



## Call for Investigative Journalism Story Pitches

**Call Number:** 010/2023 (SMAZ)

The Voluntary Media Council of Zimbabwe (VMCZ) is inviting journalists and documentary filmmakers to pitch story ideas on investigative journalism (IJ) on transnational crimes. The call for investigative story pitches is part of VMCZ's objective of strengthening watchdog journalism and media reporting for accountability. An investigation that will break new ground and result in a series of stories will be highly considered for funding.

The main criterion for eligibility is that the pitch should include the following:

- (i) 1 (one)- in-depth investigative story with thorough investigations on transnational organised crimes
- (ii) 1 (one)- follow-up story to the in-depth investigative story published

**Selection Criteria:** Grants will be offered to journalists with the strongest applications. Applications will be judged on the quality of the story pitch, the applicant's journalism skills as indicated by their work samples, and evidence of support from the applicant's editor.

Pitches and investigative story ideas that will be supported should positively answer the following:

1. Is this an underreported issue of local concern?
2. Is the story breaking new ground and exposing wrongdoing in public or private sectors?
3. Is the story likely to get traction or impact?
4. Is the reporter/outlet best positioned to tell the story?

**Number of Required In-depth Investigative Stories:** TWO ie ONE with a provided mentor and the other ONE on your own.

Each successful pitch will be supported with a ceiling payment in the amount of **US \$600**. The support shall cover direct costs that shall be incurred by the newsroom/ journalist/s in the production of the investigative story. The costs are limited to courier services, transportation, communication, lodging among other surface costs.

**Deadline:** There is no deadline for proposals, as they will be reviewed on a rolling basis with grant decisions made within two to four weeks of submission. This mentorship program will continue until September 2023. All the applications should be submitted to: [mediacomplaints@gmail.com](mailto:mediacomplaints@gmail.com) and copied to [director@vmcz.co.zw](mailto:director@vmcz.co.zw)

**Attachments:** Please submit the completed application form with a **signed acknowledgment note from an editor** as a guarantee that your story will be published after a successful application process and production. Freelance journalists can make their applications directly.

{NB: DO NOT EDIT OR REMOVE ANY SECTIONS FROM THIS TEMPLATE- you can copy and paste this template to a fresh page to create more space for responses}

**COMPLETE ALL SECTIONS**

**Story Focus Area** *(Tick appropriately)*

- 1. Trafficking of illicit goods (drug trafficking, trafficking in stolen property, weapons trafficking, Wildlife trafficking, mineral resources trafficking, counterfeiting etc,
- 2. Illicit services (commercial sex and human trafficking, smuggling of migrants, etc)
- 3. Infiltration of business and government (fraud, racketeering, money laundering, corruption, tax invasion etc)

**FULL NAME :**  **SEX :**

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**AGE:** *(Tick appropriately; X Below 35years*   *Y Above 35years.*

**MEDIA HOUSE:** *(If you are a freelance, indicate)*  **Duty Station:** *(Indicate City/Town)*

**MEDIUM:** *(where the story/stories will be published)*

**CONTACT DETAILS:** *(email/phone number)*

**PROJECT OVERVIEW** *(max 150 words)*

*Briefly summarize your topic & tell us what makes your approach different or unique. What is the expected traction/impact?*

**STORY PITCH** *(max 400 words)* **(Pitch stories not topics)**

*Story pitches must demonstrate research and answer the following KEY QUESTIONS: **WHY** is this story important? **WHO** are my sources? **WHAT** new ground are you breaking?, what is the magnitude (data/statistics)?*

**WHEN** do you expect to *start* and *complete* the investigation stories? (*Submit investigation timeline using the format below*)

No	Date	Description	Means of verification	Sources/ Key Persons
1	<i>eg 1 March 2023</i>	<i>One on One with mentor</i>	<i>Physical meeting</i>	<i>Mentor</i>
2	<i>Eg 10 March 2023</i>	<i>Eg gathering of facts, evidence</i>	<i>Eg cabinet minutes, treasury report, ministry or women affairs procurement documents</i>	<i>Eg Cabinet secretary, treasurer, ministry procurement secretary</i>
3	<i>Eg 20 March 2023</i>	<i>Investigations (what exactly)</i>		
4	<i>Eg 25 March 2023</i>	<i>Submission of 1<sup>st</sup> Draft to the mentor</i>	<i>Story 1st Draft</i>	<i>Mentor &amp; VMCZ</i>
5		<i>Incorporation of input from mentor</i>		
6		<i>Submission of 2<sup>nd</sup> Draft to the mentor</i>	<i>Story 2<sup>nd</sup> Draft</i>	
7		<i>Submission of Final Draft to the mentor</i>	<i>Story Final Draft</i>	
8	<i>28 March 2023</i>	<i>Publishing of approved article</i>	<i>Story Link</i>	<i>Name of Publication</i>

**Methodology:**

**Number of follow up stories:** An indication of proposed *total number of follow up stories* to the in-depth story to be written within 30 days after publishing the in-depth story.

**Please list three Links of your work to demonstrate your skills.**

- 1
- 2
- 3

Any questions regarding the call are answered between 1000rs to 1500hrs on Wednesday and Thursday (22&23 March 2023) ONLY.