

Colorado Media Project: Theory of Change

March 4, 2022

NORTH STAR VISION

All Coloradans have access to high-quality local news and information that they trust and use to learn about important issues facing their families, local communities, and the state, engage with their community, and participate in democracy.

LONG TERM GOAL

Colorado's local news and information ecosystem is more sustainable, collaborative, inclusive, and responsive to the public it serves.

THREE-YEAR PRIORITIES

Equity and Inclusion

Greater equity and inclusion in how Colorado's local news and information ecosystem engages with and serves communities of color, linguistically diverse communities, rural communities, and other historically marginalized communities.

Trusted Local News

Greater access to high-quality local coverage of important issues, providing Coloradans with critical information they want, trust, and need to engage in their communities, civic life, and democracy.

Sustainability and Efficiency

Stronger investment in local news by philanthropy, public funding sources, and news consumers, and more ecosystem-level opportunities that support efficient and sustainable community reporting at the local level.

OUTCOMES (1-3 years)

Stronger newsrooms

- More newsrooms implement practices that strengthen diversity, equity, and inclusion in newsroom practices, culture, and staffing.
- Newsrooms are better able to collaborate, innovate, and grow in ways that contribute to their efficiency and long-term sustainability and that strengthen access to local news among under-served communities.
- Newsrooms have the resources to expand their local coverage of important issues, particularly reporting that helps deepen understanding across communities, identifies solutions to key challenges facing communities, and supports civic and democratic participation.

More engaged communities

- Newsrooms develop more trusting and equitable relationships with the communities they serve.
- Communities -- particularly those that have been underrepresented or misrepresented in coverage -- have more influence in setting the news agenda, shaping the stories told about them, and informing efforts to strengthen the local news and information ecosystem (including CMP's activities).

More robust support for local news

- Funders strengthen their knowledge and understanding of local news and effective grantmaking strategies.
- More funders collaborate and coordinate resources to provide strategic support to Colorado's local news and information ecosystem.
- Key stakeholders work together to explore and help advance policy solutions that create sustainable revenue streams for local news organizations.
- More newsrooms grow their ability to raise funds from individual contributions.

ACTIVITIES

Support strategic grantmaking

- Serve as an intermediary that regrants funds to address gaps in how Colorado's local news and information ecosystem serves diverse communities.
- Use pooled funds to flexibly and opportunistically respond to ecosystem needs and gaps.
- Identify opportunities to deepen impact by triangulating multiple sources of support for grantees.

Support key levers for strengthening the local news and information ecosystem

- Support revenue-generating initiatives and pilot projects that contribute to newsrooms' long-term sustainability.
- Support ownership transitions, transformations, and growth opportunities that will help the ecosystem efficiently and effectively serve all of Colorado's diverse communities.
- Provide core operational support to COLab as a critical resource hub and capacity-builder for Colorado newsrooms, and identify opportunities for partnership and synergies between COLab and CMP to support newsroom capacity.

Facilitate conversations, connections, and opportunities

- Convene and work with grantees, funders, and other stakeholders to co-develop working groups, proposals, action plans, and funding requests that contribute towards a more efficient, inclusive, and collaborative local news and information ecosystem.
- Leverage CMP's local and national network to identify and facilitate opportunities to bring innovative pilots to Colorado.

Generate and share knowledge

- Identify and commission opportunities for new research or learning.
- Distill and elevate learning, innovations, and recommendations for purposes of informing the work of newsrooms, community groups, journalism funders, and other partners and stakeholders.
- Engage funders in learning opportunities and encourage greater investment in Colorado's local news and information ecosystem.

STRATEGIES

FUND

Pool funds and offer strategic grants to spur innovation, impact, equity, inclusion, and sustainability in Colorado's local news and information ecosystem.

CATALYZE

Facilitate catalytic cross-sector conversations and connections that surface new and sustainable approaches to address gaps in Colorado's local news and information ecosystem, combat mis/disinformation, and deepen civic participation.

ADVOCATE

Commission research, share learning, and leverage CMP's influence to bring more knowledge, allies, and resources into the movement to strengthen and reimagine local news and rebuild the public square.