

Guiding Principles for Accountable Partnerships

About these Guiding Principles

Internews values our relationships with our partners and we seek to hold ourselves **accountable to you and your communities**. We expect our work to maximally benefit our intended beneficiaries – the communities we serve. We want partners who expect the same of themselves and of us.

We designed these Guiding Principles with our key project partners in mind – those which play a key role in the success of a joint project in the partner’s country or community. They are inherently aspirational – donor and funding restrictions limit our ambitions and flexibility, and we understand that partners are operating from varied levels of resource, capacity, and depth with us on our projects. While not every project will achieve these high standards, we expect that our key project partnerships will, and the number that does will grow over time.

This document is meant to be shared with our strategic partners as guidance to how we commit to working together. Please consider this to be a living document that may be adapted as we implement it over time. Note that this guidance does not supersede any written and signed agreement between Internews and a partner organization.

Our Five Guiding Principles

Our commitment to you, our partners.

Joint design and ownership

Internews commits to listen to you, be responsive to your needs, and jointly design our projects as much as feasible. We will use what works best in each context and learn, adapt, and improve over time.

This means:

- Internews [prioritizes your participation in the design of joint projects](#) and activities. We do this early on in design and during implementation when possible, and will increase this practice throughout our partnership.

- We put you in the lead. We recognize that you are in the best position to understand community-level nuances and we will entrust you to execute while we provide support.
- Internews commits to listen to you and do our best to provide what you really need, when you need it to achieve or intended results. We will be flexible and accommodating to these needs as much as feasible.
- Internews works with partners that are driven by shared missions and values. We only seek to engage you in projects and activities that align with your mission.
- Internews uses the tools and methods that work best for your context to achieve our shared goals. We do not impose what is easiest for Internews or adapt tools and approaches that are not appropriate.
- Internews adapts its approaches as we implement [to improve our effectiveness](#). We make decisions [based on data](#) and evidence. We expect you to do the same, and will support you to do so whenever feasible.

Independence

Internews respects and protects your organization's independence. We welcome your collaboration with our peers.

This means:

- Internews respects the intellectual property associated with your work, and ensure you maintain the rights whenever feasible and allowable.
- We use [open source, open standards, and open innovation](#) whenever feasible.
- Internews very rarely produces its own media content. Only in humanitarian emergency responses do we do this.
- Internews does not accept funding that would compromise your integrity, your organization's brand, or the editorial independence of your content.
- We give you credit for your great work and don't claim it as our own. Internews expects you to operate autonomously, including to report on us and our donors as relevant to your mission and to hold us accountable for our mission.
- Our partners work most closely with the communities they serve, and are best positioned to speak for their interests and advocate for how we can help.

Safety and risk mitigation

Internews is committed to your safety and security. We are good stewards of your data. We will work together to apply these commitments to those we serve in your communities.

This means:

- We acknowledge that many of our partners are at risk for the work they do. We take steps to help them mitigate their risks, particularly those created by our projects.

- We design projects considering [safety and security](#) at each step. We seek to balance risks with the benefits of our activities and ensure our partners understand and accept the risks of the project. We recognize that not all risks are avoidable, and our ability to protect our partners is limited. So, we focus on planning and prevention as a mutual commitment to keep our work as safe as possible for our partners and the communities they serve.
- We brief partners on security decisions that impact them, and involve partners in risk mitigation planning.
- If our partners believe our partnership places their organization, staff, or the community they serve in unacceptable risk, we will attempt to mitigate that risk by changing our approach or, if necessary, ending the partnership.
- Our partners have the right to know the source of funding for their projects.
- Internews will practice good stewardship of partners' data, protecting it and destroying it when it is no longer needed, never sharing it with anyone outside of our obligations, such as donor or legal requirements, without consent.

Performance and redress

Internews expects great work of you and of ourselves. We are responsive to questions and requests and we handle critiques and suggestions responsibly and with humility.

This means:

- We will engage in ongoing, open communication throughout our partnership.
- Internews is respectful, responsive, and open to critiques. Internews responds as soon as feasible to all requests, questions or complaints. No partner will face retaliation for making a complaint.
- Internews is responsible with our resources. We will harmonize our efforts with our peers, limit waste, and duplication. We expect you to do the same.
- We believe our partnership and the results we achieve will improve over time if we commit to adapting to feedback and learning from successes and failures.
- Our partners have the right to understand and receive clarification on all matters related to your award from Internews. This includes technical guidance and tools to help you complete required forms and documents you must submit as part of your award.
- Our partners receive clear information about how to report complaints, including ethics violations anonymously to HQ staff.
- Our partners have the right to dissolve their partnership with Internews.

Sustainability and self-reliance

Internews strives to equip more sustainable, self-reliant partners to carry forward our shared mission. We seek to build your capacity to carry on our shared mission into the future.

This means:

- Internews builds the capacity of institutional partners – non-profit organizations that support the information ecosystem – to have the long-term strategy, leadership, management, and funding base necessary to operate without Internews' support.
- We encourage you to work with any organization that supports your mission. We do not ask key host community partners sign to exclusive agreements to work only with Internews to gain a competitive advantage.
- Whenever feasible, Internews supports media and journalism institutions to build diverse, consistent revenue streams that persist beyond the life of our project.
- Projects should be jointly designed to ensure capacity exists to continue the work, often including a hand-over of responsibilities to partners over the project's term.
- When projects are ending, we make plans with our partners to hand over assets, knowledge and responsibility wherever possible.

Notes on Accountability and Power Asymmetry

We at Internews recognize the power asymmetry and moral and ethical challenges inherent in the foreign assistance sector. Internews and its donors from [high income countries](#) have a particular obligation to be accountable to the communities we serve, to mitigate the risk of our reinforcing racist, colonialist, and exploitative policies and attitudes. While a major goal of foreign assistance is to correct these injustices and inequities, we recognize we may not be doing enough, or fast enough. We hope these principles, in alignment with our organizational commitment to Belonging, Dignity and Justice, help us to become better allies to our partners in confronting the oppressive systems we benefit from.

Internews also acknowledges the practical limitations of these principles in practice due to the requirements our donors place on us. Our goals – and those of our partners – may conflict with donor obligations at times. We believe our partners are best placed to inform our projects and inherit the work after the project is over, but too often our donors' priorities do not enable this transition. We want to do better. To our partners: we are your advocates. We will push donors to prioritize your long-term sustainability

and security, replacing quick “wins” with durable and meaningful outcomes. Our Global Change Agenda will work to elevate and center the experiences of our partners, and Internews will adapt over time as we learn how to be more accountable to the communities we serve. We will also welcome your participation in this advocacy.

Our Values

Internews bases these Guiding Principles on our core values. Our values inform all our work – from our mission and strategy – to which donors we accept support from, to how we approach implementing projects. We:

1. Listen and learn continuously

We are curious and responsive, driven by a spirit of creativity and innovation.

2. Build community

We value open communication and dialogue. We treat each other kindly and respectfully, collaborate, and support each other.

3. Act with integrity and persistence

We build trust, hold ourselves to a high standard, and don't give up.

4. Commit to making a difference

We are passionate about improving lives and creating positive change in the world.

5. Bring optimism and excitement

We approach our work with enthusiasm and love what we do.

Our core values thus require us to work collaboratively with partner organizations who are rooted in the communities they serve. We believe the ability to listen and learn, and build communities, are critical to mutual success. We seek to find partners who share our value for integrity, commitment, and optimism, and who build their capabilities to deliver our shared goals.

Want to Reach Out to Us?

Want to share your feedback? We encourage partners to reach out to the Partnerships Team at partnerships@internews.org to provide feedback or suggestions for improvement on how we work with our partner organizations, make inquiries about Internews' work that may not be directly related to your projects, or to inquire further about how we are working to improve and strengthen our partnerships. Additionally, if you have questions about how our Guiding Principles may affect your work, please let us know. Your message will go to the entire Partnerships Team for follow-up.

The Partnerships team currently includes Myles Smith, Senior Director (msmith@internews.org); Natalie Rowthorn, Program Associate (nrowthorn@internews.org)

Please note this email contact is entirely separate from existing ethics reporting systems or for resolving disputes. The terms for ethics issues are clearly laid out in subawards and should be followed accordingly when necessary.

Inspirations for these Principles:

Internews Summer Strategy Workshops (2020)

USAID Draft Local Capacity Development Policy (2020)

Internews' Working Group on Partnerships (2019)

Feedback from Internews partners on surveys, in key informant interviews and in focus groups discussions with our Accountability Team (2019-2020)

Internews' Principles for Collaboration with Private Sector Technology Companies (2020)

[Core Humanitarian Standards](#) (CHS)

[Principles for Digital Development](#) (2017-Present)

