

## **New Jersey Civic Information Consortium publishes groundbreaking case study on reimagining local news**

**February 6, 2025** – The New Jersey Civic Information Consortium (NJCIC), the nation's first publicly funded nonprofit organization providing start-up and early stage funding for local news outlets and projects, today unveiled a comprehensive case study of its founding, funding, operations, and future direction. Authored by Dickson L. Louie, a Lecturer at the Graduate School of Management at the University of California, Davis and a member of the Board of Directors of the Robert C. Maynard Institute for Journalism Education, and Marisa Porto, Knight Chair of Local News and Sustainability at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the study provides key insights, takeaways, and recommendations for states and organizations seeking to rebuild local news ecosystems and strengthen democracy.

The Consortium, formed in 2018 through bipartisan legislative support and public and foundation funding, has awarded nearly \$9 million in grants to reinvigorate New Jersey's news and information landscape. By fostering innovation, addressing underserved communities, and emphasizing trust, the Consortium is demonstrating the transformative power of public and private funding to support local journalism.

"Our case study highlights not just the successes of the Consortium but also the lessons we've learned in reimagining what local news and civic engagement can achieve," said Consortium Board Chair and Interim Executive Director, Chris Daggett. "Through partnerships, innovative approaches, and a focus on community impact, we are showing how publicly funded initiatives can address critical public service needs while strengthening democracy."

### **Key Takeaways from the Case Study:**

- **Innovative, systematic approach:** The Consortium employs a three-phase strategy—ideation, experimentation, and scaling—supporting grantees in developing sustainable journalism models and leveraging technology to meet community needs.
- **Grassroots impact:** Nearly half of NJCIC's grants support BIPOC-led organizations, empowering underserved communities, addressing news deserts, and amplifying diverse voices.
- **Economic revitalization:** NJCIC funding reinvests in local communities by supporting locally owned news outlets, creating jobs, and fostering civic engagement through initiatives like voter guides and community events.

- **National leadership:** NJCIC's groundbreaking model serves as a beacon for other states, combining public funding with operational independence and innovative partnerships.

The case study also provides recommendations to build on the Consortium's success, including strengthening university partnerships, expanding training opportunities, fostering collaboration with legacy media, and developing grantee financial sustainability.

"As local news outlets, nationwide, continue to disappear at an alarming rate, giving rise to news deserts, misinformation, and disinformation, the New Jersey model offers a possible response for other states," said Louie. "Rather than bemoan this loss, a group of dedicated individuals decided to be proactive about it. Taking a bipartisan approach, they worked with the State Legislature to create the Consortium that now systematically supports start-ups and early-stage local news outlets throughout New Jersey, especially in underrepresented communities. In the history of the United States, public-private partnerships have helped find innovative solutions to problems in science, society, and commerce. Why not now with local news, with funding by both the public and private sectors?"

"Studying the success of New Jersey's Civic Information Consortium is important not only for the growth and health of the state's information ecosystem, but for other states in the nation. The Consortium presents many lessons for how to grow and support news ecosystems with public and private resources. This case study should be read by every journalist, publisher, media entrepreneur, and policymaker concerned about the future of news – and, as the Consortium demonstrates, there is a future," said Jeff Jarvis, Fellow at Montclair State University's Center for Cooperative Media, Visiting Professor at Stony Brook University, and Professor Emeritus at CUNY's Newmark Journalism School.

And, from Steve Waldman, Founder and President of Rebuild Local News, "The New Jersey Civic Information Consortium has done pioneering work in figuring out how to provide targeted support for local news using government funding, while still preserving editorial independence and avoiding political manipulation. Local news is a public good and needs smart taxpayer support, and this is one excellent bipartisan example of how that can work."

The study includes detailed insights into the Consortium's innovative model. Stakeholders, advocates, and community members are encouraged to explore the case study, share its findings, and engage with the Consortium as it continues its mission to rebuild trust, promote civic engagement, and strengthen democracy.

To learn more about how the Consortium is transforming local journalism, please find the full case study at [njcivicinfo.org/casestudy](http://njcivicinfo.org/casestudy).

**About the Consortium:**

*The New Jersey Civic Information Consortium is a first-of-its-kind public-private partnership dedicated to revitalizing local news and civic engagement. Through innovation, collaboration, and a commitment to community impact, the Consortium supports initiatives that promote trustworthy journalism and empower underserved communities. Learn more at [njcivicinfo.org](http://njcivicinfo.org).*

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