

Serbia Accelerating Innovation and Growth Entrepreneurship Project

Terms of Reference R&D Institutes Transformation

Members of the Independent Selection Panel

1. Background

Serbia has received a loan from the World Bank Group for the Serbia Accelerating Innovation and Growth Entrepreneurship Project (SAIGE Project)¹ 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 complimentary financing support for the SAIGE Project. The Project includes the following three components:

Component 1: Research Sector Reforms – (i) Operationalization of Science Fund 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 Katapult Program, 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

Until October 2022, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development (MoESTD) was responsible for the overall Project coordination and implementation, and execution of Component 1.2 RDI Reforms. As a result of the Government reorganization after the April 2022 elections, a new line ministry – Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation (NITRA, hereinafter: the Client) – has been established as the successor and tasked with the Project coordination and implementation. On a daily level, the Project is coordinated and implemented by the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) at the Client level, comprising of a PIU manager, project officers for the three Project components, experts for environmental and social standards, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), RDI Reforms advisors and analyst, and other technical and administrative staff.

As a part of the transformation process of the participating RDIs under Component 1.2 of the SAIGE Project, investments in Upgrading Technology Readiness Level (UTRL) initiatives are made to facilitate technology transfer and/or commercialization of R&D output and innovation. Technology readiness level (TRL) is a measurement system used to assess the maturity of a technology on a scale from one to nine. Level one represents the observation of basic principles, such as paper studies of basic technology properties, while level nine indicates that the technology has been tested and proven in an operational environment and is ready for commercial deployment. SAIGE UTRL projects are projects pursued by RDIs with the goal of increasing the commercial readiness of intellectual property or technology, highly

¹ <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P170185>

preferable in partnership with the private sector. Each eligible UTRL project may receive financial support of €50,000-€150,000 under the SAIGE Project.

The goal is to increase the commercial readiness of intellectual property or technology in partnership with the private sector. Based on the level of private sector support in the development of UTRL projects, four different cases of UTRL projects may emerge:

- (1) **Establishment of a spin-out company.** A spin-out is a new venture established by an RDI to commercialize innovative technologies, products, or services best pursued with innovations at a higher technology readiness level, with a well-defined and committed team, strong intellectual property (IP) position and technology, foreseen product/market fit, sound business plan and a clear strategy for business development.
- (2) **Licensing agreement.** An agreement with a private sector company which demonstrated a strong level of interest in the early stages of the UTRL project and which will provide significant financial and/or in-kind support by the later stages of the project.
- (3) **Contract research project(s).** Development of contract research projects with private sector companies which expressed strong interest early in the research.
- (4) **Limited TRL advancement.** In cases where it is not reasonable to expect a significant private sector financial investment during the UTRL project due to project's limitations such as funding or timeframe limits in the fields such as biotech and medical devices or treatments, limited TRL advancement, for example, from TRL 4 to TRL 6 may be considered with the expectation of private sector involvement once the technology is further developed.

2. Scope of Work

The Client seeks to engage three members for the Independent Selection Panel (hereinafter: the Consultants). The Independent Selection Panel has a mandate to review and evaluate UTRL proposals on a competitive basis centered around a portfolio approach. The consultant's role will be to evaluate UTRL project proposals and select the most promising proposals to be funded as a part of the RDI transformation plans. In the future, the Panel may be asked to also do a similar evaluation process for the PoC projects from the RDIs.

Specifically, the Independent Selection Panel Members will have the following roles and responsibilities:

- Familiarize with the evaluation procedure and criteria of the UTRL projects, as provided in the RDI Transformation Operations Manual and Evaluation Guidelines document;
- Conduct evaluation of the submitted proposals and provide scores with justifications according to the evaluation criteria;
- Take part in joint meetings with SAIGE PIU and World Bank experts to discuss assessment and evaluation scores of the UTRL projects passing the pre-screening;
- Prepare written evaluations and feedback for all UTRL project proposals, including the ones not selected for financing.

Procedural details regarding the selection criteria, assessment process and reporting will be provided by the Client in the Evaluation Guidelines document in advance of the evaluation process.

The Consultants will conduct the work in line with the relevant Project documents including the Project Appraisal Document (PAD), and RDI Transformation Operations Manual.

The Client will provide access to all relevant documents.

3. Experience, Qualifications, and Eligibility

Required experience and qualifications:

- University Degree; minimum Master's degree, preferably PhD;
- At least 10 years of relevant work experience in R&D and innovation field in the private sector, public sector, and/or academia;
- Experience serving on private or public investment committees focusing on technology development and innovation;
- Previous experience in the Serbian tech community or similarly young tech/entrepreneurial ecosystems will be considered an advantage;
- Previous experience in technology startup business development lifecycles and related key performance indicators gained through experience as an investor, founder and/or operator will be considered an advantage;
- International background will be considered an advantage;
- Communication and teamwork skills;
- Computer literacy and use of MS Office tools;
- Spoken and written English.

4. Candidate Selection

The candidates will be evaluated applying the following evaluation criteria:

- General experience (40 Points)
- Specific Experience relevant to the Assignment (30 Points)
- Technical Skills and Expertise (30 Points)

5. Timeframe and Duration

The Consultants will be engaged on a part-time basis for one year with the potential for extension based on candidates' performance and Project needs. The expected time effort for the assignment is up to 30 days per Consultant. Depending on the need there is a possibility of increasing the time effort.

The Consultant agrees to be engaged in no more than 48 hours per week cumulatively for this assignment plus any additional assignments/contracts.

6. Reporting Requirements

The Consultants will work under the supervision of the PIU Project Manager to whom he/she directly reports.

Each Consultant should prepare activity reports (timesheets) summarizing tasks performed as well as working hours spent on these tasks. Reports will be provided on paper (when necessary) and electronically in the English/Serbian language.

7. Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest

The Consultants 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 to the prevailing assignment.