

A 2025 AGORA JOURNALISM CENTER REPORT
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Assessing Oregon's Local News & Information Ecosystem

What is Endangered, What is Emerging

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March 2025

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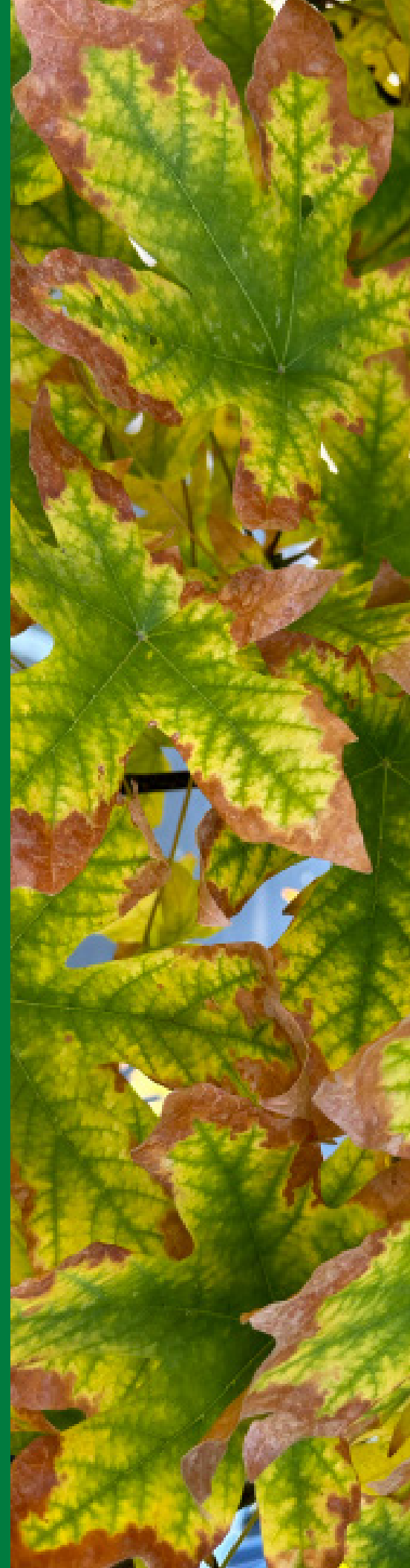


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Executive Summary

In late 2022, as attention to the crisis in local news grew around the country, the Agora Journalism Center released the first of its kind report on the state of local news in Oregon: [Assessing Oregon's Local News & Information Ecosystem 2022](#). That report documented the declining number of news outlets in our state and mapped those that remained—from local TV stations to large multimedia entities like **Oregon Public Broadcasting (OPB)** to tiny newspapers serving far-flung rural communities—and highlighted some newly emerging news providers. The report also shared insights from dozens of journalists and civic organization leaders who were unanimous in their concern that the diminishing amount of quality local news negatively impacts public life in Oregon.

Two years later, the picture is even more concerning. Since our 2022 report was published, the urgency of the local news crisis has deepened—nationally and here in Oregon. A [report](#) from the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University found local newspapers around the country closed at a higher rate in 2023 than the year before, for an average of about two closures per week—for a total of almost 2,900 newspapers lost since 2005. Major cuts at large news organizations around the country, such as a 20% reduction in staff at the *Los Angeles Times*, intensified the sense of crisis, prompting *The Atlantic* to ask, "[Is American Journalism Headed Toward an 'Extinction-Level Event'?](#)"

Here in Oregon, a number of newspapers have closed since 2022, including the 116-year-old Pulitzer prize winning *Medford Mail Tribune*. Others have been sold, including the *Portland Tribune* and two dozen other papers in the Pamplin Media Group as well as a dozen newspapers formerly owned by EO Media including the **Bend Bulletin**. Meanwhile, budgets and staff at many news outlets continue to be squeezed, while AI-generated "news" and mis- and disinformation of all kinds proliferate online. These trends combine in the alarming appearance of "zombie newspapers" featuring questionable AI-generated content that arise on the web domains of real newspapers that have died—as happened recently at the *Ashland Daily Tidings*.

This report offers an updated look at the state of local news in Oregon, focusing again on the whole range of news outlets from large to small that provide original civically relevant news about state and local affairs. We provide an updated map of Oregon's news outlets across many types of media, as well as fresh insights on how much Oregonians say they trust local news, and what Oregon's news outlets need to be sustainable and locally relevant.

This report also provides updates on new initiatives by journalistic support organizations, philanthropists, and state governments aimed at constructing a “three-legged stool” of newsroom innovation, private and philanthropic investment, and media policy to strengthen local news.

Key findings include:

- Nearly 20 local news outlets in Oregon have closed or have been merged with other outlets since late 2022. That means that in addition to heavy losses prior to 2022, another 13% of Oregon's newspapers closed since late 2022.
- Three dozen of Oregon's local newspapers were sold to a single company, Carpenter Media, in 2024. With that sale, nearly 30% of Oregon's newspapers were transferred to out of state ownership in one year. The impact of these sales remains to be seen. Research in other settings suggests that these sales may further reduce the amount, depth, and diversity of local news in communities around the state, but much depends upon how Carpenter operates these newspapers.
- Oregon has also continued to lose original local news coverage because, as resources shrink, many outlets pull back on public affairs reporting. A review of news outlets' websites and interviews with journalists around the state suggests that even where news outlets remain in business, the actual local news they can produce is sometimes thin.
- At the same time, new local news providers have recently opened or are in the process of launching, including the **Oregon Journalism Project**, spearheaded by the founding editor and co-owner of **Willamette Week**, **Lookout Eugene-Springfield**, headed by a California-based journalist and news entrepreneur, and **Uplift Local**, which focuses on community-centered, multilingual journalism in the Columbia Gorge. Smaller new entries include **Newsberg**, founded in 2024, which champions “local, neighbor-owned journalism,” while some small digital outlets launched earlier have now expanded, like the newly renamed **Lincoln Chronicle**.
- Amidst these changes, some long-time legacy stalwarts are thriving and positioning themselves for increased statewide impact. **The Oregonian** and **Oregon Public Broadcasting** in particular are important anchor institutions in the state's local news ecosystem. Content-sharing partnerships and other collaborations among

newsrooms are also on the rise—critical ways to keep providing local news to Oregonians even as individual newsroom resources shrink.

- Other new initiatives are creating more infrastructure for local news in Oregon and are beginning to contribute local news themselves. Examples include *FORJournalism*, which focuses on connecting vulnerable publications with trainings and tools and has evolved to become a news provider as well as a support organization, and the *Oregon Media Collaborative*, facilitated by the Agora Journalism Center, which is bringing together dozens of journalists from around the state to work together to solve resource and reporting challenges.
- A survey of Oregon Media Collaborative members indicates the acute resource needs of Oregon's newsrooms. Many journalists told us they want to hire more staff to be able to do more local reporting. They also want training and support in collaboration, community listening, and sustainability.
- A survey of Oregonians conducted by the Oregon Values & Beliefs Center on behalf of the Agora Journalism Center in November of 2024 indicates that while most Oregonians express a level of trust in local news, and over half are satisfied with the news organizations in their area, strong positive sentiment toward local media is limited. Dissatisfaction with local news is often rooted in perceived poor quality or bias, or simply the unavailability of local news.
- Interventions to bolster local news are gathering steam around the country, including the announcement of a \$500 million philanthropic effort called Press Forward, which has awarded funding to three Oregon newsrooms thus far. Support is also growing for public policies designed to bolster local news, including measures to incentivize investments in newsrooms and keep them locally owned and finding ways to offset the dramatic loss of revenues brought about by the rise of big tech platforms. A combination of newsroom innovation, private and philanthropic support, and supportive public policy will be required to reverse the decline of local news in Oregon.

We hope this updated picture will contribute to efforts to reverse the decline and bolster the vitality of local news in Oregon.

Foreword

This report continues our effort to monitor and assess the health of Oregon's local news ecosystem. As the local news crisis intensifies around the country, we shine a spotlight on what has happened to local news outlets—including print, radio, television and digital—here in Oregon since the release of our [first report](#) in 2022.



As the state and the nation wrestle with challenges ranging from housing and income inequality to climate change and its impacts to political polarization and steadily declining trust in institutions and the news media itself, we are more keenly aware than ever that the civic health of communities is tied to the availability of quality, trusted, locally relevant news and information. Unlike our first report, we don't dwell here on the mounting research that demonstrates this connection (readers not familiar with that research are encouraged to see our [first report](#)). Instead, we get straight to the question of how Oregon's local news environment has changed since 2022.

More and more researchers are documenting local news ecosystems in places around the country. Recent statewide local news projects have been published in [Washington](#), [Wyoming](#), [Montana](#), [Maryland](#), and other parts of the country. This work of documenting and mapping local news providers is challenging for many reasons. Not all local news and information is produced by traditional newsrooms, including the increasing use of Facebook and other social media platforms as [places to "cover"](#) local news and events. And mapping local newsrooms based on their physical address, as we do in this report, has its limitations, particularly as news and information increasingly circulate via social media through individuals' geographically dispersed social networks. Moreover, the quick rise of so-called "pink slime" and other online sites that mimic real local news complicates the task of differentiating types of local information available to communities. Researchers are redoubling efforts to improve the mapping of local news ecosystems. The recent launch of the [Local News Impact Consortium](#), with seed funding from the Knight Foundation, represents one effort to expand the study of local news with rigorous and comparable methods (the University of Oregon is an LNIC partner). Readers with questions about how the data here were compiled are encouraged to see our Methods appendix and to reach out to us with questions or

suggestions.

When reading this report, it's important to bear in mind that our maps indicate the physical location of newsrooms—not necessarily the entire areas they aim to cover. It's also important to note that the local news ecosystem is always in flux—particularly in times like these—and that the data presented here provide a snapshot in time that may be somewhat incomplete and will likely become less accurate over time.

We also want to acknowledge both the usefulness and the limitations of the term "[local news ecosystem](#)"—a phrase that has caught on among journalism researchers and funders. The term is useful and evocative, though it has been criticized for implying that local news environments are "natural" rather than humanly-created.¹ That assumption is not necessarily helpful if our aim is to intervene to counteract the decline of local news, which is why some local news advocates instead use the term "civic infrastructure" to talk about local news. We use the term "ecosystem" to bring attention to the overall availability and viability of the media "species" providing news and information to communities. It is important to note, however, that describing some news species as "endangered" does not necessarily reflect a natural evolutionary process. Just as with natural ecosystems, the survival or disappearance of various species is not a foregone conclusion, and human interventions can improve the health of news organizations and therefore the informational civic health of communities. Much depends on what journalists, philanthropists, journalism support organizations, policy makers, and the public do in response to the local news crisis.

This work is an outgrowth of the [Agora Journalism Center](#)'s mission to be a forum for the future of local news and civic health. We hope this report will contribute to the work of building a more sustainable, locally-relevant, and trusted local news ecosystem for all Oregonians.

— Regina G. Lawrence, Research Director, Agora Journalism Center
— Andrew DeVigal, Director, Agora Journalism Center

¹ Nadler, A. (2018): "Nature's Economy and News Ecology." *Journalism Studies*, DOI: 10.1080/1461670X.2018.1427000

How Local News in Oregon is Shrinking and Why It Matters

Communities around the country have been losing local news outlets for over two decades. The [current estimated rate](#) of local newspaper closures is over two per week.² As we discussed in our 2022 report, [Assessing Oregon's Local News & Information Ecosystem 2022](#),³ these losses have been caused by a perfect storm set in motion by the rise of digital media and the loss of traditional advertising—forces accelerated by the rapid “[platformization](#)” of news and information.⁴ As one recent review describes it:

Communities around the country have been losing local news outlets for over two decades.

Once consumers could access news and information from anywhere at any time, the market position of local media was greatly affected, with devastating impacts on local newspapers in particular. No longer were local news organizations the dominant way for consumers to get information about their community, and no longer were they the main vehicle through which local advertisers could reach their customers.⁵

Today, most local outlets are now deeply dependent on digital platforms like Facebook and Google to reach audiences, even as those same platforms have siphoned off available advertising dollars—the main revenue stream for traditional for-profit journalism. As political scientist [Joshua Darr puts it](#), “Print ads traditionally made up around 80 percent of newspaper revenues until platforms like Craigslist gutted classified ads, digital ads replaced printed ones at much lower profit margins, and Facebook and Google started scooping up 70 percent of those smaller revenues.”⁶

² <https://www.poynter.org/business-work/2023/2023-news-deserts-report-penny-abernathy-medill/>

³ <https://agorajournalism.center/newsecosystem22/mapping-the-local-news-ecosystem-in-oregon/>

⁴ <https://pure.psu.edu/en/publications/platform-civics-facebook-in-the-local-information-infrastructure>

⁵ Issie Japowski and Jason White, “Rescuing Local News through Tax Credits: A review of policy in the US and Canada,” Center on Technology Policy, University of North Carolina.

⁶ <https://www.carnegie.org/our-work/article/does-local-news-reduce-polarization/>

Meanwhile, many people now get their news via Google, social media, and other online platforms, which further saps the vitality of local news organizations. For example, when online consumers do not “click through” to a story produced by a news outlet, but instead just read a headline or view an image posted on social media, the outlet that produced that content loses out on digital advertising revenue. Google and other platforms can “scrape” local news content to make it available to online audiences without compensating the outlets that produced that content. Yet most news organizations today are to some extent dependent on digital media platforms to reach audiences. And, as the editor and vice president of content for [The Oregonian](#), Therese Bottomly, points out, local news outlets are also often at the mercy of these platforms’ opaque algorithms that determine how news stories and search results display for individual users. “Every media outlet in America is beholden to Google and Facebook,” Bottomly told us, “whether they are smiling on your content at any one time or not.”

The spread of mis- and disinformation and growing political polarization have both been linked to declining public engagement with mainstream journalism and with declining supplies of local news.

In other words, local news outlets have been destabilized both by the loss of advertising, with the bulk of ad budgets now going to platforms like Google and Meta, and by the way those platforms draw audiences away into other online content while algorithmically altering how readily local news appears in peoples’ web searches and social media feeds.

This precarious environment has led to financially struggling local news outlets being rapidly bought up by large media conglomerates, especially hedge funds and private equity firms, which are now [estimated](#) to control half of all newspaper circulation in the U.S.⁷ These firms typically slash newsroom staff and budgets. In the most extreme scenarios, what’s left after the cuts are “[ghost newspapers](#)”: The remaining shell of gutted local papers “existing in name only and failing to produce much original reporting,” as one analyst describes it.⁸ (Oregon has been fortunate to lose only a few news outlets to these “investment” owners, thus far, though as we discuss further below, three dozen Oregon newspapers were sold to an out of state conglomerate in 2024, and the impact on local news in Oregon remains to be seen.)

Moreover, when local newspapers close, they are sometimes replaced by social media sites and [Facebook groups](#) to “cover” the community.

⁷ <https://www.rebuildlocalnews.org/a-replanting-agenda/>

⁸ <https://www.carnegie.org/our-work/article/does-local-news-reduce-polarization/>

While social media groups can be an important component of local civic vitality, sourcing and vetting of information on these sites is much looser.⁹ Although these sites can provide an important way for communities to stay connected, the distinction on such sites between fact-checked reporting and simply reposting unvetted information can be lost.

“Without a local newspaper, a hundred years – or even a decade – from now, will your descendants be able to find quotes from residents, details from meetings, and factual information about anything, really, from social media platforms that may no longer even exist in the future?”

— SCOTT SWANSON,
PUBLISHER

Research shows that robust quality local news and information can improve the lives of communities (see our 2022 report for an [overview](#)).¹⁰ Its absence, on the other hand, weakens communities. The spread of mis- and disinformation and growing political polarization, for example, have been linked to declining public engagement with declining supplies of local news.¹¹ As Steven Waldman, president and founder of [Rebuild Local News](#), puts it, local news is critical not only for increasing government accountability, but for [building community cohesion](#):

*Obituaries, high school sports, school board meetings, the new economic development plan, the amateur theater production, a couple's 50th wedding anniversary — these types of stories teach neighbors about each other, provide basic information on communities and create a sense of shared interest.*¹²

Cohesion and community connection matter in both big, complex and diverse urban centers and in smaller and more rural communities, where local news outlets have shrunk or disappeared the most dramatically. In fact, by [one count](#), 93% of US counties that lack a local news outlet are low-population areas.¹³

⁹ <https://www.rmpbs.org/blogs/community-action/facebook-groups-news-deserts-colorado>

¹⁰ <https://agorajournalism.center/newsecosystem22/the-civic-importance-of-local-news-ecosystems/>

¹¹ Robert Faris, Hal Roberts, Bruce Etling, Nikki Bourassa, Ethan Zuckerman, & Yo-chai Benkler (2017) Partisanship, propaganda, and disinformation: Online media and the 2016 U.S. Presidential election. Berkman Klein Center (Harvard), 16 August. <https://cyber.harvard.edu/publications/2017/08/mediacloud>; Joshua P. Darr, Matthew P. Hitt, and Johanna L. Dunaway, Home Style Opinion: How Local Newspapers Can Slow Polarization (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

¹² <https://www.poynter.org/commentary/2023/high-school-sports-coverage-can-save-democracy/>

¹³ <https://www.medill.northwestern.edu/news/2023/more-than-half-of-us-counties-have-no-access-or-very-limited-access-to-local-news.html>

Here in Oregon, the publisher of [Lebanon Local](#) and the Sweet Home-based [New Era](#) recently [made an impassioned case](#) for the importance of local news.¹⁴ Writing in early January 2025, Scott Swanson described how he and his wife decided to take over publication of their local paper eight years earlier when the former *Lebanon Express* fell on hard times, and how, after selling the paper in 2023, they've decided once again to try to save their local paper rather than see it go under.

“This hasn't happened in a vacuum,” Swanson wrote. “In this business we've sustained the proverbial ‘thousand cuts’ over the last 30 years. Put bluntly, just about every possible thing that could go wrong has in the newspaper business.” But local papers matter, Swanson said, because they provide an irreplaceable local historical record. “Without a local newspaper, a hundred years – or even a decade – from now,” Swanson asked, “will your descendants be able to find quotes from residents, details from meetings, and factual information about anything, really, from social media platforms that may no longer even exist in the future?” Local media also provide a direct line to citizens, audiences, and consumers. “Despite the competition from social media,” says Swanson, “community newspapers continue to provide a very affordable option for businesses seeking to promote themselves to local people, who are the most likely to become loyal customers. Social media might get eyeballs across the world, but it doesn't always produce local foot traffic for a brick-and-mortar business.”

Overall, the local news ecosystem nationwide and here in Oregon is changing rapidly in ways that endanger communities' access to reliable, locally relevant news and civic information. Since our first assessment came out in late 2022, the challenges for local news organizations have intensified. Oregon has seen further losses of newspapers, more mergers, more budget cuts and layoffs in newsrooms, and most dramatically, a significant loss of locally owned newspapers. Interviews with over a dozen journalists, editors, newsroom leaders around Oregon revealed strong agreement that Oregon's local news ecosystem is facing a crisis. When asked for his sense of the health of local news in Oregon, Greg Retinas, president and general manager of [KGW News](#) in Portland told us, “It's not dead but it's not in good health. It feels not very well supported because we're all fighting over a small pie of advertisers and audiences. We have smart owners and smart companies” Retinas said, “but it's

¹⁴ https://www.lebanonlocalnews.com/community-support-necessary-for-continued-newspaper-survival/?lp_txn_id=541054

“It's not dead but it's not in good health. It feels not very well supported because we're all fighting over a small pie of advertisers and audiences.”

— GREG RETINAS,
KGW NEWS

a tough business to be in.” Therese Bottomly, executive editor of *The Oregonian* told us, the qualitative decline in local news around the state is “undeniable.” And, she said, “Consolidation of local media is not good for the ecosystem.”

Overall, Oregon’s local news is shrinking in three ways:

- **Closures:** An ongoing decline in the number of local news outlets;
- **Sales** to out-of-state conglomerate owners;
- **Declining production of truly local news**, due to closures, cuts in reporting jobs, and to the ongoing loss of audiences and revenues which have left many remaining outlets without the resources needed to adequately cover their communities.

Oregon Newspaper Stats at a Glance

13% (18)
of Oregon newspapers
closed since late 2022

Nearly **30%**
of Oregon’s newspapers
were sold to out of state
owners in 2024

Family-owned newspapers
now make up about **15%** of Oregon’s
newspaper ecosystem

Carpenter Media now owns
30%
of Oregon’s newspapers,
more than any
other company

42%
of Oregon’s newspapers
are now owned by
non-Oregon based owners

Newspaper Closures around Oregon since 2022

Our updated map of outlets in Oregon that are regularly producing original local public affairs news (see below) indicates that 18 news outlets have closed or gone out of business since our first report. These include:

- *The Medford Mail Tribune*, which had served Jackson County and adjacent areas of Josephine County and northern California, ceased operations in January of 2023. The first Oregon paper to win a Pulitzer Prize (in 1934, for public service in its coverage of a local political insurgency), the Tribune was at the time it closed the state’s 5th-largest newspaper.
- The *Columbia Press*, based in Warrenton, stopped publishing a print edition just as our report went to print in November of 2022, though it still has a Facebook page featuring news and announcements about local events.
- The *Columbia County Chronicle & Chief*, based in St. Helens, Oregon, which had itself been formed by the merger of *The Chronicle* in St. Helens and *The Chief* in Clatskanie under the ownership of Country Media, ceased publication in the fall of 2024. “Combining the two newspapers into one was a last-ditch effort to reduce expenses and reestablish profitability,” company president Steve Hungerford [said in a statement](#). “Sadly, that wasn’t successful.”¹⁵
- In Portland, the hyperlocal newsletter *Bridgeline*, founded in 2018, closed and encouraged its readers to migrate to the new site *Axios Portland*. As *Bridgeline* explained to its readers in June of 2024: “This newsletter is a small business and although it has been run by some passionate and award-winning individuals, the climate for supporting local businesses like ours became challenging. We are very reliant on local advertising and community support, and this has been increasingly demanding in the last couple of years.”¹⁶

It’s important to note that, as we highlight in the next section, new outlets are launching around Oregon, offsetting some loss of local news

¹⁵ <https://www.oregonlive.com/pacific-northwest-news/2024/10/two-more-oregon-newspapers-go-dark-this-time-in-columbia-county.html>

¹⁶ As a sidenote to this list, in late 2023, the *Eugene Weekly* suffered a near-fatal blow when it suddenly found itself unable to make payroll. According to Camilla Mortensen, the paper’s editor-in-chief, “[it wasn’t sagging ad sales](#), falling readership or any of the other factors that threaten the survival of community newspapers today.” The Weekly was “plundered” by a fraudulent employee who embezzled \$100,000 and left the paper with tens of thousands of dollars in debt, forcing it to pause publication for six weeks. However, this story has a happier ending than many in local news today: The community rallied, \$200,000 was raised, and the paper began publishing again. <https://eugeneweekly.com/2024/04/04/stung/>

and offering potential models for how local news can be sustainably produced in the future. Journalists, former journalists, and civic-minded people around Oregon are stepping up to fill news and information gaps in their communities by starting hyper-local news outlets, often non-profit and/or digital-only. As we explore further below, these small operations tightly focused on local communities, many of them non-profits, show promise of gaining sustainable local support and cultivating trust. Still, overall, Oregon has seen a net loss in local outlets since 2022—and a pronounced loss of locally-owned outlets.

Sales of Oregon Newspapers to Out-of-State Owners

In June of 2024, Portland-based Pamplin Media announced it had sold the *Portland Tribune* and its 23 other newspapers to a Mississippi-based publisher, [Carpenter Media Group](#). Announcing the sale, Pamplin Media Group President J. Brian Monihan thanked the Pamplin family, noting that “Without their support, many communities would have lost their local newspaper years ago.”¹⁷

Oregon has seen a net loss in local outlets since 2022—and a pronounced loss of locally-owned outlets.

The same week, local newspaper company EO Media Group, family-owned holder of a dozen newspapers around the state including the *Bend Bulletin* and the *Baker City Herald*, [announced](#) it would “scale back publication of several papers in July, lay off 28 staffers and seek a new owner with more resources.”¹⁸ The company had only recently expanded into the Medford area, starting the *Rogue Valley Times* to fill the gap left by the closure of the *Medford Mail Tribune*. As *Seattle Times* media editor Brier Dudley [observed](#) that week, “EO’s announcement is jolting because the group was an exemplar, run carefully by the journalism-minded Forrester family for decades, and a leader in efforts to save remaining local newspapers.”¹⁹

Then, in October of 2024, Carpenter also bought EO Media, comprised of a dozen papers. EO Media’s vice president Kathryn Brown [told staff](#), “It’s not that we don’t believe in the importance of local journalism, espe-

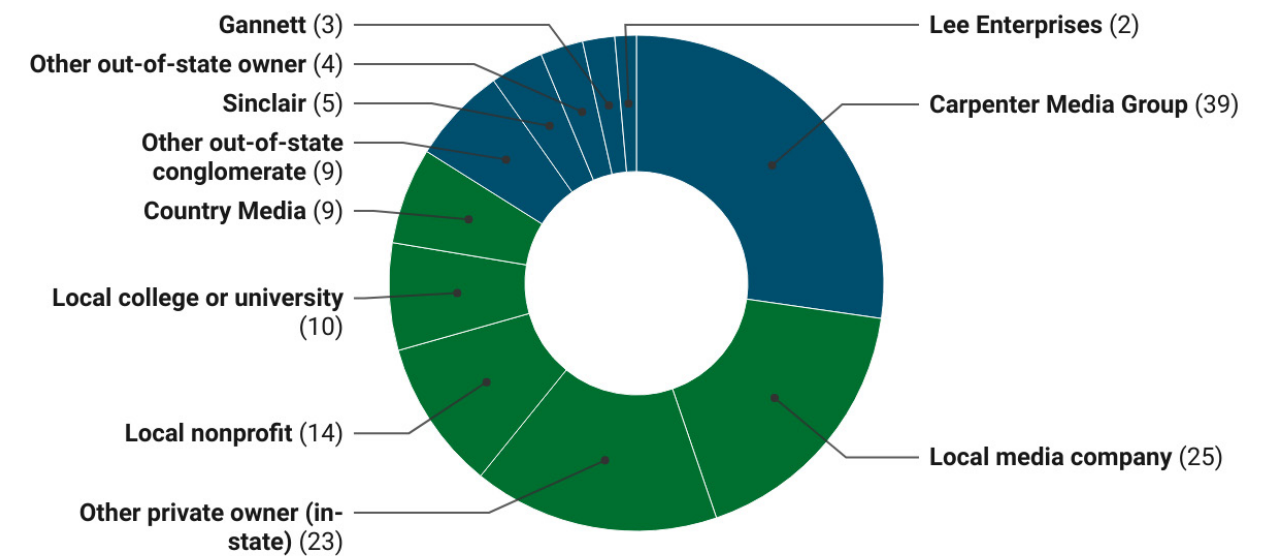
¹⁷ <https://www.oregonlive.com/business/2024/06/pamplin-media-portland-tribunes-owner-sells-to-carpenter-media.html>

¹⁸ <https://www.oregonlive.com/business/2024/06/oregon-newspaper-publisher-will-lay-off-staff-cause-printing-some-papers-and-look-for-buyer.html>

¹⁹ <https://www.seattletimes.com/opinion/a-brutal-week-for-oregon-newspapers-with-more-sales-closures/>

cially in rural communities — that remains our core value. It’s just that we have come to understand that due to the size of the company and so many other factors beyond our control, we are not in a situation that is financially sustainable.”²⁰ With these sales to Carpenter Media, nearly 30% of Oregon’s newspapers were transferred to out of state ownership in one year, and Carpenter now owns nearly a third of Oregon’s newspapers, more than any other company, becoming one of the biggest employers of journalists in Oregon.

Who Owns Local News in Oregon?



Source: Based on data compiled by OPB in December 2024 • Created with Datawrapper

It’s important to note that small, privately held newspapers do still exist in Oregon. But family-owned newspapers now make up only about 15% of Oregon’s newspaper ecosystem, according to our data, and of all Oregon’s media outlets, only 26, by our count, are single-holdings. Meanwhile, with the sale of three dozen newspapers to Carpenter on top of other newspapers that were already owned by [GateHouse Media](#) and other out-of-state owners, 42% of Oregon’s remaining newspapers are now owned by non-Oregon based owners.

Locally owned newspaper groups still exist as well. The largest is Salem-based Country Media, which acquired three weekly newspapers, the *Lincoln County Leader*, *Cottage Grove Sentinel* and *Siuslaw News*, from Illinois-based News Media Corporation in 2023, giving Country Media a total of 12 Oregon newspapers. But since 2022 several Country

²⁰ <https://www.opb.org/article/2024/10/23/east-oregon-bulletin-bend-eo-media-group/>

Who is Carpenter Media?

In 2024, Oregon's local news ecosystem shifted dramatically in terms of media ownership when Carpenter Media Group purchased first the Pamplin Media group of two dozen newspapers, then EO Media Group's one dozen newspapers – purchases that suddenly made Carpenter Media the single largest owner of media outlets in Oregon.

Carpenter's newspaper holdings have grown significantly around the country in a short period of time. According to [Medill's State of Local News 2024](#) report, "Carpenter has rapidly expanded through multiple major acquisitions, growing to 138 papers in the United States and becoming the fourth-largest owner within the span of a year"—a rate of growth the report describes as "meteoric."¹ Despite its sudden prominence, information about the company and its [financial arrangements](#) is rather limited.² According to listings on its website, Carpenter Media Group now owns local papers in 20 U.S. states, ranging from Alabama to Alaska and from South Dakota to Hawaii, along with over 90 papers in Canada, though as of this writing, that site had not been fully updated to reflect all the papers Carpenter purchased in Oregon. Oregon and Washington appear to represent some of Carpenter's largest statewide collections of holdings. As of this writing, the websites of some of the Oregon newspapers Carpenter acquired have not been updated to show Carpenter as the owner.

Carpenter Media Group's website emphasizes the message that local journalism is essential to communities. According to [CMG chairman Todd Carpenter](#), "Without local journalism, communities decline, become divisive and stagnate. With good local journalism, they are equipped to communicate, work together, grow and thrive." It was that emphasis on serving local communities, says Brian Monihan, former president of Pamplin Media Group and now Vice President and Group Publisher for Carpenter here in Oregon, that persuaded Pamplin to sell to Carpenter, which Monihan says has a "strong track record of profitable, well-managed" local newspapers. Announcing its sale to Carpenter, EO Media's Kathryn Brown [said](#), "We're not going to sell to someone who is going to basically pillage the company... We want to sell to someone who has local journalism at the heart of the brand."

But Carpenter has acquired a [reputation](#) for cutting back jobs at the papers it buys. Since its dramatic incursion into Oregon's media ecosystem, Carpenter has shown signs of doing what large chain owners, particularly private

1 <https://localnewsinitiative.northwestern.edu/projects/state-of-local-news/2024/report/>

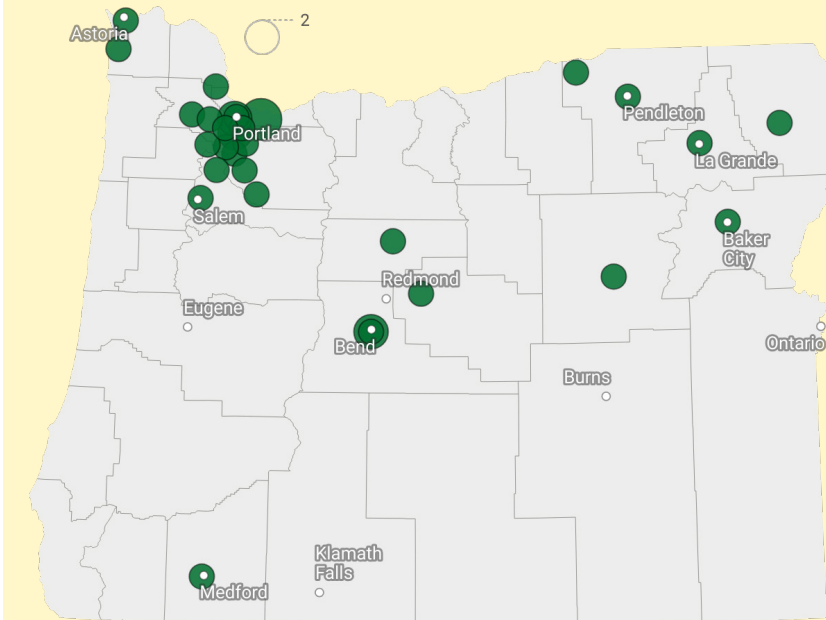
2 <https://canadiandimension.com/articles/view/black-press-sale-would-increase-american-ownership-of-canadas-news-media>

equity firms, [often do](#),³ cutting staff and budgets at some of its newsrooms and merging some outlets. These cuts will add to the [dramatic decline](#) in journalism jobs in Oregon over the past two decades.

Ken Doctor, a longtime media observer and CEO and founder of **Lookout Springfield-Eugene**, which is slated to start publishing in 2025, says the sale of Pamplin and EOM newspapers to Carpenter is troubling. According to [Doctor](#), Carpenter Media "is among a growing number of financially driven consolidators, often indifferent to community news missions, that have reshaped the American newspaper landscape over the past 15 years."⁴ For its part, senior vice president for the company's Oregon division John Carr told us that the company's expansion "is not driven by profits but by a commitment to preserving local journalistic institutions that might otherwise fail. The pot at the end of the rainbow for us isn't filled with profits or gold but with the personal satisfaction of knowing we were part of a team that helped build a sustainable model for community journalism in all its forms."

Either way, one thing seems clear: The future of Oregon's news ecosystem now depends significantly on how Carpenter decides to run the three dozen Oregon newspapers it acquired in 2024.

Carpenter Media Properties in Oregon



3 Erik Peterson & Johanna Dunaway (2023) The New News Barons: Investment Ownership Reduces Newspaper Reporting Capacity. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 707(1), 74-89. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00027162231211426>

4 <https://lookouteugene-springfield.com/2024/12/09/the-oregon-local-news-landscape/>

Media-owned papers have closed, combined with another paper, or reduced their frequency of publication.

42% of Oregon's newspapers are now owned by non-Oregon based owners.

The precise impacts of the recent changes in Oregon's media ownership are still difficult to predict. [Layoffs](#) have already occurred at some Carpenter papers (following layoffs that EO Media had already announced), including at the [Bend Bulletin](#),²¹ and at least one paper, the [Sherwood Gazette](#), has been closed and its online presence combined into a shared site with another

Carpenter-owned paper, the [Valley Times](#). But it's important to note that the financial future of the newspapers Carpenter purchased was uncertain. As Monihan and Brown both alluded to in their comments, it's not clear whether the EO Media and Pamplin newspapers would have survived long-term without being acquired by a larger company, given the economic challenges they were facing. John Carr, senior vice president of Carpenter Media Group's Oregon division, told us, "Some newspapers we acquire are in financial distress long before we arrive. Unfortunately, in those cases many of those newspapers are unable to maintain profitability or pay their bills," meaning that "some difficult decisions, such as layoffs, may be necessary to stabilize the business." As longtime Oregon journalist and Oregon Digital Content Editor for Carpenter Media Group Jody Lawrence-Turner put it to us, "From one perspective, if Carpenter hadn't come in, what would have happened to those local papers?"

Nor is it yet clear if the sales to Carpenter will significantly alter the quantity and quality of local news those papers produce, compared to what they were producing before being sold. As former Pamplin executive editor John Schrag told us, "Over the past decade, a lot of media owners including local owners were very quietly reducing the size of their staff and the extent of their local coverage." Others point out that if Carpenter Media decides to retain rather than let go the editors who, in many cases, are deeply rooted in their communities, the disruption may not be as severe. "Are they going to have the people who know the community covering the community?" asks University of Oregon journalism professor and long-time Oregon journalist Brent Walth.

When we asked how Carpenter will plan to operate the papers it has acquired, Carr responded, "CMG's approach to operating community media focuses on long-term sustainability, not short-term profits" and that the company prioritizes "reinvesting available resources into the

²¹ <https://www.opb.org/article/2024/12/05/carpenter-media-layoffs-newspaper-bend-bulletin-wollawa-county-chieftain-oregon/>

How Does News Ownership Matter?

At a time when news media ownership is increasingly concentrated in large conglomerates, and private equity firms or hedge funds [control over half of daily newspaper circulation](#) in the United States, many advocates for local journalism believe that local ownership of newspapers is critical to the quality of local news. Research suggests they are right.

Many larger newspaper chains, particularly those associated with hedge funds or private equity investment owners, are [less likely than non-chain outlets](#) to fulfill communities' critical information needs.¹ This point may feel especially vivid to readers living in the Eugene-Springfield region, for example, who have seen [significant declines](#) in coverage by the Register-Guard since it was sold in 2018 to GateHouse Media. Owners far removed from the communities their newspapers are supposed to serve are not well-positioned to really know and understand those communities. And the cuts they make for greater efficiencies can decimate newsroom capacity. The Register-Guard staff, once numbered in the 80s, is now less than ten people.

Another concern, increasingly well documented, is that news outlets owned by investment-driven owners or publicly-traded firms are focused more on profits than on journalism. [One recent study](#) found that "predatory" corporate acquisitions, especially acquisitions by hedge funds and private equity firms, lead to a significant "decrease in the volume of local content produced by local newspapers."² According to [Christy Johnson](#), a business professor at the University of Washington, "We need to think through the implications of private equity entering spaces that matter to society like newspapers. Private equity is primarily driven by profit maximization, which may not align with the objectives of free, high-quality media."³

Our data indicate that only a few of Oregon's news outlets are publicly-traded or owned by investment owners. Aside from Oregon's many "public" radio and television stations—which are freely available to all via the airwaves—most Oregon newspapers and digital news sites are owned privately and not by parent companies that are traded on the stock market. Concerns remain, however, about how the entrance of large owners who are rapidly acquiring newspapers around the country will affect the quality of local news.

¹ Rodney Benson, Timothy Neff, and Matias Hessérus (2018) "Media Ownership and Public Service News: How strong are institutional logics?" *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 23(3), pp. 275-298. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161218782740>

² Benjamin LeBrun, Kaitlyn Todd, & Andrew Piper (2022) "Buying the News: A quantitative study of the effects of corporate acquisition on local news," *New Media & Society* 26(4), 2189-2212. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448221079030>

³ <https://www.oregonlive.com/business/2023/05/eugene-register-guard-languishes-under-gannett-nations-largest-newspaper-chain.html>

organization.” When asked about concerns that conglomerate ownership might drive down the amount and quality of local news, Carr said, “Rather than reducing local news coverage,” said Carr, “our approach to coaching, training and supporting local newsrooms, coupled with the hard work of dedicated reporters and editors in each newsroom, prevents newspapers from closing altogether, ensuring that communities continue to have access to quality local journalism.”

The underlying financial precarity that makes local newspapers vulnerable to purchase by larger chains is the larger story.

On the other hand, according to the Oregonian’s Therese Bottomly, “the voracious consumption of small entities by conglomerates is not good for the ecosystem.” Heidi Wright, former Chief Operating Officer for EO Media and current president of the organization [FORJournalism](#), told us, “the loss of family-owned newspapers is especially significant. More than anything in the last year, we’ve lost that sense of community.” Chas Hundley, owner-operator of the hyper-local sites [Banks Post](#) and the [Gales Creek Journal](#), put it more starkly: “2024 was a bloodbath -- the grimmest year of Oregon journalism in a series of grim years.” However one feels about the loss of local ownership.

Whatever the long-term impacts, there is little doubt that the past several years have seen a significant shift in Oregon’s news ecosystem, with, in addition to significant ownership changes, nearly 20 local news outlets closing or merging with other outlets since late 2022. That means that in addition to heavy losses prior to 2022, another 13% of Oregon’s newspapers closed since late 2022.

Declining Production of Original Local News

Many local legacy newspapers are facing steep odds as they try to stay in business and keep providing local news to their communities, and cost-cutting has been rampant. As discussed above, the rise of digital platforms, while not the only cause, is a significant factor that has cost newspapers advertising and introduced a new middleman between news producers and audiences—a middleman that can manipulate how easily local news reaches audiences while extracting value from links to local news content. Shrinking revenues have left many newsrooms struggling to produce quality local news. Among Oregon’s journalists, stories abound of reporters working overtime to cover large geographic regions or dense, diverse cities with fewer and fewer resources; of junior reporters not long out of journalism school being made editors of resource-strapped outlets; and of newsrooms run by a single person with little capacity to do accountability reporting while local crises and

corruption scandals unfold.

For example, Tim Trainor, editor at the [Redmond Spokesman](#), is the sole staffer at a newsroom that used to employ 15 to 18 people. Trainor told us, “We are not meeting the community’s needs for sure, with just one person.” When asked what stories go uncovered by a one-person newsroom, Trainor said,

I only have time for cops. If there’s a murder in town, I cover it. There’s no beat reporter to suss out scandals and more complex stories. I have to do more re-writing of press releases—I have to fill the paper somehow. So if I have time for two stories per week, it will be cops or public safety.

John Schrag, long-time Oregon journalist and founder of [Uplift Local](#) (discussed further below), told us that at the current rate of losses, “In 20 years, there won’t be any rural journalists in Oregon—or at least none with the capacity and appetite to work on investigative journalism. The current model won’t give them to time and space to do the kind of ambitious journalism that they used to do.”

As these observations illustrate, for an increasing number of legacy newspapers, producing less and less original local content—especially public affairs content that citizens need to make informed civic decisions—can seem like the most viable way, perhaps the only way, to stay in business.

As we perused Oregon’s local news sites to prepare this report, we were struck by several ways in which local news content often seemed thin. At many local news sites, we noticed less hard news or civic information than one might expect. Some appeared to feature little news at all beyond local sports, while the colonization of many sites by advertising made the actual news stories on some sites literally hard to see. Many sites carry content shared across the parent company’s various holdings that is therefore less locally specific. All in all, it appears that the amount of originally produced content on some local news sites is less than the “curated” coverage drawn from other news producers. (A [recent study](#) of local news in Montana found only 48% of that state’s local news outlets are predominantly news creators, rather than curators.²²)

“There’s no beat reporter to suss out scandals and more complex stories. I have to do more re-writing of press releases—I have to fill the paper somehow.”

— TIM TRAINOR,
REDMOND SPOKESMAN

²² <https://lorfoundation.org/reports/special-report-montanas-media-landscape/>

When trying to assess the health of local news ecosystems, the number of shuttered and merged news outlets can be counted. What is more difficult to measure is this decline in actual original local news reporting, and its quality.²³ One study that analyzed the content of news outlets in 100 randomly-selected communities [found](#) that “fewer than half of news stories provided to a typical community were produced by the local media outlet, and only 17 percent were about the community or events that took place there”—diminishing the very notion of “local” news.²⁴

For an increasing number of legacy newspapers, producing less and less original local content—especially public affairs content that citizens need to make informed civic decisions—can seem like the most viable way, perhaps the only way, to stay in business.

The problem is complex, however. One reason local news sites may not seem very “local” is because they run content produced by other news outlets explicitly designed for that purpose. Content sharing is increasingly common across Oregon given the work of two non-profit newsrooms in particular, [Oregon Capital Chronicle](#) (OCC) and, more recently, the [Oregon Journalism Project](#) (discussed further below). It’s a welcome development in an increasingly strapped industry, allowing local outlets to continue offering quality news coverage even when, individually, they have fewer resources to produce it themselves. Chas Hundley, owner-operator of several small hyper-local Oregon news sites, told us that OCC “is really important for frequent state level updates I can republish. Pretty much every newspaper in Oregon is using them,” Hundley said, and he predicts that soon “virtually everyone will also use *Oregon Journalism*

Project” too. Content sharing doesn’t only benefit small outlets. As [The Oregonian’s](#) Therese Bottomly told us, content sharing arrangements allow [The Oregonian](#) to feature more good quality journalism, including stories the paper would not be able to cover on its own, and saves already hard-pressed reporters from burnout.

On the other hand, she said, “You want it to be part of the mix. You don’t want it to be the mix.” Indeed, the increased use of shared content may reduce the sense of the news outlet as a local institution, and may contribute to one of the public’s [biggest complaints](#) about local news: About half of respondents in national surveys say their local news doesn’t actually reflect their local communities, particularly in rural

²³ Tools are currently being developed by, among other researchers, the [Local News Impact Consortium](#) for measuring the actual content of local news.

²⁴ <https://www.usnewsdeserts.com/reports/expanding-news-desert/loss-of-local-news/the-rise-of-the-ghost-newspaper/#:~:text=In%20the%20second%20scenario%2C%20newspapers,regional%20levels%20in%20recent%20years.>

“Pink Slime” and “AI Slop”

Many communities around the country are seeing an increase in so-called “pink slime”—websites that mimic local news organizations but feature [partisan](#) and/or algorithmically generated content. As the journalism organization [Poynter](#) puts it, “These low-effort websites fill the vacuum where real local news used to be.” (Poynter’s tip for recognizing these sites: “Look for text that’s more generic than expected, or articles that are pure information without context — that’s a giveaway you’re looking at a pink slime website.”) One of the largest operators of these sites, [Metric Media](#), [lists 13 sites in Oregon](#), including the “Beaver State News,” “Central Oregon Times,” and the “Oregon Business Daily.” (None of Metric Media’s sites are included in our database).

Pink slime is enabled by artificial intelligence (AI) tools that scrape content from various online sources and refashion it into bot-generated “stories.” Questionable “news” outlets utilize AI to mimic the formats of traditional news while providing false or skewed information—or simply meaningless content, dubbed “AI slop.”

AI slop and pink slime earn advertising revenue by being optimized to show up in people’s online searches. And the artificial intelligence tools used by these sites can simply “scrape” content from legitimate news sites and pass it off as original reporting. Therese Bottomly, outgoing executive editor of the [Oregonian](#), told us, “these sites just steal your headlines, rewrite your content, and don’t send any traffic back to your site,” which she called a “looming threat” to legitimate local news organizations. According to a recent [report](#) by the Reuters Institute, “The most blatant examples...are sites belonging to newly defunct news outlets bought and filled with AI-generated articles. The goal is to mop up the remaining traffic from audiences who may not be aware of the change in ownership.”

A vivid example recently played out in Southern Oregon: Although the [Ashland Daily Tidings](#), which had been in business since the 1870s, closed in 2021, it later re-emerged online. As [OPB reported](#) in late 2024, however, “none of the people allegedly working for the [Ashland Daily Tidings](#) existed, or at least were who they claimed to be. The bylines listed on [Daily Tidings](#) articles were put there by scammers using artificial intelligence, and in some cases stolen identities.” The site became one of an increasing number of “[zombie](#)” newspapers that “keeps moving, twitching and acting like it’s alive,” but has “no heartbeat, no judgment and little usefulness.”

areas.²⁵

All in all, the decline in local news in Oregon should be thought of not only in terms of closures, sales, and mergers of outlets, but also the increasingly thin product provided by many that remain. This sense was echoed by the local journalists we spoke with. Quinton Smith of the *Lincoln Chronicle* said there is a “huge range in the quality of the work across different kinds of outlets,” and that “people in rural communities have to work harder” to find relevant news. As reporter Ryan Haas of *OPB* put it, “it’s clearly worse now than two years ago.” In 2022, “We might have used the phrase ‘inflection point’” to describe the state of local news in Oregon, Haas said, “but now it’s a cliff.”

Amid Changing Media Habits, the Enduring Importance of Local News

These examples illustrate a complex problem: As the economics of running a local news business have become more challenging, resources are declining at many local news outlets due in part to the public’s changing media habits. Shrinking audiences for local news are both a cause and a consequence of that economic challenge, as audiences feel less well-served by “local news” that doesn’t cover local public affairs and doesn’t seem to reflect the local community – a downward spiral that is difficult to reverse. (This difficulty is compounded by public perceptions that local news outlets are doing well financially, likely leaving people less motivated to pay for local news).²⁶

Audiences feel less well-served by “local news” that doesn’t cover local public affairs and doesn’t seem to reflect the local community.

And yet, as the Pew Research Center recently reported, “most U.S. adults (85%) believe local news outlets are at least somewhat important to the well-being of their local community, including 44% who say they are extremely or very important.” And “around two-thirds of Americans who feel very attached to their communities (66%) see local news outlets as extremely or very important.”²⁷

This felt connection between local news and civic belonging echoes a growing body of research showing how the availability and quality of local news affects the quality of civic life—

²⁵ <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/trust/archive/spring-2020/the-loss-of-local-news>

²⁶ <https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/2024/05/07/americans-changing-relationship-with-local-news/>

²⁷ <https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/2024/05/07/views-of-local-news/>

and our ability to grapple with shared problems. (See our 2022 report for a fuller review of that research).²⁸ For example, one study published in 2023 showed that local news is more effective at communicating about climate change, compared with national news, because it focuses on local impacts and is more trusted across party lines.²⁹ Another interview-based study of rural Caroline County, Virginia showed that when the local newspaper, the *Caroline Progress*, closed at age 99, local residents reported negative impacts, “noting increased isolation and diminished pride in their community.”³⁰

The enduring importance of local news and information butts up against the hard reality of declining capacity for production of local news. In the next section, we examine the outlets that remain—some thriving, many struggling, some just getting started—around the state.

This felt connection between local news and civic belonging echoes a growing body of research showing how the availability and quality of local news affects the quality of civic life—and our ability to grapple with shared problems.

An Updated Map of Local News in Oregon

In 2022, we released the first-ever attempt to identify and map all newspapers, radio and TV stations, and digital-first publications in Oregon that were regularly producing original, local, civically relevant content. For this report, we’ve updated that database, reviewing each entry to see what has changed (and in some cases, things we missed in 2022).

Readers should note the limitations built into this database: It includes no commercial radio stations (since research indicates the public affairs content on commercial radio is, in general, extremely limited³¹) and no

²⁸ <https://agorajournalism.center/newsecosystem22/the-civic-importance-of-local-news-ecosystems/>

²⁹ Talbot M Andrews, Cana Kim, & Jeong Hyun Kim, (2023) “News from Home: How Local Media Shapes Climate Change Attitudes,” *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Volume 87, Issue 4, Winter 2023, Pages 863–886, <https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfad049>

³⁰ Nick Mathews (2022). Life in a news desert: The perceived impact of a newspaper closure on community members. *Journalism*, 23(6), 1250-1265. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884920957885>

³¹ Jessica Mahone, Wun Wang, Philip Napoli, Matthew Weber, & Katie McCullough, “Who’s producing local journalism? Assessing journalistic output across different outlet types” (August 2019), DeWitt Wallace Center for Media & Democracy, p. 3. <https://>

stand-alone social media sites (which are very important to understanding how news is shared but are difficult to capture comprehensively); nor did we include public radio “repeater” stations that help radio station signals reach broader areas. The database also only reflects outlets that have a digital presence, which in most cases means a full-blown website, but for some small news outlets may mean a collection of online PDFs.

When updating the database we tried to re-assess whether outlets are producing public affairs content, such as coverage of local government and politics, environment, education, health, fire, crime, courts and law, economic issues, transportation, housing, and other public issues. Based on this re-analysis, we removed a few outlets from the updated database. We acknowledge the very important role played by local publications focusing exclusively on the arts, food, travel, outdoor recreation, and other lifestyle coverage for the civic vibrance of communities. For this report, however, we wanted to zero in on the news most essential to the democratic life of communities and most threatened by changes in the digital information environment: coverage of policy, politics, government, social issues, and public affairs. We included outlets that appear to regularly (if not exclusively) carry that kind of coverage. We also did not include outlets that appear to routinely mix commentary with news. Readers are encouraged to see the Methods appendix for details on how the database was assembled and updated.

Readers should also note that the main database excludes a small but important category of outlets that regularly produce original public affairs news about Oregon and other states in the Pacific Northwest: outlets like *ProPublica Northwest*, *Investigate West*, and the *Columbia Basin Bulletin*. These publications represent an important component of the local news ecosystem, especially for Oregonians who live, work, and travel across state boundaries. While important to the overall news coverage of our state, these regional outlets are not physically housed in Oregon and do not report only on Oregon. We have included them on a [separate tab of the database](#), but we have not included them in the statistical descriptions and analyses below in order to focus squarely on the state of local media within Oregon.

It's also important to bear in mind that the statistics and graphics in this report offer a point-in-time snapshot that will grow less accurate over time as changes unfold in Oregon's local news ecosystem. Readers can find our database and provide feedback at sojc.link/news-eco-25.

dewitt.sanford.duke.edu/whos-producing-local-journalism-nmrp-report/

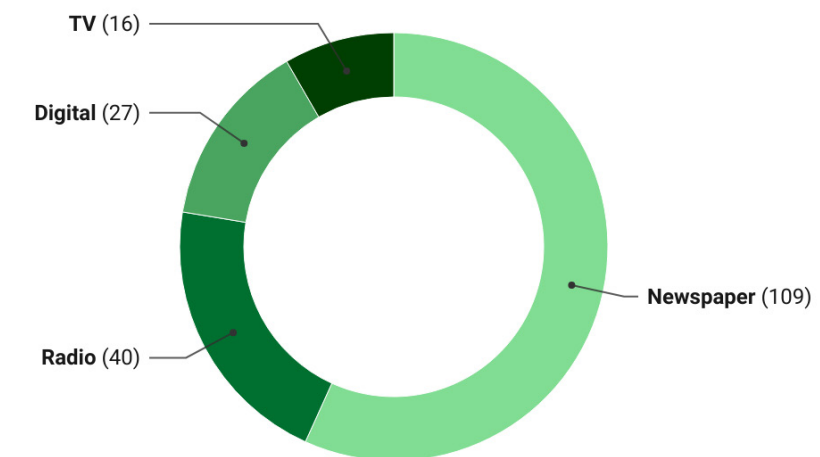
News Outlets Across Oregon, 2025

Based on the criteria described above, we counted 189 media outlets in Oregon that are regularly providing local public affairs news content.

Our research indicates that newspapers comprise 58% of news outlets in Oregon (defined by the criteria above), followed by public radio stations (22%). Digital news outlets comprise 12% of the media outlets in our dataset, and television stations almost 8%. Of course, these percentages do not reflect the audience size or reach of any individual outlet.

Oregon's Public Affairs News Outlets

by Medium

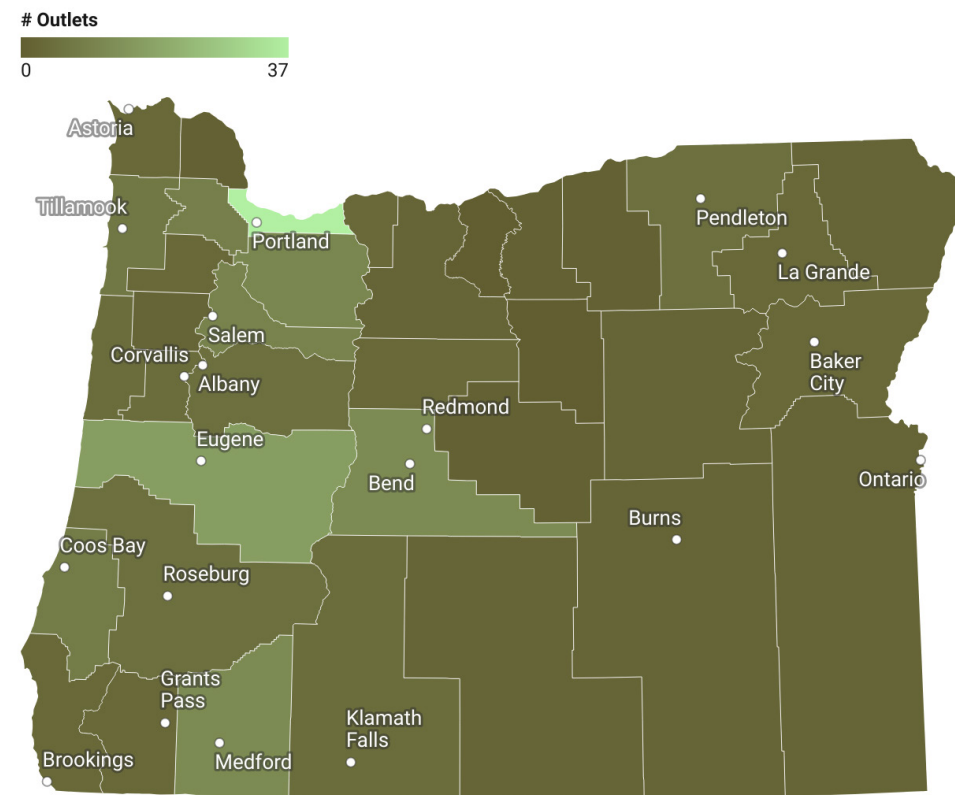


Created with Datawrapper

Just as we found in 2022, Oregonians living in different parts of the state have widely varying access to local news. Areas with higher population density tend to have more news outlets serving them—a pattern identified in studies of other locations around the U.S.³² Many of the areas of the state with lower population density are also geographically large, however, meaning that it can be harder for the few news outlets covering those areas to effectively cover all communities. The uneven distribution of outlets also means that, for some communities, if even one local outlet is at risk of shrinking or disappearing, the impact for those communities is greater. And we find two Oregon counties—Sherman and Wheeler—that are “news deserts” in the sense that we could not identify any functioning news outlet physically located in those counties.

³² See for example Nikki Usher (2021) *News for the Rich, White, and Blue: How place and power distort American journalism* (New York: Columbia University Press).

Oregon's News Outlets, by County



County	# Outlets	County	# Outlets	County	# Outlets
Baker	3	Harney	2	Morrow	1
Benton	4	Hood River	3	Multnomah	37
Clackamas	11	Jackson	12	Polk	2
Clatsop	3	Jefferson	3	Sherman	0
Columbia	1	Josephine	3	Tillamook	7
Coos	8	Klamath	4	Umatilla	5
Crook	1	Lake	2	Union	3
Curry	3	Lane	17	Wallowa	2
Deschutes	12	Lincoln	4	Wasco	2
Douglas	5	Linn	5	Washington	9
Gilliam	1	Malheur	2	Wheeler	0
Grant	2	Marion	10	Yamhill	3

As described in the opening section of this report, a number of Oregon's news outlets have closed since our first report was published in late 2022. According to our research, that list includes:

List of Closed Outlets Since Late 2022

County	Outlets
Clatsop	Columbia Press
Columbia	The Chief (or Clatskanie Chief), Chronicle & Chief
Jackson	Mail Tribune
Lincoln	Newport News-Times, News Guard
Linn	The Brownsville Times, Lebanon Express
Marion	Stayton Mail
Multnomah	Bridgeliner, Catholic Sentinel, El Centinela, Southwest Community Connection, The Way by OR360
Wasco	Dalles Chronicle
Washington	Sherwood Gazette
Wheeler	Wheeler County News
Yamhill	Christian News Northwest

Created with Datawrapper

Counting news outlets in terms of their physical location is only one way of assessing the health of local news ecosystems. In fact, even in areas with a relative wealth of local media, residents are not necessarily well informed and civically engaged.³³ Other approaches involve mapping local news in terms of media outlets' coverage areas, rather than where they are physically housed.³⁴ In other words, an outlet's bricks and mortar location is not always the best indicator of the broader swath of communities it actually reaches. For example, the Times-Journal, based in Condon, is considered the newspaper of record for three Oregon counties (Gilliam, Sherman, and Wheeler), and regularly produces news

The disappearance of individual newsrooms signals the loss of at least some capacity to cover local communities.

³³ <https://civicinfoindex.org/insights/>

³⁴ https://www.cjr.org/tow_center_reports/what-makes-for-robust-local-news-provision-looking-at-the-structural-correlates-of-local-news-coverage-for-an-entire-u-s-state-and-mapping-local-news-using-a-new-method.php

about those counties. But its physical location in Condon means that Sherman and Wheeler counties appear on our map to lack access to local news. In fact, the *Times-Journal* attempts to cover all three counties, and if we were mapping in terms of coverage area, those counties would look different on our map. With these caveats in mind, there is still value in documenting what remains and what has disappeared in terms of Oregon-based news media, because it is one important indicator of the state's local news production capacity. The disappearance of individual newsrooms almost inevitably signals the loss of at least some capacity to cover local communities.

That said, it's also important to remember that news consumers today get their news via many pathways. Documenting news production capacity is not the same as documenting where Oregonians are actually turning for local news and information. Future research needs to explore Oregonians' news consumption habits in a more comprehensive and granular way.



Along with several of his students, Professor DeVigal conducted a Listening Session in Florence in Feb 2025.

(Photos by Will Yurman)



Where Do Oregonians Get Local News and Information?

Counting the presence or disappearance of traditional newsrooms is only one part of understanding local news ecosystems. We need to understand where people regularly go to learn what is happening in their communities and around the state, including a broad range of information sources—not just traditional news outlets, but social media, friends, family and neighbors, local government, and civic organizations.

The Agora Journalism Center has conducted a series of community listening sessions and information needs assessments around the state over the past several years, including in La Pine, Hermiston, the Rogue Valley, Salem, Oakridge and Florence.

What we've heard from these gatherings offers worthwhile insights on how Oregonians try to stay informed in today's complex media environment³⁵:



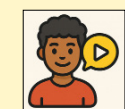
Trust in Local Media: Despite the rise of digital consumption, there is consistent trust in local radio and newspapers in particular.



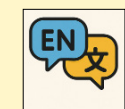
Digital Reliance and Personal Networks: Communities increasingly rely on digital platforms for news and information. People often turn to personal networks and to social media when trying to locate community information.



Information Gaps: Significant gaps remain, particularly in emergency communications and local governance updates.



Youth Engagement: Engaging younger demographics requires innovative approaches like leveraging social media.



Bilingual Resources: Providing information in multiple languages is essential for inclusivity.

³⁵ It's important to note that the insights gleaned from our listening sessions and information needs assessments are not based on surveys of large random samples of respondents, but rather from community conversations that participants chose to attend and other community outreach efforts. We don't know how closely those individuals' news habits match the overall population in Oregon.

New Outlets, New Partnerships, New Approaches

While the picture painted here so far is concerning, it's important to note that the same digital disruption that seriously weakened the traditional model for local news has also helped power the emergence of non-profit and commercial start-ups that are emerging to fill community information needs. And the same journalistic impulse to tell stories, document, and investigate that has powered local news for many decades is evident in these new start-ups as well—in many cases supported by concerned citizens, donors, and philanthropists. Since 2022, even while traditional newspapers have been closing and contracting, other newsrooms have been launched or are in the process of launching, including some promising partnerships. We begin by reviewing some larger-scale efforts, then we turn to smaller hyper-local start-ups.

Oregon Journalism Project

Launched in 2024 and headed by the longtime editor and co-owner of Willamette Week, Mark Zusman, the non-profit [Oregon Journalism Project](#) (OJP) is, Zusman [says](#), “a response to the statewide decline of local news in general, and impactful investigative journalism in particular, over the past quarter century.”³⁶ According to OJP's website, “Out-of-state

ownership and business-model disruptions have left Oregon with media enterprises unwilling and unable to devote sufficient resources to quality, independent local journalism.” In early 2025, Zusman told [Editor & Publisher](#) that “I've been on a two-year journey to determine how to expand the investigative, watchdog and explanatory journalism we do in Portland to the rest of the state, which is filled with news deserts.” Zusman told us the goal is to be “an AP [Associated Press] for Oregon” with a focus on investigative journalism to “address the most serious challenges facing the state.”

Oregon has seen a “statewide decline of local news in general, and impactful investigative journalism in particular, over the past quarter century.”

— MARK ZUSMAN,
OREGON JOURNALISM PROJECT

What makes OJP's model different is not just their exclusive focus on investigative journalism, but their model of content sharing. Zusman

³⁶ <https://www.wweek.com/news/2024/08/21/oregon-journalism-project-launches-statewide-civic-newsroom/>

says OJP (a non-profit newsroom) is focused on areas of the state “diserved by ghost newsrooms or no newsrooms” and so is hoping to pick a partner in every area of state to share exclusive access content for free. (As of this writing in early 2025, there were 34, including the soon-to-launch [Lookout Eugene-Springfield](#) and the [Bend Source](#)). Zusman told us, “We aren't doing SEO” (search engine optimization) for the OJP website—in fact, he said, “we don't care about our own website. We just want the stories published around the state to get readership to other newspapers.”

Moreover, OJP's aim is to develop investigative journalism capacity across the state, especially in rural areas, and to train the next generation of investigative journalists. While building its own statewide newsroom, eventually by locating OJP reporters around the state, OJP also plans to work with partner outlets to develop their own investigative work, by sharing expertise and resources. “We hope to create a rising tide to lift all boats,” Zusman told us.

Lookout Eugene-Springfield

Another new addition to the Oregon news ecosystem is the launch of [Lookout Eugene-Springfield](#). Modeled on [Lookout Santa Cruz](#), it is the brainchild of longtime journalist, media analyst, and former Eugene resident Ken Doctor. Doctor, whose [essays and reports](#) on the media business have shaped thinking across the industry for years,³⁷ [describes Lookout](#) as “my own model of local news revival.”³⁸ As he explained the model to us, “The ethos of [Lookout](#),” a for-profit newsroom, is community betterment. The reason communities need strong local news sources they can trust is so they can solve their problems and make communities better for everyone.”

Doctor says [Lookout Eugene-Springfield](#) will “offer a full range of community content, from government and education, to food, arts and entertainment” along with coverage of everything from “wine, aging, high school sports, and...business news.” Key parts of the model include a “civic partners” program featuring the work of local nonprofits, outreach to local schools through a “Lookout In the Classroom” program, and “Lookout Listens” community conversations to learn what issues and stories the local community wants to see covered. Communi-

³⁷ <https://www.niemanlab.org/author/kdoctor/>

³⁸ https://niemanreports.org/9-hard-truths-about-reviving-local-news/?mc_cid=0e15e8a068&mc_eid=648dae57ad

ty engagement is thus a key element of Lookout's mission and business model. As Doctor told us, "Convening should be a superpower for local media."

"The reason communities need strong local news sources they can trust is so they can solve their problems and make communities better for everyone."

— KEN DOCTOR,
LOOKOUT EUGENE-SPRINGFIELD

Lookout Eugene-Springfield also plans content-sharing partnerships with other media. In January of 2025, it [announced](#) that it would partner with the non-profit **Oregon Journalism Project** to carry OJP coverage that is "telling and useful to local readers."³⁹ Doctor told us *Lookout's* primary focus will be on the Eugene-Springfield area, with an eye toward helping to serve the whole of Lane County to "do what we can to help with rural journalism" as well.

The **Lookout** model has won attention because it appears to be relatively financially successful in a sector wracked by economic turmoil. Doctor's approach

to profitability stands out in an industry increasingly dominated by cost-cutting: "We could be quote-unquote 'profitable,'" he told [Nieman Report](#), "if we had fewer people in the newsroom. But the right thing to do, as long as we can gain the funding, is to invest — which, of course, turns that flywheel of more stories, which means more pageviews, which means more advertising revenue, which means more membership revenue."⁴⁰

In that interview, Doctor said that expanding to Eugene-Springfield reflects a specific strategy, as it is "a good-sized city that has a significant-sized group of college-educated, affluent people and a daily newspaper that has been decimated a chain owner's budget cuts" (referring to the [Eugene Register-Guard](#)). He plans to expand Lookout into three more cities by the end of 2026. Analysts nationwide are watching what happens next. As the Nieman Lab [wrote](#) in September of 2024, "There are so many American cities whose once-respectable daily newspapers have been hollowed out by plundering chains. If **Lookout** succeeds, it'll have created a model that can help fill those voids *at scale*."⁴¹

³⁹ <https://lookouteugene-springfield.com/2024/12/19/lookout-eugene-springfield-launch-update-district-4j-conversations-oregons-deepening-local-news-crisis/>

⁴⁰ <https://www.niemanlab.org/2024/09/with-an-expansion-on-the-way-ken-doctors-lookout-thinks-it-has-some-answers-to-the-local-news-crisis/>

⁴¹ Ibid.

Uplift Local

A new organization aiming to become a news provider to underserved communities is **Uplift Local**. It describes itself as a news service that plans to cover public meetings with citizen "documenters" and produce Spanish-language local news and information, initially focusing on [communities along the Columbia Gorge](#).⁴² This kind of boots on the ground local reporting on local government has been lost at many resource-strapped media outlets.

Founded by three longtime Oregon journalists—John Schrag, former executive editor with Pamplin Media Group, investigative reporter Lee van der Voo, and reporter/producer Emily Harris—this new effort grew out of the *Oregon News Exploration* (ONE), a three-year project to understand news and information habits and needs in communities around the state. Funded by private donations and the Oregon Community Foundation, ONE's surveys and focus groups found that Oregon's rural communities and communities of color often feel misrepresented in or absent from the news. As they delved deeper, Schrag told us, ONE learned that "Rural Oregonians are longing for the type of news they once had when they had a local newspaper [when] there were journalists were paying attention to their schools, city halls, events."

But the same isn't necessarily true for communities whose primary language is not English. Harris, van der Voo and Schrag are "steeped in investigative, data-driven, and accountability reporting," says Schrag, but "our research showed that [while] consumers appreciate that and many would like to see more, it's not what they need the most." So, Schrag says, "we followed our research, and where we ended up is not where we expected to go."

Building upon that work, **Uplift Local** focuses on the needs of linguistic minority communities, particularly Spanish speakers, who have historically not been well-served by local news—communities where they saw lack of engagement with and trust in local media, and whose information needs are specific. "English speakers say they need information on the planning commission, ports, transit agencies, et cetera," Schrag told us. "Spanish speakers didn't mention local government reporting at all." What those communities really want, Schrag says, "is just basic information — not 'news.' If we see smoke, is that a prescribed burn? It's snowing—will the school buses be on time? These communities have

⁴² <https://www.oregonlive.com/business/2024/10/journalism-nonprofit-uplift-local-aims-to-reinvent-community-news-in-columbia-river-gorge.html?gift=f2f0e74f-7e2f-464d-823f-4304e9f58086>

to hope someone posts that information somewhere and in Spanish.” “In a world in which all the signposts are in English,” Schrag says, these communities are looking for “accessible, locally-grounded, daily information” – and not only information translated from English, but written by and for Spanish speakers.

What those communities really want “is just basic information – not ‘news.’”

— JOHN SCHRAG,
UPLIFT LOCAL

Uplift Local also plans to start covering public meetings in the Gorge through a [Documenters](#) program—one of the first in a rural community—that trains and compensates community members to attend and take notes on public meetings; the notes are then made public for journalists and the public.⁴³ **Uplift Local** is recruiting bilingual Documenters, with additional plans to hire community members to report primarily in Spanish. With plans to expand into news for Russian- and Ukrainian-speaking communities in the greater Portland area, Schrag [describes Uplift Local](#) as “a new, scalable model to empower underserved communities.”⁴⁴

The launch of these major new organizations is a bright spot in the midst of the declines and contractions in local news around the state. And each offers potentially important models for the future of local news.

At the same time, organizations like **Lookout** and **Oregon Journalism Project** will not fill all of Oregon’s news and information gaps, particularly in the state’s news deserts and near-deserts. For example, despite the well-documented [decline in quality](#) at the **Eugene Register-Guard** in the years since it was acquired by GateHouse Media,⁴⁵ Eugene is not a news desert. Currently served by a number of media outlets, residents of the Eugene-Springfield area don’t face the same dearth of locally relevant news as residents of communities like the city of St. Helens, which lost its local paper in 2024, or Sherman county, which has lacked any identifiable local news outlets for years. Moreover, donors and foundations interested in financially supporting local news may be drawn to higher-profile start-ups like **Oregon Journalism Project** or **Lookout**, potentially siphoning dollars away from small community newspapers, digital start-ups, and others that are laboring to still serve communities

43 <https://www.documenters.org/>

44 <https://www.oregonlive.com/opinion/2024/06/opinion-oregons-local-news-landscape-is-about-to-change-are-we-finally-ready-to-talk-about-equity.html>

45 <https://www.oregonlive.com/business/2023/05/eugene-register-guard-languishes-under-gannett-nations-largest-newspaper-chain.html?e=ad92f5595758dc5528f3c92fcac133ee>

that are one closure away from becoming news deserts. (For his part, Doctor says that Lookout has raised funds primarily from the Eugene area and is not drawing away funders from other parts of the state.)

While these larger, better-funded projects will undoubtedly be important to the future of Oregon’s local news ecosystem, it will be up to other, smaller start-ups to fill other news and information gaps around the state.

Hyper-local Start-Ups

In our 2022 report, we [featured](#) some small new outlets that were emerging to fill community news and information gaps.⁴⁶ Today, many of those are seeing positive growth. For example, in 2022 we featured *YachatsNews*, a non-profit based in south Lincoln County that was founded in 2019 by longtime journalist Quinton Smith. At that time, Smith told us, “There’s lots of opportunities for things that I’m doing, but the question of course is, can it be monetized...and how should it be.” Today, Smith is in a better position to answer that question. Now renamed the **Lincoln Chronicle** “to better reflect what we currently cover and what more that we will be doing with the addition of another reporter,” Smith is adding both readership and reporting capacity. Smith told us the site’s page views reached 2 million in 2024, a 22 percent increase from 2023, and the outlet raised enough money through donations and grants to hire their second full-time reporter based in Newport to cover county government, education, housing and homelessness and other issues. This growth, Smith says, shows that “in ‘news deserts’ there is a great desire for local, professionally reported news.”

“This growth shows that “in ‘news deserts’ there is a great desire for local, professionally reported news.”

— QUINTON SMITH,
LINCOLN CHRONICLE

Some losses in local news have been offset by new hyper-local sites. *Axios*, the national news company started in 2017 by the founders of *Politico* that has been adding “Local” sites in cities around the country, [came to Portland](#) in 2023 and attracted former readers of the hyper-local newsletter *Bridgeline*.⁴⁷ Based on a subscription model, **Axios Portland** produces a daily newsletter, breaking news alerts, and guides to local schools, jobs, and real estate. Noting that “Local reporting has been obliterated by technology, private equity cash and new consumer habits,” *Axios*’s founders [believe](#) that “Too many falsely assume local

46 <https://agorajournalism.center/newsecosystem22/emerging-outlets-news-room-collaborations-and-journalistic-support-organizations/>

47 <https://www.axios.com/local/portland>

reporting can't be revitalized profitably." Instead, they believe, it can, if "you meet your readers' needs, put your investment into people, not paper or property, [and] create a new, healthy daily [news] habit."⁴⁸

Chas Hundley would likely agree. In 2017, Hundley launched the *Banks Post* and the *Gales Creek Journal*, digital-first hyper-local sites that now have developed limited print circulation. Hundley told us that the *Post* and the *Journal*—which are a "one-man show" owned, operated, and populated with content solely by him—are "doing a lot of basic journalism—school boards, elections, school plays. "If we don't do that," he said, "the only thing that fills that void is social media, which can be wildly inaccurate and filled with rumors." He hopes to help his readers cultivate new news habits while providing basic journalism that connects people to their communities: "Here's how your local government works, roads, transportation," et cetera. "You don't have to rely on algorithms showing you this information," Hundley said, hoping that his outlets can help "to get people out of that social media way of getting news."

"Here's how your local government works, roads, transportation. You don't have to rely on algorithms showing you this information."

— CHAS HUNDLEY,
BANKS POST AND
GALES CREEK JOURNAL

As this report was being written, Hundley shared the news that he was launching another site, *News In the Grove*, as a direct response to the declines in local reporting he says he saw around him. As the area newspapers (the *Hillsboro News-Times* and the *Forest Grove News-Times*) were merged, Hundley says, "extremely little was being published" about the smaller community of Forest Grove, including a house fire in which someone died, and he increasingly heard from civic leaders and community members that the News-Times "just doesn't show up for things anymore." Hundley said he felt that "It just seems like they're not covering the community in a community-centric way," which prompted him to launch *News In the Grove*. "With the sale [of the former local paper] I do believe there's a market for it," Hundley told us, though he wasn't sure how long that might take. "It's going to grow as the community supports it."

Another intriguing hyper-local start-up is *Newsberg*, which was founded in 2023 by University of Oregon journalism graduate Branden Andersen. After interning as an undergrad, Andersen briefly worked as a beat reporter at the *Bend Bulletin* before being laid off. He moved to a sales and marketing position with the beer industry—a move, Andersen says, that taught him valuable business skills. He moved to Newberg in

⁴⁸ <https://www.axios.com/newsletters/local>

2021, just months before four members of the Newberg School Board directed the superintendent to remove Black Lives Matter displays and LGBTQ+ pride flags from Newberg Schools. Andersen says he saw how, amidst a controversy that drew national attention, bloggers and social media commentary sowed division in his new community while the local legacy newspaper struggled, with its single reporter, to report local news. Later, when a neighborhood coffee shop closed under mysterious circumstances, Andersen decided to "put news back on the docket." The coffee shop story was *Newsberg's* first.

Since then, Andersen recently [told readers](#), "From humble beginnings with seven subscribers in April 2023, *Newsberg* has grown into a trusted local news source with 1,400 newsletter subscribers and 168 stories published in 2024—an average of 3.23 stories per week."⁴⁹ Andersen takes pride in listening to community members to guide his coverage, including through a reader survey, which "helps me know that I'm moving in the right direction for what the readers *actually* want, not what I think they want." "My whole thing," Andersen told us, is "to answer the community's questions. My boss is one collective community." At first, he says, people were wary of somebody new in town asking questions. But over time he's won trust. Recently, he says, when a potential story was percolating on a community social media site, someone said "I bet *Newsberg* is on it," and that was when I knew this was working."

Andersen's vision is, ultimately, not just for *Newsberg* and his local community, but to encourage community journalism around the state. In college, he says, he and his fellow journalism students aimed to "meet at *The New York Times*." But now, his goal is to help other journalists know "there are other pathways, and it could be just making a difference for 26,000 ppl." Andersen is working with the [Reynolds Journalism Institute](#) and [LION Publishers](#) to develop a playbook and digital trainings for journalists wanting to learn the pillars of building a community news business. He hopes others will see *Newsberg* as a testing ground for ways to start a sustainable digital platform. And, he says, "I hope Oregon continues to embrace the pioneer spirit by doing things differently."

Just like there are questions about how well larger, better-funded start-ups like the *Oregon Journalism Project* or *Lookout Eugene-Springfield*

⁴⁹ <https://newsberg.org/2024/12/31/newsberg-2024-a-year-in-review/>

A reader survey "helps me know that I'm moving in the right direction for what the readers actually want, not what I think they want."

— BRANDEN ANDERSEN,
NEWSBERG

can fill local news gaps, there are questions about the economic prospects for small start-ups. And it's important to note that not all new local digital start-ups are primarily journalistic: [Some](#) are opinion and partisan sites as much or more than providers of journalism.⁵⁰

National trends suggest that digital start-ups, which represent nearly 85% of local news start-ups nationwide, can face [sustainability challenges](#) similar to those of traditional newsrooms.⁵¹ Nevertheless, many of Oregon's hyper-local start-ups are seeing promising signs of success. From her vantage point as the former executive director of *FORJournalism* (FORJ), Jody Lawrence-Turner told us, "I think determined journalists with a good sustainability plan can find the resources to start digital publications in news deserts." This sentiment was echoed by others we spoke with, including Quinton Smith of *Lincoln Chronicle*, who told us, "In this community there's a big enough thirst for local professionally produced reporting" to support the expansion they are undergoing. "In news deserts, if you do it they will come, to a certain extent. Our little model is being successful at that." Nodding to another successful digital start-up, *Ashland News*, Smith said, "Communities like Ashland and Yachats are fertile field for this kind of endeavor."



An Agora Listening Session in the Rogue Valley, May 2023, with Ashland News editor Bert Etling speaking with the group.

But "what happens in the fields that aren't so fertile?" Here he pointed to the community of St. Helens, whose local paper (the *Columbia County Chronicle & Chief*, formed in December 2023 by the merger of *The Chronicle* in St. Helens and *The Chief* in Clatskanie) closed in 2024—even though the city is the county seat. Other than an occasional high-profile story, like the school sexual abuse scandal that rocked the community in 2024, "no one's going to go out there to cover the community on a regular basis." What local residents have to rely on in communities like these, said Smith, is "the *Oregonian* dropping in to cover stuff or some TV reporter [from another city] showing up."

⁵⁰ <https://www.opb.org/article/2025/01/27/oregon-local-news-journalism-hood-view-news-far-right-mike-wiley-clackamas-county/>

⁵¹ <https://localnewsinitiative.northwestern.edu/posts/2024/11/21/local-news-start-ups-look-for-sustainability/>

How To Tell Community Stories to Build Trust

— From a conversation with Will Yurman, journalism instructor at the University of Oregon and creator of [West of the Tunnel](#).

There is more than one way to serve community news and information needs, and more than one way to tell community stories. One example of creative hyperlocal multimedia storytelling is *West of the Tunnel*, started by UO journalism professor [Will Yurman](#), who moved from Pennsylvania to Florence, Oregon in 2022.

Rather than a local "news" site per se, Yurman describes *WestoftheTunnel* as a "storytelling site." Featuring short- and long-form print, audio, and video stories and sumptuous photography, it's "a place for me to tell the stories of the people who share this remarkable place. It grows out of my own curiosity about who lives here and the stories we don't often hear, or the reasons behind the stories we think we understand."

What would you say to other people who want to tell the stories of their local communities?

"I'd tell people to just start. Find someone interesting, or dig into what concerns you the most, and write or record something. Ask people you trust to help you. But most importantly, start. Create something. Put it out into the world. Get feedback. And then do it again. Try to build a community.

But also, fact-check. And be open to the possibility you're wrong. Be humble. For me, the goal is to create conversations and build trust. I'm not trying to change minds. I'm not trying to convince people of anything. I want to start conversations from a place of shared facts. I think a lot as I'm writing about more controversial topics - the 2024 election for example - about how to do that. Journalistic ideas around verification and transparency are central to me."

How do sites like *West of the Tunnel* matter in the bigger picture of declining local news?

"I think trust is the central problem in the news at all levels. Part of my hope with *West of the Tunnel* (WotT) is that it can be a test kitchen for ways of creating trust. The stories of the four people reflecting on their political views are examples of ways I've been thinking of creating conversations.

How do we build a sense of trust in the facts, even if we disagree about what they mean?

I think WotT could be one model for creating trusted sources of information. And I see it as a lab to explore different solutions.

Additional New and Evolving Local News Initiatives

FORJournalism (FORJ). In our 2022 report, we highlighted the work of [FORJournalism](#) (formerly called the Fund for Oregon Rural Journalism). Originally underwritten by EO Media, FORJ is a nonprofit led by media professionals “created to stem the tide of the decline of journalism in Oregon by connecting vulnerable publications with opportunities such as trainings, technology, tools, and grants to keep newsroom doors open.”⁵²

“Determined journalists with a good sustainability plan can find the resources to start digital publications in news deserts.”

— JODY LAWRENCE-TURNER,
BEND BULLETIN

FORJ now operates three programs: the FORJ Resource Center, designed to help newsrooms adapt to be more sustainable in today's media environment; Future Journalists of America, offering hands-on trainings and learning opportunities for high school students on both the business side and the community engagement side of local journalism; and the Journalism Lab, which brings professional journalists together to report on specific issues in stories to be shared across Oregon news outlets.

FORJ has thus evolved to become a news provider as well as a support organization. For example, the “[Homelessness: Real Stories, Real Solutions](#)” project, funded by the Central Oregon Health Council, examines the problem of homelessness in Central Oregon through both skilled journalism and deliberate community outreach. The project includes a “pre-test” survey to gauge Central Oregonians' baseline understanding of homelessness, to be followed by a post-test designed to help discover how dedicated reporting on the issue might move the needle. As FORJ's former executive director Jody Lawrence-Turner told us, they wanted to “invite readers to go on this journey with us: Who are the homeless and what are they facing?” According to Lawrence-Turner, this kind of specialized, thematic reporting is an important addition to Oregon's news ecosystem that “can really reverberate, like ripples in the water. The information can really spread.”

The Catalyst Journalism Project. Based in the University of Oregon's School of Journalism & Communication, the [Catalyst Journalism Project](#) formed in 2017 to provide students with real-world experience in producing public affairs journalism. Catalyst focuses on showing how two

⁵² <https://www.forjournalism.org/about>

reporting approaches — investigative journalism and solutions-focused journalism — can align to produce stories with impact. In 2023, Catalyst launched its Local News Initiative, supporting student journalists to fill gaps in the local public affairs coverage. According to its website, Catalyst is the first university-based newsroom of its kind in the Pacific Northwest and the only one nationwide dedicated to an investigative/solutions focus. Directed by faculty editors, “Catalyst student reporters produce multimedia stories developed in the Catalyst newsroom or directly with news outlets around the state.” In all, according to Catalyst director Brent Walth, nearly 100 journalism students have gained first-hand reporting experience while contributing to local news production in Oregon.

The Oregon Media Collaborative. Another new model for supporting local news is the [Oregon Media Collaborative](#), a group of journalists, local news supporters, and media scholars from across the state committed to meeting Oregonians' news and informational needs. Facilitated by the University of Oregon's Agora Journalism Center, as of this writing the group included 78 members from organizations and outlets ranging from large legacy newsrooms and broadcasters (e.g. *The Oregonian*, *KGW*, and *Oregon Public Broadcasting*) to smaller outlets (e.g. *Ashland News*, the *Corvallis Advocate*, the *Highway 58 Herald*, and the *Tillamook County Pioneer*) and specialized publications (e.g. the *Lund Report*, *Street Roots*). The Collaborative's aims include building a stronger sense of community among Oregon's many journalists; facilitating collective problem solving to address operational, technical, and digital transition challenges; and sharing resources and expertise. Early efforts included building a collaborative newsroom response to proposed legislation designed to bolster local news in Oregon.

Says Agora Journalism Center director Andrew DeVigal, at a time when “people are getting their news from a variety of different sources and civic information is being created and distributed across a variety of newspapers, newsletters, broadcast, podcasts, social media, et cetera,” a collaboration that engages local news providers across the state and across multiple types of media is “an opportunity to learn from each other and collectively improve the local news ecosystem.” Bringing journalism students into the conversation is another unique feature of OMC: DeVigal, a professor of practice at the UO's School of Journalism & Communication, is connecting students with journalists and communities around the state to hone the practice of [community-centered journalism](#).⁵³

⁵³ <https://agorajournalism.center/research/advancing-community-centered-journalism/>

Oregon's Shifting Patchwork of Local News Providers

Overall, our sense is that there is greater recognition of the local news crisis and greater energy and effort across the state, compared to the situation we documented in our 2022 report, to address the resource challenges of local newsrooms. As our overview above indicates, an array of new outlets are trying to meet community news and information needs in innovative ways. The emergence of new newsrooms, projects, partnerships, and collaborations from hyper-local to regional to state-wide points in promising directions.

These new efforts complement the ongoing work of legacy news. The anchoring presence of large and comparatively stable and better-resourced organizations, such as the **Oregonian**, **Jefferson Public Radio**, and **Oregon Public Broadcasting**, is an important feature of Oregon's local news ecosystem.

The Oregonian has long been Oregon's largest newspaper and is the oldest continuously-published newspaper on the West Coast. According to its editor and vice president of content, Therese Bottomly, after three consecutive downsizings before she took on the role, the paper and its parent company, Advance Media, are now "on solid footing and continuing to innovate." From managing the features content on **Here Is Oregon** and maintaining content sharing partnerships with multiple other news organizations, to producing over two dozen newsletters and managing multiple social media accounts, to producing a popular true crime podcast and stories for Tik Tok, Bottomly says she "feels good" that the **Oregonian's** online readership is now "really robust," and "we've gotten enough initiatives, subscriptions, et cetera that we can now think strategically." The paper has "tried to build partnerships that work for all parties," such as with **Underscore Native News**, that ultimately benefit the whole local news ecosystem, Bottomly says.

For its part, according to CEO Rachel Smolkin, **Oregon Public Broadcasting** wants to "remain a hub for supporting local journalism around the state and region." Smolkin, a former senior vice president at CNN who came to Oregon in 2024 to lead OPB, told us she has been "struck by the desire in so many communities to come together and have a shared discussion, to hear from different viewpoints, and experience moments of joy that bring us closer to others." Noting that the local news ecosystem is "fragile," Smolkin sees OPB as a "convener that brings people together." With its "robust" digital presence, Smolkin says she envisions OPB "leading the news and public affairs conversation across Oregon and the Pacific Northwest – in partnership with

community storytellers." She points to the **Northwest News Network** and to OPB's **editorial partnerships** with other news outlets across the region as a key contribution to Oregon's news ecosystem.⁵⁴ OPB has also opened bureaus in Bend and Pendleton, with potential plans for more bureaus around the state.

Overall, the launch of new local news outlets large and small, along with the persistence, stability, and growth of anchor institutions, point toward an optimistic perspective: Oregon's news and information ecosystem, while undergoing significant disruption, is adapting and evolving in ways that can continue to serve the public. From this perspective, bolstered by the continued strength of key anchor institutions and the growth of a variety of partnerships and collaborations, the emergence of an array of innovative start-ups offers potential new models for how to serve communities' information needs in an increasingly tough business and media environment.

The current reality, however, is that Oregonians' news and information needs are being unevenly met. In some areas of the state, a variety of media—some new, some legacy; some struggling, some stable—overlap to provide relatively robust local coverage. In other areas, people struggle to find relevant, quality local news. While the launch of new news endeavors is heartening, it is important to note that the number of new outlets to open since our first report in 2022 appears to be fewer than the 18 outlets from our 2022 database that are no longer active (not to mention the looming possibility of additional mergers and closures), raising the question of what it will take to stimulate more robust local news growth in Oregon. We turn in the next section to what Oregon's journalists say they will need for local newsrooms to survive and thrive.

Oregonians' news and information needs are being unevenly met.

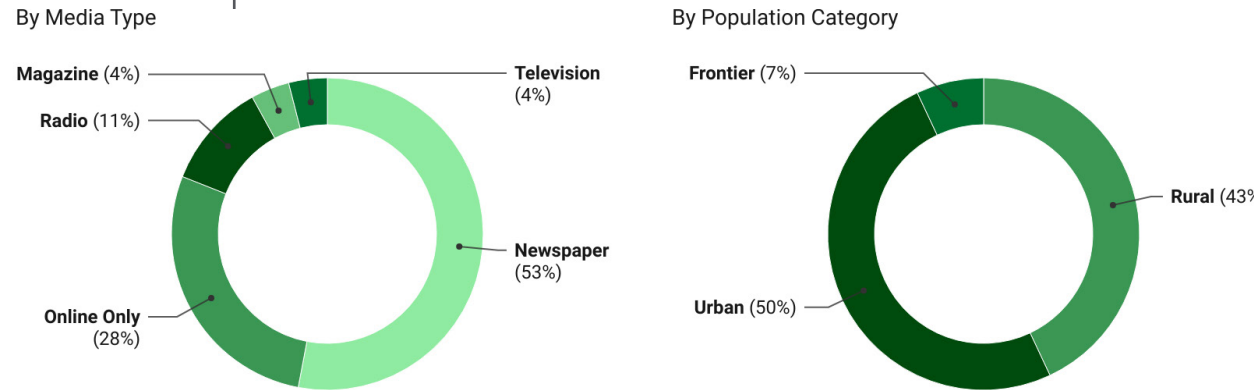
What Do Oregon's Newsrooms Need?

During the summer of 2024, the Agora Journalism Center conducted an online survey to gather information directly from Oregon's newsrooms about their resources and challenges. We heard from nearly 70 journalists who told us about their staff size, funding priorities, and about the

⁵⁴ <https://www.opb.org/partnerships/>

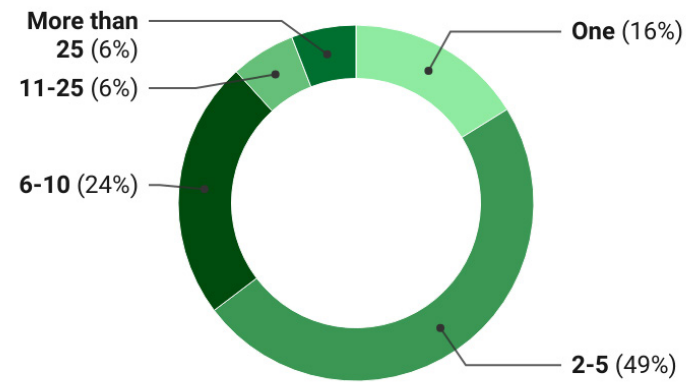
key local news sources people in their communities turn to. Although the respondents are a non-random subset of all of Oregon's newsrooms, these responses do provide a clearer sense of local journalism needs.⁵⁵ For example, the preponderance of very small newsrooms among our respondents suggests the eagerness of stretched-thin journalists to participate in studies like these that can raise awareness of their work and its challenges.

Breakdown of Respondents



Created with Datawrapper

Approximate size of your newsroom
Including full-time editors, reporters, and other staff



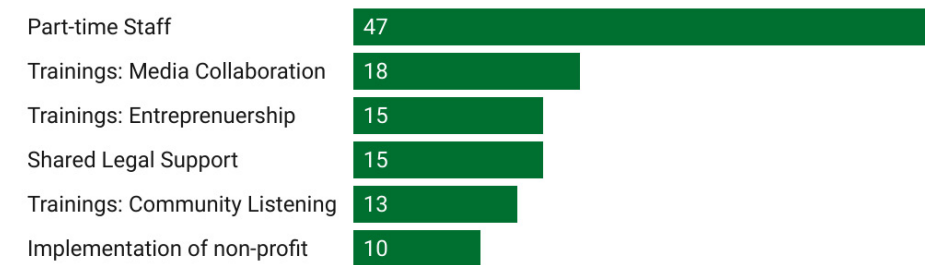
Created with Datawrapper

⁵⁵ Because this survey is not based on a random sampling of news outlets around the state, but rather on the voluntary responses of Oregon Media Collaborative members, the statistics reported here are not necessarily generalizable to all journalists or newsrooms in Oregon.

In answer to the question, “what are the top 2 or 3 other organizations where people in the communities you serve are getting their local news and information?”, many respondents to our survey—the majority of whom work at newspapers—mentioned local TV and radio stations along with social media, particularly Facebook. Local newspapers still maintain a strong presence in some regions of the state. Publications like the *Bend Bulletin* and the *Corvallis Gazette-Times* were frequently cited, along with statewide outlets such as *The Oregonian* and *Willamette Week*. In addition, respondents mentioned newsletters—both from local governments and private organizations—as important ways people stay informed about community events and updates.

Recognizing the financial constraints many local news outlets are operating under, we also asked, “If there was a pool of money to share among journalists and media organizations, how would you suggest spending it to meet your community's information needs?” Among six pre-defined responses—part-time staff, shared legal support, entrepreneurship and sustainability training, non-profit models, community listening, and media collaborations—70% of respondents selected hiring part-time staff as their top priority, with many respondents emphasizing the need for more personnel to be able to regularly produce local news content. Other options received support from 15% to 27% of this group, especially trainings in media collaborations—an important way that resource-challenged outlets can pool resources to produce local news—and in community engagement techniques. Some respondents also mentioned hiring full-time staff or shared regional reporters, while others suggested pooling resources for advertising sales in local publications.

70% of respondents selected hiring part-time staff as their top priority, with many respondents emphasizing the need for more personnel to be able to regularly produce local news content.



Building a “Three-Legged Stool” to Support Civic News and Information

Addressing a crisis as complex and fast-moving as the disappearance of local news will take coordinated efforts across many fronts. The array of innovations being tried by newsrooms around Oregon, highlighted in the previous section, are important for local journalism to become more relevant, trusted, and sustainable. The disruption of the traditional business model for local journalism, particularly for-profit newspapers, means that newsrooms can't solve the problem by doubling down on traditional approaches. According to the former COO of EO Media Group Heidi Wright, “We have to redefine the industry.”



But newsroom adaptation and innovation are only one part of the solution—one leg under the stool. News organizations and their advocates most likely cannot solve the local news crisis alone. Rebuilding the local news ecosystem will require the combined efforts of many sectors, including philanthropy and public policy. According to Wright, the solutions to Oregon's local news crisis “need to be philanthropic, legislative, and with sustainable business practices.”

Press Forward: Philanthropy and Local Journalism

Perhaps the biggest news in journalism circles in the past two years has been the announcement of [Press Forward](#), a national coalition of funders led by the Knight Foundation and the MacArthur Foundation, that aims “to raise significant new resources for local news, and lower the transaction costs to both funders and grant seekers in the process.” Animated by a vision to “re-center local journalism as a force for community cohesion, civic participation, and government accountability,” Press Forward's [opening promise](#) was to leverage \$500 million in grants,⁵⁶ [representing](#) “the largest coordinated philanthropic effort to

⁵⁶ <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2023/11/press-forward-macarthur-foundation-local-news/675847/?ref=localnewsblues.com>

support local news.”⁵⁷ By June of 2024, the coalition had [expanded](#) from 22 original funders to over 60, and Press Forward Local chapters had been established in more than 20 states.⁵⁸ By early 2025, the initiative reported it had invested \$200 million, including \$20 million given to 205 small news outlets around the country. As of this writing, three outlets in Oregon had received Press Forward funding: *The Eugene Weekly*, the *Lund Report*, and *Underscore Native News*.

Despite broad agreement with its goals, Press Forward has been criticized for moving slowly, emphasizing public announcements over concrete action, a complex structure, [lack of transparency](#),⁵⁹ and not adequately prioritizing equity (though Press Forward's messaging emphasizes equity as a key goal). Another challenge has been convincing state-level philanthropies to join the effort to invest in bolstering local news—in part because supporting the private, for-profit sector (the majority of media in the United States) is not often a priority for public-minded philanthropies; in part [because](#) “local philanthropists haven't traditionally seen news as a civic need.”⁶⁰ Meanwhile, Press Forward encourages the creation of local chapters to provide ongoing infrastructure for philanthropic support for local news, but creating those chapters can be time-consuming and may ultimately be seen as misspent effort that could end up diverting funds from newsrooms. And while Press Forward's \$500 million goal is impressive, it almost certainly is [not enough](#)⁶¹—highlighting again that multiple, coordinated efforts will be required to reverse the decline in local news—although its [proponents argue](#) that initial pledge will “help generate billions more in new support for local news.”⁶²

Still, Press Forward has helped catalyze and focus national attention on the local news crisis and helped normalize the idea that philanthropies have an important role to play in addressing it. As one Press Forward [funder put it](#), they have recognized that “the media's financial crisis threaten[s] to undermine almost everything else we [are] trying

⁵⁷ <https://niemanreports.org/press-forward-local-news-funding/>

⁵⁸ <https://www.pressforward.news/building-the-movement-our-work-to-date/>

⁵⁹ <https://www.editorandpublisher.com/stories/stop-thinking-of-press-forward-as-a-single-program,251256>

⁶⁰ <https://www.editorandpublisher.com/stories/the-challenge-and-promise-of-press-forward-funding-the-nations-local-newsrooms-for-the-future,249861>

⁶¹ <https://dicktofel.substack.com/p/yes-press-forward-but-with-eyes-open>

⁶² <https://niemanreports.org/press-forward-local-news-funding/>

Press Forward encourages the creation of local chapters to provide ongoing infrastructure for philanthropic support for local news.

to accomplish.”⁶³ Press Forward has also articulated [key principles](#) for rebuilding local news, including the importance of community-centered journalism that builds trust; resolving longstanding inequities in how and for whom local news is produced; and developing public policy to support local news.⁶⁴

Despite some initial efforts, as of this writing no Oregon Press Forward chapter has been created. There has been some important philanthropic support for local news here in Oregon, including investments by the Oregon Community Foundation (including [KOB-TV](#) in Medford, the [Cottage Grove Sentinel](#), the [Newberg Graphic](#), and [Uplift Local](#)); by the Roundhouse Foundation (which has supported outlets including [Curry Coast Community Radio](#), [Oregon Arts Watch](#), [Underscore Native News](#), and [Uplift Local](#)), and the Ford Family Foundation.

Public Policy to Bolster Local News & Information

Today, an increasing number of advocates for local news agree that public policy has a critical role to play in creating better chances of success as newsrooms work to adapt to a radically changed environment. According to a recent [Tow Center report](#), given the breadth of the local news crisis, “Fresh approaches are needed to tackle issues such as sustainability, funding for journalism, and meeting information gaps.”⁶⁵ Policy makers in the U.S. have an historical reluctance to wade directly into the question of whether the public is being well-served by the media, and “market-led approaches have historically dominated media policy” in this country. However, these analysts say, “there is evidence of market failure in this arena” that “will therefore require a new approach.”

Recently, legislatures around the country have begun taking unprecedented [steps](#) to help address the local news crisis.⁶⁶ Here we highlight some of the main approaches being tried or proposed around the country, including here in Oregon during the 2025 legislative session.⁶⁷ Read-

⁶³ <https://www.pressforward.news/how-public-policy-led-by-the-states-moves-the-needle-for-local-news/>

⁶⁴ <https://www.pressforward.news/funding-opportunities/>

⁶⁵ https://www.cjr.org/tow_center_reports/building-a-stronger-local-media-ecosystem-the-role-of-media-policy.php

⁶⁶ <https://www.rebuildlocalnews.org/policy-menu/>

⁶⁷ For a deeper look at the role of media policy in addressing the local news crisis, see Damian Radcliffe and Nick Mathews, (2023) “Building a Stronger Local Media Ecosystem: The Role of Media Policy,” *Columbia Journalism Review*, April 20, https://www.cjr.org/tow_center_reports/building-a-stronger-local-media-ecosystem-the-role-of-media-policy.php. For an overview of policies being explored across the US, see the “Policy Menu”

ers should note that some of the approaches discussed here have been bundled together in state legislation around the country.⁶⁸

Journalism scholarships & fellowships. One approach to addressing newsrooms’ diminishing ability to pay for reporters is to incentivize and subsidize people—young people in particular—to work as local journalists. This approach is being tried in several states. In 2024, the Illinois legislature passed a bill creating a scholarship program for in-state students studying journalism at in-state colleges, tied to a commitment that they work in the state for at least two years after graduating. New Mexico appropriated \$125 million to expand the Local News Fellowships and Internships program run by the [New Mexico Local News Fund](#), which is a Press Forward local chapter, and the Department of Communication and Journalism at the University of New Mexico. These moves followed a 2022 act in California allocating \$25 million over three years for a journalism fellowship program run by UC Berkeley’s journalism school, and a 2023 bill in Washington state appropriating \$2.4 million for a journalism fellowship program at Washington State University. According to a [report out of WSU](#), the [Murrow News Fellows Program](#) aims to address the fact that many local news outlets “lack the resources to hire and retain journalists at a competitive rate.”⁶⁹ The program pairs promising early career reporters with news organizations, “funding their salary for two years so they can report on civic affairs and critical information needs.” The program plans to place three six-month fellows in Olympia for the state’s 2025 legislative session, in addition to the 16 two-year fellows it has placed in newsrooms statewide.

Matching the educational role of colleges and universities to the critical resource gap that has left many local newsrooms unable to afford reporters to cover their communities adequately is one way to bolster local news, but it has some challenges and limitations. In particular, it remains to be seen if these programs can help create a sustained talent

at Rebuild Local News: <https://www.rebuildlocalnews.org/policy-menu/>

⁶⁸ For example, Illinois’ 2024 legislation included funding for journalism fellowships and newsroom payroll tax credits, and also required public notice and a waiting period prior to the sale of local news outlets to out-of-state owners—representing several of the approaches that, for clarity’s sake, we have thematically separated here.

⁶⁹ Jennifer R. Henrichsen, Pawel Popiel, Elizabeth Chambers, Alexandra Fil, Kathryn Robinson-Tay, Lisa Waananen Jones, Joanne Lisosky, Ryan J. Thomas, Jody Brannon, & Ben Shors, “From News Deserts to Nonprofit Resilience: Assessing the Health of Washington’s Local News Ecosystem,” *Edward R. Murrow College of Communication*, March 2025.

The program pairs promising early career reporters with news organizations, “funding their salary for two years so they can report on civic affairs and critical information needs.”

pool, as younger journalists may opt to leave local newsrooms, especially those in rural and other underserved areas, for higher paying jobs in bigger cities and out of state. And while state-supported scholarships and fellowships can help build the pipeline of trained local journalists and plug employment gaps in newsrooms, these programs do not address the larger, more systemic problems in today's local news business.

Public notice and government advertising mandates. A non-tax approach being tried is to require that more governmental advertising dollars be spent with local media (rather than national or social media). A somewhat similar approach is to change regulations around how public notices are published. In Oregon, the debate has focused on whether public notices should be allowed to be posted in digital and legacy media alike. These notices represent “a small but steady revenue source for outlets like mine,” according to Quinton Smith of the *Lincoln Chronicle*, but they also represent a critically important revenue stream for the newspapers of record that have historically had the exclusive responsibility to publish such notices. [SB437](#), introduced in the Oregon 2025 legislative session and sponsored by Lincoln County Senator Dick Anderson (R), would allow publication of public notices in any “news publication,” rather than specifying newspapers.⁷⁰ As of this writing, the bill's fate was uncertain, with digital publications supporting the bill and advocates for the newspaper industry lobbying against it.

Tax exemptions and tax credits. Another public policy approach to the increasingly tough economic challenges for local newsrooms is creating targeted tax credits and exemptions. One idea proposed in the 2021 federal [Local Journalism Sustainability Act](#) (LJSA) in the U.S. and adopted in Canada in 2019 is to provide consumer tax credits for subscriptions or donations to local news—an idea also pursued in at least three states around the country and proposed here in Oregon. [SB 57](#), sponsored by Sen. Cedric Hayden (R, District 6) in the 2025 legislative session, proposed an income tax credit for subscriptions to media news outlets and donations to certain journalism organizations.⁷¹

The consumer tax credit idea is attractive for those concerned about public funding of media, because it would support news outlets indirectly through the mechanism of consumer choice, rather than through direct subsidies. But research suggests the idea is not very effective in delivering much-needed revenue to newsrooms. “Interviews with experts and data released by the Canadian government,” according to

70 <https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2025R1/Measures/Analysis/SB437>

71 <https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2025R1/Measures/Analysis/SB57>

one report, “suggest this credit has been largely unsuccessful in driving new subscribers to publications and is even viewed by some as a give-away for affluent individuals who already subscribe to news.”⁷² Another tax-related policy approach being tried in Washington state is an exemption for newsrooms to business and operations taxes.⁷³

In contrast to subscriber tax credits, evidence suggests that payroll tax credits for newsrooms, particularly for adding new reporters, can be an effective approach. This idea, also a provision of the now-stalled federal LJSA, was implemented in Canada in 2019. Research there indicates that although it has not been without some problems, such as delays in disbursing funds, it has generated meaningful revenue for local newsrooms.⁷⁴ Here in the US, in 2024 the Illinois legislature [approved](#) a refundable payroll tax credit to support hiring and retention of local reporters (up to \$15,000 per current journalist and \$25,000 for adding new reporters).⁷⁵ And New York state instituted \$30 million per year for three years to support employment tax credits for news outlets in the state – the largest such investment so far nationally. As the local news advocacy organization Rebuild Local News [puts it](#), “Properly defined, an employment credit places the incentives in the right place: hiring of reporters...while being compatible with the First Amendment and the need to protect the editorial independence of news outlets.”⁷⁶ And for small newsrooms in particular, offsetting some of the costs of hiring reporters could make a big difference. As Tim Trainor of the *Redmond Spokesman* told us when we asked about the challenges facing small newsrooms, “even with 1 reporter we could do infinitely more than we can with zero.”

Another related approach is a tax credit for small businesses to advertise with local news outlets. This approach, proposed or enacted in at least three states so far (Colorado, Maryland, and Wisconsin), would work to offset the significant loss of advertising that has undermined the traditional business model of many local newsrooms.

“Even with 1 reporter we could do infinitely more than we can with zero.”

— Tim Trainor,
Redmond Spokesman

72 Lapowski and White, “Rescuing Local News through Tax Credits,” p. 13.

73 Washington House of Representatives, E2SSB 5199: An Act Relating to Tax Relief for Newspaper Publishers, April 17, 2023, <https://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/bienium/2023-24/Pdf/Bill%20Reports/House/5199-S2.E%20HBR%20APH%2023.pdf?q=20241113214331>.

74 Lapowski and White, “Rescuing Local News through Tax Credits,” p. 11-12.

75 Specific provisions of the bill can be found at <https://www.rebuildlocalnews.org/illinois-landmark-legislation-to-support-local-news/>

76 <https://www.rebuildlocalnews.org/rebuild-local-news-praises-landmark-new-york-state-action-to-help-area-news-outlets/>

Stemming the loss of locally owned media. The tax incentives described above can help offset or restore some lost revenue to local newsrooms. But even if pursued aggressively, they seem unlikely to be able to address the larger forces disrupting local news ecosystems, particularly the rapid loss of locally owned media to larger media conglomerates. As reviewed above, those conglomerates, particularly hedge funds and private equity firms, usually implement significant cuts in reporting jobs and in actual local news production, eroding the connection between communities and the media that cover and serve them. Oregon seems to be in a better situation than many states, since the main out of state owners of Oregon newspapers say they do not have the same business model as private equity buyers, but to the extent that local ownership keeps the news more locally grounded, the vulnerability of local outlets to purchase by large conglomerates is worth addressing.

“Local journalism is the heartbeat of our communities, shining a light on local issues in a way corporate media isn’t interested in. By requiring notice prior to the sale of a local news organization, we are creating an opportunity to protect the livelihoods of employees and preserving the continuity of community-focused journalism.”

— Sen. Steve Stadelman,
Illinois State Senator

One step is to require advance public notice of sales of media outlets to out-of-state entities. Illinois enacted this policy in 2024, requiring newspapers to give a 120-day notice when they seek to sell to an out-of-state company. Proponents of this approach say the goal is “to give other businesses, newspapers and nonprofits the opportunity to acquire the publication, preserving local journalism and preventing its sale to a private equity firm.” The bill’s sponsor, Sen. Steve Stadelman, [argued that](#) “Local journalism is the heartbeat of our communities, shining a light on local issues in a way corporate media isn’t interested in. By requiring notice prior to the sale of a local news organization, we are creating an opportunity to protect the livelihoods of employees and preserving the continuity of community-focused journalism.”⁷⁷ Steven Waldman of Rebuild Local News also argues for [federal tax incentives](#) to encourage community-based buyers and incentivize current local owners to sell to local buyers rather than conglomerates.⁷⁸ California legislators are considering a similar bill ([AB-611](#)), the “Keep News Local Act”, that would require advance notice of intended sales or transfers of assets and give employees of the outlet right of first refusal to purchase part or all of the outlet or its assets.

⁷⁷ <https://www.senatorstadelman.com/news/15-press-releases/719-local-journalism-students-to-see-support-thanks-to-stadelman>

⁷⁸ <https://www.rebuildlocalnews.org/a-replanting-agenda/>

Redressing tech platform harms. In addition to losses of local media to large conglomerates, another systemic threat to local news is the digital platforms that have become an unavoidable conduit to reaching audiences even while they siphon off advertising dollars and leverage local news content without compensating local news outlets. According to a recent study, “The tech giants have argued that news is not essential and that publishers are lucky to have their platforms driving traffic to their sites, which can then convert that traffic into subscriptions.” But news producers are estimated to lose nearly \$14 billion in revenue annually to technology companies like Google and Meta.⁷⁹ A [research report](#) contends that “by keeping the cost of goods sold (news) down, Google and Meta have grown rich off the advertising revenue they reap from attracting the world’s eyeballs to their sites.” Real news is valuable content that platforms can’t easily create for themselves. Yet “big tech companies have resisted paying traditional licensing and copyright fees and are not forthcoming about providing audience traffic and impression numbers. What payments they make are meager and often through small grants or private arrangements with major outlets.”

News producers are estimated to lose nearly \$14 billion in revenue annually to technology companies like Google and Meta.

So, an increasingly attractive idea is to make big tech compensate local media for the value they extract from them. Such efforts have [ramped up](#) worldwide in recent years,⁸⁰ and in 2024, the state of California tried to do so as well, in two pieces of legislation. [SB 1327](#) provided for refundable tax credits to newsrooms, with extra subsidies going to smaller newsrooms, and would have imposed a tax on the largest technology companies for “data extraction transactions.”⁸¹ [AB-886](#), the [California Journalism Preservation Act](#) (CJPA) would have provided an estimated \$500 million for local news by requiring platforms to “compensate digital journalism providers...for accessing [their] internet websites.”⁸² However, in last-minute negotiations prompted by Governor Gavin Newsome, Google struck a “public-private partnership” deal, pledging \$172 million for local media outlets and—surprisingly to some observers—to support AI development. The deal was controversial. According to [Editor & Publisher](#), to some it was seen as “a way to forestall threats by Google and Meta, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram, to block

⁷⁹ <https://www.poynter.org/commentary/2023/google-and-meta-owe-us-news-publishers-about-14-billion-a-year-our-research-estimates/>

⁸⁰ <https://www.poynter.org/business-work/2023/news-publishers-facebook-meta-google-money/>

⁸¹ https://calmatters.digitaldemocracy.org/bills/ca_202320240sb1327

⁸² https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=202320240AB886

California newsrooms from their platforms.” State Senator Steve Glazer, who was excluded from the negotiation despite being a co-sponsor of the legislation, told reporters the deal “seriously undercuts our work toward a long-term solution to rescue independent journalism.” According to Glazer’s office, “Despite the good intentions of the parties involved, this proposal does not provide sufficient resources to bring independent news gathering in California out of its death spiral.”⁸³

Real news is valuable content that platforms can't easily create for themselves.

Making big tech pay for the value their platforms extract from local news is a compelling idea for addressing one of the biggest drivers of the local news crisis. As of this writing, Oregon’s neighbor to the north is trying a similar approach, with their Senate Bill 5400.⁸⁴ At the same time, California’s experience illustrates some of the challenges of that approach. Platforms like Facebook and Google are uniquely positioned to both make and to break connections,⁸⁵ and in striking the “Wicks deal,” (colloquially named after Assemblywoman Buffy Wicks who negotiated the Google deal), Google wielded the threat to break the connection between Californians and local news content. The digital and political power of major platform companies cannot be underestimated.

But there are other, substantive challenges as well. The effects of such efforts—whether they take the form of legislation or of direct agreements with tech companies—on small media outlets of all kinds needs to be carefully considered. Smaller news outlets may lack the legal resources to bargain effectively in arbitration proceedings to hammer out compensation, for example. Other methods of distributing proceeds may also overlook small, rural, and minority-serving outlets unless explicitly designed to benefit such outlets.⁸⁶ Creating a new potential revenue stream for local newsrooms is a critical step, but formulaic approaches to distribution can end up benefitting larger newsrooms much more than smaller ones.

83 <https://www.editorandpublisher.com/stories/california-cuts-a-deal-with-google-on-local-news-support,251569>

84 <https://www.seattletimes.com/opinion/incredible-support-for-washington-bill-for-local-journalism/>

85 <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/news/power-platforms>

86 For a comprehensive overview of various proposals, see Center for News, Technology, & Innovation (2024), “Enabling a Sustainable News Environment: A Framework for Media Finance Legislation,” September 20, <https://innovating.news/article/enabling-a-sustainable-news-environment-a-framework-for-media-finance-legislation/>; Institute for Technology, Law & Policy, “Shearing the Sheep without Skinning It: Policy Options for Extracting Revenue from Online Platforms,” October 2024.

In 2025, Senator Khanh Pham (D, District 23) joined with co-sponsors from the Oregon Senate and House of Representatives to sponsor SB 686.⁸⁷ Modeled to some extent on California’s CIPA, early versions of the bill sought to make tech companies choose to either pay online news providers directly for accessing and displaying their content, or donate to an Oregon Civic Information Consortium, also provided for in the legislation, that would give grants to local information providers from revenues generated. This second provision, to create a consortium to disburse some of the funding, seeks to address the concerns described above about how to distribute proceeds in an inclusive, deliberative, and equitable way, replicating elements of New Jersey’s Civic Information Consortium,⁸⁸ established by that state’s government in 2018⁸⁹ “to benefit the state’s civic life and meet the evolving information needs of New Jersey’s communities.”⁹⁰ As of this writing, SB 686 is still taking final shape. (Full disclosure: The Agora Journalism Center offered consultation in early stages of developing SB 686, and if established, the consortium would be housed at the University of Oregon).

Creating a new potential revenue stream for local newsrooms is a critical step, but formulaic approaches to distribution can end up benefitting larger newsrooms much more than smaller ones.

The Role of Public Policy to Address the Information Needs of Communities

As these examples illustrate, support is growing in various parts of the country for government interventions to help strengthen local news. Representing that shift, the national League of Women Voters (LWV) recently voted to endorse the idea “that local news is a public good” because, the organization believes, healthy local news is critical to democracy and to empowering voters. By a vote of 859-63 at its 2024 convention in Washington, D.C., the league adopted a position stating that “it is the responsibility of the government to provide support for conditions under which credible local journalism can survive and thrive.”⁹¹ The support of civic organizations like LWV is both leading and reflecting a shift in thinking. Within an industry that historically has viewed any

87 https://legiscan.com/OR/bill/SB686/2025?utm_campaign=rss&guid=6GaJIDgQ-90AxsN3RiHVzAW

88 <https://njcivicinfo.org/about/>

89 <https://www.billtrack50.com/BillDetail/969532>

90 <https://njcivicinfo.org/new-jersey-civic-information-consortium-se-cures-3m-in-public-funding/>

91 <https://www.seattletimes.com/opinion/roundup-league-of-women-voters-backing-local-news-ca-bills-advance/>

Trust In Local Media in Oregon

As local news shrinks, where are people getting the information they need to live their daily lives, connect with their communities, and engage with politics and policy debates? We provide some insights below about the sources of information people in a variety of Oregon's communities are turning to—in ways that are both instructive and concerning.

One starting place for understanding Oregonians' news habits is to ask how much they trust local news. We reported in 2022 that solid majorities of Oregonians have at least some trust in the information they get from local news. That finding is reinforced by a new survey from Oregon Values and Beliefs Center (OVBC), conducted on behalf of the Agora Journalism Center in late 2024.

OVBC's findings show 65% of Oregonians have "somewhat" or "a lot" of trust in the information coming from local news organizations, though the bulk of respondents (48%) chose the "somewhat" category. Similar majorities (57%) say they are "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their local news organizations.

Trust in Local News Organizations

How much, if at all, do you trust the information about local/community issues that comes from local news organizations?



OVBC survey conducted Nov 9-25, 2024, among Oregon adults (representative sample, N=1,753)

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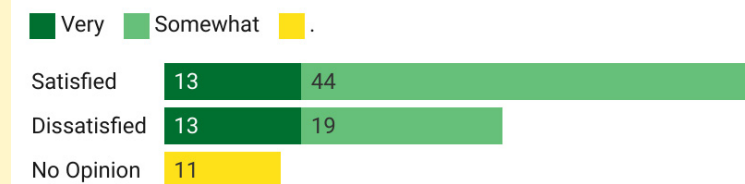
But as we also found in 2022, some Oregonians are less satisfied and trust local news less, particularly people in rural communities, who are especially likely to say they are dissatisfied with their local news. Asked why, respondents mentioned a lack of coverage of local affairs, concerns about bias or quality, or negative perceptions of local news organizations. In fact, 32% of people statewide say they trust local news organizations "not too much" or "not at all."

Responses to open-ended questions included the following:

- **...they provide important, timely coverage on issues that directly impact my community, such as local politics, schools, and events. I appreciate their ability to focus on stories that might not get attention from larger, national outlets.** - Man, age 30-44, Benton County, White
- **I feel our local news does a great job covering all news stories. They are fair and honest.** - Woman, age 65-74, Marion County, White
- **I've always depended on local news first to get the news about my community that I live in and then about Oregon in general news** - Woman, age 75+, Deschutes County, Another race or ethnicity
- **Can't get the local news all that easily in our rural community** - Woman, age 45-54, Gilliam County, White
- **Poor quality and biased.** - Man, age 45-54, Coos County, Hispanic or Latino
- **We don't have a real, reliable news source in Eugene....every time there's real news in the area we find out about it on Reddit then look for it in the daily paper in the following days and it's almost never reported!** - Non-binary or gender non-conforming, age 30-44, Lane County, White
- **Dislike the organizations.**- Man, age 18-29, Wallowa County, Asian, Black or African American, and White
- **There is no investigative or even adequate reporting on issues in our area.** - Woman, age 55-64, Klamath County, White

Local News Satisfaction

How satisfied are you with your local news organizations serving your community or area of Oregon?



OVBC survey conducted Nov 9-25, 2024, among Oregon adults (representative sample, N=1,753)

Created with Datawrapper

kind of government involvement as anathema, journalists and those who advocate for local news increasingly view public policy as a necessary leg in the proverbial three-legged stool. While innovation in news production, distribution, and business models is critically important, and the philanthropic sector is waking up to the game-changing role it could play in bolstering local news, there are certain actions government and only government can take to, for example, incentivize local news organizations to remain locally owned or provide tax relief to help newsrooms add local reporters.⁹²

A larger question looming in these efforts is, What is the objective of media policy? Is it merely to “preserve” legacy journalism, as is suggested in the titles of bills like the California Journalism Preservation Act? Or is the purpose to better ensure that the public’s information needs are being met? Addressing this question forthrightly may lead to different policy choices.

While finding ways to help for-profit newsrooms regain economic sustainability in a radically changed marketplace is an important objective, we may also need, [according to](#) journalism scholar Jacob Nelson, to “separate the conversation about how to make journalism better from how to make journalism profitable.”⁹³ Especially as [non-profit](#) and semi-publicly funded newsrooms (e.g. [public radio](#)) are [playing an increasingly vital role](#) in local news ecosystems,⁹⁴ the journalism funding paradigm may need to shift. The hard truth is that many communities may lack the economic base to support recreating local news as it once existed. As the historical model of advertising-supported news outlets has faltered, new models are needed to pay for the production of quality local news.

Increasingly, analysts, advocates, and journalists themselves believe that the scale of the local news crisis demands new thinking and fresh approaches. As Sue Cross, former executive director of the [Institute for Nonprofit News](#) (INN) [puts it](#), “We’ve lost 60 percent of our newspaper journalists in this country in under 20 years, and tens of thousands of reporting jobs just during the pandemic.” The journalism crisis is “not just [about] digital transition,” and “it’s not cyclical. This is a long-term

92 See Government Accountability Office, “Local Journalism: Innovative Business Approaches and Targeted Policies May Help Local News Media Adapt to Digital Transformation,” January 2023.

93 <https://medium.com/damian-radcliffe/from-niche-to-norm-how-can-we-make-community-centered-reporting-more-mainstream-e82f353bc443>

94 <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/faculty-research/policy-topics/media/how-local-public-radio-stations-can-fill-news-gap-left-decline>

change.”⁹⁵ Steering a path toward steady, sustainable, trusted local news – delivered through a variety of media – is the critical challenge of this moment.

Moreover, the ultimate goal of policy efforts, we believe, should focus first and foremost on the informational health of Oregon’s communities. We agree here with Mike Rispoli, senior director for journalism and civic information at the organization Free Press, who [recently asked](#), “What should we be building a bridge to? What is the actual thing that we want?” The ultimately goal of interventions in local news, Rispoli says, “should be more informed communities, more engaged communities, and — as a byproduct of that — supporting news and its production.”⁹⁶

Conclusion

Compared to the situation in 2022 when we released our first Oregon News & Information Ecosystem assessment, the number of news outlets serving Oregon’s communities, and the number of locally owned outlets in particular, has declined significantly. Moreover, local news content varies widely in quantity and quality around the state, and finding relevant local news is getting harder for many Oregonians, particularly for those living in rural regions. The first take-away from this report, therefore, is that the local news crisis has sharply accelerated in Oregon.

Amidst these declines, there are also some promising new developments, including the launch of the for-profit, **Lookout Eugene-Springfield** and the non-profit statewide investigative **Oregon Journalism Project**, and the innovative approaches to providing civic information being launched by **Uplift Local**. And there are signs of success for some digital hyperlocal news start-ups as well, both for-profit and non-profit. Our second take-away is therefore that innovation and entrepreneurship are

Innovation and entrepreneurship are happening, pointing toward promising models for local newsrooms and making Oregon a laboratory for finding sustainable solutions.

95 https://www.cjr.org/tow_center_reports/building-a-stronger-local-media-ecosystem-the-role-of-media-policy.php

96 Quoted in Sarah Scire (2025), “A New Public Policy Agenda Has a Vision for ‘Local News for the People,’” Nieman Lab, February 27 <https://www.niemanlab.org/2025/02/a-new-public-policy-agenda-has-a-vision-for-local-news-for-the-people/>

happening, pointing toward promising models for local newsrooms and making Oregon a laboratory for finding sustainable solutions.

Partnerships and collaborations are also growing to offset the increasingly limited resources of most local newsrooms, including the work of FORJ and the Oregon Media Collaborative to provide training and support, and content sharing partnerships fueled by non-profits including the **Oregon Capital Chronicle** and the *Northwest News Network*. Notably, collaborations are on the rise between non-profit and for-profit newsrooms, as are collaborations across newsrooms with non-profit and higher education organizations. These developments build on a solid foundation of relatively well-trusted local media in Oregon. As **KGW's** Greg Retsinas observed, “the ethical state of our journalism

[in Oregon] is good. You can trust the media you watch. Oregonians trust and like their media outlets.”

The picture, therefore, is not entirely negative, and Oregon's entrepreneurial newsrooms are providing valuable models that point toward a brighter future. But these bright spots need to be considered against a backdrop of years of contractions in local news around the state that have accelerated since 2022. As one Oregon journalist put it, local news in Oregon is facing not an inflection point, but a cliff.

What will Oregon do next?

One response surely involves continued adaptation and innovation by local newsrooms. As the national organization Trusting News [recently observed](#),

Today's local news landscape is complicated and messy, and a lot of words are being written about the demoralizing nature of shrinking resources. That's all true.

It's also true that the local news ecosystem overall is diverse and interesting, full of experimentation, collaboration and a continued orientation toward public service.

With those realities in tension with each other, the public needs the news industry to invest in continued evolution and collaboration.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ <https://trustingnews.org/how-an-ecosystem-approach-to-change-in-local-news-is-benefitting-news-consumers-in-oklahoma/>

One response surely involves continued adaptation and innovation by local newsrooms.

That evolution needed is not just in updated business practices and technological adaptation, but also an evolution in the craft of journalism itself. The local news crisis is connected to a larger crisis of the public's declining trust in media and in virtually all other democratic institutions.⁹⁸ Regaining the public's trust—and earning the trust of whole communities who have long felt estranged from mainstream media—is a key to building sustainable newsrooms. That may require doing journalism differently, [learning to be more relational and collaborative](#),⁹⁹ learning to work with communities and to listen more closely and effectively to their stories. Particularly for smaller news outlets, it may mean adopting the mindset of journalists like Branden Andersen of **Newsberg**, who told us that earning the trust of the community is how he knows he's doing what he set out to do. “My boss is one collective community,” says Andersen. It will also require “enriching the connections with the community, to ask what those communities need and establish pathways for them to participate,” says Agora Journalism Center director Andrew DeVigal. This evolution in practice will also require making newsrooms more inclusive. As John Schrag of **Uplift Local** told us, “Better listening and training are important, but until we have newsrooms that represent the communities we cover, there are going to be gaps.”

A second, critically necessary response is from philanthropy, the private sector, and news consumers. As John Palfrey, president of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, [states](#), “For local news to be sustainable over the long term, communities will need to stand up and support their local news providers. We will need to invest in local news the same way that we invest in arts and culture, hospitals, or our alma maters.”¹⁰⁰

A final leg to support a durable evolution of local news is public policies that help news organizations build sustainable revenue streams, assist with the costs of investment in local reporting, and offset the devastating losses brought about by the platformization of news and information. Quality, trusted local news is a public good that is in increasingly short supply, and government can take action to stimulate demand, bolster supply, and stem further losses. States around the country

⁹⁸ <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/trend/archive/fall-2024/americans-deepening-mistrust-of-institutions>

⁹⁹ <https://agorajournalism.center/research/advancing-community-centered-journalism/>

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.poynter.org/business-work/2023/press-forward-local-chapters/>

“For local news to be sustainable over the long term, communities will need to stand up and support their local news providers.”

— John Palfrey,
John D. and Catherine T.
MacArthur Foundation

are passing an array of media policies that deserve consideration and deliberation here in Oregon. The goal, as described in the 2022 [Roadmap for Local News](#), should be to “ensure that civic information is a ubiquitous asset in every community...while maintaining editorial independence.”¹⁰¹

We end on this important note: As the Roadmap's language suggests, we believe the focus of efforts by journalists and newsrooms, by philanthropists and private donors, and by policymakers and advocates—and by community members more broadly—should be on making sure communities have access to “civic information,” broadly defined. Much of that information has historically been provided by legacy news media, particularly newspapers—the “[keystone media](#)”¹⁰² within traditional local news ecosystems. But in today's rapidly changing media environment, legacy media are no longer the only important local news providers, and the goal should not simply be “saving” the traditional news business. Rather, the goal should be to support the ability of communities to access trustworthy and locally relevant civic information. This approach [recognizes](#) that “the fate of communities and the vitality of local news—whether delivered over the internet, the airwaves, or in print—are intrinsically linked.”¹⁰³

101 <https://localnewsroadmap.org/>

102 Rasmus Kleis Nielsen (2015) “Local Newspapers as Keystone Media: The Increased Importance of Diminished Newspapers for Local Political Information Environments” https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2614326

103 <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/trust/archive/spring-2020/the-loss-of-local-news>

Next Steps for Local News in Oregon

We hope this assessment of Oregon's local news and information ecosystem serves as a resource for researchers, media, community members, and funders to bolster ongoing efforts and launch new local news initiatives. Here are some ideas:

- **Conduct deeper analysis.** The data provided here indicate a looming potential supply-side crisis in local news as the number of local newsrooms—and local ownership of newsrooms—has declined significantly in recent years. Counting existing newsrooms only goes so far, however. Next steps can include closer analysis of where Oregonians are turning for local news and information—including types of media we did not analyze here. Counting news outlets also doesn't tell us what kinds of content local news outlets are carrying. Our initial assessment reported here is that many local news sites are struggling to provide a regular supply of locally-relevant news—particularly the kinds of public affairs coverage that is essential to democracy. Closer analysis is needed to illuminate coverage gaps.

If you're interested in conducting further research, contact Agora Journalism Center Research Director [Regina Lawrence](#).

- **Use the data in a story.** The data presented here is publicly available. We encourage journalists to use the data to support deeper reporting.

If you're interested in pursuing a story, contact Agora Journalism Center Director [Andrew DeVigal](#).

- **Invest in local media, especially in underserved communities.** Funders can use the data in this report to guide their strategic investments toward areas of the state where the capacity for local news production is lowest, and/or toward innovative models and emerging collaborations that are pointing the way toward a sustainable future for local news.

- **Use the data to inspire support for your hometown outlet—or start your own!** In communities across the state, it's become increasingly challenging to find the economic support required to bolster traditional forms of media. Local communities might use this report as a call to action among their peers to support the local outlets they rely on—or be inspired to start their own. While starting a news site seems like a daunting task, Oregon is blessed with innovative entrepreneurs that are already doing it, and there are organizations out there that can help. For example, the [Tiny News Collective's](#) shared resource model can empower local residents to address news coverage gaps.

Appendix: Methodology

In this report, we update the data we presented in our [2022 Oregon News & Information Ecosystem report](#). We re-examined every entry in the database we assembled in 2022 to, as accurately as possible, represent all newspapers, digital-only news sites, public radio stations, and television stations in Oregon that regularly carry local news.

Mapping local news ecosystems is [challenging](#) because there is not necessarily an existing comprehensive master list of news outlets in any particular state until researchers create one. For example, the Secretary of State's "[Oregon Blue Book](#)" provides a valuable starting place for identifying newspapers around the state, but it is not a complete list of all publications that carry civic news and information. The database and statistics presented in this report should therefore be treated as a good faith effort but possibly incomplete. We encourage readers to visit our [interactive form](#) to let us know about any outlet we may have overlooked.

To be included in our database, an outlet must have a website, both because it's difficult to know about small print publications that have no online presence and therefore cannot easily be accessed outside of the community they are produced in, and also because, as a practical matter, most functioning news outlets today have—and need to have—a web presence. Our database is therefore inherently limited in that sense.

However, we didn't include stand alone Facebook pages in our database. That's a serious limitation at a time when Facebook groups are sometimes [taking the place](#) of newspapers that have closed, but identifying such groups systematically was beyond our capacity.

Another challenge to be noted is that, in this era of increasing consolidation in the news business, multiple individual news websites can be linked by a single underlying newsroom. We have counted websites with separate URLs and/or different daily content as separate "outlets" in our database, but readers should note that these may or may not correspond to different underlying bricks-and-mortar news outlets.

For this report, we thoroughly updated our 2022 database, checking each outlet for whether it still appeared to be operational and regularly producing originally, locally relevant civic information. (Our criteria for inclusion are spelled out in more detail [here](#)). We also updated ownership information for each outlet. Adjustments to the original 2022 database include:

- Removing outlets that have closed/ceased operations. We defined an outlet as "closed" and removed it from the data shown in this report if, as of January 2025, the website was no longer active or the original URL now redirects to a news site by another name (e.g. the former *Dalles Chronicle* URL now redirects to the site of the [Columbia Gorge News](#)), and/or if web searches for the site led to a differently-named news site. When possible, we also gathered news articles or other web materials describing news outlets closures.
- Removing outlets that have been merged such that they no longer appear online under their original name (e.g. the *Newport News-Times* now redirects to the [Lincoln County Leader](#); the *Sherwood Gazette* now redirects to the [Valley Times](#)).
- Removing outlets that appear to have no website of their own for distributing news, but only a Facebook page.
- Removing outlets that, on closer examination, did not fit our criteria of a) regularly producing original civic affairs focused primarily on the state of Oregon or communities within it, and b) producing content with a generally journalistic approach (to distinguish from sites that deal primarily in interpretation and opinion). While these determinations can be somewhat difficult to make, we wanted to focus on documenting journalistic sources of news and information around the state.
- Readers should note that being removed from the database is not necessarily a comment on the quality of content produced by a particular outlet. For example, in our original database we included the Portland-based website [The Immigrant Story](#), which produces multimedia stories of the immigrant experience in the United States; on reexamination, we concluded that the site does not consistently focus on Oregon or communities within it. We also removed a few outlets we had initially included which focus predominantly on travel, culture, and lifestyle if they appeared to produce little to no locally relevant civic affairs content. Again, this is not to suggest that such outlets aren't important—they are. Communities benefit from many types of information, but at a time when public affairs reporting is particularly endangered by rapid changes in the digital news environment, we wanted to keep our focus on outlets that provide at least some civic/public affairs information.
- We also added any outlets we could identify that began operations since our database was first created in 2022, along with a small number of sites we had inadvertently overlooked in our first news

mapping effort. (We thank readers who made us aware of a few omissions that we are happy to now rectify).

In addition, we updated our coding of “Medium.” Outlets were coded as “newspapers” if they were founded before the 2000s and/or their website describes the outlet as a “newspaper” and/or if they belong to a newspaper group or chain and/or the outlet publishes regularly in print. “Digital” outlets are those that were founded since the 2000s and/or are not explicitly described as a “newspaper” on their website (common descriptors for this category are “newsroom” or “news organization”, sometimes with the term “digital”) and/or do not appear to predominantly publish in print; this includes a few cases of legacy newspapers that have stopped publishing in print altogether. The “Digital” category thus includes primarily “digital first” publications, but also a few “digital only” publications that used to be traditional newspapers. Some of these coding judgments may be subjective, and we welcome readers to let us know if our coding of any particular outlet seems incorrect. Readers should note that some organizations that today consider themselves multimedia outlets are still coded according to these categories in our database (e.g. **Oregon Public Broadcasting**, which we code as both a “Radio” [**KOPB**] and a “TV” [**OPB**] outlet).

Readers should also note that the main database excludes a small but important category of outlets that regularly produce original public affairs news about Oregon and other states in the Pacific Northwest: outlets like *ProPublica Northwest*, *Investigate West*, and the *Columbia Basin Bulletin*. While important to the overall news coverage of our state, these regional outlets are not physically housed in Oregon and do not report only on Oregon. We have included them on a separate tab of the database, but we have not included them in the statistical descriptions and analyses presented here.

It’s important to note that our findings differ slightly from those of the Medill School at Northwestern University, whose *State of Local News* reports are probably the most widely-cited research on local news around the country. The task of locating all functioning media outlets in any one locale can be challenging. While Medill’s research offers an excellent overview of the closure of local newspapers across the country and other trends in local news nationwide, it focuses mainly on newspapers and doesn’t necessarily account for other forms of local media such as public radio or digital first publications. Moreover, researchers gathering data nationally may sometimes miss local details.