Program Description + FAQs
Startup + Innovation Grant Fund

Program Overview
The Arizona Local News Foundation's **Startup + Innovation Grant** supports Arizona news organizations seeking to launch new projects, expand community connections, or test innovative approaches to local journalism.

Scope of Work
Arizona news organizations can apply to be a grantee of the Startup + Grant Program. These grants (available from $1,000 to $10,000) are designed to empower newsrooms to take risks, innovate, and bring ambitious ideas to life.

Examples of work could include: Technology for digital projects, funds for community-focused reporting/connection (Town Hall, Roundtable Conversation), and testing a new approach to local storytelling. Approved funds are available for the 2026 calendar year.

The Startup + Innovation Grant application includes:

- Organization Information (Employer Identification Number (EIN)*, Business Plan* Number of Employees, etc.)
- Project Description (Purpose, goals, community impact)
- Innovation Statement (Why this is new, needed, or transformative)
- Timeline & Work Plan (When funding is needed)
- Budget & Use of Funds (Listing cost of specific items needed to complete project)

*If startup newsroom with less than two years of published work.

Awarded newsroom grantees will be individually notified of the payment schedule depending on the approved project.

Click here to access application: Startup + Innovation Grant Application – Fill out form

Eligibility & Requirements

The application deadline for the first cycle of this grant program is March 13. Additional grant funding is anticipated to open in Fall 2026.

This grant is available to local news brands that have been in business for at **least six months** and consistently produce local information about Arizona communities that complies with the Society of Professional Journalists' code of ethics policy.

News organizations can apply for funding to support **one new project**. The Arizona Local News Foundation Board of Directors will make final determinations for all grant awards.

Newsrooms grantees will be responsible for **regular reporting to the Arizona Local News Foundation** with the following metrics:

1) Progress of the project
2) Impact on community, readers, viewers, etc.
3) Success stories
4) Challenges faced during the project

A condition of accepting this grant is assurance that this monetary grant will be used fully and exclusively on the approved project.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is an example of a successful outcome from this grant?
A: A project or startup that shows substantial change that would not have been possible without this grant. Examples of this could include: Creating community events with journalists (Town Hall, Roundtable Conversation), experimenting with different storytelling that increases metrics, digital investments (Streaming, Podcasting, etc.), journalism training that can be used in storytelling.

Q: How will the applications be scored?
A: An Arizona Local News Foundation Committee will rank each application, while the Board of Directors will give final approval. The Committee and the Board of Directors will consider the following while ranking applications: Organization Information, Project Description, Innovation Statement, Timeline & Work Plan, and Budget.

Q. What entities are eligible to apply for this grant program?
A: This grant is available to local media brands in Arizona that have been in business for at least six months and consistently produce local information about Arizona communities that complies with the Society of Professional Journalists' code of ethics policy. Producing this information must be the primary focus of an eligible organization. Organizations do NOT need to be members of the Arizona Media Association (the Arizona Local News Foundation's sister organization) to be eligible to apply for a grant.

Q: The application mentions anticipated grant awards of up to $10,000. How is that determined, and how should we determine the size of the grant we request?

A: The Program intends to fund as many innovative projects as possible in Arizona. Applicants should be very specific about the funding needed for items requested in this grant. Grant applications will be awarded up to $10,000. News organizations with smaller funding projects (starting at $1,000) are also strongly encouraged to apply.

Q: Can startup news organizations apply?
A: Yes, applicants must show at least six months of news coverage in their community to be eligible. Those organizations should include a business plan and tax information on the application. If a news organization is just shy of meeting this mark during the application process, there will be another opportunity to apply in Fall 2026.

Q: What are the reporting requirements for grantees participating in this program?
A: Grantees are required to report to the Arizona Local News Foundation regularly. During reporting, the grantee must report progress on the approved project. Including but not limited to status of project, next steps, short narrative, budget check-in, impact, learnings, and deliverables.

Q: When will newsrooms be notified of acceptance into the program?
A: Award announcements will be sent within 4-6 weeks of the portal closing.
Selected newsrooms will receive: Formal award letter, Grant agreement, Payment schedule, and Reporting expectations.

Q: When can the grantee expect grant funds to be awarded?
A: Funding will be allocated based on the applicant's needs, which will be specified on the application. (Example: 50% at start of grant participation, 50% four months into program)

Q: What happens if a grantee is not following the terms of the grant program?
A: In the event a grantee is not in compliance with the terms described above, a warning letter will be issued to the organization with a request for immediate correction. If the organization is found to be continually operating outside the terms of the agreement after another 30 days, the Foundation retains the right to terminate future funding and relationship with no further notice.

Please email foundation@azmedia.org with any questions.