

Serbia Accelerating Innovation and Growth Entrepreneurship Project
Consulting Services for Capacity Building for RDIs for Horizon Europe, Other
Competitive Programs and Project Cycle Management

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 complimentary 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, Capacity Building

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development (MoESTD) is responsible for the overall Project coordination and implementation, as well as execution of Component 1.2 RDI Reforms. Implementation of the Project is carried out by the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) team at the MoESTD comprising of PIU Project Manager, and technical and administrative staff.

2. Objective of the Assignment

The MoESTD is in the process of improving the Serbian public research and development (R&D) sector including a revised policy and legal framework, reform of public R&D Institutions (RDIs), R&D financing model, establishment of the Science Fund, etc.

In this context, in October 2020, the MoESTD engaged a consultancy firm for conducting independent external assessments of a number of RDIs, including preparing their transformation plans. In December 2021 MoESTD has signed the Memorandum of Understanding with the 6 RDIs defining the roadmap for process of transformation for each RDI; more RDIs are going undergoing a similar process. Important part of the transformation process is capacity building for management, research and administrative staff of the RDIs to diversify funding and increase success rate in competitive project-based funding programs for research and innovation with a strong focus on the Horizon Europe.

The MoESTD now plans to receive consulting services to assist RDIs to increase their competences in project proposal and management. The RDIs have diverse background in

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

participating and managing projects, therefore it is expected that the consulting support will be tailor-made to address specific needs and opportunities of each RDI. The Consulting service should involve trainings, workshops, coaching, advisory services and effective support for the selected RDIs under transformation. The training sessions should not duplicate content of the information and knowledge already provided by the MoESTD and Horizon Europe National Contact Points network, but deliver highly relevant additional information, knowledge, advice and skills to complement with the workshops and info days already available.

The Consulting firm is expected to propose relevant advisors and experts to work closely with RDIs' teams and deliver support to groups of researchers in selecting calls, designing project ideas and consortiums, addressing potential partners, developing project proposals and preparing financial plans. Consulting firm is also expected to propose improvements and assist RDIs in building internal institutional capacities, procedures and practices for successful project governance, management and implementation, including monitoring, evaluation and reporting. Project proposals will include Horizon Europe calls and other competitive research and innovation programs.

The Consulting firm should assist RDIs in increasing their overall competences in project management, starting from the research teams, but including also institutional management, technical and administrative staff. The outcome of the consulting service should be an increase in number of submitted proposals where the RDIs that have received support take either role of lead applicant or work package leader, as well as the rise of their success rate in winning competitive grants.

3. Scope of Work and expected outputs

The scope of work for the Consulting firm includes the following:

1. Preparation of a short and focused Needs assessment report with proposed work plan for each RDI that will include: a short overview of previous experience of RDI in H2020 and other relevant programs as consortium leader, work package leader, and as a partner in consortia; identification of number of research teams and groups interested to take part in proposal writing and trainings; number per category (management, research, technical, administrative) of employees interested to join training sessions on Horizon Europe and project cycle management; brief assessment RDI's needs for improvement of project governance, management and administration based on the currently ongoing and upcoming competitive funding, including but not limited to Horizon Europe program and RDI's partnership potentials; KPIs for measuring success rate in the Horizon Europe and other targeted competitive programs.
2. Conducting training sessions and workshops for RDIs based on the training needs assessment and the Transformation Plans, delivered for one or more RDIs at the same time, covering all relevant topics, including but not limited to:
 - Horizon Europe: Structure of funding mechanism, overview of funding potentials; Work Programmes & Research Priorities; Specific Issues (open science, gender dimension, interdisciplinary approach, research data management, ethics, Social Sciences and Humanities); Finding the right call,

specific challenges, scope, expected impact, rules of engagement, evaluation of proposals; Technical issues (how to register on portal, application forms and process of submitting application), Tricks and tips in proposals preparations (common errors, shortcomings and pitfalls, Brussels “English to use”, etc.), Examples of good Horizon projects.

- Preparing competitive project proposals: how to transform an idea into a project proposal, What is “Project”?, Sound preparation for proposal writing, Initiating and Planning phases, How to build partnerships and consortiums for targeted programs/calls, Excellence in writing project proposals (defining objectives, goals-oriented project planning, Logical Framework Matrix, compliance with EU goals and priorities, theory of change), Project impact (outcome and impact, measurability, stakeholders, dissemination, communication), How to develop good Implementation plan (work packages and tasks, deliverables and milestones, time planning, risk management, project governance, resource planning), Financial consideration and budget planning.
 - Successful project implementation: rules and procedures of effective project management, consortium agreement, consortium management, tasks and times management, internal reporting and monitoring, dissemination and communication of results, project related IP issues (background and foreground), external project reporting, financial management and administration, national and program financial rules, challenges and best practice, procurements, financial audit.
3. Providing expert support to RDIs’ teams and improving the quality of project proposals, starting from the selection of calls, design of project ideas and consortiums, addressing potential partners, developing project proposals and budgets, for both cases when RDI acts as lead applicant and as work package leader.
 4. Providing expert support to RDIs’ to advance the overall quality of project management and its relevant phases. This involves suggesting appropriate improvements of organizational aspects, procedures, policies and practices, and providing effective support and assistance in building of institutional capacities, including skills of managerial, research, technical and administrative staff, for successful project governance, technical and financial project administration, monitoring, and reporting.
 5. Conducting individual and group coaching sessions aiming to suit the needs of the RDIs and their individual assignments taken.
 6. Conducting short evaluation after each training, workshop, coaching session and proposal submission, and sharing the obtained evaluation results with PIU/MoESTD within the monthly activity reports.
 7. Preparation of short and focused final report summarizing the process, evaluation of trainings, individual coaching and expert support provided to the RDIs, with lessons learned and recommendations for further improvements. The final report should be submitted to PIU/MoESTD at the end of the assignment.

4. Experience and Qualifications of the Consulting firm and the staff of the Consulting firm

The Consulting firm must possess the following qualifications:

- Be a legal entity registered in the Republic of Serbia,
- At least 5 years of general experience in providing expert support, coaching and conducting trainings in Serbia for H2020 and other funding opportunities for researchers and academia,
- Proven record on successful completion of at least 5 assignments in conducting support to winning project proposals in Horizon 2020 in last three years,
- Capacity to assign a qualified and experienced team that will work on this assignment: 5 key staff (2 Senior Project Experts and 3 Project Experts), with adequate qualifications for this contract (qualifications of key personnel will be jointly taken into consideration i.e. qualifications of key personnel as a group will be evaluated) as follows:

Required qualifications of the Senior Project Experts:

- MSc or PhD degree;
- At least 10 years of experience in managing collaborative academic research projects;
- Experience in leading at least 5 successful research grants under competitive programs (e.g. FP7, H2020, HEU, etc.);
- Experience in providing expert support to other research teams in preparing successful project proposals will be considered a very strong advantage;
- Excellent spoken and written English language skills;
- Excellent communication, organisation, coaching and teamwork skills.

Required qualifications of the Project Experts:

- Minimum BSc degree;
- At least 7 years of experience in international project management in academic sector;
- At least 3 years of experience in conducting consulting services to RDIs in writing successful project proposals and their implementation;
- At least 3 years of experience in conducting trainings in preparing successful proposals for competitive research programs and in general project cycle management;
- Holding position of National Contact Point for H2020 or HEU will be considered a very strong advantage;
- Excellent spoken and written English language skills;
- Excellent communication, organisation, coaching and teamwork skills.

Any changes in the team of key experts or additional expert engagements during the assignment should be subject of prior approval by the PIU/MoESTD.

Selection of Consulting firm

The Consulting firm will be evaluated applying the following evaluation criteria:

#	Criteria	Weight
1	General experience in the field of the assignment	10
2	Specific experience relevant to the assignment	40
3	Key Experts' qualifications and competence for the assignment	50
	The Key Experts' qualifications shall be evaluated according to the following sub-criteria and their belonging weights: a) General qualifications (general education and experience) 20% b) Adequacy for the Assignment (relevant experience in similar assignments) 80%	

5. Timing and duration

The Consulting firm is expected to be engaged for a period of 12 months, with a possibility of extension subject to performance and project needs. The firm will ensure that Senior Project Experts and Project Experts are allocated with sufficient number of days to accomplish their tasks with required quality. The expected time effort is approximately 100 working days. The assignment is envisaged to start in April 2022.

6. Reporting obligations

The Consultant shall:

- Prepare monthly activity reports (timesheets), within 10 (ten) days after the end of month for which the report is due. Activity reports must contain a brief description of the assignments performed during this period, an update of progress and key findings, a summary of key training, coaching, consulting activities and meetings, key issues, as well as outstanding and resolved tasks and any other relevant information along with time spent on each issue and task. The timesheets will be supported by relevant documentation developed in the relevant month period. The timesheets need to be submitted by each of the key staff members.
- Prepare inception report and final report, and ad-hoc reports and documents when needed, at the PIU/MoESTD request.

The Consultant will be accountable and report to the Project Manager. The reports will be provided on paper (when necessary) and in electronic version in English/Serbian language.

7. Input by the Client and the MoESTD

The PIU/MoESTD will help with the access to relevant data and information as well as communication with the RDIs and other stakeholders when needed.

8. Terms of Payment

The Contract, in the form of the Standard World Bank Time-Based Contract for Small Assignments (covering fee and reimbursable expenses related to the assignment), will be entered into between the Consultant and the MoESTD as a Client. Payment for services rendered will be made monthly, based on monthly invoice and timesheets submitted and on compliance with the Project's envisaged timeframe. Each monthly timesheet must be approved by the Project Manager. The SAIGE PIU will administer the Contract and make payments.

9. Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest

The Consultant undertakes to 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.