



BUILDING SUPPORT FOR NEW ORGANIZATIONS LED BY AND SERVING COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

GOAL

To strengthen the capacity and sustainability of news organizations led by and for people of color to provide relevant, accurate information to increase civic engagement in the communities they serve.

Overview

A thriving, independent, and equitable media sector is necessary for a fully functioning democracy. Journalists provide critical information for the communities they serve and access to trusted news sources led by people from diverse backgrounds is essential, as the pandemic, racial reckonings and the 2020 elections brought into sharp relief.

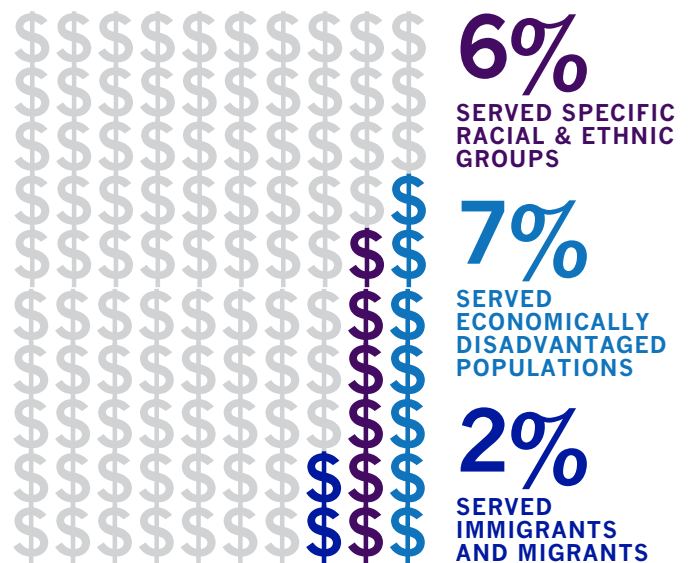
The communities with the least access to relevant public affairs news—people of color, including those who are immigrants, and people from low-income, rural, and urban communities—are also most likely to be left out of policy creation and civic processes. These communities need more opportunities to receive news and information that supports their participation on issues affecting their lives and is relevant to their rights, health, and well-being.

Background

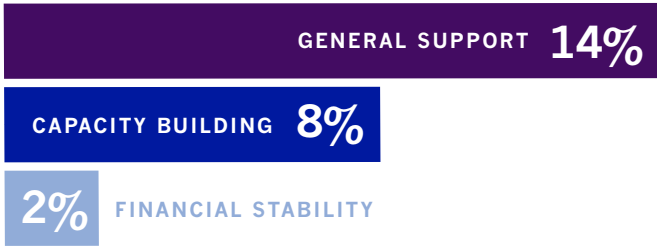
People of color-led news organizations, in particular those led by Black, Indigenous/Native, Latinx, Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders, have long-standing relationships with the diverse communities they serve. Despite being well positioned to deliver relevant news and information, BIPOC-led news organizations are often denied the funding needed to build infrastructure and resources to help maximize their impact, grow their effectiveness, ensure their longevity in the field, and invest in their ongoing growth and innovation.

Data from the Foundation Center analyzed by the Democracy Fund shows that **between 2009 and 2015, only 6% of the \$1.2 billion in grants invested in journalism, news, and information in the United States went towards efforts serving specific racial and ethnic groups** and only **7% went towards efforts serving economically disadvantaged populations.** Some communities face especially steep disparities. For example, **only 2% of funding went towards efforts serving immigrants and migrants.**

U.S. GRANTS INVESTED IN JOURNALISM, NEWS, AND INFORMATION, 2009-2015



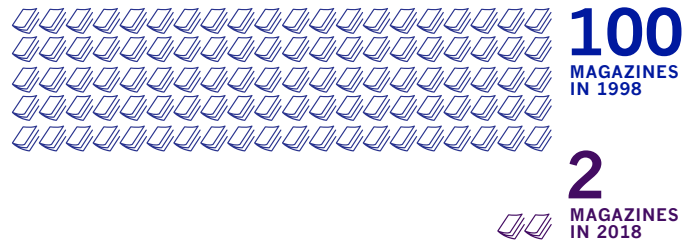
USE OF JOURNALISM GRANT DOLLARS, 2009–2015



According to research commissioned by the Democracy Fund, when it comes to funding efforts serving racial and ethnic groups, relatively few dollars go towards operational capacity and sustainability compared to project-specific funding. Between 2009 and 2015, 14% of grant dollars went to general support, 8% to capacity building, and only 2% towards financial sustainability.

The digital age and subsequent loss of advertising revenue has changed the landscape of journalism and led to the shuttering of many publications serving communities of color. For example, research has shown that from 1998 to 2018, the number of

MAGAZINES SERVING INDIAN COUNTRY 1998–2018



magazines serving Indian Country decreased from 100 to 8.

In order to maintain their relevance, legacy media organizations which previously reached their communities via print products have needed to adapt to the increasing dominance of the internet and social media. However, developing innovative ways of delivering information and engaging communities requires capital, tools, and training. Overall, news organizations led by and for people of color have not had access to investment allowing them to scale their impact and reach expanded audiences.

Grantmaking Focus

This donor collaborative is committed to the following principles:



Invest in news organizations led by and serving communities of color, particular those without alternative sources of information in geographies outside of major media markets



Prioritize organizations trusted by their communities with a depth and length of commitment to community engagement and original content that strengthens the civic discourse and promotes civic participation



Support efforts providing timely, accurate and original news content to communities who are most underserved and face the greatest barriers in receiving public affairs information



Support organizations that add value to the communities they serve by developing creative and innovative ways to reach them with relevant news

Funding Strategy



Recognizing that organizational development and technology improvements are critical for the success of people of color-led media, the REJ Fund provides both general support and capacity building resources to invest in the long-term sustainability of grantees.

In addition, the Fund's long-term vision is to create a cohort where grantees can rise together instead of being in competition with each other. Our goal is for grantees to gain knowledge and information from experts and each other. Over time, the REJ Fund will strengthen the ecosystem of people of color-led civic media.