



NEA State Affiliate

Paid Media Assistance Program Fiscal Year 2026-2027

Criteria & Guidelines

**Round 1 Submission Deadline
October 19, 2026**

**Round 2 Submission Deadline
January 19, 2027**

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The NEA State Affiliate Paid Media Assistance Program

About the Program:

In July 2000, the NEA Representative Assembly approved a special dues increase to be in place for five years to create and/or supplement Association support in several program areas. A portion of the special dues increase was dedicated to support State Affiliate advertising (paid media) efforts.

In July 2004, the NEA Representative Assembly voted to extend the special dues increase beyond the initial five years and to continue dedicating a portion of the funds to support State Affiliate advertising (paid media).

In July 2011, the NEA Representative Assembly approved an additional special dues increase of \$10, a portion of this increase is used to support the State Affiliate Paid Media Assistance Program.

In July 2026, the NEA Representative Assembly approved an additional special dues increase of \$10, a portion of this increase is used to support the State Affiliate Paid Media Assistance Program.

The specific mandate from the NEA RA is that the State Affiliate advertising (paid media) funds are intended: **“to advance the cause of public education and publicize the role of the Association and its affiliates in improving the quality of public education.”**

Specifically, these funds are to proactively advance the Association’s mission through image and reputation campaigns that strengthen the Association’s image among key audiences and the public. **The grant funds are not to be used for the promotion of specific legislative or political objectives or the overt recruitment of members.**

To administer the NEA State Affiliate Advertising Assistance Program, the Representative Assembly approved the creation of an Advisory Group, representing specific segments of the Association leadership, from the national and state levels. The Advisory Group is charged with reviewing and approving all grant applications. The State Affiliate Media Assistance grants are competitive. It is paramount that each State Affiliate submitting an application, read and follow the criteria and guidelines to ensure the full consideration of the Advisory Group.

Criteria

Each grant proposal must contain detailed information regarding the following criteria. (See attached proposal checklist for the specific information to be provided.)

Goals and Objectives

The grant proposal must present to the Advisory Group the goals for the communication campaign, and the measurable advertising (paid media) objectives that support NEA’s Vision Goals and Strategic Objectives.

NEA’s Visionary Goals

We join together as active educators (preK-12 teachers, education support professionals, and higher educators); retired and aspiring educators; public service employees; community allies; and parents, families, and coalition partners united around public education, through these three core commitments:

- We organize for Collective Excellence that advances our varied professions and commands professional respect. We cultivate continuous professional growth and innovation in public education.
- We organize for Collective Power for our union and communities to create the education system our students deserve. We advocate to build the strength, respect, and power educators need to create positive change.
- We organize for Collective Justice that creates opportunity, respect, and dignity for all. We champion public education as the bedrock of a just society where ALL students have access to a high-quality education.

Strategic Objectives

In partnership with our state and local affiliates, we demonstrate our commitments to collective excellence, collective power, and collective justice by advancing the following six strategic objectives:

- **Elevate the Professions** to advance student learning and success.
 - **Establish Educational Environments** that are fully funded, innovative, equitable, and safe.
 - **Enhance Equity** by advancing racial, social, and economic justice.
 - **Engage Diverse Leadership** throughout our system for empowered members, strengthened affiliate health, and broad participation in every affiliate.
 - **Energize Affiliates** that continuously organize, build union strength, and seek to improve member working conditions and student learning conditions.
 - **Ensure a Lasting Democracy** that serves all and that respects the foundational role of public education in our nation.
- *(NOTE: State Media Grant funds may not be used for the overt organizing or retention of members. However, State Media Grants campaigns may highlight the Association's work as related to Members.*

While State Media Grant campaigns may not directly support some of the above strategic objectives, a campaign may highlight, feature, or include information on the Association's work related to the strategic objectives.

Research

The proposal must provide a detailed explanation of research materials, polling data, focus groups, and other sources of information that will be used to make informed decisions regarding message development communication campaign planning. This might include existing information, such as data from previous Association polling efforts, shared information from polling conducted by "partner" organizations, or information from some other database or information source. If baseline research has already been secured, applicants should provide an "executive summary" of the relevant data along with the grant proposal. If executing this proposal will require new baseline research, indicate how and when that will be conducted, the level of funding this research will require, and the anticipated source of that funding. Please note, your grant proposal may include a request for funds to conduct this baseline research.

Audience & Message

The grant proposal must clearly express the overall campaign messaging and the key messages to be communicated through paid media. Identification and description of target audience(s) with rationale for why the audience(s) were selected should be provided.

Execution

The proposal should include a plan of execution, including:

- an explanation of the media and market selection,
- the buy strategy (including Gross Rating Points and cost per point),
- how the polling, production, media buy, and measurement of success will take place (including outside firms that might be used).
- a detailed budget that includes creative, production and cost of media buy.
- other metrics that may support the proposal's overall strategy.

Measurement

It is critically important that the proposal include the method by which the State Affiliate will measure the success of the advertising grant effort. This could include polling, focus groups, panels, web traffic, social media measurements, and such devices that indicate effectiveness. Again, your grant request can include a request for the funds necessary to conduct the measurement strategies.

Guidelines

1. **REVISED Language:** Based on the mandate of the NEA Representative Assembly, these funds are intended to proactively advance the Association's mission through image and reputation campaigns that strengthen the Association's image among the public. To that end, these funds may be used to support public communications and mobilization campaigns related to legislation, public policy, and other public issues affecting public education, educators, students, and communities. The Advisory Group **will not** consider grant proposals that:
 - Are intended to make appeals for Association membership.
 - Call for passage of or support for a specific, ballot measure, or endorsed candidate.
2. **NEW Language:** Applications that demonstrate a clear connection to organizing for power will be prioritized. This includes proposals that help affiliates build member engagement, strengthen local organizing capacity, activate members and member leaders, or move audiences toward collective action
3. Each grant will be for a specific length of time, preferably, not to exceed a single budget year. Resubmissions of proposals to gain additional funds to extend a previously funded grant may be considered. However, the Advisory Group makes no commitment that funding will be approved for such submissions. **The purpose of this program is to supplement, not supplant, existing communication and advertising (paid media) efforts.**
4. The grant proposal **must** contain a budget. That budget should reflect the specific activities for which NEA funds will be used. It should also reflect any state Association funds and/or in-kind resources being committed to the program and how they will be used. The grant proposal should provide the connection of how advertising efforts, made possible by the grant, support other State Affiliate goals, programs, and initiatives.
5. The Advisory Group retains the right to partially fund grant proposals and to specify elements within a proposal for which NEA funds will be made available.
6. NEA funds must be used only for the purposes outlined in the approved grant proposal. Failure to meet this guideline may result in the return of funds and/or result in future proposals submitted by the State Affiliate not being considered.
7. **Applications must be submitted jointly by the state association president, executive director, and communications staff coordinator (or appropriate communications staff person).**
8. If additional "partners" are to be involved, they must be identified, along with a brief description of their involvement. If financial support from partners is provided for grant work, it should be described.
9. An interim progress report will be required approximately six (6) months after the funds are awarded. Then upon completion of the advertising campaign, a final report, outlining the program, measurements of its effectiveness, and an accounting of how NEA funds were spent, must be provided to the Advisory Group. Along with this written report, state affiliates must include samples of the paid media that was produced, including any scripts that were developed, audio or video files, and sample ads and electronic links to the files. **The Advisory Group will not consider future funding requests from a previously funded State Affiliate until this requirement is met.**
10. The application must be completed electronically at [State Media Assistance Grant](#). Please reach out to Mike Wiser (mwiser@nea.org) or Heather Griffin (hgriffin@nea.org) if you have questions.
11. The State Affiliate will make every effort to assure compliance with all local and state laws that might be applicable to implementation of the grant.
12. State Affiliates submitting funding requests under this program are required to notify members of the NEA Board of Directors from their state that such an application has been made.

Resources

NEA staff may be able to provide guidance in the development and implementation of State Affiliate proposals. This assistance can include expert guidance relative to media buying firms, production services firms, and polling firms. NEA staff will not be available to write or review proposals.

Appeals Process

Should the Advisory Group vote not to fund or partially fund any request, the State Affiliate may access the appeals process. A letter from the State Association President and/or State Association Executive Director must be mailed to the NEA President and/or NEA Executive Director. The letter should outline the affiliate's concerns regarding the Advisory Group's decision and recommend a proposed solution to resolve those concerns. The appeal will be heard/considered by the NEA Executive Committee at its next regularly scheduled meeting after receipt of the affiliate's letter of appeal. All Executive Committee decisions regarding the State Affiliate's appeal will be considered final and binding.

Timelines

The application must be completed electronically at [State Media Assistance Grant](#). Please reach out to Miker Wiser (mwiser@nea.org) and Heather Griffin (hgriffin@nea.org) if you have questions.

The State Media Advisory Group will meet to discuss the October 2026 proposals in December. State Affiliates will be notified of the Advisory Group's decisions by December 18, 2026; awardees may access their funds in January 2027. For proposals submitted in January 2027, the Advisory Group will meet to review them in March 2027 with notification shortly thereafter; awardees may access their funds in April 2027.

Grant Proposal Checklist

The grant proposal includes:

Objective

- ☐ An explanation of the communications & advertising objectives
- ☐ An explanation of how the advertising will support the Association's strategic focus –
 - ☐ Enhance success, justice, and equity in our nation's public schools.
 - ☐ Promote fulfilling professional lives and the success of our members.
 - ☐ Grow and strengthen our Union through leaders trained to retain, inspire, engage, recruit, and empower fellow educators and public employees.

Baseline Research

- ☐ Explanation of research data being used to inform advertising decisions
- ☐ Executive summary of research, if available OR
- ☐ Explanation of how baseline research will be conducted
 - ☐ Who will conduct research
 - ☐ How the research will be conducted
 - ☐ When the research will be conducted
 - ☐ Cost of the research
 - ☐ Who pays for the research

Message & Audience

- ☐ The message of the advertising
- ☐ Who the audience for the advertising is
- ☐ Why was that audience selected

Execution

- ☐ Explanation of media selection
- ☐ Explanation of market selection
- ☐ Buy strategy
- ☐ Production plan

Measurement

- ☐ A plan for measurement of success
- ☐ How measurement will take place
- ☐ When measurement will take place
- ☐ What will constitute success of the advertising program

Additional items that accompany my proposal include:

- ☐ Timelines for the advertising program
- ☐ Detailed budget
- ☐ Names of any “partners” in the advertising program
- ☐ Completed application form – including signatures called for on the application form
- ☐ Final report on most recently awarded grant