



REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

AIR Network Advisory Board

Date of issuance: November 25, 2024

Due date for questions: December 9, 2024

Virtual briefing call: December 9, 2024

Release date for response to all questions: December 11, 2024

Closing date: Applications are due by 11:59pm (Bangkok time) December 20, 2024.

Estimated award date: January 15, 2024

1. Background on AIR Network

Empowering the Truth Tellers – Asia Investigative Reporting (AIR Network) is a five-year USAID-funded project to establish a locally led, self-sustaining investigative journalism network in Southeast Asia.

Its objectives are to strengthen cross-border investigative journalism, amplify the impact of investigative projects, and advance the safety and security of investigative journalists in the region in order to address transborder crime, corruption, and corrosive capital throughout Southeast Asia.

The project is jointly implemented by Pact and the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ).

2. Purpose Statement

Pursuant to the authority granted under USAID award 72048623LA00001, ICFJ is pleased to announce the release of a request for applications (RFA) for the AIR Network Advisory Board.

This RFA is issued as a public notice to ensure that all interested, qualified, and eligible individuals (see 4.1: Eligibility for more information) have a fair opportunity to apply to be part of the Advisory Board.

3. Role Description

AIR Network's Advisory Board members will guide the establishment of an investigative journalism Network as a self-sustaining entity that supports investigative journalists throughout Southeast Asia. Advisory Board members will provide overall leadership of the Network, including guiding editorial policy/guidelines, maintaining safety and security protocols, and upholding the gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) framework. The Advisory Board will consist of Southeast Asia-based senior editors, journalists, or civil society leaders.

3.1. Program background

Investigative journalism plays a critical role as a watchdog for the public interest. In-depth, fact-based investigations by journalists and media institutions expose abuses of power, including crime, corruption, and corrosive capital, resulting in a public that is more informed.

At the same time, the media are often the first target of authoritarian leaders and other illiberal actors in their efforts to consolidate power, making it increasingly difficult and dangerous for investigative journalists to continue their important work.

The AIR Network addresses these challenges by establishing a support network for investigative journalists in the region. The AIR Network has three objectives:

1. **Objective 1: Strengthen Networks**
Locally led investigative journalism networks are supported and strengthened.
2. **Objective 2: Amplify Reporting**
Investigative reporting has enhanced engagement, is amplified through relevant channels, and delivers impact
3. **Objective 3: Advance Safety and Security**
More proactive, comprehensive approaches to safety and security for journalists are developed and advanced

3.2. Geographic area

Editors, journalists, and civil society organizations (CSO) members based in Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Cambodia, are eligible to apply. This includes exiled Southeast Asian investigative journalists living in these countries.

3.3. Objective

The AIR Network becomes an effective and self-sustaining support system that strengthens investigative journalism in Southeast Asia that contributes toward addressing regional transborder crime, corruption, and corrosive capital.

3.4. Intended target audience

The Advisory Board's work will serve newsrooms, journalists, and CSOs in Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Myanmar, and Cambodia.

3.5. Specific Roles and Responsibilities of the Advisory Board

The inaugural Advisory Board members, selected for an initial 12-month term. Their roles and responsibilities during this term are listed below:

- Develop and maintain the AIR Network’s organizational framework, governing documents, safety & security protocols, GESI framework, and editorial policies based on initial drafts produced by the ICFJ and Pact. This will include the Board members’ term length, code of conduct, and key performance indicators for term renewals.
- Be accountable to and advise the AIR Network and its project team on editorial/investigative matters, local politics, security, legal matters, organizational strategy.
- Drive the recruitment of AIR Network members, including the vetting of potential member organizations.
- Mobilize local/international resources and networks to support AIR Network’s investigations, programs, activities, and membership recruitment.
- Engage potential partners and funders for the Network.
- Appoint and oversee executive committee members and full-time staff, who will coordinate and implement AIR Network activities, including investigations, in their respective countries and throughout the region.
- Ensure GESI framework is integrated into the work of AIR Network

3.6. Program indicators and data reporting for partners

Below is the list of program indicators to which the Advisory Board members will contribute.

- Number of AIR Network governing documents and resources developed, including gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) policies and practices.
- Number of individuals or organizations signed up as AIR Network members
- Number of programs and activities that contribute to the strengthening of investigative journalism in Southeast Asia
- Number of investigative stories, programs, or activities supported by AIR Network that receive responses from their target audiences (e.g., citing or engaging in an action to address the specific issue identified in the investigative stories) or achieve their impact objectives
- Number of non-state media outlets, including those representing women and marginalized groups, that improve their organizational viability (i.e., increasing and diversifying funding resources, expanding reach and audience, or improving organizational capacities) through the AIR Network’s small grants or trainings.
- Number of grants or partners secured for the AIR Network’s long-term sustainability.
- Number of executive committee members appointed

3.7. Benefits for Advisory Board members

- Opportunities to strengthen and expand your professional network with leading news organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and CSOs both locally and internationally.
- Opportunities to advance your organization’s mission, especially in strengthening press freedom, investigative journalism, human rights, anticorruption, and social justice.
- Gain valuable experience in organizational governance and strategic planning
- The opportunity to lead a movement that can contribute to lasting change in the areas of press freedom, journalist safety, human rights, public accountability, and countering crime and corruption.
- Opportunity to encourage organizations to take a GESI-sensitive approach to press freedom, human rights, and social justice can help address the intersectional nature of these issues.
- An annual honorarium and priority access to paid engagements (see Section 4.2)

Advisory Board members will receive support from AIR Network project team members throughout their tenure. We will provide ongoing assistance with resources, logistical arrangements, meeting coordination, and ongoing communication.

Advisory Board members will oversee an executive committee that will implement programs and coordinate investigations based on the vision and strategic plan outlined by the Board.

4. Application Submission

4.1. Eligibility

Individuals with the following attributes are encouraged to apply for the Advisory Board positions:

- Based in Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Cambodia. Exiled individuals based in these countries are eligible.
- Foreign nationals are eligible but must demonstrate a long-term commitment to advancing journalism in the country (i.e. Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, or Cambodia) they are based in.
- Has a track record of leading organizations, networks, or editorial teams.
- Has experience in investigative journalism (not necessary for applicants from CSOs)
- Has experience fundraising through grants or other revenue sources.
- Has experience working on projects involving collaborators in multiple countries.
- Well-connected within the media industry and related CSOs and NGOs.
- Able to communicate in basic English
- Is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion in newsrooms and supporting the development of stories relevant to a diverse range of populations, particularly marginalized and under-represented ones.
- Able to commit a minimum of five (5) hours a week to the role.

AIR Network is committed to establishing a diverse and inclusive leadership team. Individuals of all gender identities, ethnicities, backgrounds, religions, sexual orientation, or disability status are encouraged to apply.

4.2. Honoraria

Advisory Board members will be paid an annual honorarium of US\$3,000 for the initial 12-month inaugural phase, during which Advisory Board members are expected to play more of an executive role while the executive committee is recruited and onboarded.

The annual honorarium will be reduced to approximately US\$2,500 for the next 3 years of the project (subject to availability of funds), when the Advisory Board will have transitioned most of its executive functions to the executive committee.

Advisory Board members may also be paid separately for providing other services (e.g. training, story editing, or mentoring) based on standard market rates agreed upon by the Advisory Board and executive committee.

4.3. Application submission deadline

Applications must be submitted by **December 20, 2025 at 11:59pm EST**.

- A cover letter containing the following sections:
 - Why you are applying for the position
 - Your vision for the AIR Network
 - What you can contribute to the AIR Network as an Advisory Board member
 - How you aim to ensure diversity, equity, and inclusion in the AIR Network
 - Your availability to join meetings, contribute to investigations/activities, represent AIR Network at events, etc.

6. Evaluation of Applications

6.1. Review process

AIR Network will establish a technical review committee that includes representatives from ICFJ and Pact. All technical reviewers will be screened to eliminate any conflict of interest.

Applications will be evaluated and scored based on the criteria set forth in section 6.2. Shortlisted applicants will be invited to an interview with the technical review committee via video call, where they will have a final chance to review and adjust their scores. The process will be completed within approximately 15 to 20 business days.

AIR Network reserves the right to appoint any number of individuals to the Advisory Board or none at all. AIR Network is not responsible for any costs associated with the development of applications.

6.2. Evaluation criteria for the application

In evaluating the applications, AIR Network will examine overall merit and feasibility, as well as the specific criteria relevant to each component, as elaborated in the table below.

Applicants should note that these criteria both serve as the standard against which all applicants will be evaluated and serve to identify the significant matters that applicants should address in their applications. AIR Network will instruct the technical review committee to evaluate all applications according to the criteria as established and weighted in the following table.

Evaluation Criteria	Points
I. Relevant experience and expertise Reviewers will evaluate the applicants' performance in past roles/projects and determine if they have the necessary experience and expertise to achieve the project's objectives.	20
II. Strategic thinking Reviewers will assess the level of strategic thinking in the applicant's vision statement and proposed ideas for the AIR Network.	20
III. Leadership qualities Reviewers will look for evidence of the applicants' ability to lead a diverse group of journalists/CSO members, build consensus, manage conflict and crises, and motivate teams towards achieving shared objectives.	20
IV. Ethics and accountability Reviewers will look for evidence of the applicants' integrity, commitment to ethical standards (especially journalistic standards) and GESI principles, and willingness to be accountable for failures and mistakes.	20
V. Commitment and availability	10

Reviewers will assess the applicants' level of commitment and availability to the project.	
VI. Past Performance Reviewers will evaluate whether the applicants have managed successful projects, teams, or organizations of similar size and scope in the geographic areas specified.	10
Total	100

7. Terms and Conditions

7.1. Standard provisions

The Standard Provisions for Non-U.S. Non-Governmental Organizations as applicable will apply to these grants. Applicants can find the provisions at <https://www.usaid.gov/about-us/agency-policy/series-300/references-chapter/303mab>.

7.2. Permission for use and disclosure

By submitting an application under this RFA, the applicant consents to the disclosure of the documents submitted by the applicant to the reviewers involved in the selection process. Please note that all reviewers are bound by non-disclosure agreements.

7.3. Disclaimers

- AIR Network may cancel the solicitation and not make any appointments.
- AIR Network may reject any or all applications received.
- AIR Network reserves the right to disqualify any application based on applicant's failure to follow application instructions.
- AIR Network will not compensate applicants for their response to the solicitation.
- AIR Network reserves the right to issue an award based on initial evaluation of applications without further discussion.
- AIR Network reserves the right to waive minor application deficiencies that can be corrected prior to award determination to promote competition.
- AIR Network may contact applicants to confirm contact person, address, and that the application was submitted for this solicitation.
- AIR Network may contact listed past performance references without notice to the applicant. AIR Network also reserves the right to contact other past performance information sources that the applicant did not list in the application.
- By submitting an application, the applicants confirm they understand the terms and conditions.

- End of document -