

Empowering Fact-Checking in the Pacific

Call for Expressions of Interest

Overview

The Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS) is inviting interested journalists, academics, and civil society representatives to apply to join our upcoming Empowering Face-Checking in the Pacific project.

The overall objective of the project is to:

- Build capacity of eligible Pacific Island Media organisations and interested parties to meet and maintain the International Fact Checking Network's (IFCN) rigorous standards
- Foster relationships within the Pacific Islands network and with other regional networks to promote exchange of best practices and lessons learned

Empowering Face-Checking in the Pacific focuses on seven countries: Fiji, Vanuatu, Samoa, Micronesia, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Tonga.

The project is being delivered in partnership by RMIT ABC Fact Check, supported by the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN), with in-country support by the Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS), which is an Australian Aid Initiative delivered by ABC International Development.

What is fact checking?

Fact-checking is a process that seeks to check information to determine its accuracy and then promote the veracity and accuracy of that information in the public domain. It aims to verify political claims and hold politicians accountable (political fact checking). It also tries to combat the spread of misinformation and disinformation (verification and debunking).

Fact checking is also a sub-field of journalism. It involves searching databases, analysing statistics, consulting both academic experts and historical records. It differs from regular journalism in that fact checkers do not report the day-to-day news nor work to daily deadlines as regular journalists do.

Fact checking is becoming increasingly important. In October 2020, there were 304 fact checking projects active in 84 countries, compared with 2017 when there were 126 fact checking projects active in 49 countries.

Opportunity

PACMAS is looking for participants from Fiji, Vanuatu, Samoa, Micronesia, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Tonga who would be interested in being a part of this activity.

If your application is successful, you will have access to pre-recorded learning materials that provide an introduction to fact checking. Following this, each participant will complete eight online modules and complementary face-to-face sessions with a Peer Mentor who will guide your learning.

You will gain important knowledge and skills, used by professional fact checkers, that will enrich your work in multiple fields.

The ultimate aim of this project is to help Pacific fact checkers and organisations to establish their own fact checking body or bodies in the Pacific region. (A small group of selected participants who complete this workshop will have the opportunity to be mentored by RMIT ABC Fact Check to help establish a local fact checking outfit and become officially accredited by the IFCN.)

IFCN accreditation comes with many benefits to individuals and organisations, some of these include:

- New income streams are available through opportunities from Facebook and other companies to become third party fact checkers. Facebook pays fact checking organisations to fact check/debunk misinformation on their site.
- Fact checking organisations are entitled to apply for grants from the IFCN. The IFCN offers about 3.4 million dollars in grants and projects each year.
- There is international prestige associated with holding an official fact checking accreditation from the IFCN. The IFCN has been nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize.

Who are we looking for?

Suitable participants for this activity can come from a wide range of backgrounds. These include: senior journalists and editors; academics and postgraduate students interested in fact-checking, information environments and misinformation in the Pacific; representatives of NGOs with an interest in media education, literacy, education and monitoring; and other interested parties.

Training outline

The training will be delivered in three phases:

1. Pre-recorded videos to provide an overview and introduce basic concepts.
2. Eight training modules that can be downloaded and completed with face-to-face support from a Peer Mentor provided by PACMAS.

This component will include 12-14 hours of self-directed learning and up to 8 hours of locally-led discussion. Both types of learning will be facilitated by the Peer Mentor in a group learning setting throughout (unless COVID restrictions necessitate an entirely virtual program).

3. Webinars to answer participants' questions and consultation to support the formation of Pacific Fact Check body.

The IFCN will conduct a survey prior to these webinars to ascertain which topics participants would be keen to hear more about.

Apply today

To express interest in joining, please fill in an online application form:

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=mkDBL3hw50e7LNHLNQPgEpYDw1sN04hHj3Vb6Z47WYhUQlc4VFI0UzlaVkpKWkdBVONYSVJPOEtONi4u>

Key dates

Applications must be received by 28 June 2021 (10am Fiji, Vanuatu Time).

Live training dates will be updated on our facebook page, so follow us for updated information.

We will notify participants if they have been successful in applying by 5 July 2021.

Training dates in each country are yet to be confirmed, but we expect all in-country workshops to take place over four days in late July or August 2021.

Further information

International Fact-Checking Network

<https://www.poynter.org/ifcn/>

ABC RMIT Fact Check

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/factcheck/>

Pacific Media Assistance Scheme

<https://www.abc.net.au/abc-international-development/projects/the-pacific-media-assistance-scheme/>