

FACT SHEET

Digital News Transformation Fund

What is the Digital News Transformation Fund?

The Digital News Transformation Fund (DNT Fund) is a three-year, R114 million initiative to support the digital transformation and long-term sustainability of South Africa's small-to-medium independent publishers.

The Fund is a partnership between Google and the Association of Independent Publishers (AIP) and is independently administered by Tshikululu Social Investments.

Who is eligible?

The DNT Fund is open to small-to-medium independent publishers that:

- Produce original public-interest journalism
 - Serve local, regional or community audiences
 - Are independent of government or political ownership
 - Meet the Fund's operational and editorial eligibility requirements
 - Are members of the Press Council in good standing
- (Membership of the AIP is not required for eligibility)

What will the Fund support?

- The Fund provides project-based grants and capacity-building to support:
- Digital operations and infrastructure (e.g. CMS, analytics, SEO)
- Audience development and engagement strategies
- Revenue diversification (e.g. memberships, commercial experiments)
- Training, mentorship and organisational development

Application timeline (Year 1)

- The following timeline outlines key dates for the DNT Fund's first funding cycle:
 - 25 August 2025: Launch & Call for Proposals
 - 21 September 2025: Applications close
 - 22 September – 27 October 2025: Adjudication & due diligence
 - 27 October – 9 November 2025: Board ratification
 - 10 November – 7 December 2025: Contracting and disbursements (upon receipt of signed contracts)
 - 12 January 2026: Training starts

Governance and oversight

The Fund's governance model ensures transparency, fairness and credibility:

- The Board provides strategic oversight and accountability
- Advisors offer expert sector insight
- The Adjudication Committee is independent of the Board and is responsible for assessing and recommending funding decisions. It includes a diverse panel of experienced professionals with expertise in journalism, media sustainability, digital innovation and grant making.

- Leanne Kunz, Head of Fund, leads programme implementation and stakeholder engagement

Fund partners

- Google – Global technology partner supporting access to information
- Association of Independent Publishers (AIP) – Sector body advocating for media diversity and sustainability

Tshikululu Social Investments – South Africa's leading social investment manager and independent administrator of the Fund

More Information:

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