

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)

EPIC – Expanding Production of Independent Content

Hungary

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Summary

Funder (Prime Funder): Internews

Funder Project Name: Expanding Production of Independent Content (EPIC)

Announcement Type: Initial

RFA Number: 01

CFDA Number: 19.345

Application Submission Deadline: July 2, 2023, 23:59, Central European Time

Program overview

Internews invites applications for grants offered under its project, the **Expanding Production of Independent Content in Hungary** (EPIC). Media organizations, independent journalists, and content creators with digital operations in Hungary for more than one year may apply with specific ideas for a series of stories or media project. The **EPIC** project aims to assist in the production and dissemination of high-quality, credible, engaging, and innovative fact-based multimedia content across platforms that addresses issues of importance to communities across Hungary.

Support offered through the call

Selected applicants will receive financial support in the form of cost-reimbursable subgrants to produce relevant content. Internews anticipates awarding four (4) grants, each **up to USD \$10,000 per applicant**.

The disbursement of the grant will be made in two instalments, 70% upon signing of the grant agreement and 30% upon successful completion of the project and submission of the final narrative and financial report.

Additional funding will be available for enhancing the reach and impact of content produced in the project, refer to the section *Promotion and Distribution* for details.

Selected applicants will be reimbursed for costs incurred as part of content creation: production costs, such as travel and accommodation costs, fees of contractors (for example web developers) needed for certain aspects of production, office rent and salaries of staff involved in producing the content both based on level of effort, running costs based on the level of effort, equipment not yet

available but needed to produce the content (under USD 5,000) and other reasonable expenses expressly related to the production specific media project/series. Capital expenditures, servicing of loans, construction activities will not be considered for award. Please refer to the [budget template](#) for additional information.

Based on the needs of the selected applicants, Internews will also hire experts to provide technical expertise related to the content, and expert consultancy and/or training to help establish or strengthen capabilities of selected applicants to produce, disseminate and promote their content.

Types of support may include consultations on audience expansion, multimedia products and editorial support. Applicants are encouraged to indicate on the application form the areas or specific aspects of production or promotion for which they would need or welcome consultancy, assistance, mentoring or training.

EPIC will also support content producers in regional cross-border networking and content sharing through a story database, online and in-person events.

Internews has the right to translate and republish / distribute produced multimedia materials on platforms of media partners in other countries covered by the EPIC project. Should selected applicants want to republish such content themselves, translation services will be made available by Internews.

Further rounds of grants for national and cross border stories will follow this call, for which applicants selected through the current call are eligible to apply.

Guidelines for project proposals

Internews is looking to support media projects and/or series of stories that are **innovative in their story approaches and angles, as well as their use of (audio)visual storytelling tools** to reach a wide range of audience groups and make content accessible to people with various information needs. Projects should address issues of public interest, the human experiences that reflect them, and have the potential to counter disinformation.

Content formats

Applicants should pitch media projects and/or series of stories where **individual pieces are ideally linked by both a common theme and a common format**. Projects united by only a common format will be considered if they are sufficiently innovative and have the potential to fill an important gap in information. Projects that have the potential to be continued beyond the grant's implementation period are welcome.

The pieces should have **strong multimedia content and (audio)visual storytelling** to reach a wide range of audience groups and make the content accessible to people with various information needs.

Multimedia content can include, but is not limited to photography, videography, animation, captioned video, a wide range of infographics (ranging from standalone charts and maps to innovative data visualizations), graphics, drawings, audio segments, interactivity or even gamification. A mix of formats within a media project / series of stories is acceptable if this enhances reader engagement and the potential reach of the stories.

Applicants who have less experience with multimedia, (audio)visual storytelling, data visualizations but have a stated interest in developing these capabilities are also welcome to apply and will be supported with expert consultancy and mentoring.

The individual pieces within a series can be text-based or visuals-based, for example but not limited to:

- **longform** (upwards of 12 000 characters) combining multiple audiovisual storytelling tools,
- **shorter pieces** (from 3000 characters) that provide concise information and/or quick overviews supplemented by multimedia (video, photography, data visualization, audio, etc.)
- **standalone videos** such as reportage, explainers, features, interviews, or other video content (from 2 minutes upwards)
- **visuals-based content**, with photography, video segments or data visualization taking center stage with text providing supporting information.

Content should utilize the publishers' own platforms (websites) for original publication, except in the case of platform-native content creators. Shorter pieces should also include multimedia material(s).

Periodicity and Quantity of Content

A media project / series of stories should consist of at least three individual pieces. The stories will need to be produced and published within six months, with no more than two months between two pieces.

The number of stories within a project/series can vary depending on the format(s) and the budget. The variations given below are possible examples for content over the course of the six months:

- 3 longform pieces,
- 3 in-depth videos / explainers,
- 5 shorter pieces with multimedia content,
- 10 shorter audiovisual explainers,
- 2 longform pieces supported by 2 shorter articles.

Mixing formats and lengths is acceptable to support good storytelling – a series of around ten shorter, well-researched, well-executed audiovisual explainers will be considered, as will a series of three in-depth longreads or two longreads supported by two shorter pieces. Please be clear in your project proposal about what formats you intend to use, the planned number of pieces, the projected production and publishing schedule and how this will support your storytelling.

Promotion and distribution

To help widen distribution and increase reach of the pieces in the projects/series, selected applicants are also expected create platform-friendly or platform-native content based on them (at least one / piece, but ideally for all platforms the applicant has channels on). These pieces of content do not count toward the number of pieces in the series.

These can be adapted content but are ideally short segments produced suited to the specific platform, such as but not limited to:

- **shorts, reels, stories, and posts** used as teasers, highlights or an iteration of the original content,
- **interactive content** such as polls, tests and quizzes related to the original content that drive interaction and engagement.

Additional funding will be available for enhancing the reach and impact of content produced in the project. This pool of funds will be available to buy third-party services for content production partners to support the distribution and targeting of selected supported stories. For example, services may include content promotion costs or purchases of audience data. Beyond platforms, offline, email and other promotional methods are also welcome that drive reach and engagement.

Audience, Themes and Topics

Internews is looking for **media projects and series of stories that cover nationwide and local issues in Hungary**. Although the capital is an important business and cultural hub, preference will be given projects that cover stories outside of Budapest. Local stories will be considered if the theme, topic, or subject is also relevant to audiences outside of the specific region.

Media projects and stories should **speak to a wide range of audiences or address issues of interest to communities and audience groups that are underserved or especially affected by or vulnerable to misinformation**. Such groups include, but are not limited to young people, smaller communities, minorities, and people not regularly reached by a wider range of independent media outlets practicing credible, fact-based reporting.

Stories for and/or about niche audiences (such as minorities) should prominently feature or speak with the voice of that the specific audience.

Individual pieces within a project/series should ideally be **linked by both a common theme and a common format**, but projects united by only a common format or theme will be considered if they are sufficiently innovative and have the potential to fill an important gap in information (for example explainers that cover a wider range of issues).

Applicants are free to choose the themes and topics of the pieces produced as part of the project, but they must **meet the audiences' needs and address key current issues** affecting them in a relevant and informative manner, with a focus on how they reflect on the human experience, especially where there is an important gap in information. Possible such topics and themes include, but are not limited to:

- corruption, including its trickle-down effect in people's day-to-day lives,
- environmental issues, including how the climate crisis affects life and the economy across Hungary,
- social issues, ranging from how the welfare system functions to individual human interest stories that speak to the wider issue,
- women, the challenges they face in society, families, relationships, the workplace,
- the education system, including providing a big picture view of the system, the role of different stakeholders, any systemic risks,

- the health sector, including the role of private and public health care, their functioning, and systemic relation to each other,
- everyday lives of local people, how small communities interact with each other and their relationships,
- the agricultural sector, including the bigger picture and the lives of people working in it,
- the rising cost of living (for example how it affects everyday life of people and communities, existing and further solutions for coping, etc.),
- currently trending topics where there is a lack of policy debate before decisions are taken, including formats that enable / encourage real policy debates on local issues or cover the lack of transparency over such decisions,
- the effects of the war in Ukraine on the lives of people in Hungary, the lives of refugees living in Hungary, the roles of different actors, and the war's effect on any of the above-mentioned areas, especially where there are widely distributed disinformation narratives,
- further topics, such as LGBTQ+, the role of the EU in various aspects of life in Hungary, migration, historical misrepresentations, and other areas where audiences regularly encounter widely distributed misinformation.

Materials produced should refrain from reproducing or disseminating misinformation narratives, unchecked and non-factual information, non-scientific statements and advice, superstitions. Editorials, opinion pieces, short-form fiction will also not be considered.

Media partners should clearly mark any advertising, sponsored or paid content on their platforms appearing with the content created. The content itself must not be and may not contain any form of hidden or native advertising, sponsored, bartered, or paid content.

Application and Selection

Check the [eligibility criteria](#) and start planning your project / series of stories after making sure you fulfil them. Only the proposals of applicants fulfilling the eligibility criteria will be considered. Take note of the deadline: **applications received after the deadline will not be considered.**

Your application will consist of a pitch for your media project / series of stories (the project proposal) detailed on the application form and an accompanying budget (the budget proposal).

If you have any questions while preparing your proposals regarding this Request for Applications, please email HU-grants@internews.org.

Submission of the application

Applications must be submitted by email to HU-grants@internews.org. The subject line must include the words “**Response to RFA EPIC**”.

The documents constituting the application must be included **as attachments**. The email must list and describe the documents to be included as parts of the application. If more than one message is

required to transmit the application, each message must be identified as part of a multi-part submission (e.g., “message 1 of 3”).

Any portion of the application containing confidential or proprietary information should be clearly marked within the application itself either by highlighting or italics. The email must describe specifically how these sections are identified.

Applications can be submitted in Hungarian or English.

Content of the applications

The following documents must be included with your application:

- **fully completed [application form](#)** PDF format, and
- the **budget proposal** using the [budget template](#) in Excel (xlsx) format.

The application form should contain all information about you, as the applicant as well as your pitch for the media project / series of stories that you aim to produce with the support of this grant.

The budget proposal should detail the costs of producing the content that you wish to fund using this grant. Please use our [budget template spreadsheet](#) for this.

Deadline for applications

Applications must be submitted by **July 2, 2023, 23:59** Central European Time.

Applications received after the deadline will not be considered. All applications submitted will be acknowledged within two (2) working days and will note the documents submitted. The applicant is responsible for ensuring and confirming that the emails comprising the application are received by the Internews representatives indicated in the Summary above.

Selection criteria

Applications will **be assessed by a selection panel** comprised of Internews staff and independent media experts, taking into consideration the project proposal (quality of the pitch for the media project / series of stories and the eligibility and capability of the applicant) and the financial proposal (feasibility of the budget).

Each application will receive a score, with a maximum potential score of 100 points. Applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Records/past experience/professionalism: 10 points
- Quality of the pitch: 30 points
- Ability to achieve planned results/capacity: 15 points
- Expected results/impact: 20 points
- Budget: 25 points

Grants will be awarded to applicants whose proposals that are most responsive to this Request for Applications and are most advantageous to the project, all factors considered.

Award notification and contract

Successful applicant(s) will be notified of selection within fifteen (15) working days following the deadline for submission of applications.

The successful applicant(s) must confirm the application and acceptance of the selection within five (5) working days of selection notification or the selection will be withdrawn due to non-responsive applicant and offered to the next most qualified applicant.

Internews does not notify and provide detailed reasoning to unsuccessful applicant(s).

NOTICE OF SELECTION OF THE APPLICATION IS NOT TO BE CONSTRUED AS A CONTRACT OR SUBGRANT AWARD. Once the selection is confirmed, a final subgrant agreement will be negotiated and signed with the successful applicant(s), subject to prime funder approval, environmental clearances, and successful vetting of eligibility.

Timeline and Duration

There will be time until July 2, 2023, 23:59, Central European Time for submission of the Project Proposals after the Request for Applications is announced through an open call.

Once grant agreements are signed, Media Partners will have six months to produce, publish and promote the pieces of their media projects / series. No more than two months should elapse between two pieces.

During this time, they will have the chance to use expert consultancy and mentoring provided by the EPIC project. Three online exchanges and one in-person unconference will be organized for media partners from the project countries.

Reporting

Selected applicants will have programmatic and financial reporting requirements. Narrative and financial reports will need to be submitted once, at the end of the grant cycle, per Internews' judgement. Quarterly reports about the audience reach and engagement of pieces supported through this call will need to be submitted. Final reports will also need to include this data.

Eligibility Criteria

Applicants must meet the following criteria to be considered eligible for a subaward resulting from this Request for Applications:

- In the case of media outlets, the publishing organization is legally registered in Hungary, in the case of independent journalists and content creators, they have a registered business entity in Hungary, e.g. as a private entrepreneur.
- The applicant is active in the Hungarian online media market as a content producer for more than 1 year,
- The applicant regularly publishes Hungarian language media content that specifically targets a national, local or regional audience,

- The applicant follows an independent editorial policy and has a proven dedication to professional journalistic standards and ethics.
- The applicant has a demonstrated record of producing clear, unbiased, pluralistic content about issues of public interest,
- The applicant publicly self-identifies as an independent organization or journalist,
- The organization publishing this media outlet is not owned or managed by public authorities, local or national governments, political parties, by individuals holding public office or office in political organizations, or their close relatives.

Additional Considerations

Indirect Costs

Selected subrecipients will be eligible for reimbursement of indirect costs if they:

1. Have a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement from their cognizant agency, or
2. Accept a *de minimis* indirect cost rate of 10% applied to Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC). MTDC is defined as all direct salaries and wages, applicable fringe benefits, materials and supplies, services, employee and consultant travel, and up to the first \$25,000 of each subaward or subcontract (regardless of the period of performance of the subawards or subcontracts under the award). MTDC excludes equipment*, capital expenditures*, charges for patient care, rental costs, tuition remission, scholarships and fellowships, participant support costs* and the portion of each subaward or subcontract in excess of \$25,000.

*: Exact definitions of the terms can be found via [this](#) link.

Cost Principles

Proposal budgets will be reviewed in accordance with, and selected subrecipients' costs will be subject to, the cost principles that apply to them to assure reasonableness, allocability, and allowability:

1. Not for Profit organizations: [2CFR200](#) Subpart E, Cost Principles
2. For Profit organizations: [48CFR31.2 Federal Acquisition Regulations](#) (FAR) and [48CFR731.2](#)

Subgrant Administration

The following regulations and provisions, at minimum, will apply to subawards issued as a result of this RFA:

- [2CFR200](#) and [2CFR600](#) Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards
- [US Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions](#)

Project Goal and Description

The goal of Internews' activities in Hungary is to help foster a strong independent media sector that is resistant to powerful interests seeking to manipulate, isolate, or control the press.

Internews' activities are funded by an award from the US Department of State (DOS).

Led by Internews and implemented in partnership with Media Initiatives Center (Armenia), Instytut Reportazu (Poland), Internews Ukraine (Ukraine) and Center for Independent Journalism (Romania), the **Expanding Production of Independent Content (EPIC)** project aims to support independent media in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus through a varied blend of activities. Its goal is to

- enable media to produce and disseminate high-quality and credible content across platforms that addresses issues of importance in their local communities and counters disinformation,
- improve cross-border content production and contextualize national stories into regional perspectives and better connect media and audiences across target countries, and
- strengthen networks within their countries and across the region.

Through EPIC, media beneficiaries will have access to community-driven, country-specific and regional research and editorial policies and plans to drive high quality and responsive information, particularly as it relates to the war in Ukraine and vulnerable populations, such as women, youth and those that are discriminated against based on their gender or religion.

Attached documents

1. [Application Form](#)
2. [Detailed Budget Template](#)

End of RFA