



JOURNALISM
FUTURES FUND

FONDS AVENIR
MÉDIAS

FUNDING GUIDELINES

ORGANIZATIONAL FUNDING STREAM

FALL 2025

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*Note: terms highlighted in **blue** are defined in the Glossary*

1. FUND OVERVIEW

The Journalism Futures Fund was created by philanthropic foundations and individual donors in Canada to **support independent journalism that strengthens civic life and democracy**. It supports journalistic excellence, equity and financial sustainability.

The inaugural round of the Fund is focused on small-to-medium journalism organizations that produce impactful journalism, have a track record of engagement with their audiences and are led by members of communities that are **underserved** in Canadian media.

The Organizational Funding Stream offers multi-year funding paired with **capacity-strengthening support.** The goal is to increase journalism organizations' operational and financial resilience and deepen their engagement with their audiences. Two to seven organizations will receive three-year grants of \$50,000 to \$200,000 CAD per year. Please note that successful applicants may not be awarded the full amount requested.



2. FUND BACKGROUND

Quality independent journalism provides us with the trusted information we need to participate in civic life and hold power accountable. It puts our communities' priority issues on the public agenda, and it introduces us to stories that challenge us and spur us to action.

Many communities in Canada are underrepresented in newsroom **leadership**¹, and a growing body of research has established the negative social and cultural impacts of their stereotyping, misrepresentation and erasure in news coverage.² Supporting journalism by and for underrepresented communities therefore helps:

- **rebuild trust in media and strengthen resistance to misinformation;**
- **increase the visibility of the community's priority issues and leadership;**
- **strengthen journalism outlets' sustainability, visibility and influence; and**
- **broaden the pool of journalism leadership in the country.**

Small and medium community-serving media organizations have demonstrated an outsized ability to generate civic and democratic impacts, relative to their resources. The Journalism Futures Fund therefore focuses on strengthening these organizations with funding, capacity-building and support for special projects.

[**\[Learn more about the Fund here\]**](#)



3. ELIGIBLE ORGANIZATIONS

The Journalism Futures Fund welcomes applications from journalism organizations that:

- produce **original journalism** in **English or French**, **distributed on any platform**;
- are **registered businesses or are incorporated as a for-profit or non-profit in Canada** (this includes organizations with Registered Journalism Organization status and sole proprietorships);
- **are independent**, meaning not a government outlet — or primarily or majority-owned or governed by a publicly-traded company, advocacy group, religious group, political party, hedge fund or private equity firm); and
- **adhere to journalistic ethics guidelines**, such as those from the Canadian Association of Journalists or the Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec.



4. PRIORITY ORGANIZATIONS

The Fund prioritizes support to organizations that:

1. **are established**, with a track record of at least a year of publishing;
2. **are small to medium-sized**, meaning staffed by one to ten employees or freelancers, and with an annual budget of less than \$1,000,000 CAD.

*The Fund prioritizes support to journalism organizations that serve and are led by members of communities that are **underrepresented** in newsroom **leadership** and news coverage, specifically:*

- Black and other racialized communities;
- Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Inuit, and Métis);
- newcomers, migrant workers, refugees and asylum-seekers;
- low-income communities³;
- 2SLGBTQIA+ people;
- people with disabilities;
- and those located in Northern, rural or remote areas.



5. EVALUATION CRITERIA

The Fund will evaluate applications based on the following criteria:

- **Community Listening:** a commitment to meeting the information needs of audiences affected by the organization's journalism, supported by efforts to gather audience feedback to help guide its work and newsroom practices, where relevant.
- **Journalistic Impact:** a track record of journalism that meaningfully affects the lives of the audiences served (e.g. through access to information about public interest issues, improved capacity to advocate for change and hold power accountable and reduced vulnerability to misinformation and disinformation).
- **Representative Leadership:** the decision-makers around the organization's editorial line, operations and governance are from communities that are **underserved** in media.
- **Sustainability Planning**⁴: a clear intention to strengthen the journalism organization's journalistic impact, operational resilience and financial health – acknowledging that sustainability can look different for different outlets.



6. KEY DATES

- **Organizational Funding stream opens:** September 3, 2025.
- **Introductory application deadline:** September 29, 2025.
- **Information sessions:**
 - English: September 10 at 12:00 pm EST [\[Register here\]](#)
 - French: September 10 at 3:00 pm EST [\[Inscrivez-vous ici\]](#)
 - *Additional date to be announced*
- **Full application:** Shortlisted candidates will be invited to submit in late October and will have five weeks to prepare their submission. The Fund team will be available for support.
 - All candidates invited to submit a full application will receive an honorarium.
 - Finalists will be invited to participate in jury interviews.
- **Decision announcement:** February 2026.



7. APPLICATION PROCESS

Applications to the Journalism Futures Fund will be processed in three steps:

1. ELIGIBILITY QUIZ

The **eligibility quiz** is a self-assessment that takes about two minutes to complete. If eligible, applicants move on to the introductory application. [\[Access the quiz here\]](#)

2. INTRODUCTORY APPLICATION

The **introductory application** consists of 12 short-answer questions about the applicant organization and how it fits within the Fund's guiding criteria. This should take about two to three hours to complete.

After a due diligence review, qualified applications will be scored on a rubric by at least two independent reviewers. This process will determine a short list of applicants that will be invited to submit a full application.

[\[Access a PDF version of the questions here\]](#)

[\[Submit an introductory application here\]](#)

3. FULL APPLICATION

Organizations with strong potential to be awarded a grant will be invited to submit a **full application**. In this stage, applicants will provide information on their policies, finances, governance, leadership, audiences, current capacity and future planning.

The Fund team will be available to provide support during the submission process. Full applications will be reviewed by an independent jury, who will select a short list and make final funding decisions. All candidates invited to submit a full application will receive an honorarium.

Note: The full application will include jury interviews for a short list of finalists.

All applicants will be notified of the results. Unsuccessful applicants are welcome to reapply to future rounds of the Journalism Futures Fund.

Need support applying?

Applying for funding can feel overwhelming, especially if you're new to philanthropy or have accessibility needs. We're here to answer your questions and help make the process as smooth and manageable as possible.

Please reach out to **jff-fam@inspiritfoundation.org** for guidance, accommodations or other support.

8. FINANCES AND ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

The Organizational Funding stream of the Journalism Futures Fund will make three-year grants of \$50,000 to \$200,000 CAD per year.

Please note: Organizations may be awarded less than the total amount of funding requested. For organizations registered as for-profits, any applicable taxes will be included within the total funding amount requested.

In the full application stage, applicants must submit an overview of their finances, a detailed budget and a plan for the future. This information will enable reviewers and the jury to understand the organization's current status and assess the anticipated impact on its operational and financial resilience, as well as its engagement with audiences.

ELIGIBLE EXPENSES:

- **Salaries and benefits for employees** (full-time and part-time);
- **Professional fees and expenses** (completion of studies or surveys; development, modifications and modernization of IT systems and websites; legal and financial consulting and services supporting the production of journalism; translations);
- **Meetings and events** (e.g., venue rentals, catering and services related to organizing events or conferences that advance independent journalism);
- **Travel and accommodation within Canada** (related to activities supporting the production of journalism);
- **Training and education fees** (e.g., course fees, event entry fees); and
- **Administration** (up to 10 per cent of the budget (e.g., office rent, general accounting, software, IT systems, telecommunications)).

INELIGIBLE EXPENSES:

- Capital projects and purchases (e.g., real estate, vehicles);
- Supplies and equipment (e.g., office equipment, IT hardware);
- Endowments or investment vehicles;
- Debt repayments;
- Retroactive funding (requests for activities already completed);
- Activities conducted outside Canada;
- Projects primarily benefiting individuals living outside Canada;
- Initiatives run by non-Canadian organizations;
- Academic research, tuition, bursaries or scholarships;
- General fundraising efforts, capital campaigns or sponsorships;
- Personal appeals (for financial support); and
- Activities promoting religious or partisan political activities.



9. GLOSSARY

Capacity-strengthening: In addition to granting, the Fund will offer training support in areas like operations, audience engagement, membership models, fundraising and more. Training priorities will be determined by Fund recipients.

Community-serving: Organizations that are trusted sources of information for the community they serve and consistently respond to their needs and interests. These organizations answer questions that matter most to their audiences and have a track record of meaningful engagement with and responsiveness to their communities.

Established: The Fund prioritizes organizations that have been producing journalism for at least a year. This is not a start-up fund to launch new projects. Organizations must be incorporated non-profits, for-profits or Registered Journalism Organizations.

Independent journalism: Refers to journalism produced by organizations that are not government outlets — or primarily or majority-owned by a publicly-traded company, advocacy group, religious group, political party, hedge fund or private equity firm.⁵

Leadership: A journalism organization's leadership is made up of the individuals who make decisions about its editorial line, operations and governance.

Original journalism: Fact-based reports, features, investigations, profiles, interviews, analyses or commentaries that are written, researched, edited and formatted by and for the organization.⁶ Original journalism does not include reprints of mostly-unchanged press releases or wire copy.

Platform: The Fund accepts applications from journalism organizations operating on any platform, including digital formats (websites, newsletters, podcasts, social media, etc.), print (newspapers, magazines, etc.), TV, radio or other platform.

Underrepresented / underserved communities: The Fund prioritizes communities that are underrepresented in newsroom leadership and underserved in news coverage. To that end, the Fund prioritizes organizations serving and / or led by:

- Black and other racialized communities;
- Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Inuit, and Métis);
- newcomers, migrant workers, refugees and asylum-seekers;
- low-income communities;
- 2SLGBTQIA+ people;
- people with disabilities; and
- those located in Northern, rural, or remote areas.

1. The 2024 Canadian Association of Journalists' Diversity Survey found that despite making up about 70% of the Canadian population, "white journalists hold 83.4 per cent of supervisor roles and 80.5 per cent of the top three leadership positions in newsrooms. [...] about 70 per cent of newsrooms employed no Indigenous or visible minority journalists in the top three roles."
2. Candis Callison and Mary Lynn Young's Reckoning: Journalism's Limits and Possibilities (2019), Duncan McCue's Decolonizing Journalism: A Guide to Reporting in Indigenous Communities (2023), the Reuters Institute's report News for the powerful and privileged: how misrepresentation and underrepresentation of disadvantaged communities undermine their trust in news (2023), and the public essay Media 2070: an Invitation to Dream up Media Reparations (2020) extensively document the negative effects of the stereotyping, racism, misrepresentation and erasure of minority and Indigenous communities in North American news coverage.
3. The government of Canada provides backgrounders on how low-income and poverty are measured in Canada, the geographic areas where low-income neighbourhoods are most concentrated, and the communities that are over-represented within low-income measures.
4. This definition of sustainability is informed by Lion Publishers' work
5. This definition was adapted from Press Forward Canada's definition of independent journalism
6. This definition was drawn from the Canada Revenue Association's eligibility criteria for qualified Canadian journalism organizations.

A list of frequently asked questions is available on the Fund webpage:

journalismfuturesfund.org

For additional questions, please contact: **jff-fam@inspiritfoundation.org**



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