

CIVIC SCIENCE JOURNALISM COLLABORATIONS

A look at 12 experimental projects

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ABOUT THE CENTER

The mission of the Center for Cooperative Media is to grow and strengthen local journalism and support an informed society in New Jersey and beyond. The Center was founded in 2012 in response to the downsizing of New Jersey news organizations and the changes in the ownership of regional public media. These shifts in the news and information landscape hurt the volume of local news available in a state that has historically had limited news coverage, due to its proximity to the major metropolitan areas of New York City and Philadelphia. With 564 municipalities packed into a densely populated state, New Jersey was—and is—ripe for innovation in local journalism.

The Center coordinates statewide and regional reporting, connecting more than 280 local news and information providers through its flagship project, the NJ News Commons. The Commons helps partners to share content and encourages them to collaborate and support one another. The Center also conducts and publishes research on emerging ideas and best practices, focusing on local journalism, business models, and ecosystem mapping. The Center convenes national programs, including an annual national summit for journalism organizations to foster the conditions, ideas, and practices that lead to stronger collaborative journalism across the U.S. The Center's annual reports offer a detailed history of programs and their impact.

The Center is a grant-funded program within the School of Communication and Media at Montclair State University. Funding from the University supports the director's salary and benefits, office space for the Center and its staff, and infrastructure support and shared services such as IT, development, marketing, and administrative assistance. The Center receives core support from the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, the Democracy Fund, and the Abrams Foundation, as well as project support from many other grantmaking sources and sponsors.

OUR MISSION

The mission of the Center for Cooperative Media is to grow and strengthen local journalism and support an informed society in New Jersey and beyond. As a program of the School of Communication within the broader scope of Montclair State University, the Center is situated within the University's mission, vision, and values.

Therefore, it's important to note the definition of the Center's own vision and values should be seen through the narrower lens of the Center's mission, which is tied to local news and information, and not outside the scope of the University's overarching guidance.



OUR VALUES

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

People have universal critical information needs and we believe the work of providing for those critical information needs should be valued and promoted as a necessary public good.

COLLABORATION

We believe that by working together we can do better work than we can alone.

PROACTIVITY

We believe in taking steps as quickly as possible to respond to problems presented to us and test solutions.

COMMUNITY + INCLUSIVITY

We believe it is critical to create a sense of community that is open and welcoming among the people we work with and for.

EQUITY

We believe that access to and distribution of power and resources should be determined using a lens of justice and fairness.

JOY

We believe that enjoying our work is essential to successful outcomes.

OUR VISION

The Center for Cooperative Media envisions a world where people work together to create the news and information needed to participate in society, tell stories that reflect true experiences, and live with dignity and purpose.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the course of 2023, the Center for Cooperative Media at Montclair State University worked in partnership with Rita Allen Foundation to facilitate 12 grants of \$15,000 each that supported civic science and journalism collaborations.

The organizations chosen to receive the grant were wide-ranging, including science-focused organizations as well as newsrooms. Half of the projects were related to climate and earth science, with two focused on air quality, one on flooding, one on climate change, one on water testing, and one on water management policy.

During the year, members of the grantee cohort met five times as a group to share how their projects were going and to receive requested training. One training session focused on civic science, its evolution and definition; a second webinar focused on fundraising strategy for civic science projects.

The takeaways were clear even before the projects wrapped up:

- Small grants, such as those in the initial pilots, seem to work well when it comes to collaborative experiments, as it creates a limited scope for the work and sets boundaries.
- The timeframe to complete experiments is often longer than most partners first conceive. This is often because it simply takes time for relationship-building – not only between the science and journalism partners, but with the community, too. Additionally, data collection and analysis isn't always able to begin immediately, and sometimes needs to be repeated.
- All partners need to be on the same page about what civic science is, and how they are going to practice it together.
- Harnessing the approach of engagement-minded journalists and civic scientists can be a wonderful complement and can advance understanding of science, build trust, and help people live better lives.
- As with most collaborative work, aligning values and expectations between partners at the beginning is critical, as well as clearly defining responsibilities among journalists and scientists.
- Developing closer ties between scientists and journalists who share a civic engagement cornerstone will be a fruitful intersection for impactful, community-rooted work.



INTRODUCTION

In 2021 and 2022, Dr. Sarah Stonbely and her research team at the Center for Cooperative Media at Montclair State University studied how and why journalists collaborate with civil society organizations around the world. Supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the team analyzed 155 cross-field collaborations, involving 1,010 organizations, based or working in 125 countries around the globe.

When Stonbely wrapped up the research in 2022, one key factor stood out: The best collaborations happened when each side shared impact goals.

On a humanitarian level, this is easy to grasp; if two or more groups share the common objective of facilitating access to clean water, for example, it can make the work together much simpler because everyone sees the end goal and can envision their role in getting there. There are many other areas of society where this kind of cross-field collaboration is – or could be – a natural way to solve common problems and community issues, Stonbely found.

Is civic science one of them? That was the question that Rita Allen Foundation posed in late 2022, after reading the Center's research paper that Stonbely authored "Cross-field collaboration: How and why journalists and civil society organizations around the world are working together."



The Rita Allen Foundation defines Civic Science as "an approach to connecting science and society that emphasizes meaningful collaboration between scientists conducting research and the people whose lives could be impacted by it." JA Garlick and P Levine in their paper "Where civics meets science: building science for the public good through Civic Science," define civic science as "a discipline that considers science practice and knowledge as resources for civic engagement, democratic action, and political change." Dr. Fanuel Muindi, founder and Chief Resident of the Sai Resident Collective, defines civic science as a discipline focused "on community engagement and democratic action to tackle diverse challenges at the intersection of science and society." The Land Institute defines civic science as a practice that "weaves together science, story, and community."

While definitions differ in their verbiage, semantically they all gnaw at the same core – a discipline that builds connective tissue between scientists and society to promote equitable use of science practice and knowledge.

Dr. Muindi's Civic Science Media Lab, a "civic science journalism research laboratory that seeks to understand the civic nature of science around the world," attempts to make civic science easily digestible for stakeholders who are building solutions to benefit society. The lab, noting that Civic Science lacked a dedicated resource to provide updates in the field, created CivicSciTV, a broadcast network that offers real-time insights into what's happening in the civic science space.

Through this initiative, CivicSciTV is giving a platform to hundreds of scientists and stakeholders to share findings and research that otherwise would likely not be given a platform. For example, Professor Mike Schäfer at the University of Zurich appeared on the channel to discuss a new paper he had published in the *Journal of Science Communication*, where he highlighted the urgent need for more research on AI's impact on science communication.

Another example of a collaborative effort between civic science and journalism is Science Friday, a radio and digital news source that "directly serves hundreds of thousands of educators, parents, citizen scientists, and lifelong learners every year." Science Friday boosts the visibility of fact-based science in the public policy space by increasing national reporting of science, environmental, and health-based policy issues. Thanks to a grant from the Rita Allen Foundation, Science Friday is working with its network of nearly 500 local radio stations to ensure they are reaching localities dealing with the policy issues discussed on their show.

The podcast, A Matter of Degrees, is another collaborative effort between scientists and media. The podcast, hosted by energy and climate policy expert, Dr. Leah Stokes and climate leader, Dr. Katharine Wilkinson, "makes sense of big climate questions" through interviews with dozens of climate leaders and provides ways for their audience to take action through stories of people doing their best to be a part of the solution. The podcast is produced in collaboration with FRQNCY Media, The 2035 Initiative at UC Santa Barbara, and The All We Can Save Project.

Although broadcast-media examples of journalism-civic science collaborations are quite popular, non-broadcast collaborations have also seen widespread success. For example, the "Save Our Summits" event, hosted by Schoodic Institute, called on members of the public to hike soil to summit restoration sites to aid a restoration project at the institute. The institute invited local journalists to cover the event and speak with the researchers behind the restoration project.

Not only did the event receive widespread coverage, but the coverage also garnered a new set of volunteers for the institute - with many members of the public reaching out to see if they could help carry soil to the restoration sites. Due to the widespread interest that was facilitated by the media's coverage, the institute has hosted more "Save Our Summits"-like events, enabling the institute to reach its restoration goals faster and more efficiently.

These kinds of examples – along with Rita Allen Foundation’s leadership in the advancement of civic science – led to a 2023 grant opportunity that aimed to support cross-field civic science and journalism collaborations. Rita Allen Foundation and the Center for Cooperative Media worked together to design the grant opportunity, which built both on the Foundation’s civic science program and on the Center’s years of work research and advocating for collaboration in journalism.

In February 2023, the organizations announced an open call to solicit ideas for such new civic science journalism collaborations and projects, with a goal of ultimately awarding 10 grants of up to \$15,000 each.

The opportunity was meant to fund short-term pilots rather than long, multi-year partnerships. Projects were prioritized based on their emphasis on meaningful collaborations between civic science and journalism organizations to achieve shared purposes, including building awareness of civic science issues and potential solutions. Community engagement with intended audiences was especially important, and the initiative aimed to serve as a catalyst for future collaborations.



METHODOLOGY

There are two key methodologies to describe for the purposes of this paper: How the open call itself was structured and conducted, and how research with the grantees was structured and conducted.

The open call was announced in February 2023 via a post on the Center's website, its Medium page, newsletter distribution lists and social media. It was also promoted on Rita Allen's website and in its newsletter. The application period was open for five weeks. During that time, two public webinars were held to answer questions about the grants.

A group of advisors reviewed the grant applications. This group was composed of one Center staff member, Sarah Stonbely, and seven external judges. These judges were either recommended by the Rita Allen Foundation or had relevant civic science and/or journalism experience.

The group included:

- **Maria Balinska**, executive director, US-UK Fulbright Commission
- **Melanie Brown**, now a freelance journalist who at the time was a Civic Science Storytelling Fulbright Fellow, University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication
- **Mariette DiChristina**, Dean, Boston University College of Communication
- **Martina Efeyini**, founder of The NEXT Scientist who at the time was a Civic Science Fellow, Science News Magazine
- **Emma McMullan**, who at the time was Research!America's Civic Science Intern
- **Linda Shaw**, director of advanced practice and beacons, Solutions Journalism Network
- **Sarah Stonbely**, who at the time was research director, Center for Cooperative Media at Montclair University
- **John Upton**, partnership journalism editor, Climate Central

Once the grant window closed, a total of 23 applications were received. Each judge reviewed and scored the applications on a weighted scoring system that included objective and subjective criteria that prioritized applications emphasizing community engagement, a key component of civic science work.

In the end, 12 projects were awarded grants.



LEAD APPLICANT	PROPOSED PROJECT
<p style="text-align: center;">Sanctuary for Independent Media</p>	<p>Water Justice Media will be a ten-week intensive summer program training youth scientists as Water Justice Media Fellows to cover evolving water contamination stories in Troy, NY. The program is in collaboration with The Sanctuary for Independent Media and Riverkeeper. The program expands on their Water Justice Lab partnership, enhancing youth scientists' skills in water quality monitoring and media production. Fellows will produce radio stories, web content, social media posts, videos, and events to highlight Riverkeeper's community science work on the Hudson River. They'll engage in field trips and workshops, investigating water contamination issues, including microplastics and lead, and collaborating with experts to create radio and video segments. The produced content will be shared on local media platforms, aiming to raise awareness, amplify community voices, and advocate for improved water quality. Additionally, partnerships with other media outlets aim to expand the program's reach beyond Troy.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Planet Detroit</p>	<p>The project is a collaboration between Planet Detroit, a journalism organization, and the Ecology Center, a civic science organization. It focuses on the Center's community air monitoring project in Detroit to narrate the human impact of the city's air quality crisis. Along with partner Outlier Media, the project aims to address Detroit's severe air quality issues, highlighted by its 'F' rating in the American Lung Associations' 2022 "State of the Air" report. Detroit and Wayne County residents face heightened exposure to pollutants, leading to increased asthma rates and health complications. The project will produce journalistic articles, multimedia content, social media engagement, and data visualizations to convey the personal stories of affected individuals, the broader environmental and economic repercussions, and advocate for improved air quality measures through public events and awareness campaigns.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">The Current</p>	<p>Similar to many Gulf Coast regions, Lafayette, Louisiana, contends with escalating water levels and more frequent severe flooding. The impact of the catastrophic storms in 2016, which inundated thousands of homes, has been profound, shaping local politics and policies ever since. Despite this, there's a lack of clear understanding about Lafayette's flood risks, aggravated by ongoing development in flood-prone zones. Rising housing costs, primarily due to soaring insurance premiums, underscore the community's vulnerability to climate change impacts, yet this risk remains poorly comprehended. A collaboration between The Current, a nonprofit news organization, and the Louisiana Watershed Flood Center aims to address this gap by employing community-based research to enhance public awareness of flood risks and influence forward-looking public policies. By fostering inclusive dialogue and producing impactful reporting, the project seeks to elevate conversations about climate change, urbanization, and equity in water management, ultimately promoting evidence-based decision-making and sustainable solutions for the community.</p>

LEAD APPLICANT	PROPOSED PROJECT
WITF	<p>Sankofa African American Theater Company will partner with the Climate Solutions collaboration coordinated by WITF on a live theater production where performers tell stories about climate issues through artistic mediums like spoken word, music, and plays. Currently budgeted for a basic one-night production, they are seeking support to enhance its quality and extend its reach. This would enable conducting workshops for the actors/writers to learn about climate topics from experts to inform their work, holding interactive sessions with students after the production, creating a study guide on climate challenges and solutions for educators across the region, and having select artists serve as writing/performance coaches for Sankofa's "Poetry in Place/Monologues in Motion" youth series themed around climate. The goal is to increase accessibility to climate knowledge and solutions for underserved communities through the arts.</p>
MuckRock	<p>Microsoft installed 115 air quality sensors across Chicago in 2021 to measure neighborhood-level differences in pollution, representing one of the first large-scale air quality monitoring projects in the U.S. Journalists and data scientists at MuckRock and Columbia University's Brown Institute for Media Innovation, along with partner newsrooms including the Cicero Independiente, have been analyzing this sensor data for over a year to report on Chicago's poor air quality. They also installed additional sensors in uncovered areas and looked for pollution trends and spikes. While useful for identifying hotspots and empowering communities, Microsoft's data pipeline was inaccessible to most users and extremely difficult to process. Now that Microsoft is ending the program, the challenge is how to continue analyzing the collected data to show hyperlocal air pollution differences in Chicago neighborhoods, while also ensuring future community-based sensor projects can effectively visualize and communicate health risks from pollution sources. The plan is to purchase sensors for community volunteers and expand engagement efforts in Chicago and another city.</p>
The Salt Lake Tribune	<p>During a time of drought, climate change, and population growth in Utah, a new "water documenters" program aims to help residents understand water usage and find conservation solutions. Nested within the Great Salt Lake Collaborative of 17 news organizations, the paid student documenters will create written records of public meetings on water use from various government bodies. With coaching from Civic Documenters and Salt Lake Tribune editors, they will learn what's important to local communities, share critical information, and document the power of local government. The program will also elevate findings from Utah higher education water conservation initiatives, recruit documenters from local universities to strengthen civic engagement, and make meeting summaries publicly available via a searchable database. The collaborative will circulate the summaries to members for potential reporting.</p>

LEAD APPLICANT	PROPOSED PROJECT
<p>The Frontline Observer</p>	<p>The over 1 billion square feet of warehouse space in California's Inland Empire surrounding low-income communities of color has sparked debates around whether the jobs are worth the severe ozone pollution. Residents and community groups assert that the logistics/warehouse industries have political influence over the local government and development agencies approving these projects through campaign finance contributions. This investigative journalism project aims to accurately assess that influence by working with students, professors, and community members to research the logistics/warehouse industry's political spending. It will also use community journalism to share the experiences of impacted neighborhoods, insight into proposed community solutions, and give voice to those affected by warehouse development decision-making in the region.</p>
<p>Media In Neighborhoods Group</p>	<p>Media In Neighborhoods Group is a Philadelphia-based film production company that uses documentary storytelling for interdisciplinary discourse and social change. Their latest film Music Vets explores how three U.S. military combat veterans use music to heal from PTSD and brain injuries. With the grant, they plan to host a screening event called "A Film and Musical Healing Forum" in collaboration with the Sound Health Network, an initiative researching the science behind the effects of music on health. The event would bring together veterans, mental health professionals, musicians, film audiences, and more for a screening followed by a panel with music therapists, neuroscientists, group music-making activities, and discussions aimed at building long-term cross-field collaboration. This would be their first major West Coast event to grow partnerships and awareness around using music for healing, especially timely given the rising mental health crisis.</p>
<p>The Aspen Institute</p>	<p>The feature-length documentary "SIX DEGREES FROM SCIENCE" (working title) follows the lives and research of several passionate young biomedical scientists facing institutional barriers and fierce competition for resources in America's academic institutions. Among other life scientists, the film spotlights evolutionary and conservation geneticist Dr. Paul Barber working with students through the initiative he founded, The Diversity Project, a research-intensive summer program focused on advancing diversity in marine science and conservation; Dr. Jacob George doing groundbreaking work on robotic prosthetics directly wired to patients' nerves; and Dr. Andrea Graham researching processes that drive heterogeneity in hosts, parasites, and diseases. By depicting their daily struggles to make discoveries amid bureaucracy, funding issues, and work-life balance, the film generates empathy while asking audiences to consider the high stakes if these bright scientific minds are not given the support to fully explore life-changing scientific breakthroughs.</p>

LEAD APPLICANT	PROPOSED PROJECT
<p>National Science Policy Network</p>	<p>Science & Policy Crossroads will spotlight ten critical environmental issues through the lens of ten science policy professionals from their diverse network across the U.S. The spotlights will explore their motivation, the science behind policy goals, impactful policies for a stable future, and opportunities for young leaders to advocate on that issue. By highlighting these professionals' stories, it aims to illuminate pathways for scientists and community members to engage with the issues through policy work. The ten issues covered are climate change, extreme weather, overpopulation & waste, water scarcity, biodiversity, ocean acidification, pollution & health, energy transition, sustainable food, and sustainable urban development. In addition to connecting their network to advocacy opportunities, the project can bolster the STEM pipeline by showing diverse STEM career paths that impact societal challenges, countering high attrition rates among women and minorities despite growing youth interest in these issues.</p>
<p>Open Vallejo</p>	<p>The Vallejo People's Archive project aims to gather, digitize and analyze over a century of historical newspapers and documents from Vallejo, California – a diverse working-class community with a legacy tied to the Mare Island shipyard and issues of racial injustice. This includes creating a publicly-accessible online repository of papers from 1867-1984, including the city's Black woman-owned newspaper, The North Bay Progress. By applying machine learning to identify instances of police violence uncovered in this expansive archive, the project seeks to shed light on Vallejo's contemporary struggles with its police department's disproportionate use of force against Black, brown and Latinx residents despite mounting civil rights liabilities. The archive will empower the community to better understand their history of white supremacist structures and ideologies, while serving as a model for engaging local democracy toward positive change. Partnering with local museums, this initiative counters the city's practice of destroying police violence records.</p>
<p>Institute for Advanced Study</p>	<p>To bridge the gap between scientific advances and public understanding, the Institute for Advanced Study (IAS) will host a one-week Workshop for Science Journalism in July 2023. Led by experienced science journalists Natalie Wolchover and Siobhan Roberts in partnership with IAS and the Simons Foundation, the intensive writing program aims to provide training for prospective and early-career science journalists as well as scientists interested in science writing. Through lectures, exercises, and direct feedback from guest journalists and IAS researchers, participants will hone skills like structuring narratives, pitching stories, interviewing, covering controversies, and effectively communicating complex scientific topics to a general audience. The immersive experience builds inclusive connections between researchers, writers, and communities by enhancing journalists' abilities to make developments in science and technology accessible to diverse readerships. IAS hopes to explore scalability by potentially repeating or sharing the model with other institutions.</p>

Once the grantees were selected, they were given six months to complete their projects. All participants – including the applicant and their partners – were asked to complete two surveys, one that went out early in the project and one that went out at the end of the grant period.

The first survey included questions such as:

- Is this your organization's first collaborative project?
- From your organization's perspective, what is the central question that this project will answer?
- Who do you think the primary audience will be for this project?
- Have you and your partner agreed on a strategy for tracking the impact of this project?
- How did you decide to work with your partner organization on this collaboration?
- What does your partner organization bring to the collaboration that supplements the work you do?
- How comfortable do you feel your organization's leadership is right now with the collaboration?
- Have you discussed any hesitations or concerns with your partner organization about the collaboration?
- Overall, how would you describe the level of enthusiasm in your organization for the project? On the scale below, a "1" = may be some skepticism within the organization, but we're game to see how this goes, and a "5" = everyone in our organization is super excited!
- Tell us more about the collaboration's workflow – how will you coordinate the day-to-day tasks of the project?
- Overall, how would you describe the level of trust in the partnership right now? On the scale below, a "1" = a bit cautious, and a "5" = very high.
- What would a successful outcome for this project look like for your organization internally (in addition to the external impact the work has)?

The second survey included questions such as:

- From your organization's perspective, what central question was this project able to answer?
- Who, in the end, was the primary audience for this project? Was it who you expected it to be?
- Tell us about the impact of the project. What changed for the audiences you intended to serve? How did they receive the work and how do you know?
- Tell us more about how you and your partner contributed value to the project along the way.
- Were your roles on the project as you expected them to be? What changes did you make along the way or how did your roles adapt to the project's needs?
- How comfortable do you feel your organization's leadership is right now with the collaboration?

- Did you have any unexpected tensions or concerns in the collaboration?
- Overall, how would you describe the level of enthusiasm in your organization for the project now that it has been completed? On the scale below, a “1” = may be some skepticism within the organization and a “5” = everyone in our organization is super excited about doing another collaborative project!
- Overall, how would you describe the likelihood of your organization working again with this partner? On the scale below, a “1” = may be some skepticism within the organization and a “5” = everyone in our organization would be open to doing this again.
- Overall, how would you describe the level of trust in the partnership right now? On the scale below, a “1” = a bit cautious and a “5” = very high.

Additionally, all participants were invited to five monthly group calls, two of which included training components on civic science and fundraising, and a wrap-up call to review the grant final report deadline and deliverables. Select participants were also interviewed about their projects in more depth.



SURVEY ANALYSIS

Getting partners from all sides of the 12 collaborations to participate in the survey was a challenge. In many cases, only the lead grant applicant completed the survey. Additionally, several collaborations required grant extensions and were not able to complete their projects in the six-month timeframe.

“Civic science organizations appeared willing to forge partnerships with organizations they knew and trusted, but were more reluctant to collaborate with organizations they did not know.”

Eleven organizations responded to the first survey, including seven news organizations and four civic science organizations. It was the first collaborative project for 45% of the group. A total of 63% said their leadership felt either extremely comfortable or somewhat comfortable with the collaboration, and 82% rated their overall enthusiasm for the project as a 4 or 5 on a scale of 1-5. More than half rated their trust in the partnership as “very high.”

Eight organizations responded to the second survey, including six news organizations and two civic science organizations.

This lower response rate was in part because five of the projects requested grant extensions, each with valid reasons as to why their projects were not able to be completed by the end of December 2023. Those collaborations were given until March 31 to finish their work.

Of those that finished their projects and completed the survey, comfort with their partners remained high, with more than half saying they were either extremely or somewhat comfortable with the collaboration. Their level of enthusiasm stayed the same from the first survey, as did their level of trust, and all respondents said they would absolutely work with their partner again. Though in the second survey, civic science organizations were less likely to be as inclined to participate in a collaboration again if it was with a new partner.

A lesson from the surveys, taken altogether, is that civic science organizations appeared willing to forge partnerships with organizations they knew and trusted, but were more reluctant to collaborate with organizations they did not know or had not previously collaborated with before. News organizations, in contrast, were more open and willing to collaborate with new partners, as long as potential ethical issues were addressed. This underscores a need for relationship building, which will be addressed in the key takeaways and recommendations section below.



INDIVIDUAL PROJECT OVERVIEWS

The following section includes overviews of most of the grantees' projects. Note that not every grantee is profiled here.

WATER DOCUMENTERS – UTAH

About the project and its impact:

About a dozen university students in Utah gained valuable exposure to how public policy affects water usage across the state – while also learning about the journalistic process and how it can impact those conversations.

The students were recruited from across the state, including from the University of Utah, Brigham Young University, Westminster University, Salt Lake Community College and Utah Valley University. They were hired and managed by the nonprofit newsroom, the Salt Lake Tribune, to attend and take notes at the public meetings of agencies overseeing the state's water supply, including the Utah Lake Authority Board, Jordan River Commission, Central Utah Water Conservancy District, Metropolitan Water District of Salt Lake and Sandy, and Great Salt Lake Advisory Council. The majority of the students involved were studying media production. The students received coaching from City Bureau's Civic Documenters program, as well as regular feedback from Salt Lake Tribune editors. In 2023, they were able to cover 12 meetings held by nine agencies.

The notes the students created were then shared with the Great Salt Lake Collaborative, a group of news, education and civic organizations working together to engage the public on water issues related to the Great Salt Lake. The notes were also published on [sltrib.com](https://www.sltrib.com) and made available to the general public via a searchable database.

The Water Documenters project helped organizations in the Great Salt Lake Collaborative efficiently allocate their own resources in response to decisions and discussions from the meetings.

"It changed the way we generate story ideas," said Kelly Cannon, the Salt Lake Tribune's community engagement editor.

But perhaps the most significant outcome of the work was the impact on the students. They learned more about how their local government works, what's important to Utahns in local communities, how to reach people with critical information, and about the power of local government to effect change.

"I didn't realize initially how fun and fulfilling it would be," said Elliot Meyer, a junior at the University of Utah. Meyer, a business major aiming to attend law school, didn't have journalism experience when he signed up for the work. He said that not only has he become a better writer through the process, but he also became fascinated by the topic. "I never realized how much money was going into water infrastructure," Meyer said.

On the roles of the partners:

The Salt Lake Tribune, a founding partner of the Great Salt Lake Collaborative, took the project lead and an editor with the organization recruited the students as well as managed them after they were hired, coordinating the assignments and editing the notes that were filed.

City Bureau provided the training through their Documenters program.

Organizations in the Great Salt Lake Collaborative used the notes to allocate their own resources, which resulted in more media coverage of water policy decisions being made across conservancy districts, water task forces and watershed councils, among others.

Key takeaways from the project:

Working with students on a project like this can be deeply rewarding, but it will take an investment in time and attention from the editing staff to support them effectively. “You’ll invest more time than you think,” Cannon said.

Students were paid \$20 an hour for the time it took to travel, attend, write and respond to edits, in addition to being reimbursed mileage. But student schedules and demands still make retention a challenge.. Cannon stressed the importance of recruiting and said her efforts were most effective when she visited campus in person to talk about the project.

Cannon said that the project was successful enough as an internal tool that they plan to continue the work, and she is now thinking through more specific engagement strategies for the published notes. “We didn’t really know how to promote the meeting notes once they were published,” she said.

Project links

- Published description of the project: <https://www.sltrib.com/news/environment/2023/09/18/water-documenters-brings-notes/>
- Published notes: <https://www.sltrib.com/tag/water-documenters/>



LIVING WITH WATER – LOUISIANA

About the project and its impact:

In the beginning, The Current, a nonprofit news organization in Lafayette, La., planned to stay in familiar territory with its editorial approach to informing its audience – including local policymakers – about the science behind the flood risk within its community.

But, what was originally framed as a reporting series became a different, more elastic product inspired by the organic problem-solving that occurred during the news organization's collaboration with the Louisiana Watershed Flood Center at the University of Louisiana, said Christiaan Mader, The Current's executive editor.

The Flood Center researches flood impacts and helps design monitoring systems for flood alerts. Staff at the Center had been sources for the news organization's work before. But, granted the opportunity to explore a deeper relationship, and a budget to support it, both organizations felt more comfortable experimenting. As they talked through the best approach to making the information they wanted to share resonate with The Current's audience, they decided to build an email-based news alert system that would help their newsroom track and report potential flood events, alongside the explainers that they hoped would deepen understanding about when and why the waters rise in their area.

In that process, the Flood Center became a full collaborator, providing input on the design of the system and fact-checking the information The Current wanted to publish. "There is a ton of nuance," Mader said, referring to the scientific explanations for why certain locations are more prone to flooding than others. "They are the science experts. We're the communication experts. It worked well."

Emad Habib, director of the Louisiana Watershed Flood Center, agreed. He said he really valued the experience of working with the journalists from the start of the project. "Scientists, we communicate the way we communicate," he said, adding that engaging the public in the work requires a different level of responsibility. "It made me think differently. ... It opened my mind – what's the use case for the end user? If it's going to be public, it's a different use case."

The tool is still in its pilot stage – Louisiana has been experiencing an extreme drought and the organizations haven't yet had an opportunity to deploy and test its effectiveness. But Mader said that working on the project has changed how he and his staff think about the options for delivering information, and that The Current is now more open to investing in different approaches to their work. "We would not have done this if not for this opportunity to try something outside of our wheelhouse," he said. "That really can't be overstated."

For Habib, the project also inspired him to think differently about his work. He is interested in pursuing more collaborations with The Current, and is also seeking out opportunities to engage with communication experts inside the university, to work closely with them on his own research projects. “I wish there were more of these kinds of projects,” he said.

On the roles of the partners:

The Current took the project lead and the Flood Center took an advisory role and accepted no funding for its part in it. The two organizations traded memos and early outlines, but no formal agreement was created. The Current gave the Flood Center public credit on the project as a co-creator of the work.

Key takeaways from the project:

A key lesson, Mader said, is to let science lead the product. “With a project-oriented collaboration, it's tempting to stay fixated on a specific deliverable,” he said. “But we found that the ongoing collaboration made space for insights to reshape how we thought about what we were building.”

Habib said he learned how valuable it is to think about the public use case for the work and to bring people in on the project who know how to communicate with that audience.

“Get in a conversation with communication experts from the get go,” Habib said, about scoping the scientific research. “Make it a co-production rather than an afterthought.”

EXHAUSTED IN DETROIT – MICHIGAN

About the project and its impact:

Staff at the Ecology Center, a Michigan-based nonprofit environmental organization focused on protecting public health and natural resources, are used to being sources for reporters. But in their recent collaboration with Outlier Media and Planet Detroit, both local nonprofit news organizations, they were brought into the story development process early on – an unusual arrangement in the journalistic process and one that resulted in more community-directed stories about Detroit's air quality problems and potential solutions.

“They shared what they were seeing regarding community organizing,” and participated in early story brainstorming sessions, said Nina Ignczak, the founder, publisher and editor of Planet Detroit.

The collaboration produced a series of articles highlighting the human stories of those impacted by Detroit's failing air quality. Planet Detroit also engaged the public by holding two workshops to work with residents to construct DIY box fan air filters.

While there was no formal agreement guiding the collaboration, there was a set of shared expectations that the organizations talked through before beginning the work, Igniczak said. Staff at the Ecology Center served in an advisory role but did not have editorial oversight.

Their early participation in the process helped the Ecology Center staff understand the journalists' needs and allowed them to feel more comfortable making valuable community introductions, said research director Jeff Gearhart.

"It's important to handle those relationships carefully," he said. "We don't want to be extractive."

On the roles of the partners:

Planet Detroit and Outlier Media collaborated on the reporting approach, allocating resources from their newsrooms based on their capacity. Koby Levin, Outlier's reporter on the project, said the collaboration worked well. "Planet Detroit offers journalism chops and good credibility on environmental issues. The Ecology Center offers expertise and connections."

Igniczak said she learned from Levin, who took the lead on hosting the community workshops that were part of the story development process. "I got insights on how to make them more dynamic," she said.

Key takeaways from the project:

"Make sure your core values and those of your partners aren't substantially different," Igniczak said. That was what made the partnership with the Ecology Center work so well, she said, adding that the environmental nonprofit understood and respected the journalistic process and the newsroom never felt pressured to deliver a particular message.

Gearhart said that the project fit his approach to being proactive with reporters, helping to direct them toward the things that need to be investigated and written about.

Project links

- <https://planetdetroit.org/deep-dive/exhausted/>



SCIENCE JOURNALISM WORKSHOP – NEW JERSEY

About the project and its impact:

Eighteen early-career science journalists received in-depth training during a five-day workshop held at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey, in the summer of 2023.

Workshop sessions focused on climate journalism, reporting on scientific controversies, story structure and pitching their stories for publication. “This is not standard stuff they pick up in school,” said Natalie Wolchover, a senior editor at Quanta Magazine and the workshop’s coordinator. She was also one of the 10 instructors.

Wolchover collaborated with IAS to host the workshop at its facility and to raise the funding to offer the event to all the attendees for free.

Wolchover said the collaboration worked well because IAS supported “a real firewall around the workshop. There was no pressure to connect the journalism with the science at the Institute,” she said.

Attendees provided effusive feedback on the opportunity and published 82 articles between September 2023 and December 2023 that they felt reflected the influence the workshop had on their work.

On the roles of the partners:

The Institute for Advanced Study – an independent center for theoretical research and intellectual inquiry – hosted the workshop and provided the space, meals and housing for attendees. It also made connections with researchers who spoke at the workshop.

Wolchover is a senior editor at Quanta Magazine, an editorially independent magazine launched by the Simons Foundation that focuses on enhancing public understanding of science. She helped design and manage the workshop, as well as teach.

Key takeaways from the project:

There is a strong need for more early-career training for journalists, specifically to help develop beat-specific expertise in the sciences, Wolchover said. About 120 applications were submitted to fill the 18 spots they were able to offer.

Project links

- https://drive.google.com/file/d/1U5C_oFdSvQRuhqyKwsM81xVT0vbqbJk1/view?usp=sharing

EL AIRE QUE RESPIRAMOS – ILLINOIS

About the project and its impact:

Cicero Independiente, a bilingual news organization for the people of Cicero and Berwyn, Ill. – both suburbs of Chicago – successfully engaged its audience in new ways after collaborating with MuckRock and Columbia University’s Brown Institute for Media Innovation to measure Cicero’s air quality.

The organizations installed three air quality sensors at the homes of volunteers in Cicero, a small factory town that also sits along one of the nation’s highest-volume freight corridors. Of its population of about 82,000 residents, 88% are Hispanic. The journalists collected daily readings throughout 2023 and used the findings to highlight the gaps in how air pollution is monitored locally through community engagement events and two published investigative stories (and the work is continuing). Everything is produced in both English and Spanish, Romulo said.

They also engaged more residents in conversations about local public policy and its impact on the quality of their air, experimenting with in-person events to help people understand how to use the information. “It made the work more accessible,” said Irene Romulo, development and community engagement director of Cicero Independiente.

For example, a call-out for volunteers to allow the installation of the sensors at their home or business helped the small news organization directly engage with its readers at the beginning of the project. And while the journalists didn’t have enough monitors to give out to everyone who responded, they found other ways to keep them involved. That included inviting them to a gallery walk on the lawn of a local church where they displayed illustrated posters revealing the findings of the work – before they were published. The reporter involved in the work walked attendees through the illustrations in both Spanish and English. The reactions to and conversations about those findings at the event then helped shape the final story, Romulo said.

In addition to providing action-oriented advice in its published articles, Cicero Independiente also partnered with a local organization to distribute free native plants known to help improve the air quality.

“For us, it’s been a really good opportunity to implement engagement strategies in a way we hadn’t before,” Romulo said.

On the roles of the partners:

Cicero Independiente was the local news partner on the ground, recruiting volunteers for the project, designing the community engagement work and reporting and publishing the findings.

MuckRock, a nonprofit journalism collaborative, designed the original air monitoring project that began in Chicago. They installed the monitors and had an established relationship with the data scientists at Columbia University's Brown Institute for Media Innovation to help interpret the findings. MuckRock's staff also helped edit the final stories.

All partners received bylines on the work, with the roles they played spelled out – including reporting and writing, data analysis, sensor installation, graphics and illustrations, and editing.

Key takeaways from the project:

Derek Kravitz, MuckRock's Investigations Editor, said that partnering with academic institutions on citizen science projects is still fairly unique for journalism organizations. "It's quite a bit different," he said, compared to using academics as a source. He recommends that partners clearly define the work product and the roles and responsibilities, including credit and funding components, which are important to acknowledge at the outset.

Romulo said she was comfortable partnering with MuckRock on the investigative work because she and her organization had worked with them a few times on different types of projects before. She noted the importance of building a relationship with the organization as a whole – not just one individual.

Project links

- Call-out: <https://www.ciceroindependiente.com/english/cicero-news-air-pollution-particulate-matter-volunteers>
- On the gallery walk: <https://www.muckrock.com/news/archives/2023/aug/29/air-we-breathe-event-cicero/>
- First story: <https://www.ciceroindependiente.com/english/cicero-news-industrial-air-pollution-amazon-kropp-forge-corey-steel-koppers-laramie-ave-environmental-justice>
- Second story: <https://www.ciceroindependiente.com/english/cicero-news-stickney-koppers-epa-violations-air-pollution-industrial-muck-rock>



BETWEEN HEVAN & EARTHA – PENNSYLVANIA

About the project and its impact:

The play staged on a chilly October night in 2023 in Harrisburg, Pa., was the result of a highly unusual collaboration for the journalists involved.

WITF, a public media organization based in central Pennsylvania, and its news collaborators in the Climate Solutions/StateImpact Pennsylvania project, had partnered with the Sankofa African American Theater Company to produce a “Not-So-Tall Tale About Climate Change.”

“It’s a work of fiction informed by journalism,” said Scott Blanchard, WITF’s director of journalism and Climate Solutions editor.

“Between Hevan & Eartha” opens with a small group of strangers gathering together in a community space on a stormy night, waiting for a facilitator to arrive and guide them through a discussion on their views of climate change. When the storm delays the facilitator, they find their own – sometimes heated – way to a conversation that leaves each of them profoundly affected by the end of the night.

The one-act play was created by artists Sharia Benn and Francesca Amendolia after Benn spent time sitting in on news meetings at WITF and attending listening sessions the news collaborative hosted in central Pennsylvania on the topic of the changing environment. Facts used in the play came from the stories journalists had produced during that time. And the roles for each of the eight cast members were inspired by real people and real dialogue that the playwrights witnessed, said Benn, who in addition to co-writing and acting in a leading role in the play is also the executive artistic director of Sankofa.

The play drew an audience of about 200 people over its two nights of production. Its ending – no spoilers here – addresses one of the many losses that tend to be overlooked in mainstream narratives about climate change.

“The play was incredible and has me fired up to do more,” wrote one audience member in response to a survey conducted by WITF after the show. Another wrote: “The play made me emotional. It made me cry.” On the second and last night of the production, many were seen wiping away tears.

And although a work of fiction, the play accurately captured everything the journalists heard during their listening process, Blanchard said. “It reflects reality, humanity.”

Benn said she partnered with WITF and the news collaborative to do the work because “it was really important to make sure voices that aren’t always heard or cared about when we talk about climate impact, that they were a part of this project.”

Both Blanchard and Benn said their comfort level working with each other and experimenting with the mix of storytelling techniques was the result of a relationship built up over time, through their work together on an earlier project focused on virtual “town hall” discussions on race and education.

They were used to “having uncomfortable, powerful, meaningful, change-driven conversations,” Benn said. “That helped this project. It was a theme of the play – people being uncomfortable.”

During a talkback held the last night of production, the actors shared their own reflections on the work. Ryan Hicks, who described himself as politically liberal said that, at first, he found it challenging to embody the role of Kyle, a politically conservative businessman who frequently provokes the other characters as they wait out the storm. Hicks said that the experience helped him understand that even though Kyle was so polarizing, in the end, he, too, was just trying to survive.

Blanchard, sitting in the audience at the time, was visibly moved by the actors’ discussion and the audience’s engagement with them on the dramatic work. It was proof, he said, that it was worth experimenting with a form of storytelling that might make many news directors uncomfortable.

“We have to figure out different ways of reaching them with credible information,” he said.

On the roles of the partners:

Sankofa African American Theater Company is a nonprofit community theater organization that exists to engage and enrich the Harrisburg region with the African American perspective on relevant issues through thought-provoking theater.

WITF is central Pennsylvania's public media organization, an NPR affiliate that provides news, education and entertainment programming to 17 counties. Community engagement is among the pillars of both its journalism and education work.

Climate Solutions is a collaboration of news organizations, educational institutions and a theater company that uses engagement, education and storytelling to help central Pennsylvanians move toward climate change literacy, resilience and adaptation. Its work aims to amplify how people are finding solutions to the challenges presented by a warming world. Partners include WITF; StateImpact Pennsylvania, a public media collaboration covering energy and climate; La Voz Latina; Q’Hubo News; the York Daily Record; Franklin & Marshall College; Shippensburg University; and Sankofa African American Theatre Company.

Sankofa executive director Sharia Benn led the production of the play and drove all aspects of the project, working with Climate Solutions editor Scott Blanchard and a project manager. Climate Solutions partners conducted the community listening sessions and provided a range of support from financial to technical to promotional.

Key takeaways from the project:

The collaboration between Sankofa executive director Sharia Benn and Climate Solutions editor Scott Blanchard was not their first. They had met and worked together on an earlier project, where they built a good working relationship. “I know that helped,” Blanchard said. Benn said the same. They were already practiced at “having uncomfortable, powerful, meaningful, change-driven conversations,” she said.

Journalists who are considering partnering with non-news organizations should plan early and be patient – “news orgs tend to move faster than non-news orgs,” he said.

For organizations outside the news industry, Benn said: “You have to be willing to insert yourself and find a space to be part of the project. You’ll have to look for (those) opportunities. It’s not always apparent.”

Clearly defined roles and responsibilities help such partnerships work.

“Understand each other’s motivations (and boundaries),” Blanchard said. “From the beginning, we knew we wanted to reach new audiences in a new way to engage them in thinking about climate challenges and solutions. It was never about promoting Sankofa, or recruiting new WITF donors, or that kind of thing. Those things may have happened as spinoffs, but I think we stuck to our public-service focus, and that helped.”



NOTES FROM OTHER PROJECTS

WATER JUSTICE LAB – NEW YORK

Who: The Water Justice Lab, a program of the nonprofit Media Alliance, a community media, science and arts production space, has a partnership with Riverkeepers, a nonprofit environmental organization dedicated to protecting and restoring the Hudson River. The Water Justice Lab helps recruit and manage community members to conduct water testing and send the data back to Riverkeepers for analysis.

What they did: The Water Justice Lab hired four high school students and one intern to participate in an eight to 10-week project from May to October 2023. The students conducted water testing “from source to estuary” and created radio-quality interviews with the scientists and experts they learned from along the way.

Lessons: Working with students requires flexibility and improvisation. Especially when working with students who may not have a lot of stability in their lives, said Eillie Irons, who managed the project for the Water Justice Lab.

“One of the biggest challenges we faced included all of the Youth Fellows’ attendance and communication between everyone,” said Kathy High, co-founder, lab coordinator and project lead for Media Alliance.

They relied on texting to keep in touch with the students and found that the students were more likely to attend if they offered them a ride to and from the location. Other advice related to their partnership with Riverkeepers: “Strong collaborations need constant attention and ongoing commitment to communication, organizing and planning, and reporting. We needed to hold meetings more often to oversee our progress and fill in gaps where there were shortcomings,” High said.

Project links

- <https://www.mediasanctuary.org/project/wjl-4/>
- <https://www.mediasanctuary.org/project/wjl-radio-and-media-2024-season/>
- <https://www.mediasanctuary.org/initiatives/radio/>

WAREHOUSE INDUSTRY INFLUENCE – CALIFORNIA

Who: Frontline Observer serves the Inland Empire's frontline communities by delivering inclusive, accountable journalism centered on environmental justice and sustainable solutions. It was founded in 2020 and has one full-time employee. This is its first collaborative project.

The Robert Redford Conservancy for Southern California Sustainability at Pitzer College, through one of its classes, provided students to research and assess and collect campaign finance forms and other government documents related to local cities and government agencies.

What they did: Three students worked with a professor and students at Pitzer College to collect and analyze local campaign finance data and track the votes of the local governing board on proposals involving the local warehouse industry. The Frontline Observer used that work to help set the direction for long-form accountability stories on how developers are influencing politics – and the development of California’s Inland Empire.

Lessons: Anthony Victoria said the partnership with the local college has been tremendously helpful and helped stretch his organization’s capacity to do the kind of journalism he wants to produce. “To do really good reporting, it does take resources,” he said.

He said he is in the process of bringing in other partners to help produce the work and distribute it more widely. “We were really ambitious but that’s OK. This is a learning process for us.” ... “We have a vision of trying to do more of his reporting. Cross-collaborations will be key.”

Project links

- <https://www.kvcrnews.org/2024-03-29/controversy-in-bloomington-reignites-discussion-around-bloomington-business-park-specific-plan>
- <https://www.frontline-observer.com/pavement-politics-how-developers-are-shaping-politics-in-the-inland-empire/>

THE VALLEJO PEOPLE’S ARCHIVE – CALIFORNIA

Who: Open Vallejo, small nonprofit news organization based in Vallejo, Calif. partnered with the Mare Island Museum, Vallejo Naval and Historical Museum and the Mare Island Historic Park Foundation, which hold the archives of about 170 years of local newspapers.

What they did: The museums are providing access to their archives of historical local papers, which are held mostly on microfilm, and include the city’s only known Black-owned newspaper, The North Bay Progress. After they are digitized, Open Vallejo plans to analyze the archives to put together a more comprehensive picture of how often police were involved in shootings of local residents.

“We figured the only way to go back and figure out who has been killed is through the newspapers,” said Geoffrey King, executive director of Open Vallejo.

The goal is to create a permanent record of the city's relationship with law enforcement and its ongoing struggle for police reform.

Lessons: The Vallejo People's Archive project is focused on how to efficiently gather, archive and analyze both contemporary and historical primary-source documents before they disappear. King said they were still working through the best approach to analyzing the documents, which were still in the process of being digitized as of mid-March.

SCIENCE & POLICY CROSSROADS – CALIFORNIA

Who: The National Science Policy Network, a coalition of scientists that provide professional development, policy and advocacy support to the field.

What they did: They wanted to create 10 profiles articles of individuals in their network, leaders working at the intersection of climate and policy. The goal was to partner with a journalistic outlet to reach a wide audience with opportunities and pathways to engage with these pressing issues while training early career scientists in journalistic writing. They sought a news partner to help them on the project and talked to several outlets, but couldn't find a good fit. They are now working a freelance coach to support their volunteer doctoral students to write the profiles.

Lessons: "In the future, I would have early-career authors partner with a journalist to write articles," said Caitlin Warlick-Short, director of communications for the National Science Policy Network.

She said she learned through this process more about how relationships with media organizations work, and that it takes time to build those relationships. She also feels she is in a better position now to pitch stories to news outlets. Now that she is working with students to produce the stories, she also said she wished she had budgeted to pay them for that work.

"I've learned a lot," she said. The project "has been humbling, I'll say."



KEY TAKEAWAYS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Center for Cooperative Media learned quite a bit over the course of this project.

DEFINING CIVIC SCIENCE AND FOCUSING ON ENGAGEMENT

One thing that participants struggled with was having a clear, shared definition of what civic science is and how it works. This was especially true for the news organizations, which often strayed back toward using the science organizations as sources rather than as true civic science partners. Having all parties discuss, understand, and agree on the civic science and engagement components of the project is critical.

Including the target audience in the work is a critical element of successful civic science projects. However, many of the grantees did not or were not able to fully include the audience in the actual work; the audience was used in a cursory manner, or not at all. In some cases, the target audience was involved in other aspects of the project that led to the final result.

CIVIC SCIENCE JOURNALISM COLLABORATIONS TAKE TIME

A common reason for not including the target audience, as cited by some of the grantees, was because of the time it takes. Recruiting, training, and working with the public can be a time-intensive process, and rushing the work often leads to mistrust or efforts that go awry.

Indeed, time came up often during these projects. Five of the 12 grantees needed to extend their grant by several months. The original grant period was six months. Especially for science organizations that are used to generally longer lead times on research projects, grantees reported feeling rushed by the six-month window.

Last, quite a few collaborations were not able to meet the very short five-week deadline for the original grant application. Providing more time to build a project application likely would have resulted in more proposed project ideas.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING IS IMPORTANT

One of the other components that would have benefited from more time is relationship building. Getting to know your partner and their strengths is an integral part of this kind of work; that is especially true if the partners have never worked together before. The organizations that already had some kind of previous partnership or relationship had smoother projects.

Intentionally building relationships is also important to cross-field work in general. Journalists and scientists have different ethical practices and boundaries, and getting to know how each side works is critical. Ensuring that each organization's core values generally align helps, as well.

Beyond that, humans simply trust humans they know more than those they do not. Being able to relate to one another helps create successful collaborations.

INTENTIONAL COACHING IS NECESSARY

A more hands-on approach would have helped several projects, especially where both sides were still navigating building a new relationship. Although the Center for Cooperative Media offered training, it was clear that intentional coaching was needed much more than any kind of traditional training. A few too many assumptions were made about the depth of understanding among grantees of civic science and cross-field partnerships.

ENTHUSIASM FOR CIVIC SCIENCE JOURNALISM COLLABORATIONS

The short grant window prevented several promising projects from applying for funding. Additionally, that short window also shortened the time period for marketing the opportunity.

In the year following the grant announcements, the Center for Cooperative Media has continued to receive numerous – and regular – inquiries as to whether the opportunity will be offered again. There is absolutely interest in cross-field journalism collaboration, and the major role that several science-related topics have played in the news over the last few years has driven specific interest in civic science journalism collaborations, namely in the areas of public health and climate science.

Harnessing the approach of engagement-minded journalists and civic scientists can be a beneficial complement and can advance understanding of science, build trust, and help people live better lives.

SHARING VALUES, CLEARLY DEFINING RESPONSIBILITIES

Many pilot participants noted the importance of aligning values and expectations between partners, as well as clearly defining responsibilities among journalists and scientists. Journalists and scientists are both groups of people who tend to have strong ethical codes by which they are professionally bound, and openly discussing standards and boundaries up front can prevent tension and miscommunication later on.



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