

Request for Application for Expert(s) in Business Development and Mentoring for Media Outlets

The Thomson Foundation (TF) is recruiting experts to support the delivery of a media project in the Western Balkans. We are seeking for experts in business development and mentoring to support and directly work with up to 55 local and regional media outlets in 6 countries in the Western Balkans as part of the Accelerator Programme.

The aim of this CSSF funded media freedom programme is to develop and strengthen the editorial independence and business operation of the media, enabling them to provide citizens more effectively with a more diverse range of media content, and thus to encourage open, informed and active discussion amongst target audiences in the six Western Balkans countries.

The main beneficiaries of this are media outlets and those working within the media sphere (e.g. editors), but the programme will contribute to an impact focused on increasing citizen's engagement with a wider range of media, and potentially (over the longer term) increasing levels of trust in media which demonstrate more balanced editorial policies.

This project will last from April 2020 until March 2022 and will operate across the six Western Balkans countries. It is implemented by consortium consisted of the British Council (lead partner), Thomson Foundation, BIRN and Intrac.

About the Accelerator Programme

The Accelerator Programme is designed to provide business consultancy to media outlets with a purpose to support the development of a contextualized, feasible and implementable business plans. Over the course of the project, the developed business plans will be implemented within the context of a grant support scheme.

The overall purpose of the programme is to help media outlets become more financially resilient by improving their business skills and strategies, adopting gender-sensitive and market-oriented business strategies and to introduce and test innovative services and products as well as new revenue streams.

Following a public call and selection of up to 55 media outlets in the region, the outlets will receive expert support over a 3 months' period. Consultants for business development and mentoring are expected to closely work and communicate with media outlets supporting and mentoring them through the course of the project within the following areas:

- Business plan development
- Strategic and organizational development
- Testing and introducing new business models for media outlets
- Audience engagement, community building and digital tools application
- Content production
- Audience measurement
- Media management

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Media outlets that submit fully developed business plans with related financial plan (budget) will be granted financial support to implement them over the course of 12 months.

Scope of Work

Experts in business development and mentoring will be working with the TF Project Coordinator and Media Support and MEL Coordinator on the implementation of the following activities:

- Initial assessment of the selected media outlets (Introduction to their work, business, operations, editorial, target audiences etc.) Tools: desktop research, meetings with media outlets, workshops etc.
- Analysis of internal organisational capacities of the selected media outlets, assessment of their readiness for change, internal challenges and potential for introduction and application of new business models and approaches,
- Analysis of external factors that are affecting the work and potential business development of the selected media outlets in their environments,
- Lead the process of strategic planning within the organisation, including the entire team of the media outlet, ensuring their participation and buy-in,
- Support media outlets to create and develop strategic plans as a result of the process of strategic planning,
- Supporting media outlets to map potential business opportunities and create a plan on how to pilot, test and validate the most suitable business models/services/approaches for their outlets,
- Support media outlets in the process of testing and validation of selected business models,
- Support media outlets to create business plans with financial estimates, targets and potential budgets for the business models that were tested and validated,
- Mentor the outlets in the abovementioned areas during the course of the project;
- Coordinate and work with the Thomson Foundation staff and other experts for business development and planning,
- Send reports to TF staff within the defined deadlines,
- Submit a final report and all the materials created with/for the media outlets during the process.

The selected experts are expected to deliver the following list of documents as a result of their support to media outlets:

- Initial assessment reports: covering internal and external capacities of the selected media outlets for business development
- Business plans that are tailored to capacities, potentials, needs and ideas of selected media outlets, with realistic budgets and financial estimations for their implementation,
- Final report (in English) including assessment of supported media outlets and recommendations for their funding

Timeline and location

The first intensive mentorship cycle will be implemented from **August to December 2020**. Mentorship and support to media outlets may be continued during 2021.

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Experts will be mostly working online and in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Albania and North Macedonia. The majority of the consultancy activities will be delivered remotely/online.

Requirements

Skills and experience

- Relevant knowledge of the media sector and industry in the Western Balkans (or in the country or region of the experts' origin)
- Demonstrated experience in creating effective business plans, analysing business processes and identifying opportunities to generate additional revenue,
- Knowledge and experience in content planning, production, community and audience engagement and measurement;
- Demonstrated skills in long-term mentorship support to individuals and teams;
- Demonstrated experience in processes of strategic planning and management,
- Experience with blended-learning approaches (combination of e-learning and tailored mentoring and capacity building)
- Demonstrated experience and knowledge on entrepreneurship, start-ups, and early stages of business development,
- Experience in working with media outlets, communication/publishing start-ups and processes of digitalisation of businesses, will be considered as an advantage.
- Speaking the languages of the WB region is an asset.

Application

Interested experts are kindly asked to send the following documents (in English):

- **CV/portfolio with examples of previous work relevant for this assignment**
- **Concept proposal – a single page document that briefly explains the expert's vision and approach in business development and mentoring.**

Both documents should be submitted to Davor Marko, TF project coordinator by email: (DavorM@thomsonfoundation.org) - not later than **15 July 2020**.

Note: Issuing this Request for Application does not commit Thomson Foundation nor other members of the consortium, to select any expert and/or applicant. Thomson Foundation also reserves the right to extend/change the duration of the assignment, its scope of work, deliverables or expected outcomes.