Science Fund
of the Republic of Serbia

Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia

Guidelines for Peer reviewers

Science for Industry Program - AI Application in Industry through Scientific Partnership – “From Lab to Market”

August 2026

Contents

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. Depending on the type of the Program, the evaluation process can be a two-stage or a three-stage process. The three-stage evaluation consists of three levels: strategic and thematic assessment, peer review, and the Program Board assessment. The stage one of the evaluation in a three-stage evaluation (strategic and thematic assessment) is performed by Strategic Program Screening Panel (hereinafter referred to as: "Strategic Panel"), the stage two of the evaluation, is performed by Peer Reviewers (hereinafter referred to as: "Peer Reviewer") and the stage three of the evaluation, is performed by members of the Program Board. As the rule, the stage one of the evaluation is performed by domestic and/or experts from Serbian diaspora, while the stage two and the stage three of 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 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 Science for Industry Program - AI Application in Industry through Scientific Partnership – "From Lab to Market"

2.1. Program Description

The Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia launched the Public Call (hereinafter referred to as: "Call") for the Science for Industry Program - AI Application in Industry through Scientific Partnership – "From Lab to Market" (hereinafter referred to as: "Program") on May 13th, 2026. The Call is closed on June 15th, 2026. The Program documentation was published on the SF website and is available HERE.

The Act of the Science for Industry Program - AI Application in Industry through Scientific Partnership – "From Lab to Market" (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 **applied research in all scientific fields**. The Program is designed as a horizontal program enabling the development, testing, and validation of scientific solutions in cooperation with industry partners. It is based on clearly defined expectations regarding applicability, as well as evidence of validation through pilot implementation or testing in a real environment. In addition, the Program provides a framework for the further development of results, including their market-oriented or institutional application. The Program is thematically guided, but operationally horizontal, and aligned with the Strategy for Scientific and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia 2021-2025 "The Power of Knowledge", the Smart Specialisation Strategy of the Republic of Serbia 2020-2027 (RIS3) and Strategy for the Development of Artificial Intelligence in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2025-2030, and other relevant strategic documents. All projects within this Program must be clearly positioned within one of the following priority domains, with AI playing some role in all projects:

- Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- Food for the Future
- Information and Communication Technologies (ICT);
- Machines and Manufacturing Processes of the Future;
- Creative Industries.

Artificial intelligence, digitalisation, energy transition, sustainable energy systems, and health are recognised as horizontal thematic directions that may be addressed across the above domains, in line with relevant national strategies.

The total budget of the Program is € 11,700,000.

The Project budget shall range from € 150,000 to a maximum of € 300,000 per project.

Project duration is 12 months.

Applicants must ensure that industry partners contribute to project co-financing, either through financial and/or in-kind contributions, in accordance with Program rules. The minimum co-financing share required from industry partner(s) shall be 15% of the total requested project budget.

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 general objective of the Program is to support the development and validation of applicable scientific solutions through structured and sustainable partnerships between research organisations and industry. The Program focuses on results that can be directly used as products, services, technological processes, or public policy solutions, including results with clear potential for further development, commercialisation, and sustainable application in the market, or for adoption within business and public systems.

Specific Objectives are as follows:

- Increasing the number of projects with demonstrable potential for application in a real-world environment, through pilot implementation or testing with an industry partner and end users;

- Strengthening the capacities of research and development organisations to cooperate with industry during the phases of development, testing, and validation of solutions;

- Steering research activities towards industrial sectors recognised as strategic priorities in national strategies;

- Supporting the development of solutions that contribute to the competitiveness, resilience, and sustainability of the economy and the public sector;

- Supporting the development of research results with identifiable market potential, including preparation of solutions for subsequent innovation phases, technology transfer, or cooperation with market actors, without an obligation to commercialise results during the project duration.

The Program does not support projects focused on fundamental research at the idea stage (TRL 1).

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

- **Excellence** – quality, relevance, and contemporary significance of the proposed topic in relation to the Program objectives, priority domains, and horizontal pillars, scientific merit, innovativeness, rationality of objectives, importance of the research, applicability of the results and future prospects of the proposed research, assessment of competence of the Principal Investigator and other members of the Team; maximum 30 points in evaluation process.

- **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 35 points in evaluation process.
- **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 industry partners, as well as the complementarity of their expertise with the project topic; maximum 35 points in evaluation process.

2.3. Eligible applicants

Consortium - participating in the Project must include at least one accredited scientific research organization in the Republic of Serbia (hereinafter: SRO) and at least one industry partner acting as a co-financier of the project. The consortium may comprise a maximum of five members, including partners from the industry.

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 determined, including young researchers.

Each Team Member (including the PI) must be employed in an accredited SRO 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.

Industry partners - Participates mandatorily in project co-financing through financial and/or in-kind contributions. The Program allows participation of more than one industry partner per project, while the total contribution to the project co-financing must not be less than 15% in total. More information on the roles of the industry partners is available within the Grant manual (2.4 Industry partner).

The eligibility criteria for industry partners are checked during the administrative check. Only those Project Proposals that satisfy the eligibility criteria proceed to the evaluation process.

More information on the eligibility is available within the Grant manual HERE.

2.4. Eligible costs and budgetary limitations

The Project budget ranges from € 150,000 to a maximum of €300,000 **per project.** If, during the course of implementation, and no later than the mid-term implementation, a Project budget requires additional funding, such additional funding will be considered on a case-by-case basis, subject to a prior approval by the Strategic Program Screening Panel, the Managing Board of the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia and World Bank review and no-objection. The maximum amount for additional funding may be up to EUR 100,000. 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 Science for Industry Program - AI Application in Industry through Scientific Partnership – "From Lab to Market"

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
	(~1125 EUR)	(~337 EUR)
Research Assistant / Teaching Assistant, Teaching Assistant with PhD	144,000	43,200
	(~1227 EUR)	(~368 EUR)
Research Associate / Assistant Professor	172,000	51,600
	(~1465 EUR)	(~440 EUR)
Senior Research Associate / Associate Professor	186,000	55,800
	(~1585 EUR)	(~475 EUR)
Principal Research Fellow / Full Professor	198,000	59,400
	(~1687 EUR)	(~506 EUR)

The Principal Investigator is entitled to an increased compensation amounting to 20% of the monthly net remuneration allocated in the Project Budget, for the purpose of carrying out activities related to project and project team management.
The Principal Investigator is obligated to include the cost of the external audit in the budget to be carried out at the end of the project implementation period. This cost is allocated to the Lead SRO.

The external audit is performed for the Project in its entirety and includes the audit of project documentation and financial management of the Project by all participating SROs.

2.5. Project Proposal application process

The Public Call application process for the Science for Industry Program - AI Application in Industry through Scientific Partnership – "From Lab to Market" is conducted in two rounds.

The first round involves the submission of a Short Project Proposal and the required supporting documents submitted by the applicants. The second round involves the Full Project Proposal submission with accompanying documentation.

More information on the public call application and the required documents of a proposal can be found in section 3.2. of Grant Manual.

3. Project Proposal evaluation procedure

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

3.1. Administrative check of Project Proposals

Both Short and Full Project Proposals, including the specified supporting documentation undergo an administrative and eligibility check.
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 Public Call;
- 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, the SROs, and industry partners, as well as prescribed relations and proportions in the budget.
- confirm that the Proposal fulfils the eligibility criteria for industry partner specified in Section 2.4., and for project duration specified in Section 2.8 of Grant Manual.

Only those Project Proposals that satisfy the administrative check eligibility criteria proceed to the evaluation process.

3.2. Stage one of evaluation procedure – Strategic Program Screening Panel

In stage one of the evaluation, each Short Project Proposal, that has fulfilled the criteria of the Administrative and eligibility check, is evaluated by Strategic Panel. The Strategic Panel initially screens Short Project proposals in order to assess whether the project addresses the objectives of the call and aligns with national strategic priorities, and whether it is thematically relevant for further evaluation.

Each Panel member individually assesses the Short Project Proposal in terms of the evaluation criteria: Excellence, Impact, and Implementation, using the Strategic and Thematic Screening Form, and provide narrative description for each section of the Form. There is no in-depth scientific evaluation within this stage; evaluation is narrative-only, with no numerical points.

Each Strategic Panel member also provides an explicit recommendation on whether the Proposal should proceed to the next stage of the evaluation process. During the Strategic Panel meeting, members

discuss the proposals and jointly compile a list of projects selected to proceed to the next stage of evaluation.

Applicants whose Short project proposals pass the Stage one evaluation are invited to submit a Full project proposal, which undergoes an Administrative and Eligibility Check. Only those Project Proposals that satisfy the administrative check eligibility criteria proceed to the Stage two evaluation.

Upon completion of stage one of the Evaluation, each Principal investigator receives a notification on the outcome.

3.3. Stage two of evaluation procedure – Peer Reviewers

In stage two of the evaluation, each Full Project Proposal that has fulfilled the criteria of the Administrative and eligibility check is evaluated by two independent 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 in line with the criteria specified above (Table 2). Each Reviewer also provides an explicit recommendation confirming or withholding her/his support for the Proposal.

Upon completion of the reviews, they are summarized, and the average scores of the reviews are calculated for each criterion, as well as the overall average score.

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 two remaining reviews.

In order to pass the evaluation by the Reviewers, the average scores of the reviews calculated for each criterion, as well as the overall average score must be greater than the corresponding minimum numbers specified in Table 2.

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

Criterion	Stage two (points)
Excellence	30 (min. 18)
Impact	35 (min. 21)
Implementation	35 (min. 21)
Total	**100** (min. **70**)

Upon completion of stage two of the Evaluation, each Principal Investigator shall receive a notification on the outcome.

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

3.4. Passing to stage three of evaluation procedure

Prior to stage three of the Evaluation, a preliminary shortlist is created, with Full Project proposals ranked in descending order based on total average score assigned by the Reviewers after stage two 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 Program, or, more precisely, double the amount of the budget funded by the SF.

3.5. Stage three of evaluation procedure – Program Board

During stage three of evaluation, the Program Board for Project proposal evaluation (hereinafter referred to as: "Program board") evaluates all shortlisted Proposals 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 based on stages two and three of evaluation. The Program Board may also request from the PI to correct and/or clarify the key points of the Proposal, or another type of modification of the Project Proposal with all relevant elements.
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.

3.6. Final Decision and Financing Agreements

At the end of the work of the Program Board, based on the results of the stage three of evaluation, as well as expert analyses of Trustworthy AI risks, ethics, environmental and social impact, Project proposals are ranked and classified according to project quality and project budgets into categories A, AB, B, C and D by the Program Board (Table 3).

Table 3 - Results of the stage three of evaluation

Project score (category)	**Description**
A	Project proposals that are ranked highest after the stage three 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 stage three 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 stage three 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 stage three 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 in the Program shall be posted on the website of the Science Fund, and the Principal Investigators shall receive notification on the outcome of the stage three of Evaluation and decision by the Managing Board. Proposals that have been approved for funding shall sign 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 three 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 Project Proposal Evaluation 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.

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.**

4. 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 two evaluation process, and instructions for Peer reviewer are described below.

5.1 Project documentation

Evaluation of project proposals in stage two 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 (Principal Investigator, team members and consortium (participating Scientific research organizations – SROs, and industry partners)
  - 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 ethics and other committees’ decisions, administrative forms, and other documentation that clarifies some segments of project proposal.

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.

5.2 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, industry partners) 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.

5.3 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.

5.4 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.

5.5 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.

5.6 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 (stage two and stage three of evaluation) is performed through the Project Proposal Evaluation Module at the following link: https://evaluation.fondzanauku.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 below lists all stages and statuses of the process.

Project 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

6.1. 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 mandatory[1] 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.

6.2. 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.

6.3. 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.

[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

7. Technical assistance

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

Appendix 1. Peer Review Evaluation Form

Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia **Science for Industry Program – AI Application in Industry through Scientific Partnership – "From Lab to Market"**			
Project Grant Peer Review	**Project Reference No:** **Project Acronym:**	**Excellence score:**	
		Impact score:	
		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 project's specific objectives clearly defined, measurable, and realistically achievable within the proposed timeframe, and are they logically linked to expected TRL advancement stated in the project proposal?	
1.2. Does the proposal demonstrate a sound scientific foundation based on current literature, and to what extent does it offer a novel, innovative contribution that goes significantly beyond the applicants' previous work?	
1.3. To what extent are the AI solutions deployed in the project proposal (AI models, datasets, algorithms, methodologies, software tools, industrial applications, etc. ground-breaking objectives, novel concepts and approaches, new solutions and products, etc.) and effectively validated through the industry partnership?	
1.4. Is the proposed methodology robust, well-founded, and suitable for achieving the project goals through the effective development, testing, and validation of scientific solutions within a real-world environment or in cooperation with industry partners?	
1.5. How effectively is the proposed research aligned with the specific practical needs or challenges identified by the industry partner, and does the conceptual design of the partnership ensure that the industrial context directly shapes the project goals to maintain relevance for real-world application?	
1.6. Are the planned results likely to be significant and directly applicable as products, services, technological processes, or public policy solutions, demonstrating a high-quality "lab-to-market" logic throughout the scientific approach and project design?	
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 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 demonstrate a clear potential to generate a tangible impact on national economy, industry, or public sector, including benefits for society through improvements in the environment, climate change mitigation, healthcare, education, or other key areas of social development?	
2.2. Does the proposed research have the potential to contribute to the advancement of the relevant scientific and/or technological field, particularly in terms of application and innovation?	
2.3. Does the research contribute to the long-term innovation capacity and competitiveness of the Republic of Serbia, and to what extent does it strengthen the national scientific landscape or industry positioning?	
2.4. Are the proposed measures for project visibility and application of the results adequate and well-planned to ensure their further development, commercialization, or adoption within business and public systems and long-term sustainability of the project duration?	
2.5. Does the proposal demonstrate a clear, realistic, and technically feasible pathway for application of results in the market or public sector, including defined development stages, adoption mechanisms, and validation of milestones?	
2.6. Does the proposed research clearly identify relevant stakeholders, industry partners, and end users who will be impacted by the Project?	
2.7. Does the proposal demonstrate potential to inform, support, or improve public policies and regulatory frameworks, or otherwise contribute to national socio-economic goals and the advancement of business or public systems?	
Total (max 35 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 4000 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 score and comment on the applicants' ability and commitment to deliver the proposed project, the effectiveness of the proposed planning and management, and whether the requested resources are appropriate and have been fully justified in relation to the project's transition toward the market.

3.Implementation Assessment	**Points (1-5)**
3.1. Are the proposed research methodology and work plan coherent and effective in achieving the Project objectives, with a specific focus on the transition from a laboratory environment to a real-world application?	
3.2. Are the roles of the Project team members and industry partners clearly outlined and complementary, and is the industry partner's contribution substantial, realistic, and critical to the successful development and validation of project results in a real-world environment?	
3.3. Does the Project team possess all the necessary know-how and access to critical infrastructure needed to carry out the project's activities?	
3.4. Is the risk management properly implemented, with well-planned mitigation measures that ensure the successful validation of projects' results?	
3.5. Is the proposed budget realistic, well-balanced, and justified to ensure the successful validation of results and their further development toward the market or adoption within business and public systems?	
3.6. Does the proposal provide a sound plan for intellectual property management and the exploitation of results, clearly addressing how technology transfer, licensing, or further institutional and market-oriented applications will be achieved, even if commercialization is not mandatory during the project's duration?	
3.7. Does the project proposal provide a realistic timeline and strategy for pilot implementation, testing, or validation in a relevant environment?	
Total (max 35 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 Assessment

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 and represents a significant scientific leap with high potential for original application in a real-world environment.	
It is a novel idea but builds upon their previous work to introduce a high-degree innovation with a clearly defined new application.	
It is partially investigated/developed in their previous work and represents justified extension toward a specific, validated industry solution.	
The scientific idea has been previously implemented by the applicants, but its current application to a new sector or problem is entirely novel and innovative.	
The proposal represents an incremental advancement of the applicants' previous results, with limited innovation or applicability.	
The idea is concurrently developed and/or financed in other project(s) by the applicants, showing significant overlap with existing work.	
The idea of the Proposed Project has already been implemented, and/or commercialized by the applicants.	
Other (please provide a detailed comment in the narrative section regarding the originality and innovation of the project)	

Overall judgement

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, highlighting its main strengths and weaknesses.
In this section, please provide a comprehensive and balanced synthesis of your overall assessment for the project proposal. Your narrative should clearly highlight the main strengths and weaknesses identified across all three criteria: Excellence, Impact, and Implementation. Please ensure that your qualitative description is fully consistent with the scores assigned to each section, and the total score. The summary should justify the final rating by reflecting on the quality of the scientific concept, the clarity of the pathway toward application, and the operational capacity of the consortium to deliver the proposed results. If there are significant gaps or risks that influenced your scoring, please specify them here as key findings.