



21 Ames Street, Suite 106
Cambridge, MA 02139
environmentalsolutions.mit.edu

MIT Environmental Solutions Journalism Fellowship

Call for Applications 2024

The MIT Environmental Solutions Journalism Fellowship 2024 supports freelance and staff journalists associated with U.S. local/regional newsrooms in developing a high-impact news project that reports on how climate change and/or the shift to a low-carbon economy relates to local communities and regions, in a way that centers local messengers, values, and priorities.

Studies show that localizing climate change impacts and actions are effective ways to engage audiences in climate solutions. Yet today, climate journalism is primarily limited to national news outlets. This fellowship helps provide Americans – especially those living in areas where climate change is controversial or underreported – with well-researched reporting on what a shift to a low-carbon economy can mean for them, their communities, and their local economies.

Starting in June 2024, Fellows will participate in a four-month nonresident program that includes:

- A multi-day virtual workshop* where Fellows will connect with MIT climate scientists, earth modeling researchers, political scientists, energy economists, and others;
- Access to an editor to support project structure and packaging;
- Training on using MIT's extensive library databases, socioeconomic climate analyses, and other resources as requested;
- Twice a month virtual cohort meetings (attendance is expected);
- 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).

*Workshops will be approx. 3-6 hour virtual sessions over multiple days.

The fellowship supports projects that:

- Report on how climate change and/or the shift to a low-carbon economy relates to their audience's existing priorities and values;
- Focus on the newsroom's home county(ies) or state;
- Feature lived experience and local perspectives and voices;
- Clearly indicate the applicant deeply understands their audience and local concerns;
- Are investigative or explanatory;
- Produce a longform feature or a series of a minimum of 4 shorter pieces;
- Will open local conversations about climate change solutions and empower their audience in engaging with this issue; and
- Have received a commitment from a local/regional news outlet to publish the feature.

Previous fellowship projects of MIT Environmental Solutions Journalism Fellows:

- 2021: <https://environmentalsolutions.mit.edu/2021-esi-journalism-fellows/>
- 2023: <https://environmentalsolutions.mit.edu/esj-journalism-fellowships/>

Awards won by MIT Environmental Solutions Journalism Fellows for their fellowship projects:

- [Eric and Wendy Schmidt Award for Excellence in Science Communication](#) from the National Academies
- [Best of Gannett 2021](#) journalism awards
- [First place social issues story](#) in the Minnesota Newspaper Association's 2022 Better Newspaper Contest

Who Can Apply

We welcome applications from staff writers of U.S. newsrooms, 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 2024

April 28	Application deadline
Early May	Announce Fellows
June 3	Fellowship and week-long virtual workshops begin
September 27	End of Fellowship Program
October 27	End date for project publication



ENVIRONMENTAL
SOLUTIONS
INITIATIVE

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 their application by April 28, 2024 using this submission form: <https://climate.mit.edu/journalism-apply>.

The application includes the following:

- 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;
 - 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 expertise, information/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
 - Encouraged but optional: 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 affiliated 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 October 27, 2024 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 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 at <https://climate.mit.edu>.



Frequently Asked Questions

Are students eligible for the fellowship?

Enrolled students are not eligible in 2024.

I am not a U.S. citizen/I'm a U.S. citizen living outside of the country. Can I apply?

In 2024, we are only accepting applicants who are U.S. citizens currently living in the U.S.

I have a project idea about... Would it be a good fit for the fellowship? Can I discuss it with you?

In 2024, we're looking to support projects that report on how climate change and/or the shift to a low-carbon economy relates to local communities and regions, in a way that centers local messengers, values, and priorities. We are prioritizing projects that will engage Americans who are unsure, disengaged or doubtful about the need to act on climate change, and proposals for local stories told by local/regional newsrooms. If your project fits those criteria, then it may be a good fit. ESI is unable to have calls with applicants to discuss their projects, but you may email us with questions at climate@mit.edu.

What is the commitment for the workshop?

We're planning for the virtual workshop to be several consecutive part-time days (ex, 5 days, 3-6 hours each day) and the dates and times will be confirmed in the award letter to Fellows.

Does the stipend go directly to the individual Fellow, or can it go to the newsroom to be used toward their salary?

The MIT Environmental Solutions Journalism Fellowship isn't a grant. Applicants should plan for the stipend to be awarded directly to the individual selected to participate in the Fellowship. This could be used, for example, to sustain the Fellow financially as they pursue the project during unpaid time off from the responsibilities of their daily employment. We cannot award any funding to newsrooms, except for contract services as pre-approved by ESI.

