FUNDING REQUEST

1. Context

This document describes the framework within which IMI can support research and innovation projects. In particular, it explains the criteria, requirements, submission guidelines and evaluation process for such projects. For more information on potential opportunities for such projects, please visit the dedicated page on our website[1].

2. Project characteristics

2.1 Types of projects expected

IMI supports the following types of projects:

- Applied and experimental research projects that benefit media organizations by providing, for example, prototypes of possible solutions, tools or practical approaches that can be tested, integrated into their workflows or implemented on their digital platforms.

- Multidisciplinary research projects covering professional practices, narratives, economic issues, audiences, etc.

- Exploratory research projects, which may involve some risk taking and which could serve as a basis for the development of more applied projects.

In all cases, collaboration with a media organization that is a member of IMI is expected at all stages of the project to contribute to its realization.

In addition, projects should build on the knowledge of initiatives, tools or experiences already carried out elsewhere, both in Switzerland and internationally. Project coordinators are invited to clarify this aspect in the application document (state-of-the-art, benchmarks, best practices, etc.) and, if possible, to contact potential international partners beforehand.

2.2 Project duration, budget and start date

IMI will only consider grant applications that meet the following criteria:

- Projects can have different durations depending on their intended outcome:
  - Short-term projects: usually as a proof of concept for new approaches, methods or application ideas over a period of a few months.
  - Medium-term projects: typically over a 12-month period to reach a first tangible result, such as a prototype or MVP.
  - Longer-term projects: more ambitious research, generally over a maximum of 24 months, addressing specific priority issues motivated by one or more media organizations involved in the project. For projects with a duration of 24 months or more, a mid-term evaluation by the IMI

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[1] https://www.media-initiative.ch/direct-financing/

Scientific Committee will decide whether the project can continue or not, depending on the fulfillment of the intermediate deliverables (see 3.2).

- In principle, the grant allocated to each project should not exceed CHF 120,000 per year, excluding overhead costs.

- The grant is primarily intended to cover salaries related to scientific research (post-docs, scientific collaborators, etc.), to which some operating costs may be added, as well as overhead costs according to the rules of the project coordinator's institution. The budget outline must be prepared using the template provided in Appendix 1 and must reflect the planned collaborations.

- The grant must be administered by the project coordinator, who is affiliated with an institution that is a member of IMI (see 3.1), and who may allocate a portion of the grant to potential academic, media or industry partners.

- The budget may therefore include contributions by the media partner(s) to the project that go beyond sharing expertise and monitoring the project.

- Obtaining additional external funding (including in-kind contributions) to support a project is strongly encouraged. In this case, the project coordinator must first discuss the matter with IMI, in particular on issues related to intellectual property and access to results.

- In principle, projects must start no later than 3 months after the decision by IMI to award a grant (see 5.3).

3. Project terms and conditions

3.1 Project participation guidelines

In our efforts to promote applied research, we will consider projects based on the following guidelines:

- Each project must involve at least one academic institution that is a member of IMI (EPFL, University of Geneva, University of Lausanne, University of Neuchâtel, HES-SO Valais-Wallis) and must be supervised by a project coordinator affiliated to one of these institutions.

- As part of a project, collaboration between the academic and media sectors is expected through the participation of at least one media organization, preferably an IMI member (part of the SRG SSR Group at the time of writing), with which the coordinator must establish a partnership.

- A project may also be submitted by one or more media organizations that are members of IMI, in joint coordination with an academic institution.

- Project coordinators are encouraged to establish these partnerships before submitting a project proposal (see 4). In addition, coordinators are invited to contact IMI first to help identify possible partners.

- Collaborations with institutions and organizations outside of IMI (including international collaborations) are encouraged, whether with a university, media company or industry partner.

- There is no limit to the number of projects submitted by institutions or individuals.

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3.2   Commitments of the project coordinator and of IMI

Each project coordinator agrees to:

- Provide mid-term financial and scientific reports to be reviewed by the IMI Scientific Committee according to the terms of the Grant Agreement (see 3.3). For projects with a duration of 24 months or more, the mid-term evaluation will in particular decide whether the project can be continued or not, depending on the fulfillment of the intermediate deliverables. The final financial and scientific reports must be submitted to IMI no later than 2 months after the end of the project. The financial report must describe how the allocated funds have been used. The scientific report must describe in particular the achievements and results of the project as well as possible perspectives for its continuation (further funding round, incubation, etc.).
- Participate in events showcasing the results of IMI-funded projects.
- Promote open access to project results, in particular to any scientific publications, and possibly also to some technical developments (source code, datasets, etc.).
- Offer any IMI member wishing to pursue the project the opportunity to do so bilaterally under terms and conditions to be agreed in due course.

IMI agrees to:

- Ensure that each project coordinator and each project participant remains the sole owner of the results obtained during the execution of the project and retains all intellectual property and exploitation rights associated therewith.
- Ensure that each researcher and each academic institution involved in the project has complete freedom to research, teach, and publish.
- Ensure that each media organization involved in the project has complete freedom of information and editorial independence.

3.3   Grant Agreement

Each project coordinator, acting through their respective institution, as well as each project participant receiving part of the grant, if any, will be required to sign a Grant Agreement before receiving any funding from IMI. This agreement will specify, among other things, the schedule of payments, the reports to be submitted, the intellectual property rights and the conditions for exploiting the results.

4.   Submission of a project proposal

Submitting a grant application to IMI generally involves two steps. First, a pre-proposal outlining the idea of the project in relation to the state-of-the-art is submitted. If the pre-proposal is short-listed, the project coordinator will be invited to submit a full proposal as described below. However, project coordinators may choose to directly submit a full proposal to IMI for evaluation.

4.1   Pre-proposal (1 to 3 pages)

Pre-proposals of 1 to 3 pages, written in English or French, must be submitted by email to projects@media-initiative.ch, preferably after an initial contact with IMI (see 6) for a first discussion, and must include:

1.   The title of the project.

2. A general description of the project, with particular emphasis on the state-of-the-art and expected results.

3. The benefits that IMI members can expect (scientific innovation and media use case).

4. An initial estimate of the requested budget and project timeline.

5. An overview of the partners involved, if known, or a description of the partners that are needed and that IMI can help identify.

4.2   Full proposal (up to 12 pages)

Full proposals of up to 12 pages, written in English or French, must be submitted by email to projects@media-initiative.ch and must include:

1. The title of the project.

2. A summary of the project (about 300 words) and keywords (about 6).

3. A full description of the project: state-of-the-art, goals, methods and expected results.

4. Benefits to academic research:
    a. How will the proposed project benefit academic research?
    b. A description of the multidisciplinary dimension of the project.

5. Innovation for media organizations:
    a. How will the proposed project benefit the media sector?
    b. What are the expected practical benefits for the media partner(s) involved in the project (usability), and more generally for all media organizations that are members of IMI (replicability, sustainability)?

6. The details of the deliverables of the project (design and implementation of tools, scientific publications, etc.).

7. The timetable for the project and the main steps.

8. A detailed budget outline (indicating whether the funding is full or partial and what other sources of funding are involved, if any) using the template provided in Appendix 1. The budget outline must also reflect the planned collaborations.

9. A description of the societal impact of the project.

10. A presentation of the project coordinator(s) (please include CVs with the submission), as well as the names, positions and contributions to the project of academic, media and industry partners.

11. An evaluation of the tasks to be performed by the media organization(s) involved in the project to assess the workload required.

12. A letter of support from each media organization involved in the project, describing the goals they seek to achieve through the partnership.

13. Any additional comments you would like to share with the reviewers (intellectual property rights, patent applications, etc.).

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5. Evaluation process, criteria and timetable

5.1 Evaluation process

Project proposals submitted to IMI are evaluated by the IMI Scientific Committee, which makes recommendations to the IMI Board on which projects to fund. The IMI Director (see 6) is available to project coordinators at all stages of the submission process to answer questions and help establish the necessary collaborations and partnerships.

5.2 Evaluation criteria

The main evaluation criteria are as follows:

- Relevance to one of our priority topics as described on our website[2].
- Collaboration between the academic, media and industrial sectors.
- Innovation potential for academic research (project quality and scientific relevance).
- Multidisciplinary character of the project.
- Innovation and exploitation potential for the media sector.
- Benefits for IMI members (usability, replicability, sustainability).
- Expertise of the project coordinator(s) and partners involved.
- Societal impact of the project.
- Objectives (realistic).
- Timetable (manageable).
- Budget (reasonable).

5.3 Evaluation timetable

In general, grant applications can be submitted at any time, preferably after an initial contact with IMI (see 6) for a first discussion. The evaluation process usually takes up to 3 months, after which IMI will contact each project coordinator by email to inform them of the decision made by the IMI Board. In principle, projects must start no later than 3 months after IMI's decision to award a grant.

6 Contact for all inquiries

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[2] https://www.media-initiative.ch/get-support/

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7 Appendix 1: project budget template

Direct costs

Salary costs

Title, first name, last name	Institution / organization	Project role[3]	Contribution (%)	Duration (months)	Salary cost[4]

Operating costs

Description	Operating cost[5]
Research / field costs	
Web hosting / computation costs	
Publication / dissemination costs	
Travel costs	
Consultant / subcontractor fees	
Other operating costs	

Total direct costs (A)	

Indirect costs

Overhead costs

Projects carried out by an academic institution may be subject to overhead costs according to the rules established by that institution. These cover part of the indirect costs (in particular infrastructure and management costs) associated with the research activities. If several institutions collaborate on a project, each institution may claim its overhead costs separately based on the funding received.

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[3] Post-doc, PhD student, scientific collaborator, assistant, student, developer, etc.

[4] Including social contributions.

[5] If not explicitly stated in the project proposal, the project coordinator is asked to describe and justify each of these costs.

Total direct costs affected	Overhead rate (%)	Overhead cost

Total indirect costs (B)	

Total funding requested (A + B)	

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www.media-initiative.ch