Project Pandemic: Canada Reports on COVID-19 Member Agreement

All members agree to the following terms of engagement and use for "Project Pandemic: Canada Reports on COVID-19," a collaborative investigation in the public interest coordinated by the Institute for Investigative Journalism (IIJ), with the support of the Canadian Association of Journalists (CAJ).

Goals

All member news organizations, educational institutions and nonprofits are working toward common goals: finding answers to the questions we are collectively asking and then producing works of journalism intended for publication and broadcast.

Rules of the Road

These are the basic ground rules, common to all co-productions:

1.   Confidentiality

This project should not be discussed with anyone who isn't a member of "Project Pandemic," with of course the exception of sharing within one's own news organization.

2.   Radical sharing

We are all working in co-operation, not in competition; we all contribute to the project. For our group to produce data and content together, we must share all of our research, analysis and data.

3.   Simultaneous publication

All participating organizations will actively avoid scooping each other.

4.   Co-crediting and appropriate credits

Participants must receive appropriate credit for their work. Institutions' different formats for credit need to be accommodated.

Payment

Members acknowledge that no payment is associated with "Project Pandemic." All content produced as a result of membership in this project must be freely available to the public.

Simultaneous publication

All members agree to grant permission to the member news organizations and universities to use the information they gather to produce works of journalism, including but not limited to the mediums of text, print, photos, graphics and video.

No member news organization may scoop another news organization. All analyses must be promptly shared and uploaded, and all members notified on Slack in the #storylines channel. If you plan to pursue a story based on this project, please share these plans on the Slack channel called #storylines. Please include a brief description of the story you plan to tell.

If other news organizations express interest, all parties will coordinate on interviews. Collaboration methods standard to large groups will be described in shared documents, presentations, and videoconference seminars.

When planning to publish a story, you must also paste a reminder on the #storylines channel at least 48 hours before publication, with the exact time and date of publication or broadcast.

Crediting policy

Any data a reporter gathers will be tagged with their name, news organization and date of input.

In the spirit of collaboration, any articles, broadcasts or multimedia reports produced as a result of our collective effort must reflect this. Failure to follow crediting guidelines will be brought to the editorial board.

The words "as part of the "Project Pandemic" collaborative mapping effort mobilizing journalists across the country" should be included near the top of the article or script.

In descriptions of the data or map, by agreement with Esri Canada, participating news organizations must publish this phrase: "using Esri ArcGIS technology."

Published maps must have the "Powered by Esri" logo. "Project Pandemic" co-ordinators will send the logo to reporters by email.

At the bottom, an explainer, as follows:

"Project Pandemic: Canada Reports on COVID-19" is a national collaboration bringing together journalists and journalism students from news organizations and universities across Canada to gather information as a public service. The consortium draws on data gathered by governmental health authorities, journalists and the nonprofit platform Flatten.ca. This project is coordinated by Concordia University's Institute for Investigative Journalism, with the support of the Canadian Association of Journalists. For the full list of credits, please visit concordia.ca/projectpandemic."

Communication

All members agree to communicate with the group and share their research via our Slack channel, our group's primary means of communication. Only group notices will be sent by email.

Interview Procedures

Procedures for logging and sharing interviews and for accountability interviews are available in the shared drive.

Updates to this description

This is an innovative project and as such, work processes will change over time. There may be updates to our member agreement and to this document as the project unfolds, as approved by the editorial board.

Awards and Publicity

In many cases, IIJ will prepare award applications on behalf of the group, submitting them to the editorial board for approval.

Award applications prepared by contributing media companies will be shared with the IIJ before they are submitted. It is understood that because any such draft will discuss the work from the perspective of one journalist, researcher or organization, it will almost always require input from the rest of the group.

Branding for the project will be determined by the IIJ and editorial board.

Member journalists will notify the IIJ about any interview requests connected with the project.

Disputes

All participating institutions agree to appoint a representative who will speak for their team in the event of a dispute. If representatives are unable to resolve the issue and on deadline, they agree to a mediation session, with any decisions guided by a vote of the project co-ordinators and available board members.

Legal responsibility

All publishers are responsible for the materials they publish. All participants in the consortium understand that the documents, data and interviews uploaded by member journalists in the course of their work have not been verified.

Violations of the terms of the agreement

The project's editorial board will be the decision-making body governing these matters.

Behaviours that will not be tolerated include but are not limited to:

1. Failure to meet minimum commitments (the agreed-upon number of calls or contacts)
2. Failure to observe crediting guidelines
3. Failure to notify the coalition of analyses and resulting stories
4. Failure to notify the coalition of pending stories 48 hours before the deadline

5. Failure to coordinate on interviews
6. Failure to treat all members with professionalism and respect, regardless of gender, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, religion or other social constructs
7. Unprofessional behaviours deemed to be disruptive to group or member productivity on Slack, including posting irrelevant materials or posting with unusual frequency
8. Subjecting coalition members to bullying or threats, or such hostile communications that the editorial board deems them inappropriate to the spirit of the collaboration and/or an impediment to the work
9. Subjecting co-ordinating staff to abuse, threats, bullying or other behaviours that would not be tolerated by the news organization's own human resources department. Such communications will be automatically forwarded to a reporter's manager and the editorial board.
10. Publishing unverified statements or other instances of failure to observe journalistic practices; failure to adhere to the highest standards of our profession
11. Sexually suggestive or explicit communications
12. Theft
13. Issuing threats, including but not limited to physical violence or lawsuits

Disciplinary proceedings

If the editorial board generally agrees that the severity of an offence or offences requires immediate action, the editorial board reserves the right to instantly terminate the membership of any reporter or organization, subject to appeal.

In the event that a member engages in the actions above or similar offences, the editorial board will follow this process unless indicated otherwise:

1) On the first occasion, issue a warning letter to both the member and his or her organization, notifying them of the violation of the terms of the agreement. Any aggrieved parties will also be notified of the board's decision.
2) On the second occasion, issue a warning letter to the member and his or her organization; notify aggrieved parties of the board's decision; post the letters to the coalition's shared drive; and if deemed necessary to the group's well-being, describe the incident and outcome in the weekly newsletter to all members.
3) On the third occasion, terminate a member's access to Slack, Esri, Google Drive, and any other project systems. A notice will be issued to the member and his or her news organization.
4) If a member of any news organization fails to observe coalition guidelines to the extent that their access is terminated, the editorial board will have the option of removing the news organization's access as well.

Appeals

Those who are subject to the procedure described in step three above may argue their case to the project's editorial board and request that access be reinstated. The editorial board will consider up to five pages of submitted evidence or documentation before making a decision.