



MIT Environmental Solutions Initiative (ESI) Journalism Fellowship

Call for Applications 2022-2023

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.

In today's media environment, climate journalism is often limited to national news outlets, and yet studies show that localizing climate change impacts and actions are effective ways to engage audiences in climate solutions. As such, we are looking to support storytelling projects that will bring climate change science, impacts, and solutions 'closer to home,' especially in parts of the country where climate change is disputed or underreported.

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 realities of climate change and climate solutions.

Starting in March 2023, 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 journalists, communications researchers, and others;
- Access to an editor to support project structure and packaging;
- Training on using MIT's extensive library databases, GIS resources, and socioeconomic climate analyses;
- Regular cohort meetings;
- Republication of the project through MIT and partner channels; and
- Stipends of \$10,000 plus up to \$5,000 for qualified expenses (ex., travel, multimedia development, hosting an event).

*Workshop will be approx. 3-4 hour virtual sessions over multiple days.

The fellowship supports projects that:

- Produce a longform feature or a series of a minimum of 4 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;
- Clearly indicate the applicant deeply understands their audience and local concerns;
- Open local conversations about climate change solutions and impacts;
- Are investigative or explanatory;
- Will empower their audience in engaging with this issue; and
- Have received a commitment from a news outlet to publish the feature.



To see the award-winning projects and resulting impact of the 2021 Fellowship cohort, see: <https://environmentalsolutions.mit.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/MIT-ESI-Journalism-Fellowship-Impact-Report-2021.pdf>

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, proven ability to report and execute a complex project in their proposed medium, and a strong background or reporting experience in the subject.

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 2022-2023

Dec 14, 2022	Application deadline
January 2023	Announce Fellows
March 6	Fellowship begins; virtual workshops begin
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 publication 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, multimedia development, 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. Itemized receipts must be kept, 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 by December 14, 2022:

- 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 parts of the country where climate change is disputed, controversial or underreported, 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 proposed budget for the \$5k expenditure; 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 July 29, 2023 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.



292 Main Street (E38)
Cambridge, MA 02142
environmentalsolutions.mit.edu

About ESI & Support

The Environmental Solutions Initiative (ESI) <https://esi.mit.edu> 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. See ESI's other public engagement work: <https://environmentalsolutions.mit.edu/what-we-do/>

Funding for the 2023 Journalism Fellowship is provided by MIT ESI and the Rockefeller Family Fund.

