Call for proposals – Investigative journalism & civil society collaboration grants

Background

In an era where digital threats increasingly impact press freedom and civic space, strengthening collaboration between **investigative journalists and civil society organizations (CSOs)** is more crucial than ever. To address these challenges, **Lighthouse Reports, ECNL, and EDRi** have launched a coalition that brings them together, and is now launching a funding initiative aimed at supporting **investigative projects** that promote cross-sector collaboration, impact-driven journalism, and the inclusion of marginalized communities.

Thanks to support from the Allianz Foundation we are able to provide **3–7 grants ranging from €3,000 to €8,000** out of a total portfolio of **€25,000**. Projects should be implemented between **May and the end of November 2025**.

Objectives of the grant

This fund is designed to:

- **Foster collaboration** between investigative journalists and civil society organizations to expose and counter digital threats, including to press freedom and democracy.
- **Support impactful investigations** that lead to meaningful change through reporting, advocacy, or legal action.
- **Promote the inclusion of marginalized or affected communities**, ensuring their voices are part of investigations, public debates and policy discussions.
- **Encourage geographically diverse participation**, supporting initiatives that go beyond EU-level institutions to national and local levels.

Scope of Projects

Eligible projects should be investigative in nature, focusing **on digital rights, surveillance, or journalistic freedoms in the digital age.** Projects should meet some of the following criteria:

1. **Cross-sector collaboration**: Projects that strengthen partnerships between journalists and CSOs, e.g. by combining research, advocacy, and reporting to maximize impact.

2. **Digital threats**: Projects addressing the use of AI, biometric surveillance, spyware, or other technologies that threaten journalistic freedom, democracy and/or human rights.

3. **Legal and policy impact**: Investigations that are aimed to contribute to legal cases, policy recommendations, or strategic advocacy efforts and campaigns.

4. **Affected communities**: Projects that centre the experiences of marginalised or affected groups, through ensuring their perspectives are included in the design and implementation of planned activities or through knowledge sharing activities that support their resilience against digital harms.

5. **Expanding existing work**: Initiatives that build upon previous work of your outlet or organisation, or the work of other organisations you might be collaborating with, and helps deepen impact and reach broader audiences.

Examples of activities that can be supported: research, evidence building or freedom of information requests in collaboration between journalists and CSOs; the costs of internal and external collaborators/experts for an ongoing or planned investigation; development of an advocacy campaign accompanying an investigation.

Examples of activities that cannot be supported: general workshops between journalists and CSOs; research not linked to specific investigations; projects without collaborative aspects.

Selection criteria

Applications will be assessed based on the following criteria:

1. **Collaboration and cross-sector engagement (30 points)**

   - The project fosters meaningful collaboration between journalists and CSOs.
   - It creates synergies that strengthen both investigative journalism and advocacy.
   - Note: we do not require joint applications but we will prioritise projects which clearly outline their collaborative nature.

2. **Impact and deliverables (30 points)**

   - The project leads to or supports concrete results (e.g., investigations published, advocacy campaigns, policy recommendations).
   - There is a clear strategy to amplify findings and reach key stakeholders.

3. **Involvement of marginalized communities (30 points)**

   - Marginalized and affected communities are actively engaged in the activities for which the project seeks funding.
   - The project demonstrates ethical engagement, avoiding extractive approaches.

4. **Geographical diversity (10 points)**

   - Priority will be given to projects that expand beyond Brussels-based advocacy and engage different national and local contexts.

Application process

To apply, please submit the following documents:

- A **one-page concept note** outlining your project's objectives, methodology, potential partners, expected impact/outputs, geographic scope and how you're planing to engage affected communities.
- A **budget plan** detailing the funding request and how it will be allocated.
- A **short description of your organization**, including legal status – which type of legally established organisation are you?
  Audited financial statements from the last two years, if available. Please provide an explanation if they are not available.

Reporting: Please note that successful applicants will need to submit short narrative and financial reports upon completion of the project, based on a reporting template. You will also be required to keep all supporting documentation for expenses and share it upon request.

Deadline for applications: April 17, 2025
Please submit your application to **aljosa.ajanovic@edri.org** with the subject line **"Investigative collaboration grant application."**

Funding & disbursement

Selected projects will receive funding in the form of a **grant agreement**, with payments processed as soon as agreements are signed.

Indicative timeline

- **Call launch**: March 25, 2024
- **Deadline for submissions**: 17 April 2025
- **Selection process**: End of April
- **Disbursement:** Early May
- **Project implementation**: May – November 2025
  Reporting: December 2025

Selection Committee:

- Lighthouse Reports representative

- ECNL representative

- EDRi representative

For any questions or to discuss potential proposals, please reach out to aljosa.ajanovic@edri.org**.**
We look forward to supporting impactful investigations and fostering stronger collaborations!