SCIENCE FOUNDATION IRELAND

Starting Investigator Research Grant Programme 2018

Call for Submission of Proposals

KEY DATES

Call announcement	11th January 2018
Research Body notification of approved candidates	**22nd February 2018, 13:00 Dublin Local Time**
Deadline for submission of proposals	**29th March 2018, 13:00 Dublin Local Time**

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

SFI is committed to supporting and developing early- and mid-career researchers to become excellent, fully independent research leaders and offers a suite of funding opportunities to help facilitate this transition, including support for those who are transitioning to independence, transitioning to leadership as well supporting more established researcher leaders. The purpose of these schemes is to fund scientific research projects of excellence with impact.

Current SFI schemes include the **SFI Starting Investigator Research Grant (SIRG)** which aims to support excellent postdoctoral researchers who wish to take steps towards a fully independent research career; the **SFI Career Development Award (CDA)** which aims to support early- and mid-career researchers who already hold a salaried, independent research post and who are looking to expand their research activities and the **SFI President of Ireland Future Research Leaders programme** which is a recruitment-only programme designed to attract to Ireland outstanding new and emerging research leaders in both scientific and engineering domains.

In addition to SFI-led schemes, the Foundation provides funding opportunities for early- and mid-career researchers through the SFI-HRB-Wellcome funded Research Career Development Fellowship (RCDF) and the Senior Research Fellowship in Basic Biomedical Science[1] and the Royal Society-Science Foundation Ireland University Research Fellowship (RS-SFI URF) [2].

SFI is pleased to launch the **2018 Starting Investigator Research Grant (SIRG)** programme to support excellent early-career-stage investigators to carry out independent research for a four-year period. The award also provides funding for a postgraduate student, who will be primarily supervised by the Starting Investigator (SI).

Research Bodies will be permitted to put forward **a maximum of 12 candidates** for the submission of a proposal to the SIRG programme. SFI is aware of the need to address gender imbalance in STEM research areas and is supportive of the **Athena SWAN**[3] initiative which is endorsed by Irish Research Bodies. In recognition of this, **a maximum of six candidates, out of the 12 permitted from each eligible research body, may be male candidates.** See Section 3.1 and FAQs for further details. Upon submission to SFI all applications will be treated equally regardless of the gender of the applicant. In addition, research bodies are encouraged to prioritise applicants by paying particular attention to the strategic research priorities of the research body and future likely manpower needs in HEIs (e.g., taking into account future retirement patterns, areas of research they wish to develop, etc.), in addition to selecting excellent candidates.

2.   Programme Details

2.1   Programme Remit

The legal remit of SFI is to promote, develop and assist the carrying out of oriented basic and applied research in strategic areas of scientific endeavour that concern the future development and competitiveness of industry and enterprise in the State[4]. SFI funds in the research areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). As outlined in Agenda 2020 the Foundation is

committed to continuing its focus on funding excellent science that will deliver strongly on impact, thus realising significant benefits for the Irish economy and Irish society. Innovation 2020[5] is Ireland's five-year strategy on research and development, science and technology. This strategy sets out the roadmap for continuing progress towards the goal of making Ireland a Global Innovation Leader, driving a strong sustainable economy and a better society, underpinned by excellent research that is defined within six designated enterprise themes (ICT; Health and Medical; Food; Energy; Manufacturing and Materials; Services and Business Processes).

Since the publication of the report of the National Research Prioritisation (NRP) Steering Group in 2012, which identified 14 priority research areas (that are now positioned within the six enterprise themes listed above), a more focused approach has been adopted in the public funding of research and innovation activity. Research prioritisation has concentrated the majority of Ireland's competitive funding on areas deemed likely to yield greatest economic and societal impact.

For the SIRG 2018 call, proposals must either be aligned to one of the 14 priority research areas or to any other area under SFI's legal remit (see below) where there is convincing evidence that there will be significant potential for economic and/or societal impact.

2.2 Objectives of the SIRG Programme

- To provide a mechanism for Irish Research Bodies to attract and recruit excellent early career researchers.
- With the support of the host research body, to enable excellent early career stage researchers to establish themselves as independent investigators.
- To support excellent scientific/engineering research that has potential impact.
- To further encourage and promote Ireland's participation in the international research community and to increase the number of ERC and H2020 awards secured by Ireland-based PIs.
- To maintain Ireland's top 20 position in international bibliometric rankings through an increase in the number and quality of journal publications.
- To contribute to improving gender balance in the higher education sector.

2.3 Definitions of Applicant, Mentor and Collaborator

The **Applicant** will be a researcher with between **3-8** years' experience beyond the award of their PhD or equivalent qualification[6] (**that is, those who graduated during the period of September 2009 to December 2014, inclusive, are eligible to apply**), who is currently employed as a Postdoctoral Research Associate (or equivalent) or a Research Fellow under the guidance of a named supervisor, and who has not previously held an independent research position. The applicant will be responsible for the scientific and technical direction of the research programme, the supervision of the postgraduate student and the submission of reports to SFI. The applicant has primary responsibility for carrying out the research within the funding limits awarded and in accordance with the SFI Terms and Conditions of Research Grants. The Applicant will serve as the primary point of contact for SFI on the award.

The **Mentor** will be an established researcher within the host institution who will give advice and provide laboratory space and related infrastructure to both the Starting Investigator (SI) and the postgraduate student. The mentor will also take the role of co-supervisor for the postgraduate student; however, it is the SI who will act as the primary supervisor. The mentor does not play a

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supervisory or presiding role to the SI, but acts as an advisor and host. The mentor will work with the SI to ensure that all fiduciary and ethical approval aspects, where relevant, of the award are managed successfully.

An **Academic** Collaborator is an individual working in an academic institution who is committed to providing a valuable intellectual and/or technical contribution to the proposed research. As appropriate, Academic Collaborator(s) based in an SFI Eligible Research Body within the Republic of Ireland may receive funding through the grant (see Section 3.10), but the funding allocated should reflect the supporting role that such Collaborator(s) are expected to play in the research programme. CVs must be provided for Academic Collaborators.

Industry partners are not obligatory, but are permitted and, where appropriate for the topic of the research, are encouraged. An industry partner should be listed within the documentation as an **Industry Collaborator**. CVs may be provided for Industry Collaborators; failure to provide CVs may disadvantage an application during the review process. Each Industry Collaborator must provide a letter of support with the grant application and this must clearly outline the role of that Industry Collaborator in the programme of research proposed.

The role of either the Academic or Industry Collaborator must also be referenced in the main body of the research proposal (for example: Will the Collaborators be supplying samples, data, etc.? Will the Collaborators be providing training in techniques or the use of equipment? Will the Collaborators directly participate in specific projects? Will Collaborators be acting in a purely advisory capacity?). Please see Section 3.11 for details on letters of support.

2.4   Eligibility Criteria of Applicant

All eligible applicants to the SIRG 2018 call must meet the following eligibility criteria:

2.4.1 PhD Duration

- The applicant must possess at least three years, but not more than eight years of research experience beyond the PhD, or equivalent.
- Applicants holding an equivalent qualification may be eligible, but must seek approval from SFI in advance of submitting a proposal
- 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.
- Allowances will be made for documented leave-see Section 2.4.7

2.4.2 Publication Record

- The applicant must demonstrate a proven record of internationally recognised research accomplishments. The applicant must be senior author (first, joint-first or last author) on **at least three primary research articles** (that is, not reviews or other secondary research articles) in international peer-reviewed publications.

2.4.3 Funding History

- The applicant must not hold or have held a significant, independent internationally peer reviewed research award of greater than one-year duration. In addition, this previous award must not have had a total value in excess of €100,000 (or equivalent) direct costs. Personal awards, including student and postdoctoral fellowships, travel awards, and bursaries of greater

than one-year duration are permissible, so long as their value was no greater than €100,000 per annum.

2.4.4 Employment History

The applicant must not have previously held or be currently employed on a faculty contract[7]. Exceptions will however be made for applicants who have held (or currently hold) a temporary short-term contract **of 12 months or less in duration** where details are provided in the Research Body Letter of Support.

2.4.5 SI Mentor
- The SI must have an identified mentor, who has agreed to allow the SI and postgraduate student to carry out research within their laboratory space for the duration of the award.

2.4.6 Research Body Requirements

- The Research Body must confirm that the SI applicant meets the above criteria prior to the submission of a candidate list and must also provide assurance that the space and infrastructure to carry out the proposed research are available for the duration of the award. Please see Section 3.11 for more information.

2.4.7 Eligible Leave

A SFI SIRG applicant may extend their period of eligibility by 18 months for each separate period in which they have taken a minimum of 12 weeks of consecutive documented eligible leave since the conferring of their PhD or equivalent.

This can include, but is not limited to the examples below:
- Statutory adoptive leave
- Statutory parental leave
- Statutory maternity leave
- Statutory paternity leave
- Carer's leave
- Long-term medical illness leave
- Conscription

No allowance will be made for part-time working (two years of half-time working counts as two full time years). The maximum extension to the period of eligibility under this scheme is 4 ½ years (54 months). Note that career breaks (i.e. to go travelling or for other reasons not in line with those listed above) do not constitute eligible leave.

Additionally, applicants may extend their period of eligibility by 12 months for each year spent working in a science or engineering related industry post award of PhD. The maximum extension to the period of eligibility under this scheme is two years (24 months).

In all cases, applicants wishing to extend their period of eligibility must produce documentary evidence from their host institution's Human Resources (HR) Department or, where applicable, the HR Department of their employer at the time of their eligible leave period(s). In addition, a verifiable copy of the degree certificate must be provided to confirm the date of award of the PhD degree. Applicants must upload the relevant documents into Sesame (See Section 3.6).

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[7] *Researchers already holding a faculty position may be eligible to apply to the SFI Career Development Award. Interested parties should visit the SFI website or contact their institution's Research Office for more details.*

SIRG awards are intended to be the primary source of funding for the award holders and as such the expected time commitment to the research supported through this award should represent the majority of the time of the award holder. SFI understands that SIRG award holders will actively seek further funding for their research. It is expected that award holders will dedicate almost all of their time to the SIRG award in the first year. In cases where further funding has been obtained, SFI's expectation is that the SIRG commitment should never drop below 50%. SFI must be notified of any other awards won by the SI and, where necessary, reserves the right to approve any expected changes to the SI's time commitments. **SFI will also not allow SIRG award holders to apply to any SFI programmes during the first 12 months of the award, unless specifically indicated in the relevant call documentation that it is permissible to do so**. Potential applicants are advised to contact SFI in advance of submission to ensure eligibility.

Applicants currently under active review by SFI as either Principal Investigator (PI) or co-Principal Investigator (co-PI) under certain programmes are not entitled to apply to the SIRG Programme. These programmes include, but are not limited to: SFI Investigators Programme, SFI Research Centres, Spokes, CDA and Future Research Leaders programmes. Please contact SFI in advance of applying to confirm your eligibility for this call where you are currently under review for another SFI programme.

Where relevant, applicants under active review as team members in either the TIDA or Industry Fellowship Programmes are permitted to submit an application to the SIRG 2018 Programme but may be required to withdraw their SIRG application upon acceptance of an IF or TIDA award, where successful.

Where an applicant fails to meet the eligibility criteria outlined above, the application will be deemed ineligible and will not be accepted for review. Where uncertain, potential applicants are advised to contact SFI in advance of submission to ensure eligibility.

2.5   Eligibility of Research Body

The Research Body is the body in charge of the financial and administrative coordination of the research programme receiving a research grant from the Foundation. A list of eligible research bodies is available on the SFI website.[8]

2.6   Funding

SFI Starting Investigator Research Grant awards have a maximum value of **€425,000** direct costs for a period of **four years**. General overheads, currently 30% of "modified" total direct costs, should not be included in the requested budget (see below).

The budget requested should include the SI's salary, to which SFI will contribute over the duration of the award. The maximum contribution to the SI's salary each year must be set at a point on the Experienced Postdoctoral Researcher scale (Level 2B) of the SFI Grants Team Member Budgeting Scale. Applicants are permitted to start at any point within Level 2B (that is, either at Point 1, Point 2, Point 3 or Point 4, but not at an intermediate value between these points), and may move up to a higher point in following years, as desired. Similarly, it is permissible to remain at the same point over consecutive years; reductions in salary contributions over consecutive years are not expected. Note that at no stage in the lifetime of a SIRG award may the salary contribution be greater than Point 4 of

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[8] *Please note that Research Bodies that have been approved specifically for SFI non-research programmes are not eligible to apply for funding under the SIRG Programme.*

the Experienced Postdoctoral Researcher scale (Level 2B). Regardless of how the salary contributions are planned, it is important to explain the reasoning for the chosen plan in the budget justification (see Section 3.10). Please see the SFI Grant Application Budget Policy for full details, and note that the SI's salary contribution includes PRSI at 10.75%.

The remainder of the requested budget should cover the fees and stipend of the postgraduate student (in line with the SFI Grant Application Budget Policy), and costs for materials and consumables, equipment and travel (see Section 3.9 for more details).

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). 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.

2.7   Proposal Review Process and Evaluation Criteria

The submission of an application to SFI shall be construed as consent by the applicant to participate in the peer-review process. Proposals will be assessed using a two-stage review process that combines remote and sitting panel review stages, both carried out by international experts. The process is described below and is also illustrated in the form of a flow diagram here.

Stage 1 Remote Panel Review Stage

The assessment will be carried out by panels of distinguished international scientists and engineers. International panel members will be selected with appropriate experience. The panel members will exhibit a broad range of expertise relevant to the proposals under review and the criteria under which they will be assessed.
The proposals will be assessed on the basis of four key evaluation criteria, weighted as described below:

- **Quality, significance, and relevance of the research record of the applicant (weight 35%)**
  Impact and citation level of prior publication; success in obtaining previous eligible funding; success with patent applications; visibility at and involvement in international conferences; relevant industrial experience; etc.
- **Quality, significance, novelty, and strategic relevance of the research plan (weight 35%)**
  Novelty, importance, timeliness of the intended research; compatibility with SFI strategy; communication and description of the research; comprehension of the current state of the art; clearly delineated roles of the SI and the postgraduate student; suitability and achievability of the programme based on the experience of the student; appropriate use of the available budget, etc.
- **Potential impact and value to Ireland (weight 15%)**
  Appreciation of how research may be developed and exploited in the medium-to-long term; realistic and convincing evaluation of the benefits that will result from a successful project; areas and fields where impacts are likely to be made; etc.
- **Quality of institutional and mentor support and infrastructure provided (weight 15%)**
  Necessary space and equipment in place to carry out the programme of research; assurance from the support letters that the team will be looked after appropriately, clear rationale for the SI and mentor working together; coherent plan between SI and mentor; confidence that the SI will have significant independence and that it will be respected by the mentor, etc.

Applicant Response
A triage step will follow the remote panel review and the highest quality proposals, based on the panel review ranking will progress to Stage 2. Applicants will be notified about the outcome of the Stage 1 review upon completion of this process. Anonymous reviewer comments will then be made available to applicants and those applicants proceeding to Stage 2 will be afforded the opportunity to submit a response. Applicants will be given a defined period of time in which to respond (advanced notice of dates and guidelines relating to the response will be indicated to applicants). The lead applicant may submit a maximum of 1600 words, inclusive of any references. A maximum one-page document, to include figures and figure legends only, may be uploaded as a PDF attachment.

Stage 2 Panel Review
International panel members will be selected with appropriate experience and will include a broad range of research areas relevant to the proposals. Sitting panel members will not have been involved in the remote review stage. In addition to briefing material, the panel members will receive the proposal, anonymised remote panel reviews and the applicant's response to the panel reviews. Stage 2 panel members will assess the inputs of the panel reviews and the overall merit and priority of applications. Panels will be invited to rank proposals and to make recommendations on which applications should be given consideration for funding by SFI. The same review criteria will be applied at this stage as used for the Remote Panel Review.

The identity of international experts who conduct either the remote or sitting panel reviews shall remain confidential and will not be disclosed to the applicants. However, decisions resulting from the evaluation will be given to the applicant(s), including the remote panel reviews, the Stage 2 panel reviews, where relevant, and the scribe notes recorded at the panel meeting. SFI shall not be liable for the release of information concerning proposals to third parties by those international scientists involved in the merit review process.

SFI reserves the right to modify the review process. Applicants will be notified of any relevant modification to the review procedure.

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3. Application Procedure

3.1 Nomination of Candidates by Research Bodies

The research offices of potential host institutions will be expected to instigate a procedure to select candidates for this call. Those wishing to apply to the SIRG 2018 call should first contact their intended host institution, informing the Research Office about their identity and credentials, the identity of their chosen mentor, and an outline of their intended research plan.

Eligible research bodies may nominate up to **a maximum of 12 candidates** from whom proposals will be invited. **No more than six of the 12 nominated candidates may be male candidates**. See FAQs for further details.

To provide useful information and assist SFI with its future calls, research offices will be asked to submit a document that lists the names and genders of their approved candidates, provisional titles for their applications, and a description of the selection process that was undertaken in order to select their nominated candidates. Consideration should be given to the suitability of the candidates,

research body strategy, and strategic talent management. Any proposals submitted by applicants not featuring in this document **will be deemed ineligible and not reviewed**.

Please note that Research Bodies must provide SFI with their list of approved applicants by <u>13:00 on the 22nd February 2018</u>. The document should be sent by email to <u>sirg@sfi.ie</u>, and may nominate <u>a maximum of 12 candidates. No more than six of the 12 nominated candidates may be male candidates</u>. If more than 12 candidates in total and/or more than six male candidates are named in the document, all applications from that institution will be deemed ineligible.

Following successful selection of candidates by the associated host research body, approved candidates will be required to submit a proposal to SFI. Full details of the information required are provided in the following section. **Proposals must be submitted online through SESAME to SFI by the Research Office of the applicant's research body <u>before the call deadline</u>.**

Only applicants that submit a proposal in the format described above, and before the deadline of <u>29th March 2018 at 13:00</u>, will be eligible.

Only proposals submitted by applicants approved in advance by their host institution will be eligible for this call. Any other submitted proposals will be returned without review.

3.2   Submission

For the 2018 SIRG Programme, proposals will only be accepted through SESAME, SFI's grants and awards management system. Access to SESAME is controlled by staff at the research office of 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. 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 Researcher User Guide)](#).

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 SIRG programme may affect eligibility to submit to other SFI programmes – please refer to appropriate call documents. Note also that if a SIRG proposal is under active review, proposals cannot be submitted to the SFI Future Research Leaders, TIDA, Investigators, Spokes, Industry Fellowships, Career Development Award (CDA) or similar programmes.

Once submitted to SFI, an application to the SIRG programme cannot be withdrawn and modified for resubmission in the same call.

3.3 ORCID ID

ORCID[9] provides a unique identifier for all researchers which can then be linked to their different research works across different platforms. SESAME is integrated with ORCID making it possible for researchers with a SESAME Research Profile to connect directly to an ORCID ID from their profile.

There are a number of benefits to creating an ORCID ID, which include the following:

- ORCID allows you to pull information from different platforms creating a centralised reference to your different works (e.g. publications, patents, awards) in one location using a single sign in.
- Your ORCID ID is a unique identifier which distinguishes you from other researchers with a similar name.
- Using the ORCID ID assists in making your research works more visible to funders and publishers. You are able to build a complete picture of your research in one location.

As part of the integration of SESAME with ORCID, it is possible for researchers to import publication data from ORCID directly into their SESAME Research Profile. For the SIRG 2018, **applicants** are required to link their SESAME Research Profiles to an ORCID ID **before an application can be submitted**.

3.4 General Guidelines for Research Proposal Preparation

Applications to the SIRG programme consist of a proposal submitted online through SESAME to SFI by the Research Office of the applicant's research body. Applicants should carefully follow the instructions below and in the SESAME Researcher User Guide to complete the various sections of the application. A checklist is provided in Appendix A at the end of this document. Please contact your Research Office well in advance in order to obtain registration details for SESAME.

- **All text in uploaded PDF attachments** must be provided in Times New Roman font, or similar, with minimum font size of 12, 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**.

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[9] *http://orcid.org/*

- The number of pages in attachments <u>must not</u> 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 the applicant to ensure that eligible proposals are received by SFI on, or before, the deadline indicated. In order to safeguard against ineligibility, applicants are reminded to adhere rigorously to the guidelines presented in the call documentation and to review the proposal document prior to submission in SESAME.

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

3.5   Proposal Summary

- **Proposal Title**
  The Research Proposal title should clearly convey the nature of the research to be undertaken, in up to 30 words. Confidential information should not be included in the Proposal title.

- **Duration of Award Requested**
  All SIRG-funded proposals are supported for a period of 48 months.

- **Resubmission Statement**
  Applicants must declare whether a new submission relates to a previously submitted application to any SFI scheme. If the application is a resubmission, a statement referencing the previous application and explaining the differences must be provided and make reference to reviewer comments where relevant. This statement will assist SFI Scientific Staff in the assessment of eligibility of a revised application and will not be shared with reviewers. SFI will not review resubmissions that have not clearly taken into account the major comments or concerns resulting from the prior review and these proposals will be withdrawn without review. Please see SFI Policy on Resubmission of Grant Applications[10] for further information.

- **Alignment to SFI Legal Remit (max. 250 words)**
  This section must be used to describe how the proposed research aligns to SFI's legal remit, as defined in Section 1. This statement will be used to determine the eligibility of the application.

- **NRP Area**
  Applicants are requested to identify, where possible, the area that best reflects the proposed research. Where a proposal does not align to any of the NRP areas, please select "Other" from the drop-down menu.

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

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[10] http://www.sfi.ie/funding/grant-policies/sfi-policy-on-resubmission.html

- **Research Area -Secondary**
  Applicants should select a secondary SFI research area from the drop-down menu, which best describes the proposed research.

- **Ethical issues**
  Applicants are required to answer the questions related to Ethical Issues.

3.6   Lead Applicant Details

- **Location of Applicant at time of Submission**
  Applicants must enter the country in which they are employed at the time of submission.

- **Lead Applicant % Commitment to Project**
  Enter the percentage time commitment that is expected to be required to carry out the proposed research (see Section 2.6 for SFI's expectations concerning the time commitment to SIRG awards).

- **Applicant CV**
  A CV for the applicant (**maximum of five pages**) should be completed and uploaded as a PDF document. A link to the template is provided at the top of the application form, and is also displayed at the end of this document (see Appendix B). Publications in peer-reviewed journals (including conference proceedings) should be listed, ensuring that the criteria outlined in Section 2.4 are adhered to. Please indicate with an asterisk those publications where the applicant was the senior author. A list of the most relevant and important publications (**maximum of three pages**) should be provided; secondary research articles may be listed **but will not contribute towards fulfilling the eligibility criteria stated in Section 2.4**.

- **Eligible Leave**
  If applicable, applicants who have taken documented eligible leave and wish to extend their period of eligibility must upload the information requested in Section 2.4.7 of this call document.

- **Publication Output and supervisory experience to date**
  Provide summary information on the total numbers of publications to date (see Section 2.4 for the eligibility criteria relating to publications).

- **Expired, Current and Pending Support of Applicants**
  The Lead Applicant must report on expired, current and pending funding.
    - The applicant should include details of any financial support pending, or received to date. This should include competitive research funding received from funding agencies (international and national), charities, industry, etc.

    - The applicant must include details of any financial support 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, the applicant should 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.

Research funding may be added directly to the application or added from the applicant's profile (see the Sesame Researcher User Guide[11]). If this section is left blank it will indicate that the applicant has NO expired, current or pending funding. The Lead Applicant must complete this section within SESAME. Please ensure that research funding added to the profile of the Lead Applicant has actually been included in the application.

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

3.7 Collaborator and Mentor Details

• **Addition of Collaborator**
Applicants can include a Collaborator as part of their SIRG application. It is expected that the number of collaborators is kept to a minimum and that their role within the research programme is clearly defined. Include the name, contact information and other requested details of the Collaborator, if any. Please indicate whether Collaborators are based in academia or industry; only Academic or Industry Collaborators will be considered for SIRG 2018 applications (see Section 2.3 for further information). Once details regarding the name and institution of the Collaborator have been added and saved, which is achieved by clicking on the "Save Draft" button at the bottom of the application form, it will be possible to upload the Collaborator CV (**maximum of two pages**) by clicking on the appropriate button. A template is not provided for Collaborator CVs. Relevant publications for the Collaborator should be listed, ensuring that the two-page limit is not exceeded. CVs are mandatory for Academic Collaborators and may also be provided for Industry Collaborators.

SFI recognises that applicants may have a prior relationship with an Industry Partner engaged in an application for funding to SFI (e.g., a decision-making role in company, such as being the CEO

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or a major shareholder in the company), which may be perceived as a conflict of interest. Where a potential conflict of interest exists, SFI requires that it is disclosed by the applicant to SFI and the Research Body and is managed by the Research Body in accordance with the principles and mandates laid out in the document: *Inspiring Partnership - the National IP Protocol 2016*.[12]
Potential conflicts of interest with respect to Industry Partners named in the application should be directly declared within the applicant CV. Furthermore, the Host Research Body Letter of Support should contain a description of the institutional policy regarding management of such conflicts.

- **Addition of Mentor**
  Information about the mentor must be included in this section. Clicking on the "Add" button will open a form into which details about the mentor should be completed. Ensure that "Mentor" is selected in the 'Collaborator Type' drop-down menu. **Only one mentor may be assigned in the proposal**. Once details regarding the name and institution of the mentor have been added and saved, which is achieved by clicking on the "Save Draft" button at the bottom of the application form, it will be possible to upload the mentor's CV (**maximum of two pages**) by clicking on the appropriate button. A template is not provided for mentor CVs. Relevant publications for the mentor should be listed, ensuring that the two-page limit is not exceeded. Any other planned collaborative activities may be briefly described within the main body of the proposal.

3.8   Main Body of Proposal

- **Keywords**
  Keywords/phrases (**maximum of 15**) should be listed from the research discipline or sub discipline that best describe the research proposed in the application.

- **Scientific Abstract**
  This should be a succinct (**maximum of 200 words**) and accurate summary of the proposed work when separated from the application. Confidential information should not be included in the Scientific Abstract.

- **Lay Abstract**
  This should be a succinct (**maximum of 100 words**) and accurate summary in lay, non-technical language of the proposed work when separated from the application. Confidential information should not be included in the Lay Abstract.

- **Programme Documents Upload (Research Programme and Impact Statement)**

  Please note the total number of pages in the Programme Documents Upload must not exceed 11 pages (Research Description – eight pages, References – one page, Impact Statement – two pages).

Research description (max. 8 pages) **and References** (max. 1 pages)

Applicants are requested to **provide sufficient detail** for peer reviewers to comment on the quality of the proposed ideas. It should be noted that a lack of appropriate and sufficient detail within the research programme is a recurring issue raised by reviewers.

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[12] *http://www.knowledgetransferireland.com/ManagingIP/KTI-Protocol-2016.pdf*

The following points should be considered when writing the research programme section:

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

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

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

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

The application should also include:

Appropriate timelines, **milestones** and **expected outputs** for the proposed research (e.g., Gantt chart), and the **roles of the applicant** and **collaborators** in the work programme need to be clearly described.

Relevant **preliminary data** <u>must</u> be provided. This may take the form of (a) supporting reference(s) from the applicant's previous research or (b) where data has yet to be published, this can be included within the 8-page research description, as evidence that the applicant has a track record in the field of his/her proposed research.

Appropriate references and citations for the research programme must be provided in a separate uploaded PDF. A 1-page limit is allowed for uploaded references.

Ethical Issues:
All applicants, in particular those expecting to carry out research involving the use of animals, human participants, biological material or identifiable (or potentially identifiable) data, are required to complete an Ethical Issues Table, which forms part of the application. The Research Programme section must include a description of the proposed research and methodology relating to the intended animal- and/or human-based studies. Guidance on the ethical and scientific issues, including the Ethics Issues Table, in carrying out such studies is provided on the SFI website[13].

SFI will require evidence that relevant ethical and regulatory approval has been granted for studies involving human or animal subjects prior to an award commencing. In exceptional cases where such research may not commence until a later stage of an award, SFI may permit submission of ethical and regulatory approvals following the award start date but prior to commencement of the research involving animal and/or human subjects.

Clinical Trials:

Clinical trials and investigations requiring approval by the Health Products Regulatory Authority (i.e., HPRA) will not be permitted through the SFI SIRG Programme.

Impact Statement

An **Impact Statement** (**maximum of two pages**) is a requirement in applications to the Starting Investigator Research Grant Programme. The Impact Statement should articulate the planned and potential impact of the proposed research. SFI recognises that impact can take time and in many cases is unforeseen; as such, it is not possible to predict all impacts at the time of submission. Applicants are advised, however, to make full use of the space provided to make a strong, unambiguous, and <u>**realistic**</u> impact case with appropriate plans, milestones and deliverables.

The Impact Statement should be written primarily in lay, non-technical language, it should be as specific and comprehensive as possible, and it should cover potential economic and societal impacts by answering the following overarching questions:

- **Who will benefit from this research?**
- **What plans will you put in place to increase the chances of economic and societal impacts from the proposed research?**
- **Over what timeframe might the benefits from your research be realised?**

Applicants are encouraged to consider SFI's Agenda 2020 before writing their impact statement.

In critically appraising various possible 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?
- Are there potential international beneficiaries, collaborations with international industry or partner organisations?
- The Starting Investigator Research Grant Programme encourages industrial collaborations *where appropriate* considering the stage and topic of the research. How will industry collaborators enable increased impact? What supports are they offering? Have routes to commercialisation been considered?
- If you include an academic/industrial collaborator, how might they increase the likelihood of potential impacts? Please note, letters of support must be provided if industry collaborators are included. The letters should provide full details of the intended intellectual input and, where relevant, the level of financial (cash, in-kind or both) contribution to the research programme. Industry letters of support that do not originate from officially listed industry collaborators will be removed from the proposal.
- How will the proposed research impact 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)? Applicants should note that all SIRG awards will offer training opportunities of some degree, therefore it is important to highlight the added value that will be provided from the training provided under your award;
- How will the potential impacts of your research be best realised?
- What benchmarks or metrics can be applied to clearly demonstrate in the future that the various impacts outlined in the Impact Statement are both realistic and achievable?

- How will the proposed research impact on society and the quality of life for 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)?

The statement should consider some or all of the above potential impacts to give confidence to reviewers that clear thought and realistic ambition have been employed to assess the likely or potential longer-term benefits of SIRG-funded research, including and going beyond the training aspects for both the SI and the associated PhD student.

For more information and guidance on how to successfully articulate impact, detailed information including a webinar on research impact is available on the SFI website.[14] **Applicants are advised to refer to this information in advance of preparing their Impact Statement**.

3.9 Budget

The costs eligible for grant support by SFI under the SIRG Programme are those costs that can, uniquely and unambiguously, be identified with the proposed research programme. Applicants must give details of all relevant costs, including staff, equipment, materials and consumables and travel. Ensure that the final total provided includes all costs. All awards are made directly to the applicant's research body. Please also refer to the SFI Terms and Conditions of Research Grants and also the SFI Grant Budget Policy (GBP: Version July 2016)[15].

See notes for completion of the budget table in the SESAME Researcher User Guide**. A link is also provided with information to assist with completion.**

SIRG awards are funded to a maximum value of **€425,000** direct costs for a period of four years. General overheads, currently 30% of "modified" total direct costs, should not be included in the requested budget (see below).

- **Staff**
  It is important to note that SFI-funded researchers are employees of the research body. SFI makes a contribution to the overall staff budget for the programme. Please refer to Section 2.6 and the salary scales provided as part of the Grant Application Budget Policy with regard to the funding of SI salary (noting that the 'Cost to Grant' figures in these scales include the 20% employer's pension) and postgraduate fees and stipends[16]. Salaries for Collaborators are not permitted

- **Equipment**
  As SIRG applicants will have an identified mentor, who will provide laboratory space and necessary equipment to both the SI and the postgraduate student, it is not expected that applicants will require significant items of equipment in their budget request. Therefore, requests for equipment in SIRG proposals should be very carefully considered, and full

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[14] *http://www.sfi.ie/resources/Impact-Webinar.pdf*
[15] *http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/budget-finance-related-policies/SFI-Grant-Budget-Policy_2016_July.pdf*

[16] *SFI Team Member Salary Scales April 2017*

justification should be provided. 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.

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

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

  Access charge requests must be included as a separate line item in the budget and where relevant must include the grant code and name of the relevant infrastructure to be used. A rationale for the amount of use proposed must be provided in the budget justification.

- **Travel**
Only travel costs for journeys directly related to the progress of the research programme may be requested as a direct cost on the research grant. The applicant should outline the details of travel expenses directly related to, for example, conferences, scientific collaboration on the research programme, or learning special research techniques. Where possible, please supply the conference name and location. In the case of working visits, the rates sought for subsistence and other allowances may be no more than those which the research body's permanent staff may claim. Relocation costs of up to €2,000 for SIs relocating from outside of Ireland can be requested.

3.10   Budget Justification

The applicant must upload a Budget Justification as a PDF document. This is achieved by clicking on the "Upload" button in the application form and adding the appropriate file. Justification for requested salary, stipend, fees, equipment, consumables and travel should be provided in **no more than two pages**. Only eligible research bodies will be entitled to receive direct funding through the award and all funding will be administered through the applicant's research body. 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. As noted in Section 2.6, the SI's salary contribution over the lifetime of the proposed award should be well justified.

Clear indication should be given where funding is apportioned to Collaborators. Please note that Collaborators outside the Republic of Ireland or those not located within eligible Research Bodies in the Republic of Ireland are not eligible to receive funding through the SIRG Programme

3.11   Letters of Support

The following letters of support (**maximum of two pages**) must be included:

- A letter of support from the mentor outlining the support offered to the applicant, commitment to the co-supervision of the postgraduate student, and the availability of laboratory space and infrastructure available to the applicant and student is required. The

letter should include a statement outlining the applicant's potential as an independent SI and their ability to lead a research programme.

- A letter of support from the **host Research Body**. In recognition of the career stage of the Starting Investigator and to demonstrate the commitment of the Research Body, the proposal must include one letter of support from the Vice President for Research (or equivalent organisational official) of the nominating Research Body. The letter should be on headed paper and should:

a) Confirm the Research Body's support for the SFI SIRG candidate's career & professional development (e.g., teaching, professional development, training, etc.). In particular, it should outline the measures that will be taken to ensure that the candidate is not overburdened with teaching commitments in the early part of their appointment and should describe the candidate's maximum teaching commitment, if successful.

b) Provide a brief description of the Department's/School's/Institution's research strategy and describe how the candidate will be integrated into this strategy.

c) Describe the support and facilities (both building and equipment) which the department/host institution will provide for the applicant and postgraduate student. This could include, but is not limited to, commitments for instrumentation, laboratory facilities and research support.

d) Confirm that for the duration of the award, a successful SFI SIRG candidate will be eligible to apply and compete for any and all permanent faculty positions which arise within this institution appropriate to their field of research.

e) Confirmation of the date of award of the PhD degree.

f) Confirmation that the SFI SIRG candidate has not previously held or is currently employed on a faculty contract. Exceptions will however be made for applicants who have held (or currently hold) a temporary short-term contract **of less than 12 months in duration.** In such cases the RB must provide sufficient details in the Research Body Letter of Support.

Collaborator letter of support. Letters from Academic Collaborators should provide full details of the intended intellectual and/or technical input to the proposal. In addition, Academic Collaborators seeking funds through the award must describe how these funds will be utilised. Letters from Industry Collaborators should provide full details of the intended intellectual input and, where relevant, the level of financial (cash, in-kind or both) contribution to the research programme. Similarly, letters of support from International Academic Collaborators should provide details of any cash and/or in-kind contributions. Letters of support that do not originate from officially listed Collaborators will be removed from the proposal, as will letters from listed Collaborators that merely provide theoretical or general support without specifically describing a meaningful and impactful contribution to the proposal.

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

The Letters of Support may be uploaded as single or multiple files.

3.12   Declaration

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

3.13   Submission to Research Office

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

It is the responsibility of applicants to ensure that their Research Office has successfully submitted their proposal to SFI before the stated deadline of 13:00 on the 29th March 2018. It is not possible to submit applications through SESAME once this deadline has elapsed.

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

3.14   Research Body Approval

It should be noted that submission of an application represents an agreement to 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:

- The eligibility of the applicant.
- That the requested budget including salaries/stipends, equipment, consumables and travel is in line with accepted institutional guidelines.
- The availability of infrastructure within the institution as outlined by the applicant in the research proposal.
- That the proposed research programme has not been funded by other sources.
- That relevant ethical approval has been or will be sought and must be granted prior to the award commencing.
- That the relevant licences will be in place at the time of award.
- That the details provided in relation to research funding history (i.e., current, pending or expired grants, as detailed in the application) are valid and accurate

For SIRG applications, the Research Body is also approving:

- The suitability and willingness of the mentor to host the applicant.
- That the research body is responsible for supporting the applicant and postgraduate student, if successful in the application.

3.15   Deadlines

Applicants selected by their intended host institution must ensure that their proposal is submitted to SFI no later than the **29th March, 2018** at **13:00** by their Research Office. **Applications cannot be submitted through SESAME after this deadline**.

4.   SFI Policies and Positions

In advance of applying to any SFI programme, applicants are expected to be familiar with all relevant national and SFI policies including, but not limited to, the following:

Clinical Trials – Research programmes that include clinical trials as part of the study must adhere to the **SFI Clinical Trial and Clinical Investigation Policy**,[17] as well as with the requirements set out by the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA).

Animal Usage – Applicants intending to use animals in their research projects are obliged to comply with the **SFI Use of Animals in Research Policy**,[18] and should also ensure that their studies are in line with the HRPA's position on the use of animals in research.

Research Integrity – SFI places high importance on ensuring research integrity and endorses the **National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland**.[19] All applicants and institutions are expected to abide by this policy and the **European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity**.[20]

Doctoral Education – For postgraduate students funded by SFI, the host Research Body is expected to adopt the principles, standards and good practice for doctoral education as described in the **National Framework for Doctoral Education (2015)**,[21] which SFI has endorsed.

Intellectual Property Management – Intellectual Property (IP) should be managed according to the policies set out in the Government publication: **Inspiring Partnership - the National IP Protocol 2016**[22] *In cases where additional guidelines are specified by SFI they must also be followed. The IP arrangements are the responsibility of the Research Body and shall reflect the collaborative nature of the project, the level of cash and in-kind commitment made by the Industry Partner and compliance with State Aid Regulations.*

State aid - All SFI funding granted under this call will be subject to and must be compliant with State aid law. As such, proposals must be designed to ensure that any funding received from SFI does not, directly or indirectly, give rise to the granting of State aid.

Potential applicants are referred to the guidance provided by the European Commission in Section 2 of its 2014 Framework for State aid for research and development and innovation (2014/C 198/01)[23]. If in any doubt as to the interpretation or application of this guidance, potential applicants are advised to seek independent legal advice.

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[17] *http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/ethical-and-scientific-issues/index.xml*

[18] *http://www.sfi.ie/resources/SFI-Policy-on-the-Use-of-Animals-in-Research_June_2016.pdf*

[19] *http://www.iua.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/National-Policy-Statement-on-Ensuring-Research-Integrity-in-Ireland-2014.pdf*

[20] http://www.allea.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/ALLEA-European-Code-of-Conduct-for-Research-Integrity-2017-1.pdf

[21] http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/04/national_framework_for_doctoral_education_0.pdff

[22] https://dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/IP-Protocol-2016.pdf

[23] *http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52014XC0627(01)&from=EN*

Gender Strategy – Research should fully consider potential biological sex and socio-cultural gender dimensions as key analytical and explanatory variables. As articulated in the **SFI Gender Strategy**,[24] applicants are recommended to demonstrate that they have considered any potential sex/gender aspects in their proposed research programme.

Appeals Process - This policy establishes procedures and responsibilities for the appeal of the declination of a proposal by SFI.[25]

Current SFI policies and positions will be reviewed on a regular basis; applicants are advised to consult the policy information in advance of submission of a proposal.

5. Award Management

5.1 Reporting Requirements

SFI has stringent requirements for the reporting on awards that it makes. Individuals who hold the primary responsibility for reporting and who fail to comply with reporting requirements, run the risk of having their grant payments suspended and their eligibility to apply for funding in forthcoming SFI calls affected. Reporting is inclusive of annual reporting, completion of the annual stocktake of SFI Research Outputs (formerly referred to as the SFI Census) and the completion of a Researcher Snapshot.

The SFI Grants and Awards Management System, SESAME, is the primary conduit for annual reporting. SIRG 2018 awardees will be requested to submit their annual report by 31st January every year to report on activity during the previous calendar year (January – December). The Standard Report template which is available on SESAME must be used. An additional final report must be submitted (also using the Standard Report template) within 3 months of the expiration date of the award. In addition to the annual report, awardees are also obliged to keep their SESAME Research Profile updated, as the annual stocktake of SFI Research Outputs is drawn directly from the data entered into the Research Profile; this must also be updated and completed by 31st January every year. SFI reporting procedures are detailed here, and webinars describing the entry of data into the Research Profile are available here.

The annual report is used to monitor progress of the individual awards against the overall objectives of the SFI SIRG Programme and associated Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), as set out in SFI's Strategic Plan, Agenda 2020. Each of the SFI SIRG Programme 2018 call objectives, with expected outputs, is discussed in turn below:

- *To provide a mechanism for Irish Research Bodies to attract and recruit excellent early career researchers.*

The recipient of the award will be an excellent early stage researcher, as indicated by having a record of producing excellent scientific research with potential economic and societal impact. The SFI SIRG programme will support excellent early-career-stage investigators carry out independent research for a four-year period. The programme also provides funding for a postgraduate student, who will be primarily supervised by the Starting Investigator (SI).

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[24] http://www.sfi.ie/resources/SFI-Gender-Strategy-2016-2020.pdf
[25] http://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/other/

- *With the support of the host research body, to enable excellent early career stage researchers to establish themselves as independent investigators.*

The SFI SIRG programme is intended to enable excellent early-career-stage researchers to establish themselves as independent investigators. SFI's expectation is that the SIRG Programme will provide the support necessary for awardees to develop their research to a level where they can compete successfully for additional funding from both exchequer and non-exchequer sources and ultimately secure an academic position. It is expected that the SIRG award holder will be the primary mentor for the PhD student, supported by the award, thus enabling the development of necessary supervisory skills.

SFI expects that the PhD student supported by the SIRG award will contribute to the outputs on the award and the subsequent impact arising from these outputs. In the annual report, awardees will be asked to report on the training and development of the student. The first destination of team members will also be tracked, providing further information on the next destination of mentored individuals.

- *To support excellent scientific research that has potential economic and societal impact*

Awards made under the SFI SIRG programme will reference to both scientific excellence and impact. In the Strategic Impact section of the annual report, awardees are provided with a list of 11 impact statements or declarations and are asked to prioritise those that are relevant to the outputs on their award. Narrative must then be provided with additional details justifying the options chosen, with cross reference to relevant metrics included in the Researcher Profile. This data will help towards quantifying the types of impacts arising from the awards SFI has made under the SIRG 2018 call.

- *To further encourage and promote Ireland's participation in the international research community and to increase the number of ERC and H2020 awards secured by Ireland-based PIs.*

SFI expects that researchers based in Ireland will obtain research funding from as wide a range of sources as possible. This success is not only pertinent to the Irish Government, which has set a target of securing €1.25bn in research funding under Horizon 2020, it is also essential for meeting and exceeding targets set against relevant KPIs in Agenda 2020. Innovation 2020 notes that "our current engagement at EU level focuses on contributing to the creation of the European Research Area and on maximising Irish participation in Horizon 2020". SFI's expectation is that awards made under the SIRG Programme will provide the support necessary for awardees to build capacity, expertise and relationships to a point where they can compete successfully for funding in Horizon 2020, including the European Research Council (ERC). In their annual report, awardees are asked to report on the funding opportunities that they have pursued and won and furthermore, the position held by the SI on successful awards. This will allow SFI to track this progress on an annual basis.

- *To maintain Ireland's top 20 position in international bibliometric rankings through an increase in the number and quality of journal publications*

To date, SFI funding has produced high-quality, high-impact publications that have resulted in Ireland rising to be among the top 20 nations in international bibliometric rankings of repute. Agenda 2020 sets a target for Ireland to maintain its position in these rankings. SFI's expectation is that the grants made through the SFI SIRG Programme will contribute significantly to this target. Awardees are asked to report on all refereed journal and conference publications and international presentations directly supported by the grant. This support must be acknowledged in all publications.

- *To contribute to improving gender balance in the higher education sector.*

SFI is committed to removing and mitigating any factors that may limit the participation of women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) careers, and to redressing the gender imbalance amongst SFI award holders, of which 25% are female (Source: SFI Research Outputs 2016). One of SFI's Agenda 2020 KPI targets is to increase the proportion of female award holders to 30% by 2020.

Research Bodies will be permitted to put forward **a maximum of 12 candidates** for the submission of a proposal to the SFI SIRG Programme 2018. **A maximum of six candidates, out of the 12 permitted from each eligible research body, may be male candidates.** Upon submission to SFI all applications will be treated equally regardless of the gender of the applicant.

5.2   Progress Site Reviews

Each recipient of an SFI SIRG Award will be subject to progress review assessment in the form of a site review performed by international peer reviewers during the period of the award. These progress reviews are typically held at the midway point of the award. The panel are asked to assess to review the progress and direction of the research, the quality of the team, the management of the budget and the potential impact of the research programme. The commitment of the research body as outlined in the letter of support, in particular the teaching and non-research commitments of the SI, will be assessed. It is the expectation of SFI that the SIRG awardee mentor will attend the review. The outcome of such a review will be taken into consideration in the assessment of future applications to the Foundation. As stated in the SFI Terms and Conditions of Research Grants, the Foundation reserves the right to terminate an award if, in the opinion of the Foundation, progress is not deemed to be satisfactory.

6.   Further information

FAQs are available on the SIRG 2018 webpage.

For all additional queries please contact sirg@sfi.ie.

Appendix A: SIRG Programme Proposal Checklist

SECTION	DESCRIPTION	REQUIREMENTS
Proposal Summary	Proposal Title	**Up to 30 words**
	Duration of Award Requested	**48 months**
	NRP Area	**Select one option**
	Research Area (Primary and Secondary)	**Select one for each**
	Justification for SFI Legal Remit	**Max. 250 words**
Lead Applicant Details	Location of Applicant at time of submission	**Select country of residence**
	Lead Applicant Commitment to Project	**Enter percentage figure**
	Lead Applicant CV – use template provided	**Max. 5 pages**
	Publication Output	**Enter figure for each type**
	Funding	**Enter details**
Mentor (Collaborator) Details	Name/Contact Details etc for Mentor	**Enter details**
	CV for Mentor – no template	**Max. 2 pages**
Collaborator Details	Name/Contact Details etc for Collaborator	**Enter details**
	CV for Collaborator – no template	**Max. 2 pages**
Main Body of Full Proposal	Keywords	**Max. 15**
	Scientific Abstract	**Max. 200 words**
	Lay Abstract	**Max. 100 words**
	Research Programme	**Max. 8 pages**
	References	**Max. 1 page**
	Impact Statement	**Max. 2 pages**
Proposed Budget	Details of all Relevant Costs	**Budget Table**
Budget Justification	Budget Justification	**Max. 2 pages**
Letters of Support	Mentor Letter of Support	**Max. 2 page**
	Host Research Body Letter of Support	**Max. 2 pages**
	Collaborator Letter of Support	**Max. 2 pages**
Declaration	Agreement to SFI Terms and Conditions	**Tick box to agree**

Appendix B: Applicant CV Template

To be used for applications to the SFI SIRG Programme 2018 call

5 PAGES MAX:
Section 1 (max. 2 pages) + Section 2 (max. 3 pages)

To be used for applications to the SFI Starting Investigators Research Grant Programme 2018 call. Please note that Applicant's full research funding track record should be uploaded via SESAME and should **not** be included in this CV.
_____
APPLICANT CV TEMPLATE (MAX. 5 PAGES)

SECTION 1 – Applicant Details (max. 2 pages)
NAME AND CONTACT DETAILS

CAREER PROFILE (Education and Employment)

Applicants may provide details of any career breaks (for example, due to parental leave of long-term absence though illness) or periods of part-time work)

INNOVATION/COMMERCIALISATION ACTIVITY

Include details on, for example, relevant industry collaborations, qualified invention disclosures, pending and granted patents, licences and spin-out activities.

HISTORY OF MENTORING AND SUPERVISION

Applicants should provide details of any teaching, mentoring or lecturing duties undertaken post-PhD.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS (Research and Impact)

*Give details of **up to five** achievements that have provided significant impact or which have greatly influenced any field in science, technology, engineering or mathematics. Any type of achievement may be included in this section, and applicants are encouraged to elaborate on the various ways in which they have influenced researchers and their disciplines, or demonstrated significant economic and/or societal impact(s). For each example, provide an outline of the stated achievement, what **specific** role was played by the applicant, and how the field and, where relevant, the wider community and society have benefitted or have been influenced as a result. References to published material may be added as required.*

SECTION 2 – Publication Details (max. 3 pages)

A.   SELECTED SENIOR-AUTHOR PUBLICATIONS

*Detail up to 10 peer-reviewed, senior-author (that is, first, joint-first or last author) primary-research publications, which will confirm, **where relevant**, that the applicant meets the eligibility requirements for publications for this programme. Refer to the appropriate section of this call document for details on senior-authorship requirements. Preprints may only be included where a Digital Object Identifier*

(DOI) is quoted. **_Note that publications where the applicant claims joint-first authorship will only be accepted as senior-author publications where the article clearly verifies this._**

B.   OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Applicants should list any other publications (where they are a senior author or otherwise) that they wish to be considered in the assessment of this application. Applicants should ensure that their primary research outputs are prioritised; however, reviews, essays and any other secondary-research articles <u>relevant to this application</u> may also be listed.

Viewing the PDF of your application prior to submission allows you to verify content.

There <u>is no system validation on multiple upload file fields as the number of documents required</u> <u>may vary for each application.</u>

It is the responsibility of the lead applicant to ensure that all documentation is included and that page lengths are not exceeded.