



European Research Council

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SCIENCE FOUNDATION IRELAND

SFI ERC Development Programme

Call for Submission of Proposals

Version 6.1: May 26th 2016

KEY DATES

The SFI ERC Development Programme is run as a rolling call. Applications are invited from applicants to the most recent calls to the ERC Starting Grant, Consolidator Grant or Advanced Grant schemes, whose proposals were scored "A" at Stage 2 of the ERC's evaluation process, but were not funded owing to a lack of available budget. Applications must be received within three months of the date on the ERC notification letter if the application was made from a Host Institution in the Republic of Ireland or within 12 months of this date if the application was made elsewhere.

Terms of Reference

While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and reliability of this document, it is provided for information purposes only and as a guide to expected developments. It is not intended, and should not be relied upon, as any form of warranty, representation, undertaking, contractual, or other commitment binding in law upon Science Foundation Ireland, the Government of Ireland, or any of their respective servants or agents. SFI Terms and Conditions of Research Grants shall govern the administration of SFI grants and awards to the exclusion of this and any other oral, written, or recorded statement.

All responses to this Call for Submission of Proposals will be treated in confidence and no information contained therein will be communicated to any third party without the written permission of the applicant except insofar as is specifically required for the consideration and evaluation of the proposal or as may be required under law, including the Industrial Development (Science Foundation Ireland) Act 2003, the Industrial Development (Science Foundation Ireland) (Amendment) Act 2013, and the Freedom of Information Acts, 1997 and 2003.

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1. Introduction

The legal remit¹ of Science Foundation Ireland (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. As outlined in SFI's strategic plan, *Agenda 2020*,² a key objective of SFI is to enter into collaborative arrangements with international partners and contribute to the funding of international collaborative projects. This will help Ireland leverage significant non-exchequer research funding into the State. Agenda 2020 also states that SFI will “*support the development of European Research Council (ERC) scientists in Ireland and the attraction of more ERC scientists into Ireland*”. In addition, *Innovation 2020*,³ Ireland's five-year strategy on research and development, science and technology, notes that researchers in Ireland targeting the ERC's schemes have “*performed well in winning these prestigious awards so far under Horizon 2020. We plan to build on this success, as these awards are a global as well as a European benchmark of excellence*”

Horizon 2020,⁴ the current EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation launched in January 2014 and will be in operation until December 2020. Horizon 2020 is the funding mechanism that aims to secure the EU's global position in research, innovation and technology and is designed to create new growth and jobs in Europe. European funding should be complementary and additive to national funding and SFI intends to play a full role, both as a partner and as a catalyst, in achieving national success in obtaining EU funding. SFI has developed a strategic plan with a goal for Irish-based researchers to win significant funding from the Horizon 2020 programme and will work with agencies, centre directors, research bodies and funded researchers towards this goal. SFI continues to implement a number of incentives to encourage researchers based in Ireland to apply to Horizon 2020 schemes and has high expectations of Ireland's research community, as evidenced through the setting of ambitious but achievable targets for the acquisition of EU funding.

The European Research Council (ERC)⁵ is a European funding initiative designed to support the best scientists, engineers and scholars in Europe, and is the largest single component of the *Excellent Science* pillar of Horizon 2020, with a budget that is equivalent to approximately 17% of the total budget for Horizon 2020. The ERC's mandate is to encourage the highest-quality research in Europe through competitive funding and to support investigator-initiated frontier research across all fields, on the basis of scientific excellence.

SFI recognises the excellence of researchers funded by the ERC and has programmes designed to develop, incentivise and reward ERC applicants and awardees. SFI offers two ERC-related schemes to support ERC applications and the host institutions of ERC awardees: The **SFI ERC Support Programme** provides an additional overhead payment to the Host Institution of ERC award winners, which is designed to assist awardees, who may either have won their ERC award while working at an Irish Host Institution or who may have recently been recruited to an Irish Host Institution from overseas, to successfully carry out their ERC-funded research. The **SFI ERC Development Programme** provides direct support to ERC applicants who were considered to be of an excellent standard by the ERC but who could not be funded owing to a lack of available budget. The programme aims to enhance the opportunities for these applicants to resubmit successfully to future ERC calls and

¹ <http://www.sfi.ie/about-us/about-sfi/>

² <http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/research-impact/AGENDA-2020.pdf>

³ <https://www.djei.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Innovation-2020.pdf>

⁴ <http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en>

⁵ <http://erc.europa.eu/>

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applicants are permitted to apply for funds to carry out excellent scientific research within all areas covered by SFI's legal remit.

Three specific types of ERC grants are relevant to this SFI call: the **ERC Starting Grant**, **ERC Consolidator Grant**, and **ERC Advanced Grant**. Applicants to the **ERC Synergy Grant** programme are **not eligible** for support through the SFI ERC Development Programme. Similarly, ERC award holders who have been unsuccessful with an application to the **ERC Proof of Concept** programme are **not eligible** for support through this programme.

2. Objectives of the SFI ERC Development Programme

- To encourage excellent but recently unsuccessful ERC applicants to resubmit to the ERC
- To increase Ireland's success in future ERC calls
- To improve the success rate of Ireland-based applicants who resubmit to the ERC
- To encourage researchers based in Ireland to submit proposals to ERC schemes
- To assist SFI's eligible research bodies to recruit excellent but initially unsuccessful ERC applicants, and encourage them to reapply to the ERC for their own benefit and for the benefit of their new host institution

3. Eligibility Criteria of Applicant

- The applicant must have been an unsuccessful applicant to the most recent ERC Starting Grant, Consolidator Grant, or Advanced Grant call; this programme does not top up the grants of ERC award winners. Only one SFI ERC Development Programme application corresponding to an original ERC proposal will be eligible for review. Previous applicants to the SFI ERC Development Programme (or any of its forerunners) are not eligible to reapply.
- At Stage 2 of the ERC review process, proposals are scored "A" if they fully meet the ERC's excellence criterion and are recommended for funding if sufficient funds are available. Only applicants whose proposals scored "A" at Stage 2 are eligible to apply to the SFI ERC Development Programme.
- The applicant must have submitted a proposal to one of the ERC panels that are listed as being part of the Physical Sciences and Engineering (PE) domain or the Life Sciences (LS) domain. Applications associated with researchers who applied to a panel within the Social Sciences and Humanities (SH) domain **are not eligible** through this call, even where a secondary panel was selected in either the PE or LS domains.
- The 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 contract that covers the period of the grant, who is 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 he/she 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.

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Research Body submission confirms that the lead applicant meets these criteria and is either a member of the academic staff, a contract researcher, or awaiting appointment as defined above.

Investigators currently funded by SFI are entitled to apply to the SFI ERC Development Programme. Similarly, applicants currently under active review by SFI are also entitled to apply to the SFI ERC Development Programme.

Investigators moving from outside of the Republic of Ireland to one of SFI's eligible research bodies, who conform to the eligibility criteria listed above, are entitled to apply to the SFI ERC Development Programme.

4. Eligibility of Research Body

The Research Body is the body responsible for the overall financial and administrative coordination of the research programme supported by research grants from the Foundation. Host Research Bodies must be situated in the Republic of Ireland. Queries regarding eligibility of research bodies should be directed to SFI prior to submission. A list of [eligible research bodies](#) is available on the SFI website.

The terms 'Research Body' and '(Host) Institution' are equivalent and interchangeable in this documentation.

5. Programme Remit

The remit of the SFI ERC Development Programme is the **legal remit** of Science Foundation Ireland. The programme will fund research in those fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics, which promote and assist the development and competitiveness of industry, enterprise and employment in Ireland. SFI understands that the ERC funds very diverse themes of research that can extend beyond the legal remit of SFI. Only research that can demonstrably be aligned to SFI's legal remit can be supported through this programme. Please see SFI's website for guidance (<http://www.sfi.ie/about-us/about-sfi/>).

6. Funding

Awards made under this programme will fund only a portion of the budget originally requested from the ERC. Award amounts must match the costs of the proposed research, and are capped at **50% of the direct-cost component of the original ERC proposal budget request (that is, not including originally requested overheads), or €500,000, whichever is lower, for a period of 24 months.**

SFI funding supports the research programme costs of the Principal Investigator and their research group. Eligible costs include:

- Relevant research expenses, including equipment, consumables and travel.
- Contributions to salaries/stipends for staff hired specifically to carry out the research programme.
- Access to necessary special facilities, which are not available in the host Research Body.

Applicants moving to an eligible research body from outside of the Republic of Ireland (see Section 3) are also entitled to request a contribution to their own salary for the duration of the award.

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This request should be proportionate and not impinge on the opportunity to carry out a successful programme of research under the award. All other applicants to the SFI ERC Development Programme may not seek a salary contribution from this award.

Please consult the SFI website for more information on the [SFI Grant Application Budget Policy](#).

In addition to the direct costs provided, 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.

7. Utilising the SFI ERC Development Programme Award

The SFI ERC Development Programme aims to provide enhanced support for investigators whose ERC proposals were deemed to have the requisite excellence to obtain an award from one of the three ERC grant programmes for individual researchers, but were unfortunately not funded due to a lack of available finance. SFI views that these awards should be utilised in one of two distinct ways:

1. **Support:** In cases where the Evaluation Report from the ERC does not indicate that significant changes to the original proposal are required, thus providing a strong rationale for a rapid resubmission to the next available call to the relevant ERC scheme, the funds may be used to carry out preliminary or time-sensitive work, which would underpin the research programme of a future ERC award. Should an application to the ERC be successful, the SFI award would terminate upon the commencement of the ERC grant, based on the grant agreement that is subsequently negotiated.
2. **Improvement:** In cases where the Evaluation Report has clearly identified that changes or additional preliminary data are required before a resubmission to a future ERC scheme would have a strong likelihood of success, the funds may be used to carry out the necessary research to directly address these issues. SFI expects that a resubmission to the ERC will be made no later than to the next available call to the relevant open ERC scheme after the approved end date of the SFI ERC Development Programme award.

It should be noted that **only one application may be made to the SFI ERC Development Programme by any individual researcher.**

8. Submission

Applications to the SFI ERC Development Programme will only be accepted through SESAME, SFI's grants and awards management system. Access to SESAME is controlled by staff at the Research Office of the host research body. Please follow your internal organisational process to request this access. If you are registered by your Research Office, **you will receive an email** containing the following:

- **Username**
- **Password**
- **SFI PIN number**
- **SESAME website address**

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Your **username** and **password** are needed to log in to SESAME. This PIN number is also stored in your **contact profile** on SESAME.

SESAME is accessed using the Internet; no additional software needs to be installed. You can access SESAME online from any location. 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 using the following Internet address:

<https://grants.sfi.ie>

Please see the **SESAME Researcher User Guide** for more detailed information ([SESAME Researcher User Guide](#)).

SESAME enables:

- Individual researchers to apply online for SFI grants
- Host research bodies to review and authorise all applications

9. Application Procedure

SFI places the highest importance on the ongoing evaluation of the progress of the awards that it makes. SFI assumes that in the submission of an application, applicants accept our stringent requirements for reporting on and reviewing the progress of awards, as outlined in Section 19.

Applications for the SFI ERC Development Programme consist of a proposal submitted online through SESAME to SFI by the Research Office of the applicant's research body. Applicants should carefully follow the instructions below and in the [SESAME Researcher User Guide](#) to complete the various sections of the application. Please contact your Research Office well in advance in order to obtain registration details for SESAME.

General Guidelines

- **All text in uploaded PDF attachments** must be provided in Times New Roman font, or similar, with minimum font size of 11, and at least single-line spacing as well as a minimum margin size of 2.54cm. Text in diagrams may be in any clearly legible font.
- Uploads in SESAME must be submitted in **Adobe or Microsoft PDF format only**.
- The number of pages in attachments must not exceed the specifications for any given section. **Applications that do not comply with these guidelines will be deemed ineligible and will not be processed.**
- Appendices or other unsolicited documentation are not permitted. **Applications that include such unsolicited documentation will be deemed ineligible and will not be processed.**
- The currency to be used is the **euro (€)**.
- File sizes of attachments should be **less than 5MB**.

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Applications not adhering to these guidelines or with incomplete content will be deemed ineligible and will not be processed, regardless of the date of submission.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that eligible proposals are received by SFI on, or before, the deadline indicated (where applicable). In order to safeguard against ineligibility, applicants are reminded to adhere rigorously to the guidelines presented in the call documentation and to review the proposal document prior to submission in SESAME.

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

Proposals must be submitted to SFI by the Research Office of the applicant's research body through SESAME. If the applicant submitted their original proposal to the ERC from a Research Body located in the Republic of Ireland, the application to the SFI ERC Development Programme **must be submitted within three months of the date on the ERC notification letter**. Where the applicant submitted their proposal to the ERC from a Research Body outside of the Republic of Ireland, the application to the SFI ERC Development Programme **must be received within 12 months of the date on the ERC notification letter**, thus allowing necessary recruitment-related activities to be carried out.

(a) ORCID ID

ORCID⁶ provides a unique identifier for all researchers, which can then be linked to their different research works across different platforms. In December 2015, SESAME integrated with ORCID to make it possible for researchers with a SESAME Research Profile to connect directly to an ORCID iD from their profile. 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. For the SFI ERC Development Programme, researchers are required to link their SESAME Research Profiles to an ORCID iD **before an application can be submitted**.

(b) Proposal Summary

- **Proposal Title**
The Research Proposal title should clearly convey the nature of the research to be undertaken, in up to 30 words, and may be the same as, or different to, the original ERC application.

⁶ <http://orcid.org/>

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- **Duration of Award Requested**
All SFI ERC Development Programme awards are funded for a period of **24 months**.
- **ERC Scheme**
Applicants should indicate which ERC scheme they applied to (i.e., Starting Grant, Consolidator Grant or Advanced Grant).
- **Primary NRP Area**
Research in proposals to the SFI ERC Development Programme does not have to align strictly to the 14 NRP areas. Nevertheless, applicants are requested to identify, where possible, the area that best reflects the proposed research. Where a proposal does not align to any of the NRP areas select “*Other*” from the drop-down menu.
- **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.
- **SFI Legal Remit**
This section must be used to describe (**in no more than 250 words**) how the proposed research aligns to SFI’s legal remit. Such an alignment is mandatory for an application to be considered for support; the statement should identify any particular steps that have been taken by the applicant to address this issue in their proposal.

(c) Lead Applicant Details

- **Location of Applicant at time of Submission**
Applicants must enter the country in which they are employed at the time of submission of the proposal to this programme. Should this differ from the country in which the Host Institution for the original ERC application is located, details must be provided in the Programme Documents section (see below).

(d) Collaborator Details

- **Addition of Collaborators**
Information about the collaborator(s) must be included in this section. Clicking on the “Add” button will open a form into which details about the collaborator(s) should be completed. Ensure that either “Academic” or “Industry” (as appropriate) is selected in the ‘Collaborator Type’ drop-down menu. Once details regarding the name and institution of a collaborator have been added and saved, which is achieved by clicking on the “Associate Collaborator” button at the bottom of the application form, it will be possible to upload the collaborator’s CV (**maximum of two pages**) by clicking on the appropriate button. A template is not provided for CVs. Relevant publications for the collaborator should be listed, ensuring that the two-page limit is not exceeded. There is no limit to the number of collaborators that can be included; however, the necessity for using collaborators must be clearly justified in the Programme Documents section (see below).

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(e) Main Body of Proposal

- **Scientific Abstract**
This should be a succinct (**maximum of 200 words**) and accurate summary of the proposed work when separated from the application.
- **Lay Abstract**
This should be a succinct (**maximum of 100 words**) and accurate summary in lay, non-technical language of the proposed work when separated from the application.

(f) Programme Documents

In a **single PDF document**, applicants are requested to provide the following documentation in the order listed below:

- The full proposal originally submitted to the ERC
 - The letter from the ERC indicating the outcome of their application
 - The Evaluation Report from the ERC
 - A scientific proposal covering the funding term of the SFI ERC Development Programme (maximum four pages plus references)
- (i) Full proposal originally submitted to the ERC
This is a copy of the full proposal (Parts B1 and B2) that the applicant submitted to the ERC. The research plan outlined in this proposal must be aligned with SFI's legal remit.
- (ii) Letter from the ERC
This is a copy of the letter received from the ERC indicating the outcome of the applicant's proposal to the ERC scheme. The letter should state that the proposal fully met the ERC's excellence criterion (i.e., was given a grade "A" at Stage 2).
- (iii) Evaluation Report from the ERC
This is the report received by the applicant containing the full set of reviewers' comments following the outcome of the ERC's assessment process.
- (iv) Scientific Proposal (maximum four pages plus references)
This should describe a research programme that has been substantially reduced from that proposed in the original ERC submission, and should explain how the evaluation of the original ERC proposal has been considered for this application. The proposal may, in principle, describe work that was originally intended for the original ERC proposal, or may instead describe research that must now be carried out in order to deal with concerns that were raised during the ERC review process. Whichever is the case, the strategy being employed should be clearly explained in the proposal and a statement should be included as to how this activity will strengthen the submission of an imminent or future resubmission to the ERC (please refer to Section 7 above). In addition, the intended outcomes of the research programme should be detailed. Use of a Gantt chart to describe how the programme will proceed is encouraged.

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(g) Budget

- **Prepare Budget**

Eligible costs for grant support under the SFI ERC Development Programme are those costs that 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. All awards are made directly to the applicant's research body. Please also refer to the [SFI Terms and Conditions of Research Grants](#) and also the [SFI Grant Application Budget Policy](#).

See notes for completion of the budget table in the [SESAME Researcher User Guide](#). A link is also provided with information to assist with completion.

SFI ERC Development Programme awards are funded to a maximum value of 50% of the direct-cost component of the original ERC proposal budget request (that is, not including originally requested overheads), or €500,000, whichever is lower, to cover direct costs for a period of 24 months. General overheads, currently 30% of "modified" total direct costs, should not be included in the requested budget (see below).

- **Staff**

It is important to note that SFI-funded researchers are employees of the research body. SFI makes a contribution to the overall staff budget for the programme. Please refer to Section 6 and the salary scales provided as part of the [SFI Grant Application Budget Policy](#) with regard to the funding of PI salary (noting that the 'Cost to Grant' figures in these scales include the 20% employer's pension) and postgraduate fees and stipends. Requests for a PI salary contribution may only be submitted by applicants who submitted a proposal to the ERC from outside of the Republic of Ireland and who are moving to an eligible research body in Ireland.

- **Equipment**

Details of all requested equipment necessary for the research programme should be itemised. Small equipment of a value of less than €2,000 should be included in the Materials and Consumables section. The exception to this is costs associated with computers/laptops, which must be listed in the Equipment section regardless of cost. If funding for computer cluster resources is requested in this application, justification must be given as to why national high-performance computing facilities cannot be used for the purposes of the project. For an equipment item in excess of €50,000, the quote number and cost must be included in the budget justification. The documentation supporting this quotation must be fully auditable and available to SFI on request.

- **Materials and Consumables**

An outline of all materials and consumables that will be used in the course of the research programme should be provided.

Access charges may be sought for use of infrastructure where SFI pre-approved access charge plans are in place. Note that these may include, with SFI approval, access to facilities and services not available to the applicant, such as the costs associated with accessing international databases or commissioning specific experiments in national facilities (e.g., Tyndall NAP, CRANN AML etc.). Access charge requests must be included as a separate line item in the budget and where relevant must include the grant code and name of the

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relevant infrastructure to be used. A rationale for the amount of use proposed must be provided in the budget justification.

- **Travel**

Only travel costs for journeys directly related to the progress of the research programme may be requested as a direct cost on the research grant. The applicant should outline the details of travel expenses directly related to, for example, conferences, scientific collaboration on the research programme, or learning special research techniques. Where possible, please supply the conference name and location. In the case of working visits, the rates sought for subsistence and other allowances may be no more than those which the research body's permanent staff may claim.

- **Budget Justification**

The applicant must upload, **in a PDF document of more than two pages**, a full justification for all costs requested in the budget. Justification for hiring team members at a given point on the [SFI Grants Team Member Budgeting Scale](#) should be provided, and their roles and duties should be elucidated. Similarly, requests for equipment and consumables should be fully justified. As stated above, requests for items of equipment with a value greater than €50,000 should be supported with a quotation number.

(h) Declaration

It should be noted that submission of an application represents agreement from the applicant to the [SFI Terms and Conditions of Research Grants](#). The applicant must tick the box to confirm that such an agreement is in place.

(i) Submission to Research Office

Once all sections of the application form have been completed, applicants must submit their proposal to their Research Office by clicking on the "Submit for RO Review" button. Following submission, it will not be possible to edit the proposal while its status is given as "*Full Proposal - Pending RO Approval*". The Research Office may require applicants to make revisions to their proposals before they submit the application to SFI; a notification will be sent to applicants where such revisions are mandated, and the status of the proposal in SESAME will revert to "*Full Proposal – In Preparation*", thus allowing the required revisions to be made.

It is the responsibility of applicants to ensure that their Research Office has successfully submitted their proposal to SFI before the deadline described in this document, based on the **date of ERC notification**. While it may still be possible to submit a proposal after this date has passed, SFI staff will check the date of submission and deem the application ineligible if the application was submitted after the eligible time period has elapsed.

Applicants will receive a notification from SESAME periodically when the status of their proposal changes. Alternatively, if you wish to track the status of your proposal (e.g., when the proposal is pending Research Office approval or under review at SFI), this information will be displayed in SESAME.

10. Institutional Approval

It should be noted that institutional submission of an application encompasses approval of an application and agreement to [SFI Terms and Conditions of Research Grants](#). Submission must only be made by an authorised institutional representative. In particular, the Research Body is approving:

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- The eligibility of the applicant
- That the applicant is, or will be upon receipt of the grant, recognised as an employee of the Research Body for the duration of the award (unless otherwise indicated in the individual's CV)
- That the requested budget (including salaries/stipends, equipment, travel and consumables) is in line with accepted institutional and national guidelines
- The availability of infrastructure within the institution to carry out the proposed research
- That the proposed research programme has not been funded by other sources
- That the details provided in relation to research funding history (i.e., current, pending or expired grants), as detailed in the application, are valid and accurate
- That relevant legal and ethical approval has been sought and should be granted prior to the award commencing
- That the relevant licences will be in place at the time of award

Successful Applicants

Successful applicants may be asked to submit a revised work plan, budget, and budget justification to correspond to the award offered by SFI, which may be the amount requested or a reduced amount.

11. Deadlines

Proposals must be received by SFI **within three months** of the date on the applicant's ERC notification letter, if they applied to the ERC from a Host Institution in the Republic of Ireland or **within 12 months** of this date if they applied to the ERC from elsewhere.

12. Ethical Issues

All investigators and Research Bodies must ensure that, before the research commences and during the full award period, all the necessary ethical, legal and regulatory requirements in order to conduct the research are met, and all the necessary licences and approvals have been obtained. All Research Bodies are responsible for ensuring that a safe working environment is provided for all individuals associated with a research project.

If research activities involve the use of animals, applicants must comply with the Health Products Regulatory Authority's (HPRA)⁷ position on the use of animals in research. SFI will only support research using animals that is fully compliant with the requirements of the HPRA, has been independently peer reviewed and where consideration has been given to the use of alternative approaches not involving the use of live animals and addressing the principles of the 3R's (reduction, replacement, refinement).

For studies involving humans, ethical approval must be obtained from the relevant national or local ethics committee prior to the start of the project.

Research supported by SFI must respect fundamental ethical principles. Furthermore, in line with a current directive from its parent government department, research funded by SFI must not comprise any component of the following:

⁷ <http://www.hpra.ie/homepage/veterinary/scientific-animal-protection>.

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- Research intended to create human embryos solely for the purpose of research or for the purpose of stem cell procurement, including by means of somatic cell nuclear transfer
- Research using human embryonic stem cells or tissues

13. Research Integrity

SFI places high importance on ensuring research integrity and endorses the [National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland](#). All applicants and institutions are expected to abide by the aforementioned Irish Policy on Research Integrity and the [European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#). SFI plans to audit compliance by award holders and relevant research bodies with the principles laid down in these guidelines that are relevant to the agency's activities and the awards it makes.

14. Proposal Review Process and Criteria

SFI technical staff will:

- Determine whether the proposal satisfies the conditions laid out in this document. In particular, it will be verified that the ERC proposal is aligned with the legal remit of SFI;
- Verify the authenticity of the submitted documents to prevent fraud;
- Verify that the requested budget corresponds to the proposed research, and that any request for a Principal Investigator salary contribution is reasonable and proportionate;
- Review the scientific proposal and budget. The evaluation report from the ERC peer-review process will be considered in order to assess whether there are suitable grounds to allow an applicant to obtain SFI funding through this programme while immediately resubmitting a proposal to the next available ERC call.

Note that there is no obligation to seek further peer review for the four-page research programme provided in an application to this programme (see below). The ERC review process, with its sole review criterion of scientific excellence, has guaranteed the scientific quality of the original proposal by providing an "A" rating. The review criterion for this programme is: **How well will the proposed research either support or improve a resubmission to an ERC scheme?**

SFI reserves the right to modify the review process, including seeking external peer review where deemed necessary. Applicants will be notified of any relevant modification to the review procedure.

15. Confidentiality

Science Foundation Ireland takes all reasonable steps to ensure that information provided in the application is treated as confidential subject to submission to the members of its committees and merit review and to any obligations under law.

16. Conflict of Interest

Conflict-of-interest rules are applied rigorously and apply to both reviewers and applicants. Reviewers engaged by SFI are required to adhere to SFI's conflict of interest policy and immediately declare to SFI where a conflict of interest exists or arises so that an alternative reviewer may be appointed. International peer reviewers will not provide comments or scores on any application on which they have a conflict of interest.

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Reviewers must adhere to high standards of integrity during the peer-review process. They must not compromise the intellectual property integrity of the application and may not appropriate and use as their own, or disclose to any third party, ideas, concepts or data contained in the applications they review.

17. Grant Administration

This programme requires that the described research programme be carried out as a precursor or accompaniment to a resubmission to an ERC scheme.

If an awardee moves to another eligible research body within the Republic of Ireland while the award is active, SFI will consider whether the award can also be moved to the new institution. In contrast, if the awardee moves to an institution outside of the Republic of Ireland, the award will terminate immediately and SFI may reclaim the funding provided under the award, as deemed appropriate.

18. Non-Compliance

Proposals not in compliance with any details specified in this document or in the [SFI Terms and Conditions of Research Grants](#) will not be eligible for a grant and will be returned without review.

19. Progress Reports / Award Management

The progress reporting requirements for all awards made under the SFI ERC Development Programme call must be adhered to. Those awardees that fail to comply will risk having their grant payments suspended and/or the processing of any applications under review in other SFI Programme funding calls paused, until their reporting status is rectified. Reporting is inclusive of submission of the annual/final report, completion of the annual stocktake of **SFI Research Outputs** (formerly referred to as the *SFI Census*) and the completion of a Researcher Snapshot.

The SFI Grants and Awards Management System, SESAME, is the primary conduit for annual reporting. SFI ERC Development Programme awardees will be requested to submit their annual report by the 31st January every year to reflect the activity of the previous calendar year (January – December). The annual report template, which is available on SESAME, must be used. An additional final report, prepared with a template that is also available on SESAME, must be submitted within three months of the expiration date of the award. In addition to the annual report, awardees are also obliged to keep their SESAME Researcher Profile updated since the annual stocktake of SFI Research Outputs is drawn directly from the data entered into the Researcher Profile; this must also be updated and completed by 31st January every year. SFI reporting procedures are detailed [here](#), and webinars describing the entry of data into the Researcher Profile are available on the SFI website.

The annual reporting templates allow for the progress on awards to be monitored against the specific objectives defined for the programme under which the award was made. The ‘deliverables’ on many of these objectives will contribute towards relevant Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) outlined in Agenda 2020. Progress against the objectives set out in the SFI ERC Development Programme will be evaluated using both annual reports and, where viewed as being appropriate,

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progress site reviews. The overarching objectives specific to this programme with expected outputs are discussed below:

- *To encourage excellent but recently unsuccessful ERC applicants to resubmit to the ERC*
- *To increase Ireland's success in future ERC calls*
- *To improve the success rate of Ireland-based applicants who resubmit to the ERC*
- *To encourage researchers based in Ireland to submit to ERC programmes*

A key purpose of the Programme is to enable recently unsuccessful ERC applicants to resubmit their proposals to the ERC and compete successfully in this funding programme. SFI's expectation is that the SFI ERC Development Programme will provide the support necessary for researchers to further develop their research programme to a level that enhances their chances of securing this funding, and thus contribute to an improvement in Irish success rates.

- *To assist SFI's eligible research bodies to recruit excellent but initially unsuccessful ERC applicants, and encourage them to reapply to the ERC for their own benefit and for the benefit of their new host institution*

SFI acknowledges the excellence of researchers funded by the ERC and a key target of SFI's Agenda 2020 is to increase the number of ERC grants made to researchers based in Ireland. The Programme may be used as a magnet to attract recently unsuccessful ERC applicants from overseas, with particular focus on individuals operating in areas of strategic importance to Ireland and those with a high likelihood of having both economic and societal impact.

Other areas that SFI ERC Development Programme awardees will be required to report on are common to many awards of this scale, with specific reference to Investigator Programme awards; these are explained below.

SFI funding has produced high-quality, high-impact publications, which have resulted in Ireland rising into the top 20 in international bibliometric rankings of repute. SFI's Agenda 2020 sets a target for Ireland to remain in the top rankings. SFI's expectation is that the grants made under the SFI ERC Development Programme will result in publications that contribute significantly to this target.

SFI's Agenda 2020 sets a clear target for an SFI-funded researcher to win a top-tier international prize by 2020. The expectation is that such an award will be won by a researcher supported by the SFI ERC Development Programme who then goes on to secure ERC funding, particularly under the Advanced Grant scheme.

Further specific guidance in relation to the reporting requirements is available through SESAME and on the SFI website.

Please note that in addition to any formal reporting carried out in line with the details given above, SFI should be notified immediately once an SFI ERC Development Programme award holder has resubmitted a proposal to the ERC. The applicant should provide an overview of the resubmission at that time.

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20. Questions

A list of Frequently Asked Questions can be found at <http://www.sfi.ie/funding/funding-calls/sfi-erc-development-programme/index.xml> queries please contact erc@sfi.ie. the list will be updated regularly. For all additional
