



Institute for  
Nonprofit News

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# Nonprofit Journalism Engagement Case Studies

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## **Community and public engagement projects are central to the public service journalism provided by many of INN's 120+ member newsrooms.**

For nonprofit newsrooms, convening and engaging people around issues that shape public and civic life are increasingly critical parts of journalism as practiced today. They happen alongside journalists' work to report and distribute information. These examples were collected to show the range of public engagement with news, to give nonprofit newsrooms a place to learn what others are doing and borrow ideas that may be adaptable to their own communities.

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**Sue Cross**  
*CEO and Executive Director*



## Arizona Center for Investigative Reporting

The Arizona Center for Investigative Reporting created the AZ Dark Money Twitter bot, which automatically retrieved campaign finance filings for “dark money” sources filed with the Arizona Secretary of State’s Office, extracted relevant information, and then tweeted the information to Arizona citizens interested in anonymous campaign spending. More than 400 people followed @AZDarkMoneyBot, and the tweets generated more than 10,000 impressions, along with numerous news stories.

## Arizona State University’s Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication

The Walter Cronkite School of Journalism at Arizona State University used the Beacon crowdfunding platform to raise more than \$50,000 to support student journalists traveling to the border to interview U.S. and Mexican residents. The school also conducted the first poll of border residents in 15 years, revealing the opinions of nearly 1,500 residents in 14 U.S. and Mexico cities on critical border and immigration issues. The border poll received widespread attention from national news outlets including Arizona’s PBS newscast, which reaches more than one million viewers each week, as well as extensive coverage on Univision, which reaches 94.1 million households across the country. The school experimented with social media advertising to share the lessons learned from the project.

## Bitch Media: New Membership Engagement Via Hearken

Bitch Media set out to uncover whether audience engagement platform Hearken improved engagement and/or increased membership among users. Over the course of the experiment, Bitch Media published 20 pieces of content that were prompted by a Hearken question and found that Hearken-prompted content was 125 percent more engaging than non-Hearken prompted content. Other results revealed that Hearken users were 531 percent more likely to become members than non-Hearken users, and that users who signed up for the Bitch Media email list while reading a Hearken-prompted story were 149 percent more likely to become members than users who signed up through a non-Hearken path.

## CALMatters

CALmatters is using “Open Reporting” to demystify the reporting process for readers by sharing behind-the-scenes information, such as first-person accounts of reporter experiences. Readers are invited to engage in the process by sharing their own ideas, experiences, data and information sources. CALMatters recently saw strong reader response to Open Reporting when an education reporter wrote about her upcoming piece on the need for greater fiscal transparency in how school districts use local school funding, highlighting the challenges she had in tracking down the money. Within a day, her post sparked engagement on social media and she received several offers from readers to help her follow the money and sort through information.

## **Capital of Texas Media Foundation/Austin Monitor: Story Map**

Story Map is a mapping tool that uses in-story geocode integration to highlight the direct geographic relevance of news coverage. The Austin Monitor aimed to use the tool to increase site traffic and turn readers into subscribing customers. Although they were unable to generate an increase in subscribers, they did see a significant increase in time spent on the site, indicating that the tool remains a way to keep people reading—and reading material they otherwise might not discover. The Austin Monitor will continue to geotag relevant stories, and Story Map will continue to have a prominent place on its website.

## **Center for Michigan/Bridge Magazine**

Throughout 2016, the Center for Michigan's engagement team led in-person discussions and phone polls about public trust in state government services to inform their latest citizens' agenda, *Fractured Trust: Lost Faith in State Government, and How to Restore It*. More than 5,000 Michigan residents participated, and the report was distributed to every state legislator and member of the governor's team. Over the past five years, stories and ideas through these public engagement campaigns have resulted in countless stories in *Bridge*, as they allow *Bridge* reporters to hear directly from hundreds of communities across the state. The Center's public engagement activities have reached more than 40,000 people to date, and have provided public momentum for policy change aligned with citizen views.

## **Chalkbeat**

Chalkbeat partnered with a reputable storytelling organization to recruit five storytellers to share their experiences with schools in Detroit in an event for 300 Detroit education stakeholders. The event also included a booth to film additional stories on the spot. The storytellers were mostly people in the community whose voices are often not heard in the public conversation on Detroit's schools. This launch event proved to be an effective way to introduce the community to Chalkbeat and to start building trust and relationships that will eventually lead to sources and readership.

## **City Limits/Arts at the Limits**

City Limits created the Arts at the Limits series, which actively engaged readers by encouraging them to submit their own stories and artwork highlighting their city experiences. In addition to collecting readers' art and stories and featuring them on social media, City Limits also created a map of outer borough art galleries where readers could submit their favorite hidden gems. City Limits connected with diverse partners on this initiative such as CUNY's Graduate School for Journalism, New York City Artists, NYC Art Collective, Impact Hub NYC, and many more. Facebook posts on the series reach an average of 550 people.

## **City Limits/ZoneIn**

ZoneIn is a City Limits initiative designed to cover the de Blasio administration's proposed re-zoning plan and actively engage with affected community members. The website includes multiple ways for readers to easily submit questions, comments, ideas, story tips, and op-eds, including a phone hotline. City Limits produces targeted print newsletters for neighborhoods lacking easy internet access. So far, they have also produced 15 podcasts about housing issues and 14 videos dealing with housing as well as Spanish translations of key articles. Distribution for the latest print newsletter in Downtown Far Rockaway exceeded 1,700 copies, 650 of which were entirely in Spanish. Other content has reached tens of thousands and City Limits reports large narrative shifts following coverage of critical issues.

## **CivicStory**

CivicStory.org partnered with Summit Greenfaith Circle, an organization that includes six local houses of worship, to convene Summit's Sustainable Future, a public event featuring a diverse group of eight speakers, ranging from local leaders to high school students, who discussed ways to live sustainably 10 years from now. The event, which included a Q & A and lively informal post-event discussions, attracted 60 people and helped launch the "public input" phase of the city's 10-year Master Plan re-examination. A 30-minute video of the event aired over a several-week period.

## **Current**

Current has initiated several community engagement projects, including The Pub, a podcast featuring provocative commentary and conversation about public media mission, ethics, people, strategy, and future. Current has held live broadcasts of the podcast, which attract 30-70 people per event and have helped grow the listenership to over 10,000 listens per month, while giving Current a chance to interact with readers in a deeper way. The podcast has shifted Current's role in the public media space by attracting a loyal following of millennials and public media mavericks. Current's latest community engagement project is called "I am Public Media" (#iampublicmedia) and involves sharing the stories of people who work in public media each week, shining a light on the faces of public media at a time when funding is at risk.

## **Georgia Public Broadcasting/ Listening Post Macon**

Listening Post Macon used text messaging and community outreach tactics to inform and engage community members in a weekly conversation about emerging stories and issues. The project reached 1600 engaged citizens who signed up to receive weekly text messages with a mix of news and questions designed to draw them out on various (often difficult) subjects. The Listening Post feed was also embedded on a website for the greater public. The project resulted in successful partnerships with multiple community organizations. Multiple news stories came directly from tips shared by people as part of the Listening Post, including one powerful one about a mother teaching her children to use guns because her child was shot and killed walking to the gas station.

## **Honolulu Civil Beat/Civil Cafe**

Since 2013, Civil Cafe has been an ongoing panel series designed to foster community discussions by providing a place where citizens can hear a range of perspectives, share their thoughts and debate important issues such as homelessness and food sustainability. Themes are inspired by topical issues related to Civil Beat reporting, with reporters often moderating panels. Events draw an average crowd of 75-100 attendees. These events help Civil Beat meet its mission by providing a safe space for community conversation and action, and by supporting individuals and organizations doing good work through cross-promotion and partnerships.

## **inewssource/Spotlight Club**

inewssource developed a Spotlight Club, inspired by the movie *Spotlight*, to generate enthusiasm and support. The first Spotlight event featured a discussion of the importance of investigative journalism with “real” Spotlight editor at The Boston Globe, Walter “Robby” Robinson. It was attended by 100 people who became Spotlighters for a minimum annual donation of \$1,000. The group also received other benefits such as office tours and behind-the-scenes information. A second, similar event featuring three nationally known journalists was also attended by 100 people. Conversations at both events were rapid-fire and fully engaged. Since last August, the number of inewssource donors has more than doubled, and some donors have increased their gifts. Today, more than 50 percent of inewssource’s funding comes from individual support.

## **Iowa Watch**

Last year, the spring Iowa Watch/College Media project involved investigating efforts to limit speech on Iowa college campuses and resulted in multiple stories that served as a basis for a large public forum at a popular downtown Iowa City, bookstore. The event was livestreamed on the bookstore’s weekly program, *Live at Prairie Lights*, featured in a lengthy report on Iowa Watch’s 20-station network, and written up in related news stories at other Iowa news outlets. This year, Iowa Watch is hosting a live MOTH-like storytelling event in Iowa City, in partnership with Iowa Public Radio. The event’s theme is “Glory Days”—six selected people will tell a story from their high school days. This year’s event is projected to be bigger than last year’s, and Iowa Watch is in talks with Iowa Public Radio to host additional events in the future.

## **The Lens**

Looking to engage their most avid readers and members in New Orleans, the Lens holds regular morning coffee chat sessions at its office and happy hours at local bars. Unlike other Lens initiatives, these two efforts don’t include any formal programming, rather, they provide an opportunity for readers and members to discuss at length what The Lens is and isn’t covering with reporters. About 20 people participate in the morning conversations and 40 come to happy hours, which usually include drink specials and/or free food. These face-to-face discussions have helped engender trust, providing The Lens with some of its best news tips.

## **Maine Center for Public Interest Reporting**

Maine Center for Public Interest Reporting collected handwritten disclosure forms for state legislators and entered them into a database that also included profile information for each lawmaker. The organization then created a simple-to-use web application that allows anyone to search for individual lawmakers and see information such as what legislation s/he has sponsored, and on which committees s/he has served. The project drew enormous praise from the public and from media across the state of Maine. The organization plans to refresh the information in summer 2017, when the next set of disclosure forms will be available.

## **New England Center for Investigative Reporting**

Bay State Ballot Question Hackathon: The New England Center for Investigative Reporting held a series of community journalism hackathon events, focused on campaign contributions for four separate state ballot questions. The first hackathon attracted 65 volunteers to WGBH in Boston, where they tested a beta form of an app that allowed volunteers to scour campaign contributions to the ballot questions and segment the information in new ways. In the second hackathon, held just before the election, a group sorted the data in useful ways, such as identifying some individual donors of possible public interest. The study of state contributions data revealed newsworthy nuggets, producing a series of stories for The New England Center for Investigative Reporting's The Eye and WGBH.

## **New Mexico In Depth**

Along with Albuquerque's NPR and PBS stations, New Mexico In Depth is part People, Power & Democracy, an annual multimedia collaboration covering New Mexico's state government that holds annual public community engagement events. This year's event, called "How Would You Improve State Government?" attracted a diverse group of approximately 40 people who discussed current government problems, ways to improve them, and suggestions for future reporting. The event was also live-streamed. Participants reported feeling energized by the discussions and requested future events that encourage in-person political conversations with people with opposing views to counteract the current lack of constructive national political dialogue.

## **NJ Spotlight**

NJ Spotlight On Cities is an annual daylong conference that brings together people who believe in vibrant urban centers. In 2016, NJ Spotlight also incorporated crowd-sourcing into planning the event schedule, and questions and issues brought up during an open session of the event informed a Q & A with gubernatorial hopefuls later that day. More than 250 people participated. The impact of the event went beyond the day itself. For example, the urban section of the state library association participated in the 2016 event, and now NJ Spotlight looking at doing more with this organization, as well as better showcasing the role libraries play in New Jersey cities at its 2017 event.

## Oklahoma Watch

Oklahoma Watch provides an annual public forum series called “Oklahoma Watch-Out.” The series includes nine moderated discussions with newsmakers and prominent elected officials, and is focused on pertinent issues such as public health, education, and criminal justice. At the events, citizens hold leaders accountable and discuss solutions to pressing issues in the state. Events typically attract 60-80 people, although over 200 have attended an event in the past. The discussions are also recorded and posted on [oklahomawatch.org](http://oklahomawatch.org), which currently attracts nearly 134,000 page views monthly. Public radio and TV stations also feature the events as part of their regular programming. Participants are enthusiastic about these events—in post event surveys, 100 percent said they would attend another event, and 100 percent saying they would recommend the events to others.

## San Francisco Public Press

Public Press Live: San Francisco Public Press launched Public Press Live to present and host discussions with 40 community groups to raise its profile, build trust with the community, and expand membership. As of February 22, it had hosted 16 community events for 660 attendees, with eight additional events planned. These events resulted in 1457 newspapers distributed, 79 story tips collected, and six new memberships. (Memberships are expected to grow over time, as most new members spend six months on the email list before joining.) Topics for focused presentations, developed in concert with leaders of local groups ranged from sea level rise in the Bay Area to the role of local media organizations in the fake news era. Public Press reporters are currently working on a series of stories inspired by a story tips generated at recent Public Press Live events.

## The Seattle Globalist

The Seattle Globalist hosts a community workshop series called “Your City. Your Story. Your Voice.” which provides journalism training for traditionally underrepresented communities in Seattle. Over the past two years, the Globalist has hosted 26 workshops for 408 people, and published 256 stories from participants—many who had never heard of the organization before participating. More than a third of participants are immigrants for whom English is not a first language, writing in an English-language publication for the first time. The Seattle Globalist reports a growing demand for workshops, noting that one participant said attending a workshop “inspired me to write in my own voice without fear.” In June 2016, the program was recognized by the Society of Professional Journalists’ Region 10 with the 2016 Innovation Award for building newsroom diversity in the Northwest.

## Voice of OC

Voice of OC wanted to explore different forms of monetization while ensuring that interested communities have a real stake in the newsroom by giving them direct access to a vibrant op-ed page, listing more press releases, and instituting a civic calendar. The effort has allowed the newsroom to communicate with potential donors and reach new audiences without having to fund more reporters. Its main measure of success, online fundraising, soared by more than 117 percent last year. Voice of OC published more than 200 op-eds last year, and implemented a training program to encourage community members to write op-eds. In one example, animal rights activist Rose Tingle advocated for a new animal shelter to the Orange County Board of Supervisors, who scoffed at her. Voice of OC staff recruited Rose for an op-ed training session, after which she wrote an average one op-ed a month over two years. Her voice triggered Grand Jury reports on the bad condition of the shelter, and eventually inspired Orange County broke ground on its first animal shelter since WWII.

## VTDigger.org

During the 2016 election cycle, VTDigger hosted a candidate roster that featured contact information, issues platforms, and campaign finance data for both the primary and general election races. This information was supplied by candidates (in response to a survey from VTDigger) and campaign finance reports filed with the Vermont Secretary of State. VTDigger also held gubernatorial forums, a lieutenant governor candidate debate, and co-sponsored debates with candidates for Vermont's U.S. Congressional seats. Events were livestreamed and promoted and discussed through social media so as many people could view them as possible. In an effort to increase reach in the Rutland area, the organization partnered with three community access TV stations located in

Chittenden, Rutland, and Washington counties which serve a combined population of 281,000 Vermonters. VTDigger maintained on average 200,000 unique monthly readers, 11,000 Facebook followers, 20,000 Twitter followers and 14,000 email subscribers during this project. November 8, Election Day, was the highest web traffic day of the year, with over 57,000 pageviews.

## WDET

Framed by WDET is an audio-visual series that combines photography and storytelling to tell the stories of ethnic and cultural communities throughout metro Detroit. WDET pairs local photographers with award-winning storytellers to capture local the stories, and shares the results through a series of audio-visual installations that travel throughout Southeast Michigan. Over 400 people attended the opening of Sundays at The Carpet House, which tells the story of a local grassroots blues jam session. Similarly, other Framed by WDET opening night events have attracted a total of over 700 attendees who experienced the power of seeing their own cultural communities reflected through art. Since 2014, WDET has partnered with over ten photographers and storytellers to produce six exhibitions that have been installed in a total of 12 art galleries and community spaces throughout Metro Detroit.



## Arizona Center for Investigative Reporting

**Contact Info:** Jim Small

**One-time or ongoing?** One-time

**Who are you trying to engage?**

Citizens interested in anonymous spending on Arizona campaigns

**What did you do?**

We created the AZ Dark Money Twitter bot, which automatically retrieved campaign finance filings for “dark money” entities filed with the AZ Secretary of State’s Office, extracted relevant information (who did the spending, who the spending benefitted/harmed, how much was spent) and compiled a tweet that would automatically be sent.

**What was the impact?**

More than 400 people followed @AZDarkMoneyBot, and the tweets generated more than 10,000 impressions, along with numerous news stories by various outlets.

**What’s the project type?**

Crowdsourcing, Co-production, Crowdfunding, Inclusion, Chat, Public Convenings, Training, Platform

## Bridge Magazine

**Contact Info:** Amber DeLind, Engagement Strategy Director

**One-time or ongoing?** Ongoing public engagement, though the topic is new each year

**Who are you trying to engage?**

5,000 state residents, who are demographically representative of Michigan’s population

**What did you do?**

In a divisive year in state and national politics, the Center for Michigan asked the Michigan public about their trust in state government. Throughout 2016, the Center’s engage team led in-person discussions and phone polls about public trust in state government services, as well as the state’s ability to foster representative government. The results of these discussions were analyzed and where common ground was reached, public sentiment and ideas for improving trust in state government became our latest citizens’ agenda, Fractured trust: Lost faith in state

government, and how to restore it. This report can be viewed here: <http://www.bridgemi.com/public-sector/download-copy-fractured-trust-lost-faith-state-government-and-how-restore-it>. This is the Center's sixth public engagement campaign, gathering both quantitative and qualitative data from diverse Michigan residents, with a goal of providing public insight and ideas to Bridge journalists to research and for the Center's staff to amplify to state elected leaders. The Center's public engagement activities have reached more than 40,000 people to date, and have provided public momentum for policy change aligned with citizen views.

### **What was the impact?**

More than 5,000 Michigan residents participated. The final report, which was released on March 21, 2017, has been distributed to every state legislator and member of the governor's team, as well as every state resident who participated in this public engagement campaign. Bridge Magazine reporters wrote independent analysis of the report's findings, which can be viewed here: <http://www.bridgemi.com/public-sector/michigan-residents-lansing-we-dont-trust-you-do-basics> and here: <http://www.bridgemi.com/public-sector/michiganders-say-emergency-managers-wield-too-much-power>. The Center's staff is now meeting with state leaders to share the public views found within the final report and provide issue education on these public priorities.

### **What would you like to share with other newsrooms considering similar?**

The Center and Bridge have found that our public engagement is both labor-intensive and extremely informative to our journalism. Over the past five years, stories and ideas from Michigan residents have resulted in countless stories in Bridge, as they allow Bridge reporters to hear directly from hundreds of communities across the state. We work to raise funds for both journalism and public engagement, and have three full-time public engagement staff members designing these campaigns, recruiting in-person conversation hosts, designing the phone polls and building the digital platforms for participation, facilitating the dialogues, and analyzing the data. Keeping the journalism and public engagement independent has been important for producing in-depth reporting on what the public has shared. Additionally, we've found that providing opportunities for in-person engagement has resulted in more engaged readers, who because of their vested interest in our work, have become advocates for the organization and its work, and oftentimes, donors.

### **What's the project type?**

Crowdsourcing, Inclusion, Public Convenings, Platform

## **CALmatters**

**Contact Info:** Marcia Parker

**One time or ongoing?** Ongoing Engagement

### **Who are you trying to engage?**

As a laboratory for today's rapidly changing media, CALmatters is experimenting with what we call "Open Reporting." We think of it like the open source code for our journalism. This is a look at how our stories are put together as we are reporting them to earn our readers trust through transparency. We also want to demystify the reporting process, inform our reporting and engage our readers throughout the reporting on stories and projects so that we can produce stories that are more accurate, comprehensive and fair. Open Reporting takes a variety of forms: a tweet, a blog post, a Q&A. Sometimes it's a first-person description of a reporter's experience. Each one is designed to explain what the reporting is all about, and to pair it with a simple invitation to engage -- by sharing ideas, experiences, data or information sources that can advance and strengthen the story. Our goal is to demystify that process, increase transparency, and break through the barriers that keep many more people from engaging in the reporting process, which will also build trust and ultimately make our stories more accurate, fair and balanced.

### **What did you do?**

We've only recently begun, but just last week we saw strong reader response to Open Reporting that underscored how much they value it and their eagerness to engage in the reporting process: but we're already seeing readers respond in a way that shows us how much they value it. CALmatters' education reporter Jessica Calefati wrote this Open Reporting post about her upcoming coverage that will shine a light on why researchers, advocacy groups and many others have called for greater fiscal transparency in how K-12 districts use local school funding overall and in support of high-need students. She highlighted the challenges she has been experiencing in following and tracking the education dollars and why answers to her questions are critical as parents and schools continue to navigate the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF).

### **What was the impact?**

Within a day education reporter Jessica Calefati shared this with our team: My open reporting piece has sparked lots of engagement on Twitter, and I've gotten several emails from different people offering to help me track the money and sort through LCFF. Here's one:

Thank you for all your efforts to get financial information from schools! I can imagine the resistance you faced. It is unbelievable the way they can make money disappear without any apparent obligation to show something for it. ... just in case you ever get discouraged I wanted to say thanks again. That they seem intent on keeping you in the dark is reason enough to expose more facts to the light. I appreciate what you are doing. I can't wait to hear the rest of your report. Rachel M

Here's the full post: Open Reporting: Inside my quest to unravel school funding:  
<https://calmatters.org/articles/open-reporting-school-funding-california/>

**What would you like to share with other newsrooms considering similar?**

It works. And doubtful reporters are buying in because they see results.

**What's the project type?**

Crowdsourcing, Inclusion

## Chalkbeat

**Contact Info:** Scott Elliott. Associate Editor

**One-time or ongoing?** This was a one-time event but we are considering trying it again in other Chalkbeat cities.

**Who are you trying to engage?**

Detroit education stakeholders. The audience included students, parents, educators, school district leaders, charter school leaders, politicians, union leaders and community activists.

**What did you do?**

We partnered with a reputable storytelling organization to recruit five storytellers to share their experiences with schools in Detroit. We put out a call for storytellers through the social media and personal networks of both organizations and promoted the event in a similar fashion.

**What was the impact?**

We had sellout crowd of 300 on a Friday night. We shared the full video of the event in our story about the event and promoted video clips through our Detroit site and via social media. We also partnered with a foundation on a booth during the event to film stories from people who were not selected to present on stage. There were six story booth participants. The storytellers were mostly people in the community whose voices are often not heard in the politically charged debates about education in Detroit.

**What would you like to share with other newsrooms considering similar?**

We would definitely do a storytelling event again. The stories were moving and the evening was uplifting. Partnering with an organization that knows how to do storytelling was key. We found using a launch event like this was effective to introduce the community to Chalkbeat and to start building trust and relationships that we can then use to build sources and readership.

**Project type. Please list all that apply to your project:**

Crowdsourcing, Co-production, Inclusion, Public Convenings, Platform

# City Limits/Arts at the limits

**Contact Info:** Victoria Edwards

**One-time or ongoing?** Ongoing

## **Who are you trying to engage?**

City Limits is engaging civic-minded New Yorkers with a new way to have access to and learn more about arts in the city.

## **What did you do?**

City Limits created the Arts at the Limits series, with topics ranging from the difficulties of carving out space for NYC's emerging artists, to why NYC's art scene is so white. We featured portraits of the NYC art scene, from photo essays of gorgeous street art, to stories of successful Bushwick artists navigating their success. We actively engaged our readers in this series by encouraging them to submit their own stories and artwork highlighting their city experiences. This series allowed readers, who might not otherwise have a platform to tell their stories, a chance to promote their vision and experience of the city with others. Every week we feature one of the art submissions through our Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and our weekly newsletter. In addition to collecting readers' art and stories, we also created a mapping of outer borough art galleries where our readers submit their favorite hidden gems. This created a platform for sharing original content and illuminated rich art areas in the city that were largely ignored otherwise.

## **What was the impact?**

The Arts At The Limits series was a great success with our readers. We connected with diverse communities such as CUNY's Graduate School for Journalism, New York City Artists, NYC Art Collective, NYC Arts Chapter, Heather Anne Chamberlain, Nelson Host Photographer, Art Collective NYC, Impact Hub NYC, Artists Space, Con Artist Collective and various individual artists. Since February 24th, we did six Facebook posts with an average reach of 550 people, 26 clicks on the "Art at the Limits" links, and 27 shares. So far we've had more than 19 people submit more than 29 pieces of art. Many of those people wouldn't have known about us, much less engaged with us, if not for this series.

## **What would you like to share with other newsrooms considering similar?**

We had an "Arts at the Limits" series already encouraging readers to submit art about their city experiences -- it was just hidden in the website. I posted on our Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts encouraging community residents to submit artwork so they could get a wider audience to showcase their artwork and stories. I uploaded all of the artwork and the captions describing them, and would pick one "Friday Feature Photo" to post about on our Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and newsletter. This series reiterated the importance of targeting and connecting to relevant communities to help get the word out.

**What's the project type?**

Crowdsourcing, Co-production, Platform

## City Limits/Zoneln

**Contact Info:** Adina Berliant-McDougall

**One-time or ongoing?** Ongoing

**Who are you trying to engage?**

Zoneln, a City Limits initiative designed to cover the de Blasio administration's proposed re-zoning plan, was built to engage the community members and advocates in the proposed re-zoning areas. This list currently includes the neighborhoods of Bay Street, Bushwick, Chinatown, Downtown Far Rockaway, East Harlem, East New York, Flushing West, Gowanus, Inwood, Jerome Avenue, Long Island City, and Southern Boulevard.

**What did you do?**

A core goal of the Zoneln initiative is to actively engage with the community members and advocates affected by the de Blasio rezonings, and make their voices heard. To that effect, we have a number of engagement tools featured on our site — including a submissions portal, an email account, and a 1-800 number — so that readers can easily submit questions, comments, ideas, story tips, and op-eds. To expand the reach of Zoneln articles, and to penetrate communities lacking easy internet access, we produce targeted print newsletters filled with information and resources, which are disseminated within the neighborhoods by community organizations. Our approach to covering housing has not been limited to text reportage. So far, we've produced 15 podcasts about housing issues and 14 videos—from live footage of community board meetings to panel interviews to reported pieces—dealing with housing. We also publish Spanish translations of key Zoneln articles.

**What was the impact?**

We continue to surpass our community engagement goals. Distribution for our latest print newsletter in Downtown Far Rockaway exceeded 1,700 copies, 650 of which were entirely in Spanish. Our articles, livestreams, videos, and podcasts have tens of thousands of viewers — with our Zoneln articles often the most highly read on the site — and we've seen large narrative shifts following our coverage of critical issues, such as displacement fears and community land trusts. Our CityViews op-ed section has published 21 guest submissions dealing with housing issues, and we recently published a popular article with audio of conversations with readers weighing in on the proposed rezonings for their neighborhoods.

**What would you like to share with other newsrooms considering similar?**

We created a Zoneln newsletter opt in list for each neighborhood which is now an engaged list of readers with a higher open and click-thru rate of our base newsletter.

**What's the project type?**

Co-production, Inclusion, Chat, Public Convenings, Platform

## **CivicStory: Summit's Sustainable Future**

**Contact Info:** Susan Haig

**One time or ongoing?** One-time; though we've convened a forum every year and would like to hold them more often.

**Who are you trying to engage?**

We were seeking to engage the broader citizenry of Summit, NJ, in a cultural-civic space in downtown Summit across from the public library and middle school.

**What did you do?**

We invited a diverse group of 8 speakers to share perspectives on ways to live sustainably 10 years hence. Speakers ranged from high school students to a semi-retired biology professor, a rabbi, a news media owner/executive, and the city administrator. We highlight civics, sustainability, and creative change in cities, and help bring to public attention noteworthy examples of organizations and individuals creating change. Convening non-partisan, no-blame forums is our way of engaging citizens in issues concerning the role of news media in creative change and civic culture.

**What was the impact?**

60 people attended; 8 audience members contributed comments and questions during a Q & A, and many animated conversations followed the formal program. The event helped launch the 'public input' phase of the city's 10 year Master Plan re-examination.

**What would you like to share with other newsrooms considering similar?**

We had a larger number of speakers (8) than originally planned, and we gave strict guidelines of 4 to 7 minutes for each speaker. We were buoyed by the presence of professional planners and the city engineer, as well as city councilors, and would advise others to include the city administrator to leverage attendance.

**What's the project type?**

Co-production (we teamed up with Summit Greenfaith Circle, an organization involving 6 houses of worship in Summit; We had a co-moderator from each co-presenting organization), Inclusion (Two high school students were invited to be speakers, along with established community leaders), Public convenings (This was a public forum, co-presented by CivicStory.org, an INN member and civics-oriented news site. 30-minute video aired over several weeks).

# Current

**Contact Info:** Julie Drizin

**One-time or ongoing?** Ongoing

## **Who are you trying to engage?**

People who work in public media across the U.S at every point in their career.

## **What did you do?**

Current has initiated several community engagement projects. Our most successful to date was the launch of The Pub, a podcast featuring provocative commentary and conversation about public media mission, ethics, people, strategy, and future. Our host, Adam Ragusea, has done live editions of the podcast at various journalism and public media conferences over the past two years (PBS annual meeting, PRPD, PMDMC, PRNDI, APT Fall Marketplace, Third Coast). These have been well attended, well received, and have given current a chance to interact with readers and potential readers in a new and deeper way. Our latest community engagement project is called "I am Public Media." We are gathering and sharing the stories of people who have chosen to work in public media. This is part of our commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the public broadcasting act, and also builds morale and community at a time when public media's federal funding is under attack. The project launched last week and we will be sharing stories weekly as well as taking photos of people at public media conference with a cut-out of the hashtag #iampublicmedia. Our point is to reinforce that people are what/who make public media: <http://current.org/2017/04/iampublicmedia/>

## **What was the impact?**

Our Pub events have attracted 30-70 people per event and have helped grow the listenership to over 10,000 listens per month. The podcast has given current a voice and has shifted our role in the space, attracted a loyal following of millennials and mavericks in public media. Too early to tell about #iampublicmedia but we are hearing from many people who want to participate in the campaign. The timing of this is also good given that we are launching a digital subscription so we need to have strong, unique and magnetic content behind the paywall that people will want to read/see.

## **What would you like to share with other newsrooms considering similar?**

The Pub hasn't yet paid for itself. We thought we'd find underwriting sponsorship, but we haven't. The lesson is basic—don't launch a project unless it's funded. We've had to absorb the cost into our operation. And, when you do something edgy like put your name/ brand on an event or product that stakes out positions on issues, be prepared to receive very strong responses, both positive and negative.

### **What's the project type?**

The Pub: Inclusion, Public Convenings, Platform; #iampublicmedia: Inclusion, Crowdsourcing, Co-production

## **Honolulu Civil Beat/Civil Cafe**

**Publication/Organization:** Honolulu Civil Beat

**Contact Info:** Director of Philanthropy Ben Nishimoto

**One-time or ongoing?** Ongoing

### **Who are you trying to engage?**

The Civil Cafe panel series engages a broad audience from current to prospective readers, member-supporters and citizens who wish to learn more about their community and neighbors. Thus far, events have been held in public venues throughout the island of Oahu in Hawaii and also live-streamed online for those interested in Hawaii-based issues but unable to attend in-person.

### **What did you do?**

Since 2013, Civil Cafe has been an ongoing panel series designed to foster community discussions by providing a place where citizens can hear a range of perspectives, share their thoughts and debate important issues in a civil manner. Themes are inspired by topical issues related to Civil Beat reporting. Therefore, reporters will often moderate the panel, consisting of local experts, academics, community leaders, politicians and respected members of the community. Over the years, the discussions have ranged from homelessness with an event titled "Paradise Lost: Honolulu Homelessness" to food sustainability with "How Can Hawaii Become Food-Self Sufficient?"

### **What was the impact?**

As an all-digital news source, Civil Cafe events are an opportunity to encourage readers and guests to participate in live community discussions. They draw an average crowd of 75-100 attendees and allow Civil Beat to meet its mission of impact in several ways:

- By providing balanced information on issues of local importance
- By providing a safe space to gather information, make decisions and take action
- By supporting individuals and organizations doing good work through cross-promotion and partnerships

### **What would you like to share with other newsrooms considering similar?**

Newsrooms considering a Civil Cafe model should establish a close working relationship with editorial staff; reporters will be a resource for identifying panelists, often times act as moderators and be the direct tie between readers and the event. As not to overburden a

small newsroom, Civil Beat contracts with a speaking coach who helps secure, orient, and prep the panelists for each event. Finally, when partnering with fellow nonprofits, we have learned the importance of identifying key people from within an organization who can help push the project along and help keep costs down by waiving venue fees and cross-promotion.

**What's the project type?**

Co-production, Inclusion, Public Convenings

## **inewssource**

**Contact Info:** Lorie Hearn, Executive Director

**One-time or ongoing?** Ongoing

**Who are you trying to engage?**

We are trying to reach educated, civically engaged individuals who appreciate the necessity and power of data-driven investigative journalism to democracy. The goal is to convert interested enthusiasts into a bedrock of financial supporters in the San Diego region.

**What did you do?**

We developed a Spotlight Club, inspired by the movie "Spotlight," to build enthusiasm and support for inewssource. The club launched in September 2016 with a signature event underwritten by a generous donor. The evening featured a discussion of the importance of investigative journalism with "real" Spotlight editor at the Boston Globe Walter "Robby" Robinson. It was attended by 100 people who became Spotlighters for a minimum annual donation of \$1,000. Other benefits to engage this group, include newsletters, behind-the-scenes information about stories and how we journalists do our jobs, sneak previews of investigations and invitations for office tours and special events. We hosted a second, similar event in February, also fully underwritten by a supporter, featuring three nationally known journalists. Again, the event was attended by 100 people -- ALL donors at this premier level. Conversations at both events were rapid-fire and fully engaged.

**What was the impact?**

We started the Spotlight Club campaign last August with 54 donors already giving \$1,000 or more. That number has more than doubled, and some members have increased gifts. We know these supporters, who contribute \$1,000 a year or \$83.33 a month, believe in the importance of our organization, feel connected to inewssource and will be a financial foundation for the long term. Some have offered to host smaller events that showcase inewssource work. On the business side, the addition of Spotlight Club supporters has shifted our revenue balance. Today, more than 50 percent of our funding comes from individual support.

### **What would you like to share with other newsrooms considering similar?**

It's essential to have a core of support before you launch (e.g., committed board of directors with broad connections in the community.) You also need some seed money for expenses not covered by in-kind donations. A group at this giving level doesn't happen through email. It requires a lot of one-on-one relationship building. People like to know you know who they are and that you value them, not just their money. Don't promise benefits you can't fulfill. Make those perks easy to accomplish, items that are already part of your processes. Thank your donors. Recognize them. Engage them and thank them some more.

### **What's the project type?**

Public Convenings, Platform (We recognize all Spotlight Club members on our website, on a video presentation at signature events and in our monthly newsletters. We also try to involve them in volunteer work at inewssource, using personal skills, e.g., finance, PR, data work, etc.)

## **Iowa Watch**

**Contact Info:** Lyle Muller, Executive Director-Editor

Our best audience engagement effort at IowaWatch in the past year will be surpassed on April 8 this year. Last year's: the spring IowaWatch/College Media project in which we investigated efforts to limit speech on Iowa college campuses resulted in multiple stories that served as a basis for a large May 2, 2016, public forum at a popular downtown Iowa City, IA, bookstore that was livestreamed on the bookstore's weekly program, Live at Prairie Lights; a 23-minute radio report aired on our 20-station network; and related news stories at one Iowa college newspaper and one Iowa college radio station. This year's: IowaWatch is hosting a live storytelling event in Iowa City, IA, the night of April 8 with the theme "Glory Days," allowing six selected people to tell a story from their high school days. We are partnering with Iowa Public Radio for this MOTH-like event and has the blessing of the NPR program, MOTH, for this event and possible future ones. People are buying tickets for \$15 or \$25. We'll have a cash bar, snacks, some games and ample opportunities to donate more to IowaWatch.

## **The Lens**

**Contact Info:** Steve Beatty

**One-time or ongoing?** Ongoing

**Who are you trying to engage?**

Looking to engage our most avid readers/members in New Orleans

**What did you do?**

We hold regular morning coffees at our office and happy hours at local drinking houses. Neither of these have any programming (we have other events in which we have planned panelists or speakers). It's simply two efforts at letting our readers and members talk with us at length about what we're covering and what we're not. It really sets us apart from traditional media.

**How'd it go?**

We get about 20 for coffee and doughnuts at our offices, starting at 8 a.m., and about 40 for our 5:30 happy hours. We usually talk the bar into giving us drink specials or offering free food.

**What would you like to share with other newsrooms considering similar?**

We've gotten our best news tips from live events. People trust you more when they have a chance to look you in the eye and talk for a bit. When we meet someone new, we immediately evaluate them for trust and respect, a Harvard researcher has determined. We earn both at these live events.

**What's the project type?**

Inclusion, Public Convenings, sort of

## Maine Center for Public Interest Reporting

**Contact Info:** Joshua Moore, Executive Editor

**One-time or ongoing?** Ongoing

**Who are you trying to engage?**

Maine citizens and people with an interest in Maine and especially in Maine state government

**What did you do?**

We gathered the disclosure forms for state legislators — all of them handwritten — and created a database of them, plus profile information for each lawmaker. We then created a simple-to-use web application that allows anyone to search for individual lawmakers and to see at a glance what legislation he or she has sponsored, what committees the lawmaker has served on, and where the elected officials income comes from. This allows citizens to be better informed and to draw their own conclusions or ask their own questions about how any legislator might be influenced by his or her income sources.

**What was the impact?**

The project, which is hosted on our website, drew enormous praise from the public and from media across the state of Maine. We plan to refresh the information in summer 2017, when the next set of disclosure forms (for the newly seated 128th Legislature) will be available.

### **What would you like to share with other newsrooms considering similar?**

Promote, promote, promote. The only problem with this project that we've had was that the web application was tucked away in a sidebar on our website, and therefore it has not been discovered by as many Maine citizens as we'd like. After we refresh the content to reflect the 128th Legislature later this year, we will be giving the application much greater prominence on our redesigned website and will be heavily marketing it to our audience online and via social media and email.

### **What's the project type?**

Training, Platform

## **New Mexico In Depth**

**Contact Info:** Trip Jennings, Executive Director; Marjorie Childress, Deputy Director

**One-time or ongoing?** Ongoing on an annual basis

### **Who are you trying to engage?**

Our ideal audience is New Mexicans of all demographics, political ideologies, income levels and ethnicities.

### **What did you do?**

New Mexico In Depth is a partner in an annual collaboration called People, Power & Democracy (PPD) with Albuquerque's NPR affiliate and its PBS station. In 2015, 2016 and 2017, the project has leveraged its partners' strengths to provide multi-media approach to covering the New Mexico Legislature, with a strong emphasis on the influence of money in politics and the ethics of elected officials. As part of each year's coverage, PPD has held community engagement events. On April 4, 2017, we held this year's event entitled 'How Would You Improve State Government?' at a ballroom-sized conference room at an Albuquerque hotel. In the weeks leading up to the event partners marketed it on our respective websites, through social media and with radio plugs during popular NPR programs such as 'All Things Considered' and on NMPBS' weekly public affairs show, 'New Mexico In Focus.' We also invited our readers who receive our daily emails. Because New Mexico is such a large state geographically and the event was held in Albuquerque, PPD used Facebook Live so people unable to attend would be able to watch our event in real time. We had twin goals: To engage attendees in a conversation about state government and ways to improve it; and, to develop deeper relationships with New Mexicans who engage with our work. Today's political environment seems to have walled off people and decreased opportunities for people with differing worldviews to have honest, deep conversations about their varying views on the role of government and about the importance of knowing individuals from all walks of life, political ideologies, partisan affiliations and economic circumstances. Through community dialogues of

this nature, we build bridges, deepen relationships and surface shared values and ideas. We assigned participants to several large tables in the conference room, breaking up groups to ensure folks were talking with those they didn't previously know, with six to eight individuals per table. We explained ground rules, including that the topic of this event was dedicated to state government, not national politics. Then we asked individuals at each table a series of questions, allotting time for every individual to contribute to the discussion (Each table designated a note taker, too). Here are the questions we asked:

1. Let's start with the obvious: What are you mad about?
2. Now that we know what the problems are, What is the alternative/How can we fix them?
3. How do we get there? Solutions.

After the groups answered those three questions, we asked them to agree on one bright idea as a group that they thought could improve New Mexico state government. Each table presented their bright idea to the room. We also collected notecards that individuals used to jot down ideas, and forms that allowed them to give us more detailed information about themselves and to offer suggestions for future reporting.

### **What was the impact?**

Almost forty people attended. Many people said they felt energized by the discussions and hoped for additional forums. Some attendees expressed a desire for additional opportunities to have face-to-face interactions with people they normally wouldn't talk to as a way to combat what they saw as a weakening of serious political dialogue in the U.S. For instance, at one table, participants included a conservative Republican business owner, two young Planned Parenthood volunteers, a young African American man, two Latinos and four whites (Anglos). There were four men and three women. Our discussion was respectful and people listened to one another. The impact for our organizations included new ideas for coverage, new potential sources, and deeper relationships with folks who engage with our work on social media and elsewhere.

### **What would you like to share with other newsrooms considering similar?**

These events are energizing in that they provide us an opportunity to meet the real people who find value in our work, they give us new ideas, and they spur us to reach for new sources and communities of people. We saw what appeared to be a genuine desire on some people's parts to diversify community conversations. A former state Republican legislator who hosts a Saturday morning discussion group invited the entire room in hopes of attracting a few individuals with different worldviews. Another young man urged partners and participants to seek out voices from historic New Mexico communities.

### **What's the project type?**

Public Convenings

# NJ Spotlight

**Contact Info:** Paula Saha, psaha@njspotlight.com

**One-time or ongoing?** Ongoing – This is an annual event, and we are about to start planning our third year. Specifically here, we are talking about our 2016 event.

## **Who are you trying to engage?**

As a public policy news site in New Jersey, we wanted better engagement with the diverse crowd that includes the many community activists, advocates, innovators, business leaders, government officials and entrepreneurs doing work in our cities.

## **What did you do?**

NJ Spotlight On Cities is a daylong conference that brings together people who believe in vibrant urban centers. Attendees see intersections and make connections — between disciplines and individuals — that they might not see if they were just reading a story on their specific narrow interest. In 2016, we also incorporated crowd-sourcing into planning our event schedule. We convened a dinner with thought leaders from around the state to talk about what they believed a conference on cities should include, and we sent out an open call for people to email us their ideas about what the conference should cover. At the event itself, we had one “open” session in the afternoon with a facilitator where we had participants brainstorm the elements of an urban agenda for New Jersey. We then used questions and issues brought up during that time to inform a Q&A session with gubernatorial hopefuls later that day. How’d it go? How many people participated, what was the impact? We got overwhelmingly positive reviews. One attendee said: “You had a lot of engaged, great people in the conference...encouraging dialogue is really good.” More than 250 people participated. We built a schedule that included issues raised through the crowdsourcing, and also felt an impact that reverberated beyond the day itself. For example, the urban section of our state library association was interested in participating, and we invited them to attend and exhibit at the event. We are now looking at doing more with this organization, as well as better showcasing the role libraries play in New Jersey cities at our 2017 event.

## **What would you like to share with other newsrooms considering similar?**

Creating partnerships with organizations who are familiar with the issues you are addressing and already have trusted relationships in a community are key to pulling off an event that attracts a diverse, engaged crowd. On a more mundane note, it is important to have scalable ticket prices, that take into account the variety of backgrounds that your attendees may come from.

## **What’s the project type?**

Crowdsourcing, Coproduction, Public convenings

# Oklahoma Watch

**Contact Info:** Dena Drabek; David Fritze

**One-time or ongoing?** Ongoing

## **Who are you trying to engage?**

Oklahomans with an interest in more fully understanding the important challenges and issues facing the state, especially audiences in the Oklahoma City and Tulsa areas.

## **What did you do?**

In addition to nonpartisan news content, Oklahoma Watch provides a public forum series called "Oklahoma Watch-Out" forums. The purpose is to promote understanding and discussion of critical policy issues in our efforts to inform civic-minded Oklahomans so they can act and influence wisely. The forums focus on salient issues such as education, public health, criminal justice, poverty and government. The annual series includes nine in-depth discussions with newsmakers and prominent elected officials, moderated by Oklahoma Watch Executive Editor David Fritze. Essentially our public forums serve to educate Oklahomans on matters of public importance and encourage their participation in the democratic process. This may take the form of voting in local elections, writing their elected officials, running for office or volunteering to help others. Oklahoma Watch-Out forums connect the general public to public officials, allowing us and visitors to pose meaningful and sometimes difficult questions, hold leaders accountable and discuss proposed solutions for improving the quality of life in Oklahoma.

## **What was the impact?**

Our public forum attendance is 60-80 people on average. Our peak attendance has been 200+. The attendees vary depending on the topic, location and timing, and can range from elected officials and nonprofit executives to local issue advocates, teachers, parents and community leaders. Participants report positive experiences in post-event surveys, with 100 percent saying they would attend another event and 100 percent saying they would recommend our events to others. The forums are also videotaped and posted to our website, [oklahomawatch.org](http://oklahomawatch.org), which currently attracts nearly 134,000 page views monthly. A popular NPR affiliate station records the audio and rebroadcasts the forum on one of its regular programs. Footage is also provided to the statewide public television station, which often uses portions during its weekly news show. Commercial television and newspapers also have covered the events and aired or published stories. The forums have become an essential part of our identity as a news organization, served to introduce new followers to the full breadth of what we do, and reinforced the awareness of our public-service mission. Groups have even contacted us asking if we would conduct special public forums on their behalf. An example is the City of Oklahoma City calling to ask if we would put together a forum for the visit of the U.S. Surgeon General the following week. We have declined these invitations in order to maintain our independence as we view these public discussions as a form of journalism.

**What would you like to share with other newsrooms considering similar?**

It helps to have our media partners promote our public forum series. Eventbrite invitations are free and a more effective way to track RSVPs for the forums. We received a Google Ad Words grant that we use to promote the public forums. We have been able to find foundation funding and corporate sponsors for the events. We currently hold the Oklahoma City forums in a local coffee shop/restaurant that is very popular with the State Capitol crowd. There is no cost to rent the space and attendees can purchase food and/or drinks from the restaurant, which helps with the event attendance during the dinner time hour.

**What's the project type?**

Inclusion, Public Convenings

## The Seattle Globalist

**Contact Info:** Community Engagement Editor Christina Twu

**One-time or ongoing?** Ongoing

**Who are/were you trying to engage?**

As a media organization whose sole mission is to elevate diverse voices through media, we engage with Seattle-area communities who are often under-represented voices in Seattle's broader media landscape, including immigrants and refugees, folks of color, youth, religious minorities, women and LGBTQ-identified people.

**What did you do?**

Two years ago, we launched our community workshop series "Your City. Your Story. Your Voice" to introduce story development, reporting and interviewing, writing and visual journalism skills to diverse communities throughout Seattle. Attendees develop skills to write and report for us. So far we've hosted 26 workshops, including collaborative opportunities hosted with community and media organizations. This feeds our diverse contributor base: 67 percent are people of color, 73 percent are women and 45 percent are immigrants or children of immigrants. In all, we've been able to publish 256 stories from contributors attending our workshops, 81 of them were written by those new to The Seattle Globalist before attending a workshop. Considering that more than a third of our workshop attendees are immigrants, and report that English was not their first language, we recognize that publishing in a widely-read daily English-language publication in Seattle is no small feat.

**What was the impact?**

In all, 408 diverse Seattle adults participated in our workshops, indicating a growing demand for both our workshops and the desire to be a part of our publication. According to one participant, attending a workshop "inspired me to write in my own voice without fear." Our

workshops restructure the pitching process in a way that privileges unique perspective, passion, and diversity over persistence and experience. In June 2016, our program was recognized by the Society of Professional Journalists' Region 10 with the 2016 Innovation Award for building newsroom diversity in the Northwest.

**What would you like to share with other newsrooms considering similar?**

We attribute successful workshop recruitment to leveraging our community relationships and those with Seattle media institutions. This created a bridge and pipeline infrastructure to help diversify Seattle newsrooms. Additionally, the workshops:

- Decreased the time editors spent mentoring new writers who attended one or more workshops.
- Opened up opportunities for existing Globalist contributors to advance their journalism skills more quickly and increase their chances of following through on story ideas than with just one-on-one mentorship with editors. Part of this can be attributed to the practice of taking many story pitches within community workshop hours, combined with regular attendance of workshops.

**What's the project type?**

Inclusion, Training, Platform

## Voice of OC

**Contact Info:** Norberto Santana Jr, Publisher

**One-time or ongoing?** Ongoing

**Who are/were you trying to engage?**

Animal Welfare activists in Orange County

**What did you do?**

We activated Rose Tingle, who came the OC Board of Supervisors one day at public comment to tell OC Supervisors that animals felt pain and they needed to build a new animal shelter to replace their 75-year old facility, which is falling apart and appalls local animal rights activists. They scoffed at Rose, denying her a chance to play a video she wanted. I followed her and her friends out of the meeting and told them about our engagement program where we train and encourage community writers to get active on their issues. Rose took a training session and immediately got to work, writing tons of Op-eds.

**What was the impact?**

Total success. Rose wrote on average one Op-ed a month for about two years. Her voice triggered nearly five Grand Jury reports on the bad condition of the shelter. County supervisors called me regularly to complain about Rose and asked me to shut her down, which I did not.

Last year, the same county supervisor who kept asking me to shut her down made a motion to replace on piece of county land with another and last year Orange County broke ground on its first animal shelter since WWII. All thanks to Rose's voice. Here's a link to column explaining: <http://voiceofoc.org/2016/08/santana-oc-animal-shelter-born-from-engagement/>

**What would you like to share with other newsrooms considering similar?**

If you engage community members, they will help you cover stories you cannot cover on your own. And they do have impact, especially when they are committed, energized people who know their issue. It creates an amazing bond between your newsroom and the broader community.

**What's the project type?** Training, Platform

## VTDigger.org

**Contact Info:** Anne Galloway, Executive Director/Editor

**One-time or ongoing?** Ongoing, follows election cycle

**Who are you trying to engage?**

VTDigger's 2016 election coverage sought to engage Vermonters throughout the primary and general election cycles. This included registered voters and the candidates running for office. There were 488 primary candidates and 325 general election candidates for 180 Vermont General Assembly seats and 6 statewide elected positions. We held events in Rutland and Washington counties which were livecast on our site and on our Facebook page. We chose Rutland County partly because it was a new market for us. Earlier that year, we hired a full-time reporter to cover the region, and the gubernatorial debate was a way to engage the Rutland community with the VTDigger brand and our style of news coverage. We partnered with three community access TV stations located in Chittenden, Rutland, and Washington counties which serve a combined population of 281,000 Vermonters. These stations share videos and often rebroadcast videos that other studios have produced. VTDigger maintained on average 200,000 unique monthly readers, 11,000 Facebook followers, 20,000 Twitter followers and 14,000 email subscribers during this project. November 8, Election Day, was our highest web traffic day of the year, with over 57,000 pageviews.

**What did you do?**

We hosted a candidate roster that featured contact information, issues platforms, and campaign finance data ahead of both the primary and general election races. This information was supplied by candidates (in response to a survey we emailed to them) and campaign finance reports filed with the Vermont Secretary of State. We also held gubernatorial forums in November 2015 and September 2016, and a lieutenant governor candidate debate in

September 2016. We co-sponsored debates with candidates for Vermont's U.S. Congressional seats. Our reporters continued to cover other forums and debates across the state. All these events were livestreamed so as many people could view them as possible. We also published stories or contested legislative races as well as profiles on contests for statewide office, with a focus on the gubernatorial and lieutenant governor seats, as these were open races.

### **What was the impact?**

We have been able to build upon our previous iterations of state and national election coverage. 2016 election coverage has been our best to date. In combination with a larger newsroom and participation from candidates themselves, we've been able to be comprehensive in representing the ballots across the state. We had full houses at each of our debates, and solicited about 200 reader-submitted questions. We gained new organizational partnerships with local venues and media relationships.

### **What would you like to share with other newsrooms considering similar?**

Key factors to success are surveying our candidates, to include every registered candidate in the process, an audience participation component to an event, and livestream to include live audience and at-home audience. This effort required contribution from both newsroom and business staff. We recommend advance planning from both groups. We secured debate commitments for the gubernatorial debate BEFORE the primaries.

### **What's the project type?**

Crowdsourcing - We crowdsourced campaign platforms from the candidates themselves to populate their respective profiles. Additionally, we crowdsourced questions for the debates from our readers.

Co-production: relies on users to provide content or help craft stories - We co-sponsored a couple of debates with other production partners. We also wrote news stories of candidate forums and debates produced by third parties.

Inclusion: amplifies voices traditionally left out of news - We created a profile for every registered candidate running for a general assembly or statewide seat, regardless of party. This provided everyone with a neutral and comprehensive look at all the candidates. We included all campaign platform information that was submitted to us.

Chat: projects use mobile text or other tech to communicate with users and/or inform reporting. - We use #VTDCChat to try to engage Twitter conversations during live events. This allows us to interact and follow conversations from the crowd in the room and from the home viewing audience. We also used Facebook Live videos for both the gubernatorial and lieutenant governor debates, and our followers commented on the live streams that way.

Public Convenings: combine news and public events - in total, we hosted or co-sponsored four candidate debates in 2016.

Platform: you provide a digital space online for community voices, announcements, PR, op-ed, etc. -- community input or comment that is largely separate from your own editorial - We host a robust comment platform across our entire site which is moderated by editors in our newsroom. We also publish press releases, reader-submitted commentary, and reader-submitted community events on VTDigger. The topics ranged from local races to the national stage and of course, the democratic imperative to vote. We also earned a small bit of revenue from campaign and issue advertising on the site.

## WDET

Framed by WDET is an audio-visual series produced by Detroit's public radio station, integrating photography and storytelling to tell the story of ethnic and cultural communities throughout metro Detroit. Through the project WDET creates opportunities for local communities to see their own stories validated, reflected and elevated through art and journalism. We pair local photographers with award-winning storytellers who are from, or have a relationship with, local ethnic and cultural communities to capture their stories.

By combining the art of photography and oral storytelling, the larger public is able to experience the voices and images of these communities through a series of audio-visual installations that travel throughout Southeast Michigan. Check out some of our previous stories at [framedbywdet.org](http://framedbywdet.org)! Here is one of my favorite Framed by WDET series that tells the story of a local grassroots blues jam session– Sundays at The Carpet House.

Over 400 people attended the opening of Sundays at The Carpet House which featured performances by the John's Carpet House band and was located at The Baltimore Gallery, only blocks away from where the summer jam sessions take place. When surveyed attendees shared comments like, "...This was a nice look at real Detroit" and "Love that this happened outside the usual venues." We were told by members of the John's Carpet House community that they were weary of what we were doing at first, but that this event changed their mind. They expressed satisfaction that their stories were being recognized by the media and members outside of their community.

Similarly, other Framed by WDET opening night events attracted local community members and individuals who were captured in images and stories within the exhibition. To date, they have attracted over 700 viewers in-person. There were instances in which you could witness people viewing an image of themselves or listening to a story that included a familiar voice. Moments like this illustrate the power of experiences that allow cultural communities to see their faces and stories reflected through art in physical places that are familiar to them.

Since 2014, we've partner with over ten photographers and storytellers to produce six exhibitions that have been installed in a total of 12 art galleries and community spaces throughout Metro Detroit....and beyond. It's been a great success for us.