

CHAPTER 323

AN ACT concerning the New Jersey Civic Information Consortium and amending P.L.2018, c.111.

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. Section 4 of P.L.2018, c.111 (C.18A:64-97) is amended to read as follows:

C.18A:64-97 Board of directors.

4. a. The consortium shall have a board of directors that shall set strategic priorities and metrics to guide the consortium's grant-making and other initiatives, as well as to approve grants pursuant to section 7 of P.L.2018, c.111 (C.18A:64-100).

b. The board of directors shall consist of 16 members as follows:

(1) two members appointed by the Governor who shall not be of the same political party;

(2) one member appointed by the President of the Senate, and one member appointed by the Minority Leader of the Senate;

(3) one member appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly, and one member appointed by the Minority Leader of the General Assembly;

(4) six members, no more than four of whom shall be of the same political party, appointed by the president of each member university, each of whom shall have background or experience in the field of journalism, media, or technology; and

(5) four members, no more than two of whom shall be of the same political party, appointed by a majority vote of the 12 board members appointed pursuant to paragraphs (1) through (4) of this subsection, of which: (a) one member shall represent the media sector; (b) one member shall represent the technology sector; and (c) two members, not employed by the State or a member university at the time of the member's appointment, shall have demonstrated a record of commitment to public service and understand the importance of media and technology to the State's future.

c. Each board member shall serve a term of four years and shall serve in one of four classes as determined by the board of directors. Members of the first class shall serve an initial term of one year, the second class an initial term of two years, the third class an initial term of three years, and the fourth class an initial term of four years. No board member shall serve more than two four-year terms. In the appointment of members to the board, every effort shall be made to strive for diversity and balance of representation according to gender, race, ethnicity, and geography within any limits allowed under law. Any vacancies in the appointed membership of the board occurring other than by expiration of term shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment, but for the unexpired term only. Board members shall serve without compensation, but may be reimbursed for necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties within the limits of funds available to the board.

2. Section 5 of P.L.2018, c.111 (C.18A:64-98) is amended to read as follows:

C.18A:64-98 Executive director.

5. a. The board shall appoint and employ an executive director, and fix the executive director's compensation and conditions of employment. The executive director shall be the chief executive, administrative, and operational officer of the consortium and shall direct and supervise the administrative affairs and the general management of the consortium. The executive director shall oversee the consortium's day-to-day operations, which includes working with the board to meet the consortium's goals and grant-making requirements, hiring and managing staff necessary to carry out the purpose of P.L.2018, c.111 (C.18A:64-94 et

seq.), acting as spokesperson for the consortium's work, and raising funds from external sources. The executive director shall attend all meetings of the board.

b. (Deleted by amendment, P.L.2023, c.323)

c. To save on startup, operating, and ongoing administrative costs, one member university shall be responsible for housing the consortium and providing back-office support.

3. Section 7 of P.L.2018, c.111 (C.18A:64-100) is amended to read as follows:

C.18A:64-100 Eligibility for grants; project goals.

7. a. To be eligible for a grant from the consortium, a grant proposal application shall include, but not be limited to:

(1) evidence of a collaboration between at least one academic or administrative representative of a member university and at least one local community organization, media organization, or technology-based organization;

(2) information demonstrating that the collaboration would be a mutually respectful partnership wherein all community and member university participants invest in a project designed to serve the consortium's mission and the goals cited pursuant to subsection b. of this section; and

(3) proof that the member university or universities in total will provide an amount of funding or make an in-kind contribution having a value that matches 10 percent of the amount of grant funding for which the applicant has applied, if one or more member universities acts as fiscal sponsor for the applicant. For a grant proposal application sponsored by a member university housing the consortium and providing back-office support pursuant to subsection c. of section 5 of P.L.2018, c.111 (C.18A:64-98), the cost of that housing and support to that member university shall count towards the funding or in-kind contribution match from that member university.

b. The consortium shall provide grants for projects that achieve the following goals:

(1) improve the quantity and quality of civic information in New Jersey communities;

(2) give residents enhanced access to useful government data and public information through innovative applications, platforms, and technologies;

(3) train students, professionals, and community members in the practice of community storytelling, journalism, and media production;

(4) nurture better civic engagement and dialogue inside and between New Jersey communities;

(5) better meet the information needs of low-income communities and racial and ethnic communities that have been underserved by the media; and

(6) invest in research and practices that can help media outlets become more closely connected to their audiences and more sustainable without government support.

c. Any unspent State appropriations to the consortium from one fiscal year shall be carried over to the next fiscal year.

4. Section 8 of P.L.2018, c.111 (C.18A:64-101) is amended to read as follows:

C.18A:64-101 Grant agreement.

8. A grant issued by the consortium shall be in the form of a grant agreement. A grant agreement shall include a provision establishing a set of metrics for assessing the goals contained in the agreement to ensure evaluation of a grantee project on how well those metrics are being met and any other relevant accountability measures. The set of metrics shall be established by the board in conjunction with consortium staff. The agreement shall include

the expectations stated between the consortium and the grantee, which shall include, but not be limited to, a statement that:

- a. the grantee shall be independent from the influence of the State, a member university, and any other grantor or contributor of funds or outside source; and
- b. any grantor or other contributor of funds to the grantee shall acknowledge in writing the grantor's or contributor's understanding that the grant or donation does not entitle the grantor or contributor to dictate or influence the content of any work the grantee produces or may produce.

5. This act shall take effect immediately.

Approved January 16, 2024.