



# NEW JERSEY CIVIC INFORMATION CONSORTIUM

## Groundbreaking New Jersey initiative announces second series of grants to fund local news and information

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**MONTCLAIR, N.J.** – The New Jersey Civic Information Consortium is pleased to announce \$990,000 in grants to innovative local news and information programs around the state as part of the organization’s second round of funding.

The recipients include 13 first-time grantees and nine renewals to grantees funded during the Consortium’s initial round last year. The grants include projects to create a statewide investigative reporting center, a statewide news site to cover the state’s disabled community, and an online Creole language radio program for the Haitian community. Other projects include expanding coverage of neighborhoods across Jersey City and communities of color in South Jersey, and funding a dedicated statewide reporter to cover mental health, particularly in rural communities.

This round includes the Consortium’s first grants in Hudson, Monmouth and Union Counties, to organizations in Jersey City and New Brunswick, a public high school, and an existing public media organization.

The grant renewals include an innovative news collaborative in Newark; a Cumberland County program to teach journalism skills to foster children and children of the incarcerated; dedicated hyperlocal sites in Atlantic City, Blairstown, Bloomfield and Trenton; and an online Spanish language radio program focusing on seasonal agricultural workers in South Jersey.

“In this new round of grants, the Consortium board worked hard to continue finding ways to fund and grow innovative programs across the state,” Consortium Board Chair Christopher J. Daggett said. “The applications we received are testament to the innovative spirit of the New Jersey media community. Budget constraints were the only barriers we had to funding more projects.”

In addition to \$1 million given to the Consortium last year during the annual state budget process, New Jersey Health Initiatives (NJHI), a statewide grantmaking program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, awarded the Consortium a grant of \$150,000 to fund four health-focused projects of \$35,000 each, which are included in the grants announced today. The remaining \$10,000 of the NJHI funds will be used to support training programs offered to grantees by the Consortium.

“I am particularly excited about the many projects that grow the state’s journalism pipeline in this round of grants,” Consortium Board Vice Chair Therise Edwards said. “By bringing more people into journalism,

particularly students, we can diversify the voices of those telling the stories of New Jersey and work to grow the industry for the future.”

The Consortium is a first-in-the-nation project created in 2018 by the state to focus on growing access to local news and information across New Jersey. The Consortium consists of six Public Research University members – Rutgers, New Jersey Institute of Technology, The College of New Jersey, Montclair State University, Kean University and Rowan University.

***The full list of grant recipients includes:***

**Asbury Park Media Collective (Asbury Park/Monmouth County)**

To create an incubator for emerging community reporters and local media makers. The work the community reporters produce over the course of the training sessions — including news articles, news broadcasts for radio, news videos and documentary short subjects, podcasts, and social media posts — will be published and disseminated through a website and a network of local media partners. This is the Consortium’s first grant awarded in Monmouth County.

**Beyond Expectations, Inc. (Burlington County)\***

For continued support of a pilot program teaching students and young adults, ages 14-24, storytelling and media production skills with an emphasis on conducting interviews with professionals, business leaders, educators, etc., and using online gaming techniques for capturing and promoting interview highlights.

**Black in Jersey (Statewide)**

This grant will support the launch of Black in Jersey as a reliable news and information hub serving New Jersey’s Black communities, and will also provide support for the organization’s first statehouse and local government reporting cohort.

**Blairstown Enhancement Committee (Blairstown/Warren County)\***

For continued support of The Ridgeview Echo, a new hyperlocal news site reporting on Blairstown, Frelinghuysen, Hardwick and Knowlton, all Warren County communities with no other dedicated local news sources.

**Bloomfield Information Project (Bloomfield/Essex County)\***

For continued support of the Bloomfield Information Project's community reporter corps pilot program, which will train residents in news gathering, writing, and production, and provide paid reporting assignments that prioritize the information needs of underserved populations in their community.

### **Center for Cooperative Media at Montclair State University (Montclair/Essex County)**

To launch the NJ News Commons Spanish Translation Service, partnering with the largest Spanish-language and mainstream media outlets in the state to translate statewide news — especially elections-related content and voter information — into Spanish. This project builds on previous pilot work around translating pandemic coverage.

### **Cranford High School (Cranford/Union County)**

To grow the content, readership, and capacity of a fledgling school-wide digital news source by integrating curriculum from varied elective courses and leveraging the expertise of a local college or university. This is the Consortium's first grant in Union County and to a public high school.

### **Front Runner New Jersey (South Jersey)**

To support Front Runner New Jersey, a new site led by a veteran journalist who seeks to maintain and expand its coverage of the Black and Latinx communities in South Jersey.

### **Hopeloft, Inc. (Bridgeton/Cumberland County)\***

For continued support of Hopeloft, a Cumberland County based group that has created a journalism training program for teens in foster care and the children of incarcerated people to tell the stories of their peers. This grant is funded in part by support from New Jersey Health Initiatives (NJHI), a statewide grantmaking program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

### **Lens 15 Media (Statewide)**

To launch a news agency that produces accessible, multimedia reports for and about people with disabilities in New Jersey. This grant is funded in part by support from New Jersey Health Initiatives (NJHI), a statewide grantmaking program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

### **M.Y.M. Media LLC/Trenton Journal (Trenton/Mercer County)\***

For continued support of Trenton Journal, a hyper-local news organization bridging the information gaps and connecting communities in Trenton, New Jersey. The Trenton Journal publishes solutions-based journalism via a newsletter, video, and audio stories.

### **Movimiento Cosecha (South Jersey)\***

For continued support of Radio Cosecha, a statewide online Spanish radio program currently focused on telling the stories of seasonal agricultural workers in South Jersey that has a goal of moving statewide.

### **Newark News and Story Collaborative (Newark/Essex County)\***

For continued support of the Newark News and Story Collaborative, which works with residents, local reporters, and mediamakers to respond to Newark residents' information needs and concerns. Its lab comprises resident-reporters that produce unique coverage of issues impacting diverse communities in Newark that lack traditional media coverage.

### **Newark Water Coalition (Newark/Essex County)\***

For continued support of the Newark Water Coalition's oral history project to tell the stories of the advocates who worked to clean up Newark's drinking water.

### **New Brunswick Today (New Brunswick/Middlesex County)**

To launch an investigative project on the census, focusing on the immigrant and non-English speaking communities in New Brunswick. New Brunswick Today will examine the extent to which those communities may have been undercounted in the most recent census and any resulting implications. The project will analyze the past three census counts to examine the effects of gentrification in the city. This is the Consortium's first grant in New Brunswick.

### **New Jersey Center for Investigative Reporting (Statewide)**

To build the New Jersey Center for Investigative Reporting — the "ProPublica of New Jersey" — with the goal of engaging and empowering the public through investigative journalism at the local, county, and state level.

### **New Jersey YMCA State Alliance (Statewide)**

To support an ongoing statewide storytelling project focused on documenting resident perspectives about COVID-19 vaccination. Insights will be incorporated into a digital and print "feature" for local dissemination with resident experiences, recommendations, and best practices for communicating about the vaccine in a community-centered, culturally relevant way. This grant is funded by New Jersey Health Initiatives (NJHI), a statewide grantmaking program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

### **Radio Rouj & Ble (East Orange/Essex County)**

To deploy an online Haitian community radio organization with its own website, app, and weekly public service announcements, providing information relevant to the more than 23,000 members of the Haitian community in Essex County. Focusing on translating and disseminating reliable information on civics, health, relevant news and education, it will also serve as a voice for the community by creating a platform where community members can address concerns and share experiences.

### **Saint Peter's University (Jersey City/Hudson County)**

To support Slice of Culture, a group of young BIPOC storytellers who want to bring civic engagement to Jersey City and Hudson County through a series of how-to projects and informational stories targeted to immigrant families and communities of color. Its co-founders are Saint Peter's University alumni. This is the Consortium's first grant in Hudson County and Jersey City.

### **Stories of Atlantic City (Atlantic City/Atlantic County)\***

For continued support to train and pay community members to serve as reporters at local meetings (Executive Council, City Council, Casino Reinvestment Development Authority, and the Board of Education). The goal is to provide transparent community access to these critical local meetings and

events because traditional journalism methods are not meeting the larger Atlantic City community's information needs.

**Unidad Latina en Acción NJ (Statewide)**

To support the Radio Jornalera NJ Communication Project, which brings together the development, production and dissemination of public service announcements from the Jornalero and Domestic Laborer Communicators throughout the state. The Public Service Announcements will be on topics that affect daily life, such as housing rights, workers' rights, wage theft, health and safety at work, healthy lifestyle, and/or climate change.

**WNET/NJ Spotlight News (Statewide)**

To support a new Report for America corps member to expand health coverage by focusing on mental health in underserved communities, at the intersection of the COVID-19 pandemic, health inequity, and rural New Jersey. This grant is funded in part by support from New Jersey Health Initiatives (NJHI), a statewide grantmaking program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

*\* Projects marked with an asterisk are first round grant recipients receiving continued funding.*