

**Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy**  
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## **Funding the News: Foundations and Nonprofit Media**

Matthew Nisbet, Professor, John Wihbey, Assistant Professor, Silje Kristiansen, Post-doctoral Associate & Aleszu Bajak, Lecturer at Northeastern University

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## **Introduction**

The 2016 U.S. elections triggered a flurry of activity and debate across the philanthropic world, and few domains sustained more attention than the news media. Talk of increased funding for nonprofit journalism initiatives began almost immediately after Election Day. The attacks on the press by newly elected President Donald J. Trump stimulated what has been called a “Trump bump,” as foundations and wealthy donors aimed to reinvigorate a deeply struggling news media system and to counter a wave of extreme populism and intolerance fueled by fake news.

The election, however, also brought into sharper relief long standing and troubling trends. Debates about the future of news in today’s turbulent democracy play out against a complex historical backdrop. For decades, newspapers produced the journalism that did the most to inform public debate and to hold those in power accountable. Even as the media system rapidly evolved over the past 20 years, studies found that newspapers remained at the core of the country’s information ecology, serving as the major source for original reporting on problems, corruption, and policy debates, with this coverage shaping broader discussion, from television news to social media to interpersonal conversations.

During this period, however, most newspapers also suffered a catastrophic collapse in revenue, a greatly diminished workforce, and a corresponding loss in editorial capacity. In most regions of the country, because of the decline of local newspapers, the information needs of voters were frequently not being met. In these communities, people too often lacked a trusted local source of news that could explain, contextualize, and vet conflicting claims and interpretations. Absent quality local sources of news to rely on, it became that much easier for news consumers to turn to their ideologically preferred outlet, whether a cable news network, a talk radio show, an online site, or a fake news story circulated by way of their social media feeds.

At strategy sessions, in newsrooms, and on university campuses, there is intense concern that a crisis in civic culture, tied to a loss of news capacity, is unfolding, one requiring a mass mobilization of organizational resources and professional expertise that remain in short supply. It has fallen to a select few foundations and their grantees to make the public case that a hollowed-out newspaper industry requires a better resourced, and more robust news nonprofit sector. The 2016 election has enabled them to make that argument louder and clearer. Journalism, the lifeblood of informed communities and a functioning democracy, desperately needs help, and it needs this help now. Greater interest in this regard, and a sense of urgency, is reverberating across some parts of the philanthropic community. To catalyze greater funding of nonprofit news, several organizations such as the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and Media Impact Funders have been playing a central role via research, institutional organizing, and meetings.

But for a number of reasons, current strategic planning requires a more comprehensive understanding of what types of news organizations and journalism initiatives have been funded by foundations over the past decade, and the relevant successes and weaknesses to these funding approaches. First, the great majority of news nonprofits remain highly dependent on foundation funding for their revenue, and even those few that have meaningfully diversified their revenue streams continue to receive substantial proportions of their financing from foundations. Assessing foundation investments is therefore crucially important, since they remain the financial backbone of the news nonprofit sector. Second, far from being passive supporters of nonprofit media, foundations have played an active role in framing the challenges, defining the priorities, and promoting specific strategies for responding to the collapse of the newspaper industry. By way of their grantmaking and convening power, foundations actively shape common ways of thinking about social challenges that bind together otherwise

disconnected organizational leaders, experts, and donors into shared approaches and strategies. In doing so, foundations have played a behind-the-scenes role in guiding the direction of the nonprofit news sector, including the types of subjects covered, organizations supported, and regions prioritized.<sup>1</sup>

With these considerations in mind, in Section 1 of our report, drawing on previously published research along with interviews conducted with more than 30 news nonprofit journalists, experts, and philanthropists, we review the growth of the nonprofit news sector leading up to the 2016 election, highlighting major trends and challenges. In Section 2, we analyze 32,422 journalism and media-related grants totaling \$1.8 billion distributed by 6,568 foundations between 2010 and 2015, the most recent year for which comprehensive data is available. We assess patterns in funding specific to the production and dissemination of nonprofit journalism, as well as affiliated activities such as grants to journalism museums and higher education, support for journalism research and technology development, and grants for journalist associations and professional development. These different categories of journalism and media-related grants highlight the trade-offs that foundations face, as they often have to prioritize one area over others. In Section 3, to conclude, we discuss our main findings in the context of key themes and concerns raised by those we interviewed and highlight new investments and recently launched initiatives.

The grant decisions made by foundations in the years leading up to the 2016 elections are of historic importance, presenting a guide to what has been done in the past and a roadmap for where philanthropy needs to go today. Like any study, our research has several limitations and caveats which we highlight. However, based on our extensive cross-checking of the data, and the comments of more than a dozen relevant experts on a draft report, we are confident that our analysis comprehensively and accurately identifies major patterns in foundation funding, helping to facilitate discussion and planning about the enormous challenges our democracy currently faces.

## **Summary of Main Findings**

Several funding categories we assessed were not of primary interest to our study but represented activities or initiatives intended to enhance the field of journalism and its public understanding. These other categories of grants reflect the tough choices that funders face, as prioritizing one of these areas, even if to improve the practice and reach of journalism in society, may take away from direct support for news production. Specific to these other activities:

- Journalism and communication programs at universities along with the Newseum received \$369 million or 21% of the \$1.8 billion in relevant funding distributed over the six-year period.
- Journalist professional development received an estimated \$122 million or approximately 7% of the \$1.8 billion in funding analyzed. These grants supported journalist associations, awards, training workshops, and fellowships.
- Journalism-related research, technology development, legal support, and philanthropic coordination received approximately \$79 million or 4% of all funding during the six-year period analyzed.

Relative to direct funding for non-profit news production, our findings suggest that many innovative projects and experiments have and continue to take place, but grantmaking remains far below what is needed. We identify sharp geographic disparities in foundation funding, a heavy concentration of resources in a few dozen successful news nonprofits and on behalf of a few issues, and the granting of money to a disproportionate number of ideologically oriented outlets. The nonprofit news sector has grown considerably over the past two decades, yet it has not flourished to the degree that some had predicted. To be sure in a few states and cities and among a handful of national outlets there are

nonprofit success stories, but in terms of financial capacity and news production, neither the sector as a whole, nor any other form of commercial media have yet to be able to meaningfully fill the gaps in coverage created by the collapse of the newspaper industry. In terms of specific highlights from our research:

- Public media received approximately \$796 million or about 44% of the \$1.8 billion in grant money analyzed. Much of this funding supported non-news content such as programming related to the arts, music, culture, or entertainment. Twenty-five public media stations and content producers accounted for 70% of all funding, with grant money going primarily to stations or content producers based in 10 states. Such concentration means that public media organizations across the great majority of states lack the funding necessary to evolve into digital news hubs producing local reporting that fills gaps in newspaper coverage.
- Magazines generated an estimated \$80.1 million in grant support over the six years assessed, accounting for about 5% of all funding. The nonprofit magazine field has winnowed to the degree that a few dozen publications received 99% of foundation funding with a similar number of foundations providing most of the support. Grant making also flowed heavily in the direction of ideological perspectives, with nine liberal/left wing magazines and five conservative/right wing counterparts ranking among the top 25 grant recipients.
- National news nonprofits were backed by approximately \$216 million in foundation funding or about 12% of the \$1.8 billion analyzed. Eight out of 10 foundation dollars supported just 25 news nonprofits, with four investigative journalism units topping the list. The leading two dozen recipients were also notable for featuring six deep-vertical news organizations that specialize in coverage of topics like the environment, and six nonprofits that have a clear ideological

perspective. Overall, national news nonprofits are highly dependent on about two dozen institutional funders for nearly 70% of the grants distributed over the 6-year period analyzed.

- Local/state nonprofit news organizations received approximately \$80.1 million or about 5% of the \$1.8 billion analyzed. As foundations pursued strategies designed to fill gaps in local newspaper reporting, they focused primarily on 11 state/local public affairs news sites, six state/local investigative news units, and coverage specific to health care and the environment. Other major investments backed the Institute for Nonprofit News and related initiatives aimed at building capacity and collaboration across the nonprofit news sector. Local/state news nonprofits also depended on a limited pool of funders for their support, with the Knight Foundation driving most of the growth in the area, accounting for 20% of funding during the six-year period we analyzed.
- University-based journalism initiatives that produce either local or national coverage of public affairs were backed by an estimated \$35.9 million or about 2% of the \$1.8 billion analyzed. Just five universities accounted for half of all foundation funding, and 16 of the top 25 grant-receiving campuses were based in either California or the Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. metro areas. In terms of major grantmakers, 25 foundations provided 91% of the funding in the area, with the Knight Foundation accounting for nearly a third of all grant dollars distributed.

If these disparities and weaknesses in the news nonprofit sector are to be addressed, much more funding is required. Part of the challenge is that despite more than 6,000 foundations supporting journalism- and media-related activities during the first half of this decade, just a few dozen foundations have provided the bulk of direct support for news gathering. At the state and local level in particular,



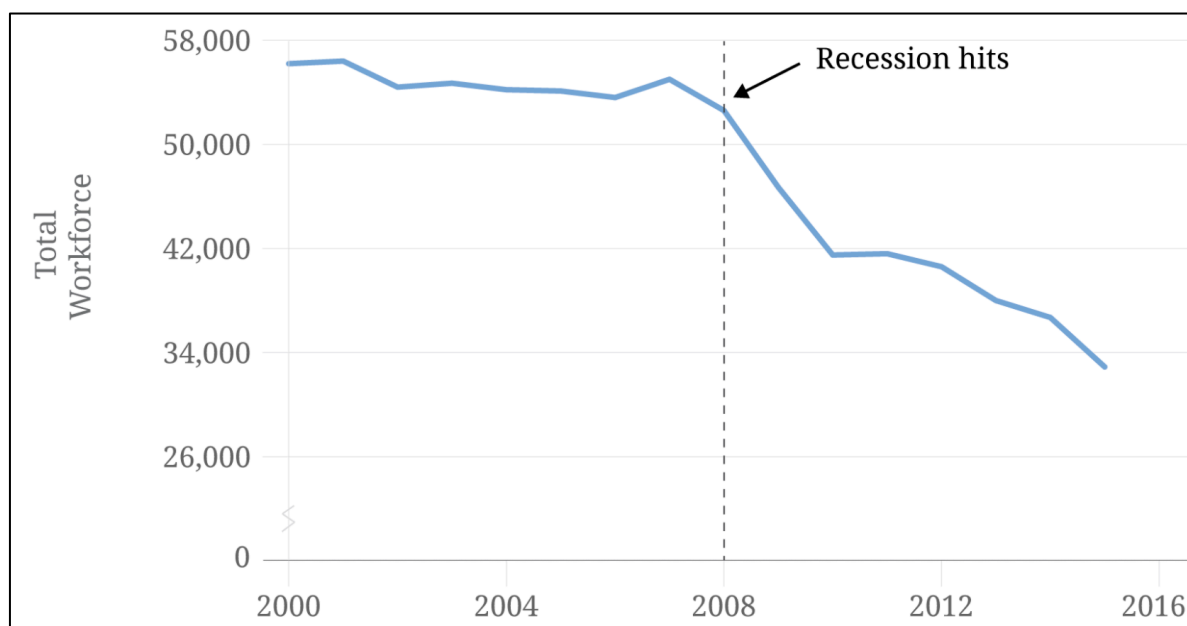
most nonprofit media funding derives from large national foundations, rather than community trusts or public charities and donor advised funds. Given that there is little tradition of giving to nonprofit media at these other types of grantmakers, they would benefit from partnering with experienced foundations. As we emphasize in the conclusion, however, a few recent trends suggest reasons for optimism.

### **The Rise of News Nonprofits**

Many nonprofit media organizations are decades-old. Venerable nonprofit magazines include the *Nation* (founded 1865), *American Prospect* (f. 1990), *Harper's* (f. 1850), *Consumer Reports* (f. 1936), and *New Criterion* (f. 1982). Launched during the late 1960s, today's 350 nonprofit public television stations reach an estimated monthly audience of 120 million viewers and their 900+ public radio counterparts draw 65 million listeners. As online platforms, these public media stations and affiliated programs engage tens of millions more by way of streaming content, downloads, and online articles, and several stations are taking the lead in efforts to reinvigorate their local news ecosystems. Other prominent examples of decades-old nonprofits include the Center for Investigative Reporting (f. 1969) and the Center for Public Integrity (f. 1989), which produce reports, books, documentaries, and online stories, often in partnership with other news outlets.<sup>2</sup>

But it was not until the mid-2000s, as newspapers faced a deepening financial crisis, that dozens of digital news nonprofits emerged. In 2000, at the start of the Internet era, total print advertising revenue for commercial newspapers was \$67 billion. Fourteen years later, inflation adjusted print and digital advertising revenue at newspapers had plummeted to \$20 billion, meaning newspapers were generating less from advertising in 2014 than they did in 1950, adjusting for inflation.

Figure 1. Newsroom employees at U.S. Newspapers, 2000-2015



Source: American Society for News Editors Employment Census projections, 1978-2015.

Such a dramatic decline in revenue severely strained the newspaper industry's capacity to deliver news. During the same period, the number of newsroom employees at newspapers dropped from 56,000 in 2000 to 37,000 in 2014, a loss of 19,000 workers, with more than half of these layoffs occurring during the five-year period following the 2008 economic recession (see Figure 1).<sup>3</sup>

In the wake of this profession-wide crisis, a few dozen pioneering journalists with the help of foundations and donors launched local and national digital news start-ups. For most, their goal was not to replace the type of general interest news coverage that commercial newspapers provided, but rather to fill gaps in coverage of government and politics, and the explanation of complex issues and problems. By 2010, several nonprofit start-ups were flourishing but the great majority were experiencing growing pains, reflecting the "Darwinian dimension" of the nonprofit news ecosystem, wrote Charles Lewis of American University's Investigative Reporting Workshop (IRW). This ecosystem in which a few thrive while many struggle was "a fluid, highly competitive, stressful environment, dependent on the vagaries

of fate, the national and local economies, the moxie, stamina and entrepreneurialism of the founders, the steadfastness or fickleness of funders, [and] the public resonance of the actual journalism, to name just a few variables.”<sup>4</sup>

## **Growth and Disparities**

Studies published during the first half of this decade offer insights into news nonprofit growth following the 2008 recession. In 2010 and 2011, IRW evaluated 75 nonprofit news publishers, 71% of which had been launched over the previous five years. In total, the 75 nonprofits were backed by an estimated \$135 million in annual funding, employing 1,300 full-time journalists, administrative, and business staff. But only a dozen news nonprofits accounted for three-quarters of total staff employed within the sector, and a similar proportion of the annual funding.<sup>5</sup>

Among the better resourced nonprofits, according to the IRW analysis, were decades old outlets like *Mother Jones* (31 staff, \$9.3M annual funding as of 2010), the Center for Public Integrity (52 staff, \$5.2M), and the Western-states focused High Country News (20 staff, \$1.8M). Those founded since 2006 included the investigative outlet ProPublica (42 staff, \$10M budget), the deep-vertical Kaiser Health News (18 staff, \$2.5 million), and the local/state-focused San Francisco Bay Citizen (30 staff, \$4M), Texas Tribune (29 staff, \$3.6M), MinnPost (14 staff, \$1.5M), and Voice of San Diego (14 staff, \$1.1M). In comparison to these relatively richer nonprofits, 43 of the 75 news publishers employed five or fewer staff and 20 reported less than \$250,000 in annual funding.

A Pew Research Center study conducted in 2012 identified 172 digital/online nonprofit news outlets that had launched since 1987 with a majority forming since the 2008 recession. Three-quarters of the nonprofits focused on state- (38%), metro- (29%), or hyper-local (8%) coverage compared to a quarter that focused on regional (4%), national (16%), or international (6%) coverage. Rather than produce general interest news, most aimed to fill gaps in reporting, with 21% specializing in

investigative journalism, 17% in coverage of government, 13% in public/foreign affairs, and 4% in the environment. Staffing and budgets on average were limited. Of the 93 nonprofits that provided employment information, 52% had five or fewer full-time staffers to cover editorial, administrative, and business operations, and 26% had no full-time staff at all. Only 6% (or 6 total) had more than 25 full-time staff. Of the 77 nonprofits that responded to a question about finances, 71% said they brought in no more than \$500,000 during the most recent fiscal year, compared to 15% reporting incomes of more than \$1 million.<sup>6</sup>

The great majority of these news nonprofits depended on foundation grants for their revenue. Between 2005 and 2012, 279 foundations had distributed approximately \$250 million by way of 1048 grants supporting 308 news projects, according to an analysis by American University's J-Lab. But a closer look at the data also reveals that nonprofit news funding came primarily from a handful of foundations that consolidated their investments in a few comparatively well-resourced organizations. Over the seven years, 10 foundations had provided more than half of the \$250 million distributed, led by the Knight Foundation, which had granted \$53 million to a few dozen nonprofits, and the Sandler Family Foundation, which provided \$30 million to ProPublica. Similarly, 10 news nonprofits had accounted for nearly half the funds received, led by ProPublica (\$34M), the Center for Public Integrity (\$21M), and the Center for Investigative Reporting (\$12M).<sup>7</sup>

A survey by the American Press Institute (API) conducted in 2015 identified 63 foundations supporting media organizations and 119 news nonprofits. Among foundations, 38% had been supporting media for more than 20 years, compared to 31% that had begun funding media only during the last decade. Two-thirds were based in the Northeast or on the West Coast, with most headquartered in either California or New York. Nearly three-quarters were private (45%) or family foundations (18%), rather than public charities (8%), community foundations (4%), or corporate foundations (3%). In terms of the

focus of their media giving, 81% said they gave to nonprofit media other than public broadcasting, 63% to journalism education and training, 62% to public broadcasting, 43% to media technology and platforms, 35% to media research, and 30% to individuals for media projects. Media giving, however, accounted for only a small part of foundation portfolios. For a majority of the 63 funders, 10% or less of their total funding went to media grants in the previous year compared to only six funders that had pledged more than 25% of their grant portfolio.<sup>8</sup>

Of the 92 news nonprofits that replied to the API survey, three-quarters were fewer than 10 years old, and a third had launched over the previous five years. About six out of 10 had a state/regional (32%), metro (16%) or hyperlocal focus (12%) compared to 15% that focused on national coverage and 3% on international affairs. In terms of staff, 60% employed fewer than five people. Nearly 70% had an annual budget of less than \$1 million and 20% had a budget of less than \$100,000. More than half of those surveyed said that at least 20% of their revenue came from foundations, and 1 out of 5 said that more than 75% of their budget depended on foundation grants.

### **Funding Challenges**

As several of our interviewees observed, the concentration of foundation investments within a relatively few nonprofits was symptomatic of a field where “money follows money.” Initial large gifts such as the \$30 million provided by the Sandler family to create ProPublica and the approximately \$3.7 million provided by wealthy donors, the Knight Foundation, and other allied funders to launch the Texas Tribune had encouraged a culture of “pack philanthropy,” in which a few nonprofits benefiting from well-financed launches are able to quickly accrue foundation grants.<sup>9</sup> Others we interviewed countered that in an ultra-competitive environment for funding, the concentration of resources in a few news nonprofits was driven by their comparative success, rather than reflecting a pack mentality.

Consider the example of the Texas Tribune. Following the launch of the nonprofit in 2009, the Texas Tribune provided an attractive model for philanthropists in at least two ways, serving as a model for other news nonprofits to emulate (assuming they could gain equivalent financing). For early backers like the Knight Foundation interested in growing nonprofit journalism across the country, the Texas Tribune demonstrated how it could be done. For other foundations chiefly interested in advancing a cause, because of the Texas Tribune's growing following among state policymakers, they could be confident that grant-financed coverage of topics like education, the environment, or social justice would be read by key decision-makers.

The accumulation of foundation investments in Texas Tribune and a relatively few other nonprofits enabled them to diversify their revenue sources. Between 2010 and 2012, according to a Knight Foundation analysis, ProPublica and the Center for Investigative Reporting decreased their reliance on foundation funding by substantially boosting income from individual donations. The Texas Tribune, MinnPost, and Voice of San Diego were able to do the same by developing corporate sponsorships, advertising, and syndication.<sup>10</sup> More recent entrants to the scene such as VTDigger in Vermont have also moved to a more diverse model of underwriting and individual donors.<sup>11</sup>

In contrast to these success stories, most of the news nonprofits surveyed by Pew in 2012 said that they neither had the business-side expertise nor the resources to diversify their revenue base. Part of the problem was the loss of their original philanthropic backers. Among respondents to the Pew survey, 56 were originally launched by way of seed funding. Yet only 16 said that their original funder had agreed to renew the grants, a trend that one of our interviewees described as “devastating” to efforts to grow news operations, boost audience, and improve digital platforms, much less pursue additional revenue.<sup>12</sup>

For several of the news nonprofit leaders we interviewed, foundations tend to be too conservative and risk averse in making the decision to fund news nonprofits, especially those at the start-up stage. National foundations often lack journalistic expertise, knowledge, or experience, they said. For most foundations, their grant-making process is also defined around specific social issues or problems, making it more difficult to provide general operating support to a news nonprofit, and for prospective grantees to define their fit. Journalism is also unpredictable, makes enemies, stirs controversy, and “can bite the hand that feeds it.” About a third of nonprofit news outlets responding to the API survey said that a previous funder had been the subject of a subsequent news story. When grant officers and their boards make the decision to fund media, such factors can make them reluctant to invest in anything but a well-established outlet.

Most local community foundations also lack experience or a set of policies for funding local area nonprofit media. For national foundations, it is also difficult to support local news nonprofits if as funders they lack staff expertise in journalism, or the contacts and time to solicit proposals and to cultivate smaller grantees across the country. These challenges, worried several of our sources, had led to “nonprofit media deserts” outside of the Northeast and West Coast where most major foundations were based, leaving many states and cities lacking a significant news nonprofit presence.

### **Independent Impact**

When foundations do provide seed grants to smaller news nonprofits they typically “want to fund something and then move on,” commented one of our interviewees, sometimes expecting that organizations quickly become sustainable by developing multiple sponsors and funding streams. This can be a major issue for start-ups that may take three to five years at a minimum to reach financial stability and to move out of a “start-up” phase. Making the challenge more difficult, foundations also expect that grantees quickly demonstrate impact. According to the API survey conducted in 2015, a

significant proportion of foundations requested that grantees provide metrics not only relative to social media activity (44%) and web traffic (40%), but also specific to formal hearings, laws changed or filed (40%), changes in public awareness or knowledge (35%), changes in attitudes or perceptions (32%), and responses from officials to reporting (24%).<sup>13</sup>

Yet direct impacts from news coverage on societal trends, policy outcomes, legislation action, or public opinion are not only unusual, but also difficult to measure. When the Stanford University economist James Hamilton comprehensively evaluated 12,000 award-nominated investigative stories produced between 1979 and 2010, only about 1-4% of stories could be linked to the passage of a specific law, change in policy, or adoption of a new regulation. The most frequently occurring impact was to stimulate deliberation about the topic, in the form of government hearing, review of policies, investigation, audit, or formal debate, which occurred in 4-18% of stories. In a second example, an assessment by ProPublica of the impact of its stories published between 2010 and 2012, identified 8 to 10 impacts per year where a clear causal link could be established to “real world” change. Such impacts were defined as influencing official actions such as public statements or reviews; creating opportunities for change such as legislative hearings or the appointment of a commission; and actual changes such as new regulations or laws passed. As Propublica’s president Richard Tofel noted, these 8 to 10 impacts per year were the product of 20 reporters filing dozens of stories supported by an annual \$10 million budget, indicating that “true impact—in the real world change sense...is relatively rare.”<sup>14</sup>

Pressure to demonstrate impact may also come at the expense of generating other forms of revenue. To reach well-off, opinion-leading audiences such as those that regularly consume the *New York Times* or National Public Radio (NPR), many investigative or subject-focused news nonprofits require distribution by larger outlets. In most cases, this content is freely shared rather than sold through syndication. “That’s one of the real challenges. There’s nothing to sell on a day-to-day basis,” one of our



interviewees told us. “News nonprofits are sort of journalism intermediaries. There are real challenges that are unclear.” Moreover, when funders are focused on shaping the views of elite audiences and those of policy-makers, they may be less likely to support coverage of topics relevant to minority and low-income communities or the news nonprofits that serve them.<sup>15</sup>

A strong emphasis by foundations on demonstrating direct policy impacts also relates to long-standing questions of journalistic independence and conflict of interest. Of those surveyed by API in 2015, 52% of funders indicated that they make media grants on issues where they are trying to affect public policy. A third of foundations surveyed said their media funding decisions served to “advance the larger strategic agenda” compared to 43% that were motivated by the “desire to strengthen a free press” and to educate citizens “regardless of the outcome of the reporting.” The worry for some observers is that funders may be pressuring news nonprofits and their journalists to produce work in line with their political objectives. On this matter, only 13% of news nonprofits in the API survey said they have formal written policies on independence that they ask funders to make part of grant agreements.<sup>16</sup>

Subject- or project-driven funding also requires news nonprofits to spend more time and overhead on grant writing, cultivating foundation relationships, and the administration of awards. A former head of an investigative nonprofit told us that he had been juggling many millions in annual revenue across 50 mostly short-term, subject driven-grants. Landing a grant would take six to nine months of work. A year later it would be time to evaluate impact and negotiate a renewal. “The greatest thing in the world is a three to four-year grant, especially for general support,” the former nonprofit news leader said. Although sympathetic to these struggles, several funders we talked to offered alternative perspectives. Many grantees, they said, could benefit from better articulating their financials and intended audience. Increasingly, all such organizations need to have a plan for attracting individual donors and grassroots giving, both to diversify their model and demonstrate community commitment.

Such organizations also needed a better sense of what might be “too much of an ask,” especially start-ups that required greater due diligence. One funder told us they preferred to provide general operating grants, but most of their requests were project-focused, as news organizations tried to fit their proposals to the foundation’s issue-focused program areas. At other times, a news nonprofit might make the same pitch to different program staff at the same foundation. “They are reporters who are aggressive,” said a funder, “but they need to coordinate internally.”

## **ANALYZING FOUNDATION FUNDING**

As we have reviewed, one method to analyze the nonprofit news ecosystem as conducted in 2010/11 by the Investigative Reporting Workshop is to analyze Internal Revenue Service filings and annual reports from a group of media organizations to estimate their annual revenue and operational capacity. A second method, as conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2013 and the American Press Institute in 2015 is to identify a population of media nonprofits and survey them, asking each to self-report via close ended questions total revenue and staffing along with the proportion of income they receive from foundations and other sources.

Instead of looking at the individual news nonprofit as the subject of analysis, in the current study we assess the funding decisions of foundations. The great majority of news nonprofits rely heavily on foundation grants for their revenue. Even for those few nonprofits with diversified revenue sources, a large proportion of their funding still depends on foundations. Understanding foundation decisions and investments is therefore critical. One approach for studying foundation decisions would be to collect grant information from a few dozen of the largest and most influential journalism and media funders, relying on their IRS 990 forms, financial statements, annual reports, and/or web databases. But as we

show in our paper, a focus on just the largest foundations would not capture 30% to 70% of funding across the sector or on behalf of a specific type of media nonprofit.

Given these limitations, in our study we instead relied on a population of grants available by way of the Foundation Center database, a nonprofit research organization that comprehensively gathers data on foundations and grantmakers. We analyzed 32,396 relevant grants totaling \$1.8 billion distributed by 6,568 foundations between 2010 and 2015, the most recent year complete data is available. We not only analyzed patterns in foundation funding specific to the production and dissemination of nonprofit journalism and media, but also affiliated activities such as the operation of public media organizations; journalistic/media partnerships and supporting services; journalism-specific research, technology development, legal support, and philanthropic coordination; university-based journalism education; journalistic associations, professional development and specialized training programs; and public education about journalism by way of museums. Collectively, these different categories of grants highlight the trade-offs that foundations face, as they often have to prioritize one area over others.

As we describe our findings, readers should keep in mind the relative scale of the dollar amounts discussed. At first glance, U.S. foundation support for journalism and media-related activities can seem impressive, until funding is placed in contrast to the immense cost of producing news for a democracy of 300 million people. A 2011 Federal Communications Commission report estimated that in the aftermath of the newsroom budget cuts of the 2000s, it would take somewhere between \$265 million and \$1.6 billion annually to fill gaps in local reporting alone, without consideration of the cost to meet national needs. Consider alternatively the following rough calculation. Assuming average annual salary and benefits of \$75,000 per journalist, replacing just half of the 19,000 editorial jobs lost at newspapers between 2000 and 2014 would cost roughly \$4.3 billion for a six-year period. This amount is more than twice the \$1.8 billion in combined support that U.S. foundations provided public media, news

nonprofits, journalism research, museums, and journalism higher education over the six-year period we analyzed. Of course, technology increases productivity and efficiency for journalistic work, but these comparisons highlight the relative magnitude of the current funding challenges.<sup>17</sup>

### **Identifying and Categorizing Grants**

To analyze the relevant nonprofit media investments of U.S. foundations in the years leading up to the 2016 election, during the summer of 2017 we obtained two proprietary datasets available by way of the Foundation Center. The first dataset “media platforms” included a population of 73,373 grants allocated to nonprofit recipients between 2010 and 2015 intended to support media platforms by which information is communicated, such as television, print, radio, documentary film, web media, mobile, museums, festivals, and public education campaigns. The second data set “journalism, news, and information” included a population of 8,935 grants allocated during the same time period intended to support the direct production of journalism and news as well as supporting activities such as journalism education, professional development, journalism research, technology development, and/or journalism-related museum initiatives. These two broad categories of grants were established by the Foundation Center in consultation with Media Impact Funders, a member-supported network of foundations supporting media and journalism-related activities. Each grant was identified and placed into one of the two respective datasets by way of the self-reporting of foundations and/or review by Foundation Center staff. For each reported grant, the datasets feature a brief description of the grant’s purpose along with subject codes that identify the type of journalism or platform supported such as “investigative journalism,” “advocacy journalism,” “television,” “web media,” or “radio” and if applicable a topic focus such as “environment,” “public integrity,” or “international relations.” Each grant in the dataset also features the name/location of the funder and recipient organization, and the type of grantmaker as defined by the following Foundation Center categories:

- *Independent Foundations*: A nonprofit grantmaking organization that usually derives its endowment and grantmaking capacity from a specific wealthy individual or family and that is governed by a Board of Trustees. Leading examples are the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the Hewlett Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the Foundation to Promote an Open Society.
- *Family Foundations*: A type of independent foundation that derives its endowment from a specific individual or family and that usually has affiliated family members among its Board of Trustees who have a significant role in grantmaking decisions. Leading examples are the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Park Foundation.
- *Community Foundations*: A nonprofit organization that derives its endowment from many different donors who make tax deductible contributions for charitable purposes in a specific community or region. A leading example is the Silicon Valley Community Foundation.
- *Public Charities/Donor Advised Funds*: An organization that typically derives its funding from tax deductible donations from the general public. A donor advised fund is a philanthropic vehicle administered by a public charity that allows donors to make a tax-deductible contribution, and to recommend grants to specific organizations from the fund over time. A leading example of a public charity is the Robert R. McCormick Foundation and an example of a donor advised fund is the Vanguard Charitable Endowment Program.
- *Operating Foundations*: A private foundation with the primary purpose of operating research, social welfare, or other programs determined by its governing body or establishment charter. Some grants might be made, but the sum is generally small relative to the funds used for the foundation's own programs. A leading example is the Freedom Forum, which operates the Newseum, and the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, which operates the Kaiser Health News.
- *Company-Sponsored Foundations*: A private foundation with grant funds primarily derived from the contributions of a for-profit business organization. The company-sponsored foundation might maintain close ties with the donor company, but it is an independent organization with its own endowment and is subject to the same rules and regulations as other private foundations. Leading examples are the Newman's Own Foundation and the MetLife Foundation.
- *Corporate Giving Programs*: A grantmaking program established and administered within a for-profit business organization. Corporate giving programs do not have separate endowments, and their annual grant totals are generally more directly related to current profits. Leading examples are Google.org and the Microsoft Corporation Contributions Program.

In a first pass at analyzing the combined data sets totaling 82,308 grants, we carefully reviewed each grant description, deleting redundant grants, and including only those grants for analysis that were specific to the production and dissemination of nonprofit journalism or public affairs media; supporting

activities and services; journalism research and higher education; and other investments such as media-specific museums and exhibits. Due to the scope of the data involved, we excluded those grants supporting documentary films not intended for broadcast by public media; youth and adult media literacy; youth journalism; libraries and related technology; art museums and festivals; film festivals; orchestras and music festivals; promotion of Internet and broadband access; analysis and advocacy specific to technology policy not specific to journalism; development of technology and platforms to improve government transparency, public information access, and other applications not specific to journalism; and strategic communication activities on the part of advocacy organizations or other nonprofits. Because of our focus on the U.S. context, we also excluded grants to non-U.S. organizations, but included grants to U.S. based organizations producing international coverage and/or supporting journalists working in other countries.

Next, we reviewed the remaining grants, categorizing each grant by its main focus, type of nonprofit, and where relevant the subject or issue covered. These categories were informed by the interviews we conducted along with a scan of more than 50 previously published white papers, reports, and studies. In stage one, over a period of several months, the first author categorized each of the remaining grants, determining a main focus, type of nonprofit, and subject covered as determined by the description available for the grant, by cross checking with the web site of the grant recipient, and by referring to any additional information made available at a grantmakers' website. In stage two, in order to ensure consistency and accuracy in our categorization of grants, the second author reviewed a randomly selected subset of 3,360 grants or ~10% of those coded. We then discussed and resolved any disagreements over the categorization of specific grants. In stage three, informed by this process, the first author reviewed each of the grants a final time, correcting categorizations where needed for consistency and accuracy. Our multi-stage review resulted in a final combined dataset of 32,422 relevant

grants distributed by 6,568 foundations between 2010 and 2015 totaling \$1.8 billion coded by focus, type of nonprofit, type of funder, and where relevant the subject or issue covered.

## **Limitations**

Drawing on a population of relevant grants, our analysis includes the most comprehensive, publicly available information on nonprofit journalism- and media-related grantmaking by U.S. foundations. However, there are several limitations and caveats that readers should keep in mind. First, given that many of the grants recorded by the Foundation Center are collected from publicly available 990 IRS forms or voluntarily reported by foundations, there tends to be a two-year lag in gathering a complete population of relevant grants. We were therefore able to include in our analysis those grants administered between 2010 and 2015, but not for 2016 and beyond. Second, some readers may be familiar with the Media Impact Funder's online grant map, a searchable tool that draws on the latest Foundation Center data to offer a geographic visualization of funding patterns and grants to specific recipients or distributed by specific foundations. Since the Foundation Center database is constantly being updated, there are minor variations between some of our totals derived from Foundation Center data as it existed during the summer of 2017 and data available today that forms the basis of the Media Impact Funders map. To estimate this variation, we cross-checked our totals for the six-year period against those currently available at the Media Impact Funders' database specific to 10 of the largest news non-profits. In each case, our estimates diverged from current totals for the organizations by \$400,000 or less.

Third, as previously reviewed a few of the better resourced news nonprofits have been able to diversify their revenue sources in recent years, growing their budgets while also decreasing their reliance on institutional foundation support. Following the 2016 elections, national investigative journalism nonprofits have likely benefited the most from the "Trump bump" surge, not only in

foundation grants and but also relative to large gifts from high net worth individuals. Drawing on currently available financial audit statements from ProPublica, the Center for Investigative Reporting, and Texas Tribune, at these better resourced news nonprofits, even as they have diversified their revenue sources over the past half-decade, grants from institutional foundations have remained an essential part of their budgets. For example, at the Texas Tribune, the news nonprofit widely recognized as having the most diverse revenue base, foundation grants in 2016 still comprised about a third of income. Notably, however, following the 2016 election, ProPublica experienced a major “Trump bump” with income from grants, large gifts, and individual donations tripling from \$14.3 million in 2016 to \$43.5 million in 2017. In contrast, in the months following the election, the Center for Investigative Reporting did not experience a similarly appreciable spike in fundraising. Combined grants and donations for 2017 totaled \$13.3 million, an increase of \$3.3 million over 2016, but an amount equivalent to Center for Investigative Reporting fundraising totals for 2015.

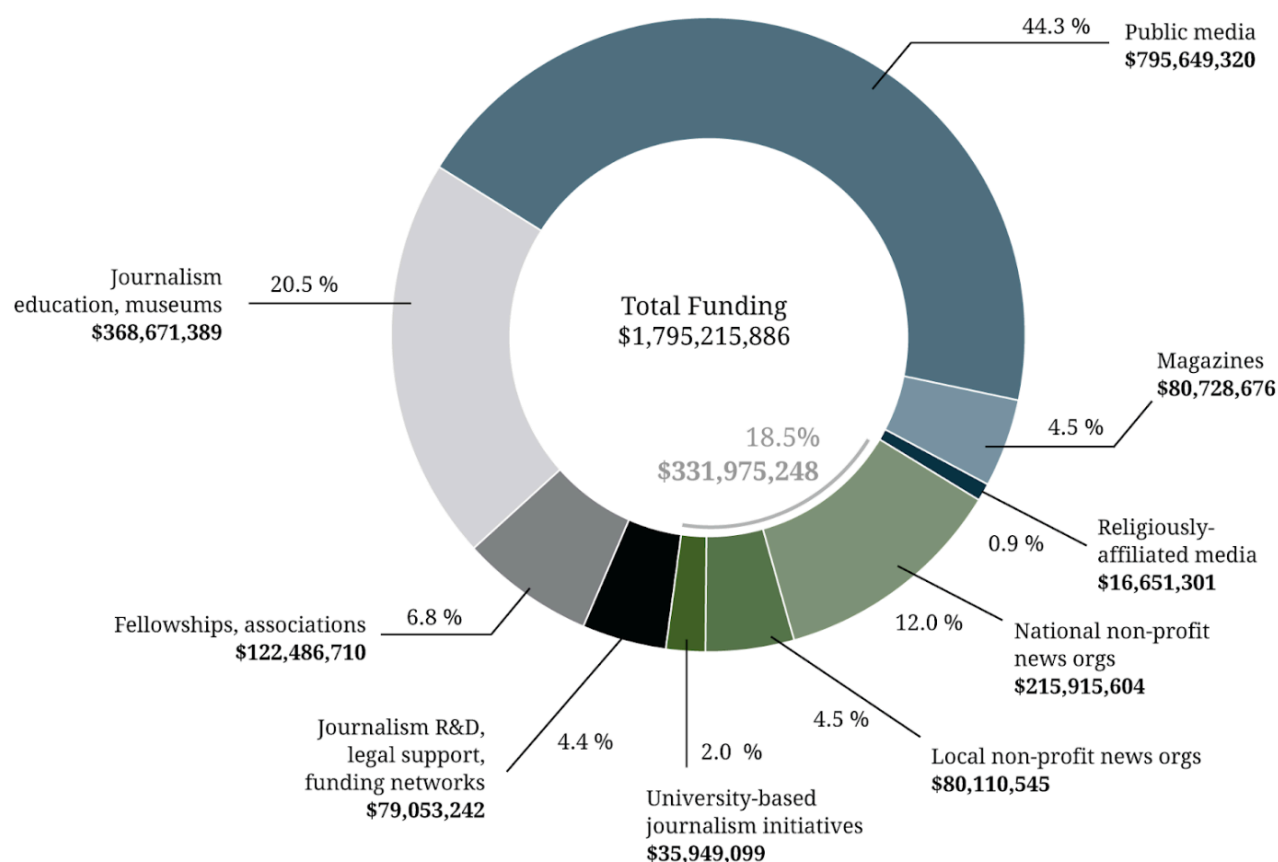
### **General Foundation Funding Trends**

Between 2010 and 2015, approximately half of all foundation funding was devoted to supporting decades-old, legacy non-profit media. As Figure 2 summarizes, an estimated \$796 million or 44% of the \$1.8 billion we analyzed supported the operation of public radio and television stations along with their affiliated programs and news reporting initiatives. Grant making in this category also funded national news and programming providers such as NPR, American Public Media, Public Radio International, and the PBS NewsHour. Important to note is that this funding for public media supports not only station operation but also a variety of content besides news including music, culture, and entertainment. Specific to other legacy nonprofit media, approximately \$80.7 million or 4.5% of funding during the 6-year period supported magazines such as *Mother Jones*, the *New Criterion*, and *Harper's*. In comparison, an estimated \$331 million or 19% of all foundation funding supported mostly newer,



digital-based forms of nonprofit media including national nonprofit news organizations (\$216M, 12% of total), local nonprofit news organizations (\$80.1M, 5%), and university-based journalism initiatives (\$36M, 2%). Grants to public media, magazines, and newer, digital-based forms of nonprofit news are detailed in subsequent sections.

Figure 2. U.S. foundation funding for nonprofit media-related activities, 2010-2015



Other funding categories displayed in Figure 2 were not of primary interest to our study but represent activities or initiatives that are generally intended to support journalism and its public understanding. These other categories of grants also highlight the tough choices and trade-offs that funders face, as prioritizing one of these areas, even if intended to indirectly improve the practice and

reach of journalism in society, may take away from direct support for news production in an era when such funding is urgently needed.

For example, approximately \$369 million or 21% of the \$1.8 billion in funding devoted to journalism/media between 2010 and 2015 supported journalism higher education and museums. Of this amount, an estimated \$178 million was dedicated to museum operations with grants from the Freedom Forum an operating foundation that runs the Newseum accounting for almost all of the funding. In terms of support for higher education, approximately \$147 million was provided to university journalism/communication programs in general support, with just two foundations and universities accounting for nearly half the funding. In this case, the Annenberg Foundation gave \$50 million to build a new academic building at the University of Southern California's (USC) Annenberg School of Communication and the Donald W. Reynolds foundation distributed grants totaling \$30 million to fund the Reynolds Journalism Institute at the University of Missouri (MU) School of Journalism.

Relative to other higher education priorities, as Table 1 details, approximately \$18.8 million was provided for scholarship and internships; \$13.3 million backed specialized training opportunities such as a degree program in business journalism; and \$10.4 million funded named professorships or faculty hiring initiatives. Notably, the Knight Foundation was the third leading grantmaker to journalism higher education, distributing a diversified portfolio of approximately \$24.9 million in grants over the six-year period analyzed.

In a second example, a combined \$122 million or approximately 7% of the \$1.8 billion in funding we analyzed supported journalist professional development. This amount included support for specialized journalism fellowships (\$40.8M), associations supporting women or minority journalists (\$31M), press clubs, general journalist associations, and conferences (\$24.5), specialized training

workshops (\$20.5M), journalism awards (\$4.3M), and grants to an individual journalist to produce a book, series of articles, or TV/radio program (\$1.4M).

Table 1. U.S. foundation funding for journalism higher education and museums, 2010 - 2015

	Amount \$	% of Total	Grants #
Journalism/media-related museum, exhibit*	178,130,322	48%	69
General support for school / program / building	147,322,450	40%	270
Scholarships/internships	18,841,763	5%	229
Specialized student training, degree program	13,317,052	4%	13
Endowed/named professorship; hiring of faculty	10,387,000	3%	7
Support for equipment/technology/news room	471,610	.1%	13
Building construction/improvements	133,000	0%	2
Not codable	78,192	0%	5
Total	368,671,389	100.0%	608

In a final focus area, as Table 2 details, approximately \$77 million or 4% of all funding was devoted to activities designed to support and inform both commercial and non-profit journalism including journalism research (\$38.6M), technology development (\$31.3M), legal support (\$5M), and philanthropic coordination (\$2.2M). Specific to the related investments in journalism research and technology development (R&D), the Knight Foundation was the leading funder, providing a combined \$37.1 million in grants across the two categories, or about half the total support for journalism R&D.

Table 2. U.S. foundation funding for journalism R&amp;D, legal support and philanthropic coordination, 2010-2015

	Amount \$	% of Total	Grants #
Research to support/inform journalism, media	38,584,513	50%	188
Technology development to support journalism, media	31,322,850	41%	86
Legal support for journalism, media	4,953,985	6%	51
Coordination of journalism, media philanthropic activities	2,186,894	3%	64
Total	77,048,242	100.0%	389

Across the \$1.8 billion in grants we analyzed, as Table 3 details, 25 foundations provided approximately half the funding. Three of the top 5 were the Freedom Forum, Reynolds foundation, and Annenberg foundation. These respective grantmakers supported the Newseum; the University of Missouri, and various business degree programs; and the USC Annenberg School of Communication respectively. By a wide margin, the second leading funder was the Knight Foundation, which invested an estimated \$133 million across the focus areas displayed in Figure 2. Breaking down the investments made by the Knight Foundation shows the trade-offs that funders face as they make grantmaking decisions. Approximately 60% of Knight funding supported activities intended to support journalism generally such as investments in higher education, fellowships, and journalism-specific research and technology development (R&D). In comparison, an estimated 40% directly supported news production at public media and digital news nonprofits.<sup>18</sup>

Table 3. Top 25 U.S. foundation funders of nonprofit media-related activities, 2010-2015

	Amount \$	% of Total	Grants #	Type*
1.Freedom Forum	174,891,205	10%	10	OP
2.John S. and James L. Knight Fdn	132,970,084	7%	352	IF
3.Donald W. Reynolds Fdn	72,477,760	4%	35	IF
4.Annenberg Fdn	67,283,553	4%	44	FM
5.Ford Fdn	66,946,681	4%	224	IF
6.The John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Fdn	60,808,000	3%	110	IF
7.Bill & Melinda Gates Fdn	50,295,907	3%	62	FM
8.Omidyar Network Fund	28,914,375	2%	40	IF
9.The California Endowment	25,647,891	1%	109	IF
10.The Kendeda Fund	25,266,678	1%	55	IF
11.Open Society Fdn#	24,383,424	1%	165	IF
12.Roderick MacArthur Fdn	23,737,500	1%	5	FM
13.Alfred P. Sloan Fdn	22,887,012	1%	31	IF
14.Lilly Endowment	21,969,000	1%	11	FM
15.Howard G. Buffett Fdn	21,700,790	1%	13	IF
16.Carnegie Corp.	20,068,600	1%	85	IF
17.Hewlett Fdn.	19,475,395	1%	67	IF
18.Robert R. McCormick Fdn	15,252,100	1%	132	PC
19.Silicon Valley Community Fdn	14,980,954	1%	700	CM
20.Vanguard Charitable Endowment Prgm	14,477,942	1%	203	PC
21.W. K. Kellogg Fdn	13,838,261	1%	60	IF
22.Park Fdn	13,400,067	1%	190	FM
23.The Wyncote Fdn	13,202,779	1%	118	IF
24.The Robert Wood Johnson Fdn	12,029,413	1%	28	IF
25. Wallace Fnd	11,401,224	1%	20	IF
Total	968,306,595	54%	2,869	--

Note: \*CM= Community Trust; FM = Family foundation; IF = Independent foundation; OP=Operating Foundation PC=Public Charity / Donor Advised Funds. #The Foundation to Promote an Open Society, founded by George Soros, is a separate grantmaking entity from the affiliated operating foundation The Open Society Institute.

## **Public Media**

Before detailing grants made to digital based news nonprofits, for comparison it is useful to review trends between 2010 and 2015 specific to the legacy nonprofit sectors of public media and magazines. For public media, two dozen grant recipients received approximately 7 out of 10 foundation dollars distributed, with these grantees located in a few states and major cities. Backed by a large proportion of general operating grants, public media enjoy relative flexibility in how this grant money is used, with only a portion typically directly supporting local, state, or national news reporting. Public media also stand out among their non-profit peers in cultivating about 20% of their support from company sponsored foundations and local community trusts, rather than relying almost exclusively as other nonprofit media do on independent and family foundations. The non-profit magazine sector is notable for the domination by 25 periodicals of 99% of all estimated foundation funding. Grant making also flows in the direction of magazines with a strong ideological perspective.

Table 4 displays public media funding by specific focus or purpose. Notably, approximately \$327 million or 41% of all public media grant making between 2010 and 2015 was in the form of general operating support, enabling content related to news, culture, the arts, entertainment, and other topics. In contrast, an estimated \$202 million or 25% of funding was specific to a TV/radio program aired on a PBS or NPR affiliated station, with only a portion of these programs public affairs related. At these stations, approximately \$80.9 million or 10% was devoted to reporting/coverage of a specific issue and \$19.6 million or just 2% of funding was devoted specifically to local/state reporting or coverage. When funding is provided in the form of general operating grants, it enables public media providers to have more discretion, but the lack of guidance from foundations may also come at the expense of direct investments in local reporting and news collaborations that help fill gaps in waning newspaper coverage.

Table 4. U.S. foundation funding for public media by specific focus or purpose, 2010-2015\*

	Amount \$	% of Total	Grants #
General operating support, fundraising	327,484,769	41%	16,589
Support for specific TV/radio program	201,578,216	25%	1,383
Reporting/coverage of specific subject	80,852,923	10%	399
Community public affairs TV/radio station#	38,291,624	5%	1,134
Community engagement, educational strategy	22,039,867	3%	339
Local/state reporting, coverage	19,559,254	2%	150
Public media growth / collaborations	18,075,299	2%	82
Not specified	87,767,368	11%	5,011
<i>Total</i>	<i>795,694,320</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>25,087</i>

Notes: \*Apart from “reporting/coverage of specific subject” and “local/state reporting, coverage,” other grant totals include support for non-news related activities such as programming and content related to the arts, culture, and entertainment. #Grants in this category are specific to independent community radio or TV stations that carry public affairs related programming.

As Table 5 details, foundation funding for public media tends to be highly concentrated among a few dozen grant recipients. Nineteen “super” stations along with the content-producers/distributors NPR, Sesame Workshop, Public Radio International, StoryCorps, the Public Radio Exchange, and Free Speech TV received approximately \$562 million or 72% of all foundation funding given to public media between 2010 and 2015. Seventeen of the grantees are based in the San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, Minneapolis, Boston, New York City, or DC/Virginia regions.

Table 5. Top 25 U.S. foundation grant recipients among public media, 2010-15

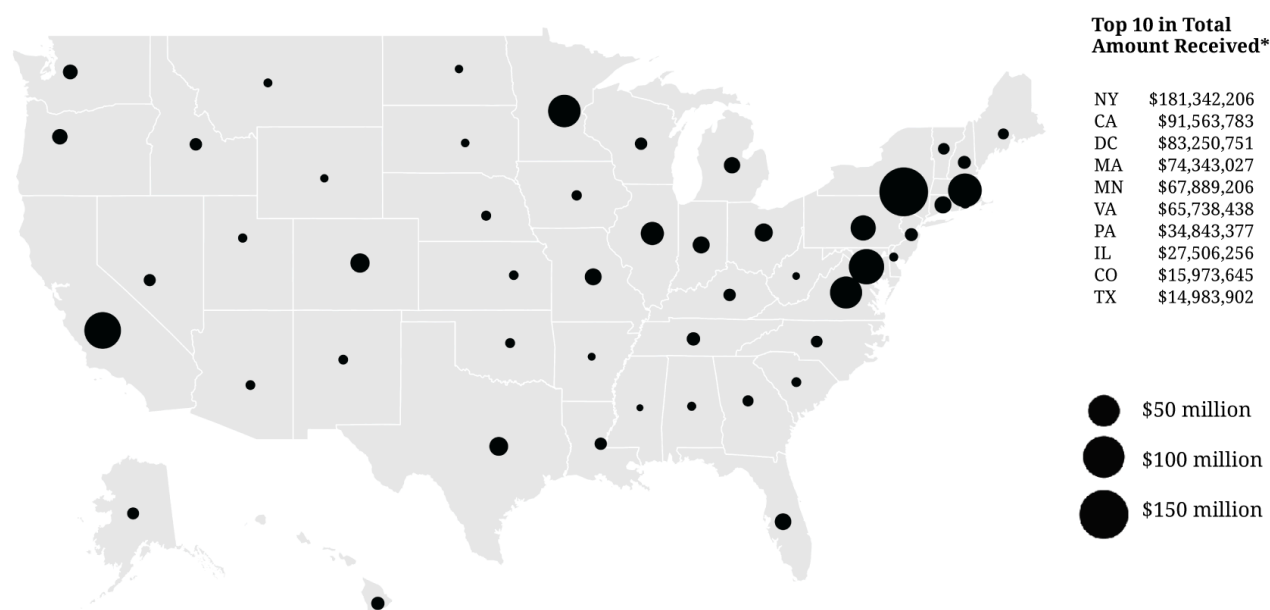
	Amount \$	% of Total	Grants #	State
1.National Public Radio / NPR	78,029,753	10%	622	DC
2.WNET TV NY/NJ	70,871,904	9%	1,140	NY
3.W G B H TV/radio Boston/Cambridge	60,226,194	8%	945	MA
4.W E T A-Washington, DC/VA/MD	58,691,766	7%	578	VA
5.W N Y C Radio New York	38,419,857	5%	1,102	NY
6.K Q E D TV/radio San Francisco	30,271,890	4%	1,325	CA
7.Minnesota Public Radio	27,859,433	4%	736	MN
8.Sesame Workshop	27,329,077	3%	164	NY
9.K T C A/K T C I TV Twin Cities	21,108,445	3%	544	MN
10.K C E TLink, Los Angeles	15,203,985	2%	138	CA
11.Public Radio International	13,339,850	2%	119	MN
12.WTTW TV Chicago	12,642,948	2%	479	IL
13.W Q E D TV Pittsburgh	10,115,417	1%	253	PA
14.Southern California Public Radio	9,825,349	1%	255	CA
15.StoryCorps	9,790,475	1%	140	NY
16.Public Radio Exchange	9,333,774	1%	23	MA
17.Ideastream radio/TV Cleveland	9,282,426	1%	266	OH
18.Connecticut Public Broadcasting	9,047,886	1%	257	CT
19.W H Y Y Philadelphia	8,873,025	1%	282	PA
20.K C R W radio Los Angeles	8,439,326	1%	108	CA
21.Chicago Public Media	7,036,740	1%	390	IL
22.K C P T-TV Kansas City	6,891,926	1%	262	MO
23. Free Speech TV	6,594,809	1%	44	CO
24.Detroit Public TV	6,589,612	1%	189	MI
25.Oregon Public Broadcasting	6,524,250	1%	430	OR
Total	562,340,117	72%	10,791	--

Similar geographic disparities are evident in Figure 3, mapping the amount of public media-specific foundation funding distributed across states between 2010 and 2015. In this case, public media organizations based in 10 states accounted for approximately \$657 million in grants or 83% of total foundation funding. Most of the top grant recipients in these states produce national news and public



affairs programming distributed to stations around the country. However, as public media organizations are called upon to become central sources of local and state news reporting, filling gaps in newspaper coverage and collaborating with other local news nonprofits, our analysis shows that in the great majority of states, public media organizations are likely to lack the necessary foundation funding to do so.<sup>19</sup>

Figure 3. U.S. foundation funding for public media by state, 2010-2015



Note: \*Grant recipients in the top 10 states accounted for approximately \$657 million in funding or 83% of total foundation funding.

Among nonprofit media we examined, public media organizations were supported by the greatest diversity of grantmakers. Approximately two-thirds of public media funding was provided by independent (56%) or family (21%) foundations. But public media organizations also received a substantial proportion of their grants from company sponsored foundations (10%) and community trusts (9%). As Table 6 details, twenty-five foundations accounted for 41% of all grant making to public media and the top five totaled 16%. The top 5 funders included the MacArthur foundation (\$35.6M), the Ford foundation (\$27.6M), the Sloan foundation (\$22.9), the Lilly foundation (\$21.7) and the Gates

foundation (\$19.8M). Nineteen of the top 25 funders were independent or family foundations, two were donor advised funds, two were company sponsored foundations, and one was a community trust.

Table 6. Top 25 U.S. foundation funders of public media by amount of grants, 2010-2015

	Amount #	% of Total	Grants #	Type*
1. MacArthur Fdn	34,597,000	4%	53	IF
2. Ford Fdn	27,586,043	4%	62	IF
3. Sloan Fdn	22,862,012	3%	30	IF
4. Lilly Endowment	21,719,000	3%	10	FM
5. Gates Fdn	19,779,295	3%	23	FM
6. Kendeda Fund	14,335,730	2%	22	IF
7. Annenberg Fdn	12,685,100	2%	26	FM
8. Knight Fdn	12,567,000	2%	42	IF
9. Carnegie Corp.	11,535,000	2%	36	IF
10. Margaret A. Cargill Foundation	10,868,044	1%	95	IF
11. Hewlett Fdn	9,728,250	1%	18	IF
12. George D. Smith Fund	9,500,000	1%	12	IF
13. Park Fdn	8,474,225	1%	74	FM
14. Silicon Valley Community Fdn	8,389,157	1%	573	CM
15. Arthur Vining Davis Fdn	8,275,460	1%	34	FM
16. Robert Wood Johnson Fdn	8,249,456	1%	16	IF
17. Schwab Charitable Fund	7,987,220	1%	113	PC
18. Vanguard Charitable Endowment Prgm	7,841,177	1%	173	PC
19. Newman's Own Fdn	7,629,000	1%	86	CS
20. MetLife Fdn	7,425,000	1%	18	CS
21. Wyncote Fdn	6,889,625	1%	63	IF
22. Richard King Mellon Fdn	6,453,290	1%	15	FM
23. James Irvine Fdn	5,960,000	1%	19	IF
24. Ahmanson Fdn	5,930,000	1%	17	FM
25. Andrew W. Mellon Foundation	5,812,500	1%	9	IF
Total	303,078,584	41%	1,639	--

Note: \*CM= Community Trust; CS=Corporate sponsored foundation; FM = Family foundation; IF = Independent foundation; PC=Public Charity / Donor Advised Funds.

## **Magazines**

Shifting focus to the \$80.7 million given by foundations to support legacy nonprofit magazines, about a third of all funding (\$25.6M) was provided to general public affairs magazines with *Harper's* accounting for most of this amount. Another third of magazine funding supported either liberal/left-wing magazines (\$22.8M) or conservative/right wing periodicals (\$6.5M). Of the remaining third of funding for magazines, almost all of this share went to support either education-focused magazines (\$14.5M), those covering science/technology (\$5.2M) or the environment/conservation (\$2.6M).

As Table 7 shows, 25 publications received 99% of all magazine funding. Nine of the 25 publications were liberal/left wing magazines, 5 were conservative/right wing magazines, 3 were public affairs magazines, 2 were science/technology magazines, 2 were environmental/conservation magazines, 2 had a minority/ethnic focus, 2 were general public affairs magazines, 1 focused on education, and 1 on consumer affairs. Among the top 5 grant recipients, nearly half of all magazine funding was given to either *Harper's* (\$23.7M) or *Education Week* (\$14.5M). Another 20% of magazine funding went to the three liberal/left wing magazines *Mother Jones* (\$6.6M), *The Nation* (\$5.6M), and *American Prospect* (\$4.2M).

Table 7. Top 25 foundation grant recipients among magazines 2010-2015

	Amount \$	% of Total	Grants #	Type
1.Harper's magazine	23,737,500	29%	5	PA
2.Education Week	14,489,429	18%	45	EDUC
3.Mother Jones	6,575,343	8%	184	LIB
4.The Nation	5,553,713	7%	180	LIB
5.American Prospect	4,198,282	5%	84	LIB
6.Nautilus magazine	3,498,150	4%	3	SCI
7. New Criterion	2,530,293	3%	79	CON
8.Washington Monthly	2,396,500	3%	16	LIB
9.Orion magazine	2,257,210	3%	54	ENV
10.Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists	1,679,900	2%	43	SCI
11.Commentary	1,574,550	2%	59	CON
12. YES! magazine	1,241,442	2%	56	LIB
13. News from Native California	1,179,254	2%	71	MI/ETH
14.Lapham's Quarterly	1,161,000	1%	18	PA
15.American Spectator	1,152,740	1%	101	CON
16.Consumer Reports	978,994	1%	4	CA
17.Atlantic Monthly*	943,921	1%	6	PA
18.Boston Review	856,700	1%	17	LIB
19.Reason magazine	688,000	1%	1	CON
20.Progressive magazine	671,700	1%	28	LIB
21.Health Affairs	654,225	1%	3	HTH
22.Democracy: A Journal of Ideas	572,000	1%	9	LIB
23.In These Times	393,500	1%	9	LIB
24.E-The environmental magazine	368,200	1%	11	ENV
25. National Review	266,060	.3%	1	CON
Total	79,618,606	99%	1087	--

Notes: CA: Consumer affairs; CON: Right wing/conservative; EDU: Education; ENV: Environment, conservation; HTH: Health, public health; LIB: Left wing/liberal; MI/ETH: Minority, ethnic focus; PA: General interest, public affairs; SCI: science & tech. \*Atlantic is a for-profit magazine. Funding support a variety of public forums and ideas festivals.

In terms of the types of foundations supporting magazines between 2010 and 2015, 92% of all funding came from either independent or family foundations. Relative to specific grantmakers, as Table

8 summarizes, 25 foundations accounted for approximately \$58.5 million of the funding for magazines, or nearly 75% of total support.

Table 8. Top 25 U.S. foundation funders of magazines by amount of grants, 2011-2015

	Amount \$	% of Total	Grants #	Type*
1.Roderick MacArthur Fdn	23,737,500	29%	5	FM
2.Wallace Foundation	5,500,000	7%	6	IF
3.John Templeton Fdn	3,498,150	4%	3	IF
4.Carnegie Corp.	2,300,000	3%	5	IF
5.Hewlett Fdn	2,130,500	3%	11	IF
6.Ford Fdn	2,128,322	3%	10	IF
7.Lumina Fdn	1,475,000	2%	4	IF
8.Kendeda Fund	1,380,400	2%	7	IF
9.Gates Fdn	1,375,000	2%	3	FM
10.Lannan Fdn	1,322,893	2%	14	FM
11.W. K. Kellogg Fdn	1,220,000	2%	4	IF
12.Surdna Fdn	1,205,500	1%	14	FM
13.Irving Harris Fdn	1,175,000	1%	26	FM
14.Vanguard Charitable Endowment	1,045,765	1%	11	PC
15.Sarah Scaife Fdn	956,500	1%	9	IF
16.The Joyce Fdn	949,934	1%	5	IF
17.Siebel Fdn	923,000	1%	5	IF
18.Bradley Fdn	900,000	1%	13	IF
19.John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Fdn	825,000	1%	4	IF
20.Searle Freedom Trust	823,000	1%	4	IF
21.Robert Wood Johnson Fdn	799,994	1%	1	IF
22.Park Fdn	765,000	1%	24	FM
23.MetLife Fdn	750,000	1%	3	CS
24.Silverman Fdn	680,500	1%	7	IF
25.Schumann Media Center	678,125	1%	4	FM
Total	58,545,083	73%	202	--

Note: \*CS=Corporate sponsored foundation; FM = Family foundation; IF = Independent foundation; PC=Public Charity / Donor Advised Funds.

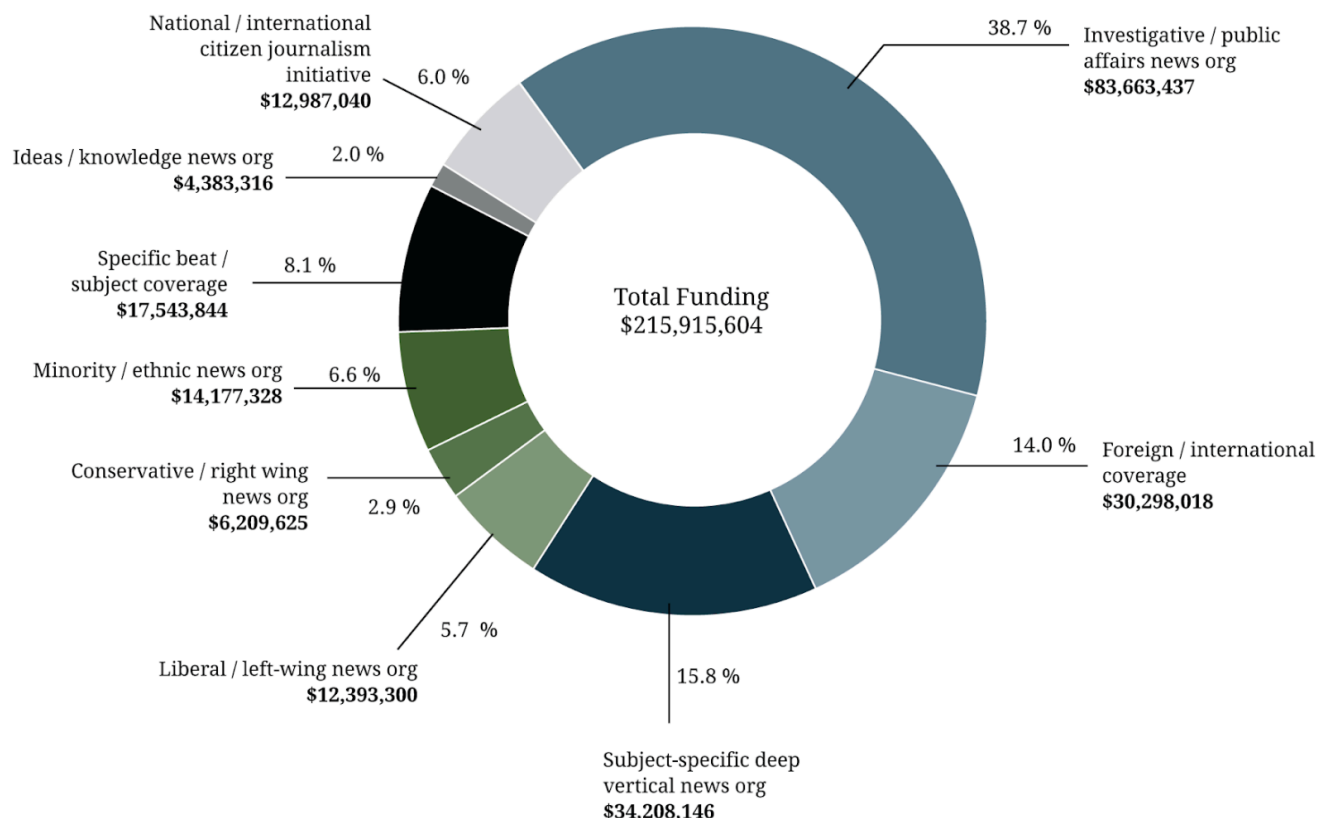
The top 5 were the Roderick MacArthur Foundation (\$23.7M), which exclusively supported *Harper's*; the Wallace Foundation (\$5.5M), which exclusively supported *Education Week*; the John Templeton Foundation (\$3.5M), which exclusively supported *Nautilus*; the Carnegie Corporation (\$2.3M), which supported *Education Week*, *American Prospect*, *Boston Review*, and *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*; and Hewlett (\$2.1M), which supported *Education Week*, *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, *Washington Monthly*, and *Boston Review*.

### **National News Nonprofits**

National news nonprofits specialize in various types of coverage and serve different readerships and audiences. Yet despite this diversity, between 2010 and 2015, 8 out of 10 foundation dollars flowed to just 25 news nonprofits, with 4 investigative journalism units topping the list. The top grantees were also notable for featuring six deep-vertical news organizations that specialize in coverage of topics like the environment or cities, and six nonprofits that have a clear ideological perspective. Overall, national news nonprofits were highly dependent on about two dozen institutional funders for nearly 70% of the grants distributed over the 6-year period analyzed.

Figure 4 displays the distribution of foundation grants to various types of national news nonprofits between 2010 and 2015. In this case, those specializing in investigative/public affairs reporting received \$83.7 million in funding, or 39% of the approximately \$216 million distributed over the six-year period. Top grant recipients were the Center for Public Integrity (\$26.2M), ProPublica (\$23.5M), Sunlight Foundation (\$21.4M) and the Center for Investigative Reporting (\$18.9M). Nonprofits covering international/foreign affairs (or supporting journalists on the beat) received \$30.3 million or 14% of funding in the area. Top recipients included the Pulitzer Center for Crisis Reporting (\$12.5M), and the International Center for Journalists (\$3M).

Figure 4. U.S. foundation funding for national news nonprofits, 2010-2015



Note: Not displayed in the figure are \$51,550 in grants to support POOR and SpeakUP, non-profit media focusing on issues related to low income / homeless communities.

Subject-specific deep vertical news organizations received \$34.2 million in foundation funding or 16% of the total in the area. Leading examples include *Grist* (\$11.1M) which specializes in coverage of the environment, *RH Reality Check* (\$2.8M) which focuses on women/reproductive rights; the Marshall Project (\$2.7M) which covers criminal justice reform; and Next City (\$2M) and CitiScope (\$1.9M) which cover cities and urban areas. Liberal or left-wing media nonprofits received \$12.4 million or 6% of the total with top recipients including the Brennan Center for Justice (\$3.2M), American Independent News Network (\$3.1M), Media Matters for America (\$2.9M), RealWorld News (\$1.5M), and Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting (\$1M). In comparison, conservative or right-wing

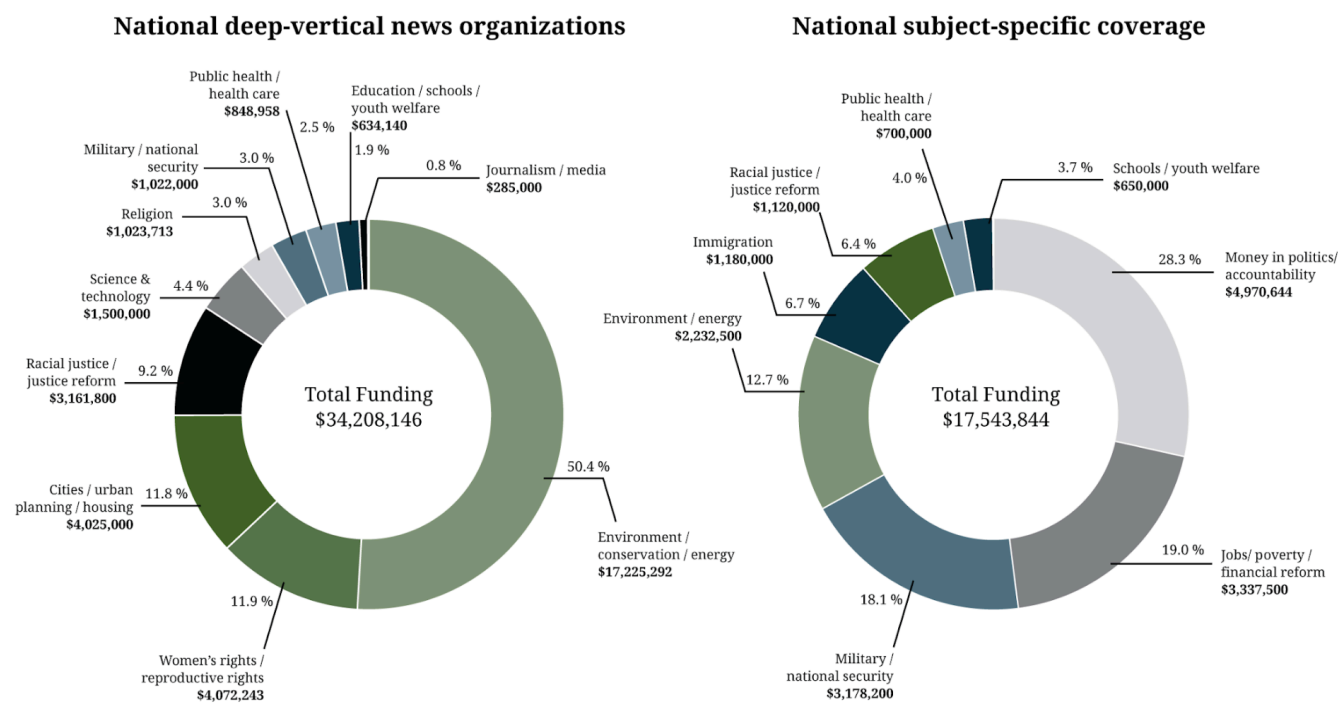
media nonprofits received \$6.2 million or 3% of the total distributed to national organizations with the top recipients including the Franklin Center for Government & Public Integrity (\$4.2M), Collegiate Fix (\$800K) and Intellectual Takeout (\$650K).

About \$17.5 million or 8% of national non-profit funding supported coverage of specific subjects or beats at a variety of national media nonprofits. Examples included money in politics, the military/national security, and the environment. National/international citizen journalism initiatives were granted approximately \$13 million with Witness Inc (\$9.4M) receiving nearly three-quarters of the funding; and the Global Press Institute (\$2.4 million) receiving most of the rest. Nonprofits serving minority or ethnic communities were supported with \$14.2 million in grants or 7% of the total. Pacific News Service / New America (\$12.3M), which ceased operations in 2017, were granted nearly 90% of the funding distributed. Nonprofits specializing in discussion of academic ideas/knowledge were provided \$4.4 million in grants, with funding going to either BlogginHeadsTV, TED, or The Conversation US.

In Figure 5 we break down foundation funding for national deep vertical organizations and specific subject/beat coverage by topic or issue focus. Among deep verticals, approximately \$17.2 million, or half of funding, went to those covering the environment/energy, with most grants flowing to Grist (\$11M), ClimateCentral (\$1.6M), and the Natural Resources News Service (\$1.1M). About 12% of deep vertical support, or \$4 million, went to nonprofits covering women's issues and/or reproductive rights with *RH Reality Check* (\$2.8M) the top recipient. Another \$3.2 million, or 9% of deep vertical funding, supported nonprofits devoted to coverage of racial justice / reform with the Marshall Project (\$2.7M) the top grant recipient.



Figure 5. Deep vertical, subject specific foundation funding at national nonprofits, 2010-2015



In terms of funding to cover specific subjects or beats at national nonprofits, slightly more than a quarter of the \$17.5 million supported coverage of money in politics/accountability (\$5.0M); and another 40% was divided between coverage of jobs/poverty/financial reform (\$3.3M) and military/national security (\$3.2M). Support for coverage of the environment/energy (\$2.2M) received about 13% of subject-specific funds; and immigration (\$1.2M) and racial justice /reform (\$1.1M) each received about 7% of allocated grants.

Table 9. Top 25 U.S. foundation grant recipients among national nonprofits, 2010 – 2015

	Amount \$	% of Total	Grants #	Type*
1.Center for Public Integrity	26,150,878	12%	171	IV/PA
2.ProPublica	23,467,526	11%	178	IV/PA
3.Sunlight Foundation	21,350,831	10%	59	IV/PA
4.Center for Investigative Reporting	18,892,079	9%	134	IV/PA
5.Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting	12,449,675	6%	44	F/INT
6.Pacific News Service / New America Media	12,310,032	6%	115	MI/ETH
7.Grist Magazine	11,153,542	5%	144	DV
8.Witness Inc.	9,422,320	4%	112	CJ
9.Franklin Center for Govt & Public Integrity	4,203,611	2%	47	CON
10.Brennan Center for Justice**	3,200,000	1%	3	LIB
11.American Independent News Network	3,075,482	1%	47	LIB
12.International Center for Journalists	3,067,750	1%	5	F/INT
13. TED / TEDx #	2,293,716	1%	10	IDEAS
14.Media Matters for America	2,897,635	1%	11	LIB
15.RH Reality Check	2,816,368	1%	12	DV
16.Marshall Project	2,681,800	1%	10	DV
17.Global Press Institute	2,386,234	1%	42	CJ
18.Next City	1,985,000	1%	13	DV
19.CitiScope	1,900,000	1%	6	DV
20.Climate Central	1,600,000	1%	4	DV
21.La Opinion	1,574,018	1%	3	MI/ETH
22.Los Angeles Times ##	1,560,000	1%	3	IV/PA
23.Independent World TV / RealWorld News	1,550,487	1%	15	LIB
24.Conversation US	1,370,000	1%	6	IDEAS
25.Ctr for Media & Democracy / PR Watch	1,305,836	1%	32	LIB
Total	174,664,820	81%	1226	--

Notes: IV/PA: Investigative public affairs; DV: Deep vertical; F/INT foreign/international affairs; MI/ETH: Minority, ethnic focus; CON: Right-wing/conservative; LIB: Left-wing/liberal; IDEAS: Academic ideas/knowledge focus; CJ: citizen journalism. \*Grants supported Brennan Center's money & politics and investigative journalism initiatives. #Grants supported the TED organization directly and others supported museums or universities hosting TEDx events. ##LA Times is a commercial newspaper. Grants from the Ford Foundation supported coverage of wealth, poverty, immigration, and criminal justices. #Natural Resources News Service is a project of the Public Education Center, an investigative news organization.

Although \$214 million was distributed to support nationally-focused news nonprofits, as Table 9 indicates, 25 organizations received \$175 million or 81% of the total. Five of the top 25, including the

four leading grant recipients, specialized in investigative and public affairs coverage. Two specialized in or supported international/foreign affairs coverage. Six were deep vertical news organizations including two focused on environmental coverage and two specializing in coverage of cities. Two were international citizen journalism nonprofits and two served minority/ethnic segments of the population. Two focused on academic ideas and research. Five were advocacy-oriented liberal/left-wing media organizations and one was a conservative/right wing nonprofit.

Specific to the type of grantmakers supporting national news nonprofits, nearly 90% of funding came from either independent foundations or family foundations compared to 6% from public charities/donor advised funds and 3% from community trusts. As Table 10 details, the top 25 grantmakers accounted for nearly 70% of all support for national news nonprofits and the top 5 accounted for about a third. The leading grantmaker was the Ford Foundation (\$21.3M), which spread its grants across investigative outlets, foreign/internal coverage, liberal advocacy sites, and a diversity of deep vertical nonprofits and subject-focused beats. Second, was the John T. and Catherine D. MacArthur Foundation (\$18.6M), which granted a combined \$14.8 million or 80% of its funding in the area to the Center for Investigative Reporting (\$5.4M), Center for Public Integrity (\$3.3M), Pulitzer Center for Crisis Reporting (\$3.3M), and ProPublica (\$2.8M). Third was the Omidyar Network Fund, which gave nearly all of its funding to the Sunlight Foundation (\$15.1M) and most of the rest to the Center for Public Integrity (\$1.9M). Fourth was the Knight Foundation (\$11.8M), which distributed approximately \$7.2 million or 60% of its grants in the area to ProPublica (\$4.2M), Center for Public Integrity (\$2M) and Center for Investigative Reporting (\$1M) respectively. Fifth was the Kendeda Fund (\$9.4M), which gave almost all of its national nonprofit funding to Grist (\$5.2M) and the Pulitzer Center for Crisis Reporting (\$4.1M)

Table 10. Top 25 U.S. foundation funders of national news nonprofits, 2010 – 2015

	Amount \$	% of total	Grants #	Type
1.Ford Fdn	21,297,316	10%	69	IF
2.The John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Fdn	18,550,000	9%	23	IF
3.Omidyar Network Fund	17,672,846	8%	15	IF
4.Knight Fdn	11,751,860	5%	29	IF
5.Kendeda Fund	9,390,548	4%	22	IF
6.Open Society Fdn	9,227,803	4%	55	IF
7.California Endowment	8,589,358	4%	21	IF
8.Arnold Fdn	6,501,193	3%	4	IF
9. Gates Fdn	6,318,902	3%	7	FM
10.Vanguard Charitable Endowment Prgm	4,549,500	2%	13	PC
11. Hewlett Fdn	4,080,645	2%	16	IF
12.The Kohlberg Fdn	3,550,000	2%	7	FM
13.Marisla Foundation	3,115,000	1%	22	FM
14.Park Fdn	2,686,160	1%	56	FM
15.National Endowment for Democracy	2,662,574	1%	17	PC
16.Grantham Fdn Protection Environ	2,500,000	1%	10	IF
17.W. K. Kellogg Fdn	2,283,278	1%	7	IF
18.Rita Allen Fdn	2,215,000	1%	16	IF
19.Silicon Valley Community Fdn	2,185,075	1%	65	CM
20.Google.org	2,100,000	1%	1	CG
21.Nduna Fdn	2,038,757	1%	4	IF
22.Schmidt Family Fdn	2,005,000	1%	6	IF
23.Hellman Fdn	2,000,000	1%	3	IF
24.Rockefeller Fdn	1,818,000	1%	10	IF
25.Carnegie Corp.	1,816,200	1%	9	IF
Total	150,905,015	69%	507	--

Notes: \*CM= Community Trust; IF = Independent foundation; FM = Family foundation. PC=Public charity/donor advised fund.

### Local/State News Nonprofits

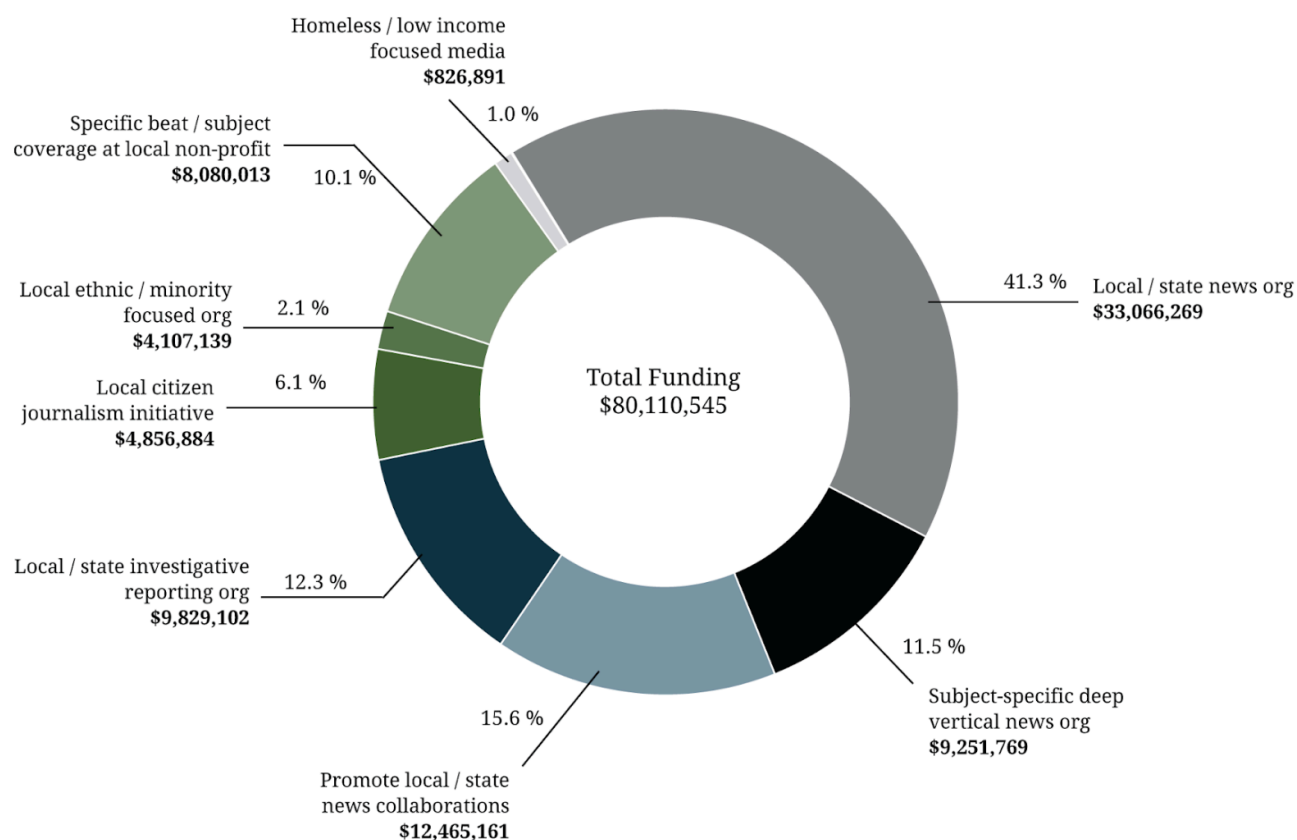
Between 2010 and 2015, as foundations pursued strategies designed to fill gaps in newspaper reporting, they focused their support on approximately 10 state/local public affairs news sites, 4 state/local investigative news units, and coverage specific to either the environment or health care. Other major investments backed the Institute for Nonprofit News and related initiatives aimed at building

capacity and collaboration across the nonprofit news sector. Overall, 25 local/state news nonprofits and capacity building initiatives received two-thirds of the funding in the area. Foundation support also tended to be concentrated in a few regions or cities, with nonprofits in 10 states receiving 82% of the grant dollars distributed. Local/state news nonprofits also depended on a limited pool of funders for their support, as 25 foundations provided approximately two-thirds of all grantmaking in the area. In this case, the Knight Foundation drove most of the growth in state/local news nonprofits, accounting for 20% of funding during the six-year period we analyzed.

Figure 6 displays the allocation of \$80.1 million in state/local news funding across types of nonprofits or focus areas. In this case, \$33.1 million or 41% of funding in the area supported state/local public affairs news sites. Of this amount, 10 nonprofits accounted for all but \$6.5 million of the funds distributed. These included the Texas Tribune (\$6.1M), San Francisco Bay Citizen (\$4.3M), MinnPost (\$3.1M), Voice of San Diego (\$3.1M), CT Mirror (\$2.5M), NJ Spotlight (\$2.4M), New Orleans Lens (\$1.9M), Seattle's Crosscut Media (\$1.5M), Twin Cities Daily (\$910K), and Oakland Local (\$831K).

Approximately 16% of funding, or \$12.5 million, backed efforts to foster local/state news collaborations and to build capacity across the non-profit news sector including at the national level. In this category, supported by the Knight Foundation and other funders, the Institute for Nonprofit News (\$5.1M) was the lead grant recipient for its efforts to provide technological, financial, legal, and mentoring services to local media nonprofits, thereby enhancing capacity across the sector. Other top grant recipients were the Miami Foundation (\$2M), which received support from Knight to establish a separate donor advised fund to finance local news non-profits, and the Geraldine Dodge Foundation (\$1M), which received funding from Knight and the Democracy Fund to create the NJ News co-op, an initiative intended to foster collaborations among state print, web, and radio news organizations.

Figure 6. U.S. foundation funding for local news nonprofits, 2010-2015



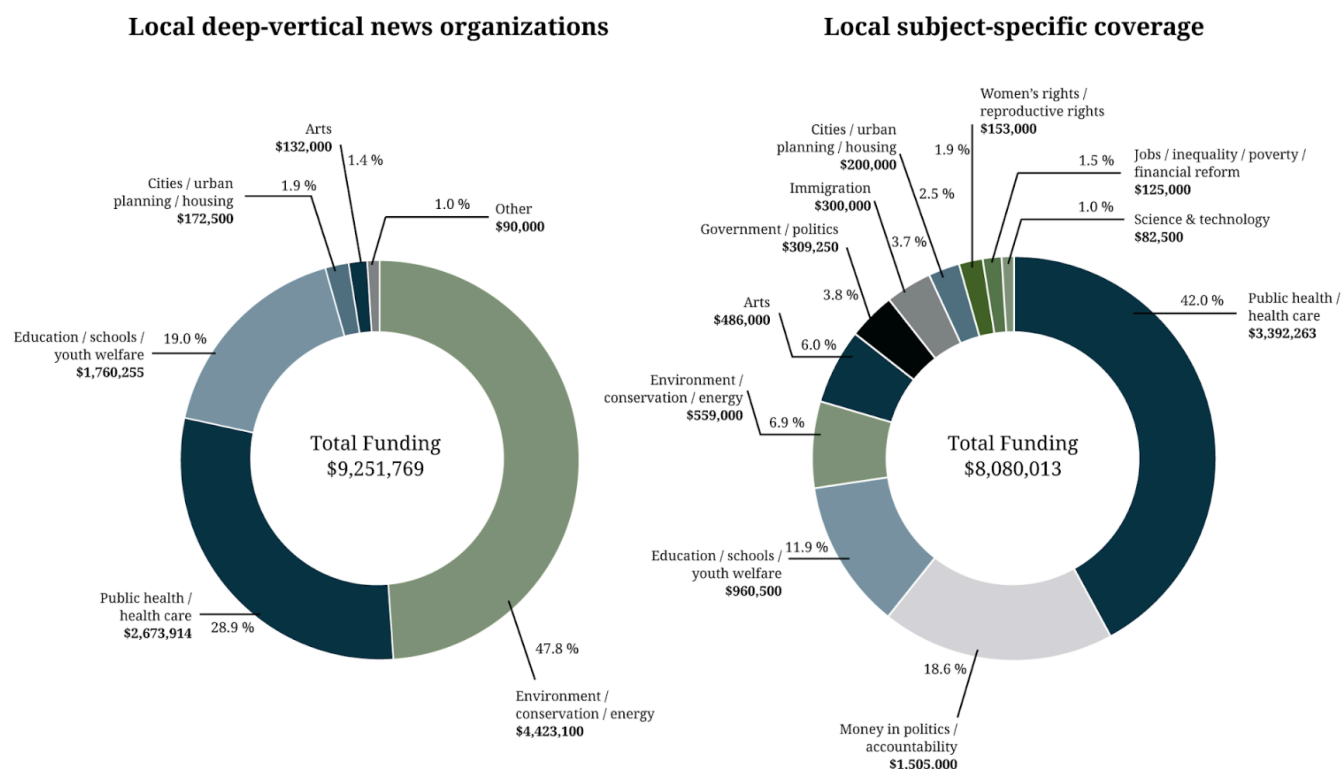
Another 12% in funding, or \$9.8 million went to local / state investigative journalism nonprofits such as the Chicago Reporter / Catalyst (\$3.5M), Texas Observer (\$1.1M), New Mexico In Depth (\$1.1M), and the Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism (\$1M). Notably, in this category were the national investigative units Center for Investigative Reporting (\$3.3M), which was funded to produce California-focused investigative and health reporting; and the Center for Public Integrity (\$2M), which received funding to support its State Integrity Investigations and State Accountability projects, to report on youth issues in California, and to collaborate on reporting with The Lens of New Orleans.

About 12% of funding at the local/state level or \$9.3 million supported subject-specific deep vertical nonprofits such as High Country News (\$2.8M), a nonprofit specializing in coverage of natural

resource/land issues across Western states, and the California Health Report (\$1.2M), which covers statewide health issues and policy. In this category, a third leading grant recipient was the Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) (\$974K), an operating foundation that finances the editorially independent Kaiser Health News (KHN) service, while also accepting support from other funders to cover costs. Most of KFF's spending on behalf of health news was not in the form of traditional grants, and therefore outside the focus of our direct analysis. Over the six-year period we evaluated, KFF provided \$27 million in internal funds to support KHN's online coverage of health issues and free syndication to hundreds of media partners. By way of contracts and collaborations, KFF also provided an additional \$4 million to support health coverage at NPR, nine regional newspapers, and the Texas Tribune. Other non-traditional grant funding supported public radio freelancers and journalism fellowships.<sup>20</sup> Approximately 10% of funding or \$8.1 million supported subject or beat specific reporting across a variety of local/state news nonprofits. Of interest, 2% or less of funding supported either local news organizations serving ethnic / minority communities or those covering issues affecting homeless / low income populations.

In Figure 7, we break down by topic the \$9 million in support for local/state deep vertical organizations. Nearly 50% of funding for local/state deep verticals or \$4.4 million went to those covering environment/energy issues. Most of this funding was provided to the previously mentioned *High Country News*. An additional 30% of funding to deep-vertical organizations or \$2.7 million supported those focusing on public health / health care with almost all of this funding going to either the previously mentioned California Health Report or Kaiser Health News service. Approximately 17% of deep vertical funding or \$1.6 million supported nonprofits focused on schools and youth welfare with Philadelphia Public School Notebook (\$395K) and the California-based EdSource (\$478K) the leading grant recipients. The Chicago Reporter / Catalyst also received \$625,000 in grants from the Ford Foundation to pass on to smaller, local education journalism organizations based in seven other states.

Figure 7. Deep vertical, subject specific foundation funding at local/state nonprofits, 2010-2015



Turning to the \$8.1 million granted to support local/state subject- or beat specific coverage at various nonprofits, Figure 7 shows that slightly more than 40% of this funding went to coverage of health care/public health (\$3.4M). A combined 30% of subject-specific funding supported coverage of money in politics/accountability (\$1.5M) and schools / youth welfare (\$960K). An additional 13% of funding went to either coverage of the environment/energy (\$559K) or the arts (\$486K).



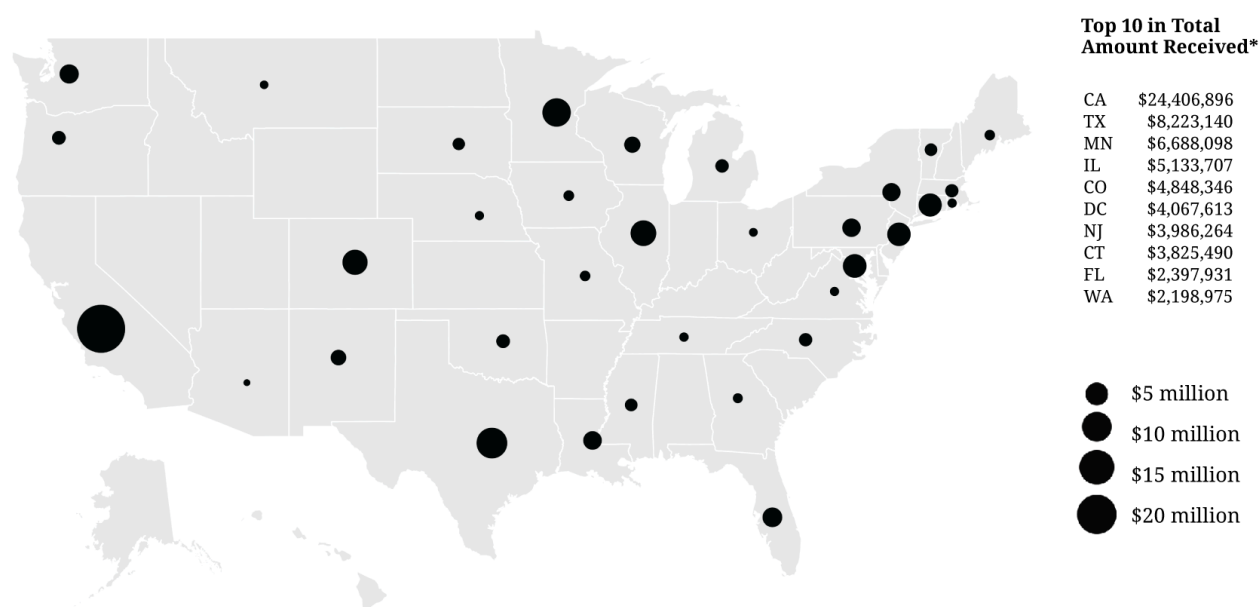
Table 11. Top 25 U.S. foundation grant recipients among local/state nonprofits, 2010 – 2015

	Amount \$	# of Total	Grants #	Type*	State
1. Texas Tribune	6,050,215	8%	130	LN	TX
2. Institute for Nonprofit News	5,073,576	6%	27	COL	CA
3. Bay Citizen**	4,317,764	5%	42	LN	CA
4. Chicago Reporter / Catalyst Chicago	3,504,250	4%	26	L/INV	IL
5. Center for Investigative Reporting^	3,262,500	4%	15	L/INV	CA
6. MinnPost	3,126,635	4%	119	LN	MN
7. Voice of San Diego	3,077,253	4%	96	LN	CA
8. High Country News	2,747,775	3%	145	DV	CO
9. Connecticut News Project / CT Mirror	2,435,420	3%	49	LN	CT
10. New Jersey Spotlight#	2,412,000	3%	25	LN	NJ
11. Miami Foundation##	2,019,980	3%	2	COL	FL
12. Center for Public Integrity+	2,010,083	3%	14	L/INV	DC
13. New Orleans Lens	1,925,598	2%	35	LN	LA
14. Crosscut Public Media (Seattle)	1,526,507	2%	53	LN	WA
15. Tides Center / California Health Report++	1,230,000	2%	3	DV	CA
16. Online Journ Project / New Haven Independent	1,165,088	1%	47	LN	CT
17. Texas Observer	1,114,839	1%	45	L/INV	TX
18. New Mexico in Depth	1,078,202	1%	7	L/INV	NM
19. Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism	1,025,000	1%	13	L/INV	WI
20. Geraldine Dodge Fdn / NJ News Commons~	1,002,000	1%	2	COL	NJ
21. Maynard Institute for Journalism Education~~	985,382	1%	5	L/CJ	CA
22. Henry J. Kaiser Family Fdn / Kaiser Health News	974,651	1%	3	DV	CA
23. Minnesota E-Democracy	955,000	1%	8	L/CJ	MN
24. Twin Cities Daily Planet	910,450	1%	24	LN	MN
25. Oakland Local	831,859	1%	17	LN	CA
Total	54,762,027	66%	952	--	--

Notes: \*LN= Local/State news site; DV= Subject specific, deep vertical org; L/INV: Local/state investigative news org; H/LI: Homeless/low income focused org; L/CJ: Local citizen journalism initiative; COL: Promote local capacity, collaboration. \*\*In 2012, the Bay Citizen merged with the Center for Investigative Reporting. ^Grants supported California Watch and CA-specific health reporting. #14 grants totaling \$1.72 million were given to Community Foundation of New Jersey to support NJ Spotlight. 25 grants totaling \$957,000 were given directly to NJ Spotlight. ##Grants provided by Knight to Miami to re-distribute as part of the Knight Innovation Fund / Local Media Initiative to support local media organizations. +Grants supported collaborations with New Orleans Lens; State Integrity Investigations; the State Accountability Project; and reporting on youth issues in California. ++Grants given to Tides Center to support HealthyCal.org. ~Grants given by Knight to Dodge to support NJ News Commons. ~~Grants supported local citizen journalism/reporting initiatives in Oakland, CA and Jackson, MS.

Interestingly, of the \$80.1 million in foundation funding distributed to support local/state news nonprofits, as Table 11 details, 25 organizations received \$54.8 million, equivalent to 66% of the total. Eleven of the top 25, and six of the top 10, focused on producing local/state public affairs coverage. Six including two of the top 5 specialized in local/state investigative reporting. Three were local/state deep vertical nonprofits, three sought to foster collaborations or increase capacity among local/state nonprofits, and two specialized in facilitating local citizen journalism and deliberation.

Figure 8. U.S. foundation funding for local/state news nonprofits by state, 2010-2015



Notes: \*The Top 10 states accounted for \$65.8M million in grants, or 82% of total local/state news funding. Grants to DC reflect state-based coverage produced by the Center for Public Integrity. Similarly, \$5 million in grants to California-based non-profits reflect funding supporting the Institute for Nonprofit News and \$2 million in grants to Florida represent funding provided by the Knight Foundation to the Miami Foundation to re-distribute as part of the Knight Innovation Fund / Local Media Initiative to support local media organizations.

Wide geographic disparities in funding are evident in Figure 8, mapping the amount of local/state nonprofit news grants distributed between 2010 and 2015 across states. In this case, nonprofits located in 10 states accounted for \$65.8 million in grants, or 82% of total local/state news funding. Several of these grant recipients such as the Institute for Nonprofit News (based in CA) or the

Center for Public Integrity (DC) received grants intended to support coverage by local nonprofits across the country. Still, these findings indicate that large regions of the country, including the great majority of cities, lack a news nonprofit presence apart from what might be provided by public television and radio.

Table 12. Top 25 U.S. foundation funders of local/state news nonprofits, 2010 – 2015

	Amount \$	% of Total	Grants #	Type*
1. Knight Fdn	16,160,880	20%	56	IF
2. California Endowment	5,952,927	7%	32	IF
3. Open Society Fdn**	5,085,000	6%	27	IF
4. Ford Fdn	2,875,000	4%	13	IF
5. Gates Fdn	2,407,944	3%	7	FM
6. Hewlett Fdn	2,020,000	3%	10	IF
7. McCormick Fdn	1,625,000	2%	17	PC
8. John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Fdn	1,600,000	2%	6	IF
9. Haas Fund	1,600,000	2%	4	FM
10. San Francisco Fdn	1,426,500	2%	22	CM
11. Bush Fdn	1,288,739	2%	15	IF
12. Omidyar Network Fund	1,275,000	2%	4	IF
13. San Diego Fdn	1,008,451	1%	63	CM
14. Open Society Institute**	1,005,000	1%	7	OP
15. McKnight Fdn	975,000	1%	8	FM
16. W. K. Kellogg Fdn	875,000	1%	3	IF
17. Joyce Fdn	845,000	1%	5	IF
18. William Penn Fdn	831,039	1%	7	FM
19. Seedlings Fdn	813,250	1%	9	IF
20. Community Fdn Greater New Haven	779,953	1%	20	CM
21. Austin Community Fdn	766,869	1%	15	CM
22. Minneapolis Fdn	696,040	1%	69	CM
23. Surdna Fdn	665,000	1%	7	FM
24. Bechtel Fdn	653,000	1%	6	IF
25. James Irvine Fdn	650,000	1%	2	IF
Total	53,880,592	68%	434	--

Note: \*CM= Community Trust; IF = Independent foundation; FM = Family foundation. PC=Public charity; OP=Operating Foundation. \*\*The Foundation to Promote an Open Society is an affiliated but separate grantmaker from the Open Society Institute.

Specific to the type of grantmakers supporting local/state nonprofits, 86% of funding came from either independent (\$52M) or family (\$12.6M) foundations and 17% from community trusts (\$11.3M).

Less than 3% of funding originated from either public charities/donor advised funds, company sponsored foundations, or corporate giving programs. As Table 12 details, 25 grantmakers accounted for nearly 68% of funding for local/state news nonprofits. The leading grantmaker was the Knight Foundation (\$16M), which accounted for 20% of all funding in the area. Knight spread its funding across 56 grants to a variety of organizations. Several nonprofits, however, received larger sums from Knight including the previously mentioned Miami Foundation (\$2M), Institute for Nonprofit News (\$1.8M) and Texas Tribune (\$1.5M). Second, was the California Endowment (\$6M), which supported a diversity of nonprofits producing health reporting in California. Third was the Open Society Foundation (\$5.1M), which backed a number of state/local nonprofits including the Voice of San Diego (\$900K), Institute for Nonprofit News (\$900K), and Wisconsin Center for Investigative Reporting (\$835K). Fourth was the Ford Foundation (\$2.9M), which gave nearly half of its funding to the Chicago Reporter / Catalyst (\$1.3M). Fifth was the Gates Foundation (\$2.4M), which primarily supported Seattle's Crosscut Media (\$800K), special education coverage at the Seattle Times (\$700,000), and education-focused journalism in Colorado (\$800K).

### **University-based Journalism Initiatives**

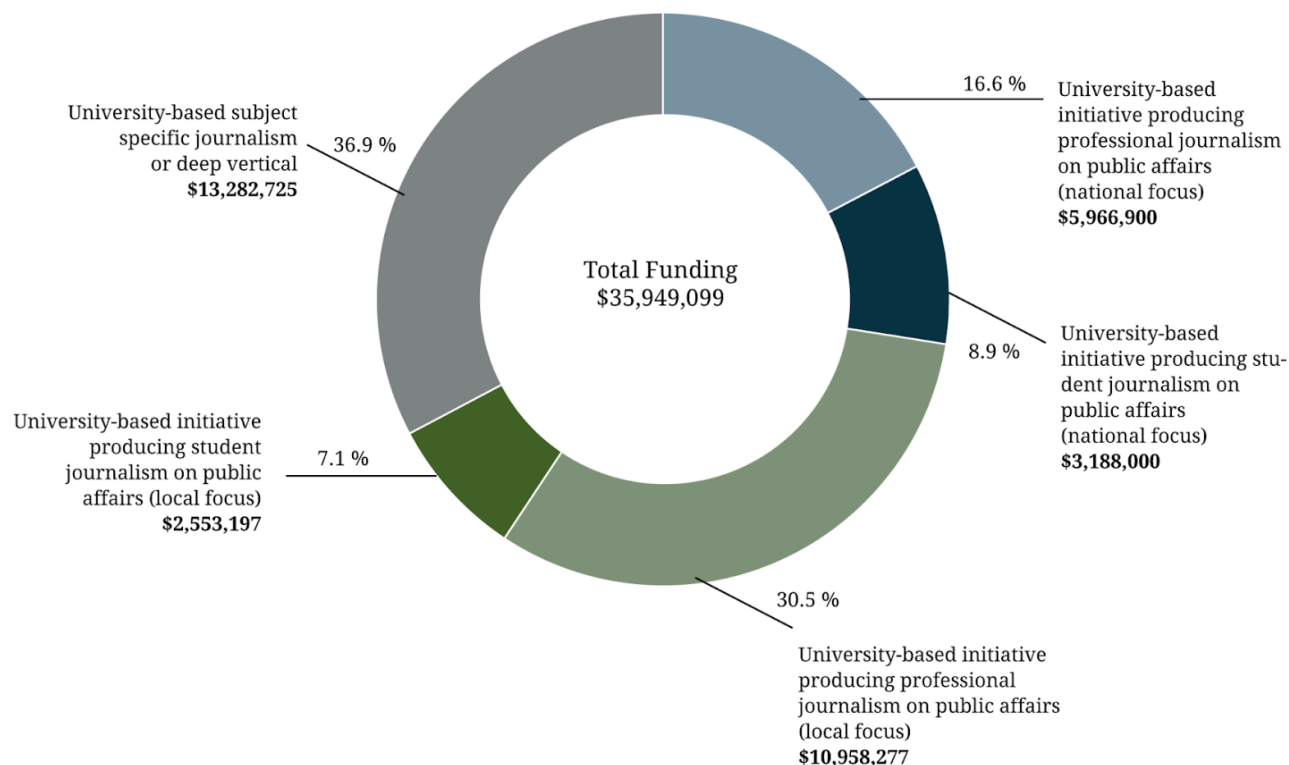
Some university-based journalism initiatives are venerable deep vertical magazines like the *Columbia Journalism Review* or independent student edited publications like UC Berkeley's *Daily Californian* that covers campus, local, and state news. But most grants in this area between 2010 and 2015 supported digital news nonprofits and initiatives at universities launched over the past 15 years. Almost all of the university-based initiatives depend on external funding. However, their affiliations with universities allow them to offset costs by drawing on faculty expertise and campus resources. Some primarily feature news produced by professional journalists and faculty with the assistance of students, frequently in collaboration with local and national news outlets. Others feature student produced

journalism under the guidance of faculty and professional journalists. Over the six-year period analyzed, news organizations or journalism initiatives at 5 universities accounted for half of all foundation funding in the area, and 25 universities received 9 out of 10 grant dollars distributed. The great majority of these universities were either on the East Coast or in California, leaving most states and communities without foundation funded university-based faculty and students working to bolster the local news ecosystem through original reporting or collaborations with public media and newspapers. In terms of major grantmakers, twenty-five foundations provided almost all of the funding in the area, with the Knight Foundation accounting for a third of all grant dollars distributed over the six-year period we analyzed.

Figure 9 details the distribution of \$35.9 million in grants to university-based news nonprofits, publications, or journalism initiatives. Slightly more than a third of university-based journalism funding or \$13.3 million was granted to deep vertical news organizations or magazines. Top recipients included the education focused Hechinger Report (\$2.6M) and *Columbia Journalism Review* (\$2.5M) both based at Columbia University, and Yale Environment 360 (\$1.8M) based at the Yale University School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. Another third or approximately \$11 million in grants supported professionally-driven state/local journalism initiatives. Top grant recipients included the Mercer University Center for Collaborative Journalism (\$4.9M) and PlanPhilly.org (\$1.9M), which covers local urban planning issues. (The site was originally launched at the University of Pennsylvania School of Design but is now part of WHYY public media.) Approximately 17% of funding or \$6 million flowed to nationally focused, professionally-driven journalism initiatives. Most of this funding supported the Investigative Reporting Workshop at American University's School of Communication (\$3.2M). Nationally-focused student driven journalism initiatives accounted for 9% or \$3.2 million in funding, which was distributed primarily to News21 projects at Arizona State University (\$2.6M) and a few other campuses. Approximately 7% or \$2.6 million supported student-driven local coverage. The leading

grant recipients were the Online News Association’s Challenge Fund program (\$891K), which distributed money on behalf of the Knight Foundation to support “teaching hospital” models of education; and UC-Berkeley’s independent *Daily Californian* (\$440K).

Figure 9. U.S. foundation funding for university-based journalism initiatives, 2010-2015



As Table 13 details, 25 universities accounted for 92% of the 35.8 million distributed with the top 5 university grant recipients receiving 52% of all funding. Sixteen of these 25 universities were based in either California or the Chicago, New York City, Boston, Philadelphia, and Washington, DC metro regions.

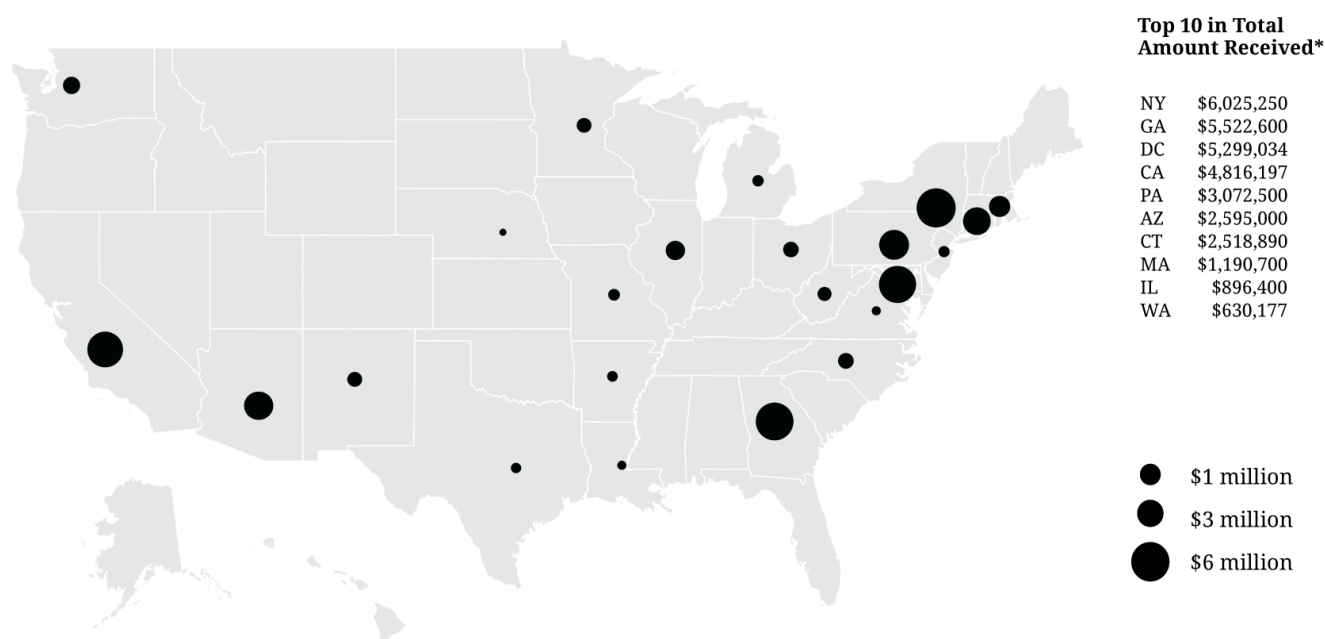
Table 13. Top 25 U.S foundation grant recipients for university-based journalism, 2010-2015

	Amount \$	% of Total	Grants #	State
1. Columbia Univ/ CJR /Hechinger Report /local reporting	5,119,000	14%	27	NY
2. Mercer Univ Ctr for Collaborative Journalism	4,939,600	14%	4	GA
3. AU School of Comm / IRW / Current newspaper	3,696,665	10%	28	DC
4. ASU School of Journ & Mass Comm / News21*	2,595,000	7%	4	AZ
5. Yale Univ/ Yale e360 / Yale Forum Climate Media	2,273,890	6%	5	CT
6. UC Berkeley School of Journ / Daily Californian**	2,202,000	6%	12	CA
7. UPenn School of Design / PlanPhilly#	1,882,500	5%	6	PA
8. USC Annenberg / Religion Dispatches/ News 21/ Health	1,795,197	5%	9	CA
9. Temple Ctr for Public Interest Journ / Axis Philly	1,112,500	3%	4	PA
10. ONA Challenge Fund for Journalism Education	891,000	3%	7	DC
11. BU College of Comm / NE Ctr Investigative Reporting	700,700	2%	5	MA
12. GW / Planet Forward / Monkey Cage / Russia List	661,400	2%	5	DC
13. Northwestern Univ Medill School of Journalism	634,400	2%	5	IL
14. Stanford Univ / Stanford Social Innovation Review	600,000	2%	4	CA
15. UNC School of Journ / Local, Rural & STEM News	460,000	1%	7	NC
16. Raymond John Wean Fdn / Youngstown State##	453,000	1%	4	OH
17. UMD Merrill College of Journalism	425,000	1%	2	MD
18. University of New Mexico	380,000	1%	1	NM
19. University of Minnesota / Ensia magazine	369,984	1%	1	MN
20. West Virginia Reed College of Media	305,000	1%	2	WV
21. Kennesaw State Ctr for Sustainable Journalism	290,000	1%	5	GA
22. Boston Globe / MIT~	250,000	1%	1	MA
23. Emory University / Religion Dispatches~~	245,000	1%	2	GA
24. CUNY School of Journalism / Voices of NY	239,950	1%	3	NY
25. NYU / The Local East Village	203,800	1%	1	NY
Total	32,725,586	92%	154	--

Notes: \*\$2M of the funding was given by the Knight Fdn to the Miami Foundation to create News 21 Innovation Fund at Arizona State University. ^Grants given to ONA to support local “teaching hospital” model at universities. \*\*Grants to support investigative and local reporting initiatives at UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism and the Daily Californian, UC-Berkeley’s independent student newspaper. #Grants to the UPenn School of Design to found PlanPhilly.org, now a part of WHYY public media. ##Grants to Youngstown State University for students to produce news for local newspaper/public radio. ~Grant to Boston Globe for partnership with MIT Civic Media Center on newsroom innovation. ~~Between 2010-2012, Religion Dispatches was based at Emory University before moving to the USC in 2013.

The concentration of funding in a handful of campuses located primarily on the East Coast and in California means that many regions of the country lack a foundation-backed university program that is helping to fill gaps in reporting on local and national affairs, training the next generation of journalists in the process (see also Figure 10).

Figure 10. Funding for university-based journalism initiatives by state, 2010-2015



Notes: \*The top 10 states receiving university-based journalism grants accounted for \$32.6 million or 91% of total funding.

Specific to the type of grant makers supporting university-based journalism initiatives, 93% of funding came from independent (\$28.2M) or family (\$5M) foundations compared to 3% from public charities/donor advised funds (\$1.2M) and 3% from community trusts (\$1.1M). As Table 14 details, the top 25 funders accounted for 92% of all support for university-based journalism initiatives. By a wide margin, the leading funder of university-based journalism initiatives was the Knight Foundation (\$10.1M), accounting for nearly a third of all funding in the area, providing more in grant support than the next five foundations on the list. Knight’s investments promoted its “teaching hospital” model of



journalism education, providing \$4.1 million to the Center for Collaborative Journalism at Mercer University and \$850,000 to Georgia Public Broadcasting to partner with the school. Other major grant recipients were Arizona State University (\$2.1M) to coordinate Knight-supported News21 programs such as those at USC (\$120K) and Northwestern University (\$115K). By way of grants to Ohio's Raymond John Wean Foundation and Youngstown State University (\$453K), Knight also supported collaborations between faculty and students and local media organizations.

Ranking second, the Ford foundation supported university-based journalism initiatives that primarily focused on social justice, a strategic priority for the philanthropy. Ford grants, for example, supported the UC Berkeley School of Journalism (\$800K) to produce nationally-focused stories about low wage work and to assist journalists covering neglected communities in the San Francisco/Bay Area. Other grants provided to the USC Annenberg of Communication (\$500K) supported national stories about social justice and religion; and coverage of social justice issues in under-served Los Angeles communities. As third on the list of top funders, the William Penn foundation provided almost all of its support in the area to the University of Pennsylvania's School of Design to launch the locally focused, deep vertical PlanPhilly.org (\$1.6M). Ranking fourth on the list, the Gordon and Betty Moore foundation provided all of its support to the environment-focused deep verticals Yale Environment 360 (\$1.2M), Ensia at the University of Minnesota (\$369,984), and Anthropocene magazine at the University of Washington (\$200,000). As the fifth leading funder, the Wyncote Foundation distributed most of its funding to the Temple University Center for Public Interest Journalism (\$865K) and to *Current* newspaper, a deep vertical covering public media affiliated with American University's School of Communication.

Table 14. Top 25 U.S. foundation funders for university-based journalism initiatives, 2010-2015

	Grants \$	% of Total	Grants #	Type
1. Knight Fdn	10,110,900	28%	29	IF
2. Ford Fdn	2,165,000	6%	11	IF
3. William Penn Fdn	1,962,500	6%	9	FM
4. Gordon & Betty Moore Fdn	1,768,874	5%	4	IF
5. Wyncote Foundation	1,724,165	5%	5	IF
6. John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Fdn	1,520,000	4%	5	IF
7. W. K. Kellogg Foundation	1,418,000	4%	5	IF
8. Open Society Fdn	1,416,967	4%	15	IF
9. Carnegie Corp.	1,355,400	4%	11	IF
10. Omidyar Network Fund	1,306,000	4%	5	IF
11. Robert R. McCormick Fdn	1,217,000	3%	13	PC
12. Park Fdn	959,000	3%	9	FM
13. The Democracy Fund	700,000	2%	2	IF
14. Gates Fdn	545,177	2%	4	FM
15. Grantham Fdn Protection of Environment	475,000	1%	1	IF
16. Joyce Fdn	404,919	1%	3	IF
17. California Endowment	400,197	1%	2	IF
18. Henry Luce Fdn	395,000	1%	1	IF
19. Nathan Cummings Fdn	305,000	1%	4	FM
20. Annie E. Casey Fdn	303,000	1%	4	IF
21. Lumina Fdn	300,000	1%	1	IF
22. Arcus Fdn	300,000	1%	2	IF
23. Silicon Valley Comm. Fdn	280,000	1%	2	CM
24. Hewlett Fdn	250,000	1%	1	IF
25. Philadelphia Fdn	250,000	1%	1	CM
<i>Total</i>	<i>31,832,099</i>	<i>91%</i>	<i>149</i>	<i>--</i>

Notes: \*CM= Community Trust; FM = Family foundation; IF = Independent foundation; PC=Public charity/ Donor Advised Fund.

## **CONCLUSION**

As news nonprofit leaders and philanthropists consider next steps, our interviews and data analysis raise several trends and concerns that merit discussion. First, there remain conflicting interpretations about the growth and success of the nonprofit news sector. Some believe that the sector is flourishing and poised to take-off in the post-2016 election period. Others express skepticism about the extent of this growth and its impact given the continued crisis in commercial journalism. Those we interviewed also raised concerns about a sector that historically has depended on a dozen or so funders, and the strong concentration of resources in a few news nonprofits.

In relative terms several news organizations have experienced tremendous success in foundation fundraising. Based on the data available, at the national level, the four top grant receiving investigative journalism units, along with the Pulitzer Center for Crisis Reporting raised more than \$100 million in grants over the six years analyzed, accounting for half of all foundation funding to national news nonprofits. These outlets have also diversified their revenue base by way of individual donors and in some cases have strongly benefited from the “Trump bump” in funding. For example, following the 2016 election, ProPublica more than tripled its combined revenue from foundations, large gifts, and individual donations. The five top state or local news organizations raised more than \$20 million in grants over the same 6-year period and the Institute for Nonprofit News received approximately \$5 million to build capacity across the sector. The Texas Tribune, Voice of San Diego, and MinnPost have similarly boosted their revenue by way of advertising, donors, events, and corporate sponsors. But in several cases even the best financed have struggled. The BayCitizen, despite \$4.3 million in start-up grants, lasted only two years before merging in 2012 with the Center for Investigative Reporting. After raising \$12.3 million in grants between 2010 and 2015, Pacific News Service / New America announced

in 2017 that it was discontinuing operations. In 2015, on the heels of \$1.9 million in funding over the previous 4 years, PlanPhilly.org left UPenn to become part of the public media station WHYY.

Looking more broadly across the sector, as Table 15 summarizes, our analysis suggests that even as a few dozen news nonprofits thrive, concern over funder dependency, financial disparities, and ideological partisanship are merited. Specific to public media, 25 stations and content producers received approximately 70% of all funding over the six years analyzed, with grant money going primarily to stations or content producers based in 10 states. Such concentration means that public media organizations across the great majority of states lack the foundation funding necessary to evolve into central hubs for local and state news reporting, filling gaps in newspaper coverage and nurturing other local news nonprofits. Among magazines, the field has winnowed to the degree that over six years, 25 publications received 99% of grant funding with two dozen foundations providing most of the support. Grant making also flowed heavily in the direction of ideological perspectives, with 9 liberal/left wing magazines and 5 conservative counterparts ranking among the top 25 recipients.

At national news nonprofits, eight out of 10 foundation dollars went to 25 recipients and nearly half of funding went to the top 5, with a few dozen philanthropies providing most of the support. Nine of the top 25 national news nonprofits can be defined as having a clear ideological perspective. Not only has similar concentration of investments occurred across local/state news nonprofits and university-based journalism initiatives, but these outlets remain dependent on an even smaller number of major funders, most notably the Knight Foundation. As layoffs at newspapers continue at a rapid rate across the country, extreme geographic disparities in foundation funding also exist, with the great majority of regions lacking a local/state news nonprofit or university-based journalism initiative. This absence is made worse by the previously mentioned concentration of public media grants to stations and organizations in a few cities and states.

Table 15. Relative distribution of U.S. foundation funding across news nonprofits, 2010-2015

Share of Funding Among Top Recipients / Funders	Public Media %	Magazines %	National Nonprofit News %	Local/State Nonprofit News %	University- affiliated News %
<i>Major Recipients</i>					
Top 25 nonprofits	72	99	81	66	92
Top 5 nonprofits	39	67	48	27	51
Top 10 states	83	NA	NA	82	91
<i>Major Funders</i>					
Top 25 funders	41	73	69	68	91
Top 5 funders	17	46	37	40	50
Knight Fdn	2	<1	5	20	28
<i>Type of Funder</i>					
Independent fdn	56	47	72	65	79
Family fdn	21	45	17	16	14
Community trust	9	2	3	14	3
Company sponsored	10	2	1	1	<1
PC/donor advised	3	3	6	3	3
Operating fdn	0	<1	0	1	<1
Corp. giving prgm	1	<1	1	0	0

According to several people we interviewed, the great majority of national and locally oriented foundations still do not realize just how much of the newspaper and commercial media workforce has been lost and why that matters. Some worry that the “Trump bump” in media-related funding may be chiefly motivated by the spread of fake news. Questions remain about whether this may have pushed philanthropic efforts down the wrong road, focusing on tactical approaches to combating misinformation and propaganda rather than a broader civic strategy aimed at restoring non-partisan and authoritative sources of journalism, particularly at the local and state levels where it is most likely to be trusted and used by citizens.

Part of the challenge in generating greater foundation support for journalism remains at the organizational level. As Table 15 shows, most nonprofit media funding derives from larger national foundations, rather than community trusts, public charities, or donor advised funds. Given that there is little tradition of giving to media at local foundations, many philanthropies have had to adjust policies, rewrite documents, and reorganize strategy to align their mission with news nonprofits' needs.

Several of our interviewees also questioned whether foundation boards may be holding back investments in news and journalism because such investments do not fit easily with their strategic priorities relative to specific issues or problems of concern such as the environment, social justice, economic development, or health. Some in the news nonprofit world also point out that foundations and donors give rather easily, sometimes automatically, to long-standing public media institutions, but do not in turn consider digital news startups operating in the same space. More collaborations between public media and nonprofit startups are surely in order, and there have been promising experiments. As philanthropic interest in non-profit news hopefully grows, the calculus between investing in public media and digital startups does not need to be zero-sum. In the New York City-region, for example, the Revson foundation has used its grant-making to link together local non-profit news start-ups with the newsroom capacity, authority, and audience reach of WNYC, among the best resourced public radio stations in the country. Local news non-profits draw on WNYC reporting as part of their coverage and in turn WNYC often features their stories by way of its digital news platform.<sup>21</sup> The Knight Foundation and allied funders have supported a similar model by supporting and thereby linking together the activities of the Mercer University Center for Collaborative Journalism with Georgia Public Broadcasting; and by enabling partnerships between St. Louis Public Radio and the digital nonprofit St. Louis Beacon.<sup>22</sup>

In the post-election period, as the news nonprofit sector pursues growth and sustainability, recent trends suggest several reasons for optimism relative to diversifying revenue streams. Launched in 2016 with backing from Democracy Fund, News Revenue Hub aims to help other nonprofits achieve a similar level of revenue diversity. Partnering with the Institute for Nonprofit News, the initiative provides technological and consulting solutions to aid news nonprofits in generating smaller-sized online donations from supporters and members via e-mail solicitations and other appeals, much like public media organizations have traditionally raised money by way of regularly scheduled on air fundraisers.

A second strategy to overcome reticence among local donors and philanthropists is NewsMatch, a fundraising campaign launched with lead support by the Knight Foundation and joined by the Democracy Fund along with the MacArthur, Gates, Wyncote, and Rita Allen foundations. These foundations pledged to match funds from other philanthropies and individuals, and then assist Institute for Nonprofit News members in generating financial support. Begun in late 2016, NewsMatch quickly helped 57 nonprofit news organizations raise more than \$1.2 million in matching donations. In 2017, those figures increased to roughly \$4.8 million in matching donations from 22 foundations, supporting more than 100 local and investigative nonprofit news organizations. Apart from these matching funds, in total, more than 202,000 donors contributed \$33 million to local, nonprofit newsrooms in amounts averaging \$160 with 43,000 donors giving to a news organization for the first time. With the help of NewsMatch, some nonprofits involved, such as the Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism, reported seeing their donations double in 2017.<sup>23</sup>

A final concern voiced among those we interviewed is that patterns in foundation funding to date reflect “elites supporting elites,” financing those nonprofit journalism initiatives most likely to be consumed by audiences who already read the *New York Times* or *Washington Post* and listen to NPR. Our findings specific to the concentration of funding within a few national news nonprofits, the

disproportionate focus on the environment and health as subjects, and deep geographic disparities in funding that favors the East and West Coasts all suggest there is merit to these critiques. Apart from these geographic differences and subject biases, several of our interviewees not only expressed concerns that minority and ethnic communities are being underserved, but also that women who found or run news nonprofits are receiving insufficient funding in comparison to their male counterparts, a likelihood that merits further analysis.

The foundation world itself has been expanding in terms of generating increased commitment from well-resourced existing funders as well as several new to the field. Launched in 2016 with an initial \$20 million endowment, the Lenfest Institute's mission is to develop and support sustainable business models for local journalism, providing grants to Philadelphia-area nonprofit media. As an experimental lab, the nonprofit also owns and runs the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Philadelphia Daily News*, and philly.com and today manages assets totaling over \$390 million. In 2017, the Barr Foundation and Heising-Simons Foundation (funders of this study), in a coordinated effort, supported more than a dozen different initiatives, including news nonprofits, journalism support organizations, and research in the area. In a third example, drawing on a "Trump bump" of more than \$30 million in grants, gifts, and donations received after the election, ProPublica in 2017 announced the state-focused ProPublica Illinois, a model that the nonprofit intends to replicate in other states. The New York-based nonprofit also announced the ProPublica Local Reporting Network, a program that funds an investigative reporter working with news organization from six smaller cities across the country.<sup>24</sup>

In terms of sheer new dollars committed to improving the news ecosystem more generally, the News Integrity Initiative, run out of the CUNY Graduate School of Journalism, is one of the more eye-popping recent efforts. The \$14 million fund is supporting a portfolio of organizations and projects in order to "foster informed and engaged communities, combat media manipulation, and support inclusive,



constructive, and respectful civic discourse.” Funders include Facebook, Craig Newmark Philanthropic Fund, Ford Foundation, AppNexus, Knight Foundation, Tow Foundation, Betaworks, Mozilla, and Democracy Fund. It remains to be seen what the direct impact of this large investment will be on the nonprofit news space. There is also competition for foundation funding from big new players. The *Guardian* and the *New York Times* have announced the creation of nonprofit vehicles to help raise foundation money. Within the news nonprofit sector, this has sparked some concern about competition over finite resources, with smaller nonprofit outlets the most at risk. Yet alongside any competition over resources, commercial and nonprofit news partnerships also appear to be increasing in scope and number, with some of these joint efforts producing award-winning work.

Among experts and leaders in the nonprofit news sector, there is a candid realization that the sector must persuasively spread a message of urgent need across the funding world more broadly, mobilizing more resources on behalf of journalism. Even with an apparent post-election “bump” in interest and activity, much more must be done. There is an almost universal acknowledgement that relatively few philanthropies have expertise in this area. Few would be comfortable reviewing applications and picking winners given existing in-house staff and knowledge, even if foundations were to embrace this new direction. An increased effort to educate foundations and donors, and to provide expertise on investing in journalism, might well be in order. Some of this is already being done, but scale is clearly the key.

Given the systematic need for a strong journalism ecosystem for a foundation to accomplish almost any community-based programmatic objective – from public health to crime, education to the environment and economic growth – some leaders in the nonprofit news sector believe that nearly all foundations should consider earmarking a modest amount annually, perhaps in the ballpark of 2%, for a journalism fund that could support news work in their communities. If these funds were pooled and

guided by shared expertise through a common, expert re-granting vehicle, such a strategy might provide substantial, targeted new resources at the grassroots level. Whether or not such a proposal is feasible remains to be seen. What is clear, however, is that a key plank in the platform of democracy has given way, and the support it provided can no longer be taken for granted.

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## **SUPPORTING INTERVIEWS**

The findings in this report were informed by more than 30 semi-structured interviews with thought leaders, stakeholders, and experts in this domain. All interviews were considered “on background” and the contents of interviews were not for direct attribution, so that interviewees could speak as candidly as possible. We did ask that, if willing, interviewees be acknowledged by name together in the documentation of this report for the purposes of transparency. To that effect, we would like to express our gratitude to the following persons. Current or relevant former affiliations are listed.

Interviewees included:

Richard Tofel, ProPublica; Julie Sandorf, Revson Foundation; Tom Rosenstiel, American Press Institute; Michelle Ferrier, Ohio University; Elizabeth Christopherson, Rita Allen Foundation; Christine Jacobs, Kresge Foundation; David Rousseau, Kaiser Family Foundation; Jennifer Preston, Knight Foundation; Chuck Lewis, Investigative Reporting Workshop, American University; David Haas, Wyncote Foundation; Brant Houston, University of Illinois; Joel Kramer, MinnPost; Sue Cross, Institute for Nonprofit News; Nick Lemann, Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism; Josh Stearns, Democracy Fund; Bill Buzenberg, Center for Public Integrity; Mary Walter-Brown, News Revenue Hub; Evan Smith, Texas Tribune; Brian Eule, Heising-Simons Foundation; Elspeth Revere, MacArthur Foundation; Elizabeth Share, Center for Investigative Reporting/Reveal; Michael Morisy, MuckRock; Eric Newton, Arizona State University/Knight Foundation; Florence Graves, Schuster Institute for Investigative Journalism, Brandeis University; Geri Mannion, Carnegie Corporation of New York; Karen Karnicki, Rockefeller Brothers Foundation; Ariadne Papagapitos, Rockefeller Brothers Foundation; Sam Gill, Knight Foundation; Joyce McDonald, Greater Public; Elizabeth Green, Chalkbeat; Dan Kennedy, Northeastern University; Vince Stehle, Media Impact Funders.

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