

CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR PROJECT PEER REVIEWERS

Date of publication: August 30, 2019

Reference number SFRS/Call/2019/02-b

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NOTICE OF CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

for the establishment of a list of experts for the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia

Date of publication: August 30, 2019

Reference number SFRS/Call/2019/02-b

1. Contracting Authority:

Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia, Nemanjina 22-26, 11 000 Belgrade

2. Reference number:

SFRS/Call/2019/02-b

3. Registration procedure

The objective of this Call for Expressions of Interest is to set up a list of external experts – Peer Reviewers for the review of Project Proposals that will be submitted to the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia (SF).

4. Interested candidates are invited to submit a filled-in Registration form and CV in English language to the following email address: experts@sciencefund.gov.rs

The Science Fund reserves the right to request supporting documents that confirm the information provided in the Registration form and CV, such as copies of degrees or diplomas, employers' certificates, references etc.

5. General description of the procedure

Natural persons are invited to submit an expression of interest in accordance with the rules set out in this Call.

The Call is open for continuous submission throughout the year.

The Science Fund will perform an assessment of incoming applications for Peer Reviewers every two weeks. The applicants will be informed of the assessment outcome.

Experts who meet the requirements defined in Section 10 will be considered for potential reviewers. Further selection will be performed based on the criteria stipulated in Section 11.

The Science Fund will sign contracts with selected experts. The signed contract entails no obligation on the part of the Science Fund concerning the allocation of Project Proposals for review to the expert.

Based on the specifications for each call, the Science Fund will contact the expert and check his/her availability, define deadlines, scope of work and send review guidelines for the corresponding program.

The application procedure for project proposals is performed in English, due to the international evaluation process. Therefore, the submitted Project Proposals are in English and the Peer Reviewers shall perform their work in English.

6. Engagement of experts resulting from this Call

The collected database resulting from this Call will be used exclusively for tasks to be carried out in accordance with the requirements stipulated in the Terms of Reference.

7. Fields covered by the Call for Peer Reviewers

Applications that will be received under this Call will be classified based on their nature into the following fields:

1. sciences and mathematics,
2. technology and engineering sciences,
3. medical sciences,
4. biotechnical sciences,
5. social sciences,
6. humanities.

8. Place of delivery

As a general rule, the services performed by the Peer Reviewers will be provided online through email or portal. In exceptional cases, the Peer Reviewers could be invited at a meeting on the premises of the Science Fund.

9. Exclusion criteria

Experts shall be excluded from participation if:

- a) they are bankrupt or under liquidation, are having their affairs administered by the courts, have entered into an arrangement with creditors, have suspended business activities, are the subject of proceedings concerning those matters, or are in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for in national legislation or regulations;
- b) they or persons having powers of representation, decision making or control over them have been convicted of an offence concerning their professional conduct by a judgment of a competent authority which has the force of *res judicata*;
- c) they have been guilty of grave professional misconduct proven by any means which the Science Fund can justify including by decisions of international organizations;
- d) they are not in compliance with their obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions or the payment of taxes in accordance with the legal provisions of the country in which they are established, or with those of the country of the Science Fund or those of the country where the contract is to be performed;
- e) they or persons having powers of representation, decision making or control over them have been the subject of a judgment which has the force of *res judicata* for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organization, money laundering or any other illegal activity, where such an illegal activity is detrimental to Serbia's and EU financial interests;
- f) they are subject to an administrative penalty for being guilty of misrepresentation in supplying the information required by the Science Fund as a condition of participation in a procurement procedure or failing to supply information, or being declared to be in serious breach of their obligation under a contract covered by the budget;
- g) they have a conflict of interest in connection with the contract; a conflict of interest could arise in particular as a result of economic interests, political or national affinities, family or emotional ties or any other relevant connection or shared interest.

Before signing a contract, the experts shall provide a declaration on their honor stating that they are not in one of the situations of exclusion listed above. In case of doubt, they may be requested to provide supporting evidence of non-exclusion.

10. Inclusion criteria

The minimum required qualifications of the external expert - Peer Reviewer are:

- Education:
 - a) for research experts: university degree – PhD
 - b) for experts from industry: university degree – bachelor's
- Work experience: at least 5 years of relevant working experience in R&D (universities, research organizations, labs or company research branches) or project management (leadership role in conducting R&D projects within industry or research organizations).
- Previous project proposal review experience.
- Ability to work in English.

All applicants who meet the listed criteria will be considered as peer reviewers for the Science Fund.

11. Assessment criteria

The candidates will be assessed based on the following criteria:

- Areas of expertise.
- Education (bachelor's degree, master's degree, PhD degree).
- Work experience (<5, 6–10, 11–15, >15 years).
- Type of work experience (academia, research, industry, government, consulting, NGO)
- Scientific experience (journal publications, conference publications, other scientific results).
- Project experience (coordinated projects, participated projects, including funding sources, duration, budget).
- Peer review experience (number of performed reviews: 1–5, 5–10, 11–20, >20 reviews in the past 5 years, funding sources, project types and budgets of the reviewed projects).

Selection of the Peer Reviewers is performed through two stages:

1. Matching the research area and key words of the proposed project with the area of expertise of the Peer Reviewers and identifying possible Peer Reviewers for each project proposal.
2. Assessment of the expertise and experience of the identified Peer Reviewers according to criteria listed in this section, and ranking the Peer Reviewers accordingly.

12. Conditions of remuneration and reimbursement of experts

The payments for services will be made based on the number of project proposal evaluated. Peer Reviewers shall be remunerated at a fixed price of 100 euros per Project Proposal. The Peer Reviewers shall provide their services online via email or a portal.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

for

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1. Background

The Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia (SF) is a public organization that supports scientific and research activities. It was established in 2019, with the aim of providing funds and supporting conditions for the continuous development of scientific and research activities in the Republic of Serbia necessary for the advancement of a knowledge-based society.

The activities of the Science Fund are targeted at scientific research, as well as technological and developmental programs. The goal is to achieve the strategic objectives of the scientific and technological development of the Republic of Serbia.

Within the programs of the Science Fund, projects are funded through competitive public calls. The aim of the projects is to provide high-level research, innovative results, competitiveness at international level and relevance to society in general.

Information relating to the programs may be accessed on the [SF WEBSITE](#).

2. Scope of work

The general functions and responsibilities of the Peer Reviewers (experts) are:

- Evaluating Project Proposals based on the evaluation criteria listed in the Review Guidelines for the specific program;
- Submitting comments and scores for Project Proposals in the Peer Review Evaluation Form via email (except where and if requested otherwise).

Names of the Peer Reviewers are confidential.

Each Peer Reviewer must declare any conflict of interest prior to undertaking the evaluation of a particular Project Proposal.

The role and responsibilities of the Peer Reviewers are as follows:

- Sign the Declaration of impartiality and confidentiality provided by SF.
- Receive access to the Project Proposal to be reviewed through email or an online portal.
- Examine Project Proposal documents.
- Within two days of receiving the Project Proposal for review, examine the assigned Project Proposal to verify that the Project Proposal matches the reviewers' area of expertise and inform the SF of any concerns.
- Review all Project Proposals assigned to them for conflicts of interest or the appearance of conflicts of interest in accordance with the SF Confidentiality and Prevention of Conflict of Interest Policy and inform the SF team if any issues exist.
- Within 3 weeks of receiving access to the Project Proposal, prepare a written evaluation

(using the Peer Review Evaluation Form), based on the defined evaluation criteria and judgment of merit. The review must give concise, pertinent and well justified comments for each criterion of the evaluation grid, in a wording that may be given directly to the applicant, if requested. Strong and weak points must be reflected. In particular, comments should not include only the summary of the Project Proposal, but should provide short critical analysis in line with (but not limited to) the respective questions of the evaluation grid.

- Assign numerical scores according to Review Guidelines of the Program.
- Complete and send the Peer Review Evaluation Form for each Project Proposal according to the described procedure.

3. Experience and qualifications

Minimum required qualifications of the Peer Reviewer are:

- Education: university degree – bachelor's.
- Work experience: at least 5 years of relevant working experience in R&D (universities, research organizations, labs or company research branches) or project management (leadership role in conducting R&D projects within industry or research organizations).
- Peer Reviewer experience: minimum 5 peer reviews conducted in the last 5 years.

The application process for projects is performed in English, due to the international evaluation process. Therefore, submitted Project Proposals are in English and the Peer Reviewers shall perform their work in English.

4. Timing and duration

The application process is performed in English, due to the international evaluation process. Therefore, Project Proposals submitted are in English and the Peer Reviewers shall perform their work in English.

Generally, the Peer Reviewers are expected to provide their services upon the timely notification by the SF team.

The Peer Reviewers' work will be done remotely and submitted via email.

5. Reporting obligations

The Peer Reviewer shall report directly to the SF team in the following manner:

- After receiving the Project Proposal for evaluation, the Peer Reviewer shall provide the results of the evaluation of the Project Proposal along with comprehensive comments and relevant scores, in written form via the email or portal, within specified deadlines – using the Peer Review Evaluation Form.

6. Input by the Science Fund

The SF team will provide necessary documentation and templates, as well as access to the Project Proposals to be reviewed.

The Review Guidelines will be provided to Peer Reviewers. The Review Guidelines will serve as guidance on how to conduct the review and how to provide adequate feedback for the Project Proposals.

7. Terms of payment

The payments for services will be made based on the number of project proposals evaluated. The remuneration for one review is 100 euros. The Lead Reviewer will be paid additional 50 euros per Project Proposal, for a consensus review. The consensus review is made based on the evaluations from all Peer Reviewers who participated in the evaluation of a Project Proposal, and finalized by the Lead Reviewer.

The SF shall administer a Contract with the Peer Reviewer. The Peer Reviewer shall submit an Invoice for the conducted services. The SF shall provide the template of the Invoice to the Peer Reviewer.

8. Confidentiality and conflict of interest

The Peer Reviewer shall comply with the SF Confidentiality Policy and Prevention of Conflict of Interest Policy and to maintain confidentiality on all information that is not in the public domain. The Peer Reviewer shall not be involved in another assignment that represents a conflict of interest to the prevailing assignment.

9. Other potential engagements

The Science Fund is launching the present Call for Expressions of Interest to establish a list of experts to assist in the peer-review process.

The Peer Reviewers identified through this Call may be contacted in the future for additional expert tasks:

- a) Establishing, analysis and monitoring programs managed by the SF, as a member of a program committee.
- b) Evaluating proposals received in response to calls for project proposals:
 - evaluating project proposals as a peer reviewer;
 - evaluating project proposals as an expert in the program evaluation committee (2nd stage of evaluation).
- c) Evaluating and monitoring projects:
 - evaluating project reports;
 - evaluating project products and results;
 - project monitoring and site visits;
 - any other tasks relating to the analysis and/or monitoring of programs and projects.
- d) Specific studies and analyses relating to the Science Fund activities.
- e) Support to the Science Fund during public events.
- f) Any other tasks relating to the programs managed by the Science Fund.

10. Other information

General terms and conditions applicable to the Call for Expressions of Interest:

All documents submitted by experts become the property of the Science Fund and will be regarded as confidential.

The rights relating to the services completed within the contract and those pertaining to their duplication and publication will remain the property of the Science Fund.

Any document based, in full or in part, on the work completed under this contract, may only be transmitted or published with permission of the Science Fund.

Submission of an application in response to the present Call for Expressions of Interest implies acceptance by the expert of all provisions and conditions stipulated in the present Call for Expressions of Interest. The experts will waive their own terms of business.

11. Processing of personal data

If processing replies to the present Call for Expressions of Interest involves recording and processing of personal data (such as: name, address and CV), such data will be processed pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data.

12. Code of conduct

The expert shall perform the contract to the highest professional standards. The expert shall have sole responsibility for complying with all legal obligations incumbent on them, notably those arising from employment law, tax law and social legislation.

13. Call documentation

The following documents are annexed to the Call and form an integral part of it:

Annex 1: Registration form for Peer Reviewers, which should be filled in and sent by email together with CV.