

Public Interest Journalism Fund: General Guidelines

Guidelines for funding applicants



If you have any questions/pātai about the following information - please contact journalism@nzonair.govt.nz

1. Purpose of this Document	1
2. Background	1
3. Goals of the Public Interest Journalism Fund	2
4. What Public Interest Journalism Is Not	3
5. Sustainability	4
6. Eligibility to Apply	4
Limited eligibility for Crown-owned and funded public media organisations (e.g. MTS and RNZ)	5
7. Data provision	5
Digital reporting requirements	5
8. Assessment Criteria	6
General Assessment Criteria	6
Role-based Assessment Criteria	7
9. Applying for Funding	7
Primary Distribution Platforms	8
General expectations and structure of applications	8
Basic information (required)	8
10. Assessment process	9
Preliminary Step: Eligibility Check	9
Stage 1 Assessment - Shortlisting	9
Stage 2 Assessment: Funding Recommendations	9
Stage 3: Ratify Recommendations	10

1. Purpose of this Document

These guidelines are for applicants intending to make a funding application to the Public Interest Journalism Fund (PIJF). In an environment where there are more applications than available funding, we want to show you how to apply and how it will be assessed. More specific information is published prior to each round about the applications we are seeking.

2. Background

In January 2021 Cabinet agreed to draw down \$55 million over the next three years (2021 - 2023) from the tagged contingency set aside by Cabinet for broadcasting initiatives. This funding will be administered by NZ On Air to support the production of public interest journalism including Māori and Iwi journalism that is relevant to and valued by New Zealanders. The [principles set out in the Cabinet paper](#) have informed the design of the fund. NZ On Air is collaborating with Te Māngai Pāho on the design and delivery of the PIJF.

The three funding pillars of the PIJF are:

- **Projects** – for tightly defined projects delivered to a deadline, similar to those funded via the NZ

Media Fund Factual stream

- **Roles** – supporting newsrooms for the employment of journalists, clearly tied to content outcomes
- **Industry Development** – An increased provision of PIJ will require growth within the journalism workforce and increased sector capability. Industry Development funding will also support projects that could include:
 - Training and development roles and programmes
 - Cadetships, journalism bursaries and internships
 - Sector collaboration and discussion
 - Staff Te Tiriti education
 - Recruitment initiatives

The PIJF will provide contestable funding delivered via a number of funding rounds. The [funding round deadlines are here](#).

The Government acknowledges a viable fourth estate is a central feature of a healthy democracy. A variety of factors have impacted the media sector in recent years diminishing its ability to fulfil this role within Aotearoa. In this context Government support is required to ensure journalistic capability across local, regional, and national newsrooms, infrastructure, and the continued production of New Zealand made content is retained. The spread of misinformation related to COVID-19, particularly through social media channels, has sharpened public awareness of the importance of, and reliance on, a strong and independent media sector. COVID-19 has accelerated the need to confront the pre-existing and fundamental challenges facing the media sector. In particular, it has compressed the time available for media companies to adapt and transition to more sustainable business models that will be fit for purpose for the future media landscape.

Sector engagement highlighted the need for the fund to reflect a Te Tiriti o Waitangi Partnership with Māori media acknowledging the different value systems that motivate content and inform reporting practices for Māori and Iwi journalism. NZ On Air intends to work with the Māori and Iwi journalism sector to ensure parity of need and interests within the sector under the PIJF.

All considerations under the PIJF will be iterative and allow for amendment prior to each funding round.

3. Goals of the Public Interest Journalism Fund

The following detail has been informed by engagement with the sector for the purposes of this fund.

The Public Interest Journalism Fund must achieve all of these things:

1. Seek to inform and engage the public about issues that affect a person's right to flourish within our society and impact on society's ability to fully support its citizens.
2. Provide accurate, accountable, and fair coverage that reflects and empowers all sectors of the community upholding the public's right to know.
3. Actively promote the principles of Partnership, Participation and Active Protection under Te Tiriti o Waitangi acknowledging Māori as a Te Tiriti partner
4. Reflect the cultural diversity of New Zealand
5. Encourage a robust and sustainable media sector.

For example, public interest journalism coverage could include content that:

- Meets the definition of Māori and Iwi journalism (detail on this below)
- Explains complex institutions, or issues
- Investigates and reports on, and explains, public policy or matters of public significance
- Reports from perspectives including Pacific, Pan-Asian, women, youth, children, persons with

- disabilities, other ethnic communities
- Engages citizens in public debate
- Informs democratic decision-making
- Holds power (in its various forms) to account
- Covers issues and sectors of society not currently being provided.

Māori and Iwi journalism

Māori and Iwi journalism is made by Māori about Māori perspectives, issues, and interests prioritising the needs of Māori.

Māori and Iwi journalism create a space and platform to give voice and representation to Māori, Iwi, hapū and hau kāinga; Māori content, language, and perspectives on all issues deemed relevant locally, nationally, and internationally.

This spectrum of reporting is integral to the protection of te ao Māori under article 2 of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and includes (but is not limited to) focus areas such as;

- Te reo Māori and tikanga
- Political matters*
- Historical accounts
- Profile-based reporting
- Tangihanga
- Māori interest
- Sports (Ki O Rahi, Waka Ama, Touch Nationals etc.)
- Civil Emergencies

*Māori and Iwi journalism and reporting is innately political in nature. This is especially true in the context of Iwi, hapū, and whānau politics as well as ensuring a plurality of voice for Māori within a national political sphere is heard.

4. What Public Interest Journalism Is Not

The sector sought guidance on what subject matter sat **outside** of the fund’s definition of ‘public interest journalism’. This exercise posed challenges when trying to compare mainstream journalism with journalism that is culturally specific. The indicative list below of ‘what PIJ is **not**’ is guided by the context of mainstream media outlets and sector feedback that advised these types of stories below are usually well-served to national and local audiences and are often stories that sell themselves.

Applicants can make the case for funded coverage of these issues on a culturally specific basis and with a clear rationale as to how they would not be covered in the normal course of events.

What PIJ is not:

- Match reports of national sporting codes
- National political coverage
- Reporting on international entertainment content
- Opinion
- High-profile crime
- Celebrity news
- International news
- Sponsored content*
- Lifestyle content with minimal connection to recent events

*Sponsored content is content specifically marked as “sponsored”, “in association with”, “brought to you by”, “advertorial” etc, and relates to news content where the advertiser has editorial input including the right of editorial veto.

Under no circumstance may funding from the PIJF be paid to subjects for interviews.

5. Sustainability

While the PIJF is currently funded only until the end of FY 2023, applicants should consider how their proposal might be sustainable beyond that time frame or how it might contribute to sustainable outcomes.

6. Eligibility to Apply

All general eligibility criteria below must be met for applications to be assessed.

General Eligibility Criteria	Overview
Commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and to Māori as a Te Tiriti partner	Applicants can show a clear and obvious commitment or intent for commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, including a commitment to te reo Māori. This commitment will enhance public interest journalism, resulting in stronger Māori representation and greater bi-cultural collaboration within the wider journalism sector. More guidance on this is provided in our Q & A document .
Commitment to Public Interest Journalism (PIJ)	We expect applicants applying for funding to have a demonstrated commitment to PIJ. In most cases, a history of broadcasting or publishing journalism will be necessary.
Data provision	Applicants must commit to use of common metrics where possible and the provision of other audience engagement, output and financial data as required. See section 7 for details.
NZ commitment	Applicants can show a track record of, or plan for, a sustained commitment to NZ content. Funding will be restricted to applicants who generate content that is focused on the New Zealand market (or a regional or local market in New Zealand), who employ journalists in New Zealand, have an operational presence in New Zealand, and pay tax in New Zealand. This initiative will not support overseas-domiciled organisations that may report on New Zealand affairs from time to time.
Freely available, simultaneous online distribution	All funded content must be broadcast or published in an acceptable form online (i.e. publishing a PDF online does not meet accessibility standards and therefore would not be considered acceptable under the PIJF). Funded content must be available to the NZ public free of charge. If behind a paywall or in a magazine with a cover price, funded content must also be available free of charge as close to simultaneously as possible in a readily available online location.
Media Standards	Applicants will be required to be subject to a relevant standards regime (the Media Council or the Broadcasting Standards Authority).
PIJF acknowledgement	In the interests of transparency, content will be required to be clearly signalled as funded by the PIJF. Guidelines on PIJF acknowledgement will be provided with the funding contract and will be a condition of the contract.
Capability	Applicants must be able to demonstrate they have the current capability to deliver (or a plan for how they will intend to deliver) the proposed scope of work.
Admin/HR capacity	Applicants must have the ability to handle payroll, overheads, holiday cover, sick leave etc. Individual journalists may not apply for funding. For role-based funding, the capacity to manage performance, ability to provide support and exercise a duty of care will be required.

Limited eligibility for Crown-owned and funded public media organisations (i.e. Māori Television and RNZ)

Projects	Roles	Industry development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> where the funded content is additional to content that the entity is currently funded for, and when acting in partnership with independent content producers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> where the funded role is additional to roles that the entity is currently funded for, and where the funding does not duplicate other roles funded through the PIJF. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> where the funded initiatives are additional to initiatives that the entity is currently funded for.

Although Māori Television is Crown funded, it is significantly different to other Crown funded organisations. Established through a Waitangi Tribunal claim and legislation to rectify Crown breaches in Te Tiriti, its specific purpose and function is to promote, protect and revitalise te reo Māori (under article 2 of Te Tiriti o Waitangi). This is highlighted in the fact that this organisation is not funded specifically for journalism purposes but has chosen to invest in those areas due to the important role journalism plays in the revitalisation of te reo Māori.

7. Data provision

It is essential to the PIJF that funded entities return regular and accurate performance metrics to NZ On Air. This reporting is an integral requirement of funding and must be considered prior to applications being made. Some content types may not be covered by the reporting requirements outlined below. In those cases, the onus is on the applicant to demonstrate how they will measure and report audience engagement.

Reporting cadence	<p>Metrics must be filed on a quarterly basis for the reporting lifetime of funded projects or roles. Deadlines for all funded applicants are common regardless of the first publication or broadcast date.</p> <p>Reporting deadlines will follow the financial year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Q1, end first week October (reporting period 1 Jul – 30 Sep) Q2, end first week January (reporting period 1 Oct– 31 Dec) Q3, end first week April (reporting period 1 Jan – 31 Mar) Q4, end first week July (reporting period 1 Apr – 30 Jun)
Reporting lifetime	NZ On Air, in consultation with the funded applicant will set the “reporting lifetime” of funded applications so that the majority of audience engagement is captured.
Reporting granularity	<p>Each piece of funded content should be broken out, with content name, publish/broadcast date and primary author identified along with core metrics. In addition to this granular reporting, engagement metrics for funded projects as a whole should be provided where possible for the quarter.</p> <p>It is necessary to ensure funded content is sufficiently organisationally distinct from non-funded content to allow for accurate reporting.</p>

Digital reporting requirements

Installation of Google Analytics	Funded applicants must use Google Analytics (GA) where web traffic is reported. Guides are available for the installation of this free analytical suite.
Websites	Core metrics from GA, with video views for embedded players. Core metrics will be detailed in the PIJF Common Metrics Framework provided with the funding contract and will be a condition of the contract.

Video	One video view will be defined as viewing for >30s.
Third-party platforms	Engagement with funded content on, for example, Google AMP pages, Facebook Instant Articles, MSN and other third-party platforms will be reported on using GA or with measures approximating the core metrics. Third party platform distribution should be flagged in applications.
Podcasts	Aggregated downloads, with embedded media plays and subscribers where possible.
Apps	Engagement with apps must be reported with measures approximating the core metrics and broken out from Web and third-party metrics.
Social media	Applicants with social media specific projects or outputs should specify how they propose to report performance in their applications. In general, it will not be necessary to report on reach or engagement in social media as adjuncts to core web and app reporting. Video views on social media will be required where the view meets the PIJF reporting standard.

Offline reporting requirements

Offline reporting will require a “best fit” approach regarding the quarterly reporting cadence.

Print	Isolating the performance of individual pieces of funded content through circulation and readership figures is generally not possible. Nevertheless, circulation and readership should be supplied to give an indication of funded content reach.
TV	Nielsen consolidated ratings to be used as per the NZ Media Fund reporting requirements.
Radio	Similar to print reporting, it is difficult to isolate the content performance of small funded projects. Where funded content corresponds to an identifiable “day part” in GfK, then metrics should be reported. Station cumulative audience and other general metrics may also be used as indicators of engagement.

8. Assessment Criteria

General Assessment Criteria

The following criteria will be used to broadly analyse all applications to ensure the objectives of the PIJF are met across the breadth of applications funded. However, round guidelines will include specific assessment criteria depending on what the focus of that round is.

Upholds PIJ	Meets the goals and definition of PIJ as outlined in Section 3 of this document.
Māori and Iwi journalism	Supports and promotes Māori and Iwi journalism that is made by Māori about Māori perspectives, issues, and interests prioritising the needs of Māori.
Targeted audiences	Targets content areas and communities (local, regional, national) that are currently not being fulfilled in particular: Pacific, women, youth, children, persons with disabilities, ethnic communities (with a focus on Pan-Asian communities).

Discoverability	A clear and convincing plan to reach the target audience/s.
Collaboration	Content distribution agreements, aggregation by platforms/publishers, sharing resources or co-producing content furthers the interests of the industry and audience.
Sustainability	Applicants should consider how their proposal might be sustainable beyond that time frame or how it might contribute to sustainable outcomes.
Ethics	Applicants must demonstrate how they will adhere to ethical and professional standards in journalism coverage.

Role-based Assessment Criteria

Supporting environment	Focused, relevant, costed, and delivered by dedicated, qualified people. Consideration will be given to the employment environment within the funded organisation. Platforms/publishers must show how they will support funded roles materially, legally, culturally, and emotionally, and highlight pathways for journalists' development. Clear editorial direction for employed roles is essential to ensure quality output.
Additional resource	Barring exceptional circumstances, funded roles should be additional to the existing workforce of a funded organisation with a view to their ongoing sustainability. In cases where loss of staff is demonstrably imminent, non-incremental roles may be funded. In this instance, applicants must be prepared to provide financial information (including potentially commercial sensitive information) on a confidential basis to be reviewed by an appropriate independent assessor.

9. Applying for Funding

- You must be registered with our online system before you can apply: funding.nzonair.govt.nz
- Register as a platform/publisher: funding.nzonair.govt.nz/platform
- You can register at any time and we encourage you to register well in advance of [funding deadlines](#)
- Please have all your documents ready to upload when you submit your application.

The PIJF is open to applications from content producers and platforms/publishers with a track record in public interest journalism and a demonstrated means to distribute that journalism to the intended audiences.

Applications must include a viable path to audiences. Individual applicants (i.e. independent content producers) with no direct audience relationship must be commissioned by platforms/publishers and must nominate a primary distribution platform in our applications portal at submission stage. Individual journalists may **not** apply for funding.

Platforms/publishers who intend to produce their own content can apply for funding and will need to be registered as a content provider. If you wish to support applications from third party content creators you will also need to be registered as a platform.

Platforms/publishers may include, for example, newspapers, apps, newsletters, magazines, TV channels, websites, and radio stations. Platforms/publishers must be able to demonstrate they have been operating for **at least six months** and can demonstrate an engaged and reasonable-sized audience (relative to the intended target audience size).

More than **two** applications for the same project that has already been declined in previous PIJF funding rounds will not be accepted unless you seek and gain approval from the Head of Journalism to resubmit it.

Applicants will **not** be able to submit proposals until all the required fields have been completed, so **please do not leave application completion to the last minute**. You can save your application at any time throughout the process and come back to it via your dashboard prior to the deadline. We do not guarantee that we will be able to contact applicants about discrepancies, and incorrect or incomplete information may adversely affect a funding application.

Primary Distribution Platforms

We recommend platforms/publishers have a single point in the organisation to coordinate and authorise support for applications to NZ On Air.

Platforms must formally confirm support for third-party projects when nominated as a primary distribution platform by an applicant.

Primary platforms will confirm their commitments online via our applications portal.

Other platforms that have confirmed involvement will provide written confirmation to the applicant prior to deadline so they can upload them with their application.

After logging in to our applications portal, platforms will be able to access a list of applications from the dashboard, that cite them as the primary distribution platform. They will be able to review the details of those applications.

Primary platforms will be asked to verify all these applications. We will need this verification within two working days of the deadline closing.

Platforms will warrant that all information they provide to us is complete and accurate as we may rely on it.

We both agree to take reasonable steps to protect the other's confidential information. Our obligation to protect confidential information is subject to the Official Information Act 1982 and other legal, parliamentary, and constitutional conventions.

General expectations and structure of applications

We suggest you consider these overarching questions when developing your application:

- How does your application meet the objectives of the PIJF?
- Does your application meet all of the eight general eligibility criteria?
- Are the skills and experience of the team appropriate for the project?

Basic information (required)

- Name of your project
- A one-line overview of the project
- The content output (i.e. total minutes (video or audio content), total number of articles (text-based))
- Budget information. At the first stage submission - a budget summary will be required (we're aware there will be different types of costs and considerations dependent on content type (e.g. print, video)).
 - At the shortlist stage - a detailed budget will be submitted in an excel format.

We will want to see aspects covered in your application including:

- Ethical and professional standards in journalism coverage you will adhere to
- Where a project has specific cultural or spiritual elements, we will expect you to include information (e.g. a plan) that demonstrates how these will be handled through implementation, production, and distribution to ensure safety of subjects and staff/crew and appropriate handling of subject matter
- Appropriate people attached to the project in leadership roles who can manage and advise on these

- cultural and spiritual aspects of the production at critical stages (e.g. research, language advisors)
- Language strategies to ensure correct pronunciation and use of language/s and dialects
 - Meaningful representation in key roles
 - Where relevant - mentoring and professional development – leading to career pathways.
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10. Assessment process

The [assessment process flowchart is here](#).

Preliminary Step: Eligibility Check

Only eligible applications will be accepted for assessment. To be eligible, applications must meet the general eligibility criteria and:

- Applications must include complete and accurate documentation. Applications with significant omissions, inaccuracies or which clearly do not meet funding criteria will be declined. The decision to decline an application at this stage will be made by the Head of Journalism.

Stage 1 Assessment: Shortlisting

- Applicants will submit proposals **up to five pages** long.
- Applications will be grouped into like applications by topic, genre, funding request amount, or any other factors considered relevant given the types of applications received. Each group of applications will be assigned to an assessment team.
- Each assessment team will comprise at least three people:
 - at least one NZ On Air funding team member
 - at least one Te Māngai Pāho team member, and
 - **up to** three external assessors
- This assessment stage requires individual assessors to consider the assessment criteria, and then compare like applications against like applications.
- The assessment team will meet formally to discuss the assessment of all **Stage 1** applications. During this meeting, questions individual assessors had about an application will be drawn to the attention of the assessment team.
- The assessment team will then meet to determine a shortlist of applications, that will be invited to submit full proposals. Unsuccessful applications at this stage will be advised stating the key reason for decline.

Stage 2 Assessment: Funding Recommendations

- The assessment team (same team as for Stage 1) may speak to shortlisted applicants to seek further clarification on applications before the applicant makes their full proposal submission.
- Applicants will submit full proposals through our funding applications portal.
- Full applications will once again be grouped into like applications and assigned to the same assessment team.
- The assessment team will meet formally to discuss the assessment of all **Stage 2** applications and the quantum of funded requested in relation to available funding. The assessment team will confirm the finalised aggregated assessment, and these will be reviewed by the Head of Journalism.
- A NZ On Air Funding team member will complete a combined funding paper which will generally cover

a group of applications. The funding paper may outline assessment discussions, explore the merits of the individual applications, and discuss all other relevant considerations that led to the proposed recommendations, including noting any strongly varying opinions.

Stage 3: Ratify Recommendations

Funding papers are submitted to the:

- NZ On Air Staff Investment Committee (SIC), for all applications seeking ≤ \$1m
- NZ On Air Board, for all applications seeking over \$1m.

SIC will:

- *review* all applications seeking ≤ \$1m, and discuss any high-level process issues or funding trends that are emerging
- *discuss* the funding papers and recommendations, including considering both available investment funds and applications going to the Board
- *agree* to fund or not fund individual applications, along with any conditions it wishes to impose, by full consensus. In a split decision, applications will be referred to the Board for determination.

The Board will:

- *review* all applications over \$1m, and any applications referred by SIC, and
- *agree* to fund, or not fund, with any conditions it wishes to impose.