





MDF works with journalists, newsrooms, civil society and public officials in Ukraine and Central and Eastern Europe. Our core objectives are:

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Support impactful journal ism by developing the skills and capabilities of regional and national media organizations;

Promote high ethical and professional journalistic standards by raising awareness of their importance and sharing best practices;

Help journalists deliver real change by supporting impactful content and providing the training and resources to make themselves heard; Work with media organizations to build a media business ecosystem in which they can grow in a sustainable and independent manner;

Help media engage with stakeholders, notably public institutions and civil society, to improve governance and social well-being.

MDF BY THE NUMBERS:



We have

12

years of experience empowering independent local journalists and newsrooms;

We run a community of

75

independent local media outlets from all regions of Ukraine, with around 10 million unique viewers monthly; Over

1,100

young journalists have participated in offline internships, online mentorship, and other activities specifically designed for novice journalists;

At least

78

experienced media professionals engaged in MDF network as mentors;

20

local media outlets launched or relaunched on de-occupied or temporarily occupied territories;







Key challenges local media outlets face during the wartime:



CHALLENGE	DESCRIPTION	CHALLENGE
1. Personnel crisis	Ongoing mobilization, burnout, exhaustion and relocation increased the classic problem of staff shortage.	 → Establishment of a new innovative educational institution for media professionals, Kyiv Media School (KMS), aimed at preparing highly skilled specialists for the media sphere across specialized fields. → Journalism Experience Program (JEP), has been operational for 10 years, focusing on developing young journalists for work in top-tier media outlets and editorial teams.
2. The emergence of news deserts	After the full-scale invasion begun in 2022, a number of media outlets have ceased to exist either due to physical damage done to their communities or due to a dire financial situation following the collapse of local ad markets. Intensified bombings of borderline regions and large population centers are destabilizing media organizations and their workflows to the point of possible collapse.	 → Research: News Deserts in Ukraine. Gathering and processing the information about regions where the situation with local media could lead to the emergence of news deserts. → Local News Relaunch Initiative. Launching and relaunching local media outlets in the regions called news deserts and providing them with sustainable financing and development. → Facilitating the relocation process, providing shelter and resources to enable the relocations across the
3. Crisis of local media outlets - monetization models and distribution	During the war, the advertising model stopped working. Media mostly depend on grant support and often do not know ways to monetize content. However, if grant funding ceases, the media will face a crisis.	 → Research: State of Local News in Ukraine. This research provides a full picture of the collapse of the classic financial model in media and related risks. → Providing the media outlets with grant support through the programs (ex. Ukrainian Media Solutions) and also distributing grant funds among them. → Mentorship support to the media outlets in fundraising training. As a result, media outlets are empowered to submit successful grant applications and secure funding for their projects independently. →Risk assessment planning through Community Leaders program
4. The risk of censorship, self-censorship, and the loss of journalism as the Fourth Estate	Throughout the history of Ukraine's independence, Ukrainian journalists have struggled with the challenges of censorship and self-censorship. But at the moment, we are experiencing the closest challenge that can throw Ukrainian independent journalism back decades - closed registers and public information access restrictions.	 → MDF programs, which are aimed at editors-in-chief, build processes of resistance to external pressure of censorship and self-censorship in local newsrooms, so that the media can continue to play the role of the fourth power in their communities, monitor early recovery processes, expose corruption schemes, and continue to improve democratic processes and movement of Ukraine to the EU. → Bucha Journalism Conference Editors Club, Media Bil', National Investigative Contest and others bring together media representatives to discuss problems and challenges in the profession and to create a mechanism of protection for freedom of speech

MDF STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS BY 2027



- Local Media Sustainability. This direction aims to ensure the development and growth of local media outlets in all regions of Ukraine, including frontlines, by in-depth training programs for mid-career professionals and top managers that will lead to sustainability of the newsrooms.
- 2 Kyiv Media School. This direction presents a new initiative of the Media Development Foundation (MDF), which forms a new generation of media professionals in the face of rapid changes in the media landscape, combining ethical principles with advanced skills.
- Journalism Experience Program. This direction aims to support young journalists as they enter the media field, providing them with the necessary tools needed for their development. Since 2014, thanks to JEP, over 1,100 young journalists have participated in offline internships, online mentorship, and other activities specifically designed for novice journalists.
- 4 Community Building. This direction aims to provide the media community with a common platform for networking and building quality partnerships through regular offline meet-ups, conferences, and online/offline activities.
- Research & Analytics. This direction aims at enriching the knowledge base of Ukrainian, Eastern European, and Central European media in terms of understanding of processes in the media system. Research and Analytics MDF bases its work on in-depth interviews, participant observation, surveys, analysis of constituent instruments, as well as content and marketing indicators.
- 6 Core Media Fund. This new initiative is designed to provide sustainable and long-term financial support for independent, national, and local, independent, public-interest media in Ukraine.



We launched the Emergency Fund for Regional Media program to help editorial offices overcome the crisis at the onset of the full-scale invasion.

waves

个 56 editorial offices

个 120 relocated media professionals

120 key focus areas: management,

content, and distribution

The Emergency Fund program served as a prototype for the Launch of the Community Leaders program.

DIRECTION 1. LOCAL MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY



The Community Leaders Program aims to build a network of independent local media outlets from all regions of Ukraine who are drivers of change in their communities and anti-corruption watchdogs. Thanks to the program the media will become leaders in their communities by:

→ by audience;

→ by financial stability;

→ by impactful content.

Currently: 70 participants among which 25 media outlets are from the de-occupied and temporarily occupied territories.

Community Leaders approach:

- Engaging true media experts and mentors who are working as remote CEOs into the transformation process.
- Transforming local media outlets into sustainable and leading organizations on the market;
- Improving all the processes at the newsrooms from writing news to creating strategic plans.

Participants of the Community Leaders
Program at the strategic planning meeting

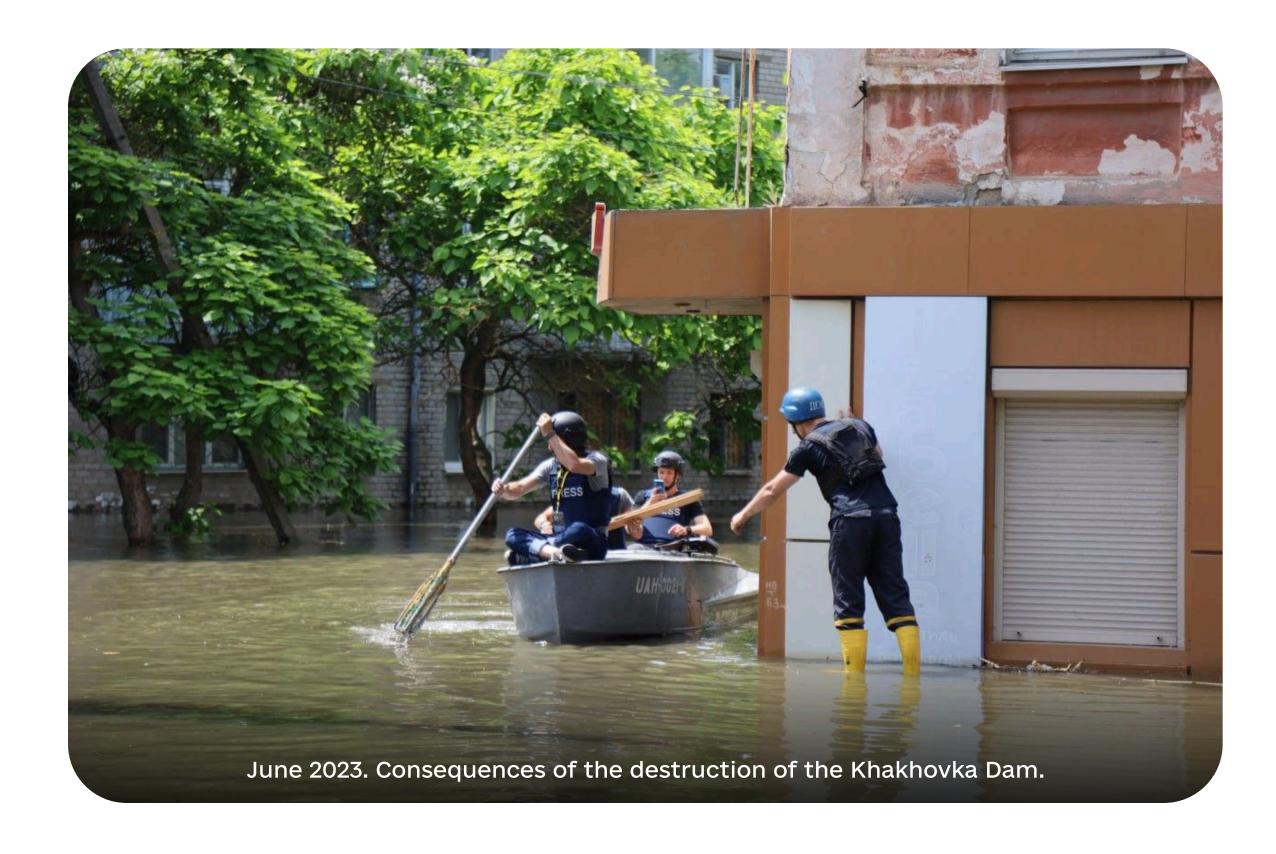
The following slides illustrate the results of this approach:

MOST, KHERSON REGION

MEDIA DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION

The media was founded in 2012 by Kateryna Handziuk and Serhii Nikitenko. MOST was and still is the only media in Kherson region that systemically covers the topic of public finance and procurement. Since the full-scale invasion started to cover the occupation of the region as well.

MOST joined the Media Development Foundation in 2021. At that time, a team consisted of **three people** who fought against the corrupt and inefficient local authorities. Currently, the editorial staff of MOST consists of **9 people**. The team has been joined by SMM specialists who managed to set up the media platforms on social media as separate platforms and an accountant.



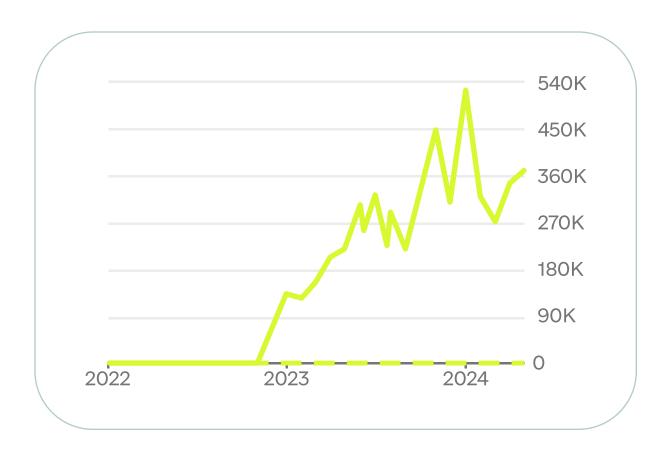


AUDIENCE:

MEDIA DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION

At the beginning of its activities, the media outlet published news about local government activities and public finances. At that time, the total audience was 35,000 people per month. In 2024, the average monthly number of website views reached 370,000, and the total reach, including social networks, reached 6-7 million.

During the systematic work of media with MDF, the indicators of coverage on all platforms in social networks, where the MOST was presented, increased several times. If at the beginning of cooperation - as of 2022 - this figure was a total of 450,000, then today the indicator is already 10.3 million.



Thanks to MDF Community Leaders program MOST:

- → Created clear work plans for the team;
- → Developed an operational strategy;
- → Established a successful content distribution strategy;
- → Thanks to experienced MDF specialists, the MOST team established processes in media management and fundraising and significantly improved the editorial part.
- → Stabilized the team and conducted a full audit of management, content, distribution and product publication. Based on the results, a transformation roadmap was prepared and specialized experts in each direction were selected.

Now, MOST is building a reader's community and working towards the development of fundraising. On an ongoing basis, 54 people were attracted to the monthly financial assistance the publication received.

The media budget increased by about 6 times compared with the pre-war period.

DIRECTION 1. LOCAL MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY



Local News Launch Initiative aims to launch or relaunch local media outlets in the regions called news deserts and provide them with sustainable financing and development.

20 participants from de-occupied and the most affected by war regions.





THE ESSENCE OF THE PROJECT:



01

Teaching

how to build capable organizations (strategy, financial planning, content improvement and audience growth)

02

Financing

the work of the teams for the start-up\restart period

03

Redesigning

the identity, creating brand books, launching the new modern websites

ACHIEVEMENTS OF PARTICIPANTS:

- → Strategy.
 each media has
 written and
 implemented 4
 strategies development,
 content, distribution
 and fundraising
- → Improvement of visibility.

Media created new identity and new sites, also learned how to monitor their influence on social processes.

→ Content.

Increasing the amount of content. As a result, the audience growth is **2+** times.

→ Financial stability.

The media use financial planning tools and launched advertising

→ Team growth.

On average, each team increased from 2-3 people to 7+

The following slides illustrate the results of this approach:

KORDON.MEDIA, SUMY REGION



The media was established on March 23, 2023 and aims to cover the Sumy region that borders Russia. The Kordon.Media team believes that this region is currently neglected in the context of national news. Therefore, they want to correct this by showcasing people who continue to fight, live, and work.

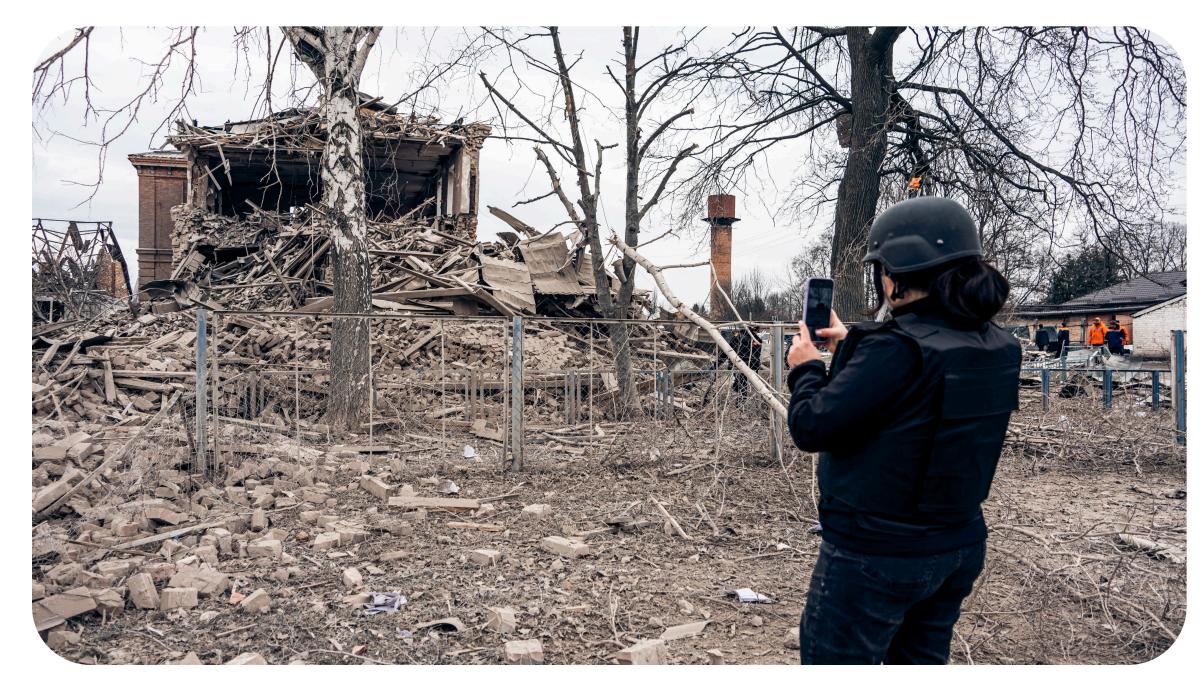
2023

6 in total, 4 co-founders (war reporters), communication manager, designer



2024

11 in total, 6 war correspondents (including the executive director, the editor-in-chief, a cameraman, a photographer, and 2 female journalists), an operations team (the operations director and the finance director).





AUDIENCE: residents of Sumy region, both those who live there and internally displaced persons. Total reach on all social media in **March 2024 - 3 581 173.**



Social network	March 2023	May 2024
YouTube (subscribers)	1818	5783 ↑ (+3965)
Instagram (subscribers)	4745	14 900 ↑ (+10 155)
Facebook (subscribers)	2800	8114 ↑ (+5314)
TikTok (subscribers)	20 000	24 900 ↑ (+4900)
Telegram (subscribers)	2700	10 153 ↑ (+7453)

Thanks to MDF Local News Relaunch Initiative:

- → hired an operations team (operations and finance directors) → updated their strategy for 2024
- → set new SMART goals
 → organized work planning, electronic document management
- → developed a content strategy
 → received 3 large grants
- → reached significant results in content distribution (Facebook engagement increased to 381,697 in March 2024.)

The editorial and operational team of the media constantly undergo training in various MDF programs. Additionally, MDF provides psychological support to media representatives.

DIRECTION 2. KYIV MEDIA SCHOOL



Kyiv Media School is a new initiative of the Media Development Foundation that was launched in 2024 and aims to establish itself as the leading institution for media professionals across Ukraine and Eastern Europe.

Our primary areas of emphasis include:

Professional training programs tailored to the media industry's demands	Master's level academic study programs	Lifelong engagement through the creation of a strong alumni community.
Two long-term courses: Local News Fundamentals and Fundamentals of News Reporting.	Cooperation with Taras Shevchenko National University on integration of KMS modules into the curriculum of the state university.	215 alumni will join the community by the end of 2024 forming one of the strongest networks of media professionals in Ukraine.
4 short-term courses: Investigative Reporting, Solutions Journalism 2.0, Content Distribution for Media Manager, Media Analytics.		



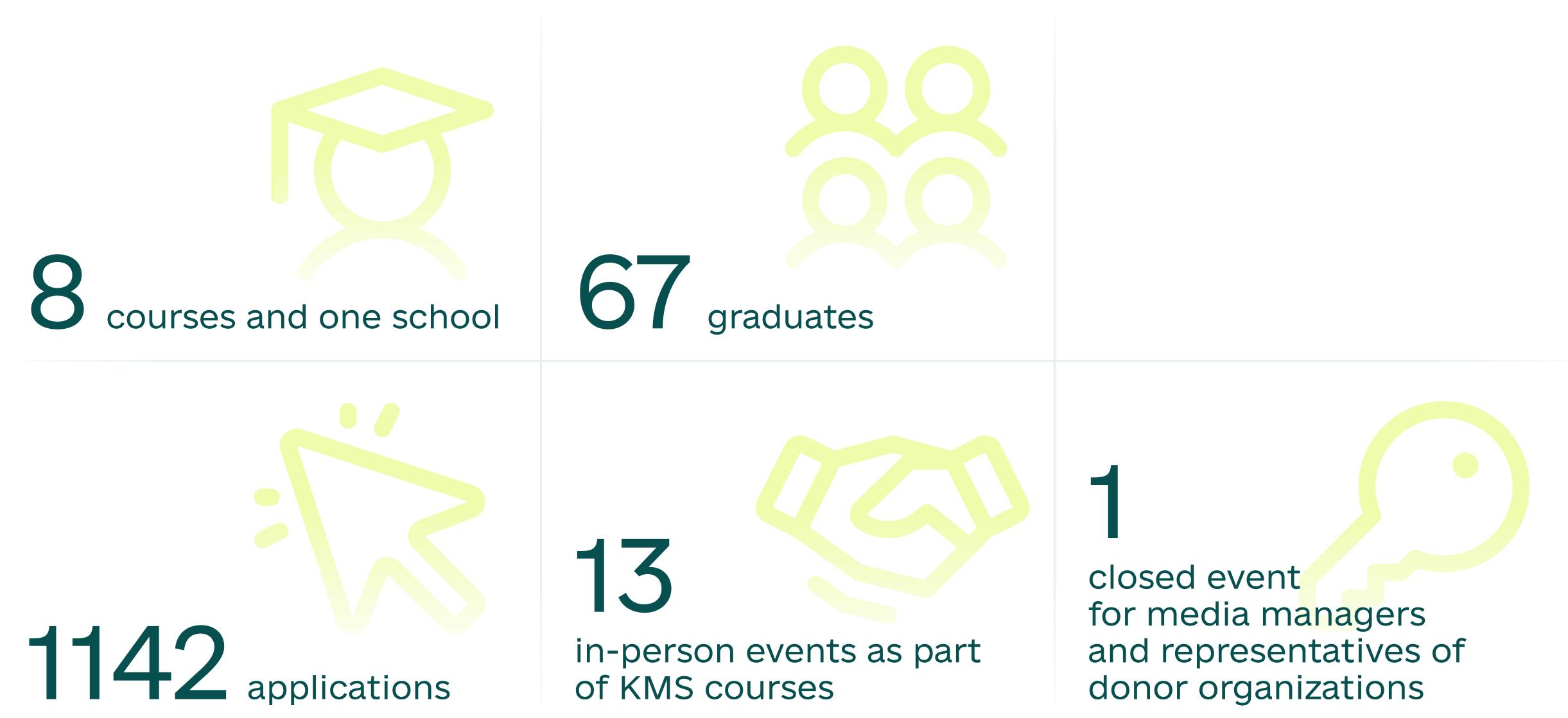




DIRECTION 2. KYIV MEDIA SCHOOL



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KMS LECTURERS INCLUDE THE BEST EXPERTS IN MEDIA, STRATEGY AND CHANGE MANAGEMENT, BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES, AND OTHERS.



These are:



ANDRIY BOBORYKIN,

CEO of Ukrayinska Pravda,



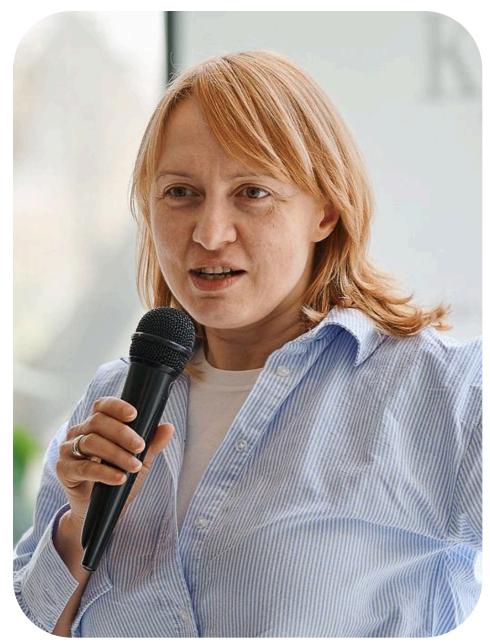
YULIA SALIZHENKO,

creative director of Platfor.ma,



ARTEM KHALIMOVSKY,

Program Manager Kyiv Media School



OLEKSANDRA BAKLANOVA,

strategy and change management consultant and managing partner of pro.mova,



GAVIN REES,

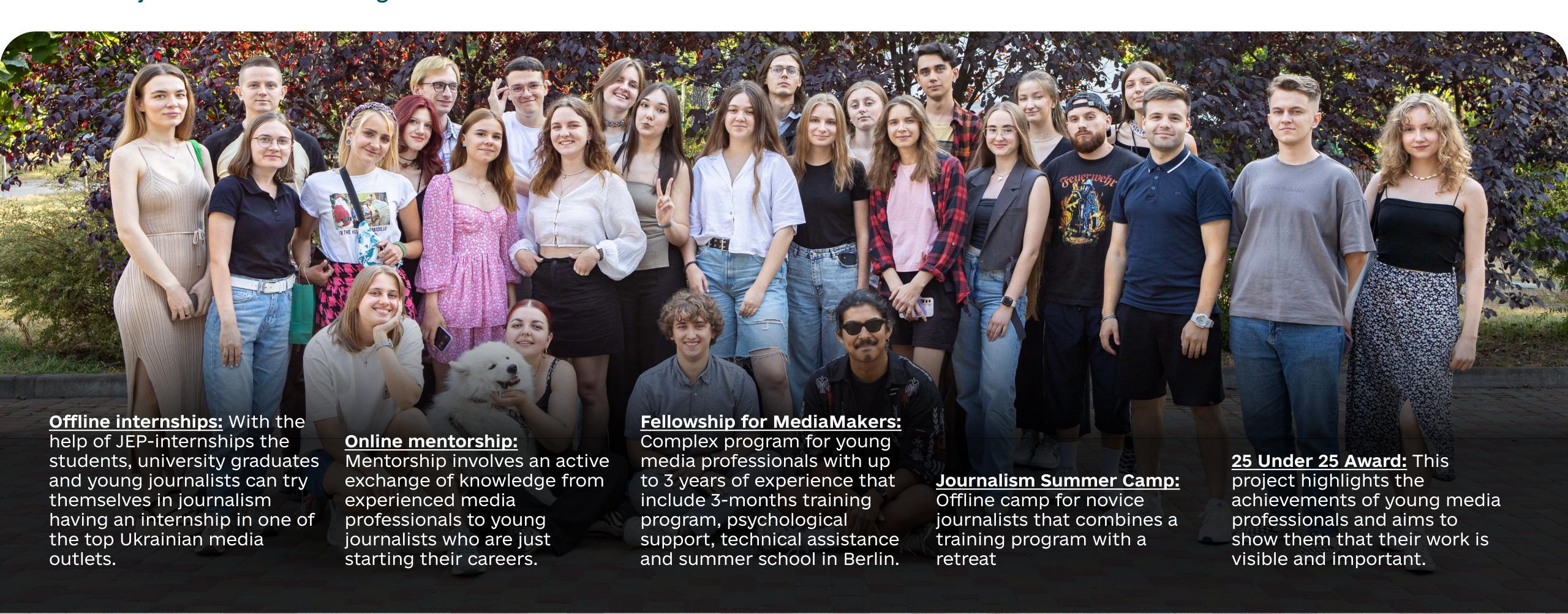
senior Advisor for Curriculum and Innovation at the Dart Center and many others.

DIRECTION 3. JOURNALISM EXPERIENCE PROGRAM



This direction aims to support young journalists and media professionals as they enter the media field, providing them with the necessary tools needed for their development through offline internships, online mentorship, fellowships, educational courses, offline meet-ups.

Since 2014, thanks to JEP, over 1,100 young journalists have participated in several activities specifically designed for novice journalists including:



FEEDBACKS



JEP-Internship



Anna
Levchenko,
Intern at
Wonderzine
Ukraine

Participating in this program changed my way of life. I realized how I want to develop further in journalism. During the internship, I learned how to process and research information, work with social media and sensitive topics, create digests, and improve my news writing skills.

JEP-Internship



Daria
Svystukha,
Short-form editor
at MediaMaker,
Ukraine

The JEP internship was pivotal in my professional journey and even changed its course. I never expected that after the internship, I would receive an offer to join the MediaMaker team as a short-form editor!

JEP International Fellowship



Kateryna Mykhaylova, Journalist at The Page

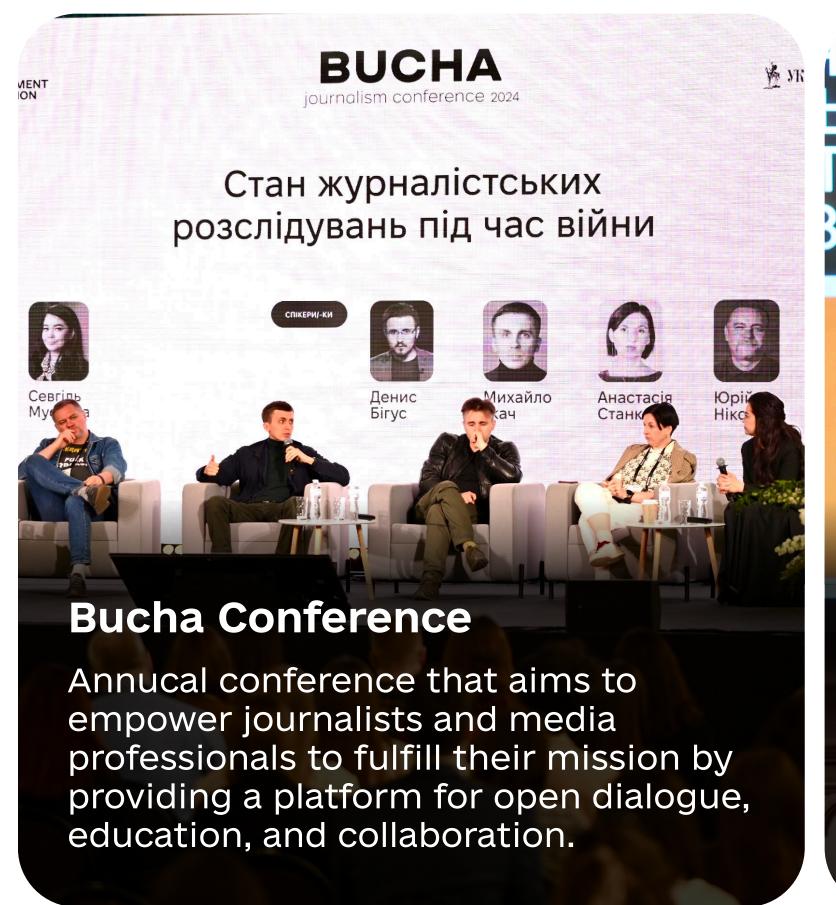
My mentor was the Belgian journalist Marteen Rabaey. During our collaboration, he explained how Western journalists cover the situation in Ukraine. Specifically, he highlighted which topics would be valuable for Ukrainians and engaging for the local audience.

DIRECTION 4. COMMUNITY BUILDING

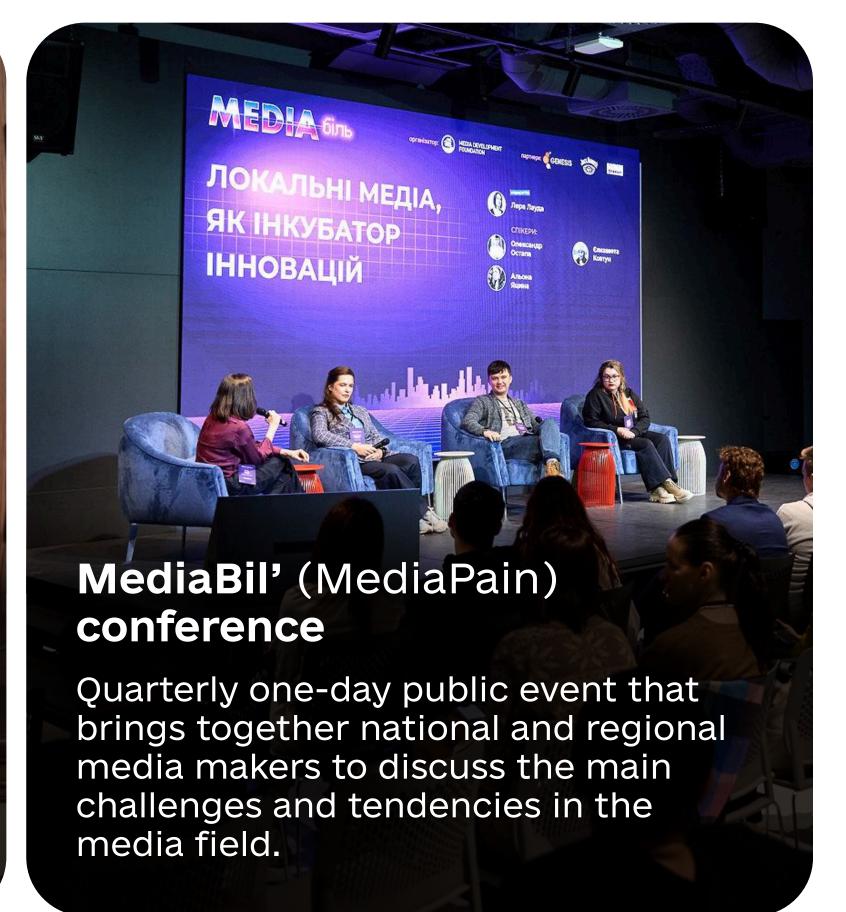


The Media Development Foundation serves as a uniting platform for the independent media with the highest professional and ethical standards at all levels - hyperlocal (community), local (district and region) and national levels, as well as media whose territories were or are temporarily occupied. It is a strong network of media professionals committed to serving their audiences.

In order to establish strong ties and partnerships between the media, we have developed a system of activities











Editors Club

A closed intellectual club for editors' of regional media. This community is focused on holding enlightening lectures from Ukraine's top minds, which will comprehensively develop and stimulate media to conduct deeper research of current events, trends and news.



MEAIAMENKEP

MediaMaker

Online media outlet for those who work (or aspire to work) in the media and want to do it honestly, balanced and beneficial to the audience. The media provides an overview of what is happening in the Ukrainian and Western media world: news, opportunities and guides to cases, stories and analytical and descriptive texts about trends that shape our work. Media share their success stories or difficult unsuccessful experiences, learn about new modern trends or discuss new wartime ethics and anti-censorship tools at MediaMaker.

DIRECTION 5. RESEARCH & ANALYTICS



This direction aims to enrich the knowledge base of Ukrainian, Eastern European, and Central European media in terms of understanding of processes in the media system. Research and Analytics MDF believes that a thorough study of processes in the media will help make their ecosystem better as a whole.

Core activities:

ACTIVITY 1.

Annual media market research aims to highlight the latest trends, changes, issues, and needs of media organizations, and obtain authentic market data and insights.

ACTIVITY 2.

Needs assessment of media organizations. This type of research is conducted at the very beginning of the project's implementation. In this way, we can track the real needs of media organizations, and prioritize them.

ACTIVITY 3.

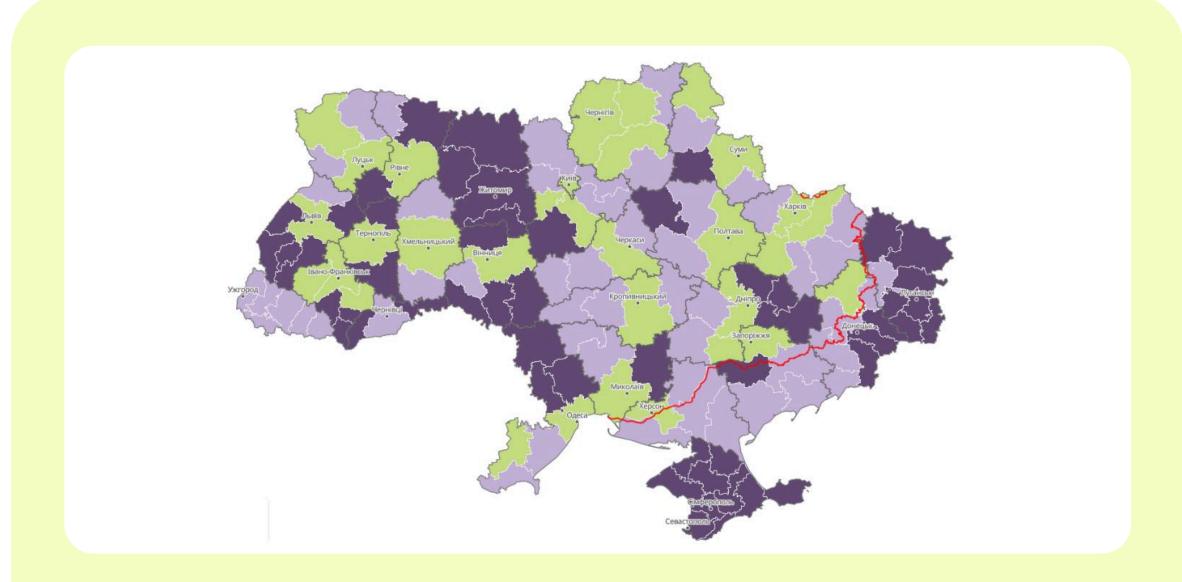
Impact assessment of media projects focusing on the evaluation of the project's goals and achievements.

ACTIVITY 4.

Specialized research of media processes and outlets – in-depth research that focuses on a specific topic or phenomenon in the field of media – investigative journalism, media management, etc.

MAIN PRODUCTS IN 2024:





"NEWS DESERTS IN UKRAINE" research

We have analyzed 138 districts and two cities: Kyiv and Sevastopol. We found 1434 media. According to the research methodology, only 157 of them are independent and cover the critical information needs of hromadas. Only 23% of districts in Ukraine are informationally "healthy.

The liberated territories demonstrate the highest level of "health"— the number of "healthy" and "partially healthy" liberated districts is 20% higher than in the districts controlled by Ukraine (which have not been subject to occupation) with the same level of "health."



"STATE OF LOCAL NEWS IN UKRAINE"

In this study, the Media Development Foundation summarizes the second year of the great war and documents the adaptive mechanisms of newsrooms in response to challenging crisis working conditions.

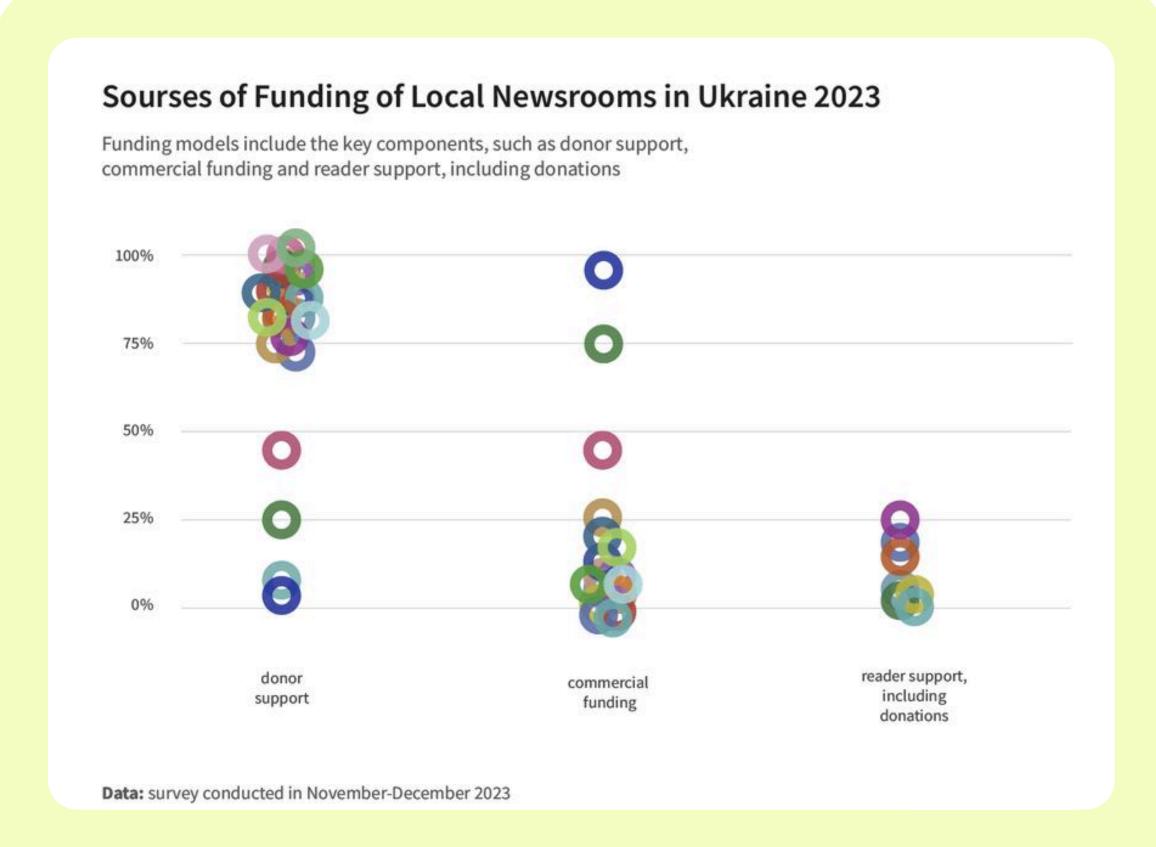
MAIN PRODUCTS IN 2024:





Research "JOURNALISTS IN THE MIDST OF FULL-SCALE WAR: REPORT ON UKRAINE"

In this study, the MDF team investigated the involvement of various stakeholder groups in addressing the issue of enhancing journalist safety during the realities of a full-scale war. As part of the project, MDF researchers collaborated with UNESCO and adapted their methodology, which has been successfully used for over 10 years to assess journalist safety indicators in other countries. The study was conducted in partnership with the Human Rights Platform and the International Solidarity Fund.



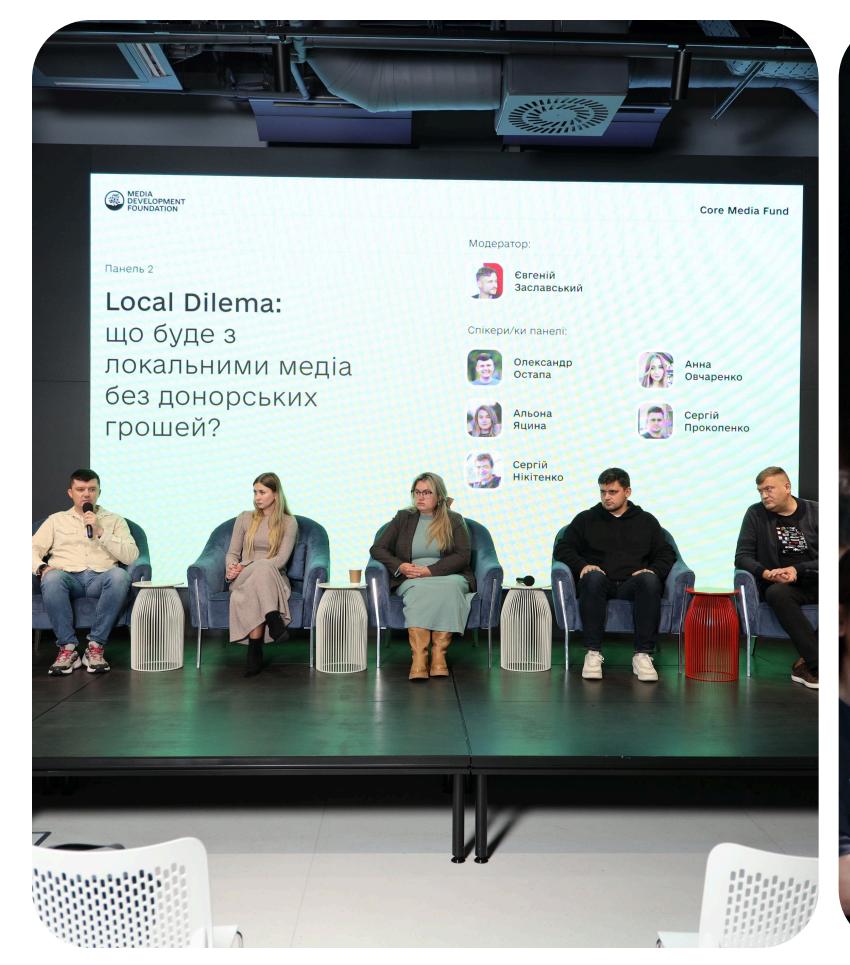
FINANCING INDEPENDENT MEDIA IN UKRAINE 2023: SALARIES AND TRENDS

This study explores the funding models of local and nationwide independent media outlets in Ukraine after two years into the war and war-related financial crisis

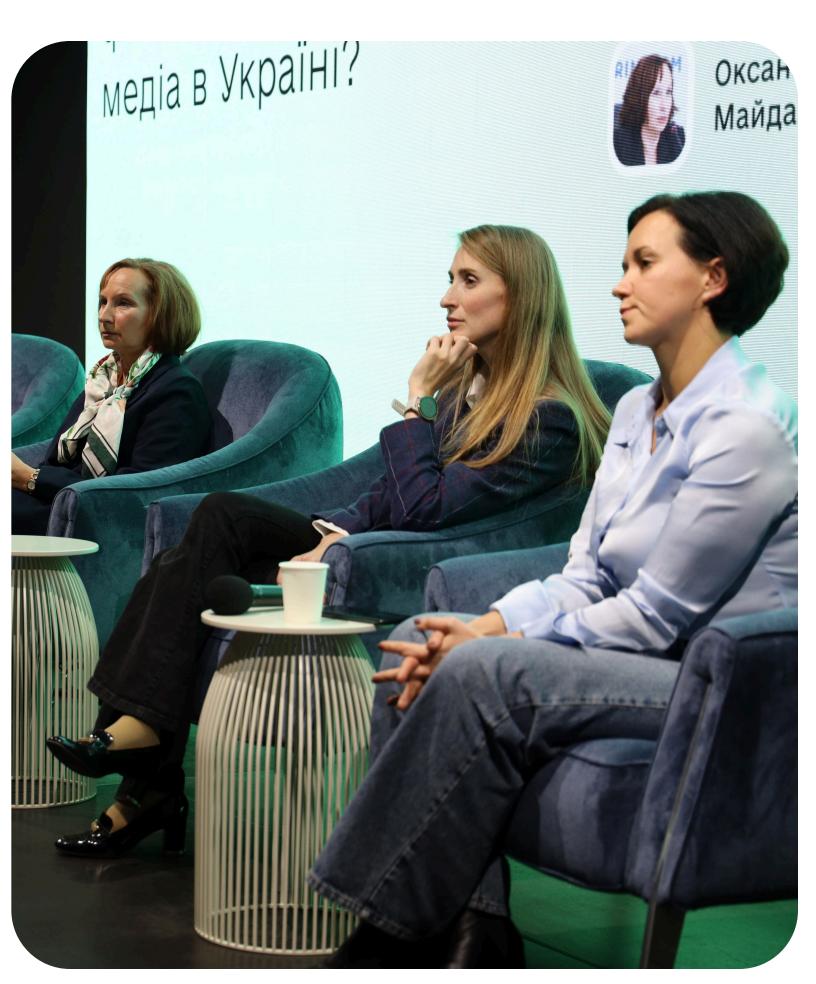
DIRECTION 6. CORE MEDIA FUND



The Core Media Fund (CMF) is a new initiative designed to provide sustainable, long-term financial support to independent media in Ukraine. Conceived n response to the critical challenges facing Ukrainian media, particularly in the context of Russia's full-scale invasion, the CMF aims to bolster the resilience and capacity of the media sector during and beyond the current crisis.









PURPOSE 13

- Create a sustainable funding vehicle for Ukrainian independent media
- Support both national and local news organizations
- Shift focus from project-based to core institutional support

KEY PROBLEM ADDRESSED 3

- Declining funds from established donors
- Current grants primarily project-focused
- Need for flexible, core support to ensure media sustainability
- High competition in the grant market
- Unsystematic support from grantors





