REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Strategic media relations project

Report	Head of Communications
Start date	14 December 2026
Application deadline	27 November 2026

The Freedom Fund

The Freedom Fund is a global fund dedicated to ending modern slavery. We work in countries and sectors where exploitation is highly prevalent, investing in frontline organisations and communities while using evidence, convening, advocacy and influence to help create lasting systemic change.

As the Freedom Fund enters its next phase of organisational growth, we are seeking an experienced media relations agency or consultant to work with us on a focused four-to-six-month project designed to strengthen our profile, position our senior leaders and frontline partners as authoritative voices, and secure a small number of high-quality earned media opportunities.

Background and context

The Freedom Fund has an ambitious strategy through to 2030, including increasing our direct impact in communities affected by modern slavery, strengthening frontline and survivor-led organisations, influencing the wider anti-slavery sector and significantly increasing the resources mobilised for this work.

Communications plays important role in supporting these ambitions. We want to move beyond measuring success primarily through volume of media coverage and take a more strategic, feature-led approach to earned media: identifying stories, perspectives and moments that can generate meaningful visibility, strengthen our influence and create opportunities for engagement with donors and other priority stakeholders.

This project also coincides with an important leadership transition. Havovi Wadia becomes Chief Executive Officer of the Freedom Fund on 1 December 2026. Havovi brings extensive experience spanning frontline organisations, philanthropy, international development and the fight against modern slavery. Her appointment creates an opportunity to introduce a distinctive new leadership voice into relevant national and international conversations.

We expect our internal Communications team to continue managing our day-to-day communications and selected specialist/philanthropic pitching. The appointed agency will therefore not operate as an outsourced press office. We are looking for a strategic partner

with strong media relationships and excellent editorial judgement that can help us secure a focused program of ambitious, high-quality earned media.

Purpose of the assignment

The primary objective is to secure a **minimum of six high-quality earned-media opportunities, with a stretch target of eight**, over and immediately following the project period.

Our priority is **quality, relevance and influence rather than volume**.

We are particularly interested in:

- Tier-one national and international print and digital media;
- influential podcasts and selected broadcast opportunities;
- substantial reported features that bring the realities of modern slavery and the work of frontline organisations to wider audiences;
- authoritative opinion and analysis from the Freedom Fund's CEO and other senior experts;
- opportunities that platform frontline organisations and people with relevant expertise and lived experience, where appropriate and ethically responsible; and
- coverage that has the potential to generate wider donor, policymaker, sector or stakeholder engagement.

Not every secured opportunity needs to be published during the contracted period. However, by the end of the assignment, unpublished opportunities counted towards the target should be formally commissioned, accepted or booked, with an editor or producer engaged and a clear intended route to publication.

A pitch sent to a journalist, or an informal expression of interest, would not in itself constitute a secured placement.

Indicative editorial program

We want the appointed agency to bring its own editorial judgement and ideas rather than simply execute a predetermined list of pitches. However, we currently see the following as strong opportunities around which the program could be built.

1. Introducing Havovi Wadia as CEO – January/February 2027

January is National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month in the United States and provides an early opportunity to introduce Havovi's leadership and perspective to a wider mainstream audience following her assumption of the CEO role on 1 December.

Our ambition would be to secure:

- **one high-profile podcast or broadcast interview for Havovi**; and
- **one tier-one opinion, analysis or other substantial media opportunity**, ideally for publication in mid-to-late January.

The agency would work with the Freedom Fund to develop the strongest editorial proposition rather than relying primarily on the fact of the leadership transition.

Preparatory work, messaging, media mapping and story development can take in late 2026.

2. Women and girls – International Women's Day, March 2027

Develop and place a substantial feature connected to the Freedom Fund's work with women and girls, with an intended publication window in late February or early March ahead of International Women's Day on 8 March.

We are particularly interested in reported, human-centred journalism rooted in the experience and expertise of frontline partners and communities, rather than institutional profile coverage.

The approach could build on previous successful feature-led storytelling secured by the Freedom Fund, where a specific human story provided an entry point into a much wider systemic issue.

3. Additional expert voice / podcast opportunity – spring 2027

Secure a further high-quality podcast, interview or broadcast opportunity for a senior Freedom Fund spokesperson.

This does not need to feature the CEO. One of our aims is to develop a broader bench of organisational spokespeople and position colleagues with substantive expertise as authoritative external voices.

4. Opinion or expert analysis – spring/summer 2027

Develop and place an authoritative piece of opinion or analysis by Havovi or another appropriate Freedom Fund expert.

The agency should help identify a genuinely timely and distinctive argument connected to wider news, policy, philanthropy or international affairs, rather than producing organisational commentary for its own sake.

5. Child domestic work / child labour – June 2027

Develop a significant feature focused on child domestic work, child labour or another closely related priority area, timed for the period around World Day Against Child Labour on 12 June and Day of the African Child on 16 June.

Potential source material could include the Freedom Fund's work in Nigeria, Kenya or Ethiopia, or another strong story identified through our programs, including potentially work concerning child marriage in Uganda if the evidence and storytelling opportunity are sufficiently strong.

We want the agency to work with our Communications and Programs teams to identify the strongest story rather than deciding the country or case study in advance.

Our preference would be for a substantial reported feature that combines compelling individual or community experience with evidence and a clear analysis of the structural drivers of exploitation.

6. World Day Against Trafficking in Persons – July 2027

Secure a further significant piece of coverage for publication around World Day Against Trafficking in Persons on 30 July.

The precise format and subject should be informed by the news environment and by stories emerging from the Freedom Fund's programs. This could be a feature, interview, opinion/analysis piece or another substantial editorial opportunity.

Because this publication date may fall after the agency's contracted period, we would expect the opportunity to have been substantively developed and secured during the assignment, with an agreed publication pathway.

Stretch opportunities

In addition to the six core opportunities above, we would welcome proposals for up to two further high-value placements, bringing the overall stretch ambition to eight.

These could include another reported feature, significant podcast or broadcast interview, timely commentary or opinion opportunity, or an unexpected media opportunity arising from the news agenda.

We do not expect all eight opportunities to involve Havovi, however we request that she feature in at least four. An important part of the project is identifying which Freedom Fund leaders, colleagues, frontline partners and other voices are best placed to tell particular stories.

Scope of work

We expect the appointed agency to provide:

Media strategy and planning

- Refine the overall media proposition and identify the strongest narratives and editorial opportunities.
- Develop a targeted media plan and priority journalist, editor, producer and podcast list.
- Advise on which stories and spokespeople are most appropriate for different outlets and audiences.
- Identify opportunities to connect our expertise to the wider news and public-interest agenda.

Story development

- Work with the Communications team to identify and develop compelling feature ideas from our programs, research and partnerships.
- Help translate complex programmatic and research material into strong editorial propositions.
- Advise on the evidence, case studies, voices and assets required to make pitches competitive.
- Challenge us constructively where an idea is unlikely to secure high-quality coverage.

Media pitching and relationship management

- Lead targeted pitching to agreed mainstream media, journalists, editors, producers and podcast hosts.
- Use existing senior media relationships where appropriate and build new relationships on behalf of the Freedom Fund.
- Manage follow-up and negotiations through to commission, booking or publication.

Thought leadership

- Identify timely opportunities for the CEO and other experts to contribute to public debate.
- Support the development and placement of opinion and analysis pieces.
- Advise on how Freedom Fund perspectives can connect credibly to current affairs without becoming overly reactive.

Spokesperson preparation

- Provide strategic briefing and preparation for significant interviews and podcast appearances.
- Where useful, provide targeted media coaching for Havovi and/or other priority spokespeople.

Monitoring and learning

- Provide concise reporting on pitches, journalist engagement, secured opportunities and publication status.
- Track qualitative outcomes beyond coverage, including relevant donor or stakeholder engagement, speaking invitations, new media relationships and other opportunities arising from coverage.
- At the end of the project, provide recommendations for sustaining and building the Freedom Fund's media profile.

Storytelling principles

The Freedom Fund is committed to communications that respect the dignity, expertise and agency of people affected by exploitation.

We expect the appointed agency to demonstrate strong judgement in reporting on modern slavery and other sensitive issues. Story development must be ethical, survivor-centred and based on informed consent, appropriate safeguarding and a do-no-harm approach.

We particularly want to avoid reductive narratives that present communities or survivors only through victimhood. Wherever possible, our storytelling should recognise agency, expertise, frontline leadership and the structural conditions that allow exploitation to persist.

We also want our media work to platform frontline partners and relevant experts rather than positioning the Freedom Fund as the sole voice on issues experienced and addressed by others.

Deliverables and measures of success

The primary project target will be:

Minimum target: six secured high-quality earned-media opportunities.

Stretch target: eight secured high-quality earned-media opportunities.

Across the portfolio, we would expect a strong mix of formats and voices, potentially including:

- tier-one national/international print or digital coverage;
- substantial reported features;
- high-profile podcasts or broadcast interviews;
- opinion or expert analysis;
- CEO positioning (at least 4 of the placements should feature the CEO); and
- opportunities featuring other Freedom Fund experts, partners or frontline perspectives.

A secured opportunity will normally mean one that has:

1. already been published or broadcast;
2. been formally commissioned or accepted by an editor; or
3. been formally booked or confirmed by a producer.

We will assess success not simply by the number of pieces generated, but also by:

- quality and relevance of outlets;
- depth and substance of coverage;
- prominence of frontline and expert voices;
- reach into priority audiences;
- strength of new journalist/media relationships established;
- evidence of donor, stakeholder or other strategic engagement arising from coverage; and
- strength of the forward media pipeline created.

Press-release syndication, automated pickups and low-value mentions would not count towards the core placement target.

Timing

We anticipate appointing an agency for a **four-to-six-month project**, with work beginning in approximately **mid December 2026**.

We are open to agencies recommending the precise project duration and phasing they believe will deliver the strongest results.

The project should be designed to:

- secure the first significant external opportunities for January 2027;
- generate further coverage through the first half of 2027; and
- establish a sufficiently developed pipeline for key June and July 2027 editorial moments, even where publication takes place after the formal contract has ended.

Ways of working

The agency will work closely with the Freedom Fund Communications team and, where relevant, colleagues in Programs, Research, Partnerships/Development and the Executive Office.

We value agencies that are collaborative but can operate with a high degree of independence once priorities have been agreed.

The appointed partner should be comfortable working across different countries, cultures and subject areas and with complex, sensitive stories involving frontline organisations and people affected by exploitation.

We are not seeking a high-volume press-office model. We would prefer concentrated senior attention on a relatively small number of ambitious opportunities.

What we would like to see in proposals

Please provide:

- Your proposed approach to this assignment and how you would structure the four-to-six-month project.
- Your assessment of the brief, including areas you would refine, challenge or approach differently.
- Initial thoughts on the strongest media narratives and opportunities you see for the Freedom Fund.
- Examples of the types of outlets, podcasts and journalists you would prioritise. We do not require a complete media list at proposal stage.
- Relevant experience securing substantial national or international earned media, particularly in human rights, international affairs, philanthropy, global development or related fields.
- Two or three relevant examples demonstrating the quality of placements you have secured and your role in securing them.
- Your experience handling sensitive stories and working with frontline organisations, survivors or vulnerable communities, where applicable.
- Details of the team who would actually work on the account, including the level of senior involvement.
- Your proposed measurement and reporting approach.
- Proposed project timetable.
- Your fee for the project, clearly identifying any assumptions, additional costs or optional elements.
- Two client references, if available.

Assessment criteria

Proposals will be assessed against:

- **Strategic and editorial quality** – understanding of the assignment and strength of the proposed approach.
- **Media relationships and track record** – demonstrated ability to secure high-quality national and international earned media.
- **Understanding of the Freedom Fund's subject matter** – ability to communicate complex global issues intelligently and responsibly.
- **Storytelling judgement** – ability to identify stories with genuine editorial value rather than relying solely on awareness days or organisational announcements.

- **Ethical approach** – understanding of safeguarding, survivor-centred storytelling and responsible representation.
- **Quality and seniority of the proposed team**.
- **Value for money**.
- **Ability to work effectively with a small in-house Communications team**.

Budget

Agencies are invited to propose a fixed project fee.

We would prefer proposals based on a **fixed project fee with clearly defined deliverables**, rather than an open-ended monthly retainer.

RFP timetable

RFP issued: Monday 16th November

Proposal deadline: 27th November

Shortlisted agency conversations: 3 and 4 December

Appointment: 10 December

Anticipated project start: [14 December 2026 tbc]

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