
REQUEST FOR IDEAS

Feb. 22, 2012

Introduction

The Robert R. McCormick Foundation's Journalism Program is launching *Why News Matters*, a grantmaking program designed to enhance news literacy skills and programs in Chicago. The McCormick Foundation plans to invest as much as \$6 million over the next three years in the *Why News Matters* initiative.

News literacy is the ability to use critical thinking skills to judge the reliability and credibility of news reports and information sources. It enables citizens to become smarter consumers and creators of fact-based information. It helps them develop informed perspectives and the navigational skills to become effective citizens in a digitally connected society. News literacy programs also emphasize the importance of news and information, the value of reliable sources and appreciation of First Amendment freedoms.

The *Why News Matters* initiative will build on the strong news literacy youth and teacher training programs that have been the core of the McCormick Foundation's journalism funding since 2009. Since then, we've learned more about young people and how they access news and information. But we also have much to learn. In addition to our youth work, we hope to expand the initiative to engage broader Chicago-area audiences.

Goal

The goal of this Request for Ideas is to significantly expand news literacy efforts throughout Chicago. We will solicit ideas and then fund a portfolio of high-impact projects. Organizations selected for funding will carry out multi-faceted approaches of expanding news literacy efforts throughout the Chicago area. We believe the *Why News Matters* initiative will yield a better informed and civically engaged citizenry.

Need

With the overwhelming flood of information, it's harder than ever for consumers to distinguish news from noise. A 2010 Pew Research Center survey found that 70 percent of respondents feel overwhelmed by the amount of news and information from different sources, and 72 percent think most sources of news are biased.

A healthy 21st Century democracy relies on informed citizens with the ability to access and analyze information. For example, preliminary research from Stony Brook University shows that students who have taken a news literacy course are more likely to register to vote and increase their exposure to news sources than students who have not taken the course.

We ask your assistance to help Chicagoans understand *Why News Matters*. Media organizations, high schools, universities, two-year colleges, community organizations, libraries and others all have a role to play. To learn more, view this [brief video](#).

Scope

The McCormick Foundation is looking for innovative ideas to extend our reach and impact in news literacy to Chicagoans of all ages and backgrounds. We are interested in supporting projects that address:

- **Education:** Integrate news literacy into public schools, after-school programs and community education settings. *May include blending news literacy into Common Core classroom lessons.*
- **Training:** Provide opportunities for Chicagoans to learn and teach others about news literacy. *May include curriculum for adults and train-the-trainer workshops.*
- **Awareness & Engagement:** Increase public understanding of news literacy principles. *May include marketing campaigns, social media, web portals, apps, games, art programs and public service announcements.*
- **Research & Evaluation:** Evaluate the impact of news literacy on student performance and civic engagement. *May include program evaluation, design and implementation of assessment tools and other research on a sector-wide or project-level basis.*

Why News Matters will not replace the Journalism Program's current grantmaking framework of Content, Audience and Rights. Rather, it is intended to better focus the current framework and make it more effective in addressing news literacy needs in Chicago. To better understand the CAR grantmaking framework, review the [Journalism Grantmaking Guidelines](#) and our current [Logic Model](#). We anticipate that most *Why News Matters* projects will fall under the Audience category of funding, while a few may fall within the Content and Rights categories.

Learning and Action Agenda

At its best, news literacy programs help citizens develop critical thinking skills, civic responsibility and respect for First Amendment freedoms. There are many aspects of news literacy we hope to better understand in coming years. Here are some of the questions we have discussed in creating *Why News Matters*:

- *To what degree will civic engagement and knowledge of current events increase through news literacy programs?*
- *How do news literacy programs impact student success?*
- *What are the most effective ways to engage middle school, high school and college students in news literacy?*
- *Research indicates that the principles of news literacy are best learned through interactive, hands-on learning. Do students make strides in news literacy by creating and consuming content that addresses topics of importance to youth?*
- *Can news literacy content be incorporated into curriculum implementing Common Core standards? What other opportunities are there to apply the values of news literacy in Common Core curriculum?*
- *What are the most effective ways to engage adults and seniors in news literacy activities?*
- *Can news literacy be incorporated with existing adult literacy programs? What about existing job training programs?*
- *Are there strategies for engaging specific ethnic groups?*

- *What role can youth play in teaching people of all ages the principles of news literacy?*
- *Is there potential for news literacy programs to collaborate with other literacies – financial, health and civic?*
- *How does news literacy overlap with Digital Literacy, Information Literacy and Media Literacy?*
- *Are there effective ways for news organizations to engage their audiences in news literacy?*
- *What shared activities, web portals, and collective learning might help bring ‘glue’ to the individual projects funded through this initiative?*

Please visit our *Why News Matters* [resources page](#) for links to news literacy programs and research.

Application

To apply, register as a user and fill out this [brief application form](#) on our online application system. https://www.grantrequest.com/SID_1449?SA=SNA&FID=35018 Note: If you are a new user to our online application system, you'll need to enter your e-mail address and create a password. If you already are registered with us, you can use your existing McCormick Grant Request log in and password. (Current grantees: This is the same log in and password you used to complete your year-end grant reports).

The application form includes:

- Your idea: Give us your elevator pitch. (100 words or less)
- Audience: Who would your initiative target and why? (50 words or less)
- Timeline: Provide a rough overview of the timeframe. (50 words or less)
- Budget: What is the estimated cost of the program? (25 words or less)
- Mission statement: Copy and paste your organization’s mission statement.
- Expertise: Why is your organization suited to carry out the project? (50 words or less)
- Evaluation: How you would evaluate the impact of your project? (50 words or less)
- Additional thoughts: Anything else you’d like to add.(50 words or less)

The deadline for submissions is **April 2, 2012**. Organizations can apply with more than one idea. If your application is selected, we will contact you by late April to request a more detailed letter of inquiry. By **mid-June**, selected applicants will be invited to submit full proposals.

Grant winners will be notified in **September 2012** and will receive their funding in **January 2013**.

Ideas can be submitted by 501c3 nonprofit organizations, as well as individuals and businesses partnering with tax-exempt organizations. If you are invited to submit a final proposal, you must select a fiscal agent that is a 501c3.

This initiative is focused on the Chicago area, though we will consider select national programs that impact on news literacy in Chicago.

Funding

The Foundation plans to invest as much as \$2 million in 2013 in the *Why News Matters* initiative, and we anticipate investing another \$4 million in the following two years. A few grants will have budgets of more than \$50,000 a year, but most will be funded at less than \$50,000

In 2013, the majority of projects are likely to be one-year demonstration grants. A select group may be funded for two years or longer. We are in the final stages of developing a news literacy logic model that will shape *Why News Matters* as a multi-year initiative around tiered outcomes.

Consult the *Why News Matters* section of the [McCormick Media Matters program blog](#), which will include a list of FAQs, additional resources and information on upcoming Q&A sessions and webinars. We look forward to hearing from you by April 2, 2012.

If you have questions or comments, please e-mail Aaron Smith at asmith@mccormickfoundation.org. The Journalism Program staff will review your question and get back to you by phone or e-mail.

Frequently Asked Questions

General Questions

1. **Why is your application called a Request for Ideas (RFI), rather than a Request for Proposals?**

At this time, we are asking for ideas rather than letters of inquiry or full proposals. To apply, you must fill out a brief application form on our application online system, providing a brief summary of your idea as well as information on your organization.

2. **What is news literacy?**

News literacy is the ability to use critical thinking skills to judge the reliability and credibility of news reports and information sources. It enables citizens to become smarter consumers and creators of fact-based information. It helps them develop informed perspectives and the navigational skills to become effective citizens in a digitally connected society. News literacy programs also emphasize the importance of news and information, the value of reliable sources and appreciation of First Amendment freedoms.

News literacy can overlap with other instructional theories, including Digital Literacy, Information Literacy and Media Literacy. Each occupies and promotes different skills sets at the intersection of digital media and critical thinking. All have a role to play in news literacy.

3. **How exactly is news literacy similar to—and different from—the other literacies (digital, information, media, etc.)?**

News literacy is the new kid on the block, but has a great deal of overlap with fields such as Civic Literacy, Digital Literacy, Information Literacy and Media Literacy, among others. Here are basic definitions and links to begin exploring:

Civic Literacy focuses on people's participation in civic life, emphasizing their knowing how to stay informed, being aware of and exercising their rights, and understanding the implications of civic decisions. **Resource:** Partnership for 21st Century Skills website:

<http://www.p21.org/overview/skills-framework/258>

Digital Literacy refers to people's ability to locate and effectively analyze information using digital technology. **Resource:** Digital Literacy report by Common Sense Media: <http://www.common Sense Media.org/digitalliteracy>

Information Literacy focuses on people's ability to locate, evaluate and effectively use information. Resource: American Library Association's website for more on information literacy: <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/informationliteracycompetency>

Media Literacy is the ability access, analyze and create media as well as a framework for understanding the role of media in society. Resource: Media Literacy website for the California-based Center for Media Literacy: <http://www.medialit.org/reading-room/what-media-literacy-definitionand-more>

4. **How does the *Why News Matters* initiative fit into the Content, Audience and Rights framework?**

Why News Matters will not replace the Journalism Program's current grantmaking framework of Content, Audience and Rights. Rather, it is intended to better focus the current framework and make it more effective in addressing News literacy needs in Chicago. Review journalism program's [Grantmaking Guidelines](#) to better understand the CAR grantmaking framework, visit. Also, click here to view our current [Logic Model](#). Most *Why News Matters* projects will fall under the Audience category of funding, while a few may fit within the Content and Rights categories.

5. **Do I have to be a Chicago-based organization to apply?**

No. While Chicago is the focus for the *Why News Matters* initiative, we will consider non-Chicago applicants that can make a strong case for how their proposed idea can impact a Chicago audience. This could mean partnering with a Chicago organization as part of your proposed work.

6. **Do I have to be a non-profit to apply?**

No. Ideas can be submitted by 501c3 nonprofit organizations, as well as individuals and businesses partnering with tax-exempt organizations. If you are invited to submit a final proposal, you must select a fiscal agent that is a 501c3.

7. **Our organization doesn't have a background in journalism or news, but we really want to get into news literacy. Can I still apply?**

Yes. We encourage organizations (arts, theater, game design) to apply. We anticipate viable applications from organizations that demonstrate strong working partnerships with organizations that have expertise in journalism training and news literacy.

8. **Can we re-apply with the same idea through the [May 1 letter of inquiry process](#) if our application is not selected for a *Why News Matters* grant?**

Applying for the *Why News Matters* does not preclude you from being able to submit a separate grant request on May 1, but please do not submit the same idea twice.

9. **What are the criteria that will be used to judge the applications?**

We are looking for creative ideas that address the goals of *Why News Matters*. As we review the proposals we will be looking at several criteria in evaluating proposals, including:

- Relevance of proposal to program priority areas
- Potential project impact
- Proposal originality
- Organization track record
- Ability to build on existing work and knowledge in news literacy
- Ability to connect proposal to McCormick Foundation priority areas

10. If I have a question about my application or my idea for *Why News Matters*, whom do I contact?

Please e-mail your questions and inquiries to Aaron Smith, administrative officer, at ASmith@McCormickFoundation.org. The Journalism Program staff will review your question and get back to you by phone or e-mail.

Program staff will also be available to answer your questions at the following informational sessions and online Q&A events:

March 9, 2012, 3 pm CT

Why News Matters Informational Webinar Featuring Journalism Program Director Clark Bell and Program Officers Mark Hallett and Janet Liao. Call in information: TBD

[Click here to register now>](#)

March 16, 2012, 3 pm CT

Why News Matters Informational Session: Featuring [Dean Miller](#), Director of the Center for News Literacy. Location: 205 N. Michigan Ave. Suite 4300, Chicago, IL 60601.

[Click here to register now>](#)

March 27, 2012, 3 pm CT

Why News Matters Informational Session: Featuring [Geanne Rosenberg](#), Baruch College. Location: 205 N. Michigan Ave. Suite 4300, Chicago, IL 60601. Time: 3 pm

[Click here to register now>](#)

11. When will I hear back about my application? What are the next steps?

If your application is selected, we will contact you by the end of April to request a more detailed letter of inquiry. If you are not selected, you will be notified by letter or e-mail.

By mid-June, a select group will be asked to submit full proposals.

12. When will I receive funding if my project is selected?

Grant winners will be notified in September 2012 and will receive their funding in January 2013.

13. Can I request multi-year funding? What is the range of grant amounts being rewarded?

We expect to invest about \$2 million in 2013 in *Why News Matters* projects. In addition, we anticipate investing another \$4 million in the following two years. A few grants will have budgets of more than \$50,000 a year, but most will be funded at less than \$50,000.

In 2013, the majority of projects are likely to be one-year demonstration grants. A select group may be funded for two years or longer. We are in the final stages of developing a news

literacy logic model that will shape *Why News Matters* as a multi-year initiative around tiered outcomes.

14. Can I submit more than one idea?

Yes. We've kept the application form short and simple, and encourage you to share your viable ideas. Each idea should be submitted as a separate application.

15. How do I apply?

To apply, fill out this [brief application form](#) on our online application system. Note: If you are a new user, you'll need to enter your e-mail address and create a password. If you already are registered with us, you can use your existing McCormick Grant Request log in and password. (Current grantees: This is the same log in and password you used to complete your year-end grant reports).

16. What websites will help us learn about news literacy?

Please visit our *Why News Matters* [resources page](#) for links to news literacy programs and research.

17. Are there additional roles that McCormick Foundation hopes groups will play to support the sector that are NOT laid out in the Request for Ideas? What are they?

The Journalism Program plans to support initiatives meant to add "glue" to the work of all of the individual partners in this initiative. This might include evaluation work, convening *Why News Matters* partners and creating an online hub for information-sharing. We want to find ways to help the sum of our grantees' work become bigger than the individual parts.

Questions from Current Grantees

18. My grant expires at the end of the year and I want to apply to renew funding for my current program. Do I have to submit both a *Why New Matters* application by April 2 and a Letter of Inquiry by May 1?

If your project is not primarily focused on the scope of *Why News Matters*, we recommend that you submit a letter of inquiry through our normal grantmaking process by May 1, 2012. If you wish to also qualify for a *Why News Matters* grant, please submit a separate application by April 2. In some situations, organizations seeking to renew grants may end up developing a proposal that addresses news literacy.

19. I'm a current grantee and our projects already encompass youth media, youth journalism and news literacy. Should I submit a *Why News Matters* application if I have an idea that is separate from my current program?

If you wish to also qualify for a *Why News Matters* grant, please submit a separate application by April 2, 2012. If your project is not primarily focused on the scope of *Why News Matters*, we recommend that you submit a letter of inquiry through our normal grantmaking process by May 1, 2012.

20. We are a grantee of the Foundation in another area (i.e. Civics, Communities). Can we still apply to the *Why News Matters* initiative?

Yes, McCormick already partners with select organizations that meet the guidelines in more than one program, so certainly this is possible under the *Why News Matters* initiative.

Informational Sessions & Webinars

The Robert R. McCormick Foundation has issued a Request for Ideas to individuals and organizations interested in helping to discover *Why News Matters*.

The application, due April 2, 2012, is now live and can be accessed online.

In March, we will be hosting two in-person informational sessions and a webinar about our news literacy initiative, *Why News Matters*.

Program staff will also be available to answer your questions at the following informational sessions and online Q&A events.

You must register to attend these events. In-person events will be capped at 20 participants. For those who are unable to attend, the sessions will be video recorded and posted for later viewing.

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Why News Matters Informational Webinar Featuring Journalism Program Director Clark Bell and Program Officers Mark Hallett and Janet Liao. Call in information: TBD

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If you have other questions or inquiries, e-mail Aaron Smith (ASmith@McCormickFoundation.org).

Resources

Here is more information about our impact and evaluation strategy, as well as our current research projects.

Impact & Evaluation

A news literacy evaluation logic model is being developed for the *Why News Matters* initiative. The model will provide baseline indicators and desired targets for the short-and long-term.

To date, our progress indicators (benchmarks for success) in news literacy have focused on:

- Number of schools implementing news literacy.
- Number of students reached by news literacy training.
- Number of youth journalism programs infusing news literacy into curriculum.
- Number of teachers trained in news literacy.

In the longer term (2015), we aim to achieve the following targets:

- CPS adopts a news literacy curriculum.
- Expand news literacy classes at local colleges and universities
- Extend reach of news literacy programs throughout Chicago.

Under *Why News Matters*, we are looking to expand our indicators to address questions in the Learning & Action Agenda section of the Request for Ideas.

Click here for a more comprehensive look at our program [logic model](#).

Current Research Projects

To help us reach long-term targets, McCormick is partnering on several projects to evaluate the impact of news literacy training on young people. The effort includes developing a set of reliable tools for measuring news literacy impact that is shared with other funders, government leaders, school officials, teachers and parents. The evaluation initiatives in progress are summarized below.

Harvard's Berkman Center for Internet and Society is carrying out a multi-faceted project with McCormick funding to identify the news literacy approaches with the most impact on conducting focus groups in four cities, to help design a curriculum and toolkit. The goal of the [Youth and Media Lab](#) is to illuminate best practices from various disciplines to feed news literacy knowledge and practice.

What we will learn: Knowing how youth use the internet should feed news literacy programs and help them better engage their intended audience. What lessons can the news literacy movement draw from information literacy, media literacy, and youth media to help feed news literacy curricula?

University of Missouri: The McCormick Journalism Program is partnering with [Stephanie Craft](#) of the University of Missouri to explore a variety of [news literacy evaluation issues](#). This project will help determine if levels of news media literacy go hand in hand with pro-social attitudes and behaviors such as interest in current affairs, voting and other forms of civic engagement. Prof. Craft has created a survey tool but will conduct focus groups to further improve the model and then conduct a citywide survey of diverse Chicago teens.

What we will learn: What is the relationship between news literacy knowledge and attitudes toward civic engagement? What is the relationship between participants in youth media and scholastic programs and news literacy awareness? What are the best indicators to assess levels of news media literacy?

McCormick Foundation's 2012 News Literacy Grantees

- [Research Foundation for City of New York](#) (Baruch College) for a NYC high school [journalism initiative & news literacy symposium](#).
- [City Colleges](#) of Chicago Foundation for student media production and news literacy curriculum.
- [Common Sense Media](#) for [after school journalism training](#).
- [Florida Gulf Coast University](#) for [newsmaker digital conversations](#) with news literacy students.
- Harvard University-Berkman Center for [Youth & Social Media Lab](#) research.
- [Heartland Alliance Social Impact Research Center](#) for evaluation of youth media initiatives.
- [Radio & Television Digital News Association](#) for [news literacy training](#).
- [Pulitzer Center](#) for support of [Chicago youth media classroom project](#).
- [Strategic Human Services/North Lawndale Community](#) for news internships and [news literacy training](#).

- [News Literacy Project](#) for news literacy programs in Chicago Public Schools, including [Mt. Vernon Elementary](#).
- Stony Brook Foundation Inc. for [news literacy training & curriculum](#).
- Univ. of Missouri for [news literacy evaluation](#).

Previous News Literacy Conferences

Setting Learning Goals for News Literacy. Prof. Geanne Rosenberg of Baruch College directed the November 2010 Inaugural High School News Literacy Summit for high school students, educators and observers from journalism and youth media institutions. Baruch also hosted a dinner/brainstorming session for news/media/digital/information literacy funders, leaders and educators. As you set your own news literacy goals, check out the News Literacy Learning Goals that came out of the convening.

Stony Brook University News Literacy Conference. Visit the News Literacy Conference web site chronicling the first national conference on News Literacy. If you didn't participate in the conference, this is an opportunity to "attend" the conference yourself. Stony Brook has arranged several layers of navigation so you can spend just a few minutes or a few hours exploring the conference. You will learn what News Literacy is. You will meet the conference attendees, including university presidents and top news media leaders. You can watch a presentation on how a course in News Literacy already is being taught to thousands of undergraduates at Stony Brook University. You can experience the conference "breakout" sessions for yourself and hear about a "Big Idea."