

## **NewsBreak / Particle Media — DFP Press Inquiry & Non-Answer**

DFP inquiry (April 15, 2026) + NewsBreak boilerplate response (April 16, 2026) · Gmail thread: 19d9291fad7d40a2 · Investigation: Platform Gatekeeping: Press Freedom

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### **EMAIL RECORD**

**From:** newsroom@dismalfreedompress.org  
**To:** publishers@newsbreak.com  
**Cc:** newsroom@dismalfreedompress.org  
**Date:** April 15, 2026 — 19:19 UTC  
**Subject:** Press Inquiry — Publisher Acceptance Criteria: Dismal Freedom Press Application

April 15, 2026

NewsBreak / Particle Media, Inc.

Publisher Relations

Mountain View, CA

To the Publisher Relations Team:

Dismal Freedom Press (DFP) is an independent investigative newsroom serving California's Central Valley and East Bay, published under Rooted Creative Group LLC (249 Commerce Ave #1042, Manteca, CA 95336). We are members of the Society of Professional Journalists and the National Writers Union, and our reporting operates under a published editorial and style guide.

We are writing to formally request written disclosure of the criteria NewsBreak applies when evaluating publisher partner applications.

DFP submitted two separate publisher partner applications — on February 16, 2026 (newsroom@dismalfreedompress.org) and April 11, 2026 (torie.cortez@dismalfreedompress.org). Both were declined without any stated reason, without reference to any published criteria, and without any pathway for reconsideration. Our records indicate the April 12 rejection was issued approximately 40 seconds after the application confirmation was received, which is inconsistent with any human editorial review process.

We are seeking written responses to the following questions:

1. What are the specific criteria NewsBreak applies when evaluating

publisher partner applications?

2. Are those criteria published anywhere accessible to applicants prior to submission?
3. What specific criterion or criteria disqualified Dismal Freedom Press from partnership?
4. Is the publisher acceptance process automated, human-reviewed, or both? At what stage does human review occur, if any?
5. What reconsideration or appeal process, if any, is available to declined applicants?

We are conducting a journalism accountability inquiry into the publisher acceptance practices of news distribution platforms, including the standards applied to independent newsrooms serving non-institutional, non-coastal communities. NewsBreak's response — or non-response — will be reflected accurately in our reporting.

We request a written response by April 29, 2026.

Sincerely,

Investigations Desk

Dismal Freedom Press

newsroom@dismalfreedompress.org

dismalfreedom.press

## EMAIL RECORD

**From:** publishers@newsbreak.com  
**To:** newsroom@dismalfreedompress.org  
**Date:** April 16, 2026 — 17:23 UTC  
**Subject:** Re: Press Inquiry — Publisher Acceptance Criteria: Dismal Freedom Press Application

Hello,

Applications may not be approved for several reasons. For example:

1. The publisher is not based in the U.S., or the content is not U.S.-focused.
2. The website lacks an About Us page or sufficient information about the editorial staff.
3. Content does not provide proper author bylines or image credits.
4. The website contains mostly aggregated content and does not have enough original content.

5. Content does not meet our Community Guidelines (<https://support.newsbreak.com>).

6. Content is behind a paywall

Best,

NewsBreak Publisher Support

[Note: This response did not address any of the five specific questions posed in DFP's April 15 inquiry. It provided only generic boilerplate categories of reasons applications may be declined — none of which were applied to DFP's application specifically.]