

# NEWS & INFORMATION IN WICHITA

2018 - 2023



**WICHITA**  
FOUNDATION





Cover photo: The Wichita Beacon hosts a Community Conversation event addressing social justice issues (Fernando Salazar/The Wichita Beacon)

Inside cover photo: WF's Courtney Bengtson, Shelly Prichard and Board Chair Debbie Gann connecting with leaders in news and information at the Knight Media Forum

**“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 Crisis<sup>1</sup>

- 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 papers<sup>2</sup>.**

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.

<sup>1</sup>Source: UNC School of Journalism & Media, Medill Local News Initiative

<sup>2</sup>Newsrooms that drastically reduce their operations due to sinking revenues

## 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



To create an informed and engaged community



And unlocked

# \$3,370,000

IN NATIONAL FUNDING

**“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



# 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.



Celebrating the release of a new mental health resource for our community

## Wichita Journalism Collaborative

Highlights since WJC's debut in 2020

### Fostering public dialogue



Media and community partners



Stories published



Internship opportunities



Scan with your phone to receive the latest stories

### Solutions-focused efforts



Experiment with digital tools



A weekly pop-up newsroom at the Wichita Public Library



Trainings and events focused on mental health

**“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*

## 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.



# 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<sup>1</sup>) 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.

<sup>1</sup> Sonification: the use of non-speech audio to convey information

## Data-Driven Storytelling in Wichita

Results since launching the experiment in 2021

**3 outlets from the  
Wichita Journalism Collaborative**  
The Journal • Planeta Venus • Wichita Public Library

### 15 BVI advisors



Located in Kansas,  
Wisconsin, Ohio &  
North Carolina



Accessibility scientists,  
technologists, engineers,  
educators, lawyers & more



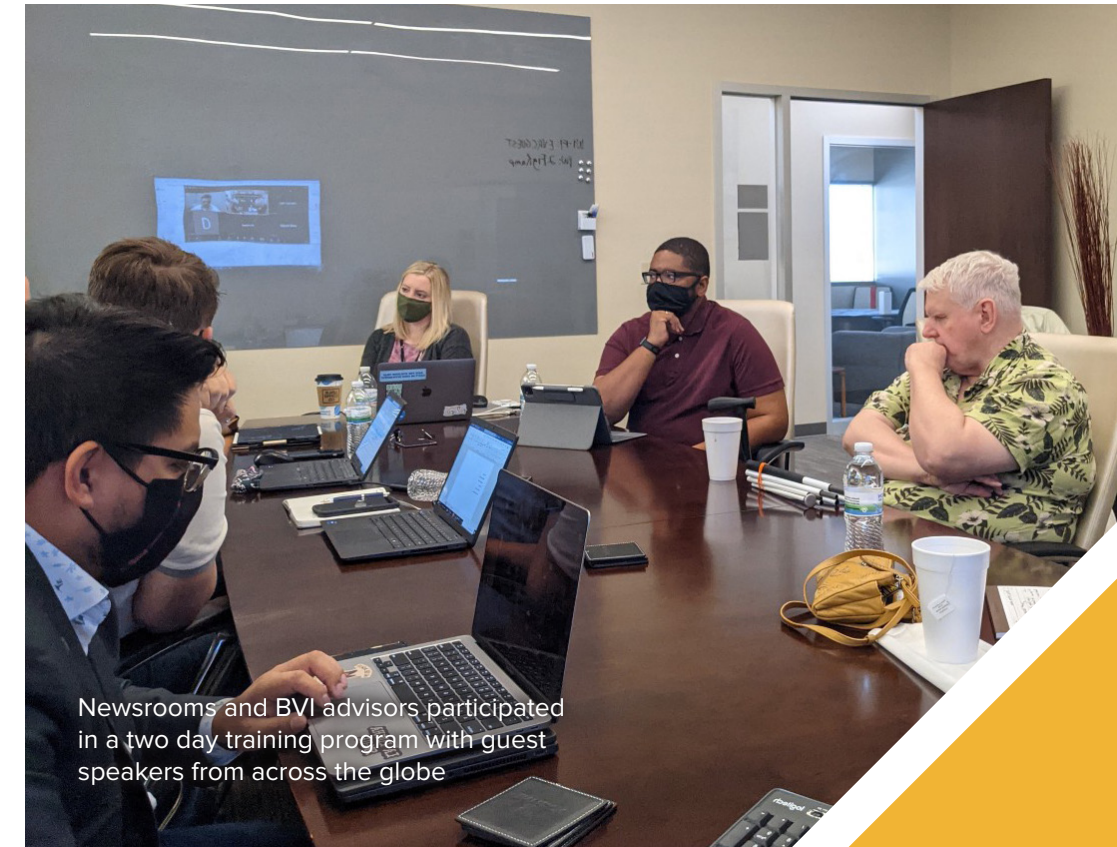
**2 trainings**  
with guest speakers  
from across the globe



**9 podcasts**  
produced and 3 published  
at [wichita.sonify.io](http://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



Newsrooms and BVI advisors participated in a two day training program with guest speakers from across the globe

## 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.

# TRANSFORMING THE NEWS LANDSCAPE

A solid foundation of local news can manifest vibrant communities, link people together and inform their way of life. With local news models emerging across the nation, philanthropic hubs are rethinking techniques to meet the information needs of their communities. That’s why we co-invested with the American Journalism Project to cultivate a community-centric newsroom in Wichita.

**\$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.



130 Wichitans participated in Community Conversations: A Social Justice Sit-Down (Fernando Salazar/The Wichita Beacon)


**“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.


### The Wichita Beacon

Delivering the latest news since 2021


#### Reporting on critical topics




Democracy




Education




Elections




Health




Housing




Investigative




Local Government



State Government




5 Staff members




10 Community Engagement Bureau members

#### National coverage

New York Times & Chronicle of Philanthropy





#### Innovation award

Wichita Business Journal honoree in 2023

## WHAT WE’RE LEARNING

### 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.

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# INFORMED & ENGAGED COMMUNITY

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.

### LOCAL NEWS SOLUTIONS

The Wichita Beacon

Wichita Journalism Collaborative

*The Active Age*

*The Community Voice*

*The Journal (Kansas Leadership Center)*

KMUW

KSN

Planeta Venus

The Sunflower

The Wichita Beacon

The Wichita Eagle

Wichita State Elliott 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



“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



# 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 Wagon  
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 O. Sibley  
Margot B. Skinner

## SUPPORTERS

*One-time gifts*

Bokeh 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)

WF, KMW and local coffee  
shops partner to encourage  
voting in 2020



Join our local news efforts to  
create a more informed city.  
Scan with your phone camera.





# LET'S BUILD COMMUNITY

Want to support the future of local news in Wichita?

Connect with us to spark change.

 [wichitafoundation.org](https://wichitafoundation.org)

 [info@wichitafoundation.org](mailto:info@wichitafoundation.org)



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