

Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia

# **CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR PROGRAM BOARD MEMBERS FOR PROJECT EVALUATION**

## **PRISMA Program**

Date of publication: 23. June 2023.

Date of change: [07. August 2023.](#)

Reference number **SFRS/Call/2023/02**

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## **NOTICE OF CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST**

**for the establishment of the Program Board of the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia**

**Date of publication:** 23. June 2023

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**Reference number** SFRS/Call/2023/02

### **1. Contracting Authority**

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

### **2. Reference number**

SFRS/Call/2023/02

### **3. Registration procedure**

The objective of this Call for Expression of Interest is to set up a Program Board for the second-stage evaluation of Project Proposals that will be submitted to the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia (hereinafter referred as to the: “Science Fund”) as a part of the PRISMA program (hereinafter referred as to the: “Program”).

Interested candidates are invited to submit a filled-in Registration form and CV in English to the following email address: [prisma-pb@fondzanauku.gov.rs](mailto:prisma-pb@fondzanauku.gov.rs) by 00:00 CET on 08. August 2023.

Submission forms received after the deadline stipulated above will not be taken into consideration.

### **4. Information to be provided**

Interested candidates should submit an application that consists of a filled-in Registration form and CV to the following email address: [prisma-pb@fondzanauku.gov.rs](mailto:prisma-pb@fondzanauku.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 by sending an application in accordance with the rules set out in this Call. The Science Fund will perform an assessment of submitted applications for Program Board Members and invite those applicants who meet both inclusion and assessment criteria to sign a Contract with the Science Fund.

Candidates who meet the requirements defined in Section 10 will be considered as potential Program Board Members. Further selection will be performed based on the criteria stipulated in Section 12 of this Call.

The Science Fund will sign contracts with the selected Program Board Members. The signed Contract entails no obligation on the part of the Science Fund concerning the allocation of Project Proposals for evaluation to a Program Board Member.

Based on the specification of the Public Call for Project Proposals within the Program, the Science Fund will contact the Program Board Members and check their availability, define deadlines, scope of work and send Evaluation guidelines for the Program.

## 6. Engagement of Program Board Members resulting from this Call

Services of the Program Board Members resulting from this Call will be used for tasks to be carried out in accordance with the requirements stipulated in the Terms of Reference. The Program Board Members identified through this Call may be contacted in the future for additional expert tasks.

## 7. Program Description and Subprograms

The objective of the PRISMA Program (Program) are as follows: to finance research projects based on: outstanding ideas that in the future may have a significant impact on the development of science and research, as well as society as a whole; clearly stated motivation for research within the framework of modern trends in the development of science in the relevant scientific fields; development of scientific and practical aspects in the field of technical and technological sciences; development of research of strategic importance for agriculture, food production and environmental protection; development of experimental, practical and clinical research that should contribute to human health in Serbia; research on topics that contribute to development in the fields of social sciences and humanities in Serbia; raising the level of science in artificial intelligence as well as its application; involving young researchers in scientific research and strengthening the professional capacities of researchers within research teams.

The Program lends support to basic and applied research in all fields of science. There are no pre-defined topics for Projects within the Program. The Program enables researchers to define their own research programs, form their own Teams and collaborate with relevant laboratories, research centres and industry in Serbia and worldwide.

The Program is implemented with **six subprograms** for the development of scientific research in the following fields of science: **1) natural sciences, 2) engineering and technological sciences, 3) biotechnical sciences, 4) biomedical sciences, 5) artificial intelligence and 6) social sciences and humanities.**

The Act on the PRISMA Program (hereinafter referred as to the: “Grant manual”) regulates the Program goals, the announcement conditions and the procedure for implementation of public calls within the Program framework, and in particular the application procedure and conditions for the submission of Project Proposals, the procedure and the criteria for the evaluation of Proposals, the procedure for monitoring the Project outputs, the procedure for evaluating the Project results, terms of financing, as well as rights and obligations of beneficiaries of Project funds.

The Program Grant manual and all relevant documentation of the Program may be accessed [HERE](#).

## 8. Composition and expertise of the Program Board

Interested candidates for Program Board Members within the subprograms are invited to apply within their respective areas of expertise. The Science Fund will constitute the Program Board which consists of **six expert panels** (hereinafter referred to as the: “Expert Panel”). Each Expert Panel is responsible for one subprogram of the Program. **Expert panels for natural sciences, engineering and technological sciences, biotechnical sciences, biomedical sciences, and social sciences and humanities shall be composed of five Members. Expert panel for artificial intelligence shall be composed of three Members.**

**Members of the Expert Panels expertise should match one or more research areas within the given subprograms: 1) natural sciences, 2) engineering and technological sciences, 3) biotechnical sciences, 4) biomedical sciences, 5) artificial intelligence and 6) social sciences and humanities.** Two or more Members of the same Expert Panel cannot be from the same scientific area of expertise. The Program Board expertise should cover a wide scope of research areas and the structure of the Program Board must include heterogeneous research expertise.

The Science Fund shall perform assessment of all candidates according to criteria listed in Section 10. All candidates shall be ranked according to defined criteria. Priority shall be given to those applicants who are top ranked, whose research experience covers defined areas and whose expertise is required by the Proposed Projects.

If the research area of an applicant is not present among the Proposed Projects qualified for the second stage of evaluation, the Science Fund reserves the right to exclude this applicant from the final selection. If there is insufficient number of applied candidates whose expertise matches the required research areas, the Science Fund reserves the right to extend the deadline of this Call and/or to select the most qualified candidates from the most closely related research areas in order to keep the heterogeneous structure of the Program Board.

## **9. Place of delivery**

The services performed by the Program Board Members will be provided **remotely**.

The Science Fund will organize and host online periodical meetings of the Program Board Members through online platforms.

All project proposals qualified for the second stage evaluation shall be evaluated by the Program board. The quality of Project proposals is evaluated according to excellence, impact and implementation, in line with defined Program rules and conditions (Grant manual which can be found [HERE](#)).

The Program Board assignment for the PRISMA program is expected to start on 21. August 2023 and to be completed by 21. September 2023.

## **10. Inclusion criteria**

The Program Board Members will be selected based on their research, project management/participation and peer reviewing experience.

**Minimal required qualifications of the Program Board Members are:**

- **Education:**
  - University degree – PhD;
- **Work experience:**
  - at least 10 years of relevant work experience (universities and/or research organizations, for specific areas it also includes clinical or lab experience, research and development for industry etc.);
  - relevant scientific experience within the research areas that respond to the objectives of the Program;
  - published scientific papers in international journals or other publications within the research areas that respond to the objectives of the Program;

- experience in project management;
  - experience in international collaboration;
  - experience in evaluation of the project proposals within international and/or national research programs, overall and within the research areas that respond to the objectives of the Program (peer reviewer, expert panel member/president or director of program or project proposals evaluation committee in national and international funds, research agency, ministry or another funding source);
  - industry R&D experience is an asset.
- **Language proficiency:**
    - Excellence in English.

The application process for Project Proposals is performed in English, due to the international evaluation process. Submitted Project Proposals are in English, and the Program Board Members shall perform their work in English. Therefore, the Program Board Members must be able to work in English.

All applicants who meet the listed criteria will be considered as candidates for the Program Board Members for Project Evaluation.

## **11. Exclusion criteria**

Candidates shall be excluded from participation if:

- a) they have any kind of conflict of interest in connection with the Contract to be signed with the Science Fund and work engagement with the Science Fund;
- b) they 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 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;
- e) 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.

Before signing their Contracts, the Program Board Members 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.

## **12. Assessment criteria**

The candidates will be assessed based on the following criteria:

- Areas of expertise within the research areas that respond to the objectives of the Program;
- Education;
- Work experience - overall and within the research areas that respond to the objectives of the Program – number of years (as defined in Section 10);

- Language proficiency (English);
- Type of work experience (academia, research, clinic and industry);
- Scientific experience within the research areas that respond to the objectives of the Program (number of scientific publications and other scientific results);
- Project management experience (overall and within the thematic areas that respond to the objectives of the Program – number of coordinated projects, types of projects including funding sources, duration and budget);
- Experience in international collaboration;
- Peer review experience within international and/or national research programs that respond to the objectives of the Program (number of performed peer reviews, project types and budgets of the reviewed projects);
- Experience as an expert panel member/president or director of program or project proposals evaluation committee in national and international funds, research agency, ministry or another funding source, overall and within the thematic areas that respond to the objectives of the Program.

Candidates should apply within their respective areas of expertise defined in Section 8 of this Call. Criteria for each area will be considered specifically.

Selection of the Program Board Members will be performed by the Science Fund in two stages:

1. Assessment of the expertise and experience of the identified candidates for Program Board Members according to the criteria listed in this section and Sections 10 and 11 and ranking the candidates accordingly.
2. The Science Fund will select the best ranked candidates.

The selected candidates will be invited to sign their Contracts as the Program Board Members of the Science Fund.

### **13. Conditions of remuneration**

The payments for services will be made based on a daily fee (8 working hours). The Program Board Members shall keep their track and submit timesheets to the Science Fund indicating their amount of work.

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

**for**

**Program Board Members of the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia**

**PRISMA Program**

**Date of publication: 23. June 2023**

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### **1. Background**

The Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia is a public organization that supports scientific and research activities. It was established in March 2019, with the aim of providing funds and supporting the 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 work of the Science Fund is in line with and contributes to the strategic objectives of scientific and technological development of the Republic of Serbia.

The programs of the Science Fund are devised to support research activities, including basic scientific research and applied scientific research and its commercial use and potential, as well as to boost technological development of the Republic of Serbia.

The programs of the Science Fund also focus on developing human resources, stimulating international cooperation, collaboration and exchange, investment in the scientific and research organizations in Serbia (SROs) infrastructure by providing equipment and core support, as well as assisting the development of laboratories and institutions of strategic importance. In addition, the Science Fund is supporting publishing of scientific and research and development (R&D) findings and results in internationally acclaimed publications and those of strategic importance for the Republic of Serbia.

The programs of the Science Fund are driven by scientific excellence and quality. They are realized through public calls for project proposals, and projects are funded in the form of grants through public competition. 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 [Science Fund website](#).

The Science Fund has established a two-stage evaluation process for the PRISMA program. The first stage of the evaluation is performed by peer reviewers and the second stage is performed by the Program Board. Reviewers award points to the project proposals during the first stage of evaluation. During the second stage of evaluation the Program board awards project scores (categories) upon evaluation of project documentation, reviews from the first stage and (where applicable) applicants' short responses to the reviews from the first stage of evaluation. Both stages of evaluation are carried out in accordance with the procedure stated in the Grant manual which can be found [HERE](#).



The Program Board is an independent expert body which will consist of **six expert panels**. Each Expert Panel is responsible for one subprogram of the Program, and it shall be composed of three to five members depending on the subprogram. **Expert panels for natural sciences, engineering and technological sciences, biotechnical sciences, biomedical sciences, and social sciences and humanities shall be composed of five Members. Expert panel for artificial intelligence shall be composed of three Members.**

In order to secure objectivity, transparency and quality of the evaluation of Project Proposals submitted within the Program, the Science Fund has established a selection process for the Program Board Members.

The Program Board is to be established in accordance with the best international practices and in accordance with the Science Fund's internal acts. It is to be an independent decision-making body comprising highly qualified individuals. The function of the Program Board is that of an independent body within the Science Fund's evaluation process. The Program Board is responsible of delivering the shortlist of Project Proposals to the Scientific Council of the Science Fund. There will be six expert panels, each consisting of three to five Program Board Members who will evaluate Project Proposals submitted within the Program. Expert panels for natural sciences, engineering and technological sciences, biotechnical sciences, biomedical sciences, and social sciences and humanities shall be composed of five Members. Expert panel for artificial intelligence shall be composed of three Members.

## 2. Scope of work

The general roles and responsibilities of the Program Board Members are:

- Evaluation of Project Proposals in the second stage of the evaluation process based on the evaluation criteria listed in the [Evaluation Guidelines](#) for the Program;
- Submitting comments and project scores (categories) for Project Proposals in the Program Board Evaluation Form via email (except where and if requested otherwise);
- Requesting the Project budget rebalance and the adjustment/clarification of the project results/milestones where needed;
- Evaluation of Project proposal (organized online);
- Participation in meetings of the Program Board (organized online).

Each Program Board Member must declare any conflict of interest prior to undertaking the evaluation of a particular Project Proposal.

The roles and responsibilities of the Program Board Members are as follows:

- Sign the Declaration of impartiality and confidentiality provided by the Science Fund.
- Receive access to the Project Proposals to be evaluated in the second stage of the evaluation process.
- Examine Project Proposal documentation, including the reviews of the project proposal from the first stage of evaluation, and (where applicable) applicants' short responses to the reviews from the first stage of evaluation.

- Within three working days of receiving a Project Proposal for evaluation, examine the assigned Project Proposal documentation and inform the Science Fund of any potential concern.
- Check all assigned Project Proposals for conflicts of interest or appearance of conflicts of interest in accordance with the Science Fund Confidentiality and Prevention of Conflict of Interest Policy and inform the Science Fund team if any issues exist.
- Evaluate all assigned Project Proposals and for each Proposal prepare a written report (using the Program Board Evaluation Form) based on the defined evaluation criteria and judgment of merit. Assign project score (category) and provide narrative evaluation according to the Evaluation Guidelines of the Program. Besides project score (category), the evaluation must include 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 on. In particular, comments should not include only the summary of the Project Proposal but should also provide short critical analysis in line with (but not limited to) the respective questions of the evaluation grid.
- Program Board members will summarize the Project Proposals assigned to them and discuss merits of each Project Proposal during the evaluation meeting(s).
- Within the evaluation, the Program Board Members may require clarifications from the applicant and/or suggest a rebalance of the proposed budget in its entirety or in individual items as specified in Grant manual.
- Complete and send the Final Evaluation Report for each Project Proposal according to the described procedure.

The shortlist of Project Proposals is a part of the Final Evaluation Report, which is to be signed by the Program Board Members and forwarded to the Scientific Council of the Science Fund, which gives an opinion about the shortlists.

The shortlist is thereafter forwarded to the Managing Board of the Science Fund. The Managing Board of the Science Fund shall make a decision on adoption of the final list of Projects that have been approved for financing by the Science Fund under the Public Call in this Program and on the amount of funds allocated to each Project approved for financing.

### **3. Timing and duration**

The Program Board assignment for the PRISMA Program is expected to start on 21. August 2023 and to be completed by 21. September 2023.

The Science Fund reserves the right to make minor changes of the schedule due to any unexpected circumstance and notify the Program Board as soon as possible.

Generally, the Program Board Members are expected to provide their services upon the timely notification by the Science Fund team.

The expected engagement of each Program Board Member is up to 30 working days.

During the course of the engagement, work of the Program Board will be organized **remotely**. Work will include online presence at the key meetings, as well as presence at the periodical meetings through video conference, project evaluations, and other administrative activities.

In order to facilitate a successful virtual and remote work, each Program Board Member should have access to a personal computer and videoconferencing equipment which can operate with Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Excel and PDF documents, and reliable access to high-speed internet.

Science Fund will provide an online platform and video conference needed for online meetings, project evaluations and other administrative activities.

All documentation will be provided by email or online platform for evaluation.

#### **4. Reporting obligations**

The Program Board Members shall report directly to the Science Fund team in the following manner:

- After receiving the Project Proposal for evaluation, the Program Board Members shall provide the results of the evaluation of the Project Proposal along with comprehensive comments and relevant scores, in written form via email, within specified deadlines – using the Program Board Evaluation Form.
- Following the evaluation process, each Program Board Member is obliged to submit a filled-in Timesheet, demonstrating the engagement in the evaluation of Project Proposals.

#### **5. Input by the Science Fund**

The Science Fund team will provide necessary documentation and templates, as well as access to the Project Proposals to be evaluated.

The Evaluation Guidelines will be provided to the Program Board Members. The Evaluation Guidelines will serve as guidance on how to conduct the evaluation and how to provide adequate feedback for the Project Proposals.

#### **6. Processing of personal data**

If processing replies to the present Call for Expression 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 2018/1725 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data.

#### **7. Call documentation**

The following document is annexed to the Call and form an integral part of it:

Annex 1: Registration form for the Program Board Members, which should be filled out and sent by email together with an updated CV.