



Coimisiún
na Meán

News Reporting Scheme

Publication date: 15 August 2025

This document contains an outline of the **News Reporting Scheme** including:

1. The scheme's objectives;
2. The parameters of the scheme; and
3. How it will operate.

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Foreword

Coimisiún na Meán (“An Coimisiún”), Ireland’s commission for regulating broadcasters, online media and supporting media development, is committed to ensuring a thriving, diverse and creative media landscape. An Coimisiún, further to its Media Development function, develops and operates funding schemes to support the creation of content for Irish audiences that reflects and shapes Irish society, and which aims to support the media sector and strengthen its plurality.

The report of the Future of Media Commission (FOMC) recognised “the critical and valued role played by a strong, independent media sector in Irish civic and cultural life and in the democratic order”.

An overarching aim of the FOMC recommendations is to support a range of funding schemes for Public Service Content Providers on a phased basis including:

- Local Democracy Reporting Scheme;
- Courts Reporting Scheme;
- News Reporting Scheme;
- Support for Digital Transformation;
- Access and Training Scheme and,
- Community Media Scheme.

In this context, and following the establishment of the Local Democracy and Courts Reporting Schemes, the News Reporting Scheme is the next to be developed.

The FOMC Report recommended that the establishment of such a News Reporting Scheme would be “...focused on supporting public interest journalism reporting on matters of public interest which are less reported, or at risk of under provision.”

The Scheme is being established on an administrative basis and the broad parameters have been informed by the recommendations of the FOMC.

As outlined, the purpose of the News Reporting Scheme, which is platform-neutral, is to provide support for the production of public interest **content** which is not substantially provided for at present. The Scheme is content-focused and thematic, and will support **additional** news reporting content on a wide range of topics, on a nationwide basis.

It will support, but is not limited to, measures to assist media service providers undertake in-depth focus pieces or series on a broad range of news issues which are currently not covered in substantial detail.

Cross-platform content and collaborative projects with other media service providers are encouraged under the Scheme.



1. Introduction

The News Reporting Scheme (“the Scheme”) is a journalism support scheme operated by Coimisiún na Meán (“An Coimisiún”) and funded through the Exchequer.

The key objective of this Scheme is to support and enhance the vital role of media service providers in reporting on news matters that are not substantially provided for at present, or are at risk of under-provision. In this context, it aims to support the creation of accessible high-quality public interest journalism by skilled journalists, thus improving Irish citizens’ access to trusted quality information on news matters.

This is the first iteration of the Scheme, which is a contestable fund.

This document sets out the key elements of the Scheme in terms of the role of An Coimisiún, the objectives, scope, available funding and the operational processes. An Coimisiún will publish supporting documentation for potential applicants on funding rounds and any associated development measures regularly over the lifetime of the Scheme.

Further to commitments made in Budget 2025 and the Programme for Government to support the provision of news and current affairs in independent radio, the Minister for Culture, Communications and Sport, Patrick O'Donovan TD has allocated a further €3m to the News Reporting Scheme to be ring-fenced for commercial radio applicants.

This brings the total monies allocated to the News Reporting Scheme to €4m.

2. Role of An Coimisiún

2.1 Role of An Coimisiún

An Coimisiún is responsible for the management of the Scheme, including corporate governance and the disbursement of the funds. The level of funding is determined by the Minister for Culture, Communications and Sport and the allocation covers both the administration of the Scheme and funding grants.

The scheme will be implemented in accordance with State Aid Rules and as set out in the European Commission Decision of December 20, 2012, the funding will only be allocated to projects that will provide public service content that supports public interest journalism for a diversity of Irish audiences, including in the Irish language, and thereby fulfil the public service obligations of the scheme.

2.2 Legislative Context for the News Reporting Scheme

Section 7(5)(b) of the Broadcasting and Other Media Regulation Acts 2009 & 2022 empowers the Minister for Culture, Communications and Sport to enter arrangements with An Coimisiún to set up schemes to ‘stimulate the provision of high quality, diverse and innovative news and comment on current affairs’.

In this context, An Coimisiún will prepare and submit to the Minister a scheme for the granting of funds to support reporting on news matters that are not substantially provided for at present, or are at risk of under-provision.

This funding support is primarily for increased media coverage of under-reported news on public interest issues that is available to all.

In this context, in Budget 2025, €10 million was allocated for the second iteration of the Local Democracy and Courts Reporting Schemes and to establish two new schemes, News Reporting and Digital Transformation, with €1m dedicated to the News Reporting Scheme.

The Department of Culture, Communications and Sport has now allocated a total of €4m for the News Reporting Scheme in 2025.

This figure reflects the original €1m allocated to the NRS in Budget 2025; it also includes €3m in funding allocated to the commercial radio sector in Budget 2025, which is to be channelled through the News Reporting Scheme and will be ring-fenced for that sector.

The scheme will be implemented in accordance with State Aid Rules and as set out in the European Commission Decision of 20 December 2012, the funding will only be allocated to projects that will provide public service content that supports public interest journalism for a diversity of Irish audiences, including in the Irish language.

2.3 Definition of Public Interest Journalism

The definition of Public Interest Journalism for the purposes of this Scheme is “journalism with the primary purpose of recording, investigating and explaining issues of public significance in order to engage citizens in public debate and inform democratic decision making at all levels of government”.

2.4 Scheme Objectives

The objectives of the Scheme are as follows:

- **News Reporting:** to provide support for and enhance the production of public interest content on news matters which are not substantially covered at present and which will enhance citizens' knowledge and understanding of local and national affairs;
- **Quality:** to support high-quality, independent, trusted, public interest journalism in the area of news reporting and public affairs, that is accurate and fair, especially at a time when mis- and dis-information are on the increase;
- **Plurality:** encourage and increase the creation of public interest journalism from a diverse range of sources;
- **Irish Language:** support this journalism in the Irish language;
- **Additionality:** increase the availability of accurate and fair public interest journalism in the news reporting sphere;
- **Local Media:** foster and encourage a robust and sustainable local media sector and collaboration across media service providers and across platforms;
- **Gender, Equality, Inclusion and Diversity:** develop public interest journalism that is appropriately diverse, accessible, inclusive and representative of contemporary Ireland;

- **Environmental Sustainability:** support and encourage best practice in sustainability.

2.5 An Coimisiún's Approach to the Implementation of Funding Schemes

There are core values that underpin An Coimisiún's approach to the task of operating a scheme. An Coimisiún is obligated to be:

- Fair – in our processes, procedures, and decisions;
- Independent – operate impartially;
- Expert – by informing ourselves through engagement, research and a commitment to professional learning;
- Accountable – in our decisions, our governance, and our resources.

3. Scope of the News Reporting Scheme

3.1 Public Interest Journalism

The core aim of the News Reporting Scheme is to fund comprehensive, professional and publicly accessible news reporting on matters that are under-provided for at present or are at risk of such. The more the public has access to a wide range of quality news reporting, the better informed citizens will be on public matters.

The NRS will support news reporting on a platform neutral basis that is additional to what is currently being covered and meets the requirements, in terms of standards and availability, including for re-use. (See Section 3.3 Eligible Criteria below).

The NRS aims to support **content** using a thematic-based approach.

3.2 Subject Matter

Following consultation with media service providers, other representations and on foot of research, the News Reporting Scheme will offer funding support for the creation of additional quality public interest journalism on the following:

- News matters which are substantially under-reported or are at risk of under-reporting on a national and regional basis. This could include reporting on matters such as impact of public policy; issues affecting rural communities; transport; content which raises public awareness and understanding of EU and global issues impacting Ireland; sustainability; migration; marginalised groups; social and cultural affairs issues with a news focus;
- Particular themes/issues which fall under this ambit;
- Projects to investigate/highlight news matters which, due to financial or other constraints, are not reported on in the day-to-day operations of a news outlet;
- Content or projects which counter mis- and dis-information in the area of news reporting and/or counter news avoidance.



Applicants will have to justify why their topic is under-reported or at risk of such.

3.3 Eligibility Criteria

Applications to the News Reporting Scheme may be submitted by media service providers of news and current affairs, **who must be regulated entities at the time of applying**, or by a freelance journalist in partnership with such a media service provider. The eligibility criteria set the minimum standards which must be achieved in order to be eligible to apply for funding.

a) High Quality Standards

An Coimisiún will only fund the creation of public interest journalism that demonstrates appropriate editorial expertise, capacity and track-record and membership of the Press Council of Ireland (print and online platforms) or adherence to relevant An Coimisiún standards and Codes of Practice (broadcasting services) or other similar EU regulatory bodies of media service providers.

b) Public interest Journalism Commitment

An Coimisiún will expect an applicant to demonstrate a track record of, or a plan for, a sustained commitment to news reporting and public interest journalism and to demonstrate a means to distribute that journalism to the intended audience/s.

Grants will be allocated on a national basis via an open contestable funding round.

Consideration will include due regard to the creation and distribution of public interest journalism in the Irish language.

c) Freely Available to the Irish Public

All funded content must be made available to other media outlets and the Irish public free-of-charge no later than seven (7) days after the publication of any funded content by the grantee, or earlier if the grantee so wishes, and uploaded to a central portal, operated on behalf of An Coimisiún.

An Coimisiún will make guidance and other supports available for users, including the standards and requirements for the submission of content, to the central hub.

In instances where a grantee charges for access to content on their service, such as a subscription fee or charge, the grantee must ensure that content funded by the Scheme is simultaneously available on such service for free.

d) Freely Available for Re-use and/ or Distribution

A grantee will be permitted to hold ownership and copyright on funded content produced as part of the Scheme for a period of seven days only, after which the content must be uploaded to the central hub and persons will then be free to share or use the funded content on the hub subject to attribution rules.

These include attribution requirements such as:

- the name and logo of the grant recipient
- the name of the authors/contributors to the public service content
- an accessible link (if published/made available online) to the original article; and
- any other matter considered appropriate by Coimisiún na Meán.

e) Access

The content funded under this funding scheme will be publicly available and will be accessible to all.



The guidance documentation for a funding round will include details on the obligations for accessibility of funded content across all platforms.

f) Exclusions

Funding will not be available to finance:

- Activities not directly related to the creation of additional public interest journalism content regarding news matters;
- Current news activities/BAU;
- The purchase of equipment or premises (capital funding);
- Depreciation.

3.4 Public Access to Funded Content

Public access to public interest journalism funded under the scheme is one of the key objectives and in the longer term, all funded public interest journalism will be available and archived, and publicly accessible to all on a central portal operated on behalf of An Coimisiún.

4. Funding

This section details the approach to funding awards under the scheme. It also highlights An Coimisiún's obligations under EU State Aid Rules and the obligation on grantees to acknowledge the source of funding.

4.1 Allocation of Funds within the News Reporting Scheme

Funds will be awarded on a national basis and will be awarded, on a contestable basis, to applications which meet the eligibility criteria and align with the aims and objectives of the Scheme.

The funding will support proposals that fulfil the thematic, content-focused nature of the Scheme. Due regard will be also given to creative and innovative proposals under the broad banner of news coverage which is substantially not provided for, or under-provided, at present.

Collaboration between media service providers is encouraged and will be given due regard.

Coverage of both national and regional/local news matters which are currently not provided for will be considered under the Scheme.

The plurality of sources will have regard to the overall level of funding awarded to any one media service provider area and in this context, An Coimisiún may take appropriate measures to limit the overall level of funding awarded to any one media service provider that has a number of media outlets.



4.2 Grant Types

An Coimisiún shall have the flexibility to determine, on a case-by-case basis, the most appropriate approach to the allocation of funding to grant applicants and has the discretion to award funding, as it sees fit.

In general, An Coimisiún will allocate grants under the News Reporting Scheme that represent 95% of the eligible costs of the proposed journalism and directly associated editorial and overhead costs.

Guidance documentation will be published for each funding round and will include detailed information on the grant award levels and budget templates setting out the permitted costs under the Scheme.

4.3 Obligations Under EU State Aid Rules

An Coimisiún must operate the funding scheme in accordance with the requirements of EU State Aid Rules and are applying the SGEI Decision (2012/21/EU). The compliance requirements include full transparency such as the publication of funding awards on Coimisiún na Meán's website and inclusion of the Scheme in a report submitted to the European Commission every two years. The Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment are the lead on this report and the Department will co-ordinate the return of information from An Coimisiún in this respect.

Further to Article 8 of the SGEI Decision, An Coimisiún must retain all required information regarding a funding award for the both the funding period and subsequently, for 10 years afterwards to ensure that a grant(s) can be inspected by the EC to determine compatibility with the SGEI decision.

4.4 Funding Rounds

An Coimisiún will allocate funding using a contestable funding rounds system. The number of funding rounds will depend on a range of factors, including availability of funding and possible future iterations of the Scheme.

4.5 Acknowledgement of Funding

Applicants in receipt of funding from An Coimisiún are contractually required to formally acknowledge this support in a format acceptable to An Coimisiún. An Coimisiún reserves the right to issue applicants with guidelines specifying precise requirements in this regard.

5. Application, Assessment and Awards

This section sets out the approach to the application and assessment process for the scheme and identifies the key principles informing these processes.

The primary concern for An Coimisiún is that the application, assessment, and award processes are transparent, equitable and verifiable. An Coimisiún has agreed and operated broad principles in respect of these processes across funding schemes as outlined below.



An Coimisiún will make information in relation to the processes and procedures for making applications, the assessment process, contracting and disbursement publicly available.

5.1 The Application Process

An Coimisiún will publish information on funding schemes and will include: details on how to make submissions, eligibility information, application timeframes, details of assessment criteria and other supplementary information as deemed appropriate.

5.2 The Assessment Process

The assessment process for the News Reporting Scheme consists of the following four phases:

5.2.1 Preliminary Assessment

The preliminary evaluation ensures that an applicant is eligible for funding under the scheme. The focus here is to ensure that applicants have met minimum criteria and submitted all required documentation. Any applications that do not pass the preliminary assessment stage are disqualified and are not subject to further consideration.

5.2.2 Qualitative Assessment

Each application is assessed on its own merits in the context of the assessment criteria which will be set out in An Coimisiún's guidance documentation published to inform and support potential applicants when making a submission to the News Reporting Scheme.

5.2.3 Strategic Assessment

In instances where there are more qualifying applications than funds available, An Coimisiún will have a second evaluation phase. This will focus on achieving a balance in the overall package of funded projects in the context of the scheme objectives. The recommendations from the qualitative phase will also be considered here. Final recommendations are then submitted to the Commissioners for ratification.

5.2.4 Commissioner Ratification

The final stage sees Coimisiún na Meán ratifying the overall package of applications recommended for funding with regard to fulfilling the objectives of the funding round.

5.3 The Award Process

Where An Coimisiún has approved an application for funding the following steps apply:

- i. An Coimisiún informs the applicant of the decision, setting out any condition(s) attached to the offer.
- ii. An Coimisiún will make public a list of the funding offers ratified by the Commissioners.
- iii. The successful applicant must confirm their acceptance of the offer of funding and any condition(s) attached thereto by An Coimisiún.
- iv. A successful applicant is required to enter into a contractual agreement with An Coimisiún, on terms to be specified by An Coimisiún. Such terms include a schedule relating to the drawdown of funds by the applicant. Funds are administered by An Coimisiún in accordance with the terms of the contractual agreement.



Where An Coimisiún has rejected an application for funding, applicants are notified individually and provided with feedback on the performance of their application in the assessment process.

An Coimisiún will develop a standardised points system to inform the evaluation of applications, and the feedback provided to an applicant.

6. Review of the News Reporting Scheme

As provided for under the FoMC Report, the News Reporting Scheme is being established on a pilot basis for an initial period of 12 months and An Coimisiún will review the operation, effectiveness and impact of the Scheme on the completion of this pilot phase and make a written report to the Minister on the review.

This evaluation of the pilot scheme will inform policy development of future iterations of the Scheme.

