



Request for Proposals State Government Coverage 2.0

Proposals Due January 31, 2024, at 5:00 pm ET

I. OVERVIEW

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (“CPB”) is accepting proposals to increase and deepen public media’s news and public affairs coverage of state government and policies and their impact on state residents (“**State Government Coverage**”). This is a second call for state government coverage proposals, following an initial round of \$2.25 million in grants that was announced in September 2023.

Already, public media stations in all 50 states provide original state government reporting at least weekly when their legislatures are in session, and stations in 31 states have increased this coverage to fill the void left by the decline of local newspapers, according to a CPB-commissioned survey (“**Survey**”) published in June 2022. The survey also found that public media stations in 18 states provide the only state government-focused public affairs broadcast program in their state. In a dozen states, public media stations provide a dedicated channel for live, gavel-to-gavel coverage of state legislative proceedings. The Survey, involving 175 public radio and television stations, was a first step in CPB’s broader strategy to address urgent civic information needs given the increasing influence of misinformation and disinformation in civil discourse. The Survey identified opportunities to grow State Government Coverage, including increased beat reporting, accountability journalism, digital innovation, and public affairs formats that reach new audiences.

Applications for this Request for Proposals (“**RFP**”) will be accepted from public media stations (“**Station(s)**”) and Station collaborations (“**Station Collaboration(s)**”) that seek to build state government coverage capacity and reach. The goals (“**Goals**”) of the RFP are to:

1. Increase the number of journalists spending 75% or more of their time producing State Government Coverage (“**Dedicated State Government Journalists**”), with priority given to states where there currently is no Dedicated State Government Journalist;
2. Increase the number of statewide collaborations among public media stations to produce State Government Coverage;
3. Increase the number of stations providing State Government Coverage throughout the year, not just when state legislatures are in session;
4. Strengthen State Government Coverage through investigative reporting;
5. Produce innovative State Government Coverage that reaches and serves digital audiences, which could include enhanced video/visuals coverage;
6. Ensure wider distribution of State Government Coverage through sharing of content with public media stations (and other media organizations) across each state.

II. BACKGROUND

CPB is a private, non-profit corporation authorized by Congress in 1967 to receive federal government appropriations and to use those funds to promote the growth and development of public broadcasting and public telecommunications services. The mission of CPB is to facilitate a public media system that is valued by all Americans and reflects a diversity of ideas, content, talent, and delivery. CPB invests in approximately 1,500 local radio and television stations – their programs, services, and other initiatives to serve and engage the public. The system reaches more than 98 percent of the U.S. population with free programming and services.

As steward of the federal appropriation for public media, CPB supports multimedia journalism that is fair, accurate, balanced, objective, and transparent, and created in a manner consistent with local stations' and producers' editorial independence. Over the past 15 years, CPB has helped sustain this ecosystem by investing a total of more than \$150 million in discretionary funds to journalism, in addition to the money directly allocated annually to public media stations.

Supporting journalism collaborations has been a key framework guiding CPB's support of local station newsrooms. Since 2009, CPB has invested more than \$44 million to help launch more than 40 local and regional news collaborations involving groups of public media stations that, together, have achieved scale and impact beyond what any one station could accomplish alone. The survey of state government coverage in public media, published in June 2022, ushered in a new phase in CPB's journalism investments, designed to ensure that American citizens are fully informed about state and local governance.

The Survey report can be found here: <https://www.cpb.org/spotlight/Survey-Captures-Public-Media-Coverage-State-Government-all-50-States>

III. WORK SCOPE

Applicants for the RFP must address at least one of the first five Goals (listed above) in their proposals: 1) increase the number of Dedicated State Government Journalists; 2) increase the number of statewide collaborations providing State Government Coverage; 3) increase State Government Coverage to year-round reporting; 4) strengthen State Government Coverage through investigative reporting; or 5) produce innovative State Government Coverage that reaches and serves digital audiences, which could include enhanced video/visuals coverage.

Further, to address Goal 6, all applicants must also provide a statewide distribution plan (“**Distribution Plan**”) for the content to be created using CPB grant funds. CPB funds will be contingent on the successful applicants making their State Government Coverage available to all other public media stations in the state to share with their audiences, whether through a formal Station Collaboration or other means. Applicants may also propose sharing the coverage with other media organizations such as local/regional non-profit news organizations, ethnic newspapers, journalism training programs, and/or other relevant entities. The content may also be shared with NPR, PBS, or national producers.

Each application should specify the editorial focus, strategic vision, and editorial standards that apply to the proposed activities. Proposals should also describe all the elements that will be needed to ensure the success and reach of this work, including grant administration and any partner participation, personnel and editorial structure, commitment to diversity, content and content deliverables, community engagement plan, timeline, measures of success, and plans for sustainability beyond CPB funding. CPB anticipates making two-year grants to three (3) to four (4) applicants.

Station Collaborations

For applicants proposing Station Collaborations, proposals must have a lead Station (“**Lead Station**”) that serves as the fiscal agent for the CPB grant. CPB will enter into a grant agreement with that Lead Station, which will, in turn, enter into agreements with each partner station (“**Partner Station(s)**”) and distribute any sub-grant funds accordingly.

- The Lead Station ensures the completion of the activities outlined in the proposal.
- The Lead Station is responsible for all grant reporting to CPB, including financial reporting.
- The Lead Station must execute agreements (“**Partner Agreements**”) with all Partner Stations receiving CPB funds that clearly state each party’s responsibilities under the grant project and adhere to all CPB grant agreement terms and conditions.
- The Lead Station and Partner Stations must ensure that all project content and activities adhere to an editorial code of journalistic integrity.
- The Lead Station and Partner Stations must all provide executive-level commitments to ensure the support and oversight of station leaders for the State Government Coverage and its sustainability.
- Partner Stations must agree to execute all required activities to ensure successful completion of the grant and to provide grant reporting information to the Lead Station in a timely manner. They must also ensure they spend, track, and report on the use of grant funds in accordance with CPB Terms and Conditions of the grant award.

Please note that Station Collaborations may include other non-public media news and civic organizations.

The paragraphs below outline the major elements of the grant work scope and the required activities.

Editorial Focus & Strategic Vision

Each applicant must outline its editorial focus and strategic vision (“**Editorial Plan**”) for its State Government Coverage. This should include an explanation of what Goal(s) it intends to address, what coverage the applicant intends to provide, and how that coverage meets the needs of the intended audience. It should explain how the coverage will advance the applicant’s current coverage efforts and be more beneficial to the audience. The Editorial Plan should provide clarity about the applicant’s frequency and depth of coverage as well as its intended use of community engagement to build on-going relationships with the audience based on trust and authenticity. In the case of a Station Collaboration, the Partner Stations must all commit to a shared Editorial Plan to produce stories that resonate with each partnering station’s audience.

The applicant, and any Partner Stations, must adhere to a code of journalistic ethics that maintains public trust (the “**Code of Ethics**”), which must be publicly posted and included in the application.

Personnel and Editorial Structure

Each applicant must outline the personnel and editorial structure that will implement the Editorial Plan. If new personnel will be hired with grant funding, please outline the job duties of the position(s). CPB will not fund existing positions unless the position dedicates more than 50% of its time to State Government Coverage.

CPB has a commitment to the principle of diversity, and each proposal must include a description of the applicant’s commitment to diversity in hiring (“**Diversity Statement**”).

Content and Content Deliverables

Content

Applicants should produce original content and reporting (“**Content**”) for broadcast and digital platforms that could include text, audio, video, photos, maps, animations, interactive elements, data visualization, and databases. Where applicable, the Content should transcend the superficial and encourage fact-based, critical thinking about state government and its impact on lived experiences. Each applicant will have to determine what mix of Content adds the greatest value and is most relevant to its audiences and any collaborators.

Content Deliverables

Applicants must commit to producing a specific number of Content treatments (“**Treatments**”). Treatments are defined as significant instances of original public affairs and journalism Content that can be packaged as broadcast programs, news spots, interviews, feature reports, series, slide shows, maps, and graphics, reporter debriefs and long-form investigations, among others. The formatting of a Treatment for another platform is not considered a separate Treatment unless significant additional reporting is undertaken, or significant additional Content is produced in the formatting process for the new platform.

Distribution Plan

Applicants must provide a Distribution Plan that makes their State Government Coverage available to all other public media stations in the state to share with their audiences. Sharing the Content will increase the accessibility and reach of the original state government reporting. For single Station applicants, this may consist of informal agreements with other public media stations that outline how they will inform the stations of coverage, how they will deliver it, and how they will track usage. For Station Collaborations, the Distribution Plan will be included in the Partner Agreements and will outline how they will communicate about coverage, how they will deliver it, and how they will track usage. Each Partner Station will commit to distributing the majority of the content produced by the collaboration on its platforms. Distribution Plans may also include how the State Government Coverage will be shared with non-public media station news and civic organizations.

Timeline

Applicants must provide a timeline for key grant program activities during the 24-month grant term (the “**Timeline**”), for example, planning meetings, hires completed, etc.

Measures of Success

Applicants must articulate measures of success (“**Measures of Success**”) that will track progress against the Goals outlined in the RFP, which could include but is not limited to metrics for:

- Number of reporters and/or public affairs staff covering state government (across three categories: most/all of their time, 50-90% of time, less than 50% of time), compared to the previous year;
- Number and type of state government stories (spot news, investigative, etc.) and/or treatments, compared to the previous year’s output;
- Distribution (for example, carriage by applicant, Stations, national producers, and other media outlets as applicable);
- Engagement (for example, social media interactions, attendance at community meetings, etc.);
- General reach (for example, radio and television audience data, digital analytics, etc.);
- Quality of programming (for example, award nominations, accolades, references in other media, etc.), and;

- Efficacy of Station Collaborations (for example, feedback or surveys among Partners, etc.).

Applicants will report progress against the Measures of Success each quarter to CPB as a deliverable (the “**Evaluation(s)**”). Reasonable direct costs incurred to implement regular Evaluations by an external evaluator or facilitator are eligible to be funded under this grant program.

Sustainability Beyond CPB Funding

Applicants must explain how they envision supporting the ongoing State Government Coverage once CPB funding comes to an end (the “**Sustainability Plan(s)**”). Sustainability Plans are one of the elements that CPB will consider when reviewing grant applications.

Collaboration Plan (for Station Collaborations only)

The Collaboration Plan should outline the methods for regular communication and coordination among Partner Stations, as well as a description of how Partner Stations will brand State Government Coverage Content and leverage their respective platforms and audiences to expand reach and impact. Tools for promotion could include (but are not limited to):

- Regular schedules of on-air promos that guide the audience to where they can consume the Content on air and online;
- Website tiles that prominently promote the Content and link to other Partners’ websites;
- Search engine optimization;
- Ongoing social media campaigns, particularly around special series of programs.
- Community Engagement;
- Newsletters, and;
- Media outreach and advertisements in other media.

Each Partner Station needs a means of receiving and publishing Content. Reasonable direct costs incurred to interface the Partner Stations and distribute Content are eligible to be funded under this grant program.

The Collaboration Plan could also include shared reporting and other coordinated activities beyond distribution and promotion, but that is not a requirement.

CPB Funding Credits

Each funded applicant must recognize CPB funding support for the grant project by including a CPB logo (in accordance with CPB standards and approval) on its website in a prominent location consistent with the recognition provided to other funders. Where applicable, funded applicants must also provide CPB with reasonable on-air credit over the course of the normal broadcast of programming credits (including during podcasts).

On-air credit language should read as follows, “State Government Coverage is funded in part through a grant from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.” Applicants may propose alternate language subject to CPB approval.

IV. REQUIRED PROPOSAL CONTENTS

All applications must consist of:

- 1) **Summary paragraph** (Microsoft Word or Adobe format), a written (no longer than 200 words) summary, including:

- Name of applicant and primary contact information;
 - Names of any Partner Stations (or other collaborating organizations);
 - A short overview of the proposed activities, and;
 - The amount of the grant request.
- 2) **Project Narrative** (Microsoft Word or Adobe format), a written (maximum of 10 pages) description of the proposed State Government Coverage that outlines:
- The organization applying for the grant, a description of its existing production capacity, the local and state news ecosystem, and why it is well-positioned to implement efforts to grow state government coverage;
 - The RFP Goals the proposal seeks to address;
 - The Editorial Plan, which includes the Code of Ethics;
 - A list of existing news and/or public affairs staff, the proposed staffing structure, including new hires, and the Diversity Statement;
 - The Content and Content Deliverables, with minimum numbers of Treatments to be produced;
 - The Distribution Plan;
 - The Timeline;
 - The Measures of Success, which track progress against the stated RFP Goals, and
 - The Sustainability Plan to continue the work beyond the conclusion of CPB funding.

For Station Collaborations the narrative must include:

- The Lead Station applying for the grant, a description of its existing production capacity, the local news ecosystem, and why it is well-positioned to implement efforts to grow state government reporting;
- The Partner Stations involved in the grant activities, including a description of each Partner Station's current audience and news production capacity; and why they are working with the Lead Station;
- The RFP Goals the proposal seeks to address;
- The Editorial Plan, which includes the Code of Ethics;
- The Collaboration Plan, which delineates the communication process among Partner Stations, as well as the Distribution Plan, which describes the process for distribution, promotion, and branding of Content;
- A list of existing news and/or public affairs staff, the proposed staffing structure, including new hires, and the Diversity Statement by each partner;
- The Content and Content Deliverables, with minimum numbers of Treatments to be produced;
- The Timeline;
- The Measures of Success, which track progress against the stated RFP Goals, and
- The Sustainability Plan to continue the work beyond the conclusion of CPB funding.

3) **Letter(s) of Commitment from CEO(s)/General Manager(s) of Applicant (for Station Collaborations include Letters of Commitment from all Partner Station CEOs/General Managers)**

- 4) **Itemized Project Budget** (Microsoft Excel spreadsheet) showing revenues and expenses associated with the State Government Coverage for the two-year grant period. It should include a budget narrative (Microsoft Word or Adobe format) that describes how costs were calculated.

CPB may ask follow-up questions or request additional materials during review of the project application.

Do not submit content samples unless requested by CPB staff.

V. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following factors with the associated weight:

- A. **Approach & Staffing:** The reasonableness of the Editorial Plan and organizational/editorial structure (20 percent);
- B. **Readiness & Experience:** The capacity of applicants to successfully execute the work outlined in the proposal (20 percent);
- C. **Impact:** The anticipated impact on the local and state news ecosystem, and the extent to which this accomplishes the RFP's stated Goals (20 percent);
- D. **Sustainability:** The prospect of sustainability beyond CPB funding (20 percent);
- E. **Budget:** The reasonableness of the proposed budget (20 percent).

VI. PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Questions

All questions concerning the RFP must be submitted in writing to Nicole Stribling <nstribling@cpb.org> by Wednesday, **December 6, 2023**, with "State Government Coverage RFP" in the subject line. The questions and CPB's responses will be posted on CPB's Website without attribution.

CPB will conduct an Applicant webinar (the "**Webinar**") on **Thursday, December 14, 2023 at 1 p.m. ET** to answer questions submitted to CPB. Potential Applicants must register for the Webinar in advance by emailing Nicole Stribling <nstribling@cpb.org> by **December 6, 2023**.

Grants Management System Access

Please submit the technical and budget proposals through CPB's digital grants management system. To gain access, please send an email request to Nicole Stribling <nstribling@cpb.org> no later than **Wednesday, December 14, 2023**. Access will then be given to the electronic grants management system.

Required Formats

Technical Proposals and Budget Narratives must be in Microsoft Word or PDF. Budget Proposals must be Excel worksheets with calculations. Other formats will not be accepted.

Proposal Due Date

Proposals are due no later than **5:00pm ET on Wednesday, January 31, 2024** through CPB's grants management system. CPB will not consider proposals submitted after the due date.

CPB may request Applicants with the top scores to virtually present their proposals to CPB. If so, CPB will notify each of the time and date.

VII. TIMETABLE

Below is the anticipated timetable.

ACTIVITY	DATE
Deadline to Submit Questions and Register for Webinar	12/6/2023
Webinar	12/14/2023
Deadline to request access to CPB's electronic Grants Management System	12/14/2023
Proposal Submissions Due	1/31/2024
Proposal Review & Selection	1/31/2024-5/15/2024
Proposal Presentations to CPB - if required	
Contract Drafting & Execution	6/28/2024

VIII. PROPOSALS

CPB is not responsible for any costs incurred by Applicant in preparing and submitting its proposal in response to this RFP, or in performing any other activities relative to this solicitation. If a proposal is selected for funding, Applicant must sign a binding agreement that meets with CPB's approval (Agreement). Until the Agreement is executed by both parties, no express or implied commitment has been made to provide funding. Applicant is not authorized to commence any work until the Agreement is fully executed, nor will CPB compensate it for the same.

Applicant must guarantee that, among other things, any work it undertakes is not defamatory and will not violate or infringe upon the privacy rights, copyrights or other proprietary rights of any third party. Applicant must also agree to indemnify CPB against any loss resulting from breach of any of the representations and warranties in the Agreement.

The Agreement will contain additional requirements, including but not limited to the following:

1. **Applicant's Financial Position.** Applicant must demonstrate that it has adequate financial support to complete the work and to deliver reports and/or other intellectual property set forth in the Agreement.
2. **Record Keeping.** Except for the work that Applicant completes pursuant to a fixed price fee structure, Applicant must provide CPB with documentation that evidences the actual costs of the project (including timesheets or other relatively contemporaneous record-keeping documents), and supporting documentation that demonstrates that all costs were reasonable, necessary, and incurred for the project.

Applicant must maintain, for three years following the final payment for the project, all records related to the project, which shall be accessible to CPB and to the U.S. Comptroller General or other representatives of each for examination and audit purposes. Applicant will additionally

ensure that any subcontractors or consultants it engaged for the project also maintain such records for the same period and under the same terms.

3. **U.S. Comptroller Audits.** Applicant must provide CPB with a copy of any U.S. Comptroller General audit report issued in connection with the project.
4. **Equal Employment Laws.** Applicant must comply with all applicable equal employment opportunity and nondiscrimination laws and policies.
5. **Governing Law.** The Agreement shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the District of Columbia without regard to its conflict of law provisions.
6. **Restrictions.** Applicant is strictly prohibited from using any funds provided by CPB:
 - a. for any activity designed to influence legislation or appropriations pending before the United States Congress or any state legislature; or
 - b. to conduct any reception or provide any other entertainment for any officer or employee of the federal government or any state or local government.
7. **CPB's Appropriation.** CPB's primary source of funding is appropriations made by the U.S. Congress. Therefore, if CPB's appropriation is reduced and that reduction materially affects CPB's ability to meet its obligations under the Agreement, then CPB and Applicant, at CPB's discretion, may agree to enter good faith negotiations to modify the Agreement.
8. **Research and Materials.** All research and materials created, developed, compiled or produced pursuant to or as a result of this project (including but not limited to all reports) will be considered ordered and commissioned by CPB as works made for hire under the copyright laws, and made in the course of services rendered. If, for any reason, the proposed research and materials to be provided are not considered works made for hire under the copyright laws, then Applicant will be required to assign all right, title and interest in and to such research and materials to CPB. Applicant further agrees that neither it, nor any of its subcontractors, will have any copyrights or other intellectual property rights whatsoever in any research and/or materials created, developed, compiled or produced by them or by any subcontractor, or by any third party participating in the preparation of research or materials for this project.

IX. CPB TERMS

This RFP does not constitute an agreement by CPB to extend funding to any party. CPB may, in its sole discretion, elect not to pursue this project. Proposals submitted in response to this RFP shall be valid for at least 90 days following the closing date.

CPB is not responsible for loss or damage to material that Applicant provides to CPB in conjunction with this RFP. Upon submission, said information shall become CPB's property (not including any intellectual property rights contained in such submission), and CPB is not required to return the same. Applicant is responsible for any violation of copyright, trademark, patent, trade secret, or other rights related to such material. Additional terms follow.

9. **Multiple Applications.** Neither multiple nor alternate applications will be accepted.
10. **Confidential Information.** Applicant should clearly identify any portion of its proposal that it considers confidential, proprietary commercial information or trade secrets.
11. **Subcontractors.** Applicant must identify all subcontractors and advisors and include a description of their roles.
12. **Exceptions.** Applicants selected for funding are deemed to have accepted the terms in this RFP. Any exceptions to these terms must be clearly identified in their proposals. CPB, at its sole discretion, may reject proposals that include exceptions.
13. **CPB Information.** In reviewing Applicant's proposal, if CPB's shares materials, data, other information and analyses (collectively, "Information") with Applicant, Applicant shall be deemed to agree to protect, preserve and maintain all such Information on a strictly confidential basis, and to promptly return to CPB, upon its request, all tangible copies of such Information in Applicant's possession.
14. **Proposals.** By submitting a proposal, Applicant grants to CPB the right to duplicate, use, disclose, and distribute any of the materials submitted for purposes of evaluation, review and research. In addition, Applicant guarantees that it has full and complete rights to all information and materials included in its proposal and guarantees that such materials are not defamatory and do not infringe upon or violate the privacy rights, copyrights, or other proprietary rights of any third party.

X. EXPENSE GUIDELINES

Travel expenses incurred by non-CPB staff (including consultants) need to be itemized in the Non-Employee Expense Form. Each expense of \$25.00 or more must be supported by an original receipt. Expenses requiring CPB approval must evidence such approval. Reimbursement of travel expenses is subject to the following limitations:

1. **Transportation:** Only coach or economy class airfare, rail fare or bus fare will be reimbursed towards travel expenses. Travelers must make every effort to plan travel and book transportation sufficiently in advance so as to realize cost savings, and are required to accept the lowest fare available for the required itinerary. Final fare coach may be used only in unusual and/or special circumstances and, in each such instance, a detailed explanation shall be provided, and reimbursement shall be contingent upon approval by CPB.

Private automobile use will be reimbursed at the prevailing IRS rate, but not in excess of the lowest available airfare. Taxicab (and rideshare) fare will be reimbursed to the extent reasonable and necessary. Rental car expense will be reimbursed only when the daily taxi (or rideshare) fare would exceed the per-day car rental rate, or when no other convenient and less expensive form of ground transportation is available. Travelers may rent intermediate-size vehicles.

2. Lodging: CPB will only reimburse for reasonable, standard rate, single room accommodations and appropriate incidental charges (i.e., tax). Incidental expenses incurred for comfort, grooming or personal enjoyment, such as airline and room movies, haircuts, shaving equipment, shoe shines, etc., are not eligible for reimbursement.
3. Meals: CPB will reimburse for meals up to a total of \$75.00 per day for domestic travel, provided that meals are not otherwise furnished or included in connection with an activity.
