




Budget and finance for journalism collaborations

By Shady Grove Oliver



A collaborative journalism
guide from the Center
for Cooperative Media at
Montclair State University



About the Center for Cooperative Media

The mission of the Center for Cooperative Media at Montclair State University is to grow and strengthen local journalism, and in doing so, serve New Jersey citizens.

The Center does that through the use of partnerships, collaborations, training, product development, research and communication. It works with more than 270 partners throughout the Garden State as part of a network known as the NJ News Commons, which is its flagship project. The network includes hyperlocal digital publishers, public media, newspapers, television outlets, radio stations, multimedia news organizations and independent journalists. The Center is also a national leader in the study of collaborative journalism. It believes that collaboration is a key component of the future success of local news organizations and healthy news ecosystems.

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For more information, visit CenterforCooperativeMedia.org.

About the author

Shady Grove Oliver is a reporter, editor, and fiction writer. She has a background in Narrative Medicine, which seeks to create more engaged and empathetic health care through storytelling and narrative practice. Recently, she spent five years working as the sole reporter for the only local newspaper in the U.S. Arctic. She has a passion for collaboration and community involvement and believes that compassion and reciprocal relationships build ethical journalism.



Introduction

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Collaboration with outside partners is becoming standard practice for more and more news organizations. Questions about how to fund collaborative projects — especially those requiring an ongoing labor-intensive investment by partners — are increasing, too.

This guide aims to explore the different ways in which news organizations around the U.S. have approached budgeting and finance for collaborative work. It discusses how collaborative models influence funding decisions, different funding sources, how to seek funding and how to structure and allocate budgets.

While many collaborative projects are largely funded through in-kind support from the project's partners, it's becoming more common for collaboratives to seek outside funding. We hope this guide gives you a basic understanding of what you'll want to consider as you think about how to finance and build the budget for your collaborative work.

Among the major funding considerations this guide will cover are:

- ▼ **How to choose the best funder for your project and ensure your goals are aligned**
- ▼ **Ways to build a manageable budget, covering everything from tech to travel**
- ▼ **The importance of financing sufficient staff for project management and editorial work**
- ▼ **The challenges of allocating money within a partnership and maintaining fairness and equity**
- ▼ **Why it's important to financially plan with both flexibility and sustainability in mind**

Collaborative Models



The kind of collaboration you hope to build will guide the type and amount of funding you need to make it viable and fair to all of the partners and the communities you are serving. “It really depends on what people are wanting in the long term,” said Jean Friedman-Rudovsky, co-executive director of Resolve Philly. “Are people really just wanting to come together for a year to be able to work together on a reporting project? That’s very different from a group of news outlets saying, ‘Yeah, we want to invest in this for the long term.’”

For example, you may want to bring together a group of news outlets to report on a specific idea or theme, or you may be pursuing a partnership to ensure a future for your organization and others through shared services and costs. Determining what model for collaboration your project fits into is an important first step toward figuring out what kind of financing and budget you’ll need.

The Center for Cooperative Media has identified [six collaborative models](#) that are helpful for understanding your project’s time frame and level of integration among the partners. Timewise, collaborations are either temporary, meaning they constitute a one-time or finite partnership, or ongoing, meaning they are open ended. In terms of integration, collaborations can be separate, co-created, or integrated. If they are separate, partners create their own independent content and share it with one another. Co-created collaborations happen when partners work together to create shared content. Finally, collaborations are integrated when they share content, data, and resources at the organizational level. To recap, partnerships can be temporary and separate, temporary and co-creating, temporary and integrated, ongoing and separate, ongoing and co-creating, or ongoing and integrated.

This guide will showcase a handful of examples of different collaborative approaches as baselines for funding structures. In this section, you can find the background and origin story for each example.

Guns & America

This collaboration, which was launched by lead station WAMU in 2018, is a two-year grant-funded project. “Essentially, WAMU was looking around for an opportunity to focus explicitly on an important topic here in the region – one that had national legs, one that had national implications, one that

was ripe to make connections with other media outlets across the country to share best practices and share ideas, and not do this reporting in a vacuum,” said Guns & America Director Jeremy Bernfeld.

WAMU General Manager J.J. Yore had a relationship with the Kendeda Fund, an Atlanta-based private family foundation. The foundation wanted to support the station in expanding its reporting efforts, Bernfeld said. Prior to his hiring as director, station representatives sat down with funders and decided that a project on guns and American society was something both were interested in pursuing.

The station was given the task of putting together a more detailed grant proposal. During the research and development phase of the proposal process, WAMU considered what types of stations or communities it wanted to involve in the project, Bernfeld said. The station decided it would seek partners who could report on different gun issues from a variety of perspectives in both urban and rural areas.

“We wanted to be in newsrooms that would have a real focus in terms of gun issues on community gun violence, on guns and suicide, on the cultural role of hunting and sport shooting in rural America,” he said. “We wanted to be partnering with newsrooms that had strong editorial track records and had the ability to nurture and develop a new reporter. We didn’t want to drop somebody into a newsroom that was so strapped for resources that this person would be cut off at the legs before they even started. And then, we also wanted to partner with stations that had a good track record in terms of partnerships.”

After they established the parameters, they put together a request for proposals (RFP) and invited a select number of stations to apply. From the pool, WAMU selected its nine partners. Guns & America is in its second year of the grant.

Guns & America comprises 10 partner public media outlets across the country:

- [WAMU](#) in Washington, D.C.
- [Boise State Public Radio](#) in Boise, Idaho
- [Connecticut Public Radio](#) in Hartford, Connecticut
- [ideastream](#) in Cleveland, Ohio
- [KCUR](#) in Kansas City, Missouri
- [KERA](#) in Dallas, Texas
- [KUNC](#) in Greeley, Colorado
- [North Carolina Public Radio](#) - WUNC in Chapel Hill, North Carolina
- [OPB](#) in Portland, Oregon
- [WABE](#) in Atlanta, Georgia

Each of the 10 partner stations hired one reporter who would focus most of their time on the Guns & America project throughout its anticipated two-year lifespan as part of the Audion Reporting Fellowship. These local reporters were also tasked with contributing to the regular news cycle at their home stations. The Audion Reporting Fellowship is supported by a \$5.3 million grant from the Kendeda Fund. The grant funds the reporters' salaries and professional development opportunities, as well as a six-member team in charge of leading the project, editorial projects, and project infrastructure, like the website.

Resolve Philly

Resolve Philly, a nonprofit organization based in Philadelphia, is dedicated to reshaping how local news outlets cover critical stories in the region. It traces its roots to a 2016 initiative, called [The Reentry Project](#), a Solutions Journalism Network (SJN) project backed by funding from the Knight Foundation.

As part of The Reentry Project, 13 newsroom partners from the region produced more than 200 stories in 2017 about how people who completed prison sentences reintegrated into society. The partners included El Zol Philly 1340 AM, the Philadelphia Daily News, The Philadelphia Inquirer, WHYY Newsworks, and Temple University's Klein College of Media and Communication. The project was "meant to be an experiment in how collaborative solutions journalism might look within a local market," said Friedman-Rudovsky, who served as the lead editor.

The success of that project led to the formation of Resolve Philly, which pursued a second collaborative reporting effort, called Broke in Philly. "I asked the newsrooms involved if they wanted to do this again — have another collaborative reporting project from a solutions-oriented angle, and they all said yes," she said. Project leaders applied for additional grant funding to transform the partnership from Reentry to Broke in Philly. They nearly doubled the number of partner organizations, to 25, and reported on poverty and economic justice in the city throughout 2018.

Toward the end of that year, Resolve Philly applied for 501(c)(3) nonprofit status, which it received in 2019. The collaborative is pursuing a number of endeavors, including the creation of a tool to help reporters be more thoughtful about their use of language and framing in their stories. Resolve plans to license the tool to newsrooms to help self-fund in the future.

CoastAlaska

CoastAlaska, a regional nonprofit public broadcasting organization, comprises eight public radio stations in coastal Alaska. Member stations are:

- KCAW Sitka
- KRBD Ketchikan
- KFSK Petersburg
- KSTK Wrangell
- KRNN Juneau
- KXLL Juneau
- KTOO Juneau
- KUCB Unalaska

CoastAlaska began as a collaborative experiment in 1994 by six public radio stations that served several communities of the Alaska panhandle. Preceding formation of the collaborative, from the late 1980s to the late 1990s public broadcasters in Alaska saw a 55 percent reduction in state funding, as well as comparable losses in federal matching funds.

“The collaboration itself was built slowly,” said Executive Director Mollie Kabler. “It started with an idea that was totally unformed — the idea that we should work together and that we can agree to meet and work together. We were six separate radio stations that had, in essence, competed against one another for financial resources and it was in a period of time when the outlook for funding was not good. So people had quite a bit of motivation to try and figure it out.”

Two years later, the group was awarded a two-year Future Fund grant from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) in the amount of \$382,542. Under the terms of the grant, the stations would agree to share resources to fundraise, reduce overhead, and produce quality programming with greatly reduced staffing.

“Stations could no longer afford network programming, local newsrooms were at risk of folding, and engineering support was unreliable,” noted the Future Fund’s final grant report, published in 2000. Local stations found themselves at a crossroads. They could “go it alone and run the risk of a greatly diminished public service, and possible takeover from an outside entity, or work together,” as they did.

If you're considering building a collaboration, it's important to think about whether it would benefit more from a short-term, limited-scope approach or a long-term, expandable approach. Here are some questions to ask yourself that can help you understand which approach would work best. Do you want to:

- ▼ **Reach a wider audience?**
- ▼ **Have access to more resources or tools?**
- ▼ **Build coverage or editorial capacity?**
- ▼ **Ensure sustainability for you and your partners?**
- ▼ **Focus local, regional, state, or national attention on a particular theme or topic?**
- ▼ **Do some combination of the above?**

Understanding what kind of collaboration you are building will help you determine how to fund it.

Stories of Atlantic City collaboration budget

REVENUE	AMOUNT
Dodge Foundation grant to Stockton University	\$18,500
TOTAL	\$18,500
EXPENSES	AMOUNT
Grant to Leadership Studio for costs related to community outreach and coordination, story sourcing, being the lead on-the-ground project manager, engaging others as needed	\$5,000
Storytellers event (<i>including food, space rental, AV</i>)	\$3,500
Grants to individual media partners (<i>\$1,000 each for stories and participation</i>) - Press of Atlantic City - Route 40 - SNJ Today - Kedar Dockery - Breaking AC - Stockton	\$6,000
Marketing, for outreach, promotion of stories and promotion of event	\$1,500
Website costs (<i>initial setup, Wordpress theme, hosting, graphics</i>)	\$500
Documentation of the project, including survey of partners involved and creation of toolkit for replication	\$2,000
TOTAL	\$18,500

Funding Types



Once you know what kind of collaborative structure might work best for you and your partners, you can begin to seek funding sources. This section will cover various types of funding that may be available, including philanthropic, in-kind and government funding, and such revenue streams as underwriting, selling ad space, hosting events and creating a product for distribution or licensing.

Grants and philanthropic funding

One of the most common sources of seed funding for ongoing collaboratives and full funding for temporary collaboratives is philanthropic grants. Philanthropic grants can come from a number of sources, including private donors, national funding organizations, like the Knight Foundation, and local or regional community foundations, among others.

The two-year [Guns & America](#) project has been wholly supported by a grant from the [Kendeda Fund](#). The Solutions Journalism Network's [Reentry Project](#) was funded by a \$250,000 grant from the [Knight Foundation](#). New Hampshire's [Granite State News Collaborative](#) and [Harvest Public Media](#), based in the Midwest, also started with external grants from SJN.

"I think that foundations, particularly community foundations, must understand that they need to support organizations that are trustworthy sources of information for a community, so that communities can make good decisions for themselves and be involved and engaged," said Liza Gross, vice president of practice change for SJN. "Having said that, I also don't think the way some news organizations or some people have advocated that foundations must take on the entire burden of financing [is] a solution either. I think there are other ways of raising money and creating connections with your audiences that are perfectly legitimate and should be explored."

Along with large full-funding grants, you can seek smaller area- or theme-specific grants for equipment, services, or a portion of your operating costs. These can be helpful for covering the cost of a handful of stories, supporting a reporter's room, board, travel or buying new equipment.

For example, CoastAlaska stations applied for and received grants from

the Alaska Center for Excellence in Journalism to purchase additional equipment to aid in their coverage of the novel coronavirus. The center is a project of the Alaska Community Foundation and is backed by the Atwood Foundation. These were both region- and topic-specific grants.

If you've already done work on your collaborative project and want to continue or expand your scope, some foundations offer grants specifically tailored to projects at this stage. In 2017, once work on The Reentry Project was underway, the Philadelphia-based collaborative sought help from the newly created Lenfest Institute to take their partnership to new heights.

Lenfest put out an open call for proposals and was particularly interested in amplification proposals to strengthen and grow projects already underway, Friedman-Rudovsky said. The group applied and were awarded a \$100,000 grant, which allowed work to begin on Broke in Philly and ultimately helped them establish Resolve Philly.

Finally, public media outlets may have access to additional grantors, like CPB, not open to their for-profit counterparts. "We're funded through a federal appropriation every year," said CPB's Kathy Merritt. "We are the stewards of this federal investment in public media. So we're unique in the country, really. There's nothing else that has this type of federal tax dollar support for public broadcasting or any kind of media organizations."

"I think that foundations, particularly community foundations, must understand that they need to support organizations that are trustworthy sources of information for a community, so that communities can make good decisions for themselves and be involved and engaged."

Liza Gross

CPB began funding collaborations to help outlets build their capacity. Over the past decade, they've put out several rounds of requests for proposals (RFPs), seeking applicants hoping to create collaboratives "just to achieve some scale, if nothing else," she said. They've now funded several dozen, spanning a wide range of cooperative goals. "Some are topic-based, some are really covering regional news, and we've had a few specialized collaborations," she said. "We've seen the success of doing that because it did achieve some of the things we set out to do. And I think now, we've really helped create a culture of collaboration that has been a really positive force in public media."

Both SJN and CPB want collaborations they fund to have a sustainability plan to ensure the work won't stop once the first round of funding runs dry. This is one of the challenges of relying on grant funding to carry your project. When the grant period ends, what will you do?

It should be noted that it is not always easy to find out about grant opportunities. Some philanthropic organizations will only fund projects they personally invite to apply; others have open application processes that occur on an annual or semi-annual basis. Sometimes philanthropic organizations will issue open calls that allow anyone who is eligible to apply; these are often focused on areas of interest.

If you're building a partnership, it's important to understand what types of funding are best suited to your needs. Here are some things to think about as you're deciding what you'll need in a funder:

- ▶ **Will you apply for grants or try to secure philanthropic funding? If so, will each partner seek their own grants or will you apply as a collaboration?**
- ▶ **What is your plan for receiving money? Will there be a lead station or news outlet to apply for and/or receive grant funding on behalf of the rest of the partners? Is this agreeable and equitable to all partners?**
- ▶ **Do you have or want a sustainability plan or will this be a one-time partnership with a specific goal and time frame?**
- ▶ **Do you already have relationships with potential funders, or do you need to spend time studying the landscape and seeking opportunities?**

In-kind funding

In-kind funding can be a beneficial way to secure things you need for your project or trade your expertise and resources for those of another. Broadly, in-kind funding covers all non-cash goods and services that come in the form of a donation, trade, or use agreement.

Nearly all collaborative projects between journalism organizations include some level of in-kind support; in fact, many projects rely solely on in-kind contributions.

A local library may allow you to use its meeting room for an engagement event, saving you the cost of rent at another location. A community group may offer you its old chairs for use in your new office. Likewise, a programmer may donate her time to help you create something to help

sift through raw data. Two employed reporters from different news outlets may team up to co-report and co-publish a story, and no money changes hands.

Maintaining fair relationships is critical. As you work with your partners, ask yourself what service you are providing in return. How is the work you're doing benefiting the organization or community you're seeking help from? It doesn't have to be transactional in nature, but it's important to be mindful of the burden you may be placing on others as you work.

Not all collaborations track in-kind funding — most don't — though some are asked to by outside organizations, including potential funders. Many public media outlets are able to claim credit on their regular grant reports for non-cash goods and services, so they may be more likely to track this type of funding from the get-go.

Here are some things to think about as you're considering what types of in-kind funding might work for your project:

- ▶ **What could you use from others and what does your organization have to offer in return?**
- ▶ **Will participating in a collaborative that relies heavily on in-kind support place too heavy a burden on your staff?**
- ▶ **Don't forget that in-kind support doesn't have to mean only personnel time; it could also include public meeting space or space for engagement events, equipment shares, licenses for development tools, web hosting space, books, archives, database access, data processing tools or skills, pre-established outside trades for travel, services or resources, relationships or access to expertise, IT support, other shareable or teachable reporting, editing, organizational or management skills.**

Other revenue streams

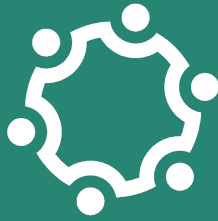
Along with grant and in-kind funding, collaborations have a wealth of other options for getting the money they need to support their work. "Anything works," said Gross. "Anything that is ethical, anything that does not create any kind of obligation" is possible.

Resolve Philly is developing an editing tool it plans to license to other media outlets to generate revenue. For-profit outlets may be able to sell advertising space while nonprofits may seek underwriters for some of their content.

Gross said she doesn't think news outlets have exhausted all the potential creative avenues for funding and would encourage them to consider such options as sponsorships, memberships, and fundraising events.

As you think about the sustainability of your collaborative, here are some questions to ask yourself and your partners to determine what strategies will be the most beneficial for you:

- ▶ **What skills or abilities does your collaboration have that it can leverage to create a new revenue stream?**
- ▶ **What time-tested models for raising money are appropriate and ethical for your group of news outlets?**



Determining what model for collaboration your project fits into is an important first step toward figuring out what kind of financing and budget you'll need.

Shady Grove Oliver

Seeking Funding



Once you know what kind of collaborative structure you'd like to build and have an idea of the types of funding you'd like to pursue, you have to find people, foundations, and other organizations that are willing to help you.

It comes down to striking a balance. Which funders can give you what you need in a way that you and your partners feel comfortable with? Look into where foundations get their money and explore potential donors' track records if they have previously supported collaborative projects. Make sure you and your partners will be able to maintain equitable relationships with one another and responsible relationships with your funding sources that won't compromise journalistic integrity.

Potential funders

There's no doubt that foundations play a major role in today's journalism landscape. While they have supported many large- and small-scale reporting efforts over the years, there is room for discussion about how they influence what is reported on and by whom.

Foundations and other private funders can be risk-averse, so they may be less open to supporting a starter project or a smaller or less well-known collaboration. They may be more comfortable putting money into a project that already has a proven track record, which is why funding often leads to more funding. However, some are willing to get in on the ground floor for a project that really piques their interest. Regardless of what stage your project is at, it is worth understanding how foundations work and the ways in which they may be an asset to you.

No two foundations or funders are the same, so it's important to research what falls under their purview, what types of grants or donations they give, and the time frame and deliverables they expect to see.

For example, community and place-based foundations typically focus on providing assistance and opportunities to groups working in or for specific neighborhoods, cities, or other geographic areas. They tend to take a local-first approach and want to see how your work will explicitly benefit their area of interest or the residents therein. Many of these types of foundations prioritize working with media groups based in their areas, as well, and may do it exclusively.

Private and family foundations may prioritize particular issues they find meaningful, like housing or economic inequality, and seek out projects that target them. Many are invitation-only for applications and do not accept pitches. However, others are open to hearing about original projects, which is why it is critical to research the specifics of the foundation you're hoping to work with before approaching them.

A good place to start is with the membership of [Media Impact Funders](#). On their website, you can find a list of dozens of organizations and foundations with a history of backing journalism and media projects. In a similar vein, the University of North Carolina has the [SPIN Funding Database](#), an exhaustive list of more than 40,000 public, private, non-profit, and federal funders and funding opportunities.

You can also look into who pays for projects, outlets, or collaborations comparable to yours. For example, [ProPublica provides a list of its supporters on its website](#). Specifics are also often included in annual reports and on tax forms. [Carolina Public Press includes links to these documents](#) via the mission statement page on its site.

Finally, it's helpful to just keep your eyes and ears open at all times. If you go to a journalism conference, pay attention to who is financially supporting it. Perhaps they also fund reporting directly. Are there foundations or organizations backing other types of media events? Look at local roundtables, town halls, and mixers. Who has booths, handouts, or displays? Are there foundation representatives giving out business cards or putting their information on communal white boards?

Once you've identified potential funders, make sure your entire team is on board; that includes top leadership as well as colleagues from other areas of the organization, like finance or human resources.

Make sure you and your partners will be able to maintain equitable relationships with one another and responsible relationships with your funding sources that won't compromise journalistic integrity.

"I always want to see commitment from the station leader, not just from the newsroom leaders, because it's great that newsrooms want to work together, but collaboration really filters through the stations in multiple ways," said CPB's Merritt. "For example, when you're doing the reporting back to CPB, you need financial data. That is part of our requirement. So that has to come from the other stations' financial people and from your own station's financial person."

The newsroom leader can't always go to their organization's development director and request a report on short notice, she said. The general manager, president, or CEO of the organization may have to say the collaboration will be a priority.

A collaboration "is not something that's just coming out of the newsroom," she said. "It's nice [when] you get letters of commitment from station managers, from general managers, but I really want to see that the leadership of the organizations has totally committed and bought into the idea."

As you're seeking a potential funder, it's important to ensure your relationship will be ethical and productive. Here are some things to think about to help you understand what you are looking for in a potential funder:

- ▼ **Does your organization agree with the values of the funder and the kind of work it seeks to support?**
- ▼ **What types of projects does the funder seem to support most often and for what duration?**
- ▼ **How will you approach your potential funder? If you need to meet them in person or at a conference, who will be the designated delegate from your collaboration?**
- ▼ **Do you feel you can meet the funder's expectations with your anticipated capacity and timeline?**
- ▼ **Does the funder offer no-cost extensions beyond the original scope of the first grant or an option for grant renewal?**
- ▼ **Does the funder require a sustainability plan? If so, how will you do that?**

Grant writing

Grant writing is its own industry, and for good reason. Writing grant proposals isn't easy and takes strong strategic, writing, proofreading and budgeting skills.

Additionally, every funder's proposal template is different. Most use online forms for proposal submission, although some funders communicate via email and have you submit Word and Excel documents.

Most grants require you to write at least a project overview, a budget

narrative, a timeline, expected outputs/outcomes, potential risks, and how you will measure success or impact. A budget spreadsheet is also required for the grant you're applying for, as are other financial documents for your organization, such as audited financial statements.

Some ask you to go in depth on certain questions. Increasingly, journalism funders want you to identify the audience you're intending to serve and how you'll measure impact. Funders are also often looking to support projects that aren't just a flash in the pan; they want to see how your project could be replicated or create long-term impact or change.

It is a good idea to seek examples of grant proposals other collaborations have used to secure funding, and ask colleagues what has or hasn't worked for them when they've applied. Likewise, if you've written a successful grant proposal, consider sharing it with other outlets that could benefit from your expertise.

Additionally, many foundations and philanthropic organizations publish narratives about what they hope to support in broader terms. It's a good idea to read these ahead of time and see if you need to shift your approach to give your proposal its best chance of success, or if conforming to a funder's preferences would negatively affect your project or partners.

Things you may want or need to address in your grant proposal:

- ▼ **Who you'll be bringing into your project or have already consulted**
- ▼ **What experience or skills you and your partners bring to the table**
- ▼ **What you've already done to lay the groundwork for your project**
- ▼ **How you will use the grant to best serve your community or audience**
- ▼ **Why your particular project is timely and relevant**
- ▼ **The long-term potential impact of your project**
- ▼ **A plan for sustainability beyond the initial grant**

Building relationships

Starting and maintaining relationships with potential funders is key and will determine the overall success of your fundraising; in a way, it's tantamount to developing story sources.

"People who know fundraising say from the beginning, it is relationship building," said Friedman-Rudovsky. "It's a long game."

Looking back on the years she has spent fundraising for Resolve Philly and related projects, Friedman-Rudovsky said she wished she'd known when she started just how much time and effort finding funding truly takes. "I started submitting proposals, going to some conferences where funders were," she said. She spoke on panels and tried to connect with potential funders personally whenever she traveled. She sought out one-on-one conversations and always kept an eye on who was taking funding applications when.

"That's what's going to pay off and our work is certainly a testament to that," she said.

But as Resolve Philly and its reporting projects grew in scope, so did the need for more money. With expanding budgets came more effort and energy needed to pin down funding sources. As the project editor, that work often fell to her. She split her time between editing and fundraising and handling a multitude of other tasks that landed on her desk.

"The simplified budget that a lot of collaboratives start with is not sustainable in the long term. It's sustainable for time-stamped or temporal reporting projects, but if it is going to be sustained, money has to sustain it, which means somebody has to be raising that money, which sometimes you can find a project editor with the skill set for fundraising, but often not," she said. "And even if they have that skill set, are you giving them that time they need to actually raise that money?"

Her advice? Collaborative partners should be aware of this time commitment and adapt ahead of time, making sure they put the right people in the right roles to get it done and add additional staff to the task, if needed.

Charlotte Journalism Collaborative collaboration budget structure

Core budget

Project Manager
Partner Journalism Fund
Community Engagement
Translations
Subject Matter Expert Freelancers
Media Production
Social Media Support
Queens University Interns (Bilingual)
Misc.
Evaluation/Metrics*
UNCC Data Journalism*

Ideal budget with additional funding

Project Manager
Partner Journalism Fund
Community Engagement
Translations
Subject Matter Expert Freelancers
Media Production
Social Media Support
Queens University Interns (Bilingual)
Misc.
Evaluation/Metrics*
UNCC Data Journalism*
Additional Partner Budget
Website Upgrades



Part of securing funding for your collaboration is knowing how you'll structure and manage your group's finances. Some collaborations choose to become a joint nonprofit, so they are able to receive money straight from donors or grantors. Other collaborations choose to keep their organizations financially separate and choose a lead station or third-party finance manager to dole money out to each partner, as needed. There are benefits and drawbacks to each of the different money management structures discussed in this section, depending on how long your partners plan on working together and whether you want a side-to-side or top-down approach.

Agreements and contracts

First of all, you should plan on having some kind of written contract or memorandum of understanding. That collaborative contract should outline the partners' relationships to one another and to the funding. Having a solid contract is a way to keep the peace between partners and spell out rights and responsibilities; it's a roadmap for working together, however specific or open-ended. Although the CoastAlaska partnership is two decades old, the written agreement held among the partners is still key.

"The compact is designed for a station to say 'I want out' and they could get out. At this point in time, as enmeshed as we are amongst one another with our 20 years of working together, it's pretty challenging to get out. It was set up so that you give six months notice and then you go at the [end of the] fiscal year," said Kabler. "But it was never intended to be an opt-in and opt-out kind of situation. It was always intended to be a long-term arrangement to promote sustainability of the organizations by having centralized shared services that are specialized."

The CoastAlaska contract outlines how the collaboration will handle a variety of shared assets, outputs, and needs, including:

- Shared regional services and the extent of those services.
- Contribution of funds by the stations.
- Retention of assets
- Accounting records for member stations
- Regional and local employees
- Collaborative budget

- Withdrawal or expulsion of member stations
- Definition of local control for member stations
- Boards of directors for stations and the collaboration

For Guns & America, lead station WAMU has a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with its partners that all were required to sign. That MOU outlines a payment schedule for the sub-grants that WAMU doles out to each of the other stations. Solutions Journalism Network has its grantees sign an agreement that establishes payment guidelines with each of the partners.

Things to think about:

- ▶ **How are you ensuring your contract is equitable to all partners, especially ones of different sizes?**
- ▶ **Have all partners had enough time to read over the agreement, provide feedback, discuss changes, and agree to the final terms?**
- ▶ **Does the contract provide a way to end the partnership, if necessary?**

Receiving and managing the funds

Finding a way to actually receive monetary payouts is a challenge for many collaborations.

With a number of SJN's early grants, the partners had to come up with creative ways to accept them. "We had to jump through a couple of hoops here because, of course, when the collaboratives [first] get together, they are not a legal entity. They are just a group of organizations that say, 'ok we're going to work together,' and we can't cut a check," said Gross. "So, what we do is we make them all sign a contract with us so that we can disburse funds individually. That means that legally, they are allowed to receive funding from us."

For the collaborative partners of The Reentry Project, those hoops didn't go away once the first round of funding ended. Initially, SJN supported the project from its own discretionary funds. The Knight Foundation then joined the effort, backing it with unrestricted funding. It was SJN's first time experimenting with this model, so the terms were a bit more flexible than those of currently-supported collaboratives. When SJN decided it wasn't in their long term plan to continue supporting large-scale place-based projects, Friedman-Rudovsky said she had to find a new way to fill the funding gap.

"I had to find a fiscal sponsor to be able to receive [future] grant money," said Friedman-Rudovsky. "There's an organization here called CultureWorks which does back-end financial administration and HR for small arts and humanities and journalism nonprofits, so that was a good fit because they could accept the money and administer it to us."

Like many fiscal sponsors, CultureWorks took a percentage as payment: 12 percent from the \$100,000 Lenfest grant. That cut needed to be factored into the overall budget, she said. However, the sponsorship served a critical purpose for the fledgeling group. They "also were able to do all the back-end stuff, which was great, because at that point it was literally just me trying to almost be the project editor and get the new project off the ground and also try to do the fundraising and essentially play the role of the executive director of a new nonprofit," she said. So, retaining a smaller portion of the money was worth not having to handle another set of very specific tasks. In the years since, Resolve Philly has become a nonprofit, able to accept and manage its own funds.

This is something to consider as you are figuring out your collaboration's framework for managing grant funding. Is having a fiscal sponsor who can manage some of the financial back-end work a logical trade-off for a little less cash to you and your partners? Is your grantor willing to help you find a workaround?

Guns & America is currently in the second year of its grant from the Kendeda Fund. Soon, they'll have to decide as a group how they want to continue in the future. Since the project began as a short-term partnership with a set time frame, they decided to use another common approach. As the lead station, WAMU took on the responsibility of being the grantee, paying out sub-grants to the other partners.

This is the same kind of structure CPB prefers when it gives out a grant. "Usually, what we ask for in these collaborations is we just want one station or one organization to be the grantee. We don't want to have to disburse funds to half a dozen different stations all in the same collaboration," Merritt said. "We funnel it all to one lead organization or lead station and then they have sub-agreements with all those stations and disburse the money out to them." It's more practical to have a single grant agreement with one lead than five or six agreements with each individual partner. "But honestly, you have to start all these collaborations with the stations, the organizations involved, being on the same page," she said. "They've got to have a shared goal, a shared vision for the work they want to do together."

SJN takes the opposite approach. “We very much encourage not to have any individual participant take on the role of being the fiscal agent or the conduit whereby the money is disbursed,” said Gross. When one collaborative partner controls the money, it may seem to other partners that they are attempting to direct the collaboration, even if they don’t try to in practice. It can be an obstacle to work flow, communication, and the sharing of ideas, if the perception of inequity is there.

There is another path open to partners who want to commit to a longer-term solution, which is to jointly become a nonprofit — or have the collaboration itself become a nonprofit. For the partner stations of CoastAlaska, they function as either individual entities or a group, depending on what works best for each specific grant. “One of our values systems is when it makes sense to be one, we are one; we’re CoastAlaska. And when it makes sense to be six, we’re six,” said Kabler. “But we never lie. So, if an agency says yes, we will accept a grant request from you, we’ll say OK, we each have a 501c3 and then we have this centralized

Having a solid contract is a way to keep the peace between partners and spell out rights and responsibilities; it’s a roadmap for working together, however specific or open-ended.

formation, the group exemption organization of CoastAlaska.” Depending on whether the collective nonprofit or the smaller individual nonprofits fit the bill, they’ll go either way. “We’ve written grants for the whole and then split the funds between us on some hopefully pre-agreed upon formula. Each station manager will write a grant if they’re eligible. And some stations are eligible for a grant that’s community-based, so they would write a grant within their own community that the other stations wouldn’t be eligible for,” she said. “If we aren’t clear whether we can apply as Coast or if we should apply as individuals, then we ask and explain who we are and how we work.” An interesting advantage to this approach is that it can open up more potential avenues for distributing funding or benefits where they best serve the whole.

While each of the CoastAlaska stations has its own broadcast license, their financials are merged. If partners in a collaboration are not as financially intertwined as the Coast stations, it may be more complicated negotiating how to switch back and forth between collective and individual funding, and sharing amongst the group.

Allocating the funds

Figuring out how funds are allocated within a collaboration can be one of the trickiest parts of working together. This is where many of the questions about equity, equality, fairness, and practicality can come into play. It's crucial that all partners in a collaboration are on the same page as to how these decisions are made, what options they have to participate, and how they can disagree with the process or suggest changes.

To ensure that their partners are starting off on the same foot, SJN takes an interesting approach with their regionally-based collaborations. "All the organizations operate within the same local media ecosystem and so what we encourage them to do is [agree that] everybody is equal here. Everybody brings something to the table," Gross said. For example, under SJN's Local Media Project, partners get a pot of money and make joint decisions about how to spend it. In some cases, the pot is as much as \$100,000 per year for two years.

Partners can spend it on reporting, database creation, audience engagement events, and more, but all decisions must be made jointly. It's "pretty much like a board in a corporation in a simplified fashion," she said. "Everybody votes." If somebody wants to take a reporting trip, they typically bring a proposal to the group and tell them how much they think they'll need for it. Collectively, the partners decide if it's a worthwhile expense. They also discuss how much to set aside for group activities, like engagement events. "Everybody has access" to the communal funds, Gross said.

For Guns & America, the agreement between WAMU and the Kendeda Fund outlines a payment schedule..

"So, it's not an as-needed thing," said Bernfeld. "There's an official schedule laid out in the terms of the grant."

The money went to American University, which is the licensee, and the chief content officer of the station serves as the primary investigator on the grant. "The American University grants office and the business administration office at WAMU work together to administer the grant," he said.

The MOU among the partners lays out the payment schedule for each of the other stations. "So, these stations send the WAMU business office an invoice and they're paid according to that schedule," Bernfeld said. "The partners can each decide how they use their own chunk of the money.

One of the challenges the Guns & America partners faced was figuring out which partners should get which pieces of the grant pie. The newsrooms range from east coast urban to mountain west rural and by necessity, have different costs. “We do have newsrooms, say, in Washington, D.C. [in which] the salary costs are higher than in many of our partner station newsrooms. The cost of living is higher,” he said. “But what’s also interesting is our reporter in Boise, where the cost of living is much lower, has to have a much larger travel budget because they cover a much larger physical area, the physical area is a lot harder to travel in, and he’s having to travel a lot more and a lot further and a lot more often than our reporter in DC. So, none of those things completely even out, but I think if we had to account for every single detail like that, we might have run into some problems.” They decided that each station would receive the same amount of grant money, to use as they saw fit, under the project guidelines.

That means each station can use the money to hire one reporting fellow and provide funding for their professional development, equipment and travel. Once those expenses are covered, the stations can use the money to advance Guns & America in other ways. For example, some have used it to pay for additional editorial support, or to cover the cost of a large reporting project.

“It is a sensitive question,” he said. “That was a difficult decision for us to make. We made it at the beginning of the project due to a number of factors that included just the ease of budget and grant administration. We made the decision that we would provide every station with enough funding to do this project really, really well, even if that meant perhaps some stations could do more with the funding — in order that we didn’t waste so many resources tracking the funding, figuring out sliding scales, going back and forth on invoices and payments and so forth as the need arose.” While the columns may not add up in exactly the same ways, Bernfeld said he hopes overall, they’ve managed to achieve a fair distribution.

CoastAlaska faced a unique set of challenges when they first joined together as a single nonprofit. They had to make some serious changes to how finances were managed at each station and the conversations weren’t always easy. “At the beginning, we didn’t have that many shared services and we just had to figure out a way that everybody paid fairly for shared services and then as time went on, we scaled up,” said Kabler. “The other thing that happened was the stations each had a wide range of reserves. So, some had significant reserves and some had almost no reserves, and in early conversation, that was a big point of contention, this turning over your reserves for the good of the group.” The stations had to come to the understanding that individual survival depended on ensuring

the collective was solvent. They pooled their reserves and moved many services — like engineering, financial work, and administration — to the regional level. Staff were cut at the smaller stations, which was painful for the partners, Kabler said.

Now, years later, the system has proven to be effective. “At this point in time, the only funding that is not considered to be Coast funding is a bequest or a donation that has donor restriction on it, for example, to be used by a certain station,” she said. “Then the station gets to designate that funding is for them. Otherwise, all revenue comes to CoastAlaska, but stations get credit for it. The cost of regional services are a line item in each station’s budget.” Stations pay for regional services based on a percentage of their contributions. So, the smaller stations pay less money, but they pay the same percentage of their total as the larger stations. Every partner carries the same weight, if not the same amount.

Things to think about:

- ▼ **How can the group ensure all the partners are treated equitably and their needs are being met?**
- ▼ **Is there transparency among the collaborative partners?
How can each partner help facilitate free and open sharing?**
- ▼ **Are there any difficult conversations that need to happen to get all the partners on the same page?**
- ▼ **What is the plan for regularly checking in with all of the partners?
Are the right people on the group calls or email chains?
Does someone else need to be looped in?**
- ▼ **Is there a way for partners to express concerns or give suggestions?**
- ▼ **How will decisions be made?
By a popular vote?
Will a project manager make the final call?**

The Center for Investigative Reporting sample collaboration budget

	<u>% of Time</u>	<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Notes</u>
CIR Personnel			
Director of Collaborations	100%		
Director of Audience	20%		
Community Engagement Specialist	50%		
Senior Data Editor	10%		
Data Reporter	10%		
Editor in Chief	7%		
CEO	10%		
COO	10%		
General Counsel	10%		
Copy/web Production Staff			20% of related staff
Video Production Staff			5% of related staff
Audio Production Staff			50% of related staff; approximately half of the show includes partner stories.
Benefits	23%	\$0	
TOTAL		\$0	
Non-Personnel Expenses			
Travel			
Partners' Travel			
Community Engagement Events			
Production Expenses			
Research and Reporting Expenses			
Outreach Materials			
Partner Content Fees/ Freelance Reporters			
Partner Stipends			
Workshops			
Legal, Security and Insurance Expenses			
Overhead Expenses			
TOTAL EXPENSES			

Building a Budget



When you know how you'd like to manage your money as a collaborative group, you can start building your budget. Some partnerships have a communal budget; they all draw from the same pot of money, so costs have to be counted holistically. Others track their spending outlet by outlet, with each having a separate fund to allocate where they choose. Still more have a combination of the two. They may communally agree on how to spend their money, but leave the line item decisions up to individual partners.

Where does the money go?

Each of the partnerships and funding organizations interviewed for this guide said the vast majority of a collaboration's budget typically goes to people.

"We really try to let the applicants and the grantees drive [letting] us know where they need the most help," said Merritt. "But generally, that's salaries."

Some money might go to travel or small equipment purchases, new software or a training session. "We really try to have them limit overhead," she said. "That's something that we work with grantees on. The lower the overhead, the happier CPB is because we really want those funds going directly into the cost of doing the journalism."

For Guns & America, the Keneda grant provides funding to support 10 reporting fellows — one at each of the partner stations. "They are employees of the partner station," said Bernfeld. "They are part of the newsroom just as any other reporter is. They should have access to the same benefits and resources and all those things as an on-staff reporter because they are hired on staff in a full-time but temporary grant-funded position and that is for two years."

The fellows are assigned to spend 80 percent of their professional time with the project and the additional 20 percent on local home station work at the direction of their local editor.

That local editor may also be partly supported by the sub-grants from WAMU, Bernfeld said. That's so that newsrooms don't become overwhelmed by extra duties without extra support. "We were lucky enough that our grantor understood that to run a collaboration effectively

takes a lot of resources that are not necessarily evident at first blush,” said Bernfeld. “So, yes, we want to pay for a reporter, but it’s a strain on a newsroom to pay for a reporter and not also account for an editor’s time that it takes to integrate that person into the newsroom. If that means offsetting some of an editor’s position in order to make sure our reporting fellow can do their job in your newsroom, that is an appropriate thing.”

This is a critical piece to consider when setting your budget, especially if you are grant funded. What other positions that help facilitate the grant should be accounted for in the spending plan?

Both Gross and Merritt said they liked to see some of that money pay for a project manager or lead editor. Bernfeld and Friedman-Rudovsky have both filled some iteration of that role in their respective collaborations. In some cases, one person can fill both roles. Other times, the project manager may coordinate the big picture parts of the collaboration while the editor handles only the news side.

“We encourage that all of these collaboratives get a project manager — someone who will direct traffic that is not part of any of the participating organizations and does not create an undue burden for any one of the organizations,” said Gross. “On the contrary, it serves as a facilitator, as an organizer, sees the gaps in coverage, and supports in general the work of the collaborative.”

For example, in a collaborative project covering sexual assault in North Carolina, spearheaded by Carolina Public Press, there was both a lead editor and a project manager. The editor stitched together the reporting pieces and guided the coverage ship. The project manager handled the day-to-day communications among the partners, made sure people stayed on track with their work, and took the lead on planning events and other related activities.

The formation of Resolve Philly coincided with the hiring of a co-executive director, Cassie Haynes, with whom Friedman-Rudovsky is splitting leadership duties. “And then we were able to, with the strength of the two of us, really actually start doing what you need to do to become a sustainable organization, which is thinking about things like strategy and long-term planning and governance and really amping up fundraising,” she said.

If you hire a project manager or lead editor for your collaboration, it’s important to make sure that person has enough time and capacity to handle all the work that ends up on their plate. It may become necessary to start spreading that work out among a handful of people so everyone can focus their attention on a specific set of tasks.

Where should your money be allocated?

- ▶ **Consider hiring a project manager, lead editor, or both.**
- ▶ **Set aside sufficient funds to hire staff and reporters for the collaboration.**
- ▶ **Decide with your partners whether the staff will be shared/employed by the collaboration as a whole or employed by a partner news outlet.**
- ▶ **Estimate the cost of travel, including transportation, per diem, lodging, and related expenses.**
- ▶ **Provide for equipment purchases, if needed.**
- ▶ **Don't forget potential additional expenses, like legal fees, fees for record requests, insurance, event space rentals, translation or transcription assistance, among others.**
- ▶ **Talk to partners about what you will do if you are unable to finish your project on time. Do you need to build a buffer into your budget?**
- ▶ **What will happen to any unused funds at the end of the project? Decide if the project will be extended, if funds will be returned to the grantor/funder, or paid out to partners.**

For collaborations like CoastAlaska that don't have a set time frame and are intended to continue in perpetuity, learning to build a budget that works for all partners is a challenging task. In Coast, there is both a regional budget and individual station budgets that have to sync up financially throughout the year. "Every station has a budget and they build their own budget in consultation with their own board of directors and the template of that budget comes from regional," said Kabler. "So, as many of the expenses as we know, we build into a template, send it on to the station, and then the station looks at what their revenue is going to be and what their budget can be for expenses based on revenue. So we recognize all of the revenue at the local station level, but the actual dollars and transactions are all managed by the regional staff. It's really an unusual model."

CoastAlaska's annual budget is roughly \$3.5 million, said Kabler. Of that, just over \$900,000 comes from membership, about \$670,000 comes from underwriting, and just shy of \$850,000 comes from CPB grants. "Membership and underwriting are both what we consider local support or community support, so you could lump those together and say we're two-thirds local community support and one-third federal support," said Kabler. "There's several other significant line items that I didn't add in there to get to the \$3.5 million, but that's kind of the rough look at it."

For a station in CoastAlaska, they already know the projected cost of regional expenses when they start to build their budget. It's a line item that's already on the spreadsheet. From there, they have to make decisions about how much revenue they're expecting to bring in, what the rest of their expenses look like, and what level of staffing they can afford. The local manager puts together a budget, gets it approved by their local board of directors, and sends it to the CoastAlaska board for approval. While the hiring decisions are made at the local level, there's a regional tiered salary plan for every type of job.

"The biggest issue is building trust," said Kabler. "You have to have trust and be willing to work together, or whatever structure and function you end up doing is kind of moot, honestly." One of the ways Coast worked to build trust among its partners was transparency. There is complete financial transparency between the individual stations. "In other words, our budget document is big, it's a multi-tabbed spreadsheet, and all the managers have access to it. When I say access to it, of course they would have access to their own station budget, but they also have full access to every other station budget and regional budget and all of the background underpinning calculations and formulas that make it work."

"The biggest issue is building trust. You have to have trust and be willing to work together, or whatever structure and function you end up doing is kind of moot, honestly."

Mollie Kabler

Over the years, Kabler has talked to other managers outside the collaboration who have expressed surprise or skepticism about such a great degree of financial transparency. "And I understand that," she said. "But the transparency piece just takes off the table anybody thinking something suspicious because they can just open the documents and see what the plan is." She credits transparency as one component of the partnership that's ultimately led to long-term success. It's not just transparency about station or newsroom operations, either, she said. It also includes specifics like staff salaries and benefits. "It's not shared with all the staff, but all the management staff can see exactly what their colleagues are getting paid and what their colleagues are paying their staff and the same for regional staff. That's kind of a values-based thing I think that has made a big difference for us."

As you are figuring out your partnership's level of internal transparency and communication style, here are some helpful things to think about:

- ▶ **What types of staffing will you need to add to bolster your collaboration? Can you re-shuffle any staff that are already employed?**
- ▶ **What level of transparency are you willing to have with your partners when it comes to finances? If you are a partner, consider asking a project manager or the other partners to call for transparency.**
- ▶ **Does everyone have clearly defined roles or do you need to spread certain duties among multiple staff members and compensate them accordingly?**

Sustainability and long-term benefits

Some collaborations are intended to be short-term. They have a set length of time and they don't continue past the final deadline. But others change and grow over time; some partnerships may want to shift their focus after the first project is done and move on to a new subject. Either way, it's important to talk about a sustainability plan before you start on your project. Even if you don't have the details worked out, it should be on your list from Day 1.

"You can't wait until the grant is over to start thinking about that," said Merritt. "We really want to see people saying OK, this money will get us started and here are the things we're thinking about that are going to raise revenue for this, or here are the ways that we think in two years will be able to support the reporters that have been hired, the editor that's been hired. And that's not always what people are thinking about at the beginning of a project. So I think that's really important. We try to impress that on people from the beginning that the sustainability plan needs to start on the first day of the grant, not on the last day of the grant."

The collaborative partners of Guns & America are facing this question now. Their original grant term was 32 months, with eight months for ramping up and 24 months of the programmatic work. They've asked Kendeda for a no-cost extension of their grant so they can continue using it through the end of this calendar year — about seven months longer than they'd expected. "Some stations are spending their money at a faster rate than others, so every station is going to be able to get through two years of reporting, which is what we promised, but there are some stations that are going to be able to extend that just because they have additional funding for a few extra months," said Bernfeld. "And the grantor said absolutely, if we can get more reporting out of this, we can get more of

the programmatic stuff that we like, let's do that, for not more money." He anticipates the programmatic part will finish around October.

What happens after that depends on the wishes of the partners and lead organization WAMU. "By that time, we expect to either launch a new iteration of this project, or to wind down the project, take what we can learn from it, and figure out what the next steps are," he said. "In terms of fundraising, yes, we are actively looking to raise funding to continue the project. We're looking in a variety of ways to do that."

As previously discussed in this guide, Resolve Philly is working to diversify its funding sources. At present, it is nearly entirely philanthropically supported. That has kept it afloat and able to report, but it's not a solution. "That is not our long-term plan," said Friedman-Rudovsky. "We have a whole alternative revenue plan for an initiative of ours called Reframe that has a tech tool that will have a licensing component. We do have a process for impact investment already underway. It will be postponed a bit because of COVID, but it is not our plan to stay fully grant funded because it is absolutely not sustainable in the long term to be so heavily reliant on foundations. But at this point, that's where we are."

It's important to talk about a sustainability plan before you start on your project. Even if you don't have the details worked out, it should be on your list from Day 1.

CoastAlaska has seen the benefits of its stations' shared revenues and reserves. "We built our reserves collectively, so our reserves are there to support all stations," said Kabler. "In this last year, with the loss of state funding, we used reserves. We had that as a collective resource versus a station-by-station [resource]. Would we have been as well prepared for it" without that? It's one of the ancillary benefits of being part of a collaboration, whether short or long term. Having strong partners and added resources can help carry a partner that is struggling, for whatever reason, for some period of time. "Even if it isn't long term the best choice, someone could help another station or a collaborative partner do something for a while," Kabler said, "while there was a transition or a growth or a turnover in personnel."

For example, KCAW Sitka, one of the Coast stations, went without a general manager for about a year. It relied on interim managers to do what tasks they could. It was a disruptive time, Kabler said, and there wasn't much growth, but the regional partners and widespread communal

support meant that station's staff could hold their ground and fulfill their base mission of serving their community until a new manager was hired.

The coronavirus pandemic has caused a lot of change and upheaval in newsrooms across the country and these collaborations have not been spared the effects. Many have pivoted their coverage away from their original focus to bolster local reporting on COVID-19. Guns & America partners have started to investigate the intersection of gun violence and coronavirus. But they've also used their collective power to help their partners who could benefit from a little added capacity.

"It just is a powerful thing to be able to say — even to our grantor — look, can we spend a month devoting some of these resources not to gun issues, even though that's not the terms of our grant, so that we can add 20 percent reporting capacity to a newsroom?" said Bernfeld. "In a place like Boise, where there's not a lot of news resources, where news resources are being cut back, that's a powerful thing to be able to do and one we're excited about."

Kabler likened it to the common aphorism, "A rising tide lifts all boats." When the collaboration is doing well, all participants benefit. When times are challenging or uncertain, having access to shared financial resources, additional staff and support, and a common mission can give a partner a welcome boost.

In the past, journalists did not need to think about sustainability. "The sales people thought about that," said Gross. "We just wrote or managed the newsroom and we had nothing to do with what those money people were doing. But times have changed. The landscape is very different. And so, we need to learn new roadmaps and we need to learn to think about this in a different way. And we cannot ignore the fact that sustainability is key."

About this guide

Among the research for this guide, interviews with several people were instrumental in synthesizing the different areas of consideration and suggestions contained within.

Jeremy Bernfeld is the director of Guns & America, a public media collaboration reporting on the role of guns in American life, and of collaborative reporting at WAMU.

Jean Friedman-Rudovsky is the co-executive director of Resolve Philly, a community-centered journalism nonprofit based in Philadelphia.

Liza Gross is the vice president of practice change at the Solutions Journalism Network, which provides funding, support, and a platform for solutions-oriented news.

Mollie Kabler is the executive director of CoastAlaska, a collaborative public media nonprofit organization serving numerous radio and television stations in coastal Alaska.

Kathy Merritt is the senior vice president of journalism and radio at the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and is in charge of advancing CPB's collaborative efforts in public media.

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The Rita Allen Foundation invests in transformative ideas in their earliest stages to leverage their growth and promote breakthrough solutions to significant problems.

The guides were also produced in partnership with Heather Bryant, who agreed to update her Collaborative Journalism Workbook for inclusion as one of the series' six guides.

To see the guides online, visit collaborativejournalismhandbook.org.

To learn more about collaborative journalism in general, visit collaborativejournalism.org.

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