

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA) – PHASE 2.

Strengthening Engagement of Regional Audiences in Poland and Hungary (SERAPH)
Hungary

Publication Date: 28/OCT/2024

Application Deadline: 24/NOV/2024

Program Overview

Project Goal

Internews's Strengthening Engagement of Regional Audiences in Poland and Hungary (SERAPH) project aims to support local online media in Hungary and Poland to produce relevant and engaging content for their audiences and improve their outreach and engagement with their audiences and communities.

Project Description

In Phase 2 of the Project, Internews will again select Partners from the local and regional online media, and independent content producers through a competitive process, based on the quality of project ideas submitted by interested and eligible applicants. Top performing Partner(s) from the SERAPH project's Phase 1 may receive invitation from Internews to submit follow-on development and community engagement projects. Based on Partner needs and project proposals, Internews will offer a blend of support to help Partners in Hungary and Poland to increase output, quality and reach of locally relevant content; improve engagement with audiences and local communities; and improve editorial practices to facilitate the former.

This support will be delivered through the disbursement of Editorial Development Grants, Community Engagement Grants and milestone-based technical consulting designed for and with Partners. In Hungary the support will include a training and internship program for Partners, supporting the recruitment of talented prospective journalists. Internews will nurture cross-border and in-country networking between Partners in Hungary and Poland.

Subaward Information

Financial support

Subaward Amount: Under this RFA, Internews anticipates awarding the following financial support in Hungary:

For Editorial Development:

- three (3) cost-reimbursable subgrants to media outlets, each up to \$22,000.
- one (1) cost-reimbursable subgrant to an individual content creator, up to \$10,000.

For Community Engagement:

- three (3) cost-reimbursable subgrant supplements to media outlets or individual content producers, each up to \$7,000.

During their applications, applicants are expected to submit project plans for both Editorial Development Grants and Community Engagement Grants, and will be evaluated against the quality of both planned projects. Project-supported editorial development plans and community engagement plans should ideally support each other in the applications, but the former should be coherent and viable also as a standalone project plan. Applicants may be awarded with standalone Editorial Development Grants, or a combination of Editorial Development and Community Engagement Grants, but no standalone Community Engagement Grants will be awarded.

Timeline and Duration

Internews anticipates subgrants awarded under this RFA to have a performance period of up to 14 months. The anticipated starting date for Editorial Development Grants is January 2025, and for Community Engagement Grants is April 2025.

Support offered

This Request for Applications (RfA) relates to the selection of SERAPH Phase 2 Partners in Hungary for the following activities:

Editorial Development and Community Engagement

Following selection, Internews will co-create an up to 14-month plan with each Partner, in which Partners can define their editorial development and community engagement goals and milestones.

Partners can apply with editorial development proposals in the following areas for example:

- Improving skills or processes in content planning and production
- Expanding thematic scope
- Developing, testing and running story formats for a variety of distribution platforms
- Using new strategies for recruitment, retention and motivation of editorial staff
- Procurement of new equipment or software for content production activities
- Other innovative editorial development initiatives

To improve community engagement, partners may propose a mix of activities that aim to support better connections or communications with their local communities and audiences, and stories targeting specific issues or a development priorities within their community. Supported activities may include:

- Developing a community engagement strategy and recruiting new staff to manage community engagement activities for the Partner
- Publishing a series of stories centered around a locally relevant theme with a potential to trigger community and audience response
- Planning and publishing series of content pieces that are built on information or feedback retrieved from the audience through systematic outreach activities
- Organizing a series of in-person and/or online events with members of local communities
- Improving communication flow with local audiences through feedback and listening.

Tailored Technical Assistance

Throughout the lifespan of the project, based on needs, requests and plans, Partners will be paired with local or regional consultants to help them achieve their editorial development and community engagement milestones. Internews' technical consultants will help Partners improve their skills and capabilities in content planning, production, and distribution, or other areas as needed. Internews will also help partner media devise and test community engagement approaches and activities through online platforms and beyond, such as through in-person meetups.

Technical support may take the form of onsite or ongoing online mentorship or short-term trainings and seminars. The project will also provide targeted support to improve editorial teams' administrative and financial management capacities, with a focus on grants management.

Partner Grants

Editorial Development Grants will cover expenses needed to further the Partners' editorial development goals and increase the output and quality of locally relevant content, and improve distribution and reach. Partner Editorial Grants may include hiring more newsroom or support staff, costs associated with the production of quality content (fees, software, travel expenses etc.), and costs associated with improved distribution.

Community Engagement Grants cover Partners' efforts to improve their engagement with their audiences online, and to strengthen ties between media outlets and the local communities they serve. Partners are eligible to apply for such financial support with separate Community Engagement proposals, on the same application form where they apply for Editorial Development Grants. The community engagement activities supported should nurture the culture of media engagement that goes beyond political affiliations and information bubbles to serve a diverse set of audiences and increase trust in local media within local communities. Proposed projects should demonstrate applicants' ambition to experiment with outreach and engagement with audiences across a variety of online platforms, as well as in-person, create opportunities for and foster discussions around locally relevant issues, and activate citizens around locally relevant issues.

Young Talent Program

To support local media organizations in recruiting and retaining skilled young journalistic staff for their editorial teams, SERAPH's Partner Grants will be supplemented by a structured training and internship program for a select group of young people planning a journalistic career at the selected Partners. Applicants for this Young Talent Program will be recruited and selected in a competitive application procedure, in close cooperation with the media Partners. In collaboration with a local implementing partner, SERAPH will enroll at least two young people per media partner in a multi-month training program focusing on journalism and local news reporting. At the end of the training program, Partners will be able to use their Editorial Development Grants to offer newsroom positions to the best performing participants. Editorial Development Grants will include a dedicated budget to cover the employment of one intern per Partner for a 3 to 6 month period.

Eligibility Information

Media outlets and individual content producers must meet the following criteria in order to be considered eligible for a sub-award resulting from this RFA:

1. Media outlets must be legally registered in Hungary, and have an editorial team that is based outside Budapest and Pest county. Individual content producers must be tax residents of Hungary.
2. They must have been actively producing content in Hungarian language for more than 1 year.
3. They must regularly publish media content that targets local or regional audiences in Hungary in one or several locations outside Budapest.
4. They must be independent in their editorial decisions, and must have a proven dedication to professional journalistic standards and ethics.
5. They must have a demonstrated record of producing clear, unbiased, pluralistic content about issues of public interest.
6. They should self-identify as an independent organization / individual. Media outlets must not be owned or managed, individual content producers must not be controlled – directly or indirectly – by public authorities, local or national governments, political parties, by individuals holding public office or office in political organizations, or their close relatives.

Applicants and staff members receiving project support must refrain from both real and perceived conflicts of interest that may cast doubt on their independence and professional ethics. Internews reserves the right to terminate subgrant agreements if credible information about conflicts of interest emerge, and if Partners do not cooperate in resolving these conflicts of interest.

Application and Selection

Inquiries

All questions regarding this RFA should be directed via email to HU-grants@internews.org.

Applicants interested in applying for this funding opportunity should indicate their interest in advance by pre-registering at the following form: <https://forms.office.com/r/xvh6dRie1L?origin=lprLink>

Pre-registered prospective applicants who fulfill the eligibility criteria of the RFA will receive additional information and invitations to information sessions about the application process.

Application Submission Requirements

Applications must be submitted by email to HU-grants@internews.org.

The subject line must include the words “SERAPH grant application”. The documents constituting the application must be included as pdf and xlsx 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.

Application Content Requirements

Application(s) must meet the following requirements:

1. Include a completed Subgrant Application Form, **Attachment 1** hereto.
2. Include a Budget Proposal, using the Subgrant Budget Template, **Attachment 2** hereto.

If you require technical support about the completion of the forms listed above, you can reach out for help to the email address HU-grants@internews.org. Internews intends to support those with limited experience in grant applications.

Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be reviewed and evaluated by a technical committee on a range of selection criteria. Each application will receive a score, with a maximum potential score of 100 points. Applications will be evaluated based on the quality of project ideas, cost effectiveness and feasibility, with the different elements of the project idea weighted as follows:

1. **Background:** 20 points
2. **Goals and needs:** 25 points (from which 15 points for editorial development and 10 points for community engagement goals and needs)
3. **Proposed activities and expected results:** 25 points (from which 15 points for editorial development and 10 points for community engagement goals and needs)
4. **Risk analysis and challenges:** 10 points
5. **Financial planning:** 20 points (10 points for editorial development grant and 10 points for community engagement grant)

Subawards shall be made to the respondent whose application is responsive to the RFA and the project objectives, all factors considered. Project proposals with strong potential to produce coverage on vulnerable and underrepresented groups such as the elderly, the youth, women, low-income households, ethnic or other minorities, etc. will be awarded with extra points. During the evaluation the previous experience of Internews with the applicants will be considered.

Award Notification and Responses

All applications submitted will be acknowledged within two (2) working days and will note the documents submitted. The respondent is responsible for ensuring and confirming that the emails comprising the application are received by the Internews representatives indicated in the Summary above.

Successful respondent(s) will be notified of selection within thirty (30) working days following the deadline for submission of applications.

The successful respondent(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 respondent and offered to the next most qualified respondent. Internews does not provide detailed reasoning to unsuccessful applicants.

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 respondent, subject to a prior capacity assessment of the respondent and the successful vetting of eligibility.

Expectations from Partners

As part of their program participation, selected Partners' commitment is required for the following activities:

- work with Internews representatives and the SERAPH project team throughout the project implementation to maximize the potential of editorial development and community engagement support;
- attend project meetings and conferences, and work with experts and mentors on an agreed-upon schedule;
- implement activities in a timely manner, with effective and timely communication.
- submit all required reports to Internews in a timely manner, following the agreed reporting schedule

Reporting

Subgrants awarded as a result of this RFA will include programmatic and financial reporting requirements. Narrative, M&E and financial reports will be submitted, per Internews' judgement, on a quarterly basis.

Reporting requirements will be detailed to successful applicants and will receive support with it if needed.

Attachments:

1. Subgrant Application Form
2. Subgrant Budget Template

Additional Considerations

The activities of this project are funded by an award from the US Department of State (DOS).

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](#)

Indirect Costs

Selected sub-recipients 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.

*Participant support costs are direct costs for items such as stipends or subsistence allowances, travel allowances, and registration fees paid to or on behalf of participants or trainees (but not employees) in connection with conferences, or training projects.

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](#)

Summary Data

1.0 Funder (Prime Funder): Internews

1.1 Funder Project Name: Strengthening Engagement of Regional Audiences in Poland and Hungary (SERAPH)

1.2 Announcement Type: Initial

1.3 RFA Number: 03

1.4 CFDA Number: 19.345

1.5 Application Submission Deadline: 24/NOV/2024, 23:59, time zone: CET

End of RFA