

# SFI guidance on the process for changes to Directors of SFI-funded Research Centres

**December 2016**

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As per the SFI Letter of Offer for Research Centre awards, the Foundation must be notified in advance of any changes involving the Director of an SFI-funded Research Centre at any point in the lifetime of the Centre. For changes involving a Director, the Vice President for Research of the lead Host Institution for the Centre award should submit a written request to SFI to consider the change. This request should be submitted by email to the SFI Director of Programmes, the Research Centres Manager and the relevant Scientific Programme Manager within SFI, along with the programmatic email address (i.e. centres@sfi.ie). The lead institution's request should, at a minimum, contain the following information:

1. The background for the request, providing an explanation as to why the existing Director is stepping down from his/her position.
2. A description of the impact that his/her departure will have on the operations or research activities of the Centre, as well as any steps being undertaken to manage or mitigate this impact.
3. The process to be adopted by the lead Host Research Body for the replacement of the Director. SFI will assess the process to be adopted by the Host Research Body and provide feedback before commencement of recruitment.

Two scenarios are envisaged for the process of recruiting a new Director to an existing Research Centre:

- a) **Open recruitment process** – whereby the position of Director is filled through an open competition, as laid out by the Host Research Institution. This should involve the advertisement of the position both within the Host Research Institution and externally. It would be expected that an international search would be carried out to provide confidence that the selected Director would be of an international calibre. Internal candidates can apply and should be evaluated, in competition, as part of this process. For Research Centres using the CEO/COO model, this falls under the open recruitment process and SFI requirements will remain the same.
- b) **Succession Plan** - where a Centre has a robust succession plan in place, SFI will consider this process for the filling of the Director role. SFI will require assurance from the Host Research Institution that all potential candidates within the Centre, including those not based at the Host Research Institution, have been considered as part of such a succession plan. An assessment of all candidate(s) identified as part of the succession plan by a selection committee should take place to evaluate the calibre of candidate(s).

In both process scenarios, SFI requires assurance from the Host Research Institution that the following conditions are met:

- i. Two internationally recognised researchers, both of whom have been approved by SFI are present on the selection committee. Information, in the form of a CV, on such scientists should be provided to SFI for approval;
- ii. The views of the Governance Committee of the Research Centre on the appointment/role assignment are represented by the involvement of the Governance Chair in the selection committee panel;

- iii. All potential candidates meet the minimum eligibility requirements which were outlined in the call document for the Research Centre programme.

*SFI may also require additional information, requests for which will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.*

4. The SFI Board must approve the appointment/role assignment of the Research Centre Director and to facilitate this approval, the following information should be provided to SFI for its consideration:
  - i. A summary of the recruitment/role assignment process which was carried out;
  - ii. Notification in writing to SFI when the appointment is proposed to be made;
  - iii. The CV of the proposed replacement;
  - iv. A description of the role and responsibilities of the proposed replacement within the Centre, if different from the incumbent;
  - v. A statement from the proposed replacement that he/she is prepared to act as Director in the Centre, and will assume the responsibilities for the Centre award that are attached to that role. In all cases where the proposed replacement is in receipt of significant SFI research funding, SFI will examine their commitment and work load in determining the suitability of such an appointment.
  - vi. A letter of support from the Host Research Institution, outlining their support and contractual commitments for the new Director.
  - vii. Any additional pertinent information which may be requested by SFI, for example, any potential changes to the Host Research Institution of the Research Centre.
5. The Vice President for Research of the Host Research Institution and the Centre Director will be informed of the decision by SFI.