

Press release: New Jersey Civic Information Consortium announces new grants

Sept. 27, 2022

MONTCLAIR, N.J. — The New Jersey Civic Information Consortium announced the awarding of 18 new grants to local news and information organizations across the state. The grants include support for training programs that will benefit grantees and additional research about the field and its needs.

The Board of Directors of the Consortium made the awards, which total \$924,014, as an extension of its second round of grants. Funding was provided by an additional appropriation in accordance with language in the FY22 State budget.

“On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to thank the Department of the Treasury, Governor Murphy, and the State Legislature for their continued support of the Consortium’s work,” Board Chair Christopher J. Daggett said. “The new money allows the Consortium to fund more projects across the state and serves as an endorsement of the work of grant recipients.”

The extended round of grants includes ten programs that are receiving first-time funding and eight “bump-up grants” to second round grantees that would have received larger grants if money had been available at the time. Of the ten new grants, seven were second round applicants who had been runners-up for grants, and three were new proposals — two of which are for training and research programs, and one to a first-round grantee for a new project.

This round of funding includes the Consortium’s first two-year grant and 18-month grant, along with the Consortium’s first grant in Morris County.

“The entire board continues to be impressed by the innovation and quality of the projects that come before us,” Consortium Board Vice Chairperson Therese Edwards said. “The projects included in this extended second round will have a tremendous impact in all corners of our state and grow access to local news and information.

New Grants

Center for Cooperative Media (statewide) – This is a two-year grant to fund a researcher at the Center for Cooperative Media at Montclair State University to conduct research on the New Jersey local news ecosystem. The researcher will also conduct learning and impact evaluation for the Consortium. (\$185,014)

Clinton Hill Community Action (Newark/Essex County) – This grant will fund journalism training for neighborhood residents engaged in one of the organization’s three advocacy programs to learn how to use storytelling as an advocacy strategy. This will include oral histories, podcasts, video reports and documentaries and will be used to build out a media advocacy platform. (\$50,000)

coLab Arts (New Brunswick/Middlesex County)- This grant will fund a program to create a new community memory project in the Esperanza and Unity Square neighborhoods of New Brunswick. It is being developed by coLab Arts and New Brunswick Tomorrow through Esperanza, a community-based Spanish-language creative storytelling project. (\$40,000)

Hammonton Gazette (Hammonton/Atlantic County) – This grant will fund freelance reporters to cover municipal meetings in news deserts in Atlantic County and Camden County. It is a new grant to a first-round grantee. (\$35,000).

Intersystemz (Trenton/Mercer County) – This grant will fund the creation of a new community centered news platform covering Trenton, in partnership with COMPAS, Pod City Trenton, Kean University and The College of New Jersey. (\$35,000)

New Jersey Council for the Humanities and Journalism + Design (statewide) – This is an 18-month grant to fund the development of a statewide journalism training program in partnership with six New Jersey community colleges that equips citizens with skills to tell the stories of their communities. Journalism + Design and NJCH piloted a similar program in South Jersey in spring 2022. The Consortium previously engaged Journalism + Design to support grantees in developing their own community journalism training programs. (\$339,000)

Morristown Green (Morristown/Morris County) – The grant will fund a paid internship program for this hyperlocal news site covering Morristown. It is the Consortium's first grant in Morris County. (\$20,000)

Public Square Amplified (Newark/Essex County) – This grant will fund a program to recruit, train, and promote community reporters and journalism students and provide an outlet for their work in Caribbean, African, Indigenous, and Immigrant communities. (\$50,000)

South Jersey Climate News Project (South Jersey) – This is a program at Rowan University that provides high quality news coverage of climate change in South Jersey, including the impact on the environment, agriculture, the Pine Barrens, beaches, tourism, and wetlands. The grant will cover stipends for student interns. (\$40,000)

NJ Society of Professional Journalists (statewide) – This grant will fund a census of student journalists and journalism programs around the state, along with the development of a central database of scholastic journalism websites and publications. The grant will also fund student press identification cards. (\$35,000)

Bump-up grants

Beyond Expectations (Burlington County) – This program teaches media and business skills to Burlington County teens and has involved them in organizing and staging esports tournaments and programs. This was a first-round grantee that also received a second-round grant. The second-round grant has been bumped up from \$50,000 to \$60,000. (\$10,000)

Blairstown Enhancement Committee (Blairstown/Warren County) – This grant is for continued funding of the Ridge View Echo, created to cover Blairstown, Frelinghuysen, Hardwick and Knowlton. This is a first-round grantee that also received a second-round grant. The second-round grant has been bumped up from \$35,000 to \$40,000. (\$5,000)

Bloomfield Information Project (Bloomfield/Essex County) – This grant is for continued funding of the Bloomfield Information Project's community reporter corps, which trains community members to cover Bloomfield. This is a first-round grantee that also received a second-round grant. The second-round grant has been bumped up from \$50,000 to \$65,000. (\$15,000)

Cranford High School (Cranford/Union County) – This grant funds the growth of a fledgling digital journalism program and curriculum at Cranford High School. It includes integrating the journalism curriculum with other curricula at the school. The grant is bumped up from \$25,000 to \$35,000. (\$10,000)

Front Runner New Jersey (South Jersey) – This grant funds a journalism site which is growing coverage of the Black and Latino communities in South Jersey. The grant is bumped up from \$40,000 to \$65,000. (\$25,000)

Newark News and Story Collaborative (Newark/Essex County) – This grant funds a program which trains community members in journalism to tell the stories of the Newark community. It is a first-round grantee that also received a second-round grant. The second-round grant is bumped up from \$65,000 to \$75,000. (\$10,000)

Newark Water Coalition (Newark/Essex County) – This grant funds an oral history program to tell the stories of the advocates who worked to address lead contamination in Newark's drinking water. This is a first-round grantee that also received a second-round grant. The second-round grant is bumped up from \$30,000 to \$35,000. (\$5,000)

New Jersey Center for Investigative Reporting (statewide) – This grant funds the creation of a statewide investigative reporting center which aims to be the "ProPublica of New Jersey." This grant is bumped up from \$60,000 to \$75,000. (\$15,000)

For more information about the Consortium, please visit the website, www.njcivicinfo.org.