



DRAFT

New Jersey Public Media

Providing trusted news, civic information, and
public-interest programming statewide

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for stakeholder feedback
and public comment

*Ut wisi enim ad
agnam, quis nostrud
dum, quis nostrud
tion ullamcorper
lobortis nisi ut
x ea*

Vision

*Ut wisi enim ad
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People across New Jersey have access to innovative, independent, and sustainable public media that informs, educates, and reflects their communities.

This vision is grounded in a coordinated statewide framework that distinguishes content production, ecosystem support, grantmaking, and fundraising — aligning complementary institutions around a shared public mission while preserving independent governance.



Executive Summary

New Jersey has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build the strongest statewide public media ecosystem in the country.

The state's information landscape is changing rapidly. Traditional media business models are collapsing, newsroom capacity has declined, and the major network broadcast outlets serving New Jersey are headquartered outside the state. At the same time, the loss of federal public broadcasting support and the transition of NJ PBS operations to a new contractor in mid 2026 require New Jersey to establish a durable, in-state framework for public media.

This report presents a strategy for doing exactly that. Commissioned by the New Jersey Civic Information Consortium (NJCIC), it outlines a coordinated public media system designed to provide trusted news, civic information, arts and culture, high school and college sports, C-SPAN type coverage of statehouse meetings, and public-interest programming to communities across the state.

The proposed framework proposes three recommendations:

- ▶▶ **Statewide Content Production and Distribution** through a new independent public media organization (called "NewCo" for purposes of this report) producing news and public-interest programming across broadcast and digital platforms.
- ▶▶ **Ecosystem Support and Collaboration**, led by the Center for Cooperative Media and NJCIC, strengthens partnerships, training, and innovation across New Jersey's journalism ecosystem.
- ▶▶ **Funding and Sustainability Infrastructure** through NJCIC, which will continue to secure public and philanthropic investment to support civic information statewide.

Together, these essential functions create a coordinated statewide system that preserves editorial independence while expanding collaboration, reach, and long-term sustainability.

To realize this vision, the report proposes a five-year public investment of \$55 million, which includes:

- ▶▶ \$6.9 million in FY2027 to support a statewide public media service plus
- ▶▶ \$5 million annually to sustain the broader civic information ecosystem through NJCIC.

With sustained investment and coordination, New Jersey can ensure every community has access to trusted news and reliable civic and public safety information, strengthening civic engagement and democracy statewide.

About This Report

The New Jersey Civic Information Consortium (NJCIC or “the Consortium”) commissioned this report to reimagine the state’s public media system to serve all of New Jersey.

Responding to the dissolution of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, transition of NJ public broadcasting to a new contractor, and collapsing business models within public media, NJCIC convened a group of experts to envision a more innovative, effective, and sustainable public media system. Meeting weekly for several months, this Design Team created a shared vision, clarified core functions, explored various governance, operating, and financial models, and developed solutions grounded in state data and national best practices.

The “Design Team” included leaders from the New Jersey Civic Information Consortium; the Center for Cooperative Media at Montclair State University; NJ Spotlight News; Rutgers University; Kean University; Rowan University; The College of New Jersey (TCNJ); the Community Foundation of New Jersey; New Jersey Civic Information Consortium; the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey; the Statewide Hispanic Chamber of Commerce; the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation; and experienced journalists, media professionals, and civic leaders from across the state.

The Consortium hired a consulting team with relevant experience to support the visioning process, including:

- ▶▶ Due East Partners - visioning and systems design
- ▶▶ Public Media Company - business modeling
- ▶▶ Free Press - stakeholder engagement

This DRAFT report is authored by the consulting team with an emphasis on independence, editorial integrity, sustainable funding, equitable representation, and a strong statewide news function. While the findings are informed by the guidance and input of the Design Team as a whole, the recommendations may not reflect the views of individual Design Team members. Key recommendations will be tested with stakeholders across the state, including state elected officials, funders, community leaders, educators, cultural institutions, and media partners, with a final report (incorporating feedback) anticipated in late April or early May. This report outlines a proposed framework for a statewide public media system. Final operational decisions will depend on the entity selected through the state’s operator selection process.



NEW JERSEY PUBLIC MEDIA

Reimagining NJ's Public Media



What We Mean by Public Media

Public media is a system of independent media organizations and content creators serving the public interest and public good—strengthening civic life, community connection, and democratic participation.

Public Media Is...

- ▶▶ Independent
 - Not owned or governed by another organization with priorities beyond public media
 - Editorial freedom
 - Diverse - funding + information sources, flows and platforms
- ▶▶ Accountable to journalistic [standards](#)
- ▶▶ Representative of the public it serves
- ▶▶ Responsive to community needs
- ▶▶ Focused on public mission over profit
- ▶▶ A public good that requires public investment
- ▶▶ Transparent and trusted



For decades, New Jersey operated its own statewide public television network (NJN). In 2011–2012, the state transitioned away from operating the network and entered into an agreement with WNET to operate NJ PBS. As that agreement approaches its conclusion, New Jersey now has an opportunity to reassess the long-term structure of public media serving the state. During this transition, it will be important to work collaboratively with WNET to transfer NJ public media assets (archives, equipment, infrastructure and NJ Spotlight).

NEW JERSEY PUBLIC MEDIA

Reimagining NJ's Public Media



Why This Approach

This report presents a proposed framework for a statewide public media ecosystem in New Jersey — outlining the structure, investment, and collaboration required to build the strongest local news and civic information system in the country.

Why Now

- ▶ Audience needs and information habits are changing faster than traditional public media models can adapt.
- ▶ Existing business models are financially unsustainable.
- ▶ Local and regional news capacity has eroded, creating gaps in civic information.
- ▶ New Jersey lacks a locally owned or governed public media institution serving the entire state.
- ▶ The dissolution of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and WNET's withdrawal from statewide operations require New Jersey to establish a nimble and enduring in-state structure for public media serving all of New Jersey.

New Jersey previously operated a statewide public television network (NJN). In 2010–2011, the state ended all direct funding of public television, enacted the Transfer Act authorizing programming services to be managed by a nonprofit entity, issued an RFP for those services, and entered into a contract with WNET to operate NJ PBS. As that contract approaches its expiration on June 30, New Jersey now has an opportunity to reassess the future structure of public media serving the state.

Why It Matters

- ▶ [Strong public media is essential to our democracy](#), supporting an informed public, civic participation and trust, and cultural expression and identity.
- ▶ Without innovation and expanded public investment into quality public media, it will be harder for New Jersey residents to find trusted sources of information, leaving them exposed to misinformation and content that sows division.

NEW JERSEY PUBLIC MEDIA

The Case For Change

New Jersey’s information environment is at an inflection point. Audience behavior is shifting rapidly, traditional public media organizational and cost structures are under pressure, newsroom capacity across the state remains uneven, and trust dynamics are evolving.

With WNET exiting statewide operations and federal public media infrastructure dissolving, New Jersey must transition from an outsourced operating model to a coordinated, in-state public media framework.

At the same time, New Jersey has unusual structural strengths — including annual public investment through the [NJ Civic Information Consortium](#) and ecosystem support and content sharing through the [Center for Cooperative Media](#) at Montclair State University — that make transformation not only necessary, but achievable.

Audience Trends

New Jersey audiences increasingly consume public media across platforms — not just on broadcast.

According to the NJ PBS 2024 Local Content & Service Report, NJ PBS reached 26.8 million TV viewers, alongside 1.2 million digital and social media streams, and NJ Spotlight News added 11,000+ YouTube followers in the reporting year.



NEW JERSEY PUBLIC MEDIA

The Case For Change

At the broader ecosystem level, the 2024 Impact Architects “Local News & Information Ecosystems: New Jersey” report shows that to stay up-to-date on the news:



56.3%

New Jersey residents report using a **TV station daily**



40.6%

New Jersey residents report using a **website or app daily**



40.6%

New Jersey residents report using a **social media daily**

This underscores that residents are not choosing between broadcast and digital — they use both.

How often, if at all, do you use each of the following for staying up-to-date on news?	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Less Than Monthly	Never
A newspaper	34.4%	17.2%	5.5%	16.4%	26.6%
A website or app	40.6%	15.6%	4.7%	15.6%	23.4%
A radio station	30.5%	22.7%	3.9%	20.3%	22.7%
A TV station	56.3%	16.4%	9.4%	10.2%	7.8%
Direct communication with people in your area	22.7%	32%	15.6%	15.6%	14.1%
A magazine	4.7%	14.1%	14.1%	31.3%	35.9%
A social media platform	40.6%	11.7%	3.9%	6.3%	37.5%

Data is from the 2022 Gallup/Knight American Views survey. n = 128

What's Needed

Public media must operate as a cross-platform, community-centered information utility — not a linear channel with digital extensions.

The Case For Change

Financial Reality

Even as audience engagement grows in New Jersey and across the country, public media is at a crossroads with an uncertain future. The unexpected shutdown of the Corporation of Public Broadcasting after 58 years has left gaping holes in public media budgets.

NJPBS, operated by WNET, [announced in September 2025](#) that the network will cease operations on June 30, 2026, citing significant federal and state funding reductions and the inability to finalize a new contract with the NJ Public Broadcasting Authority for programming services.

This development highlights a central challenge: audience demand may be strong, but legacy cost structures — particularly those reliant on unpredictable public funding streams — are increasingly fragile.

Meanwhile, NJ PBS reported adding nearly 3,500 new members in 2024, demonstrating that community support is growing. (Please see page 2 of [this link](#).)



Key Takeaway

As the state seeks to find a new home for NJ public broadcasting through a current competitive bidding process, this is the ideal moment to reimagine NJ’s public media system (broadcast, digital, radio, print) and commit public and private investment to ensure its future.

The Case For Change

News Ecosystem Gaps

New Jersey’s proximity to New York and Philadelphia creates a structural news gap: the major network broadcast outlets serving NJ audiences are headquartered out of state and often treat New Jersey as a secondary news priority.

The 2024 Local News & Information Ecosystems: New Jersey report by Impact Architects documents stakeholder concerns that:

- ▶▶ Most broadcast coverage is owned or produced outside New Jersey
- ▶▶ Local civic reporting, including municipal and statehouse coverage, has declined significantly
- ▶▶ News deserts and uneven geographic coverage persist
- ▶▶ Many New Jersey voices and communities remain underrepresented

In addition to these qualitative findings, Design Team analysis of [ecosystem mapping data](#) indicates capacity constraints in the composition of New Jersey’s media landscape. The majority of outlets are for-profit and corporate-owned, while nonprofit and public media organizations represent a relatively small share of the overall ecosystem.

This distribution suggests that nonprofit and public-interest journalism — which disproportionately supports investigative and government accountability reporting — operates with limited statewide scale relative to the number of media outlets.

Together, these trends point to a system in which reporting capacity is fragmented, unevenly distributed, and insufficient to meet statewide civic information needs. (Please see pages 1–2, 3, and 15 of [this link](#).)



NEW JERSEY PUBLIC MEDIA

The Case For Change

The overall number of news and information providers in New Jersey is shrinking:

731
total news
and information
providers statewide —
down 6%
since 2020.

628 providers physically
based in New Jersey —
down 8% since 2020.

Just
414 outlets produce
new contents at
least weekly.

Those 414 outlets are spread across
only 60% of NJ municipalities —
leaving 40% of communities with
no local news outlet.

New Jersey ranks **49th out of 50 states**
in local journalists per capita —
just 5 journalists per 100,000 residents.

Ethnic media
outlets have
declined 12%,
now totaling

123
statewide

In short, fewer organizations are producing original reporting, fewer communities are being covered consistently, and fewer journalists are available to hold government accountable.

This is not simply market consolidation — it is a measurable decline in reporting capacity across the state, reinforcing the need for a coordinated, statewide civic media strategy.

The Case For Change

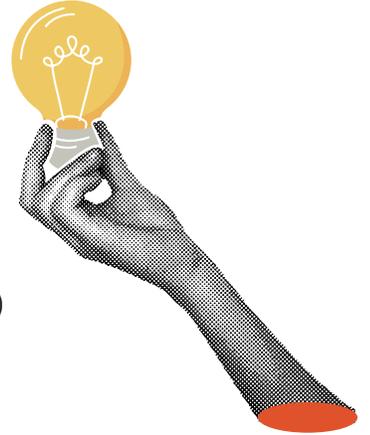
Public Trust

Trust remains fragile nationally, but New Jersey shows relative strength.

According to the Impact Architects NJ report:

- ▶▶ Approximately half of NJ residents agree that local news does not intend to mislead (roughly six percentage points higher than the national average)
- ▶▶ Community and ethnic media outlets are often trusted more highly than mainstream outlets. (Please see pages 14-15 of [this link](#).)

This presents a strategic opening: nonprofit, public-interest, and community-centered journalism models are well-positioned to compete on reliability and trust — if scaled appropriately.



Whats Working

1 Coordinated Investment

Public Investment:

The New Jersey Civic Information Consortium (NJCIC) was established through state legislation in 2018 and is supported by annual state appropriations to strengthen local news and civic information across New Jersey. This public funding represents one of the nation’s most direct state-level investments in rebuilding local journalism infrastructure.

Private & Philanthropic Investment:

In addition to state funding, philanthropic partners have made meaningful contributions to the state’s civic information ecosystem. As of December 2025, [NJCIC reports](#) that total investment in New Jersey’s civic information ecosystem — combining public and philanthropic funding — exceeds \$20 million, reflecting growing cross-sector commitment to strengthening local news and civic life.



The Case For Change

Whats Working

Private & Philanthropic Investment (*cont*):

- ▶▶ In 2024, Press Forward New Jersey (a collaboration between NJCIC and the Community Foundation of New Jersey) [received a \\$250,000 two-year Catalyst Fund grant](#) to establish the NJ chapter of Press Forward and mobilize additional state-level funding.
- ▶▶ In its first regional grant round (South Jersey), [Press Forward NJ awarded grants](#) between \$50,000–\$60,000 to seven local organizations.

2 Ecosystem Mapping, Coordination and Field Support

- ▶▶ The Center for Cooperative Media (CCM) at Montclair State University has mapped and tracked New Jersey’s news ecosystem for more than a decade through its NJ News Commons and statewide research initiatives. CCM’s most recent ecosystem mapping identified 731 news and information providers connected to New Jersey, including 628 based in the state and 123 ethnic media outlets, while also documenting ongoing declines in outlet count and reporting capacity.
- ▶▶ Through convenings, research, training, and content-sharing initiatives, CCM and NJCIC together play a central coordinating role across nonprofit, for-profit, public, academic, and community media organizations statewide.
 - [Referenced in the NJ ecosystem chapter](#)

2 National Ecosystem Recognition

New Jersey is [identified by Democracy Fund](#) as one of several states where ecosystem-building strategies are being actively supported and studied.



NEW JERSEY MEDIA SYSTEM OVERVIEW

A Reimagined Public Media Ecosystem

New Jersey Media System Overview

NJ’s public media system provides reliable, trusted news, civic information, and public-interest programming statewide. The system has three core functions, led by three independent, yet interconnected organizations: **statewide content production and distribution, ecosystem support, and funding.**

To ensure ongoing coordination and adapt NJ’s public media to changing technologies, economics, and consumer wants/needs, this system will require a coordinating body, made up of the three functional leads as well as state, philanthropic, and media leaders.

CONTENT PRODUCTION + DISTRIBUTION

Through NJ Public Broadcasting Authority (NJPBA) and Department of the Treasury, the state will transition public broadcasting programming in mid 2026 to a new operator - generically called “NewCo” in this report until that selection is made. NewCo will serve as the statewide content producer and successor to prior statewide public television operators. It integrates broadcast and digital production under unified editorial leadership, with NJ Spotlight News forming the core of its news operation. NewCo will fulfill FCC broadcast requirements while expanding access through streaming, social, and emerging platforms.

As the state transitions NJTV programming services to a new contractor, several operational questions will need to be addressed, including the transfer of assets, infrastructure, and responsibilities currently managed through the WNET partnership.



CONTENT PRODUCTION + DISTRIBUTION

- Broadcast & digital content production
- Independent news & civic information
- Storytelling & public interest programs
- Arts, culture, and sports programming
- Audience engagement

NEW JERSEY PUBLIC MEDIA



ECOSYSTEM SUPPORT

The Center for Cooperative Media and the New Jersey Civic Information Consortium (NJCIC) coordinate training, content-sharing, and capacity-building across public, nonprofit, for-profit, academic, and community media organizations. CCM hosts the NJ News Commons—a network of journalists, content creators and media outlets across the state actively engaged in the creation of quality news and information.



Transition Considerations

- ▶ Status of NJ Spotlight News
- ▶ Stewardship of historic NJ public television archives
- ▶ Ownership of production equipment and infrastructure located in New Jersey
- ▶ Coordination with philanthropic supporters and partners

FUNDING & SUSTAINABILITY

The NJCIC secures annual state appropriations and private funding to support public media statewide. Through a pooled fund for public and private investment, NJCIC awards competitive grants to sustain and strengthen local journalism, civic information and public media statewide.



NEW JERSEY MEDIA SYSTEM OVERVIEW

A Reimagined Public Media Ecosystem

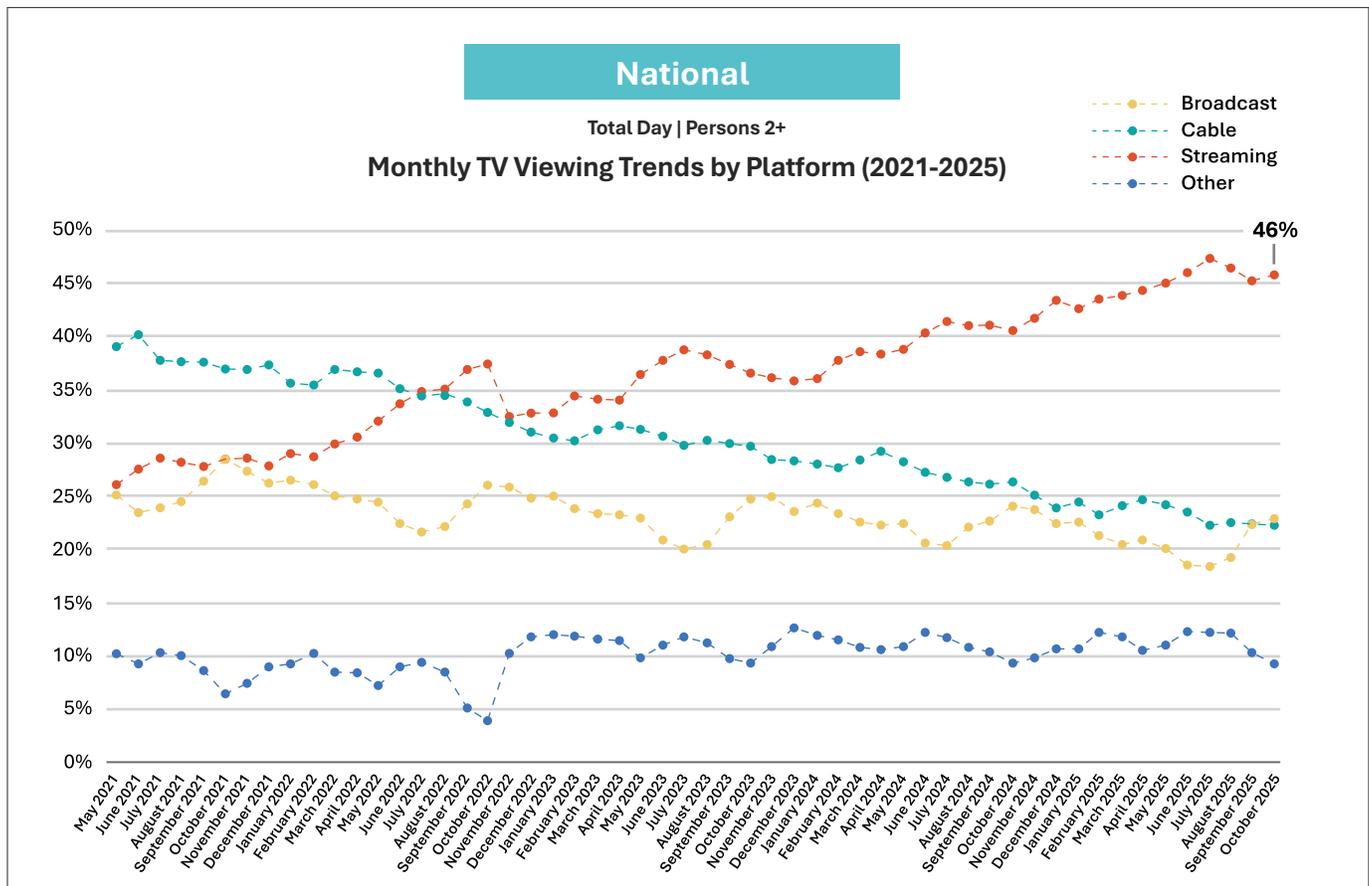


NEW JERSEY MEDIA SYSTEM OVERVIEW

Business Model

National Trends in Broadcast TV and Public Broadcasting

National television consumption has shifted decisively toward streaming and broadband delivery. Streaming now represents approximately 45% of total U.S. television viewing, surpassing cable (roughly 20–25%) and broadcast (20–25%) in 2025. Broadband-only and internet-delivered live TV bundles (vMVPDs) together now account for approximately half of national TV consumption. Over the past five years, broadband-only households have more than doubled nationwide, while cable penetration has steadily declined. Advertising-supported streaming continues to grow incrementally, while subscription streaming has plateaued. Younger audiences — particularly adults under 35 — are unlikely to have ever had a cable subscription or even a traditional TV and disproportionately consume video via connected devices and streaming platforms. The 24-hour linear television stream is rapidly fading as a dominant consumer habit.



Source: Nielsen, *The Gage, TV Viewing Trends in the U.S., Americans' Media Habits*.

NEW JERSEY MEDIA SYSTEM OVERVIEW

Business Model

National Trends in Broadcast TV and Public Broadcasting

At the same time, public media has entered a new era. With the elimination of federal funding in the summer of 2025, the traditional financial foundation of public broadcasting has fundamentally shifted. For nearly six decades, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) distributed federal appropriations, with more than 70% of its annual allotment — approximately \$535 million in 2025 — going directly to over 1,600 local public media stations. On average, public television stations derived roughly 15–18% of their revenue from CPB support, with some affiliates more heavily reliant on it. That funding is now gone, while PBS dues and national programming costs remain. Coupled with aging linear audiences and intensifying competition for underwriting and philanthropic dollars, the economic model of legacy public media is under significant strain.

Public media organizations are responding by deepening local engagement, exploring new operational partnerships, and broadening collaboration with nonprofit local and statewide media organizations. Most importantly, a fundamental conversation has emerged about public media’s role in a world no longer defined by broadcast technology.

Public Media Network



Data from CPB's Report: "State of the System: FY24 Financial Results, CPB CSG Grantee Stations," May 2025

Business Model

National Trends in Broadcast TV and Public Broadcasting

This new reality directly informs the design of New Jersey’s new public media service (NewCo). **A statewide institution launched after the loss of federal funding cannot rely on legacy assumptions about future federal subsidies or linear audience growth.** While a nightly newscast and PBS distribution remain important tools for statewide civic visibility, long-term sustainability must be built on diversified revenue and broadband-led audience growth. A new entity must engage the broader public media ecosystem, leverage the great work of NJ Spotlight, serve as a hub of journalistic activity focused on New Jersey, and align with national trends in public media innovation.

The operating model for NewCo bridges the gap between legacy and future-state realities. Broadcast, which is still valued by newsmakers and an older generation for its reach and accessibility, serves as the civic spine, but collaboration and digital distribution are treated as the primary growth engine. **Streaming, social video, podcasts, newsletters, distribution, and on-demand access are core channels, not secondary extensions.** Investments in digital product leadership, creator networks, data-driven audience development, and multi-platform distribution position NewCo to serve younger and more diverse audiences who are unlikely to adopt traditional broadcast habits.

Financially, the elimination of federal funding requires structural diversification. NewCo relies on a mix of State subsidies, expanded underwriting, growing membership, major gifts, foundation support, and close alignment with NJCIC. In this environment, NJCIC becomes even more central, serving as a statewide civic journalism funding vehicle supporting investigative reporting, regional bureaus, community engagement, and innovation initiatives independent of federal appropriations.

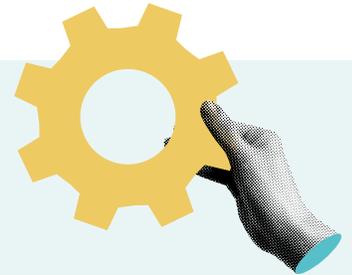
In this post-federal funding landscape, public media in New Jersey must evolve from a federally anchored broadcast system to a diversified, state-aligned civic information network. By combining the credibility of a nightly news service with a broadband-first multi-platform distribution strategy and a diversified revenue base aligned with NJCIC, NewCo is positioned to become a resilient, statewide civic institution built for long-term sustainability.



NEW JERSEY MEDIA SYSTEM OVERVIEW

New Jersey Statewide Public Media Service (NewCo)

Staffing Plan, and Five-Year Budget Overview and Funding Needs (FY27–FY31)



Background and Purpose

“NewCo” is used throughout this report as a placeholder name for the future statewide public media operator.

With the support and direction of the Design Team, Public Media Company was commissioned by NJCIC to develop a five-year financial model reflecting key structural and financial assumptions aligned with the Design Team’s input. **The model is intentionally based on a fully built, robust statewide public media enterprise — not a minimum viable product or transitional pilot configuration. The assumptions presented here are intended to illustrate the scale, structure, and operating principles of such a system.**

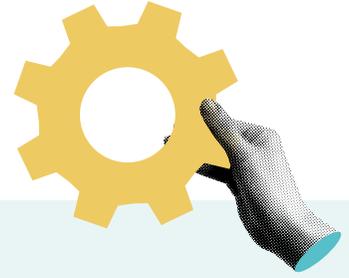
This model represents a comprehensive civic media institution that integrates:

- ▶▶ A statewide nightly news program
- ▶▶ A fully staffed newsroom with investigative and regional capacity
- ▶▶ A structured creator network
- ▶▶ A broadband-first multi-platform digital product strategy
- ▶▶ Education and classroom-aligned content initiatives
- ▶▶ Community engagement and civic forums
- ▶▶ Strategic partnerships across institutions and regions
- ▶▶ Arts and culture and high school and college sports programming
- ▶▶ C-SPAN type coverage of statehouse meetings and legislative sessions

Lean or digital-only models were considered. While such approaches would reduce short-term operating costs, they would not deliver the statewide impact, civic infrastructure, or long-term audience growth envisioned for New Jersey. Additionally, the ecosystem would benefit greatly from a continuation of the efforts of NJ Spotlight.

The goal is not simply to operate a television service, but to establish a statewide civic information infrastructure capable of delivering daily accountability journalism, reflecting New Jersey’s diversity, and sustaining long-term public trust. The nightly newscast is envisioned as a bridge to a digital-dominant future. This model will be refined through stakeholder testing and feedback.

NewCo



The Operating Model

NewCo integrates three mutually reinforcing components:

1 Nightly News

A nightly newscast serves as the public-facing anchor of the service. It establishes statewide visibility and accountability through:

- ▶▶ Statehouse and regional reporting
- ▶▶ Election and civic forums
- ▶▶ Beat coverage (education, health, environment, government, etc.)
- ▶▶ Public-service journalism

The nightly broadcast feeds digital platforms, podcasts, and social distribution. PBS programming remains part of the schedule, with flexibility regarding scale and mix over time. Over the next 3–5 years, resources devoted to traditional nightly broadcast are expected to shift toward digital distribution while maintaining depth of coverage.

Currently, only a small number of public TV stations air nightly newscasts, including NJ Spotlight, KPBS (San Diego), and WTTW (Chicago), reinforcing the distinctiveness of this approach.

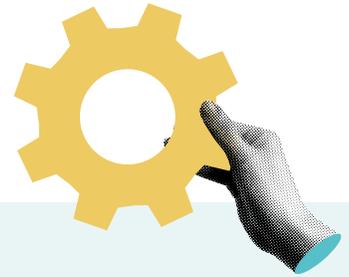
WTTW in Chicago is a strong benchmark for a multiplatform public media operation. Operated by Window to the World Communications, WTTW serves nearly 10 million people in and around Chicago and has developed a robust local journalism operation on public television. In addition to national programming from PBS, the station produces a large portfolio of original local content across broadcast, digital, and streaming platforms. In [FY2024, WTTW TV spent \\$37 million in total expenses, translating into a \\$3.70 per capita](#).

At the same per capita expense rate, NewCo’s expenses would be \$33 million per year. While we don’t expect NewCo to spend at this level in the next five years, its operations are expected to grow as its content and engagement strategies take hold and funding sources expand.

WTTW is a useful benchmark for emerging public media initiatives because it demonstrates that a public television station can successfully operate a hybrid model combining broadcast journalism with strong digital and community engagement. Its newsroom feeds both the nightly television program and a broader digital news ecosystem, allowing stories to reach audiences through broadcast, streaming, web, and social platforms.

NEW JERSEY PUBLIC MEDIA

NewCo



The Operating Model

2 Creator Network: Statewide Representation

Alongside staff journalists, NewCo embeds a structured creator ecosystem:

- ▶▶ Commissioned content
- ▶▶ Community correspondents
- ▶▶ Regional creators (North, Central, South Jersey)
- ▶▶ Language and culture-specific contributors

This model ensures geographic and demographic representation while maintaining editorial standards through commissioning, coaching, and newsroom integration.

NJCIC alignment is particularly important here. NJCIC funding will help support:

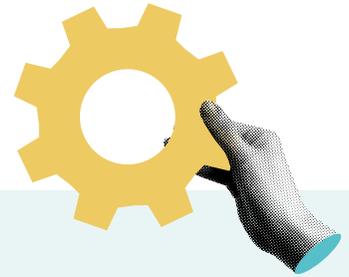
- ▶▶ Investigative and enterprise reporting
- ▶▶ Regional bureau expansion
- ▶▶ Community engagement pilots
- ▶▶ Education and civic literacy initiatives
- ▶▶ Training of next-generation media professionals

This enables innovation and equity goals to be funded structurally rather than episodically.

UNC TV North Carolina Channel and Twin Cities PBS Minnesota Channel are good examples of a Creator Network. Both local channels air public affairs, state history and identity, cultural and regional storytelling, community partnerships, and other locally produced programs. Together, these models illustrate how public media organizations can operate beyond a single station newsroom by building a broader ecosystem of contributors and partners. Instead of producing all content centrally, they function as regional/statewide platforms for curated storytelling, allowing local producers, institutions, and communities to participate in the content pipeline.

NEW JERSEY MEDIA SYSTEM OVERVIEW

NewCo



The Operating Model

3 Multi-Platform Distribution

NewCo distributes across broadcast and digital platforms, including:

- ▶▶ Streaming and local digital services
- ▶▶ Social video
- ▶▶ Podcasts
- ▶▶ Newsletters
- ▶▶ Educational materials

Broadcast provides accessibility and civic visibility; digital platforms serve as the primary engine for growth and audience development.

Staffing Plan: Headcount grows from 80 in FY2027 to 100+ in FY2031.

(including contract-based independent correspondents and creators).



NEW JERSEY MEDIA SYSTEM OVERVIEW

Benchmarks



The proposed NewCo model has no single direct peer organization. It blends multiple elements that are typically found separately across the public media landscape: nightly public television news production, a statewide creator-network content strategy, and multiplatform distribution across broadcast, streaming, and digital platforms. Accordingly, the benchmarks below highlight organizations that illustrate these individual components rather than serving as exact operational equivalents.

In addition to the Chicago, North Carolina and Twin Cities benchmarks described on pages 21-22, another useful benchmark is KPBS, although it serves a much smaller population in the Greater San Diego metropolitan area. KPBS produces KPBS Evening Edition, a nightly television news program that integrates reporting from its radio, television, and digital newsroom. Similar to WTTW, KPBS distributes its journalism across broadcast, streaming, web, and social platforms, illustrating how public media organizations can operate integrated multiplatform news operations.

Digital nonprofit newsrooms also provide relevant benchmarks for statewide civic journalism models. The Texas Tribune is a nonprofit newsroom focused on state policy and politics and distributes its reporting across digital platforms and partnerships with media outlets throughout Texas. Similarly, CalMatters produces statewide coverage of California government and policy and distributes its journalism through its website, newsletters, social platforms, and partnerships with newspapers and broadcast outlets.



Benchmarks



The NewCo concept draws elements from each of these approaches: a broadcast anchor in the form of a nightly news program, a multiplatform distribution strategy, and a statewide network of creators and partners contributing to the content ecosystem. The table below summarizes several of these benchmark organizations and compares their overall scale to the populations they serve.

Organization	Primary Model	Geography Served	Population Served (Approx.)	Annual Expenses (2024)	Per Capita
WTTW	Broadcast newsroom + multiplatform distribution	Chicago metropolitan region	~10 million	\$37 million*	\$3.70
KPBS	Broadcast newsroom + multiplatform distribution	Greater San Diego metro	~3.3 million	\$31 million**	\$9.40
Texas Tribune	Statewide digital-first nonprofit newsroom	Texas	~30 million	\$15 million***	\$0.50
CalMatters	Statewide digital-first nonprofit newsroom	California	~39 million	\$17 million****	\$0.44

Given its population size, TV broadcast operation, and the nightly news production, WTTW is closer to NewCo than the other examples. At WTTW’s per capita expense rate and NJ state population of 9.5 million people, NewCo’s operating expenses would be approximately \$35 million per year. While NewCo is not expected to operate at this level within the next five years, the comparison illustrates the potential scale of a mature statewide public media organization as its content, engagement strategies, and funding sources grow over time.

Notes

*: [TV operation-only](#)

** : [TV operation-only](#)

***: <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/264527097>

****: ProPublica Nonprofit Explorer

NewCo



Phase 1 (FY2027–FY2028)

- 1 Launch nightly news and core newsroom
- 2 Establish creator network infrastructure
- 3 Build membership and underwriting teams
- 4 Add digital product leadership
- 5 Establish North/South Jersey regional bureau leadership

Phase 2 (FY2029–FY2030)

- 1 Add Investigations Editor and investigative reporting capacity
- 2 Expand digital journalists and distribution staff
- 3 Add North/South Jersey bureau leadership
- 4 Add digital archiving and media asset management
- 5 Expand education and K–12 partnership capacity

By FY2031, NewCo operates as a fully integrated statewide news and civic media institution with balanced broadcast and digital capabilities.

Five-Year Budget Overview (FY2027–FY2031)

Revenues and Support (not including funds that support NJPBA)

Total revenues grow from **\$2.9M in FY2027** to **\$8.3M in FY2031, not including the tower lease and EBS revenue from the State.**

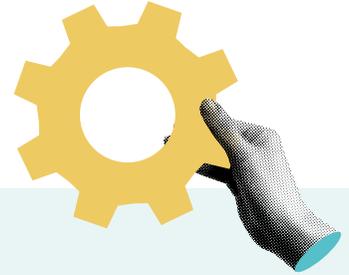
Key components include:

- ▶ **Tower rental revenue provided by the State:** \$2.56M → \$2.88M
- ▶ **EBS lease revenue provided by the State:** \$1.61M → \$1.81M
- ▶ **Underwriting:** \$0.76M → \$1.65M
- ▶ **Foundations:** \$0.25M → \$0.80M
- ▶ **Membership (donors giving <\$1,000):** \$1.26M → \$3.15M
- ▶ **Major gifts (donors giving >=\$1,000):** \$0.56M → \$2.45M
- ▶ **Planned Giving:** \$0.10M → \$0.25M

Expenses grow from approximately \$14.0M in FY2027 to \$17.6M in FY2031. Major cost drivers include salaries and benefits, PBS dues, program production and acquisition, facilities, technology infrastructure, and fundraising support.

NEW JERSEY MEDIA SYSTEM OVERVIEW

NewCo



Expenses

Total expenses (NewCo, not including NJPBA) grow from **\$14.0M in FY2027** to **\$17.6M in FY2031**.

Major cost drivers include:

- ▶ Salaries and Benefits: \$9.46M → \$12.72M
- ▶ PBS dues: \$1.18M → \$1.30M
- ▶ Program production/acquisition that includes all non-PBS programming: \$1.0M annually
- ▶ Facilities (rent, utilities, maintenance): approx. \$0.80M → \$0.88M
- ▶ Technology, streaming, and master control infrastructure
- ▶ Fundraising and administrative support services

Operating Gap and Sustainability

The projection reflects annual operating deficits ranging from approximately \$4.6M to \$6.9M across the five-year period, with a cumulative funding gap of approximately \$30M plus \$3.5M in working capital.

This gap reflects the cost of operating a fully scaled statewide nightly news service combined with a creator network and digital distribution infrastructure.

Conclusion

Total Over five years, NewCo becomes:

- ▶ A statewide civic news institution
- ▶ A creator-driven, equity-centered journalism platform
- ▶ A multi-platform digital and broadcast service
- ▶ An education and civic engagement partner
- ▶ A modern public media infrastructure aligned with NJCIC

Together, NewCo, NJCIC and the Center for Cooperative Media establish the foundation for a long-term statewide civic information system built for reliability, credibility, inclusion, and resilience.

NewCo Budget

Cash Flow Projections for the Hybrid Model Base -Assumptions- (NewCo and NJPBA Combined)					
	NewCo Projections				
	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030	FY 2031
	Jul. 26-Jun. 27	Jul. 27-Jun. 28	Jul. 27-Jun. 29	Jul. 27-Jun. 30	Jul. 27-Jun. 31
REVENUES AND SUPPORT					
Tower Rental and EBS Lease provided by the State	4,170,000	4,290,000	4,410,000	4,550,000	4,690,000
Underwriting	760,000	980,000	1,200,000	1,430,000	1,650,000
Foundations	250,000	500,000	600,000	700,000	800,000
Membership	1,260,000	1,720,000	2,200,000	2,670,000	3,150,000
Major Individual Gifts	560,000	920,000	1,350,000	1,850,000	2,450,000
Planned Giving	100,000	150,000	200,000	250,000	250,000
Other	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL REVENUES AND SUPPORT	7,100,000	8,560,000	9,960,000	11,450,000	12,990,000
EXPENSES					
Headcount	80	89	93	95	97
Salaries and Wages	7,260,000	8,080,000	8,690,000	9,200,000	9,640,000
Benefits, Payroll Taxes, Commissions	2,200,000	2,550,000	2,750,000	2,910,000	3,080,000
PBS Dues	1,180,000	1,200,000	1,240,000	1,270,000	1,300,000
Program Production and Acquisition	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000
Rent	600,000	620,000	630,000	650,000	660,000
Utilities and Facility Maintenance	200,000	210,000	210,000	220,000	220,000
Outsourced Services	400,000	500,000	510,000	510,000	510,000
Supplies, Premiums, Postage, Printing	150,000	160,000	180,000	190,000	200,000
Telephone and Transmission	200,000	210,000	210,000	220,000	220,000
Market Research	250,000	-	-	-	-
Other Operating Expenses	600,000	630,000	670,000	690,000	740,000
TOTAL EXPENSES	14,040,000	15,160,000	16,090,000	16,860,000	17,570,000
Funding Gap	(6,940,000)	(6,600,000)	(6,130,000)	(5,410,000)	(4,580,000)
Cumulative Funding Gap	(6,940,000)	(13,540,000)	(19,670,000)	(25,080,000)	(29,660,000)

NEW JERSEY PUBLIC MEDIA

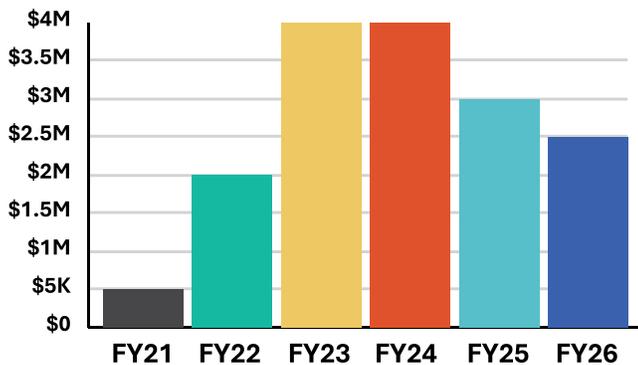
NJCIC Overview and Funding Needs

The [New Jersey Civic Information Consortium](#) (NJCIC) is a first-in-the-nation initiative designed to strengthen local journalism and civic information across the state. As an independent 501(c)(3), the Consortium supports media outlets, journalism internships, sustainability efforts, and other initiatives that help address news deserts, misinformation, and declining civic engagement in New Jersey communities.

To support its critical grantmaking function and expanded role with Newco, a state appropriation of \$5 million is recommended. To date, state funding combined with foundation support has enabled the Consortium to award more than \$12 million in grants.



NJCIC’s History of State Funding



Impact

The Consortium currently supports 50 grantees, including local media outlets, journalism internships, the Documenters program, and sustainability partnerships such as its work with Blue Engine to help organizations build long-term revenue strategies.

Consortium grants typically require three to five years of support to help organizations build the capacity needed to attract additional funding. Of the current grantees, 32 are scheduled for renewal, and NJCIC plans to invest \$700,000 in new grants to expand coverage in counties with limited local news.

NEW JERSEY MEDIA SYSTEM OVERVIEW

NJCIC Budget Overview and Funding Needs (FY27–FY31)

	FY 26	FY 27	FY 28	FY 29	FY 30
Revenue Projection					
OSHE	\$2,500,000	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000
Foundations, Major Donors, other sources of revenue	\$1,158,168	\$1,520,000	\$1,664,400	\$1,814,196	\$1,995,616
Total	\$3,718,168	\$6,520,000	\$6,664,400	\$6,814,196	\$6,995,616
Expenses					
Personnel Expenses					
Salaries	\$495,276	\$628,025	\$650,167	\$666,072	\$682,454
Benefits	\$138,677	\$175,847	\$182,047	\$186,500	\$191,087
Subtotal Personnel	\$633,953	\$803,872	\$832,213	\$852,572	\$873,541
Other Expenses					
Consultant Services	\$288,000	\$296,640	\$305,539	\$314,705	\$324,147
Material and Supplies	\$1,000	\$1,020	\$1,040	\$1,061	\$1,082
Equipment Rental/Purchase	\$1,500	\$1,530	\$1,561	\$1,592	\$1,624
Travel Expenses and Lodging	\$16,000	\$16,320	\$16,646	\$16,979	\$17,319
Communications/Marketing	\$60,000	\$61,200	\$62,424	\$63,672	\$64,946
Shipping/Postage	\$1,000	\$1,020	\$1,040	\$1,061	\$1,082
Conferences, Meetings	\$5,000	\$5,100	\$5,202	\$5,306	\$5,412
Subscriptions & Software	\$15,589	\$15,901	\$16,219	\$16,543	\$16,874
Current Grants	\$3,400,000	\$4,000,000	\$3,500,000	\$3,570,000	\$3,641,400
New Grants		\$700,000	\$1,200,000	\$1,224,000	\$1,248,480
Journalism Pipeline	\$49,500	\$120,000	\$170,000	\$200,000	\$250,000
Blue Engine (Revenue Capacity Building for Grantees)	\$40,000	\$80,000	\$100,000	\$102,000	\$104,040
Documenters Program -	\$320,000	\$326,400	\$332,928	\$339,587	\$346,378
Audit	\$25,000	\$25,500	\$26,010	\$26,530	\$27,061
Other Expenses	\$61,300	\$62,526	\$63,777	\$65,052	\$66,353
Subtotal Other Expenses	\$4,283,889	\$5,713,157	\$5,802,386	\$5,948,089	\$6,116,193
Total Expenses	\$4,917,842	\$6,517,029	\$6,634,600	\$6,800,661	\$6,989,739
Surplus/Deficit	-\$1,199,674	\$2,971	\$29,800	\$13,535	\$5,877
Rollover funds	\$1,200,000				

NEW JERSEY MEDIA SYSTEM OVERVIEW

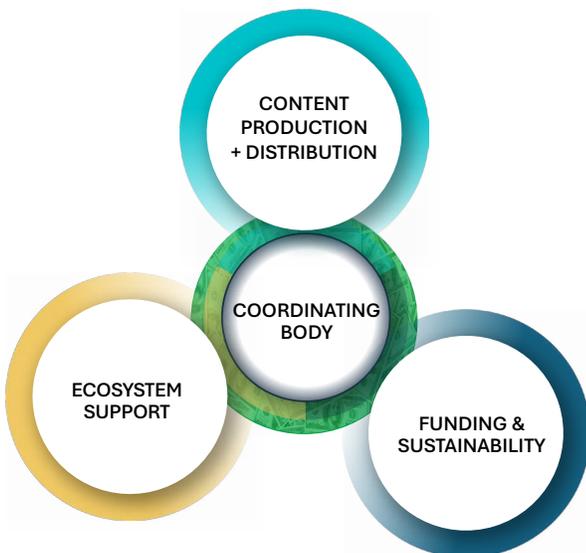
What Will It Take?

Trusted Media that Informs, Educates and Engages the Public Requires Public Investment

New Jersey needs a reimagined public media system to provide reliable, trusted news, civic information, and public-interest programming statewide. Yet, public media in New Jersey and across the nation is struggling to survive. With the loss of federal support for public broadcasting, compounded by market forces, the traditional business model for public media is no longer viable. Under these pressures, public media is becoming increasingly fragmented, similar to commercial media.

The reality is, states that value public media’s vital role in upholding our democracy, informing the public and uniting our communities through fact-based information will need to invest in its future.

New Jersey has the opportunity to lead the nation with an adaptive, sustainable public media system that meets the evolving needs and expectations of New Jerseyans. This leverages three statewide functions (shown here):



This will take continued and new investment from the State. The chart below shows a FY2027 budget for New Jersey to sustain its public media system. Without renewed and modest additional public funding, New Jersey will lose the opportunity to create a public media system that serves New Jerseyans today and for generations to come.

The table below shows the estimated FY2027 Budget for Public Media. Over five years, this totals \$55 million to launch a statewide public media service and sustain New Jersey’s broader civic information ecosystem.

FY2027 Budget for NJ Public Media	
State Funding	
NewCo	\$6,940,000
NJCIC (historical + new)	\$5,000,000
Subtotal State Funding	\$11,940,000
Other Revenue Sources (fundraising, etc.)	
NewCo	\$2,930,000
NJCIC	\$1,520,000
State Allocated EBS/Tower Revenue	\$4,170,000
Subtotal Other Revenue Sources	\$8,620,000
Total First Year Budget	\$20,560,000

* NJCIC FY26 State funding was \$2.5M.

** NJTV FY26 recieved \$250k

*** NewCo NJTV FY26 currently recieves \$4.17 million in revenue from EBS spectrum lease and tower rentals



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