

# Community Foundations & Journalism:

## Funding Data from 2009-2019

In October 2019, Media Impact Funders released a [major report](#) looking at the state of journalism funding in the U.S. since 2009. Part of that report paid special attention to the increasingly important role of community foundations in the journalism funding ecosystem. This data snapshot provides further examination of community foundation-funded journalism and is an attempt to ignite a conversation among community foundations to better understand the scope of their funding.

Community foundations have long supported journalism projects, local public media stations and national reporting efforts of interest to their donors. Now, at a time when the collapse of local journalism is leaving cities, towns and counties without quality local news, community foundations are making significant contributions to reverse the troubling trends in journalism and reconnect local communities with the information they need to thrive.

And while it might be unrealistic to think that philanthropy can (or should) offer a clear solution to journalism’s economic fallout in the digital age, it can and must support quality news and information, especially at the local level, where subscription volume and decreased advertising revenues make sustainability impossible. Community foundations, which have existed for more than 100 years to serve their local communities, have an especially important role to play.

Knowing that an informed and engaged public can better hold power to account, advocate for broad community needs and create more representative government, support for local, quality journalism aligns well with the goals of community foundations. While not on scale with larger national funders and not often making headlines for their work, community foundations have played a critically important role in advancing quality news and information, and are increasingly key partners in inspiring news collaborations, bringing their local expertise and convening power to the table.

According to Candid’s Foundation Maps for Media Funding, between 2009 and 2019, 140 community foundations have given \$109 million in journalism grants (excluding journalism education).

### Number of Grants

**3,515**

### Value of Grants

**\$109.2** Million

### Number of Funders

**140**

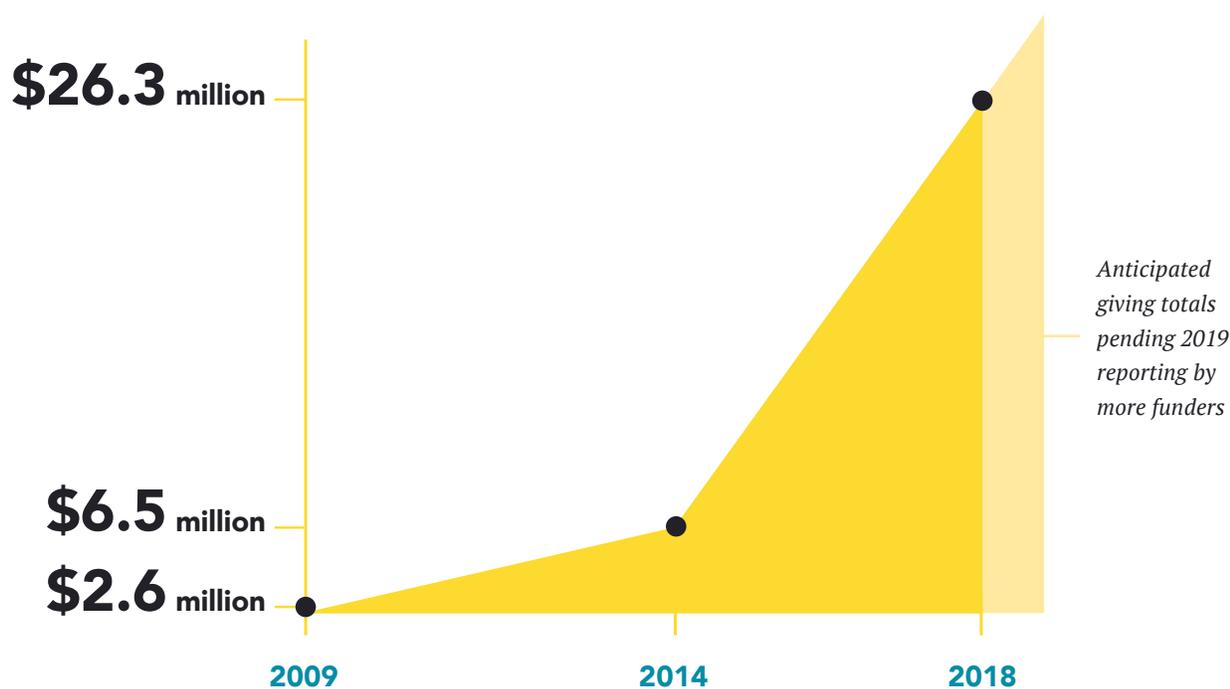
### Number of Recipients

**597**

*Funding totals are based on available data from mid-September 2020 in Foundation Maps for Media Funding, and are expected to change when more funders report their data.*

# Journalism Grant Giving

2009-2018



The scale of increased giving is substantial. In 2009, data show that 26 U.S.-based community foundations gave \$2.6 million in journalism grants. By 2014, that number had more than doubled to \$6.5 million. In 2018, 80 community foundations gave \$26.3 million—an increase of 1000% percent since 2009, which is expected to grow as more funders report their grants.

Current data indicates that only three states—Kentucky, Montana and North Dakota—are without a single community foundation that is funding journalism. This is down from the eight states we noted in our 2019 journalism report, which is positive news. Of the five states that now show some community foundation giving for journalism, four are new to journalism grantmaking, beginning in 2017. Those grants, which total \$140,000, had not been submitted to the data map when we wrote our 2019 journalism report. At a time of dwindling local news, it is heartening to see new funding, even at modest levels.

Also in our 2019 report focusing on journalism philanthropy in the U.S., we found that the top 10

community foundations\* that make journalism grants contributed \$44.2 million since 2009. According to updated reporting from funders, those top 10 community foundations have made \$78.5 million in journalism-related grants between 2009 and 2019, which equals 72 percent of total journalism grants made by community foundations in that time period. We know those numbers will increase as more foundations report 2019 grants. Note that we chose to include giving through 2019 because Silicon Valley Community Foundation and a handful of other funders have shared 2019 data, and we want to offer the latest picture of giving. Seven of the top 10 community foundations have only submitted their grants data through 2018, so we recognize that their giving totals will increase for this time period.

Like some areas of philanthropy, there is one outsized donor in this field—Silicon Valley Community Foundation, which has given \$44.4 million in journalism grants, or 40 percent of total giving. The next nine largest community foundations in this space have given \$34 million combined.

\*The top 10 community foundations for journalism funding: the Silicon Valley Community Foundation; Foundation for the Carolinas; San Francisco Foundation; New York Community Trust; Rochester Area Community Foundation; Boston Foundation; Seattle Foundation; Miami Foundation; The Pittsburgh Foundation; and Tulsa Community Foundation

# Sample grants from top 10 community foundations

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More about Foundation Maps for Media Funding and its taxonomy can be found on [Page 5](#).

## Silicon Valley Community Foundation

Mountain View, CA

**\$44.4 million / 737 grants**

Top two recent grants:

- \$2 million to ProPublica (Investigative Journalism)
- \$1.5 million to Journalism Development Network for Media justice (Journalism, News and Information, General)

## Foundation for the Carolinas

Charlotte, NC

**\$8.2 million / 21 grants**

Top two recent grants:

- \$1 million to the North Carolina Coastal Foundation (Journalism, News and Information, General)
- \$200,000 to the Center for Public Integrity (Investigative Journalism)

## The San Francisco Foundation

San Francisco, CA

**\$6.9 million / 145 grants**

Top two recent grants:

- \$329,536 to Northern California Public Broadcasting (Journalism, News and Information, General)
- \$250,000 to ProPublica (Investigative Journalism)

## The New York Community Trust

New York, NY

**\$3.6 million / 173 grants**

Top two recent grants:

- \$250,000 to International Documentary Society for Film and video (Advocacy Journalism)
- \$150,000 to the Marshall Project (Advocacy Journalism)

## The Rochester Areas Community Foundation

Rochester, NY

**\$3.3 million / 212 grants**

Top two recent grants:

- \$57,500 to Online News Association for Web-based media (Journalism, News and Information, General)
- \$15,000 to Investigative Reporters and Editors (Investigative Journalism)

## The Miami Foundation

Miami, FL

**\$3.2 million / 115 grants**

Top two recent grants:

- \$60,908 to Institute for Nonprofit News (Journalism, News and Information, General)
- \$41,309 to Florida Center for Investigative Reporting (Investigative Journalism)

## Boston Foundation

Boston, MA

**\$3.2 million / 109 grants**

Top two recent grants:

- \$10,000 to ProPublica (Investigative Journalism)
- \$10,000 to Data for Black Lives (Journalism, News and Information, General)

## Seattle Foundation

Seattle, WA

**\$2.4 million / 259 grants**

Top two recent grants:

- \$100,000 to Utah Film Center (Investigative Journalism)
- \$75,000 to Grist Magazine for Web-based media (Advocacy Journalism)

## The Pittsburgh Foundation

Pittsburgh, PA

**\$2.1 million / 20 grants**

Top two recent grants:

- \$300,000 to the Lenfest Institute for Journalism (Journalism, News and Information, General)
- \$250,000 to PublicSource (Constituency Journalism)

## Tulsa Community Foundation

Tulsa, OK

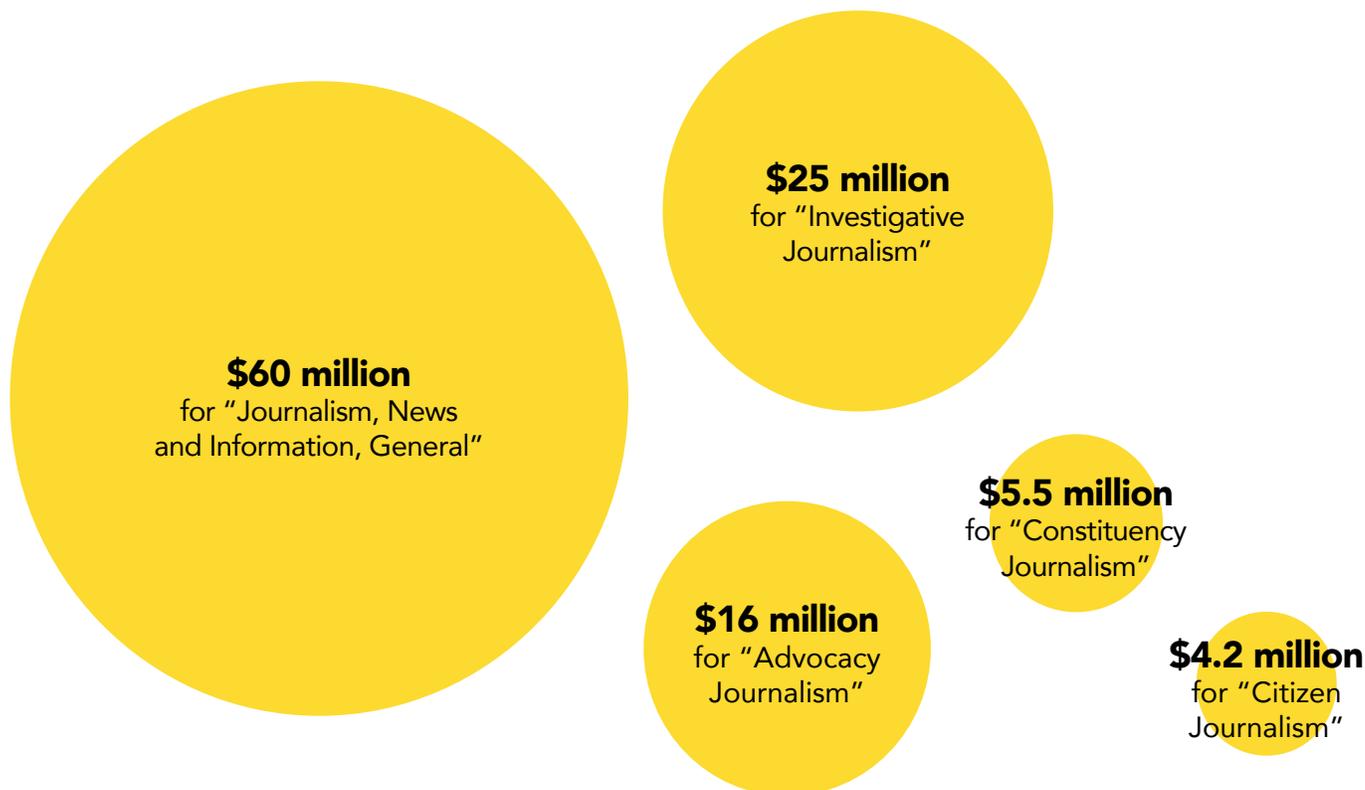
**\$2 million / 11 grants**

Top two recent grants:

- \$95,000 to Global Press Institute for Media justice (Media Literacy, Constituency Journalism)
- \$75,000 to the Marshall Project (Advocacy Journalism)

# Distribution of journalism grants

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While we know that community foundations are making important investments in journalism, there are gaps in our knowledge that we aim to fill. For example, because community foundation grants are reported without the distinction between donor-advised giving, the available data makes it hard to determine how much local journalism is being supported by staff who oversee discretionary funds and how much is directed via donor-advised funds.

To that end, and in keeping with our strategic imperative to present and identify funding models and best practices for

supporting local journalism, this data snapshot is an attempt to ignite a conversation to better understand the role community foundations are playing in supporting critical civic education, especially at the local level.

In the coming weeks, Media Impact Funders will be surveying leading community foundations about their journalism work and look forward to sharing the results of our inquiry. If you have insights to share, we encourage you to email us at [journalism@mediafunders.org](mailto:journalism@mediafunders.org)

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Media Impact Funders is a knowledge network advancing and catalyzing the work of a diverse range of funders committed to media that informs, engages, and inspires.

# Appendix



## About Foundation Maps for Media Funding

The data map only shows grantmaking investments, not other financial instruments such as loans or equity stakes. Data is collected in several ways. Funders submit their giving data directly to Candid (formerly Foundation Center) and Candid also reviews 990 tax forms and other public information. Data is then coded according to grant description and other details. Grants in the media map include a wide range of approaches that some funders don't consider part of their media work. For example, a funder supporting development of web content for educational use might consider that an education grant, rather than a media grant for an educational outcome. Recognizing that the scope of the taxonomy developed in partnership with Candid includes media-related grants outside of some funders' portfolios, readers are encouraged to explore the map themselves using search parameters that fit their funding guidelines.

## The top-level taxonomy includes:

- Media Content and Platforms
- Telecommunications Infrastructure
- Media Applications and Tools
- Media Access and Policy
- Journalism, News and Information

Within these wider categories of funding there are 25 subcategories, including radio, film and video, mobile media, media justice, internet access, freedom of expression, investigative journalism, and more. More information about the definitions and coding methods are available on the [data map](#).