

# **Serbia Accelerating Innovation and Entrepreneurship Project**

## **Science Fund Project Officer**

### **Terms of Reference**

#### **1. Background**

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

**Component 1: Research and Development Sector Reforms** – Sub-Component 1.1 - The financing of selected competitive programs of the Science Fund, Operationalization of Science Fund, including the strengthening of its corporate governance, and provision of competitive grants to researchers; Sub-Component 1.2 - The design and implementation of institutional transformation plans for Selected RDIs; Sub-Component 1.3 - Capacity building for the AI Institute staff and researchers on AI topics; Sub-Component 1.4 – Support to BIO4, and Sub-Component 1.5 - Establishment of a diaspora facility within the Science Fund.

**Component 2: Enterprise Acceleration** – Establishment of co-investment fund to provide Matching Grants to Selected Companies that raise an equal or greater private equity; Establishment of AI Matching Grant program.

**Component 3: Project Implementation, Monitoring, Capacity Building**

SAIGE has been extended in 2025 with additional AI (artificial intelligence) financing, and a mandate to support AI-based research and innovation. 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 of a PIU Project 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.

In addition to the above, Serbia received additional funds (Additional Financing) for the SAIGE Project to support artificial intelligence (AI) development in Serbia in support of Serbia's commitment to AI development, recognizing the importance of AI, digitalization, and robotics in

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<sup>1</sup> <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P170185> and <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P181485>

various sectors, including the economy, healthcare, public services, the environment, etc. specifically focusing on the legal framework, enhancing workforce skills in AI, and improving the regulatory environment, coverage of AI topics in education and research, and the availability of computing power, including support for the AI programs.

Serbia's high-level plan is to support AI programs/activities by allocating additional funds that will focus on three main areas: green development based on IT (green transition), transport systems and the auto industry (e-mobility), and the application of AI in clinical medicine (clinical healthcare). This plan, inter alia, includes support for Science Fund (SF) AI programs to support scientific researchers through grants in deploying artificial intelligence (AI) and cutting-edge technologies to drive innovation and improve services and capacity building of the SF in this regard.

The Client is now looking for a local individual consultant, i.e. Science Fund Project Officer (hereinafter: the Consultant), to support the Science Fund activities of the SAIGE Project.

## **2. Objectives of Engagement**

The Consultant will be responsible for technical and administrative support required for implementing the activities, coordinating, monitoring and reporting on the operations and activities of the SF under Project Component 1, Subcomponents 1.1. and 1.5, in close cooperation with the Project Manager and Science Fund staff.

## **3. Scope of Work**

Following are the specific tasks and responsibilities of the engagement of the Consultant:

1. Support the PIE<sup>2</sup> – SF responsible for the implementation of Subcomponents 1.1 and 1.5, including but not limited to:
  - Drafting the Terms of Reference (ToRs) for experts, services and technical specifications for goods and non-consulting services;
  - Support the design, implementation and monitoring of the SF competitive programs and the Serbian Diaspora Facility (SDF) and its relevant documents;
  - Exchanging relevant Project procurement and financial documents with the CFU<sup>3</sup> (ToRs, Evaluation Reports, Contracts, Consultant reports, Invoices, delivery receipts, Bank Statements and supporting documents, which will be collected by Consultant, who will ensure approvals from authorized persons at the SF and forward documents to CFU;
  - Deliver on a monthly basis the summary table of disbursements made in respect of grants, trainings, consultants' services, and operating costs along with the supported documents, coordinate payments under the Subcomponents 1.1 and 1.5 and submit electronic copies of Bank statements, manage contracts, and keep records of Project documents.
2. Administrative and technical support to the PIU in the implementation of the following tasks:

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<sup>2</sup> PIE – Project implementing entity

<sup>3</sup> CFU – Central Fiduciary Unit within Ministry of Finance responsible for the procurement and financial management of the Project

- Development of relevant reports and progress reports as required by the PIU, NITRA and World Bank;
  - Tracking of SF performance indicators (KPI - Key Performance Indicators) and their interpretation;
  - Preparation for participation at the relevant meetings;
  - Perform other duties as required by the Project Manager and PIE – Science Fund, including M&E requirements;
3. Administrative and technical support to other experts engaged under Subcomponents 1.1 and 1.5.

The Consultant will conduct the work in line with the relevant Project documents, including the Loan Agreement, Subsidiary Agreement, Project Appraisal Document (PAD), Project Operations Manual (POM), Grant Manual, Environmental and Social Management Framework, and Stakeholder Engagement plan.

The Consultant will cooperate with PIU and SF staff members involved in the management and implementation of Subcomponents 1.1. and 1.5 of the Project, as well as individual experts and consulting firms involved in the activities under these subcomponents.

The Consultant will be based at the PIU NITRA premises. The SF and PIU NITRA will provide access to all relevant documents.

#### **4. Experience and Qualifications**

- Postgraduate academic or professional degree (master's degree, specialist academic degree, or specialist professional degree);
- At least 5 years of relevant professional experience;
- Working experience in the implementation of at least one project implemented/funded by the World Bank or other international organisations;
- Experience in co-operation between officials of the Government and other public authorities;
- Excellent spoken and written Serbian and English;
- Excellent communication, organisation, and teamwork skills;
- Advanced computer skills.

#### Selection criteria:

The candidates will be evaluated by applying the following evaluation criteria:

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

#### **5. Timeframe and Duration**

The Consultant will be engaged on a full-time basis until September 30, 2027, which is the official Project end date, with a probation period of 6 months.

## **6. Reporting Requirements**

The Consultant will report primarily to the Client/Project Manager. The Consultant should prepare monthly activity reports (timesheets) in which he/she will summarize 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 the English/Serbian language.

Each monthly timesheet must be firstly approved by the Client/PIU Project Manager.

## **7. 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 to the prevailing assignment.