AI & DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

POSTED BY

Build Practical Technology Solutions for Sustainable Zimbabwean Media

Zimbabwe Media Commission



Success means producing practical, pilot-ready technology that helps Zimbabwean media organisations improve their workflows, use limited resources more effectively, grow and retain audiences, generate sustainable revenue, strengthen trust, support digital

POSTED BY	**Zimbabwe Media Commission**	PILOT BUDGET	**TBA**
LOCATION	**Bulawayo**	APPLICATIONS CLOSE	**28 Oct 2026**
SUB-THEME	**AI & Digital Transformation**	TEAM SIZE	**2–6 people**

1 The problem

Background

Zimbabwean media organisations rely on fragmented systems, manual processes and limited resources, making it difficult to produce and distribute news efficiently. They lack useful audience insights and sustainable digital revenue models, while struggling with content verification, regulatory compliance and public trust. Additionally, valuable public data is underused in public-interest journalism.

What's going wrong

Zimbabwean media organisations face operational, technological and financial challenges that affect their ability to produce quality journalism, reach audiences and remain sustainable. Key problems include: - Fragmented workflows: News production and approval rely on disconnected tools, emails, WhatsApp and manual processes. - Limited resources: Small newsrooms cannot afford advanced digital tools, while journalists spend valuable time on repetitive administrative tasks. - Poor audience insights: Media organisations struggle to understand audience behaviour, engagement and reasons for subscribing or disengaging. - Unstable revenue models: Heavy reliance on advertising, shrinking budgets and competition from global platforms limit financial sustainability. - Misinformation and compliance: Weak verification processes and difficulties applying ethical, privacy and regulatory requirements threaten public trust. - Underused public data: Transport, traffic, accident and road-safety data are not consistently transformed into accessible, timely and actionable journalism. The core problem is the lack of affordable, integrated technology solutions that help Zimbabwean media organisations operate efficiently, understand their audiences, diversify revenue and deliver trustworthy, data-driven public-interest journalism.

2 What we need

A strong solution will:

- ✓ The challenge focuses on improving media operations through smarter newsroom workflows, resource efficiency, audience growth, sustainable revenue models, content verification, regulatory compliance, and data-driven road-safety journalism.
- ✓ Solutions must include a functional prototype that addresses a real user problem and demonstrates how it can be piloted, adopted, maintained, and financially sustained by a media organisation or relevant institution.

Constraints

- Each team must select one primary challenge track and is not expected to solve all seven.
- The solution must be designed for Zimbabwean operating conditions, including limited resources and connectivity challenges.
- The prototype must work on ordinary smartphones or standard web browsers and remain usable under low-bandwidth conditions.
- The solution must comply with applicable Zimbabwean media, privacy and data-protection requirements.
- Personal, confidential, journalistic and commercially sensitive information must be protected.
- Any artificial-intelligence outputs must be reviewable by a human, and AI must not invent laws, regulatory guidance, sources or factual information.
- Regulatory information must clearly identify its official source.
- The solution must not enable censorship, unlawful surveillance or political profiling.
- Teams must use authorised, anonymised, sample or publicly available data.
- The solution must be affordable and maintainable without relying on expensive proprietary infrastructure that participating institutions cannot realistically support.

Challenge tracks

Challenge Track 1: Smarter Newsroom Workflows – Streamline story assignments, approvals, publishing and editorial coordination.

Challenge Track 2: Doing More with Limited Resources – Reduce production costs, automate repetitive tasks and help small newsrooms maximise staff and equipment.

Challenge Track 3: Audience Growth and Retention – Analyse audience behaviour to improve engagement, attract regular readers and retain subscribers.

Challenge Track 4: Sustainable Media Revenue – Develop alternative income streams through subscriptions, memberships, micropayments, events and other services.

Challenge Track 5: Trust, Verification and Content Integrity – Help journalists verify claims, detect manipulated content and document corrections.

Challenge Track 6: Digital-Media Regulation and Compliance – Simplify compliance guidance, complaints handling and regulatory processes for media practitioners, the public and ZMC officers.

Challenge Track 7: Public-Interest Data and Road Safety – Turn transport, traffic, accident and road-safety data into useful maps, visualisations, alerts and journalism.

3 Deliverables

By forum week, matched teams are expected to bring:

01 Problem Statement: A clearly defined problem and the selected challenge track.

02 Stakeholder Engagement: Evidence of engagement with at least one intended user or relevant stakeholder.

03 Working Prototype: A functional minimum viable product (MVP) or high-fidelity prototype.

04 User Journey Demonstration: A demonstration of the required workflow for the selected challenge track.

05 Technical Materials: Source code, prototype files or other technical build materials.

06 System Architecture: A basic system architecture and data-flow diagram.

07 Data Requirements: A description of the data needed by the solution.

08 Privacy, Security and Ethics: An assessment of potential privacy, security and ethical risks.

09 Pilot Proposal: A proposed pilot involving at least one relevant media organisation or institution.

10 Implementation Roadmap: A six-month plan outlining development, testing, deployment and implementation.

11 Budget: Estimated costs for the pilot and ongoing operations.

12 Impact Measurement: Indicators for measuring effectiveness, adoption and public value.

13 Final Pitch and Demonstration: A five-minute presentation showcasing the problem, proposed solution, working prototype and expected impact.

4 How teams are evaluated

Applications and final pitches are scored by the challenge owner and the ZBIF secretariat.

CRITERION	WHAT WE LOOK AT	WEIGHT
Fit to the problem	Does it solve the problem as the challenge owner describes it?	**30%**
Technical feasibility	Can the team build and run it with the resources available?	**25%**
Cost and scalability	Is it affordable to pilot, and to roll out if the pilot works?	**20%**
Team capability	Does the team have the skills and time to deliver?	**15%**
Local impact	Jobs, skills or value it keeps in Zimbabwe.	**10%**

Who can apply

- ✓ A registered ZBIF innovator account: innovators, consultancies, technologists, university teams or freelancers.
- ✓ At least one team member based in Zimbabwe.
- ✓ Able to attend the event at the challenge location if shortlisted.
- ✓ IP ownership and pilot terms are agreed between your team and the challenge owner in the Deal Room.

5 Timeline

21 Oct 2026	Challenge posted
28 Oct 2026	Applications close
As responses arrive	Each response is screened and ranked for the challenge owner

7 How to apply

01 Create a free innovator account at **zbif.co.zw**, or sign in.

02 Open this challenge (ref ZB-32) and press **Apply**.

03 Tell us your team name, size and how you would solve the problem. Applications close on **28 Oct 2026**.

Questions about the brief can be asked from the challenge page. Answers are shared with every applicant.

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