SOLUTIONS JOURNALISM NETWORK

Office of the Vice President for Energy and Climate

SJN/MIT Climate Journalism Fellowship FAQs

Will the fellowship exert editorial control over fellows' stories?
No, your newsroom editor is still your editor. Specialists in solutions reporting and science journalism editing are available throughout the fellowship to advise you on reporting and writing your stories, but this advice is intended to complement, not supplant, your normal editorial process.

Which journalists are eligible?
Any U.S.-based journalists, including freelance journalists, working with U.S.-based local/regional newsrooms are eligible to apply. Journalists can be U.S. citizens, permanent residents and individuals with work authorization, as long as that authorization is not limited to employment with the organization sponsoring them. Newsrooms can include newspapers, news magazines, broadcast and radio stations, digital news outlets, and investigative journalism organizations. Writers employed by or writing for think tanks, lobbying groups, or advocacy groups are not eligible.

Does my project pitch count as "solutions journalism"?
For the purposes of this fellowship, "solutions journalism" stories incorporate the SJN's four pillars of solutions journalism in their reporting. We will work with fellows to refine their stories and reporting to put these principles into practice. Not all stories published as part of a fellow's project must adhere to all four pillars; for example, it is appropriate to publish a story investigating a problem as part of a series that will go on to interrogate solutions. However, at least two stories reported under the fellowship should meet the full definition of "solutions journalism" stories.

I'm not aware of any solutions being pursued locally to the climate change impacts I wish to cover. Can I apply?
Your project may still be eligible if you can explore how climate solutions being pursued elsewhere are relevant to local challenges. Please note that in-depth solutions journalism is expected as part of this fellowship, and in this case you will likely need to dedicate a significant share of your stipend to travel.

How much time should I plan to devote to the fellowship?

A typical fellowship project will include a minimum of four related, deeply reported stories, reported and published over an 8-month period. You and your newsroom should plan accordingly to ensure you have the time and editorial support needed to complete your project.

In addition, the fellowship includes a number of virtual workshops and cohort meetings, and one in-person gathering (paid for by the fellowship), for which attendance is expected. These activities are paced to minimize disruption of staff journalists' regular responsibilities to their newsrooms, and are generally most intensive in the early part of the fellowship (January and February). Expect roughly the following time commitment for collective activities over the 8 months of the fellowship:

- December: 2-hour introductory call to meet fellows and go over administration of the program
- Each month, January-August: 2 hours for a virtual cohort meeting, plus one hour for an individual consultation
- January: ~10 hours of introductory climate science and communication workshops, over multiple days
- February-March: ~15 hours of solutions journalism "Train the Trainers" workshops, across 5 weekly sessions
- April: a two-day in-person gathering at the Society of Environmental Journalists' annual conference in Halifax, Nova Scotia

How can I use my stipend?

The fellowship is designed to enable fellows to work on their projects over an eight-month period while still maintaining their regular employment and/or other contracts. Fellows will receive $5,000 in advance and $2,500 upon publication of their project and submission of a final grant report, though applicants should specify if this will present a hardship.

Fellows are free to use their stipends in any way that supports their reporting, including for travel, conference fees, access to archives, documents and research, software, and for work with other professionals such as photographers, videographers, data analysts, graphic designers, and software developers. Stipends may also support your time working on your project—for example, for freelance journalists who may forgo other work opportunities. In addition, the final $2,500 of the stipend is reserved until your stories are published; this portion is intended as additional compensation for your time and effort and an incentive for completing the fellowship.

How do I submit a letter of recommendation to demonstrate newsroom/editor support?

Because we believe that local stories should be told by local newsrooms, we require fellowship finalists to include a letter of support from a news editor who intends to publish the project that you propose.

We will ask this of our short-list candidates during the interview process, not in the initial application submission. But as an applicant, you should be prepared to provide a letter of

recommendation from your employer or freelancer's affiliated outlet (on letterhead with contact information) pledging to support the fellow:

- In participating in the fellowship as outlined above (including providing adequate time for the fellow to participate in workshops and to travel for, report and write the project);
- In publishing the work before September 2027, and in providing the editorial and technical support required to do so;
- By allowing MIT and/or PNS to republish or otherwise make available the completed project, with appropriate credit given to the fellow and original outlet;
- By including mention of the reporter's fellowship in the package or series.

What is my newsroom committing to in submitting my letter of recommendation?
We recognize that newsrooms cannot make unqualified pledges to publish reporting they have not yet seen and edited. For freelance journalists, a letter of recommendation indicates that a supporting newsroom is interested in publishing the project as described, has confidence in you to deliver on your pitch, and intends to work with you in good faith to edit the pieces you produce as part of this fellowship and ultimately publish them by August 2027, while upholding its editorial standards.

For staff journalists, a letter of recommendation further pledges that you will be given adequate time for reporting and for fellowship activities throughout the eight-month term of your fellowship. Supporting newsrooms also agree that MIT may republish, and the Public News Service (PNS) may adapt for radio broadcast, pieces produced under the fellowship, with appropriate credit given to the journalist and the originating outlet.

I work for a national publication. Can I apply?
We emphasize local outlets to help close the gap in resources for climate reporting between local and national newsrooms, and because research shows local news sources are more trusted than national media and have been shown to strongly influence climate views. Journalists working with national publications will not generally be considered. However, if you work for a publication with a well-defined place-based audience beyond the boundaries of a single state or territory, have a strong and demonstrable connection and engagement with the community your project will cover, and can demonstrate how your reporting will reach that community, you may write us at climate@solutionsjournalism.org to discuss whether your project may be eligible.

Regarding the Public News Service audio versions of the stories — does PNS require exclusivity and/or primary rights? How does republication work?

Through this partnership with Public News Service, SJN identifies strong climate solutions journalism stories published by fellows and then contracts with PNS to turn them into shorter audio pieces. The radio pieces run on local stations such as drive-time AM news slots — concentrated in rural areas as well as major cities — bringing climate solutions stories to a new

audience. After a story is published, a PNS producer will shorten the story and rewrite parts for the ear, and then offer it to its partner stations in relevant states to air. The PNS version will credit the original journalists and publication, and PNS will also republish the original story on its website, with a link to the original story on your site and with attribution at the top. After the story goes live, we will send you a usage report that details audience reach and media outlet pickup. You can read more about our partnership with PNS and see how stories from past fellows were adapted here.