

New Jersey Civic Information Consortium

2023 GRANTEES

The New Jersey Civic Information Consortium is pleased to announce the new grantees for its 2023 funding cycle. With a total of \$2,870,696 in grants, the Consortium is supporting projects that will improve the quantity and quality of civic information in New Jersey communities and better meet the information needs of low-income communities and racial and ethnic communities that have been underserved by the media.

In addition, the board approved a \$600,000 project to provide revenue and sustainability coaching, as well as small technology grants, for 20 news organizations across the state, as well as a bump-up grant of \$25,000 for one of its 2022 grantees.

NEW GRANTS

ATLANTIC CITY FOCUS - \$100,000 - ATLANTIC COUNTY

This grant will fund a project to create a Civic Engagement Guide for Atlantic City that provides residents with a comprehensive directory of information on local elections, community resources, and leadership. By providing this information in an accessible and easy-to-use format, Atlantic City Focus' goal is to increase voter turnout, promote civic engagement, and empower residents to take an active role in shaping the future of Atlantic City.

CAMDEN PARENT & STUDENT UNION (CPSU) - \$100,000 - CAMDEN COUNTY

CPSU will train Camden high school students in interviewing and media reporting so they can become community reporters and storytellers. CPSU will use PBS NewsHour Student Reporting as a training framework. In addition, CPSU will host voter information sessions, community civics training, and candidate profiles during the upcoming local Camden elections. The grant also will fund voter education programs and training. Camden Parent & Student Union is creating pathways to voter registration for high school students and young adults 18-27. The goal of the project is to increase civic education for students, youth voters, and residents in Camden City.



DATASOURCENJ INC. - \$50,000 - MIDDLESEX COUNTY

With an operating prototype in place, DataSourceNJ's is developing a repository to collect, clean, host, integrate, analyze, and present data and resulting insights to local investigative journalists, community activists, small businesses, academicians and students.

VIETLEAD - \$48,000 - CAMDEN COUNTY

Jersey Roots Youth Program aims to collaborate with VietLead's Resilient Roots Farm Project in order to hold neighborhood listening sessions in the 2023-2024 growing season and to learn about what local issues are top of mind for its Black, Brown, and Southeast Asian neighbors who live, work, and play in East Camden neighborhoods of Camden City. In addition, the organization will incorporate arts to reflect the stories, expand cultural knowledge of urban farming rooted in environmental justice, increase the opportunities for teaching and learning on the farm, and build Camden youth's community organizing and leadership skills through environmental and political education.

CAMDEN FIREWORKS - \$64,460 - CAMDEN COUNTY

Camden Fireworks will undertake a community-centered storytelling project in Camden documenting the challenges and opportunities of living a long, healthful life amidst environmental injustice by interviewing, facilitating discussions, and documenting the personal narratives of community members. The goal of this apprentice storytelling project is to lay the foundation for other Camden residents to initiate their own journeys into visual storytelling. Their hope is that these narratives will result in future work that includes visual storytelling as an accessible medium for community journalists.

CIVIC NEWS COMPANY - \$100,000 - ESSEX COUNTY

Camden Civic News Company subsidiary, Chalkbeat Newark, seeks to foster civic engagement in the city's public schools through journalism. This will be done through: 1) in-depth reporting on school segregation litigation and federal Covid relief spending; 2) adding a state education policy reporting fellow; 3) a texting service to inform the community about school board actions; 4) a 2024 school board election guide; 5) first person student essays published through Chalkbeat Newark's Student Voices program.



CORPORATION FOR NEW JERSEY LOCAL MEDIA - \$86,459 - MORRIS COUNTY

This grant funds the continuation of the work of the Northern NJ News Collaborative on its “Stormwater Matters” initiative, and to grow community engagement. The News Collaborative works with newspapers and online outlets to use solutions journalism to address the issue of stormwater management, and will use reporting and community engagement to increase individual knowledge of the importance of stormwater management, specifically by responding to issues raised by communities covered by the collaborative.

NEW LABOR - \$100,000 - MIDDLESEX COUNTY

This grant will fund the “Community-driven Journalism Project”, which will develop journalists from among everyday people. Their focus will be on Black and Brown workers in low wage jobs across the state of New Jersey, sharing their stories via traditional methods of journalism as well as through underutilized mediums (radio, cultural exchange through art making) and new social media platforms (TikTok, Twitter, Zoom).

INDUSTRY MEDIA ARTS - \$99,720 - OCEAN COUNTY

This grant will fund a Journalism Mentorship Program, which will provide high school students with early awareness and readiness training for undergraduate collegiate journalism programs. The project will create a mentorship/protégé learning environment for students beginning with the Camden, New Brunswick, and Newark areas closest to Rutgers. The goal is to foster an inclusive culture, support for growth, and leadership opportunities for aspiring journalists from all backgrounds.

CENTER FOR COOPERATIVE MEDIA - \$100,000 - BURLINGTON COUNTY

This grant will support the expansion of the South Jersey Information Equity Project (SJIEP) from a cohort of five to ten fellows annually and establish an SJIEP community reporting workshop series to further engage local storytellers through intergenerational learning and co-creation workshops. The goal of SJIEP is to address media inequity in South Jersey, specifically by seeking to improve the quality and quantity of news and information produced by and for communities of color.



MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY FOUNDATION - \$92,070 - ESSEX COUNTY

This grant will fund the 2023 N.J. Statewide Voting Guide project, which aims to foster collaboration between local news organizations and stakeholders in New Jersey to promote comprehensive coverage of state legislative elections and improve voter access to information. Through these collaborations, the Center for Cooperative Media at Montclair State University will work with dozens of partners across the state through the NJ News Commons to map which news organizations are covering which races, identify where the gaps are, and assign content to ensure every single race is covered. That content will be fed into NJ Spotlight News' main statewide voting guide, which will be available to all news organizations in the state to use. Additionally, through its existing partnerships with ethnic media, the Center will ensure that key content from the voting guide is translated into multiple languages.

MUSLIM.CO - \$100,000 - STATEWIDE

This grant will fund a media publication centering Muslim news, with coverage affecting the New Jersey Muslim community. New Jersey contains the highest percentage of Muslims to the state population in the United States. Founded out of concern with the rise of Islamophobia, Muslim is a news outlet, media publication and a space for Muslims to connect with one another, feel empowered through each other, amplify their faith, and share their lifestyles and views.

WAYNE HILLS HIGH SCHOOL - \$10,991 - PASSAIC COUNTY

This grant will fund the creation of a podcasting studio and support the digital journalism program for students in Wayne Township. The project will provide a state-of-the-art learning environment for young journalists to develop technical expertise, deliver hands-on podcasting experience, and create enthusiasm for contributing to ground-level local journalism in their community. By giving students tools to write, record, and edit the stories about themselves, their peers, and their community, students will be taught how podcasts can both entertain and inform, disseminating information essential to the community and holding those in power to account.

NJ COALITION TO END HOMELESSNESS - \$99,200 - MERCER COUNTY

This grant will support NJCEH in their efforts to expand their reach and enhance the impact of Garden State Leaders, a statewide leadership and advocacy training program for NJ residents with lived experience of homelessness and poverty. The funds will enable them to formalize their ongoing statewide support and outcome tracking, and to pilot a local leadership program in collaboration with the Mercer Alliance to End Homelessness for replication in other counties.

WNET NJ SPOTLIGHT - \$100,000 - STATEWIDE

This grant will support the hiring of a D.C.-based correspondent who can provide regular reporting for NJ Spotlight News and a collaborative network of newsrooms across the state on developments and the day-to-day workings of New Jersey's Congressional delegation and other federal agencies as they make decisions affecting the state. This grant will fill a large reporting gap with the retirement recently of the last New Jersey correspondent from our nation's capital.

CENTRAL DESI - \$81,066 - MERCER COUNTY

This grant will fund a fellowship opportunity that will cultivate college students as future journalists in New Jersey and train them to report, write, and engage with local communities by covering the South Asian American community. It will result in the coverage of the underreported South Asian community and drive engagement through community events and social media.

NJ ADVANCE MEDIA - \$25,000 - MIDDLESEX COUNTY

Nationally, journalists of color make up less than 17% of newsrooms and just 13% of newsroom leadership. This grant will fund the creation of a Journalism Talent Pipeline for aspiring journalists who are of color or from an underrepresented community to improve their writing skills. Students will be paired with a mentor of color from NJ Advance Media's DEI team. The mentors will meet with students on a regular basis to discuss and review class assignments and associated writing. The project will hold three- to four-hour sessions at a participating college each month. Sessions will cover all aspects of digital news reporting, including writing, video production, social media, photography, podcast development and niche writing, such as sports coverage. Upon successful completion of the program, students will receive a \$1,500 scholarship."

RENEWAL GRANTS

ASBURY PARK MEDIA COLLECTIVE - \$72,660 - MONMOUTH COUNTY

This grant funds a small community newsroom in Asbury Park focused on grassroots-led local news reporting and media literacy that inspires and supports civic engagement. The project has focused on live streaming city council and board of education meetings in Asbury Park. With renewed funding, a web designer and web producer will be hired to meet the organization's technology shortcomings and work with the Center for Cooperative Media at Montclair State University to source effective community journalism training.

BLACK IN JERSEY - \$100,000 - CAMDEN COUNTY

Black in Jersey is a reliable news and information hub serving New Jersey's Black communities and the launch of its incubator program featuring Millennial and Generation Z-led news services -- including the Hotspot Podcast. Renewed funding will allow Black in Jersey to establish itself as a trusted and go-to news source in Camden and statewide. They also will increase publishing frequency and build additional community relationships.

THE RIDGEVIEW ECHO - \$100,000 - WARREN COUNTY

The Ridge View Echo News Project works to keep residents informed and engaged in the community of Blairstown. The publication updates residents and property owners on vital and timely government announcements regarding their health and safety, provides them with an outlet to advertise community events, and welcomes opinion pieces. The renewal grant will build on the same work and expand reporting to two additional townships of Hope and Stillwater.

THE NJ NEWS COMMONS SPANISH TRANSLATION SERVICE - \$75,000 - STATEWIDE

The NJ News Commons Spanish Translation News 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 grant will continue and expand on this work.



THE JERSEY BEE - \$100,000 - ESSEX COUNTY

The Jersey Bee (previously Bloomfield Info Project) uses journalism and education to work with community members to produce news and storytelling that meets local information needs, inspires civic participation, and builds narrative power. The new grant will be used to formally relaunch a daily newsletter service to East Essex County, begin publishing meeting briefs and community-informed/led content and reporting, and continue engagement in select markets, with a focus on public health, local government, and education. The Jersey Bee also will develop and promote an advertising and sponsorship sales kit.

FRONT RUNNER NEW JERSEY - \$100,000 - 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 a restorative perspective to news and information reporting. Renewed funding will enable the project lead to work on the project full time and to expand coverage to city council meetings, investigative articles, and community opinion pieces.

HAMMONTON GAZETTE - \$21,800 - ATLANTIC COUNTY

The Hammonton Gazette Inc. is southern New Jersey's premier independent weekly newspaper. Their Spanish publication "Noticias" goal is to reach as many people as possible and to make news coverage more representative of Hammonton's residents and communities. With the launch of Noticias in 2021, The Hammonton Gazette was the first local newspaper to offer news articles in Spanish (Mexican Dialect). Renewed funding will enable the organization to continue the work. Articles cover a wide range of topics, including town council meetings, local civic happenings, school board coverage, and general community news.

TRENTON JOURNAL - \$100,000 - CAMDEN COUNTY

The Trenton Journal focuses on addressing the disparities faced by the Black and Brown community in Trenton. The Trenton Journal's goal is to amplify local voices and perspectives by publishing solutions-based journalism through newsletters and community engagement. Renewed funding will enable the work to continue. The Trenton Journal produces a weekly newsletter that has over 2,500 subscribers, 6,000 Facebook followers, 1,500 Instagram followers, and averages 20,000 views a month on its website.

MORRISTOWN GREEN - \$80,000 - MORRIS COUNTY

MorristownGreen.com is an online newspaper serving Greater Morristown. Created and led by former Star-Ledger reporter Kevin Coughlin, Morristown Green covers a diverse range of topics, including zoning, crime, art, cultural events, and city council and board of education meetings. It is a trusted source of information for the greater area of Morristown. The new grant will fund equipment upgrades, establishment of internships, and onboarding of freelancers. On average, Morristown Green produces 30 stories a month.

MOVIMIENTO COSECHA - \$100,000 - SOUTH JERSEY

Radio Cosecha is an immigrant-led news organization that serves Spanish-speaking communities of NJ. Cosecha researches and delivers important local, national, and international news in an accessible format, in order to achieve greater civic participation within New Jersey's immigrant community. Through their live broadcasts and information sessions, they have helped families successfully apply to the Excluded Workers Fund. Their efforts have also included producing news content to educate the immigrant and undocumented population about avoiding driver license fraud. With renewed funding, Radio Cosecha will create a mobile news van for its street reporter team and create a community media training center. It also will ensure a living wage for the project lead.

NEWARK WATER COALITION - \$65,000 - ESSEX COUNTY

Newark Water Coalition (NWC) and the Humanities Action Lab (HAL) at Rutgers University-Newark created "Newark Community Voices," an ongoing digital media and community organizing training program for Newark youth resulting in the weekly production and distribution of multimedia local community health stories that center Newark community information needs, focusing first on access to clean water. NWC has created two self-produced documentaries about the Newark water crisis and produced an in-depth and thorough case study on the prevalence of lead found in Newark homes. The study is based on data collected through NWC field research. NWC tested 300 homes for the presence of lead in water, soil, and dust. The new grant will expand on their previous project and move Newark Community Voices from the supervision and control of Rutgers University to the Newark Water Coalition. It also will ensure compensation for community stipends.

NEWARK NEWS AND STORY COLLABORATIVE - \$100,000 - ESSEX COUNTY

Newark News & Story Collaborative is a team of Newark residents, young people, content creators, and organizers who commit to acts of journalism. They produce unique coverage of issues affecting diverse Newark communities that are not covered by traditional media and partner and train city residents to tell stories and authentically capture the essence of our city. The project has made significant progress in amplifying community voices and addressing key issues in Newark, including the successful training of 12 local residents who have now become empowered storytellers and journalists. Renewed funding will build on this work.

SOUTH JERSEY CLIMATE NEWS PROJECT - \$24,270 - 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. Work from the project has doubled monthly website traffic and expanded their social media presence. Student journalists have covered stories in Atlantic, Burlington, Cumberland and Cape May counties. The grant will help avoid a programming pause as the organization operates on a college semester timeline. It also will cover stipends for student interns.

SAINT PETER'S UNIVERSITY - \$100,000 - HUDSON COUNTY

Slice of Culture (SoC) is a group of young BIPOC storytellers who want to bring civic engagement to 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. The project organized two community storytelling training workshops. From the training, four handpicked storytellers, along with a graphic artist, produced 11 multimedia stories focused on civic engagement. They also built a small community of young staff writers, videographers and artists who produced stories for free. The new funding will continue the work and compensate these writers in the future.

UNIDAD LATINA EN ACCIÓN NJ - \$100,000 - STATEWIDE

The Radio Jornalero NJ Communication Project brings together the development, production, and dissemination of public service announcements from the Jornalero and Domestic Laborer Communicators. Their focus is to cover and broadcast topics that affect the daily lives of their community members with an emphasis on voting, housing, and workers rights. Unidad Latina en Accion has set up a studio in Highland Park, NJ where they livestream interviews and media coverage. They run six shows on a biweekly basis and have been able to train five "reporteros callejeros" street reporters in central and south Jersey. The Radio Jornalera live stream averages 400 views on their Youtube channel with 14 programs running twice a month. Renewed funding will enable the work to be continued and expanded.

NEW JERSEY YMCA STATE ALLIANCE - \$100,000 - STATEWIDE

New Jersey's YMCA State Alliance project identifies public health and policy priorities from the lived experiences of NJ residents during the COVID-19 pandemic and develops strategic dissemination plans that enhances access to documented stories, promotes information-sharing, and strengthens communities. Over the course of the last year (phase 2 of the project) the YMCA has gathered stories from over 580 participants across all 21 NJ counties in the form of interviews, focus groups, and creative works, including essays, poetry, artwork, and music. With new funding for phase three, they will utilize the recommendations and priorities shared by NJ residents, along with synthesized findings from the project that emerged within a thematic analysis of the stories, to advocate for the development and strengthening of new and existing public health initiatives, transforming lived experience and guidance into action.

WNET/NJ SPOTLIGHT - \$100,000 - STATEWIDE

This project expands NJ Spotlight's health coverage by focusing on mental health in underserved communities at the intersection of the COVID-19 pandemic, health inequity, and rural New Jersey. Lead writer Bobby Brier has published more than 90 digital stories on mental health during the grant period and has hosted a series of mental health roundtable events for NJ Spotlight. The new grant will support two Report for America corps members as they create and grow digital and multi-platform reporting within NJ Spotlight News' two newest beats: Education & Child Welfare and Mental Health.



HOPELOFT, INC. - \$75,000 - CUMBERLAND COUNTY

Hopeloft's Follow Local News project actively recruits, trains, and equips youth/citizen journalists to write for its local news site, FollowSouthJersey.com. There is no experience required, because Hopeloft has developed a curriculum to train and coach youth over the course of a 15-week internship program. The program trains youth who have experienced foster care, homelessness, or other adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Over the span of Hopeloft's programming, they have recruited, hired, and trained 23 student journalists, including undergrads, grad students, and high school students. Collectively, those interns have written 454 articles for FollowSouthJersey.com. Follow South Jersey currently has 63,657 followers on Facebook, which is their most-used social media platform and where they share the majority of the work that is published to their website. Renewed funding will enable Hopeloft to continue and expand its current curriculum.

