



USAID | GEORGIA

FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

USAID Media and Information Activity

NOTICE TYPE:	Request for Information (RFI)
REFERENCE NUMBER:	RFI-114-22-00001
ACTIVITY TITLE:	USAID Media and Information Activity
ISSUED BY:	USAID/Georgia, Office of Democracy, Rights, and Governance (DRG)
ISSUANCE DATE:	November 29, 2021
RESPONSE DUE BY:	December 14, 2021, 10:00 AM Tbilisi Time

I. INTRODUCTION

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Mission to Georgia (USAID/Georgia) is gathering information related to an anticipated activity in support of the U.S. Government's efforts to identify and foster creative, cutting edge, and effective approaches to strengthen quality media and information in Georgia so that it can more effectively fulfill its crucial function in support of democracy, human rights, and good governance.

This is a Request for Information (RFI). The intent of this RFI is to conduct market research to help shape USAID's strategy for strengthening quality media and information in Georgia. We are seeking responses from interested individuals and organizations to provide information and recommendations.

This Notice is issued for the purpose of providing stakeholders an opportunity to review and provide comments on the attached preliminary description of purpose, objectives and program activities. If you would like to provide comments, please submit no more than five (5) pages of comments no later than December 14, 2021, 10:00 AM Tbilisi Time, via email to mchelidze@usaid.gov and rcaucasus@usaid.gov.

This Notice is issued solely for information and planning purposes and does not constitute a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) or a Request for Applications (RFP). It is not to be construed as a commitment by the U.S. Government to issue any solicitation or funding opportunity or make an award; nor does it commit the Government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of any comments. Any funding proposals submitted in response to this request will not be considered.

Responses to this notice must be received no later than the due date stated above in this notice. All materials submitted will become the property of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and will not be returned. This RFI does not restrict the U.S. Government's approach on any future Solicitation or Notice of Funding Opportunity.

Responses to this RFI are strictly voluntary, and USAID will not reimburse respondents for the preparation of information submitted in response to this RFI. Responses to this notice cannot be accepted by the U.S. Government to form a binding contract or assistance award.

Respondents will receive electronic confirmation acknowledging receipt but will not receive individualized feedback on any suggestions. Submissions in response to this RFI will not be returned and respondents will not be notified of the results of the review. Questions regarding this announcement will not be answered. After USAID reviews and considers any responses, a decision will be made regarding whether and how to proceed with the new potential activity.

Not responding to this request does not preclude participation in any future solicitation or funding opportunity, if any is issued. USAID reserves the right to use information provided by respondents for USAID’s own purposes. While it is not the intention to make public any response to this request, proprietary and sensitive information must not be sent.

Responding to this Notice will not give an advantage to an organization in any subsequent procurement.

II: PRELIMINARY ACTIVITY PURPOSE

USAID/Georgia seeks to partner with relevant stakeholders that can implement a media and information support activity using innovative approaches to strengthening the quality of media and information in Georgia. This activity will advance key USAID/Georgia priorities, including advancing democracy, human rights, and governance goals and objectives; promoting transparent, citizen-responsive governance and democratic norms and institutions; and engaging with Georgian civic movements to hold the Georgian government accountable for commitments, building demand for responsive governance, as noted in the USAID/Georgia Country Development Cooperation Strategy 2020-2025.¹

Unlike previous USAID support to media in Georgia, this activity will be linked to community action by stimulating “**Communities of Action.**” USAID will support the growing convergence of media and civil society, working with media actors that provide information that resonates with citizens’ concerns, and that have a catalyzing force in the active community engagement of Georgian citizens, to help them build institutions or hold to account the institutions that are failing them. The potential for the media to contribute to democratic development is articulated in the Mission Statement of 2021 Nobel Laureate Maria Ressa’s publication *Rappler*: “Through cutting-edge stories, conversations, and collaboration, we aim to speak truth to power and build communities of action for a better world.”² This notion articulates journalism’s ability to nourish “communities of action” by providing the populace with data, facts, and information that inform

¹ [Country Development and Cooperation Strategy -- Georgia 2020-2025](#)

² [Rappler: Mission Statement](#)

public discussion about important issues. The activity will take a broad view of communities -- defined by groups of individuals bound by geography, cause, and association -- that are working together to advance reforms, build institutions, and engage in collective action to advance Georgia's political and economic development.

Deliberative democracy: This activity will work with media and information actors to create spaces for deliberative democracy, defined in a recent report by the Center for International Media Assistance as “citizen engagement practices which can help to ensure that local governance more accurately reflects the needs of a representative cross-section of local citizens, avoiding elite capture or the dominance of a particular social or political faction” and can be assisted by appropriate media engagement to ensure wider receptivity by citizens.”³ As the report suggests, “deliberative democracy practices can help media outlets ensure the relevance of their content to the public and can help address the challenges of disinformation and media manipulation.”

Focus on content: In doing so, this activity will take an expansive view of the information and media landscape that goes beyond traditional media institutions. The activity aims to support outlets that citizens are turning to for news and information. Georgia's information sector is evolving and contains a range of players; this activity will support *new* content offerings in a range of formats and players, regardless of platform. It will seek to meet audiences where they get their information to make key decisions in their lives, and upon which their communities coalesce to solve their common concerns. The activity will work with start-ups, online influencers, investigative reporters, and/or teams within a (traditional) media outlet working on innovative or experimental content that demonstrate promise to resonate in the public discussion and deliver impact. This approach is distinct from traditional support to established independent media outlets, and in doing so, will assume some level of risk, investing in new players and experimentation.

Preliminary Goal/Vision of Success: Protecting an information landscape that is vital to Georgia's citizens and communities and holds Georgia's government to account. To achieve this vision of success, the activity will work toward the following anticipated objectives:

Objective 1: Increase the number of high quality, alternative, independent sources of information that are available to communities.

Objective 2: Preserve and strengthen an enabling environment that fosters press freedom and access to information.

Objective 3: Develop more effective self-regulation among media professionals and information producers that sets standards for quality and ethics.

³ “[The Wisdom of the Crowd: Promoting Media Development through Deliberative Initiatives](#),” Craig Matasick, September 2020, Center for International Media Assistance

III: BACKGROUND

Journalism under threat

Once a beacon of a vibrant, free, and unfettered press, Georgia's media environment is on weaker footing, in particular for those media representatives who challenge the current government. They routinely experience threats and verbal attacks, both online and offline, by politicians, members of the clergy, and extreme nationalist agitators, in some cases culminating in physical attacks. These attacks have reached life-threatening levels, with spikes around elections and other politically sensitive events. Observers reported that in the period between the parliamentary elections in fall 2020, and local elections in fall 2021, 93 journalists were physically attacked, with over half taking place on July 5-6 in a coordinated, violent episode that has not led to any arrests, prosecutions, or consequences for those responsible.⁴

What some call the "Pogrom against Media," on July 5-6, highlights this low point in Georgia's deteriorated media environment. The two day period began with media covering Georgia's LGBT Pride celebration and ended in mass violence directed at 53 journalists, camera-operators, and photographers from over 10 media outlets by violent far-right groups involved in verbal abuse, physical injuries resulting in death, and deliberate destruction of journalists' equipment. The hostile environment for journalists in Georgia has grown over the last two decades: V-Dem data (see fig.1) shows a significant rise in harassment of journalists in Georgia who are "threatened with libel, arrested, imprisoned, beaten, or killed by governmental or powerful nongovernmental actors while engaged in legitimate journalistic activities."⁵ Although Georgia's laws protect freedom of the press, through its Criminal Code, Article 154 (unlawful interference with the professional activities of journalists⁶), this article is rarely invoked. Despite statements from the Prime Minister, the Georgian National Communications Commission, demands from Parliamentarians for a hearing from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and recommendations of civil society and the international community; as well as the availability of documented video

⁴ [Pre-election Media Environment](#), Transparency International/ Georgia

⁵ [Varieties of Democracy](https://www.v-dem.net/en/news/harassment-journalists-2017/), <https://www.v-dem.net/en/news/harassment-journalists-2017/>

⁶ [Law of Georgia, Criminal Code](#)

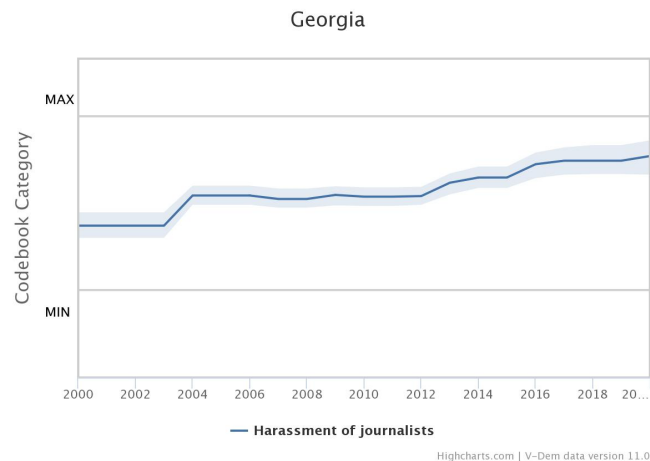
evidence of and witnesses to the violent episode, Georgia's law enforcement did not make any arrests in connection with the incident.⁷

Subsequently, media workers assumed an activist stance to defend themselves and the state of freedom of the press in Georgia, protesting the lack of action from the authorities in the month after the attacks. Broadcasters, such as Mtavari, Pirveli, Formula, Kavkasia, dropped their programming for days, airing black screens with the names of injured journalists and calling for the Prime Minister to resign. They held rallies before the parliament to mourn the death of TV Pirveli's Lekso Lashkarava, a casualty of July 5-6, push for safe working conditions for journalists, demand accountability for the organizers of the violence, and call for the resignation of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Internal Affairs.

Georgia also has seen backsliding in access to information, as public officials restrict access to journalists and institutions by not responding to freedom of information requests,

leading to diminished government transparency and accountability. In its June 2021 report, the Institute for the Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI) noted sharp decreases of access to public information during the Covid19 pandemic, with an 80% response rate of requests made to public institutions -- the lowest response rate for IDFI since 2013.⁸ While 80% may seem relatively high, according to IDFI, only 56% of responses were received within the required period of 10 days and many were incomplete or of limited use. Furthermore, in comparison to 2018, the percentage of complete responses decreased by 7% in 2019, while the ratio of unanswered requests increased by 5%; and during 2019 the number of public institutions demonstrating 100% access to public information was nearly twice as low as in the previous year.

It is against this backdrop of a more dangerous operating context for journalists and less accountable governance that Reporters Without Borders has shown an overall decline in

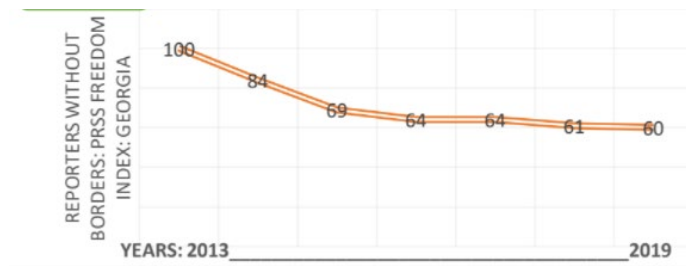


⁷ [“A Pogrom of the Media: Tbilisi July 5-6, 2021,”](#) Media Advocacy Coalition.

⁸ [“Access to Public Information in Georgia,”](#) Institute for the Development of Freedom of Information

Georgia's rating on the World Press Freedom Index from a rank of 100 out of 180 countries in 2013 to 60 out of 180 countries in 2020, reflecting a historically low point for Georgia's media.

Media polarization, shifts in media consumption, lack of public support and trust

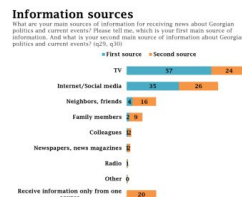


The media landscape in Georgia is diverse, yet politicized. Georgia's national TV broadcasters have traditionally been the most consumed media. They reflect the state of the country's politics, with several serving as a mouthpiece for the ruling party and pro-opposition broadcasters unrelentingly critical of it. They are frequently subject to criticism for unethical coverage, sensationalization of politics, use of divisive rhetoric across nearly all topics, and for coverage that is removed from the day-to-day concerns of regular Georgian citizens. Consequently, they do not enjoy a high level of trust among the public, according to public opinion surveys. In an IRI poll, 45% of respondents expressed trust in Imedi TV (pro-governmental), 29% in Mtavari Arkhi (oppositional), and 36% in Rustavi2 (oppositional),⁹ with respondents generally trusting broadcasters that conformed with their own political perspectives.

These polarized national TV stations, however, are not the sole providers of information and are increasingly losing their hold on the attention of citizens as consumer habits in Georgia are changing.

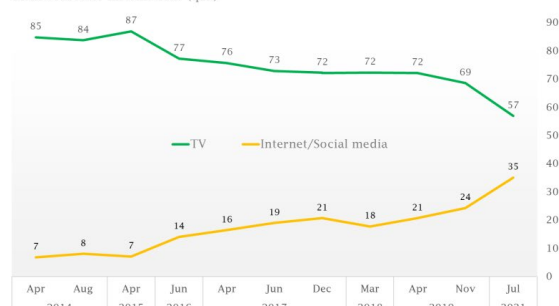
A July 2021 NDI survey shows a considerable drop since 2014 in TV consumption as the main source of news about Georgian politics and current events (from 85% to 57%). At the same time, use of the internet and social media have increased dramatically (from 7% to 35%). The increase in online consumption is mainly generational, with young (18-34) consumers consuming nearly twice as much of their information online as their primary source for news about politics and current events (62%) than consumers age 35-54 (35%) (and only 11% of ages 55 and above consuming news online).¹⁰

Dramatic rise of social media since 2014



Information sources

What are your main sources of information for receiving news about Georgian politics and current events? Please tell me, which is your first main source of information. (q29)



⁹ [Public Opinion Survey Residents of Georgia, June 2021](#), International Republican Institute

¹⁰ [Public Attitudes in Georgia, July 2021](#) National Democratic Institute

In addition, Georgians are turning to alternative sources for information, such as local and regional broadcasters and online media, and a burgeoning alternative ecosystem online of independent content producers that enjoy trust among their communities. These alternative information sources cover issues that are relevant and resonant in citizens' daily lives, in languages that they speak.¹¹ They increasingly play a role in mobilizing citizens around community needs and problems. Examples range from mobilizing a community to get its local authorities to repair a non-functioning movie theater, to raising awareness of those in greatest need in a community, to producing oral histories to help a community at the border reflect on the conflict it endured in the 1990s. Previous USAID support to regional media implemented by IREX has shown that, "citizens provide leads to their local community media outlets that, in turn, advocate for change by making those issues visible at a larger scale and promoting accountability for local governments."¹² Vital to their communities, they can actively tap into comparatively high levels of civic participation in Georgia where, according to a USAGM study, a substantial number of citizens are engaged in local politics and community organizations.¹³

Georgia's digital media upstarts demonstrate an alternative path for Georgia's information landscape, but many of them are small and underfunded. According to an Internews report, "Georgia: An Information Ecosystem Assessment," a defining feature of the information landscape is the growing role of social media platforms for production, distribution and consumption of information, with consumers primarily using Facebook (since October 2021 called Meta), Messenger, YouTube, Viber, Whatsapp, and Instagram and with two thirds of Meta users reporting using the platform "all the time."¹⁴ Popular digital and social media platforms have enabled local media to expand their geographic reach, with small digital startups able to capture a large share of the audience through creative, innovative storytelling; for example, RegInfo, a local outlet in Gurjaani, is among the most followed channels on YouTube, and Radio Nor, a community radio in ethnic-Armenian Ninotsminda, is listed among the most followed media on Instagram.¹⁵ There are also a promising set of emerging online influencers who may serve as potential deliverers of critical news and information, and are a part of the information landscape where young content creators dominate.

A significant challenge to the viability of much of Georgia's broadcast media sector is the lack of research and data that would help individual outlets measure and understand their audiences in order to further develop their commercial potential. Although such data exists for national TV broadcasters (TVMR and Kantar Media Group surveys), local and regional media do not have sufficient granular data about their audiences, although the Vibrant Information Barometer 2021 states that the combined audience for media that are members of the Alliance of Broadcasters

¹¹ ["Vibrant Information Barometer 2021 / Georgia," IREX](#)

¹² ["Georgian media outlets support communities during the COVID-19 pandemic," IREX, February 2021](#)

¹³ USAGM: Georgia Media Use Survey Analytical Report, Nationally Representative Survey in the Republic of Georgia, November 2020 – January 2021

¹⁴ ["Georgia: An Information Ecosystem Assessment"](#) Internews, February 2021

¹⁵ Ibid.

are placed among the top 15 by audience size in the country.¹⁶ Online media are able to use traditional web measurement and analytics tools, such as Google Analytics and Facebook Analytics to better understand their audiences and to present data to advertisers and sponsors.

Georgia's advertising market is small and unable to sustain the entire media sector: according to Internews' "Information Ecosystem Assessment," the market consists of \$34 million advertising market for TV for 2019 (a 10% drop from 2018), with approximately 71% going to TV Imedi and Rustavi2; \$3.1 million for radio; and an estimated \$1.8 million for print in 2018. In 2019, there was nearly \$1 million in *state* advertising, with 59% going to Imedi and Rustavi 2. There is limited information available on advertising on digital media, although there are figures on state spending and from Facebook on advertisements during elections.¹⁷ The commercial potential for independent media in Georgia is small, and therefore more appropriate models for independent media outlets may include community-based and non-profit models, which has increasingly become an adopted practice elsewhere in the world.¹⁸

Media self-regulation

Likely due to the fragmentation of the media among other factors, there is a weak professional culture and solidarity among media workers to advance the sector or advocate for its rights, although the events of July 5-6 galvanized journalists to work together to address that moment of crisis. Institutions such as the Georgian Charter of Journalism Ethics are vital to bring media workers together in self-regulatory efforts to discuss the state of their profession and help mediate ethical reporting practices. The Charter has a diverse membership and its efforts are respected, but, according to observers and media workers, are not broadly impactful or influential in their ability to change the state of the quality of media that consumers see. It has not been successful in enforcing adherence to the Ethics Charter and does not sufficiently foster self-reflection in the profession, for example, through research and analysis into the portrayal of various topics by media, or engagement with the public to collectively articulate a positive vision for Georgia's media landscape.

Although the Media Advocacy Coalition¹⁹ has been formed to address press freedom concerns, and several civil society organizations are tracking violations against freedom of expression and freedom of the press, these are mainly reactive and ad hoc initiatives with little sustained pressure campaigns to address the urgency to preserve Georgia's open space for media. This stands in some contrast to the early 2000s, during the Shevardnaze era, when the murder of a journalist (for example: Georgy Sanaya) could bring masses out into the street and capture high-

¹⁶ [Vibrant Information Barometer 2021 / Georgia, IREX](#)

¹⁷ "Georgia: An Information Ecosystem Assessment" Internews, February 2021

¹⁸ "Five Reasons 2020 was the Year of Non-Profit Local News," Knight Foundation, December 2020, "[New nonprofit news report: More local outlets come online](#)," Knight Foundation, June 2020, "[How More Philanthropists, Local Foundations Can Sustain Local News](#)" Knight Foundation, January 2021

¹⁹ [Georgia Media Advocacy Coalition](#)

level attention with vocal public support for the sector.

IV: ANTICIPATED PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

This activity seeks to address an evolving set of changes in Georgia's media and information landscape. These changes include how Georgian citizens are accessing news and current events that are relevant to their lives and their communities; the deterioration of robust access to information and freedom of expression; and the polarization of public discourse that is, in part, due to the lack of adherence to standards within the media sector.

The activity seeks to achieve:

- Increased availability of relevant, high-quality information across a variety of platforms/formats for citizens and their communities
- Increased trust and investment by citizens in the media they consume
- Preservation of a free and open environment for freedom of expression and press
- Entrepreneurship and innovation in content and business models to engage audiences and increase viability
- Greater commitment in the media and information sector to ethical and professional content and journalism in the public interest

Objective 1: Increase the number of relevant, high quality, alternative, independent sources of information that are available to communities.

Support to independent actors in the information system

This activity's focus will be weighted towards informational content production as opposed to traditional media outlet institutional strengthening. It will work with content producers that meet their audiences where they are: reaching them through the languages and platforms (social media, tv, radio, print) that they use; and in the formats (audiovisual, pictorial, text) that they prefer to get their news and current affairs information. It will support engaging, fact-based content that addresses community concerns and ensures all levels of government are held accountable to the citizens they serve.

The activity will take an expansive view of the information and media landscape beyond traditional media institutions. This should include, but is not limited to, teams of investigative journalists, online influencers, YouTubers, bloggers, TikTokers, start-ups, or teams working on innovative productions within traditional newsrooms. The information sector now contains a range of players and formats, operating on different platforms and serving different segments of the audience. The activity will place particular emphasis on those content producers building "communities of action" and supporting deliberative democratic practice, that provide the

information that strengthens the collective action of communities to help build institutions and/or take action where institutions are failing the communities they are supposed to serve.

Building business models for media and content production

The activity should focus on experimentation to assist media and content providers to develop viable business models with diversified revenue sources. It should build a community of practice among media entrepreneurs that are working in this area to share best practices, results of experiments, and new and innovative ideas. Financial viability for media working in the public interest is a challenge globally in both developed and developing media markets. A recent study into the state of digital native media [media companies that were born and grown entirely online] in developing contexts shows the similarities among news organizations across geographies as they strive to cover their communities and build sustainable business models.²⁰ The study concludes that although most operate with relatively small budgets, “they have an impact that punches above their weight when compared to the size of their teams and resources.”²¹ The study provides insight into how they generate revenue, which is often diversified, but primarily consists of grants (on average 30%), in addition to ads, services, and revenue from readers.

Georgian media is no different. Georgian media managers, like their counterparts overseas, are exploring new models for financial viability that align with global practices for non-profit media.²² With a small commercial advertising base available to media, non-profit or philanthropy-driven models are promising in this context. Outlets that have the resources are conducting feasibility studies and experimenting with new models such as membership models, subscriptions, paywalls, and others. This activity will stimulate entrepreneurship in the sector and will seek to connect beneficiaries with their counterparts across the region or working in analogous contexts to grow the community of practitioners in the media entrepreneurship space, and to ensure their exposure to other business models and solutions. This proposed activity will explore and experiment with feasible models that may be viable in the Georgian context that will help media diversify their funding sources, reform their business models, stimulate entrepreneurship, and grow and intensify their engagement with their audiences.

Expected results:

- Increased availability of information in the public interest on a range of platforms and reaching diverse parts of the population;
- Enhanced watchdog journalism through accountability and investigative journalism;
- Increased community engagement through relevant content in the public interest; and

²⁰“[Inflection Point International](#),” Sembra Media and Luminate Group, November 2021

²¹ Ibid.

²² “[Five Reasons 2020 was the Year of Non-Profit Local News](#),” Knight Foundation, December 2020, “[New nonprofit news report: More local outlets come online](#),” Knight Foundation, June 2020, “[How More Philanthropists, Local Foundations Can Sustain Local News](#)” Knight Foundation, January 2021

- Increased experimentation with new business models for media and content producers that strengthen their financial viability.

Objective 2: Protect and strengthen an enabling environment that fosters press freedom and access to information.

Given the volatile state of the operating environment for journalists, the activity will support more sustained and strategic advocacy to address the unacceptable level of harassment of and violence against them, calling for accountability from perpetrators of attacks against journalists (in violation of Article 154 of the criminal code: unlawful interference with the professional activities of journalists), and state institutions that have failed to protect them and uphold the rule of law. The activity will grow the cadre and capacity of legal specialists providing assistance to journalists; this may include lawyers addressing the increase in FOIA lawsuits and those bringing strategic cases relevant to protecting journalists and the practice of journalism, including, but not limited to redress for journalists who have been victims of violence as a consequence of performing their professional duties.

As it has become more challenging for media to operate in Georgia, the activity will take a holistic and proactive approach to prepare those engaged in independent reporting for their professional work, particularly those who may encounter dangerous situations, or engage in high-risk reporting. It will mitigate risks through a combination of training, equipment, and development of operational protocols to address physical and digital security concerns.

Given the recent exposure of surveillance by the security services of journalists, it is increasingly evident that there is a need to help journalists secure their data and communications. This will be addressed in this activity through digital and operational security awareness and digital hygiene assistance.

Protection of media's assets online (i.e. protecting websites from being hacked, social media accounts getting trolled, communications being intercepted) will also include exploring options for interventions to protect media outlets' institutional reputation, efforts towards creating a safer and more inclusive space online, as well as mitigating cases of harassment and trolling online, which is frequently directed at women and minorities and threatens to silence them or deter their public participation. It is well known that physical attacks against journalists have been preceded by threats and verbal attacks online and offline.

The activity will incorporate psychosocial support to help media workers prepare for reporting in dangerous situations, and handle the stress (including post-traumatic stress) that accompanies their work and affects their emotions, thoughts, judgement, and behaviors.

Expected results:

- Persistent, effective and strategic advocacy for media freedom and access to information;

- Increased availability of legal assistance for media workers;
- Enhanced safety and security of media workers through physical, digital, and psychosocial training and support; and
- Strengthened initiatives to create a safer, more inclusive online environment online.

Objective 3: Develop more effective self-regulation among media professionals and information producers that sets standards for quality and ethics.

This objective will stimulate more rigorous and impactful self-regulation, analysis, and research in the information sector. In this objective, the activity intends to support more constructive and actionable analysis and research as well as discussion fora that aim to foster greater and more effective self-reflection and self criticism within the industry.

At this time, the existing institutions (such as the Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics²³) are not sufficiently effective or influential to engage the industry and the public to hold the industry more accountable to professional standards. There are no forums of the requisite status or profile (among publications, broadcasts, public discussion, the academy) to stimulate this much needed reflection. There is likely to be some resistance to this given the fiercely independent nature of many media workers and the tendency to equate any kind of regulation with censorship. This activity will work to address this by raising the profile of respected and authoritative voices within the industry who have the gravitas to celebrate and recognize excellent work, as well as respectfully and constructively call out work that is not up to standard.

The activity will not focus exclusively on the professional journalism cadre and will be inclusive of those influencers and content producers who are a vital part of the information market, the activity will include these information players into these industry discussions.

Expected results:

- Improved self-regulation within the media sector;
- Increased adherence to the Ethical Charter;
- Increased public support for media; and
- More effective institutions of media analysis and criticism.

V: INFORMATION REQUESTED:

USAID seeks your input, comments, and recommendations on any or all of the following questions below. Other questions and comments are also welcome. This is not a formal question

²³ [Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics](#)

period; therefore, USAID will not be providing responses. The USAID design team will review all comments and questions and use them to inform the development of the activity.

1. Are the initial proposed objectives and results achievable and/or realistic? If not, why? Please be specific. Are there additional objectives or results that you believe would make this activity more effective in achieving the stated purpose?
2. USAID/Georgia has a long history of media programming since 1994. What new opportunities exist to promote information in the public interest in Georgia's current environment? What do you think could be achieved in five years and in the given budget (\$10m), within the stated objectives?
3. This activity seeks to take an expansive view of media as a larger information system beyond formal traditional media. How can this activity support alternative media and information producers to compete with dominant TV stations that are highly polarized and politically aligned? Are there opportunities or value to work with the large broadcasters? Is there a way to work with dominant TV stations to amplify quality, citizen-oriented reporting?
4. What viable not-for-profit or philanthropic models and opportunities realistically exist for independent Georgian media and content producers that can help them diversify their revenue streams?
5. There is a demonstrated need for strengthened self-regulation in Georgia's media sector. What may be effective approaches to create more cohesion and solidarity among the sector, and more ethical practice in journalism and content production? Georgian journalists are fiercely independent and committed to free expression, but what measures can be taken to foster a more thoughtful media analysis and critique that would not be easily dismissed, or deployed to further discredit a media sector already under attack, but to improve media standards and the quality of the public discussion?
6. How can this activity be more intentionally designed to focus on catalyzing civic action, deliberative democracy, and enhanced government accountability?
7. What are the target/underserved demographics that are in most need of increased access/availability of quality independent media? Where are there information gaps within Georgian society? Who are these underserved demographics?

Any other suggestions you may wish to offer that will improve program design and implementation are welcome.

VII. SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS:

All interested parties are welcome and encouraged to submit responses to this RFI. Responses must be in writing and must be in English. Submission via e-mail is required; phone calls or hard copy delivery will not be accepted. Submit your response via e-mail to Maya Chelidze, Senior Acquisition & Assistance Specialist, at mchelidze@usaid.gov, and rcocaucasus@usaid.gov with

the e-mail subject line of: “**Response to Georgia Media and Information Activity RFI -114-22-00001: [Respondent Name]**” no later than the due date and time stated above.

Attachments: Please attach any documents that support your comments to the above questions.

We request that respondents keep their submissions to under five (5) pages. USAID may not be able to review submissions exceeding the page limit. Focused answers and materials will be appreciated.

[END OF REQUEST FOR INFORMATION]