

2026



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Community Journalism Grants

A crisis in journalism threatens to become a crisis for our democracy.



Community journalism and local news are at a critical crossroads.

We need them more than ever for timely and accurate information. With all the false information on everything from elections to the pandemic and community issues, citizens deserve a trusted source for information.

But the last decade has seen cuts, layoffs, and closures to news organizations in communities across our state, straining the quality and quantity of original, independent journalism.

A robust press and an engaged, informed citizenry are the cornerstones of a healthy democracy and civil society. This MPA Foundation community journalism grant is one way to help support essential local news and make sure that it continues to happen.

The Community Journalism grants will help provide vital resources for local newsrooms at community newspapers around Michigan. The grants are intended to support various newsroom projects, from helping to fund additional reporters, a specific news project, augmenting newsroom technology, or other needs to keep watchdog journalists delivering fair, informative community news coverage.



MISSION

Provide a funding resource that helps support, **strengthen, spark, and sustain** quality community journalism in Michigan Press Association member newspapers across the Great Lakes State.

GOALS

- Support MPA's diverse newspapers and online publications with competitive grants to bolster their newsroom operations and help offset declining or stretched resources and staff.
- Strengthen local news and information, increasing the trust and value Michiganders place on community journalism.
- Spark creativity in local newsrooms on ways to use such funding and garner donor interest and engagement in supporting community journalism.
- Sustain community journalism and the state's newspapers and online publications in the long term by helping build capacity and raising broader support and awareness of the role and value of local news.

PARAMETERS

For grantees

Michigan Press Association members are diverse – from large metros to small weekly newspapers and online publications. MPAF acknowledges that one size will not fit all. That is why we will accept a wide range of requests. Applicants must clearly outline how they will use the award to benefit their local newsroom and community.

The grantee can use the resources to:

- Add additional reporters, whether hiring a freelance writer, an intern, and/or supporting an existing reporter's completion of news that matters to the community
- Fuel a specific in-depth, investigative, or data news project
- Enhance newsroom technology
- Your unique idea or project

A committee comprised of MPAF board members, community representatives, and MPA member publications (one weekly, one daily, one group, one online publication, one affiliate member, one emeritus, and one individual member) will review and evaluate each grant application based on the merits of the proposal, ability to improve newsroom quality and resources, and to impact and inform the community. The committee members are chosen from a pool of volunteers after the submission deadline to avoid conflict of interest.





Criteria considerations:

Is there a vital newsroom need? (Under-covered topics, communities or geographic areas, tech upgrade, online edition?)

How will the grant help fill your news gap?

Will this project provide an opportunity to generate local philanthropy for improved news coverage?

Other factors include having the following:

How will this project content be distributed for maximum community impact?

How will you assess the project's success?

Who is eligible? Any MPA member and organization committed to providing objective, civically influential local journalism. That could include public radio and TV stations, newspapers, digital sites, commercial radio and TV stations, or wire services, providing direct journalism. The member newspaper can be independent, nonprofit, or group.

Advocacy journalism organizations are not eligible. We are aware that advocacy journalism organizations do great work. However, our goal is to promote local community news reporting.

Application deadline: The applications for consideration open on **May 15, 2026**, and close on **July 31, 2026**. Grant reviewers will assess applications August 15-30, 2026, with the award announced by September 15, 2026.

Send Application forms to: Jim Tarrant • jim@michiganpress.org

Who picks projects? Applicants know the community, and it is up to the newspaper to decide what will be a catalyst to address what will benefit news coverage in the community. It could be dedicated time for a reporter or freelancer to conduct an enterprise project, an intern to cover local government, and more.

Local Support: Let us know if you have other sources/partners helping to fund this project. One of the program's goals is to encourage creative thinking and bolster local support for journalism.

The foundation encourages news organizations to involve the community in supporting the grant initiatives. We hope the project may induce new community support through membership, subscriptions, events, or philanthropy.

Grants must be for projects and programs that benefit residents and methods to improve local news coverage, educate the public, and be a better watchdog for the community.

FINAL REPORT: Acceptance of a Community Journalism Grant; the recipient agrees to provide an impact story that explains the success of the project and how the funds aided in advancing the project.

The recipient grants MPA Foundation permission to use the story and support materials in its promotion to donors and future grant applicants. The Final Report must be submitted within ninety (90) days of project completion.

DEADLINE IS July 31st, 2026

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