

Media Cymru × BBC Cymru Wales

Content Innovation Fund (Round 2)

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Overview

The second round of the Media Cymru BBC Content Innovation Fund invites Wales-based production companies to submit proposals for Research and Development (R&D) projects with a focus on innovative approaches to climate content. Successful applicants will develop programmes to engage and inform audiences across Wales and beyond with one of the most pressing issues of our times.

The Content Innovation Fund offers dedicated time and resource for Welsh indies to explore innovative ways of engaging audiences with the climate crisis. The fund is aligned with the BBC's Climate Creatives Strategy and responds to the [Climate Content Pledge](#) (signed by the BBC and other major broadcasters and streamers at COP26).

The fixed-time R&D project is designed to precede traditional development funding from a commissioner. Companies will be funded to research and develop an ambitious idea for climate content aimed at a mainstream audience, with innovation at its core, and with broad appeal for BBC One Wales or network. Ideas can relate to any genre: innovative approaches to climate content may be developed in genres such as drama, entertainment and comedy, as well as in traditional factual formats.

**The Content Innovation Fund will open on Wednesday 2 October 2024.
Applications close on Friday 8 November 2024, at noon.**

Up to five Wales-based companies will be chosen to develop ideas for a three-month R&D sprint that will take place between February and April 2025. Successful applicants will receive up to £20,000 each to carry out R&D sprints to develop a new idea and deliver a pitch deck and sample sequence.

At the start of the R&D sprints, there will be an Insight Day to provide companies with an opportunity to engage with the BBC's Climate Creatives strategy, and to discuss scientific perspectives on climate change and insights into how diverse audiences engage with climate content.

The fund may result in the BBC commissioning a programme idea. However, if the idea does not lead to a commission or further development funding from the BBC, companies will be free to retain their IP and develop the idea further with other broadcasters.

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:

- You have an idea for an innovative R&D project focused on climate content that is aligned with the BBC's Climate Creatives Strategy.
- Your project must be aimed at mainstream audiences, with broad appeal for BBC One Wales or network.
- Your company must be based in Wales and must qualify as a 'Regional Production' from Wales in accordance with the regional production criteria in [Ofcom's Guidance for public service broadcasters](#)
- Your company must have at least one television credit in the last six years.
- You are able to dedicate time and effort to complete a R&D project between February and April 2025.
- We will only accept and fund one application per individual/company/organisation as a project lead.

All application forms must be submitted online via our website:

www.media.cymru/funding/bbc-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

- **2 October 2024** – Applications open
- **8 November 2024** – Applications close at noon: please note, applications will not be accepted after this time
- **6 December 2024** – Applicants notified (applicants should note that it can take up to 5 weeks for contracts to be issued)
- **29 January 2025** – Insight Day (BBC, Central Square, Cardiff)
- **3 February 2025** – R&D projects begin
- **30 April 2025** – R&D projects end
- **May – June 2025** – possibility of BBC commissioning an idea (if not commissioned projects will be free to retain the IP and develop their projects with other partners)

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 content development

We welcome applications for R&D projects that explore innovative and novel approaches to content development, the creation of new media formats and

content production techniques. We do not, however, commission the development of commercial media content. What this means, in practice, is that the outcome of a Media Cymru R&D content development project is likely to be a prototype, proof of concept, pitch deck, sizzle reel or technical plan, rather than a finished pilot, programme or film.

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

- Exploring and testing the use of new technologies such as AI, advanced media production technologies, or XR technologies.
- New collaborations that span different creative sub-sectors such as television/ film production, gaming and live performance, to create new forms of convergent media content and distribution.
- 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 content.
- Audience research that leads to conceptual innovation and/ or the production of content that reaches more diverse or underserved audiences
- Market research that leads to deeper understanding of global 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.

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 Content Innovation Fund support is offered in the form of a cash grant from Cardiff University, of up to £20,000. There are two Subsidy Control routes under which the BBC Content Innovation Fund could be issued: **Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA)** or **Research, Development and Innovation Streamlined Subsidy Scheme (RDI SSS)**.

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](#), or take independent legal advice. Cardiff University is unable to advise on individual eligibility or legal obligations.

If this proposed amount exceeds £315,000, you may be eligible for the **Research, Development and Innovation Streamlined Subsidy Scheme** (or **RDI SSS**). Please contact media.cymru@cardiff.ac.uk for more information and guidance.

Research, Development and Innovation Streamlined Subsidy Scheme

Media Cymru support awarded as a cash grant under the Research, Development and Innovation Streamlined Subsidy Scheme (RDI SSS) is in accordance with Section 10 of the Subsidy Control Act 2022. In your application, you will be asked to declare your eligibility for RDI SSS and provide information that establishes how the project, your organisation and the level of funding meet the scheme criteria.

The maximum percentage of RDI SSS grant support Media Cymru can provide depends on the size of the company (as determined under Company Act 2006) and the category of research and development activity your project is proposing to deliver.

Qualifying criteria	Small enterprises	Medium-sized enterprises
Turnover	Not more than £10.2 million	Not more than £36 million
Balance Sheet Total	Not more than £5.1 million	Not more than £18 million
Number of Employees	Not more than 50	Not more than 250

Any companies that do not meet the criteria for small or medium are large companies. Further information is available under the [UK Government Companies House guidance](#).

Categories of research activity

Industrial research is the planned research or critical investigation that is aimed at the acquisition of new knowledge and skills for developing new products, processes, or services; or that is aimed at bringing about a significant improvement in existing products, processes, or services.

Experimental development means acquiring, combining, shaping, and using existing scientific, technological, business, and other relevant knowledge and skills with the aim of developing new or improved products, processes, or services.

Level of funding available

	Industrial Research	Experimental Development
Small Enterprises	70% of the eligible costs of the project	45% of the eligible costs of the project
Medium Enterprises	60 % of the eligible costs of the project	35% of the eligible costs of the project
Large Enterprises	50% of the eligible costs of the project	25% of the eligible costs of the project

Eligible costs

Media Cymru will provide you with a budget template to capture your total eligible costs. The maximum grant you can request is limited to the percentage of these costs as identified in the table above. All costs must be incurred as a direct result of the project, limited to those strictly necessary for the project, and incurred between the start and end date of the project.

Under the RDI SSS scheme, the following costs are eligible:

- Staff or personnel costs; researchers, technicians and other supporting staff to the extent employed on the project.
- Costs of equipment to the extent employed on the project.
- Costs of conducting research and of external consultancy and contractual research or other knowledge assets, including patents bought or licenced from outside sources.
- Project operating costs such as materials, supplies, and similar products.

- Overheads (your methodology or calculating these will need to be reviewed by Media Cymru).

If awarded funding under RDI SSS, we will ask you to evidence the costs that you have incurred when you claim the grant from us. Additional details and guidance on providing this financial information, evidence and retention policies will be provided upon confirmation of eligibility for RDI SSS.

The budget template will ask you to confirm other sources of income for the project. In addition, it will ask you to demonstrate how you will support the balance of project costs not covered by the grant, which is known as your **match funding**. The balance of costs you pay for, less any other sources of income/external funding for the project, is your match-funding contribution met from your own resources. Other income to support the project might include other sources of external funding from other cash investors or public grants.

The value of all public funding used to support the project must not exceed the percentage of the permitted subsidy. In-kind contributions to the project from third parties are **not** part of your eligible costs or match funding.

A member of our team will be happy to talk to you about your project ideas, fit to scheme requirements and budget queries. Please contact media.cymru@cardiff.ac.uk.

Assessment Criteria

Your application proposals will be assessed in four key areas:

1. **Your Programme Idea**

Your programme idea must:

- Relate to engaging and informing audiences about **climate change**
- Be able to function on a non-linear platform, e.g. BBC iPlayer, and not assume a television channel or timeslot.

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 programme/format ideas.
- New ways to engage and inform audiences about climate change.
- 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 in order to enhance development of innovative television content.
- New methods of production, for example through crewing, editing processes, or a new type of collaboration etc., in order to develop innovative television content.

Media Cymru's definition of Research and Development and approach to content development is described above.

3. Project Impact

Your R&D activity will need to gather evidence that your programme idea will both engage and inform audiences about key aspects of climate change.

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: www.media.cymru/funding/bbc-content-innovation-fund/

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

Criteria

- My enterprise (company or freelance) is based in Wales.
- My company has received a broadcast credit in the past six years.
- My company is eligible to receive grant funding awarded under Minimum Financial Assistance (please see grant funding eligibility criteria). Please get in touch to discuss alternative options if you are not eligible to receive funding under Minimum Financial Assistance.
- My company has availability and capacity to work on this project between February and April 2024.

R&D Project details

- **Project title.**
- **Write a summary of your programme idea.** (up to 250 words)

Your programme idea must:

- Relate to engaging and informing audiences about climate change
- Be able to function on a non-linear platform, e.g. BBC iPlayer, and not assume a television channel or timeslot.

- **Write a summary of your research and development (R&D) project idea or approach, highlighting how it supports your programme idea.** (up to 300 words)
- **The BBC is interested in attracting new audiences, from all sections of society, with innovative and impactful content. Please outline the intended audience for your idea.** (up to 200 words)
- **How will your project fit within timeframe? Provide a basic timeline of activities, demonstrating how your project will be achievable within the 2-3 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.

- **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. The commissioning phase will be subject to BBC Wales and/or BBC network's normal commissioning process.

- **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

- Please explain how your R&D and/or the programme would have a positive impact on public engagement with and understanding of climate change. (up to 200 words)

Previous work

- Please show evidence of your track record in production of factual content, or provide a link to your company's portfolio and/or showreel. Your company must have had a broadcast credit within the last six years.

Your details

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

Core team

- 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.

***To view the full application form, please visit the online form on our website:**
www.media.cymru/funding/bbc-content-innovation-fund/