

Google launches African News Innovation Challenge

With the assistance of generous sponsors, Google has announced the launch of a new US\$1 million African News Innovation Challenge (ANIC) to help African journalism flourish in the digital age.



The project will provide grants from US\$12 500 to US\$100 000 for projects aimed at strengthening and transforming African news media. The challenge welcomes proposals that improve data-based investigative journalism, mobile news distribution and new revenue models. Grantees will receive technical advice in carrying out their projects.

The African Media Initiative (AMI), a large association of media owners and operators, is running the contest and digital strategist Justin Arenstein, a Knight International Journalism Fellow working with AMI, is leading the initiative. The International Centre for Journalists in Washington DC, administers the Knight Fellowships.

"African media have a tremendous opportunity to leapfrog the business disruption faced by media in Europe and the US," says AMI chief executive Amadou Mahtar Ba.

"The growing reach of mobile networks and improving internet access is beginning to reshape the media landscape in Africa. We believe this competition will help African news organisations stay ahead of the curve." adds Mahtar Ba.

Julie Taylor, Google's head of communications for sub-Saharan Africa said, "We're committed to working with journalists across Africa to help them use technologies to gather and tell important stories. Google is keen to help because we think the future is digital, and we want to see journalism flourish in the digital age."

Partners involved

Partners include the Omidyar Network, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the US. State Department, the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, and the World Association of Newspapers & News Producers.

"Omidyar Network is delighted to be supporting the African News Innovation Challenge," said Stephen King, partner at Omidyar Network.

"Across the continent we are seeing innovative ways in which technology is providing people with greater access to information. This challenge is a great opportunity for journalists, entrepreneurs and technologists to join forces and help

enable the African media to hold their leaders to account."

Improving journalism in Africa

This is Google's latest effort to spur African journalism. Google is already working with newsrooms across the continent to show journalists how the internet can help them be better reporters - whether it is doing advanced searches and analysis for investigative stories, or incorporating great data-based visuals or citizen voices into their reportage.

Outside of Africa, Google is also active in promoting digital journalism. In the Nordics, the company recently partnered with Danish newspaper Dagbladet Information and Denmark University's Centre for Journalism to sponsor the Nordic News Hacker. Google is also supports the Global Editor Network's data journalism prize and International Press Institute media innovation prizes.

How to apply

Entries must be submitted to the ANIC website (africannewschallenge.org) by midnight Central African Time on 10 July 2012. Proposals may be submitted by news pioneers from anywhere in the world, but entries must have an African media partner who will help develop and test the innovation. Projects that are designed for Africa will stand a better chance of receiving support.

Projects of interest

ANIC is seeking new ways to create, discuss and share news and make quality journalism sustainable. This could include new revenue or production models, new ways to gather, produce or distribute news. Ideas that can be scaled up across the continent or replicated elsewhere are of particular interest. Preference will be given to ideas that solve bottlenecks facing Africa's media.

The judging process

Winning projects will be selected by an ANIC panel of judges, following public voting and a review by an international jury. Finalists will get a chance to refine their proposals during one-on-one mentoring sessions at a 'tech camp' in Zanzibar in August 2012.

For more, go to africannewschallenge.org.

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