FAQ – US-Ireland R&D Partnership Programme

GENERAL

1. **What is the US-Ireland Call?**

   This is a programme where Principal Investigators (PI) from the United States (US), Northern Ireland (NI) and the Republic of Ireland (RoI) collaborate to submit a joint "tri-partite" proposal in response to calls for proposals in the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Science Foundation (NSF). There must be at least one PI from each jurisdiction, with the US partner bearing responsibility for submission of the joint "tri-partite" proposal to their home agency, NIH/NSF. If approved for funding at the NSF or NIH, the partner agencies in RoI fund the RoI investigator(s), the partner agencies in NI fund the NI-based investigator(s), and the US partner agency funds the US investigator(s).

2. **Who are the partner agencies?**

   The partner agencies in the US are the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The partner agencies in RoI are Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) and the Health Research Board (HRB). In Northern Ireland, the Health & Social Care R&D Division (HSC R&D) supports health-related projects, while the Department for Employment and Learning Northern Ireland (DELNI), and Invest Northern Ireland (InvestNI) support projects related to Sensors & Sensor Networks, Nanoscale Science & Engineering, Telecommunications, and Energy & Sustainability.

3. **Do US-Ireland R&D Partnership proposals have a competitive advantage with the NSF/ NIH calls?**

   US-Ireland R&D Partnership proposals compete head-to-head with 'non-US-Ireland partnership' proposals submitted to the same call. The competitive advantage comes from the additive nature of the collaboration as well as the leveraged non-exchequer funds. It is important for applicants to spell this out in the introduction to the proposal to ensure that NSF/NIH reviewers fully understand the intricacies of the process.

4. **Is the US-Ireland R&D Partnership call still open?**

   Yes, the call is open and is a rolling call within SFI, however, applications MUST be submitted to SFI *at least* 6 weeks in advance of the NSF/NIH deadline or, *if applicable*, the deadline at the US University's Research Office in advance of the NIH/NSF full proposal deadline.

   For applications to the NIH, there is an additional pre-eligibility application stage where an application MUST be submitted *at least* 12 weeks in advance of the NIH deadline.

5. **When is the next NSF/NIH call deadline?**

    SFI has no control over the deadlines set by NSF/NIH. You are strongly advised to consult with your US partner for information on NSF/NIH call deadlines. The US partner makes the submission on behalf of the Northern Ireland & Republic of Ireland applicants and should therefore be familiar with NSF/NIH programmes and submission systems.

6. **Why do I have to submit a draft of the proposal to SFI in advance of the NSF/NIH deadline?**

    A draft of the "tri-partite" proposal for submission to the NSF/NIH must be submitted to SFI *at least* 6 weeks in advance of the NSF/NIH deadline. The purpose of this step is to ensure compliance of the research with remit, to assess the budget requested, and to confirm that the work proposed for each jurisdiction adds significant value so that the overall programme of research goes beyond what might be achieved by any one PI working alone supported only by national funding. If SFI agree to support the proposal, a funding commitment letter is provided to the applicant for inclusion in the full proposal to be submitted to NIH/NSF. This letter is also sent to the responsible person at NIH or NSF to indicate our commitment to this proposal should it be deemed fundable by the NIH/NSF peer-review process. Please ensure that all relevant appendices are included with the draft proposal.

7. **I need to know SFI's decision by a certain date prior to the NSF deadline?**

    SFI will endeavour to inform you at the earliest possible date if your proposal is approved/declined but please bear in mind that SFI's internal review takes 6 weeks. If there is a submission deadline at the US research office, please ensure that the draft proposal is submitted to SFI at least 6 weeks in advance of this research office deadline.

8. **Where can I find information on calls within the NSF? Which calls in NSF are open to the US-Ireland programme?**

    See link here for information from the NSF & participating directorates   [NSF - Further Information on the US-Ireland R&D Programme](#)

9. **Where can I find information on eligible calls within the NIH? Which calls in NIH are open to the US-Ireland programme?**

    See link here for details of Institutes - [NIH - Information on Institutes](#)

10. **I'm a PI based in the States – how do I go about finding research partners in the Republic of Ireland & Northern Ireland?**

    As a first step please check the SFI researcher database on our webpage for further information on funded SFI PIs – just review the appropriate scientific area [SFI Researcher Database](#)

11. **Can anyone apply to this programme?**

    No, there are a number of eligibility criteria which you must met, please consult the call document on the [SFI - US-Ireland R&D Partnership Webpage](#).

12. **What is the eligibility criteria for a co-PI?**
    The **eligibility criteria for a co-PI is the same as for the lead PI** – see question above. Please note only one application per PI may be under review at SFI at any one time.

13. **I'm a PI from the States, where can I find more information on the NSF?**
    Please see link here – [NSF - Further Information on US-Ireland R&D Partnership Programme](#)

14. **I'm a PI from Northern Ireland, where can I find further information from Invest Northern Ireland?**
    Please see links - [DEL NI - Further Information on US-Ireland programme,](#) [HSC R&D - Further information on US-Ireland Programme](#)

Pre-Eligibility Application

1. **Who needs to complete the Pre-Eligibility application stage?**
   If you are applying to the NIH, you are required to complete the pre-eligibility application. Pre-eligibility applications must be submitted to SFI *at least* 12 weeks in advance of the NIH deadline. Please see further information here at NIH guidelines - [SFI - US-Ireland R&D Partnership Webpage](#).

2. **Do all lead applicants and co-applicants have to apply for pre-eligibility approval if applying to the NIH?**
   Yes, **all lead and co-applicants** in both Republic of Ireland (ROI) & Northern Ireland (NI) have to apply for pre-eligibility approval from the relevant funding agency. For example, if there is more than one RoI applicant proposing to participate in a US-Ireland proposal to the NIH, the pre-eligibility approval request to SFI must include relevant details for all such applicants. Pre-eligibility approval is required for all applications to the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

3. **I'm applying to the NIH under sensors theme linked to health – do I need to submit a pre-eligibility application?**
   Yes – for any application to the NIH, a pre-eligibility approval application is required at least 12 weeks prior to the NIH deadline. If successful, the applicant will be invited to submit a full draft proposal. Draft proposals to the NIH will only be accepted from applicants who have been approved at the pre-eligibility application stage.

4. **What needs to be included in the scientific abstract in the pre-eligibility application?**
   An overall description of the research project in addition to each partner's contribution to the proposed research with a focus on the research requesting support from the applicant's 'home' agency should be included. It is important to understand how the entire project fits together, hence targeting the abstract solely to one partner's research is not sufficient.

PLANNING GRANT

1. **What is the US-Ireland planning grant?**
   The US-Ireland planning grant facilitates the RoI & NI applicants to travel to the US to meet with their US counterpart and develop a proposal for submission to the NIH and NSF under the US-Ireland R&D partnership programme.

2. **How long does it take to review a planning grant application?**
   Please allow a minimum of 4 weeks for a decision.

3. **What do I need to include in the planning grant application?**
   Please see the call document on the SFI website [SFI - US-Ireland R&D Partnership Webpage](#).

4. **Can a person in the RoI research team, who is not the lead applicant, be included in the planning grant application to travel to the planning meeting in addition to the lead RoI applicant?**
   It may be possible for a team member/collaborator to be included on the planning grant application, in addition to the lead applicant but a *very strong justification* will need to be provided in the planning grant application. If awarded, the lead applicant must travel to the planning meeting – this cannot be delegated to a collaborator/team member.

5. **If I am planning a US-Ireland submission to the NIH, do I need to apply for pre-eligibility approval prior to submitting a planning grant application?**
   Yes pre-eligibility approval is required prior to a planning grant submission for applications to the NIH.

6. **I'm the RoI partner and I've submitted my planning grant application – what about my NI partner?**
   If both the RoI and NI partners are proposing to travel to the United States to a planning meeting and are requesting travel funds under the US-Ireland planning grant call, then both the RoI & NI partners need to apply for planning grant applications to their own funding agencies. It is not possible for the RoI agency to cover the travel costs of the NI partner and vice versa. The planning grant applications should be submitted simultaneously to the RoI & NI funding agencies, and at least four weeks is required by the agencies for review of these planning grant applications.
   It is not a requirement that both partners travel to the US, one partner can travel from Ireland however it may be more beneficial to the collaboration to have all partners around the table when developing the final proposal for the US-Ireland R&D Partnership programme.

7. **How does the NI partner submit their US-Ireland planning grant application?**
   Please see the link here for details on how Northern Ireland partners can apply for the US-Ireland planning grant - [DEL NI Further Information for applicants from Northern Ireland](#)

FULL PROPOSAL

1. **What research areas are covered under the US-Ireland programme?**
   The research areas listed below are covered keeping in mind SFI's legal remit
   - Sensors & Sensor Networks
   - Nanoscale Science and Engineering
   - Telecommunications
   - Energy & Sustainability
   - Health

   Further details can be found in the call documents.

2. **What is the maximum funding request to SFI?**
   The budget for full applications from applicants in the Republic of Ireland has been capped at €350K **direct costs**, therefore the budget request should be no greater than €350K, equating to an average of €110K/yr for a 3 year award.
   SFI expect that the funding requested by Irish applicants will be commensurate with the work proposed, and that it will be similar in scale and duration to that requested by Northern Ireland and US-based applicants from their respective funding agencies.

3. **Does SFI fund the salary of lead or co-PI?**
   SFI does not fund the salary of grant applicant/co-applicant (see page 4 of the SFI grant applications budget policy) http://www.sfi.ie/funding/grant-policies/grant-applications-budget-policy/

4. **Where can I find more information about eligible costs for SFI budget requests**
   Please see the SFI Grants Applications Budget Policy at the link below. This policy applies to SFI budget requests http://www.sfi.ie/funding/grant-policies/grant-applications-budget-policy/

5. **Do both SFI & HRB have to agree approval before a proposal can be submitted to NIH?**
   If the proposal involves both HRB and SFI funding, then both agencies have to review and support the tri-partite proposal.

6. **Are overheads included in SFI & HRB budgets?**
   For the **SFI budget request** – overheads are not included **and should not be included** in the requested budget to SFI – Direct Costs only (max €350k SFI budget request)
   For the **HRB budget request** – overheads are included and **must be included** in the requested budget to HRB – Both Direct & Indirect Costs (max €350k HRB budget request)

7. **What if SFI approve their portion of the funding and the HRB decline or vice versa?**
   In the event either HRB or SFI decide not to support the request, depending on the structure of the project, it *may* be possible for the proposal to be submitted supported by funding from a single agency. Applicants need to understand the time constraints involved and need to ensure that the budgets for each agency are distinctly justified and that they must be commensurate with the work proposed within the remit of each agency.

8. **How do I submit to SFI?**
   Convert all documents to a single pdf (only the cover sheet with signatures should be scanned) and submit by email to usireland@sfi.ie

9. **If I'm successfully approved by SFI – what are the next steps?**
   If approved by SFI for submission to NSF/NIH,
   - an approval notification email will be sent by SFI to the applicant
   - a formal SFI Funding Commitment Letter will be sent by SFI to the NSF/NIH, as well as to the applicant for inclusion in the full submission.
   - The RoI applicant may need to submit a revised budget and signed cover sheet by their institution to SFI
   - SFI requires a copy of the full proposal submission to NSF/NIH with official email confirmation including NSF/NIH proposal code

10. **What happens if I don't submit all documents as required by SFI by the 6 week deadline?**
    Incomplete documents will be returned without review. Applications received after the 6 week deadline prior to NIH/NSF submission will be returned without review.

11. **Can the partner in Republic Of Ireland or Northern Ireland be an SME/ industry?**
    No the ROI and NI partners have to be 3rd level institutions.

12. **How do I find out about upcoming workshops or webinars promoting the US-Ireland programme?**
    Subscribe to SFI e-alerts on the SFI homepage www.sfi.ie