



NEWS RELEASE

Digital Media Incubator, Project Liberty Expands on Success in Philadelphia

Ben Franklin Technology Partners of Southeastern Pennsylvania will use \$345,000 from Knight Foundation to improve incubator and build investment opportunities

Project Liberty now accepting applications from startup and established digital media companies, due noon on August 30, 2013

Philadelphia (Aug. 7, 2013) Project Liberty Digital Incubator, located in the heart of the nation's fourth largest media market, will expand its program with \$345,000 in support from the [John S. and James L. Knight Foundation](#).

A project of [Ben Franklin Technology Partners of Southeastern Pennsylvania](#), Project Liberty launched in 2011 to build a community of startups in Philadelphia and foster newsroom innovation. Since then, Ben Franklin has supported eight startups along with [Interstate General Media LLC](#) (IGM,) publisher of *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Philadelphia Daily News* and *Philly.com*.

Project Liberty was the first incubator in the nation to reside within a traditional media company, a model now followed by *The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe* and other media outlets. Housed amid the company's newsrooms, Project Liberty is designed to promote innovation and adoption of new technologies as a way to provide communities the information they need. Participating startups receive six months of rent-free space, mentoring, equipment and technical and administrative support. Companies also receive access to *Philly.com*, *Inquirer.com* and *PhillyDailyNews.com* as a platform for launching their new products.

Knight Foundation supported the initial launch of the incubator to test the effectiveness of the model. The new funding will help Project Liberty attract both talented entrepreneurs and new funding from public and private sources. The incubator will also expand its applicant pool and provide incumbents with more management assistance and counseling, while connecting them with smaller news outlets that may benefit from new innovations. DreamIt Ventures and Drexel University are also partners in Project Liberty.

“Project Liberty has shown that connecting entrepreneurship with the newsroom can help create a culture of innovation and risk-taking in journalism. The model directly benefits communities by improving the quantity and quality of information, so that people can make educated decisions on issues they care about,” said Michael Maness, Knight Foundation vice president of journalism and media innovation. “As the birthplace of Project Liberty, Philadelphia was the first to benefit from the incubator. With its energy and diversity the city proved to be the right breeding ground, and it is the right place to further grow and improve this model.”

“Project Liberty’s next phase builds upon its eight successful alumni, which have raised more than \$6 million, and include DreamIt Ventures graduates, Ben Franklin portfolio companies and companies who have developed partnerships with IGM. Moving forward, we are excited to involve other community media outlets in the program,” said RoseAnn B. Rosenthal, president and CEO of Ben Franklin.

“The media industry is now fully embracing innovative methods for expanding digital business development; the Project Liberty Incubator, unprecedented in the media sector when it first launched, has now been replicated in other media companies throughout the United States,” said Bob Hall, publisher and CEO of Interstate General Media. “We continue to believe in the tremendous opportunity and entrepreneurship which it provides to our community, while also helping to engage audiences with new products and enhanced digital resources.”

Philly.com has incorporated several innovations from current and former incubator residents. For example, tapCLIQ’s mobile relationship management and advertising platform has been integrated into *Philly.com*’s mobile app, successfully attracting advertisers such as online grocer FreshDirect and Susquehanna Bank.

“These two highly regarded companies in the Philadelphia region are very supportive of the platform, as it was helpful in driving successful results for their advertising campaign goals on the *Philly.com* mobile app,” said Chirantan Bhatt, founder and CEO of tapCLIQ. “The Project Liberty Digital Incubator provides an invaluable vantage point and extensive experience for tapCLIQ in being able to work closely with *Philly.com* on their most important advertising initiatives, while delivering important revenue and ingenuity to IGM’s digital products.”

Inaugural incubator resident ElectNext has their module integrated into *Philly.com* to provide users with an easy and interactive way to access political information on candidates seeking public office. “We loved the opportunity to launch our first publisher product with *Philly.com* while in the 2012 Project Liberty Incubator, and the relationship has grown only stronger since,” said Keya Dannenbaum, founder and CEO at ElectNext. “Since that time we have seen *Philly.com* maintain its early adopter approach to adding our data-driven content modules to its political news articles, helping citizens across the region stay informed and engaged around the issues that matter to them not just at election time, but every day.”

Ben Franklin is also accepting applications for the fourth class of companies. Startup and established media companies from throughout the Greater Philadelphia region are encouraged to apply. The incubator is looking for innovative products including, but not limited to, the news media, e-commerce and mobile applications for smartphones and tablets. Applicants are encouraged to present business plans for products and ideas that have received some level of angel investment, and can complement the digital needs of the media sector. [Applications can be downloaded here. The deadline for submission of applications is noon on August 30, 2013.](#)

Project Liberty clients and alumni include [CloudMine](#), [ElectNext](#), [SnipSnap](#), [Rumble](#), [Zaahah](#), [tapCLIQ](#), [TuvaLabs](#) and [A View From My Seat](#).

About Ben Franklin Technology Partners of Southeastern Pennsylvania

Celebrating our 30th Anniversary, Ben Franklin Technology Partners of Southeastern Pennsylvania is a national, award- winning organization for *Stimulating Entrepreneurial Potential*, through entrepreneurship, technology and innovation. Ben Franklin provides the *Capital, Knowledge and Networks* that help innovative enterprises compete in the global marketplace, generating wealth and supporting regional economic growth. Ben Franklin has invested more than \$165 million to grow more than 1,750 regional enterprises, across all areas of technology. It has launched university/industry partnerships that accelerate scientific discoveries to commercialization. The Ben Franklin Technology Partners is an initiative of the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development and is funded by the Ben Franklin Technology Development Authority. www.sep.benfranklin.org

About Interstate General Media / Philly.com

Interstate General Media LLC is the parent company of Philadelphia Media Network (PMN), publisher of *Philly.com*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Philadelphia Daily News* and *Philadelphia Daily News Weekend*. With its multiple brand platforms and integrated print and digital products, PMN is the region's largest media network and the industry's technological leader and innovator. Philadelphia Media Network publications reach an average weekly audience of 1.9 million adults – more than the combination of the three early evening television news shows or the combination of those radio stations ranked in the top five during morning drive-time programming. www.Philly.com

About the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

Knight Foundation supports transformational ideas that promote quality journalism, advance media innovation, engage communities and foster the arts. We believe that democracy thrives when people and communities are informed and engaged. www.knightfoundation.org

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