

# News Literacy District Fellowship Program

Spring/Summer 2025

## Program Overview

### Objectives

**The News Literacy Project's District Fellowship Program** is a three-year, \$30,000 grant to support school districts that want to develop and implement district-wide news and media literacy education. Working with NLP, fellowship districts create their own plans to teach all students news literacy skills before they graduate high school, empowering students to be active participants in our democracy.

### About the Fellowship

Young people are at a significant disadvantage in our society because they lack the skills to knowledgeably navigate our information landscape. Education leaders and policymakers across the country recognize that students urgently need to learn to identify credible information, cite reliable evidence and recognize falsehoods, viral rumors and manipulated content. News literacy education does just that, and yet, according to our recent study of teens across the country, less than 40% are getting any exposure to this education. The News Literacy Project's District Fellowship seeks to change this.

The News Literacy Project's District Fellowship, a three-year commitment, invites proposals from district leaders who wish to partner with NLP to design and execute innovative and sustainable initiatives to embed news and media literacy education into their districts. The program champions the news literacy approach to media literacy education at the district level, providing professional learning, curriculum and community to help fellows meet the requirements of participation.

### Fellowship Opportunity

Each year, a new cohort of fellows from around the country is selected to reimagine news and media literacy learning at the district level, creating a positive and lasting impact in their school communities. During the first year of the program, fellows work with NLP to lay the foundation and develop an action plan for executing news literacy instruction in their district. During the second year, fellows pilot their implementation plans. During the third year, they continue this work and expand their impact. Applications open each spring.

Proposals should include a holistic approach to news literacy teaching and learning, which may involve professional development/learning, instructional strategies, a scaffolded curriculum approach, new course creation, student-centered learning models or project-based learning that addresses ways to develop and expand students' news and media literacy. All fellowship proposals should include a timeline of design and implementation within the span of the fellowship. Proposals also should include a budget for allocating the \$10,000 (per year) fellowship stipend.

## **Year 1: Laying the Foundation**

- Participate in initial introduction and additional professional learning opportunities and cohort meetings to increase understanding of news and media literacy at the local and state levels. (Travel may be required.)
- Identify a fellowship team, including an administrator, to build consensus and staff capacity in the areas of news and media literacy.
- Perform a needs assessment to identify grades and disciplines best suited for news/media literacy.
- Create an action plan to guide years 2 and 3 of the fellowship (aligned to research-based best practices, initiative implementation, coaching and additional support).
- Submit detailed reports that demonstrate progress to goals, professional learning attendance and budget spent.

## **Year 2: Pilot Implementation Plan**

- Identify district implementation team to support action plan, continuous learning and coaching plans, plus data collection to support efficacy of implementation.
- Provide professional learning and support for the leadership team and the staff.
- Use NLP coaching and on-site visits to ensure fidelity of initiative implementation.
- Submit detailed reports that demonstrate progress to goals, professional learning attendance, coaching, implementation and budget spent.
- Submit implementation data collected at the end of each semester of implementation.
- Share fellowship experience and student achievement gains in news/media literacy at conferences, including learning opportunities sponsored by NLP.

## **Year 3: Continue Implementation and Expand Impact**

- Identify full-implementation timeline to be concluded at the end of year 3.
- Analyze student and staff data to assess current implementation plan with a goal of increasing impact across the district.
- Provide professional learning to increase the capacity of leadership and staff.
- Work with NLP staff to identify resource and program improvement needed to enhance initiatives.
- Submit detailed reports that demonstrate progress to goals, professional learning attendance, coaching, implementation and budget spent.
- Submit implementation data collected at the end of each semester of implementation.
- Share fellowship experience and student achievement gains in news/media literacy at conferences, including learning opportunities sponsored by NLP.

## **Application timeline and process**

The NLP fellowship is open to public school district leaders in Arizona, California, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, Nevada, Oklahoma, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Texas. The application allows one administrator and two additional staff members to be part of the cohort. Stipends will be given to the district and managed by the institution's fiscal agent/business manager. **The NLP fellowship is a 3-year commitment, for the 2025-26, 2026-27, and 2027-28 academic years.**

Questions? Contact Shaelynn Farnsworth, director of fellowship, at [sfarnsworth@newslit.org](mailto:sfarnsworth@newslit.org)

- **March 11:** Fellowship application opens.

- **May 16, 11:59 p.m. Central Time:** Application submission deadline.
- **May 16-31:** Review period.
- **June 1:** Fellows notified.
- **July 1:** Introduction to fellowship program in preparation for the 2025–26 academic year.
- **Fall 2025-May 31, 2026:** Year 1 of fellowship; Preparation.
- **June 1, 2026-May 31, 2027:** Year 2 of fellowship; Implementation.
- **July 1, 2027-May 31, 2028:** Year 3 of fellowship; Implementation.

**Who should apply:** Eligible applicants include current public school district leaders, administrators or curriculum directors. Preference is given to applicants in Arizona, California, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, Nevada, Oklahoma, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Texas — but districts from all states are encouraged to apply. Every applicant must secure a commitment signature from the institution’s lead administrator.

**Start date:** July 1, 2025

**Duration of fellowship:** 3 years

**Stipend:** Each district receives a \$10,000 stipend per year to implement the proposal and to be managed by the district’s business manager.

**Application deadline:** May 16, 2025 (email finished applications to Shaelynn Farnsworth at sfarnsworth@newslit.org)

## Application Components

A completed fellowship application includes:

- Approval from the institution’s lead administrator.
- A preliminary districtwide plan for news literacy education that includes a finalized plan with details for development during Year 1 of the fellowship:
  - No more than 10, double-spaced pages.
  - A timeline for implementation of the plan.
  - A budget that includes specifics for how the district plans to spend \$10,000 each year.

## How Applications Are Evaluated

All applications are screened and reviewed by teams of NLP staff members. The most highly rated applicants may be asked to participate in a virtual interview. All applicants will be notified about their progress in the fellowship application and selection process. All materials within the application are peer-reviewed and will be assessed against the key qualities we seek in NLP fellows. These qualities include:

- **Demonstrable contributions to student learning around news and media literacy.**
- **Effective leadership skills.**
- **Strong communication skills.**
- **Commitment to civic engagement.**
- **School system support.**

## About NLP

Founded in 2008, the News Literacy Project is a national nonpartisan education nonprofit that empowers educators to teach middle school and high school students how to sort fact from fiction in the digital age. Our central offering is the Checkology® virtual classroom, an online e-learning platform. Since the platform was introduced in 2016, almost 60,000 teachers have registered to use it in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, four U.S. territories and 113 other countries.

Each spring, NLP selects a cohort of fellows to join the program through an open application cycle. NLP chooses fellows based on their innovative approach to expanding and implementing news and media literacy education in their districts. Whatever your idea, its creation should benefit your school district. NLP will work with you to publish regular updates and share outcomes. The final product of your fellowship must be an implementation plan to expand news literacy education in your district.

**News Literacy District Fellows Program Application**

Questions? Contact Shaelynn Farnsworth, fellowship lead, at sfarnsworth@newslit.org

Send completed applications to Shaelynn Farnsworth at sfarnsworth@newslit.org

Applicant Name:

Title:

District/City/State:

Number of Schools in District:

District Address for Program Materials:

Phone Number:

Supervisor/Manager Name:

**Participating Educators (curriculum director, instructional coach, discipline lead)**

Participant 1

Name:

Email:

Position Title:

Participant 2

Name:

Email:

Position Title:

Participant 3

Name:

Email:

Position Title:

## Questions

1. Why are you applying for the fellowship? Why is news and media literacy learning important to your district faculty, staff and students?
2. How does the fellowship fit into your district's strategic plan?
3. How would you describe your district? (enrollment, staff, buildings, demographics)
4. Year 1 of the fellowship will focus on creating a detailed action plan for implementation. With this understanding, describe your initial ideas to implement news and media literacy learning in your district if selected. Include a budget that provides ideas for how the district plans to spend the yearly \$10,000 stipend. (300-word limit)
5. What challenges do you foresee arising during the fellowship? How do you plan to address them?
6. Explain how your district plans to sustain news and media literacy learning beyond the fellowship years. (300-word limit):
7. Describe how the implementation of the action plan will increase access to equitable opportunities for all students, especially historically underserved students (including students from a variety of backgrounds, cultures, socioeconomic classes, etc.)? How will you measure progress toward higher levels of access? (500-word limit)
8. Additional comments (in this area, please share with us any special circumstances or information specific to your district that would be pertinent for us to consider).
9. How did you hear about the News Literacy District Fellowship program?