

## **Annex I**

### **Terms of Reference (TOR) for Expert Commission member for the evaluation of project proposals submitted to the Public Call for strengthening the innovation of newly established or existing micro, small and medium-sized enterprises 2025**

#### **1. Background**

Innovation Fund of Montenegro (hereinafter: IF) aims to play a key role in developing and implementing government innovation policy based on the smart specialisation concept and is intended for innovative entrepreneurship as a driver of sustainable economic development. The funds of the IF will be distributed within designed programme framework and following the predetermined procedures within public calls.

The Call for strengthening the innovation of newly established or existing micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (hereinafter: MSMEs) was published on IF's website [www.fondzainovacije.me](http://www.fondzainovacije.me) on 23 April 2025. The purpose of the Call is to invest in pre-commercial activities of newly established companies and existing MSMEs to encourage the development and improvement of products, services and technologies that are new or significantly improved compared to those already available on the market with the aim of commercialization, which will contribute to increasing the company's income.

In line with international best practices, the IF will support projects on a competitive basis through an independent international evaluation process, led by an independent international Expert Commission comprised of proven professionals and supported by internationally qualified technical peer reviewers. The number of funded projects will be determined by the quality of the proposals and the total funds available or allocated to the program.

#### **2. Program Objectives**

The main objective of the Program for strengthening the innovation of newly established or existing MSMEs (hereinafter: the Program) is to increase the innovation of MSMEs by introducing process innovations or developing new or improved market-oriented products, services or technologies. The program will support the projects of newly established and existing MSMEs whose technological maturity is beyond the proof-of-concept stage, but which are not yet ready for the market, i.e., those whose technological level of project development is between TRL 5 and TRL 8, that is, they are in the experimental development phase.

The specific Program objectives which are expected three years after the end of the implementation of the projects are as follows:

- a) Introducing new or improved products, services and technologies to the market
- b) Introducing new or significantly improved way of doing business
- c) Strengthening the capacity of MSME staff for research, development and innovation
- d) Improving the operations of newly established MSMEs with an emphasis on company management

The deadline for submission of Applications was 1<sup>st</sup> September 2023. Total funds allocated for this Call for Proposals is EUR 1,000,000 for co-financing innovative projects for a period of up to three years. The lowest and highest amount of grants that can be awarded to an individual applicant and project is:

- the lowest amount is EUR 50,000.00
- the highest amount EUR 200,000.00

In accordance with the Program:

The maximum intensity of de minimis aid awarded within this Public Call is up to 80% of eligible costs.

### **3. Scope of Work**

The role and responsibilities of the Expert Commission (hereinafter: EC) member are as follows:

- Receive access to the Applications for review through the IF Portal;
- Examine the IF's Review Guidelines and instructions;
- Review all Applications for conflicts of interest or the appearance of conflicts of interest in accordance with the Fund Confidentiality and Prevention of Conflict-of-Interest Policy and inform the Fund Program Managers if any issues exist;
- Within two days of receiving access to the Applications to review, EC member must examine each assigned Application to verify that the proposals match the reviewers' area of expertise and inform the Fund Program Managers of any concerns;
- Review all the Application documents and come well prepared for discussions for each Application which will be presented at the final pitch event to be held in Montenegro;
- Provide each Applicant with a 20-minute time to present their Applications to the EC and answer specific questions that the EC may have for each project;
- The main questions that applicants will need to answer during the presentation relate to:
  - Presentation of a business idea
  - Presentation of the problem that is solved by the project proposal
  - The solution to the problem
  - Presentation of a product, service, technology or process
  - Presentation of the business model
  - Analysis of the market situation
  - Competition analysis
  - Business development

- Business risks
- Based on the public presentation, the Expert commission will evaluate project proposals based on the following criteria: Project Sustainability and Effect of the Project.
- The Expert Commission makes a common assessment for both criteria for each project based on the following formula:  $EC = 0.5I + 0.5II$ , where I and II are the ratings of the Expert commission for the corresponding criterion, and EC is the rating of the Expert commission.
- By means of both evaluations (the evaluation of the Expert commission (EC) and the evaluation of the evaluator from the first round (K1), the final evaluation of the project proposal (KO) is formed on the basis of the following formula:  $KO = K1 * 0.5 + EC * 0.5$ .

#### **4. Experience and Qualifications**

According to the Rulebook on the Evaluation Process, the minimum criteria that a member of Expert Committee must meet are as follows:

- Excellent knowledge of written and spoken English language;
- Education – minimum University degree – Bachelor's;
- At least 3 years of experience:
  - on the managing position in the business sector and/or;
  - in establishing and development of new companies and/or fundraising for finance from private or public sector (venture capital) and/or;
  - on managing positions in finance which included venture capital and/or;
  - on managing positions or positions which include decision making on investments in big or middle size companies.
- Proven experience in expert commissions (investment panels) in the last 5 years (including panels of the angel investors, venture capital, grants or similar bodies which decided about investments)

#### **5. Timing and Duration**

Subject assignment is expected to start at the end of July and last until the third week of September 2025. Generally, the Expert Commission members are expected to provide their services upon the timely notification by the IF team.

The Expert Commission member's work will be done remotely through the IF online portal and in person during the second week of September (two or three days for pitches) in Podgorica at the IF premises.

The Investment Committee member is expected to be engaged for approximately 10 working days (1 working day equals 8 working hours), starting from the receipt of the projects.

## 6. Terms of Payment

The payments for services will be made based on the number of working days spent on the execution of the contract. The remuneration for services is EUR 450 for one working day.

In addition to the expert fee, the expert is entitled to the following allowances and reimbursement of expenses:

- reimbursement of travel expenses from departure destination to Podgorica and back
- a daily allowance 200 EUR (lump sum which includes the accommodation costs)

## 7. Submitting your Expression of Interest

To express your interest in being considered for the Expert Committee Member, please submit the following documents **by 13 June 2025** to [info@fondzainovacije.me](mailto:info@fondzainovacije.me) using the subject line "Expression of interest for the Program for Strengthening the Innovation of newly established or existing MSMEs":

- A cover letter, indicating your motivation to apply and how you satisfy the selection criteria; and
- Your curriculum vitae.

You will be required to register as international experts on Innovation Fund's Portal (click on "Register as an evaluator") - <https://programifonda.me/ords/fond/r/118/>