

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

DIGITAL, INNOVATION, AND GREEN TECHNOLOGY PROJECT
(DIGIT PROJECT)

IBRD LOAN NO. 9558-HR

PROJECT ID: P180755

CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST
FOR TECHNOLOGY SCOUTS

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1. Introduction

The Government of the Republic 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 (hereafter: DIGIT Project) in the amount of EUR 106 million on June 28, 2023. The Ministry of Science, Education and Youth of the Republic of Croatia (hereafter: MSEY) is in charge of implementing the DIGIT Project.

The DIGIT Project aims to facilitate the digital transformation and green transition of the economy, increase resources for applied research and experimental development, and support the efforts of the Croatian government to strengthen its institutional capacity to deliver research and innovation policies. The DIGIT Project provides financing through Sub-grant schemes and supports important reforms on the research and innovation agenda. It relates to activities and reforms envisaged in the National Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021-2026 (NRRP), the Croatia Smart Specialization Strategy 2029 (S3), the Programme for Competitiveness and Cohesion 2021-2027 (PCC), and the country's accession to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Therefore, as part of the DIGIT Project, the Technology scouting program (hereafter: Program) is launched. The main objective of the Program is to increase the innovativeness and competitiveness of Croatian companies by addressing their technology needs and leveraging academic expertise effectively. The Program aims to bridge critical gaps between innovative companies and academia, thereby driving economic growth and competitiveness.

The Program is structured around two main components:

- Component 1 focuses on building and utilizing technology scouting capacity. It revolves around the delivery of essential services by technology scouts to validate ideas for a Proof-of-Concept (hereafter: PoC) and to minimize risk of potential failure. This component involves evaluation and preparation to ensure that the PoC is grounded in feasible and promising ideas.
- Component 2 then progresses to Call for PoC proposals and actual development and testing of PoC, where the concepts and preparations from Component 1 are brought to life and their practicality and effectiveness are tested in real-world scenarios.

In summary, the Program will i) build technology scouting capacity, and utilize that capacity to ii) prepare good PoC proposals, and iii) support the implementation of PoC sub-projects.

2. Objective of the Call for Expression of Interest

The objective of this Call for Expression of Interest (hereafter: Call for EoI) is to establish a pre-approved list of technology scouts. The technology scouts will facilitate knowledge transfer, foster collaboration between industry and academia, and support the development of PoCs, aligned with the national strategic priorities. Through this Call for EoI, we aim to identify and engage qualified experts to act as technology scouts.

This document outlines the process and conditions for interested professionals to apply and become part of the pre-approved list of technology scouts.

By responding to this Call for EoI, you agree to perform the assignments to the **highest professional standards** and in compliance with the **conditions outlined in this Call for EoI**.

3. Scope of the work of the technology scouts

Selected qualified professionals participate in the following activities:

Component 1

1. Training for technology scouts (mandatory):

Hybrid training, a combination of online and in-person training to prepare professionals in areas of innovation management, technology scouting techniques, and fostering effective collaborations between academia and business. The training will be supported by the World Bank and will be delivered in coordination with international experts. The planned duration of the training is six (6) months, and the professionals will obtain a **Technology Scout Certificate** at the end of the training. During this activity, the professionals will network and connect academia and the business sector to develop a sub-project idea. The conclusion of this activity will result in established pool/pre-approved list of technology scouts.

2. Providing technology scouting services (mandatory):

A potential applicant for upcoming Call for PoC proposals can select a technology scout from a pre-approved list of trained technology scouts, ensuring a match with their specific innovation needs, or a technology scout can find a potential applicant. A technology scout connects companies with research organizations and provides a range of business services. During this activity, the technology scout will deliver a series of mandatory services, including business validation and preparation of the PoC proposals together with the applicant. The applicant will apply on the Call for PoC proposals, first by submitting a Concept note and then a Full application. This structured approach guarantees consistency and quality across all sub-projects. Involving technology scout from the pre-approved list in sub-project preparation significantly reduces the risk of low-quality service and ensures that the sub-project is progressing appropriately.

Component 2

3. Implementation of the sub-project (optional):

In case funding for PoC is awarded, the beneficiary will sign Sub-grant Agreement with MSEY and the sub-project will advance to Component 2, which is focused on the development of the PoC. This activity is a critical step where the theoretical ideas and plans from Component 1 are put into practice and validated in real-world scenarios. The continuity of support from the technology scouts or other experts can be ensured,

allowing for a seamless transition and consistent expertise throughout the sub-project lifecycle. During the implementation of the sub-projects, technology scouts can provide the following services: services related to market analysis, feasibility studies, and product development strategies; consulting related to the management and protection of intellectual property and a preliminary search of patent databases; verification of assumptions and analysis related to the target use, users and the market for the solutions developed; and development of a commercialization plan.

During the implementation of these activities, continuous mentoring will be provided by experienced professionals from the MSEY and the World Bank, offering ongoing support and guidance to the technology scouts and beneficiaries throughout their innovation sub-projects. This mentoring focuses on enhancing sub-project implementation, fostering effective academia-business collaborations, and ensuring the successful realization of innovation objectives.

4. Benefits for technology scouts

In addition to the Technology Scout Certificate and acquired knowledge, the selected technology scouts will also benefit from the provision of services during the preparation and implementation of the sub-projects.

5. Eligible profiles

Two types of professionals are eligible to apply to this Call for EoI:

A. Professionals experienced in research;

B. Professionals experienced in technology and knowledge transfer.

The ideal technology scout is a professional with at least three years of experience in research (profile type A) or at least one year of experience in technology and knowledge transfer (profile type B). While work experience in technology companies is preferred, it is not mandatory. Candidates should have some relevant experience in collaboration between academia and business. A willingness to undergo intensive training and apply the acquired skills is essential. Experience in public funding processes is a plus, as well as the ability to understand and interpret complex technical information. This role offers an opportunity to engage with a dynamic market, providing specialized services to both academic institutions and businesses.

This profile seeks to attract professionals who possess not only technical and business competence but also interpersonal skills and academic familiarity necessary to bridge the gap between industry and academia, thereby driving innovation forward.

Mandatory expertise is the following:

- At least 3 years of research experience (profile type A) or at least one year of experience in technology and knowledge transfer (profile type B);
- Some experience in collaboration between academia and business, including contractual research, collaborative projects or working at technology transfer offices;
- Willingness to undergo intensive training in English and apply the acquired skills in practice in Croatian ecosystem.

Desirable expertise is the following:

- Strong communication skills to facilitate interactions between companies and academia;
- Previous experience working with technology companies;
- Familiarity with innovation management and/or R&D management;
- Understanding of public funding and associated administrative requirements;
- Technical background or education;
- Experience in human-centered design methodologies;
- Ability to understand and interpret complex technical information (profile type A).

6. Exclusion

The application will be rejected in the following cases:

- Non-compliance with the conditions of this Call for EoI;
- Misrepresentation of required information during the selection process or failure to provide necessary information.

7. Procedure

The MSEY invites qualified candidates to submit their CVs (that match the mandatory and desirable expertise) by September 16, 2024, to the e-mail address: digit@mzom.hr. **In the application, please indicate the type of professional profile you qualify for.**

The candidates who have met the criteria will be invited to an interview (online or in-person). It is expected that the selected experts will start training in the last quarter of 2024.

8. Data protection

The personal data of the interested professionals will be processed under the responsibility of the data controller of the MSEY and in accordance with the usual practice and regulations.