

News Collaborative of Central Florida (NCCF) Governance Framework

Governance Philosophy

NCCF's governance is intentionally lightweight, relational, and enabling. It exists to support collective action, manage shared resources, and provide clarity around decision-making—without centralizing authority or replacing trust.

Governance should protect editorial independence, enable collaboration at scale, provide accountability without rigidity, and allow NCCF to evolve over time.

1. Overall Structure

NCCF is not a standalone legal entity. It operates as a collaborative network supported by a fiscal sponsor.

Governance is organized around member organizations, a Steering Committee, editorial leadership structures, and staff or contractors.

2. Membership Meetings

NCCF will hold at least two membership meetings annually to which all members will be invited.

3. Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is NCCF's primary governance and stewardship body.

Responsibilities include setting and upholding NCCF's mission, vision, and strategy; making final decisions about editorial focuses and collaborative initiatives; approving budgets and overseeing fundraising strategy; hiring and supervising staff or contractors; and resolving escalated conflicts.

The Steering Committee does not manage newsroom operations or make individual editorial decisions.

Composition and Terms:

The Steering Committee is made up of 5-9 members drawn from NCCF member organizations, independent journalists, and partner institutions.

Committee members are elected by the full NCCF membership. Each member organization will have one vote. The majority of votes cast will determine the outcome. The Steering Committee will design procedures for voting.

Committee members serve two-year terms, renewable for up to three consecutive terms (maximum six years).

The Steering Committee Chair and Vice Chair are elected by a majority vote of the Steering Committee to serve one-year terms, renewable for up to three consecutive terms.

The following requirements will apply to the composition and membership of the Committee:

- Up to two Committee members can be representatives of journalism-affiliated partner institutions or independent journalists.
- No more than two individuals from the same news organization or partner institution may serve on the committee at the same time. Any organization represented on the committee will have only one vote and must designate one individual as the voting member.
- At least one seat will be reserved for a hyperlocal news organization that focuses on one community or one county. At least one seat will be reserved for a regional news organization that focuses on multiple counties or the whole region, including the Orlando metro area.

Proxy voting is not permissible.

4. Editorial Leadership Group

The Editorial Leadership Group coordinates NCCF's collaborative journalism and recommends editorial priorities to the Steering Committee.

Participation is open to journalists from member organizations involved in the current editorial focus. The group is led by a Collaborative Editor appointed by the Steering Committee, typically for a 6–12 month term aligned with editorial cycles.

5. Project Manager and Staff

As funding permits, NCCF will employ a Project Manager to provide operational coordination, implements governance decisions, manages budgets and documentation, and facilitates collaboration. In the absence of funding, these responsibilities will fall to Steering Committee members.

The framework anticipates the possibility of additional staff or contractors as NCCF grows, with hiring authority vested in the Steering Committee.

6. Fiscal Sponsorship

NCCF operates with Central Florida Foundation as its fiscal sponsor, which manages funds, compliance, and financial reporting.

Strategic, editorial and programmatic authority remains with NCCF's Steering Committee.

7. Budgeting and Fundraising

The Steering Committee approves budgets, major expenditures, and fundraising strategies. The Project Manager tracks spending and reports to the Steering Committee.

8. Ongoing Governance

As NCCF evolves, governance structures will be revisited to ensure they continue to support trust, effectiveness, and sustainability.

News Collaborative of Central Florida (NCCF) Membership Standards

Purpose

The News Collaborative of Central Florida (NCCF) is a collective of independent local news organizations working together to strengthen public-service journalism and support an informed and engaged Central Florida region. NCCF members collaborate while maintaining their own editorial voices, ownership structures, and business models.

These Membership Standards establish a shared baseline for journalistic quality, independence, transparency, and community responsibility, ensuring trust among collaborators and with the public.

1. Eligibility

NCCF membership is open to independent local news organizations serving Central Florida communities.

To be eligible, an organization must:

- Be locally focused and primarily serve communities within Central Florida, including: Orange, Osceola, Seminole, Brevard, Lake, Marion, Polk, and Volusia.
- Produce original journalism on issues of public interest
- Operate as an independent news organization, not controlled by a political party, government entity, or advocacy organization
- Agree to uphold NCCF's Membership Standards and Code of Collaboration

For-profit and nonprofit news organizations are welcome to [apply for membership](#).

2. Editorial Excellence

NCCF members are committed to high-quality journalism that serves the public interest.

Members must:

- Produce original, fact-based reporting, clearly distinguishing news from opinion or sponsored content
- Follow recognized professional ethics, such as the [Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics](#)
- Maintain a corrections policy and promptly and transparently address factual errors
- Use transparent sourcing and verification practices when reporting

Collaborative work produced under NCCF should reflect these same editorial standards.

3. Editorial Independence

Each NCCF member retains full editorial control over its content and coverage.

Members must:

- Maintain a clear firewall between editorial decision-making and financial interests, including advertisers, sponsors, donors, or funders
- Avoid allowing funders, partners, or collaborators to influence editorial content
- Clearly label any sponsored, paid, or promotional content

NCCF itself does not dictate coverage decisions and does not endorse political candidates, ballot initiatives, or advocacy positions.

4. Transparency

NCCF members commit to transparency that allows audiences to understand who produces their journalism, how it is funded, and how it is created.

At a minimum, members should:

- Publicly identify ownership, leadership, and key staff
- Disclose major sources of funding or revenue, consistent with their business model
- Publish or make available key editorial and ethics policies

5. Ethical Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence

NCCF members must be transparent with their audiences about the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools in the creation, editing, or distribution of editorial content.

This includes a commitment to:

- Clearly disclosing when and how generative AI tools are used where that use materially affects published content
- Ensuring that AI does not replace editorial judgment, verification, or accountability
- Maintaining human oversight of AI-assisted content

6. Community Responsibility and Engagement

NCCF members recognize journalism's role in supporting civic life and democratic participation.

Members are expected to:

- Serve their communities with coverage that reflects accuracy, fairness, and inclusivity
- Seek to represent a diversity of voices and experiences, particularly those historically underrepresented in local media
- Engage audiences respectfully through feedback, listening, or participation opportunities

7. Compliance and Accountability

Membership in NCCF is at the sole discretion of the Steering Committee and contingent upon continued adherence to these standards.

- New members will be asked to certify that they are in compliance with NCCF Membership Standards when joining
- Concerns are addressed through a collaborative and corrective process governed by the Steering Committee
- NCCF reserves the right to suspend or terminate membership if standards are materially violated
- For more details on this process, see the Governance Framework

8. Standards Review

These Membership Standards will be reviewed periodically to reflect evolving best practices in local journalism and collaboration.

News Collaborative of Central Florida (NCCF) Partnership Standards

Purpose

The News Collaborative of Central Florida (NCCF) engages in strategic partnerships to strengthen local journalism, expand community impact, and support the flow of accurate, timely, and relevant information. These standards define the expectations, boundaries, and guiding principles for all external partnerships. All partnerships will be established, maintained, and terminated at the discretion of the Steering Committee, based on the standards laid out in this document. The Steering Committee will review partnership requests and existing relationships as needed and vote on whether to approve, deny, or terminate a partnership.

1. Guiding Principles

All partnerships must align with the following core principles:

- **Editorial Independence**
NCCF maintains full editorial control over all content. Partners may not influence editorial decisions, framing, or coverage priorities.
- **Transparency**
All partnerships will be disclosed publicly when relevant, particularly when they involve funding, shared content, or co-produced initiatives.
- **Accuracy and Integrity**
Partners must demonstrate a commitment to factual, evidence-based information and ethical communication practices.
- **Community Impact**
Partnerships should advance public understanding, civic engagement, and equitable access to information across Central Florida communities.

2. Eligible Partners

NCCF may enter into partnerships with organizations that align with its mission, including but not limited to:

- Other news collaboratives and journalism networks
- Nonprofit organizations
- Nonpartisan civic engagement groups
- Educational institutions

- Foundations and philanthropic organizations
- Professional journalism associations

All partners participating in newsgathering must operate in a manner consistent with widely accepted journalism ethics, such as those outlined by the Society of Professional Journalists.

3. Partnership Categories

Partnerships may include, but are not limited to:

- **Content Sharing**
Co-publishing or distributing reporting across platforms
- **Co-Reporting / Collaborative Journalism**
Joint investigative or explanatory projects
- **Community Engagement Initiatives**
Events, listening sessions, or public forums
- **Training and Capacity Building**
Workshops, fellowships, or resource sharing
- **Funding and Resource Support**
Grants or in-kind contributions that support collaborative work

4. Editorial Safeguards

To protect journalistic integrity:

- NCCF and its members retain final decision-making authority over any journalistic content.
- Sponsored or funded content of any kind must be clearly labeled
- Partners cannot pre-approve stories or require favorable coverage
- Conflicts of interest must be disclosed and managed proactively

5. Nonpartisanship and Advocacy

- NCCF does not engage in political advocacy or endorse candidates
- Partnerships with nonpartisan organizations are permitted if they do not compromise neutrality
- NCCF may carefully consider partnerships with organizations that take public positions on political or policy matters and/or that engage in lobbying or political campaigning, NCCF will vet such potential partners through this lens: “Would we

collaborate in the same way with an organization that advocates for different policy outcomes?”

- Partnerships with such organizations should include public statements clarifying that NCCF does not share or endorse the positions of the partner organization.

6. Funding Transparency

- All financial contributions tied to partnerships must be disclosed when relevant
- Funding sources must not influence editorial content
- NCCF reserves the right to decline funding that presents a conflict of interest

7. Branding and Attribution

- All co-produced content must clearly identify participating organizations
- NCCF branding may not be used without permission
- Partners must adhere to agreed-upon attribution standards

8. Data Sharing and Privacy

- Any shared data must comply with privacy laws and ethical standards
- Audience data will not be sold or shared without consent
- Data-sharing agreements must be documented in writing

9. Evaluation and Accountability

- Partnerships will be periodically reviewed for alignment with NCCF goals
- Feedback mechanisms should be established to assess effectiveness and community impact

10. Termination Clause

NCCF reserves the right to end any partnership if:

- The partner violates these standards
- The partnership threatens editorial independence
- The collaboration no longer serves the public interest
- NCCF believes the partnership poses a risk of reputational harm to NCCF or its members.

News Collaborative of Central Florida (NCCF) Code of Collaboration

Purpose

The NCCF Code of Collaboration establishes shared expectations for how member organizations work together. It is designed to promote trust, clarity, fairness, and impact while preserving the editorial independence and distinct identities of each member newsroom.

This Code applies to all NCCF-facilitated collaborative projects, content sharing, and joint initiatives.

1. Shared Mission, Independent Voices

All collaboration is rooted in NCCF's shared mission to strengthen local journalism and support an informed and engaged Central Florida region.

Member organizations retain full editorial independence, including final decisions about publication, framing, and distribution. Participation in NCCF collaborations does not imply endorsement of other members' coverage or viewpoints.

2. Editorial Integrity in Collaboration

Collaborative journalism must meet each member's own editorial standards, as well as NCCF's Membership Standards.

Editorial decisions for collaborative projects should be clearly defined at the outset, including leadership roles, editing authority, and publication timelines. NCCF will not require coverage of any topic or story as a condition of membership.

3. Transparency and Attribution

Collaborative projects and shared content should clearly identify all participating organizations through fair and prominent attribution on all platforms, including in social media posts and newsletters.

Collaborative projects and content shared under the NCCF umbrella should include the NCCF boilerplate. Shared content should link back to the story on the originator's website.

Roles and contributions should be agreed upon in advance and credited appropriately. When funders support collaborative work, disclosure practices should follow NCCF transparency standards and respect members' editorial independence.

Use of generative AI should be disclosed at the onset of any collaborative project.

4. Respectful and Equitable Participation

NCCF members commit to treating one another with professionalism, respect, and good faith, prioritizing collaboration over competition. Members agree to respect the origination of story ideas and ownership of enterprise reporting.

Collaboration should strive for equitable participation, recognizing differences in newsroom size, capacity, and business model.

5. Use, Republishing, and Ownership of Content

Terms for content sharing, republication, embargoes, and licensing must be clearly defined.

Shared content may not be modified without prior permission from the originator.

Unless otherwise agreed, creators retain ownership of their original work. NCCF does not claim ownership over member content.

6. Communication and Conflict Resolution

Open, timely communication is essential to successful collaboration.

Concerns or disputes should be raised early and addressed directly, with NCCF leadership facilitating when needed. The goal of conflict resolution is learning and improvement, not blame.

7. Accountability and Review

Members participating in collaborative projects agree to uphold this Code.

NCCF may periodically review collaboration practices and update this Code based on member feedback and evolving best practices.