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## Accelerate Local announces NewsFuel project to build matchmaking platform for journalism grants

*Project funded by Google News Initiative Innovation Challenge*

(October 25, 2019) – Accelerate Local, designed by Local Media Association to reinvent business models for news, today announced a project to create NewsFuel, a “matchmaking” platform that connects funding entities with news organizations seeking grants for journalism projects.



NewsFuel launches with \$300,000 in funding announced today from the Google News Initiative Innovation Challenge. The project is one of 34 initiatives in North America that received GNI funding in this round.

“The demand for quality journalism and reporting in local communities is strong, yet there are significant hurdles to meeting this critical need,” said Jed Williams, chief strategy officer, Local Media Association. “NewsFuel seeks to change this by connecting journalism funders and local news organizations with greater efficiency and ease. Ultimately, our goal is to enable local media to better meet the information needs of the communities they serve.”

The project will combine development of a grant/recipient matching platform with subject-matter expertise to identify prospective funders, news organizations, and journalism projects.

NewsFuel aims to address critical issues reducing overall capacity for local journalism:

- Many local media organizations are cutting local and investigative reporting resources just to survive, even as the need for quality local journalism grows. News executives need to know how to find sources of grants or other financial

backing for journalism projects, and what types of programs and media entities are eligible for such funding.

- Many foundations and other giving organizations would like to fund journalism projects, but don't have an easy way to connect with news organizations and identify their best, most qualified projects for funding. They have limited resources to track and monitor compliance and overall performance toward a project's objectives.

"Direct funding of quality local journalism is a fast-emerging new business model. NewsFuel will create an environment for funders and news organizations to find each other much more easily, and help facilitate the whole process," said Peter Newton, managing director, Accelerate Local.

Accelerate Local expects the first phase of technology development for NewsFuel to lead to a "minimum viable product" release of the matching platform by the second quarter of 2020, Newton said. Later phases may include increasing sophistication in matching logic and more application tracking capabilities for both grant-makers and journalism organizations seeking funds.

"The first GNI North America Innovation Challenge attracted an amazing field of applicants looking to stimulate the local news space with ideas and energy," said Ludovic Blecher, head of GNI's Innovation Challenges. "It was a tough shortlist to whittle down to the final selection but we're very proud to now be able to support 34 great projects focused on an important topic for the industry. We look forward to what lessons they all learn so that we can share with the wider news ecosystem."

## *About Accelerate Local*

Cracking the code to build a viable future for journalism will take far more than any one person or company can provide. Created by Local Media Association and backed by its deep partner network, Accelerate Local (<https://www.localmedia.org/accelerate-local/>) — "Reinventing Business Models for News" — fuses the experience of local media with the ingenuity and strength of leading tech providers and entrepreneurs to reinvent business models that support a healthy local news ecosystem.

## *About Local Media Association*

Local Media Association (<https://www.localmedia.org/>) is a thriving and innovative organization that serves more than 3,000 newspapers, TV stations, digital news sites, radio stations, directories and research & development partners. LMA is the only industry trade organization that brings all local media together for the purpose of sharing, networking, collaborating and learning. The association's focus is on future business models and maximizing opportunities on the digital side of the business. This is accomplished via cutting-edge programs including its business model accelerator, Accelerate Local, as well as conferences, webinars, research, training, innovation missions, chief digital clubs and more.

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