

Serbia Accelerating Innovation and Growth Entrepreneurship Project

NITRA Operations Advisor (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 (SAIGE) Project**¹ (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

Component 2: Enterprise Acceleration

Component 3: Project Implementation, Monitoring, and Capacity Building

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development (NITRA) until October 2022 was responsible for the overall Project coordination and implementation and execution of Component 1.2 RDI Reforms. After the April 2022 elections, a new line ministry – Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation (NITRA, hereinafter: the Client) has been tasked (in October 2022) as the successor, with the overall Project coordination and implementation. The Project is coordinated (and implemented) by the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) at the Client, comprising a PIU manager, project officers for the three Project components, experts for environmental and social standards, M&E and RDI transformation officers, and other technical and administrative staff.

The Client is now looking for a local individual consultant, i.e., NITRA Operations Advisor (hereinafter: the Consultant), to support strengthening NITRA's capacity in financial management and monitoring of budget and project funds.

2. Scope of Work

The Consultant will provide technical support to strengthen NITRA's capacity in financial management, operations and monitoring of budget and project funds. Building on extensive experience in finance, accounting, and corporate management, the Consultant will focus on identifying bottlenecks and improving processes and operations related to financial planning, reporting within NITRA.

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

The objective of the Consultant's engagement is to support and help streamline the finance operations-related aspects of project funds in NITRA and to align them with project outcomes that will improve overall management between NITRA, scientific research organisations, and projects.

Specifically, the Consultant will:

- Review existing NITRA financial operational procedures, reporting flows, and coordination mechanisms within NITRA;
- Identify challenges in the financial planning and operations, cash flow management, and budget execution of funds, and propose practical measures for improvement;
- Assistance to Client in reviewing NITRA financial documents and processing;
- Support the development of internal control mechanisms and standardized reporting templates to ensure transparency and efficiency in fund utilization;
- Provide on-the-job mentoring to NITRA financial staff to strengthen their analytical, budgeting, and financial reporting capacities;
- Contribute to aligning NITRA's financial management practices, ensuring consistency with local finance-related regulations and NITRA project requirements;
- Prepare analytical and financial reports and participate in meetings;
- Ensure smooth implementation and execution of activities and objectives in line with the Client's obligations regarding projects under implementation;
- Enhance overall management between NITRA and Projects;
- Attend meetings and related events at the request of the Client;
- Perform other duties as required by the Project Coordinator and Project Manager.

The Consultant will be based at the NITRA premises.

The NITRA will provide the requisite office infrastructure and access to all relevant documents.

3. Experience and Qualifications

The candidate suitable for this position should have the following qualifications:

- Advanced university degree in finance/banking and business management, accounting, or economics.
- At least 10 years of professional experience in finance, accounting, and corporate implementation;
- Experience in budget planning operations and public finances is a strong plus;
- Background with experience in team leadership, business planning, monitoring and market analysis;
- Advanced computer skills, and in particular experience with financial software;
- Working knowledge of English.
- Prior experience in international business environments and experience with donor-funded projects are considered an advantage.

Selection criteria:

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

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

4. 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.

5. Reporting Requirements

The Consultant will work under the supervision of the Client to whom he/she directly reports.

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 Client. These reports will be provided on paper (when necessary) and electronically in English/Serbian language.

The monthly timesheet must be firstly approved by the Client.

6. Terms of Payment

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

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.