

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 BBC also welcomes applications for membership from news providers that target BAME communities in the UK and which can demonstrate an ongoing commitment to bringing public interest journalism to those communities.

The project has defined two types of partner – Partner and Supplier:

- Partner: Receives free content generated through the News Hub, Shared Data Unit and Local Democracy Reporting Service,
- Supplier: 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 the [Criteria for Local News Partnerships](#) document.

To be eligible to bid for the contracts to employ the Local Democracy Reporters, Partners must additionally meet the criteria set out in Part 2 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 no greater than a single Nation of the UK or which targets a BAME community of the UK¹
- 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

¹ If through expansion, acquisition, mergers, or aggregation an organisation becomes greater than a single nation 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. Nation in this sense means: England; Scotland; Wales or Northern Ireland.

- 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)

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 Local Democracy Reporter Supplier 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.

The BBC reserves the right to refuse any application where it has reasonable grounds to believe that the admission of a third party organisation to the Local News Partnerships might undermine the aims and/or operation of the Partnership or otherwise damage the BBC's reputation or run counter to its values.

Application process to become a 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.

- 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 Supplier contract 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.).

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

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 Supplier partner

Having successfully completed a Partner application, applicants can tender for Local Democracy Reporter [LDR] Supplier contracts.

Organisations can bid for more than one LDR Contract. Only one application per contract area is permitted.

Organisations will be expected to provide evidence which is relevant to each specific LDR Contract area.

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

Minimum requirements

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 one or more journalists	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.

Demonstration of suitability

Once a Supplier applicant has met the minimum standards, they will be asked to provide information in areas including:

- Training and development activities offered to editorial staff
- Delivery of the service and managing/supporting LDRs, and
- How they propose to:
 - fully hold power to account

- manage relationships with other users of the service
- engage with relevant communities and audiences
- promote and develop the work of the LDRS
- support the delivery of work in multi-media formats
- attract a diverse and inclusive cohort of reporters
- support sustainability