

# 2022 SEAI National Energy RD&D Funding Programme

Frequently Asked Questions - April 2022



## 2022 SEAI National Energy RD&D Funding Programme - Frequently Asked Questions

This document collates responses to questions submitted during the live 2022 SEAI National Energy RD&D Funding Programme Information Webinar held on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April 2022, 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/>

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## General Application Queries

### 1. Webinar

#### **Is the webinar (April 20<sup>th</sup> 2022) recorded?**

The webinar is available to view at the following [link](#). (Password: RDD2022Call).  
Webinar slides are also available [here](#).

### 2. 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 4](#) 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 €1million. However, there is no minimum requested funding amount required to apply to different categories of projects.

### 3. Project start dates

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

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

#### **What is the projected start date of an Academic Fellowship (the call document states January 2023 for SEAI-Based Fellowships, is it the same for an Academic Fellowship)?**

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

Project start dates for all successful proposals to the 2022 Call are expected to start from late 2022. 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.

We do not anticipate any project start dates to be earlier than Q4 2022.

### 4. Project team and experience

#### **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).

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

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.

#### **Is a DORA CV required?**

For details of Project Team & Collaborator Profiles required please see [page 47](#) of the Call Document. Fellowship applications should also include a Letter of Motivation - providing a statement to demonstrate interest in and suitability for the proposed Fellowship. This may include an outline of professional experience, how the Fellowship would enhance their career development and personal motivation for the submitted Fellowship proposal. SEAI-based Fellowship applications must include a CV (2 pages maximum), which can be a DORA CV but this is not a requirement.

#### **Is prior experience of completing research projects important?**

Under Section 2 of the application form applicants have the opportunity to provide details of previous SEAI or other RD&D Funding (if applicable). Please see [page 46 of the Call document](#) for further guidance. Applicants are also requested to provide details of the project team within Section 2.3, please refer to [page 47 of the Call Document](#) for further guidance.

Details on the evaluation criteria can be found on [page 11 & 12 of the Call document](#).

## 5. 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. Researchers based in other jurisdictions will not be funded by the programme.

Researchers based in other jurisdictions could 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.

## 6. Topic vs Open Strand Applications

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

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

Ultimately, this will depend on 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?**

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.

**Topic 20 - Are High Temperature Heat Pumps limited to output temps above 100°C? Are commercial buildings considered eligible 'industry'?**

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. Applicants may also consider applying to the Open strand. Please also see replies to the above Topic/Open Strand questions.

**Is there going to be a more specific call for ocean (tidal and wave) projects outside the RD&D Call?**

There is currently no specific Call for ocean energy projects scheduled. Please note that the Open Strand 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. Therefore, ocean energy related projects which satisfy this requirement may apply to the Open Strand. For more information, please refer to the Call Document and the SEAI RD&D Budget Policy.

## 7. 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.

## 8. Academic fellowships/SEAI-based fellowships

### **Can you clarify who would be the Lead and Partner applicant for academic and SEAI-based Fellowships?**

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. Please note that the mentor/supervisor is not eligible for funding and should be a core funded member of staff. Fellowship applications will be accepted from 3rd level educational bodies only, based in the Republic of Ireland.

## 9. New to the 2022 Call

### **What are the main changes between last year's and this year's call?**

There have been some changes to the 2022 Call relative to previous RD&D Calls. Please read the [Call Document](#) and [Budget Policy](#) for 2022 carefully. Some of these changes include:

- **Evaluation criteria**  
There has been an update in the proportion of marks awarded to each criterion in the 2022 Call. Relevance and Impact has been increased from 30% to 35%, this increased emphasis on relevant and impactful research reflects the need for accelerated progress and impact in the delivery of Ireland's energy and climate ambitions.
- **Engaged research and considering research end-users**  
We ask Applicants to outline potential research end users targeted in Section 1 of the Application Form. We also require further details in Section 3.6. For further guidance please refer to [page 46](#) and [page 49](#) of the Call document.
- **Diverse participation and gender considerations**  
We ask Applicants to consider gender aspects to their research in Section 1 and Section 3.7 of the Application Form. Please refer to [page 50](#) of the Call document.
- **Data management**  
Additional details are required in section 3.4 (impact-Data management and open access) of the application form, among others. Please refer to [page 48](#) of the Call document for guidance.

## 10. 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 2022 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/>

## 11. Project outputs

### **Can 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, 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?**

There is no specific TRL requirements. If you plan to apply to a Topic, please refer to the individual suggested outputs outlined within the specific Topics in the [Call Document](#). Information on the Experimental Development and Industrial Research categories can be found on [page 11 & 12](#) of the Budget Policy.

## 12. 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 LoS. A checklist is also provided in Section 6 of the Application form.

### **Can you provide further detail as to what is required in a (Host) 3<sup>rd</sup> Level Educational Institution Letter of Support, specifying differences (if any) in Letters of Support required between open and topic strand applicants; Academic and SEAI-based Fellowship applicants?**

There is no difference between Letters of Support (lead applicant organisation) required for open and topic strands. A Letter of Support (Lead Applicant Organisation / Host Organisation) should be provided for all applications, confirming the organisation's endorsement of the proposal, and providing details of how they will host and facilitate the proposed project for open and topic strand applicants and for Fellowships based in the institution. Please refer to the guidance on Letters of Support required available on [page 54](#) of the Call Document. Please also see answer to the above question.

## 13. Previously funded projects

### **Can you please give an example of a 'Low Energy Building' project that was funded in the past 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.

## 14. 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 (Section 1).

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 50](#) 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.

## 15. 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. It is up to applicants to build a project team as suited to their research project activities.

#### While it states in the Call Document that for Fellowships (Academic/SEAI) “proposed project has not been/is not the subject of grant aid from any other source”, can you clarify what the rules are in this regard for other RD&D applications for the open or topic strand?

This applies to all applications to the call, both to the open and topic strands. All applications are required to submit a Lead Applicant Letter of Support, 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. Please see details on [page 54](#) of the SEAI RDD Call Document.

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](#). Please outline any in-kind contributions (e.g. contribution of services/equipment/other) within Section 5.3 of the Application Form.

## Applicant Eligibility Queries

### 16. Third level educational bodies and fellowship applications

#### 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 Technical University	St Angela’s College Sligo
Dublin City University	St Patrick’s College, Drumcondra
Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies	South East Technical University
Dundalk Institute of Technology	Technical University Shannon
Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology	Technological University Dublin
Marino Institute of Education, Dublin	Trinity College Dublin
Mary Immaculate College	Royal Irish Academy of Music, Dublin
Maynooth University	Royal College of Surgeons Ireland, Dublin
Munster Technological University	Royal Irish Academy, Dublin
National College of Art and Design	University College Cork
National College of Ireland, Dublin	University College Dublin
National University of Ireland, Galway	University of Limerick
Pontifical University of Maynooth	

### 17. SEAI-Based Fellowship

#### Can an applicant in the latter stages of their PhD apply for a SEAI-Based Fellowship (as is permitted with the Academic Fellowship)?

#### 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.



## 18. Lead and Partner Applicants

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

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

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, each organisation will submit one budget, per application. Co-applicants within the same organisation can apply for different budget lines within their organisation's total budget. (i.e. One budget per organisation within an application). For Eligible Costs and Budget Categories see Section 2 of the [Budget Policy](#). Please see also replies in the 'General application queries'.

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.

#### **Can I be named as a partner applicant in the proposal? Are Partner Applicants eligible to receive salary funding?**

##### 3<sup>rd</sup> level educational bodies

In the case of a 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> level educational bodies that are already in receipt of salaries funded from other sources. **Applications should not name individuals (Lead and Partner Applicants), but rather request funding for the required staffing skillset** at the appropriate level to carry out the described project specific tasks. It is SEAI's expectation that organisations conduct an open and transparent recruitment process, the details of which may be requested for audit purposes.

If partnering with a partner applicant from a different 3<sup>rd</sup> level educational body, a partner applicant should be named as a legal entity and contact person. In the case of a 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 there any specific qualifications required for partner applicants?**

Partner Applicants 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, 3<sup>rd</sup> level Educational Bodies, public sector bodies or semi-state bodies who are based in the Republic of Ireland.

#### **The Project Team slide included Lead/Partner/Collaborators only. Can external consultants be included in the 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 3 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.



## 19. Organisational access to PEP

**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.

## Financial/ Budgetary Queries

### 20. PhD Stipend/Overheads

**How much is the PhD scholarship stipend?**

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

**Is there an overhead eligible for this?**

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

SEAI will provide a maximum annual contribution of €18,500 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.

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

### 21. 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?**

Seconded staff employed via a third party would not be eligible for reimbursement.

### 22. 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.

### 23. Academic Fellowships

**Can academic fellowship applications include funding requested to support a research assistant/postdoctoral researcher?**

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. All Fellowship applications must be submitted by the individual intending to take up the proposed Fellowship. A mentor/supervisor should be identified as part of the project team and should be listed as a Partner Applicant. Mentors/Supervisors/Assistants are not eligible for funding. If planning a larger project involving multiple researchers, including research assistants, this would **not** be eligible under the academic fellowship category.

## 24. Equipment 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 on [pages 6-7](#) of the Budget Policy and [pages 11-13](#) for Funding Rates.

## 25. Budget template

**Can SEAI provide a completed sample budget template?**

No, this is not possible, but we are happy to answer any specific questions you may have. Please also refer to the examples outlined within the [Budget Policy](#).

## 26. Reimbursement process

**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.

**Can you provide further details of the SEAI budget policy in terms of how the reimbursement policy applies to salaries e.g. Fellowship salary? Is the host 3rd level institution required to provide funds for a fellow upfront, with staff costings reimbursed at a later stage by SEAI – if so, does this agreement need to be confirmed in the institutional Letter of Support?**

Yes, third level educational bodies pay salaries for fellowships hosted by their institution. Financial claims are then submitted to SEAI on a biannual basis for H1 (Jan – Jun) and H2 (Jul – Dec). A letter of support is required from an authorised staff member in the host institution (e.g. University/Research Institution Vice President for Research/Director of Research or equivalent) confirming their endorsement of the proposal and confirming their commitment to hosting and facilitating the proposed project, should it be successful.