

Guidance notes for BBC Local News Partnership applications

General principles

The BBC's Local News Partnership [LNP] supports established news providers who can demonstrate an ongoing commitment to the production of public interest journalism for local or regional audiences, irrespective of size or means of distribution.

The project has defined two types of partner – Section One and Section Two

- Section One partner: Receives free content generated through the News Hub, Shared Data Unit and Local Democracy Reporting Service
- Section Two partner: Receives free content generated through the News Hub, Shared Data Unit and Local Democracy Reporting Service and employs one or more of the Local Democracy Reporters

Eligibility

All potential partners must meet the editorial criteria set out in part one of the [Local News Partnerships Eligibility Criteria](#) document.

To be eligible to bid for the contracts to employ the Local Democracy Reporters, potential partners must additionally meet the criteria set out in [part two](#) of document.

Local news providers must be an individual, company or group which

- targets an audience typically located in a specific geographical area which is smaller than a single Nation of the UK (ie smaller than Scotland)¹
- generates and distributes its own news content directly to local or regional audiences
- can demonstrate journalistic output covering a broad range of topical subjects for a minimum period of 12 months preceding the date of application
- can demonstrate coverage of all aspects of public institutions, organisations and civic life, including councils and public bodies
- regularly publishes, broadcasts or distributes news content. Interpretation of 'regularly' will depend on the applicant (i.e. it might be hourly for a broadcaster, daily for a news website or weekly for some newspapers)

¹ If through expansion, acquisition, mergers, or aggregation an organisation becomes national in terms of its intended audience, it will no longer be deemed to be *local* and therefore will not qualify to benefit from the initiatives. National in this sense means: Great Britain; the United Kingdom; England; Scotland; Wales or Northern Ireland.

Organisations **not** eligible for these partnerships include

- news providers whose target audience is restricted to a community of interest (e.g. supporters of a sports team)
- news providers whose editorial is local, but focussed on a narrow genre (e.g. entertainment listings, satire, etc.)
- providers of national or international news
- organisations which aggregate or distribute content made by third-party providers.
- media production companies

News agencies

News agencies will not be eligible to receive any content generated by these partnerships, but agencies which supply local content will be eligible to tender for Section Two Local Democracy Reporter contracts, so long as they meet all other relevant criteria.

All news agencies, including members of the National Association of Press Agencies, will be processed through the ‘non-regulated’ application process.

Application process to become a Section One partner

All applicants will be placed in one of two categories

- Regulated: Recognised by a regulatory body and “fast-tracked” through the process
- Non-regulated: Subjected to a “full check” by an assessor

Non-regulated applicants will be asked to provide ten examples of appropriate content, two of which must be at least one year old. These examples may be links, AV files or electronic versions of printed materials.

Editorial standards

All applicants must meet and maintain high journalistic standards with reference to both the [BBC’s Editorial Guidelines](#)² and the [Editors’ Code of Practice](#).

High journalistic standards can be evidenced by having journalists subject to oversight by a ‘regulator or self-regulator’ such as, but not limited to, Ipso, IMPRESS or OFCOM, or by producing a demonstrable track record of quality journalism.

² In practice this will be the relevant parts of sections 3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 14, 15, and 18 of the [BBC’s Editorial Guidelines](#)

- Being subject to a regulator or being a member of a regulatory body will be accepted as a commitment to high journalistic standards, so long as local/regional news (as set out above) is central to the offering.
- 'Regulator' does not, in this context, have the same meaning as in the Royal Charter for the Press Recognition Panel. In this guidance, it is intended to refer to membership of an appropriate regulatory body for the purposes of the BBC recognising an applicant's commitment to editorial standards as credible. It does not mean that a body meeting the BBC's criteria is recognised for the purposes of the Crime and Courts Act 2013.

Applicants' current content is not expected to meet the BBC standard of impartiality, but should an applicant wish to tender for a Local Democracy Reporter contract under Section Two of the LNP they will be expected to ensure all content supplied as part of that contract meets the highest standards of impartiality.

Handling complaints

All applicants must be able to demonstrate a robust method for handling complaints.

Being subject to a regulator or being a member of a regulatory body will be accepted as sufficient demonstration of a complaint handling mechanism

Local news providers who are not members of regulatory bodies will need to demonstrate a system to handle editorial complaints and evidence of its operation.

Local authority area

Applicants will need to define their editorial area by top-tier local authority area (e.g. county council, metropolitan borough, London borough, etc.).

For larger news providers this will mean indicating a number of council areas. For smaller providers (ie a news website for a single postcode area in a large town), please indicate the single most relevant local authority area.

Application process to become a Section Two partner

Having successfully completed Section One, applicants wishing to tender for Local Democracy Reporter [LDR] contracts must complete Section Two.

Applications under Section Two must be made by individual titles or outlets, with no group applications accepted.

Individual titles or outlets can bid for more than one LDR contract so long as the contracts are relevant to their normal editorial area.

The LDR contracts are fixed value, so the award will be made solely on an applicant's ability to meet the minimum requirements and a compelling demonstration of their suitability.

Minimum standards

Requirement	Guidance
Ability to produce content in more than one format	Format is defined as text, images, video and audio (as distinct from platform, eg print, radio etc)
Currently employs more than one journalist	For the purpose of this question, 'employ' is defined as a salaried member of staff rather than, for example, an owner or director of the business. 'Journalist' is defined as a member of staff employed with the primary function of generating editorial content.
A suitable level of experience among editorial staff (more than two years)	Using the longest-serving member of staff as an example and the overall length of journalistic career rather than time spent with your own organisation.
A suitable level of training among editorial staff (sufficient evidence of training, eg qualifications, training delivered by a third party or formal in-house training)	Evidence of relevant journalistic qualifications and significant formal training should be provided, along with details of whether training was delivered in-house or externally
Evidence of your current employment practices.	Health and sickness absence policy Payroll and expenses Performance Management Holiday and Parental Leave A single document such as a standard contract may be used as evidence for multiple areas.
Evidence that your organisation is located within, or close to, the contract area you are bidding for	Contract area is defined by top-tier local authority (county, metropolitan borough or unitary)

Bidder's proposal

Once an applicant has met the minimum requirements, they will be asked to provide information in three further areas

- Suitability to run a Local Democracy Reporter Contract, relating all evidence, where possible, to the specific contract, or contracts being bid for
- A commitment to diversity and equality in the workplace and editorial coverage
- And additionally, any commitment to work in partnership with other applicants from Section One of the Local News Partnership