



CALL FOR PROJECTS 2023

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF MEDIA AND SOCIETY: MULTIDISCIPLINARY PROJECTS ON IMMERSIVE AND CONNECTED EXPERIENCES AND THE OPEN WEB

1. Background and objectives

At a time when our physical and digital lives seem to be merging more seamlessly than ever before, driven by rapid technological advances combined with our changing behaviors, IMI seeks to explore the role and implications for the media, for journalists and, more broadly, for society. In doing so, we want to consider new immersive or virtual experiences, as well as the underlying distributed and open infrastructures that are being designed to support the evolution of the web. This theme is highly user-centric and aims to deliver value to users who want to be informed, entertained and connected, while contributing to the proper functioning of our democracy. The breadth of the opportunities and challenges at stake requires interdisciplinary approaches that bring together the media sector, the humanities and social sciences, and the engineering sciences in a quest to explore the future of media and digital society through collaboration between professional and academic stakeholders.

By supporting research projects on this theme, IMI encourages an experimental approach with original results that can respond to specific or local needs. At the same time, by focusing on the user, such results are meant to be as tangible as possible in order to serve as demonstrations for the media and the public.

2 Use cases

IMI welcomes all research proposals that fall within the context described above (1) and that meet the requirements outlined briefly below (3) and in more detail in the "Funding Request" document available on our website¹. Examples of media or society use cases include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Designing immersive, user-centric experiences that connect media brands and their audiences. Project proposals should enhance dialogue and engagement between the public and the media by focusing on evolving and emerging user needs, for example, through the creation of virtual meeting spaces, shared connected experiences, frictionless and facilitated forms of exchange, common frameworks for co-creation and information sharing.
- Exploring the technologies and understanding the implications of projecting one's identity into an immersive or virtual world as an avatar, especially in the context of journalism. The relationship between a person's identity in the physical world and the one they project online. The role and responsibilities of a virtual journalist, reporter or news anchor in a virtual world. The relationship between user avatars and virtual instances of media.
- Synthetic media, including AI-generated content, as a means to enrich immersive experiences and connected worlds, but also to provide users with better and more personalized media-related content and services online. Preventing synthetic media from being used to spread misinformation and disinformation.

¹ <https://bit.ly/imi-funding>

- Exploring new revenue models based on decentralization, blockchain technologies and token-based economics, such as applying cryptocurrencies to media (content creator remuneration, advertising, subscriptions, micropayments) or diversifying revenue streams while increasing audience engagement with NFTs. Studying how such technologies will change the way goods and services, including media content, are purchased and consumed online.
- Using blockchain-based applications to improve public trust in the media, for example by tracing the origin of online content and allowing users to better identify quality information.
- Addressing the legal, ethical and social issues related to this theme. Project proposals should incorporate one or more of these dimensions where possible, or choose to explore them as a central research question in their own right.

3 General requirements

The following is a general overview of the requirements for applying to the IMI Research Grant. For further guidance, please refer to the full document available on our website.

3.1 Eligibility

Open primarily to academic institutions and media organizations affiliated with IMI, but third parties may also apply, in which case they are encouraged to seek collaboration with IMI members.

3.2 Project length

From a few months to up to 24 months.

3.3 Grant amount

Generally up to CHF 120,000 per year (excluding overhead costs).

3.4 Media partnership

A media organization must be involved in each project, either by contributing or at least by endorsing it.

In all cases, the IMI Director (see 6) is available to help establish such collaborations or partnerships.

4 Timetable and deadlines

The main steps and deadlines for this call for projects are listed below.

- March 15: launch of the call for projects.
- May 16: speed dating workshop² in Lausanne for catalyzing ideas and meeting project partners.
- May 31: deadline for submitting pre-proposals (1 to 3 pages) to present the idea to IMI in relation to the state-of-the-art.
- June 15: end of pre-proposal reviews by the IMI Scientific Committee. Short-listed projects will be invited to submit a full project proposal.

² <https://www.media-initiative.ch/imi-annual-event-2023/>



- July 15: deadline for submitting full proposals (up to 12 pages).
- Fall: end of full proposal reviews by the IMI Scientific Committee and approval of awarded grants by the IMI Board.

5 About IMI

IMI is a multidisciplinary membership organization, housed at EPFL, that brings together leading scientific institutions and public and private media companies. Our mission is to act as an interface between academia and the media and mediatech sector. In this way, we help media companies to innovate and adapt as they go digital. At the same time, we advance academic research in all related fields, both through information technology and in relation to human and social sciences. Ultimately, we work to ensure the diversity and quality of media in our democratic society.

To this end, our founding members which are EPFL, Ringier AG, SRG SSR and Triangle Azur—a cooperation network between the Universities of Geneva, Lausanne and Neuchâtel—as well as our affiliate members such as HES-SO Valais-Wallis, maintain an innovation support fund with an annual budget of approximately CHF 650,000 to invest in research and innovation projects. Finally, we remain open to all private and public organizations in Switzerland and abroad that wish to join and are active in the relevant fields.



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