

SCIENCE FOUNDATION IRELAND

SFI ERC Support Programme (Recruitment Call)

Call for Submission of Proposals

Key Dates

The SFI ERC Support Programme is run as a rolling call. Applications are invited from senior representatives of the Host Institutions of recruited awardees that have been funded through the ERC Starting Grant, Consolidator Grant, Advanced Grant or Synergy Grant schemes. The ERC awardee associated with the application must have succeeded in obtaining their award from a Host Institution outside of Ireland. The proximity of an application to this programme to the official starting date of the associated ERC award may affect the level of funding available.

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 General Terms and Conditions 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 Acts 1997 and 2003.

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1 Introduction

The legal remit of Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) is to promote and assist the development and competitiveness of industry, enterprise and employment in Ireland. SFI funds oriented basic and applied research in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics.¹ As outlined in *Shaping Our Future*,² SFI's strategic plan to 2025, the Foundation will aim to “*identify and recruit targeted world-leading researchers and rising stars to move to Ireland to act as nuclei of world-class research groups, which will attract Foreign Direct Investment, entrepreneurial activity, and bolster local expertise*”. In addition, EU and global engagement is a critical element of Ireland's Research and Innovation activity, as highlighted in *Impact 2030: Ireland's Research and Innovation Strategy*; as such, successful engagement with Horizon Europe across all its pillars is of high priority.

The European Research Council (ERC) is a European funding initiative under the *Excellent Science* pillar of Horizon Europe.³ Since 2007, the ERC has supported the best scientists, engineers and scholars in Europe. With a budget of ca. €16bn from 2021-2027, the ERC represents approximately 17% of the total Horizon Europe budget. The ERC's mandate is to encourage the highest-quality research in Europe through competitive funding and to support investigator-initiated frontier research across all fields, on the basis of scientific excellence. SFI recognises the excellence of researchers funded by the ERC and supports Ireland's activities by acting as the host for Ireland's ERC National Delegate and the National Contact Point for the Life Sciences and the Physical Sciences and Engineering domains. SFI is committed to improving the success of Ireland-based researchers in ERC schemes and recognises that the best way to create a culture of ERC success is to provide a mechanism to allow people with proven success to work alongside the next generation of ERC awardees, in an environment where essential support is provided.

The **SFI ERC Support Programme** provides an additional overhead payment to the Host Institution of ERC award winners. For this call, the Programme is **encouraging SFI's Eligible Research Bodies to actively seek and recruit excellent researchers who wish to transfer their ERC-funded research programme to Ireland.**

Four specific types of ERC grants are relevant to this SFI call: the **ERC Starting Grant**, **ERC Consolidator Grant**, **ERC Advanced Grant** and **ERC Synergy Grant**. The ERC expects Host Institutions to provide suitable research infrastructure and support to its awardees. ERC grants are specifically designed to be portable. This portability allows awardees who are not being provided with suitable infrastructure and facilities to relocate to a different host institution if they so wish. This call to the SFI ERC Support Programme will assist Irish Host Institutions to provide excellent support to ERC awardees who have chosen to move their ERC-funded research to Ireland.

2 Objectives of this SFI ERC Support Programme Call

- To allow Irish institutions to recruit ERC-funded researchers from outside of Ireland
- To help recruited ERC awardees by providing excellent facilities and infrastructure
- To enhance the benefits of applying to ERC schemes for institutions and applicants
- To increase, in the long term, the participation of Ireland-based researchers in all ERC schemes
- To increase, in the long term, Ireland's success rate across all ERC schemes

¹ [About SFI - What we do](#)

² <https://www.sfi.ie/strategy/>

³ <http://erc.europa.eu/>

3 Eligibility Criteria of Applicant

- The applicant must be an appointed senior representative (e.g., Vice President for Research, Dean of Research, Head of Research, etc.) of the Research Office of an SFI Eligible Research Body hosting the research programme of an ERC awardee who can demonstrate that they have officially transferred, or will officially transfer, their ERC award to their institution from an institution based outside of Ireland.
- The recruited awardee must have been successful in one of the ERC schemes listed in the Section 1.
- The recruited awardee may have submitted their proposal to any panel within the three ERC domains. However, applications associated with ERC awardees whose funded research cannot clearly be shown to align with SFI's legal remit will not be accepted.¹

4 Eligibility of Research Body

The Host Institution of the recruited ERC awardee must be situated in the Republic of Ireland. Queries regarding the eligibility of research bodies should be directed to SFI prior to submission. A list of eligible Research Bodies is available on the SFI website.⁴

The terms 'Research Body' and '(Host) Institution' are equivalent and interchangeable in this documentation.

5 Funding

This call to the SFI ERC Support Programme offers a maximum award of **€300,000**, which is provided as an overhead to the Host Institution of a recruited ERC awardee. Regardless of which ERC scheme the awardee applied to, the maximum award is the same. The funding may be requested for two principal purposes:

- To help provide an optimal environment to allow the recruited awardee to succeed with their ERC-funded research programme
- To assist the Host Institution to be successful in winning ERC awards through future funding calls

No more than 25% of the total funding requested (i.e., a maximum of €75,000) may be used for the latter purpose.

Researchers recruited to Ireland before being notified of the outcome of an ERC application may **not** be associated with an application to this call. Only researchers holding either an active or approved (but not started) ERC grant can be the subject of an application to this call.

6 Submission

Applications to the SFI ERC Support 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 the host Research Body. Please follow your internal organisational process to request this access

⁴ <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/eligibility-related-information/>

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(applicants to this programme are expected to have this access already). If you are newly registered by your Research Office, **you will receive an email** containing the following:

- **Username**
- **Password**
- **SFI PIN number**
- **SESAME website address**

Your **username** and **password** are needed to log in to SESAME. SESAME is accessed using the internet; no additional software needs to be installed. You can access SESAME online from any location. 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.

The SESAME system is accessed using the following Internet address:
<https://grants.sfi.ie>

Please see the **SESAME Researcher User Guide** for more detailed information.⁵

SESAME enables:

- Individuals to apply online for SFI grants
- Host research bodies to review and authorise all applications

7 Application Procedure

Applications for the SFI ERC Support Programme consist of a proposal submitted online through SESAME to SFI by the Research Office of the applicant's Research Body. Applicants should carefully follow the instructions below and in the SESAME Researcher User Guide to complete the various sections of the application; applications that do not adhere to these instructions will be deemed **ineligible and will not be reviewed**. A checklist for applications to this call is provided in **Appendix A**.

General 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.
- 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. **Applications that do not comply with these requirements will be deemed ineligible and will not be reviewed.**
- Appendices or other unsolicited documentation are not permitted. **Applications that include such unsolicited documentation will not be reviewed.**

⁵ <http://www.sfi.ie/funding/award-management-system/>

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- The currency to be used is the **euro (€)**.
- File sizes of attachments should be **less than 5MB**.
- Applicants must complete all mandatory SESAME profile fields (marked in red) before submitting an application. It is not possible to submit an application without this information.

Applications not adhering to these guidelines or with incomplete content will be deemed ineligible and will not be processed, regardless of the date of submission.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that eligible proposals are received by SFI on, or before, the deadline indicated (where applicable). In order to safeguard against ineligibility, applicants are reminded to adhere rigorously to the guidelines presented in the call documentation and to review the proposal document prior to submission in SESAME.

Applications cannot be withdrawn and modified for resubmission in the same call.

7.1 Proposal Summary

- **Proposal Title**
The Research Proposal title should be written in the following style:

SFI ERC Support Programme – ERC Awardee’s Name (Applicant’s Host Institution)
- **Duration of Award Requested**
Applicants should indicate the number of months remaining on the associated ERC award at the time of application, **rounding up to the nearest full year** (for example, if at the time of application there is 18 months remaining on the ERC award, select **24 months** from the drop-down menu). The minimum duration is **24 months**, while the maximum is **60 months** (or **72 months** for ERC Synergy Grants only).
- **ERC Scheme**
Applicants should indicate which award is held by the associated ERC awardee (i.e., Starting Grant, Consolidator Grant, Advanced Grant or Synergy Grant).
- **Start Date for ERC Award**
Applicants should indicate the official start date for the associated ERC award, as agreed with the ERC Executive Agency (ERCEA). SFI ERC Support Programme awards will not be allowed to commence until the associated ERC award has started, but applications may be submitted in advance of this date.

7.2 Research Alignment

- **Primary Priority Area**
Applicants should select one of the 14 Refreshed Priority Areas from the drop-down menu as the **Primary Priority Area**, which aligns best to the associated ERC-funded research. It is also possible to detail **Secondary Priority Areas** that the research will be relevant to.

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- **Research Area (Primary)**
Applicants should select a primary SFI research area from the drop-down menu, which best describes the associated ERC-funded 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 associated ERC-funded research.
- **SFI Legal Remit**
Applicants should use this section to describe (**in no more than 250 words**) how the research being proposed under the associated ERC award aligns to SFI's legal remit.¹ Such an alignment is mandatory for an application to this call to be considered for support, regardless of the panel and domain the associated ERC award was submitted to.

7.3 Budget

- **Prepare Budget**
The SESAME system requires that applicants include budget information, in addition to the details provided in the PDF document described in the Programme Documents section above. A single entry should be added in this section, entitled "**Miscellaneous Costs**". The amount associated with this budget entry should be identical to the total request identified in the PDF document. See notes for completion of the budget table in the **SESAME Researcher User Guide**.⁵

7.4 Programme Documents

In a **single PDF document**, applicants are requested to provide the following documentation in the order listed below:

- **A letter from the Applicant indicating how the funds requested will assist the associated ERC awardee**
- **Evidence that the recruited ERC awardee has transferred (or will be transferring) their ERC award to an Irish Host Institution, which is the same institution represented by the Applicant**
- **A budget table, with budget lines for each use of the requested award**
- **A budget justification, providing rationale for each of the requests in the budget table**
- **The full proposal originally submitted to, and approved by, the ERC**
- **The notification letter from the ERCEA detailing the successful outcome of their application**

Letter from the Applicant

In no more than two pages, this letter, **signed by the Applicant**, will indicate how the funding available through this programme will **specifically** assist the recruited ERC awardee with their funded research. Any other intended use of the funding **must** also be described.

Evidence of ERC award transfer

If available, this should be a copy of an official letter from the ERCEA, which indicates that the associated ERC award has been transferred to the Irish Host Institution. Where this has not yet been obtained, this must instead be a **brief Letter of Intent**, signed by both the Applicant and the recruited ERC awardee, which confirms that the award will be transferred to the

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Applicant's Host Institution, and provides an indication of when this transfer will be completed. The date of transfer (and, consequentially, the time remaining on the ERC award at the time of transfer) may be taken into consideration when considering the outcome of the application to this programme.

In any case, an official letter from the ERCEA that confirms the transfer of the ERC award **must be provided** in order for a Letter of Offer to be issued following an application to the SFI ERC Support Programme.

Budget breakdown and justification

In no more than two pages, a table providing a detailed breakdown of the intended use of the funding available through this programme must be provided along with a comprehensive justification for each element of the budget. Awards made through this programme provide additional overhead support; as a consequence, **it is not permissible** to use funds from this programme to cover salary or stipend costs for team members that will be hired to carry out research activities. However, funds may be used to support the salary of personnel that will assist either the ERC awardee specifically or will support the Host Institution to carry out administrative or other related activities that will help to enhance activity and success in future ERC funding calls. Large items of equipment (with a value of greater than €50,000) that are requested must be justified along with a quotation number. Where the associated ERC award has already been active for a significant period of time (e.g., more than six months), it is advised that the application to this programme takes the time remaining on the award into account when preparing the budget and budget justification.

Full proposal originally submitted to the ERC

This is a copy of the full proposal (Parts B1 and B2) that the applicant submitted to the ERC. The research outlined in this proposal, and being carried out in their funded award, must be aligned with SFI's legal remit.

Letter from the ERC Executive Agency

This is a copy of the letter received from the ERCEA, indicating the outcome of the applicant's proposal to the ERC scheme.

8 Institutional Approval

It should be noted that Research Body submission of an application represents institutional approval of an application and agreement to **SFI General Terms and Conditions**.⁶ Submission must only be made by an authorised Research Body representative. In particular, the Research Body is approving:

⁶ <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/sfi-general-terms-and-conditions/>

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- The eligibility of the Applicant (see **Section 3**)
- That the process leading to the transfer of the associated ERC award is either underway or already complete
- The availability of infrastructure within the institution to carry out the associated ERC-funded research
- That relevant legal and ethical approval has been or will be sought and should be granted before the ERC-funded research commences
- That the relevant licences will be in place at the time of award
- That permission from the recruited ERC award holder has been obtained, such that SFI may receive their personal information, and may process such data for the purpose of review

9 Deadlines

This programme will run as a rolling call for applications. Applications may be submitted after relocation of an ERC awardee to Ireland has been agreed (see **Section 7.3**). SFI ERC Support Programme awards will only be made if a reasonable amount of time remains on the ERC award following transfer to an Irish Host Institution. The level of funding awarded in such instances will be decided on a case-by-case basis that may be determined by the time remaining on the ERC award.

10 SFI Policies and Positions

In advance of applying to any SFI programme, applicants are expected to be familiar with all relevant national and SFI policies including, but not limited to, the following:

Clinical Trials – Research programmes that include clinical trials as part of the study (see Section 5.6) must adhere to the **SFI Clinical Trial and Clinical Investigation Policy**,⁷ 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**,⁸ and should also ensure that their studies are in line with the HPA's position on the use of animals in research.

Research Integrity – SFI places high importance on ensuring research integrity and endorses the **National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland**.⁹ All applicants and institutions are expected to abide by this policy and the **European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity**.¹⁰

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 as described in the **National Framework for Doctoral Education (2015)**,¹¹ which SFI has endorsed.

Intellectual Property Management – Intellectual Property (IP) should be managed according to the policies set out in the Government publication: **Inspiring Partnership - the National IP Protocol**

⁷ <http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/ethical-and-scientific-issues/>

⁸ http://www.sfi.ie/resources/SFI-Policy-on-the-Use-of-Animals-in-Research_June_2016.pdf

⁹ <http://www.iaa.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/National-Policy-Statement-on-Ensuring-Research-Integrity-in-Ireland-2014.pdf>

¹⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/hi/h2020-ethics_code-of-conduct_en.pdf

¹¹ http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/04/national_framework_for_doctoral_education_0.pdf

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2016.¹² In cases where additional guidelines are specified by SFI they must also be followed. The IP arrangements are the responsibility of the Research Body and shall reflect the collaborative nature of the project, the level of cash and in-kind commitment made by the Industry Partner and compliance with State Aid Regulations.

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**,¹³ applicants are recommended to demonstrate that they have considered any potential sex/gender aspects in their proposed research programme.

Appeals Process – This policy establishes procedures and responsibilities for the appeal of the declination of a proposal by SFI.¹⁴

State Aid – All SFI funding granted under this call will be subject to, and must be compliant with, State Aid law. As such, proposals must be designed to ensure that any funding received from SFI does not, directly or indirectly, give rise to the granting of State Aid. Potential applicants are referred to the guidance provided by the European Commission in Section 2 of its **2014 Framework for State aid for research and development and innovation (2014/C 198/01)**.¹⁵ If in any doubt as to the interpretation or application of this guidance, potential applicants are advised to seek independent legal advice.

Child Protection – Where relevant, applicants and Research Bodies are required to comply with the provisions of the **Children First Act 2015**,¹⁶ and the **National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017**.¹⁷ 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** is a legal framework that sets out guidelines for the collection and processing of personal information of individuals within the European Union.¹⁸ 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**.¹⁹

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.

¹² <http://www.knowledgetransferireland.com/ManagingIP/KTI-Protocol-2016.pdf>

¹³ <http://www.sfi.ie/resources/SFI-Gender-Strategy-2016-2020.pdf>

¹⁴ <http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/other/>

¹⁵ [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52014XC0627\(01\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52014XC0627(01)&from=EN)

¹⁶ <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2015/act/36/enacted/en/pdf>

¹⁷ http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Children_First_National_Guidance_2017.pdf

¹⁸ <https://www.eugdpr.org/>

¹⁹ <http://www.sfi.ie/privacy/>

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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.

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

11 Proposal Review Procedure and Criteria

An eligibility check carried out by SFI technical staff will determine whether the proposal satisfies the conditions laid out in this document. In particular, it will be verified that the research funded through the associated ERC award is aligned with SFI's legal remit, and that incoming ERC awardees have a clear recruitment plan in place with their new Host Institution. SFI expects to receive a copy of the notification from the ERCEA that the Host Institution on the associated ERC award has officially been changed to the new Irish Host Institution, either as part of the application or immediately after it is provided by the ERCEA.

SFI reserves the right to modify the review process. Applicants will be notified of any relevant modification to the review procedure.

12 Grant Administration

This programme requires that the corresponding ERC-funded research programme is carried out at the Irish Host Institution; if this requirement is not satisfied, SFI will reclaim the funding awarded under the SFI ERC Support Programme.

In cases where the corresponding ERC grant terminates earlier than scheduled or is moved to any other Host Institution outside of Ireland, SFI will initiate a process through which some or all of the funds may be reclaimed or transferred on a case-by-case basis.

13 Progress Reports and Award Management

This call to the SFI ERC Support Programme provides funding as an overhead payment directly to the Host Institution of recruited ERC awardees; the awardees will report directly to the ERC on the progress of their awards. As such, there is no formal reporting procedure pertaining to research achievements and progress associated with this programme. However, it should be noted that institutions supported through the SFI ERC Support Programme may be asked at any time to provide SFI with information concerning the usage of these funds.

14 Further Information

For all additional queries please contact erc@sfi.ie.

Appendix A: SFI ERC Support Programme Application Checklist

SECTION	DESCRIPTION	REQUIREMENTS
Proposal Summary	Title	Up to 30 words
	Duration of Award Requested	Select duration
	ERC Scheme	Select relevant ERC scheme
	Start date for ERC award	Enter start date
Research Alignment	Alignment of ERC research with SFI Legal Remit	Max. 250 words
	Priority Area (Primary)	Select area
	Priority Area (Secondary)	Select area(s)
	Research Area (Primary)	Select area
	Research Area (Secondary)	Select area
Budget & Budget Justification	Single-line budget with title " <i>Miscellaneous Costs</i> "	Complete table
Programme Documents (Single PDF Document)	Letter from the Applicant	Max. 2 pages
	Evidence of award transfer (or of intent to transfer)	Add letter from ERCEA or a letter of intent (max. 2 pages)
	Budget breakdown and justification	Max. 2 pages
	Full proposal originally submitted to the ERC	Add Parts B1 and B2
	Letter from the ERC Executive Agency	Add letter from ERCEA

Viewing the PDF of your application prior to submission allows you to verify content.

There is no system validation on multiple-upload file fields as the number of documents required may vary for each application.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that all documentation is included and that page lengths are not exceeded.