technology Transfer Office (TTO) will, at a minimum, form the membership of the Executive Management Committee of the Hub. The Executive Management Committee will be responsible for the successful execution and delivery of the SFI ARC Hub goals through the management, administration and financial control of the SFI ARC Hub, in compliance with the terms and conditions of funding as set out in SFI's Grant Conditions (inclusive of SFI's General Terms & Conditions[7], Letter of Offer and SFI Policy documents [8]). They will also be responsible for the delivery of the indicator targets, the milestones and deliverables, and ultimately realising the impact of the SFI ARC Hub in the region and beyond, through transformation of the regional research and innovation ecosystem.

In addition to a management structure, funded SFI ARC Hubs will put in place sufficient and appropriate governance structures including:

Advisory Committee:

This will comprise of, for example, senior international academics, relevant industry experts, entrepreneurs, scientific experts, venture capitalists, TTO staff, representatives from national funding agencies. The Committee will provide advice and guidance to the Executive Management Committee of the Hub on strategy, operations and performance, as well as providing independent peer review in relation to the selection of the Translational Research Projects, as described in Section 3.4.

Governance Committee:

This will include the SFI ARC Hub Director, a senior member of the host Research Body (typically the Vice President for Research or their designate) and at least one representative from the partner institutions involved in the SFI ARC Hub. At least half of the members must be external to the SFI ARC Hub, and will be senior, independent figures from business, academia or the public sector.

The primary function of the Governance Committee is to assist the Hub Director in ensuring that the SFI ARC Hub performs in line with best practice in all aspects of its operations. The Governance Committee will ensure appropriate governance and management structures are adhered to while supporting the strategic development and performance of the SFI ARC Hub, and providing equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) oversight.

The selection of Chair of the Governance Committee should be agreed between the President/Provost, SFI ARC Hub Director and SFI, and should preferably be a senior public figure, ideally an independent contributor not affiliated with any of the Research Bodies or industry partners (if relevant) engaged in the Hub.

---

[7] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/sfi-general-terms-and-conditions/
[8] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/

SFI is committed to promoting inclusivity and gender balance, and we therefore urge applicants to consider this when forming their Operations Team, Executive Management, Advisory and Governance Committees. We particularly encourage applicants to actively seek women and underrepresented groups for leadership roles.

Figure 2: Hub Structure

3.4   Translational Research Budget

Each SFI ARC Hub award will include a Translational Research Budget, which will be used to support researchers who have identified novel research opportunities that can be accelerated towards rapid commercial impact. At application stage, it is expected that the SFI ARC Hub applicants will present a programme of research that has strong potential for commercialisation and provides assurance of the level of demand for an SFI ARC Hub in the proposed thematic area, as well as the potential for impact and achievement of the performance indicators (see Section 4). This will entail a series of different work programmes, led by individual researchers (Co-PIs or Translational Researchers) located in both the host Research Body (host of the SFI ARC Hub) and collaborating Research Bodies. Detailed information on Translational Researcher eligibility is outlined in Section 9.3.

In addition to those projects approved as part of the application for funding, the Translational Research Budget of the SFI ARC Hub may support follow-on funding for successful projects, as well as being used to support new projects during the lifetime of the SFI ARC Hub that are deemed to be high quality research projects with commercial potential. Project funding cannot be committed beyond the

end date of the ARC Hub award and consideration should be given as to how the Translational Research Budget will be managed effectively during the lifetime of the Hub.

To ensure the research supported by the SFI ARC Hub is of high quality and aligns with the goals of the Hub, the SFI ARC hub will be required to adhere to a formal approval process for any new projects proposed once the Hub is established.

The researcher leading on the proposed Translational Research Project will submit a research proposal to the Executive Management Committee of the SFI ARC Hub using a template application form. If the budget request is for less than €150,000, the proposal will be subject to peer review by suitable members of the SFI ARC Hub Advisory Committee, or external peer reviewers if the specific required expertise is not available amongst the Advisory Committee members. The reviews, along with the names and affiliations of the reviewers, will then be supplied to the Hub Executive Management Committee for final decision. The SFI ARC Hubs will regularly report to SFI on additional projects which have been locally approved for Hub support.

For those Translational Research Projects which are seeking budget greater than €150,000 from the SFI ARC Hub, the Executive Management Committee of the SFI ARC Hub will submit the relevant documentation to SFI for international scientific peer review. Funding will be approved by SFI for high potential projects, as determined by the international expert reviews. SFI will notify the SFI ARC Hub of the outcome.

3.5   Industry collaboration

Partnership with industry is not a mandatory component of activity in the SFI ARC Hub and there are no specific targets in relation to the number of collaborations with industry or co-funding secured. The SFI ARC Hub Programme has, however, been structured to allow for industry collaboration on Translational Research Projects, where appropriate. Some projects funded through the SFI ARC Hubs may involve collaboration with industry, if this is deemed by the SFI ARC Hub to be the most effective way to progress the research towards a commercialisation output. The SFI ARC Hub will be able to choose whether to partner with industry on a project-by-project basis throughout the lifetime of the Hub.

Applicants applying to SFI for funding are advised that funding awarded will be subject to, and must comply with, State aid rules and the conditions of the EU Commission General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER). [9] See Section 3.6 below for further details.

3.6   State Aid and SFI funding

As per SFI's Grant Conditions (inclusive of SFI's General Terms & Conditions[10], Letters of Offer and SFI Policy documents[11]), 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)[12].

Applicants applying to SFI for funding are advised that funding awarded under the SFI ARC Hub Programme will be subject to, and must comply with, State aid rules and the conditions of the EU

---

[9] EU Commission Regulation (EC) No. 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 (as amended).
[10] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/sfi-general-terms-and-conditions/
[11] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/
[12] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52016XC0719(05)&from=EN

Commission General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER). Funding will be awarded to successful applicants under Article 25, in respect of aid for research and development projects.

All SFI ARC Hubs are required to put in place a full economic costing model for all activities of the Hub based on consistently applied and objectively justifiable cost accounting principles. Where SFI-funded ARC Hubs carry out activities of both economic and non-economic nature[13], the costs, funding and revenues of each of the two activities must be clearly accounted for separately.

As noted above, the SFI ARC Hub will include central management and operations structures. In addition, each SFI ARC Hub award will include a Translational Research Budget, which will be used to support individual research projects. The activities of the Hub must be predominately non-economic in nature. Any economic activity that is carried out by the SFI ARC Hub must be purely ancillary (i.e., such that it corresponds to an activity which is directly related to and necessary for the operation of the SFI ARC Hub or intrinsically linked to its main non-economic use and which is limited in scope). In this regard, the economic activities must consume exactly the same inputs (such as material, equipment, labour and fixed capital) as the non-economic activities and the capacity allocated each year to such economic activities must not exceed 20% of the relevant SFI ARC Hub's overall annual capacity (see above in relation to separation of accounts).

At application stage, it is expected that the SFI ARC Hub applicants will outline an initial portfolio of research projects to be funded through the Translational Research Budget, as described above (Section 3.4). Funding for projects that involve industry partners will be awarded in line with the conditions of GBER and SFI will complete the necessary compliance checks at application stage, if relevant. Applicants are asked to complete both the 'SFI ARC Hub Budget Template' and the 'Translational Research Project Template' to supply the required information on each of these projects. [14]

In addition to those projects approved as part of the application for funding for an SFI ARC Hub, the Translational Research Budget of the SFI ARC Hub will be used to support additional projects during the lifetime of the Hub (i.e., where the project details (including whether there is involvement by an industry partner), scope and budget are not be known at the initial application stage). It is possible for these projects to involve partnership with industry if this is seen by the Hub as an effective approach for the acceleration of progress to commercialisation. The SFI ARC Hub will be able to choose whether to partner with industry on a project-by-project basis.

Translational Research projects without industry involvement

Subject to the matters set out elsewhere in this Section 3.6, State aid related pre-approval by SFI is not required for projects that do not involve partnership with industry. As explained above, the activities of the SFI ARC Hub must be predominantly "non-economic" in nature, so as to ensure that funding supporting such activities does not, directly or indirectly, give rise to the granting of State aid.

Translational Research projects involving industry

For all Translational Research Projects involving an industry partner, the SFI ARC Hub must contact SFI before work on the project or activity starts and submit the required documentation to SFI for

---

[13] See points 18 and 19 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
[14] www.sfi.ie/funding/funding-calls/sfi-arc-hub-programme/

completion of State aid checks in line with the requirements of the GBER. Projects involving industry may not commence or be funded from the Translational Research Budget until SFI has issued written approval. Further detail on the required information to be supplied to SFI is outlined below.

3.6.1   Levels of grant aid

The EU Commission Regulation stipulates the levels of funding support (grant aid) that can be provided by SFI. The maximum funding level for which a project is eligible depends on the category of research the project falls under and the status of the industry partner company. As such, SFI can only provide a fixed proportion of the total eligible project costs with the remaining funding to be met by the industry partner. For example, the SFI funding rate will vary from 25% to a maximum of 80% of the total eligible project costs depending on the size of the industry partner, the category of research being undertaken and on whether the outputs will be widely disseminated.

Appendix III provides further detail on determining the SFI funding rate.

When completing the 'SFI ARC Hub Budget Template' and determining total project costs, the value of in-kind contributions from industry, as well as cash, are eligible. [15]

The Hub Director, Executive Management Team and Host Institution must ensure that the SFI ARC Hub award remains State aid compliant throughout its lifetime. This will include collecting appropriate information to demonstrate compliance with the conditions of GBER with respect to the individual projects supported by the Hub. Where a Hub is supporting projects that involve industry partners, the Hub will be responsible for monitoring the aid intensities of these projects.

For all applications for funding that give rise to State aid, SFI will notify the appropriate bodies at the point of awarding the grant or approving additional Translational Research Projects, as required by prevailing State aid regulations.[16] Additional financial reporting may be requested at intervals during the duration of the grant.

Additional guidance on State aid compliance is available in the relevant section of the SFI website.[17] Applicants are advised to seek independent legal advice in advance of applying to SFI for funding, where further clarification is sought.

3.6.2   Financial Declarations by Industry Partners

Under State aid rules (General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER)), SFI cannot provide funding, whether directly or indirectly, towards projects involving Industry Partners that are 'undertakings in difficulty'[18]. Industry partners will be required to provide the following financial information/declarations to SFI either at the initial application stage (i.e., if the proposed portfolio of projects involves any industry collaboration) or when applying to SFI for use of the Translational Research Budget (i.e., if new industry partners are involved in projects during the lifetime of the Hub) (See Financial Declaration Templates[19]):

---

[15] In-kind costs should be accounted for using a justifiable costing methodology in line with generally accepted accounting principles

[16] In line with the obligation to report to the Commission as set out in Article 11 of COMMISSION REGULATION (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014

[17] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/state-aid/

[18] article 2, no. 18 of COMMISSION REGULATION (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014

[19] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/funding-calls/sfi-arc-hub-programme/

- Declaration of financial resources (template provided)

- Declaration of SME status (for applications requesting increased grant intensity based on company size) (template provided)

- Declaration of solvency (template provided)

- Latest set of financial records (P&L and Balance Sheet). If the industry partner is not required to produce audited accounts, management accounts signed off by an accountant will suffice. SMEs will need to verify their status by submitting an SME Declaration.

These documents will be used to determine eligibility of a potential industry partner pursuant to the State aid rules. To assess whether a State aid exemption applies, it may be necessary for SFI to request further information, going beyond that provided in any application. Please note that where further information is requested, replies should be consistent with, and reconcile to, information already provided, including financials.

For industry partners involved at application stage, the forms should be submitted to **arc@sfi.ie** by **29ᵗʰ September 2023** (one week post-proposal submission deadline), referencing the name of the proposed Hub in the email.

4 Indicators

SFI has a responsibility to report on Indicators for this Programme which have been pre-defined in the Northern & Western Regional Operational Programme 2021-2027 and Southern, Eastern & Midland Regional Operational Programme 2021-2027.

The indicators are as follows:

Indicator Name	Definition
Research organisations participating in joint research projects	Number of supported research organisations that cooperate in joint research projects. A joint research project includes at least one research organisation and another partner (such as an enterprise, another research organisation etc). Cooperation in R&D activities may be new or existing, and it should last at least for the duration of the project supported. The indicator covers active participations in joint research projects, and it excludes contractual arrangements with no active cooperation in the supported project (i.e., excludes cases where partners in a framework contract do not all participate in a specific joint research cooperation) i.e., any Translational Research Project supported in a Research Body outside of the Host Research Body will be considered as a 'joint research project' for the purposes of this indicator.
Patent applications submitted	Number of patent applications submitted and validated ("filing"), and which are due to projects supported by the SFI ARC Hub. The ultimate granting of the application is not a requirement. The supported project should have a clearly

	identifiable contribution to the patent for which the application is submitted. Design patent applications are included in the indicator. (Excluded: double counting, such as a patent application for the same invention filed in more than one patent jurisdiction)
Number of spin-outs created dependent on IP from HEI	A spin-out is an incorporated entity with a business plan, dependent on the exploitation of specific intellectual property rights of the HEI and in which the HEI holds equity and/or has executed a licence to the relevant IPR (Intellectual Property Right) on which the company is founded.
Licensed Technologies	Licences are agreements between a public research organisation and one or more commercial undertakings, whereby IP rights are transferred to that undertaking for the purpose of commercialisation. Specifically, a licence is a grant of rights for the purpose of commercialisation of IP. The number of licences reported must equate to the number of licences reported to and approved by the TTO.
Assignments	Assignments are agreements between a public research organisation and one or more commercial undertakings, entailing a grant of ownership of IP rights for the purpose of commercialisation of IP. Assignment may in rare circumstance be instead of a Licence, or a Licence may convert into an Assignment subject to a milestone trigger.

Applicants will be expected to set targets for each of these indicators as part of their SFI ARC Hub application, as well as any additional milestones and deliverables deemed appropriate. An example of a milestone in the journey towards commercialisation of research would be to successfully transition SFI ARC Hub-funded Translational Research Projects into existing national and international 'downstream' commercialisation supports and funding programmes, such as the Enterprise Ireland Commercialisation Fund.

The proposal should include a justification for the proposed targets and description of how these targets can be met. The appropriateness of the proposed targets will be considered by international peer review. SFI will agree final targets with the successful applicants, based on ERDF-requirements, feedback from reviewers and the scale and ambition of the Programme proposed.

As part of the indicator reporting, the successful SFI ARC Hubs will be expected to provide detailed information on the gender breakdown of the researchers who led on each of the outputs, as per the requirements of ERDF funding.

5 SFI ARC Hub Culture, Innovation Management and Training

For an SFI ARC Hub to catalyse a step-change in the translation of research to impact through the commercialisation process, it is expected that a Hub will foster a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship and implement a sustainable and scalable innovation management framework.

5.1 Culture

A key consideration for an SFI ARC Hub is how a culture of innovation will be developed that fosters curiosity, entrepreneurial mindset and behaviours, and agile processes that will allow the Hub to

sustain and scale its activities over the course of its lifespan and potentially beyond. This culture should be exemplified by senior leadership and embedded at every level of the Hub. It should inform how opportunities are identified, staff are recruited and developed, and partnerships established.

5.2   Innovation Management Framework

This framework should underpin and support the operationalisation of a Hub's strategic intent, providing for the continuous, end-to-end management of research ideas, technologies and stakeholders. Importantly, this framework should reflect the non-linear nature of innovation and should support flexible, agile and iterative management methodologies to reduce uncertainty and mitigate risks at each stage of research translation. It is envisaged that both the culture and innovation management framework will be central to expected Hub activities, including (but may not be limited to):

- Identifying opportunities, allocating resources, managing risk associated with research commercialisation;
- Enhancing the efficiency with which research outputs are translated to commercial impact;
- Building collaborations between researchers, enterprise and other key stakeholders;
- Establishing appropriate performance targets, capabilities and metrics;
- Increasing the likelihood of successfully delivering meaningful impact from research.

As part of its overall innovation management framework, an SFI ARC Hub is expected to establish an innovation pipeline. Given the need to ensure that research is translated to market, it is important that the methodologies associated with these activities are evidence-based.

5.3   Skills Development

The development of the operational and entrepreneurial skills of the Hub Leadership, Operations Team and Translational Researchers will form a key differentiating component of the Hub. As indicated, a Hub will foster a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship and implement a sustainable and scalable innovation management framework. To support this ambition and to assist a Hub in meeting its objectives, the Hub leadership and Operations teams will be expected to participate in the I-Corps@SFI Academy.

This training will focus on two key areas:

i)   Developing a deeper understanding of best practice in establishing, scaling and sustaining innovation and entrepreneurship activities in a large-scale centre-like setting;

ii)   Developing knowledge and skills in the delivery of evidence-based entrepreneurship training for researchers. This will be facilitated through participation in the instructor trainee stream of the I-Corps@SFI Academy.

As part of the proposal, applicants should detail how training will be provided to both the Hub Leadership and Operations Team, and to the Translational Researchers to enable them to identify and validate opportunities for commercialisation. SFI ARC Hubs are strongly encouraged to leverage existing training supports (e.g., I-Corps@SFI Academy) utilising the availability of I-Corps training through SFI, as well as training programmes available through the Research Bodies and other training providers active in the research, innovation and commercialisation landscape. Applicants may also wish to develop their own in-house training and tailored approaches based on best-practice.

Irrespective of the approach used, Hubs must ensure that the outcome of training is rigorous validation of problem-solution fit and an understanding of the how follow-on supports, such as the Enterprise Ireland Commercialisation Fund, can be used to gain further insights on product-market fit.

To ensure that teams funded under an SFI ARC Hub are positioned for success in securing follow-on funding, suitable teams will be encouraged to apply to the SFI-NSF I-Corps@SFI Entrepreneurial Training Programme (ETP). Teams successful in applying to the ETP, will participate in an intensive 7-week training programme delivered by the National Science Foundation Innovation Corps (NSF I-Corps). This training will allow teams to undertake extensive problem-solution fit validation activities. Through participation in the programme, teams will gain valuable insights on the impact potential of their idea and receive mentoring from highly experienced NSF instructors. Teams will also learn from other US-based research teams participating in the programme.

Note that applications to the SFI-NSF I-Corps@SFI Entrepreneurial Training Programme (ETP) are accepted from teams comprising a lead PI (e.g., Hub Lead, Co-PIs or Translational Researchers), an Entrepreneurial Lead (e.g., postdoctoral researcher) and an Entrepreneurial Mentor (e.g., Hub Operations team member, member of staff within the Technology Transfer Office or Research Office of a Research Body).

6   Equality and Human Rights Principle

The SFI ARC Hub programme is co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund (and regulated under the Common Provisions Regulation (EU) 2021/1060), which requires that all supported activities must be consistent with the 'Enabling Conditions' including the 'Horizontal Principles of 'Equality and Human Rights'.[20] This principle ensures the following are taken into account throughout the lifecycle of the programme:

- Ensure respect for fundamental rights and compliance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union[21] and with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (UNDRPD)[22] in implementation of funds;
- Ensure equality between men and women, gender mainstreaming[23] and the integration of gender perspectives are addressed in the preparation, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of programmes; and
- Take any appropriate steps to prevent any discrimination based on gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, and sexual orientation in the preparation, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of programmes, with particular attention to accessibility for persons with disabilities.

---

[20] As defined in Article 9 of the Common Provisions Regulation. https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/find-funding/funding-management-mode/common-provisions-regulation_en
[21] Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union - https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:12012P/TXT
[22] United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disability - https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-2.html
[23] According to the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), gender mainstreaming involves the integration of a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures and spending programmes, with a view to promoting equality between women and men, and combating discrimination.

As such, all applicants will be asked to confirm at application stage that they have taken, and will continue to take steps to prevent any discrimination based on gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, sexual orientation and accessibility for persons with disabilities, throughout all aspects of programme related activities.

There is the expectation that leadership within the SFI ARC Hubs will commit to ensuring that the horizontal principles of equality and human rights are considered for all programme-related activities. Applicants should highlight how they will ensure steps will be taken to prevent any discrimination throughout the programme cycle as part of the application (See Appendix I).

Additionally, within the Letter of Support (Section 13.13), the Host Research Body should confirm that they have effective mechanisms in place to ensure compliance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (UNDRPD).

In addition to complying with the requirements set out by the Common Provisions Regulation, applicants are expected to be familiar with SFI's policies and positions (Section 15) and all relevant national policies when preparing their application.

7   San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)

SFI became a signatory of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)[24] in 2019 and, as such, is aligning its review and evaluation processes with DORA principles. In January 2022, SFI reinforced its existing commitment to the core principles by joining DORA as a member[25]. To this end, all types of research output are recognised, and SFI is committed to assessing the quality and impact of research through means other than journal-based metrics and research performance-based metrics such as impact factors and H-index. In the spirit of supporting open research and as a signatory of Plan S,[26] SFI will also consider a commitment to making data and other types of research open and accessible.

SFI is also a signatory to Ireland's National Action Plan for Open Research 2022-2030[27]. To complement these activities and further reinforce SFI's commitment to the overarching objectives of the Narrative CV, during 2022, SFI became a signatory to the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment[28] and thus became a member of the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA)[29].

8   Do No Significant Harm (DNSH)

As the SFI ARC Hub programme is co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund (and regulated under the Common Provisions Regulation (EU) 2021/1060), all supported activities must

---

[24] https://sfdora.org/read
[25] Contributor level membership.
[26] https://www.coalition-s.org/
[27] National Action Plan | National Open Research Forum (norf.ie)
[28] https://coara.eu/app/uploads/2022/09/2022_07_19_rra_agreement_final.pdf
[29] https://coara.eu/

promote sustainable development including the 6 objectives of 'Do No Significant Harm' (DNSH) principle.[30] These principles state that, in order to be deemed environmentally sustainable, an economic activity must not cause any significant harm in relation to the six environmental objectives:

- climate change mitigation
- climate change adaption
- the sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources
- the transition to a circular economy, including waste prevention and recycling
- pollution prevention and control to air, water and land
- the protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems

The Host Research Body for the SFI ARC Hub will be asked to confirm in the Letter of Support (Section 13.13) that they have, and will continue to respect the 6 principles of Do No Significant Harm for all supported activities. Additionally, all awardees will be encouraged to consider and report on any positive contribution their activities can have in supporting the 6 environmental objectives associated with DNSH.

9   Eligibility

Prior to international peer-review, each application will be assessed by SFI, against the criteria outlined in Sections 9.2-9.5, to ensure it is eligible before proceeding to international peer review.

9.1   Definitions

Lead Applicant (Hub Director)	The **Lead Applicant** will be designated as a Hub Director of the SFI ARC Hub if successful and has primary responsibility and accountability for managing the Hub within the funding limits awarded and in accordance with SFI General Terms and Conditions[31] and the Grant Agreement. The Lead Applicant will serve as the primary point of contact for SFI for the application, during the review process and, if successful, during the course of the grant.
Co-Applicant (Co-PI)	The **Co-Applicant** has a well-defined, critical and continuing role in the SFI ARC Hub. Co-Applicants are expected to be members of the Executive Management Committee and play an important role in successful execution and delivery of the SFI ARC Hub goals. Where relevant, Co-Applicants are expected to undertake a mentorship role to Translational Researchers. In addition to a leadership role in the Hub, the Co-Applicants can lead on their own Translational Research Project.

---

[30] As defined by Article 17 of the Taxonomy Regulation. https://finance.ec.europa.eu/sustainable-finance/tools-and-standards/eu-taxonomy-sustainable-activities_en

[31] http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/sfi-general-terms-and-conditions/

	For the purposes of eligibility, reviewing and monitoring, a Co-Applicant applying for funding under the SFI ARC Hub Programme will receive equal evaluation to the Lead Applicant and will hold equal accountability for the delivery of the proposed research objectives. In this documentation, the terms and conditions for 'Applicant' and 'Co-Applicant' are interchangeable. A Co-Applicant may be located at a different eligible Research Body to the Lead Applicant. The grant, however, will be administered through the Research Body of the Lead Applicant only.
Translational Researcher	A **Translational Researcher** (TR) leads on a research project funded through the Translational Research Budget. A TR may be either an academic member of staff or independent researcher employed by an eligible Irish Research Body, or a postdoctoral researcher that holds a PhD at the time of application. Where a TR is (to be) employed under a postdoctoral research contract (including Research Fellows and holders of personal Fellowships), they must have commitment from a suitable mentor. Where applicable, a TR may be the primary supervisor/mentor of team members supported through Translational Research Project funding.
Academic Collaborator	An **Academic Collaborator** is an academic member of staff of an Irish or international Research Body who is committed to providing a focused contribution for a specific task(s). The collaborator will serve under the direction of the Hub Director or one of the Co-Principal Investigators, and **may not** receive funding through the award. Academic Collaborators may not be the primary supervisor/mentor of research staff on the Award.
Industry Partner	An **Industry Partner** is a company that is involved on a specific Translational Research Project of the Hub and is making a financial contribution (through cash or in-kind) to the budget of the SFI ARC Hub. 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 ARC Hub. Industry collaborators are not eligible to receive funding through the award.

9.2 Eligibility Criteria of Lead Applicant and Co-Applicant(s)

The eligibility criteria presented below are minimum requirements only and it should be noted that both the Lead Applicant and any Co-Applicants are expected to have strong, highly-competitive track

records in their research fields, as well as in leadership (including large-scale initiatives), entrepreneurship and commercialisation.

The letter of support from the host Research Body of the Lead Applicant must detail the employment status of the Applicant(s), including how the Applicant(s) meet the eligibility criteria for this call. A letter of support from the host Research Body of the Co-Applicant(s) and Translational Researcher(s) (if different from the Research Body of the Lead Applicant) is also required. For further information on Research Body Letters of Support, please see Section 13.13.

9.2.1 Employment Status

The Lead Applicant and Co-Applicants must be:

- A member 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 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, or
- An individual who will be recognised by the Research Body upon receipt of the SFI grant as a member of the academic staff or as a contract researcher as defined above. The applicant does not necessarily need to be employed by the Research Body at the time of proposal submission.

Consideration should be given to time commitments on existing awards, including other SFI awards. An individual is only permitted to be the Lead Applicant or Co-Applicant on one SFI ARC Hub proposal, but is eligible to contribute to additional proposals as a Translational Researcher or Academic Collaborator.

Directors of currently funded SFI Research Centres or Lead applicants on Co-Centres are not eligible to apply to the SFI ARC Hub Programme as a Lead Applicant or Co-Applicant, but are eligible to contribute to a proposal as either a Translational Researcher or Academic Collaborator.

Co-Principal Investigators of currently funded SFI Research Centres or co-applicants on Co-Centres are not eligible to apply to the SFI ARC Hub Programme as a Lead Applicant but are eligible to apply as a Co-Applicant, Translational Researcher or Academic Collaborator.

> **In all cases where Lead or Co-Applicants are already in receipt of significant research funding from SFI, the evaluation process will examine the commitment and workload of the Lead/Co-Applicant in determining the suitability of such an arrangement. Such applicants must include strong justification for their role in the applicant group.**

Retired or Emeritus members of academic staff, meeting all other eligibility criteria, are eligible to apply if their institution makes the necessary commitments; further details are available on the SFI website.[32]

---

[32] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/eligibility-related-information/

9.2.2   PhD Duration

The Lead Applicant and any Co-Applicants must have held a PhD or equivalent qualification for at least eight years at the time of the submission of the full proposal. The official date of a PhD is defined as the year that the degree was conferred (i.e., the year printed on the official PhD certificate). The number of years is determined by calendar year.

Details on SFI's PhD equivalence policy can be found on the SFI website.[33]

9.2.3   Senior-Author Publications

The Lead Applicant and Co-Applicants are required to demonstrate that they are a senior author on at least ten international peer-reviewed articles. Only original research publications, and not review articles or other secondary research literature, are acceptable.

Senior authors are defined as follows:

- Authors that are listed as first or joint-first author, reflecting the fact that they have provided the greatest intellectual contribution, have held the primary responsibility for collecting and analysing data, and for the writing of the manuscript and associated drafts.
- Last authors will also be considered as a senior author, since this position generally reflects their overall responsibility for the study and suggests that a level of mentorship has been provided.

It is noted that different publishers have differing rules on how the senior authorship is indicated (e.g., by using asterisks, underlining, placing the name first or last in the list of authors, etc.); however, it is of overriding importance that the applicants should be able to convince and reassure reviewers that they are the key author on these publications. Joint-first authorship may only be claimed where the article clearly states that two (or more) authors have provided equal and significant contributions to the work described. Please note that senior authorship does not necessarily mean that the researchers were responsible for the finance associated with the research that was reported.

Applicants are required in their CV to detail ten peer-reviewed, senior-author primary-research publications, which will confirm that the applicant meets the eligibility requirements for publications for this programme.

9.2.4   Research Independence

The Lead Applicant and Co-Applicants must have demonstrated research independence through securing at least one independent research grant as a lead investigator or as co-investigator. Personal awards such as travel awards, career fellowships (which only include the salary of the PI and not research team costs (i.e., salary for team member(s) & consumables etc.) do not count as independent research grants.

---

[33]http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/eligibility-related-information/PHD-equivalence-policy_September_2018.pdf

9.2.5 Supervision

The Lead Applicant and Co-Applicants are expected to have the experience, capability and authority to mentor and supervise postgraduate students and team members.

9.3 Eligibility Criteria of Translational Researchers

Translational Researchers must be:

- A member of the academic staff of an eligible Irish Research Body (permanent or with a contract that will cover the period of the research activity, as described in Section 9.2.1) or
- A postdoctoral researcher (including Research Fellows and holders of personal Fellowships).

In addition, Translational Researchers must:

- Hold a PhD or equivalent at the time of application.
- Be senior author on at least one international peer reviewed article. Only original research publications, and not review articles, are acceptable.
- Have the experience, capability and authority to mentor and supervise (or co-supervise) team members, if appropriate.
- For postdoctoral researchers, they must have a commitment from a suitable mentor (an established researcher from their Host Research Body, or, a Co-Applicant of the SFI ARC Hub) at application stage.

Please note that CVs for Translational Researchers are not required at application stage. CVs for Translational Researchers will be requested at a later stage if the application is successful, to ensure that the TR eligibility criteria are met. Transitional Researchers (to be) employed under postdoctoral contracts will also be asked to supply a Letter of Support from their proposed mentor, should the application be successful.

9.4 Eligibility of Research Body

The Research Body of the Lead Applicant is the body responsible for the overall financial and administrative co-ordination of the research programmes supported by funding from SFI. Host Research Bodies must be situated in the relevant Programme Area. In cases where more than one applicant shares responsibility for a grant, the grant will be administered by the host Research Body of the Lead Applicant. A list of eligible Research Bodies is available on the SFI website. [34] The term 'Research Body' and 'Institution' are equivalent and interchangeable in SFI documentation and in the SFI SESAME system.

9.5 European Regional Development Fund Eligibility Criteria

The Research Body of the Lead Applicant is the body responsible for overall compliance with the conditions for support set out in the Grant Agreement, including those relating specifically to co-funding under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Applications will be assessed against specific ERDF eligibility criteria as set out below, including with reference to commitments given in the letter of support provided by the host Research Body:

---

[34] http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/eligibility-related-information/

a. Confirmation that the host Research Body has effective mechanisms in place to ensure that all public procurement is consistent with National[35] and EU procurement legislation.

b. Confirmation that any State aid would be lawful, and that the host Research Body is eligible to receive grant aid at the requested level within the State aid regulations, if applicable.

c. Confirmation that any aid granted through the project to third parties is permissible under, and would be managed in accordance with, State aid regulations.

d. Confirmation that the host Research Body has effective mechanisms[36] in place to ensure compliance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union[37] and with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (UNDRPD)[38].

e. Confirmation that all supported activities will promote sustainable development including the six principles of 'Do No Significant Harm' (DNSH).

f. Confirmation that the host Research Body has the necessary financial resources and mechanisms in place to cover operational and maintenance costs for any capital equipment purchased using ERDF funding, so as to ensure their financial sustainability.

g. Confirmation that the ERDF funding will not be used to fund infrastructure[39].

h. Confirmation that the proposed activities have not started before the selection of the operation.

i. Confirmation that the proposed activities fall within the scope of the ERDF and the specific intervention type (012. Research and innovation activities in public research centres, higher education and centres of competence including networking (industrial research, experimental development) and are consistent with the call documentation and Ireland's Smart Specialisation Strategy.

j. Confirmation that the application does not include activities which were part of an operation subject to relocation as per Article 66 of Reg (EU) 2021/1060[40] or which would constitute a transfer of a productive activity as per point (a) of Article 65(1) of the same regulation.

k. Confirmation that the application is not directly affected by a reasoned opinion by the Commission in respect of an infringement under Article 258 TFEU that puts at risk the legality and regularity of expenditure or the performance of operations.

---

[35] The Office of Government Procurement – The National Public Procurement Policy Framework - https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/39a1b-the-national-public-procurement-policy-framework/

[36] One of the key mechanisms for public bodies to ensure compliance is the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty (Section 42 Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014). https://www.ihrec.ie/our-work/public-sector-duty/

[37] Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union - https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:12012P/TXT

[38] United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disability - https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-2.html

[39] As per the European Commission 'Technical guidance on the climate proofing of infrastructure in the period 2021-2027 (2021/C 373/01)', infrastructure is a broad concept encompassing buildings, network infrastructure, and a range of built systems and assets. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021XC0916(03)&from=EN

[40] Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy

10 Funding

10.1 Funding available

The total funding that can be requested from this Programme is dependent on the location of the host Research Body for the SFI ARC Hub:

Northern & Western Regional Programme: maximum budget of €26.67M per hub (excluding overheads).

Southern, Eastern & Midland Regional Programme: maximum budget of €24.87M per hub (excluding overheads).

Broadly, the budget for the SFI ARC Hubs is divided between operations costs (e.g. Operations staff salaries, IT equipment, events and outreach, training) and budget for Translational Research Projects. The duration of each SFI ARC Hub award is 60 months. Funding is timebound such that awards will begin in 2024 and run to 2029, in accordance with Ireland's regional development programmes (2021 to 2027).

The costs eligible for grant support by SFI under the SFI ARC Hub Programme are those costs which can, uniquely and unambiguously, be identified with the proposed programme. Applicants must give details of relevant direct costs, including staff, equipment, materials and travel, and must ensure that the final total provided includes all costs requested from SFI. General overheads should not be included in the requested budget to cover costs incurred directly as a result of the award. All awards are made directly to the lead applicant's Research Body. Please refer to the SFI Grant General Terms and Conditions[41] and the SFI Grant Budget Policy.[42]

10.2 Operations Budget

The Operations component of the SFI ARC Hub Budget is capped at a maximum of 20% of direct costs. The Operations component of the SFI ARC Hub budget is expected to fund the operational running costs. Such costs may include salary for Operations Staff (such as a Hub Manager and staff tasked with business development, programme management, reporting, finance, communications and administration). Where such roles are requested, reference must be made to the relevant role description, HR recruitment procedure and local Research Body salary scale (please provide a link to relevant scale). Further guidance is provided in the SFI Grant Budget Policy. Operations costs may also include IT equipment, travel and related business expenses associated with these roles, promotional and outreach costs, and training costs.

10.3 Translational Research Budget

As described in Section 3.4, each SFI ARC Hub award will include a Translational Research Budget, to fund research opportunities that can be accelerated towards rapid commercial impact.

At application stage, it is expected that the SFI ARC Hub applicants will present a portfolio of different projects to be funded through the Translational Research Budget, led by individual researchers located

---

[41] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/sfi-general-terms-and-conditions/
[42] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/budget-finance-related-policies/

in both the host Research Body (host of the SFI ARC Hub) and collaborating Research Bodies. The specific costs for each of these projects should be detailed in the 'SFI ARC Hub Budget Template'.

In addition, in the budget template the applicants should set out the requested level of the Translational Research Budget which will be used to fund additional, not yet defined projects that will be supported during the lifetime of the Hub. A high-level budget should be provided for this 'unassigned' Translational Research Budget (defining predicted budget under the headings of Staff, Equipment, Materials and Travel for each year of the Hub). SFI acknowledges this breakdown is a prediction and there may need to be adjustments made to this budget in future years. Project funding cannot be committed beyond the end date of the ARC Hub award and consideration should be given as to how the Translational Research Budget will be managed effectively during the lifetime of the Hub.

Eligible costs as part of the Translational Research Budget include:

- Salaries/stipends of research staff, including post-doctoral researchers who will have the title 'Translational Researcher' in the SFI ARC Hub (up to 100% of salary can be requested in line with their time commitment to the project)
- Teaching buyout/replacement for Technological University/Institute of Technology sector applicants (see Section 10.3.1)
- Teaching Replacement after eligible leave (see Section 10.3.2)
- Materials and consumables
- Equipment
- Travel
- Training costs
- Access to facilities and services not available to the applicant, including test-bed facilities for technology demonstration
- Access charges for use of infrastructure where SFI pre-approved access charge plans are in place.[43] Note that these may include, with SFI approval, access to facilities and services not available to the applicant, such as the costs associated with accessing international databases or commissioning specific experiments in national facilities (e.g., Tyndall etc.)
- Sub-contracting of research, where required (e.g. for prototyping)

Examples of ineligible costs include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- Contingency or miscellaneous costs
- Salary or benefits of the Lead Applicant, Co-Applicants or Translational Researchers (with the exception of salary costs for postdoctoral researchers who are acting as a Translational Researchers, as described above)
- Entertainment costs
- Legal Fees
- Journal subscriptions
- Relocation expenses
- Access to facilities, where access by the research community has already been provided for by alternate Exchequer funding

---

[43] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/budget-finance-related-policies/

- Infrastructure

10.3.1 Teaching Replacement (TU/IoT sector applicants only)

In order to support enhanced focus on research activities within the TU/IoT sector, Applicants (lead, co-applicants and) from this sector can apply for teaching replacement of up to 50% of their teaching load for the full duration of the grant. In addition, Translational Researchers can apply for teaching replacement of up to 50% of their teaching load for the duration of their Translational Research Project. Salary scales for replacement lecturers based in TUs/IoT must be reasonable and justified appropriately within the budget justification. Requests for teaching replacement must be included in the requested budget and detailed in the budget justification. Teaching replacement requests must be pro-rata and proportional to the time commitment.

10.3.2 Teaching Replacement after eligible leave

In order to support enhanced focus on research activities following periods of leave (see eligibility criteria below), applicants (lead, co-applicants and Translational Researchers) are entitled to request funding for teaching replacement of up to 50% of their teaching load for a period of up to 12 months.

Such requests should be included in the requested budget and detailed in the budget justification. Any applicant who has taken consecutive documented eligible leave (minimum 12 weeks) since 1st January 2012 and has since returned to work is eligible to request funding for teaching buyout. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Statutory adoptive leave
- Statutory parental leave
- Statutory maternity leave
- Statutory paternity leave
- Carer's leave
- Long-term medical illness leave
- Conscription
- Academic staff who have returned to an academic position having worked for a minimum of two years in a science- or engineering-related industry.

If an application is successful, applicants applying for eligible leave must provide SFI with a short statement detailing their eligibility for teaching buyout, and the start and end dates of their eligible leave, if applicable. In addition, applicants must also produce documentary evidence of their eligibility from their host institution's Human Resources (HR) Department or, where applicable, the HR Department of their employer at the time of their eligible leave period(s).

Teaching buyout costs should be calculated on the basis of hiring a temporary lecturer (e.g., at point 1 on the Assistant Lecturer salary scale, or equivalent point on the institutional scale) regardless of the seniority of the prospective applicant. Requests must be pro-rata and proportional to the time commitment. Applicants who have previously received funding for teaching buyout after eligible leave from are not eligible to apply for teaching buyout a second time.

Further information on SFI's eligible and ineligible costs can be found in the Grant Budget Policy and the associated SFI Team Member Salary Scales.[44]

10.3.3 Translational Research Budget to support additional projects during the lifetime of the Hub

In addition to the costs for the pipeline of projects defined at application stage, the budget should also include estimated costs for future projects that will be supported during the lifetime of the Hub. A high-level budget should be provided for this 'unassigned' Translational Research Budget (defining predicted budget under the headings of Staff, Equipment, Materials and Travel for each year of the Hub). SFI acknowledges this breakdown is a prediction and there may need to be adjustments made to this budget in future years.

10.4 Overheads

In addition to direct costs, SFI also makes an indirect or overhead contribution to the host Research Body, which is reflected as a percentage (30%) of the SFI direct costs (excluding equipment). Overheads are payable as a contribution to the Research Body for the indirect costs of hosting SFI-funded research programmes and are intended to enable the Research Body to develop internationally competitive research infrastructure and support services.

11 SESAME

Full Proposal applications to the SFI ARC Hub Programme will only be accepted through SESAME, SFI's grants and awards management system. Access to SESAME is controlled by staff at the Research Office of your host Research Body. Please follow your internal organisational process to request this access. Once you have been registered by your Research Office, you will receive an email containing your username, password and SFI PIN number.

SESAME enables:

- Individual researchers to apply online for SFI grants
- Host Research Bodies to review and authorise all applications

SESAME is accessed using the internet; no additional software needs to be installed. You can access SESAME online from any location. SESAME supports Chrome, Firefox and Edge. With Mac we recommend that you use either Firefox or Chrome. The configuration of some browsers and internet infrastructure (popup blockers, firewalls, etc.) can restrict an individual's access to the internet and as a result, to the SESAME system. If you are having any such difficulties, please contact your organisation's internal IT support team.

---

[44] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/budget-finance-related-policies/

Applicants should carefully follow the instructions below and in the SESAME Researcher User Guide to complete the various sections of the application.

11.1   General Submission Guidelines

- All text in uploaded PDFs should be provided in Calibri font or similar, with minimum font size of 11, and at least single line spacing as well as a minimum margin size of 2.5cm. Text in diagrams may be in any clearly legible font.
- Applications should be prepared using the templates provided by SFI. [46]
- Uploads in SESAME must be submitted in Adobe or Microsoft PDF format only. 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.
- The number of pages in uploads must not exceed the specifications for any given section.
- Appendices or other unsolicited documentation are not permitted. Applications that include such unsolicited documentation will be returned without review.
- File sizes of attachments should be less than 5MB.
- The use of hyperlinks is limited to citing information already in the public domain which is non-critical to the evaluation of the proposal. The actual URL text should be referenced, so it appears on the page, for example in brackets or in a footnote, rather than embedding the URL in a specific word or phrase. Hyperlinks and URLS may not be used to provide additional information, which would be necessary for application review, and as a means of circumventing page limits. Reviewers are not obligated to view linked sites.
- Applications must comply with the SFI Grant General Terms & Conditions[47], and the SFI Grant Budget Policy[48].
- Applications must meet the minimum eligibility requirements set out in Section 9 to progress for further assessment.

It is the responsibility of the Lead Applicant to ensure that eligible proposals are received by SFI. In order to safeguard against ineligibility, applicants are reminded to adhere rigorously to the guidelines in the call documentation and to review the proposal document prior to submission in SESAME.

Once submitted by the host Research Body to SFI through SESAME, an application cannot be withdrawn and subsequently modified for resubmission in the same call, regardless of the date of submission.

Please note that proposal eligibility checks will be completed by SFI staff.

---

[45] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/award-management-system/
[46] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/funding-calls/sfi-arc-hub-programme/
[47] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/sfi-general-terms-and-conditions/
[48] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/budget-finance-related-policies/

11.2   ORCID iD

ORCID[49] provides a unique identifier for researchers, which can then be linked to their research works across different platforms. There are a number of benefits to creating an ORCID iD, which include the following:

- ORCID allows you to pull information from different platforms, creating a centralised reference to your different works (e.g., publications, patents, awards) in one location using a single sign in.
- Your ORCID iD is a unique identifier, which distinguishes you from other researchers with a similar name.
- Using the ORCID iD helps to make your research works more visible to funders and publishers. You are able to build a complete picture of your research in one location.

As part of the integration of SESAME with ORCID, it is possible for researchers to import publication data from ORCID directly into their SESAME Research Profile. Both Lead Applicants and Co-Applicants are required to link their SESAME Research Profiles to an ORCID iD before an application can be submitted.

12   Abstract Application Procedure

Applicant groups intending to submit a full proposal application to the SFI ARC Hub call must provide a proposal title and an abstract (max. 200 words), summarising the proposed area of focus for the Hub. This should be submitted to arc@sfi.ie no later than the 21st July 2023, 13:00 Dublin Local Time. This step is mandatory. Any full proposals submitted where an abstract has not been provided by the 21st July 2023 will be returned 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. A template for submission of an abstract can be found on the SFI website.[50]

13   Full Proposal Application Procedure

Full proposal applications will only be accepted through SESAME, SFI's grants and awards management system.[51] As part of the application process, applicants will be asked to confirm that they have read and understood the eligibility criteria for the SFI ARC Hub Programme Call, as well as confirming the research body for endorsement of the application. The application cannot proceed until this acknowledgement is confirmed.

The Lead Applicant will then be guided to complete a number of fields on SESAME which are detailed below.

---

[49] http://orcid.org/
[50] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/funding-calls/sfi-arc-hub-programme/
[51] https://grants.sfi.ie

13.1 Proposal Summary

Proposal Title
The proposal title should be in the format 'SFI ARC Hub for [.......]' summarising the high-level thematic focus of the Hub in up to four words.

Duration of Grant requested (in months)

60 months is the set duration and should be selected from the dropdown.

Region
Applicants should select the location of the host Research Body for the SFI ARC Hub from the list provided menu (Northern and Western Region, Southern Region, Eastern and Midland Region)

Total Funding Request Amount (in €)
This will automatically be updated when the requested SFI budget table is completed (see Section 13.11).

13.2 Resubmission

Does your proposal relate to a previously submitted application to any SFI scheme?
Applicants must declare whether a new submission relates to a previous unsuccessful application to any SFI scheme. Select 'Yes' of 'No' as appropriate.

Resubmission Statement (if applicable) (max. 1000 words)
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 external reviewers. See SFI's Resubmission policy for further details.[52]

13.3 Research Alignment

Alignment with regional priorities / Thematic area as per S3

Applicants should select one of the thematic areas from the drop-down menu which best aligns with the focus of the SFI ARC Hub and is relevant to the existing and emerging sectoral areas of strength of the host region of the Hub, as outlined in the S3 (See Section 2.1.1).

Justification that the proposed research aligns with one of the host region's thematic areas of focus and their contribution to regional needs as per the 'National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Innovation 2022-2027' (S3). (max. 200 words)

This statement will be used as part of the determination of the eligibility of the application.

Priority Area Alignment (Primary and Secondary)
Applicants should select one of the 14 Research Priority Areas from the drop-down menu as the area which best describes the proposed research (as outlined in the report of the refreshed Research

---

[52] http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/eligibility-related-information/

Priority Areas 2018-2023[53]). Alternatively, applicants may select "Other". It is also possible to detail Secondary Priority Areas that the research will be relevant to.

Research Area - Primary
Applicants should select a primary SFI research area from the drop-down menu, which best describes the proposed research.

Research Area - Secondary
Applicants should select a secondary SFI research area from the drop-down menu, which in combination with the primary SFI research area already selected, best describes the proposed research.

Justification that the proposed research is within SFI remit (max. 250 words)
This section must be used to describe how the proposed research aligns to SFI's legal remit. This statement will be used as part of the determination of the eligibility of the application.[54]

13.4   Lead Applicant Details

Percentage Time Commitment
Indicate the percentage time commitment to the proposed research programme, as a percentage of the total working time of the Lead Applicant. The time committed should reasonably reflect the amount of funding being requested.

Lead Applicant Narrative CV (Upload)
A CV of the Lead Applicant must be completed and uploaded, using the 'Applicant and Co-Applicant Narrative CV Template' provided on the SFI ARC Hub Programme webpage,[55] (upload; max. 5 pages). Please click on "Save Draft" after upload.

The current template allows for the provision of additional information such as that relating to periods of leave from research, where relevant. **Also, reference to metrics such as journal impact factor, h-index and total number of publications are not permitted. If these metrics are included, they will be redacted prior to expert review.**

Supervisory Experience to Date
Provide the number of Masters and PhD students graduated and currently supervising, and the number of other staff currently supervising, which can be directly attributed to the Lead Applicant.

13.5   Co-Applicant Details

To add a Co-Applicant to a proposal, the Lead Applicant should click the 'Add Co-Applicants' button and **enter their surname and SESAME SFI PIN**. To obtain their SESAME SFI PIN, the Co-Applicant should navigate to the 'Profile' section of their SESAME account and select the 'SFI PIN/ORCID ID' tab.

If there is a Co-Applicant on the proposal, they must login to SESAME and select 'Applications Pending Action' to upload their CV, insert their time commitment to the project, supervisory experience and research funding (see Section 13.6) and agree to the Terms and Conditions of the proposal.

---

[53] https://dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Research-Priority-Areas-2018-to-2023.pdf
[54] https://www.sfi.ie/about-us/about-sfi/what-we-do/
[55] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/funding-calls/sfi-arc-hub-programme/

Please note that SESAME does not permit two-individuals to concurrently modify a proposal. The Lead Applicant must close the proposal in order to allow a Co-Applicant to make modifications, and vice-versa.

Percentage Time Commitment

Indicate the percentage time commitment, as a percentage of the total working time of the Co-Applicant, to the proposed research programme. The time committed should reasonably reflect the amount of funding being requested.

Co-Applicant(s) Narrative CV (Upload)

A CV of the Co-Applicant(s) must be completed and uploaded, using the 'SFI ARC Hub Programme Applicant and Co-Applicant Narrative CV Template' provided on the SFI ARC Hub Programme webpage,[56] (upload; max. 5 pages). Please click on "Save Draft" after upload.

The current template allows for the provision of additional information such as that relating to periods of leave from research, where relevant. **Also, reference to metrics such as journal impact factor, h-index and total number of publications are not permitted. If these metrics are included, they will be redacted prior to expert review.**

Supervisory Experience to Date

Provide the number of Masters and PhD students graduated and currently supervising, and the number of other staff currently supervising, which can be directly attributed to the Co- Applicant.

13.6   Research Funding

The Lead-Applicant and all Co-Applicants must list any prior research funding that has been received within the last five years. Research funding may be added directly to the application or added from the applicant's profile (see the SESAME Researcher User Guide [57]). If this section is left blank, it will indicate that the applicant has NO expired, current or pending funding. Both the Lead and Co-Applicant(s) need to complete this section within SESAME. Please ensure that research funding added to the profile of the Lead Applicant, or the profile of the Co-Applicant, has actually been included in the application.

For each current and pending grant listed above, clearly indicate any scientific overlap with this application, referring only to overlap in content

A text box is provided in the SESAME application form to describe (in a maximum of 1,000 words) any scientific overlap that exists between any current or pending grants and the research proposed in the SFI ARC Hub application.

Also, within this textbox, under the sub-heading "Management of More Than One Major SFI Award" applicants should provide <u>justification and rationale</u> for how they would manage two or more concurrent major SFI grants, where applicable.

13.7   Translational Researcher, Academic and Industry Collaborator Details

To add Translational Researchers, Academic or Industry Collaborators to the proposal, click the 'Add' button and enter the name, contact information and other required details for the individual. After

---

[56] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/funding-calls/sfi-arc-hub-programme/
[57] www.sfi.ie/funding/award-management-system/SFI_SESAME_User_Guide_-_Researcher-v_6_13_(Arcadia).pdf

adding collaborator details, click the 'Assign Collaborator' button. To exit the window, click the 'Close' button. In order for the collaborator(s) to be visible on SESAME click 'Save Draft'.

Please note that CVs for Translational Researchers and collaborators are not required as part of this Call. CVs for Translational Researchers will be requested at a later stage if the application is successful, to ensure that the eligibility criteria are met.

13.8   Main Body of Proposal

Keywords (max. 15)
List the keywords/phrases that best describe the research proposed in the application.

Scientific Abstract (max. 200 words)
Provide a succinct, stand-alone summary of the proposed work programme. The scientific abstract should be non-confidential.

Lay Abstract (max. 100 words)
Provide a succinct, stand-alone summary of the proposed work programme in lay, non-technical language. The lay abstract should be non-confidential.

13.9   Ethical Issues

All Applicants are required to answer questions related to ethical issues and will be guided to answer two questions initially:

1. "Does your research involve the use of animals?"
2. "Does your research involve human participants, human biological material, or identifiable/potentially identifiable data?"

If the answer is Yes to question 2, you will be prompted to complete the ethical issues questionnaire. Please refer to Section 15 of this document for further information. Further details on SFI's Policies can be found on the SFI Ethical Policies webpage[58] and in SFI's 'Guidance for Applicants on Ethical and Scientific Issues'. [59]

The Research Body and Principal Investigator must ensure that, before the research commences and for the full award duration, all the necessary ethical, legal and regulatory requirements in order to conduct the research are met, and all the necessary licences and approvals have been obtained.

SFI will require evidence that relevant ethical and regulatory approval has been granted for studies involving human and animal subjects prior to an award commencing. In exceptional cases where such research may not commence until a later 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.

---

[58] http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/ethical-and-scientific-issues/
[59] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/ethical-and-scientific-issues/1-Guidance_for_Applicants_on_Ethical_and_Scientific_Issues.pdf

13.10 Sex and Gender Dimension in Research Statement (max. 1000 words)

In accordance with the SFI Gender Strategy (Strand 3: Integrating Gender in Research and Innovation)[61], all applicants must complete a statement articulating the consideration of biological sex and/or social gender variables in their research programme. Please consult the Guidance for Applicants on Ethical and Scientific Issues[62] for resources on how to address the sex and/or gender dimension of research in your grant.

Do **not** include information on how you have addressed gender equality, diversity and inclusion in your research team/environment; this should be addressed in the body of the proposal . It may also be addressed in your CV, should you choose to highlight.

To complete this section, please consider the following questions:

- Is sex as a biological variable taken into account in the research design, methods, analysis and interpretation, and/or dissemination of findings?
- Is gender as a socio-cultural factor taken into account in the research design, methods, analysis and interpretation, and/or dissemination of findings?

If the answer is yes, please describe how sex and/or gender considerations will be integrated into your research proposal. If no, please explain why sex and/or gender are not applicable to your research proposal.

13.11 Budget

1) A detailed budget should be prepared using the 'SFI ARC Hub Programme Budget Template' Excel document, which breaks down the requested costs between Operations costs and the Translational Research Budget. This budget spreadsheet should be uploaded to SESAME under the Budget section.
2) Applicants are required to complete a budget within SESAME, summarising the requested SFI contribution to the project. This budget should include the high-level costs under each of the headings of staff, equipment, materials and travel. The 'SFI ARC Hub Programme Budget Template' includes a tab ('Summary Budget for SESAME') that provides the required totals to input to SESAME, once the more detailed sections of the template have been completed. To complete the budget table in SESAME, press open in the 'Prepare Budget' section and input the costs under each category headings.
3) The summary tables from this Excel template ('Summary Budget for proposal'), which include both the SFI and industry budgets (if applicable) are to be included as part of the Programme Document, alongside a detailed budget justification, as described in Appendix I.

---

[60] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/ethical-and-scientific-issues/1-Guidance_for_Applicants_on_Ethical_and_Scientific_Issues.pdf
[61] http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/gender/
[62] http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/ethical-and-scientific-issues

13.12 Programme Documents (Upload)

Completed Programme Documents should be uploaded to SESAME as a PDF in the Programme Documents upload section.

13.12.1 Data Management Plans (Upload; max. 2 page)

Good data governance and stewardship are key components of good research practice. Applicants to the SFI ARC Hub Programme will be required to provide a short (2 page) Data Management Plan (DMP) as part of their Full Proposal application. In preparing this plan, consideration should be given to SFI's Guidance on Data Management Plans.[63] A DMP is a living document which details the procedures for careful handling of data and other research outputs. A DMP follows the data through the lifecycle of the programme of research,[64] from collection to analysis and interpretation, sharing and dissemination, and long-term storage.

Data Management Plan Requirements:

DMPs will be evaluated by reviewers to ensure that they contain sufficient information on practices and standards as guided below; this assessment will be incorporated into the overall scoring criteria for the Research Programme section of the application. Although practices and standards vary across disciplines, SFI recommends the use of Science Europe DMP templates and guidelines.[65] Each DMP should include the following as appropriate to the programme or project:[66]

1. Data description and collection or re-use of existing data
2. Documentation and data quality
3. Storage and backup during the research process
4. Legal and ethical requirements, codes of conduct
5. Data sharing and long-term preservation
6. Data management responsibilities and resources including institutional or project specific resources dedicated to managing data and ensuring adherence with the FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Re-usable).

The Completed DMP should be saved as a separate [word/PDF] file and uploaded to SESAME

13.13 Letters of Support (Upload)

Letters of Support may be uploaded as single or multiple files, using the appropriate buttons in the application form.

The following letters of support **must** be included at full proposal stage:

---

[63] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/open-research/

[64] SFI-funded research programmes, as described in call documents, can range from a single research project to a collection of research projects encompassed in several work packages. The data management plan should reflect the relevant standards for individual research projects while describing a cohesive approach to managing data across the overall programme of research as appropriate.

[65] https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-topic/data-protection_en

[66] Based primarily on guidance provided by Science Europe: https://www.scienceeurope.org/our-resources/practical-guide-to-the-international-alignment-of-research-data-management/ and supplemented by guidance from the European Research Council of the European Commission: https://erc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/document/file/ERC_info_document-Open_Research_Data_and_Data_Management_Plans.pdf

- A letter of support from the Research Body of the Lead Applicant, each Co-Applicant, and each Translational Researcher named in the proposal. If a Co-Applicant or Translational Researcher is based in the same Research Body as the Lead Applicant, a single letter of support providing details of all applicants is sufficient. If there are a large number of applicants to detail in the one letter of support, they can be listed in an appendix, which does not count towards the page limit of the letter. The Letter of Support should endorse the eligibility of the listed applicants for this call as detailed in Section 9. The letter should also comment on the infrastructure, services and support available and should confirm compliance with the ERDF eligibility criteria as outlined in Section 9.5. A checklist of these criteria for inclusion in the Letter of Support is provided in Appendix IV. This is a formal letter on headed notepaper and is signed by an authorised institutional representative. **(max. 3 pages for each letter)**
- A letter of support from each Academic Collaborator. Details of the intended intellectual and/or technical input to the proposed research programme must be clearly described. **(max. 2 pages for each letter)**
- A letter of support from each Industry Partner (if relevant). The industry partner should supply a letter of support which outlines the rationale for involvement and their contribution to the project. In addition, the industry partner's financial contribution should be detailed in the letter and correspond to the detailed project budget spreadsheet submitted as part of the application. **(max. 2 pages for each letter)**

13.14 Excluded Reviewers

Applicants may specify up to three international researchers who should not act as reviewers for the application, due to the competitive and confidential nature of the research programme. Please note that applicants may request exclusion of specific companies within this list. This section is not made available to reviewers.

13.15 View Proposal Prior to Submission

A PDF of the proposal is available to view in SESAME and should be reviewed prior to submission to enable you to validate your application. The responsibility lies with the applicant in this regard. Submission is made initially to your local Research Office for approval, prior to submission by the Research Office to SFI.

Please note that the Lead Applicant and Co-Applicant(s) may choose to complete fields and upload documentation that are common to all applicants (e.g., keywords, abstracts etc.), but only the Lead Applicant can submit the application.

13.16 Applicant Agreement to Terms and Conditions

Submission of an application confirms acceptance of and agreement with the SFI Terms and Conditions of Research Grants; that the applicant meets eligibility requirements, including those relating specifically to co-funding under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF); that the project is in full agreement with all legal and regulatory matters governing research in Ireland; that no aspect of this project is already being funded from another source and that all details provided are correct.

13.17 Research Body Approval

Submissions must be approved by an authorised Research Body representative. In particular, the host Research Body is approving:

- Eligibility of each Lead Applicant/Co-Applicant as well as the eligibility of the applicant group as a whole
- That the Lead Applicant and Co-Applicant are, or will be upon receipt of the grant, recognised as an employee of one of the collaborating Research Bodies for the duration of the award
- That the requested budget including salaries/stipends, equipment, travel and consumables are in line with accepted institutional guidelines and appropriate to the intended time commitments
- The availability of infrastructure within the institution as outlined by the applicant group in the proposal
- That the proposed research programme has not been funded by other sources
- That relevant ethical approval has been or will be sought and should be granted prior to the award commencing
- That the relevant licences will be in place at the time of award
- That the details provided in relation to research funding history i.e., current, pending or expired awards, as detailed in the application, are valid and accurate.
- That permission from all team members and collaborators has been obtained, such that SFI may receive their personal information, may process such data for the purpose of peer review and may share such data with third parties in order to meet obligations under Regulation (EU) 2021/1060

Submission of an application through SESAME serves as the Research Body's endorsement of the eligibility of the Lead Applicant as well as approval of the budget requested, the infrastructure to be provided by the Research Body, and furthermore, confirms the validity and accuracy of the details provided in relation to the current, pending and expired grants as detailed in the application.

---

14   Application Review Process and Evaluation Criteria

Postal review

The submission of an application to SFI shall be construed as consent by the applicant to participate in the peer review process. All reviewers engaged by SFI are required to adhere to the SFI Reviewer Code of Conduct and SFI Confidentiality Agreement. The identity of international experts who conduct reviews shall remain confidential and will not be disclosed to the applicants.

SFI will solicit postal reviews of proposals from at least five international scientific peer reviewers with expertise in the substantive area of the proposed research who may be from academic, industrial or commercialisation/tech transfer settings.

The following evaluation criteria will be applied. Narrative and a score (1-5) will be provided for each criterion.

Quality, significance and relevance of the Applicant Team's experience and achievements, including their research, entrepreneurship and commercialisation track record relevant to the thematic area of the SFI ARC Hub.

Weighting 25%

Including:

- Quality of the expertise and experience of the Lead Applicant, including their track record in research, particularly in the proposed thematic area, leadership (including large-scale initiatives), entrepreneurship and commercialisation.
- Quality of the expertise and experience of the Co-Applicant(s) including their track record in research (particularly in the proposed thematic area), leadership, entrepreneurship and commercialisation, as relevant given their proposed contribution to the Hub.
- Quality of the cohesiveness of the Applicant Team and capabilities that would enable the Hub to deliver on its objectives.
- How the applicant group has addressed each of the following areas, as outlined in their CVs (commensurate with their career stage and research discipline, taking any periods of leave into account):
  - Generation of Knowledge,
  - Development of Individuals and Collaborations,
  - Supporting Broader Society & the Economy and,
  - Supporting the Research Community.

Quality, significance and novelty of the projects proposed including their commercialisation potential and strategic relevance to the thematic area and their alignment with regional needs and the National Smart Specialisation Strategy.

Weighting 25%

Including:

- Alignment of the Hub with one of the host region's thematic areas of focus and their contribution to regional needs as per the National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Innovation 2022-2027 [67]
- Strength and capacity of the region and of Ireland in the proposed thematic area.
- Understanding of the current challenges, limitations and needs in relation to accelerating research to commercialisation broadly, and in relation to the specific thematic area, regionally and nationally.
- Quality, novelty, timeliness and commercial potential of proposed research projects and the project pipeline.
- 'Sex and Gender Dimension in Research' statement.
- Data Management Plan[68]

---

[67] https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/2aa15-national-smart-specialisation-strategy-for-innovation-2022-2027/
[68] Based primarily on guidance provided by Science Europe. https://www.scienceeurope.org/our-resources/practical-guide-to-the-international-alignment-of-research-data-management/ and supplemented by guidance from the European Research Council of the European Commission.

Proposed SFI ARC Hub structure and quality of strategy for execution and delivery of the SFI ARC Hub goals and ERDF Performance Indicators.

Weighting 25%

Including:

- Quality of strategy for execution and delivery of the Hub goals, including managing the portfolio of projects for success, accelerating commercialisation, scouting for and selecting future projects, developing entrepreneurial researchers through training and guidance.
- Appropriateness of the proposed Indicator targets, milestones and deliverables.
- The appropriateness of the operational plan, including proposed makeup of the Operations Team.
- Suitability of the proposed governance and management structure, including proposed advisory committees.
- Proposed positioning within the Host Research Body, as well as the broader landscape, including interaction and cooperation with the existing research, innovation and commercialisation landscape e.g. entities such as Technology Transfer Offices, incubators, SFI Research Centres and EI Technology Centres and Gateways.
- Quality of institutional support.
- Quality of proposed actions to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion are considered as part of the activities of the Hub.
- Value for money (considering amount of funding requested, proposed activities and likelihood of achievement of objectives).

Quality, significance, and relevance of the potential economic and societal impact expected to arise as a result of the SFI ARC Hub and its value to the region and Ireland

Weighting 25%

Including:

- Potential economic impact, including likelihood of commercialisation of research through the creation of new high potential start-up companies, the transfer knowledge/technology from academia to industry though licensing, creation of new patents and/or transitioning of funded research into existing national and internal close-to-market supports, as appropriate.
- Potential to support the economic development of the region in which the Hub is hosted.
- Potential to develop a cohort of entrepreneurial scientists and engineers that are primed from an early stage to exploit the commercial potential of their research endeavour and the impact of such.
- Potential for other aspects of societal benefit including, but not limited to the health and well-being of the population, food security, energy security, environmental protection, contribution towards Government policies and strategies (as appropriate to the individual Hub).

In addition, the reviewers will be asked to provide narrative in relation to the appropriateness of the budget.

Applicant response

The postal reviews will be collated, anonymised and provided to the Lead Applicant, who will be given the opportunity to provide a written response to the comments made. Applicants will be given a defined period of time in which to respond (advance notice of dates and guidelines relating to the response will be indicated to applicants).

Interviews/ Panel Review

Depending on the volume of applications and scores received, SFI reserves the right to carry out a triage step prior to invitation of applicants to the interview stage of the review process.

Applicants who are invited to attend a full proposal panel will be required to present an overview of their proposal and a vision for the SFI ARC Hub. In addition, they will be afforded the opportunity to further respond to the postal reviewers' comments.

The Panel will be made up of international experts (separate to those who conducted the postal review) from a range of sectors who have broad research knowledge, leadership experience and a track-record in entrepreneurship and commercialisation. The Panel will be provided with documentation relating to each application, including postal reviews and applicant response. All reviewers engaged by SFI are required to adhere to the SFI Reviewer Code of Conduct and SFI Confidentiality Agreement.

At the panel meeting, panel members will consider the postal review scores in light of the interview and applicant response. They will use the same evaluation criteria as the postal reviewers to assess the applications, as defined above. They will provide a consensus score for each of the evaluation criteria, resulting in an overall score per proposal. This process may result in an adjustment compared to the postal review scores and a change of the preliminary ranking of the proposal based on the postal reviews.

Indicative numbers of Hubs that will be supported are provided in this call document. However, based on the recommendations provided by expert review panels and available budget, SFI reserves the right to fund fewer Hubs than indicated.

The identity of international experts who conduct postal reviews shall remain confidential and will not be disclosed to applicants. In the case of interview-based review processes, however, SFI may at their discretion disclose the identities of those panel members in advance of the panel meeting.

Reviewers engaged by SFI are required to abide by the SFI Reviewer Code of Conduct.[69] The submission of an application to SFI shall be construed as consent by the applicant(s) to participate in the peer-review process. SFI reserves the right to return applications without review where they do not meet the eligibility criteria.

SFI reserves the right to modify the review process in consultation with the ERDF Managing Authorities. Applicants will be notified of any relevant modification to the review procedure. The final funding decisions are at the sole and exclusive discretion of SFI.

---

[69] http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/review/

15 SFI Policies and Positions

In addition to complying with the GT&Cs, applicants are expected to be familiar and consult with SFI policies/positions and with all relevant national policies and ERDF-related policies when preparing their application to any SFI programme. All members involved in the funded research should be apprised of the following non-exhaustive list of relevant policies, which may be revised from time to time.

Clinical Trials

Research programmes that include clinical trials as part of the study must adhere to the **SFI Clinical Trial and Clinical Investigation Policy**,[70] as well as with the requirements set out by the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA).

Animal Usage

Applicants intending to use animals in their research projects are obliged to comply with the **SFI Use of Animals in Research Policy**,[71] and should also ensure that their studies align with the HRPA's position on the use of animals in research.

Research Integrity

SFI places paramount importance on ensuring that the highest standards of research integrity underpin all aspects of the research that it supports. To this end, SFI endorses the **National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland**;[72] that is, all institutions and SFI award holders are expected to abide by this statement and the **European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity**,[73] in addition to their respective institutional policies and procedures for handling research misconduct allegations.

Doctoral Education

For postgraduate students funded by SFI, the host Research Body is expected to adopt the principles, standards and good practice for doctoral education described in the **National Framework for Doctoral Education (2015)**,[74] which SFI has endorsed.

Intellectual Property Management

Intellectual Property (IP) should be managed according to the policies set out in the Government publication: **Ireland's National IP Protocol 2019** and must comply with State aid Regulations.[75] The IP arrangements are the responsibility of the Research Body and shall reflect the collaborative nature of the project and the level of cash and in-kind commitment made by the Industry Partner. IP arrangements should be explicitly in collaborative research agreements (CRAs).

---

[70] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/ethical-and-scientific-issues/
[71] https://www.sfi.ie/resources/SFI-Policy-on-the-Use-of-Animals-in-Research_June_2016.pdf
[72] https://www.iua.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/National-Policy-Statement-on-Ensuring-Research-Integrity-in-Ireland.pdf
[73] https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/european-code-of-conduct-for-research-integrity_horizon_en.pdf
[74] http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/04/national_framework_for_doctoral_education_0.pdf
[75] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/national-policies-sfi-positions/

Gender Strategy

Research should fully consider potential biological sex and socio-cultural gender dimensions as key analytical and explanatory variables. As articulated in the **SFI Gender Strategy (Strand 3: Integrating Gender in Research and Innovation),**[76] applicants are advised to demonstrate that they have considered any potential sex/gender aspects in their proposed research programme.

In the SFI Strategy 2025 Shaping Our Future,[77] targets are set for 35% of SFI's funded leadership positions (PIs & Co-PIs) to be women and for research teams to be composed of at least 40% of the underrepresented genders by 2025.

Maternity Supplement

SFI is committed to removing and mitigating any existing or perceived factors that may limit the participation of women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) careers. SFI invites its award holders to apply for a supplemental discretionary allowance to support their SFI-funded award when either an SFI Awardee or a team member, including PhD students funded by an SFI award, takes a period of maternity or adoptive leave.[78]

Appeals Process

The Appeals Process Policy establishes procedures and responsibilities for the appeal of the declination of a proposal by SFI.[79]

State Aid

All grants awarded under this programme are subject to, and must comply with, State aid law, in particular GBER[80]. GBER sets out a number of conditions for exemption from the obligation of prior notification to the European Commission for certain categories of aid, including research, development and innovation funding. To satisfy GBER it is necessary to satisfy all Common Provisions (set out in Chapter 1 of the GBER) and the requirements set out in at least one of the Specific Conditions (set out in Chapter 3). Article 25 sets out the criteria for exemption of aid for research and development projects. The aid intensities/funding percentages set out in GBER provide the maximum allowable threshold of aid. Therefore, grants will be provided for example at a level determined on basis of the size of the industry partner involved, the category of research undertaken in the project and the total eligible costs of the project. SFI funding must comply with the aid intensities set out in Appendix III. The State aid information in this call document is provided by way of guidance only and it is not a substitute for legal or professional advice, which is the responsibility of applicants.

Child Protection

Where relevant, applicants and Research Bodies are required to comply with the provisions of the **Children First Act 2015**,[81] and the **National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children**

---

[76] https://www.sfi.ie/research-news/publications/SFI-Gender-Strategy-2016-2020.pdf
[77] https://www.sfi.ie/strategy/
[78] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/gender/
[79] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/review/
[80] EU Commission Regulation (EC) No. 651/2014
[81] http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2015/act/36/enacted/en/pdf

2017.[82] It is the responsibility of the Research Body to ensure that they are compliant with all applicable law.

Data Protection Policy

The **General Data Protection Regulation**[83] is a legal framework that sets out guidelines for the collection and processing of personal information of individuals within the European Union.[84] Applicants are advised that they must be compliant with this regulation if they collect or process personal data.

SFI may collect, use and disclose personal data provided in the application and/or otherwise obtained under, or in connection with, the application for processing the submission, for the performance of its statutory powers and functions, and for the general activities of SFI. Further details regarding SFI's collection, use and disclosure of personal data, and the rights of individuals with respect to any personal data held by SFI, are available in the **SFI Privacy Statement**.[85]

During peer review procedures, information may be sent to external experts in countries outside of the European Economic Area, including countries that are not recognised by the European Commission as having adequate data protection laws. By submitting an application to SFI, the Research Body and members of the Research Team are agreeing that they consent to the processing and transfer of personal information in this way.

During the application process or at any time thereafter, SFI may contact the Research Body, the Principal Investigator, or any member of the Research Team with regard to funding opportunities, activities or events organised by SFI or other relevant bodies, or for the purposes of monitoring and evaluation (including, but not limited to, the collection of scientific data or data relating to the application process). SFI may choose to authorise a third party to contact the Research Body, the Principal Investigator or any member of the Research Team on its behalf.

In support of effective monitoring of appropriate evaluation and selection of operations under the ERDF Regional Programmes, SFI may share personal data provided in the application with other ERDF programme authorities, including the Managing Authority, the national ERDF Audit Authority and European Commission auditors.

Conflict of Interest

SFI recognises that applicants may have a prior relationship with an industry partner engaged in an application for funding to SFI (e.g., industry consultancy role, founder of an academic spin-out company) which may be perceived as a conflict of interest. Where a potential conflict of interest exists, SFI requires that it is disclosed by the applicant to SFI and their Research Body and that any such situations are managed by the Research Body in accordance with the principles and mandates laid out in **Ireland's National IP Protocol 2019**.[86]

---

[82] http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Children_First_National_Guidance_2017.pdf
[83] https://www.dataprotection.ie/
[84] https://gdpr.eu/
[85] http://www.sfi.ie/privacy/
[86] http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/national-policies-sfi-positions/

Open access

In line with the principles espoused by Plan S[87] and as a signatory of the National Action Plan for Open Research 2022- 30[88], SFI is committed to ensuring that all publicly funded research articles are openly available. Where a research publication arises in whole or in part from SFI-funded research (i.e., where at least one of the researchers concerned receives SFI funds in support of their endeavours), the researcher(s) should adhere to **SFI's Open Access policy**.[89] SFI monitors compliance with this policy through scientific and financial reporting, financial audits and other reviews, and data gathered through Research Outputs.

Data Management

Good data governance and stewardship are key components of good research practice. Science Foundation Ireland is part of an initiative for the voluntary international alignment of research data management policies.[90] Applicants may find it helpful to consult with this and Science Europe's framework for discipline-specific research data management if preparing a data management plan as part of their application for funding to SFI.[91] Applicants should review individual programme funding call requirements regarding data management plans and timelines as to when they are required to be submitted.

Current SFI policies and positions are reviewed on a regular basis; applicants are advised to consult the policy information in advance of submission of a proposal.

16   Post Award Management

16.1   Communications

As the SFI Accelerating Research to Commercialisation (ARC) Hub programme is co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Union through the ERDF Programme 2021-27, all recipients of SFI ARC Hub funding must adhere to the communications requirements for their relevant region in line with Articles 22 (3) and 50 (1) (e) of the Common Provisions Regulations 2021/1060. Key requirements for SFI ARC Hubs are highlighted below. If successful, applicants will be supplied with a guidance document outlining these requirements in more detail.

- Recipients of SFI ARC Hub funding must use the programme logo and funding statement on all physical and online communications elements for the SFI ARC Hub
- A permanent plaque highlighting ERDF support must be erected by the host Research Body as soon as project implementation starts or purchased equipment is installed
- A dedicated webpage must be created on the host Research Body's main website to highlight the ERDF co-funded project
- Social media posts of the SFI ARC Hub must include the hashtag #euinmyregion

---

[87] https://www.coalition-s.org/addendum-to-the-coalition-s-guidance-on-the-implementation-of-plan-s/principles-and-implementation/

[88] https://norf.ie/

[89] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/open-research/

[90] https://www.scienceeurope.org/our-resources/practical-guide-to-the-international-alignment-of-research-data-management/

[91] https://www.scienceeurope.org/our-resources/guidance-document-presenting-a-framework-for-discipline-specific-research-data-management/

- Recipients of SFI ARC Hub funding must ensure ERDF support and the Managing Authority is acknowledged in all advertisements, press releases and other promotional materials related to the SFI ARC Hub

During the course of the funding period, recipients of SFI ARC Hub funding may be asked to participate in events and site visits, as well as the publication of case studies or beneficiary stories, to highlight the successes and benefits of ERDF co-funding. Additionally, a list of project recipients and associated Research Bodies under the ERDF Programme 2021-27 will be published on the relevant Managing Authority's website and on the European Commission's Europe-wide EU funds beneficiary search platform, called [Kohesio.](https://kohesio.ec.europa.eu/en/)[92]

The SFI ARC Hubs have been designated "operations of strategic importance" under the ERDF Regional Programmes. This means that the SFI ARC Hubs are flagship projects for the Regional Programmes and will be required to collaborate with the Managing Authority and SFI on communications and visibility activities from time to time. In particular, the SFI ARC Hubs will work with SFI, the Managing Authority, the Member State and the Commission on a high-level event or activity. SFI and the Managing Authority will liaise with the SFI ARC Hubs on this activity.

Non-compliance can result in a loss of up to 3% of ERDF financial support.

16.2 Reporting

SFI has 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.

16.2.1 Annual scientific reports

Each year, on a calendar year basis, a report must be submitted to SFI by the Lead PI (i.e. Hub Director) that summarises the progress, outputs/outcomes and achievements of all components of the SFI ARC Hubs 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. All named applicants within the SFI ARC Hub will have access to SESAME for the purposes of post-award reporting requirements.

16.2.2 Indicator Reports

Progress against the agreed indicator targets will be reviewed on a six-monthly basis, using information submitted via the Research Profile on SESAME. The indicators are described in Section 4.

Updates on progress against the targets will be provided to the European Commission on a periodic basis.

Please note that targets will be finalised as part of a KPI setting process between SFI and the SFI ARC Hub 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.

---

[92] https://kohesio.ec.europa.eu/en/

A template for the annual report and further guidelines on the indicator reporting requirements will be provided to successful applicants. Reporting will be used to monitor the progress of awards against the research programme milestones and deliverables, and against the overall objectives of the Programme funding call.

16.2.3 Financial Reports

The Applicant Group will be required to submit financial reports detailing expenditure against the award to SFI as per their current reporting processes (and detailed in the individual Grant Agreements).

SFI will monitor and verify, on an on-going basis and as required, the Research Body's compliance with State aid law. Upon request, the Research Body will provide the Foundation with all documentation reasonably required to satisfy SFI 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 SFI and to other ERDF programme authorities, including the Managing Authority, the national ERDF Audit Authority and European Commission auditors as required.

16.3 Document Retention

All material related to the grant award should be retained for audit purposes, including financial, administrative, scientific and communications activities records to enable future audits in accordance with Article 82 of EU Regulation (EU) 2021/1060, which requires that documents are retained for a 5-year period from 31st December of the year in which the last instalment of the grant payment is made by SFI.

16.4 Progress Site Review

Each SFI ARC Hub will undergo a progress site review at the midway point of the award. A review panel of distinguished researchers, scientists, engineers and individuals with significant commercialisation and Translational Research expertise will be convened to evaluate the Hub. As stated in the SFI General Terms and Conditions,[93] SFI reserves the right to terminate a grant if, in the opinion of the SFI, progress is not deemed to be satisfactory.

---

[93] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/sfi-general-terms-and-conditions/

Appendix I – Programme Documents

In the preparation of this section, applicants should ensure that their proposal reflects the objectives of the SFI ARC Hub Programme and the regional priorities, as outlined in Sections 1 and 2. Applicants should carefully consider the review criteria in Section 14 to ensure that sufficient information is presented for the reviewers to assess the application in all aspects.

Background/context (max. 3 pages)

- Describe how the proposed SFI ARC Hub aligns with one of the host region's thematic areas of focus and will contribute to regional needs as per the National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Innovation 2022-2027.
- Provide an overview of the current strength and capacity of the region and of Ireland in the proposed thematic area.
- Provide a brief summary of the current challenges, limitations and needs in relation to accelerating research to commercialisation broadly, and in relation to the specific thematic area, regionally and nationally.
- Describe the high-level vision of the proposed SFI ARC Hub and how it will help address the challenges described above.

Applicant Team's experience and achievements (max. 6 pages)

- Describe the expertise and experience of the Lead Applicant, including their track record in research, particularly in the proposed thematic area, leadership (including large-scale initiatives), entrepreneurship and commercialisation.
- Describe the expertise and experience of the Co-Applicant(s) including their track record in research (particularly in the proposed thematic area), leadership, entrepreneurship and commercialisation, as relevant given their proposed contribution to the Hub.
- Describe the cohesiveness of the Applicant team and capabilities that would enable the Hub to deliver on its objectives.

Proposed Hub Structure, Management and Operation (max. 6 pages)

Provide a description of the management and operations of the SFI ARC Hub. In particular, the following areas should be addressed:

- Executive Management
  Describe the Executive Management structure of the proposed Hub. Describe the membership of this Executive, both from the cohort of Lead/Co-Applicants and other members of the Hub (e.g. TTO, Operations staff). Clearly describe the role of the Hub Director and, where relevant, the roles of any Vice- or Co-Directors.
- Operations Team
  Describe the structure and composition of the operations team outlining the roles and skills required to ensure the successful management of the SFI ARC Hub. Include reference to how it will interface with, and leverage relevant support functions within the HEIs.

Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Arna chomhchistiú ag
an Aontas Eorpach
Co-funded by the
European Union

Northern & Western
Regional Assembly

Tionól Réigiúnach an Deiscirt
Southern Regional Assembly

SFI

Fondúireacht Eolaíochta Éireann
Dá bhfuil romhainn
Science Foundation Ireland
For what's next

- Governance Structure

  Describe the proposed governance and advisory committee structures for the SFI ARC Hub and the proposed role of these committees (detail on the membership of these committees will be requested post-award, should the application be successful)

Innovation Management Framework, Strategy and Training (max. 8 pages)

Describe the innovation management framework and strategy for execution and delivery of the Hub goals. This should include:

- Managing the portfolio of projects for success, including strategies to accelerate research to commercialisation outputs
- Promotion of the Hub activities amongst prospective researchers and partners, and scouting for future Translational Research Projects both within and across the regions during the award duration
- Process for selection of additional Translational Research Projects
- Development of entrepreneurial researchers through mentorship, training and guidance
- Details of the proposed training plans, utilising the availability of I-Corps training though SFI, as well as training programmes available through the Research Bodies and other entities active in the research, innovation and commercialisation landscape.
- Proposed Indicator targets (as per the list defined in Section 4), as well as any additional milestones and deliverables deemed appropriate. Narrative should be provided justifying the proposed targets and describing how the SFI ARC Hub would deliver against these targets.

Translational Research Projects (max. 4 page overview, plus Translational Research Project Templates)

Describe, at a high-level, the portfolio of Translational Research Projects being included in the proposal, including their quality, novelty, timeliness and commercial potential and how they are aligned with the goals of the Hub. If an industry partner is involved in one or more of the projects, give a high-level overview of the relationship(s) and the benefit gained from this collaboration. Each of the proposed Translational Research Projects should be outlined in detail using the template provided and included as part of the Programme Documents as an appendix or separate upload.

Positioning in the Landscape and Institutional Support (max. 3 pages)

Describe the proposed interaction and cooperation with the existing research, innovation and commercialisation landscape to help achieve the goals of the Hub and deliver on the objectives of the programme. This should include positioning within the Host Research Body, as well as the broader landscape. This could include outlining proposed engagement with entities such as TTOs, incubators, SFI Research Centres and EI Technology Centres and Gateways.

Describe any support services that will be provided by the Research Body/Bodies, for example IP/technology transfer services, HR, contracts and legal supports.

Describe the infrastructure, facilities, and space to be provided by the Research Body/Bodies. This should include details of the office, laboratory, computing, animal or other facilities as necessary,

where the research will be done, including all of the equipment that will be available, but excluding equipment requested in this application.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (max. 3 pages)

Describe the proposed actions to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion are considered as part of the activities of the Hub. This should include:

- how equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), including gender-balance, has been considered during formation of the core leadership team (Lead Applicant and Co-Applicant(s)) and
- how EDI, including gender-balance, will be considered when recruiting the Operations Team, and for the Advisory and Governance Committees.
- how the team has and will continue to attract a diverse range of researchers to receive funding through the Translational Research Budget, with the aim of increasing the number of female entrepreneurs and researchers, as well as increasing the number of researchers from underrepresented groups (In-line with the National Research and Innovation Strategy, Impact 2030[94]).
- how the SFI ARC Hub's leadership team is committed to delivering on EDI for the Hub and will promote and monitor the Horizontal Principles of Equality and Human Rights, including steps they will take to prevent discrimination based on gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, sexual orientation and accessibility for persons with disabilities.
- what supports, resources or training will be utilised by the SFI ARC Hub to ensure the leadership team have the skills and knowledge necessary to promote EDI (e.g. policies, training programmes, accessibility services).

Impact (max. 6 pages)

Describe the intended impacts of the SFI ARC Hub. This should include:

- how the proposed Hub will help boost regional innovation and how this will contribute to Ireland's national innovation system. This should be considered in terms of the impact of the Translational Research Projects, as well as the development of entrepreneurial scientists and engineers and the potential culture shift resulting from creating of the proposed SFI ARC Hub.
- how the proposed Hub will support the economic development of the region in which the Hub is hosted, as well as contribute to national economic development.
- the potential for other types of impact/societal benefit including, but not limited to, the health and well-being of the population, food security, energy security, environmental protection, contribution towards Government policies and strategies (as appropriate to the individual Hub).

The strategic priorities of the National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Innovation 2022-2027 (S3) should be considered when completing this section.

---

[94] https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/27c78-impact-2030-irelands-new-research-and-innovation-strategy/

References (no page limit)

A full list of all references should be provided in this section of the Programme Documents. References should include the following details: author(s), title of article, name of publication, date of publication, and other appropriate details (such as volume, pages).

Budget

Please copy over the tables from the 'Summary Budget for proposal' tab of the MS Excel Budget template to relevant section of the Programme Document.

Budget justification (max. 5 pages)

The budget justification is the narrative explanation of the budget. It helps SFI and reviewers to evaluate whether the budget requested is reasonable. It should clearly explain why requested eligible costs are necessary for the proposed SFI ARC Hub and how they have been calculated. General guidance on completing the budget justification can be found in the Grant Budget Policy.

Appendix II - Full Proposal Checklist

FULL PROPOSAL CHECKLIST		
SECTION	**DESCRIPTION**	**REQUIREMENTS**
Proposal Summary	Title	SFI ARC Hub for XXXX (Max. 4 additional words)
	Region	Drop-down menu
Resubmission	Resubmission statement (if relevant).	Max. 1000 words
Research Alignment	Alignment with regional priorities / thematic area as per S3	Drop-down menu
	Justification that the proposed research aligns with one of the host region's thematic areas of focus and their contribution to regional needs as per the 'National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Innovation 2022-2027' (S3)	Max. 200 words
	Justification that the proposed research is within SFI remit as defined in the call document	Max. 250 words
	Priority Area Alignment (Primary and Secondary)	Drop-down menu
	Research area (Primary and Secondary)	Drop-down menu
Lead Applicant details	SESAME Profile information	Complete SESAME profile. Mandatory profile fields marked in red
	ORCID iD	Link SESAME profile to ORCID iD
	Percentage Time Commitment	Insert time commitment
	Narrative CV	Upload - Max. 5 pages (use template provided)
	Supervisory Experience	Provide the number of Masters and PhD students graduated and currently supervising, and the number of other staff currently supervising
Co-Applicant details	Add Co-Applicants	All Co-Applicants registered on SESAME and added to the application page
	SESAME Profile information	Complete SESAME profile . Mandatory profile fields marked in red
	ORCID iD	Link SESAME profile to ORCID iD
	Percentage Time Commitment	Insert time commitment
	Narrative CV	Upload - Max. 5 pages (use template provided)
	Supervisory Experience	Provide the number of Masters and PhD students graduated and currently supervising, and the number of other staff currently supervising
Research Funding	Lead Applicant Funding History	Enter details of funding secured in last 5 years
	Co-Applicant Funding History	Enter details of funding secured in last 5 years
Collaborator(s) details	Assign Collaborators	Translational Researchers, industry partners and collaborators added – Add contact name, details etc.
Main Body of Proposal	Keywords	Max. 15 words
	Scientific Abstract	Max. 200 words
	Lay Abstract	Max. 100 words
Ethical Issues	Questions regarding ethical issues (Use of Animals, Research involving Human Participants, Biological Material or Identifiable Data)	Select relevant answers
Sex & Gender Dimension in Research	Sex & Gender Dimension in Research Statement	Max. 1000 words
Budget	Prepare Budget	Details of all relevant SFI costs using Budget Table in SESAME
	Detailed budget request	Upload - use excel template provided

Programme Documents	Programme Documents	Upload
	Data Management Plan	Upload – Max. 2 pages
Letter(s) of Support	Host Research Body of the Lead Applicant	Upload, Max. 3 pages for each letter
	Host Research Body of Co-Applicant(s) / Translational Researcher(s) if in a different Research Body	Upload, Max. 3 pages for each letter
	Academic Collaborator	Upload, Max. 2 pages for each letter
	Industry Partner	Upload, Max. 2 pages for each letter
Excluded Reviewer		Specify up to 3

Appendix III – State Aid

Categories of Research
Under the SFI ARC Hub Programme, all Translational Research Projects funded by SFI must align with SFI's legal remit **and** fall under one of the following categories of research as defined by the EU[95]:

Industrial Research:
- planned research or critical investigation aimed at the acquisition of new knowledge and skills for developing new products, processes or services or for bringing about a significant improvement in existing products, processes or services in any area, technology, industry or sector (including, but not limited to, digital industries and technologies, such as super-computing, quantum technologies, block chain technologies, artificial intelligence, cyber security, big data and cloud technologies).
- comprises the creation of component parts of complex systems and may include the construction of prototypes in a laboratory environment or in an environment with simulated interfaces to existing systems as well as of pilot lines, when necessary for the industrial research and notably for generic technology validation.

Experimental Development:
- means acquiring, combining, shaping and using existing scientific, technological, business and other relevant knowledge and skills with the aim of developing new or improved products, processes or services in any area, technology, industry or sector (including, but not limited to, digital industries and technologies, such as for example super-computing, quantum technologies, block chain technologies, artificial intelligence, cyber security, big data and cloud or edge technologies).
- this may also include, for example, activities aimed at the conceptual definition, planning and documentation of new products, processes or services.
- may comprise prototyping, demonstrating, piloting, testing and validation of new or improved products, processes or services in environments representative of real-life operating conditions, where the primary objective is to make further technical improvements on products, processes or services that are not substantially set.
- this may include the development of a commercially usable prototype or pilot which is necessarily the final commercial product, and which is too expensive to produce for it to be used only for demonstration and validation purposes.
- experimental development does not include routine or periodic changes made to existing products, production lines, manufacturing processes, services and other operations in progress, even if those changes may represent improvements.

Applicants are asked to complete both the 'SFI ARC Hub Budget Template' and the 'Translational Research Project Template' to supply the required information.

Applicants will be required to justify in their application which category of research each Translational Research Project falls under.

---

[95] The definition of the categories of research/studies as are described in Articles 2(84), (85), (86) and (87) of GBER

The SFI GBER scheme shall apply only to aid which has an "**incentive effect**" as per Article 6 of the Regulation. Aid shall be considered to have an incentive effect if the beneficiary has submitted a written application for the aid to SFI before work on the project starts. The application shall contain at least the following: undertaking's name and size, description of the project, relevant dates, locations, list of costs, type of aid (e.g., grant)[96] and amount of public funding needed for the project. If work begins before the applicant has submitted a written application to SFI, the whole project will be ineligible for the aid.

In the case of "large undertakings", applicants will also need to demonstrate that there is:

(a) a material increase in the scope of the project/activity due to the aid, or
(b) a material increase in the total amount spent by the beneficiary on the project/activity due to the aid, or
(c) a material increase in the speed of completion of the project/activity concerned;

BUDGET

Under State aid guidelines, SFI's funding rate (aid intensity) can vary from 25% to a maximum of 80% of total eligible project costs depending on the size of the industry partner company and the type of research involved. The industry partner supports the remaining project costs. The baseline funding rate for each targeted project is determined as follows:

50% of the total eligible costs for Industrial Research
25% of the total eligible costs for Experimental Development

Company Size

The size of the industry partner determines the funding rate available under the call. The European Commission defines what qualifies as a small or medium-sized enterprise (SME). In general, the staff headcount and financial thresholds determine the enterprise categorisation.

Industry partners will be required to provide financial information/declarations to SFI, including financial records. This is described in detail in Section 3.6.2.

Company Size	Number of employees AND	Annual Turnover OR	Annual Balance Sheet
Small	1-49	≤€10M	≤€10M
Medium	50-249	≤€50M	≤€43M
Large	>250	>€50M	>€43M

These ceilings apply to the figures for individual firms only. A firm that is part of a larger group may also need to include staff headcount/turnover/balance sheet data from that group.[97]

For clarification with regard to the potential eligibility of an industry partner, please email arc@sfi.ie.

---

[96] Other types of 'aid' include loan, guarantee, repayable advance, equity injection or other. SFI provides aid in the form of grants.

[97] https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/smes/sme-definition_en

The funding rate may be increased up to a maximum aid intensity of 80% of the total eligible costs as follows:

- by 10% for medium-sized enterprises
- by 20% for small enterprises
- by a further 15% (available to all industry partners irrespective of company size) if one of the following conditions is fulfilled [98]:
  - the results of the project are widely disseminated through conferences, publication, open access repositories, or free or open-source software. SFI will monitor awards to ensure outputs are widely disseminated.
  - the beneficiary commits to, on a timely basis, make available licences for research results of aided R&D projects, which are protected by intellectual property rights, at a market price and on non-exclusive and non-discriminatory basis for use by interested parties in the EEA;
  - the R&D project is carried out in an assisted region fulfilling the conditions of Art 107(3)(a) TFEU

The maximum aid intensity that can be granted by SFI is outlined in the following table:

	Industry Partner Company Size		
Category of Research: R&D Projects	Small	Medium	Large
Industrial Research	70%	60%	50%
Experimental Development	45%	35%	25%
Category of Research: R&D Collaborative Projects plus at least one requirements of art 25 (6)(b) fulfilled			
Industrial Research	80%	75%	65%
Experimental Development	60%	50%	40%

The applicant, in conjunction with their industry partner, and their Technology Transfer Office as appropriate, is responsible for selecting a research category which appropriately reflects the proposed project activities. However SFI reserves the right to final assessment of project research categorisation.

---

[98] In line with article 25 6 (b)

Appendix IV –Research Body Letter of Support Checklist

The following must be detailed within the Letter of Support:

- The names of the Lead Applicant, Co-Applicant(s) and Translational Researchers from the Research Body who are listed on the application.
- An endorsement of the eligibility of those applicants
- description of the infrastructure, services and supports available within the Research Body

In addition, the following ERDF eligibility components **must be confirmed** within the Letter of Support, by including the following text:

I hereby confirm:

- that effective mechanisms are in place to ensure that all public procurement is consistent with National and EU procurement legislation
- eligibility to receive grant aid at the requested level with the State aid regulations
- that any aid granted through the project to third parties will be permissible under and will be managed in accordance with State aid regulations
- that effective mechanisms in place to ensure compliance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (UNDRPD)
- the activities of the SFI ARC Hub will promote sustainable development including the six principles of 'Do No Significant Harm' (DNSH) - climate change mitigation, climate change adaptation, the sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources, the circular economy, including waste prevention and recycling, pollution prevention and control to air, water, and land and the protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystem
- ERDF funding will not be used to fund infrastructure
- the proposed activities have not started before the selection of the operation
- the proposed activities fall within the scope of the ERDF and the specific intervention type (012. Research and innovation activities in public research centres, higher education and centres of competence including networking (industrial research, experimental development)
- the proposed activities are consistent with the call documentation and Ireland's Smart Specialisation Strategy
- the application does not include activities which were part of an operation subject to relocation as per Article 66 of Reg (EU) 2021/1060 or which would constitute a transfer of a productive activity as per point (a) of Article 65(1) of the same regulation
- that, as the body responsible for overall compliance with the conditions for support set out in the Grant Agreement, including those relating specifically to co-funding under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the Host Research Body will ensure that all contracts with third parties, including inter-institutional agreements with other Research bodies , will take full account of the legal obligations of the Host Research Body set out in the Grant Agreement