

# Media Cymru x PDR x Alacrity Foundation

Seed Fund 2024 – Round two

**Developing innovation-driven products, services and experiences for the Welsh media sector**

## Table of Contents

<b>Overview</b> .....	2
<b>Accessibility</b> .....	3
<b>Key Dates</b> .....	3
<b>Media Cymru’s definition of R&amp;D</b> .....	3
<b>Media Cymru’s approach to content development</b> .....	4
<b>Portfolio approach</b> .....	5
<b>Media Cymru Pillars</b> .....	5
<b>Eligibility</b> .....	5
<b>Ideas Lab</b> .....	6
<b>Project support</b> .....	7
<b>Subsidy control</b> .....	7
<b>Minimal Financial Assistance</b> .....	7
<b>Ethics and Responsible Innovation</b> .....	10
<b>Potential further funding opportunity</b> .....	10
<b>Application assessment criteria</b> .....	10
<b>Application questions</b> .....	13
<b>Criteria</b> .....	13
<b>Enterprise</b> .....	13
<b>R&amp;D Project Details</b> .....	13
<b>FAQs</b> .....	15

## Overview

Media Cymru's aim is to support the growth of Wales's media sector by investing in Research and Development (R&D) to deliver transformative economic and social impacts.

We want to invest in people and companies that can match global competitors in their scale of innovation ambition and skills. The Media Cymru Seed Fund enables Wales based individuals and companies to apply for up to £10,000 to research and develop innovation-driven products, services and experiences within the media sector.

We would like you to set out a potential challenge, issue or opportunity you would like to explore through R&D during a three to five-month project. At Seed Fund stage we do not expect you to have a finished idea for a product or service in mind, but you do have to understand the problem you want to address. We are looking for ideas that have long-term potential for you or your business beyond the life of the project with Media Cymru.

By the end of the project, you will have the foundations of a business plan, a financial forecast and a pitch deck that will enable you to pitch for funding to investors. You may also be eligible to apply for up to £50,000 of Media Cymru Development Funding to take your idea to the next level.

### **Your project can focus on one or more of the following:**

- New media formats and the development of innovative content
- Advanced media production, including the convergence of virtual production and traditional production
- New and inclusive media business models and production processes
- Net zero and the decarbonisation of the screen sector (projects that respond to the findings of the [Screen New Deal Transformation Plan for Wales](#) are particularly welcome)
- Immersive storytelling through Extended Reality (XR) technologies, including Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR) and Mixed Reality (MR)
- Video game content and production, including convergence with other media

- Artificial Intelligence (AI) and other technologies as tools for media production
- Placemaking, including cultural and media tourism
- Bilingual and multilingual production
- News and public information
- Music, voice and audio production, including performance and distribution

This list is not intended to be exhaustive or limiting.

The Seed Fund is **not** suitable for:

- Generic content development (for example, the development of short films, feature films or television pilots that conform to standard genres and storytelling practices)
- General business development, or
- One-off art commissions

## 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](mailto:media.cymru@cardiff.ac.uk) or phone 02922 511 434.

## Key Dates

- **7 October 2024** – Applications open
- **31 October 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)
- **21-23 January 2025** – Ideas Lab Workshop (Excelsior Rd, Cardiff CF14 3AT)
- **3 February 2025** – Projects begin.

## Media Cymru's definition of 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

## Portfolio approach

We want to fund a variety of projects across different technologies, markets, technological maturities, location and research categories. We call this a portfolio approach.

Following Media Cymru assessment, all fundable applications will be considered by a panel of independent advisors and relevant members of the Media Cymru Delivery Team. The panel will review the applications in line with the Portfolio Criteria and recommend to Media Cymru which projects would make up a balanced portfolio across the programme's four strategic pillars (see below). That recommendation will inform Media Cymru's final decision on funding awards.

## 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 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

## 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.

We welcome applications from different sizes and types of organisations including micro-businesses, sole-traders and freelancers.

Eligibility criteria:

- Your company or practice is based in Wales.
- You have a clearly articulated R&D idea.
- You are in the Welsh media industry, or your idea directly benefits the Welsh media industry.
- You can dedicate time and effort to complete an R&D project between January and June 2024.
- We will only accept and fund one application per/company/organisation as a project lead.

## Ideas Lab

All successful Seed Fund applicants are required to attend a three-day Ideas Lab workshop taking place in Cardiff between Tuesday 21 and Thursday 23 January 2025. **Attendance is mandatory and all applicants will need to attend to secure funding for seed projects.** The workshop is led by [PDR](#) International Centre for Design and Research and [The Alacrity Foundation UK](#).

The course will cover:

- Understanding R&D and how to apply it to an idea
- The value of iterative testing, collaboration and user centred design
- Business development and entrepreneurship
- Encouraging thinking around how to launch a product and generate public/private funding

On completion, participants will understand how to translate ideas into innovative proposals that incorporate the needs of end users.

A bursary of £500 will be provided to all attendees of the Ideas Lab workshop, in addition to the funding awarded for your seed project.

## Project support

If successful, participants will benefit from three mandatory sessions (totaling six hours), plus an optional session (two hours) with world leading design consultancy and applied research facility [PDR](#). These sessions will be to support you on your innovation journey and are based around established methodology for developing an approach to R&D projects:

**Session one:** Challenge and plan

**Session two:** Making sense of research data

**Session three:** Findings - Feasibility and next steps

There will also be three mandatory support sessions (totaling six hours) from [The Alacrity Foundation](#) providing business development and commercialisation expertise to projects.

Where appropriate, the Media Cymru team will seek to supplement this by drawing on experience from the [Media Cymru Innovation Spaces](#) project.

Projects will also be supported by a Producer from Media Cymru.

## 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.

Media Cymru Seed Fund support is offered as a Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) Subsidy, in the form of a cash grant from Cardiff University. It will also include the cash grant equivalent support value from PDR and Alacrity Foundation and the £500 bursary for mandatory attendance on the Ideas Lab course. The total MFA value of the grant and support is up to £15,000.

## 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.

## 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](mailto: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.

## Potential further funding opportunity

substantial, contestable Development Fund in spring 2025 (with funding up to £50,000).

Successful applicants to the October 2024 Seed Fund call will have the opportunity to apply for the

This closed Development Fund call will run in addition to an open Development Fund call in February 2025 but will provide a ringfenced opportunity for Seed projects starting in February 2025 to progress through the Media Cymru Innovation Pipeline.

All applications to the closed Development Fund call will be assessed following the same process and standards as open funding calls. For Development Fund project applications to be funded, they will need to develop an R&D project that demonstrate clear potential for a tangible product or service.

Successful applicants to the October 2024 Seed Fund call will be provided with further information in early 2025.

## Application assessment criteria

Your application proposals will be assessed in five key areas:

### **1. Your R&D idea**

We want you to clearly explain the opportunity, challenge or gap in the market that you have identified and why you believe that R&D would support your idea.

## **2. The R&D activities you would like to do**

We define R&D as a systematic process of conducting research as you develop your new product, service or experience. R&D often begins with an identifiable problem, need or opportunity, rather than assuming a solution. The R&D process then allows you to identify how best to address that problem or need. You may have good ideas about how best to do this but expect these to change or evolve as part of the R&D process. Please also carefully consider the potential ethical impacts of the innovation to sector growth and social, cultural or environmental approaches.

This is your opportunity to outline the areas of work that you would like to explore as part of this project. Be realistic here in terms of what you can achieve in the timeframe with the resource available.

## **3. Achievability of your proposed timeline**

Within your application you should demonstrate that the proposed R&D draws on appropriate expertise and considers time management that gives us confidence that you are able to deliver within the proposed duration of the project.

Please also include the **mandatory 12 hours of activity** with PDR and The Alacrity Foundation in your plan.

## **4. Budget and finances**

At this stage we will only be asking for indicative costs. You will be asked to provide a more detailed budget at a later stage if your application is successful.

Funding is provided specifically for R&D activity. Example costs could include staff time, consumables, subcontracts, travel and subsistence, equipment purchases and rental. **We do not fund business as usual activity.** For example, funding is not provided for marketing and communications activity or work undertaken to build or develop a website that is not directly related to your R&D project.

Please consider the work you would like to undertake and who will be conducting this work. You should also note the requirement for the mandatory 12 hours of activity with PDR and The Alacrity Foundation to ensure the time for this is budgeted.

## **5. Potential impact**

**a. Economic impact (our Growth pillar)**

The economic benefit of your R&D activity may be that:

- It enables the growth of your company (or the creation of a new company)
- It gives you a competitive advantage by increasing your efficiency
- It creates broader economic benefits in the Welsh media sector.

Your response could refer to:

- Amount of spend in Wales
- Reduced costs / increased production efficiency
- Increased use of research infrastructure
- Increased revenue from sales, licensing, or exports
- Creation of a new business model
- Improved quality of products, services and/or experiences
- Increased employment of new staff
- Increased efficiency
- Development of new Intellectual Property (IP)
- Exploitation of existing IP.

The more tangible and ambitious these benefits are, the better a project will score against these criteria.

**b. Social and cultural impact (our Fair pillar)**

You need to consider the social and cultural impact of your R&D activity. Impacts here may include:

- Enhancing or developing the representation of Welsh culture, language, stories, landscapes
- Reaching underserved or diverse audiences or markets
- Increasing equality of access to the media sector
- Increasing people's levels of wellbeing or quality of life.

**c. Environmental impact (our Green pillar)**

You need to consider the environmental impact of your R&D activity. Impacts may include:

- Contribution to net zero targets
- Having a positive environmental impact for you/your company/wider industry
- Increasing audience awareness of the climate emergency

## Application questions

**Please note all applications must be submitted via the online form on our website:** <https://media.cymru/funding/seed-fund/>

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

### Criteria

- My enterprise (company or freelance) is based in Wales.
- I/My company is eligible to receive grant funding awarded under Minimum Financial Assistance. (please see grant funding eligibility criteria).
- I/My company has availability and capacity to work on this project between January and June 2025.

### Enterprise

- Please introduce us to yourself/company/organisation and the work that you currently undertake. (max. 250 words).

### R&D Project Details

- Project Title
- Please provide a short description of your project. This may be used by our comms team to announce successful projects. (max 50 words)
- Please write a summary of the opportunity, challenge or gap in the market you would like to explore through your Seed Fund project. (max. 250 words)

- Please tell us about the R&D activities you would like to undertake during this project and how this supports the opportunity, challenge or gap in the market you have identified. (max. 300 words)
- What is your proposed duration for the project in months? (in months)  
Choose 3, 4 or 5 months.
- Please demonstrate how your R&D project activities are achievable in the timeframe you have proposed. (max. 100 words).  
It is important that you demonstrate a clear and achievable timescale for key deliverables. You may wish to 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 £10,000 for the R&D phase.
- Please provide an indication of the kind of costs you are likely to incur during the R&D phase. (max. 100 words).  
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.
- Please explain how your R&D project might have a positive economic impact. This can include the impact for you, your company or the sector. (max. 100 words).  
Your response could refer to:
  - Amount of spend in Wales
  - Reduced costs or increased production efficiency
  - Increased use of research infrastructure
  - Increased revenue from sales
  - Increased revenue from licensing
  - Increased revenue from exports
  - New business model
  - Improved quality of products, services and experiences
  - Increased employment of other staff
  - Reduced employment (due to efficiencies)
  - Development of new Intellectual Property (IP)
  - Exploitation of existing IP.
- Please explain how your project will have a positive social and cultural impact. (max. 100 words)  
You may discuss outcomes such as:

- Enhancing or developing the representation of Welsh culture, language, stories or landscapes
  - Increasing diversity of, and access to, the sector
  - Reaching new, underserved, and diverse audiences or markets
  - Improving people's quality of life
  - Other social or cultural benefits.
- Please explain how your project will have a positive environmental impact. (max. 100 words)

You may discuss outcomes such as:

- Reduced environmental impact on your company and the sector as a result of this work
- Lowering emissions
- Reduced transport use
- Reducing or repurposing materials
- More energy-efficient processes.

## FAQs

### **What amount of funding does Media Cymru offer?**

Media Cymru will provide up to £10,000 seed funding towards a three to five-month R&D project.

### **I have applied for Media Cymru Funding previously, can I apply again?**

Yes. Any application for Media Cymru funding must address the application assessment criteria and directly answer and evidence the questions in the application form (see above).

### **Can projects be collaborations between multiple partners?**

Yes. We encourage collaborations, but each project application must be led by one person or organisation.

### **Can my project include additional funding or grants not provided by Media Cymru?**

All costs must be clearly defined in your project budget and should be clear which project costs are met using Media Cymru funding. If your project includes additional funding that is not provided by Media Cymru, this should also be clearly specified in your budget. Throughout your project the Media Cymru delivery team will monitor your project budget with you during regular milestone meetings.

**Do I have to attend the Ideas Lab workshop?**

Yes. Attendance is mandatory and all applicants will need to attend to secure funding for seed projects. The workshop will introduce you to PDR and Alacrity, who will support you throughout your project, and help you translate ideas into innovative projects.

