



# **The Evaluation Protocol of Technology Transfer Support Fund**

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

1. OBJECTIVE OF THE PROTOCOL
2. EVALUATION OVERVIEW
3. SELECTION OF INDEPENDENT EXTERNAL EVALUATORS
4. FINAL SELECTION
5. GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE

## **1. OBJECTIVES OF THE PROTOCOL**

The Protocol for The Evaluation of Technology Transfer Support Fund (TTSF) Proposal Submissions and The Selection of TTSF Grants provide guidelines for the evaluation of proposals submitted in response to the Call for Proposals for the Technology Transfer Support Fund element of the Higher Education Development in Pakistan project, and in addition provides guidance to the Higher Education Commission for selection of funded grant projects based upon the results of the evaluation process.

Proposals may be submitted by qualified higher education institutions in Pakistan as described in the Call for Proposals. Finance for the project is provided by the World Bank.

The Higher Education Commission will select independent expert evaluators charged with objectively assessing proposals submitted in response to the TTSF Call for Proposals. All proposals must address the Call for Proposals through a series of planned activities undertaken by academia and industrial partners that are designed to translate promising university technological research to industry and the commercial sector. The anticipated result from a TTSF project is the development of products or services that are marketable and can generate positive cash flows.

The Protocol will be used by the independent expert evaluators tasked with assessing the merits of the submitted proposals, and by the Higher Education Commission tasked with selecting the projects to be supported following the independent evaluation process. In addition, the protocol will be available to institutions preparing proposals.

The Protocol provides guidelines for the independent expert evaluators on assessment criteria for the submitted proposals, as well as the procedures to be followed in the evaluation process. The Protocol also describes the procedures that the Higher Education Commission will employ for the Selection of TTSF grantees. The World Bank's Higher Education Development in Pakistan Project Appraisal Document (PAD) contains the rationale for the project and a summary of the project description. The TTSF Call for Proposals Guidance contains information for those institutions submitting proposals, and the Proposal Template Document describes each of the required sections in a proposal. The independent expert evaluators and the Higher Education Commission may refer to any of these documents at any point in the evaluation and selection process.

## **2. EVALUATION OVERVIEW**

The Evaluation Process for the TTSF will be conducted in a single phase termed as Desk Review comprising of the following steps:

- a) The first step of the Evaluation Process is a screening of proposals by the Higher Education Commission. The purpose of the screening is to ensure that submitted proposals:
  - i. are eligible for the competition; and
  - ii. respond to the Call for Proposals

Those proposals that do not meet the above criteria will be declined. Those proposals that meet the above criteria will be considered for further evaluation.

- b) Those proposals that meet the above criteria will have a technical assessment by 3-4 independent expert evaluators with the disciplinary expertise necessary to consider the proposed project. At least one (1) of the evaluators will come from an industry (rather than academic) background.

The technical assessment may be conducted by remote evaluators and/or a panel convened to evaluate a group of TTSF proposals.

- c) Following the review of each proposal, a multidisciplinary Panel of experts will be convened to synthesize the evaluation reports from the Reviewers and to make recommendations to the Higher Education Commission for the selection of a cohesive portfolio of TTSF grants that reflect the goals of the TTSF Project element.

## **DESK REVIEW**

In response to the Call for Proposals, interested teams (led by university affiliated researchers and including industrial partners) must submit a Proposal.

The first part of the desk review will be administrative. The Higher Education Commission Program Manager will ensure that the lead institution submitting each proposal is eligible to submit a proposal, and that the proposed research idea aligns with one of the priority thematic areas identified in the Operations Manual and the Call for Proposals.

Those proposals that do not meet the above criteria will be declined and The Program Manager will provide feedback to each Principal Investigator and the host institution identifying the reasons why the proposal has not been considered for further evaluation.

The screened out proposals will be forwarded for Desk Review. The Desk Review by the independent expert evaluators will be guided by an Evaluation Rubric made available concurrently to the Call for Proposals. Therefore, institutions will be able to tailor proposals to the evaluation criteria.

The Higher Education Commission and the Program Manager will assign each proposal to one of several Panels that in total encompass the thematic areas identified in the Call for Proposals. Separate teams of independent expert evaluators – composed of approximately 4-8 members each will be convened in each of these Panels. Each Panel will include a sufficient number of sectoral industrial evaluators to ensure that each proposal under consideration has at least one industrial evaluator.

The Evaluation Panels will meet at the Higher Education Commission over the course of a week to conduct the Desk Review of all submitted proposals. At least Panel members, including at least one industry based evaluator, will evaluate each submitted proposal. In addition, one or two additional independent expert evaluators will provide an evaluation of each proposal remotely (e.g. without physically traveling to the Panel meeting at the HEC).

The independent expert evaluators must (independently, and without consultation with any other member of the Desk Review team) evaluate each proposal assigned to them according to the criteria specified in the Evaluation Rubric. For the Desk Review, the evaluators must rely upon the information contained in the written TTSF proposal. In addition to a numerical score, evaluators must provide written justification for the score in each element of the Evaluation Rubric. The Program Manager may ask any evaluator to provide further written justification at any point in the Desk Review process.

Following the submission of all of the assigned Evaluation Rubrics for each proposal in a Panel, the members of each of the Evaluation Panels will discuss all of the proposals in their Panel. This discussion is to ensure that each proposal is treated fairly in the Desk Review evaluation process, and to recommend those proposals which should advance for further consideration by a multidisciplinary Panel.

The final step in the evaluation process is a multidisciplinary Panel – composed of two members of each of the thematic Panels – to discuss all of the proposals forwarded by the thematic Panels. This discussion is to ensure that each proposal is treated fairly in the Desk Review evaluation process. The evaluation panel will meet to consolidate the work of each thematic Panel and will make recommendations to the HEC on which proposals should be selected for TTSF funding.

The multidisciplinary Evaluation Panel should seek to recommend a portfolio of TTSF grants that:

- Addresses the major thematic areas identified in the Call for Proposals
- Based upon the written proposal, supports projects with a high likelihood of success in alignment with TTSF objectives
- Addresses industrial concerns through a new product, an addition to an existing product, or a solution to an industrial problem
- Supports the best overall proposals that respond to project goals
- Reflects the diversity of disciplines that can address the thematic areas
- Results in a portfolio of proposals that reflects the diversity of thematic areas
- Results in a portfolio of proposals that reflects junior and senior principal investigators/team leaders
- Results in a portfolio of proposals that supports the Project goals of female principal investigators

In conjunction with a list of recommendations for the Higher Education Commission, the Desk Review Panel should provide a written narrative describing the reasoning for its decisions.

### **3. SELECTION OF INDEPENDENT EXPERT EVALUATORS**

The credibility of the independent expert evaluators is essential to the credibility of the evaluation process and the TTSF competition.

The core expectations and requirements for the independent expert evaluators are:

- Subject matter experts in one or more disciplines associated with the thematic areas and the proposals submitted in response to the TTSF Call for Proposals
- Capable of effectively evaluating TTSF proposals related to their area of expertise
- Capable of evaluating research and technology transfer projects
- Independent of any institution submitting a TTSF proposal

In addition to the core requirements, the team of evaluators will include:

- Experts with knowledge of the Pakistan academic system
- Experts with knowledge of the Pakistan's industrial system with additional insights about international trends
- Experts with deep experience in the global academic system
- Members of the Pakistan diaspora
- Experts with an industrial background in sectors identified in the Call for Proposals

The Higher Education Commission is tasked with identifying and inviting the independent expert evaluators to participate in the TTSF evaluation process. The evaluators will be recruited from institutions and companies both in Pakistan and from around the world. While the HEC will select the evaluators, recommendations will be solicited from global research funding agencies and development partners around the world.

The identities of the evaluators for each proposal will not be disclosed.

#### **AVOIDANCE OF ANY REAL OR PERCEIVED CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The Higher Education Commission is committed to avoid any Conflict of Interest in the Evaluation and Selection of TTSF grantees.

Prior to participating in the Desk Review of any proposal, all independent expert evaluators must sign a Conflict of Interest declaration regarding any proposal they are evaluating.

The evaluators are prohibited from receiving any gifts or favors from the institution or any partners. Similarly, the institution and any partners may in no way offer gifts or favors. The evaluators are required to immediately report any offers of gifts and favors to the Higher Education Commission. Similarly, the institutional team is required to report any requests for gift or favors to the Higher Education Commission.

#### **4. FINAL SELECTION**

After the multidisciplinary Review Panel has submitted its final evaluation report to the Program Manager, the Project Steering Committee in the Higher Education Commission will meet to discuss the Panel findings and recommendations. In its final selection, the Higher Education Commission may deviate from the recommendations of the Panel, without, however, changing any evaluation marks of the individual proposals. It may do so based upon an objective and clearly stated rationale to ensure a reasonable geographical, thematic and principal investigator representation in the final selection. In its Selection, the Higher Education Commission must follow the project goals as described in the World Bank PAD, ensuring that the portfolio of TTSF grantees address the major thematic areas described in the Call for Proposals and the Project Operations Manual. The Higher Education Commission will formulate its position regarding the evaluation outcomes in writing in the minutes of the final selection meeting.

The report of the Desk Review panel, and the Minutes of the Higher Education Commission meeting regarding the outcomes of the evaluation together form the evaluation results. All institutions that submitted proposals in response to the TTSF Call for Proposals will receive copies of all Evaluation Rubrics associated with the proposal.

#### **5. GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE**

In extremely rare occasions, institutions may raise an objection or grievance regarding the TTSF Evaluation and Selection process. The objection or grievance must first be raised with the HEC Program Manager for the TTSF project within seven (07) working days of the selection results being announced.

The Higher Education Commission will set up a small (3-member) Grievance Committee to which institutions can submit grievances. The Grievance Committee will seek clarifications from the institution/principal investigator concerned, from the independent expert evaluators, from the Program

Manager and other relevant entities, and provide a recommendation to the Higher Education Commission Project Coordinator on whether the grievance or appeal should be accommodated and any proposed modified evaluation/selection decision.