



Digital News Transformation Fund (DNTF)

Project Application Form – Phase 1

Keep responses short and include only what's required. Organisation-level documents (legal registration, founding documents, governance, tax, financials) are collected in phase two of the registration process should your project be selected.

A. Eligibility Confirmation

Registered South African entity (NPC/Trust/NPO/Co-op/Pty) or fiscally hosted by one	Yes / No
Member of the Press Council of South Africa	Yes / No
Tax compliant (SARS TCS PIN)	Yes / No
Less than 1 million monthly unique website visitors (or ineligible for Google News Showcase due to language/other restrictions)	Yes / No
Commitment to *monitoring, evaluation and reporting requirements	Yes / No

*See below 'Notes' section for details on monitoring, evaluation and reporting requirements.

B. Demographics

Audience/readership profile	Describe communities served (location, gender, languages, age, interests).
Rural/under-served focus	Yes/No. If yes, specify areas.
Language(s) of publication	
Does your readership/audience include any of these priority groups (tick)	Women <input type="checkbox"/> Youth <input type="checkbox"/> Rural <input type="checkbox"/> Persons with disabilities <input type="checkbox"/> LGBTQIA+ <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

C. Publication details

Date the company/organisation was established	
Where do you distribute print copies (areas)?	
Are you issuing print editions of your publication? If not, why not?	
If yes, what is the frequency of distribution of print (daily, weekly, monthly, other)?	



How often do you update your digital platforms (daily, weekly, monthly, other)?	
Roughly how many content pieces do you upload per day to the above digital platforms	
Provide links to digital properties if relevant (e.g., website, Facebook, X, YouTube, Instagram)	

D. Funding Tier Selection

Below are details on the three tiers and the types of projects that could be supported within each.

You can apply as a single publisher, a group of publishers, or support organisations to run sector-wide projects.

We can fund up to the cap for your tier, per project, per year, for up to three years. Single- and multi-year projects are welcome. Multi-year funding depends on yearly reviews and available funds. We encourage piloting of new ideas that will assist your publication but also be useful for other publishers. A critical factor is how you are going to maintain the project once the funding period is over.

N.B You will need to complete a Digital Readiness Assessment (provided as a link in the application portal) which will tell you which tier you fall under.

Build – foundational

- Who it's for: Individual and collective beneficiaries with little or no online presence.
- Goal: To establish a solid digital foundation and strengthen financial and operational sustainability.
- Up to R380,000 annually for foundational digital initiatives.

Examples:

- Contributions to technology infrastructure (e.g., hardware and connected devices).
- Ensuring adequate connectivity.



- Audience development strategies.
- Website development, domain registrations, and content management systems, mobile-first or offline-accessible platforms appropriate to low-connectivity environments.
- Use of GenAI and publishing tools (e.g., plugins).
- Training and development of digital news specialists, or sales and marketing specialists for combined print and online, and online-only environments.
- Organisational development for those facing acute sustainability challenges, including:
 - Strategic and digital transformation planning.
 - Training on digital tools and products.
 - Management training and development.
 - Market scoping and analysis.

Grow – expansion

- Who it's for: Individual and collective beneficiaries with a basic digital publishing product.
- Goal: To expand reach and digital capability.
- Up to R950,000 annually for expanding digital presence and capabilities.

Examples:

- Optimisation or expansion of websites, CMS, and publishing tools.
- Development or expansion of content visibility programmes (e.g., SEO, newsletters, audio/video news).
- Use and integration of GenAI tools.
- Development of data and governance strategies.
- Audience-growth campaigns (e.g., youth/vernacular focus), newsletters, podcasts.
- Membership/donation funnels; CRM integrations; data strategy and governance.
- Training and development of digital news specialists.



- GenAI Use with guardrails; product diversification (events, branded content).

Engage – advanced & sector-level

- Who it's for: Digitally mature individual beneficiaries and collectives.
- Goal: To invest in new technologies that improve online reach, engagement, and business models.
- Up to R1,900,000 annually for advanced, scalable innovations.

Examples:

- Investments in audience engagement and reach (e.g., publisher and GenAI tools).
- Improvements to ad performance.
- Shared ad-sales networks; joint CMS instances; sector platforms
- Development or enhancement of reader revenue models.
- Creation of data and digital governance strategies.
- Training and development of digital news specialists.
- Cross-outlet content sharing initiatives; scalable infrastructure pilots.

Single- or multi-year funding?	Single year <input type="checkbox"/> Multi-year (≤3 years) <input type="checkbox"/> Years requested: _____
Tier (Year 1)	Build (up to R380,000) <input type="checkbox"/> Grow (up to R950,000) <input type="checkbox"/> Engage (up to R1,900,000) <input type="checkbox"/>
Justification for tier	Explain digital stage, as explained in the tiers above, and why this tier fits.
Project start & end dates	Start: ____ / ____ / ____ End: ____ / ____ / ____
Amount requested (this year)	R _____ (Total project value incl. co-funding: R _____)

E. Project Summary (up to 300 words)

In 300 words (or up to 8 concise bullets), give a high-level overview of your project so we can quickly assess fit and readiness for Phase 2. Please cover:



- **Goal & fit:** Which DNTF priority(ies) your project advances (increase digital reach, build audiences, diversify revenue, and/or strengthen community engagement).
- **Who & where:** Your primary audience/community and location.
- **The problem/opportunity:** What needs fixing or improving.
- **What you'll do (high level):** 3–5 key activities over the grant period.
- **What you'll deliver & how success is measured:** 2–4 headline deliverables and 2–3 ways you will know the project has been successful.
- **Timeline & team:** Intended start–end months (dd/mm/yy), project lead, and any core partner(s) if applicable.
- **Funding snapshot:** Budget tier requested.
- **Risk & sustainability:** One top risk and how you'll reduce it, plus what continues after the grant.
- **Ethical AI/data safeguards (if applicable):** How you'll use AI responsibly and protect data/privacy.

F. Budget Summary (a detailed budget will be required in Phase 2)

Category	Amount (R) – DNTF
Digital infrastructure / tech, e.g., laptops, software etc.	
Audience & product development, e.g., analytics, SEO, podcasts, newsletters, events etc.	
Revenue diversification, e.g., affiliate marketing, job boards, reader donations, events etc.	
Services / vendors, e.g., ad sales house, translation, Mailchimp, PayFast	
Other (specify)	

Total requested (this year): R _____



Notes

Monitoring and reporting

Grant recipients need to understand in advance that if they receive funding, they will need to commit to the following:

1. Providing clear timelines and deliverables as detailed in the Project Plan template.
2. Submitting progress reports twice a year including milestones and deliverables in accordance with indicators provided by the Fund. A template will be provided for this.
3. Submit accurate financial reports detailing use of funds.
4. If your grant is over R950,000, submit audited financial statements. If you don't have them, submit independently reviewed statements or ask us to support an external reviewer.
5. At the end, submit a full report outlining what changed because of your project. We will provide a template for this.
6. Accept that the project outcomes may be shared publicly as case studies by the funder.