

# STATE OF NEW YORK

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8471

2021-2022 Regular Sessions

## IN ASSEMBLY

November 17, 2021

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Introduced by M. of A. KELLES -- read once and referred to the Committee on Higher Education

AN ACT in relation to establishing the "New York Local News Act"

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "New York  
2 local news act".  
3 § 2. Definitions. As used in this act:  
4 (a) "Board of directors" or "board" means the board of directors of  
5 the New York commission on local news and civic information.  
6 (b) "Commission" means the New York commission on local news and civic  
7 information.  
8 (c) "In-kind contribution" means a contribution of goods or services,  
9 other than a cash grant.  
10 (d) "Local community organization" means a locally-based organization  
11 serving a community of people having shared interests that is incorpo-  
12 rated, organized, and operated in such a manner as to qualify as a  
13 nonprofit corporation described in section 501(c)(3) of the federal  
14 Internal Revenue Code, 26 U.S.C. 501(c)(3).  
15 (e) "Member university" means the University of the State of New York  
16 and the City University of New York.  
17 § 3. New York commission on local news and civic information estab-  
18 lished. There is hereby established the New York commission on local  
19 news and civic information which shall consist of the member universi-  
20 ties. The purpose of the commission shall be to advance research and  
21 innovation in the field of media and technology to benefit the state's  
22 civic life and evolving information needs.  
23 § 4. Board of directors. (a) The commission shall have a board of  
24 directors that shall set strategic priorities and metrics to guide the  
25 commission's grant-making and other initiatives, as well as to approve  
26 grants.

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets  
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 (b) The board of directors shall consist of 17 members as follows:

2 (i) two members appointed by the governor;

3 (ii) two members appointed by the temporary president of the senate,  
4 and one member appointed by the minority leader of the senate;

5 (iii) two members appointed by the speaker of the assembly, and one  
6 member appointed by the minority leader of the assembly;

7 (iv) five members appointed by the chancellor of the state university  
8 of New York and the chancellor of the city university of New York, each  
9 of whom shall have background or experience in the field of journalism,  
10 media, or technology; and

11 (v) four members appointed by a majority vote of the eleven board  
12 members appointed pursuant to paragraphs (i) through (iv) of this subdi-  
13 vision, of which:

14 (1) one member shall represent the media sector;

15 (2) one member shall represent the technology sector; and

16 (3) two members, not employed by the state or a member university at  
17 the time of the member's appointment, shall have demonstrated a record  
18 of commitment to public service and understand the importance of media  
19 and technology to the state's future.

20 (c) Each board member shall serve a term of four years, except that  
21 the member representing the New York media sector shall serve an initial  
22 term of one year and the member representing the New York technology  
23 sector shall serve an initial term of two years. No board member shall  
24 serve more than two four-year terms. In the appointment of members to  
25 the board, every effort shall be made to strive for diversity and  
26 balance of representation according to gender, race, ethnicity, and  
27 geography within any limits allowed under law. Any vacancies in the  
28 appointed membership of the board occurring other than by expiration of  
29 term shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment, but  
30 for the unexpired term only. Board members shall serve without compen-  
31 sation but may be reimbursed for necessary expenses incurred in the  
32 performance of their duties within the limits of funds available to the  
33 board.

34 § 5. Executive director. (a) The board shall appoint and employ an  
35 executive director and fix the executive director's compensation and  
36 conditions of employment. The executive director shall be the chief  
37 executive, administrative, and operational officer of the commission and  
38 shall direct and supervise the administrative affairs and the general  
39 management of the commission. The executive director shall oversee the  
40 commission's day-to-day operations, which includes working with the  
41 board to meet the commission's goals and grant-making requirements,  
42 hiring and managing program officers and administrative staff pursuant  
43 to subdivision (b) of this section, acting as spokesperson for the  
44 commission's work, and raising funds from external sources. The execu-  
45 tive director shall attend all meetings of the board.

46 (b) (i) The executive director shall employ program officers who shall  
47 be experienced practitioners with a strong understanding of the media or  
48 civic technology fields. The executive director shall strive to appoint  
49 program officers that represent the state's racial, ethnic, gender, and  
50 geographic diversity within any limits allowed under law. The program  
51 officers shall manage the grant-making process, in accordance with the  
52 commission's goals. The grant-making process shall include soliciting,  
53 recommending, and processing grant proposals, working with grantees to  
54 ensure work on grant project ideas, and directing public engagement and  
55 evaluation efforts.

(ii) The executive director shall employ no more than three administrative staff to provide operational support for the commission, including office management, support for the executive director and program officers, coordination among member universities, payment to grantees, human resources, and logistics.

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

§ 6. Collaboration among member universities. The commission shall be a collaborative effort among the member universities. Each member university shall focus its initiatives on one area of expertise and the board of directors shall decide on each member university's focus of expertise in order to allow for greater collaboration among member universities, decrease competition for grants, and reduce redundancy of efforts. Member universities may collaborate on projects together, as well as seek out other academic institutions to partner with on seeking grants.

§ 7. Eligibility for grants; project goals. (a) To be eligible for a grant from the commission, a grant proposal application shall include, but not be limited to:

(i) evidence of a collaboration between at least one member of the faculty or graduate student of a member university and at least one local community organization, media organization, or technology-based organization;

(ii) 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 commission's mission and the goals cited pursuant to subdivision (b) of this section; and

(iii) 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 an application is sponsored by one or more member universities. For a grant proposal application sponsored by a member university housing the commission and providing back-office support, 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 commission shall provide grants for projects that achieve the following goals:

(i) improve the quantity and quality of civic information in New York communities;

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

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

(iv) become sustainable without government support while offering substantial civic information;

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

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

1     § 8. Grant agreement. A grant issued by the commission shall be in the  
2 form of a grant agreement. A grant agreement shall include a provision  
3 establishing a set of metrics for assessing the goals contained in the  
4 agreement to ensure evaluation of a grantee project on how well those  
5 metrics are being met and any other relevant accountability measures.  
6 The set of metrics shall be established by the board in conjunction with  
7 the executive director and program officers. The agreement shall include  
8 the expectations stated between the commission and the grantee, which  
9 shall include, but not be limited to, a statement that:

10     (a) the grantee shall be independent from the influence of the state,  
11 a member university, and any other grantor or contributor of funds or  
12 outside source; and

13     (b) any grantor or other contributor of funds to the grantee shall  
14 acknowledge in writing the grantor's or contributor's understanding that  
15 the grant or donation does not entitle the grantor or contributor to  
16 dictate or influence the content of any work the grantee produces or may  
17 produce.

18     § 9. Annual report to the governor, the temporary president of the  
19 senate, and the speaker of the assembly; public hearings. (a) The  
20 commission shall annually report to the governor and to the temporary  
21 president of the senate, and the speaker of the assembly, on the activ-  
22 ities of the commission and make the report available on the commis-  
23 sion's website. Such report shall include, but not be limited to:

24     (i) a list of all grant applicants and approved grant applicants;

25     (ii) the grant amounts of approved grant applicants;

26     (iii) the amount of matching funds and types of in-kind contributions  
27 provided to approved grant applicants; and

28     (iv) a status report on the activities funded by an approved grant  
29 applicant.

30     (b) The commission shall make available on its website its grant-mak-  
31 ing criteria and other relevant documents.

32     (c) The board, in conjunction with the executive director and program  
33 officers, shall hold one public hearing annually in the northern,  
34 central, and southern regions of the state. The public hearings shall  
35 provide a forum for the board to report on how the public funds that the  
36 commission receives are spent and to gather public input on what the  
37 commission's mission should be and whether the commission is meeting its  
38 mission. Public input shall be used to assess whether the commission's  
39 grant-making metrics and process for issuing grants needs to be changed.

40     § 10. This act shall take effect immediately.