

Call for Proposals

UNDP Serbia Project “Civil Service Training for the 21st Century in the Republic of Serbia”	DATE: 28 February 2023
	REFERENCE: Title: Call for Proposals for Grant Competition on Flagship Public Sector Innovation Programme

Dear Sir/Madam,

We kindly request you to submit grant proposals for the **Call for Proposals for Grant Competition on Flagship Public Sector Innovation Programme**.

Please be guided by the form attached hereto as Annex 1 and Annex 2, while preparing your Proposal.

Please send filled application materials electronically to the following e-mail address: **grants.rs@undp.org** in PDF (signed and stamped) and word formats. **The subject line should read: “Grants for Flagship Public Sector Innovation Programme”.**

Deadline for submission of grant proposals is 27 March 2023 at 23:59 CET. In the course of preparing your Proposal, it shall remain your responsibility to ensure that it reaches the address above on or before the deadline. Proposals that are received by UNDP after the deadline indicated above, for whatever reason, shall not be considered for evaluation.

We look forward to receiving your proposal.

UNDP Serbia

Call for Proposals for Grant Competition on Flagship Public Sector Innovation Programme

March 2023

Guidelines

Please read the Application Guidelines before Submitting a Grant Application

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1. BACKGROUND

The Project “**Civil Service Training for the 21st Century in the Republic of Serbia**” is supporting development of an effective and professional civil service by enhancing the capacities and skills of future management staff and other civil servants in public institutions and organizing their continuous training, since this is a critical condition for overall modernization of public administration, as well as implementing administrative, economic and social reforms.

The Project aims to build on the previous achievements which were recognized both in Serbia and internationally, and provide effective support to the **National Academy for Public Administration (NAPA)** in (1) further building and strengthening its internal capacity at staff/trainer and institution level, (2) designing new, innovative and competitive training programs and redesigning of existing ones in line with needs of the public sector and the latest global trends of public administration for aligning to the 4th industrial revolution, (3) introducing modern e-learning platforms using effective electronic multimedia educational technologies and (4) supporting NAPA’s international cooperation activities, educational research, as well as outreach activities in order to promote and ensure greater visibility of NAPA’s mission and activities.

The National Academy for Public Administration (NAPA) was founded in 2018 in order to provide a well-rounded approach to professional development of civil servants in the public sector and to establish a link between the skills and knowledge building of civil servants and the strategies and objectives of Public Administration Reform (PAR). A special law regulates NAPA as the central institution responsible for the system of professional training in public administration. Its scope of competence encompasses state bodies, independent organisations, bodies reporting to the National Assembly (supervisory and regulatory bodies), public agencies and local self-government. The Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government (MPALSG) supervises its work. The previous achievements of NAPA in the field of Public Service and Human Resource Management were recognized not only by the EU Progress Report but even more so, the SIGMA 2021 Monitoring Report. In the latest SIGMA report published in November 2021, NAPA is recognized as a central training institution in Serbia, with estimation that NAPA has enough capacities and works well.

One of the main priorities of the Government of Serbia remains public administration reform, modernization and innovations, given that the quality of civil service massively affects the communication between the state, citizens, business, and wider society, which gives the capacity of civil servants the crucial role on the path to successful reforms aimed at economic development, enhancing entrepreneurship, a favorable investment climate and social capital. International practice suggests that well-functioning public sector institutions and quality public service are a prerequisite for successful implementation of economic reforms and ensuring competitiveness of a country at the global market, which in combination with developing market relationships can have a significant impact on the social and economic development of a country. Taking all previously stated into account, and in order to improve public administration system at all levels, increase efficiency, effectiveness and satisfaction of end users, Government of Serbia strongly supports innovations in public administration sector.

Thus, as a key institution for civil servants' professional development at the national level, reaching out to both management and the executive level of civil servants, the National Academy for Public Administration is critical for overall development of Serbia.

The plans for the further development of NAPA include the introduction of a new educational curricula which would reflect contemporary challenges in public administration, using innovative learning methods, ICT and innovative technologies, engage high caliber trainers/professors, organizing comprehensive studies on international best practice in public sector management and design recommendations for further enhancement of the public administration system in Serbia.

UNDP Serbia has commissioned, within the project *Civil Service Training for the 21st Century*, in consultation with the National Academy for Public Administration in Serbia, a survey that provided inputs for the preparation and realization of the **Flagship Programme on Public Sector Innovation**. The purpose of the survey has been to enable the project stakeholders to learn more about the preferences and needs of Serbian civil servants. The survey was based on interviews with 20 selected senior civil servants working in a number of public institutions in Serbia, middle to senior management level. It has been a widely shared perception among the interviewed civil servants that the Serbian public administration has undergone a shift in the last decade or so towards a user-focused administration in which the realization has grown that the delivery of user-friendly, efficient public services, in an accountable manner, should be at the heart of the civil service's mission and work. This marks a perceptual shift away from the long-existing paradigm of traditional public administration, proverbially focused on hierarchy, process and rule following, where technical expertise was considered the main civil servants' competence. The nature of civil servants' tasks, as the interview responses indicate, has changed too in the recent decade, with civil servants now facing an increased number of shorter and simpler yet more expedient tasks. Overall, the impression is widely shared by survey respondents that over the last decade or so, the Serbian civil service has achieved progress towards citizen-oriented public services. The evolving digitization is seen as a pressuring and catalyzing factor for this shift.

2. THE GOAL OF THE CALL FOR PROPOSALS

The **objective** of the **UNDP Call for Proposals for the Public Sector Innovation Programme is development and implementation of a flagship program in order to build better understanding and strengthen skills among a group of senior civil servants** relating to the design and implementation of innovations in public administration. This should make them more capable of pursuing innovation in both the short and medium term. The programme will introduce trainees to the concept of innovation in the public sector and enable them to identify where innovation could be made in their organization or policy area or in the wider Serbian public administration, as well to apply the acquired knowledge, i.e. to have the project support in introducing innovations in their environment.

The programme will be implemented by the National Academy for Public Administration as a national partner, with support of the UNDP Serbia within the project "Civil Service Training for the 21st Century in the Republic of Serbia" funded by the Swedish International Cooperation Agency (SIDA).

The programme is supposed to consist of 15-20 trainings and workshops on a range of topics under the overarching theme “Public Sector Innovation”, given by leading experts in the field.

The learning outcomes of the proposed flagship programme should be built around the following demonstratable learning outcomes, namely that, trainees will be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the concept of innovation in public administration;
- Demonstrate familiarity with a wider set of governance and regulatory approaches and techniques that can be used to complement or enhance current governance approaches that are in place in Serbia in efforts to bring the state administration closer to the ideals of modern and functional civil service/public administration;
- Identify where innovation could be implemented in their own organisation and/or policy;
- Improve their own culture of innovation and develop a stronger personal inclination towards forward-looking and problem-solving thinking looking for innovative solutions;
- Based on the framework and knowledge learned in the flagship programme, propose a set of specific innovations that could be implemented in their own organisation/sector, in the broader policy field or in other parts and levels of the Serbian public administration;
- Evaluate the prospects for successful implementation of the proposed innovation(s), anticipate their success and failure factors and suggest how these could be managed.

Alongside the above learning outcomes, trainees should produce tangible outputs as the programme unfolds, in line with the adopted teaching and learning approach focusing on applicability of the acquired knowledge. During the programme, the trainees should (ideally) start developing concrete proposals for innovation. Upon completion of the programme, these proposals will be ready to be utilized in real life.

Again, based on the conclusions from the survey that was conducted, highlights the need to introduce trainees to several interrelated topics that can help them better understand how they can enhance:

- **Performance and accountability** among public employees, topic that would relate to managerial strategies of oversight and the inducement of more effective behavior in the context of non-coercive monitoring and control.
- It would also be beneficial if trainees learn the traditional frameworks and debates surrounding **control and oversight in public bureaucracy**, ranging from those based on the adoption of statutory instruments and reporting procedures, to those based on analysis of cultural patterns in specific organizations, to, most recently, behavioral interventions based on the inducement of better performance through changed messaging and choice architectures.
- Familiarizing with incentives-based **regulatory strategies** would further expand the toolset of possible approaches that they can deploy in trying to address the problem of hampered performance management that is highlighted in the survey. Given that the current legal framework might evolve over time, it would be useful if the above debates could be contextualized against frameworks that consider **how the various types of tasks in the public sector - as per their monitorability and measurability - affect the selection of optimal control and accountability strategies.**
- Returning to the notion of **innovation** in public management, studying the above topics would enable the trainees to develop new ways of performance management in their work, including

innovative strategies to enhance employees' accountability whilst improving their **motivation** to carry out the assigned tasks and fulfil the set goals.

- Incorporating lessons on **regulatory and enforcement strategies** into the flagship programme would serve well the need to strengthen policy compliance competencies. Regulation is about the steering of the behavior of individuals or organisations, including those in the public sector. Through a module/training on regulatory governance, trainees would learn about a wider range of possible **strategies and approaches to ensuring compliance and improving performance**. **Regulatory governance** module should teach trainees about a variety of approaches that they can take to ensure compliance of external subjects-citizens, businesses, or third-party organisations-with rules, policies, and regulations set by legislation or public institutions. Public officials are often not familiar with the variety of strategies that they can take in designing schemes that would incentivise greater rule compliance, whether those are incentive-based schemes, voluntary schemes, or based on more or less punitive approaches, or escalatory strategies such as in the case of responsive regulation. The fundamental lessons from regulatory governance would help them think through how to innovate from the current approaches to rule design and implementation to more effective rules and strategies for their enforcement.
- **Innovation principles and applications** - nature of innovation, various components of, and stages in, the innovative process, major innovative practices and techniques, critiques and limitations of innovation in PA.
- **Leadership in innovation** - the processes and challenges of leading innovative changes
- Related to this, but as a stand-alone module, could be included a module on **behavioral interventions**, a tool commonly known in public policy practice and analysis as **"Nudge"**.
- The **inter-institutional collaboration** – a module/lesson combining the topics of policy collaboration and network governance would help prepare the trainees to better deal with some of the common issues that tend to arise in their collaboration with external actors.
- **Analytical skills** are among the most important skills for civil servants. Civil servants with strong analytical skills are in a good position to contribute to sound and evidence-based policy analysis and design. Within this, following specific topics could be derived as possible modules for the flagship training programme: data collection and management and methodological skills.
- **Digitalisation** as one of the most important, if not the most important, trend that has shaped and will shape the work of Serbian public administration. Such a transformation could improve the efficiency of public services and generate substantial savings for both citizens and the public administration. The flagship programme would benefit from a module/lesson that encourages trainees to learn more about the potential of digital governance and to think critically about the key challenges that may arise during a digital transformation process. Also, trainees could be encouraged in one such module to actively identify opportunities for the development of digital governance platforms in their own organisation/unit. Regarding the selection of a trainers/professors for this topic, it would be helpful if, in addition to the expertise in digital infrastructure, the trainer's/professor's educational background includes public governance or a related social science discipline. This would be particularly helpful in avoiding the jargonistic and conceptual misunderstandings that are encountered in digital governance workshops.
- Set of issues that relates to digital transformation of government, and which can be taught on the programme relates to the use of public and private sources of **big data and open data** in public

management, including for **artificial intelligence (AI) systems, geospatial information systems and applications.**

The above is a set of proposed topics and modules that could be incorporated into the flagship programme. The purpose of this list is to point to possible topics that could be taught in the flagship programme, based on the results of the conducted survey. It is up to the syllabus designer preferences whether and which of these topics will eventually end up on the curriculum list, but they should be determined in a way that defined outcomes could be achieved.

Methods of instruction

Key priorities

The programme's structure and dynamic should render the study viable and efficient for trainees. The learning methods that will be adopted should, therefore, be tailored towards achieving those two priorities, with an emphasis on innovative learning methods such as: flipped classroom, design thinking, peer teaching, VR learning, project-based learning etc. **The program should consist of 15-20 trainings and workshops and whole implementation of training should not last more than 3-4 months.**

In terms of viability, reducing the amount of preparation and revision material and dividing it up could be key to enable trainees to sustain continuous engagement with the programme. The programme should provide for a manageable workload and a preparation and revision dynamic that enables trainees to engage with the study material on a regular basis. They have busy work schedules, a factor that was mentioned in the survey as a major barrier to their potential participation in the training. They will, therefore, have very little or no time to prepare for the session if this requires them to spend a long stretch of time on the preparatory material (e.g. a reading). The preparatory material must therefore be divided into "digestible chunks" to enable gradual preparation in several and relatively short periods of time. Following the rules of good visualization, skillful fragmented materials not only enable trainees to make use of the short windows of time available to them in their daily lives, but, as studies on learning methods in adult education show, also positively influence their learning efficiency. This has been shown to be an effective learning method that promotes the integration of knowledge, cross-thematic integration and the development of transferable skills in general.

Next, the preparatory materials should ideally vary in format and style. Instead of having just readings, it would be more useful to combine reading pieces with multimedia materials, presentations and/or pre-recorded training bites.

The programme would ideally be taught by renowned experts in the fields of public management and public administration and the related or sub-fields, with the focus on public sector innovation, that comprise the curriculum. It would be helpful to the achievement of the programme's objectives if (most of) the trainers/professors had experience in teaching and/or training public administration professionals.

The survey respondents unanimously expressed a preference for a more "hands-on approach" to study in the training programme, stressing that the traditional training format could be a demotivating factor. This survey suggests that the method for conducting the flagship programme should be - the "flipped classroom" method, which inverts the sequence of activities of the traditional classroom model. In the

“flipped classroom” method, trainees go through the learning material before a training/workshop. This enables them to familiarize themselves with key course materials and concepts and leaves it up to the trainers/professors to use session time to guide each trainee through active, practical and innovative applications of given subject.

Assessment

Assessment is a key element of any learning process, and the upcoming training programme is no exception. Assessment can be both formative, meaning that trainees receive feedback and possibly a grade, with no impact on passing the programme, and summative, meaning that it determines the success of the student, i.e. whether the course has been passed or not.

Language of the programme and material

This programme should be conducted in Serbian or English (with provided translation). It is expected that all course participants will be able to follow lectures delivered in English, however translation may be required if participants are required to produce written materials or engage in a discussion in English. UNDP shall not be obligated to provide additional funds for translation if the course is in English, therefore this cost must be defined within the proposed budget.

3. ELIGIBILITY

Application for this grant competition can be submitted by:

- **Academic institutions – universities (local or international)** which are not funded by governments (state owned institutions)
- **Civil society organizations, think-tanks (local or international)**

Additional criteria for above mentioned institutions/organizations are:

- Minimum 10 years of experience in the delivering lectures and trainings.
- Delivered at least 5 similar projects during the last 10 years.
- Able to gather a team for implementation of the program with work experience in relevant field (not less than 7 years) and education in relevant field. Applicants shall submit CVs of all team members.

Applicants can submit only one proposal.

4. FINANCING SCHEME AND INELIGIBLE COSTS

Individual grants requested under this Call for Proposals should not exceed USD 100,000. Proposals with the grant staff salary and administrative costs exceeding 25% of the total budget will be disqualified without further consideration. Co-funding and in-house contributions are strongly encouraged.

Expenditures such as infrastructure improvement, office equipment, and similar costs, that are not directly related to the proposed grant project, will not be financed under this grant scheme.

The following list indicates the types of expenditure that WILL NOT be covered:

- Proposals focusing only on the research and needs assessment
- Activities that have been completed or have commenced prior to signing the grant agreement
- Costs incurred in the preparation of a grant application or related documentation
- Any activity which is contrary to the objectives and intent of this Call for Proposals or the UNDP project.

5. TIMEFRAME

28 February 2023	Releasing announcement on the opening of grant competition
20 March 2023	Collecting and answering questions regarding the grant scheme
27 March 2023	Deadline for submission of proposals
14 April 2023	Evaluation of proposals and selection of one proposal for awarding
21 April 2023	Signing of grant agreement

6. PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUBMISSION PROCESS

Call for applications will be open from **28 February 2023, ending on 27 March 2023 at 23.59 CET**. No applications will be accepted after the deadline.

The maximum timespan of the grant period is up to **4 months** counted from the date of the contract signature to the date when all relevant activities have been successfully completed.

Applications must be submitted in **English**. Application materials should be sent electronically to the following e-mail address: **grants.rs@undp.org** in PDF (signed and stamped) and word formats. The subject line should read: **“Grants for Flagship Public Sector Innovation Programme”**.

UNDP will confirm the receipt of each application within two working days after the submission via email. If the confirmation has not been received within two days, please send an email to designated contact persons at: **grants.rs@undp.org** and request the confirmation of the receipt of your application. Otherwise, UNDP will not be held responsible for a technical error which may cause a delay in receiving your application.

6.1 SUBMISSION OF ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Additional questions can also be sent to **grants.rs@undp.org**. Potential applicants will receive answers to their questions within two working days from sending the questions. All questions must be sent before 20 March 2023.

6.2 REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

1. Completed grant proposal form (Annex 1)

2. Extract from the public register
3. Statute of the applicant
4. Debt certificate - Note from Revenue Service on tax obligations
5. CVs of proposed team members
6. Any other documents which are related to the idea of the project (leaflets, brochures etc.)

UNDP reserves the right to request any additional information from applicants.

7. PROPOSAL SELECTION PROCESS

Decisions on awarding submitted proposals will be made by the Selection Commission (hereinafter referred to as the Commission). The Commission will be comprised of the representatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Serbia and NAPA. Representatives of other international organisations/projects implementing similar projects may join sessions of the Commission in the capacity of observers upon an invitation to be extended by the chair of the Commission.

The Commission shall make a final decision no later than two calendar months after the deadline for submission of proposals. Successful applications will be notified by e-mail by UNDP within two weeks after the decision has been made. Applicants whose proposals fail to meet the requirements of the programme will not be contacted.

Grant Application(s) will not be further considered if:

- Applicant presents proposal (duplicate) already financed by other project/organization;
- It is provided by non-eligible entity;
- It does not comply with objectives, priorities, and instructions provided in this announcement;
- It includes ineligible costs;
- Fails to uphold principles of gender equality and environmental principles.

Each applicant can be awarded with only one grant. In total, a maximum of 1 grant will be selected for award. UNDP will sign Low Value Grant (LVG) Agreement with the winning applicants.

7.1 SELECTION CRITERIA

The proposals will be evaluated based on the criteria outlined in the table below:

	Criteria	Score Weight	Points Obtainable
1	Qualifications and experience	20%	200
2	Relevance of the proposal, methodology, approach, and implementation plan	40%	400

3	Management structure and key personnel	20%	200
4	Cost-efficiency and relevance of the budget	10%	100
5	Risk-management, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms	10%	100
	Total	100%	1000

The UNDP will review proposals through a five-step process: (i) determination of eligibility; (ii) technical review of eligible proposals; (iii) scoring and ranking of the proposals based on the assessment criteria outlined in the proposal to identify highest ranking proposal; (iv) round of clarification (if necessary); and (v) Grant Agreement (GA) signature.

8. MONITORING AND REPORTING

Any key changes within proposed project team or other that may affect the implementation of the proposed grant must be notified to UNDP team.

Contracted applicants will be required to submit interim and final reports (both financial and narrative) in line with requirements and procedures set forth in the grant agreement. Reports should provide the evidence on:

- Progress against agreed milestones, outcomes and indicators
- Expenditures of the grant

The UNDP team will monitor progress by assessing reports and may conduct site visits or request records to confirm details of your report if necessary. The UNDP team may also seek further information within a year after the completion of the grant implementation for the assessment of achieved results.

Contracted applicants must discuss any reporting delays with the UNDP team as soon as they become aware of them.

8.1 INTERIM PROGRESS REPORT

Interim progress reports must:

- Include evidence of the progress towards completion of agreed activities, outcomes and indicators.
- Be submitted by the report due date.
- Provide financial report reflecting expenditures incurred against agreed grant budget within reporting period.

8.2 FINAL REPORT

When grant activities are completed, the grantee shall submit a final report that:

- Describes in clear and detailed manner how outcomes have been achieved (what and how) as well as any objectively identified challenges affecting the achievement of these outcomes (if any).
- Provides any document/information confirming the completion of grant activities.
- Includes the agreed evidence as specified in the grant agreement.
- Provides financial report reflecting expenditures incurred against agreed grant budget.

8.3 FINANCIAL REPORTING

Financial reports are prepared and submitted in line with UNDP's standard procedures and requirements laid down in the grant agreement. Each report should include total eligible expenditure incurred with respective bank statements.