



Institute for Nonprofit News

Annual Report 2017

INN is a network of more than 150 newsrooms — nonprofit, nonpartisan and dedicated to public service.

Together, we are strengthening the sources of trusted information for thousands of communities.

151 U.S.-based news organizations

Nonprofit, nonpartisan, dedicated to public service

INN trained **993** participants from nonprofit news organizations

541 took part in INN programs

452 joined "INN Friends Present" partner programs

73 learned social media tactics

Nonprofit news leaders received **91** hours of individual business coaching

Sessions on Startups helped **33** news entrepreneurs

59 organizations conferred with INN about ethics and standards



Provided **1,873** hours of tech consulting to nonprofit newsrooms

Advanced publishing industry initiatives with **1,417** hours of software development

Generated **\$258,555** in savings for nonprofit newsrooms through donated services

Powered **53** U.S. news sites

Provided Largo WordPress news theme run by **197** sites worldwide

Logged more than **4 million** sessions and 6 million page views per month on Largo sites



Cover:

Scalawag magazine Editor Danielle Purifoy captured this image of community members gathering around Studio South Zero at Mebane First Presbyterian Church in North Carolina. The mobile art studio was created for journalists to collect stories and make artwork illustrating the preservation of historic black sites in the South, for the project *In Conditions of Fresh Water*.

This photo also illustrates the creativity we see from so many nonprofit newsrooms as they find new ways to invite communities into the work of journalism and new ways for people to tell their stories. Learn more at <https://www.scalawagmagazine.org/tag/in-conditions-of-fresh-water/>.

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Building a new American news media

Dear friends of INN:

We are in a unique media and civic environment — one in which news outlets of all sizes are grappling with fundamental questions of trust, audience engagement and the role of news media in building community and fostering civic participation.

In this environment, nonprofit, nonpartisan newsrooms stand out as a great success story.

Since INN's founding in 2009 by 27 investigative newsrooms, the network has grown to more than 150 nonprofit news media organizations, all dedicated to public-service reporting on behalf of their communities and all committed to high standards of transparency, journalism ethics and quality reporting.

Their numbers continue to grow as journalists and community supporters alike find that nonprofit newsrooms are an effective way of providing quality coverage and giving more people a voice in public life.

INN is proud to support and help build our members' collective strength as an innovation network, sharing best practices and successful new strategies, providing services that help them provide more news coverage. **The Institute for Nonprofit News** is the only organization in the U.S. specifically focused on building the emerging nonprofit news sector and its unique role and commitment to public service news reporting.

Here at INN, we see the power of the nonprofit news network to help engineer a new media ecosystem, one that is inclusive, engaging and provides millions of people with trusted information.

We are deeply appreciative of the philanthropists, supporters and partners who help advance the work of nonprofit news organizations and of INN. Together with you, we are proud to be building a new and inclusive kind of American news media.



Laura Frank
INN Board Chair
VP Journalism,
Rocky Mountain PBS



Sue Cross
Executive Director & CEO
Institute for Nonprofit News

Programs and services

INN builds the field of public service journalism by bringing independent newsrooms the strengths of a network and the leverage of shared services. Four program tracks help media find, invent and implement new revenue models to support great journalism and accelerate growth of public service news reporting so it reaches and benefits more people.

- **Network-building and shared services**
- **Training and business capacity-building**
- **INN Labs: Open-source publishing tools**
- **Amplify: Collaborating to build reach and readership**

Network-building

INNOVATION NETWORK

Sharing what works is crucial in an environment where new models to support news are continually invented, tried and tested. INN speeds adoption of innovative approaches by publishing case studies, organizing presentations and facilitating peer groups. INN staff also spend 40+ hours a month individually connecting members with resources and references.

INCUBATOR

It is important to continue fostering new publications — the experimentation inherent in these ventures is critical to the future of journalism. INN helps communities and journalists plan and launch viable, successful newsrooms, often in “news deserts.” INN Startup Sessions provided business and strategy coaching for more than 30 founders in 2017, and INN provides fiscal sponsorship that can improve early growth rates.

SHARED SERVICES

Negotiated group savings and vetted service providers bring economies of scale to independent media, from access to media insurance to donor research and charity registration.

JOURNALISM STANDARDS

INN’s sample policies for editorial independence and donor transparency are used by more than 100 news organizations.

Capacity-building

Entrepreneurial journalists are reinventing the U.S. news media. INN provides a rich mix of training and professional consulting to help them.

BUSINESS COACHING AND TRAINING

Participation in business training for journalists doubled in 2017 with the addition of an in-house startup and growth coach. The capacity-building program mixes monthly online video training, “pop up” sessions on hot topics and regular free Office Hours advising. Two convenings provide hands-on training and peer support. INN Days are held in conjunction with the Investigative Reporters & Editors conference each June and serve more than 90 news leaders. A fall Business Intensive launched in 2017, drawing 60 news leaders to sessions on audience development and sponsorship.

NEWSMATCH

For a second year, INN helped support this matching campaign launched by Knight Foundation and now backed by the Democracy Fund, MacArthur Foundation and many other funders. This \$3 million matching campaign helps publishers develop reader revenue and other individual donors. INN worked with sponsors and News Revenue Hub to help more than 100 nonprofit newsrooms prepare for the campaign and build community support of high-quality nonprofit journalism.



LEADERSHIP

INN launched two in-depth coaching and mentoring programs in 2017. The Emerging Leaders Council strengthens and supports 10 rising managers. “LEAP” — for Lead, Execute, Accelerate, Pivot — helps leaders of highly successful news organizations pursue major strategic initiatives.

Supporting nonprofit news leaders

“We are lean and mean with a focus on editorial operations. INN allows us to succeed on the business side as well ... Our first step isn't to call an attorney, or hire an HR consultant or recruiter, or do industry research. We call INN.”

CALmatters began operations in January 2015. One of the first places we visited was the Institute for Nonprofit News (INN) and it has been an invaluable resource ever since. INN's knowledge of the field, the investment it has made in providing infrastructure and capacity building, and its broad national network have made it a crucial partner for CALmatters as we've grown into the largest editorial bureau covering California state politics.

From its vantage point, INN has seen a myriad of models and strategies. We leverage that perspective and have turned to INN for feedback on strategies ranging from distribution to partnering to professional development.

It also serves as a terrific networking resource and repository of best practices: for example, when we decided to redesign our website, they provided counsel on the best technology platforms. We've used their statement on editorial independence and their guidelines on donor disclosure since the very beginning. The industry standard it sets is invaluable in explaining and defending our policy.

As a startup organization, we are lean and mean with a focus on editorial operations. INN allows us to succeed on the business side as well by making policy, standards and general industry expertise available. Our first step isn't to call an attorney, or hire an HR consultant or recruiter, or do industry research. We call INN. Thank you.

—**SIMONE COXE**
BOARD CHAIR AND CO-FOUNDER,
CALmatters

Simone Coxe



“INN gave us a home and a family of member newsrooms eager to continue helping our growing team scale our newsroom.”



Without INN as our newsroom’s fiscal sponsor, launching The War Horse would not have been possible. INN’s backing extended credibility and tax incentives to our donors, sponsors and foundations when we existed only as an idea.

Most important of all, INN gave us a home and a family of member newsrooms eager to continue helping our growing team scale our newsroom responsibly and with sustainability in mind. Because The War Horse is fiscally sponsored by INN we’re able to focus on what matters most — our stories.

— **THOMAS BRENNAN**
FOUNDER, THE WAR HORSE

Thomas Brennan. Photo by Anna Hiatt/The War Horse

INN Labs

The INN Labs “news nerds” specialize in building open-source tools and news products for independent publishers – tools that can be used freely across the WordPress content management system that powers 70 percent of publishing sites.



This universal design work improves the scope and quality of news products and saves publishers thousands of dollars in custom development that can be reinvested in news coverage. Their work on

industry-wide solutions also is the bridge from innovation to impact for many journalism projects and prototypes. In 2017 those included building audio tools for NPR affiliates, a database for Poynter Institute’s International Fact-Checking Network, working with The Trust Project on features to enhance newsroom transparency and reader trust and the Knight Lab on storytelling tools.

LARGO & THE POLYJUICE PROJECT

INN Labs created and maintains Largo, a news theme for WordPress in use by 197 sites. Building on Largo, the INN Labs Polyjuice Project is leveraging new WordPress capabilities to make it easier, faster and less expensive for news sites to update their designs without extensive software development or platform migrations. The team also worked with more than 15 news organizations in 2017



“Without INN we couldn’t have produced an award-winning project. That says it all.”

The resources offered by INN have helped our small investigative newsroom punch well above our weight. Thanks to INN’s open-source web design for news organizations, we have a website that showcases our content and engages and impresses our readers.

But here’s the example that really tells the story: When we decided to launch an ambitious police database project, we knew we didn’t have the capacity to do it alone. So we chose INN to design the database. The INN Labs technology team members were more than contractors; they were real thought partners in the process. Without INN, we couldn’t have produced an award-winning project. That says it all.

— **SUSAN SMITH RICHARDSON**
EDITOR AND PUBLISHER
THE CHICAGO REPORTER

Reporter La Risa Lynch interviews a community member in the Pilsen neighborhood of Chicago. Photo by José Alejandro Córcoles/The Chicago Reporter

on custom web projects, from site redesigns to editorial projects such as data visualizations and special series presentations. To date, INN Labs tools have been utilized more than 700 times by more than 150 news sites.

SUPPORTING NEWS TECHNOLOGISTS

INN Labs runs a help desk and technical knowledge base for INN members, provides site maintenance and support and consults on Google Analytics and Data Studio. Members benefit from group licenses for premium WordPress plugins and software discounts. The weekly Nerd Alert newsletter, software documentation and open Office Hours further support the community.

Amplify

Journalists from 21 Midwest newsrooms are testing how a news collaboration and distribution hub can help grassroots newsrooms share news and leverage today’s complex digital distribution channels so their reporting reaches more people.

Amplify fosters local/national news collaborations to bring local and regional news of national interest to a broader audience, and to strengthen national newsrooms’ sources of on-the-ground reporting from under-covered regions.

The pilot project also helps newsrooms increase the impact of their journalism through audience development techniques including newsletters and email outreach, social media and search.

The INN community

Members



INN Members

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|---|---|--|---|--|---|
| 100Reporters | Coda Story | inewsources | Mother Jones | ProPublica | The Crime Report |
| Alabama Initiative for Independent Journalism | Colorado Independent | Injustice Watch | Mountain Independent | PublicSource | The CT Mirror |
| Alhambra Source | Connecticut Health Investigative Team | InsideClimateNews | MuckRock | Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting | The Hechinger Report |
| Alicia Patterson Foundation | Current | International Consortium for Investigative Journalists | National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting | Religion News Service | The Hummel Report |
| All Digitocracy | East Lansing Info | InvestigateWest | National Institute on Money in State Politics | Retro Report | The Investigative Fund |
| Anthropocene Magazine | Economic Hardship Reporting Project | Investigative Post | New England Center for Investigative Reporting | Rivard Report | The Lens |
| Arizona Center for Investigative Reporting | ecoRI News | Investigative Reporting Workshop | New Hampshire Center for Public Interest Journalism | Rocky Mountain PBS | The Marshall Project |
| Aspen Journalism | EdSource | Iowa Center for Public Affairs Reporting | New Haven Independent | San Francisco Public Press | The Nevada Independent |
| Austin Monitor | Ensia | Juvenile Justice Information Exchange | New Mexico In-Depth | Scalawag | The New Food Economy |
| Baltimore Brew | FairWarning | Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting | News Revenue Hub | Schuster Institute for Investigative Reporting | The Reporters Inc. |
| BenitoLink | Florida Bulldog | LkIdNow | Newsdesk | Searchlight New Mexico | The Trace |
| Better Government Association | Florida Center for Investigative Reporting | Local Standrd | Next City | Seattle Globalist | The War Horse |
| Borderzine | Food and Environment Reporting Network | Madison365 | NJ Spotlight | Sembra Media | The Youth Project |
| Bridge Magazine | G.W. Williams Center for Independent Journalism | Maine Center for Public Interest Reporting | North Carolina Health News | Shelterforce | Tucson Sentinel |
| California Health Report | Georgia Health News | Maryland Matters | Northern Kentucky Tribune | Signcasts | Twin Cities Media Alliance |
| CALmatters | Georgia News Lab | Maryland Reporter | NOWCastSA | Solitary Watch | Voice of Orange County |
| Carolina Public Press | Global Center for Investigative Journalism | Midwest Center for Investigative Reporting | Ohio Center for Investigative Journalism | Solutions Journalism Network | Voice of San Diego |
| Center for Public Integrity | Grist | Midwest Energy News | Oklahoma Watch | South Dakota News Watch | Voices of Monterey Bay |
| Centro de Periodismo Investigativo | Hidden City Philadelphia | Migratory Notes | Orb | Southern Investigative Reporting Foundation | VTDigger |
| Chalkbeat | High Country News | Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service | PassBlue | St. Louis Public Radio | Washington Monthly |
| Charlottesville Tomorrow | Highlands Current | MinnPost | PBS NewsHour | Texas Tribune | Wausau Pilot and Review |
| Chicago Reporter | Honolulu Civil Beat | Mississippi News and Information Corp. | Philadelphia Public School Notebook | The Austin Bulldog | WBUR |
| ChicagoTalks | In These Times | Mongabay | PolitiFact | The Center for Investigative Reporting | WFYI Public Media |
| City Bureau | Indigenous Media Freedom Alliance | | | The Center for Responsive Politics | WHYY |
| City Limits | | | | The Chronicle of Social Change | Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism |
| CivicStory | | | | | Women's eNews |
| Civil Eats | | | | | WyoFile |
| | | | | | Youth Radio |

“INN makes
a tangible
difference for
PublicSource.”



Mila Sanina; Executive Director, PublicSource

We take advantage of their offerings — from a terrific newsletter to website redesign to webinars on fundraising and engagement strategy — and have extensively leveraged INN’s expertise, services and network.

INN made the redesign of our website possible. Converting to Largo enabled us to activate pop-up capabilities to drive up our newsletter subscriptions, custom design editorial projects and gain a fully responsive design. Visitors’ time on our site has increased.

Our organization has benefited from one-on-one coaching on how to talk to local funders and board members about the importance of editorial independence. In addition, PublicSource has frequently taken part in INN training sessions on ways to build financial support for and public engagement with public service news reporting.

I am delighted that our managing editor, Halle Stockton, was selected to be a member of INN’s Emerging Leaders cohort. Through this fantastic network, she has formed valuable relationships, learned skills and brought new ideas to PublicSource. We’ve already implemented some of them.

PublicSource looks forward to being part of the INN network going forward, learning from other organizations in this ecosystem and hopefully serving as a resource and model for other newsrooms.

—MILA SANINA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PUBLICSOURCE

The INN community

Journalism Partners & Supporters

Building new models of journalism is the work of many organizations. INN acknowledges with deep gratitude the many people and organizations who work with INN to help build the future of nonprofit newsrooms — contributing funding and ideas, inspiration and insights, and collaborating on training and projects to advance the field.

craigslist
Charitable Fund



Individual supporters include:

Charles Anesi	Judy Christie	Brent Gardner-Smith	Kay James	Mary McMullen	Bruce Putterman	Travis Smith
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Partners who worked with INN to benefit nonprofit newsrooms include:

American Press Institute	Columbia College Chicago	Facebook	Knight Lab and Medill School of Journalism,	National Network of Fiscal Sponsors	Reynolds Journalism Institute, University of Missouri	Puzzle Project, NYU
Audience Engine	Corporation for Public Broadcasting	First Amendment Coalition	Northwestern University	News Revenue Hub	Society for News Design	The Poynter Institute
Center for Cooperative Media, Montclair State University	Cronkite School, Arizona State University	Gather, Agora Journalism Center, University of Oregon	LION Publishers	NPR Digital Services	Solutions Journalism Network	The Trust Project
Center for Media Engagement, University of Texas	Dot Connector Studio	Google	Media Law Resource Center	OpenNews	Temple University	University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
		Investigative Reporters & Editors	MediaShift	Public Narrative	The Membership	WordPress
				Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press		

2017 Financials

INN's net assets grew from \$732,153 at the start of 2016 to \$1.3 million by the end of 2017. This enabled INN to build a six-month reserve and grow its operating budget to \$1.35 million in 2017. Combined, these factors give INN a healthy financial base and the ability to support a growing membership with a broader range and depth of programs. Totals exclude pass-through grants and fiscally sponsored projects, which are broken out below.

INN is funded primarily by foundation grants, leveraged to provide network-wide services and training. Earned revenue covered 30% of operating costs in 2016 and more than 40% in 2017. The 2017 percentage was unusually high because of a single large project and completion of a two-year plan to build operating reserves. Earned revenue includes membership dues but comes primarily from fees for services.

Statement of Activities 2017

REVENUE

No donor restriction

Contributions	\$35,315
Grants	\$675,000
Investment income	\$84
Earned revenue	\$578,030

With donor restriction

Grants	\$330,000
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Total revenue \$1,618,429

EXPENSES

Program	\$909,111
Administration	\$251,204
Fundraising	\$142,469

Total expenses \$1,302,784

Net change in assets \$315,645

ASSETS

(excludes fiscally sponsored projects.)

Net assets 2016	\$994,264
Net change in assets	\$315,645
Net assets 2017	\$1,309,909
Management reserve	\$829,000
Available cash assets	\$480,909

Functional Expenses

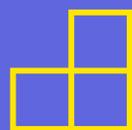


Fiscally Sponsored Projects

INN has helped launch 25 news organizations by providing fiscal sponsorship, a program under which INN serves as their 501(c)3 umbrella organization and handles their finances. Funds shown below are accounted separately and not mixed with INN's operating funds.

Sponsored projects in 2017 include the International Center for Investigative Journalism (ICIJ), Migratory Notes, News Revenue Hub, Sembra Media, Solitary Watch, The War Horse and Voices of Monterey Bay. ICIJ accounted for an unusually high 2017 total. Project revenues typically total under \$1 million per year and are expected to return to that level in 2018.

Sponsored Project Revenue	\$4,065,932
Sponsored Project Expenses	\$3,043,014
NET all fiscally sponsored projects	\$1,022,918



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