
Guide for pitching ideas to Discourse Media

Who we are: Discourse Media is an independent media company that produces and enables in-depth journalism about complex issues. Our work is collaborative, inclusive and driven by intentional impact. We leverage new media to tell stories in innovative ways and meaningfully engage partners, media outlets and the general public. Our projects range from print and digital editorial packages commissioned by major media outlets to complex, independently-funded journalism projects that involve standalone websites, data analysis and interactives, multimedia content, strategic partnerships and deep engagement strategies. For more information, visit www.discoursemedia.org.

Elements that we look for when deciding to take on a project:

- 1. Journalism that builds empathy.** When done well, this approach to journalism goes beyond simply causing an audience to feel compassion for a voice or character impacted by the issue reported on. It is journalism that features complex characters with complex motivations, avoids oversimplifying conflict, and utilizes multimedia storytelling formats. It “sets the table” for constructive dialogue by enabling audiences and communities to imagine where multiple stakeholders from different backgrounds (political, ethnic, socioeconomic, generational) are coming from.
- 2. Access to sophisticated information.** We aim to empower our audiences and communities by making sophisticated information available, understandable and engaging. We recognize that much knowledge and data exists that isn’t being effectively communicated to the public or to policymakers, especially as it relates to science. We prioritize data journalism, which includes collaboration with experts and in-depth analysis.
- 3. Journalism that nurtures imagination.** We recognize that a lot of journalism is conflict-driven and can cause its audience to feel pessimistic and weary, harming public support for systemic change. We want to leave our audience with a better understanding of problems, while fuelling a sense of possibility. Solutions journalism practice produces content that not only describes challenges we face but also illuminates possible paths forward and mobilizes knowledge among those on the ground working towards change.
- 4. Impact-driven.** This means pausing before pitching to consider how we can add value to existing conversations as opposed to simply broadcasting content. We often begin major projects by analyzing current discourse around an issue and asking what it means to advance a constructive conversation. What is the potential impact of this work? What do Canadians need to know about this subject? What can we do that no other media outlet would take on?



What we want in a pitch:

A pitch should be a maximum two-page document that clearly lays out the story or investigation. Please use hyperlinks as needed and email reporters@discoursemedia.org with the following:

Focus statement (2-3 sentences):

Paint a clear picture of the story and the angle you're proposing.

Why tell this story (2-3 sentences):

Explain why this is a story that Discourse Media needs to tell. How time-sensitive is the story/ why now? How does this fit with our values and/or contribute to projects we are already working on? What solutions journalism attributes does the story have, or have the potential to contribute?

Your experience (3-4 sentences):

What is your experience working on this subject? What information/documentation/media do you already have? What do you see your role being in the project?

Digital engagement (2-3 bullet points):

How will this story live on social media? What multimedia elements should be used to best tell the story?

Data and digital:

What data exists that supports your work (e.g., link to data repository, sources, experts)? Is it publicly available? Are there data gaps? Are there experts in a related field who might bring value to the project through collaboration?

Other coverage (choose the most relevant):

What has been done? Where and when was it published?

Concerns and critiques:

What are the gaps in the story? What issues do you think you may have to deal with in your reporting? Any conflict of interest?

Timeline:

How long do you need to tell this story? What deadlines will you meet? What support do you need from the team (e.g. FOI support, data interpretation, multimedia production)?