

AMERICANPRESS *institute*

Topline: Nonprofit Media Organizations

From “Charting new ground: The ethical terrain of nonprofit journalism” (Published 4/20/16)
Collected May 20-July 5 and October 16-November2, 2015
Total N=94

		PERCENT	COUNT
1. How long ago was your nonprofit news organization founded?	Less than 5 years ago	35%	33
	6-9 years ago	39%	37
	10-15 years ago	7%	7
	16-50 years ago	10%	9
	More than 50 years ago	3%	3
	Don't know/Not sure	1%	1
	No response	4%	4

2. Which media category best describes your nonprofit news organization?	Other	2%	2
	Newspaper media	3%	3
	Television media	0%	0
	Digital only media (General interest or community based)	41%	39
	Single subject news organization (digital or multiplatform)	24%	23
	Radio media	2%	2
	Multimedia	21%	20
	No response	5%	5

3. Which of the following best describes your core audience?	Other	3%	3
	Hyperlocal	12%	11
	Metro area	16%	15
	State or regional	32%	30
	National	15%	14
	International	3%	3
	Several of the above	14%	13
	No response	5%	5

		PERCENT	COUNT
4. Approximately, what was your organization's overall budget in the last calendar year?	Less than \$100,000	20%	19
	\$100,000 to \$249,999	18%	17
	\$250,000 to \$499,999	17%	16
	\$500,000 to \$999,999	14%	13
	\$1 million to \$1.9 million	9%	8
	\$2 million to \$5 million	4%	4
	More than \$5 million	9%	8
	Don't Know/Not Sure	0%	0
	No response	10%	9

5. Over the last five years, has your overall budget increased, decreased or remained the about same?	Increased	53%	50
	Decreased	13%	12
	Remained the same	22%	21
	Don't Know/Not Sure	3%	3
	No response	9%	8

6. About how many full-time staff employees does your organization have?	Fewer than 5	57%	54
	5-9	11%	10
	10-19	9%	8
	20-29	4%	4
	30 to 50	4%	4
	More than 50	5%	5
	Don't Know/Not Sure	1%	1
	No response	9%	8

8. Looking at your current funding, roughly how much of your budget comes from each type of charitable source?			
A. Private foundations	Less than 25%	24%	23
	25%-50%	21%	20
	More than 50%	32%	30
	None	11%	10
	No response	12%	11
B. High net worth individual donors	Less than 25%	39%	37
	25%-50%	20%	19
	More than 50%	6%	6
	None	14%	13
	No response	20%	19

		PERCENT	COUNT
C. Small donations	Less than 25%	63%	59
	25%-50%	10%	9
	More than 50%	6%	6
	None	6%	6
	No response	15%	14
D. Community foundations	Less than 25%	41%	39
	25%-50%	10%	9
	More than 50%	0%	0
	None	18%	17
	No response	31%	29
E. Public charities	Less than 25%	29%	27
	25%-50%	1%	1
	More than 50%	0%	0
	None	33%	31
	No response	37%	35
F. Corporate foundations	Less than 25%	31%	29
	25%-50%	2%	2
	More than 50%	1%	1
	None	30%	28
	No response	36%	34
Other	University support	6%	6
	Advertising	3%	3
	Events	4%	4
	Sponsorships	5%	5
	PBS/CPB/Government	3%	3

9. What percentage of your organization's overall budget approximately came from foundation grants in the last calendar year?	Other	2%	2
	Zero	11%	10
	1 percent - 5 percent	3%	3
	5 percent - 10 percent	5%	5
	11 percent - 20 percent	6%	6
	21 percent - 50 percent	15%	14
	51 percent - 75 percent	18%	17
	More than 75 percent	21%	20
	Don't Know/Not Sure	3%	3
No response	15%	14	

		PERCENT	COUNT
10. Over the last five years, has the percentage of your budget coming from foundation grants increased, decreased or remained the same?	Increased	19%	18
	Decreased	30%	28
	Remained the same	33%	31
	Don't know/Not Sure	4%	4
	No response	14%	13

11. How many different foundations did you receive funding from in the last calendar year?	None	9%	8
	One	6%	6
	Two to four	30%	28
	Five to nine	18%	17
	10 to 15	9%	8
	16 to 25	4%	4
	More than 25	3%	3
	Don't Know/Not Sure	4%	4
	No response	17%	16

12. Over the last five years, has the number of foundations you received funding from increased, decreased or remained about the same?	Increased	44%	41
	Decreased	12%	11
	Remained the same	26%	24
	Don't know/Not Sure	2%	2
	No response	17%	16

13. Approximately what percentage of your budget, if any, comes from earned income such as advertising, sponsorship, events, e-books or anything other than philanthropic support?	None, or almost none	21%	20
	Less than 10%	26%	24
	10% to 24%	19%	18
	25% to 50%	12%	11
	More than 50%	5%	5
	Don't Know/Not Sure	0%	0
	No response	17%	16

		PERCENT	COUNT
15. On your website or annual report, does your organization publicly list all your donors, most of them, only some, or none?	All	40%	38
	Most	22%	21
	Some	16%	15
	None	3%	3
	Don't Know/Not Sure	2%	2
	No response	16%	15

16. Do you set a level of financial contribution above which your organization discloses the name of the donors, and if so at what level?	\$250 and above	5%	5
	\$500 and above	4%	4
	\$1,000 and above	13%	12
	\$5,000 and above	3%	3
	\$10,000 and above	1%	1
	All donations regardless of their level	21%	20
	We do not set a threshold	26%	24
	Don't Know/Not Sure	5%	5
	No response	21%	20

17. Have you ever received contributions from donor-advised funds, which are charitable organizations administered by third-parties to manage the charitable contribution of an organization, family or individuals?	Yes	47%	44
	No	28%	26
	Don't Know/Not Sure	10%	9
	No response	16%	15

18. IF YES: Do you identify both the name of the donor-advised fund on your website or annual report, as well as the individual(s) who make the contribution?	Other	3%	3
	The donor-advised fund but not its constituent contributors	16%	15
	Both donor-advised funds and its contributors	18%	17
	Neither	3%	3
	Don't know	6%	6
	No response/Not asked	53%	50

		PERCENT	COUNT
19. Does your organization have a written policy about disclosing contributors that is posted on your website or annual report?	Yes	40%	38
	No	35%	33
	Don't Know/Not Sure	5%	5
	No response	19%	18

20. How does your organization disclose the partnership or relationship with a funder on specific content area that they have underwritten? (check all that apply)			
a. We explain the content area that the funder has funded		26%	24
b. We identify when a specific story has been produced with a funder's support		31%	29
c. We stipulate the specific issues or problems a funder is providing support for		15%	14
d. We don't identify funders on stories, only in our contributors' list generally		23%	22
e. We don't identify funders		1%	1

21. Has a partner or funder you have worked with ever subsequently been a subject of one of your own news stories?	Yes	37%	35
	No	39%	37
	Don't know/Not Sure	4%	4
	No response	19%	18

22. Did you mention your previous collaboration in that story, did you not cite it, or do you not know?	Other	0%	0
	We cited our collaboration in subsequent news stories about them	24%	23
	We didn't cite our collaboration in subsequent news stories about them	3%	3
	We cited them in some news stories but not others	7%	7
	Don't know/Not Sure	1%	1
	No response	64%	60

		PERCENT	COUNT
23. Do you have written guidelines regarding who you will and will not accept money from?	Yes	37%	35
	No	38%	36
	Don't Know/No Sure	6%	6
	No response	18%	17

24. IF YES: Are your funding guidelines published on your website or anywhere else?	Yes	27%	25
	No	6%	6
	Don't Know/Not Sure	4%	4
	No response	63%	59

25. Which of the following kinds of grants is your organization receiving now and has it changed in the last five years?			
A. General operating support grants	Increased	13%	12
	Decreased	10%	9
	Remained the same	10%	9
	Don't receive this kind of grant	4%	4
	No response	64%	60
B. Grants for capacity building (to help grantees fundraise and develop sustainability)	Increased	7%	7
	Decreased	7%	7
	Remained the same	5%	5
	Don't receive this kind of grant	15%	14
	No response	65%	61
C. Grants for coverage of general subject areas (such as environment or health care)	Increased	16%	15
	Decreased	2%	2
	Remained the same	6%	6
	Don't receive this kind of grant	12%	11
	No response	64%	60
D. Grants for coverage of more specific issues or problems (such as fracking or breast cancer)	Increased	11%	10
	Decreased	4%	4
	Remained the same	2%	2
	Don't receive this kind of grant	18%	17
	No response	65%	61
E. Funding of particular investigative projects or series of stories	Increased	9%	8
	Decreased	4%	4
	Remained the same	11%	10
	Don't receive this kind of grant	13%	12
	No response	64%	60

		PERCENT	COUNT
F. Grants to experiment with new forms of storytelling	Increased	11%	10
	Decreased	1%	1
	Remained the same	3%	3
	Don't receive this kind of grant	20%	19
	No response	65%	61
G. Grants to adopt new technologies	Increased	5%	5
	Decreased	4%	4
	Remained the same	3%	3
	Don't receive this kind of grant	22%	21
	No response	65%	61
H. Grants for a particular type of journalism (such as investigative) without specifying topics or projects	Increased	9%	8
	Decreased	5%	5
	Remained the same	11%	10
	Don't receive this kind of grant	11%	10
	No response	65%	61

26. Has your organization ever accepted donations from contributors who do not wish to be identified publicly beyond what is required by law in your 990s?	Yes	29%	27
	No	49%	46
	Don't Know/Not Sure	4%	4
	No response	18%	17

27. IF YES: For which of the following have you accepted anonymous donations of this sort? (check all that apply)		
a. General support	24%	23
b. Coverage of general subject areas of coverage	3%	3
c. Coverage of specific issues or problems	3%	3
d. Particular investigative projects or series of stories	1%	1
e. To experiment with new forms of storytelling	1%	1
f. To adopt new technologies to improve journalism	0%	0
g. For a particular type of journalism (such as investigative)	4%	4
h. Amounts below a certain threshold amount	6%	6
i. We have no conditions limiting anonymous donations	3%	3

		PERCENT	COUNT
28. Has a foundation, donor or partner ever changed its mind and agreed to disclosure because of your policies, or has this not ever happened that you know of?	Other	4%	4
	Yes, we have had a donor agree to disclosure because of our policy	9%	8
	No, this has not happened that I know of	67%	63
	No response	20%	19

29. To what degree do you usually communicate with funders about what you are working on prior to publication?	Other (please specify)	2%	2
	We talk about specific stories and timing	3%	3
	We talk about the problems our reporting might expose and the conclusions we will come to but not specific stories	4%	4
	We talk about coverage areas but only in general terms	34%	32
	Our policy is never to discuss with funders specifically what we are working on prior to publication	34%	32
	Only details related to grants or updates on what we're doing	3%	3
	No response	19%	18

30. How often, it at all, do funders see editorial content they have helped underwrite prior to publication?	Always	1%	1
	Usually	0%	0
	About half the time	0%	0
	Only sometimes	1%	1
	Very rarely	3%	3
	Never	73%	69
	Don't Know/Not Sure	2%	2
	No response	19%	18

		PERCENT	COUNT
31. How often, if at all, do you make any editorial changes in your content based on funder input?	Almost always	0%	0
	Usually	0%	0
	About half the time	0%	0
	Only sometimes	2%	2
	Hardly ever	3%	3
	Never	51%	48
	We have never been asked to do so	22%	21
	Don't Know/Not Sure	1%	1
	No response	20%	19

32. What is the nature of the review that funders USUALLY have in reviewing journalistic content prior to release for work they have underwritten?	Other	4%	4
	Funders have the right to edit the content they have underwritten	1%	1
	Funders can make suggestions but we do not have to accept them	1%	1
	Funders can offer general comments but not specific editorial suggestions	0%	0
	We do not pass their comments along to the editorial department	1%	1
	Funders see content prior to publication but only as a courtesy and they only offer a comment if there is a significant "red flag" concern	0%	0
	We do not allow funders to review content prior to publication	71%	67
	No response	21%	20

		PERCENT	COUNT
33. Whatever your policies, how are they communicated to funders and other partners?	Other	0%	0
	We don't have a written policy but we make our views on editorial independence clear	43%	40
	We have formal written ethics policies that establish our editorial independence but we don't make it part of the grant agreement	22%	21
	We have a formal written policy on editorial independence and we ask funders to make it part of our grant agreements	13%	12
	No response	22%	21

34. Do any of your funders make reviewing content prior to publication a formal or informal condition of the grant?	Other	0%	0
	Some funders make it a formal condition of the grant	0%	0
	Some funders informally expect this as part of the grant	2%	2
	None of our funders have this expectation	78%	73
	No response	20%	19

35. Recognizing there can be many factors in funding decisions, which of the following statements comes closer to describing the reason you think your funders make grants to media organizations?	To have a desired impact and advance the larger strategic agenda of the foundation	33%	31
	To strengthen a free press and to educate the citizens regardless of the outcome of the reporting they fund	40%	38
	Don't Know/Not Sure	6%	6
	No response	20%	19

36. Funders often look for metrics to evaluate their grant making. Please indicate all metrics that you provide to funders.

	PERCENT	COUNT
a. Your web traffic such as page views, visitors, time spent etc.	65%	61
b. Social media numbers or activity	59%	55
c. Web traffic of partners who distributed the work	34%	32
d. Numbers of other media organizations that used or cited the work	55%	52
e. Audience comments or other audience actions taken	37%	35
f. Responses from officials to the reporting	41%	39
g. Direct impact from your work, i.e. formal hearings, laws changed or charges filed	50%	47
h. Editorials written or other journalistic activities that followed your work	38%	36
i. Evidence of changes in awareness or knowledge of an issue or topic	43%	40
j. Evidence of changes in attitudes/perceptions about an issue or topic	32%	30
k. As a matter of policy, we don't provide partners with metric	3%	3
l. Never been asked	2%	2

37. Has a foundation ever offered to fund an investigation or specific series of stories on an issue or problem, as opposed to ongoing coverage of a general topic area?	Yes	41%	39
	No	34%	32
	Don't Know/Not Sure	4%	4
	No response	20%	19

38. IF YES: Did you accept the funding?	Yes	34%	32
	No	9%	8
	Don't Know/Not Sure	0%	0
	No response/Not asked	57%	54

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

	PERCENT	COUNT
a. While the particular project was not on our list, the general topic was one we cover	4%	4
b. The project or investigation was already on our list of thing to do	24%	23
c. The project was not on our list already but struck us as worthwhile	5%	5
d. The funding was important to our sustainability	4%	4
e. We wanted to establish a relationship with this funder	4%	4
f. We already had a good relationship with this funder	3%	3

40. 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	12%	11
c. The subject was not one we generally cover	3%	3
d. The funder is such an advocate on the issue this felt like a conflict of interest	2%	2
e. We felt the funder would be too involved	0%	0
f. Previous experience with funder led us to decline working with them again	1%	1
g. We didn't have the capacity at the time to do the work	3%	3

41. Have you ever accepted funds from a donor and decided later that you wouldn't want to accept funding from them in the future?	Yes	3%	3
	No	67%	63
	Don't Know/Not Sure	7%	7
	No response	22%	21

42. IF YES: What were the most important reasons for your decision not to work with them again? (Select up to two)

	PERCENT	COUNT
a. The level of communication and consultation was too involved	0%	0
b. We decided their advocacy on this issue constituted more of a conflict of interest than we were comfortable with	0%	0
c. The level of funding was not sufficient to finance the work we had to do	1%	1
d. They did not understand the difference between journalism and political action	0%	0
e. The partnership was more trouble than it was worth	0%	0
f. The affiliation with them was too controversial	0%	0
g. Other	3%	3

43. Has your organization ever returned or declined a grant that was offered?	Yes	11%	10
	No	60%	56
	Don't Know/Not Sure	9%	8
	No response	21%	20

44. 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	4%	4
b. The grant became too controversial	0%	0
c. Discussions over editorial content became too difficult to resolve	0%	0
d. Differences over the timetable of the work	0%	0
e. Differences over editorial independence	0%	0
f. The collaboration was more trouble than it was worth	2%	2
g. Other	5%	5

		PERCENT	COUNT
45. Has a funder ever requested that your organization return funds for reasons other than the grant period ended and not all funds had been used?	Yes	0%	0
	No	31%	29
	Don't Know/Not Sure	0%	0
	No response	69%	65

47. Has your organization ever had to defend itself from public criticism because it accepted funding from a particular foundation?	Yes	24%	23
	No	51%	48
	Don't Know/Not Sure	3%	3
	No response	21%	20

48. IF YES: About how often has that happened?	Other	2%	2
	It has happened with almost every foundation	0%	0
	It has happened several times	10%	9
	It has happened once or twice	12%	12
	No response	76%	71

49. Does your organization ever accept grants to cover issues on which the funder 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	6%	6
	We make those decisions case by case, based on the level and nature of the advocacy	35%	33
	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	7%	7
	We have never been approached about doing this	24%	23
	No response	27%	25

		PERCENT	COUNT
50. Has your organization ever collaborated editorially with for profit or other not-for-profit news organizations?	Yes we sometimes collaborate with for profit news organizations	11%	10
	Yes we sometime collaborate with other not-for-profit news organizations	13%	12
	We sometimes collaborate with BOTH for profit news organizations and other nonprofit	46%	43
	No, we never collaborate with either	6%	6
	Don't Know/Not Sure	3%	3
	No response	21%	20

51. If you have ever collaborated with for profit news organizations, do they pay you for your work?	Yes	6%	6
	No	45%	42
	Some do/Some do not	15%	14
	Don't Know/Not Sure	6%	6
	No response	28%	26