# FAQ's for SFI Research Infrastructure programme
*Updated: 17/06/2021*

## Eligibility

**Can you clarify the following eligibility requirement: "In addition, the applicant must hold, or have held, a significant peer-reviewed, independent research grant or award."**

The eligibility criteria for the lead applicant on a Research Infrastructure proposal states that they must hold "a significant peer-reviewed, independent research grant or award". This is **typically** a multi-annual (≥ 3 years in duration) grant or fellowship that provides support for research costs and may include staff / team member(s) in addition to the applicant.

The potential applicant for the Research Infrastructure call must hold or have held the award in question - a named collaborator on an award would not be eligible to apply, regardless of the number of awards they are listed on as collaborator. It is important to note that SFI cannot ascertain eligibility without having the full documentation at submission stage, therefore justification that the potential lead applicant fulfils these criteria must be clearly laid out in the relevant section of the Expression of Interest.

**Regarding applicant eligibility, if an applicant holds an SFI Discover award that supports two additional staff, is this considered to be holding 'a significant peer-reviewed, independent research grant or award'?**

No; the grant or award referred to in the call document will have been awarded to facilitate research.

**Could a Lead Applicant use an IRC Postdoctoral Fellowship, on which they acted as Supervisor, to be eligible to act as a Lead Applicant on a SFI Research Infrastructure 2021 programme application? This would be their only qualifying award.**

The applicant is only eligible where they hold or have previously held the award in question. A named collaborator or supervisor on an award would not be eligible to apply, regardless of the number of awards they are listed on as collaborator.

## Equipment

**Is it acceptable to submit for a testbed suite of equipment, that when accumulated meets the minimum cost threshold?**

As stated in Section 2.5 of the call document "Multiple items of equipment can be grouped together to reach the €500,000 cost threshold, so long as they contribute to a single, shared infrastructure request (e.g., a testbed or distributed cluster)."

**Is data infrastructure eligible for the Research Infrastructure call?**

Data infrastructure **may** be eligible under the Research Infrastructure call, however, it is not possible for SFI to say whether a particular concept or potential proposal would be eligible until submission stage, when we can determine if the proposal fits the remit of the call.

When preparing an application, applicants should ensure that it is clear how the proposed research satisfies the following, outlined in Section 2.1 of the call document: "For this call, proposals must either be aligned to one of the 14 Refreshed Priority Research Areas for 2018-2023, or to any other area under SFI's legal remit where there is convincing evidence that there will be significant potential for economic and/or societal impact."

**Can we apply for equipment from more than one supplier?**

As stated in Section 2.5 of the call document, "Multiple items of equipment can be grouped together to reach the €500,000 cost threshold, so long as they contribute to a single, shared infrastructure request". These items of equipment may be purchased from more than one supplier where necessary and justified.

# Cost Share

**Can the trade-in or sale of existing equipment be used as cash cost-share?**

Cash through the sale of fully depreciated equipment may be used as a cash contribution. It should be noted that Section 18.3 of SFI's General Terms and Conditions states that: SFI permits the Research Body to sell any SFI funded Programme Asset, but with the _prior written consent of SFI_. 18.3 (b) sets out who is must be made available to for use in order of priority. The Research Body is permitted to treat the receipts from the sale as income of the Research Programme and notified to SFI.

**Regarding Cash cost share, does this have to be cash? Is the in-kind cost share separate to the minimum cash cost share?**

As with the 2018 Research Infrastructure call, 10% cash cost share is mandatory. In-kind cost share is separate to cost share, and details of each are outlined in the call document which can be found on the programme webpage: https://www.sfi.ie/funding/funding-calls/sfi-research-infrastructure-programme/.

**Can you clarify how the 10% cash cost share is calculated?**

The 10% cash cost share should be calculated based on the total infrastructure cost, not the total SFI budget request.

The 10% cash cost share should be calculated prior to the deduction of any in-kind costs. The SFI budget request must be at least €500,000 following the deduction of in-kind costs.


**Can in-kind cost share be provided a State Body?**

In-kind contribution may come from a State Body for the Research Infrastructure call.

**Can you advise the form that the 10% cash cost share can take: buildings, fund management, manager?**

As stated in the call document, the 10% cash cost share cannot come from buildings or personnel - these costs are classified as in-kind. Cash cost share may come from multiple sources including collaborating Research Bodies, industry, philanthropic donations etc.

**Regarding in-kind cost share, would staff from different areas, e.g. finance management, be eligible to be included as in-kind cost share?**

Technical staff already employed at the research body can be in-kind cost share (as stated in section 2.6 of the call document). Finance management would not be a requested cost for Research Infrastructure proposals.


**If a company puts up the 10% required for the SFI infrastructure call, does this mean that they cannot have free access to the instrument for a given time period, say 3 years, based on SFI state aid rules?**

SFI's awards must be compliant with EU State aid legislation. The Research Infrastructure call document sets out some guidance for applicants, however it is up to the Research Body/lead applicant to ensure that there is full understanding and compliance.

Where industry provides a contribution to cash cost share, they may have free access to the infrastructure to offset the contribution, however it must be clear that this usage adheres to the "80:20 rule."

# Other

**What is the maximum cash award for a single infrastructure application?**

There is no maximum budget for Research Infrastructure Programme awards

**Can the estimated budget outline in the HEI EoI submission can vary from that of the request in the final submission? Do you have a set % accuracy that this estimate must fall within?**

There is no % accuracy that the estimated/final submitted budget must fall within. We would not expect any changes between the EoI and full proposal to be significant, however we appreciate that vendor quotes and costs can change; we ask that you clearly outline the justification for the final cost in the full proposal.

**Can you provide clarification on the Letters of Support from collaborating Research Bodies?**

A key objective of this years' Research Infrastructure call is: "To facilitate broad usage across Ireland and to encourage partnerships and collaboration between different cohorts of researchers in Ireland; for example, between Universities, Technological Universities, Institutes of Technology, other Eligible Research Bodies, researchers in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, and between different cohorts of researchers in Ireland".

As a result, inclusion of letters of support from collaborating research bodies is mandatory for this year's call, where it was optional in 2018. This is to ensure that applications demonstrate there will be maximum sharing of the infrastructure and commitment from collaborating Research Bodies. The letters should detail the key users for the collaborating Research Body; the selection of LoS from collaborating research bodies that is included here is at the discretion of the applicant. The letters of support may be provided by the key users themselves or an institutional representative.

The "Key users" (Section 3.5.2 of the call document) should be a description of **all** groups of users who will access the infrastructure. This section has been increased from 2 to 3 pages to ensure applicants have sufficient space to detail as many key users as required. Please enter the key users in bullet point format.

To summarise - the key users section describes **all** potential users of the proposed infrastructure, and the LoS are from collaborating research bodies to highlight involvement, sharing and collaboration through the proposed infrastructure.

**Is one access charge plan required for each item of equipment requested?**

Yes, an access charge plan should be provided for each item of infrastructure requested.