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## **New Mexico State Legislature Provides Landmark Support for Local News**

### ***Department of Workforce Solutions partners with Local News Fund to expand Fellowship program***

May 16, 2023 – SANTA FE, NM – In a pioneering move to support local news, the New Mexico State Legislature and Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham approved an appropriation of \$125,000 to the Department of Workforce Solutions to expand the Local News Fellowships and Internships program run by the New Mexico Local News Fund and the Department of Communication and Journalism at the University of New Mexico. This bipartisan support will nearly double the number of fellows and interns in the program, helping create a pipeline of diverse emerging journalists for New Mexico newsrooms. This move by state leaders sends a clear message: local news matters.

“We need a new generation of local journalists to connect New Mexicans to their communities and the issues they care about,” said Department of Workforce Solutions Cabinet Secretary Sarita Nair. “These internships and fellowships give students a firsthand look at a career in reporting while also helping companies cultivate the next wave of talent and perspectives. This program falls right in line with our mission to help every New Mexican find a rewarding job that matches their skills and passions.”

This move follows a national trend of states supporting local news, especially in underserved communities. In 2018, New Jersey created and funded an independent Civic Information Consortium to give grants to support local news and information providers, and in 2022 California created a local news fellowship program similar to New Mexico’s. Many of these efforts are being nurtured by the Rebuild Local News Coalition (<https://www.rebuildlocalnews.org/>).

The New Mexico Local News Fellowships program is entering its fifth year, connecting current journalism students and recent graduates to newsrooms around the state. The fellows are paid a competitive salary and assigned a mentor for the nine-month program. Out of the first 16 fellows in the program, the majority are working full time in local newsrooms. Candidates are selected by an independent committee led by faculty from University of New Mexico, New Mexico State University and Eastern New Mexico University with representatives from journalism organizations.

“When we first researched the local news ecosystem in New Mexico a few years ago, we realized that many talented journalism graduates had to move away from the state for their first jobs,” said Rashad Mahmood, executive director of the Local News Fund. “This program has a proven track record of helping diverse graduates get their journalism careers started here in New Mexico.”

The bill to support local news was sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Peter Wirth (D-Santa Fe), who became a champion for expanding the fellowship program.

“I was happy to sponsor legislation to expand the local news fellowship program and see the funding make it into the budget,” Wirth said. “Our democracy functions best when everyone has

access to credible news and information. Newspapers across the nation are struggling and news deserts are a real problem, particularly in rural communities. Providing opportunities for young journalists to stay here in New Mexico and create meaningful connections serving their local communities will meet a critical jobs need while helping to inform New Mexicans across the state.”

The program pays interns and fellows who participate in the program, while UNM provides a training boot camp in the summer before work begins. Here are some key impacts of the program so far:

- In the last year, 4 fellows won awards including from the New Mexico Press Association and Society of Professional Journalists.
- 74% of fellows and interns are people of color.
- 67% of fellows and interns are women.
- 46% of current participants identify as LGBTQ+.

“This program has demonstrated the value of investing in local news and in the next generation of journalists and I’m so happy the state recognizes that,” said Program Manager Gwyneth Doland. “This new funding allows us to expand our reach deeper into rural communities that are among the most underserved, including Roswell, Clovis, Deming and Belen.”

Learn more about the Local News Fellowship program here: <http://newmexicolocalnewsfellowships.org/>

### **About the New Mexico Local News Fund:**

The New Mexico Local News Fund aims to grow the ecosystem of local news across our state to better serve the information needs of all New Mexicans. To accomplish that ambitious goal, we work with both existing newsrooms and trusted community organizations. Our goal is ultimately for everyone to have access to the local news and information they need to thrive. Learn more here: <https://www.nmlocalnews.org/>

### **About the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions:**

The New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions (NMDWS) oversees the New Mexico public workforce system. The department is committed to supporting the business community through special recruitment, analyzing hard to fill jobs, layoffs, job fairs, and skills assessments for hiring; and assisting New Mexicans seeking employment opportunities with job search, job referrals and placement, and customized skill development such as interviewing skills and resume writing. The department administers programs to include business services; workforce training; Unemployment Insurance; labor law enforcement; veterans’ services; and labor market information. Learn more here: <https://www.dws.state.nm.us/en-us>

### **About the Communication & Journalism Department at the University of New Mexico:**

Founded in 1889, the University of New Mexico is a Carnegie Research I institution ranked nationally as a “[Top Public School](#),” “[Best Global University](#)” and “[Best National University](#).” New Mexico is a majority minority state and UNM is a Hispanic Serving Institution where about 43 percent of students are Hispanic and more than 5 percent are Native American. The Department of Communication and Journalism creates excellence in learning through academic scholarship, teaching and service to the community and the field. The faculty are

nationally and internationally renowned and are known on campus as excellent teachers, regularly winning university-wide awards. Learn more here: <https://cjdept.unm.edu/>

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