

Job Description: News Editor
March 2022

The Mississippi Free Press, a thriving and rapidly growing nonprofit digital newsroom run by the Mississippi Journalism and Education Group, is seeking a full-time news editor to work with a **diverse team of reporters and freelance contributors** across Mississippi committed to covering Mississippi in a deeper, more contextual and inclusive fashion than traditional media here. Named the **Institute for Nonprofit News' Startup of the Year in 2021 for our innovative and inclusive journalism**, the **women-founded Mississippi Free Press** engages deeply with an extremely diverse and deep source base throughout the 82 counties of Mississippi through **interviews, conversations and solution circles to identify systemic challenges** that need **both cause- and solution-driven reporting**. Upon our March 2020 launch with a core team with deep shared journalism experience, and who had worked together to create groundbreaking journalism for years, the **MFP had immediate impact**, attracting deep and wide media coverage and followup to our work and **winning a plethora of awards after just one year**—success we attribute to our mission-driven teamwork and shared values more than any other factor.

The news editor will help assign, edit, track, and oversee daily breaking news and in-depth news features for our noon MFP Daily newsletter (M-F) and to go live at other times as needed. The news editor will have assistance from and help direct two deputy editors (**one in charge of features/news assistance and the other MFP Voices columns and working with the editor-in-chief on systemic reporting projects**), the **creative director (photography and art)** and the **digital editor (posting, social)** with input as needed from the editor-in-chief to maintain a vigorous and informative daily publication schedule. The team will collaborate and brainstorm in weekly scrums and other meetups with the news editor and deputy editors for coverage plans and to ensure a reader-friendly mix of **breaking and short news, longer-form deep dives, investigative pieces, features** and more.

The news editor will help generate story ideas about policy, elections and government; COVID-19 and health care; higher and K-12 education; race and racism; violence prevention, policing, prisons and public safety; infrastructure and environment; equitable economic development; immigration and lives of immigrants; gender and LGBTQ+ concerns; and others of public interest in Mississippi. We strongly urge those who are members of traditionally

marginalized communities or who have related life experiences to apply for this position to help lead our coverage across Mississippi in the most inclusive way possible.

News Editor Central to Rapid Growth

The ideal news editor for the MFP will have good reporting skills and at least three years' experience editing news pieces for substance, readability, accuracy, fairness, sensitivity, storytelling, historic and other needed context, as well as know AP style and have a sharp copy-editing eye. It helps if you despise the passive voice, shy away from standard inverted pyramids and know (or want to learn) how to work with reporters to transform bland just-the-facts ledes into compelling narrative.

The right MFP news editor will have leadership skills and experience guiding reporters, deputy editors, and freelancers through the reporting and writing process and systems as needed. It is important to be fast and thorough at editing and have good judgment. We are eager to hire a news editor with either journalism experience inside Mississippi and/or deep institutional knowledge about Mississippi. If you grew up here, even better. (Most of us did.) You will also write compelling headlines, subheads, and ensure that the social team creates and publishes accurate, compelling social-media messages.

This job will be central to Mississippi Free Press' rapid growth into our role as a leading news source in Mississippi. But not every job candidate arrives with every skill and professional experience nailed down. Our organization values creativity and experimentation (without fear of failure) and continuous learning. Across the organization, we encourage our journalists to develop their skills through classes, workshops, webinars, mentorship, peer-training opportunities, and more. We ask all MFP team members to embrace and seek learning experiences daily from each other and the people across Mississippi.

Strong, Cohesive Team of Professionals

This news editor will join a strong, cohesive, and mutually supportive and respectful [team of journalism professionals](#) who, in most cases, have worked together for years. Most joined the Mississippi Free Press, which has had no staff turnover—only growth—since our March 2020 launch, after working together at the Jackson Free Press for years to create award-winning and impactful journalism. Co-founders [Kimberly Griffin \(publisher\)](#) and [Donna Ladd \(editor-in-chief\)](#) have worked closely together for 15 years, first at the Jackson Free Press and now at the MFP. Both founders have also worked with all but one of the 11 full-time MFP team members at least three years, many closer to or more than a decade. News-editor finalists will have the opportunity for one-on-one and group conversations with the team during the interview process about our culture, systems and any other questions. We also invite candidates to visit our [Board of Directors/Advisory Board page](#) to read about the people who support our work, our team and our mission to on a daily basis.

If this sounds like a job that fits your skills and experience, please reach out. Since our March 2020 launch, the MFP team's work culture has focused on excellence; journalism that can move needles for all Mississippians; and a collaborative, mutually supportive team of professionals who believe in our mission deeply. We have an equitable, respectful, and deeply inclusive work culture that the news editor can enjoy, help grow and maintain daily, as well as help improve. We have fun while working hard for our state every day in ways that support each other's life-work balance. The successful candidate for our newsroom will join a current and growing full-time editorial and revenue team of 12, in addition to part-time team members, and freelance writers, artists and photographers.

Primary responsibilities include:

- Edit daily and weekly news coverage, including short news, news features, profiles, newsletters, features, social media packages, and more.
- Perform and, as needed, assign fact-checks.
- Execute substantive edits that account for inclusive sourcing, balance, news value, insight, equity and compelling ledes.
- Communicate with sources and other members of the public as needed over story ideas, concerns about coverage and practices, and to develop trust and sourcing.
- Help grow and maintain an inclusive source base in Highrise (simple CRM) for edit team members.
- Line edit for readability, engagement, accuracy, legal concerns, adherence to style sheet.
- Create effective, accurate, and search-friendly headlines and packaging.
- Help direct, write, adapt, and post news coverage as needed for other platforms (including social media, newsletters, and more).
- Collaborate with the editor-in-chief on news assignments and coverage plans.
- Work supportively with editors, reporters and freelance journalists.
- Work with editor-in-chief on in-house training sessions and outside development opportunities for editorial staff members.

Knowledge/experience required:

- At least three years' experience leading and managing team members and content in a news environment.
- Proven track record editing stories and helping staff to grow and develop as journalists.
- Institutional knowledge in Mississippi and any of its counties.
- Superior editorial judgment and the ability to identify great stories and quickly react to breaking news.
- Deep familiarity with the reporting process and journalistic ethics and standards.
- Proven ability to write concise and web-friendly headlines.
- Experience with editing multimedia or social media content.

- Familiarity with social media and other engagement platforms to find sources and story ideas.
- Ability to use social-media tools and platforms to reach audiences and amplify impact.
- Knowledge and experience of the changing media landscape.
- Experience working with diverse communities to bring their stories to light.

Knowledge/Experience (or willingness to learn) desired:

- Familiarity with editing in Google Docs and using tools in Google Drive.
- Narrative writing and editing.
- Website management and posting. Familiarity with WordPress.
- Fluency (or competence) with languages spoken by Mississippi communities, especially Spanish.
- Ability to identify and conceptualize potential stories in a variety of areas.
- Use of communications and project-management systems like Basecamp, GroupMe, Highrise, Google Drive, Zoom and more to make work more efficient for the full team and support healthy work-life balance for all, including editors.
- Willingness to speak or appear in public (or virtually) to talk about MFP journalism, our mission and to develop source connections.

Salary and Benefits:

- The salary range for the news editor begins at \$50,000 and will be based on prior experience and skillset. A growth opportunity for this position is a future added position of managing editor or other top editor positions.
- MFP currently pays 50 percent of the employee's medical, vision and dental benefits through our group plan; family members can be covered through employee contributions.
- This position can be fully performed offsite at home, but inside Mississippi, using our virtual team systems. The MFP's office is in downtown Jackson and will re-open in 2022 on a hybrid basis for those wishing to work onsite, but it is not required. We will host meetings, brainstorm sessions and other activities in the office when we deem it safe enough, but staff members out of town may attend virtually. We do plan to have occasional all-hands retreats and other gatherings planned in advance that we'd like everyone to attend.
- This position will receive a total of 24 days of PTO and nine holidays for 33 total paid days off a year. We are closed on seven non-religious holidays and provide two floater days for staff members to use for either religious or non-religious days off due to their personal preference and needs.

Application process:

To apply for this immediate hire, please send a resume and a cover letter describing your

experience and what excites you about the possibility of editing and working at the Mississippi Free Press. If you have many of the requested skills and experiences, but not all of them, feel free to apply. Send resume and cover letter to [Editor-in-chief Donna Ladd](mailto:donna@mississippifreepress.org) at donna@mississippifreepress.org. You can also email questions before you apply to Donna as well as [Publisher Kimberly Griffin](mailto:kimberly@mississippifreepress.org) at kimberly@mississippifreepress.org. Please put “MFP news editor” in the subject line.

Read stories about the MFP's coverage approach, team members, mission and shared ethos:

- [The Mississippi Free Press Aims to Be in Nonprofit News 'For the Long Game': Neiman Lab](#)
- [Kimberly Griffin and Donna Ladd Connect Problems with Possibilities: Saturday Evening Post](#)
- [My MFP Role Helps Me Pass Torch to Other Badass Black Mississippians: Mississippi Free Press](#)
- [INN Names Mississippi Free Press 'Startup of the Year' \(plus press release\): Institute for Nonprofit News](#)