

CALL FOR GRANT PROPOSALS

MEDIA FOR DIGITAL JUSTICE IN MALAYSIA

Deadline: 31 December 2025

1.0 Background

We are currently experiencing shifts in our information ecosystem, marked by intense datafication, platformisation, and reconfiguration of power dynamics among corporations, states, and citizens. Media organisations, in particular, are one of the key stakeholders facing growing strain from this shift. Newsrooms are operating in a digital environment shaped by big tech that controls distribution, data use and revenue. Their opaque algorithms decide what gains visibility, thus reducing reach, weakening trust and pushing content that drives polarisation rather than inclusive and public interest reporting.

To add to this issue, the rise of generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) adds new pressure. These tools are used to create news-like content at scale, which increases the risk of misinformation and disinformation. In addition, AI systems also train on news content without fair terms or compensation, raising serious concerns for news outlets. As a result, many face growing financial strain. Falling subscriptions, advertising, and licensing revenue, driven by AI-generated content replacing visits to original news sites, which in the long run has an impact on the organisation's sustainability.

AI governance in the media is also a growing area, constantly debated over the use of GenAI in newsrooms, including ethical considerations and AI in content production. There is still no consistent guidance on how media organisations should govern the use of AI. Many outlets may

lack policies and frameworks or may not disclose to the public how they are utilising the technology, while maintaining editorial integrity.

Regulatory developments also influence the media landscape. The Malaysian Media Council (MMC) was established in June this year, meaning protections are being afforded to media organisations and journalists. However, the amended Communications and Multimedia Act (CMA) 1998 and the possible expansion of the powers of the Printing Presses and Publication Act (PPPA) 1984 are likely to bring online media outlets under stricter control and increase risks to editorial independence.

Lastly, journalists still operate in a hostile legal environment, particularly with the existence and use of laws such as the CMA, the Sedition Act 1948, the Official Secrets Act 1972, and various provisions under the Penal Code. These laws can be applied to any reporters and editors, which in turn encourages self-censorship and limits reporting on certain issues, particularly those that are political and intersect with race, religion, and royalty (3R). Take-down requests and DNS blocking are also some of the digital threats faced.

This call supports initiatives of media organisations working to document, analyse, or develop approaches to data governance and digital rights with the aim to:

- a) Strengthen the capacity of media to investigate and report on data governance, digital rights and the impact of emerging technologies;**
- b) Improve engagement and collaboration between media, civil society, government, tech actors and various other stakeholders that shape the information ecosystem;**
- c) Create new tools, strategies or methods to promote rights within digital spaces;**
- d) Raise public awareness on data accountability, privacy, transparency and digital justice; can**
- e) Amplify the voices of communities impacted by data practices and digital technologies.**

This grant is also centred and aligned with the objectives of the overall project ***Safeguarding Our Information Ecosystem: Empowering Civil Societies in Malaysia to Strengthen Data Governance and Respond to Emerging Threats***, led by ARTICLE 19 and the Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ), in partnership with Sinar Project, which aims to empower civil society organisations (CSOs) to promote a progressive information ecosystem and enhance engagement with policymakers and technology companies.

2.0 Grant Information

Three (3) small grants of EUR 10,000 each will be awarded to selected journalists or media organisations.

Implementation period: 1.5 years

Selected organisations will also receive tailored guidance, technical support, and training on secure digital rights practices.

3.0 Eligible Activities

a) Research and analysis

Conducting investigative journalism or research that examines data protection or misuse, platform practices, AI-driven risks, and digital threats affecting media workers. This includes analysis of online harassment, content moderation systems, surveillance practices, internet censorship methods, advertising mechanisms, or the impact of platform algorithms on reach and sustainability. It can also map legal or policy governance practices and assess how communities at risk are affected by these practices.

b) Content creation and engagement

Articles, reports, podcasts, videos, or explainers that increase public understanding of data governance, AI, digital threats, media sustainability or their rights as a user/consumer when using these technologies

Initiate campaigns to support public awareness on these issues or provide spaces/storytelling projects to amplify the voices of communities affected by the gaps in digital governance and accountability.

c) Developing innovative tools

Creating interactive tools or platforms to track digital rights issues (privacy trackers, misinformation monitors, AI transparency tools).

Design and disseminate data governance trends through dashboards, data visualisations, or accessible open-source databases (for example, monitoring specific AI use cases, using data to track relationships between tech companies and government agencies/officers, tracking power/water shortage data to gauge AI environmental impact).

d) Advocacy and stakeholder engagement

Engaging with media organisations, government agencies, regulators, and technology companies to promote safe conditions for journalists and a fair information ecosystem.

4.0 Eligibility criteria

Applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Be a journalist, media organisation or journalists' collective based and operating in Malaysia;
- Demonstrate experience or interest in digital rights, freedom of expression, or related media or technology reporting or content;
- Be available for training and regular update meetings.

5.0 Selection Criteria

Applications will be invited through a closed call for proposals and evaluated based on:

- **Relevance:** to the objectives and scope of activities;
- **Coverage of eligible activities:** the ability to cover one or more activities listed above;
- **Innovation:** Creativity of the proposed approach and the potential impact,
- **Cost effectiveness:** a budget that demonstrates efficient and responsible use of funds; and
- **Implementation capacity:** clarity of work plan and demonstrate ability to deliver outcomes and manage resources effectively.

6.0 Application Process

Interested applicants are requested to submit the following documents:

- Detailed concept note consisting of clear objectives, methodology, expected outcomes and outputs, and communication strategies.
- Detailed budget outlining costs for implementing the proposed activities and milestones for payments.
- Workplan with timeline
- CV and/or organisational profile.

Applications are to be submitted to cijmalaysia@cijmalaysia.net

Deadline: Prospective applicants are required to submit their proposal **by 31 December 2025**.

Templates for the work plan and budget can be found here

 [Workplan Template](#)  [Budget Template](#)