

# **Serbia Inclusive Primary Education Improvement Project (IPEIP)**

## **Terms of Reference**

### **Grant Coordinator**

## **I Background and objective of the Project**

### **Background Information**

The Serbian Inclusive Primary Education Improvement Project (IPEIP) is in line with central aspects of the Strategy for Education Development in Serbia (SEDS) 2030, the Serbia 2023 Report of the European Commission (EC) and Serbia's 2023–2030 Climate Change Adaptation Program (CCAP).

The SEDS 2030 focuses on the need for increased quality of teaching and learning, fairness and accessibility of pre-university education, and a strengthened educational role in all educational institutions, while EC's 2023 Report is focused on the country's need to ensure equitable access to quality education for all students, especially those from Roma and disadvantaged backgrounds.

In order to address the persistent inequalities in learning outcomes, influenced by multiple factors, including socio-economic status of students, geographic location of schools, students' gender, teacher quality, school management, quality of learning environment, and hours of instruction, Serbia started a series of ambitious reforms, that include the introduction of the new learning outcomes-based curriculum and an Enriched Single Shift Initiative (ESSI), in the light of the growing evidence that such programs that extend the school day positively impact a variety of academic and non-academic outcomes among students and adult labor force participation, and is one of the key mechanisms to close the socioeconomic gap in learning outcomes. The Government of Serbia has made a clear commitment to improve the quality and the relevance of the extended school day options by providing proper training to teachers and school principals to best use the additional hours of instruction and keeping the most disadvantaged students in school during the extra hours by improving school feeding opportunities.

Serbia's 2023–2030 CCAP reflects the country's commitment to addressing immediate adaptation needs while enhancing long-term resilience across its economic sectors amidst increasing climate variability. Based on an assessment of the country's vulnerability to floods, heat waves and landslides, the IPEIP also integrates climate adaptation measures and strengthens the schools' resilience to climate risks.

The IPEIP directly supports these priorities through its various components.

### **Objective**

The Project Development Objective (PDO) is to enhance the quality of the learning environments and improve teaching quality and school management in targeted primary schools across Serbia. Improvements in the overall quality of learning conditions in targeted schools will be the result of the implementation of School Improvement Plans (SIPs) which operationalize the transition to the Whole Day Schooling (WDS) model, thus guaranteeing that the new model directly serves to the long-term strategy for school improvement. Investments under the project will result in improvements in physical learning spaces for single-shift schools, better teaching practices, a broader set of pedagogic strategies, increased access to enriched learning programs that target cognitive and non-cognitive skills, as well as better managerial practices. These efforts will be complemented by investments in the introduction of nation-wide learning assessments and technical assistance to have better diagnostics of learning gaps. Moreover, improvements in the Teacher Professional Development (TPD) contents and structure will benefit all Serbian teachers in the long run, while in the short run benefits will be concentrated in enriched single-shift initiative (ESSI) and WDS schools where teachers will be trained as part of the project.

The Project is implemented by the Ministry of Education (MoE) and is relying on the existing structures of the MoE. A Project Management Unit (PMU) is formed to support the existing structures for managing the Project. The Preschool and Primary Education Sector within the MoE, and the PMU, would be responsible for the technical implementation of the project activities. In addition, professionals of the MoE (civil servants) in coordination with the Institute for Improvement of Education (IIE) and the Institute for Education Quality and Evaluation (IEQE) will facilitate the technical inputs for specific project implementation activities.

The overall fiduciary responsibilities of the Project, procurement and financial management issues rest on the Central Fiduciary Unit (CFU), housed under the Ministry of Finance (MoF).

## **II Objective and Scope of the Assignment Required**

The second component of the project will support a gradual rollout of the WDS model in schools that do not receive the ESSI program and recognizes that schools differ in their initial conditions and require flexible implementation arrangements. Grants linked to the development and implementation of the School Improvement Plans (SIPs) will be a key instrument to adjust the implementation of the WDS to the needs of the school and its community. The objective is to operationalize a concept of a “model” primary school that accommodates collaborative, interdisciplinary, and experiential learning, provides space for extracurricular and project-based activities strongly embedded within the broader community.

The sub-component 2.1 will provide selected schools with i) technical assistance and ii) one-off grants to help school principals design and implement SIPs that build on rigorous school diagnostics. The technical assistance will address school principals’ general leadership and management skills, as well as specific needs related to the implementation of the WDS model – e.g. scheduling, understanding of local community needs. In addition, school leadership will include a module focused on enhancing climate adaptation and disaster risk planning at the school level. Ahead of program’s inception, schools will receive clear guidelines on possible uses of the resources as well as eligible and non-eligible expenditures. The MoE will receive technical assistance for the development of a Grant Operational Manual (GOM), which will define the grants’ approval and implementation arrangements for awarding grants. The completion of the GOM satisfactory to the World Bank will be a condition for disbursing against this activity. The key instrument for implementing grants will be the grant agreement between the MoE and the awarded schools.

The sub-component 2.2 would finance enriched learning activities and diverse learning programs, especially for vulnerable students, e.g. students from poor families, students with disabilities, and students from ethnic minorities. Depending on the school needs – as presented in the SIP – and pre-existing conditions, the project will finance the expenses related to the design and the implementation of curricular and extracurricular activities. Special emphasis will be given to remedial actions to improve the foundational skills of students lagging behind and interventions to improve student mental health and socioemotional skills. In schools with adequate digital infrastructures, online tutoring and computer assisted learning programs can enhance climate resilience in remedial actions by offering flexible schedules that accommodate interruptions caused by climate change induced extreme weather events. Additionally, targeted interventions will specifically address gender gaps by implementing remedial programs aimed at improving boys' reading comprehension. To ensure sustained engagement and progress, robust mechanisms will be put in place to closely monitor boys' participation and attendance in these remedial programs, allowing for timely adjustments and support to maximize their impact. All these activities could be financed through grant funds, and the amount will depend on the type of activities and the number of students who attend these activities. In the design of extra-curricular activities, schools will prioritize the needs of local communities, while leveraging on the resources available locally. Moreover, extra-curricular activities will be introduced to enhance students' knowledge of climate change mitigation and adaptation, fostering greater awareness and action at the school level. Eco-green clubs will empower students to explore

environmental concepts and actions beyond the confines of a syllabus or curriculum, and foster greater community involvement in addressing climate change. Whereas existing conditions allow (Category 1 schools), the component will also finance and evaluate different school feeding modalities, in order to assess their long-term viability. A GOM will define the grants' approval and implementation arrangements for awarding grants. The completion of the GOM satisfactory to the World Bank will be a condition for disbursing against this activity. The key instrument for implementing grants will be the grant agreement between the MoE and the awarded schools.

The procedures and core package of activities shall be defined in a Grant Operation Manual (GOM), for which the Grant Coordinator will be the most responsible to develop.

The Grant Coordinator is responsible for management and implementation of all grant-related activities of the Project and provides support to the Project Director and the PMU Coordinator in overall project implementation.

The Consultant works under the overall guidance of the PMU Coordinator and interacts with employees of the MoE, PMU (primarily with components' coordinators) and CFU.

### **Detailed Tasks and Responsibilities**

Without limiting the generalities of the foregoing, the following are the specific tasks and responsibilities of the Grant Coordinator:

- Managing and facilitating all aspects of implementation of grant-scheme on technical level under the Project, in line with the Loan Agreement and the Project Operations Manual (POM);
- Managing preparation and update of the Grant Operation Manual (GOM), as well as other related Project documents, jointly with the PMU Coordinator and the Coordinator for School Improvement Plans, School Leadership and Enriched Learning Programs;
- Developing, steering and supervising grant-scheme activities, as well as legal and administrative procedures for disbursement of grant funds to selected schools, such as: managing public call for proposals, evaluation of schools' for financing, steering the Grant Approval Committee, preparing report and draft of decision on final list of approved school projects for financing, follow up activities, including monitoring, grant contracting (and amending, if needed) with schools, reporting, day-to-day communication with grant recipients, etc.;
- Providing technical input to the Terms of References and related documents, as well as to the Procurement Plan, in agreement with the Project Director and the PMU Coordinator;
- Drafting procedures and documents necessary for grant implementation, in cooperation with components' coordinators;
- Preparing manuals and guidelines for grant awards and implementation, organizing timely distribution of these documents to stakeholders;
- Participating in establishment of the Grant Approval Committee, in accordance with the Loan Agreement, POM and GOM;
- Participating in drafting the contracts between MoE and grant recipients;
- Overseeing financial management of the grant funds;
- Contract management of all contracts he/she is responsible for; preparation of data needed to upload new Project activity in the World Bank's Systematic Tracking of Exchanges in Procurement (STEP);
- Ensuring stakeholders' access to information related to the grants and their regular feedback;
- Producing periodical and annual progress reports of the grant related activities and contributing to progress reports of the Project in general;
- Approving general financial execution reports for all allocated grants, in accordance with procedures:

- Preparing, updating and maintaining the Grant Contracts Summary Table with relevant data and submitting verified table quarterly (or on the request) to the Project Director, PMU Coordinator and CFU;
- Makes synergies with other projects of MoE;
- Performing other tasks related to the Project at the request of the Project Director and/or PMU Coordinator.

### **III Reporting obligations**

The Grant Coordinator works under supervision of and reports directly to the PMU Coordinator.

### **IV Consultants Qualification**

- University degree in the field of social science, master degree is an advantage;
- Seven years of relevant professional experience, especially in the design and implementation of school grant programs;
- Knowledge of the Republic of Serbia's legal, social and systematic context of education;
- Fluency in Serbian and good command of English;
- Computer skills (MS Word, MS Excel, MS Project, Power Point, e-mail, Internet);
- Knowledge of administrative structure and procedures of the public administration is considered an advantage;
- Previous experience in implementation of the World Bank funded projects and other internationally financed projects in Serbia is preferred;
- Ability to work under pressure and meet deadlines.

### **V Duration of the assignment**

The Consultant shall provide full-time services until April 15, 2030.

The Consultant shall not have other full or part-time assignment during the engagement under this Contract.

### **VI Selection Method**

The selection method is Open Competitive Selection in accordance with the procedures specified in the World Bank Procurement Regulations for Investment Project Financing (IPF) Borrowers: Procurement in IPF of Goods, Works, Non-Consulting and Consulting Services, February 2025.

The candidates will be evaluated applying the following evaluation criteria:

- Qualifications and General experience (40 Points)
- Specific Experience relevant to the Assignment (60 Points)