THE STATE OF NONPROFIT NEWS

INN Index 2025



Institute for
Nonprofit News

About INN

The Institute for Nonprofit News strengthens and supports 500 independent news organizations in a new kind of news network: nonprofit, nonpartisan and dedicated to public service. From local news to in-depth reporting on pressing global issues, members of the INN Network tell stories that otherwise would go untold – connecting communities, holding the powerful accountable and strengthening civic life. INN programs help these news organizations develop revenue and business models to support strong reporting, collaborate on editorial and business innovation, share services and advance the diverse leaders who are forging a new future for news.

REPORT CREDITS

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About the Index

The INN Index is the most comprehensive dataset on nonprofit news in North America.

The Institute for Nonprofit News (INN) has conducted its annual Index survey of INN member news organizations since 2018. Those organizations act as a research consortium by sharing their business and editorial statistics to help each other benchmark their own development. This practice helps INN evaluate and better understand new media business models and operational needs to develop programming that supports newsrooms as they form and grow.

Since 2024, INN has leveraged Index data to produce actionable benchmarking data for member news outlets via INN's Pods program. The Pods program tailors benchmarks to distinct types of nonprofit news organizations — from small hyperlocal community outlets to larger investigative powerhouses and creates opportunities for members to connect with peers facing similar challenges and opportunities.

As the nonprofit news field rapidly evolves, the INN Index serves as a vital resource for understanding what drives this growth — how it's funded, who it serves and where it's headed. By tracking and analyzing these trends, INN provides funders, researchers and newsroom leaders with insights that not only strengthen the work of member organizations but also inform strategies to expand access to high-quality information for the public.

Please contact INN's communications team with any questions or press inquiries.

THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS

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Cover photo credit: Natasha Ofman/The World

The Nonprofit News Difference:

INN's work in the field points to key differentiators that characterize nonprofit journalism.

1. **EDITORIAL FOCUS:** Nonprofit newsrooms prioritize reporting that meets public needs but is challenging to produce, including specialized in-depth reporting, investigative and civic work to hold governments accountable, and robust, inclusive local coverage.

2. **TRUST & TRANSPARENCY:** Community-centric rather than shareholder-focused, nonprofit news is nonpartisan and focuses on facts, and news nonprofits are more transparent about their funding than most commercial media.

3. **SUSTAINABILITY:** News nonprofits are highly entrepreneurial and supported in good measure by the people they serve, making them more resilient than many for-profit media.

4. **COLLABORATION:** A culture of collaboration enables nonprofit news to share local reporting on a national scale. Most nonprofits share their coverage with commercial media, distribute through digital platforms and publish without a paywall – sharing information far beyond their own direct audiences.

Executive Summary

New data from the 2025 INN Index, the eighth annual survey of INN members across North America, show that nonprofit news organizations continued to strengthen financially in 2024, building on revenue growth from the prior year while also seeing a steady rise in the number of local outlets joining the field.

The median INN member outlet generated $532,000 in annual revenue, a marked jump from $477,000 in 2023. Overall, INN estimates that the nearly 400 digital-first nonprofit newsrooms in its ranks took in a combined $650–$700 million in revenue last year, representing a 14% increase from 2023, alongside a 10% rise in the number of outlets included in the sample.

For the first time, local news outlets make up the largest share of INN's membership, rising to 51% in 2024 from 48% in 2023. These organizations often operate with smaller budgets and leaner staff, yet they distinguish themselves through a close alignment with community needs. Local outlets are far more likely to define their missions around broad and current news coverage: 75% cover a wide range of topics (compared with 29% of non-local outlets) and 61% focus on current events (versus 25%). They are also more likely to serve rural communities, with 23% doing so compared with 16% of non-local outlets.

On the other hand, the growth of startups within INN membership is slowing. Startups, organizations that launched within the prior three years, made up about 15% of INN's membership in 2024, down from the peak at 27% in 2021.

In 2024, INN member outlets employed an estimated 4,650 staff, with about 70% working in editorial or news related roles. Women continue to hold a majority of executive roles (53%) at news outlets in INN's sample. Four in 10 outlets (42%) report at least one executive of color out of the three top executives, and representation is highest at outlets that center their journalism on communities of color.

On average, INN members publish 52 stories per month, with a median of 20. Outlets focused on in-depth, investigative or analytical reporting typically produce fewer stories than those covering daily news. Based on the monthly average, INN estimates that the nearly 400 digital-first nonprofit news outlets produced about 230,000 stories in 2024.

Growing and retaining audiences remains a challenge for INN members and news organizations more broadly as referral traffic from Google and Facebook continues to decline and AI-generated summaries reduce click-through rates. In 2024, outlets saw a modest increase in median monthly web visitors: 30,000 compared with 27,000 the year before. Newsletters, however, stand out as a key area of audience growth for INN member outlets: Between 2021 and 2024, 72% of outlets expanded their subscriber lists while only 10% reported declines.

Despite the challenges, INN members are turning to collaborations to increase capacity and reach. In 2024, 4 in 10 organizations participated in four or more editorial collaborations, and nearly 80% partnered on at least one — an increase from 75% in 2022. The steady rise in collaboration reflects a durable trend of resource-sharing across the field. The most common topics for collaboration include government, the environment, politics, equity and justice, elections, health, housing and unhoused communities.

Method and Definitions

METHODS

About the survey: INN distributed the Index survey online in January 2025 to 444 INN Network newsrooms, excluding service organizations that are also INN members. Ninety-two percent, or 407 organizations, completed the survey. Survey responses reflect performance in the calendar year 2024. Previous years' surveys were generally representative, with response rates ranging from 54% to 94%. Starting in 2020, INN began requiring outlets participating in NewsMatch to complete the Index survey, which raised completion rates for subsequent surveys. Survey language is provided here. The data do not scientifically represent all North American nonprofit news outlets because not all of them belong to INN, including an array of public media stations. Cautiously interpret specific year-over-year comparisons; this report draws directional trends across the nonprofit news field.

A note on the cohort used for this report: The Index tracks parent organizations rather than individual titles. In cases where an organization produces multiple outlets, we collect data only from the parent organization. This report includes the data of 376 of the 407 news organizations that completed the survey. Four outlets were excluded because they are not primarily publishers. Chapter 1 through chapter 5 of this report exclude data provided by 27 members from the public media sector due to systematic differences in how they report revenue and expenses. Chapter 6 presents data exclusively from these 27 outlets.

For the revenue analysis portion, we excluded 12 startups younger than one year as they did not have annual data to compare. Another seven organizations did not provide revenue data. Thus, the revenue section of the report is based on the information provided by 357 outlets.

For the year-over-year revenue analysis portion, we drew comparisons from smaller cohorts of outlets that provided complete financial data for 2021 and 2024 (N = 236).

For the year-over-year audience analysis portion, we include data from all outlets that reported complete audience data — either web visitors or newsletter subscribers — for 2021 and 2024. Sample sizes vary slightly by metric, depending on data availability in each year:

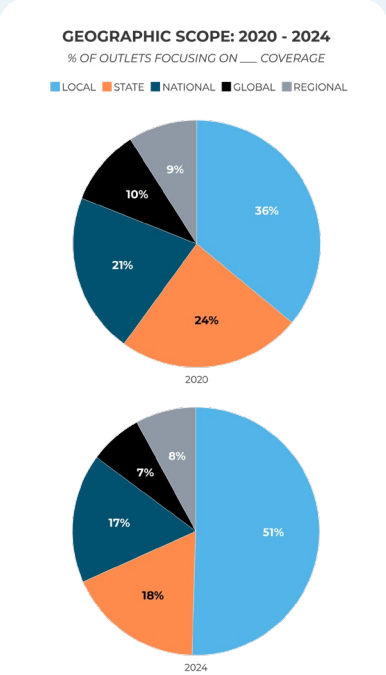
- 229 outlets provided complete web visitor data for both years.
- 226 outlets provided complete newsletter subscriber data for both years.

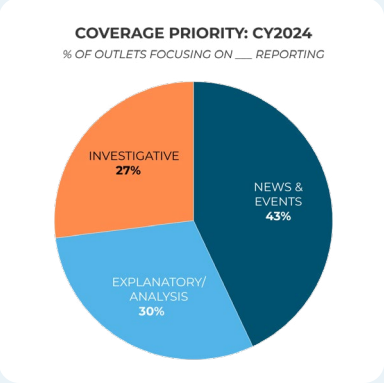
A note on medians vs. averages vs. ranges: The Index authors believe median calculations are more representative due to some significant outliers that skew averages. However, for some calculations like the average donation in dollars, we can't calculate the median because we do not have a list of data points for this survey question. In these cases, we default to averages.

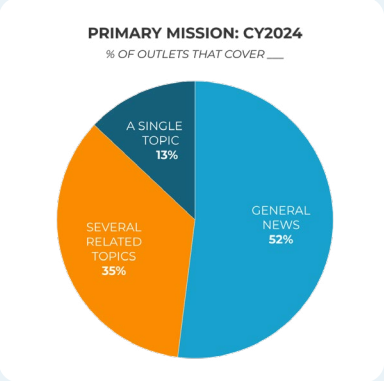
We supply a range of cases where knowing the upper and lower limits of a data point help with understanding the field.

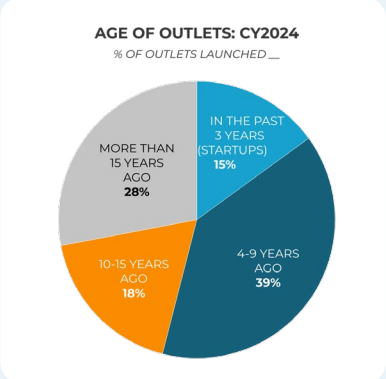
DEFINITIONS

- **People of color:** This is an extrapolated category that we have defined, for the purposes of this report, as encompassing individuals who identify with a racial or ethnic category other than white, including multiracial.
- **Core group of digital-first, independent publishers:** This term refers to the digital-first outlets that are not public broadcasters. For chapter 1 through chapter 5 of the report, the research team excluded financial data from the two dozen public broadcasting INN members due to systematic differences in how the organizations report revenue and expenses. Chapter 6 presents data exclusively from these 27 outlets.
- **Direct audiences:** Direct audiences use and engage with a news outlet's platforms, including its website, email newsletters and social media platforms. Direct audiences are largely interpreted in this report as a news organization's web traffic (measured by average monthly unique visitors) and its number of email newsletter subscribers.
- **Earned revenue:** Earned revenue is the funds a nonprofit organization generates by providing value to businesses including events, sponsorship, advertising and underwriting. This contrasts with funds received from philanthropic sources, such as grants and major gifts. Earned revenue is one of the three major revenue streams for nonprofit news.
- **Foundations:** Foundations are nonprofit organizations that support charitable activities to serve the common good. Foundation funding is one of three major revenue streams for nonprofit news.
- **FTE:** full-time equivalents, referring to both salaried employees (including staff, executives and managers) and significant contractors. For this question, we count FTE for all paid personnel rather than individual staff members. A full-time employee working 40 hours a week is one FTE; a half-time employee working 20 hours is 0.5 FTE.
- **Global news:** Global organizations cover broad world topics or produce news about a country or region outside of the United States.
- **Individual giving:** This umbrella term encompasses financial contributions from individuals, including small-dollar (less than $1,000), mid-level ($1,000 – $5,000) and major donors (more than $5,000). Survey respondents use these shared definitions for their Index survey reporting. Individual giving is one of the three major revenue streams for nonprofit news.
- **Local news:** Local news organizations cover part or all of a community, municipality or county, or a cluster of them, ranging from large metro areas to small neighborhoods.
- **National news:** National organizations focus on public affairs issues that affect, in this context, the United States, except for two survey respondents in Canada.
- **Regional news**: Regional news outlets cover news within two or more states or parts of states making up a region, such as the Midwest.
- **State news:** State news outlets primarily focus on government policy, politics or topics of public interest, such as health or the environment, in one state.
- **Third-party audiences:** This term refers to audiences interacting with a news outlet's coverage or services but on a platform not managed by the news outlet itself. In this report, we refer to the organizations managing these external platforms as "third-party publishers." Third-party audiences largely come from other news outlets republishing or rebroadcasting content, including on social media and other digital platforms.









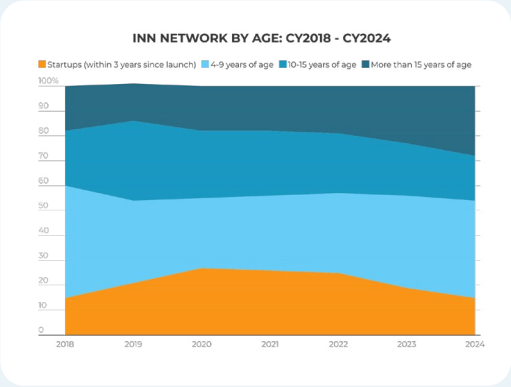
Coverage Quality

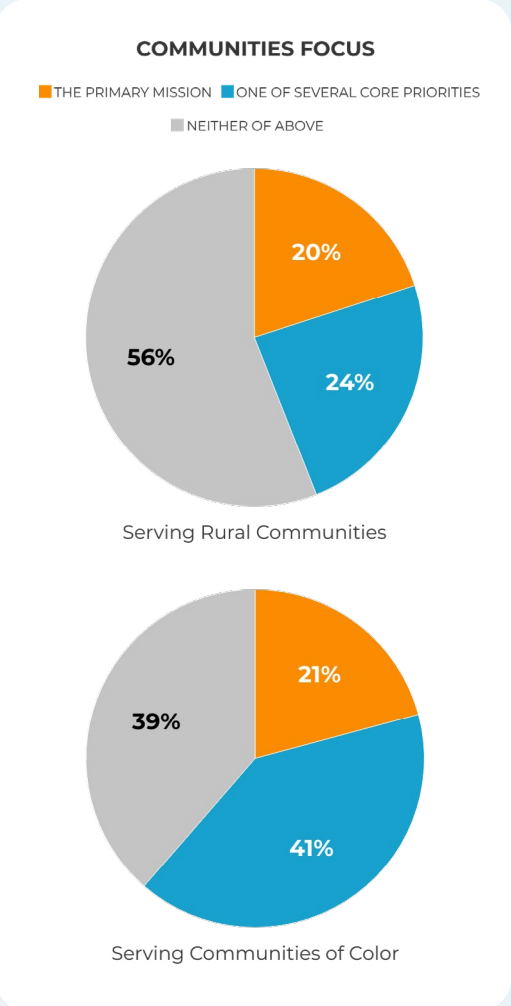
LOCAL OUTLETS NOW MAKE UP MORE THAN HALF OF INN MEMBERSHIP

For the first time, a majority of INN members are local outlets: 51% in 2024. That milepost reflects growth that accelerated in 2020, when local outlets made up just over a third of INN members.

Beyond the geographic scope of coverage, several other indicators help paint a fuller picture of nonprofit news' quality of coverage in 2024, from the types of coverage organizations prioritize to their missions, age and community focus.

- **Coverage priority:** We have seen growth in the number of INN members that focus their coverage on current, daily news and events rather than specializing in in-depth investigative or explanatory journalism. This tracks with the growth in local outlets, which are most likely to provide more immediate coverage of their communities. More than 4 in 10 (41%) of all INN member outlets cover news and current events, compared to 2 in 10 (19%) in 2018. Among outlets that cover local, state and regional news, 25% report providing statehouse coverage in 2024 and having at least one part-time or full-time reporter assigned to cover a statehouse.
- **Primary Mission:** The share of INN members covering a broad range of topics has increased to 52% last year from 39% in 2018. The share of members focusing on a single topic decreased from 21% in 2028 to 13% in 2024. Other INN members continue to focus on a narrow set of related topics, typically government policy issues.
- **Age:** Growth of startups among INN membership is slowing, according to our survey. Startups, organizations that launched within the prior three years, made up about 15% of INN's membership in 2024, down from the peak at 27% in 2020. Still, half of the membership is relatively young, with a median of seven years in operation.
- **Community focus:** One-fifth of INN members focus primarily on serving communities of color, meaning that people of color comprise a majority of their audience and the organization spends a majority of its funding, resources, and staff time on stories for people of color. Substantial numbers also consider communities of color one of several





NUMBER OF STORIES PRODUCED MONTHLY CY2024

Type of outlets	Median	Average
Investigative	10	23
Explanatory and analysis	16	36
News and events	34	81
All Members	20	52

core priorities. Aboutv one-sixth of outlets focus primarily on serving rural communities.

- **Number of stories produced:** INN members publish an average of 52 stories per month, with a median of 20 stories. Outlets focused on in-depth, investigative, or analytical reporting tend to produce fewer stories than their news-of-the-day peers.
- **Primary topics covered:** More than half (53%) of INN member outlets said reporting on the government is one of their organization's five primary coverage topics, followed by environment and climate (41%). For about one-third of outlets, other major beats include arts and culture, campaigns and elections, education and equity. The prioritization has remained fairly stable since 2022, when this question was last asked.

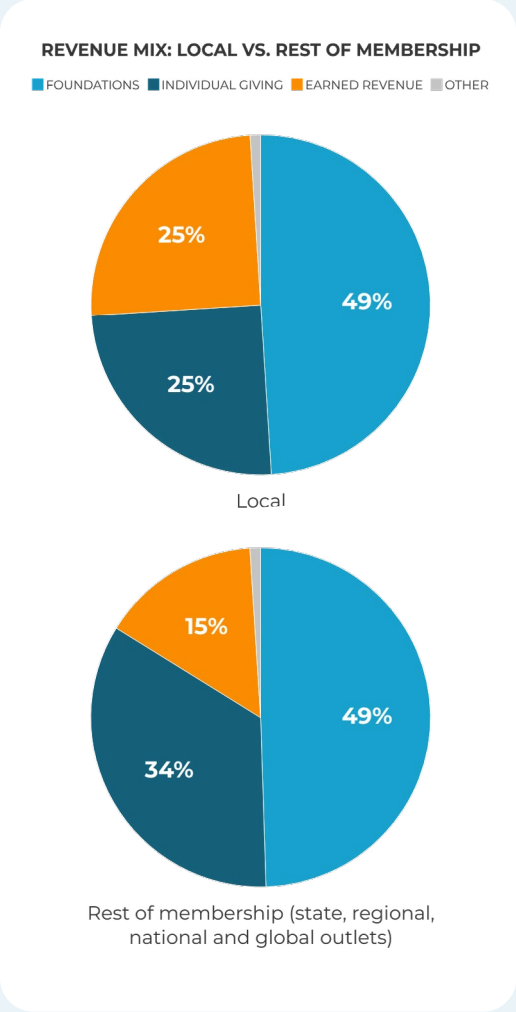
THE LOCAL DIFFERENCE

Local news organizations typically operate on smaller budgets and with fewer staff, compared to state, regional, national and global outlets. In 2024, local outlets had a median of four full-time equivalent (FTE) employees, compared to a median of eight FTEs for the rest of INN membership, which includes state, regional, national and global outlets. The median revenue per local outlet was just under $360,000 compared to $970,000 for the rest of the membership, a nearly three-fold difference.

While local outlets share the same public service ethos as their regional, national, and global peers, they stand out in several meaningful ways that reflect connection to the communities they serve.

BROADER, MORE RESPONSIVE COVERAGE

Local outlets are more likely to define their missions with general and current news coverage, responding directly to the day-to-day needs of their communities. With 75% covering a broad range of topics (vs. 29% of nonlocal outlets) and 61% focused on current events (vs. 25%), local outlets are taking a more generalist approach that prioritizes responsiveness and immediacy over specialization.



COMMUNITY-CENTERED OPERATIONS WITH A FOCUS ON DIRECT DISTRIBUTION

While local outlets are as likely as the rest of membership to focus on communities of color, they are more likely than the rest to focus on rural communities (23% vs. 16%). Local outlets also benefit from their proximity to readers, which facilitates community engagement. This is evident in their use of volunteers, with 52% reporting having volunteers in key roles — double the rate of nonlocal outlets — and the largest numbers in editorial and executive roles. While this model deepens community ties, it may present sustainability challenges over time.

Local outlets' audience reach is more modest than the rest of the membership, both in web traffic and newsletter subscriptions. Yet, these outlets are embracing a more direct-to-reader strategy: Nearly three-quarters (74%) said they reach 90% or more of their audiences through direct channels like websites and newsletters. Meanwhile, only a third of nonlocal outlets rely heavily on distribution via their own channels as state and national outlets are increasingly building out their content redistribution networks through third-party publications.

Local outlets have a distinct revenue mix: Earned revenue makes up 25% of their income, compared with 15% for the rest of the membership, while individual giving accounts for 25%, compared with 34% for the rest.

PUBLICATION FREQUENCY AND REPUBLICATION CONSTRAINTS

To maintain audience attention and grow direct traffic, local outlets publish more stories: a median of 25 stories monthly compared to a median of 16 monthly stories for the rest of INN membership. However, local outlets are far less likely to see their content republished elsewhere, with a median of just four partner publications compared to 20 among nonlocal peers. This likely reflects both the local nature of their content and the limited pool of media partners in smaller communities

Staff and Leadership

INN MEMBERS CONTINUE TO GROW THEIR CAPACITY, THOUGH STAFFING GAINS REMAIN MODEST AND LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES PERSIST.

A ROUNDUP OF IMPORTANT STATISTICS IN THIS CHAPTER:

- INN member outlets (excluding public media) together employed an estimated 4,650 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees.
- The median staff size of an INN member outlet is 5.5 FTEs.
- 4 in 10 outlets report at least one executive of color out of the three top executives.
- More than half (53%) of all executives of color lead outlets that primarily serve communities of color.
- **27%** of the top three executives at nonprofit news outlets are people of color[1]—a notable increase from **19% in 2019.**

In 2024, INN member outlets employed an estimated 4,650 staff, with about 70% working in editorial or news-related roles — only a slight increase from the prior year.

The typical newsroom is lean, with a median staff size of 5.5 FTEs.

AN ORGANIZATION'S STAFF SIZE IS LARGELY DICTATED BY THE AGE AND GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE OF ITS NEWS COVERAGE.

Local outlets tend to have about four people on staff, whereas national or global organizations have a median staff size of 9.5, ranging from no paid staff to 200 FTEs. Unsurprisingly, startup outlets in their first three years of operation often have a lower count of staffers — usually between one to three people.

REPRESENTATION OF PEOPLE OF COLOR IN TOP LEADERSHIP ROLES HAS GROWN.

Leadership teams are quite small. We asked publishers to provide the gender and race of up to three top executives in their organization. About half (48%) listed only one or two executives.

Women continue to hold a majority of executive roles (53%) at news outlets in INN's sample. This runs counter to media industry trends: A recent Reuters Institute study of top editorial

MEDIAN STAFF SIZE MEASURED BY FTE: CY2024

	Median Editorial FTE	Median Non-editorial FTE	Median Total FTE
Local	3	1	4
State	5	2	7
Regional	4	1	4
National	7	3	11
Global	3	1	4

[1]This is an extrapolated category that we have defined, for the purposes of this report, as encompassing individuals who identify with a racial or ethnic category other than white, including multiracial.

positions showed that women hold only 38% of these jobs and their presence has dipped in recent years.

Representation of people of color in top leadership roles has grown. As of 2024, **27%** of the top three executives at nonprofit news outlets are people of color[2] — a notable increase from **19% in 2019**.

Four in 10 outlets (42%) report at least one executive of color out of the three top executives, and representation is highest at outlets that center their journalism on communities of color.

More than half (53%) of all executives of color lead outlets that primarily serve communities of color — even though these organizations represent only about one-fifth of the field overall.

LEADERSHIP TURNOVER AND SUCCESSION IS ANOTHER CHALLENGE.

Burnout among journalism managers has been a persistent issue, and the financial impact of turnover is steep. Between 2022 and 2024, 38% of nonprofit newsrooms experienced at least one leadership turnover. Yet only 14% report having a succession plan in place — a concerning gap for organizations that often rely heavily on a founder or central leader. Replacing a single staff member can cost more than twice their annual salary, according to Gallup estimates, highlighting the need for not just resilience, but also sustainable strategies for leadership development and retention.

View the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Index Report for more demographic data of the people behind nonprofit news and the most common equity and inclusion practices across the sector.

[2]This is an extrapolated category that we have defined, for the purposes of this report, as encompassing individuals who identify with a racial or ethnic category other than white, including multiracial.

Revenue and Expenses

REVENUE GROWTH AMONG INN MEMBERS IN 2024 SUGGESTS THAT THE NONPROFIT NEWS FIELD CONTINUES TO GROW FINANCIALLY.

Nonprofit business model experts have urged all sectors of the field to diversify their revenue streams. Nonprofit newsrooms are heeding that call. As a group, INN members are maintaining a broad suite of revenue streams and showing growth across the board. Not all outlets improved their bottom lines, but the bird's-eye view shows a field that is steadily stabilizing and maturing over the last three years.

A ROUNDUP OF IMPORTANT STATISTICS IN THIS CHAPTER:

- For the first time in five years, INN members generated more than $500,000 dollars in median annual revenue, going from a median of $477,000 in 2023 to $532,000 in 2024. In total, they generated a combined $650 million to $700 million. Revenue growth has been widespread; roughly 80% of all outlets increased their total revenue over the last three years.
- Foundation grants account for most of the growth. Grant funding accounts for about half of fieldwide revenue, and 80% of outlets increased this source of funding over the last three years.
- Earned revenue sources such as sponsorships, advertisements and events have steadily increased as a greater proportion of revenue across INN membership. Over the last three years, 57% of INN members increased their earned revenue. This may be attributable to an influx of local digital and legacy outlets rather than a sign of fieldwide growth.
- Most individual giving revenue comes from major donors, and the average major donor gift increased by 27% in the last year, from $26,000 to $33,000.

REVENUE ACROSS THE NONPROFIT NEWS FIELD CONTINUES TO INCREASE

By one key measure, the nonprofit news field experienced solid financial growth in 2024. The median outlet generated $532,000 in annual revenue, a marked jump from $477,000 the year before.

The growth came at a time when a number of philanthropic organizations ramped up their efforts to support local newsrooms, including Press Forward's $20 million infusion to more than 200 local newsrooms, of which 40% are nonprofit news outlets and about 33% are INN members.

Overall, INN estimates that the nearly 400 digital-first nonprofit newsrooms in its ranks took in a combined $650 million to $700 million in revenue last year, making 2024 the most successful year on record for the nonprofit news field. This figure does not include startups that launched in 2024 and did not have a full year of financial accounting on record nor the several dozen public broadcasters within INN's membership.

REVENUE GROWTH IS SHARED ACROSS THE FIELD, NOT JUST DRIVEN BY A FEW STRONG PERFORMERS

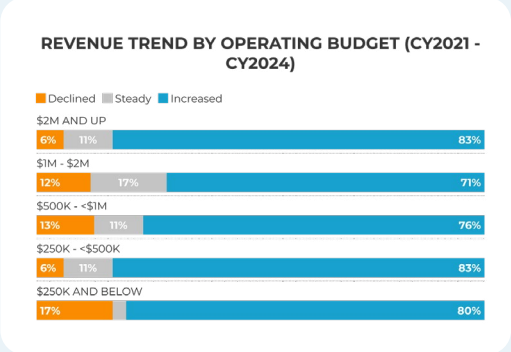
Most nonprofit news outlets have increased their intake over the last few years. A deeper look at multi-year trends using the 2021-2024 trend set[3] helps explain what drove this overall revenue growth.

- 79% of trend set outlets increased their annual revenue by more than 10%.
- 8% held steady during this stretch, defined as +/- 10% change.
- About the same (9%) saw a decrease in total revenue over the three years of more than 10%

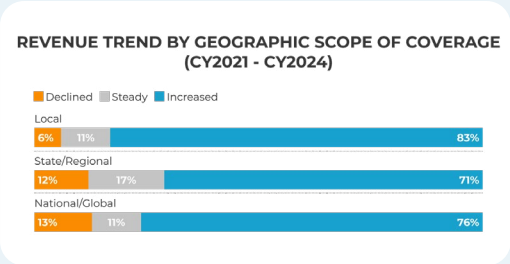
The growth was so widespread that most types of outlets — big and small, local and national — enjoyed the upward trend, with certain revenue sizes and geoscopes faring better than others.

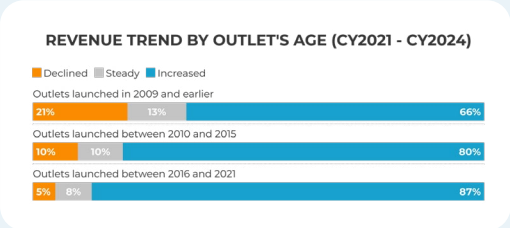
Both big-budget outlets (annual revenue of $2 million or more) and small-budget outlets ($250,000 to $500,000 in annual revenue) were slightly more likely than those in the middle to experience revenue growth over the three-year period.

Local outlets were more likely to have achieved revenue growth than outlets focused on state, national or global affairs.



[3]The 2021-2024 trend set includes data from all outlets that reported complete revenue data for calendar years 2021 and 2024.





Additionally, younger outlets were more likely than mature ones to have stronger growth during this time period. This may reflect the recent surge in local startups or how younger outlets often quickly accrue capital during their first few years of operation.

A CLOSER LOOK AT HIGH-GROWTH OUTLETS SHOWS THE BIG GOT BIGGER

Outlets focused on national, global and local affairs, as well as younger outlets, are heavily represented in this category

What do we know about the characteristics of INN's high-growth news organizations? A closer look at data from 2021-2024 reveals that the 25 outlets that grew the most in total dollars over the three years in the trend set tend to already be fairly robust operations, are often national or global in reach, and are relatively young organizations although not startups (organizations that launched within the prior three years).

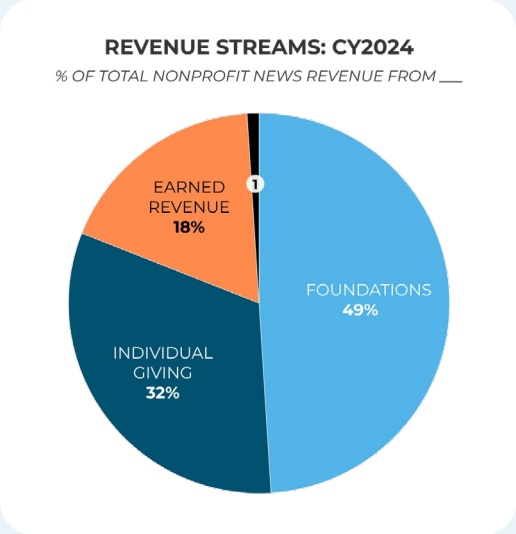
All outlets in this group generated at least $2 million in total revenue in calendar year 2024. Their revenue growth over the three-year trend period ranged from $1.6 million to $13 million. Nearly half (12 out of 25) are national or global in scope, proportionally greater than the overall composition of all INN member organizations.(Seven outlets are state or regionally focused and six are local.) A plurality of outlets (10 out of 25) launched between 2017 and 2021.

Analyzing high-growth outlets' gains by percentage instead of total dollars tells a different story. The 25 outlets with the fastest percentage growth, excluding those that launched in 2021 with zero revenue, tended to be either big-budget or small-budget operations. Most are local in scope. And the vast majority (19 out of 25) launched between 2017 and 2021.

The group that declined in revenue by more than 10% includes a large number of small-budget outlets (10 out of 26).

AMONG REVENUE STREAMS, FOUNDATION GRANTS CONTINUE TO ACCOUNT FOR THE BIGGEST SINGLE SLICE OF FIELDWIDE FUNDING

The average value of major donor gifts has increased, and earned revenue sources such as sponsorships now account for a bigger slice of the overall earned revenue pie, reflecting the changing composition of the field.



AVERAGE INDIVIDUAL DONATION (CY2021 - CY2024)

Individual Donor Type	Average donation (CY2021)	Average donation (CY2024)
Major donor ($5,000 or more)	$26,000	$33,000
Mid-level donor ($1,000 – $5,000)	$1,500	$1,400
Small donor ($1,000 or less)	$82	$99

One of the most consistent findings over the last eight years of surveying INN members is that foundation funding accounts for about half of all fieldwide intake. That was no different in 2024, with grants accounting for 49% of fieldwide revenue. The remaining revenue included individual giving (32%), earned revenue such as sponsorships and events (18%), and other ancillary charitable sources of revenue (1%).

Most nonprofit news outlets lean on a variety of revenue streams to support their mission. The 2025 survey shows that 43% of outlets report utilizing at least four different revenue streams[4].

Foundation grants have been a lifeline for many nonprofit news organizations, especially in their early startup years, but those funds can be earmarked for a specific coverage topic and not general operations. Most outlets (70%) report that at least 50% of their foundation funding is available for general operating expenses. One exception is national and globally focused outlets, which are disproportionately limited to restricted funding. National or global news outlets make up just over 20% of the field, but they are 40% of the outlets that said up to a quarter of their grants are earmarked to support general operations.

Revenue distribution has not significantly shifted in the last eight years, but earned revenue is one exception. That stream has nearly doubled from 10% in 2018 to 18% in 2025. This change likely reflects the proliferation of local outlets in the field, including recent commercial-to-nonprofit conversions — outlets that typically rely more heavily on sponsorship and advertising than the average nonprofit news outlet.

A look at the top 25 outlets in terms of overall advertising revenues shows that many are older, well-established organizations. Only a handful were launched in the last five years.

Looking more closely at individual giving, 64% comes from major donors (gifts of $5,000 or more), 28% from small-dollar donors (less than $1,000), and 8% from mid-level donors ($1,000-$5,000). This, too, is a long-term consistent finding. At the same time, the average value of major-level gifts has increased modestly, from roughly $26,000 in calendar year 2021 to about $33,000 in 2024.

[4]For this analysis, a revenue source is categorized as a stream only if it accounted for at least 5% of the organization's total revenue.

TREND DATA SHOWS GROWTH ACROSS ALL MAJOR TYPES OF REVENUE, ESPECIALLY FOUNDATION GRANTS

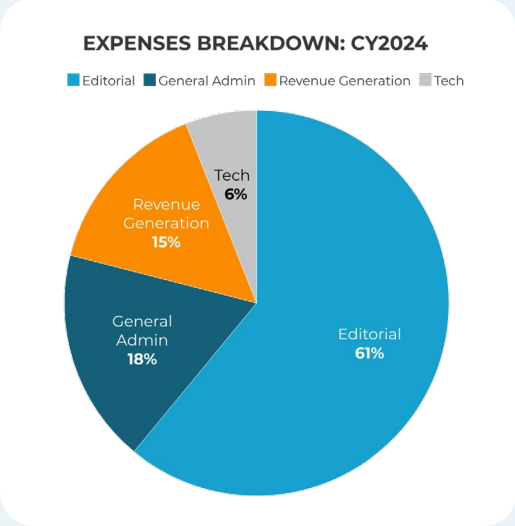
Outlets that draw on earned revenue sources (sponsorships, ads, events) saw mixed results, with just over half reporting growth in the last three years.

The three-year trend set is a window into recent shifts in individual revenue streams. On balance, most outlets saw growth across various types of revenue. Notably, though, investigative newsrooms experienced a slightly disproportionate decline in foundation funding, and national and global newsrooms struggled with earned revenue. Outlets focused on serving communities of color were disproportionately more likely to enjoy growth in individual giving.

Among outlets that reported data on foundation grants for both calendar years 2021 and 2024 (230 outlets), 80% saw this revenue stream increase, while 13% experienced a decline. The remaining 7% remained steady. The INN members that lost revenue last year reflected the composition of INN membership, except for a slightly higher percentage of investigative outlets (40%).

With individual giving, slightly fewer trend-set outlets — those that reported completed revenue data for 2021 and 2024 — experienced growth, 65% overall, with 24% seeing decline and 10% remaining steady over the three-year period. The overall composition of these trend-set outlets reflected the broader INN membership, except a smaller percentage (38%) are local, and a larger share (29%) have a primary mission to serve communities of color.

A majority of the trend-set organizations saw earned revenue growth from 2021 to 2024, though not to the same extent as with foundation grants and individual giving. Just 57% — a narrow majority — saw an increase, while 25% experienced a decline. Another 18% remained flat, including outlets that typically do not draw on these types of revenue streams. National and global organizations are disproportionately represented among those that experienced a decline: 34%.



OPERATING EXPENSES: EDITORIAL REMAINS THE PRIORITY WHILE REVENUE GENERATION INVESTMENT HAS GROWN

Aside from revenue, operating expenses are another important part of the financial picture for nonprofit journalism. As in

previous years, the overall picture remains steady. INN member organizations dedicate a majority of all operating expenses to editorial costs (61%) such as reporting and editing. The rest goes to administrative, revenue generation, and technology.

Between 2019 and 2024, revenue generation–the expenses category that encompasses fundraising, donor development and related activities–has grown as a proportion of all expenses, from 10% to 15% of the whole, a 50% increase.

Last year alone, 48 outlets reported investing at least 25% of their budgets in revenue generation. They are disproportionately local (58%) compared to the field. Many of them, 44%, launched in 2009 or earlier, while 21% of them launched after 2021.

How well did this additional investment pay off? The data is not entirely clear. The trend set indicates there was no difference in the results for the outlets that spent at least 25% of their budget on revenue generation and the overall cohort. Among outlets that heavily invested in revenue generation, 82% grew foundation support and 55% increased individual giving in 2021-2024, compared with 80% and 65% for the trend set overall.

It's important to consider the counterfactual implications of this finding. For instance, did these organizations invest so heavily in revenue generation because they were operating at a disadvantage or from a place of financial weakness? In other words, the heavy investors may have had the greatest needs. Without that spending, they might have underperformed further.

Audience and Distribution

INN MEMBERS CONTINUE TO BROADEN THE WAYS THEY REACH AUDIENCES

INN member outlets are adapting their publishing and distribution strategies to reach audiences across a fragmented and shifting media environment. While web traffic faces headwinds, outlets are expanding their reach through content sharing via republication partnerships and direct-to-audience strategies like newsletters. Together, these trends highlight both the challenges and the growing opportunities for nonprofit outlets to connect with the public in new and sustainable ways.

A ROUNDUP OF IMPORTANT STATISTICS IN THIS CHAPTER:

- In 2024, INN members reported approximately 25,000 republication partners — more than three times the number reported in 2022. This figure represents all reported partnerships combined, not unique partners. The median partners per outlet is seven.
- The median number of unique monthly web visitors in 2024 was about 30,000, a slight increase from 27,000 visitors in 2023.
- Median newsletter subscribers also grew slightly from about 5,800 to 6,000 during the same period.

INN MEMBERS CONTINUE TO EVOLVE THEIR PUBLISHING AND DISTRIBUTION STRATEGIES TO MEET AUDIENCES WHERE THEY ARE DESPITE AN INCREASINGLY FRAGMENTED MEDIA LANDSCAPE.

Today, INN member outlets are primarily digital, with 70% publishing their coverage through a website — a shift from traditional print journalism. Smaller segments use email newsletters (15%), print newspapers (10%) and podcasts (2%) as their primary platform.

AN OUTLET'S GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE OF COVERAGE OFTEN INFLUENCES HOW IT REACHES ITS AUDIENCES, WHETHER DIRECTLY OR THROUGH THIRD-PARTY PARTNERSHIPS.

Local outlets continue to prioritize direct publishing. Most local outlets (89% in 2024) focus on reaching audiences through their own direct platforms, mostly online. Meanwhile, state, regional, national and global outlets are expanding their reach by forming third-party republication partnerships with other news sites, print publications and public radio to reach audiences beyond their own platforms.

INN MEMBERS EXPAND AUDIENCE REACH THROUGH STRATEGIC REPUBLICATION PARTNERSHIPS.

As reported in the 2024 INN Index, the majority of INN members allow republishing of their reporting for free or with few restrictions.

In 2024, INN members reported approximately 25,000 republication partners. This figure represents all reported partnerships, not unique partners, because outlets may share some of the same partners, INN cannot fully deduplicate these counts. The median partners per outlet is seven.

Geoscope	Percentage of INN members by number of partners	Percentage of INN members by number of outlets
Local	12%	51%
State/Regional	27%	26%
National/Global	62%	24%

National and global outlets make up 24% of the INN' Network but account for 62% of members' republication partners. In contrast, local outlets comprise half of the membership and account for just 12% of republication partners.

Only 19% of INN members are outlets with over $2 million in revenue, but they account for 63% of republication partners. Nearly half (49%) of those outlets are national/global outlets.

As we described more in-depth in the 2024 Audience Index Report, larger, more prominent national outlets have greater visibility and capacity to build distribution networks, while local newsrooms face more barriers to expanding the reach of their reporting. The fact that a few of larger outlets have been the main drivers in the network's growth in republication partners since 2023 points to a meaningful trend: syndication and republication seem to have become a growing core audience strategy for the biggest INN members, especially as they face the steepest contractions in direct distribution channels such as web traffic, a topic we'll discuss further later in this chapter.

Last year, INN launched On the Ground, a republication portal and newsletter, to tap into this growth in republication. Initially, the service was a way to help 90 members share politics and elections content. INN has since broadened the scope to include stories about the effects of federal policy changes on communities.

INN also partnered with Public News Service and the Associated Press to make member content available to more than 3,000 news organizations via On the Ground. Member newsrooms have shared more than 1,600 stories across more than 1,000 news outlets.

In addition to sharing content with one another, nonprofit news outlets are forging robust partnerships with their for-profit peers. Virginia Arrigucci, deputy director of local journalism products at the Associated Press, described this as a symbiotic relationship.

"Republication partners are either seeking 'more content for my audience' or 'more audience for my content,'" Arrigucci said.

She added that for-profit outlets want more quality news content, while nonprofits are seeking broader audience reach. This mutual need is driving partnerships that help nonprofits extend their impact and for-profits to enrich their coverage.

While third-party republication is helping many outlets expand their reach, direct audience trends tell a more nuanced story.

INN MEMBERS' WEB TRAFFIC PATTERNS REFLECT BROADER INDUSTRY CHALLENGES, THOUGH LOCAL OUTLETS SHOW SIGNS OF GROWTH

In 2024, INN members drew a median of 30,000 unique monthly web visitors, a slight increase from about 27,000 visitors in 2023. Median newsletter subscriber numbers rose to 6,000 from 5,800 during the same period.

Web traffic patterns among nonprofit news outlets are consistent with those of the broader media landscape. SimilarWeb, a data firm that tracks web traffic, found that only 30% of the top 50 U.S. news websites saw year-over-year traffic growth in May, while most of the top 10 sites experienced significant declines in web traffic during that period, Press Gazette reported.

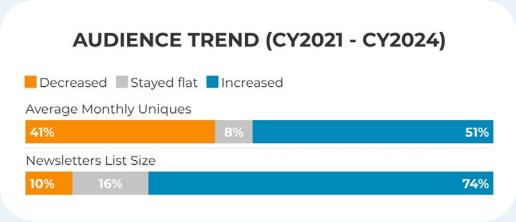
In recent years, publishers have expressed concerns about declining referral traffic from Google and Facebook, as well as

lower click-through rates – typically coming through Google's search engine – following the rise of Google's AI summaries in search results.

A closer look at the trend set6 reveals that overall, 52% of INN member news outlets experienced more than 10% growth in web traffic between 2021 and 2024, while 41% experienced declines. For 8% of outlets, traffic remained relatively flat, fluctuating by 10% or less.

When examining web traffic trends by geographic scope of coverage, local outlets were the only subgroup to show overall growth. In contrast, national/global and state/regional outlets experienced net declines in web traffic during the same period.

Between 2021 and 2024, national global outlets recorded the largest total decline in web traffic — a combined drop of approximately 6.4 million users. State/regional outlets also declined, though to a lesser extent, with a total drop of about 1.6 million users. By contrast, local outlets showed modest overall growth, gaining about 290,000 users.



Between 2021 and 2024, 34% of local outlets experienced a decline in web traffic, while nearly 60% saw growth. Among national/global outlets, half reported declining traffic, and about one-third achieved growth.

When analyzing web traffic trends by coverage priorities, we found that outlets focused on investigative journalism and news and event reporting were less likely to experience traffic declines — 32% and 39% of these outlets saw declines, respectively — compared to 50% of outlets producing primarily explanatory journalism. Notably, 58% of investigative outlets reported an increase in web traffic during the same period.

Outlets specializing in covering a single topic were more likely to see web traffic decrease, with 60% of single-topic outlets experiencing declines compared to 41% for those covering multiple related topics and 34% for general news outlets. Fifty-nine percent of general news outlets saw web visitor growth in the same period.

NEWSLETTERS ARE A KEY AREA OF AUDIENCE GROWTH FOR INN MEMBERS

While growing and maintaining website audiences remains a challenge for nonprofit news outlets, they are finding success in growing a newsletter subscriber base. Between 2021 and 2024,

72% of nonprofit news outlets surveyed grew their newsletter list size, defined as an increase of more than 10%. Only 10% experienced a decline of more than 10%.

LOCAL OUTLETS SHOWED THE STRONGEST NEWSLETTER AUDIENCE GROWTH

The majority of INN members (52%) across all geographic scopes reported growth between 2021 and 2024 in their newsletter subscriber lists, with local outlets leading the way.

Local outlets showed the strongest growth in this area, with 78% reporting increases in newsletter subscribers. Those outlets represent 50% of all respondents that reported newsletter subscriber growth. This likely reflects their strong emphasis on cultivating direct relationships with audiences, particularly through email, as a primary method of distribution and engagement. State and regional outlets also demonstrated solid progress: 72% grew their newsletter subscribers base while 66% of national and global outlets reported newsletter subscriber growth. National and global outlets had the largest average newsletter subscribers gain, at about 22,800 each. That number is about 5,000 for locals and 500 for state and regional outlets.

GROWTH IS CONSISTENT ACROSS EDITORIAL APPROACHES, WITH INVESTIGATIVE OUTLETS LEADING SLIGHTLY

Between 2021 and 2024, investigative outlets were the most likely to report newsletter subscriber growth, with 80% seeing increases compared to 70% of outlets focused on news and events or explanatory reporting. On average, investigative outlets gained about 9,100 subscribers over four years, while news and events outlets added roughly 4,300, and explanatory news organizations saw the highest average increase at 10,500 subscribers.

These patterns reinforce the strategic importance of email newsletters as a direct-to-audience channel, especially in a shifting distribution landscape where social media reach has become more uncertain. The broad-based growth across geographic scope of coverage and primary mission signals that newsletters is becoming a core audience strategy across INN membership and, by extension, the broader nonprofit news field.

On INN Public Media Members

For the first time, this Index report includes a dedicated highlight section on INN's cohort of public media member newsrooms. In July, the U.S. Congress passed a bill rescinding $9 billion in previously allocated funds, including $1.1 billion for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, essentially cutting all federal support for NPR, PBS and their member stations, and about $7 billion in foreign aid. Since then, PBS has reported on the financial struggles of public media stations as well as the impact and risks facing stations in rural communities.

While digital-first nonprofit newsrooms make up the majority of INN's membership, public broadcasters remain an important part of the network, accounting for approximately 7% of INN members as of September. For the first time, this Index includes a dedicated highlight section on INN's cohort of public media member newsrooms. The INN Network includes 34 public media outlets as of this year. Of those, 27 completed the Index survey with 2024 data, offering a snapshot of key characteristics of public broadcasters within INN membership.

Because public media often categorize revenue and expenses differently, their responses are usually excluded from the main Index analyses. Here, however, we present key takeaways from their data. To put this sample in perspective: The U.S. has more than 1,500 locally owned and operated public media stations, including 1,200 radio stations, according to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. The 27 organizations represented in the Index survey are a small slice of this much larger field.

Most of the 27 INN member outlets are radio or digital organizations, with just one identifying television as its top direct platform. A majority (56% or 15 outlets)

are local and typically serve much larger audiences than newer local digital newsrooms. Fifteen outlets also report targeting audiences of 1 million to 10 million or more.

Public broadcasters in this sample also prioritize serving specific communities. Two outlets (7%) report that people of color are their primary focus, meaning people of color comprise a majority of their audience, and the organization spends a majority of its funding, resources, and staff time on stories for communities of color. Fifteen outlets (56%) list serving communities of color as one of their several core priorities.

Five outlets (19%) identify rural audiences as their primary focus and another 11 outlets (41%) list rural communities as one of their several core priorities.

Leadership diversity mirrors broader trends in nonprofit news. Among up to three top executives per organization, one-fourth (25%) are people of color. Leadership diversity of INN members that are public broadcasters reflects the broader INN Network. Among up to three top executives per organization, one-fourth (25%) are people of color. Women make up 43% of the executive ranks.

A majority of these broadcasters (67% or 18 of 27) indicated they participated in some form of policy-related work or discussions related to journalism policy in 2024. Most (97%) said that work entails attending a webinar or an event to learn about media policies, while 39% (7 of 27) reported reaching out to a representative in support of or against some media policy.

On the audience side, these broadcasters report a median of 147,109 monthly unique users, 10,131 newsletter subscribers, and 15,574 podcast downloads. These organizations also emphasize building direct audience relationships: The median outlet derives 90% of its reach from its own channels.

Like many other INN members, public broadcasters also collaborate frequently. In 2024, about 78% of them participated in at least one editorial collaboration, which is defined as two or more outlets sharing resources for news reporting. These broadcasters had a median of five republication partners.

Examples of such collaborations illustrate the value of these partnerships. KUNR and The Nevada Independent, an INN member, partnered to expand access to local journalism across Nevada. The outlets share news stories, partner on reporting projects, and host community events together. They have reported on timely political issues, including a series examining the influence of baseless claims about voter fraud in the 2020 presidential election. They also exposed ties between extremist groups and public officials, and covered efforts by local governments to seek more autonomy from the Legislature.

At a statewide level, the California newsroom, launched in early 2020, unites INN members KQED and CalMatters with NPR and more than a dozen public media organizations. The collaboration expands reporting capacity, shares content, and enables investigations that might not otherwise reach statewide or national audiences. Since its launch, the newsroom has produced award-winning journalism that influenced multiple policy issues, including reforms to compassionate release for dying incarcerated people, congressional scrutiny of wildfire prevention, and stronger state oversight of nursing homes.

That same year, INN also led From Rust to Resilience, a collaborative climate reporting project involving Belt Magazine, The Conversation, Ensia, Great Lakes Now at Detroit Public Television, MinnPost, and Side Effects Public Media, along with public media partners such as WUWM Milwaukee, Indiana Public Broadcasting, and The Water Main from American Public Media. The series produced a dozen stories examining how Great Lakes cities — from Detroit and Chicago to Duluth, Minn., and Toronto — are confronting climate vulnerabilities like flooding, aging infrastructure and pollution. The collaboration produced 12 stories and reached about 103,272 unique visitors across six outlets. The project was also recognized with a 2020 Great Lakes Leadership Award from the Great Lakes Protection Fund.

Though only a small portion of the broader public media field is represented in the Index, their participation highlights the vital role public broadcasters play in the nonprofit news ecosystem.

INN PUBLIC MEDIA MEMBERS (AS OF SEPTEMBER 2025)

- Center for Broadcast Journalism and WEQY POWER104.7FM
- Connecticut Public Broadcasting
- Delaware Public Media
- KOSU
- KPBS
- KPCW
- KQED
- Lehigh Valley Public Media (PBS39, WLVR 91.3)
- Lower Cape TV (Lower Cape News, ArtsLight, Coast + Climate)
- KHNS News
- Nevada Public Radio (KNPR 88.9, KCNV 89.7, Desert Companion Magazine)
- New York Public Radio (WNYC)
- North Texas Public Broadcasting (KERA)
- Northern Community Radio (KAXE)
- Northern Kentucky Tribune
- PBS NewsHour
- Pittsburgh Community Broadcasting Corporation (WESA)
- PRX (The World)
- Public Broadcasting Atlanta (WABE 90.1 FM)
- Public Media of New England, Inc. (WHAV Wavelengths)
- Radio Catskill
- Red Canary Magazine
- Science Friday
- Tulsa Local News Initiative
- WCBU 89.9 FM and WCBU.org
- Western North Carolina Public Radio (Blue Ridge Public Radio)
- WFAE
- WGLT 89.1 FM and WGLT.org
- White Pine Community Broadcasting, Inc. (WXPR Public Radio)
- WHRO Public Media
- WHYY News, BillyPenn at WHYY, Plan Philly
- WITF
- Jacksonville Today
- WVIA News

Timely Topics

INN MEMBERS ADAPT TO A CHANGING MEDIA LANDSCAPE

The 2025 Index introduces a new section on timely topics, in which we survey INN members on emerging topics such as impact measurement, collaboration, policy engagement related to revenue for news organizations, and the use of artificial intelligence.

We added these questions to benchmark how nonprofit newsrooms are navigating emerging forces that could shape their sustainability and operations and found that across the board, INN members are responding strategically to external forces that could change, disrupt or strengthen their newsrooms. From new technology integration to policy and civic engagement, they are not only adapting but beginning to assert agency.

A ROUNDUP OF IMPORTANT STATISTICS IN THIS CHAPTER:

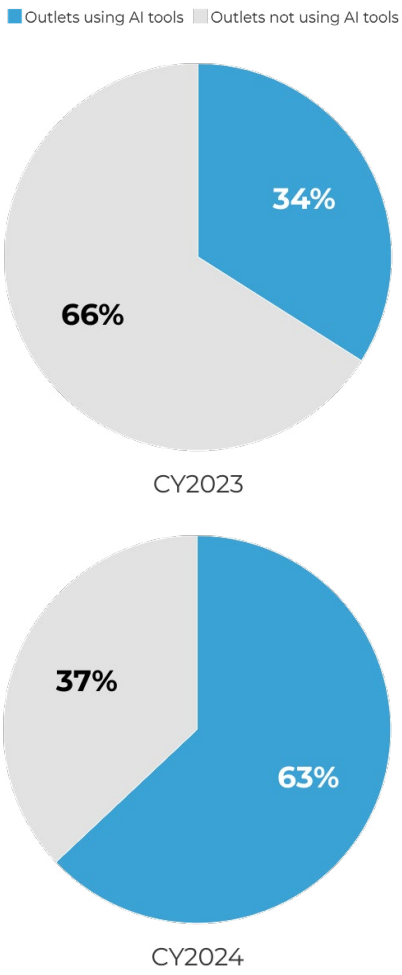
- In 2024, about 63% of INN members reported using AI in their operations, a sharp increase from 34% in 2023.
- 45% of INN members participated in some form of government policy-related activity in 2024.
- 46% of INN members use impact trackers to assess the outcomes of their work. - Four in 10 organizations participated in four or more editorial collaborations, and nearly 80% partnered on at least one.

AI USAGE IS ACCELERATING, AND ITS APPLICATIONS REMAIN CONCENTRATED ON BUSINESS OPERATIONS AND SPEEDING UP TASKS SUCH AS TRANSCRIPTION AND DATA ANALYSIS.

In 2024, 63% of INN members reported using AI in their operations, a sharp increase from 34% in 2023. Usage seems evenly distributed across outlets of different geographic scope and coverage priority (outlets focusing on investigative, deep analysis or general news).

Most are using AI tools for more automated, back-office functions such as transcription or data analysis rather than newer generative uses like creating or repurposing text or

USAGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TOOLS: CY2023 - CY2024



AI USAGE AMONG INN MEMBER NEWSROOMS: CY2024

Uses of AI tools	Percentage of outlets
Transcribing or summarizing interviews	67%
Analyzing data	38%
Drafting and/or personalizing emails or social media copy for audiences	32%
Drafting grant applications	32%
Drafting and/or personalizing emails for funders or stakeholders	27%
Editing stories or editorial product	16%
Scraping data from third-party websites	15%
Translating stories or other copy	14%
Identifying sources or potential story ideas	13%
Identifying potential funders or donors	11%
Summarizing and/or aggregating stories for a newsletter	10%
Drafting interview questions	8%
Adapting stories into platform-specific formats	7%
Drafting stories or editorial product	6%

images. That said, some newsroom leaders remain skeptical of AI, expressing concern that its growing focus in the nonprofit news space may divert attention and resources from urgent day-to-day needs.

About two-thirds of respondents use AI for interview transcription. Editorial applications remain more limited: 16% of outlets use AI to edit stories, and fewer than 10% are experimenting with drafting interview questions, stories, or other editorial content.

NEARLY HALF OF INN MEMBERS USING AI APPLY IT TO FUNDRAISING AND DONOR OUTREACH EFFORTS

Fundraising, traditionally a rigorous and resource-intensive endeavor for nonprofits, is an area where outlets are often employing AI tools. Roughly 47% of outlets that use AI reported using it to draft grant applications, personalize outreach to funders or stakeholders, or identify prospective donors.

Conversations with practitioners suggest that AI is being used in fundraising primarily as a time-saving assistant rather than a transformative force. AI tools are often described as supportive, helping carry out brainstorming tasks, but not fundamentally changing the nature of the work. AI is mostly helpful in early-stage research and drafting, with potential to assist in pulling specified information from large amounts of written materials. However, AI output must eventually be reviewed by humans for accuracy. Practitioners' responses also indicate they see AI as a "first draft" generator that helps save time and organize ideas, but is not yet fully reliable.

One fundraising professional shared that their team uses AI-driven tools like iWave to research potential donors and Perplexity AI to generate lists of foundations based on geographic areas and funding priorities. The respondent said these tools were a "helpful starting point," but inaccurate results curbed their utility. In another example, a respondent used ChatGPT to extract relevant information from past grant applications for use in a new proposal. The results, the practitioner said, were limited and ultimately not reliable enough for continued use in that context. Respondents also used AI tools for email fundraising efforts. A fundraising practitioner described using ChatGPT to break an existing appeal letter into a series of fundraising emails.

For one executive, their most useful experience involved

using ChatGPT to prepare for a major donor call — a type of fundraising they don't engage in often. The tool helped them sketch out a lightweight strategy and gather publicly available background information on the prospect. While they could have found the information on their own, they said, ChatGPT was faster and felt more like having a "buddy" to think through the task with them.

Practitioners expressed willingness to continue experimenting with AI in limited ways, particularly for repetitive tasks, but with careful supervision and reviews.

OUTLETS DEMONSTRATE A STRONG LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT IN MEDIA POLICY-RELATED WORK AND DISCUSSIONS

Nearly half (45%) of INN members participated in some form of policy-related work or discussions pertaining to revenue for news organizations in 2024. While many began with exploratory activities like attending a webinar or an event, a notable one-third of those involved took a more active role by reaching out to legislators about media policy. Nearly a quarter reported having signed a petition related to a media policy.

Our data indicate that member outlets at the local or state and regional levels are more likely to participate in media policy-related activities than their national and global counterparts.

Three of the most populous U.S. states — California, New York and Illinois — plus Massachusetts report the highest number of organizations participating in policy-related work or discussions. Together, these four account for more than a third of outlets that reported engagement in policy-related work.

Notably, two other populous states, Texas and Florida, report far less media policy-related activity than Massachusetts and Illinois despite having a comparable number of outlets in our sample.

While state outlets were the most likely to engage in policy discussions, 60% of them report that the engagement did not correlate strongly to whether they offered statehouse coverage. In comparison, the engagement rate for overall membership is 45%, 48% for local outlets, and 33% for national outlets. But more organizations (42) that provide statehouse coverage engaged in policy discussions than did not (28).

MEDIAN STAFF SIZE MEASURED BY FTE: CY2024

	Median Editorial FTE	Median Non-editorial FTE	Median Total FTE
Local	3	1	4
State	5	2	7
Regional	4	1	4
National	7	3	11
Global	3	1	4

Looking at geographic scope of coverage, state outlets were the most likely to engage in policy discussions, 60% of state outlets report engagement, in comparison, the engagement rate for overall membership is 45%, 48% for local outlets, and 33% for national outlets. While state outlets were the most likely to engage in policy discussions, activity did not correlate strongly to whether the organization offered statehouse coverage or not. Among outlets that provide statehouse coverage, 60% report engagement in policy discussions and 40% did not.

Predictably, there is a strong correlation to staff size. Organizations engaged in policy discussions had a median of 22 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees compared to five FTEs for those that did not engage.

OUTLETS LOOK BEYOND PAGE VIEWS TO MEASURE THEIR SUCCESS

Many INN members are working to understand and deepen their impact, with nearly half (46%) using impact trackers to assess the outcomes of their reporting. Around 1 in 5 has also articulated a theory of change[5] — a sign that a substantial portion of members are thinking strategically about how their work leads to changes within their communities. INN's work in the field suggests that nonprofit news outlets' interest in naming theories of change is often in response to funder inquiries, since more grant applications now require them. Outlets are also using impact trackers to assess the outcomes of their work. Member outlets' use of impact trackers appears consistent across different geographic scopes — local, state/regional, and national/global — with usage rates ranging from around 40% to 50%.

The commitment to civic impact shows up in INN members' work. Beyond providing news and coverage, in 2024, nearly half (46%) of INN member outlets produced guides to help people register to vote and participate in civic life. About 40% said they have encouraged their audience's participation in local government meetings or public hearings, while 39% indicated they have hosted or facilitated public discussions on political issues.

OUTLETS CONTINUE TO COLLABORATE TO INCREASE CAPACITY AND REACH

In 2024, 4 in 10 organizations participated in four or more editorial collaborations. Nearly 80% partnered at least once — an increase from 75% in 2022. The steady rise in collaboration

Wisconsin Watch and Montana Free Press are two examples of the numerous INN members that published comprehensive 2024 voter guides to help residents navigate registration, ballot measures, and polling locations. In another example, CalMatters' inaugural 2024 Ideas Festival brought together about 1,000 people—thought leaders, policymakers and residents—for conversations about pressing state issues such as climate change, reparations, workforce development and homelessness. San José Spotlight's political festival, PolitiBeat, gathered leaders in government, education, media and sports to discuss the successes and challenges facing San Jose and Silicon Valley.

[5]A theory of change is a method that explains how a given intervention or set of interventions are expected to lead to a specific change.

reflects a durable trend of resource-sharing across the field. The most common topics for collaboration include government, the environment, politics, equity and justice, elections, health, housing and unhoused communities. Outlets at the state/regional or national/global levels are more likely to have participated in editorial collaborations than those covering local issues, likely because collaborations are resource intensive, requiring staffing capacity and broader networks that larger outlets are more likely to have.

Each year since 2018, ProPublica has partnered with about 20 newsrooms on investigative projects via the Local Reporting Network, connecting community newsrooms to the national investigative outlet's funding, reporting and editing help, and visual and audience support. Partners have included INN members such as CT Mirror, Arizona Luminaria, BridgeDetroit, The Connecticut Mirror, Honolulu Civil Beat and Invisible Institute. The reporting produced through these partnerships has won national journalism awards, including the 2020 Pulitzer Prize for public service.

Last year, two INN members, Grist and Deep South Today, launched a partnership in which they share reporters. As part of the collaboration, Grist placed its fifth local reporter in Deep South Today's Louisiana newsroom, and the two organizations reported they would be developing a new reporting position in Mississippi.

In northeast Wisconsin, six news organizations — Wisconsin Watch, FoxValley365, The Post-Crescent, Green Bay Press-Gazette, The Press Times and Wisconsin Public Radio — collaborate via the NEW News Lab to produce in-depth local journalism. They report on critical issues like racism as a public health crisis, affordable housing shortages, school funding, and the workings of the local justice system.

In May, the Bangor Daily News and The Maine Monitor, two statewide investigative journalism outlets, announced their new editorial partnership that aims to deepen statewide coverage of Maine through content sharing, joint investigations and coordinated public service journalism.

To expand reach of our members, INN also facilitated collaborations via the Rural News Network in 2024 through projects like "Bridging Access," which connected five local, regional and national outlets to explore rural healthcare solutions in communities of color; "Falling Short," a cross-state, data-driven effort in partnership with Big Local News at Stanford University that documented how new federal staffing requirements affected rural nursing homes across the country; and "Rural Realities," which brought centered lived experiences in stories about rural life and post-secondary educational opportunities.

INN Index participants

100 Days in Appalachia

100Reporters

Adirondack Explorer

Advocate Media

Alabama Initiative For Independent Journalism

Amjambo Africa

An Arm and a Leg

Anthropocene Magazine

Applegate Valley Community Newspaper

Arizona Center for Investigative Reporting

Arkansas Nonprofit News Network

Asheville Watchdog

Aspen Journalism

Bay City News Foundation

Bay Journal

Bay Nature Institute

Belt Media Collaborative

BenitoLink

Better Government Association

Block Club Chicago

Borderless Magazine

Borderzine

Boyle Heights Beat

Breckenridge Texan

Bridge Detroit

Bridge Michigan

California Health Report

CalMatters

Canopy Atlanta

Capital of Texas Media Foundation

Capitol News Illinois

Carolina Public Press

Center for Collaborative Investigative Journalism

Center for Public Integrity

Center for Responsive Politics

Center for Sustainable Journalism

Centro de Periodismo Investigativo

Chalkbeat

Charlottesville Tomorrow

Chicago Reader

Cicero Independiente

Circle of Blue

City Bureau

City Limits

Cityside

CivicStory

Civil Eats

CoastAlaska

Coda Media

Colorado News Collaborative

Columbia Insight

Community Info Coop

Connecticut Health I-Team

Connecticut Mirror

Crosscut

Current

Daily Yonder

Dallas Free Press

DC Witness

DCist

Deep Indigo Collective

Delaware Currents

Delaware Public Media

Detour Detroit

Detroit Public Television's One Detroit

Documented

East Greenwich News

East Lansing Info (ELi)

ecoRI News

EdSource

El Paso Matters

El Tímpano

Energy News Network

Enlace Latino NC

Ensia

Eurasianet

Evanston RoundTable

FairWarning

Flint Beat

Florida Bulldog

Florida Center for Investigative Reporting

Food & Environment Reporting Network

Food Bank News

Foothills Forum

Fostering Media Connections

Foundation for Financial Journalism

Futuro Media

Georgia Health News

Georgia News Lab

Grist

Growing Community Media

H2O Radio

Hidden City Philadelphia

High Country News

Highlands Current

Honolulu Civil Beat

Hoptown Chronicle

In These Times

India Currents

Indian Country Today

Indigenous Media Freedom Alliance

inewsource

Injustice Watch

Inside Climate News

InvestigateWest

Investigative Post

Investigative Reporting Workshop

Iowa Center for Public Affairs Journalism

Ipswich Local News

Ithaca Voice

KCUR

Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting

Kentucky Center for Public Service Journalism

Key Peninsula News

KOSU

KPBS

KPCW

LkldNow

Lower Cape TV

Madison365

Maryland Matters

Maryland Reporter

Matter News

Midwest Center for Investigative Reporting

Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service

MinnPost

Mission Local

Mississippi Center for Investigative Reporting

Mississippi Free Press

Mississippi Today

MLK50: Justice Through Journalism

Mongabay

Montana Free Press

INN Index participants

Montclair Local

Mother Jones

Mountain Journal

Mountain State Spotlight

MuckRock

NancyOnNorwalk

National Parks Traveler

Nevada Public Radio

New Hampshire Center for Public Interest Journalism

New Haven Independent

New Mexico In Depth

New York Focus

Next City

NJ Spotlight

NOISE

North Carolina Health News

NOWCastSA

Ohio Center for Investigative Journalism

Oklahoma Watch

Open Campus

Open Vallejo

Orb Media

Outlier Media

PassBlue

Patagonia Regional Times

PBS NewsHour

PBS39/WLVT

Planet Detroit

PolitiFact

Prism

ProPublica

PRX

Public Broadcasting Atlanta

PublicSource

Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting

Radio Ambulante

Religion News Service

Resolve Philly

Retro Report

Rochester Beacon

Rocky Mountain PBS

Sahan Journal

Salish Current

San Antonio Heron

San Antonio Report

San Francisco Public Press

San Jose Spotlight

Scalawag

Science Friday

Science News

Searchlight New Mexico

Shelterforce

Sierra Nevada Ally

SJV Water

Sludge

Solitary Watch

South Dakota News Watch

South Side Weekly

Southerly

Spotlight PA

St. Louis Public Radio

Street Sense

Texas Observer

The 19th*

The 74

The Austin Bulldog

The Badger Project

The Beacon

The Bedford Citizen

The Center for Investigative Reporting

The Charlotte News

THE CITY

The Conversation US

The Counter

The Crime Report

The Current

The Current Media

The DC Line

The Devil Strip

The Forward

The Frisc

The Frontier

The Fuller Project

The GroundTruth Project

The Hechinger Report

The Hummel Report

The Intercept

The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists

The Land

The Lens

The Local Reporter

The Maine Monitor

The Marjorie

The Markup

The Marshall Project

The Narwhal

The Nevada Independent

The Nonprofit Quarterly

The Record North Shore

The Reporters

The Salt Lake Tribune

The Texas Tribune

The Trace

The Tyler Loop

The UpTake

The Utah Investigative Journalism Project

The War Horse

The Water Desk

Threshold

Tradeoffs

TucsonSentinel

Type Investigations

Underscore

Virginia Center for Investigative Journalism

Voice of OC

Voice of San Diego

Voices of Monterey Bay

VTDigger

Washington Monthly

Wausau Pilot and Review

WDET

West View Media

WFAE

WFYI

WGBH

WHYY

Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism

WITF

WitnessLA

WJCT

WNIN

WyoFile

Yale Environment 360

YES! Media

YR Media



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