

Report | Cultural Policy Hub on Taking it Local: Building new pathways for support to Canadian local news and journalism

On April 4, 2025, the Cultural Policy Hub at OCAD University held a day-long workshop on the future of policies to support Canadian local news and journalism. The session was part of the 2025 edition of DemocracyXChange, Canada's democracy summit, and a partnership with the Canadian Journalism Collective and Rideau Hall Foundation.

In a context marked by continuing decline in local news (*Local News Is Dying. The Consequences Are Worse Than You Think*, April Lindgren, 2025), and changes in governments that could affect policy and programs that support journalism, over 40 independent news leaders, funders, researchers, philanthropists, journalists and policymakers (see Appendix A for a list of participants) gathered to discuss the current situation and how policy can best respond. Following up on last year's workshop, the participants came together to explore potential models of financing and policy reform and immediate actions—so that local journalism can not only survive but thrive and continue to support a healthy democracy.

The discussion was facilitated by Kelly Wilhelm, Head of the Cultural Policy Hub at OCAD U, and was broken down into three parts:

- I. Scene setting with presentations and conversations around the most recent developments and research on the state of local news and journalism:
 - A. Findings of *The Lost Estate: How to put the local back in local news* report
 - B. Discussion with the Canadian Journalism Collective on the distribution of the funds from the Online News Act
 - C. Early results from a current study led by Concordia University on the potential role of community foundations to support the future of local news in Canada
 - D. Evidence-gathering from the News Startup Fund on how to lower barriers to local news entrepreneurship
- II. Group work to dig in policy issues and make propositions in 4 areas of interest:
 - A. Examining the limits and possible reforms of the Local Journalism Initiative (LJI)
 - B. Strengthening the role of community foundations in supporting local news
 - C. Coordinating and investing in data collection, research and evaluation
 - D. Strengthening the application of tax credits and other fiscal tools
- III. A wrap-up presentation by each group to identify priorities for action

This report provides an overview of the key takeaways coming out of this discussion, and the proposed policy actions and pathways.

I. Recent developments, research and initiatives in funding local news

The initiatives discussed in this section build on previous work and publications such as *The Shattered Mirror: News, Democracy and Trust in the Digital Age* (2017) by the Public Policy Forum and *Funding Journalism: A Guide to Philanthropic Support for Canadian Media* (2024) by the Inspirit Foundation. The Local News Research Project, led by April Lindgren, continues to be a key resource for understanding changes to local news across Canada. A further reading list can be found in Appendix B.

A. The Lost Estate Report: on the importance of local news and the role of philanthropy

Jill Clark, Allison MacLachlan and Allison Uncles shared the findings of the February 2025 report *Lost Estate: How to put the local back in local news*, a partnership among the Public Policy Forum, the Rideau Hall Foundation/Fondation Rideau Hall (RHF) and the Michener Awards Foundation (MAF).

The report confirmed a continued decline in local news outlets—252 fewer since 2008, including 24 closures in the last two years.

Local news is still important to Canadians. An Ipsos poll in small- to medium-sized communities, conducted for this report in 2024, showed that:

- 87% of Canadians believe local news is critical for a well-functioning democracy
- Community members largely trust local newspapers and radio stations over national outlets
- The decline in local news contributes to a lack of knowledge about local government, schools, hospitals and more
- Closures of local media outlets lead to a disconnect within the community, a lack of coverage of local civic affairs and decreased democratic engagement.

Local journalism has the greatest impact on the civic life of Canadians across the country because people trust it, it reflects their realities and because local news outlets are agile and responsive to community needs.

The report makes several policy recommendations to revitalize local news, including:

- Create a new nonprofit organization to provide funding to local journalists.
- Encourage advertising by local businesses in locally owned media outlets through tax incentives
- Allocate government advertising funds specifically to local news publishers.
- Require advance notice before the sale of a news outlet to give communities time to organize support and potentially prevent its shutdown.

In March 2025, the Michener Awards, Rideau Hall Foundation and Public Policy Forum launched Covering Canada: Election 2025, a timely, non-partisan granting initiative to support journalists at small- and medium-sized media outlets in covering the 2025 federal

election. The goal of the non-partisan granting initiative is to provide funds to media outlets to ensure high-quality coverage of the campaign and elections for all Canadians.

The fund was open to Qualified Canadian Journalism Organizations (QCJOs) with fewer than 20 editorial staff. Smaller media that may not have QCJO status were also invited to apply to ensure the funds would support reporting from coast to coast to coast, with broad geographic representation and coverage of small communities.

A total of \$525,000 was distributed through grants between \$2,000 and \$35,000. While thorough evaluation of this initiative will take time, the fund found its audience because it responded to an immediate gap and was flexible in responding to applicants' needs.

B. Canadian Journalism Collective (CJC): Distribution of funds allocated under the Online News Act (Bill C-18)

The Canadian Journalism Collective/Collectif Canadien de Journalisme (CJC-CCJ) was formed following the 2024 Cultural Policy Hub workshop at the DemocracyXChange Summit and in response to Google's Request for Proposals for a collective to administer the \$500 million that Google committed to providing over five years in response to the passing of Bill C-18, the Online News Act.

The CJC-CCJ's goal is to represent the entire news industry in the transparent distribution of funds allocated under the Online News Act. In 2025, it will distribute \$100 million, with a mandated distribution of 7% for the CBC, 30% for other broadcasters and 63% for publishers.

Through the distribution of this fund, the CJC-CCJ aims to ensure that the Act is "implemented in a way that supports the full diversity of Canadian media, including traditional print and broadcast organizations, new, innovative emerging media, and independent local news media" (Source: CJC-CCJ website).

As of April 4, 2025, the CJC-CCJ had received 600 applications from news organizations, and sent out 228 determination letters approving \$26 million in funding of the initial \$100 million. On April 30th, the CJC-CCJ released their first list of news organizations who had received their payments to date, with a commitment to update the list of recipients and amounts paid out every two weeks.

Eligible media outlets include QCJOs, "licensed campus, community or native stations", other community or Indigenous news outlets and news organizations based in Canada and employing journalists in Canada. Applicants can be for-profit or non-profit and must produce original content and follow a code of ethics.

The CJC-CCJ will continue to collect feedback to evaluate its processes and implement an appeal procedure for organizations deemed ineligible.

C. The possible role of community foundations in supporting local news

New research by Concordia University, in partnership with the Canadian Philanthropy Partnership Research Network (PhiLab) and the Cultural Policy Hub at OCAD U, has been digging deeper into the role of community foundations in supporting local journalism and its potential for growth, through shared issues and alternative funding models.

Researcher Jessica Botelho-Urbanski shared results of previous research demonstrating that local news and information can contribute significantly to community foundations' priorities: these include, for example, improving public health, contributing to community engagement and a sense of belonging and to environmental and social issues. Preliminary findings of this new study show that many community foundations can make progress on their goals by offering more support to local news organizations who directly and indirectly contribute to the well-being of the communities they serve.

Community foundations have already found innovative ways to support local news outlets in Canada, as shown in the five case studies highlighted in this research:

- The Winnipeg Foundation helped expand public awareness about environmental issues in the Prairies by supporting a shared beat reporter between the Winnipeg Free Press (a local news outlet) and The Narwhal (a national digital outlet reporting on environmental news).
- Toronto Foundation, recognizing the link between healthy local journalism and healthy local communities, set up a 10-year no-strings-attached grant to The Local in 2023.
- With help from the Vancouver Foundation, the Ross Howard Fund uses the interest accrued from a donor-advised fund to grant awards to journalism students from Langara College who demonstrate strong ethics in researching, writing and reporting.
- Edmonton Community Foundation has tried to fill in gaps in Alberta's media ecosystem by supporting various projects including Pandemic University, The Narwhal, The Breach, Where Edmonton articles, Melanistic Magazine and Eighteen Bridges magazine's Canada 150 issue.
- When La Converse, a Montreal non-profit news outlet, was trying to get RJO status, the Foundation of Greater Montreal helped them create a short-term fund through the foundation so that individuals could give to the news outlet and receive charitable tax receipts in return.

Some key questions remain:

1. How can we build relationships between community foundations and journalists across Canada?
2. How can we leverage existing relationships or networks to support this work on a national scale? (e.g. partnering with Community Foundations of Canada)
3. What creative ways can community foundations and journalists find to collaborate within existing funding frameworks? (e.g. with RJOs and with non-qualified donees)

The full report will be published later this year.

D. Lowering barriers to local news entrepreneurship

From 2008 to 2025, 82% of media closures in Canada were associated with corporate chains while 45% of newly-launched media were independently owned and 53% of openings were online/digital outlets (*Local News Map Data*, April 2025). To date, the main objective of federal government policy approaches to local news and journalism has been preventing such closures. The broader question of how to support a healthy local news and information ecosystem requires looking at how to support new entrants and models.

Erin Millar, co-founder and CEO of *Indiegraf*, spoke about initiatives designed to support independent digital startups. The *News Startup Fund* (NSF) with the support of the Knight Foundation, Google and the McConnell Foundation, has provided \$4.5 million in direct support—including capital, technology and services—to 24 startups from 2022-2025, including five Canadian recipients.

Comparing Canadian news startups accompanied by the NSF to their US peers, Canadian news startups suffer from Meta's ban on Canadian news sources in response to C-18 and from a lack of philanthropic funding in early stages, much more easily accessible in the U.S. Start-ups, many of which work on a contract-based model, tend to be ineligible for federal journalism support programs and initiatives because they don't meet certain criteria, such as a minimum number of full-time journalists.

With these experiences and feedback, Millar proposed:

- Further research into startups' success factors
- A national Canadian Journalism Innovation Accelerator developed and funded by a public-private partnership
- Incentivized investment in innovation through tax credits and grants, adapting existing scientific R&D grants
- Equitable and streamlined access to federal supports for news startups.

II. Group Policy Discussions

Participants broke into four groups according to their interest for the policy workshop in the second part of the day. The four groups were:

1. Reconceive the Local Journalism Initiative (LJI)
2. Strengthen the role of community and philanthropic foundations
3. Coordinate and invest in data collection, research and evaluation
4. Strengthen application of tax credits and other fiscal tools.

Each group was asked to consider:

- What's the big policy idea that your group would propose? What will it change/improve?
- Who leads, who supports, who funds, who benefits?
- What are the next steps?

A. Reconceive the Local Journalism Initiative

The Local Journalism Initiative (LJI), created by the Government of Canada in 2019, aims to support the “creation of original civic journalism that covers the diverse needs of underserved communities across Canada.” Workshop participants offered feedback on the extent to which the program has achieved its objectives:

- (1) **LJI has not closed the gap of civic affairs coverage in underserved communities.**
The launch of the Local Journalism Initiative just before the COVID-19 pandemic has meant that the grants have been treated as a general lifeline for many small media. In fact, in many underserved communities, gaps in civic affairs and municipal politics coverage persist.
- (2) **The annual cycle of applying for and receiving LJI funds is not working for many applicants.** The LJI’s annual application and spending cycle poses several challenges:
 - a. It places a heavy burden on small newsrooms with very small staff
 - b. Having only one year—or less depending on when applicants are notified—to spend the funds is challenging
 - c. Attracting journalists to smaller or rural communities for a one-year commitment has been difficult
 - d. News outlets find themselves training new staff for a one-year term without the ability to reap the benefits from that training over a longer timeframe
- (3) **Outlets in underserved communities have limited capacity to train journalists:**
Journalists willing to work in underserved communities for relatively low compensation are often at the very beginning of their careers and need additional practical training, which is beyond the capacity of some outlets to provide.
- (4) **The LJI requirement for full-time employees fails to consider the reality that many outlets work with freelance journalists:** As underlined by workshop participants and in the Hub’s panel discussion at DXC on Who Pays for Local News, funding programs are designed for newsrooms that employ full-time journalists. However, the industry is increasingly reliant on quality reporting by freelance journalists, who often have the capacity to cover specific issues or areas with a high degree of expertise and have the flexibility to occasionally work with specific outlets.

Participants recommended that the Department of Canadian Heritage shift the objective of the LJI to “strengthening communities and democracy through journalism.” They suggested a reform to LJI in two phases:

1. Streamline the administration process in the fall of 2025
2. A deeper overhaul of objectives and eligibility when renewing the LJI in 2027.

For phase 2, participants recommended that the Department of Canadian Heritage:

- Refocus the LJL around the importance of civic journalism, with more incentives for organizations to dedicate the funding to coverage of civic issues and local politics
- Facilitate training of journalists and improve the impact of the program by moving from one-year to three-year funding timeframes
- Allow for extensions in using the funds from LJL into the next year if a small percentage of the grant was not used (e.g. because of a journalist absence or recruitment difficulty)
- Streamline the distribution of funds process with one portal for all outlets
- Support very small media outlets in rural areas by developing a grant stream to fund journalists that would serve multiple outlets in one underserved area, under the leadership of one bigger outlet and with a formal agreement between the different outlets
- Work with partners such as foundations (Inspirit Foundation, Rideau-Hall Foundation, etc.), journalists' associations and federations (Community Radio Fund of Canada, Fédération des télévisions communautaires autonomes du Québec, Canadian Press, Alliance des radios communautaires du Canada, Canadian Association of Journalists, etc.) and existing journalism schools to create a community training journalism institute accessible for everyone to remove barriers of access to producing quality reporting across Canada
- Incentivize philanthropic funding for that institute or for similar initiatives, for example by having the government match any funds from the private sector.

These initiatives could be developed in partnership with and promoted by a collective of local media outlets and support organizations—including the foundations and journalists' associations and federations previously mentioned, each mobilizing their own network.

B. Strengthen the role of community and philanthropic foundations

As noted in the first part of the workshop, a healthy local news and information ecosystem contributes to the objectives that community foundations are working to achieve. Reciprocally, local news outlets could benefit from working with the more than 200 community foundations across Canada to build on existing examples and expand support for local news and information.

- Participants want to build relationships between foundations and journalists, finding intermediaries that speak both “languages” and can help both foundations and journalists know how to speak and explain their work and expectations to one another. Building an understanding of shared goals between community foundations and local journalism could help increase the readiness of community foundations to invest in local media outlets
- Inspirit Foundation, working with partner foundations, is launching a first-of-its-kind national Pooled Fund for Independent Journalism (working title) to support a more vibrant independent journalism ecosystem. Most philanthropic funding for

journalism in Canada has been by individual foundations, often through project funding. This fund is a collaborative model, grounded in a shared vision that prioritizes multi-year funding and capacity-building. With an initial target of \$5M to \$8M over five years, the fund has surpassed \$3M in confirmed commitments from four foundations as of April 2025 and will be publicly announced later this year. Inspirit will steward the fund through its pilot phase, with the goal of transitioning it to an intermediary journalism organization. This initiative is informed by and in active dialogue with other pooled funds around the world that are aligning philanthropic efforts to strengthen independent media

- In general, foundations with an understanding of the sector can act as powerful bridges and capacity-builders. Inspirit Foundation and Community Foundations of Canada (CFC) have been engaged in fruitful conversations around the vital role that local foundations play in supporting independent journalism during the workshop and since then, as CFC has a history of delivering programs across Canada.

Conversations around the role of community foundations in supporting local journalism are ongoing, and participants in the workshop have agreed to continue their discussions and advocacy at CFC's Illuminate 2025 conference in May in Halifax.

C. Coordinate and invest in data collection, research and evaluation

- When considering how to better coordinate data collection and research efforts among policymakers, researchers/academic and the industry to identify critical gaps in local journalism and its funding and how these could be filled, participants to the workshop brought up the idea of a Canadian Journalism Research Data Lab.

This Journalism Research Data Lab could build on the data collection being conducted by the Local News Research Project as well as on a dialogue with the CJC-CCJ and Village Media. It would need to begin with an understanding of what data are already being collected and what data are needed to better support a healthy journalism ecosystem in Canada, including both those who are supporting journalism and those who are producing journalism content.

Data collected should include who is getting funding, how much funding they are getting, where the news deserts are, what the demographics of journalists are, how financially sustainable news outlets are, what the intersection of RJO status with these factors is, etc. The data collected should be the same year-over-year to allow for comparisons.

Industries would have an interest in data surrounding factors for sustainability of an outlet and the impact of a publication, while foundations could be interested in transparent data on the finances and impact of nonprofit news outlets. Researchers are likely to be interested in data on how well served communities are by their local media, and policymakers would benefit from this research to inform their policy decisions in support of journalism. The data collected could also be used to create training modules, taking inspiration from the work of the Poynter Institute in the U.S.

This Journalism Research Data Lab could be hosted at a university and supported by partners. It would need to be externally funded, potentially through a combination of public and private funding; [SSHRC](#) funding could be explored. Crowdfunding and a small group of founding donors could help launch this initiative, which, the group proposed, would need 10 years to fully establish itself for the long-term.

D. Strengthen application of tax credits and other fiscal tools

Existing tax credits and other tools—e.g. federal designation as Qualified Canadian Journalism Organization (QCJO) and Registered Journalism Organization (RJO)—designed to support local journalism could be improved for increased effectiveness and complemented by other tools to generate even more support for news outlets.

- Participants to the group discussion suggest using the new federal digital service tax (DST)—that requires foreign and domestic large businesses to pay tax on certain revenue earned from engaging with online users in Canada—to create a digital sovereignty fund that would benefit Canadian media and allow independence from U.S. tech giants. The \$800M that the Department of Finance expects to collect per year (source: [Bill C-59](#)) could help prompt innovation in small and big organizations, not to create a Canadian centralized news source but to support a more decentralized approach to journalism.

The digital sovereignty fund proposal could be put forward to the federal government by an ad hoc coalition of local media, civil society, unions, think tanks, grass roots organizations, Friends of Canadian Media, etc. with the possible sponsorship of the Public Policy Forum and others.

The transition in government following the federal election in April 2025 could be a strategic moment to prepare and make a proposal.

The next step is to collectively write a longer policy paper with more specific recommendations.

Participants discussed the following additional ideas:

- Closing tax loopholes that benefit U.S. tech giants to the detriment of Canadian online media: for example, extending Sections 19 and 19.1 of the Income Tax Act to the internet and digital media would restrict the deduction of business expenses to advertising that appears in Canadian-owned digital media as opposed to foreign-owned digital media, like it is already restricted to Canadian-owned media print. As discussed in the *Shattered Mirror* report by the PPF, this could generate “a revenue stream of \$300 to \$400 million a year” that could be used to finance “a pool of funds for reinvestment in journalism and digital news innovation”
- Developing tax credits for local business advertising in local media

- Expanding the criteria for QCJO status to enable small newsrooms to have better access to the Canadian Journalism Labour Tax Credit and to the Digital News Subscription Tax Credit
- Stopping the deductibility of grants and other forms of assistance for tax credits: in the calculation of the qualifying labour expenditure for the Canadian Journalism Labour Tax Credit, amounts that are considered to be assistance in respect of an eligible newsroom employee (e.g. grant, subsidy, forgivable loan, provincial tax credits, allowance or any other form of inducement) reduce the amount of qualifying labour expenditure. News organizations utilizing multiple forms of funding outside of federal support (including philanthropy), as they are encouraged to do, can therefore be penalized when applying for tax credits.

III. Conclusions

Throughout the workshop, the news leaders, funders, researchers, philanthropists and journalists who participated in this workshop identified the following priority actions:

- 1) Organize to advocate with elected officials and have conversations with Heritage in this period of transition in government for reforms benefitting independent Canadian media, especially:
 - a. Tax reforms such as a digital sovereignty fund supported by the digital service tax, an extension of Sections 19 and 19.1 of the Income Tax Act to the Internet, non-deductibility of grants for tax credits and additional tax credits for research and innovation in the journalism sector
 - b. Modernization of QCJO criteria and of grant procedures to better take into account the growing importance of freelance journalists and of digital startups on the independent media outlets stage
 - c. An LJI reform proposal to be co-created by journalists and media associations to allow for longer term investment by local media and better training of journalists
 - d. A national Canadian Journalism Innovation Accelerator developed and funded by a public-private partnership
- 2) Explore and develop the role of community and philanthropic foundations in funding local journalism:
 - a. Create momentum and partnerships around Inspirit's new Pooled Fund for Independent Journalism (working title) to ensure its funding over the next few years and its transition to an intermediary journalism organization
 - b. Continue the fruitful conversations especially between the Inspirit Foundation and Community Foundations of Canada

- c. Continue the discussion on the role of community foundations at the Community Foundations of Canada's Illuminate 2025 conference in Halifax in late May 2025
- 3) Gather sponsors and allies to strengthen and organize research and data on journalism production and funding, building on the experience and data collection of the Local News Research Project, and the CJC.

In the coming months, the Cultural Policy Hub at OCAD U will conduct follow-up calls on each of the four policy areas with workshop participants to further the discussion. The Hub will develop a policy brief detailing policy pathways in each of the four policy areas, to be published in the fall of 2025.

The Cultural Policy Hub will continue to work with partners to convene conversations like this one that connect industry practitioners, researchers and policymakers and to mobilize its expertise and data to help inform decision making.

Appendix A:

List of participants (in alphabetical order by last name)

Louis Béland, Alliance des radios communautaires du Canada, Directeur général
JP Bervoets, Community Foundations of Canada, Chief Strategy Officer
Marla Boltman, FRIENDS, Executive Director
Jessica Botelho-Urbanski, Concordia, Research Assistant
Gabrielle Brassard-Lecours, Pivot Québec, President and Co-founder
Pietro Cimino, Canadian Heritage, Senior Advisor to the Director of Communications Regulatory and Legislative Policy, Digital and Creative Marketplace Frameworks
Jill Clarke, Rideau Hall Foundation, Senior Manager Communications and Media
Flavian Delima, Spinning Forward, Founder
Claire DeVeale-Blane, Toronto Community Foundation, VP Communications & Engagement
Joseph Fantauzzi, Cultural Policy Hub, Research Assistant
Eden Fineday, IndigiNews, Publisher
Liz Forsberg, Trillium Foundation, Lead, Partnerships Investment
Alex Freedman, Community Radio Fund of Canada, Executive Director
Robert Gehl, York University, Associate Professor
Clara Godbillon-Vasseur, Cultural Policy Hub, Policy Advisor
Matthew Gray, Torstar, Senior Advisor, Policy and Media Partnerships
Sarah Gustavas Lim, Lion Publishers, Membership Director
Ana Sofía Hibon, Inspirit Foundation, Program Manager
Amélie Hinse, Fédération des télévisions communautaires autonomes du Québec, Directrice Générale
Brent Jolly, Canadian Association of Journalists, President
Malcolm Kirk, Canadian Press, President
Miriam Kramer, OCAD University, Executive Director
Pierre-Marc Lauzon, Canadian Heritage, Director Periodicals
Chris Lee, Inspirit Foundation, Director of Programming
Niamh Leonard, Euphrosine Foundation, Executive Director
Anita Li, The Green Line, Publisher & CEO
April Lindgren, Toronto Metropolitan University, Professor
Brian Loevner, BLVE Consults, Founder & CEO
Allison MacLachlan, Rideau Hall Foundation, Director, External Relations and Public Engagement
Paul MacNeil, Island Press Limited, Publisher
Matthew Mendelson, Social Capital Partners, CEO
Erin Millar, Indiegaf, Co-Founder and CEO
Cal Millar, Channel Zero, President and COO
Erica Ngao, Indiegaf, Impact Manager
Dru Oja Jay, CUTV | The Breach, Executive Director | Publisher
Patti Pon, Cultural Policy Hub, Policy Fellow
Brandi Schier, Discourse Community Publishing, CEO
Sarah Spring, Documentary Organization of Canada, Executive Director
Melanie Thomas, Community Foundations of Canada, Vice President
Alison Uncles, Public Policy Forum, Vice-President, PPF Media and Communications
Amy Van Es, Indiegaf, Director, Client Operations
Kelly Wilhelm, Cultural Policy Hub, Head
Jillian Witt, The Philanthropist, Communications and Engagement Lead
Sadia Zaman, Inspirit Foundation, CEO

Appendix B: **Further reading list (*from most recent*)**

Local News Data Reports

Local News Research Project

April 3, 2025

The Local News Map is a crowd-sourced resource that tracks what is happening to local newspapers, broadcast outlets and online/digital news sources in places across Canada. It displays information on the launch/closing of local news organizations along with service increases/reductions going back to 2008, which marked the beginning of a deep recession and a turning point for many previously profitable local news organizations. Map data are downloaded and analyzed in reports that are published every two months. The latest report from April 1, 2025 is now available.

News deprivation: Canadian communities starving for local news

Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives

March 20, 2025

This report on a dataset of 2,900 local news outlet in Canada tracks their changes since 2008 and demonstrates that 11% of print media outlets have closed since 2014, and that 2.5 million Canadians have almost no local news, especially in Newfoundland and Labrador and in the suburbs of large cities. To prevent this void from being filled with misinformation from less credible news sources, the Centre calls for more formal policy and an implementation strategy within the CBC for local news service across communities that is equitable, extensive and transparent.

How the ‘localness’ of local news strengthens communities

The Philanthropist Journal

March 3, 2025

As local media actors are trying to better connect to their funders and help them understand their work and their needs, journalists explain the vital role of local, independent news outlets in fostering trust, dialogue and informed engagement within Canadian communities. They share the challenges they face, such as limited resources and overexploitation of racialized journalists, but also speak of their passion for community-building and of the necessity for philanthropic support and innovative approaches to sustain local journalism, which is crucial for the health of democracy.

Local News Is Dying. The Consequences Are Worse than You Think

The Walrus

April Lindgren, February 19, 2025

This article highlights how the closure of local news outlet has led to reduced access to reliable information, fostering misinformation and public uncertainty, exemplified by unfounded serial killer rumors in Smiths Falls, Ontario. The article also discusses how the loss of local journalism diminishes coverage of public affairs, weakens people’s sense of connection to their environment and community, hampers early warnings for public health

issues and emergency responses and leaves a void that often gets filled by misinformation on social media.

The Lost Estate: How to put the local back in local news

Public Policy Forum, Rideau Hall Foundation and Michener Awards Foundation
February 4, 2025

As more and more local news outlets are closing and their communities become deprived of sources of trusted news and connection with each other, this report examines the challenges local media face in finding funding, between advertising revenue, philanthropy and government help, and in reaching their audience, notably after Meta's ban of Canadian news sources; but it also presents practical solutions and policy propositions from the perspective of local news publishers themselves.

Report: The Critical Role Support Organizations Can Play in Maturing the Local News Field

Commoner Co.

Anika Annand, January 29, 2025

As support organizations face increasing criticism from news makers, this commissioned report applies the Strong Field Framework to the local news sector and estimates that the local news sector is transitioning from the "networking" stage to "maturation". To help along this maturation process, the report argues that support organizations need a shared identity so that they can collaborate with funders and newsmakers to build a common agenda and consolidate best practices while publicizing the value of local news.

How public service media are reaching and reflecting Indigenous audiences

The Public Media Alliance

October 2024

This report commissioned by CBC/Radio-Canada is based on in-depth interviews with leaders in Indigenous strategy and content at national Public Service Media (PSM) and Indigenous media in Canada and abroad. It highlights the current issues and questions around language preservation and revitalization, archives and ownership (including the topic of Indigenous data sovereignty), balancing external investment and Indigenous creation, relevancy of the content for Indigenous people and to reach new audiences, collaboration and reconciliation, as well as the organisation, status and place of Indigenous departments, Indigenous talents and Indigenous strategy in PSM for them to be successful.

Funding Journalism: A Guide to Philanthropic Support for Canadian Media

Inspirit Foundation

May 28, 2024

Media organizations in Canada are struggling with challenges that undermine their ability to produce and distribute public interest journalism. The disruption of traditional revenue sources, declining public trust in media, and the rise of misinformation require new tools for journalism organizations to move forward.

Charitable foundations are increasingly recognizing the democratic value of quality independent journalism, and the link between journalism and the social, economic and environmental issues they care about. Philanthropic support for journalism can create many opportunities for newsrooms. But, for the relationship between philanthropy and journalism to flourish, the two sectors need a shared understanding of their respective fields.

Funding Journalism: A Guide to Philanthropic Support for Canadian Media provides practical tools for Canadian media interested in exploring philanthropy as a revenue source. It is tailored to journalists and leaders at nonprofit and for-profit media organizations, and others with an interest in journalism.

Reinventing and rebuilding community journalism

The Philanthropist Journal

February 20, 2024

Part of a series exploring current crises in journalism, this article discusses the need for philanthropy to support the ecosystem of local journalism as essential services in need of investment, but also the need for news outlet to educate themselves on philanthropy to better ask for grants and negotiate contracts. The piece also showcases examples of innovative approaches taken by Indigenous and independent media to adapt and compensate journalists fairly.

Funding Journalism, Strengthening Communities

Inspirit Foundation

2023

These five case studies of community-serving and innovating journalism projects in Canada demonstrate the vital role of journalism in supporting healthy communities, diverse representation and democracy and the importance of philanthropic support to sustain independent journalism and give voice to underserved communities.

Reconnecting Communities Belonging, Engagement and Well-Being

Community Foundations of Canada, 2023 National Vital Signs Report,

2023

Based on a survey of Canadians' feelings towards their communities, this report highlights that sense of belonging and social connectedness have dropped over the last 10 years and that people have become less engaged in their community, which leads to a significant decline in support for the charitable sector. Although, overall, Canadians' sense of well-being and their mental health seem stable, people who are already most vulnerable or discriminated against are also the most likely to lack community and support.

How we know journalism is good for democracy

Medium

September 15, 2022

This literature review of over 50 studies succinctly highlights how robust local journalism contributes to increased voter turnout, enhanced government and company accountability, reduced political polarization and a higher sense of community. However, local news outlets have also historically caused harm to marginalized groups, leading to a real need for more equitable and community-centered reporting practices.