



Reinventing Local News



“Where better than Philadelphia
to invent the future of the free press?”

H.F. “GERRY” LENFEST

2024
Impact Report

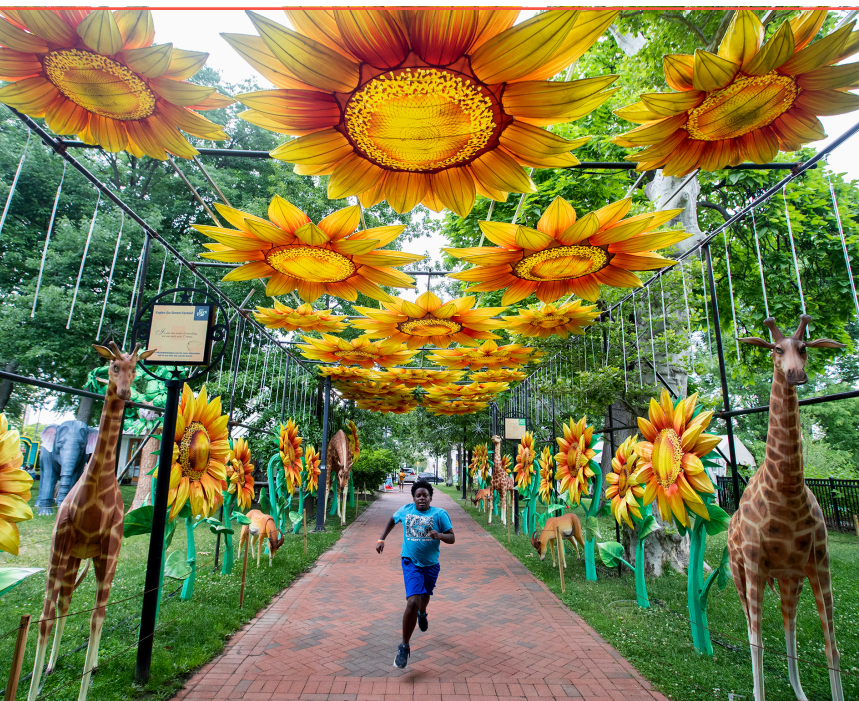
Cover image: Independence Hall in Philadelphia. Sean Pavone/Shutterstock.



About 500 students from 17 Philadelphia high schools marched around City Hall during a youth get-out-the-vote event. Tom Gralish / Philadelphia Inquirer Staff Photographer

2024

This impact report details how your support made our work possible. We're grateful for your partnership, and we look forward to our continued work together in 2025 and beyond.



A youth runs through the northwest walkway at the Philadelphia Chinese Lantern Festival. Charles Fox/Philadelphia Inquirer Staff Photographer



The Pennsylvania Department of Health sought to impose new limits on doctors who want to practice in the state's medical marijuana program under legislation prompted by a Spotlight PA investigation. Daniel Fishel for Spotlight PA

Dear Friends,

Local journalism is at an inflection point.

Across the United States, local newspapers are continuing to disappear at a concerning rate and many remaining outlets are being consolidated into hedge fund-backed chains solely focused on extracting profit. Meanwhile, bad-faith actors are stepping into these voids to share politically motivated misinformation masquerading as news.

Despite these troubling trends, there are signs of hope. Locally owned legacy newspapers are transforming themselves into digital powerhouses, journalism entrepreneurs are creating community-focused publications that put the public's interest first, and individuals are turning to less traditional platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok to share important information with their communities.

The Lenfest Institute for Journalism is at the vanguard of the movement to reinvent local journalism.

Here in Philadelphia, the Institute has deepened its commitment to Every Voice, Every Vote, a coalition of community and news organizations providing in-depth journalism and catalyzing civic action, with nearly \$3 million in new grant funding thanks to the support of the William Penn Foundation and other generous funders.

As the non-controlling owner of The Philadelphia Inquirer, the Institute has supported The Inquirer's ongoing transformation through investments in digital technology, marketing strategies, and high-quality journalism that helped The Inquirer reach 118,500 digital subscribers for the first time in 2024.

The Institute's investment in Spotlight PA, now an independent nonprofit newsroom sharing its coverage with more than 125 Pennsylvania publishers, empowered nonpartisan election resources that made it easier for Pennsylvanians to cast informed votes.

As we embark into 2025, the Institute plans to expand its work across the country to help leaders in other cities replicate the successes we've seen in Philadelphia and Pennsylvania.

We are partnering with Open AI and Microsoft to launch the Lenfest AI Collaborative and Fellowship program, a \$10 million initiative that will enable eight metro news organizations, including The Philadelphia Inquirer, to utilize artificial intelligence tools to enhance their businesses.

And in partnership with the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the Institute is launching the Knight Communities Network to mentor and advise leaders in eight cities across the country as they work to expand their own local news ecosystems.

We are grateful for your continued support of The Lenfest Institute, and we look forward to continuing to share updates on our progress investing in the next generation of local news.

With thanks,

Jim Friedlich
Executive Director & CEO, The Lenfest Institute for Journalism

Spotlight PA government reporter Kate Huangpu interviews community members. Photo by Jared Wickerham for Spotlight PA



Students at the Antonia Pantoja Charter School in North Philadelphia watch the solar eclipse. Jessica Griffin / Philadelphia Inquirer Staff Photographer



Reinventing Local Journalism in Philadelphia: Every Voice, Every Vote

In 2024, The Lenfest Institute expanded its Every Voice, Every Vote coalition, partnering with 71 Philadelphia media organizations and community groups to create journalism and civic engagement projects that connect residents to local government and track the progress of the city's new administration.

The Every Voice, Every Vote program is investing \$4.3 million over two years to support grants to 71 media and community organizations, conduct citywide opinion research, and more. Philadelphians are eager for positive change, and the funding is enabling partners to focus on public safety, affordable housing, sanitation, education, economic opportunities, and other issues that matter to their communities.

Every Voice, Every Vote has been building upon its initial success as Philadelphia's largest-ever collaborative journalism and community engagement effort. Of the 71 grantees, nine media organizations and 15 community organizations joined the Every Voice, Every Vote coalition for the first time in 2024. Every Voice, Every Vote is tracking the progress of city initiatives through four core focus areas: "Be heard," "Be engaged," "Be accountable," and "Take action."



Be heard

Philadelphians are letting public officials and fellow community members know their priorities — at the polls and in their neighborhoods. As city officials work to tackle the city's most pressing issues, Every Voice, Every Vote partners are creating space for them to share their perspectives through community listening events, and regular news reporting.

A prime example was Green Philly's Sustainability in Action event, where city officials answered residents' questions on the city's environmental initiatives and how leaders are balancing economic growth with environmental responsibility. Elizabeth Lankenau, interim director of the city's Office of Sustainability, said Green Philly's events have become key opportunities for her to engage directly with constituents.

Be engaged

Every Voice, Every Vote is meeting people where they are, in the real world and online. The coalition has partnered with independent social media content creators to encourage civic

engagement among younger Philadelphians. Partners have continued to regularly translate civic information into several languages to ensure all Philadelphians can engage with city affairs. Madre Tierra and Congreso partnered to create English and Spanish social media content with step-by-step explanations of how to prepare to vote. Woori Center, which serves the city's Korean community, offers translation services and helped publish election-related articles in local Korean newspapers.

Be accountable

Before the 2023 mayoral election, Every Voice, Every Vote identified the issues most important to Philadelphians. In 2024, partners tracked the progress of city initiatives intended to address those issues.

At The Philadelphia Inquirer, data reporter Lizzie Mulvey's coverage looks at gentrification in the city. After the latest property tax assessments, which impact property tax rates, The Inquirer found that the sharpest increase in property assessments are primarily affecting Black and lower income neighborhoods. The census tracts where property taxes increased the least are

majority white and have poverty rates below the city average.

Grid Magazine is covering the intersection of environmental sustainability and policy, including calls for improved flood mitigation efforts across the region; asbestos, lead, and HVAC issues plaguing Philly schools; and lack of regulation for carbon emissions among private sector entities that control essential city infrastructure.

Kensington Voice, which covers North Philadelphia, has continued providing solutions-oriented accountability reporting on the opioid crisis, housing, and calls for policing and prison reform in North Philadelphia — issues which often go hand-in-hand.

Take action

All of Every Voice, Every Vote's partners are working to energize city residents to become active participants in the city's civic processes. The most basic action item is voting: Every Voice, Every Vote conducted a get out the vote campaign for the 2024 state and national elections, creating social media content and advertisements that partners could easily include in their coverage.

Several partners are taking this work a step further, creating opportunities for residents to become actively involved in policy and media production. Center 1968 launched A Black Girl's Guide to Policy, a social media and live event series helping Black women and girls understand state and local legislation that directly impacts them, including maternal health, reproductive care, and more.

Local broadcasting company We Talk Weekly partnered with The Philadelphia Film Factory to launch the Youth Civic News mentorship program for local youth ages 15-24. The program promotes civic engagement and civic literacy by giving participants the tools to produce and run their radio or TV show.



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Every Voice, Every Vote is a two-year, \$4.3 million effort to expand access to civic news and information in Philadelphia.



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1. Grid Magazine reported on Members of the Lift Every Voice Philly team who advocated for students outside of the headquarters of the School District of Philadelphia. Photo by Gregory Wright. 2. SPA Youth Votes annual Give Us a Ballot March in celebration of National Vote Early Day. Courtesy of PA Youth Vote. 3. Every Voice, Every Vote reports on the issues most important to Philadelphians. Anton Klusener/ Philadelphia Inquirer Staff Illustration. 4. Green Philly's Sustainability in Action town hall. Rivkin Collective. 5. Philadelphia teacher Charlie McGeehan speaks to students in his social studies class at the Academy at Palumbo. Carly Strin / Chalkbeat. 6. Every Voice, Every Vote partners host civic education events for all ages. Courtesy of Episcopal Community Services. 7. Movita Johnson-Harrell shared how she lost five immediate family members to gun violence in "The Intergenerational Fallout of Gun Violence." Caroline Gutman for The Trace.



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Reinventing Local Journalism in Philadelphia

The Lenfest Institute's commitment to supporting the Philadelphia news ecosystem serves as an example for other cities across the country.

Our peers across the country have recognized the Institute's success – Press Forward, a nationwide coalition to strengthen local journalism, published its Guide for Local Funders in February 2024 and included a case study on The Lenfest Institute's investments in the Philadelphia news ecosystem as a model to replicate in other cities.

In October 2024, The Knight Foundation enlisted The Lenfest Institute for Journalism to use its learnings from its Philadelphia investments to support eight emerging news ecosystems in cities across the United States through strategic guidance.



Philadelphia Media Founders Exchange

The Philadelphia Media Founders Exchange, The Lenfest Institute's accelerator program for media entrepreneurs of color, returned in November for its third year of programming thanks to the support of Comcast NBCUniversal, the Independence Public Media Foundation, and the Christian R. and Mary F. Lindback Foundation. The 2024-2025 Founders Exchange class consists of program alumni whose businesses are poised for the next stage of growth.

The curriculum builds upon the foundational skills the fellows developed during their first Founders Exchange experience, which focused on best practices for early-stage entrepreneurs, including self-assessment, goal setting, market understanding, and business modeling.

The fellows are focusing on strategic planning, operational efficiency, and revenue generation, with the goal being to empower participants to build profitable, impactful, and sustainable media enterprises. Each fellow will receive a grant of \$50,000 to support their continued growth.

The programming was adapted for the

2024 cohort based on feedback from past programming and now includes one-on-one coaching sessions with experts like Black & Brown Founders Executive Director Deldelp Medina and Crawford Leadership Strategies founder Joyel Crawford. These sessions are designed to help the fellows address their specific business needs and foster new connections from outside of the program.

Fellows are also participating in hands-on workshop sessions, providing them a platform to share practical applications of the lessons learned in the fellowship with other fellows and industry experts. This collaborative environment fosters a deeper sense of community and shared learning, ensuring the fellows benefit from diverse perspectives and real-world examples.

The Lenfest Institute for Journalism hosted its second annual Philadelphia Media Founders Exchange Revenue Summit in July, bringing together program alumni, Philadelphia media makers, and entrepreneurs for a day-long discussion on building sustainable businesses.

A key theme of the event was the need for a holistic approach to revenue and sustainability. Speakers from within the journalism and nonprofit space shared expertise on



business practices, grantmaking, community engagement, adapting emerging technologies such as AI, and how to effectively tell your organization's story.

Philadelphia Local News Sustainability Initiative

The Philadelphia Local News Sustainability Initiative supports established Philadelphia-area news organizations with approximate annual revenue between \$500,000 and \$5 million. Each grant is intended to help address the specific sustainability needs of a news organization serving a key Philadelphia community. Funding focuses on notable sustainability drivers such as new revenue strategies, reaching new audiences, and the digital transformation of legacy news organizations.

The Philadelphia Local News Sustainability Initiative grantees have been meeting quarterly to exchange learnings, successes, and challenges. The grant program is ongoing through 2025, but here's a look at the projects currently underway:

- **The African Cultural Alliance of North America** is fostering greater representation in local media coverage and expand revenue and audience growth.
- **Billy Penn** is broadening audience engagement and reader revenue.
- **Chestnut Hill Local**, which serves Northwest Philadelphia and Eastern Montgomery County, is hiring a business growth officer focused on developing new products and revenue streams.
- **Generocity** which covers philanthropy in Philadelphia, is hiring a full-time journalist and a community narratives editor.
- **FunTimes Magazine** which serves the African and Caribbean diaspora, is hiring a community navigator to spearhead outreach programs, audience engagement, and revenue streams.

- **Kensington Voice** is addressing news, information, and equity gaps through the expansion of community-centered reporting.
- **Love Now Media**, is hiring a managing director.
- **Newspaper Media Group**, which owns several newspapers in and around Philly, is investing in digital innovation, increased language translation services to appeal to diverse audiences, and the testing of new reader revenue strategies.
- **Esperanza**, which publishes Spanish-language community newspaper Impacto, is integrating new technologies and continuing to enhance its digital presence.
- **Philadelphia Gay News** is making significant investments in future sustainability through digital transformation, the addition of new operations and journalism staff, and the addition of a multimedia news component.
- **PhillyCAM** is enhancing its community engagement activities through the creation of satellite locations and media partnerships across Philadelphia.
- **Schneps Media**, publisher of Metro Philadelphia, is conducting in-depth investigative reporting focused on the

Philadelphia housing crisis and an increased investment in staffing and digital outreach.

- **Spotlight Delaware** is growing its business staff to meet operational needs and expand community engagement.
- **Technically Media**, is investing in an array of new business and information tools and services:
- **The Philadelphia Citizen**, is increasing social media outreach and other data-gathering activities and hiring a part-time social media associate, intern, and video editor.
- **The Philadelphia Tribune**, the nation's oldest continuously published Black newspaper, is hiring a marketing director and investigative reporter.
- **Trace Media Inc.**, which covers gun violence, is expanding its Philadelphia bureau to grow fundraising plans and enhance resources available to assist local media's reporting of this critical issue.
- **WURD Radio**, Pennsylvania's only Black-owned talk radio station, is hiring a key executive leader focused on revenue and responsible for spearheading the development of a comprehensive news strategy.



Entrepreneurs running media, news, and information businesses gathered for the Philadelphia Media Founders Exchange Revenue Summit on July 9, 2024. Photos by Love Now Media.

The Philadelphia Inquirer

Investment, innovation, and reinvention

Our colleagues at The Philadelphia Inquirer are reinventing the great American newspaper. The Inquirer reached 118,500 paying digital subscribers for the first time in 2024 thanks to significant investments in digital marketing, experimentation with platforms like Apple News, and expansion of important coverage areas such as food, sports, and investigative news. Thousands of additional donors made contributions to The Inquirer's High-Impact Journalism Fund, which supports The Inquirer's investigative journalism. The Inquirer was able to reach these critical milestones thanks to investments from The Lenfest Institute, which allowed The Inquirer to experiment with digital upgrades and new tools to reach audiences.



The Inquirer was recognized by the International News Media Association's Global Media Awards for Best Brand Awareness Campaign for its cheeky UNSUBSCRIBE/SUBSCRIBE campaign. The Inquirer asked Philadelphians to unsubscribe from clichés and stereotypes about our city and local journalism and instead subscribe to The Inquirer's unique approach to Philadelphia-first reporting.

Impactful investigations

The Inquirer's in-depth reporting sets it apart. From investigating poor conditions at a local animal shelter to reporting on rampant wage theft, Inquirer journalists put community members first and worked tirelessly to amplify voices of those who are underserved.

One worker The Inquirer identified was owed more than \$99,000 from a home-care agency and did not know he was entitled to the funds. "Wow," he said. "Oh, my gosh. How did I get none of that money?"

- An Inquirer investigation found that chronic under staffing, squalid kennel conditions, and casual euthanasia were the norm at the Montgomery County Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Despite the organization's \$67 million annual budget, the Montco rescue had the lowest save rate among 11 shelters in the region, euthanizing nearly one in five animals that came to its main shelter.

The organization's executive director resigned in October, two weeks after The Inquirer report.

- The city of Philadelphia was planning to spend \$250 million to renovate South Philadelphia's FDR Park, which included a dozen multi-purpose playing fields covered in artificial turf. In March, residents sued the city to stop the park's makeover following Inquirer reporting on the risk of

PFAS, cancer-causing forever chemicals, in artificial turf.

- Buyers who purchased foreclosed property from Philadelphia Sheriff's Office sales — sometimes spending hundreds of thousands of dollars — have been left without a deed to the property for months. The deed-recording process, which historically took around six to eight weeks to conclude after a Philadelphia sheriff sale, was taking about seven months — or more, according to Inquirer reporting. The buyers in limbo can't access the properties, make repairs, or rent them out.

The Sheriff's Office only admitted it made an error after The Inquirer repeatedly showed documentation and asked about the sales.

"Your persistent questions caused us to delve deeper into this matter, and we discovered that the deeds you provided to our office were delayed due to a staffing error," a spokesperson said. "We are evaluating and updating our current policies and procedures, as well as ensuring that corrective action and training take place."



The Philadelphia Inquirer now has more than 118,500 paying digital subscribers.

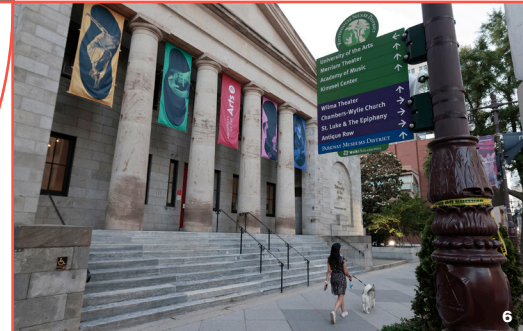


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Subscribe to foodie city.

Some notable stories from 2024 include:

- Inquirer reporting found that the U.S. Department of Labor was holding more than \$18 million for 9,000 workers who were owed money from settlements in federal wage-theft cases over the past three years. The Inquirer built an online tool that listed 260 Pennsylvania companies that still owed employees money. Readers could look up their employers and follow step-by-step instructions for requesting payment if they were owed anything.



Unsubscribe from "So close. Nice try."

Subscribe to "Fly Eagles Fly."



Unsubscribe from watered-down takes.



Subscribe to a fiery Philly voice since 1829.



1. The Klean Kensington community gardening initiative. Courtesy of Nina Sciaccia. 2. Protesters at the Montgomery County SPCA. Tyger Williams / Staff Photographer. 3. Chinatown arena opponents demonstrate outside Philadelphia City Hall. Jose F. Moreno / Staff Photographer. 4. Successful Aging Care Net was among the Pa. companies found to owe thousands of low-salary workers for unpaid overtime. Elizabeth Robertson / Staff Photographer. 5. Tyrell Carter, a man experiencing homelessness, makes his way down Ruth Street, one block off of Kensington Avenue. Jessica Griffin / Staff Photographer. 6. The University of the Arts Dorrance Hamilton Hall. The Inquirer reported on the University's abrupt closing in June. Elizabeth Robertson / Staff Photographer. 7. Controversy over neighborhood board members. Monica Herndon / Staff Photographer. 8. Mike Herman with a photograph of his daughter, Schyler wants to know whether artificial turf could be linked to the cancer that killed her at age 15. Jessica Griffin / Staff Photographer



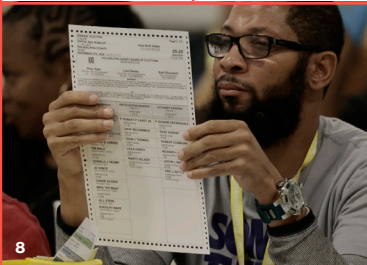
The Philadelphia Inquirer Election 2024

Philadelphia and Pennsylvania were at the center of the political universe in 2024 as a key swing state of the presidential election. The Philadelphia Inquirer's reporting helped residents understand the key issues, make sense of the candidates' claims, and decide how to vote in races up-and-down the ballot.

In the run-up to Election Day, The Inquirer partnered with The New York Times and Siena College to conduct joint polls of Pennsylvania voters and produce deep dive reporting that provided valuable insights into what issues were top-of-mind for voters and how the race was evolving. The polls were part of an ongoing collaboration between the three organizations, which was supported by The Lenfest Institute.

The Inquirer's government reporting extends beyond presidential election years: a team of Inquirer reporters — Anna Orso, Sean Walsh, Julia Terruso, Aseem Shukla, and Layla Jones — won Syracuse University's Toner Prize for Excellence in Local Political Reporting for their coverage of Mayor Cherelle L. Parker's victory in a crowded Democratic primary election. The reporting was made possible by The Lenfest Institute's Every Voice, Every Vote initiative.

A team of Inquirer reporters won Syracuse University's Toner Prize for Excellence in Local Political Reporting.



1. Sophia Lin in front of the South Philadelphia High School polling place. Jessica Griffin / Staff Photographer. 2. The Fletcher Street Urban Riding Club helped register people to vote. Monica Herndon / Staff Photographer. 3. West Philadelphia resident Boronne Gao. Jessica Griffin / Staff Photographer. 4. While waiting in line to vote, Candidate for U.S. Senate Andy Kim adjusts the tie of his older son Austin Lai as his younger son August Lai stands by. Jessica Griffin / Staff Photographer. 5. Philadelphia resident Ramon Ortiz on Election Day. Alejandro A. Alvarez / Staff Photographer. 6. The Community College of Philadelphia polling place. Jessica Griffin / Staff Photographer. 7. Paul Judd, who participated in The Philadelphia Inquirer's voter poll. Courtesy of Paul Judd. 8. An election worker at Philadelphia's election warehouse. Elizabeth Robertson / Staff Photographer. 9. A Kamala Harris campaign event at Temple University. Tom Gralish / Staff Photographer. 10. The Rochon family of Downingtown, Pa., after casting their votes. Tyger Williams / Staff Photographer. 11. Philadelphia's election warehouse on Roosevelt Blvd. Elizabeth Robertson / Staff Photographer

Reinventing Local Journalism in Pennsylvania: Spotlight PA

The Lenfest Institute for Journalism co-founded and launched Spotlight PA in 2019 as a central pillar of its commitment to build solutions for the next era of local news.

Spotlight PA's mission is to hold powerful private and public forces across Pennsylvania — especially governments, businesses, and special interests — to account through urgent and compelling public-service and investigative journalism that drives change and strengthens our democracy, the state, and all who live here.

While Spotlight PA became an independent nonprofit in 2023, The Lenfest Institute continues to be a significant donor and key advisor to Spotlight PA. Both organizations remain closely linked as the Institute provides regular guidance and support to Spotlight PA's leaders as they develop sustainable models to pursue its mission of producing high-quality investigative and accountability journalism.

Spotlight PA provides its reporting free-of-charge to more than 125 newspapers, public radio stations, and news sites throughout Pennsylvania.

Growth and expansion

In 2024, Spotlight PA made significant investments to expand its reach and serve even more Pennsylvanians.

Spotlight PA announced its plans to move forward with its second regional bureau, expanding coverage to Berks County, Pennsylvania. The decision was made after a yearlong community listening effort, which found that Berks County residents are extremely frustrated with the diminished capacity of the local newspaper, which was sold to a hedge fund in 2019, and are concerned about a lack of access to trustworthy information in their community.

The Berks County bureau follows in the footsteps of Spotlight PA's State College bureau, which launched in 2022 to serve north-central Pennsylvania with support from The Lenfest Institute.

Spotlight PA also announced a groundbreaking partnership with local TV news. For the first time, Spotlight PA will share its content with five television stations across Pennsylvania, turning its most important investigations and other reporting into broadcast-ready news packages to air during regular local newscasts. The stations collectively reach 5.1 million homes and 10 million adults.

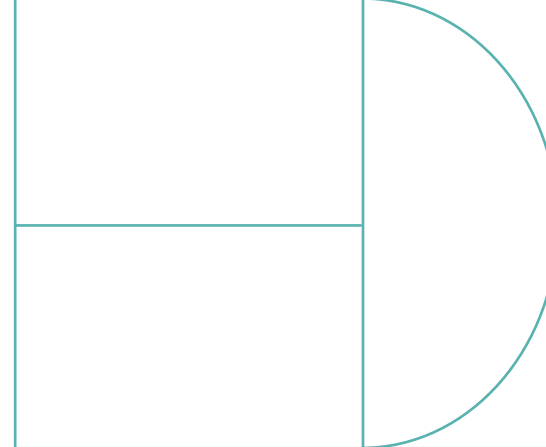
This partnership bridges the gap between nonprofits and commercial television, which is a trusted local news source for many communities. This is the first major investment in video for Spotlight PA, and the team plans to share the coverage across its digital and social media platforms to boost audience engagement.

Elections

Although 2024 was an important year for national elections, Spotlight PA kept its readers informed about races happening at the local and statewide level that often go unnoticed.

It created a 2024 Election Hub, complete with general and issue-based voter guides; logistics on voter registration, including how to vote, how mail-in ballots work, and more; and an explainer on how Spotlight PA's journalists were covering the elections. It created specific voter guides for races like Attorney General, Treasurer, and Auditor General — three highly impactful state-level positions that are often underreported. To deepen its reporting, it collaborated with Votebeat, a national, nonpartisan news organization covering local election administration and voting.

Spotlight PA launched an AI-powered election assistant, where readers could ask election



related questions to a chat-bot and receive instant answers. Spotlight PA trained this AI tool to produce answers based on its own coverage and official government websites, conducting rigorous testing to ensure it produced accurate responses.

Spotlight PA also created an interactive "Find Your Candidate Match" quiz, where readers could answer questions about their views on various issues and be matched with candidates whose policies align.

Spotlight PA has a proven track record when it comes to election coverage. In 2023, it produced a series focused on the judicial elections and how these races affect the real, day-to-day issues readers care about most. In June 2024, the Pennsylvania NewsMedia Association awarded Spotlight PA the prestigious Public Service Award to honor these efforts.

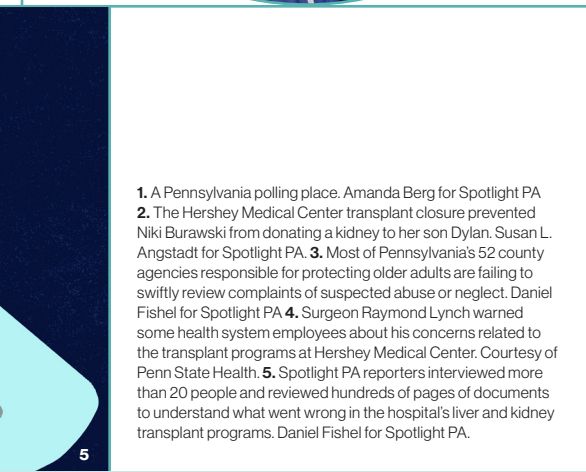
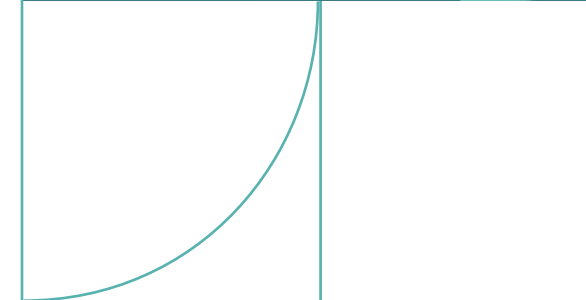
Holding power to account

Organ transplants

A top surgeon raised concerns about what he believed were serious problems within the kidney and liver transplant units at Penn State Health Milton S. Hershey Medical Center — only to be dismissed. Weeks after, those same programs came under scrutiny from federal regulators. Penn State then abruptly discontinued abdominal transplants. Spotlight PA reporters spoke to more than 20 experts and current and former employees of Penn State Health, and reviewed financial records, transplant data reports, recordings of internal meetings, emails, and text messages to better understand what had happened in the transplant programs. In addition, Spotlight PA spoke to patients who were scheduled for a life-saving organ transplant or who were hoping to be added to the transplant waiting list in the near future, but instead had to spend months searching for a new transplant program that was accessible and would admit them.

Elder abuse

In July 2024, a Spotlight PA investigation found that most of the 52 county agencies responsible for protecting older adults are failing to review and respond to reports of suspected abuse or neglect in a timely manner, including in emergency situations. This is despite the fact that the state Inspector General issued a warning about the slow response times back in 2018 to the Department of Aging, a government agency that oversees the operations in the 52 county agencies. A subsequent Spotlight PA investigation found that when agencies break the rules intended to keep the state's elderly safe, the Department of Aging often fails to take punitive action, and in some cases, it completely fails to monitor the organizations that have been red flags in the past. It has never levied financial sanctions against the agencies.



1. A Pennsylvania polling place. Amanda Berg for Spotlight PA 2. The Hershey Medical Center transplant closure prevented Niki Burawski from donating a kidney to her son Dylan. Susan L. Angstadt for Spotlight PA 3. Most of Pennsylvania's 52 county agencies responsible for protecting older adults are failing to swiftly review complaints of suspected abuse or neglect. Daniel Fishel for Spotlight PA 4. Surgeon Raymond Lynch warned some health system employees about his concerns related to the transplant programs at Hershey Medical Center. Courtesy of Penn State Health 5. Spotlight PA reporters interviewed more than 20 people and reviewed hundreds of pages of documents to understand what went wrong in the hospital's liver and kidney transplant programs. Daniel Fishel for Spotlight PA.

Spotlight PA provides its reporting free-of-charge to more than 125 newspapers, public radio stations, and news sites throughout Pennsylvania.

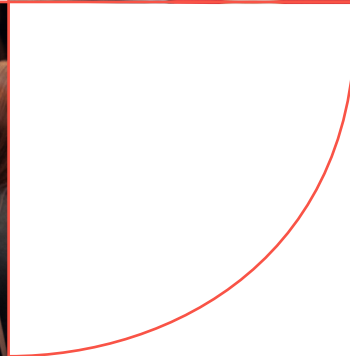
Reinventing Local Journalism Nationwide: Lenfest Communities of Practice

The Lenfest Institute leads Communities of Practice to bring together news leaders from across the world. Each is completely free to join. The Institute's programming is business-model agnostic, so both for-profit and nonprofit organizations are welcome in the communities of practice.

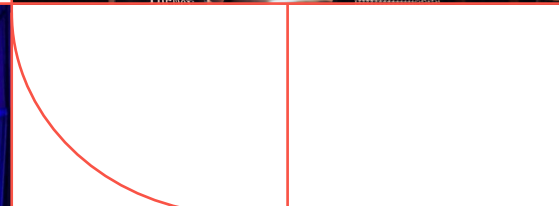
We believe the local news industry is better when we see the similarities in the challenges we face and come together to create solutions. The communities have also provided support to members to attend conferences or other professional development opportunities.

The Lenfest Communities of Practice are supported by The Knight-Lenfest Local News Transformation Fund, a recently completed joint venture between the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and The Lenfest Institute, and the Google News Initiative.

Here are a few ways the Institute's Communities of Practice supported journalists in 2024:



We believe the local news industry is better when we see the similarities in the challenges we face and come together to create solutions.



Photos 1 through 5: Members of The Lenfest Institute's Communities of Practice met at the Online News Association's 2024 conference in Atlanta for an in-person gathering and networking event. Photos by Mark Tioxon. **6.** Lex Roman, author of *Journalists Pay Themselves* and member of the Audience Community, wrote about insights gleaned from ONA in an article for the Institute. Photo courtesy of Lex Roman. **7.** Montana Free Press reporter Alex Sakariassen catches up with rancher Dusty Crary inside the Montana Capitol. Eliza Anderson Wiley / Montana Free Press

Lenfest Institute AI Collaborative and Fellowship Program

In October 2024, The Lenfest Institute launched a major new collaboration in partnership with Open AI and Microsoft: The Lenfest AI Collaborative and Fellowship Program, which is designed to help local newsrooms explore ways in which artificial intelligence can help drive business sustainability and innovation.

In the initial round of the program, five members of the Institute's Local Independent News Coalition — Chicago Public Media, Newsday (Long Island, NY), The Minnesota Star Tribune, The Philadelphia Inquirer, and The Seattle Times — will each receive a grant to hire a two-year AI fellow to pursue projects that focus largely on improving business sustainability and implementing AI technologies within their organizations. The fellowship will also provide Open AI and Microsoft Azure credits to help these publications experiment and develop tools to assist with local news.

The first slate of AI Collaborative and Fellowship members will work on projects that focus on the use of AI for analysis of public data, to better utilize news and visual archives, to build audience engagement, for creating new AI-based news tools and products, and more. As part of the program, the news organizations will work collaboratively with each other and the broader news industry to share leanings, product developments, case studies, and

technical information needed to help replicate their work in other newsrooms.

Press Forward coaching

The Lenfest News Philanthropy Network partnered with the Press Forward coalition to offer complimentary fundraising coaching and grant writing support to local news organizations applying to Press Forward's first open call for funding.

The coaches conducted 419 sessions with 283 applicants. In total, 42% of the organizations that received coaching and applied received funding. Both the applicants and the coaches praised the program. One coach said: "It is so refreshing to be able to share insights and help organizations and leaders refine their applications and to think strategically. To really explore what is being asked of them."

Grants, sponsorships, and more

In 2024, the Institute's Communities of Practice introduced several programs to provide additional support for its community members.

The Lenfest News Philanthropy Network and the Engaged Cities community both launched catalyst grant programs, which provided funding to select member organizations to support various experiments in sustainability.

The Lenfest News Philanthropy Network supported 11 news organizations with experiments in their year-end fundraising efforts. The grantees, which include both non- and for-profit media, received up to \$20,000 to fund innovative approaches to end-of-year fundraising — including direct mail fundraising, SMS messaging, live events, and more.

Lenfest Engaged Cities, which originally launched in 2023 with nine founding member organizations, announced in 2024 its plans to expand and create a second cohort.

The Lenfest Audience Community of Practice supported its individual members by sponsoring attendance to the Online News Association conference in Atlanta, the largest annual convening of journalists in the U.S.

Lex Roman, a Lenfest Audience Community member who writes the newsletter *Journalists Pay Themselves* and attended the conference, wrote a recap of their experience at ONA for The Lenfest Institute, noting that finding community among other journalists is a source of strength. "We all left with a lot to consider, and we have a lot of smart people to consider it with," wrote Roman.

Tools and Convenings



Toolkits

The Lenfest Institute is committed to making its expertise and insights as accessible as possible. The Institute in 2024 invested in making toolkits, creating resources, and undertaking research to share replicable best practices and reach news organizations at scale.

Thousands of local news leaders accessed Institute tools to help with revenue generation, community impact, and more.

Beyond Print Toolkit

Across the United States local newspapers — from metro dailies to alt-weeklies and community publications — are making changes to their businesses that once would have been considered radical or a sign of decline: they're reducing print frequency or even eliminating print altogether.

To help newspapers make these fundamental changes, The Lenfest Institute created The Beyond Print Toolkit, published in partnership

with the American Press Institute. The Toolkit is designed to help local newspapers build engaged digital audiences, create robust new revenue streams, and reimagine the role of print, all while continuing to produce essential journalism that serves their communities.

Beyond Print is supported by an anchor donation from the Andrew and Julie Klingenstein Family Fund and additional funding from The Knight-Lenfest Local News Transformation Fund.

Lenfest Local News Infrastructure Fund

The Lenfest Local News Infrastructure Fund was created in January 2024 to make critical technology infrastructure and services more accessible to local news publishers across the United States.

The Fund is made possible by a three-year, \$7.25 million investment from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. Philanthropists interested in making additional tools and services available to more local news publishers are welcome to join the Fund.

The Infrastructure Fund is initially supporting Newspack, an all-in-one digital publishing system serving more than 250 publications globally, and BlueLena, a consultancy and technology firm working with publishers to drive audience growth and monetization.

Intro to Grant Writing

About 1,000 leaders have signed up for The Lenfest Institute's News Philanthropy Network Introduction to Grant Writing course, an asynchronous program that introduces journalists and news professionals through every stage of the grant writing process.

The program, led by Molly Penn and Marissa Lewis of Penn Creative Strategy, covers everything from research to relationship-building to crafting the perfect proposal. The video lectures are accompanied by our Grant Writing Workbook, which help participants map out their grant writing strategy.

Community impact research

To better understand the community impact of local journalism, The Lenfest Institute partnered with George Washington University professor Danny Hayes to conduct surveys of news audiences in Michigan, Montana, and New Hampshire.

The study found that independent news organizations are having a significant impact on their communities by serving as trusted sources of information, keeping their audiences informed about major issues and stories, and encouraging civic engagement. This constitutes a bright spot in a challenging media environment and underscores the importance of vibrant state and local news for promoting civic and political engagement in local communities.

To help other local news leaders conduct similar research, Hayes created a how-to guide for how to undertake surveys and focus groups.

INN dashboard

The Institute's Statewide News Collective partnered with the Institute for Nonprofit News to create a data dashboard to provide benchmarking data and insights to Collective members. The dashboard showcases anonymized revenue, audience, staffing, and coverage data across 48 statewide, nonprofit news outlets.



Convenings

The Institute brings together leaders from across the local news field to share insights, identify best practices, and build opportunities for funding and collaboration.

2024 highlights:

The Local News Summit

The Lenfest Institute and The Aspen Institute annually host The Local News Summit, a gathering of about 75 local news leaders from across the United States to identify key challenges and sketch out opportunities for collective action to develop and implement solutions for local news.

The 2024 Summit, held in Charleston, S.C., was the third annual event. Discussions at the Summit focused on topics ranging from fostering collaboration across newsrooms, harnessing AI technologies responsibly, engaging more deeply with communities to combat polarization and the erosion of public trust, and exploring innovative funding models. The first discussions about the merger between CalMatters and The Markup also occurred on the sidelines of the Charleston Summit.

The Lenfest Institute/AP Forum on Journalism & Democracy

In May, the Institute and the Associated Press gathered more than 100 journalists, foundations, technology executives and election-integrity experts at Microsoft's New York offices for a "Democracy Demo Day," a day-long showcase that provided a platform for leaders in local news and nonpartisan election services to share their work with one another and with prospective funders.

Twelve presenters representing newsrooms from coast to coast were chosen from an open call of more than 90 applicants for the opportunity to share their work. Projects experimented with utilizing influencers and content creators to share information on social media, improving information on down-ballot races, ensuring legal protections for journalists reporting on protests, and more.

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\$7 million contributed by 1,367 donors – a 25% increase over the previous year.

2024 By the Numbers

Grantmaking Totals

| | |
|--|-----------------------|
| The Philadelphia Inquirer..... | \$7.3 million |
| Philadelphia..... | \$3.6 million |
| National..... | \$2.9 million |
| Fiscal Sponsorship..... | \$805,000 |
| Spotlight PA..... | \$500,000 |
| Total in grants in support of the Institute's mission to reinvent local news..... | \$15.1 million |



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