Press Forward Vermont Matching Challenge Grant 2026-27

Vermont Community Foundation

Guidelines

Press Forward Vermont is inviting local newsrooms across the state to participate in a new fundraising opportunity as part of Local News Day 2027.

Up to 20 Vermont newsrooms will be selected to receive free fundraising training, ready-to-use tools, and **the chance to triple the money they raise** from their audiences in April 2027.

Whether you're new to fundraising or already have experience, we encourage you to apply. This pilot program is designed to meet you where you are, helping newsrooms of all sizes build stronger relationships with their communities and grow local support.

Open to nonprofit, locally owned for-profit, and public media newsrooms across Vermont, including college and student newsrooms that serve the broader community.

Applications open November 2 and close December 1, 2026, at 5pm ET.

This opportunity is presented by Press Forward, Press Forward Vermont, and Local News Day.

Instructions and Program Guidelines

Please read the information and instructions in this section carefully before beginning your application.

How the Match Works

For every $1 your newsroom raises from individual supporters during April 2027, Press Forward will add $2 up to $10,000 in matching funds per newsroom.

You don't have to raise the full $5,000 to benefit. Every eligible dollar counts, up to your newsroom's approved matching limit. Funds can support your newsroom's general operations.

Please review the program guidelines on the Press Forward Vermont Matching Challenge grant webpage for full grant eligibility information and to learn more about the match.

Eligible Applicants

We welcome applications from newsrooms serving Vermont communities, including:

- 501(c)(3) nonprofit news organizations.

- Locally owned and operated for-profit newsrooms with a fiscal sponsor.
- Public media organizations.

To qualify, your newsroom must:

- Primarily serve audiences in Vermont.
- Publish original, nonpartisan, non-advocacy, public service journalism relevant to your community at least twice a week.
- Have at least one full-time equivalent (FTE) journalist(s) based in the community(ies) they serve. One FTE can consist of multiple PT individuals, including staff, contractors, and community contributors – paid or unpaid.
- Follow the professional and editorial standards of the Society of Professional Journalists.
- Commit to participating in training, fundraising, and reporting activities.

Who is not eligible?

- 501(c)(4) organizations.
- Newsrooms whose primary audience is outside Vermont.
- Newsrooms owned or controlled by non-local, for-profit companies.
- Organizations that do not meet the journalism requirements above.

We're looking for a variety of newsrooms from across Vermont, including smaller organizations and those serving communities with limited access to local news. Special consideration may be given to rural and hyper-local newsrooms with annual operating budgets below $500,000 and those serving underserved audiences.

Application Deadline, Notification & Grant Match Timeline

Applications will be accepted between November 2nd and December 1st, 2026. **Applications must be received by 5PM on December 1st, 2026.** Late applications will not be accepted. We anticipate notifying applicants of grant decisions by January 8, 2027.

If selected, your newsroom will be required to participate in fundraising training in February and March of 2027. The Matching Challenge will take place from April 1st to 30th. Matching funds will be distributed by June 30th, 2027.

Helpful Hints

- Character limits include spaces and punctuation.
- Be sure to save your work frequently by clicking the "Save" button at the bottom of the page as the system will log out after 90 minutes of inactivity.
- The size of text boxes can be adjusted by dragging on the lower right corner.

- Create a PDF version of your application via the "Application Packet" button at the top of the page. All content and attachments will be included.

All applications must be submitted electronically to the Vermont Community Foundation through the application form in the Online Grants Manager. If you are viewing a PDF version of the application questions, please note that you must log on to your online account to access the online form at www.vermontcf.org/OGM. Applications will not be accepted by mail or email.

You may view the full program guidelines on the Press Forward Vermont Matching Challenge grant webpage.

If you have questions about the Online Grants Manager, please contact Emma Johnson, ejohnson@vermontcf.org.

With questions related to the Press Forward Matching Grant Challenge or if you need an accommodation to support successfully making a grant submission, please contact Haley Pero at hpero@vermontcf.org or 802-828-7917.

About Your Organization

Organization legal name*
Character Limit: 250

Publication name(s)*
If awarded, we will use the text entered here when publicly announcing the Press Forward VT Matching Challenge newsroom cohort.

Character Limit: 250

Website URL(s)
Character Limit: 250

Social media handle(s)
Character Limit: 250

Newsroom primary distribution channels*
Please describe how you reach your audience.

Character Limit: 500

What status best describes the applicant?*
This grant must be paid to a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit. If your newsroom is not one, you will need to use a fiscal sponsor. For full eligibility information, see the the Press Forward

Vermont Matching Challenge Grant webpage. If you have questions, please contact ejohnson@vermontcf.org or 802-828-7902.

Choices

Registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit
Other - Please provide details to your answer in the next question.

Use this space to provide additional information about the applicant's status (if applicable).

If you have a fiscal sponsor—or if you operate under the umbrella of a larger registered nonprofit—provide their name below.

Character Limit: 200

Fiscal Sponsor Agreement Form (if applicable)

If your organization is not a 501(c)(3), download a blank Fiscal Sponsor Agreement Form (**click here to download the form**) and forward it to your fiscal sponsor to print, fill out, and sign. The form must be filled out completely and you must use the official VCF form.
Upload the form here.

File Size Limit: 3 MB

Annual operating budget*

Please enter your newsroom's total annual operating budget for your most recently completed fiscal year.

Character Limit: 20

2025 Financials*

Please upload your 2025 audited financials (if available), or end of year financial statement

File Size Limit: 3 MB

Year your newsroom began publishing*

Character Limit: 50

Staff size*

Please share the number of full-time equivalent staff, number of part-time staff, and regular contributors or volunteers.

Character Limit: 500

Geographic Area Served*

Please list the geographic area(s) your newsroom covers

Character Limit: 500

Publication Language(s)*

What languages do you publish in?

Character Limit: 250

Matching Challenge

Project Name*
Character Limit: 100

Why do you want to participate in the Press Forward Matching Challenge?*
Character Limit: 2000

Describe your audience — demographics, size/reach, engagement.*
What metrics do you track that are most important to your newsroom?

Character Limit: 1000

How experienced is your newsroom with asking your audience to support your journalism?*
Choices
Brand new, this will be our first time
Some experience, but still learning
Lots of experience

In what ways does your audience contribute to your newsroom, currently?*
Choices
Subscriptions
Memberships
Donations
Volunteering
Other

If you selected other, please explain
Character Limit: 250

How many individual contributors (of less than $1,000) supported your newsroom last year (2025)?*
If you are not sure, please estimate

Character Limit: 7

How much money did you raise from audience contributions last year (2025)?*
If you are not sure please estimate.

Character Limit: 20

How much money do you think you can raise from your audience in April 2027?*
Enter the dollar value you aim to raise from your audience, before any matching funds.

If selected to participate in the Matching Challenge, Press Forward will double match up to the first $5,000 you raise (see chart on the Matching Challenge webpage for examples).

Character Limit: 20

How do you plan to raise those funds from your audience?*

Are there specific communications channels or fundraising strategies you're hoping to use?

Character Limit: 3000

If selected for the Matching Challenge, what supports will your newsroom need most to be successful?*

Check all that apply.

Choices

Fundraising basics
Campaign planning support
Peer conversations and examples
Planning and messaging templates
Audience contact list development
Other

If you selected other, please explain

Character Limit: 250

Do you have any questions for our chapter?

Character Limit: 500

Data Sharing Agreement

To support local newsrooms in the Matching Challenge, and for the purposes of match validation, program evaluation, and public reporting on the Matching Challenge, Press Forward VT wishes to share the contents of your application and grantee impact reports with The Miami Foundation, Press Forward and its Matching Challenge contractors. Financial data from individual organizations will be kept confidential within these limited groups at all times. External reports on Matching Challenge program impact will contain only limited participant-specific data (organization names, mission statements, audiences served, website and social links); all financial data will be aggregated and unidentifiable.

Commitment to program requirements*

Do you agree to this data sharing? If you do not, your application will still be considered.

Choices

Yes, I agree
No, I do not agree
I have questions

Save and Submit

Applications must be received by 5PM on December 1, 2026 in order to be considered. We anticipate notifying applicants of decisions by January 8th, 2027.

By submitting your application to the Vermont Community Foundation, you give us permission to share your application and information about your project with other potential funders, both individuals and foundations.