

Google

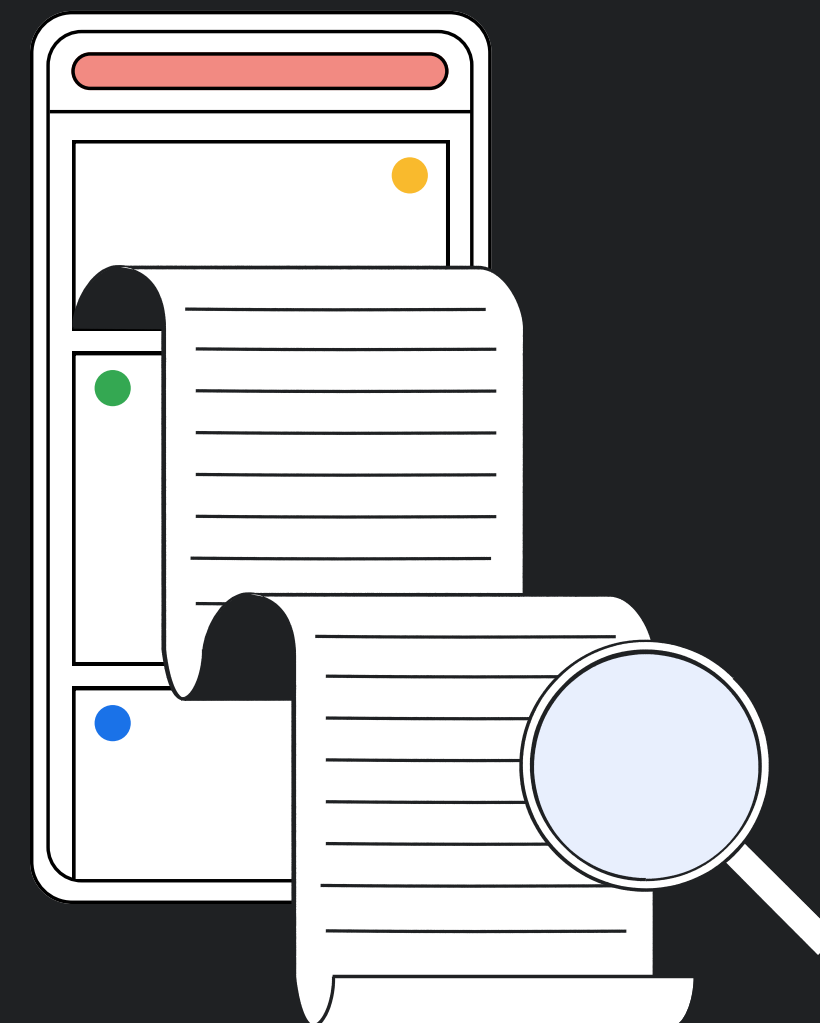


2025

# Google News Initiative U.S. Impact Report

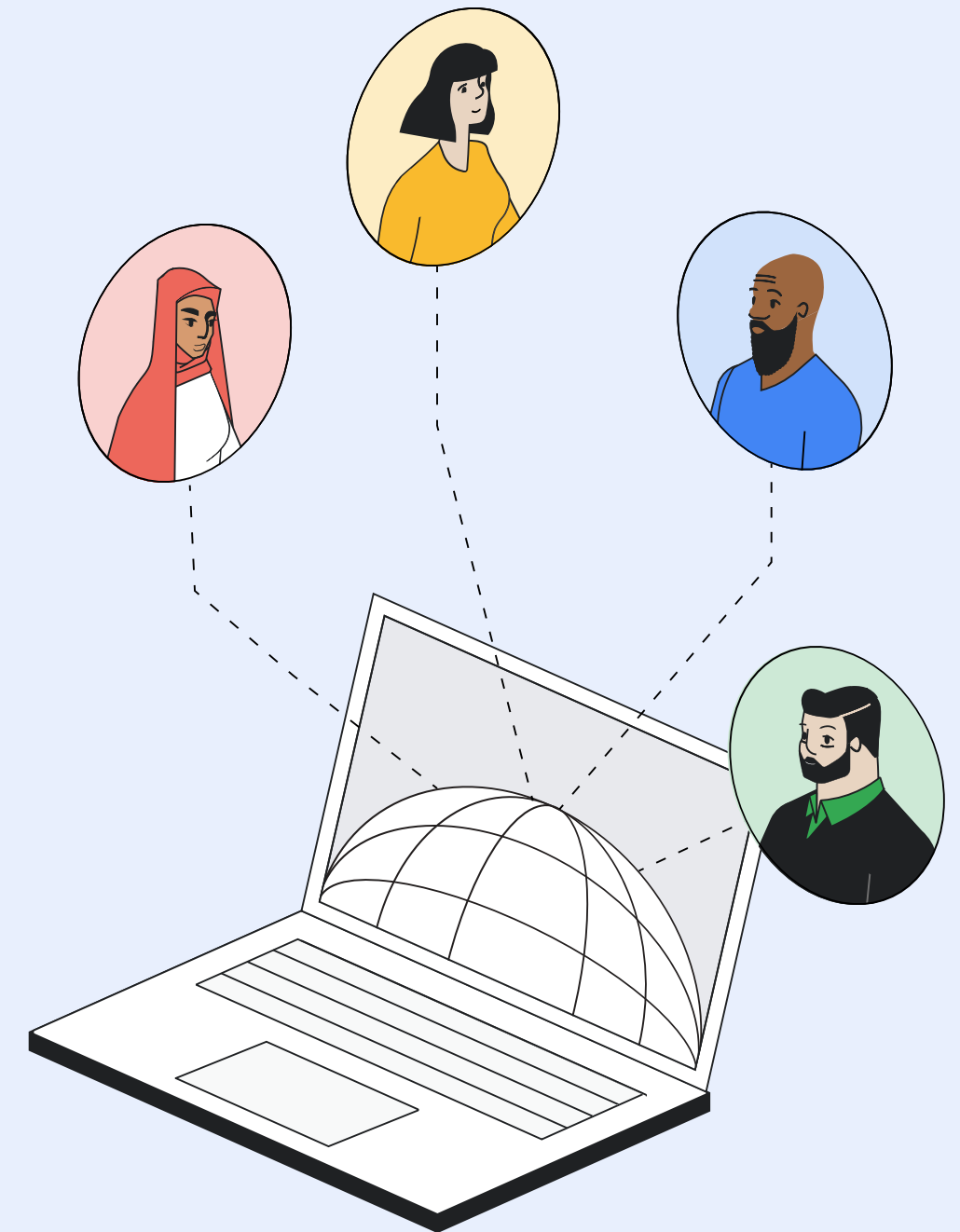
01

# Executive Summary



The news industry stands at a pivotal moment as shifting consumer preferences redefine what it takes for news publishers to compete and sustain journalism.

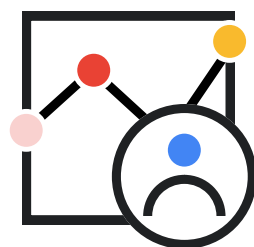
Audiences, particularly younger audiences, are increasingly consuming information across multiple digital channels and from a variety of sources, including social, videos, and podcasts. Digitally native creators are meeting these audiences where they are, delivering news and information in formats that reflect consumption habits and on platforms that reach audiences directly. In this saturated media environment, audiences are gravitating towards forums that feature authentic voices and firsthand perspectives they connect with and trust. This shift has intensified competition for audience attention and placed additional pressure on news publisher business models.



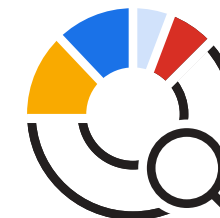
News publishers that are effectively adapting to this evolving landscape are redefining ways to achieve sustainability, build resilient business models, and serve their communities. Each organization's path to success may look different, but most have identified the need to:



**Lean into digital and AI innovation** to power their businesses and meet audience expectations. This includes investing in digital news site and app updates to improve the audience experience, harnessing audience data to personalize content, and utilizing AI to support research or operational efficiencies that extend newsroom output.



**Deliver on audience needs** by harnessing a multimedia, multi-platform delivery approach to news publishing and tailoring news products that build and engage a loyal audience community.



**Grow and diversify revenue streams** to supplement direct reader revenue, sourced from digital subscriptions or member donation programs, including monetized newsletters, community event sponsorships, event ticketing, and philanthropic funding.



## Google News Initiative

### Collaborating to Support a Sustainable Future for News

News publishers, even those that have seen success, face a constant need for evolution. News publishers of all sizes benefit from partners that can help address resource constraints, skill gaps, and technology enhancements required to continually adapt.

Google's broader mission is to help connect people to relevant and useful information. The Google News Initiative (GNI) was launched in 2018 to provide targeted support to help journalists and news publishers navigate the changing digital landscape and innovate. Smaller, local publishers are a key part of a healthy information ecosystem and critical to keeping communities informed. To date, GNI has supported 7,000+ news partners in more than 120 countries and territories through more than \$550 million in global funding.





Beyond funding, these programs teach news publishers how to do things that will **sustain their business for the long-term**. These programs give them coaching and experts they would not have access to on their own.

Nancy Lane, CEO Emeritus of LMA

GNI has collaborated with journalists, publishers, and industry leaders to provide news organizations access to:

- **Tools and technologies** that accelerate responsible AI adoption and build confidence in emerging digital journalism solutions
- **Training and consultation** to upskill journalists and news professionals on top digital topics across prioritized editorial and commercial workflows
- **Localized support and programs** to help news publishers reimagine their business models and drive sustainable growth
- **Peer networks** to learn from and collaborate with to tackle the most pressing concerns facing journalism
- **Targeted innovation grants** to enable newsroom initiatives focused on revenue growth, audience engagement, and digital transformation

The combination of the programs and resources delivered by GNI supports news publishers in exploring new ways to achieve long-term financial sustainability. As Nancy Lane, CEO Emeritus of LMA shared during an interview, “Beyond funding, these programs teach news publishers how to do things that will sustain their business for the long-term. These programs give them coaching and experts they would not have access to on their own.”

# Google News Initiative Supported Programs in Action

This 2025 Google News Initiative U.S. Impact Report highlights select recent programs supported by GNI, including their impact on the U.S. News Ecosystem, and shares examples of success that news publishers can learn from. To illustrate this impact, this report highlights the stories of 8 organizations that have driven measurable results through their partnership with GNI. Results include the ability to:



**Drive AI Adoption and Digital Innovation in Newsrooms** by optimizing news publisher technology stacks to deliver digital journalism and equipping journalists with AI tools that extend their capacity.

### Spotlight

By participating in the JournalismAI Innovation Challenge supported by GNI, **CalMatters** was able to scale their homegrown AI tool, Digital Democracy, to a new state and connect with a critical partner to help resolve a technical roadblock required for future national expansion. See page 11 to learn more.



**Expand Reach to Underserved Audiences** by focusing on audience needs to deliver differentiated coverage and reach communities impacted by local coverage gaps.

### Spotlight

GNI supported **NOTUS**’ launch of the Washington Bureau Initiative, pairing D.C. based journalists with local outlets to jointly produce and distribute relevant political coverage, reaching local voters back home facing accountability coverage gaps. See page 20 to learn more.



**Advance Business Resilience through Sustainable Revenue Models** by driving digital revenue growth, achieving regional market expansion, and generating entirely new revenue streams.

### Spotlight

The **Local Media Association** partnered with GNI to launch the Lab for Journalism Funding, which taught 194 news publishers how to secure philanthropic funding as a key source of revenue, resulting in a collective \$35M raised to expand newsroom capacity and achieve long-term financial sustainability. See page 27 to learn more.

Together, these examples and the additional case studies later in this report illustrate an industry in transition: one that is simultaneously safeguarding its roots while inventing its future.

While the challenges facing journalism are real, many news publishers, in partnership with GNI and driven by their own unwavering commitment to serve the public good, are reinventing themselves in creative ways to shape a more hopeful, sustainable future for journalism.

As Karen Rundlet, the CEO and Executive Director of the Institute for Nonprofit News (INN) stated during an interview, “GNI is pushing and inspiring our [news publisher] members to peek around the corner at the next decade. They're really exposing our members to the future of information, journalism, and reporting.”

Google News Initiative commissioned PwC to develop this report. Further details on the methodology and research approach, inclusive of how case study participants were selected, are outlined in the Appendix.

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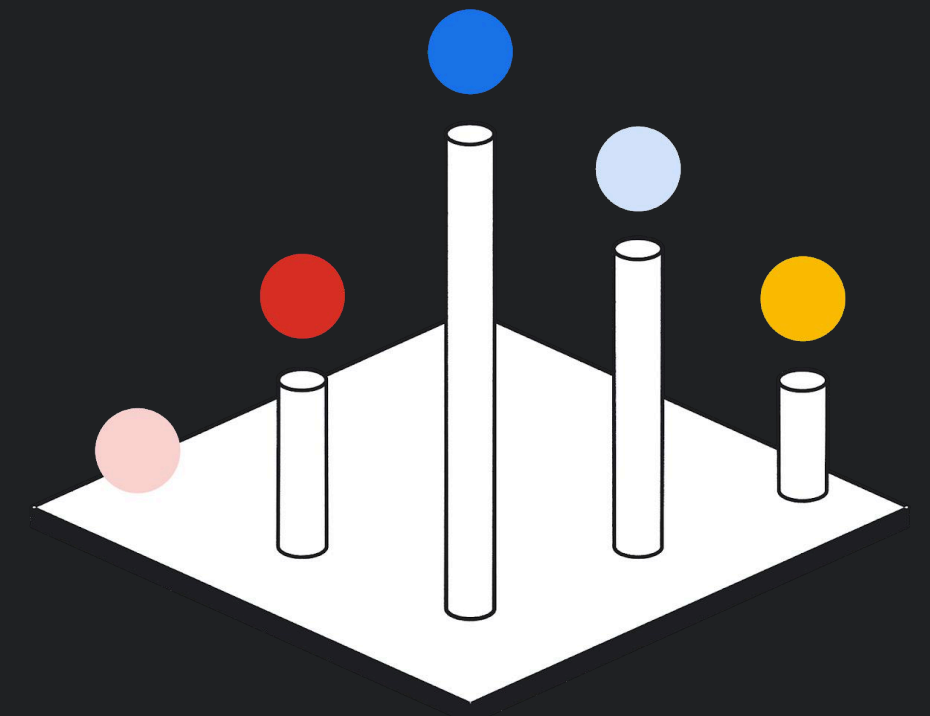
GNI is pushing and inspiring our [news publisher] members to peek around the corner at the next decade. They're really exposing our members to **the future of information, journalism, and reporting.**

Karen Rundlet, CEO and Executive Director,  
Institute for Nonprofit News

Executive Summary .....	1	Conclusion .....	30
Google News Initiative Supported Programs in Action .....	10	The Path Forward .....	31
Drive AI Adoption and Digital Innovation in Newsrooms .....	11	Appendix .....	34
CalMatters .....	12	Important Notice from PwC .....	35
FELN .....	14	State of the U.S. News Industry: Summary and Key Trends .....	35
Expand Reach to Underserved Audiences .....	16	Methodology .....	37
INN .....	17	Glossary of Terms .....	37
Sacramento Observer .....	19	Market Research Sources .....	38
NOTUS .....	21		
Advance Business Resilience through Sustainable Revenue Models .....	23		
Shaw Media .....	24		
LION .....	26		
LMA .....	28		

02

# Google News Initiative Supported Programs in Action



# 01

## Drive AI Adoption and Digital Innovation in Newsrooms

In today's digital environment, where consumers have access to an abundance of information, it is more important than ever for news publishers to embrace technology and AI to stand out and deliver what audiences value most: deeply relevant and authentic content in a variety of formats. This shift isn't just about adapting to new tools, it is about redefining how journalism connects with audiences.

Digital innovation now enables news publishers to unlock new revenue streams, engage audiences across multiple platforms, and streamline newsroom operations. While some news publishers are focused on laying the foundation by modernizing websites and core technology platforms, others are pushing boundaries with multiformat storytelling, personalized user experiences, and AI to support reporting.

The case studies that follow illustrate how Google News Initiative supported programs have helped news publishers turn digital innovation into measurable impact, from an AI solution enabling a California-based newsroom to expand state government coverage to targeted support that unlocked high-ROI digital improvements.



# CalMatters

DATE FOUNDED

2015

GNI PARTNER SINCE

2023

ABOUT CALMATTERS

CalMatters is a nonprofit, nonpartisan newsroom dedicated to covering America’s largest state, reaching 39 million Californians. CalMatters’ mission is to improve California’s democracy by making its government more transparent and accountable and give Californians the information they need to understand and engage with that government.

To learn more, [click here](#).

GNI SUPPORTED PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Scaled Digital Democracy, a custom-built AI tool, to a new state.

”

These programs create 35 examples that ideally 350 other publishers see and learn from.

Neil Chase, CEO, CalMatters





## Scaling AI Innovation to Keep State Governments Accountable

In California, CalMatters recognized that as the state press corps shrank, coverage of complex legislative debates and decisions grew increasingly thin, leaving the public with fewer ways to understand how policy was being shaped. To address this gap, the newsroom and its partners at CalPoly San Luis Obispo created Digital Democracy, a tool that uses AI to surface legislative data insights in formats reporters and citizens can use. CalMatters partnered with Google News Initiative (GNI) with the goal of expanding the tool's coverage to additional states across the U.S.

Neil Chase, CEO of CalMatters, emphasized that GNI plays a catalytic role in the industry by providing resources, expertise, and connections that enable local and nonprofit publishers to innovate and extend resource capacity to deliver critical accountability reporting at scale.

## Google News Initiative Supported Program Outcomes

By participating in the GNI JournalismAI Innovation Challenge, CalMatters was able to scale Digital Democracy, an AI-enabled tool that mines legislative data for updates, trends, and anomalies, and translates them into tips for reporters, from California to Hawaii. The program also fostered global peer connections that introduced CalMatters to a technical partner who helped resolve a major hurdle in speaker identification, paving the way for broader national expansion and helping address accountability gaps across the country.

CalMatters participated in a separate GNI program specifically with the goal of deepening digital newsletter engagement. As a result of this program and complementary internal initiatives, CalMatters tripled its newsletter offerings, achieved a 59% increase in subscribers, and increased paid memberships by 65%.

**59%**increase in  
subscribers**65%**increase in paid  
memberships

# The Fund for Equity in Local News

DATE FOUNDED

1978

GNI PARTNER SINCE

2023

ABOUT THE FUND FOR EQUITY AND LOCAL NEWS (FELN)

FELN is a fiscally-sponsored project of the Alternative Newsweekly Foundation (ANF), a nonprofit foundation founded by the Association of Alternative Newsmedia (AAN Publishers). FELN represents 500+ Black, Latino, and alternative local news outlets, providing grantmaking, peer learning networks, and specialists to ensure the long-term health of diverse, local, independent media.

To learn more, [click here](#).

GNI SUPPORTED PROGRAM OUTCOMES

113% increase in digital ad sales achieved by one of the participating publishers.



”

Coming into the program many of the participating publishers were unfamiliar with the tools and tactics required to sustain digital revenue streams. **Once publishers understood how to execute digital strategies, they began to feel more confident.**

Todd Stauffer, Executive Director, AAN Publishers



## Accelerating Digital Innovation and Revenue Growth for Local Publishers

ANF recognized that local news publishers were rethinking how to connect with audiences and deliver community-centric journalism digitally. This included deploying a multi-platform strategy to reach audiences, applying lessons learned from the “creator economy” to build loyalty, and adopting AI tools to streamline workflows. In partnership with AAN, NAHP, and NNPA, ANF launched the Fund for Equity and Local News (FELN) to stabilize and accelerate innovation for BIPOC and other locally owned newsrooms.

Ellen Meany, Executive Director at ANF, said the GNI partnership has helped FELN launch programs like Transformation Tech, which connects news publishers with critical coaching and programming that create safe spaces for news publishers to experiment and innovate.

## Google News Initiative Supported Program Outcomes

Supported by GNI investments, FELN launched Transformation Tech, an intensive lab that helped 240 established local news publishers engage audiences and generate sustainable digital revenue. Across six quarterly cohorts running through late 2024, each program participant received a grant, one-on-one coaching, and targeted training sessions to build a Revenue Transformation Plan and implement a high-impact item on their digital roadmap.

As a result, news publishers upgraded their websites, launched and monetized newsletters, tested AI tools, developed new digital products, and acquired audience funnel tools. For example, La Raza, a Spanish-language news outlet in Chicago, added display advertising to its newsletter, generating an additional \$1,600 per month in new revenue within the first quarter of the program. It also launched a targeted social media campaign that tripled its newsletter subscriber base and saw an overall 113% increase in digital ad sales.



\$1,600

new revenue  
per month



113%

increase in  
digital ad sales

# 02

## Expand Reach to Underserved Audiences

Audience confidence in news is historically low, with only 28% of Americans expressing trust in news media, down from 31% in 2024 and 40% in 2020. This downward trend in news trust underscores the importance of building differentiated coverage that audiences trust.

Both emerging and long-standing newsrooms are reimagining local news and finding new ways to connect with audiences, especially those historically underserved or impacted by recent local coverage gaps. These news publishers are putting audience needs at the center and focusing on what makes their reporting distinct and deeply relevant.

The case studies that follow spotlight how news publishers are taking unique approaches, enabled by Google News Initiative supported programs, to reach and engage audiences to enable sufficient accountability and community-centric coverage.

# Institute for Nonprofit News

## DATE FOUNDED

2009

## GNI PARTNER SINCE

2020

## ABOUT INSTITUTE FOR NONPROFIT NEWS (INN)

The Institute for Nonprofit News (INN) is a membership network of 500+ independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan news organizations. Founded to strengthen public service journalism, INN provides its members with training, resources, and collaborative programs to advance sustainable revenue models, diversify leadership, and uphold transparency standards.

To learn more, [click here](#).

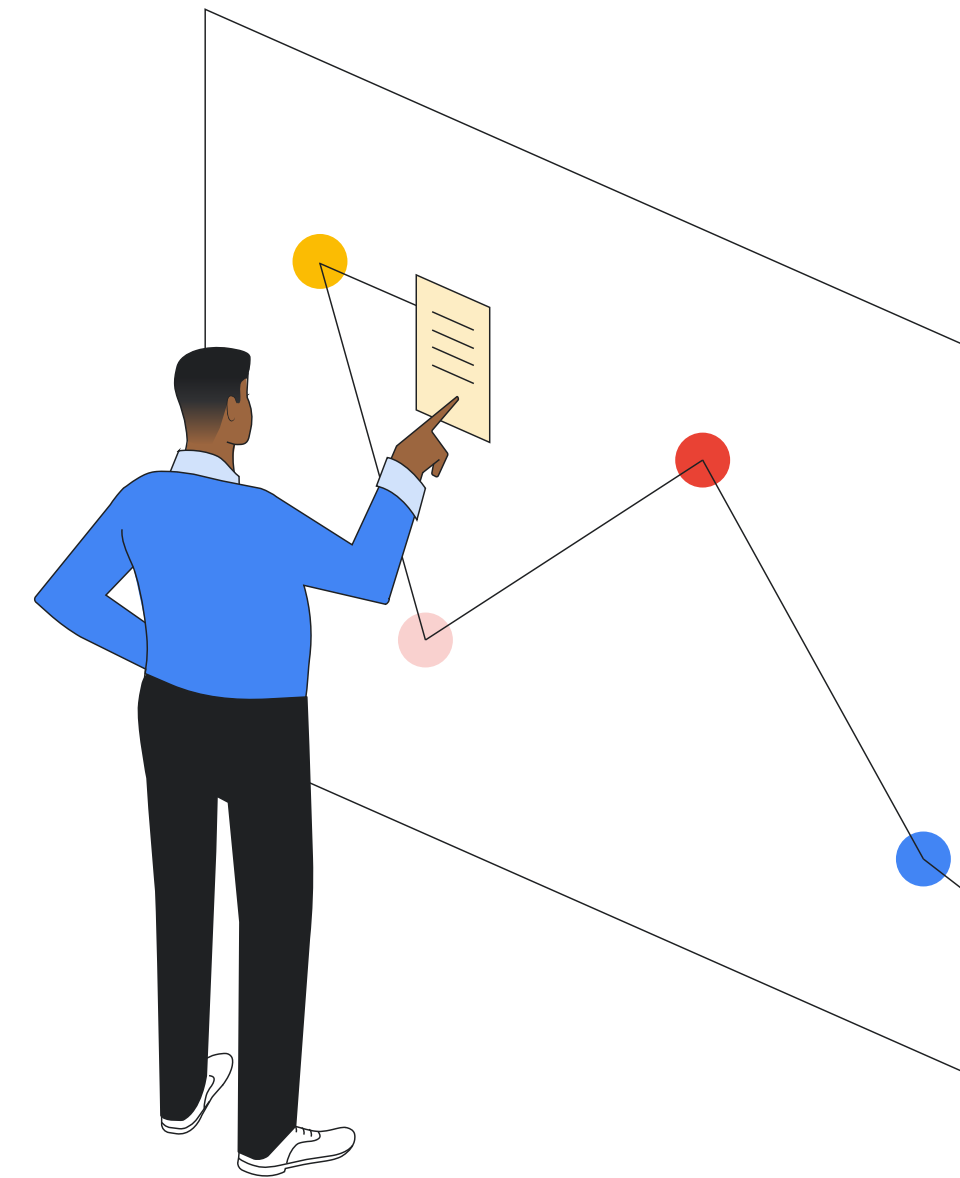
## GNI SUPPORTED PROGRAM OUTCOMES

72-hour turnaround time to distribute critical grants.

”

The GNI/INN Rapid Response Natural Disaster Reporting Fund **demonstrates the value of accurate news and fact-based reporting to keep the public safe.** This type of work is vital to communities. We often hear about fact based reporting and a free press as essential to democracy. In this case, the work is essential to keeping residents out of harm's way and informing them about relief and recovery resources.

Karen Rundlet, CEO/Executive Director, Institute for Nonprofit News





## Equipping Local Newsrooms During Disasters

INN found that in the wake of local emergencies, such as natural disasters, newsroom capacity is often hampered by resource and operational challenges at the exact moment when community demand for information peaks. In partnership with Google News Initiative (GNI), INN launched the Rapid Response Natural Disaster Reporting Fund to provide just-in-time support for local outlets covering natural disasters.

## Google News Initiative Supported Program Outcomes

Through the Rapid Response Natural Disaster Reporting Fund, grants were distributed to newsrooms responding to crises such as the floods in West Virginia, Kentucky, and Texas and the California wildfires. In most cases, grants were distributed within 72 hours, enabling outlets to continue delivering accurate, real-time information to their communities.

The funds have covered essential costs like overtime pay, freelance journalists, and other critical supplies for journalists working around the clock. For example, in the first days of the January 2025 California wildfires, INN member newsroom, LA Public Press, used disaster relief funding to pay for safety gear, freelance support, and licensed fire photo images. This support kept reporters out of toxic burn areas and produced coverage later cited in state and federal legislative analyses.

Karen Rundlet, CEO of INN, explained that GNI and INN have worked on other programs to strengthen the business operations of member newsrooms. These have equipped newsrooms with training, audits, and resources to support them in implementing audience development and reader revenue strategies. Beyond supporting the GNI/INN Rapid Response Natural Disaster Reporting Fund, Rundlet described GNI as a “learning partner” that “exposes INN members to the future of information, education, journalism, reporting.”



**72h** grant distribution  
time

# Sacramento Observer

DATE FOUNDED

1962

GNI PARTNER SINCE

2020

ABOUT SACRAMENTO OBSERVER

The Sacramento Observer is a Black-owned weekly newspaper dedicated to serving the African-American community in Sacramento, across California, and along the West Coast. The Observer has been awarded as the nation’s top Black newspaper and has expanded beyond reporting to engage with the community through signature events and initiatives.

To learn more, [click here](#).

GNI SUPPORTED PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Launched digital newsroom, expanding audience reach to a new market.



”

The Growth Catalyst investment gave us the courage to **strategically go after a market** that we didn’t have access to. This gave us an opportunity to imagine what we could go after.

Larry Lee, President and Publisher, Sacramento Observer



## Empowering the Black Community in Sacramento and Beyond

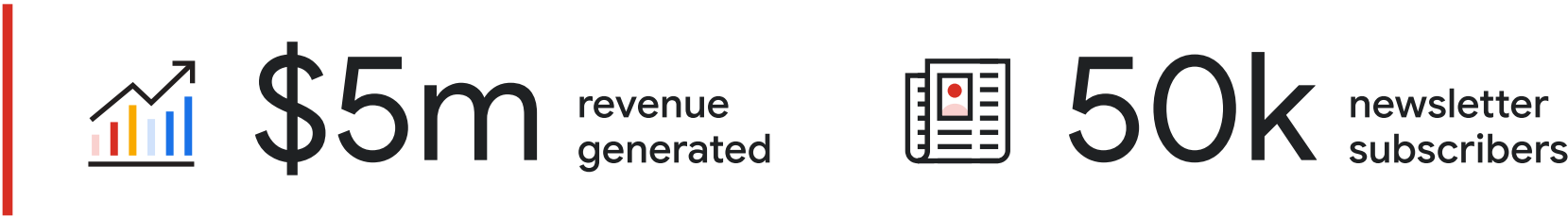
Nationally recognized as one of the country’s leading Black newspapers, The Sacramento Observer has built deep roots by investing in journalism coverage and community experiences. Under President and Publisher Larry Lee, the newsroom has scaled its impact and reached new Black communities through market expansion, digital innovation, and partnerships.

Lee described Google News Initiative (GNI) as “a smart, creative, technology-proficient partner in the room trying to help,” emphasizing the combination of investment, coaching, and tools that helped it modernize and scale, while staying anchored in their mission.

## Google News Initiative Supported Program Outcomes

Resources received through a GNI-enabled program has allowed The Sacramento Observer to launch a new digital newsroom in Stockton that will serve San Joaquin County’s Black community. Lee noted that without this support, the Observer would likely be contracting rather than expanding its reach.

GNI has also supported mission-aligned collaboratives that The Sacramento Observer participates in, amplifying impact beyond its organization. GNI funded the digital infrastructure required to launch Word in Black, an ongoing collaboration of ten Black publishers, which has grown to include six journalists, nearly 50,000 newsletter subscribers, and \$5 million in revenue within just a few years. Each participating news publisher also saw measurable growth in audience and site engagement as a result of improved content, increasing reader revenue potential. GNI also funded a development resource for Solving Sacramento, a collaborative focused on community-driven reporting and growing sustainable revenue.





# NOTUS

DATE FOUNDED

2023

GNI PARTNER SINCE

2024

ABOUT NOTUS

NOTUS is a Washington D.C.-based, non-partisan digital newsroom covering government, politics, and campaigns. NOTUS was launched by the nonprofit Allbritton Journalism Institute and hires AJI fellows as reporters.

To learn more, [click here](#).

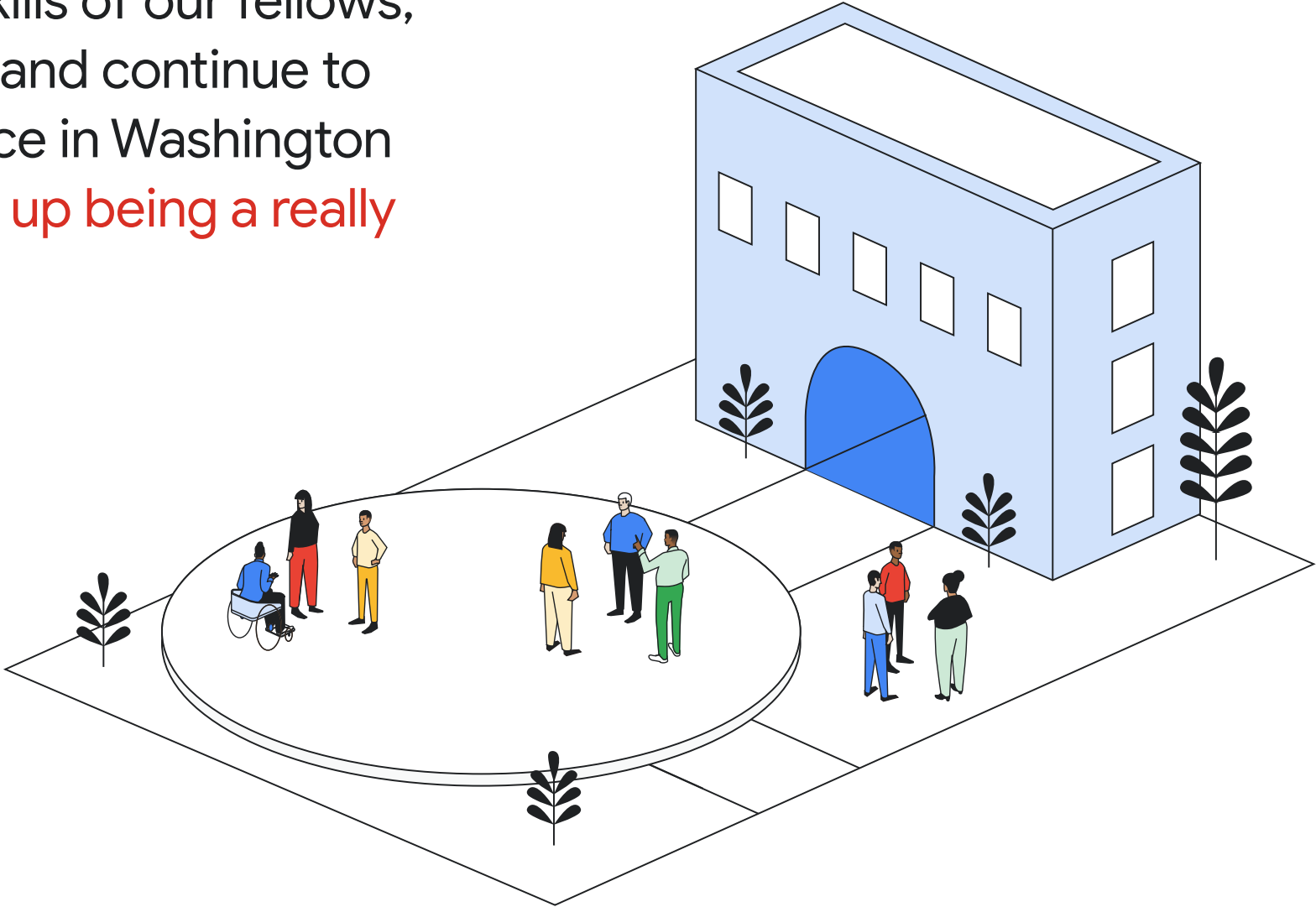
GNI SUPPORTED PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Scaled program to 15 partners across 12 states within first year.

”

We are able to partner with these local outlets, sharpen the skills of our fellows, reach new audiences, and continue to serve our core audience in Washington D.C. very well - **it ends up being a really terrific formula.**

Kevin Grant, Director of Development



## Closing the Accountability Gap by Connecting Local Communities to Washington, D.C.

NOTUS identified a critical need to expand the reach of Washington D.C.-based accountability reporting to help local communities across the country effectively monitor their representatives and the government decisions shaping their lives. With support from Google News Initiative (GNI), NOTUS and AJI launched the Washington Bureau Initiative, pairing D.C.-based journalists with local outlets to jointly produce and distribute relevant coverage and reach voters back home.

Reflecting on the Washington Bureau Initiative, Kevin Grant, Director of Development at NOTUS, described it as “a really terrific formula,” noting that it allows NOTUS to continue serving its core D.C. audience while also delivering significant value to local partners. AJI Fellows describe the program as both highly rewarding and energizing, fueling their professional growth as the next generation of political journalists.

## Google News Initiative Supported Program Outcomes

With GNI’s support, the Washington Bureau Initiative launched with eight partners in five states, then expanded to 15 partners in 12 states by the end of the first year. Reporting produced as a result of this initiative, posted on both NOTUS.com and participating local outlet news sites, has led to increased web traffic and engagement from key audiences. For example, Times of San Diego reported that NOTUS coverage drove more than 14,000 additional page views in just four months. In Maine, a local partner new to the program was able to restore D.C. coverage after a 15-year statewide gap, raising \$10k in local support in 24 hours. This demonstrated impact has prompted participating news organizations to request that the program expand to include additional regional peers.

Beyond the Washington Bureau Initiative, Tim Grieve, Editor in Chief of NOTUS, noted that GNI’s partnership affirms that “this work is important and worth investing in.”



14k additional pageviews

# 03

## Advance Business Resilience through Sustainable Revenue Models

News publishers have been seeking ways to generate reader revenue in a digital environment. However, audience preferences make this increasingly challenging. Audiences are accessing news and information across a growing range of digital sources, with about half of U.S. adults (53%) saying they at least sometimes get news from social media. At the same time, only 15% of Americans have paid for local news within the last year, compounded by many Americans avoiding the news altogether.

To capture and monetize audience attention in this media environment, news publishers should build new, diversified revenue strategies that extend beyond traditional reader revenue and build audience loyalty. Successful tactics include deploying newsletters to regularly engage readers, facilitating events that foster community connection, or expanding reach through enhanced digital experiences.

The case studies that follow spotlight how four different organizations have utilized Google News Initiative supported programs to address these exact challenges head-on and help news publishers achieve long-term financial sustainability in today's rapidly changing landscape. Examples include optimizing digital revenue, building entirely new revenue streams, expanding into new markets, and cultivating loyal audiences.

# Shaw Media

DATE FOUNDED

1851

GNI PARTNER SINCE

2015

ABOUT SHAW MEDIA

Shaw Media, headquartered in Crystal Lake, IL, is the third oldest, continuously owned and operated family newspaper in the U.S. Today it operates as one of the nation’s largest newspaper publishers, reaching 2.5M+ readers and listeners in print, radio, and online every month.

To learn more, [click here](#).

GNI SUPPORTED PROGRAM OUTCOMES

13x increase in digital revenue between 2015 and 2025.



”

Funding is great - but that alone isn’t what is helping us change our business model to be sustainable. It’s also **the training and technology for our staff - myself included - to learn how to navigate changes.**

Tom Shaw, VP and Chief Product Officer



## How a 175-Year Old Publisher is Driving Digital Growth and Market Expansion

Shaw Media has been on a 10+ year digital innovation journey to build a sustainable business that balances the needs of their long-time, print-loyal subscribers and newer digital-first audiences. Tom Shaw, Shaw Media’s VP and Chief Product Officer, shared that participating in Google News Initiative (GNI) funded programs equipped their news organization to accelerate digital revenue growth and reach new audiences.

## Google News Initiative Supported Program Outcomes

By participating in the Family and Independent Media Sustainability (FIMS) Lab, Shaw Media gained access to expert coaching that enabled them to revamp their digital advertising and audience growth strategies, resulting in a 13x increase in digital revenue since 2015.

More recently, Shaw Media received critical support through another GNI-backed program focused on helping news publishers with geographic expansion. This enabled Shaw Media to relaunch three acquired local papers that had recently closed in northern Illinois within just one month. In addition to avoiding a news desert, this market expansion helped Shaw Media generate additional revenue and instantly garner community trust.

Participation in GNI supported programs has directly enabled Shaw Media to sustain local reporting in existing and new markets, setting the foundation for business growth for years to come.





# LION Publishers

DATE FOUNDED

2010

GNI PARTNER SINCE

2020

ABOUT LION PUBLISHERS

The mission of LION Publishers is to strengthen the local news industry by helping independent news publishers build more sustainable businesses. They serve 575+ news publisher members in the U.S. and Canada.

To learn more [click here](#).

GNI SUPPORTED PROGRAM OUTCOMES

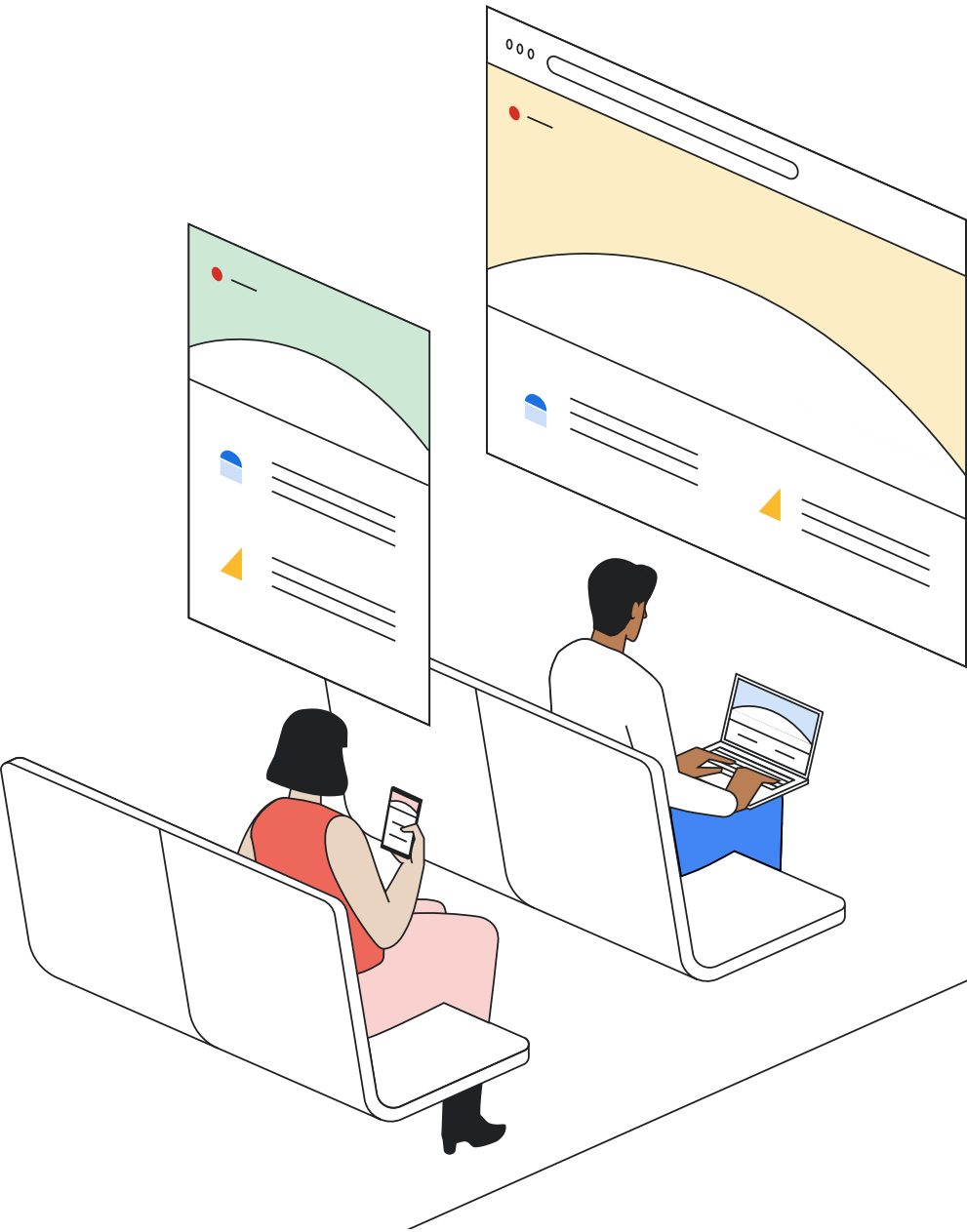
93% of news publishers reported a positive impact on sustainability.



”

GNI has helped us find and pay for subject matter experts that were 100% out of reach for the average individual publisher.

Chris Krewson, Executive Director, LION



## LION's Targeted Audits to Drive Sustainability Initiatives

LION recognized the critical need for independent local newsrooms to build operational resilience and diversify revenue in face of shifting audience preferences and ongoing news industry evolution. With support from Google News Initiative (GNI), LION launched a series of signature programs that combine tools, coaching, and grants to help news publishers strengthen business fundamentals and create pathways to long-term sustainability.

Chris Krewson, Executive Director of LION, credits GNI for thought partnership and enabling rapid iteration and scale of their programs, providing resources that small publishers may not be able to access on their own. Overall, Krewson sees GNI as a consistent ally whose support strengthens both LION's capacity to support members and the broader local news ecosystem.

## Google News Initiative Enabled Outcomes

The Sustainability Audits program helps publishers assess strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities while providing recommendations and targeted grants to implement solutions. With backing from GNI and others, this program has become LION's widest reaching initiative, serving 354 unique LION members between 2022 and 2024. Among participants, 93% reported a positive impact on sustainability. Burlington Buzz, a program participant based in Massachusetts, shared that the audit process offered valuable insights into previously overlooked aspects of their business. The newsroom found the experience both validating and constructive, appreciating the positive approach of the coach and the audit report which provided a tangible roadmap for enhancing the organization's long-term sustainability.

In 2024, LION introduced Sustainability 360, extending the audits with tailored coaching on foundational needs like HR policies and workflows. The Buckeye Flame, an early participant, credited the program with enabling a critical development hire and creation of their first employee handbook. The pilot began with six newsrooms and has since expanded to serve 40 newsrooms in 2025.



# 93%

reported positive  
impact on sustainability

# Local Media Association

DATE FOUNDED

1971

GNI PARTNER SINCE

2015

ABOUT LMA

The Local Media Association (LMA) is a trade association serving 3,000+ newspapers, TV stations, radio stations, directories, digital news sites and R&D partners across North America. LMA helps local media companies develop revenue growth and new business model strategies via cutting-edge programs, conferences, webinars, research and training.

To learn more, [click here](#).

GNI ENABLED OUTCOME

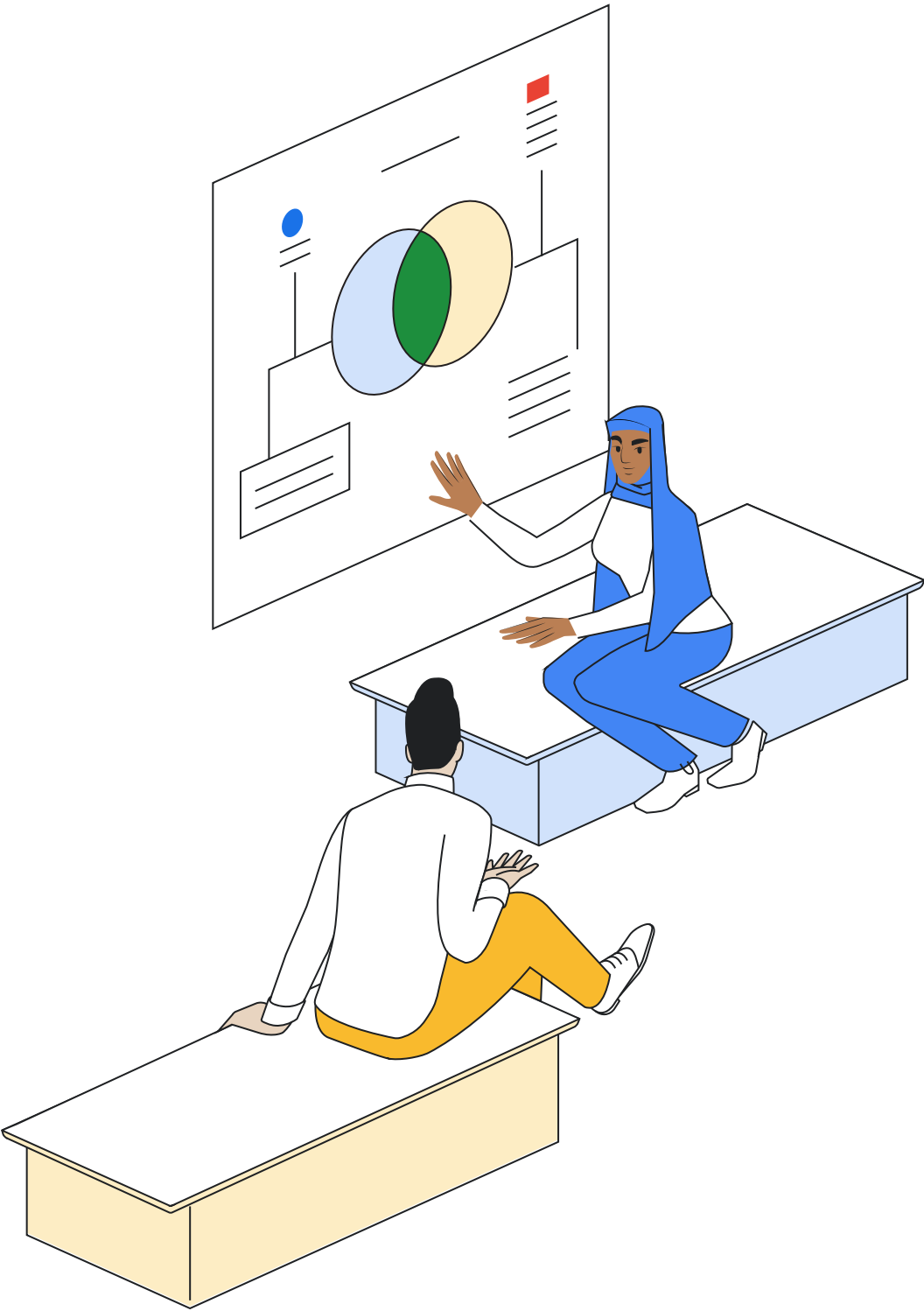
\$35M in philanthropic revenue across 194 publishers.



”

Beyond funding, these programs teach news publishers how to do things that will sustain their business for the long-term. These programs **give them coaching and experts they would not have access to** on their own.

Nancy Lane, CEO Emeritus, LMA





## Teaching Local Publishers how to Secure Philanthropic Funding

Local Media Association (LMA) sought support to help local news publishers identify new revenue streams and combat increased competition for audience attention. Google News Initiative (GNI) partnership enabled LMA to launch the Lab for Journalism Funding in 2020, a six-month training program to equip and empower local newsrooms to secure philanthropic funding as a revenue source to sustain essential journalism.

According to longtime CEO Nancy Lane, the resulting Lab for Journalism Funding program has been “game-changing,” going far beyond typical training programs. GNI investments enabled LMA to hire a tenured leader to run the program and secure a team of eight best-in-class journalism fundraising expert coaches.

## Google News Initiative Supported Program Outcomes

As a result of sustained investments from GNI, the Lab for Journalism Funding has provided 194 local news publishers access to deep, one-on-one coaching to help them build pitch decks, write grant applications, and engage funders. The program has run five national cohorts, five state-level cohorts, and two advanced fundraising cohorts. Collectively, the publishers that participated raised \$35M in philanthropic funding.

For example, by enrolling in the Lab for Journalism Funding, Georges Media Group in Louisiana was able to expand from three to 25 philanthropy-funded reporter positions. Specifically, NOLA.com, a newsroom part of the Georges Media Group, was able to secure a three-year grant as part of the Lab for Journalism Funding that more than doubled the newspapers’ investigative team and expanded the reach of coverage. Georges Media Group was also able to launch the Shreveport-Bossier City Advocate, a new ten-person newsroom to support another market in Louisiana, through philanthropic funding. This success story highlights scalable lessons for sustaining local journalism and expanding audience reach.

**22**philanthropy-funded  
reporter positions**\$35m**in philanthropic  
funding

03

# Conclusion



# The Path Forward

The news industry stands at a key inflection point. The challenges of shifting audience preferences and fragmented audience attention are not new, but the actions being taken by the innovative organizations spotlighted within this report are evidence that they are not insurmountable. Each example offers unique lessons on how news publishers can adapt and thrive.

## Embrace AI adoption and digital innovation.

News organizations are increasingly leveraging technology not just to improve the digital news experience, but to power the entire business. News publishers use digital and AI tools to discover new audiences and drive revenue, streamline operations through data-driven efficiencies, such as AI-supported reporter research, and harness analytics to better understand audience behavior and content performance. The most forward-looking leaders treat technology as a force multiplier, fueling smarter decisions, freeing up resources, and unlocking new opportunities to invest in high-impact journalism.

## Lead with an audience-first approach.

Successful newsrooms are those that deeply understand the needs, interests, and values of their communities. They do not try to be everything to everyone. This applies to the coverage and products provided, the formats in which news is delivered, the frequency with which that content is delivered, and the focus of their sales and marketing efforts. Meeting audiences where they are is essential for engagement and building long-term trust.

## Amplify your unique value.

Every newsroom must be clear about what makes its journalism and news products unique. That could mean focusing on political accountability reporting or hyperlocal coverage that no one else is providing. Being intentional about this differentiation is critical not only for attracting and retaining audiences, but also for strengthening credibility and trust with advertisers, funders, and partners who invest in the newsroom's mission.

## Explore multiple revenue streams.

While investing in an effective digital subscription revenue stream and attracting advertisers back to news remain important, relying on these revenue streams alone is likely not a sustainable strategy for most news publishers. From newsletter sponsorships to member programs and philanthropic grants, diversification is key. News publishers must also think strategically about distribution, making content accessible in the formats and platforms audiences prefer and use most. Importantly, newsrooms, especially local ones, are uniquely positioned to convene and connect their communities, whether through in-person events or shared digital spaces, which not only strengthens their role as trusted community anchors, but also opens new opportunities for engagement-driven revenue.

## Stay poised for continued reinvention.

The landscape will continue to evolve and newsrooms that thrive in years to come must be ready and willing to adapt. Whether by adjusting publishing cadences, experimenting with new formats and distribution channels, targeting niche audiences with specialized coverage - or something not yet imagined - newsrooms need to embed adaptability into their strategic and operational approach to be ready to respond to what's coming. This includes tapping into resources available for ongoing coaching and training.

## Don't go it alone.

Partnerships with mission-aligned organizations, like GNI, a peer organization, or one of the many ecosystem partners highlighted within this report, can extend each news publisher's reach and unlock access to valuable expertise. Collaboration is no longer optional, it is a requirement for success.

The path towards sustainability and growth will look different for every news publisher. However, the strategies highlighted within this report point to a future in which journalism can not only endure but also prosper. Google News Initiative remains committed to collaborating with news organizations to build toward a resilient future for journalism.

For more information about Google News Initiative, including inquiries about active programs or answers to any questions about this report, please visit [newsinitiative.withgoogle.com](https://newsinitiative.withgoogle.com)

04

# Appendix



## Important Notice from PwC

This report was commissioned by Google and produced by PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (“PwC”). PwC’s Services were performed and this Deliverable was prepared for the sole use and benefit of, and pursuant to a client relationship exclusively with, Google (“Client”). PwC is providing no opinion, attestation or other form of assurance and disclaims any contractual or other responsibility to others based on their access to or use of the Deliverable. Accordingly, the information in this Deliverable may not be relied upon by anyone other than Google.

## State of the U.S. News Industry: Summary and Key Trends

The forces reshaping journalism today are now impacting every part of the news industry. Publishers are responding with digital-first, audience-focused strategies designed to better reach and serve their communities. Google News Initiative (GNI) works to support news publishers within this rapidly evolving ecosystem.

### Audience Engagement and Monetization

Attracting and engaging audience attention has never been more difficult. In today’s fragmented media environment, consumers are seeking information from a range of sources, including social platforms, influencers, podcasts, and video networks. Research shows that, for the first time ever, a higher proportion of U.S. adults accessed news via social media or video networks than through news websites or apps.

At the same time, the share of U.S. adults who say they are paying close attention to local news dropped by 15 percentage points between 2016 and 2024.

This dynamic makes it essential for news publishers to be hyper-focused on understanding and meeting the needs of their target audience. Successful outlets clearly define who they serve and consistently articulate the unique value their reporting provides. News publishers are also adapting formats and distribution channels to audience behavior, delivering personalized, multiformat content, from video to SMS to newsletters. Importantly, publishers are learning from the success of online influencers and creators who have built loyal followings through authenticity and direct engagement. This combination of clearly knowing the audience, tailoring formats, and embracing lessons from the creator economy helps convince people that engaging with, and even paying for, news is worthwhile.

### Revenue Reinvention and Diversification

Establishing loyal audiences is only the first step. Monetizing that engagement through a number of diversified revenue streams is equally critical for news publisher sustainability. While U.S. newspaper digital circulation revenue is forecasted to grow at 8.1% CAGR between 2024 and 2029, and select national news publishers have demonstrated the potential of digital subscription models, many local publishers continue to struggle to sustain reader revenue. In fact, only about 15% of Americans pay for local news, lower than overall averages for paid news consumption in the U.S.

These pressures are driving news publishers to fundamentally rethink their revenue models. Some are doubling down on creating sustainable digital subscription and

advertising revenue streams. Many are testing entirely new revenue streams, such as events, newsletter sponsorships, and membership programs to build and monetize audience loyalty. Others are pursuing the option of becoming a non-profit or tapping into philanthropic funding to diversify their income base.

Independent of what revenue strategy is pursued, publishers need to clearly articulate their unique value proposition to readers, advertisers, and funders. For example, according to an [IAB study](#), consumer trust in brands that advertise within news organizations increases, but news organizations have yet to articulate and convince advertisers to return to spending on their sites. The future of journalism will depend not only on building loyal audiences, but also translating that loyalty into durable revenue models that enable news publishers to thrive.

### Digital and AI Innovation

Technology innovation is central to the newsroom of the future. Across the U.S., publishers are investing in improving their technology capabilities, with the hopes of cutting through the noise of abundant information and delivering a better experience to their audiences. It is important to note that news publishers are often leveraging proven platforms, like Newspack or audience analytics tools, to modernize operations without starting from scratch.

Others are pushing the boundaries of technology innovation even further by building AI capabilities for both revenue generation and cost efficiency. News organizations that have seen success have balanced this innovation with maintaining editorial trust,

while recognizing the opportunity to generate digital revenue, accelerate research, and streamline workflows.

### Shifting Role of Local News

Established news publishers and emerging digitally native outlets are stepping in to reach audiences impacted by local coverage gaps or historically underserved communities. Established alternative weeklies have demonstrated surprising resilience, often becoming the sole remaining papers in their markets, while digital startups are emerging as trusted voices for their audiences. In fact, there has been a surge of digitally native news publishers across the U.S., including a net increase of 105 stand-alone digital sites between 2023 and 2024.

In this context, local news is being redefined. Tomorrow's newsroom may be smaller, more nimble, and more specialized - publishing less frequently, but with deeper community connection and more diversified ways of engaging their audiences.

### Building an Ecosystem of Partners

One thing is particularly clear: news publishers do not have to navigate these challenges and opportunities all on their own. Partnerships are increasingly recognized as essential to remain competitive and for news publisher survival and growth. Collaborations with mission-aligned organizations, such as peer newsrooms, non-profits, technology providers and funders, help extend reach and unlock access to critical expertise, tools and resources.



## Methodology

In order to create this report, PwC conducted interviews with organizations that received direct support from Google News Initiative (GNI). These organizations represented a mix of news publishers and ecosystem partners, defined as organizations that provide direct services and resources to the news industry.

To reflect a broad cross-section of the news landscape, the sample includes variation across factors such as geographic location (U.S. State or Region), organization size (employee count, revenue), audience reach (local, regional, national) and content format (digitally native, print and digital, and multiformat). Together, these organizations represent a range of GNI supported programs and their impact on the U.S. ecosystem, including cohort programs that offer expert coaching, organizational audits, training, digital tools and targeted grants.

The outcomes and perspectives highlighted within this report were shared directly by participating organizations and supplemented by secondary market research, as detailed in the Market Research Sources section down below. Please note that PwC did not independently verify impact results shared by organizations that participated in case study interviews.

## Glossary of Terms

Below is a brief set of terms with corresponding definitions related to how they were utilized within the context of this research paper.

TERM	DEFINITION
News Publishers	Print newspapers that also have an online news site and online-only news websites. This research excludes other digital sources of news such as broadcast news.
Ecosystem Partners	Non-profit organizations that provide direct services and resources to the news industry, including but not limited to training, expert coaching, technology and organizational audits, in partnership with Google News Initiative.
Digitally Native Publishers	News publisher that was founded and built to operate and distribute journalism online, rather than evolving from a print or broadcast organization.
Audience	Consumer of news and information across all formats, including but not limited to digital, print, video and audio.
Local News	Refers to journalism that covers events, issues, and stories directly relevant to a specific community, defined by location, cultural or interest commonality.

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