Assessment and Selection Process

The selection of media organizations is governed by a clear, fair, transparent, and open decision-making process. The process is managed through a multi-stage review that involves the Programs Team and an Independent Selection Committee.

- **Programs Team** (CRFC & NMC): Responsible for the administrative management of the process, including eligibility screening, conflict of interest (COI) management, and implementing the final funding decisions and regional adjustments.
- **Independent Selection Committee:** A group of external experts with diverse backgrounds (including representation from LJI underrepresented groups) is convened to review and score all eligible applications impartially based solely on the published criteria. All members must sign a Conflict of Interest (COI) declaration and adhere to strict confidentiality.

The assessment and selection process is divided into four sequential stages:

Stage 1: Eligibility Screening

The Programs Team reviews all submitted applications (Media Organization Profile, Application Form, and Budget) against the mandatory baseline requirements:

- Applicant Eligibility: Verification of Canadian ownership, operation within Canada, and adherence to a journalistic code of ethics.
- Completeness and Compliance: Confirmation that all mandatory forms are submitted and complete. If documents are not submitted, applicants will be contacted by the Programs Team and will have one week to submit missing forms or documents.

Stage 2: Project Evaluation

The Independent Selection Committee evaluates all eligible applications using the 100-point scoring system published below.

- Each application is scored based on the evidence provided for Relevance (40 points), Impact (40 points), and Capacity (20 points).
- Scores are finalized, and a ranked list based on the total score is produced.

Stage 3: Strategic Prioritization

In order to contribute to the advancement of the LJI's objectives and to contribute to an enhanced media landscape with greater diversity, a **Strategic Bonus** score is applied to the Project Evaluation Score by the Independent Selection Committee. This allows the committee to identify funding priorities rooted in reconciliation, equity, diversity, and inclusion.

The **Strategic Bonus** of up to 10 points is applied based on the Strategic Priority they meet (e.g., Indigenous Media, **News Desert, Rural/Remote** service to targeted communities). This

creates the final ranked list.

Stage 4: Equitable Geographical Distribution

The final ranked list is reviewed, and an adjustment may be made to ensure an equitable geographical distribution of funds. This adjustment may result in funding a lower-ranked application from an underrepresented region over a higher-ranked application from an overrepresented region. The final ranked list is then approved by the Independent Selection Committee.

Project Evaluation Criteria and Strategic Bonus Scoring

The following table details the three core criteria, evaluation prompts, and the maximum points available. All applicants are evaluated equally against these criteria.

The Independent Selection Committee reviews applications using the following criteria:

1. **RELEVANCE (40 Points Maximum)**

Criteria	Evaluation Prompts	Max Points
1.1 Underserved Community Identification	Does the proposal clearly demonstrate that the target community is a News Desert or an Area of News Poverty, supported by a compelling rationale? For applicants who self-identified as belonging to rural/remote/Indigenous communities, is their proposal supported by a compelling rationale?	15
1.2 Scope of Coverage & Gaps	Does the proposal clearly outline the geographical communities and the specific gaps in existing news coverage that the project will address?	15
1.3 Target Community Service	Does the proposal demonstrate that the applicant has a clear understanding of the local news issues present in their intended coverage area?	10

2. **IMPACT (40 Points Maximum)**

Criteria	Evaluation Prompts	Max Points
2.1 Alignment with LJI Objectives	Does the proposal demonstrate a strong alignment with LJI's core objectives: supporting civic journalism, reflecting diversity, and addressing the identified news gaps?	10
2.2 Quality of Proposed Content Plan	Does the proposal articulate a compelling and effective rationale for how the media organization is well-suited to fill the specific news gaps identified?	15

2.3 Strength of impact	Does the proposal strongly demonstrate the potential impact that could be made by regular news coverage through participation in the LJI?	15

3. **CAPACITY (20 Points Maximum)**

Criteria	Evaluation Prompts	Max Points
3.1 Oversight & Content Plan Feasibility	Has the organization made a strong case that they are fully equipped to support and oversee the journalist? Is the plan for the content expectations fair, reasonable, and impactful?	5
3.2 Journalistic Integrity & Ethics	Does the organization demonstrate that it is equipped to uphold journalistic integrity and use best practices?	10
3.3 Organizational resilience and budgeting	Does the applicant demonstrate an ability to forecast reasonable yet manageable challenges while being proactive in addressing possible issues? Is the budget realistic in supporting the journalist position(s) and equipment needs proposed by the applicant?	5

Strategic Bonus Scoring

Indigenous Media (Pilot Project Eligible)	10 points
News Desert **OR** Rural/Remote Area of News Poverty (serving an **underrepresented group**)	7 points
Urban Area of News Poverty (serving an underrepresented group)	5 points
Rural/Remote Area of News Poverty (General)	3 points
Urban Area of News Poverty (General)	1 point