



Institute for
Nonprofit News

2018 Annual Report

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Dear friends of INN:

As the Institute for Nonprofit News enters its 10th anniversary year, this annual report offers a time to reflect on a decade of progress.

What started with 27 news organizations in 2009 has grown nearly tenfold. We had projected INN would reach 200 newsroom members by 2021. Instead, we're nearing the 200 mark at the end of 2018.

Even more inspiring is this: It's a well-known benchmark that half of all entrepreneurial startups fail within five years. Not in INN. Fewer than 10 percent of our members have had to close their doors. We believe INN's work in educating journalistic entrepreneurs is making a huge impact.

INN is needed now more than ever. The growth rate of nonprofit newsrooms is accelerating, growing 24 percent last year. That's twice the rate of our first five years. And our members' operations are becoming more diverse and sophisticated. INN continues to support them along the way.

Last year, we partnered with the Emma Bowen Foundation to place 20 interns of color in our newsrooms. And we trained a cohort of 10 members in developing major gifts programs. They raised more than \$1.7 million during the program and continue to build on those successes.

To track this growth and change, INN created the INN Index – the first consistent, ongoing survey of the nonprofit news field. The report provides benchmarks around organizations' operations and strengths.

INN is proud to support this emerging journalism ecosystem that is bringing more trusted public service journalism to communities all over the nation. We are truly grateful for the partners, philanthropists and other supporters who are helping advance this innovative network.

Here's to the next 10 years. Together with you, we are building a strong, sustainable and diverse kind of American news media.



Laura Frank
INN Board Chair
VP Journalism
Rocky Mountain PBS



Sue Cross
Executive Director & CEO
Institute for Nonprofit News



Building a new American news media

INN's cause is the news itself — quality journalism. In 2018, INN membership grew 24 percent, to 190 news organizations. Editorially independent, transparent and dedicated to public service, these newsrooms pose a promising alternative to the decline of commercial media and the confusion sown by social media.

Over the next 10 years, INN's goal is to generate at least a tenfold increase in the reporting power of these newsrooms — growing the field from some 2,000 editorial staff to more than 20,000 field journalists by 2030.

With this goal in mind, INN's work in 2018 was organized around four strategic aims:

The **Innovation Network** strengthens every member and speeds nonprofit news growth across the field.

Revenue & business capacity programs propel the work of member newsrooms to build sustainable revenue for public service newsrooms.

INN amplifies the public benefit of news coverage by organizing **collaborations and distribution** partnerships so journalists' best work reaches more people.

INN is finding and training the publishers of the future, building the diversity and skills of the field through a robust set of **leadership & diversity** programs.

Here is a closer look at 2018 programs and services in each area:

Innovation Network

- INN serves as a **network-builder** for the field, making 50-100 connections each week among nonprofit news leaders so they can compare common challenges, share solutions and support each other. Real-time information exchanges, peer groups and 1:1 relationships spread innovation in this entrepreneurial field.
- **Standards & Best Practices:** INN sets standards of editorial independence and transparency that build trust in nonprofit news. In 2018, INN helped more than 75 news organizations adopt or update ethical standards and explain them to the public. INN also works with foundations and partners on finding ways to strengthen fact-based news and public trust.
- **Shared Services:** INN brings its members the leverage of shared resources, saving time and money so they can grow faster and focus on what they do best: public service journalism.
- **INN Labs**, a five-person news technology team, supported more than 200 news sites through open-source tool and product development, management of the Largo WordPress theme, website redesign and support. In 2018, 105 website design and consulting projects were completed for 45 organizations. Labs is self-supporting



Executive Editor Chuck Lewis looks over intern Cindy Choi as she edits a video in the Investigative Reporting Workshop. Choi is a graduate journalism student at American University.

and saves nonprofit newsrooms tech expense while improving their digital and mobile news presentations.

- **Fiscal sponsorship** aided the launch of the American Journalism Project and 19 other news organizations during 2018 by providing an umbrella 501(c)(3) for new and growing organizations. INN also helped more than 50 newsrooms access media insurance, legal, HR and other **business and editorial resources**.

Revenue & Business Capacity

- **Building business capacity in news:** INN helps journalists launch and grow nonprofit news organizations and build their business and nonprofit leadership skills. Training and coaching programs served more than 1,500 participants in 2018.

- **INN Days**, the largest annual gathering of nonprofit news leaders and the only training conference tailored to the field, built skills in sponsorship sales, HR, fundraising and leadership for some 165 executive directors and managers. Nearly 100 joined INN **Business Intensive** workshops on audience development. Hundreds of executive directors, editors and development directors also use weekly INNnovation Office Hours and Startup Sessions with INN's in-house professional business growth coach, or tap into INN's online [Startup Guide](#) for founders. In 2018, more than 55 new founders were trained in business and product development, audience and funding strategies.
- INN piloted a **Major Gifts Coaching** program in 2018 with 10 members. Within one year, they collectively raised more than \$1.7 million in net new revenue. The program is being expanded. INN also is a proud partner in **NewsMatch**, the largest grassroots fundraising initiative for journalism. INN qualifies applicants, provides technology and analysis help and works with partner organizations to build participants' fundraising capacity. Donations through the national campaign increased 11 percent between 2017 and 2018 for newsrooms that took part in both, bringing NewsMatch's multi-year total to more than \$14 million generated for nonprofit newsrooms.
- INN launched **INN Index**, the first comprehensive, repeatable survey of the growing field. INN Index measures growth indicators, operational practices and journalism focus across the field. It gives news leaders a way to benchmark their performance. It quickly became a research resource for foundations, universities and international organizations.

Collaboration & distribution

- **Helping news reach more people.** While people can find media in more places than ever, identifying and finding reliable news coverage is a greater challenge than ever. Distributing news across the many digital channels available today is one of the most daunting challenges for journalists.

INN helps member newsrooms build direct audience and expand news sharing through partner media. INN developed a workshop with the Medill School at Northwestern University to help newsrooms expand newsletters, social media and other direct audience-building measures. And it expanded Amplify, a pilot program in the Midwest that tests distribution channels. The INN Amplify program partnered with the Associated

Press, SmartNews, Patch and various cause organizations to extend news distribution to millions of added readers.

- **Collaborations:** Many INN members want to work with other media but don't have structures in place to organize collaborations or work through competitive issues. INN serves as a neutral party to frame and organize joint reporting projects. Through the Amplify program, INN established regular sharing among Midwest newsrooms and laid groundwork for news collaborations in health, environment and government accountability. More than 1,000 stories have been shared with more than 24 participating news sites.

Leadership & diversity

INN and its members are forging new career paths for tomorrow's news leaders. This emerging media field calls for evolving skill sets: a higher level of community outreach and the ability to develop new philanthropic and business models.

- The first cohort of the **INN Emerging Leaders Council** — rising leaders from across the U.S. — continued to meet and share challenges while INN developed an expanded program that adds skills training in product development.
- **Diversity, equity and inclusion:** INN works with the Emma Bowen Foundation, which promotes diversity in media and technology, to place paid interns of color at more than 20 nonprofits each year. INN also developed a business intern program with the University of Missouri and trained news leaders on managing diverse newsrooms and developing inclusive candidate pools. The number of INN members led by or serving communities of color has increased 150 percent to nearly 15 percent of the membership.
- **Recruiting resources:** INN works with professional recruiters to cultivate expertise in nonprofit news, organizes members for joint recruiting at journalism conferences, university job fairs and similar events.



High Country News contributing editor Graham Lee Brewer speaks with Willie Grayeyes while reporting on Navaho voter disenfranchisement in Utah.



CT Mirror reporter Keith Phaneuf stands out for his ability to analyze and explain Connecticut's complex state budget, where pension liability is a key issue.

Photo credit:
Cloe Poisson

More watchdog reporting, More representative reporting

How INN field-building generates public benefits

When people in Connecticut learn how their tax dollars are being spent, they're often reading the work of Keith Phaneuf, widely regarded as the best state budget reporter in the state. Phaneuf helped Connecticut residents make sense out of competing proposals to pay for transportation needs. He showed how closing sales tax loopholes would hit low-income families. Phaneuf challenged gubernatorial candidates' budget proposals as unrealistic and disclosed that the president of the University of Connecticut banked excessive amounts of vacation time.

As commercial news media cut coverage of state government, The Connecticut Mirror was able to hire Phaneuf and keep him in the statehouse.

This kind of news coverage relies on philanthropic and public support. Helping INN members fund teams that bring deep expertise and diverse experience to their reporting is one way INN strengthens the reporting and trusted information available to communities across America.

The CT Mirror news budget that covers Phaneuf's salary was bolstered by more than \$85,000 in new funding that CT Mirror raised after participating in INN's Major Gifts Coaching program. Ten members shared a major gifts coach, tools and training to learn how to develop fundraising programs, from research to making the pitch. It is part of INN's program to help nonprofit newsrooms raise revenue and build the public support that produces public service journalism.

"The state budget crisis is a highly complex topic. It touches every family and every community in Connecticut. It is not easy to explain but is crucial for voters to understand," said CT Mirror CEO and Publisher Bruce Putterman. "No one explains it better than The Connecticut Mirror. And the more new money we can raise with our new skills in major giving, the more explaining we can do."

While Keith holds political leadership accountable on state budget issues, his colleague Maya Moore, a student at the University of Connecticut, was learning the ropes as a CT Mirror reporting intern through INN's Emma

Courtney Fong was drawn to CalMatters mission-driven coverage of her home state and joined CalMatters after working as an INN/Emma Bowen Foundation intern.

Photo credit:
Anne Wernikoff for CalMatters



Bowen Foundation Fellowship. INN places interns of color at more than 20 news nonprofits each year, working with the Emma Bowen Foundation and other partners to create new career paths in journalism and diverse staffing that reflects all communities.

During her summer at CT Mirror, Moore profiled a UConn professor who is an expert in [reparations for African Americans](#), explored why Connecticut's struggling dairy farmers are [resisting efforts to farm hemp](#) and covered a [protest against the rollback of federal health care protections for transgender people](#).

"Maya brought prodigious talent, a tireless work ethic, a delightful personality, and, most importantly, a different perspective to our newsroom," Putterman said. "This captures the essence of the INN/Emma Bowen partnership."

The feeling was mutual — in a thank you card to the newsroom at the end of the summer, Moore wrote, "I have never felt more seen or valued as a journalist of color. Thank you for everything."

Across the country, another Emma Bowen intern graduated to a full-time staff position at CalMatters, a nonprofit committed to explaining how California's state government works. Courtney Fong started at CalMatters after her junior year at Sacramento State

University, drawn by the sense of mission in a nonprofit newsroom covering her home state.

Fong "quickly became an important member of the team, using her journalism education and talents as a researcher to develop audience lists that have expanded our reach and brand awareness throughout California," said CalMatters Membership Director Trevor Eischen.

Fong worked part-time through her senior year and after she graduated, CalMatters hired her in a new role as marketing coordinator. Among her accomplishments: promoting CalMatters' award-winning 2018 voter guide, helping create a sophisticated digital approach to targeting audiences across California, and contributing to the recent growth in newsletter subscribers.

"I already felt part of the team and with the 2020 election coming up ... I really wanted to be part of it," Fong said of moving from intern to staff member. "I can learn in a growing nonprofit newsroom."

Fong said she appreciates the long-term nature of the program. Most internships are for consecutive years, and interns become part of an alumni group that continues to connect and learn. "Emma Bowen really opened the door to a lot of opportunities for me, being part of the alumni group, being able to understand the media industry," she said. "It's been great."

2018 Financials

INN's net assets grew from \$1.3 million at the start of 2018 to \$1.9 million at the end, reflecting growth in programs, membership and funding. This enabled INN to expand programs and services to \$1.6 million over the course of the year, supporting membership that grew by a third and even greater levels of program participation as the field expanded.

INN is funded primarily by foundation grants, as an intermediary organization providing network-wide services and training. Earned revenue covered 40% of operating costs in 2018, primarily from service fees. Combined, these funding sources provided a resilient financial base and allowed INN to maintain management reserves within best-practice guidelines.

Totals exclude fiscally sponsored projects, which are broken out separately. The financials of sponsored projects also reflect continued growth in the field.

| Revenue | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| No Donor Restrictions | |
| Contributions | \$25,087 |
| Grants | \$1,035,116 |
| Investment Income | \$41 |
| Earned Revenue | \$635,896 |
| With Donor Restrictions | |
| Grants | \$510,000 |
| Total Revenue | \$2,206,140 |

| Expenses | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|--------|
| Program | \$1,304,236 | 81.18% |
| Administrative | \$171,448 | 10.67% |
| Fundraising | \$130,923 | 8.15% |
| Total Expenses | \$1,606,607 | |

NET CHANGE in ASSETS **\$599,533**

| Net Assets | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Net Assets - 2017 | \$1,309,476 |
| Net Change in Assets | \$599,533 |
| Net Assets - 2018 | \$1,909,009 |
| Management Reserve | \$1,090,740 |
| Net Assets - Available Cash | \$818,269 |

Fiscally Sponsored Projects

| | |
|--|--------------------|
| Sponsored Project Revenue | \$4,159,156 |
| Sponsored Project Expenses | \$1,763,821 |
| Net all Fiscally Sponsored Projects | \$2,395,335 |

INN has helped launch 35 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.

INN sponsored ten new projects in 2018, bringing the total during 2018 to 19 organizations:

| | | |
|-----------------------------|--|------------------------|
| American Journalism Project | Independent Investigative Network | Sembra Media |
| Block Club Chicago | International Consortium for Investigative Journalism (ICIJ) | Solitary Watch |
| Breckenridge Texan | Migratory Notes | The Rochester Beacon |
| Documented | Montana Free Press | The War Horse |
| Gray Matter Media | News Revenue Hub | True Speech |
| Hartford Guardian | San Jose Spotlight | Underscore |
| | | Voices of Monterey Bay |

Full financials, tax filings, annual reports and audits can be found online at: <https://inn.org/about/financials/>

Thank you to our Journalism partners & members

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KF KNIGHT
FOUNDATION

MacArthur
Foundation

OPEN SOCIETY
FOUNDATIONS

PARK
FOUNDATION

ROBERT R.
McCORMICK
FOUNDATION

INN Members

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| 100Reporters | Documented | Reporting | Northern Kentucky Tribune | The Center for Responsive Politics |
| Adirondack Explorer | East Lansing Info | Juvenile Justice Information Exchange | NOWCastSA | The Chronicle of Social Change |
| Alabama Initiative for Independent Journalism | Economic Hardship Reporting Project | KCUR | Ohio Center for Investigative Journalism | The Conversation US |
| Alhambra Source | ecoRI News | Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting | Oklahoma Watch | The Crime Report |
| Alicia Patterson Foundation | EdSource | KPBS | Orb | The CT Mirror |
| All Digitocracy | Energy News Network | KyForward | PA Post | The Daily Yonder |
| Anthropocene Magazine | Ensia | LkldNow | PassBlue | The Forward |
| Arizona Center for Investigative Reporting | FairWarning | Lower Cape Community Access Television | PBS NewsHour | The Frontier |
| Arkansas Nonprofit News Network | First Look Media Works | Madison365 | Philadelphia Public School Notebook | The Groundtruth Project |
| Aspen Journalism | Flint Beat | Maryland Matters | Pine Tree Watch | The Hartford Guardian |
| Austin Monitor | Florida Bulldog | Maryland Reporter | PolitiFact | The Hechinger Report |
| Baltimore Brew | Florida Center for Investigative Reporting | Midwest Center for Investigative Reporting | ProPublica | The Hummel Report |
| Bay Nature Institute | Food and Environment Reporting Network | Migratory Notes | Public Radio International | The Lens |
| Belt Magazine | Futuro Media | Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service | PublicSource | The Marshall Project |
| BenitoLink | G.W. Williams Center for Independent Journalism | MinnPost | Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting | The Nevada Independent |
| Better Government Association | Georgia Health News | Mission Local | Religion News Service | The New Food Economy |
| Block Club Chicago | Georgia News Lab | Mississippi Today | Retro Report | The Reporters Inc. |
| Borderzine | Global Investigative Journalism Network | Mongabay | Rivard Report | The Rochester Beacon |
| Breckenridge Texan | Grey Matter Media | Montana Free Press | Rocky Mountain PBS | The Seattle Globalist |
| Bridge Magazine | Grist | Mother Jones | San Francisco Public Press | The Trace |
| California Health Report | Hidden City Philadelphia | Mountain Independent | San Jose Spotlight | The Tyler Loop |
| CalMatters | High Country News | MuckRock | Scalawag | The War Horse |
| Carolina Public Press | Highlands Current | Nancy on Norwalk | Schuster Institute for Investigative Reporting | Threshold Podcast |
| Center for Public Integrity | Honolulu Civil Beat | National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting | Science News | Tucson Sentinel |
| Centro de Periodismo Investigativo | In These Times | National Institute on Money in Politics | Searchlight New Mexico | Twin Cities Media Alliance |
| Chalkbeat | Indigenous Media Freedom Alliance | National Parks Traveler | Sembra Media | Type Media Center |
| Charlottesville Tomorrow | inewsources | New England Center for Investigative Reporting | Shelterforce | Voice of Orange County |
| Chicago Reporter | InsideClimateNews | New Hampshire Center for Public Interest Journalism | Signcasts | Voice of San Diego |
| ChicagoTalks | Insider Louisville | New Haven Independent | Solitary Watch | Voices of Monterey Bay |
| City Bureau | International Consortium for Investigative Journalists | New Mexico In-Depth | Solutions Journalism Network | VTDigger |
| City Limits | InvestigateWest | News Revenue Hub | South Dakota News Watch | Washington Monthly |
| CivicStory | Investigative Network News & Documentaries | Next City | Southerly | Wausau Pilot and Review |
| Civil Eats | Investigative Post | NJ Spotlight | Southern Investigative Reporting Foundation | WDET |
| Coda Story | Investigative Reporting Workshop at American University | North Carolina Health News | St. Louis Public Radio | WFYI Public Media/Side Effects |
| Colorado Independent | Iowa Center for Public Affairs | North Suburban News | Tarbell | WHYY, Inc. |
| Connecticut Health Investigative Team | | | Texas Observer | Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism |
| Crosscut | | | Texas Tribune | WitnessLA |
| Current | | | The Austin Bulldog | Women's eNews |
| Delaware Currents | | | The Center for Investigative Reporting | WyoFile |
| | | | | Yale Environment 360 |
| | | | | YR Media |



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