

Serbia Accelerating Innovation and Growth Entrepreneurship Project (SAIGE)

NITRA coordinator for EXPO 2027 (part-time)

Terms of Reference

1. Background

Serbia has received a loan from the World Bank Group for the Serbia Accelerating Innovation and Growth Entrepreneurship Project (SAIGE Project) to support the strengthening of the Serbian Innovation and Entrepreneurship ecosystem. The main objective of the Project is to improve (i) the relevance and excellence of scientific research; and (ii) innovative entrepreneurship and access to finance for enterprise growth, as a way of contributing to Serbia's growth and competitiveness. The European Union Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA-II) is also providing complementary financing support for the SAIGE Project. The Project includes the following three components:

Component 1: Research Sector Reforms – (i) Operationalization of Science Fund (SF) including capacity building, and design and implementation of Science Fund grant instruments, and provision of competitive grants to researchers; (ii) Research and Development Institutes (RDIs) reforms through independent evaluation, preparation and implementation of transformation plans, as well as policy development support to Ministry; (iii) Design of Serbian Diaspora Facility and provision of grants for visits and joints projects with diaspora.

Component 2: Enterprise Acceleration – Establishment of Innovation Fund (IF) Programs, a co-investment fund and acceleration program, including the provision of technical assistance facility necessary for the program execution.

Component 3: Project Implementation, Monitoring, Capacity Building

The Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation (NITRA, hereinafter: the Client) is responsible for the overall Project coordination, implementation, and execution of Component 1.2 RDI Reforms. The Project is coordinated and implemented by the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) at the Client level, comprising a PIU Project Manager, project officers for the three Project components, experts for AI, environmental and social standards, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), RDI Reforms advisors and analysts, and other technical and administrative staff.

The SAIGE Project Additional Financing, which became operational in May 2025, also aims to scale up the ongoing SAIGE activities and to further enhance innovation capacity through better R&D and entrepreneurship in the areas of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and biotechnology, to increase the country's competitiveness in global markets.

In parallel with the implementation of the SAIGE Project, the Republic of Serbia is preparing to host **EXPO 2027 Belgrade**¹, a global event expected to attract wide international participation. This represents a strategic opportunity to showcase the achievements of Serbian research and innovation institutions, including beneficiaries of the SAIGE Project, and to further strengthen international partnerships and visibility of Serbia's innovation ecosystem.

2. Objectives of Engagement

The objective of this engagement is to engage the NITRA coordinator for EXPO 2027 (hereinafter: the Consultant) to support the management of NITRA and SAIGE Project Implementing Entities - PIEs (NITRA, SF and IF) in coordinating and facilitating the participation of RDIs and innovative companies,

¹ <https://expobelgrade2027.org/en>

i.e., program beneficiaries, within the framework of EXPO 2027 Belgrade. The inclusion of all relevant stakeholders from the STI field is crucial for the presentation of Serbian success stories.

EXPO 2027 Belgrade represents a strategic opportunity for Serbia to position itself globally as an innovation-driven economy and to showcase the achievements of RDIs and innovative enterprises to international partners and stakeholders.

The Consultant will contribute to ensuring effective coordination, visibility, and strategic alignment of relevant SAIGE-supported initiatives within the EXPO 2027 framework.

3. Scope of Work

The Consultant shall perform the following tasks:

- Coordinate activities related to EXPO 2027 among NITRA and relevant SAIGE-supported institutions and programs (including RDIs, SF and IF beneficiaries);
- Review and analyse granted projects with market potential implemented by PIEs, and provide recommendations to NITRA regarding potential participation and presentation at EXPO 2027 Belgrade;
- Maintain regular communication with the management of NITRA, SAIGE Project Manager, NITRA Project Officer, and selected grants implementation teams;
- Liaise with EXPO-related stakeholders (RDIs, innovative private sector entities, etc.) and the EXPO 2027 organizational team;
- Organize and coordinate meetings between selected RDIs, innovative private sector entities, and the EXPO 2027 team;
- Participate in coordination and planning meetings as required;
- Prepare analytical notes, briefings, reports, and other relevant documentation as required by the Client;
- Perform other related duties as requested by the Client.

The Consultant will be based at the Client's premises. If needed, the Consultant will be invited to field visits during the course of the assignment.

The Client and PIEs will provide access to all relevant documents.

4. Experience and Qualifications

- University degree in economics sciences (master's or equivalent is desirable, bachelor's degree is mandatory);
- At least 5 years of relevant professional experience, with financial and operational execution;
- Experience in projects implemented/funded by international organisations, in the last 3 years, will be considered an advantage;
- Experience in co-operation between officials of the Government and other public authorities;
- Experience in the private sector will be considered an advantage;
- Excellent spoken and written Serbian and English;
- Excellent communication, organisation, and teamwork skills;
- Advanced computer skills.

Selection of consultant:

The candidates will be evaluated applying the following evaluation criteria:

- Qualifications and General experience (40 Points)
- Specific Experience relevant to the Assignment (60 Points)

5. Timeframe and Duration

The Consultant will be engaged on a part-time basis until September 30, 2026.

The expected initial time effort for the assignment is up to 10 working days (i.e., 80 hours) per month. The engagement will be subject to appropriate extension based on the Project's needs and the performance of the candidate.

6. Reporting Requirements

The Consultant will report primarily to the Project Manager and to NITRA management.

The Consultant should prepare monthly activity reports (timesheets) in which he/she will summarise key issues and emerging and day-to-day tasks undertaken. In addition, the Consultant will prepare progress and ad hoc reports and documents where so required by the Project. These reports will be provided on paper (when necessary) and online in English/Serbian language.

The monthly timesheet must be firstly approved by the PIE and the Client.

8. Terms of Payment

The contract, in the form of the Standard World Bank Time-Based Contract for Individual Consultants, will be entered between the Consultant and the Client. Payment for services rendered will be made monthly.

9. Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest

The Consultant will maintain confidentiality on all information that is not in the public domain and shall not be involved in another assignment that represents a conflict of interest with the prevailing assignment.

Selection of consultant:

The candidates will be evaluated applying the following evaluation criteria:

- Qualifications and General experience (40 Points)
- Specific Experience relevant to the Assignment (60 Points)