



IMI Call for Projects

Helping media build stronger ties with the public and enhance its engagement

1. Context and goals

1.1 Overview

Most media organizations ask themselves the question of their audience renewal. They also wonder how to create a strong sense of trust with their community. They are aware that the long-standing asymmetric relationship between an “emitting” media and “receiving” audiences is no longer relevant, or is no longer perceived as such by generations born after the emergence of the web who are seeking a real dialogue. Media outlets are opening their doors, showing more transparency and devising editorial and economic models that foster greater mutual engagement between them and the public.

At a time when mistrust is growing towards the major American platforms, which have been the most effective in offering a place for the general public to express themselves, media organizations have a role to play in providing a relevant alternative to Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, etc. How to better adapt your media offering to your audience? How to establish a dialogue with your community? How to stimulate ideas and open up newsrooms? What business models can be developed for an “open” media and how can we think about the viability of these new models? What technological tools can be used to encourage the relationship between the media and the public? What is the social role of a media positioned in this way?

With this call for projects, the IMI intends to defend the principle of applied research allowing for media partners to carry on their digital transformation and their quest for sustainable solutions, and for scientific institutions to pursue novel research in their domains.

1.2 Priorities

The IMI encourages the submission of any applied research project falling under the topic outlined in the overview (1.1), corresponding to the types of research project expected (1.3) and corresponding to the criteria and conditions (1.4 et 2). While they are by no means exclusive, the following priority topics are of particular interest:

- **Understand the audience more clearly** (audiences and analytics measurement, data mining, qualitative studies, detection of weak discussion signals, etc.).
- **Leverage new technologies** to better meet public expectations (personalization, content recommendation, automated writing, automatic video creation, etc.).

- Evolve traditional **business models** to increase public adoption and stimulate their participation (micropayment, alternative monetization, crowdfunding, etc.).
- Consider the **sustainability and economic viability** of models involving public engagement and participation to produce quality information.
- Ensure **accessibility to the media**, to all audiences, while adapting to new ways in which audiences consume information (user experience, interface design, accessibility, etc.).
- Explore **formats and narratives** that promote interactivity with the public (conversational interfaces, connected objects, interactive narratives, immersive formats, gamification, etc.).
- Promote **ways for the media to be transparent and committed** to their audiences (evaluation of existing solutions and experimentation): initiatives promoting dialogue (e.g. Info Verso, Hyperlien), meetups, open newsrooms, etc.
- Rethink the **modalities of public participation** (comments section, collaborative survey, crowdsourcing, etc.).
- Study the issue of trust in the media within the **multilingual context of Switzerland** and propose solutions to strengthen engagement at the national rather than regional level.

1.3 Types of projects desired

The IMI supports the following types of projects:

- Applied and experimental projects beneficial to media organizations, by offering, for example, prototypes for possible solutions, tools, or practical approaches which could be tested and integrated into their workflow and implemented on their digital platforms.
- Multidisciplinary research projects covering professional practices, narratives, economic issues, audiences, etc.

In both cases, collaborations with media organizations which are members of the IMI are expected to facilitate this process.

Furthermore, projects should build on the knowledge of initiatives, tools or experiences already carried out elsewhere, in Switzerland but also internationally. Project coordinators are invited to clarify this aspect in the application document (state of the art, benchmark, best practices, etc.), and possibly to establish prior contact with potential international partners.

1.4 Length, budget and beginning of projects

The IMI will only consider project proposals which respect the following criteria:

- The typical length of a project submitted to the IMI under this current call for projects is of 12 months. Subsidies could exceptionally be granted for longer periods (max. 18 months). Projects with shorter time frames can also be submitted.

- The amount allocated per project will not exceed CHF 150,000 for 12 months, omitting overheads.
- The budget allocated by the IMI are primarily intended for salaries related to scientific research (post-doc, scientific collaborator, etc.), to which some operating costs may be added, as well as overheads conforming to the regulations of the project coordinator's institution. The budget outline must be drafted in accordance with the template provided in Appendix 1 and must reflect the intended collaborations.
- The funding allocated by the IMI shall be managed by the project coordinator belonging to a scientific institution which is a member of the IMI (see 2.1) who then has the possibility of allocating part of it to potential academic, media or industry partners.
- The budget can therefore include contributions that are provided by the media partner/s in the framework of the project, beyond the exchange of know-how and project tracking.
- The projects financed by the IMI can benefit from additional financing from third-parties under certain conditions which must first be discussed with the IMI.
- The projects must begin between **1 March 2020** and **1 June 2020**.

2. Conditions and terms of engagement regarding IMI projects

2.1 Modalities to participate in research projects

In its pursuit of promoting applied research projects, the IMI will consider project proposals based on the following scheme:

- Any project financed by this current call for projects must be conducted by at least one scientific institution which is a member of the IMI (EPFL, University of Geneva, University of Lausanne, University of Neuchâtel, HES-SO Valais-Wallis) and must be managed by a project coordinator affiliated with one of these institutions.
- Collaborations between the scientific and media sectors are expected as part of these projects, through the participation of at least one media organization which is a member of the IMI (among the following groups: Ringier/Ringier Axel Springer, SRG and ESH Médias) and with which the coordinator will have to establish a partnership.
- A project may also be submitted by one or more media organizations which are members of the IMI, through joint coordination with a scientific institution.
- Project coordinators are asked to establish these partnerships preferably before submitting pre-proposals (see 3.1), but at the latest before submitting full proposals (see 3.2). Before these deadlines, project coordinators are invited to contact the IMI to facilitate this process.

- Collaborations with institutions outside of the IMI (including international collaborations), can also be considered, be they with academia, a media organization or an industry partner.
- There are no limits to the number of projects submitted by institution or by person, however the IMI will only finance one project per project coordinator.

2.2 Commitments of the project coordinator and of the IMI

Each project coordinator commits to:

- Create a brief financial and scientific report each semester. At most three months after the end of the financing period, he/she must submit a final financial and scientific report. The financial report must describe how the allocated funds were used. The scientific report will detail, in particular, the accomplishments and results of the project, as well as possible perspectives for continuation (incubation, development, etc.).
- Participate in an event showcasing the accomplishments of the various projects financed by the IMI at the end of the 1st year.
- Allow public access to all the results of the project as well as any potential technical development (source code, datasets, etc.).
- Offer the possibility to one or more members of the IMI who would wish to pursue the project, bilaterally, under conditions to be jointly defined.

The IMI commits to:

- Guaranteeing that each project coordinator and each participant of the project remains the sole owner of the obtained results during the execution of the project and retains all the intellectual property and usage rights associated with them.
- Guaranteeing that every researcher and any academic institution implicated in the project can benefit from total freedom of research, instruction and publication.
- Guaranteeing that any media organization implicated in the project can benefit from total freedom of information and editorial freedom.

2.3 Research contract

Each project coordinator, via their institution, will have the obligation of signing a Grant Agreement prior to obtaining a subsidy from the IMI. This agreement will regulate, among other things, the payment schedule, the reports to be provided by the project coordinator, scientific publications, intellectual property rights and the modalities for exploiting the results.

3. Submission of project proposals

The submission of projects will be done in two steps. A pre-proposal shall first present the main aspects of the project, its timetable as well as the budget envelope requested from the IMI. If the pre-proposal is selected, then the project coordinator shall be invited to submit a full proposal.

3.1 Pre-proposal for the first evaluation (max. 3 pages)

Pre-project proposals, maximum 3 pages long, written in English or in French, must be submitted at the latest on **13 October 2019 at 17:00** by email, to the following address projects@media-initiative.ch and must include:

1. The title of the project.
2. A general description of the project: state of the art, goals, methods, expected results.
3. The benefits that the members of the IMI can expect (scientific innovation and benefits for media organizations).
4. The budget requested, the main expense categories and all the partners involved.
5. A presentation of the people involved in the project (coordinator, collaborator, partner, etc.), be they from the scientific or media sector¹.

3.2 Full proposal for the final evaluation (max. 12 pages)

The submission for evaluation of full project proposals is reserved for project coordinators who have received approval on their initial pre-proposal submission. Full project proposals, maximum 12 pages long, written in English or in French, must be submitted at the latest on **8 December 2019 at 17:00** by email, to the following address projects@media-initiative.ch and must include:

1. The title of the project.
2. A summary (max. 300 words) including key words (max. 6).
3. A full description of the project: state of the art, goals, methods and expected results.
4. Benefits for academic research:
 - a. How does the proposed project benefit academic research?
 - b. A description outlining the multidisciplinary dimension of the project.
5. Innovation for media organizations:

¹ At this stage of project submission, the project coordinators have the opportunity to contact the IMI to establish the appropriate partnerships.

- a. How does the proposed project benefit the media sector?
 - b. What are the practical benefits for the media organizations which are members of the IMI (usability, replicability, sustainability)?
6. The details on the deliverables of the project (conception and implementation of tools, scientific publications, etc.).
 7. The timetable for the project and the main steps.
 8. A detailed budget outline (detailing if the funding is full or partial and what other sources of financing are involved, if any) according to the template provided in Appendix 1. The budget outline must also reflect the intended collaborations.
 9. A description of the societal impact of the project.
 10. A presentation of the project coordinator or co-coordinators (please attach the CVs to the submission) as well as the names, positions and contributions to the project of academic, media and industry partners. Support letters may also be attached to the submitted document.
 11. An evaluation of the tasks to be carried out by the media associated with the project in order to assess the workload required.
 12. Additional observations you wish to communicate to the reviewers (intellectual property rights, patent applications, etc.).

4. Process, evaluation criteria and timetable

4.1 Process

The project proposals submitted within this call for projects will be evaluated by the IMI Scientific Committee (in two separate submissions, see 4.3), which will in turn submit recommendations to the IMI Board on the projects which will receive a subsidy.

4.2 Evaluation criteria

The main evaluation criteria are the following:

- Relevance to the topic of this call for projects.
- Collaboration between the academic, media and industry sectors.
- Potential for innovation and for academic research (project quality and scientific relevance).
- Multidisciplinary approach of the project.
- Potential for innovation and exploitation for the media sector.

- Benefits for IMI members (usability, replicability, sustainability).
- Expertise of the project coordinator and of the partners involved.
- Societal impacts of the project.
- Objectives (realistic).
- Calendar (manageable).
- Budget (reasonable).

4.3 Timetable

The IMI Scientific Committee shall finish its evaluation of the pre-project proposals on **10 November 2019**, at which time the IMI shall inform the project coordinators in writing. The Scientific Committee shall then complete its evaluation of the full project proposals on **19 January 2020**, and shall send its recommendation to the IMI Board. The Board shall validate the selected projects during a meeting that will be held in **February 2020**, after which the IMI will contact the project coordinators in writing.

5 About the IMI

5.1 Description

The IMI is a consortium of academic, public and private partners that was created in January 2018 in an effort to support and develop innovation in the media and IT sector. The aim of this alliance is to initiate research projects with partner universities and to conduct activities to support innovation, in particular through the organization of events and the creation of a community that brings together researchers, media professionals and investors.

To this end, the IMI founding members which are EPFL, SRG, Ringier and Triangle Azur—a cooperation network between the Universities of Geneva, Lausanne and Neuchâtel—as well as the IMI affiliate members such as the partnership between ESH Médias and HES-SO Valais-Wallis, maintain an innovation support fund with an annual budget of CHF 700,000. The Federal Office of Communications (OFCOM) is also supporting projects under this initiative. The IMI is open to all private and public organizations, in Switzerland or abroad, who wish to join and are active in the relevant fields.



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7 Appendix 1: Project budget template

Direct costs

Direct personnel costs

Title, first name, last name	Institution / organization	Project role ²	Involvement (%)	Duration (month)	Total cost ³

Other direct costs

Description	Total cost ⁴
Research / field costs	
Web hosting / computation costs	
Publication / dissemination costs	
Travel costs	
Consultant / subcontractor fees	
Other operating costs	

Total direct costs (a)	
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Indirect costs

Overhead

Projects carried out by a scientific institution may be subject to an overhead. These overheads cover part of the indirect costs (in particular infrastructure and management costs) related to research activities.

² Postdoc, PhD student, scientific collaborator, assistant, student, developer, etc.

³ Including social contributions.

⁴ The project coordinator is invited to describe and justify each of these costs if they are not made explicit in the project proposal.



Total direct costs involved	Overhead (%)	Overhead amount

Total indirect costs (b)	
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Total funding requested (a+b)	
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