



Libraries and Local News Initiative

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Information Session



Libraries and Local News ULC Team



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Why news why now?

There is a growing movement to revitalize and reimagine local news and media organizations.

- Shifting newsroom practices to centering community needs, ensuring accessibility, and more.

Most Americans still want and value reliable local news about their communities, but it's getting harder and harder to know who to trust online.

- Local outlets now compete with a patchwork of platforms that provide information but often lack depth, consistency, and connection.

This is leading to declining trust in civic institutions, including in local and national news.

How can ULC member libraries leverage the shared power of local news and local libraries to increase media literacy and trust? How might we achieve the tangible, measurable impacts that More Perfect is seeking?

What We Know

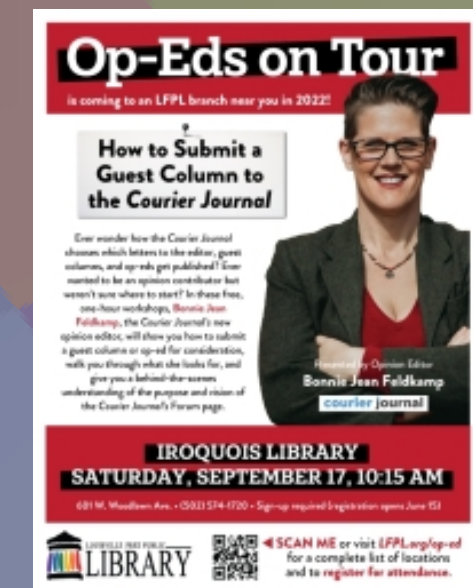
Libraries and local newsrooms share a core civic function: informing. Yet they do not often collaborate.

Some ULC libraries have already taken on the charge, to great success:

- Louisville Public Library's Mobile Newsrooms
- Poudre River Public Library's Local News Initiative
- Dallas Public Library - Dallas Morning News Partnership
- Brooklyn Public Library x Library Newsroom Project (Terry Parris, Jr.)

Louisville Public Library's Mobile Newsrooms

The Mobile Newsroom began when reporters from the Courier Journal approached the library about shifting local narratives—from stories focused on violence to ones highlighting community culture and history. The library served as a trusted space where one or two journalists were based for about a week at a time, allowing residents to stop in, share story ideas, or speak directly with reporters. The effort required minimal staff involvement—primarily providing space and posting when journalists would be present—and functioned much like a public tabling effort. Most resulting stories focused on the community rather than the library, with programs like “Meet the Editor” further connecting residents to the local news process.



Poudre River Public Library's Local News Initiative

The Northern Colorado Deliberative Journalism Project brought together a local newspaper, a university deliberation center, and the Poudre River Public Library District to strengthen civic dialogue and local journalism. The initiative combined weekly community questions published by the newspaper, library-hosted public discussions where



residents engaged with journalists and one another, and student-produced reporting and storytelling that expanded community voices in local news. Together, these elements created a feedback loop between residents, journalists, and civic institutions to better understand community perspectives and improve public discourse around local issues.

“...the last thing to mention is that when we conducted our strategic planning process last year using the Harwood Approach, **we heard from the community that our lack of local news and information was a leading concern for them. As a result, civic engagement is one of our key goals in our 2026-2029 Strategic Plan**, so there is definitely potential for Poudre Libraries to work further for the improvement of our local information ecosystem in the coming years.”

- Annaclaire Crumpton, Digital Communications Specialist at Poudre Libraries

Project Goals

1. **Increasing access to, and trust in, reliable local information.** Libraries and library-newsroom teams will explore methods for increasing community access to and trust in non-partisan, high-quality information particularly about local happenings.
2. **Increasing community voice and narrative.** Library-newsroom teams will pilot methods for increasing community voice in the local news infrastructure, whether through deepening journalist-community connections or employing co-production projects.
3. **Creating pathways for democratic participation.** Libraries and library-newsroom teams will create and support opportunities for community engagement in democratic dialogue, leveraging the library's natural role as a welcoming and low-barrier third space.

Libraries will receive...

6-8 member libraries in the US will receive **\$7,500 - \$10,000** to support a local news related project.

Skill-building focused on topics including partnership development, community asset mapping, understanding current trends and opportunities in journalism, program or service design, facilitation, and evaluation.

Access to a **national network** of libraries implementing innovative local news projects.

Access to **expert ULC guidance** and support

The Commitment

Send at least one project lead to **monthly virtual cohort calls**, including one longer kickoff training session tentatively scheduled for June 16.

Implement **one program, service, or initiative** to address local information needs in your community between Nov. 2026 and May 2027.

Partner with a **local news or civic media-affiliated institution** or individual.

Participate in ULC-led **grant reporting and evaluation** activities.

Project Timeline



March - May 2026

Application process & participant selection



June - October 2026

Train participants on basic concepts, guide through project & budget development



November 2026 - May 2027

Funds dispersed, projects run & evaluated



June - September 2027

Final playbook development and dissemination, grant close out

How to Apply

Application opened April 8 and closes May 1

- Approximately 20-30 minutes to complete.
- Must be a ULC member
- Must be based in the US

No previous experience with or knowledge of local news required. Libraries to be selected based on:

- Capacity, willingness, enthusiasm.
- General community awareness
- Comfort with experimentation/piloting and partnering
- Geographic, community need/opportunity variety

Finances

Only limitation on expenses is no lobbying or political donations

ULC will guide staff through budget development as part of project process and provide feedback.

No itemized reporting, just spend all funds before end of May 2027

Evaluations

Project-wide evaluation

- ULC R&D manager Corissa Goodrich will create standard cohort-wide evaluation tools to assess impacts on staff and news partners, understand best practices in process.

Individual program or service evaluation

- Because of the variation in both topic and format of final project, participants will also need to develop their own evaluation tool for their specific pilot.
- ULC will provide sample tools and individual support to develop and use these tools.

Questions for us?

