SCIENCE FOUNDATION IRELAND

SFI Spokes Programme 2015

Call for Submission of Proposals

Key Dates:

Call announcement:	**23rd November 2015**
Deadline for submission of <u>Fixed Call</u> proposals:	**10th March 2016, 13:00 (Local Time, Dublin)**
Deadline for submission of <u>Rolling Call</u> proposals:	**Expressions of Interest accepted on rolling basis**

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

Science Foundation Ireland's (SFI) legal remit[1] 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. Towards this goal, SFI has made a significant investment in order to establish 12 world leading Research Centres of scale.

The SFI Spokes programme[2] is a vehicle to enable the addition of new industrial and academic partners and projects to SFI Research Centres, so allowing the Centre to expand and develop in line with new priorities and opportunities. It is expected that the Spokes Programme will enhance the ability of SFI Research Centres to deliver significant economic and societal impact for Ireland. The Spokes programme also provides a vehicle to link together, in a meaningful and relevant way, the national Research Centres.

The SFI Spokes programme will help link scientists and engineers in partnerships across academia and industry to address crucial research questions, foster the development of new and existing Ireland-based technology companies, attract industry that could make an important contribution to Ireland and its economy, and expand educational and career opportunities in Ireland in science and engineering.

The 2015 Spokes Programme consists of both Fixed and Rolling Calls which will operate on a non-thematic basis.

In addition, SFI would particularly like to attract proposals in the area of advanced manufacturing in order to develop capacity and support the manufacturing industry, which is an area of particular strategic importance to the Irish economy. As such, proposals submitted to the Fixed Call in the area of advanced manufacturing may avail of reduced industry cost share requirements and additional incentives.

Objectives of the Spokes Programme

The specific objectives of the SFI Spokes programme are to:

- increase the number of targeted projects within an existing SFI Research Centre
- build new capabilities into an SFI Research Centre
- provide a mechanism to allow new industry partners to join the Research Centre consortium
- provide a mechanism to incentivise the commencement of new projects with existing industry partners
- encourage clusters of SMEs to join the consortium that individually may not otherwise have the financial means to do so

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[1] http://www.sfi.ie/about/what-we-do/

[2] Awards made under the Spokes Programme are co-funded under the European Regional Development Fund 2014-2020

- provide a mechanism to allow new academic partners to join the Research Centre
- link existing Centres and other major Grant Holders and build an integrated, efficient and coherent Research Centre ecosystem
- allow the Research Centre to develop and evolve dynamically and thereby enhance its sustainability

The objectives of the Research Centres programme[3] are also relevant to the Spokes programme, since all Spokes awards will become part of the existing Research Centres. Spokes proposals may be new projects with industry partners with whom the SFI Research Centre already has a commercial relationship, or they may be new projects with new industry partners with whom the SFI Research Centre has never worked previously. Spokes proposals may not, however, be existing projects that have already been funded as part of an SFI Research Centre or through other funding schemes, from SFI or otherwise. It is important to note that whilst one of the objectives of the Spokes programme is to provide a mechanism to allow new industry partners to join a Research Centre, proposals submitted to the programme should represent a strategic development of the Research Centre's activities and should result in significant added value to the Research Centre.

SFI Spokes projects must exhibit outstanding research quality, intellectual rigour, and active collaboration; and must add value to the strategic objectives of the SFI Research Centre.

Applications to the SFI Spokes Programme must fall within SFI's legal funding remit and must align with areas of strategic opportunity for Ireland, as outlined in the report of the National Research Prioritisation Exercise[4]. Additionally, in line with SFI's Agenda 2020 strategy[5], consideration will be given to applications in emerging areas of major economic importance where Ireland has an opportunity to lead both in leveraging international funding (e.g. Horizon 2020) as well as in future industrial and economic development. Applicants must ensure that proposals align with, complement and add value to the current activities of the SFI Research Centre.

This call document describes two distinct funding mechanisms for the development of new research spokes within existing Research Centres, herein referred to as the 'Spokes Fixed Call' and the 'Spokes Rolling Call'.

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[3] *http://www.sfi.ie/funding/funding-calls/closed-calls/sfi-research-centres-programme-2013.html*

[4] *https://www.djei.ie/en/Publications/Research-Prioritisation-Steering-Group-Report.html*

[5] *http://www.sfi.ie/assets/files/downloads/News%20and%20Events/AGENDA%202020.pdf*

2   Economic and Societal Impact

Each year the Irish Government spends in the region of €800 million on scientific research, training and development. As with all public spending, it is necessary to demonstrate and articulate the potential impact and benefits of scientific research.

In addition to the requirement for scientific excellence, applications considered under the Spokes programme must clearly demonstrate the value of the research to the expansion, development and sustainability of the SFI Research Centre and the potential for economic and societal impact to Ireland. As part of the review process, reviewers will be asked to evaluate the potential impact of the application as articulated by the applicant in the Impact Statement.

What is meant by Impact?

Impact can be described as *the demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to the economy and society.* Impact embraces the diverse ways in which research-related knowledge and skills benefit individuals, organisations and nations. SFI has developed detailed guidelines on research impact which are available on the SFI website: Research Impact guidelines. Applicants are encouraged to read all impact guidance documentation and to listen to the Impact webinar provided on the SFI website.

Impact Statement

A maximum of 3 pages is allowed for the impact statement. The statement should be as specific and comprehensive as possible and provide information that external reviewers will find helpful in assessing the potential impact of the proposed research activity. It should be written primarily in lay, non-technical language. Appropriate plans, milestones and deliverables associated with the potential impact may also be indicated. Potential economic and societal impacts should be addressed by answering, at a minimum, the following overarching questions:

- **How will the SFI Research Centre and the industry partner benefit from this research?**
- **How will the host institution benefit from this research?**
- **Who are other potential beneficiaries?**
- **What will be the benefit to Ireland?**
- **Over what timeframe might the benefits from the research be realised?**

> **Applicants are encouraged to consider SFI's Agenda 2020 and to review the SFI 'Research Impact' guidance documentation before writing their impact statement.**

In critically appraising various possible impacts, the following points should be considered:

- What is the potential impact of the proposed Spoke on the outputs of the SFI Research Centre?
- What is the potential impact of the proposed Spoke on the capabilities of the SFI Research Centre?
- What is the potential impact of the proposed Spoke on the R&D activities and product pipeline of the industry partner(s)?
- What is the potential impact of the proposed Spoke on the Irish economy, competitiveness and development?
- Is the research likely to lead to patents, licenses or spin-outs?
- How will the industry partner(s) enable increased impact? What supports are they offering? Have routes to commercialisation been considered?
- Letters of support must be included from the industry partner(s), and may be included from other bodies and individuals who will be <u>directly</u> involved in supporting the work described in the application but not listed as official 'industry' partners. Letters should provide full details of the intended intellectual and financial (if relevant) input. Letters which do not demonstrate direct involvement will be removed from the proposal.
- What is the potential impact of the proposed Spoke on the education, training and career of Ireland's students and research team members? Will there be infrastructural benefits for further research and education, e.g. facilities and instrumentation? It is important to highlight the added value that will be provided from the training provided under the Spokes award.
- How will the potential impacts of your research best be realised?
- How do you propose the impact of your research could be measured?
- What is the potential impact of the proposed Spoke on society and the quality of life of Ireland's citizens?
- Does the proposed Spoke link in other Research Centres and/or investigators and/or industrial collaborators in an integrated and efficient way? What are the anticipated interface benefits?
- Are there potential beneficiaries within the private sector, public sector, third level sector or any others (e.g. professional or practitioner groups, charities or patient groups)?

3 Programme Details

3.1 General Eligibility

Applications to the Spokes programme may only be made by Centre Directors of SFI-funded Research Centres. Applications cannot be submitted directly by industry partners. The award will be administered by the host Research Body of the Research Centre award but can involve other Research Bodies who are involved in the Research Centre.

The nominated Spoke Leader(s) will provide the leadership for the Spoke proposed in the application. Spoke Leaders may consist of the Centre Director, an existing Research Centre investigator or a new academic partner. All Spoke Leaders must meet the eligibility criteria detailed later in this document. The Centre Director will ultimately be responsible for the governance of all Spokes associated with

that Centre. The development of any Spokes proposal should, at an early stage, involve close liaison between the Spoke Leaders and the Centre Director.

3.2   Spokes Rolling Call Description

The Spokes Rolling Call will remain open, with no closing date (until further notice), to allow Research Centres to apply for funding at any time for new collaborative research projects with an industry partner(s).

Industry partner(s) must make a <u>minimum cash contribution of 50% of the Rolling Spoke Budget</u> associated with an application. If multiple industry partners are associated with the proposal, the minimum combined industry cash contribution must be 50% of the total award size. In-kind contributions are encouraged and should be quantified as part of an application, but do not count towards the minimum cost share contribution.

Proposals submitted to the Spokes Rolling Call are expected to be characterised by their high level of importance and urgency to both the Research Centre and industry partners. The Spokes Rolling Call is different to the Fixed Call in the following ways:

- Timing of the application submission is determined by the applicants and not SFI
- The proposal review process is fast-tracked
- Assessment of the proposal on its own merit and not in competition with other proposals

Applicants to the Spokes Rolling Call must submit an Expression of Interest (EoI) prior to submission of a full application. Applicants who submit EoIs that are reviewed positively by SFI will be invited to submit a full application which will be evaluated by international peer review.

3.3   Spokes Fixed Call Description

Proposals must be submitted to the Spokes Fixed Call in advance of the set deadline and applications will be assessed competitively. Industry partner(s) must make a <u>minimum cash contribution of 30% of the Fixed Spoke Budget</u> associated with an application. If multiple industry partners are associated with the proposal, the minimum combined industry cash contribution must be 30% of the Fixed Spoke Budget total award size. In-kind contributions are encouraged and should be quantified as part of an application, but do not count towards the minimum cost share contribution.

Each Centre may submit up of 5 applications to the 2015 Spokes Fixed Call. Spokes Fixed Call proposals will be competitively assessed (i.e., ranked competitively against other proposals submitted to the Call). Therefore it is possible that some applications which are deemed to be fundable by scientific

and impact review will not be funded in cases where competing proposals make a more compelling case for funding, and are ranked higher.

3.3.1   Spokes Fixed Call – Advanced Manufacturing

Advanced Manufacturing refers to a range of interdisciplinary activities that seek to improve existing, or create entirely new, materials, products, and sustainable processes. The convergence of science, engineering and information technology is a key enabler of product and process innovation in advanced manufacturing. New discoveries and concepts in physics, chemistry and biology will play a central part in developing, for example, technologically complex devices, products based on novel materials with customised properties, or innovative processes that rely on complex biological or chemical interactions. The digitisation of equipment, products, processes and organisations will enable advanced manufacturing to drive new and innovative business models. As smart sensors and machines capable of wireless communication become more integrated in products and processes, ICT will increasingly facilitate the rapid communication, analysis (analytics), storage and exploitation of data, enabling automated and adaptive cyber physical systems to be developed where reliability and security are critical. These systems will, in turn, along with adaptive machines, support the development of flexible, potentially decentralised, manufacturing processes that can be reconfigured and tailored in response to the demand for products. These approaches will enable increased convergence between manufacturing and services, leading to innovations in supply-chain management and business models that will drive Ireland's global competitiveness in manufacturing.

Proposals submitted to the Spokes Fixed Call which are in the area of 'advanced manufacturing' (as defined by this call document) are required to achieve a minimum cost share of 30%, at least one-third of which must be cash (i.e. a minimum of 10% of the Fixed Spoke Budget must be cash).

In addition to the standard eligible costs for proposals submitted to the Spokes Programme, proposals submitted to the Spokes Fixed Call in the area of advanced manufacturing (only), may also include the following costs:

- Salary, travel and subsistence costs associated with attracting senior researchers to Ireland from abroad on sabbatical for between three months and one year. Such researchers would be expected to provide significant added value / research capacity to a Spokes proposal. In this scenario the applicant's Research Body is responsible for ensuring that any salary costs are appropriately pro-rated for the duration which the senior researcher will spend working on the project (see FAQ's for further details).

- Costs associated with collaborating with international groups of competence in advanced manufacturing (travel costs; costs to access equipment not available in Ireland; workshops for developing international networks and planning strategically important funding applications, such as Horizon 2020 bids).

- Contract manufacturing costs (e.g. costs associated with outsourcing the development of a prototype, where strongly justified).

3.4   Definitions

Lead Applicant	The lead applicant is defined as the Research Centre Director of the SFI Research Centre submitting the Spokes application. The lead applicant will have overall responsibility for delivery of the objectives of the Research Centre and the Spokes project. In cases where a Spokes proposal involves more than one Research Centre, one of the Research Centres should be designated as the lead administrator of the Spokes proposal, and the associated Centre Director's details should be inputted in the lead applicant field.
	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 fiduciary responsibility and accountability for carrying out the research within the funding limits awarded and in accordance with the terms and conditions of SFI. The lead applicant will serve as the primary point of contact for SFI on the award, during the review process, and if successful, during the course of the award.
Spoke Leader(s)	Spoke Leader(s) will have well-defined, critical and continuing role(s) in the proposed Spoke. The nominated Spoke Leader(s) will provide the leadership for the Spoke proposed in the application. Spoke Leaders may consist of the Centre Director, an existing Research Centre investigator or a new academic partner. Spoke Leader(s) will be designated as a co-applicant on a Spokes proposal. There is no limit to the number of Spoke Leaders (i.e., co-applicants). The number of Spoke Leaders should be commensurate with the size and complexity of the proposed Spoke project. All Spoke Leaders must meet the eligibility criteria detailed later in this document.
	In cases where proposed Spoke Leaders are not already part of the Research Centre, they should be designated a formal status within the Research Centre upon funding of a Spokes proposal (e.g. Research Centre Co-PI or Funded Investigator). Research Centres should follow the process outlined on the SFI website in order to add new PI's and FI's to their Centre.
Academic Collaborator	An academic collaborator may be an academic member of staff of an Irish or international Higher Education Institution; or a member of a relevant non-academic institution, such as a Government Agency, who is committed to providing a focused contribution to specific tasks within the Spokes work programme. Collaborators will serve under the direction of Spoke Leaders and may or may not receive funding through the award. Official collaborators may not be the primary supervisor/mentor of postgraduate students, postdoctoral researchers or research staff enrolled on the award.
Industry Collaborator	An industry collaborator is the lead contact person from an industry partner contributing cash or in-kind costs to the Spoke Budget. Note that industry collaborators are not eligible to receive funding under this programme.

Industry Partner	An industry partner is a company making a financial contribution to the budget of the Spoke, as well as an intellectual contribution to the research programme of the Spoke. The industry partner is represented by its Industry Collaborator(s).
Research Centre	A group funded under the SFI Research Centres Programme are referred to as a SFI Research Centre.
Spoke Budget	The Spoke Budget is defined as the total budget for the Spoke programme of research. For the Spokes Rolling Call, SFI will contribute a maximum of 50% cash towards the Spoke Budget. Industry partners must contribute at least 50% cash to the Spoke Budget. For the Spokes Fixed Call, SFI will contribute a maximum of 70% cash towards the Spoke Budget. Industry partners must contribute at least 30% cash to the Spoke Budget. Proposals submitted to the Spokes Fixed Call which are in the area of 'advanced manufacturing' (as defined by this call document) are also required to achieve a minimum cost share of 30%. In such cases at least one-third of the industry cost share must be cash (i.e. a minimum of 10% of the Fixed Spoke budget must be cash). The Spoke Budget is considered to be direct costs only and does not include the SFI or industry contribution towards the overheads of the Research Body.

3.5   Eligibility Criteria of Lead Applicant (Centre Director) and Spoke Leaders

The lead applicant is defined as the Research Centre Director of the SFI Research Centre submitting the Spokes application. The lead applicant will have overall responsibility for delivery of the objectives of the Research Centre and the Spokes project.

The **Spoke Leader(s)** is expected to direct the research in the Spokes award. **Spoke Leader(s)** must:

1. 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*

2. 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*

3. 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 (this is

only relevant in cases where the Spoke Leader is a new academic partner). The applicant does not necessarily need to be employed by the Research Body at the time of proposal submission.

4.   Hold a PhD or equivalent for at least 8 years by the proposal deadline, in the case of the Fixed Call, or at the time of submission, in the case of the Rolling Call. Applicants must consult SFI's policy on PhD equivalence[6].

        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

5.   Be a senior author on at least 10 international peer reviewed articles. Only original research publications, and not review articles, are acceptable. Consult the accompanying FAQ document regarding the definition of 'senior author'. Please note that 10 senior author publications is a minimum eligibility criterion; however applicants with higher numbers of publications are likely to be more competitive.

6.   Have demonstrated research independence through securing at least one independent research grant as a lead investigator or as co-investigator. Personal awards such as travel awards, career fellowships (which only include the salary of the PI and not research team costs (i.e., salary for team member(s) & consumables) etc. do not count as independent research grants. Consult the accompanying FAQ document for further details

7.   Have proven prior experience, capability and authority to mentor and supervise postgraduate students and team members

Spoke Leaders that are currently under evaluation within other SFI programmes are permitted to apply to the Spokes programme as long as the proposed research programmes are sufficiently unique.

In all cases where Spoke Leader(s) are already in receipt of significant SFI or other research funding (e.g. they hold SFI IvP or Investigators awards, are strand leaders on CSETs or SRCs, or hold other significant awards), the evaluation process will examine the commitment and work load of the Spoke Leader(s) in determining their capacity to take up the Spokes award. Such applicants should include strong justification in their CV for their role as a Spoke Leader.

Spoke Leaders may be located at different SFI-eligible Research Bodies than the Centre Director. In this case, the grant will be administered through the Research Body of the Centre Director only.

Where, in the opinion of SFI, an applicant fails to meet the eligibility criteria outlined above, the application will be deemed ineligible and will not be accepted for review.

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[6] http://www.sfi.ie/funding/grant-policies/sfi-policy-on-phd-equivalence.html

3.6   Funding

There are a number of minimum criteria that must be reached in terms of industry cost share:

- Industry partner(s) must make a <u>minimum cash contribution of 50%</u> of the Spoke Budget associated with a <u>Spokes Rolling Call</u> application.

- Industry partner(s) must make a <u>minimum cash contribution of 30%</u> of the Spoke Budget associated with a <u>Spokes Fixed Call</u> application.
    - The exception to this is proposals submitted to the Fixed Call which are in the area of 'advanced manufacturing' (as defined by this call document). Such proposals are required to achieve a minimum cost share of 30%, at least one-third of which must be cash (i.e. a minimum of 10% of the Spoke budget must be cash).

There is <u>no minimum or maximum project size</u>. Whilst there is no minimum project size, it is expected that all proposals submitted to the Spokes programme will involve the addition of strategically important projects/partners, and will represent projects of scale which will result in a significant value add to the Research Centre. The maximum project size should be determined by the objectives of the proposed research programme.

Centre Directors must ensure that the collective budget of their Research Centre (i.e. the SFI Research Centre Award in addition to new SFI Spokes awards) achieves a minimum industry cost share of 30%, with a minimum of 10% industry cash contribution.

3.6.1   Industry Cost Share

Spokes applications must include minimum industry contributions as defined above. Industry cash contributions should be calculated with reference to direct funding for the research programme, after any overheads or other Research Body contributions are deducted.

Contributions, whether in cash or in-kind from Irish exchequer sources such as other funding agencies, Government Departments or other Agencies of the State cannot be counted as industry contributions[7]. Likewise, funding from charities, not-for-profit organisations or philanthropic donations, while welcomed and encouraged, cannot be counted as industry contributions.

Industry in-kind contributions include, but are not necessarily limited to the costs associated with provision of the following items to a Spokes project:

- Industry scientists, engineers and technicians assigned to working on the Spokes research programme

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[7] Commercial semi-state companies such as the group of companies under CIE, ESB, Ervia, etc. are *excluded* from this definition.

- Student placements with industry partners
- Equipment
- Software
- Materials
- Data

Further details on SFI's policy with respect to in-kind contributions may be found on the SFI website[8].

Industry funding that has already been used as cost share, or is earmarked for cost share for any other Irish exchequer supports (e.g. IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Irish Research Council supports etc.) may not be counted as industry cost share in Spokes applications. In cases where industry contributions exceed the minimum requirements, this should be reflected in a decreased budgetary request from SFI.

3.6.2　Eligible and Ineligible Costs

Eligible costs include:
- Contributions to salaries/stipends of research staff hired specifically to carry out the research programme
- Materials and consumables, equipment and travel
- Access to facilities and services not available to applicant team, including test-bed facilities for technology demonstration
- SFI approved access charges

Examples of ineligible costs include, but are not necessarily limited to:
- Contingency or miscellaneous costs
- Entertainment costs
- Technology transfer or patent costs
- Legal fees
- Conference & workshop organisation costs (except for proposals submitted to the Fixed Call in the area of advanced manufacturing)
- Journal subscriptions
- Relocation expenses
- Clinical time or teaching buyout

3.7　Overheads

In addition to the 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) of the SFI

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[8] http://www.sfi.ie/funding/grant-policies/industry-cost-share/

contribution to the research project. Overheads will only be paid on the SFI portion of the award and not on the industry contribution. 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, including contributions towards the costs of technology transfer and the filing and maintenance of patents.

3.8   Duration

The period of the award should be a *minimum* of 12 months and a *maximum* of 60 months. In the event that an application is approved for funding and for which the term of the award extends beyond the end date of the parent Research Centre award, it will be the responsibility of the Centre Director and lead Research Body, in agreeing to the terms and conditions as outlined in the Letter of Offer, to ensure that the requisite infrastructures are in place to support the completion of the project as defined in the Spokes proposal.

Since Spokes projects are reported as part of the Research Centre, the Centre Director must ensure that the appropriate reporting frameworks remain in place for the Spokes project, even after the associated Research Centre award has ended.

3.9   Proposal Review Procedure and Criteria

The submission of an application to SFI shall be construed as consent by the applicant to participate in the peer review process. SFI reserves the right to refuse to grant permission to an applicant to submit a proposal to the SFI Spokes programme if it deems the applicant to be ineligible. Full proposals received to the Spokes Rolling call without prior written approval will be returned without review.

Expression of Interest Review

Applicants to the Spokes Rolling Call must submit an Expression of Interest (EoI) prior to submission of a full proposal. Applicants who submit EoIs that are reviewed positively by SFI will be invited to submit a full proposal which will be evaluated by international peer review. EoIs will be reviewed using the following criteria:

- The credentials of the applicant team
- The strategic benefit of the collaborative project to the Research Centre and Industry Partner(s)
- The potential impact (both economic and societal) of the co-funded initiative

Postal Review

In accordance with the international peer review process used to evaluate proposals submitted to SFI, all *eligible* proposals will be forwarded to international experts for evaluation. SFI reserves the right to return applications without review where the applicant does not meet the eligibility criteria (or where the research programme does not fit with the remit of the Foundation). SFI Scientific Programme Managers will solicit reviews of proposals from at least three (3) peers with expertise in the substantive area of the proposed research who may be from academic or industrial settings. The applicant may specify ***up to*** three referees or companies who should ***not*** be approached to act as reviewers for his or her application due to the competitive and confidential nature of the research programme. SFI shall not refer the application to any of these three reviewers. Otherwise, selection of reviewers shall be at the sole and exclusive discretion of SFI.

Reviews received from peers will be collated and forwarded to applicants. Applicants will then be afforded the opportunity to submit a response to reviewers' comments. Applicants will be given a defined period of time in which to respond (*advance notice of dates and guidelines relating to the response will be indicated to applicants*). This response document will be considered by SFI alongside the proposal and postal reviews in making a funding decision. SFI reserves the right to implement an on-site panel review as part of the overall review procedure.

During the postal review process, the following review criteria will be applied:

- *Quality, significance, and relevance of the proposed research, including value for money and the potential to advance knowledge and understanding within its own field or across different fields*

- *Alignment/value add of the proposed project(s) with the current objectives of the SFI Research Centre*

- *Quality, significance, and relevance of the recent research record of the proposed investigator(s), taking into account the career stage of the applicant(s), and the applicant's record of securing non-exchequer funding*

- *Quality, significance, and relevance of the proposed research's potential contribution to demonstrably support and underpin enterprise competitiveness and societal development in Ireland*

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

Panel Review for Applications to the Spokes Fixed Programme

All full proposals to the Spokes Fixed call will proceed to the panel review process following completion of the postal review process. Panel members will be selected with broad scientific and programmatic experience and will cover a broad range of research areas. Certain panel members with expertise in

research translation and commercialisation will have the responsibility of assessing the potential impact of the proposed research. In addition to briefing material, panel members will receive the full proposal, anonymous postal reviews and the applicant's response to postal reviews. Panel members will assess the inputs of the postal peer reviews and the overall merit and priority of applications. Panels will rank proposals and make recommendations for an application to be given consideration for funding by SFI.

In accordance with the postal review process, the identity of experts who conduct the panel review shall remain confidential and shall not be disclosed to the applicants.

SFI reserves the right to modify the review process. Applicants will be notified of any relevant modification to the review procedure. The final funding decision rests with SFI

Site Review

SFI reserves the right to schedule a pre-award site visit in advance of a funding decision. This will be particularly relevant in the case of larger awards and/or where discrepancies arise among postal reviews for the Spokes Rolling call.

4   Application Procedure

Full proposals to the Spokes Programme will only be accepted through SESAME, SFI's grants and awards management system. In order to submit a full proposal to the Spokes Rolling Call, an Expression of Interest must first be submitted. An Expression of Interest submission is not required for applications associated with the Spokes Fixed Call.

Access to SESAME is controlled by staff at the research office of your host Research Body. Please follow your internal organisational process to request this access. Once you have been registered by your research office, **you will receive an email** containing the following:

1. Username
2. Password
3. SFI PIN number
4. SESAME website address

Your **username** and **password** are needed to log in to SESAME. The Spoke Leader(s)/Co-Applicant(s) PIN number must be provided to the lead applicant, in order to be associated with the same application. This PIN number is also stored in your **contact profile** on SESAME.

SFI's grants and awards management system, 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 user guides).

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

Please note that submission of an application to the Spokes Programme may affect eligibility to submit to other SFI programmes – please refer to appropriate call documents.

Each Research Centre may submit a maximum of five proposals to the 2015 Spokes Fixed Call. There is no limit to the number of applications that can be made to the SFI Spokes Rolling Call.

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.

Full proposals are submitted through SESAME to SFI by the Research Office of the Centre Directors 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 and so that you are aware of any internal institutional deadlines.

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 be returned without review**
- Appendices or other unsolicited documentation are not permitted. **Applications that include such unsolicited documentation will be returned without review**
- The currency to be used is the **euro** (€)
- File sizes of attachments should be **less than 5MB**.

Applications not adhering to these guidelines 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 applicants to ensure that eligible proposals are received by SFI. In order to safeguard against ineligibility, applicants are reminded to adhere rigorously to the proposal checklist included in the call documentation and to review the proposal document prior to submission to SFI.

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

Please note that SESAME will **not** alert applicants when page limits have been exceeded.

In order to ensure that uploaded documents are displayed in the correct order in a particular field, applicants should either combine individual documents into one single PDF prior to uploading, or number all documents consecutively in the correct order.

4.1   Spokes Rolling Call Expression of Interest (EoI)

Applicants to the Spokes Rolling Call must request an invitation to submit a full proposal. This is done outside of SESAME. This EoI should be submitted by email to spokes@sfi.ie by the Centre Director, and should include the following information:

- *Title of proposed Spokes proposal*
- *Name, position and institution of the Centre Director(s) and Spoke Leader(s)*
- *Name of SFI Research Centre (title and award code*)
- *Outline of budget (including industry partners intent to fund the project with a minimum of 50% cash)*
- *Brief description of the proposed Spokes research programme (max. 1 page)*
- *Brief description on the alignment of proposed research with the current centre objectives and the added value of the proposed Spoke to the research centre (max. 1 page)*
- *Brief description of research commercialisation plan (max. 1 page)*
- *CVs of the Spoke Leader(s) including details of funding history, supervision experience, innovation/commercialisation experience & publications (short 2 page CV, no template)*

Once submitted, an EoI will be acknowledged by email. SFI will endeavour to decline/invite a full proposal within 4 weeks of EoI submission. Applicants who submit successful EoIs will be invited to submit a full proposal which will be sent for international peer review. Once SFI has approved the EoI, a Rolling Spokes Application template will be created on SESAME specifically for that application, which will be visible on the applicant's workbench. The full proposal submission process is the same for both the Fixed and Rolling Calls.

4.2   Full Proposal Eligibility Questionnaire

Applicants will be asked to confirm that they have read and understood the eligibility criteria for the Spokes Call to which they are applying. The application cannot proceed until this acknowledgement is confirmed.

4.3   Proposal Summary

- **Proposal Title**

The proposal title should clearly convey the nature of the research to be undertaken, in up to 30 words. <u>The proposal title should be non-confidential.</u>

After entering the Proposal title and clicking 'Save Draft', a Proposal ID is automatically generated by SESAME. Additional fields now appear in the SESAME application form.

- **Name of Research Centre**
  Select the name of the Research Centre that the lead applicant is the Director of from the dropdown box.

- **Duration of Award Requested**
  Enter the duration (in months) of the award requested.

- **NRP Area**
  Select the National Research Prioritisation (NRP) area to which the proposed research most closely aligns with. If the proposal does not align with a NRP area, please select 'other'

- **Research Area (Primary)**
  Select a primary research area to which the proposed research best aligns.

- **Research Area (Secondary)**
  Select a secondary research area to which the proposed research best aligns.

- **How does the proposal align with SFI's legal remit**
  Use the textbox provided to describe (max. 250 words) how their proposal aligns with SFI's legal remit[9].

4.4   Lead Applicant (Centre Director) Details

- **Location of the Applicant at the time of Submission**
  Select the country in which the Centre Director is employed at the time of submission.

- **Lead Applicant CV (max. 2 pages)**
  Upload the CV (max. 2 pages) of the Lead Applicant (Centre Director) using the template provided in on the Spokes Programme webpage. Clicking 'Save Draft' at the bottom of the page will make the uploaded CV visible on the SESAME application form.

- **Publications and Supervisory Experience to Date**
  Provide summary information on the total numbers of publications and supervisory experience directly attributed to the Lead Applicant (Centre Director) to date.

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[9] http://www.sfi.ie/about/what-we-do/

4.5   Co-applicant (Spoke Leader) Details

Spoke Leaders should be added into SESAME under the co-applicant field. Please note that Spoke Leaders information will appear in the proposal document in the order which they are added into SESAME.

To add Spoke Leaders to a proposal, click the 'add' co-applicants button and **enter their surname and SESAME SFI PIN**. IN order to obtain their SESAME SFI PIN, Spoke leaders should navigate to the 'additional information' section of their SESAME profile.

Please note that SESAME does not permit two-individuals to concurrently modify a proposal. The Lead Applicant must close the proposal in order to allow Co-Applicants (Spoke Leaders) to make modifications, and vice-versa.

- **Percentage Time Commitment**
  Indicate the percentage time commitment, as a percentage of the total working time of the Co-Applicant (Spoke Leader), to the proposed research programme.

- **Co-Applicant CV (max. 5 pages)**
  Upload the CV (max. 5 pages) of the Co-Applicant (Spoke Leader) using the template provided on the Spokes Programme webpage. Clicking 'Save Draft' at the bottom of the page will make the uploaded CV visible on the SESAME application form.

- **Publications and Supervisory Experience to Date**
  Provide summary information on the total numbers of publications and supervisory experience directly attributed to the Co-Applicant (Spoke Leader) to date.

4.6   Collaborator Details

To add collaborators to the proposal, click the 'add' collaborators button and enter the name, contact information and other required details for the academic or industry collaborators (Note: please do not choose Mentor or Funded Investigator when adding collaborators as these classifications are not relevant for Spokes applications). After adding collaborator details, click the 'Associate Collaborator' button. To exit the window, click the 'close' button. In order for the collaborator(s) to be visible on SESAME click 'save draft'.

- **Collaborator CV (max. 2 pages)**
  Upload a CV (max. 2 pages) for each collaborator using the template provided. Clicking 'Save Draft' at the bottom of the page will make the uploaded CV visible on the SESAME application form. Please note that in cases where proposals to the Fixed Call in the area of Advanced Manufacturing are requesting salary/travel costs associated with attracting senior researchers to Ireland on sabbatical, they should be listed as Academic collaborators.

4.7　**Main Body of Proposal**

- **Keywords (max. 15)**
  List the keywords/phrases from the research discipline or sub-discipline that best describe the research proposed in the application.

- **Scientific Abstract (max. 200 words)**
  Provide a succinct summary of the proposed work programme when separated from the application. It should clearly explain the potential impact of the work programme to a non-technical expert. The scientific abstract should be non-confidential.

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

4.8　**Programme Documents**

Applicants must complete the Programme Document template which is available for download from the Spokes Programme webpage. **Please note that the completed Programme Document should be uploaded to SESAME as a PDF in the Programme Documents upload section.** The Programme Document consists of the following sections:

- **Research Programme Description (upload, max. 15 pages)**
  Applicants are requested to provide sufficient detail for reviewers to comment on the quality of the ideas and proposed implementation. The Research Programme Description should be structured under the following headings:

  (i)　What is the overall goal of the research programme?

  (ii)　What research question will the programme address?

    Describe clearly and concisely the specific aims and objectives of the project(s) within the research programme. They should be coherent, well-planned and should be linked with real deliverables. Relevant preliminary data must be provided. This may take the form of (a) supporting reference(s) from the applicants' previous research or (b) where data has yet to be published, this can be included within the 15-page research description, as evidence that the applicant(s) has a track record in the field of his/her proposed research.

  (iii)　Why is the question significant?

    What are the unique and innovative aspects of this research? What market opportunity does the research address? What is the current state-of-the-art in the area and how will the proposed research advance this? What is the competitive advantage of the team to deliver in this area? Applicants should consider the specific objectives of the SFI Research Centres Programme and the SFI Spokes Programme when justifying the importance of the proposed research.

(iv) How does the Spokes research programme align with the Research Centre's objectives? How does this research programme add value to the Research Centre(s) into which it will join?

Describe in detail how the proposed Spoke aligns with the goals and objectives of the SFI Research Centre(s) into which it will join. Describe how the proposed Spoke will add value and enhance the outputs and subsequent impact of the Research Centre, and ultimately promote/contribute to the long term sustainability of the Research Centre. Describe why the proposed Spoke is strategically important to the Research Centre.

(v) What approach or methodology will be used?

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?

(vi) What is the project management plan?

Describe the milestones and deliverables for the research programme along with delivery dates and key performance indicators used to measure progress. <u>A Gantt chart should be provided</u>.

Describe the roles and responsibilities of each partner (i.e. Spoke Leaders, industry collaborators, academic collaborators etc.) in delivering the research programme

Include an assessment of risks associated with the delivery of the Spokes research programme and explain measures to mitigate and manage these risks.

- **References (upload, max. 5 pages)**
  Appropriate references and citations for the proposed research must be provided

- **Impact Statement (upload, max. 3 pages)**
  The statement should be as specific as possible and provide information that external 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. The impact statement should include a commercialisation plan for the outputs of the proposed Spokes research programme. Please refer to the details on the SFI website[10] when writing your impact statement.

- **Intellectual Property (IP) (upload, max. 1 page)**
  Applicants should include as much detail as possible on the relevant Intellectual Property (IP) landscape surrounding the research in question, which should detail any background IP that will be introduced to the project. A plan for management of all IP relating to the Spokes research programme must be provided which should be in accordance with

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[10] http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-research-impact/

national guidelines, including the National IP Protocol 'Putting Public Research to Work for Ireland'[11].

SFI has issued a set of guidelines describing how the National IP Protocol is to be implemented in SFI Research Centres. The IP model adopted for Spokes projects must be compatible with these guidelines[12].

Suitable contracts and IP agreements between the Research Body or Bodies, and the Industry Partner(s) must be concluded and signed within 90 days of the official start date of the Spoke award, as per the Letter of Offer. Copies of these agreements are to be returned to SFI. As a matter of policy, until an IP agreement relating to the awarded Spoke is executed, it is to be understood by all parties that full ownership of the IP in question will remain with the Research Body, with no access or exploitation rights by the corporate partner(s).

- **Industry Partner Overview (upload, max. 1 page per industry partner)**
  Applicants should include a 1-page overview of each industry partner(s) involved in the proposed research project. The overview should include:

  a) A brief description of the company (including legal definition such as e.g. commercial for-profit, semi-state), its size, business, relationship with the Research Body;
  b) A brief description of how the industry partner will engage in this research programme;
  c) Details of how the technology/research collaboration will directly benefit the company/companies involved, how it will contribute towards strengthening the competitive advantage and long term survival of the company, and how the proposed collaboration could benefit the Irish economy;
  d) Details of the amount and type of contribution that the proposed partner will provide to the research programme.

- **High Level Budget (SFI Request + Industry Commitment)**
  Applicants should prepare a high level budget by completing the Microsoft Excel budget template provided on the Spokes Programme webpage (see section 4.10.1 for details on how to complete this budget template). **Please copy over the tables to relevant section of the Programme Document. Applicants are also required to upload the completed Excel budget to SESAME in the Programme Documents upload section.**

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[11] http://www.knowledgetransferireland.com/About_KTI/Knowledge-Transfer-Framework/

[12] http://www.sfi.ie/funding/grant-policies/intellectual-property-management-guidelines/

4.9   Research Funding

The Lead Applicant (Centre Director) and Co-Applicant(s) (Spoke Leader(s)) must report on <u>expired</u>, <u>current</u> and <u>pending</u> funding.

- 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.

- Include details of any financial support from another body *currently provided*, or *currently being sought*. SFI will not support research programmes currently being funded by another source.

- For each current and pending grant listed, provide a brief description of the research. Applicants must also indicate their percentage time commitment to these other projects, as a function of 100% of their total working time.

- For pending grants, please include the expected decision date in the description box.

- 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 solely a collaborator on a collaborative research project, the grant should not be included here.

- The portion of research funding claimed in an applicant's name must be an accurate and a 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 extremely large numbers of expired grants over the previous ten years may be selective with which funding grants to include in this section. The most prestigious grants and those 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](link)). If this section is left blank it will indicate that the applicant has NO expired, current or pending funding. Both the Lead and Co-Applicant(s) (i.e. the Centre Director and Spoke Leaders) need to complete this section within SESAME.

Please ensure that research funding added to the profile of the Lead Applicant (Centre Director), or the profile of the Co-Applicants (Spoke Leaders), has actually been included in the application.

The applicants must complete the textbox detailing potential overlap between current and pending funding and the proposed research in this application (max 1,000 words). For each current and pending grant listed, the applicant <u>must clearly indicate any scientific overlap with this application, based on the methodologies being employed and the stated objectives of the funded project(s)</u>.

4.10 Budget

Submission of the budget requires three task to be completed as follows:

4.10.1 Budget Template in Excel (SFI Request + Industry Commitment)

Applicants are required to prepare a high level budget by completing the Microsoft Excel budget template provided on the Spokes Programme webpage. **A copy of the completed budget tables must be included within the relevant section of the Programme Document and must also be uploaded to SESAME as an Excel file (see section 4.8)**. This budget must include:

- A budget for the requested SFI contribution to the Spokes budget separated by staff, equipment, materials and travel
- Where applicable, budgets for the SFI contribution to the Research Centre Operations and Platform
- A detailed breakdown of industry financial contributions to the Spoke, both cash and in-kind (e.g. staff, equipment, other). Note that the financial commitments identified in these tables should be in accordance with and supported by the commitments provided by the industry partners in their letters of support
- An overall Spokes budget encompassing the SFI contributions as well as the industry cash and in-kind contributions

Please only enter values in the white cells. Applicants must follow the SFI grant application budget policy.

4.10.2 Budget Template in SESAME (SFI Request only)

Applicants are additionally required to complete a detailed budget for the requested SFI contribution to the Spokes project within SESAME. This budget should provide a detailed breakdown of costs under each the headings of staff, equipment, materials & travel. To complete this, press open in the Prepare Budget section.

4.10.3 Budget Justification (max. 3 pages)

For each full time employee (FTE) proposed in the budget section, the applicant should provide a description of up to 200 words outlining their role with particular reference to the targeted project within the spoke research programme that s/he will be associated with. Please include the salary scale (as per SFI Grants Team Member Budgeting Scale) for each team member. If known, the team member's name should also be included. Clear and explicit justification is required for any request for an experienced post-doctoral researcher, i.e. one who will be appointed higher than Level 2A, Point 1 of the SFI team member budgeting scales. In the case of requests (justified in the budget justification) for experienced post-doctoral researchers (>8 years post-PhD), SFI will pay a contribution to their salary at the level of L2B, Point 4 for the requested duration within the grant.

Justification should also be provided for requested equipment, consumables and travel, and the requested duration of funding. Clear indication should be given where funding is apportioned to collaborators (within the Republic of Ireland and within an eligible Research Body only). Please note that collaborators outside the Republic of Ireland are not eligible to receive funding through the Spokes programme.

If funding is sought for overseas services, this should be clearly justified and the rationale for not carrying out this activity in Ireland must be explained.

In cases where proposals in the area of advanced manufacturing request non-standard costs as defined in section 3.3.1 these should be detailed here.

4.10.4   Budget Completion Guidelines

Once the proposed Spoke has been awarded funding, it is the responsibility of the Centre Director to manage the budget in combination with the Research Centre budget so that the overall minimum industry contributions of the entire Research Centre (SFI Research Centre award in combination with subsequent SFI Spokes awards) are continuously maintained. Please note that whilst some costs may be listed as ineligible in the paragraphs below, proposals submitted in the area of advanced manufacturing may request non-standard costs as defined in section 3.3.1.

I.   Staff: Salaries and benefits

It is important to note that SFI-funded researchers and their teams are employees of the Research Body. SFI makes a contribution to the overall salary budget for the programme. Please refer to the [SFI Grants Team Member Budgeting Scale](#) and note that the 'Cost to Grant' figures in these scales include the 20% employer's pension. Please note that the submission of an application by the host Research Body must only take place once salaries requested have been approved and justified. Contributions to team-member salaries, and fees and stipends for postgraduate students (PhDs and MScs by research) may be requested. Salaries for Principal Investigators, Industry Collaborators, industry staff members and all other collaborators are not permitted.

SFI will fund a contribution to the salary of postdoctoral researchers according to the SFI Team Member Budgeting Scale, Level 2. The point on the scale should be determined by qualifications and experience, and the rationale for appointing a named individual at that point should be explained in the budget justification. SFI would expect to see individuals directly post-PhD to be appointed at point 1 of the scale.

II.   Equipment

Details of all requested equipment necessary for the research project 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.

For large items of infrastructure requested as part of the current application, applicants may also submit an associated access charge plan which will be reviewed by SFI, should funding be awarded for the infrastructure requested. Please contact SFI prior to submission of an access charge plan to obtain relevant template and guidelines. Plans may be submitted by email to spokes@sfi.ie, and should be referred to accordingly in the budget justification.

III.   Materials and Consumables

Details 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 etc.).These may also include, for example, access charges for use of infrastructure approved under the SFI Research Infrastructure Call 2012, where pre-approved access charge plans are now in place.

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

In addition, where access charge plans are submitted for infrastructure requested as part of the current application, indicative associated access charges may be included.

IV.   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 detail travel expenses directly related to conferences, scientific collaboration on the research programme, or learning special research techniques and should indicate the number of team members participating in each event. 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.

V.   Ineligible Costs

The following costs are examples of ineligible costs:

Clinical buyout; contingency or miscellaneous costs, entertainment costs; technology transfer or patent costs; legal fees, workshop organisation; journal subscriptions; relocation expenses.

General overheads, currently 30% of 'modified' total SFI direct costs, should not be included in the requested budget.

4.11   Letters of Support

The following letters of support must be included:

- A letter of support from **each industry collaborator** outlining their intention to participate in the proposed Spoke project. Industry letters of support should outline any previous history of collaborations with the academic applicants and outline how the research to be undertaken aligns itself with the current and future needs of that industry partner. The letter of support should describe the level of cost-share commitment from the industry partner, both in terms of cash and in-kind contributions and the time period for which the contribution is being made. Applicants should ensure that a completed company contribution table (Appendix I: Industry Collaborator Letter of Support) is included within each letter.

- A letter of support from **each academic collaborator** (1 page). Details of how the academic collaborator will contribute to the proposed research programme must be clearly described.

- A letter of support from the **host Research Body of the Centre Director** which should comment on the infrastructure, services and support available to the programme.

- A letter of support from the **host Research Body of each Spoke Leader**, where different from the Research Body of the Centre Director. This letter should comment on the infrastructure, services and support available to the programme and in addition should include the endorsement of eligibility of the Spoke Leaders(s).

- In cases where proposals submitted to the Fixed Call in the area of advanced manufacturing are **requesting salary costs associated with attracting senior researchers to Ireland from abroad on sabbatical**, a letter on headed paper from the **HR Department of the home institution or company** (in English) confirming the position of employment of the person concerned, verifying their current salary level and confirming that they will not be in receipt of a salary during the period of the request sabbatical is required.

Letters of Support may be uploaded as single or multiple files, using the appropriate buttons in the application form.

4.12   Excluded Reviewers

Applicants may specify up to three international researchers who should not act as reviewers for his or her application due to the competitive and confidential nature of the research programme. Please note that applicants can request exclusion of specific companies within this list.

4.13   View Proposal Prior to Submission

A PDF of the proposal is available to view in SESAME and should be reviewed prior to submission to enable you to validate your application. The responsibility lies with the applicant in this regard. Submission is made initially to your local research office for approval, prior to submission by the research office to SFI. **Please note that the deadlines referred to in this Call Document refer to submission of the finalised application to SFI by your local research office. Local research offices may mandate internal submission deadlines in order to ensure that they have sufficient time to review applications and submit them to SFI.**

Please note that the Lead Applicant and Co-Applicants may choose to complete fields and upload documentation that are common to all applicants (e.g. keywords, abstracts etc.), but only the Lead Applicant can submit the application.

4.14   Research Body Approval

It will be noted that Research Body submission of an application represents their approval of an application and agreement to the SFI Terms and Conditions of Research Grants. Submission must only be made by an authorised Research Body representative. In particular, the Research Body is approving:

- Eligibility of each lead applicant/co-applicant as well as the eligibility of the applicant group as a whole
- That the lead applicant and each co-applicant are recognised as an employee of one of the collaborating Research Bodies for the duration of the award
- That the requested budget including salaries/stipends, equipment, travel and consumables are in line with accepted institutional and national guidelines
- The availability of infrastructure within the institution as outlined by the applicant group in the research proposal
- That the proposed research programme has not been funded by other sources
- 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
- That the details provided in relation to research funding history i.e., current, pending or expired awards, are valid and accurate.

Furthermore, submission of an application further represents the approval of the lead applicant and all co-applicants of the application and agreement to SFI Terms and Conditions of Research Grants.

5   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 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.

6   Ethical and Regulatory Approval

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) 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. Additional requirements apply to clinical trials, as outlined in Section 7 below.

Furthermore, in line with a current directive from its parent Government Department, research funded by SFI must not comprise any component of the following:

> • 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.

7   Clinical Trials

SFI permits early stage clinical trials (Phase 0, Phase I) to be undertaken with support from an SFI Research Centre, Spoke or Strategic Partnership Award. Any such clinical trial must be conducted in accordance with SFI Terms and Conditions and adhere to the relevant SFI Policy including the terms outlined below.

Investigator(s) proposing to undertake clinical trials should avail of the input, advice, services and/or support of a Clinical Research Facility/Centre (CRF/CRC), a Clinical Trials Unit (CTU) or other specialist facilities at the study design stage and the clinical trial must be under the governance and oversight of an established Clinical Research Facility/Centre.

SFI cannot take on the role of sponsor; therefore appropriate sponsorship arrangements, satisfactory to SFI, must made in compliance with relevant EU Clinical Trials Directives and related regulations, or, where relevant, the EU Medical Device Directives. Details of Sponsors, including Letters of Support from sponsors, must be provided to SFI prior to initiation of the clinical trial.

It is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the clinical trial is conducted in a manner that is compliant with all applicable legislation, regulations and guidelines, including the Guidelines for Good Clinical Practice. Furthermore, evidence that the requisite ethical and competent authority approval has been secured, and that the appropriate insurance cover (including no-fault and legal liability insurance as deemed appropriate by SFI) is in place to cover the liability of all parties including the Principal Investigator, Research Body and Sponsor, must be provided to SFI prior to initiation of the clinical trial. Responsibilities of the Principal Investigator shall also include that the clinical trial will be well managed and monitored in respect of any inherent risks, that the principles of good clinical practice are applied effectively, and that sound safety reporting systems are put in place.

The award shall be subject to such terms and conditions for clinical trials at the discretion of SFI and notified to the Research Body. In the case of any clinical trials that may be multi-site, SFI may apply additional terms and conditions.

Please note that payment on awards involving clinical trials will not be issued until evidence of ethical and competent authority approval and the requisite insurance cover has been submitted to SFI. Additionally, the host Research Body and/or Sponsor (as stipulated by SFI) must fully indemnify SFI from all claims and proceedings arising from the trial by submitting a signed indemnity to SFI using a template to be provided.

8   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.**

9   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 reviewers and to any obligations under law.

10   Conflict of Interest

Conflict of interest rules are applied rigorously and apply to both and 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.

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.

SFI recognizes that applicants may have a prior relationship with an industrial collaborator 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 the Foundation and Research Body and is managed by the Research Body in accordance with the principles and mandates laid out in the National Intellectual Property Guidelines.

Potential conflicts of interest with respect to industrial collaborators named in the Spokes application should be directly declared within the applicant CV at the full proposal stage. Furthermore, the Host Research Body Letter of Support should contain a brief description of the institutional policy regarding the management of such conflicts.

11   Award Management

SFI has stringent requirements for the reporting by applicants on the grants that it makes. Applicants that fail to comply with these reporting requirements run the risk of having their grant payments suspended.

Since the Spokes programme will integrate into the SFI Research Centre, reporting on the progress of the Spokes award will be included in the reporting requirements for the Research Centre and hence a separate report will not be required.

The Spokes programme will be reviewed as part of the SFI Research Centre as a whole and as such, progress of the programme will be reviewed in conjunction with the other spokes and targeted projects at the SFI Research Centre site review

12   Intellectual Property Management

IP management practices should be in accordance with national guidelines. In particular, Research Centres must comply with the practices and procedures described in the Putting public research to work for Ireland document. Research Centres will be expected to update their practices in line with changing directives from the Central Technology Transfer Office 'Knowledge Transfer Ireland ' (KTI), SFI or other relevant official bodies during the life-time of the Research Centre.

Industry partners must make a minimum contribution to the full cost of the Targeted Project(s) in which they are engaged in order to enjoy preferential access to IP associated with or arising from the project. Preferential access may include privileges such as first sight of technology, first options to negotiate particular licenses, and other benefits as decided by the TTO and which are not available to outside parties. An industry partner wishing to enjoy preferential access to IP must make a formal commitment before the project commences to contribute not less than 30% of the full cost of the project and must include a minimum of 10% cash, in line with the general structure of the Research Centres programme. Further details are available on the SFI website[13].

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[13] http://www.sfi.ie/funding/grant-policies/intellectual-property-management-guidelines.html

APPENDIX I: Industry Collaborator Letter of Support

A letter of support from each industry collaborator outlining their intention to participate in the proposed Spokes project must be provided at the full-proposal application stage. Industry letters of support should outline any previous history of collaborations with the academic applicants and outline how the research to be undertaken aligns itself with the current and future needs of that industry partner. The letter of support should describe the level of cost-share commitment from the industry partner, both in terms of cash and in-kind contributions and the time period for which the contribution is being made as per the following table:

INDUSTRY PARTNER 'X' CONTRIBUTIONS						
	2016	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**TOTAL**
Cash Contribution						
Staff Contribution						
Equipment Contribution						
Other in-kind contribution						