



New Business Model Grants

USAID Media Program intends to support innovative media actors and journalistic start-ups. USAID Media Program will provide grants and managerial guidance for initiatives which aim to support media and information outlets with new, sustainable approaches and business models for reaching communities and audiences.

As consumption of news and current events content is constantly evolving and audiences steadily migrating from single to multi-platform and social media domains, the New Business Model Grants Program seeks to provide modest financing to new, more agile actors to address current shifts in Georgia's media landscape. The grants are intended to trigger and encourage experimentation with new, sustainable journalistic models and unlock potential of entrepreneurial journalism. In addition to funding support, USAID Media Program will seek international models and lessons to bring to the applicant's initiative.

USAID Media Program encourages creative, out-of-box ideas and approaches to digital journalism and storytelling. Illustrative themes could include:

Developing media content (output) to increase engagement with targeted and specific audiences. Examples of these models could include strengthening engagement with audiences based on specific demographic (i.e. youth engagement), geographic (i.e. local/community media), or interest (youth issues, student media, etc.).

Adopting new technologies: New technologies grants would financially support technology solutions for products and services that increase the potential market share or revenue generation for a content creator. Examples could include:

- Developing a local media platform that combines news, service, and event information that fills a gap in the market and provides new opportunities for further partnership and revenue generation
- Developing a partnership between an existing local media outlet and a retailer or digital platform service provider to introduce new advertising and cross-marketing opportunities
- Launching of a new media platforms or products (such as a podcast) that are appropriate for the Georgian market
- Other innovative ideas that introduce technology-based solutions to challenges facing media.

Key information

- Estimated funding for individual projects: up to \$6,000
- Maximum sub-grants to be awarded in this round: 3
- Grant duration: 4 months
- USAID Media Program may choose to fund selected application(s) fully or incrementally.

Selection Process

USAID Media Program will review candidates for the grants using a two-stage process.

Applicants must first submit a short concept note, describing their business idea in brief. Concept notes must be filled in using the attached template.

If a concept note is approved, USAID Media Program will contact applicants and provide instructions and templates to complete an application. Applicants should expect feedback that will help them clarify and improve their ideas.

Criteria for approval:

- Thoughtful consideration and understanding of the target audience: groups and/or communities that applicant intends to reach, engage, and/or serve.
- Clarity and creativeness of the proposal: what is your initiative offering to the audience?
- Clear value created by initiative. Illustrative examples of “value” might be:
 - Does the initiative open new ways for reaching audiences?
 - Is your initiative lead to more convenient or efficient access for audiences?
 - Does your initiative improve the audience experience?
 - Does your initiative engage the target audience in news gathering and content production?
 - Or other value identified by the applicant that the program agrees is suitable to this grant.
- What gap in Georgia’s news/media/information landscape does the applicant plan to address?
- Commitment to regular coaching sessions by IREX
- Does the approach include a feasible revenue generation plan?
- Willingness to provide “lessons learned” meetings/workshop to peers in Georgia following the launch of the initiative

Eligibility

Private enterprises, individual content creators, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Community Based Organizations (CBOs), Private Enterprises, Professional Associations, Foundations and Associations.

**ANNUAL PROGRAM STATEMENT (APS)
for USAID Georgian Media Program**

Funding opportunity title:

New Business Model Grants

Announcement type:

Annual Program Statement

Funding opportunity number:

APS 2023-04

Issuance date: June 13, 2023

Questions for first round of evaluations due by: N/A; questions accepted any time

Deadline for submission of concept notes: July 13, 2023

Final closing date: June 12, 2024

Submit concept notes to: contact.mp.ge@irex.org

Reference: Issued under an International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX) USAID
COAG Number 72011422CA000041

The purpose of this Annual Program Statement (APS) is to solicit applications for funding. USAID Media Program is seeking Concept notes first and then applications from prospective partners to support innovative business ideas and initiatives that will contribute to long-term sustainability of media actors in Georgia.

This APS aims to cultivate creative and effective approaches in Georgian media environment that will contribute to the emergence and strengthening of civically relevant, new, and self-sustainable sources of information.

Applicants may choose to receive funding for new initiatives or scale up small projects that have potential for success. Awardees will be expected to share data and evaluation results and key lessons and disseminate periodic activities and outcomes with the broader community.

SECTION I - FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Description of the Proposed Program

Background

The USAID Media Program in Georgia is a five-year program funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by IREX. The program envisions a vibrant, resilient, networked media sector that provides Georgia's citizens and diverse communities with the civically relevant, fact-based independent information they need to build a more just, prosperous, and inclusive society.

Program Objectives:

1. Preserve and strengthen an enabling environment that fosters press freedom and access to information
2. Increase the availability of civically relevant, fact-based, independent sources of information

Under Objective 2, the USAID Media Program intends to support initiatives addressing economic sustainability and business development efforts of various media actors.

B. Application Process

The USAID Media Program will review candidates for subawards using a two-stage process.

Applicants must first submit a concept note. Concept notes must be filled in using the attached template.

If a concept note is approved, the USAID Media Program 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 the USAID Media Program. Only upon receipt of positive feedback on the concept note, the applicant will be requested to assemble a full proposal for USAID Media Program, based on instructions provided by IREX at that time.

C. Concept note

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

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. Application Process

If a concept note is approved, USAID Media Program will contact applicants and provide instructions and templates to complete an application.

E. Administration of Award <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/agency-policy/303mab.pdf>

F. Awards to U.S. organizations will be administered in accordance with [2 CFR 200](#), [2 CFR 700](#), USAID Standard Provisions for U.S. Nongovernmental Organizations. For non-U.S. organizations, USAID Standard Provisions for non-U.S. Non-Governmental Organizations would apply.

G. Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) will be provided during application process.

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

¹ Group of individuals may apply, but if the idea will be selected for funding organization will be asked to register and form a legal entity

o Standard Provisions for Non-U.S., Nongovernmental Recipients:
<http://usaid.gov/policy/ads/300/303mab.pdf>

SECTION II - AWARD INFORMATION

The points of contact for this APS and any questions during the APS process are:

All technical questions should be sent to Nick Tabatadze NTabatadze@irex.org. General questions should be submitted to the e-mail listed on the cover page.

Any prospective applicant desiring an explanation or interpretation of this APS must request it in writing by the date listed on the cover page to allow a reply to reach all prospective applicants before the submission of their applications. Oral explanations or instructions given before award of a sub-award 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 thereof would be prejudicial to any other prospective applicants.

SECTION III - AWARD INFORMATION

A. Evaluation Criteria for Concept note

Concept notes 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.

SECTION IV- ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Types of Entities that May Apply

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

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

SECTION V – OTHER INFORMATION

Issuance of this APS does not constitute an award or commitment on the part of IREX, nor does it commit USAID Media Program or IREX to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application. Issuance of this APS does not constitute an award or commitment on the part of IREX, nor does it commit USAID Media Program to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application.

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

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 referenced 2 CFR 200 Subpart E Cost Principles and FAR 31.2 Cost Principles for Commercial Organization.

Environmental Considerations: Activities supported by the USAID Media Program will not support or engage in construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, or renovation work. The USAID Media Program 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, the USAID Media Program will not support activities that:

- Support project preparation, project feasibility studies, engineering design for activities listed in §216.2(d)(1);
- 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.