

Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia

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

Program IDEAS 2024

Date of publication: 23 June 2025

Reference number **SFRS/Call/2025/01**

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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 2025

Reference number SFRS/Call/2025/01

1. Contracting Authority

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

2. Reference number

SFRS/Call/2025/01

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 Program IDEAS 2024 (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: ideas2024-pb@fondznanauku.gov.rs by **23:59 CET on 15 August 2025**.

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 written in English to the following email address: ideas2024-pb@fondznanauku.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.

Applicants who meet the requirements defined in Section 10 and who are not excluded due to any of the reasons listed in Section 11 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 Call is open both to international and national experts with international experience in performing project evaluation who meet the requirements set in 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

The 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 objectives of the Program IDEAS 2024 (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.

Program supports basic and applied research in all fields of science. There are no predefined topics for projects within the Program. The Program enables researchers to define their research programs, form their teams and collaborate with corresponding laboratories, research centers, and commerce.

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 Program IDEAS 2024 (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 Grant manual is available [HERE](#)

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 and consists of three to five 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 reserves the right to consider other candidates applying from different research/scientific fields and to select those who are the most qualified for the position, in accordance with the evaluation criteria.

The Science Fund shall perform an assessment of all submitted applications in accordance with the criteria listed in Sections 10, 11 and 12. All candidates shall be ranked according to the defined criteria. Priority shall be given to those applicants who are top ranked, whose research experience covers defined areas of research and whose expertise is in line with the topics of the Proposed Projects.

The Science Fund reserves the right to exclude an applicant from the final selection in case that his/her expertise is not required, i.e. there are no Proposed Projects qualified for second stage of evaluation with a topic in research area(s) aligned with the applicant's expertise.

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.

One of the Members of each Expert Panel of the Program Board will be selected as the chairperson of that Expert panel.

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 Program IDEAS 2024 is expected to start in September 2025 and to be completed in October 2025.

10. Inclusion criteria

The Program Board Members will be selected based on their research, project management/participation and experience in project evaluation of scientific programs.

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 for which he/she has applied to serve as a member of the Program board;
- 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);

- **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.

In addition to all stated qualifications, members of the Expert Panel for Subprogram for biomedical sciences must also have experience in clinical and/or laboratory work.

In addition to all stated qualifications, the members of the Expert Panel for social sciences and humanities are international experts, two of whom are experts from Serbia with an internationally recognized professional career who meet the requirements to hold the title of a member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts or professor emeritus. They must have relevant scientific research experience in a field corresponding to the key terms for cultural and national identity fields of research: language, script, literature, national history, religion, cultural heritage, and national identity. Additionally, they should have published scientific papers in internationally significant journals related to the specified key terms in the field of cultural and national identity fields of research for which they are applying as a board member.

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

If an insufficient number of candidates with expertise matching the recommended research and scientific fields apply, the Science Fund will select the most qualified candidates from related research and scientific fields to maintain the heterogeneous structure of the Program Board.

11. Exclusion criteria

Candidates shall be excluded from participation if:

- a) within the previous five years, up to the publishing date of this Call, they have participated in project(s) funded by the Science Fund;
- b) 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;

- c) 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;
- d) they have been guilty of grave professional misconduct proven by any means which the Science Fund can justify including by decisions of international organizations;
- e) 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;
- 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.

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

Applicants who meet requirements defined in Section 10, and who are not excluded due to any of the reasons listed in Section 11 will be considered as potential Program Board Members. Further selection and assessment will be performed based on the following criteria:

- Areas of expertise within the research areas that respond to the objectives of the Program;
- Work experience in academia, research, industry and international collaboration;
- Scientific experience within the research areas that respond to the objectives of the Program, as well as overall (number of scientific publications and other scientific results and metrics);
- Project coordination and participation experience¹ (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);
- Project evaluation experience:
 - Peer reviewer within international and/or national research programs that respond to the objectives of the Program (number of performed reviews, project types and budgets of the reviewed projects);
 - Expert panel member/chairperson/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.

Applicants 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 the following stages:

1. Assessment of the expertise and experience of all the applicants according to the criteria listed in Section 10, and who are not excluded due to any of the reasons listed in Section 11 will be considered as potential Program Board Members.

¹ Relevant management experience in research and development within industry sector or experience in leading research projects aimed at commercializing results of scientific research is considered an asset

2. Assessment of the expertise and experience of potential Program Board Members in accordance with the criteria listed in this section:

- a. Candidates with expertise within the research areas that respond to the objectives of the Program and to correspond to the topics of the project proposals will be given priority;
- b. Candidates will be assessed quantitatively, with maximum possible score of 100 points distributed as follows:

Candidate assessment criteria*	Points (max)
Work experience	20
Scientific experience	30
Project coordination and participation experience	10
Project evaluation experience	40
Total	100

**As described in this section*

- c. Scored candidates will be ranked accordingly, taking into account their expertise, objectives of the Program and topics of the project proposals.

3. The Science Fund will select the best ranked candidates for Program board members.

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 track of their working hours and evaluation activities and submit timesheets to the Science Fund indicating their amount of work. The Science Fund shall provide a timesheet template, which the Program Board Members shall fill in with relevant information on their activities and working hours during the evaluation process within the program.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

for

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

Program IDEAS 2024

Date of publication: 23 June 2025

Reference number SFRS/Call/2025/01

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 Program IDEAS 2024. 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.

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.
- 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.

- 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.
- 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).
- Program Board Members may request clarifications from the applicant on the key points of the project proposal and/or suggest a rebalance of the proposed budget in its entirety or in individual items as specified in Grant manual.
- Complete and submit the Final Evaluation Report for each Project Proposal according to the described procedure.
- Provide an expert response to complaint(s) to the results of the evaluation process submitted by applicants whose project proposal is not, at the end of the evaluation process, supported for funding.

The ranking list of Project Proposals is a part of the 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 ranking list.

The ranking list is thereafter forwarded to the Managing Board of the Science Fund. The Managing Board of the Science Fund shall decide on adoption of the final list of Projects that have been approved for funding 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 Program IDEAS 2024 is expected to start in September 2025 and to be completed in November 2025.

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 timely notification by the Science Fund team.

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

During 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.

To facilitate 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.

The 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 through 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.