

Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia

Guidelines for Peer reviewers

Program IDEAS 2024

June 2025

Contents

1.	Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia	3
1.1.	General.....	3
1.2.	Programs	3
1.3.	Selection of projects.....	3
1.4.	Conflict of interest	3
2.	The Program IDEAS 2024.....	4
2.1.	Program Description	4
2.2.	Program objectives	4
2.3.	Eligible applicants.....	5
2.4.	Eligible costs and budgetary limitations	5
3.	Project Proposal evaluation procedure	6
3.1.	Administrative check of Project Proposals	6
3.2.	Stage one of evaluation procedure – Peer Reviewers	7
3.3.	Passing to stage two of evaluation procedure.....	7
3.4.	Stage two of evaluation procedure – Program Board	8
3.5.	Final Decision and Financing Agreements	8
4.	Roles and responsibilities of Peer Reviewers	9
5.	Instructions for Peer Reviewers	10
5.0	Project documentation.....	10
5.1	Receiving an invitation to perform a peer review.....	11
5.2	Performing evaluations of the project proposals.....	11
5.3	Reaching consensus (if necessary)	13
5.4	Verification of a submitted written review by the Science fund	13
5.5	Deadlines	13
6.	Project Evaluation Module	14
Performing Project review and access to Project Proposal(s)	15	
Editing your review	15	
Consensus review.....	16	
Technical assistance.....	16	
7.	Appendix 1. Peer Review Evaluation Form.....	17
Title of Proposed Project	17	
Excellence	17	
Impact.....	18	
Implementation	18	
Novelty in relation to the previous work of the applicants.....	19	
Overall judgment.....	19	
Summary Assessment.....	19	

1. Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia

1.1. General

The Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia (hereinafter referred to as: “SF”) is a public organization that supports scientific and research activities. It was established in March 2019, with the aim of providing funds and supporting conditions for continuous development of scientific and research activities in the Republic of Serbia necessary for advancement of a knowledge-based society. The work of the SF is in line with and contributes to the strategic objectives of scientific and technological development of the Republic of Serbia.

1.2. Programs

Programs of the SF are devised to support research activities, including basic and applied scientific research and their commercial use and potential, as well as to boost technological development of the Republic of Serbia.

The programs of the SF are driven by scientific excellence and quality. They are realized through thematic public calls for project proposals. Projects are funded in the form of grants through public competition. The projects are expected to result in high-level research, innovative results, competitiveness at the international level, and relevance to society in general.

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

1.3. Selection of projects

For each program, a public call is launched. All applications (project proposals) received before the deadline set in the call are first inspected through the administrative check procedure. Thereafter, generally, the evaluation procedure comprises of stage one of the evaluation, which is performed by Peer Reviewers (hereinafter referred to as: “Peer Reviewer”), and stage two of the evaluation, which is performed by members of the Program Board. As the rule, the evaluation is performed by international experts, who are carefully selected based on their outstanding results in research, experience in project participation and coordination, and experience in review of project proposals. The evaluation criteria are specific to each program, but they are always focused on excellence, impact and implementation of the proposed projects. Project proposals that pass the administrative check and both stages of the evaluation are shortlisted and only the proposals that are within the allocated budget are financed by the SF.

1.4. Conflict of interest

In regard to confidentiality rules and prevention of conflict of interest, the **Peer Reviewer shall act in accordance with the SF Confidentiality Policy and Prevention of Conflict of Interest Policy**, which is, **defined in the Contract** signed between the Peer Reviewer and SF.

Experts participating in the evaluation procedure shall take all necessary measures to prevent and terminate any situation that could compromise impartiality and objectiveness of the evaluation. They shall follow the SF Confidentiality Policy and Prevention of Conflict of Interest Policy, defined in the General terms for consultancy services referred to in the Contract signed with the SF, and inform the SF team if any issues exist.

In particular, the expert may not be the person who participated in any way in preparation of a project proposal within the SF’s program for which s/he is hired to provide services, whether or not s/he reviews that particular project proposal. The expert may not be a participant in any project or project proposal within the SF’s programs for which s/he is hired to provide services, regardless of whether s/he reviews that particular project proposal.

2. The Program IDEAS 2024

2.1. Program Description

The Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia launched the Public Call (hereinafter referred to as: “Call”) for the Program IDEAS 2024 on October 11th, 2024. The Call was closed on February 28th, 2025. The Program documentation was published on the SF website and is available [HERE](#).

The Act of the Program IDEAS 2024 (hereinafter referred to as: “Grant manual”) defines the program goals, as well as all terms and conditions for this Program and projects within the framework of this Program (hereinafter referred to as: “Project”). The Grant manual is available [HERE](#).

Through this Program, the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia (SF) aims to support basic and applied research in all fields of science. There are no pre-defined topics for projects within the Program. The Program is implemented with six subprograms for the development of scientific research in the following fields of science: 1) natural sciences and mathematics, 2) engineering and technological sciences, 3) biotechnical sciences, 4) biomedical sciences, 5) artificial intelligence and 6) social sciences and humanities.

The Program enables researchers to define their own research ideas and plans, form their own teams and collaborate with relevant laboratories, research centres and industry in Serbia and worldwide.

The total budget of the Program is € 24,000,000.

The maximal budget per Project is € 300,000.

Project duration is up to 36 months.

Project Proposals (hereinafter referred to as: “Proposal”) are submitted in English and the review process is also performed in English by international experts.

2.2. Program objectives

The objective of the 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.

All project proposals must be evaluated according to three main criteria:

- **Excellence** – quality, relevance, and contemporary significance of the proposed topic, scientific merit, innovativeness, rationality of objectives, importance of the research, applicability of the results and future prospects of the proposed research, assessment of the implementation of open scientific practice in the proposed methodology, assessment of competence of the Principal Investigator and other members of the Team; maximum 50 points in stage one of evaluation;
- **Impact** – contribution to science, economy and society in the Republic of Serbia, impact of scientific research on economy, society, climate change, environment, health care, education and other aspects of social development at the national and international level, efficacy of the proposed measures for Project promotion and visibility, and application of the Project results, assessment whether the proposed research identifies potential stakeholders and beneficiaries who will be impacted by the Project; maximum 30 points in stage one of evaluation.

- **Implementation** – rationality of the implementation plan, possible risks and mitigation measures, budget rationality and balance, assessment of the defined roles of project team members and partners, as well as the complementarity of their expertise with the project topic; maximum 20 points in stage one of evaluation.

2.3. Eligible applicants

Consortium - participating in the Project must be accredited SROs from Serbia in the capacity of Lead SRO, and accredited SROs from Serbia and/or SROs outside of the Serbia in the capacity of Participating SROs.

Project team - Each Project is led by a **Principal Investigator** (hereinafter referred to as: “PI”), who must hold a PhD. The minimum number of Team Members is 3, while the maximum is not limited.

Each Team Member (including the PI) must be employed in an accredited SRO with a minimum of 50% of monthly engagement and has a valid research or scientific title, or an equivalent title in higher education at the moment of project proposal submission as well as throughout her/his engagement in the Project. For the purpose of affirmative measures for the inclusion of young researchers in scientific research, an exception regarding the condition that all team members must have a valid research appointment at the time of submitting the Project Proposal, i.e., on the day of closing the Public Call will be made for persons who are Ph.D. students not holding a current research appointment.

The project may include up to four External Collaborators, each from a different eligible category (diaspora researcher, retired academic, regional researcher, or foreign researcher provided their number does not exceed that of the Project Team members.

Compensation (Personnel costs) – Only team members (including the PI) may receive compensation for their engagement in the Project in the form of salaries/fees. External collaborator(s) are not entitled to this type of compensation, however it is acceptable to cover their travel costs to Serbia or travel expenses for joint participation in conferences in Serbia and abroad.

The eligibility criteria are checked during the administrative check. Only those Project Proposals that satisfy the eligibility criteria proceed to the stage one of evaluation.

More information on the eligibility is available within the Grant manual [HERE](#).

2.4. Eligible costs and budgetary limitations

The maximum Project budget amount is €300,000 per project.

The budget of a Project must be realistic and well-justified. It must fully be in accordance with the needs of the Project implementation, and it must not be prodigal.

The categories of eligible and ineligible costs, as well as the maximum allowable percentage share of each eligible category, are defined by the Grant manual available [HERE](#).

Personnel costs may be salaries or fees. A Team Member who is employed full-time (including teaching and research positions supported through institutional or other funding) cannot be engaged for more than additional 30% full-time working hours on projects funded by the SF of the Republic of Serbia (including other programs).

Team Member may be employed and financed by the resources of the proposed Project with up to 100% full-time working hours, in compliance with other engagements and the Labor Law. PhD students (i.e., junior researchers) are usually engaged with 100% full-time working hours if they have no other engagements. Senior researchers are usually engaged with up to 30% full-time working hours.

The SF has prescribed the maximal monthly net salaries and fees for the Team Members, who in accordance with the Program rules are entitled to such compensation (Table 1). These amounts (in Serbian dinars, RSD) are given in the following table, for various titles and percent of the engagement. Salaries planned within a Project Proposal may be lower than those shown here, or may, within one Project, differ among Team Members who hold the same title, but differ in work experience or skillset.

Table 1. maximal monthly net salaries and fees for the Team Members participating in the Program IDEAS 2024

Researcher's title	Percent of monthly engagement and corresponding NET amount in RSD (and EUR)	
	100%	30%
Junior Research Assistant / Junior Teaching Assistant	132,000	39,600
	(~1126 EUR)	(~338 EUR)
Research Assistant / Teaching Assistant, Teaching Assistant with PhD	144,000	42,200
	(~1229 EUR)	(~360 EUR)
Research Associate / Assistant Professor	172,000	51,600
	(~1468 EUR)	(~440 EUR)
Senior Research Associate / Associate Professor	186,000	55,800
	(~1587 EUR)	(~476 EUR)
Principal Research Fellow / Full Professor	198,000	59,400
	(~1689 EUR)	(~507 EUR)

3. Project Proposal evaluation procedure

The evaluation procedure comprises of administrative check, stage one of the evaluation, which is performed by Peer Reviewers, and stage two of the evaluation, which is performed by members of the Program Board.

3.1. Administrative check of Project Proposals

The administrative and eligibility check includes a review of the application documentation submitted to the Call in order to:

- establish the timeliness of the submitted Proposal against the deadline stipulated in the Program IDEAS 2024;
- establish that the Proposal is administratively accurate and complete, including all annexes, confirmations, and signatures;
- confirm that the Proposal fulfils the general conditions defined in the Grant manual, including formal fulfilment of criteria for the Principal Investigator, Team Members and the SROs, as well as prescribed relations and proportions in the budget.

Only those Project Proposals that satisfy the administrative check eligibility criteria proceed to the stage one of evaluation.

3.2. Stage one of evaluation procedure – Peer Reviewers

In stage one of the evaluation, each Project Proposal is evaluated by Peer Reviewers.

Each Peer Reviewer shall assess the Project Proposal in terms of the evaluation criteria: Excellence, Impact, and Implementation, as laid out in the Peer Reviewer Evaluation Form (Appendix 1) and provide numerical scores (awarding between 1 and 5 points for each question) and narrative description for each section of the Form.

The maximal score that can be awarded by a Reviewer is 100 points. Each Reviewer also provides an explicit recommendation confirming or withholding her/his support for the Proposal.

Upon completion of the reviews, average scores for each criterion and the total average score are calculated as arithmetic mean of the relevant scores awarded by the Reviewers.

In case that the highest and the lowest total score awarded by the reviewers differ by more than 20 points, Commission of the Science Fund notes the discord and coordinates the reviewers to reach consensus or justify the difference of opinions. The consensus procedure is initiated by making all submitted reviews available to reviewers for comparative analysis of the reviewers' point of view and difference in opinions. As a result, the reviewers may change their scores and/or narrative and resubmit evaluation or they can decide not to change their initial evaluation. If consensus is not reached, the Science Fund will request an additional independent review of the Project Proposal. After obtaining the additional review, the one score which represents the outlier is discarded, and the final score is calculated as the average score of the remaining reviews.

Each Peer Reviewer formulates an explicit recommendation on whether the evaluated Project Proposal passes the qualifying threshold for further evaluation.

In order to pass stage one of the evaluation, each Proposal must receive a minimum of points for each criterion and total number of points, as shown in Table 2. Only Project Proposals with scores above the qualifying threshold are considered for further evaluation.

Table 2. Criteria for the evaluation of Projects in stage one the maximum (and minimum) number of points

Criterion	Stage one (points)
Excellence	50 (min. 30)
Impact	30 (min. 18)
Implementation	20 (min. 12)
Total	100 (min. 70)

More details about the procedure, forms, and criteria are given in Sections to follow.

3.3. Passing to stage two of evaluation procedure

Prior to stage two of the Evaluation, a preliminary shortlist is created for each subprogram, with Project proposals ranked in descending order based on total average score assigned by the Reviewers after stage one of Evaluation, considering only the Proposals that have satisfied the specified criteria, and whose total proposed budgets aggregately do not exceed the double budget of the respective sub-program defined in the Public Call.

After the stage one of evaluation, Principal Investigators of project proposals invited to the second round have an opportunity submit to the Science Fund a written response (up to 500 words) with comments on results of the stage one of evaluation, that are then forwarded to the Program Board and used during the second stage of evaluation.

3.4. Stage two of evaluation procedure – Program Board

During stage two of evaluation the Program Board for Project proposal evaluation (hereinafter referred to as: “Program board”) evaluates all shortlisted Proposals within the work of six expert panels - one panel for each sub-program, and forms the Proposal of the final ranking list.

Project proposal evaluation is carried out in accordance with procedure defined by the relevant Science Fund Acts and in accordance with criteria defined by the Grant manual.

The quality of Project proposals is evaluated according to three evaluation criteria - excellence, impact and implementation, in line with defined Program rules and conditions.

The Program Board may request from the Principal Investigator to rebalance the proposed Project budget, in its entirety or in individual items. The Program Board may also request from the Principal Investigator that the milestones proposed in the Proposal be adjusted and/or clarified.

The total required budget for all Projects accepted for funding (parts of the total budget financed by the SF) may not exceed the total budget of the Program defined by the Public Call.

3.5. Final Decision and Financing Agreements

Finally, Project proposals are ranked by the Program Board based on the results of the second stage of evaluation, and classified according to project quality and project budgets into categories A, AB, B, C and D (Table 3).

Table 3. Results of the second stage of evaluation

Project score (category)	Description
A	Project proposals that are ranked highest after the second stage of evaluation whose aggregated budgets constitute 20% of the Program budget, and which are supported for funding .
AB	Project proposals that are next in the ranking list after the second stage of evaluation, and whose aggregated budgets constitute middle 40% of the Program budget, and which are supported for funding .
B	Project proposals that are next in the ranking list after the second stage of evaluation, and whose aggregated budgets constitute the remaining 40% of the Program budget, and which are supported for funding .
C	Project proposals that are ranked below the program budget limit after the second stage of evaluation, and that are not supported for funding .
D	Projects for which a deficiency or irregularity has been identified due to which they can in no way be supported for funding .

In accordance with the rules from Table 3, the Program Board forms the Proposal of the final ranking list of projects proposed for funding under the Public Call on the basis of this Program and submits it to the Scientific Council of the Science Fund.

The Scientific Council considers the Report of the Program Board and submitted Proposal of the final ranking list and together with its opinion on procedural correctness, submits to the Management Board of the Science Fund the Proposal of the final ranking list of projects proposed for funding under the Public Call under this Program.

Based on the Proposal of the final ranking list and the opinion of the Scientific Council of the Science Fund from the previous article of this document, the Managing Board of the Science Fund makes the decision to adopt the Final list of projects approved for funding with the resources of the Science Fund under the Public Call under this Program, as well as the amount of funds allocated to each Project for which the funding has been approved.

Once the Managing Board of the Science Fund has made its decision, the final list of Proposals approved for financing shall be posted on the website of the Science Fund, and the Principal Investigators shall receive notification on the outcome of the second stage of Evaluation and decision by the Managing Board. Proposals that have been approved for funding shall be signed financing agreements with the Science Fund.

4. Roles and responsibilities of Peer Reviewers

Peer Review is the cornerstone of the work of the SF as a funding organization. The time and effort that Peer Reviewers commit to the SF peer review procedure is invaluable in helping the Program Board make funding decisions in stage two of the evaluation.

The Peer Reviewer shall comply with the following rules:

- The Peer Reviewer shall **answer all invitations** issued by the SF **in a timely manner** and **in accordance with the signed Contract**, regardless of whether s/he accepts or rejects to evaluate a Project Proposal.
- Upon submitting the review prepared by the Peer Reviewer, the SF shall examine and verify each document. If issues are identified during the verification, the SF team will request the **Reviewer to edit the submitted review** within the deadline allocated by the SF.
- The **Peer Reviewer shall maintain the confidentiality of all information**, including files with data about the Projects, and personal information, in particular. S/he shall comply with all rules and regulations of the signed Contract.

The roles and responsibilities of the Peer Reviewer are as follows:

1. Confirm the Declaration of impartiality and confidentiality provided by the SF.
2. Within two days of receiving an invitation to review a project proposal and relevant parts of the Project Proposal for review:
 - Examine the abstract of the assigned Project Proposal to verify that the Project Proposal matches the Reviewer's area of expertise and inform the SF of any concerns.
 - Review the documentation of the assigned Project Proposal for conflicts of interest or the appearance of conflicts of interest in accordance with the General terms for

consultancy services referred to in the Contract signed with the SF and inform the SF team if any issues exist.

- Respond to the invitation to review by filling in the invitation form at the Module.

Following this the Reviewer who has accepted the invitation to review and stated to have no Conflict of interest will receive access to the full documentation of Project Proposal(s) to be reviewed.

3. **Prepare a written review of the project proposal within the deadline stipulated within the invitation to perform the review**, by using the Peer Review Evaluation Form (shown in Annex 1), based on defined evaluation criteria and judgment of merit.

Within the Evaluation form Peer Review must give **concise, pertinent, and well justified comments in a wording that may be given directly to the applicant. Strong and weak points must be reflected in the narrative comments.**

In particular, comments shall include not only the summary of the project proposal but shall provide a short critical analysis of the project proposal's strong and weak points.

4. **Formulate a recommendation within the written review**, on whether in his/her expert opinion project proposal should qualify for further evaluation and in line with thresholds defined in Table 2.

The written review must contain **fact-based narrative, that is in line with the numerical scores.** The written review contains **narrative focused on argumentation supporting a positive or negative assessment of the Project Proposal, for each evaluation section - Excellence, Impact, and Implementation.**

5. Prepare a written response to complaints, if any.

5. Instructions for Peer Reviewers

The evaluation process is performed using a Project Proposal Evaluation Module (hereinafter referred as: "module").

Notifications will be sent to the Reviewer by e-mail and posted on the module.

The steps of the stage one evaluation process, and instructions for Peer reviewer are described below.

5.0 Project documentation

Evaluation of project proposals in stage one is done by examination of the project documentation and preparing a written review based on this.

Project documentation consists of:

- **Main documentation - mandatory for assessment of each project proposal** consists of:
 - Applicant info – Information on project participants (team members and external collaborators) and consortium (participating Scientific research organizations – SROs)
 - Project description part A
 - Project description part B
 - Budget
 - Gantt chart
- **Additional documentation** - even though not mandatory for review of the project proposal may be informative in case further information is needed for assessment and preparation

of written review. Additional documentation consists of letters of consent from external collaborators, ethics and other committees' decisions, administrative forms, etc.

Stated project documentation is available for download at the Project proposal evaluation module after the reviewer has accepted the invitation to review the project proposal and the SF has granted access to it.

5.1 Receiving an invitation to perform a peer review

SF sends an invitation to Peer reviewer to perform a project proposal evaluation through the module, and the invited reviewer receives it via e-mail and the module.

At this point the reviewer will have access to the basic information on the project proposal - Project abstract and Applicant info, necessary to

- make an informed decision on whether to accept the invitation to review
- assess for the possibility of Conflict of interest.

After receiving an invitation to perform a peer review, in accordance with these Guidelines, please examine the assigned project proposal and the project participants **within two days to:**

- verify that the project proposal matches your area of expertise and
- check for possibility of Conflict of interest with any of the project participants (team members, external collaborators) and organizations
- **inform the SF of any concerns, particularly conflicts of interest and deadlines.**

In the case that there is no conflict of interest, and you are available to carry out the review, the SF will send you a confirmation that you have been assigned as a Peer Reviewer, and you will receive access to the entire project documentation.

5.2 Performing evaluations of the project proposals

1. For a successful evaluation procedure, it is very important to meet the deadlines. If you cannot complete the evaluation within the stipulated deadline, please notify the SF as soon as possible and propose a new deadline by which the task will have been completed. The proposed deadline must be approved by the SF.

2. All fields in the Evaluation Form must be filled. Please double check your Evaluation Form before submitting your review. The SF cannot accept incomplete or evaluations which are not in accordance with Program rules and Guidelines for Peer reviewers. Therefore, the SF will be obliged to request a correction if the submitted review is incomplete, data is missing or the submitted review is not in line with the program rules and guidelines.

3. Provide your judgment on the Project Proposal by choosing one of the proposed options. Please, select the relevant option that reflects your opinion and the overall (total) score given to the Project Proposal.

4. Compare the Proposed Project with the previous work of Team members and give your opinion on the novelty of the Project by selecting one of the options available in the table at the top of the Evaluation Form.

5. You will be required to enter numerical points and textual description for three evaluation sections that follow the evaluation criteria: 1) Excellence, 2) Impact and 3) Implementation.

6. For each evaluation criterion, you should answer a set of questions (sub-criteria) and assign numerical scores as follows: 1 (poor), 2 (fair), 3 (good), 4 (very good), and 5 (excellent). The assigned points must be presented in round (integer) numbers. Scores assigned in decimals are not admissible. The total number of points for Excellence, Impact, and Implementation are automatically calculated, as well as the overall score.
7. Along with the numerical score, please provide concise, pertinent, and well justified narrative comments for each sub-criterion of the evaluation grid, in a wording that may be shown to the applicant. The minimal number of characters for each textual field is 500, and the maximal number is 4000.
8. Please comment concisely on each evaluation sub-criterion to the best of your abilities, professional skills, knowledge, and in line with the code of ethics. **Strong and weak points of the Project Proposal assessment must be elaborated on in narrative comments.**
9. Comments should provide a short critical and constructive analysis in line with (but not limited to) the respective questions of the evaluation grid (evaluation sub-criteria) and should not only include the summary of the Project Proposal.
10. Provide brief, constructive, and instructive comments, specific for the Project Proposal, which fully justify the provided quantitative evaluation.
11. Assigned numerical points should be in alignment with your descriptive assessment of each evaluation criterion as much as possible. The applicant should receive unambiguous information on the given score and Reviewer's opinion on the Project Proposal.
12. When expressing your opinion in the form of a critical analysis, please aim to be as objective and constructive as possible. Statements in the form of personal remarks should be avoided. Please be sure to check all information in the Project Proposal and make sure that your judgment and comments are driven by data and facts.
13. Summarize your view of the Project Proposal within the limited number of characters – **minimum 500 and maximum 4000** – stating both strengths and weaknesses of the Proposal, and
14. Explicitly provide a recommendation for the Program Board on whether you suggest the Project Proposal for further evaluation or not. If you suggest that the Project Proposal should not be funded in the proposed form or within this Program, your comments should include recommendations for future improvements of the Proposal.
15. Provide the information on your expertise. Please indicate the areas of expertise that are relevant to your assessment. Make sure not to enter any personal information that would enable the identification of the reviewer (name, institutional affiliation, etc.). The Evaluation Form is to be filled out anonymously and may be viewed by the applicant(s) or made accessible to the public.
16. Please submit the Peer Review Evaluation Form within the stipulated deadline and help us complete this complex, and crucial phase of the program cycle in due time.

5.3 Reaching consensus (if necessary)

1. After all reviews of a project proposal are submitted, the system automatically registers if there is a large numerical discrepancy among given scores.
2. If total scores given by the Peer Reviewers of the Project Proposal differ by **more than 20 points** the SF contacts the Peer Reviewers and asks for consensus or justification of differing opinions.
3. The reviewers will gain insight into all reviews of the project proposal and have the opportunity to edit their assigned scores and comments and resubmit the review.
4. In the case that a reviewer decides not to amend their judgement and the discrepancy between total scores remains larger than 20 points, the Science Fund will request an additional independent review of the Project Proposal. After obtaining the additional review, the one score which represents the outlier is discarded, and the final score is calculated as the average score of the remaining reviews. In case that the total points of the additional review is equidistant from the total points of the other reviews, the final score is calculated by taking into account the two reviews which are most favourable.

5.4 Verification of a submitted written review by the Science fund

After submitting each written review, you will be notified if your review has been verified and accepted. Otherwise, if issues are identified during the verification, the SF team shall contact you asking for edits of the submitted form.

The SF reserves the right to return the project evaluation to a reviewer for required corrections, clarifications, and justification of the assigned scores in case of but not limited to the following: the evaluation form was not completed in line with the Program rules and the Guidelines for Peer reviewers, the initial narrative of the evaluation is not clear and instructive, the narrative does not include comments based on the facts and data provided by the proposed

Project, the comments are presented in a too general way or only consist of summary of the Project proposal, the narrative is not aligned with the assigned scores.

5.5 Deadlines

Deadlines that should be met by Peer Reviewers are as follows:

Task	Deadline
Accepting invitation to review and declaring no conflict of interest	2 days
Performing the peer review	14 days
Consensus review	3 days

If you should require an extension of a deadline, please inform the SF. If the SF grants an extension, you will be notified about the new deadline. Otherwise, the SF will notify you that it is not possible to grant an extension and your access to the Project Proposal may be blocked.

Please note that you cannot be reimbursed for a review that you have not completed properly in due time.

6. Project Evaluation Module

The evaluation process is performed through the Project Proposal Evaluation Module at the following link: <https://evaluation.fondznanauku.gov.rs/fzn/login>

Please log into your account to access your dedicated evaluation space.

In case of any issues, please contact the SF by e-mail. Project acronym should be stated in the subject line of the e-mails if the issue is related to a particular Project Proposal.

Within the module you will find notifications about the progress of the evaluation process. You will also receive notifications from the evaluation module through e-mail.

The module contains an overview of all Project Proposals you were invited to or are currently reviewing. The module shows basic information on each of those Project Proposals: Program name, Project acronym, title and application number, set deadline, and status of the review. This page provides access to the Project Proposal page.

In order to keep track of the review process, you can monitor status of each Project Proposal assigned to you. The Table 4 shown below lists all stages and statuses of the process.

Table 4. Project review statuses and descriptions

Project review status	Description
Request for review	Request to review a Project Proposal is sent to the Reviewer, and his/her reply is pending
Review request accepted	Reviewer has informed the SF that he/she is willing to perform the review
Review request rejected	Reviewer has informed the SF that he/she is not willing to perform the review
Review in progress	Reviewer that has accepted to perform the review has been approved by the SF Admin; deadline for review submission has been set
Review overdue	The submission deadline has not been met by the Reviewer
Review submitted	Review of the Project Proposal has been submitted
Review accepted	The submitted review of the Project Proposal has been verified and accepted by the SF as completed in line with the Guidelines
Review edit requested	Submitted review is not in line with the Guidelines and edits have been requested
Consensus requested	There is a large discrepancy among total scores of the reviews, which should be amended or justified by the Reviewers
Consensus submitted	The Consensus review has been submitted by Reviewer
Project evaluation completed	All reviews of the project have been completed, verified, and accepted by the SF; Consensus (where necessary) has been reached

Performing Project review and access to Project Proposal(s)

In accordance with your expertise, you will be invited to review one or more Project Proposal(s). At this point the basic information on the Project Proposal will be made available at the module: Project title, acronym, application number, abstract, and information on project team.

After receiving an invitation to perform a peer review, please examine the assigned Project Proposal within **two days** to verify that the Project Proposal matches your area of expertise and inform the SF of any concerns, particularly conflicts of interest and deadlines.

In case there are no conflicts of interest, and you are available to carry out the review, please fill in the Invitation form and accept the invitation. The SF will review the Invitation form, and if everything is in line with the Guidelines you will be appointed reviewer of the project and be given access to the entire project documentation. You will receive an email confirming that you have been assigned as a Peer Reviewer of the project by the SF.

The documentation of the Project Proposal in its entirety will be made available to you. The Project proposal documentation can be downloaded complete or as individual files.

You will be using the Evaluation Form for evaluation of the assigned project proposal(s). You should enter scores and comments for each evaluation criterion and sub-criterion. Most fields in the form are mandatory¹ and should be filled in for the review to be considered complete.

At the bottom of the Evaluation Form, two options are available:

- **Save Only** - In the case you need to save changes made to the Evaluation Form and continue to review the Project Proposal later, please use the **Save Only** option.
- **Save and Submit** - If you have filled in all the mandatory fields in the Evaluation Form, and you consider the review to be complete, please use the **Save and Submit** option. By using this option, the Review will be submitted, and the SF will assess the review to make sure it was completed in line with these Guidelines and Program rules. At this point your access to the complete Project Proposal documentation will be locked.

Editing your review

Each submitted review is assessed by the SF to make sure all mandatory fields were filled in, and that the evaluation of the Project Proposal was completed in line with these Guidelines and Program rules.

In case issues are identified within the submitted review, you will be asked by the SF to edit your review accordingly, and access to the entire Project Proposal documentation will be provided. Please follow the steps laid out in the previous section for editing the project review.

¹ All fields, except for the **Private message to SF**, are mandatory. Any message to SF you enter is strictly confidential and will not be made available to applicants or other participants in the evaluation process

Consensus review

If total scores given by Reviewers of the project differ by more than 20 points, the SF contacts the Peer Reviewers and asks for consensus or justification of differing opinions.

Reviewers of the project proposal will be given access to all reviews. You will be asked to consider editing assigned scores and comments in order to lessen the discord and resubmit your review. Please follow the steps laid out in the previous section(s) for editing the project review.

In the case that a reviewer decides not to amend their judgement and the discrepancy between total scores remains larger than 20 points, the Science Fund will request an additional independent review of the Project Proposal. After obtaining the additional review, the one score which represents the outlier is discarded, and the final score is calculated as the average score of the remaining reviews. In case that the total points of the additional review is equidistant from the total points of the other reviews, the final score is calculated by taking into account the two reviews which are most favourable

7. Technical assistance

In case any issues arise, do not hesitate to contact us by e-mail: experts-sfrs@fondznanauku.gov.rs

Project acronym should be stated in the subject line of the e-mails if the issue is related to a particular Project Proposal.

8. Appendix 1. Peer Review Evaluation Form

Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia – Program IDEAS 2024			
Project Grant Peer Review	Project Reference No:	Excellence Score:	
		Impact Score:	
	Project Acronym:	Implementation Score:	
		Total Score:	

Title of Proposed Project

Excellence

Please score and comment on the excellence of the proposed research.

1.Excellence Assessment	Points (1-5)
1.1. Are the specific objectives for the Project clear and measurable?	
1.2. Are the specific objectives realistic and achievable within the duration of the Project?	
1.3. Is the proposed research scientifically founded in recent scientific publications?	
1.4. Is the proposed research work ambitious and goes beyond the state-of-the-art?	
1.5. Are the planned results of the proposed research likely to be significant and (where relevant) applicable?	
1.6. Is the proposed research likely to lead to publications in high-impact journals/books and other scholarly publications relevant for the scientific field of the proposal?	
1.7. Is the proposed research methodology appropriate to achieve the goals of the project?	
1.8. To what extent is the proposed research original and novel, not just an extension of previous results? (Briefly justify in the description of the Excellence score your judgment about the novelty of the Proposed Project compared to the previous work of the applicants)	
1.9. Does the PI demonstrate the necessary scientific/scholarly credentials and scientific leadership in the field of the project proposal?	
1.10. Do the key members of the Project team demonstrate the necessary scientific/scholarly credentials necessary for its execution?	
Total (max 50 points)	

Note: Assign points using the following range: 1 (poor), 2 (fair), 3 (good), 4 (very good) and 5 (excellent).

Description of the Excellence score (maximum 4000 characters)

Please justify the given score and provide argumentation. Make sure you state both strengths and weaknesses in the Excellence of the proposal.

Strengths:
Weaknesses:

Impact

Please score and comment on the pathway to impact identified for this work.

2. Impact Assessment	Points (1-5)
2.1. Does the proposed research have a potential to have a global impact on the society, economy, industry, climate change, environment, healthcare, education and other aspects of social development?	
2.2. Does the proposed research have a potential to contribute to the development of the specific scientific field?	
2.3. Does the proposed research have a potential to contribute to the science, economy or society at the national level?	
2.4. Are the proposed measures for dissemination and application of the results adequate and well planned?	
2.5. Will the research results and/or acquired data be made available for other researchers beyond the project team (open research and open data)? *In case that the project proposal deals with AI or AI-related research (in whole or in part), will the project results and/or generated data be published in open access repositories or databases in line with open data principles?	
2.6. Does the proposed research identify stakeholders and beneficiaries who will be impacted by the Project?	
Total (max 30 points)	

Note: Assign points using the following range: 1 (poor), 2 (fair), 3 (good), 4 (very good) and 5 (excellent).

Description of the Impact score (maximum 4,000 characters)

Please justify the given score and provide argumentation. Make sure you state both strengths and weaknesses in the Impact of the proposal.

Strengths:
Weaknesses:

Implementation

Please comment on the applicants' ability and commitment to deliver the proposed project, the effectiveness of the proposed planning and management and on whether the requested resources are appropriate and have been fully justified.

3. Implementation Assessment	Points (1-5)
3.1. Are the proposed research methodology and work plan coherent and effective to achieve the Project objectives and impact, including adequate allocation of resources to tasks and members?	
3.2. Are the roles of the Project team members and consortium partners clearly outlined, and are their fields of expertise complementary, such that the Project team has all the necessary know-how and access to critical infrastructure needed to carry out the project activities?	
3.3. Is the risk management properly implemented and are the mitigation measures well planned?	
3.4. Is the budget realistic and well balanced?	
Total (max 20 points)	

Note: Assign points using the following range: 1 (poor), 2 (fair), 3 (good), 4 (very good) and 5 (excellent).

Description of the Implementation score (maximum 4000 characters)

Please justify the given score and provide argumentation. Make sure you state both strengths and weaknesses in the Implementation of the proposal.

Strengths:
Weaknesses:

Novelty in relation to the previous work of the applicants

Compared to the previous work of the applicants, mark the novelty of the proposed idea (Place an **X** next to the relevant option):

It is a completely novel idea for the applicants	
It is a novel idea but based on their previous work	
It is partially investigated/developed in their previous work and represents justified extension	
It is incremental research compared to their previous work	
This idea has been implemented by one part of the applicants, but its application is novel	
The idea is concurrently developed and/or financed in other project(s) by the applicants	
The idea of the Proposed Project has already been implemented and/or published by the applicants	
Other (provide comment in the narrative section of the excellence score)	

Overall judgment

Mark the overall judgment of the project proposal (Place an **X** next to the relevant option):

This is a very strong proposal that fully meets all assessment criteria	
This is a strong proposal that broadly meets all assessment criteria	
This is a good proposal that meets all assessment criteria but with minor weaknesses	
This proposal meets all assessment criteria but with clear weaknesses	
This proposal does not meet one or more of the assessment criteria	
This proposal is scientifically or technically flawed	

Summary Assessment

Please summarize your view of the proposal (maximum 4000 characters). Make sure you state both strengths and weaknesses of the proposal.

--