

AN AERIAL VIEW INITIATIVE

Terms of Reference

THE AFRICA STORY PROJECT

Version 1.0 | 2026

Issued by Ria's Colony, for Aerial View's editorial and destination partners.

riascolony.com

01 About Ria's Colony

Ria's Colony promotes trade and tourism across Africa by helping women, businesses and destinations grow. We equip women to communicate their value and thrive in business and professional spaces, tell stories that broaden perspectives, create travel experiences that expand horizons, and help destinations and businesses connect with the people, customers and partners who matter most. Four products carry that work.

- Style Vault teaches her to own her value and enter business, commerce and professional spaces with confidence.
- Style Mirror gives her stories, that name what she has felt but rarely read.
- Aerial View helps you understand a place before you arrive, so you return with more than photographs.
- Aerial Connect helps businesses find customers and partners in new African markets before they invest heavily.

The Africa Story Project sits inside Aerial View. It is how Aerial View carries out its central purpose at scale: finding the people who understand a place because they live it, and helping them tell that place's story properly.

02 Background

Africa is one of the most written about places in the world, yet still one of the least understood. Most travel content falls into two extremes. Destination brochures sell perfect beaches and unforgettable experiences, while travel lists tell you where to go and what to photograph. Neither helps you understand how a place actually feels. They do not explain why a market opens after eleven in the morning, why everyone knows each other in a particular village, why the best restaurant rarely has the biggest sign, or how a country's history still shapes the way strangers greet one another today.

Those are the stories that make a destination understandable, not just visitable. That is why the Africa Story Project exists. We believe Africa should be told by the people who know it because they live it, not because they visited for a few days.

03 Purpose of the Programme

The Africa Story Project exists to find the people and organisations who know their communities best and help them share their stories with a wider audience.

We work with local storytellers, tourism businesses, guides, conservation organisations, artisans, hospitality brands, cultural institutions and community leaders to tell stories that are real, specific and worth reading.

By helping travellers understand the people, history and culture behind a place, these stories preserve local identity while encouraging more meaningful tourism.

Instead of publishing promotional content, Aerial View works with selected partners from those who apply to tell those stories honestly. Every feature is written in their voice while meeting our editorial standards: clear, truthful and worth reading.

04 Objectives

- Tell richer, more specific stories about African places.
- Showcase destinations beyond conventional tourism marketing.
- Document local culture, craft and knowledge before it disappears.
- Increase visibility for deserving, working tourism businesses.
- Give priority attention to women building and leading tourism across Africa.
- Encourage slower, more thoughtful travel and destination storytelling.
- Build a trusted editorial resource that travellers and destination partners can rely on.

05 Scope

Applications are invited from organisations and individuals operating within Africa, including but not limited to:

- Boutique hotels, eco-lodges and guesthouses
- Restaurants and food experiences
- Community tourism projects and social enterprises
- Museums, historic sites and art galleries
- Conservation organisations and wildlife projects
- Cultural centres, coffee farms, tea estates and wine producers
- Local guides, walking tours and artisans
- Destination management organisations and tour operators
- Festival organisers and women's tourism initiatives

This list is illustrative rather than exhaustive. If an organisation preserves, explains or shapes the character of an African destination, it is in scope.

06 Who Can Apply

To be eligible, an applicant must:

1. Operate within Africa.
2. Have a verifiable physical presence at a specific location.
3. Demonstrate ethical business practices.
4. Own, or hold permission to use, all submitted photographs.
5. Provide accurate and complete business information.
6. Be willing to participate in an editorial interview if requested.
7. Agree to the editorial process and terms described in this document.

07 Priority Categories

The programme is open to all eligible organisations described in Section 05. Priority consideration is given to businesses founded, co-founded, owned or led by women, including organisations with women serving as directors, partners or executive leaders, and to:

- Women preserving cultural heritage, craft or traditional knowledge
- Women-led conservation and wildlife initiatives
- Women-led tourism enterprises and hospitality businesses
- Community projects that create employment for women

This reflects Ria's Colony's wider commitment to creating opportunity for women across Africa, while remaining open to any organisation whose story meets the standard set out in Section 08.

08 Editorial Philosophy

We do not publish advertisements disguised as stories because we believe a place becomes memorable through the people, history and traditions that shape it, not marketing slogans. Every place is beautiful to someone. The more interesting question is why.

A successful feature should make a reader think, “I didn’t know that,” not, “I’ve seen that before.”

What we are looking for

- ✓ Stories that explain a place, not just describe it
- ✓ Businesses and people preserving culture, craft and heritage
- ✓ Artisans, food traditions and local experiences
- ✓ Communities and the people behind a destination
- ✓ Hidden or lesser-known places
- ✓ Conservation work told through the people doing it
- ✓ Women building and leading tourism

What we are not looking for

- ✗ “Top 10 Places” lists or generic itineraries
- ✗ AI-generated or plagiarised articles
- ✗ Advertisements or brochures disguised as stories
- ✗ Content without genuine local knowledge behind it
- ✗ Unverified historical claims

If a story could describe almost any country in the world, it is probably not the story we are looking for.

09 Selection Process

Selection takes place in eight stages, each designed to protect the quality of the stories we publish.

S/N	Stage	What happens
1	Application	The applicant completes the online application form (Annex A).
2	Editorial Review	The Aerial View editorial team reviews for originality, authenticity, story potential, destination relevance, photography and alignment with Ria's Colony.
3	Qualifying Questionnaire	Shortlisted applicants receive a questionnaire (Annex B) requesting deeper background, documentation and permissions.
4	Editorial Interview	Where needed, the editorial team conducts a short virtual interview to understand the people behind the story.
5	Editorial Production	A Ria's Colony writer produces the feature in the Aerial View voice, built from the applicant's own words, while preserving their perspective.
6	Fact Checking	The draft undergoes editorial review, historical verification, fact checking and photograph verification.
7	Publication	The approved feature is published on Aerial View.
8	Promotion	The feature is promoted across Ria's Colony's channels, including a fourteen-day complimentary website and social media advertising campaign.

Acceptance at any stage does not guarantee progression to the next. Ria's Colony may decline to proceed at any point where the story, verification or materials do not meet the standard set out in this document.

10 Application Requirements

The initial application asks only for what is needed to make a first, fair editorial judgment.

Field	Notes	Required
Business or organisation name		Yes
Category	See Scope, Section 05	Yes
Country, city and region		Yes
Physical address or location	Approximate location accepted where relevant	Yes
Website and social media handles	At least one online presence	Yes
Business registration	Where applicable in the applicant's jurisdiction	If applicable
Primary contact: full name, role, email, phone	Include country code for phone	Yes
Founder or leadership information	Names and roles of founders, directors or key leaders	Yes
Is a woman a founder, co-founder, director or key leader here?	Yes / No, plus name and role	Yes
Destination served	The place this story is really about	Yes
Business story, in your own words (150 to 300 words)	Not a brochure description. What is actually true about it?	Yes
One to three photographs	Real, unfiltered, taken on site	Yes
Consent to this Terms of Reference		Yes

11 Evaluation Criteria

Every application that passes initial screening is scored against the same matrix. No single factor decides an outcome on its own.

Criterion	Weight
Authentic local knowledge	30%
Storytelling potential	20%
Cultural significance	15%
Originality	15%
Photography quality	10%
Community impact	5%
Alignment with Ria's Colony	5%
Total	100%

12 What Selected Participants Receive

At no cost, selected participants receive:

- A professionally written editorial feature, produced in the Aerial View voice.
- Professional editing and fact-checking.
- Publication on Aerial View.
- Clear attribution to the founder, business or organisation featured.
- Promotional content using great storytelling techniques with interactive videos or images advertised across social media channels, as a collaborative post between your brand and ours. Ria's Colony covers the cost of the adverts and the images or videos.
- Newsletter inclusion, where applicable.
- A complimentary fourteen-day promotional advertising campaign on the Ria's Colony website.
- A simple Brand Voice Guide to help you communicate more consistently.
- A Brand Guideline to keep your visual identity and messaging consistent.
- A PR consultation with practical advice on how to present your brand, communicate your story and get the most value from your feature.
- Exposure to travellers, tourism professionals and culturally curious audiences across Africa and beyond.
- Long-term discoverability through search engines, as a lasting editorial asset rather than a one-day post.

13 Editorial Process

Selected features are written by the Aerial View editorial team, not published as submitted. We develop a professionally edited, long-form feature in the Aerial View voice, while preserving the contributor's personality, knowledge and perspective.

Editorial independence

- Participation in this programme does not constitute paid advertising.
- Acceptance into the programme does not guarantee publication.

- Publication does not imply endorsement of a business, its products or its services.
- Our responsibility is to the reader first. Where a story does not hold up under fact-checking, it is not published.

14 Rights & Permissions

Applicants retain ownership of their original photographs, business information and source materials at every stage of this process.

By participating, an applicant grants Ria's Colony a non-exclusive, royalty-free licence to edit, publish and promote the submitted material and the resulting feature across its editorial and marketing channels, including the fourteen-day promotional campaign described in Section 12, with appropriate credit maintained throughout.

Applicants must own, or hold clear permission to use, every photograph and piece of material they submit. Ria's Colony accepts no responsibility for rights disputes arising from material an applicant was not entitled to submit.

15 Terms & Conditions

Ria's Colony reserves the right to:

- Decline any application, at any stage, without obligation to give a reason.
- Request additional information or documentation before proceeding.
- Edit submitted content for clarity, accuracy and consistency with its editorial standards.
- Withdraw a published feature where submitted information is found to be inaccurate or misleading.
- Remove published content where legal or ethical concerns arise.

In addition:

- Participation in the Africa Story Project is entirely free. Ria's Colony will never charge an applicant or selected partner a fee at any stage.
- Applicants should never pay any individual or organisation claiming to guarantee selection into this programme. No such guarantee exists, and no such payment should ever be requested.
- AI-generated or plagiarised submissions will be rejected on discovery, at any stage, including after publication.

16 Privacy & Data Use

The Africa Story Project collects only the personal and business information needed to review an application, verify a story and, where selected, produce and publish a feature.

This includes contact details, business information, founder and leadership information, and any photographs or documents an applicant chooses to submit.

- Information is used solely for application review, verification, editorial production and programme-related communication.
- Information is not sold to third parties, and is shared only within the Ria's Colony editorial team and, where verification requires it, directly with the applicant.
- Applications that are not selected are retained for up to twelve months for reference, then deleted, unless the applicant requests earlier deletion.
- Information used within a published feature remains part of that public record unless a removal request under Section 15 is honoured.
- Applicants may request access to, correction of, or deletion of their personal data at any time by writing to the contact in Section 18.

Questions about the Africa Story Project, or about an application already submitted, can be sent to the address below. Also, we're open to partnerships. If you're willing to partner with us. Please send us an email.

- Editorial Partnerships, Aerial View, Ria's Colony
- Email: africastoryproject@riascolony.com
- Editorial enquiries: editorial@riascolony.com
- Website: riascolony.com
- Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis. We'd send emails to the shortlisted candidates

17 How to Apply

Visit www.riascolony.org/newsroom/the-africa-story-project fill in the form there and we'd get back to you!