



This New Coalition Could Fund Your Idea for Increasing Digital Literacy in Philly

Generocity | Albert Hong | February 21, 2017

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The Digital Literacy Alliance is giving up to \$175,000 in the initial round of grants. Proposals are due March 3.

The conversation about digital literacy in Philadelphia is nothing new — and that's a good thing.

Whether it was the Comcast Foundation's granting of \$1.8 million to local nonprofits dedicated to digital literacy last year or a comprehensive panel of media and government folks talking about the issue, it's clear the city is taking steps forward.

Joshua Breitbart, senior advisor for broadband in New York City, noted during last year's panel how his office reached out to Philly's after the city finalized the 15-year franchise deal with Comcast this past December. The idea was to "look throughout our digital ecosystem for ideas," he said.

Well, the newly formed Digital Literacy Alliance, a wide-ranging coalition of groups working together to lessen the digital divide in Philly (and an initiative coming out of the Comcast franchise deal), is reaching out for original ideas aimed at alleviating the issue. And it's currently got a seed fund of \$850,000 to give away as potential grant opportunities for these ideas.

The fund is comprised of a \$500,000 grant from Comcast and a \$350,000 grant from Verizon, and the first round of grant opportunities will award up to \$175,000, with each individual award ranging from \$10,000 to \$25,000.

Letters of intent from applicants, which can include an individual or organization outside of Philly (as long as they have some kind of presence in the city), are due by noon on March 3.

"I'm convinced that the most innovative ideas for boosting digital literacy will be found in the very communities that would benefit from these efforts," said Mayor Kenney in the press release announcing the funding opportunity last month.

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Andrew Buss, director of innovation management at the Office of Innovation and Technology, said that's also why the initial round of grants was deliberately left wide open for, really, any ideas geared toward digital inclusion.

They want to hear from people who may not necessarily be a part of the digital literacy conversation now.

"I think one of the purposes of trying to get into some of these different communities and get them to submit proposals is that we don't really know what they might submit, and there might be something really interesting in there worth funding," Buss said.

Grant awardees will be notified by June, for which an announcement event will also be held, he added. ■