



EVALUATION OF THE BMAP-FORWARD ACTIVITY

JUNE 10, 2024

This publication is made possible by the support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and was prepared by Integra Government Services International LLC for the Europe and Eurasia / Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, and Decision Support (EE/MELDS) Activity.

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF THE BMAP-FORWARD ACTIVITY

Contract Title: Europe and Eurasia / Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Decision Support (EE/MELDS)

Contract Number: GS-10F-083CA / 7200AA22M00013

Activity Number: EE/MELDS – 1022.1005

Submitted: June 10, 2024

Contractor: Integra Government Services International LLC
1156 15th Avenue NW, Suite 800
Washington, DC 20005

USAID Office: USAID/Europe and Eurasia Bureau

COR: Kraemer Lovelace, klovelace@usaid.gov

Photo Credit: Internews

This publication is made possible by the support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and was prepared by Integra Government Services International LLC for the Europe and Eurasia / Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, and Decision Support (EE/MELDS) Activity.

ABSTRACT

Activity Description: The Balkan Media Assistance Program to Foster Organizational Readiness While Advancing Resilient Development (BMAP-FORWARD) is a \$13 million regional Activity (2022-2028) that aims to strengthen the independence and resilience of media outlets in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia.

Evaluation Purpose: USAID/Europe and Eurasia Bureau requested a mid-term performance evaluation of BMAP-FORWARD to understand which approaches, tools, and interventions are successfully contributing to planned outcomes according to the Activity’s three key objectives: 1) Increase strategic business practices of key media partners to operate as viable enterprises and better understand their markets and audiences; 2) Reinforce the ability of content producers to produce data-driven content, engage wider audiences, improve digital security efforts, and expand reach across the region; and 3) Foster stronger partnerships between media outlets and the technology, commercial, and entrepreneurial sectors to advance solutions on common challenges in the information space.

Evaluation Design: Mixed methods and non-experimental evaluation design approaches, including Expert Consultations and Outcome Harvesting, were employed to collect and analyze primary and secondary data, including reviewing 140 documents, conducting 51 key informant interviews with experts, 47 in-depth interviews with recipients of assistance, an online Expert Survey (n=63), and conducting 13 interviews and an online validation survey (n=48) to substantiate outcome stories. All data were triangulated to inform the evidence base to develop each finding and conclusion.

Key Findings: BMAP-FORWARD’s tailored and localized approach is a key strength of its ability to provide effective, useful, and timely assistance, which has strengthened Key Media Partners’ (KMPs’) shift towards strategic planning, ability to pursue diversified revenue sources, improve content production and technology use to engage wider audiences, produce data-driven content using new software, and engage in cross-border collaborations. BMAP-FORWARD assistance has strengthened KMPs’ digital security practices and protocols, although with room for improvement to sustain this support. While BMAP-FORWARD has made inroads to foster partnerships between media and non-traditional actors, key factors inhibit progress towards this Activity Objective (Objective 3).

Key Recommendations: BMAP-FORWARD should: 1) continue to employ the highly tailored approach to learn KMPs’ needs, co-create solutions and action plans, identify resources to implement solutions, and present new ideas; 2) consider providing more opportunities for intentional engagement for peer-to-peer learning for newsroom staff from different outlets, including non-KMPs and different media across the region; 3) consider investing in strengthening in-house expertise capacity or identify long-term solutions for each KMP to navigate the evolving digital security challenges; and 4) consider designing and marketing sessions at forums geared towards facilitating potential partnerships between private sector actors and KMPs, which can be followed by ongoing assistance to support KMPs in navigating how to structure partnerships.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	4
TABLE OF FIGURES	6
ACRONYMS	7
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	8

I. INTRODUCTION	13
1.1 REGIONAL CONTEXT	13
1.2 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION	14
2. EVALUATION PURPOSE AND QUESTIONS	16
2.1 EVALUATION PURPOSE	16
2.2 EVALUATION QUESTIONS	17
3. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY	17
3.1 EVALUATION DESIGN	17
3.2 DATA COLLECTION METHODS	19
3.3 DATA ANALYSIS	20
4. FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	20
4.1 CROSS-CUTTING FINDINGS	20
4.2 EVALUATION QUESTION 1:	25
4.3 EVALUATION QUESTION 2:	31
4.4 EVALUATION QUESTION 3:	40
4.5 EVALUATION QUESTION 4:	47
ANNEX A: EVALUATION SCOPE OF WORK	53
ANNEX B: ACTIVITY AUTHORIZATION REQUEST	56
ANNEX C: EVALUATION METHODS AND LIMITATIONS	68
ANNEX D: EVALUATION TIMELINE	77
ANNEX E: EVALUATION DESIGN MATRIX	78
ANNEX F: DATA COLLECTION TOOLS	80
ANNEX G: SOURCES OF INFORMATION	111
ANNEX H: DATA COLLECTION ITINERARY	117
ANNEX I: SURVEY RESULTS	123
ANNEX J: EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS	173
ANNEX K: FINDING, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATION TABLE	177

TABLE OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1: OVERVIEW OF EVALUATION DESIGN PROCESS	18
FIGURE 2: SUBSTANTIATION SURVEY RESULTS TO THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT: THE BMAP-FORWARD STAFF IS QUICK AND EFFECTIVE IN RESPONDING TO MY/OUR COMPANY'S NEEDS AND REQUESTS.	22
FIGURE 3: PERCENT CHANGE IN AUDIENCE REACH FROM BASELINE TO Y2Q4	31
FIGURE 4: SUBSTANTIATION SURVEY RESULTS TO T: BMAP-FORWARD TRAINING AND EXPERT CONSULTATIONS HAVE HELPED ME / MY COMPANY TO PRODUCE CONTENT IN NEWER OR MORE IMPROVED DIGITAL FORMS.	32
FIGURE 5: SUBSTANTIATION SURVEY RESULTS TO: BECAUSE OF TECHNICAL AND/OR GRANT SUPPORT RECEIVED FROM BMAP-FORWARD, I / MY COMPANY HAVE IMPROVED OUR DIGITAL SECURITY PRACTICES AND PROTOCOLS.	41
FIGURE 6: SUBSTANTIATION SURVEY RESULTS TO: THE SAFETAG SECURITY AUDIT AND SUBSEQUENT ASSISTANCE WERE EFFECTIVE IN STRENGTHENING OUR COMPANY'S DIGITAL SECURITY NEEDS.	42
FIGURE 7: SUBSTANTIATION SURVEY RESULTS: [BMAP-FORWARD] GRANT ASSISTANCE ENABLED US TO STRENGTHEN OUR DIGITAL SECURITY PROTOCOLS AND/OR PRACTICES.	44
FIGURE 8: SUBSTANTIATION SURVEY RESULTS: BMAP-FORWARD HAS ENCOURAGED ME / MY COMPANY TO PURSUE PARTNERSHIPS WITH ENTREPRENEURS, COMMERCIAL AND TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES.	48
FIGURE 9: SURVEY RESULTS TO: "WHAT FACTORS INHIBIT OR CHALLENGE SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN THE MEDIA AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR?"	50
FIGURE 10: SURVEY RESULTS TO: "I / MY COMPANY AM (IS) NOT INTERESTED IN PURSUING PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR FOR VARIOUS REASONS..	51
FIGURE 11. OVERVIEW OF EVALUATION DESIGN PROCESS	68

ACRONYMS

AI	Artificial Intelligence
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
BMAP	Balkan Media Assistance Program
BMAP-FORWARD	Balkan Media Assistance Program to Foster Organizational Readiness While Advancing Resilient Development
EC	European Commission
EE/MELDS	Europe and Eurasia / Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, and Decision Support
EED	European Endowment for Democracy
EQ	Evaluation Question
ET	Evaluation Team
EU	European Union
FCR	Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations
GIZ	German Agency for International Cooperation
HRSM	Human Rights Support Mechanism
IP	Implementing Partner
IT	Information Technology
KII	Key Informant Interview
KMP	Key Media Partner
LOE	Level of Effort
MDIF	Media Development Investment Fund
MIL	Media Innovation Lab
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NED	National Endowment for Democracy
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PIP	Performance Improvement Plan
PROGRESS	Protecting Global Rights Through Sustainable Solutions Consortium
RRG	Risk Reduction Grants
TOC	Theory of Change
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USAID/E&E	USAID/Europe and Eurasia
USG	US Government

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND: The United States Agency for International Development USAID/Europe and Eurasia (USAID/E&E) Bureau requested a mid-term performance evaluation of the Balkan Media Assistance Program to Foster Organizational Readiness While Advancing Resilient Development (BMAP-FORWARD), implemented by Internews, with respect to the period from February 2022 through March 2024. Building upon the success of the first Balkan Media Assistance Program (BMAP) activity, BMAP-FORWARD is a US\$13 million, six-year project (February 2022 to February 2028)¹ that aims to strengthen media resilience and expand audiences in the digital space in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia through three key objectives:

1. Increase strategic business practices of key media partners (KMPs) to operate as viable enterprises and better understand their markets and audiences.
2. Reinforce the ability of content producers to produce data-driven content, engage wider audiences, improve digital security efforts, and expand reach across the region.
3. Foster stronger partnerships between media outlets and the technology, commercial, and entrepreneurial sectors to advance solutions on common challenges in the information space.

EVALUATION PURPOSE: This evaluation assessed the extent to which BMAP-FORWARD's approaches, tools, and interventions were influencing the Activity's performance at this mid-term stage with respect to specific outcomes aligned with BMAP-FORWARD's three main activity objectives. Four evaluation questions guided this evaluation:

1. To what extent are BMAP-FORWARD approaches, tools, and interventions influencing KMPs' business practices and abilities to understand markets and ensure revenue diversification?
2. To what extent are BMAP-FORWARD approaches, tools, and interventions influencing the ability of content producers to produce data-driven content, engage wider audiences, and expand reach across the region?
3. To what extent are BMAP-FORWARD approaches, tools, and interventions influencing KMPs' digital security?
4. What factors influence partnerships between media outlets and the technology, commercial, and entrepreneurial sectors?

METHODOLOGY: The USAID Europe and Eurasia Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Decision Support (EE/MELDS) evaluation team (ET) combined two approaches to guide its mixed method and non-experimental design: Expert Consultations and Outcome Harvesting. The ET reviewed over 140 documents as a part of a rigorous desk review to inform this evaluation. Additionally, the ET deployed multiple methods for primary data collection. Primary data were collected in person and remotely across BiH, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and other countries from March 4 to April 12, 2024. As a part of the Expert Consultations, the ET deployed an online perception-based survey (n=63, response rate=70 percent) and conducted key informant interviews with identified stakeholders, such as USAID/US Government (USG) staff (n=13), Implementing Partner (IP) staff and consultants (n=21), Other Donors and Agency Representatives (n=16), and Private Sector Actors (n=1) across the Western Balkans. As a part of the Outcome Harvesting approach, the ET conducted in-depth interviews with recipients of the

¹ The BMAP-FORWARD activity was originally funded for five years (February 2022 to February 2027) for US\$10 million, but the activity received a cost extension in Year 2 Quarter 3.

Activity's assistance, including KMP staff (n=35) and non-KMP grantees (n=12). The ET then verified findings from these in-depth interviews via a Substantiation Phase by conducting individual interviews with select KMP staff (n=10) and non-KMP grantees (n=3) and an online Perception Survey (n=48, response rate=50 percent) to validate outcome stories. The ET analyzed primary quantitative data using descriptive statistics and qualitative data using content and thematic analysis techniques. All collected data were triangulated to inform the evidence base to develop each finding presented in this report.

KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS:

CROSS-CUTTING: As a regional program, BMAP-FORWARD's tailored and localized approach to working with KMPs is a key strength of its ability to provide effective, useful, and timely assistance, as reported by KMP staff across all KMPs. BMAP-FORWARD's staff and leadership team are equipped with the necessary capacity, expertise, and experience to facilitate trusted and effective assistance to KMPs and coordination with other stakeholders, as underscored by a KMP staff member from Serbia, who said, *"Perhaps the greatest value of the [BMAP-FORWARD] team members is that they are well acquainted with the media, so there is no need to further explain activities."* At this early stage in the Activity's implementation, few areas require major adjustments, with various stakeholders suggesting that the activity could embed attention to professionalism and ethics in journalism and media in the existing assistance.

EVALUATION QUESTION 1: BMAP-FORWARD's tailored assistance has helped KMPs shift towards strategic, operational planning and pursue more commercially oriented practices. As an illustrative example, a staff member from BiH said, *"We developed our strategic plan with the help of an expert from [BMAP-FORWARD], where we can follow our development and whether we can reach our strategic plans [for 2027]. This was crucial also for our organizational planning and strategic thinking."* These strategic efforts are now manifested in KMPs' actions targeting growth, expansion, and increased business sustainability to meet their goals. According to Activity monitoring data, eight of 14 KMPs (with available data) increased their total sales and revenue (minus funding from USG grants) from Year 1 to Year 2. Looking ahead, most KMPs now seek diversified revenue sources to become less donor-reliant, although their abilities to diversify revenue vary based on their size, capacity, and ability to navigate external challenges.

EVALUATION QUESTION 2: BMAP-FORWARD's assistance has supported KMPs in expanding their reach and engaging wider audiences. All KMPs reported increases in audience reach between Year 1 and Year 2, and four KMPs reported increases of over 200 percent. BMAP-FORWARD's tailored approach to working with each KMP individually has enabled BMAP-FORWARD and KMPs to target their time, engagement, and resources and effectively contribute to the KMPs' goals and interests in expanding their reach. Specifically, creative content grants, artificial intelligence (AI)-powered translation tools, data analytics tools like SmartOcto², and technical assistance to improve content production effectively strengthen KMP capacity. KMP staff across all five countries agreed or strongly agreed that BMAP-FORWARD training and expert consultations improved their ability to produce content in newer or more improved digital forms, and with the exception of staff from KMPs in Serbia (who were neutral), staff from KMPs agreed or strongly agreed that using SmartOcto strengthened the integration of data analytics to inform editorial decisions.

Issues with BMAP-FORWARD staff bandwidth and resources may impact the effectiveness of the assistance provided. Staff ensured that trainings were highly tailored to the respective participants' skills and needs and always offered opportunities to hear feedback and iterate the session based on feedback.

² SmartOcto is a software platform designed to help publishers optimize content strategy and performance using tools and analytics aimed at understanding user behavior, identifying trending topics, and improving engagement.

BMAP-FORWARD facilitated cross-border engagement among media actors through various tools and approaches, including the integration of AI-powered translation, the More than a Quota Initiative project, the Media Innovation Lab, and fostering media-to-media partnerships. While the Balkansmedia.org platform³ was acknowledged as very useful by those who use it, it may be limited in its reach and could be strengthened to have a wider impact to facilitate more cross-border engagement.

EVALUATION QUESTION 3: BMAP-FORWARD's highly tailored assistance was well-received in addressing KMPs' digital security and digital hygiene concerns as it met KMPs' specific needs and aligned with their existing protocols. Staff from 12 KMPs observed improvements in how their respective KMP was able to identify, respond to, and resolve digital security challenges as a result of the BMAP-FORWARD technical assistance and grant funding, as was validated by results from the Substantiation Survey.

Training and capacity-building efforts revealed some observable improvements in organizational digital hygiene behaviors, particularly among newsroom staff, for increased awareness and adoption of digital security practices. For instance, a KMP staff member from BiH noted that the digital security trainings were *"important for our members...[there has been] a change in awareness of [our] members about digital security...how they use their telephones; many no longer use Viber but other applications. It is still in the beginning and more trainings are needed."*

Several challenges may undermine the sustainability of improved digital security protocols and practices over the long term, especially as adopting best practices or risk management strategies is a daily and ever-evolving task.

EVALUATION QUESTION 4: Many stakeholders were generally unaware of BMAP-FORWARD's specific interventions or activities that promote or foster partnerships between KMPs and non-traditional partners. For example, when asked about BMAP-FORWARD's activities to foster partnerships among KMPs and the private sector, a USG staff said they could not comment because they were unaware of anything of that nature.

Multiple factors hinder the ability to foster partnerships between the media and private sectors in the Western Balkans. For example, Some KMP staff explained they were hesitant to engage in non-traditional partnerships due to concerns about losing editorial independence, while others reported a perceived lack of expertise to engage in topics that interest the private sector, such as open data tools, reducing their involvement in potentially beneficial collaborations. Another KMP staff stated, *"Unfortunately, the limited size and relative weakness of our local business sector haven't presented an opportunity for more collaborative partnership based on shared interests."* Other stakeholders observed a *"general lack of understanding about the mutual benefits of partnerships between KMPs and the private sector."*

While real barriers exist to establishing partnerships between the media and the private sector, some media outlets remain interested in exploring potential opportunities.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

CROSS-CUTTING RECOMMENDATIONS

- I. BMAP-FORWARD should continue to employ the highly tailored and localized approach to working with KMPs to learn their needs, co-create solutions and action plans, identify resources to implement solutions, and present new ideas.

³ Launched in 2018, the Balkansmedia.org platform serves as a multilingual regional resource for local media outlets and professionals. It offers a blend of training materials, analytical information, and real-time support to help contextualize emerging trends and promote peer-to-peer exchanges. All content is translated and available on the Balkansmedia website and social media in Albanian, B/C/M/S, and Macedonian languages (BMAP-Forward Year 2 Workplan, p. 10).

2. Reconsider BMAP-FORWARD staff allocation for coordination with other donor-funded programming, bilateral Activities, and in countries without bilateral Activities— i.e., Kosovo and Montenegro— to maximize efficiency and effectiveness to deliver on BMAP-FORWARD's objectives.
3. Consider further strengthening adherence to professional standards among KMPs and other grantees and adding segments on challenges to journalistic integrity during existing technical assistance activities.

EVALUATION QUESTION 1 RECOMMENDATIONS

4. Continue to provide tailored assistance to KMPs to build their capacity for designing and implementing strategic plans. Offer proactive support through expert assistance, grant funding, or other resources, especially to smaller, donor-reliant KMPs. Consider creating template Action Plans to guide smaller KMPs in developing their strategic plans. This support should be higher-touch for smaller KMPs.
5. Continue to provide high-touch and tailored support for KMPs to identify and pursue new sources of revenue, particularly for non-profit KMPs or those that are more nascent in their shift to commercial approaches.
6. For smaller investigative outlets that are hesitant to monetize their work, continue to brainstorm and work with such KMPs to identify, design, and implement strategic approaches to crowdsourcing, fundraising, or alternative means of strategically diversifying funding sources to reduce reliance on donor funding.

EVALUATION QUESTION 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

7. Continue to deliver highly tailored training and technical assistance, ensuring feedback mechanisms are in place to assess effectiveness.
8. Consider providing more opportunities for intentional engagement for knowledge transfer and peer-to-peer learning for journalists and newsroom staff from different outlets, including non-KMPs and different media across the region.
9. Consider developing recorded versions of capacity-building efforts and trainings to offer newsroom staff the option to participate asynchronously.
10. Continue exploring avenues to expand the promotion and reach of the Balkansmedia.org platform to the extent reasonable. In addition to upcoming planned activities for Year 3 to test a LinkedIn newsletter and survey to assess the newsletter's effectiveness, BMAP-FORWARD should consider other modes of promotion, particularly beyond the KMP and grantee network. Additionally, consider designing a sustainability strategy and plan for the Balkansmedia.org platform.

EVALUATION QUESTION 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

11. Consider intentionally promoting peer-to-peer learning events to exchange knowledge and best practices among KMPs, particularly newsroom staff, to foster a culture of continuous learning and improvement around organizational digital hygiene.
12. Consider investing in strengthening the capacity of in-house expertise or identifying long-term solutions for each KMP to navigate the evolving digital security challenges.
13. Consider strengthening the sustainability of capacity-building efforts, such as producing standalone manuals that promote how to develop and implement best policies and practices for digital security and risk mitigation. Sustainability plans could be co-designed with KMPs when reviewing

SAFETAG results to map how best policies and practices will be implemented and enforced in the long term.

EVALUATION QUESTION 4 RECOMMENDATIONS

14. Strengthen communication of outcomes and challenges associated with activities conducted under Objective 3 specific to those focused on facilitating partnerships among KMPs and private sector/nontraditional actors, particularly among USG and KMP staff.
15. Develop workshops to enhance dialogue and transparency between media and business sectors, fostering trust and aligning their priorities. Additionally, consider launching a project incubator to nurture innovative media-business partnerships that uphold journalistic integrity.
16. Continue organizing events like the Media Innovation Lab and Annual Media Forum, along with smaller gatherings, to convene media and non-traditional actors. Consider intentionally designing and marketing sessions that promote opportunities for non-traditional and media actors to engage, providing ongoing support to help KMPs structure these collaborations for mutual benefit.

I. INTRODUCTION

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID)/Europe and Eurasia (USAID/E&E) Bureau requested a mid-term performance evaluation of the Balkan Media Assistance Program to Foster Organizational Readiness While Advancing Resilient Development (BMAP-FORWARD) implemented by Internews. This evaluation focused on the period from February 2022 through March 2024.

I.1 REGIONAL CONTEXT

A mix of challenges and progress has long characterized the media landscape in the Western Balkans. Concerns persist over media freedom, political interference, human rights, economic pressures, ownership issues, and journalist safety. Governments limit press freedom, with many outlets politically aligned or influenced by business interests, affecting editorial independence.⁴ Political and economic transitions and European Union (EU) integration obstacles affect the region's media. The rise of online media brings disinformation and misinformation, impacting public discourse.⁵ Russian propaganda, particularly through Serbian media, promotes anti-Western views, detracting from domestic reform failures.⁶ The environment for independent media is worsening.⁷ International efforts, including those from USAID, the EU, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), European

⁴ Human Rights Watch. 2015. "Western Balkans: Media Freedom Under Threat," July 15, 2015.

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/07/15/western-balkans-media-freedom-under-threat>

⁵ Sunter, Daniel. 2020. "NATO Review - Disinformation in the Western Balkans." NATO Review. December 21, 2020.

<https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2020/12/21/disinformation-in-the-western-balkans/index.html>

⁶ European Western Balkans. March 1, 2024: <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2024/03/01/russian-state-media-in-serbia-support-the-government-with-anti-western-narratives/>; VOA, May 16, 2024; <https://www.glasamerike.net/a/sloboda-medija-srbija-ruska-propaganda-elizabet-alen-stejt-department-glas-amerike/7614786.html>; Autonomija.info, May 16, 2024: <https://autonomija.info/americka-podsekretarka-zabrinuti-smo-zbog-ruske-propagande-u-srpskim-medijima/>; Independent

Journalists' Association of Serbia (IJAS), August 3, 2022: <https://nuns.rs/ruski-uticaj-na-medije-u-srbiji-omiljene-lazne-vesti-i-propagandne-konstrukcije/>. Please note that some of the content is in the local language.

⁷ World Press Freedom Index: <https://rsf.org/en/index>.

Endowment for Democracy (EED), Media Development Investment Fund (MDIF), and other donors support media development through training, advocacy, media literacy, legal reform, and strengthening media organizations. The BMAP-FORWARD program evaluated in this report aims to enhance independent media competitiveness and sustainability in the Balkans through partnerships and collaboration with key media outlets across the region.

I.2 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

I.2.1 USAID'S SUPPORT TO STRENGTHEN MEDIA IN THE BALKANS

Since the end of the Cold War, USAID has undertaken several significant initiatives to support local media in the Western Balkans, playing a vital role in promoting democracy, transparency, and accountability. Recognizing the harmful role played by regime media during the Yugoslav wars, a new generation of diplomats and international agencies, including USAID, identified media freedom as a crucial element to the region's reconstruction.

More recently, USAID funded the Balkan Media Assistance Program (BMAP) from September 2017 to July 2022, implemented by Internews, to bolster media in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia. BMAP provided tailored expertise and grants to 11 media outlets, aiming to strengthen their strategic vision, management, and audience reach. These efforts resulted in significant growth: a 103 percent audience increase to 14.8 million unique visitors, a 15 percent rise in organizational capacity, and up to a 1,300 percent surge in ad revenue. Moreover, this support rescued several outlets from bankruptcy and prevented a Montenegrin outlet from falling under Kremlin-influenced control, showcasing BMAP's essential role in ensuring the survival and resilience of independent media.

Furthermore, BMAP spurred regional cooperation and capacity building, establishing the South East Europe Media Association for advocacy and a competitive market. It enabled partnerships for cross-border journalism and content-sharing among leading outlets, enhancing local expertise and innovation. BMAP's focus on local insights and collaborative design has fostered sustainable progress in the Balkans' media sector.

I.2.2 BMAP-FORWARD ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

Building upon BMAP's success, BMAP-FORWARD is a US\$13 million, six-year Activity (February 2022 to February 2028),⁸ also implemented by Internews, and is a part of the USAID-funded Protecting Global Rights Through Sustainable Solutions Consortium (PROGRESS) Human Rights Support Mechanism (HRSM) led by Freedom House. Media outlets in BiH, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia have long faced a hostile environment for freedom of expression, and the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated vulnerabilities to political and financial pressures and digital attacks. Despite progress in some aspects of media development, the media sector in the Western Balkans remains fragile, largely due to the region's political situation, the war in Ukraine, the economic downturn, and foreign malign influences. BMAP-FORWARD's goal is to strengthen the competitiveness of independent media in the Western Balkans in the local and regional marketplaces and to improve the sustainability of the sector across the

⁸ The BMAP-FORWARD activity was originally funded for five years (February 2022 to February 2027) for US\$10 million, but the activity received a cost extension in Quarter 3 of Year 2.

region through creative partnerships and collaboration. BMAP-FORWARD is based on the following three objectives:

- **Objective 1:** Increase strategic business practices of key media partners to operate as viable enterprises and better understand their markets and audiences.
- **Objective 2:** Reinforce the ability of content producers to produce data-driven content, engage wider audiences, improve digital security efforts, and expand reach across the region.
- **Objective 3:** Foster stronger partnerships between media outlets and the technology, commercial, and entrepreneurial sectors to advance solutions on common challenges in the information space.

According to the award description, BMAP-FORWARD's theory of change (TOC) is as follows:

IF media practitioners, particularly in the digital space, are better positioned to access and attract more substantial and stable financial resources and investments, and **IF** they engage wider audiences through demand-driven, high-quality multi-platform content and expand their reach, and **IF** they foster stronger partnerships across the Balkans to advance solutions on common challenges, **THEN** they will be more competitive in the local and regional marketplaces, and **THEN** the independence of the media sector will be more sustainable and resistant to external influence, and **THEN** citizens in the Balkans will have increased access to objective, trustworthy information that empowers them in their daily lives and supports democratic processes.

To achieve these objectives, BMAP-FORWARD provides:

- Targeted training, mentoring, and funding via grants for select groups of media outlets (also referred to as Key Media Partners (KMPs) to improve key business management skills and practices.
- Targeted training and technical support for a wider selection of KMPs to expand and improve the quality of their digital content, as well as grant funding to support experimental and data-driven content creation.
- Funding events to facilitate cross-sectoral partnerships and networks among media, information technology (IT), civil society, the arts, academia, and the private sector, and support joint advocacy work and cross-border content production.

Internews developed its approach on lessons learned based on more than 30 years of work with independent media worldwide and 20 years of experience supporting the development of the Western Balkans media sector. BMAP-FORWARD's comprehensive slate of mutually reinforcing activities aim to continue and deepen the work conducted under BMAP in addition to achieving the objectives outlined above. The BMAP-FORWARD Activity complements bilateral media-strengthening activities in BiH and Serbia (and a smaller Activity in North Macedonia), as well as similarly aligned regional programs funded by other donors, such as the European Commission (implemented by the German Agency for International Cooperation [GIZ]).

USAID/E&E contracted Integra LLC to conduct a performance evaluation of BMAP-FORWARD's implementation from February 2022 to February 2024. This report presents this evaluation's design, findings, conclusions, and recommendations (FCR). The evaluation team is led by an evaluation specialist

and supported by international and national subject matter experts, logistics and operation support, and home-office technical support (See **Annex J** for a full list of team members).

2. EVALUATION PURPOSE AND QUESTIONS

2.1 EVALUATION PURPOSE

The purpose of this evaluation and the resulting FCR is four-fold:

1. To assist USAID/E&E, Missions in BiH, Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Serbia, and the U.S. Embassy/Podgorica in understanding the extent to which BMAP-FORWARD is on track to achieve its planned results as the project completes its second year of implementation.
2. To improve USAID/E&E, Mission, and U.S. Embassy/Podgorica understanding of regional BMAP-FORWARD interventions on the competitiveness of independent media in the Western Balkans in the local and regional marketplaces.
3. To improve the sustainability of the independent media sector across the region through creative partnerships and collaboration.
4. To determine any necessary adjustments to BMAP-FORWARD or its TOC in order to maximize development outcomes for the duration of its implementation.

The intended audience for this evaluation report is USAID, USG, the BMAP-FORWARD implementing team, Internews, BMAP-FORWARD KMPs and grantees, and other relevant stakeholders from the media sectors in the Western Balkan countries.

2.2 EVALUATION QUESTIONS

This evaluation assessed the extent to which BMAP-FORWARD's approaches, tools, and interventions were influencing the Activity's performance at this mid-term stage with respect to specific outcomes aligned with BMAP-FORWARD's three main activity objectives. This evaluation was guided by the four following evaluation questions (EQs):

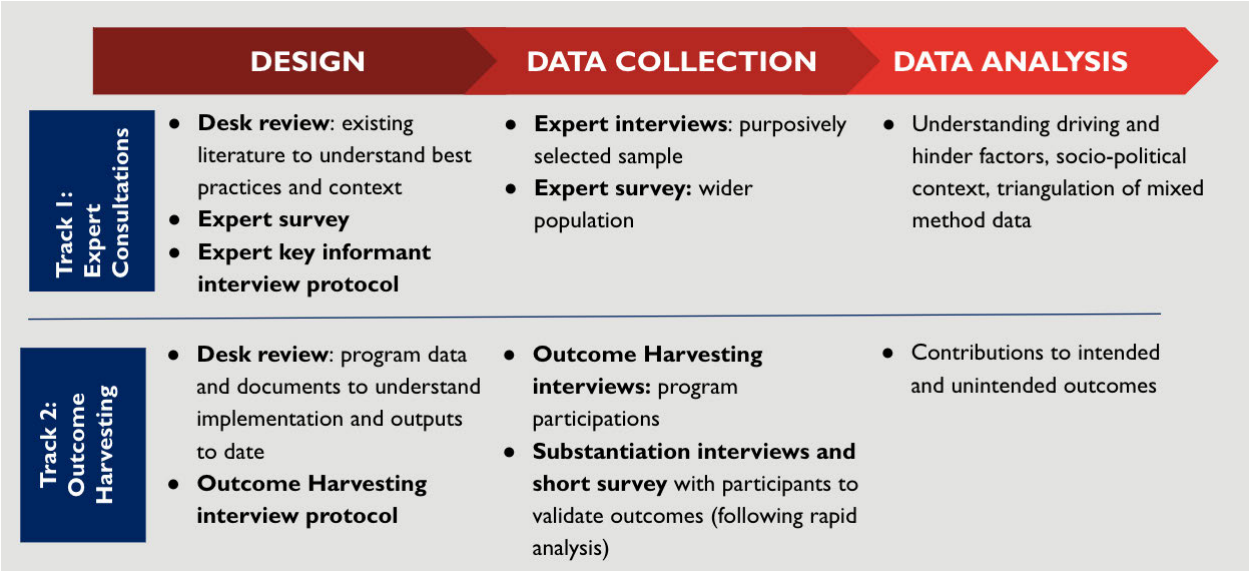
- **EQ1:** To what extent are BMAP-FORWARD approaches, tools, and interventions influencing KMPs' business practices and abilities to understand markets and ensure revenue diversification?
- **EQ2:** To what extent are BMAP-FORWARD approaches, tools, and interventions influencing the ability of content producers to produce data-driven content, engage wider audiences, and expand reach across the region?
- **EQ3:** To what extent are BMAP-FORWARD approaches, tools, and interventions influencing KMPs' digital security?
- **EQ4:** What factors influence partnerships between media outlets and the technology, commercial, and entrepreneurial sectors?

3. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 EVALUATION DESIGN

The Europe and Eurasia/Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, and Decision Support (EE/MELDS) ET combined two approaches to guide its mixed method and non-experimental design: Expert Consultations and Outcome Harvesting (**Figure 1**). Multiple methods to collect and analyze secondary and primary data were employed to inform each step of the evaluation process. **Figure 1** presents an overview of the process and the two approaches employed.

FIGURE 1. OVERVIEW OF EVALUATION DESIGN PROCESS



During the design phase, the ET conducted a robust literature review of the media landscape and best practices to strengthen media resilience in the Western Balkans and conducted a thorough review of the available program data and reporting. The learnings from this desk review informed the development of data collection protocols for both the Expert Consultations and the Outcome Harvesting approaches. A full list of documents reviewed is presented in **Annex G**. The Expert Consultations consisted of key informant interviews (KIIs) and an online perception-based survey (both tools are presented in **Annex F**). The Expert Consultations purposively sampled stakeholders from four categories: 1) USAID or other USG partners, 2) IP staff and consultants, 3) other donors and agency representatives, and 4) private sector actors (see **Annex E** for a further description of how these categories are defined and the types of stakeholders included in each). The ET received a comprehensive roster of potential stakeholders from which to sample from the IP and USAID. The ET sent an online expert survey to each stakeholder within these categories and identified a smaller subset of respondents to invite for an interview. Interviews were conducted individually or in small groups.

Concurrently, the ET purposively sampled staff from KMPs and other recipients of direct assistance from BMAP-FORWARD for the Outcome Harvesting approach. The ET invited these stakeholders to participate in an initial interview that followed an open-ended Outcome Harvesting protocol. Once all initial interviews with participants were completed, the ET conducted a rapid analysis workshop to identify

key outcomes that emerged from the interviews. The ET developed initial outcome statements from this workshop and used these to develop an interview and survey protocol. The ET implemented these protocols during the Substantiation Phase to validate these outcomes with project participants (see protocols in **Annex F**).

The ET analyzed all primary and secondary data collected from this evaluation and triangulated data from across multiple sources to inform the basis of the findings. In this report, the ET endeavors to explain the extent to which certain approaches have been effective and which have not and to identify the factors that drive adaptive change. Specifically, the ET identifies successful interventions without measuring outcomes given the early stage of implementation. Importantly, as this is a performance evaluation, it relies on currently available output data as well as stakeholder perceptions. It does not intend to nor is it designed to understand the pathways through which interventions lead to outcomes or impacts.

3.2 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

3.2.1 DESK REVIEW

The ET conducted a thorough desk review of relevant primary and secondary sources, including program documents and external gray literature. A list of all referenced documents is included in **Annex G**.

3.2.2 EXPERT CONSULTATIONS

The ET conducted targeted interviews with purposively sampled expert stakeholders via individual or small group interviews from March 4 to 29, 2024. The interviews were conducted both in person and remotely, and in English or in the local language, depending on the stakeholder's preference. Expert interviews lasted approximately one hour. A total of 51 experts were interviewed for this evaluation (See **Annex H** for a breakdown of experts interviewed by category and country). See **Annex C** for a detailed description of the evaluation methodology and sampling approach.

3.2.3 EXPERT SURVEY

The ET administered two online, perception-based surveys to the stakeholders described above. The first survey targeted USAID and IP staff and was designed to ask questions related to each EQ and the broader implementing context. The second survey targeted other donors and agency representatives and private sector actors. It was designed to ask questions related to EQ4 and the broader implementing context. Each survey included up to 15 questions, mostly close-ended with a few optional, open-ended (see **Annex F** for the survey tools). The first survey (USAID/IP) received 44 responses, a response rate of 71 percent, and the second survey (Other Donors and Private Sector Actors) received 19 responses, totaling a response rate of 68 percent. See **Annex C** for more details on the survey implementation.

3.2.4 OUTCOME HARVESTING

Concurrently with the Expert Consultations, the ET conducted Outcome Harvesting interviews with 47 project participants (See **Annex H** for a breakdown of stakeholders by country and category). After these initial interviews were completed, the ET held a rapid analysis workshop at the end of March to develop preliminary outcome statements, which were used to develop subsequent interview and survey tools to validate the outcome harvesting data via a Substantiation Phase (April 1–12, 2024). Thirteen interviews were conducted with select KMP staff and grantees, and 48 program participants responded to an online, perception-based survey. Both tools are presented in **Annex F**.

3.3 DATA ANALYSIS

The ET team conducted descriptive statistical analyses using Microsoft Excel and Google Sheets to summarize and present all secondary and primary quantitative data collected. All survey results are presented in **Annex I**. The ET employed thematic and content qualitative analysis techniques for all secondary and primary qualitative data collected, analyzed the outcome stories from participant interviews and validated these during a substantiation phase. After analyzing all data sources, the ET employed a triangulation method that leveraged qualitative and quantitative data, ensuring a multifaceted view that enhanced the reliability and validity of the findings. This approach combined learnings from interviews, surveys, desk review, and secondary data analyses. By correlating these different forms of evidence, the ET provides a nuanced understanding of the underlying patterns, trends, and relationships to inform findings under each EQ. See **Annex C** for more details on this evaluation's data collection methods, analysis, and limitations.

4. FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 CROSS-CUTTING FINDINGS

FINDINGS

Finding 1.1: Staff from all KMPs and other stakeholders reported that BMAP-FORWARD's highly tailored and localized approach effectively met their needs and enabled a useful and trusted working relationship. Staff from all 15 KMPs reported the localized and tailored approach allowed for BMAP-FORWARD staff to learn the KMPs' respective goals, help co-design, and offer solutions to implement activities to achieve those goals, all of which created trust among the KMP staff to work with BMAP-FORWARD. Results from the Substantiation Survey (**Annex I**, Question 1.2) indicated that KMP staff from all five countries generally agreed or strongly agreed, on average, that the BMAP-FORWARD Activity provided the right type of training and expert consultations to meet their needs and that Activity staff presented new ideas that were useful to improve KMP staff capacity in the media sector.

As one KMP staff from Montenegro said, BMAP-FORWARD

“assistance was crucial for the development of our media company; it was specifically tailored to our needs. BMAP-FORWARD conducted a detailed analysis to understand the nature of our company, its values, and its developmental goals. Based on this analysis, BMAP-FORWARD created a program tailored to our needs, which included strategic guidance, expert consultations, and financial support through grants, all of which were instrumental in advancing our company.”

A staff member from a KMP in Serbia also stated,

“We've been incredibly impressed by the project representatives, coordinators, and consultants. Their training not only equipped us with essential media tools and skills, but it was clear they were deeply invested in our success. They fostered a genuine sense of collaboration, making us feel like a united team working towards a common goal. And whenever we faced challenges, they were consistently there for us,

especially during critical moments.” A USG staff also noted, “The technical assistance is targeted and superb.”

Additionally, an IP staff member highlighted during an interview that USAID recognized the former BMAP Activity as an exemplary approach to implementing the USAID Localization Strategy in “Entry Points for Programming that Support Locally Led Development,” a case study series published by USAID’s Learning Lab.⁹ Specifically, the case study highlights BMAP’s design for engaging in co-design and relying on local expertise as notable approaches for locally led development.

Finding 1.2. KMP staff reported that BMAP-FORWARD country managers and in-country IP staff effectively support the KMPs’ goals and objectives given in-depth country experience and subject matter expertise. Staff from 12 KMPs explained that the country managers, in particular, were effective in providing useful and tailored support to KMPs and deeply understood the context in which they were working, which helped to mitigate inefficient assistance and support. A KMP staff member from Serbia said, *“Perhaps the greatest value of the [BMAP-FORWARD] team members is that they are well acquainted with the media, so there is no need to further explain activities.”* Another KMP staff from Serbia noted, *“The [BMAP-FORWARD] assistance was tailored to our needs and provided in a timely manner, with a deep understanding of the process and media expertise.”*

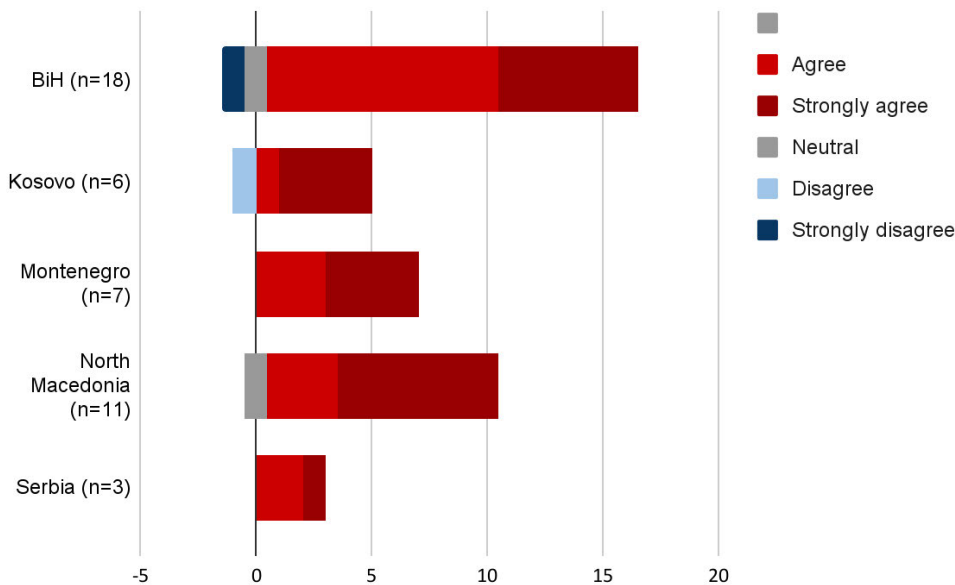
In another example, staff from one KMP in Montenegro explained that a key value add of the country manager is his in-depth knowledge and experience in the country and its media sector, which enables him to provide targeted and useful support and feedback given the unique operating context of Montenegro’s media sector. Compared to working with other donor-assisted programs, this is a unique aspect of BMAP-FORWARD, as reported by this KMP’s staff. The BMAP-FORWARD country manager’s in-country expertise creates a more trusted engagement between the KMP and the Activity. It also saves the KMP staff time and frustration from having to navigate inapplicable suggestions and explain the Montenegrin media sector and its unique operating environment to its counterpart, which was reported to often be the case when working with donor-assisted programs. Similar feedback was shared about the country managers and relevant IP staff from the other four countries.

Finding 1.3. KMP staff reported that, in general, BMAP-FORWARD’s assistance was timely and that in-country staff were well-equipped to effectively respond to the KMPs’ needs, although they were sometimes under-resourced. Staff from 12 KMPs observed that, for the most part, BMAP-FORWARD’s in-country teams are well-equipped with the necessary expertise, experience, and capacity to listen to the KMPs’ needs and offer new ideas, quickly identify solutions to address KMP needs (whether acute or ongoing), and quickly connect KMPs with needed resources to implement said solutions. Such resources include mobilizing expert consultants from across the region, facilitating connections with other media partners, and identifying grant funding to acquire new technology, equipment, or needed human resources. A KMP staff member from Serbia said, *“It is very characteristic that communication with the team is immediate; we don’t have to wait for responses, and they reply within a few minutes, regardless of the nature of the request.”* Staff from eight KMPs reported that working with BMAP-FORWARD is highly favorable compared to other donor-assisted programs due to this quick and effective assistance, as well as ease in reporting requirements. Other donor-assisted

⁹ USAID. 2023. “Balkan Media Assistance Program: A case study in locally led development.” https://usaidlearninglab.org/system/files/2023-09/20230912_bmap_case_study_-_final.pdf

programs were described as overly onerous in reporting requirements, slow and bureaucratic in administration processes, and sometimes lacking in deep country- and sector-level expertise. However, respondents shared this as a generality and did not elaborate on specific examples.

FIGURE 2. SUBSTANTIATION SURVEY RESULTS TO THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT: THE BMAP-FORWARD STAFF IS QUICK AND EFFECTIVE IN RESPONDING TO MY/OUR COMPANY'S NEEDS AND REQUESTS.



Note: 1 respondent indicated N/A.

Results from the Substantiation Survey indicated that KMP staff generally agreed

or strongly agreed that BMAP-FORWARD staff is quick and effective (**Figure 2**). While still generally agreeing, respondents from BiH reported a slightly lower than average score than those from the other countries. From interviews with KMP and IP staff in BiH, it was noted that assistance and communication from BMAP-FORWARD staff is sometimes (not always) slow, which delays support provided. For example, one KMP staff member cited an example where negotiations for an activity took several months, which made it hard for their organization to plan efficiently. They shared a caveat that other aspects of their engagement with BMAP-FORWARD did not experience similar challenges and were otherwise satisfactory. Both KMP and IP staff in BiH acknowledged that the IP staff in BiH were understaffed and thus had limited bandwidth to handle all requests and needs for the Activity and KMPs in BiH, specifically.

Additionally, USG, IP, KMP staff, and other donors and agency representatives specifically highlighted the role of the BMAP-FORWARD implementation leadership team, including the Chief of Party (COP), as instrumental in facilitating strong, trusted engagements with media partners and coordinating with stakeholders across the region. A respondent from the Expert Survey shared this additional feedback, *“Effective leadership of the team is the critical point to all work envisioned according to the complexity of such work. The dynamics and the energy of the team is a great asset to the project. Personally, I haven't worked for anyone with stronger and effective leadership skills than [the Chief of Party].”*

Finding I.4. Three USG staff raised concerns about a sufficient IP footprint and availability to implement BMAP-FORWARD activities effectively. Only three USG staff raised the point that the IP staff available to fully implement the Activity in the respective countries may need to be increased. Specifically for the countries without a bilateral media activity, that is, Kosovo and Montenegro, USG staff noted that BMAP-FORWARD, while designed as a regional Activity, was the only media assistance available to implement the respective interventions. One USG staff said, *“The BMAP-FORWARD footprint is too small. There should be a larger team in each country. The ingredients of success increase [when] the Internews staff that are here in-country working objectively and closely with each KMP.”* Additionally, another USG staff raised concerns about the BMAP-FORWARD implementing team splitting their level of effort to collaborate with other donor-funded programs that have similar goals and noted that this split effort could be better used to focus on strong coordination with the bilateral USAID Activity. Specifically, the COP splits his time between BMAP-FORWARD (80 percent) and GIZ programs (20 percent). It should be noted that USAID places a high priority on donor coordination, driven by the Missions’/Embassy’s desire to ensure the efficient use of U.S. taxpayer resources and leveraged results across media strengthening programs.

Finding I.5 Stakeholders overall offered few critiques of the BMAP-FORWARD design and implementation approach. During interviews, stakeholders from across stakeholder categories did not share reflections regarding areas of weakness on how BMAP-FORWARD has been designed or implemented that require immediate course correction. A few notable exceptions include specific instances of challenges with IP timeliness and bandwidth issues, as noted in Finding I.3 and Finding I.4.

Finding I.6 Stakeholders from BiH, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia suggested that attention to professionalism and ethics in journalism could be further embedded into BMAP-FORWARD assistance. USG staff, IP consultants, other donors and agency representatives, and KMP staff from BiH, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia noted that while BMAP-FORWARD is not designed to address professionalism and ethics in journalism, this is a topic that could be embedded into existing technical assistance activities to provide continuous capacity strengthening for KMPs to be aware of and integrate best practices. A KMP staff member from North Macedonia shared that there was little they could suggest to improve BMAP-FORWARD assistance, but a suggestion to consider would be to help staff *“make a clear distinction between propaganda and hate speech on one side, and professional and independent journalism.”*

A USG stakeholder shared the following observation when asked about suggestions to address gaps or strengthen existing assistance,

“While we recognize this isn’t the main focus of the program, there is in general a lack of attention to professionalism in journalism and following best practices for journalism ethics. The Activity is so focused on technical revenue and business diversification, but there could be more of a focus on professionalism and ethics in journalism, basics in media ethics, or giving a global perspective to make media outlets more professional and independent.”

However, KMP staff and other stakeholders in Kosovo did not raise this as a concern or gap. KMP staff specifically noted they do not need assistance regarding how to do their jobs but could use support in other areas, such as how to navigate the challenging regulatory environment in Kosovo.

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion I.1. As a regional program, BMAP-FORWARD's tailored and localized approach to working with KMPs is a key strength of its ability to provide effective, useful, and timely assistance. Specifically, the reliance on local expertise with in-depth knowledge of the respective media sectors and operating environments facilitates effective collaboration and fosters trusted engagement with the KMPs to identify their goals, co-design solutions, and provide the necessary support to implement said solutions. This approach is well-received by all types of stakeholders as effective, particularly in comparison to other donor programming approaches that do not employ a tailored approach and without deep country-level and sector-specific expertise. USAID's attention to the former BMAP Activity, upon which the BMAP-FORWARD Activity is primarily designed (with few adjustments), as an exemplary approach for locally led development reinforces the strength of BMAP-FORWARD's locally led approach.

Conclusion I.2. BMAP-FORWARD's staff and leadership team are equipped with the necessary capacity, expertise, and experience to facilitate trusted and effective assistance to KMPs and coordinate with other stakeholders. While the staff's expertise, capacity, and leadership are key enabling factors to foster strong and effective implementation, staff bandwidth and other resource concerns may undermine its full effectiveness, particularly in BiH, Kosovo, and Montenegro.

Conclusion I.3. At this early stage in the Activity's implementation, few areas have been identified as ineffective or requiring considerable course corrections. Different types of stakeholders shared a similar observation that existing BMAP-FORWARD assistance could embed attention to best practices for professionalism and ethics in journalism and the media to continuously strengthen capacity on these topics for KMPs and newsroom staff.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. BMAP-FORWARD should continue to employ the highly tailored and localized approach to working with KMPs to learn their needs, co-create solutions and action plans, identify resources to implement solutions and present new ideas.
2. BMAP-FORWARD and USAID should reconsider how the implementing team's staff are allocated to coordinate with other donor-funded programming and bilateral activities and to maximize efficiency and effectiveness in countries without bilateral activities to deliver on BMAP-FORWARD's objectives.
3. Consider further strengthening adherence to professional standards among KMPs and other grantees and adding segments on challenges to journalistic integrity during existing technical assistance activities.

4.2 EVALUATION QUESTION 1:

To what extent are BMAP-FORWARD approaches, tools, and interventions influencing KMPs' business practices and abilities to understand markets and ensure revenue diversification?

FINDINGS

Finding 2.1: KMP staff reported that BMAP-FORWARD assistance has strengthened their ability and interest in adopting strategic operational planning. Staff from 14 KMPs reported that BMAP-FORWARD assistance has shifted mindsets among KMP staff to be more strategic in planning their operations and business. Assistance from expert consultations and strategic planning tools, such as Performance Improvement Plans (PIPs), were specifically identified as effective in helping KMP staff learn how to design strategic plans for their company in ways that are realistic and feasible and align with their respective goals. These included planning how to diversify and explore revenue sources, attract wider and larger audiences, understand existing and new potential audiences, better monetize content, and identify partners across the region with similar interests and goals.

A KMP staff member from Serbia explained,

“As a media outlet focused on business objectives, we prioritize strategies that enhance our market presence and financial performance. Undoubtedly, the guidance provided by [BMAP-FORWARD] consultants proved invaluable in navigating our growth trajectory. While it's challenging to isolate the exact impact of the support program alone, it's worth noting that during the previous year, coinciding with our collaboration with BMAP-FORWARD, our marketing revenues experienced a significant surge, registering a notable increase of 31.7 percent.”

A staff member from a KMP in BiH also stated,

“We developed our strategic plan with the help of an expert [BMAP-FORWARD], where we can follow our development and whether we can reach our strategic plans [for 2027]. This was crucial also for our organizational planning and strategic thinking. We are planning business strategies with our members...”

Finding 2.2: KMP staff report being in various stages of implementation of their strategic plans. The KMPs that continued from BMAP to BMAP-FORWARD reported building on the progress made under BMAP during BMAP-FORWARD and were further along in implementing their strategic plans than those recently onboarded through BMAP-FORWARD. As one example, **Oslobođenje BiH created an integrated editorial office under BMAP, combining online, TV,** and print media, which served as an effective strategic plan, particularly during COVID-19. Now, under BMAP-FORWARD, **Oslobođenje built on this success to focus their planning** on how to better monetize online content production via podcasts and by redesigning their webpage (both of which are ongoing at the time of this evaluation). To operationalize these plans, they conducted market research to understand how audiences perceive their outlet and plan to conduct focus groups to present web page designs to different audiences and tailor their design to meet audience needs.

KMPs who were recently onboarded under BMAP-FORWARD reported finalizing their strategic plans and identifying areas to start implementing them. For example, Capital in BiH began under BMAP-FORWARD in January 2023. Staff explained they currently plan to test a marketing tool that will

contribute to their strategic planning towards financial sustainability, but had not yet done so at the time of this evaluation.

Additionally, KMPs operating as non-profits or those primarily reliant on donor funding, in particular, noted that while developing the strategic plans enabled them to reorient their thinking regarding their operational planning, they required continued assistance to translate their strategic plans into action. For example, three of the four KMPs in Kosovo were non-profit organizations prior to engaging with BMAP-FORWARD, which supported them in registering as commercial business entities. Staff reported that this transition reflects a completely new experience for them and that they need in-depth and targeted assistance toward achieving this goal.

Finding 2.3: BMAP-FORWARD assistance via expert consultations and strategic planning was perceived to shift mindsets among most KMPs toward adopting more commercial operational approaches and seeking financial independence. Expert stakeholders generally agreed that financial independence was among the most pressing needs for strengthening media independence in the region while reporting, on average, limited confidence in the current independence of media outlets from the influence of political or external pressures (see **Annex I**, Question 2.22, 2.23 and Question 2.21, respectively).

Under Objective 1, BMAP-FORWARD worked with KMPs to strengthen their business practices and orient toward a more commercial approach to operations in seeking diversified sources of revenue beyond donor funding. Staff from 14 KMPs reported that due to BMAP-FORWARD assistance, they were more interested in and actively engaged in strategic planning to pursue diversified revenue sources and rely less on donor funding. Respondents in the Substantiation Survey validated this statement, generally agreeing that they (or their company) now have better means of finding new ways to make money or increase their earnings because of BMAP-FORWARD training, expert consultations, and grant assistance, which has enabled them (or their company) to pursue new revenue sources (**Annex I**, Question 1.5).

For example, two KMPs in Kosovo that previously relied entirely on donor funding have begun to explore avenues for generating their own revenue streams as a result of BMAP-FORWARD assistance.

One staff member explained,

“We received significant assistance from BMAP-FORWARD in developing our business strategy. In addition to supporting us in creating a strategic plan and identifying business opportunities, they also helped us with concrete actions. Initially, we were organized as an NGO, but BMAP-FORWARD helped us register as a business, create a business plan, and launch ourselves on that path.”

With support from BMAP-FORWARD, a KMP in Kosovo appointed an additional manager to oversee more efficient business operations, while another, now operating as a commercial entity, has begun exploring methods to increase revenue.

A few non-profit KMPs focused on investigative journalism are notable exceptions, particularly in Serbia, where BMAP-FORWARD is designed to focus on such outlets to complement the existing bilateral Activity, according to USG staff. While staff from these outlets acknowledged BMAP-FORWARD's efforts to promote a commercial-oriented approach, they chose not to pursue this advice to prioritize their mission and social impact over potential compromises in the pursuit of financial gain. They acknowledged that despite this, BMAP-FORWARD has helped them to strategize about different funding sources to become less reliant on donor funding in the future.

A staff member from one such KMP in Serbia explained,

“Yes, BMAP-FORWARD representatives did promote a business orientation, but in our case, we didn't implement it. This wasn't due to their efforts, but rather our own decision not to commercialize our work. Doing so would have threatened our independence and forced us to adapt to market demands, which isn't our mission. However, they did help us work towards increasing our independence from donor funding.”

Finding 2.4: With technical and grant assistance from BMAP-FORWARD, most KMPs have been able to identify and/or pursue new revenue sources and increase revenues. According to the most updated performance monitoring data at the time of this evaluation, 11 of 14 KMPs (with available data) reported increases in their total overall annual income from Year 1 to Year 2. When removing USG grants from annual income figures, only eight KMPs reported increases in sales and donations from Year 1 to Year 2. Of these eight, there was an even split between commercial and non-profit KMPs.¹⁰ Percent increases overall ranged from 1.86 percent to 428.35 percent for sales and donations between Year 1 and Year 2, indicating some KMPs saw drastic increases in their sales and donations revenue. Two KMPs, specifically, saw sales and donations increase over 100 percent between Year 1 and Year 2.

Across interviews, staff from most KMPs (12) specifically cited BMAP-FORWARD's technical and grant assistance as key enablers for developing and implementing new ideas to diversify their revenue sources while also delivering new forms of content. As an example, podcast production was pursued as a new mode of content production that also generated new revenue streams. A KMP staff member said, “We understood that we need podcasts to give us a new platform for monetization that we did not have before.” For example, Vijesti in Montenegro received grant assistance from BMAP-FORWARD to establish a podcast production studio and purchase necessary equipment, as well as technical assistance to train staff on how to develop and deliver podcast content. Once established and functional, Vijesti plans to rent out the podcast studio to other media actors, creating a new revenue stream in addition to a new mode of content production. Other examples include grant assistance to establish video studios and the necessary equipment in addition to training for journalists to develop and produce video content. These studios can also then be rented to other media actors for use, creating additional revenue sources.

In addition to studio production, KMP staff shared other examples where BMAP-FORWARD provided technical assistance on how to monetize different forms of content, such as through social media, or by exploring new topic areas, such as obituary pages, real estate advertisements, or expanding to tourism and travel pages, among others.

Finding 2.5: KMPs report utilizing different approaches to increase or diversify revenue sources aligned with their operating goals and navigating operational challenges. For example, in Serbia, a larger, commercially oriented KMP could identify and then pursue new revenue sources via diversified modes of content production. Another larger KMP received BMAP-FORWARD grant funding to establish and equip a studio for audio and video content production, with plans to rent this studio as a new revenue stream. Smaller investigative outlets in Serbia pursued new revenue sources through alternative crowdfunding strategies and fundraising campaigns targeted at their

¹⁰ At the time of this evaluation, the BMAP-FORWARD had available revenue data for 14 of 16 KMPs. One KMP had not yet submitted updated figures and one KMP had only just established a baseline.

readers. The smaller KMPs rejected advice to pursue more commercially oriented approaches to maintain their independence as investigative outlets but worked with BMAP-FORWARD to identify strategies to become less donor-reliant. In Serbia, both the larger and smaller KMPs noted that regardless of the strategy employed to seek new revenue sources, they were doing so in a very challenging operating environment characterized by a closed system dominated by monopolies and authoritarian media control, with limited media freedom, reduced access to information, a lack of diversity among media voices, and an erosion of public trust.

In Kosovo, KMPs encountered acute difficulties in pursuing strategies to monetize content production, primarily stemming from political issues related to Kosovo's status. KMP staff noted frustration regarding monetization challenges, as major social networks like Google, YouTube, and Facebook do not recognize the Albanian language or Kosovo as an independent entity. Consequently, KMPs reported engaging with third-party companies registered in other jurisdictions to monetize their content, resulting in revenue loss for the outlets involved.

In BiH, KMP staff pursued online content production and monetization, particularly through social media. According to interviews with KMP staff, without the support of BMAP-FORWARD, especially expert support, it would have taken them much longer to devise strategic plans and understand their own needs, trends, and audiences. They cited a lack of time, resources, and expertise to devise strategic plans to operationalize strategies in pursuing or diversifying revenues. For one KMP, it was noted that external expert support was important to convince their staff that changes (such as podcast production) are needed. However, for several of the KMPs in BiH, strategies for revenue diversification have yet to be tested and most of the strategic goals are in their initial planning phases and continue to navigate the fragmented and poor market, with substantial political influence on the media.

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion 2.1. BMAP-FORWARD's highly tailored and specific assistance has helped KMP staff to shift their mindsets towards more strategic operational planning, where staff are now interested in designing and implementing actions that strategically target areas for growth, expansion, and increased business sustainability to meet their respective goals as a media outlet. The technical assistance, coupled with grant funding, has enabled KMPs to implement stronger business practices and, to varying extents, implement strategic plans. The recently onboarded KMPs are in the earlier stages of designing or implementing their strategic plans, while the others have built upon progress made under BMAP, underscoring the importance of the tailored assistance provided to each KMP.

Conclusion 2.2. Financial independence is understood as a critical enabling factor for strengthening media independence in the Western Balkans. BMAP-FORWARD assistance has helped KMP staff to shift mindsets toward more commercial-oriented practices and seek additional and diversified sources of revenue, with the exception of two smaller outlets in Serbia that prefer to remain non-profit in alignment with their missions as independent investigative outlets. All KMPs are pursuing sources of diversified income or sources of funding to be less donor-reliant.

Conclusion 2.3. KMPs varied in their ability to pursue diversified and/or new revenue sources based on their size, existing capacity, operational structure and goals, and their ability to navigate challenges specific to their operating environment. Larger KMPs sought new business models to monetize content

or pursue new commercial revenue sources with assistance from BMAP-FORWARD, whereas smaller KMPs, particularly non-profit and donor-dependent investigative journalism outlets, require more in-depth and intense assistance to design and implement strategic plans and navigate unfavorable operating environments to do so. BMAP-FORWARD assistance has been flexible, targeted, and integral in supporting each KMP to design and implement these strategic plans and navigate the unique challenges faced by each.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Continue to provide tailored assistance to KMPs to build their in-house capacity to design and implement strategic plans for current and future operations. For all KMPs, and particularly for smaller, donor-reliant KMPs, continue to provide proactive and tailored support via expert assistance, grant funding, or identifying other resources to leverage to implement their strategic plans over the long term. Consider designing template action plans to guide smaller KMPs to implement their own strategic plans. This support should be higher-touch for smaller KMPs.
2. Continue to provide high-touch and tailored support for KMPs in identifying and pursuing new sources of revenue, particularly for non-profit KMPs or those that are more nascent in their shift to commercial approaches.
3. For smaller investigative outlets that are hesitant to monetize their work for fear of compromising their independence, continue to brainstorm and work with such KMPs to identify, design and implement strategic approaches to diversify funding sources and reduce reliance on donor funding. This could include revenue generation through subscription or crowdfunding models or developing commercial services that are less likely to endanger their independence (e.g., video production, communication, advocacy support to NGOs).

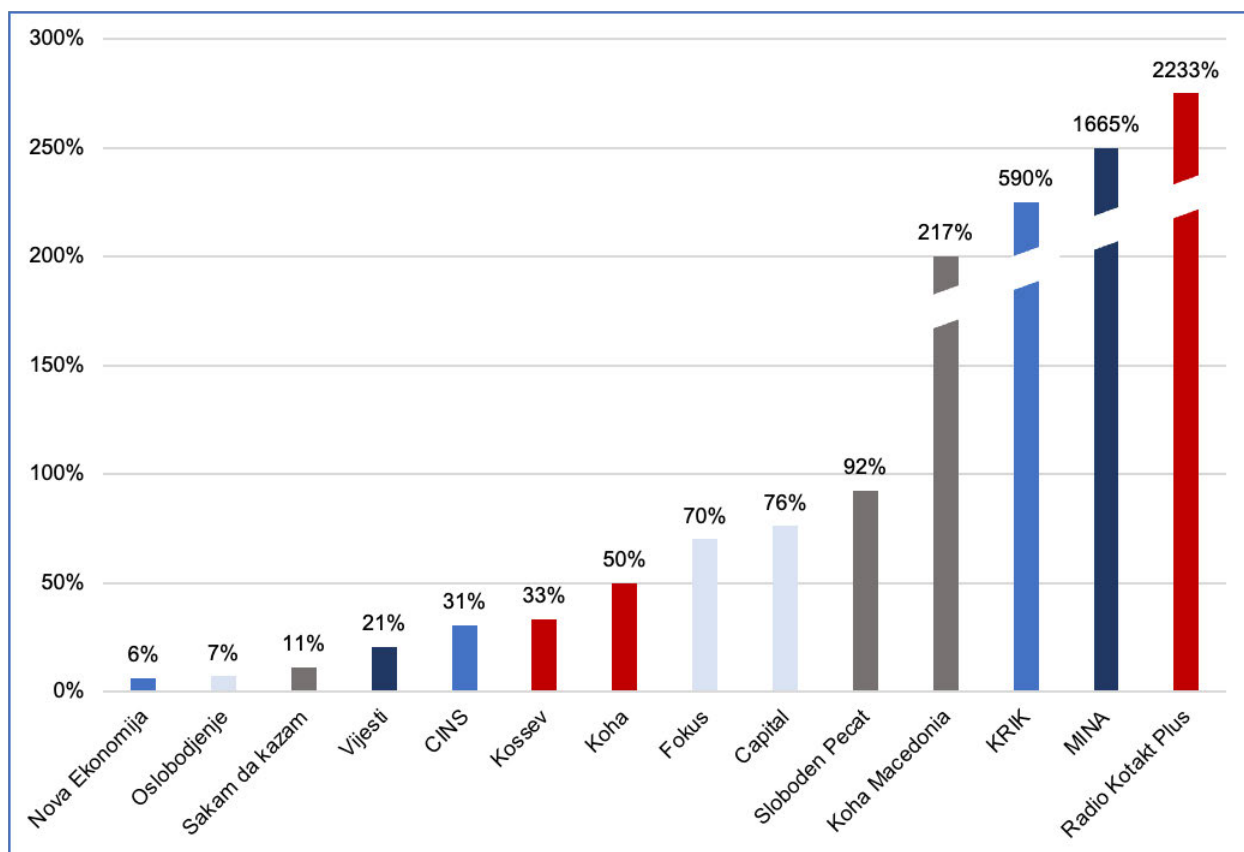
4.3 EVALUATION QUESTION 2:

To what extent are the BMAP-FORWARD approaches, tools, and interventions influencing the ability of content producers to produce data-driven content, engage wider audiences, and expand reach across the region?

FINDINGS

Finding 3.1: All KMPs have expanded their audience reach, in some cases exponentially, under BMAP-FORWARD. While all 14 KMPs with available data reported increases in audience reach between Year 1 and Year 2 (See **Figure 3**), four reported increases of over 200 percent. KMP staff across all countries described BMAP-FORWARD assistance as essential for helping them diversify their content production and improve their capacities to deliver new forms of content in new ways, all of which facilitated their ability to expand their audience reach.

FIGURE 3. PERCENT CHANGE IN AUDIENCE REACH FROM BASELINE TO Y2Q4

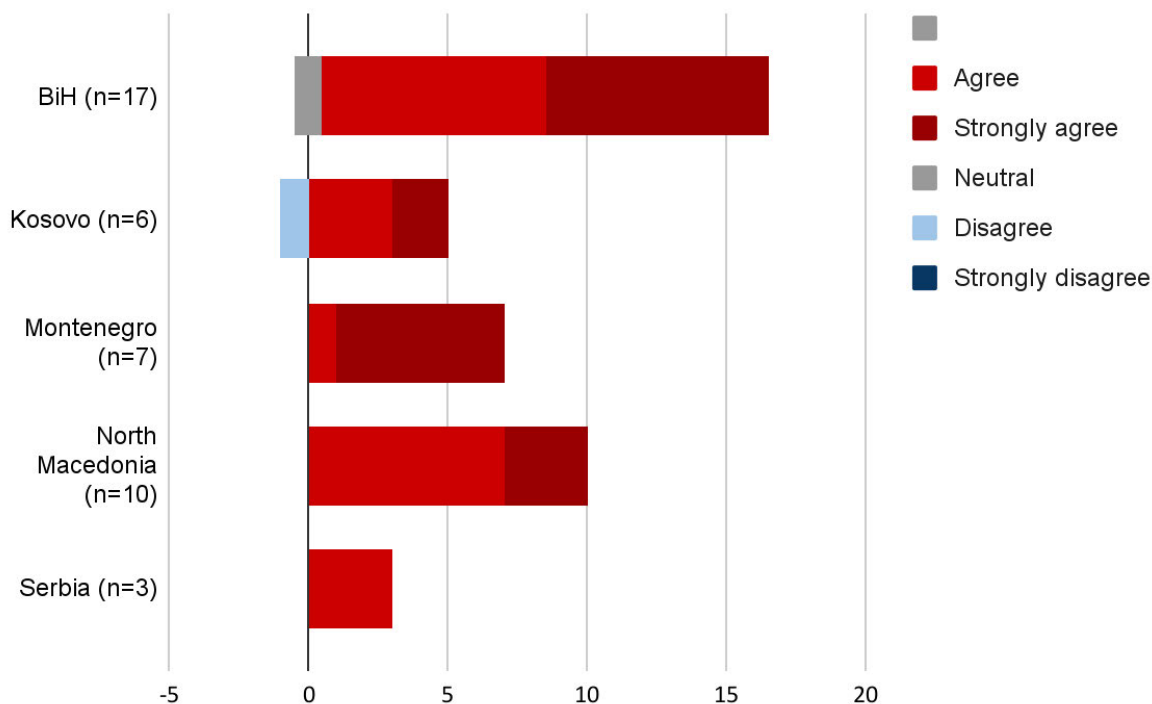


Source: BMAP-FORWARD Program Monitoring Data.

Note: This figure only presents the 14 KMPs for which updated data is available. The bars are color-coded by country.

Finding 3.2 Stakeholders reported these increases in audience reach were facilitated in part by the technical assistance, capacity building, and tools introduced and provided by BMAP-FORWARD. KMP staff explained that the technical assistance, grant funding, and capacity-building support to deliver content in new ways from BMAP-FORWARD was particularly useful because they were specifically aligned with the KMP's goals and feasible within their existing capacity and/or operating environment. Such examples include the digital transformation of several media outlets (although much of this assistance was initially provided under BMAP and has since continued under BMAP-FORWARD). **Figure 4** presents the results from the Substantiation Survey, where staff from KMPs across all countries agreed or strongly agreed that BMAP-FORWARD assistance helped them produce content in newer or improved digital forms.

FIGURE 4. SUBSTANTIATION SURVEY RESULTS TO THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT: BMAP-FORWARD TRAINING AND EXPERT CONSULTATIONS HAVE HELPED ME / MY COMPANY TO PRODUCE CONTENT IN NEWER OR MORE IMPROVED DIGITAL FORMS.



Note: 2 respondents indicated N/A.

Other stakeholders also reported observable improvements. A USG staff indicated that prior to BMAP, one KMP from Montenegro “had nothing related to video production, and [they] were only producing written products. With the help of BMAP and the EU, they developed their video capacities and are now a go-to media outlet to cover [USG] events... They are a solid media outlet in Montenegro whose capacity has significantly improved over the years.” BMAP-FORWARD also provided grant assistance for this KMP to hire additional staff, specifically a cameraman, to facilitate this transition to digital content production, and provided subsequent capacity-building support to the cameraman.

Journalists from KMPs in Montenegro stated that the BMAP-FORWARD training improved their knowledge of and capacity for producing content on mobile devices (i.e., mobile journalism stories), which were useful for producing content on social media channels. Other examples include strengthening capacities for newsroom staff to diversify their skills in content production. One journalist from Montenegro who previously only worked on print articles reflected on how they learned new software and skills from BMAP-FORWARD training and felt they were now more open to learning new skills previously perceived as unnecessary. For example, they learned how to do mobile journalism, use software like Montage for video editing, and integrate visuals into written articles. They explained that without BMAP-FORWARD training, “I would just be writing articles as a journalist, and this is [no longer] enough. In this time, you have to be digital and have to improve yourself.” Another journalist from BiH said, “Before, to me, it was not attractive to do video journalism, but during [BMAP-FORWARD trainings], I changed my mind and

understood it was not that hard,” and explained that they developed their capacities as a journalist to produce new types of content and reach wider audiences. A KMP staff member from Serbia said, “Yes, [BMAP-FORWARD] helped us acquire skills and knowledge about scrolly-telling and improve our work on the narrative podcast.”

Finding 3.3. KMP staff observed that Creative Content Grants enabled improvements in content production that facilitated expanded audience reach.

Results from Question 1.8 (**Annex I**) indicate that KMP staff generally agreed that BMAP-FORWARD grant assistance provides resources to develop new technologies that help them reach wider audiences (with the exception that respondents in Serbia were neutral). For example, KMPs in Kosovo utilized Creative Content Grants to produce series on different topic areas, such as one KMP that developed a series focused on Kosovo Wildlife, which has attracted newer, young audiences. Another KMP from BiH used a Creative Content Grant to assist them in developing a TikTok channel and now has one of the largest followings on TikTok among media outlets in BiH.

Finding 3.4. KMP staff reported that media-to-media partnerships facilitated by BMAP-FORWARD helped expand audience reach.

Two KMPs in Kosovo entered a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to exchange and republish each other's content, with one providing content in Albanian and the other in Serbian. This collaboration expanded their respective audiences, enhanced their understanding of their audience demographics, and furthered their respective reach to different populations in Kosovo and the region. Staff specifically highlighted BMAP-FORWARD's assistance in facilitating this MoU.

Finding 3.5. The use of artificial intelligence (AI)-powered translation tools has enabled KMPs to expand audience reach nationally, regionally, and beyond.

AI-powered translation tools have enabled some KMPs to share their content in various languages to reach different populations both within their own country and across the region. For example, a KMP in Kosovo implemented an AI-powered translation tool that translates their articles into eight languages. This innovation broadened their audience reach and extended their influence across the region and beyond. According to interviews with relevant stakeholders, articles translated into English, Bulgarian, Greek, Serbian, and Spanish, among others, garner larger audiences than the original Albanian versions. These translated articles have attracted regular readership from countries including BiH, Greece, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Spain, and other countries worldwide. Some interviewees mentioned that the support given for producing open-source speech-to-text tools during Annual Media Innovation Labs will be very useful for the KMPs and the media community.

Finding 3.6: Staff from KMPs with direct consumer engagement reported increased capacities to understand and utilize audience data and analytics to inform editorial decision-making and focus content production on those with higher-quality audience engagement. SmartOcto was specifically cited as a useful tool for such KMPs.

Staff from seven KMPs specifically referenced their strengthened capacity for interpreting and using data analytics to increase data-driven editorial decisions. Specifically, such examples focused on using SmartOcto as a key tool to provide audience analytics that inform which types of content and which format has higher or better quality user engagement to focus their time and attention to drive more effective editorial decision-making. Results from the Substantiation Survey validated these statements, as KMP staff across countries generally agreed that the use of SmartOcto has strengthened the integration of data analysis to inform

editorial decisions, with the exception of Serbian respondents who were neutral on the question (**Annex I, Question I.14**).

SmartOcto was reported as highly effective for outlets that have direct engagement with consumers. For example, KMPs in BiH, Kosovo, Montenegro, and North Macedonia that produce content directly to consumers found SmartOcto to be incredibly useful to better understand how their audience engages with their content. Coupled with expert assistance from BMAP-FORWARD, these KMPs also reported a strengthened capacity to use these analytics to inform their decision-making about strategically allocating resources to focus on producing content with positive and quality user engagement. Such data enables KMPs to make better decisions about what types of stories to pursue based on audience interests, according to KMP staff. A KMP staff from Kosovo explained, *“I identify BMAP-FORWARD with SmartOcto, which enables data analytics. It helps us to have analysis, which helps us [understand] how to behave in terms of what is being read and what [is] not. It gives us important indicators about our work.”* Another staff member from a KMP in Kosovo explained that every morning meeting begins with integrating SmartOcto's data analytics, and it has leveraged SmartOcto to assess the reception and timing of its wildlife-related content among target audiences. Another KMP in Kosovo employs SmartOcto to gauge audience reception to their content, observing that narratives focused on youth and inter-ethnic traditions in Kosovo garner a broader audience compared to standard news stories.

Finding 3.7: Staff from one KMP that uses SmartOcto report language barrier challenges with the tool but indicate that BMAP-FORWARD has assisted in navigating them. A staff member from a KMP in Montenegro explained that not all staff have strong English language skills. SmartOcto reports are published in English, making it challenging for the necessary staff to access the analytics in a timely manner. However, it was noted that BMAP-FORWARD has helped this KMP work with SmartOcto to resolve this issue.

Finding 3.8: KMPs without direct consumer engagement report tools, such as SmartOcto, as less or not relevant to their operations. A KMP staff from Montenegro explained that as a news agency primarily serving as an information wholesaler to other media outlets, the direct engagement with end consumers is limited, which reduces the relevance of these tools to their operations. While SmartOcto provided some metrics about their online portal, he noted that the portal is not their core business, and consequently, the tool's utility in their daily news production and workflow is limited, particularly compared to media outlets that interact directly with end consumers, for whom such tools would be more impactful. Another staff from a KMP in Serbia explained that they had no use for such tools as they already understood their market well.¹¹

Finding 3.9. Journalists and newsroom staff generally reported improved capacities as a result of BMAP-FORWARD training and assistance, but indicated bandwidth and timing were obstacles to fully participate in and benefit from training and assistance. While journalists and other newsroom staff noted having the support of their respective editors and leadership teams to participate in BMAP-FORWARD training, it was sometimes difficult to balance existing workloads and time to participate. For example, a journalist from Montenegro said, *“We are a small [media] outlet, so it was difficult to take the time to participate in these trainings and workshops. It*

¹¹ This observation stems from a reputable investigative media outlet. The ET notes that such outlets typically operate with a distinct audience niche rather than high-volume content production and may not fully leverage audience analytics for optimization and monetization as high-volume producers do, but may recognize the value of such platforms overtime as they become more acquainted.

would be easier for training to happen on weekends or non-working hours or to coordinate around work hours.”

Other stakeholders also observed this challenge, including IP staff and consultants who delivered assistance or managed specific activities under BMAP-FORWARD. KMP staff explained that the BMAP-FORWARD team was aware of this challenge. BMAP-FORWARD staff ensured that trainings were highly tailored to the respective participants’ skills and needs, and always offered opportunities to hear feedback and iterate the session based on feedback. The journalist from Montenegro further stated, “We were *always asked what skills we needed and what we needed to focus on [in the training]. The training was tailored to our specific needs, which helped to prioritize the focus on our skill building specifically.*” A KMP staff member from Kosovo also said,

“It was a big burden for us, not easy to implement our part of the project, especially in this political situation where we have to do daily reporting and implement the project. If the situation had been calmer, we would not have had this burden. My recommendation would be to be supported also in our daily work and reporting.”

Finding 3.10: KMP staff reported hiring and retaining qualified staff was a notable challenge that sometimes undermined the effectiveness of training and capacity-building assistance. Staff from six KMPs shared this observation. For example, a KMP staff member from Kosovo noted that their main need was hiring more journalists to cover events and produce content, but it was difficult to find interested and qualified applicants. Thus, their bandwidth overall was stretched thin and hindered their ability to expand as needed or desired. As another example, a staff member from a KMP from Montenegro explained that they had to hire a cameraman “*without full experience and qualifications because of the challenging local labor market with limited qualified persons*” and noted they “*asked BMAP-FORWARD to conduct training for the cameraman to acquire the experience for field operations. Now we do in-house trainings for other cameramen.*”

Finding 3.11. Stakeholders reported that BMAP-FORWARD technical assistance, the Media Innovation Lab (MIL), and the More than a Quota Initiative have fostered both direct and indirect opportunities for collaboration among media partners to extend audience reach and produce cross-border stories. Stakeholders reported that BMAP-FORWARD, directly and indirectly, fostered partnerships and collaborations among KMPs and other media actors to produce cross-border stories and content. Staff from 13 KMPs cited examples where they began collaborating with other outlets due to their participation in BMAP-FORWARD. Through this joint work, they produce cross-border stories and have a wider reach across the region, but noted that such collaborations are not frequent, nor were they directly initiated or planned through BMAP-FORWARD. For example, staff from a KMP in BiH explained they produce regular joint content with an outlet in Serbia and Montenegro, but BMAP-FORWARD did not intentionally facilitate this collaboration but rather was an indirect result of their participation in the Activity. Several such stakeholders noted that this aspect could be strengthened for BMAP-FORWARD to facilitate more intentional opportunities to meet and collaborate with other media partners.

While on a smaller scale, IP staff and consultants, as well as KMP staff, noted that the More than a Quota Initiative was useful in fostering collaborations among the cohort of 13 women journalists from across the region. As an example, two journalists from BiH and Montenegro connected via the More than a Quota Initiative to produce a joint story on femicide, which is an important issue in both countries. This gave them an opportunity to pursue a story they otherwise would not have had the time, resources, or know-

how to work on. They are planning to publish the story in each of their respective outlets and reported that the collaboration enabled them to reach wider audiences across borders and develop both professionally and in their capacity to collaborate with other journalists to co-produce stories of public interest and importance.

Other stakeholders cited the MIL as an excellent forum to facilitate collaboration and connection among media actors across the region while also fostering new innovative ideas to strengthen content production or tools to expand audience reach. A KMP staff member from Kosovo reflected on their experience with the MIL, saying,

“It is a positive change because we learned that one challenge is language barriers in the Balkans. During my participation in the Media Innovation Lab, these challenges were discussed in a concrete way — how to use technology to enrich content. The usage of AI was a common topic, and everyone saw it as a useful tool. AI was used to vocalize text, speech-to-text conversion, and translation. One challenge was offering content for people with disabilities (vocalization of texts) and vice versa. On an average scale, I would not have known this if I had not participated in BMAP-FORWARD.”

USG stakeholders and KMP staff observed cross-border engagement among media actors to produce joint content as a key strength of BMAP-FORWARD. For example, Vijesti in Montenegro collaborates with KMPs in BiH and Kosovo to produce joint content monthly. A USG stakeholder observed,

“This is very important for Montenegrin audiences because people tend to think of Montenegro in a bubble and not recognize there are politics and events occurring outside of Montenegro. It is very good to have this kind of perspective in Montenegro news for these audiences. This is a very significant aspect of this project.”

Finding 3.12: Those who use Balkansmedia.org described it as a useful resource to access new content or collaborate with others across the region. BMAP-FORWARD monitoring data indicates that Balkansmedia.org has seen an approximately 166 percent increase in user engagement from the baseline to Year 2, exceeding its Year 2 target by approximately 73 percent. By the end of Year 2, Google Analytics indicated 23,642 total persons engaged with Balkansmedia.org platform content.¹²

KMP staff that reported using Balkansmedia.org included editors and journalists. Many were unaware of the extent to which their colleagues or other staff members knew of or utilized Balkansmedia.org. Those who use Balkansmedia.org cited its usefulness in producing useful or applicable content to media actors across the region. One KMP staff member from Montenegro indicated that he appreciated the platform's ability to provide easy access to diverse experiences and case studies that are relevant and applicable to their work. The platform's content production in various languages enables KMP staff from across the region to learn from and collaborate with other content producers, gain new ideas on stories to report in their own country, and keep abreast of news occurring in other countries or areas of the region. A non-KMP grantee reported using Balkansmedia.org to access information about grants, calls for applications, and to read informative articles available in all regional languages, particularly appreciating the platform for its utility and availability of content in multiple languages. Other KMP staff noted that they

¹² BMAP-FORWARD. 2024. Annex I_Performance Indicator Tracking Table_BMAP-F_Y2Q4.

regularly read the Balkansmedia.org newsletter, launched by BMAP-FORWARD in September 2023,¹³ and then go to the platform to further read up on key topics of interest presented in the newsletter.

Finding 3.13. Several stakeholders cited Balkansmedia.org as limited in its reach and effectiveness as a collaborative tool. Several KMP staff indicated that they either did not use the platform or were unaware of what it offers, as generally validated by responses in the Substantiation Survey where respondents were, on average, neutral on questions related to Balkansmedia.org (**Annex I, Questions 1.15 – 1.19**). One KMP staff member from Serbia cited a lack of staff bandwidth to further explore the platform, *“We recognized the portal as a good source of useful information; however, haven’t been using it as frequently as we wanted due to the work overload.”* Another KMP staff member from North Macedonia noted, *“We didn’t use the platform itself. The reason for this is likely because we were informed about all the news published on the platform through links sent to our email by BMAP-FORWARD representatives on a daily basis.”* Most stakeholders did not raise the topic of Balkansmedia.org as a useful tool during interviews. In most cases, it was only discussed when specifically asked or probed by the evaluation team, suggesting it is not a key tool stakeholders refer to when considering BMAP-FORWARD’s influence.

Several KMP staff indicated that the platform could be better marketed to increase engagement and awareness among KMP staff, as well as those beyond the BMAP-FORWARD circle. One non-KMP grantee said, *“We agree the platform is largely under-promoted, but we also agree that it is extremely useful and that we have used it regularly.”* Several stakeholders noted that its limited use beyond BMAP-FORWARD was a missed opportunity and that it could provide a crucial tool for other media actors in the region if they were aware of it.¹⁴

A few USG stakeholders expressed concern over the platform’s sustainability, particularly beyond the BMAP-FORWARD Activity. While none of the stakeholders interviewed suggested nor indicated a sustainability plan in place for continuing this platform post-Activity, the ET notes this is currently planned for Year 3 and acknowledges it will take time to determine the best and most appropriate sustainability strategy for this platform.

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion 3.1. BMAP-FORWARD’s assistance has supported KMPs in expanding their reach, engaging wider audiences, and contributing to cross-border collaboration. Specifically, assistance has been specific and tailored to KMPs’ needs with respect to their existing capacities, interests, and abilities to pursue different modes of content production within their operating environment.

Conclusion 3.2. BMAP-FORWARD’s tailored approach to working with each KMP individually has enabled both BMAP-FORWARD and KMPs to target their time, engagement, and resources to effectively contribute to the KMPs’ goals and interests in expanding their reach. Multiple approaches, tools, and interventions have effectively strengthened KMPs’ capacities to produce data-driven content and engage wider audiences through new types and formats of content production. Creative content production grants have strengthened KMP staff’s capacity to apply new formats and engage in newer modes of content

¹³ BMAP-FORWARD. 2024. BMAP Forward_Y2Annual Report.

¹⁴ The ET notes that BMAP-FORWARD has plans to utilize the platform to host the project’s gender-related activities and the regional women expert database, which is anticipated to facilitate increased cross-border engagement and expand its reach in the future in a manner that does not involve securing additional resources.

production, like podcasts or video studios. Tools such as AI-powered translation have allowed certain KMPs to deliver their content to wider audiences, both nationally and regionally. Tools like SmartOcto have been useful for KMPs with direct to consumer engagement to build and strengthen their capacity to use engagement analytics to inform editorial decisions.

Conclusion 3.3. KMP staff and management face bandwidth and resources issues that may undermine the effectiveness of the assistance provided. Journalists and newsroom staff must balance existing workloads with participation in assistance activities, while KMPs, in general, have difficulties hiring and retaining qualified staff members. BMAP-FORWARD staff and consultants work with the KMPs to navigate these challenges.

Conclusion 3.4. BMAP-FORWARD has facilitated cross-border engagement among media actors through various tools and approaches, including integrating AI-powered translation, fostering collaboration among a small cohort of women journalists via the More than a Quota Initiative the MIL, and facilitating partnerships among media actors across the region. While tools, such as the Balkansmedia.org platform, are acknowledged as very useful by those who use them, they may be limited in their reach and could be strengthened to have a wider impact and facilitate more cross-border engagement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. BMAP-FORWARD should continue to deliver capacity-building trainings and technical assistance as highly tailored and specific to participants' needs, with offered opportunities for continuous feedback from direct participants to assess trainers and training modes' effectiveness in meeting participants' needs.
2. BMAP-FORWARD should consider providing more opportunities for intentional engagement for knowledge transfer and peer-to-peer learning for journalists and newsroom staff from different outlets, including non-KMPs and different media across the region. Such engagements could be online meetings, side events during meet-ups and forums, or training courses where staff from one KMP would be invited as facilitators/trainers.
3. BMAP-FORWARD should consider developing recorded versions of capacity-building trainings to offer newsroom staff the option to participate asynchronously.
4. BMAP-FORWARD should continue exploring avenues to expand the promotion and reach of the Balkansmedia.org platform while balancing the cost-benefits of doing so and if it feels it is worth investing more time and energy into. In addition to upcoming planned activities for Year 3 to test a LinkedIn newsletter and survey to assess the newsletters' effectiveness, BMAP-FORWARD should consider other modes of promotion, particularly beyond the KMP and grantee network. Additionally, continue plans to design a sustainability strategy and plan in Year 3 for the Balkansmedia.org platform.

4.4 EVALUATION QUESTION 3:

To what extent are BMAP-FORWARD approaches, interventions, and tools influencing KMPs' digital security?

FINDINGS

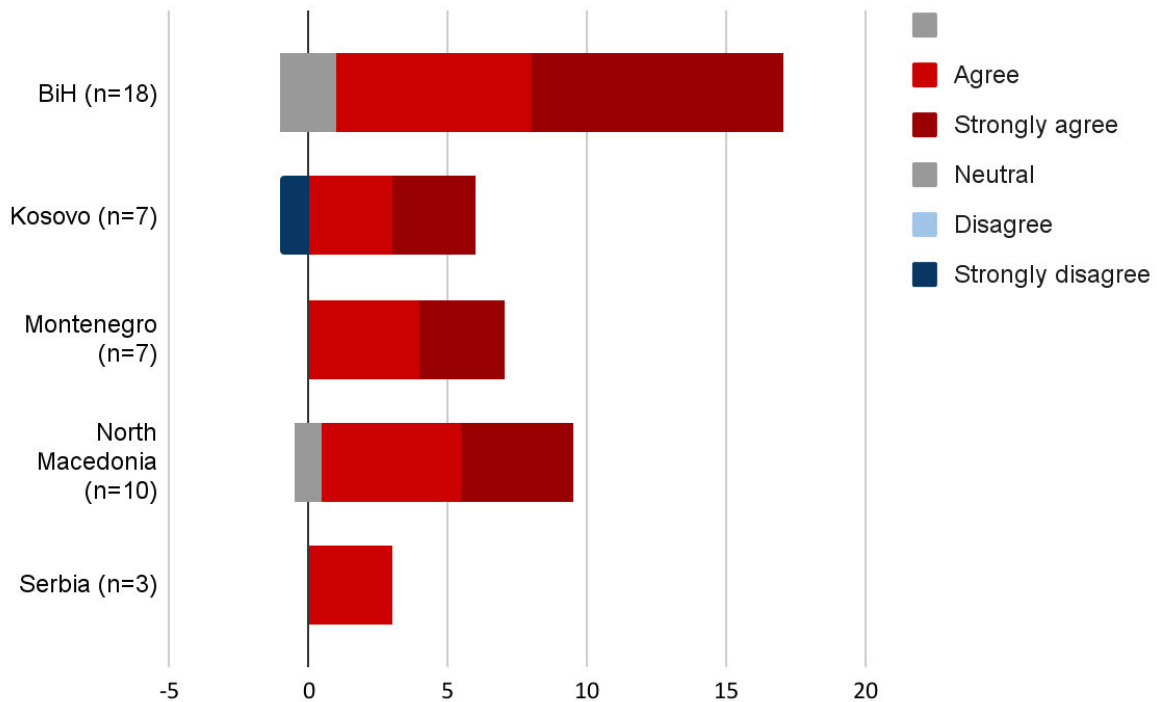
Finding 4.1: A majority of KMP staff and several other stakeholders perceived improvements in KMP digital security practices as a result of BMAP-FORWARD assistance.

Staff from 12 KMPs observed improvements in how their respective KMP was able to identify, respond to, and resolve digital security challenges as a result of the BMAP-FORWARD technical assistance and grant funding, as was validated by results from the Substantiation Survey, where KMP staff generally agreed or strongly agreed that their respective company has improved their digital practices and protocols as a result of BMAP-FORWARD assistance (**Figure 5**).^{15&16} One KMP staff from Kosovo, for instance, noted that the targeted training increased digital security to “*a great degree*.” Another KMP staff from Kosovo stated how the customized assistance from BMAP-FORWARD to prevent cyberattacks during significant news events had reduced their company’s vulnerability. Another KMP staff from BiH said that “[The] [f]lexibility and tailor-made approach is the best experience with BMAP-FORWARD,” as it allowed the organization to react to cyber- and other threats quickly and dynamically. A KMP staff from North Macedonia noted that their digital security needs were very specific and consequently, they sought solutions within the local market. After identifying effective options, BMAP-FORWARD assisted them in acquiring the necessary digital security solutions. One IP staff based in BiH said that BMAP-FORWARD’s support for digital security measures had created routine safety checks across their organizations and collaborating organizations. A digital security expert noted that the tailored approach delivered by BMAP-FORWARD was important because the considerable range in age and knowledge among KMP staff led to varying levels of awareness about digital security challenges.

¹⁵ BMAP-FORWARD monitoring data on reported improvements in digital security practices were not available at the time of this evaluation. This data should be reviewed when available after the mid-term Organizational Capacity Assessments, planned for 2025, to determine progress towards this objective.

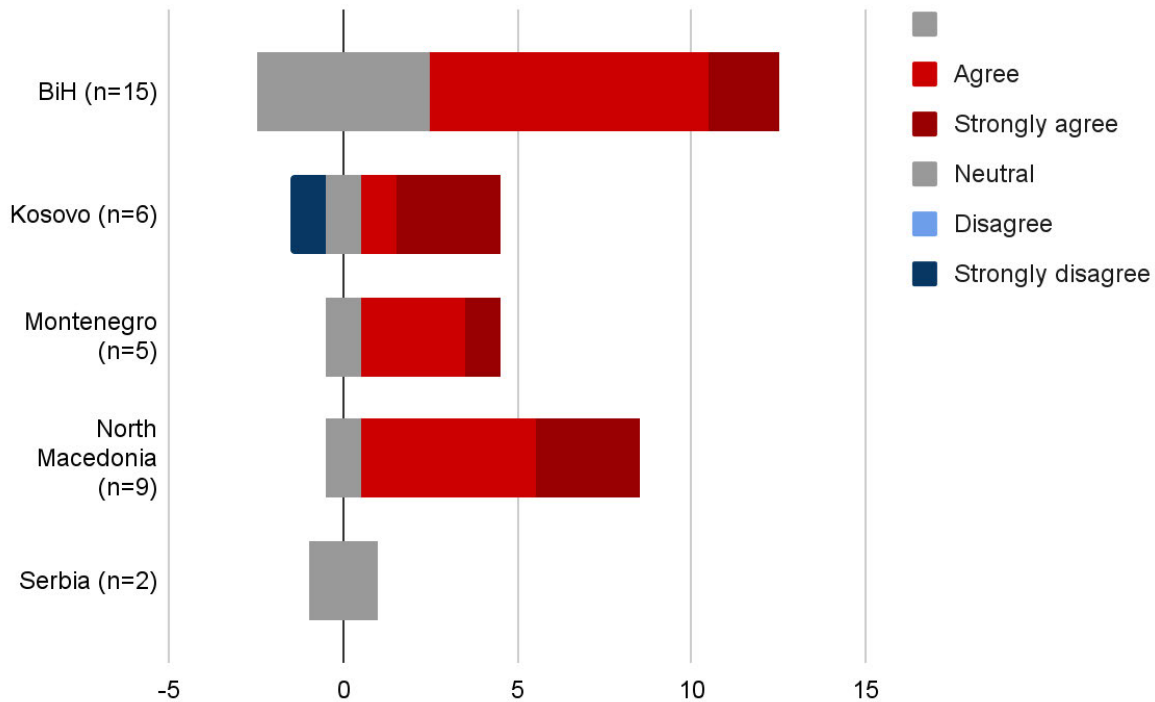
¹⁶ It is relevant to note that staff from KMPs may be receiving digital security support and guidance from other sources, which may temper BMAP-FORWARD’s influence on their digital security protocols and practices.

FIGURE 5: SUBSTANTIATION SURVEY RESULTS TO THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT: BECAUSE OF TECHNICAL AND/OR GRANT SUPPORT RECEIVED FROM BMAP-FORWARD, I / MY COMPANY HAVE IMPROVED OUR DIGITAL SECURITY PRACTICES AND PROTOCOLS.



Finding 4.2: SAFETAG audits were considered a useful tool to diagnose each KMP’s specific gaps and vulnerabilities with respect to digital security and to engage with experts to identify feasible solutions. Staff from 12 KMPs across all five countries reported that the SAFETAG audits effectively identified weaknesses or vulnerabilities in their digital security and digital hygiene practices. Respondents in the Substantiation Survey more or less agreed (**Figure 6**), although not all respondents were involved in this aspect of the Activity, nor did all KMPs undergo a SAFETAG audit at the time of the evaluation, which may contribute to more neutral responses among staff and high number of respondents indicating N/A for this question (n=8).

FIGURE 6: SUBSTANTIATION SURVEY RESULTS TO THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT: THE SAFETAG SECURITY AUDIT AND SUBSEQUENT ASSISTANCE WERE EFFECTIVE IN STRENGTHENING OUR COMPANY’S DIGITAL SECURITY NEEDS.



Note: Eight respondents indicated N/A.

Additionally, staff from nine KMPs indicated that the subsequent technical and grant assistance was highly tailored to address the specific challenges or vulnerabilities identified by the SAFETAG audits, effectively responding to their unique needs. A BMAP-FORWARD country manager mentioned that the SAFETAG audit was used to identify both online and physical security challenges facing the respective KMPs, all of which were addressed by BMAP-FORWARD assistance.

A KMP leader from Montenegro explained that the SAFETAG audits were useful since they confirmed the strength of already existing security protocols and, thus, did not require significant subsequent follow-up assistance. Similarly, some respondents were unaware of the SAFETAG audits and noted they were not aware of all activities conducted under BMAP-FORWARD, regardless of whether their company underwent an audit.

Finding 4.3: KMP staff explained that expert assistance provided by BMAP-FORWARD was targeted and useful, providing a quick response option to acute challenges and helping to implement new protocols and practices that observably improved organizational digital hygiene. Staff from seven KMPs shared this observation. For example, staff from a KMP in Kosovo explained that cyberattacks against their company ceased to succeed

after they received expert assistance from BMAP-FORWARD, which included installing Cloudflare¹⁷ and moving their website to a different server. Another KMP in Kosovo explained how the targeted and quick assistance enabled them to strengthen their capacity as a serious media outlet and strengthen their resilience to digital security issues, saying,

“I contact BMAP-FORWARD experts through SMS, and they resolve our issues in five to six minutes, and this gives us a sense of security. We are no longer identified as a vulnerable media, which can be crashed through [cyber] attacks. And we are more serious in the media market. I would have never found a solution to our problems without BMAP-FORWARD.”

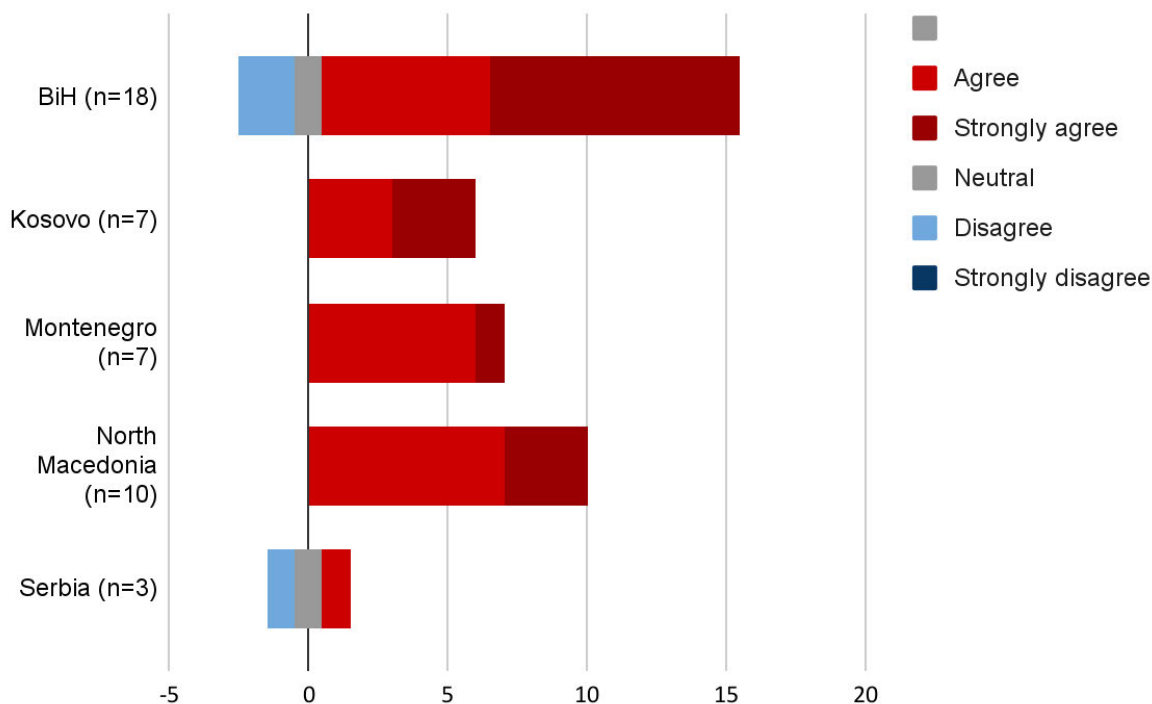
Other stakeholders, including USG staff, also observed the effectiveness of this kind of quick and targeted assistance to KMPs, particularly those facing acute digital security vulnerabilities. Results from the Expert Survey indicated that USG and IP expert consultants generally agreed or strongly agreed that the tools and approaches employed by BMAP-FORWARD effectively strengthened KMPs’ awareness, knowledge, and continued adoption of digital security practices (**Annex I**, Question 2.9).

Finding 4.4: KMP staff who received Risk Reduction Grants (RRG) reported that the funding was specifically aimed at providing assistance to address a range of digital security vulnerabilities through various solutions. Staff from KMPs who received a subsequent RRG (or staff that were knowledgeable about the grant) indicated the funding was useful to support a wide variety of solutions, including purchasing key equipment or fund strategies to implement improved digital security protocols and practices. For instance, a country manager explained that with respect to their country’s engagement under BMAP-FORWARD, *“A very strong component of our program is enhancing digital security,”* further elaborating that some KMPs had frequently been the target of cyber-attacks from Iran and Russia. After receiving an RRG, the respective KMP’s awareness of potential risks and containment strategies improved, as reported by the staff, and they now regularly assess the safety of their websites and share their newfound expertise with other news outlets.

According to the Substantiation Survey, most KMP staff generally agreed or strongly agreed that grant assistance enabled their KMP to strengthen digital security protocols and practices, with the exception of three staff in Serbia who were neutral on the topic (**Figure 7**).

¹⁷ Cloudflare is online platform that provides digital security support and solutions to individuals and enterprises.

FIGURE 7: SUBSTANTIATION SURVEY RESULTS TO THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT: [BMAP-FORWARD] GRANT ASSISTANCE ENABLED US TO STRENGTHEN OUR DIGITAL SECURITY PROTOCOLS AND/OR PRACTICES.



Finding 4.5. A few stakeholders noted that the RRGs were cost-effective in providing solutions to digital and physical security challenges. In Year 2, five RRGs were dispersed for an average of US\$5,307.74 per grant. The RRGs accounted for approximately ten percent of all grants dispersed by BMAP-FORWARD, but only approximately one percent of the total funding dispersed.¹⁸ A BMAP-FORWARD grants manager mentioned that although the RRGs were relatively small, they nevertheless enhanced security protocols for recipients, given they were designed to target acute solutions following the SAFETAG audits or very specific security issues that arose. For example, a KMP in Kosovo received an RRG to purchase the necessary equipment to implement digital security solutions, as explained by a KMP staff, “We also had a small Risk Reduction Grant, which is connected to security equipment. We had problems with the internet, and we needed a stable internet connection. They gave us recommendations, so we purchased new equipment, and our internet is more stable.”

Finding 4.6. KMP staff and other stakeholders shared concerns over the long-term effectiveness of BMAP-FORWARD digital security assistance. For example, a BMAP-FORWARD IT consultant thought that there was still “a lot of room for improvement” with regard to digital hygiene at KMPs and said that grant funding needed to be accelerated to increase the adoption of digital security practices among staff. A USG staff member said broader systematic changes are required, and grant funding is just a first step, stating “BMAP-FORWARD is doing a good initial training of KMPs” but needs to identify longer-term solutions for continued technical assistance for independent media organizations

¹⁸ Internews. 2024. “BMAP-F List of awarded grants in project year 2 (February 1st, 2023 - January 31, 2024).”

to navigate these challenges. A BMAP-FORWARD country manager said that while the RRG deployed to a respective KMP was helpful in mobilizing quick expert assistance, the grant was insufficient to address cybersecurity issues in the long term, and new policies and the continued adoption of such policies were needed.

Finding 4.7 Stakeholders report observations in systematic changes among KMP staff, including increased awareness and adoption of digital security practices. Several stakeholders reported observable increases in awareness and knowledge of digital security and best practices and protocols among newsroom staff and perceived these increases as partly due to BMAP-FORWARD assistance. A BMAP-FORWARD country manager, for instance, pointed out that two to three years ago, journalists did not know about two-factor authentication. This changed due to BMAP-FORWARD, as did the overall awareness of issues related to digital security. They said,

“Today, everybody uses a two-factor authentication system, has secure key numbers, and uses licensed equipment...The awareness and knowledge of staff who use equipment has improved. By default, when new staff is hired, they need to undergo training on digital security. We assess and test whether they are working in a safe environment and give them concrete suggestions on what should be done.”

A KMP staff from BiH noted that the digital security trainings were *“important for our members...[there has been] a change in awareness of [our] members about digital security...how they use their telephones, many no longer use Viber but other applications. It is still in the beginning and more trainings are needed.”*

Finding 4.8. Few stakeholders noted ongoing challenges that hinder full adoption of digital security practices. A country manager highlighted that while KMP staff were more aware of digital security practices, a lack of prioritization limited their adoption of these best practices, as staff were *“too busy”* with the daily demands of running a media business to seriously improve cybersecurity. A KMP staff from BiH indicated that their organization had only just begun digital security training and there has yet to be full adoption among organization members for best digital security practices. A digital security expert that provided assistance under BMAP-FORWARD stated, *“I would really recommend that BMAP-FORWARD continue to invest in in-house experts [at the KMPs] and building that expertise from within, instead of just external consultants,”* noting that adoption of best practices or risk management strategies is a daily and ever evolving task.

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion 4.1. Overall, BMAP-FORWARD tools, technical assistance, and grant funding were well received to address KMPs’ digital security and digital hygiene concerns as they were highly tailored to each KMP’s specific needs and aligned with their existing protocols. The SAFETAG audit serves as a useful diagnostic tool to either highlight important gaps or vulnerabilities in KMPs’ existing protocols or to confirm the strength of existing protocols. The subsequent grant and technical assistance responded directly to solutions outlined from SAFETAG audits, were cost-effective in providing targeted assistance, and were quickly deployed to respond to both acute and ongoing challenges.

Conclusion 4.2. Training and capacity-building efforts have revealed some observable improvements in organizational digital hygiene behaviors, particularly among newsroom staff, for increased awareness of digital security efforts as well as adoption of better digital security practices. While BMAP-FORWARD’s focus on strengthening digital security protocols and digital hygiene was targeted and useful, several

concerns may undermine the sustainability of improved digital security protocols and practices over the long term. Such concerns centered around the need for ongoing and in some cases, in-depth, technical assistance to navigate evolving digital security challenges and to promote and enforce the adoption of protocols and practices among newsroom and other KMP staff.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. BMAP-FORWARD should consider intentionally promoting peer-to-peer learning events to exchange knowledge and best practices among KMPs, particularly newsroom staff, to foster a culture of continuous learning and improvement around organizational digital hygiene to the extent that budgets allow and noting existing time burdens facing newsroom staff.
2. BMAP-FORWARD should consider investing in strengthening the capacity of in-house expertise or identify long-term solutions for each KMP to navigate the evolving digital security challenges.
3. BMAP-FORWARD should consider tools and approaches to strengthen the sustainability of capacity building efforts under the Activity. For example, BMAP-FORWARD could produce standalone manuals or a training program as a part of the planned (Year 3) digital security concept trainings that would promote how to develop and implement best digital security policies and practices or risk mitigation strategies for digital security. Additionally, BMAP-FORWARD could integrate co-designed sustainability plans with KMPs when reviewing SAFETAG audit results for how they will continue to implement and enforce best policies and practices for strengthened digital security among staff.

4.5 EVALUATION QUESTION 4:

What factors influence partnerships between media outlets and the technology, commercial, and entrepreneurial sectors?

FINDINGS

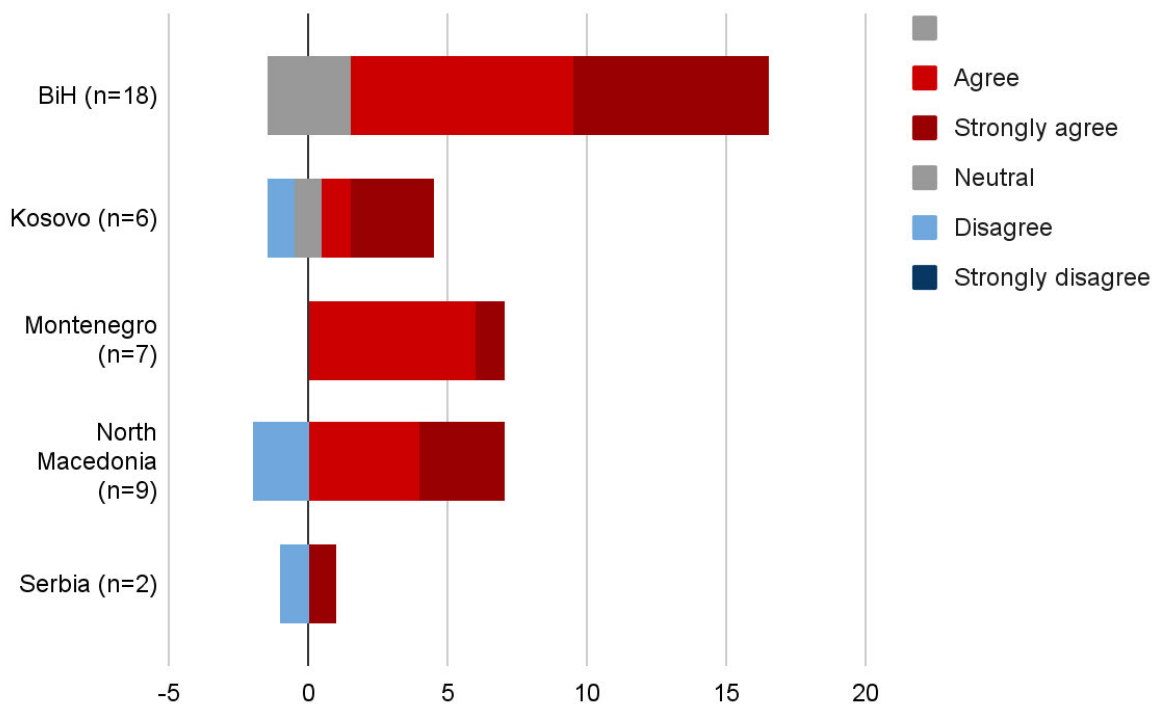
Finding 5.1 Many stakeholders reported being unaware of BMAP-FORWARD's activities with respect to facilitating and fostering partnerships between KMPs and the private sector. A BMAP-FORWARD country manager mentioned that she knew that the MIL was trying to foster partnerships between KMPs and the private sector but also admitted that she was unsure what, if any, such results were. A USG staff said that many KMPs would like to diversify their revenue base by partnering with the private sector but that they were unsure about how that could be achieved. When asked about their perspective on BMAP-FORWARD's activities to foster partnerships among KMPs and the private sector, another USG staff said they could not comment because they were not aware of anything of that nature. A KMP staff member said that she was not aware of this aspect of BMAP-FORWARD's interventions and thus was uncertain of its specific impact. Respondents from the Expert Perception Survey reported the current state of partnerships between media and the private sector in the Western Balkans as weak or neutral (See **Annex I**, Question 2.11).

According to BMAP-FORWARD's monitoring data, the Activity lagged behind anticipated targets for Year 2, only achieving three established links between media entities and non-traditional partners. # citing delays in project implementation and awarding specific investment grants aimed at facilitating such partnerships.

Finding 5.2. A few stakeholders reported examples of BMAP-FORWARD’s assistance in facilitating linkages between KMPs and private sector actors. For example, an IP staff from Kosovo noted that one KMP “*cooperates closely with an online retail and tech company...to broadcast their content. They exchange services and do some services jointly, such as real estate sales.*” A business consultant providing assistance under BMAP-FORWARD also said that BMAP-FORWARD had created a more “collaborative environment” in the media sector.

However, while KMP staff during interviews did not elaborate on linkages fostered by BMAP-FORWARD with the private sector, results from the Substantiation Survey indicated that staff generally agreed or were neutral that BMAP-FORWARD had encouraged their KMP to pursue partnerships with entrepreneurs, and commercial and technology companies (**Figure 8**). Results from the Expert Survey with other donors and agency representatives or private sector actors indicate that they generally agreed or were neutral regarding BMAP-FORWARD effectively fostering collaborative partnerships between the media and private sectors (**Annex I, Question 2.13**).

FIGURE 8: SUBSTANTIATION SURVEY RESULTS TO THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT: BMAP-FORWARD HAS ENCOURAGED ME / MY COMPANY TO PURSUE PARTNERSHIPS WITH ENTREPRENEURS, COMMERCIAL AND TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES.



Note: Three respondents indicated N/A.

Finding 5.3. Some KMP staff, particularly among investigative outlets, report a perceived loss of independence as an inhibiting factor to pursue partnerships with the private sector. Some KMP staff explained they hesitated to engage in non-traditional partnerships, particularly with the private sector, due to concerns about losing editorial independence. This is seen as

particularly problematic for investigative media outlets, which might view such partnerships as compromising their integrity. A KMP staff from BiH said,

“Given the [investigative] nature of these outlets, it’s particularly challenging to select private companies to work with that align with their values and operational integrity...the politicized environment and prevalence of corruption complicates finding private sector partners not involved in political sectors or corrupt practices.”

Another KMP staff from Serbia stated,

“The media landscape in Serbia doesn’t allow us to enter into partnerships with the private sector without jeopardizing our independence and the investigative nature of our work. Some form of collaboration might be possible, but only with small businesses and under carefully structured agreements that wouldn’t compromise either our goals or theirs.”

Finding 5.4. A lack of capacity, expertise, and financial resources are reported by stakeholders as additional inhibiting factors to pursue partnerships with private sector actors. Some KMP staff and other stakeholders reported that a perceived lack of expertise to engage in topics that interest the private sector, such as open data tools, reducing their involvement in potentially beneficial collaborations. A BMAP-FORWARD country manager explained,

“We as a team try to assist [the KMPs] and guide them, pointing out the latest trends, but at the end of the day, it is up to them to say they are prepared. Do they have the capacity? Can they find the proper partner to implement the idea? Since they are coping with their daily work, lack of quality workforce, most of the time are stretched to the maximum, are calculating every cent and many more factors that are influencing them to enter in such dealings.”

A KMP staff member highlighted financial constraints as a significant barrier to forming partnerships. These include the high costs of hiring skilled personnel like programmers and the timing of grant availability, which affect project implementation. The changing landscape of advertising revenue was also mentioned, further straining KMPs financially.

Finding 5.5. Some KMP staff report that difficult operating environments, limited options for suitable partners, or a general lack of interest constrain their ability to pursue such private sector partners.

For example, one KMP staff from North Macedonia explained that his organization

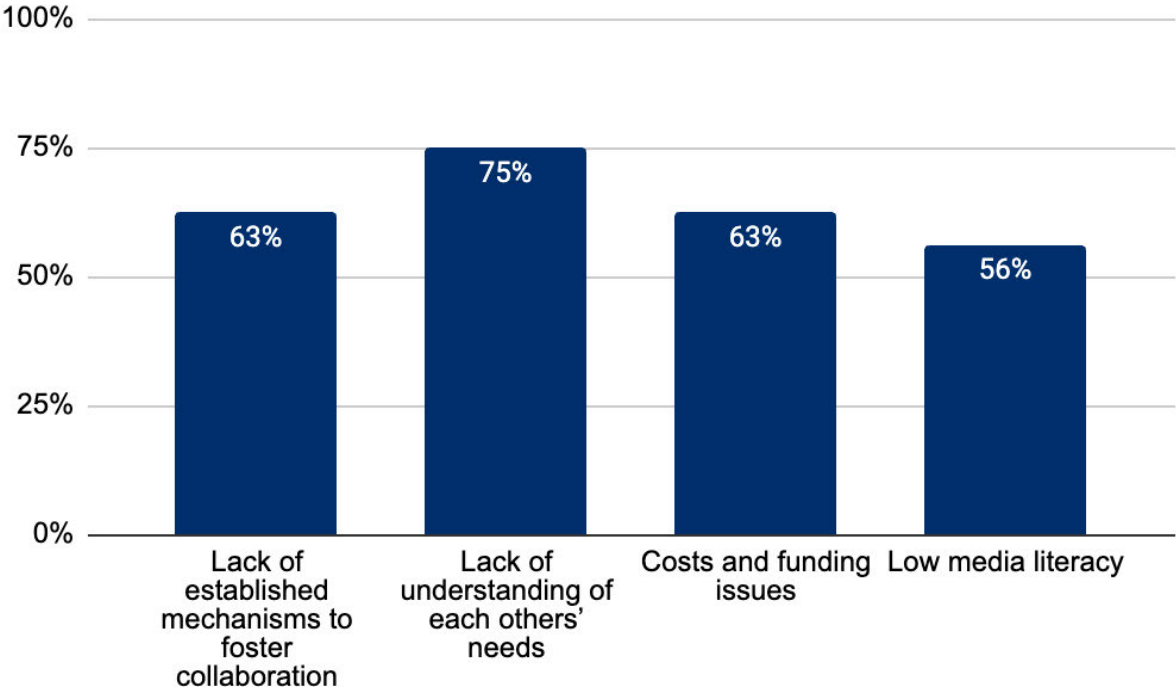
“finds it challenging to establish partnerships with private sector actors in North Macedonia due to a lack of options and selectivity in choosing potential partners...stemming from the limited availability of suitable companies within North Macedonia that could align with [their] needs or objectives for collaboration.”

Another KMP staff said, *“Unfortunately, the limited size and relative weakness of our local business sector haven’t presented an opportunity for more collaborative partnership based on shared interests.”* Finally, another KMP staff noted that while their company already operates within the private sector and relies heavily on advertising revenue, *“partnering with private sector actors beyond advertising collaborations is not appealing nor relevant.”*

Finding 5.6. Experts observe that a lack of understanding of mutual benefits for private sector partnerships among media actors and established mechanisms to facilitate such understanding are key inhibiting factors. For instance, an Internews

consultant said that developers and programmers often did not understand how journalism and the media sector worked. Similarly, a donor agency representative said that there was a “*general lack of understanding about the mutual benefits of partnerships between KMPs and the private sector.*” Seventy-five percent of respondents in the Expert Survey reported that “*a lack of understanding of each other’s needs*” was an inhibiting factor for fostering partnerships between the media and the private sector (**Figure 9**). Additionally, 62.5 percent of respondents noted that a lack of established mechanisms to foster such collaboration was also an inhibiting factor.

FIGURE 9: SURVEY RESULTS TO THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT: “WHAT FACTORS INHIBIT OR CHALLENGE SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN THE MEDIA AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR?”



Source: BMAP-FORWARD Performance Evaluation, Survey for Other Donor Representatives and Private Sector Actors (n=16)

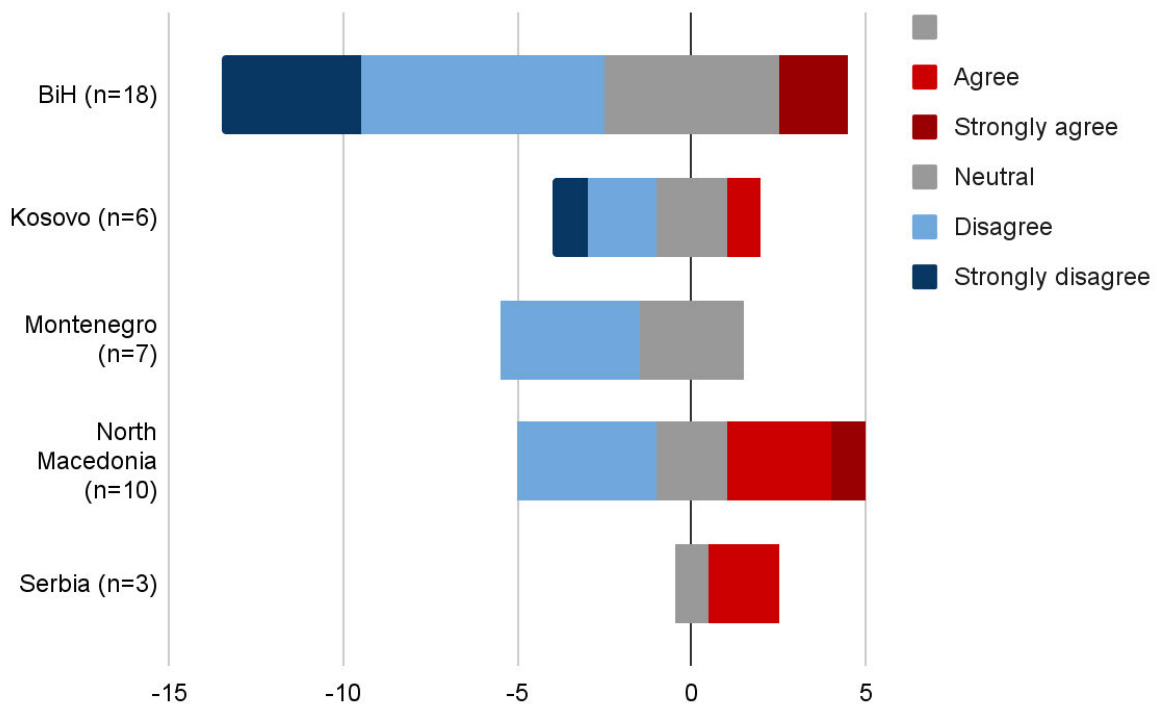
Finding 5.7. Some KMP staff reported an interest in pursuing the right types of partnerships with private sector actors. Results from the Substantiation Survey suggest that staff from KMPs are interested in establishing partnerships with the private sector (**Figure 10**) as they generally disagreed with the statement, “I am not interested in pursuing partnerships with the private sector for various reasons.” For instance, one KMP staff emphasized that such partnerships could drive innovation and strengthen their long-term viability. Another KMP staff from Montenegro said, “*I see value in potentially partnering with local IT companies that could offer services at reasonable prices, making logistical and operational aspects more manageable,*” and is open to exploring how such types of partnerships could be mutually beneficial.

The exception is respondents from Serbia, who either agreed or were neutral to this statement. During interviews, KMP staff from Serbia either outright did not want to pursue such partnerships due to

concerns over maintaining independence or because they did not need or want assistance from BMAP-FORWARD to facilitate such partnerships. A KMP staff shared,

“We are primarily a media outlet whose survival in the market depends on the commercialization of our work. We enter into partnerships with other companies by implementing our marketing plans. As the media market in Serbia does not always offer fair conditions, it is not always possible to fully realize all partnerships with other businesses. Nevertheless, we find ways to establish and maintain business partnerships. In this aspect, we did not receive support from BMAP-FORWARD, not because they were unable to offer it to us, but because we did not need it.”

FIGURE 10: SUBSTANTIATION SURVEY RESULTS TO THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT: I / MY COMPANY AM (IS) NOT INTERESTED IN PURSUING PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR FOR VARIOUS REASONS.



Note: 1 respondent indicated N/A.

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion 4.1. Many stakeholders, including USG staff and KMP staff, were generally unaware or uninformed about BMAP-FORWARD’s specific interventions or activities that promote or foster partnerships between KMPs and private sector actors or other non-traditional partners. Monitoring data also indicates that the Activity lags behind its anticipated progress by Year 2. While facilitating partnerships between KMPs and private sector or non-traditional actors is only one aspect of activities implemented under Activity Objective 3, BMAP-FORWARD’s interventions and progress specific to facilitating these types of partnerships under this Objective are not well understood by USG and KMP stakeholders alike.

Conclusion 4.2. A wide variety of factors hinder the ability to foster partnerships between the media and private sectors in the Western Balkans. Such factors include a lack of interest, expertise, capacity, and financial resources among KMPs to pursue such partnerships; a difficult operating environment with a limited pool of suitable partners; a lack of established mechanisms to intentionally foster such collaborations; a lack of understanding of each other’s needs; and finally, primarily for smaller, investigative outlets, a perceived loss of independence for engaging in such partnerships.

Conclusion 4.3. While real barriers to establishing partnerships between the media and the private sector exist, some media outlets remain interested in pursuing potential opportunities. Such opportunities include exploring ways in which partnerships could alleviate in-house capacity gaps or challenges, underscoring how collaborations with the private sector could help media outlets scale their business and expand their reach and impact.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. BMAP-FORWARD and USAID should strengthen the communication of goals, activities, and interventions conducted specific to facilitating partnerships between media and the private sector or non-traditional actors under Objective 3, particularly among USG and KMP staff.
2. BMAP-FORWARD should consider developing initiatives like dialogue and transparency workshops aimed at aligning the divergent priorities of media and business sectors while fostering trust through transparency. Additionally, BMAP-FORWARD could consider establishing a project incubator program to support the development of feasible media-business partnerships, emphasizing innovation and mutual benefits without compromising journalistic integrity.
3. BMAP-FORWARD should continue to organize forums, such as the MIL and Annual Media Forum, and other smaller “meet-ups” to convene media and non-traditional actors. However, BMAP-FORWARD should consider intentionally designing and marketing sessions geared toward facilitating potential partnerships between private sector actors and KMPs. Such sessions can be followed by ongoing assistance to support KMPs in navigating how to structure such partnerships and the potential mutual benefits that can be achieved through such partnerships.

ANNEX A: EVALUATION SCOPE OF WORK

USAID EE/MELDS Tasking Request:

Balkan Media Assistance Program to Foster Organizational Readiness While Advancing Resilient Development (BMAP FORWARD) Performance Evaluation

Date of Request: April 4, 2023

Type of Task: Performance Evaluation

Statement of Work (SOW):

This is a Statement of Work (SOW) for a Midterm Performance Evaluation of the BMAP FORWARD activity, implemented by Internews under Associate Cooperative Agreement No. 7200AA21LA000006, running from February 3, 2022 through February 2, 2027.

The project goal is to strengthen the competitiveness of independent media in the Western Balkans in the local and regional marketplaces and improve the sustainability of the sector across the region through creative partnerships and collaboration. The program implementer, Internews, has based its proposed approach on lessons learned from more than 30 years of work with independent media around the world and 20 years of experience supporting the development of the sector in the Balkan region, most recently through the ongoing USAID-funded Balkans Media Assistance Program (BMAP), which will end in June 2022.

BMAP Forward's comprehensive slate of mutually reinforcing activities will continue and deepen work conducted through BMAP and will achieve the following objectives:

- Objective 1: Increase strategic business practices of key media partners to operate as viable enterprises and better understand their markets and audiences.
- Objective 2: Reinforce the ability of content producers to produce data-driven content, engage wider audiences, improve digital security efforts, and expand reach across the region.
- Objective 3: Foster stronger partnerships between media outlets and the technology, commercial, and entrepreneurial sectors to advance solutions on common challenges in the information space.

The evaluation will focus on the period starting from February 3, 2022 through the present. The Bureau will use the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of this evaluation to assess BMAP FORWARD's performance and to inform decisions regarding the activity's implementation over the remainder of the award.

Evaluation Questions:

- I. **Tools/approaches.** Of the BMAP Forward tools, approaches, and interventions under Objectives 1 and 2, which tools in current programming have strengthened links with audiences and have the potential in building trust with the outlier audiences? Which helped partners create data-driven content? Which have not and could be refined? Disaggregate by the size of the outlet and region/market/country.

2. **Business practices.** What were the most effective business practices in: monetizing content and expanding audiences? What factors influenced the efficacy of these practices (such as outlet size, operating environment, audience demographic)? What percentage of partners adopted, applied and succeeded in increasing strategic business practices (disaggregated by the size of the outlet, region/market/country, as well as increase in income, increase in audience, or new or core business growth as applicable) and what most significantly contributed to the success (please list up to three most important factors). For partners that failed to adopt or implement the business practices, what was the reason for the failure (e.g. failure in monetizing content, expanding audiences, growing media businesses)?
3. **Partnerships.** What were the most successful partnerships between media and the private sector? What common challenges did the partnerships successfully address? What solutions had the most impact? Disaggregate by media outlet size, type of partnership (sectors engaged), type of solution (technology, business, etc), and region/country/market (as applicable). What additional untested forms of partnerships do stakeholders identify that could prove helpful? Have BMAP-Forward cross-regional interventions (such as the Media Innovation Labs, collaborative content grants, and joint advocacy initiatives) led to greater partnerships to address common challenges in the information space? Which have been more effective and why? How has BMAP-Forward's intensive efforts to coordinate with other donor-supported programs, particularly, but not limited to, Media Innovation (Serbia), Media Engagement Activity (Bosnia-Herzegovina), and Support for Media Freedom and Pluralism (regional), led to more leveraged impact among the Key Media Partners?
4. **Digital security.** With regard to improving digital security practices among the BMAP Forward partners, what have been the most effective incentives and technical assistance activities to achieve changes in attitudes about digital security? What type of assistance (technical, financial, third-party short term expertise, in-house expertise, peer learning etc) most significantly contributed to improvements in digital security behavior and structural changes? What did not and why? Disaggregate by media outlet size, region/country/market (as applicable). What is necessary to encourage, support, and sustain long-term changes in opinions or beliefs about the importance of digital security among management and employees at media partners?

Geographic Scope: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia

Deliverable(s):

- Evaluation Desk Review and Workplan
- Post-Fieldwork Briefings
- Evaluation Report (draft and final versions)
- Recommendations Workshop
- Post-Evaluation Action Plan (draft only) (Google Sheets Format)
- Bureau/ACE presentation on Evaluation

Dates of performance and timeline: Completion by November 2023

ANNEX B: ACTIVITY AUTHORIZATION REQUEST

I. BACKGROUND

USAID/Europe and Eurasia (USAID/EE) Bureau has requested a mid-term performance evaluation of the Balkan Media Assistance Program to Foster Organizational Readiness While Advancing Resilient Development (BMAP Forward or BMAP-F) implemented by Internews. This evaluation will focus on the period starting from February 2022 through March 2024.

This Activity Authorization Request (AAR) provides an overview of the approach that the EE/MELDS team proposes, including the staffing plan, budget, and timeline to implement the evaluation.

I.1 EVALUATION PURPOSE & AUDIENCE

The purpose of this evaluation and the resulting findings, conclusions, and recommendations is four-fold:

- To assist USAID/E&E, Missions, and U.S. Embassy/Podgorica in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH), Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia in understanding the extent to which BMAP Forward is on track to achieve its planned results as the project completes its second year of implementation;
- To improve USAID/E&E, Mission, and U.S. Embassy/Podgorica understanding of regional BMAP-F interventions on the competitiveness of independent media in the Western Balkans in the local and regional marketplaces;
- To improve the sustainability of the independent media sector across the region through creative partnerships and collaboration; and
- To determine any necessary adjustments to BMAP-F or its theory of change in order to maximize development outcomes for the duration of its implementation.

The primary audience of the evaluation will be USAID/E&E, four USAID Missions in the region, the U.S. Embassy in Montenegro, the implementing partner (Internews), and the 16 key media partners (KMP). USAID/E&E may also share the results of this evaluation with other stakeholders, such as government partners, private sector partners, associations of journalists and broadcasters, civil society organizations (CSOs), and other USAID implementing partners and donors working in this area.

I.2 BMAP FORWARD PROGRAM

BMAP-F is a five-year project implemented by Internews. The project is a part of the USAID-funded PROGRESS Human Rights Support Mechanism (HRSM) led by Freedom House. BMAP-F builds upon the successes of the first Balkan Media Assistance Program (BMAP) implemented from 2017 to 2022, which supported the media sector and expanded digital audiences. Media outlets in BiH, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia have long faced a hostile environment for freedom of expression, and the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated vulnerabilities to political and financial pressures and digital attack. To increase prospects for a sustainable media sector in the region and to expand audiences in the digital space, the Protecting Global Rights Through Sustainable Solutions Consortium (hereafter “PROGRESS”

or “the Consortium”) will implement activities under an Associate Cooperative Agreement to the BMAP-F program. The project is slated to run from February 2022 through February 2027.

Despite progress in some aspects of media development, the media sector in the Balkans remains fragile, largely due to the region's political situation, the war in Ukraine, the economic downturn, and undue foreign influences from Russia, China, and other countries. BMAP-F's goal is to strengthen the competitiveness of independent media in the Western Balkans in the local and regional marketplaces and to improve the sustainability of the sector across the region through creative partnerships and collaboration. BMAP-F is based around the following three objectives:

- **Objective 1:** Increase strategic business practices of key media partners to operate as viable enterprises and better understand their markets and audiences;
- **Objective 2:** Reinforce the ability of content producers to produce data-driven content, engage wider audiences, improve digital security efforts, and expand reach across the region; and
- **Objective 3:** Foster stronger partnerships between media outlets and the technology, commercial, and entrepreneurial sectors to advance solutions on common challenges in the information space.

The program implementer, Internews, developed its proposed approach on lessons learned based on more than 30 years of work with independent media around the world and 20 years of experience supporting the development of the sector in the Balkan region— most recently through the ongoing USAID-funded BMAP, which ended in June 2022. BMAP-F's comprehensive slate of mutually reinforcing activities will continue and deepen the work conducted through BMAP in addition to achieving the objectives outlined above.

2. EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Based on discussions with USAID/E&E on September 11, 2023, the EE/MELDS team refined four evaluation questions (EQs) that will be used in this performance evaluation (Table 1). The EE/MELDS team will review and assess all EQs from a lens that considers gender and social inclusion (GESI), and underserved and marginalized communities. Additionally, to the extent possible, all data will be disaggregated by sex and underserved/marginalized groups.

TABLE 1: EVALUATION QUESTIONS

1: Which BMAP approaches, tools, and interventions have strengthened KMPs' business practices and abilities to understand markets and ensure revenue diversification?
2: Which BMAP approaches, tools, and interventions have strengthened the ability of content producers to produce data-driven content, engage wider audiences, and expand reach across the region?
3. Which approaches, interventions, and tools of BMAP Forward have improved KMPs' digital security?
4. What are the most successful partnerships between media outlets and the technology, commercial, and entrepreneurial sectors?

3. TECHNICAL APPROACH

The EE/MELDS team will use a non-experimental, mixed-methods, and utilization-focused evaluation design. The evaluation process will be a consultative and iterative approach, which aims to increase EE/MELDS collaboration with USAID to clarify the expectations and objectives of the evaluation and to ensure the relevance and inclusion of recommendations by USAID and local partners. The evaluation will use quantitative and qualitative methods, including an in-depth document review, key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGD), surveys, and site visits with the program’s local implementers and partners (as applicable and feasible). The EE/MELDS team will assess reported and observed results of specific activities during its evaluation. Stakeholders to be included in this evaluation include relevant USAID/Washington and regional mission staff, implementing partner staff, recipients of BMAP-F interventions (including KMP staff and other grantees), other donors (including Rockefeller Brothers, Balkan Trust for Democracy, Open Society Foundations, Media Development Investment Fund (MDIF)) and relevant private sector partners from the advertising and business communities in the respective countries. It is anticipated that approximately 15 individual or group interviews will be conducted in each country with relevant stakeholders. The EE/MELDS team will also design up to two or three short perception-based surveys to disseminate to specific groups of stakeholders. The surveys will be short (maximum ten questions) and will be used to validate qualitative findings and increase the depth of the overall analysis. Additionally, as response rates may not be particularly high for these types of surveys, the EE/MELDS team defines a successful response rate to be 30 percent in this context. To mitigate against this challenge, the EE/MELDS team will oversample each survey, however this is dependent on the extent to which we receive accurate and up-to-date stakeholder lists from the implementing partner.

The Evaluation Workplan (EWP), which will be submitted after USAID’s approval of the AAR, will outline the rationale for each EQ and what USAID seeks to learn from each EQ. The methodological approach will define program outputs, such as “revenue diversification,” “data-driven content,” “audience trust,” “digital security,” etc., and describe how these program outputs can be measured and analyzed. The EWP will also describe the overall analytic framework to be used in this evaluation and demonstrate how the different sources of data will feed into the analysis. This mid-term performance evaluation will shed light on the initial results of BMAP-F and determine the feasibility, appropriateness, and acceptability of BMAP-F interventions in addressing activity objectives. The evaluation team (ET) will identify why some approaches have worked well while others have not and describe factors that drive adaptive change. Specifically, the ET will identify successful interventions without measuring outcomes given the early stage of this project.

4. TASKS AND DELIVERABLES

Based on the SOW provided, the EE/MELDS team presents our approach for tasks and deliverables for consideration in conducting the evaluation.

4.1 DELIVERABLES

ACTIVITY KICK-OFF CALL

On September 11, 2023, the EE/MELDS team participated in an activity kick-off call with USAID/EE to answer outstanding questions regarding USAID’s goals and objectives for the BMAP-F performance evaluation. This call additionally identified potential stakeholders, documentation for reference (including the annual report anticipated in March 2024), and an updated timeline for the evaluation.

ACTIVITY AUTHORIZATION REQUEST (AAR)

Based on the information provided by USAID/Europe and Eurasia Bureau in the Scope of Work (SOW) and introduction call, the EE/MELDS team has developed this initial AAR for review and approval. This AAR serves as a working document and can be refined and edited per USAID comments and feedback.

EVALUATION WORKPLAN

Following the kick-off call and USAID's approval of the AAR, the EE/MELDS team will develop an Evaluation Workplan, which will outline the technical approach in detail and serve as an important reference guide for the Mission and EE/MELDS COR. Within this document, the ET will outline the rationale for each evaluation question (EQ) and what USAID seeks to learn from each EQ.

REMOTE DATA COLLECTION

The Evaluation Team will utilize a mix of in-person and remote data collection options to collect primary qualitative and quantitative data in BiH, Montenegro, N. Macedonia, Kosovo, and Serbia. During the data collection period, the ET will conduct remote KIIs with USAID, external stakeholders, and Internews. Short surveys will also be collected via remote options to targeted stakeholders. As appropriate and available, the ET will conduct in-person interviews with other key stakeholders in each country, such as KMP staff, grantees, and other recipients of BMAP-F activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS WORKSHOP

The Evaluation Team will host a virtual Recommendations workshop with USAID/EE and each country Mission to discuss the initial findings and jointly develop recommendations prior to the Evaluation Final Report.

EVALUATION FINAL REPORT

The Evaluation Final Report will include evaluation findings related to the previously mentioned EQs and cross-cutting themes. Additionally, the ET will incorporate a set of recommendations based on their expertise, the evaluation findings, and collaboration with USAID/EE and the respective country Missions. This report will be submitted as a draft for USAID's review and feedback prior to its final submission.

POST-EVALUATION ACTION PLAN

The Post-Evaluation Action Plan will summarize all recommendations to improve BMAP-F interventions to advance the project's goals and objectives. It will additionally provide immediate next steps and a tracker for USAID to monitor the implementation of said actions. This will be submitted as a Google Sheet/Excel file (as USAID prefers).

4.2 TIMELINE OF DELIVERABLES

Under this Mid-term Performance Evaluation, the EE/MELDS team will submit the following deliverables:

DELIVERABLE	DUE DATE
AAR	October 18, 2023
USAID Review of AAR	November 1, 2023

Draft Evaluation Workplan	November 22, 2023
USAID Review of Evaluation Workplan	December 8, 2023
Final Evaluation Workplan	December 20, 2023
Draft KIIs, Survey, and FGD Data Collection Tools	January 15, 2023
USAID Review of KIIs, Survey, and FGD Data Collection Tools	January 31, 2024
KII, Survey, FGD Data Collection Tools Finalized	February 16, 2024
Remote Data Collection	March 4 – 29, 2024
In-person Data Collection	March 4 – 29, 2024
Draft Performance Evaluation Report	April 22, 2024
Recommendations Workshop	April 29-May 3, 2024
USAID Feedback on Draft Evaluation Report	May 6, 2024
Final Evaluation Report	May 20, 2024
Post-Evaluation Action Plan	May 20, 2024

5. STAFFING PLAN

5.1 CORE TEAM

Position	Responsibilities
Team Leader Sarah Eissler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design the overall evaluation methodology, including data collection tools, evaluation design, and evaluation timeline • Design and validate questionnaires, interview guides, focus group discussions outlines, and other tools • Train the evaluation team on the evaluation tools and methodologies, ensuring a clear understanding and uniform application • Direct in-Country data collection • Lead Briefings and Recommendations Workshop • Oversee the collection, storage, cleaning, and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data • Draft the evaluation report, ensuring it is comprehensive, clear, and aligned with USAID guidelines • Participate in check-in calls with USAID • Lead the team to ensure high quality delivery of the evaluation • Ensure that the evaluation process upholds ethical standards, including securing informed consent from participants and ensuring data privacy.

Position	Responsibilities
Media Subject Matter Expert Micheal Buehler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Contribute to the development of the EWP with a specific focus on including an international perspective of media programming ● Contribute to the development and refinement of tools for Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) ● Tie together emerging themes from evaluation findings in each country to create high-level conclusions and recommendations for BMAP-F ● Join regular calls with the team to update, review progress, and discuss any issues or concerns ● Engage in Briefings and Recommendations Workshop ● Collaborate extensively with the Team Lead to draft, review, and refine the evaluation report, ensuring that key themes and recommendations are included from an international and media-perspective
Sr. Technical and Evaluation Expert Brenda Pearson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conduct an intensive desk review of BMAP-F documentation, including annual reports, MEL surveys and data collected thus-far, and beneficiary/stakeholder lists, among others ● Keep Evaluation Team abreast of key media outlets, partnerships, technology, and entrepreneurial sector developments ● Provide significant cultural, political, and media expertise specific to the Balkans region, which will inform the interpretation of findings and recommendations
Sr. Media Specialist and Subject Matter Expert for Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia Saso Ordanoski	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Contribute to the development of EWP ● Contribute to the development and refinement of tools for Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) ● Lead the elaboration of quantitative survey instruments to ensure they're suitable for the local context ● Lead KIIs and FGDs in Montenegro, N. Macedonia and Serbia ● Participate in KIIs and FGDs in BiH and Kosovo capturing essential data and insights across the region ● Compile KII and FGD Meeting Notes ● Contribute to qualitative data coding and analysis ● Lead quantitative data analysis ● Join regular calls with the team to update, review progress, and discuss any issues or concerns ● Engage in Briefings and Recommendations Workshop ● Participate in drafting, reviewing, and refining the evaluation report, ensuring inclusion of relevant local insights and data
Media Specialist and Subject Matter Expert for CSOs/NGOs and Bosnia Herzegovina (Sarajevo and Banja Luka) Anida Soko	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Contribute to the development of EWP with specific focus on BiH media landscape and partnerships with CSOs/NGOs ● Contribute to the development and refinement of tools for Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) ● Lead the elaboration of quantitative survey instruments to ensure they're suitable for the local context ● Carry out KIIs and FGDs in BiH ● Compile KII and FGD Meeting Notes ● Contribute to qualitative data coding and analysis ● Lead quantitative data analysis

Position	Responsibilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Join regular calls with the team to update, review progress, and discuss any issues or concerns • Engage in Briefings and Recommendations Workshop • Participate in drafting, reviewing, and refining the evaluation report, ensuring inclusion of relevant local insights and data
<p>Media Specialist and Subject Matter Expert for Private Sector Engagement and Kosovo Arben Qirezi</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to the development of EWP with specific focus on private sector engagement and partnerships with media • Contribute to the development and refinement of tools for Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) • Lead the elaboration of quantitative survey instruments to ensure they're suitable for the local context • Carry out Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions, capturing essential data and insights • Compile KII and FGD Meeting Notes • Contribute to qualitative data coding and analysis • Lead quantitative data analysis • Join regular calls with the team to update, review progress, and discuss any issues or concerns • Engage in Briefings and Recommendations Workshop • Participate in drafting, reviewing, and refining the evaluation report, ensuring inclusion of relevant local insights and data
<p>Regional Logistician Flamur Hamidi</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compile stakeholder list using ET member input • Schedule Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) • Schedule Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) • Handle venue, transport and logistics • Take notes during KIIs and FGDs. • Prepare annexes for the evaluation report • Act as an interpreter during the meetings if needed

SARAH EISSLER, TEAM LEADER

Ms. Sarah Eissler, Ph.D, will serve as the Team Lead and will manage the production and delivery of all activity deliverables. She will lead the design of the evaluation work plan, data collection, data analysis, write the draft and final evaluation reports, and develop presentations for USAID and IPs. Ms. Eissler is an independent consultant with over eight years of experience in mixed-methods evaluations in the social sciences, including work on a number of USAID evaluations. She has subject matter expertise in social behavioral change; gender and women's empowerment; and agriculture value chains. Her evaluation skills include: process, performance, and impact evaluations; program and project assessments; mixed- and multi-method research designs; quantitative and qualitative analysis methodologies; and enumerator training. Her field experience includes qualitative impact evaluations for IFPRI on agricultural programs in Nigeria, Benin, and Burkina Faso from 2018-20; and mixed-methods research for Feed the Future activities in Indonesia and Vietnam in 2017. In 2020, Ms. Eissler co-led a program review of Conservation International's Gender Program with the EnGen Collaborative. Her software capabilities include SPSS, SAS, NVIVO, and CommCare, among others.

Ms. Eissler's work with Integra has spanned research, data collection, data analysis, evaluation design, and technical writing on subjects including the private sector landscape, entrepreneurship, women's

empowerment, and Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI). Her evaluation and data analysis efforts have been effectively applied to projects at the national and regional levels. Ms. Eissler holds a PhD in Rural Sociology and dual M.S. degrees in Rural Sociology and International Agriculture and Development from Penn State University. Her work has been published in several journals, including *Global Environmental Change*, *the Journal for Agriculture, Food Security and Community Development*, and *Feminist Economics*.

MICHAEL BUEHLER, MEDIA SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT

Mr. Michael Buehler, Ph.D, is an Associate Professor in Comparative Politics at SOAS, University of London, specializing in Southeast Asian politics concerning state-society relations during democratization and decentralization. He actively serves as a consultant, providing ambassadors and diplomats briefings on politics, economics, and cultural affairs. He has researched and provided intelligence on the media landscape and broader political context in Asia, Southeast Asia, and Eurasia. Still, he has worked in the United States, Western Europe, Asia, and Southeast Asia, therefore gaining a truly international perspective that adds to his advisory services.

Mr. Buehler's media experience includes coordinating a team of experts to examine and report on disinformation campaigns in Central Asia, East Asia, South Asia, and the Pacific Islands. He presented these findings to USAID headquarters and field offices. Mr. Buehler also consulted for Media Consulta GmbH in Germany, where he authored a strategy paper and provided insight on EU public relations campaigns targeting Asia. While in that role, he further evaluated existing communications strategy, focusing on crisis communication and protocols.

Mr. Buehler's monitoring and evaluation experience includes evaluability assessments, policy evaluations, policy and program recommendations, and mid-term evaluations for clients ranging from national governments to the World Bank, USAID, and private development implementing partners. While his expertise in media and evaluations is heavily Asia/Southeast Asia focused, he can provide an international perspective based on his work on several continents for international, national, and local clients. Mr. Buehler holds a PhD in Political Science and a Master of Science in Comparative Politics from the London School of Economics and Political Science.

BRENDA PEARSON, SR. TECHNICAL ADVISOR

Ms. Brenda Pearson will serve as a Sr. Technical & Evaluation Advisor, providing media, cultural, and political expertise within the context of the BMAP-F project for the Evaluation Team. She will provide an in-depth desk review on the regional media-scape and BMAP-F activities for the five countries in which BMAP-F takes place. Ms. Pearson brings technical expertise in democracy, human rights, and governance (DRG) and economic growth in the E&E region. She has extensive experience in program design, implementation, and evaluation that supports independent media and civil society, enforces the rule of law, bolsters human rights, and counters foreign malign influence. Ms. Pearson wrote an op-ed column for Nova Makedonija and was an accredited member of the Macedonian Association of Journalists and Broadcasters. She is a regional expert who previously served as Chief of Party in Croatia and North Macedonia and provided extensive short-term technical assistance to countries in the Europe & Eurasia region, including Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, and Ukraine. In the past three years, she has served on evaluation teams for five USAID mid-term performance evaluations.

As recent Team Leader of the global CATALYZE and WEE programs and the regional EDGE project, she examined the efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability of USAID buy-in mechanisms and how they function at the country and regional levels. Ms. Pearson additionally served as Team Lead for three USAID-funded democracy, human rights, and governance (DRG) assessments in Bulgaria, Romania, and Guyana that assessed dynamics driving democratic backsliding (2020-2022). She holds M.A. degrees in International Economics and American Foreign Policy from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. She possesses basic language skills in Albanian, Croatian, and Macedonian.

SASO ORDANOSKI, REGIONAL MEDIA SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT

Mr. Saso Ordanoski, Ph.D, will serve as the Sr. Evaluation Expert on this assignment. He will be primarily responsible for conducting key informant interviews in North Macedonia and Serbia and supporting KIIs in Kosovo, BiH, and Montenegro. He will take part in data collection including the in-depth desk review, KIIs and FGDs, report drafting, and presentations. Dr. Ordanoski has a professional career spanning 30 years, with considerable experience in journalism, media management, public relations, and public communications in the East European region and internationally. He is an accomplished media practitioner and academic researcher/lecturer, an award-winning journalist, and a regular contributor to international print and electronic media. He served as Managing Director and Editor-in-Chief of the national public broadcaster *Macedonian TV* and Managing Director of the national commercial TV *Alsat-M*. He founded, managed, and coached rising journalists for the weekly *Forum* news magazine in Macedonia for 10 years. He was a regional editor for the London-based *Institute for War and Peace Reporting*. Earlier in his career, he was Head of External Affairs for the World Bank regional office. Dr. Ordanoski has consulted for numerous international organizations and institutions on media, communications, democracy, security, and political issues, including the UNDP, NDI, IFES, DI, EU, and NATO. From 2021 to September 2022, he was the Media Director of *Sloboden Pecat* and directed the main digital content on the *SlobodnaTV* internet platform. He holds M.A. degrees in journalism and sociology and a Ph.D. in Sociology and Communications from the University of St. Cyril and Methodius, Skopje, N. Macedonia. He is fluent in Macedonian, English, Serbo-Croatian, and Bulgarian.

ANIDA SOKOL, BOSNIA HERZEGOVINA MEDIA SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT

Ms. Anida Sokol, Ph.D, will serve as the subject matter expert for KIIs and FGDs in Bosnia Herzegovina. She is currently a researcher and project coordinator at Mediacentar Sarajevo, which provides support to the development of independent and professional journalism in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Her current research and advocacy focus on media and media policies in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including those on the transparency of media funding from public budgets and on online threats to journalists. She has published papers on media, memory, and BiH politics, including in *Politička misao*, *Palgrave Macmillan*, and *Mediacentar Sarajevo*. She is a lecturer at the International Burch University in Sarajevo and Sarajevo School of Science and Technology, where she teaches Politics and Media and Political Communication. She has a Master's degree in English Language and Literature from the Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo and a Ph.D. in the History of Europe, which she received as a Basileus grant holder at the Faculty of Political Science, University Sapienza in Rome, where she worked as a research fellow. Her research interests included language policies and memory politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina and other former Yugoslav countries. She also worked as a research fellow at Sapienza University on a project on discrimination and prejudice in Southeast Europe. She is fluent in Bosnia and other Balkan languages, English and Italian.

ARBEN QIREZI, KOSOVO MEDIA SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT

Mr. Arben Qirezi, Ph.D, will serve as the subject matter expert in Kosovo. He has over 25 years of experience working in development programming in Kosovo, with specific experience in print and broadcast media, public education, and conducting performance evaluations. Since the 2000s, he has been a journalist/writer for both Kosovar and international publications, including Koha Ditore, Klan Kosovo, Kohavision, Radio Television of Kosovo, Zeri, Freedom House, Institute for War and Peace Reporting, Balkan Investigative Reporting Network in BiH and Kosovo. His investigative reporting has focused on corruption in public administrations, human rights and inter-ethnic relations, local governance, and Russian disinformation campaigns in the region. Dr Qirezi has held project management, government, academia, international development, and international affairs positions. He is a university professor who teaches communications, political science, and political extremism. Earlier in his career, he served as a Chief of Staff and Spokesman for the Prime Minister of Kosovo. He is an experienced evaluator with strong methodology skills and has conducted performance evaluations for USAID EDGE, USAID NDI, and PACT projects. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Galway and was a Fulbright Visiting Scholar at the University of California San Diego. He is fluent in English, Albanian, and other Balkan languages.

FLAMUR HAMIDI, REGIONAL LOGISTICS COORDINATOR

Mr. Flamur Hamidi has five years of experience in operations, logistics, and coordination in international development. Mr. Hamidi will support the team leader and other team members for logistics in the five countries. As the logistics coordinator will send introductory emails to the interviewees (lists will be provided to USAID), coordinate the meeting schedule, and follow up as needed by phone or email. All scheduling information will be updated daily. He will provide research assistance and provide information for selected annexes in the evaluation report. Most recently, he supported the four-country mid-term performance evaluation of EDGE; he arranged more than 80 KILs in Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova, and North Macedonia. He previously served as executive assistant to the Albanian Ambassador to the United Nations, when Albania was a member of the UN Security Council as well as supporting the North Macedonia delegation to the UN. He holds a Master of Arts degree in international relations from Syracuse University as a recipient of the prestigious Fulbright scholarship. He is fluent in English, Macedonian, and Albanian.

5.2 EE/MELDS SUPPORT PERSONNEL

Note that the EE/MELDS Team may bring on an additional senior subject matter expert, field logistics manager, or technical specialist to support the Team Leader, as relevant. The possible addition of these team member(s) could change the overall budget but will not affect the overall budget ceiling unless otherwise approved by USAID.

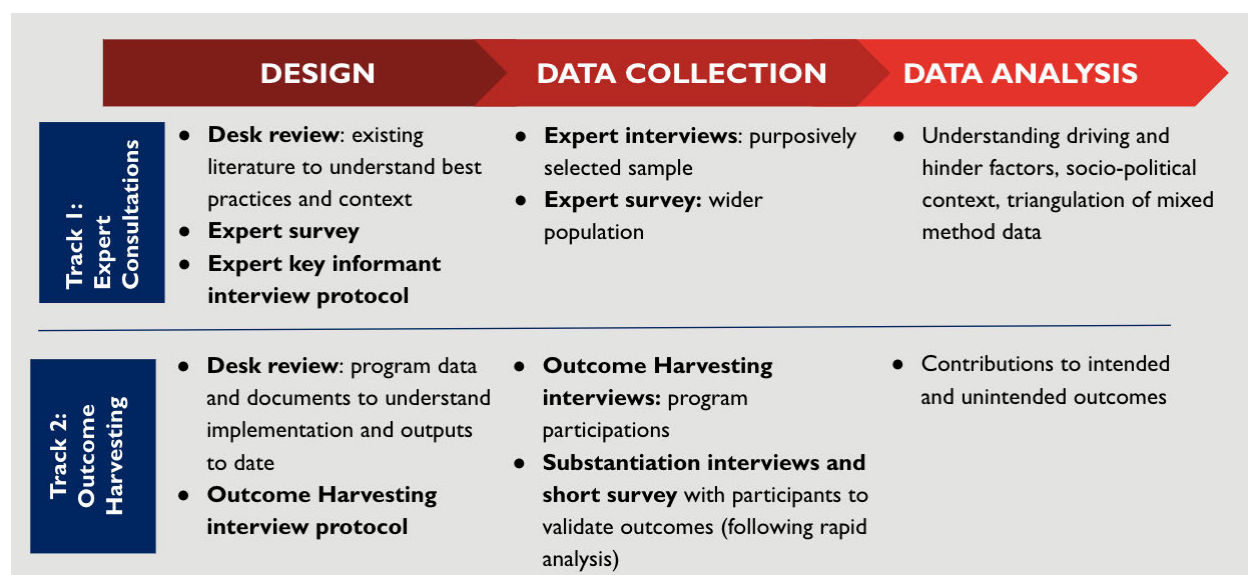
EE/MELDS is a demand-driven task order. Therefore, core operations and administrative functions of the project are billed directly to the activity (e.g., activity authorization development, recruitment, contracting and fielding consultants, quality assurance review, etc.). Mr. Kev Torosyan, Sr. Technical Advisor, and Ms. Summer Hunter-Kysor, Technical Specialist- Mid-Level, and their team will oversee activity operations in addition to providing administrative support.

ANNEX C: EVALUATION METHODS AND LIMITATIONS

EVALUATION DESIGN

The EE/MELDS evaluation team (ET) employed a consultative and iterative approach to increase collaboration with USAID to clarify the expectations and objectives of the evaluation and to ensure the relevance and inclusion of recommendations by USAID and local partners. The ET implemented a non-experimental and mixed-methods design for this evaluation. Specifically, the ET combined two approaches: Expert Consultations and Outcome Harvesting (**Figure 11**). Multiple methods to collect and analyze secondary and primary data were employed to inform each step of the evaluation process. **Figure 11** presents an overview of the process and the two approaches employed.

FIGURE 11. OVERVIEW OF EVALUATION DESIGN PROCESS



During the design phase, the ET conducted a robust literature review of the media landscape and best practices to strengthen media resilience in the Western Balkans as well as conducted a thorough review of the available program data and reporting. The learnings from this desk review informed the development of data collection protocols for both the Expert Consultations and the Outcome Harvesting approaches. A full list of documents reviewed is presented in Annex G. The Expert Consultations consisted of key informant interviews and an online perception-based survey (both tools are presented in Annex F). The Expert Consultations purposely sampled stakeholders from four categories: 1) USAID or other US Government (USG) partners, 2) the Implementing Partner (IP) staff and local partners, 3) Other Donors and Agency Representatives, and 4) Private Sector Actors. Table 1 presents a description of each stakeholder category.

Table 1: Description of Experts by Category	
Category	Type of Respondent
USAID	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Relevant staff from USAID/E&E Bureau ● Relevant staff from country Missions (BiH, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Serbia) and U.S. Embassy in Podgorica
IP Staff and Local Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Internews staff ● Local partner staff in each country ● Technical experts who deliver assistance, mentorship, and training to Key Media Partners (KMPs) and other intended beneficiaries ● Balkansmedia.org helpdesk staff
Private Sector Actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Representatives of SEENPM ● Representatives of MASE ● Participants of MIL who represent civil society, information technology (IT), private sector and entrepreneurs, industry associations ● Participants of Annual Media Forum who represent civil society, IT, private sector and entrepreneurs, industry associations
Other Donor and Agency Representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Deutsche Welle Akademie ● European Commission ● European Endowment for Democracy (EED) ● Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) ● German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) ● Media Development Investment Fund (MDIF) ● National Endowment for Democracy (NED) ● Rockefeller Brothers Fund ● US State Department ● Others

The ET received a comprehensive roster of potential stakeholders from which to sample from the IP and USAID. The ET employed a strategic, purposive sampling approach that allows for a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of BMAP-FORWARD and ensured diversity, representativeness, and relevance of the individuals interviewed. Within each respondent category (Tables 1 and 2), the ET purposely identified and sampled specific individuals to participate in interviews based on their expertise and experience in relation to the BMAP-FORWARD program. This nonprobability sampling technique allowed the ET to intentionally choose participants with specific knowledge and experience with BMAP-FORWARD to ensure the data is relevant, valid, and reliable to understand which tools, interventions, and approaches are working well and which are not to influence progress towards specified outputs. By targeting specific individuals, the ET gained in-depth insights and detailed information that might not have been accessible through a random sampling approach.

The following criteria were used for the selection of interview participants:

- **Profile:** Representatives from each respondent category profile presented in Tables 2 and 3 were selected to ensure sufficient coverage and perspectives of all the BMAP-FORWARD interventions relevant to each EQ.
- **Country:** Individuals from each country included in BMAP-FORWARD were represented.
- **Experience:** The ET identified individuals from various stakeholder categories who have specific experience with BMAP-FORWARD, whether as a member of the donor agency, implementing partner staff, or recipient or participant of BMAP-FORWARD interventions and activities.
- **Role:** The ET identified individuals with specific roles within organizations from the stakeholder categories linked to BMAP-FORWARD's specific objectives or implementation activities.
- **Diversity:** The ET identified people with different backgrounds and specifically targeted women journalists who received support from BMAP-FORWARD interventions to ensure capturing critical information covering various perspectives.

The ET sent an online expert survey to all stakeholders within these categories, and identified a smaller subset of respondents to invite for an interview based on the above sampling criteria. Interviews were conducted individually or in small groups.

Concurrently, the ET purposively sampled staff from KMP and other recipients of direct assistance from BMAP-FORWARD for the Outcome Harvesting approach. Table 2 presents the types of stakeholders included in the Outcome Harvesting approach.

Table 2: Description of Respondents for Outcome Harvesting	
Category	Type of Respondent
KMP staff	Various types of staff from each of the 15 KMPs active under BMAP-FORWARD, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CEOs, COOs, and Directors ● Editors-in-Chief and other leadership / staff in decision-making positions ● Journalists, cameramen, or other types of newsroom staff
Grantees	Recipients of the following grants provided by BMAP-FORWARD who are not part of KMPs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Collaborative content grants ● Creative content grants ● Joint advocacy grants ● MIL small grants ● Risk reduction grants ● Rolling innovation fund grant ● Technology investment grants

The ET invited these stakeholders to participate in an initial interview that followed an open-ended, Outcome Harvesting protocol. Once all initial interviews with participants were completed, the ET conducted a rapid analysis workshop to identify key outcomes that emerged from the interviews. From this workshop, the ET developed initial outcome statements and used these to develop an interview and

survey protocol. The ET implemented these protocols during the Substantiation Phase to validate these outcomes with project participants (see protocols).

The ET analyzed all primary and secondary data collected from this evaluation and triangulated data from across multiple sources to inform the basis of the findings. This mid-term performance evaluation sheds light on the initial results of BMAP-FORWARD to determine the feasibility, appropriateness, and acceptability of BMAP-FORWARD interventions in addressing activity objectives. In this report, the ET attempts to describe why some approaches have worked as well while others have not worked as well, and also to describe factors that drive adaptive change. Specifically, given the early stage of this project, the ET identifies successful interventions without measuring outcomes. Importantly, as this is a performance evaluation, it relies on currently available output data as well as stakeholder perceptions. It does not intend to nor is it designed to understand impact pathways of which interventions are leading to which impacts at this early stage.

3.2 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

3.2.1 DESK REVIEW

The ET conducted a thorough desk review of relevant primary and secondary sources, including program documents, such as activity implementation plans; Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plans; quarterly/annual reports; annual work plans; performance monitoring data; and additional materials made available to the ET from the IP. The ET also collected additional materials from the IP and others during the primary data collection phase. The ET also conducted a robust literature review of existing gray and academic literature to provide an overview of the media sector in the Western Balkans, the different interventions various donors are funding to strengthen media resilience in the Western Balkans, and evidence of best practices to support these interventions. Annex G presents a full list of documents reviewed.

3.2.2 EXPERT CONSULTATIONS

The ET conducted targeted interviews with purposely sampled expert stakeholders via individual or small group interviews. The primary data were collected from March 4 to 29, 2024 both in person and remotely, and in English or in the local language, depending on the stakeholder’s preference. Expert interviews lasted approximately one hour. All best practices for ethical data collection were followed, including receiving statements of informed and voluntary consent from each respondent prior to each interview. Interviewers took notes of each interview and these summary notes served as the raw qualitative data for analysis. A total of 51 expert interviews were conducted. Table 3. presents the number of Expert Interviews conducted during primary data collection.

	BiH	Kosovo	Monte- negro	North Macedonia	Serbia	Other	Total
USAID/ USG	1	2	3	1	2	4	13
IP	8	2	1	3	2	5	21

Other Donors and Agency Reps	4	0	0	3	8	1	16
Private Sector Actors	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total	13	5	4	7	12	10	51

3.2.3 EXPERT SURVEY

The ET employed two online, perception-based surveys to the stakeholders described above. The first survey targeted USAID and IP staff and was designed to ask questions around each EQ as well as the broader implementing context. The second survey targeted other donors and agency representatives and private sector actors. It was designed to ask questions around EQ4 and the broader implementing context. Each survey included up to 15 questions, mostly close-ended with a few optional, open-ended questions (see Annex F for the survey tools). The surveys were disseminated to all potential stakeholders in each respective category. The surveys were delivered in English and the local language (Albanian, Bosnian, Macedonian, Montenegrin, and Serbian). The ET sent an initial request email and three follow-up emails to remind participants to take the survey, which contributed to the relatively high response rate for this type of survey. Table 4 presents the survey responses and response rates by each survey type.

Table 4. Expert Survey Responses and Response Rate			
	Number of Invitations Sent	Number of Responses Received	Response Rate
USAID/IP Survey	62	44	71%
Other Donors and Private Sector Actors	28	19	68%

3.2.4 OUTCOME HARVESTING

Concurrently with the Expert Consultations, the ET conducted Outcome Harvesting interviews with project participants (both KMP staff and non-KMP staff that received assistance from BMAP-FORWARD). The ET purposely sampled a select number of staff from all 15 KMPs who receive assistance from BMAP-FORWARD who represent multiple types of positions, including C-suite staff, editors-in-chief and other types of editors, and journalists and newsroom staff. The ET also purposely sampled all non-KMP staff who received assistance from BMAP-FORWARD to interview since this potential sample size was much smaller. Table 5 presents the total number of participants interviewed in each country.

Table 5. Total Number of Program Participants Interviewed by Category and Country

	BiH	Kosovo	Montenegro	North Macedonia	Serbia	Total
KMP Staff	8	6	8	9	4	35
Non-KMP Staff (Grantees)	3	3	0	2	4	12
Total	11	9	8	11	8	47

After these initial interviews were completed, the ET held a rapid analysis workshop at the end of March to develop preliminary outcome statements. These were used to develop subsequent interview and survey tools that the ET deployed during the “Substantiation Phase” of data collection. This phase occurred from April 1 to 12, 2024 and served to validate the outcome stories that emerged (or were “harvested”) from the initial set of interviews. A total of 11 interviews were conducted with select KMP staff. Moreover, an online, perception-based survey was sent to all KMP staff and non-KMP staff who received assistance from BMAP-FORWARD. Both tools are presented in Annex F. Table 6 presents the total number of interviews conducted and surveys that were received from each type of participant by country.

Table 6. Substantiation Interviews and Survey Responses by Country

	BiH	Kosovo	Montenegro	North Macedonia	Serbia	Total
Interviews	3	3	2	3	2	13
KMP	2	2	2	2	2	10
Non-KMP	1	1	0	1	0	3
Survey	18	7	8	12	3	48

3.3 DATA ANALYSIS

3.3.1 QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

Primary Survey Data: The ET team conducted descriptive statistical analyses using Microsoft Excel and Google Sheets to summarize and present the online survey data collected from the two main surveys: 1) Expert Consultations and 2) Outcome Harvesting Substantiation. The full survey results are presented in Annex I.

Secondary Performance Monitoring Data: The ET conducted descriptive statistical analysis on performance monitoring data shared with the ET by the IP that demonstrated progress to date against targets until Year 2 Quarter 4. These results are presented throughout the findings, conclusions, and recommendations section where appropriate to provide evidence from triangulated data points.

3.3.2 QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Desk Review: The ET organized data pulled from the desk review by each EQ and sub-EQ, which included a review of technical and operational strategies and plans, program documents, and any secondary data pulled from each KMP or other targeted respondent that verifies qualitative claims or perceptions. Through this desk review, the ET identified key themes and patterns to support findings emerging from the interviews and surveys.

Interviews: Each interviewer completed detailed summary notes of each interview in English and submitted these to a shared Google folder for analysis. These served as the raw data for qualitative analysis. The ET analyzed outcome stories from the participant interviews and validated these through additional interviews conducted during the substantiation period. The ET conducted thematic analysis to identify key themes and patterns that emerged from the expert interviews. The analyzed primary qualitative data is integrated throughout the report using verbatim quotes as illustrative evidence and summarizes these key insights and themes to link them to specific recommendations.

3.3.3 TRIANGULATION

After analyzing all data sources, the ET employed a triangulation method that leverages qualitative and quantitative data, ensuring a multifaceted view that enhanced the reliability and validity of the findings. This approach combined learnings from interviews, surveys, desk review, and secondary data analyses. By correlating these different forms of evidence, the ET provides a nuanced understanding of the underlying patterns, trends, and relationships to inform findings under each EQ.

3.4 LIMITATIONS

SELECTION BIAS

Several key informants were either unavailable or unwilling to participate in an interview or the online survey. This could potentially introduce selection bias, affecting the quality and type of primary data collected from respondents for both qualitative and quantitative data collection. To mitigate this possibility, the ET requested a full list of potential respondents by category from the IP and USAID, and when feasible and appropriate, snowball sampled additional stakeholders after conducting interviews. The ET oversampled both the interviews and online survey to maximize the types and number of respondents the ET was able to reach and mitigate this bias against nonresponses.

RESPONSE BIAS

As with all primary qualitative data collection, the risk of response bias is present. Respondents may have difficulty recalling certain events or may conflate interventions from another program with BMAP-FORWARD (or vice versa). Additionally, respondents may not want to fully disclose or share their real thoughts and perceptions with interviewers. To mitigate these forms of response bias, the interviewers were prepared for each interview in understanding the ways in which the respondent(s) engaged with BMAP-FORWARD in order to facilitate their recall of certain events (or validate responses that may be conflated). Additionally, the ET prepared initial scripts of informed consent that were read prior to

beginning an interview that outlined the purpose of their participation, confirming how their responses will be recorded and used, explaining that their participation in the interview is voluntary, and reiterating that their identity and the information shared will be kept confidential. Respondents were provided the opportunity to request certain information (or the entire interview) to remain anonymous, in which case their personally identifying information was removed. These steps helped to make respondents feel more comfortable sharing their real thoughts and perceptions, as well as have a sharper recall of their engagement with BMAP-FORWARD. Finally, it is important to note and emphasize that this evaluation heavily relies on perception-based data that can be influenced by bias. The ET employed multiple steps to validate perceptions heard and to triangulate responses with secondary data to the extent feasible. However, this evaluation is not a baseline assessment of progress toward outcomes or impacts of BMAP-FORWARD.

AVAILABILITY OF PROGRAM DATA

The IP was timely and responsive in sharing available program data to the ET to inform this evaluation. However, some data points were unavailable at the time of the evaluation and thus could not be used to inform the ET's understanding of the extent to which KMPs had changed under BMAP-FORWARD.

POTENTIAL LIMITATION OF OUTCOME HARVESTING APPROACH

This evaluation relied heavily on outcome harvesting as a complexity-aware qualitative approach to eliciting factors and influences that have led to changes for targeted recipients. However, it relied on the ability of interviewees to understand and describe processes that lead to the changes in their lives or in their environment and be able to articulate those changes. Certain external factors may not have been referenced or shared by interviewees and thus could be missed by interviewers. To identify potential factors or examples, the ET drew on a robust understanding of which tools, approaches, and interventions were implemented and which were received by the target respondent to be able to recall such examples during interviews, if needed. Additionally, due to the qualitative nature of Outcome Harvesting, outcome stories may have been strongly influenced by differences in perception and personal opinions. The ET mitigated this bias by applying a standardized validation process to review outcome stories and triangulate stakeholder perspectives jointly.

ANNEX D: EVALUATION TIMELINE

DELIVERABLE	DUE DATE
Draft Evaluation Work Plan	November 22, 2023
USAID Review of Evaluation Work Plan	December 8, 2023
Final Evaluation Work Plan	December 20, 2023
Draft KIIs, Survey, and FGD Data Collection Tools	January 15, 2024
USAID Review of KIIs, Survey, and FGD Data Collection Tools	January 31, 2024
KII, Survey, FGD Data Collection Tools Finalized	February 16, 2024
Remote Data Collection	March 4 – 29, 2024
In-person Data Collection	March 4 – 29, 2024
Data Substantiation	April 1 – 12, 2024
Draft Performance Evaluation Report	May 10, 2024
Recommendations Workshop	May 16, 2024
USAID Feedback on Draft Evaluation Report	May 24, 2024
Final Evaluation Report & Post-Evaluation Action Plan	June 10, 2024

ANNEX E: EVALUATION DESIGN MATRIX

EVALUATION DESIGN MATRIX		
EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND SUB-QUESTIONS	DATA COLLECTION METHODS	DATA ANALYSIS METHODS
<p>EQ1. To what extent are BMAP-F approaches, tools, and interventions influencing KMPs' business practices and abilities to understand markets and ensure revenue diversification?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk review (program documents, program monitoring and KPI data) • Secondary literature review of relevant reports, studies, and publications on contextual factors that may or may not influence variance across countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content analysis of document review • Comparative analysis of expected and realized results from program data at this stage • Descriptive analysis from online surveys • Outcome harvesting and substantiation

EVALUATION DESIGN MATRIX

EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND SUB-QUESTIONS	DATA COLLECTION METHODS	DATA ANALYSIS METHODS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Individual and group interviews with recipients of B-MAP interventions, IP staff, USAID staff ● Short online surveys (both Expert and Substantiation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Comparative analysis of outcome results at the subnational and national levels ● Pattern/thematic qualitative analysis from stakeholder (IP staff, USAID staff, external actors) interviews
<p>EQ2. To what extent are BMAP-F approaches, tools, and interventions influencing the ability of content producers to produce data-driven content, and engage wider audiences, and expand reach across the region?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Desk review (program documents, program monitoring, and KPI data) ● Secondary literature review of relevant reports, studies, and publications on contextual factors that may or may not influence variance across countries ● Individual and group interviews with recipients of B-MAP interventions, IP staff, USAID staff ● Short online surveys (both Expert and Substantiation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Content analysis of document review ● Comparative analysis of expected and realized results from program data at this stage ● Descriptive analysis from online surveys ● Outcome harvesting and substantiation ● Comparative analysis of outcome results at the subnational and national levels ● Pattern/thematic qualitative analysis from stakeholder (IP staff, USAID staff, external actors) interviews
<p>EQ3. To what extent are BMAP-F approaches, interventions, and tools influencing KMPs' digital security?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Desk review (program documents, program monitoring and KPI data) ● Secondary literature review of relevant reports, studies, and publications on contextual factors that may or may not influence variance across countries ● Individual and group interviews with recipients of B-MAP interventions (particularly women journalists), IP staff, USAID staff ● Short online surveys (both Expert and Substantiation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Content analysis of document review ● Comparative analysis of expected and realized results from program data at this stage ● Descriptive analysis from online surveys ● Outcome harvesting and substantiation ● Comparative analysis of outcome results at the subnational and national levels ● Pattern/thematic qualitative analysis from stakeholder (IP staff, USAID staff, external actors) interviews

EVALUATION DESIGN MATRIX

EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND SUB-QUESTIONS	DATA COLLECTION METHODS	DATA ANALYSIS METHODS
<p>EQ4. What are the factors influencing the success or lack thereof of partnerships between media outlets, and the technology, commercial, and entrepreneurial sectors?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Desk review (program documents, program monitoring and KPI data) ● Secondary literature review of relevant reports, studies, and publications on contextual factors that may or may not influence variance across countries ● Individual and group interviews with recipients of B-MAP interventions, IP staff, USAID staff, private sector actors, donor representatives ● Short online surveys (both Expert and Substantiation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Content analysis of document review ● Comparative analysis of expected and realized results from program data at this stage ● Descriptive analysis from online surveys ● Outcome harvesting and substantiation ● Comparative analysis of outcome results at the subnational and national levels ● Pattern/thematic qualitative analysis from stakeholder (IP staff, USAID staff, external actors) interviews

ANNEX F: DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

I. OUTCOME HARVESTING DATA COLLECTION TOOLS - KMP/GRANTEE

I.1 STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT

Interviewers: Please read this statement prior to beginning any interview and ensure the respondent provides consent to the participant before beginning the line of questioning.

Introduction: Integra has been hired to conduct an independent evaluation of the BMAP-FORWARD program supported by USAID. We have asked to interview you because you participated in or were identified as a relevant key stakeholder regarding the BMAP-FORWARD program and, therefore, can provide a unique perspective on the program.

Confidentiality: Your responses in this interview will be kept confidential and will only be available to the evaluation team. Neither your name nor any identifying information will be connected to your responses in this interview nor appear in any of the publications or reports completed for this evaluation.

For Group Interviews Only: If you participate in the group interview, group participants from the same group will also know your responses. Due to the private nature of this research, we ask that all group interview participants agree not to share anything that is discussed with anyone outside of this group once this conversation ends.

Voluntary Participation: Your voluntary and complementary participation in this interview is highly valued. You can choose not to answer any question or stop the interview at any time.

Length Of Participation: This interview will last approximately 60 minutes.

1. Do you understand that your participation in this interview is voluntary and unpaid and that you can end the interview at any point? (check one)
 - Yes
 - No
2. Are you willing to participate? (check one)
 - Yes
 - No
3. Would you be willing to allow the interview to be recorded? (check one)
 - Yes
 - No

I.2. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Information

Respondent Category	Grantee	KMP Staff
Date of Interview		
Name of Interviewer		
Mode of Interview	In person	Virtual
Respondent Information		
Name		
Gender		
Country		
Agency / Organization		
Role		

Prior to beginning the interview, please review the BMAP-FORWARD activity and its interventions, tools, and approaches with the respondent. Facilitating questions below:

1. Please describe your understanding of the BMAP-FORWARD activity. What are its goals and objectives?
2. How have you been involved with the BMAP-FORWARD activity? [Review all approaches, tools, and interventions with which the respondent has been involved. *Review the EWP Section 2.3 for a list of approaches, tools, and interventions].
3. When did you begin your participation in the BMAP-FORWARD activity? [Note year].

SECTION I. CHANGE QUESTIONS (IDENTIFYING THE OUTCOMES)

4. What significant changes have you observed in your work [at the KMP or as a content creator] since beginning your participation with the BMAP-FORWARD activity in [YEAR]?

Note: Review EWP Section 2.3 for definitions of each below.

For KMPs:

- Improved business practices (EQ1)
- Ability to understand the media market(s) (in your respective country or across the region, depending on where you publish or promote content) (EQ1)
- Ability to ensure revenue diversification (EQ1)
- Ability to produce data-driven content (EQ2)
- Ability to engage wider audiences (EQ2)
- Ability to expand reach across the region (EQ2)
- Improved digital security (EQ3)
- Improved organizational behavior around digital hygiene (EQ3)
- Fostered successful partnerships with private sector actors (EQ4)

For content creators/non-KMPs:

- Ability to produce data-driven content (EQ2)

- Ability to engage wider audiences (EQ2)
- Ability to expand reach across the region (EQ2)
- Fostered successful partnerships with private sector actors (EQ4)

***For women journalists from KMPs and non-KMP content creators:**

- Improved digital security practices (EQ3), specifically mitigated impact of online violence and digital threats and harassment against women journalists

Please note each specific change (positive or negative) indicated, and review each using the following questions.

5. Do you view these changes as positive or negative for you / your company? Why?

SECTION 2. SIGNIFICANCE (WHY)

6. In what way does this change influence your / your company's success in the media sector? Why?

SECTION 3. CONTRIBUTION (WHAT / HOW / WHEN)

7. Which of these changes were influenced by [name of BMAP-FORWARD approaches, interventions, tools previously mentioned], if any?
8. How did your participation with BMAP-FORWARD contribute to this change?
9. Describe the chain of events for each change:
 - a. What aspects of the BMAP-FORWARD [tool/approach/intervention] contributed to the change?
 - b. How did these contribute to the change? Please be specific.
 - c. When did they contribute to the change?
 - d. *Continue probing until respondents run out of ideas.
10. To what extent did men and women in your [company/network of peers] experience or receive the BMAP-FORWARD [tool/approach/intervention]?

SECTION 4. COUNTERFACTUAL PROBING

11. To what extent would this change have taken place without your participation in BMAP-FORWARD [tool/approach/intervention]?

Suggested probing questions:

- a. Where else would you have gained this skills/knowledge to [insert change]?
- b. Would you have been able to gain other skills/knowledge without your participation in BMAP-FORWARD [approach/tool/intervention]? Where and how so?
- c. How do you know these changes resulted from your participation in BMAP-FORWARD [approach/tool/intervention] and not other projects or influences?

SECTION 5. GENERAL FEEDBACK

(The following questions will inform all four EQs and shed light on general implementation strengths and areas for improvement).

12. In general, what do you need [in terms of support, assistance, guidance, tools] to achieve your goals in your work?
13. In general, what do you see as the needs of the media sector in [your country] and the Western Balkans to strengthen its resilience?
14. Overall, what did you like most about your experience with BMAP-FORWARD activity? Why?
15. Overall, what did you like the least about your experience with the BMAP-FORWARD activity? Why? How could this be improved?

2. EXPERT INTERVIEWS DATA COLLECTION TOOL: USAID STAFF, IP STAFF, PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERS, OTHER DONOR AND AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES

2.1 STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT

Interviewers: Please read this statement prior to beginning any interview and ensure the respondent provides consent to the participant before beginning the line of questioning.

Introduction: Integra has been hired to conduct an independent evaluation of the BMAP-FORWARD program supported by USAID. We have asked to interview you because you participated in or were identified as a relevant key stakeholder regarding the BMAP-FORWARD program and, therefore, can provide a unique perspective on the program.

Confidentiality: Your responses in this interview will be kept confidential and will only be available to the evaluation team. Neither your name nor any identifying information will be connected to your responses in this interview nor appear in any of the publications or reports completed for this evaluation.

For Group Interviews Only: If you participate in the group interview, group participants from the same group will also know your responses. Due to the private nature of this research, we ask that all group interview participants agree not to share anything that is discussed with anyone outside of this group once this conversation ends.

Voluntary Participation: Your voluntary and complementary participation in this interview is highly valued. You can choose not to answer any question or stop the interview at any time.

Length Of Participation: This interview will last approximately 60 minutes.

1. Do you understand that your participation in this interview is voluntary and unpaid and that you can end the interview at any point? (check one)
 - Yes
 - No
2. Are you willing to participate? (check one)
 - Yes
 - No
3. Would you be willing to allow the interview to be recorded? (check one)
 - Yes
 - No

2.2 USAID STAFF

Interview Information	
Respondent Category	USAID Staff

Date of Interview	
Name of Interviewer	
Mode of Interview	In person Virtual
Respondent Information	
Name	
Gender	
Mission / Embassy / Bureau	
Role	

2.2.1 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Can you describe your current role?
2. How are (or were) you involved in the BMAP-FORWARD activity?
3. To your knowledge, how does the BMAP-FORWARD activity influence participating KMPs' business practices and abilities to understand markets and ensure revenue diversification in [your respective country of operation]? **(EQ1)**
 - a. What is working well to contribute to this influence?
 - b. What is not working well? Why?
 - c. What needs to be improved? What are your recommendations for improving?
4. How is the BMAP-FORWARD activity influencing content producers' (in [your respective country of operation]) ability to produce data-driven content, engage wider audiences, and expand their reach across the region? **(EQ2)**
 - a. What is working well to contribute to this influence?
 - b. What is not working well? Why?
 - c. What needs to be improved? What are your recommendations for improving?
5. If your Mission also has a bilateral media strengthening activity, how do BMAP-FORWARD interventions complement the bilateral program? If not, why not?
6. How is the BMAP-FORWARD activity influencing KMPs' digital security and digital hygiene practices in [your respective country of operation]? **(EQ3)**
 - a. What is working well to contribute to this influence?
 - b. What is not working well? Why?
 - c. What needs to be improved? What are your recommendations for improving?
7. How does the BMAP-FORWARD activity influence partnerships between media outlets and the technology, commercial, and entrepreneurial sectors in [your respective country of operation]? **(EQ4)**
 - a. What is working well to contribute to this influence?
 - b. What is not working well? Why?
 - c. What needs to be improved? What are your recommendations for improving?

Finally, we'd like to ask you about your general observations about the BMAP-FORWARD activity and its implementation. *(The following questions will inform all four EQs and shed light on general implementation strengths and areas for improvement).*

8. How has the project scope evolved from the first BMAP activity, and what lessons were learned from the initial phase?

9. What are key strengths of the BMAP-FORWARD activity in its current implementation? What is working well and why?
10. What are areas needing improvement? What is not working well and why?
11. What are your recommendations to improve BMAP-FORWARD implementation?

2.3 IMPLEMENTING PARTNER STAFF

Interview Information	
Respondent Category	Implementing Partner Staff
Date of Interview	
Name of Interviewer	
Mode of Interview	In person Virtual
Respondent Information	
Name	
Gender	
Country	
Company / Organization	
Role	

2.3.1 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Please describe your current role and how you are involved in the BMAP-FORWARD activity.

With respect to influencing KMPs' business practices and abilities to understand markets and ensure revenue diversification (**EQ1**):

2. Please describe how the participating KMPs' business practices have changed since the beginning of their participation with BMAP-FORWARD.
 - a. Please provide an example.
 - b. What tools, approaches, or interventions have influenced this change? Please describe. *Probe: specific BMAP-FORWARD approaches, interventions, and tools.*
 - c. How can BMAP-FORWARD approaches, tools, and interventions be improved to contribute to this outcome better?
 - d. What are your recommendations to improve these?
3. Please describe how the participating KMPs' abilities to understand media/media-adjacent markets and ensure revenue diversification have changed since the beginning of their participation with BMAP-FORWARD.
 - a. Please provide an example.
 - b. What tools, approaches, or interventions have influenced this change? Please describe. *Probe: specific BMAP-FORWARD approaches, interventions, and tools.*
 - c. How can BMAP-FORWARD approaches, tools, and interventions be improved to contribute to this outcome better?
 - d. What are your recommendations to improve these?

With respect to influencing the ability of content producers to produce data-driven content, engage wider audiences, and expand reach across the region **(EQ2)**:

4. Please describe how participating content producers have changed their ability to produce data-driven content, engage wider audiences, and expand their reach across the region since the beginning of their participation with BMAP-FORWARD.
 - a. Please provide an example.
 - b. What tools, approaches, or interventions have influenced this change? Please describe. *Probe: specific BMAP-FORWARD approaches, interventions, and tools.*
 - c. How can BMAP-F approaches, tools, and interventions be improved to contribute to this outcome better?
 - d. What are your recommendations to improve these?

With respect to influencing KMPs' digital security and digital hygiene **(EQ3)**:

5. Please describe how participating KMPs' have changed their digital security and digital hygiene practices since the beginning of their participation with BMAP-FORWARD.
 - a. Please provide an example.
 - b. What tools, approaches, or interventions have influenced this change? Please describe. *Probe: specific BMAP-FORWARD approaches, interventions, and tools.*
 - c. How can BMAP-FORWARD approaches, tools, and interventions be improved to better contribute to this outcome?
 - d. What are your recommendations to improve adoption of digital security practices?
 - e. In your opinion, are there digital hygiene practices that still need to be addressed? If so, what would you prioritize in the short and medium terms?

With respect to influencing the success or lack thereof of partnerships between media outlets and the technology, commercial, and entrepreneurial sectors **(EQ4)**:

6. Please describe how the establishment of or continuation of partnerships between media outlets and technology, entrepreneurial, and commercial sectors has changed since the beginning of the BMAP-FORWARD activity.
 - a. Please provide an example.
 - b. What do you consider to be an effective or strong partnership between the media and these other sectors? What should this partnership look like?
 - c. What factors enable this type of strong partnership between media outlets and these other sectors?
 - d. What factors constrain these partnerships? How can these be overcome?
 - e. What is BMAP-FORWARD doing well to facilitate these partnerships? How could this be improved?
 - f. What is BMAP-FORWARD doing to address these constraints? How could this be improved?
 - g. What are your recommendations to improve these?

Finally, we'd like to ask you about your general observations about the BMAP-FORWARD activity and its implementation. *(The following questions will inform all four EQs and shed light on general implementation strengths and areas for improvement).*

7. What are the key strengths of the BMAP-FORWARD activity in its current implementation? What is working well and why?
8. What are areas needing improvement? What is not working well and why?
9. What are your recommendations to improve BMAP-FORWARD implementation?
 - a. Potential probing questions: What are near term adjustments to the activity needed to overcome these obstacles/challenges identified?

2.4 PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS

Interview Information	
Respondent Category	Private Sector Actors
Date of Interview	
Name of Interviewer	
Mode of Interview	In person Virtual
Respondent Information	
Name	
Gender	
Country	
Company / Organization	
Role	

2.4.1 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Can you describe your current role?
2. How are (or were) you involved in the BMAP-FORWARD activity?

With respect to influencing the success or lack thereof of partnerships between media outlets and the technology, commercial, and entrepreneurial sectors **(EQ4)**:

3. Please describe what you consider to be an effective or strong partnership between media and the private [technology, commercial, entrepreneurial] sector.
 - a. What are your motivations for entering into this type of partnership? How do these motivations often align with one another?
 - b. What are the outcomes of this type of partnership?
4. What factors enable this type of strong partnership?
 - a. What are the best approaches to facilitate this type of partnership?
 - b. Who are the key actors to bring together and foster these types of partnerships?
5. What factors constrain these partnerships?
 - a. What are the steps to overcoming these constraints?
 - b. How can this be done, and by whom?

6. In general, what do you need [in terms of support, assistance, guidance, and tools] to have an effective/beneficial partnership with the media in [your country]?
7. [If the respondent was engaged in the BMAP-FORWARD activity]: To what extent do you consider BMAP-FORWARD approaches, tools, or interventions to facilitate these types of partnerships? Please describe/provide an example.
8. What worked well? Why did this work well? What was the outcome?
9. What could be improved? Why does this need to be improved? How could this be improved?

The following questions will inform all four EQs, shed light on the implementation context, and identify the needs of the sector to strengthen recommendations.

10. In general, what do you see as the needs of the information and media sector in [your country] and the Western Balkans to strengthen its resilience? What are the best approaches to address those needs?

2.5 OTHER DONOR AND AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES

Interview Information	
Respondent Category	Other Donor and Agency Representatives
Date of Interview	
Name of Interviewer	
Mode of Interview	In person Virtual
Respondent Information	
Name	
Gender	
Country	
Agency / Organization	
Role	

2.5.1 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Can you describe your current role and the objectives of your organization?

The following questions will inform all four EQs, shed light on the implementation context, and identify the needs of the sector to strengthen recommendations.

2. To what extent do you address issues of strengthening media resilience in your current role?
3. In your view, what are the key challenges facing the media sector today in [respective country/area of focus]?
4. What are the key contextual factors (war in Ukraine, COVID-19, foreign influences) that influence media independence in [respective country/area of focus]?
5. To your knowledge, what programming has been/is being done to address these challenges? To what extent is this programming effective? Why or why not?
6. What are the best practices to address these challenges affecting the media sector today?
7. Are you aware of the BMAP-FORWARD activity implemented by Internews? If so, please share your understanding of its goals and objectives.
8. Are you / have you been involved in the BMAP-FORWARD activity? If so, please describe.

With respect to influencing the success or lack thereof of partnerships between media outlets and the technology, commercial, and entrepreneurial sectors **(EQ4)**:

9. Please describe what you consider to be an effective or strong partnership between media and the private [technology, commercial, entrepreneurial] sector.
 - a. What are the outcomes of this type of partnership?
10. What factors enable this type of strong partnership?
 - a. What are the best approaches to facilitate this type of partnership?
 - b. Who are the key actors to bring together and foster these types of partnerships?
11. What factors constrain these partnerships?
 - a. What are the steps to overcoming these constraints?
 - b. How can this be done, and by whom?
12. What are your recommendations for best practices regarding how these types of partnerships could be established and strengthened?

The following questions will inform all four EQs, shed light on the implementation context, and identify the needs of the sector to strengthen recommendations.

13. In general, what do you see as the needs of the information and media sector in [respective country] and the Western Balkans to strengthen its resilience? How can the donor community effectively address those needs?

3. EXPERT SURVEY - USAID AND IMPLEMENTING PARTNER STAFF

3.1 MODULE A: CONSENT AND RESPONDENT DETAILS

#	QUESTION	RESPONSES	Notes
	<p>Consent Script: We need your help. Integra has been hired to conduct an independent evaluation of the Balkan Media Assistance Program to Foster Organizational Readiness while Advancing Resilient Development (BMAP FORWARD) program supported by USAID. This research and your responses will provide important information to help guide the continued implementation of this program.</p> <p>This survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Your voluntary responses to this survey will be kept confidential to the evaluation team. Survey responses will be reported in the aggregated and will be shared in a manner that does not allow for personal identification.</p> <p>If you have any questions about the study or your rights as a participant, you may contact Sarah Eissler, Team Leader of this evaluation, at sarah.e.eissler@gmail.com.</p>		
a1	Please indicate whether you represent USAID or the Implementing Partner (Internews)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - US Embassy / USAID — SKIP AI_0 ● 2 - Internews 	
a1_0	Please indicate whether you work at a Mission, Embassy, EE Bureau, or other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - US Embassy ● 2 - USAID EE Bureau ● 3 - USAID Mission ● 4 - Other —SKIP AI_1 	
AI_1	Other (please specify)	[Open text]	
A2	Please indicate where you work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - Bosnia and Herzegovina ● 2 - Kosovo ● 3 - Montenegro ● 4 - North Macedonia ● 5 - Serbia ● 6 - Washington ● 7 - Other — SKIP A2_0 	
A2_0	Other (please specify)	[Open text]	

3.2 MODULE B: IMPROVED CAPACITIES OF KEY MEDIA PARTNERS

In this module, we would like to ask your perceptions on which BMAP FORWARD interventions are working well to strengthen the Key Media Partners' ability to operate viable businesses and better understand their markets and audiences. There are 16 Key Media Partners across the five countries of implementation who receive capacity building, assistance, and support from BMAP FORWARD interventions.

#	QUESTION	RESPONSES	Notes
B3	<p>To what extent is the BMAP FORWARD program effective in strengthening the following capacities for Key Media Partners?</p> <p>1=very ineffective; 2=ineffective; 3=neither ineffective nor effective; 4=effective; 5=very effective; -99=I don't know</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 - Improved strategic business practices (1 2 3 4 5 -99) • 2 - Ability to understand media markets (1 2 3 4 5 -99) • 3 - Ensure revenue diversification (1 2 3 4 5 -99) 	EQ1
B4	<p>Please rate the BMAP FORWARD interventions on their effectiveness in strengthening Key Media Partners' capacities to understand media markets.</p> <p>1=very ineffective; 2=ineffective; 3=neither ineffective nor effective; 4=effective; 5=very effective; -99=I don't know</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1- Technology investment grants (1 2 3 4 5 -99) • 2 - Targeted technical assistance, including comprehensive engagement, targeted mentoring, and consulting (1 2 3 4 5 -99) • 3 - Capacity building on market analysis and targeting audiences (1 2 3 4 5 -99) 	EQ1
B5	<p>Please rate the BMAP FORWARD interventions on their effectiveness in strengthening Key Media Partners' capacities to ensure revenue diversification.</p> <p>1=very ineffective; 2=ineffective; 3=neither ineffective nor effective; 4=effective; 5=very effective; -99=I don't know</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1- Technology investment grants (1 2 3 4 5 -99) • 2 - Targeted technical assistance, including comprehensive engagement, targeted mentoring, and consulting (1 2 3 4 5 -99) • 3 - Capacity building on market analysis and targeting audiences (1 2 3 4 5 -99) 	EQ1

B6 5	To what extent has the BMAP FORWARD targeted technical assistance adequately addresses the different needs of women and other marginalized groups in the newsroom?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 - Very inadequate • 2 - Inadequate • 3 - Neither inadequate nor adequate • 4 - Adequate • 5 - Very adequate • -99 - I don't know 	EQ1
B7 6	To what extent has the BMAP FORWARD targeted technical assistance adequately addresses the different needs of women and other marginalized groups at the managerial level?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 - Very inadequate • 2 - Inadequate • 3 - Neither inadequate nor adequate • 4 - Adequate • 5 - Very adequate • -99 - I don't know 	EQ1

3.3 MODULE C: DIGITAL SECURITY

In this module, we would like to ask you your perceptions on which of the BMAP FORWARD interventions are working well to strengthen the Key Media Partners' awareness, knowledge, and continued adoption of digital security practices in the immediate and longer terms.

#	QUESTION	RESPONSES	Notes
C87	To what extent is the BMAP FORWARD program effective in strengthening each listed practice for Key Media Partners and content producers? 1=very ineffective; 2=ineffective; 3=neither ineffective nor effective; 4=effective; 5=very effective; -99=I don't know	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 - Organizational behavior around awareness, knowledge and continued adoption of digital security practices (1 2 3 4 5 -99) • 2 - Implementation of practices that reduce the risk of a digital security attack and improve Key Media Partners' ability to respond (1 2 3 4 5 -99) 	EQ3
C98	Please rate the BMAP FORWARD interventions on their effectiveness in strengthening Key Media Partners' awareness, knowledge, and continued adoption of digital security practices. 1=very ineffective; 2=ineffective; 3=neither ineffective nor effective; 4=effective; 5=very effective; -99=I don't know	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 - Targeted advising for Key Media Partners from digital security experts (1 2 3 4 5 -99) • 2 - SAFETAG audits and assistance (1 2 3 4 5 -99) • 3 - Risk reduction grants (1 2 3 4 5 -99) • 4 - Use of the Media Innovation Lab to create innovative digital security solutions (1 2 3 4 5 -99) • 5 - Using emergency funds to respond to digital security threats (1 2 3 4 5 -99) 	EQ3

C109	To what extent have available resources from BMAP FORWARD been effectively utilized to support journalists to respond to incidents of exposure to online violence?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - Very ineffective ● 2 - Ineffective ● 3 - Neither ineffective nor effective ● 4 - Effective ● 5 - Very effective ● -99 - I don't know 	EQ3
C110	To what extent have the resources provided by BMAP FORWARD been adequate to support journalists in responding to threats or incidences of online violence?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - Very inadequate ● 2 - Inadequate ● 3 - Neither inadequate nor adequate ● 4 - Adequate ● 5 - Very adequate ● -99 - I don't know 	EQ3

3.4 MODULE D: DATA-DRIVEN CONTENT AND ENGAGING WIDER AUDIENCES

In this module, we would like to ask you your perceptions on which of the BMAP FORWARD interventions are working well to strengthen content producers to produce data-driven content, engage wider audiences, and expand reach across the region.

#	QUESTION	RESPONSES	Notes
D121	<p>To what extent is the BMAP FORWARD program effective in strengthening the following abilities of content producers?</p> <p>1=very ineffective; 2=ineffective; 3=neither ineffective nor effective; 4=effective; 5=very effective; -99=I don't know</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - Produce data-driven content (1 2 3 4 5 -99) ● 2 - Engage wider audiences (1 2 3 4 5 -99) ● 3 - Expand reach across the region (1 2 3 4 5 -99) 	EQ2

D132	<p>Please rate the BMAP FORWARD interventions on their effectiveness in strengthening Key Media Partners' and content producers' abilities to produce data-driven content, engage wider audiences, and expand reach across the Western Balkan region?</p> <p>1=very ineffective; 2=ineffective; 3=neither ineffective nor effective; 4=effective; 5=very effective; -99=I don't know</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - Creative content grants (1 2 3 4 5 -99) ● 2 - Targeted technical assistance to support content creation (1 2 3 4 5 -99) ● 3 - Collaborative learning resources and tools (1 2 3 4 5 -99) ● 4 - Balkansmedia.org and its helpdesk (1 2 3 4 5 -99) ● 5 - Collaborative content grants (1 2 3 4 5 -99) ● 6 - Rolling Innovation Fund grants (1 2 3 4 5 -99) 	EQ2
------	--	---	-----

3.5 MODULE E: FOSTERING PARTNERSHIPS

In this module, we would like to ask you your perceptions on which of the BMAP FORWARD interventions are working well to foster partnerships between media and private sector partners to advance solutions on common challenges.

#	QUESTION	RESPONSES	Notes
E143	<p>To what extent is the BMAP FORWARD program effective in fostering partnerships between media outlets and the private sector (technology, commercial, and entrepreneurial sectors)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - Very ineffective ● 2 - Ineffective ● 3 - Neither ineffective nor effective ● 4 - Effective ● 5 - Very effective ● -99 - I don't know 	EQ4
E154	<p>Please rate the BMAP FORWARD interventions on their effectiveness in strengthening partnerships of media outlets and the private sector to collaborate on common goals.</p> <p>1=very ineffective; 2=ineffective; 3=neither ineffective nor effective; 4=effective; 5=very effective; -99=I don't know</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - Annual Media Innovation Lab (1 2 3 4 5 -99) ● 2 - Rolling Innovation Fund grants (1 2 3 4 5 -99) ● 3 - Annual Media Forum (1 2 3 4 5 -99) ● 4 - Collaboration with SEENPM and MASE to strengthen the legal and business environment for media (1 2 3 4 5 -99) ● 5 - Collaborative content production support (1 2 3 4 5 -99) ● 6 - Technical assistance to grantees to foster regional networks (1 2 3 4 5 -99) 	EQ4

3.5 MODULE F: GENERAL FEEDBACK

In this module, we would like to ask you about your general feedback on the implementation of the BMAP FORWARD program and broader challenges affecting the media sector in the Western Balkans.

#	QUESTION	RESPONSES	Notes
F165	To what extent is the BMAP FORWARD program effectively addressing the socio-political context in which the media outlets operate?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - Very ineffective ● 2 - Ineffective ● 3 - Neither ineffective nor effective ● 4 - Effective ● 5 - Very effective ● -99 - I don't know 	EQ1, EQ2, EQ3, EQ4. This question helps to provide the overall context of implementation.
F176	To what extent has the BMAP FORWARD program effectively adapted its approaches to the specific challenges in each of the five countries in which it is implemented? 1=very ineffective; 2=ineffective; 3=neither ineffective nor effective; 4=effective; 5=very effective; -99=I don't know	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - Bosnia and Herzegovina (1 2 3 4 5 -99) ● 2 - Kosovo (1 2 3 4 5 -99) ● 3 - Montenegro (1 2 3 4 5 -99) ● 4 - North Macedonia (1 2 3 4 5 -99) ● 5 - Serbia (1 2 3 4 5 -99) 	EQ1, EQ2, EQ3, EQ4. This question helps to provide the overall context of implementation.
F187	Please select which factors pose the greatest challenge for the BMAP FORWARD to successfully achieve its objectives in strengthening media resilience and competitiveness in the Western Balkans. Select all that apply.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - Undue foreign influence ● 2 - War in Ukraine ● 3 - Macroeconomic challenges ● 4 - Domestic political environment ● 5 - Other — SKIP F187_0 	EQ1, EQ2, EQ3, EQ4. This question helps to provide the overall context of implementation.
F187_0	Other (please specify)	[Open text]	
F198	What are the most pressing needs of the media sector in the Western Balkans? Select all that apply.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - Capacity building for digitalization ● 2 - Ethics and professional training ● 3 - Financial independence ● 4 - Safety and security of journalists and media actors ● 5 - Media literacy ● 6- Other — SKIP F198_0 	EQ1, EQ2, EQ3, EQ4. This question helps to provide an overall context of implementation and can help prioritize what is most needed in the sector.

F198_0	Other (please specify)	[Open text]	
F2019	What are your recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the BMAP FORWARD implementation to achieve its objectives?	[Open text]	

4. EXPERT SURVEY - DONOR AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES OR PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS

4.1 MODULE A: CONSENT AND RESPONDENT DETAILS

#	QUESTION	RESPONSES
	<p>Consent Script: We need your help. Integra has been hired to conduct an independent evaluation of the Balkan Media Assistance Program to Foster Organizational Readiness while Advancing Resilient Development (BMAP FORWARD) program supported by USAID. This research and your responses will provide important information to help guide the continued implementation of this program.</p> <p>This survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Your voluntary responses to this survey will be kept confidential to the evaluation team. Survey responses will be reported in the aggregated and will be shared in a manner that does not allow for personal identification.</p> <p>If you have any questions about the study or your rights as a participant, you may contact Sarah Eissler, Team Leader of this evaluation, at sarah.e.eissler@gmail.com.</p>	
a1	Please select which of the following options best describes your company/organization or agency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - International donor agency ● 2 - International NGO ● 3 - International research / think tank ● 4 - International for-profit company ● 5 - National NGO ● 6 - National community-based organization ● 7 - National for-profit company ● 8 - Other (please specify) — SKIP A1_0
a1_0	Other (please specify)	[Open text]
A2	Please indicate which country or countries you primarily work in. Select all that apply.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - Bosnia and Herzegovina ● 2 - Serbia ● 3 - Kosovo ● 4 - North Macedonia ● 5 - Montenegro

4.2 MODULE B: PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN MEDIA AND PRIVATE SECTOR

In this module, we would like to ask you about your thoughts on fostering successful partnerships between the media in the country(ies) in which you work in the Western Balkans and the private sector.

#	QUESTION	RESPONSES	NOTES
B3	How do you perceive the current state of partnerships between the media and the private sector?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 - Very weak • 2 - Weak • 3 - Neither weak nor strong • 4 - Strong • 5 - Very strong • -99 - I don't know 	EQ4
B4	What factors contribute to successful partnerships between the media and the private sector? Select all that apply.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 - Established mechanisms to facilitate collaboration • 2 - Increased engagement to produce content • 3 - Favorable legal and regulatory environment • 4 - Increased capacity building for collaboration • 5 - Other (specify) — SKIP B4_0 	EQ4
B4_0	Other (please specify)	[Open text]	EQ4
B5	What factors inhibit or challenge successful partnerships between the media and the private sector? Select all that apply.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 - Lack of established mechanisms to foster collaboration • 2 - Lack of understanding of each others' needs • 3 - Costs and funding issues • 4 - Low media literacy • 5 - Other (specify) — SKIP B5_0 	EQ4
B5_0	Other (please specify)	[Open text]	EQ4
B6	Are you familiar with the BMAP FORWARD program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 - Yes — SKIP B7 • 2 - No — SKIP MODULE C 	To facilitate SKIP logic
B7	To what extent do you perceive the BMAP FORWARD program effectively fostering collaborative partnerships between the media and private sectors?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 - Very ineffective • 2 - Ineffective • 3 - Neither ineffective nor effective • 4 - Effective • 5 - Very effective • -99 - I don't know 	EQ4

4.3 MODULE C: OVERALL PERCEPTIONS OF THE MEDIA SECTOR

In this module, we would like to ask you about your thoughts on the media sector in the country(ies) in which you work in the Western Balkans.

#	QUESTION	RESPONSES	NOTES
C8	How would you rate the current ability of media outlets in delivering unbiased and accurate news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - Very weak ● 2 - Weak ● 3 - Neither weak nor strong ● 4 - Strong ● 5 - Very strong ● -99 - I don't know 	EQ1, EQ2, EQ3, EQ4. This question helps to inform the overall context of program implementation.
C9	To what extent do you think the public has access to reliable and timely information from current media outlets?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - No access ● 2 - Limited access ● 3 - Neither limited nor open access ● 4 - Some access ● 5 - Open access ● -99 - I don't know 	EQ1, EQ2, EQ3, EQ4. This question helps to inform the overall context of program implementation.
C10	To what degree are you confident in the independence of media outlets from political or external pressures?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - No confidence ● 2 - limited confidence ● 3 - Neither confident nor not confident ● 4 - Confident ● 5 - Very confident ● -99 - I don't know 	EQ1, EQ2, EQ3, EQ4. This question helps to inform the overall context of program implementation.
C11	Which of the following factors are the most challenging to overcome to strengthen media independence? Select all that apply.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - Lack of understanding markets and market trends ● 2 - Lack of public media literacy ● 3 - Safety and security of journalists ● 4 - Lack of sustainable and independent funding ● 5 - Lack of public trust in the media ● 6 - Lack of diversified revenue streams for media outlets ● 7 - Lack of digital literacy and capacity for digitization ● 8 - National political influence ● 9 - Foreign political influence ● 10 - Misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation 	EQ1, EQ2, EQ3, EQ4. This question helps to inform the overall context of program implementation.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11 - Other (please specify) — SKIP C11_0 	
C11_0	Other (please specify)	[Open text]	
C12	What are the most pressing needs for the media sector to strengthen its independence? Select all that apply.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 - Financial independence 2 - Transparent funding 3 - Strengthened professionalism and ethics 4 - Capacity building for digitalization 5 - Strengthened media literacy 6 - Improved safety and security of journalists and media actors 7 - Other (please specify) — SKIP C12_0 	EQ1, EQ2, EQ3, EQ4. This question helps to inform the overall context of program implementation and can help shape recommendations for priority needs in the sector.
C12_0	Other (please specify)	[Open text]	
C13	What are the best practices needed to address these challenges in strengthening media independence in the Western Balkans?	[Open text]	EQ1, EQ2, EQ3, EQ4. This question helps to inform the overall context of program implementation and can help shape recommendations for priority needs in the sector.

4.4 MODULE D: CONCLUSION

Thank you very much for your time and participation.

#	QUESTION	RESPONSES	NOTES
D14	Please share any additional feedback or recommendations you have with us.	[Open text]	Open feedback, optional question.

SUBSTANTIATION INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

As previously mentioned, we are primarily interested in conducting this follow up interview with you to ensure our interpretation of what we've heard accurately reflects yours and others who have received assistance from BMAP-FORWARD's experience. For the following questions, I will briefly summarize what we've heard with respect to different points related to BMAP-FORWARD and ask you to describe if and how it reflects your experience.

1. Overall, we have heard that BMAP-FORWARD's technical assistance provided through training, expert consultations, guidance, and grant assistance has been extremely tailored and targeted to meet your needs and interests as discussed with BMAP-FORWARD staff, and that this has been effective because it is highly targeted and tailored. To what extent has this been your experience?
2. We have heard that the BMAP-Forward staff was well equipped and experienced to respond to your and/or your company's needs. They were often quick and proactive, but in some cases, we've heard that response times were too slow to be effective. Can you elaborate on your experience?
3. We've heard that BMAP-FORWARD assistance has promoted media partners to think more strategically about their business plans, diversifying their revenue sources, and to be more commercially oriented. To what extent has this been your / your company's experience?
4. We've heard that BMAP-FORWARD assistance has helped KMPs and staff better understand their markets through different types of tools, technology and data analytics support. Some tools include the use of SmartOcto, for example. To what extent has this been your / your company's experience?
5. We've heard that BMAP-FORWARD assistance has been critical in strengthening the digitization of media partners' content, which has had a range of different benefits from increasing potential revenue sources to reaching wider audiences. Can you describe to what extent this has been your experience?
6. We've heard that BMAP-FORWARD assistance has helped media partners to think of or pursue new modes of content production, such as creating podcasts or through mobile journalism. To what extent has this been your / your company's experience?
7. We've heard that BMAP-FORWARD has helped to increase collaboration across the region among media outlets and/or journalists through various ways, such as the joint collaboration grants, the Annual Media Forums or the Media Innovation Labs. To what extent has this been your experience?
8. We've heard that the Balkansmedia.org platform is sometimes useful, but maybe not everyone knows about it or thinks to use it regularly. Can you describe your experience with this platform? To what extent can you share about how others in your company / network use this platform and why?
9. We've heard that the SAFETAG audits and subsequent technical assistance or grant funding has helped to identify digital security challenges or issues for media partners, and they've been useful to provide effective solutions to resolve those issues. To what extent has this been your experience?
10. We've heard that it is difficult for various reasons for media partners to want or consider partnering with private sector actors, such as those from the commercial, IT, or entrepreneurial sectors. We have also heard that BMAP-FORWARD has not really encouraged or pushed these types of partnerships for media partners. Can you elaborate on what has been your experience?

What do you think about potentially partnering with private sector actors? Is this something that would interest you, why or why not?

11. Finally, can you describe what has been the most impactful aspect of BMAP-FORWARD for you / your company and why?
12. What has been the least impactful and why? How could this be improved?

Thank you so much for your time and sharing your additional feedback with me. Do you have any questions for me?

SUBSTANTIATION SURVEY PROTOCOL

3.1 MODULE A: CONSENT AND RESPONDENT DETAILS

#	QUESTION	RESPONSES	Notes
<p>Consent Script: Integra has been hired to conduct an independent evaluation of the Balkan Media Assistance Program to Foster Organizational Readiness while Advancing Resilient Development (BMAP FORWARD) program supported by USAID. This survey and your responses will provide important information to help guide the continued implementation of this program.</p> <p>This survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Your voluntary responses to this survey will be kept confidential to the evaluation team. Survey responses will be reported in the aggregate and will be shared in a manner that does not allow for personal identification.</p> <p>If you have any questions about the study or your rights as a participant, you may contact Sarah Eissler, Team Leader of this evaluation, at sarah.eissler@gmail.com.</p>			
A1	In which country do you work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - Bosnia and Herzegovina ● 2 - Kosovo ● 3 - Montenegro ● 4 - North Macedonia ● 5 - Serbia ● 6 - Other — SKIP A2_0 	
A2	Please indicate which most closely aligns with your role in the media sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - CEO of media company ● 2 - Editor, Department Head, or Manager at a media company ● 3 - Journalist, correspondent, or camera operator at a media company ● 4 - Independent journalist (not affiliated with a media company) ● 5 - Other (please specify) SKIP A2_0 	
A2_0	Other (please specify)	[Open text]	
A3	What is your gender?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - Man ● 2 - Woman ● 3 - Non-Binary ● 4 - Prefer not to answer 	
A4	Please indicate to what extent you've received assistance from BMAP-Forward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - I and/or my company have received grants, technical assistance, coaching, and other support from BMAP-Forward ● 2 - I and/or my company have only received grant funding from BMAP-Forward ● 3 - Other (please specify) SKIP A4_0 	
A4_0	Other (please specify)	[Open text]	

3.2 MODULE B: PERCEPTIONS OF BMAP-FORWARD PROGRAM

In this survey, we are looking to understand the extent to which the following statements align with your experience with BMAP-Forward. For each question, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the listed statement based on your own experience. If a question does not apply to you, please indicate "Not Applicable".

#	STATEMENT	RESPONSES	EQS
B4	The BMAP-Forward program provided me or my company with the right type of training and expert consultations to meet our specific needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - I strongly disagree ● 2 - I disagree ● 3 - I neither agree nor disagree ● 4 - I agree ● 5 - I strongly agree ● 6 - Not applicable (N/A) 	EQ1, EQ2, EQ3, EQ4
B5	Because of the BMAP-Forward training and expert consultations, I/ my company now plan better for finding new ways to make money or increase our earnings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - I strongly disagree ● 2 - I disagree ● 3 - I neither agree nor disagree ● 4 - I agree ● 5 - I strongly agree ● 6 - Not applicable (N/A) 	EQ1
B6	The BMAP-Forward training and expert consultations have improved my or my company's capacity to understand our audiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - I strongly disagree ● 2 - I disagree ● 3 - I neither agree nor disagree ● 4 - I agree ● 5 - I strongly agree ● 6 - Not applicable (N/A) 	EQ1
B7	The BMAP-Forward staff is quick and effective in responding to my / our needs and requests.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - I strongly disagree ● 2 - I disagree ● 3 - I neither agree nor disagree ● 4 - I agree ● 5 - I strongly agree ● 6 - Not applicable (N/A) 	EQ1 EQ2 EQ3

B8	The BMAP-Forward staff presents new ideas that are useful for me / my company to improve our capacity in the media sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - I strongly disagree ● 2 - I disagree ● 3 - I neither agree nor disagree ● 4 - I agree ● 5 - I strongly agree ● 6 - Not applicable (N/A) 	EQ1 EQ2
B9	I / my company has received a grant from BMAP-Forward.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - Yes SKIP B9_0 ● 2 - No SKIP B10 	
B9_0	<p>Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the grant or grants you've received from BMAP-Forward.</p> <p>1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree, 5 = strongly agree, 6 = N/A</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - The grant provided the necessary equipment or capacity to pursue new revenue sources. (1 2 3 4 5 6) ● 2 - The grant provided resources to improve our capacity to produce content in multiple or newer formats. (1 2 3 4 5 6) ● 3 - The grant provided resources to improve our use of data analytics to understand our audiences. (1 2 3 4 5 6) ● 4 - The grant provided resources to develop new technologies that helped us reach wider audiences. (1 2 3 4 5 6) ● 5 - The grant provided an opportunity to collaborate with other media partners to produce joint content. (1 2 3 4 5 6) ● 6 - The grant enabled us to strengthen our digital security protocols and/or practices. (1 2 3 4 5 6) ● 7 - Other (please specify) 	EQ1 EQ2 EQ3

B10	BMAP-Forward training and expert consultations have helped me / my company to produce content in newer or more improved digital forms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - I strongly disagree ● 2 - I disagree ● 3 - I neither agree nor disagree ● 4 - I agree ● 5 - I strongly agree ● 6 - Not applicable (N/A) 	EQ2
B11	BMAP-Forward training and expert consultations have improved my / my company's ability to use Social Media platforms to connect with audiences and/or disseminate content.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - I strongly disagree ● 2 - I disagree ● 3 - I neither agree nor disagree ● 4 - I agree ● 5 - I strongly agree ● 6 - Not applicable (N/A) 	EQ2
B12	BMAP-Forward strengthened my / my company's ability to use analytics to improve editorial decisions with SmartOcto.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - I strongly disagree ● 2 - I disagree ● 3 - I neither agree nor disagree ● 4 - I agree ● 5 - I strongly agree ● 6 - Not applicable (N/A) 	EQ2
B13	I am a woman journalist who participated in BMAP-Forward's women and journalism project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - Yes SKIP B13_0 ● 2 - No SKIP B14 	EQ2
B13_0	<p>Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the women and journalism project.</p> <p>1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree, 5 = strongly agree, 6 = N/A</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - This project was effective in building my capacity as a journalist. (1 2 3 4 5 6) ● 2 - This project created connections with other women journalists across the region. (1 2 3 4 5 6) ● 3 - Because of this project, I have improved the quality of the content I am 	

		<p>producing. (1 2 3 4 5 6)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 - Because of this project, I will or have produced cross-border stories with other women journalists. (1 2 3 4 5 6) • 5 - Because of this project, I have reached wider audiences with my work. (1 2 3 4 5 6) 	
B14	<p>Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the Balkansmedia.org platform.</p> <p>1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree, 5 = strongly agree, 6 = N/A</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 - I use the Balkansmedia.org platform in my work (1 2 3 4 5 6) • 2 - The Balkansmedia.org platform is useful (1 2 3 4 5 6) • 3 - I use the Balkansmedia.org platform to generate ideas for new content (1 2 3 4 5 6) • 4 - I only read the Balkansmedia.org newsletter (1 2 3 4 5 6) • 5 - I wish the Balkansmedia.org platform produced more relevant content (1 2 3 4 5 6) • 6 - Other (please specify) 	EQ2
B15	<p>Because of technical and/or grant support received from BMAP-Forward, I / my company have improved our digital security practices and protocols.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 - I strongly disagree • 2 - I disagree • 3 - I neither agree nor disagree • 4 - I agree • 5 - I strongly agree • 6 - Not applicable (N/A) 	EQ3

B16	The SAFETAG security audit and subsequent assistance was effective in strengthening our company's digital security needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - I strongly disagree ● 2 - I disagree ● 3 - I neither agree nor disagree ● 4 - I agree ● 5 - I strongly agree ● 6 - Not applicable (N/A) 	EQ3
B17	BMAP-Forward has encouraged me / my company to pursue partnerships with entrepreneurs, commercial and technology companies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - I strongly disagree ● 2 - I disagree ● 3 - I neither agree nor disagree ● 4 - I agree ● 5 - I strongly agree ● 6 - Not applicable (N/A) 	EQ4
B18	I / my company am (is) not interested in pursuing partnerships with the private sector for various reasons.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - I strongly disagree ● 2 - I disagree ● 3 - I neither agree nor disagree ● 4 - I agree ● 5 - I strongly agree ● 6 - Not applicable (N/A) 	EQ4
B19	Through the Annual Media Forum or the Media Innovation Labs, BMAP-Forward has enabled me / my company to develop partnerships with other media outlets from across the region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 - I strongly disagree ● 2 - I disagree ● 3 - I neither agree nor disagree ● 4 - I agree ● 5 - I strongly agree ● 6 - Not applicable (N/A) 	EQ4
B20	Please share any additional feedback to share regarding your experience with BMAP-FORWARD. (*Optional question*)	Open ended	

ANNEX G: SOURCES OF INFORMATION

DESK REVIEW BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Evaluation Team reviewed the following documentation to inform the desk review. Documents were either identified via secondary searches or provided by USAID and the Implementing Partners.

1. Balkaninsight. "Women in newsrooms: perspectives on equity, diversity and resilience" Bojana Kostic, Jennifer Adams and Marija Sajkas.
2. BMAP Forward Activity Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plan (January 2023)
3. BMAP Forward Activity Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plan (January 2024)
4. BMAP Forward Annual Report Year I (February 3, 2022 – January 31, 2023)
5. BMAP Forward Award Program Description
6. BMAP Forward "Annex 1--SCS BMAP_ME Table_Final"
7. BMAP Forward "Annex 2--SCS BMAP Google Analytics Data for Key Partners_Final"
8. BMAP Forward "Annex 3--SCS BMAP PITT_Final"
9. BMAP Forward. "Annex 4 - SCS BMAP Google Analytics Data for Key Partners_Comparison to YI"
10. BMAP Forward PIP BiH Oslobodjenje
11. BMAP Forward PIP BiH Fokus
12. BMAP Forward PIP BiH Capital
13. BMAP Forward PIP Kosovo KOSOVALIVE
14. BMAP Forward PIP Kosovo Kontakt Plus
15. BMAP Forward PIP Kosovo KOSSEV
16. BMAP Forward PIP Kosovo Koha
17. BMAP Forward Serbia Nova Ekonomija
18. BMAP Forward PIP Serbia CINS
19. BMAP Forward PIP Serbia KRIK
20. BMAP Forward PIP North Macedonia Koha
21. BMAP Forward PIP North Macedonia Sloboden Pecat
22. BMAP Forward PIP North Macedonia Sakam da kazam
23. BMAP Forward PIP Montenegro Vijesti
24. BMAP Forward PIP Montenegro MINA
25. BMAP Forward Year I Quarterly Report (February-March 2022)
26. BMAP Forward Year I Quarterly Report (April-June 2022)
27. BMAP Forward Year I Quarterly Report (July-Oct 2022)
28. BMAP Forward Year II Quarterly Report (February-March 2023)
29. BMAP Forward Year II Quarterly Report (April- June 2023)
30. BMAP Forward Year I Work Plan (February 3, 2022 to January 31, 2023)
31. BMAP Forward Year 2 Work Plan (February 1, 2023 to January 31, 2024)
32. BMAP Forward Year 3 Work Plan (February 1, 2024 to January 31, 2025)
33. BMAP Forward Year 2 "Annual Narrative Report February 1, 2023 - January 31, 2024" March 1, 2024
34. BMAP Forward Year 2 "Annual Narrative Report February 1, 2023 - January 31, 2024: Annex I_Performance Indicator Tracking Table_BMAP-F_Y2Q4" March 1, 2024

35. BMAP Forward Year 2 "Annual Narrative Report February 1, 2023 - January 31, 2024: Annex 2_GrantsOverview_Y2" March 1, 2024
36. BMAP Forward Year 2 "Annual Narrative Report February 1, 2023 - January 31, 2024: Annex 3_Balkansmediaorg_ArticlesY2" March 1, 2024
37. BMAP Forward Year 2 "Annual Narrative Report February 1, 2023 - January 31, 2024: Annex 4_Balkansmediaorg_AnnualReview" March 1, 2024
38. BMAP Forward Year 2 "Annual Narrative Report February 1, 2023 - January 31, 2024: Annex 5_GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE COMMUNICATION IN THE MEDIA: The path towards inclusivity and equality" March 1, 2024
39. BMAP Forward Year 2 "Annual Narrative Report February 1, 2023 - January 31, 2024: Annex 6_RODNO TRANSFORMATIVNA KOMUNIKACIJA U MEDIJIMA: Put prema inkluzivnosti i ravnopravnosti" March 1, 2024
40. BMAP Forward Year 2 Work Plan "ANNEX I: BMAP FORWARD YEAR 2 BACKGROUND" (February 1, 2023 to January 31, 2024)
41. BMAP Forward Year 2 Work Plan "ANNEX II_Cross Cutting Activities_Revised_Clean" (February 1, 2023 to January 31, 2024)
42. BMAP Forward Year 2 Work Plan "ANNEX III. COORDINATION WITH OTHER USAID AND OUTSIDE DONOR-FUNDED ACTIVITIES" (February 1, 2023 to January 31, 2024)
43. BMAP Forward Year 3 Work Plan "ANNEX I_Y3 KMP Support Approaches in Coordination with Other Donors" (February 1, 2024 to January 31, 2025)
44. BMAP Forward Year 3 Work Plan "BMAP_Forward_WP_Budget_Y3" (February 1, 2024 to January 31, 2025)
45. BMAP Forward BMAP Forward Year 1 Quarterly Report "Annex 1: 2022 OCA Institutional Module-Summaries of KMP Results" (July-Oct 2022)
46. BMAP Forward BMAP Forward Year 1 Quarterly Report "Annex 2: 2022 Multimedia Assessment – Summary of KMP Results" (July-Oct 2022)
47. BMAP Forward BMAP Forward Year 1 Quarterly Report "
48. BMAP Forward BMAP Forward Year 2 Quarterly Report "PMP_Year2_Q1" (February-March 2023)
49. BMAP Forward BMAP Forward Year 2 Quarterly Report "Annex 2: Support to Key Media Partners" (February-March 2023)
50. BMAP Forward BMAP Forward Year 2 Quarterly Report "Annex 3: Coordination with Other US Government and Donor-Funded Programs" (February-March 2023)
51. BMAP Forward BMAP Forward Year 2 Quarterly Report "Annex 4_BMAPF_GenderAssessment_Draft" (February-March 2023)
52. BMAP Forward BMAP Forward Year 2 Quarterly Report "Annex_4_BalkansmediaOverview" (February-March 2023)
53. BMAP Forward BMAP Forward Year 2 Quarterly Report "Annex 5: Selecting A Multi-Factor Authentication Solution: How to Address the Human and Technology Concerns" (February-March 2023)
54. BMAP Forward BMAP Forward Year 2 Quarterly Report "Annex 8: Gender Equality in Media" (February-March 2023)
55. BMAP Forward BMAP Forward Year 2 Quarterly Report 3 & 4 "Annex2_BMAP-F_Y2Q3-Y2Q4_Grants_Overview"

56. BMAP Forward BMAP Forward Year 2 Quarterly Report "Annex 3: Creative Content Grants Project Descriptions"
57. BMAP Forward BMAP Forward Year 2 Quarterly Report 3 "Annex 5: LIST OF ARTICLES PUBLISHED BY BALKANSMEDIA.ORG in Q3 of Year 2"
58. BMAP Forward BMAP Forward Year 2 Quarterly Report "Annex 6: BMAP Forward Support To Umbrella Network"
59. BMAP Forward BMAP Forward Year 2 Quarterly Report "Annex 7: JOURNALIST SAFETY TIPS FOR COVERING CRISIS ZONES"
60. BMAP Forward BMAP Forward Year 2 Quarterly Report "Annex 8: BalkansMedia REPORTING ON FEMICIDE"
61. BMAP Forward BMAP Forward Year 2 Quarterly Report "Annex 9: ROLLING INNOVATION FUND GRANTS RESULTS SUMMARY"
62. BMAP Forward BMAP Forward Year 2 Quarterly Report 2 & 3 "Annex 3: Y2Q2/Y2Q3 Grants Overview:"
63. BMAP Forward BMAP Forward Year 2 Quarterly Report 2 "Annex 7: GTranslate"
64. BMAP Forward BMAP Forward Year 2 Quarterly Report "Annex 6: INVESTMENT GRANT FUND PROJECTS DESCRIPTION SUMMARY"
65. BMAP Forward BMAP Forward Year 2 Quarterly Report "Annex 10: CCG Fokus Reach"
66. BMAP Forward BMAP Forward Year 2 Quarterly Report "Annex 2: Agenda of ANNUAL MEDIA FORUM 2023 Thinking Forward in Disruptive Times Hotel Holiday, Conference Room Hercegovina"
67. BMAP Forward BMAP Forward Year 2 Quarterly Report 3 "Annex 5: LIST OF ARTICLES PUBLISHED BY BALKANSMEDIA.ORG in Q2 of Year 2"
68. BMAP Forward BMAP Forward Year 2 Quarterly Report "Annex 11: Annual Media Forum 2023 Infographic"
69. BMAP Forward BMAP Forward Year 2 Quarterly Report "Annex_4_BalkansmediaOverview" (April- June 2023)
70. BMAP Forward "Highlights for February 2023"
71. BMAP Forward "Highlights for March 2023"
72. BMAP Forward Indicator Reference Sheets
73. BMAP Indicator Reference Sheets
74. BMAP Forward Fact Sheet
75. BMAP Forward Fact Sheet "Activity Brief BMAP" with Partners FHI360 and Internews
76. List of BMAP Forward KMPs
77. BMAP Forward " 2022-2027 in 30 slides"
78. BMAP Forward "Our First 1000 Days in 25 slides"
79. BMAP Forward Program Description (August 23, 2021)
80. CAPITAL. "Strateški okvir medija" December 04, 2022
81. CINS. "CINS Strategic Objectives 2023 - 2027"
82. Fokus. "Nacrt strateških smjernica Fokus.ba" Maj 2023.
83. GIZ. "SMFP_BMAP_F overlap_Update Feb 2 2024"
84. GIZ. "SMFP_Strategic partners Jan 2024"
85. European Federation of Journalists. "Sustainable journalism, from local to global: Good practices in Europe". March, 2024

86. Internews. "BMAP Forward Key Media Partners: North Macedonia Country Background."
87. Internews. "BMAP Forward Key Media Partners: Bosnia and Herzegovina Country Background."
88. Internews. "BMAP Forward Key Media Partners: Kosovo Country Background."
89. Internews. "BMAP Forward Key Media Partners: Montenegro Country Background."
90. Internews. "BMAP Forward Key Media Partners: Serbia Country Background."
91. Internews. "Annex 3--KRIK 2018 PIP Final for Distribution" (October 2018-September 2019)
92. Internews. "Annex 4--KRIK 2018 PIP Final for Distribution" (October 2018-September 2019)
93. Internews. "PIP 2018 KontaktPlus-Kosovo Final for Distribution" (August 2018-July 2019)
94. Internews. "PIP 2018 KOHA-Kosovo Final for Distribution" (August 2018-July 2019)
95. Internews. "PIP 2018 KIM-Kosovo Final for Distribution" (August 2018-July 2019)
96. Internews. "PIP 2018 Oslobodjenje - Bosnia and Herzegovina_Final for Distribution" (August 2018-July 2019)
97. Internews. "PIP 2018 Zurnal - Bosnia and Herzegovina_Final for Distribution" (August 2018-July 2019)
98. Internews. "PIP 2018 BIRN - Regional_Final for Distribution" (August 2018-July 2019)
99. Internews. "PIP 2018 Juzne Vesti- Serbia_Final for Distribution" (August 2018-July 2019)
100. Internews. "PIP 2018 360 Degrees- North Macedonia_Final for Distribution" (August 2018-July 2019)
101. Internews. "PIP 2018 MINA- Montenegro_Final for Distribution" (August 2018-July 2019)
102. Internews. "PIP 2018 Vijesti- Montenegro_Final for Distribution" (August 2018-July 2019)
103. Internews. "PIP 2018 Sloboden Pecat- North Macedonia_Final for Distribution" (August 2018-July 2019)
104. Internews. "Assessment Recommendations: Oslobodjenje-BIH_Final for distribution"
105. Internews. "Assessment Recommendations: Zurnal-BIH_Final for distribution"
106. Internews. "Assessment Recommendations: KOHA-KOSOVO_Final for distribution"
107. Internews. "Assessment Recommendations: Radio KontaktPlus-KOSOVO_Final for distribution"
108. Internews. "Assessment Recommendations: KIM-KOSOVO_Final for distribution"
109. Internews. "Assessment Recommendations: BIRN-Regional_Final for distribution"
110. Internews. "Assessment Recommendations: Juzne Vesti-Serbia_Final for distribution"
111. Internews. "Assessment Recommendations: 360 Degrees-North Macedonia_Final for distribution"
112. Internews. "Assessment Recommendations: MINA-Montenegro_Final for distribution"
113. Internews. "Assessment Recommendations: Vijesti-Montenegro_Final for distribution"
114. Internews. "Assessment Recommendations: Sloboden Pecat-North Macedonia_Final for distribution"
115. KRIK. "KRIK STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2026" November 15, 2021
116. KOSSEV "KOSSEV Kosovska Mitrovica STRATEŠKI DOKUMENT"
117. KosovaLive. "KosovaLive Strategic Plan 2023-2026" March 23, 2023
118. Koha. "STRATEGIC PLAN FOR DEVELOPMENT OF KOHA (2023-2027)"
119. KOHA Media Group. "KOHA GROUP STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK 2023 - 2028" May 2023
120. Radio Kontkat Plus. "Radio KONTAKT PLUS Kosovska Mitrovica STRATEŠKI DOKUMENT"

121. MINA. "CRNOGORSKA MEDIJSKA AGENCIJA STRATEGIJA RAZVOJA 2021-2026" July, 2021
122. NovaEkonomija. "STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2028" April 2023
123. Oslobođenje. "OSLOBODJENJE GROUP STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK 2023-2028" March 2023
124. Pen to Paper. "Internews: BMAP Forward Gender and Media Pilot Project 'Common Threats to Women Journalists in the Balkans'". Jennifer Adams and Bojana Kostic, February 2024
125. Pen to Paper. "Gender and Media Compiled Resources".
126. Sakam da kazam. "STRATEGIC PLAN FOR DEVELOPMENT OF SDK (2023-2027)"
127. Sloboden Pecat. "SLOBODEN PEČAT **STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT** FRAMEWORK 2023 - 2028" April 2023
128. Umbrella Association. "STRATEGIC PLAN UMBRELLA ASSOCIATION (UBA) 2024-2029" June 1, 2023
129. USAID "Associate Cooperative Agreement No. AID-168-LA-17-00003 Balkan Media Assistance Program (BMAP)" September 25, 2017
130. USAID. "Assessment of USAID Media Assistance in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1996–2002." Washington D.C., 2002.
131. USAID. "BALKAN MEDIA ASSISTANCE PROGRAM: A case study in locally led development"
132. USAID. "Bosnia and Herzegovina: COUNTRY DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION STRATEGY DECEMBER 2020 - DECEMBER 2025"
133. USAID. "COUNTERING MALIGN KREMLIN INFLUENCE Development Framework: Implementing Report." Washington D.C., 2022.
134. USAID. "Fact Sheet: Investigative Journalism in Bosnia and Herzegovina." Washington D.C., n.d.
135. USAID "Final Narrative Report September 29, 2017 - July 31, 2022" September 13, 2022
136. USAID. "INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM SHINES LIGHT ON BOSNIAN CORRUPTION." Washington D.C., 2017.
137. USAID. "Kosovo: COUNTRY DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION STRATEGY (CDCS) MAY 13, 2020 - MAY 13, 2025"
138. USAID. "Media Innovation." Washington D.C., 2023.
139. USAID. "Monitoring and Evaluation Plan" December 6, 2019
140. USAID. "North Macedonia: COUNTRY DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION STRATEGY (CDCS) September 2020 - September 2025"
141. USAID. "Serbia: COUNTRY DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION STRATEGY December 2020 – December 2025"
142. USAID. "Strengthening Independent Media in Macedonia (SIMM)." Washington D.C., 2015.
143. Vijesti. "GRUPACIJA VIJESTI STRATEŠKI OKVIR ZA RAZVOJ 2022-2027 Ažuriranje strateških ciljeva 2024." December 2023

ANNEX H: DATA COLLECTION ITINERARY

Date	Country	Virtual / In Person	Stakeholder Name and Organization	Stakeholder Category
February 26, 2024	BiH	Virtual	██████████ GIZ	Other Donor Partner and Agency Rep
February 27, 2024	USA	Virtual	██████████ USAID/W E&E Bureau	USAID Staff
February 27, 2024	Montenegro	Virtual	██████████ Internews	Implementing Partner Staff
February 29, 2024	Serbia	Virtual	██████████ USAID/Kosovo	USAID Staff
March 1, 2024	Kosovo	Virtual	██████████ USAID/Kosovo	USAID Staff
March 4, 2024	BiH	Virtual	██████████ Umbrella Organization	KMP - Participant
March 4, 2024	Serbia	Virtual	██████████ Rolling Innovation Fund Grantee	Non-KMP - Participant
March 4, 2024	Kosovo	In Person	██████████ Media Innovation Lab Mentor	Private Sector Actor
March 5, 2024	Kosovo	In Person	██████████ CEO KMP	KMP - Participant
March 5, 2024	Serbia	In Person	██████████ CINS	KMP - Participant
March 5, 2024	BiH	Virtual	██████████ Media Innovation Lab Grantees	Non-KMP - Participant
March 6, 2024	Serbia	In Person	██████████ IREX	Other Donor Partner and Agency Rep
March 6, 2024	BiH	Virtual	██████████ Capital	KMP - Participant
March 6, 2024	BiH	Virtual	██████████ Internews	Implementing Partner
March 6, 2024	Serbia	Virtual	██████████ Internews	Implementing Partner
March 6, 2024	Serbia	In person	██████████ IREX	Other Donor Partner and Agency Rep
March 7, 2024	BiH	In Person	██████████ Thomson Foundation	Other Donor Partner and Agency Rep

March 7, 2024	Kosovo	In Person	Media Innovation Lab Fellow	Non-KMP - Participant
March 8, 2024	Israel	Virtual	Consultant	Implementing Partner Staff
March 8, 2024	Serbia	Virtual	Share Fondacija	Non-KMP - Participant
March 8, 2024	BiH	In Person		Non-KMP Participant
March 11, 2024	BiH	In Person	OSCE	Other Donor Partner and Agency Rep
March 11, 2024	Serbia	Virtual	MDIF	Other Donor Partner and Agency Rep
March 11, 2024	Serbia	Virtual	EED	Other Donor Partner and Agency Rep
March 11, 2024	Kosovo	In person	Radio Kontakt Plus	KMP - Participant
March 11, 2024	Kosovo	In person	Kosovalive	KMP - Participant
March 11, 2024	North Macedonia	Virtual	RESIS	Other Donor Partner and Agency Rep
March 11, 2024	Austria, Netherlands	Virtual	en to Paper	Implementing Partner Staff
March 11, 2024	Belgium	Virtual	European Commission	Other Donor Partner and Agency Rep
March 12, 2024	BiH	In person	Oslobodjenje	KMP - Participant
March 12, 2024	BiH	In person	Internews	Implementing Partner Staff
March 12, 2024	Serbia	In person	Internews	Implementing Partner Staff
March 12, 2024	Serbia	Virtual	IREX	Other Donor Partner and Agency Rep
March 12, 2024	North Macedonia	Virtual	oundation for debate and education IDEA SEE	Non-KMP - Participant
March 13, 2024	North Macedonia	Virtual	journalist at "Sakam da Kazam"	KMP- Participant
March 14, 2024	BiH + North Macedonia	Virtual	GIZ	Other Donor Partner and Agency Rep

March 15, 2024	North Macedonia	In person	██████████ USAID	USAID Staff
March 15, 2024	North Macedonia	In person	██████████ "Sloboden Pecat"	KMP- Participant
March 15, 2024	North Macedonia	In person	██████████ PINA	Non-KMP - Participant
March 15, 2024	BiH	In person	██████████ Fokus	KMP- Participant
March 16, 2024	North Macedonia	In person	██████████ Koha Production	KMP- Participant
March 18, 2024	North Macedonia	In person	██████████ Sakam Da Kazam	KMP- Participant
March 18, 2024	North Macedonia	In person	██████████ Koha Production	KMP- Participant
March 18, 2024	Kosovo	In person	██████████ Country Programme Manager for Kosovo	Implementing Partner Staff
March 19, 2024	Kosovo	Virtual	██████████ Kossev	KMP- Participant
March 19, 2024	Kosovo	Virtual	██████████ the Rolling Innovation Fund Fellow	Non-KMP - Participant
March 19, 2024	North Macedonia	In person	██████████ Koha Production	KMP- Participant
March 19, 2024	North Macedonia	In person	██████████ Internews	Implementing Partner Staff
March 19, 2024	North Macedonia	In person	██████████ Association of Journalists in Macedonia	Other Donor Partner and Agency Rep
March, 19, 2024	Montenegro	In person	██████████ MINA	KMP- Participant
March, 19, 2024	Montenegro	In person	██████████ MINA	KMP- Participant
March 20, 2024	BiH	Online	██████████ USAID	USAID staff
March 20, 2024	North Macedonia	In person	██████████ Sakam Da Kazam	KMP- Participant
March 20, 2024	North Macedonia	In person	██████████ Sakam Da Kazam	KMP- Participant
March 20, 2024	North	In person	██████████	Implementing Partner

	Macedonia		Internews	Staff
March 20, 2024	U.S.A	Online	██████████ ██████████ State Department	US Government Staff
March 20, 2024	BiH	In Person	██████████ Internews	Implementing Partner
March 20, 2024	Montenegro	In person	████████████████████	KMP- Participant
March 21, 2024	Montenegro	In person	████████████████████ U.S. Embassy	US Embassy Staff
March 21, 2024	BiH	In person	████████████████████ KMP Oslobodjenje	KMP-Participant
March 21, 2024	Serbia	Online	██████████ GIZ	Other Donor Partner and Agency Rep
March 21, 2024	Montenegro	In person	██████████ MINA	KMP-Participant
March 22, 2024	Kosovo	Online	██████████ Koha Media Group	KMP-Participant
March 22, 2024	BiH	In person	██████████ Oslobodjenje	KMP-Participant
March 25, 2024	BiH	In person	██████████ Oslobodjenje	KMP-Participant
March 25, 2024	BiH	Online	██████████ Internews	Implementing Partner
March 25, 2024	Kosovo	Online	██████████ Radio Kontakt Plus	KMP-Participant
March 25, 2024	North Macedonia	Online	██████████ RESIS	Other Donor Partner and Agency Rep
March 25, 2024	Montenegro	Online	██████████ MINA	KMP-Participant
March 26, 2024	Serbia	In person	████████████████████ KRIK	KMP-Participant
March 26, 2024	Kosovo	Online	██████████ Kosovo Advocacy Group	Non-KMP - Participant
March 26, 2024	BiH	Online	██████████ Internews	Implementing Partner
March 27, 2024	BiH	Online	██████████ Internews	Implementing Partner

March 27, 2024	North Macedonia	Online	██████████ Internews	Implementing Partner
March 27, 2024	BiH	Online	██████████ Internews	Implementing Partner
March 28, 2024	Serbia	Online	██████████ Thomson Foundation	Other Donor Partner and Agency Rep
March 28, 2024	Serbia	In person	██████████ Radio Televizija Novi Pazar	Non-KMP - Participant
April 5, 2024	USA	Online	██████████ Internews HQ	Implementing Partner
SUBSTANTIATION				
April 1, 2024	Serbia	In person	██████████ ova ekonomija	KMP-Participant
April 2, 2024	North Macedonia	Online	██████████ Sloboden Pecat	KMP-Participant
April 2, 2024	Kosovo	Online	██████████ Koha Media Group	KMP-Participant
April 2, 2024	North Macedonia	Online	██████████ KOHA	KMP-Participant
April 2, 2024	BiH	Online	██████████	KMP-Participant
April 4, 2024	Kosovo	Online	██████████ Radio Kontakt Plus	KMP-Participant
April 8, 2024	Kosovo	Online	██████████	Non-KMP - Participant
April 9, 2024	BiH	Online	██████████	KMP-Participant
April 11, 2024	BiH	Online	██████████	Non-KMP - Participant
April 11, 2024	Montenegro	Online	██████████ Vijesti	KMP-Participant
April 12, 2024	Montenegro	Online	██████████ MINA	KMP-Participant
April 12, 2024	Serbia	In person	██████████ CINS	KMP-Participant
April 17, 2024	North Macedonia	Online	██████████ PINA	Non-KMP - Participant

ANNEX I: SURVEY RESULTS

SUBSTANTIATION SURVEY RESULTS

SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

Table I.1 Description of Substantiation Survey Sample

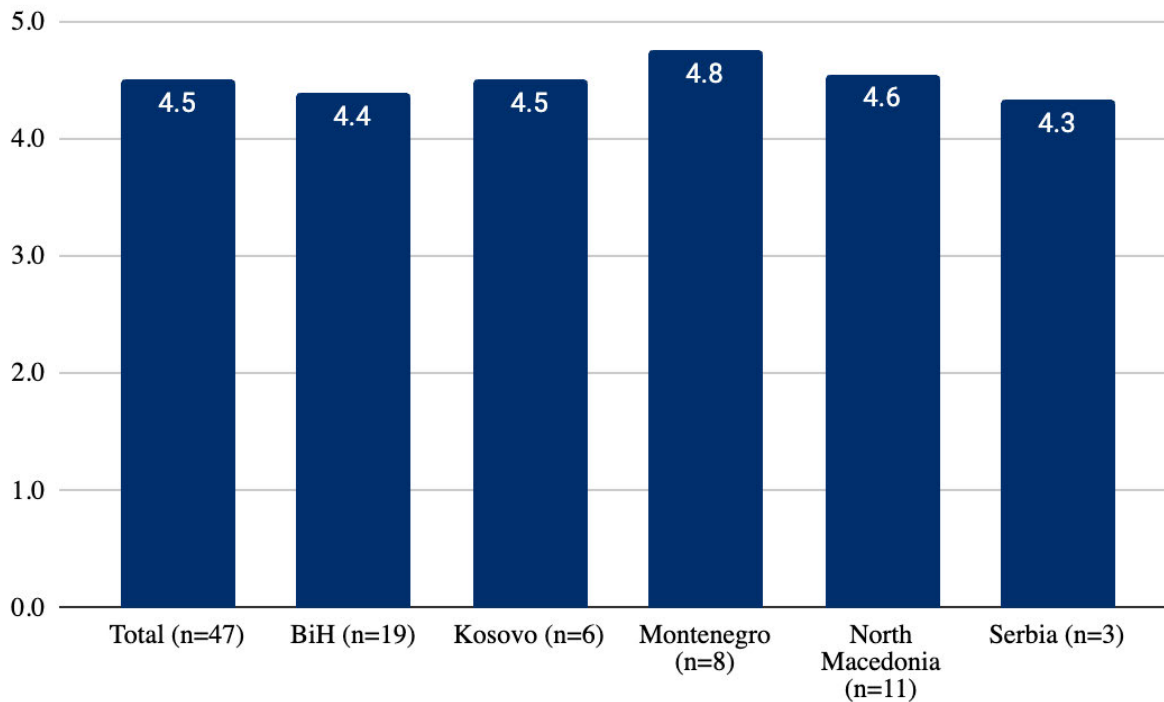
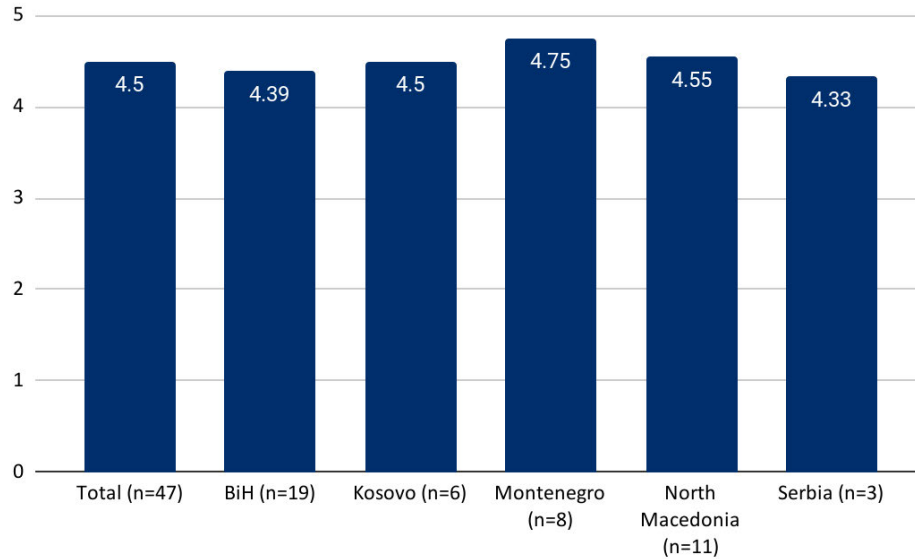
*Note: Five respondents did not complete the survey and were thus removed from the sample.

	N	%
Country		
BiH	18	37.5
Kosovo	7	14.6
Montenegro	8	16.7
North Macedonia	12	25.0
Serbia	3	6.3
Gender		
Female	20	41.7
Male	28	58.3
Role		
CEO, COO, other C-Suite position	14	29.2
Editor-in-Chief or other Head Position	19	39.6
Journalist of Newsroom staff	8	16.7

Ten respondents indicated only receiving grant funding from BMAP-FORWARD; 36 indicated having received grant funding, technical assistance, coaching, and or other support, and two respondents indicated Other (one said they haven't received any help or support from BMAP-FORWARD and one noted "BMAP-advisors — development, strategic, technical").

OVERALL PERCEPTIONS OF BMAP-FORWARD

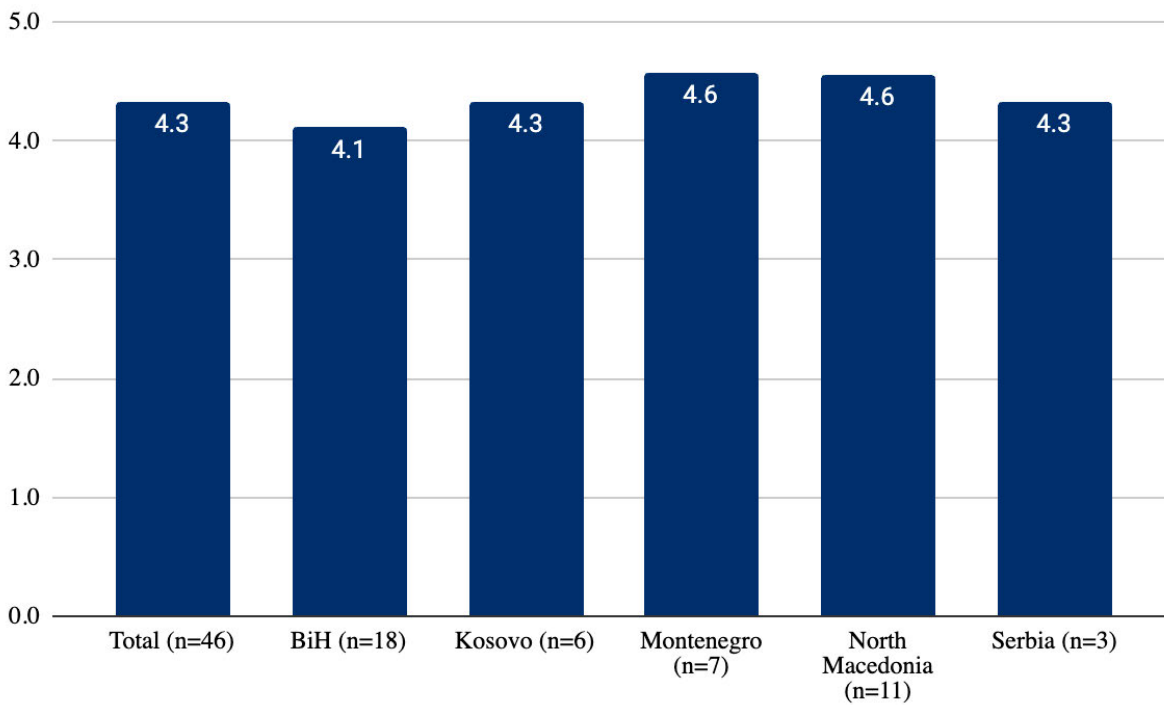
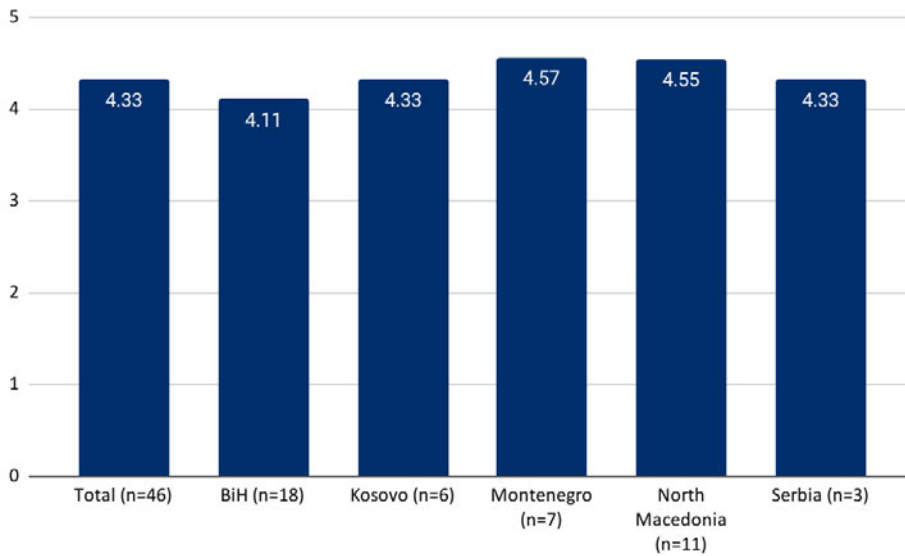
Question 1.2: The BMAP-FORWARD program provided me or my company with the right type of training and expert consultations to meet our specific needs.



Note: One respondent indicated N/A.

Scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree

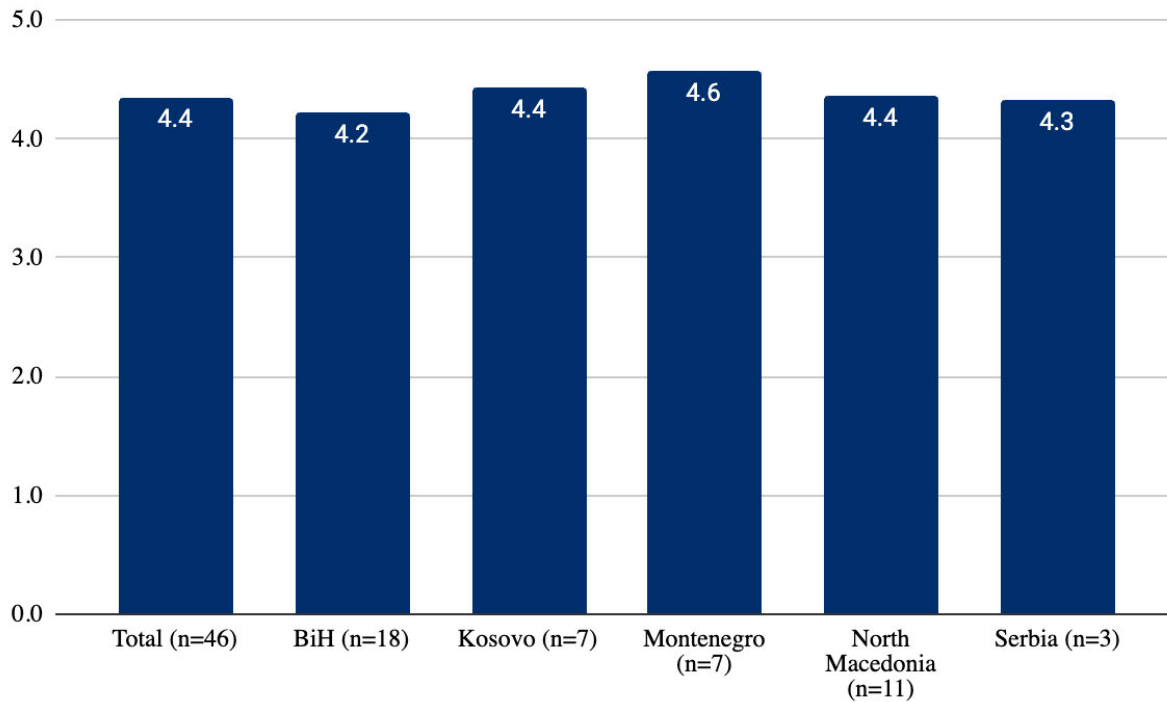
Question I.3: The BMAP-FORWARD staff is quick and effective in responding to my / our company's needs and requests.



Note: One respondent indicated N/A.

Scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree

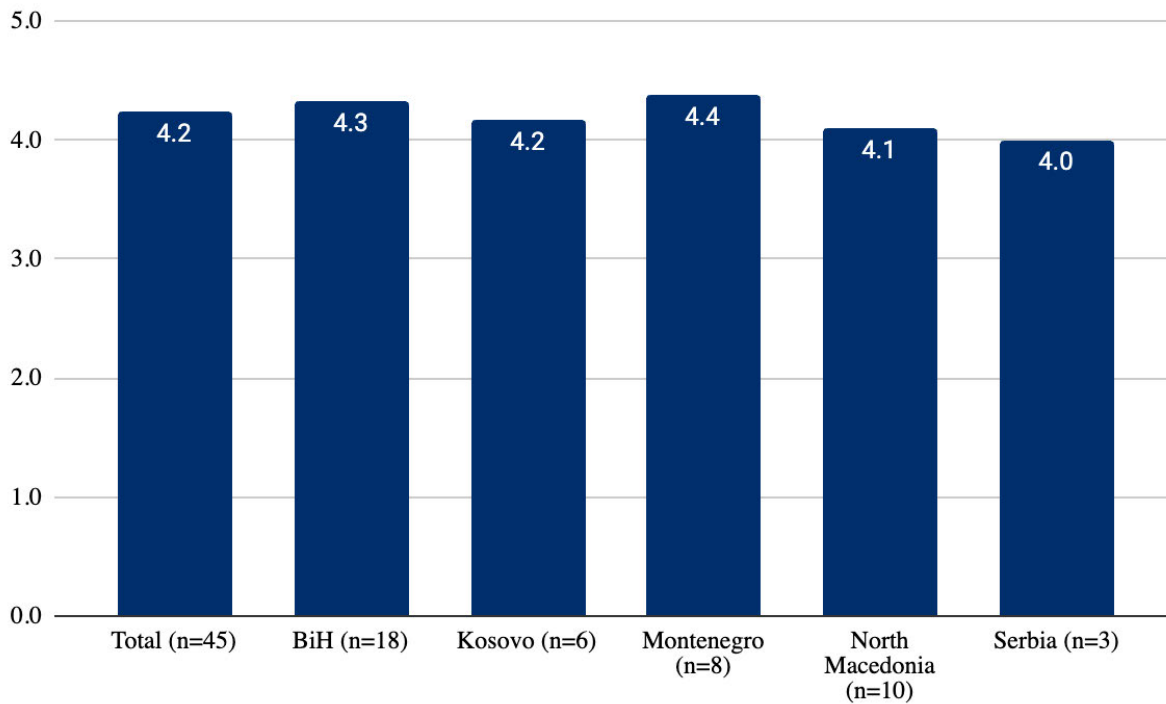
Question I.4: The BMAP-FORWARD staff presents new ideas that are useful for me / my company to improve our capacity in the media sector.



Scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree

EVALUATION QUESTION I

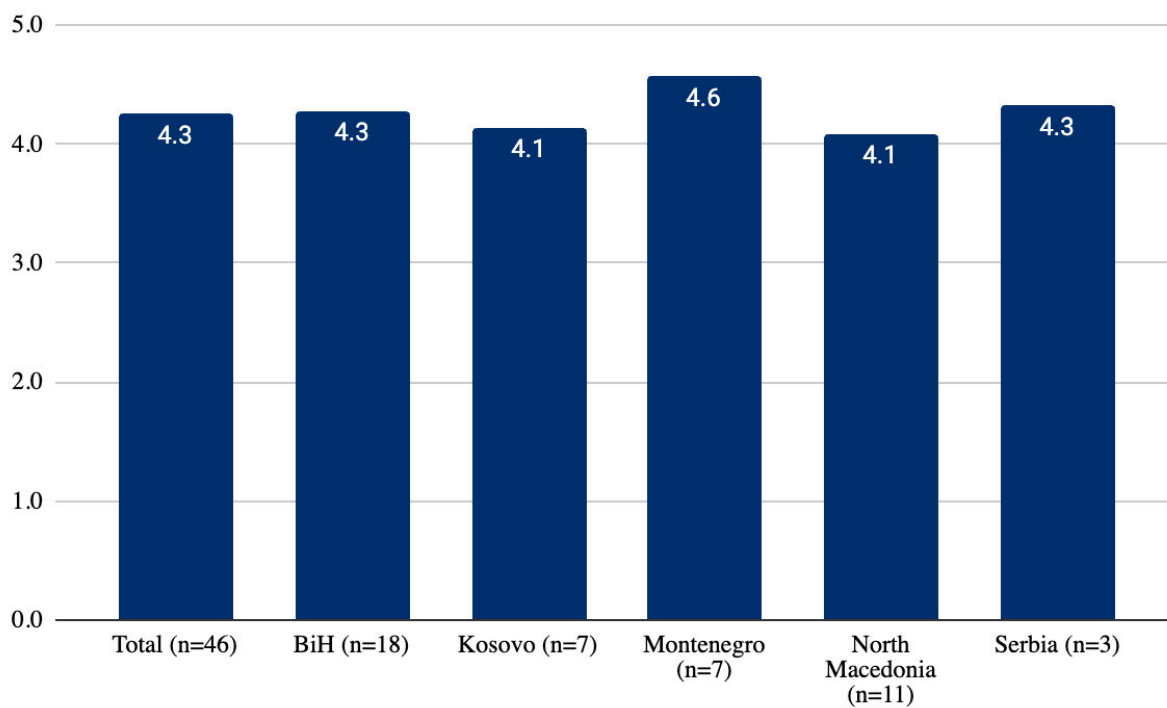
Question I.5: Because of the BMAP-FORWARD training and expert consultations, I / my company now plan better for finding new ways to make money or increase our earnings.



Note: Two respondents indicated N/A.

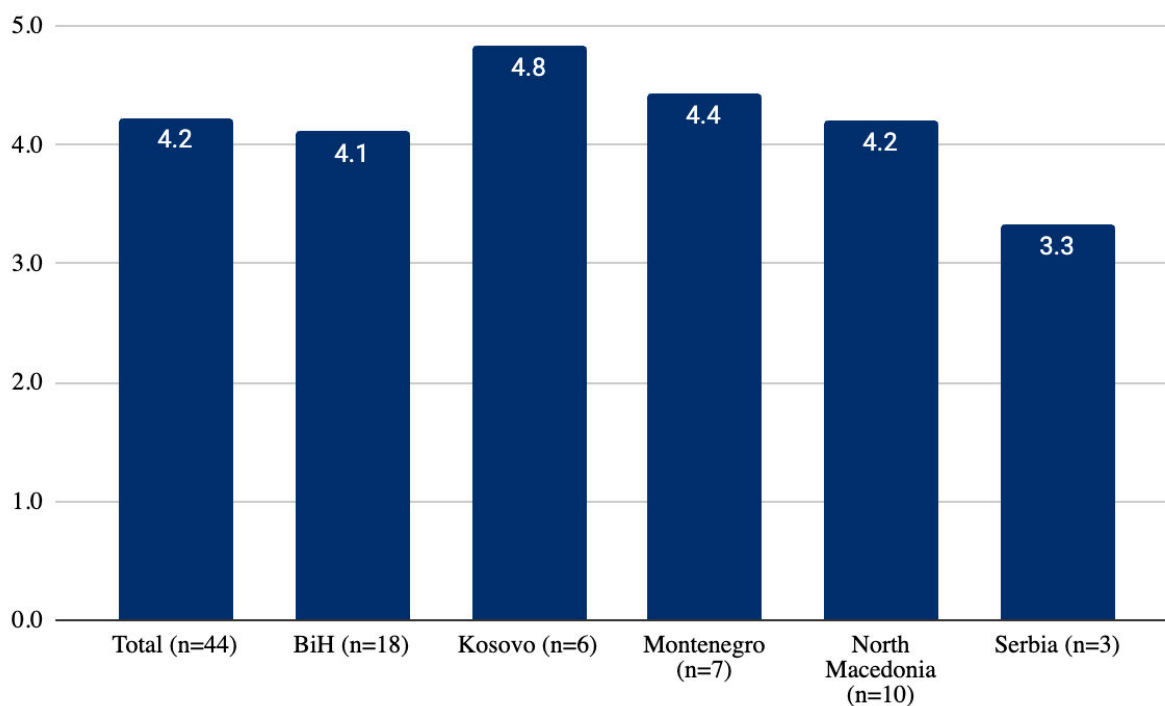
Scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree

Question 1.6: The BMAP-FORWARD training and expert consultations have improved my or my company's capacity to understand our audiences.



Scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree

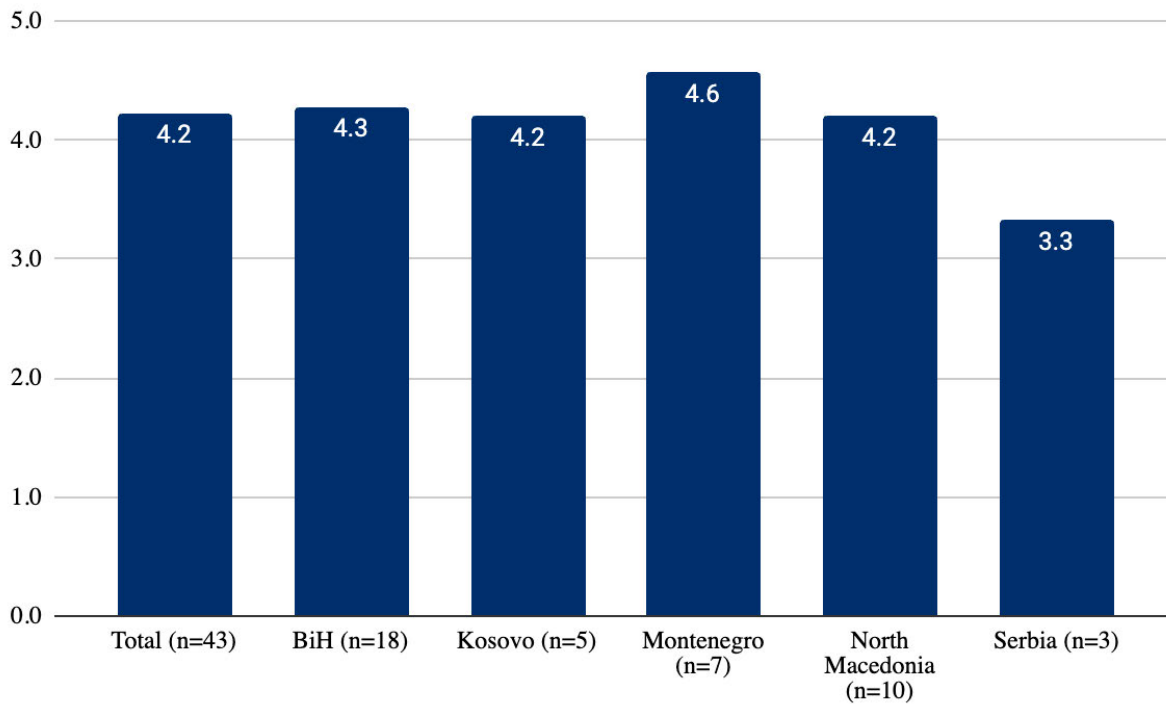
Question 1.7: [GRANT ASSISTANCE] The grant provided the necessary equipment or capacity to pursue new revenue sources.



Scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree

EVALUATION QUESTION 2

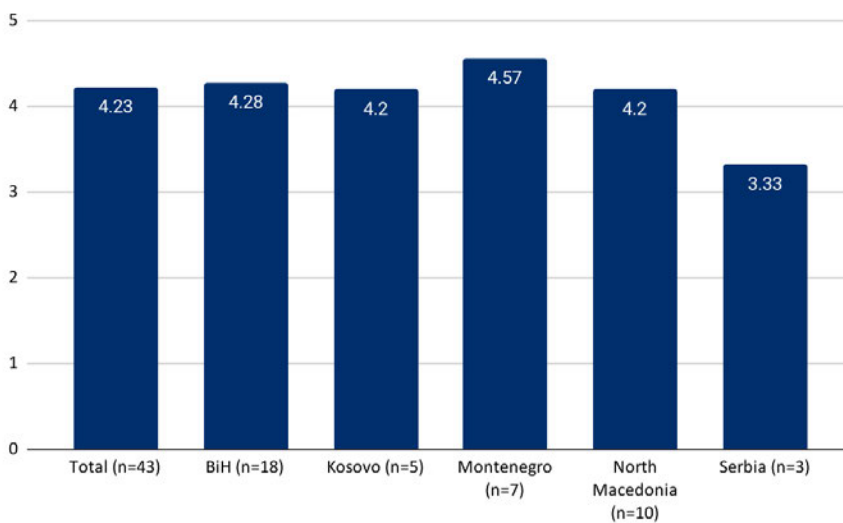
Question 1.8: [GRANT ASSISTANCE] The grant provided resources to improve our capacity to produce content in multiple or newer formats.

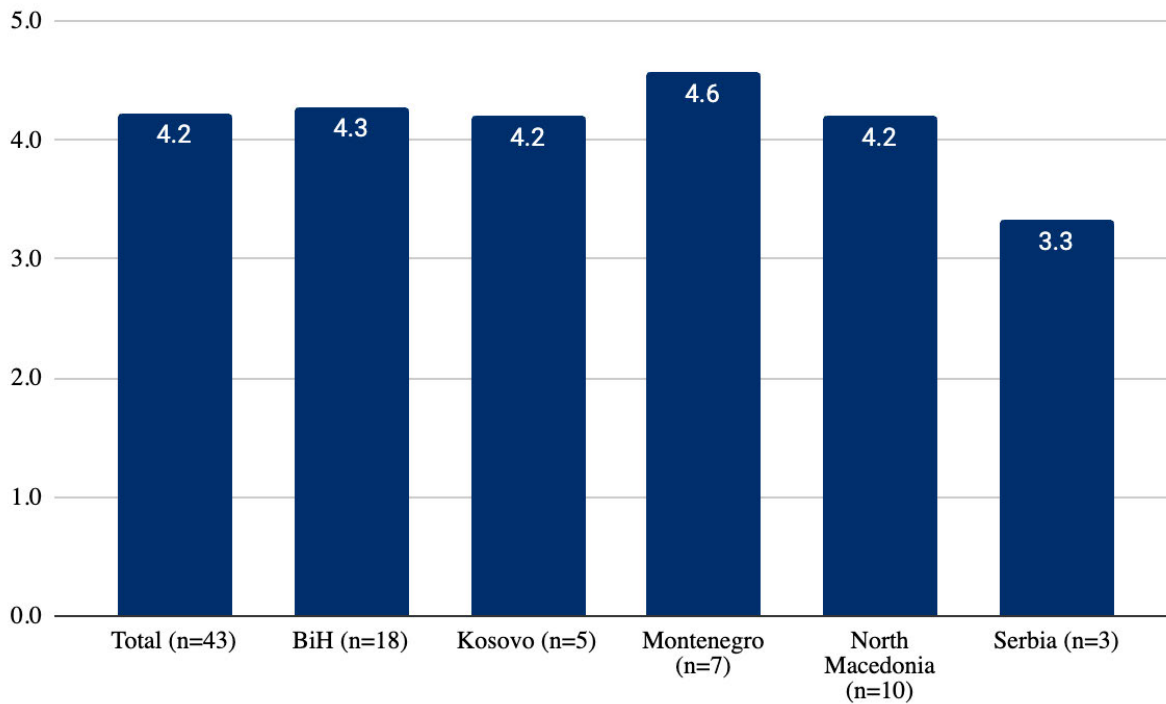


Note: One respondent indicated N/A.

Scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree

Question 1.9: [GRANT ASSISTANCE] The grant provided resources to improve our use of data analytics to understand our audiences.

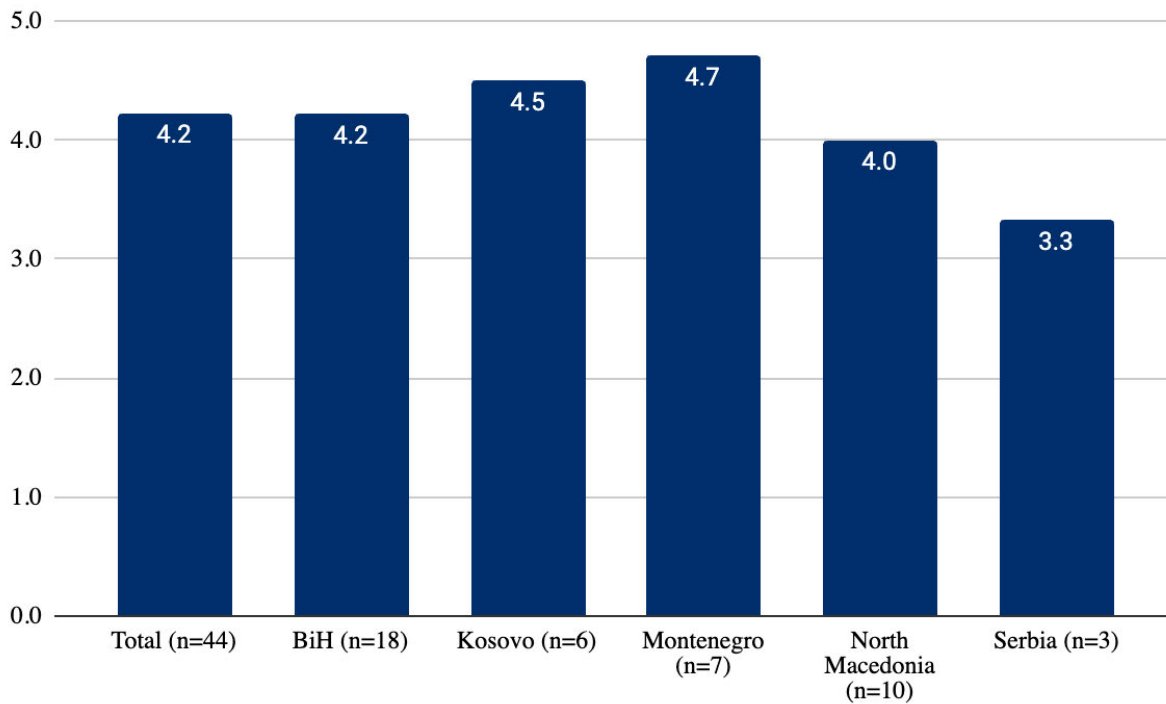




Note: One respondent indicated N/A.

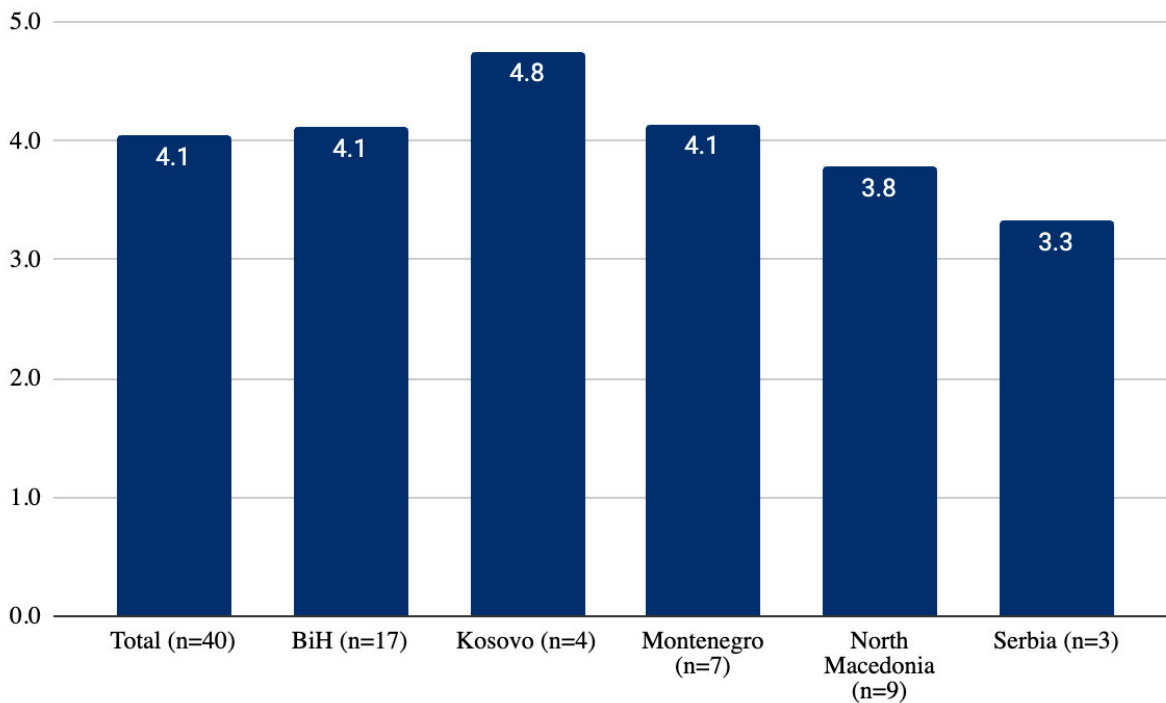
Scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree

Question 1.10: [GRANT ASSISTANCE] The grant provided resources to develop new technologies that helped us reach wider audiences.



Scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree

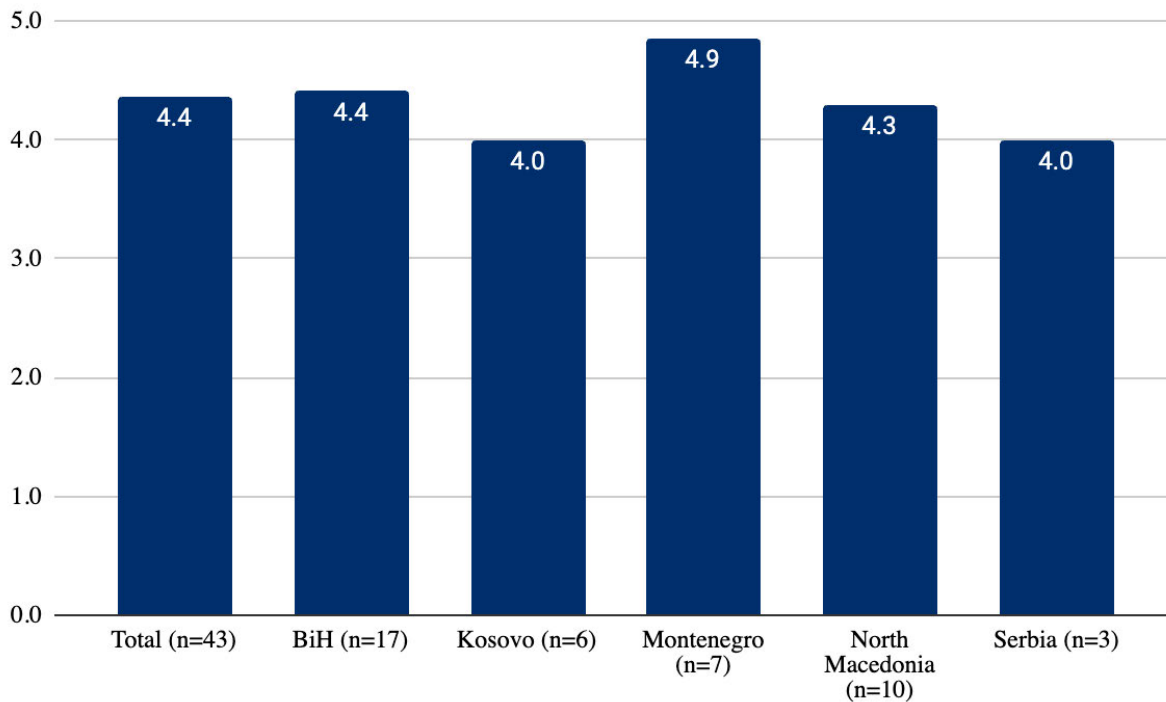
Question 1.II: [GRANT ASSISTANCE] The grant provided an opportunity to collaborate with other media partners to produce joint content.



Note: Four respondents indicated N/A.

Scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree

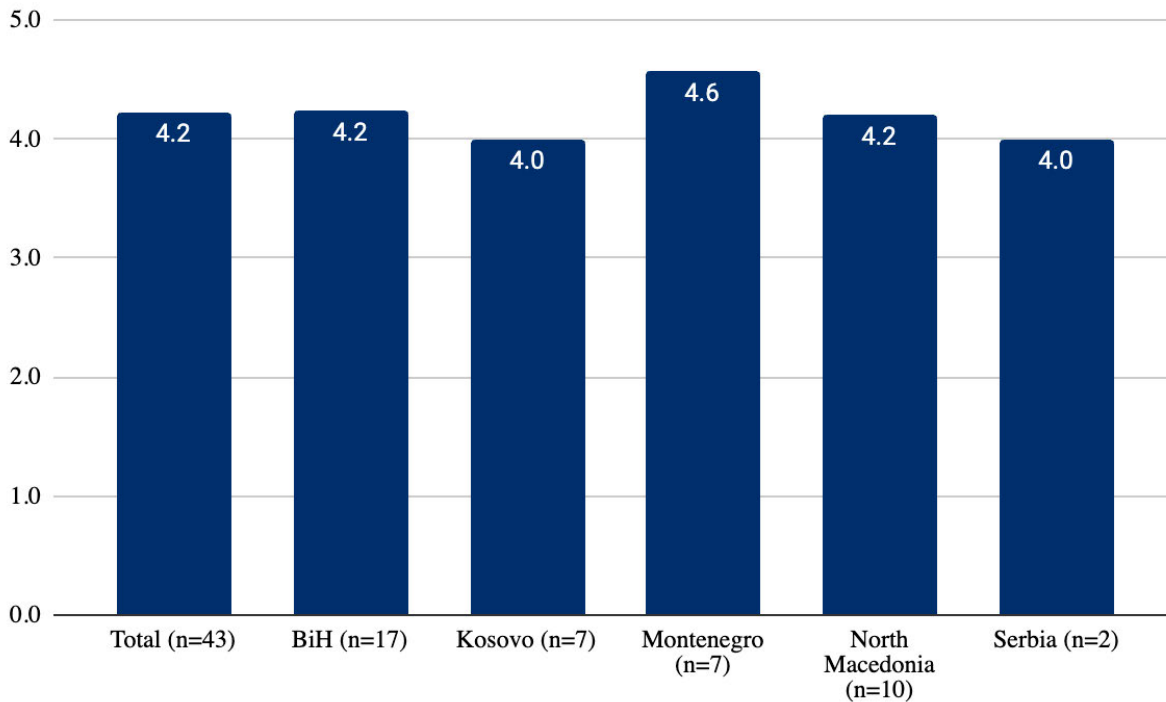
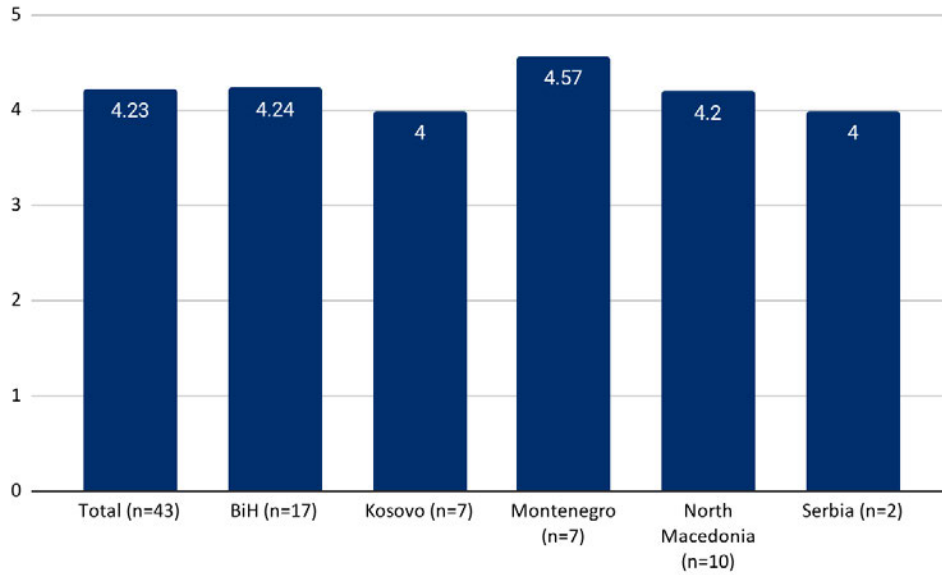
Question 1.12: BMAP-FORWARD training and expert consultations have helped me / my company to produce content in newer or more improved digital forms.



Note: Two respondents indicated N/A.

Scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree

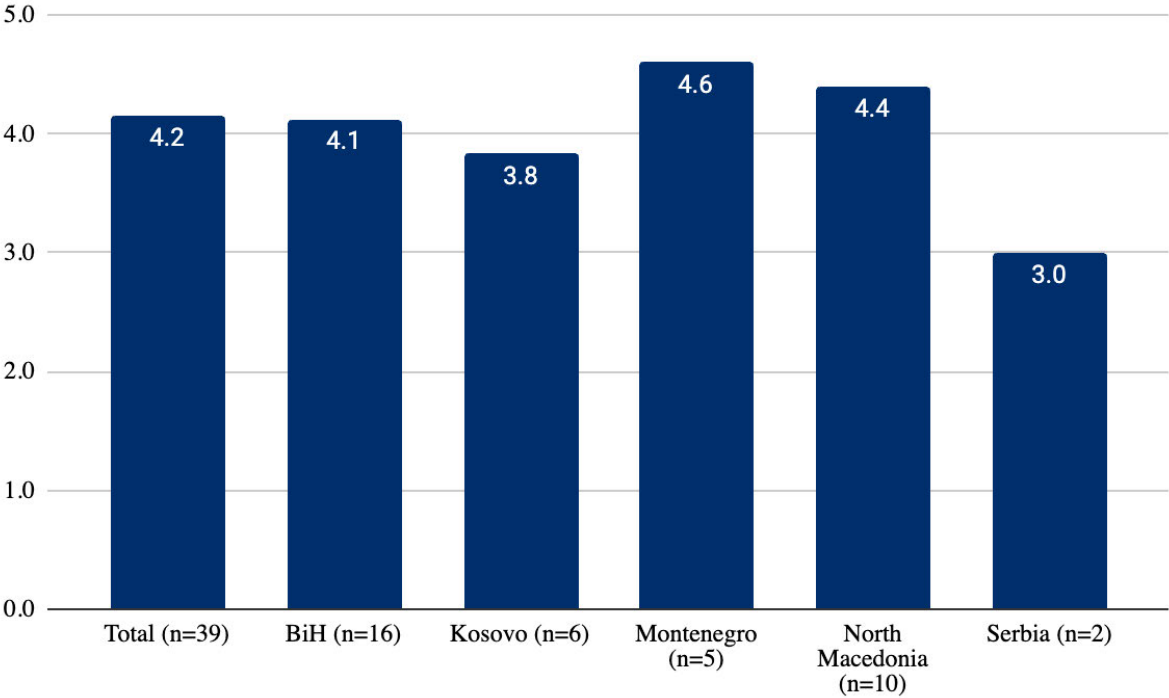
Question I.13: BMAP-FORWARD training and expert consultations have improved my / my company's ability to use Social Media platforms to connect with audiences and/or disseminate content.



Note: Two respondents indicated N/A.

Scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree

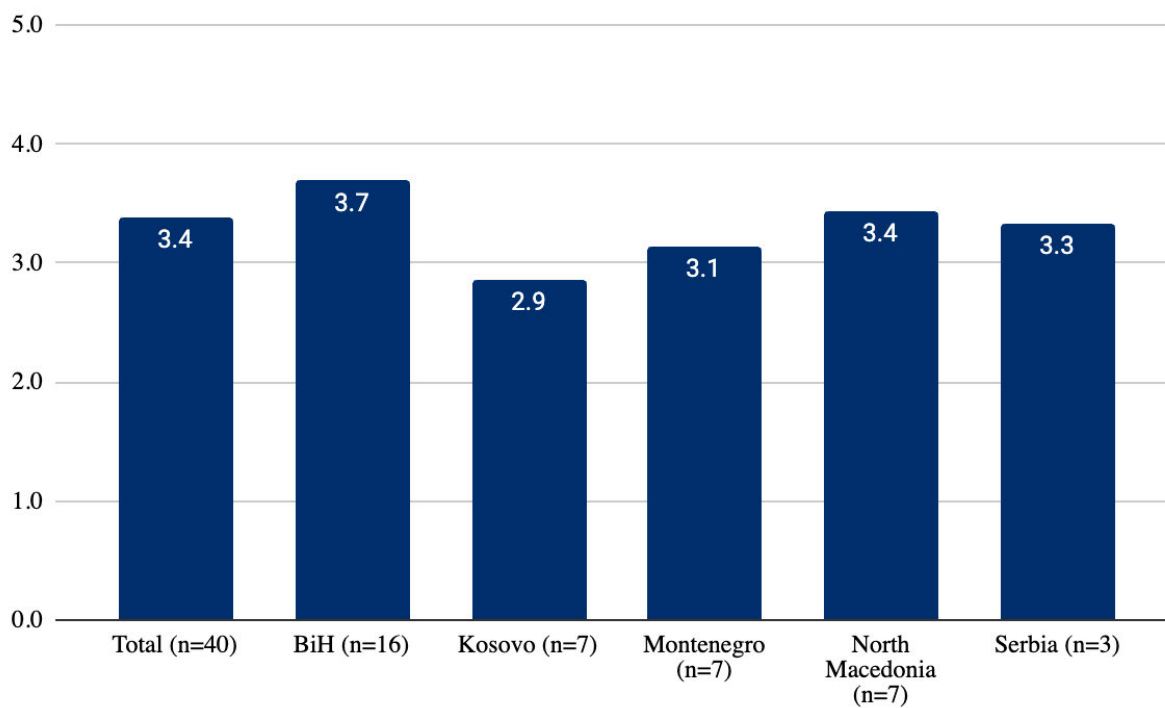
Question 1.14: BMAP-FORWARD strengthened my / my company's ability to use analytics to improve editorial decisions with SmartOcto.



Note: Six respondents indicated N/A.

Scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree

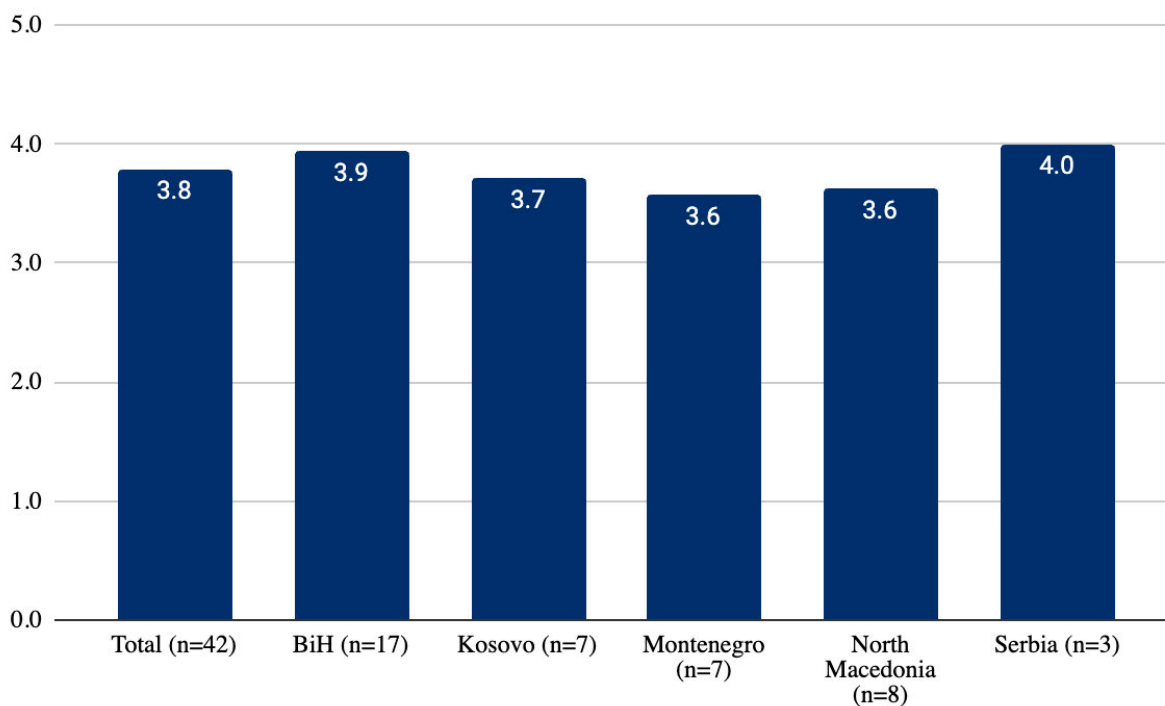
Question 1.15: [BALKANSMEDIA.ORG] I use the Balkansmedia.org platform in my work



Note: Four respondents indicated N/A.

Scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree

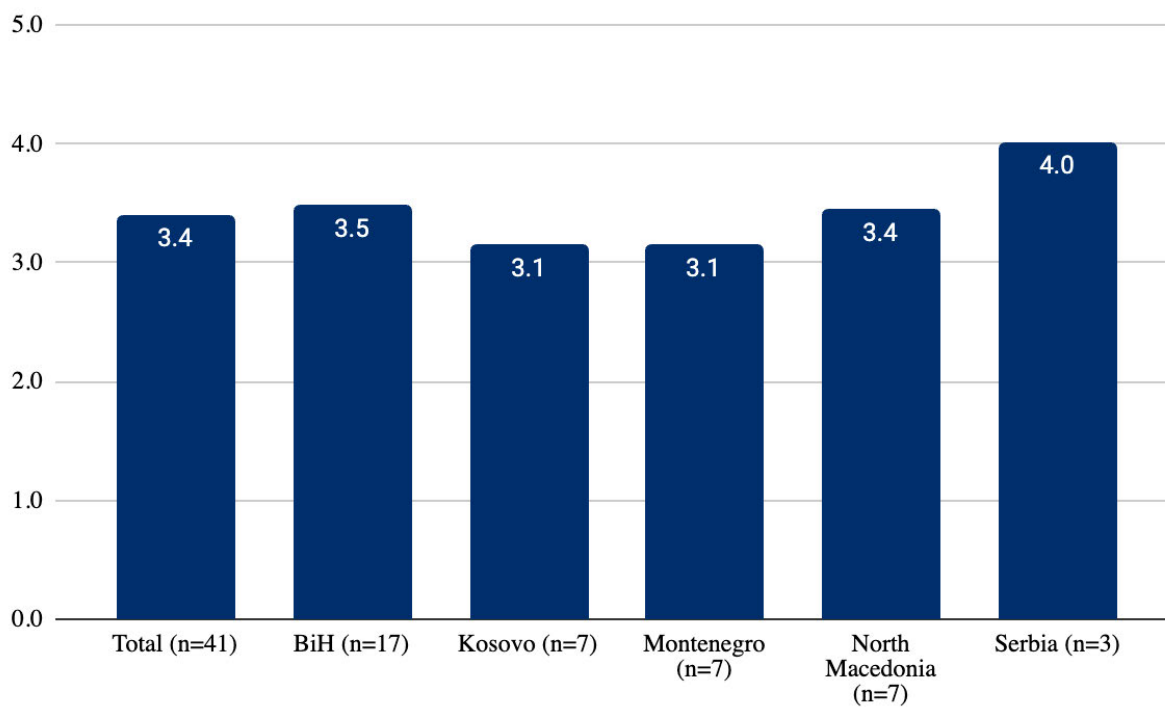
Question 1.16: [BALKANSMEDIA.ORG] The Balkansmedia.org platform is useful.



Note: Three respondents indicated N/A.

Scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree

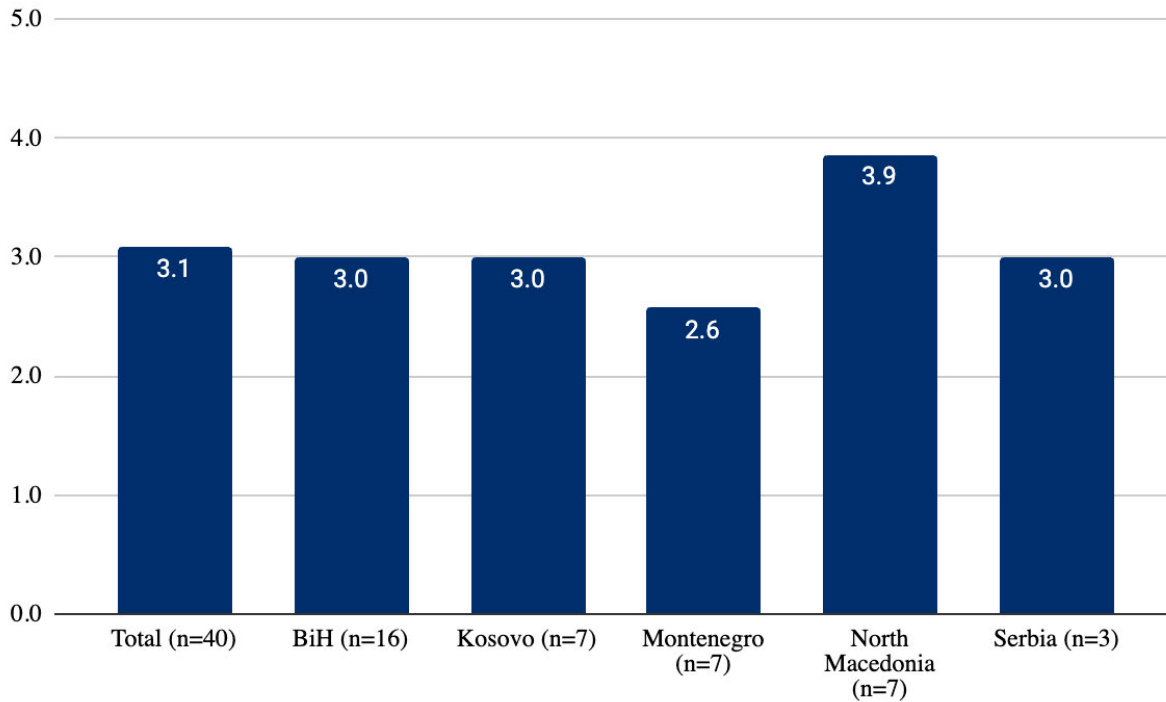
Question 1.17: [BALKANSMEDIA.ORG] I use the Balkansmedia.org platform to generate ideas for new content.



Note: Four respondents indicated N/A.

Scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree

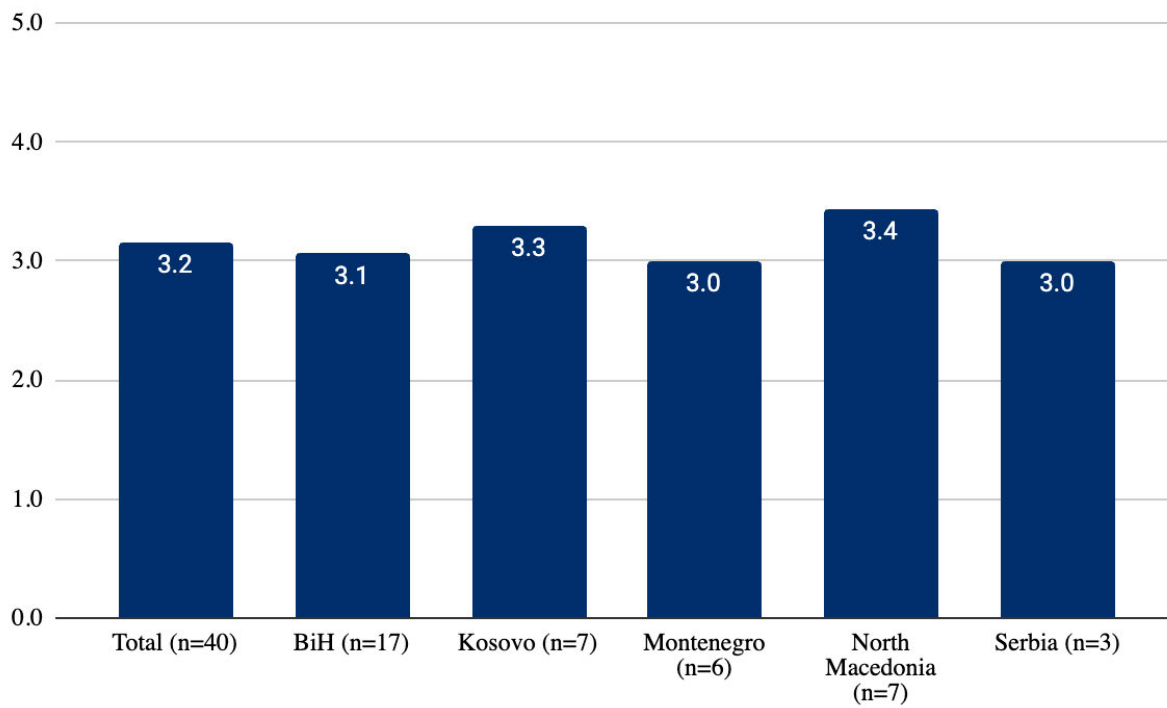
Question 1.18: [BALKANSMEDIA.ORG] I only read the Balkansmedia.org newsletter.



Note: Five respondents indicated N/A.

Scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree

Question 1.19: [BALKANSMEDIA.ORG] I wish the Balkansmedia.org platform produced more relevant content

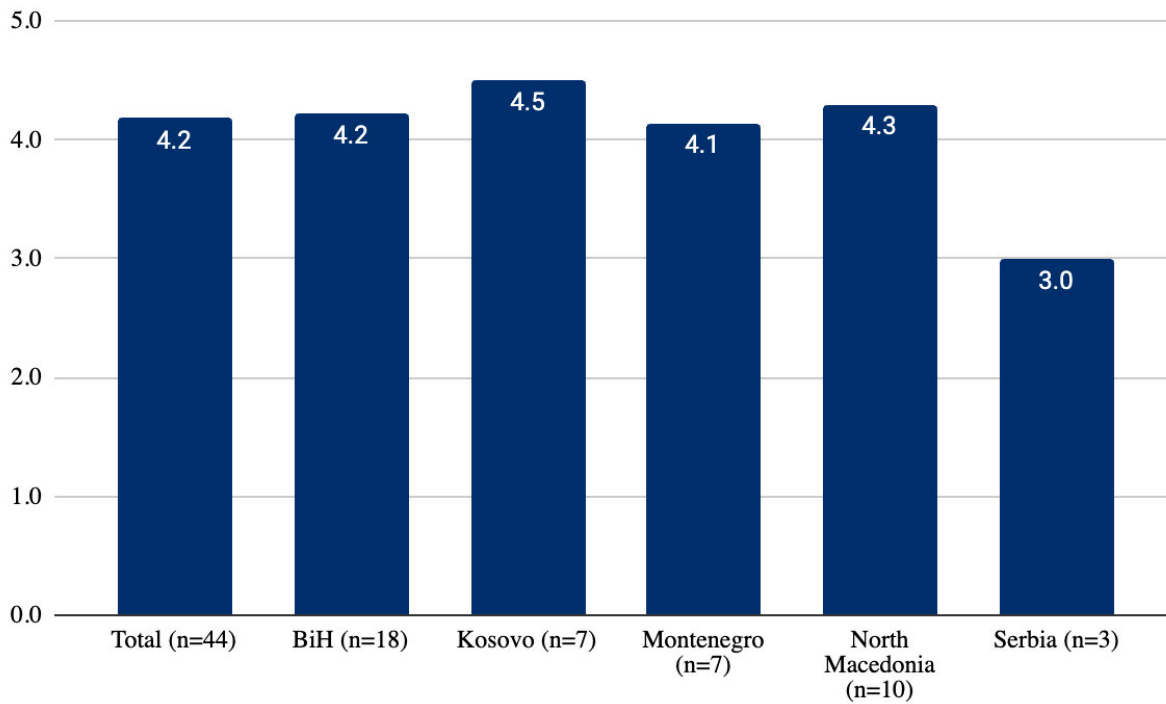
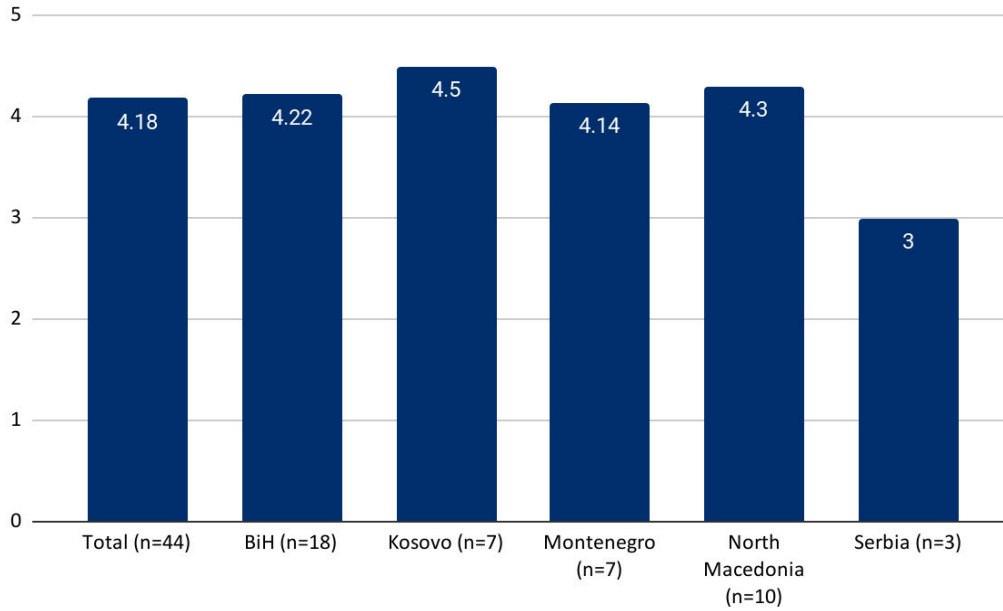


Note: Five respondents indicated N/A.

Scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree

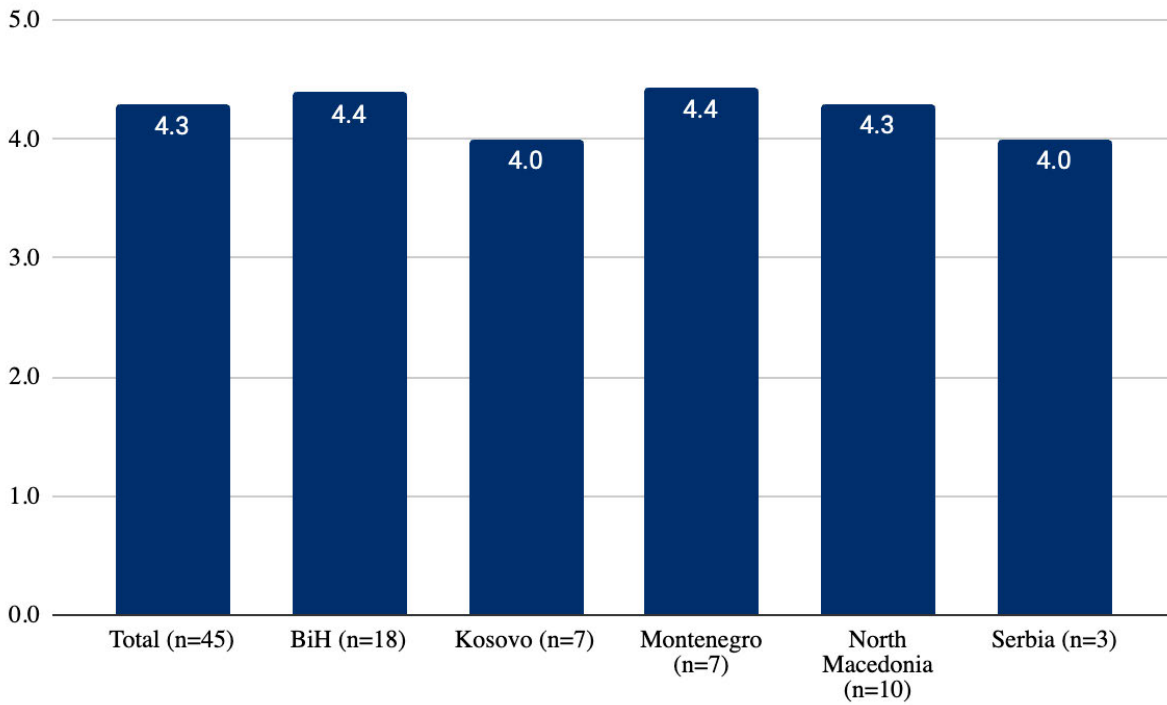
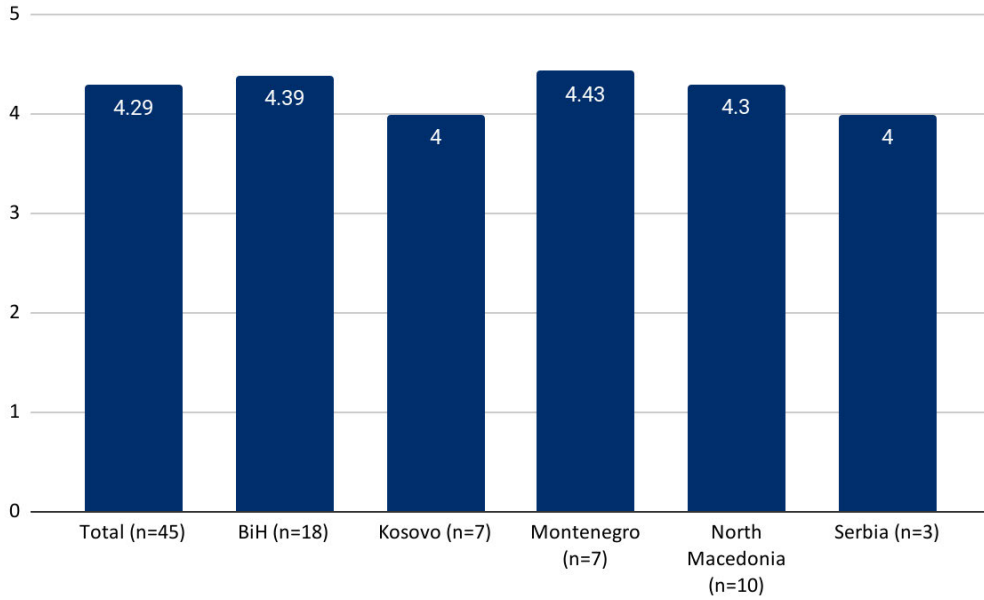
EVALUATION QUESTION 3

Question 1.20: [GRANT ASSISTANCE] The grant enabled us to strengthen our digital security protocols and/or practices.



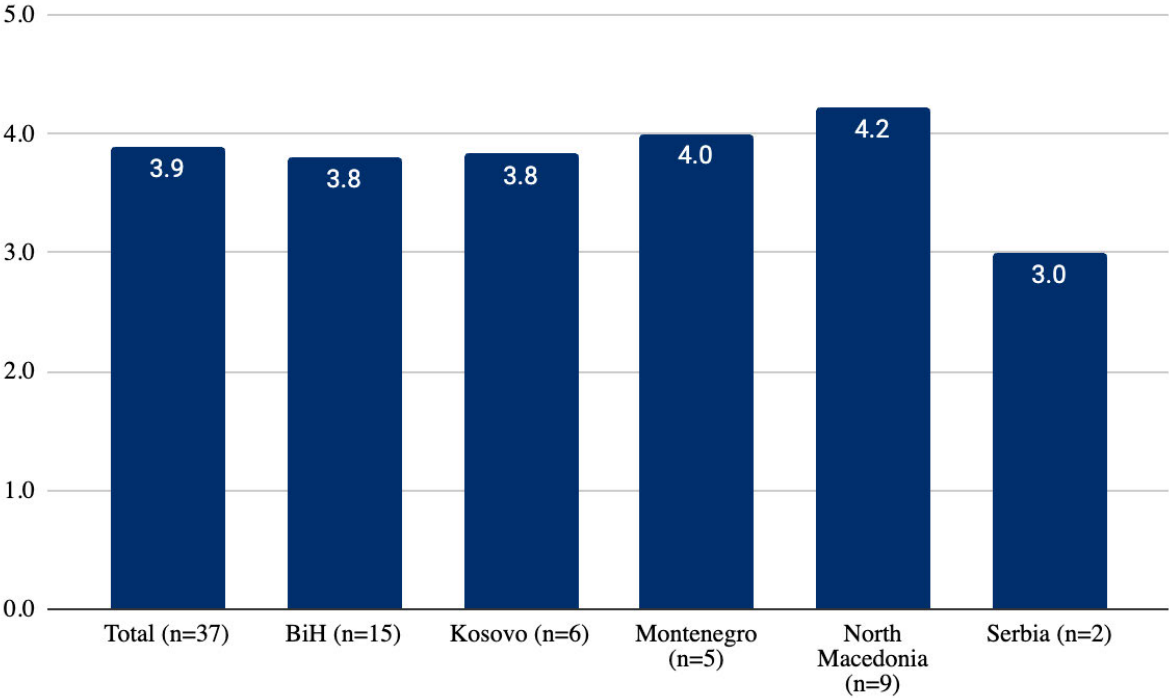
Scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree

Question 1.21: Because of technical and/or grant support received from BMAP-FORWARD, I / my company have improved our digital security practices and protocols.



Scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree

Question I.22: The SAFETAG security audit and subsequent assistance was effective in strengthening our company’s digital security needs.

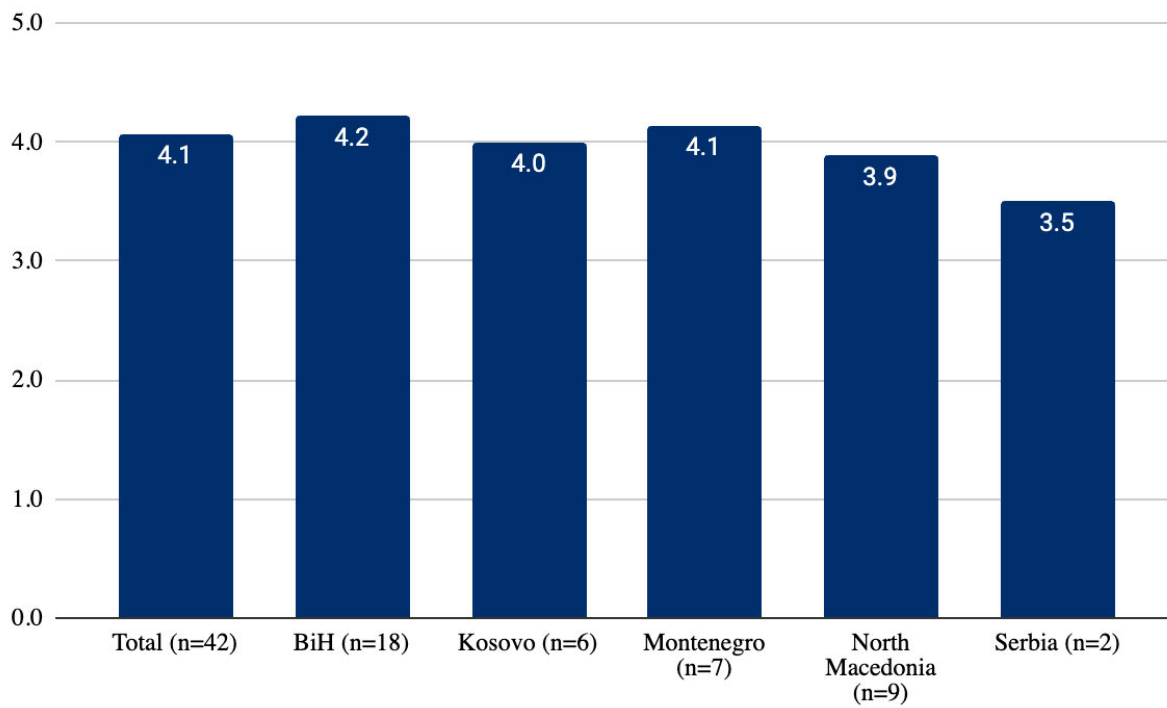


Note: Eight respondents indicated N/A.

Scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree

EVALUATION QUESTION 4

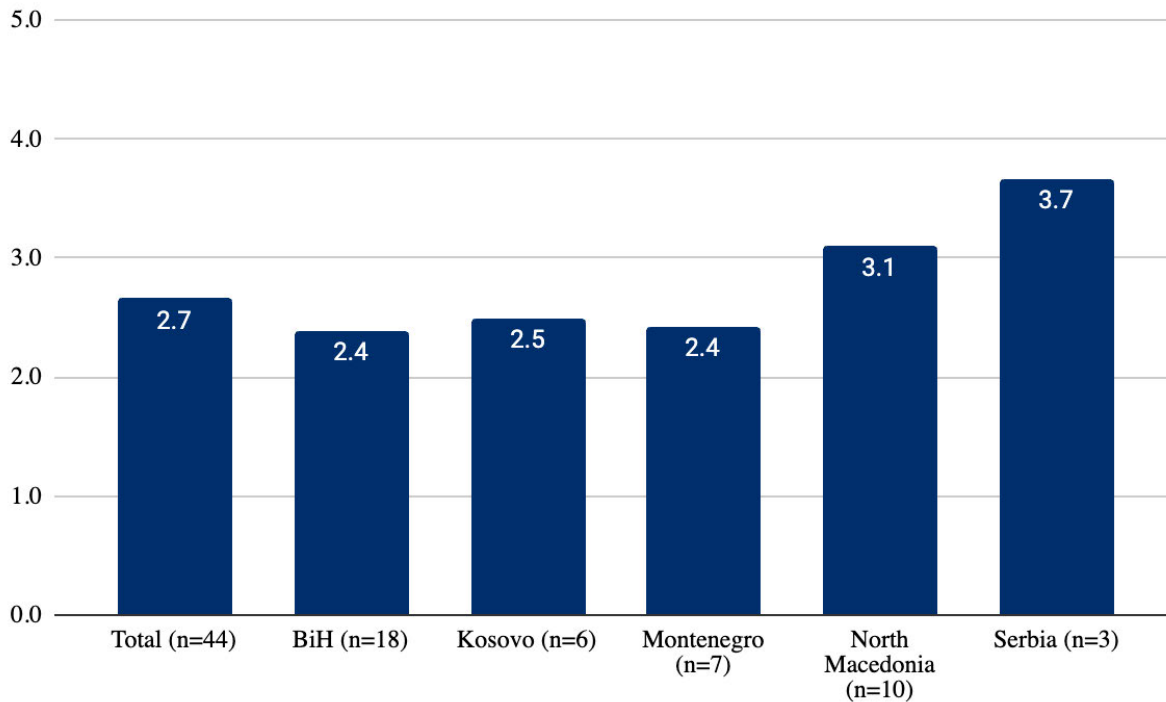
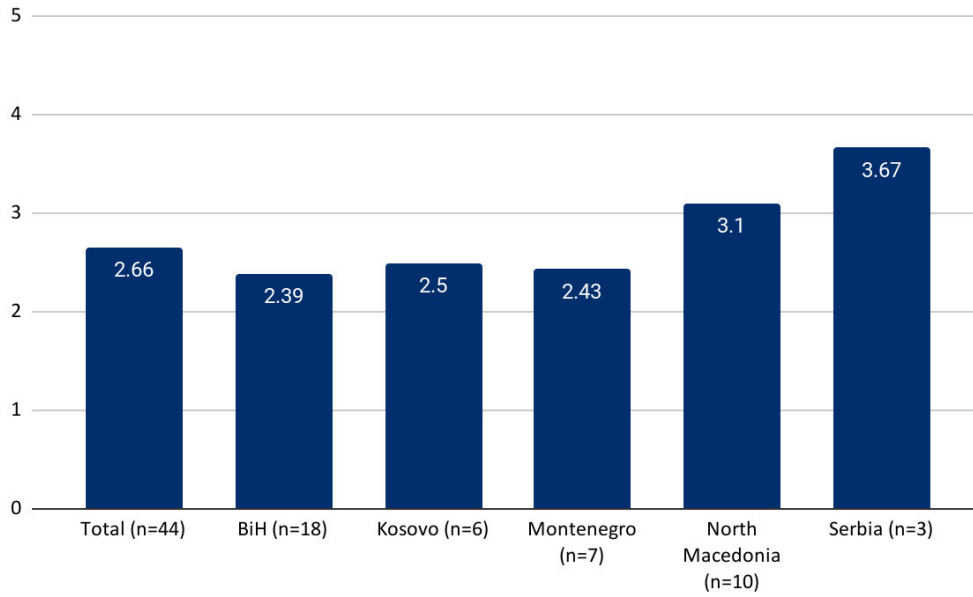
Question I.23: BMAP-FORWARD has encouraged me / my company to pursue partnerships with entrepreneurs, and commercial, and technology companies.



Note: Three respondents indicated N/A.

Scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree

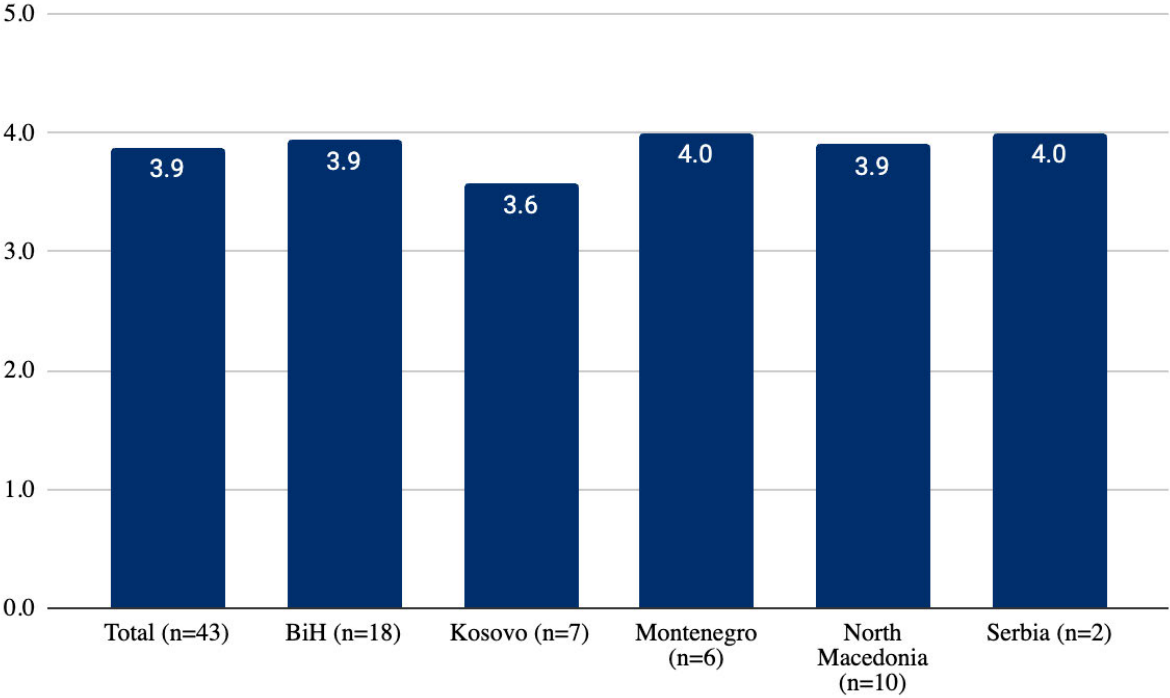
Question 1.24: I / my company am (is) not interested in pursuing partnerships with the private sector for various reasons.



Note: One respondent indicated N/A.

Scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree

Question 1.25: Through the Annual Media Forum or the Media Innovation Labs, BMAP-FORWARD has enabled me / my company to develop partnerships with other media outlets from across the region.

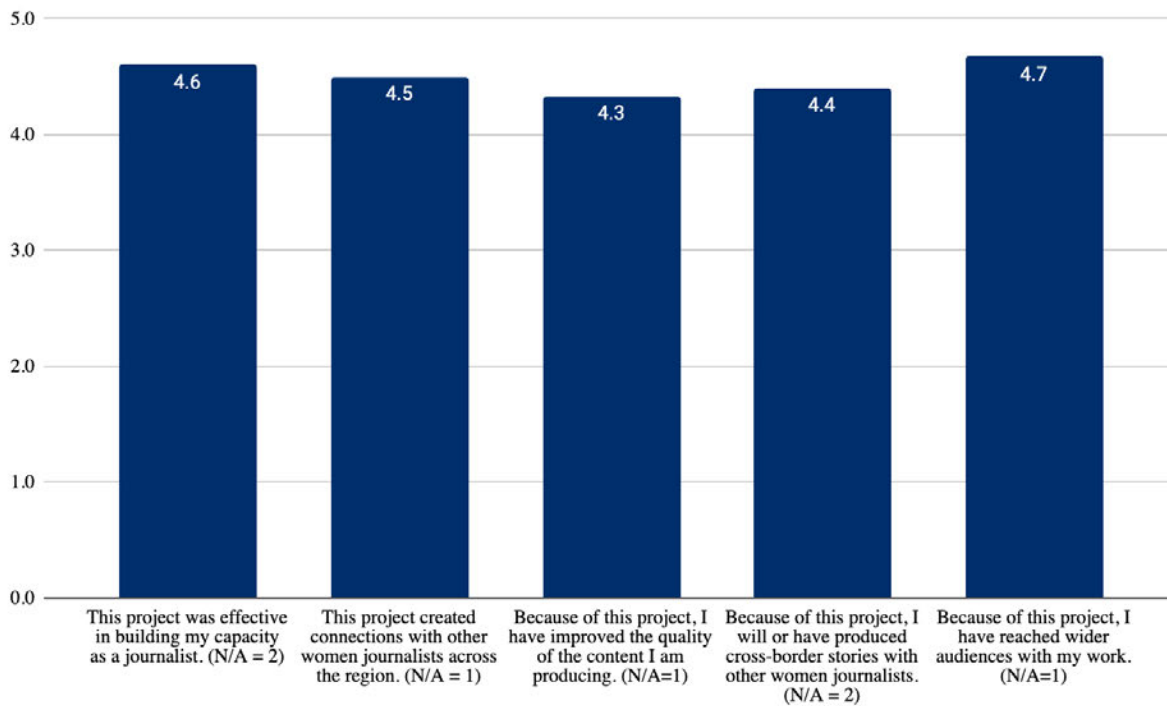


Note: Two respondents indicated N/A.

Scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly disagree

MORE THAN A QUOTA INITIATIVE

Question 1.26: Feedback from participants in the More than a Quota Initiative (n = 7)



Note: Seven survey respondents indicated they had participated in the More than a Quota Initiative.

Scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree

Table: Open Ended Feedback from Survey Respondents

In which country do you work?	Please share any additional feedback to share regarding your experience with BMAP-FORWARD.
North Macedonia	Проектот многу ми помогна да сфатам дека родово сензитивното известување може да опфати и теми за кои досега не сум размислувала. Translation: The project helped me understand that gender sensitive reporting can cover themes/topics that I hadn't thought of before
North Macedonia	Very good program and on the spot reaction if any problems with execution of grant.
North Macedonia	Грантот е дизајниран токму како што треба за новинарски содржини. Вистински грант за новинарство, треба да продолжи во таа насока, единствено ми пречи што се бараат time-sheet-ови. Новинарството нема стриктно работно време, не познава ноќе, дење, празник, недела и слично. Translation: The grant is perfectly designed for news content. A true grant for journalism has to continue on that end, however, the one thing that bothers me is the time-sheets. Journalism does not have a strict work hour, it does not recognize/know night, day, holidays, weekend and so on.
Serbia	Kroz saradnju uspehi smo da implementiramo neke od planova Translation: Through cooperation we managed to implement some of the plans.
Kosovo	Nemam ih Translation: No feedback
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Veoma koristan program, koji nam je pružio ogromnu podršku i otvorio brojne mogućnosti. Translation: Very useful program, which has provided us with a lot of support and opened many opportunities.
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Vrlo korisno, značajna podrška i mogućnost razvoja. Translation: Very useful, significant support and provides the possibility for development
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Kroz BMAP Forward gramzive smo razvili dva nova formata koja nismo imali priliku razviti samostalno ili sa nekim drugim donatorima. Formati su se pokazali veoma uspešnim, te nam je uloga ključnog partnera u ovom programu mnogo pomogla i ohrabрила nas da stvaramo što više autorskog sadržaja. Također smo zahvalni na BMAP Forward programu jer smo razvili dva nova medijska formata koja još uvijek nisu u potpunosti zaživjeli u medijskom prostoru BiH. Radi se o formatima Storytelling i Data vizualizacija. Translation: Through the BMAP Forward campaign, we developed two new formats that we did not have the opportunity to develop independently or with other donors. The formats proved to be very successful, and the role of key media partner in this program helped us a lot and encouraged us to create as much original content as possible. We are also grateful to the BMAP Forward program because we have developed two new media formats that have not yet fully taken root in the BiH media space. These are Storytelling and Data visualization formats.
Montenegro	Pozitivno iskustvo, s tim što je naporno uskladiti obuke sa dnevnim radnim obavezama. Translation: A positive experience, with the fact that it is hard to balance training with daily work duties
Montenegro	I will look back at the trainings. Most of them were useful, detailed and interesting. The only problem is that during training, we had to do our work at the same time, so we weren't fully focused.
Kosovo	Zbog podrške kroz BMAP-FORWARD, Kontakt Plus je 2023. godinu završio sa više prihoda u odnosu na prethodne godine. Translation: Due to the support through BMAP-FORWARD, Kontakt Plus ended the year 2023 with more income compared to previous years.
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mislím da je ovo izuzetno koristan program, možda jedan od najboljih koji su se pojavili u poslednjih 20-tak godina. Translation: I think this is an extremely

	useful program, perhaps one of the best that has appeared in the last 20 years or so
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Dosadašnje iskustvo sa BMAP-OM je zaista super. Uspjeli smo uraditi mnogo važnih stvari. Translation: So far the experience with BMAP-Forward has been fantastic. We have managed to do many important things.
Kosovo	I wish there was a little bit less bureaucracy in decision making and delivery from BMAP side.
Kosovo	thankful for the great opportunity to work and benefit from BMAP-FORWARD
North Macedonia	Bashkëpunimi, konkretisht grantet e BMAP dhe trajnimet që i kemi kryer na kanë mundësuar të përforcojmë median tonë, si dhe të rritim kapacitetet e prodhimit të produkteve tona dhe me këtë, të jemi faktorë i rëndësishëm në tregun medial në Maqedoninë e Veriut dhe më gjerë. Translation: The cooperation, the BMAP-Forward grants and training which we have done has allowed us to strengthen our media/medium, and to increase the capacity to produce our products/content and with that, to become an important factor in the media market of North Macedonia and beyond.

2. EXPERT SURVEY RESULTS

SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

Two expert surveys were deployed. Survey 1 was sent to USAID and IP staff. Survey 2 was sent to Other Donor and Agency Representatives and Private Sector Actors. For both surveys, respondents were asked to indicate the country or countries in which they worked. Thus, some respondents indicated multiple options and percentages exceeded 100.

Table: Description of Survey Samples by Gender and Country

	TOTAL N	GENDER			COUNTRY*					
		Men	Women	Prefer not to say	BiH	Serbia	Kosovo	North Macedonia	Montenegro	Other
Survey 1 (USAID and IP Staff)	43	19 (44%)	22 (51%)	2 (5%)	19 (44%)	2 (4.7%)	5 (12%)	6 (14%)	5 (12%)	6 (14%)
Survey 2 (Other Donors and Private Sector)*	19	10 (53%)	9 (47%)	0	8 (42%)	8 (42%)	6 (32%)	8 (42%)	5 (26%)	0

In Survey 1, five (11.6 percent) respondents identified as USAID/USG staff, and 38 (88.4 percent) identified as IP staff or consultants. In Survey 2, two (10.5 percent) respondents identified as from international donor agencies, five (26.3 percent) respondents identified as from the private sector, and 11 respondents (57.9 percent) identified as from an international or national non-governmental organization. Three respondents did not respond to all survey questions thus the total responses per survey question may vary.

EVALUATION QUESTION I

Question 2.2 To what extent is the BMAP Forward program effective in strengthening the following capacities for Key Media Partners? (n=33)

Capacity	Average	I don't know (n)
Improved strategic business practices	4.4	3
Ability to understand media markets	4.6	3
Ensure revenue diversification	3.9	6

Scale: 1 = Very ineffective; 2 = Ineffective; 3 = Neither effective nor ineffective; 4 = Effective; 5 = Very Effective

Source: BMAP-FORWARD Performance Evaluation, Survey for USAID and Implementing Partner Staff

Question 2.3 What is the extent to which the BMAP FORWARD interventions have been effective in strengthening Key Media Partners' capacities to understand media markets? (n=33)

	Average	I don't know (n)
Technology investment grants	4.5	2
Targeted technical assistance, including comprehensive engagement, targeted mentoring, and consulting	4.6	1
Capacity building on market analysis and targeting audiences	4.4	2

Scale: 1 = Very ineffective; 2 = Ineffective; 3 = Neither effective nor ineffective; 4 = Effective; 5 = Very Effective

Source: BMAP-FORWARD Performance Evaluation, Survey for USAID and Implementing Partner Staff

Question 2.4. What is the extent to which the BMAP FORWARD interventions have been effective in strengthening Key Media Partners' capacities to ensure revenue diversification? (n=33)

	Average	I don't know (n)
Technology investment grants	4.3	3
Targeted technical assistance, including comprehensive engagement, targeted mentoring, and consulting	4.5	3
Capacity building on market analysis and targeting audiences	4.3	4

Scale: 1 = Very ineffective; 2 = Ineffective; 3 = Neither effective nor ineffective; 4 = Effective; 5 = Very effective

Source: BMAP-FORWARD Performance Evaluation, Survey for USAID and Implementing Partner Staff

EVALUATION QUESTION 2

Question 2.5. To what extent is the BMAP FORWARD program effective in strengthening the following abilities of content producers (i.e., KMP and other non-KMP recipients of BMAP FORWARD assistance)? (n=33)

	Average	I don't know (n)
Produce data-driven content	4.5	3
Engage wider audiences	4.2	3
Expand reach across the region	4.2	5

Scale: 1 = Very ineffective; 2 = Ineffective; 3 = Neither effective nor ineffective; 4 = Effective; 5 = Very effective

Source: BMAP-FORWARD Performance Evaluation, Survey for USAID and Implementing Partner Staff

Question 2.6. What is the extent to which the following BMAP FORWARD interventions are effective in strengthening Key Media Partners' and content producers' abilities to produce data-driven content, engage wider audiences, and expand reach across the Western Balkan region? (n=33)

	Average	I don't know (n)
Creative Content Grant	4.4	3
Targeted technical assistance to support content creation	4.4	3
Collaborative learning resources and tools	4.2	5
Balkansmedia.org and its helpdesk	4.5	8
Collaborative Content Grant	4.5	6
Rolling Innovation Fund Grant	4.5	7

Scale: 1 = Very ineffective; 2 = Ineffective; 3 = Neither effective nor ineffective; 4 = Effective; 5 = Very effective

Source: BMAP-FORWARD Performance Evaluation, Survey for USAID and Implementing Partner Staff

Question 2.7. To what extent has the BMAP-FORWARD targeted technical assistance adequately addressed the different needs of women and other marginalized groups? (n=33)

	Average	I don't know (n)
In the newsroom?	4.3	6
At the managerial level?	4.2	7

Scale: 1 = Very inadequate; 2 = Inadequate; 3 = Neither adequate nor inadequate; 4 = Adequate; 5 = Very adequate

Source: BMAP-FORWARD Performance Evaluation, Survey for USAID and Implementing Partner Staff

EVALUATION QUESTION 3

Question 2.8. To what extent is the BMAP FORWARD program effective in

strengthening each listed practice for Key Media Partners and content producers? (n=33)

	Average	I don't know (n)
Organizational behavior around awareness, knowledge, and continued adoption of digital security practices	4.3	3
Implementation of practices that reduce the risk of a digital security attack and improve Key Media Partners' ability to respond	4.2	5

Scale: 1 = Very ineffective; 2 = Ineffective; 3 = Neither effective nor ineffective; 4 = Effective; 5 = Very effective
 Source: BMAP-FORWARD Performance Evaluation, Survey for USAID and Implementing Partner Staff

Question 2.9. What is the extent to which the following BMAP FORWARD interventions are effective in strengthening Key Media Partners' awareness, knowledge, and continued adoption of digital security practices? (n=33)

	Average	I don't know (n)
Targeted advising for KMPs from digital security experts	4.3	6
SAFETAG audits and assistance	4.3	11
Risk Reduction Grants	4.4	10
Use of the Media Innovation Lab to create innovative digital security solutions	4.4	6

Scale: 1 = Very ineffective; 2 = Ineffective; 3 = Neither effective nor ineffective; 4 = Effective; 5 = Very effective
 Source: BMAP-FORWARD Performance Evaluation, Survey for USAID and Implementing Partner Staff

Question 2.10. To what extent have the resources provided by BMAP FORWARD been effectively utilized by journalists to and adequate to support journalists in responding to threats or incidences of online violence? (n=33)

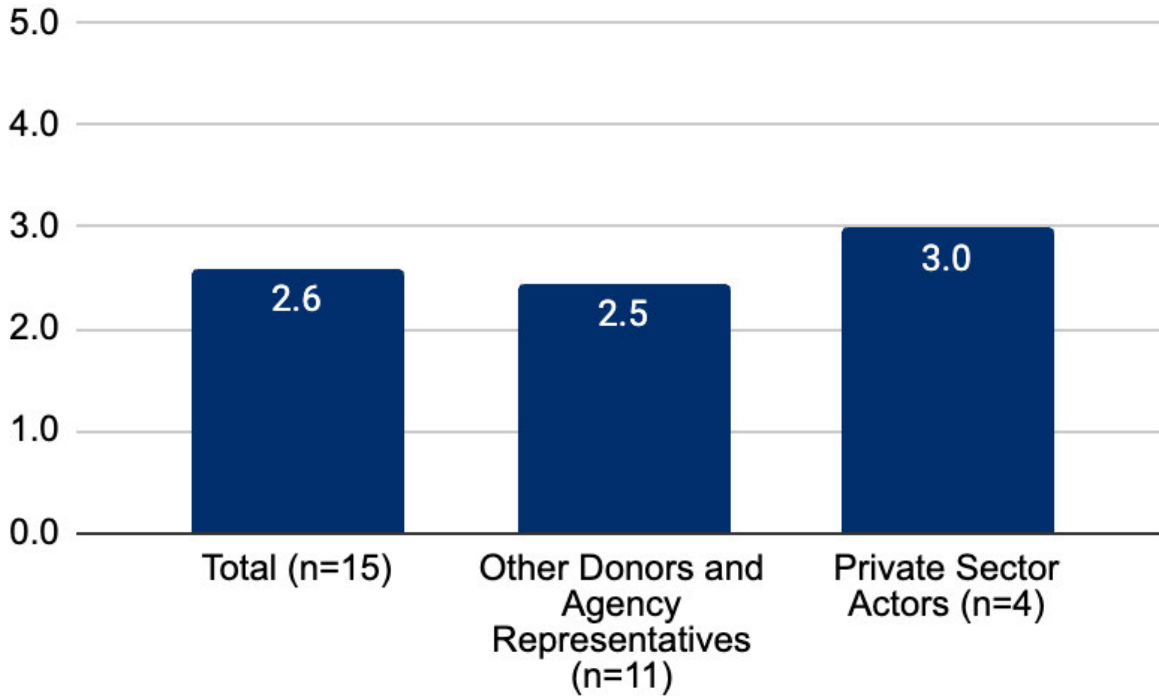
	Average	I don't know (n)
Effectively Utilized by Journalists	4	10
Adequate to Support Journalists	4.1	9

Scale: 1 = Very ineffective/inadequate; 2 = Ineffective/inadequate; 3 = Neither effective/adequate nor ineffective/inadequate; 4 = Effective/Adequate; 5 = Very Effective/Very adequate

Source: BMAP-FORWARD Performance Evaluation, Survey for USAID and Implementing Partner Staff

EVALUATION QUESTION 4

Question 2.11. How do you perceive the current state of partnerships between media and the private sector?



Scale: 1 = Very Weak; 2 = Weak; 3 = Neither weak nor strong; 4 = Strong; 5 = Very strong

Note: I don't know, N = 1

Source: BMAP-FORWARD Performance Evaluation, Survey for Other Donor Representatives and Private Sector Actors

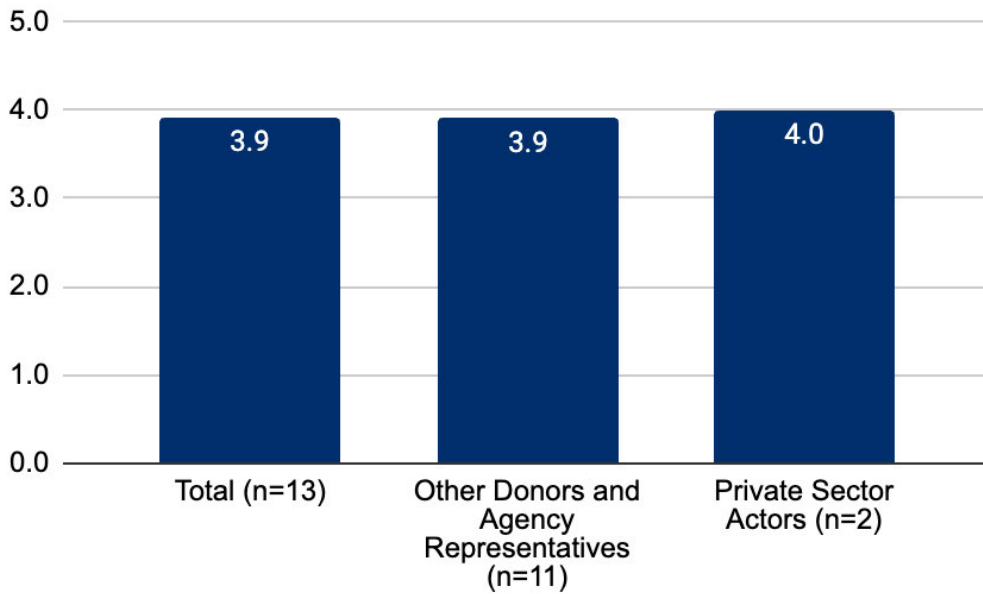
Question 2.12: Are you familiar with the BMAP-FORWARD program?

	n
Total	16
Yes	14
No	2

The two respondents who were not aware of the program were from the private sector.

Source: BMAP-FORWARD Performance Evaluation, Survey for Other Donor Representatives and Private Sector Actors

Question 2.13. To what extent do you perceive the BMAP FORWARD program effectively fostering collaborative partnerships between the media and private sectors? (n=13)

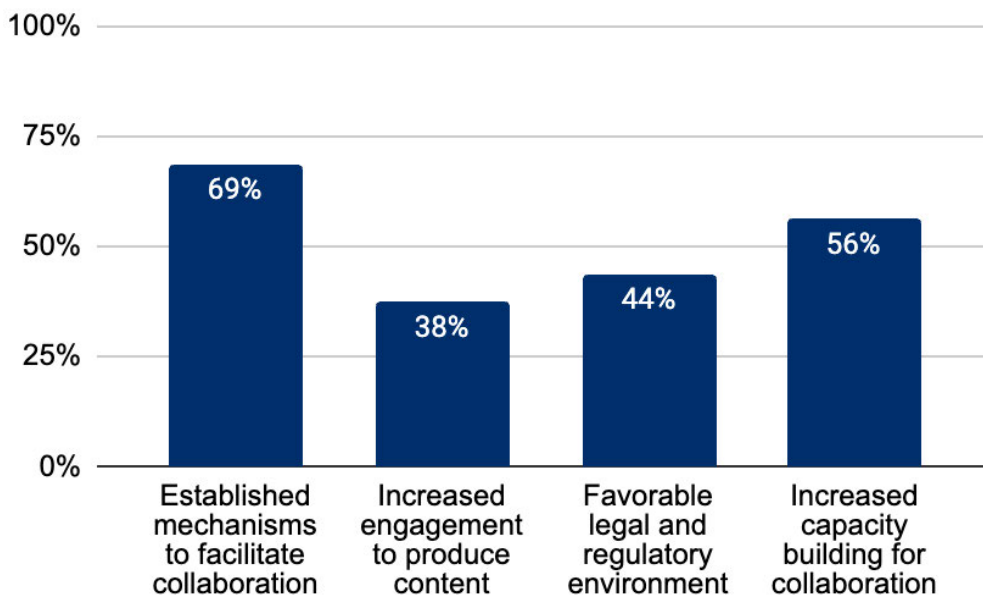


Scale: 1 = Very ineffective; 2 = Ineffective; 3 = Neither effective nor ineffective; 4 = Effective; 5 = Very effective

Note: I don't know, n = 1

Source: BMAP-FORWARD Performance Evaluation, Survey for Other Donor Representatives and Private Sector Actors

Question 2.14. What factors contribute to successful partnerships between the media and the private sector? (n=16)

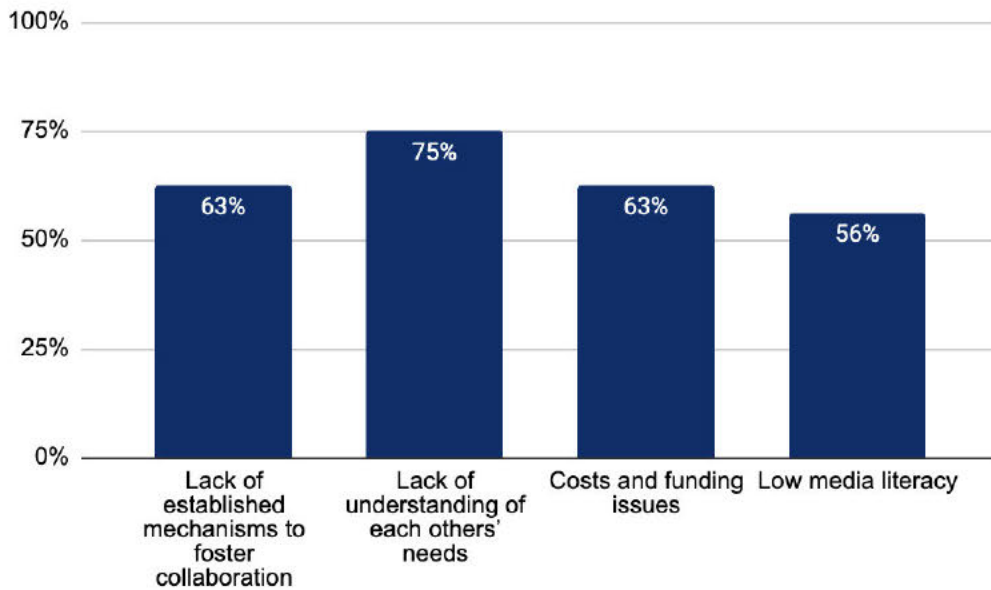


Source: BMAP-FORWARD Performance Evaluation, Survey for Other Donor Representatives and Private Sector Actors

One respondent from an international NGO selected “other” and provided the following explanation: “Some key words missing in the previous question: partnership of independent media and private sector in public interest - in the specific political context in the region, partnerships between private sector and media are commonly used to exercise control

over media reporting, primarily for the benefit of the political power centers. these partnerships can't be seen as successful business model.”

Question 2.15: What factors inhibit or challenge successful partnerships between the media and the private sector? (n=16)



Source: BMAP-FORWARD Performance Evaluation, Survey for Other Donor Representatives and Private Sector Actors

Question 2.16. To what extent is the BMAP FORWARD program effective in fostering partnerships between media outlets and the private sector (technology, commercial, and entrepreneurial sectors)? (n=33)

	Average	I don't know (n)
Total	4.4	6

Source: BMAP-FORWARD Performance Evaluation, Survey for USAID and Implementing Partner Staff

Question 2.17. To what extent are the following BMAP-FORWARD interventions effective in strengthening partnerships of media outlets and the private sector to collaborate on common goals? (n=33)

	Average	I don't know (n)
Annual Media Innovation Lab	4.2	7
Rolling Innovation Fund	4.3	8
Annual Media Forum	4.4	7
Collaboration with SEENPM and MASE to strengthen the legal and	3.9	17

business environment for media		
Collaborative Content production support	4.3	8
Technical assistance to grantees to foster regional networks	4.4	9

Source: BMAP-FORWARD Performance Evaluation, Survey for USAID and Implementing Partner Staff
Scale: 1 = Very ineffective; 2 = Ineffective; 3 = Neither effective nor ineffective; 4 = Effective; 5 = Very effective

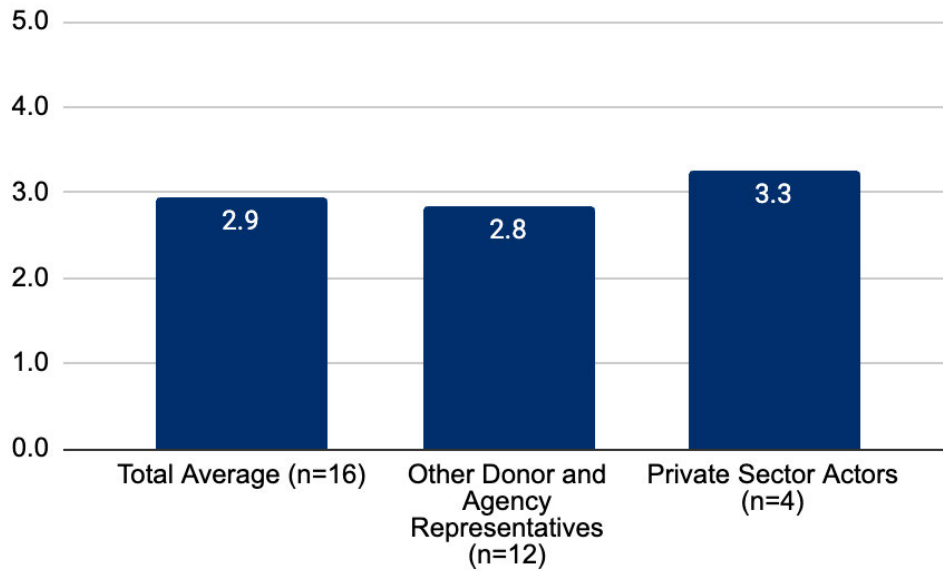
CONTEXTUAL QUESTIONS

Question 2.18. To what extent is the BMAP-FORWARD program effectively addressing the socio-political context in which the media outlets operate in general and by country? (n=33)

	Average	I don't know (n)
Total	4.7	1
By Country		
BiH	4.6	8
Kosovo	4.6	10
Montenegro	4.6	13
North Macedonia	4.6	12
Serbia	4.5	14

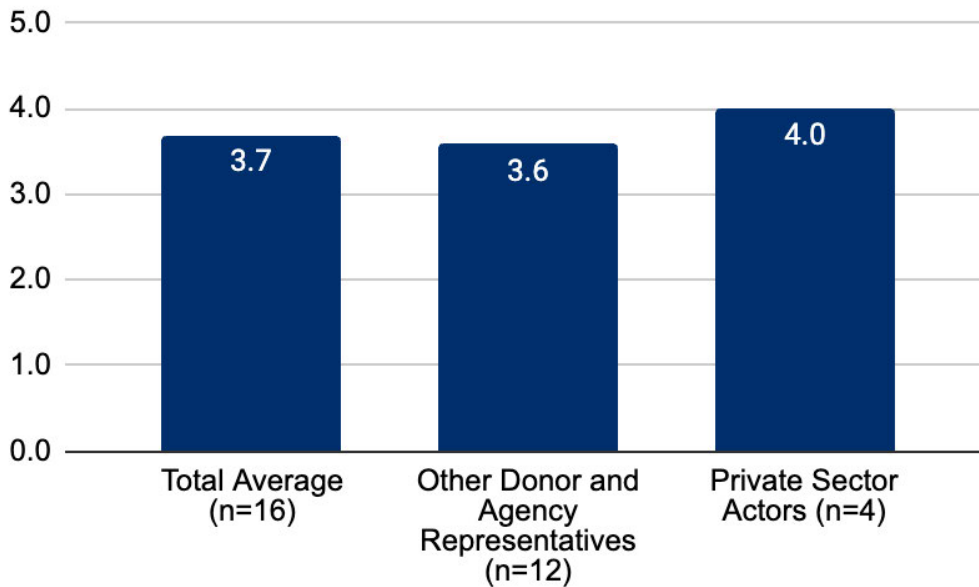
Source: BMAP-FORWARD Performance Evaluation, Survey for USAID and Implementing Partner Staff
Scale: 1 = Very ineffective; 2 = Ineffective; 3 = Neither effective nor ineffective; 4 = Effective; 5 = Very effective

Question 2.19. How would you rate the current ability of media outlets in delivering unbiased and accurate news? (n=16)



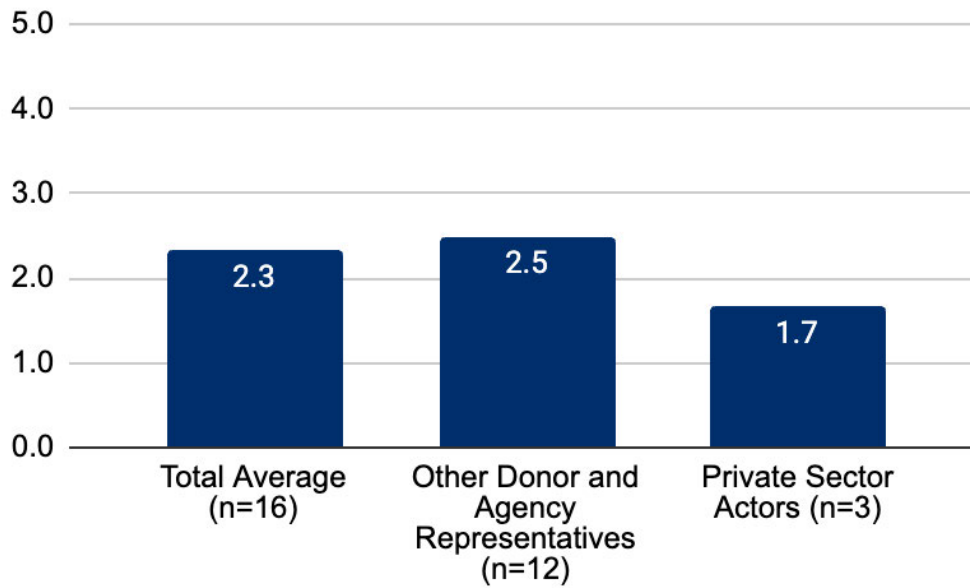
Source: BMAP-FORWARD Performance Evaluation, Survey for Other Donor Representatives and Private Sector Actors
 Scale: 1 = Very weak; 2 = Weak; 3 = Neither weak nor strong; 4 = Strong; 5 = Very strong

Question 2.20. To what extent do you think the public has access to reliable and timely information from current media outlets?



Source: BMAP-FORWARD Performance Evaluation, Survey for Other Donor Representatives and Private Sector Actors
 Scale: 1 = No access; 2 = Limited access; 3 = Neither limited nor open access; 4 = Some access; 5 = Open access

Question 2.21. To what degree are you confident in the independence of media outlets from political or external pressures?

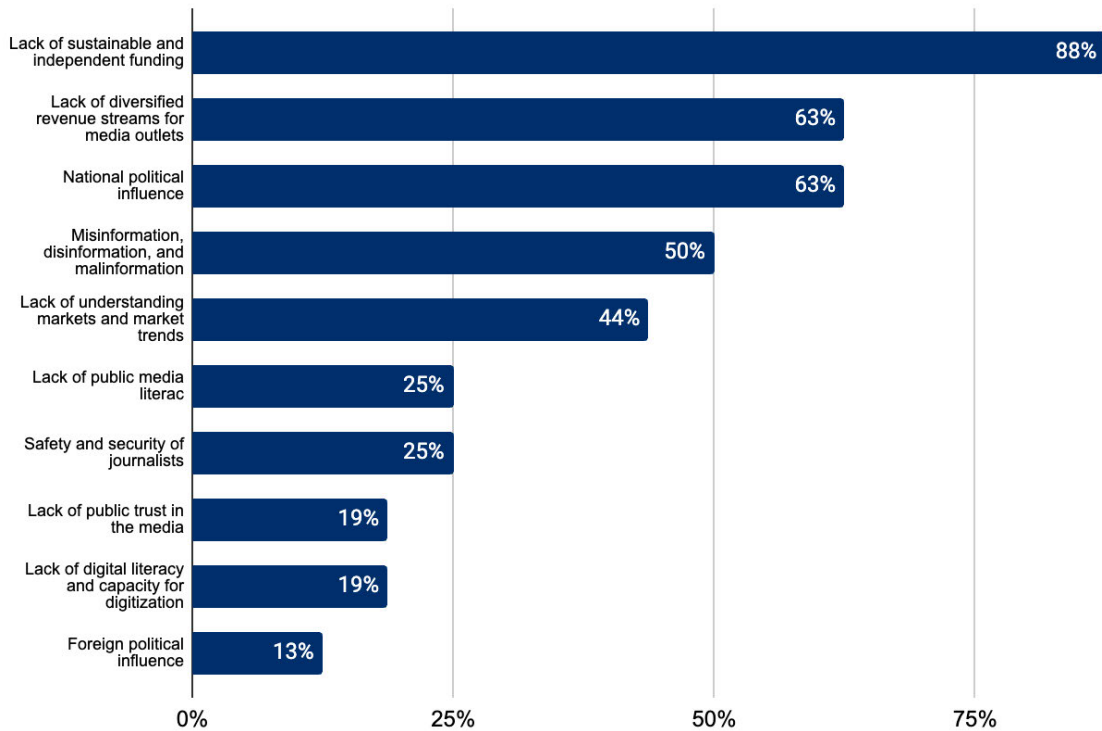


Source: BMAP-FORWARD Performance Evaluation, Survey for Other Donor Representatives and Private Sector Actors

Scale: 1 = No confidence; 2 = Limited confidence; 3 = Neither confident nor not confident; 4 = Some confidence; 5 = Very confident

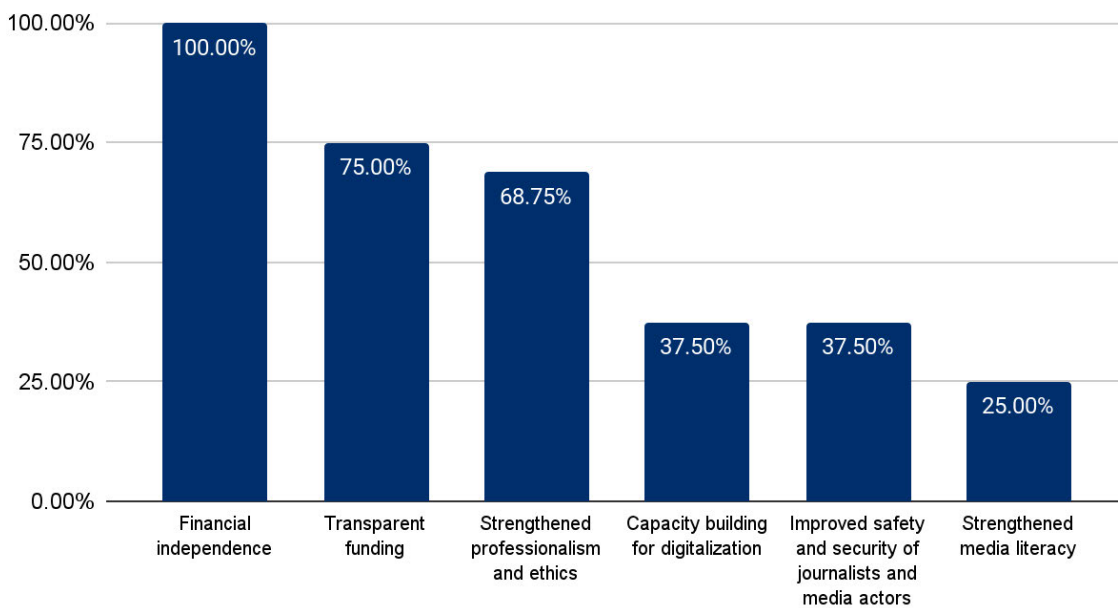
Note: I don't know, n=1

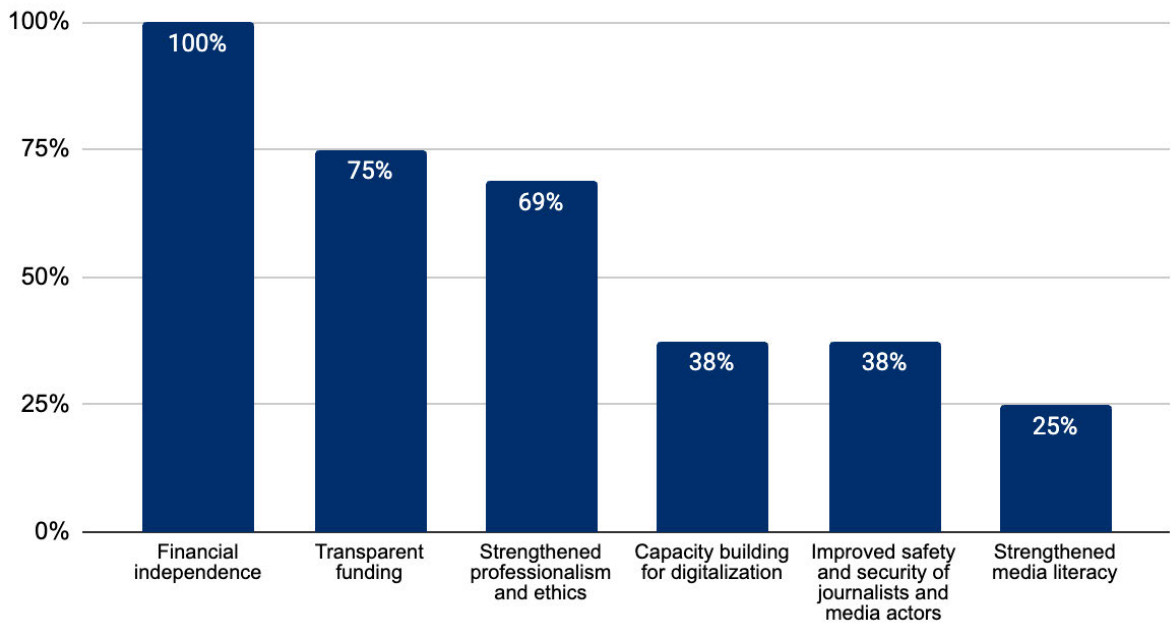
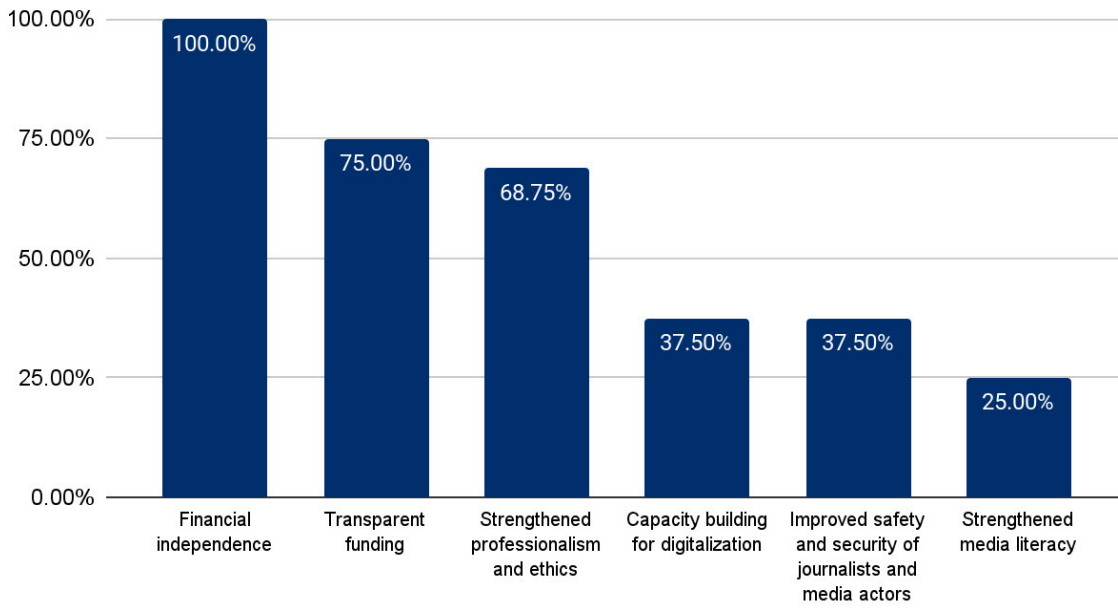
Question 2.22. Which of the following factors are the most challenging to overcome to strengthen media independence? (n=16)



Source: BMAP-FORWARD Performance Evaluation, Survey for Other Donor Representatives and Private Sector Actors

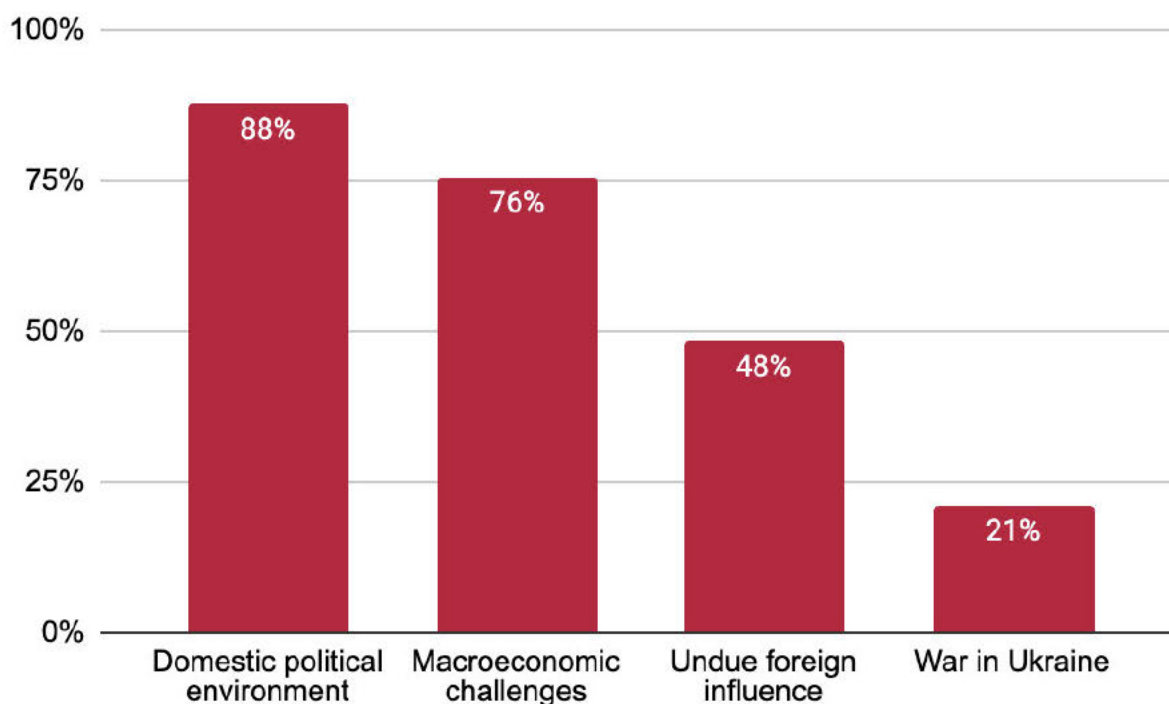
Question 2.23. What are the most pressing needs for the media sector to strengthen its independence? (n=16)





Source: BMAP-FORWARD Performance Evaluation, Survey for Other Donor Representatives and Private Sector Actors

Question 2.24a. Which factors pose the greatest challenge for the BMAP FORWARD to successfully achieve its objectives in strengthening media resilience and competitiveness in the Western Balkans? (n=33)

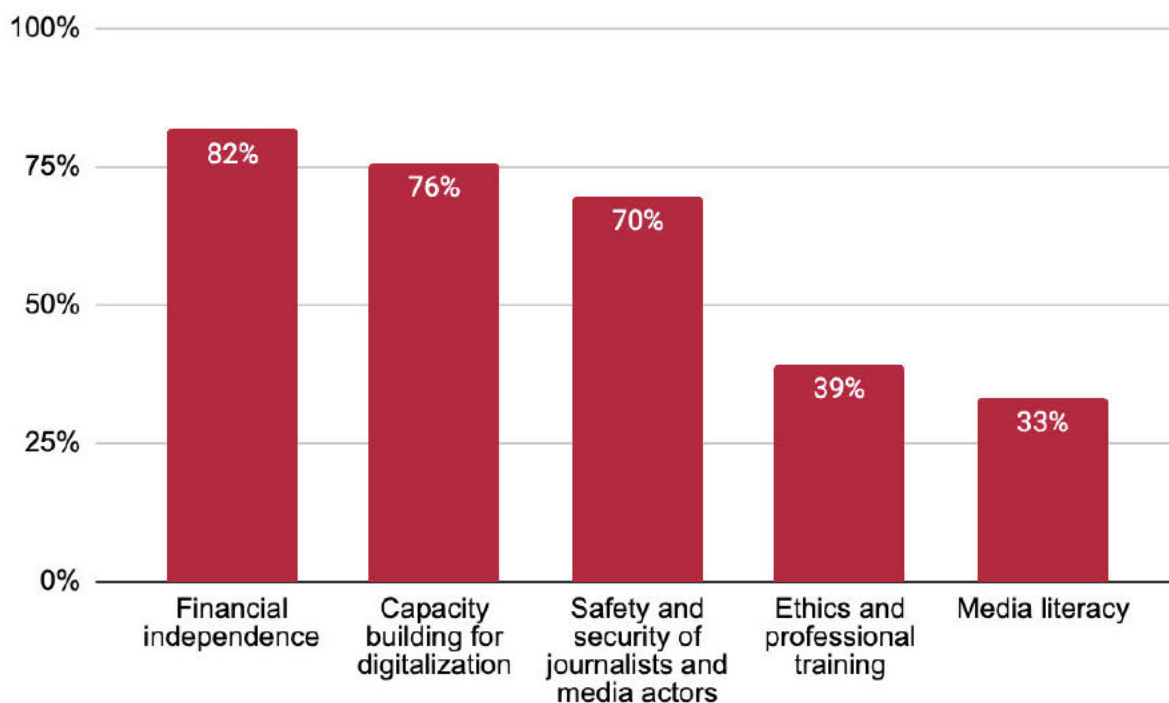


Source: BMAP-FORWARD Performance Evaluation, Survey for USAID and Implementing Partner Staff
 In response to this question, six respondents shared additional feedback, presented in the below table.

Question 2.24b. "Other" Response Options
Domestic regulatory environment
Insufficient space for journalists to rest and rejuvenate. Limited opportunities for journalists to acquire knowledge about emerging forms of journalism.
Internal coordination
Lack of support from Internews Program Management Unit (PMU) in the program implementation, lack of PMU understanding of the BMAPF operational context, and undue PMU interferences into the program implementation by using authority of hierarchy, instead of relying on the field staff and field analysis
Local economical constraints
insufficient knowledge and interest and inadequate approach (nedovodljivo znanja i interes i neadekvatan pristup)
Political influence over the media regulatory infrastructure and advertising market
Professional standards and media ethics

Source: BMAP-FORWARD Performance Evaluation, Survey for USAID and Implementing Partner Staff

Question 2.25a. What are the most pressing needs of the media sector in the Western Balkans? (n=33)



Source: BMAP-FORWARD Performance Evaluation, Survey for USAID and Implementing Partner Staff

In response to this question, eight respondents shared additional feedback, presented in the below table.

Question 2.25b. “Other” Response Options
All above
Community-building, bystander organisational support, critical and community-driven journalism, tech-literacy, reliance on local knowledge and practices to increase community resilience and audience engagement. Human aspects of tech-safety and technology. Capacity building for digitalisation that ensures human-centric tech-design and usability.
Digital security
lack of technological infrastructure
Market free from political influence targeting undesirable media
Means for creating quality content that could be exchanged among themselves (Sredstva za izradu kvalitetnih sadržaja koje bi mogli razmjenjivati među sobom)
Understanding that there's a need for a specific, tailored-made approach to each individual media outlet, in understanding their needs, capacities and potentials. Goals should be defined individually and realistically; for example, diversification of sources of revenue has one meaning in a media that produces content of a general interest, and different in, say, investigative reporting media, etc.
Using new technologies, AI and ethics for using AI in their work

Source: BMAP-FORWARD Performance Evaluation, Survey for USAID and Implementing Partner Staff

Question 2.26. What are the best practices needed to address these challenges in strengthening media independence in the Western Balkans?

International NGO	Comprehensive and joint intervention from external (donors and implementers) and internal factors (media workers) in tackling key challenges in the sphere.
International donor agency	Increasing the number of independent media (Povećanje broja nezavisnih medija)
National NGO	<p>Connecting the media through individual projects so that, united, they have greater coverage and visibility, optimization of resources (more people from different media can achieve more)... exchange of knowledge and information and experiences from the market</p> <p>(Povezivanje medija kroz pojedine projekte kako bi, ujedinjeni, imali veću pokrivenost i vidljivost, optimizaciju resursa (više ljudi iz različitih medija može više da postigne)... razmena znanja i informacija i iskustava sa tržišta)</p>
National NGO	<p>Education on the importance and advantages of professional and ethical reporting; education about financing methods and how to get them; adoption of the legal framework on the operation of the media</p> <p>(Edukacija o važnosti i prednostima profesionalnog i etičkog izvještavanja; edukacija o načinima finansiranja i kako doći do njih; donošenje zakonskog okvira o djelovanju medija)</p>
International NGO	<p>comprehensive analysis of the business - from the ownership structure, through management, marketing and sales; creating partnerships with actors in the info ecosystem (business, NGOs, media entities, influencers); start using innovations (AI, various mechanisms/software for collecting and processing data</p> <p>(sveobuhvatna analiza poslovanja - od vlasnicke strukture, preko menadžmenta, marketinga i prodaje; kreiranje partnerstva sa akterima u info ekosystemu (biznis, NGO, media entiteti, influenseri); krenuti sa koriscenjem inovacija (AI, razni mehanizmi/softveri za prikupljanje i obradu podataka)</p>
International for-profit company	Complete independent and transparent funding of media, much better education, professional level and integrity of journalists.
International NGO	This is a million dollar question :) Tailor-made assistance works best.
International NGO	comprehensive approach through synergies of donor support that takes into considerations political and financial constraints that prevent implementation of theoretic solutions; provision of operational support in parallel to expertise and business development the only way to ensure success
Private Sector Actor (Other Category)	I don't know
National NGO	good media regulation, transparent public funding
International donor agency	To strengthen their financial independence
International for-profit company	<p>trainings for media development, diversifying funding and transfer of successful practices</p> <p>(obuki za mediski razvoj, diverzificiranje na finansiranje i prenosivanje na uspešni praktici)</p>
National community-based organization	Independent funding and capacity building of media workers with a focus on their safety in the workplace and during coverage of high-risk events

	(Независно финансирање и градење на капацитети на медиумски работници со фокус на нивната безбедност на работно место и за време на покривање на настани од висок ризик)
National NGO	Practices from countries such as Germany and Great Britain (Praktikat nga shtete si Gjermania dhe Britania e Madhe)
National NGO	EFCSN

Source: BMAP-FORWARD Performance Evaluation, Survey for Other Donor Representatives and Private Sector Actors

Question 2.27. Additional Feedback from the Expert Survey

International NGO	Donor's coordination is of utmost importance in order to have efficient impact on the media sphere in the region.
National NGONacionalna NVO	Everything that the bmap-forward project or projects are doing is already on that path, the path of seriously improving the way of working and functioning of independent media, and the results are clear and visible. The only thing is that the region it covers is still fragile and unstable enough that sometimes it takes time to achieve the desired goals in the desired time - personal observation Sve što bmap-forward projekat ili projekti čine, već jesu na tom putu, putu ozbiljnog unapredjenja na čina rada i funkcionisanja nezavisnih medija i rezultati su jasni i vidljivi. Jedino što je regija koju pokriva još uvek dovoljno trusna i nestabilna da je nekada potrebno vreme da se željeni ciljevi postignu u željenom vremenu - li čna opservacija
International for-profit companyМеѓународна профитна компанија	there will need to be more programs that will support the functioning of specialized and especially local media organizations, since they are the most exposed to financial uncertainty потребно е да постојат повеќе програми што ќе го поддржат функционирањето на специјализираните и посебно локалните медиумски организации бидејќи тие се најмногу изложени на финансиска неизвесност
National community-based organizationНационална организација базирана на заедница	Greater involvement of journalists in building media policies Поголема вклученост на новинарите во градење на медиумските политики

Source: BMAP-FORWARD Performance Evaluation, Survey for Other Donor Representatives and Private Sector Actors

Question 2.28. What are your recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the BMAP FORWARD implementation to achieve its objectives?

Keep doing the good work so far, and maybe plan for more long-term projects in supporting financial independence and sustainability by strengthening revenue generation of media outlets.
Continuing to adjust approaches to local circumstances in each country; include ethical and professional standards into the overall picture.

More price money for the winner. My opinion is that there should be only one winner with bigger reward, that would make a bit more pressure on them to make the project happen.
None
Approaching media ecology from the perspective of automation of cognitive labor.
I don't have an overview of the projects that are implemented and that are financed by BMAP. Maybe on the next BMAP there should be only one winner with a good price, and then to work and monitor their progress to the fullest.
Better support of Internews HQ to project activities.
Based on the results so far reached by BMAP FWD, only uninterrupted continuation in activities implementation will lead to effective achievement of objectives. The implementing team is very much dedicated and capable to ensure the achievement of programmatic objectives.
Effective leadership of the team is the critical point to all work envisioned according to the complexity of such work. The dynamics and the energy of the team is a great asset to the project. Personally, I haven't worked for anyone with strongest and effective leadership skills than Davor Glavaš.
More operational (and "institutional") space for the implementation of the locally created, locally implemented solutions based on the real needs of the media partners, avoiding undue PMU interventions based on "hierarchy" more than on understanding the context and the needs of media partners. This is, in a way, the biggest BMAP-F challenge: not the one on addressing strategic and immediate challenges, but in overcoming negative impact of PMU "hierarchy-based" decisions.
work with a larger number of media, more seminars or consultants with completely new topics (AI, new tools...) more money and larger grants greater openness of the BMAP >FORWARD program (now few people know what they do at all, criteria for awarding grants, results of work...) (rad s većim brojem medija, više seminara ili konsultanata sa sasvim novim temama (AI, novi alati....) više novca i veći grantovi veća otvorenost BMAP >FORWARD programa (sada malok o zna sta uopšte rade, kriterije za dodjelu grantova, rezultate rada...)
modern technical support
Technical assistance in the process of implementation of the strategic frameworks.
I think that BMAP FORWARD is fulfilling all goals, and dedicates the energy and know how of the whole team and local experts to have a custom made approach to all KMPs. It's all about continuing the same excellent work, rising the bars with each step forward, confronting challenges and being flexible in pivoting, in order to serve and help KMPs accomplish their business goals. As well for all of it to function it is crucial to have such a leader as it has who not only understands the whole socio-political context, but also is very influential and dedicated to overcome all the obstacles in the way. Currently as a member of the team, I worry if some upcoming changes will bring the same dynamics to the market, relations with KMPs as well as the dynamic of the team.
Leverage insights from the journalistic community, adopting their established practices and knowledge to enhance resilience. Create dedicated spaces and allocate resources for rest and rejuvenation, fostering an environment conducive to generating fresh ideas. Collaborate with media outlets to enhance safety culture. Foster a deeper comprehension of technology, emphasizing investment in human skills for AI deployment over solely investing in AI itself.
As mentioned above, securing financial independence and opportunities for better revenue diversification in North Macedonia.
Increase follow-up sessions for all objectives: Regular check-ins will help monitor progress closely and address any deviations from the plan promptly, ensuring that each objective stays on track and is achieved effectively. 2. Provide targeted training programs: Identifying specific areas in which partners require training will ensure that they acquire the necessary skills and knowledge relevant to their fields. Offering tailored training materials or on-site training sessions will enhance their capacity to contribute effectively to the project. 3. Remain flexible and

adaptable: Being open to adjustments enables the project to respond effectively to changing circumstances and challenges.

Source: BMAP-FORWARD Performance Evaluation, Survey for USAID and Implementing Partner Staff

ANNEX J: EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS

CORE TEAM

Position	Responsibilities
Team Leader Sarah Eissler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design the overall evaluation methodology, including data collection tools, evaluation design, and evaluation timeline • Design and validate questionnaires, interview guides, focus group discussions outlines, and other tools • Train the evaluation team on the evaluation tools and methodologies, ensuring a clear understanding and uniform application • Direct in-Country data collection, lead KIIs in Montenegro • Lead Briefings and Recommendations Workshop • Oversee the collection, storage, cleaning, and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data • Draft the evaluation report, ensuring it is comprehensive, clear, and aligned with USAID guidelines • Participate in check-in calls with USAID • Lead the team to ensure high quality delivery of the evaluation • Ensure that the evaluation process upholds ethical standards, including securing informed consent from participants and ensuring data privacy.
Media Subject Matter Expert Micheal Buehler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to the development of the EWP with a specific focus on including an international perspective of media programming • Contribute to the development and refinement of tools for Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) • Tie together emerging themes from evaluation findings in each country to create high-level conclusions and recommendations for BMAP-F • Join regular calls with the team to update, review progress, and discuss any issues or concerns • Engage in Briefings and Recommendations Workshop • Collaborate extensively with the Team Lead to draft, review, and refine the evaluation report, ensuring that key themes and recommendations are included from an international and media-perspective
Sr. Technical and Evaluation Expert Brenda Pearson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct an intensive desk review of BMAP-F documentation, including annual reports, MEL surveys and data collected thus-far, and beneficiary/stakeholder lists, among others • Keep Evaluation Team abreast of key media outlets, partnerships, technology, and entrepreneurial sector developments • Provide significant cultural, political, and media expertise specific to the Balkans region, which will inform the interpretation of findings and recommendations
Sr. Media Specialist and Subject Matter Expert for Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia Miodrag Bogdanovic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to the development of EWP • Contribute to the development and refinement of tools for Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) • Lead the elaboration of quantitative survey instruments to ensure they're suitable for the local context

Position	Responsibilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lead KIIs and FGDs in N. Macedonia and Serbia ● Participate in KIIs and FDGs in BiH and Kosovo capturing essential data and insights across the region ● Compile KII and FGD Meeting Notes ● Contribute to qualitative data coding and analysis ● Lead quantitative data analysis ● Join regular calls with the team to update, review progress, and discuss any issues or concerns ● Engage in Briefings and Recommendations Workshop ● Participate in drafting, reviewing, and refining the evaluation report, ensuring inclusion of relevant local insights and data
<p>Media Specialist and Subject Matter Expert for CSOs/NGOs and Bosnia Herzegovina (Sarajevo and Banja Luka) Anida Soko</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Contribute to the development of EWP with specific focus on BiH media landscape and partnerships with CSOs/NGOs ● Contribute to the development and refinement of tools for Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) ● Lead the elaboration of quantitative survey instruments to ensure they're suitable for the local context ● Carry out KIIs and FGDs in BiH ● Compile KII and FGD Meeting Notes ● Contribute to qualitative data coding and analysis ● Lead quantitative data analysis ● Join regular calls with the team to update, review progress, and discuss any issues or concerns ● Engage in Briefings and Recommendations Workshop ● Participate in drafting, reviewing, and refining the evaluation report, ensuring inclusion of relevant local insights and data
<p>Media Specialist and Subject Matter Expert for Private Sector Engagement and Kosovo Arben Qirezi</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Contribute to the development of EWP with specific focus on private sector engagement and partnerships with media ● Contribute to the development and refinement of tools for Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) ● Lead the elaboration of quantitative survey instruments to ensure they're suitable for the local context ● Carry out Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions, capturing essential data and insights ● Compile KII and FGD Meeting Notes ● Contribute to qualitative data coding and analysis ● Lead quantitative data analysis ● Join regular calls with the team to update, review progress, and discuss any issues or concerns ● Engage in Briefings and Recommendations Workshop ● Participate in drafting, reviewing, and refining the evaluation report, ensuring inclusion of relevant local insights and data
<p>Regional Logistician Flamur Hamidi</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Compile stakeholder list using ET member input ● Schedule Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) ● Schedule Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) ● Handle venue, transport and logistics ● Take notes during KIIs and FGDs. ● Prepare annexes for the evaluation report ● Act as an interpreter during the meetings if needed

E.2 EE/MELDS SUPPORT PERSONNEL

Note that the EE/MELDS Team may bring on an additional senior subject matter expert, field logistics manager, or technical specialist to support the Team Leader, as relevant. The possible addition of these team member(s) could change the overall budget but will not affect the overall budget ceiling unless otherwise approved by USAID.

EE/MELDS is a demand-driven task order. Therefore, core operations and administrative functions of the project are billed directly to the activity (e.g., activity authorization development, recruitment, contracting and fielding consultants, quality assurance review, etc.). Mr. Kev Torosyan, Sr. Technical Advisor, and Ms. Summer Hunter-Kysor, Technical Specialist- Mid-Level, and their team will oversee activity operations in addition to providing administrative support.

ANNEX K: FINDING, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATION TABLE

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
Cross Cutting		
<p>Finding 1.1: Staff from all KMPs and other stakeholders reported that BMAP-FORWARD’s highly tailored and localized approach was effective in meeting their needs and enabled a useful and trusted working relationship.</p>	<p>Conclusion 1.1. As a regional program, BMAP-FORWARD’s tailored and localized approach to working with KMPs is a key strength of its ability to provide effective, useful, and timely assistance. Specifically, the reliance on local expertise with in-depth knowledge of the respective media sectors and operating environments facilitates effective collaboration and fosters a trusted engagement with the KMPs to identify their goals, co-design solutions, and provide the necessary support to implement said solutions. This approach is well received by all types of stakeholders as effective, particularly in comparison to other donor programming approaches that do not employ a tailored approach and without deep country-level and sector specific expertise. USAID’s attention to the former BMAP Activity, upon which the BMAP-FORWARD Activity is primarily designed (with few adjustments), as an exemplary approach for locally-led development reinforces the strength of its locally-led approach.</p>	<p>1. BMAP-FORWARD should continue to employ the highly tailored and localized approach to working with KMPs to learn their needs, co-create solutions and action plans, identify resources to implement solutions, and present new ideas.</p>
<p>Finding 1.2. KMP staff reported that BMAP-FORWARD country managers and in-country IP staff are effective in supporting the KMPs’ goals and objectives given in-depth country experience and subject matter expertise.</p>		
<p>Finding 1.3. KMP staff reported that in general, BMAP-FORWARD’s assistance was timely and that in-country staff were well-equipped to effectively respond to the KMPs’ needs, although sometimes were under-resourced.</p>	<p>Conclusion 1.2. BMAP-FORWARD’s staff and leadership team are equipped with the necessary capacity, expertise, and experience to facilitate trusted and effective assistance to KMPs and coordination with other stakeholders. While the staff’s expertise, capacity, and leadership are key enabling factors to foster strong and effective implementation, bandwidth and other resource concerns may undermine its full effectiveness, particularly in BiH and countries without a bilateral Activity.</p>	<p>2. BMAP-FORWARD and USAID should reconsider how the Implementing Team’s staff are allocated to coordinate with other donor-funded programming, bilateral Activities, and in countries without bilateral Activities to maximize efficiency and effectiveness to deliver on BMAP-FORWARD’s objectives.</p>
<p>Finding 1.4. Three USG staff raise concerns about sufficient IP footprint and availability to implement BMAP-FORWARD activities effectively.</p>		

<p>Finding 1.5 Stakeholders overall offered few critiques of the BMAP-FORWARD design and implementation approach.</p>	<p>Conclusion 1.3 At this early stage in the Activity's implementation, few areas have been identified as ineffective or requiring considerable course corrections. Different types of stakeholders did share a similar observation that existing BMAP-FORWARD assistance could embed attention to best practices for professional and ethics in journalism and the media to continuously strengthen capacity on these topics for KMPs and newsroom staff.</p>	<p>3. Consider further strengthening adherence to professional standards among KMPs and other grantees and adding segments on challenges to journalistic integrity during existing technical assistance activities.</p>
<p>Finding 1.6 Stakeholders from BiH, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia suggested that attention to professionalism and ethics in journalism could be further embedded into BMAP-FORWARD assistance.</p>		
<p>EQ1: To what extent are BMAP-FORWARD approaches, tools, and interventions influencing KMPs' business practices and abilities to understand markets and ensure revenue diversification?</p>		
<p>Finding 2.1: KMP staff reported that BMAP-FORWARD assistance has continued to strengthen their ability and interest in adopting strategic operational planning.</p>	<p>Conclusion 2.1. BMAP-FORWARD's highly tailored and specific assistance has helped KMP staff to shift their mindsets towards more strategic operational planning, where staff are now interested in designing and implementing actions that strategically target areas for growth, expansion, and increased business sustainability to meet their respective goals as a media outlet / organization. The technical assistance coupled with grant funding has enabled KMPs to implement stronger business practices and to varying extents, implement strategic plans. The recently onboarded KMPs are in the earlier stages of designing or implementing their strategic plans while the others have built upon progress made under BMAP, underscoring the importance of the tailored assistance provided to each KMP.</p>	<p>1. Continue to provide tailored assistance to KMPs to build their in-house capacity to design and implement strategic plans for current and future operations. For all KMPs, and particularly for smaller, donor-reliant KMPs, continue to provide proactive and tailored support via expert assistance, grant funding, or identifying other resources to leverage to implement their strategic plans over the long term. Consider designing template Action Plans to serve as guidance for smaller KMPs to implement their own Strategic Plans. This support should be higher-touch for smaller KMPs.</p>
<p>Finding 2.2: KMP staff report being in various stages of implementation of their strategic plans.</p>		
<p>Finding 2.3: BMAP-FORWARD assistance via expert consultations and strategic planning was perceived to shift mindsets among most KMPs towards adopting more commercial operational</p>	<p>Conclusion 2.2. Financial independence is understood as a critical enabling factor of strengthening media independence in the Western Balkans. BMAP-FORWARD assistance has helped KMP staff to shift</p>	<p>2. Continue to provide high-touch and tailored support for KMPs in identifying and pursuing new sources of revenue, particularly for non-profit KMPs or those that are more nascent</p>

<p>approaches and seeking financial independence.</p>	<p>mindsets towards more commercial-oriented practices and seek additional and diversified sources of revenue, with the exception of two smaller outlets in Serbia that prefer to remain non-profit in alignment with their missions as independent, investigative outlets. All KMPs are pursuing sources of diversified incomes or sources of funding to be less donor reliant.</p>	<p>in their shift to commercial approaches.</p>
<p>Finding 2.4: With technical and grant assistance from BMAP-FORWARD, most KMPs have been able to identify and/or pursue new revenue sources, and increase revenues.</p>		
<p>Finding 2.5: KMPs report utilizing different approaches to increase or diversify revenue sources aligned with their operating goals and navigating operational challenges.</p>	<p>Conclusion 2.3: KMPs varied in their ability to pursue diversified and/or new revenue sources based on their size, existing capacity, operational structure and goals, and their ability to navigate challenges specific to their operating environment. Larger KMPs sought new business models to monetize content or pursue new commercial revenue sources with assistance from BMAP-FORWARD whereas smaller KMPs, particularly non-profit and donor-dependent investigative journalism outlets, require more in-depth and intense assistance to design and implement strategic plans and navigate unfavorable operating environments to do so. BMAP-FORWARD assistance has been flexible, targeted, and integral in supporting each KMP to design and implement these strategic plans and navigate the unique challenges faced by each.</p>	<p>3. For smaller investigative outlets that are hesitant to monetize their work for fear of compromising their independence, continue to brainstorm and work with such KMPs to identify, design and implement strategic approaches to diversify funding sources and reduce reliance on donor funding. This could include revenue generation through subscription or crowdfunding models or developing commercial services that are less likely to endanger their independence (e.g., video production, communication, advocacy support to NGOs).</p>
<p>EQ2: TO WHAT EXTENT ARE THE BMAP-FORWARD APPROACHES, TOOLS, AND INTERVENTIONS INFLUENCING THE ABILITY OF CONTENT PRODUCERS TO PRODUCE DATA-DRIVEN CONTENT, ENGAGE WIDER AUDIENCES, AND EXPAND REACH ACROSS THE REGION?</p>		
<p>Finding 3.1: All KMPs have expanded their audience reach, in some cases exponentially, under BMAP-FORWARD.</p>	<p>Conclusion 3.1. BMAP-FORWARD's assistance has supported KMPs in expanding their reach, engaging wider audiences, and contributing to cross-border collaboration. Specifically, assistance has been specific and tailored to KMPs needs with respect to their existing capacities, interests, and abilities to pursue different modes of content production within their operating environment.</p>	<p>1. BMAP-FORWARD should continue to deliver capacity-building trainings and technical assistance as highly tailored and specific to participants' needs, with offered opportunities for continuous feedback from direct participants to assess trainers and training modes' effectiveness in meeting participants' needs.</p>
<p>Finding 3.2 Stakeholders reported these increases in audience reach were facilitated in part by technical assistance, capacity building, and tools introduced and provided by BMAP-FORWARD.</p>		

<p>Finding 3.3. KMP staff observed that Creative Content Grants enabled improvements in content production that facilitated expanded audience reach.</p>	<p>Conclusion 3.2. BMAP-FORWARD's tailored approach to working with each KMP individually has enabled both BMAP-FORWARD and KMPs to target their time, engagement, and resources to effectively contribute to the KMPs' own goals and interests in expanding their reach. Multiple approaches, tools, and interventions have been effective at strengthening KMPs' capacities to produce data-driven content and engage wider audiences through new types and formats of content production. Creative content production grants have strengthened KMP staff capacity to apply new formats and engage in newer modes of content production, like podcasts or video studios. Tools such as AI-powered translation have allowed certain KMPs to deliver their content to wider audiences, both nationally and regionally. Tools like SmartOcto have been useful for KMPs with direct to consumer engagement to build and strengthen their capacity to use engagement analytics to inform editorial decisions.</p>	<p>2. BMAP-FORWARD should consider providing more opportunities for intentional engagement for knowledge transfer and peer-to-peer learning for journalists and newsroom staff from different outlets, including non-KMPs and different media across the region. Such engagements could be online meetings, side events during meet-ups and forums, or training courses where staff from one KMP would be invited as facilitators/trainers.</p>
<p>Finding 3.4. KMP staff reported media to media partnerships facilitated by BMAP-FORWARD assistance helped to expand audience reach.</p>		
<p>Finding 3.5. The use of AI-powered translation tools has enabled KMPs to expand audience reach nationally, regionally, and beyond.</p>		
<p>Finding 3.6: Staff from KMPs with direct consumer engagement reported increased capacities to understand and utilize audience data and analytics to inform editorial decision-making and focus content production on those with higher quality audience engagement. SmartOcto was specifically cited as a useful tool for such KMPs.</p>		
<p>Finding 3.7: Staff from one KMP that use SmartOcto report language barrier challenges with using the tool, but indicate BMAP-FORWARD has assisted to navigate them.</p>		
<p>Finding 3.8: KMPs without direct consumer engagement report tools, such as SmartOcto, as less or not relevant to their operations.</p>		
<p>Finding 3.9. Journalists and newsroom staff generally reported improved capacities as a result of BMAP-FORWARD training and assistance, but indicated bandwidth and timing were obstacles to fully participating in and benefitting from training and assistance.</p>	<p>Conclusion 3.3. KMP staff and management face bandwidth and resources issues that may undermine the effectiveness of assistance provided. Journalists and newsroom staff must balance existing workloads with participating in assistance activities, while</p>	<p>3. BMAP-FORWARD should consider developing recorded versions of capacity building trainings to offer newsroom staff the option to participate asynchronously.</p>

<p>Finding 3.10: KMP staff reported hiring and retaining qualified staff were notable challenges that sometimes undermined effectiveness of training and capacity building assistance.</p>	<p>KMPs in general have difficulties hiring and retaining qualified staff members. BMAP-FORWARD staff and consultants work with the KMPs to navigate these challenges.</p>	
<p>Finding 3.11. Stakeholders reported that BMAP-FORWARD technical assistance, the Media Innovation Lab, and the More than a Quota Initiative have fostered both direct and indirect opportunities for collaboration among media partners to extend audience reach and produce cross-border stories.</p>	<p>Conclusion 3.4. BMAP-FORWARD has facilitated cross-border engagement among media actors through various tools and approaches, including the integration of AI-powered translation, fostering collaboration among a small cohort of women journalists via the More than a Quota Initiative, the Media Innovation Lab, and facilitating partnerships among media actors across the region. While such tools, such as the Balkansmedia.org platform, are acknowledged as very useful by those who use it, it may be limited in its reach and could be strengthened to have a wider impact to facilitate more cross-border engagement.</p>	<p>4. BMAP-FORWARD should continue exploring avenues to expand promotion and reach of the Balkansmedia.org platform, while balancing the cost-benefits of doing so and if it feels it is worth investing more time and energy into. In addition to upcoming planned activities for YR3 to test a LinkedIn newsletter and survey to assess the effectiveness of newsletters, BMAP-FORWARD should consider other modes of promotion, particularly beyond the KMP and grantee network. Additionally, continue plans to design a sustainability strategy and plan in YR3 for the Balkansmedia.org platform.</p>
<p>Finding 3.12: Those that use Balkansmedia.org described it as a useful resource to access new content or collaborate with others across the region.</p>		
<p>Finding 3.13. Several stakeholders cited Balkansmedia.org as limited in its reach and effectiveness as a collaborative tool.</p>		

EQ3: TO WHAT EXTENT ARE BMAP-FORWARD APPROACHES, INTERVENTIONS, AND TOOLS INFLUENCING KMPs’ DIGITAL SECURITY?

<p>Finding 4.1: A majority of KMP staff and several other stakeholders perceived improvements in KMP digital security practices as a result of BMAP-FORWARD assistance.</p>	<p>Conclusion 4.1. Overall, BMAP-FORWARD tools, technical assistance, and grant funding were well received to address KMPs’ digital security and digital hygiene concerns as they were highly tailored to each KMPs’ specific needs and aligned with their existing protocols. The SAFETAG audit serves as a useful diagnostic tool to either highlight important gaps or vulnerabilities in KMPs’ existing protocols or to confirm the strength of existing protocols. The subsequent grant and technical assistance responded directly to solutions outlined from SAFETAG audits, were cost-effective provide targeted assistance, and were quickly deployed to respond to both acute and ongoing challenges.</p>	
<p>Finding 4.2: SAFETAG audits were considered a useful tool to diagnose each KMPs’ specific gaps and vulnerabilities with respect to digital security and to engage with experts to identify feasible solutions.</p>		
<p>Finding 4.3: KMP staff explained that expert assistance provided by BMAP-FORWARD was targeted and useful, providing a quick response option to acute challenges and helping to</p>		

<p>implement new protocols and practices that observably improved organizational digital hygiene.</p>		
<p>Finding 4.4: KMP staff who received Risk Reduction Grants reported that the funding was specifically aimed at providing assistance to address a range of digital security vulnerabilities through various solutions.</p>		
<p>Finding 4.5. A few stakeholders noted that the Risk Reduction Grants were cost-effective in providing solutions to digital and physical security challenges.</p>		
<p>Finding 4.6. KMP staff and other stakeholders shared concerns over long-term effectiveness of BMAP-FORWARD digital security assistance.</p>	<p>Conclusion 4.2. Training and capacity building efforts have revealed some observable improvements in organizational digital hygiene behaviors, particularly among newsroom staff, for increased awareness of digital security efforts as well as adoption of better digital security practices. However, several challenges may undermine the sustainability of improved digital security protocols and practices over the long-term. Such challenges center around the need for ongoing and in some cases, in-depth technical assistance to navigate evolving digital security challenges and to promote and enforce adoption of protocols and practices among newsroom and other KMP staff.</p>	<p>1. BMAP-FORWARD should consider intentionally promoting peer-to-peer learning events to exchange knowledge and best practices among KMPs, particularly newsroom staff, to foster a culture of continuous learning and improvement around organizational digital hygiene to the extent that budgets allow and noting existing time burdens facing newsroom staff.</p>
<p>Finding 4.7 Stakeholders report observations in systematic changes among KMP staff, including an increase in awareness and adoption of digital security practices.</p>		<p>2. BMAP-FORWARD should consider investing in strengthening the capacity of in-house expertise or identify long-term solutions for each KMP to navigate the evolving digital security challenges.</p>
<p>Finding 4.8. Few stakeholders noted ongoing challenges that hinder full adoption of digital security practices.</p>		<p>3. BMAP-FORWARD should consider tools and approaches to strengthen the sustainability of capacity building efforts under the Activity. For example, BMAP-FORWARD could produce standalone manuals or a training program as part of planned (YR3) digital security</p>

		<p>concepts trainings that would promote how to develop and implement best digital security policies and practices, or risk mitigation strategies for digital security. Additionally, BMAP-FORWARD could integrate co-designed sustainability plans with KMPs when reviewing SAFETAG audit results for how they will continue to implement and enforce best policies and practices for strengthened digital security among staff.</p>
--	--	---

EQ4: WHAT FACTORS INFLUENCE PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN MEDIA OUTLETS, AND THE TECHNOLOGY, COMMERCIAL, AND ENTREPRENEURIAL SECTORS?

<p>Finding 5.1 Many stakeholders reported being unaware of BMAP-FORWARD’s activities with respect to facilitating and fostering partnerships between KMPs and the private sector.</p>	<p>Conclusion 4.1. Many stakeholders, including USG staff and KMP staff, were generally unaware or uninformed about BMAP-FORWARD’s specific interventions or activities that promote or foster partnerships between KMPs and private sector actors and other non-traditional partners. , i.e., those in the private sector. Monitoring data also indicates that the Activity is lagging behind anticipated progress by Year 2. While facilitating partnerships between KMPs and private sector and non traditional actors is only one aspect of activities implemented under Activity Objective 3, BMAP-FORWARD’s interventions and progress specific to facilitating these types of partnerships under this Objective are is not well understood by USG and KMP stakeholders alike.</p>	<p>1. BMAP-FORWARD and USAID should strengthen their communication of goals, activities and interventions conducted specific to facilitating partnerships between media and the private sector and non traditional actors under Objective 3, particularly among USG and KMP staff.</p>
<p>Finding 5.2. A few stakeholders reported examples of BMAP-FORWARD’s assistance in facilitating linkages between KMPs and private sector actors.</p>		<p>2. BMAP-FORWARD should consider developing initiatives like dialogue and transparency workshops aimed at aligning the divergent priorities of media and business sectors, while fostering trust through transparency. Additionally, BMAP-FORWARD could consider establishing a project incubator program to</p>
<p>Finding 5.3. Some KMP staff, particularly among investigative outlets, report perceived loss of independence as an inhibiting factor to pursue partnerships with the private sector.</p>	<p>Conclusion 4.2. A wide variety of factors hinder the ability to foster partnerships between the media and private sectors in the Western Balkans. Such factors include a lack of interest, expertise, capacities, and financial resources among KMPs to pursue such partnerships; a difficult operating</p>	

	<p>environment with a limited pool of suitable partners; a lack of established mechanisms to intentionally foster such collaborations; a lack of understanding each others' needs; and finally, primarily for smaller, investigative outlets, a perceived loss of independence for engaging in such partnerships.</p>	<p>support the development of feasible media-business partnerships, emphasizing innovation and mutual benefits without compromising journalistic integrity.</p>
<p>Finding 5.4. A lack of capacity, expertise, and financial resources are reported by stakeholders as additional inhibiting factors to pursue partnerships with private sector actors.</p>		
<p>Finding 5.5. Some KMP staff report that difficult operating environments, limited options for suitable partners, or a general lack of interest constrain their ability to pursue such private sector partners.</p>		<p>3. BMAP-FORWARD should continue to organize forums, such as the Media Innovation Lab and Annual Media Forum, and other smaller “meet ups” to convene media and nontraditional actors. However, BMAP-FORWARD should consider intentionally designing and marketing sessions geared towards facilitating potential partnerships between private sector actors and KMPs. Such sessions can be followed by ongoing assistance to support KMPs in navigating how to structure such partnerships and potential mutual benefits that can be achieved through such partnerships.</p>
<p>Finding 5.6. Experts observe that a lack of understanding of mutual benefits for private sector partnerships among media actors and established mechanisms to facilitate such understanding as key inhibiting factors.</p>		
<p>Finding 5.7. Some KMPs staff did report an interest in pursuing the right types of partnerships with private sector actors.</p>	<p>Conclusion 4.3. While there exist real barriers to pursuing establishing partnerships between the media and private sector, some media outlets remain interested in pursuing potential opportunities. Such opportunities include exploring ways in which partnerships could alleviate in-house capacity gaps or challenges, underscoring how collaborations with the private sector could help media outlets scale their business, expand their reach and impact.</p>	