



SCIENCE FOUNDATION IRELAND

SFI Research Centres Programme 2016

Frequently Asked Questions

Last Updated 19th February 2016

Queries should be directed to: Centres@sfi.ie

Terms of Reference

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1. LEAD-APPLICANT, CO-APPLICANTS, FUNDED INVESTIGATORS & COLLABORATORS

Q1a: Under the SFI Research Centres Programme what is the definition of a lead applicant and co-applicant?

The Lead Applicant is defined as the Scientific and Technical lead for the proposed Research Centre and is nominated as the Research Centre Director on the Research Centre proposal. The Lead Applicant will have overall responsibility for delivery of the objectives of the SFI Research Centre. The Lead Applicant will serve as the primary point of contact for SFI on the award, during the review process, and if successful, during the course of the award. The Lead Applicant will be designated as the lead investigator of a funded Research Centre and will be responsible for the scientific and technical direction of the research programme and the submission of reports to SFI. The lead investigator has primary fiduciary responsibility and accountability for carrying out the research within the funding limits awarded and in accordance with the terms and conditions of SFI.

A Co-Applicant has a well-defined, critical and continuing role in the proposed investigation. A Co-Applicant would be expected to lead one or more Targeted Projects, or projects within the Platform Research component of the centre. For the purposes of eligibility, reviewing and monitoring, a Co-Applicant applying for funding under the SFI Research Centres 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 will be designated as a co-lead investigator in a funded Research Centre.

Q1b: Under the SFI Research Centres Programme what is the definition of a funded-investigator?

A funded investigator is an academic member of staff who is undertaking a management role in a research project within a Centre. It is anticipated that SFI Funded Investigators have budgetary responsibility for a research project within an SFI Centre, but who is not a named Lead Applicant or Co-Applicant. SFI Funded Investigators will serve under the direction of the Lead Applicant (PI) or one of the Co-Applicants (co-PIs). The funded investigator designation in an SFI centre should be a reflection of the level of input of the individual to the research programme, and should take account of the career stage of the investigator.

Q1c: Under the SFI Research Centres Programme, what is the definition of an official collaborator?

An official collaborator may be either (a) an academic member of staff of an Irish or international Research Body or (b) a member of a relevant non-academic institution, such as a Government Agency, who is committed to providing a focused contribution for a specific task(s). The collaborator will serve under the direction of the Lead Applicant or one of the Co-Applicants, and may or may not receive funding through the award (see budget justification). Official collaborators may not be the primary supervisor/mentor of postgraduate students, postdoctoral researchers or research staff enrolled on the Award.

Q1d: Under the SFI Research Centres Programme, what is the definition of an industry collaborator?

An industry collaborator is the lead contact person from an industry partner company contributing cash or in-kind costs to the SFI Centre budget. Note that industry collaborators are not eligible to receive funding through the award.

An industry partner is a company making a financial contribution to the budget of the Research Centre, as well as an intellectual contribution to the research agenda of the centre. The Industry Partner is represented in the SFI Centre by its Industry Collaborator.

Q1e: Can researchers in research bodies outside Ireland (Republic of) be co-applicants, funded investigators and collaborators, and can they receive funding from the award?

Researchers in Research Bodies outside Ireland cannot be co-applicants or funded-investigators but can be official collaborators. Only researchers in eligible Research Bodies can receive funding from an SFI Research Centres Programme award, but their contribution to the research programme must be clearly delineated within the research programme section. The financial support a collaborator is to receive must also be fully justified in the budget justification section.

Q1f: Can researchers from Northern Ireland Institutions apply as co-applicants or funded investigators?

No. However, researchers from Northern Ireland may be named as official collaborators.

Q1g: Is it possible for collaborators on an SFI Research Centres Programme award to receive funding from the award?

A collaborator working within an eligible research body within the Republic of Ireland may receive funding from the award. This should be clearly stated in the budget justification section. Salaries for collaborators are not permitted. Financial responsibility for the grant (including any audit) remains the responsibility of the lead applicant.

Q1h: What is the minimum/maximum number of co-applicants allowable in an SFI Research Centre?

Applicant groups must have one Lead Applicant and a number of Co-Applicants. The appropriate number of Co-Applicants should be defined by the applicant group. When defining the Co-Applicant group, it should be noted that all Co-Applicants will receive equal evaluation to the Lead Applicant and will hold equal accountability for the delivery of the proposed research objectives of the proposed Research Centre.

2. SUBMISSION AND REVIEW

Q2a: Should applications for the SFI Research Centres Programme be submitted through SESAME?

Yes, all proposals must be submitted via SESAME, SFI's online grants and awards management system.

Q2b: When is it appropriate for the CV of research team members, e.g. postdoctoral researchers, to be submitted?

Please do not submit the CVs of research team members. SFI will fund a contribution to the salary of a postdoctoral researcher according to the SFI Team Member Budgeting Scale, Levels 2A (new post-doctoral researcher) and 2B (experienced post-doctoral researcher) (see SFI's [Grant Application Budget Policy](#)). The point on the scale should be determined by qualifications and experience, and the rationale for appointing an individual at that point should be explained in the Budget Justification. SFI would expect to see individuals directly post-PhD to be appointed at point 1 of the 2A scale.

Q2c: Should Letters of Support be included in the pre-proposal application?

At the pre-proposal stage, letters of support should only be included by each proposed industry partner and each organisation committing 'other non-exchequer' contributions (e.g. philanthropic, charity etc.) towards the Research Centre.

Q2d: Should Letters of Support be included in the full proposal application?

At the full proposal stage, letters of support are required from: a) each Industry Partner; b) each official collaborator; c) the Research Body of the Lead Applicant, each Co-Applicant and each Funded Investigator; and d) each organisation committing 'other non-exchequer' contributions (e.g. philanthropic, charity) to the Centre. Applicants should refer to the call documentation for the details to be provided within the letters of support. If the required Letters of Support are not included, the application may be deemed ineligible and will be administratively withdrawn.

3. ELIGIBILITY

Q3a: How many applications can an investigator make to the SFI Research Centres Programme?

An investigator may only be the lead applicant on one pre-proposal submission. A lead applicant cannot be named as co-applicant on a second application to the same call but could engage as a funded investigator or collaborator.

An investigator may be named as co-applicant on a maximum of two pre-proposal submissions.

An investigator may engage as a funded investigator or collaborator on more than one pre-proposal submission.

Lead Investigators (i.e. Research Centre Directors) of currently funded Research Centres are not eligible to apply to the 2016 call as a Lead Applicant or Co-Applicant but are eligible to contribute to a proposal as either a funded investigator or official collaborator. Co-lead investigators of currently funded Research Centres are eligible to apply as a Co-Applicant, funded investigator or official collaborator.

Please note where an investigator is involved in multiple applications to the Research Centres 2016 call, particularly as a co-applicant, SFI will evaluate the current commitment and workload of the investigator in determining the suitability of such an arrangement.

Q3b: I have submitted an application to the current Investigators Programme call. Can I also apply as a lead applicant, co-applicant or funded investigator to the Research Centres Programme?

Investigators that are currently under evaluation in the SFI Investigators Programme or other SFI programmes are eligible to apply for funding under this programme (as lead applicant, co-applicant, funded investigator or official collaborator) subject to meeting the specified eligibility criteria.

Q3c: Can an individual be a co-applicant on more than one Research Centres application?

An investigator may be named as a co-applicant on up to 2 pre-proposal submissions.

Q3d: How does SFI define a senior author?

A senior author is one who is listed as first or joint first author, reflecting the fact that he/she has provided the greatest intellectual contribution, has held the primary responsibility for collecting and analysing data, and for the writing of the manuscript and associated drafts. The last author will also be considered as a senior author, since this position generally reflects his/her overall responsibility for the study and suggests that a level of mentorship has been provided.

It will be 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.); of overriding importance however is that the applicant should be able to convince and reassure reviewers that they are the key author on these publications.

Please note that senior authorship does NOT necessarily mean that they were responsible financially for the research that was reported.

Q3e: What qualifies as an independent research grant, as defined by the call documentation?

The lead applicant and co-applicants are expected to have demonstrated research independence through securing at least one independent research grant as lead investigator or as co-investigator. 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, post-graduate fellowships, post-doctoral fellowships, and awards of short duration (12 months or less). Laboratory fit-out / start-up funding, 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 centres@sfi.ie

Q3f: Is a retired member of academic staff, who meets all the other eligibility criteria, eligible to apply to the Research Centres Programme call if the University can make the necessary commitments regarding infrastructure requirements and independent status of the individual?

Yes, a retired member of staff can apply to SFI Research Centres Programme once the Research Body can provide a letter signed by the Vice-President of Research (or equivalent) which confirms that the following is the case:

- There is a written contract of employment/statement of appointment (or similar) in place, which extends at least up to the expiration date of the award.
- The Emeritus / 'retired' Professor has full access to all facilities, labs, and other infrastructure necessary to successfully embark on the intended programme of research.
- The Emeritus / 'retired' Professor has full signing and approval authority, in order to manage the award appropriately, and to supervise students.
- The Emeritus / 'retired' Professor is bound by the rules and regulations of the institute, as is the case for other faculty colleagues.
- The Emeritus / 'retired' Professor is covered by the indemnity insurance of the Research Body.

This letter needs to be submitted to SFI (centres@sfi.ie) well in advance of the pre-proposal submission deadline (which is 13:00 on the 28th of April 2016), in order to receive approval to submit to SFI Research Centres Programme 2016.

Once approval has been received, if the pre-proposal is successful and the applicant is invited to submit a full proposal, this letter must also be included as a Letter of Support to the full proposal.

If the applicant will reach retirement age during the course of the award, a similar letter of support must be provided by the Research Body, in advance of the application deadline in order to receive approval to submit a pre-proposal to SFI Research Centres Programme 2016. If the pre-proposal is successful and the

applicant is invited to submit a full proposal, this letter must also be included as a Letter of Support to the full proposal.

Q3g: What qualifications are necessary as a basic requirement for applicants/co-applicants to the SFI Research Centres Programme?

Lead/co-applicant: The lead applicant/co-applicants must have a PhD or equivalent*, and must be at least eight years post the year of conferring of this qualification by the pre-proposal deadline. Also the lead applicant/co-applicants must be a senior author on 10 internationally peer reviewed articles.

Funded investigator: A funded investigator must have a PhD or equivalent*, and must be at least three years post the year of conferring of this qualification by the pre-proposal deadline. Funded investigators must be a senior author on 3 internationally peer reviewed articles. Only original research publications, and not review articles, are acceptable.

*An equivalent qualification and/or demonstrated research accomplishments may be accepted and **must be approved in advance** of submission by SFI. Please refer to the [SFI Policy on PhD Equivalence](#). Please direct enquiries to centres@sfi.ie.

Q3h: Is it an eligibility requirement that there must be more than one Research Body involved in an application?

It is not a requirement that more than one Research Body participates in a Research Centre application. However, SFI expects that Research Centres will link researchers across different Research Bodies to create a critical mass of expertise in areas of relevance to the industrial sector.

Q3i: Can the composition of the research team be modified between pre- and full proposal?

It is expected that the team composition will remain substantively the same, however, it may be changed based on feedback from the pre-proposal stage or under exceptional circumstances. Applicant groups intending to modify the composition of the applicant group must secure prior approval from SFI, who will affect the change on Sesame. It is expected that the identity of the lead applicant will remain the same between the pre- and full proposal stage and would only change in exceptional circumstances, such as in response to feedback from the pre-proposal review panel.

Q3j: Can someone be co-applicant in two Research Centre applications?

Yes. However, it is important to bear in mind that the evaluation process will examine the commitment and work load of individuals in determining the suitability of such an arrangement.

Q3k: What is the timeframe over which the applicant group must have raised at least €10m cash (direct costs) in research funding?

The applicant group must meet the €10m cash (direct costs) eligibility criteria in the period 1st January 2010 to the 28th of April 2016.

Q3l: Can you count the value of an award granted to a PI or co-PI that was awarded to the researcher at a previous Institute (at a previous position of employment)? The previous institute is not included in this applicant group.

Yes, provided the funding was secured in the period 2010 to 2016 as defined above. Note: The award value is exclusive of overheads, and in-kind contributions should not be included.

Q3m: The eligibility criteria states “10 international peer reviewed articles” - does this include books, editorship, special issue editing, standards, patents?

Eligible publications must be original, international peer reviewed research publications. Review articles, patents, standards, editorship, special issue editing and books are not acceptable.

Q3n: Is it possible to submit applications for funding of a particular Targeted Project or Spoke simultaneously to the SFI Spokes and Research Centres programmes?

Targeted projects that engage an existing Research Centre may be supported *either* through an application to the Spokes programme described above or through the engagement of a co-lead investigator or funded investigator of a 2012/2013 Centre in a bid for a 2016 Research Centre. It is the responsibility of the applicant team to identify the most appropriate funding route. Applications for funding of a particular Spoke cannot be submitted to both the Research Centres 2016 and Spokes 2015 calls.

Q3o: I am a Co-PI on an existing Research Centre, can I be listed as a Co-PI on more than one application to the 2016 Call?

No, Co-PI's in existing Research Centres may be listed as a Co-PI on no more than one application associated with the 2016 Call. Such individuals may however, be involved in other applications as Funded Investigators, or as Academic Collaborators. Please note that as part of the review process, reviewers will assess the capacity of individuals who already have substantial commitments in the context of their ability to commit an appropriate amount of time to proposed activities in new Research Centres.

Q3p: Can a Postdoctoral Researcher be listed as a Funded Investigator on a Research Centres Application?

Funded Investigators must be academic members of staff, or contract researchers with contract for the duration of the project and cannot request salary support from a Research Centres award. Additionally, the funded investigator is expected to have the experience, capability and authority to mentor and supervise postgraduate students and team members. As such, a postdoctoral researcher would not qualify as a Funded Investigator.

4. FUNDING

Q4a: Is the proposed Research Centres funding of between €1M and €5M per annum inclusive of overheads?

No, the funding refers to SFI direct costs only.

Q4b: At the application stage it is not always possible to know if you will utilise/recruit someone existing in the public sector system or a new person. How is one then to know which scale to utilise?

SFI recognises that the identity of team members may not be known at the time of grant preparation. In such cases grant applicants should request budget contributions for team members using the 'Existing Public Servant' scale. If a team role is ultimately filled by a 'new entrant' SFI will decide whether funds liberated by such an occurrence shall be returned to SFI or can be used productively elsewhere within the grant. Further details about SFI's Grant Application Budget Policy can be found (<http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/budget-finance-related-policies/index.xml>)

Q4c: Are there restrictions on budget changes between pre-proposal and full proposal stages?

There are no restrictions on budget changes between pre-proposal and full proposal stages.

Q4d: Are externally-funded projects, such as those funded through FP7, Wellcome Trust, ERC, etc. considered as "spokes"?

No. Spokes, or targeted projects, are academic-industry collaborative projects which will receive direct funding from SFI and to which the industry partner(s) are expected to make an intellectual and financial contribution. SFI does, however, expect that Research Centres will leverage funding from non-exchequer sources, with a particular emphasis on Horizon 2020 funding.

Q4e: Does SFI contribution cover the overhead on industry contribution?

No, SFI will not pay overhead on the industry contribution. Overheads will be paid on SFI contribution only.

Q4f: How will the cumulative funding total by group be assessed? Is the total award in the year awarded counted, or the annualised amount (i.e. a €3M grant awarded in 2013 with end date in 2016 count as €3M or €1M)? What sources of funding can be included when calculating the cumulative funding total by group (e.g., are innovation partnerships, etc. eligible)?

The cumulative funding should include the total funding amount formally granted (i.e. letter of offer or contract was dated) in the period 1st January 2010 to the 28th of April 2016. In the example quoted this would be €3M.

Examples of sources which can be included are: SFI, EI, EPA, HRB, IRCSET/Irish Research Council, EU Framework Programme, Horizon 2020 Irish or international charities, international funding sources such as Wellcome Trust, NIH and industry-funded research projects (cash).

The amounts should include direct costs only. In-kind cost share from industry should not be included.

Q4g: Can you clarify that the €10m total only includes funding secured by the lead and co-applicants?

The funding history for the applicant group should include only the eligible funding secured by the lead applicant and co-applicants named on the proposal. Funding secured by funded investigators and official collaborators is not eligible for the purposes of calculation of the €10m.

Q4h: Can you confirm that industry contributions should be calculated as a percentage of total direct costs and not the total budget inclusive of overhead?

Yes, industry contributions are calculated as a percentage of total direct costs, i.e. not inclusive of overheads.

Q4i: Do postgraduates only fit within platform research or can they be situated within targeted projects?

Potentially postgraduates/postdoctoral research can be recruited to undertake research within both the platform and targeted project components of the Centre.

Q4j: Can a co-applicant salary be paid from the Centre?

No, please refer to the Grant Application Budget Policy available at: <http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/budget-finance-related-policies/index.xml>

Q4k: Will SFI commit funding against indicative budgets for years 3 to 6 of a proposed Centre?

SFI commitment is predicated on maintaining the minimum 30% cost-share. If Centres have achieved commitment for the first two years of the Centre and can demonstrate that they are likely to maintain, or

grow, industry commitment then SFI funding will track that. Ultimately, the obligation lies with the Centre to maintain their industry cost-share commitments.

Q4l: On what basis is the 30% SFI overhead calculated?

Overhead is calculated based on the SFI contribution only.

Q4m: Does it strengthen the proposal if the university commits to use the Centre's overheads for the direct benefit of the Centre?

Yes, use of the overheads associated with a Centre award to support Centre activities would be viewed favourably and *may* strengthen the proposal.

Q4n: Does SFI calculate the industry cash contribution as the total industry contribution or the funding available after the Research Body overhead and VAT deductions?

The industry cash contribution will be calculated as the direct research funding after any overheads, VAT or other Research Body contributions are deducted.

Q4o: Are budgets now being prepared for submission for Stage 2 required to adhere to the annual limit of €5M or is there some reasonable level of lee way if it is exceeded?

Provided that the budget stays within the overall envelope of an average of €5m (direct costs) per annum over the award period, and that the cost-share limits are adhered to, SFI will permit some flexibility in terms of how those funds will be distributed over time.

Q4p: Are field work costs allowed and if so, how they be categorised within the requested budget?

All costs for field work must be eligible, reasonable and directly aligned to the research programme. Applicants should strongly justify the requests for such costs including travel-related costs within the travel section of the budget and any associated consumables within the Materials & Consumables, as separate line items.

5. INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT

Q5a: What is the minimum number of industrial partners required on a targeted project?

Each targeted project must involve at least one industry partner.

Q5b: Can government funded agencies, charities or similar entities, engage in SFI Research Centre submissions?

Yes, where appropriate, however, their participation will not be considered to satisfy the eligibility criterion of industry engagement. Representatives from not-for-profit bodies should be named as official collaborators rather than as lead-, co-applicants or funded investigators and will not be eligible to receive SFI funding. For specific queries please email centres@sfi.ie.

Q5c: Can commercial semi-state organisations engage in SFI Research Centres submissions?

Yes, where appropriate, and their participation will be considered to satisfy the eligibility criterion of industry engagement. Representatives from semi-state bodies should be named as industry collaborators and will not be eligible to receive SFI funding. For specific queries please email centres@sfi.ie.

Q5d: Is it necessary for a multi-national which is a partner on a targeted project to have a base in Ireland?

It is not a requirement that the company has a base in Ireland. However, proposals that involve industrial participants from outside Ireland will need to clearly make a strategic case for their involvement, to demonstrate the potential benefit to the Irish economy or Irish society.

Q5e: How is industry cost-share defined and at what stage is cost-share required?

Cost-sharing must make up a minimum of 30% of the Centre budget, with a minimum of 10% of the Centre budget in cash and the balance from in-kind contributions such as personnel, data, equipment, samples, or devices. Proposals that can demonstrate industry cost-share contributions above the specified levels may be viewed as delivering a greater economic impact to Ireland and hence this *may* make the proposals more competitive.

At the pre-proposal stage the minimum requirement is an indication of the ‘intended’ support. At the full proposal stage details of the level of cost-share commitment and the time period for which the contribution is being made must be provided.

Q5f: What level of cost-share commitment needs to be in place at (i) pre-proposal and (ii) full proposal stages?

At the pre-proposal stage industry partners are expected to indicate their intended intellectual and financial support for the research activity. At the full proposal stage, industry funding both cash and in-kind must be committed *at least* for the first two years, and *may* be indicative for the last four years.

Q5g: Is industry contribution (in-kind and cash) required for all spokes or is the total funding viewed cumulatively?

It is expected that each targeted project will involve at least one industry partner. However, for the purposes of satisfying the cost-share requirements this will be determined at an overall Centre level.

Q5h: Is the definition of an SME consistent with EI’s definition at <http://www.enterpriseireland.com/en/About-Us/Our-Clients/SME-Definition.html>?

Yes.

Q5i: Can a Technology Centre be considered to be an industry partner in a SFI Research Centre?

Although an EI/IDA Technology Centre is not considered as an ‘industry partner’, companies who are participating in Technology Centres are encouraged to participate in the SFI Research Centres Programme as industry partners.

Q5j: Can contract research funding (i.e. 100% industry funded projects) be used for matching purposes?

For collaborative Targeted Projects in which an industry partner requires full ownership of the IP and is willing to pay the full cost of the Research Centre Targeted Project, the industry cash contribution can be counted towards the cost share of the Centre provided that the company is actively participating in the research collaboration and that the contribution of the collaborative project to the goals of the Research Centre is clearly outlined in the proposal.

Industry cash secured through contract research undertakings where the Research Centre is providing a service, for example, in the form of access to equipment and testing facilities or is undertaking a defined body of research for the industry partner on a non-collaborative basis, cannot be counted towards the Centre's industry cost share.

Q5k: What is eligible as in-kind contributions?

Eligible in-kind contributions include personnel, equipment, student placement with industry partners, software, materials, data etc. Please refer to the SFI website for details: <http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/budget-finance-related-policies/>

Q5l: Are cost contributions from public sources recognised as in-kind cost-share?

Contributions, cash or in-kind, from public sources will not be counted as an industry contribution. Specific queries on the eligibility of cash and in-kind contributions should be directed to centres@sfi.ie

Q5m: Can targeted projects that were not outlined in the pre-proposal be included in the full proposal?

Yes, subject to the overall cost-share requirements being satisfied.

Q5n: Is it a requirement that there must be SME involvement in the Centre?

Although not mandating SME involvement, SFI welcomes and encourages the Research Centres to actively engage with SMEs. It is at the discretion of the applicant team to secure engagement from industry partners, large or small, which are best aligned with the research agenda and goals of the Centre.

Q5o: Is there a minimum number of industry projects per application?

No. The number of targeted projects is at the discretion of the applicant team.

Q5p: For a possible industry membership scheme, can all cash be for membership – how are targeted projects then defined?

It is at the discretion of the Centre to determine how the membership model is structured and for what purpose the industry funding is used.

Q5q: What can be promised to industry partners for their Centre contributions?

Industry partners that make a minimum contribution to the full cost of the Targeted Project(s) in which they are engaged may benefit from preferential access to IP associated with or arising from the project. It is the responsibility of the individual Centre and respective Research Office to define what is meant by preferential access but it may include privileges such as first sight of technology, first options to negotiate particular licenses, and other benefits as decided by the TTO and which are not available to outside parties. An industry partner wishing to enjoy preferential access to IP must make a formal commitment before the project commences to contribute not less than 30% of the full cost of the project and must include a minimum of 10% cash, in line with the general structure of the Research Centres programme. See [here](#) for further details.

Q5r: What is the view of SFI on international collaborators or industry partners that wish to fund quality R&D initiatives in Ireland?

International partners are welcome to participate. However, the Centre should be mindful of the overall programme goal – to provide an economic benefit to Ireland – and ensure that inclusion of such partners will contribute to this goal.

Q5s: What is the expected link (if any) between core research and targeted projects?

It is at the discretion of the individual Centre to determine the structure. We would anticipate that the core research activity would provide background knowledge which is common across a range of targeted projects rather than being tied to any one specific targeted project or company. Targeted projects would then focus on more specific questions and draw upon the findings of the platform research activities.

Q5t: Is there a mechanism for securing funding to support the addition of new Targeted Projects or Spokes to a Research Centre after it has commenced?

New Targeted Projects or Spokes can be added to a Research Centre through the SFI Spokes programme which currently operates on both a fixed deadline and rolling call basis. Please refer to the SFI Spokes Programme webpage for further details.

6. REMIT

Q6a: Are there thematic areas of the Research Centre Programme 2016?

The 2016 SFI Research Centres Call will operate on a non-thematic basis, and will accept applications aligned with all areas of SFI's legal remit. Proposals will be accepted in areas which are sufficiently distinct from existing SFI-funded Research Centres.

Q6b: Can funding be allocated for PI-led teams looking at areas complementary to science and engineering such as policy, economic analysis etc.?

The principal focus of the research activity should be oriented basic and applied research in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), which promotes and assists the development and competitiveness of industry, enterprise and employment in Ireland. However, SFI may consider funding a component of the research activity in interdisciplinary areas which are complementary to the STEM activity.

7. IMPACT

Q7a: What is impact?

We define Impact as “*the demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy*”. Thus, the direct and indirect ‘influence’ of research, or its ‘effect’ on an individual, a community, the development of policy, or the creation of a new product, service or technology.

Please refer to the [SFI website](#) for additional details.

Q7b: Will impact be evaluated as part of the review process?

Impact will be a key evaluation criterion at both the pre- and full proposal stages. To be considered for funding, proposals must achieve an appropriate level of excellence in both the scientific/technical and impact evaluation.

Q7c: What if the research is reviewed as excellent but the impact is not?

Only proposals achieving excellence in both (scientific research and impact) will be considered for funding.

8. EDUCATION & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Q8a: Could you provide some examples of eligible education & public engagement costs?

Examples include: contributions towards the salary of dedicated education & public engagement operations staff (where justified); direct public engagement activity and production costs such as venue, props and equipment, materials and promotion; relevant training and development; and EPE evaluation costs (including formative/development).

Q8b: What are the primary objectives of the education and public engagement activities in a Research Centre?

The primary objectives are: to strengthen capacity and provide opportunities for researchers to engage the public with their research; to stimulate dialogue and debate amongst the public on STEM in society and public policy; and to enable public aspirations and concerns to be considered within the research so as to contribute to the future STEM pipeline.

Q8c: I have seen reference to the term ‘an engaged public’ – what does this refer to from SFI’s perspective?

SFI defined ‘an engaged public’ as one which: understands the role of STEM; can judge between competing STEM arguments; encourages young people to study and work in STEM; and feels engaged with STEM research.

Q8d: What audiences should the Education and Public Engagement activities target??

SFI is not prescriptive in terms of defining the target audiences for public engagement activity. More importantly SFI expects that Research Centre applicants will select the most appropriate audiences and present details of the objectives which it aims to achieve, and to outline how this aligns with SFI objectives, how it will be delivered and how it will be measured and evaluated.

Q8e: What EPE activity should Research Centres implement?

The Research Centres should decide on the activities which are most suitable to the research area and the format of the Centre being proposed. In most cases this will involve a number of outputs which could include, for example:

- Engagement with the education sector at primary and second level for example workshops with schools and the professional development of teachers to inspire the next generation of researchers.
- Engaging the general public through participation in festivals and events, working with museums, galleries and cultural venues and collaborating with artists to stimulate interest, excitement and debate on STEM or gain new perspectives on your research,
- Providing input and guidance to public policy and legislation
- Involvement of the public as researchers (e.g. citizen science)
- Engaging with the general public to help inform research areas e.g.:

- Consultation of communities directly affected by a particular piece of research to inform the reach process
- Building the capacity of communities directly affected by research to identify and communicate their needs and priorities
- General public as members of advisory boards

Q8f: Who is responsible for the Education and Public Engagement programme of a Research Centre?

Whilst each Centre may request costs towards the salary of an EPE Manager it is imperative that a whole Centre approach to EPE is adopted by the Centre, meaning researchers at all levels are responsible for EPE and should be involved in the planning, development and delivery of the EPE programme of activities. The Research Centre Director should promote the involvement of all researchers in the EPE programme and should provide leadership by example in this regard.

Q8g: How should the Research Centre EPE programme align with the SFI EPE programme?

The SFI core EPE team will liaise directly with the leadership of funded Centres in terms of the EPE operational plan throughout the lifecycle of the Centre. The SFI team will work closely to provide guidance to each Centre ensuring that the planned EPE programme of activities is closely aligned to SFI objectives and to ensure close collaboration across EPE activities delivered by the Centres.

9. INTERNATIONALISATION

Q9a: Can you clarify what you are expecting re leverage of international funding in the new Centres?

SFI expects Research Centres to leverage complementary funding from other sources including the upcoming Horizon 2020 programme.

Q9b: How would an international academic partner be included in a Research Centre?

International researchers may participate in the Research Centres Programme as official collaborators.

10. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Q10a: When do IP agreements have to be in place?

Suitable contracts and IP agreements between the Research Body or Bodies, and the Industry Partner(s) must be concluded and signed within 90 days of the official start date of the Centre, as per the Letter of Offer. Copies of these agreements are to be returned to SFI.

As a matter of policy, until an IP agreement relating to particular project or Research Centre spoke is executed, it is to be understood by all parties that full ownership of the IP in question will remain with the RPO, with no access or exploitation rights by the corporate partner, absent an IP agreement.

11. ACCESS CHARGES

Q11a: How do I apply for access costs to shared facilities through the Research Centres Programme?

Access charges may be sought for use of infrastructure where SFI pre-approved access charge plans are in place. This may include, for example, access charges for use of infrastructure approved under the SFI Research Infrastructure Call where pre-approved access charge plans are in place. Charges for access to facilities and services not directly available to the applicant, such as the costs associated with commissioning specific experiments in research facilities (e.g. Tyndall, CRANN etc.) may also be requested where SFI pre-approved access charge plans are in place.

Access charges may also be requested for use of other shared facilities or national test-beds, which are required as part of the proposed research. The requested access charges should be clearly specified in the budget as a separate line item and justified in the budget justification section. The scientific rationale for undertaking such experiments should be outlined in the research description.

In addition, requests may be included for accessing international databases and facilities or for the commissioning of experiments in international facilities/research labs where appropriately detailed justification is provided and where the required infrastructure is not available in Ireland.

SFI will manage all requests for approval of access charge plans for new infrastructure items to be purchased through the Centres 2016 award once an application is approved for funding (i.e., during the revised work plan and budget process). Applicants are not obliged to submit Access Charge plans for large pieces of equipment at the proposal stage.