

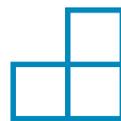


Institute for
Nonprofit News

2020 Impact Report



Within 10 years, independent, nonprofit newsrooms will produce a significant share of the news consumed by most Americans about our civic life, and that news will flow from newsrooms that reflect the full diversity of the communities they serve.



Institute for
Nonprofit News

A new era in news

Over the last decade, the Institute for Nonprofit News (INN) has worked to establish a vibrant, sustainable nonprofit news ecosystem. In 2020 we saw both how far that work has come and how powerful it can be.

When the American public needed us the most — with the Covid-19 pandemic, protests demanding racial justice, and a deeply divisive election — the nonprofit news sector reached a new level of impact. With more than 2,500 journalists grounded in newsrooms across the country, the nonprofit news field demonstrated that it can:

- **Provide** individuals and communities with trusted and essential information.
- **Share** expert, in-depth and investigative reporting to help build an understanding of complex issues.
- **Contribute** facts and context to the public conversation, from local to global.
- **Bring** a diversity of voices to news coverage.
- **Help** millions of citizens vote, volunteer and engage in public life.

Of equal importance, 2020 affirmed that sustainable business models exist for journalism rooted in civic purpose rather than profit.

INN creates an ecosystem where new forms of public service journalism are being discovered and developed, and many of the nation's strongest journalists are supported through this network. While the news industry as a whole remains in crisis, the story of nonprofit news is growth, resilience, and invention.

To support the incredible individuals and organizations doing the work of nonprofit news and ensure this field grows even stronger, in 2020 INN:

- **Generated** more than \$10 million for public interest reporting, through collective fundraising and revenue-building programs.
- **Provided** more than 2,800 participants with training, coaching and growth tools to support public service journalism and help civic leaders save local news.
- **Strengthened** public trust and journalism standards, vetting nearly 300 news organizations for fact-based reporting and helping more than 100 strengthen editorial independence and financial transparency practices.
- **Established** the first baseline research for measuring diversity, equity and inclusion in nonprofit news.
- **Expanded** programs to fight racism and inequity in news organizations and coverage and build more inclusive career leadership paths.
- **Engaged** more than 30 newsrooms in reporting collaborations that increase the power of their journalism and heighten public attention to critical issues.
- **Filled** in news deserts. INN coached and provided shared services for nearly 60 news startup founders and directly helped 25 organizations launch through fiscal sponsorship and expert business support.

The next few years will define the future of our free press, for generations. Nonprofit newsrooms are shaping this new era in news by restoring trusted reporting, the coverage that communities count on and engage with, and the facts and understanding around which people can come together. We invite you to read how we're doing it, and join us, in reimagining and rebuilding news as a public good.

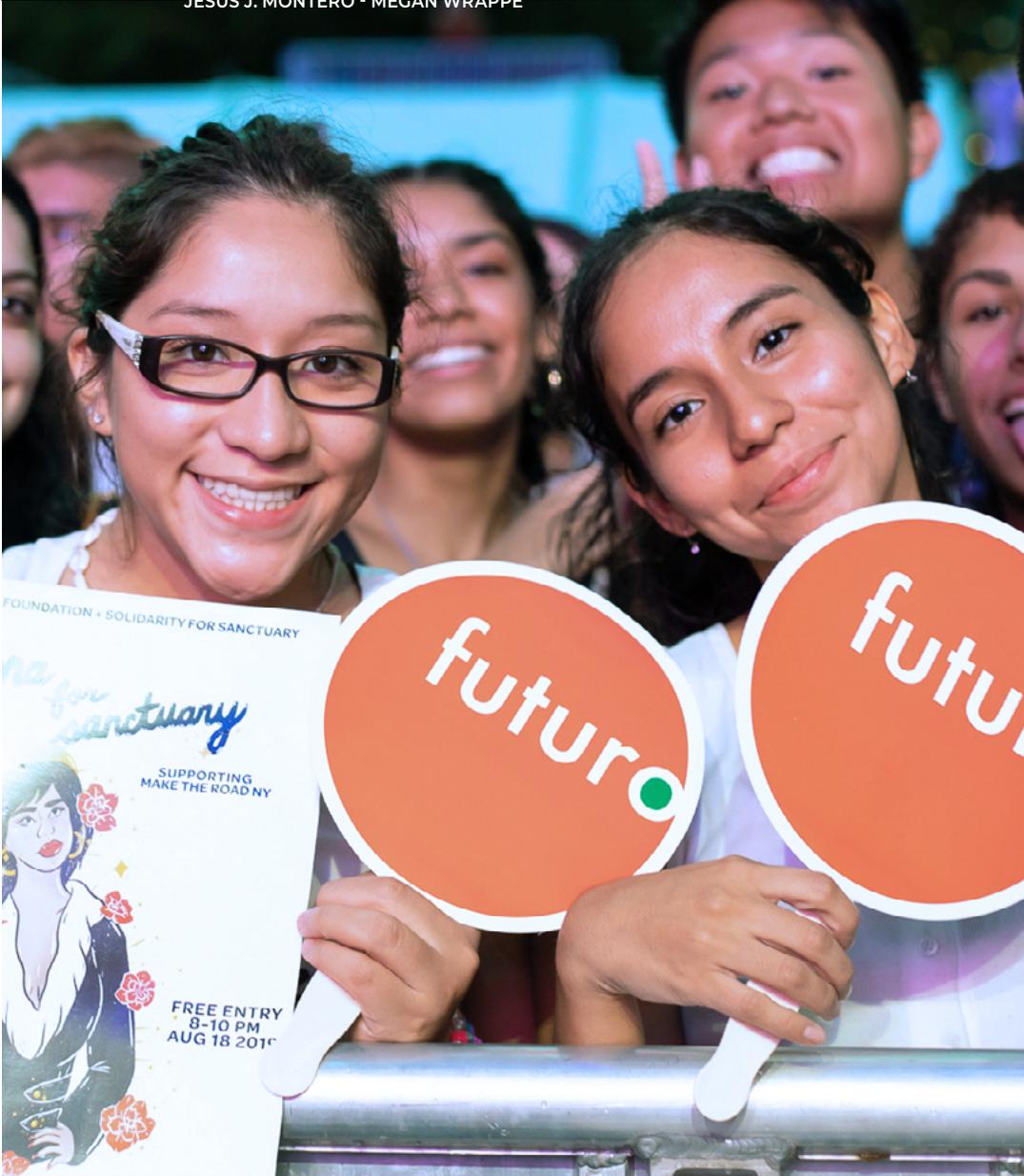


Sue Cross
Executive Director & CEO
Institute for Nonprofit News



Futuro Media was a media partner for this concert supporting immigrant rights in New York City (pre-pandemic).

JESUS J. MONTERO - MEGAN WRAPPE



The Future of Media in a Changing America

INN accelerates and shapes the emerging field of nonprofit news, which empowers *everyone* to participate in public affairs.

Where INN members thrive, informed communities debate critical issues, facts hold, citizens vote, and abuses of power are challenged. Our work is a catalyst for democratic action everywhere.

Our movement was sparked by the collapse of traditional media and informed by the reality that old models no longer work. The truth is, they never worked well enough for many communities. Out of this disruption, we are creating something new and better designed for the challenges of our times.

INN's more than 300 member organizations generate some of the most innovative and highest quality reporting available. From national award-

winning organizations like ProPublica and Reveal at the Center for Investigative Reporting to statewide news hubs like CalMatters, WyoFile and VTDigger to organizations serving local communities, like the New Haven Independent and Pittsburgh's Public Source, and communities of color such as Scalawag and Sahan Journal, our members enable more substantive participation in the world.

And we are just getting started.

Yes, there's a crisis in media. And yes, nonprofit news is bucking the trends.

Ninety-three percent of news startups under the INN umbrella make it through their first five years and continue to grow, a rate of success that would be the envy of venture capitalists. In a little over a decade, our membership has grown tenfold, from 27 to

more than 300 news outlets. With 2,500 journalists spanning the country, the INN network now provides reporting on a scale similar to National Public Radio and its member stations.

The INN network produces deep explanatory and investigative reporting that has been dropped by many for-profit media. The network also produces reporting of high relevance for communities poorly served by traditional, ad-centric newsrooms.

INN member newsrooms are regular winners of Pulitzers, Polks and Peabody awards, and a disproportionate share of most national and local citations celebrating excellence in journalism.

INN members' growth runs counter to the continued decline of traditional U.S. newspapers, which have cut tens of thousands

TucsonSentinel reporter Paul Ingram photographed a protest at the site where the Trump administration was building a 30-foot-border wall along the protected Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge, near Sasabe, Arizona.

JOHN DE DIOS



of jobs, leaving behind more than 1,800 “news deserts.” This collapse is correlated with the escalation of partisanship, mistrust of the media, the spread of misinformation, and the inability to collectively address issues ranging from the Covid-19 pandemic and racial injustice to climate change.

If you want to know what’s happening in your neighborhood, state capital or around the world, a nonprofit news source is often your best entry point.

The INN difference

While admiring and partnering with many for-profit media institutions, we believe **key differentiators make nonprofit news central to the future of journalism.** These include:

Editorial focus: Nonprofit newsrooms prioritize reporting that meets public needs but is challenging to produce, including investigative work to hold governments and companies accountable and robust local coverage that is independent and inclusive.

Trust: Independent, transparent, and community-centric rather than shareholder-focused, nonprofit news focuses on facts and can restore public trust in media.

Sustainability: Nonprofit news organizations are supported by the people they serve and are more resilient than many for-profit entities.

Collaboration: A culture of collaboration enables this nationwide network 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 -- building knowledge far beyond their own audience.

We’re not cavalier. We know it is challenging to launch and grow nonprofit news outlets, that every day requires innovation and determination. But nonprofit news is reinventing public service journalism and expanding its impact year after year. And we have a good idea why.

Our members are the epitome



“Until last year, I was just a journalist. I didn’t know anything about nonprofit organizations. I’ve received so much through INN and the network: coaching on business strategies, NewsMatch funding to help us get off the ground, a COVID relief grant from Facebook, and now the Major Gifts Training program. What I like the most about the network is how everyone is open to sharing knowledge and you can call up or email or have a Zoom chat with other colleagues who are running nonprofits or doing amazing work.”

MUKHTAR IBRAHIM, Founder & Executive Editor, Sahar Journal

Sahar Journal is the only digital newsroom dedicated to providing news reporting for and about the expanding population of immigrants and refugees in Minnesota.

“I feel like INN is a colleague. When you are the executive director of a small organization, you need other hands, other brains to help you think through your processes and also your growth. You feel like you’re in the wilderness by yourself, and INN is like the oasis in the desert – there’s somebody over there who can help me.



The work we do is incredibly taxing but also incredibly necessary for our community. Getting it right is not a matter of ego, it’s a matter of service.”

CANDICE FORTMAN,
Executive Director, Outlier Media

Outlier Media reports information to empower residents of Detroit to hold landlords and government officials accountable. Outlier recently added an Arabic-language reporter with funding facilitated through INN.

of grit, resilience, and savvy. Brilliance too. These entrepreneurial journalists go beyond solo reporting to invest in building news organizations that last.

INN has an unparalleled depth of knowledge. Grounded in hard data from the field and the experience of our diverse membership, INN understands the state of the field -- what’s working, what isn’t, and what’s possible now.

We use that informed perspective to guide strategic investments provided by our philanthropic partners to make a critical difference. Driven by a flow of real-time information, we are continuously adapting to the opportunities of an evolving field rather than making singular bets.

What matters most

No one knows the needs of nonprofit news better than INN and its 300 members. Our services are designed to build opportunities with the most transformative potential. Our annual INN Index study and daily work with newsroom innovators give INN a finger on the

pulse of the field and the ability to quickly design programs that build strong news providers. Accordingly, each of **INN’s top priorities contributes to the overarching goal of journalistic excellence:**

Elevate journalism as a philanthropic priority. The core distinction of nonprofit news’ business models is that they are sustained by philanthropic contributions, rather than primarily advertising revenue. That requires a social redefinition of news from something we purchase (or get for free) to something we contribute to and invest in as a shared public good. Since 2016, INN members have raised more than \$150 million from 2.3 million individual donors in the NewsMatch matching-gift program. This initiative is one of the most ambitious collaborative fundraising campaigns in the field of journalism, raising more than \$21 million in pooled matching funds from 17 national and more than 300 local funders. With our core partners, INN is now evolving the program to leverage its success in generating individual and

institutional philanthropy and transforming how communities sustain journalism for years to come. In addition, INN provides a Network Philanthropy Center, with expert coaching and a range of services that help newsrooms build sophisticated development programs to find, retain and expand the foundations of major giving in support of public service news. The Center launched in 2020 and already has helped hundreds of news sites amplify public support for their journalism.

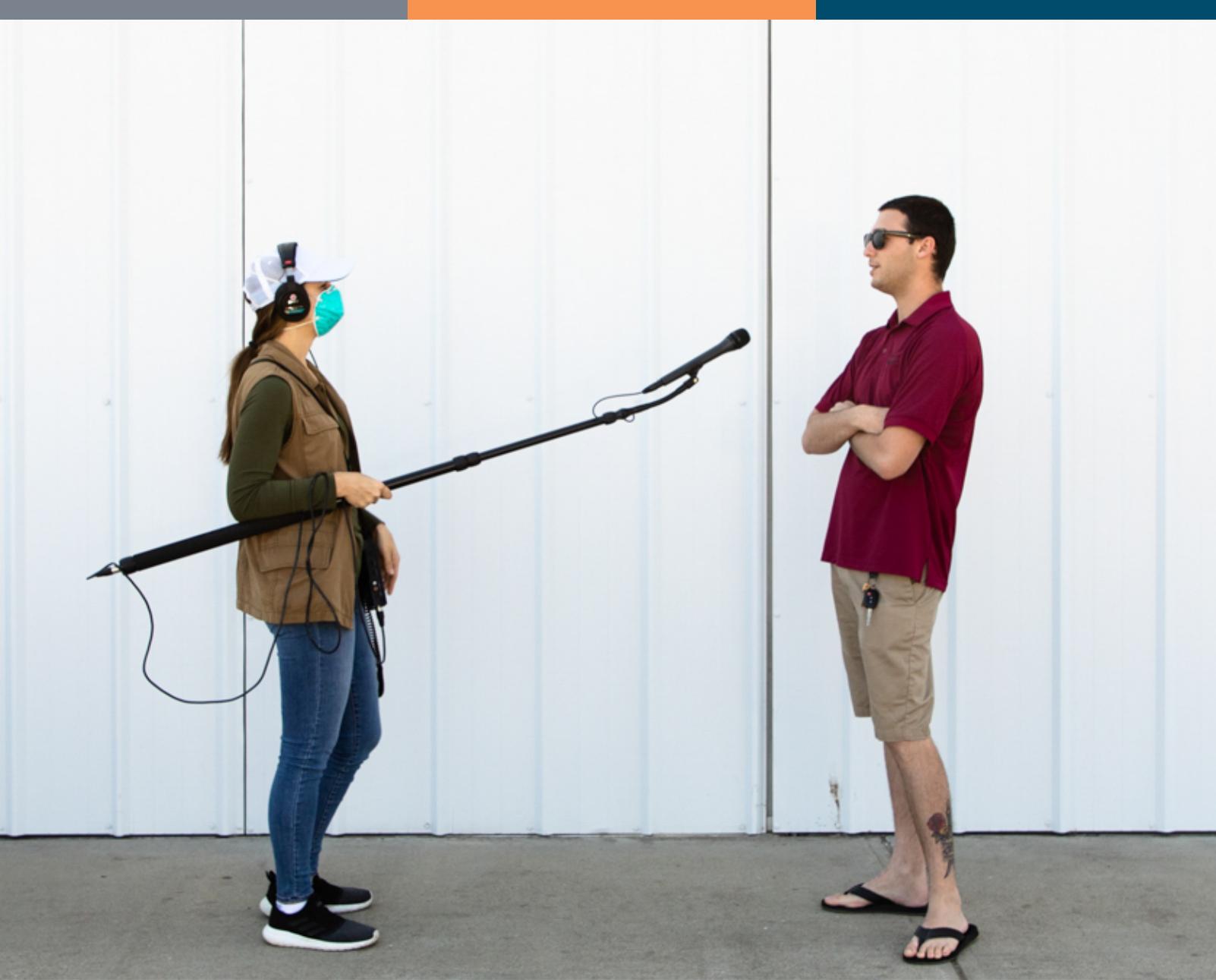
Position diversity, equity and inclusion as field norms. To fulfill journalism’s fundamental promise of supporting informed communities, and not just those prioritized by advertisers, INN is elevating diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) standards within our organization and across our network. Many INN members are leaders in DEI work, while others are grappling with issues ranging from attracting and retaining diverse talent to rethinking the standards that enable nonprofit news to be anti-racist, inclusive, and equitable.



“It’s a hard time to be a journalist in this country in an industry in trouble. It’s especially challenging as a cofounder of a news startup. INN really presented a lifeboat this past year and a place we could talk to other newsroom leaders going through the same things. Having connections with people, finding resources that others found useful, getting answers to questions about everything from newsletter software to freelancer rates — all of that is so valuable.”

NISSA RHEE, Executive Director
& Co-Founder, Borderless Magazine

Based in Chicago, Borderless Magazine is a women- and BIPOC-run nonprofit news outlet reimagining immigration journalism with a lens on justice.



ZOË MEYERS

Investigative reporter Mary Plummer of inewsource records an interview for radio in San Diego, Calif.

We are elevating dialogue across the field, expanding training programs and data collection to track DEI trends in nonprofit news. Within INN, we are working to better align our staff, leadership, and board with the standards we aspire to meet, and to ensure that we are a welcoming, relevant network organization for BIPOC-led nonprofit news organizations.

Sponsor smart experimentation that moves the field forward. Over the past decade, the pool of knowledge about nonprofit news has grown exponentially. We see the emergence of proven, replicable models that demonstrate how nonprofit news organizations can be structured to thrive in a wide range of circumstances, supporting a diversity of communities and objectives. And yet, it is still a field in formation and there is an immense amount to learn. INN members pool their data and experience to work as an innovation and learning lab. It is a period of fertile experimentation, as we find new ways to support



“There are not many bright spots in American journalism now, but the explosive growth of nonprofit journalism is due in no small part to INN’s leadership. The tenfold increase in INN membership in the past few years didn’t happen by accident. It’s a result of the services offered, the value of the network, the trusted relationship with members, and the sensitivity of INN leadership in doing their jobs. INN has put a marker in the ground for reader support as the business model for the next generation of great journalism.”

STEVE KATZ, Publisher,
Mother Jones

Founded in 1976, Mother Jones is America’s longest-running investigative news organization and reaches more than 10 million people each month across multiple media platforms.

*INN is designed around principles of networking and peer-to-peer exchange.
When any one organization makes a leap forward, others have the opportunity to build on success.*

journalism and meet community needs. Essential issues that need to be explored now include new uses of technology to help consumers find news they trust designing collaborations and partnerships to expand the reach and impact of shared reporting, and new ways that journalism can meet consumers' interests in building strong communities.

Collaborate and commit to high standards. The INN community shares commitments to trust, transparency and high standards for quality journalism. Following a year in which political interest groups financed more than 1,200 sites mimicking local news, this has never been more important. INN network newsrooms inform with facts and work for the benefit of their readers and communities rather

than any particular cause or party. They pledge editorial independence from advocacy or influence, let the public know their major funders and limit anonymous gifts. They also collaborate and share their journalism itself, contributing nonprofit news reporting to thousands of commercial media outlets. By working together and sharing news as a public trust, they bring the benefits of reliable information to millions of Americans and are helping to build shared understanding of our common challenges.

Invest in talent and the human capital to drive sustained change. For some nonprofit news leaders, the challenge is how to make the leap from "reporter" to "publisher," which requires a very different set of business skills. For others, there is a challenge in

helping newer organizations rise to high standards of journalism. INN invests deeply in talent, recognizing that it is individual leaders and their teams who will create the future of journalism. Our role is not to answer all of the questions, but to continually support -- through training, mentoring, and collective engagement -- the leaders who will take nonprofit news from a grand experiment to a pillar of American democracy.

INN is designed around principles of networking and peer-to-peer exchange. As a result, as these and other investments reveal opportunity and build capacity, all learning is widely distributed across the network. When any one organization makes a leap forward, others have the opportunity to build on success and adapt inno-

vations to their particular circumstances.

We are leading into a new and brighter future for news

In this year of crisis, millions of Americans discovered they could depend on nonprofit news. From the pandemic through racial reckoning, through political polarization, economic stresses and efforts to recover: independent, nonpartisan newsrooms proved themselves an information safety net.

INN and its members are creating a strong foundation -- a new root system -- for American journalism based on knowledge, shared research and resources, high standards and open values.

Having grown tenfold over the past decade, **INN has an**

ambitious vision for the future -- another cycle of tenfold growth through 2030, resulting in an American field force of more than 20,000 public service journalists. While most easily measured by scale, this growth is fundamentally about quality in our news coverage.

Within 10 years, independent, nonprofit newsrooms will produce a significant share of the news consumed by most Americans about our civic life, and that news will flow from newsrooms that reflect the full diversity of the communities they serve.

As INN and our nonprofit news network grows, our goal is to spark a new era of journalism equipped for the social complexities, technologies and defining issues of the coming decades.

2020 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

During 2020, 80 percent of INN's expenses went to member programming and services, with 13 percent of those program costs being direct pass-throughs to member organizations or services fees paid on their behalf.

Programs expanded to serve record levels of participation among INN members and journalists, as well as the launch of new field-building initiatives: the Network Philanthropy Center and News Giving Roadmap, the GNI-INN Sponsorship Lab and a spring NewsMatch campaign to fund COVID crisis coverage. Some planned programming and related expenses were delayed by COVID and emergency program needs and carried forward into 2021. Earned revenue shifted from technical support fees to fiscal sponsorship, as INN sunsetted the INN Labs tech design service in Q4, moved resources to higher-impact programs and waived training event fees due to exceptional member needs throughout this crisis year. INN shifted from in-person to virtual events and will carry some contracted meeting facility costs forward into coming years when in-person meetings can resume.

INN retained a management reserve within best-practice guidelines, to ensure continuation of member services in case of revenue volatility. Totals exclude fiscally sponsored projects, which are broken out separately. The financials of sponsored projects also reflect continued growth in the field.

REVENUE	FY 2020	
No Donor Restrictions		
Contributions	\$ 49,721	
Grants	\$1,190,00	
Investment Income	\$990	
Membership dues	\$118,635	
Other Earned Revenue	\$529,728	
With Donor Restrictions		
Contributions	\$2,053	
Grants	\$2,462,305	
TOTAL REVENUE	\$4,569,232	
EXPENSES		
Program	\$2,521,071	80.164%
Administrative	\$241,149	7.71%
Fundraising	\$364,019	11.64%
Total Expenses	\$3,126,239	
NET CHANGE in ASSETS	\$1,442,993	
NET ASSETS		
Net Assets - Prior Year	\$ 2,683,049	
Net Change in Assets	\$1,442,993	
Net Assets - Current Year	\$ 4,126,042	
Management Reserve	\$1,029,000	
Net Assets - Available Cash	\$ 3,097,042	
% of Earned Rev. of Total Operating Costs (Exp.)	16.94%	
Fiscally Sponsored Projects		
Sponsored Project Revenue	\$1,606,323	
Sponsored Project Expenses	\$1,472,650	
Net all Fiscally Sponsored Projects		
Funds Released to Separated FS Organizations	\$(217,772)	

FISCAL SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

INN helps launch and support news organizations by providing fiscal sponsorship, a program under which INN serves as their 501(c)3 umbrella organization and handles their finances. Sponsorship funds shown here are accounted for separately and not mixed with INN's operating funds. Full financials, tax filings, annual reports and audits can be found online at: <https://inn.org/about/financials/> During 2020 INN sponsored 26 projects and helped five graduate to independent operation.

FISCALLY SPONSORED PROJECTS

Breckenridge Texan
Cityside
Documented
Evanston Roundtable
Georgia News Lab
Gray Matter Media
Hartford Guardian
Independent Investigative Network
Migratory Notes
Mississippi Center for Investigative Reporting
North Carolina Local News Lab
Open Campus Media
The Rochester Beacon
Salish Current
Solitary Watch
The Land
The Objective
The Record North Shore
Tradeoffs
True Speech
Underscore Media Collaboration
Virginia Center for Investigative Journalism
Voices of Monterey Bay
The War Horse
WEHOville

SUPPORTERS

We deeply thank all of the supporters who made a significant contribution to our work in 2019-2020.

FOUNDATIONS

\$500,000 +

Democracy Fund
John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
John S. And James L. Knight Foundation

\$100,000 - \$499,999,

Bernard and Anne Spitzer Charitable Trust
Facebook Journalism Project
Google News Initiative
Inasmuch Foundation
Open Society Foundations
Robert R. McCormick Foundation
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

\$10,000 to \$99,999

Edwards Family Fund
Field Foundation of Illinois
Great Lakes Protection Fund
Joyce Foundation
Park Foundation
The Peter and Carmen Lucia Buck Foundation
Present Progressive Fund
Walton Family Foundation

CONFERENCE & EVENT SPONSORS

DigestBuilder	Newspack
Facebook Journalism Project	Patch
Microsoft	PressPatron
	Trust Project

INDIVIDUAL

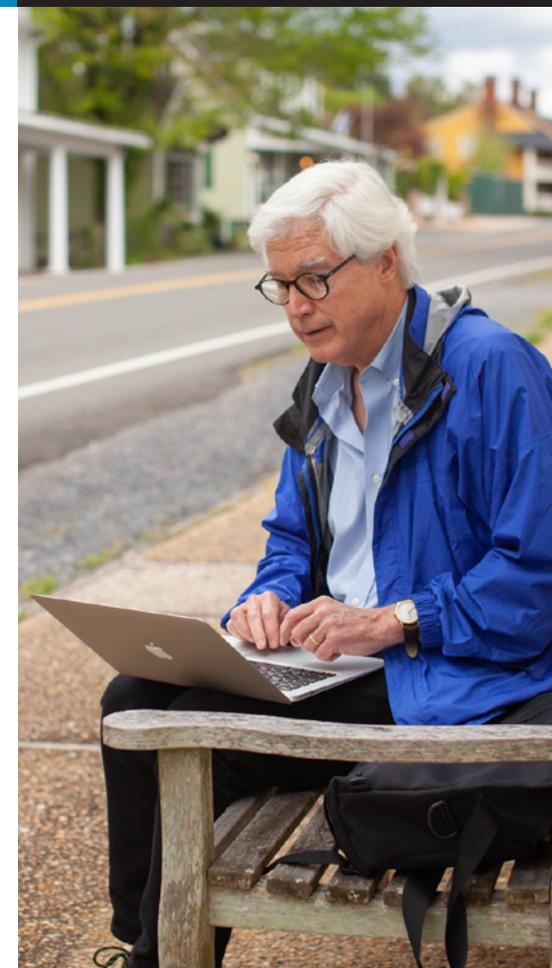
We are very grateful to these individuals and families who gave substantial gifts in 2019-2020 to advance our work.

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Zachary Arnold	Ann Cross
Monya Baker	Sue Cross
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Leslie Schwabacher	Hsiu Mei Wong

The Institute for Nonprofit News strengthens and supports more than 300 independent news organizations in a new kind of media network: nonprofit, nonpartisan and dedicated to public service. See: inn.org.



LUKE CHRISTOPHER

Foothills Forum profiled Tim Carrington, who launched a training program in economics journalism for the World Bank.



MAPLE LLOYD WALKER

Pascal Sabino is a reporter for Block Club Chicago who covers the West side of Chicago.

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ALISON COOPER

The Colorado News Collaborative team brings together Colorado media outlets to strengthen high-quality local journalism.



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