

Supplemental funding request for Centres for Research Training (CRT): SFI-NSF Student Mobility Programme

Version: 13 March 2024

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 Terms and Conditions of Research Grants 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 2014.

Scope and Objectives of the Supplemental funding request for CRT SFI-NSF student mobility programme

The SFI-NSF student mobility programme is designed to enable Irish based PhD students to collaborate on research projects in academic laboratories in the United States of America for a period of 4 weeks to 12 weeks. The programme specifically links PhD students from the SFI funded Centres for Research Training (CRT) with academic laboratories at the National Science Foundation (NSF) Research Traineeship Program (NRT). This supplemental funding opportunity supports CRT-based PhD students to develop and strengthen valuable research skills, transversal and cross-sectoral skills, and discipline-specific skills, and benefit from mentorship and experiential learning at an NRT.

This programme is developed with the principal goal of encouraging the development of innovative models for interdisciplinary / convergent STEM graduate training. Moreover, a broader expected impact of the program is “increased partnerships and collaborations (both domestic and international) between academia and others.” Further details on active NRTs is accessible [here](#).¹

¹ Projects funded by NSF’s Research Traineeship Program:

<https://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/advancedSearchResult?PIId=&PIFirstName=&PILastName=&PIOrganization=&PIState=&PIZip=&PICountry=&ProgOrganization=&ProgEleCode=1997&BooleanElement=All&ProgRefCode=&BooleanRef=All&Program=&ProgOfficer=&Keyword=&AwardNumberOperator=&AwardAmount=&AwardInstrument=&ActiveAwards=true&OriginalAwardDateOperator=&StartDateOperator=&ExpDateOperator=>

Objectives

A student mobility scheme between the CRTs and NRTs is designed to help drive innovative research cooperation and would be aligned with the following objectives:

- Support postgraduate students in their development of professional networks, widen career exposure and create the possibility of attracting talent.
- Facilitate training in appropriate research skills and/or use of equipment and techniques that may not be readily available in Ireland.
- Encourage knowledge exchange and strengthened collaboration between CRTs and NRTs in their highly specialised areas of expertise.
- Learnings and shared experiences between innovative postgraduate training programmes within rich research environments.

Funding

The funding available, on a competitive basis, for successful candidates is up to **€7,000 per individual** for a period of **4 to 12 weeks**. All incurred costs must be justified and in line with the allowable costs outlined below and are subject to SFI's Grant budget policy, available [here](#).

Eligible costs per student include the following costs only:

- Accommodation and subsistence costs for the applicant to carry out collaborative research in the host laboratory for a period of 4 to 12 weeks. Subsistence rates supplied by SFI (Appendix A) must be used. Subsistence rates provided are inclusive of accommodation.
- Travel costs, covering the cost of one return trip to the host laboratory as well as associated domestic transport. Please note that applicants are required to procure the cheapest available economy flights. Public transport links from the international airport to the international lab are considered eligible travel costs.
- Costs associated with application for a US visa will be covered.

Ineligible costs include other costs associated with consumables and materials, equipment including laptops, participation in conferences or workshops or study tours, car-hire, travel, and health insurance.

Application overview

Applications will only be accepted for applicants from the CRT programme and will only support research visits for a period of 4 to 12 weeks at an NRT. Applicants are encouraged to review the list of active NRTs¹ in identifying the most appropriate partner.

How to apply:

CRTs are invited to submit a maximum of **four applications per centre** (through SESAME by the CRT Director) and accompanied by three attachments only:

- Letter of Invitation from host NRT [maximum 1 page].
- Letter of Confirmation from Irish host institution [maximum 1 page].
- Motivation letter from CRT-based PhD student [maximum 2 pages].

Eligible applicants:

The nominated CRT candidates are expected to demonstrate the following:

- Applicants must have identified a host NRT who will provide access to their laboratory space, dedicated time, and their research group (details outlined in a *letter of invitation*).
- A *letter of confirmation* from the Irish host institution indicating that each applicant
 - is an active CRT student,
 - has the support to participate from their supervisory team,
 - has completed the first year of their PhD studies at the time of application,
 - has the required health and travel insurance in place prior to travel.
- Applicants must demonstrate the synergies between their research activities and the host NRT/research group and outline the expected outputs of their visit (*motivation letter*).
- CRTs should aim for a gender-balanced approach and endeavour to nominate a diverse and talented group of candidates.²

Application - Detailed Process

Proposal Summary

Proposal ID of Parent Award

Please select the CRT award to which the supplement is being applied for.

Duration of the Award requested (in weeks)

Please enter the duration of the placement in weeks. Only placements of between 4 and 12 weeks can be selected.

Start Date.

Please enter the date on which the placement will start.

End Date

Please enter the date on which the placement will end.

² SFI's ambition is that Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2023-2028 will be a key driver of an inclusive, engaged research culture and, through this Strategy, SFI will be an agent of change. As such, the SFI EDI Strategy presents a vision and strategy for SFI, as a leading research funder, to help reduce systemic barriers to participating in the research endeavour. SFI has already demonstrated leadership in improving the representation of women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) research more broadly in the entire education talent pipeline. Whilst gender will remain a central tenet of the new EDI Strategy, SFI will now proactively consider other areas of inequality or disadvantage to support an intersectional approach, in keeping with our values and best practice. For further information see, <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/gender/>.

PhD Student Details

Full name of PhD student

Enter the name of the nominated candidate PhD Student.

PhD student home institution

Please select the institution where the PhD student is registered.

Host Details

Name of NRT

Please enter the name of the NRT where the candidate will be hosted.

Name of Host

Please enter the name of the researcher(s) who will act as the candidate's host.

Institution

Please enter the name of the institution where the candidate will be hosted.

Budget and Budget Justification

Budget

The budget available, on a competitive basis, is up to **€7,000** direct costs for a period of 4 to 12 weeks. Please complete the budget template, **using only the Travel section**, providing Travel Costs (e.g. Flights, visa fees etc.) and Subsistence (which includes accommodation) as separate line items.

Budget Justification

Please upload a budget justification [1 page max].

Additional Proposal Content

Please upload the following documents to the application:

- Letter of Invitation from host NRT [maximum 1 page].
- Letter of Confirmation from Irish host institution [maximum 1 page].
- Motivation letter from CRT-based PhD student [maximum 2 pages].

General guidelines

- All text in attachments should be written in single-space using *at least* 12-point Times New Roman font, or similar, with *at least* 2.54 cm (1 in) right and left margins.
- The number of words/pages in any given section must not exceed the specifications.
- Appendices, or other unsolicited documentation, (e.g. team member CV, letters of support from individuals other than the official collaborators, quotations) are not permitted.

- The currency to be used is the euro (€).
- Once submitted by the host research body to SFI through SESAME, an application cannot be withdrawn and subsequently modified for resubmission in the same call, regardless of the date of submission.
- Proposals must be endorsed and submitted online through SESAME to SFI by the Research Office of the Applicant's research body by 13:00 on the closing date.
- Applicants should note that their research body may have internal deadlines before this date that must be adhered to.

Applications not adhering to the specified guidelines (e.g. page limit specifications), or with incomplete content, will be deemed ineligible and will not be accepted for review.

State Aid and SFI Grant Funding

As per SFI's grant conditions (inclusive of SFI's General Terms & Conditions³, Letters of Offer and SFI Policy documents⁴), all SFI funding granted is subject to, and must be compliant with, State aid legislation based on Article 107(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)⁵.

Namely, research activities undertaken as part of a grant awarded under the *Supplemental funding request for Centres for Research Training (CRT): SFI-NSF student mobility programme*, and agreed to subject to SFI's grant conditions, must be "non-economic" in nature and be designed to ensure that any funding received does not, directly or indirectly, give rise to the granting of State aid.

Where recipients of grant funding engage with an 'undertaking'⁶ or industry party, under the *Supplemental funding request for Centres for Research Training (CRT): SFI-NSF student mobility programme* they are required to demonstrate compliance with the conditions of "effective collaboration" as per the 2022 Framework for State aid for research, development, and innovation (2022/C 414/01).⁷

For further guidelines please see <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/state-aid/>

Review Process

Applications submitted for supplemental funding for the SFI-NSF mobility scheme will be subject to internal SFI review only. Applications can only be submitted by the respective CRT Director (applications submitted by individual candidates will not be reviewed).

CRTs are expected to instigate a procedure to select candidates for the supplemental funding and may nominate a maximum of four candidates per centre.

³ <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/sfi-general-terms-and-conditions/>

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

⁵ [Commission Notice on the notion of State aid as referred to in Article 107\(1\) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union TABLE OF CONTENTS \(europa.eu\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2022/414/oj/1)

⁶ The concept of an "undertaking" under EU competition law rules is an entity that is engaged in an "economic activity" regardless of its legal status or the way that it is financed. An activity is economic in nature when it involves offering goods or services on a market.

⁷ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2022.414.01.0001.01.ENG

Submitted applications will be reviewed on the following:

- Quality of the applicant.
- Quality of the proposed research activities.
- Justification of the benefit of the collaboration.
- Evidence of synergies in research and committed support from the host NRT.

Relevant information about the supplemental funding requests which are under consideration for funding, along with the corresponding reviews, may be shared with representatives from NSF as appropriate.

Supplemental funding requests should be submitted by the following deadline: **21 March 2024 at 1.00 pm.**

SFI's Policies and Positions

In addition to complying with SFI's grant conditions, which are inclusive of those outlined in the Letter of Offer and SFI's Grant General Terms & Conditions, applicants are expected to be familiar and consult with SFI policies/positions <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/> and with all relevant national policies when preparing their application to any SFI programme and in conducting their programme of research. All team members should be appraised of relevant policies, which may be revised from time to time.

Appendix A: Subsistence Rates (Inclusive of Accommodation)

Subsistence Rates based on Horizon Europe – Work Programme 2023/2024 Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions Country Correction Coefficients (CCC)⁸ (inclusive of accommodation).

US - Correction coefficient is 102.3.

For example, using PhD stipend rate of €22,000:

Cost of Living Index = $102.3 \div 100 = 1.023$

Yearly Rate for US = $€22,000 \times 1.023 = €22,506$

Monthly Rate to be used for mobility programme = €1,876

⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2023-2024/wp-2-msca-actions_horizon-2023-2024_en.pdf