“Community needs evolve over time. The Fund for Wichita gives the Wichita Foundation the flexibility to address critical gaps, such as the local news landscape, and seize ideas to improve the quality of life in our city.”

- Debbie Gann, Wichita Foundation Board Chair
WHY NEWS & INFO MATTERS

Informed citizens lead to a healthier Wichita. Yet, across the country, local news organizations are disappearing. This shortage harms the civic health of communities, including ours.

The Crisis¹
20% of the U.S. population lives in a news desert. 58 counties in Kansas have a single newspaper. One county in Kansas is without a newspaper. Wichita is a city of ghost papers².

Since 2018, the Wichita Foundation has been laying the groundwork for an engaged community by investing in local news and information needs. We’re just getting started with our work to revive community-centric news and reconnect Wichitans with the information they need to thrive.

Turn the page to learn about our News & Information efforts to create a more informed city.

News & Information Fund at WF
A look at our impact from 2018 to 2023

$1,950,000
invested in Wichita

With a focus on
COLLABORATION + EXPERIMENTATION + TRANSFORMATION

To invest in new initiatives
• WICHITA JOURNALISM COLLABORATIVE • DATA-DRIVEN STORYTELLING: WICHITA • THE WICHITA BEACON • TINY NEWS COLLECTIVE •

Which welcomed local partnerships from
15 INFORMATION OUTLETS

And unlocked
$3,370,000
IN NATIONAL FUNDING

To create an informed and engaged community

“By transforming the local news ecosystem as a whole, our community can engage in quality content that is central to citizens’ lives and the health of our city.”

- Courtney Bengtson, Chief Strategy Officer of the Wichita Foundation

¹ Source: UNC School of Journalism & Media, Medill Local News Initiative
² Newsrooms that drastically reduce their operations due to sinking revenues
Collaborating To Elevate Stories

There’s power in news partnerships. What if like-minded partners in Wichita convened to maximize their reporting of local challenges? An initial gift from the News and Information Fund at WF launched this idea with an eye toward pooling resources and elevating stories that matter to Wichitans.

$365,900 combined investment with Solutions Journalism Network to create Wichita Journalism Collaborative

This coalition empowers reporters to discover solutions to address information needs, facilitate audience engagement initiatives and push the boundaries of traditional delivery platforms. The partners work collectively to deliver quality content that covers complex topics, fostering a more informed citizenry and driving meaningful conversations within the community.

Wichita Journalism Collaborative Highlights since WJC’s debut in 2020

Fostering public dialogue
- 11Media and community partners
- 70+Stories published
- 2Internship opportunities
- Scan with your phone to receive the latest stories

Solutions-focused efforts
- Experiment with digital tools
- News and community partners
- Stories published
- Internship opportunities
- Scan with your phone to receive the latest stories

WHAT WE LEARNED

Partnerships spark change.
- National partners leveled up WJC’s access to training and knowledge-sharing with other communities.
- Explore emerging tech.
- Leverage digital and social tools, like text messaging and video series, to enhance audience reach and depth of reporting.
- Focus on the mission.
- Setting a clear, collective goal with all parties is critical to build trust and cultivate quality journalism in the group.

“We hope that fostering public dialogue and telling the stories of residents will help make discussion of mental health issues less stigmatized in our community.”

- Chris Green, Project Manager for the Wichita Journalism Collaborative
EXPERIMENTING ON ACCESS FOR ALL

Open data has the strength to bring residents together to solve problems and enhance our community. Data is primarily shared through a sight-based format that limits its accessibility to the blind and visually impaired (BVI). How do we make this information digestible to all?

$140,000 investment explores audio methods for Making Civic Data Accessible

This project, funded by the Knight Foundation, brought together the Wichita Journalism Collaborative, Sonify (a New York company focused on data-sonification) and Envision (a nonprofit that empowers the blind or visually impaired) to explore immersive storytelling techniques with members of the BVI community. The result is data-driven audio solutions we can all benefit from as consumers of information.

Data-Driven Storytelling in Wichita

Results since launching the experiment in 2021

- Wichita Journalism Collaborative
- Planeta Venus
- Wichita Public Library

3 outlets from the

15 BVI advisors

9 Males
6 Females

4 states
6+ occupations

Located in Kansas, Wisconsin, Ohio & North Carolina
Accessibility scientists, technologists, engineers, educators, lawyers & more

2 trainings with guest speakers from across the globe
9 podcasts produced and 3 published at wichita.sonify.io

““The goal of the project was to take visual information, like a pie chart or visual data set, then translate that into an auditory medium. I knew that was not going to be easy.””

- Robert Tabor, BVI Advisor

WHAT WE LEARNED

- Inclusion is key. The BVI community’s direct involvement supported storytelling teams in testing and evaluating audio pieces for a more immersive experience.
- Think globally, act locally. Sonification is complex. Uniting storytellers, technologists and applied researchers from across the globe helped unlock solutions and guidance in the field.
- Embrace the journey. Experimenting with unique storytelling techniques, such as sound, manifests innovation and audience engagement.

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- Embrace the journey. Experimenting with unique storytelling techniques, such as sound, manifests innovation and audience engagement.
Focus on the collective vision.
We strive to strengthen local news to build community. Stories are produced by Wichitans for Wichitans, with a goal of making a stronger, more vibrant city for all.

Harness local voices.
Amplifying the stories of residents directly affected by local issues is central to building trust and a more equitable future of local news.

Embrace national partnerships.
Establishing relationships with leaders in philanthropy and journalism help foster efforts to strengthen, scale and sustain local news efforts.

WHAT WE’RE LEARNING

“Communities across the country have their eye on us and the collaborative approach we’re taking here to build back the local news ecosystem.”

- Stephanie Campbell, CEO of Beacon Media, Inc.

$1,100,000 record commitment
launched a nonprofit startup
The Wichita Beacon

By partnering with The Beacon, a nonprofit regional news network serving Kansas and Missouri, we established our city’s first nonprofit digital news organization. The Wichita Beacon is reshaping the face of journalism with a fresh model for reliable news on topics that matter to Wichitans and reporters deeply woven into our community to advance the hyperlocal news ecosystem as a whole.

Reporting on critical topics

Democracy  Education  Elections
Health  Housing  Investigative
Local Government  State Government

0  5  10
Staff members  Community Engagement  Bureau members

National coverage
New York Times & Chronicle of Philanthropy

Innovation award
Wichita Business Journal honoree in 2023

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Philanthropy is a growing and stable source for funding local news. Since the launch of WF’s News and Information Fund, organizations and news information outlets are at the frontlines working to build a sustainable future for Wichita’s local news landscape.

“The Wichita Foundation has been a pioneer in demonstrating how community foundations can sustain public service journalism that connects readers to essential resources, informs them on local policy decisions that affect their lives, and bridges divides.”

- Sarabeth Berman, CEO of the American Journalism Project

Local News Solutions
- The Wichita Beacon
- Wichita Journalism Collaborative
- The Active Age
- The Community Voice
- The Journal (Kansas Leadership Center)
- KMUW
- KSN
- Planet Venus
- The Sunflower
- The Wichita Beacon
- The Wichita Eagle
- Wichita State School of Communication
- Wichita Public Library
- Data-Driven Storytelling: Wichita
- Envision
- Sonify
- Wichita Journalism Collaborative

National Partners
- American Journalism Project
- Center for Cooperative Media at Montclair State University
- Center for Public Integrity
- The Documenters Network
- Democracy Fund
- Knight Foundation
- The Lenfest Institute
- LION Publishers
- Media Impact Funders
- Solutions Journalism Network
- Tiny News Collective

Members of the Wichita Journalism Collaborative attended the Collaborative Journalism Summit.
NF, KMUW and local coffee shops partner to encourage voting in 2020

Join our local news efforts to create a more informed city.

FUND FOR WICHITA

These gifts support WF’s strategic initiatives, including the News and Information Fund. This list contains gifts made as of July 31, 2023.

FOUNDERS
Wichitans who established the Fund for Wichita.
- Bank IV
- Beech Memorial Foundation
- Vernon & Kathleen Bateson
- S.M. & Laura H. Brown Charitable Trust
- Elizabeth Hamilton & Edward Alexander Caredis
- DeVore Foundation
- Fidelity Bank
- William L. & Mary Lynn Oliver
- Richard & Harriet Price
- Dale V. Reed
- A. Scott & Carol Ritchie
- Carl & Mildred Rohwer
- Robert J. & Alice R. Sauer
- Donna J. Schmid
- Kenneth Waggon
- E. Lawrence & H. Lucile Wulfmeyer

LEGACY DONORS
Wichitans who have listed the Fund for Wichita in their estate plans.
- Clay & Kate Bastian
- Doug & Suzanne Coin
- Jim & Sharon Kincaid
- Cameron & Shelly Prichard
- Carl Rohwer
- Kelly Rundell
- Craig & Laura Thompson

FUNDERS
Annual contributors
- Vernon & Kathleen Bateson
- Don & Bettie Cordes
- Victor Murdock
- Gerry G. Sibey
- Margot B. Skinner

SUPPORTERS
One-time gifts
- Boleh Development
- Computer Sciences Corporation Fair Fund
- Steve & Janis Cox Charitable Fund
- Chuck & Cindy McSwain
- James Nastars
- Greg & Nikki Rincker
- Give Lively Foundation, Inc.

ANONYMOUS FUNDS (4)
LET’S BUILD COMMUNITY

Want to support the future of local news in Wichita?

Connect with us to spark change.

 wichitafoundation.org
 info@wichitafoundation.org

A paint night and suicide prevention training event hosted by the Wichita Journalism Collaborative and Suspenders4Hope