



TO: Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz)  
Members of the Public

FROM: Blake Kaiser-Lack, Assistant Deputy Director of External Affairs and  
Operations

DATE: May 12, 2026

RE: **Public Notice of the California Civic Media Program Advisory Board**

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A meeting of the California Civic Media Program Advisory Board is scheduled to take place on **May 22, 2026** from **1:00 P.M. - 3:30 P.M.** Please note that all Advisory Board members in attendance will participate remotely.

**Meeting Details:**

Date: May 22, 2026  
Time: **1:00 P.M. - 3:30 P.M.**  
Location: Virtual Via Zoom | In-Person Option at Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (1325 J Street, Suite 1800, Sacramento, CA 95814). 1325 J St. is a secured facility that requires visitors be screened and access is limited to GO-Biz's offices on the 13th floor

**Zoom Webinar Details (please register at the following link):** [https://gobiz-ca.gov.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_wYauzjKYQPqTDF4iLdymYQ](https://gobiz-ca.gov.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_wYauzjKYQPqTDF4iLdymYQ)

**Meeting ID:** 818 7984 9863

A copy of the meeting agenda and meeting materials are attached for your reference.

This notice and the agenda are available on the GO-Biz website at [business.ca.gov/california-civic-media-program](https://business.ca.gov/california-civic-media-program). If you have any questions regarding this meeting, please contact Blake Kaiser-Lack at [CaCivicMedia@gobiz.ca.gov](mailto:CaCivicMedia@gobiz.ca.gov) or write to the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development, 1325 J Street, Suite 1800, Sacramento, CA 95814.

The meeting facilities are accessible to persons with disabilities. Requests for disability-related modification or accommodation should be made at least five business days prior to the meeting and should be directed to Blake Kaiser-Lack.



**California Civic Media Program Advisory Board**

**May 22, 2026**

**1:00 P.M. - 3:30 P.M.**

**Location: Virtual via Zoom | In-Person Option at Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (1325 J Street, Room 1834, Sacramento, CA 95814).**

**AGENDA**

- I. Welcome and Roll Call
- II. Consideration of Minutes *(Please see Attachment A)*
  - a. Public Comment
  - b. Vote
- III. Program Guidelines and Modeling Presentation *(Please see Attachment B)*
- IV. Outreach Plan Presentation
- V. Consideration of Program Advancement
  - a. Public Comment
  - b. Vote
- VI. Public Comment
- VII. Next Steps and Adjournment



## ATTACHMENT A: Draft Meeting Minutes

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### California Civic Media Program Advisory Board

April 3, 2026

1:00 P.M. – 3:30 P.M.

**Location: Virtual via Teleconference | In-Person Option at Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (1325 J Street, Suite 1800, Sacramento, CA 95814)**

## MINUTES

### Open Session

#### I. Welcome & Roll Call

Director Myers called the meeting of the Civic Media Program (Program) Advisory Board (Board) to order at 1:03 p.m.

**Board Members Present via Teleconference:** Arturo Carmona, Chuck Corra, Erik Cushman, Julian Do, Sean Emery, Jeff Glasser, Marian Kaanon, Julie Patel Liss, Regina Wilson.

#### II. Consideration of Minutes

Director Myers opened the item for questions or comments. There were none.

**Action Moved/Seconded:** Member Wilson / Member Cushman

**Yes:** Members Carmona, Corra, Cushman, Do, Emery, Glasser, Kaanon, Patel Liss, Wilson

**No:** None

**Abstained:** None

#### III. CA Civic Media Program Third-Party Administrator Introductions

Director Myers invited the two third-party administrators selected to administer Program funds to briefly introduce themselves:

- James B. McClatchy Foundation (JBMF) – State Funds: Priscilla Enriquez, President and CEO of JBMF, introduced herself and her organization. She noted JBMF has made significant investments in journalism, particularly in underserved Central



Valley communities. She described the foundation's values, including equity, inclusion, and a focus on community powered journalism.

- Journalism Funding Partners (JFP) – Private Funds: Rusty Coats, Executive Director of Journalism Funding Partners, introduced himself. He described JFP's mission to bridge philanthropy and local journalism and the organization's administration of grant programs in the space. He noted JFP's significant growth in recent years.

#### IV. **Presentation and Discussion on Program Guidelines and Modeling**

##### Overview and Framing

President Enriquez opened the presentation by recapping the statutory goals of the Program and the mission statement previously approved by the Board. She shared what JBMF and stakeholders have heard throughout the process, including the importance of creating a lasting model; a sense of urgency to move funds expeditiously; an equity imperative for small, ethnic, and cultural outlets; a need for sustainability and capacity building; and a priority to preserve California-based journalism jobs.

##### Definitions and Eligibility

Assistant Deputy Director Kaiser-Lack walked the Board through proposed definitions and eligibility criteria, noting these were compiled from stakeholder input, other state programs, and proposed California legislation. Key points for each item included:

- Qualified News Organization: An organization based in or registered to do business in California, with at least one qualified journalist, that produces original, fact-based news content and engages in standard journalism activities.
- Qualified Journalist: A journalist working at least 30 hours per week who covers state or local news and is based in California.
- Print Outlets: Must publish at least once per month and demonstrate distribution via USPS periodicals or carrier delivery service.
- Digital Outlets: Must publish at least once per week, have a mission dedicated to California news, and demonstrate an audience at least 33% located within California.
- Eligibility Requirements: Included 1) public disclosure of ownership, 2) nonprofit mission statements focused on local news, 3) media liability insurance held for at least one year, 4) a published ethics and correction policy at the time of



application, 5) a minimum annual revenue of \$100,000, 6) exclusion of broadcast outlets, and 7) limits on revenue from political organizations.

### Board Discussion – Definitions and Eligibility

Board members raised several substantive points:

- **30-Hour Journalist Threshold:** Members Carmona, Wilson, Do, Cushman, Emery, Patel Liss, and Glasser all raised the challenge that a 30-hour threshold could pose for small outlets that rely on multiple part-time or freelance contributors. Members suggested alternatives such as a full-time equivalent (FTE) calculation based on collective hours or work volume. Members Wilson and Emery cautioned that any freelance formula should avoid creating AB 5 (Chapter 296, Statutes of 2019) compliance issues for outlets unable to track contractor hours. Member Emery specifically advocated retaining an emphasis on full-time, salaried employees with benefits while allowing for some FTE conversion. Member Glasser cautioned against using article count as a proxy and noted complications with AB 5 as well. Member Patel Liss suggested offering bonus weighting for newsrooms with full-time employees rather than excluding freelance-reliant outlets. Member Kaanon agreed with Member Glasser's argument on article volume and supported the FTE calculation method.
- **Digital Audience Threshold:** Members Corra and Do raised the proposed 33% California audience requirement for digital outlets, noting potential difficulties in tracking audience location due to VPNs and Independent Service Provider-based location data. Member Do proposed lowering the threshold to 20% to accommodate ethnic media outlets with large international audiences. Member Glasser noted the Illinois-derived standard of 33% may not translate well to California.
- **Print Distribution Proof:** Member Do noted that many ethnic media outlets distribute through community centers, houses of worship, and grocery stores rather than through USPS. He proposed that affidavits or invoices be accepted as proof of print distribution.
- **Journalist Location Requirement:** Member Glasser raised the point that some journalists covering California stories may reside in neighboring states and that residency versus work location should be considered.
- **Media Liability Insurance:** Member Wilson noted that some outlets may have general insurance but not specifically media liability insurance. Member Do reported that a survey of his network's members suggested many do not carry media liability insurance and proposed that obtaining coverage by the application date be sufficient, rather than requiring one year of prior coverage.



- **Political Limitations:** Member Wilson commented on the 5% revenue cap from political sources, noting it may disadvantage news organizations who regularly receive funds as part of political campaigns. Member Glasser raised first amendment concerns about limiting funding sources. Member Patel Liss supported the mission of the cap and suggested it be targeted towards outsized funding from specific political parties and wanted to ensure political advocacy organizations be on the list of excluded applicants.
- **Newspapers of General Circulation:** Member Wilson noted that legally designated newspapers of general circulation have already been verified and suggested this status could substitute for some eligibility requirements. Assistant Deputy Director Kaiser-Lack agreed to explore whether this could be incorporated.
- **Broadcast Eligibility:** Member Do raised the point that for many underserved communities, radio and television are the primary news sources. He requested the Board consider allowing broadcast outlets serving news deserts to be eligible.

### Geographic Allocation Framework

Keiona Williamson, Journalism Sustainability Director at JBMF, presented a proposed geographic allocation structure grounded in California's existing regional framework from the California Jobs First initiative. The state would be divided into five media regions, with funding allocated proportionally based on population. The approach leverages JBMF's existing statewide infrastructure, including partnerships with the League of California Community Foundations.

- Member Glasser raised the challenge of publications with significant audiences across multiple regions and wanted to explore how headquarters-based assignment would work.
- Member Patel Liss supported geographic allocation in principle and asked whether population density was factored in. Assistant Deputy Director Kaiser-Lack confirmed the model is per capita.
- Member Cushman expressed the desire to consider journalists-per-capita in a geographic allocation.
- Members Carmona and Kaanon expressed support for the approach as a means of addressing the disproportionate impact of the journalism crisis on inland and rural communities, particularly communities of color.
- Member Do supported the framework and advocated for overlaying data on existing newsroom and journalist counts by region to target funding in news deserts.



- Member Kaanon voiced support for the geographic approach and noted that even if a region has less news organizations, the point should still be to still invest that apportioned money. Member Wilson also lent support to this approach.
- Member Glasser argued that the Program was not solely intended to address news deserts but to support the journalism industry broadly, including outlets in more populated areas.

Assistant Deputy Director Kaiser-Lack began an eight-minute break period for the meeting.

### Program Models

Director Myers welcomed the Board and the public back from the break and passed it to President Enriquez, who gave a high-level overview of the models as distinguished in their review process but aligned in their focus on equity.

Assistant Deputy Director Kaiser-Lack gave a presentation on California journalism data with an estimate from the Bureau of Labor Statistics that there are about 1,531 to 7,670 journalists and editors in California based on how narrowly they are defined. He ended with the fact that despite the data not being perfect, awards for a strict pro rata model could range from \$2,400 to \$12,000 per journalist, which was not a number that felt impactful enough to GO-Biz and required the consideration of other approaches.

*Model A: Weighted Priority Pro Rata Model:* Assistant Deputy Director Kaiser-Lack presented a formula-based approach where organizations submit a standardized application listing journalist headcount. Applications are ranked using a weighted priority system tied to equity and job retention criteria. Key features include:

- A \$250,000 award cap per organization
- A descending award structure with a funding floor: \$20,000 per journalist for the first 5 journalists, then \$15,000 per journalist until the cap is reached
- Applications evaluated in priority order based on a point system (not first-come, first-served) until funds are exhausted
- Priority weighting: 5 points for California-owned organizations, 5 points for journalist job retention, 5 additional points for job growth, and 5 points for organizations located in historically disinvested communities (potentially to be measured based on median household income, California Healthy Places Index, etc.)
- An accountability mechanism that rescinds awards if journalists are laid off after receiving the state grant.



*Model B: Field Building Application Model:* Journalism Sustainability Director Williamson presented a proposal-based grant model where organizations apply for funding across defined categories, including jobs and reporters, product development, sustainability and business infrastructure, and community engagement. Key features include:

- Grants ranging from \$50,000 to \$250,000, sized based on the scope of work, organizational capacity, and alignment with legislative goals
- Applications evaluated by an independent cross-sector review committee
- Application scored using a transparent rubric aligned to the statutory goals
- Modeled on New Jersey's Civic Information Consortium and Press Forward

#### Board Discussion – Program Models

Assistant Deputy Director Kaiser-Lack opened the meeting to feedback from the Board:

- **Accountability Provision:** Members Patel Liss and Emery supported accountability measures requiring repayment of awards if funded journalists are laid off.
- **Administration Costs:** Member Emery requested GO-Biz and the third-party administrator confirm that the administration costs for managing either proposed model would be the same and stay within the authorized budget.
- **Data:** Members Cushman and Do wanted more data on the number of qualified news organizations and journalists in California to inform if a pro-rata approach was still viable.
- **Larger News Organizations:** Member Patel Liss commented that a cap would penalize larger organizations that provide more journalism jobs. Member Glasser also opposed an award cap, arguing it penalizes larger news organizations that have hired more journalists and were the primary targets of industry disruption resulting from digital advertising. He argued that a per-journalist distribution (no cap) would be the fairest approach. He also cautioned that the job growth weighting criterion is challenging given the industry is contracting. Member Cushman echoed this, noting the program's spirit was to sustain working journalists and he believes the headcount-based pro rata model most closely reflects legislative intent.
- **News Deserts:** Member Corra raised the idea of using news deserts as a prioritization metric. Assistant Deputy Director Kaiser-Lack responded that GO-Biz was looking into this, but there are no widely accepted definitions of what constitutes a news desert.
- **Alternative Model:** Member Patel Liss referenced a recently introduced legislative proposal that would provide a 20% bonus for the first 5 FTE journalists at



a newsroom and a 10% bonus for FTEs 6–10, regardless of size. Assistant Deputy Director Kaiser-Lack responded that Model A had a similar bonus for the first set of journalists counted.

- **Application Process:** Member Cushman expressed concern with a grant application approach, which he argued would be burdensome and may disadvantage smaller or less grant-savvy organizations. Member Do raised a similar concern, noting that ethnic media outlets often struggle with grant application processes. Assistant Deputy Director Kaiser-Lack offered that no matter the model, technical assistance would be made available to applicants.
- **Hybrid Model:** Multiple members expressed support for a hybrid approach, including Members Carmona, Wilson, and Patel Liss. Member Carmona proposed that public funds be distributed through a needs-based model aligned with Model B, while private funds be distributed on a pro rata basis. Member Wilson suggested separating the funding into two pools: one pro rata for established newsrooms with professional journalists and one using a Model B-type approach for smaller and nonprofit outlets serving underrepresented communities. Member Patel Liss raised the idea of dividing funds into pools based on newsroom size (e.g., by FTE count), citing this as a way to prevent small outlets from competing directly against large ones.

## V. **Public Comment**

Assistant Deputy Director Kaiser-Lack opened the public comment period. The following individuals provided comment:

- **Reggie Ellis (CINA):** Presented recommendations from the California Independent News Alliance (CINA), including reimbursement for printing costs; a three-year operating threshold for applicants; a tiered payment structure fully funding the first five journalists before subsequent journalists; inclusion of freelancers; and a bi-weekly publication standard for qualified print outlets. He provided data on the negative impact of Google's online advertising exchange on the newspaper industry.
- **Scott Hayes (OC World):** Asked GO-Biz to reconsider the exclusion of multimedia/visual media organizations from eligibility.
- **Jose Martinez-Saldana (Radio Bilingue):** Advocated for inclusion of broadcast radio in the Program, particularly for ethnic and community radio serving rural, non-English speaking, and low-literacy populations.
- **Malena Data Ernani (El Tímpano):** Advocated for inclusion of broadcast for underserved communities and adding language access, broadband access



rates, and news information density as factors in the geographic allocation formula rather than relying on population alone.

- **Greg Little (Mariposa Gazette / CINA):** Expressed appreciation for the attention to smaller organizations, supported the accountability provision, challenged the characterization that newsroom growth is unrealistic, and reiterated opposition to hedge fund-owned news organizations being eligible.
- **Matt Pearce (Rebuild Local News):** Raised a technical concern about the nonprofit eligibility clause requiring local news to be the “stated mission” in IRS filings, noting this could unintentionally exclude established outlets whose mission statements describe democratic goals without using the words “news” or “journalism.”
- **Vaughn Reese:** Asked whether any program funds are allocated for journalism technology infrastructure or shared services, noting his organization develops technology tools for newsrooms.
- **Hugo Morales (Radio Bilingue):** Advocated for the inclusion of community radio by and for people of color, citing Radio Bilingue’s history of providing news to the Latino community.
- **Henrietta Burroughs (East Palo Alto Center for Community Media):** Supported a hybrid model, cautioning that a pure pro rata model could perpetuate inequity by rewarding existing scale.

## VI. **Next Steps and Adjournment**

Director Myers thanked the public commenters and Board members for a robust discussion. She noted that GO-Biz and JBMF would review all feedback and work toward final guidelines and program models for presentation at the next Board meeting.

Director Myers adjourned the meeting at 3:50 p.m.



## ATTACHMENT B: PROPOSED PROGRAM MODEL AND GUIDELINES

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**OVERVIEW:** This memo summarizes GO-Biz's updated proposed program guidelines for the Civic Media Program under a hybrid approach. Key features include a two-part funding structure with per-journalist staffing as a base and additional funds set aside for needs-based considerations. Applications will be prioritized based on a set rubric evaluated by an independent review committee. A minimum amount of funds will be available to each region of the state.

- **Allocation:** Using one single application process, funds will be distributed via two funding pools:
  - **Pro Rata Journalist Fund (\$16.25 million):** \$20,000 per full-time equivalent (FTE) eligible journalist up to 5 FTEs. \$10,000 per remaining FTE until capping out at the \$250,000 cap per news organization. Part-time journalists may be eligible as .5 FTE. Contractors (1099 employees) will not be eligible but can be referenced in the Needs-Based Bonus Pool. See journalist definition below for full details.
  - **Needs-Based Bonus Pool (\$2.50 million):** Organizations are eligible for up to twice the amount of their Pro Rata Journalist Fund award based on a priority rubric and demonstrated need (see below). Organizations that meet all other requirements and have no FTE or part-time journalists will be eligible for up to \$40,000 or twice the allocation of one FTE journalist.
- **Program Cap:** \$250,000 per news organization, regardless of funding pool.
- **Prioritization, Rubric, and Review Committee:** News organizations will be scored based on a predefined rubric that considers data-based economic indicators and three short narrative questions (less than 250 word each) on planned use of funds, ongoing viability, and service to disinvested communities. Applicants will be scored by a review committee, with those that score highest receiving grants until program funds are depleted. The program's third-party administrators will independently create and run the review committee, made up of industry experts and regional leaders in the field. Neither GO-Biz nor the Advisory Board will be on the review committee.
- **Geographic Allocation:** To ensure regional diversity, applicants will initially be split among the 13 regions in the [State Economic Blueprint](#), which was developed over three years as a part of the Governor's California Jobs First Initiative. Each regional pool will get a minimum of \$250,000 open only to news organizations in that region. Once that regional pool is depleted, the remaining applications return to the statewide pool, where top scoring applicants will receive funds. Any funds left in the regional pools will be returned to the statewide funding pool.
- **News Organization Requirements**
  - Ethics and Correction Policy (*at time of application*)
  - Public Disclosure of Ownership (*at time of application*)
  - Media Liability Insurance (*at time of award*)



- Three years of Operation (*from application due date*)
- Secretary of State Filing / Proof of Doing Business in CA (*at time of application*)
- Proof of California News Organization
- **News Organization Ineligibility Conditions**
  - **Political Ownership:** must not be controlled, directly or indirectly through one or more intermediaries, by any of the following disqualified organizations: lobbying firms, political action committees or entities described in Section 527 of the federal Internal Revenue Code; or an organization that maintains Section 501 (c)(4) or 501 (c)(6) status under the federal Internal Revenue Code.
  - **Broadcast:** persons or entities whose principal business is the distribution of audio or visual programming to the public through broadcast, cable, satellite, or internet based streaming services.
- **Draft Application Process**
  - **Part I:** Organization Information
  - **Part II:** Submission of Eligible Journalists
  - **Part III:** Narrative Questions | Optional: Needs-Based Bonus Narrative

## **JOURNALIST DEFINITION AND SUBMISSION**

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**Core Definition:** An “Eligible Journalist” is an individual whose primary professional function is the gathering, reporting, editing or production of original, fact-based news and information that concern local California matters of public interest. The journalist must live in California. The individual’s role should be captured by the following Eligible Editorial Functions:

### **Eligible Editorial Functions**

- **Text:** Reporters, editors, copy editors and fact-checkers
- **Visual & Audio:** Photojournalists, videographers and audio producers
- **Emerging & Other:** Digital journalists, data journalists, newsletter authors and community engagement producers (journalistic, not promotional)

### **Ineligible Functions**

- **Business & Revenue:** Advertising, sales, marketing, graphic design, public relations or fundraising
- **Administration:** Human resources, accounting, legal or general operations
- **Publishers/Owners:** Executives or owners who do not dedicate at least 50% of their working hours to editorial production or management
- **Aggregators:** Individuals who exclusively curate, syndicate or aggregate content produced by others without contributing original reporting
- **Non-Local News:** Journalists who do not cover local California matters.



### **Draft Calculation Standard**

- **Full-Time Employees:** Calculated as **1.0 FTE** based on an average 30-hour work week
- **Part-Time Employees:** Calculated at **.5 FTE** based on a 30-hour work week for employees working 15 hours – 29 hours on average a week. Employees working less hours can be referenced in requests for funding out of the need-based bonus pool.
- **Contractors (1099):** Contractors cannot be used as part of the FTE calculation but can be referenced in requests for funding out of the need-based bonus pool.

**Verification:** for each employee, applicants will be asked to submit basic identifying information about each journalist submitted for funding. Additionally, applicants will be required to submit a payroll summary, sign a legally binding attestation verifying the accuracy of submitted documentation, and be open to submitting additional information if selected for a randomized audit.

DRAFT