

MEDIA INNOVATION EUROPE 2.0

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

VALIDATION BOOSTER (VB)

Opening Date	16 July 2024
Closing Date (Deadline for application)	24 September 2024, 23:59 CET (for the I cycle) 1 April 2025, 23:59 CET (for the II cycle)
Grant Budget Ranges	Grants for initiatives – ceiling of up to EUR 3 000 Grants for individuals – ceiling of up to EUR 3 000 Grants for media outlets / organizations – ceiling of up to EUR 5 000



1. BACKGROUND

Media Innovation Europe 2.0 (MIE) is a two-year programme co-funded by the [European Union](#) aiming to provide support to the European newsrooms and individuals through business needs assessments and personalised advisory, grants, training, hackathons and mentorship to media managers and journalists that work or are building working in and building newsrooms that are moving towards a full digital transition.

MIE's overall goal is to empower media outlets to navigate a changing media industry, providing tools and guidance to align their journalistic products, business structures, and means of discovery and distribution in an audience-focused and sustainable way.

The project is delivered by a consortium led by the Vienna-based [International Press Institute](#) (IPI) together with the Berlin-based [Thomson Media](#) (TM), The Fix Foundation (TFF) and the [Balkan Investigative Reporting Network](#) (BIRN).

The following European countries are eligible to apply: Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Republic of Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Ukraine.

2. OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE CALL

The **Validation Booster** is a tailor-made acceleration programme for media outlets, networks, initiatives and individual content creators who want to learn **how to do validation of business ideas that imply new digital products/services, diving into the process of rethinking a media's potential and feasibility in the digital environment.**

Successful applicants, in addition to the financial support through awarded grants, will benefit from mentorship and capacity building in the domain of business development during the six-month-long acceleration process (per cycle).

In addition to the financial support through awarded grants, successful applicants will benefit from mentorship and strong capacity building in business development within the Validation Booster programme. Successful applicants are expected to allocate their time for the programme for six months, including:

- **Active participation in 12 online workshops over 4 months (each workshop lasts 4 hours);**
- **So-called “validation execution” over 2 months where successful applicants are expected to use learned tools to research, talk to their target audiences, validate their ideas -or learn that they need to pivot.**
- **Lastly, at the end of the project, create a pitch deck to formulate the best, most effective, most comprehensive way to quickly explain their new business to anyone they address (audience, potential donors, future clients...)**

During all three segments listed above, successful applicants will have one-on-one mentoring sessions and full mentor support.



The programme targets individuals that can act as “intrapreneurs” – people who work for media outlets or CSOs with publishing activities and launching new digital products/services inside the existing entities, by **testing and validating new digital products as part of a developing audience and business strategy**. The ideal participant is a person or team with capacity, capability and high interest in spearheading innovative initiatives and demonstrated commitment to participate in the programme.

Besides traditional media and journalists, **we encourage unconventional media representatives, individuals working for media organisations and/or those performing as individual content producers and creators, media CSO, media outlets, niche media/platforms with focus on ecology or green transition (increase transparency of the renewable energy sector, promote public awareness, and support the democratization and decentralization of energy markets) to apply.**

After completing the Validation booster beneficiaries will have developed skills which enable them to:

- Clearly define their idea/purpose;
- Test, validate and evaluate their business idea;
- Develop materials required to present and communicate their validated idea to interested parties and potential donors.
- Present their idea, if validated to wider pool of donors

List of ideas that may be proposed for validation:

* Note: Do not stick to these only

- Validation of a new subscription-based service to diversify revenue streams
- Validation of crowdfunding campaign
- Validation of a paywall system to monetise premium content
- Validation of a mobile app to enhance user experience and engagement
- Validation of an AI-based tool for automated content tagging and organisation
- Validation of a podcast form as a platform for socially relevant topics
- Validation of email newsletters, tailored in line with different audience segments
- Validation of new or upscaling existing digital products and services in ecology and green transition (development and deployment of clean energy technologies) etc

To attend this programme applicants have to have a good command of spoken English. The programme has a total duration of 6 (six) months, and it will run of 2 (two) cycles: (I cycle: November 2024 – April 2025) and (II cycle: June 2025 - November 2025). Both cycles are the same content-wise, and you may apply for the first or for the second cycle, depending on what suits you or your media better. Please note that the deadline for the application for the I cycle is **24 September 2024 by 23:59 CET** and for the II cycle it is **1 April 2025, by 23:59 CET**.

3. PROFILE OF POTENTIAL BENEFICIARIES

The Validation booster is intended for:



1. **Organisations** – media outlets, both traditional and online media, groups/teams of journalists with the status of a legal entity (e.g. associations, formally established networks, etc.) and non-profit media organisations in Creative Europe countries.
2. **Individuals** – media professionals, stand-alone journalists, young journalists, students and media content creators and producers.
3. **Initiatives** – actions of groups of professional individuals engaged in (or planning) strengthening the role of underrepresented groups in the media sector, promoting quality journalism, regional initiatives with focus on environment, health, human rights, or some other niche topics or areas of interest for their local communities, etc.

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.

Eligible costs including human resources, necessary audience and market research costs, outsourcing expert help, all validation process-related costs including piloting/testing activities such as events, episodes, platforms, software etc., and renting equipment and space needed for the purpose of piloting activities.

Ineligible costs include costs for buying office equipment, construction costs, entertainment and excessive transport and event costs, restaurant bills or hospitality costs for personnel not directly participating in the project; bank costs charged by the beneficiary's bank for transfers from the granting authority; currency exchange losses; Taxi.

The activities should be implemented in the Creative Europe countries.

4. AVAILABLE FUNDING AND ALLOCATIONS

The **Validation booster** grant process starts with this Call that will be open until 24 September 2024, 23:59 CET for the applicants who want to apply for the **I cycle** (project implementation from November 2024 to April 2025) and **until 1 April, 2025 23:59 CET for the applicants who want to apply for the II cycle (project implementation from June 2025 to November 2025)**

Upon the closure of the call, all applications that fulfil technical requirements – eligibility check - will be evaluated by a jury. Jury will be evaluating the proposals against the criteria of Quality and Relevance, Potential and Social Impact, Digital Products or Services helping build future sustainability, Value for money. For details see subsection 4.2.

Following the evaluation phase, a grant allocation will be made, and media outlets will start with the program.

Minimum and Maximum Grant Award

Grant Budget Ranges:

- Grants for individuals – ceiling of up to EUR 3,000
- Grants for informal initiatives – ceiling of up to EUR 3,000
- Grants for media outlets / organisations – ceiling of up to EUR 5,000

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

4.1. Instructions for application submission

4.1.1. Application Form content

To apply for the Validation booster (VB) media outlets will need to send in an application via the Jotform platform.

Applicants will need to submit the **application form** including the proposed **budget** via this [LINK](#). Application Form should be completed in **English language**.

The Jury will review the proposals submitted and recommend up to 10 media organisations (per cycle) to join the programme.

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

4.1.2. Application deadline

The applicant must submit the Application Form by 24 September 2024 by 23:59 CET (for the I cycle) and by **1 April 2025 by 23:59 CET (for the II cycle)**.

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

4.1.3. Clarifications, Questions & Answers

Requests for clarification should be submitted in English language to the email address below, **no later than 25 March 2025**:

NerminaS@thomsonfoundation.org

For FAQ, please check out the previous Info session, available [HERE](#).

4.2. Evaluation and selection

The evaluation will be conducted in three (3) steps:

STEP 1: ADMINISTRATIVE AND ELIGIBILITY CHECK

During this step, the application will be assessed whether:

- Application Form is filled as per instructions provided in this Call and in the Application Form,
- All mandatory documents are submitted,
- The requested budget amount is within the given threshold, and



- Clear consent if selected the applicant will be committed during the whole duration of the project - 6 months

The application that does not meet the above listed criteria will be rejected and the applicant will be notified accordingly. The application that passes this check will be evaluated further.

The Project will ask the grant recipient to submit a post-grant report that includes a narrative description of project outcomes and a financial report backed up by eligible costs spent. The narrative and financial report template will be prescribed by the Project.

STEP 2: EVALUATION CRITERIA (PROPOSAL QUALITY)

The application is assessed based on these criteria:

Quality and Relevance of the Proposed Project (40 points)

- How well does the project align with the specified objectives?
- What is the level of innovation and originality in the project's approach?
- How clearly defined and feasible are the ideas proposed?

Potential and Social Impact (30 points)

- What is the expected impact on the target community or audience by the proposed idea?
- How will the project/proposed idea address and solve specific social issues, needs or challenges?
- What are the potential long-term benefits of the idea, if validated?
- How well does the project/proposed idea promote inclusivity, and positive social change?

Proposed digital services and products helping build future sustainability (20 points)

- Whether proposed project/idea include validation of digital content, services or products?
- Whether proposed project/idea test some innovative modalities toward its digital platform and media?
- Whether proposed project/idea have potential to help build sustainability?

Efficiency of Expenditures and Value for Money (10 points)

- How cost-effective is the proposed budget in relation to the project's objectives and expected outcomes?
- Are the expenditures justified and reasonable for the scope of work?
- Does the budget demonstrate a clear and efficient allocation of costs including human resources, necessary audience and market research costs and all other validation process-related costs?

The application that does not meet the above listed criteria will be rejected and the applicant will be notified accordingly. The application with higher scores will be recommended by the evaluation panel for possible grant awarding and subject to available funding.

STEP 3: DUE DILIGENCE

This process will be conducted in parallel with the evaluation process – the Quality Assessment. The Due Diligence will be conducted through the Due Diligence Checklist which will be provided to the applicant by the project team.

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.

The applicants will be informed in writing, by email, on decisions concerning their application.

The Project reserves the right to propose budget changes to maximize budget utilization, ensuring that the principles of value for money and the overall project efficiency are applied. Successful applicants will receive a Grant Agreement. All projects must be completed in accordance with their Grant Agreement.

STEP 4: FINAL NOTIFICATION

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

Call for Application process	Date / Month
Launching of the Call	16 July 2024
Deadline for requesting any clarifications from the Project	25 March 2025
Deadline for submission of applications	24 September 2024 - I cycle 1 April 2025 - II cycle
Notification to rejected applicants on the results of the administrative check (Step 1)	30 September 2024 (for I cycle) 14 April 2025 (for II cycle)
Notification to applicants on the results of the qualitative assessment and due diligence (Step 2 & Step 3)	11 October 2024 (for I cycle) 12 May 2025 (for II cycle)
Grant Agreement Signature	1 November, 2024 (for selected I cycle grantees) 2 June, 2025 (for selected II cycle grantees)

5. VISIBILITY

All project-related visibility activities will be carried out in accordance with the Project Communication Strategy. Grantees will be guided on Project's visibility requirements. Grantees will be required to plan and carry out communication activities in accordance with Project rules and procedures. Each media outlet or team that receives support will be briefly introduced, with a summary of its project and details of its work accomplished during the project period. In addition, partners will also publish interviews and feature stories about the experiences of teams that took part in the program. All of this will be highly useful in terms of raising the profile of transformational projects made possible with the support of the consortium.

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Application Form including budget [LINK](#)