



ANNUAL PROGRAM STATEMENT (APS)
USAID Mediji.Inovacije Activity

Funding Opportunity Title:	<i>Mediji.Inovacije</i> Support
Announcement Type:	Annual Program Statement
Funding Opportunity Number:	APS-MIA-2023-01
Issuance Date:	July 20, 2023
Questions for First Round of Evaluations Due By:	Questions are accepted on a rolling basis
Deadline for Submission of Concept Papers:	May 31, 2024
Final Closing Date:	June 30, 2024
Submit Concept Papers to:	grants.mi@irex.org

The purpose of this Annual Program Statement (APS) is to solicit applications for funding. The Media Innovation Activity (aka *Mediji.Inovacije*), funded by United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Swedish International Cooperation Agency (SIDA), seeks to support innovative business ideas, focused on growth and impact, that will increase prospects of business success and contribute to long-term sustainability of media and media adjacent organizations.

Key information about the APS:

- The geographic focus under consideration includes the following: **Serbia**
- No projected funding ceiling for individual projects;
- Maximum grants anticipated to be awarded: 15
- APS competition duration: 12 months, on a rolling basis:
- All of the available funds for this APS may be allocated early on in the program;
- IREX/*Mediji.Inovacije* may choose to fully fund, partially fund or incrementally fund the selected application(s).
- The number of awards and amount of available funding is subject to change and IREX/*Mediji.Inovacije* reserves the right to make no awards as a result of this APS.

The goal of *Mediji.Inovacije* is to improve the economic sustainability and business development of Serbian digital media, information, and communications sector stakeholders that support public access to accurate and relevant information. Under this APS, potential digital media, information and communications sector actors include, but are not limited to: entities that provide information, IT services, content analytics, audience measurement, establishment of new digital platforms, cybersecurity, or other services that can facilitate public access to fair and relevant information, critical thinking or digital literacy skills necessary to navigate and participate in the 21st century information landscape (hereinafter, Beneficiaries).

This APS seeks applicants to propose creative and effective approaches that will address the *Mediji.Inovacije* goal and improve their capacities, resilience, contributing to tangible and measurable results in the following areas:

1. Business and technological development;
2. Increasing market share (for example, increased audience reach, new customers/users, increased revenue)
3. Attracting finance or leveraging third-party investments.

Applicants may propose a range of initiatives or scale up small projects that have demonstrated potential for success. Awardees will be expected to share data, evaluation results and key lessons, and disseminate periodic activities and outcomes with the broader community. Awardees will provide information on the potential level of cost share they can provide, for example utilizing their own facilities/equipment, time and value of personnel working directly on the project, down payments on finance, or own funds invested. In the case of for-profit organizations, the amount of profit foregone on the grant/activity can be included in the cost share calculation.

Applications outside the geographic focus will not be considered. Applicants must demonstrate success in managing cultural and political considerations in the proposed focus country or region as well as success in addressing *Mediji.Inovacije* development objectives.

SECTION I - FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Description of the Proposed Program

Background

Mediji.Inovacije activities work to improve the economic sustainability and business development of Serbian digital media, information, and communications sector stakeholders that support public access to fair, accurate, and relevant information. The program does this by supporting the realization of business and technological development and improving the beneficiary's capacities to access finance and secure commercial investment.

The following is an overall description of the *Mediji.Inovacije* grants program, and specific objectives under each component:

Catalyzation Grants: This is a small grants program that enables beneficiaries to focus on making the changes and absorbing the support offered through M.I technical assistance. This small-grant program provides resources to allow recipients to drive change and engage in new activities focused on improvement, growth and impact. Grant disbursements will be tied to clear milestones so that payments are progressive, based on progress along an agreed development plan.

Incentivization Grants: These grants are designed to support beneficiaries further develop their improvement and growth concepts and identify viable partners, third-party funders for grants, and/or sources of finance or investment. Grants will support the achievement of a set of objectives and key performance indicators (KPIs) and will finance testing and implementation of new business and marketing models.

Mediji.Inovacije will assess the best mechanism to use for funding for each individual application.

Applicants could be supported by grants and/or technical assistance and expert support. Themes of grant-supported projects could include, for example, but are not limited to the following. Please feel free to propose projects that can contribute to the growth and sustainability of your business:

- *Adoption of new technologies, products and services:* Grants in this category may finance technologies, products and services via national/international ICT or other technology companies toward quantifiable improvement in market share or revenue generation. Examples include: a local media app that combines news, service, and event information, filling a gap in the market and providing new opportunities for further partnership and revenue generation; or a partnership between an existing local media outlet and a retailer or service provider digital platform to bring new advertising and cross-marketing opportunities.
- *Access to finance/investment matchmaking.* Utilizing local and regional experts, grants in this category will help beneficiaries determine the most appropriate types and sources of funding/financing, including commercial loans and leases, equity financing, and/or strategic partnerships, and assist them with the application process. *Mediji.Inovacije* will mentor promising partnerships and enable beneficiaries through the grant program to meet lender or investor needs.
- *Network development.* These grants will assist and encourage media/digital media companies to develop regional and international ties with financiers, investors, and strategic partners to increase business opportunities and improve market share or revenue. Grants in this category could finance beneficiary participation at regional and international finance, investment, entrepreneurship, and trade/sectoral events and fairs. Such events can help beneficiaries identify new commercial opportunities, strategic partnerships, and/or potential finance/investment.

B. Application Process

Mediji.Inovacije will review candidates for grants using a two-stage process.

Applicants must first submit a concept paper of no more than 5 pages to *Mediji.Inovacije*. Concept papers must be filled in using a template that can be found on the [IREX *Mediji.Inovacije*](https://irex.org/sites/default/files/IREX%20Mediji.Inovacije%20Concept%20Paper%20Template.docx) page and meet the identified needs of this solicitation.

Direct download of the Concept Paper template:

<https://irex.org/sites/default/files/IREX%20Mediji.Inovacije%20Concept%20Paper%20Template.docx>.

Any questions during the APS process should be sent to : grants.mi@irex.org.

If a concept paper is approved, *Mediji.Inovacije* will contact applicants and provide instructions and templates to complete an application.

Please note the following:

Do not submit a full proposal unless requested by *Mediji.Inovacije*. Only upon receipt of positive feedback on the concept paper is the applicant requested to assemble a full proposal for *Mediji.Inovacije* consideration, based on instructions provided at that time.

C. Concept Paper

In the first stage, all interested applicants are required to submit a short technical concept paper of no longer than 5 pages that is specific and concise. The concept paper should demonstrate the applicant's capabilities and expertise with respect to achieving the goals of this program.

Concept papers will be reviewed in terms of responsiveness to the APS, appropriateness of subject matter, and creativity. Applicants are encouraged to demonstrate how their proposed work will contribute to *Mediji.Inovacije* objectives as noted in concept paper template and within the geographical region of Serbia.

Concept note Instructions:

1. Cover Page (no more than one page)
 - a. The APS number.
 - b. Address of the organization/applicant
 - c. Type of the organization¹ (e.g., for-profit, non-profit, etc.)
 - d. Lead contact point
2. Technical approach. This section should address the program summary and selected objectives and should include:
 - a. Organization Background
 - b. Problem Description
 - c. Method of approach: please describe your suggested solution to the problem formulated in (2b), including relevant (anticipated) audience engagement, anticipated results and indicators for success; financial metrics you will use to measure the viability of the business model; outlook for financial sustainability.
3. Proposed Total costs:
 - a. Brief cost breakdown of proposed estimated cost.

Concept notes will be reviewed in terms of responsiveness to this APS, appropriateness of subject matter, and creativity.

D. Unique Entity Identifier Number

All entities receiving US Government funds are required to have a Unique Entity Number (UEI). As this process might require some time, any applicant organizations that do not already possess a UEI are strongly encouraged to apply for UEI at the concept note stage.

[Here](#) you can find instruction for UEI registration.

E. Administration of Award

For awards to non-U.S. organizations that are Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), USAID Standard Provisions for non-U.S. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) would apply. For awards to non-US organizations that are businesses, USAID Standard Provisions for Businesses would apply.

Applicants may obtain copies of the referenced material at the following websites:

- Standard Provisions for Non-U.S., Nongovernmental Recipients:

www.usaid.gov/sites/default/agency-policy/303.pdf

- Standard Provisions for Non-US Businesses:

<https://www.usaid.gov/about-us/agency-policy/series-300/references-chapter/303maa>

SECTION II – CONCEPT PAPER REVIEW INFORMATION

A. Evaluation Criteria for Concept Paper

Concept papers will be reviewed in terms of responsiveness to the APS, appropriateness of subject matter, clarity and creativeness. Applicants are encouraged to demonstrate how their proposed work will implement innovative business ideas focused on growth and impact that will increase long-term prospects for business success and long-term sustainability for their media and/or media adjacent organizations.

Mediji.Inovacije encourages applicants to propose concept papers that include development plans that are incentivized. For example, incentivization could involve providing additional funding or resources to the grantee for exceeding performance benchmarks or anticipated outcomes. The *Mediji.Inovacije* team will provide guidance in this regard.

To foster resilience and sustainability, *Mediji.Inovacije* will motivate potential grantees to incorporate Access to Finance (A2F) elements into their proposals. As part of this initiative, grantees are expected to:

- Engage with and utilize commercial financing options/solutions, where feasible;
- Pursue additional funding by submitting applications to parties interested in providing external financing.

SECTION III - AWARD INFORMATION

A. Anticipated Start Date of this Award and Performance Period

Mediji.Inovacije anticipates the start date upon award with a performance period of up to 12 months with possibility to extend.

B. Award Type

Mediji.Inovacije anticipates awarding up to 15 grants (hereafter called Agreement) to fund successful applications submitted in response to this APS.

SECTION IV- ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Types of Entities that May Apply

Registered non-U.S. non-governmental organizations and for-profit businesses may apply. For-profit businesses must be willing to forego profit on the grant funding (no profit will be included in the grant amount).

This APS is issued as a public notice to ensure that all interested and qualified organizations have a fair opportunity to submit applications for funding. Eligible organizations include:

- Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)
- Community Based Organizations (CBOs)
- Private Enterprises
- Professional Associations
- Foundations and Associations

B. Cost Share

Applicants are encouraged to contribute resources from their own private or local sources for the implementation of this program where feasible. Winning applicants will be required to report on their cost share contributions, for example, cost share can include things like the use of facilities/equipment for the project, time and value of personnel working directly on the project, down payments on finance, or own funds used on the project. In the case of for-profit organizations, the amount of profit foregone on the grant/activity can be included in the cost share calculation.

SECTION V - PROJECT CONTACTS

Any prospective applicant desiring an explanation or interpretation of this APS must request it in writing. A written reply will be provided to all prospective applicants before the submission of their applications. Oral explanations or instructions given before or after award of a grant will not be binding. Any information given to a prospective applicant concerning this APS will be furnished promptly to all other prospective applicants as an amendment of this APS, if that information is necessary in submitting applications or if the lack of it would be prejudicial to any other prospective applicants.

SECTION VI - OTHER INFORMATION

Issuance of this APS does not constitute an award or commitment on the part of IREX, nor does it commit *Mediji.Inovacije* to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application, which are the responsibility of the applicant.

IREX reserves the right to fund, in part or in full, any or none of the applications submitted. Further, IREX reserves the right to make no awards as a result of this APS.

Environmental Considerations: Activities supported by *Mediji.Inovacije* will not support or engage in construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, or renovation work. *Mediji.Inovacije* will also not engage in actions that normally have a significant impact on the environment as defined by 22CFR216.2 (d):

- i. Programs of river basin development;
- ii. Irrigation and water management;
- iii. Agricultural land leveling;
- iv. Drainage projects;
- v. Large scale agricultural mechanization;
- vi. Resettlement projects;
- vii. New land development;
- viii. Penetration road building and road improvement;
- ix. Powerplants;
- x. Industrial plants; and
- xi. Potable water and sewerage projects

In addition, *Mediji.Inovacije* will not support activities that:

- Support project preparation, project feasibility studies, engineering design for activities listed in §216.2(d)(I);
- Affect endangered species;
- Provide support to extractive industries (e.g. mining and quarrying);
- Promote timber harvesting;

- Lead to construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, or renovation work;
- Support agro-processing or industrial enterprises;
- Provide support for regulatory permitting;
- Lead to privatization of industrial facilities or infrastructure with heavily polluted property;
- Assist the procurement (including payment in kind, donations, guarantees of credit) or use (including handling, transport, fuel for transport, storage, mixing, loading, application, clean-up of spray equipment, and disposal) of pesticides or activities involving procurement, transport, use, storage, or disposal of toxic materials--pesticides cover all insecticides, fungicides, rodenticides, etc. covered under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act; and/or
- Procure or use genetically modified organisms.

Pursuant to 2 CFR 200.216 procurement of certain telecommunications and video surveillance services or equipment is prohibited.

Funds provided under this APS:

- Shall not be used to finance any of the following commodities as per ADS 312 Eligibility of Commodities:
- **Ineligible Commodities:** Military equipment, surveillance equipment, commodities or equipment for the support of police or other law enforcement activities, abortion equipment and services, luxury goods, gambling equipment, weather modification equipment.
- **Restricted commodities include** Agricultural commodities, motor vehicles, pharmaceuticals, contraceptives and condoms, pesticides, used equipment, fertilizer.
- **Others:** Purchases of goods or services restricted or prohibited under the prevailing USAID source and nationality and other regulations found under ADS 310 or from countries and suppliers as may be identified by USAID's consolidated list of debarred, suspended, or ineligible contractors at <http://www.sam.gov/>.
- Any purchases or activities deemed unnecessary to successfully complete the activity, including any Subawardee headquarters expenses that are not directly linked to the implementation of the proposed project.
- Previous obligations and/or bad debts.
- Fines and /or penalties.
- Other costs unallowable under USAID and/or federal regulations such as FAR 31.2 Cost Principles for Commercial Organization.