

SENATE, No. 3746

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

220th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MARCH 30, 2023

Sponsored by:

Senator VIN GOPAL

District 11 (Monmouth)

Senator M. TERESA RUIZ

District 29 (Essex)

SYNOPSIS

Concerns New Jersey Civic Information Consortium.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



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

3

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

6

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

35 c. Each board member shall serve a term of four years **[except**
36 **that the member representing the New Jersey media sector]** shall
37 serve in one of four classes as determined by the board of directors.
38 Members of the first class shall serve an initial term of one year
39 **[and the member representing the New Jersey technology sector**
40 **shall serve],** the second class an initial term of two years, the third
41 class an initial term of three years, and the fourth class an initial
42 term of four years. No board member shall serve more than two
43 four-year terms. In the appointment of members to the board, every
44 effort shall be made to strive for diversity and balance of
45 representation according to gender, race, ethnicity, and geography

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets **[thus]** in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

1 within any limits allowed under law. Any vacancies in the
2 appointed membership of the board occurring other than by
3 expiration of term shall be filled in the same manner as the original
4 appointment, but for the unexpired term only. Board members shall
5 serve without compensation but may be reimbursed for necessary
6 expenses incurred in the performance of their duties within the
7 limits of funds available to the board.

8 (cf: P.L.2021 c.282, s.43)

9

10 2. Section 5 of P.L.2018, c.111 (C18A:64-98) is amended to
11 read as follows:

12 5. a. The board shall appoint and employ an executive
13 director, and fix the executive director's compensation and
14 conditions of employment. The executive director shall be the chief
15 executive, administrative, and operational officer of the consortium
16 and shall direct and supervise the administrative affairs and the
17 general management of the consortium. The executive director
18 shall oversee the consortium's day-to-day operations, which
19 includes working with the board to meet the consortium's goals and
20 grant-making requirements, hiring and managing **[program officers**
21 **and administrative]** staff necessary to carry out the purpose of
22 P.L.2018, c.111 (C.18A:64-94, et seq.) **[pursuant to subsection b. of**
23 **this section]**, acting as spokesperson for the consortium's work, and
24 raising funds from external sources. The executive director shall
25 attend all meetings of the board.

26 b. **[** (1) The executive director shall employ program officers
27 who shall be experienced practitioners with a strong understanding
28 of the media or civic technology fields. The executive director shall
29 strive to appoint program officers that represent the State's racial,
30 ethnic, gender, and geographic diversity within any limits allowed
31 under law. The program officers shall manage the grant-making
32 process, in accordance with the consortium's goals. The grant-
33 making process shall include soliciting, recommending, and
34 processing grant proposals, working with grantees to ensure work
35 on grant project ideas, and directing public engagement and
36 evaluation efforts.

37 (2) The executive director shall employ no more than three
38 administrative staff to provide operational support for the
39 consortium, including office management, support for the executive
40 director and program officers, coordination among member
41 universities, payment to grantees, human resources, and logistics. **]**
42 (Deleted by amendment, P.L. _____, c. _____ (pending before the
43 Legislature as this bill)

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

47 (cf: P.L.2018, c.111, s.5)

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

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

5 (1) evidence of a collaboration between at least one **【**member of
6 the faculty or graduate student**】** academic or administrative
7 representative of a member university and at least one local
8 community organization, media organization, or technology-based
9 organization;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

46 (cf: P.L.2018, c.111, s.7)

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

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

13 a. the grantee shall be independent from the influence of the
14 State, a member university, and any other grantor or contributor of
15 funds or outside source; and

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

21 (cf: P.L.2018, c.111, s.8)

22

23 5. This act shall take effect immediately.

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STATEMENT

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28 This bill revises provisions of State law concerning the
29 operations of the New Jersey Civic Information Consortium. When
30 the consortium was the first established in 2018, it was the first of
31 its kind. The lessons learned in the years since its inauguration have
32 led to amendments in 2021, and further changes proposed in this
33 bill.

34 Primarily, the bill staggers the terms of service for the
35 consortium's board of directors. The bill also removes the
36 provisions of law concerning hiring program officers and
37 administrative staff. This bill broadens the categories of university
38 representatives that can serve as grantee partners and permits
39 unspent funds to be used in subsequent years, allowing the
40 flexibility to provide multi-year grants.