



## Implementation Plan: SFI Spokes Programme

<b>Operational Programme</b>	S&E Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020
<b>Priority</b>	1: Strengthening RTDI in the S&E Region
<b>Thematic Objective</b>	1: Strengthening Research, Technological Development and Innovation
<b>Investment Priority</b>	(a) enhancing research and innovation (R&I) infrastructure and capacities to develop R&I excellence, and promoting centres of competence, in particular those of European interest;
<b>Scheme</b>	SFI Spokes
<b>Categorisation Code</b>	060
<b>ERDF Certifying Body</b>	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
<b>Managing Authority</b>	Southern Regional Assembly
<b>Intermediate Body</b>	Science Foundation Ireland
<b>Level 1 Public Body</b>	Higher Education Institutes
<b>Grant Rate</b>	100%
<b>EU Co-Financing Rate</b>	50% of public eligible expenditure declared

### Objectives of Intervention.

The objective of the Spokes Programme is to promote the further development of existing SFI Research Centres to incorporate new areas of research, new industrial and academic collaborators.

### Description of Intervention.

The Spokes Programme is an initiative to enable the addition of new industrial and academic partners and projects to an existing SFI Research Centre in the S&E region, so allowing the Centre to expand and develop in line with new priorities and opportunities aligned with the Research Prioritisation Exercise. This will ensure that the Research Centre retains its ability to do cutting edge research and its industrial relevance, and so enhance its sustainability. The Spokes programme also provides a vehicle to link together, in a meaningful and relevant way, different Research Centres. The Programme has been designed to deliver excellent oriented applied research results and discoveries in targeted projects associated with SFI Research Centres and hence will deliver significant economic and societal impact during the lifetime of the programme.

SFI Spokes will help link scientists and engineers in partnerships because under this programme Industrial and academic researchers (both scientists and Engineers) are linked through funding of projects delivered via the Spokes programmes. The SFI Spokes programme will enable scientists and engineers to address crucial research questions, foster the development of new and existing Ireland-based technology companies, attract industry that could make an important contribution to Ireland and its economy, and expand educational and career opportunities in Ireland in science and engineering.



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The Spokes Programme will contribute to the specific objective of the investment priority by enabling new industrial and academic partners to join existing strategic research projects. This will increase the level of strategic research activity in the S&E region and enable increased engagement by industry with the supported research centres.

Industry partners are expected to contribute 50% of the cost of research activities in Spokes Projects. This high industry cost-share component reflects the importance and urgency of the programme to industry and to ensure maximum impact on growth and jobs. The co-funded expenditure does not include infrastructure.

## **Responsibilities of Intermediary Body.**

Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) will enter into an Administrative Agreement with the Regional Assembly which will set out in detail the responsibilities of each. This agreement will be prepared by the Regional Assembly in consultation with SFI and the Office of Science, Technology & Innovation at the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation.

SFI will be responsible for ensuring the effective implementation of the intervention and for full compliance with the Regulations, particularly those concerning financial management, control, publicity and public procurement. SFI commits to revising its EU Structural Funds Procedures Manual to comply with the requirements of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Circular on the management of EU co-funded programmes 2014-20; and the EU regulations.

SFI will ensure that the beneficiary HEIs are provided with a grant award document setting out the conditions of support for each operation, including the specific requirements concerning the products or services to be delivered under the operation, the financing plan, the time limit for execution and the conditions for use of the Structural Funds IT System 2014-2020.

SFI will be responsible for ensuring that all payment claims for European Structural and Investment Fund expenditure, submitted by the relevant Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), are supported by receipted invoices and audit documents, and that a clear and sufficient audit trail exists. Spot checks will be carried out by SFI and/or by other bodies on their behalf on management and control systems in the HEIs. These checks will include procedures to verify the delivery of the research projects co-financed and the reality of expenditure claimed and compliance with applicable national and Community rules on, in particular, the eligibility of expenditure for support, public procurement, State aid - including the rules on the accumulations of aid, protection of the environment and the horizontal principles.

SFI will also be responsible for ensuring in respect of co-financed Intervention/projects, that only eligible expenditure actually incurred is submitted to the Managing Authority. SFI is responsible for the certification of all expenditure incurred by the HEIs.

SFI will be responsible for the drawdown of funding from DJEI and for the processing and authorisation of grant awards to the HEIs.

SFI will be responsible for submitting eligible expenditure in the format required by the Certifying Authority to the Regional Assembly (Managing Authority) in order for payment claims to be prepared for submission to the Certifying Authority. Project level data will be updated, as and when requested and specified, by the EU Structural Funds I.T. System.

SFI will compile monitoring/progress reports as requested by the Regional Assembly and cooperate with OP level evaluations as required. These reports will provide data on the



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integration of the Horizontal principles following a screening exercise to be undertaken by SFI.

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The HEIs will be responsible for ensuring in respect of co-financed Intervention/projects, that only eligible expenditure actually incurred is submitted to SFI.

The contribution of the Irish exchequer and the European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020 will be acknowledged in all promotional material, annual reports, research laboratories and websites relevant to the co-funded awards, by use of appropriate logo and text references. SFI will ensure that the HEIs will comply with EU publicity requirements.

## Integration of Horizontal Principles.

SFI is committed to removing and mitigating any existing or perceived 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 19% are female (Source: SFI Census 2012). One of SFI's Agenda 2020 KPI targets is to increase the proportion of female award holders to 25% by 2020. The aim in attaining this target is to facilitate the retention of excellent female researchers within academia.

To this end, SFI will focus on streamlining gender initiatives across all its programmes by providing supporting schemes and measures that can facilitate the retention, re-entry, retraining and career advancement of women in STEM research as follows:

- Advance Award/Industry Fellowships
- SFI Maternity/Adoptive Policy
- Flexible eligibility criteria for applicants to the SFI Investigators Programme
- Promotes other Non-SFI gender initiatives i.e. Athena Swan Charter

SFI Discover, the section charged with responsibility for outreach activities to the general public and to students at primary and secondary level.

SFI will track the participation of women in Research on an Annual basis through the Annual Census, both at an award holder level and as part of the Research team

SFI will track the level of funding in the Environmental science and energy space over the period 2014 – 2020 – However it must be stressed only funded proposals in these areas who demonstrate excellent science will be funded,



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## Selection Process and Criteria.

### 1. Selection Process

There are open calls run for researchers in eligible Research Bodies, which generally have fixed deadlines. All submissions are subjected to competitive, international merit review processes carried out by a panel of leading experts who make recommendations to SFI Executive, or SFI Board as appropriate, who make the final decision on awards.

### 2. Selection Criteria

The standard selection criteria to be used for the Rolling and Fixed Spokes calls are as follows and apply to Grant expenditure effective from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2014. The following eligibility and evaluation process is extracted from the 2014 Rolling and Fixed Spokes Call.

#### General Eligibility

Applications to the Spokes programme must be made by the relevant SFI Research Centre Director. As such, the application can only be submitted to SFI from an eligible academic Research Body. Only Research Centres funded through the 2012 call are eligible to apply to this iteration of the Spokes Fixed call. The Spokes Rolling call is open to all SFI Research Centres, including those funded in the 2013 Research Centres programme.

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

A maximum of 3 pages is allowed for the impact statement. The statement should be as specific and comprehensive as possible and provide information that external reviewers will find helpful in assessing the potential impact of the proposed research activity.

#### Proposal Review Procedure and Criteria

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

The review process will take place in the following stages:

#### 1. Postal Review (both Fixed and Rolling Spokes)

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



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Reviews received from peers will be collated and forwarded to applicants. Applicants will then be afforded the opportunity to submit a response (max. 2 pages including references) to reviewers' comments. Applicants will be given a defined period of time in which to respond (advance notice of dates and guidelines relating to the response will be indicated to applicants). This response document will be considered by SFI alongside the proposal and postal reviews in making a funding decision. SFI reserves the right to implement an on-site panel review as part of the overall review procedure.

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

- Quality, significance, and relevance of the proposed research, including value for money and the potential to advance knowledge and understanding within its own field or across different fields
- Alignment/value add of the proposed project(s) with the current objectives of the SFI Research Centre
- Quality, significance, and relevance of the recent research record of the proposed investigator(s), taking into account the career stage of the applicant(s), and the applicant's record of securing non-exchequer funding
- Quality, significance, and relevance of the proposed research's potential contribution to demonstrably support and underpin enterprise competitiveness and societal development in Ireland

## 2. Panel Review - for applications to the Spokes Fixed Programme only

All full proposals to the Spokes Fixed call will proceed to the panel review process. Panel members will be selected with broad scientific and programmatic experience and will cover a broad range of research areas relevant to the NRP areas.

Certain panel members with expertise in research translation and commercialisation will have the responsibility of assessing the potential impact of the proposed research. In addition to briefing material, panel members will receive the full proposal, anonymous postal reviews and the applicant's response to postal reviews. Panel members will assess the inputs of the postal peer reviews and the overall merit and priority of applications.

Panels will rank proposals and make recommendations for an application to be given consideration for funding by SFI. The ranked list of fundable proposals will inform the final decision as to which Research Centre Spokes proposals are to be funded by SFI Executive Committee and SFI Board.

## Appeals.

SFI has a formal Appeals Process which is published on the SFI Website.

### 1. Introduction

This policy establishes procedures and responsibilities for the appeal of the declination of a proposal by SFI.

In making its decision regarding funding, SFI takes into account the peer review assessments of the scientific and technical merits of a proposal, but also the value to Ireland of the research programme, the budget availability and programmatic priorities of the Foundation. Proposals are evaluated in open competitions via a combination of international peer review and strategic fit with SFI's mission. In addition to the principles espoused by SFI's core values, SFI uses the following principles in reaching its funding decisions: value for money, strategic impact, efficient use of the peer review system, internationalisation, critical mass, cohesion with other funding streams, and availability of funding.



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The primary aim of the SFI appeals procedure is to ensure that SFI's review process itself has been fair and reasonable and that SFI's stated review procedures were followed. Although the appeal procedure is not a peer review process itself and will not re-open such a peer review process, it may address procedural errors in the peer review process, or other aspects of proposal review including: unaccounted-for conflicts of interest, inappropriate consideration of rumour / hearsay, or incomplete / inconsistent documentation being made available to the reviewers. SFI would like to emphasise that in all such cases a robust argument must be articulated and that the appeal will subsequently follow the specific procedures outlined in section 2.

It is appreciated that applicants may, from time to time, disagree with the detailed technical perspective of the expert referee, or their position on the overall quality or impact of the proposed research. However, SFI has full confidence in the high quality of experts that it engages in the peer review process and takes the position that this source of expert input allows SFI to make the best and most informed decisions. The judgment, interpretation, or level of understanding of these experts is, therefore, not grounds for appeal.

SFI now has in place a formal process integrated into some of its programmes, whereby applicants are invited to provide a scientific response. In programmes where this response stage does not form part of the SFI review process, an appeal may be accepted where specific factual inaccuracies can be clearly identified. Otherwise, appeals must be limited to clearly identifiable issues of procedure. The process required for invoking the formal process of appeal is outlined in detail in section 2.

Regarding appeals made prior to full technical peer review of a proposal; SFI remains confident that the procedures for submission of Eols, pre-proposals and full proposals are clearly delineated in the call documentation and that it remains the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that these are followed correctly. For this reason, appeals based on applications that have been deemed administratively ineligible, including, but not restricted to, late applications, applications exceeding page limits or missing documentation, will not be considered unless it can be explicitly demonstrated that this resulted from an oversight by SFI.

Appeals based on funding levels, or award conditions on applications that have been approved for funding, will not be considered.

Award of SFI funding is discretionary and the appeal process is not an adversarial one. A formal hearing, therefore, is not provided. Factors such as programme budgets and priorities will have to be taken into account when making a decision on an appeal.

## **2. Procedures**

The appeal process at SFI has three stages:

### **(A) EXPLANATION BY THE SFI PROGRAMME MANAGER OR SCIENTIFIC DIRECTOR.**

An applicant whose proposal has been declined is encouraged to request more information from the cognisant SFI Programme Manager, over and above the explanatory materials received with the declination notice. The Programme Manager will afford the applicant an opportunity to present his/her point of view, will provide additional information if any exists, and will take any further action that seems appropriate in consultation with the relevant SFI Scientific Director.

### **(B) REVIEW OF THE APPEAL BY AN SFI DIRECTOR NOT INVOLVED IN THE ORIGINAL REVIEW.**

If dissatisfied with the explanation or action provided under Section (a), the applicant may submit a written request to the Secretary to the SFI Board that SFI reconsider its decision.



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SFI will consider such a request only if the applicant has first sought and obtained an explanation under the procedures described in Section (a), only if the request is received by SFI within 30 days after the date of the declination notice, and provided that the applicant's request for an appeal has been sent through the research office of the applicant's host Research Body and is endorsed by the host Research Body (VP for research or equivalent). In the letter requesting the appeal, the applicant should state whether the appeal is based on a) factual inaccuracy (only applicable to awards that do not already include a rebuttal process) or b) procedural error. The applicant should also provide a concise written statement (no more than 300 words) clearly explaining the grounds for the appeal. The Secretary to the Board will forward the request to a Director at SFI who was not involved in the original review of the proposal. This Director will reconsider the record to determine whether SFI's review of the declined proposal was fair and reasonable. The Director may personally conduct the review or may designate a Programme Manager in his/her Programme area, who had no part in the initial review, to do so.

Within 30 days after the date of the request, the Director will provide the results of the appeal, in writing, to the research office of the host Research Body with a copy to the applicant. If the results cannot be furnished within 30 days, the allocated Director will give the host Research Body and the applicant a written explanation of the need for more time, indicating the date when results can be expected.

### (C) FURTHER REVIEW BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL AT THE REQUEST OF THE HOST RESEARCH BODY.

Within 30 days after the Director has notified the applicant of the results of the appeal, the host Research Body may request further review by the Director General of SFI.

The request need not be in any particular format, but it must be in writing and must be signed by the President/Provost/Chief Executive Officer of the host Research Body and by the PI. The request should explain why the host Research Body still believes that an error may have occurred in the initial evaluation and why it is not satisfied with the review of the original appeal conducted by the Director under the procedures described in Section (b), above.

The Director General is responsible for reviewing the request for a further appeal and the record of earlier SFI actions (including the original review of the proposal and the review conducted under Section (b)). The Director General may personally conduct the further review or may designate another SFI official, who had no part in the original review or the review conducted under Section (b), to do so. Additionally, an external third party expert(s) may be asked to examine the case and to present a recommendation. Within 30 days after a request for further appeal is received at SFI, the Director General will furnish the results of the further appeal, in writing, to the host Research Body. If results cannot be furnished within 30 days, the Director General will provide the host Research Body with a written explanation of the need for more time, indicating the date when the results can be expected.

THE DECISION MADE BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL IS FINAL

## Performance Indicators.

### Priority-level Output Indicators

#### Investment Priority 1(a)

ID	Indicator	Measurem	Fund	Category	Target	Source	Frequenc
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		ent Unit		of Region	Value	of Data	y of Reporting
CO 24	Number of new researchers in supported entities	Full-Time Equivalents	ERDF	More Developed	689	SFI	Annual

### Programme-Specific Result Indicators Investment Priority 1(a)

ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Category of Region	Baseline Value	Baseline Year	Target Value	Source of Data	Frequency of Reporting
1(a)	Increase d number of industry partners engaged with funded strategic research centres in the S&E region	No. of enterprises	More Developed	529	2014	713	SFI	Annual

### Financial Management.

Funding for SFI is provided by Central Government, and will be maintained under a separate Sub-head to be provided by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI), on an annual basis to SFI.

The “Finance and Operations” Unit of SFI will allocate funding on an instalment basis to the HEIs over the duration of the award. Such allocations will be made in line with the SFI awards selection criteria relevant to the specific programme and as detailed in the formal SFI “Letter of Offer” relating to the specific research award.

SFI will enter into an Administrative Agreement with the Regional Assembly and the HEIs which will set out in detail the responsibilities at each level in respect of financial management and control.

The HEIs will submit to SFI details of their research project(s) and, as the project(s) progress, request their funding requirements in instalments for the duration of the research project. SFI will examine, validate and process such requests and will authorise the SFI Finance and Operations Unit to make the necessary payments, by electronic transfer, to the relevant HEI bank account.

The HEIs will provide, as requested detailed certification reports (B1’s) to SFI outlining eligible expenditure claimed. SFI will examine such reports and will from time to time carry out spot checks to verify actuality of expenditure claimed.



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The HEIs will prepare annual reports and accounts of their activities. The books and accounts of the HEIs will be available on request for examination by SFI, the Managing Authority, the Certifying Authority, the Comptroller and Auditor General, the ERDF Financial Control Unit, the European Commission and the European Court of Auditors.

### **Document Retention.**

In accordance with Article 140 of the Common Provisions Regulation (EC) 1303/2013 all supporting documents regarding expenditure, verification checks, certification and audits on operations for which total eligible expenditure is less than €1,000,000.00 will be kept available for the EU Commission and Court of Auditors for a period of three years from 31 December following the submission of the accounts in which the expenditure of the operation is included. In the case of operations over €1,000,000.00 all supporting documentation shall be kept for a 2 year period from 31 December following the submission of accounts in which the **final** expenditure of the completed operation is included.

### **Monitoring and Reporting Arrangements.**

The reporting arrangements require that a progress report be submitted annually to the Monitoring Committee in a format to be specified by the Committee. In addition, Intermediary Bodies will be required to provide data on the IT system which will be used to transfer information to the Commission. This system is currently being developed.

SFI will monitor the performance of the measure at Regional and National level and will report to the Regional Assembly in the matter. The HEIs will confirm in relation to each project that the agreed proposals have been implemented though it is recognised that the nature of the research awards means that some of the benefits to the region and nationally will be in the longer term.

On an annual basis SFI will compile reports on research project/Programme performance at intervention level, setting out progress against agreed intervention objectives and targets and performance on the horizontal principles as laid out in the reporting template. Progress reports will cover financial management details, performance indicators and qualitative information where appropriate. Given the nature of the SFI funding mechanism to HEIs, an annual report on expenditure incurred to date at research project level under the intervention will also be provided. SFI will agree the composition and format of these reports with the Managing Authority. The IT System will be used to report on the intervention and to transfer information on to the Commission, including information on operations as appropriate.

### **Information and Publicity.**

SFI will ensure that the HEIs as beneficiaries will comply with section 2.2 of Annex XII of Commission Regulation 1303/2013 and with Articles 4 and 5 of Commission Implementing Regulation 821/2014.

The contribution of the Irish exchequer and the European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020 will be acknowledged in all promotional material, annual reports, research laboratories, websites, letters of offer etc., by use of appropriate logo and text references. The relevant Structural Funds regulations on Information and Publicity will be complied with in this regard.



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# S&E Regional OP 2014 – 2020.





## Implementation Plan: SFI Research Centres.

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<b>Level 1 Public Body</b>	Higher Education Institutes
<b>Grant Rate</b>	100%
<b>EU Co-Financing Rate</b>	50% of public eligible expenditure declared

### Objectives of Intervention.

The objective of the Research Centres Programme is to develop a set of world-leading, large-scale research centres aligned with the 14 priority areas of research identified in the Research Prioritisation Exercise that will provide major economic impact for Ireland.

### Description of Intervention.

SFI Research Centres link scientists and engineers in partnerships across academia and industry to address crucial research questions; foster the development of new and existing Irish-based technology companies; attract industry that could make an important contribution to Ireland and its economy; attract international research talent and capital; attract, anchor and spin out related companies in Ireland; and increase the numbers of SFI-trained researchers employed in industry.

All of the approved research centre proposals will be aligned with the 14 priorities identified in Ireland's Research Prioritisation Exercise.

The Research Centres are structured on a hub and spoke model consisting of a number of targeted projects undertaken in partnership with industry that connect into a central hub containing the platform research (specified research activity in the approved work programme) and core operations (payroll and other operational costs). A key feature of SFI Research Centres is the creation of a critical mass of internationally leading researchers in strategic areas which become a key attractant to industry and lay the foundation for effective and productive academic and industrial partnerships. The Research Centres provide the foundation for sustainable research activity which can take place in conjunction with Industry Partners and other funding agencies such as EU by leveraging against the core SFI funding, with the objective to meet the changing needs of industry and society.



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SFI Research Centres envisage evolving to maximise capabilities, outputs and industry offerings including the transfer of knowledge and expertise to enterprises and the spin-out of new, high-technology start-up companies that have the potential to raise external angel or venture funding.

The SFI Research Centre programme will contribute to the specific objective of the investment priority by increasing the level of strategic research taking place in the S&E region, aligned with the Research Prioritisation Exercise, with strong industrial linkages and will also promote eco-innovation, where relevant.

Industry partners are expected to contribute 30% of the cost of research activities in Strategic Research Centres. This relatively high industry cost-share component reflects the importance of the programme to industry and to ensure maximum impact on growth and jobs. The co-funded expenditure does not include infrastructure.

### **Responsibilities of Intermediary Body.**

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claims to be prepared for submission to the Certifying Authority. Project level data will be updated, as and when requested and specified, by the EU Structural Funds I.T. System. SFI will compile monitoring/progress reports as requested by the Regional Assembly and cooperate with OP level evaluations as required. These reports will provide data on the integration of the Horizontal Principles following a screening exercise to be undertaken by SFI.

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## Integration of Horizontal Principles.

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To this end, SFI will focus on streamlining gender initiatives across all its programmes by providing supporting schemes and measures that can facilitate the retention, re-entry, retraining and career advancement of women in STEM research as follows:

- Advance Award/Industry Fellowships
- SFI Maternity/Adoptive Policy
  - Flexible eligibility criteria for the Investigators programme under the SFI Investigator Career Advancement (ICA) criteria, whose aim is to support those researchers returning to academic research after a prolonged absence e.g.
    - Statutory adoptive leave
    - Statutory parental leave
    - Statutory maternity leave



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- Promotes other Non-SFI gender initiatives i.e. Athena Swan Charter
- SFI will track the participation of women in Research on an Annual basis through the Annual Census, both at an award holder level and as part of the Research team.
- SFI will track the level of funding in the Environmental science and energy space over the period 2014 – 2020 – However it must be stressed only funded proposals in these areas who demonstrate excellent science will be funded.

### Selection Process and Criteria.

There are open calls run for researchers in eligible Research Bodies, which generally have fixed deadlines. All submissions are subjected to competitive, international merit review processes carried out by a panel of leading experts who make recommendations to SFI Executive, or SFI Board as appropriate, who make the final decision on awards.

The 2013 Research Centres Programme call will follow three stages:

- Pre-Proposal stage** - submit a pre-proposal application to the call must provide a proposal title and abstract (max. 200 words).  
Each pre-proposal will be reviewed by a panel of scientific and commercialisation experts who will evaluate both the scientific merit of each pre-proposal and its potential to deliver significant economic and societal impact. Only those pre-proposals that are deemed to be excellent both in terms of science and potential for delivering economic and societal impact to Ireland will progress to the full proposal application stage. Pre-proposals deemed not to have met the required level of scientific excellence and potential for impact will be eliminated from the evaluation process.
- Full Proposal stage** - Full proposals will be sent for postal review. For each proposal under evaluation, SFI will solicit between five and seven written reviews (i.e., postal review) from international topic experts who will appraise the quality of the applicant team and proposed research programme. Applicants will be provided with the anonymised postal reviews and will be invited to provide a brief written response to these reviews (i.e. applicant response).  
Based on the evaluations submitted by the postal reviewers and the applicant responses, SFI will select the proposals that have demonstrated a high-level of scientific excellence to progress to the Impact Panel assessment stage.  
Proposals not selected for the final Impact Panel meeting will be eliminated from the evaluation process.
- Impact Panel Presentation** - The Impact Panel will comprise high-level members, such as Vice Presidents of Research from universities, corporate R&D Directors, partners from the investment and venture capital communities and entrepreneurs. SFI anticipates issuing invitations to applicant groups to attend the panel meeting in mid-June 2014. The Impact Panel will be tasked with identifying fundable proposals and will provide SFI with a list of such proposals ranked in order of priority for funding.

The ranked list of fundable proposals will inform the final decision as to which Research Centre proposals are to be funded by SFI Executive Committee and SFI Board.

**The selection criteria to be used for the Research Centres awards are as follows and apply to Grant expenditure effective from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2014:**



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The Research Centres eligible for ERDF funding in the 2014 – 2020 Operational Programme were awarded following the 2013 Research Centres Call. This Call operated on a themed basis and focused on a number of areas which could generate significant economic and societal benefit for Ireland. The themes that were selected were aligned to National Research Prioritisation (NRP) areas identified by the National Research Prioritisation Exercise which was implemented as government policy in 2012.

The themes for the 2013 SFI Research Centres Call were:

- Future Networks and Communications (Priority Area A)
- Digital Platforms, Content and Applications (Priority Area C)
- Medical Devices (Priority Area E)
- Diagnostics (Priority Area F)
- Sustainable Food Production and Processing (Priority Area I)
- Smart Grids and Smart Cities (Priority Area K)
- Manufacturing Competitiveness (Priority Area L)
- Software (Platform science & technology)
- Geosciences Underpinning Sustainable Economic Development
- Earth and Ocean Observation

In addition to the requirement for scientific excellence, applications considered under the 2013 SFI Research Centres Call needed to clearly demonstrate potential for economic and societal impact to Ireland, and this was required at both pre-proposal and full proposal stages.

The following is extracted from the 2013 Call document and sets out the selection and evaluation criteria as follows:

### Eligibility Criteria of the Applicant and Co-applicants

Applicant groups must have one lead applicant and between two and nine co-applicants. SFI expects that the group of lead and co-applicants will form the executive management committee of the Research Centre, with administrative responsibility for the performance of the centre.

The lead applicant (and co-applicants) must be members of the academic staff of an eligible Research Body (permanent or with a contract that covers the period of the grant).

Funded investigators must hold a PhD or equivalent for at least 3 years by the pre-proposal deadline.

## Appeals.

SFI has a formal Appeals Process which is published on the SFI Website.

### 1. Introduction

This policy establishes procedures and responsibilities for the appeal of the declination of a proposal by SFI. In making its decision regarding funding, SFI takes into account the peer review assessments of the scientific and technical merits of a proposal, but also the value to Ireland of the research programme, the budget availability and programmatic priorities of the Foundation. Proposals are evaluated in open competitions via a combination of international peer review and strategic fit with SFI's mission. In addition to the principles espoused by SFI's core values, SFI uses the following principles in reaching its funding decisions: value for money, strategic impact, efficient use of the peer review system, internationalisation, critical mass, cohesion with other funding streams, and availability of funding.



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The primary aim of the SFI appeals procedure is to ensure that SFI's review process itself has been fair and reasonable and that SFI's stated review procedures were followed. Although the appeal procedure is not a peer review process itself and will not re-open such a peer review process, it may address procedural errors in the peer review process, or other aspects of proposal review including: unaccounted-for conflicts of interest, inappropriate consideration of rumour / hearsay, or incomplete / inconsistent documentation being made available to the reviewers. SFI would like to emphasise that in all such cases a robust argument must be articulated and that the appeal will subsequently follow the specific procedures outlined in section 2.

It is appreciated that applicants may, from time to time, disagree with the detailed technical perspective of the expert referee, or their position on the overall quality or impact of the proposed research. However, SFI has full confidence in the high quality of experts that it engages in the peer review process and takes the position that this source of expert input allows SFI to make the best and most informed decisions. The judgment, interpretation, or level of understanding of these experts is, therefore, not grounds for appeal.

SFI now has in place a formal process integrated into some of its programmes, whereby applicants are invited to provide a scientific response. In programmes where this response stage does not form part of the SFI review process, an appeal may be accepted where specific factual inaccuracies can be clearly identified. Otherwise, appeals must be limited to clearly identifiable issues of procedure. The process required for invoking the formal process of appeal is outlined in detail in section 2.

Regarding appeals made prior to full technical peer review of a proposal; SFI remains confident that the procedures for submission of EoIs, pre-proposals and full proposals are clearly delineated in the call documentation and that it remains the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that these are followed correctly. For this reason, appeals based on applications that have been deemed administratively ineligible, including, but not restricted to, late applications, applications exceeding page limits or missing documentation, will not be considered unless it can be explicitly demonstrated that this resulted from an oversight by SFI.

Appeals based on funding levels, or award conditions on applications that have been approved for funding, will not be considered.

Award of SFI funding is discretionary and the appeal process is not an adversarial one. A formal hearing, therefore, is not provided. Factors such as programme budgets and priorities will have to be taken into account when making a decision on an appeal.

## 2. Procedures

The appeal process at SFI has three stages:

### *(A) EXPLANATION BY THE SFI PROGRAMME MANAGER OR SCIENTIFIC DIRECTOR.*

An applicant whose proposal has been declined is encouraged to request more information from the cognizant SFI Programme Manager, over and above the explanatory materials received with the declination notice. The Programme Manager will afford the applicant an opportunity to present his/her point of view, will provide additional information if any exists, and will take any further action that seems appropriate in consultation with the relevant SFI Scientific Director.

### *(B) REVIEW OF THE APPEAL BY AN SFI DIRECTOR NOT INVOLVED IN THE ORIGINAL REVIEW.*

If dissatisfied with the explanation or action provided under Section (a), the applicant may submit a written request to the Secretary to the SFI Board that SFI reconsider its decision.



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SFI will consider such a request only if the applicant has first sought and obtained an explanation under the procedures described in Section (a), only if the request is received by SFI within 30 days after the date of the declination notice, and provided that the applicant's request for an appeal has been sent through the research office of the applicant's host Research Body and is endorsed by the host Research Body (VP for research or equivalent). In the letter requesting the appeal, the applicant should state whether the appeal is based on a) factual inaccuracy (only applicable to awards that do not already include a rebuttal process) or b) procedural error. The applicant should also provide a concise written statement (no more than 300 words) clearly explaining the grounds for the appeal. The Secretary to the Board will forward the request to a Director at SFI who was not involved in the original review of the proposal. This Director will reconsider the record to determine whether SFI's review of the declined proposal was fair and reasonable. The Director may personally conduct the review or may designate a Programme Manager in his/her Programme area, who had no part in the initial review, to do so.

Within 30 days after the date of the request, the Director will provide the results of the appeal, in writing, to the research office of the host Research Body with a copy to the applicant. If the results cannot be furnished within 30 days, the allocated Director will give the host Research Body and the applicant a written explanation of the need for more time, indicating the date when results can be expected.

### *(C) FURTHER REVIEW BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL AT THE REQUEST OF THE HOST RESEARCH BODY.*

Within 30 days after the Director has notified the applicant of the results of the appeal, the host Research Body may request further review by the Director General of SFI.

The request need not be in any particular format, but it must be in writing and must be signed by the President/Provost/Chief Executive Officer of the host Research Body and by the PI. The request should explain why the host Research Body still believes that an error may have occurred in the initial evaluation and why it is not satisfied with the review of the original appeal conducted by the Director under the procedures described in Section (b), above.

The Director General is responsible for reviewing the request for a further appeal and the record of earlier SFI actions (including the original review of the proposal and the review conducted under Section (b)). The Director General may personally conduct the further review or may designate another SFI official, who had no part in the original review or the review conducted under Section (b), to do so. Additionally, an external third party expert(s) may be asked to examine the case and to present a recommendation. Within 30 days after a request for further appeal is received at SFI, the Director General will furnish the results of the further appeal, in writing, to the host Research Body. If results cannot be furnished within 30 days, the Director General will provide the host Research Body with a written explanation of the need for more time, indicating the date when the results can be expected.

*THE DECISION MADE BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL IS FINAL*

## Performance Indicators.

### Priority-level Output Indicators

#### Investment Priority 1(a)

ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Fund	Category of Region	Target Value	Source of Data	Frequency of
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## S&E Regional OP 2014 – 2020.



CO 24	Number of new researchers in supported entities	Full-Time Equivalents	ERDF	More Developed	689	SFI	<b>Reporting</b> Annual
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### Programme-Specific Result Indicators Investment Priority 1(a)

ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Category of Region	Baseline Value	Baseline Year	Target Value	Source of Data	Frequency of Reporting
1(a)	Increased number of industry partners engaged with funded strategic research centres in the S&E region	No. of enterprises	More Developed	529	2014	713	SFI	Annual

### Financial Management.

Funding for SFI is provided by Central Government, and will be maintained under a separate Sub-head to be provided by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI), on an annual basis to SFI.

The “Finance and Operations” Unit of SFI will allocate funding on an instalment basis to the HEIs over the duration of the award. Such allocations will be made in line with the SFI awards selection criteria relevant to the specific programme and as detailed in the formal SFI “Letter of Offer” relating to the specific research award.

SFI will enter into an Administrative Agreement with the Regional Assembly and the HEIs which will set out in detail the responsibilities at each level in respect of financial management and control.

The HEIs will submit to SFI details of their research project(s) and, as the project(s) progress, request their funding requirements in instalments for the duration of the research project. SFI will examine, validate and process such requests and will authorise the SFI Finance and Operations Unit to make the necessary payments, by electronic transfer, to the relevant HEI bank account.

The HEIs will provide, as requested detailed certification reports (B1’s) to SFI outlining eligible expenditure claimed. SFI will examine such reports and will from time to time carry out spot checks to verify actuality of expenditure claimed.

The HEIs will prepare annual reports and accounts of their activities. The books and accounts of the HEIs will be available on request for examination by SFI, the Managing Authority, the Certifying Authority, the Comptroller and Auditor General, the ERDF Financial Control Unit, the European Commission and the European Court of Auditors.



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## Document Retention.

In accordance with Article 140 of the Common Provisions Regulation (EC) 1303/2013 all supporting documents regarding expenditure, verification checks, certification and audits on operations for which total eligible expenditure is less than €1,000,000.00 will be kept available for the EU Commission and Court of Auditors for a period of three years from 31 December following the submission of the accounts in which the expenditure of the operation is included. In the case of operations over €1,000,000.00 all supporting documentation shall be kept for a 2 year period from 31 December following the submission of accounts in which the **final** expenditure of the completed operation is included.

## Monitoring and Reporting Arrangements.

The reporting arrangements require that a progress report be submitted annually to the Monitoring Committee in a format to be specified by the Committee. In addition, Intermediary Bodies will be required to provide data on the IT system which will be used to transfer information to the Commission. This system is currently being developed.

SFI will monitor the performance of the measure at Regional and National level and will report to the Regional Assembly in the matter. The HEIs will confirm in relation to each project that the agreed proposals have been implemented though it is recognised that the nature of the research awards means that some of the benefits to the region and nationally will be in the longer term.

On an annual basis SFI will compile reports on research project/Programme performance at intervention level, setting out progress against agreed intervention objectives and targets and performance on the horizontal principles as laid out in the reporting template. Progress reports will cover financial management details, performance indicators and qualitative information where appropriate. Given the nature of the SFI funding mechanism to HEIs, an annual report on expenditure incurred to date at research project level under the intervention will also be provided. SFI will agree the composition and format of these reports with the Managing Authority. The IT System will be used to report on the intervention and to transfer information on to the Commission, including information on operations as appropriate.

## Information and Publicity.

SFI will ensure that the HEIs as beneficiaries will comply section 2.2 of Annex XII of Commission Regulation 1303/2013 and with Articles 4 and 5 of Commission Implementing Regulation 821/2014.

The contribution of the Irish exchequer and European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020 will be acknowledged in all promotional material, annual reports, research laboratories, websites, letters of offer etc., by use of appropriate logo and text references. The relevant Structural Funds regulations on Information and Publicity will be complied with in this regard.



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## Implementation Plan: Commercialisation Fund

<b>Operational Programme</b>	S&E Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020
<b>Priority</b>	1: Strengthening RTDI in the S&E Region
<b>Thematic Objective</b>	1: Strengthening Research, Technological Development and Innovation
<b>Investment Priority</b>	(b) promoting business investment in R&I, developing links and synergies between enterprises, research and development centres and the higher education sector, in particular promoting investment in product and service development, technology transfer, social innovation, eco innovation, public service applications, demand stimulation, networking, clusters and open innovation through smart specialisation, and supporting technological and applied research, pilot lines, early product validation actions, advanced manufacturing capabilities and first production, in particular in key enabling technologies and diffusion of general purpose technologies;
<b>Scheme</b>	Commercialisation Fund
<b>Categorisation Code</b>	062
<b>ERDF Certifying Body</b>	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
<b>Managing Authority</b>	Southern Regional Assembly
<b>Intermediate Body</b>	Enterprise Ireland
<b>Level 1 Public Body</b>	Universities and Institutes of Technology
<b>Grant Rate</b>	100% direct project costs
<b>EU Co-Financing Rate</b>	50% of public eligible expenditure declared

### Objectives of Intervention.

To foster and grow a dynamic and commercially aware research community and to create an environment that promotes entrepreneurship. In so doing an accessible route to commercialisation is established for the transfer of knowledge from the research base into industry.

### Description of Intervention.

Third-level researchers and researchers in other research producing organisations (RPOs) can apply to carry out applied research that may lead to licensing agreements and spin-out companies.

The programme will fund the development of innovations at all stages of the commercial pipeline to the point where they can be commercialised as new products, services and companies. This Fund will not support purely exploratory research, nor does it support applied research for companies.

Two funding supports will be provided:

- Feasibility support to investigate the commercial case for the innovation, technology, project idea; and,



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- Commercialisation Fund support to develop the innovation/technology for commercialisation.

Researchers in third level institutions and non-profit research agencies and organisations in the Republic of Ireland are eligible to apply. The Commercialisation Fund programme leverages the research strengths and technical expertise in Irish HEIs to develop innovations that will have an economic impact in Ireland. Innovations including those aligned to the 14 areas of Research Priority that provide commercial opportunities which can be exploited by Irish companies operating in relevant markets or which create opportunities for new start-up companies are supported by the programme.

The Commercialisation Fund will contribute to the specific objective of the investment priority by supporting research organisations to develop a route to commercialisation for innovative technology-based projects, leading to the creation of R&D based spin-out enterprises.

### Responsibilities of Intermediary Body.

Enterprise Ireland will manage this initiative through the Programme Coordination unit (within the Research & Innovation Business Unit) which, in collaboration with the agency's Policy Department is responsible for the design of the scheme, project selection and related information and publicity. It works closely with the agency's Finance Department in the administration and financial management of payments to the beneficiary bodies. Enterprise Ireland is responsible for the selection/evaluation processes and ongoing monitoring of projects during the funding period. In so doing, Enterprise Ireland ensures that a clear audit trail exists for external independent auditing of projects. An administrative agreement will be entered into between Enterprise Ireland and the Managing Authority setting out the respective roles and responsibilities of each.

EI will ensure that the beneficiaries are provided with a grant award document setting out the conditions of support for each operation, including the specific requirements concerning the products or services to be delivered under the operation, the financing plan, the time limit for execution and the conditions for use of the Structural Funds IT System 2014-2020.

EI will be responsible for ensuring that all payment claims for European Structural and Investment Fund expenditure, submitted by the relevant beneficiary Institutions are supported by receipted invoices and audit documents, and that a clear and sufficient audit trail exists. Spot checks will be carried out by EI and/or by other bodies on their behalf on management and control systems in the HEIs. These checks will include procedures to verify the delivery of the research projects co-financed and the reality of expenditure claimed and compliance with applicable national and Community rules on, in particular, the eligibility of expenditure for support, public procurement, State aid - including the rules on the accumulations of aid, protection of the environment and the horizontal principles.

EI will also be responsible for ensuring in respect of co-financed Intervention/projects, that only eligible expenditure actually incurred is submitted to the Managing Authority. EI is responsible for the certification of all expenditure incurred by the HEIs.

### Responsibilities of Public Beneficiary Body.

The public beneficiary bodies will support individuals and groups of researchers to successfully execute their duties in respect of delivering the project output. This support will



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be in the form of grant administration, financial management and control, the scoping and submission of applications, the certification of eligible expenditure, compliance with issues such as public procurement and tax clearance along with providing expert advice on commercialisation through the technology transfer office. This support will be provided in conjunction with mirroring support from Enterprise Ireland's Research & Innovation Business Unit.

The beneficiaries will be responsible for ensuring in respect of co-financed Intervention/projects, that only eligible expenditure actually incurred is submitted to EI.

The contribution of the Irish exchequer and the European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020 will be acknowledged in all promotional material, annual reports, research laboratories and websites relevant to the co-funded awards, by use of appropriate logo and text references. EI will ensure that the beneficiaries comply with publicity requirements.

## Integration of Horizontal Principles.

Following the screening of the EI co-funded schemes, the following actions will be taken:

### Actions:

1. To monitor and report the gender balance on the Board, Executive Committee, Investment Committee, Industrial Research and Commercialisation Committee and R&D Committee. While Enterprise Ireland is conscious of the need to have gender representative decision making boards and committees, the Ministerial appointment to the Enterprise Ireland board and the filling of tenders for private sector members on Committees as well as internal appointments is based merit, i.e., on the appropriate mix of skills to ensure balance and rounded decision making as well as compliance with the code of corporate governance for semi-state bodies. In summary, the person with the most appropriate skills will be appointed. This is also the view of the Institute of Directors, i.e., that board appointees must be on merit first and foremost.
2. Monitor and report on the gender balance of lead researchers approved for commercialization project funding.

## Selection Process and Criteria.

### 1. Selection Process

Applications from researchers for Commercialisation Fund supports will be evaluated for their commercial and if appropriate to the support technical merit by internal and/or external evaluators. Funding recommendations for feasibility support will be considered by relevant senior management in Enterprise Ireland who will make the funding decision. Funding recommendations for Commercialisation Fund support are presented to the Industrial Research and Commercialisation Committee in Enterprise Ireland for approval. This committee is currently composed of senior members of Enterprise Ireland, the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment, the Department of Agriculture, the IDA, senior academics and independent industrial experts and members of the business community.

### 2. The selection criteria to be used are as follows:

Projects are assessed for their commercial merit and technical merit by internal and in some cases external reviewers and panels which may include external experts. The criteria considered by reviewers in assessing proposals include:

Evaluation Criteria



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- 1) Commercial opportunity
- 2) Exploitation potential (Economic Impact in Ireland)
- 3) Innovation
- 4) Project team
- 5) Project Management and Workplan
- 6) Project Costs

## Appeals.

- Clients have the right to contact their DA to discuss committee decisions.
- Clients have the right to appeal to the Secretary to the Board.
- Clients can re-apply as often as they wish.

## Performance Indicators.

### Priority-level Output Indicators

#### Investment Priority 1(a)

ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Fund	Category of Region	Target Value	Source of Data	Frequency of Reporting
1.3	Number of commercialisation fund awards	No. of awards	ERDF	More Developed	325	EI	Annual

### Programme-Specific Result Indicators

#### Investment Priority 1(b)

ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Category of Region	Baseline Value	Baseline Year	Target Value	Source of Data	Frequency of Reporting
1b	Increase in the number of licenses as a result of research	No. Licenses	More Developed	24	2013	125	EI	Annual

## Financial Management.

The gross public expenditure in respect of projects funded under this intervention will be provided annually in the estimates of the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation from SubHead B4 of the Department's Vote. Enterprise Ireland draws its funding from the Office of Science, Technology and Innovation of DJEI. Grants will include the ERDF contribution, which will be reclaimed by the Certifying Authority for the benefit of the Exchequer. Claims, once approved and certified, in respect of ERDF assistance will be submitted to the Commission by the Certifying Authority.



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The beneficiary institutions will be responsible for implementation of the intervention at local operation level. As the final beneficiaries in the cascade of reporting, they will be responsible for ensuring that only actual eligible expenditure incurred, and expenditure which comes under the terms of the research project(s) as approved, is certified. They will be required to ensure a clear audit trail exists in relation to EU co-funded expenditure and that all claims are supported by receipted invoices or, where this cannot be done, by accounting documents of equivalent probative value.

The public beneficiary body will be required to have in place separate accounting arrangements in respect of project expenditure under the sub-measure.

### **Document Retention.**

In accordance with Article 140 of the Common Provisions Regulation (EC) 1303/2013, EI and the HEI's will ensure that all supporting documents regarding expenditure, verification checks, certification and audits on operations for which total eligible expenditure is less than €1,000,000.00 are kept available for the EU Commission and Court of Auditors for a period of three years from 31 December following the submission of the accounts in which the expenditure of the operation is included. In the case of operations over €1,000,000.00 all supporting documentation shall be kept for a 2 year period from 31 December following the submission of accounts in which the **final** expenditure of the completed operation is included.

The Managing Authority will inform EI and the HEI's of the start date of the period referred to above.

### **Monitoring and Reporting Arrangements.**

The necessary reports will be provided in the required formats that are to be agreed with the Managing Authority. A dedicated unit within Enterprise Ireland be responsible for the compilation of data and reporting. These actions will be facilitated by a recently upgraded, dedicated IT system.

### **Information and Publicity.**

The contribution of the Irish exchequer and the European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020 will be acknowledged in all brochures, promotional material, press releases, publicity activity, advertisements, signage, applications forms, annual reports, letters of offer, etc., by use of appropriate logo and text references. A dedicated commercialisation communications unit within Enterprise Ireland will be responsible for continued promotion of the scheme and commercialisation in general. This may include advertisement campaigns, road shows, and dedicated websites. EI will ensure that the beneficiaries will comply with section 2.2 of Annex XII of Commission Regulation 1303/2013 and with Articles 4 and 5 of Commission Implementing Regulation 821/2014.



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## Implementation Plan: Innovation Partnerships

<b>Operational Programme</b>	S&E Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020
<b>Priority</b>	1: Strengthening RTDI in the S&E Region
<b>Thematic Objective</b>	1: Strengthening Research, Technological Development and Innovation
<b>Investment Priority</b>	(b) promoting business investment in R&I, developing links and synergies between enterprises, research and development centres and the higher education sector, in particular promoting investment in product and service development, technology transfer, social innovation, eco innovation, public service applications, demand stimulation, networking, clusters and open innovation through smart specialisation, and supporting technological and applied research, pilot lines, early product validation actions, advanced manufacturing capabilities and first production, in particular in key enabling technologies and diffusion of general purpose technologies;
<b>Scheme</b>	Innovation Partnership
<b>Categorisation Code</b>	062
<b>ERDF Certifying Body</b>	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
<b>Managing Authority</b>	Southern Regional Assembly
<b>Intermediate Body</b>	Enterprise Ireland
<b>Level 1 Public Body</b>	Universities and Institutes of Technology (research performing organisation)
<b>Grant Rate</b>	from 40% to 80% of eligible costs, depending on the size of company involved and the type of research undertaken
<b>EU Co-Financing Rate</b>	50% of public eligible expenditure declared

### Objectives of Intervention.

The objective of the Innovation Partnership Programme is to propel the use of key technologies by Irish companies by encouraging them to work with Irish research institutes resulting in mutually beneficial co-operation and interaction.

### Description of Intervention.

Companies can access expertise and resources to develop new and improved products, processes, services, and generate new knowledge and know-how. The participating company benefits in terms of its growth, the evolution of its strategic research and development and the creation of new knowledge that it can use to generate commercial advantage. The research institute benefits in terms of developing skill sets, intellectual property and publications. The Innovation Partnership programme leverages the research strengths and technical expertise in Irish HEIs to develop innovations that will have an economic impact in Ireland. The Innovation Partnership programme is aligned to 14 areas of the Research Prioritisation Exercise.



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The Innovation Partnership Programme is aimed at propelling the use of key technologies by Irish companies and is a key part of the strategy for the implementation of the Research Prioritisation Exercise. The Innovation Partnership Programme helps companies to engage in collaborative research projects with Irish universities and institutes of technology to develop new products and services. The Programme will support companies which already have a history of investing in innovation and R&D activity - mostly in-house; is deepening existing links between academia and business in many cases; is serving companies whose main motivations for participation is to help their business to grow and also to access academic knowledge.

For companies, Innovation Partnership funding reduces both the cost and the risk associated with collaborative research. The programme is focused on firms, especially SMEs, that have difficulty exploiting technological developments that are outside their established capacities. It also address the insufficient use being made by industry of the wealth of expertise and technology available from Ireland's knowledge base.

Innovation Partnership funding may follow an Innovation Voucher as a large commitment of a company to R&D. It can also build on commercialisation funding through working with a platform technology developed through the Commercialisation Fund or through SFI funding to customise and advance the technology for a particular field of use. EI's R&D fund could also follow an Innovation Partnership to 'productise the technology developed in an Innovation Partnership. The Programme attracts clients through organised exhibitions, presentations and networking, articles and editorial, advertising and brochures.

The implementation of research prioritisation is de facto a manifestation of the overarching goal of accelerating the economic and societal return on Ireland's STI investment. The Innovation Partnership Programme remains a key part of this strategy of delivering both direct and indirect economic impacts.

The Innovation Partnership Programme contributes to the specific objective of the investment priority by supporting Irish companies to undertake increased R&D activities with the support of public research institutions

### **Responsibilities of Intermediary Body.**

Enterprise Ireland will manage this initiative through the Programme Coordination unit (within the Research & Innovation Business Unit) which, in collaboration with the agency's Policy Department is responsible for the design of the scheme, project selection and related information and publicity. It works closely with the agency's Finance Department in the administration and financial management of payments to the beneficiary bodies. Enterprise Ireland is responsible for the selection/evaluation processes and ongoing monitoring of projects during the funding period. In so doing, Enterprise Ireland ensures that a clear audit trail exists for external independent auditing of projects. An administrative agreement will be entered into between Enterprise Ireland and the Managing Authority setting out the respective roles and responsibilities of each.

EI will ensure that the beneficiaries are provided with a grant award document setting out the conditions of support for each operation, including the specific requirements concerning the products or services to be delivered under the operation, the financing plan, the time limit for execution and the conditions for use of the Structural Funds IT System 2014-2020.

EI will be responsible for ensuring that all payment claims for European Structural and Investment Fund expenditure, submitted by the relevant beneficiary Institutions are



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supported by receipted invoices and audit documents, and that a clear and sufficient audit trail exists. Spot checks will be carried out by EI and/or by other bodies on their behalf on management and control systems in the HEIs. These checks will include procedures to verify the delivery of the research projects co-financed and the reality of expenditure claimed and compliance with applicable national and Community rules on, in particular, the eligibility of expenditure for support, public procurement, State aid - including the rules on the accumulations of aid, protection of the environment and the horizontal principles.

EI will also be responsible for ensuring in respect of co-financed Intervention/projects, that only eligible expenditure actually incurred is submitted to the Managing Authority. EI is responsible for the certification of all expenditure incurred by the HEIs.

## **Responsibilities of Public Beneficiary Body.**

The public beneficiary bodies will support companies and researchers to successfully execute their duties in respect of delivering the project output. This support will be in the form of grant administration, financial management and control, the scoping and submission of applications, the certification of eligible expenditure, compliance with issues such as public procurement and tax clearance along with providing expert advice on commercialisation through the technology transfer office. This support will be provided in conjunction with mirroring support from Enterprise Ireland's Research & Innovation Business Unit.

The beneficiaries will be responsible for ensuring in respect of co-financed Intervention/projects, that only eligible expenditure actually incurred is submitted to EI.

The contribution of the Irish exchequer and the European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020 will be acknowledged in all promotional material, annual reports, research laboratories and websites relevant to the co-funded awards, by use of appropriate logo and text references. EI will ensure that the beneficiaries comply with publicity requirements.

## **Integration of Horizontal Principles.**

Following the screening of the EI co-funded schemes, the following actions will be taken:

### Actions:

1. To monitor and report the gender balance on the Board, Executive Committee, Investment Committee, Industrial Research and Commercialisation Committee and R&D Committee. While Enterprise Ireland is conscious of the need to have gender representative decision making boards and committees, the Ministerial appointment to the Enterprise Ireland board and the filling of tenders for private sector members on Committees as well as internal appointments is based merit, i.e., on the appropriate mix of skills to ensure balance and rounded decision making as well as compliance with the code of corporate governance for semi-state bodies. In summary, the person with the most appropriate skills will be appointed. This is also the view of the Institute of Directors, i.e., that board appointees must be on merit first and foremost.
2. Monitor and report on the gender balance of lead researchers approved for commercialization project funding.



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## Selection Process and Criteria.

### 1. Selection Process

Innovation Partnership funding is paid to the research-performing organisation. The percentage of the costs paid by Enterprise Ireland is determined by company size and by the type of research (Industrial Research or Experimental Development). There are two phases associated with an Innovation Partnership application. In Phase 1, either an Outline Proposal Document or an Innovation Partnership Feasibility Study application can be submitted. Phase 2 is a Full Application. Full Proposal Applications are accepted following the approval of an outline proposal or following the submission of a report upon completion of an Innovation Partnership Feasibility Study. The company must discuss this proposal in detail with their Development Adviser / Agency Contact before the research institute partner submits it. After Technical and Commercial Assessment, the project is brought to Enterprise Ireland's Industrial Research & Commercialisation Committee for decision.

### 2. Selection Criteria

- 1) Commercial opportunity
- 2) Exploitation potential (Economic Impact in Ireland)
- 3) Innovation
- 4) Project team
- 5) Project Management and Workplan
- 6) Project Costs

## Appeals.

- Clients have the right to contact their DA to discuss committee decisions.
- Clients have the right to appeal to the Secretary to the Board.
- Clients can re-apply as often as they wish.

## Performance Indicators.

### Priority-level Output Indicators

#### Investment Priority 1(a)

ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Fund	Category of Region	Target Value	Source of Data	Frequency of Reporting
CO04	Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support (innovation partnerships)	No. of enterprises	ERDF	More Developed	143	EI	Annual

### Programme-Specific Result Indicators

#### Investment Priority 1(b)

ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Category of	Baseline Value	Baseline Year	Target Value	Source of	Frequency of
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			Region				Data	Reporting
1b	Increase in the number of licenses as a result of research	No. Licenses	More Developed	24	2013	125	EI	Annual

### Financial Management.

The gross public expenditure in respect of projects funded under this intervention will be provided annually in the estimates of the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation from SubHead B4 of the Department's Vote. Enterprise Ireland draws its funding from the Office of Science, Technology and Innovation of DJEI. Grants will include the ERDF contribution, which will be reclaimed by the Certifying Authority for the benefit of the Exchequer. Claims, once approved and certified, in respect of ERDF assistance will be submitted to the Commission by the Certifying Authority.

The beneficiary institutions will be responsible for implementation of the intervention at local operation level. As the final beneficiaries in the cascade of reporting, they will be responsible for ensuring that only actual eligible expenditure incurred, and expenditure which comes under the terms of the research project(s) as approved, is certified. They will be required to ensure a clear audit trail exists in relation to EU co-funded expenditure and that all claims are supported by receipted invoices or, where this cannot be done, by accounting documents of equivalent probative value.

The public beneficiary body will be required to have in place separate accounting arrangements in respect of project expenditure under the sub-measure.

### Document Retention.

In accordance with Article 140 of the Common Provisions Regulation (EC) 1303/2013, EI and the HEI's will ensure that all supporting documents regarding expenditure, verification checks, certification and audits on operations for which total eligible expenditure is less than €1,000,000.00 are kept available for the EU Commission and Court of Auditors for a period of three years from 31 December following the submission of the accounts in which the expenditure of the operation is included. In the case of operations over €1,000,000.00 all supporting documentation shall be kept for a 2 year period from 31 December following the submission of accounts in which the **final** expenditure of the completed operation is included.

The Managing Authority will inform EI and the HEI's of the start date of the period referred to above.

### Monitoring and Reporting Arrangements.

The necessary reports will be provided in the required formats that are to be agreed with the Managing Authority. A dedicated unit within Enterprise Ireland be responsible for the compilation of data and reporting. These actions will be facilitated by the EU Structural Funds IT system



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## Information and Publicity.

The contribution of the Irish exchequer and the European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020 will be acknowledged in all brochures, promotional material, press releases, publicity activity, advertisements, signage, applications forms, annual reports, letters of offer, etc., by use of appropriate logo and text references. A dedicated unit within Enterprise Ireland will be responsible for continued promotion of the scheme. This may include advertisement campaigns, road shows, and dedicated websites.

EI will ensure that the beneficiaries will comply with section 2.2 of Annex XII of Commission Regulation 1303/2013 and with Articles 4 and 5 of Commission Implementing Regulation 821/2014.



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Investment Funds Programmes  
2014-2020

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## Implementation Plan: Marine Research Programme

<b>Operational Programme</b>	S&E Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020
<b>Priority</b>	1: Strengthening RTDI in the S&E Region
<b>Thematic Objective</b>	1: Strengthening Research, Technological Development and Innovation
<b>Investment Priority</b>	(a) enhancing research and innovation (R&I) infrastructure and capacities to develop R&I excellence, and promoting centres of competence, in particular those of European interest;
<b>Scheme</b>	Marine Research Programme
<b>Categorisation Code</b>	060
<b>ERDF Certifying Body</b>	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
<b>Managing Authority</b>	Southern Regional Assembly
<b>Intermediate Body</b>	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM)
<b>Level 1 Public Body</b>	Marine Institute
<b>Grant Rate</b>	Up to 100% (100% HEI/PRI, 75% SME and 50% MNC)
<b>EU Co-Financing Rate</b>	50% of public eligible expenditure declared

### Objectives of Intervention.

The objective of the Marine Research Programme is to provide funding to the marine sector in Ireland that will:

- build new research capacity and capability;
- enable sharing of existing knowledge and technology transfer;
- increase competitiveness and opportunities for sustainable economic growth;
- protect and conserve marine resources;
- inform public policy; and
- increase public awareness of our maritime heritage.

### Description of Intervention.

The Marine Research Programme administered by the Marine Institute aims to achieve the above objectives by providing support for a range of grant awards including MSc/PhD scholarships, Post-Doctoral fellowships, research projects, infrastructure and networking / technology transfer initiatives.

Funding will be offered by the Marine Institute to provide assistance for appropriate marine research activities that support the goals of *Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth – An Integrated Marine Plan for Ireland (2012)*, and/or complement the objectives of other national and European marine strategies e.g. Food Harvest 2020, Research Prioritisation Steering Group Report, EU Blue Growth Strategy and EU Strategy for the Atlantic.

The Marine Institute will launch competitive calls for funding of marine research activities, which will be open to both the public sector and to industry, and will co-fund relevant marine research that aligns with Ireland's strategic objectives, as set out in the *Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth* and that are consistent with Priority 1 of the Atlantic Strategy Action Plan, in the S&E Region.



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The Marine Institute will also catalyse funding from other funding agencies (e.g. Environmental Protection Agency, Science Foundation Ireland, Irish Research Council, Geological Survey of Ireland, Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, etc.) through co-funding initiatives aimed at achieving common research objectives.

In a report published by the Socio-Economic Marine Research Unit, NUI Galway four emerging marine industries were identified as having potential for further growth and expansion. Two of these industries 1) marine biotechnology and bio-products, and 2) high tech marine products and services sectors, have a combined turnover of €85m per annum (2010). These sectors are underpinned by marine research.

These initiatives will increase the level of research activity taking place in the S&E Region aligned with Ireland's marine research priorities and in support of a growing marine economic sector, thus contributing to the specific objective of the investment priority.

### **Responsibilities of Intermediary Body.**

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) is designated as the Intermediate Body in respect of the co-funded Marine Research intervention of the Regional Operational Programmes 2014-2020.

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) will enter into an Administrative Agreement with the Regional Assembly, which will set out in detail the responsibilities of each. This agreement will be prepared by the Regional Assembly in consultation with DAFM.

As the Intermediate Body, DAFM maintains a broad corporate governance oversight of the Marine Institute activities with respect to marine research. DAFM is responsible for ensuring satisfactory compliance arrangements are in place and that the Marine Institute maintain and operate satisfactory control procedures for co-financed activity under the Marine Research Programme.

DAFM will be responsible for ensuring that all payment claims for European Structural and Investment Fund expenditure, submitted by the Marine Institute are supported by receipted invoices and audit documents, and that a clear and sufficient audit trail exists. Spot checks will be carried out by DAFM and/or by other bodies on their behalf on management and control systems in the Marine Institute.

These checks will include procedures to verify the delivery of the research projects co-financed and the reality of expenditure claimed and compliance with applicable national and Community rules on, in particular, the eligibility of expenditure for support, public procurement, State aid - including the rules on the accumulations of aid, protection of the environment and the horizontal principles.

DAFM will also be responsible for ensuring in respect of co-financed Intervention/projects, that only eligible expenditure actually incurred is submitted to the Managing Authority. DAFM is responsible for the certification of all eligible expenditure incurred by the Marine Institute.

### **Responsibilities of Public Beneficiary Body.**

As the beneficiary body the Marine Institute has, within the context of its role as the managing agency for the Marine Research Programme, overall responsibility for the administration of grant-aid; including information and publicity, grant administration, financial



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management and control, monitoring and evaluation, IT, interim reporting and consideration of horizontal principles. The Marine Institute's roles in relation to the Marine Research Intervention include:

- Overall scheme design
- Verification of beneficiary grant claims
- Integration of Horizontal principles
- Information and publicity
- Project selection and approval
- Ensuring that a clear audit trail exists
- Co-operation with OP-level evaluations

The Marine Institute will ensure that the beneficiaries are provided with a grant award document setting out the conditions of support for each operation, including the specific requirements concerning the products or services to be delivered under the operation, the financing plan, the time limit for execution and the conditions for use of the Structural Funds IT System 2014-2020.

### Integration of Horizontal Principles.

#### Environmental Sustainability

The quality of the marine environment underpins the value of the marine resource and in particular the quality and marketability of its seafood and tourism sectors. It is widely accepted that knowledge must inform environmental management and sustainable development.

The acquisition of this knowledge; its use in environmental management along with policy formation and implementation is central to meeting the requirements of national and EU strategies and directives (e.g. Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth, Food Harvest 2020 EU Marine Strategy Framework, Water Framework and Habitats/Natura Legislation).

The aim is to apply the knowledge derived from research and obtained by monitoring the marine environment to inform public policy, governance and regulation of the sector, assist in spatial planning and support the delivery of a more innovative, customer driven and market conscious ethos and practice in the public sector.

*Criteria for project definition* include:

- Will the research advance the environmental sustainability of marine businesses?
- Will the research undertaken advance the sustainable development and management of marine resources?
- Will the research undertaken create knowledge of relevance to the management of Ireland's future environmental well-being?
- Will the research undertaken generate scientific knowledge that enhances our understanding of marine and coastal ecosystems and supports the development of evidence-based marine related public policy?

*Indicators* include:

- No. of projects that advance the sustainable development and management of marine resources
- No of projects that enhances our understanding of marine and coastal ecosystems and/or create knowledge of relevance to the management of Ireland's future environmental well-being



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2014-2020

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## **Gender Equality**

*Gender Equality* has also been identified as a priority horizontal principle for the Marine Research Programme of this intervention.

The EU principle of gender mainstreaming applies, and the Marine Institute is committed to ensuring that equal access for both genders to research funding. In addition specific actions may be taken to advance women, where there has been under representation in the past e.g. as scientific leads on research projects. However, evaluation of research proposals is based purely on the scientific and technical merit of proposals and the track record of applicants.

Funded applicants are asked to report on the breakdown of male/female researchers subsequently appointed to work on the research project and this will be reported on.

As a pro-active means of promoting gender equality the Marine Institute:

- Has committed to covering social costs (including maternity cover) for funded researchers in the event that these arise during the course of projects.
- Will actively seek to achieve gender balance in the make-up of research proposal and award evaluation and review panels.
- Will support conferences/workshops focusing on women in marine science and research.

## **Equality Principle**

The Marine Institute is committed to a policy of equality of opportunity and treatment in its procedures, practices and policies with respect to the award of marine research funding.

## **People with Disabilities**

The Marine Institute's policy is to develop and sustain positive measures to encourage the recruitment, development and retention of people with disabilities.

## **Social Inclusion**

The Marine Institute is committed to promoting active participation in marine research, and particularly encourages mature graduates who have retrained or returned to full-time education later in life. For example, the Marine Institute has expanded the Networking and Travel Grant Scheme to allow access to funding for Job-Bridge/Interns to attend marine conferences, workshops or training courses overseas.

## **Selection Process and Criteria.**

### **1. Selection Process**

Marine research funding will be administered via competitive calls for proposals from both the research community and industry. Research proposals are evaluated by a panel of national and international experts maintained by the Marine Institute and drawn from third-level, public and industry sectors.

Research themes and projects are defined by the Marine Institute in consultation with advisory teams and are aimed at addressing the agreed objectives and RTDI requirements of national and European strategies.

To ensure that the best quality scientific research is undertaken, the Marine Institute carries out ongoing project monitoring from grant award to final report that focuses on the achievement of planned project outputs and deliverables.

### **2. Selection Criteria**



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Potential beneficiaries are advised of the eligibility rules and evaluation criteria in the Guidelines for Applicants.

Proposals received are evaluated as follows:

Step	Description	Carried out by
1. Eligibility Check	To ensure comply with eligibility rules	Research Office, Marine Institute
2. Individual Expert Evaluation	Evaluated against pre-defined evaluation criteria	Independent Experts
3. Consensus Evaluation	Evaluators agree consensus scores	Independent Experts
4. Final Project Confirmation	Based on ranking by expert panel and available funding	Research Office, Marine Institute

### Evaluation Panel Membership

Research proposals are evaluated by a panel of national and international experts maintained by the Marine Institute and drawn from third-level, public and industry sectors. The names of the experts assigned to individual proposals are not made public. However, the Marine Institute makes available lists of all the experts participating on its evaluation panels at regular intervals. These will be reported on a gender-disaggregated basis.

### Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria vary depending on the nature of awards (project-based versus researcher-based), but include:

#### *Project-based Awards*

- 1) Understanding of the strategic context of the project and the specific research topic
- 2) Extent to which the project addresses the objectives of relevant national/international marine strategies including benefits and impacts of the project
- 3) The scientific and technical quality of the research proposal
- 4) Evidence within the research proposal of ability to address the specific deliverables required in the project Terms of Reference
- 5) Scientific quality/track record of the project team and technical capability to carry out the project
- 6) Proposed project management commitments/arrangements
- 7) Facilities (and training) to be provided by the host institution to accommodate and support the Post-Doctoral Fellow or MSc/PhD Scholar
- 8) Costs and value for money

Applicants must demonstrate the following:

- Excellence of science/research, including track record of applicant and research team
- Strategic context for undertaking research
- Impacts of research, measurable outputs and value for money

In addition, although not evaluation criteria *per se*, applicants are asked to:

- State how the proposed project will contribute to sustainable development and protection of the environment; and
- Identify and address the possible negative and/or positive impacts of the processes and outputs from the research.



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## Note:

Under criteria 1 and 2 applicants would be expected to demonstrate in their proposal:

- How the proposed project will contribute to sustainable development and protection of the environment; and
- How the research will contribute to Ireland's efforts to meet EU and international legislative/policy requirements (e.g., EU Water Framework, Marine Strategy Framework and Habitats/Birds Directives), particularly with regard to protecting and managing the marine environment

## Appeals.

Proposals are ranked based on consensus scores following evaluation by independent experts.

Award offers are issued to the highest ranked proposals within the available funding allocation.

All applicants receive a consensus evaluation report that provides their scores and comments under each evaluation criteria. It also provides guidance on how the application could have been improved.

The Research Office also provide advice to applicants on how to address the evaluation criteria and present the best application possible, as there are common causes for proposals receiving a poor score, for example:

- Scientific objectives not clearly stated, or too ambitious for the time frame of project.
- Not demonstrated knowledge of current research developments in the field, especially recent technology advances.
- Poor work plan or allocate of tasks and responsibilities within the team.
- CV including publication record not included for all named members of the team.
- Collaboration or multi-discipline nature of research not demonstrated.
- Not demonstrating the strategic context of the research.
- Value for money not clearly demonstrated.

All applicants are encouraged to take account of the advice provided in the consensus report, and apply for future calls.

In keeping with norms for funding agencies, the Marine Institute does not have a formal appeals process. The highest calibre experts are used to evaluate proposals in order to ensure that best research proposals are selected for funding.

The Research Office's role is to support the process and ensure that the panel evaluation is carried out in a fair and proper manner. The Research Office will also provide feedback and clarifications in relation to the consensus report to unsuccessful applications, if required.

## Performance Indicators.

### Priority-level Output Indicators Investment Priority 1(a)

ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Fund	Category of Region	Target Value	Source of Data	Frequency of Reporting



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Number of marine research MSc/PhD and Post-Doctoral Researchers funded	No. of researchers	ERDF	More Developed	21	MI	Annual <i>Breakdown by Gender will be provided</i>	
Number of projects/awards that advance the sustainable development and management of marine resources through investment in SMEs	No. of projects/awards	ERDF	More Developed	7	MI	Annual	
Number of projects/awards that enhances our understanding of marine and coastal ecosystems and/or create knowledge of relevance to the management and protection of Ireland's environment and resources	No. of projects/awards	ERDF	More Developed	8	MI	Annual	
Number of North/South Collaborations	No. of collaborations	ERDF	More Developed	3	MI	Annual	
Number of Research Visits for Networking, Training and Technology Transfer	No. of inward/outward research visits	ERDF	More Developed	14	MI	Annual	
Number of Travel Grants for Job-Bridge/ Interns	No. of travel grants	ERDF	More Developed	7	MI	Annual <i>Breakdown by Gender will be provided</i>	

**Note:** These monitoring indicators will not form part of the performance framework of the OP, but will be provided solely for the information of the OP Monitoring Committee.

### Financial Management.

#### BENEFICIARY BODY

Financial management for the theme will be in accordance with the financial management and control requirements relating to the implementation of ERDF co-funded assistance to be set out by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Managing Authority.



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2014-2020

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All expenditure being reported will be certified (via Forms B1, B2, B3 & C) before making any expenditure declaration to the Commission.

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the Marine Institute shall prepare procedures manuals in accordance with the advised format.

As the beneficiary body the Marine Institute (Research Office) is responsible for reporting and certifying the accuracy, actuality and eligibility of the expenditure to Level 2 and for completing the Form B1. Level 1 certifies that the required management and control procedures are in place and that an adequate audit trail exists. Each expenditure report forwarded from Level 1 will be accompanied by a completed Form B1 and project schedule, as appropriate.

The Marine Institute will have responsibility under the following phases:

### 1) Payment Phase

The approved level of funding for each project is set out in the letter of offer and grant-aid agreement. The first advance payment (typically up to 30% of the total approved funding) is made following signing of the grant-aid agreement to allow projects to start. Subsequent stage payments, in the form of reimbursement of certified expenditure, are made during the life of the project, based on the receipt and review of Interim Reports (Technical and Financial).

### 2) Verifications of Operations on-the-spot

The Marine Institute will implement procedures to verify the delivery of the project; reality of the expenditure; and compliance with the regulatory requirements, in accordance with Article 125 (5) of the Common Provisions Regulation (EU) 1303/2013. These procedures include the verification of operations on-the-spot at the level of the grant-aid recipients (grantees).

### 3) Irregularities & Errors

Any administrative or financial mismanagement that comes about either by act or by omission whether or not there is an actual loss of funds is considered as an irregularity.

The extent of the definition of 'irregularity' means that the Marine Institute must have systems and resources in place to detect, record, report and follow-up on identified irregularities. The Marine Institute will:

- Identify irregularities and record sufficient detail to assist in identifying any evidence of a breakdown of systems or a need to take action to correct emerging systemic weaknesses in the management and control arrangements that are in place:
- Report on a regular basis all irregularities to DAFM: and
- Take action to follow-up and correct all recorded irregularities, recover the grant where appropriate and take steps to ensure that the irregularity is not repeated.

### 4) Form B Certification Process

The Form B certification process as set out in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Circular requires certification that sound and efficient financial management and control procedures are in place and that an adequate audit trail exists. As the Beneficiary Body the Marine Institute (Research Office) is responsible for completing, and submitting to DAFM, the B1 Forms for the Marine Research sub-Theme. Form B1 certification will be performed annually.

### 5) Audit Trail

The audit trail requirements for EC co-financed activity are set out in Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Circular,. The procedures to be adopted will ensure that documents that are relevant to specific expenditure incurred and payments made to the



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2014-2020

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projects, co-financed under Marine Research theme are held in accordance with the requirements of Article 140 of Regulation (EC) No 1303/2013.

## **INTERMEDIARY BODY**

The Financial Management and Control Procedures, which DAFM is required to ensure, are delivered by means of:

### *1) In-depth examination of the Form B1s submitted by the Marine Institute (the Beneficiary Body)*

The process is largely determined by the structure contained in Form B1. DAFM will ensure that the Form B1s received from the Marine Institute are completed in accordance with the appropriate DoF requirements, and clarify and resolve any issues arising.

### *2) The completion of ex-Ante Verification Checks on the Marine Institute following submission of signed Form B's to verify the following:*

1. The practical application and effectiveness of the management and control systems;
2. For an adequate number of accounting records, the correspondence of those records with supporting documents held by Final Beneficiaries;
3. The presence of a sufficient audit trail;
4. That the Community financial contributions are within the limits provided for in the applicable Community provisions;
5. That the appropriate national co-financing has in fact been made available; and
6. That the co-financed operations have been implemented in accordance with Community rules and policies as required by Regulation (EC) 1303/2013 and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Circular

Checks should establish whether any problems encountered are systematic, entailing a risk for other EU-aided operations carried out by the same final beneficiary. The causes of such errors should be identified along with any necessary further investigation and corrective and preventative action.

### *3) The signing off of Form B2s in order to forward the claim to the ERDF Certifying Body (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform):*

When the Form B1s have been checked and no financial control weaknesses, risks or irregularities have been identified while carrying out Ex-Ante Verification Check DAFM will prepare a Form B2 for submission to the Certifying Body. This form confirms that:

- Management and control procedures in accordance with the Marine Institute's Financial Management processes are in place; and
- Steps including sample checking of information at Phase 1 have been taken to give reasonable assurance that the amount returned is correct and the working papers are available for inspection.

## **Document Retention.**

In accordance with Article 140 of the Common Provisions Regulation (EC) 1303/2013 all supporting documents regarding expenditure, verification checks, certification and audits on operations for which total eligible expenditure is less than €1,000,000.00 will be kept available for the EU Commission and Court of Auditors for a period of three years from 31 December following the submission of the accounts in which the expenditure of the operation is included. In the case of operations over €1,000,000.00 all supporting documentation shall be kept for a two-year period from 31 December following the submission of accounts in which the **final** expenditure of the completed operation is included.



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## Monitoring and Reporting Arrangements.

Annual progress reports will be submitted to the Monitoring Committee in the required format to be agreed with the Managing Authority.

The Marine Institute closely monitors all funded projects and interim reports are required on a six-monthly basis. Quantitative data are collated on an ongoing basis via a database of funded projects.

## Information and Publicity.

The Marine Institute will advise beneficiaries that they will need to comply with section 2.2 of Annex XII of Commission Regulation 1303/2013 and with Articles 4 and 5 of Commission Implementing Regulation 821/2014.

The contribution of the Irish exchequer and the European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020 will be acknowledged in all promotional material, annual reports, research laboratories, websites, letters of offer etc., by use of appropriate logo and text references. The relevant Structural Funds regulations on Information and Publicity will be complied with in this regard.



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