



The Chicago News Cooperative

The Chicago News Cooperative (CNC) is a fresh, innovative approach to supporting the solid, professionally-edited public service journalism that is being threatened by the severe and real problems afflicting the metropolitan news media.

Commentators from across the political spectrum have floated numerous ideas to address the news industry's precipitous decline. But CNC's founders decided to try something different: the cooperative is marshaling community forces interested in quality journalism for Chicago to build a self-sustaining, member-based organization dedicated to solid, accountability journalism in a city and state known for corruption, rising taxes and staggering social problems. WTTW, Chicago's public television station, is joining the effort as a founding member, supplying in-kind services in return for content, and CNC is exploring resource sharing arrangements with other local media such as WBEZ, the city's public radio station.

At the heart of the cooperative is a plan to create multiple streams of revenue designed to finance a team of experienced reporters and editors and younger journalists housed in an organization that will encourage high journalistic standards, citizen involvement and news literacy in the community. These revenue sources will include membership, underwriting, fees and philanthropy.

The CNC already has in place one element of the revenue stream. The New York Times, America's premier newspaper, has agreed to pay the Chicago News Cooperative to supply it with two pages of local news for its Chicago edition twice a week. That venture will start next month.

But journalism for the Times is only one element of the CNC's plans. Early in 2010, the CNC will create a new website, *Chicago Scoop*, that will provide members of the coop with solid news, commentary, investigative reporting and news analysis from an expanded team of technologically-sophisticated journalists

and commentators who adhere to high journalistic standards as they cover the city, county and state. The CNC intends to charge a small membership fee for complete access to the site and other benefits being created by the coop for its members.

A key benefit for coop members will be CNC sponsored news groups -- social networking sites organized around an interest in the news. For an additional small fee, the CNC will help members interested in everything from foreign policy to suburban schools to organize into groups to hear speakers, swap opinions, debate issues, report on developments, air their views to journalists and hire professional journalists to create op-ed pieces that the coop will help them place in media. Any editorial material submitted to the coop must conform to CNC's standards of fairness, accuracy and its code of ethics.

Start-up support has been provided by the MacArthur Foundation, individuals and a local law firm, Winston & Strawn. A more extensive fund raising effort to fully develop the coop is now underway. Coop founders are exploring plans to convert to a new type of private social entrepreneurship corporation in 2010. CNC's goal is to create enough revenue from membership fees, advertising and service fees to be self sustaining within 5 years.

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