



NJ STATE FY2026

Annual Report

Strengthening local news and civic
information across New Jersey

REPORTING PERIOD

July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026

SUBMITTED TO

The State of New Jersey

Table of contents

01	A message from leadership	3
02	About the Consortium	4
03	FY26 grantmaking	7
04	What public investment makes possible	9
05	Stories of impact	11
06	Building New Jersey's journalism pipeline	13
07	Strengthening the ecosystem	14
08	Leveraging New Jersey's investment	16
09	A model for the nation	17
10	Looking ahead	18
11	Leadership	20
12	Additional resources	21

Select any entry to jump to that section. Underlined text and buttons throughout the report link to online resources.

A message from leadership

Reliable local information is essential public infrastructure. It helps residents understand what is happening in their schools, governments and neighborhoods; make informed decisions; participate in community life; and hold institutions accountable. Every New Jersey community should have access to that information, regardless of its size, income or commercial appeal.

In FY2026, the Consortium continued building a statewide response to this need. We invested in local journalism, strengthened the organizations that produce it, helped develop the next generation of community storytellers, and supported shared resources that can benefit the entire field.

Since receiving its first State appropriation in 2021, the Consortium has grown into New Jersey's statewide civic information fund. Through more than 200 grants to 85 organizations, Consortium-supported partners have reached communities across 19 of the state's 21 counties. They have produced tens of thousands of stories and information resources, created and sustained journalism jobs, trained community members and emerging journalists, and expanded access to trusted local information.

FY2026 also demonstrated that the Consortium's role extends beyond grantmaking. We invested in newsroom sustainability, university partnerships, paid internships, professional development and shared civic information infrastructure. Partnerships with philanthropy, universities and national journalism organizations brought additional expertise and resources to New Jersey, extending the reach and value of the State's investment.

Significant challenges remain. Too many New Jersey communities still lack consistent local reporting. News organizations continue to face financial pressure and a rapidly changing information environment. Meeting those challenges requires both continued investment in local reporting and stronger systems to help that reporting endure.

As the Consortium looks ahead, our focus remains on ensuring that New Jersey residents have access to the local news and civic information they need to participate fully in their communities. We are grateful to the State of New Jersey, our grantees and board members, and our university, philanthropic, and community partners for helping make that work possible.

Christopher J. Daggett

Board Chair

Lisa A. Sahulka

Executive Director

About the Consortium

The New Jersey Civic Information Consortium is the nation's first publicly funded nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening local news and civic information. Established by the State of New Jersey in 2018 and funded beginning in 2021, the Consortium operates as a wholly independent, nonpartisan organization with a statewide mission to serve all New Jersey residents.

Since 2021, the Consortium has invested statewide in a stronger local news and civic information ecosystem.

\$14.8M+

invested since 2021

200+

grants

88

organizations funded

19 of 21

New Jersey counties reached

36,000+

stories, briefs and translated articles produced

371

journalism jobs supported

1 in 4

New Jersey households reached monthly

Our mission

The New Jersey Civic Information Consortium invests public and private funds in grants, training, research, and innovation to strengthen trustworthy, community-based news and information across New Jersey.

What we do

1

Fund local news

We provide grants to news organizations, community groups, and civic information projects that respond to local information needs.

2

Strengthen news organizations

We invest in training, technical assistance, and revenue development to help local news organizations build capacity and become more sustainable.

3

Build the talent pipeline

We fund pathways into journalism and civic information through professional development, youth journalism programs, community journalism training, and paid internships.

4

Invest in civic information infrastructure

As local newsrooms shrink and critical community information becomes harder to find, we invest in tools, technology, and shared resources that ensure New Jersey residents can access the information they need to stay informed, connected, and engaged.

5

Bring more resources to New Jersey

NJCIC brings together philanthropic partners, universities, journalism organizations, community groups, and public institutions to strengthen local news across New Jersey. Together, we build on the State's investment with additional funding, expertise, and opportunities for the communities we serve.

Where we invest

The Consortium-supported organizations serve communities across 19 of New Jersey's 21 counties. Our investments range from statewide public-interest reporting and regional collaborations to hyperlocal organizations serving individual municipalities and neighborhoods.

We prioritize communities with limited access to consistent local reporting, while supporting journalism and civic information that reflects New Jersey's diverse communities. This includes Black, Latino, Asian American, and other communities historically underserved by mainstream media; immigrant and multilingual communities; rural communities; and communities developing new models for locally rooted news and information.

North Jersey

Education, neighborhood, and multilingual reporting in communities including Newark, Paterson, Jersey City, and surrounding areas.

Central Jersey

State House, municipal, and community reporting across Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, and Somerset counties.

South Jersey

Growing local reporting capacity across Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, Ocean, and Salem counties.

See where Consortium grantees work

Our interactive grantee map shows reach across all regions.

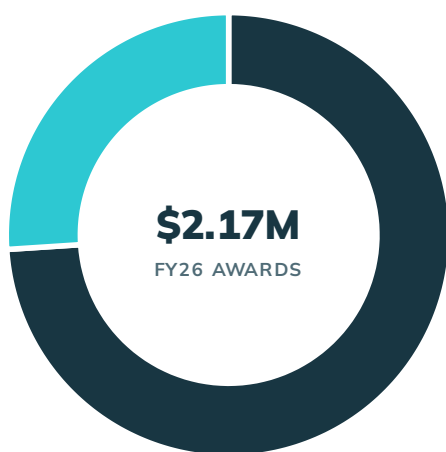
[Explore our reach →](#)

FY26 grantmaking: supporting local news for the long term

During State Fiscal Year 2026, the Consortium invested \$2,168,696 supporting local reporting, journalism training, and civic engagement. Approximately 75% of this funding supported renewal grants, providing continued investment in organizations already serving New Jersey communities.

Renewal funding helps local news organizations maintain reporting capacity, deepen community relationships and build more sustainable sources of revenue. New and supplemental awards extend that impact by reaching underserved audiences, addressing emerging information needs and supporting new approaches to keeping NJ communities informed, connected, and engaged.

FY26 AWARDS BY TYPE



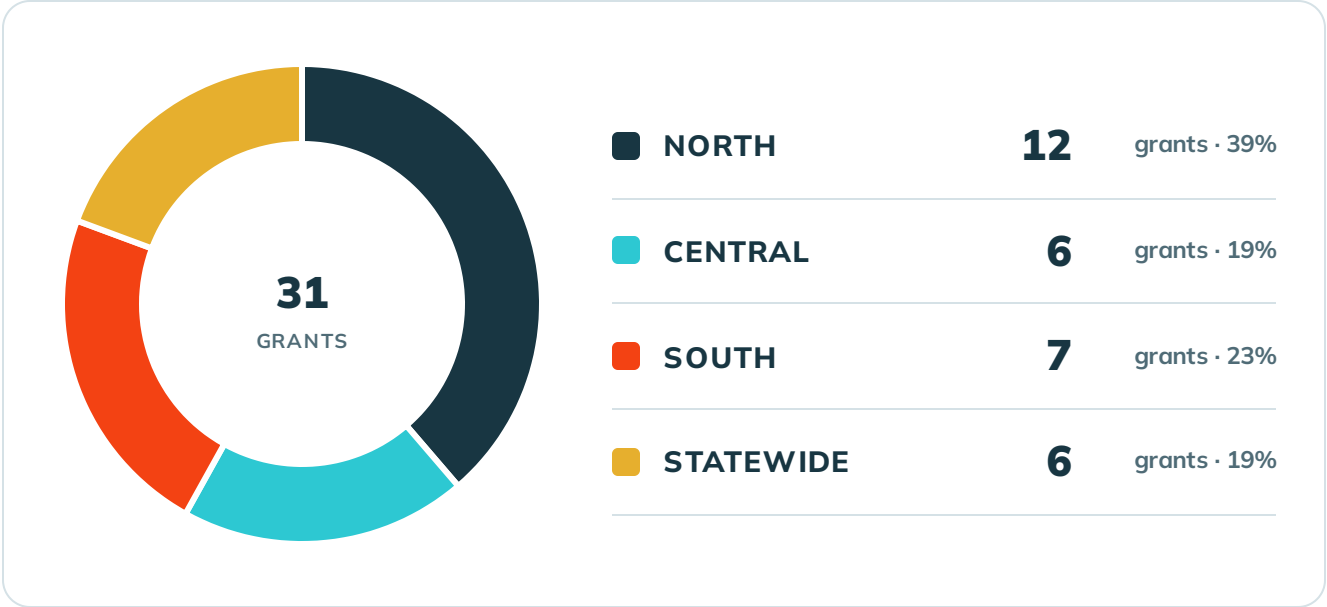
AWARD TYPE	AWARDS	AMOUNT	SHARE
■ Renewals	24	\$1,604,045.88	74.0%
■ New grants	7	\$564,650	26.0%
Total	31	\$2,168,695.88	100%

Investment across New Jersey

FY26 funding supported locally rooted reporting and civic information across North, Central, and South Jersey, alongside statewide and multi-region projects serving communities across county lines.

Investments supported local and State House reporting, education and environmental coverage, Spanish-language journalism, student and emerging journalists, community storytelling and other efforts to address local information needs.

FOCUS AREA — OUT OF 31 GRANTS



Together, grants and organizational support help New Jersey retain reporting capacity while developing new ways to serve communities with persistent information gaps.

The measure of that work is that residents can continue to find reliable, relevant news about their own communities—and that the organizations producing it are better positioned to keep doing so.

What public investment makes possible

FY26 impact by the numbers

\$2,168,695

invested with public funds*

\$345,000

invested with philanthropic funds**

9,576

pieces of original local news content***

3,541

local news briefs***

317

Spanish-translated news articles***

50%

increase in web traffic reported by our grantees***

* This number reflects funding during State Fiscal Year 2026. We awarded additional funding in July (\$630K) and September (\$376K).

** Awarded through Press Forward New Jersey — [see page 16](#).

*** 2026 Impact Report findings. Explore the full report [here](#).

From investment to informed communities

Beyond individual grants, the Consortium supports the people, organizations and infrastructure that make local information available to New Jersey communities.



Cumulative impact since 2021

36,000+

stories, briefs and translated articles

371

journalism jobs supported

840,000+

estimated unique website visitors per month

2,875

repuplications extending the reach of original reporting

62.5%

of grantees who participated in Blue Engine increased revenue

1,600+

community storytellers engaged

2,000 youth engaged in journalism

Want the full picture?

Grantee outcomes, audience reach and more.

[Explore our full 2026 Impact Report! →](#)

Stories of impact

The impact of the Consortium's investments is ultimately reflected in the reporting produced, the organizations strengthened, and the communities better equipped with the information they need.

NORTH JERSEY

Journalism that holds powerful institutions accountable

In Morristown, **Morristown Green** uncovered closed-door discussions between town officials and Atlantic Health over a proposed hospital expansion—the largest development project in Morristown's history. The response was significant, and public opposition prompted the hospital to halt its plans and engage in a more transparent process. Separate reporting from Morristown Green also prompted the mayor to withdraw a proposed ban on sleeping in public places.

HudPost, an independent, Latino-owned outlet based in Hudson County, reported on racist remarks by the Jersey City Board of Education president. The reporting contributed to public condemnation from the NAACP, the National Action Network, and local faith leaders. Later, HudPost's video coverage of a school protest became part of the public record surrounding another controversy; the Board of Education subsequently banned a former board president from school premises, citing HudPost's coverage.

Montclair Local's reporting exposed how years of inadequate financial oversight contributed to a \$19.6 million school budget gap, resulting in deep staffing and program cuts and a voter-approved tax increase. For the average Montclair homeowner, the school budget and deficit referendum will add more than \$1,400 to 2026 property taxes, with another increase coming in 2027.

A new generation of journalists emerge

The **NJ State House News Service** addresses two challenges at once: expanding coverage of state government and preparing the next generation of New Jersey journalists. With Consortium support, the nonprofit news service provides student journalists with hands-on experience reporting from the State House under the guidance of professional editors, while making their reporting available at no cost to more than 100 media partners across the state. The model gives emerging journalists meaningful professional experience while helping local news organizations provide their communities with timely, relevant information about what is happening in Trenton.

At Princeton High School, student journalists at **The Tower** investigated the district's use of student surveillance software. Their reporting raised questions about privacy and monitoring, prompting the school district to reverse its changes.

Local reporting gives communities the information to act

The **Hammonton Gazette** demonstrated why persistent local accountability reporting remains indispensable, exposing approximately \$1.5 million in debt at a local theater receiving taxpayer support. The reporting brought the theater's finances into public view and prompted the local government to halt funding and investigate how the money was being spent.

South Jersey Climate News (SJC�), run by Rowan University's Journalism Department, is a local environmental news outlet that trains student journalists and collaborates with community partners to report on environmental issues affecting NJ, particularly in the Southern counties. Residents and environmental advocates have come to rely on its articles and resources. In 2025, SJC� created a map of every data center in New Jersey categorizing its status as operational, planned, cancelled, or under construction. The tool has been widely viewed and shared more than 25,000 times.

Together, these examples demonstrate how sustained local reporting gives residents the information they need to understand—and participate in—the decisions shaping their communities.

Building New Jersey's journalism pipeline

A healthy local news ecosystem requires a strong and diverse pipeline of people prepared to report on New Jersey communities.

The Consortium works with universities, newsrooms and community organizations to connect emerging journalists with paid professional opportunities. These investments open doors for people who might otherwise be unable to afford an unpaid internship, strengthen the workforce available to local news organizations and help New Jersey retain talented journalists.

Statewide paid internship program

13

interns placed

14

participating
newsrooms

8

week experience

\$20/hr

up to 20 hours per
week

In June 2026, the Consortium launched the second cohort of its statewide paid internship program. Thirteen interns were placed with 14 participating newsrooms for an eight-week experience that continued into State FY2027. Interns earned \$20 per hour for up to 20 hours per week, reducing financial barriers to meaningful newsroom experience.

The program builds on the Consortium's relationships with its six member universities and participating local news organizations, strengthening the pathway between journalism education and employment in New Jersey.

Since the close of FY2026, interns have already turned those experiences into meaningful career opportunities and far-reaching journalism. One participant leveraged their internship to secure a full-time role as a news associate at CBS, while another published a story that reached audiences around the world—demonstrating the program's potential to launch careers, amplify emerging voices, and create real-world impact.

UNIVERSITY PARTNERS

Kean University

Rowan University

New Jersey Institute of Technology

Rutgers University

Montclair State University

The College of New Jersey

Strengthening the ecosystem

The Consortium's role extends beyond individual grants. We invest in shared infrastructure, professional development and partnerships that can make New Jersey's broader local information ecosystem stronger.

Making it easier to participate in local government

Public meetings are where many of the decisions closest to residents' daily lives are made—from schools and public safety to housing, transportation, taxes and neighborhood development. When people can easily learn when meetings are happening and what will be discussed, they are better able to attend, ask informed questions, share their perspectives and participate in shaping their communities.

In June 2026, the Consortium, the Center for Cooperative Media and Civilio announced a statewide initiative to make information from public meetings easier to find, search and use.

[Civilio](#) is a technology platform designed to gather publicly available information about government meetings from many different websites and bring it together in one searchable place. Using automated tools, including artificial intelligence, Civilio identifies and organizes meeting notices, agendas, minutes and related materials that are otherwise distributed across individual municipal, county, school board and public-agency websites.

The goal is to help residents find relevant meetings and understand what their local governments are discussing without requiring them to know which website to search or where a particular document has been posted. Journalists and community organizations can use the same information to identify developing issues, plan coverage and connect residents with opportunities to participate.

This work builds on the Consortium's investment in the NJ Documenters program, which trains residents to attend public meetings and produce accessible notes for their communities. Moving forward, Civilio will leverage useful technology to expand community knowledge and participation, making public information easier to access.

[Learn about Civilio](#) →

Newsroom sustainability and professional development

The Consortium continues to connect New Jersey news organizations with training and technical assistance focused on audience development, revenue growth, organizational strategy and long-term sustainability. Participating newsrooms strengthened their business practices, developed clearer growth strategies and became better equipped to diversify revenue and expand their audiences.

~20%

revenue growth reported after a first Blue Engine accelerator experience

50%+

revenue growth reported following a second accelerator round

Through accelerator programs offered in partnership with Blue Engine Collaborative, participating news outlets reported revenue growth of approximately 20% after their first accelerator experience and more than 50% following a second round. These results underscore the value of investing not only in journalism itself, but also in the organizations that produce it—helping them build stronger, more resilient operations and better position themselves to serve their communities for the long term.

Research and impact measurement

The Consortium continues to strengthen how it measures the reach and impact of its investments. Grant recipients report on both quantitative and qualitative outcomes, including reporting produced, audiences reached, jobs supported, community engagement and organizational sustainability.

This information helps the Consortium understand where public investment is producing results, identify emerging needs and improve future grantmaking and programs.

Leveraging New Jersey's investment

The Consortium leverages public investment to attract additional philanthropic funding, partnerships and resources for local news and civic information across New Jersey.



Since its launch, the Consortium has worked with philanthropy, universities, and national and statewide journalism organizations to bring additional funding and expertise to New Jersey. This public-private model allows State investment to serve as a foundation for broader investment in the state's local news and information ecosystem.

Press Forward New Jersey

The Consortium and the Community Foundation of New Jersey jointly house Press Forward New Jersey, the state chapter of a national initiative dedicated to strengthening local journalism. The partnership brings foundations and other donors together to increase philanthropic investment in New Jersey local news and complement public funding.

\$345,000

awarded to support local news and civic information in South Jersey through Press Forward New Jersey, funded entirely by philanthropic partners to date.

\$0.25

raised for every \$1 in State funding since 2021

A model for the nation

New Jersey was the first state in the nation to create a publicly supported initiative dedicated to strengthening local news and civic information.

Since the Consortium was established in 2018, New Jersey has helped pioneer a new approach to public investment in local journalism—one designed to support community information needs while preserving the editorial independence of the organizations receiving funding.

Today, that model is influencing efforts beyond New Jersey. Policymakers in other states are exploring public funding approaches to strengthen local journalism, with proposals in Pennsylvania and Wisconsin modeled directly on New Jersey's approach and similar efforts underway in Oregon, California and Massachusetts.

MODELED DIRECTLY ON NEW JERSEY

[Pennsylvania](#)
[Wisconsin](#)

SIMILAR EFFORTS UNDERWAY

[Oregon](#)
[California](#)
[Massachusetts](#)

The Consortium's experience has also provided lessons for policymakers, funders and journalism leaders considering how public investment, philanthropy, universities and community organizations can work together to strengthen local information ecosystems.

New Jersey didn't just invest in local news. It began treating it as a public good.

Like sidewalks, streetlights and other shared infrastructure, local news helps communities function. It gives residents the information they need to stay informed, connected and engaged in the places they call home.

By recognizing the value of local information and investing public resources to strengthen it, New Jersey pioneered a model that other states are now looking to replicate.

Learn more



WATCH

A Model for the Nation

Consortium video · YouTube



READ

New Jersey Consortium Seen as Model for Reviving Local Journalism

WhoWhatWhy

Looking ahead

In the coming year, the Consortium will continue its work of building New Jersey's local information ecosystem and strengthening and expanding the infrastructure needed to sustain it.

Our priorities respond directly to the challenges facing the field: unstable revenue, persistent gaps in local coverage, an insufficient pipeline of journalists and rapidly changing technology.

The Consortium will focus on:

- **Protecting essential local reporting.** The Consortium will continue supporting news and civic-information organizations that have demonstrated their value to New Jersey communities, helping them retain journalists, maintain coverage and build on the progress made through earlier investments.
- **Closing critical information gaps.** New funding will be directed toward communities with limited access to consistent, trustworthy local reporting—particularly lower-income, multilingual and historically overlooked communities.
- **Building stronger and more sustainable news organizations.** Through grants, technical assistance and programs such as Blue Engine, the Consortium will help local news providers strengthen revenue, reach new audiences, improve operations and reduce their dependence on any single source of funding.
- **Creating pathways into journalism.** The Consortium will expand paid internships, university partnerships and hands-on training opportunities that allow students, emerging journalists and community members to develop skills, gain experience and pursue careers in New Jersey media.
- **Making local government easier to follow.** The Consortium will advance shared civic-information infrastructure to make public meetings and government information easier for journalists and residents to find, understand and use.
- **Bringing more investment into New Jersey.** The Consortium will use the State's investment to attract additional philanthropic funding, national partnerships and technical expertise.

Continuing the mission

The Consortium was created to help ensure that New Jersey residents have access to the information they need to participate in civic life and stay connected to their communities.

That mission remains at the center of our work as we build a stronger, more sustainable and more inclusive local information ecosystem.

CONTINUING INVESTMENT IN NEW JERSEY COMMUNITIES

\$1M

in grants awarded since the end of State FY26

+\$1M

in additional grants expected by the end of calendar year 2026

Since the end of State FY26, the Consortium has awarded \$1 million in grants and expects to award an additional \$1 million in grants by the end of calendar year 2026, supporting local news and civic information organizations across New Jersey. This next round of funding will help sustain existing local reporting, address unmet community information needs and support new approaches to keeping New Jersey residents informed and connected.



Every New Jersey community should have access to reliable local information, regardless of its size, income or commercial appeal.

Leadership

Board of directors

The Board of Directors provides governance, fiduciary oversight and strategic direction for the Consortium. Board members help establish funding priorities, review and approve grants, oversee the responsible stewardship of public and philanthropic resources, and guide the Consortium's long-term role within New Jersey's civic-information ecosystem.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS DURING NJ STATE FY26

Chris Daggett • CHAIRPERSON

Independent Consultant

Therise Edwards • VICE CHAIRPERSON

President, Teshly Solutions LLC

Molly de Aguiar • TREASURER

Former President, Independence Public Media Foundation

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Director of Communications, FIFA World Cup 2026 NYNJ

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Staff

Lisa A. Sahulka

Executive Director

Ayinde Merrill

Program Officer

Madison McCool

Grants & Communications Manager

Additional resources

Select any resource below to open it online.



Audited financials

PDF



Founding statute (amended)

PDF



The Consortium website

njcivinfo.org



Grantee map

njcivinfo.org/map



Grants awarded to date

Airtable database



2026 Impact Report

njcivinfo.org/impact-report



OSHE FY26 grant agreement

PDF



NEW JERSEY
CIVIC INFORMATION
CONSORTIUM

1 Normal Avenue, Montclair, NJ 07043

www.njcivicinfo.org

info@njcivicinfo.org

Designed by: Madison McCool