

Local Journalism & American Democracy



2023
Impact Report





Cover image: WURD Radio host Andrea Lawful-Sanders asks a question to the Philadelphia mayoral candidates at an Every Voice, Every Vote forum. Photo by Zamani Feelings



A woman shows off her hoodie reading, "My Mayor is a Black Woman," at Cherelle Parker's election night party at the Sheet Metal Workers Local 19, in Philadelphia. Heather Khalifa / Philadelphia Inquirer Staff Photographer

2023

This impact report details how your support made this work possible. We're grateful for your partnership, and we look forward to our continued work together in 2024 and beyond.

Community group Congreso de Latinos Unidos hosts an Every Voice, Every Vote voter education event. Photo by Zamani Feelings



Philadelphia City Council candidate Nicolas O'Rourke speaks at an Every Voice, Every Vote event. Photo by Zamani Feelings

Dear Friends,

The Lenfest Institute is committed to building solutions for the next era of local news, and in 2023 this mission was at the center of everything the Institute undertook.

Philadelphians went to the polls to elect the city's 100th mayor with more access to the candidates and information about their plans and policies thanks to Every Voice, Every Vote, the coalition of media and community organizations led by The Lenfest Institute.

The more than 70 media and community partners in Every Voice, Every Vote facilitated in-person events, televised town hall meetings, and extensive issues-driven news coverage. You can learn much more about Every Voice, Every Vote on Page 4 of this report.

Every Voice, Every Vote showcases The Lenfest Institute's commitment to supporting sustainable solutions for the next era of local news to better serve our communities and protect our democracy in our hometown of Philadelphia — the birthplace of the First Amendment — and in cities across the United States.

The Institute deepened its support for Spotlight PA as the Harrisburg-based newsroom, which shares its coverage with more than 100 news organizations throughout the Commonwealth free of charge, became an independent nonprofit. Spotlight PA consistently holds state lawmakers to account and makes democratic institutions in Harrisburg and across Pennsylvania more accessible to all.

We have also continued to convene newsroom and media business leaders nationally to collectively address the major challenges facing our industry and to help put big ideas into practice. Our Communities of Practice provide space for news professionals to connect, share best practices with, and learn from their peers. The Beyond Print program supports local newspapers looking to reduce their reliance on print and move toward a digital future.

In this impact report, my colleagues and I are pleased to share more about this essential work, which would not be possible without your ongoing commitment to The Lenfest Institute and our mission to support the next era of local news.

2024 will undoubtedly be another critical year for our democracy and the press that protects and serves it. We're looking forward to our continued work together.

With thanks,



Jim Friedlich
Executive Director & CEO
The Lenfest Institute for Journalism

“Never in the city’s history have there been so many mayoral forums or so much news coverage on so many topics critical to the future of our city.”

– Reverend Luis Cortés, CEO
Latine community organization Esperanza



Cherelle Parker speaks at her election night party at the Sheet Metal Workers Local 19, in Philadelphia. Heather Khalifa / Philadelphia Inquirer Staff Photographer

Every Voice, Every Vote

Philadelphians headed to the polls in 2023 to elect the city’s 100th mayor. To ensure all citizens had access to high-quality journalism, civics education, and the opportunity to engage with candidates around important issues facing their communities, The Lenfest Institute launched the Every Voice, Every Vote coalition, which consisted of over 70 media and community organizations from across the city. These partners facilitated in-person events, televised town hall meetings, and extensive issues-driven news coverage through the year.



Resolve Philadelphia Senior Director of Development Lee Whack (left) and Impacto Editor in Chief Perla Lara (right) speak at an Every Voice, Every Vote event. Photo by Zamani Feelings.





The Every Voice, Every Vote public opinion survey asked Philadelphia residents about the state of the city and the major issues it faces. Its findings were used to shape election coverage.
Anton Klusener/ Philadelphia Inquirer Staff Illustration

Every Voice, Every Vote provided access to news, information, and tools to help all city residents harness their power and hold Philly's elected officials accountable today, tomorrow, and beyond. Democracy can work how it should — for all of us — if we demand it together.

People over politics

Every Voice, Every Vote was designed to be an inclusive, citywide movement that prioritizes people over politics.

In total, 34 media organizations, including community-based and neighborhood-specific publications, ethnic media, legacy media, and public media, joined the coalition. The initiative also engaged 45 community organizations — including nonprofits and civic engagement groups — and 59 social media influencers.

Every Voice, Every Vote began in spring 2023 in advance of the primary elections, and partners produced more than 230 projects to engage Philadelphians, including:

- Solutions, service, and community-driven journalism
- Translation services and multi-language activities in 14 languages
- Public forums, debates, and community conversations

- Voter education materials
- Civics education activities and events

The project's community-centered model created natural feedback loops and allowed media partners to intentionally incorporate the voices of Philadelphians in reporting.

Survey

A key component of the project was a public opinion survey that Every Voice, Every Vote commissioned to help partners understand how to engage Philadelphia's diverse communities in the electoral process and ensure reporting and community conversation centered on the issues.

The Lenfest Institute engaged market research firm SSRS to conduct the survey, with findings released in March 2023. By using a traditional public opinion polling research tool and incorporating it into a collaborative, community-centered initiative, the findings shed light on the first-person perspectives of Philadelphians rather than specific candidates or platforms.

Impact

From December 2022 through the election in November 2023, Every Voice, Every Vote media and community partners collectively accumulated 16.6 million impressions. Initial data from the primary election found that of the people reached, 78% were ages 18-34 and 73% were people of color.

Candidates have referred publicly and specifically to the results of the EVEV public opinion survey, and many media and community partners incorporated the results into their work. The Philadelphia Inquirer wrote 12 front page feature stories about the views of Philadelphians that emerged from the survey research, the candidate positions on each of the issues studied, and an array of prospective solutions. The Philadelphia Citizen and each of the major television stations referred overtly to the data from the survey and the five issues it highlighted during public debates, eliciting candidate views and policy proposals on each.

Both the media and community partners hosted several voter engagement events throughout the city, including debates, community listening sessions, and forums for candidates focused on specific issues, neighborhoods, and identities. These events helped create direct communication channels to and from Philadelphia residents that were both unprecedented and highly equitable, as each event was unfiltered by PAC funding, personal wealth, social media, or television advertising.

Every Voice, Every Vote also created space for collaboration among partners: Media and community partners engaged in more than 200 partnerships or collaborative efforts during the course of the project.

Philadelphia News Ecosystem

The Lenfest Institute supports individual journalists, local media organizations, and the Philadelphia media ecosystem itself to ensure residents are connected to their neighbors, have access to news organizations, and can utilize information resources that allow them to flourish.

The Lenfest Institute's programs in 2023 included:

Philadelphia Local News Sustainability Initiative

The Lenfest Institute launched the Philadelphia Local News Sustainability Initiative, a two-year, \$2 million grant program, to provide core operating support and capacity-building funding to nonprofit and for-profit local news organizations in the Philadelphia region.

The Philadelphia Local News Sustainability Initiative is supporting 17 established Philadelphia-area news organizations with approximate annual revenue between \$500,000 and \$5 million.

Each grant is intended to help address the specific sustainability needs of a news organization serving a key Philadelphia community. Funding focuses on notable sustainability drivers such as new revenue strategies, reaching new audiences, and the digital transformation of legacy news organizations.

The program also provides a support network for grantees. The Institute hosts quarterly meetings to exchange learnings, successes, and challenges. The Lenfest Institute uses these meetings as an opportunity to share expertise with Initiative grantees from our local and national partners and highlight lessons learned.

The Philadelphia Media Founders Exchange

The Philadelphia Media Founders Exchange returned in 2023 to welcome 12 entrepreneurs whose businesses specialize in a broad range of media platforms including audio, video, live events, and digital-first news coverage. The accelerator program, which ran from February to July, supports media makers of color through training, one-on-one coaching, and grantmaking.

In 2023, the Founders Exchange increased the core support grant, offering \$15,000 to all participants in addition to providing opportunities to apply for additional funding. All participants received a membership to PhillyCAM, enabling them to utilize the community media center and its high-level production training focused on using the local broadcast studio and radio station to support their work.

The Founders Exchange began with a successful class of 11 entrepreneurs in 2022, many of whom returned in 2023 to provide peer support for new participants. Members of the inaugural 2022 class were also eligible to apply for \$7,500 matching grants as part of the 2023 program.

This year's program also included the first ever Philadelphia Media Founders Exchange Revenue Summit, a day-long event focused on key revenue areas such as pursuing venture capital investments, philanthropy, and audience

support, in addition to sharing strategies for how to successfully manage the human side of starting and running a business.

According to an in-depth survey after completion of the program, the 2023 entrepreneurs reported the Founders Exchange helped them:

- Better understand the value of their work
- Create innovative revenue streams and pricing models
- Re-evaluate and increase expense and revenue projections
- Increase momentum and solve business problems in a collaborative environment

"My business coach was instrumental in helping me identify additional sources of revenue, and the exercise of describing my ideal day and being specific about how much money I need to experience it really helped me focus my efforts on a targeted goal," said Stephanie Humphrey, founder of Til Death Do You Tweet.

The Constellation News Leadership Initiative

The Constellation News Leadership Initiative is a comprehensive management development program providing career coaching and executive leadership resources to Philadelphia-area media professionals of color pursuing senior roles in local news media enterprises.



1. The Philadelphia Media Founders Exchange Revenue Summit. 2. Tamara Russell, founder and host of REVIVE Radio, addressing Revenue Summit attendees. 3. We Talk Weekly Host Charles Gregory at the Reimagining Philadelphia Journalism Summit. Photos by Zamani Feelings



The Lenfest Institute welcomed 10 news professionals as part of the 2023 cohort.

Now in its third year, the program serves Philadelphia's journalists and media makers of color in an equitable and progressive way through in-depth training from J+, the professional development arm of the Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY, mentorship from Executive Advisors who have advanced to positions of leadership in Philadelphia-area news organizations, and career coaching from Crawford Leadership Strategies, a Black-owned leadership development firm.

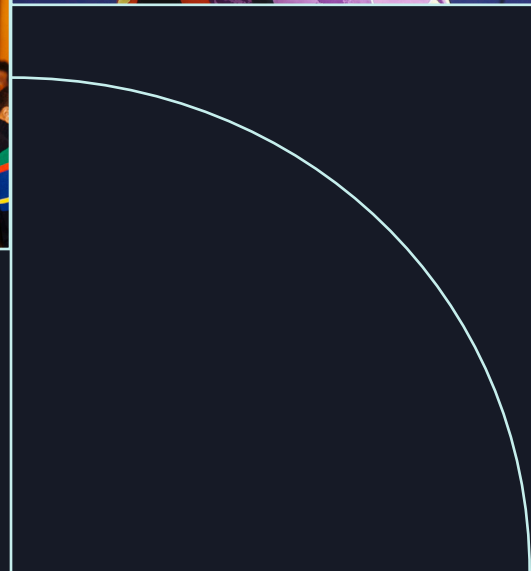
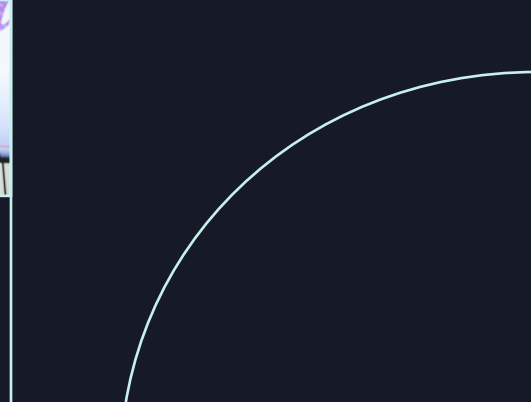
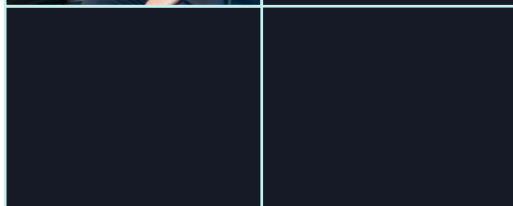
The curriculum centers on improving the leadership and digital news skills of Fellows with a focus on understanding audience and data metrics, product management & development, strategic assessment of revenue models, and managing newsroom culture and changes.

The Lenfest Next Generation Fund

The Lenfest Next Generation Fund supports professional development opportunities for Philadelphia-area journalists, media executives, and students of color. In 2023, 22 media professionals received awards from the Fund, with 20 of them being first-time recipients.

Nineteen individuals received support through the NextGen Professional Development Track, which allowed them to attend an association conference or professional training of their choice or purchase new, work-related equipment.

The NextGen Internship Support Track also supported individuals in internships at Philadelphia-based media organizations that would otherwise have been unpaid. Award winners work in digital, television, radio, podcasting, and print media in multiple languages across the Philadelphia region.



1. Fiona Morgan of Brainchild Consulting, Silvia Rivera of the MacArthur Foundation, Lauren Williams of Capital B, and Rob Collins of Oklahoma Media Center speaking at the Reimagining Philadelphia Journalism Summit. **2.** Arianne Bracho, executive director of Centro Integral de la Mujer Madre Tierra, speaking to fellow Philadelphia Media Founders Exchange cohort members. **3.** Derrick Cain, Resolve Philly director of community engagement, leads a discussion at the Reimagining Philadelphia Journalism Summit. **4.** Sajda Blackwell, founder of PQRADIO1, addresses Philadelphia Media Founders Exchange Revenue Summit attendees. **5.** Tamara Russell, founder and host of REVIVE Radio, speaking at the 2023 kick-off event. **6.** Members of the 2022 and 2023 Philadelphia Media Founders Exchange cohorts at the 2023 kick-off event. Photos by Zamani Feelings



The Philadelphia Inquirer

Impactful investigations

The Philadelphia Inquirer is committed to a sustainable digital future that empowers its journalists to pursue high-impact investigative journalism. The Inquirer has built a series of tools to measure the Investigative Team's impact on subscriptions and change in the community. Key metrics now help The Inquirer track subscription conversions on stories, measure impact, improve coverage topics, and determine how new and loyal readers are using the journalism.

The I-Team continues to rank among the highest performing newsroom desks in attracting new subscribers. In 2023, I-Team stories helped bring in nearly 1,000 new subscribers.



Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney, left, School Superintendent Tony B. Watlington Sr., and State Rep. Malcolm Kenyatta greet students on the first day of classes at Dunbar Elementary in North Philadelphia last September. Alejandro A. Alvarez / Philadelphia Inquirer Staff Photographer

School attendance crisis

In January 2023, The Philadelphia Inquirer launched an investigation into Philadelphia's school attendance challenge. The resulting reporting, "Unexcusable: Philly schools' chronic absence crisis" was published on May 31. The investigation found that an "alarming 46% of all district students are 'chronically absent,' meaning they missed more than 10% of their school days." By missing so many days, students are at increased risk of falling behind in math or reading, and potentially not graduating.

The Inquirer spent more than three years fighting to see the Philadelphia School District's attendance data. Journalists had to overcome substantial obstacles to obtain the data needed for this reporting. Their

persistence paid off as The Inquirer acquired four years of de-identified student attendance data that revealed the true scope of the district's declining attendance. The data showed that the Philadelphia school attendance crisis is far worse than that of other big cities. It also allowed The Inquirer's journalists to look at districts in other cities, like Los Angeles, and report how they have tackled similar challenges.

"Unexcusable" led to a series of stories, in collaboration with The Inquirer's education team; The Temple University Logan Center for Urban Investigative Reporting fellow, Julie K. Brown; and students at Temple, that deeply explored the attendance crisis. They examined the reasons behind education inequities and possible solutions.

Uncovering forever chemicals

In a series of articles which began in March, the I-Team investigated "forever chemicals," which can have devastating health effects, and have been found in both Veterans Stadium's AstroTurf and firefighters' protective gear.

The Inquirer's "Field of Dread" reporting looked at the possible dangers of the AstroTurf that the Phillies played on from 1971 to 2003. Six former Phillies, including Tug McGraw, Darren Daulton, Johnny Oates, and David West, have all died from a rare form of brain cancer.

"To get that disease at such a young age, you sort of scratch your head, 'Something might be going on,'" said Larry Bowa, now 77, and a Phillies senior adviser and the shortstop on the Phillies 1980 World Series-winning team. For their reporting in "Field of Dread," Barbara Laker and David Gambacorta purchased turf samples off of eBay and sent them to an environmental laboratory for testing. Their inquiry expanded from there and included stories on what to know about "forever chemicals," the history of AstroTurf, and a deeper look into the turf's test results.

"The Burning Question" built upon this investigation, focusing on harmful chemicals in certain types of firefighter gear — some of which is still in use today.

The Inquirer reported that cancer is a leading cause of death for firefighters, and they are significantly more likely to die from cancer than the general population in the United States. Firefighters have become increasingly concerned about the use of "forever chemicals" used in their equipment as cancer deaths climb. The firefighters union advises firefighters to transport their gear in plastic trash bags and avoid bringing into their homes as a precaution.

In March, the firefighters union sued the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), an international fire codes organization, alleging that the organization downplayed health hazards that PFAS pose. Jessica Griffin / Philadelphia Inquirer Staff Photographer



“For some families, school lost some level of importance over the course of the pandemic.”

– Principal Amy Williams



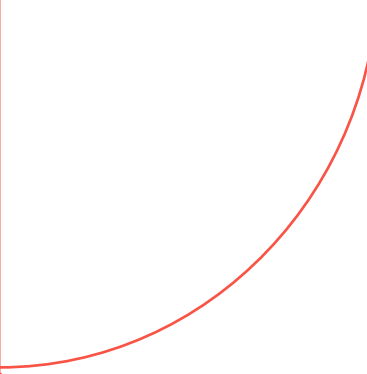
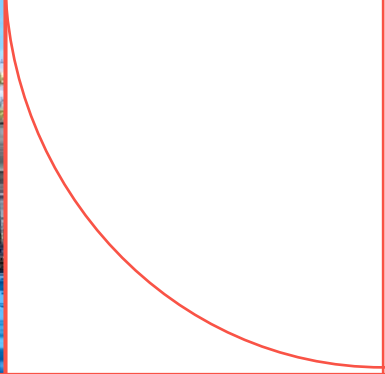
Principal Amy Williams, outside of William Dick Elementary in North Philadelphia in May 2021, Heather Khalifa / Philadelphia Inquirer Staff Photographer



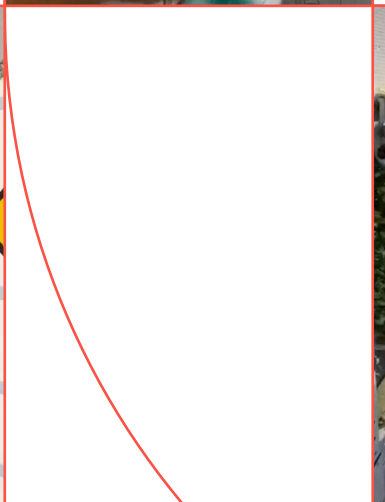
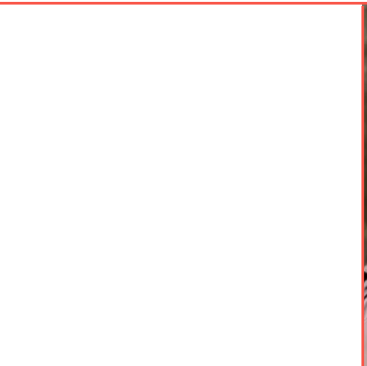
AstroTurf samples from Veterans Stadium submitted by Philadelphia Inquirer reporters at the University of Notre Dame to be tested for PFAS, in Indiana, Feb. 9, 2023. Jessica Griffin / Philadelphia Inquirer Staff Photographer

Shayla Robinson and Anthony Patterson planned to marry on Nov. 10, 2022, while Patterson battled Stage IV lung cancer. He died hours before the ceremony was to be held. Jessica Griffin / Philadelphia Inquirer Staff Photographer

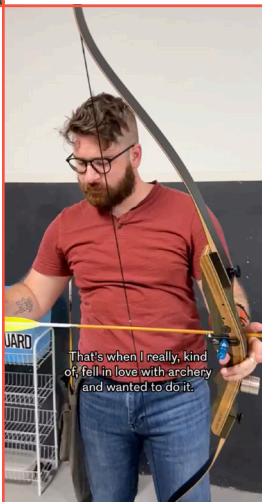




The Communities & Engagement Desk created a Community Tour series, which featured short videos on apps like TikTok and Instagram showing places where Philadelphians find belonging.



And we encompass many, many different identities.



That's when I really, kind of, fell in love with archery and wanted to do it.

The Philadelphia Inquirer

Opinion, Communities & Engagement Desk, and impact

Diverse voices for a diverse city

The Inquirer Opinion desk introduced new writers to readers, meaningfully broadened the views it published, expanded its visual opinion pieces, and experimented with new storyforms. This work has helped to support the acquisition of new subscribers and the addition of underrepresented voices.

The Inquirer sought to expand its use of visual opinion journalism because it is a vital form of storytelling that can help attract new audiences.

Opinion columnist Helen Ubiñas created a video, "Counting down to Philly's 100th mayor,"

which was a plea to Philadelphia's voters to get involved in the 2023 mayoral election. Published before the crowded primary, Helen broke down each candidate for mayor and explained why this election is so important for the poorest big city in America.

This year, The Inquirer also published a series of illustrated op-eds called The Drawing Board. These differ from traditional political cartoons in that they can be full, multi-panel comics or pieces of fine art. In "Post-COVID Life," Max Temescu reflected on death and the magnitude of the pandemic.

Communities & Engagement Desk

The team of journalists on The Inquirer's Communities & Engagement Desk took a deliberative approach to building trust and engaging with residents across Philadelphia.

The Communities & Engagement Desk made itself accessible to community members in-person and online by hosting community pop-ups across the city in neighborhoods such as North Philadelphia, Germantown, and Norris Square. Each team member also has "open access hours" where anyone can schedule time to meet with them.

The Desk also works with members of its Soapbox Salons, 35 community members and leaders who meet regularly to advise The Inquirer. The Soapbox Salon was instrumental in shaping and expanding the reach of The Inquirer's new Up for Review policy, which considers requests to update or remove old stories that have caused unintended or lasting harm.

The Communities & Engagement Desk also created a Community Tour series, which featured short vertical videos on apps like TikTok and Instagram that show places where Philadelphians find belonging. The series took viewers to places like an inclusive weightlifting gym, an archery range, and a local sewing shop.

"We need folks to do the job that they took an oath to do...The Inquirer's journalism obviously made some people aware of issues with the system."

— Interim Police Commissioner John Stanford



Anton Klusener/ Philadelphia Inquirer Staff Illustration

Lasting impact

The fall-out from The Inquirer's shocking 2022 reporting on police absenteeism continued into 2023. The Inquirer journalists reported in "MIA: Crisis in the Ranks" that as of 2021, 652 officers were deemed unable to work and were claiming benefits from the Pennsylvania Heart and Lung Act, which affords a full salary without any state or income taxes. That means that 11% of the city's police force was missing, significantly higher than other cities like Chicago at 3.3% and Portland, Oregon at 1.9%, The Inquirer reported.

Thanks to The Inquirer's reporting, the practices are starting to change: In September, The Inquirer reported that the number of police officers on leave fell 46% from late 2021 to the summer of 2023, which meant that there were about 300 more police officers at work each week.

As of late summer, more than 200 officers were listed as being available to testify in court as they recovered from their injuries — an increase from just 64 in late 2021 — which indicates they could perform non-physical tasks while still recovering.



Max Temescu

Spotlight PA

The Lenfest Institute for Journalism co-founded and launched Spotlight PA in 2019 as a central pillar of its commitment to build solutions for the next era of local news. In 2023, Spotlight PA completed its transition to 501(c)3 status, making it independent from the Institute.

Spotlight PA's mission is to hold powerful private and public forces across Pennsylvania — especially governments, businesses, and special interests — to account through urgent and compelling investigative journalism that drives change and strengthens our democracy, the state, and all who live here.



Daniel Fishel for Spotlight PA

The Lenfest Institute continues to be a significant donor and key advisor to Spotlight PA. Both organizations remain closely linked as the Institute provides regular guidance and support to Spotlight PA's leaders as they develop sustainable models to pursue its mission of producing high-quality investigative and accountability journalism.

Spotlight PA provides its reporting free-of-charge to more than 100 newspapers, public radio stations, and news sites throughout Pennsylvania.

After launching its first local bureau in State College, PA in 2022, it announced in September 2023 the launch of a major study to assess the potential for another bureau in Berks County.

Missed Conduct

Spotlight PA's State College Bureau and the Centre Daily Times published an investigation into Penn State's once-praised system of compliance offices and reforms implemented in the wake of the Jerry Sandusky child sex abuse scandal. The newsrooms reported deep-rooted flaws — and fear of retaliation is rampant. For nearly two years, the unit Penn State created to hold itself to the highest ethical standards struggled to handle behavior it was designed to prevent.

The two newsrooms spent a year speaking with current and former Penn State employees, state lawmakers, and outside experts. The reporters reviewed court filings, university-sponsored campus surveys, internal university communications, and confidential hotline reports alleging misconduct.

Waiting Game

A Spotlight PA investigation found that a crucial program to help Pennsylvania homeowners recover from the pandemic was still struggling to get the money out months after the state attempted to overhaul it.

In January 2023, Spotlight PA reported that the \$350 million Pennsylvania Homeowner Assistance Fund was overwhelmed by demand. Applicants waited as long as nine months for help, putting their homes and utility services at risk. Homeowners reported that caseworkers at the company hired to run the program stopped responding to them.

Later that month, the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency announced that it would end the contract and run the program itself. But a follow-up investigation published in August found that many problems persisted, new ones emerged, and thousands of applicants still had not received aid.

Broken Code

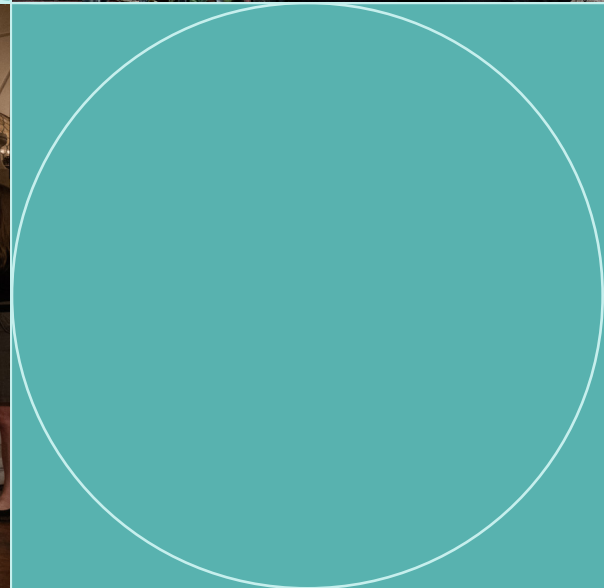
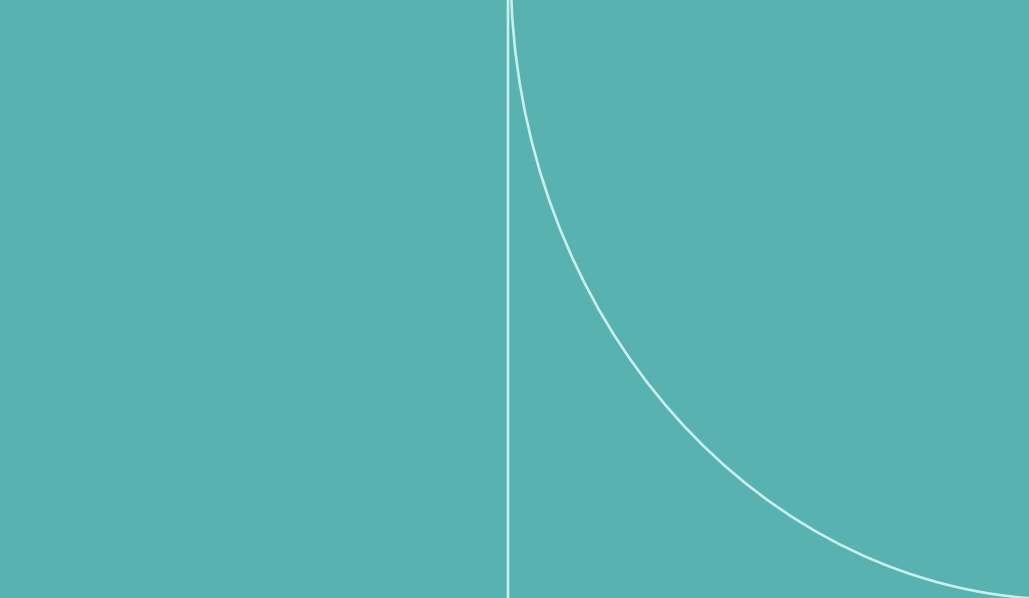
With the next presidential election just around the corner, Spotlight PA, in partnership with Votebeat, analyzed the state's election code, interviewed election directors and academics, and traced the history and contradictions of the state's election policies.

Spotlight PA and Votebeat reported that Pennsylvania's legislature hasn't comprehensively updated the election code since 1937, forcing the officials who run elections to rely on an amalgamation of sources outside of the text of the code itself, including recent legal opinions and advice from county solicitors, other administrators, and the state.

Numerous conflicts between sections have led to confusion, lawsuits, and the spread of misinformation. The law also does not address key legal precedents or reflect how elections are run in 2023 with evolving technologies.

Awards

Spotlight PA won several local and national awards for its reporting in 2023. At the **Pennsylvania NewsMedia Association Awards**, Spotlight took home eight prizes, including the prestigious Public Service Award, which recognizes "a news company that



1. Thousands of PA homeowners have struggled to get help from a state relief program. Steven M. Falk / Philadelphia Inquirer for Spotlight PA 2. Housing advocates have pushed Pennsylvania to get financial assistance to the people who applied for its pandemic mortgage relief program. Jelani Splawn for Spotlight PA 3. Spotlight PA's 2023 coverage spanned homeowner relief laws, tax rebate legislation, Penn State, and much more. Daniel Fishel for Spotlight PA

Spotlight PA's mission is to hold powerful private and public forces across Pennsylvania — especially governments, businesses, and special interests — to account



has made a significant contribution to the betterment of its community through public service leadership."

The winning project, "One Vote, Two Pennsylvanias," produced voter-centric coverage of Pennsylvania's 2022 gubernatorial race — including dozens of guides and explainers, expanded Spanish

translations, and a new Election Center website. The groundbreaking effort sought to rewrite the script of local political reporting by refocusing all newsroom resources and editorial decisions around one question: How will this help a voter?

At the **2023 Institute for Nonprofit News Awards**, Spotlight won the Community

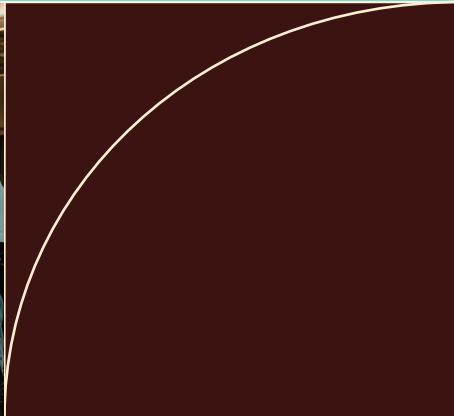
Champion Award for the launch of the State College Bureau, which not only covers 14 of the state's most rural counties, but also devotes investigative resources to covering Penn State, the state's most influential institution of higher learning. Spotlight PA was also named as a finalist in three other categories.

National Programs

News leaders network at the Institute's INN Days meetup in Washington, DC in June 2023.



Industry professionals network at the opening reception for ONA23, held at The Philadelphia Inquirer offices in August 2023. Photos by Hannah Yoon



Communities of Practice

The Lenfest Institute is home to four communities of practice serving various types of journalism professionals and organizations.

In 2023, the Institute launched one new community and expanded our existing three communities through new programming and the addition of new members.

The communities are designed to support the growth and success of U.S. local news at a critical time in the industry's development. In August, The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and The Lenfest Institute for Journalism announced a two-year, \$1 million investment to support the Communities of Practice. With this funding, The Lenfest Institute will provide each community of practice with peer-to-peer knowledge sharing, mentorship, and coaching, as well as facilitate the exchange of product, revenue generation, news, and distribution expertise. Each community will be supported by a new grantmaking program to facilitate experimentation and help fund new projects.

1. News Philanthropy Network

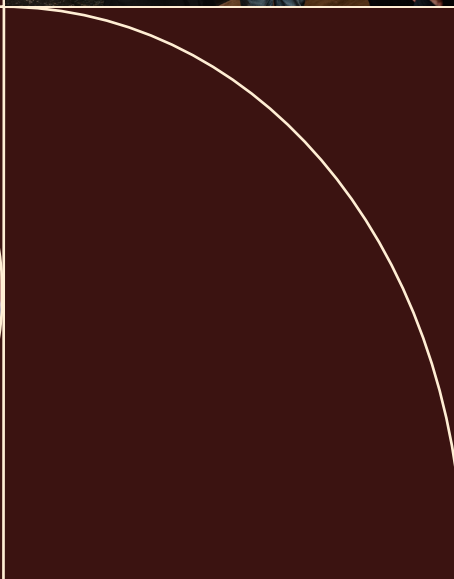
The Lenfest News Philanthropy Network is a community of practice designed to support and build capacity for fundraising and development professionals in journalism.

Participation in the Network is free and open to publishers of all sizes and business models — nonprofit, for-profit, legacy, start-up, digital, broadcast and print. Our singular and deep focus is on supporting and fostering a cohesive, collaborative, and growing cohort of



News leaders discuss strategies on reducing print frequency at the Beyond Print convening in Detroit in June 2023.

Members of the Statewide News Collective gather at an INN Days event in Washington, DC in June 2023.



development professionals who are serving a vital need for news organizations by creating contributed revenue streams.

The Network consists of more than 2,600 members from around the world. In 2023, the Network provided free workshops and training opportunities. We also convened the second News Philanthropy Summit, a virtual, free-to-attend, two-day conference for fundraising professionals.

2. Audience Community

The Audience Community of Practice provides organizational resources for community members in news organizations to share strategies, best practices, and resources. In addition to providing tactical programming and connecting the network, The Lenfest Institute helps members with strategic and operational questions of building teams and defining roles.

After being re-launched at The Lenfest Institute in late 2022, the Audience Community has since grown to nearly 300 audience development professionals. With so many changes in the world of social media and technology, the community has hosted timely workshops and discussions on AI and how to utilize platforms like Twitter, TikTok, and YouTube. The community also provided practical tools to conduct audience surveys and to connect with younger news consumers.

The Audience Community of Practice also provided grants to five of its members to cover their attendance at the 2023 News Product Alliance Summit, which provides hands-on sessions, master classes, peer sharing, and virtual networking for news professionals working at the intersection of product, audience, editorial, and technology.

3. Statewide News Collective

The Statewide News Collective addresses the unique challenges facing news organizations that serve an entire state. It provides mentorship, peer support, and the exchange of information on news coverage, content distribution, revenue creation, product development, and more.

There are currently 30 publishers representing 25 states in the Collective. Participants share best practices and opportunities for collaboration, discuss news coverage initiatives, identify strategies for supporting distributed staffs, and share technology, product, and sustainable revenue development plans.

The Collective was founded in 2022 by The Lenfest Institute, RevLab at The Texas Tribune, and Spotlight PA.

4. Engaged Cities

Engaged Cities is a community of practice for news organizations with engagement-first approaches to serving U.S. cities. The curated, limited-member community launched in 2023 and consists of nine member organizations.

Created by The Lenfest Institute for Journalism in partnership with New York-based newsroom THE CITY, the Engaged Cities community works together to tackle common challenges, share innovative approaches, and serve as a sounding board for peers. The Engaged Cities community will also pilot and spread creative, collective solutions to help these news organizations serve their diverse communities in sustainable ways.

The Engaged Cities community holds monthly virtual discussions that center on engagement as a throughline to addressing editorial, product, revenue, and operational issues. Additionally, The Lenfest Institute facilitates active collaborations among members, engages in data benchmarking and research projects, and publishes relevant learnings to benefit the field.

Press Forward

In September, a nonpartisan group of 22 foundations, including The Lenfest Institute, announced the formation of Press Forward, a nationwide coalition backed by a commitment of more than \$500 million over five years to help transform the local news industry in America. Press Forward will enhance local journalism at an unprecedented level to re-center local news as a force for community cohesion; support new models and solutions that are ready to scale; and close longstanding inequities in journalism coverage and practice.

The Lenfest Institute is bringing the coalition to the local level: In November, Press Forward announced the creation of local chapters, with the Institute serving as the leader in Philadelphia.

Advisory Services

The Lenfest Institute works with select organizations whose missions align with the Institute's goal to advance sustainable solutions for local journalism.

In 2023, the Institute worked with The Assembly, a statewide digital magazine covering North Carolina, as it acquired The Indy, a local alt-weekly newspaper in Durham, North Carolina.

The Institute also supported the launch of the The Center for News, Technology & Innovation, an independent global policy research center that seeks to encourage independent, sustainable media, maintain an open internet and foster informed public policy conversations. Our team serves on the CNTI advisory board.

Independent Metro Newspaper Peer Group

The Lenfest Institute serves as a connector, bringing together organizations of all backgrounds and business models to share best practices. In July 2023, we hosted a peer group meeting attended by the publishers of eight of the nine largest independent metro newspapers in the country.

The news organizations submitted data, plans, and written descriptions covering sources of revenue; newsroom staffing, productivity, and initiatives; audience sources and audience development structure and plans; product metrics and initiatives; consumer marketing tactics and metrics; resource deployment and investment plans. Using this material, alongside industry data and ideas from national newspapers, we coordinated a two-day discussion. Each publisher came away with learnings and ideas for things they could do to improve revenue and operations.

The Lenfest Institute will provide each community of practice with peer-to-peer knowledge sharing, mentorship, and coaching, as well as facilitate the exchange of product, revenue generation, news, and distribution expertise.

Beyond Print

Beyond Print is a program created by The Lenfest Institute for Journalism and the American Press Institute to help guide publishers away from print-centric revenue models toward a sustainable digital future.

The program launched in 2022 with a pilot cohort featuring four participating news organizations — La Voz at The Arizona Republic, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, The Philadelphia Inquirer, and The Seattle Times — to review their reliance on print revenues and create digital-first products and workflows. As part of the program, outlets tested new ideas to create and expand sustainable digital models and developed strategies to increase print readers' use of digital products.

Publishers in the initial Beyond Print cohort graduated from the program in early 2023 and are continuing to carry out their experiments. In October, the Institute announced a new grant program that will provide up to \$25,000 to organizations conducting experiments that will result in transformative change toward a print transition.

To inform the broader journalism community, The Lenfest Institute has been publishing lessons from the initial cohort and several other organizations who have been implementing print reduction strategies. The new cohort of grantees will share insights from their experiments in 2024.

Beyond Print Convening

In June 2023, the Institute and API brought together more than 20 news organizations for the first Beyond Print Convening in Detroit. Attendees ranged from organizations at the early stages of print reduction to fully digital organizations, and the convening provided space to share lessons learned and ask questions.

At the event, several key themes emerged. News organizations shared that diversifying their digital product offerings can help bring in a diverse array of readers and businesses, creating pathways to revenue through subscriptions or sponsorships. These products go beyond traditional news articles and can include newsletters, podcasts and video, exclusive sports coverage, lifestyle content, digital editions of print newspapers, and more.

For news organizations that still rely on a printed edition but are facing challenges related to delivery logistics and costs, several organizations shared that mail delivery is a cheaper and more consistent form of delivery.

At the core of all this work is the need for strong customer service and communications plans. Making your organization accessible to your readers and walking them through the various changes that come with moving beyond print can make a significant difference in subscriber retention. As Atlanta Journal-Constitution Senior Director of Strategy and Innovation Rodney Gibbs put it: "There may be bumps along the way, but your print subscribers can come along with you with a little TLC."

"There may be bumps along the way, but your print subscribers can come along with you with a little TLC."

— Rodney Gibbs, Senior Director of Strategy and Innovation, Atlanta Journal-Constitution





Photos from the Beyond Print Convening in Detroit.
Photos by Julianne Lindsey



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2023 By the Numbers

Grantmaking Totals in Support of the Institute’s Local News Mission

Philadelphia Inquirer.....	\$6.5 million
Philadelphia News Ecosystem.....	\$2.5 million
National	\$481,000
Spotlight PA	\$3.9 million
Fiscal Sponsorship.....	\$151,000
<hr/>	
Total in Grants	\$13.5 million

\$11.2 million
raised from
3,000 donors

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