

Local Journalism Initiative

Changing Narratives Fund

Information Session for Applicants



Local Journalism
Initiative

About the Local Journalism Initiative

Program Mission

The LJI supports the creation of **original civic journalism** that covers the diverse needs of underserved communities across Canada.

The produced news content is made available to media organizations through a **Creative Commons license** so that Canadians can be better informed.

Underserved Communities

- **News Deserts:** Communities where citizens do not have access to journalistic information about community issues because there are no daily/community newspapers or broadcasters producing local news.
- **Areas of News Poverty:** Communities with limited access to journalistic content, or where media demonstrate significant gaps in coverage due to lack of capacity.

Core Objectives



Civic Journalism

Support the creation of original civic journalistic content for underserved communities.



Diversity

Promote employment and coverage that reflects Canadian diversity.



Independence

Provide support in a manner that preserves the independence of the press.

Program Administration

Three not-for-profit organizations jointly deliver the Initiative to protect press independence.

Community Media Coalition (CMC)

*Represented by the Community Radio Fund
of Canada*

Community radio/TV, Indigenous
stations

**Sole administrator of the Changing
Narratives Fund**

News Media Canada (NMC)

Print and digital news media (English,
French, Indigenous).

Consortium of Official Language Minority Community Media

Minority language newspapers, radio,
and online news services.

New for 2025-2027

Changing Narratives Fund

A funding stream for media organizations seeking to hire and provide professional development opportunities to journalists who self-identify as:

- Indigenous
- Black
- Racialized
- Ethno-religious minority
- 2SLGBTQIA+
- Persons living with disabilities

Pilot Project

Enhanced support (Travel, Accommodation, Professional Development) for specific organizations to address distinct challenges:

- Start-up organizations
- Indigenous organizations
- Rural & Remote organizations

Pilot Project: Enhanced Eligible Expenses

Rural, remote, Indigenous, and start-up organizations may be eligible for:

Indigenous Self-Determination

- Translation, editorial guidance, consultation.
- Initiatives promoting preservation/use of Indigenous languages.
- Ensuring content is culturally respectful & aligned with community needs.
- **Only available to Indigenous media organizations.**

Travel and Accommodation

- Costs to facilitate reporting from rural, remote, or hard-to-reach areas.
- Production or dissemination of content in underserved areas.
- Reimbursement capped at Gov. of Canada Travel Directive rates.

Mentoring & Professional Development

- Training & mentorship advancing equity, inclusion, and capacity-building.
- For journalists and editorial staff directly engaged in the LJI.

Operational Costs

- Digital transformation & tech investments.
- Outreach and community engagement.
- Temporary infrastructure strengthening local access to journalism.

Changing Narratives Fund

The core objectives of the Changing Narratives Fund - LJI Stream are to:



Increase the representation and active participation of journalists from underrepresented communities.

CNF specifically targets: Indigenous Peoples, Black, racialized, ethno-religious minority, persons with disabilities, and 2SLGBTQIA+



Strengthen career growth and advancement opportunities through mentorship, peer learning, and professional development.

Changing Narratives Fund: Priority & Eligibility

★ Priority Given To

Organizations that have a **clearly stated and defined mandate** to serve one or more CNF-prioritized communities and are **led by individuals** from those communities.

CNF-prioritized Organization Definition

A CNF-prioritized organization meets **at least one** of these criteria:

- **Leadership:** At least **30%** of board members or leadership positions are held by individuals from diverse communities.
- **Mandate:** Primary mandate to serve CNF target communities (Indigenous, Black, racialized, ethno-religious, 2SLGBTQIA+, persons with disabilities).

Self-Identification Form

In order to be approved for funding, CNF-LJI journalists must complete a Self-Identification form.

- Responses are used to determine eligibility for support under the CNF-LJI program.
- Journalists may select '**Prefer not to answer**' for any question.
- To be considered for CNF funding, journalists **must respond** to the relevant self-identification question(s).
- Data is shared with the Department of Canadian Heritage in a **completely anonymized** format.
- Information is stored according to the Administrators' **Protection of Personal Information and Privacy policy**.

** Self-Id Form also used in LJI to approve accessibility-related expenses are eligible to support journalists who self-identify as Deaf or as living with disabilities or mental illness.*

Eligible Applicants

Criteria

- › **Type:** Canadian press agency, non-profit, or private-sector news organization.
- › **Sectors:** Written press, community radio/TV, online news service.
- › **Ownership:** Majority owned and controlled by Canadians.
- › **Operations:** Edited and designed in Canada.
- › **Ethics:** Member of recognized association or adheres to strict code of ethics.

Ineligible

- › Private non-community broadcasters.
- › CBC / Radio-Canada.

Eligible Activities



Hiring

Hire full-time, part-time, or freelance journalists to produce civic journalism.



Distribution

Content must be made available to the public and other media via Creative Commons license.



Restrictions

No opinion pieces, advertising, hate propaganda, or advocacy/lobbying content.

Funding Information

Journalist Salaries

- Up to **\$60,000** per full-time journalist position (annualized).
- Includes Mandatory Employment Related Costs (MERCs).
- Cannot fund *existing* positions (only new hires or increased hours).

Equipment

- Up to **5%** of total approved funding.
- Includes purchase or lease of equipment.
- Includes accessibility-related expenses.

Application Requirements

Applications are submitted via the online portal.

Document Type	Details
Media Org Profile	Key details about the applicant organization.
Application Form	Information on the community, news gaps, proposal, and budget.
Mandatory Docs	Articles of incorporation, Financial statements, Digital replica (print only).
Optional	Letters of support, circulation reports, Self-Identification form.

Assessment Criteria (Total 100 Points)

Relevance

- **Community ID:** Clear demonstration of News Desert or Area of News Poverty.
- **Scope:** Specific gaps in existing coverage identified.
- **Understanding:** Deep knowledge of local issues.

Impact

- **Alignment:** Supports civic journalism and diversity.
- **Content Plan:** Compelling rationale for how news gaps will be filled.
- **Strength:** Potential for regular, impactful news coverage.

Capacity

- **Oversight:** Ability to support the journalist.
- **Integrity:** Upholding ethical standards.
- **Budgeting:** Realistic financial planning.

Assessment and Selection Process

1. Eligibility Screening

Confirmation of applicant eligibility and completeness of application.

2. Project Evaluation

The Independent Selection Committee scores the proposal using the Assessment Criteria.

3. Strategic Prioritization

Scores are consolidated and Strategic Bonus points are applied to create a final ranking list.

4. Final Ranking

List of recipients is determined based on ranking, equitable geographical distribution, and available budget.

Strategic Bonus Scoring (LJI General)

Applicants can earn up to 10 bonus points based on geographic and language criteria. This supports the program's mandate to reach the highest-need areas.

Strategic Priority	Bonus Points
Indigenous Media	10 points
News Desert OR Rural/Remote Area of News Poverty (serving an underrepresented group)	7 points
Urban Area of News Poverty (serving an underrepresented group)	5 points
Rural/Remote Area of News Poverty (General)	3 points
Urban Area of News Poverty (General)	1 point

Note Points are cumulative, but the total bonus score cannot exceed 10 points.

Strategic Bonus Scoring (CNF)

The Changing Narratives Fund prioritizes organizations with a mandate to one of the CNF-prioritized communities, as well as early career journalists.

Strategic Priority	Bonus Points
Leadership / Mandate	10 points
Early career journalist	5 points

Note Points are cumulative, but the total bonus score cannot exceed 10 points.
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Application Portal

Applications are submitted through the online application portal

- SM Apply.

 **Linked in the program guidelines and program webpages.**

 **To apply via the application portal, you must create an account.**

The CRFC and News Media Canada acknowledge receipt, by email, of any funding applications successfully submitted through the online platform.

Important Dates

Applications Open

LJI

Nov 28,
2025
CNF

Dec 3,
2025

Applications Close

LJI

Dec 19,
2025
CNF

Dec 21,
2025

Dec - Jan

Assessment
Process

Jan 16, 2026

Notification of
Results

Questions?

Thank you for your interest in the Local Journalism Initiative & Changing Narratives Fund.

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