

Local that Works:

PUBLIC MEDIA'S INCREASING IMPACT IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES



TRENT NELSON / THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE



JAYDA GREY EAGLE / SAHAR JOURNAL



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MIGUEL CUTLERREZ, JR. / KUT NEWS



DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATIONS / HEARKEN & DOT CONNECTOR STUDIO



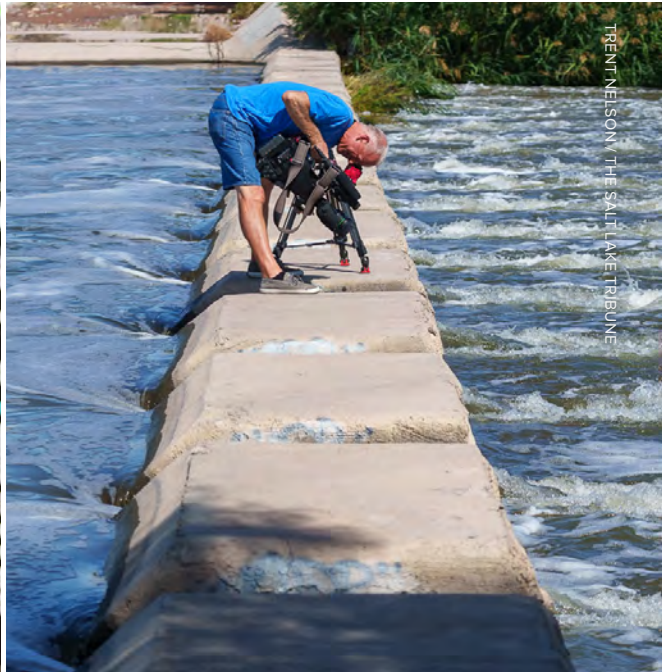
FATH-AUSTIN / WDAV



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JULIA RHIS / KUT NEWS



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LOCAL THAT WORKS:

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This report focuses on *Local that Works (LTW)*, a six-year project that has shed light on the extraordinary work being done in public media at the local level, in both news and cultural programming. The initiative was conceived and administered by Mark Fuerst, a long-time Wyncote consultant, in conjunction with Current, a primary news source covering public media, led by executive director Julie Drizin. (Current receives operating support from Wyncote.)

Local that Works invited local nonprofit newsrooms and cultural programmers to submit their highest impact projects annually for judging by peers, with the winner receiving a grant. In addition to bringing field attention to notable work, LTW built a compendium of examples that media organizations can learn from and adapt to their own communities. The Current.org website provides access to this database, featuring hundreds of LTW examples of submitted projects.

Projects selected as finalists were reasonably repeatable, meaning they would be replicable by any one of the great majority of media organizations that don't have the resources to launch programs at a larger scale and that rely on collaboration with other enterprises to achieve impact. The name, "Local that Works," is meant to capture the notion of expressly engaging *local* and regional communities, but in a manner that *works*, i.e., that achieves mission impact while being organizationally sustainable and strengthening.

LTW reflects the Wyncote Foundation's goal to further a thriving public media ecosystem. In an era of rapidly changing technology, with shifts in individual behavior and strong market forces, supporting public media's long standing forms and practices is not enough. Wyncote seeks out systemic approaches that encourage adaptation and experimentation in content creation, distribution, and engagement across the field.

Over the years, Mark Fuerst has earned the respect and trust of the public media system in a variety of roles—as an observer, convener, and thought leader. Mark has consistently and persuasively advocated for transformation in public media. LTW is only one example of his impact over the past three decades.

With gratitude to Mark, we share these examples and takeaways from *Local that Works*. We invite you to read about and learn from the dynamic projects being built at public media organizations across the United States.

David Haas

Vice Chair, Wyncote Foundation

Introduction

Local that Works began in the summer of 2016, when many station leaders in public radio were pessimistic about the future of their industry—for good reason.

Competition was increasing. Nonprofit digital news sites had launched in many American cities. “Serial,” the real-crime audio documentary, demonstrated the blockbuster potential of podcasting in the world of high-quality audio journalism, which had been dominated by National Public Radio and top performing local stations. Talented and experienced people started leaving public radio, sensing the opportunities in podcasting and digital news start-ups. A report in *The Wall Street Journal* summed it up this way: “With both its stars and audience aging, NPR is struggling to adapt to the digital age.”¹

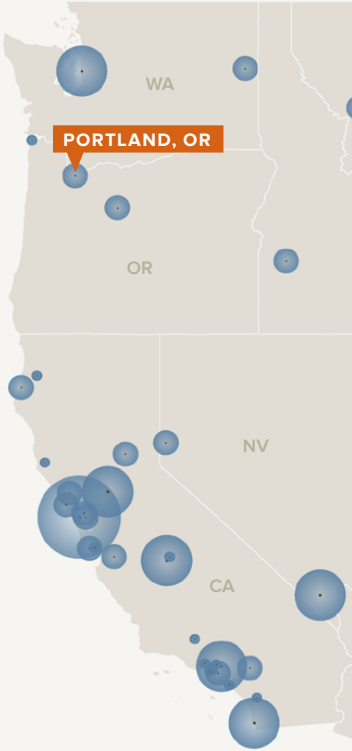
Local that Works was a direct response to this pessimism and oversimplification, making the case that, despite serious challenges, public media has also been growing and strengthening in ways not immediately visible to the national field. LTW was developed to identify opportunities for change by collecting and sharing examples that showed how the public media field could evolve. Mark Fuerst laid out the premise of this new Wyncote project in the title of a paper he published in *Current* in October 2016 titled, “Changing the conversation: Embracing ‘Local that Works.’”²

Previous Wyncote-supported research had already revealed that predictions of an imminent public media system collapse were off the mark. Public radio had proven to be remarkably resilient during the first two decades of digital disruption. The fundamentals of the business model remained strong, the system was reaching tens of millions of people every week, and the strongest stations continued to advance. This view was reinforced and documented in a 2022 Wyncote white paper published at the Tow Center for Digital Journalism at Columbia University, titled “The Growing Strength of Public Media Local Journalism.”³

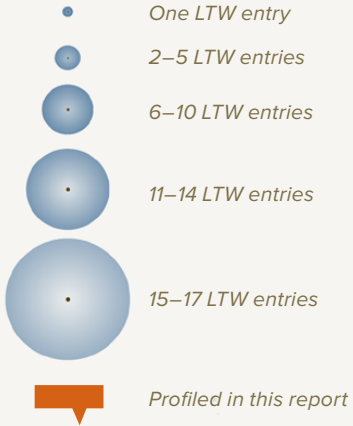
However, in 2016, many signs pointed in the other direction: toward industry decline. Stations struggled to shift away from a broadcast model reliant on national programming to new forms of multi-platform digital service.

Over six years, *Local that Works* has served as an avenue for sharing examples of innovative and effective local service, with special attention to three characteristics. The program looked for projects or practices that:

1. **Were widely applicable** at large, medium, and smaller stations;
2. **Were repeatable**, in that the projects delivered content or services day after day (vs. “one offs”); and
3. **Provided multi-platform output**, including broadcast programming, podcasts, online and mobile service, and in some cases, in-person engagement.



Locations Key



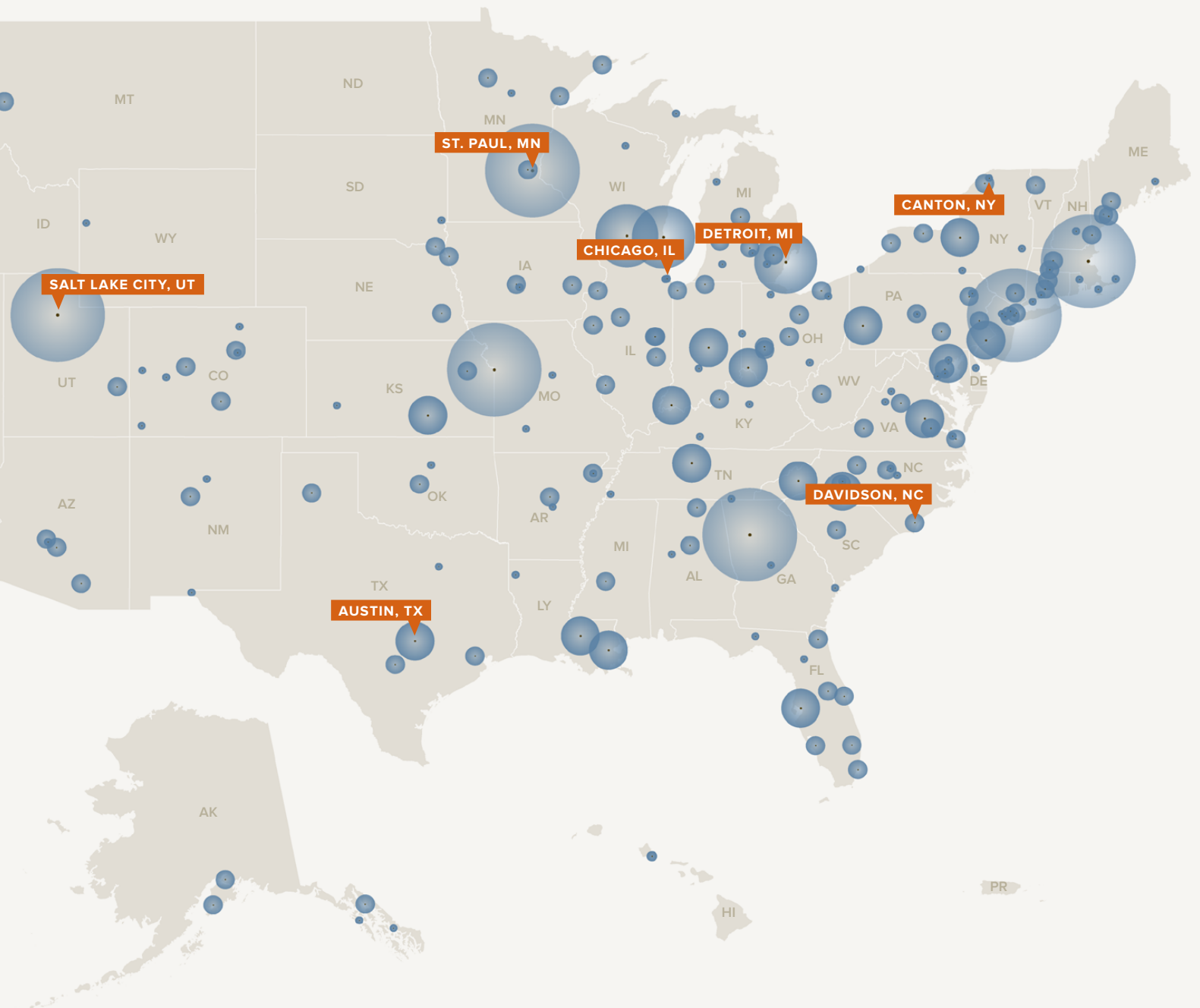
Local that Works was developed to identify opportunities for change by collecting and sharing examples that showed how the public media field could evolve. Over six years, *Local that Works* has highlighted innovative projects that could be adapted to local conditions across a wide range of organizations.

49
states

730
entries

335
organizations

219
cities



In 2019, *Local that Works* expanded its outreach to capture more examples from the groundbreaking work surfacing in other sectors of nonprofit media, including the rapidly expanding group of journalism organizations working under the banners of the Institute for Nonprofit News; the Local Media Association; and Gather, the University of Oregon’s center for engaged journalism.

Local that Works’ organizers have hosted more than 60 conference sessions, seminars, and webinars, always with the same purpose: to highlight innovative projects that could be adapted to local conditions across a wide range of organizations.

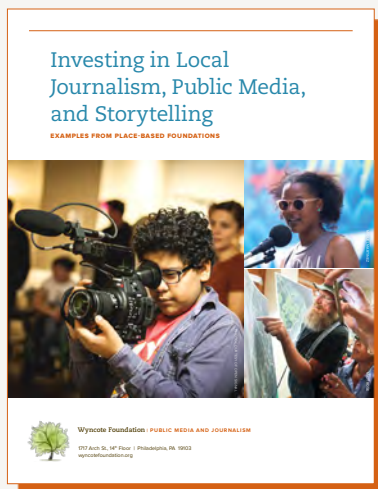
Examples were sourced by an open call for entries to the annual *Local that Works Contest*. An expert panel sorted through the entries, picked four or five “finalists” (projects of unusual impact and value), and the finalists were invited to present their work at a conference (after 2019 this shifted to a webcast). Several hundred media professionals attended these “finals,” and with their votes would select a “winner,” who received a \$20,000 project grant.

Even after reaching out to a wider range of public service media, most entries continued to come from CPB-funded public radio and TV stations. Nonetheless, submissions from outside public media grew each year, and in 2022, 35 percent of entries came from outside that legacy cohort, including three (of five) finalists from independent local news organizations.

LTW’s database now includes more than 700 examples of local projects. Most of these are documented in a searchable database at Current.org and 61 were presented over the years in conferences, webinars, and webcasts. The examples span a very wide range of public service programming, from early childhood education, to community book clubs and concerts, to powerful collaborative investigative reporting projects that have changed legislation and influenced local police practices.

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Previous Reports in Wyncote's Place-Based Media Series



Our 2018 report profiling place-based grantmakers that invest in media. tinyurl.com/3eb92afz



Our 2019 report sharing examples of engaged journalism projects and organizations. tinyurl.com/bdrcakxw



Our 2021 report on media organizations dedicated to local and regional cultural expression. tinyurl.com/3eb92afz

What have we learned?

- **For all the challenges it faces, public media remains resilient**, with many organizations showing the scale, reach, and capacity to become leaders in local news ecosystems. These organizations can forge large-scale collaborations with other news entities. They can partner with civic and cultural organizations. Working with other local groups, they can identify, uplift, and amplify local themes, ideas, and concerns.
- The vast majority of *Local that Works* finalists are based in large metropolitan areas with strong philanthropic sectors investing in local news initiatives. **Smaller communities, especially rural areas with less access to funding, are not evolving at the same pace.** The lack of access to philanthropic investment in rural areas is ripe for attention within the funding centers now working to rebuild local news ecosystems.
- **Women are playing an ever more prominent role in nonprofit journalism.** In the first two years that *Local that Works* solicited submissions (2017–2018), only 41 percent of projects selected for conference or webinar sessions (seven out of 17) had women presenting or directing the work. In the last two years, 68 percent of featured projects (16 out of 24) were led by women, with all five 2022 finalists presented or directed by women.
- ***Local that Works* submissions reflect a broader prioritization among media organizations on staff and audience diversity.** In the first two years the program solicited submissions, 35 percent of featured projects (six out of 17) focused on diversity and inclusion, sometimes by targeting service to underserved audiences. In the most recent two years (2021–2022), 58 percent of projects (14 out of 24) presented in conference or webinar sessions amplified under-heard voices or advanced diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.
- **Several *Local that Works* finalists have matured into independent organizations.** (For an example, see the profile on Hearken.) Low barriers to entry for newer online journalism sites have provided significant opportunities for growth, impact, collaboration, and innovation outside legacy public media organizations, even if these enterprises initially hosted such projects and incubated their launches.
- Finally, over time, the annual call for entries shows **an increasing percentage of high-impact collaborations.** Two thirds of *Local that Works* finalists (20 out of 30) were collaborations, as were three quarters of overall featured projects (45 out of 61). Several factors appear to be at work. As newspapers continue to contract, building large-scale public service journalism projects requires a collaborative effort. Even the largest local newsrooms cannot support months-long expansive reporting; joining forces makes sense. Second, collaborations between and among local partners provide avenues for fragmented audiences to recombine and reconnect. Multiple collaborators can bring disparate communities together in new ways, reaching beyond each organization’s audience and becoming a force for wider community engagement, discussion, and problem solving.

Thank you for reading this report and reflecting on the growing relevance, vitality, and impact of local nonprofit media. We hope you find ideas and inspiration in this work.

The following pages highlight the breadth of projects from six years of *Local that Works*, offering examples of repeatable, widely applicable, and multi-platform ideas for local engagement and public service.

LOCAL THAT WORKS 2021 WINNER

All Classical Portland

Diversifying the nation's classical music playlists

Classical music stations wanting to diversify their playlists face a challenge. “If the recordings don’t exist, we can’t play them on the radio,” observed Suzanne Nance, All Classical Portland President & CEO.⁴

In early 2021, All Classical Portland (ACP) launched the Recording Inclusivity Initiative (RII) to produce new, high-quality recordings of classical music by composers and performers from communities historically underrepresented in the genre. This includes Black, Indigenous, people of color, and women. **ACP invited nominations and selected five works for the inaugural RII**—three by living composers, and two posthumous. The three living composers received \$2,500 stipends, a week-long residency, and in-studio recording sessions. These recordings are contributing to an RII music database that will be made available for free to public radio stations.

ACP released the first RII album, titled “AMPLIFY,” in October 2022. “AMPLIFY” features five new recordings by composers Lauren McCall, Mélanie Hélène Bonis, Keyla Orozco, Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson, and Jasmine Barnes. **ACP also published a how-to kit for fellow stations based on lessons learned from their first cycle of RII**, with resources ranging from donor appeal letters to project budgets, contract templates, and marketing assets.

Conceived as more than a project of ACP, RII is an invitation to fellow public radio stations to support system-wide transformation through working locally. ACP welcomed and challenged peer stations to spearhead recording projects, with the goal of producing a total of 250 new recordings over the upcoming two to three years. Through collective action, ACP hopes to diversify playlists heard at classical stations across the country—and around the world.

In addition to transforming playlists, RII is an opportunity for stations to showcase creative talent in their own communities while connecting with local listeners, composers, and performers. Arianna Avena, RII advisor, explained, “One of the beautiful things about RII is that it has enabled us to create a blueprint, a map, for other stations to follow and learn how they can do this work in their own communities in their own unique ways.”⁵

LOCATION:

Portland, OR

ORGANIZATION TYPE:

Public Radio

KEY FUNDERS:

N M Bodecker Foundation

Oregon Cultural Trust

Regional Arts and Culture Council

Sorel Organization

LINKS:

All Classical Portland:
allclassical.org

RII:
recordinginclusivity.allclassical.org

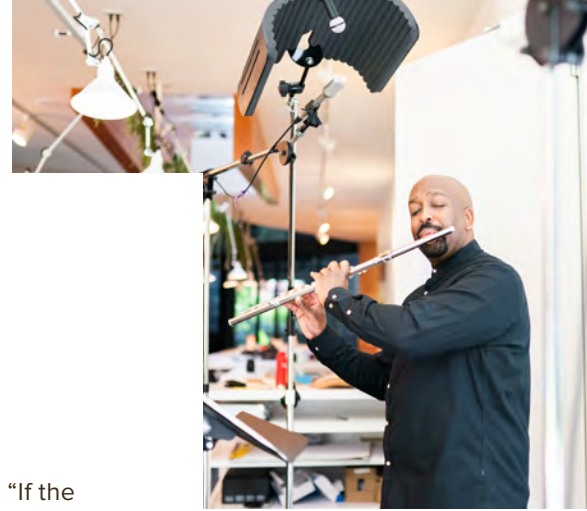
RII How-To Kit:
recordinginclusivity.allclassical.org/how-to-kit

KGW8 segment on RII:
tinyurl.com/4b88ahka

Want a More Diverse Playlist?:
tinyurl.com/4p8xxhxx

CONTACT:

Kristina Becker,
Communications and
Operations Manager,
kristina@allclassical.org



Top: Adam Eccleston during an RII recording session for Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson’s “Sonata for Flute and Piano.”

Middle: Karen Slack during an RII recording session for Jasmine Barnes’ “Taking Names.”

Bottom: Jasmine Barnes with Yoko Greeney in the studio for the RII recording session of “Taking Names.” (Photos by Christine Dong)



LOCAL THAT WORKS 2019 WINNER

WDET

Showcasing local community stories on air and in photography

How can public radio move beyond the airwaves and into public spaces? How can audio projects amplify local voices while also creating opportunities to connect in the communities they feature?

For the multimedia project, Framed by WDET, public radio station WDET commissioned local photographers and audio producers to create multimedia installations showcasing Detroit's complex social, racial, and ethnic life. From 2014–2018, Framed by WDET profiled 10 communities, combining photographs, audio storytelling, and text. These narratives captured life in a Bangladeshi dress shop, a downtown Detroit boxing gym, a blues jam, Middle Eastern food culture in and around Detroit, and local underground dance parties.

An engaged journalism approach was central to the project's success. WDET hired local photographers to document life in the highlighted communities and sent audio producers to record nearly 100 community voices. To develop new and nuanced local stories, WDET understood the need to connect with and support storytellers and photographers who were invested and active in Detroit, and at times, in the very communities they were documenting.

Every profile in the series was presented as both photo and audio installations that WDET brought to 20 community and art spaces throughout Metro Detroit, with event attendance totaling 5,000 visitors. The installations then traveled to additional venues in the city and across the country, reaching thousands more. In 2019, WDET published 160 Framed by WDET photographs and accompanying stories in an art book financed by a Kickstarter campaign. Through these efforts, Framed by WDET connected with new audiences, new donors, and new underwriters, demonstrating that public radio can reach beyond its traditional white, older listenership and reflect the breadth of community life and culture that is today's Detroit.

Connecting the project to WDET's core values, Courtney Hurtt, who led the Framed by WDET project, explained: "In public media, we commonly cite our responsibility to ensure a healthy democracy...it's also our job to ensure healthy communities... And one way to do that is to reflect the lives of the people we're here to serve."⁶

Left: A celebration of automotive art and design from the lowrider community in Southwest Detroit. (Photo by Erik Paul Howard)

Right: A window into Hamtramck's Bangladeshi community through the lens of dress shop owners. (Photo by Kenny "Karpov" Corbin)

LOCATION:
Detroit, MI

ORGANIZATION TYPE:
Public Radio

KEY FUNDERS:
Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan

John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

Michigan Council for the Arts and Cultural Affairs

The Kresge Foundation

LINKS:
WDET:
wdet.org

"Framed by WDET" takes public radio out in public:
tinyurl.com/8x2hjn5m

Sustaining Framed by WDET:
tinyurl.com/3scb45ek

Feature on Framed by WDET from Current:
tinyurl.com/4kum5yce

CONTACT:
Laura Herberg,
Reporter at WDET,
laura.herberg@wdet.org



Left: A conservation aide with the Las Vegas Valley Water District on patrol in Summerlin, a community in the Las Vegas Valley, NV. When runoff water from a home's sprinklers reaches the street, Polanco-Gamez stops to document the situation and notify the homeowner. (Photo by Trent Nelson, The Salt Lake Tribune)

Right: Members of Utah Youth Environmental Solutions Network (UYES) and volunteers stage a "die-in" near Saltair to call for immediate action to protect the Great Salt Lake. (Photo by Leah Hogsten, The Salt Lake Tribune)

LOCATION:

Salt Lake City, UT

ORGANIZATION TYPE:

Nonprofit News

KEY FUNDERS:

Knight Foundation, through Solutions Journalism Network

LINKS

Great Salt Lake Collaborative:
greatsaltlakenews.org

GSLC wins Local that Works:
tinyurl.com/4hwy3pnz

Anthology:
greatsaltlakenews.org/anthology

At Water's Edge Reporting Project:
tinyurl.com/bdzjkk4x

CONTACT:

Heather May, Project Manager,
info@greatsaltlakenews.org

LOCAL THAT WORKS 2022 WINNER

Great Salt Lake Collaborative

Collaborating to spread the word about environmental destruction and spark action

Utah's Great Salt Lake is shrinking. The lake is at its lowest level on record, having lost almost half its surface area. In addition to harming local ecosystems, the loss threatens the 10 million birds who rely on the lake as a migratory stopover. Meanwhile, dwindling water is exposing arsenic and other metals in the lakebed. Confronted with this devastation, how can local newsrooms use their skills, networks, and platforms to effect real change?

Established in January 2022, the Great Salt Lake Collaborative brings together more than 20 news and education partners to raise awareness, deepen understandings, and engage communities in supporting the lake. News organizations include public, nonprofit, and commercial media, from digital publications to television, radio, and print outlets. **While normally competitors, the participating newsrooms pool resources and share stories, working together to reach as many people as possible across the fragmented news landscape.** Community partners work to educate the public about new ways to appreciate and protect the lake, helping to translate complex ecosystem concerns to a range of audiences. Representing a wealth of areas of expertise, collaborators include scientists, writers, librarians, researchers, historians, and artists.

In just over a year, the Collaborative's 13 newsrooms have produced and distributed 245 stories, which are gathered on their website, along with informational resources and a multimedia anthology featuring community voices. **Instead of focusing only on the crisis, newsrooms are investigating solutions** so that viewers, listeners, and readers can effectively get involved in water conservation and land-use policy as they see fit. They have organized a variety of events and activities, including panel discussions, farmers market booths, tours for the public, and even a "Salty" trivia gaming night. The Collaborative's radio and podcast series, "Lake Effect," engages Utah residents in audio storytelling.

While the threat to the lake is daunting, Heather May, Great Salt Lake Collaborative project manager, observed, "The focus on solutions...has brought hope to the community." Speaking to the replicability of the Collaborative's approach, she underscored, "Every community is dealing with environmental change," and she encouraged concerned mediamakers and organizations to "pick your own wicked problem and find passionate partners."⁷

Hearken

Strengthening the connections between news organizations and communities

Hearken helps newsrooms deepen their relationships with the communities they serve, and provides tools and training that enables them to better listen to and collaborate with their audiences. As consultants and conveners whose company is “for-profit and for a cause,”⁸ Hearken shares proven, replicable engagement strategies and bespoke digital tools that help news organizations hone practices that support meaningful work with greater impact.

Hearken’s approach to community engagement began as Curious City, a project developed at WBEZ Chicago in 2012 by Jennifer Brandel, future Hearken CEO and co-founder, with early funding from the Wyncote Foundation and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Curious City provided a regular avenue for listeners to ask questions and contribute to WBEZ’s editorial decision-making, adding nuance and transparency to news coverage of the city and **widening the editorial filter for what’s considered “newsworthy” and who gets to decide**. Building on this success, Brandel developed Hearken as a company offering training and a technology platform to replicate processes and share learnings from Curious City.

Hearken has grown exponentially, working with newsrooms across a range of settings. With partner Library Futures, Hearken connected libraries, newsrooms, and patrons to help journalists explore overlooked or underreported stories. Through Democracy SOS, a partnership with Solutions Journalism Network, Hearken provided training aimed at transforming election coverage from “horse race” reporting to exploring the issues that most concern voters. In 2022, Hearken co-created Democracy Day, a nationwide collaboration among newsrooms to draw attention to threats to democracy and improve reporting on democratic processes. Working with the **social entrepreneur movement Zebras Unite**, Brandel is developing programming for Philadelphia Media Founders Exchange, an accelerator program for media entrepreneurs of color.

Today, Hearken’s reach is international, having worked with 400 partners in 90 countries and 27 languages. The company’s orientation, however, remains specific: fostering curiosity and a dedication to stakeholder engagement one organization and one community at a time. Reflecting on fundamental changes in the news landscape, Brandel explained, “Speed, efficiency, and distribution are no longer the game you want to play.” Instead, she noted, news organizations must build “relevance, trust, and relationships...The future of news is not so much the newsroom. It’s about how to create a civic information ecosystem.”⁹

LOCATION:
Chicago, IL

ORGANIZATION TYPE:
Social Entrepreneurship

KEY FUNDERS:
Association of Independents in Radio
Democracy Fund
Lenfest Institute
News Integrity Initiative
Henry Luce Foundation

KEY INVESTORS:
Matter
New Media Ventures
Angel investors

LINKS:
Hearken:
wearehearken.com

Zebras Unite:
zebrasunite.coop

Q&A with Jennifer Brandel:
tinyurl.com/ypbadw3m

“How engaged journalism can help build revenue”:
tinyurl.com/yr3hc3ey

CONTACT:
Jennifer Brandel,
Co-founder & CEO,
jennifer.brandel@wearehearken.com
wearehearken.com



Top: Hearken’s team in 2019 closing out their Engagement Innovation Summit.

Right: Participants in Hearken’s 2019 Engagement Innovation Summit use Dot Connector Studio’s Impact Pack. (Photos by Digital Development Communications)

Uncovering stories to share and leaving behind documentation

A leader in rural public media, North Country Public Radio (NCPR) serves 200 communities scattered in and around the Adirondacks in New York, covering an area the size of Switzerland. While considering project ideas that could knit this disparate listenership together, the station identified the theme of “local work life” as a way to reach and celebrate the many different communities within the North Country.

The resulting multimedia project, North Country at Work (NC@W), launched in 2016 and **collects oral histories of work life in different industries and digitizes photos of workers and workplaces past and present.** The staff at NCPR reached out to libraries, historical societies, museums, and cultural centers to find images that show how work has flourished and changed over the decades. The archive of photos from the 1860s to the present documents the work of iron ore miners and sawmill workers, nurses and doctors, hotel workers, and quarrymen. Images capture cultural legacies of braiding sweetgrass and moments in barbershops. All of these historic images, documents, and audio stories are shared through the NC@W website, northcountryatwork.org.

In addition to gathering stories, project staff organize exhibitions of photos of local work that they donate to local community institutions, where they also host work-related storytelling events and celebrations. **Through these outreach efforts, NC@W connects NCPR to local citizens who might never otherwise listen to public radio,** and helps the station share stories and voices rarely heard.

NC@W’s archive of images and recordings continues to grow, providing content for broadcast, the NCPR website, social media, and podcasts. When asked in an interview by Current for lessons to share with peer stations, Ellen Rocco, former station manager and project founder, suggested determining a geographic focus and developing media output that can be channeled to multiple platforms. She also advised, “Do not narrow your focus.” A broad topic like work life “sounds scary,” but it “generates interest and excitement,”¹⁰ and communicates to people from many backgrounds that their station is a place where their stories will be heard and valued.



Top: NC@W event at the Cornwall Brothers Store Museum in Alexandria Bay, NY.

Bottom: NC@W event at the Akwesasne Cultural Center on the Akwesasne Mohawk Reservation. (Photos courtesy of North Country Public Radio)

LOCATION:
Canton, NY

ORGANIZATION TYPE:
Public Radio

KEY FUNDERS:
Adirondack Foundation
(Charles B. Decker Fund)
Cloudsplitter Foundation
NY Humanities
NY State Regional Economic
Development Councils
Northern New York
Community Foundation

LINKS:
North Country Public Radio:
northcountrypublicradio.org

North Country at Work:
northcountryatwork.org

Feature on NC@W from
Current:
tinyurl.com/4ckyzt8

Story Map:
tinyurl.com/4yum3uuw

Curated Photo Collections:
[northcountryatwork.org/
collections](http://northcountryatwork.org/collections)

CONTACT:
Mitch Teich,
Station Manager,
mitch@ncpr.org



LOCAL THAT WORKS 2020 WINNER

Sahan Journal

Centering immigrant communities and communities of color in news coverage

In August 2019, Mukhtar Ibrahim, a Minnesota-based and Somali-born journalist, launched the nonprofit digital newsroom Sahan Journal to fill a gap in local news coverage. Mainstream newsrooms often ignored stories that mattered to Minnesota’s immigrants and communities of color—or covered them poorly. The fastest-growing communities in the Twin Cities needed better news.

In a 2021 Report to the Community, Ibrahim summed up his goal: “To create a news outlet that would put people of color—and our stories—on the front page, every day.”¹¹ In just three years, Sahan has grown from a solo endeavor to an 18-person team serving an audience that is young by many journalism standards. **A majority of readers are under the age of 40, with 75 percent of traffic coming from mobile users.** Stories are regularly picked up by the state’s biggest newsrooms, broadening Sahan’s reach and impact.

In addition to daily beat reporting, Sahan has initiated a series of projects that meet **real-time community needs.** Partnering with UCare, Sahan produced COVID-19 explainer videos in five languages, including guidance from medical professionals and community leaders. Following the murder of George Floyd, in-depth reporting explored local Black Lives Matter coalition-building among immigrants and refugees. Sahan’s 2021 “MPLS is Us” voter guide, created in collaboration with Pollen Midwest and Pillsbury United Communities, provided customized multimedia information for each of Minneapolis’ 13 wards.

A collaborative “Citizen Lab,” supported by Google News Initiative, opened a far-ranging conversation with community members to discuss their information needs with staff from Sahan, La Raza 95.7z FM, 3HmongTV, and Somali TV Minnesota. A related survey sought community insights on barriers to local news access, methods of sharing news, and what builds trust.

In contrast to mainstream news outlets that spotlight communities of color only in breaking news—often crime and disaster reporting—Sahan’s daily reporting is playing a meaningful role in the local news landscape. As Ibrahim underscored in an interview with the Bush Foundation, “Immigrants and communities of color play a major role in the economy and civic life of Minnesota, and they should see themselves reflected in the press.”¹²

Left: Pahoua Hoffman poses for a portrait with her mother, Chia, inside of her mother's shop, Sew Simple in Minneapolis.

Middle: After warmup exercises, 10-year-old Lavendar Nelson puts on gloves and prepares to spar. She trains 12 to 18 hours a week after school.

Right: Juan Mejia in the truck he uses for food deliveries. (Photos by Jaida Grey Eagle)

LOCATION:
Saint Paul, MN

ORGANIZATION TYPE:
Nonprofit News

KEY FUNDERS:
F.R. Bigelow Foundation
McKnight Foundation
Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation
Knight Foundation

LINKS:
Sahan Journal:
sahanjournal.com

Report to the Community:
tinyurl.com/ya696mxj

Sahan Journal Case Study from INN:
tinyurl.com/2b8y9w7r

“An Innovative Approach”:
tinyurl.com/2s3r8vcz

MPLS is Us voter guide:
pollenmidwest.org/mplsibus

CONTACT:
Dawn Flinsch,
Managing Director,
Development & Operations,
dflinsch@sahanjournal.com



LOCAL THAT WORKS 2017 SUBMISSION

Texas Standard

Collaborating to create a platform for statewide news coverage

Texas presents an extreme example of the nationwide decline in local news outlets. Since 2005, the state has lost nearly a third of its newspapers. Today, one in ten Texas counties has no local paper, contributing to the rise of misinformation, political polarization, and decreased trust in the media. Many Texans are left to get their news from newsrooms far removed from local contexts, understandings, and perspectives.¹³

In 2015, KUT News in Austin launched a daily hour-long, state-focused newsmagazine, Texas Standard, in collaboration with Texas Public Radio, KERA, and Houston Public Media. The program is accompanied by a state-focused news website and podcasts on state-focused stories and policy issues. Topics range from arts and culture to borders and immigration, business, crime, technology, the environment, and more, with a selection of stories also available in Spanish.

Texas Standard reflects two prominent trends in public media. First, it is an example of **public media organizations responding to the collapse of local journalism** in their communities. Second, it illustrates the power of collaboration among independent public media organizations to create something no single entity could produce alone.

While Texas Standard is relatively new, KUT News, which produces the show, began exploring the idea of a statewide news service as early as 2002. Covering stories across the state, as well as providing a Texas perspective on national and international news, required extensive planning. In addition to editorial and technical experimentation, the team at KUT News spent time identifying signature segments and assessing audience responses.

Those years of testing, the urgency of the need, and the multi-station collaboration have combined to create a robust and reliable news source that now airs on 29 stations with coverage to reach 92 percent of the Texas population with stories and **perspectives not available elsewhere**. Rick Holter, then-VP of News at KERA, explained, “This state is so big and so diverse and is such a rich well of journalism and stories, that something like Texas Standard makes perfect sense.”¹⁴

Left: Texas Standard reporter Kristen Cabrera interviews Haithem El-Zabri in front of the Texas Capitol in Austin as part of a day of action in solidarity with the Palestinian uprising on May 18, 2021. (Photo by Gabriel C. Pérez)

Right: Texas Standard reporter Michael Marks interviews Dustin Baker an effort to maintain public access to the Cutoff, a lake five miles south of Trinidad. (Photo by Michael Minasi)

LOCATION:
Austin, TX

ORGANIZATION TYPE:
Public Radio

KEY FUNDERS:
Shield Ayers Foundation
Individual funders

LINKS:
Texas Standard:
texasstandard.org

“KUT preps ambitious newsmag”:
tinyurl.com/yrz5kj6

“The Long Haul: Texas and the Pandemic”:
texasstandard.org/longhaul

“Uvalde: What’s next?”:
tinyurl.com/yx4a48he

“The complicated legacy of César Chávez”:
tinyurl.com/mvatsh8e

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WDAV

Building bridges across communities through new artistic collaborations

WDAV has been the home for classical music in Charlotte, NC, since 1978, broadcasting from its base at Davidson College, and adding a public radio affiliation in 1987. Over the past decade, the station has launched apps and podcasts, and reflected on its role within the local community. As with many cultural centers around the country, classical music in Charlotte remains largely white, despite being part of a broader, vibrant, and diverse local music scene.

In early 2020, WDAV staff began brainstorming ways to become more racially inclusive, starting with an idea to better support classical musicians of color. The station soon recognized that an effective effort would require partners that had community ties and trust. Staff approached David “Dae-Lee” Arrington of FAIR PLAY Music Equity Initiative, which advocates for fairness and inclusivity across the Charlotte music ecosystem. Arrington suggested that WDAV step outside their comfort zone. Rather than centering initiatives wholly within classical music, Arrington encouraged WDAV to “**build uncommon relationships.**”¹⁵ The result was NoteWorthy.

NoteWorthy fosters collaborations between classical musicians and local musicians of color rooted in a range of contemporary music genres and styles. The first round of NoteWorthy performances paired three featured artists with three classical counterparts for a video recording session in March 2021. This virtual format, begun by necessity during the pandemic, has evolved through a series of free live-streamed and in-person events. All NoteWorthy concerts are filmed and the program’s full archive of 10 presentations to date is available on YouTube.

In less than two years, **NoteWorthy has attracted tens of thousands of viewers, including a significantly younger audience than WDAV’s other classical events.** In addition to expanding the station’s community networks, NoteWorthy is helping WDAV diversify its own staff, including hiring trumpeter Keenan Harmon as an on-air host. While NoteWorthy has a focused framework as a collaborative performance series, it “continues to deliver unexpected outcomes,” noted Will Keible, Director of Marketing and Corporate Support, “helping make WDAV a better station, and thus a better service to the community.”¹⁶

LOCATION:
Davidson, NC

ORGANIZATION TYPE:
Public Radio

KEY FUNDERS:
Arts & Science Council
Blumenthal Performing Arts
OrthoCarolina (corporate sponsor)

LINKS:
WDAV:
wdav.org
NoteWorthy:
noteworthyclassical.org
FAIR PLAY Music Equity:
fairplayclt.com
Inside NoteWorthy:
tinyurl.com/2zds2pbz

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Right: NoteWorthy performance featuring the electro-pop ensemble Bravo on June 8, 2022. (Photo by Faith Austin)

Bottom: Musical ensemble from NoteWorthy concert featuring jazz saxophonist and composer Harvey Cummings on October 27, 2021. (Photo by Harris Jeeter)



Resources for learning about local media support and initiatives

ARTICLES & REPORTS:

- **“Changing the conversation: Embracing ‘Local that Works,’”** Mark Fuerst, *Current*, October 25, 2016: Countering common narratives of the demise of public radio, Fuerst outlines challenges facing the sector, as well as the many ways that organizations have adapted to changing times, in part through focusing locally. current.org/2016/10/changing-the-conversation-embracing-local-that-works
- **The Growing Strength of Public Media Local Journalism:** Elizabeth Shapiro, Mark Fuerst, and Caroline Porter, *The Tow Center*, October 2022: This report examines the public media system’s potential role in rebuilding local news, as well as formats and practices already underway. tinyurl.com/ycx99p25
- **The State of Local News: The 2022 Report:** This report is an analysis of a number of trends among local journalism outlets in the U.S. localnewsinitiative.northwestern.edu/research/state-of-local-news/report
- **Five Benchmarks for Measuring Equity and Representation in Local News:** A paper from the Lenfest Institute written by Sarah Schmalbach that offers ideas for what benchmarks for representation could look like in coverage, which a news organization could track and measure against for signs of progress. tinyurl.com/ysjd4tw5
- **Look Back at Lenfest Local Lab:** A compendium of information and outcomes from local journalism innovation projects funded and supported by the Lenfest Institute from 2018–2021. tinyurl.com/3x3b54pa

ORGANIZATIONS & RESOURCES:

- **Center for Cooperative Media:** The Center for Cooperative Media’s mission is to grow and strengthen local journalism through collaboration. The Center offers training, resources and tools, project support, research, and an annual conference, all aimed to help news organizations foster collaborative efforts in their local communities. centerforcooperativemedia.org

- **Current:** Current is a nonprofit publication serving the field of public broadcasting with coverage of programs, policy, technology, development, and people. Based at American University School of Communication, its mission is to share best practices, keep public media professionals connected, and provide information that helps public media thrive. current.org
 - Current’s archive of *Local that Works* webinars: current.org/local-that-works-webinars
 - Database of *Local That Works* submitted projects on the Current website current.org/series/local-that-works
- **Gather (Agora Journalism Center):** Gather is an internet-based information-exchange platform that supports community-centered journalism and the journalists building this practice. A project of the Agora Journalism Center at the University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communications, its mission is to make journalism more responsive to the public’s needs and more inclusive of the public’s voices and diversity by helping journalists, educators, and students who share these values find each other, resources and best practices, and support and mentorship. letsgatherin.slack.com
- **Institute for Nonprofit News (INN):** The Institute for Nonprofit News strengthens and supports more than 400 independent news organizations across the United States, helping them develop revenue and business models to support strong reporting, collaborate on editorial and business innovation, share services, and advance the diverse leaders who are forging a new future for news. inn.org
- **Knight Foundation:** Knight is a Miami-based grantmaker with a focus on public service journalism at both the local and national level.
 - Compendium of information about recent Knight local journalism efforts knightfoundation.org/topics/local-and-nonprofit-news
 - "How Local Foundations Can Support Local News" knightfoundation.org/how-local-foundations-can-support-local-news-full

- **Lenfest Institute:** The Lenfest Institute is working throughout local news ecosystems in Philadelphia and beyond “to crack the code on a sustainable future for this vital resource.” The Lenfest Institute's ownership of The Philadelphia Inquirer is the cornerstone of an enthusiastic investment in local news. Lenfest’s website is a trove of reports and information.

lenfestinstitute.org

- **Media Impact Funders (MIF):** MIF is an affinity group of philanthropists interested in advancing the role of nonprofit media in society and sharing strategies, ideas, and results.

- *Community Foundations & Media:* This report provides a detailed look at community foundation support for media in the U.S., including top funders and recipients, comparisons of funding across regions, and examples of grants across a range of media subjects.

mediaimpactfunders.org/reports/community-foundations-media-funding-data-from-2009-2021

- *Journalism and Media Grantmaking: Five Things You Need to Know and Five Ways to Get Started:* A guide for grantmakers interested in media funding programs.

tinyurl.com/2neuhdke

- **Solutions Journalism Network:** Solutions Journalism Network (SJV) is a global network focused on journalism that seeks out and uplifts solutions to persistent problems and the outcomes of efforts to address them.

solutionsjournalism.org

MORE NEWSLETTERS:

- **American Press Institute**
americanpressinstitute.org/category/need-to-know
- **Nieman Reports**
niemanreports.org/articles/category/newsletter
- **Tow Center for Digital Journalism**
tinyurl.com/y8jd3due

About Wyncote Foundation

Wyncote is a family foundation based in Philadelphia that pursues a range of disparate grantmaking interests. Wyncote’s Public Media and Journalism Program focuses on local journalism, public media, and storytelling, primarily in the Philadelphia region and the state of Pennsylvania. It also participates actively in field development efforts throughout the broader public media and journalism sectors in the U.S.

In its local and regional media grantmaking, Wyncote takes an ecosystem approach, combining a commitment to accountability journalism with support for a range of community information needs and resources, including many examples of creative storytelling and other narrative forms. Wyncote sees media as a crucial component of a region’s “public square,” and advocates for cultural organizations as facilitators and stewards of community memory, identity, and vision through their multifaceted media offerings.



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Julie Drizin, Executive Director, Current

Local that Works winners:

- Great Salt Lake Collaborative, 2022
- All Classical Portland, Recording Inclusivity Initiative, 2021
- Sahan Journal, 2020
- WDET, Framed by WDET, 2019
- Alaska Public Media, Community in Unity, 2018
- Siouland Public Media Radio, KWIT-KOJI Siouland Public Media, Ode: Stories Without Borders, 2017

Other Local that Works finalists:

2022

- Injustice Watch, #CheckYourJudges
- CapRadio, After the Assault
- TPT - Twin Cities PBS, Minnehistories
- Outlier Media, Vote with Confidence: A Guide from the Detroit Documenters

2021

- WBUR, Mass. Election Prep: Become An Informed Voter in 7 Days
- The Oaklandside, Mission Metrics
- WHYY, News and Information Community Exchange (N.I.C.E.)
- Wisconsin Watch, with Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service & Outlier Media, News414

2020

- KALW, Uncuffed
- Detroit Public Television, COVID313
- KQED, California Reporting Project
- Maine Public, The Learning Space

2019

- KMUW, Engage ICT: Democracy on Tap
- Pennsylvania Public Media, Battling Opioids
- Voice of San Diego, A Parent's Guide to Public Schools

2018

- KALW, The Intersection
- North Country Public Radio, North Country at Work
- WTVI, PBS Charlotte 3-D Project: Dreamers, Doers, Destiny

2017

- 88Nine Radio Milwaukee, Band Together
- 88Nine Radio Milwaukee, Grace Weber's Music Lab
- 88Nine Radio Milwaukee, 414 Music
- Louisville Public Media, 90.5 WUOL Education Outreach
- Vermont PBS, Made Here

Local that Works panelists:

Listed with first year of participation and affiliation at the time of participation.

Ashley Alvarado, Southern California Public Radio, 2019

Andrea Asuaje, Rococo Punch, 2020

Jan Boyd, Boyd West Consulting, 2022

Paul Buckner, Public Broadcasting Atlanta, 2020

Andrew DeVigal, University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication, 2021

Dave Edwards, Dave Edwards Media, 2021

Karen Everhart, Current, 2018

Adriana Gallardo, ProPublica, 2017

Shane Guter, Public Works, 2017

Cristina Hanson, Wisconsin Public Television, 2017

Kristen Hare, Poynter Institute, 2021

Darryl Holliday, City Bureau, 2020

Erika Howard, POV, 2018

Jonathan Kealing, Institute for Nonprofit News, 2019

Deanna Mackey, Public Television Major Market Group, 2017

Kate Myers, First Look Media Works, 2019

Christine Paige Diers, Public Media Journalists Association, 2021

Jeff Ramirez, KERA, 2017

Andrew Ramsammy, Arizona PBS, 2019

Ellen Rocco, North Country Public Radio, 2019

Christine Schmidt, Democracy Fund, 2020

Bill Siemerling, Wyncote Foundation, 2018

Tracy Wahl, Tracy Wahl Public Media, 2017

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