

# NewsMatch 2018

## Learning Report



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## Executive Summary

Over the last three years NewsMatch has left an indelible imprint on the field of nonprofit news, helping jumpstart new local newsrooms and strengthening long-standing investigative reporting organizations. It couldn't be happening at a more important moment for American journalism, which continues to face political threats, commercial crisis, and technological change. No single effort alone can respond to all these challenges, but a new evaluation of the NewsMatch campaign shows how it is making a dent.

NewsMatch is a nationwide campaign focused on three interlocking goals: Driving more donations to nonprofit journalism, strengthening nonprofit newsrooms' fundraising capacity, and promoting the role of nonprofit news in America. Now entering its fourth year, NewsMatch continues to be one of the most successful efforts to support nonprofit news at scale.

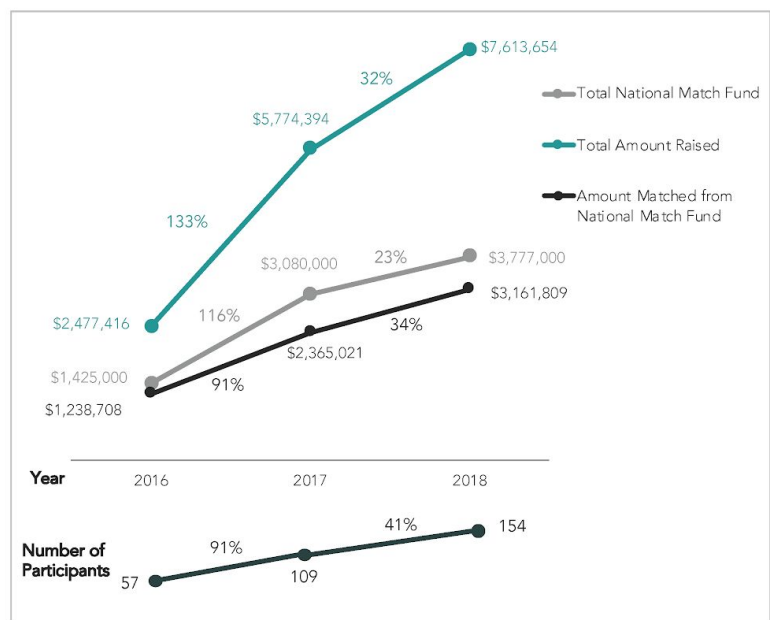
Between Nov. 1 and Dec. 31, 2018, the campaign helped 154 nonprofit news organizations across the country raise more than \$7.6 million in unrestricted funding, which is being invested in more and better journalism, crucial general operating support, and improved fundraising capabilities. Since 2016, NewsMatch has helped nonprofit newsrooms raise more than \$15.8 million.

The public is noticing. In two months — November and December of 2018 — over 240,000 people gave to news organizations, and 52,000 were new donors supporting a nonprofit news organization for the first time. The year before, in 2017, 43,000 new donors gave for the first time during NewsMatch, for a two-year total of 95,000 new donors.

Through NewsMatch, nonprofit news organizations are also getting more successful at year-end fundraising. In a

year when nonprofits overall only saw 1.5 percent year-over-year growth in individual donations, the average NewsMatch participant raised 11 percent more during the campaign in 2018 vs 2017. Small and medium newsrooms saw the biggest growth in year-end support, with 30+ percent increases in individual donors, donations, and dollars raised during NewsMatch.

Finally, NewsMatch has become a unique new on-ramp for foundations, corporations and major donors who want to support journalism in America. In 2018, new foundations joined NewsMatch,



contributing to the national fund and setting up additional matches to support specific newsrooms by topic and geography. The Facebook Journalism Project donated \$1 million, and participating news organizations directly secured more than \$675,000 in additional matching commitments from major donors and foundations as part of the campaign. NewsMatch is a proven model for foundations and donors who want to pool their resources for greater impact.

Each year NewsMatch shares what it is learning and how it is adapting the program to meet the needs of the current moment. For the third consecutive year, Third Plateau conducted a summative evaluation of the NewsMatch effort, using a mixed-methods research process that included review of pre- and post-match financial data from participating organizations, evaluative notes collected before and during the campaign, a post-match survey of participants about the NewsMatch experience, and confidential phone interviews with participating organizations and NewsMatch partners and funders. This public learnings report is informed by Third Plateau's evaluation and excerpts key sections (which are marked throughout.)

**“The campaign caught the budding nonprofit news sector at a critical stage in its growth and is giving it a jetstream by helping coach newsrooms, funders, and individual donors into seeding its future.”**

Christine Schmidt, Nieman Journalism Lab

The conclusion drawn from the evaluation is that NewsMatch is a critical campaign at a crucial moment for U.S. journalism, and it is a particularly effective philanthropic program. As the challenges that face commercial media accelerate, NewsMatch continues to grow, driving more dollars to more newsrooms in more places around the country. We expect the number of participating news organizations to increase, as the Institute for Nonprofit News now counts more than 200 organizations among its membership. In 2019, we are sharing this learning report to reflect not only what the NewsMatch team is learning about but also what nonprofit news organizations are sharing with us about their fundraising needs and opportunities, and what funders, philanthropists, field-building organizations and leaders in communities across the country can do to ensure a strong, sustainable future for news.



## The Three Goals of NewsMatch

The three goals of NewsMatch are to drive new donors to support nonprofit news, increase fundraising capacity in nonprofit newsrooms, and build awareness about the impact of nonprofit journalism among U.S. donors. Our third-party evaluation firm, Third Plateau, found that NewsMatch continues to drive outcomes that further those goals:

### Goal #1: Drive New Donors to Nonprofit News

“ This year, all reporting organizations acquired new donors during the campaign period, and 22 percent of all donors from Nov. 1 to Dec. 31 (52,159 individuals), were first-time donors to an organization. This is an increase of 21 percent from 2017.... Of organizations eligible for the goal-based bonus for reaching 100 new donors during the campaign period, 35 percent were able to do so. ”

### Goal #2: Increase Fundraising Capacity in Nonprofit Newsrooms

“ The majority of participants attracted more donors, donations, and dollars in 2018 than they did in 2017. Nearly half saw a greater share of their revenues come from individual donors. In the post-match evaluation survey, 91 percent of respondents agreed that NewsMatch helped equip them to do more, better fundraising, and 93 percent reported that the campaign helped them raise more money than they otherwise would have. ”

### Goal #3 Building Awareness About the Role of Nonprofit News in America

“ Over three-quarters (76 percent) of participants that responded to the survey agreed that NewsMatch helped raise awareness around nonprofit news in their communities, a 21-percent increase from 2017. Newsrooms interviewed by Third Plateau felt the increased credibility from being associated with a national campaign helped boost awareness, and that being part of the campaign forced them to hone their messaging, both providing a deeper alignment within their organizations about their role and purpose as well as strengthening their appeal for donors. ”



## How NewsMatch Works

Part fundraising program, part capacity building effort, part public awareness campaign, NewsMatch tries to achieve a complex set of goals while making it as easy as possible for anyone — donor, newsroom, foundation — to participate. Here is how it works.

Behind the scenes, planning for NewsMatch 2018 started in February, immediately after the 2017 campaign wrapped up. Partners and funders met regularly on team calls and in working groups to design the 2018 effort, based on feedback and input from participants and funders. Publicly, NewsMatch 2018 kicked off in June at the annual INN Days conference. Throughout the summer and fall, in-person and online trainings and 1-on-1 coaching for small news organizations and first-time participants helped organizations get ready for their end of year push. At the same time, national fundraising and communications teams worked steadily to build the fund and the national campaign.

### Highlights from the Campaign

Raising the Funding for NewsMatch: The national NewsMatch fund has to be replenished each year. It is housed and administered by the Miami Foundation and is open to contributions from foundations, individuals and companies. More and more funders are also creating “partner funds” which create additional matches for specific newsrooms based on topic (i.e. science reporting) or geography (i.e. newsrooms in Pennsylvania). As such, NewsMatch is a platform for a wide array of donors and funders which makes it easy to support trusted newsrooms all over the country.

Creating a Donation Portal for Giving to News: The NewsMatch.org website creates a one stop shop for discovering and donating to local and investigative journalism. It lets people add newsrooms to their “cart” and give to multiple newsrooms with one transaction. The website also gives smaller newsrooms a simple and streamlined set of fundraising tools for processing payments and promoting their campaign.

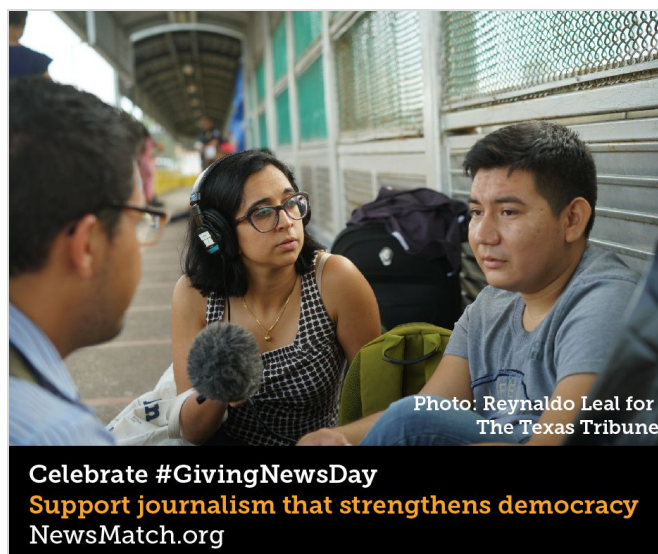
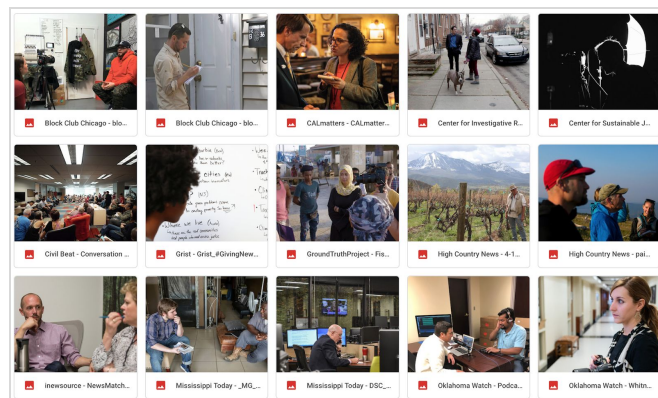
Fundraising Toolkit. The NewsMatch fundraising toolkit is a campaign-in-a-box that provides smaller news organizations with everything they need to run a professional, year-end fundraising campaign online. For larger organizations, the messaging, graphics and other resources in the toolkit are an expert complement to their own in-house fundraising assets.



National Photo Day: For one day in November, we invited NewsMatch participants to turn their cameras around to show the work of nonprofit newsrooms and journalists that donations during NewsMatch help to support. We ended up collecting more than 350 photos that have been widely used since to tell the amazing story of nonprofit news organizations across the U.S.

Powerful Storytelling: Throughout the fall, NewsMatch lifted up the stories of inspiring newsroom leaders across the country, reaching new audiences with a message about the impact of nonprofit news. Profiles in Bustle, Teen Vogue and Popsugar, along with coverage in the Chronicle of Philanthropy, Forbes, BuzzFeed and other outlets presented NewsMatch as an exciting and effective charitable effort deserving the attention of U.S. donors.

#GivingNewsDay: For the second year in a row NewsMatch used the Tuesday after Thanksgiving to elevate journalism as a charitable cause alongside more traditional causes. NewsMatch promoted #GivingNewsDay alongside Giving Tuesday to highlight the ways local news and investigative reporting contribute to healthy and just communities. No matter what issue you care about most you can find and support nonprofit news organizations whose reporting is helping to reveal injustice, seek accountability, and shine a spotlight on solutions. Newsrooms' fundraising total for the day topped \$1.3 million.



## How NewsMatch Learns

NewsMatch has become a powerful tool for learning and has helped guide other grantmaking and newsroom strategy year round. We make learning a core part of NewsMatch through our external evaluations, participant feedback, ongoing debriefs and data collection. NewsMatch now has one of the largest sets of data about trends and strategies for individual giving to nonprofit news anywhere and we are using that to expand training and resources.

Each year, we design NewsMatch to better support participants and meet our goals. In 2018 we made five distinct changes to the campaign:

1. The match period was shortened to two months, instead of three. Condensing the timeframe created more urgency and allowed more time for training and preparation.
2. Small and medium organizations (defined as participants with a budget of \$2 million or less) were eligible for bonuses based on meeting any of three goals during the campaign: securing 100 new individual donors; receiving donations from more individual donors in 2018 than in 2017; and raising more dollars year over year. These bonuses rewarded newsrooms who were growing their fundraising capacity.
3. In an effort to better support memberships and sustaining donor programs in 2018, we matched new recurring donations at a full-year value, providing a unique incentive for people to sign up for recurring donations.
4. Donations made by individuals through a small business, family foundation, or donor advised fund were eligible for the match, enabling individuals to give through a diverse set of vehicles.
5. We lowered the total amount we would match to \$25,000 per organization to account for the increased number of participants and to maximize the bonuses.

The response by participants to these changes was overwhelmingly positive.

**“** On a scale of 1-10, 10 being “excellent” and 1 being “poor”, survey respondents rated their overall experience participating in NewsMatch as a 9. The vast majority of respondents, 89 percent, rated the program at an 8 or above, and only one rated it below a 5. **”**

Survey respondents also had a positive experience with most aspects of the campaign, including structural changes, bonuses, and match limitations. The most positive experiences were with the shortened campaign window, accepting individual donations through small businesses and other giving vehicles, and matching recurring donations at their full-year-value. The aspects with the most negative experiences were the individual donation limit and the match cap.

## Impact: Strengthening Nonprofit News Across America

Given the multifaceted goals of NewsMatch, we are interested in how the campaign is changing newsrooms, donors, and philanthropy. While the dollars raised is the most visible impact of NewsMatch, we don't believe the program can be a success unless it is also helping shift overall long term capacity for newsrooms and trends in giving to journalism. In the sections that follow we examine each of these kinds of impact.

NewsMatch 2018 helped to raise more than \$7.6 million in unrestricted funding for 154 newsrooms across the U.S., a 32 percent increase in dollars raised versus NewsMatch 2017.

“ Despite a shorter time frame, participants were able to raise more money from more donors during the 2018 campaign. ”

### NewsMatch Fundraising Data 2016-2018 (% Change from Previous Year)

Metric	2016	2017	2018
Number of Participants	57	109 (+91%)	154 (+41%)
Total National Match Fund	\$1,425,000	\$3,080,000 (+116%)	\$3,777,000 (+23%)
Percent of Participants that Met the Match	77%	51% (-26%)	61% (+10%)
Total Amount Raised	\$2,477,416	\$5,774,394 (+133%)	\$7,613,654 (+32%)
Amount Eligible to be Matched <sup>1</sup>	\$1,238,708	\$2,365,021 (+91%)	\$3,161,809 (+34%)
Amount Matched by the National Fund	\$1,238,708	\$2,365,021 (+91%)	\$3,161,809 (+34%)
Additional Match from Partner Funds	Not Applicable	\$158,000	\$209,209 (+32%)
Local Matches <sup>2</sup>	No Data	\$886,352	\$676,814 (-24%)
Amount Paid Through Bonuses	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	\$404,013

Sources: Knight News Match Evaluation 2016, NewsMatch Internal Report 2017, NewsMatch 2018 Post-Match Reports

<sup>1</sup> This value is equal to the amount paid out by the national match fund, and reflects donations made by individuals during the campaign of \$1,000 or less, up to \$25,000 per organization.

<sup>2</sup> The methodology for asking about local matches changed in 2018, to ask specifically about local matches secured *as a result of* NewsMatch rather than local matches leveraged during the campaign. This may have had an impact on responses, as participants that secured matches not as a result of NewsMatch, but that were leveraged during the campaign, were not reported.



Given that these funds are all unrestricted, newsrooms are able to invest them in any way they need, providing unique flexibility for participants in a field where most grants are still focused on specific projects or reporting beats. NewsMatch participants identified three main ways they plan to invest the funds.

#### More, better journalism:

“ The comment most made by newsrooms was that NewsMatch funding would go towards delivering and expanding their services, providing high-quality journalism to their communities. Examples of this included increasing mobile distribution, exploring multimedia initiatives, improving social media capacity, translating stories into Spanish, launching new beats or projects, developing partnerships with other local or regional media, and hosting more events. NewsMatch dollars are also better suited to cover breaking news, which changes rapidly and can be difficult to secure funding for on a tight timeline. ”

#### Crucial general operating support:

“ The funds are especially valuable given that they are general operating support, which is more flexible than grant dollars and hard to come by. Examples of investments in operations include staff salaries, building out fundraising infrastructure, hiring consultants in areas such as digital fundraising, web development, and gap funding to cover operating costs between grants. For some organizations, NewsMatch was the only thing that enabled them to fully pay their staff. ”

#### Improved fundraising:

“ Multiple respondents indicated plans to use the funding to deepen existing membership programs, build out nascent membership models, secure major donors, or seek funding from local foundations. ”

## Impact on Newsrooms: Building Fundraising Capacity

Key to the success of NewsMatch is using short-term fundraising sprints to build long-term fundraising capacity. To this end, NewsMatch provides a range of trainings and support services to participants leading up to and during the campaign. These services are designed to help newsrooms implement new structures and practices that will pay off during and beyond the campaign. This year, NewsMatch offered 11 training webinars, one-on-one support and office hours, a “campaign-in-a-box” toolkit of prepared and branded content (e.g., logos, email copy) from News Revenue Hub, technology support from the Institute for Nonprofit News, in-person training days, and a Paid Ad Toolkit to help newsrooms use Facebook ads.

“ In the NewsMatch survey, 91 percent of respondents agreed that NewsMatch helped equip them to do more, better fundraising, and 93 percent that the campaign helped them raise more money than they otherwise would have... [T]he match served as an impetus to fundraise and provided a structure to approach fundraising strategically and systematically, by doing things such as updating their fundraising infrastructure (e.g., MailChimp lists). Beyond this, the time limit of the match motivated newsroom staff to focus and work hard and start their end-of-year campaigns early. ”

The services that were useful for the most participants were the campaign-in-a-box toolkit, the national NewsMatch campaign and branding, NewsMatch.org, and the training webinars. The services least used were the Paid Ad toolkit, tech support, and in-person trainings (however those that did use these services generally found them to be useful).

By nearly all measures, fundraising capacity among NewsMatch participants continues to grow, with the majority attracting more donors, donations, and dollars from individual donors in the 12 months from January to December 2018 compared to the previous year. While the number of participating organizations grew by 41 percent:

- Total donors grew by 29 percent
- Dollars raised from individuals grew by 53 percent
- 61.7 percent of participants met the \$25,000 match cap, an increase of 10 percent

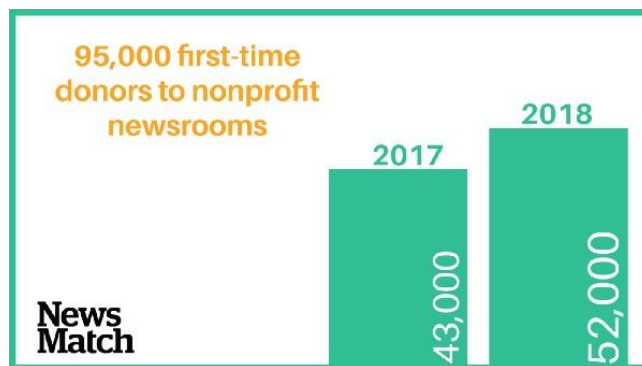


The results hold across the board, but are particularly strong among small and medium organizations where growth in fundraising capacity can make an immediate, meaningful difference.

## Impact on Donors: Recruiting New Support

For many donors in the U.S. journalism isn't thought of as a charitable activity that depends on donors. A recent Pew Research study showed that the majority of Americans don't understand the crisis and financial decline of local news. As such, NewsMatch believes it is critical to attract new donors and make the case for why journalism needs support.

NewsMatch continues to help nonprofit newsrooms secure new donors and grow the donor base for journalism. In 2018, every participating organization reported attracting new donors, and overall, 22 percent of all donors in November and December (52,159 individuals) were supporting an organization for the first time. Over the last two years NewsMatch has helped bring in nearly 100,000 new donors. In 2018 the median newsroom attracted 92 new donors, a slight decrease from 2017.



Over three-quarters of participants in NewsMatch 2018 that responded to the survey (76 percent) agreed that NewsMatch helped raise awareness around nonprofit news in their communities, a 21 percent increase from 2017. Fewer than 2 percent of respondents disagreed with the statement, while 22 percent were unsure. This represents a substantial improvement in opinion from 2017.

“ Participants that responded to the NewsMatch survey recognized the impact the campaign had on their ability to secure new donors, with 88 percent agreeing that the campaign helped bring in more new donors than their organization otherwise would have. This represents an increase of 2 percent from 2017. ”

Interviewees indicated that the following aspects of the campaign were helpful to them in securing new donors:

- The campaign toolkit, whose high-quality, pre-packaged email and social appeals saved newsrooms the time it would have required to prepare similar quality items;
- Encouragement from the NewsMatch team to ask aggressively and repeatedly, which yielded greater returns;
- The match itself and its bounded timeframe, which served as an impetus for newsrooms to run their campaigns and an incentive for donors to give; and
- The increased credibility newsrooms gained from being part of a national campaign.

## Impact on Philanthropy: Awareness and Opportunity

NewsMatch is a platform for philanthropic partnerships, welcoming both long-time media funders and those new to funding journalism. NewsMatch has been designed as a open and trusted place for funders who want to invest in local news and investigative reporting and learn more about effectively supporting journalism. The fund is set up at the Miami Foundation who administers the applications, grants and due diligence.

There are multiple ways that funders can get involved, and most can be customized to meet specific goals. Funders can contribute to the national fund and support newsrooms in more than 40 states and Puerto Rico. Funders can also work with Miami Foundation to set up a “partner fund” which creates an additional match focused on supporting specific newsrooms by topic or geography. Finally, foundations and donors can also work with local news organization to set up independent matches and challenge grants directly with a single newsroom.

NewsMatch helps funders make the most out of their dollars by leveraging them through the capacity building support and its individual-matching requirement. This ensures the investments have impact well beyond the dollars put into the fund and help increase the financial sustainability of nonprofit news into the future.

In 2018, NewsMatch continued to drive new philanthropic dollars to participating newsrooms:

- The national matching fund grew to \$3.7 million, an increase of 116 percent. Seven funders contributed to the national fund.
- Regional and issue-focused funders offered partner matches for cohorts of newsrooms (for examples, newsrooms reporting on sciences, investigative newsrooms in the South, Colorado news outlets, etc.). Four funders set up these targeted matches alongside the main fund.
- Participating newsrooms independently leveraged their participation in NewsMatch to secure more than \$675,000 in additional, direct matches for their year-end campaigns. (Down a bit from 2017.)

“A decade ago, nonprofit news was an emerging niche in the media ecosystem, clouded with uncertainty around sustainability” said Bob Ross, Chairman and CEO of Ethics and Excellence in Journalism Foundation. “The outstanding support from individuals and foundations through NewsMatch exemplifies the evolution from uncertainty to enthusiasm for nonprofit news and investigative reporting in communities across the country.”



## Serving a Diverse and Growing Field

NewsMatch is designed as a flexible capacity-building campaign that supports organizations at multiple levels of experience and expertise. Over the years we have seen remarkable creativity in how newsrooms large and small, new and well-established, use NewsMatch in very different ways to meet their diverse goals.

However, as the field of nonprofit news is growing to more than 200 members of the Institute for Nonprofit News, it is also swiftly changing. INN was originally established as an association of nonprofit investigative news organizations but over the years has broadened its membership to include vibrant daily newsrooms, niche and topical sites, public media newsrooms, and other organizations that support quality journalism locally and internationally. In addition, NewsMatch has thus far been limited to nonprofit news organizations who are members of INN. However we recognize how a program like this could also benefit small community newsrooms (such as the members of the Local Independent Online News (LION) Publishers group). While we can't currently open the program up to those newsrooms we are exploring how we can work in closer coordination and make some of the toolkit and other resources available to them. At the same time, a growing number of nonprofit newsrooms have participated in NewsMatch for one, two or even three years, building capacity along the way.

All of this suggests that the one-size-fits-all approach NewsMatch has taken to some of our training and toolkits will have to adapt to better serve different kinds of newsrooms. That will be one way we are adapting NewsMatch in 2019.

In 2018, we put a specific focus on new structures and bonuses designed to support small and medium newsrooms, understanding that the biggest newsrooms with the strongest fundraising teams could engage with NewsMatch fairly independently. We also worked to recruit and support newsrooms specifically focused on serving communities of color or led by journalists of color. The results of those interventions were mixed and highlight places where NewsMatch has more work to do.

Supporting Small and First-Time Participants: NewsMatch 2018 included 49 first-time participants, from new organizations that launched earlier in the year and more than two dozen very small news outlets, many serving communities underrepresented in traditional news media. For all these organizations, NewsMatch created a first-time participant guide and provided extra outreach, coaching, and one-on-one support to ensure that they could maximize the opportunity.

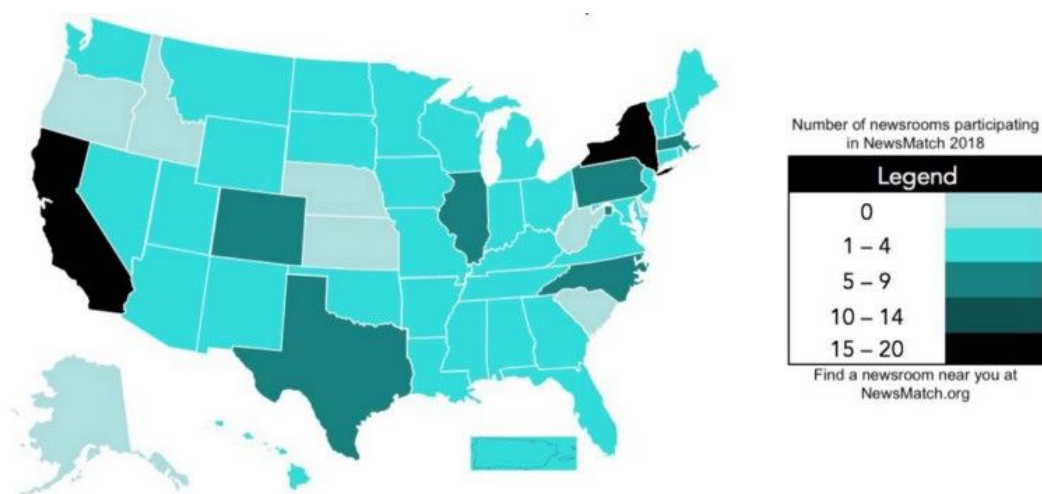
Small and medium-sized newsrooms saw the biggest growth in year-end support, with 30+ percent increases in individual donors, donations, and dollars raised during NewsMatch. First-time participants were able to secure 51 percent more new donors, on average, than returning participants — a high-speed on-ramp to fundraising for nonprofit newsrooms just getting starting.

Supporting Newsrooms Serving Underserved Communities or Led by People of Color: The entire field of nonprofit news has to do more to invest in creating more equitable and inclusive newsrooms

that don't simply replicate the staffing, culture and reporting that have marked much of legacy media. As such, we track and report on the participation and results of newsrooms focused on underserved communities or led by people of color, to ensure we continue to make NewsMatch more accessible to and successful for those newsrooms. NewsMatch 2017 only included nine such newsrooms. For NewsMatch 2018, that number increased to 17, and we began to offer more support, training and resources for those newsrooms. INN continues to add newsrooms focused on underserved communities or led by people of color to its membership who will be eligible to participate in NewsMatch for the first time in 2019.

We drove attention through our national campaign to these organizations, securing profiles of women and people of color who lead newsrooms from Flint, Mich., to El Paso, Tex. — although national attention did not directly lead to local donations that we could track. Ten of the 17 newsrooms had more individual donors in 2018 than 2017, and many of the newsrooms who earned bonuses in 2018 were focused on underserved communities or led by people of color. However, these newsrooms raised less money than many of their counterparts, and these overall results reinforce what we know: these critical news outlets face large structural challenges. NewsMatch is only a partial answer, but we have to continue to improve access and support full participation for these outlets in particular. We must do more to engage, listen, and serve these newsrooms, especially in light of longstanding inequities in how philanthropy has funded these organizations and communities historically.

The NewsMatch evaluator, Third Plateau, has recommended adjusting some of the bonuses and providing more training for these newsrooms. However, we know that these journalists are already stretched thin and so we are considering ways we can go beyond training their current staff to potentially paying for additional staff capacity before and during the end of year campaign (i.e. potentially paying for some business/fundraising staff for part of the year). In addition, in 2017 the News Integrity Initiative sponsored an additional match fund for these organizations, but we were unable to find a sponsor for such of fund in 2018. We hope to offer a focused match fund again moving forward.



## What's Next

The successes NewsMatch has achieved are stunning, but the challenges we face are large and often humbling. NewsMatch is only one piece of how funders and the public will continue to support a bold and sustainable future for local news and investigative reporting. It must work in concert with other funding strategies and support options — including major donor development, new products and services, and expanding community engagement, and more. We will continue to move forward in that spirit and share what we are learning as we enter this fourth year of NewsMatch.

We will continue to evolve the campaign based on the team's learnings, feedback from newsrooms, and the Third Plateau evaluation. A few key areas we are working on in 2019 include:

- Tailoring participation for different kinds of newsrooms to maximize their participation the campaign and provide additional targeted support where needed.
- Providing additional capacity and support for newsrooms focused on underserved communities or led by people of color.
- Adding more support to coordinate national fundraising and provide donor services to the growing number of NewsMatch partners.
- Improving the usability of the NewsMatch toolkit for Year Four and creating opportunities for peer learning across participants.
- Creating clear goals and metrics for the national communications strategy and allocate resources accordingly.
- Exploring collaborations with other kinds of media to elevate giving to news more generally.

We are currently fundraising for this year's campaign. We hope to raise at least \$5 million in the national fund to match the growing nonprofit news sector. We invite you to join us in in this opportunity to support the growth and sustainability of the nonprofit news field and ensure a healthy future for our democracy.

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## APPENDIX

# 29 Times Nonprofit Journalism Made A Difference In 2018

*When it comes to [the biggest stories of 2018](#), from immigration to education, gun violence to campaign finance, nonprofit journalists around the country have been a driving force for good, revealing corruption and lifting up the stories of their communities. This month, the Institute for Nonprofit News published a list of nearly 100 of the best stories from the past year, stories made possible by the donations of supporters. Below are 29 remarkable examples from the list that show the power and importance of this kind of reporting. You can donate to all these newsrooms at [NewsMatch.org](#) between now and the end of the year — and NewsMatch will make your support go twice as far by doubling your donation.*

### Shining a Spotlight on Family Separation

1. After ProPublica [obtained a recording of children inside a U.S. Customs and Border Protection facility](#) who were recently separated from their families, they used the audio and related reporting to document the reality of the Trump administration's family separation policy. Within 48 hours President Trump reversed his policy and soon after a federal judge ordered that parents and children be reunited. A month later the 6-year-old girl in that recording was reunited with her mother.
2. KPBS's [ongoing coverage of family separation](#) showed that the practice was not limited to illegal border crossings, but was also occurring at legal ports of entry, contradicting the claims of senior White House officials.
3. In "[Kids on the Line](#)," Reveal from the Center for Investigative Reporting exposed a shelter in Texas drugging migrant children against their will. After the reporting a federal judge demanded the activity be stopped and that the children be removed quickly.

### Revealing Corporate Corruption and Wrongdoing

4. The Lens [uncovered a scheme to place paid actors](#) at New Orleans City Council meetings to give the impression of community support for a power plant. The reporting triggered an investigation of the city's power utility, Entergy New Orleans, which faced a \$5 million fine.
5. The New Food Economy [revealed](#) that Amazon was a top employer of food stamp recipients across the nation, prompting a new bill from Sen. Bernie Sanders which drove Amazon to raise its minimum wage to \$15 an hour for hundreds of thousands of employees.
6. After the U.S. Energy Department proposed a new rule to subsidize struggling coal and nuclear power plants, In These Times [published exclusive photos](#) showing an undisclosed meeting between Energy Secretary Rick Perry and coal CEO Robert Murray, at which Murray



handed Perry a similar proposal. The article led the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to delay its rulemaking and to ultimately reject the proposal in January 2018, and resulted in a federal lawsuit.

## Driving Accountability in Local Coverage of #MeToo

7. Voice of San Diego spent months [reporting on sexual misconduct by teachers and other public school employees](#) and, in several cases, has gone to court to secure records documenting those abuses. Reporting revealed that abusers often were allowed to quietly resign or transfer — sometimes with cash payouts and glowing recommendations.
8. After the Tucson Sentinel's extensive reporting on an Arizona congressional candidate's [failed attempt to cover up a sexual assault allegation](#), numerous Democratic organizations disavowed him.
9. Months of reporting by MinnPost culminated [in a detailed expose of sexual harassment and misconduct](#) by a top aide to Rep. Rick Nolan, one of Minnesota's most prominent Democratic politicians. The investigation revealed not only the harassment of three young women, but the systemic mishandling of their allegations by the congressman and his senior staff. The story resulted in widespread criticism of Nolan and prompted increased scrutiny during his failed run for lieutenant governor.
10. The Frontier spent months [tracking down what had happened to police reports and 911 calls from a domestic violence call](#) to the home of a powerful figure in Oklahoma politics, Preston Doerflinger. Doerflinger resigned from all of his state positions less than 18 hours after the story was published, despite being considered untouchable by many in the state.

## Reporting on Elections and Campaign Finance

11. The Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism, as part of its "Undemocratic" series, [exposed the tricks used by the Legislature](#) to sneak in unpopular legislation and keep the public in the dark. The story put into context legislative maneuvers — such as last-minute and anonymous budget amendments.
12. Bridge Magazine's [monthslong probe](#) documented how a nonprofit front group backed by business interests worked with politicians to gerrymander Michigan and solidify political majorities for a full decade. In November, Michigan voters overwhelmingly passed a ballot proposal to take redistricting out of politicians' hands.
13. Injustice Watch's [reporting on judges](#) in Cook County, Illinois, led to a judge losing his reelection race for the first time since 1990.
14. Eye On Ohio, published by the Ohio Center for Investigative Journalism, [analyzed 10 years' worth of election contributions](#) and found that the past two attorneys general — both running for governor — were much more likely to give no-bid debt collection contracts to campaign donors. This prompted a lawsuit against the attorney general.

## Covering Criminal Justice Across the Country

15. The Marshall Project teamed up with the USA Today Network in Tennessee to [expose how a 150-year-old law allows county jails to put people in solitary confinement before they are even convicted of a crime](#). After the reporting, Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam signed a law prohibiting jail officials from holding teenagers in state solitary confinement while awaiting trial
16. City Bureau reporters [followed the opening of the nation's first restorative justice court](#), on Chicago's West Side, bringing an unprecedented amount of transparency and community input to an experimental and opaque court system.
17. The Better Government Association and WBEZ [exposed a big loophole](#) that allowed many officers involved in shootings in Chicago suburbs to escape discipline. The report resulted in a law requiring all police shootings in the state to prompt an internal review for policy violations or procedural mistakes.
18. The Investigative Reporting Workshop [found deep cracks in the registry system for sex offenders](#) that allow predators to move, skip registration, and begin new lives under the radar in a new neighborhood — unless they are arrested again.

## Keeping An Eye on Education

19. Oklahoma Watch [revealed that dozens of private schools fail to include disabled students](#) in their policies against discrimination in admissions in violation of state law. The story led the state's largest tax-credit scholarship fund to order at least 60 schools to comply or be removed from the program.
20. PublicSource [spent months in schools around Pennsylvania](#) to document disparities between school districts that border one another. Following the reporting, the state education secretary visited to talk with local administration officials about potential solutions to disparities.
21. IowaWatch showed that nine of every 10 [public school districts in Iowa have buildings within 2,000 feet of farm fields where pesticides get sprayed](#), a potential risk some school leaders were unaware of.
22. Philadelphia Public School Notebook [revealed in January that school district contractors had botched lead paint remediation efforts](#). Lead exposure is a major issue in many old school buildings. The reporting prompted the city council to call a hearing and the district obtained state funding to assist with repairs.

## Standing up For Kids and Families

23. A four-month investigation by Searchlight New Mexico [uncovered a pattern of abuses within New Mexico's foster care system](#), specifically a branch focused on serving the most traumatized children in state custody. The reporting found at least 28 specific violations of oversight rules and led to a state investigation.
24. In 2015, North Carolina's legislature passed a law mandating that insurers cover expensive treatments for children with autism, but more than two years later, that promise had yet to be fulfilled for many families. After NC Health News [reported and ran this pair of stories](#), state health officials pressed local mental health management to start serving these children.

25. After dogged reporting by WHYY's PlanPhilly showed that [a plan to stop providing aid to Puerto Rican evacuees](#) living in Philadelphia would effectively leave them homeless, FEMA extended housing assistance.
26. Scattered reports of children dying in Russia from AIDS led Coda Story to [investigate how malfeasance in public healthcare](#), the Kremlin's encouragement of conspiracy thinking, and a grassroots campaign of denial of accepted HIV treatment combined into a deadly public health crisis.

## Tracking Pollution and Public Health

27. The Food & Environment Reporting Network, in collaboration with Reveal, [documented how the EPA for years ignored scientific evidence](#) that the herbicide dicamba was prone to drift onto nearby fields and kill non-GMO crops that weren't designed to resist it. Journalists had to sue to get access to public records that showed scientists had repeatedly warned the EPA and illustrated the influence of industry groups.
28. South Dakota News Watch [showed how major rivers across the state have become dumping grounds](#) for billions of gallons of human, agricultural and industrial waste each year under a state-sanctioned permit program. The "Rivers at Risk" series put water quality and inspection deficiencies onto the agenda for gubernatorial debates.
29. Digging behind the headlines of a corruption trial, BirminghamWatch found [the vast majority of the local region's major sources of pollution are located in low-income areas](#) whose residents are largely African-American. The reporting continues to inform the ongoing dispute over whether former Alabama environment agency officials broke the law in resisting remedies.

## How You Can Help

Nonprofit journalists are able to take on these stories, to spend the time to get it right, because they are supported by their community. That means they answer to the public, but that the public has a role to play. If you want to support this kind of reporting through the NewsMatch campaign contact Josh Stearns at [jstearns@democracyfund.org](mailto:jstearns@democracyfund.org).