Google launches news innovation challenge for African media

Google has announced that the Google News Initiative (GNI) Innovation Challenge is launching in the Middle East, Africa and Turkey in June.

Image source: Gallo/Getty.

The GNI Innovation Challenge is inviting proposals for projects from news organisations of every size to address increasing engagement with readers and/or exploring new business models in any form such as subscriptions, membership programs, and so on. Traditional publishers, news startups and associations that aim to build innovative digital media projects are all eligible to apply.

A panel will evaluate the submissions and fund selected projects up to $150k, with funding for up to 70% of the total project cost. The funding will be reviewed against several criteria, including a “sharing component” - for example, a project proposal can include publishing findings or holding a public seminar to encourage applicants to share the knowledge and learnings to others.

The application window for project submissions will open in June, and will extend for one month. More information on eligibility, rules and criteria, and funding will be published on the GNI website.

“News publishers in many parts of the world are grappling with questions of how quality journalism can thrive in the digital

age. With economic models changing and new ways in which people are consuming news, innovation in the news industry has never been more important," says Madhav Chinnappa, director for News Ecosystem Development, Google.

Ludovic Blecher, head of the Google News Initiative Innovation, says: "We're excited to bring the GNI Challenge to the region. We want to make sure that all news organisations, large and small, legacy publishers, as well as new entrants, have the opportunity to inject new ideas into the regional news industry."

Last year, Google announced the Google News Initiative (GNI), the global umbrella that pulls together everything Google does to help news players in their transition to a digital future. The Google News Initiative is Google's effort to help news players in their transition to a digital future, focusing on three pillars:

1. Elevating and strengthening quality journalism.
2. Evolving business models to drive sustainable growth.
3. Empowering news organisations through technological innovation. Over the last two years Google has trained more than 4000 journalists across Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa.

Google's mission is to organise the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful. Through products and platforms like Search, Maps, Gmail, Android, Google Play, Chrome and YouTube, Google plays a meaningful role in the daily lives of billions of people and has become one of the most widely-known companies in the world. Google is a subsidiary of Alphabet Inc.

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