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NEW JERSEY CIVIC INFORMATION CONSORTIUM



2023

ANNUAL REPORT

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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



Dear supporters and advocates of quality local news and information,

We're pleased to share some remarkable developments at the NJ Civic Information

Consortium that underscore our commitment to expanding local news coverage in the state. This year has been a milestone for us in our efforts to bring diverse voices into the media landscape.

From 2021 to 2023, we've awarded a substantial \$5.35 million in grants to 52 organizations spread across 15 counties and more than 19 cities. Notably, 16 of these grantees are making an impact across multiple municipalities. Twenty-one of those organizations are led by a person of color, and 26 projects are spearheaded by a person who identifies as BIPOC.

Our average new grant has more than doubled to \$80,000, and renewal grants are at an encouraging \$84,000.

Our work has been funded by appropriations from the New Jersey state budget, bolstered by more than \$600,000 in foundation grants. The foundation funding has supported operational, as well as grant expenses, thereby allowing us to allocate more public funds directly to grantmaking.

For the upcoming fiscal year, we've already secured an additional \$410,000 in foundation grants (and another \$510,000 for future years), aimed at enhancing our training programs, technical support and collaborative initiatives.

New Jersey stands alone in its unique approach to supporting local news, combining both public and private grants. Our comprehensive services are setting a national standard for fostering vibrant, informed and engaged communities. As you read this report, we hope you will agree.

Next up: We need your support. The Consortium has a goal to raise \$50 million in private funds to stabilize New Jersey's media ecosystem for years to come.

If you'd like to donate, learn more or have any questions, please reach out to us at info@njcivicinfo.org.

Thank you for your continued support in making local journalism more inclusive and impactful. Local news is the bedrock of democracy.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in a teal color that reads "Chris Daggett". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chris Daggett
Executive director

ABOUT THE CONSORTIUM

MISSION + VISION

MISSION

The mission of the New Jersey Civic Information Consortium is to expand residents' access to trustworthy and verifiable news and information, and to foster increased civic engagement. The Consortium pursues this mission by providing financial resources to organizations building and supporting local news and information in communities across New Jersey, with a particular emphasis on news deserts and historically marginalized people.

VISION

All residents of New Jersey have abundant access to trustworthy and verifiable news and information that enables them to participate actively in their communities and civic life as a result of a financially thriving and collaborative ecosystem of news and information sources across the state.

VALUES

IMAGINATION

Those who worked to bring the New Jersey Civic Information Consortium to fruition imagined a future where everyone has access to trustworthy and verifiable local news and information through public funding of media.

EQUITY

A strong commitment and priority to marginalized communities who have been denied access to high quality news and information, and meaningful inclusion in civic decision-making.

COLLABORATION

Working in partnership with communities, based on the needs communities identify, for a more informed and engaged public, as well as nurturing collaboration among news and information organizations across the state, for a stronger and more connected ecosystem.

YOUTH

Commitment to lifting up all the ways that youth contribute to our communities and to ensuring opportunities for them to help shape the future of our communities.

TRANSPARENCY

Publicly funded news and information demands that we be accountable and transparent to the public about our work.





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Consortium hit several key goals and milestones as it moved through its third full year of grantmaking during fiscal year 2023. Significantly, the organization secured and granted out nearly \$4 million in funding to support the media ecosystem across New Jersey.

By the end of the fiscal year, the Consortium supported 46 grantees and had handed out its largest round of grants. The newest grants expanded the geographic and community reach of the Consortium. The organization also engaged in the early stages of a community-led grantmaking effort with stakeholders in Salem, a significant news desert.

Importantly, the Consortium also made big investments in grantee and ecosystem support outside of direct grants. Sustainability is a major issue for media across the United States, and New Jersey is no exception. To help ensure that the news ecosystem is as financially sustainable as it can be, the Consortium invested in a one-year technology and sustainability program run by Blue Engine Collaborative that will directly support up to 20 news organizations. Additionally, the Consortium announced that it is bringing the Documenters program to New Jersey, which is an innovative initiative that will train and pay community members to attend and document public meetings and publish the results in up to three communities.

TIMELINE OF THE CONSORTIUM

2018

CREATION OF THE CONSORTIUM

The **Civic Info Bill** is passed on Aug. 24, creating the Consortium.

2021

FUNDING

The state of New Jersey appropriates **\$500,000** in funding for FY2021. The Consortium receives **\$250,000** in private foundation funding.

2022

MORE FUNDING

The state of New Jersey appropriates **\$2 million** for FY2022. The Consortium receives **\$350,000** in private foundation funding.

2023

STATE FUNDING

The state of New Jersey appropriates **\$4,000,000** in funding for FY2023.

2023

STATE FUNDING

The state of New Jersey appropriates **\$4,000,000** in funding for FY2024.

2023

MORE FUNDING

The Consortium receives **\$920,000** in two- and three-year foundation grants.

CONSORTIUM BECOMES OPERATIONAL

Articles of Incorporation are signed on June 8.

2020

FIRST ROUND OF GRANTS

The Consortium awards **\$486,553** to 14 grantees.

2021

SECOND ROUND OF GRANTS

The Consortium awards **\$950,000** for 13 first-time grants and 9 renewal grants.

2022

THIRD ROUND OF GRANTS

The Consortium awards **\$999,014** for 8 bump-up grants and 11 new grants.

2022

FOURTH ROUND OF GRANTS

The Consortium awards **\$2,895,696** for 17 first-time grants and 18 renewal grants, plus one bump-up grant.

2023

NEW PROGRAMS

The Consortium announces a new **Technology & Sustainability Accelerator** and launches **NJ Documenters**.

2023

IMPACT TO DATE

200⁺

GRANT APPLICATIONS

The Consortium has received more than 200 grant applications

82

TOTAL GRANTS

The Consortium has awarded a total of 82 grants

52

GRANTEES

The Consortium has supported a total of 52 grantees

\$5M⁺

AWARDED IN GRANTS

The Consortium has awarded nearly \$5.5M in grants

49%

BIPOC-LED PROJECTS

49% of all projects funded by the Consortium have been BIPOC-led

15^{of}
21

NEW JERSEY COUNTIES

Our grantees represent and serve 15 of the 21 counties in NJ



GRANTEE HIGHLIGHTS

NJ Council for Humanities and Journalism + Design Statewide

This project develops a statewide journalism training program for community members in partnership with four New Jersey community colleges.

Public Square Amplified Essex County

Public Square Amplified recruits and trains community reporters and journalism students and provides an outlet for their work on Caribbean, African, Indigenous and Immigrant communities.

Ridge View Echo Warren County

Ridge View Echo keeps residents informed and engaged in the community of Blairstown and surrounding municipalities. The publication updates residents and property owners on vital and timely government announcements regarding health and safety, provides them with an outlet to advertise community events, and welcomes opinion pieces.

“Based on conversations with our readers, most are very pleased with the news and information they are getting from Ridge View Echo. The desire to find out what's happening locally is very strong.”

– **Gail Keogh-Dwyer,**
Ridge View Echo



L-R: Paul Avery, Gail Keogh-Dwyer, Carol Cook and Desi Dunn
Ridge View Echo

Hopeloft, Inc.
Cumberland County

Hopeloft has developed a curriculum to train and coach youth/citizen journalists over the course of a 15-week internship program. The students work is published in FollowSouthJersey.com, Hopeloft's Follow Local News project.

Radio Cosecha
South Jersey

Radio Cosecha is an immigrant-led news organization that serves Spanish-speaking communities of New Jersey. Cosecha researches and delivers important local, national and international news in an accessible format in order to achieve greater civic participation within the state's immigrant community.

St. Peter's University
Slice of Culture
Hudson County

Slice of Culture is a group of young BIPOC storytellers who want to increase civic engagement in Jersey City and Hudson County through a series of how-to projects and informational stories targeted to immigrant families and communities of color. It is opening doors to aspiring journalists who are committed to strong, local journalism and stories that matter to the community.

"Thanks to project funding from The New Jersey Civic Information Consortium, we have been fortunate to be given resources that have enabled us to focus more on local civic engagement stories, hold team and community workshops, purchase production equipment, invest in a marketing budget and grow our team."

- **Gerald Gabinete**,
St. Peter's University



Neidy Gutierrez & Adrienne Romero
Slice of Culture

The NJ News Commons Spanish Translation Service Statewide

The NJ News Commons Spanish Translation Service is a collaborative project between English- and Spanish-language local news outlets in New Jersey to make the best English-language statewide reporting available and accessible to news organizations that serve Spanish-speaking communities in the state.

The New Jersey Center for Investigative Reporting Statewide

The New Jersey Center for Investigative Reporting is a group of seasoned journalists that publishes investigative reports, explanatory stories and solutions journalism statewide. It offers free training and coaching to local news outlets in the state on how to conduct investigative journalism.

Trenton Journal Mercer County

Trenton Journal focuses on addressing the disparities faced by Black and brown communities in Trenton. Trenton Journal amplifies local voices and perspectives through news posts, solutions-based journalism newsletters, and community engagement.

Front Runner New Jersey South Jersey

Front Runner New Jersey brings a new perspective on the people, events and issues making an impact on African Americans in Atlantic City and South Jersey. Front Runner highlights the stories and people of Atlantic City to bring restorative narratives to news and information reporting.

“I am really thankful for the grant from the Consortium. It has enabled me to hire more local writers to continue giving back to the community.”

– **Kenneth Miles**, Trenton Journal



Kenneth Miles
Trenton Journal

CONSORTIUM STAFF



Chris Daggett

Interim Executive Director
& Board Chair



Ayinde Merrill

Program Officer



Madison McCool

Grants & Communications
Manager

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS](#)
- [2023 GRANTEES + PROJECT OVERVIEWS](#)
- [BOARD OF DIRECTORS](#)
- [STATUTE CREATING THE CONSORTIUM](#)
- [BYLAWS](#)
- [CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY](#)
- [2022 AUDIT](#)



OUR COMMUNITY OUR VOICES

SUPPORT THE CIVIC INFO BILL S3303/A4933



REPORT DESIGNED BY MADI McCOOL