

Press Forward: Two Years of Catalytic Support for Local News

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Press Forward is a network with chapters nationwide, working to strengthen local news so communities stay informed, connected and engaged. With more than 40 place-based chapters and over \$400 million invested, we support sustainable models, close coverage gaps, and cultivate the local news champions that help ensure everyone has access to reliable information. Together, we can write a new story for local news. More at pressforward.news



Impact Architects works at the nexus of research, philanthropy, and news and information. We support partners in developing high-impact strategies, clarifying purpose and goals, and measuring success.

Acknowledgements:

Press Forward would like to thank all of the funders who contributed their time, talent, and treasure to making this report and this network possible. We are honored to have you as colleagues and deeply appreciate your dedication to our shared mission. And to our network's grantee partners at 740+ newsroom and support organizations — thank you for your tireless work to strengthen local news and communities nationwide.

Press Forward: Catalyzing Support for Local News

Press Forward launched in September 2023 with commitments from funders to invest at least \$500 million over five years and a goal to grow a nationwide network of place-based funders with a stake in the future of public service journalism. In the two years since launch, **Press Forward's network has invested at least \$405 million to support local news across the U.S. and increased its funder network five-fold, from 22 to more than 110.**

Press Forward has hired staff, supported the launch of 41 local chapters across 31 states, and grown the number of funders who are committed to support local news and information in alignment with Press Forward's strategic priorities — local news sustainability, durable infrastructure, equitable access, and public advocacy. In early 2025, Press Forward engaged Impact Architects to analyze the network's growth and investment in the local news sector across the U.S. Through this process, our goal has been to **better understand the network of funders, their priorities, and funding trajectories, as well as to determine funding trends and amounts invested in local news by the Press Forward network.**

Press Forward's network has invested at least \$405 million to support local news across the U.S. and increased its funder network five-fold, from 22 to more than 110.

From April through August 2025, Impact Architects and Press Forward developed and deployed a **two-part data-gathering process**, including a network survey for all aligned funders and local chapters, and a method for gathering and analyzing data for

all grants made in association with Press Forward, including aligned funding (direct grants) and grants to the field via Press Forward pooled funds at the national and local levels.



This report presents high-level findings from these data. Throughout, all dollar amounts are **minimum amounts**, as not all network funders shared their grant-making data. We have removed all inter-Press Forward grants (e.g., grants to the Press Forward Pooled Fund and to Press Forward Locals) from the detailed grants analysis to ensure no dollars are double-counted. And finally, all grants data are from September 2023, or when a funder joined the network, through the end of June 2025.

Press Forward will continue to survey the network and gather grants data annually. Press Forward is committed to sharing trends and insights with the field again in 2026.

The data:

The survey was completed by 75 out of 82 funders (Press Forward's network at the time of survey distribution) and 34 out of 41 local chapters. Impact Architects reviewed grantmaking data from 62 funders (about half of the network), including the Press Forward Pooled Fund and 69 grants to Press Forward local chapters and chapter hosts (e.g., a community foundation). Funders completed up to 24 fields of data for each grant, and Impact Architects coded an additional 20 fields.

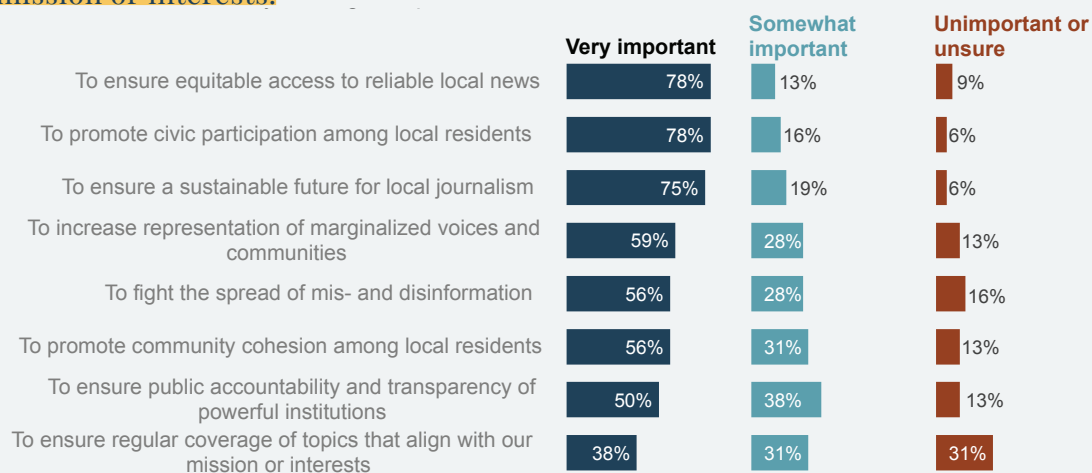
- 1,299 unique grants
- 740 unique grantees

Press Forward Funder Network Snapshot*

Press Forward funders report widespread alignment on the importance of Press Forward’s four core priorities — local news sustainability, durable infrastructure, equitable access, and public advocacy — and place relatively low emphasis on ensuring regular coverage of their own mission or interests.

- 71% of Press Forward funders are place-based
- Community foundations and private foundations are the most common funder types, at 34% each
- 61% have a formal approach to funding journalism
 - About one quarter fund journalism without a formal portfolio or strategy
- The most important factors influencing grantmaking among all funders are:
 - Ensuring equitable access to reliable local news and information
 - Promoting civic engagement
 - Increasing representation of marginalized voices and communities
- Press Forward funders prioritize a wide range of issues outside of journalism (and not related to their journalism funding). The most common are:
 - Education (59%)
 - Information and communications (51%)
 - Arts and culture (48%)
 - Community and economic development (47%)

Press Forward funders prioritize equitable access to information and civic participation for grantmaking decisions and place far less emphasis on aligning journalism with their own mission or interests.

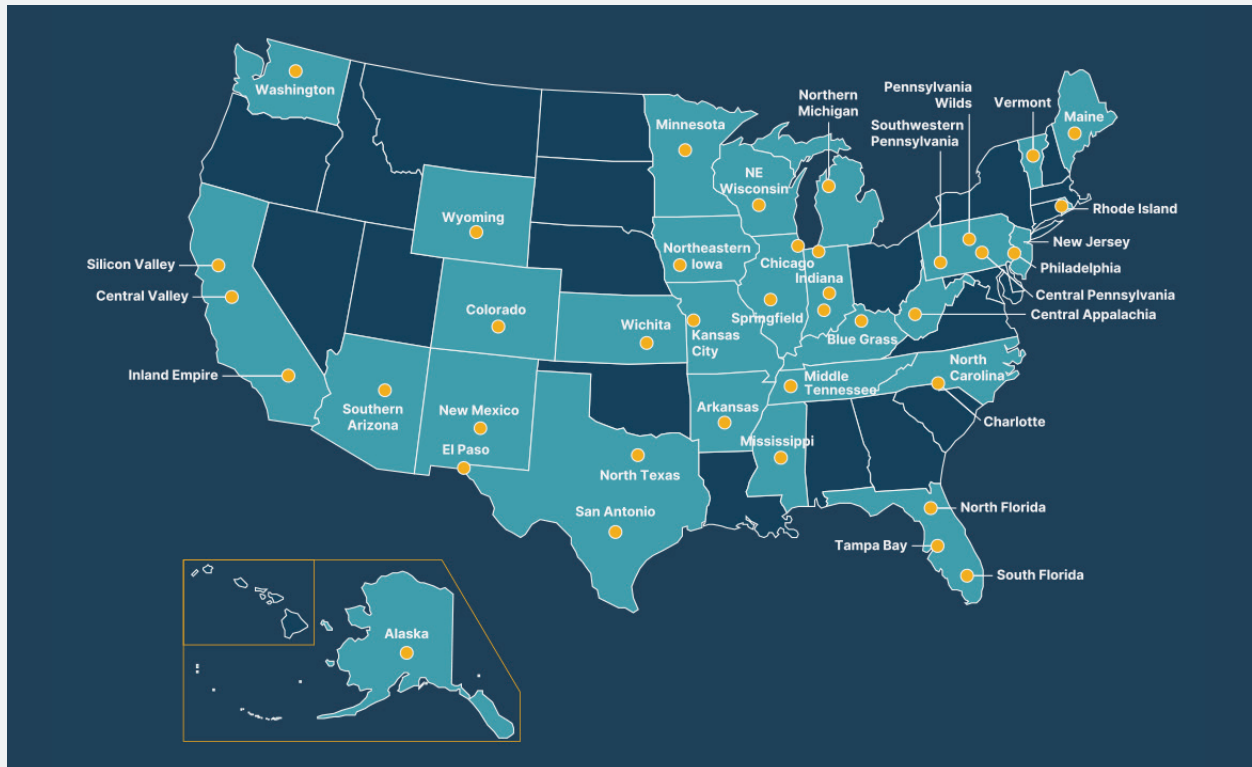


**Data are from the 75 of the 82 Press Forward network funders that were active as of June 2025 and that completed the survey. As of the publishing of this report, Press Forward has 110+ funders.*

Press Forward Local Chapters Snapshot*

Locals are in different stages of development: about half have begun grantmaking, while about half are still in the early stages of fundraising. About two-thirds of local chapters (67%) have set fundraising goals, which total \$18.24 million for 2025. Two-thirds (66%) of chapters have pooled funds in place, and 72% are activating aligned funders to do direct grantmaking to local newsrooms.

- More than half (52%) of Locals report there is substantive, high-quality, or heavy investment in local reporting in their area, while 42% say there is some quality reporting, and 6% characterize their region as a news desert.



Local Chapter Structure: Anchored by Community Foundations, Inclusive of Community

- Most Locals — 82% — include staff already employed by the host organization, most commonly a community foundation.
- Fewer than one-quarter of Locals have hired dedicated full-time or part-time staff.
- 79% of local chapter leadership teams — which lead fundraising, grantmaking and make strategic decisions — involve community foundations.
- Half of chapters' leadership teams involve local journalists, 44% involve private foundations, 35% involve community leaders, and 29% include community members.
- About half of responding chapters also use advisory committees, which provide additional perspective and guidance on strategy, grantmaking, and research.

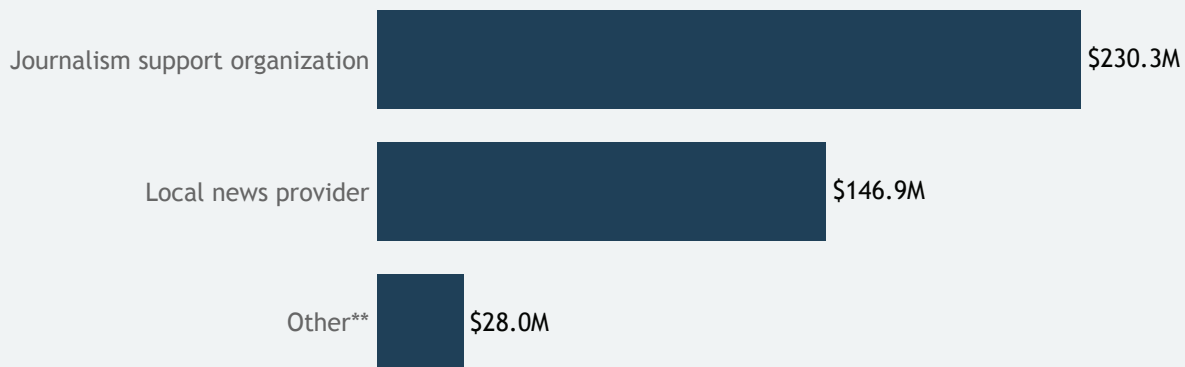
**Data are from the 34 Press Forward local chapters that completed the survey. As of the publishing of this report, Press Forward has 41 local chapters.*

Grantmaking Analysis

Press Forward has increased funding for news and information among its network.

- At least \$405+ million* has been invested directly in organizations working in the local news sector.
 - Two-thirds of Press Forward network funders (67%) say they have **increased their resources devoted to journalism** as a result of Press Forward.
 - **39% of surveyed funders are new to the space** and have been supporting news and information for five years or less.
 - 52% of grants were **for general operating support**.

Breakdown of grants by type of grantee



- Press Forward network funders have contributed \$77.8 million to the national Pooled Fund. Of this, Press Forward has re-granted \$48.4 million via 263 grants from the Pooled Fund.
- Network funders have granted \$32 million (74 grants) to Locals, local chapter hosts, or their fiscal sponsors, including community foundations and local backbone organizations like the North Carolina Local News Lab Fund.
- There is not yet a robust data set for aligned grantmaking at the local level, as most place-based funders associated with Press Forward Locals did not submit grantmaking data.

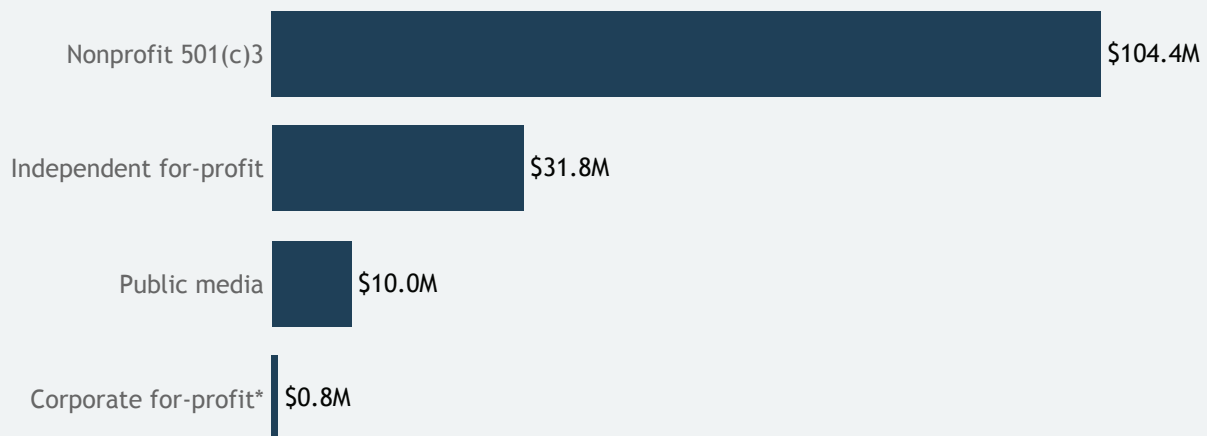
**The \$405+ million in total grantmaking reflected throughout this report includes all grants made directly to local newsrooms, support organizations, and other entities working in the local news and information sector. To avoid double counting dollars as they flow between Press Forward intermediaries, the total grantmaking does not include contributions to Press Forward's Pooled Fund, local chapters, or community foundation hosts.*

***Includes grants made for technology services not exclusive to the journalism sector, convenings, pipeline development, arts and culture, and community-based organizations, and more.*

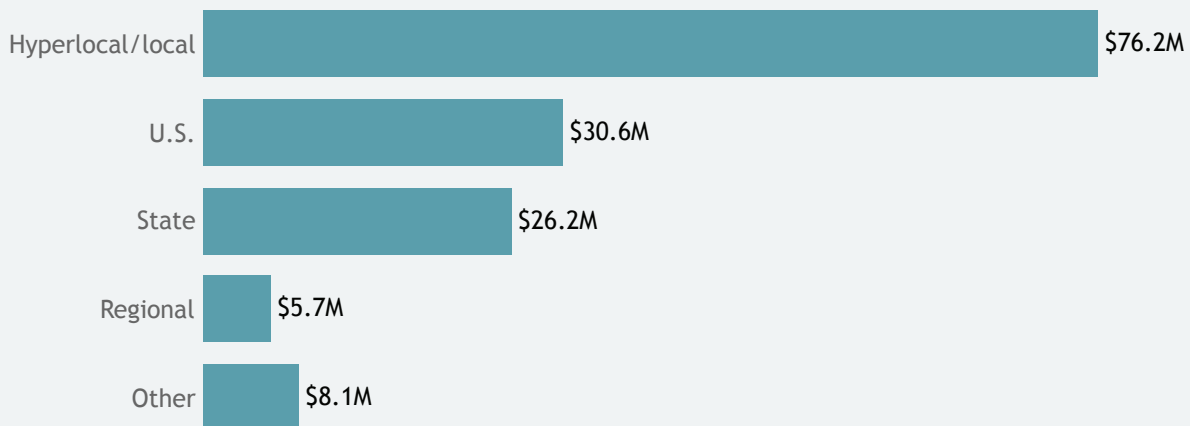
Hyperlocal and local nonprofit news organizations received the most investment among news providers.

Nearly two-thirds of all grants went to news providers (769 grants), most of which went to nonprofit organizations. Hyperlocal or local news outlets received the most funding.

Most dollars invested in news providers went to nonprofit newsrooms.



Most dollars invested in news providers went to hyperlocal/local outlets.

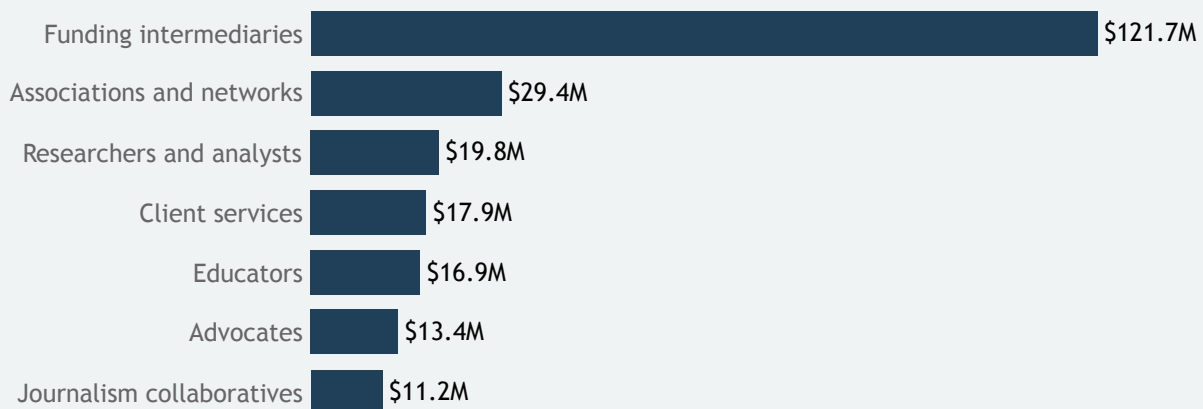


**Includes media chains, conglomerates, and outlets owned by investment firms.*

More than half of the dollars invested in journalism support organizations went to funding intermediaries, which re-grant to news organizations.

While they received fewer grants, journalism support organizations received the most dollars. Notably, most of that support went to funding intermediaries that invest directly in local newsrooms through regranting, the provision of staff, and/or subsidizing costs such as technology or fractional staff.

Most dollars invested into journalism support organizations went to funding intermediaries.



Top Funding Intermediary Grantees Among Press Forward Funder Network

American Journalism Project makes grants to nonprofit news organizations, partners with communities to launch new organizations, and coaches leaders as they grow and sustain their newsrooms.

Report for America, an initiative of GroundTruth Project, places journalists into local newsrooms to report on under-covered issues and communities.

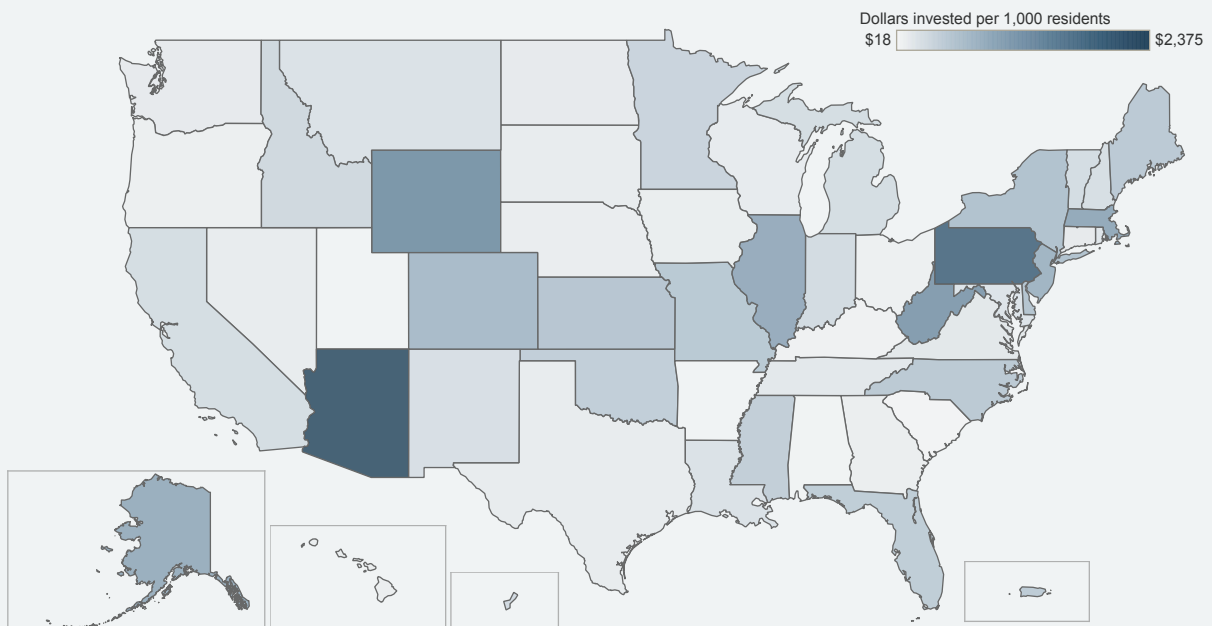
Racial Equity in Journalism Program, hosted at Borealis Philanthropy, re-grants to newsrooms led by and serving Black and Indigenous communities and people of color.

Local Media Foundation provides training as well as staffing and technical support for newsroom coalitions.

Institute for Nonprofit News's NewsMatch is a matching-gift campaign to inspire individual giving to nonprofit newsrooms that are members of the INN Network.

The Press Forward network has invested in all 50 states.

States with local chapters and a history of philanthropic activity preceding Press Forward have stimulated the most investment in local news.



Includes 824 grants. Excludes grants made to organizations with a national focus, grants to Press Forward local chapters, and Press Forward Local hosts. Population data source (except Guam): U.S. Census Bureau five year estimate, 2020-2024. Population data source for Guam: U.S. Census Bureau 2020 census.

Building long-term investment in local news

Some states reflecting higher per-capita investment above are those with a history of ecosystem building and/or longer-term support from specific funders. For example, Democracy Fund has supported ecosystem building work in North Carolina, Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado for almost a decade. The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation has supported local news and information in Chicago, the Lenfest Institute has done the same in Philadelphia, and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation invests in Knight cities nationwide, across journalism and the arts.

In some of these communities, there were already networks and backbone organizations in place at the launch of Press Forward that were ready to leverage Press Forward to supercharge their work. In communities where Press Forward local chapters are at earlier stages of development and still building local support for news and information, there is reason to believe that resources, networks, and durable infrastructure will continue to grow.

Total dollars invested by state by 62 Press Forward network funders, including Press Forward's Pooled Fund, local chapters, and aligned funders*

Pennsylvania	\$26,265,973	Maine	\$775,000
Arizona	\$18,009,574	Ohio	\$720,000
New York	\$13,326,625	Alaska	\$709,365
Illinois	\$12,597,500	Idaho	\$700,000
Florida	\$11,921,000	Delaware	\$675,000
California	\$11,668,096	Washington, D.C.	\$555,000
New Jersey	\$8,149,344	New Mexico	\$550,000
Massachusetts	\$7,475,000	Wisconsin	\$500,000
North Carolina	\$6,106,705	Connecticut	\$446,991
Colorado	\$4,620,844	New Hampshire	\$390,500
Missouri	\$3,529,988	Nevada	\$350,000
Texas	\$3,489,100	Oregon	\$305,000
Michigan	\$2,953,000	Iowa	\$300,000
Minnesota	\$2,363,261	Montana	\$258,000
West Virginia	\$2,260,000	Kentucky	\$212,960
Indiana	\$2,225,000	Vermont	\$200,000
Oklahoma	\$1,988,000	Alabama	\$200,000
Kansas	\$1,821,225	Nebraska	\$200,000
Puerto Rico	\$1,700,000	Rhode Island	\$200,000
Virginia	\$1,470,000	Hawaii	\$125,000
Mississippi	\$1,410,000	Arkansas	\$100,000
Maryland	\$1,300,000	North Dakota	\$100,000
Tennessee	\$1,150,000	South Carolina	\$100,000
Louisiana	\$1,025,000	Utah	\$100,000
Washington	\$1,000,000	South Dakota	\$100,000
Georgia	\$950,000	Guam	\$50,000
Wyoming	\$815,000		

**Includes grants to Press Forward Locals and excludes U.S. and international grants and Press Forward Pooled Fund*

Conclusion: Press Forward, a Movement in the Making

Throughout this report, we've shared concrete evidence — gathered via surveys and grantmaking data — that demonstrates the growth of Press Forward's network of funders and an increase in resources supporting local news in the U.S. And yet, we recognize that the dollars invested are a minimum, as they reflect grantmaking from only about half of the funder network. Furthermore, about half of local chapters are still in the process of establishing their approach to supporting their unique local news ecosystems, and we expect grantmaking to ramp up in the coming years.

And finally, this research does not fully capture the degree to which Press Forward and its funder network are catalyzing a movement to strengthen local news over the long-term through other field-building efforts. Nor does it dig into the impact that grantees of the Press Forward network are having in their communities across the country.

Going forward, Press Forward plans the following:

- Conducting an annual funder network survey
- Gathering and analyzing grantmaking data annually
- Supporting Press Forward local chapters to engage in local learning
- Supporting grantees to engage in learning about their impact

As Press Forward continues to develop its own approach to learning, it is committed to transparently sharing its analysis and insights with the field.

For more information about Press Forward and its impact, visit: pressforward.news/impact

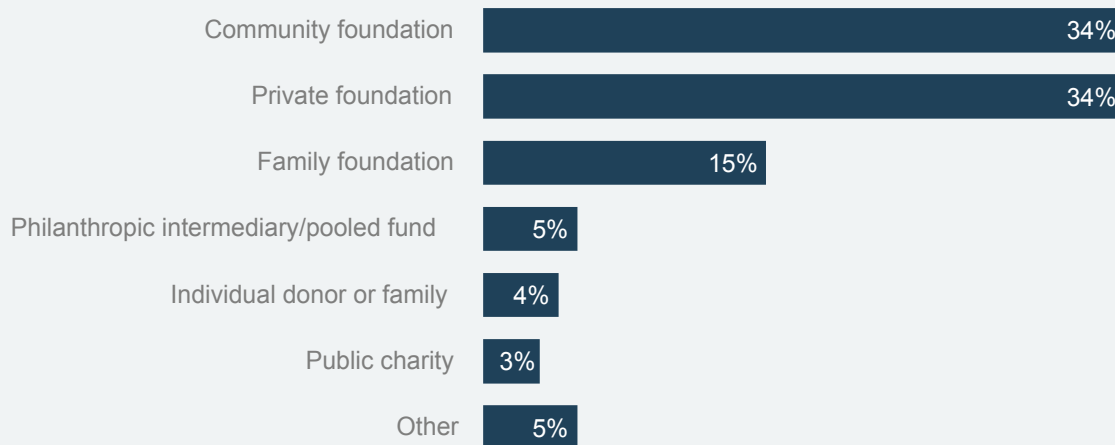
Appendices

Appendix A

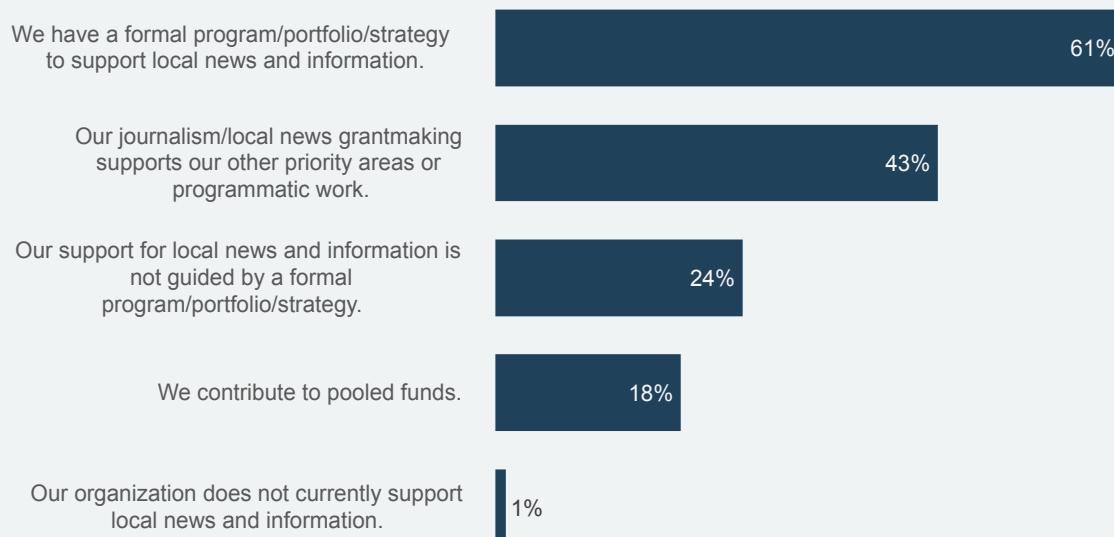
Press Forward Aligned Funder Network Survey, Select Results

The Press Forward funder network baseline survey, administered in May and June 2025, aimed to gather standardized information about these funders' organizational priorities, how they approach journalism funding, and the total number of dollars awarded thus far in conjunction with Press Forward. The data will serve as baseline information for future annual surveys. This survey yielded 75 responses out of a pool of 82 funders.

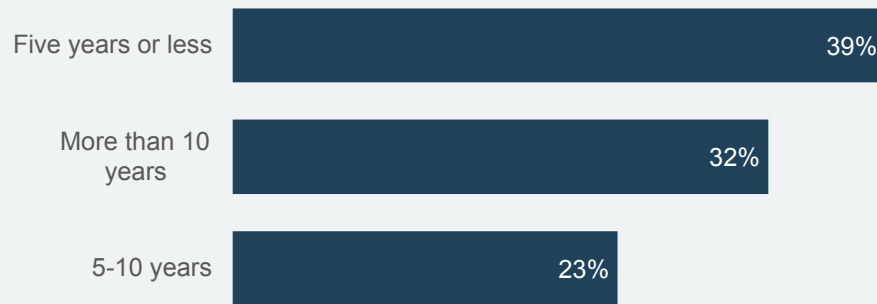
About one-third of Press Forward funders are community foundations, and one-third are private foundations.



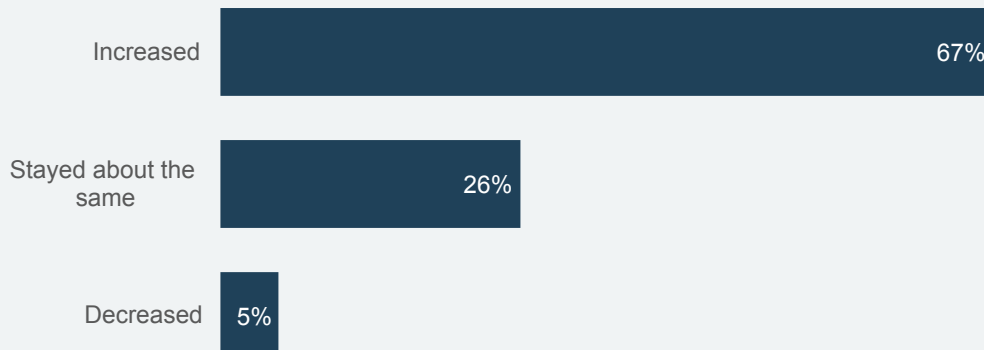
Most Press Forward funders have an institutionalized approach to funding local journalism.



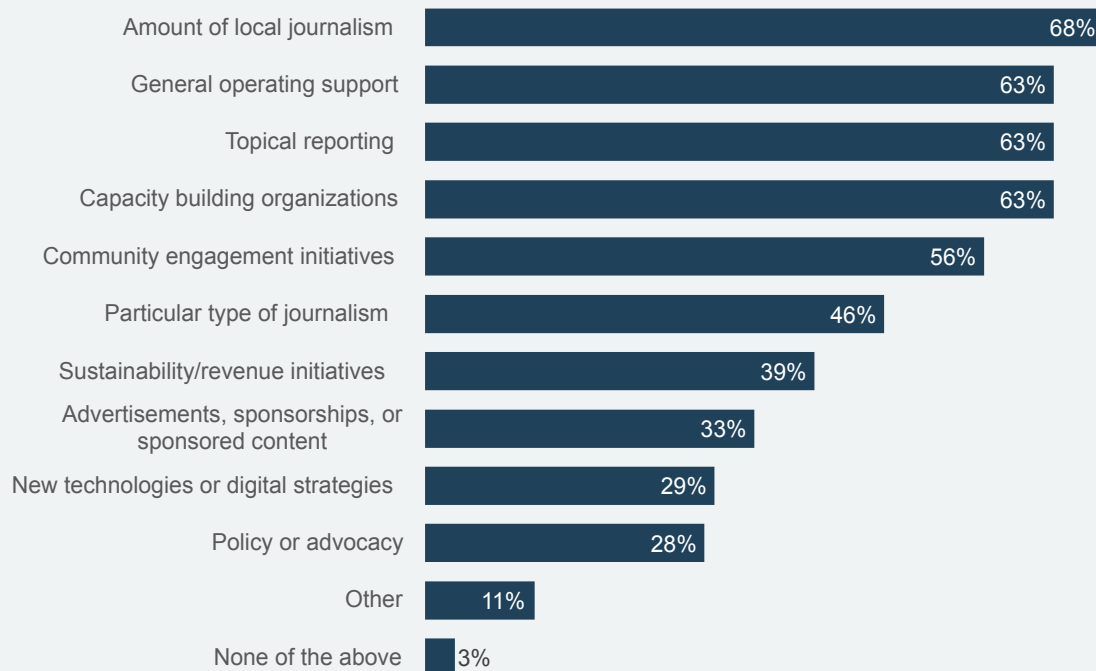
Nearly 40% of funders are relatively new to funding local news.



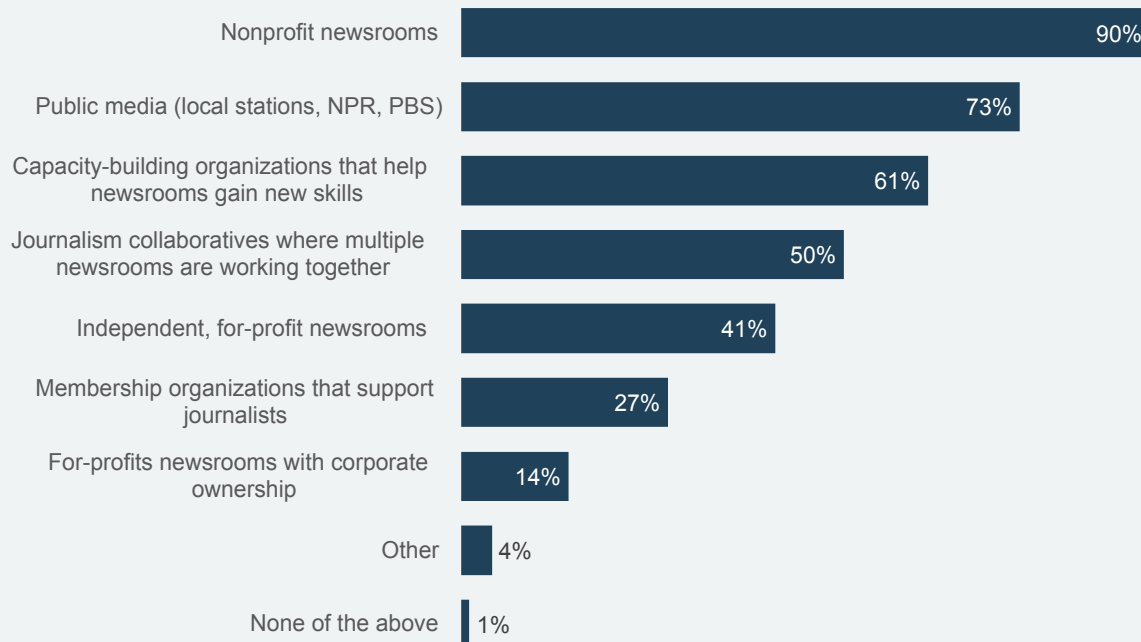
As a result of joining Press Forward, two-thirds of Press Forward funders increased funding for journalism and information since the launch of Press Forward in September 2023.



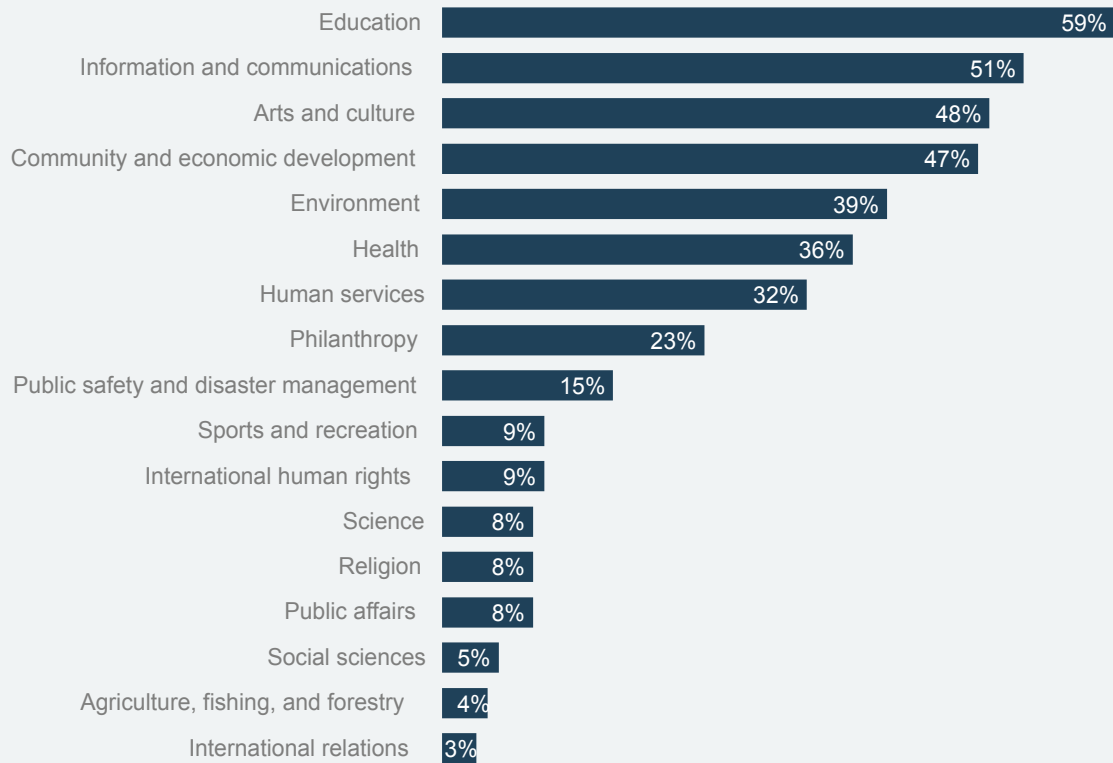
Press Forward funders make a variety of grants to support local journalism, news, and information.



Almost all Press Forward funders support nonprofit newsrooms; less than half of funders support independent, for-profit newsrooms.



Areas of focus (aside from local news) among Press Forward funders.



Appendix B

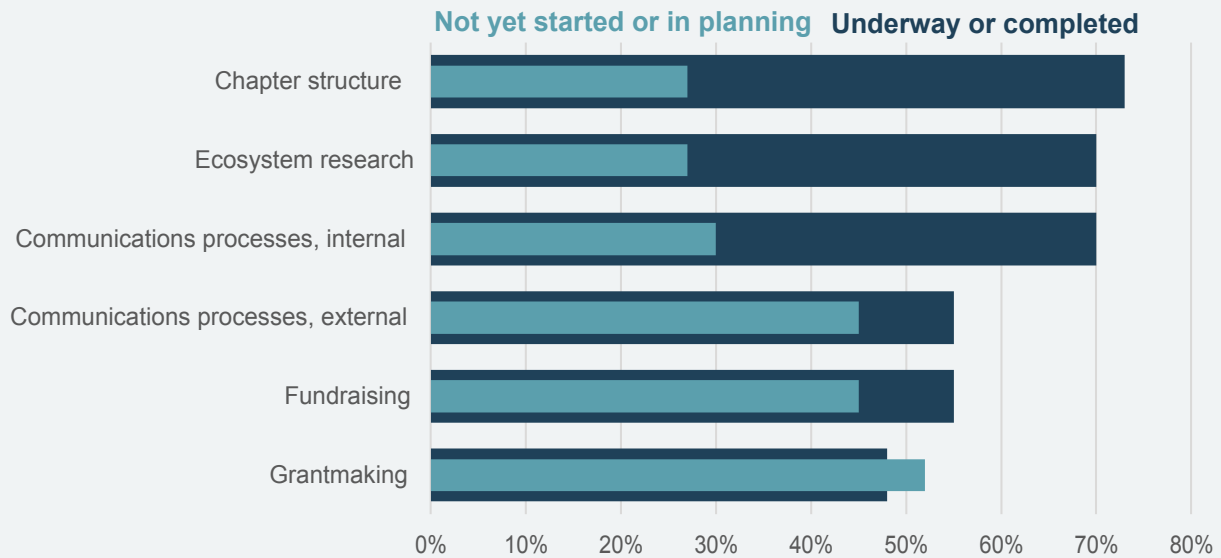
Press Forward Local Chapter Survey, Select Results

The Press Forward Locals survey, administered in June and July 2025, was primarily designed to gather information about chapter structure, strategies, and tactics, as well as understanding approaches for how Press Forward National might support and partner with local chapters. The survey received 34 responses from 41 Locals (although some were just launching at the time the survey was distributed).

Community foundations are the most common participants in leadership teams, but community members and local journalists are more common in advisory committees.



Most Locals have foundational work underway or completed, and less than half have started grantmaking.



Local chapters fund or intend to fund a variety of types of organizations.



There's near consensus on factors influencing grantmaking, with equitable access, civic participation, and local news sustainability the highest priorities.

