



## SCIENCE FOUNDATION IRELAND

# SFI Spokes Programme 2015

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## Frequently Asked Questions

Queries should be directed to: [Spokes@sfi.ie](mailto:Spokes@sfi.ie)

### Terms of Reference

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



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## **SFI Spokes Programme**

### **1 APPLICANTS AND COLLABORATORS**

#### **1.1 Can researchers in Research Bodies outside Ireland (Republic of) be Spoke Leaders and can they receive funding from the award?**

Researchers in Research Bodies outside Ireland cannot be Spoke Leaders but can be official collaborators. Only researchers in eligible Research Bodies can receive funding from an SFI Spokes Programme award, but their contribution to the research programme must be clearly delineated within the research programme section and within the collaborator's letter of support. The financial support a collaborator is to receive must also be fully justified in the budget justification section.

#### **1.2 Is it possible for collaborators on an SFI Spokes Programme award to receive funding from the award?**

A collaborator working within an eligible Research Body within the Republic of Ireland may receive funding from the award. This should be clearly stated in the budget justification section. Salaries for collaborators are not permitted. Financial responsibility for the grant (including any audit) remains the responsibility of the lead applicant.

#### **1.3 Can a Spoke Leader become a Lead Co-Investigator in the Research Centre?**

Yes; Should the Centre Director wish to do so, he/she may nominate the Spokes leader as a Centre co-Lead Investigator, in the event that the Spokes application is deemed fundable.

### **2 SUBMISSION AND REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Should applications for the SFI Spokes Programme be submitted through SESAME?**

Yes, all full proposals must be submitted via SESAME, SFI's online grants and awards management system. Expressions of Interest (EoI) to the Spokes Rolling Calling should be submitted outside of SESAME by emailing the EoI to [spokes@sfi.ie](mailto:spokes@sfi.ie).

#### **2.2 Should the CV's of team members (e.g. Postdoctoral Researchers) be submitted?**

Please do not submit the CVs of research team members. SFI will fund a contribution to the salary of a postdoctoral researcher according to the SFI Team Member Budgeting Scale, Levels 2A (new post-doctoral researcher) and 2B (experienced post-doctoral researcher) (see SFI's [Grant Application Budget Policy](#)). The point on the scale should be determined by qualifications and experience, and the rationale for appointing an individual at that point should be explained in the budget justification section. SFI would expect to see individuals directly post-PhD to be appointed at point 1 of the 2A scale.

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### **2.3 Do I need to submit an Expression of Interest (Eoi) prior to my full application?**

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. Eoi submissions are not required for the Fixed Call.

### **2.4 I am requesting funding for 40 months, but the options in the drop-down menu do not allow me to do this. How should I proceed?**

If requesting funding for a period of time which is not specified in the drop-down menu, please select the option which is greater than the number of months you are seeking to be funded for e.g. For 40 months select 48 months. This will allow you to complete the budget template for the appropriate period of time in that year. Please indicate the exact proposed award duration within the body of the proposal.

### **2.5 Will SESAME alert me if the required documents have not been uploaded or if fields have not been completed, as part of my submission?**

To check that required fields have been completed prior to submission, click "Validate". Validation will also automatically occur when "Submit" is selected. However, it is important to note that there is no system validation on multiple upload file fields, including for example programme documents and collaborator CVs, and letters of support. The number of documents required may vary depending on each application.

You should view the PDF of your application prior to submission to allow you to verify content, to print or to save your application. It is the responsibility of the lead applicant to ensure that all documentation is included and that page lengths are not exceeded.

### **2.6 Can you list the most common issues researchers have seen in submitting Proposals using SESAME system?**

Issues with PDF Generation: (created with open source software, page count issue etc.)

Please ensure to use unencrypted, non-password protected PDFs with the copying function disabled, developed using either Adobe or Microsoft word PDF convertor software ONLY. Also do NOT use commas or special characters in the title of your uploaded PDF document.

Issues with PDF Document Titles:

Do NOT use commas or special characters in the title of your uploaded PDF document.

Password Issues/resets:



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If you forget your password, click on the 'Forgot your password, Please click here' link on the SESAME homepage

### Pop Ups enabled in Browser:

Please ensure that popups ARE ENABLED in your browser configuration.

### Single/multiple upload field:

If you wish to use the multiple upload field, please ensure that you have the java plugin installed. If you click the "multiple files" button and it does not work, you will see a link to the java website where you can download the latest plugin.

### Browser "Back" button:

Please do NOT use the browser "back" button when navigating SESAME.

### Documentation Uploads:

Please ENSURE all documents are uploaded into the correct fields in the application.

### Funding support from profile:

Creating new funding support details while working on the application will add those details to both the application and to the profile. If you are not adding these new funding support details directly to your application, but are instead adding them directly to your profile, please ensure that you later also attach the relevant details to the application. Please refer to the SESAME researcher user guide for details of how to do this.

### Co-applicant access issues:

It is only possibly for one person to work on the proposal at any one time. To allow your co-applicant to access the proposal, please save the proposal and close the browser window. Your co-applicant will then be able to access the proposal.

## **2.7 I will be an industry collaborator on a Spokes application and would like to know how we could get setup on SESAME.**

Industry collaborators do not need SESAME access; they will be added to the application by the Lead Applicant.

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### **2.8 If there is more than one targeted project within the Spoke application, will the page limits remain the same?**

Yes – applicants must adhere to the page limits associated with each section of the application. Applications that exceed the page limit will be disqualified.

## **3 ELIGIBILITY**

### **3.1 How does SFI define a senior author?**

A senior author is one who is listed as first or joint first author, reflecting the fact that he/she has provided the greatest intellectual contribution, has held the primary responsibility for collecting and analysing data, and for the writing of the manuscript and associated drafts. The last author will also be considered as a senior author, since this position generally reflects his/her overall responsibility for the study and suggests that a level of mentorship has been provided.

It will be noted that different publishers have differing rules on how the senior authorship is indicated (e.g., by using asterisks, underlining, placing the name first or last in the list of authors, etc.); of overriding importance however is that the applicant should be able to convince and reassure reviewers that they are the key author on these publications.

Please note that senior authorship does NOT necessarily mean that they were responsible financially for the research that was reported.

### **3.2 What qualifies as an independent research grant, as defined by the call documentation?**

Spokes Leaders *must* have demonstrated research independence through securing at least one independent research grant as lead investigator or as co-investigator. The grant *must* have been competitively awarded and internationally peer reviewed. Eligible research grants *must* support at least one full - time equivalent, excluding the investigator(s), and include research team costs (e.g., materials and consumables). At least one full-time equivalent funded by an eligible research grant *must* be under the supervision (or co-supervision) of the investigator. Eligible research grants EXCLUDE smaller awards such as travel grants, equipment grants, post-graduate fellowships, postdoctoral fellowships, and awards of short duration (12 months or less). Laboratory fit-out / set up funding, awards from the investigators institution, and awards that have not been subject to external international peer review are also excluded.

### **3.3 Can a Spoke Leader be a new academic partner?**

Yes. Spoke Leaders can be either a current investigator in the Research Centre or a new academic partner. All nominated Spoke Leaders must meet the minimum eligibility criteria detailed in the call document.

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### **3.4 Can someone be nominated Spoke Leader on more than one application?**

Yes. However, it is important to bear in mind that the evaluation process will examine the commitment and work load of individuals in determining the suitability of such an arrangement.

### **3.5 The eligibility criteria states “10 international peer reviewed articles” - does this include books, editorship, special issue editing, standards, patents?**

Eligible publications must be original, international peer reviewed research publications. Review articles, patents, standards, editorship, special issue editing and books are not acceptable.

### **3.6 Can there be more than one industry partner involved in a targeted project? Are industry partners required to contribute the same level of cost share?**

Yes – there can be more than one industry partner per targeted project. Applicants and industry partners have flexibility to manage the cost share commitments of individual industry partners. The total overall minimum industry cost share for the Spoke project, as described in the call document, must be achieved.

### **3.7 Why is the CV of the Centre Director required when the CV may not be relevant to the research programme in the application?**

If successful, the Spoke will be fully integrated into the associated Research Centre in terms of reporting etc. As such, it will ultimately be the responsibility of the Centre Director to oversee the research and to ensure that objectives are reached. The Spoke Leaders will lead and direct the specific research programme associated with the Spoke.

## **4 FUNDING**

### **4.1 What is the anticipated start date for project funded by the 2015 Spokes Fixed Call?**

Applicants are likely to be notified of funding decisions in August 2016 and should plan to start projects funded by the 2015 Spokes Call in Q4 2016.

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### **4.2 Are there minimum or maximum award sizes for Spokes projects?**

There is no minimum or maximum project size. 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.

### **4.3 Is funding available for central operations support within the Spokes programme?**

The budget submitted should primarily be aligned within the Spoke project. Applicants are, however, afforded the flexibility to direct a portion of this budget towards the platform research and/or operations within the Research Centre Hub if it is considered to contribute to the overall success of the Spoke. Any allocation of SFI funding or industry cost-share funding to the Hub must be described and justified by the lead applicant.

### **4.4 At the application stage, it is not always possible to know if you will utilise/recruit someone existing in the public sector system or a new person. How is one to know which scale to utilise?**

SFI recognises that the identity of team members may not be known at the time of grant preparation. In such cases grant applicants should request budget contributions for team members using the 'Existing Public Servant' scale. If a team role is ultimately filled by a 'new entrant' SFI will decide whether funds liberated by such an occurrence shall be returned to SFI or can be used productively elsewhere within the grant. Further details about SFI's Grant Application Budget Policy can be found at (<http://www.sfi.ie/funding/grant-policies/grant-applications-budget-policy/>)

### **4.5 Are externally-funded projects, such as those funded through Horizon 2020, Wellcome Trust, ERC, etc. considered as "spokes"?**

No. Spokes are academic-industry collaborative projects which receive direct funding from SFI and to which the industry partner(s) are expected to make an intellectual and financial contribution. SFI does, however, expect that Research Centres will leverage funding from non-Exchequer sources, with a particular emphasis on Horizon 2020 funding.

### **4.6 Does the SFI contribution cover the overhead on industry contribution?**

No, SFI will not pay overhead on the industry contribution. Overheads will be paid on SFI contribution only.

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### **4.7 Can you confirm that the contributions should be calculated as a percentage of total direct costs and not the total budget inclusive of overhead?**

Yes, industry contributions are calculated as a percentage of total direct costs, i.e. not inclusive of overheads.

### **4.8 Do industry partner cost share contributions made as part of a Spokes proposal count towards the Research Centre's minimum cost share requirements once funded?**

Yes, since the Spoke will become part of the Research Centre in its entirety, the cost share associated with the Spoke will be counted towards the overall industry partner contributions towards the Research Centre.

### **4.9 How are overheads associated with the award distributed?**

Overheads will be paid directed to the Research Body hosting the Research Centre. It is up to the Research Body to distribute the overheads according to their internal policies.

## **5 INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT**

### **5.1 What is the minimum number of industry partners required for Spokes application?**

Each Spoke application must involve at least one industry partner. This may be a new industry partner or an existing industry partner.

### **5.2 Can semi-state organisations engage in SFI Spokes submissions?**

Yes, where appropriate, and their participation will be considered to satisfy the eligibility criterion of industry engagement. Representatives from semi-state bodies should be named as collaborators and will not be eligible to receive SFI funding. For specific queries please email [spokes@sfi.ie](mailto:spokes@sfi.ie).

### **5.3 Is it necessary for a multi-national partner to have a base in Ireland?**

It is not a requirement that the company has a base in Ireland. However, proposals that involve industrial participants from outside Ireland will need to clearly make a strategic case for their involvement, to demonstrate the potential benefit to the Irish economy or Irish society.

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### **5.4 Can a Technology Centre be considered to be an industry partner in a SFI Spokes application?**

Although an EI/IDA Technology Centre is not considered as an 'industry partner', companies who are participating in Technology Centres are encouraged to participate in the SFI Research Centres Programme as industry partners and can therefore be included in Spokes applications.

### **5.5 What is eligible as in-kind contributions?**

Eligible in-kind contributions include personnel, equipment, student placement with industry partners, software, materials, data etc. Please refer to the SFI website for details: <http://www.sfi.ie/funding/grant-policies/industry-cost-share/>.

### **5.6 Are cost contributions from public sources recognised as in-kind cost-share?**

Contributions, cash or in-kind, from public sources will not be counted as an industry contribution. Specific queries on the eligibility of cash and in-kind contributions should be directed to [spokes@sfi.ie](mailto:spokes@sfi.ie)

### **5.7 What can be promised to industry partners for their Spokes contributions?**

Industry partners that make the required minimum contribution to the full cost of the Spokes project(s) in which they are engaged may benefit from preferential access to IP associated with or arising from the project. It is the responsibility of the individual Centre and respective Research Office to define what is meant by preferential access but it 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.

See [here](#) for further details.

### **5.8 What is the view of SFI on international collaborators or industry partners that wish to fund quality R&D initiatives in Ireland?**

International partners are welcome to participate. However, the Centre/Spoke should be mindful of the overall programme goal – to provide an economic benefit to Ireland – and ensure that inclusion of such partners will contribute to this goal.

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### **5.9 Do the National IP Guidelines also apply to applications to the Rolling Spokes call given that the industry contribution is 50% cash?**

Yes – all applicants are advised to adhere to the National IP Protocol and the SFI Guidelines for Industry Access to Intellectual Property in the SFI Research Centres Programme.

## **6 IMPACT**

### **6.1 What is impact?**

We define Impact as “*the demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy*”. Thus, the direct and indirect ‘influence’ of research, or its ‘effect’ on an individual, a community, the development of policy, or the creation of a new product, service or technology. Impact embraces the diverse ways in which research-related knowledge and skills benefit individuals, organisations and nations by:

- Enabling and developing global economic performance, and specifically the economic competitiveness of Ireland
- Increasing the effectiveness of public services and policy
- Enhancing quality of life, health and creative output

In thinking about potential impacts, the following points should also be considered:

- What is the activity’s potential impact on the development of industry and the Irish economy, competitiveness and development?
- What is the activity’s potential impact on society and the quality of life of Ireland’s citizens?
- 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)?
- Are there potential international beneficiaries, collaborations with international industry or partner organisations?
- What is the activity’s potential impact on the education and training of Ireland’s students; the career development of research team members and the infrastructure for further research and education, e.g. facilities and instrumentation?
- How will the potential impacts from your research best be realised?
- How do you propose the impact from your research could be measured?

Further information is available on the SFI website (<http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-research-impact/>).

### **6.2 Why is an impact evaluation being introduced?**

Applicants have always been asked to outline the ‘Value to Ireland’ of their research in their applications to SFI. Impact Statements are an evolution of this with the dual aim of asking applicants to consider activities which will enhance the impact of their research in order to ensure that potential impacts can be realised, and in helping the scientific community, SFI and its parent

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Government department communicate better the benefits and value that public funding of research will bring to Ireland, its citizens and the wider society.

### **6.3 Will impact be evaluated as part of the review process?**

Impact will be a key evaluation criterion at both the EoI (for applications to the rolling call) and full proposal stages. To be considered for funding, proposals must achieve an appropriate level of excellence in both the scientific/technical and impact evaluation.

### **6.4 What if the research is reviewed as excellent but the impact is not?**

Only proposals achieving excellence in both (scientific research and impact) will be considered for funding.

## **7 INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY**

### **7.1 When do IP agreements have to be in place?**

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).

## **8 ACCESS CHARGES**

### **8.1 How do I apply for access costs to shared facilities through the Spokes Programme?**

Access charges may be sought for use of infrastructure where SFI pre-approved access charge plans are in place. This may include, for example, access charges for use of infrastructure approved under the SFI Research Infrastructure Call where pre-approved access charge plans are in place. Charges for access to facilities and services not directly available to the applicant, such as the costs associated with commissioning specific experiments in research facilities (e.g. Tyndall, CRANN etc.) may also be requested where SFI pre-approved access charge plans are in place.

Access charges may also be requested for use of other shared facilities or national test-beds, which are required as part of the proposed research. The requested access charges should be clearly specified in the budget as a separate line item and justified in the budget justification section. The scientific rationale for undertaking such experiments should be outlined in the research description.

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In addition, requests may be included for accessing international databases and facilities or for the commissioning of experiments in international facilities/research labs where appropriately detailed justification is provided and where the required infrastructure is not available in Ireland.

### **9 ADVANCED MANUFACTURING**

#### **9.1 What level of salary is appropriate in the context of a senior advanced manufacturing researcher joining our team for a period of 12 months?**

Visiting researchers not in receipt of salary from their home institution during their stay in Ireland can claim both salary and subsistence (according to national guidelines: <http://www.revenue.ie/en/tax/it/leaflets/it54.html>). SFI will contribute to a salary based on the visiting researcher's current academic position or industrial level of employment. If the visiting researcher will be in receipt of salary from their home institution during their stay in Ireland, they will not be permitted to claim salary but can claim subsistence, as above. Where a contribution to salary is requested, applicants are required to include a letter from the HR Department of the visiting researcher's home institution or company confirming their position of employment, verifying their current salary level and confirming that they will not be in receipt of salary during the period of their visit to Ireland. The total request for salary and subsistence for a 12 month visit cannot exceed €150,000 and must be appropriately pro-rated for shorter term visits.

#### **9.2 We intend to request salary costs associated with attracting a senior researcher in the area of advanced manufacturing on sabbatical, are there any eligibility criteria?**

It must be clear that such individuals have the appropriate track record to provide significant added value / research capacity to a Spokes proposal. In addition, at a minimum they must satisfy the following eligibility criteria:

- A proven record of leadership and accomplishment appropriate to international standards of the field
- Doctorate level or comparable research experience
- Currently residing and working outside of Ireland
- Must have a current position in academia or industry that will be still active once the sabbatical is finished

#### **9.3 Are subsistence costs an eligible cost for a visiting senior researcher with expertise in advanced manufacturing?**

Subsistence expenses are an eligible cost for the duration of the stay in Ireland. Adherence to



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National guidelines is the responsibility of the Research Body. Please see the link below for the Irish Revenue guidelines for allowable subsistence expenses:

<http://www.revenue.ie/en/tax/it/leaflets/it54.html>