

SCIENCE FOUNDATION IRELAND

SFI Research Infrastructure Programme 2023

Call for Submission of Proposals

Key Dates

Call launch: **22nd May 2023**

Expression of Interest Deadline: **28th June 2023, 13.00 Dublin local time**

Full Proposal Submission Deadline: **28th July 2023, 13.00 Dublin local time**

Terms of Reference

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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 2014.

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During the application process or at any time following the termination of the application process and decision, SFI may contact the Research Body, the Principal Investigator or any member of the Research Team concerning funding opportunities, SFI activities or any events, or for the purposes of monitoring and evaluation including but not limited to collecting scientific data and data related to the applications process. SFI may choose to authorise a third party to contact the Research Body, the Principal Investigator or any member of the Research Team on its behalf.

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1 Introduction

Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) funds excellent and impactful research and talent, and shapes the future of Ireland through anticipating what's next and widening engagement and collaboration. SFI's 2025 strategy ***Shaping Our Future*** sets out the vision that Ireland will be a global innovation leader in scientific and engineering research for the advancement of Ireland's economy and society.¹ The strategy has two ambitions: Delivering Today and Preparing for Tomorrow. ***Impact 2030, Ireland's Research and Innovation Strategy***, positions research and innovation at the heart of addressing Ireland's societal, economic and environmental challenges².

The “*Excellent Research*” theme within *Shaping Our Future* aims for the delivery of research that brings about scientific breakthroughs and expands the international footprint of investigators working in Ireland. In support of this, SFI seeks to provide state-of-the-art research infrastructure to facilitate high-quality research across Ireland's higher-education system. Furthermore, as part of the “*Cohesive Ecosystem*” theme, there is an action to *support increased inter-institutional and national sharing of research infrastructure across academia and enterprise to increase the utilisation and efficiency of the funded research infrastructure*.

The SFI Research Infrastructure Programme supports the research community in building and sustaining the required infrastructural capacity to accomplish high-quality, high-impact and innovative research in areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics that demonstrably enhance and support enterprise competitiveness and societal development in Ireland. SFI encourages the efficient use, renewal and development of existing national research infrastructures while also recognising the need for continued investment in cutting-edge research equipment and infrastructure in areas of national priority.

Applications to the SFI Research Infrastructure Programme 2023 call will seek **Strategic Research Infrastructures** that focus on large-scale items in areas of national priority and in other areas of strategic opportunity.

Objectives of the SFI Research Infrastructure Programme

- To give Ireland's researchers access to cutting-edge research infrastructure that will enhance high-quality research activities and innovation in areas of strategic priority
- To make Ireland an attractive location for the recruitment of world-leading scientists and engineers
- To provide outstanding research infrastructure that will enable Ireland's researchers to compete in future Horizon Europe research funding calls
- 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
- To encourage research partnership with industry through collaborative initiatives that involve industry access to infrastructure
- To support the strategic development and growth of the SFI Research Centres

¹ <https://www.sfi.ie/strategy/shaping-our-future/index.xml>

² <https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/224616/5f34f71e-e13e-404b-8685-4113428b3390.pdf#page=null>

- To support national and European Open Science policies and principles and ensure access to an effective digital research infrastructure ecosystem
- To optimise utilisation and promote future sustainability of research infrastructures through the development of management and access charge plans

In line with the objectives of the programme, the following important aspects should be considered and included in the proposal where relevant:

Partnerships

The demonstration of effective partnerships, sustainable planning and intra- and inter-institutional collaborations to ensure maximal usage of infrastructure is a key element of the 2023 Research Infrastructure Programme call. The following applications are strongly encouraged:

- Applications where the Lead Applicant is a Principal Investigator (PI) at an Institute of Technology (IoT) or Technological University (TU)
- Applications that include collaborations with IoTs/TUs
- Applications containing “All-Ireland” collaborations that drive partnerships with Research Bodies in Northern Ireland³

Industry Participation

SFI-funded Research Infrastructure awards may involve usage by, or partnership with, industry leading to innovative ideas or products with scientific and/or commercial impact. While SFI encourages these activities, they are required to comply with access charge plan guidance and State aid rules. Please see Section 2.2 for additional information.

International Programmes

Investments arising from this programme call may enable researchers in Ireland to participate in other national and international infrastructural or research programmes, including future schemes supported through the Horizon Europe Framework Programme. Membership or links with other relevant Research Infrastructure consortia are encouraged.

Driving Recruitment

Investments arising from this programme call may act as a key driver in the recruitment of world-leading scientists and engineers. Applicants should consider and include in the proposal how the requested infrastructure may facilitate such recruitment.

Open Science Infrastructure

Requested infrastructure may address the increasing challenges of data-driven research and address the vision of European Open Science to align with emerging European policies, principles and funding agency requirements. Innovative approaches for the promotion of open data and open access of datasets, libraries, publications and other outputs are encouraged.

Access Charge Plans

The development of appropriate and auditable access charge plans is an important element of applications to this call. Effective access charge plans will strengthen the future sustainability of

³ Lead applicants from Research Bodies based in Northern Ireland are not eligible to apply for SFI Research Infrastructure Programme.

funded infrastructure and will maximise utility and impact within the academic and industrial research community. Please refer to section 3.5.6.

Co-Funding Partnerships

The 2023 SFI Research Infrastructure Programme call involves the participation of the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) as a co-funding partner. The research topics of interest under this call and the specific objectives of the partnership are described in Section 2.1.

Declaration of Research Assessment (DORA) Principles

SFI is a signatory to the San Francisco Declaration of Research Assessment (DORA),⁴ and as such aligns its review and evaluation processes with DORA principles. In January 2022, SFI reinforced its existing commitment to the core principles by joining DORA as a member.⁵ To this end, all types of research output are recognised and SFI is committed to assessing the quality and impact of research through means other than journal-based metrics and research performance-based metrics such as journal impact factors and H-indices. In the spirit of supporting open research and as a signatory of Plan S,⁶ SFI will also consider a commitment to making data and other types of research open and accessible. SFI is also a signatory to Ireland's National Action Plan for Open Research 2022-2030.⁷ To complement these activities, during 2022, SFI became a signatory to the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment⁸ and thus became a member of the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA).⁹

1.1 Expression of Interest (EOI) and proposal checklist

This EOI and proposal checklist is provided as a summary guide for applicants. However, please read this entire call document carefully as full details on the SFI Research Infrastructure are provided in Sections 2 to 7 below.

EOI Checklist		
Section	Description	Requirements
Proposal Title	Indicate name of infrastructure item requested	30 words
Lead Research Body	Include name of Research Body	Mandatory
Collaborating Research Bodies	Include name of collaborating Research Bodies and the associated PI/ research groups	
Item Requested	Name of item requested	Mandatory
Lead Applicant	Name of one key investigator who will be responsible for the	Mandatory

⁴ <https://sfdora.org/read/>

⁵ Contributor level membership.

⁶ <https://www.coalition-s.org/>

⁷ <https://norf.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/National-Action-Plan-for-Open-Research-webversion.pdf>

⁸ https://coara.eu/app/uploads/2022/09/2022_07_19_rra_agreement_final.pdf

⁹ <https://coara.eu/>

	item requested and their email address	
Details of awards held by the Lead Applicant	Title and code of award (SFI or non-SFI)	Mandatory
Research Priority Area	Name of the research priority area	Mandatory
Research Keywords	List keywords that describe the requested research infrastructure	15 keywords
Estimated total cost	€ (incl. VAT, delivery and associated costs)	Mandatory
Total request to SFI	€	Mandatory
% cost share (cash)		Mandatory
Total cash cost share amount	€	Mandatory
Infrastructure Bids Currently Under Review	Include grant code and expected decision date or state n/a	
Distributed Infrastructure	Yes or No	Mandatory
Infrastructure Location	e.g., Department, Institute, etc. In the event of distributed infrastructure, please indicate the locations of all items.	Mandatory
Lay Abstract	Summary of requested infrastructure in non-technical language	150 words
Scientific Abstract	Technical details on infrastructure	250 words
Statement on Strategic National Importance of Proposed Research Infrastructure	Describe proposed research infrastructure alignment with national strategic priorities and the potential impact of the infrastructure	250 words

PROPOSAL CHECKLIST		
SECTION	DESCRIPTION	REQUIREMENTS
Proposal Summary	Proposal Title	Up to 30 words
	Duration	Max. 12 months
	Total Infrastructure Cost including cost share (it should not be less than €550,000)	
	Total Funding Request Amount (€)	
Resubmission	Resubmission statement (if relevant)	Max. 1000 words
Research Alignment	Priority Area and Alignment	Select from list
	Justification of alignment with SFI's Legal Remit	Max. 250 words
Lead Applicant Details	Complete Mandatory SESAME Profile information	Mandatory profile fields marked in red

Main Body of Proposal	ORCID iD	Link SESAME profile to ORCID iD
	Research Funding History	Enter details
	Keywords	Max. 15 words
	Scientific Abstract	Max. 250 words
Programme Documents (SESAME uploads)	Lay Abstract	Max. 150 words
	Detailed Description of Infrastructure Request	Max. 2 pages
	Detailed Description of Key Users	Max. 3 pages
	Detailed Description of Strategic Impact	Max. 2 pages
	Management and Sustainability Plan	Max. 2 page
	Data Management Plan	Max. 2 page
	Access Charge Plan	Max. 1 page per infrastructure item where multiple items constitute infrastructure Template optional
Letters of Support	Lead Research Body (where applicant is based)	Mandatory; max. 2 pages
	Collaborators from other Research Bodies	Max. 10 Collaborators in total per application; max. 2 pages each
	Other collaborators such as industry, researchers in Northern Ireland, European Consortia	Optional; max. 2 pages each
Vendor Quotes	Include quote numbers and full costs for all individual items requested	Minimum 2 vendor quotes; Upload as single PDF
Budget	Details of all relevant costs	Budget Table in SESAME
	Upload Proposed Budget (template provided)	Max. 2 page
	Upload Budget Justification	Max. 1 page
	Green Procurement Plan	Max. 1 page

2 Programme Details

2.1 Programme Remit

The legal remit of SFI is to promote, develop and assist the carrying out of oriented basic and applied research in strategic areas of scientific endeavour that concern the future development and competitiveness of industry and enterprise in the State.¹⁰ **Oriented basic research** is “research that is carried out with the expectation that it will produce a broad base of knowledge that is likely to form the background to the solution of recognised, or expected, current or future problems or possibilities”. Additionally, **applied research** is defined as “an original investigation undertaken to acquire new

¹⁰ <https://www.sfi.ie/about-us/about-sfi/what-we-do/>

knowledge and is directed primarily towards a specific practical aim or objective. The results of applied research are intended primarily to be valid for a single or limited number of products, operations, methods, or systems”.

The Irish Government has undertaken a review of the objectives of National Research Prioritisation, building upon the original exercise carried out in 2012,¹¹ and has taken into account a number of important current challenges and developments including the growth of disruptive technologies, Brexit and the adoption of UN Sustainable Development Goals, amongst others. Research Prioritisation will continue to demand that the majority of Ireland’s competitive funding is concentrated on areas deemed likely to yield the greatest economic and societal impact.

Impact 2030 continues to focus Ireland’s research efforts on areas most likely to have the strongest economic and societal impact through the research priority areas identified in the Research Prioritisation Exercise¹². For this call, proposals must either be aligned to one of the 14 Refreshed Priority Research Areas for 2018-2023¹³ or to any other area under SFI’s legal remit¹⁰ where there is convincing evidence that there will be significant potential for economic and/or societal impact (see table below). These 14 areas are the constituents of six broad Enterprise themes that underpin the updated prioritisation exercise. Applications should also aim to address the wider large-scale infrastructural needs of the research community.

Research Infrastructure – Research Areas	
ICT	Future Networks, Communications and Internet of Things
	Data Analytics, Management, Security, Privacy, Robotics and Artificial Intelligence (including Machine Learning)
	Digital Platforms, Content and Applications, and Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality
Health and Wellbeing	Connected Health and Independent Living
	Medical Devices
	Diagnostics
Food	Therapeutics
	Food for Health
	Smart and Sustainable Food Production and Processing
Energy, Climate Action and Sustainability	Decarbonising the Energy System
	Sustainable Living
Manufacturing and Materials	Advanced and Smart Manufacturing
	Manufacturing and Novel Materials
Services and Business Processes	Innovation in Services and Business Processes
	Other Research Areas with Significant Potential for Economic and/or Societal Impact


¹¹ <https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Research-Prioritisation.pdf>

¹² <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/27c78-impact-2030-irelands-new-research-and-innovation-strategy/>

¹³ <https://dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Research-Priority-Areas-2018-to-2023.pdf>

Co-Funding Partnerships

The SFI Research Infrastructure Programme includes a co-funding partnership with the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI).¹⁴ This partnership is based on alignments to research topics that are of particular significance to SEAI's research objectives (see table below). Following the submission of proposals, SFI will reach agreement with SEAI on which proposals may be supported through the partnership. All applications that potentially align to the research topics outlined by SEAI in the table below will be considered for support under the partnership. There is no requirement for applicants to indicate specifically that funding through the partnership is sought; all applications will be assessed under the same peer-review criteria, regardless of any alignment to SEAI's research objectives.

	<p>SEAI is Ireland's national sustainable energy authority. SEAI will be central to bringing about a low-carbon economy through measures and activities focused on the transition to a smarter and more sustainable energy future. The partnership between SEAI and SFI aims to support excellent scientific research that will contribute to Ireland's transition to a clean and secure energy future, aligning with research topics that are of particular relevance to SEAI:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wind energy • Smart buildings • Decarbonising heat • Smart grids • Transport • Offshore/Ocean • Energy efficiency • Emerging technologies
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By submitting an application to the SFI Research Infrastructure Programme, an applicant/Research Body is accepting that SFI has the right to share information (including the application and any post-award reports submitted to SFI) with existing and potential co-funding partners, on a confidential basis, without the need to obtain any further consents from such applicants.

2.2 State Aid and SFI Grant Funding

As per SFI's Grant Conditions (inclusive of SFI's General Terms & Conditions,¹⁵ Letters of Offer and SFI Policy documents),¹⁶ all SFI funding granted is subject to, and must be compliant with, State aid legislation based on Article 107(1) of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).¹⁷

¹⁴ <https://www.seai.ie/>

¹⁵ <http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/sfi-general-terms-and-conditions/>

¹⁶ <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/>

¹⁷ [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52016XC0719\(05\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52016XC0719(05)&from=EN)

Namely, activities undertaken as part of a Grant awarded under the SFI Research Infrastructure Programme, and agreed to subject to SFI's Grant Conditions, must be primarily “non-economic” in nature in accordance with Section 2 of the **2022 Framework for State aid for research and development and innovation (2022/C 414/01)** (the “Framework”).

In particular, and by way of example, when SFI awards a Grant under this call, it is on the understanding that:

a) Where the Research Body and any other entity in receipt of Grant funding, carries out activities of both an economic and non-economic nature, it must have in place appropriate accounting separation processes (including in relation to the operation of "research infrastructures"), in accordance with paragraph 19 of the Framework, such that the two kinds of activities and their costs, funding and revenues can be clearly separated to avoid cross-subsidisation of the economic activity.

b) Where industry provides a contribution (cost share) to the costs associated with the purchase of the Research Infrastructure, the applicants will be required to outline how this arrangement including any subsequent access rights of the industry party will be compliant with State aid law.¹⁸

c) Where industry collaborates with an academic group and this collaboration involves the use of the infrastructure, these partnerships must be structured as an “effective collaboration” in accordance with the Framework and ensure that the allocation of intellectual property rights arising out of the effective collaboration comply with one of the conditions set out in paragraphs 29 and 30 (as appropriate) of the Framework”; SFI will require that compliance is supported through the completion of the Industry Collaboration Form. The costs of SFI-funded infrastructure used in an effective collaboration projects should be calculated on the basis of generally accepted accounting principles.¹⁹

d) Where industry accesses the Research Infrastructure, market rates should apply, and these should be reflected in the access charge plan submitted as part of an application to this call (see Section 3.5.5 for more details).

e) Further to point (d), where industry accesses the SFI-funded Research Infrastructure under a contract or rental agreement, these types of commercial activity may only comprise a maximum of 20% of the annual capacity for the SFI-funded Research Infrastructure and must also be charged at the full market rate (referred to as “**the 80:20 rule**”). For SFI-funded Research Infrastructures involving a mix of non-economic (academic usage/projects or projects complying with “effective collaboration”) and economic or commercial activities, the economic activities must remain purely ancillary and directly related to and necessary for the operation of the infrastructure/the research Body or linked to the main non-economic activities and otherwise should not exceed 20% of the overall annual capacity.

SFI's advisors will monitor compliance with State aid law (including the 80:20 rule) on an ongoing basis. Upon request, the Research Body will provide the Foundation with all documentation reasonably required to satisfy SFI that the Research Body complies with State aid law. The Research Body is responsible for retaining such documentary records as are required to demonstrate compliance with

¹⁸ Applicants must satisfy themselves that the arrangement proposed is compliant with State aid law; by awarding a Grant, SFI will not be ‘approving’ such arrangements but these may be subject to ex-post audit as described.

¹⁹ <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/state-aid/>

State aid law, and ensure, where relevant, that all necessary third-party consents are procured to allow for such documentation to be disclosed to SFI.

For additional information, please see 'Guidance on State aid for applicants to, and recipients of, SFI Grant funding'¹⁹. Potential applicants are also referred to the guidance provided by the European Commission in Section 2 of the Framework and are advised to actively engage with their Technology Transfer Offices and/or seek independent legal advice (where required) in advance of applying for funding.

2.3 Definition of Lead Applicant, Lead Research Body and Collaborating Research Body

The **Lead Applicant** is responsible for the submission of the application on behalf of the Lead Research Body associated with the infrastructure request, and will have primary responsibility and accountability for the management of the infrastructure award and all associated reporting (see Section 5 for more details on Award Management). **The Lead Applicant must be based at the Lead Research Body.** If the infrastructure is distributed between more than one Research Body, a Lead Applicant and Lead Research Body should be agreed upon and selected. The Lead Applicant will serve as the primary point of contact for SFI on the grant, during the review process and, if successful, during the course of the grant. Co-applicants are not permitted on infrastructure awards. Researchers may only act as a Lead Applicant on one proposal; however, it is permissible to be named as a key user on more than one proposal.

The **Lead Research Body** is the body in charge of the financial and administrative co-ordination of the award received from SFI. A list of eligible Research Bodies is available on the SFI website.²⁰ In the event of multiple collaborating Research Bodies, the award will be administered by the Lead Research Body. For all applications, the Lead Research Body is responsible for the oversight and management of the research infrastructure. Research Bodies in Northern Ireland may **not** serve as the Lead Research Body on an application.

A **Collaborating Research Body** is a proposed major user of the infrastructure requested, where the sharing of resources by the collaborating Research Body can be clearly measured. In the case of a **distributed infrastructure** (such as a testbed) the collaborating Research Body may host part of the infrastructure. **The collaborating Research Body may either be an eligible Research Body** in the Republic of Ireland, or a Research Body in Northern Ireland.

It is recognised that collaborating Research Bodies will play a role in the shared oversight and management of the research infrastructure in certain cases. In order to ensure there are no duplication of bids to the call, **SFI recommends Research Bodies to engage in discussions related to proposed bids in advance of submission.**

²⁰ <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/eligibility-related-information/>

2.4 Eligibility Criteria of Lead Applicant

The **Lead Applicant** must be an independent researcher and must have held a PhD or equivalent qualification for at least three years at proposal submission.²¹ The SFI policy on PhD Equivalence²² should be consulted before submitting an application, where relevant. The official date of a PhD is defined as the year that the degree was conferred (i.e., the year printed on the official PhD certificate). The number of years is determined by calendar year, that is, only individuals with an official date of 2020 or earlier are eligible to apply to the SFI Research Infrastructure call in 2023. In addition:

The applicant must hold, or have held, 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 support the salaries and/or stipends of staff/team member(s) in addition to the Applicant.

SFI has stringent requirements for the reporting by awardees on the grants that it makes.²³ Failure to satisfactorily complete SFI's reporting requirements on a current or historic SFI-funded award may result in an applicant being deemed ineligible for the SFI Research Infrastructure Programme.

2.5 Funding

Applications to the SFI Research Infrastructure Programme 2023 will have a minimum budget request of **€500,000 direct costs**. **An additional 10% cash cost share is mandatory in all applications**, therefore the total direct costs of the infrastructure **must be at least €550,000**. There is no maximum budget request. Please refer to Section 2.6 for further details on the cost share.

Multiple items of equipment can be grouped together to reach the €550,000 cost threshold, so long as they contribute to a single, shared infrastructure request (e.g., a testbed or distributed cluster).

2.6 Cost Share

Cash Cost Share

For all infrastructure requests, a **minimum** cost share of 10% cash (at least **€50,000**) from the Research Body and/or other sources (e.g., philanthropic donations, collaborating Research Bodies, industry, etc.) is mandatory. The percentage of cash cost share is a percentage of the **total direct costs** (including VAT) of the infrastructure request to SFI (i.e., 10% of \geq €500,000 direct costs request to SFI).

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

²¹ http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/eligibility-related-information/PHD-equivalence-policy_September_2018.pdf

²² <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/eligibility-related-information/>

²³ <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/sfi-general-terms-and-conditions/>

As described in Section 2.2, where an industry party provides a contribution to the costs associated with the purchase of the Research Infrastructure, the applicants will be required to outline how this arrangement will be compliant with State aid law (e.g., in terms of any preferential access arrangements being offered to that industry as part of the access charge plan). If industry has financed **at least 10% of the investment costs of the infrastructure**, they may have preferential access to the infrastructure access under more favourable conditions. In order to avoid overcompensation, such access shall be proportional to the industry party's contribution to the investment costs and these conditions shall be made publicly available. However it must be clear that this usage strictly adheres to the "80:20 rule" (refer to Point (e) in Section 2.2).

Cash cost share may be obtained from any collaborating Research Body, including those based in Northern Ireland. However, It should be noted that SFI Research Centres cannot provide cost share for Research Infrastructure where money is generated from SFI. Funding directly from an SFI Research Centre could be classified as double counting, which is not permitted as cost share.

In-Kind Cost Share

Contributions through in-kind cost sharing are also highly encouraged and will be looked upon favourably. In-kind cost share must not originate from other forms of SFI funding; appropriate sources are detailed below. The percentage of in-kind cost share is a percentage of **total costs** of the infrastructure (including VAT). It is recognised that in-kind contributions (e.g., vendor discounts, free maintenance contracts, etc.) will be indicative at the submission stage and should be included where relevant in the quotes provided. Following the tendering process, awardees will be required to provide updated final costs and cost-share contributions received.

At least one dedicated technical staff member is required to manage the proposed infrastructure.

Examples of in-kind cost share

- Salary costs of dedicated personnel to operate infrastructure
- Supplier discounts
- Maintenance/service contracts
- Technical support
- Materials and Consumables essential to the operation of the equipment
- Software costs
- Training for key personnel required to operate instruments
- Installation costs
- Industry scientists, engineers or technicians assigned to work on instrument development or to provide on-going technical support

2.7 Eligible Costs

The following costs are eligible for SFI Research Infrastructure Programme proposals:

- Items of new equipment including VAT, transportation and installation (where necessary)
- Equipment upgrades, where appropriate and cost effective
- Maintenance or service contracts **(for up to two years from purchase date)**
- Materials and Consumables required to set up or operate the equipment for up to two years from purchase date **(not for specific research projects)**
- Installation costs for large pieces of equipment
- Software costs

- Training for key personnel required to operate equipment

2.8 Ineligible Costs

The following costs are ineligible for SFI Research Infrastructure Programme proposals:

- Indirect or overhead costs
- Institutional overhead-related costs
- Building(s), construction or refurbishment costs
- Equipment depreciation
- Human resources (including salary of key personnel required to operate instruments). These costs may be included as in-kind cost share as detailed above.
- Contingency or miscellaneous costs
- Costs for conducting research programmes
- Access charges related to the use of the requested infrastructure
- Hospitality and entertainment costs
- Office equipment and supplies
- Technology transfer or patent costs
- Conference and Workshop organisation costs
- Materials, software, maintenance charges if funded from another source (i.e., to avoid double-counting).

3 Application Procedure

For the 2023 Research Infrastructure Programme call, **each eligible Research Body in the Republic of Ireland may submit a maximum of six applications, one application per Lead Applicant employed at that Research Body.** Researchers based in Northern Ireland may **not** act as Lead Applicants in proposals submitted to this call.

Prospective Lead Applicants must first contact the Research Office of the intended Lead Research Body and notify them of their intention to submit a proposal. **Applications should only be submitted to SFI where it is clearly demonstrated that appropriate funding and resources are in place to ensure maximum usage of the requested infrastructure.**

It is the responsibility of the Research Body to carry out selection processes to determine which proposals are put forward for submission. Should a Lead Applicant withdraw from the process prior to the full proposal deadline, the Research Body may nominate a replacement candidate. **If more than six applications are included in the Expression of Interest document submitted to SFI, all applications from that institution will be deemed ineligible.**

3.1 Expression of Interest (Email Submission)

Prior to the submission of Full Proposals, Research Bodies are required to submit an Expression of Interest document to SFI by email. The template for the Expression of Interest is provided on the SFI

website.²⁴ For each Research Body, a member of the Research Office staff must provide SFI with a cover sheet and the infrastructure summary tables for all applications (as a single PDF document) by email (infrastructure@sfi.ie) no later than **28th June 2023, 13:00 local Dublin time**.

Please complete the Expression of Interest document using the guidance below.

Proposal Summary

- **Proposal Title**
The proposal title should clearly convey the nature of the research infrastructure request. The titles of funded proposals are published by SFI and therefore should not contain personal information.
- **Lead Research Body and Collaborating Research Bodies**
Indicate the Lead Research Body and collaborating Research Bodies as described in Section 2.3.
- **Item Requested**
Indicate the name of the requested infrastructure.
- **Lead Applicant**
Include details for the Lead Applicant, including details of their eligible funding criteria, and contact email address. Please refer to Section 2.4 to ensure the proposed Lead Applicant meets the eligibility criteria.
- **Distributed Infrastructure**
Choose Yes/No if the proposed location of the infrastructure (e.g., Department, Institute, etc.) is distributed.
- **Infrastructure Location**
Indicate the proposed location of the infrastructure (e.g., Department, Institute, etc.). In the event of distributed infrastructure, please indicate the locations of all items.
- **Research Priority Area**
Indicate the primary Research Priority Area most relevant to the infrastructure.
- **Research Keywords**
Indicate the most appropriate **Research Keywords** (max. 15) for each infrastructure request.
- **Infrastructure Costs**
Indicate the total **cost of the infrastructure** and the **requested amount to SFI**. Indicate the **percentage and monetary amount** of the cash cost share.
- **Infrastructure Bids Currently Under Review**
Indicate where items of requested infrastructure are **also currently under review elsewhere**, giving details of the application and expected decision date. This includes bids made to SFI.

²⁴ <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/funding-calls/sfi-research-infrastructure-programme/>

- **Lay Abstract (max. 150 words)**
Provide a succinct and accurate summary of the requested infrastructure in lay, non-technical language.
- **Scientific Abstract (max. 250 words)**
Provide technical details on the infrastructure (e.g., components, function, etc.) and an overview of alignment of the infrastructure with the objectives of this call, where relevant.
- **Statement on Strategic National Importance of Proposed Research Infrastructure (max. 250 words)**
Describe how the proposed research infrastructure aligns with national strategic priorities and the potential impact of the infrastructure in terms of research outputs, partnerships, etc.

The Expression of Interest requested is mandatory and is required by SFI for planning purposes.

The detail in the Expression of Interest may be modified when completing the full proposal to this call. However, SFI expects the full proposal to be generally consistent with the information submitted under the Expression of Interest. SFI reserves the right to withdraw applications where the Expression of Interest differs significantly from the full proposal.

Only Lead Applicants that have submitted the requested Expression of Interest through their host institution's Research Office will be permitted to submit a proposal to the call. Any information submitted directly to SFI, and not through the host institution Research Office, will not be accepted, and submission of a proposal will not be permitted.

3.2 Full Proposal Submission

Proposals will only be accepted through SESAME, SFI's grants and awards management system.

Access to SESAME is controlled by staff at the Research Office of the host Research Body. SESAME is accessed using the internet; no additional software needs to be installed. You can access SESAME online from any location. SESAME supports Internet Explorer, Chrome and Firefox. With Mac we recommend that you use either Firefox or Chrome. The configuration of some browsers and internet infrastructure (popup blockers, firewalls, etc.) can restrict an individual's access to the internet and, as a result, to the SESAME system. If you are having any such difficulties, please contact your organisation's internal IT support team.

The SESAME system is accessed here: <https://grants.sfi.ie>

Please see the SESAME Researcher User Guide for more detailed information.²⁵

²⁵ <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/award-management-system/>

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 submitted online through SESAME to SFI by the Research Office of the Lead Applicant's Research Body no later than **28th July 2023, 13:00 local Dublin time.**

Proposal submission requirements:

- **All text in uploaded PDFs** should be provided in Calibri font or similar, with minimum font size of 11, and at least single-line spacing as well as a minimum margin size of 2.5cm. Text in diagrams may be in any clearly legible font.
- Uploads in SESAME must be submitted in **Adobe or Microsoft PDF format only**. Please ensure to use unencrypted, non-password-protected PDFs with the copying function disabled, developed using either Adobe or Microsoft Word PDF convertor software only.
- The number of pages in uploads must not exceed the specifications for any given section. **Applications that do not comply with these requirements will be deemed ineligible and will be returned without review.**
- Appendices or other unsolicited documentation are not permitted. Applications that include such unsolicited documentation will be returned without review.
- File sizes of attachments should be less than 5MB.

Applications not adhering to these requirements, or with incomplete content, will be deemed ineligible and will not be accepted for review, regardless of the date of submission.

It is the responsibility of the Lead Applicant to ensure that eligible proposals are received by SFI before the deadline indicated. In order to safeguard against ineligibility, applicants are reminded to adhere rigorously to the guidelines in the call documentation and to review the proposal document prior to submission in SESAME.

Please note that proposal eligibility checks will be completed by SFI staff.

Applications cannot be withdrawn and subsequently modified for resubmission in the same call.

3.3 ORCID ID

ORCID provides a unique identifier for all researchers, which can then be linked to their different research works across different platforms.²⁶ There are a number of benefits to creating an ORCID iD, which include the following:

- 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.

²⁶ <http://orcid.org/>

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

As part of the integration of SESAME with ORCID, it is possible for researchers to import publication data from ORCID directly into their SESAME Research Profile. **Applicants are required to link their SESAME Research Profiles to an ORCID iD before an application can be submitted.**

3.4 Full Proposal Summary

All templates for the Full Proposal can be found on the [Research Infrastructure programme webpage](#)

Please populate the following required proposal sections on SESAME, as outlined below:

- **Proposal Title (max. 30 words)**
The proposal title should clearly convey the nature of the research infrastructure request. The titles of funded proposals are published by SFI and therefore should not contain personal information.
- **Duration of Award**
The maximum duration of awards is **12 months**.
- **Resubmission Statement (max. 1000 words)**
Applicants must declare whether a new submission relates to a previous unsuccessful application to any SFI scheme. If the application is a resubmission, a statement referencing the previous application and explaining the differences must be provided and must make reference to reviewer comments where relevant. This statement will assist SFI Scientific Staff in the assessment of the eligibility of a revised application and will not be shared with reviewers. See the SFI Resubmission Policy for further details.²⁷
- **Distributed Infrastructure**
Choose Yes/No if the proposed location of the infrastructure (e.g., Department, Institute, etc.) is distributed.
- **Infrastructure Location**
Indicate the proposed location of the infrastructure (e.g., Department, Institute, etc.). In the event of distributed infrastructure, please indicate the location of all items.
- **Total Infrastructure Cost (€)**
Indicate the total cost of the infrastructure (it should not be less than €550,000), as described in the budget justification, and including all proposed cost share.

²⁷ [SFI policy on Resubmission of Grant Proposals](#)

- **Total Funding Request (€)**
This field will be automatically filled when the total cost of the infrastructure request to SFI is entered in SESAME's budget template.
- **Priority Area Alignment**
Applicants should select one of the 14 Refreshed Priority Areas from the drop-down menu as the Primary Priority Area, which best describes the proposed research area that the infrastructure will be aligned to. Alternatively, applicants may select "Other". It is also possible to detail Secondary Priority Areas that the infrastructure will be relevant to.
- **Research Area (Primary)**
Applicants should select a primary SFI research area from the drop-down menu, which best describes the research area aligned with the requested infrastructure.
- **Research Area (Secondary)**
Applicants should select a secondary SFI research area from the drop-down menu, which best describes the research area aligned with of the requested infrastructure.
- **Alignment to SFI Legal Remit (max. 250 words)**
This section must be used to describe how the proposed research aligns to SFI's legal remit, as defined in Section 2.1. This statement will be used to determine the eligibility of the application.
- **Proposal Keywords (max. 15)**
Applicants should add their own (specific) research keywords that describe the research area(s) aligned to the requested infrastructure.
- **Lay Abstract (max. 150 words)**
Please provide a succinct and accurate summary of the requested infrastructure in lay, non-technical language.
- **Scientific Abstract (max. 250 words)**
Provide technical details on the infrastructure (e.g., components, function, etc.) and an overview of alignment of the infrastructure with the objectives of this call, where relevant. This should not contain confidential information.

3.5 Research Infrastructure Requests (SESAME Uploads)

3.5.1 Detailed Description of Infrastructure Request (max. 2 pages)

The detailed description of the Infrastructure Request should provide information that reviewers will need to assess the **justification of need for the infrastructure (weight 20%)**.

Please provide a detailed justification for all items of infrastructure in the proposal. Include a description of each item of infrastructure requested. Include a justification for why new or updated infrastructure is needed, including an overview of existing centralised or national research facilities. Strong justification must be provided that there is a demand for the requested infrastructure and that existing facilities have been considered. Include how the acquisition of the infrastructure will aid and develop existing research programmes. Where relevant, details pertaining to the installation or planning permission requirements of the infrastructure should also be included.

3.5.2 Detailed Description of Key Users (max. 3 pages)

The detailed description of key users should provide information that reviewers will need to assess the **potential for broad usage and access across Ireland (weight 20%)**.

Include the names of **all groups of key users** who will use the infrastructure. Using a bullet-point format, indicate how the infrastructure will enable, develop and enhance research activities for the Lead Applicant's group, and any collaborating department(s), Research Bodies and industry partners. The description of key users should highlight the potential for broad usage across Ireland.

3.5.3 Strategic Impact of Research Infrastructure Request (max. 2 pages)

The Strategic Impact Statement should be as specific as possible and provide information that reviewers will need to assess the **potential impact of the requested infrastructure (weight 40%)**.

- For **emergent areas of research**, describe how the proposed investment would enable development and provide a new opportunity for research in a key strategic area.
- Describe how the requested infrastructure will align with **institutional strategy**.
- Where relevant, describe how the infrastructure will facilitate **industrial collaboration and partnership**. Outline the relevance of the proposed investment to industry and proposed use of infrastructure by industry (both SMEs and MNCs). Please refer to the guidelines concerning State aid compliance (Sections 2.2) and include details for all arrangements with industry.
- Where relevant, describe how the infrastructure investment by SFI could be used to leverage **non-Exchequer funding, including future Horizon Europe calls**. Include any links to current European consortia.
- Include, where relevant, how the infrastructure could play a role in the recruitment of world-leading researchers.
- Include, where relevant, how the infrastructure could play a role in the development of the wider research that involve some or all of the following: IoTs/TUs, Universities, eligible SFI Research Bodies, SFI Research Centres, institutions in Northern Ireland.
- Include, where relevant, how the infrastructure would support Open Science policies, principles and activities.

Guidance in relation to impact, including information on how to prepare an impact statement, how metrics and narrative in support of impact are reported on and reviewed by SFI, as well as other useful links are found on the SFI website.²⁸

3.5.4 Management and Sustainability Plan (max. 2 pages)

The detailed description of the Management and Sustainability Plan should provide information that reviewers need to assess the **management and sustainability plan (weight 20%)**.

²⁸ <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/award-management/research-impact/>

Sustainability planning and maximum usage of equipment is a key component of the Research Infrastructure Programme 2023 call. It is expected that Research Bodies will have the ability and resources to maintain acquired items of infrastructure; this must be clearly described in the application. Applicants should also consider and include the following points where relevant:

- A realistic and manageable financial plan for long-term operation and maintenance of the infrastructure.
- Describe who will provide the specialist expertise and/or technical support that may be required to make effective use of the requested equipment. SFI requires at least one dedicated technical staff member to manage the SFI infrastructure, the details of which should be provided. Indicate whether such technical expertise is currently in place.
- Include how qualified the key users or other assigned personnel are to operate and maintain the infrastructure, conduct associated research projects, and evaluate the research results
- Include details on how new users will be trained.
- Outline the expected impact of sharing resources and how the requested infrastructure would maximise the usage of existing infrastructure. Include (approximately) the number of researchers that will benefit from the infrastructure.
- Describe the environmental impact of long-term management of the infrastructure from installation to the end of its life (max 750 words). Highlight any alternative green consumables and sustainable practices that will be considered for running the infrastructure facility. If the Infrastructure is housed in a facility with a lower environmental footprint (e.g., net-zero building, using renewable energy, an efficient heating and cooling system installed), then explain how it will help to reduce the environmental impact of running the infrastructure over the years.

3.5.5 Data Management Plan (upload; max 2 pages)

Good data governance and stewardship are key components of good research practice. Applicants to the Research Infrastructure programme are required to provide a short (2 pages) Data Management Plan (DMP) as part of their full proposal application. In preparing this plan, consideration should be given to SFI's Guidance on Data Management Plans²⁹. A DMP is a living document which details the procedures for careful handling of data and other research outputs. A DMP follows the data through the lifecycle of the programme of research³⁰, from collection to analysis and interpretation, sharing and dissemination, and long-term storage.

Data Management Plan Requirements

DMPs will be reviewed to ensure that they contain sufficient information on practices and standards as guided below; this assessment will be incorporated into the overall scoring criteria for the Research Programme section of the application. Although practices and standards vary across disciplines, SFI

²⁹ <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/open-research/SFI-DMP-Guidance-FINAL-140322.pdf>

³⁰ SFI-funded research programmes, as described in call documents, can range from a single research project to a collection of research projects encompassed in several work packages. The data management plan should reflect the relevant standards for individual research projects while describing a cohesive approach to managing data across the overall programme of research as appropriate.

recommends the use of [Science Europe DMP templates and guidelines](#). Each DMP should include the following as appropriate to the programme or project³¹:

1. Data description and collection or re-use of existing data
2. Documentation and data quality
3. Storage and backup during the research process
4. Legal and ethical requirements, codes of conduct
5. Data sharing and long-term preservation
6. Data management responsibilities and resources including institutional or project-specific resources dedicated to managing data and ensuring adherence with the [FAIR](#) principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Re-usable).

The Completed DMP should be saved as a separate [word/PDF] file and uploaded to SESAME.

3.5.6 Access Charge Plan (Optional Template provided,³² max. 1 page)

Science Foundation Ireland recognises the importance of sustainability planning to enable research bodies to maintain research infrastructure. It is therefore critical that maximum usage of infrastructure is planned, and an appropriate access charge plan is put in place.

In order to support widespread infrastructural sustainability within the Irish STEM research community, Science Foundation Ireland allows grant applications under its various programmes to include requests for infrastructure access charges to support research programme aims. However, the Foundation will only fund Research Body-managed infrastructure charges once a pre-approved access charge plan is in place.

Investigators are also advised to consult the HEA National Guidelines on Access to Research Infrastructure³³.

Applicants are required to submit an access charge plan for each item of infrastructure requested. An access charge plan should include realistic, specific and quantitative details on the anticipated usage, taking into account downtime of instruments and maintenance costs.

The access charge plan must also outline the expected rate per hour to be charged to any industry users who wish to access the infrastructure, which should correspond to market prices or be based on full economic costs plus a reasonable margin established by reference to those typically applied in the sector. Research Body contribution to the operational costs should also be factored into the access model, where applicable, so as to reduce the access charge.

³¹ [Based primarily on guidance provided by Science Europe: https://www.scienceeurope.org/our-resources/practical-guide-to-the-international-alignment-of-research-data-management/and-supplemented-by-guidance-from-the-European-Research-Council-of-the-European-Commission:https://erc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/document/file/ERC_info_document-Open_Research_Data_and_Data_Management_Plans.pdf](https://www.scienceeurope.org/our-resources/practical-guide-to-the-international-alignment-of-research-data-management/and-supplemented-by-guidance-from-the-European-Research-Council-of-the-European-Commission:https://erc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/document/file/ERC_info_document-Open_Research_Data_and_Data_Management_Plans.pdf)

³² <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/funding-calls/sfi-research-infrastructure-programme/>

³³ [Research Infrastructure: Guidelines for Access | Funding, Governance and Performance | Higher Education Authority \(hea.ie\)](https://www.heai.ie/research-infrastructure-guidelines-for-access-funding-governance-and-performance)

The access charge plan should clearly demonstrate that the resultant revenue stream from both academic and industry users will cover the operational costs of running the infrastructure and ensure its future sustainability.

Please refer to the sample access charge template, and consider the following points (where applicable):

- The purpose of this plan is to provide details on how the access charge rates (academic, industry) are calculated, and to demonstrate that the resultant revenue stream covers the operational costs of running the infrastructure (minus any exchequer funded costs).
- The plan should list all costs contributing to the *Total Gross Operating Costs* of the infrastructure in the **Category section of the table** under the sample line items *staff, materials & consumables, maintenance/service costs, and other costs*.
- Please ensure that all listed costs are eligible. The following are examples of ineligible costs:
 - Equipment Depreciation
 - Institutional overhead related costs
 - Indirect costs / overhead
 - Buildings & construction
 - Contingency or miscellaneous costs
 - Costs for conducting programmes of research
 - Access charges related to the use of the requested infrastructure
 - Costs to industry partners
 - Hospitality & entertainment costs
 - Office equipment & supplies
 - Technology transfer or patent costs
 - Conference & workshop organisation costs
 - Materials, software, maintenance charges if funded from another source (i.e. to avoid double counting).
- The plan should also list all staff required to run/maintain the infrastructure under the category line item **'Staff'** in the access charge template. All staff costs, including staff funded from institutional core funding, such as the HEA core grant, should be included in the **'Total Gross Operating Cost'** calculation.
- Exchequer-funded operational costs (e.g., core-funded staff, etc.) initially included as part of the **'Total Gross Operating Costs'** should be deducted when arriving at the **'Total Net Operating Costs'** of the infrastructure in the access charge table.
- The plan should clearly state expected **'Total Usage Hours'** taking into account breakdowns and maintenance. Equipment downtime should not be charged to the access charge plan, but rather downtime should be factored into the calculation for usable hours.
- The **'Cost per Hour'** (or per day if appropriate) for academic users must be a direct calculation based on the **'Total Net Operating Costs'** divided by the **'Total Usage Hours'**. Note that industry access charge income cannot be used to subsidise the academic rate. However, it may be used to demonstrate the overall sustainability of the infrastructure.

- Access charges based on a membership fee must also provide a justification of this fee with respect to the academic user access charge rate.
- The academic charge should be the same for all academic users regardless of their host Research Body or whether they are SFI funded.
- The '**Net Deficit/Surplus**' per annum is calculated by subtracting the 'Total Annual Charges' from the 'Total Net Operating Costs'.

Please note that, although details are not required as part of this plan, industry access charges should correspond to market prices or ensure full economic cost recovery (e.g., depreciation costs) plus a reasonable margin.

If you require additional blank pages to explain certain aspects of the access charge plan please add these to the end of the template provided.

Additional Queries

If you have any queries regarding the access charge plan process, please send them to infrastructure@sfi.ie.

ACPs should be made publicly available (openly available Access Charge Plans are critical not only to ensure fair and accurate charges for RI, but to ensure that the infrastructure is widely accessible and fosters collaboration both intra- and inter-institutionally).

Applicants should also consult with guidance on compliance with State aid rules; see Section 2.2.

Revised access charge plans may be submitted to SFI upon notification of an award. Final approval of access charge plans by SFI will take place following a funding decision and prior to the issue of a Letter of Offer.

3.5.7 Proposed Budget and Justification (Budget Template provided,³² max. 2 pages; Justification max. 1 page)

A sample budget is provided for reference on the SFI website.³⁴ Include details of all relevant costs, including VAT, delivery, installation, where relevant. Please provide a budget justification, including a detailed description of proposed cash and in-kind cost share (see Section 2.6 for details). Include how the proposed infrastructure provides value for money. See Sections 2.7 and 2.8 for details of eligible and ineligible costs, respectively.

Please also refer to the SFI Grant Terms and Conditions,³⁵ and also the Grant Budget Policy (GBP) (version March 2023).³⁶

³⁴ <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/funding-calls/sfi-research-infrastructure-programme/>

³⁵ <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/sfi-general-terms-and-conditions/>

³⁶ <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/budget-finance-related-policies/>

3.5.8 Green Procurement Plan (max 1 page)

All Equipment/Infrastructure must be acquired, in compliance with all National and EU procurement guidelines, at the least cost and upon the most competitive terms having regard to the needs of the Research Programme as to economy, time, quality, and environmental impact³⁷, and without any conflict of interest. Include a Green Procurement plan to purchase the Research Infrastructure. Describe the steps taken to ensure that the Environment Protection Agency Green Public Procurement Guidance³⁸ is followed.

3.5.9 Letters of Support (max. 2 pages for each letter)

The following letters of support **are mandatory** and should be uploaded to SESAME:

Lead Research Body

- A letter of support is required from the **Lead Research Body**. This letter should detail the employment status of the Lead Applicant, including how the Lead Applicant meets the eligibility criteria for this call as detailed in Section 2.4. The letter should comment on the infrastructure and services available to support the management of the research infrastructure request, and should include the level of financial (cash, in-kind or both) contribution to the infrastructure request. Where relevant, this letter should include details of how this investment would support the recruitment of a world-leading researcher. In order to provide the details of the required eligibility criteria, please use the table provided below. **This table must be present in the letter of support from the host Research body of Lead Applicant.**

Applicant Eligibility Criteria	Response (<i>to be filled out by research body</i>)
What is the Applicant's job title?	
Does the Applicant have a permanent contract? (Yes/No)	
If 'No', please provide the Applicant's current contract start and end dates.	
Is the Applicant recognised as an independent researcher? (Yes/No)	
Does the applicant hold, or have held, a significant peer-reviewed, independent research grant or award? (Yes/No)	
What year was the Applicant's PhD conferred?	
Does the Applicant hold a secondary appointment with another Eligible Research Body (ERB) ³⁹ or a Research Performing	

³⁷ <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/efa12-green-public-procurement-gpp/>

³⁸ <https://www.epa.ie/our-services/monitoring--assessment/circular-economy/green-public-procurement/#:~:text=What%20is%20Green%20Public%20Procurement,in%20meeting%20environmental%20policy%20objectives.>

³⁹ <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/eligibility-related-information/>

Organisation that is not an existing approved ERB and which may be non-Irish? (Yes/No)	
If 'Yes', please provide written details of the applicants employment relationship (including the type of secondary appointment held) with the other entity or entities.	

Collaborating Research Bodies

- Letters of support from up to 10 collaborating Research Bodies are mandatory. Each letter should detail how the infrastructure will enable, develop and enhance research activities, and how collaborations will be maintained. The selection of letters of support should highlight the potential for broad collaboration across the Irish Research Community. Inclusion of letters of support from collaborating research bodies is mandatory. The letters of support may be provided by the key users themselves or an institutional representative.

The following letters of support should be included where relevant and should be uploaded to SESAME:

Current EU Consortia

- Letters of support should be provided by the **lead project coordinator** of any existing and relevant consortia. The letter(s) should describe how receipt of an SFI Infrastructure award may strengthen a future Horizon Europe (or equivalent) bid.

Industry Collaborators

- Letters of support from the industrial collaborator(s) outlining financial and non-financial contributions, where relevant, should be provided. Include details of the intended intellectual input for instrumentation development or technical support to be provided. This letter is **not** required where the industry contribution does not involve collaborative research, as is the case with vendor discounts, or where it constitutes materials and consumables, supplied as an in-kind contribution. These details should be included in the quotations provided and referenced in the budget justification.
- Letters of support from potential industry users who may use the infrastructure, paying through the access charge plan, should be provided.
- Please consult with guidance concerning compliance with State aid rules (please see Section 2.2 for further details).

Northern Ireland Partnerships

- Letters of support from academic partners based in Northern Ireland should be provided. The letter(s) should describe, where relevant, how a) the infrastructure will help in the establishment and development of potential all-Ireland research infrastructure, and/or b) how the infrastructure will enhance all-Ireland research collaborations.

SFI Research Centres

- Letters of support from the **SFI Research Centre Director** should be provided, where relevant, outlining the strategic importance of the infrastructure investment to the Centre.

Philanthropic Organisations

- Letters of support from philanthropic organisations where a cash contribution has been provided, outlining the reasons for the contribution, should be provided.

3.5.10 Vendor Quotes

For all individual requests, the quote numbers and full cost must be uploaded to SESAME. Quotations from at least **two** vendors must be supplied and uploaded as a single PDF document.

3.6 Research Body Approval

Submissions must only be made by an authorised Research Body representative. In particular, the Lead Research Body is approving:

- The proposals to be put forward for submission
- The eligibility of the Lead Applicant
- That the Lead Applicant is recognised as an employee of the Research Body for the duration of the grant
- That the requested budget items are in line with accepted institutional guidelines
- The availability of infrastructure within the institution, as outlined by the applicant in the research proposal
- That the proposed research infrastructure has not been funded by other sources
- That relevant ethical approval (where required) has been or will be sought and must be granted prior to the award commencing
- That the relevant licences will be in place at the time of award
- That the details provided in relation to research funding history (i.e., current, pending or expired grants, as detailed in the application) are valid and accurate
- That permission from all collaborators has been obtained
- That there is an appropriate accounting structure in place to ensure that usage of the infrastructure complies with State aid rules

3.7 Applicant Agreement to Terms and Conditions

It should be noted that submission of an application represents an agreement from the applicant to SFI's Grant General Terms and Conditions (GT&Cs).⁴⁰ Applications that fail to comply with the above terms and conditions, or with requirements outlined in this call document, will not be eligible and will be withdrawn without review.

3.8 Proposal Submission

A PDF of the proposal is available in SESAME and should be reviewed prior to submission to enable validation of an application. The responsibility for verifying that the proposal is ready for submission lies with the **Lead Applicant** in this regard. A submission is made initially to the Research Office of the Lead Applicant for approval, prior to final submission by the Research Office to SFI.

⁴⁰ <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/sfi-general-terms-and-conditions/>

Please contact the Research Office well in advance in order to become familiar with any internal Research Body submission deadlines.

**After the Full Proposal submission deadline, applications will not be accepted by SESAME.
Therefore, they will not be reviewed by SFI.**

Applicants will receive a notification from SESAME periodically when the status of their proposal changes. Alternatively, the status of a proposal (e.g., where a proposal is pending Research Office approval or is under review at SFI) is displayed in SESAME.

4 Review Process

Expression of Interest

The Expressions of Interest documents submitted to SFI are for information purposes only and will not be peer reviewed.

Full Proposal Review

All eligible proposals will be assessed by international peer reviewers under the review criteria described below. These criteria will be applied at each stage of the review process.

- **Justification of Need (weight: 20%)**
 - The strength of the justification of need of the infrastructure
 - Demonstration that the infrastructure is not readily available and accessible
 - Demonstration that the infrastructure is cutting-edge and innovative
 - The value for money of the potential investment in the requested infrastructure
 - The technical validity of the infrastructure to achieve the stated research activities
- **Potential for broad usage and access across Ireland (weight: 20%)**
 - Quality of the plans for broad usage of the infrastructure
 - Potential for meaningful partnerships and collaborations across Ireland that involve some or all of the following: IoTs/TUs, Universities, eligible SFI Research Bodies,⁴¹ SFI Research Centres, institutions in Northern Ireland
- **Strategic Impact (weight: 40%)**
 - Potential long-term benefits and impacts of the proposed infrastructure to enhance the current research activities of SFI-funded researchers in Ireland
 - Contribution to the research strategy of the Lead Research Body and any collaborating Research Bodies
 - Potential for leveraging non-Exchequer funding (e.g., future Horizon Europe calls)
 - Proposed industry usage of infrastructure (both SMEs and MNCs)
 - Potential for supporting the recruitment of world-leading researchers

⁴¹ <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/eligibility-related-information/>

- **Management and Sustainability (weight: 20%)**
 - Quality of sustainability and management plans
 - Quality of access charge plans
 - Negotiation with suppliers for discounts
 - Maintenance and technical support
 - Inclusion of industry cost share
 - Demonstration that the infrastructure follows Green Procurement
 - Quality of the infrastructure environmental impact statement
 - Quality of Data Management Plan

Reviewers engaged by SFI are required to abide by the SFI Reviewer Code of Conduct.⁴² The submission of an application to SFI shall be construed as consent by the applicant(s) to participate in the peer-review process. SFI reserves the right to return applications **without review where they do not meet the eligibility criteria**. A schematic of the review process is provided below. Full details on the review process are provided in Appendix A.

Other Review Information

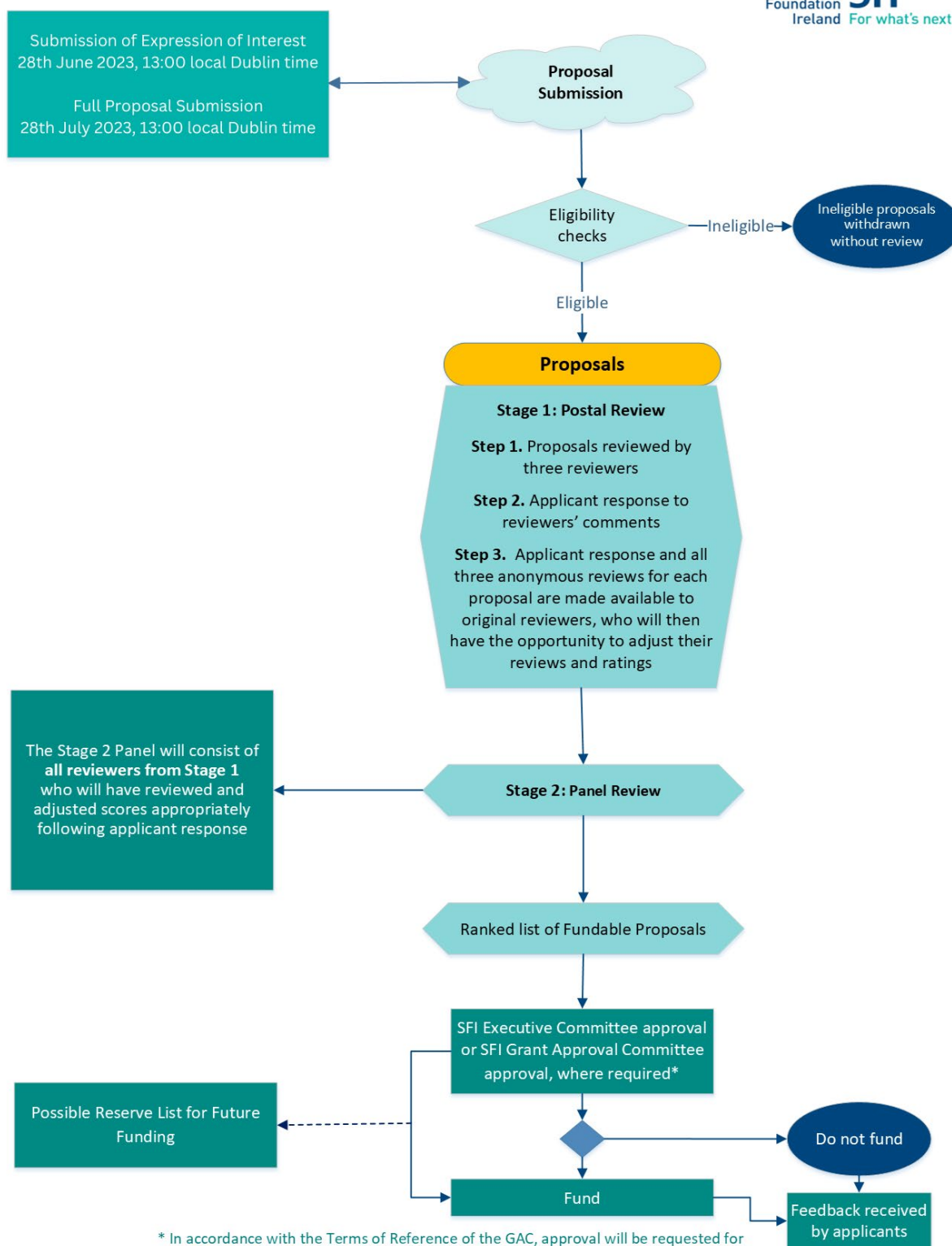
The identity of international experts who conduct reviews shall remain confidential and will not be disclosed to the applicants. SFI shall not be liable for the release of information concerning proposals to third parties by those international peer reviewers involved in the merit review process.

SFI reserves the right to modify the review process. Applicants will be notified of any relevant modification to the review procedure. The final funding decisions are at the sole and exclusive discretion of SFI. Applications deemed to be sufficiently excellent, but which cannot be supported due to the lack of available budget, may be placed on a reserve list and may eventually be supported should additional funds be secured at a later date.

Should circumstances arise, SFI reserves the right to modify the review process. Applicants will be notified of any relevant modifications. The final funding decisions are at the sole and exclusive discretion of SFI.

⁴² <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/review/>

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* In accordance with the Terms of Reference of the GAC, approval will be requested for recommendations where the amount of SFI funding is above the delegated authority of the SFI Executive (greater than €250,000 per annum).

5 Award Management

5.1 Reporting Requirements

Through SFI's funding programmes, the State has made a significant investment in scientific research. As such, it is the responsibility of SFI to monitor the progress and outcomes of all the funding it administers. All SFI grant holders are required to report on outputs and impacts arising from their research programme for the duration of their award and for up to five years after the award end (close) date. SFI reserves the right to request reporting beyond five years, if deemed appropriate. The progress reporting requirements for awards made under the SFI Research Infrastructure Programme include the completion of SFI Research Outputs and annual/final reports.

Specific guidance for reporting on SFI Research Infrastructure awards can be found on the SFI website.⁴³ SFI Research Infrastructure awards may also be subject to a financial audit and/or operational review as part of the post-award management and oversight procedures, as per SFI's General Terms and Conditions.

The **Lead Applicant** named against each infrastructure award has primary responsibility and accountability for the management of the award, including all associated reporting, in accordance with SFI General Terms and Conditions. Where the Lead Applicant is unable to continue in this role, an alternative investigator must be nominated by the Research Body and approval must be sought from SFI in advance of this change. While the **Lead Applicant** has primary responsibility for reporting, the **Lead Research Body** is required to ensure that the Lead Applicant complies with all necessary reporting requirements within the timeframes specified by SFI.

6 SFI Policies and Positions

SFI Policies and Positions

In addition to complying with the GT&Cs, applicants are expected to be familiar and consult with SFI policies/positions and with all relevant national policies when preparing their application to any SFI programme. All members involved in the funded research should be apprised of the following non-exhaustive list of relevant policies, which may be revised from time to time:

Clinical Trials

Research programmes that include clinical trials as part of the study (see Section 5.6) must adhere to the **SFI Clinical Trial and Clinical Investigation Policy**,⁴⁴ as well as with the requirements set out by the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA).

⁴³ <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/award-management/reporting-procedures/Research-Infrastructure-Reporting-Guidelines.pdf>

⁴⁴ <http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/ethical-and-scientific-issues/>

Animal Usage

Applicants intending to use animals in their research projects are obliged to comply with the **SFI Use of Animals in Research Policy**,⁴⁵ and should also ensure that their studies align with the HRPAs position on the use of animals in research.

Research Integrity

SFI places paramount importance on ensuring that the highest standards of research integrity underpin all aspects of the research that it supports. To this end, SFI endorses the **National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland**⁴⁶; that is, all institutions and SFI award holders are expected to abide by this statement and the **European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity**,⁴⁷ in addition to their respective institutional policies and procedures for handling research misconduct allegations.

Doctoral Education

For postgraduate students funded by SFI, the host Research Body is expected to adopt the principles, standards and good practice for doctoral education described in the **National Framework for Doctoral Education (2015)**,⁴⁸ which SFI has endorsed.

Intellectual Property Management

Intellectual Property (IP) should be managed according to the policies set out in the Government publication: **Ireland's National IP Protocol 2019** and must comply with State aid Regulations.⁴⁹ The IP arrangements are the responsibility of the Research Body and shall reflect the collaborative nature of the project and the level of cash and in-kind commitment made by the Industry Partner. IP arrangements should be explicitly described in collaborative research agreements (CRAs).

Gender Strategy

Research should fully consider potential biological sex and socio-cultural gender dimensions as key analytical and explanatory variables. As articulated in the **SFI Gender Strategy (Strand 3: Integrating Gender in Research and Innovation)**⁵⁰, applicants are advised to demonstrate that they have considered any potential sex/gender aspects in their proposed research programme.

In the SFI Strategy 2025 Shaping Our Future,⁵¹ targets are set for 35% of SFI's funded leadership positions (PIs & Co-PIs) to be women and for research teams to be composed of at least 40% of the underrepresented genders by 2025. As such, applicants should consider and describe how these targets can be achieved at all levels of the research team.

⁴⁵ http://www.sfi.ie/resources/SFI-Policy-on-the-Use-of-Animals-in-Research_June_2016.pdf

⁴⁶ <https://www.iua.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/National-Policy-Statement-on-Ensuring-Research-Integrity-in-Ireland.pdf>

⁴⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/european-code-of-conduct-for-research-integrity_horizon_en.pdf

⁴⁸ http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/04/national_framework_for_doctoral_education_0.pdf

⁴⁹ <http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/national-policies-sfi-positions/>

⁵⁰ <https://www.sfi.ie/research-news/publications/SFI-Gender-Strategy-2016-2020.pdf>

⁵¹ <https://www.sfi.ie/strategy/>

Maternity Supplement

SFI is committed to removing and mitigating any existing or perceived factors that may limit the participation of women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) careers. SFI invites its award holders to apply for a supplemental discretionary allowance to support their SFI-funded award when either an SFI Awardee or a team member, including PhD students funded by an SFI award, takes a period of maternity or adoptive leave.⁵²

Appeals Process

The Appeals Process Policy establishes procedures and responsibilities for the appeal of the declination of a proposal by SFI.⁵³

State Aid

All SFI funding granted under this call will be subject to, and must comply with, State aid law. As such, proposals must be designed to ensure that any funding received from SFI does not, directly or indirectly, give rise to the granting of State aid. Applicants are referred to the guidance provided by the European Commission in Section 2 of its **2022 Framework for State aid for research and development and innovation (2022/C 414/01)**⁵⁴ and that which has been developed by Knowledge Transfer Ireland.⁵⁵ If in any doubt as to the interpretation or application of this guidance, applicants are advised to seek independent legal advice.

Child Protection

Where relevant, applicants and Research Bodies are required to comply with the provisions of the **Children First Act 2015**,⁵⁶ and the **National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017**.⁵⁷ It is the responsibility of the Research Body to ensure that they are compliant with all applicable law.

Data Protection Policy

The General Data Protection Regulation⁵⁸ is a legal framework that sets out guidelines for the collection and processing of personal information of individuals within the European Union.⁵⁹ Applicants are advised that they must be compliant with this regulation if they collect or process personal data.

SFI may collect, use and disclose personal data provided in the application and/or otherwise obtained under, or in connection with, the application for processing the submission, for the performance of its statutory powers and functions, and for the general activities of SFI. Further details regarding SFI's collection, use and disclosure of personal data, and the rights of individuals with respect to any personal data held by SFI, are available in the **SFI Privacy Statement**.⁶⁰

⁵² <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/gender/>

⁵³ <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/review/>

⁵⁴ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2022.414.01.0001.01.ENG

⁵⁵ <https://www.knowledgetransferireland.com/Model-Agreements/Practical-Guides/Practical-Guide-to-State-Aid-Considerations-in-Research-Development-and-Innovation-for-RPOs-and-Industry.pdf>

⁵⁶ <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2015/act/36/enacted/en/pdf>

⁵⁷ https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Children_First_National_Guidance_2017.pdf

⁵⁸ <https://www.dataprotection.ie/>

⁵⁹ <https://www.eugdpr.org/>

⁶⁰ <http://www.sfi.ie/privacy/>

During peer review procedures, information may be sent to external experts in countries outside of the European Economic Area, including countries that are not recognised by the European Commission as having adequate data protection laws. By submitting an application to SFI, the Research Body and members of the Research Team are agreeing that they consent to the processing and transfer of personal information in this way.

During the application process or at any time thereafter, SFI may contact the Research Body, the Principal Investigator, or any member of the Research Team with regard to funding opportunities, activities or events organised by SFI or other relevant bodies, or for the purposes of monitoring and evaluation (including, but not limited to, the collection of scientific data or data relating to the application process). SFI may choose to authorise a third party to contact the Research Body, the Principal Investigator or any member of the Research Team on its behalf.

Conflict of Interest

SFI recognises that applicants may have a prior relationship with an industry partner engaged in an application for funding to SFI (e.g., industry consultancy role, founder of an academic spin-out company) which may be perceived as a conflict of interest. Where a potential conflict of interest exists, SFI requires that it is disclosed by the applicant to SFI and their Research Body and that any such situations are managed by the Research Body in accordance with the principles and mandates laid out in **Ireland's National IP Protocol 2019**.⁶¹

Open access

In line with the principles espoused by Plan S⁶² and as a signatory of the National Action Plan for Open Research 2022-30⁶³, SFI is committed to ensuring that all publicly funded research articles are openly available. Where a research publication arises in whole or in part from SFI-funded research (i.e., where at least one of the researchers concerned receives SFI funds in support of their endeavours), the researcher(s) should adhere to **SFI's Open Access policy**.⁶⁴ SFI monitors compliance with this policy through scientific and financial reporting, financial audits and other reviews, and data gathered through Research Outputs.

Data Management

Good data governance and stewardship are key components of good research practice. Science Foundation Ireland is part of an initiative for the voluntary international alignment of research data management policies.⁶⁵ Applicants may find it helpful to consult with this and Science Europe's framework for discipline-specific research data management if preparing a data management plan as part of their application for funding to SFI.⁶⁶ Applicants should review individual programme funding call requirements regarding data management plans and timelines as to when they are required to be submitted.

⁶¹ <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/national-policies-sfi-positions/>

⁶² <https://www.coalition-s.org/addendum-to-the-coalition-s-guidance-on-the-implementation-of-plan-s/principles-and-implementation/>

⁶³ <https://norf.ie>

⁶⁴ <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/open-research/>

⁶⁵ <https://www.scienceeurope.org/our-resources/practical-guide-to-the-international-alignment-of-research-data-management/>

⁶⁶ <https://www.scienceeurope.org/our-resources/guidance-document-presenting-a-framework-for-discipline-specific-research-data-management/>

Current SFI policies and positions are reviewed on a regular basis; applicants are advised to consult the policy information in advance of submission of a proposal.

7 Further Information

All information related to the SFI Research Infrastructure Programme is available on the programme webpage:

<https://www.sfi.ie/funding/funding-calls/sfi-research-infrastructure-programme/>

For all additional queries please contact: infrastructure@sfi.ie

Appendix A: SFI Research Infrastructure Programme Review Process

The review criteria and weighting detailed in Section 4 will be applied at all stages of the review process. In addition, a weighting and scoring system will also be applied.

Review Criteria	Weighting (%)
Justification of Need of Infrastructure	20
Potential for Broad Usage and Access across Ireland	20
Strategic Impact	40
Management & Sustainability	20
Total	100

Weighted scores will be rounded to the nearest half point.⁶⁷

All proposals submitted to the SFI Research Infrastructure programme will be assessed for eligibility; proposals meeting the eligibility requirements will be reviewed as outlined below.

Both stages of the review process will be carried out by the same international expert panel.

Stage 1 Review

The assessment will be carried out remotely by a number of international reviewers. All proposals will receive a minimum of three reviews.

Review Type	SFI Research Infrastructure Stage 1 Review SFI Research Infrastructure Stage 2 Review
Review Questions	<p>1. Question pertaining to Justification of Need</p> <p>Please review the detailed description of infrastructure request and comment on the justification of need of the requested infrastructure.</p> <p>In your assessment, please consider: whether the requested infrastructure is cutting-edge and innovative; whether the technical validity of the infrastructure to achieve the stated research activity/activities; whether the requested infrastructure will provide value for money; and whether the applicant has demonstrated that similar infrastructure is not readily available and accessible locally and/or nationally.</p> <p>Half scores are permitted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 = Very poor justification of the need for the requested infrastructure 2 = Poor justification of the need for the requested infrastructure

⁶⁷ SFI reserves the right to adjust this rounding based on the number of applications received. Applicants will be made aware of any changes to the review process.

- 3 = Good justification of the need for the requested infrastructure
- 4 = Strong justification of the need for the requested infrastructure
- 5 = Very strong justification of the need for the requested infrastructure

2. Question pertaining to Potential for Broad Collaboration across the Irish Research Community

Please review the list of key users and letters of support from collaborating Research Bodies and comment on the potential for broad collaboration across the Irish Research Community. In your assessment, please consider: whether the applicant has convincingly described that the infrastructure has the potential for broad usage across Ireland; and whether the applicant has demonstrated the potential for meaningful collaborations with Universities, IoTs/TUs, institutions in Northern Ireland, other eligible Research Bodies and SFI Research Centres.

Half scores are permitted.

- 1 = Very poor potential for broad collaboration
- 2 = Poor potential for broad collaboration
- 3 = Good potential for broad collaboration
- 4 = Strong potential for broad collaboration
- 5 = Very strong potential for broad collaboration

3. Question pertaining to Strategic Impact

Please review the Impact Statement prepared by the lead applicant and comment on the potential strategic impact of the infrastructure.

In your assessment, please consider: whether the proposed infrastructure has the potential for long-term benefits and impacts in enhancing the current research activities of SFI-funded researchers in Ireland; how the infrastructure investment could be used to leverage non-Exchequer funding (e.g. future Horizon Europe funding); potential for supporting the recruitment of world-leading researchers; the proposed industry usage of infrastructure (both SMEs and MNCs), and how the requested infrastructure has the potential to build on institutional or national strategy.

Half scores are permitted.

- 1 = Very low strategic impact potential
- 2 = Low strategic impact potential
- 3 = Good strategic impact potential
- 4 = High strategic impact potential
- 5 = Very high strategic impact potential

Please rate the applicant's ability to demonstrate the potential impact and value to Ireland (half scores are permitted)

4. Question pertaining to Management and Sustainability

Please review the management and sustainability plan and access charge plan(s) and comment on their quality.

In your assessment, please consider: the overall quality of the management and sustainability plans; the overall quality of the access charge plans; whether the application demonstrates negotiation with suppliers for discounts; whether maintenance and technical support is included; whether industry cost share is included; whether applicant demonstrate that Green

	<p>Procurement Guidelines is followed; and the quality of the infrastructure environmental impact statement.</p> <p>Data Management Plan Drawing upon your subject matter expertise, please indicate whether the data management plan (DMP) is sufficient or insufficient (lack of information or deemed incorrect).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the data management plan sufficient? Yes / No • If the data management plan is not sufficient, please explain. <p>Half scores are permitted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 = Very poor quality management and sustainability plans • 2 = Poor quality management and sustainability plans • 3 = Good quality management and sustainability plans • 4 = Very good quality management and sustainability plans • 5 = Outstanding management and sustainability plans
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Applicant Response

Following Stage 1 review, anonymised reviewer comments will be made available to all applicants who will be afforded the opportunity to submit a **response** to the reviewer comments. Applicants will be given a defined period of time in which to respond (advanced notice of dates and guidelines relating to the response will be indicated to applicants).

Stage 2 Review

The international reviewers who have provided reviews at Stage 1 will also participate in a **remote sitting panel** at Stage 2. Prior to commencement of the panel, reviewers will receive the written reviews and scores from all reviewers, and the applicant's response. The panel will discuss each proposal in detail, agree on final scores and make a funding recommendation.

Weighted scores will be rounded to the nearest half point.⁴³ When ranking applications, in the event of applications receiving the same final score, SFI will give priority to applications with the highest score for the **Potential for (Broad) Collaboration across the Irish Research Community**. For those applications which have the same score, SFI may use a randomisation/lottery process and/or additional tiebreakers. SFI also reserves the right to change the level of rounding, depending on the number and quality of applications. Applicants and Research Offices will be made aware of any changes to the review process.

SFI will fund down the ranked lists until the programme funding is exhausted. Applicants will receive the panel's report as feedback.