Press Forward
New Jersey

PILOT PROGRAM · LOCAL NEWS DAY 2027

PRESS FORWARD MATCHING CHALLENGE

Guidelines for *New Jersey newsrooms.*

Every eligible dollar a reader gives can bring three to local news.

Apply by December 1, 2026

2:1	$10K	14	April
MATCH ON ELIGIBLE READER GIFTS	MAXIMUM MATCH PER NEWSROOM	MAX NJ NEWSROOMS SELECTED	1–30, 2027 CAMPAIGN PERIOD

In partnership with **Press Forward** *and* **Local News Day**

NJCIC · Community Foundation of New Jersey

AT A GLANCE

The essentials for New Jersey newsrooms considering the challenge.

THE OPPORTUNITY	A coordinated fundraising challenge in April 2027 that helps local newsrooms raise revenue from their audiences, in partnership with Press Forward, 12 participating local chapters, and Local News Day.
THE MATCH	**$2 in matching funds for every $1** in eligible individual contributions during April 1–30, 2027, up to each participating newsroom's matching grant cap. A maximum of $1,000 in contributions per individual donor can count toward the match.
NEWSROOM COHORT	Press Forward New Jersey will select **up to 14** New Jersey newsrooms to participate.
POTENTIAL AWARD	**Up to $10,000** in matching funds per newsroom, subject to the final local matching pool and each selected newsroom's assigned cap.
WHO CAN APPLY	Eligible nonprofit, locally owned for-profit, and qualifying community-facing college or student newsrooms serving communities anywhere in New Jersey. See Eligibility Requirements.
INFORMATION SESSION	National session: October 30, 2026, noon–1 p.m. ET (Zoom). Press Forward New Jersey is not hosting a separate local information session or office hours.
APPLICATIONS OPEN	November 2, 2026, through the NJCIC Good Grants portal.
DEADLINE	**Tuesday, December 1, 2026, 5:00 p.m. PT (8:00 p.m. ET)**
NOTIFICATION	By January 8, 2027, via email. Public announcement January 20, 2027.
QUESTIONS	Madison McCool, Grants & Communications Manager, New Jersey Civic Information Consortium, madi@njcivicinfo.org

OVERVIEW

Individual contributions from loyal audience members—whether donations, memberships, or subscriptions—are among the most important and sustaining revenue streams available to local newsrooms. Strengthening newsroom relationships with the communities they serve, and encouraging communities to invest in local news, is an essential part of building a healthy civic information ecosystem.

In April 2027, in coordination with the second annual Local News Day, Press Forward and 12 participating local chapters will pilot the Press Forward Matching Challenge, giving selected newsrooms an opportunity to raise contributions from their audiences with matching support.

Through this coordinated challenge, Press Forward New Jersey will select up to 14 qualifying newsrooms statewide to participate, with matching grants of up to $10,000 per newsroom. Under the New Jersey challenge, every eligible $1 raised from individual audience members will unlock $2 in matching funds, up to the newsroom's assigned match cap.

$100 FROM A DONOR + **$200** MATCHING FUNDS = **$300** TO THE NEWSROOM

A qualifying $100 contribution can bring *three times* its value to local news.

Press Forward has committed up to $70,000 toward Press Forward New Jersey's local matching pool. Press Forward New Jersey is raising additional funds from New Jersey donors and foundations through March 31, 2027. The total amount of matching funds available, number of newsrooms selected (up to 14), and individual newsroom caps will depend on the resources raised and selections made.

Press Forward New Jersey, the statewide chapter of the national Press Forward movement, is a collaboration between the New Jersey Civic Information Consortium and the Community Foundation of New Jersey. The partnership works to mobilize philanthropic support for trustworthy, community-based news and civic information throughout New Jersey.

Program Goals

The Press Forward Matching Challenge is designed to accelerate local fundraising capacity and bring new money into local news ecosystems. This pilot aims to:

01

Strengthen fundraising capacity and coordination among local chapters and newsrooms, equipping them with shared language, tools, training, and financial leverage to accelerate major giving and individual contributions.

02

Put new money into local news by leveraging philanthropic support to match contributions from individual audience members.

03

Test a replicable model that more Press Forward chapters and national campaign partners may use in future years.

Alongside matching grants, Press Forward will provide customizable campaign templates, sample messages, cohort-based online training, and fundraising guidance. Training will include a track for newsrooms newer to individual fundraising and one for more experienced fundraisers, including organizations that have participated in NewsMatch.

KEY DATES

From application to campaign, November 2026 through April 2027.

DATE	MILESTONE
November 2, 2026	Applications open at njcic.grantplatform.com.
December 1, 2026 5 p.m. PT / 8 p.m. ET	**Application deadline.**
By January 8, 2027	All applicants notified by email; selected newsrooms receive acceptance materials and matching grant agreements.
April 1–30, 2027	**Matching Challenge fundraising period.**

Reporting dates and requirements are subject to change. Newsrooms will receive at least 30 days' notice of any changes.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Open to newsrooms serving communities anywhere in New Jersey.

To be eligible for the Press Forward Matching Challenge through Press Forward New Jersey, applicants must:

1. **Be an eligible newsroom type:**
    - A 501(c)(3) nonprofit local news organization;
    - A university, college, or student newsroom producing community-facing journalism, not solely news for a higher education audience; or
    - A for-profit local news organization that is locally owned and operated. For-profit newsrooms wishing to use Mightycause must have or establish a 501(c)(3) fiscal sponsor; guidance will be available.
2. **Serve New Jersey communities.** The challenge is open statewide, including North, Central, and South Jersey.
3. **Publish original journalism**—locally relevant, non-advocacy, nonpartisan, public-service journalism—at least two articles per week.
4. **Have at least one full-time equivalent (FTE) journalist** employed by the organization and based in the community or communities served. One FTE may consist of multiple part-time individuals, including staff, contractors, or community contributors.
5. **Adhere to the professional and editorial standards** of the Society of Professional Journalists.
6. **Agree to the Participation Requirements** in these guidelines.
7. **Commit to a coordinated audience-fundraising campaign** alongside Press Forward, Press Forward New Jersey, Local News Day, and other participating newsrooms during April 1–30, 2027.

HOW THE MATCH WORKS

Every eligible $1 unlocks $2 in matching funds.

- Press Forward has committed up to $70,000 toward Press Forward New Jersey's matching pool. Press Forward New Jersey is raising additional gifts from local major donors and foundations through March 31, 2027.
- Selected newsrooms will run audience-fundraising campaigns from April 1 through April 30, 2027.
- For each $1 in eligible contributions, the matching pool will provide $2, until the newsroom reaches its assigned match cap. This makes each eligible dollar worth $3 in total support to the newsroom, counting the original contribution.
- Press Forward New Jersey will select up to 14 newsrooms, with matching grants up to $10,000 per newsroom, subject to the funds ultimately available and the assigned cap for each participant.

Match Examples

ELIGIBLE AUDIENCE CONTRIBUTIONS	MATCHING FUNDS AT 2:1	TOTAL TO NEWSROOM
$100	$200	**$300**
$500	$1,000	**$1,500**
$3,000	$6,000	**$9,000**
$5,000	$10,000	**$15,000**

Examples assume all audience contributions meet the individual-donor limit and that the newsroom has enough remaining match capacity. A newsroom with a $10,000 matching cap would need to raise $5,000 in eligible contributions to earn the full match.

Eligible Contributions

To qualify for matching support, contributions must:

- Come from **individual donors**, not businesses, foundations, or other organizations;
- Be **pledged and received** during the challenge period, April 1–30, 2027; and
- Be counted at **no more than $1,000 per individual donor** toward the match.

New qualifying memberships, donations, and subscriptions may count. New contributions from existing donors may also count. See the FAQs for additional detail about larger and recurring contributions.

> The New Jersey challenge period begins at **12:00 a.m. Eastern Time, April 1, 2027**, and ends at **11:59 p.m. Eastern Time, April 30, 2027**.

Match Documentation, Impact Reporting, and Grant Payment

By **May 14, 2027**, participating newsrooms must submit a transaction-level report of individual contributions received during the challenge, including donor name, contribution date, and contribution amount. Press Forward will validate eligible contributions before matching grant payments are released.

Selected newsrooms will also submit a brief impact report to Press Forward New Jersey describing fundraising results, lessons learned, and campaign feedback by **May 31, 2027**. Press Forward New Jersey will disburse validated matching grants in **June 2027**.

Instructions for submitting contribution documentation and impact reports will be provided in the matching grant agreements.

WHAT PARTICIPATING NEWSROOMS RECEIVE

- A **"campaign in a box"** individual-fundraising toolkit from Press Forward, with a campaign plan, sample language, a customizable case for support, and email and social media fundraising templates.
- **Required virtual fundraising training** in February–March 2027, co-hosted by Press Forward and participating chapters, including Press Forward New Jersey.
- **$2 in matching funds per $1** in eligible contributions, up to the newsroom's assigned matching grant cap.
- **Communications amplification** from Press Forward and Press Forward New Jersey.
- **Access to the Mightycause** fundraising platform.

PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

Selected newsrooms commit to:

1. Attend the required Press Forward fundraising training sessions in February–March 2027.
2. Confirm or establish an online fundraising page able to accept individual contributions and generate transaction-level reports before the April 2027 campaign begins.
3. Create a profile on Press Forward's Mightycause campaign page. For-profit newsrooms will need a 501(c)(3) fiscal sponsor to create the profile.
4. Develop and carry out an audience-fundraising campaign during April 1–30, 2027, using Press Forward campaign templates and materials where appropriate.
5. Submit transaction-level documentation of eligible contributions by May 14, 2027.
6. Submit the final impact report to Press Forward New Jersey by May 31, 2027.
7. Participate in program evaluation by Press Forward or an evaluation partner and provide relevant photos, videos, and community impact information for Press Forward and Press Forward New Jersey reporting.
8. Acknowledge Press Forward and Press Forward New Jersey in campaign communications using the provided communications guidelines.

ONLINE FUNDRAISING PLATFORM

Press Forward is partnering with Mightycause, a nonprofit fundraising platform offering giving pages, campaign tools, and donor management. Newsrooms without an existing online fundraising platform may use Mightycause for the April 2027 campaign. Assistance with campaign-page setup will be provided during campaign preparation.

Newsrooms that already accept donations or memberships through another platform—such as a membership CRM, giving processor, or community foundation giving page—may keep using it. Regardless of platform, each newsroom must be able to provide a transaction-level report of eligible contributions received during April 1–30, 2027, identifying donor name, date, and amount.

> Every selected newsroom must also create a **Mightycause campaign profile**, even if it processes its actual contributions elsewhere. Because Mightycause profiles require nonprofit status, selected for-profit newsrooms will need a fiscal sponsor for the profile. Press Forward can provide guidance on finding a sponsor.

REVIEW PROCESS AND SELECTION

Press Forward New Jersey, coordinated by the New Jersey Civic Information Consortium, will select up to 14 newsrooms after reviewing eligible applications in December 2026. According to the program calendar, a review committee is expected to make selections by December 17, 2026. All applicants will be notified by email by January 8, 2027. Press Forward and the participating chapters will announce the selected newsroom cohort publicly on January 20, 2027.

The application gathers information about each newsroom's audience, community relationships, journalism impact, fundraising experience and capacity, anticipated benefit from the challenge, and proposed campaign plan.

ABOUT THE APPLICATION

Apply through NJCIC Good Grants by December 1, 2026.

How to Apply

Applications open **Monday, November 2, 2026**, at the New Jersey Civic Information Consortium's Good Grants portal: njcic.grantplatform.com.

- If you already have an NJCIC Good Grants account, log in. Otherwise, register using your email address.
- Find the Press Forward New Jersey Matching Challenge application in the portal and complete the required sections. You can manage your applications under My Applications.
- Submit your application by **Tuesday, December 1, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. PT (8:00 p.m. ET)**.
- Applicants will receive a confirmation of receipt by December 2, 2026 and will be notified of decisions by January 8, 2027.

For program or portal questions, contact Madison McCool, Grants & Communications Manager, at madi@njcivicinfo.org.

What the Application Asks

The application includes eight sections:

SECTION	WHAT IT COVERS
1. Organization and Contact Information	Legal and publication names, website, social platforms, mailing address, logo, and up to three contacts for program communications.
2. Organization Status	Tax status, EIN, fiscal sponsorship, mission, founding year, communities served, and a 400 × 400 px newsroom logo image.
3. Fiscal Sponsor or Nonprofit Partner	For fiscally sponsored newsrooms and for-profit newsrooms fundraising through a nonprofit partner.
4. Affiliations	New Jersey journalism association or collaborative affiliations, if any, and national affiliations such as INN or LION Publishers.
5. Fundraising Capacity and Baseline	Annual budget, staffing, revenue mix, individual-giving revenue in the past 12 months, audience reach, fundraising platform and donor data, and prior matching campaigns and grants.
6. April 2027 Campaign Plan	Fundraising goal and plan, campaign lead's experience and available capacity, intended use of funds, and support needed.
7. Journalism and Community Impact	An impact story, coverage priorities, and a question about the community served.
8. Certification and Consent	Program commitments, data-sharing consent, authorized representative, and certification.

Data Sharing

By submitting an application, applicants authorize Press Forward New Jersey to share application, match-validation, and impact-report data with The Miami Foundation, Press Forward, and their program contractors as needed for newsroom support, match validation, program evaluation, and aggregated reporting on the Matching Challenge. Individually identifiable organizational or financial data will not be shared outside the specific program purposes described here.

Resources for Applicants

- **Program information:** njcivicinfo.org/pf-matching-challenge
- **Apply:** njcic.grantplatform.com by December 1.
- **Fundraising platform:** Mightycause is available at no cost for newsrooms needing a platform, with campaign preparation support for selected newsrooms.
- **Questions:** info@njcivicinfo.org

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Answers to common questions about the program, eligibility, and the match.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

What is the Press Forward Matching Challenge?

It is a pilot fundraising program coordinated by Press Forward and participating local chapters in connection with Local News Day 2027. Selected newsrooms receive training, campaign planning resources, and an opportunity to have qualifying individual contributions matched during April. In New Jersey, each eligible $1 in audience contributions will unlock $2 in matching support, up to each newsroom's assigned cap.

What is Local News Day?

Local News Day is a national day of action connecting communities with trusted local news. More than 1,300 newsrooms participated in April 2026, using the day to introduce products, host events, and invite readers to support local journalism. The next Local News Day is April 8, 2027, during the Matching Challenge campaign period.

Where do the matching funds come from?

Press Forward selected 12 local chapters for the pilot, pledging up to $70,000 to each participating chapter to help build local matching pools. Press Forward New Jersey is working with New Jersey donors and foundations to increase the total available pool by March 31, 2027. Matching funds will then be made available to selected newsrooms based on eligible audience contributions raised during April.

How much can our newsroom receive?

Press Forward New Jersey anticipates matching awards of up to $10,000 per selected newsroom. Each selected newsroom's actual cap will be based on the final pool and communicated before the campaign. For a newsroom with a $10,000 matching cap, raising $5,000 in eligible contributions would unlock the full $10,000 match, for $15,000 in combined audience and matching support.

What if we don't raise enough to reach our full match cap?

You receive only the matching amount earned through your eligible audience contributions, up to your cap. For example, a newsroom with a $10,000 matching cap that raises $3,000 in eligible gifts earns a $6,000 match, bringing $9,000 total into the newsroom.

ELIGIBILITY

Who can apply?

Eligible nonprofit and locally owned for-profit newsrooms, as well as qualifying community-facing university, college, and student newsrooms, serving communities anywhere in New Jersey. Applicants must meet all other eligibility and participation requirements above. Participation in Local News Day activities is encouraged.

Can for-profit newsrooms apply?

Yes, if they are locally owned and operated and meet all other requirements. A fiscal sponsor is not automatically required to apply or to use your existing fundraising platform, but a 501(c)(3) sponsor is required for the Mightycause campaign profile that all selected newsrooms must create. Press Forward can provide guidance to newsrooms that need to find a sponsor.

Can fiscally sponsored newsrooms apply?

Yes. They must provide the sponsor's contact information and EIN and confirm that the sponsor can hold campaign contributions and receive the matching grant on the newsroom's behalf.

Can public media stations, student newsrooms, news collaboratives, or outlets owned by a larger company apply?

Yes, if they meet all eligibility and participation requirements in these guidelines, including the requirement that for-profit outlets be locally owned and operated. Community-facing university, college, and student newsrooms can also apply if they meet the requirements.

We have participated in NewsMatch or another matching campaign before. Can we apply?

Yes. Previous participation in a matching challenge is not required and does not disqualify an applicant. Prior fundraising experience will help place selected participants in the appropriate training track.

We already received a grant from Press Forward New Jersey or Press Forward. Can we apply?

Yes. Existing grantees are eligible. The application asks about grants received from Press Forward New Jersey, Press Forward, and Press Forward funders during the past three years to understand applicants' existing support.

CONTRIBUTIONS AND THE MATCH

Which contributions are eligible for the match?

New individual memberships, donations, and subscriptions that are pledged and received during April 1–30, 2027 can qualify. Contributions from companies, foundations, or organizations cannot be matched. No more than $1,000 per individual donor may count toward the match.

What do "eligible for the match" and "meet the Press Forward match" mean?

An eligible contribution is a qualifying individual audience gift during the April campaign that counts toward a newsroom's fundraising total for matching purposes. In New Jersey, qualifying gifts unlock $2 in match funds for each eligible $1, until the newsroom reaches its cap. For example, a qualifying $250 donation earns a $500 match, bringing $750 in total support to the newsroom.

Do gifts from existing donors count? What about recurring gifts or gifts over $1,000?

New gifts from existing donors may count. Across contributions from an individual donor, no more than $1,000 can count toward the match, so even if someone gives $2,000, only $1,000 is eligible and would unlock up to $2,000 in matching funds, subject to the newsroom's cap. The national guidelines also allow newly pledged recurring commitments to count up to 12 months, subject to the same $1,000-per-donor limit; implementation and documentation instructions will be provided to selected newsrooms.

Our newsroom has a fundraising system. Do we have to use Mightycause to process donations?

No. Your existing system may be used if it provides transaction-level reports showing donor name, contribution date, and amount. However, selected newsrooms must still create a Mightycause campaign profile.

Do we have to create a Mightycause profile?

Yes. The campaign uses a shared Mightycause page so donors and partners can view participating newsrooms. Only nonprofits can have these campaign profiles, so for-profit newsrooms will need a fiscal sponsor for this purpose. Press Forward can help identify a sponsor.

How do we document our match? Can checks count?

Submit a transaction-level report of eligible contributions by May 14, 2027, including donor names, dates, and amounts. Checks can count if received during April 1–30, 2027; copies of checks and deposit slips will be required. Submission instructions will be provided in the matching grant agreements.

When will we receive matching funds?

After contribution documentation is validated by Press Forward, Press Forward New Jersey will disburse earned matching grants in June 2027.

Are there restrictions on how matching funds can be used?

Matching grants may be treated as general operating support. For-profit newsrooms working through fiscal sponsors may need to document how the funds will advance their journalism mission and serve the community. Sharing your planned use of funds publicly can also make your fundraising appeal more compelling.

PARTICIPATION

What is the time commitment?

Newsrooms will participate in a series of 60- to 90-minute virtual training sessions during February and March 2027, conduct an April fundraising campaign, provide supporting donation records by May 14, and submit a final impact report by May 31, 2027.

Are the workshops required?

Yes. More experienced fundraising teams are expected to participate in approximately two to three sessions, while newsrooms newer to fundraising may attend up to five sessions.

Do we have to fundraise on Local News Day?

The challenge runs throughout April 1–30, 2027. April 8 is a coordinated nationwide promotional and fundraising push. Newsrooms will receive Local News Day campaign messages and templates.

Who will see our application information and campaign results?

Press Forward New Jersey will share information necessary for the program with Press Forward and The Miami Foundation, including organization or publication name, fundraising-page contact information, and campaign results for validation, evaluation, and reporting. Participating newsrooms will be publicly named in the January 20 cohort announcement. See Data Sharing for additional detail.

APPLYING

How do we apply?

Submit the application through the NJCIC Good Grants portal beginning November 2, 2026, no later than December 1, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. PT (8:00 p.m. ET). New applicants may register; returning applicants may sign in with their existing credentials.

How long will the application take?

The application is designed to take under 25 minutes to complete.

When will we know if we have been selected?

All applicants will be notified by email by January 8, 2027. The selected cohort will be announced publicly by Press Forward and local chapters on January 20, 2027.

What if we are not selected?

Newsrooms may still use Mightycause as a fundraising platform at no cost, regardless of whether they are selected for the challenge.

Who can we contact with questions?

Madison McCool, Grants & Communications Manager, New Jersey Civic Information Consortium, at madi@njcivicinfo.org.

Questions?

Reach out to us at **info@njcivicinfo.org**

Press Forward *New Jersey*