

Terms of Reference

Request for Services

PA Awards Applications Assessor-Senior Expert in Public Administration and Service Delivery

1. Background

The Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) is a regional organization established in 2010 as a joint initiative financed by European Commission and Western Balkans (WB) administrations. It is managed and governed by five ReSPA Members: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, while Kosovo* is beneficiary. ReSPA's purpose is to help governments in the region to develop better public administration, public services and overall governance systems for their citizens and businesses, and prepare for the membership to European Union.

ReSPA establishes close co-operation with Ministers, senior public servants and heads of units in Member countries' administrations. ReSPA also works in partnership with the European Union, specifically Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), other regional actors such as OECD/SIGMA and Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), as well as agencies and civil society organizations. Since its inception, ReSPA, as an international organization and a key regional endeavour in Public Administration Reform, has contributed to capacity-building and networking activities through in-country support mechanisms, peering and the production of regional research materials. The European Commission (EC) provides directly managed funds for the support of the ReSPA activities (research, training and networking programmes) in line with the EU accession process. The current EC grant supports the implementation of the activities required for contribution to the achievement of the three strategic objectives during the period 2019-2022.

ReSPA works primarily through regional networks which operate at three levels: Ministerial, Senior Officials, and networks/working groups of experts and senior practitioners. There is one network – Programme Committee composed of the representatives of institutions in charge of PAR, Public Financial Management (PFM) and government policy planning and the European Integration (EI) co-ordination process and five Working groups: (1) Centre-of-Government Institutions; 2) Better Regulation; 3) Human Resource Management and Development; 4) E-Governance; and 5) Quality Management.

2. Description of the assignment

ReSPA and SIGMA jointly organize the Public Administration Awards in the Western Balkans with the aim to identify, recognize, and reward efforts that advance, promote and anchor effective, efficient, transparent, accountable, innovative and citizen-centred public governance, administration and services in Western Balkan countries. This is crucial for the stability, the sustainable development and the resilience of the countries in the region. They are also fundamental paths and enablers for the European Union membership.

The Western Balkans Public Administration Award 2024 (WB PA Awards 2024) aims to identify, reward, and promote initiatives that set a standard of excellence, leading to enhanced public service delivery and an improved quality of life for citizens in the region.

This year eligible initiatives were focused the application of a judicious use of digital transformation, administrative simplification, innovation, inclusiveness, community impact and user engagement while demonstrating clear and tangible outcomes for users.

The applications come from a wide range of areas, policy sectors and fields of public governance as long as the focus is on demonstrating a **direct or indirect positive impact on the users and contributing to the improvement of public service delivery** (citizens, service users, targeted groups of beneficiaries, businesses and other stakeholders).

Regardless of the area of public administration and governance, the initiatives need to meet all or any of the following:

- developed with users or demonstrates understanding of user needs assessment (e.g. surveys, focus groups) or other methodologies that gather feedback from users and stakeholders to improve the services and adapt to evolving needs and preferences (e.g. participation in environmental protection);
- involve citizens in decision-making processes, foster participatory democracy, and empower local communities to address their own needs (e.g. participatory budgeting);
- adopt user-centred design approaches and usability testing in the development of services and solutions; promote citizen/stakeholder engagement and participation, securing inclusiveness (e.g. eParticipation platforms, personalised services in healthcare);
- ensure that interfaces are intuitive, accessible, and tailored to the needs of diverse user groups, thus showing the lived experiences of individuals interacting with government services;
- contribute to building transparency, integrity and accountability (e.g. use of open data) and cultivate trust and confidence among citizens (e.g. increased transparency in the fight against corruption);
- allow informed choices through accessibility, improved exchange of information and facilitate effective communication between stakeholders;
- reduce administrative burden and promote simplification as well as efficiency in administrative procedures (e.g. improved administrative procedures, enhanced accessibility, cost reduction);
- promote online service delivery and digital transformation, i.e. secure that technology serves as a powerful enabler for improving public administration's relation with its users (e.g. digital platforms, secured digital identity solutions, the use of emerging technologies, data protection models);
- ensure that interoperable systems and services adhere to the 'once only' principle, minimising the need for users to provide the same information across different platforms or interactions repeatedly (e.g. interoperability solutions);
- ensure that the collection, storage and use of data comply with relevant privacy regulations and standards as well as allow data to scale up to serve larger populations or be replicated in other contexts or regions;
- implement security measures to protect sensitive information and mitigate cybersecurity risks;
- promote innovation, creativity and strategic foresight (such as projects based on science and innovation, projects developed in cooperation with academic and scientific organisations and private entities etc.);

- promote collaboration and allow governments to tap into the collective wisdom and expertise of the community;
- enable and implement collaborative platforms/projects, thereby fostering a sense of ownership and shared responsibility.

As a way to encourage diverse approaches and perspectives, the WB PA Awards 2024 is particularly sensitive to and supportive of initiatives that have the following transversal (additional) aspects and aims:

- promote green and sustainable measures (or services);
- integrate a gender equality perspective;
- initiatives for vulnerable and/or marginalised groups and citizens at risk of being disadvantaged;
- promote cross-border collaboration and community impact in the Western Balkans and beyond;
- foster youth empowerment;
- ensure stability/permanence in the functioning of public organisations in everchanging societal circumstances.

For purpose of conducting independent assessment of the received applications, there is a need to assign PA Award 2024 Applications Assessors.

3.Tasks and Responsibilities

In close collaboration with the PA Award Committee, composed of ReSPA and SIGMA representatives and together with other independent assessors, the selected Assessor will be responsible for the following tasks:

Preparatory phase – up to one (1) working day

1. Getting familiar with PA Award Methodology and Guideline for Assessors and Jury members, as well as background information on ReSPA and SIGMA/OECD organizations (0.5 working day).
2. Online consultations with PA Award Committee including introductory video call with other assessors and award secretariat (*Explaining the methodology, process and platform functionality to the assessors*). (up to 0.5 working day)

Implementation of the assessment process – up to seven (7) working days

1. Evaluation of the eligible applications using the award platform, according to the criteria as set up in the PA Award 2024 Methodology, particularly from the perspectives of public administration reform and service delivery (accessibility). Writing a note for each application evaluated. The applications will be assessed in tandem with another Assessor as defined in the Guidelines for Assessors and Jury members. (up to 4 working days).
2. Attending the Consensus meeting to reach commonly agreed list of ranked projects and agree on the list of projects for interviews. (up to 1 day working day)
3. Conduct of the interview with the applicant representative in the case of the need for obtaining certain clarifications / additional information: telephone / online communication with the applicants. (up to 1 working day)

4. Presentation of the results of the evaluation to Jury members (up to 1 working day).

The assignment foresees up to 8 (eight) working days for the Assessor.

The engaged Assessor will liaise directly with ReSPA Programme Manager in charge of the assignment and will take into consideration the instructions received beforehand.

The final product will be subject to approval from ReSPA before the payment is executed.

4.Necessary Qualifications

The Expert shall possess the following profile:

Qualifications and skills:

- At least a university degree in Social Sciences, Public Administration, Computer Science or other related fields;

General professional experience:

- Minimum 9 years of experience in dealing with Public Administration matters and the EU affairs/integration across the EU

Specific professional experience:

- Minimum 5 years of experience in assessment of project proposals in similar awards schemes, preferably funded by the EU
- Minimum of 5 years of experiences in the organisation and running of competitive awards schemes, preferably at EU level
- Minimum 5 years of experience in assessment of the public administration strategies and/or action plans
- Knowledge about the public administration reform processes in the public administrations in Western Balkans will be an asset.
- Experience of working in the Western Balkans will be an asset.

Skills:

- Excellent analytical skills;
- Excellent presentation skills;
- Excellent written and oral communication skills in English;
- Team work

5.Timing and Location

The assignment foresees work from home including online meetings and consultations. The assignment will be realized in August- September 2024 with precise timeframe defined together with other independent assessors and ReSPA and SIGMA representatives.

The Assessor needs to confirm the availability for the completion of the above-listed tasks.

6.Remunerations

The remuneration envisaged for this assignment is up to **EUR 4800** for a total of up **to 8 working days**.

The ReSPA expert selection procedure will be applied to define the daily fee based on the assessed and evaluated expert's capacity. The payment will be made in one instalment upon the completion of the assignment and the submission of documents required for payment.

Note: No other costs will be covered apart from the expert cost per day. The expert cost per day comprises of expert's fee per day and a lump sum for covering related costs and other incidentals.

7.Reporting and Final Documentation

The Expert will be requested to deliver the following documents before the payment is conducted:

Outputs

- All documents related to foreseen activities and outputs as described in the Tasks and responsibilities.

Documents required for payment

- Invoices (original and signed);
- Timesheets (original and signed);
- Brief Report on deliverables (up to 1.5 page)