# AI PROJECT CONSULTING

AP's Local News AI initiative is providing an opportunity for newsrooms to develop and advance projects that use automation or AI to address the needs of one or more aspects of the news operation. In Phase I, newsrooms will participate in a design sprint. In Phase II, select news operations will receive hands-on consulting, technology development and software installation. We are opening a competitive project pitch process where 15 entries will be selected for Phase I, and then five projects will be selected for Phase II. **The deadline to submit a pitch is June 17 at 6 p.m. PDT.**

| 2022 | | | | | | 2023 | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| JUL | AUG | SEP | OCT | NOV | DEC | JAN | FEB | MAR | APR | MAY |
| **Phase I: Design Sprint** 15 newsrooms July – August (approximate) | | **Phase II: Direct, Hands-On Consulting** 5 newsrooms September – May 2023 (approximate) | | | | | | | | |

This program is made available by funding from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

## What newsrooms can expect

At the end of Phase I, participating newsrooms will receive a blueprint to deploy their technology proposal from AP's Local News AI team. Newsrooms selected for Phase II will work with AP to implement that blueprint from development through installation.

**Phase I:** The initial confirmation of the project will take one to two months. Your newsroom can expect to receive a written document that describes in detail the request and needs of your news operation, AP's proposed implementation strategy and a rough timeline for the project.

**Phase II:** AP will work with your team, developers and vendors to implement the project in your newsroom. Resources assigned and timing will depend on the project's complexity. A detailed description of deliverables will be covered by a statement of work.

## What's expected of newsrooms

AP is providing consultancy services, development and initial software costs to newsrooms through Knight Foundation funding. Newsrooms will need to fund their staff member(s) and be able to continue to pay for software and maintenance once the AP consultancy concludes.

Newsrooms are expected to have one person committed to one weekly remote meeting with

AP's Local News AI leaders and to work at least five hours a week on the project. All news organizations must commit to supporting project development and in Phase II, seeing it through to implementation.

Newsrooms selected for this consulting program will be featured in informational and promotional materials such as articles, blog posts, social media, videos and audio recordings. Participants agree to the use of their newsroom name and logo. Staff and program administrators will be mentioned by name and possibly quoted. AP will publish newsrooms case studies and related project findings to benefit the journalism industry.

Newsrooms agree to submit all surveys and programmatic benchmark materials in a timely manner throughout the duration of the design sprint and consultancy.

## Apply now

The deadline to apply is **June 17 at 6 p.m. PDT**. The application is only available online.

Applications are open to newsrooms based in the U.S. and its territories. We welcome applications from every size, medium and community-based news outlet. Individual newsrooms, collaborative projects and media groups are welcome to apply. AP membership is not a requirement.

In your **300-word pitch**, we recommend including some of the following ideas:

- What problem in your news operation are you trying to solve? Describe your project concept.

- How will your project help your news operation to produce more information or extend the reach of your audience?

- Do you know what existing technology(ies) your project requires, or does the technology need to be built?

- Who will lead the project on your team and what kind of time do they have to commit to the execution of this project for one year?

- Do you have a budget to procure and maintain any tools needed?

- Could your project be applicable or informative to other newsrooms?

- What do you hope to get out of the AP consultancy?

All applications will be reviewed by the AP team. Newsrooms will be notified by June 28 if their project has been accepted for Phase I. Newsrooms must confirm participation in the design sprint by July 1 or the slot will be offered to another newsroom.

| EVENT | DATE |
| --- | --- |
| Application deadline | June 17 at 9 p.m. ET / 6 p.m. PT |
| Selected newsrooms notified | June 28 |
| Selected newsrooms confirm participation | July 1 |
| Alternate newsrooms notified | July 5 |
| Alternate newsrooms confirm participation | July 8 |

# Phase I: Design sprint

Four, 90-minute design sprint meetings will begin the week of July 11 and run through the week of August 1. Teams will then have two weeks to polish the project planning phase and design. The group will reconvene the week of August 22 for a final 90-minute meeting, along with three external judges, to discuss their project and a blueprint to bring the program to fruition.

| EVENT | DATE (approximate) |
|---|---|
| Meeting 1 | July 11 |
| Meeting 2 | July 18 |
| Meeting 3 | July 25 |
| Meeting 4 | August 1 |
| Meeting 5 | August 22 |

# Phase II: Consulting

Three judges will narrow the Phase I cohort to five projects for the consultancy. The five newsrooms will be contacted about their successful application for consultancy on August 29 and must confirm participation by September 2 or else their slot will be offered to another newsroom. Newsrooms must agree to a statement of work.

Consultancy meetings will begin the week of September 12. AP's Local News AI team will meet with newsrooms individually and will then determine the best cadence for meetings, establish project milestones and benchmarks for success. Newsrooms will complete a mid-term evaluation of the project in January 2023. The program will conclude by the end of May 2023.

# Project criteria

The following categories will be part of the review rubric AP Local News AI leaders and reviewers will use:

- **Project feasibility/viability.** Does the technology currently exist, or would creating it be possible in the project timeline?

- **Project scalability.** Other newsrooms should be able to take advantage of a tool or process that is created for your news operation.

- **Clarity of issue.** It's fine to not have a solution in mind – that's what AP is here for! -- but it's essential that your news operation knows what is getting in the way of producing news and information or curtailing the reach of distribution.

- **Newsroom location.** We seek broad representation of news operations across the U.S. and its territories.

- **Community served.** We seek newsrooms that have a specific mandate, are hyperlocal or have dispersed communities. Rural, landlocked, island, desert, delta – we want to hear from you.

- **Newsroom size.** Our research shows that smaller newsrooms could benefit the most from technologies that include AI and automation, we'd like to test that theory.

- **Project commitment.** Ability to commit one person on your team to five hours per week plus a weekly call with AP's Local News AI leaders for one year.
- **Budget capacity.** Newsrooms must be able to sustain long-term development and subscription costs associated with the project.
- **Experimentation tolerance.** Ability to see this work as a grand experiment that may or may not deliver anticipated results.
- **Interest in sharing.** Participate in a published case study and public presentation at the end of the project term to share what you've learned with others at a scheduled event.

# Project timeline

- June 17: deadline 6 p.m. PDT
- June 28: design sprint newsrooms selected will be notified

## Phase I

- July 1, week of: deadline to confirm design sprint participation
- July 11, week of: 90-minute design sprint meeting
- July 18, week of: 90-minute design sprint meeting
- July 25, week of: 90-minute design sprint meetings
- August 1, week of: 90-minute design sprint meeting
- August 8 to 19, design sprint refinements
- August 22, week of: final 90-minute meeting to discuss project status
- August 29: five newsrooms will be contacted about their successful application for consultancy
- September 2: newsrooms must confirm participation in the nine-month consultancy

## Phase II

- September 12: consultancy meetings begin
- November: Newsroom receive project plan
- January 2023: mid-term project evaluation
- May 2023: program conclude by the end of the month
- June to August 2023: AP publishes project findings and outcomes

# Contact

If you have questions about the project pitch process, please email AP's Local News AI leaders Aimee Rinehart and Ernest Kung at ai@ap.org, read the Local News AI research and sign up for the free online course that may help you refine your pitch.