Science Foundation Ireland sfi For what's next

ARC HUB Accelerating Research to Commercialisation

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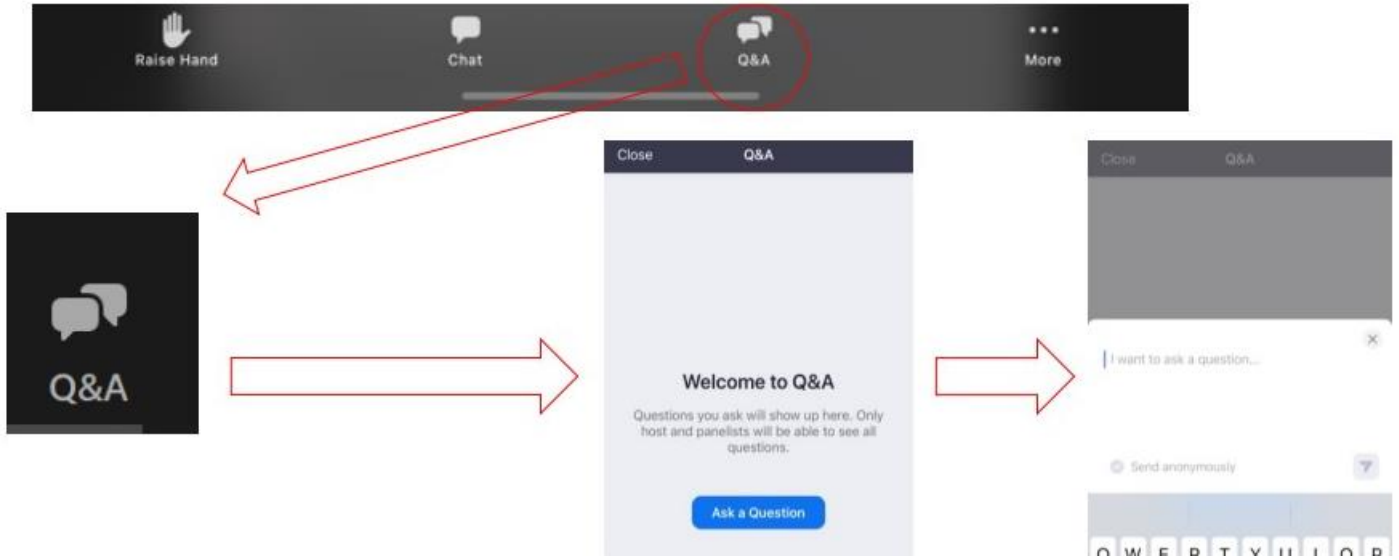
Rialtas na hÉireann Government of Ireland
Cómhaoinithe ag an Aontas Eorpach
Co-funded by the European Union
Northern & Western Regional Assembly
Tionól Réigiúnach an Deiscirt Southern Regional Assembly

Webinar Information

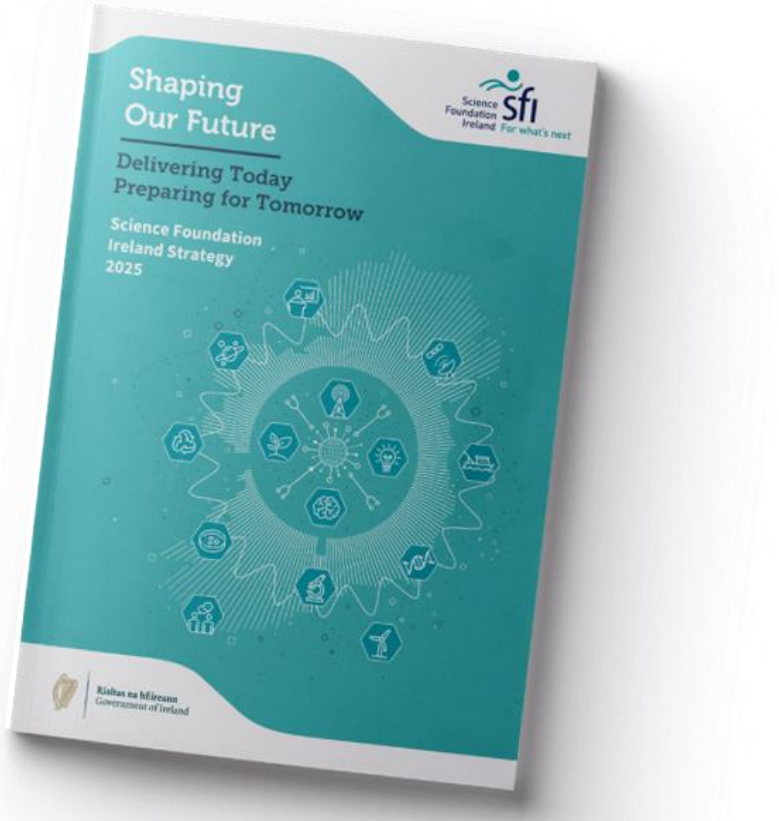
- This webinar consists of a PowerPoint presentation
- We will answer questions at the end
- You may submit questions at any time by typing them in the Q&A box on the bottom of the zoom screen – please try to be concise



- FAQs and a link to the presentation of the webinar will be added to the ARC Hub Programme webpage in the coming days

SFI's 2025 Strategy action:

Create research and innovation hubs for industry and academic engagement across the regions, so that real-world impacts of knowledge transfer are better realised. These hubs will follow EU Smart Specialisation principles, building key skills in regional clusters. The new schemes will focus on reducing lead time, bureaucracy and complexity.



Objectives of ARC Hub programme

- 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

Programme Funding

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

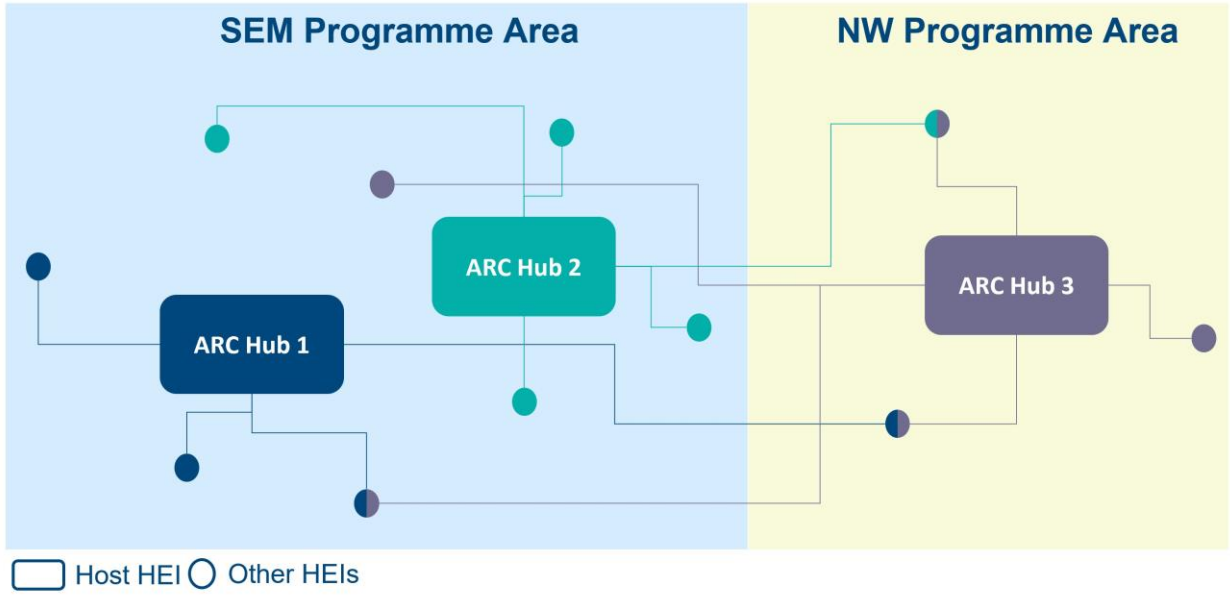
Programme Funding

- Max budget dependent on the location of the host Research Body for the SFI ARC Hub:

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

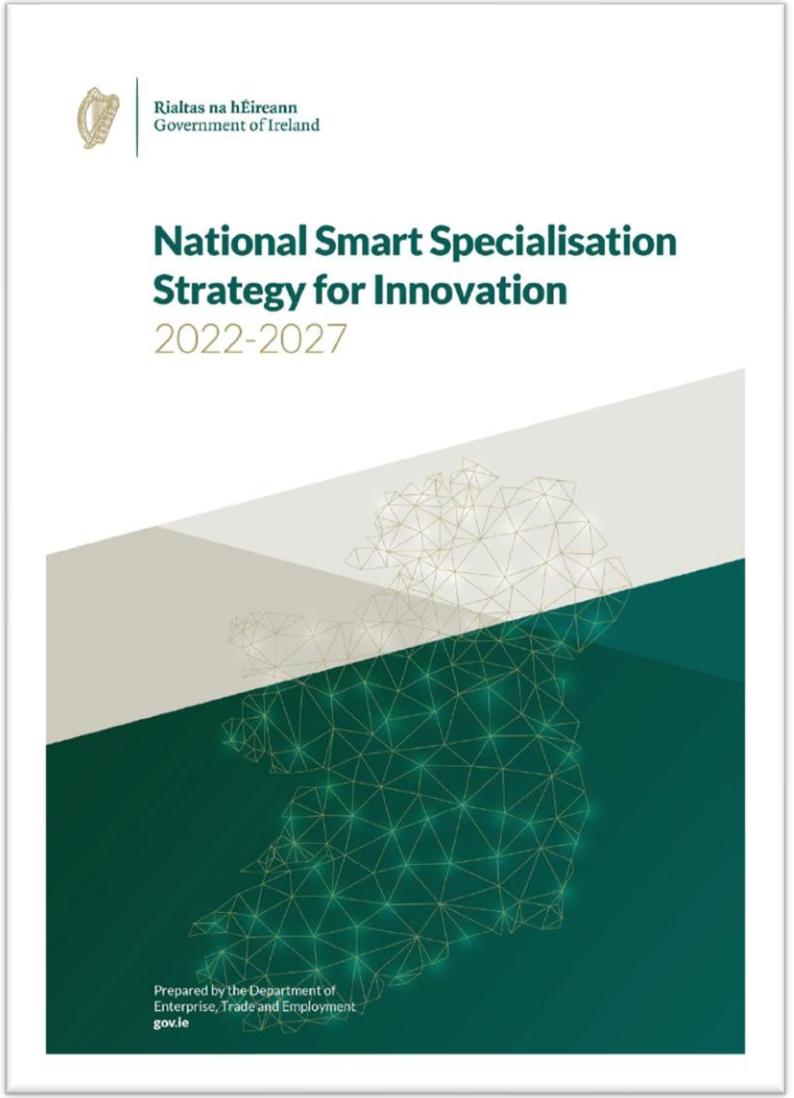
  Northern & Western Regional Programme: maximum budget of €26.67M per hub (excluding overheads).

- Each hub will be hosted by a HEI located in the designated programme area but will be multi-site and will involve collaboration with other HEIs, which can be located anywhere in the Republic of Ireland



Smart Specialisation

- As an ‘enabling condition’ of ERDF funding, Ireland is required to have a Smart Specialisation Strategy.
- DETE launched the National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Innovation 2022-2027 (S3) in July 2022.
- Smart Specialisation aims to boost regional innovation, contributing to growth and prosperity by helping and enabling regions to focus on their economic and research strengths and emerging areas of opportunity.
- As the SFI ARC Hub Programme is funded under the ERDF Regional Programmes, it must be consistent with Ireland’s S3.



Regional Strengths

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

Link to Strategy

ARC Hub leadership

- Each SFI ARC Hub will be led by a **Hub Director** (Lead Applicant) located in the host Research Body, with support from a group of **Co-PIs** (Co-Applicants).
- The leadership team are expected to be experienced researchers, with strong track records in research, in leadership, and in entrepreneurship and commercialisation.
- The leadership team should have the vision and drive to build capacity amongst the funded Translational Researchers and create a culture of innovation that fosters entrepreneurship and agile processes

Translational Research Budget

- Each SFI ARC Hub award will include a Translational Research Budget, which will be used to support researchers with novel research projects that can be accelerated towards rapid commercial impact.
- At application stage, the proposal should include a collection of projects that will receive funding through the Hub. This should provide assurance of the level of demand for a Hub in the proposed thematic area and the quality of projects and their potential for commercial impact.
- Each of the proposed Translational Research Projects should be outlined in detail using the template provided.
- Eligible costs for these projects include salaries, materials, equipment, travel
- The specific costs for each of these projects should be detailed in the budget template

Translational Research Budget

- In addition to projects approved at application stage, the Translational Research Budget will be used to support additional projects during its lifetime
- Hubs will have autonomy to fund new projects up to a certain threshold (€150K), following a defined review and approval process
- Projects above the threshold will be submitted to SFI for review. SFI will ensure a rapid peer review and approval process to ensure fast turn around between submission and project initiation
- At application stage 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).
- Translational Research budget cannot be committed beyond the end date of the ARC Hub award and consideration should be given as to how it will be managed effectively during the lifetime of the Hub.

Translational Researcher eligibility

- Researchers can be located in the host Research Body (host of the SFI ARC Hub) and collaborating Research Bodies
- Hold a PhD or equivalent at the time of application.
- Be senior author on at least one international peer reviewed article.
- Postdoctoral researchers must have a commitment from a suitable mentor (an established researcher from their Research Body, or a Co-PI of the SFI ARC Hub)
- Salaries for Postdoctoral Translational Researchers is an eligible cost (in line with their time commitment to the project)

Operations Team

- The activities of the SFI ARC Hub will be supported by an Operations Team
- Activities will include:
  - Project management of the portfolio of projects
  - Scouting for new projects
  - Marketing, communications and promotion of the SFI ARC Hub
  - Understanding and ensuring compliance with the requisite standards
  - management and oversight of entrepreneurial training
  - administration and reporting to SFI and the European Commission
- Define the structure and composition of the Operations Team in the application, outlining the roles and skills required
- The Operations costs is capped at a maximum of 20% of direct costs.

Hub Strategy

- Applicants should describe how the Hub will be set up and managed for success.
  - 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 and metrics;
  - Increasing the likelihood of successfully delivering meaningful impact from research.

Skills development

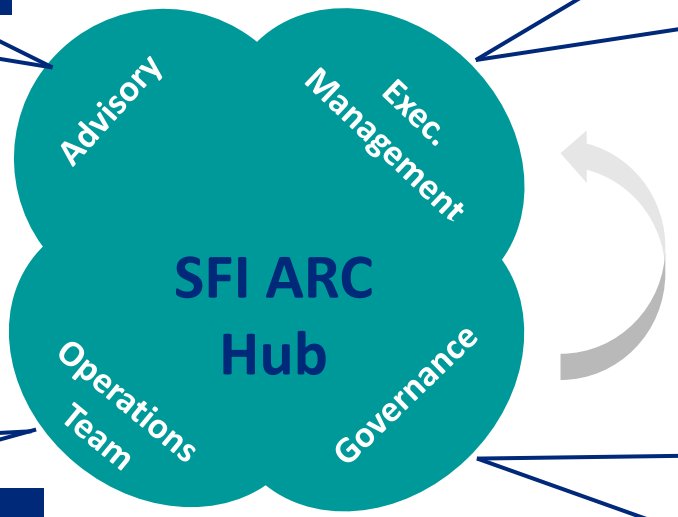
- Award will involve development of the operational and entrepreneurial skills of the Hub Leadership, Operations Team and Translational Researchers
- As part of the proposal, applicants should detail what training will be provided
- Strongly encouraged to leverage existing training supports
- Hub leadership and Operations teams will be expected to participate in the I-Corps@SFI Academy
  - establishing, scaling and sustaining innovation and entrepreneurship activities in a large-scale entity
  - skills in the delivery of entrepreneurship training for researchers
- Translational Researchers will be encouraged to apply to the SFI-NSF I-Corps@SFI Entrepreneurial Training Programme. Successful Teams will participate in an intensive 7-week training programme delivered by the National Science Foundation

Governance

Responsibilities
- Advice and guidance to Exec. Management on Strategy, Operations and Performance
- Peer-review of TR projects (<€150K)

Membership
- Senior Int. Academics
- Industry Experts
- Entrepreneurs
- Venture Capitalists
- TTO Staff
- Reps from other national agencies

Advise on Strategy & Performance



Oversight of Activities & Best Practice

Membership
- Hub Director
- Co-PI(s)
- Senior Ops Team Member
- Senior TTO Member

Responsibilities
- Execution and delivery of Hub goals, indicator targets, milestones and deliverables & impact
- Management, Administration and Financial control

Responsibilities
- Report to Hub Director
- Close support of TRs
- Scout new TR projects
- Project Management
- Oversight of training
- Marketing & Communications
- Admin and reporting to European Commission

Membership
- CEO/Exec. Director
- Hub Manager
- Business Manager
- EDI Manager
- Project Managers & Administrators
- Comms personnel
- IT Technical Support

Membership
- Hub Director
- Host HEI VPR
- External representatives (e.g. CEO, CIO, Senior Policy Exec.)

Responsibilities
- Ensure Hub performs in line with best practice
- Ensure governance and management structures adhered to
- Support strategic development and performance
- EDI oversight

Indicators

- Indicators for this Programme were pre-defined in the Northern & Western Regional Programme 2021-2027 and Southern, Eastern & Midland Regional Programme 2021-2027.
    - Research organisations participating in joint research projects
    - Patent applications submitted
    - Number of spin-outs created dependent on IP from HEI
    - Licensed Technologies
    - Assignments
- Applicants should propose targets for each indicator with justification and description of how these targets can be met.
- 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.

Industry engagement/State Aid

- Industry collaboration is **not** the main focus of a Hub
- Collaboration with industry is an option for specific projects, where it will support and develop the rapid commercialisation of the outputs. The SFI ARC Hub can choose whether to partner with industry on a project-by-project basis.
- The programme has been structured to align with the General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER).
- Levels of funding support (grant aid) that can be provided by SFI are dependent on the size of the industry partner, the category of research being undertaken and on whether the outputs will be widely disseminated
- Details on industry partnership should be included in the application, including the budget template
- Industry partners will be required to provide financial information/declarations to SFI (deadline 29th September 2023, vis arc@sfi.ie)
- Once the Hub is established, all new projects involving industry must be submitted to SFI for review (even if <€150K).

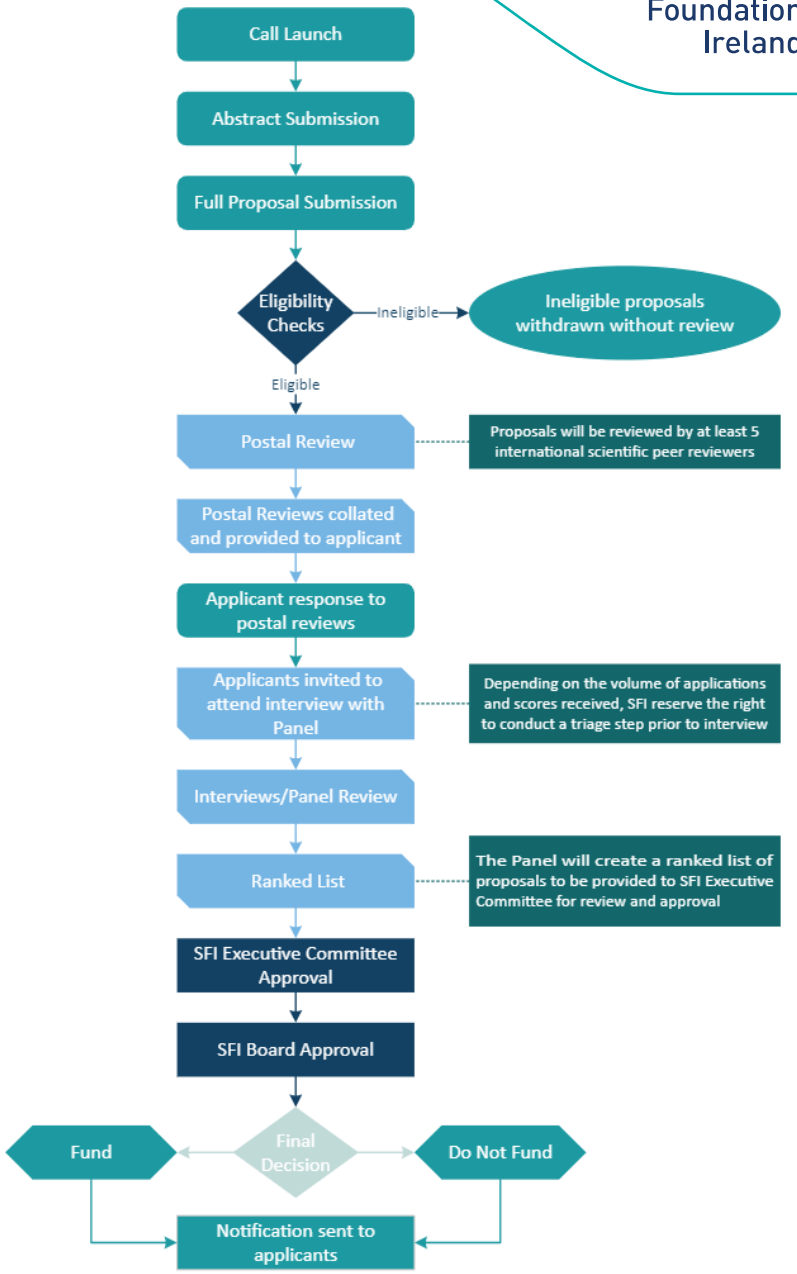
Application Process

- **Abstract deadline 21st July 2023**
  - Submission via e-mail: arc@sfi.ie
  - Template available on website
  - Abstracts will not undergo evaluation.

- **Full proposals deadline 22nd September 2023**
  - Submission via SESAME
  - SESAME Form and upload of required templates

Review Process

- Eligibility checks
- Postal review – at least five international peer reviewers
- Applicant response
- Panel meeting – includes presentations by applicants and interview



Evaluation Criteria

- 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%*
- 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%*
- 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%*
- 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%*

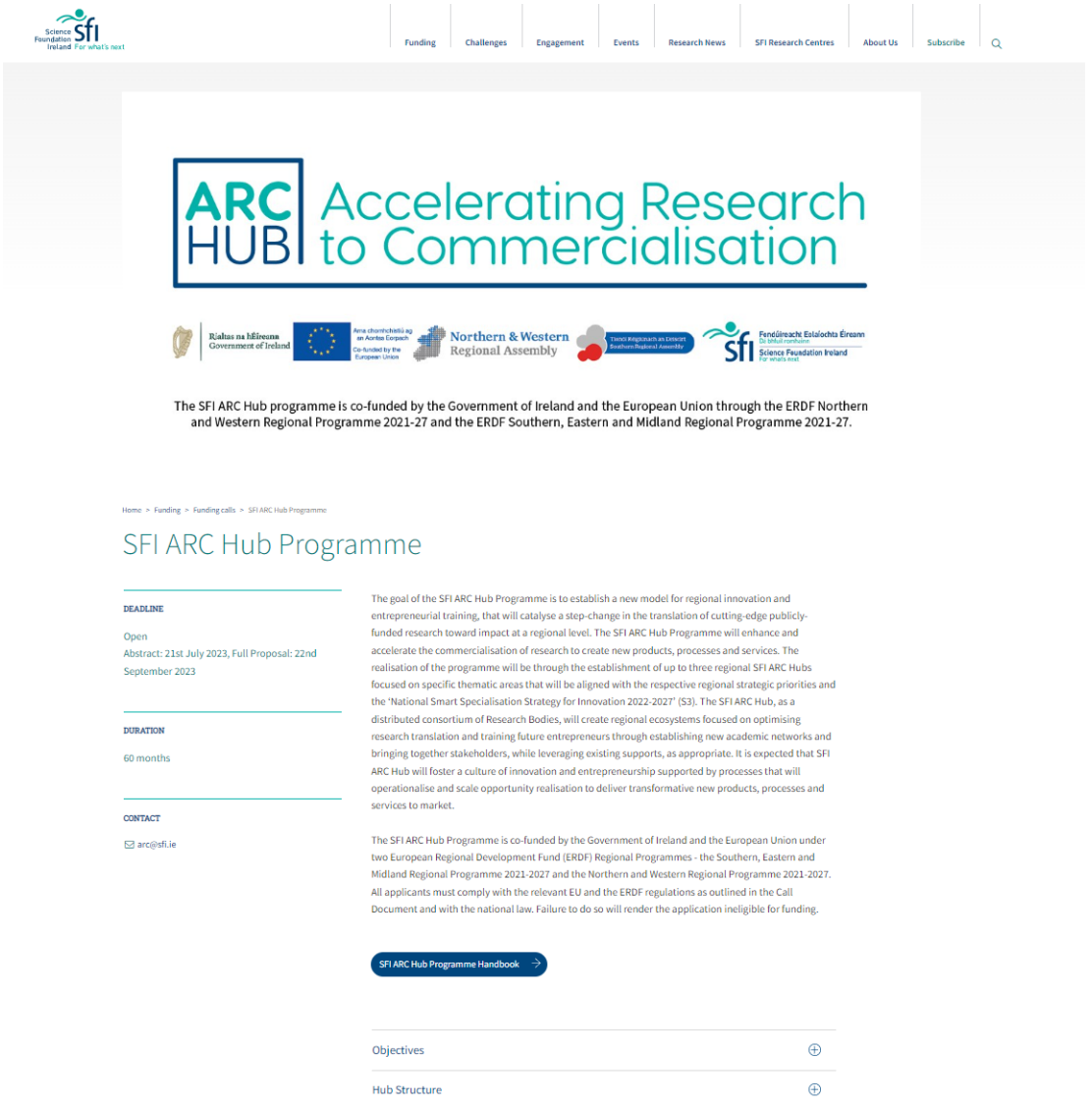
Timelines

- **Call announcement:** 1st June 2023
- **Deadline for Abstract Submission:** 21st July 2023
- **Deadline for Submission of Proposals:** 22nd September 2023
- **Panel Review:** End of January 2024
- **Letter of Offer:** March 2024
- **Award start date:** Mid-April 2024

Further information

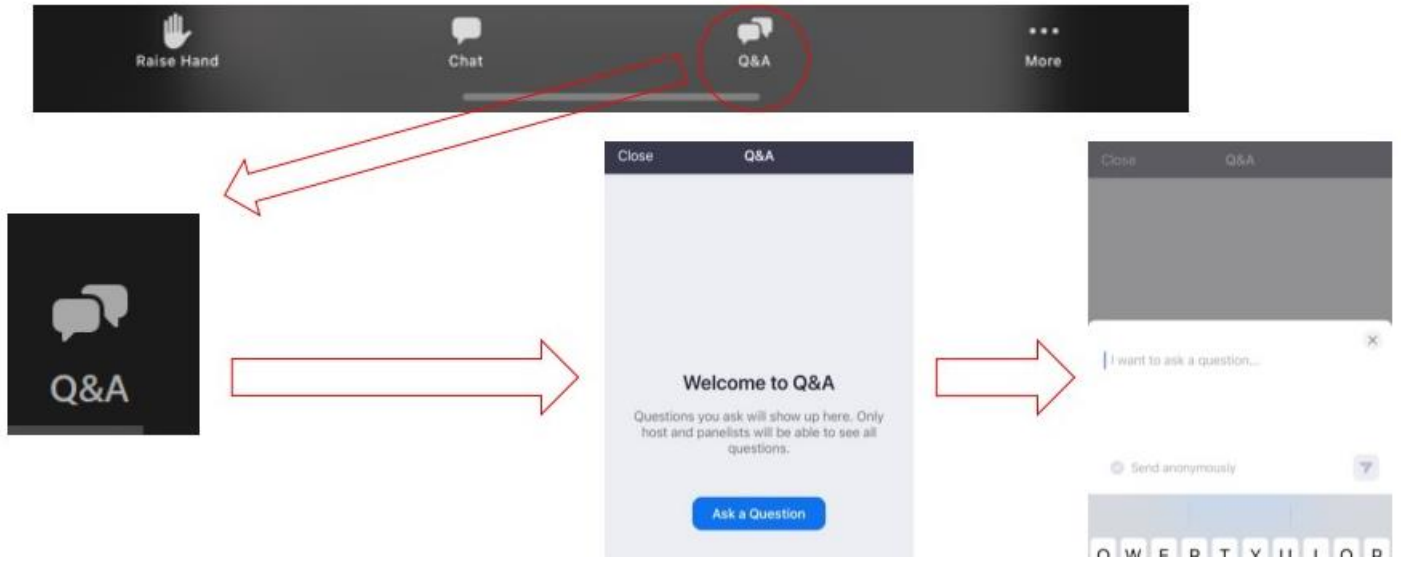
- Website: https://www.sfi.ie/funding/funding-calls/sfi-arc-hub-programme/
- Call Document & templates
- Webinar and FAQ will be available on SFI website in coming days

- Queries: arc@sfi.ie



Q&A Session

- We will now take an approx. 10 minute break to review questions.
- You may continue to submit questions by typing them in the Zoom Q&A box.



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Thank you

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