

INNOVATION FUND OF MONTENEGRO**publishes****PUBLIC CALL FOR THE AWARD OF INNOVATION VOUCHERS¹****I SUBJECT OF THE PUBLIC CALL**

The subject of the Public Call is the award of innovation vouchers (hereinafter referred to as: vouchers) whose main purpose is to financially encourage micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (hereinafter referred to as: MSMEs) to raise the level of innovation of their products and improve their competitiveness in the market by using specialized services of scientific research institutions and/or innovation infrastructure entities (hereinafter referred to as: service providers). The vouchers will enable MSMEs to use professional knowledge to develop their innovative products, processes, services, identify new materials, explore new technologies, apply scientific research, access specialized infrastructure or obtain appropriate expertise.

The public call is aligned with the priority areas identified in Smart Specialization Strategy of Montenegro (2019–2024).

The priority areas identified by the Strategy are:

- Sustainable agriculture and the food value chain;
- Energy and sustainable environment;
- Sustainable and health tourism; and
- Information and communication technologies as a horizontal sector.

The Smart Specialization Strategy of Montenegro (2019-2024) is available at the following link: [Smart Specialization Strategy of Montenegro 2019-2024 \(www.gov.me\)](http://www.gov.me) Until the adoption of the new Smart Specialization Strategy (2026-2031), Montenegro has ensured the sustainability of the priorities and measures from the previous strategic cycle.

II OBJECTIVES OF THE PUBLIC CALL

The objectives of the Public Call are to:

¹ This is an unofficial translation. In case of any discrepancies, the version in the official language of Montenegro shall prevail.

- financially incentivize private enterprises to collaborate with service providers on commercially applicable scientific research and development efforts to make their operations and products more competitive in the marketplace;
- enable rapid knowledge transfer and contribute to the creation of long-term partnerships between MSMEs and scientific research organizations and innovation infrastructure entities;
- enable MSMEs to use expertise to develop their innovative products, processes, services, identify new materials, explore new technologies, apply scientific research, access specialized infrastructure or obtain appropriate expertise;
- strengthens the capacities of MSMEs for research, development and innovation by encouraging cooperation with service providers in order to develop new products, services or processes, with an emphasis on their commercialization;
- improve the innovativeness of MSMEs and provide opportunities for knowledge valorization for the purpose of future development and investment in innovation by MSMEs.

III ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

MSMEs established as legal entities in the manner defined by the applicable Law on Business Companies) and the Law on Accounting ("Official Gazette of Montenegro", No. 145/21 and 152/22), registered in the Central Register of Business Entities of Montenegro (CRPS) with headquarters in Montenegro and majority private ownership, where the share of ownership of a large business company may not exceed 10%, may apply to the Public Call.

Eligible applicants are MSMEs that fall into one of three categories:

Company category	Number of employees	Total revenue	or	Total assets
Medium-sized enterprises	< 250	≤ €50 million		≤ €43 million
Small businesses	< 50	≤ €10 million		≤ €10 million
Micro enterprises	< 10	≤ €2 million		≤ €2 million

Newly established companies that are not classified as MSMEs at the time of consideration of the voucher application may also apply to the Public Call. In this case, it is necessary to submit cross-sectional financial statements - balance sheet and income statement from the moment of establishment of the company, up to and including the last completed month, in order to determine whether the company belongs to the MSME segment.

The applicant is an MSME that meets the following requirements:

- that it complies with the definition in Annex 1 of the GBER Regulation;
- that it is registered in the Central Register of Business Entities of Montenegro;
- to have its seat on the territory of Montenegro;
- that it has fulfilled all obligations for regular payment of taxes and contributions;
- that it has not suspended regular business activity in pre-bankruptcy, bankruptcy proceedings, or liquidation proceedings, or similar in accordance with national regulations;
- that it has not used financial assistance from public national and international funding sources, or donor programs for the same activities covered by the project application. If the applicant has applied for funds from other state aid providers for the same eligible costs, it is necessary to submit a statement stating the amount and status of this support.

The applicant is responsible for submitting the Application to the Fund.

One Applicant may receive a maximum of one voucher under this Public Call.

IV ELIGIBLE SERVICE PROVIDERS

Eligible service providers for vouchers are scientific research institutions registered in the Register of Licensed Scientific Research Institutions at the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation or innovation infrastructure entities registered in accordance with paragraph 2, Article 6, of the Law on Innovation Activity ("Official Gazette of Montenegro", No. 82/20).

A list of licensed NIUs is available [HERE](#)

The list of registered innovation infrastructure entities is available [HERE](#).

V FUNDING AMOUNT

The Innovation Fund has allocated funds in the total amount of 150.000 EUR for this Public Call. One voucher can cover up to 100% of the total cost of the service and can amount to a maximum of 10.000 EUR, including value added tax (VAT). Both limits apply simultaneously.

Support granted through vouchers to entities carrying out economic activities, regardless of their legal status and the way in which they are financed, will be provided under the de minimis aid regime (small value state aid). The total amount of de minimis aid granted to one beneficiary may not cumulatively exceed 300.000 EUR during any period of three fiscal years.

At least 70% of the available budget of the Fund for this Public Call will be allocated to Applications that fall within the above-mentioned priorities of the Smart Specialization Strategy, while a maximum of 30% will be allocated to all other areas.

VI ELIGIBLE SERVICES

Vouchers can be used for the transfer of scientific, innovative, technological knowledge or for solving a technical/technological problem determined by the company.

The following services are eligible for support through this Public Call²:

- Developing new or improving existing products, processes or services to increase their functionality and quality;
- Proof of concept;
- Feasibility study;
- Prototyping and testing;
- Different types of testing (in the laboratory, in a pilot plant);
- Technology validation;
- Validation of new or improved products, processes or services;
- Development and implementation of special software for a product or process (as part of product development).

Innovation vouchers cannot be used for:

- Creation of business plans, strategies, economic assessments;
- Sales and marketing activities;
- Creating websites or mobile applications that do not solve a technological problem;
- Development and creation of software for sales and marketing activities or which are not in line with product development;
- Market research and analysis activities;
- Training, coaching, conferences, travel expenses, registration fees, etc.;
- Salaries, allowances, awards or bonus payments to employees;
- Consulting services for legal and financial affairs, market development strategies, management and leadership);
- Non-consulting services that are already available on the market (ISO standardization, technical certificates, etc.);
- Payment of licenses and software subscriptions (Microsoft Office, AutoCAD, SAP, etc.);
- Activities that are already funded under another program or by another company;
- Purchase of equipment or ready-made software solutions.

VII PERIOD OF IMPLEMENTATION OF INNOVATION VOUCHERS

The awarded innovation voucher must be used by the Beneficiary within a period of up to six (6) months from the date of signing the contract between the Fund and the Voucher Beneficiary.

VIII CONTENT OF THE APPLICATION

²For a more detailed explanation, see Chapter VII of the Innovation Voucher Program Manual.

The application for an innovation voucher must contain the following documentation:

- Application form
- Financial offer
- Applicant's statement
- Confirmation of settled tax liabilities or an appropriate document on tax debt rescheduling from the Tax Administration;
- Confirmation or certificate from the Commercial Court that no bankruptcy or liquidation proceedings have been initiated against the MSME and that no bankruptcy or liquidation proceedings are being conducted;
- De minimis aid declaration form

It is necessary that the financial offer from the Service Provider contains the following elements:

- Specification of the technical problem for the requested service;
- Name of the proposed Service Provider and contact person responsible for processing and performing the requested service;
- Total cost of the service including VAT, which should be presented as a separate cost if the Service Provider is in the VAT system;
- Service costs broken down into three categories:
 - human resources costs³ Service provider, including the names of the persons engaged and the duration of their engagement;
 - costs for materials used;
 - costs for using/renting equipment;
- Number of days for the realization of the requested service;
- The time validity of the offer (at least 30 days from the date indicated on the financial offer).

The financial offer must be signed by the official legal representative of the Service Provider.

IX HOW TO APPLY

The voucher application is submitted electronically via the Fund's portal. Before proceeding with the voucher application process, the Applicant must register on the Fund's portal, which is available at the following link: www.programifonda.me.

The registration request is automatically approved, after which the Applicant receives the necessary access credentials to log in to the Fund's portal.

³During a given service provision period, a person providing the service may be engaged in multiple projects simultaneously, provided that the total number of days of engagement on all projects may not exceed 132 days for a period of 6 months (6 months x 22 working days per month). The Innovation Fund will reject a financial offer that does not comply with this guideline.

Upon completion of registration, the Applicant may submit an Application via the Fund's portal. The Application is submitted as a set of documents completed in accordance with the instructions set out in the Innovation Voucher Program Manual and the application documents within the Public Call.

After the Applicant has completed the Innovation Voucher application form, placed a financial offer and accepted the terms of the Innovation Voucher Program, they need to click on the " Podnesi zahtjev" in order for the Application to be successfully submitted.

X VOUCHER REVIEW AND APPROVAL PROCESS

Innovation vouchers will be approved in chronological order of receipt of applications, starting from the date of publication of the Public Call, ending with the moment of spending the allocated funds within this Public Call, and no later than December 1, 2025.

The voucher approval process is carried out within the Fund. The Fund informs each Applicant of the outcome within seven (7) business days from the date of submission of the Application.

After submitting an Application for the award of vouchers, the Fund will conduct a review of each Application. which includes:

- Meeting the formal requirements for accepting the application;
- Fulfillment of criteria related to the services being financed, as well as those related to service providers;
- Correctness of the financial offer;
- Verification of the service's affiliation to priority areas within the Smart Specialization Strategy of Montenegro.

If all criteria are met, the Fund will approve the voucher to the Applicant, notify him/her and deliver the appropriate contract for signing.

Applicants whose Applications are rejected will be notified by email or via the Fund's portal, clearly stating the reasons for the rejection. The applicant may submit a new correct/corrected application, regardless of the reason for which the previously submitted Application was rejected.

X APPLICATION DEADLINE

The public call for the award of innovation vouchers is conducted as an open procedure, i.e. until the allocated funds are spent. Applications are processed and approved in the order of their receipt on the Fund's portal, and vouchers are awarded in the same order, depending on the outcome of the evaluation of applications. Applications for innovation vouchers can be submitted starting from 23 April 2025.

Incomplete applications, as well as applications not submitted electronically through the Innovation Fund portal, will not be considered.

A manual detailing the terms and conditions of the Innovation Voucher Program is available on the Fund's website.

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