

SFI President of Ireland Future Research Leaders Award Programme FAQs

APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

Q. What is the definition of a senior author?

A senior author is one who is listed as first or joint first author, reflecting the fact that s/he has provided the greatest intellectual contribution, has held the primary responsibility for collecting and analysing the data, and for writing the manuscript and associated draft. The last author (or joint last author) will also be considered as a senior author, since this position generally reflects his/her overall responsibility for the study and suggests a level of mentorship has been provided. Different publishers have different 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.); what is important is that the applicant could convince and reassure reviewers that they were the key author on these publications. Please note that this does NOT mean that they were responsible financially for the research that was reported. Note also that only primary research articles are considered – secondary research articles such as reviews, essays and book chapters in which the research of peers is discussed rather than the author's own results, will not contribute to the required three senior-author publications.

Q. Are Irish researchers ineligible to apply?

This call is open to researchers of all nationalities who are currently undertaking research in an overseas academic institution or industry, or who have been recruited to Ireland within two years of the Expression of Interest deadline.

Q. May a President of Ireland Future Research Leaders Programme applicant apply in parallel for other SFI research awards?

No. Individuals may not, while their proposal is under active review, submit an application named as an applicant or co-applicant to any of the following programmes: SFI Investigators Programme, SFI Research Professorship, SFI SIRG/CDA or similar career development programmes. Please refer to individual call documentation for additional information.

Q. Would academic staff (e.g., a Lecturer) based in Northern Ireland for more than two years, and who have held research grants as PI be eligible?

Yes, if all other eligibility criteria are fulfilled, a researcher based in Northern Ireland is eligible to apply.

Q. If unsuccessful in this round, is it possible to apply again in the next round?

Yes, if the programme is run again, it will be possible to re-apply. However, **only one resubmission to this programme** is permissible. Applications from individuals who have already applied to the programme on two occasions will not be reviewed.

Q. Can I apply to this programme with more than one host institution?

No, only one Research Body may be associated with a single application to this programme in any given call.

Q. What qualifies as an independent research grant?

The Lead Applicant is expected to have demonstrated research independence through securing at least one independent research grant as lead investigator or as co-investigator. The grant must have been competitively awarded and internationally peer reviewed. Eligible research grants would be expected to support at least one full-time equivalent, excluding the applicant(s), and include research team costs (e.g., materials and consumables). This **excludes** smaller awards such as travel grants, equipment grants, postgraduate fellowships, postdoctoral fellowships, and awards of short duration

(12 months or less). Laboratory fit-out/setup funding, awards from the applicant's institution, and awards that have not been subject to external international peer review are also excluded. You will be required to provide evidence to support the validity of an award if required. If you are uncertain regarding the eligibility of funding you have received, please contact SFI at fri@sfi.ie

Q. Is a Marie Curie IEF (Intra-European Fellowship) grant considered to be an independent research grant for eligibility to the programme?

As this award is a fellowship, it is not considered to be an independent research grant – see previous question.

Q. What does SFI consider as the official date of a PhD award?

The official date is defined as the year that the degree was conferred, i.e., the year printed on the official PhD certificate. Verification of this official date by the awarding research body must be available upon request. The number of years since the degree is defined from the date of submission to SFI of the Expression of Interest. That is, those wishing to apply in 2018 for the President of Ireland Future Research Leaders Programme, which requires candidates to be 3-15 years post-PhD, must have been conferred with their degrees on any date in the period 2003-2015.

Q. Is the three years post-PhD eligibility rule applied at the EoI deadline or the full proposal deadline?

The EoI deadline is the programme deadline as applicants who are successful at EoI stage will be invited to full proposal, therefore an applicant must have had their EoI reviewed to have the possibility of being invited to full proposal.

Q. I am a clinician scientist and hold an MD degree. Can my MD be considered equivalent to a PhD?

For medical doctors (or applicants holding a degree in medicine), an MD degree will not be accepted by itself as equivalent to a PhD award. To be considered eligible, these candidates, in addition to their medical degree must also either hold a PhD degree, or have at least two years of research experience (supported by peer-reviewed publications) in order to further substantiate the equivalence of their overall training to a PhD. As such, to fulfil the criterion of being 3–15 years post-PhD for this programme, the certified date of the medical doctor degree completion plus two years is the time reference for calculation of the call eligibility window. Please see further information at the following link: http://www.sfi.ie/resources/PHD-equivalence-policy_Final_June_2016.pdf

Q. Is any allowance made for those applicants who have taken documented eligible leave?

Allowance is made for those applicants who have taken documented eligible leave – the maximum extension to the period of eligibility under this scheme is 4 ½ years (54 months). Please see Section 2.2.1 of the call document for further details. Additionally, applicants may extend their period of eligibility by 12 months for each year spent working in a science or engineering related industry post award of PhD. The maximum extension to the period of eligibility under this scheme is 2 years (24 months).

Q. Are permanent members of staff eligible for the President of Ireland Future Research Leaders award?

Yes. Both permanent and contract staff are eligible for nomination by a Research Body, provided all other eligibility criteria are fulfilled.

Q. If an individual was not previously an independent investigator and has obtained research funding only as a contributor (i.e., postdoc under the PI to whom the grant was awarded), are they eligible to apply to the FRL programme?

No, the Applicant is expected to have demonstrated research independence through securing at least one independent research grant as **lead investigator** or as **co-investigator**. The grant must have been competitively awarded and internationally peer reviewed.

COLLABORATORS AND ADVISOR

Q. Is there a limit to the number of academic and industry collaborators?

No, there is no limit, but the applicant should ensure that all collaborators are making meaningful contributions to the proposed research. In addition, the letters of support from collaborators should be genuine and meaningful.

Q. Is it possible to have a co-applicant on a President of Ireland Future Research Leaders Programme proposal?

As this programme is focused on the recruitment of outstanding new and emerging research leaders to Ireland, there can only be a single applicant on a proposal. It is possible to have collaborators associated with specific tasks on an application be they academic or industry collaborators. Please see section 2.1 of the call document for further details.

Q. Does an application to the President of Ireland Future Research Leaders Programme need to have an associated mentor?

No, the applicant does not have a mentor but due to the recruitment-driven focus of the programme, an **Advisor** is required. All successful applicants will have been stringently reviewed and assessed on their scientific independence and leadership capability, but continuous guidance from an established and experienced local member of faculty will be beneficial as they establish an independent research group and integrate into their respective school. The function of the Advisor is to guide, assist and facilitate the awardee in settling into the new institution. The Advisor is not a collaborator but may also act as a collaborator if appropriate, and if this is the case then they must provide the documentation required for all collaborators, in addition to the documentation required for the Advisor.

RESEARCH BODY

Q. Is there a limit on the number of applicants a Research Body can support?

No, there is no limit.

Q. Is the Research Body required to sustain the post beyond the timeframe of the award?

The host Research Body must demonstrate their commitment to recruiting the applicant by stating their intention to offer the identified applicant a full-time, permanent academic position before funding provided through a President of Ireland Future Research Leaders Programme award expires.

Q. What level of academic appointment can the applicant expect?

Although SFI makes a contribution of up to 50% of the applicant salary, which should be on the SFI Research Fellow/Senior Research Fellow salary scale, SFI does not define the level of the academic appointment. This is for negotiation between the applicant and the host Research Body.

Q. Do President of Ireland Future Research Leaders Programme applicants have to have an existing relationship with the nominating Research Body?

This prestigious award is aimed at recruiting the best early/mid-career scientists from around the world. No pre-existing relationship is necessary.

Q. Could you advise on what kind of contractual agreement a candidate should have with the Research Body?

Contractual agreements between the applicant and the Research Body need to be negotiated between these two parties.

LETTERS OF SUPPORT

Q. Are letters of support from industry a benefit?

Meaningful letters of support are of benefit where they provide convincing statements on how the relevant industry collaborator(s) will actively support (through financial and/or in-kind contributions) the proposed research programme.

Q. Can supplementary information not solicited in the call be included with the proposal?

Only information requested in the call document should be submitted. Proposals are submitted via SESAME, SFI's online grants and awards management system. Additional information may cause your application to be declined without review.

PROGRAMME

Q. Will this call be run on an annual basis?

SFI hopes to run this call on an annual basis; the SFI annual plan will outline programmes to be coordinated in the following year – those intending to apply should consult this document.

SFI REMIT

Q. Will the programme fund blue-sky research proposals?

Research carried out through this programme must align with SFI's legal remit to fund oriented basic and applied research in STEM that is scientifically excellent and demonstrates potential economic or societal impact. For guidance on SFI remit, please see documentation at the following link: <http://www.sfi.ie/about-us/about-sfi/what-we-do/>

Q. Can SFI fund clinical trials through the President of Ireland Future Research Leaders programme?

Funding requests for clinical studies or investigations for the purposes of product development or optimisation will not be considered. This includes clinical trials designed to test the safety and/or efficacy of drugs, devices or treatments. However, SFI recognises that certain fundamental explorations, which do fall under SFI's remit, may require use of human volunteers and/or human samples. Please direct any queries you may have to fri@sfi.ie. Further information regarding SFI's policy can be found at the following link: <http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/ethical-and-scientific-issues/>

Q. Are proposals of clinical translational research supported?

Funding requests for clinical studies or investigations for the purposes of product development or optimisation will not be considered, however certain fundamental explorations under SFI's remit may require use of human volunteers and/or human samples, and will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Please review SFI's policy at <http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/ethical-and-scientific-issues/>

Q. How does SFI define disruptive technology?

Disruptive technology has the potential to radically alter the way we work and live, or how businesses operate and compete. Disruptive technologies have the potential therefore to result in transformative societal and/or economic impact and opportunities for Ireland. Disruptive Technologies may arise from research that is highly innovative and ambitious. Such research often requires interdisciplinary and convergent approaches. Consequently, its outputs and impact may be unpredictable at the outset and as such are considered as high risk and high reward.

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Q. What is required in the two-page research description section of the EoI?

The research description section of the Expression of Interest (EoI) application should include a two-page description of the proposed research, its scientific importance and potential applications. Please clearly describe the specific aims and objectives of the programme and link with real deliverables. Describe how this proposed will advance the state-of-the-art. Ensure that information is provided regarding how collaborators (if any) will input on aspects of the proposed research as well as how the research proposed fits with/complements current activity within the host institution/other institutions in the state. It is important to clarify how the proposed research is independent of work ongoing with previous supervisors. Please note that references are to be included within the two-page limit.

Q. Can an individual who submitted an EoI last year and was not invited to submit a full proposal, resubmit this year?

Yes, it is possible for an unsuccessful applicant from the previous call to apply to the call this year. If this is the case, please ensure that you complete the resubmission statement in Sesame. However, only one resubmission of an Expression of Interest to this programme is permissible; applications from individuals who have already submitted two Expressions of Interest will not be reviewed.

FULL PROPOSAL

Q. What is the duration of an SFI President of Ireland Future Research Leaders award?

The duration of an SFI President of Ireland Future Research Leaders award is **five years**.

Q. What is expected from a leadership plan?

The applicant must articulate how they will manage the project, how the project will enable their career development and the development of their credentials as a future research leader. See Section 5.6.3 of the call document for more details.

FUNDING

Q. Is the salary contribution from SFI maintained for the duration of the award?

Host institutions may, at their discretion, request that their contribution to the applicant's salary be introduced on a phased or graduated basis over the course of the award. That is, the host institution does not necessarily have to contribute 50% of the applicant's salary every year, provided that their salary contribution over the full course of the award is at least 50% of the applicant's salary costs.

Q. Must the remaining 50% salary contribution be paid directly from the host institution, and not from another research grant?

Yes, SFI is making a commitment to the awardee up to a level of 50% of the applicant salary and the Research Body is expected to make a similar if not greater commitment to the salary of the applicant.

Q. What is the total amount of funding available?

The level of funding available is €1 million direct costs. In addition, SFI can offer start-up costs of up to €250,000. The start-up costs are not eligible for an overhead contribution.

Q. Are start-up costs only allowed for those currently external to the Research Body or is it available to applicants already within the Research Body?

Start-up costs are offered to all applicants to the President of Ireland Future Research Leaders programme. These start-up costs should be entered into the budget template under the equipment section as a single line item. These costs then need to be clearly detailed (including costs for each item requested) and fully justified in the budget justification – this is particularly the case where the applicant is already in place at the Host Institution. If this justification is unclear and not fully detailed, the start-up costs will not be considered for funding.

Q. What are the start-up costs designed to cover?

The start-up costs are designed to facilitate the establishment of a lab in a new location and can cover the purchase of equipment and/or access to large facilities, but should not include a salary contribution. The start-up costs are not subject to an overhead contribution.

Q. Can collaborators receive funding?

Yes, collaborators in Irish Research Bodies can receive funding, as long as it is fully detailed and justified in the application, but overseas collaborators cannot receive funding from the award.

Q. Can awardees who are permanent academic staff request salary (i.e., buyout of their time) for the duration of the grant?

A contribution of **up to 50%** of the salary of the applicant, in cases where they will not be in receipt of a full salary from the Research Body. Where the applicant is already in receipt of a full salary (e.g., where they are a permanent member of staff), no salary contribution may be requested.

Q. Can the Research Body's contribution to the programme be in a form other than salary (for example, research costs)?

No. The Research Body must undertake to provide at least 50% of the successful applicant's salary over the course of their President of Ireland Future Research Leaders award. The Research Body may, however, elect to gradually increase their contribution over the course of the award, rather than contributing 50% each year. It is the expectation of SFI that the President of Ireland Future Research Leaders awardee would have moved to a full-time position funded by the host institution by the end of the award.

Q. Is the Research Body contribution to salary included in the total value of the award?

No, the total value of the research award will be up to a maximum of €1,000,000 direct costs, exclusive of the Research Body's salary contribution and start-up costs.

REVIEW PROCESS

Q. Are all applicants who submit a full proposal invited to interview?

No, only those deemed to be excellent at full proposal stage will be invited to interview.

Q. Is the career stage of the applicant taken into account? For example, 15 years post-PhD is very different to 5 years post-PhD.

Yes, the career stage is taken into account by reviewers. SFI are looking for excellent, cutting-edge, top-tier applicants, with attributes appropriate to their career stage. Awards will be made to the most competitive applicants.

Q. Is it a competitive review process?

Yes, it is a competitive review process. Only proposals deemed to be outstanding by an international panel of expert reviewers will be awarded. In addition, candidates who have already demonstrated excellence through other competitive international funding programmes (e.g., through European Research Council schemes) are particularly sought through this call.

Q. Is there a preference for applicants seeking their first permanent academic post (following the award), or are those seeking to leave an established position overseas to relocate to Ireland equally considered?

All applicants will be fully considered on a competitive basis.

ORCID ID

Q. What is ORCID and what are the benefits of creating an ORCID iD?

ORCID (<http://orcid.org/>) provides a unique identifier for all researchers which can then be linked to their different research works across different platforms.

There are a number of benefits to creating an ORCID iD that include:

1. 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.
2. Your ORCID iD is a unique identifier which distinguishes you from other researchers with a similar name.
3. Using the ORCID iD assists in making your research works more visible to funders and publishers. You are able to build a complete picture of your research in one location.

Q. Is it necessary to link my SESAME Researcher Profile to my ORCID iD prior to submission of the President of Ireland Future Research Leaders' application?

Yes, it is necessary to link your SESAME Researcher Profile to your ORCID iD prior to submission of the President of Ireland Future Research Leaders' application.