



## **Science Foundation Ireland Annual Programmes Plan 2024**

### **1. Summary**

Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) and the Irish Research Council (IRC) will amalgamate in 2024 to establish a new research and innovation funding agency, Taighde Éireann-Research Ireland.

The new agency will streamline research funding calls across all disciplines and assist researchers in navigating the state support landscape. It will also play an important role in underpinning evidence for policy and supporting Government Departments.

IRC and SFI grant-holders and related stakeholders can be assured that there will be no interruption to ongoing services and funding programmes during the transition phase and the establishment of the new agency.

SFI 2024 programme plan has been developed to align with the implementation of SFI's strategy, Shaping Our Future, and to support the delivery of the Government's research and innovation strategy – Impact 2030. The plan will focus support on:

- Mid-career and established Investigators via the SFI Frontiers for the Future and the SFI Research Professorship programmes
- Early-career researchers through the SFI-IRC Pathway Programme
- Challenge-based funding approaches through the National Challenge Fund, supported by the EU's Recovery and Resilience Facility and the SFI Future Innovator Prize
- The new ARC Hub Programme supported by the European Regional Development Fund will focus on accelerating early-stage, cutting-edge research to commercialise impact
- National and international collaborations with partner research funding organisations
- Participation in EU partnerships through Horizon Europe
- Education and Public Engagement programmes
- Excellent and impactful research through the network of SFI Research Centres
- Fellowship opportunities in industry, SFI and the public sector
- Industry partnerships through the SFI Strategic Partnerships and Spokes Programmes
- Investment in state-of-the-art research infrastructure

The IRC's 2024 Programme Plan can be found here:

<https://research.ie/assets/uploads/2017/05/Irish-Research-Council-Indicative-Call-Schedule-2024-Final.pdf>

## **2. Investigator-led Research (including International Programmes)**

### 2.1. SFI Frontiers for the Future

A key action of the SFI strategy is to deliver 140 investigator grants every year to support excellent research, and to attract and develop top talent. The SFI Frontiers for the Future Programme is the primary mechanism to achieve this goal and provides access to funding for high risk/high reward projects as well as larger scale awards with clearly defined impacts. Women researchers are encouraged and supported, as well as emerging researchers, and those coming back from industry or long-term leaves-of-absence.

In 2024, the programme will be run in partnership with Geological Survey Ireland (GSI), Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland and the Children's Health Foundation (CHF). SFI is open to forging new co-funding partnerships with agencies and organisations.

The programme comprises two streams: Projects and Awards

- SFI [Frontiers for the Future Projects](#) provide funding for high-risk/high-reward research that facilitates highly innovative and novel approaches to research.
- SFI Frontiers for the Future Awards provides larger scale funding for innovative, collaborative and excellent research programmes. The SFI Frontiers for the Future Awards stream has been expanded to facilitate recruitment of top talent.

### 2.2. SFI-IRC Pathway Programme

The SFI-IRC Pathway Programme supports talented postdoctoral researchers from all research disciplines to develop their track record and become independent research leaders.

The SFI-IRC Pathway Programme is open to postdoctoral researchers (2 years post PhD) in the STEM and AHSS fields. SFI coordinates the overall programme, while acting as lead agency for all STEM-related applications, while the IRC leads on all AHSS applications.

Early career researchers should also consider submission of proposals under the Royal Society University Research Fellowship (URF) scheme.

### 2.3. SFI Research Professorship Programme

A key objective of Shaping Our Future is to recruit world-leading researchers and rising stars to move to Ireland. SFI Research Professorship Programme is currently paused for new applications.

### 2.4. US-Ireland R&D Programme

The US-Ireland R&D Programme is a tri-jurisdictional scheme, involving Ireland, the US and Northern Ireland, which includes US-Ireland Investigator calls with the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and the US-Ireland Centre-to-Centre calls with the NSF. The partner agencies in the Republic of Ireland are SFI and the Health Research Board (HRB), in the US are the NIH and the NSF, and in Northern Ireland are the Department for the Economy (DfE), and the Health and Social Care agency R&D Division (HSC R&D).

### 2.5. SFI-Royal Society Partnership

The SFI-Royal Society partnership will continue to support Ireland-based applicants under the Royal Society University Research Fellowship (URF) scheme. The Royal Society University Research Fellowships are 8 years in duration. Deadlines are set by the Royal Society.

## 2.6 SFI-EPSRC Partnership

SFI will continue its partnership with the UK Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC).

## 2.7. European Initiatives

The 2024 programme will provide for European co-funding support to participate in new EU Partnerships under Horizon Europe. We have joined the EU Partnerships for Personalised Medicine, Clean Energy Transitions and Data of Agriculture under the Framework programme and are actively engaging with EU partners to enable participation in newer upcoming co-fund schemes.

The ERC Support Programme has been reopened to attract ERC award holders to Irish Higher Education Institutions.

## 2.8 SFI Supplemental Grant for Displaced Researchers – Ukraine

The SFI Supplemental Grant for Displaced Researchers – Ukraine remains open. This supplemental grant scheme aims to encourage and enable holders of existing SFI grants, and their associated Host Institutions, to provide opportunities for displaced researchers from Ukraine to join and collaborate on existing SFI-funded grants.

## SFI-NSF Student mobility Programme

The SFI-NSF student mobility programme is designed to enable Irish based PhD students to collaborate on research projects in academic laboratories in the United States of America for a period of 4 weeks to 12 weeks.

# **3. Challenge Research, Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Commercialisation**

## 3.1. Challenge Research

Teams funded under the eight Challenge streams (including both Green Transition and Digital Transformation themes) of the National Challenge Fund (funded by the EU's Recovery and Resilience Facility) will compete at various stages for increased funding during both 2024 and 2025. During 2024, SFI will develop and implement a number of new challenge calls *including* a relaunch of the SFI-Defence Organisation Innovation Challenge and the SFI-Irish Aid SDG Challenge. Additional challenges may launch later in 2024, subject to confirmation.

## 3.2. SFI ARC Programme - Accelerating Research to Commercialisation

SFI's new ARC Programme will accelerate early-stage, cutting-edge research to commercial impact readiness, driving innovation and supporting Ireland's commercialisation pipeline. The programme is supported by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The ARC Programme will drive regional development through a network of three hubs, each working in areas aligned with Ireland's smart specialisation strategy. It will develop entrepreneurial scientists and engineers that are primed from an early stage to exploit the commercial potential of their research endeavours.

## 3.3. SFI-NSF I-Corps@SFI Entrepreneurial Training Programme

The I-Corps@SFI Programme, which supports evidence-based entrepreneurship training, will be supported in 2024 in collaboration with the National Science Foundation (NSF).

### 3.4 I-CORPS@SFI Academy

The I-Corps@SFI Academy is a cohort-based programme that is delivered virtually over a number of weeks to train researchers in evidence-based entrepreneurship using the NSF I-Corps methodology.

## **4. Education and Public Engagement (EPE)**

### 4.1. EPE Funding Programmes

The SFI Discover Programme annual call will run in 2024, supporting projects that broaden STEM awareness and engagement with STEM, strengthen STEM education activities, build capacity for public engagement, and contribute to the development of a talent pipeline in STEM areas.

The SFI Science Week call will run in 2024, to support activities that broaden nationwide access and public engagement during Science Week.

## **5. Fellowships - Science Policy and Researcher Engagement beyond academia**

### 5.1 Industry RD&I Fellowships

Shaping Our Future aims to continue to develop SFI's Fellowship programmes, including Industry Fellowships, to support life-long learning and knowledge exchange across academia, industry and public service. Programme call will launch in Q1 2024.

### 5.2. SFI Fellowship Programme

The SFI Fellowship Programme provides a training opportunity for the research community to engage in the role of science policy and administration within SFI, while providing expertise and support across a range of SFI functions.

### 5.3. SFI Public Service Fellowship

There will be no deadline for a Public Service Fellowship Call in 2024, although plans will be underway with Host Organisations to relaunch the call with timeframe to be confirmed later in 2024.

### 5.4. SFI Science Policy Research Programme

The Science Policy Research Awards makes awards which themselves study research and research funding. Awards will be made in Q1 2024 resulting from the SPR call in Q3 2023.

### 5.5. SFI Maternity/Adoptive Leave Allowance

SFI continues to support Maternity/Adoptive Leave allowance awards, in line with [SFI's External EDI Strategy 2023-2028](#).

## **6. Research Centres and Enterprise Partnerships**

SFI has developed a research ecosystem where academia and industry collaborate effectively, driving research out into the market and society. Shaping Our Future will build on this success through driving deeper industry research and innovation engagement.

### 6.1 SFI Research Centres Programme

SFI Research Centres are international beacons of scientific excellence, bringing together a critical mass of outstanding researchers to collaborate at a scale that delivers systemic impact, providing talent and innovative solutions to Ireland's economic, societal and environmental challenges. SFI launched a call for proposed SFI Research Centres in September 2023 and pre-proposals accepted in December 2023 are currently under review.

### 6.2. Spokes Programme

The Spokes Programme is a rolling call programme that enables SFI Research Centres to apply together with industry partners for additional funding to support new collaborative research projects at any time.

### 6.3. Strategic Partnerships

The [SFI Strategic Partnerships](#) Programme supports novel co-investment partnerships with the private sector including industry, philanthropy and charitable organisations, in areas of strategic importance.

## **7. Research Infrastructure**

A key action from Shaping Our Future is to Invest in state-of-the-art research infrastructure programmes which will facilitate high-quality, excellent research.

The current reserve list will be kept open until end of Q4 2024.

## **8. Cohort-based Doctoral student training**

Innovate for Ireland is a new collaborative PhD cohort training programme between industry and the Government of Ireland. This new initiative will seek to attract cohorts of PhD students to undertake research in Ireland that tackles national and global grand challenges. The programme is under development.

## **Overview of 2024 - Planned Programme Calls**

Note dates are indicative and subject to final SFI Board and Executive agreement.

### **1. Programmes launched during 2023 or earlier with a 2024 funding decision**

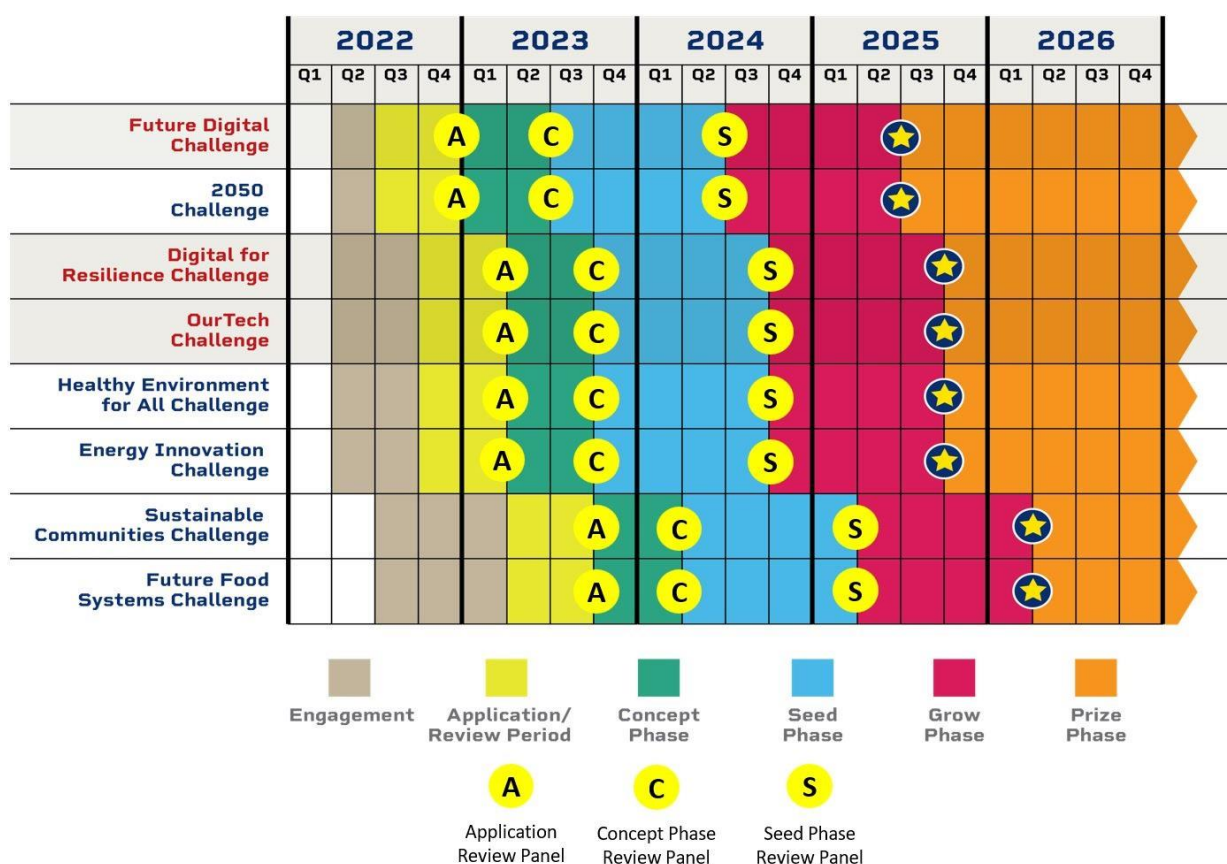
*Deadline prior to 2024, applications currently under review.*

| Programme                                  | 2024 Award Decision Timeframe |
|--|-------------------------------|
| SFI Frontiers for the Future Projects 2022 | Q1                            |
| SFI/IRC Pathway Programme (2022)           | Q1 (Res List 2022 Call)       |
| SFI Research Infrastructure                | Q4 (Res List 2023 Call)       |

|                                     |                               |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| SFI Industry RD&I Fellowship        | Q1 (2023 Call B)              |
| ERDF ARC Hubs                       | Q1                            |
| Science Policy Research programme   | Q1                            |
| SFI Research Centres Programme 2023 | <a href="#">See call page</a> |

### National Challenge Fund

Teams are evaluated as they progress through the National Challenge Fund various stage gates. The schematic below shows the overarching progress under the National Challenge Fund and status of different cohorts.



### Deadline in 2024

| Programme  | Call Deadline 2024                    | Award Decision Timeframe |
|--|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <a href="#">SFI Frontiers for the Future 2024</a> (Projects) | Q2<br>Deadline 17 <sup>th</sup> May   | Q4 2024/Q1 2025          |
| <a href="#">SFI/IRC Pathways programme</a>                   | Q2<br>Deadline 10 <sup>th</sup> April | Q4                       |

## 2. Fixed Deadline Calls to Open in 2024

| Programme                                     | Call Launch 2024 | Call Deadline     | Award Decision Timeframe |
|---|------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| SFI Frontiers for the Future (Projects 2025)  | Q4               | Q1/2 2025 or TBC  | Q4 2025 or TBC           |
| SFI Industry RD&I Fellowship                  | Q1 2024 (TBC)    | Q2 (TBC)          | Q3 (TBC)                 |
| SFI Discover Programme Annual Call            | Q2 2024          | Q2 2024           | Q4 2024                  |
| SFI Science Week Call                         | Q1 2024          | Q1 2024 & Q2 2024 | Q2 2024                  |
| SFI Fellowship                                | Q2               | Q2 2024           | Q3 2024                  |
| SFI Defence Organisation Innovation Challenge | Q2 2024          | Q3/4 2024         | Q4 2024                  |
| SFI-Irish Aid SDG Challenge                   | Q2 2024          | Q4 2024           | Q1 2025                  |

## 3. Rolling Calls Open during 2024

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| Programme  |
| <a href="#">SFI Strategic Partnerships</a>                                 |
| <a href="#">Frontiers for the Future</a> (Awards)                          |
| <a href="#">SFI Research Professorship</a> (Currently paused)              |
| <a href="#">SFI Spokes Programme</a>                                       |
| <a href="#">Maternity/Adoptive Leave Allowance</a>                         |
| <a href="#">SFI Discover Programme Opportunistic Funding Mechanism</a>     |
| <a href="#">ERC Support Programme</a>                                      |
| <a href="#">SFI Supplemental Grant for Displaced Researchers - Ukraine</a> |
| Disability Supplement (TBC)  |

#### 4. International Partnerships Open in 2024. Deadlines as scheduled by Lead Agency

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| Programme  |
| <a href="#">US-Ireland R&amp;D Partnership Programme</a>               |
| <a href="#">SFI-Royal Society University Research Fellowship</a>       |
| <a href="#">EPSRC-SFI Standard Research Grants</a> (rolling)           |
| <a href="#">I-CORPS@SFI Academy</a>                                    |
| <a href="#">SFI/NSF I-CORPS@SFI Entrepreneurial Training Programme</a> |
| <a href="#">SFI-NSF Student mobility Programme</a>                     |
| <a href="#">European co-funding initiatives</a>                        |