



REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

AIR Network Core Committee & Fellowship

Closing date: February 14, 11:59pm (Bangkok time)

1. Background on AIR 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) for the AIR Network Core Committee and Fellowship Program.

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 Core Committee.

3. Program Description

The AIR Network is recruiting leading journalists, editors, media professionals, or CSO members in Southeast Asia to form its first-ever leadership team, which will be known as the AIR Network Core Committee.

The Core Committee will lead the AIR Network's investigative work, grants programs, training activities, advocacy work, and more. They will work remotely, while remaining attached to their respective organizations, and their salaries will be subsidized by the AIR Network.

Core Committee members will undergo a Fellowship program (approximately 9-12 months) to build their skills in investigative journalism, content production, leadership, advocacy, and more. The fellowship program will include several online immersive workshops and at least one in-person convening.

3.1. Role and responsibilities of Core Committee members

Core Committee members will be required to dedicate at least 15 working hours a week to the AIR Network during their 12-month tenures. A salary subsidy of US\$300 per month will be paid to their respective host organizations for their time spent working on the Network.

Core Committee members will work closely with ICFJ, Pact, and the AIR Network Advisory Board members (consisting of experienced editors, journalists, and CSO leaders) throughout their tenure. ICFJ and Pact will provide ongoing assistance with resources, international connections, logistical arrangements, and meeting coordination.

Here is a summary of the Core Committee's general roles and responsibilities:

- Produce cross-border investigations in collaboration with other Committee members and AIR Network partners
- Support investigative projects by AIR Network partners and grantees
- Develop and implement programs and activities (e.g. training programs, grants, or developing IJ resources) both locally and regionally.
- Support recruitment and vetting of AIR Network members in their respective countries.
- Build and maintain local AIR Network chapters in their respective countries.
- Promote AIR Network programs, activities, and investigations through their host organizations and local networks.
- Produce impact and advocacy campaigns in collaboration with civil society groups.
- Ensure the diversity and inclusivity of the AIR Network membership through regular stakeholder engagements.
- Contribute to AIR Network evaluation and learning initiatives.

3.2. Benefits for Core Committee members

Committee members will receive the following benefits:

- Opportunities to be involved in cross-border collaborative investigations, and to include their host organizations (i.e. their employers) as partners in such projects.
- Opportunities to strengthen and expand your professional network with leading editors, journalists, news organizations, NGOs, and CSOs both locally and internationally.
- Opportunities to develop events and activities using the Core Committee's annual program budget

- Access to investigative tools, resources, experts, and mentors.
- Access to safety and security support.
- Access to small grants and other paid opportunities.
- Access to a network of partners to cross-promote your content and projects.
- Regular capacity-building and professional advancement opportunities under the Fellowship program.
- Opportunities to represent AIR Network and the Committee members' respective host organizations at international events.

3.3. Program indicators and data reporting for partners

Below is the list of program indicators to which the Core Committee members will contribute.

- 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 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.

4. Application Submission

4.1. Preferred Attributes

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

- Preferably based in AIR Network's current focus countries, i.e. Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Cambodia. Exiled individuals based in these countries are eligible. Foreign nationals are also eligible but must demonstrate a long-term commitment to advancing journalism in the country they are based in and be affiliated with a local host organization.
- Has experience in project management.
- Has experience in investigative journalism (not necessary for applicants from CSOs).
- Is well-connected within local media and civil society circles.
- Can communicate in basic English.
- Is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion and to supporting the publication of stories representing the concerns of diverse communities.
- Has approval from their employer or host organization to dedicate a minimum of 15 working hours a week to AIR Network tasks.
- Has one or more of the following skills:
 - Investigative journalism
 - Program development
 - Project/campaign management
 - Multimedia production (video production, graphic design, podcasting, etc.)

- Data journalism
- Public advocacy and activism
- Safety and security
- Open-source intelligence (OSINT)
- Web development
- Able to participate fully in the AIR Network fellowship program, which will include at least four online immersive workshops.
- Able to travel to attend a one-week in-person convening, which will be held in Thailand or Indonesia (TBC). The convening is currently scheduled for mid-August 2025.

Core Committee members must be attached to a host organization (e.g. a current employer, or any organization that can provide editorial oversight and institutional support) throughout their tenure. The host organization must provide a written letter of support which includes a guarantee of the minimum 15 working hours a week to be dedicated to AIR Network, in return for the US\$300 salary subsidy.

Freelancers must secure a letter of support from a potential host organization before applying, and they may continue their freelance work outside of the time commitment to AIR Network.

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

4.3. Application submission deadline

Applications must be submitted by **February 14, 2025 at 11:59pm EST**.

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 or in person by an organization or the authorized representative.

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 the 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 21, 2025, at 11:59pm EST.

The email subject line should read “Questions - AIR Network Core Committee – *name of individual submitting application.*”

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

4.7. Submission method for final application

Submit applications electronically to Ian Yee (iyee@icfj.org), with copies to Sher Khashimov (skhashimov@icfj.org). AIR Network is not receiving paper applications for this RFA.

The email subject line should read “AIR Network Core Committee – *name of individual submitting application.*” Application documents and attachments must be submitted in Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF.

4.8. Virtual briefing

A virtual briefing will be held on January 24, 2025 at 2:00pm (Bangkok time, UTC +7). All potential applicants are encouraged to attend.

Location: Zoom (https://icfj-org.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUtf-qrqDMiHNTLHDO-gGnyoJ-vSVr_goWe)

Confirmation: Register using the [Zoom link](#) to confirm your participation.

Language: The workshop will be held in English.

5. Application Format

5.1. Overall requirements

Applicants must submit the following:

- Updated CV
- A minimum of three character references
- Letter of support from your host organization endorsing your potential involvement in the AIR Network Core Committee. The letter of support must specifically state the host organization will accept a salary subsidy of US\$300 per month and allocate a minimum of 15 hours a week of your working hours to the AIR Network
- A cover letter containing the following sections:
 - Why you are applying for the position
 - Your prior experience and/or achievements relevant to the position
 - Your vision for the AIR Network
 - What you can contribute to the AIR Network as a Core Committee 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 selection 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. The selection committee will interview shortlisted applicants in two phases. The first will be a group interview with other applicants, and the second will be a one-on-one interview.

AIR Network reserves the right to appoint any number of individuals to the Core Committee 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 if the applicants have the necessary experience, skills, 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
II. 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 willingness to be accountable for failures and mistakes.	20
V. Commitment and availability Reviewers will assess the applicants' level of commitment and availability to the project.	20
Total	100

7. Terms and Conditions

7.1. 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.

7.2. Disclaimers

- AIR Network may cancel the solicitation and not make any appointments.
- 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.

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