

“Media for All - Supporting Greater Media Independence in the Western Balkans”
This project was funded with UK aid from the UK government.

Request for Application (RFA) - Online course author and mentor on Strategic use of content performance data - from basics to data- informed decision-making in a newsroom

The Thomson Foundation (TF) is seeking to hire an online course author for the project: ‘Media for All - Supporting Greater Media Independence in the Western Balkans’.

The Request for Application (RFA) document is providing the information about the project, the list of expected services that are required from the expert/consultant and the scope of their work.

BACKGROUND

The aim of the “Media for All - 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 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.

ABOUT THE ACTIVITY

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 above-mentioned 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.

The creation of the online course – ***Strategic use of content performance data - from basics to data-informed decision-making in a newsroom***, is envisioned for a group of activities under the number 3. E-learning.

SCOPE OF WORK

One of the core set of TF activities is the development and production of E-learning courses that will be free and available to the beneficiaries of the project. Through the course of the project, 8 E-learning courses will be developed and distributed. They are envisioned as combinations of video, text, visual and other interactive educational materials such as quizzes, tests and all sorts of assignments.

Based on TF blended learning approach, E-learning courses will be complementary to other capacity building and technical assistance activities - provided by the TF mentors and experts through the course of the project.

All the E-learning courses are being created with the EdX tool and they will be hosted and primarily published on the TF Journalism Now platform. From there, e-learning courses are also to be made available on the online platform for media outlets – once it is developed and launched.

All E-learning courses (as well as the other content on the platform), will be available in all WB languages (group of languages used in BiH, Serbia and Montenegro, Albanian and Macedonian).

Main Tasks and Responsibilities

The Expert's main tasks will be:

- Desk research that includes overview of existing tools and approaches in strategic use of audience data for the sake of media operation and decision-making;
- Familiarising with the online course platform and back-end as well as learning about the technical requirements and coordination with TF online course director;
- Develop an online course including practical guidance to media outlets staff with the understanding and the set of skills needed to make informed business decisions based on customer analytics;
- Identify specific themes, formats that are most attractive and friendly to media outlets for use and reuse;

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- Develop detailed scenario / script for online course on Strategic use of media measurement data, including its structure, content, presentation formats, defining potential cases and contributors to the course;
- To develop and follow detailed production plan with timeline and resources needed for production and post-production;
- To produce all proposed segments of the course (textual materials, interactive pieces, videos, additional resources);
- To upload the course on the platform, following the TF team instructions, and test each of its segments;
- To overview the use of the course and implementation of acquired skills during the period of the project, until March 2022, and to report it to the TF team and project coordinator;
- While the primary target group of the course will be media managers and senior staff of media outlets in the region of the Western Balkans selected for the grant support, the course will have a comprehensive stand-alone character and will be usable by media professionals at large.

Deliverables

- Detailed course scenario draft (December 2020)
- Production plan (December 2020)
- Online course completed and produced (February 2020)
- Online course launched and tested (March 2020)
- Teaser video produced (March 2020)
- Final report of how selected media outlets used the course and develop their business plans (March 2021)
- Monthly reports on the tailored support effects and its progress (2021-2022)

REQUIREMENTS

Professional Experience:

- Sound understanding of the media and business sector in the Western Balkans;
- Being familiar with marketing and advertising strategies and approaches in media sector;
- Minimum of 3 years of using analytical platforms / tools to measure performances of online media;
- Minimum 5 years of experience in working with online media from the Western Balkans;
- Mentoring at least 5 media outlets in adapting and active use of analytical platforms / tools in the region of Western Balkans;
- Having experience in online / remote knowledge transfer;
- Demonstrated innovative ideas and approaches would be an asset;
- Experience in working on various media related projects (monitoring, content analysis, etc.) would be an asset;
- Given the situation at the moment, the expert will have to be able and willing to work digitally, and use online apps to communicate, film and produce materials for the course.

Education:

A level of education which corresponds to the advertised task and field of expertise.

Language and skills:

- Speaking, reading, and writing proficiency in English and one of the languages spoken in the WB region required;
- Excellent presentation, oral and writing communication skills, with strong interpersonal and cross-cultural communication 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 Expert is obliged to report to the TF project coordinator and Community management and communications expert. At the end of each month, the expert will submit a timesheet 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.

At the end of activity, the expert will report on the 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 Serbian, the consultant must provide an 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 15 November 2020. The expert is expected to complete the online course until March 2021.

APPLICATION

Interested experts are kindly asked to submit their **application** to Ilcho Cvetanoski, TF Community management and Communications expert by email: IlchoC@thomsonfoundation.org - not later than **22 October 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.

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LOCATION

Not specified.