SCIENCE FOUNDATION IRELAND

SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme 2024

Call for Submission of Proposals

Key Dates

Call launch:	December 20th 2023
FFP Project proposal submission:	**Fixed Deadline:** April 25th 2024, 13.00 Dublin local time
FFP Award proposal submission:	**Rolling Call:** Open

Call document updated on 20th December 2023

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 Act 2014.

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1 Introduction

The Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) Frontiers for the Future Programme (FFP) supports the development of world-class research capability and human capital in areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) that demonstrably support and underpin enterprise competitiveness and societal development in Ireland. The purpose of this funding scheme is to provide opportunities for independent investigators to conduct highly innovative, collaborative research with the potential to deliver impact, whilst also providing discrete opportunities for high-risk, high-reward research projects.

As described in SFI's External Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy 2023-2028[1], SFI is committed to increasing the number of SFI grants held by woman researchers. Towards achieving this goal, the Frontiers for the Future Programme provides additional supports for excellent woman researchers to secure funding. The programme also provides additional opportunities for "Emerging Investigators" who have taken periods of leave from their research careers or who have not previously held a significant SFI grant.[2]

The SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme provides funding for independent researchers through two streams – Frontiers for the Future Programme **Projects** and Frontiers for the Future Programme **Awards:**

- **Frontiers for the Future Projects** provide funding for high-risk, high-reward research that facilitates highly innovative and novel approaches to research.
- **Frontiers for the Future Awards** provide larger-scale funding for innovative, collaborative and excellent research programmes that have the potential to deliver economic and societal impact.

Applicants can apply for either an SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme **Project** or an SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme **Award**, subject to all programme eligibility criteria being met. The funding levels and durations are summarised here:

SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme		
	FFP Projects	**FFP Awards**
Deadline	**Fixed Deadline:** April 25th 2024, 13.00 Dublin local time	**Rolling Call:** Open
Amount	€200,000 - €600,000 (direct costs)	€600,000 - €1,500,000 (direct costs)
Duration	24, 36 or 48 months	48 or 60 months

[1] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/gender/
[2] Defined in Section 2.4

Awards Stream Submissions: Important - Please Read

Awards stream submissions will be accepted until further notice.

If you have an existing application in preparation, you **do not** need to restart the application process, but you must consult **this call document** to ensure that updates in policies and conditions are met in your submission.

If you have any questions, please contact FFP@sfi.ie

Objectives of the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme

- To build research capacity, expertise and reputation through funding excellent scientific research
- To fund highly innovative Awards with strong potential for economic and societal impact and to provide the opportunity to conduct high-risk, high-reward Projects
- To provide additional supports for excellent woman researchers to secure funding
- To retain and improve Ireland's reputation as a place to carry out excellent research
- To facilitate researchers based in Ireland to lead consortia and to win further support through various non-Exchequer funding schemes
- To allow Ireland-based researchers to win top-tier international prizes
- To develop an integrated research ecosystem through partnerships with other agencies
- To support the growth and development of research capacity for the Technological University and Institute of Technology sector
- To support relevant collaborations and partnerships, and attract talent from outside of the Republic of Ireland
- To support researchers returning to active academic research after a period of eligible leave

Frontiers for the Future supports the SFI Strategy 2025 – Shaping Our Future[3] – by funding excellent research and talent underpinning tangible benefits for our society and economy. Frontiers for the Future also supports the national research and innovation strategy *Impact 2030.* Both strategies see SFI working within the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation, and Science (DFHERIS), and across other Departments and agencies, to foster a cohesive research and innovation ecosystem that will support Ireland's global competitiveness. SFI's ambition is to deliver for Ireland by attracting and developing more top talent, supporting collaboration, and building on Ireland's exceptional research base. At the same time, SFI's actions will prepare Ireland for tomorrow by developing the future skills needed to support our economy and society. 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[4]. The national research and innovation strategy Impact 2030 continues to focus Ireland's research efforts on areas most likely to have strongest economic and societal impact through the research priority areas identified in the Research Prioritisation Exercise. Until further notice, proposals to this call must either be aligned to one of the 14 Refreshed Priority Research Areas for 2018-2023[5] or to any other area of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics where there

[3] https://www.sfi.ie/strategy/SFI-Strategy-2025.pdf
[4] https://www.sfi.ie/about-us/about-sfi/what-we-do/
[5] https://dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Research-Priority-Areas-2018-to-2023.pdf

is convincing evidence that there will be significant potential for economic and/or societal impact. See Section 2.2 for details on the programme remit.

As part of our cohesive, collaborative and innovative research ecosystem goals, the Frontiers for the Futures call involves the participation of the Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI), the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) and the Children's Health Foundation (CHF) as co-funding partners. The research topics of interest under this call and the specific objectives of these partnerships are described in Section 2.2.

As was the case in the previous Frontiers for the Future Programme calls, woman candidates are strongly encouraged to apply to this funding call, and we encourage applicants to consider SFI's EDI Strategy outlined below:

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy

The SFI Strategy: *Shaping Our Future* underscores SFI's commitment to building equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) within the Irish research and innovation sector.[6] SFI recognises that excellent research stems from diverse and inclusive teams, which reflect our society and the communities we serve. As such, SFI aspires to proactively lead in driving the EDI agenda forward through the research and research teams that it funds.

In SFI's External Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy 2023-2028[7], increasing the number of women and members of Historically Underserved Communities[8] in Applicant Teams are key objectives. As such, women and members of Historically Underserved Communities are strongly encouraged to apply to this programme. Further details on SFI's data on application submission and success rates by gender (binary) can be found on the SFI website.[9]

Whilst gender data fields on the SFI Grants and Awards Management System, SESAME, have been expanded to encompass more inclusive gender identifiers, SFI has decided to continue with the objective of increasing the representation of women in the higher education sector for the purpose of this Frontiers for the Future Programme Call. Therefore, the gender tiebreak criterion previously deployed, which has been successful in meeting this objective, has been retained for this Call.

As such, when ranking applications, in the event of applications receiving the same final score, SFI will give priority in the review process to applications from woman lead applicants.

SFI acknowledges the limitations of focusing on gender in the binary, particularly in the context of meeting the needs of the community and meeting those objectives described in SFI's External EDI Strategy, which aims to be a key driver of an inclusive research culture, lead in minimising barriers to participation in the research endeavour, and ensure that its investment reflects the input of researchers that are representative of society, and thus the outputs are relevant to society. Gender

[6] https://www.sfi.ie/strategy/SFI-Strategy-2025.pdf
[7] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/gender/SFI-External-Equality-Diversity-and-Inclusion-Strategy-2023-2028.pdf
[8] For the purposes of this Strategy, Historically Underserved Community encompasses a broad and diverse range of historically marginalised groups including but not limited to the nine protected grounds established in the Equal Status Acts 2000-2018 and socioeconomic status.
[9] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/gender/

data gathered will inform the diversity of the applicant group. It will help to inform future iterations of this and similar programme calls. The data gathered will also inform how we can best improve the representation of other Historically Underserved Communities, including individuals from underrepresented genders, in our portfolio of grants awarded. Consultations will be undertaken with the community as we adapt the gender quotas and tiebreaker approaches to ensure they are fit for purpose and providing the supports anticipated.

Furthermore, as part of its EDI Strategy, SFI also aims to increase awareness of the sex and gender dimension in research, by requesting that researchers demonstrate that they have considered any potential biological sex and/or socio-cultural gender aspects in their proposed research programme.

SFI became a signatory of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)[10] in 2019 and, as such, is aligning 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.[11] 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 impact factors and h-index. In the spirit of supporting open research and as a signatory of Plan S,[12] 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.[13] To complement these activities and further reinforce SFI's commitment to the overarching objectives of the Narrative CV, during 2022, SFI became a signatory to the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment[14] and thus became a member of the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA).[15]

1.1 Proposal Checklist

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

[10] https://sfdora.org/read/
[11] Contributor level membership
[12] https://www.coalition-s.org/
[13] https://norf.ie/national-action-plan/
[14] https://coara.eu/app/uploads/2022/09/2022_07_19_rra_agreement_final.pdf
[15] https://coara.eu/

PROPOSAL CHECKLIST		
SECTION	**DESCRIPTION**	**REQUIREMENTS**
Proposal Summary	Title	Up to 30 words
	Are you applying for an SFI-CHF collaboration? (Projects Only)	Selected Yes or No
	Duration of Award Requested	**Projects:** 24, 36 or 48 months **Awards:** 48 or 60 months
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
	ORCID iD	Link SESAME profile to ORCID iD
	Percentage Time Commitment	Insert time commitment
	Narrative CV	Max. 5 pages (use template provided)
	Joint Appointment	Select **Yes** or **No** Details required if 'Yes'.
	Indicate if applying under the Emerging Investigator category	Select **Yes** or **No**
	Emerging Investigator: copies of relevant supporting docs	Applicants applying under the Emerging Investigator category should provide a statement detailing how they are eligible to apply under the category and scanned copies of supporting documents detailing periods of leave or time spent in industry, where relevant.
	Supervisory Experience	Enter details
	Research Funding History	Enter details
Co-Applicant details	Complete mandatory SESAME Profile information	Mandatory profile fields marked in red
	ORCID iD	Link SESAME profile to ORCID iD
	Percentage Time Commitment	Insert time commitment
	Narrative CV	Max. 5 pages (use template provided)
	Joint Appointment	Select **Yes** or **No** Details required if 'Yes'.
	Supervisory Experience	Enter details
	Research Funding History	Enter details
Collaborator(s) details	Name/Contact details etc.	Add contact name, details etc.
	CV for each collaborator, including Mentor (SFI recommends using the 2-page Narrative CV template provided)	Upload CVs (max. 2 pages)

	Letters of support also required (see Section 3.11)	(max. 2 pages)
Main Body of Proposal	Keywords	Max. 15 words
	Scientific Abstract	Max. 200 words
	Lay Abstract	Max. 100 words
Ethical Issues and Sex/Gender Dimension in Research	Answer questions regarding ethical issues (Use of Animals, Research involving Human Participants, Biological Material or Identifiable Data)	Select relevant answers
	Sex & Gender Dimension in Research Statement	Max. 1000 words
Budget	Details of all relevant costs	Budget Table in SESAME
	Upload the budget justification	Max. 3 pages
Programme Documents	Research Programme	**Projects:** Max. 8 pages **Awards:** Max. 15 pages
	Research Programme References	Max. 5 pages
	Data Management Plan	Max. 2 pages
	Impact Statement	Max. 3 pages
Infrastructure, facilities, services and space to be provided by Research Body	Description of the infrastructure, facilities, services and space provided by Research Body	Max. 1 Page
Letter(s) of Support	Host Research Body of the Lead Applicant (and Co-Applicant if in the same Research Body)	Max. 2 pages
	Host Research Body of Co-Applicant(s) if in a different Research Body	Max. 2 pages
	Collaborators (Academic, Industry, Mentor)	Max. 2 pages (Each)
Excluded Reviewers	Up to three individuals may be excluded from reviewing the proposal ***(Awards only)***	

2 Programme Details

2.1 Funding

SFI Frontiers for the Future Projects budgets are in the range of €200,000 to €600,000 in total direct costs and have a duration of 24, 36 or 48 months. **SFI Frontiers for the Future Awards** will generally be in the range of €600,000 to €1,000,000 in total direct costs and have a duration of 48 or 60 months. Applications for funding in excess of €1,000,000 are welcomed only where the applicant is relocating to an Eligible Research Body, or where an applicant has recently moved to a new Eligible Research Body (see Section 3.9 for more details).

2.2 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.[16] **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 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*".

For this call, and until further notice, proposals must either be aligned to one of the 14 Refreshed Priority Research Areas from 2018-2023[17] or to any other area of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics where there is convincing evidence that there will be significant potential for economic and/or societal impact.

Co-Funding Partnerships

Children's Health Foundation

SFI and the Children's Health Foundation (CHF) continue to fund novel collaborative paediatric research projects that will significantly improve the understanding of the underlying causes, diagnosis or treatment of childhood diseases and support further growth and development of paediatric research in Children's Health Ireland (CHI) and throughout Ireland.

The partnership between SFI and CHF aims to build meaningful collaborations between clinicians in CHI and its network centres, and academic partners in order to develop and deliver innovative, excellent, academic paediatric research that will have meaningful impact for Irish children and their families.

Applicant(s) must apply specifically for funding through this partnership as there are specific requirements for this application process. Please consult **Appendix B** for further details.

[16] https://www.sfi.ie/about-us/about-sfi/what-we-do/
[17] https://dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Research-Priority-Areas-2018-to-2023.pdf

Geological Survey Ireland and the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland

Frontiers for the Future 2024 includes a co-funding partnership with the Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) and the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). This partnership is based on alignments to research topics that are of particular significance to the research objectives of GSI and SEAI (see table below). Following the submission of proposals, SFI will reach agreement with GSI and SEAI on which proposals may be supported through the partnerships. All applications that potentially align to the research topics outlined by GSI or SEAI will be considered for support under the partnership. There is no requirement for applicants to indicate specifically that funding through the partnership is sought. Partnership and non-partnership applications to this call will be treated the same, with respect to the review process.

Geological Survey Suirbhéireacht Gheolaíochta Ireland | Éireann	The co-funding partnership with the Geological Survey of Ireland aims to support excellent scientific research that has potential economic and societal impact. The SFI-GSI Partnership applies to the geoscience topic areas listed below. Successful grants under these areas are expected to improve our understanding and/or management of Earth systems and natural resources. • Raw materials • Soil health • Coastal geoscience • Geohazards • Geochemistry • Geophysics • Groundwater • Earth observation • Geotechnical engineering • Application of machine learning/AI to geological datasets • The geological climate record • Geothermal energy
seai SUSTAINABLE ENERGY AUTHORITY OF IRELAND	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: • Wind energy • Smart buildings • Decarbonising heat • Smart grids

	• Transport • Offshore / Ocean • Energy efficiency • Emerging technologies

By submitting an application to the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme, an applicant 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.

2.3 State Aid and SFI Grant Funding

As per SFI's Grant Conditions (inclusive of SFI's General Terms and Conditions,[18] Letters of Offer and SFI policy documents[19]), all SFI funding granted is subject to, and must be compliant with, State aid legislation based on Article 107(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).[20]

Namely, research activities undertaken as part of a Grant awarded under the SFI Frontiers for the Future programme, and agreed to subject to SFI's Grant Conditions, must be "non-economic" in nature and be designed to ensure that any funding received does not, directly or indirectly, give rise to the granting of State aid.

Where an application for funding involves an 'undertaking'[21] or industry party, recipients of Grant funding under the SFI Frontiers for the Future programme are required to demonstrate compliance with the conditions of "effective collaboration" and that the conditions relating to the allocation between the parties of the results and/or intellectual property rights arising from the collaboration comply with one of the conditions set out in paragraphs 29 ad 30 (as appropriate) of the2022 Framework for State aid for research, development and innovation (2022/C 414/01) (the "Framework").[22] SFI has set out guidance to support how the programme of research or project is developed and undertaken in accordance with these conditions. See 'Guidance on State aid for applicants to, and recipients of, SFI Grant funding' for further information.[23] Where a proposed programme of research activities involves a collaboration with an industry party or "undertaking",[21] for all or part of the term of the Grant, applicants must demonstrate compliance with the conditions of "effective collaboration" and complete an "Industry Collaboration Form" (ICF). The ICF is used to assist applicants in defining the relationship with the relevant industry partners in order to comply with the conditions of "effective collaboration".

SFI requires that the ICF is completed and returned to SFI on or before the date that the Collaborative Research (or Intellectual Property Rights) Agreement (CRA) has been 'agreed' with, or signed by, the relevant partner(s). A copy of each CRA arising from the Grant must be held on file by the relevant Research Body. SFI may request a copy of the signed CRA to be provided (as advised in the Grant Terms and Conditions) and held on file by SFI for audit purposes. Further information on the role of the CRA and SFI's ex-post State aid verification checks (i.e., on-going checks after the granting of funds / partial funds) can be found in 'Guidance on State aid for applicants to, and recipients of, SFI Grant funding,

[18] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/sfi-general-terms-and-conditions/
[19] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/
[20] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52016XC0719(05)&from=EN
[21] The concept of an "undertaking" under EU competition law rules is an entity that is engaged in an "economic activity" regardless of its legal status or the way that it is financed. An activity is economic in nature when it involves offering goods or services on a market.
[22] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2022.414.01.0001.01.ENG
[23] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/state-aid

on the SFI website.[24] The ICF and related guidance, inclusive of an FAQ document, can be found on the SFI website.[25] Applicants are advised to seek independent legal advice in advance of applying to SFI for funding where further clarification is sought.

2.4 Definition of Lead Applicant, Co-Applicant, and Collaborator

The **Lead Applicant** will be responsible for the scientific and technical direction of the research programme and the submission of reports to SFI. The Lead Applicant has primary responsibility and accountability for carrying out the research within the funding limits awarded and in accordance with SFI General Terms and Conditions.[26] 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.

The **Co-Applicant** has a well-defined, critical and continuing role in the proposed investigation. For the purposes of **eligibility**, **reviewing** and **monitoring**, a Co-Applicant applying for funding under the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme will receive equal evaluation to the Lead Applicant and will hold equal accountability for the delivery of the proposed research objectives. In this documentation, the terms and conditions for 'Lead Applicant' and Co-Applicant' are interchangeable. Inclusion of Co-Applicants is not mandatory and no more than one Co-Applicant per application is permitted. **Co-Applicants are not permitted on an application if applying under the Emerging Investigator category (including the SFI-CHF collaboration; see Appendix B)**; however, these Emerging Investigator applicants are permitted to include a mentor, as described below**.**

A Co-Applicant may be located at a different eligible Research Body to the Lead Applicant. However, the grant will be administered through the Research Body of the Lead Applicant only. All Co-Applicants must comply with the same eligibility and evaluation criteria as the Lead Applicant.

Emerging Investigator Category

Applicants who fulfil the programme eligibility criteria (see Section 2.5) can choose to be reviewed as an "Emerging Investigator" if, in addition, they:

- have not previously held a significant SFI research award (including, but not limited to, SFI's Investigators Programme awards, Frontiers for the Future Awards or Projects, Frontiers for Partnerships, Career Development Award, Research Centres, US-Ireland R&D Partnership Programme, Strategic Partnerships Programme, President of Ireland Young Investigator Award, President of Ireland Future Research Leaders, Research Professorship Programme) as Lead Investigator or co-Investigator, **or**

- have had a period of eligible leave from research (e.g., following time spent in industry, statutory maternity leave, statutory adoptive leave, statutory parental leave, statutory paternity leave, carer's leave, long-term medical illness leave, conscription).

Applicants applying under the Emerging Investigator category can apply to SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme Projects or Awards, subject to all programme eligibility criteria being met. The "Emerging

[24] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/state-aid/State-Aid-Guidance.pdf
[25] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/state-aid
[26] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/sfi-general-terms-and-conditions/

Investigator" category will be assessed alongside and against the same criteria as all other applicants; however, the weighting of the review scores will mean that there is increased emphasis on the research proposal over the track record (see details on the review process in Appendix A).

Note: Although an applicant may meet the criteria of an Emerging Investigator, there is no obligation to apply under this category.

Reviewers will not be made aware if an applicant is applying under the Emerging Investigator category. All SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme applicants are requested to detail any periods of leave from research in their CV – this will be taken into account by reviewers when assessing the track record of applicants.

Successful applicants funded under the Emerging Investigator category will not be differentiated from the standard cohort of SFI Investigators once a grant has been made.

Applicants applying under the Emerging Investigator category must provide a statement detailing how they are eligible to apply under the category and scanned copies of supporting documents detailing periods of leave from research or time spent in industry, where relevant. These documents will not be circulated to reviewers.

Any queries in relation to eligible leave can be forwarded to FFP@sfi.ie.

An **Academic Collaborator** is an individual working in an academic institution who is committed to providing a valuable intellectual and/or technical contribution to the proposed research. As appropriate, Academic Collaborator(s) based in an SFI Eligible Research Body within the Republic of Ireland may receive funding through the grant (see Section 3.9 for details), but the funding allocated should reflect the supporting role that such Collaborator(s) are expected to play in the research programme. Academic Collaborators may not be the primary supervisor/mentor of postgraduate students, postdoctoral researchers or research staff enrolled on the grant, but may be a short-term 'local supervisor' if these team members conduct a portion of their research activities in a different institution to the Lead or Co-Applicant. The plan to use a local supervisor, including proposed time commitment, should be clearly indicated in the research programme. Academic Collaborators intending to act as a local supervisor to team members should be able to demonstrate a competitive track record of achievements and must have previously held a supervisory role in research programmes.

Industry partners are not obligatory, but are permitted and, where appropriate for the topic of the research, are encouraged (please refer to Section 2.3 above). An industry partner should be listed within the documentation as an **Industry Collaborator**.

Please see Section 3.6 below regarding documentation to be provided by Collaborators.

2.5 Eligibility Criteria of Applicant and Co-Applicant

2.5.1 Employment Status

A key part of the SFI Strategy 2025 *Shaping Our Future*, fostering diverse Top Talent, will be achieved through attracting and retaining academic and research talent. For the Frontiers for the Future Programme 2024 call, we are opening eligibility to applicants who have already established themselves as independent researchers, both within and outside the Republic of Ireland, but who may

not have a contract in place with an SFI eligible Research Body at the time of submission; see criteria below.

For applicants, the following employment status criteria applies:

The Lead Applicant and any Co-Applicant must be of the academic staff of an SFI eligible Research Body (permanent or with a contract that covers the period of the grant),

or

A contract researcher with a signed contract in place on the date of proposal submission to SFI. This contract must cover the period of the grant, and the contract researcher must be recognised by the Research Body as an independent investigator and will have an independent office and research space at the host Research Body for which the researcher will be fully responsible for *at least* the duration of the SFI grant,

or

An individual who will be recognised by the Research Body upon receipt of the SFI FFP grant as a member of the academic staff or as a contract researcher as defined above. The applicant does not necessarily need to be employed by the Research Body at the time of proposal submission but must be recognised by the Research Body as an independent investigator and will have an independent office and research space at the host Research Body for which the researcher will be fully responsible for *at least* the duration of the SFI grant.

Please note that **Postdoctoral Researchers are not eligible to apply for the Frontiers for the Future Programme** even if their host research body agrees that a contract of sufficient duration, for an academic staff member position, will be provided to the applicant in the event of the application's success.

Applicants applying for the SFI-CHF collaboration should consult **Appendix B** for details on applicant eligibility requirements specific to this collaboration.

If an applicant is in the process of moving between two SFI eligible research bodies (i.e., has already successfully secured a new position, prior to the submission date), it is mandatory that a signed employment contract with the new host institution, covering the duration of the grant, is in place (and signed) on the date of proposal submission, and should the application be successful, the applicant must have taken up their independent position at their new host institution before a grant can commence.

Further Employment Criteria:

Applicants who hold joint appointments are typically ineligible to apply for SFI grants (excluding SFI Research Professorships). **If an applicant holds a joint appointment, they must contact FFP@sfi.ie in advance of application submission with details of those appointments.**

Please be aware that applicants holding joint or secondary appointments must refer to the most up-to-date SFI policies relevant to these types of appointments. SFI eligibility checks assess the appropriateness of the time commitment and engagement with the research programme, and the

time committed should reasonably reflect the amount of funding being requested. SFI may seek additional information on how joint appointments are being managed by the host Research Body/Bodies. SFI reserves the right to require specific conditions of funding, for applicants holding a joint appointment, should they be awarded. Any other queries on joint appointments and/or FTE levels must be submitted directly to SFI at FFP@sfi.ie in advance of the call deadline.

The letter of support from the host Research Body of the Lead Applicant must detail the employment status of the Applicant(s), including how the Applicant(s) meet the eligibility criteria for this call. A letter of support from the host Research Body of the Co-Applicant **(if different from the Research Body of the Lead Applicant)** is also required. For further information on Research Body Letters of Support, please see Section 3.11 below.

It should be noted that Lead Applicant or Co-Applicant salary is not an eligible cost for the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme. **Applicants must obtain their salary either from an award in their own name (excluding fellowship-type awards) or by their host institution.**

The SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme is open to independent investigators only.

Retired or Emeritus members of academic staff, meeting all other eligibility criteria, are eligible to apply if their institution makes the necessary commitments; further details are available on the SFI website.[27]

In advance of proposal submission, eligibility queries regarding employment status may be directed to SFI at FFP@sfi.ie; however, full eligibility checks are not conducted before proposal submission. SFI reserves the right to make any application ineligible where the employment status of an Applicant/Co-Applicant is unclear or unsatisfactory, or where commitment levels are deemed to be insufficient.

2.5.2 PhD Duration

The Lead Applicant and any Co-Applicant must have held a PhD or equivalent[27] qualification for at least **three years** at proposal submission.

- 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. Only individuals with an PhD certificate date from 2021 or earlier are eligible to apply to the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme call in 2024.

- Details on SFI's PhD equivalence policy can be found on the SFI website.[28]

2.5.3 Senior-Author Publications

The Lead Applicant and any Co-Applicant are required to demonstrate that they are a **senior author** on at least **three international peer-reviewed articles**. Only original research publications, and not review articles or other secondary research literature, are acceptable. For this programme, senior authors are defined as follows:

[27] http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/eligibility-related-information/
[28] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/eligibility-related-information/

- Authors that are listed as first or joint-first author, reflecting the fact that they have provided the greatest intellectual contribution, have held the primary responsibility for collecting and analysing data, and for the writing of the manuscript and associated drafts. Joint-first authorship may only be claimed **where the article clearly states** that two (or more) authors have provided equal and significant contributions to the work described.

- Last authors will also be considered as a senior author, since this position generally reflects their overall responsibility for the study and suggests that a level of mentorship has been provided.

- Senior authors may, or may not, have had financial responsibility for the research findings that are disseminated in the publication.

- It will be noted that different publishers have differing rules on how the senior authorship is indicated (e.g., by using asterisks, underlining, placing the name first or last in the list of authors, etc.); in cases or specific fields where, for any reason, senior authorship is not evident from a contribution-based author list on a publication, applicants should briefly, but convincingly, detail the critical contributions of the author in the relevant CV section.

Applicants are required in their CV to detail up to three peer-reviewed, senior-author primary-research publications, which will confirm that the applicant meets the eligibility requirements for publications for this programme. Failure to use the template or deviating from the instructions in the template may result in an application being deemed ineligible.

2.5.4 Other SFI Grants

Applicants holding active SFI grants, or who are under review in other SFI calls, should refer to the information below regarding eligibility for the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme:

Investigators funded through an existing grant from the SFI programmes listed below may apply to the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme 2022 call at any stage of their grant and once all other eligibility criteria are met:

- SFI Research Centres
- SFI, EI, IDA COVID-19 Rapid Response Funding Call
- Investigators Programme Projects
- SFI ERC Development Programme
- US-Ireland R&D Partnership
- SFI-HRB-Wellcome Trust Biomedical Research Partnership
- Royal Society – Science Foundation Ireland University Research Fellowship
- SFI-Pfizer Biotherapeutics Innovation Award Programme
- SFI Strategic Partnerships Programme
- SFI Technology Innovation Development Award
- SFI Industry Fellowship Programme
- BBSRC-SFI Joint Funding of Research
- EPSRC-SFI Joint Funding of Research
- SFI-NSFC Partnership Programme
- SFI Discover Funding Programme
- SFI ERC Support Programme
- SFI-NSF Graduate Research Opportunities Worldwide (GROW)
- Joint Programming Initiatives and European Research Area Networks

- SFI Research Infrastructure Programme
- SFI/NSF I-Corps
- SFI Centres for Research Training Programme
- SFI Frontiers for Partnership Awards
- SFI National Challenge Fund (NCF)*

* If a submission is being made by an unsuccessful NCF applicant, and their application to this call is based on their unsuccessful NCF application, a resubmission statement should be provided as part of this application (see Section 3.2).

Investigators currently funded by SFI as either a Principal Investigator (PI) or co-Principal Investigator (co-PI) under certain programmes may **only** apply to the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme 2024 call if the proposal submission date is less than 24 months before the expiry date of their current award. These programmes include, but are not limited to:

- SFI Investigators Programme Awards (IvP)
- SFI Starting Investigator Research Grant (SIRG)
- SFI Career Development Award (CDA)
- SFI President of Ireland Future Research Leaders Award (FRL)
- SFI Research Professorship Programme
- SFI-IRC Pathway Programme

Researchers currently under review as Lead Applicant under the SFI Research Professorship Programme are not entitled to apply to the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme 2024 call. Please contact FFP@sfi.ie if you have a query regarding this.

For applicants currently on a reserve list (FFP 2022 Projects stream), or under review (FFP 2022 Awards Stream):

- Subject to adhering to all other eligibility criteria, applicants currently on a Frontiers for the Future Programme Projects Stream reserve list are eligible to apply to the Projects stream of the FFP 2024 call. However, new applications submitted to this call **must be distinct from the application currently on the reserve list.** Should an existing FFP application on the reserve list be funded, the 2024 application will be withdrawn from review. These applicants are **not eligible** to apply for the current Awards stream.
- Applicants under review for the FFP 2022 Awards stream are eligible to apply for the FFP 2024 Projects stream, subject to meeting all other eligibility criteria. However, new applications submitted to the 2024 Projects stream **must be distinct from the application currently under review**. Should a 2022 Awards stream application under review be funded, the 2024 application will be withdrawn from review.

For current SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme grant holders:

- Applicants who hold a previously granted Frontiers for the Future **Project** may not apply for an Award or Project unless they are in the final **12 months** of their current Project at the date of submission.
- Applicants who hold a Frontiers for the Future **Award** may not apply for an Award or Project unless they are in the final **24 months** of their current Award at the date of submission.

Individuals may only be under review as an applicant (Lead or Co-Applicant) on one proposal to this SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme 2024 call (*either* the Projects stream or the Awards stream).

If you are under review or are a PI funded through any SFI programme that is not listed above, please contact FFP@sfi.ie if you have a query regarding your eligibility to apply.

SFI Research Centres
SFI Research Centre PIs and Co-PIs may apply to the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme 2024 call at any stage of their grant and once all other eligibility criteria are met.

All individuals managing other/multiple SFI grants must provide justification and rationale for how they would manage two or more major SFI grants under the heading: "Management of More Than One Major SFI Award" as part of the information concerning scientific overlap (see Section 3.5).

Where SFI finds that an applicant has either a current grant or pending application that demonstrates significant scientific overlap with an application to the Frontiers for the Future programme, the FFP application may not be reviewed. Details on potential funding overlap may be sought from applicants as part of eligibility checks.

Where applicants have indicated that a pending application has scientific overlap with their FFP application, they are required to contact FFP@sfi.ie should this pending funding be awarded.

SFI has stringent requirements for the reporting[29] by awardees on the grants that it makes. 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 Frontiers for the Future Programme.

2.6 Eligibility of Research Body

The Research Body of the Lead Applicant is the body responsible for the overall financial and administrative co-ordination of research programmes supported by funding from SFI. In cases where more than one Republic of Ireland based applicant shares responsibility for a grant, the grant will be administered by the host Research Body of the Lead Applicant. A list of Eligible Research Bodies is available on the SFI website.[30]

3 Application Procedure

Proposals will only be accepted through SESAME, SFI's grants and awards management system. Please note that there are separate SESAME application forms for Projects and Awards.

Access to SESAME is controlled by staff at the Research Office of your 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 Microsoft Edge, 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

[29] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/sfi-general-terms-and-conditions/
[30] http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/eligibility-related-information/

Please see the SESAME Researcher User Guide[31] for more detailed information.

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:

- **Projects: Deadline April 25th 2024, 13:00 local Dublin time, and**
- **Awards: Open**

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.
- Appendices or other unsolicited documentation are not permitted.
- File sizes of attachments should be **less than 5MB**.
- Hyperlinks and URLs are only allowed when specifically noted in call documents or SESAME guidance/instructions. The use of hyperlinks is typically limited to citing information already in the public domain which is non-critical to the evaluation of the proposal. Hyperlinks and URLs may not be used to provide additional information, which would be necessary for application review, and as a means of circumventing page limits. Furthermore, the use of hyperlinks and URLs to provide additional information on submitted Narrative CVs is not permitted as per the Guidance on SFI Narrative CVs and associated FAQs.[32] Reviewers are not obligated to view linked sites and are cautioned that they should not directly access a website (unless the link to the site was specifically requested in application instructions). When allowed, you must reference the actual URL text so it appears on the page, for example in brackets or in a footnote, rather than embedding the URL in a specific word or phrase.
- Applicants and Co-Applicants must complete all mandatory SESAME profile fields (marked in red) before submitting an application. It is not possible to submit an application without this information.

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.

[31] http://www.sfi.ie/funding/award-management-system/
[32] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/narrative-cv-dora/

Please communicate with your research office as early as possible, regarding submission timelines. Applications not submitted before the deadline will not be considered for review under any circumstances.

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

Applications cannot be withdrawn and subsequently modified for re-submission in the same call.

3.1 ORCID ID

ORCID[33] provides a unique identifier for all researchers, which can then be linked to their different research works across different platforms. 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.
- 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. Both **Applicants and Co-Applicants** are required to link their SESAME Research Profiles to an ORCID iD **before an application can be submitted**.

3.2 Proposal Summary

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

- **Proposal Title (max. 30 words)**
  The Research Proposal title should clearly convey the nature of the research to be undertaken and should not contain confidential details, given that the titles of funded proposals are published by SFI.

- **Duration of Grant Requested**
  SFI Frontiers for the Future Projects are funded for a period of 24, 36 or 48 months. SFI Frontiers for the Future Awards are funded for a period of either 48 or 60 months. Please add the duration in months of your proposal.

- **Total Funding Request (in €)**
  This figure will be populated from the requested budget submitted.

- **Resubmission Statement**
  Applicants must declare whether a new submission relates to a previous unsuccessful application to any SFI scheme.

[33] http://orcid.org/

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 in the assessment of the eligibility of a revised application and will not be shared with reviewers. See SFI's Resubmission policy for further details.[34]

- **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. Alternatively, applicants may select "Other". It is also possible to detail Secondary Priority Areas that the research will be relevant to.

- **Research Area (Primary)**
  Applicants should select a primary SFI research area from the drop-down menu, which best describes the proposed research.

- **Research Area (Secondary)**
  Applicants should select a secondary SFI research area from the drop-down menu, which in combination with the primary SFI research area already selected, best describes the proposed research.

- **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 the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme call document. This statement will be used to determine the eligibility of the application.

3.3 Lead Applicant Details

- **Time Commitment to Grant**
  Indicate the Lead Applicant's time commitment to the proposed research project as a percentage of their total working time. **The time committed should reasonably reflect the amount of funding being requested. SFI reserves the right to request additional detail on commitment levels. Commitment deemed insufficient may result in ineligibility**.

- **Lead Applicant Narrative CV (Upload)**
  A CV of the Lead Applicant, using the template provided in the Downloads section of the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme website,[35] must be completed and uploaded **(upload: max. 5 pages). Please click on "Save Draft" after upload.** The current template allows for the provision of additional information such as periods of leave from research if relevant. Please consult the Guidance for Applicants on the SFI Narrative CV and FAQs for resources to help you prepare your Narrative CV.[36] **Reference to metrics such as journal impact factor, h-index**

[34] http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/eligibility-related-information/
[35] http://www.sfi.ie/funding/funding-calls/frontiers-for-the-future/
[36] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/narrative-cv-dora

and total number of publications are not permitted.[37] **If these metrics are included, they will be redacted prior to expert review.**

- **Does the Lead or Co-Applicant (where applicable) hold a Joint Appointment**
  Yes or No. If Yes, the applicant will be requested to provide details of the appointment including a breakdown of time commitments. **If an applicant holds a joint appointment they must contact ffp@sfi.ie in advance of application submission with details of those appointments.** Please be aware that applicants holding joint or secondary appointments must refer to the most up to date SFI policies relevant to these types of appointments, see Section 2.5.1 for more details on applicant eligibility.

- **Emerging Investigator Category**
  Please indicate if you are applying under the Emerging Investigator category. Please note that Co-applicants are **not permitted** on an application if applying under the Emerging Investigator category. Inclusion of a Co-applicant for this group of applicants will result in the proposal being deemed ineligible. See Section 2.4 for details on the Emerging Investigator category.

- **Emerging Investigator Documentation (Upload)**
  Lead Applicants applying under the Emerging Investigator category must upload a statement detailing how they are eligible to apply under the category. If the Lead Applicant is applying under this Category due to eligible leave, scanned copies of supporting documents detailing periods of leave or time spent in industry, where relevant, must be provided (see Section 2.4 for further details on the Emerging Investigator Category). **Supporting documents should not include children's birth certificates or other personal and confidential documents.** HR letters are the most appropriate documented evidence of periods of leave or time spent in industry.

  Reviewers will not be made aware if an applicant is applying under the Emerging Investigator category and will not have access to the Emerging Investigator documentation. All SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme applicants are requested to detail any periods of leave from research in their CV – this will be taken into account by reviewers when assessing the track record of applicants.

- **Are you applying for a SFI-CHF collaboration**
  Yes or No - See **Appendix B** for further details of requirements for applications to this initiative.

- **Supervisory Experience**
  Provide summary information on supervisory experience to date for the Lead Applicant.

- **Research Funding History**
  See Section 3.5 below for details.

3.4 Co-Applicant Details

If there is a Co-Applicant on the proposal, they must login to SESAME to upload their CV, insert their research funding history and provide details relating to the summary of supervisory experience, as is

[37] Per the Guidance for Applicants on the SFI Narrative CV and FAQs, the inclusion of information about citations, including Field Weighted Citation Impact (FWCI), is permitted, but this should complement the qualitative (narrative) information provided.

the case for the Lead Applicant. In addition, they must agree to the Terms and Conditions of the programme.

If you are applying for the SFI-CHF collaboration, please see **Appendix B** for specific details on co-applicants.

SESAME does not permit two individuals to concurrently modify a proposal. The Lead Applicant must close the proposal to allow the Co-Applicant to make modifications, and vice versa.

- **Time Commitment to Grant**
  Indicate the Co-Applicant's time commitment to the proposed research grant as a percentage of their total working time. **The time committed should reasonably reflect the amount of funding being requested.**

- **Supervisory Experience**
  Provide summary information on supervisory experience to date for the Co-Applicant.

- **Co-Applicant Narrative CV (Upload)**
  A CV of the Co-Applicant, using the template provided in the Downloads section of the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme website,[38] must be completed and uploaded **(upload: max. 5 pages). Please click on "Save Draft" after upload.** The current template allows for the provision of additional information such as periods of leave from research if relevant. Please consult the Guidance for Applicants on the SFI Narrative CV and FAQs for resources to help you prepare your Narrative CV.[39] **Also, reference to metrics such as journal impact factor, h-index and total number of publications are not permitted.**[40] **If these metrics are included, they will be redacted prior to expert review.**

- **Does the Lead or Co-Applicant (where applicable) hold a Joint Appointment**
  Yes or No. If Yes, the Co-applicant will be requested to provide details of the appointment including breakdown of time commitments. **If a Co-applicant holds a joint appointment they must contact ffp@sfi.ie in advance of application submission with details of those appointments.** Please see Section 2.5.1 for more details on applicant eligibility.

- **Research Funding History**
  See Section 3.5 below for details. **Research Funding History is mandatory for Co-Applicants.**

3.5 Research Funding History

The Lead Applicant and Co-Applicant (where relevant) must provide a report on expired, current and pending funding. Funding details may be added from the applicant's existing SESAME profile or can be created in this section.

[38] http://www.sfi.ie/funding/funding-calls/frontiers-for-the-future/
[39] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/narrative-cv-dora
[40] Per the Guidance for Applicants on the SFI Narrative CV and FAQs, the inclusion of information about citations, including Field Weighted Citation Impact (FWCI), is permitted, but this should complement the qualitative (narrative) information provided.

- The applicant should include details of any financial support pending, or received over the previous ten years. This should include competitive research funding received from funding agencies (international and national), charities, industry, etc.

- The applicant must include details of any financial support currently provided, or currently being sought. Applicants must detail the total funding allocated to the grant and **the amount of this funding that is allocated to the Applicant. SFI will not support research currently being funded through another source.**

- For each current and pending grant listed, the applicant should provide a brief description of the research. Applicants must also indicate their time commitment to these other projects, as a percentage of their total working time.

- For pending grants, please include the expected decision date in the description box. **Where applicants have indicated that pending grant funding has scientific overlap with their FFP application, they are required to contact FFP@sfi.ie should their pending funding be awarded.**

- Please complete the requested details for each expired, current, or pending financial support. **Fields coloured red are mandatory**. Certain field labels are underlined and contain further information concerning the details that are required; hover the mouse pointer over these labels to view this information.

- If the applicant is a Collaborator on a research project, the grant should not be included here; only awards where the applicant is either the Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator should be listed.

- The portion of research funding claimed in an applicant's name must be an accurate and fair reflection of their responsibility in the projects listed and will be verifiable as such. **SFI may conduct audits to verify such claims and reserves the right to reject proposals where the above principle of proportionality is not observed.**

- This section of the proposal will be reviewed as part of the applicant's track record. Applicants with a number of expired grants over the previous ten years may be selective with which funding grants to include in this section. Grants that are most relevant to the proposed research should be included.

Research funding may be added directly to the application or added from the applicant's profile (see the SESAME Researcher User Guide).[41] If this section is left blank it will be assumed that the applicant has NO expired, current or pending funding. Both the Lead and Co-Applicant need to complete this section within SESAME.

Please ensure that research funding added to the profile of the Lead Applicant, or the profile of the Co-Applicant, has been included in the application via SESAME.

Applicants **must** complete the textbox detailing potential overlap between current and pending funding and the proposed research in this application. For each current and pending grant listed

[41] http://www.sfi.ie/funding/award-management-system/

above, the applicant **must clearly indicate any scientific overlap with this application, based on the methodologies being employed and the stated objectives of the funded project(s)**. **Failure to do so will make the proposal ineligible.** Also, within this textbox, under the sub-heading "Management of More Than One Major SFI Award" applicants must provide justification and rationale for how they would manage two or more concurrent major SFI grants, where applicable.

3.6 Collaborator(s) Details

Include the name, contact information and other requested details of Collaborator(s), if any. Please see Section 2.4 for further information on the role of Collaborators. If you are applying for the SFI-CHF collaboration, please see **Appendix B** for specific details on collaborators.

Where applicants have included an Industry Collaborator they should please refer to Section 2.3.

CVs (max. 2 pages) for all Academic Collaborators must be uploaded. CVs may also be provided for Industry Collaborators; failure to provide Industry Collaborator CVs may disadvantage an application during the review process. The use of a template is not mandatory for Collaborator CVs; however, we recommend that the Collaborator Narrative CV template available on the programme webpage is used.[42] **Also, references to metrics such as journal impact factor, h-index and total number of publications are not permitted.**[43] **If these metrics are included, they will be redacted prior to expert review.**

Collaborator letters of support must be provided – further details are provided in Section 3.11.

3.7 Mentor Details (If Applicable)

Lead Applicants are permitted to include a Mentor on their application. Mentors should be added as academic collaborators. See Section 3.6.

The Mentor will be an established researcher within the host institution who will provide advice and guidance to the award holder and associated team. The Mentor may also take the role of a co-supervisor for staff and/or students employed on the research programme, but it is the award holder who will always act as the primary supervisor. The Mentor does not play a supervisory or presiding role to the award holder but acts solely as an advisor. The nomination of a Mentor is not obligatory but may strengthen or formalise the institutional support to be provided to the applicant.

Mentor letters of support must be provided at proposal stage – further details are provided in Section 3.11 of this document.

3.8 Main Body of Proposal

The following outlines the Frontiers for the Future Programmes proposal requirements. Please see Appendix B for specific requirements pertaining to the SFI-CHF collaboration.

[42] http://www.sfi.ie/funding/funding-calls/frontiers-for-the-future/

[43] Per the Guidance for Applicants on the SFI Narrative CV and FAQs, the inclusion of information about citations, including Field Weighted Citation Impact (FWCI), is permitted, but this should complement the qualitative (narrative) information provided.

- **Keywords (max. 15)**
  These should be descriptors that best characterise the proposed research.

- **Scientific Abstract (max. 200 words)**
  This should be a succinct and accurate summary of the proposed work when separated from the application.

- **Lay Abstract (max. 100 words)**
  This should be a succinct and accurate summary in lay, non-technical language of the proposed work when separated from the application.

- **Ethical Issues**
  - **Use of Animals**

  Applicants must indicate whether animals are to be involved in any of the research planned. Further details can be found on the SFI Ethical Policies webpage.[44]

- **Research Involving Human Participants, Biological Material or Identifiable Data**
  Applicants must complete the questionnaire indicating whether their research programme will involve human participants, human biological material or the use of identifiable (or potentially identifiable) human data. Further details can be found on the SFI Ethical Policies webpage.[44] Clinical trials and investigations requiring approval by the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) will not be permitted through SFI's Frontiers for the Future Programme.

- **Sex and Gender Dimension in Research Statement (max. 1000 words)**
  In accordance with the SFI External Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy 2023-2028,[45] all applicants must complete a statement articulating the consideration of biological sex and/or social gender variables in their research programme. Please consult the Guidance for Applicants on Ethical and Scientific Issues[44] for resources on how to address the sex and/or gender dimension of research in your grant.

  Do not include information on how you have addressed gender equality, diversity and inclusion in your research team/environment; this should be addressed in the body of the proposal and/or in your CV, as appropriate.

  To complete this section, please consider the following questions:

1. Is sex as a biological variable taken into account in the research design, methods, analysis and interpretation, and/or dissemination of findings?
2. Is gender as a socio-cultural factor taken into account in the research design, methods, analysis and interpretation, and/or dissemination of findings?

   If the answer is yes, please describe how sex and/or gender considerations will be integrated into your research proposal. If no, please explain why sex and/or gender are not applicable to your research proposal.

[44] http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/ethical-and-scientific-issues/
[45] http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/gender/

- **Research Programme (upload; <u>Frontiers for the Future Awards max. 15 pages</u>; <u>Frontiers for the Future Projects max. 8 pages)</u>**

  The following points should be considered when describing the proposed research:

  - Describe clearly and concisely the specific aims and objectives of the proposal. These aims should be coherent, well-planned and should be linked with real deliverables.

  - Explain the background and significance of the problem – does the study address an important research problem? Is it strategically important? What is the current state of the art in the area? Describe and explain how the proposed work, if successful, will advance the state of the art. The background section should reference the state of the art in this research field.

  - Are the concepts described novel? Ensure that the novelty of the approach is clearly explained, again with reference to the state of the art.

  - The methodology of the proposed programme should be well developed, and how this proposed methodology advances the current state of the art should be described in detail. Is the proposed scientific approach (including the competencies and activities of the team members) feasible and realistic?

  The application should also include:

  - Appropriate timelines, milestones and expected outputs for the proposed research (e.g., a Gantt chart), and clear descriptions of the roles of the Lead Applicant, Co-Applicant(s), Collaborators and Team Members in the work programme.

  - Relevant preliminary data, if available, which may either take the form of (a) supporting reference(s) from the applicants' previous research, or (b) a summary of results where the data has yet to be published. In the latter case, this should be included within the research programme as evidence that the applicant team has a track record in the field of the proposed research.

- **References (upload; max. 5 pages)**
  Appropriate references and citations for the proposed research must be provided in a separate PDF document. A five-page limit is permitted for uploaded references.

- **Data Management Plan (upload; max 2 Pages)**
  Good data governance and stewardship are key components of good research practice. Applicants to the Frontiers for the Future programme are required to provide a short (2-page) 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 Plans.[46] A DMP is a living document which details the procedures for careful handling of data and other research

[46] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/open-research/SFI-DMP-Guidance-FINAL-140322.pdf

outputs. A DMP follows the data through the lifecycle of the programme of research,[47] from collection to analysis and interpretation, sharing and dissemination, and long-term storage.

Data Management Plan Requirements
DMPs will be evaluated by reviewers 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 recommends the use of Science Europe DMP templates and guidelines.[48]

Each DMP should include the following as appropriate to the research programme[49]:

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).

- **Impact Statement (upload; max. 3 pages)**
  The Impact Statement (max. 3 pages) should be as specific as possible and provide information that reviewers will find helpful in assessing the potential impact of the proposed research activity. Appropriate milestones and deliverables associated with the potential impact should be indicated. Where appropriate for the topic of the research, industry collaborations including co-funding through cash and/or in-kind contributions should be discussed. Detailed 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.[50]

3.9 Budget

The budget requested should be appropriate to the proposed work and should take into account the applicant's experience and recent research funding record. Value for money is explicitly part of the review criteria; applicants are strongly advised to consider the scale of their requests.

Applications failing to demonstrate reasonable value for money will not be supported through this programme, or may be subject to budget reductions.

[47] 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.
[48] https://www.scienceeurope.org/our-priorities/research-data/research-data-management/
[49] 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
[50] http://www.sfi.ie/funding/award-management/research-impact/

The budget requested must be within the Programme limits (see Section 2.1 of the Programme call document). Applications with budget requests outside of these limits will be deemed ineligible.

When preparing the budget, applicants should also take into account the fact that on average, successful woman applicants receive smaller grants than man applicants; however, man applicants, on average, request more funding than woman applicants. We encourage applicants to consider the above points when preparing their application budgets and associated justification.

For the Awards stream, requests will generally be no greater than €1,000,000 in direct costs over 48 or 60 months; however, budgets up to €1,500,000 will be considered for applicants relocating to SFI eligible research bodies. This provision is designed to support the costs of establishing the research groups of applicants who are either moving from outside of the Republic of Ireland (ROI), or who are ROI-based researchers moving to a new SFI eligible research body.

Requests in excess of €1,000,000 will **only** be considered appropriate to cover instances where the applicant is relocating to move an existing research group or establish a new research group and requires funding for set-up costs or significant infrastructure. However, relocation costs (or similar) are not an eligible budget request. Budget requests **must** align to the proposed research programme.

Applicants do not need to have a contract in place with their proposed host research body at the time of submission, but must have an agreement that a contract of sufficient duration will be provided to the applicant in the event of the application's success (see Section 3.11). If a contract is already in place with the proposed host research body, the start date outlined in the contract must be within 12 months of the submission date of their application.

Applicants requesting a budget in excess of €1,000,000 must contact SFI (FFP@sfi.ie) ahead of submission for approval. Without this approval, applications requesting in excess of €1,000,000 will be made ineligible.

SFI funding supports the research programme costs of the applicant(s) and their research group(s). Eligible costs include:

- Contributions to salaries/stipends for staff hired specifically to carry out the research programme. Lead Applicant/Co-Applicant salaries are not eligible costs. Please consult the SFI website for more information on the SFI Grant Budget Policy (GBP).[51]
- Teaching Replacement for TU/IoT sector applicants
- Teaching Replacement after eligible leave
- Relevant research expenses, including equipment, consumables and travel
- Access charges for use of large items of infrastructure or test-bed facilities may be requested in certain situations; see the SFI GBP for details
- Contributions to Education and Public Engagement activity, organisation of conferences/workshops, and hosting of visiting researchers and fellowships (details below).

[51] http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/budget-finance-related-policies/

In addition to direct costs, SFI also makes an indirect or overhead ***contribution*** to the host Research Body, which is reflected as a percentage of the direct costs (excluding equipment). Overheads are payable as a contribution *to the Research Body* for the indirect costs of hosting SFI-funded research programmes and are intended to enable the Research Body to develop internationally competitive research infrastructure and support services. General overheads should **not** be included in the requested budget and are payable as a contribution to the Research Body for the indirect costs of hosting SFI-funded research programmes.

The costs eligible for grant support by SFI under the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme are those costs which can, uniquely and unambiguously, be identified with the proposed research programme. Applicants must give details of all relevant costs, including staff, equipment, materials and travel. Ensure that the final total provided includes all costs requested from SFI. All grants are made directly to the Lead Applicant's Research Body. Please also refer to the SFI Grant Terms and Conditions[52] and also the latest GBP.[53]

Costs that will be covered by industry contributions should not be included in the proposed budget.

See notes for completion of the budget in the SESAME Researcher User Guide[54] and within SESAME.

Please consult the latest SFI Grant Budget Policy[53] for details on the following categories; programme specific conditions are below.

3.9.1 Staff: Salaries and Benefits

All information required to complete the Staff section can be found the latest GBP.[53]

SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme grants **do not** fund the core salary or benefits of either the Lead Applicant or Co-Applicant.

3.9.2 Teaching Replacement (TU/IoT sector applicants only)

In order to support enhanced focus on research activities within the TU/IoT sector, Applicants (lead and/or co-applicants) from this sector can apply for teaching replacement of up to 50% of their teaching load for the full duration of the grant. Salary scales for replacement lecturers based in TUs/IoT must be reasonable and justified appropriately within the budget justification.

Requests for teaching replacement costs **must be made at the proposal stage** and must be included in the requested budget and detailed in the budget justification. Requests for teaching replacement post receipt of the application will not be considered by SFI. Teaching replacement requests must be pro-rata and proportional to the time commitment.

3.9.3 Teaching Replacement After Eligible Leave

In order to support enhanced focus on research activities following periods of leave (see eligibility criteria below), successful applicants will be entitled to request funding for teaching replacement of up to 50% of their teaching load for a period of up to 12 months for Frontiers for the Future Projects or 24 months for Frontiers for the Future Awards from the start date of their grant. **Such requests**

[52] http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/sfi-general-terms-and-conditions/
[53] http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/budget-finance-related-policies/
[54] http://www.sfi.ie/funding/award-management-system/

must be made at the proposal stage and should be included in the requested budget and detailed in the budget justification. Requests for teaching buyout post receipt of the application will not be considered by SFI.

Any applicant who has taken consecutive documented eligible leave (minimum 12 weeks) since 1st January 2014 and has since returned to work is eligible to request funding for teaching buyout. This can include, but is not limited to, the examples below:

- Statutory adoptive leave
- Statutory parental leave
- Statutory maternity leave
- Statutory paternity leave
- Carer's leave
- Long-term medical illness leave
- Conscription

Or

- Academic staff who have returned to an academic position having worked for a minimum of two years in a science- or engineering-related industry.

If an application is successful, applicants applying for eligible leave must provide SFI with a short statement detailing their eligibility for teaching buyout, and the start and end dates of their eligible leave, if applicable. In addition, applicants must also produce documentary evidence of their eligibility from their host institution's Human Resources (HR) Department or, where applicable, the HR Department of their employer at the time of their eligible leave period(s). This documentary evidence must be submitted before a letter of offer can be issued.

Teaching buyout costs should be calculated on the basis of hiring a temporary lecturer (e.g., at point 1 on the Assistant Lecturer salary scale, or equivalent point on the institutional scale) regardless of the seniority of the prospective applicant. Requests must be pro-rata and proportional to the time commitment.

Applicants who have previously received funding for teaching buyout after eligible leave from SFI (SFI Industry Fellowship, SFI Investigators Programme PICA, ICA, previous Frontiers for the Future Programme awards) are not eligible to apply for teaching buyout a second time.

3.9.4 Equipment

All information required to complete the Equipment section can be found the latest GBP.[55]

Where significant (costing in excess of €50,000) items of equipment are proposed, timelines for purchasing and installation, and management plans for the equipment, must be clear and aligned with the timelines of the research programme. This may be particularly relevant for those applicants moving to a new SFI Eligible Research Body.

3.9.5 Materials and Consumables

All information required to complete the Materials and Consumables section can be found the latest GBP.[55]

[55] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/budget-finance-related-policies/

Costs relating to Education and Public Engagement activity, organisation of conferences/workshops, and the hosting of visiting researchers and fellowships should be included in this budget category as outlined in the GBP.[56] These costs must be directly related to the research programme and must **not** be in excess of €30,000.

3.9.6 Travel

All information required to complete the Travel section can be found the latest GBP.[56]

3.9.7 Personal Support and Assistive Technology

Please see the latest GBP for information on budget requests for Personal Support and/or Assistive Technology.[56]

Should you have any questions on these budget categories, please contact FFP@sfi.ie. Please do not include personal health information relating to a PI or team member in any correspondence with SFI.

3.9.8 Budget Justification (upload, max. 3 pages)

All information required to complete the Budget Justification can be found in Section 7 of the GBP.[56]

3.10 Infrastructure and Services Provided by Research Body (upload; max. 1 page)

The Applicant(s) must describe the infrastructure, facilities and space to be provided by the Research Body/Bodies. This should include details of the office, laboratory, computing, animal or other facilities as necessary, where the research will be carried out, including all of the equipment that will be available, but excluding equipment requested in this application. Indicate what IP/technology transfer services are provided by the Research Body.

3.11 Letter(s) of Support (uploads; max. 2 pages for each letter)

The following letter(s) of support **must** be included at proposal stage:

- A letter of support from the **host Research Body of the Lead Applicant (and Co-Applicant where relevant)**. The Letter of Support should detail the employment status of the applicant(s), including how the applicant(s) meet the eligibility criteria for this call as detailed in Section 2.5. 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. The letter should also comment on the infrastructure and services available and should contain a brief description of the institutional policy regarding the management of conflicts of interest (see Section 6 for details).
  If a Co-Applicant is based in the same Research Body as the Lead Applicant, a single letter of support providing details of both applicants is sufficient.
  If the letter of support is for an applicant who does not currently have a contract of sufficient duration in place, the host research body must clearly state that a contract of sufficient duration will be provided to the applicant in the event of the application's success. Applications will be made ineligible if this is not provided.

[56] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/budget-finance-related-policies/

This is a formal letter on headed notepaper and is signed by an authorised institutional representative.

Applicant Eligibility Criteria	**Response (*to be filled out by research body*)**
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.	
Does this contract cover the duration of the proposed research programme? **(Yes/No)**	
If **'No'** please declare that a contract of sufficient duration will be provided to the applicant in the event of the application's success.	
Is the Applicant recognised as an independent researcher? **(Yes/No)**	
Will the Applicant be provided with an independent office and research space at the host research body, for which the Applicant will be fully responsible throughout the duration of the proposed grant? **(Yes/No)**	
What year did the Applicant obtain their PhD?	
Is the Applicant a first or senior author on at least three peer-reviewed original research publications? **(Yes/No)**	
Does the Applicant hold a joint appointment with any other research-performing organisation, or have a non-full time contract position with the host research body? **(Yes/No)**	
If '**Yes**', please describe the Applicant's contract details and/or joint appointments (including FTE where relevant).	
Is the budget request over €1M? **(Yes/No).** If '**Yes'**, please confirm the contract status **Pending** or **Signed**. If **'Signed'**, please confirm that the start date is ≤ 12 months from submission.	

- A letter of support from the **host Research Body of the Co-Applicant IF different from the Research Body of the Lead Applicant.** The details of the letter should be as outlined above, and **must** also include the table outlining eligibility (above).
- A letter of support (max 2 pages) from ***each*** **Academic and Industry Collaborator, and Mentor (if applicable)**. Letters from Academic Collaborators should provide full details of the intended intellectual and/or technical input to the proposal. In addition, Academic Collaborators seeking funds through the award must describe how these funds will be utilised. Letters from Industry Collaborators should provide full details of the intended intellectual input and, where relevant, the level of financial (cash, in-kind or both) contribution to the research programme. Similarly, letters of support from International Academic Collaborators should provide details of any cash and/or in-kind contributions. Letters of support that do not originate from officially listed Collaborators will be removed from the proposal, as will letters from listed Collaborators that

merely provide theoretical or general support without specifically describing a meaningful and impactful contribution to the proposal. If applicable, a letter of support from the Mentor outlining the support to be offered to the applicant is required. The letter should include a statement outlining how the mentor will provide added value to the proposal, bearing in mind that the applicant is already an independent researcher.

Letters of support may be **a maximum of two pages**; extraneous pages will be removed from the letter and the proposal. Letters of support may not be included from other bodies and individuals who are not Collaborators. Unsolicited letters of support will be redacted.

3.12 Excluded Reviewers

FFP Award stream applicants can select up to three individuals who may be excluded from review of their application. This section is not made available to reviewers. Due to the panel nature of the FFP Projects review, selection of excluded reviewers is not possible.

3.13 Applicant Acknowledgement of Terms and Conditions

Submission of an application confirms that SFI's Grant General Terms & Conditions have been read and understood; that the applicant meets eligibility requirements; that the project is in full agreement with all legal and regulatory matters governing research in Ireland; that no aspect of this project is already being funded from another source and that all details provided are correct; that the information supplied in the application is correct and the research proposal is their own work. Failure to do so, or to comply with requirements outlined in this call document, will deem an application ineligible resulting in its withdrawal prior to expert review.

SFI's Grant Conditions shall govern the administration of SFI grants and awards to the exclusion of this and any other oral, written, or recorded statement.

3.14 Research Body Approval

Submissions must be approved by an authorised Research Body representative. In particular, the host Research Body is approving:

- The eligibility of the applicant(s)
- Applicants have a signed contract of employment in place that covers the duration of the requested Grant and are in receipt of a salary from their host research body or through a grant in their own name (excluding fellowship-type grants)
- OR the applicants have/will have a signed contract of employment in place that covers the duration of the requested Grant and are/will be in receipt of a salary from their host research body or through a grant in their own name (excluding fellowship-type grants), if their application is successful
- That the requested budget, including salaries/stipends, equipment, travel and consumables, is in line with accepted institutional guidelines and appropriate to the intended time commitments
- The availability of infrastructure within the institution, as outlined by the applicant in the research proposal
- That the proposed research programme has not been funded by other sources
- That relevant ethical approval 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 the applicants' research funding history (i.e., current, pending or expired grants, as detailed in the application) are valid and accurate.
- That permission from all team members and collaborators has been obtained, such that SFI may receive their personal information, and may process such data for the purpose of peer review.

Submission of an application through SESAME serves as the Research Body's endorsement of the eligibility of the Applicant(s) as well as approval of the budget requested, the infrastructure to be provided by the Research Body, and furthermore, confirms the validity and accuracy of the details provided in relation to the current, pending and expired grants as detailed in the application.

3.15 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 Applicant(s) 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.

Please note that the Co-Applicant and/or the Lead Applicant may choose to complete sections or upload documentation that are common to both applicants (e.g., scientific summaries, research descriptions, etc.); **however, only the Lead Applicant can submit an application to the Research Body**.

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

After the submission deadline for Projects, 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

SFI became a signatory of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)[57] in 2019 and, as such, is aligning its review and evaluation processes with DORA principles. 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 impact factors and h-index. SFI will also consider a commitment to making data and other types of research open and accessible. All 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.

[57] https://sfdora.org/read/

Review Criteria

- **Quality, significance and relevance of the applicant's and co-applicant's (if relevant) key achievements and research track record, commensurate with their career stage and research discipline, taking any periods of leave into account and considering the quality and relevance of the collaborators and/or mentor, if relevant.***
  The following areas will be considered: 1) Generation of Knowledge, 2) Development of Individuals and Collaboration, 3) Supporting Broader Society & the Economy and, 4) Supporting the Research Community.[58]

- **Quality, significance, novelty, and strategic relevance of the research plan**
  Including importance, timeliness of the proposed research; quality of institutional support; communication and description of the research; comprehension of the current state of the art; value for money, the sex and gender dimension, etc.

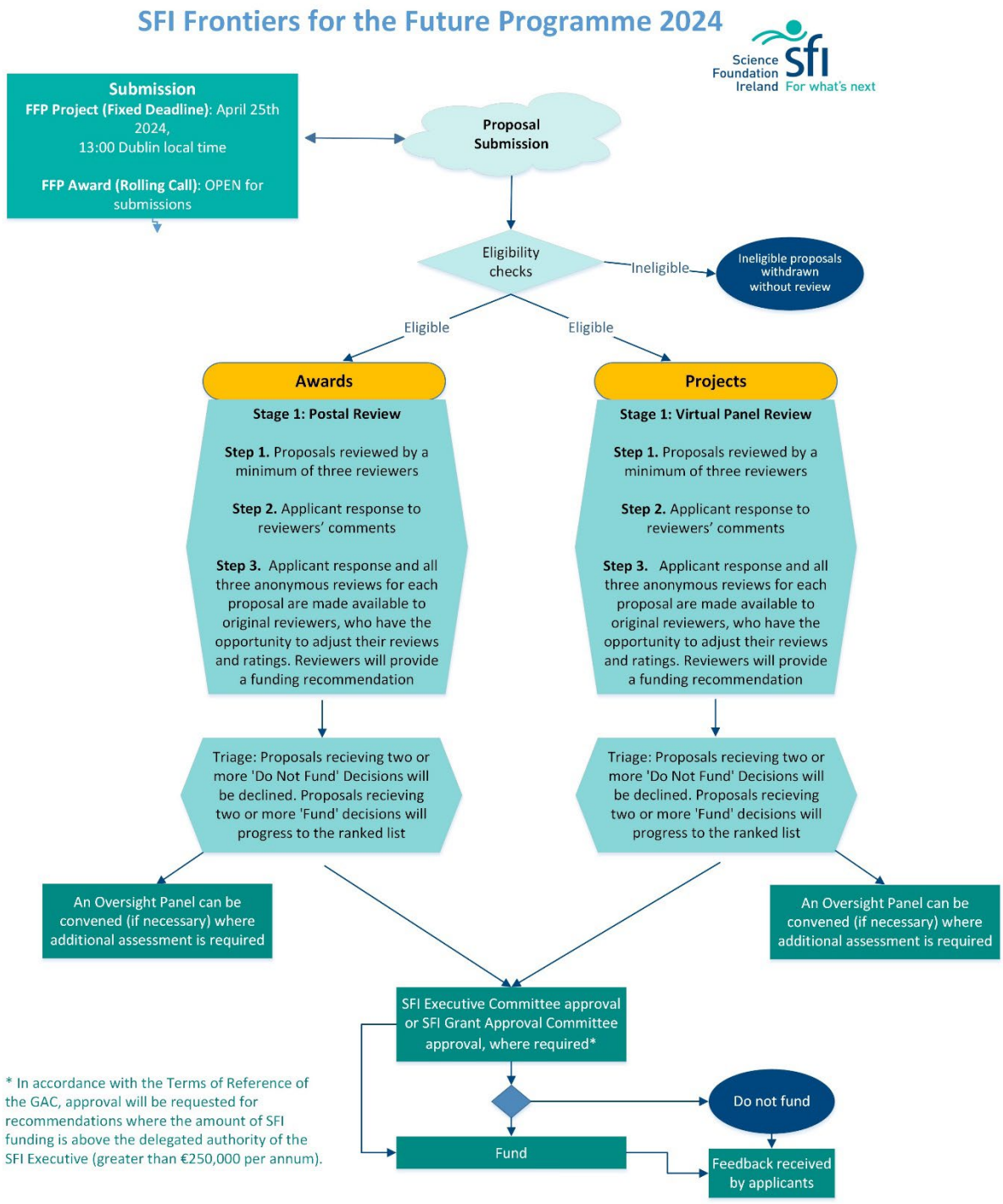
- **Potential economic and societal impact and value to Ireland****
  Including appreciation of how research may be developed and exploited in the medium-to-long term; realistic and convincing evaluation of the benefits that will result from a successful project; etc.

*For the Emerging Investigator category**,** weighting of the review scores will mean that there is increased emphasis on the quality of the research over the track record (see Appendix A for details).

**The weighting of the review scores will mean that there is decreased emphasis on the impact criterion for SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme Projects, compared to Awards (see Appendix A for details).

Reviewers engaged by SFI are required to abide by the SFI Reviewer Code of Conduct.[59] 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.

[58] Examples are provided in the Applicant CV template, which is available on the Programme webpage: https://www.sfi.ie/funding/funding-calls/frontiers-for-the-future.
[59] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/review/



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.

Pre-award site visits, conducted by SFI staff, to examine infrastructure may take place, where appropriate. The performance of applicants on previous SFI grants, as determined through progress reviews and/or annual reports, will be taken into consideration in the decision-making process. **The final funding decisions are at the sole and exclusive discretion of SFI**.

5 Project/Award Management

5.1 Reporting Requirements

The State has made a significant investment via SFI into scientific research and, as such, it is the responsibility of SFI to monitor the progress and outcomes of all 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. The progress reporting requirements for awards made under the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme include the completion of an Annual Report and SFI Research Outputs (formerly referred to as the SFI Census). The annual report is used to monitor the progress of individual awards against the overall objectives of the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme and associated Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Each of the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme call objectives, with expected outputs, is discussed in turn below:

Objective: *To build research capacity, expertise and reputation through funding excellent scientific research*
Expected Outcomes: The SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme will establish research funding for independent researchers at mid- and advanced career stages. Funding will be used to support the hiring of postdoctoral researchers and PhD students. Research capacity will be assessed through the reporting of the number of team members in each awarded project. Awardees will be asked to report on the level of training received and the research outputs from each team member, thus enabling the level of expertise to be assessed. Reputation will be assessed through a combination of research outputs, in particular, presentations at international conferences, hosting of workshops, winning of prizes etc.

Objective: *To fund highly innovative Awards with strong potential for economic and societal impact and to provide the opportunity to conduct high-risk, high-reward Projects*
Expected Outcomes: The review process for the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme references both scientific excellence and impact. In the Strategic Impact section of the annual report, awardees are provided with a list of impact statements or declarations and are asked to prioritise those that are relevant to the outputs on their award/project. Narrative must then be provided with additional details justifying the options chosen, with cross reference to relevant metrics included in the Research Profile. These data will help towards quantifying the types of impacts arising from the awards SFI has made under the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme 2024 call.

Objective: *To provide additional supports for excellent woman researchers to secure funding*
Expected Outcomes: SFI recognises the need to provide opportunities for women in senior grant holder roles within Ireland. Excellence can only be attained where gender balance is embedded in leadership and decision-making. As such, increasing the number of women applicants and grant awardees is a key objective of the SFI External EDI Strategy. An objective of the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme is to enable an increase in the number of woman SFI grant award holders. Since success rates for woman applicants are on par with man applicants, SFI aims to increase the number of woman applications as a percentage of the total number of applications to this funding call compared with those levels seen previously.

Objective: *To retain and improve Ireland's reputation as a place to carry out excellent research*
Expected Outcomes: To date, SFI funding has produced high-quality, high-impact publications that have resulted in Ireland rising to the top 20 in international bibliometric rankings of repute. SFI's expectation is that the grants made in the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme will contribute significantly to this objective. Awardees are asked to report on all refereed journal and conference publications and international presentations directly supported by the grant. This support must be acknowledged in all publications.

Objective: *To facilitate researchers based in Ireland to lead consortia and to win further support through various non-Exchequer funding schemes*
Expected Outcomes: SFI expects that researchers based in Ireland will obtain research funding from as wide a range of sources as possible. SFI's expectation is that awards made under the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme will provide the support necessary for awardees to build capacity, expertise and relationships to a point where they can compete successfully for funding in Europe, including Horizon Europe and the European Research Council (ERC). In their annual report, awardees are asked to report on the funding opportunities that they have pursued and won and also to report on the position held by the awardee. This will allow SFI to track this progress on an annual basis.

Objective: *To allow Ireland-based researchers to win top-tier international prizes*
Expected Outcomes: SFI's expectation is that awards made under the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme contribute to the potential of Ireland-based researchers to win top-tier international prizes. In the academic outputs section of the annual report, awardees are asked to report on all prestigious prizes or awards received during the reporting period.

Objective: *To develop an integrated research ecosystem through partnerships with other agencies*
Expected Outcomes: The SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme 2024 call includes co-funding partnerships between SFI and the Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI), the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI), and the Children's Health Foundation (CHF). These partnerships are based on alignments to research topics that are of particular significance to GSI/SEAI/CHF's research objectives. Where relevant, successful applicants will be asked to report on the outcomes of the partnerships, for example through joint publications or public engagement.

Objective: *To support the growth and development of research capacity for the Technological University and Institute of Technology sector*
Expected Outcomes: A key goal of the SFI Strategy 2025, Shaping our Future, is to "increase geographical involvement and engagement across the country, including through the SFI Research Centres, and increased collaboration with the new Technological Universities and the Institutes of Technology to ensure that benefits arising from our activities are realised across the entirety of Ireland". Applicants to the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme from the Technological and Institute of Technology sector can apply for teaching replacement of up to 50% of their teaching load for the full duration of the grant. Where relevant, successful applicants will be asked to report on the effectiveness of the support provided.

Objective: *To support relevant collaborations and partnerships, and attract talent from outside the Republic of Ireland*
Expected Outcomes: In the Strategic Impact section of the report, awardees are asked to enter details of any relevant collaborations. Where industry collaborations are involved, details must be provided on how they comply with State aid rules, including reference to any ICFs and CRAs completed during the term of the award (please see Section 2.3 above). A key objective of the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme is to foster and support these collaborations and, as such, it is SFI's expectation that SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme awardees will have the capacity to develop such relationships.

Objective: *To support researchers returning to active academic research after a period of eligible leave through the Emerging Investigators component of the call*
Expected Outcomes: Applicants to the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme call may choose to be evaluated under the Emerging Investigator category. Awardees under this category are asked to report on progress in the same way as other awardees using the same annual report template. In the annual report, the awardees under the Emerging Investigators category must emphasise how their grant has enabled them to advance their academic career following a period of eligible leave.

These reporting guidelines are relevant to *all* awards made under the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme. All awardees carrying out projects that are relevant to the co-funding partner agencies are encouraged to update their Research Profiles in order to report on any new collaborations and joint funding applications or awards that are relevant to the programmatic and/or partnership objectives of the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme.

5.2 Progress Reviews

SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme Awards and selected SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme Projects will be subject to a progress review. Progress reviews can be conducted internally (exclusively by SFI staff) or can be conducted by international peer reviewers, during the period of the grant. These progress reviews are typically held at the midway point on the award and may be attended by representatives from the co-funding partner agencies. Progress reviews conducted with an international peer review panel are comprised of up to three international subject matter experts, who will be asked to review the progress and direction of the research, the quality of the team (including gender balance) and partnerships, the management of the budget and progress towards generating impact. In relation to the latter, the panel will be guided to review progress against the impact statement provided by the applicant(s) in their original proposal. These progress reviews will also involve a data provenance review, where a dataset will be reviewed in the context of experimental design, data capture, analysis, storage and curation. The research team will also be assessed on matters concerning training, mentoring and supervision. The outcome of any type of review will be taken into consideration in the assessment of future applications made to SFI. As stated in the SFI General Terms and Conditions,[60] SFI reserves the right to terminate a grant if, in the reasonable opinion of SFI, progress is not deemed to be satisfactory.

6 SFI Policies and Positions

In addition to complying with SFI's General Terms and Conditions, 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 team 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 must adhere to the **SFI Clinical Trial and Clinical Investigation Policy**,[61] as well as with the requirements set out by the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA).

[60] http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/sfi-general-terms-and-conditions/
[61] 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**[62] and should also ensure that their studies align with the HRPA's 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;**[63] that is, all institutions and SFI award holders are expected to abide by this statement and the **European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity,**[64] 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 (2023)**.[65]

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.[66] 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).

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

SFI's ambition is that Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2023-2028 will be a key driver of an inclusive, engaged research culture and, through this Strategy, SFI will be an agent of change. As such, the SFI EDI Strategy presents a vision and strategy for SFI, as a leading research funder, to help reduce systemic barriers to participating in the research endeavour.

SFI has already demonstrated leadership in improving the representation of women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) research more broadly in the entire education talent pipeline. Whilst gender will remain a central tenet of the new EDI Strategy, SFI will now proactively consider other areas of inequality or disadvantage to support an intersectional approach, in keeping with our values and best practice.

In the SFI Strategy 2025 *Shaping Our Future*,[67] targets are set for 35% of SFI's funded leadership positions (PIs & Co-PIs) to be held by women and for research teams to be composed of at least 40% of the underrepresented gender by 2025. As such, applicants should consider and describe how these targets can be achieved at all levels of the research team.

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[62] http://www.sfi.ie/resources/SFI-Policy-on-the-Use-of-Animals-in-Research_June_2016.pdf
[63] https://www.iua.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/National-Policy-Statement-on-Ensuring-Research-Integrity-in-Ireland.pdf
[64] https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/european-code-of-conduct-for-research-integrity_horizon_en.pdf
[65] https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2023/02/National-Framework-for-Doctoral-Education-2023.pdf
[66] http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/national-policies-sfi-positions/
[67] https://www.sfi.ie/strategy/SFI-Strategy-2025.pdf

Research should fully consider potential biological sex and socio-cultural gender dimensions as key analytical and explanatory variables. As articulated in the SFI EDI Strategy, applicants are advised to demonstrate that they have considered any potential sex/gender aspects in their proposed research programme.

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.[68]

Appeals Process

The Appeals Process policy establishes procedures and responsibilities for the appeal of the declination of a proposal by SFI.[69]

State aid

Please refer to the **State aid** section (Section 2.3) above.

Child Protection

Where relevant, applicants and Research Bodies are required to comply with the provisions of the **Children First Act 2015**,[70] and the **National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017**.[71] 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 Regulation[72] is a legal framework that sets out guidelines for the collection and processing of personal information of individuals within the European Union.[73] 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**.[74]

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

[68] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/gender/
[69] http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/review/
[70] http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2015/act/36/enacted/en/pdf
[71] http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Children_First_National_Guidance_2017.pdf
[72] https://www.dataprotection.ie/
[73] https://gdpr.eu/
[74] http://www.sfi.ie/privacy/

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**.[75]

Open access

In line with the principles espoused by Plan S[76] and as a signatory of the National Action Plan for Open Research 2022- 30[77], 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.**[78] 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.[79] 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.[80] Applicants should review individual programme funding call requirements regarding data management plans and timelines as to when they are required to be submitted.

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.

[75] http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/national-policies-sfi-positions/
[76] https://www.coalition-s.org/principles-and-implementation/
[77] https://norf.ie
[78] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/open-research
[79] https://www.scienceeurope.org/our-resources/practical-guide-to-the-international-alignment-of-research-data-management/
[80] https://www.scienceeurope.org/our-resources/guidance-document-presenting-a-framework-for-discipline-specific-research-data-management/

7 Further Information

All information related to the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme is available on the programme webpage:

http://www.sfi.ie/funding/funding-calls/frontiers-for-the-future/

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

Appendix A: SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme Review Process

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

Score Weighting System:

Awards

Review Criteria	Applicants	Emerging Investigator Applicants
Applicants	30%	10%
Research Proposal	40%	60%
Impact	30%	30%
Total	100%	100%

Projects

Review Criteria	Applicants	Emerging Investigator Applicants
Applicants	30%	10%
Research Proposal	55%	75%
Impact	15%	15%
Total	100%	100%

For the Emerging Investigator category, weighting of the review scores will mean that there is increased emphasis on the quality of the research over the track record. Furthermore, due to the high-risk, high-reward nature of the Projects, the weighting of the review scores will mean that there is decreased emphasis on the impact criterion for SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme Projects, compared to Awards.

If you are applying for the SFI-CHF collaboration, please see Appendix B for the collaboration-specific score weighting system.

Weighted scores will be rounded to the nearest half point.[81] SFI reserves the right to reduce the rounding levels, depending on number and quality of applications. See below for detailed breakdown of the ranking process.

SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme Review Process

All proposals submitted to the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme will be assessed for eligibility and proposals meeting the eligibility requirements will be reviewed as outlined below.

[81] 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.

Stage 1: Review

Step 1. All proposals will be forwarded to a minimum of three distinguished international peer reviewers for written evaluation and rating under the review criteria outlined below. A copy of the review form is provided in the table below.

- SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme Awards will be evaluated by expert international **'postal reviewers'**, where the reviewers are selected based on the alignment of his/her expertise with the content of the proposal; a postal reviewer is asked to review one proposal only;
- SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme Projects will be reviewed by a **'virtual panel'** comprised of a large number of international reviewers; where each member of the virtual panel receives a number of proposals, up to six, to review. The virtual panels are therefore more generalist in nature and reviewers may not be experts in the exact subject area of all the proposals which have been assigned to them.

Review Type	**SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme Awards (postal review)** **SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme Projects (virtual panel review)**
Review Questions	**Question pertaining to Applicant(s)** SFI became a signatory of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)[82] in 2019 and as such, is aligning 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.[83]To this end, all types of research output are recognised by SFI, and we are committed to assessing the quality and impact of research through means other than journal-based metrics and research performance-based metrics such as impact factors and h-index. In the spirit of supporting open research and as a signatory of Plan S,[84] 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.[85] To complement these activities and further reinforce SFI's commitment to the overarching objectives of the Narrative CV, during 2022, SFI became a signatory to the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment[86] and thus became a member of the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA).[87] Please take these positions into account during your assessment of the Narrative CV(s) submitted by the applicant(s). Please comment on the quality, significance and relevance of the **applicant's and co-applicant's (if relevant) key achievements and research track record as demonstrated in the CV(s),** commensurate with their career stage and research discipline, taking any

[82] https://sfdora.org/read/
[83] Contributor level membership
[84] https://www.coalition-s.org/
[85] https://norf.ie/national-action-plan/
[86] https://coara.eu/app/uploads/2022/09/2022_07_19_rra_agreement_final.pdf
[87] https://coara.eu/

	periods of leave into account. In your review, please comment on how the applicant(s) has addressed each of the following areas: 1) Generation of Knowledge, 2) Development of Individuals and Collaborations, 3) Supporting Broader Society & the Economy and, 4) Supporting the Research Community. With your review, please also consider whether the expertise and experience of the lead applicant, co-applicant(s), mentor and collaborator(s), if relevant, are appropriate given their proposed contribution to the research programme. There are **two stages** to the scoring of the applicant(s): First, please score the quality, significance and relevance of the applicant's and co-applicant's (if relevant) key achievements and research track record with regard to the individual categories in the CV(s): 1) Generation of Knowledge, 2) Development of Individuals and Collaborations, 3) Supporting Broader Society & the Economy, 4) Supporting the Research Community. Half scores are permitted. • 1 = Applicant(s) not internationally competitive for this category • 2 = Applicant(s) track record has considerable weaknesses for this category • 3 = Applicant(s) track record lacking in one or two critical aspects for this category • 4 = High-quality applicant(s) in nearly all respects for this category • 5 = Outstanding applicant(s) for this category Second, taking into account the four categories referred to above, please use your judgement to provide one overall score based on the quality, significance and relevance of the lead applicant's and co-applicant's (if relevant) key achievements and research track record, commensurate with their career stage and research discipline, taking any periods of leave into account. Please consider the quality and relevance of the collaborators and/or mentor, if relevant. This score will be the final score used to assess the applicant(s). Half scores are permitted. • 1 = Applicant(s) not internationally competitive • 2 = Applicant(s) track record has considerable weaknesses • 3 = Applicant(s) track record lacking in one or two critical aspects • 4 = High-quality applicant(s) in nearly all respects • 5 = Outstanding applicant(s) ***Within this applicant category, please do not assess the applicants(s) based on the possible outcome of the research. Please provide assessment based on the applicant(s)' history of achievements as outlined in their CV. The Narrative CV categories correspond with the scoring categories to help this process.*** **Question pertaining to Research Programme** Please comment on the quality, significance, novelty, and strategic relevance of the research plan. In your assessment, please consider points such as: importance, timeliness of the proposed research; quality of institutional support; communication and description of the research; comprehension of the current state of the art; value for money, the Sex and Gender dimension, Data Management Plan etc.

	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). • Is the data management plan sufficient? Yes / No • If the data management plan is **not sufficient**, please explain. **Sex and Gender Dimension in Research** **This section should not** include information on gender equality, diversity and inclusion in the research team/environment. • Has the applicant adequately addressed the sex and/or gender dimension/s in their proposal? Yes/No • If the applicant **has not** included a sex and/or gender dimension/s in their research proposal, are you satisfied that they have justified this position sufficiently? If not, please explain. • If the applicant **has** included a sex and/or gender dimension/s in their research proposal, is the design/analysis described sufficiently rigorously to test for differences between the sexes and/or genders? If not, please explain. • If the applicant is only studying one biological sex and/or gender, has the applicant provided sufficient justification with reference to the scientific literature, preliminary data, or other relevant consideration in their proposal? Please rate the quality, significance, novelty, and strategic relevance of the research plan, including the Sex and Gender Statement aspects (half scores are permitted) • 1 - Research proposed is not worthy of funding • 2 - Research proposed has serious deficiencies • 3 - Research proposed is lacking in one or more critical aspects; key issues need to be addressed • 4 - High-quality research programme in most respects • 5 - Outstanding research programme in all respects **Question pertaining to Impact** Please review the Impact Statement prepared by the applicant(s) and comment on the applicant's ability to demonstrate the potential impact and value to Ireland. In your assessment, please consider points such as: Appreciation of how research may be developed and exploited in the medium-to-long term; realistic and convincing evaluation of the benefits that will result from a successful research programme; areas and fields where impacts are likely to be made. Please rate the applicant's ability to demonstrate the potential impact and value to Ireland (half scores are permitted) • 1 Very low impact potential • 2 Low impact potential • 3 Good impact potential • 4 High impact potential • 5 Outstanding impact potential **Question pertaining to Budget, Team & Project/Award Duration** Is the budget appropriate/realistic given the track record of the applicant(s)? Please comment on the appropriateness of the skills, composition and size of the team requested, the appropriateness of the resources requested and award duration. **Question pertaining to Ethical Issues**

	Please comment on any ethical issues, particularly related to any aspects of the proposed research that involves animals, human participants, human biological material, or identifiable/potentially identifiable data?

Step 2. Written reviews received from the international peer reviewers will be collated and forwarded to each applicant. Applicants will then be afforded the opportunity to submit a **response** to the reviewers' 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).

Step 3. The applicant response and all three anonymous reviews received for each proposal will be made available to the Step 1 reviewers, who will then have the opportunity to adjust their reviews and ratings based on their assessment of the quality of the response. The Step 1 reviewers will also be asked if they recommend the proposal for funding.

Applications will progress to a ranking list, and be eligible for funding, if at least two reviewers recommend the proposal for funding.

Applications will **not** be considered for funding by SFI if at least two reviewers do **not** recommend the proposal for funding.

Applications that are recommended for funding will be funded based on the ranking system detailed below.

SFI reserves the right to assess applications with very high standard deviations or vastly deviating reviewer opinions using additional reviewers or review through an oversight panel. Should additional reviewers assess an application, they will review the fairness of the existing reviews and may make a funding recommendation and/or may modify scores where an application is judged to have been treated unfairly and there is sufficient justification and rationale for doing so.

Ranking List

For applications that are recommended for funding by the Stage 1 panel, weighted scores will be rounded to the nearest half point.

When ranking applications, in the event of applications receiving the same final score, SFI will give priority in the review process to applications from woman lead applicants. 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.

SFI's co-funding partners (see Section 2.2) may elect to fully fund applications that were deemed to be fundable following the review process. This is done at the discretion of the relevant organisation.

Appendix B: SFI-CHF Co-Funding Partnership

Applicants are invited to submit **SFI-CHF collaborative applications** in the **FFP Projects stream** in 2024. All applications that meet the applicant eligibility requirements, and align to paediatric research will be considered for support under the partnership, subject to the outcome of the review process.

Applicants **must** indicate if they are applying to the SFI-CHF collaboration. **SFI-CHF applications will undergo the same review process, as non-partnership applications.**

Below are the **additional** requirements for applicants applying specifically for the SFI-CHF collaboration. **All other applicant eligibility and application requirements as outlined in Sections 2 and 3 of the call document must be met.**

Programme Details

- **Eligibility Criteria of Applicant and Co-Applicant**
- **Employment Status**

- Each application to the SFI-CHF partnership must include one Lead and one Co-applicant;

- The Lead applicant must meet the programme eligibility requirements and be based in an SFI eligible research body:
  The Lead Applicant must be a member of the academic staff of an eligible Research Body (permanent or with a contract that covers the period of the grant), **or**

  A contract researcher with a signed contract in place on the date of proposal submission to SFI. This contract must cover the period of the grant, and the contract researcher must be recognised by the Research Body as an independent investigator and will have an independent office and research space at the host Research Body for which the researcher will be fully responsible for at least the duration of the SFI grant, **or**

  An individual who will be recognised by the Research Body upon receipt of the SFI grant as a member of the academic staff or as a contract researcher as defined above. The applicant does not necessarily need to be employed by the Research Body at the time of proposal submission but must be recognised by the Research Body as an independent investigator and will have an independent office and research space at the host Research Body for which the researcher will be fully responsible for at least the duration of the SFI grant.

- Clinical (Co-)applicants **must** be a member of staff of either Children's Health Ireland (CHI) or CHI network partner sites (paediatric and neonatal facilities on the island of Ireland) with a permanent position, or with a contract that covers the period of the grant at submission. This applicant must be salaried by that healthcare organisation. This must be clearly stated in the LoS from the CHI, **or**

  An applicant can apply individually if they hold a joint appointment between CHI or CHI network partner sites (paediatric and neonatal facilities on the island of Ireland) and an SFI eligible research body.

- PhD equivalence is not an eligibility requirement for CHI based or CHI network partner site (paediatric and neonatal facilities on the island of Ireland) Co-applicants, given the nature of the collaboration. However, Co-applicants without SFI PhD equivalence[88] may have limitations placed on their proposed supervision of post-graduate team members should they be funded.

- Lead and Co-Applicants will hold equal accountability for the delivery of the proposed research objectives, and are subject to the eligibility requirements outlined within this document. For the purposes of grant administration, review process, and (if successful), award monitoring, the applicant affiliated to the SFI eligible research body **must** be designated as the Lead on all applications.

- All applicants will be subject to the eligibility requirements outlined within this document.

- For the SFI-CHF collaboration, collaborations between investigators from CHI and CHI network partner sites (paediatric and neonatal facilities on the island of Ireland) are not obligatory, but are strongly encouraged, particularly where applications reflect paediatric populations throughout the island of Ireland. Clinical collaborators should be listed within the documentation as an **Academic Collaborator.**

Application Procedure

- Applicants must indicate that they are applying to the SFI-CHF collaboration
- Applicants wishing to apply as an Emerging Investigator to the SFI-CHF collaboration **cannot** assign a co-applicant to their application, and as such must hold a joint appointment between CHI or CHI network partner sites (paediatric and neonatal facilities on the island of Ireland) and an SFI-eligible Research Body.

Main Body of Proposal

- **Research Programme**
- Applicant(s) **must** provide a Research Programme focussed on paediatric research, and indicate how patients/parents are taken into consideration in research design and operations. In descriptions of Dissemination plans, applicants **must** describe how patients/parents will be considered.
- Clinical trials and investigations requiring approval by the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) will not be permitted through SFI's Frontiers for the Future Programme.

- **Impact Statement**
- In the Impact Statement section, applicants **must** specifically describe the benefits of the collaboration (if applicable), and the potential impact of the research in the real world. Applicants **must** also consider how their research programme will develop a culture of paediatric research, and paediatric researchers/staff in Ireland. In particular, **projects with a national collaborative remit are strongly encouraged.**

[88] https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/eligibility-related-information/PHD-equivalence-policy_September_2018.pdf

Budget

- Staff: Salaries and Benefits
  - Clinical members of CHI staff (not the applicant) who would be employed by the SFI eligible research body in a research capacity (e.g. PhD or Post-Doctoral researcher) for the duration of the grant is an allowable cost. This should be calculated as standard (subject to the SFI grant budget policy) depending on the position requested.
  - Clinical 'buy-outs' are not an allowable cost.

Review Process

- **Scoring**
  - Applications submitted for the SFI-CHF collaboration will be weighted as per the figures outlined below.

Score Weighting

Review Criteria	Review Weighting	
	Applicants	**Emerging Investigator Applicants**
Applicants	30%	10%
Research Proposal	40%	60%
Impact	**30%**	**30%**
Total	100%	100%

Ranking of the partnership applications will be the same as for non-partnership applications. Ranking is detailed above in Appendix A.

By submitting an application to the SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme, an applicant 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.

In advance of proposal submission, queries regarding the SFI-CHF collaboration may be directed to SFI at FFP@sfi.ie; however, full eligibility checks are not conducted before proposal submission.