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: October 20, 2026

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

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

Meeting Details:

Date: October 30, 2026
Time: **1:00 P.M. - 3:00 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_HctZrXINQ9Syj39jANIlHw
Webinar ID: 830 0117 4711

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. If you have any questions regarding this meeting, please contact Blake Kaiser-Lack at 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
October 30, 2026
1:00 P.M. - 3:00 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. Overview of Inaugural Civic Media Program Grant Awards*
    a. Discussion
    b. Public Comment
IV. Next Steps
    a. Discussion
V. Public Comment
VI. Adjournment

** Note: award notifications will be made by end of day October 30, 2026*

ATTACHMENT A: Draft Meeting Minutes

California Civic Media Program Advisory Board
May 22, 2026
1:00 P.M. – 3:00 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

Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz) Director Dee Dee Myers called the third 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, Marian Kaanon, Julie Patel Liss, Regina Wilson.
Board Members Absent: Jeff Glasser.

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, Kaanon, Patel Liss, Wilson
No: None
Abstained: None

III. – IV. Presentation & Discussion on Program Guidelines, Modeling, and Outreach Plan

Overview and Framing
Director Myers began by highlighting that the Governor's May Revise budget proposal included $10 million per year over the next two fiscal years for a total of $20 million in future state funding for the program, pending final negotiations with the legislature.

James B. McClatchy Foundation (JBMF) Executive Director Priscilla Enriquez expressed gratitude to the team, advocates, and administrators. She recapped the statutory goals of the Program and emphasized a collaborative effort for the pilot year.

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Definitions and Eligibility

GO-Biz Assistant Deputy Director Blake Kaiser-Lack presented the updated application process based on stakeholder feedback, split into eligibility, funding determination, and prioritization buckets:

- **Eligible News Organizations:** Must be legally registered and have a principal business address in California, producing original fact-based content. The previous requirement for at least one full-time equivalent (FTE) staff journalist was removed to accommodate contractor-only models.
- **Requirements:** An Ethics and correction policy, public ownership disclosure, a Secretary of State filing, and a minimum of 3 years of operations. Media liability insurance remains a requirement but can now be acquired upon grant award rather than requiring a prior year of coverage. Digital audience and print distribution tracking requirements were removed to reduce administrative burden.
- **Ineligible Conditions:** Exclusions remain for political ownership (lobbying firms/PACs) and broadcast organizations. However, general limitations on election-season advertising revenue from political campaigns were removed.

Funding Determination & Pro Rata Journalist Fund

Assistant Deputy Director Kaiser-Lack and Journalism Funding Partners (JFP) Executive Director Rusty Coats detailed the base funding mechanism and corresponding eligible journalist definition:

- **Degressive Formula:** $20,000 per full-time equivalent (FTE) eligible journalist for the first 5 FTEs, and $10,000 per FTE for remaining journalists, capped at $250,000 per organization.
- **FTE Definitions:** Full-time employees count as 1 FTE (averaging 30+ hours/week). Part-time employees (15-29 hours/week) count as 0.5 FTE. 1099 independent contractors and part-time employees working less than 15 hours are excluded from this base formula pool.
- **Editorial Functions & Verification:** Executive Director Coats listed eligible positions (reporters, editors, videographers, data journalists, and publishers spending 50%+ time on editorial). Business, PR, and non-California staff are excluded. Verification requires a legally binding self-attestation form.

Needs-Based Bonus Pool & Prioritization Framework

JBMF Journalism Sustainability Director Keiona Williamson explained the needs-based bonus pool of funding and narrative and scoring processes:

- **Needs-Based Bonus Pool:** Outlets can make a case for additional funds (up to twice their base award, subject to the $250,000 overall cap) based on serving disinvested communities or news deserts. Outlets with 0 FTEs (fully contractor-reliant) can access this pool up to a limited amount.
- **Narrative & Prioritization:** Three short narrative questions concerning audience, sustainability, and alignment to goals will be scored against a rubric by an

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independent, regionally based review committee organized by JBMF. Neither GO-Biz nor the Board will sit on this committee. The scores will be used to rank applications to inform funding priority.

- **Geographic Allocation:** Assistant Deputy Director Kaiser-Lack gave an overview of the Program's regional funding set aside grounded in GO-Biz's Jobs First initiative. The framework splits the state into 13 economic regions. Each region has an exclusive $250,000 initial allocation block to guarantee funding reaches every corner of the state before leftover funds are pooled statewide.
- **Technical Assistance & Timeline:** A robust technical assistance infrastructure which will include live webinars, office hours, and direct outreach support. The Program website and eligibility quiz will launch June 15, 2026. Applications open July 6 and close August 21, 2026, with awards distributed in early fall.

V. Consideration of Program Advancement

Board Discussion

- **Geographic and Population Disparities:** Member Patel Liss warned that the $250,000 per region set aside could disadvantage urban newsrooms, which serve high population regions of California. She recommended dividing the remaining funding proportionally by population in addition to a funding floor. Members Wilson, Kaanon, Do, and Corra offered support for the regional floor as an insurance policy protecting rural markets.
- **Award Caps and Large-Employer Newsrooms:** Member Cushman argued for a straight headcount distribution and critiqued the $250,000 cap, noting large newsrooms who employ much of the state's journalist workforce and do impactful reporting for their communities would not be able to receive funding that matches their scale. He proposed at least increasing the cap from $250,000 to $400,000 for newsrooms with larger staff. Member Patel Liss and Member Wilson asked why the $250,000 cap was chosen, and Assistant Deputy Director Kaiser-Lack explained that the goal was to give a $20,000 per journalist award for at least the first five journalists with $10,000 for every journalist after to ensure an impactful award. He explained that U.S. Census data showed most outlets have less than 20 employees, indicating that a cap of $250,000, which is the equivalent of a 20-journalist newsroom, would serve most applicants.
- **Accountability:** Member Emery emphasized that public funds should protect working journalists and proposed adding guardrails to ensure grant recipients do not initiate immediate layoffs or divert funds into automated AI content solutions. Member Patel Liss provided support for a claw-back provision.
- **Equity and Inclusivity:** Member Carmona expressed concern over whether enough funds were allocated for needs-based grants serving ethnic media and requested more pronounced weighted pro rata options for those outlets. Member Wilson offered support of a model that prioritizes "the middle of the news ecosystem," from small outlets to larger ones, and emphasized that smaller news organizations often

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do not have the same resources and benefits as larger ones. Assistant Deputy Director Kaiser-Lack added that part of the prioritization rubric would include coverage of disinvested audiences.

Public Comment

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

- **Reggie Ellis (Mineral King Publishing):** Emphasized that small outlets regularly break major stories and supported an emphasis on community media.
- **Laura Rearwin Ward (CINA):** Stated that small consistent funding sums make a critical survival difference for local operations, though expressed minor concerns regarding how the regional tracking overlay would settle.
- **Greg Little (Mariposa Gazette):** Inquired if grant awards constitute taxable income and voiced strong gratitude that small rural newsrooms are being explicitly supported by state program structures.
- **Madeleine Bair (El Tímpano):** Expressed disappointment with the headcount-driven model, arguing that tying a majority of funds to staffing could lead to a lack of prioritizing communities hardest hit by news disparities. She also noted that the 3-year operational threshold could limit funding towards new, innovative papers.
- **Nicole Noren:** Advocated for sole proprietors and independent journalists be included. She requested clarity on the distinction between excluding broadcast organizations from the program but allowing audio/visual reporting to be counted. Assistant Deputy Director Kaiser-Lack clarified that organizations whose primary function is broadcast are excluded, but not those who just do some audiovisual reporting.
- **Brandy Maddox:** Appreciated the removal of the 1-FTE minimum threshold but noted that completely excluding 1099 independent contractors from the pro rata calculation caps monthly, contractor-reliant papers at the lowest bonus floor. She also raised issues about remote editorial leadership residency rules. Assistant Deputy Director Kaiser-Lack explained that contractors were excluded from the headcount pool due to the challenging and unequal way that they would have to be counted against hourly-tracked employees. He explained the needs-based pool is a pilot to see if that model can help serve contractor news models.
- **Carlos Hernandez: Echoed** Highlighted that small publications rely heavily on contractors due to narrow margins, making these funds vital to keeping independent local newsrooms afloat.
- **Kassandra Hishida (Radio Bilingue):** Urged the inclusion of public broadcast entities like Radio Bilingue, which serve low-income, Spanish-speaking, rural populations who have no other news options.

Following public comments, Member Wilson introduced a motion to approve the program guidelines as presented, with a directive that staff will reach out to the Board via email if any substantive modifications are proposed over the coming week. Member Cushman seconded the motion. Member Patel Liss introduced an amendment to the regional floor model as presented to distribute the remaining $14

million using population as a factor; the amendment did not secure a procedural vote as the original package motion was brought to a vote.

Action Moved/Seconded: Member Wilson / Member Cushman
Yes: Members Corra, Cushman, Do, Emery, Kaanon, Wilson, Carmona*
No: Member Patel Liss
Abstained: None
**Note: Member Carmona clarified his intent to vote yes to the program as designed following the conclusion of the board meeting, despite verbally indicating a no during the meeting.*

A final roll call vote was conducted to adjourn the session.
Action Moved/Seconded: Member Wilson / Member Cushman
Yes: Members Carmona, Corra, Cushman, Do, Emery, Kaanon, Patel Liss, Wilson.
No: None
Abstained: None

Director Myers adjourned the meeting at 2:53 p.m.

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