

AMERICANPRESS

institute

Topline: Commercial Media Organizations

From “Charting new ground: The ethical terrain of nonprofit journalism” (Published 4/20/16)

Collected October 6 - November 5, 2015

Total N=146

		PERCENT	COUNT
1. How long ago was your news organization founded?	Less than 5 years ago	15%	22
	6-9 years ago	12%	17
	10-15 years ago	3%	5
	16-50 years ago	3%	4
	More than 50 years ago	65%	95
	Don't know/Not sure	1%	1
	No response	1%	2

2. Which media category best describes your news organization?	Newspaper media	60%	88
	Television media	1%	1
	Digital only media (General interest or community based)	29%	43
	Single subject news organization (digital or multiplatform)	1%	1
	Radio media	0%	0
	Digital, print and broadcast or video	2%	3
	Digital and print	5%	8
	No response	1%	2

		PERCENT	COUNT
3. Which of the following best describes your core audience?	Other	3%	4
	Hyperlocal	47%	69
	Metro area	27%	39
	State or regional	8%	12
	National	1%	2
	International	2%	3
	Several of the above	10%	15
	No response	1%	2

4. What approximately was your overall newsroom budget in the last calendar year?	Less than \$1 million	43%	63
	\$1 million to \$4.9 million	27%	40
	\$5 million to \$49.9 million	18%	27
	\$50 million to \$100 million	0%	0
	More than \$100 million	1%	1
	Don't Know/Not Sure	8%	11
	No response	3%	4

5. Over the last five years, has your newsroom budget increased, decreased or remained the about same?	Increased	20%	29
	Decreased	55%	80
	Remained the same	18%	26
	Don't Know/Not Sure	5%	7
	No response	3%	4

		PERCENT	COUNT
6. About how many full-time staff employees does your newsroom have?	Less than 5	29%	43
	5-9	9%	13
	10-19	13%	19
	20-29	10%	15
	30 to 50	10%	14
	50-99	14%	21
	100-499	12%	17
	500-1,000	0%	0
	More than 1,000	1%	1
	Don't Know/Not Sure	0%	0
	No response	2%	3

8. Has your news organization ever partnered with a non-profit news organization, foundation, university or college, or other non-profit in any kind of collaboration?	Yes	52%	
	No	42%	62
	Don't Know/Not Sure	5%	7
	No response	1%	1

**Following questions based only on those who said yes to Q8
Those in partnership with non-profit organizations
N=76**

9. Which of the following types of non-profit organizations have you collaborated or partnered with in the last five years? (check all that apply)

a. Foundations	45%	34
b. Community organizations	50%	38
c. Non-profit news organizations	42%	32
d. Universities or other educational organizations	71%	54
e. Other	1%	1

10. How many times in the last year, if at all, have you entered into any of the following partnerships or collaborations with a non-profit organization, funder, university, college or other non-profit?

		PERCENT	COUNT
A. Distributed news content produced by a non-profit news operation	None	17%	13
	Once	8%	6
	Twice	8%	6
	More than Twice	54%	41
	No response	13%	10
B. Partnered on reporting and editing content	None	28%	21
	Once	13%	10
	Twice	9%	7
	More than Twice	32%	24
	No response	18%	14
C. Partnered on reporting but published our own separate stories	None	46%	35
	Once	11%	8
	Twice	4%	3
	More than Twice	17%	13
	No response	22%	17
D. Collaborated on data collection and information sharing	None	36%	27
	Once	17%	13
	Twice	5%	4
	More than Twice	25%	19
	No response	17%	13
E. Collaborated on public events	None	30%	23
	Once	12%	9
	Twice	7%	5
	More than Twice	36%	27
	No response	16%	12

		PERCENT	COUNT
F. Accepted funding	None	51%	39
	Once	9%	7
	Twice	9%	7
	More than Twice	9%	7
	No response	21%	16

11. Over the last five years, has the number of your partnerships with non-profit organizations increased, decreased or remained about the same?	Increased	54%	41
	Decreased	7%	5
	Remained the same	25%	19
	Don't know/Not Sure	8%	6
	No response	7%	5

12. Overall, which of the following is the MAIN reason your newsroom forms partnerships with non-profit organizations?	Other	4%	3
	Sharing the costs of the project	21%	16
	Other organizations bring a different skills or higher level	39%	30
	They have had important project ideas	18%	14
	Local events	3%	2
	Internships	5%	4
	No response	8%	7

		PERCENT	COUNT
13. How, if at all, do you disclose collaborations you have with non-profit partners or funders?	Other	2%	3
	We identify them in a designated place on our website	5%	4
	We always cite them either inside or in notes that accompany	53%	40
	We sometimes but not always cite non-profit partners in stories, depending on the nature of the collaboration	9%	7
	We share bylines with the non-profit partners	14%	11
	We never disclose collaborations with non-profit organizations	1%	1
	Multiple responses	4%	3
	No response/not applicable	11%	8

14. Has a partner or funder you have worked with ever subsequently been a subject of one of your own news stories?	Yes	53%	40
	No	34%	26
	Don't Know/No Sure	7%	5

15. IF YES: Did you mention your previous collaboration in that story, did you not cite it, or do you not know?	Other	5%	4
	We cited our collaboration in subsequent news stories about	12%	9
	We didn't cite our collaboration in subsequent news stories	17%	13
	We cited them in some news stories but not others	12%	9
	Don't know/Not Sure	5%	5
	Not asked	49%	36

16. Has a non-profit partner or funder ever asked to NOT be disclosed publicly?	Yes	1%	1
	No	84%	64
	Don't Know/No Sure	7%	5
	No response	8%	6

		PERCENT	COUNT
17. IF YES: Have you ever agreed to NOT publicly disclose a non-profit partner?	Other	0%	0
	Yes, we have agreed to this	0%	0
	No, we have never agreed	1%	1
	Not asked	99%	75

18. Does your newsroom have written guidelines regarding what types of non-profit organizations it will and will not partner with?	Yes	13%	10
	No	75%	57
	Don't Know/Not Sure	4%	3
	No response	8%	6

19. IF YES: Are these guidelines published on your website or anywhere else?	Yes	3%	2
	No	8%	6
	Don't Know/Not Sure	0%	0
	No response	11%	8
	Not asked	79%	60

20. If you have accepted funding from non-profit organizations, which of the following kinds of funding did you receive? (check all that apply)

a. Grants for general operating support or underwriting	3%	2
b. Grants for ongoing coverage of a general subject area, such as health care or the environment	9%	7
c. Grants for ongoing coverage of a specific issue or problem, such as cancer or fracking	5%	4
d. Grants for a particular project or series on a specific problem or issue	16%	12
e. Grants to experiment with new forms of storytelling	4%	3
f. Grants to adopt new technologies	0%	0
g. Grants for a particular type of journalism (such as investigative) without specifying topics or projects	9%	7
h. We don't accept direct funding from non-profit organizations	36%	27

		PERCENT	COUNT
21. To what degree do you usually communicate with non-profit funders prior to publication about the work they have underwritten?	Other	4%	3
	We talk about specific stories and timing	13%	10
	We talk about the problems our reporting might expose and the conclusions we will come to but not specific stories	3%	2
	We talk about coverage areas but only in general terms	22%	17
	Our policy is never to discuss with funders specifically what we are working prior to publication	16%	12
	Only communicate during grant process	3%	2
	Not applicable/don't use non-profit funders	12%	9
	No response	28%	21

22. Have you ever compensated a non-profit news organization or other non-profit partner, either for content they have provided or for their staff time and expenses?	Yes we do this regularly	3%	2
	Yes, we do this sometimes	8%	6
	Yes, but rarely	14%	11
	No, we never do this	54%	41
	Don't know/Not Sure	9%	7
	No response	12%	9

23. Non-profit funders and non-profit media often look for metrics to evaluate their grant making. Please indicate all metrics that you have provided either to funders or non-profit partners:

	PERCENT	COUNT
a. Your web traffic such as page views, visitors, time spent etc.	28%	21
b. Social media numbers or activity	17%	13
c. Web traffic of partners who distributed the work	3%	2
d. Numbers of other media organizations that used or cited the work	9%	7
e. Audience comments or other audience actions taken	20%	15
f. Responses from officials to the reporting	16%	12
g. Direct impact from your work, i.e. formal hearings, laws changed or charges filed	14%	11
h. Editorials written or other journalistic activities that followed your work	16%	12
i. Evidence of changes in awareness or knowledge of an issue or topic	11%	8
j. Evidence of changes in attitudes/perceptions about an issue or topic	4%	3
k. As a matter of policy, we don't provide partners with metrics	20%	15

24. Has a foundation, university or college, non-profit media operation or other non-profit ever approached you about funding or partnering on an investigation into a particular problem or doing specific series of stories?	Yes	46%	35
	No	36%	27
	Don't Know/Not Sure	7%	5
	No response	12%	9

25. IF YES: Did you accept the funding or partnership?	Yes	26%	20
	No	16%	12
	Don't Know/Not Sure	4%	3
	Not asked	54%	41

26. IF YES: What were the main reasons you went forward with the project?
(Select up to two)

	PERCENT	COUNT
a. The project or investigation was already on our list of things to do	7%	5
b. The project was not on our list already but struck us as worthwhile	4%	3
c. The funding was important to our sustainability	3%	2
d. We wanted to establish a relationship with this funder or non-profit	4%	3
e. We already had a good relationship with this funder or partner	8%	6
f. In general, we want to increase such collaborative journalism	9%	7
g. The partnership provided us with expertise that we did not otherwise have access to	13%	10
h. Other	1%	1

27. IF NO: What were the main reasons you declined the project? (Select up to two)

a. The stories were not already on our list	0%	0
b. We never accept funding for specific investigations or stories	3%	2
c. The subject was not one we generally cover	1%	1
d. The funder is such an advocate on the issue this felt like a conflict of interest	8%	6
e. We felt the funder would be too involved	3%	2
f. Previous experience with funder or partner led us to decline working with them again	0%	0
g. We didn't have the capacity at the time to do the work	5%	4
h. Other	1%	1

		PERCENT	COUNT
28. Based on your experience, which of the following comes closest to your general attitude about collaborations with non-profits of any kind? (select one)	Other	4%	3
	We only are interested in distribution partnerships, not full reporting partnerships	3%	2
	We have had very good experiences with collaborations and non-profit funding and see them as an important part of our future	29%	22
	Collaborations with non-profits are complicated but we remain open to possibilities	39%	30
	We have had problems with collaborations and non-profit funding but consider future ones on a case-by-case basis	5%	4
	We have decided not to continue with non-profit partnerships	0%	0
	Don't Know	7%	5
	No response	13%	10

29. Have you ever accepted a partnership with a non-profit organization and decided you didn't want to partner with them in the future?	Yes	20%	15
	No	57%	43
	Don't Know/Not Sure	12%	9
	No response	12%	9

30. IF YES: What were the main reasons you decided NOT to work with them again?
(Select up to two)

a. The level of communication and consultation was too involved	3%	2
b. We decided their advocacy on this issue constituted more of	5%	4
c. The level of funding was not sufficient to finance the work	0%	0
d. They did not understand the difference between journalism an	1%	1
e. The partnership was more trouble than it was worth	9%	7
f. The affiliation with them was too controversial	1%	1
g. Other	4%	3

		PERCENT	COUNT
31. Has your organization ever cancelled a partnership with a non-profit news organization or funder before the project was completed?	Yes	4%	3
	No	74%	56
	Don't Know/Not Sure	11%	8
	No response	12%	9

32. IF YES: What are the main reasons you cancelled the partnership or returned the funding? (Select up to two)

a. We decided that the goals of our two organizations were too different		1%	1
b. The grant became too controversial		0%	0
c. Discussions over editorial content became too difficult to resolve		3%	2
d. Differences over the timetable of the work		0%	0
e. Differences over editorial independence		1%	1
f. The collaboration was more trouble than it was worth		1%	1
33. Has your news organization ever had to defend itself from public criticism because of funding or a collaboration with a non-profit?	Yes	5%	4
	No	76%	59
	Don't Know/Not Sure	5%	4
	No response	13%	10

34. IF YES: About how often has that happened?	It has happened with almost every partnership	0%	0
	It has happened several times	3%	2
	It has happened once or twice	3%	2
	Not asked	93%	71

		PERCENT	COUNT
35. Does your news organization ever accept grants to cover issues where the foundation is also engaged in work such as trying to change policy, or influence public behavior on that issue?	No, our policies require that we would decline that funding	47%	36
	We make those decisions case by case, based on the level and	28%	21
	We would accept the funding, but only the condition that it be for general operating support but not for coverage of a specific topic, issue or project	5%	4
	No response	20%	15
36. If you ever collaborated with a non-profit news organization or other non-profit partner on content, how early in the process do the personnel from your newsroom get involved?	Our editors supervise the project from the beginning	55%	42
	Our editors are involved later in the process but still supervise the editing of the final product	12%	9
	Our editors have little or no involvement in the planning or development of the story	3%	2
	No response	30%	23