

# 2024 SEAI National Energy Research Development & Demonstration (RD&D) Funding Programme

Frequently Asked Questions - May 2024

## 2024 SEAI National Energy RD&D Funding Programme - Frequently Asked Questions

This document collates responses to questions submitted during the live 2024 SEAI National Energy RD&D Funding Programme Information Webinar held on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April 2024, as well as responses to other frequently asked questions submitted directly to SEAI.

If you have a question that has not been addressed below, please contact [energyresearch@seai.ie](mailto:energyresearch@seai.ie).

Please also refer to the detailed guidance and programme documentation available at:

<https://www.seai.ie/grants/research-funding/research-development-and-demonstration-fund/>

### Query topics

General Application Queries.....	3
1. Webinar.....	3
2. General queries.....	3
3. Support for applicants.....	3
4. Previously funded projects.....	3
5. Project scales.....	3
6. Lead and Partner Applicants.....	4
7. Applicants or collaborators from outside the Republic of Ireland.....	6
8. Multiple applications.....	6
9. Project start dates.....	6
10. Project team structure.....	7
11. Topic vs Open Strand applications.....	7
12. End-Users.....	8
13. Academic fellowships.....	8
14. Project outputs and Intellectual Property.....	10
15. Supporting documentation and Letters of Support.....	11
16. Gender considerations.....	11
17. Sustainable Research.....	11
18. SEAI as sole-funder.....	11
19. PEP Application Portal.....	12
Financial/ Budgetary Queries.....	12
20. Staff costs.....	12
21. PhD stipend/overheads.....	13
22. Project costs.....	13
23. External Consultants.....	13
24. Eligible companies.....	14
25. Financial Declarations.....	14
26. VAT queries.....	14
27. Research Category.....	15
28. Reimbursement process and reporting requirements.....	15

## General Application Queries

### 1. Webinar

#### **Is the webinar (April 30<sup>th</sup> 2024) recorded?**

The webinar is available to [view at this link](#).

Webinar slides are also [available here](#).

### 2. General queries

#### **Is this an annual call?**

The SEAI RD&D Programme runs as an annual call. Calls typically open in Q1 each year. Details of previously funded projects can be found on the [National Energy Research Funding Database](#).

#### **How long does an application take to write roughly for a lead, if a project concept is ready with collaborators? e.g. one person full time for 3 weeks?**

Please review the Application Form and requirements outlined in [Annex 2 of the Call Document](#) providing further application guidance, as well as the maximum page allowances outlined for each section.

### 3. Support for applicants

#### **Is there a support contact for a project team who would like to receive assistance with an application?**

#### **Can we discuss the project idea with SEAI to see its fit before we start building the project proposal and the team?**

If you have any queries on the application process or the programme, please do not hesitate to contact us at [energyresearch@seai.ie](mailto:energyresearch@seai.ie).

However, as this is a competitive call, SEAI cannot provide feedback on draft proposals or project ideas.

For full details of the call, please download the 2024 SEAI RD&D Call Document, Budget Policy, Application Form and Budget Template available from our website: <https://www.seai.ie/grants/research-funding/research-development-and-demonstration-fund/>

### 4. Previously funded projects

#### **Can you please give an example of previously funded projects and the extent of the funding?**

Previously funded research projects can be found at the [National Energy Research Database](#). This database can be searched by keyword, topic area, organisation, funding agency etc.

### 5. Project scales

#### **Can you define a Small-Scale, Medium-Scale and Large-Scale project please?**

Classification of a small, medium, or large-scale project is based on the duration of the proposed project. Please see [page 6](#) of the Call Document for details.

#### **Our draft application would be within the medium-scale budget limit but would ideally be 48 months long to support PhD researchers for up to 4 years, does this make it a large-scale project?**

Yes, a large-scale project is typically classified as a project of up to 4 years' duration and the maximum indicative funding is €1.25million. However, there is no minimum requested funding amount required to apply to different categories of projects.

#### **Are there absolute limits (upper/lower) on funding per project?**

Classification of a small, medium or large-scale project is based on the duration of the proposed project. Please see [page 6](#) of the Call Document for details.

#### **Is it possible to apply for a small or medium scale project as an individual organisation?**

The SEAI National Energy RD&D Funding Programme is open to public and private sector organisations based in the Republic of Ireland (including Irish subsidiaries of overseas companies) who wish to carry out projects in Ireland. Applications will be accepted from companies, 3rd level educational bodies, public sector bodies and semi-state bodies who are based in the Republic of Ireland. The aforementioned organisations may apply to the Programme individually or as part of a consortium. Proposals from individuals applying in their own right will not be accepted.

**I am considering applying for funding for a PhD student under a topic noted as Medium Scale. However, this would need to be spread out over 4 years. As this topic is noted as medium scale, would it be possible to apply for a 4-year project under this Topic?**

Classification of a small, medium or large-scale project is based on the duration of the proposed project. Please see [page 6](#) of the Call Document for details. Applicants could also consider submitting an application under the open strand, please see Section 9 of this FAQ document for more information.

## 6. Lead and Partner Applicants

**What is the difference between a lead and partner applicant?**

**Are there any specific qualifications required for project partners (Partner Applicants)?**

**Can the lead applicant and partner applicant be from the same organisation, with different budget lines?**

**What is the eligibility criteria in terms of experience required for full project proposal?**

Each project application must include a Lead Applicant organisation. This refers to an organisation that is a legal entity with one named contact person. For applications involving multiple project partners (Lead and Partner Applicants), each organisation will submit one budget, per application. For Eligible Costs and Budget Categories see Section 2 of the [Budget Policy](#). Please see also replies in the 'General application queries'.

Definitions for Lead and Partner Applicants are outlined on page 5 of the Call Document, these are:

**Lead Applicant:** The Lead Applicant is a budget holder and will hold responsibility and accountability for management of the proposed project. They will be responsible for the technical direction, progress monitoring, budgeting, reporting, dissemination and other management duties associated with the proposed project in-line with SEAI policies. The Lead Applicant is responsible for ensuring that all project partners and stakeholders are kept fully informed on all matters relating to the project. The Lead Applicant will act as the primary contact point for SEAI. Each application may list only one Lead Applicant. The Lead Applicant must hold a contract covering at least the duration of the proposed project or agreement from their employer that their employment will be extended to cover at least the period of the proposed project. Please note, for 3rd level Educational Bodies, the named Lead Applicant must be a core funded member of academic staff or a member of academic staff with a fixed-term contract and is therefore ineligible to receive salary funding through the SEAI National Energy RD&D Funding Programme.

**Partner Applicant** (Partner Applicant Organisations) may form part of the proposed funded project team, along with the Lead Applicant and are responsible for supporting the Lead Applicant to achieve the goals of the proposed project. The role of the Partner Applicant(s) should be well-defined within the application. Partner Applicants can be companies, 3rd level Educational Bodies, public sector bodies or semi-state bodies who are based in the Republic of Ireland.

Eligible staff costs are outlined in section 2.1.1 of the [Budget Policy](#). It should be noted that salary costs are only eligible once they are not funded from any other sources.

**Does the Lead Applicant need a contract that covers the duration of the project?**

Yes, the Lead Applicant should confirm within their Letter of Support that they hold a contract covering at least the duration of the proposed project or agreement from their employer that their employment will be extended to cover at least the period of the proposed project.

As detailed in the [Call Document](#), the application should be accompanied by a letter of support from the lead applicant confirming that the information provided in the application is correct to the best of their knowledge, and that the proposed project has not been/is not the subject of grant aid from any other source. By submitting a proposal, the Lead Applicant confirms that they hold a contract covering at least the duration of the proposed project or agreement from their employer that their employment will be extended to cover at least the period of the proposed project.

A letter of support should also be provided by an authorised staff member in the lead institution/organisation (e.g., company CEO/CFO/Director, University/Research Institution Vice President for Research or equivalent) confirming their endorsement of the proposal and confirming their commitment to hosting and facilitating the proposed project should it be successful.

**Can I be named as a Partner Applicant in the proposal? Are Partner Applicants eligible to receive salary funding? Can a partner applicant (non-permanent staff) request his/her salary in the budget? Is it required to have done 2 years of experience post PhD to become a partner applicant? Would a postdoc be eligible to be a partner applicant for a medium project?**

In the case of a 3rd level educational body, the lead applicant contact must be a core-funded member of staff or a member of academic staff with a fixed term contract and is ineligible to receive salary funding through the programme. There may be more than one core-funded staff member from the same organisation involved in a proposal. In this case these staff members would not be listed as partners but rather part of the lead organisation team. Please note that SEAI does not fund the salary of staff within Irish 3rd level educational bodies that are already in receipt of salaries funded from other sources.

If partnering with a project partner (Partner Applicant) from a different entity (3rd level educational body, company, public/semi-state bodies) a lead Partner Applicant should be named as a legal entity and contact person. In the case of a 3rd level educational body, the Partner Applicant contact must be a core-funded member of staff or a member of academic staff with a fixed term contract and is ineligible to receive salary funding through the programme.

#### Positions to be filled

For 3<sup>rd</sup> level educational bodies, companies and public/semi-state bodies, if the completion of the project requires positions to be filled, (e.g. researchers/staff) applications should not name individuals, but rather request funding for the required staffing skillset at the appropriate level to carry out the described project specific tasks.

**Are postdoctoral researchers eligible to apply for small or medium level projects in the open or topic strand category?**

In the case of a 3rd level educational body, the lead applicant must be a core-funded member of staff or a member of academic staff with a fixed term contract and is ineligible to receive salary funding through the programme.

**Can external consultants be included in the project team?**

**My project may require external assistance from a specialist consultant for a short period of time. Can this organisation be named as a collaborator within the application form (requesting costs)?**

External consultants should not be listed as collaborators in an application. Please note that collaborators are organisations who are committed to providing a valuable intellectual, technical or financial contribution to the proposed project. Collaborators are **not funded** by SEAI in a proposed project. Please see [page 5 of the Call Document](#) for more details of the project roles.

Every possible effort must be made to build a project team capable of completing all tasks proposed in the project without the need for external consultants. If that is not possible, funding can be requested to support external consultants subject to strong justification and obtaining value for money. Proof of compliance with National and EU procurement guidelines may be requested. Please see [page 8](#) of the Budget Policy for further details.

**Is there a way to indicate interest to potential applicants seeking collaborative partners?**

We cannot facilitate the collaboration of partners, however applicants may wish to refer to the [National Energy Research Database](#) to search for potential project partners or collaborators. This database provides information on current and previous energy research projects and is intended to enable additional collaboration and communication between companies, academic institutions, research institutes and researchers who work in the energy/low carbon technology area. It allows users to search for projects by topic, year funded, funding agency and keyword.

**For application by an SME, is it necessary to partner with an academic institution or other staffed agency?**

Is it not necessary to partner with an academic institution or other staffed agency. SME's can be a single applicant.

## 7. Applicants or collaborators from outside the Republic of Ireland

**Is it possible for either a project partner applicant or project collaborator to be based outside of the Republic of Ireland?**

**Can an EU partner be included as a collaborator?**

The SEAI National Energy RD&D Funding Programme is open to public and private sector organisations (including Irish subsidiaries of overseas companies) based in the Republic of Ireland, who wish to carry out projects in Ireland. Organisations based in other jurisdictions will not be funded by the programme but can partake in proposals in the role of (non-funded) collaborators.

Applicants may wish to refer to the [National Energy Research Database](#) to search for potential partners or collaborators. This database provides information on current and previous energy research projects and is intended to enable additional collaboration and communication between companies, academic institutions, research institutes and researchers who work in the energy/low carbon technology area. It allows users to search for projects by topic, year funded, funding agency and keyword.

**Can a Project Lead be based outside of Ireland (e.g. in the UK)? We are an Irish company but have some team members based in the UK.**

The SEAI National Energy RD&D Funding Programme is open to public and private sector organisations (including Irish subsidiaries of overseas companies) based in the Republic of Ireland, who wish to carry out projects in Ireland. Organisations based in other jurisdictions will not be funded by the programme.

Eligible companies applying to the Call must be Irish registered companies. For any staff costs to be eligible they must be an employee of the Irish registered company and paid via the Irish companies' bank account.

**Can a staff member who is not based in Ireland be claimed for as a staff cost?**

Yes, once they are paid and employed through an Irish based and registered company. Eligible companies applying to the Call must be Irish registered companies. For any staff costs to be eligible they must be an employee of the Irish registered company and paid via the Irish companies' bank account.

**If you are a collaborator not based in ROI, so not funded, would you then submit a letter of support?**

Please refer to Section 13, "Collaborators are **not funded** by SEAI in a proposed project but will need to provide a Letter of Support confirming their support for the project, providing details to confirm their role in the project, and details of any proposed support (e.g., data access, technology trial/demonstrator, in-kind support, or other)."

## 8. Multiple applications

**If we have multiple separate projects that are not directly linked to each other, should we submit separate applications or a single application?**

**Can an application be made through different strands, for example an application through academic fellowship and another through open strand?**

**Is it possible for an applicant to submit more than one proposal, for example, leading in one and partner or collaborator in others?**

**Can I apply with an application for the fellowship strand, and also be a partner applicant on another application with a permanent member of staff as PI?**

Applicants can submit multiple applications to the Call, provided that the entity/team have the capacity to carry out all projects if successful. Projects should be able to proceed independently of one another and the activities/outputs of one should not rely on the other. Please clearly outline the capacity of the Lead/Partner organisations within Section 4 of the Application Form, identifying if multiple applications have been submitted.

## 9. Project start dates

**When are the projected start dates for short-, medium-, long-term or academic fellowship projects?**

**Are projected start dates different for Open and Topic strands?**

**Is there a chance the award date could be earlier than Q4?**

**When must the project begin? (e.g. if there is a delay in hiring)**

Project start dates for all successful proposals to the 2024 Call are expected to start during Q1 2025. Project start dates are individual per project and are not uniform across all projects. Individual project start dates are agreed and set only when a Grant Agreement is issued to successful applicants.

Further updates on overall application and award timelines will be provided throughout the Call process.

## 10. Project team structure

### **Is there any limit on the number of partner applicants allowed within an application/consortium?**

There is no limit to the number of project partners on an application. If you require a budget template for more than three partners, please contact [energyresearch@seai.ie](mailto:energyresearch@seai.ie).

## 11. Topic vs Open Strand applications

### **How many proposals will SEAI fund under each topic?**

### **How is the total budget split between Open & Topic strands?**

### **Based on SEAI RDD projects funded under previous calls what is the % split of project awarded between the topic and open call strands?**

Ultimately, this will depend upon the applications submitted to the call, and the quality of the proposals. The Programme budget is not split between the Open and Topic Strands. As this is a competitive Call, applications submitted under both strands will be evaluated competitively under the same evaluation criteria.

For example, following completion of all technical reviews and project selection, it may be the case that some topics will not receive adequately competitive applications, and may not be funded. It could also be the case that multiple proposals submitted to certain topics are funded, depending upon the quality of the proposals received and that the research activities involved are sufficiently distinct from one another.

Please refer to the RD&D [Call Document](#) for details of the technical evaluation criteria.

### **If your project proposal may suit two topic strands, is it possible to apply under multiple strands for one project application?**

### **Is it encouraged to apply for both topic strand and open strand or to just select one strand?**

### **If you have a proposal that aligns broadly with a topic but does not specifically fulfil the objectives, would it be best to apply to the open strand?**

It is up to applicants to decide what topic to apply to, or whether to apply to the open strand. You will need to select and identify either if you are applying to a Topic, or if you are applying to the Open Strand, within the application. It is up to Applicants to define and justify the focus of proposals submitted to Topics within the Topic Strand, with consideration to the outline Topic details provided.

As detailed in the [Call Document](#), please note that proposals submitted to specific Topics are not necessarily expected to address every objective and output listed in all cases. Applicants should clearly outline which of the suggested objectives and expected outputs they intend to address/deliver as part of their proposed project and may propose additional objectives/outputs.

If a proposal may address aspects of multiple topics, applicants could consider applying to the open strand. However, it is up to applicants to decide what topic to apply to, or whether to apply to the open strand. If you are applying to one particular topic, clearly indicate this and ensure you review the topic details and guidance on maximum indicative funding and project scale outlined for that Topic within Annex 1 of the call document.

### **Would the open call be suitable for research around the repurposing/reuse of low value waste streams? i.e., farm plastics?**

### **I work at a planning company and we are considering projects that use new technologies to improve some systems. In this context, can we submit our application?**

The Open Strand provides an opportunity for applicants to pitch ideas for research proposals that are within SEAI's remit and that meet the programme objectives outlined in the [Call Document](#).

**Since the call is for RD&D projects what will be "demonstration" part of the projects be? Is this policy informing?**

Eligible project proposals include projects that address the overarching programme objectives (see Section 1 in the [Call Document](#)), that are submitted by eligible organisations. The programme provides the opportunity for applicants to submit proposals to either a topic strand or an open strand. The open strand of the call provides an opportunity for applicants to propose projects within SEAI's remit which directly address the aims and objectives of the SEAI National Energy RD&D Funding Programme Call. Proposals can be submitted for research, development or demonstration projects.

**Is the Bat Migration topic only open to academic fellowship applications?**

The indicative funding level for this co-funded topic is for an Academic Fellowship.

**How were the thematic topics identified, particularly those selected for Offshore Wind?**

Topics are developed through consultation with policy makers, government departments and agencies and other stakeholders.

## 12. End-Users

**What if the end user is the same as the project applicant?**

Research end-users should be identified in the Application Form regardless of who they are. A research end-user is defined as an individual, community, or organisation, that will directly use or directly benefit from the outputs of the proposed research. These will be dependent upon the research project itself, and as such, it is up to applicants to identify the research end-users and to outline these within the application form.

## 13. Academic fellowships

**Can you clarify who would be the Lead and Partner applicant for Academic Fellowships?**

**Is it mandatory to have an academic mentor from my current institution or can I choose to have a Supervisor from another non third level body or from a company/other organisation?**

All Fellowship applications must be submitted by the individual intending to take up the proposed Fellowship (i.e. the Fellow is noted as the Lead Applicant Organisation Contact).

A mentor/supervisor should be identified as part of the project team and should be listed as a Partner Applicant. Fellowship applications will be accepted from 3<sup>rd</sup> level educational bodies only, based in the Republic of Ireland. The identified fellowship mentor/supervisor should be based within the confirmed host 3<sup>rd</sup> level educational body.

**Is there an obligation for the mentor to have a contract that covers the full duration of the fellowship?**

Yes. Please note the Academic Mentor/Supervisor must be a core-funded member of academic staff or a member of academic staff with a fixed-term contract covering at least the duration of the proposed fellowship, based within the confirmed host 3<sup>rd</sup> level educational body.

**What is the success rate for this call when applying for the academic fellowship?**

Ultimately, this will depend upon the applications submitted to the call, and the quality of the proposals. The Programme budget is not split between the Open and Topic Strands. As this is a competitive Call, applications submitted under both strands, which includes Academic Fellowships, will be evaluated competitively under the same evaluation criteria.

**Are both the Academic Fellowship and the full project evaluation and selection process the same?**

All project proposals are evaluated under the outlined evaluation criteria and compete with each other for funding. However as noted Section 8 of the [Call Document](#) (page 14), an intensifier may be applied to Fellowship applications, to further support leadership and career development opportunities, providing enhanced capacity to the energy sector.



**Regarding Academic Fellowships, is it possible for the candidate to have two mentors in case of interdisciplinary research?**

It is possible for the candidate to have two mentors, however there should be a primary mentor who will take responsibility for the administrative management of the fellowship within the 3<sup>rd</sup> level educational body. The primary mentor should be a member of academic staff that is core funded or has a contract that extends beyond the end-date of the proposed project. The roles of both mentors should be outlined in the letters of support accompanying the application.

**Could you provide a list of eligible 3rd level educational bodies for Fellowship applications?**

Please see Table below which includes a list of eligible 3<sup>rd</sup> level educational bodies. Please contact [energyresearch@seai.ie](mailto:energyresearch@seai.ie) if you have any queries.

Atlantic Technological University	South East Technological University
Dublin City University	St Angela's College
Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology	Technological University Dublin
Dundalk Institute of Technology	Technological University of the Shannon
Mary Immaculate College	Trinity College Dublin
Maynooth University	University College Cork
Munster Technological University	University College Dublin
National College of Art and Design	University of Galway
Royal College of Surgeons Ireland, Dublin	University of Limerick

**Is an applicant who has not yet completed their PhD required to have graduated before commencement date/funding would commence?**

It may be possible for PhD students to apply when in the latter PhD stages, however, award of a Fellowship is contingent upon PhD completion. Where applicable, applicants should clearly detail expected PhD completion and graduation dates within their application.

**Can Academic Fellowship applications include funding requested to support a research assistant/postdoctoral researcher?**

If planning a larger project involving multiple researchers, including research assistants, this would **not** be eligible under the academic fellowship category. Please consider the small, medium, or large-scale project categories. The Fellowship category aims to build capacity in the energy sector, providing opportunities for early-stage postdoctoral researchers to lead projects in support of Ireland's clean energy transition.

**Can you advise on how fellowship applications should address the diversity and gender balance of the project?**

Please consider any potential gender and diversity dimension of the proposed research activity. Where applicable, consider how gender balance would be fostered within the project team. Please refer to Section 3.7 of the Application Form and the guidance outlined on page 45 of the [Call Document](#) for further details. It is up to applicants to consider and provide details here, as applicable to their proposed project activities.

**If a fellowship applicant wishes to collaborate with a company and the company is providing data only, how should they be classified in terms of funding? Are they a partner (therefore needing to give budgetary information) or are they a collaborator?**

In this case, the company could act as a Project Collaborator. Collaborators are **not funded** by SEAI in a proposed project but will need to provide a Letter of Support confirming their support for the project, providing details to confirm their role in the project, and details of any proposed support (e.g., data access, technology trial/demonstrator, in-kind support, or other).

**Regarding academic fellowships: 1) Is it only possible to apply to the open strand? 2) In the case the answer to 1 is no, would the project funding and time cap of the topic strand apply, or the academic fellowship cap?**

The topic descriptions in the [Call Document](#) Annex 1 include recommended project scales and indicative funding. Candidates may apply to either the topic strand or the open strand as appropriate.

The Fellowship category aims to build capacity in the energy sector, providing opportunities for early-stage postdoctoral researchers to lead projects in support of Ireland's clean energy transition.

If you have specific questions on the Academic Fellowship funding and time cap please email [energyresearch@seai.ie](mailto:energyresearch@seai.ie) or contact your Research Office.

**How are the Academic Fellowship applications assessed? Are they competing against the "Projects" or are they evaluated separately?**

There is no funding ring-fenced for any project category or strand. All project proposals are evaluated under the outlined evaluation criteria and compete with each other for funding. However as noted [Section 8 of the Call Document \(page 12\)](#), an intensifier may be applied to Academic Fellowship applications, to further support leadership and career development opportunities, providing enhanced capacity to the energy sector.

**Do you need to have a contract covering the period of the project when submitting the proposal for the Academic Fellowship?**

You need a Letter of Support from your organisation stating that they will support your Fellowship should the application be successful.

**For the Research Fellow Point 1, is the Gross salary €62,698 and Budget amount with the Employer PRSI without pension?**

Salary costs as per those outlined in the IUA scales under the Annual Cost to Budget Column, which are inclusive of Employer costs, should be used. If you have specific questions on Academic Fellowship salary scales please email [energyresearch@seai.ie](mailto:energyresearch@seai.ie) or contact your Research Office.

**Is it possible for the Research Fellow to start after finishing a current project on August 2025?**

Project start dates for all successful proposals to the 2024 Call are expected to start during Q1 2025. Project start dates are individual per project and are not uniform across all projects. Individual project start dates are agreed and set only when a Grant Agreement is issued to successful applicants.

Further updates on overall application and award timelines will be provided throughout the Call process.

## 14. Project outputs and Intellectual Property

**Can Intellectual Property (IP) be considered as an output of the project, rather than sharing project outputs by publications/posters?**

IP may be considered as an output. Where project outputs cannot be widely disseminated, applicants may not be eligible to apply for the dissemination grant intensifier. Please carefully review the research categories and intensifier definitions before choosing one for your project, further details are outlined in the [Budget Policy](#). For further guidance please refer to e.g. [Section 3.5 \(page 44\)](#), *Impact - Intellectual Property Management & Exploitation*, of the Call Document and to the SEAI RD&D Budget Policy.

**What is the expected minimum and maximum technology readiness level (TRL) of final project outputs?**

**Will the TRL of a technology affect the funding rate?**

If you plan to apply to a Topic, please refer to the suggested outputs outlined within the specific Topics in the [Call Document](#).

In relation to eligible research categories and associated funding rates, please refer to the guidance on [page 11 & 12](#) of the Budget Policy.

Applications to the Open strand are welcome for early-stage research through to demonstration projects.

**If a company is using their existing IP to carry out or tie into research work, what are the terms under which the ownership of that IP is treated?**

**How is Intellectual Property treated as part of the project. Will each partner own the IP of their work but with an agreement to share project work?**

Successful applicants are required to take necessary steps to preserve and protect intellectual property rights including, where appropriate, applying for patent registration; and actively exploiting any discoveries, inventions or processes resulting from the research, by means of commercial licensing arrangements or otherwise.

Where there is a reasonable potential for commercial exploitation of research outputs, applicants should apply the principles of the National IP Protocol 2019 – Ireland's framework for research commercialisation – Knowledge Transfer Ireland.

Where relevant, applicants should discuss expected project outputs and intellectual property with their Technology Transfer Office and/or consult with Knowledge Transfer Ireland for information on how to fulfil

Intellectual Property obligations, and for support in relation to developing consortium agreements where required.

Where appropriate and whenever possible, IP should be managed for the benefit of enterprise development in Ireland.

Details relating to Intellectual Property Management & Exploitation for a proposed project should be outlined within the Application Form see [section 3.5 \(page 44\)](#).

For collaborative projects, please confirm (by ticking the relevant box in the application form) that should the proposed application be successful, the project consortium (Lead Applicant, Partner Applicant(s) and Collaborator(s)) will put a formal agreement in place to agree on Intellectual Property Rights and other relevant issues associated with the responsibilities within the project and exploitation of results.

## 15. Supporting documentation and Letters of Support

**Is it possible to submit Letters of Support from companies or other collaborators (that do not receive funding)? Is there any specific section to add these LOSs?**

Unsolicited letters of support (LoS) are not permitted. However, required Letters of Support that should be submitted along with your application include Letters of Support from: the Lead Applicant, an authorised staff member in the Lead Applicant Organisation; each Partner Applicant Organisation; each Collaborator Organisation. Please refer to Section 6 of the [Call Document](#) for more details or for information relating to the Fellowships. A checklist is also provided in Section 6 of the Application form.

## 16. Gender considerations

**What details are required within the application regarding gender considerations?**

Similar to other research funders, data collection is requested relating to applicant gender to inform future activities or programmes.

Please also consider any potential gender dimension of the proposed research activity, as well as considering how gender balance would be fostered within the project team. Please refer to Section 3.7 of the Application Form and the guidance outlined on [page 45](#) of the Call Document for further details. It is up to applicants to consider and provide details here, as applicable to their proposed project activities.

## 17. Sustainable Research

**Are the sustainable research headings listed in the application form to address?**

**What is the SEAI's interpretation of "Sustainable Research" as this can be taken a few directions?**

SEAI's mission is to drive the reduction and replacement of fossil fuel usage, and our role is to help all of society be more energy efficient. Research has a major role in the design of new practices and products, education, policy formation and information exchange to realise both mission and goal. However, research activities themselves can be resource intensive. SEAI funded researchers are required to describe their research design that will minimise waste and environmental footprint without adversely impacting the validity and reliability of the research outputs. Please refer to Annex 2 Section 8 of the [Call Document](#) for further details on completing this section of the application form.

## 18. SEAI as sole-funder

**Can I request funding for an existing project?**

**Do you need an industry partner providing funding or can it solely be funded by SEAI?**

Project proposals need to be novel and innovative. SEAI must be the only project funder and will not consider applications where SEAI is considered as a partnership funder, except where existing SEAI pre-defined co-funding arrangements are in place, as detailed in the [Budget Policy](#).

Applications are not required to involve an industry partner however it is also possible for applications to include multiple entities. It is up to applicants to build a project team as suited to their research project activities.

**Can a project be linked to an existing funded research project through extending the research into areas not covered by the existing project?**

Project applications that expand on findings of prior research projects are welcome to apply to the Call. However, proposal(s) must be for a unique body of work with a specific defined scope. Proposal(s) should be

able to proceed independently of other prior projects, and the activities/outputs of one should not rely on the other. Further, as noted in the [SEAI RDD Budget Policy](#), SEAI must be the only project funder and will not consider applications where SEAI are considered as a partnership funder, except where SEAI's existing pre-defined co-funding arrangements are in place.

### 19. PEP Application Portal

**I work in the research office of a university; can Research Officers be given access to the PEP application system to track institutional applications?**

It is not possible for Research Officers to be provided access to the PEP portal to track applications. We recommend that applicants from 3<sup>rd</sup> level educational bodies engage with their Research Office during the application process, in advance of submitting to PEP.

**My organisation does not appear as an option within the PEP Portal Organisation dropdown list?**

Please create a new organisation within the PEP Portal. Guidance will be provided on this within the PEP Application Guidelines which will be available shortly within the Programme Documents section of the RDD website. It is expected that the PEP Portal will open for applications by early May, a notification will be issued to the Energy Research mailing list and to all registered webinar attendees as soon as the PEP Portal is open. You can register to the Energy Research mailing list at the bottom of the [SEAI RDD website](#).

## Financial/ Budgetary Queries

### 20. Staff costs

**It was mentioned that only costs related to staff directly employed are eligible. Does this mean that costs related to seconded staff employed via a third party are not eligible?**

- Staff that may be seconded to a funded organisation from another organisation would only be eligible for reimbursement if they have a contract of employment/agreement with the funded organisation and are paid by the funded organisation thereby meeting SEAI's eligibility criteria regarding payslips and proof of payment. Staff seconded to a funded organisation who continue to be paid by their original employer, would not be eligible for reimbursement.
- If an organisation is using an agency to hire and manage payroll for a staff member(s), the payroll costs (salary) of that hire are eligible for reimbursement but please note that agency fees are not. Contract of employment with the agency may be required at claim stage.

**When we calculate the budget for recruiting new staff, do we need to multiply by (1+25%)?**

As part of the budget, SEAI will contribute to the indirect costs of project-based research work that it supports through an overhead payment which is automatically calculated as 25% of Staff costs. Staff costs include salaries and stipends only, and **do not** include student fees.

See of the [Budget Policy document](#) for further details.

**Will you fund more than one staff member per partner in a project, and if so, what are the limits?**

More than one staff member can be funded per partner.

**Can part time staff work on research projects?**

Yes, part-time staff can be funded on research projects.

**You said that there is a cap on salaries paid. However, if Directors of a company that will work on the project do not draw a salary from the company, how can these costs be recovered?**

Staff costs are only reimbursable if they have actually been incurred and paid. We require 100% proof of salaries being paid before they can be requested for reimbursement in a claim.

**Can I just clarify if changes e.g. daily rates applied in the 2024 RD&D Call are only for new projects funded in 2024, or retrospectively applied to existing RD&D projects?**

The changes to the daily rate calculation are applicable to projects RD&D Call onwards but are not applicable to previously funded projects.

**I am already funded via SFI. The planned project timelines include time where I will not be funded. Can I be a partner on the project, if staff costs include myself when I am not funded or it is better to be an external consultant on the project.**

If an applicant is already funded by another research body, they cannot be funded by SEAI. However, if the post is only part-funded by SFI, the unfunded time could be eligible to be included in the application. Please note that staff time spent on a research project should be costed in under the Internal Staff cost category and not external consultants.

## 21. PhD stipend/overheads

**How much is the PhD scholarship stipend? Is there an overhead eligible for this?**

**Can a small-scale project fund a PhD student over 3 or 4 years?**

**Should the scholarship stipend for a PhD student be included under staff costs or postgraduate fees?**

SEAI will provide a maximum annual contribution of €25,000 towards PhD scholarship stipends for up to 48 months. PhD students will only be funded for projects of a minimum 36-month and maximum 48-month duration. Classification of a small, medium, or large-scale project is based on the duration of the proposed project. Please see [page 5](#) of the Call Document for details.

Please note that postgraduate fees and stipends are two separate contributions from SEAI. The stipend must not be used to contribute to student fees under any circumstances. SEAI will provide a maximum annual contribution of €6,000 towards postgraduate fees, for up to 48 months.

As part of the budget, SEAI will contribute to the indirect costs of project-based research work that it supports through an overhead payment calculated as 25% of Staff costs. Staff costs include salaries and stipends only, and **do not** include student fees. See page 10 (section 2.7) of the [Budget Policy](#) document for further details.

**Can existing, unfunded PhD students be funded under new applications?**

Funding can be provided for new PhD students working 100% of their time on projects for a minimum of 36 months and a maximum of 48 months.

## 22. Project costs

**Regarding CAPEX (capital expenditure), we are working on a proposal which will require a substantial cost for an item which will be used for 100% of the project. Is this covered?**

Please refer to the Equipment section of the [Budget Policy](#) and for further details.

**What cost category should costs related to boat hire, tank testing and wind tunnel testing be considered under?**

Depending upon the exact circumstances, the Material category could be the most suitable category for costs such as these. Please review the SEAI RDD Budget Policy for further guidance. Please note, cost category allocation will be further reviewed by SEAI during the review process.

**Can a first-of-a-kind pilot plant project that requires CAPEX funding be eligible?**

Please email [energyresearch@seai.ie](mailto:energyresearch@seai.ie) with more specific information.

## 23. External Consultants

**Can consultants based outside of Ireland be paid from the grant (within the 20% funding rule)?**

Every possible effort must be made, in the first instance, to build a project team capable of completing all tasks proposed in the project without the need for external consultants. However, where this is not feasible, costs associated with external consultants/service providers may be included within the project costs subject to obtaining value for money. Where such external assistance is proposed, strong justification should be provided.

Proof of compliance with National and EU procurement guidelines may be requested. External consultant costs are costs of external labour, sub-contractors, specialist consultancy and equivalent services that are used exclusively for delivery of the project. SEAI funds subcontracted tasks that are separately identifiable and cover only a limited part of the project. For the avoidance of doubt, core tasks defined in the Work Plan (Section 4) cannot be subcontracted and external consultants should not be listed as a collaborator or partner.

## 24. Eligible companies

### **Are Sole Traders eligible to apply to this call?**

Sole traders are not eligible applicants for this call. Eligible companies applying to the call must be a company registered with the Companies Registration Office Ireland (CRO) and have a CRO number.

### **Are NGOs considered as companies?**

NGOs may not necessarily be considered companies. The status of a potential NGO applicant can vary and would be determined on a case-by-case basis. Please contact us at [energyresearch@seai.ie](mailto:energyresearch@seai.ie) if you wish to discuss eligibility criteria in more detail.

### **Is there a formal or informal rule about the maturity of businesses that can apply? For example, for a pre-revenue tech start-up would this be considered too early to lead or participate?**

Applicants that are companies must be an incorporated business based within the state, but once that criterion is met there is no minimum maturity requirement.

### **Are Large Enterprises eligible for SEAI funding?**

Yes. Small, medium and large enterprises are eligible to apply.

### **For a small company would an initial advance payment at the start of the project like what happens in EPA funded projects?**

At present SEAI funds companies on a reimbursement basis only.

### **Is there any mechanism for small social enterprises to be involved in SEAI projects. Would they just have to be collaborators or consultants?**

In order to be a budget holder they need to be a CRO registered entity. Small social enterprises can also be collaborators. External consultants should not be listed as collaborators in an application. Please note that collaborators are organisations who are committed to providing a valuable intellectual, technical or financial contribution to the proposed project. Collaborators are not funded by SEAI in a proposed project.

## 25. Financial Declarations

### **Do the declarations need to be for the full cost of the project, not just the particular partner's stake (e.g. Declaration of Financial Resources)?**

For the Declaration of Financial Resources, the amount to be entered into the declaration template is the total project costs for each of the individual project partners (i.e. the total costs per Project Partner and not the overall full project cost). For more information, please refer to the Budget Template and Application Form for information on types of organisations that are required to complete the Declarations.

## 26. VAT queries

### **Is a VAT statement/official letter from revenue required from applicants based in universities?**

No.

### **For a company registered for VAT, would we pay inclusive of VAT and not be able to reclaim it?**

Companies are generally able to reclaim VAT on the project and would be requesting VAT Exclusive project costs. However, VAT is complex, if you feel that the Company is unable to reclaim VAT on the project expenditure due and wish to apply for VAT Inclusive project costs, a letter from Revenue must be supplied with your application. The letter must state that the Company is unable to reclaim VAT on the specific project activities/costs, must be on Revenue Letterhead. This may be requested each year of the project.

**If you are not going to be claiming VAT from the project do you need any supporting docs?**

Please refer to the [Budget Policy](#) page 10.

## 27. Research Category

**We are unsure about which research category to apply under for our proposed research project: the Industrial Research category or the Experimental Development category.**

**What do you define as non-economic public good (NEPG) research?**

**Can a project be categorised as NEPG even if it is supported by a company who provide data and other support?**

The onus is on the Lead/Partner applicant to select the research category that appropriately reflects the proposed project activities and to provide adequate justification within their application form. It may be the case that different organisations in a consortium are eligible for different categories based on the research activities undertaken, and the organisation structure.

While the Applicant organisations are responsible for selecting the correct research category, SEAI reserves the right to final assessment of project research categorisation.

Please refer to Section 3.3 of the [Budget Policy](#) page number 13.

## 28. Reimbursement process and reporting requirements

**Should an application be successful, how does the reimbursement process work?**

All costs related to the project need to be incurred and paid before they are claimed for reimbursement. For salaries, supporting documents to provide along with a claim include contracts of employment, timesheets/declaration of exclusive work, payslips, and proofs of payment. For example, a claim for salaries for the period of January – June should, among other, include payslips for the same periods and corresponding proof of payment (e.g. bank statements) for the period of January – July (as salaries are usually paid in the next month for the previous month). Please refer to the [Budget Policy](#) for further guidance.

**If a project proposal is successful, what are the reporting requirements?**

All SEAI RD&D grantees are required to report on outputs and impacts arising from their research at regular reporting periods throughout their research projects. Grantees are required to report to SEAI every six months for the duration of an award, this includes both a financial claim and technical project progress update. Grantees are also required to submit Annual Technical Report(s) as well as a Final Technical Report upon completion of their project.