SYNOPSIS
Concerns New Jersey Civic Information Consortium.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT
As introduced.
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:

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

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 [except
that the member representing the New Jersey media sector] 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
[and the member representing the New Jersey technology sector
shall serve], 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

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

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

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 [program officers
and administrative] staff necessary to carry out the purpose of
P.L.2018, c.111 (C.18A:64-94, et seq.) [pursuant to subsection b. of
this section], 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. [ (1) The executive director shall employ program officers
who shall be experienced practitioners with a strong understanding
of the media or civic technology fields. The executive director shall
strive to appoint program officers that represent the State's racial,
ethnic, gender, and geographic diversity within any limits allowed
under law. The program officers shall manage the grant-making
process, in accordance with the consortium's goals. The grant-
makeing process shall include soliciting, recommending, and
processing grant proposals, working with grantees to ensure work
on grant project ideas, and directing public engagement and
evaluation efforts.

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

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.
(cf: P.L.2018, c.111, s.5)
3. Section 7 of P.L.2018, c.111 (C.18A:64-100) is amended to read as follows:

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 member of the faculty or graduate student 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 an application is sponsored by 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.

(cf: P.L.2018, c.111, s.7)
4. Section 8 of P.L.2018, c.111 (C.18A:64-101) is amended to read as follows:

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 [the executive director and program officers] 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.

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

5. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

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

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