

**MEDIA FOR ALL PROJECT**  
(SUPPORTING GREATER MEDIA INDEPENDENCE  
IN THE WESTERN BALKANS)

**CALL FOR APPLICATIONS**

**BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT GRANT SCHEME**

**Deadline for application:  
19 July 2020; 24:00 local time**

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## 1. BACKGROUND

Media for All is a regional project<sup>1</sup>, funded by the UK Government through the British Embassy in Serbia. The project will support local and regional independent media outlets to become more audience oriented and financially sustainable by improving business development and organisational capacities and strengthening relationships between citizens and the media and creating a platform for citizen reporting. This support will enable media outlets to provide citizens with a more diverse range of media content, and thus to encourage open, informed and active discussion amongst target audiences across Western Balkans (Albania, BiH, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia).

The project is delivered by a consortium led by the British Council<sup>2</sup> in partnership with the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN)<sup>3</sup>, Thomson Foundation<sup>4</sup> and INTRAC (The International NGO Training and Research Centre)<sup>5</sup>.

The media sector in the Western Balkans is characterized by the relatively high number of outlets, though there is little plurality within the market. The media outlets in this region face similar challenges reflected in experiencing political and financial pressure, presence of threats and harassment, poor working conditions, often risk of censorship and low level of public trust in media.

The **Business development grant scheme** aims to contribute to a greater financial resilience and editorial independence. The Project supports local and regional media outlets with an aim to improve their business skills and strategies and enable them to increase the proportion of income coming from market sources (such as advertising revenue, community-based financing models, incomes from other media-related businesses, etc). This will help to reduce their dependence on any source of income and enable them to be more financially resilient.

In addition to the grant funding, the Thomson Foundation – the key partner of the British Council for this grant scheme – will provide a technical assistance to selected outlets to help them articulate and test their business ideas, as well as to build capacities necessary for their implementation.

## 2. OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE CALL

The Project's overall vision is to enable a positive shift in citizens' engagement with independent media in the Western Balkans. The main beneficiaries of this media independence Project are media outlets and those working within the media sphere.

The following are the **outcomes** that the project aims at achieving through this grant scheme:

- Project supported media outlets are more financially resilient,
- Project supported media outlets are generating revenue from new business streams,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.britishcouncil.rs/en/programmes/education/media>

<sup>2</sup> [www.britishcouncil.org](http://www.britishcouncil.org)

<sup>3</sup> <https://birn.eu.com/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.thomsonfoundation.org/about/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.intrac.org/>

- Project supported media outlets have improved organisational practices, including ethical business practice and gender equality in the workplace.

Alongside the development of new business streams, this Call aims at building media outlets' capacity to understand their (existing and potential) audiences' needs and priorities, and to respond to these better through tailoring their products and adopting modern digital formats, content distribution channels and outreach technologies – all these will enable them to expand their audiences, establish trusty relations and open up new opportunities for generating income. This includes the need for media to adopt audience research and engagement strategies that are gender sensitive and to develop ways of formatting and distributing content appropriate to reach diverse audiences, including women, young people and marginalised groups.

### 3. AVAILABLE FUNDING AND ALLOCATIONS

The Business development grant process starts with this Call expecting applicants to apply with their business ideas and an indicative budget, that will be the key elements on which the applicants will be selected. Selected outlets will be provided with Technical Assistance to develop their ideas into business plans and budget.

#### Minimum and Maximum Grant Award

Any grant requested under this call for applications must fall between the following minimum and maximum amounts:

Minimum grant amount: 10,000 GBP

Maximum grant amount: 25,000 GBP

The total estimated amount of the indicative budget is to be provided at this phase in the Application Form (Annex 1). Detailed Budget proposal will be developed together with the Business Plan only by those applicants selected to receive Technical Assistance (TA).

No co-financing from the applicant's side is expected or is obligatory within this Call for Applications.

#### Technical assistance (TA)

The pre-grant phase will involve a **two-month period of technical assistance** by the Project to assist the applicant to develop Business Plan and Budget, followed by disbursement of grant funds to implement the Business Plan. During the grant implementation phase, technical assistance will be also provided on an ongoing basis to support implementation of Business Plan.

## 4. GENERAL RULES FOR CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

### 4.1. Eligibility criteria

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The applicant must fulfil the following criteria in order to be eligible for funding under this Project:

- Applicant must be registered as a media outlet in Serbian Business Registers Agency (SBRA)<sup>6</sup>.
- Legal entity owning this media outlet must be registered in Serbia before 1 January 2018.  
(N.B. Some media outlets are self-contained/business entities themselves, while others belong to a legal entity.)
- Financial statements for 2018 calendar year, or 2019, if applicable;
- Certificate from relevant tax authority that the legal entity has paid all due taxes in accordance with the local legislation.

#### Other important requirements:

- Partnership with another media outlet / organisation for the grant application purpose is not allowed as the grant scheme is focused on building individual capacity of selected media outlets.
- Your organization may submit only one application under this grant scheme.

### 4.2. Eligible activities

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The illustrative activities that could be financed include, but are not limited to:

a) Piloting new sources of revenue

1. Introducing and testing new advertising streams (digital advertising, native advertising, etc.);
2. New services or products development;
3. Media-related 'side' businesses that feed the primary media business;
4. Online fundraising models (direct engagement of citizens through donations, membership, crowdfunding, etc.);

b) Developing and implementing new audience / community engagement strategies that could be used to increase trust and reinforce the mission of media outlets, and could be used as a basis for a new stream of monetization;

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<sup>6</sup> Agencija za privredne registre (APR)

- c) Improving digital content distribution and outreach approaches sensitive to the needs and interests of men and women as part of their targeted audience / community;
- d) Digital audience research and analysis (to explore socio-economic and other factors influencing media audiences, specifically including women, young people and marginalised groups); and / or
- e) Developing gender-sensitive codes of conduct and workplace policies on, for example Gender, Equal Opportunities, Sexual harassment, Bullying, Safety and Cyber security.

#### 4.2.1. Duration of the project

The planned duration of the project may not exceed 12 (twelve) months.

Overall expected project timeline is 14 months (2 months of technical assistance plus maximum length of the project of 12 months). All activities must finish no later than 31 December 2021.

#### 4.2.2. Location

The activities should be implemented in Serbia.

### 4.3. Eligible and ineligible costs

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The applicant should consider eligible and ineligible costs when developing the business idea and considering an amount of the total indicative budget in the Application Form (Annex 1).

Eligible costs:

Category	Explanation
<b>Human Resources Costs</b>	Should only include cost of organisation's staff and experts directly involved in implementation of the proposed project activities and proportionate to their level of involvement.

Category	Explanation
<p><b>Programmatic Costs</b></p>	<p>Programmatic costs should be divided into Cost per each Activity, and Operational Costs. Operational costs are programmatic costs that apply to all activities. In both cases only direct programmatic costs will be allowed, as below:</p> <p><i>Activities:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Travel and subsistence costs of project staff, experts and beneficiaries related to implementation of activities;</li> <li>- Costs of meetings, training events essential to the project;</li> <li>- Basic catering costs associated with events or meetings directly relating to activities;</li> <li>- Translation costs;</li> <li>- Publication costs directly related to the activities;</li> <li>- Short term room hire including hire of audio-visual equipment;</li> <li>- Developing digital platforms and locally owned digital audience tool;</li> <li>- Other activity related costs.</li> </ul> <p><i>Operational Costs:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social media and other advertising;</li> <li>- IT support, website development;</li> <li>- Transport and/or fuel costs;</li> <li>- Communication costs (telephone and internet);</li> <li>- Office costs such as office rent, office supplies and other utilities might be included if relevant to project activities, but these costs must be kept to a minimum.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Equipment</b></p>	<p>Purchase of equipment is allowed up to 25% of total value of proposed budget, for equipment essential to successful implementation of the project. Use of equipment should be clearly justified. This may also include among others, specialist software licences and online app or webinar licenses essential to the project.</p>

Ineligible costs:

Category	Explanation
<p><b>General office equipment and costs</b></p>	<p>Costs of purchase of office furniture and other equipment such as: Desks, chairs, filing cabinets, photocopiers, fax machines. Patents costs.</p>

Category	Explanation
<b>Construction costs</b>	Costs relating to the construction and purchase of physical infrastructure, (e.g. office buildings, media rooms, media studios).
<b>Entertainment</b>	Entertainment costs such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gifts</li> <li>- Alcohol</li> <li>- Restaurant bills or hospitality costs for personnel not directly participating in the project.</li> </ul>
<b>Excessive transport</b>	Excessive taxi fares and/or fuel costs.

#### 4.4. Instructions for application submission

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##### 4.4.1. Application Form content

Applications must be submitted in line with the instructions and guidance of this Call. The following documents should be submitted when applying for this Call:

1. Application Form (Annex 1)

The Application Form should contain the following annexes:

1. Registration certificate of the media outlet confirming that it is registered with the Serbian Business Registers Agency (SBRA);
2. Document that proves that the legal entity owning the media outlet is registered in Serbia before 1 January 2018 (if applicable);
3. Financial statements for 2018 calendar year (or 2019, if applicable);
4. Certificate from relevant tax authority that the legal entity has paid all due taxes, in accordance with local legislation.

Application Form should be completed in **English language**.

Other documents, issued from local institutions, can be submitted in their original languages. Application Form should be signed and stamped.

Any error or major discrepancy related to the Application Form instructions may lead to its rejection.

Clarifications will only be requested when information provided is not sufficient to conduct an objective assessment.

Hand-written Application Form will not be accepted.



The Project reserves the right to request the original versions of submitted documents from applicants.

#### 4.4.2. Where to and how to send the applications

The Application Form must be submitted exclusively via e-mail in both PDF (signed, stamped and scanned) and original editable format (Word). Signed, stamped and scanned versions must contain the same information as the editable formats. In case of discrepancies, signed, stamped and scanned version will prevail.

The application must be submitted, within the given deadline, to the following e-mail address:

[mediagrants.srb@britishcouncil.org](mailto:mediagrants.srb@britishcouncil.org)

**The Application Form with supporting documents must be sent with the email subject consisting of the name of the Call for Applications and Name of the applicant.** (e.g. BD Grant Scheme\_Media XYZ)

Automatic notification of the delivery would follow upon successful submission of email application.

Once the application is submitted, the Project will generate a unique application ID number. **Applicants should note this number and use it in all communications with the Project.**

#### 4.4.3. Application deadline

The applicant must submit the Application Form until **19 July 2020 at 24:00** local time.

Applications submitted after the deadline will not be considered for funding. The deadline applies to all parts of your application, including supporting documentation.

#### 4.4.4. Clarifications, Questions & Answers

Requests for clarification should be submitted in English language to the email address below:

[mediagrants.srb@britishcouncil.org](mailto:mediagrants.srb@britishcouncil.org) by **2 July 2020** at the latest.

**Online information session** will be organised within the period from **6 - 10 July 2020**. The session will be conducted in local language. The exact date and time of the online information session will be provided in due course.

## 4.5. Evaluation and selection

### STEP 1: ADMINISTRATIVE AND ELIGIBILITY CHECK

During the administrative check the following will be assessed:

- Compliance with the submission deadline. If the deadline has not been met, the application will automatically be rejected.
- The Application Form satisfies all criteria specified in section 4.1 Eligibility criteria and subsection 4.4.1 Application Form content. If any of the requested information/document is missing or is incorrect, the application may be rejected on that sole basis and it will not be evaluated further.

The application that passes this check will be evaluated further as part of the quality assessment.

### STEP 2: EVALUATION CRITERIA (QUALITY ASSESSMENT)

The evaluation grid is divided into sections and subsections. Each section will be given a score between 1 and 10 depending on the level of criteria met.<sup>7</sup>

The following are the evaluation (quality assessment) criteria for applications that passed the administrative check:

Criteria	Total Score (max) 40
<p><b>1. Relevance of proposal to enhance current business model of media outlet</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the proposal identify areas that the organisation would like to target in terms of capacity building and improving the organisation across the following areas: audience / community engagement, media management (internal organisation), production, community building, business management, introduction of new services or product, etc.?</li> <li>• Is the purpose of the organisations' proposal clear and relevant to the local environment in which it operates?</li> <li>• Does the proposal contain specific cross cutting issues, such as promotion of gender equality, respect of human rights and equal opportunities, the needs of women, young people and marginalized groups?</li> </ul>	<p>Max 10 points</p>

<sup>7</sup> The scoring will be translated as follows: 9–10 points - an exceptional level; 7–8 points - very high level; 5–6 points - high level; 3–4 points - adequate level; 1–2 points - low level; and 0 points - fails to meet any of the criteria to an adequate level

<p><b>2. Capacity and willingness to receive and responsibly use grant funding</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrated commitment to upholding journalistic standards.</li> <li>• Description of available capacity within the organisation, as well as technical and media skills missing to implement suggested improvements.</li> <li>• Media outlet has sufficient and relevant experience in project implementation.</li> <li>• Are the risks and challenges identified specific and manageable, and is there evidence of being able to mitigate the risks?</li> </ul>	<p>Max 10 points</p>
<p><b>3. Sustainability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the proposal indicate how identified areas of improvement will contribute to the sustainability of media outlet?</li> <li>• Does the project feature other measures for building sustainability?</li> <li>• Are the expected results of business idea implementation taking into account all relevant factors that may possibly affect it both positively and negatively (external and internal)?</li> </ul>	<p>Max 10 points</p>
<p><b>4. Potential</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential of suggested new audience measurement tools to contribute to the better engagement with audience.</li> <li>• Potential to adopt organisational changes to improve operations of media outlet.</li> <li>• Potential of suggested production improvements to contribute to the better-quality media content.</li> <li>• Potential of suggested measures for community engagement to build the stronger links with local community.</li> <li>• Potential of new revenue streams to contribute to greater financial viability of media outlet.</li> </ul>	<p>Max 10 points</p>

The following criteria is a social impact criterion and will add a total of 5 points if the media outlet addressed at least one of the following issues:

<p><b>5. Social impact</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media outlet operating in remote geographic area.</li> <li>• Media outlet is established and/or managed by underrepresented groups (minority, youth and other underrepresented groups).</li> </ul>	<p>5 points</p>
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The application with higher scores will be recommended by the evaluation panel for further due diligence check phase and possible grant awarding.

### STEP 3: DUE DILIGENCE

The due diligence will, by default, only be performed for the applications that have been provisionally recommended according to their score as described in Step 2. The Due Diligence will be conducted through the Due Diligence Check list which will be provided to the applicant upon notification of successful results of the quality assessment.

The Due Diligence Checklist is a self-declaration document to be filled by the applicant and will be confirmed by the Project. Any missing supporting document or any incoherence between the declaration by the applicant and the supporting documents may lead to the rejection of the application on that sole basis.

Any rejected application will be replaced by the next best placed application on the reserve list that falls within the available budget for this Call for Applications.

### STEP 4: NOTIFICATION – PRE-AGREEMENT PHASE

The applicants will be informed by email about decision concerning their application.

Notification is conducted during two phases of the evaluation:

- Notification 1: Not passing the administrative check
- Notification 2 (final): Selection or non-selection upon the qualitative assessment and due diligence

Successful applicants at this phase, upon positive notification, will sign the Pre-Agreement with the Project and become a recipient of the technical assistance.

### STEP 5: PROVISION OF THE TECHNICAL ASSISTENCE FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE BUSINESS PLAN AND BUDGET

Upon signature of the Pre-Agreement, the media outlet will be supported by Thompson Foundation, through technical assistance to develop a business plan and budget. The technical assistance (TA) will be provided for a period of two months. By the end of TA phase, the selected applicants will submit Business Plan and Budget (templates will be provided during TA phase) for further evaluation process.

The following will be assessed in this step:

1. The Business Plan (developed based on the Application Form) and its feasibility
2. Budget

Condition to successful completion of the technical assistance phase, selected applicants will receive grants to implement their business plan.

## STEP 6: FINAL NOTIFICATION

The applicants will be informed by email about decision concerning their application.

The following is the indicative table of the application, evaluation and notification process:

<b>Call for Application process</b>	<b>Date / Month</b>
<b>Launching of the Call</b>	22 June 2020
<b>Deadline for requesting any clarifications from the Project</b>	2 July 2020
<b>Information session</b>	6 - 10 July 2020
<b>Final Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) sent to applicants</b>	14 July 2020
<b>Deadline for submission of applications</b>	19 July 2020 (until 24:00)
<b>Notification to rejected applicants on the results of the administrative check (Step 1)</b>	August 2020
<b>Notification to applicants on the results of the qualitative assessment and due diligence (Step 2 &amp; Step 3)</b>	October 2020
<b>Pre-Agreement signature</b>	October 2020
<b>Provision of Technical Assistance for Business Plan and Budget development</b>	October – December 2020
<b>Submissions of Business Plan and Budget</b>	December 2020
<b>Notification to applicants on the results of the Business Plan and Budget evaluation</b>	December 2020
<b>Grant Agreement Signature</b>	January 2021

## 5. CONDITIONS OF IMPLEMENTATION

### 5.1. Contractual arrangements

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Selected applicants will be considered for funding under this Call for Applications. Subject to successful completion of technical assistance phase, a grant agreement, containing terms and conditions, code of conduct and the reporting templates will be signed with British Council.

### 5.2. Visibility

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All project-related visibility activities will be carried out in accordance with the Project Communication Strategy. Grantees will be required to plan and carry out communication activities in accordance with Project rules and procedures. All equipment purchased from the grant donation will be properly marked to reflect the ownership.

### 5.3. Data Protection Policy

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The British Council takes data protection seriously and recognises the importance of collecting and managing data in a way that protects the rights of the people with whom we work. In doing this we work to a set of internationally recognised minimum standards in data management and we support our grant beneficiaries to work to the same minimum standards.

We apply the UK Data Protection Act (incorporating the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)) to all our global operations unless the local equivalent law is stronger. For more detailed information and guidance, please refer to our website: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/privacy-cookies/data-protection>.

## 6. ANNEXES

Annex 1: Application Form