

PUBLIC INTEREST JOURNALISM FUND - OVERVIEW



April 2021

Purpose

This paper gives stakeholders an overview of the Public Interest Journalism funding framework including detail on stakeholder consultation and framework design to date. Following Cabinet's approval of the high-level policy parameters for the use of the \$55m allocation in February 2021, NZ On Air and the Ministry for Culture and Heritage commissioned former journalist and media executive Hal Crawford to interview key leaders in the media sector on the design and implementation settings for the fund. Twenty-four interviews were conducted over two weeks. A Summary of this report and its recommendations is [here](#).

The *Stakeholder Consultation report* presents recommendations for the design and dissemination of the funding, and this paper outlines which recommendations NZ On Air proposes accepting without change, accepts with amendments, or intends to undertake further consultation about before making a final decision.

Background

On 26 January 2021, the Cabinet Business Committee agreed to allocate \$55 million to provide targeted, short to medium-term protection of public interest journalism and jobs. The funding is to be allocated over three years: \$10 million in the remainder of 2020/21; \$25 million in 2021/22; and \$20 million in 2022/23. The principles set out in the [Cabinet paper](#) state that the initiative will protect journalistic jobs, and preserve and enhance public interest journalism across local, regional and national newsrooms.

Cabinet also indicated that this initiative will interact with other work programmes in the longer term. This includes the work to support the sustainability of the media sector for which Cabinet has already agreed funding, the Strong Public Media programme, and the Māori Media Sector Review.

NZ On Air Response To Stakeholder Consultation Report Recommendations

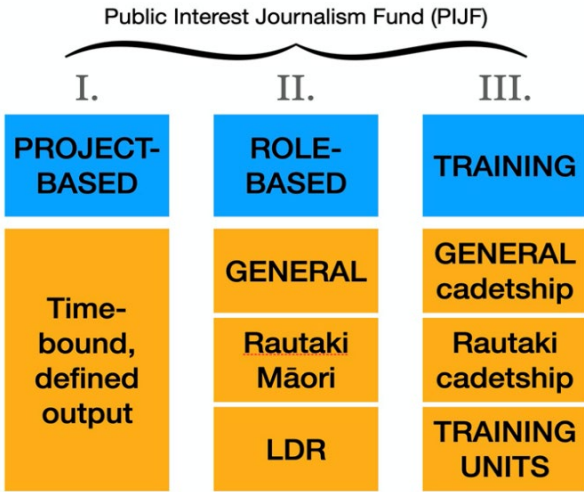

We believe the three-pillar approach in the report is a simple and logical way to achieve the best outcomes for public interest journalism (PIJ). We have made minor tweaks to this structure reflected in the *proposed structure diagram* below. As is the existing practice with our general funding rounds, we will design the round funding allocations throughout the year and provide estimated round allocation figures in the guidelines released prior to the round opening.

In developing the detailed criteria and processes for implementing the funding, NZ On Air has considered existing practices, reviewed the stakeholder consultation report, worked closely alongside the Māori Broadcast funding agency, Te Māngai Pāho and commissioned Te Amokura Consultancy to conduct targeted engagement with the Māori journalism sector. NZ On Air is also undertaking further consultation with the journalism education sector to inform the training and development objectives of this funding.

The PIJ funding will sit (ring-fenced) within the [NZ Media Fund Factual stream](#), but will have customised eligibility criteria, assessment criteria and application guidelines.

We will create assessment panels with NZ On Air staff and external assessors (as we do currently for targeted rounds) to ensure we have skilled and relevant practitioners guiding recommendations. The inaugural round will focus on project-based and industry development funding as role-based funding will require further input from the sector to inform detailed guidelines. NZ On Air intends to run PIJ funding rounds at the same time as its [general funding rounds](#) apart from the inaugural PIJ funding round, with its key dates as follows:

Eligibility and assessment criteria published	30/04/21
Round 1 guidelines published	30/04/21
Round 1 Funding Portal open	30/04/21
Round 1 Applications close	14/05/21
Round 1 decisions (≤\$1m) announced	29/06/21
Round 1 decisions (> \$1m) announced	15/07/21

Stakeholder consultation report recommended structure	NZ On Air Proposed structure	Key differences
 <p>Public Interest Journalism Fund (PIJF)</p> <p>I. PROJECT-BASED Time-bound, defined output</p> <p>II. ROLE-BASED GENERAL Rautaki Māori LDR</p> <p>III. TRAINING GENERAL cadetship Rautaki cadetship TRAINING UNITS</p>	 <p>NZ On Air Irirangi Te Motu</p> <p>PUBLIC INTEREST JOURNALISM FUND</p> <p>I. PROJECTS Time-bound, defined output</p> <p>II. ROLES Tied to content outcomes</p> <p>III. INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT Training Cadetships</p>	<p>We have re-labelled the third pillar Industry Development to provide flexibility if the need to fund small-scale, targeted public interest journalism initiatives beyond training and cadetships arises.</p> <p>We are emphasising that role-based funding is tied to content outcomes.</p> <p>We are undertaking targeted sector consultation to determine if the two rautaki Māori (Māori strategy) recommendations from the stakeholder report broadly resonate with the Māori journalism sector before making a decision on this.</p> <p>We are removing specific reference to the LDR from the second pillar to avoid the impression that ongoing funding is guaranteed under the PIJF. We expect the LDR scheme to apply for future contestable funding alongside other role-based applications.</p>

This table below shows which recommendations NZ On Air proposes **accepting without change**, **with amendments**, or **undertaking further consultation about** before making a final decision. Greater information on our responses is below but we recommend you read the stakeholder report first as it contains greater detail on the recommendations.

Recommendations in the stakeholder consultation report	Key	NZ On Air response to recommendations
Establish a project-based pillar		Similar funding approach to, and scale of Factual projects we already fund. Examples include: <i>Stuff Circuit, Newsroom Investigates, The Detail</i> .
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tightly defined projects delivered to a deadline 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modelled on the Factual stream of the NZMF 		
Establish a role-based pillar		Funded journalists will be employed by the news organisations, not NZ On Air.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-year contracts with publishers for the employment of reporters, with output minimum requirements and agreed coverage guidelines 		In exceptional cases where a compelling case can be made - a maximum of two-years funding could be available to applications. There would be clear KPIs to ensure performance measures are met before any funding is rolled over into a second year. We are clear that while the funding is role-based - as this is the most efficient means of achieving the scale of intervention required - it is clearly tied to <u>content outcomes</u> .
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roles incremental to existing staffing 		Barring exceptional circumstances, funded roles should be additional to the existing workforce
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ring-fenced funding for Māori journalists 		To be informed by targeted consultation with the Māori journalism sector.
Establish a training pillar		As noted above – we are re-labelling this pillar Industry Development to provide flexibility.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cadet programme in consultation with industry 		We are looking to fund a cross-sector cadetship programme with multiple media entities partnering to deliver training/cadetships to journalists. It is likely that we will also fund cadetships attached to single media entities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rautaki Māori cadetship programme in consultation with Māori media 		To be informed by targeted consultation with the Māori journalism sector.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared Data Unit for sabbatical training of existing practitioners 		The Shared Data Unit is a data journalism initiative run by the BBC. These and other training concepts will be included in the Industry Development pillar, about which we are engaging further with the sector to define. We are likely to issue a specific call-out for targeted initiatives within future PIJF funding rounds. Industry initiatives are unlikely to be large-scale given the high-demand and time-bound nature of the funding.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further training units over time, such as an Investigative Journalism Unit for existing practitioners 		
Pillars should be administered by NZ On Air with the assistance of an industry advisory group and separately, a Rautaki Māori advisory group		We are currently assessing whether a separate rautaki Māori (Māori strategy) advisory group is required. Our preference is for one advisory group with strong cultural representation.

Consult further with Māori media to ensure aspects of the PIJF pertaining to Māori media/audience are reflective and effective		This work is underway with Te Amokura consultancy.
Retain the LDR as a programme within the PIJF, with potential expansion of the existing 14 roles in response to identified coverage gaps		The Local Democracy Reporting (LDR) initiative should come under the PIJF to be considered in a contestable funding environment alongside other, similar initiatives.
Allow paywalled funded content if content simultaneously and freely available elsewhere		It is important that taxpayer funded content is provided free. We will require all content be provided free somewhere simultaneous to its publication/broadcast if that publication/broadcast is not free. There was consideration given to exclusivity windows however given the wide range of media platforms likely to seek support individual exclusivity windows would be too complex.
Require applicants to demonstrate a track record of PIJ		This recommendation means that new start-ups would not be eligible for PIJF funding. The intention of the fund is to preserve sustainable public interest journalism. It would be counter-productive to encourage further fragmentation. We reinforce the need for applicants to not only show a track record of Public Interest Journalism, but also a path to the audience. However, there will be room for innovation to be supported through the Industry Development funding pillar.
Do not fund infrastructure projects		This recommendation requires further input from the sector.
Establish a simple (not perfect) performance assessment system		No change to stakeholder report recommendation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require adoption of a common metrics suite 		No change to stakeholder report recommendation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audience and output minimum targets set by agreement 		No change to stakeholder report recommendation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Before and after public sentiment surveys 		We are still defining evaluation measures and will test this public sentiment survey recommendation with wider industry and journalism academic stakeholders.
Require the publishing of funded content in HTML environments (rather than allowing uploaded PDFs to stand in for digital publication)		In order to meet Government accessibility requirements digital publication in an HTML environment is the minimum standard.
Do not shift existing news projects within the NZMF to the PIJF without a corresponding increase in the funding budget of the PIJF		Current planning on this point is outlined in detail below.
Separate Government from any actual or perceived involvement in decision-making and administration of the working fund		As an Autonomous Crown Entity, we do not take instruction from Government, other than through the Letter of Expectations annually from our Minister. This is published on our website. In addition, the Broadcasting Act is clear that we cannot be involved in editorial aspects of the content we fund.
Where possible adopt an iterative approach to the implementation of the fund, testing funding against desired outcomes		This is exactly how we intend to launch and run the PIJF. We will be able to spot deficits and opportunities and respond quickly.

DETAILED RESPONSES TO RECOMMENDATIONS

Roles incremental to existing staffing

We accept this recommendation, with a caveat. It is clear from the Cabinet Paper that the initiative should ‘protect journalistic jobs’¹. Our draft assessment criteria currently states: ‘*Barring exceptional circumstances, funded roles should be additional to the existing workforce of a funded organisation. In cases where loss of staff is demonstrably imminent, existing roles may be funded. All other criteria still apply in this case.*’ We believe the bar for funding existing roles should be set very high and have significant external assessment and rigour built into the review process to accurately gauge circumstances when ‘loss of staff is demonstrably imminent’.

Ring-fenced funding for Māori journalists

This approach should be informed and supported by the Māori journalism sector. We are undertaking more detailed consultation on this. We have appointed Te Amokura Consultants to undertake this work, so that this information can inform the fund design. Ongoing engagement with the sector will be essential to ensure objectives are met.

Establish a training pillar

We have accepted this recommendation, re-labelled as Industry Development. We are seeking further sector consultation on the details of what will be most useful. We see this pillar supporting a range of training initiatives from discrete projects meeting specific needs, to broader industry-based initiatives. We intend to invite proposals in the inaugural funding round opening at the end of April 2021, but there will be further funding rounds for this. As noted above, outside of any cadetship programme/s, training initiatives will be targeted and are unlikely to be large-scale given the high-demand and time-bound nature of the funding.

Rautaki Māori cadetship programme in consultation with Māori media

We have appointed Te Amokura Consultants to undertake detailed consultation with the Māori journalism sector to better understand their needs. This consultation will inform the design of the funding framework.

Assistance of an industry advisory group and separately, a Rautaki Māori advisory group

We intend to establish an industry advisory panel to have ongoing oversight of the PIJ work programme. This will be important as we need to ensure the implementation of the PIJ is iterative and responding to the needs of the sector in a dynamic way. Our preference is for one panel that includes strong Māori sector representation, but we do not want to presuppose the outcome of the current Māori media sector consultation.

Retain the LDR as a programme within PIJ

¹ ‘The initiative will protect journalistic jobs at a local, regional and national level.’ Paragraph 7.

The full report recommendation is: *'Retain the LDR as a programme within the PIJ funding, with potential expansion of the existing 14 roles in response to identified coverage gaps.'* We accept the recommendation that the LDR should sit within the role-based funding pillar (it is currently funded as a 'project' under the Factual funding stream). However, we believe that potential future funding for the LDR (it has currently been funded for its second year out of baseline Factual funding until early 2022) should be via a contestable process and not guaranteed ring-fenced funding from the PIJ. The LDR has its own set of requirements (such as pre-publication sharing) and tailored management model which we envisage would not change if future PIJ funding were granted, so it will be structured differently to other role-based funding. Any expansion would be considered as part of a future funding proposal from the applicants.

Do not fund infrastructure projects

We accept this recommendation in principle. However, we want to engage further with the sector – especially with local and regional providers, Māori and Pacific, and ethnic minority media organisations where a modicum of infrastructure funding could generate outcomes in line with the overall aim. If there is a strong case, we do not envisage such funding being at a large scale.

Existing news projects within the NZMF

The full report recommendation is: *'Do not shift existing news projects within the NZMF to the PIJF without a corresponding increase in the funding budget of the PIJF'*. We can partially accept this recommendation. There are currently a number of journalism and current affairs projects annually-funded from the general Factual fund. Some are long-running, others are relatively new, and some originated in the past 2-3 years from one-off additional funding from Government (the latter are particularly challenging to continue funding given the one-off nature of the original funding). All these projects will need to apply for future funding via the PIJF in order to run a fully contestable process and ensure they are assessed under the same eligibility and assessment criteria as similar journalism applications.

We propose adding circa \$4m from baseline funding to the PIJ funding to partially accommodate for this. If you have a journalism project currently funded by NZ On Air, we recommend you get in touch with the Head of Funding, Amie Mills (amie@nzonair.govt.nz), to seek guidance on future funding submissions.