



REIMAGINING COLORADO'S PUBLIC SQUARE

What does a healthy local news & information ecosystem look like in 2028 — and how do we get there?

*Colorado Media Project's
full body of research and current
activities are online at
coloradomediaproject.com*

INTRODUCTION

Why should concerned citizens and residents, including state and local officials, care about what's happening in Colorado's local journalism industry? What new models and trends are transforming Colorado's local news landscape — for better and worse? And who must be involved in ensuring that all Colorado communities have equitable access to trustworthy local civic news and information that equips and engages all residents — particularly those historically left out and left behind — to shape the future of our state?

Since the summer of 2018, Colorado Media Project (CMP) has supported and worked alongside a broad-based coalition of civic leaders, students, academics, philanthropists, journalists, business leaders, librarians, technologists, and other local residents to study the market forces behind the decline in local news; to understand new opportunities and threats introduced by technology and social platforms; to survey Coloradans on their news and information interests, needs, and habits; and to help launch and test new approaches for sustaining and transforming local newsrooms — and engaging a broader range of residents in the future of local news in our state.



September 15, 2023

About this Paper

This white paper is an update to CMP's 2019 report, *Local News is a Public Good*¹, which for the first time provided an in-depth look at local news ownership in Colorado, quantified the declining number of Colorado journalists and primary news sources and its impact on Colorado communities, and laid out five approaches that the state's people, communities, funders and public officials could take to sustain and evolve local public- service journalism. This report refreshes key data points; spotlights what we know Colorado communities want, need, and expect from local news; and challenges all of us to rise to the occasion.

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COLORADO MEDIA PROJECT

While many mission-driven groups and individuals are hard at work across the sector, for the past five years Colorado Media Project has attempted to serve as a center of gravity for engaging non-journalists — especially those from underserved communities — in this pivotal conversation. CMP serves as a **catalyst, funder, and advocate** for innovations that make Colorado's local news ecosystem more sustainable, collaborative, trusted, equitable and accountable to the public it serves. Since 2018 CMP has raised more than \$6 million for local news directly, and helped to rally millions more in direct grants and impact investments for Colorado's local news producers and civic media ecosystem. In 2022 alone, CMP provided more than \$772,000 in direct grants to 62 newsrooms, ecosystem capacity builders, and projects across Colorado.

¹ "Local News is a Public Good: Public Pathways for Supporting Coloradans' Civic News and Information Needs in the 21st Century," Colorado Media Project, 2019. <https://coloradomediaproject.com/public-good>



Participants at Migrahack Colorado discuss data-based approaches to reporting on immigration. (Colorado Media Project)

Global Trends Shaping Local News and Civic Engagement

A lot has changed in Colorado's local news ecosystem since 2018. There's more collaboration among newsrooms, more focus on reaching digital audiences, and many more sources of local news and information sprouting up across the state — some run by entrepreneurial journalists, some run by residents, some run by institutions. While it is nearly impossible to predict what the state's local news and information ecosystem will look like in five years, these global trends and Colorado data points should shape our vision:

- **National consolidation and hollowing of commercial newspapers.** As tech platforms have peeled away local advertising dollars over the past two decades, the headwinds facing metropolitan newspapers have continued to blow. In Colorado, hedge funds now own 19 of the state's largest newspapers (including the Denver Post, Pueblo Chieftain and Ft. Collins Coloradoan) and account for nearly one-quarter of Colorado's total 1.46 million print circulation. Meanwhile, national news chains own 29 Colorado newspapers, accounting for 9 percent of total print circulation.² While these newspapers still produce a large portion of the original local news available statewide, most content remains behind paywalls and the number of local journalists and editors they employ to cover Colorado communities has declined dramatically, leading to decreased coverage of important topics, especially in suburban and rural areas.
- **Locally owned newspapers persist as vital sources of original, local news.** Especially in rural areas and among Colorado's communities of color and non-English speaking residents, independently owned newspapers are producing a significant amount of the state's original, local content. In Colorado, 150 of the state's 212 newspapers (more than 70 percent) are locally owned small businesses, Colorado-owned chains, or controlled by Colorado higher education or community groups. Yet at least 52 Colorado newspapers have closed in the past two decades — including 19 since the last time CMP reported this data in 2019.³

70 percent

of the state's newspapers are Colorado-owned, accounting for 56 percent of the state's 1.5 million-reader print circulation.

Source: 2023 Coppini & Hutchins

² 2023 ownership, reach and closure analysis conducted by Dr. David Coppini of University of Denver and Corey Hutchins Colorado College for Colorado Media Project, based on current Colorado News Mapping Project data and a 2021 content analysis by Dr. Coppini and Dr. Kareem El Damanhoury of University of Denver: <https://coloradomediaproject.com/latest-news/2022/10/21/co-news-mapping-project>

³ 2023 Coppini & Hutchins.



Colorado Sun reporter Erica Breunlin interviews a DSSST Schools student. (Olivia Sun/The Colorado Sun via Report for America)

- **The rise of the creator:** In large part due to this upheaval, the days when individual news outlets were the remote gatekeepers of facts and information are gone forever. “New power” media models, where individuals are actively producing, sharing, and participating in news are on the rise. Nontraditional news providers — from local politicians and government agencies to neighborhood groups, faith leaders and nonprofits — have their own multi-channel strategies and are competing with 100+ year old institutions for audiences. Especially as media outlets reckon with a legacy of harm to communities of color, the creator culture and easy-to-use technology tools have democratized who can be a storyteller – for better and for worse.
- **Media fragmentation, disinformation, and polarization:** For many Coloradans, media fragmentation is causing digital overwhelm, reinforcement of pre-existing beliefs, and — for some — retreat into dark corners of the internet. Thanks to sophisticated data gathering and targeting by tech platforms, our digital media diets grow increasingly narrow as we are served more of what keeps us scrolling and clicking. Angry rhetoric and clickbait headlines inspire more “engagement” — and more eyeballs mean more money for platforms. Fringe beliefs gain hold, as targeted disinformation campaigns spread like wildfire. “Mainstream media” is considered the enemy by many on both the far right and far left ends of the political spectrum, and there is significant disagreement on a common source of “truth.”
- **Platform and AI accountability:** In recent years and months, tech platforms and artificial intelligence companies have come under increasingly intense scrutiny in the U.S. and abroad for their role in a polluted information environment worldwide. While legislators debate regulation and taxation, it is unclear whether there is political will to take on the uniquely American big tech entrepreneurs. Actions abroad are heating up — the European Union’s Digital Services Act went into effect in August 2023⁴, requiring more transparency and content moderation from social platforms. In June 2023, Canada followed Australia’s lead in passing a law that requires tech platforms to pay a small fee to journalism producers when they host news on their platforms.⁵ A similar bill in California was stopped cold after Facebook and Google threatened to remove news on their platforms if it became law. But the policy is already on in Australia, which devoted \$140 million from the platforms to support local media in 2022, the first year since the law went into effect.⁶ Meanwhile in March 2023, Senators Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and John Kennedy (R-LA) reintroduced a bipartisan bill in the U.S. Congress that would clear the way for publishers to bargain collectively with platforms for compensation.⁷

⁴ “The EU’s Digital Services Act goes into effect today: here’s what that means,” The Verge, Aug. 25, 2023. <https://www.theverge.com/23845672/eu-digital-services-act-explained>

⁵ “Meta Begins Blocking News in Canada,” New York Times, August 2, 2023. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/08/02/business/media/meta-news-in-canada.html>

⁶ Australia’s news media bargaining code pries \$140 million from Google and Facebook,” Poynter.org, August 16, 2022. <https://www.poynter.org/business-work/2022/australias-news-media-bargaining-code-pries-140-million-from-google-and-facebook/>

⁷ “Senate Judiciary Committee Advances Journalism Bill To Bolster Newspapers, TV Stations Despite Facebook Threat” Deadline. <https://deadline.com/2023/06/facebook-journalism-competition-and-preservation-act-senate-1235418032/>



- Local media's trusted role in a pluralistic democracy:** Americans of all political stripes seem to have one thing in common: a feeling of being misunderstood and misrepresented, in media and by their neighbors, and a common concern for the future of democracy and civic engagement. A 2022 Gallup poll found that Americans' trust in media is at a near record low, with only 34 percent reporting they have a "great deal" or a "fair amount" of confidence in national media. However a 2022 survey commissioned by Colorado Media Project found that 71 percent of Colorado residents said they were "very" or "somewhat" confident they can trust local news organizations to report the news fully, accurately, and fairly. 77 percent of Colorado residents said that seeing stories that present varying sides of an issue would increase their trust in local news organizations, and most Coloradans (58%) said they want local newsrooms to report on facts without taking positions on issues.⁸ Meanwhile, three-quarters of Americans across the political spectrum feel that media bias could be corrected if news organizations hired reporting staff with more diversity and different backgrounds.⁹ And while nearly half of Americans say the news media deserves "a great deal" of blame for divisions, about the same portion of all Americans — and more than 60% of Republicans — say the media could also do "a great deal" to heal political divisions.¹⁰

71 percent of Colorado residents said they were "very" or "somewhat" confident they can trust local news organizations to report the news fully, accurately, and fairly.

Source: Corona Insights for CMP, 2022

- Longing for real-world connections and local solutions to global issues:** Local news outlets are poised to seize these opportunities and reenvision their role as the modern "public square"¹¹ by amplifying important stories and diverse perspectives, curating streams of trusted local sources, and convening difficult conversations in a way that bridges divides and illuminates a path forward. After years in social isolation, glued to screens and "doomscrolling", Americans have emerged with an intense desire to connect with loved ones, neighbors, and colleagues. At the same time, there is an urgent need for more empowering, solutions-based narratives for addressing entrenched issues — mental health, racial justice, social-economic inequities, climate change and more — on both the systemic and human or local levels.



Denver Urban Spectrum Associate Publisher Brittany Winkfield and Publisher Rosalind "Bee" J. Harris. (Denver Urban Spectrum)

- Digital, public media models gain importance for sustaining civic news:** Market forces and technology have carved away all profit centers from the traditional, daily newspaper — from the classifieds (now Craigslist and Facebook marketplace) to auto ads (now Cars.com) to the business listings (now Google and Yelp) to the sports section (now The Athletic and others). What's left and must be protected is the "red meat" of accountability journalism and civic information that is labor-intensive and costly to produce, but is most critical for the future of public engagement in our democracy.¹² Most local news startups that emerge to fill coverage gaps are selecting digital-only, nonprofit, or public benefit models that focus primarily on civically important topics. Studies show that these models are quickly eclipsing all other types of media (radio, television, even newspapers), in terms of the amount of local civic news they are producing, and the efficiency with which are producing it.

⁸ Attitudes Toward State and Local Media: 2022 Colorado Media Project/Corona Insights Colorado News Audience Survey, <https://coloradomediaproject.com/latest-news/2022/9/22/cmp-statewide-survey-2022>

⁹ American Views 2020: Trust, Media and Democracy" Gallup/Knight Foundation. <https://knightfoundation.org/reports/american-views-2020-trust-media-and-democracy/>

¹⁰ "American Views 2020" Gallup/Knight.

¹¹ The Northern Colorado Deliberative Journalism Project, Colorado State University. <https://cpd.colostate.edu/djp/>

¹² "New study finds mixed news about survival of investigative reporting" Stanford Business Journal, September 2021. <https://www.gsb.stanford.edu/insights/what-analysis-6-million-articles-reveals-about-state-us-newspapers>



How Do We Know Local News Is Good For Democracy?

To thrive individually and to participate in our democracy, all Coloradans need reliable access to factual, nonpartisan information in eight categories deemed essential by the Federal Communications Commission (see box). Academic studies show that losing access to trustworthy, independent local news coverage results in less civic engagement, greater political polarization, lower voting rates, fewer candidates running for public office, higher costs of local government, and weaker economies.

Since 2018, Democracy Fund — an independent and nonpartisan, private foundation dedicated to confronting deep-rooted challenges in American democracy while defending against new threats — has been tracking academic studies that show in stark terms the impact journalism has on our democracy. This research review has become a critical guide for funders, policymakers, communities, and journalists who care about creating a healthier and more inclusive democracy.



Chalkbeat reporter Melanie Asmar and Michelle Griego from CBS Colorado moderate a public forum featuring Denver mayoral candidates. (Eric Gorski/Chalkbeat)

CRITICAL INFORMATION NEEDS FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES

According to the FCC, all U.S. residents need access to timely, factual, nonpartisan information – in their language, via accessible media – in eight essential categories:

1. **emergencies and risks**, both immediate and long-term;
2. **health and welfare**, including group-specific health information where it exists;
3. **education**, including the quality of local schools and choices available to parents;
4. **transportation**, including costs and schedules;
5. **economic opportunities**, including job information, job training, and small business assistance;
6. **the environment**, including air and water quality and access to recreation;
7. **civic information**, including opportunities to strengthen community relationships via civic and religious institutions;
8. **political information**, including information about candidates at all levels of local governance, as well as public policy initiatives affecting communities and neighborhoods.



IDEA: As the State of Colorado aims to connect 99% of Colorado households to high-speed broadband Internet by the end of 2027, community members and civic leaders should consider increasing support for independent local newsrooms that are reliably providing original, local news on the FCC's eight essential categories of information — particularly news sources that serve non-English speakers and rural residents. Investing in more high-quality, original local news content and digital distribution may be necessary in order to fill significant gaps, once all Colorado residents are adequately connected. Digital community information hubs (possibly managed by or with independent local newsrooms, with input from local community members) may provide a solution for curating high-quality content from a variety of trusted sources across sectors in a region, county or municipality.



A summary of key findings from the Democracy Fund research scan (updated in 2022)¹³ is below; authors Josh Stearns and Christine Schmidt provide additional details on each finding on the DF website:

Strong local journalism = more people turning out to vote. Weak local journalism = fewer people vote. Thorough local journalism helps people be less biased when considering candidates.

- People who consume local news are more likely to vote locally.¹⁴ The act of reading a newspaper can mobilize as many as 13 percent of non-voters to vote.¹⁵ Voters have been more likely to vote in down-ballot races in places with more local newspapers per capita.¹⁶
- Local news can boost voting by young people, and help them feel better prepared to go to the polls.¹⁷
- Voters in districts with less campaign coverage had a harder time evaluating candidates and reported they were less likely to vote.¹⁸ When a newspaper shuts, fewer candidates run and incumbents are more likely to win.¹⁹
- Giving voters even the slightest bit of additional information on a candidate (like occupation) in addition to having just the race or gender, eliminated or mitigated gender and racial/ethnic biases.²⁰



Reporter Melanie Asmar (far left) sits in on a negotiating session prior to the Denver Public Schools teacher strike. (Chalkbeat)

Quality local journalism can counter divisive national narratives that aim to stoke polarization. People feel a stronger sense of community in places with strong local journalism. And it's not just news outlets that are responsible for social cohesion — storytelling in general is key.

- Local media establishes a trusted, shared public understanding of local issues, counteracting distrust of national media.²¹
- Local news availability keeps leaders accountable to constituents rather than the national party.²²
- Political polarization among voters increases after local newspapers close down.²³
- Local news — with local owners — keeps rural people engaged with their physical location and local government.²⁴
- Connection to local storytelling — not just to news outlets — is the key to “neighborhood belonging, collective efficacy, and civic participation.”²⁵

¹³ “How do we know local journalism is good for democracy?” Josh Stearns and Christine Schmidt, Democracy Fund, September 15, 2022. <https://democracyfund.org/idea/how-we-know-journalism-is-good-for-democracy/>

¹⁴ “Voting in local and national elections: the role of local and national news consumption and news media preference” <https://doi.org/10.1080/15456870.2020.1856108>

¹⁵ “The Effect of Newspaper Entry and Exit on Electoral Politics” <http://web.stanford.edu/~gentzkow/research/voting.pdf>

¹⁶ “Newspapers and political participation: The relationship between ballot rolloff and local newspaper circulation” <https://doi.org/10.1177/07395329211014968>

¹⁷ “Local News Helped Young People Get Ready to Vote in 2020” <https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/local-news-helped-young-people-get-ready-vote-2020>

¹⁸ “The Troubling Causes and Consequences of Diminished Local News” <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2015/02/03/the-troubling-causes-and-consequences-of-diminished-local-news/>

¹⁹ <http://www.nber.org/papers/w14817>

²⁰ <https://doi.org/10.1177/1078087419831074>

²¹ “Red state, purple town: Polarized communities and local journalism in rural and small-town Kentucky” <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884918783949>

²² “The effects of high-information environments on legislative behavior in the U.S. House of Representatives” <https://doi.org/10.1111/lsg.12325>

²³ “Newspaper closures polarize voting behavior,” <https://journalistsresource.org/studies/politics/polarization/political-polarization-local-news-research>

²⁴ “Where Local Meets Plethora: Media Usage and Community Integration in Rural Communities” <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2021.1907413>

²⁵ “Community Storytelling Network, Neighborhood Context, and Civic Engagement: A Multilevel Approach” <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1468-2958.2006.00282.x>



Colorado Sun reporter Olivia Prentzel on the hunt for pikas in Rocky Mountain National Park (The Colorado Sun)

Local news keeps communities informed during times of upheaval, like disasters, protests, and pandemics — when people need critical information to engage their communities and leaders.

- Epidemiologists depend on local newspapers to identify and forecast disease outbreaks.²⁶
- Local media is often the first to reveal a crisis and draw sustained attention to it — like the Flint water crisis.²⁷

Watchdog reporting holds the powerful to account and has outsized economic and social impacts.

- Every dollar spent on local news produces hundreds of dollars in public benefit by exposing corruption & keeping an eye on government spending.²⁸
- Without watchdog reporters, cities faced higher long-term borrowing costs — that can translate to immediate costs for citizens.²⁹
- Local newspapers hold companies accountable for company misconduct.³⁰
- Watchdog coverage is more effective when it includes possible solutions to encourage civic actions.³¹

Local news isn't inherently good for communities just because it's local though, studies show.

Local reporting can fill information needs, but it can also replicate inequities.³²

“Since the colonial era, media outlets have used their platforms to inflict harm on Black people through weaponized narratives that promote Black inferiority and portray Black people as threats to society.”³³

Sensationalized coverage emphasizes short-term conflicts rather than social concerns.³⁴

Paywalls limit access to information that operates as part of local media's civic potential.³⁵

When purchased by corporate predators, local news becomes less frequent, relevant, and inherently local.³⁶

²⁶ “When towns lose their newspapers, disease detectives are left flying blind” <https://www.statnews.com/2018/03/20/news-deserts-infectious-disease/>

²⁷ “Searching for news: The Flint water crisis” <http://www.journalism.org/essay/searching-for-news/>

²⁸ “Democracy’s Detectives: The Economics of Investigative Journalism - Author Q&A” https://www.cjr.org/q_and_a/investigative-reporting-value.php

²⁹ “Financing dies in darkness? The impact of newspaper closures on public finance” https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3175555

³⁰ “When the local newspaper leaves town: The effects of local newspaper closure on corporate misconduct” <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0304405X2100372X?via%3Dihub>

³¹ “Ignored, uninterested, and the blame game: How *The New York Times*, *Marketplace*, and *TheStreet* distanced themselves from preventing the 2007–2009 financial crisis” <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884912455904>

³² “Local News in Colorado: Comparing Journalism Quality Across Four Counties” <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2022.2083003>

³³ “Media 2070: An invitation to dream up media reparations” A project of Free Press, 2020. <https://mediareparations.org/essay/>

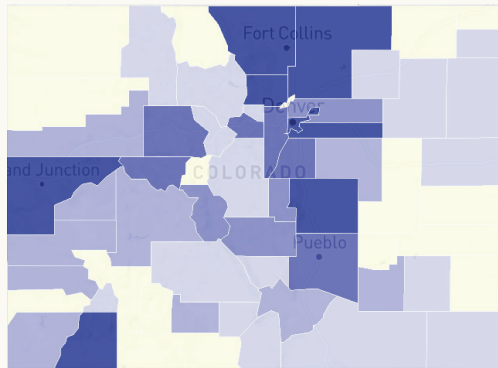
³⁴ “We’re Going Under’: The Role of Local News Media in Dislocating Climate Change Adaptation” <https://doi.org/10.1080/17524032.2021.1877762>

³⁵ “Paywalls’ Impact on Local News Websites’ Traffic and Their Civic and Business Implications” <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2019.1633946>

³⁶ “Buying the news: A quantitative study of the effects of corporate acquisition on local news” <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448221079030>



Who's Producing Local News and Civic Information in Colorado?



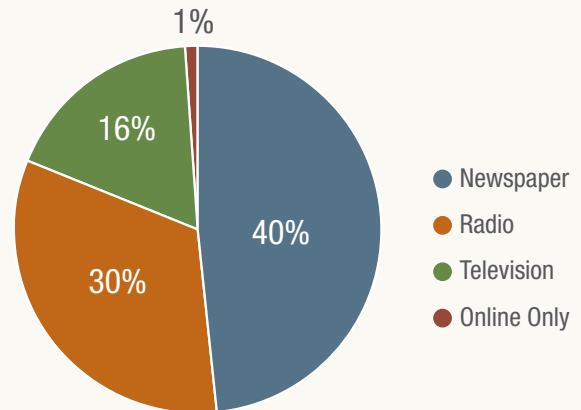
Because accessibility, concentration, and ownership of local news matter, CMP has been on a mission to understand: Who owns Colorado's local news outlets, and who do they serve? Which types of media sources are responsible for producing the most original, local news, and where are our state's most urgent news deserts? What new sources and forms of local civic news and information are popping up to fill news gaps, and what are the implications?

In 2022, CMP partnered with Colorado College's Journalism Institute, the University of Denver, Harken and the Colorado News Collaborative (COLab) to launch the Colorado News Mapping Project with support from the Online News Association. The first-of-its-kind map visualizes both traditional, credentialed news outlets staffed by trained journalists, and also many nontraditional sources of local news — from resident-led Facebook pages with thousands of members, to community-based projects such as Brother Jeff's Cultural Center and Five Points Atlas, to newsrooms linked to governments, civic groups and foundations such as The Rangely Review, the Colorado Chamber of Commerce's The Sum & The Substance, or The Colorado Trust's Collective Colorado.

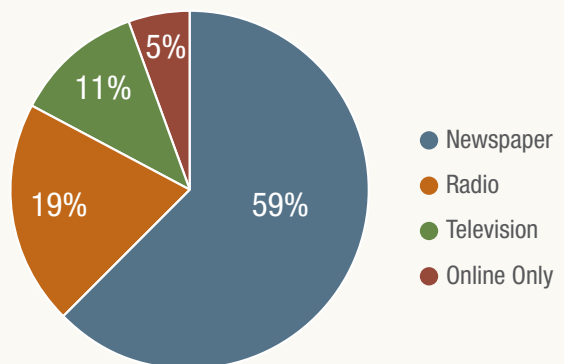
"Our goal is to reflect the reality of the state's local media ecosystem," says Corey Hutchins, co-director of CC's Journalism Institute and publisher of the weekly Substack newsletter, "Inside the News in Colorado." "Our intent is not to weigh the reliability or quality of the information disseminated, but to pinpoint for the first time what Coloradans themselves have told us are their local sources of community information."

Despite the emergence of nontraditional news sources, a new 2023 content analysis by University of Denver for CMP³⁷ indicates that newspaper journalists — by far — are still responsible for producing the lion's share of original, local content that reaches Colorado residents across the state, especially in rural areas. Among Colorado's community newsrooms (excluding outlets that produce news for statewide audiences), community newspapers accounted for about 44 percent of original content on a given day, while local radio stations accounted for 30 percent, local TV for 16 percent, and community-specific digital-only sources accounted for just 1 percent.

% (SHARE) OF STORIES IN COLORADO'S COMMUNITY-BASED OUTLETS IDENTIFIED AS ORIGINAL COVERAGE OF CRITICAL ISSUES



% (SHARE) OF STORIES IN COLORADO'S COMMUNITY-BASED OUTLETS IDENTIFIED AS LOCALLY FOCUSED



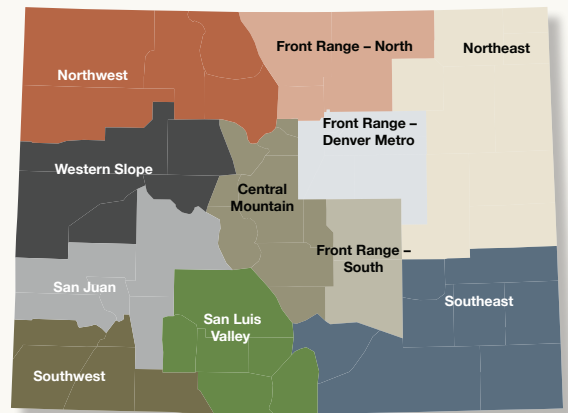
Source: 2023 review of 2021 content analysis (Coppini & El Damanhoury, University of Denver)

³⁷ Share of original and local content (by outlet primary distribution type) was analyzed in Fall 2023 by University of Denver's David Coppini, Ph.D., based on an analysis of 1,867 stories from Colorado news outlets coded for originality and locality on a single Friday in the spring of 2021.



Among statewide outlets (including Chalkbeat Colorado, Colorado Politics, Colorado Public Radio, The Colorado Sun, The Denver Post and High Country News), in a single-day content analysis 95 percent of stories were original and 74 percent were focused on Colorado-specific news.

Perhaps surprisingly, DU researchers found that smaller and more rural counties have a higher concentration of original and local stories per 1,000 people as compared to bigger counties in metro areas. For example, the two smallest counties included in the analysis, Sedgwick and Kiowa counties, had more than two original stories and at least one local story per every 1,000 residents, while in contrast El Paso and Denver counties had less than 0.3 original stories and less than 0.2 local stories for every 1,000 residents.



Regional classifications listed in the chart below align with those assigned by the Colorado Nonprofit Association

COLORADO SOURCES OF LOCAL NEWS: BY REGION AND PRIMARY DISTRIBUTION							
Region	Newspapers	Radio	TV	Online	Magazines	Non-Traditional/Community	TOTALS
State Wide	4	3	0	19	4	1	31
Central Mountain	14	8	0	5	1	19	47
Front Range - Denver Metro	66	36	22	21	16	11	172
Front Range - North	21	15	0	15	13	2	66
Front Range - South	15	19	8	6	8	3	59
Northeast	15	4	0	0	0	5	24
Northwest	5	1	0	1	1	2	10
San Juan	12	3	0	3	1	3	22
San Luis Valley	11	2	0	3	0	6	22
Southeast	15	4	0	3	1	7	30
Southwest	13	10	3	3	1	4	34
Western Slope	21	19	11	8	9	9	77
TOTALS	212	124	44	87	55	71	594

Using the same methodology, DU researchers did a deeper content analysis in 2020³⁸ — analyzing 600 stories appearing on the digital home pages of all news sources in four counties (Weld, Montezuma, La Plata, and Alamosa) during the course of one week. In a peer-reviewed paper, they reported finding:

- Overall, 79 percent of the stories covered at least one critical information need (healthcare, emergencies, civic info, economy, environment, education, politics, and transportation).
- Newspapers were more likely to cover critical information needs compared to other types of news media.

- Overall, 59 percent of the stories were classified as local and 57 percent were original. In total 48 percent of the stories were both original and local.
- Non-traditional news sources, such as government bodies or nonprofit organizations, were more likely to provide local and original information.
- More rural and counties with lower median incomes (Alamosa and Montezuma) tended to have lower rates of original, local content in their ecosystems.

³⁸Damanhoury, K. E., Coppini, D., Johnson, B., & Rodriguez, G. (2022). Local News in Colorado: Comparing Journalism Quality Across Four Counties. *Journalism Practice*, 1-22.



When analyzing other trends among Colorado newspapers, a new 2023 DU analysis of Colorado newspapers found³⁹:

Reach: Collectively, Colorado's 212 newspapers currently reach more than 1.46 million Coloradans through print circulation alone — and many more through their digital distribution channels

Ownership: 150 Colorado newspapers are currently under local ownership, collectively accounting for 56 percent of local newspaper circulation statewide. Hedge funds now own 19 of the state's largest newspapers (including the Denver Post, Pueblo Chieftain and Ft. Collins

Coloradoan) and nearly one-quarter of Colorado's total print circulation. Meanwhile, national news chains own 29 Colorado newspapers, reaching more than 134,000 residents (9 percent of total print circulation).⁴⁰

Rural Service: 25 Colorado counties have only one newspaper producing original, local news; 88 percent of these counties are considered non-metro, and 48 are classified as completely rural.

Closures: At least 52 newspapers have closed since 2004 — including 19 since the last time CMP reported this data in 2019.⁴¹

COLORADO'S NEWSPAPERS: OWNERS AND PRINT CIRCULATION

Newspaper Owner	# of papers	Circulation	% of Total Circulation	Type of Owner
Small business owners (1 or 2 newspapers owned)	107	490,240	34%	CO Small Business
Colorado Community Media	23	221,940	15%	CO Ownership Group
Media News/Digital First News/Prairie Mountain Publishing	17	299,164	20%	Investment Firm
Other/Non Classified	14	155,951	11%	N/A
Higher Education/Community Group	11	49,500	3%	Higher Ed/Community Group
Ogden Newspapers	10	70,406	5%	National Chain
J Louis Mullen	7	8,382	1%	National Chain
Clarity Media Group	5	58,621	4%	CO Ownership Group
Cherry Road Media	5	32,640	2%	National Chain
O' Rourke Media Group	5	12,900	1%	National Chain
Ballantine Communications	4	5,691	0.4%	CO Ownership Group
Gannett	2	47,931	3%	Investment Firm
Wick Communications	2	9,816	1%	National Chain
Total	212	1,463,182	100%	

Recognizing that Colorado's newspapers are still vitally important to Colorado communities — it's also important to understand why is printing is still so important to Colorado's local news publishers. While nearly all of Colorado's newspapers distribute both in print and online, revenue from print advertising still makes up the largest percentage of most newspaper publishers' overall annual income. Print products, therefore, remain a vital part of Colorado publishers' product suite, both to reach local audiences — especially in rural areas that don't yet have reliable connectivity — and to generate revenue that underwrites the costs associated with reporting and producing high-quality local news.

³⁹ 2023 ownership and reach analysis was conducted by Dr. David Coppini of University of Denver and Corey Hutchins of Colorado College for Colorado Media Project, based on current Colorado News Mapping Project data: <https://coloradomediaproject.com/latest-news/2022/10/21/co-news-mapping-project>

⁴⁰ 2023 ownership, reach and closure analysis conducted by Dr. David Coppini of University of Denver and Corey Hutchins of Colorado College for Colorado Media Project, based on current Colorado News Mapping Project data and a 2021 content analysis: <https://coloradomediaproject.com/latest-news/2022/10/21/co-news-mapping-project>

⁴¹ 2023 Coppini & Hutchins.



What Do Coloradans Want From Local News?

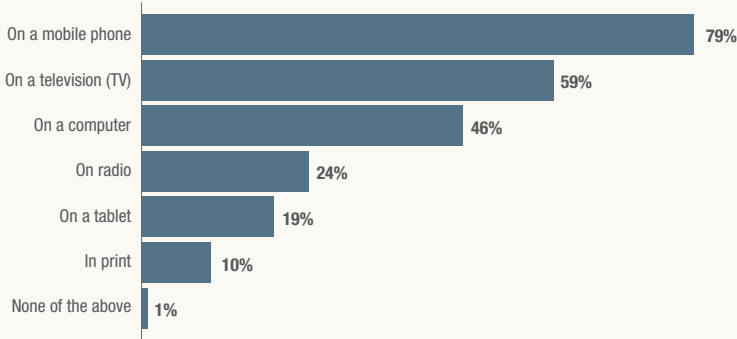
Where do Coloradans get their local news — and how? Who do they trust, what are they paying for — and why? What roles do Coloradans think local journalists should be playing in our democracy — and how well do they think they are doing? A 2022 Colorado Media Project/Corona Insights survey of more than 1,800 Coloradans⁴² provided key takeaways that reflect current views of local news outlets and journalists — and trends that are shaping the future, including:

- **Nearly half of adult Coloradans (47% or 2.2 million) are interested in state and local news, are digitally savvy, and engage with the news beyond headlines.** However, only 13% (or 600,000 adult residents) in this “addressable market” also currently paid for at least one source of news. Our research also confirmed that Coloradans are becoming increasingly digitally savvy. Four out of five residents consume information on their phone at least daily — compared to just 10% in print and 24% via radio.

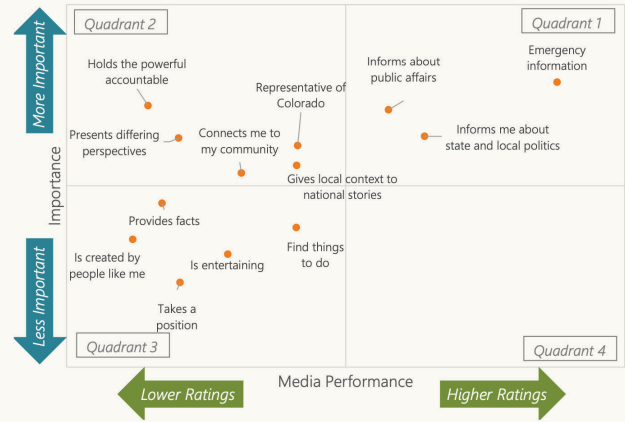
⁴² Attitudes Toward State & Local Media: CMP/Corona Insights Statewide Survey, 2022. <https://coloradomediaproject.com/latest-news/2022/9/22/cmp-statewide-survey-2022>



MODES COLORADANS CONSUME INFORMATION AT LEAST ONCE A DAY

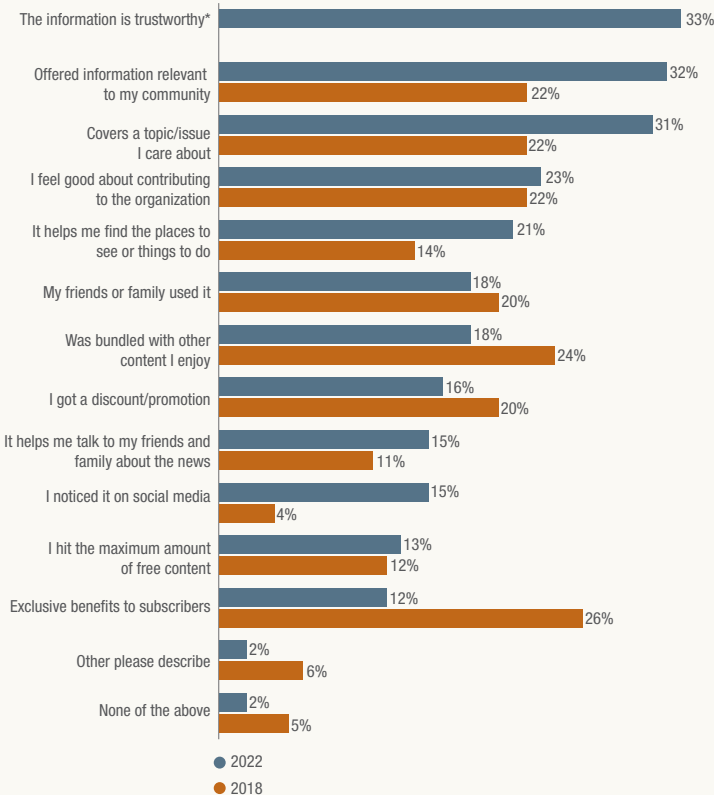


IMPORTANCE BY STATE AND LOCAL MEDIA PERFORMANCE

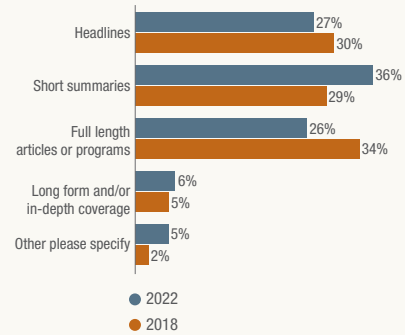


- Coloradans said the most important purposes of state and local media were to inform residents about emergencies, hold leaders accountable, and inform residents about public affairs. About three out of four residents said state and local media did a good or excellent job at providing emergency information (80%) and keeping Coloradans informed about public affairs (72%). However, nearly half of residents (48%) described state and local media’s ability to hold leaders accountable as fair or poor.

MAIN REASONS COLORADANS FINANCIALLY SUPPORT STATE AND LOCAL NEWS



TYPICAL ENGAGEMENT TO GET NEWS





Denver editor Christy Steadman photographs a Holocaust survivor during his speech. (Colorado Community Media)

- **Most Spanish speakers agreed that they could access news about the state and their community in Spanish.** The survey collected over 100 responses from Spanish speakers. Most residents who spoke Spanish at home agreed that they could access news about Colorado (71%) and their community (61%) in Spanish. When compared to English speakers, Spanish speaking residents were more likely to say they used their mobile phone to consume information and that they relied on social media to verify the veracity of local media claims.
- **When asked to provide the names of sources they typically use to stay up-to-date on Colorado and community information, residents most frequently mentioned local TV, newspapers, and friends/family.** Denver Metro residents were especially likely to mention TV (in general and specific stations/programs) while those in the Mountain West were much more likely to mention newspapers (in general and specific outlets).
- **While residents were most likely to say they were currently paying a great deal of attention to national news, Coloradans said they were most interested in consuming information about their city and state.** A third of Coloradans said they were paying a great deal of attention to national news, compared to a quarter toward local news, and a fifth to state news. However, when asked to rank types of content by level of interest, Coloradans gave the highest rankings to city and state information. Rankings of national and neighborhood news followed with international information being the least desired.



Four Priorities for a Healthier Local News Ecosystem for Colorado

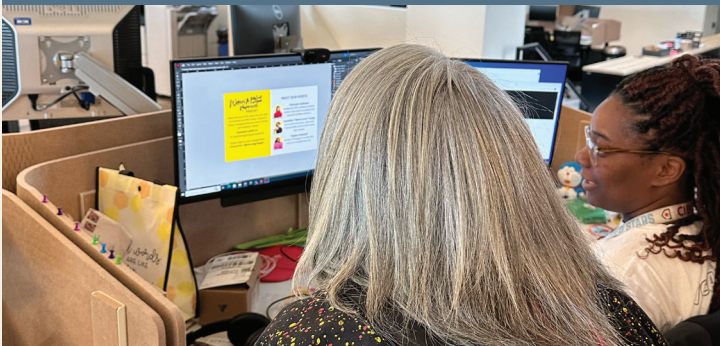
Since 2018, six funders — Bohemian Foundation, The Colorado Health Foundation, The Colorado Trust, Democracy Fund, Gates Family Foundation, and Rose Community Foundation, CMP's fiscal sponsor — together have committed more than \$6.2 million and rallied millions more in impact investments and independent grants toward CMP's mission.

Our north star is not to salvage legacy systems of media, or to create a new single entity or outlet-to-eclipse-them-all — but to build a healthier, more equitable, solutions-focused local news and information ecosystem that supports vibrant communities across the state.

To have impact at scale, CMP seeks to continue growing a broad-based coalition of mission-aligned journalists, funders, policymakers, and community partners in Colorado and nationwide who are building a healthier local civic news ecosystem that supports informed and engaged communities.

Below are four strategies that we see as most promising for ensuring all Coloradans have access to high-quality local news and information as a public good, now and into the future. These four priority areas also align with the national Press Forward movement, which aims to bring significant new public and philanthropic resources for local news, and lower the transaction costs to both funders and grant seekers in the process.

1 Strengthen Local Newsrooms that Have the Trust Of Local Communities and Address Gaps in Original, Local Civic News



Denver Urban Spectrum



Reporter Corinne Westeman interviews a business owner at a Wheat Ridge event. (Colorado Community Media)

So far, through CMP's statewide civic news fund hosted at Rose Community Foundation, we have made more than 150 grants to projects and organizations that are hard at work serving Colorado communities each day — providing many of the state's too-long overlooked ethnic media and small, independently owned rural newspapers with their first philanthropic dollars ever.

Here are some ways that CMP is facilitating direct investments in Colorado's community-based newsrooms:

- Since 2018, CMP has provided matching grants to Colorado's nonprofit and locally owned independent newsrooms participating in [#newsCOneeds](#) — an end-of-year fundraising campaign designed to build community investment in local news. In 2022, 33 newsrooms

each received a \$5,000 matching grant (for a total matching pool of \$165,000), which they collectively leveraged to raise \$832,720 in small contributions from 5,406 individual contributors.

- Since 2022, CMP has devoted more than \$650,000 to newsrooms and coalitions that serve Colorado's communities of color and rural residents, through our [Community News Network](#).
- Since January 2023, CMP has made 46 grants totaling \$629,790 to newsrooms and community-based projects through our [Advancing Equity in Local News](#) fund, to address calls to action from community members and journalists of color through the [Voices Initiative](#).



In addition, Colorado funders are making big bets — together and independently, through grant dollars and impact investments — that have helped launch and grow new media models that are creating a more resilient and responsive local news ecosystem in Colorado, including:

- [The Colorado News Conservancy](#), the first state affiliate established by the National Trust for Local News, which has kept 23 Colorado Community Media titles [in local hands](#) and is now investing in community listening, digital transformation, streamlining business services, and boosting editorial capacity; nearby the [Aurora Sentinel](#) — serving the state's most diverse city — is on a similar path under separate but mission-aligned ownership;
- [The Colorado Sun](#), which as of EOY 2021 had more paying members than The Texas Tribune (in a state with one-fifth the population) and whose founding journalists are co-owners of the public benefit corporation;
- [Colorado Public Radio](#), now one of the largest newsrooms in the state, added digital capacity and a younger, more diverse metro audience through its [acquisition of Denverite](#), one in the first wave of public radio-digital site mergers in the nation;

- [Rocky Mountain PBS](#), including its launch of [The DROP](#), one of the country's first public media urban alternative FM-radio stations, expansion of its inclusive [Colorado Voices](#) digital-first strategy, and 2021 opening of the shared [COLab Newsroom](#) in downtown Denver.

Colorado's independent, nonpartisan local news outlets won't exist without investment from community members. These sources can help you find a high-quality local newsroom in your region or neighborhood:

- Institute for Nonprofit News is a national network of mission-driven sites, including these [outlets based in or covering Colorado](#).
- Colorado News Collaborative is an unprecedented coalition of dedicated local journalists from [more than 150 Colorado newsrooms](#).
- Colorado Press Association is the state's premier professional journalism association, with [more than 130 members](#).

2

Invest In Infrastructure that Supports Shared Services and Efficiencies, Better Digital Products, and Broader Reach For Quality Content

Colorado's collaborative news ecosystem has become legendary nationwide, but it wasn't by accident. Ever since the closure of the Rocky Mountain News, Colorado journalists have had a camaraderie unlike many states in the U.S.

In late 2019, CMP joined with the Associated Press, Chalkbeat Colorado, Colorado Freedom of Information Coalition, Colorado Press Association, The Colorado Sun, KGNU Community Radio, Open Media Foundation, and Rocky Mountain PBS to establish the COLab Newsroom on the third floor of Rocky Mountain Public Media's new Buell Center for Public Media in downtown Denver. CMP also supported strategic planning for the group, to develop a mission, vision and goals for the initiative.

In 2021 the [Colorado News Collaborative](#) (COLab) became an independent nonprofit, with a community-led board to raise support for the organization and its mission - to help Colorado newsrooms strengthen reporting, reach, revenue in service to Colorado communities. COLab is now a hub for accountability reporting, community engagement and capacity-building that brings together journalists from 170+ newsrooms of all business models and distribution modes across the state to learn best-practices, take on big projects, and share resources.



The Associated Press' platform **StoryShare** is one of those resources. In the early days of COVID, Colorado became the second state in the nation to implement the Google-funded tool, which allows any COLab member newsroom to upload stories, photos, and graphics to be shared freely with peers statewide.

Rocky Mountain Community Radio Coalition unites 16 non-commercial radio stations in Colorado (with more in New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming) to create, broadcast and share diverse news and music programming. The coalition employs a Managing Editor and a Capitol Coverage reporter and is expanding its digital reach in rural areas through a combination of station membership and foundation grant support.

Meanwhile, the **Colorado Press Association**, one of the most forward-thinking industry coalitions in the nation,

leads advocacy for press freedom and open government, and sends \$1-2 million annually to newsrooms across the state by connecting advertisers with CPA members' trusted local brands. CPA also just launched a new podcast spotlighting member innovations and national best practices, and convenes cross-sector working groups to tackle "wicked problems" facing the industry.

Watchdog journalists statewide benefit from **Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press** lawyer Rachael Johnson and **Colorado Freedom of Information Coalition's** Jeff Roberts. The duo also advise CMP's Watchdog Fund, which provides funding to reimburse Colorado journalists and media makers who need access to public records in order to investigate and report on social, economic, racial and other inequities — up to \$1,000 per request.

3

Ensure Equitable Access, Representation, and Coverage that Reflects and Serves Colorado's Communities of Color, Rural Residents and Other Historically Marginalized Groups

What will it take to ensure that local news in Colorado reflects, respects and meets the needs of the state's communities of color? How can journalism leaders and reporters, community members, and funders create momentum for tangible, lasting changes in the ways that Colorado newsrooms cover diverse communities — and how those newsrooms welcome and support journalists from diverse backgrounds?

Starting in 2019, CMP initiated and funded a series of working groups to identify how Colorado news organizations can better listen to, work with, reflect, inform and serve the state's communities of color. The Voices Initiative⁴³ — led by the Colorado News Collaborative and community liaisons since 2020 — brought together journalists and community members and produced four independent reports, containing the following calls to action:



Black Voices: Recommendations⁴⁴

- Name and acknowledge how local-news coverage and media institutions have negatively impacted Black Colorado communities.
- Use existing platforms to gather and amplify the voices and perspectives of Black Coloradans.
- Contribute to the growth of a vibrant Black Colorado press corps and equally robust community of Black storytellers in other media.
- Build power in Black communities to hold news media accountable.
- Dedicate more resources for reporting that uncovers, examines and provides solutions for issues that disproportionately impact Black Coloradans.

⁴³ The Voices Initiative, Colorado News Collaborative: <https://colabnews.co/the-voices-initiative/>

⁴⁴ "The Time is Right Now: A Call to Action for Anti-Racist and Just Local News" <https://coloradomediaproject.com/s/The-Time-is-Right-Now-Black-Voices-CO-Report.pdf>



Latinx Voices: Recommendations⁴⁵

- Hold newsrooms accountable for increasing Latinx diversity on staff, among sources and in stories.
- Create programs for Latinx youth to learn about the impacts of news media and participate in its change toward accurate, fair and equitable coverage.
- Support existing and emerging networks of Latinx information providers, storytellers and community members.
- Build Latinx-owned media power.



Asian, South Asian, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Voices: Recommendations⁴⁶

- Establish ongoing connections with Asian, South Asian, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Coloradans.
- Increase Asian, South Asian, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander representation in newsrooms and in coverage.
- Represent culture and history intentionally and accurately.
- Invest in translation and adapt media formats to reach younger and older generations.



Indigenous Voices: Recommendations⁴⁷

Respect: Understand Indigenous communities' histories, cultures and contexts — from our point of view — to ensure accurate and respectful coverage

Representation: Combat invisibility and stereotypes by increasing nuanced coverage of Indigenous communities and hiring Indigenous journalists and storytellers

Reach: Build and strengthen long-term relationships between news media and Indigenous Coloradans across geographies, demographics and professions

In response to the Voices Initiative calls to action, Colorado Media Project developed the Advancing Equity in Local News grant program - which as of January 2023 has made 70 grants totaling \$1,444,790 to strengthen service to Colorado's communities of color, non-English speaking residents, and rural residents with three priorities:

- **Support internal diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) capacity-building efforts in Colorado newsrooms.** When Colorado newsrooms have inclusive workplace cultures they can successfully recruit, retain and promote reporters who represent the communities they serve, and are better equipped to cover communities with the respect, nuance, and completeness they deserve. The Colorado Trust is providing funding to support DEI capacity-building in Colorado newsrooms aimed at creating inclusive workplace cultures. *Project examples:* DEI training for newsroom leaders and reporters; content audits or projects to examine trends in sourcing, framing and/or language;

⁴⁵ "Think Big, Act Now: A Call to Action from Latinx Coloradans for Equitable and Just Local News" https://coloradomediaproject.com/s/latinx_voices_report_final.pdf

⁴⁶ "Fighting to be Seen: A Call from Colorado's AANHPI Communities for Equitable and Just Local News" <https://coloradomediaproject.com/s/2023-AANHPI-Voices-Colorado-Working-Group-Report.pdf>

⁴⁷ "Reach, Representation and Respect: Recommendations to improve relations between Indigenous communities and local news in Colorado" https://colabnews.co/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/COLAB-002-Voices-Initiative_Indigenous_screen.pdf



leadership development for journalists of color or representing diverse perspectives or abilities; and more.

- Strengthen connections and build trust between Colorado newsrooms and the diverse communities they serve. Local newsrooms can be hubs for trusted civic news, but building and sustaining that trust requires strong, ongoing, two-way connections between newsrooms and the local community members they serve, especially with communities of color and others whose perspectives and stories have historically been left out of or distorted by coverage. *Project examples:* Community engagement or reporting projects co-designed by newsrooms and community groups; support for public accountability boards that provide ongoing and actionable community feedback to newsrooms; systemic approaches to connect newsrooms with expert sources, storytellers and collaborators from diverse communities; and more.

- Support more diverse and inclusive civic news leadership, entrepreneurship, ownership and narratives. Colorado's current local journalism workforce is overwhelmingly white and concentrated in the Front Range, which narrows the range of issues and voices amplified in our state. When Coloradans read, see and hear about concerns, struggles, triumphs and perspectives from neighbors and families not like their own, it can build common understanding and point to solutions. *Project examples:* Capacity-building that develops media leadership, entrepreneurship, storytelling or reporting skills among journalists, content creators and residents of color, low-income residents, or those from rural or other underserved communities; support for media ownership transitions, innovations or growth that significantly impact communities of color, rural or other underserved communities; editorial projects led by and for those whose stories are not being told; and more.

Applications for the third round of AELN grant funding will open in October 2023.

4 — Advance Public Policies that Support a Healthy Public Square and Increased Civic Engagement

Colorado needs to develop new frameworks and robust coalitions to advance policy ideas that expand access to news and information while strengthening the First Amendment and protecting the independence of local journalists.

Some state- or local-level public policies that have been introduced and/or passed in recent years that Colorado should consider, include:

- **Tax credits for small businesses to advertise with local news organizations.** In 2022, CMP joined a coalition of journalism and civic engagement advocates to support HB 1121, which would have offered businesses with fewer than 50 employees an income tax credit of up to \$2,500. To qualify, businesses would have been required to advertise in news organizations that primarily serve the needs of Colorado communities

and employ at least one journalist who lives and works in the state. Similar proposals have advanced in Wisconsin, Maryland and the U.S. Congress.

- **How might this work in Colorado?** HB 1121 advanced with bipartisan support through two committees in Colorado's House of Representatives, but was not prioritized in the budgeting process due to its \$10 million fiscal note. This legislation may have a stronger chance of passing by limiting the types of businesses and news outlets that could qualify for the tax credits.

⁴⁸ "Broad coalition voices support for small business tax credit for local news advertising," Colorado Media Project, March 11, 2022. <https://coloradomediaproject.com/latest-news/2022/3/11/broad-coalition-for-hb1121>

⁴⁹ New Jersey Civic Information Consortium: <https://njcivicinfo.org/about/> and <https://njcivicinfo.org/team/>



- **State government contributions to a public-private grant program administered by an independent 501c3 dedicated to improving the quality and quantity of local news and increasing civic engagement.** New Jersey's Civic Information Consortium⁴⁹ has distributed \$5.5 million in state funding to 81 grantees since 2021, and was just awarded a \$4 million allocation for 2024. Funding decisions are made by a nonpartisan board of directors representing academia, media, government, and civil society. Support has gone to traditional newsrooms as well as university and community-based training programs, with a special focus on better meeting the needs of the state's low-income, rural, and underserved racial and ethnic communities.

- **How might this work in Colorado?**

With as little as \$1 to 3 million per year, the state legislature could fund a significant three-year pilot to test a public-private grant program and measure its impact statewide. A community foundation could host the fund and a nonpartisan committee made up of journalists, higher education leaders, and community members could review and award the grants — using a model similar to what is currently being used to distribute \$33 million to Colorado nonprofits via the Nonprofit Infrastructure Grant program funded via the Department of Local Affairs.⁵⁰ Hosting the fund at a community foundation could also allow Colorado foundations and individual community members to contribute to the grant program, and matching grants from recipients could stimulate investments at the hyperlocal level.

- **Spending more government “public information” advertising dollars with community-based newsrooms that are trusted by local audiences.** New York City, Chicago, and Connecticut have passed measures requiring public agencies to spend a certain percentage of their public

information budgets to reach local audiences via community newsrooms. In NYC, a mayoral executive order just prior to COVID is credited with funneling nearly \$10 million in ad spending from 51 city agencies to more than 220 community newsrooms — reaching residents in more than 30 languages with health and economic information, and keeping these vital small businesses afloat during tough financial times.⁵¹ One caveat for this approach: If a news outlet becomes overly dependent on government advertising (or any single source, for that matter), it may face sustainability risks if the funding dries up, and/or real or perceived challenges to its independence if the relationship becomes or appears too close.

- **How might this work in Colorado?**

The simplest solution also bears no additional cost to taxpayers: Any executive leader or elected body in Colorado may choose to establish policies requiring that agencies under their jurisdiction spend a certain percentage of their advertising budgets locally, with community-based media. Many of Colorado's public agencies — including health, safety, and economic opportunity departments, school districts, city and county governments, and immigrant service agencies — already recognize the value of this strategy and are doing this voluntarily. By reaching local audiences through local newsrooms, public officials guarantee that important civic messages are seen in context with trusted local brands. Public ad spending in local news also contributes to the local economy and sustainability of these important small businesses. In contrast, public spending for digital ads on tech platforms and social media sends Colorado's tax dollars out of state and supports an industry that is currently under scrutiny in the U.S. and abroad for negative impacts on children and communities.

⁵⁰ Nonprofit Infrastructure Grant Program, Department of Local Affairs. <https://dlg.colorado.gov/npj>

⁵¹ “Opinion: How New York City is saving its local news outlets,” New York Times, May 20, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/20/opinion/newspapers-New-York-City.html>



ABOUT COLORADO MEDIA PROJECT: HISTORY & IMPACT

Originally launched by civic-minded tech entrepreneur JB Holston⁵² as a project of the University of Denver, CMP has operated since January 2020 as a fiscally sponsored project of Rose Community Foundation — raising more than \$6 million to build a more responsive, resilient and inclusive local news ecosystem in Colorado. More than 95 percent of our funding comes from six foundations — the Ft. Collins-based Bohemian Foundation, Colorado Health Foundation, The Colorado Trust, the Denver-based Gates Family Foundation⁵³, Democracy Fund and Rose Community Foundation — who have adopted a united theory of change⁵⁴ and are dedicated to pooling resources and co-funding path-leading initiatives in order to address issues that extend beyond any single newsroom, organization, topic, sector or community.

Since our founding, CMP has maintained a commitment to open-source learning and a spirit of optimism during an otherwise very dark time for local news and our democracy in general. Formal and informal groups of local media and civic leaders and national experts have advised CMP since 2019, and our ecosystem-building approach has been recognized nationally and even internationally⁵⁵ as an example of providing place-based solutions to the information crisis facing local communities. We've done this by:

Conducting Research to Inform Practical, Scaled Solutions that Better Meet Colorado's Information Needs



Launching and Supporting Efforts that Increase Collaboration, Innovation, Equity and Trust in Local News



⁵² “JB Holston and his Colorado Media Project want to increase scrutiny of the state’s institutions. Here’s how.” The Colorado Independent, July 20, 2018. <https://coloradomediaproject.com/latest-news/2018/7/25/qa-with-jb-holston>

⁵³ “Gates commits \$1.125M over three years to launch Colorado Media Project” Gates Family Foundation, February 1, 2019. <https://gatesfamilyfoundation.org/colorado-media-project-launch/>

⁵⁴ Colorado Media Project Funder Table: Principles of Membership, March 2022. <https://coloradomediaproject.com/s/2022-Colorado-Media-Project-Funder-Table.pdf>

⁵⁵ Colorado Media Project: Impact and Ideas <https://coloradomediaproject.com/impact-ideas>



Rallying Local and National Support for Media Transitions, Innovation and Stronger Public Service



To read about more about these investments, a lookback on our impact and learning through is [here](#) and an independent evaluation report is [here](#).

CONCLUSION AND INVITATION

If you are a foundation leader, public sector fund manager, or impact investor — please contact [Melissa Davis](#) (CMP Chair, Gates Family Foundation) or [Sarah Kurz](#) (CMP Vice Chair, Rose Community Foundation) to learn more about Colorado Media Project's [Funder Table](#), a peer-to-peer network where we learn from innovators across Colorado and the U.S., strategize together, and leverage our resources via pooled funds and co-funding to address big issues that extend beyond any single newsroom, organization, topic, sector or community.

If you are a Colorado resident, business, foundation, or philanthropic individual — below are a number of additional ways you can make a direct impact in your community:

Support Your Local Newsroom

Colorado's independent, nonpartisan local news outlets won't exist without investment from community members like you. Donate, become a member, or subscribe today. These sources can help you find a high-quality local newsroom in your region or neighborhood:

- Institute for Nonprofit News is a national network of mission-driven sites, including these [outlets based in or covering Colorado](#).
- Colorado News Collaborative is an unprecedented coalition of dedicated local journalists from [more than 100 Colorado newsrooms](#).
- Colorado Press Association is the state's premier professional journalism association, with [more than 130 members](#)."

Advance Equity In Local News

Colorado's communities of color, non-English speakers, rural residents and other historically under- and misrepresented communities deserve local news that centers their needs, voices and aspirations.

In January 2022, CMP's [Informed Communities fund](#) provided nearly [\\$1 million in new grants](#) to support Colorado newsrooms, journalists, and media entrepreneurs in launching new projects and strengthening existing efforts to serve diverse communities across the state.

To support the dozens of newsrooms and projects expected to participate in 2024, [Contribute to CMP's Advancing Equity in Local News fund at Rose Community Foundation](#).

Invest in #newsCOnneeds

Since 2018, Colorado Media Project's [#newsCOnneeds Matching Challenge](#) has provided matching grants to dozens of locally owned and/or nonprofit newsrooms, to inspire their readers and listeners to give generously.

This program also provides newsrooms with collateral, messaging, and coaching to run successful year-end campaigns to gain more individual subscribers, members or donors and become more sustainable:

[Donate to CMP's #newsCOnneeds Matching Fund at Rose Community Foundation](#)

**COLORADO
MEDIA
PROJECT**

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