



2024 Impact Report

Local Media Association
Local Media Foundation



To ensure a healthy future for local journalism, which is essential to a strong democracy, by reinventing business models for news.

Our Mission



Dear friends and colleagues in the local media industry

So much accomplished, so much more to do! That sentiment applies to all of us working to sustain and grow local journalism, whether we're practitioners within media companies or support organizations such as LMA/LMF.

In this year's report, we want to highlight how our programs benefited those on the front lines of local news transformation.

The Family and Independent Media Sustainability Lab, for example, conducted a training and development sprint in 2024 for new account executives, led by consultant Peter Lamb. He tells us that participants such as Ian Riley of Rust Communications; April Glidden of the Maine Trust for Local News; and Holly Thompson of The Gazette in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, exhibited real star power in that sprint.

In the Knight x LMA BloomLab, which completed its third year in 2024, people such as Ra-jah Kelly at The Washington Informer, Josiah Scott at The Seattle Medium, and David Bonifay at The Atlanta Voice excelled at adopting the technology implementations and upgrades made possible by the lab.

We can't forget the 16 journalism fellows working in Word In Black and News is Out newsrooms as part of The Digital Equity Voices Lab. Countless others in local news apply what they learn in LMA/LMF programs to their everyday work. These programs exist thanks to the generous support of funders such as Knight Foundation, Google News Initiative, Comcast NBCUniversal and many others. We are humbled by and grateful for this support.

We could tell so many more inspiring stories of 2024 successes besides these and others you'll read in this report. It all adds up to major progress on the path to long-term sustainability. But it's a long road, and the path ahead will be bumpy. LMA and LMF stand ready to help along the way. We invite you to engage with us as we devote our energies to the future of local media and journalism.



Nancy Lane
2024 Co-CEO
LMA/LMF



Jay Small
2024 Co-CEO
LMA/LMF

By the Numbers

LMA
LMF

\$3.75M+

New digital revenue for Knight x LMA BloomLab publishers over 3 years

30

AI experiments created by newsrooms in LMA AI Innovation Lab

\$28M

Philanthropic funding raised by alumni of Lab for Journalism Funding

Word in Black

Successful spin-out to Public Benefit Corporation in 2024

3

FIMS Lab sprints driving sales, first-party data and reader revenue

\$115M

Branded Content Project revenue generated by media companies since inception

200

Original pieces of content created on NewsisOut.com

\$225k

Oklahoma Media Center stipends awarded to newsrooms in the state since 2021

\$1.3M

Raised by organizations in Local News Fund for journalism projects

LMA
LMF

Stories of Impact



Word In Black

OUR IMPACT

Word In Black launched in 2020 as a project of the Local Media Foundation, with less than \$500,000 in seed money and a goal of becoming a standalone corporation in three years. On January 1, 2024, that goal became a reality.

Ten of the nation's legendary Black publishers are the shareholders behind Word In Black, with LMA providing management services. The group chose to form a public benefit corporation, prioritizing mission over profit.

In 2024, the group developed a strategic plan focused on long-term sustainability and impact. Much of the year was spent building a data and research strategy that would provide unparalleled access to Black American perspectives and experiences.

In Q4, Word In Black announced funding of \$1.5 million from the Knight Foundation to build out and staff the data strategy, as well as adding resources for events. With additional funding of \$500,000 from the MacArthur Foundation, the group is building a research division aligned with the data strategy.

NEW

Successful spin-out to a public benefit corporation

3000+

stories published by WIB funded reporters

Completion of strategic plan to launch data, events and research products

“The grit, determination and hard work of our 10 publishers, staff and the team at LMA led to a newsroom of 10 employees, a rapidly growing audience, and the spin-out to a public benefit corporation. In 2025, we will do things that no one else is doing. We’re reinventing business models and sharing every lesson we learn along the way.”



Dr. Frances "Toni" Draper
CEO of The AFRO American,
and chair of the Word In
Black board of directors

Lab for Journalism Funding

OUR IMPACT

In 2024, the Lab for Journalism Funding set records for fundraising, cohorts offered and newsrooms trained. In addition to a national cohort, the lab expanded to offer its first two state cohorts, in Pennsylvania and Colorado, bringing together new funders and partners to respond to the opportunities created by Press Forward local chapters.

In total, 47 newsrooms completed the Lab for Journalism Funding training in 2024, and the 148 alumni of the lab have raised more than \$28 million since 2020. The Lab for Journalism Funding is made possible with sustained support from Google News Initiative. In 2024, the state cohorts were enabled with additional funding from Knight Foundation, local support from Pennsylvania NewsMedia Association and Colorado Media Project, and programming support from Lenfest Institute.

“The motto of this lab, to me, should be: Mission accomplished. I hoped to leave this lab with the information needed to ask for resources and the confidence to do it. Not only have I gained that confidence, but I have a deeper understanding and belief that what Watermark Out News does is important and valuable. I have this lab to thank for that.”



Rick Todd
Publisher
Watermark Publishing
Group

47

newsrooms
trained in
fundraising best
practices
(a record)

NEW

First state cohorts
(Pennsylvania and
Colorado)

\$28m

More than \$28
million raised
since inception to
fund local
reporting

NEW

Sustaining
Philanthropy for
Journalism industry
report published

Family and Independent Media Sustainability Lab

OUR IMPACT

The Family and Independent Media Sustainability Lab achieved its ambitious goals by equipping participants with the tools and strategies needed to thrive. Over the course of three focused sprints in 2024, the group tackled critical areas including reader revenue, sales strategies and first-party data. These hands-on sessions provided actionable insights and practical applications, enabling media organizations to diversify revenue streams, enhance their sales efforts, and leverage data to deepen audience connections.

Beyond the structured learning, the lab fostered a collaborative environment, helping participants grow together. Sharing experiences, challenges and successes, the group benefited from collective knowledge and support, building a strong network of peers committed to sustainable growth. This dynamic exchange not only inspired innovative solutions but also created a sense of shared purpose, empowering independent and family-owned media to navigate today's challenges and secure a thriving future.

OUTCOMES

- Adopted innovative reader revenue strategies, driving growth in both revenue and subscriber base.
- Empowered 30+ account executives with advanced training, resulting in more productive meetings and higher sales conversions.
- Leveraged cutting-edge first-party data techniques, enhancing audience insights and delivering smarter, data-driven strategies.



Kelly Homewood
President
The Gazette

“The FIMS Lab has been transformational for our team to gain valuable insights from both experts and fellow publishers. The ability to collaborate and seek assistance from our peers has reduced the challenges we are facing as an industry as we all seek sustainability.”

The Branded Content Project

OUR IMPACT

In 2024, the Branded Content Project celebrated six years of driving success for local media companies, helping them generate over \$115 million in revenue since 2019. Through cutting-edge sales products, innovative training, and collaborative opportunities, the project has proven the transformative power of branded content backed by expert guidance and practical tools.

Hundreds of media professionals have elevated their skills through sales boot camps, Big Branded Calls, and our Branded Badges training curriculum. In 2024, new workshops, sales sprints and a video education series delivered actionable strategies to help even more companies connect with audiences and accelerate revenue growth.

With a steadfast focus on supporting independent media, publishers of color, and underserved markets, the project's initiatives — like The Exchange with Deloitte — amplified diverse voices and drove meaningful revenue for media companies.

The Local Media Association, Local Media Consortium and the Meta Journalism Project have powered the project over the past six years.

\$115M

generated by participants with our branded content programs, training, guidance, and support

20

curated content series available for monetization by news partners

300+

media companies involved in training, bootcamps, sales products, accessed research and cohort groups



"The Branded Content Project has been invaluable in helping us get off our small market 'island.' We do a lot of creative and analytical experiments with limited resources and being able to brainstorm with industry peers keeps us connected, celebrates our efforts, and gives us tons of ideas that have helped grow our branded content business threefold in 2024 alone."

Molly Adams
Content Marketing Manager
Maine Trust for Local News

Knight x LMA BloomLab

OUR IMPACT

After three years of providing technology, revenue development and business strategy services to more than two dozen Black-owned local news organizations, directors of the Knight x LMA BloomLab learned a critical lesson: No “one-size-fits-all” solution can effectively address every need. As a result, we identified combinations of several tailored solutions to effectively meet many challenges faced by these publishers.

Publishers used BloomLab technology stipends to upgrade and optimize content management and newsletter platforms, enable reader revenue, and add process improvement and artificial intelligence tools.

Some participants also conducted “community listening” surveys in the lab, to help understand content types and themes that most resonated with their audiences, and how to improve their offerings and engagement.

The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation provided \$3.2 million funding in 2022 to Local Media Foundation to lead BloomLab for three years.

OUTCOMES

- \$3.25+ million cost savings on technology in three years
- 250+ technology platform/service implementations through three years
- \$3.75+ million digital revenue growth for BloomLab participants



“As the oldest Black-owned newspaper in Minnesota, the Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder has a legacy of serving our community with integrity and purpose. Our involvement in the Knight x LMA BloomLab has empowered us to grow our revenue across all categories, amplify our digital presence, engage new audiences, and ensure that our voice remains a powerful advocate for the stories that matter most.”

Tracey Williams-Dillard

Publisher

Minnesota Spokesman-Recorders

Local News Fund

Since 2020, Local Media Foundation's Local News Fund has helped hundreds of local and national media organizations secure funding for journalism projects via its fiscal sponsorship program. To date, more than \$17 million has been raised through this fund.

Participants in the program include some of the largest news brands in the country down to the smallest startups, and everyone in between.

The Local Media Foundation serves as sponsor and guardian of these funds, ensuring they are used for charitable purposes per the agreements with funders. LMF also provides extensive support for participants of the program, including training, templates and fundraising tools.

OUTCOMES

Over \$17 million raised for journalism projects since 2020

Hundreds of media organizations have participated

Over \$2 million raised through crowdfunding tools provided by LMF



“We began to hear about other newspapers around the country partnering with nonprofits to raise donations for local journalism. We explored that option, knowing that it would allow our readers the best way to help keep local journalism alive. The Local Media Foundation gave The Columbian the easiest and simplest way to do that.”

Will Campbell
Editor, The Columbian (raised more than \$1.5M since 2022)

News is Out

OUR IMPACT

Now in its third full year, News is Out: A Queer Media Collaborative has established itself as a cornerstone of LGBTQ+ media.

In 2024, News is Out partnered with Comcast/NBCUniversal and Word In Black to create the Digital Equity Local Voices Lab, which housed and mentored 16 early-career journalism fellows at Word In Black and News is Out publications, focusing on issues like technology, connectivity, and stories about Black and LGBTQ+ creatives and entrepreneurs.

The seven publishers, full-time editor/managing director, and six fellows have contributed insightful feature pieces on topics such as the impact of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation, Target's reversal of LGBTQ+ support for artists and consumers, and safe spaces for the LGBTQ+ community, both online and in person.

OUTCOMES

- Hired second full-time position, Director of Strategic Partnerships
- \$2,000 in funds raised for the inaugural LGBTQ+ Media Day (Oct. 8)
- Hosted its first virtual event, a 2-hour panel discussion of Project 2025
- 51% open rate on weekly newsletter

“This was my first full year as part of News is Out since taking ownership of Tagg Magazine. I’m so thankful for the camaraderie and opportunities the collaboration has provided. From being able to update our newsletter system, to working with the next generation of queer journalists through the fellowship, our work with News is Out has only benefited Tagg and our future.”



Sondra Morris
Publisher
Tagg Magazine

Oklahoma Media Center

Oklahoma Media Center began 2024 by visiting with working journalists statewide. These Lunch & Listen sessions helped OMC develop strategies to support and strengthen newsrooms. The nonprofit's strategic planning session in March focused on refining its mission, expanding programming and advocating for sustainability through revenue training, audience development and increased collaboration.

In April, OMC facilitated a two-day training with Investigative Reporters & Editors for professional and student journalists statewide. Next, OMC created a Local News Literacy Campaign designed to raise awareness about the importance of a free press to democracy. The campaign featured Mike Hosty's song "Free Press Isn't Free" in a "Schoolhouse Rock!"-style cartoon. Stipends from OMC enabled collaborators to run the content on their newsrooms' social media and websites.

OMC also began hosting a quarterly Higher Education Roundtable to inform journalism schools about the work of the collaborative, and find ways to bridge the experience between the classroom and the newsroom.

OUTCOMES

Nearly \$300,000 raised in grants to support local journalism.

Over 80 Oklahoma journalists, including nearly 30 journalism students, attended an in-person IRE training facilitated by OMC.

Majority of OMC collaborators participated in Local News Literacy Campaign stressing the importance of a free press.



“The Oklahoma Media Center provides a foundation for young journalists to share their hopes, concerns and questions about entering the news industry. I was thrilled to participate in their Young Journalists’ Roundtable, and the conversation with professional newsroom leaders gave me hope about the future of local journalism.”

Luísa Clausen

Oklahoma State University student from Brazil

Solving Sacramento

OUR IMPACT

Solving Sacramento is a journalism collaborative of seven nonprofit and for-profit local newsrooms and one civic engagement organization working together to produce stories on the issues that impact the greater Sacramento region, done through a solutions lens.

Partners include California Groundbreakers, CapRadio, Outword, Russian American Media, Sacramento Business Journal, Sacramento News & Review, Sacramento Observer and Univision 19.

In 2024, the group received funding from the City of Sacramento to support journalism focused on the arts community, a beat that none of the news outlets had previously been able to cover. They also received support from the James Irvine Foundation and from McClatchy Foundation to support numerous journalism initiatives.

OUTCOMES

- More than 50 content contributors and collaborators, producing stories, photos, podcasts, illustrations and videos
- More than 100 original stories published, with an emphasis on reporting through a solutions lens
- Amplified reach by cross-publishing nearly 200 times across our collaborative's member outlets

“Strong local journalism builds social cohesion, encourages civic participation and improves the efficiency and decision-making of local and state government. That’s why I’m proud to be part of this collaborative that’s intent on saving it.”



Vanessa Richardson, Founder
California Groundbreakers

AI Community Journalism Lab

OUR IMPACT

Local Media Foundation launched the AI Community Journalism Lab in fall 2024 with \$150,000 in funding from the Walton Family Foundation. The lab focuses on rural and underserved markets, investing in experiments using artificial intelligence to develop efficiencies in local news. An industry report will highlight the lab's accomplishments and insights in late fall 2025.

The first wave of AI Lab participants includes 21 publishers from the LMA Family and Independent Media Sustainability Lab and the Knight x LMA BloomLab. Experiments will begin in March 2025 with completion anticipated by early fall 2025. A second wave of AI Lab participants will launch experiments in late Spring 2025.

Each project is tailored to the news organization and the audience it serves. A hallmark of the AI Community Journalism Lab is its focus on learning, sharing insights, and community outreach. Lab participants meet biweekly to explore how to design, evaluate and execute experiments that create efficiencies using AI. The newsrooms also are researching and discussing how their communities feel about AI use in gathering, reporting and presenting local news.

OUTCOMES

- Two dozen AI experiments designed
- Projects focused on news efficiency, content, production, and audience development
- Coaching in experiment design and measurement for key audiences.



“The AI Lab has been groundbreaking for our approach to the next iteration of how readers consume news. We look forward to working with John Humenik on transforming our newsroom to meet the needs of the modern news consumer.”

John Sahly
Senior Digital Editor
Shaw Media

THE PATH FORWARD

Here are three innovative initiatives LMA is pursuing in 2025 to advance its mission of transforming business models for local news.

2

Program expansion

Four of LMF's most successful industry programs will be expanded thanks to funding from the Knight Foundation. This includes the Knight x LMA BloomLab, The Branded Content Project, FIMS lab and the Lab for Journalism Funding. BloomLab will focus on proving out a shared services model that could be the blueprint for many others in the industry.

The other labs will benefit from additional consulting resources, travel stipends for participants to learn and share in group settings, dedicated staff resources and much more.

1

LatidoBeat

LatidoBeat, an exciting startup backed by seven of the leading local Latino publishers, will launch under the Local Media Foundation umbrella in 2025. This national coalition of Spanish-language news organizations will amplify Latino voices and fill voids in communities that do not have an authentic news source. The group will use the proven Word In Black model to launch, grow and eventually spin off into its own legal entity.

3

State summits focused on the crisis in local news

With local news sustainability at risk, LMA will convene a first-of-its-kind summit in Michigan, bringing together key stakeholders including philanthropic, business, government, nonprofit, education and other community leaders to create a model for local action. The goal is bring this concept to many other states over the next three years.



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Daniel Williams
Founder/CEO
BlueLena



Jane Wooldridge
Senior Director for Journalism
Sustainability & Partnerships
Miami Herald



Purpose-Driven Team

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Jay Small
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Frank Mungeam
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John Celestand
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Penny Riordan
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Janice Norman
Director, Accounting
and Finance



Terese Kartholl
Director, Journalism
Funding Initiatives



Zachary McGrew
Program Coordinator,
Oklahoma Media
Center



Rob Collins
Project Manager,
Oklahoma Media
Center



Dana Piccoli,
Project Manager,
News is Out



Michel Pelletier
Director of Strategic
Partnerships,
News is Out



Tracie Campbell
Accounting Clerk



Amanda Moore
Data Entry Specialist



Peter Lamb
Consultant



John Humenik
FIMS Lab
Program Manager



Joanne Heyman
Consultant and Coach,
Lab for Journalism
Funding



Joaquin Alvarado
Consultant and Coach,
Lab for Journalism
Funding



Jennifer Preston
Consultant and Coach,
Lab for Journalism
Funding



Nina Joss
Project Manager
Lab for Journalism
Funding

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- City of Sacramento
- Comcast NBC Universal
- Conrad N. Hilton Foundation
- Democracy Fund
- FThree Foundation
- Google News Initiative
- Inasmuch Foundation
- James B. McClatchy Foundation
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- Meta Journalism Project
- Pennsylvania NewsMedia Association Foundation
- Ray and Dagmar Dolby Fund
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- Solutions Journalism Network
- The Commonwealth Fund
- The Henry Luce Foundation
- Teichert Foundation
- W.K. Kellogg Foundation
- Walton Family Foundation
- Yield Giving



LocalMedia
Foundation

We invite you to continue to
support our programs.

DONATE today!

