

Local Democracy Reporting: Host Newsroom Application Guidelines

The Local Democracy Reporting (LDR) programme is a free public-interest news service dedicated to strengthening coverage of local authorities and rūnanga and other similar organisations. This includes but isn't limited to local councils, council committees, community boards, council-owned commercial enterprises, district health boards, local trusts, and port and airport authorities.

Media organisations are able to apply for funding to hire a local democracy reporter to focus on just these kinds of stories for the good of their community. The reporters are employed by, and report to, their host newsrooms but receive extra training and support from RNZ.

The funding covers the reporters' remuneration and other associated costs (agreed on a case by case basis).

In recognition of the public funding, the host newsrooms don't get first or exclusive access to the stories, but instead share them through the programme with all media that qualify to access them.

The programme is managed by RNZ with the support of the News Publishers' Association and NZ On Air. Its trial phase started in July 2019 with the first reporters employed from October 2019.

The programme is expanding to at least four additional placements from January to December 2021.

Who can apply to host a local democracy reporter

We are currently welcoming applications from [NZ Media Council members and associate members](#) interested in hosting reporters from January to December 2021. This includes but isn't limited to members of the Community Newspapers' Association and Te Whakaruruhau o Te Reo Irirangi Māori.

Applicants will need to be able to show they already consistently cover civic matters for regional or under-served audiences. They will need to be able to say how they will use the extra reporter to broaden or deepen their existing coverage.

They will be invited to submit a budget proposal detailing the estimated local cost of employing the extra reporter for a year, including which costs they're willing and able to cover themselves.

Media organisations may only apply for one placement given the limited number of spots.

How the LDR programme works – the details

- The local democracy reporters are recruited and employed by the host newsrooms in consultation with RNZ. They report to the editor, chief reporter or senior journalist of the host newsroom, while also working alongside the LDR Manager and/or LDR Editor employed by RNZ.

- The host newsrooms are required to incorporate a job description supplied by RNZ¹ in the reporters' employment agreements.
- To qualify, the host newsrooms (as the employer) must have:
 - a. Ability to handle health and safety, payroll, overheads, sick leave, etc.
 - b. Ability to provide appropriate support and exercise a duty of care
 - c. Capacity to manage performance
- The reporters can only be assigned to stories that fall within the LDR editorial brief. The brief is to report on the decision-making process: what decisions are made in the public's name and how are they arrived at; what evidence is presented to the councils, etc. It also means going out and talking to the people affected and sharing their stories and perspectives.
- Content must be able to be provided in multimedia format (text, photos, video, audio).
- The reporters will receive multimedia training, some of which will be provided by RNZ.
- The reporters will be subject to a code of ethics and their stories will come under the jurisdiction of the NZ Media Council and/or Broadcasting Standards Authority.
- In recognition of it being publicly funded, all of the reporters' content must be provided in a timely manner to all qualifying media partners, which may include their employers' competitors. A newspaper publisher may not hold stories to suit a print distribution time.
- All media organisations that meet the criteria outlined [here](#) are able to apply to the LDR Manager to publish or broadcast the content, in exchange for agreeing to terms including recording and reporting the number of stories that they use, taking care not to change the stories' meaning, and accepting jurisdiction of the appropriate media standards body.

Documentation required

To apply for funding to employ a local democracy reporter as part of the programme, please email the following documentation to LDR Manager Nina Fowler at nina.fowler@rnz.co.nz by **5pm Wednesday 30 September 2020**.

Document 1 (max 2 pages): PDF proposal that addresses the following:

1. Name of media organisation and the platform and/or publication that would host the LDR
2. Please describe your target audience and provide supporting info (e.g. circulation numbers)
3. Specific geographical area and organisations that the LDR would be assigned to cover
4. Extent of your existing coverage of the kinds of stories in the LDR editorial brief and how the LDR would make a difference in terms of broader and/or deeper coverage

¹ This job description has also been approved by the News Publishers' Association and NZ On Air.

5. Where the LDR would be based – for example, your main newsroom, a home office
6. Confirmation that your media organisation:
 - a. generates and distributes its own news content directly to local or regional audiences;
 - b. is able to demonstrate a robust method for handling complaints. Being subject to the NZ Media Council will be accepted as sufficient demonstration of a complaint handling mechanism;
 - c. is able to ensure submitted material has been checked by a senior journalist
7. Evidence of your current employment practices including:
 - a. Health and safety policy;
 - b. Payroll and expenses;
 - c. Holiday, parental leave and sick leave;
 - d. Performance management – including what ongoing mentoring, training and support will be available for the reporter
8. Detail demonstrating your commitment to diversity, inclusion and equality including through your hiring practices
9. Commitment to working collaboratively with the programme’s wider media partners (especially any partners who cover the same region or an adjacent region)
10. An indication that you would be willing to backfill any secondments to the role

Document 2 (max 2 pages): PDF and Excel budget proposal that includes the following:

1. Annual base pay for LDR salary assuming intermediate or senior journalist
2. Where relevant – other staff costs (e.g. KiwiSaver, ACC, shift allowances)
3. If required – equipment costs (e.g. laptop, camera, smartphone, broadcast field equipment)
4. If required – communications and software costs (e.g. monthly phone billing)
5. If required – travel costs (e.g. leased vehicle / mileage)
6. Please outline all in-kind contribution costs (see below)

Host newsrooms that employ LDRs will ideally contribute the following:

- Office accommodation and supplies or assistance with a home office if that is preferred.
- Provision of necessary reporting tools including laptop, mobile phone with camera (including video capability). Host newsrooms are encouraged to cover these costs. However, if this is not possible, then costs may be reimbursed from the LDR project budget (as agreed on a case by case basis).
- On-the-job training covering text, photo, video and audio journalism.
- An opportunity for a future career path, subject to performance.

Please use the budget proposal template available for download from RNZ’s website to assist with this part of your application: <https://www.rnz.co.nz/ldr/host-newsroom-applications>