

CPB Radio and Media Strategy Departments
Request for Proposals
Grow the Audience: Strengthening Local Journalism
June 11, 2009

Overview

CPB seeks to enhance the ability of public radio stations¹ to create high quality journalism locally by supporting the establishment of multimedia reporting collaborations or Local Journalism Centers (LJCs) among small sets of stations. Each LJC should have a team of skilled journalists to provide a vertical editorial focus on a particular area of concentration or closely related set of issues², providing deep and meaningful coverage from a diversity of perspectives that will establish the LJC as a widely recognized resource on that topic. By working together, stations can leverage each other's resources and pools of knowledge to provide more and deeper coverage.

This RFP seeks proposals from groups of 3-6 stations willing to form multi-platform reporting LJCs that will result in an elevated quality and quantity of journalism designed to better serve their collective audience. The LJCs should create compelling content and community engagement opportunities that include audio, video, text, photos, blogs, social networking, dynamic syndication, and mobile applications. Proposals should address all the elements that will be needed to create a successful LJC, including personnel, training, infrastructure, community engagement, and research, and should describe the nature of the broadcast, online and other forms of content that will be produced.

Proposed projects should be conducted over a 24 month time period. The resulting projects should represent models for enhancing local journalism that can be replicated by other groups of stations. All LJC content will need to be available nationally through a (soon-to-be developed) common public service media online news platform/architecture.

Background

In a time when newspapers are collapsing, cable television news is straying further into entertainment, and commercial radio has all but abandoned its newsrooms, public radio continues its commitment to public service journalism and is becoming a primary news source for more and more people.

While listeners recognize public radio's important contributions, there are additional steps that need to be taken in order to strengthen public radio's capacity and fully realize its potential as a leader in journalism. The recently released CPB initiated and funded "Grow the Audience Report" recommends a number of actions to enhance public radio journalism:

- Make public radio America's most trusted and one of its most widely-used sources of daily journalism by strengthening the power and scope of its most

¹ CPB encourages partnerships with or/participation by public television stations with journalism capacity in this project.

² LJCs should choose one of the following areas: environment; health; education; innovation/ business/ technology; or changing American demographics. CPB will also consider other vertical areas relevant to the applicants' community of service.

- listened-to national news programs, investing in program innovation that will lead to more choice and service for listeners, and supporting significant growth in the scale, quality, and impact of local reporting.
- Collaborate in ways that advance shared use of local station reporting on a regional and topical basis and invest in shared resources such as editors for broadcast and online content. Such efforts should have a clear focus on wider use of content, cost reduction, or both.
 - Create an integrated online news presence for diverse public media sources – international, national and local – that extends current capacities and brands, leverages current editorial assets and adds or creates new ones, and that might include the distinctive strengths and separate assets of public television and online public service media organizations.

The “Grow the Audience Report” underscores the reality for many public radio stations: they aspire to produce high quality journalism that matches that of national producers but station resources and editorial capacity are often inadequate to do so.

One way to increase the capacity of local public broadcasting journalism is to create multimedia reporting Local Journalism Centers (LJCs) around specific themes or important areas of coverage. For the purposes of this RFP, an LJC is defined as a group of 3-6 stations (may include public television stations) that agree to create a team of journalists producing multimedia vertical content around a single shared editorial priority. The goal is for each LJC to become the “go-to” resource on the selected topic. Recommended topics are the environment, health, education, innovation/business/technology, and changing American demographics. CPB will also consider other areas relevant to the applicants’ community of service. Geographic proximity is highly encouraged although not required for stations to form a LJC, however, it could help shape the LJC’s editorial teamwork and focus. For example, a group of stations in a region could cover environmental concerns of a particular watershed.

Staffing structures may vary from one LJC to the next, but each LJC should include a team of journalists who bring strengths individually and collectively in broadcast, online and digital reporting. CPB recommends a staffing structure that includes:

- An experienced full-time editor devoted entirely to the LJC, who assigns and coordinates coverage; guides and instructs reporters; and edits content to ensure accuracy and high quality.
- An adequate number of reporters (at least one reporter at each station) who are comfortable working on multiple platforms, including online or digital media.
- An experienced full-time senior managing facilitator (or similar position), who manages the non-editorial activities such as community engagement.

Given the demise of some newspapers and layoffs in other media companies, there is an opportunity to reach out to seasoned journalists who may bring new skills and perspectives to public radio to participate in LJCs as appropriate.

The combined resources of the LJC stations would produce comprehensive coverage of the selected issue through on-air broadcasts and robust digital content and resources, including audio, video, text, blogs, user curated content, interactive elements, etc. The content produced would represent a diversity of perspectives and would primarily serve local listeners and users. In addition, the content should be structured to be integrated

into other larger-scale public media projects, i.e., an integrated online news platform, and must be optimized for search and syndication.

Stations proposing to form an LJC will need to designate a **Lead Station** which will serve as the grantee and will head the project. The Lead Station needs to currently have at least a three person news/public affairs staff and produce local news content daily. CPB will not consider proposals that do not have a Lead Station that meets this minimum requirement or otherwise lacks the capacity to serve as the grantee and project head. Stations proposing to form an LJC must submit letters of commitment from their General Managers/CEOs stating their willingness to participate in the LJC and support for the Lead Station. At the time a grant is awarded, CPB will require that the Lead Station have written agreements with all LJC partner stations stating each party's responsibilities and contributions (cash and in-kind).

Training and on-going evaluation are essential parts of the LJC. In order to enhance the stations' ability to create high quality journalism, the LJC should provide its staff with the tools and opportunities to upgrade their skills as multimedia content creators. Each LJC should also have a process for evaluating its work and applying evaluation findings to continually increase the quality of its journalism. Stations submitting proposals should determine what training and evaluation resources will be needed to make the LJC successful.

In addition, proposals should include plans for infrastructure, research, community engagement, any potential community partnerships, and financial sustainability beyond the term of the grant period.

CPB intends to provide a significant level of funding for any selected LJC for the first two years of its operation but will require participating stations to provide a level of investment that reflects their commitment to the project. If multiple LJCs are funded, CPB will require the LJCs to share their learnings and best practices with each other and to connect their digital infrastructure. CPB will also require the participating stations to take part in the Public Media Metrics project, which helps stations measure and analyze their web strategies.

Goals of this RFP

This RFP seeks proposals submitted by groups of 3-6 public broadcasting stations that intend to create multimedia reporting LJCs that will allow them to strengthen their local journalism capacity, deepen their audience's understanding of the selected issue, and, consequently, better serve their communities. The resulting projects should create models of capacity building that can be used by other LJCs. The projects should also demonstrate how LJCs can better reflect the diversity of the audiences they serve. Finally, the projects should demonstrate new models for utilizing multiplatform content development and syndication that engage audiences to improve their understanding of critical issues in the community.

Application Criteria

Grants will be awarded to one Lead Station which will serve as the administrator and fiscal agent of the LJC. An LJC should consist of 3-6 stations (may include public television stations) which are not licensed to the same entity. The application must include letters of commitment from the CEOs/General Managers of the collaborating stations.

Proposals will be evaluated based on how completely and clearly they:

- Describe the issue to be covered by the LJC and why it was selected.
- Describe the benefits to the community and the participating stations that would be achieved by the LJC.
- Describe the characteristics of the LJC's primary and other targeted audiences.
- Describe why the particular stations proposing to collaborate are properly aligned to do so, and why the chosen Lead Station is the appropriate entity to serve as the grantee.
- Describe the current journalistic capacity of each station, particularly the Lead Station. The Lead Station needs to currently have at least a three person news/public affairs staff and produce local news content daily.
- Describe the proposed staffing structure of the LJC and the relevant skills necessary to be successful. Please provide a proposed organizational chart and short job description or bio of key staff.
- Describe the proposed LJC activities (reporting, community engagement, partnerships, meetings, etc.)
- Describe the investments needed to achieve a successful LJC (training, infrastructure, research, etc.)
- Describe the multiplatform content (video, audio, mobile, etc.) to be produced and key applications (i.e. social networking, Twitter) that would be utilized as a result of the project. Please describe how it would be broadcast as well as distributed and/or syndicated using digital media platforms. Also, describe how the digital applications and platforms would be supported and maintained.
- Describe how the LJC would measure success for the project.
- Present a project timeline with project milestones.
- Present an appropriate detailed budget for the project, including a description of how the project would become sustainable after the grant period. CPB recognizes that the Lead Station may incur additional costs for administration of the project but excessive overhead will not be permitted.

Who Should Apply

Successful applicants to this RFP will:

- Have experience providing daily, weekly and/or special project local news coverage.
- Have experience working collaboratively with other organizations, especially other public media entities.
- Demonstrate innovative thinking in how stations can leverage each others' assets to strengthen local journalism.
- Place a high value on representing and reflecting diverse perspectives.
- Demonstrate the creative use of technology in facilitating the communications and activities of the LJC.
- Have a track record of implementing budgets that are cost effective and sustainable.

QUESTIONS?

CPB's radio staff is available to help you develop your ideas and proposals and to answer any questions. For information, please contact Kathy Merritt, Director, Program Investments, at kmerritt@cpb.org or (202) 879-9631.

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

All applications must consist of:

- Completed [Online Application Form](#)**, filled out in its entirety.
- Project Narrative**, a written (maximum of eight pages) description of the project that addresses the points of the Application Criteria above.
- Letters of Commitment from CEOs/General Managers of collaborating stations**
- Itemized Project Budget**, the financial plan for the project presented in spreadsheet format, tailored to the request, and identifying how each line amount was calculated. (For additional guidance, see the accompanying [budget information sheet](#).)

Do not submit content samples, unless requested by CPB staff. You may include a website address where samples of the proposed program or other relevant work may be found.

Do not submit proposals by fax or U.S. mail. They will not be accepted.

DEADLINE

Receipt at CPB by 5pm Eastern Standard Time on **JULY 16, 2009**.

REVIEW AND SELECTION

The process will begin with CPB staff review. CPB may forward applications to outside experts, who will advise CPB regarding each project's merits and consistency with the RFP's goals and criteria. Most funding decisions will occur no sooner than 10 weeks after submission. While we seek input and advice from outside experts, funding decisions are CPB's alone.

OTHER

Projects selected for funding may receive requests for additional detail, including project timeline and cash flow projections. CPB may ask applicants to work with other individuals or institutions to achieve proposed outcomes.

CPB is not responsible for loss or damage to the material submitted. Any submission to CPB shall become the property of CPB (not including any intellectual property rights contained in such submission), and CPB is not required to return any submitted materials to any applicant. CPB is not responsible for any violation of copyright, trademark, patent, trade secret, or other rights that may result from disclosure made by response to this RFP.

Solicitation by CPB of proposals does not constitute an agreement by CPB to extend funding to any party for the project under consideration. CPB may, in its sole discretion, elect not to pursue this project in any manner.

By submitting a proposal, each applicant grants to CPB the right to duplicate, use, disclose, and distribute all of the materials submitted for purposes of evaluation, review, and research. In addition, each applicant guarantees that the applicant has full and

complete rights to all of the information and materials included in the proposal. Each applicant also guarantees that all such materials are not defamatory and do not infringe upon or violate the privacy rights, copyrights, or other proprietary rights of any third party.

Conditions of Agreement

If a proposal is selected for funding, applicants will be required to sign a binding agreement. Until both parties have signed an agreement, no express or implied commitment has been made to provide financial support. Applicants are not authorized to commence work until the agreement is fully executed. If applicants opt to commence work, they do so at their own risk. No oral or written statement other than the signed, written agreement will govern or modify the relationship.

As a condition of agreement, applicants must guarantee that, among other things, any work they undertake on behalf of CPB is not defamatory and will not violate or infringe upon the privacy rights, copyrights, or other proprietary rights of any third party. Contractors must also agree to indemnify CPB against any loss resulting from breach of any of the guarantees contained in the agreement.

Those receiving funds from CPB must be able to comply with a number of requirements that will be included in the operative agreement. These requirements include but are not limited to:

- (1) A demonstration of adequate financial support to complete the work for which they have been contracted and to deliver reports and/or other intellectual property created pursuant to the Agreement;
- (2) Maintenance, for three years following receipt of relevant funds, of all financial records to the project, which records shall be accessible to CPB, and to the U.S. Comptroller General or other representatives for examination and audit purposes;
- (3) Maintenance, for three years after approval of a final financial report, of a complete file of all subcontracts and other agreements, licenses, clearances, and other documents related to the work undertaken, copies of which shall be made available to CPB on request;
- (4) Compliance with equal employment opportunity and nondiscrimination laws and policies;
- (5) Applicants who plan to engage sub-contractors will be expected to obtain competitive bids, and to provide assurances that the prices obtained for any such services are fair and reasonable;
- (6) Applicants will be required to provide documentation as to actual costs, and provide supporting detail demonstrating that all costs are reasonable, necessary and allocable to the requirements and objectives of the work undertaken; and
- (7) All research and materials created, developed, compiled or produced pursuant to or as a result of this project (including but not limited to all

reports) will be considered ordered and commissioned by CPB as works made for hire under the copyright laws, and made in the course of services rendered. If, for any reason, the proposed research and materials to be provided are not considered works made for hire under the copyright laws, then the applicant will be required to assign all right, title and interest in and to such research and materials to CPB. Applicants further agree that neither they, nor any of their subcontractors, will have any copyrights or other intellectual property rights whatsoever in any research and/or materials created, developed, compiled or produced by them or by any subcontractor, or by any third party participating in the preparation of research or materials for this project.

Other material terms and provisions will be set forth in the documents provided to the applicant that successfully completes the selection process.

All Applicants are advised to familiarize themselves with these [Grant Requirements](http://www.cpb.org/grants/termsandconditions/) before applying. In advance of submitting any proposal, Applicants should read the Terms and Conditions for Television, Radio and Other Media Production Grants (November, 2002) which is currently posted at the following site:
<http://www.cpb.org/grants/termsandconditions/>.

Proposals that initially do not receive funding may be resubmitted up to three times. After that, Applicants must obtain prior approval from CPB before a given proposal may be resubmitted.