

Journalism & Media Grantmaking

5

Things You
Need to Know

Ways to Get
Started



Wyncote
Foundation



MEDIA
IMPACT
FUNDERS

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Journalism and Media Grantmaking

**Five Things You
Need to Know**

**Five Ways to Get
Started**

By Michele McLellan

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Five Things You Need to Know

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Foreword

Journalism and Media Grant Making: *Five Things to Know, Five Ways to Get Started* was first published in 2011 by the William Penn Foundation and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation to help grantmakers support reliable journalism as newspapers struggled with the collapse of the advertising-based business model. This updated version, produced by Media Impact Funders with support from the Wyncote Foundation, reflects shifts in the field as well as lessons learned through the expansion of media funding practice, as more grantmakers have gotten involved.

Since 2011, the decline of journalism and news and information entities has further intensified, exacerbated by even greater upheaval in the news industry. Newspapers have been steadily shrinking, digital news startups have not found stable business models, and news consumers' habits have changed significantly—moving from a reliance on print and broadcast sources to online and mobile, and shifting toward news shared by friends and peers rather than directly from original content producers.

Most foundations were either not funding journalism in 2011, or were just beginning to, recognizing the growing need. The purpose of the first booklet was to encourage such funding, but also to advise and caution grantmakers to be mindful of important basic principles, practices, and questions to think about before launching into action based purely on civic urgency and the desire to address the need.

Such principles and practices will always be needed as guideposts for new as well as seasoned funders, whatever their grantmaking strategy. But with the growth of the journalism funding field, and with ongoing attention being paid to “news ecosystems,” funders can now incorporate new approaches. There are many more instructive examples from the grantmaking field, as well as a wider range of resources for nonprofit journalism that can be tapped. We also have the benefit now of learning from unsuccessful initiatives and from the ongoing challenges of organizational and mission sustainability that news organizations face.

Foreword

When news organizations falter, issues at the center of civic life—education, the environment, health, social justice and economic progress—receive less independent scrutiny from journalists, and citizens have less access to the information they need to engage effectively in their communities. At the same time, misleading or false stories masquerading as news have proliferated across the news ecosystem, undermining public trust in reliable journalism, exploiting the information vacuum left by shrinking news operations, and disrupting civic dialogue.

Growing numbers of foundations have stepped forward to address these challenges, using a variety of strategies and approaches. A few larger foundations are prominent in this shift, but increasingly community and place-based foundations have joined in. The Media Grants Data Map—produced by Foundation Center, in collaboration with Media Impact Funders—found that foundations invested \$1.2 billion in grants to U.S.-based journalism, news and information recipients between 2009 and 2015.

The scope of grantmaking has also broadened in ways that reflect a growing sense of urgency and a diversity of approaches. These include approaches that support not only traditional accountability reporting, but also the ability of community members to tell their own stories, as well as to locate narratives and sources they can recognize from their own lives in the news.

The current news and information environment opens exciting paths to experimentation and innovation. Digital platforms are creating fresh opportunities to bring diverse voices into the mix. Collaborations are improving the quality and expanding the reach of credible journalism. Journalists and news entrepreneurs are experimenting with new practices for civic engagement. Emerging models for financial sustainability focus on the need for stronger community interaction.

This booklet updates lessons from the field, with examples of greater investment and innovation in journalism. It describes how foundations are responding to the information gap challenge within their own

Foreword

missions and grantmaking practices. We hope to encourage even more foundations to get involved.

We are especially pleased to work with Media Impact Funders (MIF) to publish this booklet. MIF has amplified many examples of effective journalism funding, and will be central to growing the awareness, understanding and critical assessment of the practice in an ongoing fashion. MIF has the capacity to convene around best practices by established funders and practitioners, to play a connecting role, to serve as an authenticator of the importance of this field, and to elevate the vital role of journalism to communities in a democracy.

Working on this booklet—both the first time around and in this revision—has helped us to articulate and share what we’ve been learning alongside our philanthropic peers. It has also surfaced new examples that we can learn from. We hope you will also find it useful in your own work.

Sincerely,



David Haas
Vice Chair
Wyncote Foundation

How to Use This Resource

This booklet is a starter guide for foundations interested in exploring how to make impactful journalism and community-information grants. It shares the experiences of dozens of foundations that have recently funded news and information projects. It also introduces the work of peer foundations that support journalism. It is published by Media Impact Funders, a network of media grantmakers.

Foundations do not need to have a formal journalism program to make grants that support healthy news and information flows. Nor does a foundation need large dollar investments to get started. Even a small grant may help citizens in a given community or demographic gain access to credible information that will help them participate in civic life.

The news ecosystem is dynamic and rapidly changing. Willingness to experiment, learn from mistakes and be nimble are assets for both funders and grantees.

This booklet is divided into two main parts: Things you need to know, and ways to take action.

Five Things You Need to Know

This section offers perspectives from a range of funders already supporting journalism, designed to inform those new to the field.

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one

The work foundations care about, to advance democratic participation and build a civic commons, is at risk.

Fewer local newspapers can afford consistent, in-depth coverage that explains important civic issues or investigates community problems. At the levels of state and local government especially, fewer reporters are on hand to examine complex policy shifts or hold politicians accountable. As a result, people know less about the issues that funders' work addresses, and are less engaged as citizens.

“When we don’t have enough news coverage to tell people what’s going on, people become disconnected from their community,” says Marcelle Eply, president and CEO of the Long Beach Community Foundation, which is launching a news collaborative to investigate the digital divide in that city.

“We all recognize the importance of an informed and engaged electorate,” says Stefan Lanfer, director of communications at the Barr Foundation. We count on policy-makers being responsive to research and evidence, and being held accountable. And we know that robust, quality journalism contributes mightily to each of these important ingredients of change. When journalism falters, it is an impediment to progress on a host of issues.”

“All funders would do well to consider what roles we might play in strengthening this sector.”

**—Stefan Lanfer,
Barr Foundation**

Alberto Ibargüen, president and CEO of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, believes foundations have a critical role to play

in both re-establishing trust in media and fostering media that can be trusted. “We need to rebuild common ground,” he says.

Bolstered by foundation backing, myriad nonprofit news organizations are taking their place alongside traditional media and public broadcasting to help provide news in the public interest. Sue Cross, CEO of the Institute for Nonprofit News (INN)—an affiliate organization for about 140 of these outlets—estimates there are about 200 such organizations today in the United States, compared with a handful a decade ago. These largely digital-first outlets exist alongside and sometimes in partnership with the public radio and television stations that funders have supported for decades. INN cites dozens of stories by member organizations in 2016 alone that resulted in civic debate, policy changes, criminal charges, improvements to public safety, and even saved lives.

However, even these promising organizations need substantial support from both foundations and individual donors to survive. By stepping up, new funders can help to fill critical information gaps. ■



How Nonprofit News Makes an Impact

- Wyofile reported extensively on the possible misuse of federal funds by a prominent Wyoming developer, who was later convicted of fraud.
- *Bridge Magazine* in Michigan revealed how a school choice policy advocated by Betsy DeVos was leading to greater school segregation.
- A Connecticut Health I-Team investigation prompted reform after showing how the state was coercing parents of children with severe behavioral problems to give up custody in order to obtain care for them.
- ProPublica doggedly challenged Facebook’s practice of allowing “ethnic affinity” ads for housing and jobs.

two

**Journalism must
forge new and
more meaningful
connections with
the community.**

News outlets no longer set the pace and agenda for coverage. People can now consume information when they want to, reshape it on their own terms, and share it across multiple platforms. The result is an on-demand culture that operates 24/7. This revolution in news consumption is not limited to the young; older Americans are flocking to social media platforms and mobile devices to find news and information. In an era of

shifting demographics and personalized content, journalists must now adapt to connect more meaningfully with audiences—simply putting content online does not do the trick.

Foundations may move too slowly and be too risk averse to thrive in this fast-moving environment, according to Jennifer Choi, associate director for strategic partnerships at the News Integrity Initiative at City University of New York.

**“If you want to be relevant, you
have to go out there and listen.
The effort is so worth it.”**

**—Jennifer Choi,
News Integrity Initiative**

Choi says that disconnect was evident in her previous role as journalism program officer for the Chicago-based Robert R. McCormick Foundation. She spent months getting to know people who were regarded as leaders by their communities but were not on the foundation’s radar. She then championed initiatives totally new to the foundation. Among

them was City Bureau (see sidebar). Choi advises foundation leaders to “fund for the long game” in journalism with the understanding that a meaningful payoff may take a while.

Social and mobile platforms also offer opportunities to engage harder-to-reach news consumers. Many for-profit sites, for example, are targeting news to young people on mobile devices, such as Philadelphia-based Billy Penn. The Knight Foundation gave this outlet a grant in 2015 to document mobile best practices for other newsrooms. A nonprofit, Outlier Media, uses text messaging and Facebook Messenger to reach low-income residents with customized data and requests for story leads, primarily about consumer protection and predatory financial practices. The project is being piloted in Detroit with support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

Funders have also supported numerous efforts to use digital platforms to engage younger and more varied public radio audiences. ■



A Closer Look at the City Bureau

City Bureau is a foundation-supported “civic news lab” that covers Chicago’s South and West sides. Launched in 2015 as a collaborative of journalists and community members, it has several aims: produce news that includes diverse sources and perspectives, nurture the next generation of journalists through training and mentoring, and engage citizens in an effort to restore trust in reliable news.

City Bureau has hosted nearly four dozen meet-ups where journalists and community members discuss local issues. City Bureau stories have explored critical issues, including segregation, racial disparities, and police misconduct, and have appeared in 12 partner publications, including the *Chicago Defender* and *The Atlantic* magazine. Its Documenters program pays members of the public to report live on public meetings and events.

three

New business models will be crucial to sustaining journalism.

Foundations should recognize that business model development is a critical long game for the future of journalism. Traditional news organizations and startups alike are chasing the elusive formula for financial sustainability in the digital age.

New regional and local organizations can't count on a mass audience to sustain even a lean advertising model. Instead they need to draw revenue from a loyal, active and influential audience

through efforts such as membership programs and civic events with paying sponsors. National nonprofit outlets are also experimenting with a mix of revenue sources.

Engagement is a key element of emerging funding models, whether revenue comes through digital subscriptions, membership dues or sponsorships. This means that simply distributing news is no longer sufficient. Instead, news organizations must provide multiple mechanisms for feedback, participation, critique and sharing. Guiding news organizations toward a business model based on community engagement may be the most important support foundations can provide, according to Molly de Aguiar, managing director of the News Integrity Initiative.

To surface new approaches, the Membership Puzzle Project is currently exploring the intersection of engagement and audience support. The News Revenue Hub also works with nonprofit sites on membership and audience engagement initiatives.

The Lenfest Institute for Journalism is a significant new force in the

quest for sustainability. Founded in 2016 by media entrepreneur and philanthropist H. F. (Gerry) Lenfest, its mission is to develop sustainable business models for local journalism, including struggling newspapers in metro markets. Lenfest created the Institute with an initial endowment of \$20 million, and also donated his ownership of the Philadelphia Media Network (two major newspapers and a news website) to the Institute to serve as a live lab.

“Targeted philanthropy in journalism at this moment could make catalytic change in how the industry transforms to a new public service model.”

**—Josh Stearns,
The Democracy Fund**

In 2017, the Institute made innovation grants totaling \$1 million, and the Knight Foundation has committed \$4.6 million to the Knight-Lenfest Newsroom Initiative. ■



Newsrooms Are Experimenting With a Range of Revenue Models

- National newsrooms such as The Marshall Project are turning to crowdsourcing platforms such as Kickstarter to raise funds for coverage.
- Local nonprofit news outlets such as Voice of San Diego and MinnPost have built enough community loyalty to develop membership programs similar to those that support public broadcasting.
- Berkeleyside, a for-profit start up in California, is exploring whether community backing is strong enough to support a direct public offering. It is well on the way to its goal of \$800,000 in community investment.

four

Trust in journalism is threatened by new platforms, user habits, and a boom in disinformation.

The flood of false information into the public square lends urgency to efforts to help the public discern fact from fiction, and to rebuild trust in credible journalism. Efforts to fight disinformation play out on three fronts: supply, distribution and public demand.

On the supply side, the need to produce more trustworthy journalism is obvious. Fact checking is also essential; the explosion of misinformation has

spawned dozens of fact-checking operations in the United States in the past five years.

But distribution of information no longer belongs exclusively to professional journalism organizations. Social media and search platforms including Facebook, Google, and Twitter were bombarded with disinformation during the 2016 election campaign. The internet giants have announced steps to stem the tide of falsehoods, but it remains to be seen whether they can succeed.

The Trust Project, a consortium of news and tech companies including Google, wants platforms to use “trust indicators” such as publication of policies governing accuracy and ethics to help people identify credible sources. Search engines and social media platforms will be able to determine if these transparency practices are in place and use that information to boost quality stories.

The disinformation crisis has also turned attention to the need to raise media literacy, make the case for why people should seek out credible reporting,

“[News literacy] is something people don’t know they need until they see it in action—and then they can’t believe they haven’t moved on it earlier.”

**—Tobi Printz-Platnick,
Gwendolyn Cafritz
Foundation**

and deepen trust in news. The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation funds news literacy training in the Washington, D.C., area. Tobi Printz-Platnick, senior program officer, recommends local funders consider supporting such programs.

The News Integrity Initiative is a \$14 million fund launched by the

Ford Foundation, Facebook and the Craig Newmark Philanthropic Fund in 2016 to support efforts to fight misinformation and promote trust. The Knight and Rita Allen foundations and the Democracy Fund also supported a prototype fund with up to \$1 million to test ideas that might improve the flow of accurate information. ■



Fostering the Flow of High-Quality News

As political hostility to the press grows, the Knight Foundation in 2016 founded the Knight First Amendment Institute at Columbia University to defend freedom of speech and the press through litigation, research and public education. At the local level, the Society of Professional Journalists has dozens of local chapters fighting for access to public information. A local chapter may be a good point of contact for place-based foundations seeking to learn more about local media challenges.

The nonprofit News Literacy Project uses nearly a decade of teaching experience in classrooms in Checkology, an online curriculum available to teachers. The project, supported by Knight and more than a dozen other foundations, has a high rate of success in teaching students to check the sourcing of news before sharing it. Stony Brook University in New York offers an online class for adult learners called “Making Sense of the News.”

five

Editorial
independence
and transparency
matter.

Editorial independence and transparency are hallmarks of journalistic credibility. That means funders can't dictate what stories to cover or how to cover them. Even the perception of influence by a funder will taint the credibility of the journalistic work, thus defeating the purpose of foundation investment. That said, funders have different approaches to addressing this dynamic.

The American Press
Institute (API) provides

detailed guidance with respect to journalistic ethics and transparency. In consultation with foundation leaders and nonprofit news editors, API offers two sets of guidelines—one for funders and one for news organizations—covering best practices. Specifically, essays by contributors explored two approaches to ensuring independence: funding targeted to a broad topic, and unrestricted funding.

Daniel Green of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation advocates a middle ground where a foundation can target funding to issues that align with its mission, without dictating coverage. But Kathy Im and Peter Slevin of the MacArthur Foundation argue for flexibility.

"The work of the funders is to identify smart, innovative and ethical newsroom leaders and then trust them to do the right thing."

**—Kathy Im and Peter Slevin,
MacArthur Foundation**

Funders should recognize that when topics are very tightly circumscribed or seen from a particular point of view (i.e.

corruption in City Hall, or single-point pollution on one watershed, or restrictions on abortion funding) resulting coverage may come to be viewed as advocacy journalism, with an attendant loss of credibility. These issues and potential disconnects should be considered upfront, early in the grantmaking process and not discovered in the heat of a disagreement.

Foundations should also be prepared to weather pushback when journalism ruffles feathers. For example, when one state government news site launched a few years ago, its first major project revealed that a key corporate backer of the sponsoring foundation had failed to pay a state tax surcharge. In response, the foundation leader explained, without equivocation, that the news site was independent.

News consumers need transparency about funding and any point of view reflected in the journalism. Research also shows that the public places more trust in news organizations that are open about their mission and ethics.

Transparency also is critical in advocacy journalism, a cousin of independent journalism that provides factual information while owning—and disclosing—a point of view. While some foundations believe objective journalism is the most credible and important, others believe transparent advocacy journalism is a way to advance their missions and invest in coverage of particular topics. ■



Sample Transparency Policies

The Institute for Nonprofit News (INN) requires that its members, independent news organizations, publish the names of individual and organizational donors that contribute \$5,000 or more, as well as providing their IRS Form 990 or equivalent salary information.

The Texas Tribune publishes a list of all donors and paying members dating back to its seed funding in 2009, as well as its tax forms, a code of ethics that includes journalism practices and revenue sources, and a description of its major activities.

Five Ways to Get Started

Armed with the knowledge from the previous section, funders should feel better prepared to take the following action steps—or to devise their own.

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- 2 Support innovations in reporting, business models and engagement** 24
- 3 Reinforce partnerships that expand the diversity, scope and distribution of news** 26
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one

Identify grantmaking and investment strategies that support news outlets' capacity.

There are different ways for funders to help news organizations.

One method is direct funding to a nonprofit news outlet or a for-profit outlet that may have greater reach. Another way is to fund collaborations and partnerships among local or local-national news organizations. Grant dollars can also go to groups that support journalism and can help identify promising initiatives, such as the Local Independent Online News

Publishers (LION), or the Ida B. Wells Society for Investigative Reporting. Funders also often work together to support an outlet or organization in order to increase the impact of their dollars.

While traditional news outlets cover general news, albeit less of it, newer nonprofit news outlets are usually more specialized. Some produce only investigative reporting that holds officials accountable, reveals abuses, or

“We have increased our journalism funding mostly in response to the disruption in the news business that has led to newspaper consolidations, closings, and job cuts.”

—Bill Strong, Joyce Foundation

documents hazards. Other outlets produce a mix of news and investigations with a fairly tight focus on a few public affairs topics. Still others drill down a single topic, such as health or education. Not all foundation support goes to nonprofit outlets—for example, the Seattle Foundation

supported education coverage in *The Seattle Times*, while the Ford Foundation supported immigration coverage in *The Los Angeles Times*.

The Joyce Foundation targets funding to broad issues in the Great Lakes region that are central to its mission, including environment, education and economic mobility. Bill Strong, director of communications at Joyce, says support for journalism has more than doubled in the past three years to \$1.4 million in 2017.

Two recent initiatives make it easier for foundations to get involved. News Match enables local funders and donors to contribute to nonprofit outlets. The \$3 million open fund, created by the Knight and MacArthur foundations and the Democracy Fund, matches donations. Report for America will share the cost of a reporter's salary with a local foundation and a local news organization where the journalist will work. For example, the Galloway Family Foundation is backing reporters to cover Appalachia. ■



Not All Reporting Is Alike

Foundations can support different types of news organizations:

Investigative reporting: The Ethics and Excellence Foundation supports investigative organizations in Oklahoma, Florida and Wisconsin, among others.

Public affairs reporting: Community and place-based foundations have been key supporters of organizations that focus on civic topics, such as Voice of San Diego, which covers local government and land use, and New Jersey Spotlight, which covers state government.

Topical reporting: More than 40 foundations have given support to Chalkbeat, which covers education in five states. The Kaiser Family Foundation established Kaiser Health News, an independent source of news about health policy.

Collaborative reporting: The Corporation for Public Broadcasting supports a variety of news collaborations across stations focused on particular topics of regional interest.

two

Support
innovations
in reporting,
business models
and engagement.

As a new journalism ecosystem emerges, experimentation has value even if success is not guaranteed. Mauricio Palma, who oversees news experiments for the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, embraces such projects as exciting opportunities for funders to stretch and learn.

The value of trying new things was a key idea in the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation's bold initiative to strengthen information flows and

civic engagement in New Jersey. "News and information has the power to build broad coalitions around community or state issues," says de Aguiar, who directed the initiative. "It's a powerful focal point."

"It is something very new for a community foundation to be a part of a process where the outcome is not defined before a commitment is made. Part of the end result is to be discovered in the process of experimentation. It's an incredible culture shift."

—Mauricio Palma, Silicon Valley Community Foundation

Simply funding reporting at news startups does not guarantee their future, she observes. Instead, the initiative encouraged experiments to increase their visibility and their revenue while embracing community participation.

Dodge's Local News Lab, with support from Knight Foundation, offered news entrepreneurs training, guides and strategic coaching. Experiments in engagement included the Listening Post, which uses text messaging,

recording devices and public signs to share community voices. Three of the newsrooms also used Hearken, an online platform that connects journalists to communities, resulting in increased traffic, engagement and new monthly revenue.

Dodge also launched the Center for Cooperative Media at Montclair State University to foster collaboration among local news organizations and supported a number of other journalism initiatives designed to encourage community engagement, including News Voices New Jersey.

The Local News Lab itself has proven to be a valuable resource for the broader field. The Democracy Fund has adopted and updated the site to serve communities around the country, and now publishes regular posts on creative ways to sustain and conduct local reporting. ■



How to Support More Inclusive Innovation

Experimentation is not just about new platforms or tools. Foundations can help journalism find fresh ways to engage diverse communities. Paul Waters, senior associate with the Democracy Fund, suggests:

- Support training to help local newsrooms adopt more inclusive reporting practices. The Maynard Institute for Journalism Education has long provided training aimed at bridging divides of race, gender, age and class.
- Partner with organizations such as the Emma Bowen and T. Howard foundations, which place student interns from underrepresented groups in local newsrooms.
- Bring established training programs to local communities, which minimizes travel costs for local journalists. The Ida B. Wells Society provides investigative reporting training.
- Help local journalists participate in national conferences of organizations such as the NAHJ, AAJA, NABJ or the NAJA, which offer training and networking opportunities.

three

Reinforce partnerships that expand the diversity, scope and distribution of news.

Partnership is a powerful new trend in journalism and community information projects. Content collaborations, distribution partnerships, or a mix of the two are being embraced by both nonprofit and commercial media.

Supporting collaborative projects is one way for funders to build greater impact in news. The Center for Cooperative Media has been researching and showcasing successful collaborations that involve

multiple outlets. They have identified six variations of partnerships ranging from temporary, in which organizations coordinate but work separately, to ongoing partnerships in which multiple organizations share resources.

“While lessons are still being learned, collaborative journalism has evolved from experiment to common practice.”
—Sarah Stonbely,
Center for
Cooperative Media

However, funders should be aware that forcing collaboration does not work. Such agreements need to be carefully constructed in order to ensure mutual benefit, editorial rigor, and efficient sharing of labor and resources.

Partnerships that include ethnic media represent a way to reach and elevate voices that might otherwise be overlooked. Voting Block, a partnership of more than two dozen New Jersey news organizations,

including ethnic media outlets, shared stories about the November 2017

governor's race that reflected views from disparate communities. These were then compiled in a People's Agenda that was sent to the incoming governor.

Distribution partnerships have proven vital to dozens of relatively new nonprofit news organizations that publish on the web. These organizations produce high quality journalism but do not have the scale to put it in front of large audiences. For example, Wisconsin Watch, a small investigative news organization that covers state government and politics, notes that its reports have been carried by more than 500 publications with audiences totaling more than 56 million. ■



Working Together to Surface Solutions

In 2017, a coalition of 15 Philadelphia news organizations collaborated on a yearlong quest to address challenges faced by newly released prisoners.

The coalition included general, community and ethnic news outlets. It launched as a project of the national Solutions Journalism Network, a foundation-supported nonprofit that has worked with 200 newsrooms to champion a fresh approach to journalism: Instead of simply documenting social problems, journalists investigate solutions and engage the community in discussing them.

The Reentry Project produced more than 100 stories and organized several events that brought together journalists, former prisoners and other community members. Dozens of former prisoners also told their stories through a call line and video storytelling booths. One city official credited the work with "changing the narrative" of reentry. Prison officials expressed interest in vocational programs they learned about from the stories.

The initiative, launched with support from Knight Foundation, will live on as Solutions Stories Philly. With a grant from the Lenfest Institute, the collaborative in 2018 will tackle poverty as its next topic.

four

Invest in high-quality community data to engage and improve communities.

Qualified and verified data is essential

to informed civic decision-making. By providing journalists and policy-makers with reliable community data, foundations can use data to engage and improve communities. Funders are also supporting national initiatives in creating and preserving open data, training journalists in data visualization, and working with government agencies to

improve and make datasets more accessible.

Nowhere is the value of good data more evident than in Detroit. Starting in 2013, the Skillman and Kresge foundations turned to Data Driven Detroit to collect data that would help the community make decisions about how to improve their neighborhoods. Marie Colombo, director of strategic evaluation and learning at the Skillman Foundation, says the data has also helped empower residents as they become more adept in their ability to analyze it.

“A core value is enabling the community to have a strong voice. In order to do that they have to have access to information.”

—Marie Colombo, Skillman Foundation

During the foreclosure crisis, blight became a critical concern. Neighborhood leaders lamented that “abandoned homes and trash-strewn, overgrown lots made neighborhoods unsafe to live in and difficult places for children and their families to thrive.”

Data Driven Detroit and a tech partner created a parcel survey for a pilot neighborhood and a smartphone app that allowed people to upload photos and information, which then fed into mapping software. “This collaboration represented the most comprehensive, quickest and most efficient land survey ever done in Detroit,” reports the Skillman Foundation, which went on to fund demolition of 71 houses in the demonstration neighborhood.

Results of the pilot helped leverage public and private resources for blight removal, including \$100 million in federal funding. By 2015, the City of Detroit had torn down 7,000 vacant houses. ■



Showing Citizens How to Put Data to Work

Launched in 2010 with support from the Chicago Community Trust, the MacArthur Foundation and the City of Chicago, the Smart Chicago Collaborative seeks to improve lives by making technology accessible. Among its initiatives:

- Training, equipment and information to help residents improve their health. One project, Chicago Health Atlas, provides citywide information on health trends.
- Tech training and mentoring for young people, including Youth Led Tech for teens in several Chicago neighborhoods and Connect Chicago, a network of locations that offer free internet and computer access.
- Better data about justice in underserved communities. Convicted in Cook analyzed five years of criminal convictions in Cook County, where Chicago is located.
- Fostering engagement of the tech sector in civic life. Smart Chicago is developing a Chicago School of Data in which more than 200 organizations contribute information about how they use data.

five

Connect with other funders to learn more about media grantmaking.

Funders don't have to go it alone. Getting to know peers with similar goals can help answer many questions about how to proceed.

Media Impact Funders, the publisher of this booklet, is a member-supported network of funders who seek to improve society through media and technology.

The organization advises grantmakers interested in using media to further their missions, offers a database of grantmaking

for media, and connects funders and allies who support media that informs, engages and inspires. Journalism funders in the network connect through an annual meeting and regular conference calls to explore issues in the field. To learn more about joining this network, send an email to journalism@mediafunders.org.

Another key source of information is the Knight Foundation, which in the past decade has been a major catalyst both nationally and in local communities for experimentation in journalism and press freedom, community, technology and healthy information flows.

Knight also hosts an annual Knight Media Forum (formerly Media Learning Seminar), which brings together leaders of all types of

"Across America, funders are increasingly concerned about the vitality of journalism as a bulwark for our democracy."

**—Vince Stehle,
Executive Director,
Media Impact Funders**

foundations with leaders in technology, media and libraries.

Past speakers' presentations are archived on the Knight Foundation website: knightfoundation.org/media-learning-seminar.

The Democracy Fund has created a map that may help foundations assess information flows in their communities. It assesses the role of local news and public engagement beyond the strength of the individual news outlet: democracyfund.org/local-news-participation.

The map takes a “systems thinking,” approach, considering other influences that include the local economy, demographics, technological infrastructure and the policy environment, as well as the capacity of local citizens to find, interpret and share information needed for civic engagement. ■



Other Resources on Public-Interest Journalism

- The Pew Research Center is an invaluable source of information about audience behavior, including news consumption, internet usage, technological adoption, and trust in news.
- The American Press Institute is a leading think tank about best practices for news organizations. API has collaborated with funders to create guidelines that assure independence and credibility for journalism grantees.
- Two national membership organizations represent independent news publishers: The Institute for Nonprofit News (INN) and Local Independent Online News Publishers (LION).
- Major journalism publications include Nieman Lab and the *Columbia Journalism Review*. The major U.S. gathering in digital journalism is the annual Online News Association conference.

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