



# REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

## AIR Network Investigative Grants: Cambodia

**Date of issuance:** December 27, 2024

**Due date for questions:** January 6, 2024

**Grant solicitation workshop:** January 6, 2024

**Release date for response to all questions:** January 10, 2024

**Closing date: Applications are due by 11:59pm (Bangkok time) March 31.**

**Estimated award date:** Rolling basis starting February 1

### 1. Background on AIR Network

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

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

## 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) from Cambodian investigative journalists for funding under its AIR Network Investigative Grants.

This RFA is issued as a public notice to ensure that all interested, qualified, and eligible Cambodian journalists have a fair opportunity to submit applications for funding.

## 3. Program Description

The AIR Network Investigative Grants: Cambodia provides up to \$3,000 in funding for journalists to produce an investigative project with the AIR Network. Selected journalists will receive technical support and will be eligible for the AIR Network's safety and security assistance as needed.

## 4. Application Submission

### 4.1. Grantee eligibility

Applicants must:

- Be a practicing journalist based in Cambodia, or a Cambodian journalist based or working from outside of Cambodia.
- Have a letter of support from a host organization. The letter should state the host organization's commitment to:
  - provide editorial support and oversight
  - publish the investigation if it meets editorial and safety standards
  - provide safety and security support and comply with AIR Network's safety and security protocols
- Have prior experience working on at least two investigative reports.
- Be willing to complete a personal risk assessment with the AIR Network if selected.

### 4.2. Funding

AIR Network anticipates these awards will be a fixed amount award. Grant type may change based on the results of the partner's pre-award risk assessment, which AIR Network will conduct prior to issuance of the award.

Subject to the availability of funds, AIR Network intends to award up to \$3,000 in total funding for up to six months. Up to 50% of the budget may be used for staff costs or freelancer/consultant working hours, except in cases where written justification by the applicant is accepted by the grant selection committee.

AIR Network anticipates awarding up to five (5) investigative grants to successful applicants. Negotiations will be conducted with successful applicants only. AIR Network reserves the right to award any or none of the applications submitted.

### 4.3. Application submission deadline

Applications will be assessed and selected on a rolling basis between now and the deadline of March 31, 2025 at 11:59pm or until five grantees have been selected, whichever comes first.

Early submissions are strongly encouraged. Applications submitted after the deadline will not be reviewed.

#### 4.4. Late submissions, modifications, and withdrawals of application

At AIR Network’s discretion, any application received after the exact date and time specified for receipt may be considered ineligible for consideration. Applications may be withdrawn by written notice via email.

#### 4.5. Conflict of interest clause

Applicants must provide disclosure of any past, present, or future relationships with any parties associated with the issuance, review or management of this solicitation and anticipated award. Failure to provide full and open disclosure may result in ICFJ having to re-evaluate selection of a potential applicant.

#### 4.6. Submission method for questions

Submit questions electronically to Ian Yee (iyee@icfj.org), with copies to Sher Khashimov (skhashimov@icfj.org). The deadline for questions is January 6, 2025 at 11:59pm.

The email subject line should read “Questions - AIR Network Investigative Grants: Cambodia – *name of individual submitting application.*”

All questions and answers will be shared with all interested applicants.

#### 4.7. Submission method for final application

Applications must be submitted via the International Center For Journalists’ Submittable platform on this link:

**<https://icfj.submittable.com/submit/316270/air-network-investigative-grants-cambodia>**

The following documents must be uploaded on the Submittable platform as part of your submission:

- Letter of support from a host organization
- Detailed budget
- CV(s) of the journalist(s) who will lead the project
- A detailed reporting plan and timeline

#### 4.8. Grant solicitation briefing

**Date(s):** A grant solicitation briefing will be held on January 6, 2025 at 2:00pm (Bangkok time, UTC +7). All applicants are encouraged to attend, but no more than three people from one organization.

**Location:** Zoom ([https://icfj-org.zoom.us/meeting/register/B7L2VIN\\_S1WTOkiIyZodMQ](https://icfj-org.zoom.us/meeting/register/B7L2VIN_S1WTOkiIyZodMQ))

**Confirmation:** Participation in the briefing must be confirmed via Zoom registration using the same link above.

**Language:** The workshop will be held in English.

## 5. Evaluation of Applications

### 5.1. Review process

AIR Network will establish a selection committee that includes representatives from ICFJ and Pact. All selection committee members will be screened to eliminate any conflict of interest. Evaluation will be based on the criteria set forth in section 5.2.

AIR Network reserves the right to make any number of awards or none at all. AIR Network is not responsible for any costs associated with the development of applications.

### 5.2. 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.

<b>Evaluation Criteria</b>	<b>Points</b>
<b>I. STORY ANGLE</b> Submissions must have a newsworthy story angle and a strong investigative hypothesis. The selection committee will prioritize investigative stories (i.e. those that uncover some form of crime, corruption, human rights abuses, or wrongdoing) over in-depth feature stories.	25
<b>II. REPORTING PLAN, including gender equality and social inclusion plan</b> Submissions must have a detailed reporting plan that shows how the applicant aims to investigate and obtain information/evidence in order to prove the hypothesis. Applicants should also include how it will ensure the perspectives of women and/or marginalized communities are considered in their reporting.	25
<b>III. IMPACT AND AMPLIFICATION STRATEGY</b> Submissions must consider the desired impact of the story (e.g. public awareness, policy reforms, civil society reforms, or law enforcement), and develop content distribution and impact strategies to help achieve that impact. <i>Note: Projects may be eligible for additional funding and support under a separate impact grant program if their impact and amplification strategies show positive initial results.</i>	25
<b>IV. BUDGET EFFICIENCY</b> The budget will be evaluated reasonableness, allocability, allowability, cost effectiveness, realism, and financial feasibility.	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

## 6. Terms and Conditions

### 6.1. 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.

## 6.2. Disclaimers

- AIR Network may cancel the solicitation and not award any funds.
- AIR Network may reject any or all applications received.
- Issuance of solicitation does not constitute award commitment by AIR Network.
- AIR Network reserves the right to disqualify any application based on applicant's failure to follow solicitation 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 may choose to award only part of the activities in the solicitation or to issue multiple awards based on the solicitation activities.
- 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.