

## MIT Environmental Solutions Initiative (ESI) Journalism Fellowship 2021

The MIT Environmental Solutions Initiative's Journalism Fellowship supports freelance or staff journalists associated with U.S. local/regional newsrooms in developing a high-impact news project that connects local perspectives, values and priorities with climate change science and solutions. The Fellowship is part of ESI's Here & Real project, which directly engages with U.S. states and communities on climate impacts, solutions and an emerging low-carbon economy.

In 2021, the Here & Real project is taking the stance that “we're all in this together” and therefore is looking to support storytelling projects that will engage Americans who are unsure, disengaged or doubtful about the need to act on climate change. We recognize that while scientists are experts on many aspects of climate change, we don't presume to know people's lived experiences, values and priorities. This Fellowship aims to marry the two in the service of connecting more Americans to the scientific realities of climate change and options that we collectively face.

Starting in May 2020, Fellows will participate in a four-month nonresident program that includes:

- A multi-day virtual workshop where Fellows will connect with MIT earth modeling and political scientists, economists, science communicators, and others;
- Access to a researcher who can support with local analysis;
- Biweekly cohort meetings;
- Collaboration with designers to produce multimedia content;
- Republication of the feature through MIT's channels; and
- Stipends of up to \$15,000 plus up to \$5,000 for qualified expenses.

The fellowship supports projects that:

- Produce a longform feature or a series of shorter pieces;
- Focus on the newsroom's home county(ies) or state;
- Are nonpartisan and promote critical thinking;
- Feature lived experience and local perspectives and voices;
- Open conversations about climate change solutions and impacts;
- Are investigative or explanatory (i.e. localized versions of the MIT Climate Primer, [climateprimer.mit.edu](http://climateprimer.mit.edu));
- Will empower their audience in engaging with this issue; and
- Have received a commitment from a news outlet to publish the feature.

### Who Can Apply

We welcome applications from U.S. newsrooms who have identified a staff writer to participate in the Fellowship, or freelance journalists who are affiliated with a newsroom, and who want to tackle an ambitious project by themselves, as a newsroom-wide undertaking or as a collaboration with other media outlets in their communities.

Newsrooms can include newspapers, news magazines, broadcast stations, digital news outlets, and investigative journalism organizations. Writers employed by or writing for think tanks, lobbying groups, or advocacy groups are not eligible.

We look for applicants with proven journalism experience and proven ability to report and execute a complex project in their proposed medium.

We are committed to working with rural, hydrocarbon-producing and marginalized communities across the United States and we will ask judges to keep this in mind when selecting Fellowship placements.

## Schedule 2021

April 4	Application deadline
April	Announce Fellows
Week of May 24	Virtual workshops
October 31	End date for project publication

## Term of the Fellowship

The Fellowship is designed to enable Fellows to work on the project over a four-month period while still maintaining their regular employment and/or other contracts. Fellows will receive 50% of the stipend in advance and 50% upon successful completion of their project, though applicants should specify if this will present a hardship.

Fellows will also be awarded up to \$5,000 for project-related expenses and will have significant discretion with how to use these funds. Acceptable expenditures include relief from daily newsroom duties, project-related travel expenses, transcription or relevant translation services, attending conferences or workshops to build subject-specific knowledge, or contracting with an outside journalism resource such as a data journalist or sensitivity reader. Funds may not be used to pay family members for any of these services. All receipts must be submitted to and approved by the MIT Environmental Solutions Initiative.

## How to Apply

Qualified applicants are invited to submit the following to [climate@mit.edu](mailto:climate@mit.edu) by April 4, 2021:

- Resume/CV;
- One page cover letter introducing yourself, your proposed project and qualifications to execute it, and why you are seeking Fellowship support;
- A letter of recommendation and commitment from a news editor who pledges that the news outlet will publish your feature/series (see below);
- Up to three samples of your best and most relevant work, published during the past 24 months; and
- A two- to three-page project proposal outlining your project. Please include:
  - Your plan for incorporating the required project features listed above;
  - A description of who and what size is your audience;
  - Avenues through which your project may reach other audiences (news sharing systems or other means available to you or your newsroom);
  - How the project will engage Americans in your audience who are cautious, disengaged or doubtful about climate change, in a way that is new or novel;
  - What kinds of data and multimedia content you would like to have access to/include;
  - Disclosures on any potential conflicts of interest you may have;
  - A budget; and
  - Optional, how the impact of the project could be evaluated and what an audience engagement component would look like.

## Letter of Recommendation and Commitment

Because we believe that local stories should be told by local newsrooms, and because ESI does not have the capacity to help journalists place stories, we require Fellowship applicants to include a letter of commitment from a news editor who can pledge that the news outlet will publish the feature or series that you propose\*.

Each employer (or freelancer's intended outlet) will be asked to provide a letter of recommendation (on letterhead with contact information) pledging to support the Fellow:

- In participating in the Fellowship as outlined above (including, if applicable, providing adequate time for the fellow to travel for, report and write the project);
- In publishing the work before Oct. 31, 2021 and in providing the editorial and technical support required to do so;
- By allowing MIT and the MIT Environmental Solutions Initiative to republish or otherwise make available the completed project, with appropriate credit given to the Fellow and original outlet;
- By including mention of the reporter's Fellowship in the package or series.

\* We recognize that this letter is not an unqualified pledge.

## About MIT ESI and the Here & Real Project

The Environmental Solutions Initiative (ESI) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) is MIT's institute-wide effort to mobilize the substantial scientific, engineering, policy, and design capacity of our Institute to contribute to addressing climate change and other environmental challenges of global import. We pursue multidisciplinary research, education, events, and partnerships to help move society toward an environmentally and socially sustainable future.

This Fellowship is part of ESI's Here & Real project, which directly engages with U.S. states and communities on climate impacts, solutions and an emerging low-carbon economy. The project localizes conversations about climate change by combining world-class research with local values and economic realities, supporting decision-makers and residents as they work to create a resilient future. Here & Real's approach is to listen thoughtfully; respect communities' deep-seated values and experience; and pursue shared, science-based solutions across political lines.

## Contact

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