

Media Cymru × BBC Cymru Wales

Digital Innovation Fund

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Overview

Media Cymru and BBC Cymru Wales's latest Research and Development (R&D) fund specifically targets Digital Innovation.

The fund offers dedicated time and resource to develop existing BBC Cymru Wales content for a YouTube audience.

If your production company has delivered a returning series for BBC Cymru Wales within the last five years, we would like you to creatively reimagine that content for a YouTube audience. What does the content look like? How can it be expanded, changed, and revamped? This is an opportunity to breathe new life into a well-loved brand, expand its reach, and build a bridge back to iPlayer.

How you choose to reimagine your content for YouTube is entirely up to you – we are looking for bold, original thinking that reflects the brand and speaks directly to digital audiences. You may wish to explore talent-led spin-offs, interactive formats, location or contributor spotlights, fan engagement, or behind-the-scenes content. These suggestions are simply starting points to inspire your approach.

We encourage you to push creative boundaries and use this fund to elevate your content in new and exciting ways. The ultimate aim is to introduce your series to a fresh audience on YouTube, while guiding audiences back to full episodes on iPlayer.

The opportunity is also open to Welsh indies with a background in scripted content. We would like you to consider how you could reimagine your series for a YouTube audience. Consider real-time reaction videos to key plot twists, thematic spin offs that dive into the world your series inhabits, or even location based storytelling that blends fiction with reality. Feel free to build on these suggestions and take them in your own direction. What fresh, YouTube focused ideas could you develop that bring your scripted world to life in new unscripted ways?

We are not just looking for repurposed clips: we want fresh, engaging content that introduces your brand to new audiences and makes the most of YouTube's creative potential.

Next Steps

Up to four Wales-based companies will be given the opportunity to develop ideas during a three-month R&D sprint, which will take place between February and April 2026.

Successful applicants will receive up to £20,000 each to develop a new idea and deliver a pitch deck and/or a taster or sizzle reel.

The Digital Innovation Fund opens on Friday 3 October 2025. Applications close on Friday 31 October 2025, at noon (please note the closing date was extended from 24 October to 31 October).

At the start of the R&D sprint, there will be an Audience Insight Day with the BBC's Audience Research team. They will share data driven insight on maximising the benefits of YouTube and discuss how to engage diverse audiences via digital platforms.

Eligibility

With all our activity, we are keen to reach the widest audience possible to ensure we hear the best ideas. We recognise that too often R&D investment circulates around networks which are not representative of our wider community in its social and cultural diversity. We aim to change that pattern and are working to address these structural imbalances in the sector. We also hope to inspire transformative and inclusive lines of research and development that will challenge existing ways of producing and thinking.

Eligibility criteria:

- Your company must be based in Wales, with a 'substantive base' in Wales

- You have had a scripted or unscripted returning series, meaning a programme that has been recommissioned for more than one series, commissioned specifically by BBC Cymru Wales within the past five years (rather than by the BBC more broadly) and your returning series for BBC Cymru Wales must have qualified as a 'Regional Production' from Wales, in each case in accordance with the regional production criteria in [Ofcom's guidance for public service broadcasters](#)
- You must own the copyright and/or IP in your returning series free from any third-party restrictions or limitations (other than the rights granted to the BBC in the series)
- The R&D work must happen between February and April 2026
- Your company is eligible to receive grant funding awarded under Minimum Financial Assistance (please see grant funding eligibility criteria). Please [get in contact](#) to discuss alternative options if you are not eligible to receive funding under Minimum Financial Assistance
- Your project must be aimed at driving audiences from non-BBC digital platforms back to iPlayer
- We will only fund one application per company.

All application forms must be submitted online via our website:

<https://media.cymru/projects/content-innovation-fund/>

Accessibility

If you have any specific requirements that would make the application more accessible to you (such as advice, scribing or reading support) or would like to discuss this application in an alternative format (video or audio formats, audio narration, large font, plain text, or alternative language) please email media.cymru@cardiff.ac.uk or phone 02922 511 434.

Key Dates

- **3 October 2025:** Applications open

- **31 October 2025: Please note, the closing date has been extended (from 24 October to 31 October).** Applications close at **noon**, applications will not be accepted after this time
- **5 November 2025:** Applicants notified (applicants should note that it can take up to 5 weeks for contracts to be issued)
- **January 2026:** Insight Day (BBC, Central Square, Cardiff). **Date TBC**
- **2 February 2026:** R&D projects begin
- **30 April 2026:** R&D projects end
- **May 2026:** End of project review with BBC and Media Cymru

Media Cymru's definition of Research and Development (R&D)

R&D activities are defined as creative and systematic work undertaken to address challenges and to create new or improved products, services, processes or experiences.

In a media context, this could mean exploring, experimenting with or testing new technology such as extended reality, artificial intelligence or virtual production. It could also mean exploring radical, fairer and more planet-friendly ways of working. It could involve testing new methods of producing, distributing and experiencing content, or new ways of reaching audiences and being more sensitive to their needs and demands.

The kind of R&D projects we are looking for are:

- **Novel:** they will be based on original concepts and hypotheses, not obvious ones.
- **Creative:** they will take experimental approaches and generate new findings.

- **Uncertain:** they will begin with a degree of uncertainty about the final outcomes.
- **Systematic:** they will be based on a planned and budgeted approach.
- **Transferable:** they will generate results that can be reproduced to gain wider benefits.

Media Cymru's approach to Digital Innovation

Examples of digital innovation activities that would be eligible for R&D funding from Media Cymru include:

- Exploring and testing the use of new technologies such as AI
- New collaborations between television production companies and digital platform specialists
- Innovative approaches to storytelling
- Knowledge exchange activities, such as focus groups and workshops, designed to uncover new concepts, approaches or perspectives to inform the development of digital content
- Audience research that leads to conceptual innovation and/ or the production of digital content that reaches more diverse or underserved audiences
- Market research that leads to deeper understanding of global digital markets and the development of strategies for targeted economic growth.

Media Cymru Pillars

We are keen to support projects that address some, or all, of our four strategic pillars: Green, Fair, Global, Growth.

The Media Cymru programme strategic pillars are:

- [Green](#) reducing the negative environmental impact of the sector
- [Fair](#) - creating a fair, equal and diverse sector

- [Global](#) - increasing international collaborations
- [Growth](#) - driving growth and productivity through R&D

Responsibilities of the applicant

While we encourage collaborations, each project application must be led by one person or organisation. Depending on organisational type, the applicant must be legally entitled to work in the UK or be a UK-registered business or charity.

The lead applicant is responsible for:

- Acting as the 'contractual lead' or signatory to the Media Cymru Grant Agreement.
- Leading, managing and delivering the project in accordance with the agreed proposal and budget.
- Claiming and receiving grant funding and keeping appropriate financial records of all expenditure.
- Acting as the point of contact for reporting and monitoring on the project, liaising regularly with a dedicated Media Cymru team member.

Where the project is collaborative, and includes other co-applicants, the applicant will also be responsible for:

- Putting in place any necessary sub-contracting or collaboration agreements with co-applicants.
- Distributing funding to co-applicants in accordance with the agreed project budget.

The lead applicant will be required to provide assurance that they have a business bank account, can manage the cash flow requirements of their projects, and have appropriate financial processes in place to deliver projects in accordance with our funding terms and conditions.

Where a project is formed of a consortium of organisations, all collaborating organisations (or 'co-applicants') must be named in the project proposal.

We will perform due diligence checks on organisations as part of our project feasibility assessments. Outcomes are considered against the scale of funds requested and the duration of project activities. The applicant and co-applicants must be willing to submit supporting documents on request.

Any applicant must be eligible to receive funding in line with the Subsidy Control Act 2022 at the time we confirm you will be awarded funding.

Should you have any queries around managing finances, please contact media.cymru@cardiff.ac.uk and we will be happy to provide guidance.

Use of AI in Applications for Media Cymru Funding

In line with UKRI governance and research practice frameworks, all applicants are expected to be transparent when using generative AI tools during the application process. When applying for Media Cymru funding for R&D projects, all applicants should follow UKRI guidance on the [use of generative artificial intelligence in application preparation and assessment](#) and adhere to the applicant responsibilities.

Applicants are encouraged to consider AI tool bias and ensure compliance with all relevant intellectual property and data protection legislation. If you use generative AI in your application, there is an opportunity in the application questions below to provide further details about your AI use and how it complies with UKRI's guidance.

Ethics and Responsible Innovation

Media Cymru adheres to the highest possible standards when it comes to [research ethics](#). We have some fundamental values that guide our procedures, directly aligned with the main objectives of Media Cymru. Our commitment to high ethical standards also seeks to

inform, foster and support the R&D activities planned and developed by our funded projects. Following UKRI's [Responsible Innovation Framework](#) our assessment panels will consider the ethical impact of the proposed R&D project (including potentially unintended consequences). Please ensure that you take ethical considerations into account in your application particularly when demonstrating the potential economic, social, cultural and environmental impact of the proposed R&D project.

Subsidy Control

A subsidy is where a public authority provides support to an enterprise that gives an enterprise an economic advantage. Subsidies that are awarded, in compliance with the Subsidy Control Act 2022, provide a legitimate way for public funding to support economic activity.

The BBC Digital Innovation Fund support is offered in the form of a cash grant from Cardiff University, of up to £20,000. The grant will be awarded as **Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA)**.

Minimal Financial Assistance

Under MFA rules, public authorities can award up to £315,000 of MFA subsidy to an enterprise over an 'applicable period' of three financial years. This 'applicable period' is:

- the elapsed part of the current financial year ending 30 March (i.e., from April) and
- the two financial years immediately preceding the current financial year.

In the application you will be asked to declare your eligibility to receive funding via the MFA route. To establish your eligibility, we require you to confirm that the addition of our grant funding does not exceed your £315,000 limit for MFA across the 'applicable period' of three financial years.

When assessing the previous assistance that you may have received over the applicable period, please include the following:

- De Minimus Aid
- Small Amounts of Financial Assistance (SAFA) given as Special Drawing Rights (SDR)
- Services of Public Economic Interest (SPEI) Financial Assistance
- Minimal Financial Assistance

Prior award or notification letters from public authorities should clearly state the basis and date of award. If in doubt, you should contact the public authority granting the assistance to confirm its nature. You do not need to include assistance granted on a different basis - for example a grant made under the EU State Aid General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER).

When assessing MFA, **you must include all organisations in your group structure that operate under 'common control'**. Further details on this can be found in Annex 1 of the [Statutory Guidance](#) for the [UK Subsidy Control Act 2022](#), para 15.40-15.46, pp. 174-176.

If you are unsure about your obligations under the Subsidy Control Act 2022, you can find further information in the [Statutory Guidance](#), Chapter 7.

You may also wish to review the wider guidance materials available from the [Welsh Government Subsidy Control Unit](#), take independent legal advice. Cardiff University is unable to advise on individual eligibility or legal obligations.

Assessment Criteria

*To view the full online application form, please visit:
<https://media.cymru/projects/content-innovation-fund/>

Your application proposals will be assessed in four key areas:

1. Your R&D Idea

Your R&D idea must:

- Demonstrate innovative approaches to developing content for YouTube, which drives audiences to scripted and unscripted brands currently available on the BBC iPlayer
- Be able to function on YouTube

The BBC is interested in attracting both mainstream and new audiences, from all sections of society, with innovative and impactful content so we will consider how your idea might serve existing and new audiences.

2. How R&D Supports your Programme Idea

This is an opportunity to let us know what is innovative about your project. This is not an exhaustive list, but you may wish to research, develop, investigate, or test the following:

- New ways of generating and developing online content/format ideas
- New ways to engage and inform audiences online
- The use of new technologies or the use of graphics in a way that hasn't been seen before to help tell a story
- How audiences and audience behaviour might be changing to enhance development of innovative online content
- New methods of production, for example through crewing, editing processes, or a new type of collaboration etc., to develop innovative online content.

Media Cymru's definition of Research and Development and approach to digital innovation described in this guidance document above.

3. Project Impact

Your R&D activity will need to gather evidence that your online content idea will both engage and inform audiences.

4. Is the proposal achievable and realistic?

Is there a clear plan for your R&D that draws on appropriate expertise and takes into account other commitments on your time? We are looking for:

- Clear and achievable timescale for key deliverables
- Realistic level of risk
- Appropriate levels of experience and capability in the team
- Resource requirements including technological capability
- A realistic indicative budget

Application questions

Please note all applications must be submitted via the online form on our website:

<https://media.cymru/projects/content-innovation-fund/>

Should you wish to prepare your answers offline, the key application questions are*:

R&D Project details

1. Project title.

2. Write a summary of your content idea. (up to 250 words)

Your R&D idea must:

- Based on existing BBC Cymru Wales brands demonstrate innovative approaches to drive audiences back to iPlayer
- Must actively engage audiences on YouTube whilst maintaining its distinctive BBC Cymru Wales brand.

3. Write a summary of your research and development (R&D) project idea or approach, highlighting how it supports your content idea (up to 300 words).

4. The BBC is interested in attracting new audiences, from all parts of the community, with innovative and impactful content. Please outline the intended audience for your idea (up to 200 words).

5. How will your project fit within timeframe? Provide a basic timeline of activities, demonstrating how your project will be achievable within the 3-month timeframe.

It is important that you demonstrate a clear and achievable timescale for key deliverables. You may wish to simply use key dates and project milestones to answer this question.

6. What is your estimated budget for the R&D Phase?

We are offering funding of up to £20,000 for the R&D phase. You are currently applying for only the R&D phase.

7. Please provide an indication of the kind of costs you are likely to incur in the delivery of your project through the R&D phase.

(Note: This budget is provisional. You will be asked to provide a more detailed budget at a later stage if your application is successful, with guidance as needed.)

Project impact

8. Please explain how your R&D would have a positive impact on driving audiences back to BBC iPlayer (up to 200 words).

9. Have you used generative AI tools to write any elements of your Media Cymru funding application? Yes/No

If yes, please provide:

- The generative AI tools you used (e.g. ChatGPT, Claude, Copilot, Gemini).
- The specific purpose for which you used them.
- The steps you have taken to ensure compliance with [UKRI's guidance](#).

Previous work

Please show evidence of your track record in content production or provide a link to your company's portfolio and/or showreel.

Your details

- Name of lead company:
- Website:
- Address:
- Postcode:
- Email address:

Core team

- Lead
- Name:
- Employer:
- Job title:
- Briefly describe role on project:
- Email address:
- Other team members

Supporting documents

Diversity Monitoring

Please complete our anonymised Diversity Monitoring Form. This information helps us to understand the diversity of our applicants and funded organisations and to build an R&D programme which is representative of our communities within Wales.

