



2026

Application Guidelines



**Simon Cumbers
Media Fund**
An Initiative of Irish Aid

Simon Cumbers Media Fund

Funding Guidelines for Applicants

The Simon Cumbers Media Fund, an initiative of Irish Aid, supports journalists in Ireland to report on issues of global development for Irish audiences.

The media plays an important role in informing the public about major issues facing our world today. This fund promotes quality coverage of global development issues in the Irish media by supporting journalists to travel to the 'Global South' to produce a report for publication.

The fund is named in honour of Simon Cumbers, an Irish journalist who was killed while working for the BBC in Saudi Arabia in 2004.

The Simon Cumbers Media Fund is an initiative of Irish Aid, and is administered by DHR Communications.



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Applicant Information & Requirements

Quick Links



A Better World



Travel Advisory



UN SDGs



**Global Charter of
Ethics for Journalists**



Who can apply?

The Fund is open to media professionals:

- The applicants must be professional journalists, either employed directly by a media organisation or with a demonstrable record as a freelance reporter;
 - Personal references and/or references to earlier work are essential in that respect.
 - News/media outlets the applicant is affiliated to must be legal entities officially incorporated at least one year before the application deadline of the grant call.
 - The media outlet committing to publish the project should be a member of the Press Council of Ireland or be an established media organisation with a strong track record of bringing foreign stories to a large audience in Ireland.
- Applications will be accepted for print, broadcast and online projects, with a preference for cross-media projects;
 - Joint applications, for example between a journalist and a photographer, are permitted, but the applicant must indicate strong reasons for the proposed collaboration.
 - All applications must be accompanied at the time of submission by a valid letter of commitment to publish by a verifiable media outlet with its primary audience in the Republic of Ireland.

All information regarding a project contained in an application is held strictly confidential by the Fund's administration team and judging panel.

Project information in the application is shared with no third parties, and is used solely for the purpose of making a grant decision.



Application Requirements

Proposed media projects should:

- Focus on **international development themes** and be clearly linked with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and one or more priority areas in *A Better World*, Ireland's policy on international development;
- **Reflect the modern reality of life** in the 'Global South' in the context of international development;
- **Challenge stereotypes** and/or seek to **portray positive developments**, as well as **exploring the challenges**;
- Projects exploring themes of innovation, growth and entrepreneurship are encouraged;
- Applicants may only submit one project proposal and one exhibition proposal in each funding round.
- The proposed media project must be new, i.e. it must not have been broadcast, published or exhibited in any format previously.
- All applications must be accompanied **at the time of submission by a valid letter of commitment by a media outlet with its primary audience in the Republic of Ireland**. The letter **must be on the organisation's headed paper and must be signed by a commissioning editor**.

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- Applications are not required to focus on Irish Aid priority countries but do need to focus on countries ranked as having 'low' or 'medium' levels of development according to the [UN's Human Development Index](#). Only applications [focused on countries categorised as having 'medium' or 'low' levels of development](#) will be considered by the judges.
 - Funding **will not be provided to travel to conflict zones or any country to which the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade advises against travel to** – i.e. any country or area that has a 'do not travel' advisory.
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Joint Applications

In the case of a joint application, one person must be nominated as the 'primary' contact to whom the funding agreement will be addressed. It will be the responsibility of the lead contact to notify DHR Communications, on behalf of Irish Aid, of any changes to their project / personnel prior to travel. Failure to do so will result in the withdrawal of funding. In the event of a disagreement between the two parties, administrators will deem the primary named applicant as the person charged with delivery of the project.



Commitment to Publish

Each application must be accompanied by a valid **letter of commitment from a media organisation with its primary audience in the Republic of Ireland.**

The primary outlet committed to publish the project must be based in the Republic of Ireland. The primary outlet is the media outlet which is the main vehicle for communicating the story. Additional opportunities with outlets in other jurisdictions are permitted and encouraged, once the primary outlet is in the Republic of Ireland.

Research

Applicants are expected to undertake preliminary research regarding the treatment of their proposed story, and this should be addressed within the application form. They are expected to have a well-developed sense of the issues they want to cover, destination country/region, the people/groups with whom they want to engage, and the perspective they want their audience to see, read or hear in their work.

The preliminary research includes, but is not limited to, consideration of the following (as outlined in the application form):

- The judges will look for evidence that the applicant can display preliminary knowledge of the topic and can deliver a clear pitch in terms of what the story is and how it will be told. The focus of the project should be clear, and applicants must show how it relates to the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Applicants should have some idea of who they plan to interview/engage with while in the destination country – the name of organisations, rather than individuals, suffices. This list does not have to be exhaustive but should illustrate that the applicant has researched relevant organisations and has made initial contacts with individuals or organisations to secure their participation.
- Lastly, the applicant should be able to demonstrate why they believe the story is of interest and importance to the public in Ireland.

The research section of the proposal gives applicants the opportunity to showcase their engagement with the topic and advance preparations. The more detailed the approach the better.

Local collaboration

While joint applications, for example between a journalist and a photographer, are permitted, in an effort to promote sustainability and to help the local economy, applicants are encouraged to collaborate with local stakeholders and service providers, e.g. photographers / camera operators.



Connection with NGOs and Agencies

- Applicants are expected to collaborate with authorities and communities in their country of destination when researching and producing their media output.
- Applicants must not have a vested interest in the project. Applications that explicitly promote the work of a single agency or organisation, or are considered to have a biased agenda, will not be considered.
- If you have an interest or prior interest professionally or personally regarding a particular NGO or agency which may be covered in your reporting, this should be stated within your application form and detail offered regarding the nature of your reporting in respect of that interest.
- Potential conflicts of interest must be clearly flagged in your application form for consideration.

Editorial Independence

All published pieces that have been any way supported by the grant funding of the Simon Cumbers Media Fund should upon first publication and thereafter clearly acknowledge the support of the Fund and that it is an initiative of Irish Aid, it is the spirit of the fund that there is editorial independence given to each journalist on their final published piece(s).

While the carrying out of travel and reporting is being supported by the Simon Cumbers Media Fund grant, the produced work of the journalist is editorially independent and is not intended to represent - or be presented as - a report on behalf of Irish Aid, The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, or the Government of Ireland.

Freelance Journalists

Freelance journalists are eligible to receive €1,000 as part of their funding to cover expenses for research and time spend travelling. This must be included in the applicant's budget submission. This grant of €1,000 is available to freelance journalists only and will not be made available to staff journalists.



Photographic Exhibitions

Applications for photographic exhibitions that support a primary project will also be accepted, provided there is a clear photographic element to the main project proposal.

The applicant must clearly set out how they will use the exhibition to increase the reach of the project and raise understanding of development issues.

This must also be accompanied, at submission stage, by a valid letter of commitment from the hosting outlet.

Applications solely for a photographic exhibition will not be considered by the judging panel.

Applications that have a film festival / exhibition as their main outlet will not be considered as a *primary* publication outlet.

Exhibition Costs

In the case of applications for the funding of an exhibition, these costs may cover the printing and mounting of photographs as well as venue hire.



Acknowledgement of the Fund

Each project funded by the Simon Cumbers Media Fund **must publicly acknowledge the support received, using the official Fund logo and the following wording: ‘Reporting for this project has been supported by the Simon Cumbers Media Fund’.**

The full logo and wording must be used in all broadcasts, print outputs, photographic outputs and online outputs associated with the project. There is an alternate version of the logo available in white.

A high-resolution image of the logo, as below, is available on request from the Fund administrators.



**Simon Cumbers
Media Fund**
An Initiative of Irish Aid

*Reporting for this project has
been supported by the Simon
Cumbers Media Fund.*

What is funded?

The Fund is intended to cover costs associated with members of the media travelling to and within a developing country for the production of development-related articles or reports that would not normally be covered by a media organisation's news budget.

Funding sought must be for costs to facilitate the project.

The successful grantee is expected to organise all travel and visa related requirements themselves.

The fund **can cover** the following items:

Direct project costs and out of pocket expenses:

- Travel, e.g. flights, in-country car hire, taxis, public transport
- Visa costs, if applicable
- Daily Subsistence/Food
- Accommodation, at best value available.
- Phone bill for period/Roaming package.
- Travel insurance
- Medical costs directly associated with travel to the region/country e.g. vaccinations, where applicable. Can also cover consultation fee.

Development and support costs or research expenses

- Publications
- Attendance at a conference or event in Ireland to gain or strengthen skills needed for the investigation and/or to meet experts and colleagues to discuss their supported research
- Freelance journalists are eligible to receive €1,000 as part of their funding to cover expenses for research and time spend travelling. This must be included in the applicant's budget submission. This grant of €1,000 is available to freelance journalists only and will not be made available to staff journalists.

Resources

- Aids or equipment rental to facilitate your project
- Costs for tools necessary for the investigation (e.g. datasets, satellite imagery, but no hardware).

Local service Providers

- Hiring local service providers in the destination country e.g. fixers, drivers, photographers, interpreters.



The fund does not cover:	• Retrospective work • Staff wages / overheads (administration, coordinators, managers, financial officers etc) • Production costs or printing costs • Travel within Ireland • Capital expenses or hardware (i.e. purchase of equipment, furnishings, etc.). IT hardware, mobile phones, cameras, or other types of equipment • Third-level fees • Consultant fees to write applications • Purchase, repair or furnishing of buildings • Servicing debts or loans • Per diems. The Simon Cumbers Media Fund does not fund journalists to travel to war-zones or to cover conflicts.
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Further Information on Funding

The **maximum amount of funding available is €10,000**, but this sum will be awarded only in exceptional circumstances. Typically, grants are in the region of €3,000 to €7,000 depending. Applicants are expected to be realistic in terms of their proposed costs, including the length of stay required in-country. The judging panel is not obliged to award the amount sought by the applicant.

The only funding request that will be considered by judges, is that which is **costed in the budget form uploaded as part of the application**.

Successful projects will receive:

- **70%** of the grant funding after the funding agreement between the applicant and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has been signed.
 - The **remaining 30%** of the grant funding will be paid after the project:
 - o has been published,
 - o on completion of a project report, detailing the project costs, and including scanned copies of all associated receipts.
- Any unused funds from the grant must be returned to the Simon Cumbers Media Fund.
 - Applicants are expected to source the best value available in relation to flights, transport, accommodation and any other costs associated with their project.

Applicants are expected to arrange and organise all travel and visas as required.



Travel

Applicants undertake to [familiarise themselves with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade travel advice](#) regarding their country of destination and to monitor it regularly in the lead up to and during their visit.

The Simon Cumbers Media Fund does **not** provide funding for journalists to travel **to conflict zones or any country or region within a country to which the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade advises against travel to** – i.e. any country or area that has a ‘do not travel’ advisory.

Should the judges award funding to support travel to a country or region which then subsequently has its travel advice changed to ‘do not travel’, the Fund reserves the right to cancel the contract and request a return of all funds provided.

On a case-by-case basis, the judging panel will consider applications which concern travel to areas where the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has indicated to avoid non-essential travel to. The judges will consider in a robust manner any such proposal on its individual merits, bearing in mind the reasons why the travel advisories exist. In these cases, the judging panel will consider:

- The overall strength of the application.
- The extent to which the applicant demonstrates an understanding of the situation and appreciation of risk in the area.
- The detail of the outlined support mechanisms available to the traveling journalist, including appropriate training, insurance, and a clearly defined risk approach.

Applicants must secure the necessary visa required for their work in their country of travel. Where a journalist visa is required, recipients must travel on that visa. Applicants are encouraged to make contact with the Embassy or Consulate of the country to which they intend to travel in advance.

The Simon Cumbers Media Fund does not fund journalists to travel to war-zones or to cover conflicts.



Judging

Successful applications will be chosen by a judging panel made up of representatives across the following organisations /groups:

- The Cumbers family;
- Media experts;
- Irish Aid;
- Development experts.

The Simon Cumbers Media Fund judging panel will base its decision to grant all / part-funding* on the following criteria. The judging panel reviews every grant application carefully and votes on which to approve on the following criteria:

- ✓ Quality of the proposal including how it has been costed
- ✓ Feasibility
- ✓ Reach of the project (i.e. the ability of the project to reach high audience numbers in the ROI, across a range of media platforms/outlets)
- ✓ Focus on development issues;
 - relevance to one or more of the priorities in *A Better World*, Ireland's Policy for International Development and the UN Sustainable Development Goals;
- ✓ Originality and innovation demonstrated within the project proposal.

**Based on the quality of applications received, the panel may decide to award partial funding to certain applicants.*

Please note:

- Where there are two very similar proposals from the same media organisation, judges will only allocate funding for one proposal.
- Judges will base their decision on whether to fund a photographic exhibition on the main project proposal and also the track record/experience of the photographer. Applicants submitting a proposal for an exhibition must demonstrate a track record of professional photography and, ideally, of mounting an exhibition.
- **The amount of funding available to the judging panel is restricted. It will not be possible to approve all applications. Failure to secure funding is not necessarily a reflection on the application but on the competitive nature of the process.**
- The decision of the judging panel is final. There is no appeals process.
- Lobbying members of the judging panel is forbidden and will lead to an applicant's exclusion from the process.



Contractual Conditions

- The grantees and all other persons involved in the project have to endorse the principles of the Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists as well as the national codes of ethics that are in force.
- Each journalistic product funded by the Simon Cumbers Media Fund **must publicly acknowledge the support received.**
- Grants are paid in euro. They are only paid out on the bank accounts of the grantees, not via other money transfer services.
- Successful applicants **may be invited to attend events** to showcase the work and outputs arising from the Simon Cumbers Media Fund. As a condition of funding, they will be expected to cooperate with the Fund administrators in the event of being invited to participate in showcasing activities.
- Successful applicants **will agree to contribute short updates or items of content** to the Simon Cumbers Media Fund online promotional tools (e.g. Photo from location, in agreement with Journalist). A final project report is also required following successful publication of the project.
- Successful applicants will be solely responsible for all aspects of planning and execution of the media project, including but not limited to travel, visa, insurance, accommodation, interpreters, security, and completion.
- The **copyright of the final product will remain with the applicant. However, materials produced must be made available, royalty-free – for potential future use by Irish Aid, including on the Irish Aid website. Irish Aid will at all times acknowledge copyright.**
- The Media Recipient shall at all times comply with all applicable national and EU data protection legislation, including the Data Protection Act 2018.
- Projects must have been completed and published / broadcasted in the calendar year 2027.
- The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade or Irish Aid is not responsible for any damage, loss or injury sustained while a journalist is overseas. Successful applicants should ensure travel insurance is in place prior to departure.



If you need clarity or further information on the above, please contact scmf@dhr.ie.

Your question/query will not prejudice your application.

The final marks allocated to you will be on the basis of your application. In rare cases, the judging panel may seek additional information for clarity and you will be given a specific period within which to respond satisfactorily.

If you are unsuccessful, you will receive a short note of feedback on your application from the panel. All judging panel decisions are final.

ENDS

