

Five Things You Need To Know

05

Journalism and Media

# Grant Making

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Five Ways To Get Started

  
WILLIAM PENN  
FOUNDATION

 John S. and James L.  
Knight Foundation  
*Informed and engaged communities.*

Journalism and Media

# Grant Making

Five Things You Need To Know

Five Ways To Get Started

By Michele McLellan  
and Eric Newton

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# Foreword

**“We don’t do media grants. Certainly not journalism grants.” For decades, that’s what you heard from many foundation leaders in the United States.**

But today, that’s changing, as the digital age upends traditional media economics, tossing roughly 15,000 American journalists out of work in the past few years.

We might call them media grants, journalism grants or community information grants. Regardless of their name, community and other place-based foundations are doing more of these grants.

**The reason for this is interesting. Foundations are making more media and journalism grants not for the sake of media alone, but because they are finding they need a healthy news ecosystem in order to achieve their strategic goals.**

Enter this booklet, by foundations that make media and journalism grants, for foundations with little or no experience in this field.

The question of why these grants are gaining in popularity is one you can easily answer for yourself.

First, think of your mission as a foundation. What good do you hope to achieve? What are your program goals? Second, think of the news and information people need to have to engage with your work. Think of what people need to know before they can do what they must do for your programs to succeed. Is today’s news and information system helping you get things done? Odds are, it isn’t.

This is a result of the turmoil in communications caused by the digital revolution. No one knows where things are heading. The news and information landscape is morphing right before our eyes. Traditional news outlets are cutting back. New outlets are emerging. Everyone is trying new approaches.

**But the bottom line is that few, if any, community challenges can be faced, or local issues debated, or happy outcomes achieved, without a healthy flow of news and information.**

In 2009, the [Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy](#) declared the nation to be at a critical juncture:

*“The digital age is creating an information and communications renaissance. But it is not serving all Americans and their local communities equally. It is not yet serving democracy fully. How we react, individually and collectively, to this democratic shortfall will affect the quality of our lives and the very nature of our communities.”*

That is a dire warning, one suggesting that your foundation’s strategic objectives may be losing power if you are in a community where news and information is declining.

Leaders of community and place-based foundation would agree. In 2008, 41 percent told Knight Foundation that useful local news was shrinking in volume. Just two years later, 75 percent of them said local news was drying up. Many also felt government web portals were not easy to use and that broadband access was far from universal. (Only local libraries got uniformly good marks.)

The good news, though, is that the same digital age that is upending traditional media makes it easy for foundations to make media grants. You can support existing news organizations, like public media or community cable or the local commercial media. You can start a new news organization. You can help citizens use new digital tools to better know and act on community issues.

Foundations have risen to this call to action by increasing grant making designed to help fill local news and information gaps in areas where they focus – from more news about planning and zoning in Pennsylvania to more news about community health in California.

That's because foundation leaders are learning that the quality of information and public conversation matters to their communities and it underpins the work the foundations are trying to accomplish. Many are seeing their news and information efforts strengthen their community leadership profile and improve their work in more traditional areas.

*“Media, once taken for granted, is the life blood of the nonprofit organizations we fund. The stories in the newspapers and on television serve to spotlight pressing community needs and showcase those nonprofits stepping up to address those needs. We can all recall countless stories of the plight of an individual, a cause, or a community that is profiled in a newspaper story or television segment, and donations pour in. Media is also the main vehicle for the arts to gain visibility, critique, and promotion. The success of nonprofit organizations depends on a strong media ecosystem.”*

**- Terry Mazany, President and CEO,  
The Chicago Community Trust**

Two surveys in 2010 by FSG Social Impact Advisors of community and place-based foundations (more than 125 foundations the first time, more than 150 the second time) found that 46 percent said their media and journalism spending was growing, 50 percent said they were now making such grants and 59 percent said they believed such funding would increase during the next three years.

Seeking to advance “informed and engaged communities,” the [John S. and James L. Knight Foundation](#) has fueled this trend. Knight offered \$24 million in matching money through the Knight Community Information Challenge.

*“Information is as vital to the healthy functioning of communities as clean air, safe streets, good schools or public health. Maybe even more vital – because it is hard to succeed in the areas of environment, safety, education or health when the news and information system isn’t working. The trend driving these changes is bigger than community journalism or community foundations. It’s bigger than all of us. But all of us together can make a difference.”*

**- Alberto Ibarguen, President and CEO  
Knight Foundation**

# Introduction

This booklet is a quick primer for foundations interested in making media, journalism or community-information grants.

Aimed at foundations with little or no experience in this field, it is based on the experiences of the leaders of dozens of foundations that have funded local news and information projects. Many of us started out somewhat perplexed by the constantly shifting digital media landscape. Now, our experience and projects can provide inspiration and know-how (plus a few cautions) to help you start on news and information grant making.

In the digital age, you have plenty of options. Many do not require large dollar investments. You can fund the efforts of existing media or you can develop your own initiatives. You can work with partners to increase the reach of your efforts or you can create independent organizations. You can build an information component into an initiative you're already funding or you can research information needs in your community to make your grant making more strategic.

You can call these grants media grants, or build them into your regular program areas. More important is what they do. These are grants that advance the idea of "news in the public interest" – the news that citizens need to run their communities and their lives. They are projects that are done with the values of traditional journalism – the fair, accurate, contextual search for truth. They have the public good in mind.

This starter booklet consists of two parts:

Five things you need to know

Five ways to get started

Because this book is designed as a starter, we hope you will use the “Additional reading” pages in the back, as well as visit [www.informationneeds.org](http://www.informationneeds.org). That’s the website of the Knight Community Information Challenge, where you can connect with additional resources, including the Knight Circuit Riders, who can provide project management and technical advice as you think through and create your project.

Ready to take the next step?

Congratulations and good luck!

### Five things you need to know

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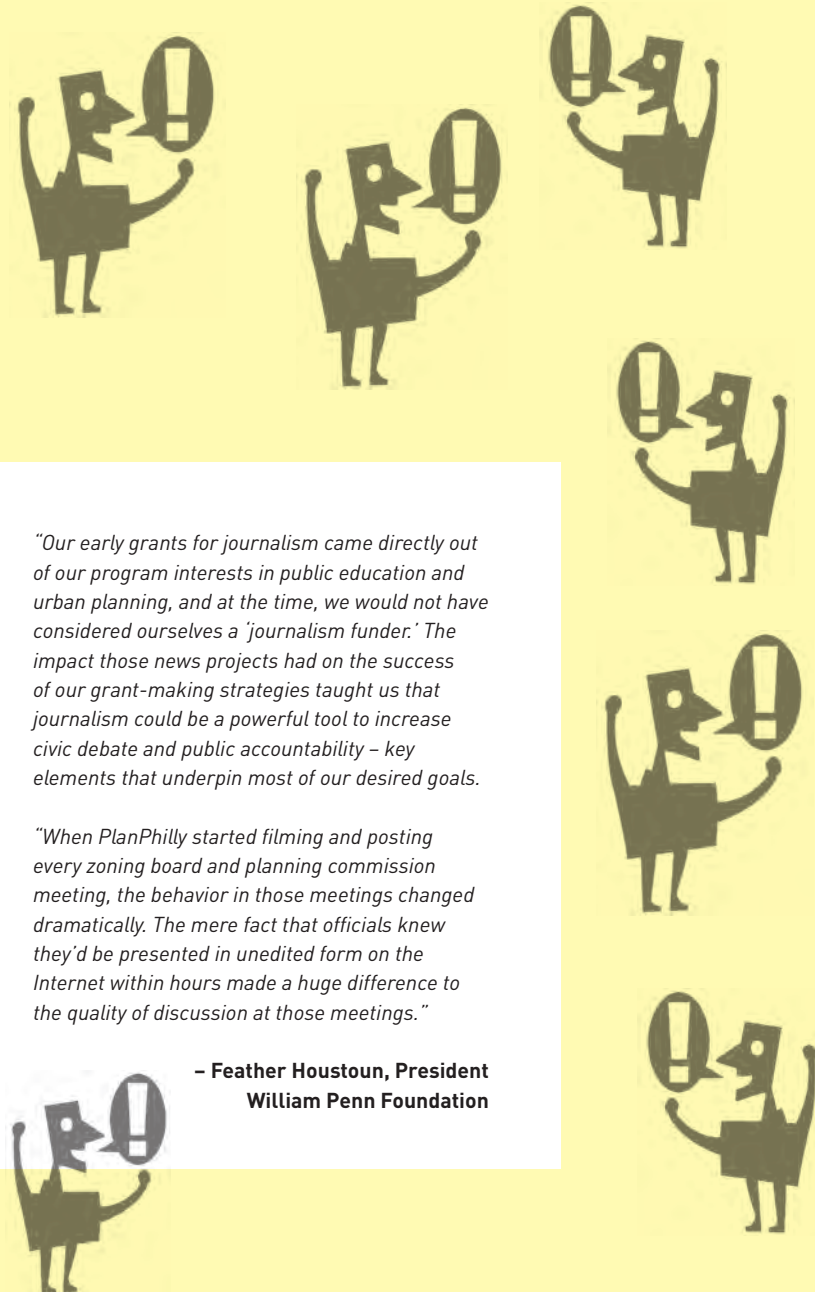
# This is everyone's issue

No matter what you are trying to do in your community, you probably can't get it done without a healthy flow of news and information. Foundations committed to media and journalism grants consider them an essential component of their programming efforts.

After all, how can a city engage in development issues if no one knows where or when new building is planned? How can the water be cleaned if no one knows it's dirty? How can schools be improved if people don't understand why they are failing? Quality news and information is an essential element of effective citizen engagement.

The William Penn Foundation has funded \$3 million in journalism grants since 2000, including \$800,000 for Plan Philly, an independent online news organization that covers planning and development and works to engage citizens in discussions about the future of Philadelphia.

Feather Houstoun, president of the William Penn Foundation, says the project has created civic debate about issues that previously went uncovered.



*"Our early grants for journalism came directly out of our program interests in public education and urban planning, and at the time, we would not have considered ourselves a 'journalism funder.' The impact those news projects had on the success of our grant-making strategies taught us that journalism could be a powerful tool to increase civic debate and public accountability – key elements that underpin most of our desired goals.*

*"When PlanPhilly started filming and posting every zoning board and planning commission meeting, the behavior in those meetings changed dramatically. The mere fact that officials knew they'd be presented in unedited form on the Internet within hours made a huge difference to the quality of discussion at those meetings."*

**– Feather Houstoun, President  
William Penn Foundation**

## FIVE THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

# 02



# You can build on what you're already doing

News and information efforts can bolster initiatives that foundations are already investing in, rather than becoming a new program area.

The [California Endowment](#), for example, is focused on health, particularly how neighborhood environments affect health in underserved communities. The endowment funds news and information projects that deal with health issues, including grants that allowed:

- A local newspaper to hire a reporter to exclusively cover community health (\$50,000 to \$100,000 per year).
- An emerging nonprofit news organization to increase its focus on community health (\$75,000).
- A community access cable outlet to work with youth to cover community health issues (\$50,000).
- Public radio to report on health issues and make its health coverage more prominent (\$300,000).

The result? The issue in which the endowment is heavily invested gets a higher profile as well as greater reach and potential impact.

*"Our foundation has a place-based strategy focused on community health, with a strong emphasis on youth engagement. Our media grant making supports this strategy by funding local projects in our targeted communities aimed at increasing the quantity and quality of news coverage about community health issues. For example, in Sacramento, we support a Neighborhood News Bureau project created by [Access Sacramento](#), the local community access cable foundation. Through this project, news bureaus have been set up at two nonprofit organizations, where youth report on community health news and train community members in how to create their own media. Access Sacramento's partnerships with local mainstream media organizations, including the daily newspaper, provide a channel through which these new stories and voices can reach a wider audience."*

**– Mary Lou Fulton, Program Officer  
The California Endowment**

Similarly, the [Cleveland Foundation](#) has invested heavily in creating a youth support network, [MyCom](#) (short for My Commitment, My Community). The missing ingredient? The voices of young people in the mainstream. So the foundation is creating [MyMedia](#), a \$146,000 program that will train youths in media and make their work available to local news organizations.

*"One of the distinctive aspects of MyCom is youth engagement, and we truly believe that youth voice is an essential, but often missing, element in our community dialogue. For that reason, we wanted to create a program that specifically addressed this void and allowed our youth to have a voice in the issues that matter most in their lives. The MyMedia program was created under the MyCom umbrella to give youth the tools to participate more fully in our community's dialogue while building their credibility as knowledgeable resources for local media."*

**– Ronald Richard, President and CEO  
Cleveland Foundation**

## FIVE THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

# 03



# You can start without a lot of money

You don't have to spend a lot of dollars to dip a toe in the water. You can fund coverage by an existing media outlet, as [The George Gund Foundation](#) does with grants of \$40,000-\$50,000 a year to support news coverage of the Great Lakes region on National Public Radio.

Or you can help put local news start-ups on a path to sustainability by expanding their audiences, as [The Chicago Community Trust](#) has done with grants of \$30,000 to \$60,000 to emergent local news organizations.

Foundation investments in media come in all shapes and sizes. For example, the [West Anniston Foundation](#) in Alabama hosts a weekly [radio call-in show](#) devoted to industrial pollution at a cost of \$15,000 a year. [The Park City Foundation](#) in Utah, invested \$80,000 (plus ongoing costs) to create [parkcitygreen.org](#), which enables residents to calculate their carbon footprint and figure out ways to conserve.

[ACT for Alexandria](#) foundation is creating an [online forum](#) for community problem solving for \$35,000.

In the digital age, news and information involve a wide variety of sources and partners that go well beyond traditional news organizations. Today, community news and information providers include traditional media, public media, nonprofits, universities, government, libraries, schools, businesses and citizens themselves.

The Black Hills Area Community Foundation in South Dakota, for example, is working with local libraries to create a “[knowledge network](#)” to help keep citizens informed.

*“Healthy communities depend on formal and informal information networks to enable citizens to learn what they need to know in a timely way. Focusing on local libraries as community information hubs, the Black Hills Knowledge Network aggregates content from local governments, media, nonprofits and citizen journalists to create a reliable information hub for ‘everything local.’”*

**– Eric Abrahamson, Board Member  
Black Hills Area Community Foundation**

Creating an independent professional journalism site can be at the multimillion-dollar end of the cost spectrum. (Happily, the best of such sites are finding ways to bring in operating revenue so they don't rely solely on grants.)

Regardless of the size of your investment, you must plan for the project's sustainability from the outset. That means helping build connections among the content, its curators and the community – connections that will bring in cash.

Having diverse revenue sources may be critical to success in the long term. Help your staff or your partner plan and organize donor or memberships drives. Consider advertising or sponsorships by local businesses. Think about revenue from memberships, like the public broadcasting fund-raising model, or organizing events or training for local businesses and community organizations that need help with digital media themselves. Ask your partner if it has the right kind of donation-soliciting software. Remember: Local media live on local support. Foundations can start media; communities sustain media.

*“We created NJ Spotlight as a separate entity because we wanted to inculcate a small-business culture among the principals and employees. We think it is important to approach the effort as an entrepreneurial one rather than as a ‘foundation program.’ It was vital to bake the for-profit goals of profit sharing and ownership into the DNA of the effort from the beginning.”*

**– Hans Dekker, President  
Community Foundation  
of New Jersey**

# 04

## Good journalism requires independence

If your foundation decides to pursue a traditional journalism project, do your homework to understand the values that shape journalism and distinguish it within the larger field of media. It's a good idea to have people or organizations involved who have a strong journalism background.

Accuracy, fairness, independence – these things matter to journalists. You can fund their news organizations, but you can't dictate their stories. A good journalism [code of ethics](#) can be found on the website of the Society of Professional Journalists. It calls upon journalists to resist special interests "and their pressure to influence news coverage."

Community foundations doing special news and information projects face the same decisions of how independent their work should be. [The Pittsburgh Foundation](#), for example, is creating a new news organization that will produce investigative journalism. In order to underscore editorial independence, the foundation will fund a separate organization rather than creating a project within the foundation.



*"We recognized early in the process that the independence of our journalism project was critical to our success, and we decided that our project would operate within an independent nonprofit organization rather than as part of The Pittsburgh Foundation. In order to build the trust necessary to allow the public to rely upon the information provided by the project's investigative journalists, there has to be the appearance and reality of objectivity and independence. The community foundation agenda, however well intentioned and noble, is still an agenda."*

**– Jeanne Pearlman, Senior Vice President for Program and Policy  
The Pittsburgh Foundation**



# 05

## Digital media must be targeted to produce impact

If you take on a full-fledged community communication project, there's a lot you'll need to know. First up: defining and understanding the community you are trying to engage. Who is your audience, and how do they use media?

For example, if you are trying to reach young people, digital media may be best; for seniors, traditional media; for some, television; for others, mobile phones. Don't assume different groups use digital media the way you do.

*"Many organizations make the mistake of defining their audience using mass media characteristics, such as all stakeholders in a geographic region. However, online audiences are highly fragmented and dynamic; online audience growth and retention come from targeting segments defined by demographics, attitudes, interests and other characteristics."*

– **"Measuring the Online Impact of Your Information Project"**  
Knight Foundation and FSG Social Impact Advisors

As with any project, be clear at the outset what impact you hope the work will have and have a plan for measuring it. To have great impact it needs to be used by people to improve their communities and their lives. So it is wise to set those kinds of impact goals from the start.

For example, if you design a project that raises public awareness about an important topic, you might conduct a simple survey before you start and after you complete the campaign. If your foundation funds a professional news project, you may want to determine whether its work has influenced policy makers to take action on important issues.

The California Community Foundation, for example, led a coalition that campaigned to increase participation in the 2010 Census, including a social-media campaign targeting Latino youth. Their goal: to have Los Angeles County receive a fair share of federal funding in the coming decade.

*"A collaborative approach, a specific goal of a 70 percent or better participation rate, and creative strategies to achieving it were critical to the success of the initiative."*

– **Antonia Hernández, President and CEO**  
California Community Foundation



## FIVE WAYS TO GET STARTED

# 01



# Map your community's news ecosystem

The results may surprise you.

The Chicago Community Trust and the William Penn Foundation were worried about the decline of established news media in their cities and they commissioned studies. While decline of traditional sources was evident, both foundations also discovered something new emerging online.

*"Inventorying all the new local news and conducting research on the needs of information consumers helped us understand how we can be more strategic in our support for a strong information ecosystem. We learned that there are many interesting information experiments that need sustainable support. We also found, on the other hand, that some areas and populations – particularly the city's low-income neighborhoods – are simply not as well served by this explosion of creativity as others. So we're now working to stimulate development of new information sources for these areas."*

**– Ngoan Le, Vice President of Program  
The Chicago Community Trust**

In 2010, Knight Foundation and Monitor Institute, with advisory support from the Pew Research Center's Project for the Internet and American Life project, tested a new way for a community to explore its local media ecosystem in three cities – Philadelphia, San Jose, Calif., and Macon, Ga. They did research and then gathered community members and leaders to discuss the results. A popular feature of the media exploration exercise was a "scavenger hunt," wherein participants tried to find particular kinds of information, everything from how to get a driver's license to a search for the big local school board issue. The result: the [Community Information Toolkit](#), a workbook for community members who want to hold similar media learning sessions in their cities.

*"It was clear that people are eager to learn how changes in media are affecting their communities and what they can do about it. At the local workshops, many participants said they wanted to stay involved to help improve news and information flows. We think the best conversations are those focusing on a particular aspect of a community's information system – education news, or health information, or City Hall news – the more targeted you can be the better. The information ecosystem is vast, and it is easy for folks to get lost in the woods if they aren't considering just one aspect of the system."*

**– Mayur Patel, Director of Strategic Assessment  
Assistant to the President  
John S. and James L. Knight Foundation**

Bringing people and experts together is a good way to better understand the information flow and the needs in your community.

The [Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo](#) and the [Community Foundation of South Wood County \(Wisc.\)](#) convened major community gatherings to stoke discussion of local information needs and cement partnerships that drive their information projects.

As a result, the Buffalo foundation now has more than 150 local partner organizations that participate in its information project, [GrowWNY](#), a website focusing on green opportunities and environmental protection in western New York State. South Wood County's convening focused on community information needs and the digital divide.

# 02

## Run a contest to find new voices

The Minnesota Community Foundation created Minnesota Idea Open and the Northern Chautauqua (N.Y.) Community Foundation created Amazing County as competitions designed to engage residents in local information and problem-solving.

Minnesota Idea Open seeks to raise awareness of important public issues with a highly participatory annual contest. Northern Chautauqua's Amazing County uses frequent online treasure hunts to help raise public awareness of resources and recreational opportunities in the region, with hundreds of dollars in prizes.

More than 6,000 residents participated in the first Minnesota competition, which solicited ideas for fighting obesity. The winning entry: "Kids Lead the Way," won \$15,000 to put the idea into action.

*"In our always-on culture, we realized that we're competing for attention spans with reality TV, video games, YouTube and so much more. We saw a contest as our "hook" for grabbing a slice of people's attention. We are an engaged community - if asked. The Idea Open was a really cool and unique way to ask Minnesotans to participate in what was, ultimately, a statewide public education campaign."*

**- Carleen Rhodes, President and CEO  
Minnesota Community Foundation and The Saint Paul Foundation**

Contests aren't the only way to tap into diverse groups that aren't always well covered by traditional media. Through BGTIME, the Central Carolina Community Foundation is helping senior citizens cross the digital divide so they can share their perspectives online. The Raymond John Wean Foundation, with Ohio's Youngstown State University, is developing a project that will engage local residents in choosing stories about their neighborhoods that will be covered by students. The California Endowment, with New America Media, will enable young people to report on life in their neighborhoods. Both projects envision distributing the youth content across traditional news channels, ones that often don't capture young voices and perspectives.

Other youth media projects include The Skillman Foundation's Our Life in the D in Detroit and the Cleveland Foundation's MyMedia. Beyond Bullets, funded by The New York Community Trust, includes documentary interviews about the impact of violence on young people and reaches youth and other citizens both on and off line.

*"Over the past two years of concentrated work on Beyond Bullets, we have engaged nearly 1,000 teenagers in conversations about gun violence in communities throughout NYC where the issue is prominent. Our website has at least 100 unique visitors each week who typically watch at least one video, and our Facebook page and Twitter have hundreds of followers. Students have responded to our videos with comments like 'Seeing these videos right now teaches you how to handle what you go through in life by seeing other people handle what they go through.' Our direct community outreach has been an essential component of Beyond Bullets. Our events drum up attention for our website and help galvanize teenagers and community leaders toward action. It is an ideal equation: direct community outreach plus sustainable online activities."*

**- Stephanie Skaff, Director  
Beyond Bullets, DCTV.org**



## FIVE WAYS TO GET STARTED

# 03



# Grow your own digital expertise

Remember: these days, everyone can be a news and information provider. That means everything your foundation does can be improved if you have greater communications expertise on your staff, and everything your grantees do will be improved if they have greater communications skills. In the digital age, we can literally tell our stories to the world – if we take the time to do it well.

The Community Foundation for Palm Beach and Martin Counties, for example, jump-started its digital information efforts by hiring a director of digital communications. Similarly, five years ago when Knight Foundation wanted to do more in digital media, it too hired a digital media program director. We call these folks “digital lieutenants.” Everyone should have one: you and each of your major grantees.

A digital director can do more than help your foundation build and maintain an information website. That’s just the start. Slade Sundar, who served in that role for the Palm Beach foundation, developed an information strategy for its information site, YourPBC, and even coached nonprofit contributors to the site in social media, journalism and cause-related marketing.

A good digital director (or consultant) can also help you avoid common traps if you’re just starting out.

*“Foundations will operate differently in the future than they do today, and a big part of that difference will come from the Internet and social media. We knew that we didn’t have those capabilities in-house. We learned that hiring someone was critical, but not enough: more of us had to learn digital skills, particularly in social media, to build our capacity and be more effective.”*

**– Leslie Lilly, President and CEO  
Community Foundation for Palm Beach and Martin Counties**

For example, you will want to resist proposals that promise to create a customized, utopian website solving all the problems of your community. First, not even daily newspapers that have been at it for 100 years or more have developed brands that capture all the web traffic in a community. Second, these days content doesn’t like to stay put on just one website anyway. It likes to move around through social networks such as Twitter and Facebook and onto mobile phones.

You also need to figure out how to measure your digital efforts. Web metrics are not difficult to learn. Funders need to know enough about them to require their use both inside and outside their organizations. Once a news or information project has determined whom it is trying to engage, web metrics can help you determine if that’s happening. You can find out what content people are looking at, how often or for how long; where they are coming from and where they are going when they enter and leave a site, and how often they return.

All those usage metrics are now being joined by a new set of measurements called “engagement metrics.” You can measure deeper engagement by looking at how many people download content, leave comments, sign petitions or share your web content with others. Once you know an information project’s priorities, you can judge what metrics you will require.

*“It is no longer sufficient or effective to simply build a great destination and convince people to come. The social media revolution requires that we go where people are and become part of many conversations. This can mean using Facebook to engage community around story topics; Twitter to link people with new content, and YouTube and Flickr to create broader content distribution paths. These are tools that very effectively empower others to be ambassadors, distributors, promoters and conveners around community journalism. Use of new media platforms is a critical component of success.”*

**– Roberta F. King, Vice President PR and Marketing  
Grand Rapids Community Foundation**

# 04

## Partner with a local news organization

You don't have to reinvent the wheel. Even if your community's traditional news organizations have been shrinking, they likely still have considerable reach.

An established news organization in your community may be a great partner for news and information projects, especially if you want to reach a wide audience. The [Alaska Community Foundation](#), for example, is working with Alaska Public Telecommunications Inc. to create a hub of local blogs that will bring diverse voices to the airwaves. The [Hawaii Community Foundation](#) is partnering with PBS Hawaii to create [Hiki No \(Can do\)](#), which will create a statewide student news network. The [Rhode Island Foundation](#) partners with an NPR affiliate, which airs its [forums](#) on important public issues.

In some cases, funding the work of an existing news organization may create a more stable flow of information than starting your own project. That's the philosophy behind many of [The George Gund Foundation's](#) media grants. These including the funding for NPR, for a statewide environmental newspaper in Ohio (\$25,000-\$40,000) and for [Ideastream](#), a local public broadcasting company (\$250,000).

*"Fundors can support local public affairs journalism without starting from scratch. We can bolster existing media. Too often foundations get enamored with the idea of launching their own projects. But those projects frequently are short-lived because of the all-too-common tendency of foundations to jump from issue to issue and because their foundation-centric initiatives excluded the sort of broad-based funding that would have built sustainable efforts."*

**– David T. Abbott, Executive Director  
The George Gund Foundation**



You may find partners outside of traditional media.

The [Community Foundation of South Wood County](#) in Central Wisconsin has invested heavily in developing partnerships with local businesses and agencies as it creates projects that will help residents cross the digital divide. More recently, the foundation has formed a [partnership](#) with the [Media Lab](#) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to develop several interactive information programs for local residents and students.

*"We provide the MIT Media Lab with a 'community lab' within which technology experiments to foster civic engagement can be created and tested. The Lab benefits from our foundation's networks, reputation in the community and holistic approach to re-development."*

**– Kelly Lucas, President and CEO  
Community Foundation of South Wood County**

## Help create a public interest news organization

Public interest and investigative news is suffering with cutbacks in traditional media. There are fewer reporters available to cover state government or to conduct time-consuming investigations of potential wrongdoing.

Community foundations are helping fill the void. The Community Foundation of New Jersey created NJ Spotlight, a website that covers state government, while The Community Foundation Serving Boulder County is helping the fledgling Rocky Mountain Investigative News Network stabilize and grow.

*"Investigative stories are the first to disappear when newsroom budgets tighten. This is because they are the most expensive type of story to produce. But they are also of the highest value to communities. We got involved in this project because one of the state's best investigative reporters approached us with a great idea and we wanted to see it succeed."*

**– Josie Heath, President  
The Community Foundation Serving Boulder County**

These efforts can have a great deal of impact in the public policy arena.

NJ Spotlight, for example, launched in 2010. During its first week of operation, the site published a report revealing that a major power utility had failed for years to pay a state-mandated energy surcharge. In 2009 alone, Public Service Enterprise Group should have paid an estimated \$47 million into the societal benefits charge fund, according to one estimate.

Another foundation-supported professional news site, California Watch, has created a distribution model that puts its investigative stories about state government in front of hundreds of thousands of readers and viewers across a variety of platforms and media outlets. Editor Mark Katches estimated that one 2010 story about large cuts in the number of school days in many districts reached 1.35 million people.

Remember, these new news organizations face the complex issue of maintaining traditional journalistic independence while simultaneously using their editorial, business and tech savvy to really engage a community. They employ professional journalism staffs and typically require annual budgets in the millions of dollars.



So these major projects won't be for everyone. And that's OK, too. Starting an entirely new news organization is not the only way to make a big impact. (Recently, for example, The Community Foundation Serving Boulder County targeted early education with a \$184,000 awareness campaign that led to voter approval of \$22.5 million in annual school funding, including a \$5 million annual commitment to expanded preschool and kindergarten services.) Greater impact is out there to be had on the issues you care about, and journalism and media grants can help, if you are willing to jump in and learn as you go.

# Acknowledgements

The idea for this booklet arose from the conversations at the annual “journalism funders” meeting which was co-hosted in 2010 in Philadelphia by the William Penn Foundation and the Pew Charitable Trusts. So much of the discussion focused on the “how to” of getting started in news and information grants, why not collect what foundations know and share it?

The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation joined William Penn as the booklet’s second coordinating foundation, with Knight Journalism Vice President Eric Newton and Knight Community Information Challenge Consultant Michele McLellan signing up as authors.

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**Kate Wolford**, The McKnight Foundation

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# Additional reading

To find out more about topics discussed in this booklet, take a look at these resources:

## Community news and information in the digital age

“Informing Communities: Sustaining Democracy in the Digital Age,” Knight Commission on Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy, [www.knightcomm.org](http://www.knightcomm.org)

“Opportunities for Foundation Leadership: Meeting Community Information Needs,” FSG Social Impact Advisors, [www.informationneeds.org/leadership](http://www.informationneeds.org/leadership)

“Reports from the Field: Community and Place-Based Foundations and the Knight Community Information Challenge,” Knight Foundation and FSG Social Impact Advisors. [www.kflinks.com/reportsfromthefield2010](http://www.kflinks.com/reportsfromthefield2010)

“The State of Funding in Information and Media Among Community and Place-based Foundations,” FSG Social Impact Advisors, [www.kflinks.com/stateoffunding](http://www.kflinks.com/stateoffunding)

“Community Information Toolkit: Building Stronger Communities through Information Exchange,” the Monitor Institute and Knight Foundation, <http://www.infotoolkit.org>

Community News Matters, multiple reports on the emerging news ecosystem of the region from The Chicago Community Trust, [www.kflinks.com/communitynewsmatters](http://www.kflinks.com/communitynewsmatters)

“Exploring a Networked Journalism Collaborative in Philadelphia,” J-Lab for the William Penn Foundation, [www.kflinks.com/Phillyjournalism](http://www.kflinks.com/Phillyjournalism)

“New Voices, What Works,” Knight Community News Network at J-Lab, [www.kcnn.org/WhatWorks/introduction/](http://www.kcnn.org/WhatWorks/introduction/)

“The New Media Makers, a toolkit for Innovators in Community Media and Grant Making,” Knight Community News Network at J-Lab, [www.kcnn.org/toolkit](http://www.kcnn.org/toolkit)

## Journalism

"The Elements of Journalism," Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel,  
[www.journalism.org/node/71](http://www.journalism.org/node/71)

SPJ Code of Ethics, Society of Professional Journalists,  
[www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp](http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp)

## Internet and social media usage

Pew Research Center produces regular in-depth surveys and reports on digital media and society. Recent reports include:

"The Social Side of the Internet,"  
[www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2011/The-Social-Side-of-the-Internet.aspx](http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2011/The-Social-Side-of-the-Internet.aspx)

"Millennials Will Make Sharing in Networks a Lifelong Habit,"  
<http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Future-of-Millennials.aspx>

"Older Adults and Social Media,"  
[www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Older-Adults-and-Social-Media.aspx](http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Older-Adults-and-Social-Media.aspx)

"Understanding the Participatory News Consumer,"  
<http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Online-News.aspx>

"Mobile Access 2010,"  
[www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Mobile-Access-2010.aspx](http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Mobile-Access-2010.aspx)

## Metrics, evaluation and sustainability

"Measuring Online Impact of Your Information Project," FSG Social Impact Advisors and Dana Chinn,  
[www.knightfoundation.org/research\\_publications/detail.dot?id=370646](http://www.knightfoundation.org/research_publications/detail.dot?id=370646)

"Knight Community Info Challenge Evaluations," Ellen Martin, FSG Social Impact Advisors, Presentation to Knight Digital Media Center Community Information Challenge Boot Camp (video),  
[www.knightdigitalmediacenter.org/seminars/video3-5/boot\\_camp\\_for\\_knight\\_community\\_information\\_challenge\\_projects1/](http://www.knightdigitalmediacenter.org/seminars/video3-5/boot_camp_for_knight_community_information_challenge_projects1/)

"Seeking Sustainability: A Nonprofit News Roundtable, Knight Foundation,  
[www.knightfoundation.org/research\\_publications/detail.dot?id=364196](http://www.knightfoundation.org/research_publications/detail.dot?id=364196)

"The S Word," Rusty Coats, Presentation to Knight Digital Media Center Community Information Challenge Boot Camp,  
[www.knightdigitalmediacenter.org/seminars/resources/boot\\_camp\\_for\\_knight\\_community\\_information\\_challenge\\_projects1/](http://www.knightdigitalmediacenter.org/seminars/resources/boot_camp_for_knight_community_information_challenge_projects1/)

**John S. and James L. Knight Foundation**

Wachovia Financial Center  
Suite 3300  
200 South Biscayne Boulevard  
Miami, FL 33131-2349

305.908.2600

[KnightFoundation.org](http://KnightFoundation.org)

**William Penn Foundation**

Two Logan Square  
11th Floor  
100 North 18th Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19103

215.988.1830

[WilliamPennFoundation.org](http://WilliamPennFoundation.org)