

MEDIA INNOVATION EUROPE 3.0

INFO SESSION — QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

VALIDATION BOOSTER

Q. Can we apply in both calls: the Validation Booster and the Business Innovation Synergizer?

A. Yes. Applicants may submit applications to both the Business Innovation Synergizer and the Validation Booster programmes. However, if selected, they may receive funding under only one of the two grant schemes.

Q. I'm just starting to learn English (and will continue to improve my skills throughout the program), am I eligible to apply?

A. A good command of English is required to participate in the programme, as all sessions, communication and mentoring will be conducted in English. Participants need to be able to actively follow the sessions, communicate with mentors and engage in discussions throughout the programme. Therefore, if you are just starting to learn English, you may find it difficult to fully participate at this stage. We encourage you to apply once you feel comfortable communicating and participating in English.

Q. Does this open call for the Validation Booster accept software projects?

A. Software and technology-based projects can be considered under the call, provided that they are relevant to the media sector and address a clear need or challenge related to media, information, audiences or content. The fact that your software could also be used by non-media users does not necessarily make it ineligible. However, the proposed project should have a clear and relevant application within the media sector and demonstrate potential value for media organisations or media-related users.

Q. Could I apply in partnership with a European media organization as a collaborative project?

A. Partnerships are not allowed for the Validation Booster application. The only exception is if you are applying as an initiative, in which case a collaborative application may be possible.

Q. Is there any flexibility for stateless individuals or organizations operating outside Europe but with strong ties to European media networks?

A. The eligibility criteria require applicants to be based in eligible countries. Unfortunately, there is no flexibility for organisations or individuals based outside the eligible countries, even if they have strong ties to European media networks. REMINDER: Applications are open to all 27 EU member states, as well as Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Iceland, Kosovo, Liechtenstein, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and Ukraine

Q. Is a for-profit media technology company eligible to apply, and would such an applicant be competitive before the jury?

A. Yes, for-profit media technology companies are eligible to apply.

Q. The Validation Booster is described as supporting the validation of early-stage ideas. Would a product that has already been launched commercially be eligible if the validation focuses on a new audience segment or format rather than the core product?

A. Yes. A commercially launched product may still be eligible, provided the proposed project is aimed at validating a new audience segment, format, feature, or other significant innovation. Eligibility depends on whether the activity involves testing and validating a new concept or development that has not yet been sufficiently validated, rather than supporting the routine operation, expansion, or scaling of an existing product.

Q. Could you please confirm whether the awarded grant amount is paid gross or net, and whether beneficiaries are responsible for any applicable taxes or social contributions in their respective countries?

A. The grant is awarded as a lump-sum amount, and beneficiaries are responsible for determining and complying with any tax, social security, or other legal obligations that may apply in their country of residence or operation. In many jurisdictions, grant funding may be exempt from taxation, but applicants are strongly encouraged to seek advice from a qualified local tax professional or relevant authority.

Q. Will the grant be disbursed as a single payment or in installments?

A. There will be two instalments - first in the middle at the project and second at the end of the project after the narrative and financial reports are approved.

Q. Does completing the Validation Booster provide access to follow-on funding opportunities, investor introductions, or additional acceleration programmes?

A. Yes, the strongest teams will be selected to pitch their ideas directly to donors, investors, and other potential funders. They will receive guidance and support throughout the preparation process to help them develop a compelling pitch. We will also work with you to prepare a professional portfolio document presenting your idea, which will be shared with potential investors and funders following the programme.

Q. Can grant funds be used to pay salaries or bonuses to staff journalists, or to provide financial compensation for producing content as part of a new project or new content formats?

A. Yes, grant funds may be budgeted for staff salaries and other personnel costs. Salaries may be allocated to staff members who will be actively involved in the programme and who will be accountable for testing the proposed idea, implementing the planned activities, and delivering the results of the validation process. The costs should therefore be clearly linked to the specific roles, responsibilities, and activities required to test the idea and assess its feasibility, rather than being general or unrelated staff costs. The budget may also include compensation for the production of content for testing of new content formats where these activities form an integral part of the proposed validation process and are carried out by the staff members actively engaged in the programme.

Q. Would it be possible to submit a project focused on the technical modernization of the website?

A. The proposal should go beyond technical upgrades alone and demonstrate how the modernization will enable the applicant to test a specific idea, improve its feasibility, reach or engagement with audiences, and generate measurable results from the validation process.

Q. Can grant funds be used for promoting content on social media, if this is expected to significantly expand the media outlet's audience?

A. The proposal should clearly explain how social media promotion will contribute to the validation of the proposed idea and how increased audience reach will support the validation results.

Q. Can someone apply if they have prior experience as a media developer but are not currently working in the media sector?

A. Yes, they are still eligible to apply. Previous experience as a media developer is relevant and valued, even if the applicant is not currently working in that capacity. We welcome applications from individuals who have a background in media development and can

demonstrate how their past experience is relevant to the proposed idea. Applicants should clearly explain their experience, expertise, and motivation for participating in the programme in their application.

Q. Is participation in the Ideation Hub workshop in Serbia mandatory? I currently live in a different country, and travelling to Serbia for four days would be difficult for me.

A. If selected to join the Ideation Hub programme, participation in the in-person workshop in Serbia is mandatory. The workshop is a core component of the programme, providing participants with intensive training, mentoring, peer learning, and networking opportunities that are essential to the programme experience. To ensure accessibility, all costs associated with attending the workshop, including travel, accommodation, and meals, will be covered by Thomson. Applicants should therefore ensure they are able to participate in person for the full duration of the workshop before applying. If exceptional circumstances arise, these may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Q. Can more than one person from the same media organisation participate in the programme and attend the training sessions, or is only one designated participant allowed?

A. Yes, more than one person from the same media organisation may participate in the online training sessions and activities. However, due to capacity limitations, only one representative per organisation may attend the in-person workshop and other face-to-face programme components. Organisations are therefore encouraged to nominate a single individual who will take primary responsibility for participating in the programme and leading the validation of the idea within their organisation.

Q. Do supporting documents that are issued in Serbian need to be submitted with a certified translation?

A. No. A certified translation is not required. Applicants may submit a regular translation of supporting documents issued in Serbian. The translation should be clear, complete, and sufficiently accurate to allow the information to be properly assessed during the evaluation process.

Q. If I apply as an individual applicant, can I include compensation for my own time spent working on the project under HR costs, or are HR costs limited to employees, freelancers, and external experts?

A. Yes. If you are applying as an individual, you may include compensation for your own time spent working on the project as part of the project budget, provided the costs are directly related to the validation of the idea and are justified and reasonable.

Q. As a freelance software developer, my work for media organisations is not always publicly visible. Would a recommendation letter be sufficient to demonstrate my experience working with a media outlet?

A. Yes. A recommendation letter from a media organisation can be used as evidence of your professional experience, particularly where your contributions are not publicly visible due to the nature of your work. Applicants are encouraged to provide any relevant references, recommendation letters, contracts, or other supporting materials that help verify their experience working with media organisations.

Q: Will the Validation Booster programme be repeated in the future? I am asking this because for one of my ideas, a 2027 programme would be the best.

A. The Validation Booster programme is intended to be offered by Thomson Media at least once a year, subject to the availability of funding. The current Validation Booster programme, for which the call has been launched, will take place from mid-January to mid-June 2027.