
REPUBLIC OF CROATIA
MINISTRY OF SCIENCE, EDUCATION AND YOUTH
Donje Svetice 38, Zagreb 10000, Croatia

DIGITAL INNOVATION AND GREEN TECHNOLOGY (DIGIT)
9558-HR

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR CONSULTANCY SERVICES

PROGRAM EVALUATION SPECIALIST FOR SUPPORT IN THE EVALUATION OF PROJECT PROPOSALS

1. Background

The Government of Croatia and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) have signed the Loan Agreement (Loan No. 9558-HR) for the Digital Innovation and Green Technology Project (DIGIT) in the amount of EUR 106 million. The Project seeks to advance research and innovation with a digital and green focus through enhancing institutional infrastructure and research performance of research organizations and firms. The Project is managed by the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth (MSEY).

The Project comprises two components over a duration of 5 years. Component 1 (*Enabling institutional conditions for digital and green research and innovation*) provides technical assistance and financing to strengthen institutional capacities and support the efficient use of EU funds. Component 2 (*Programs for digital and green research and innovation*) provides sub-financing through grant support programs to cover the gaps in EU funding and improve the targeting of research and innovation support to digital and green technology.

The DIGIT project aims to advance research and innovation with a digital and green focus through enhancing institutional infrastructure and research performance of research organizations and firms. This also implies building the capacity of MSEY for the implementation of activities within the DIGIT Project and Sector for EU programs and projects.

2. Objectives

The objective of engaging a Program Evaluation Specialist is to support MSEY in the delivery of the evaluation of project proposals under published calls for proposals. The Consultant will provide expert guidance and assistance to ensure the efficient and effective implementation of the evaluation process for research and innovation projects funded through the EU and other public sources.

3. Scope of Work

The Consultant will provide expert advice and support related to the evaluation of project proposals under published calls for proposals. The Consultant will conduct advisory, quality enhancement, and capacity building roles, as outlined below:

- Oversight of the evaluation process: provide strategic advice on the design, organization and implementation of the evaluation process, ensuring alignment with established procedures, timelines and quality standards; identify potential bottlenecks, inconsistencies and procedural risks; and recommend appropriate improvements.

- Coordination of the pool of experts: facilitate a shared understanding of roles, responsibilities, evaluation requirements and quality expectations among the Client and evaluation experts; support methodological alignment, calibration and consensus processes; and provide guidance on material differences in scoring or assessment reasoning, without replacing the independent professional judgement of evaluators.
- Evaluation methodology, requirements and documentation: provide expert input into the development, review and refinement of evaluation criteria, methodologies, guidance documents, checklists, control tools, templates and instructions; advise on the consistent application of applicant, project, activity and cost eligibility requirements and quality assessment criteria; and provide recommendations to improve the completeness, clarity, consistency, usability and alignment of evaluation documentation with applicable procedures and standards.
- Quality assurance advice: provide expert feedback to promote the quality, objectivity and consistency of the evaluation process, including (i) consistent and appropriate application of scoring approaches; (ii) clarity, proportionality and evidence basis of assessment justifications; (iii) alignment with evaluation criteria, methodology and call documentation; and (iv) identification of recurring issues requiring clarification or corrective action.
- Digitalization of the evaluation process: provide expert input into the design, testing, implementation and continuous improvement of digital workflows and tools supporting the evaluation process, including the structured entry and review of project and evaluation data, electronic completion and approval of checklists and control documents, and the export, storage and archiving of final evaluation records, while ensuring traceability, data consistency and an adequate audit trail.
- Capacity building and advisory support: deliver on-demand advice, briefing materials and targeted support to strengthen the professional capacity of evaluation experts; identify common gaps, recurring errors and implementation challenges; and propose practical measures, lessons learned and recommendations to enhance the consistency, efficiency and quality of current and future evaluation processes.

4. Deliverables and payment

The Program Evaluation Specialist will perform the assignment independently and in professional coordination with the Project Manager and the Head of the Department for Contracting of EU Projects. The Consultant is expected to deliver the following:

- Expert input on the design and organization of the evaluation process, ensuring alignment with applicable procedures, timelines, and quality standards. This may include feedback notes or advisory memos commenting on proposed evaluation phases, structures, or methodologies.
- Summary guidance notes or briefing materials that clarify roles, responsibilities, and quality expectations for evaluation experts.
- Recommendations to strengthen coherence, objectivity, and methodological alignment in expert scoring and comments.
- Brief assessment summaries highlighting recurring issues and proposals for improvement in checklists and control lists.
- Recommendations to enhance professional capacity and evaluation consistency.

- A monthly timesheet specifying the working days spent and the tasks performed.
- A report on services rendered summarizing all activities performed.

Payment for the services will be made on a time spent basis, at a fixed daily rate, according to the actual number of working days confirmed by the Project Manager and the Head of the Department for Contracting of EU Projects. One working day is equal to 8 (eight) working hours. The monthly timesheet approved by the Client constitutes the basis for payment.

5. Conflict of interest

If the Program Evaluation Specialist is directly, indirectly, or in any way connected with an applicant, evaluation expert or project proposal in relation to which they provide support, or has other responsibilities that may jeopardize their impartiality in relation to them, they must inform MSEY immediately before starting the assignment, and immediately upon becoming aware of any such circumstances arising during the assignment. MSEY will then ensure that, if the connection is such that it may jeopardize the evaluation, the Program Evaluation Specialist does not participate in the activities relating to the project proposal of that applicant.

In line with paragraph 3.16 of the applicable Procurement Regulations, the Program Evaluation Specialist shall provide professional, objective and impartial advice, shall at all times hold the interests of MSEY paramount, without any consideration of future work, and shall avoid conflicts with other assignments and their own interests.

(Non)existence of conflict of interest must be consistent with the provisions (par. 3.16 and 3.17) of the applicable Procurement regulations:

- <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/178331533065871195-0290022020/original/ProcurementRegulations.pdf>.

Before starting the assignment, the Program Evaluation Specialist is obliged to sign the Declaration of confidentiality, impartiality and non-existence of conflicts of interest for external experts.

6. Qualifications and Experience Required

The Consultant should have a Master's degree, and have proven experience with a minimum of 5 years and knowledge of evaluations of research and innovation programs, particularly those funded by the EU or public sources. Strong knowledge of evaluation methodologies, quality assurance processes, and familiarity with evaluation frameworks is essential. The Consultant should have excellent coordination, communication, and analytical skills, with the ability to lead expert teams and ensure consistency and accuracy in evaluation outputs. Fluency in English and Croatian is essential.

7. Duration of the Contract

The Program Evaluation Specialist will be hired under a Time-Based Contract, issued on a time spent basis, with payment at a fixed daily rate.

The maximum level of effort is 150 (one hundred and fifty) working days.

The length of the assignment is 12 (twelve) months.