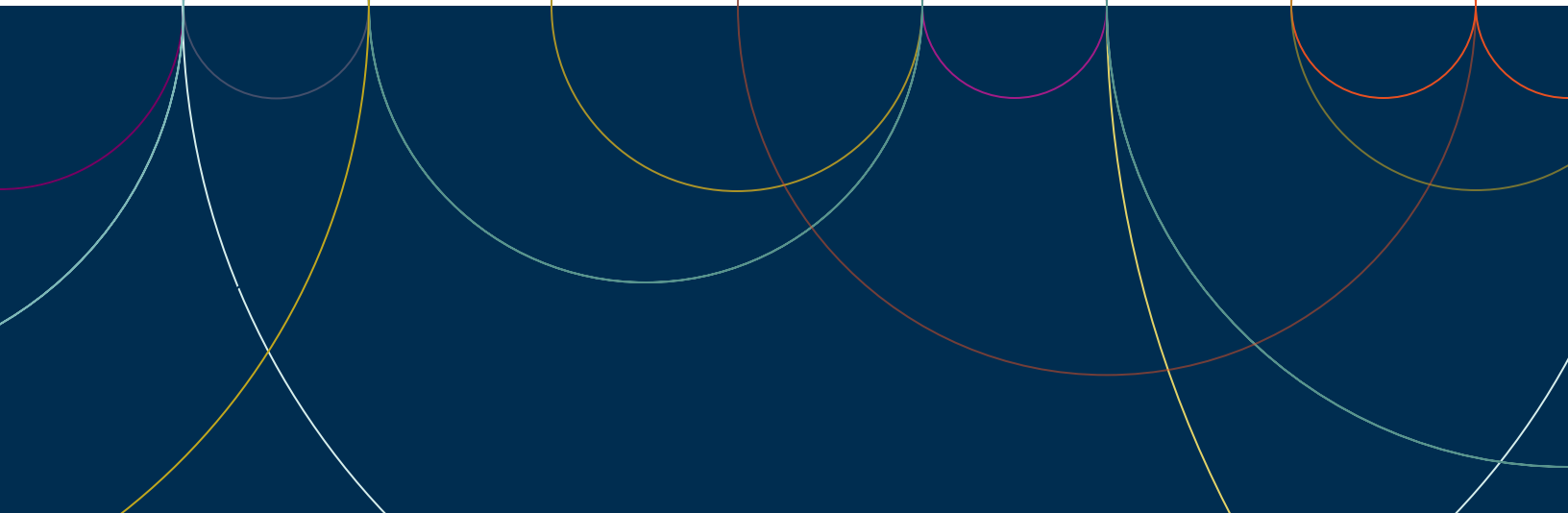




API'S 2024 IMPACT

Bridging Communities, Strengthening Trust





2024 Impact Report

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“It’s important to engage people to learn about their concerns, to report on their concerns, to address their concerns and then to go back and ask them again, ‘Well, what did you think about what we did? Did we miss something? What did you like? What didn’t you like? How was that perceived?’”

— Michael Bolden,
CEO & Executive Director,
American Press Institute

A Future Built on Trust

Friends,

Every day in journalism begins with a promise:
the promise of reinvention.

In a rapidly evolving media landscape, local newsrooms are reimagining how they serve their communities, and the American Press Institute is proud to be their partner in that transformation.

In 2024, API focused on building trust, fostering community engagement and driving newsroom sustainability. We launched new initiatives, strengthened long-standing partnerships and supported journalists navigating the challenges of an election year. Our work is not just about supporting journalism — it's about reimagining how it connects to civic life.

API serves as a bridge between media, civic life and public trust, helping news organizations deepen their relationships with the people they serve. News organizations don't have to let us in, yet they do. We help reduce the risks of the unknown, ensuring that journalists don't have to face challenges alone.

API provides a network of support that allows journalists to take bold steps toward building trust in their communities, whether in Alaska working with Indigenous communities or debunking disinformation targeting immigrant communities in Ohio following the presidential debate. This report is a reflection of that trust and our gratitude for the journalists, communities and funders who make this work possible.

At API, we believe that **local news is at the heart of an informed and engaged democracy**. That's why we continue to provide essential funding, equip newsroom leaders with the tools they need to thrive and build partnerships that extend beyond traditional media. We also equip newsrooms with the data, tools and product strategies needed to sustain their journalism long term. Whether through Metrics for News, Source Matters or product innovation coaching, we help news leaders build smarter, more resilient organizations.

Looking ahead, the need for informed, engaged communities will only grow. API remains committed to empowering news organizations to innovate, experiment and lead the way forward.

We're grateful to our many partners and funders who have been allies in this work. Join us in shaping the future of local journalism.



Michael Bolden
CEO & Executive Director,
American Press Institute

2024 at a Glance

A YEAR OF IMPACT

API strengthened its role as a partner to local newsrooms, ensuring they had the support, training and tools needed to build trust, engage audiences and support their reporting.



66 total grants awarded to news organizations.

6 grants awarded to newsrooms that participated in the Elections + Influencers Learning Cohort to help communities make informed choices about voting.



200+ organizations received custom newsroom coaching and training.



90 hours of Table Stakes coaching calls and specialized support delivered by 13 Table Stakes coaches.



30+ convenings, including Local News Summits in Akron, Tulsa and Minneapolis, bringing together newsroom leaders to discuss community engagement, trust and belonging.



1450+ journalists participated in the American Press Institute's election coverage webinar series with The Associated Press.

To illustrate our impact, we've grouped our key achievements into three major categories: Funding & Support, Training & Convenings and Strategic Initiatives.

Funding & Support

- **32 grants awarded** to news organizations through the Election Engagement Experiment Fund.
- **Six grants awarded** to newsrooms that participated in the Elections + Influencers Learning Cohort to help communities make informed choices about voting.
- **21 news organizations** funded through the Election Coverage and Community Listening Fund.
- **Hosted Trusting News** and helped launch it as an independent organization with logistical support and grants of more than \$100,000.
- **Six newsrooms** participated in the Live Events Sprint Program and were awarded grants to test convening and engaged journalism audience strategies.
- **Sponsored industry events** such as ONA24, Wonder Women in Media and Entertainment breakfast, the Collaborative Journalism Summit and OpenNews NICAR event, as well as supported student journalists, advisors and educators through Student Press Law Center and the Association of Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.

Training & Convenings

- **30+ convenings**, including Local News Summits in Akron, Tulsa and Minneapolis, bringing together newsroom leaders to discuss audience engagement, revenue sustainability and trust.
- **1,450+ journalists** participated in API's election coverage webinar series with The Associated Press.
- **200+ organizations** received custom newsroom coaching and training.
- **90 hours of Table Stakes coaching calls** and specialized support delivered by 13 Table Stakes coaches.

Strategic Initiatives

- Metrics for News celebrated its 10th year, having **supported 400+ local publishers** with insights that help them recognize and invest in coverage that matters most to their communities.
- **Expanded** Source Matters, automating source tracking to improve representation and strengthen community trust.
- **Deepened** DEIB efforts through the API Inclusion Index, helping newsrooms embed listening practices and build trust with diverse communities.
- **Funded** the Virginia Local News Ecosystem Study with the University of Virginia Karsh Institute of Democracy to assess the state of journalism in the commonwealth.
- **Strengthened** cross-sector collaboration, working with experts in civic engagement, democracy research and behavioral science to advance newsroom innovation.
- **Conducted** actionable research in partnership with Templeton World Charity Foundation about how journalists and non-news experts can better work together.
- **Shared** research-driven insights in partnership with The SNF Agora Institute at Johns Hopkins University about local opinion journalism's connection to our democracy and the role philanthropy plays.
- **Bridged** research and practice, collaborating with the Journalism Bridging Project on a white paper addressing the disconnect between journalism researchers and newsroom leaders with actionable strategies for integration.

"API is great at fostering connections that are mutually beneficial to news organizations nationwide. They help shepherd what I view as one of the biggest positives in local news right now — the mindset that since local outlets across the country don't need to compete with each other, we can share the best ideas and learn from one another."

—Jack Rooney,
The Keene Sentinel
in Keene, New Hampshire



Listening to the API Community

At API, we know that impact is more than numbers; it's about the local and community-based media organizations we serve. That's why we check in regularly with those who engage with our programs, research, training and tools to understand what's working and where we can do better.

Eighty-four journalists from over 60 newsrooms shared their experiences with API via our 2024 Impact Survey. Their feedback helps shape our future offerings, ensuring we continue providing the support, resources and connections news organizations need to thrive.

HOW API SUPPORTS JOURNALISTS & NEWSROOMS

- 89.3% say API has contributed to their knowledge and growth as a journalist.
- 85.7% have gained new skills through API that increased their confidence in the industry.
- 73.8% report that API has helped them develop solutions for newsroom challenges.
- 86.9% are satisfied with their API experience.

"API makes space to learn and experiment. Sometimes, that space is resources — playbooks, guides, articles and training. Sometimes it's time. Sometimes it's a tool, like Metrics for News."

— Erica Smith,
Times Union in Albany, New York

PHOTO: API's Product Strategy team talking with and learning from journalists at ONA Atlanta.



92.9%

say API's products,
programs and
research are essential
to supporting news
organizations.

PHOTO: Local news leaders tackle hurdles to belonging through Lego Serious Play at API's Local News Summit on Fostering Collaboration and Belonging in Minneapolis. CREDIT: Darin Kamnetz


A NETWORK FOR INNOVATION

API doesn't just provide resources — we create spaces for learning, innovation and collaboration. Whether helping journalists rethink audience engagement, experiment with new storytelling approaches, or build sustainable newsroom strategies, API is committed to strengthening journalism from the ground up.





PHOTO: Participants share a laugh during a debrief at API's Local News Summit on Elections, Trust and Democracy in Akron. CREDIT: Lilly Chapa



"API has helped us adopt an audience-first mindset and break down silos that were preventing departmental collaboration and overall ownership of our mission."

—Lacey Daley,
Boise State Public Radio

Strengthening Local Election Coverage

In 2024, 32 grants were awarded as part of the Election Engagement Fund and 21 grants were awarded through the Election Coverage and Community Listening Fund. This initiative was designed to help local and community-based newsrooms enhance voter engagement and provide more accessible election reporting.

Grantees used API and Knight Election Hub funding to:

- Expand election voter guides, making nonpartisan information more accessible.
- Host civic events and town halls to foster direct engagement between voters and candidates.
- Develop innovative print and digital election resources to reach underserved communities.

API provided:

- Strategic guidance and best practices for election coverage
- One-on-one newsroom coaching to help grantees implement effective engagement strategies
- Facilitated peer learning cohorts, allowing newsrooms to share successes and challenges

THE POWER OF TRUSTED ELECTION COVERAGE

Community-centered election reporting is vital in a time of widespread misinformation and declining public trust in media. This program helped newsrooms build credibility with their audiences, ensuring voters had reliable, fact-based information to make informed decisions.

Expanding Voter Engagement Beyond Metro Detroit

The Detroit Free Press, Michigan's largest local newspaper, leveraged the Election Engagement Experiment Fund to expand its election coverage beyond Metro Detroit, ensuring more diversity was represented in its reporting.

Through Voter Voices, a new initiative powered by API's funding, the newsroom created a virtual focus group of voters from eight key counties. The group offered insights into what mattered most to Michigan residents during the 2024 election.

With API's support, Detroit Free Press:

- Expanded election reporting beyond Metro Detroit, incorporating voices from both urban and rural communities.
- Partnered with Michigan State University student freelancers, allowing the newsroom to scale its coverage while providing real-world journalism experience.
- Created a voter focus group that provided periodic feedback on election coverage, ensuring journalism was informed by direct community insights.
- Held a post-election wrap-up event, creating a space where participants could reflect on their experiences and provide direct feedback to journalists.

"It takes a lot of work to cultivate quality connections. But I like to think these are people in their communities now who, when their friends question the media, can say they know and have worked with us."

**— Emily Lawler,
Detroit Free Press**

BUILDING A MODEL FOR RESPONSIVE ELECTION COVERAGE

The Detroit Free Press transformed its approach to election reporting by centering voter concerns rather than traditional media priorities. The newsroom’s focus group challenged assumptions about what voters wanted to read — shifting coverage from broad economic discussions to more personalized topics, such as how inflation affected retirement planning.

By working closely with community members, the newsroom delivered more relevant, responsive election reporting and strengthened trust with its audience.

REDEFINING COMMUNITY LISTENING IN ELECTION REPORTING

This initiative demonstrated the power of long-term voter engagement, proving that direct relationships between journalists and the public lead to more impactful, trusted election coverage. The Detroit Free Press plans to build on this model for future elections, ensuring that diverse community voices continue to shape election journalism in Michigan for years to come.

PHOTO: Emily Lawler of the Detroit Free Press shares a “popcorn provocation” during API’s Local Summit on Elections, Trust and Democracy in Akron. CREDIT: Lilly Chapa.



Innovative Partnerships for Credible Election Coverage

API launched the Election + Influencers Learning Cohort, an experimental initiative designed to help local communities make informed choices about voting and use high-quality information to understand and have confidence in the voting process.

Amid growing news fatigue and digital misinformation, local news organizations sought new ways to connect with disengaged audiences. This program facilitated collaborations with trusted messengers, community leaders and digital creators who already had credibility in their communities.

Newsrooms in the cohort:

- Collaborated with influencers and local trusted voices to share election information in formats that resonated with their niche communities.
- Produced mixed-media storytelling, including short-form videos, social media graphics and interactive community discussions.
- Leveraged research insights on Gen Z and Millennial news consumption habits to improve engagement.

API strategic support and funding included:

- Best practices training on engaging trusted messengers.
- Grants to support experimentation in influencer partnerships.
- Leadership support and organization-wide coaching to build comfort with experimentation.
- Data and audience research insights to guide newsroom strategies.

EXPANDING TRUST IN LOCAL JOURNALISM

At a time when audiences are turning to digital spaces for news, the Election + Influencers Learning Cohort empowered newsrooms to meet people where they are while maintaining journalistic integrity. This program demonstrated that collaborations between journalists and community influencers can enhance credibility and strengthen civic participation.

Expanding Engagement Beyond Traditional Media

INFLUENCERS COHORT CASE STUDY

THE CITY, a nonprofit newsroom serving New York City, participated in API's Election + Influencers Learning Cohort to engage historically disengaged voters.

Recognizing that younger audiences and underserved communities often turn to trusted digital voices for news, THE CITY aimed to expand its reach beyond traditional journalism channels.

With API's support, THE CITY:

- Developed partnerships with hyperlocal influencers, including Gerrie Lim, known as @pigeonpost, who covers local headlines on TikTok and Instagram.
- Produced engaging, short-form videos breaking down key election issues and voting rights tailored for social media.
- Hosted live Q&A sessions on social platforms, allowing community members to ask real-time election questions.
- Experimented with a distributed content model to engage prospective readers where they already consume news.

MEETING AUDIENCES WHERE THEY ARE

THE CITY's participation in this program underscored the importance of delivering election coverage in formats and spaces where audiences naturally engage. Instead of relying solely on website traffic, the newsroom successfully used distributed content strategies to provide nonpartisan election information to more New Yorkers.

THE CITY also learned that working with influencers requires mutual trust and alignment on editorial values, ensuring the information remains accurate, ethical and community-driven


REDEFINING LOCAL ELECTION COVERAGE FOR A DIGITAL AUDIENCE

By adapting coverage to digital consumption habits and being flexible with their vision for engagement, THE CITY successfully increased engagement, strengthened trust and provided a new model for election reporting in urban communities.

The program demonstrated that newsrooms can expand their impact without compromising editorial integrity — if they are willing to experiment, collaborate and invest in audience-first journalism.

PHOTO: API staff enjoying a coffee break at their 2024 Convene + Collaborate retreat in DC.





“People are often looking to social media to explain an issue or offer guidance on a certain topic. Establishing a reputable presence on more platforms works to help us achieve our goals of providing New Yorkers with the information they need to navigate life in our city.”

—Diana Riojas,
THE CITY
in New York



PHOTO: Local news leaders take an art walk with a Tulsa-based visual anthropologist to his Pathway of Hope Public Art Trail during the non-news expert discussions at API's Local Summit on Rural Journalism, Community and Sustainability. CREDIT: Lilly Chapa.

Building Capacity & Strengthening Networks

In addition to direct funding and election initiatives, API continued to provide hands-on training, convenings and strategic coaching that helped news organizations work toward long-term success.

Two key programs, the Local News Summits and Live Events Sprint Program, played a crucial role in strengthening newsroom capacity and fostering collaboration across the industry.

PHOTO: In this moment of reflection during API's Local News Summit in Akron, leaders recorded the community feedback they wanted to receive after the 2024 election.
CREDIT: Lilly Chapa.



LOCAL NEWS SUMMITS

API hosted three major summits, convening newsroom leaders to tackle critical challenges in local news. What set these gatherings apart was API's intentional inclusion of non-news experts — leaders in civic engagement, community organizing and behavioral science — who broadened the conversation on sustainability, trust and newsroom culture.

To serve its mission of supporting local and community-based media, API curated a selection of experts from beyond journalism, including leaders in civic engagement, community organizing and philanthropy. Their perspectives enriched discussions on newsroom sustainability and community trust.

For many participants, these summits provided a rare opportunity to exchange insights, hear directly from leaders outside of journalism and build partnerships that help nurture local news in an era of digital transformation and social disconnection.

Each summit focused on a distinct priority:



ELECTIONS, TRUST & DEMOCRACY (AKRON, OHIO):

Explored how local election coverage can build audience trust and civic engagement beyond Election Day, strengthening voter education and combating misinformation.



RURAL JOURNALISM, COMMUNITY & SUSTAINABILITY (TULSA, OKLAHOMA):

Examined how rural newsrooms can serve as community conveners, using local gatherings and in-person engagement to deepen trust and drive sustainability.



FOSTERING COLLABORATION & BELONGING (MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA):

Focused on workplace culture and resilience, helping news organizations build more inclusive, psychologically safe environments in order to thrive long-term.

LIVE EVENTS SPRINT PROGRAM

API also supported six newsrooms through its Live Events Sprint, a five-month coaching initiative designed to help local news organizations develop, promote and monetize editorially driven live events. Unlike traditional marketing-driven events, this program challenged newsrooms to reimagine their journalism as an opportunity for “live” journalism — where storytelling, community engagement and editorial content converge in new and dynamic ways.

For many participants, this was a significant shift in mindset. Live journalism has historically been tied to breaking news or live coverage, but this sprint encouraged newsrooms to embrace live storytelling as a way to deepen audience relationships and expand their journalism. Despite the challenges of developing new event formats, newsrooms successfully tested revenue models while expanding their role as conveners of civic dialogue.

API's Tools: Powering Smarter Journalism

To help newsrooms build sustainable strategies, API provides hands-on coaching and cutting-edge tools:

- **Metrics for News:** A data analytics tool designed specifically for journalists to understand audience engagement and refine content strategies.
- **Source Matters:** An AI-powered tool that helps newsrooms track and improve source diversity, strengthening trust and representation in reporting.
- **Tech & Product Strategy Coaching:** API helps newsroom leaders balance innovation and long-term viability, ensuring technology supports newsroom goals.

BUILDING SUSTAINABLE NEWSROOMS FOR THE FUTURE

Grant funding provides a critical line of support, but the added layer of API's training, coaching and leadership development programs help set the foundation for lasting newsroom resilience. Sustainability isn't just about financial models — it's also about creating healthier workplaces that support the well-being of journalists and newsroom leaders.

By equipping leaders with strategic tools, collaborative networks and data-driven insights, API helps news organizations build both financial stability and strong, inclusive cultures where journalists can thrive. A truly sustainable newsroom is one that prioritizes both its business model and its people, ensuring that local journalism remains a vital force for years to come.

PHOTO: News leaders participate in small group discussion about managing a young newsroom with Glenn Burkins at the API Summit on Fostering Collaboration and Belonging in Minneapolis. CREDIT: Darin Kamnetz

“API has helped us focus on ways to build a newsroom culture that values the health and well-being of its employees. The workshops have given us tools to build a more caring work environment.

— Glenn Burkins,
QCity Metro
in Charlotte



A Multi-Faceted Partnership for Growth

PublicSource, a nonprofit newsroom based in Pittsburgh, engaged with API across multiple programs, demonstrating the value of long-term engagement and multi-program collaboration.

Through API's guidance and funding, PublicSource refined its approach to community-centered journalism, expanded election coverage and deepened its commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion in reporting.

PROGRAMS PUBLICSOURCE PARTICIPATED IN

- **Election + Influencers Learning Cohort:** PublicSource leveraged API's support to partner with community essayists and digital creators, producing engaging election content tailored to residents spanning generations.
- **Pittsburgh Local News Advisory Committee:** As an active participant in API's six-month pilot advisory committee, PublicSource helped formalize a feedback loop between newsrooms and the community. By sharing their role as listener and news representative across their organization, they ensured that multiple staff members built strong community connections and deepened their understanding of local information needs.
- **Community Listening & Engagement:** With API's coaching, PublicSource strengthened its listening frameworks, ensuring that its reporting was shaped by community needs and voices.
- **API Inclusion Index:** API conducted an in-depth assessment of PublicSource's sourcing and editorial practices, offering actionable steps to improve representation, accessibility and newsroom culture. This work between API and PublicSource has spanned multiple years, reinforcing an ongoing commitment to building a more inclusive and community-centered newsroom.

HOW PUBLICSOURCE GREW

- Expanded election reporting collaborations, using API-backed influencer partnerships to extend their reach.
- Deepened community relationships, strengthening trust and accountability between journalists and the people they serve.
- Developed new audience engagement strategies to better reach underserved communities.
- Implemented DEIB recommendations, fostering a more inclusive newsroom environment.

STRENGTHENING JOURNALISM THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

By engaging with multiple API programs, PublicSource saw tangible improvements in audience trust, newsroom diversity and community partnerships. The combination of funding, coaching and strategic insights empowered the newsroom to experiment with new formats and continue these efforts long-term.

PHOTO: PublicSource staff participate in the second API Inclusion Index project launch event in Pittsburgh. CREDIT: Tricia Cantor



“To enable a newsroom with information, funding and moral support was a great thing to do. It was transformational. I now feel more equipped to lead our innovative team into this world while staying true to our mission and ethics.”

—Halle Stockton,
PublicSource
in Pittsburgh



PHOTO: Journalists from WESA.FM in Pittsburgh canvas the historic Deutschtown neighborhood in Pittsburgh during the second Inclusion Index launch.

Expanding API's Reach and Impact

As API looks ahead, our focus remains on deepening our investments in community-centered journalism, extending the momentum of our election initiatives and equipping newsrooms with the tools and training needed to support their work — and their people — for the long term.

WHERE API IS HEADED

Deepening Investments in Community-Centered Journalism

- API will expand its partnerships with civic organizations and non-news entities, recognizing that the future of journalism requires cross-sector collaboration.
- New funding and training initiatives will focus on inclusive leadership practices, fostering local collaborations and partnerships and helping communities embrace — not avoid — news by connecting journalism to local identity, history and civic discourse.

PHOTO: Journalists at API's Local News Summit on Rural Journalism, Community and Sustainability in Tulsa.




Sustaining Election-Year Momentum

- The lessons learned from the Election Engagement Experiment Fund and the Election + Influencers Learning Cohort will inform expanded programs for local news organizations, helping them maintain audience trust beyond election cycles.
- API will continue supporting newsrooms in combating misinformation through data-driven insights and researched tactics on community engagement and trust-building.

Equipping Newsrooms for the Future

- API will develop new resources on AI in journalism, sustainability models and community engagement strategies, ensuring newsrooms are prepared for emerging challenges.
- API will enhance its Metrics for News and Source Matters tools, integrating natural language processing (NLP) and real-time audience analytics to support data-driven editorial decision-making.
- API will develop new tools that use AI and data to help news organizations and philanthropies track the ongoing changes in their rapidly evolving communities and evaluate the impact of their work.



“[API has] helped me widen my lens about how to serve our community. We don’t often slow down enough to imagine/consider audience impact. API has given me tools and also the confidence to slow down, plan and execute.”

—Melissa Luck, *KXLY-TV*
in Spokane, Washington

JOIN US IN STRENGTHENING LOCAL JOURNALISM

Journalism today faces unprecedented challenges, but its role as a pillar of democracy has never been more vital. API is committed to being a stabilizing force, helping newsrooms navigate uncertainty, take bold yet informed risks and build deeper trust with the communities they serve.

The future of journalism is not about survival. It's about creating a stronger, more resilient and inclusive media ecosystem in which local news remains a source of reliable information and civic engagement. We are committed to being the bridge that connects newsrooms, communities and sustainable reporting models, ensuring that local journalism remains a cornerstone of democracy for generations to come. Our impact is only possible with the support of funders, newsroom leaders and partners who believe in the future of trustworthy journalism. Let's build a more resilient, community-centered news ecosystem together.

Contact us for more information on how you can support API's mission and strengthen local journalism.

hello@pressinstitute.org

Please include "2024 Impact Report" in your subject line.



PHOTO: API staff gather around CEO Michael Bolden after a successful and energizing staff retreat in DC.



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