

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

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

ENGAGED CITIZEN REPORTING GRANT SCHEME

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

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1. BACKGROUND

Media for All is a regional project¹, 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 Council² in partnership with the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN)³, Thomson Foundation⁴ and INTRAC (The International NGO Training and Research Centre)⁵.

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.

What is Engaged Citizen Reporting (ECR)?

Engaged citizen reporting should not be confused with audience engagement measured through page views, likes, shares, etc. ECR, is much more, it means that readers, viewers and listeners are involved in the story production, long before it was published. That way media can learn what are the true problems in their community from its members and also can rely on citizens to help media investigate and report on certain issues.

Essentially, ECR stands for reporting with the citizens, not only about them. In more practical terms, engaging citizens means giving them the opportunity to suggest topics, provide testimonials, documents, evidence, etc. ECR tools that will be developed during this project, based on successful models worldwide, will allow the media to gather such information and data in a simple, yet systematic and a secure way. The issue of security is of great importance, as citizens, who may be in possession of important information in public interest, often hesitate to reach out to official institutions or media out of fear of losing job, or fear for their own safety.

ECR tool will be developed and implemented by the project team, while selected grant recipients will be trained on how to use the tool and will be provided with the editorial support and mentoring throughout the project, as well as, through the implementation of the grants, they will be supported in content production and promotion.

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

² www.britishcouncil.org

³ <https://birn.eu.com/>

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

⁵ <https://www.intrac.org/>

ECR tool will have two versions – a basic ECR tool (for collecting story proposals, testimonials, different kinds of evidence), and the more advanced (for collecting larger numbers of data for more complex stories and investigations). Based on the project description in the application form and the capacity of the media outlet, the support will be provided in applying one of the ECR tools.

2. OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE CALL

The Project's overall vision is to enable a positive shift in citizens' engagement with independent local and regional media in the Western Balkans.

In relation to 'citizens' engagement', this goes beyond passive consumption of media to include more active engagement, from expressing their opinions and concerns, to proposing topics, providing evidence and/ or expertise, contributing to content production and design.

There are **long-term outcomes** that the project believes are necessary for sustaining independence, and strengthening citizens' engagement, and they are as follows:

1. Project-supported media outlets are more financially resilient and working in accordance with adopted policies, including on gender in the workplace.
2. Project supported media outlets and media professionals produce quality, relevant, gender-sensitive content that attracts and engages new audiences, including women and marginalized groups.

In addition, the following are the **intermediate outcomes** envisaged by this project and to be achieved through this grant scheme:

- More men and women in media produce quality, ethical, gender sensitive content that challenges prevailing gender norms and stereotypes
- Editorial decisions of local media outlets increasingly reflect citizens' priorities and interests, including those of women and marginalized groups.

3. AVAILABLE FUNDING AND ALLOCATIONS

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

- Minimum amount: GBP 7,500.00
- Maximum amount: GBP 15,000.00

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

4. GENERAL RULES FOR CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

4.1. Eligibility criteria

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)⁶.
- 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

The following is the list of activities, but not limited to, that will be considered as eligible for this Call for Applications:

- Content production based on the information and data acquired through the ECR tool (the tool will be designed and implemented to the grantees' websites by the BIRN and recipients of the grant will receive adequate training)
- Content may include news, analysis, investigations, etc., it can be in any form – text, audio, video.
- Content promotion through outlets' social media channels.
- Engaging citizens by promoting the ECR tool as a platform where they can suggest topics, express interest to be contacted in the future for the purpose of reporting, or take part in different investigations, etc. (through outlets' social media channels and innovations on the website described below)

⁶ Agencija za privredne registre (APR)

- ECR promotion through introduction of dedicated sections on the website, additional information in the 'about' and 'contact' section, banners, etc.

The applicant may propose other activities that correspond with the vision and long-term objectives of this project and that relate to above-listed activities.

4.2.1. Duration of the project

The duration of the project is nine (9) months in total, including the implementation of the ECR tool to the grantees' websites and training on ECR.

Please note that there are two cycles of project implementation envisaged for the grant recipients under this Call for Application. The foreseen starting dates are: October 2020 and April 2021. The project reserves the right to group the grant recipients for relevant starting dates and project implementation cycles.

4.2.2. Location

The activities should be implemented in Serbia.

4.3. Eligible and ineligible costs

The following are the eligible costs to be foreseen by the applicant under this Call, when completing Budget Form (Annex 2):

Eligible costs:

Category	Explanation
Human Resources Costs	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>Programmatic Costs</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"> - Travel and subsistence costs of project staff, experts and beneficiaries related to implementation of activities; - Costs of meetings, training events essential to the project; - Basic catering costs associated with events or meetings directly relating to activities; - Translation costs; - Publication costs directly related to the activities; - Short term room hire including hire of audio-visual equipment; - Developing digital platforms and locally owned digital audience tool; - Other activity related costs. <p><i>Operational Costs:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social media and other advertising; - IT support, website development; - Transport and/or fuel costs; - Communication costs (telephone and internet); - 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.
<p>Equipment</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>General office equipment and costs</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
Construction costs	Costs relating to the construction and purchase of physical infrastructure, (e.g. office buildings, media rooms, media studios).
Entertainment	Entertainment costs such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gifts - Alcohol - Restaurant bills or hospitality costs for personnel not directly participating in the project.
Excessive transport	Excessive taxi fares and/or fuel costs.

4.4. Instructions for application submission

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)
2. Budget Form (Annex 2)

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

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. ECR 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 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.⁷

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

Criteria	Total Score (max) 50
<p>1. Relevance of proposal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the application identify areas that the organisation would like to target in terms of capacity building and improving the organisation across the following areas: community building, helping citizens communicate closer with their organisation and developing creative ways of interacting with local communities? • Is the purpose of the organisations' work clear and relevant to the local environment in which it operates? • Does the proposal directly contribute to the expected outcomes of this Call for Applications? 	Max 10 points
<p>2. Capacity and willingness to receive and responsibly use grant funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrated commitment to upholding journalistic standards. 	Max 10 points

⁷ 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

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity within the organisation, as well as technical and media skills available to implement activities (number of staff (journalists and editors) in total, number of staff (journalists and editors) dedicated to the project by seniority, available equipment, functioning website. Are the risks and challenges identified specific and manageable, and is there a clear list of mitigating measure (clear risk management and mitigation plan of the risks)? 	
<p>3. Sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the proposal outline how implementing ECR will contribute to the sustainability of interaction of media outlet with their local audiences? 	Max 10 points
<p>4. Potential to actively engage a broader community than the media content currently reaches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential to actively encourage audiences to get involved, address problems in its own community and engage with the outlet using the ECR tool to produce meaningful content. Potential to actively engage specific target groups, with the focus on underrepresented groups (such as women and girls, younger people, or ethnic, social, sexual and other minorities). 	Max 10 points
<p>5. Financial proposal</p> <p>Does the budget demonstrate value for money – is it reasonable that this organisation will be able to manage the applied amount and carry out the activities?</p>	Max 10 points

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>Social impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Media outlet operating in remote geographic area. Media outlet is established and/or managed by underrepresented groups (minority, youth and other underrepresented groups). 	5 points
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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

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

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

Call for Application process	Date / Month
Launching of the Call	22 June 2020
Deadline for requesting any clarifications from the Project	2 July 2020
Information session	6 - 10 July 2020
Final Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) sent to applicants	14 July 2020
Deadline for submission of applications	19 July 2020 (until 24:00)
Notification to rejected applicants on the results of the administrative check (Step 1)	August 2020
Notification to applicants on the results of the qualitative assessment and due diligence (Step 2 & 3)	October 2020
Grant Agreement signature	October 2020

5. CONDITIONS OF IMPLEMENTATION

5.1. Contractual arrangements

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

5.2. Visibility

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

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

Annex 2: Budget Form