

Request for Application (RFA) - Community Management and Communications Expert

The Thomson Foundation (TF) is seeking to hire a Community Management and Communications Expert within the project ‘Supporting Greater Media Independence in the Western Balkans’.

BACKGROUND

The aim of the Supporting Greater Media Independence in the Western Balkans project - is to develop and strengthen the editorial independence and business operation of the media outlets, enabling them to provide a more diverse range of media content to their audiences, and thus to encourage an opened, informed and active discussion amongst the citizens in the six Western Balkans countries.

The main beneficiaries of the project are media outlets and those working within the media sphere (e.g. editors), but the programme will contribute to an impact focused on increasing citizens’ 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.

Supporting Greater Media Independence in the Western Balkans project is funded by the **Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) of the UK Government** and implemented by the consortium consisted of the **British Council** (lead partner), **Thomson Foundation**, **Balkan Investigative and Reporting Network (BIRN)** and the **International NGO Training and Research Centre (INTRAC)**.

The duration of the project is two years, until March 2022, and it will be implemented across six Western Balkans countries: **Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Albania, and North Macedonia**.

Our inception report demonstrates that challenges that the media sector is facing with, are shared among the 6 WB countries. Those are: overwhelmingly neglected local media compared to the national ones, limited business capacity/financial viability of local media, low IT and organisational capacity of local media, low quality of content produced by local media, weak relationship between local media and their audiences and limited experience or opportunities for journalists to engage with citizens in the region.

As a part of a consortia, the Thomson Foundation is participating in the implementation of the following four sets of activities, to contribute mitigation of the abovementioned challenges:

1. **Technical assistance support** to media outlets to develop their business ideas into Business plans (Media Accelerator and mentoring)
2. **Grants for Business plans implementation**
3. **E-learning** through online courses and mentoring, and
4. **Capacity building** tailored to individual needs of media outlets (digital tools and media outlets’ capacity improvement).

The binding outcome of these activities is to equip the media outlets with knowledge, tools and platforms so they can improve their content production/distribution, audience engagement, and overall business performance.

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The support and the engagement of the **Community Management and Communications Expert** is envisioned **for group of activities under the number 1. and 3: Technical assistance support to media outlets and E-learning.**

Having in mind the nature of communications as an overarching activity that is needed in every aspect of project implementation, **the expert may be engaged to provide similar support in other groups of activities.**

ABOUT THE ACTIVITY

A robust online platform will be developed and launched to serve as a go-to resource base for media outlets from the entire WB region. The platform will contain:

1. E-learning courses
2. Educative content
3. Website templates

1. **E-learning courses** are one of the core set of TF activities and they will provide the beneficiaries with needed knowledge and resources for the 3-month period of acceleration that will lead to awarding direct grants for the implementation of their business ideas during their 12-month long projects. Trough the course of the project, 8 e-learning courses will be developed and published at the online platform.
2. **Educative content** about various topics relevant for media outlets will be created and distributed through the platform covering topics such are: business models and case studies for media outlets, e-payment resources, digitalisation of business, tools and advice for newsroom improvement, media management, audience measurement and engagement and etc. The content provided will be interactive, user friendly and in all regularly used formats: video, audio, infographics, text etc.
3. **Website templates for media outlets** that will be available for download and usage, are envisioned to be in a form of a website theme, that may additionally contain some (or all of) the following elements and functionalities:
 - Pre-defined and adaptable categories for content publishing tailored to media outlets
 - Banner positions with standardized formats and sizes
 - Security and general data privacy tools and policies built in
 - Engaged Citizens’ Reporting (ECR) tool provided by BIRN built in
 - Multilingual content presentation functionality (BHSM, Macedonian and Albanian)
 - E-payment gateway for online donations/subscription
 - Content research tool built in (i.e. smartocto insights (ex Content Insights), UpScore etc.)
 - Other functionalities

SCOPE OF WORK

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Main Tasks and Responsibilities

The Experts main tasks will be to:

- Participate in the process of planning and developing the online platform for media outlets (defining the structure, selecting the vendor for its development, communicating with the editorial team etc.)
- Create content and support the editorial staff of the online platform for media outlets
- Promote the platform and grow its audience
- Promote the e-learning courses (internally and externally)
- Plan, implement and monitor results of outreach activities to project beneficiaries and broader public using online tools and various communication channels and techniques
- Support project staff in internal communications, project implementation and reporting activities
- Communicate with project beneficiaries and the pool of mentoring experts during the acceleration and grants implementation phase (moderating the internal Facebook group, directly communicating etc.)
- Prepare reports about outreach and other project activities
- Participate in other project activities as needed
- Present the project in the region and foster communication that empowers media outlets to pilot innovative solutions in the areas of digital technologies and business

REQUIREMENTS

Professional Experience:

- High level of understanding of the media sector in the Western Balkans,
- Up to 5 years of working experience in areas social media management, community and audience building, content curation, online promotion, internal and external communication. Experience of working with and for the media outlets is preferred
- High familiarity about content management systems, online learning tools and content distribution
- Working experience in internal communications and communication in niche communities
- 5 years of relevant working experience in the field of IT, digital technologies, journalism, marketing, communications or a related field,
- Research and analysis working experience is preferred
- Working experience in the field of media development preferred
- Willingness and the ability to work, deliver and communicate online
- Demonstrated innovative ideas and approaches would be an asset

Education:

A level of education which corresponds to completed university studies of at least 4 years in the field of communication, media, international development, social sciences, and other related (but for this post) relevant fields.

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Language and skills:

- Speaking, reading, and writing proficiency in English and one (or more) of the languages spoken in the WB region required,
- Excellent presentation, oral and writing communication skills, with strong interpersonal and cross-cultural communication skills,
- Significant project and program management skills,
- Reliable with high standards for perfection and attention to details,
- Highly collaborative working style, a team player who communicates well across all levels of the organization,
- Strong organizational skills, problem-solving, proactive, can-do-it attitude and ability to get things done,
- Ability to adjust to changes in priorities in a deadline-driven environment.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The consultant/expert is obliged to report to the TF project supervision and project coordinator.

At the end of each month, the consultant/expert will submit a time sheet for approval including the number of days spent and brief description of the activities and tasks performed as well as an invoice. In addition, at the end of each calendar month, the expert will prepare a short overview of key monthly achievements, as a contribution to the overall project monthly report to be prepared by the project coordinator.

In addition, at the end of each calendar month, the expert will prepare an overview of key monthly achievements, as a contribution to the overall project monthly report to be prepared by project coordinator. At the end of activity, the expert will report on entire activity and its achievements and impact, following the template prepared by the TF. All reports should be submitted in English as agreed with the project coordinator. If reports are prepared in local language, the consultant must provide executive summary of the report in English.

The timing of deliverables and their detailed content will be agreed with the TF project coordinator.

DURATION OF ASSIGNMENT

It is expected that the assignment will commence no later than 10th of August 2020. The expert will be hired until March 2022.

APPLICATION

Interested experts are kindly asked to submit their **CV/Resume** to Davor Marko, TF project coordinator by email: (DavorM@thomsonfoundation.org) - not later than **20 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.