

# **An Introduction to Funding Journalism and Media**

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# Executive Summary

Donors working around the world are concerned about the threat posed by **closing space**, including intensified threats against freedom of expression and information, and media freedom. This compounds the crisis that the field of journalism – **a critical pillar of open, democratic societies** – is already facing worldwide. Declining revenues, dependence on large technology providers, and global-scale information pollution **threaten journalism’s economic, technical and organisational independence**, and weaken its democratic role and functions. This damages in turn the **ability of civil society to scrutinise and hold power to account**, at all levels.

At the same time, the technical and financial barriers to entry into the journalism field have never been lower, and the **opportunities to innovate and have impact** with journalism have in many ways never been greater. New public-interest journalistic endeavours are launching in **even the most constrained places** around the world. Non-traditional donors like Google have created their own initiatives to **stimulate greater innovation and transformation** in the industry. Against this backdrop, the journalism field is increasingly **turning to philanthropy for support**, including to human rights, social change and transparency donors.

Current journalism donors are actively seeking to **diversify the number and range of funders** supporting the journalism and media field. This resource aims to help Ariadne members to boost their understanding of the **key issues, debates and approaches in funding journalism and media**. We hope that this will help prepare funders focused on human rights, social justice or transparency and accountability to **engage in the journalism and media field effectively and ethically**, with a stronger shared understanding of why, when and how to do so.

We hope this will be of value both to those developing **strategic responses** to the challenges Ariadne members face today, and to programme officers making **day-to-day decisions** about what and whom to fund.

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# Introduction

This resource has been commissioned by the Ariadne Network of European Funders for Social Change and Human Rights to support its member grantmakers new to or curious about journalism and media grantmaking. It has been developed with the Transparency and Accountability Initiative (TAI), and part-funded by the Potter Foundation.

The information, analysis and opinions in this document draw on in-depth interviews with funders with current experience and expertise in funding journalism, media and information in Europe, the USA and internationally. These eleven interviewees – to whom we are extremely grateful for their generosity and candour - include members of Ariadne and TAI, and other specialised media funders or programmes with global recognition. The resource is also informed by twenty survey responses from Ariadne members, feedback from a webinar with Ariadne members, and desk research by Macroscopic London, all conducted in the first half of 2018.

It has been designed, researched and written by Sameer Padania of Macroscopic London, with input and guidance from Julie Broome and the Ariadne team, and a small panel of expert readers from philanthropy, to whom we are extremely grateful.

## Who and what is this resource for?

This resource is tailored primarily for **Ariadne members who have never funded media or journalism before**, or have done so only in ad hoc, small or sporadic ways. Perhaps they are starting to see an increase in the number of journalism organisations approaching them for funding, or they are **considering whether to support media** in a more structured way. They may not have a media specialist on staff, a dedicated media programme, or an in-house manual or guidance – and they may not know whom to turn to for advice, whether peer grantmakers or expert advisors or consultants.

This is a first attempt to provide these non-specialist funders with a ***tour d’horizon of the journalism and media funding field, major approaches, debates, barriers and opportunities in it, and suggestions of next steps*** for those interested in learning more. It focuses primarily on the funding situation for journalism and media in **Europe**, although, where helpful, we have either described or linked to resources and organisations relevant to other regions of the world.

It is not designed to be a comprehensive manual setting out best practices on grantmaking in the media space or how to design a media programme; nor is it designed to map who funds what or whom, or the amounts of funding already available. Where relevant resources of these kinds exist elsewhere, we have pointed to them in the text and footnotes of this resource.

## How to use this resource

This resource has three parts, each of which is designed to act as a standalone section, to some extent.

1. Section 1 summarises the **background to and rationale for philanthropic funding of the media**, including from a social justice and human rights perspective. This should help Ariadne grantmakers who are not sure if and why they should support media directly to make an informed decision, or to help make the case to colleagues.
2. Section 2 is framed around the **key advice** offered by experienced media grantmakers about **making grants to or investments in the media**. This should help grantmakers entering the field to ask themselves, colleagues and partners the right questions about how they do so.
3. Section 3 looks specifically at five areas of **opportunity and threat** in the journalism, media and information fields **to which philanthropic funding does or might respond**. This should help orient grantmakers in respect of plausible potential areas of intervention, and provide them with a range of jumping-off points from which to explore in more depth.

We hope that these three sections will help support those who are thinking about dipping a toe in the water of media funding to feel better equipped to do so in a way that is consonant with their values and mission and respects ethical boundaries, such as the editorial independence of grantees. It should also help funders with grantees who say they work with journalism and media to ask more helpful and informed questions and understand better the context in which their grantees' work sits.

The media and journalism field is sometimes volatile and fast-moving, and the media funding field itself is going through significant change, so elements of this guidance will of course become out-dated, and therefore we have not attempted to cover every aspect or new development in the field. (Funders new to the field are unlikely to jump straight into funding the development of Artificial Intelligence, for example, or into funding journalism in conflict-ridden or fragile states.)

We welcome any questions, updates or feedback from Ariadne members on the content, structure or future of this resource - please send your comments to Ariadne.

# Recent initiatives and resources to support media grantmaking

There is much academic and grey literature on the subject of journalism and the media, but until recently, relatively few practical efforts to support donors to understand why and how to get started. Before offering a perspective tailored for Ariadne members, here we share some of the most relevant recent efforts to do so for other donor audiences.

## ***Deep expertise within the media development field***

The media development field – including the civil society groups specialised in supporting media and the enabling environment for media,<sup>1</sup> and a range of bilateral, multilateral and philanthropic donors – has long wrestled with questions of why media matters to democracy, good governance, transparency, poverty reduction, and myriad other issues. As part of this, it has developed a strong range of resources and tools to support donors and practitioners working globally.

Three resources from 2017 offer a balanced introduction to thinking from the media development field: [this overview article](#)<sup>2</sup> by BBC Media Action’s James Deane, this report<sup>3</sup> by Shanti Kalathil on recent trends in media funding, and [this longer but well-organised overview](#)<sup>4</sup> by iMedia Associates of approaches to and the history of media funding by different types of donors, including an annotated bibliography.

## ***Growing journalism funding in the USA***

The majority of coverage and analysis of the relationship between philanthropy and journalism – or at least the most widely-circulated and debated – has been US-focused. There has been a major increase in foundation funding for media in the USA in the last decade,<sup>5</sup> driven by a mixture of regulatory changes facilitating the creation of non-profit media, and the catalytic work of a range of funders, researchers and thinktanks, spearheaded by the [Knight Foundation](#) in particular.<sup>6</sup>

In early 2018, the US-based [Media Impact Funders network](#) (MIF) released an [accessible and succinct guide](#) to explain to a wider range of US funders why funding media in the US is important, and to offer five practical ways to get started. The MIF guide is, however, designed for this highly-specific US national context in which much groundwork has already been done and in which some barriers to philanthropic funding of the media have been removed. (It’s instructive to see the [2011 version of this primer](#), which came early in that groundwork.)

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<sup>1</sup> For example, members of the [Global Forum for Media Development](#) (GFMD)

<sup>2</sup> James Deane, [How to support independent media in an age of misinformation](#) (Alliance, December 2017)

<sup>3</sup> Shanti Kalathil, [A Slowly Shifting Field: Understanding Donor Priorities in Media Development](#) (CIMA, 2017)

<sup>4</sup> Mary Myers, Nicola Harford and Katie Bartholomew, *Media Assistance: Review of the Recent Literature and Other Donors’ Approaches* (iMedia Associates, 2017)

<sup>5</sup> Brenda Henry-Sanchez and Anna Koob, [Growth in Foundation Support for Media in the United States](#) (Foundation Center, 2013)

<sup>6</sup> The Knight Foundation’s most recent initiative is its [Commission on Trust, Media and Democracy](#).

## ***Journalism funding in Europe more fragmented***

In Europe by contrast, while some of these dynamics may be emerging on the national level – notably in Germany, the Netherlands, Scandinavia, and, very embryonically, in the UK – the picture is far more fragmented, multi-lingual, and multi-layered - and with very different kinds of threats and opportunities, and even different societal journalistic cultures. According to the available data, the size of media philanthropy in the US also dwarfs that of Europe,<sup>7</sup> and overall US expenditure on journalism, media and quality information is much higher. Unlike in the US, charitable status is not available consistently across Europe to journalism organisations, for example, stifling the growth both of more diverse journalistic entities, and of philanthropy to the media.

Efforts to improve knowledge-sharing among European media donors are coalescing around the [Journalism Funders Forum](#) (JFF), which is backed by six foundations. The JFF's brief overviews of the philanthropic funding of journalism in [France](#), [Germany](#) and the [UK](#), are a useful and digestible introduction to the issues in each country.

At the national level, in Germany, the Bundesverband Deutscher Stiftungen and the DJV (German Journalists' Union) collaborated to create a (German-language) guide explaining [how German foundations have supported journalism of various kinds](#). In the Netherlands, the Adessium Foundation supported Shaerpa to produce a [report detailing more than fifty ways to generate revenue](#) for journalism organisations.<sup>8</sup>

Curious grantmakers might also find helpful perspectives in the [December 2017 issue of Alliance Magazine](#), guest-edited by Miguel Castro of the Gates Foundation and featuring an eclectic range of contributions from funders/investors, journalists, researchers and analysts. (Ariadne member Stichting Democratie en Media of the Netherlands sponsored the issue to make it open-access to help widen its reach.)

## ***Best practices for ethical funding of the media and journalism***

Philanthropic funding of media in the USA has, notably, engaged in a more formal way than its European counterparts in the **ethical issues involved in funding**. The American Press Institute, for example, worked with a wide set of foundation, journalism and academic stakeholders to develop a set of "[best practices for ensuring editorial independence](#)", with practical advice on ethical practices and red-lines for [fundors](#), [non-profit newsrooms](#), and [for-profit media](#).

The Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA) in Washington, DC published in early 2017 a report by Anya Schiffrin of Columbia University's School of International Public Affairs (SIPA) on the relationship between charitable foundations and newsrooms in the Global South.<sup>9</sup> This report broke new ground in terms of the clarity and

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<sup>7</sup> A [recent study of philanthropic funding of the media in the USA](#) found that between 2010 and 2015, "32,422 journalism and media-related grants totalling \$1.8 billion [were] distributed by 6,568 foundations" (though nearly half of this went to public media, which in Europe would not be counted). Eric Karstens' 2017 piece in Alliance adds a European angle to the picture [here](#).

<sup>8</sup> Pieter Oostlaender, Teun Gauthier, Sam van Dyck - [Financing Quality Journalism: Research into existing and new models to finance quality journalism and possible strategies for moving forward](#) (Shaerpa/Adessium, 2015)

<sup>9</sup> Anya Schiffrin, [Same Beds, Different Dreams? Charitable Foundations and Newsroom Independence in the Global South](#) (CIMA, 2017)

forthrightness with which it raised and charted the **ethical boundaries and power dynamics** of philanthropic funding of media in developing countries - but also holds insights and lessons for those working and funding in Europe. The report was particularly critical of thematic funding for journalism, where funding is provided, for example, for content or training tied to other thematic programmes such as the environment, women's health, or anti-corruption.

This introductory resource draws inspiration from these and other publications, but takes a European approach, with more of a human rights and social justice perspective. We hope our brief guide will serve as a contribution to the field by:

1. Supporting Ariadne members to start thinking in a more structured way about funding journalism and media
2. Helping to spark helpful conversations or discussions among funders, media and other stakeholders in Europe where such a resource might not yet exist
3. Being re-used, re-versioned, localised and/or improved by other funders or funder networks, including thematic or regional groups



# Section 1: The background to and rationale for funding media and journalism

## Why do donors fund journalism and the media?

*“Journalism is fundamental to open societies. It is vital for building well-informed and critical thinking communities, a basic building block of democratic regimes.”*

(Journalism funder, UK)

*“There’s growing recognition that transparency, accountability and participation are not possible without strong independent media, and this needs direct support from [our] programming.”*

(Bilateral donor)

*“Media contribute to a more fair and just system, and support citizens to have more impact on their own lives.”*

(Journalism funder, UK)

*“Journalism has an important function in open democratic societies. It plays an important role by telling stories about important societal issues and helps society in the conversation it has with itself; it makes sure that a great variety of perspectives is represented in this conversation, and that is an in-depth conversation with multiple perspectives, context and analysis.”*

(Journalism funder, NL)

*“In a healthy democracy, we know what people are doing, and allow and welcome a cross section of ideas and contributions from different sectors of society, and a lot of this should not be based on your wealth, skin colour, location, and so on.”*

(Journalism funder, USA)

## Why should European human rights and social justice funders fund the media?

Press freedom is declining worldwide – but most worryingly, it is declining in Europe<sup>10</sup> where even formerly stable democracies, until recently champions of the free press, are beginning to see media as adversaries.<sup>11</sup> The last year saw two investigative journalists in Europe killed, another faking his own death to avoid assassination, and the targeting and intimidation of other public-interest information workers, including [right to information](#) advocates and [whistle-blowers](#). Where once media reported on human rights defenders, but were themselves protected to some extent by law and convention, now they are as at risk - if not, in some settings, more at risk.<sup>12</sup> In the wake of the Harvey Weinstein scandal,

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<sup>10</sup> The European Parliament’s Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs adopted a [report on media pluralism and freedom in the EU](#) in March 2018 outlining a slew of worsening challenges.

<sup>11</sup> Reporters Sans Frontières’ [2018 analysis](#) shows continued decline in press freedom in Europe.

<sup>12</sup> In 2018, the OECD’s annual [Human Dimension Implementation Meeting](#) devoted the entirety of its second day (11 September) to media freedom: <https://www.osce.org/odihr/393101?download=true>

there is also a greater focus on the ongoing, systematic and disproportionate risks and inequalities faced by women in journalism and media.<sup>13</sup>

Ariadne donors are very familiar with the phenomenon of “closing space”<sup>14</sup> and, alongside other international donor networks, and civil society networks like Civicus,<sup>15</sup> are taking note of the pressures on the media as part of this. So-called “illiberal democracies” such as Hungary and Poland, and other governments, for example in Turkey, are targeting, stigmatising and weakening the media through laws, through the withdrawal or misuse of public advertising, prosecuting and jailing journalists and editors, and closing down, capturing or even taking over independent media outlets. Funders too are finding that they face increasing restrictions when funding cross-border, particularly around funding of the media – a phenomenon now even beginning to affect investment-based funders.<sup>16</sup>

### ***Journalism and media face a multi-faceted crisis***

In addition to these threats, journalism and media across the world are facing an extraordinary upheaval due to a range of factors largely stemming from digitisation and the dominance of technological platforms like Facebook and Google.

Digitisation has all but eliminated the historical business model that sustained quality news production with predictable, healthy revenues, with clear firewalls between editorial and commercial activities - captive geographical audiences, finite space to print or broadcast, willing advertisers, high barriers to entry for new competitors, and so on. Digitisation has eliminated most of these advantages, and the revenues that came with them. There has been a dramatic decline in the number of employed journalists in many societies, and those that remain are expected to do more with less. Now many of these journalistic media are fighting new competitors on so many fronts that they are struggling to keep their heads above water, let alone transform themselves or think about innovation. Citizens have in many places a vast array of media to choose from, Facebook and Google swallow up the vast majority of digital advertising revenues, and even formerly unassailable and wealthy media outlets are feeling the pinch.

Precariousness now seems an expected part of the condition of public-interest media. Media are turning to foundations for funding to overcome or mitigate these market conditions, and to protect public benefit or public interest journalism. Those unable or unwilling to adapt and respond quickly to the new environment find it hard to survive.

Concern over these issues, related to the viability of media, and of quality journalism in particular, have been superseded for donors to some degree by the need to counter the phenomena under the umbrella term of “Information Disorder”<sup>17</sup> (misinformation,

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<sup>13</sup> In September 2018, the International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF) published, in partnership with Trollbusters, new research - [Attacks and Harassment: The Impact on Female Journalists and their Reporting](#) - building on their 2014 report with the International News Safety Institute (INSI), [Violence and Harassment against Women in the News Media: A Global Picture](#).

<sup>14</sup> [Challenging the Space for Civil Society: A practical starting point for funders](#) (Ariadne, May 2016)

<sup>15</sup> "There has never been greater need for civil society to strengthen relationships with independent media, based on a shared interest in promoting transparency." [2018 Civicus State of Civil Society Report](#)

<sup>16</sup> Omidyar Network [statement \(Jan 2018\)](#) on Philippine SEC's decision to revoke journalism investee Rappler's certificates of incorporation, and [subsequent action \(Feb 2018\)](#).

<sup>17</sup> Most persuasively by Claire Wardle and Hossein Derakhshan in their 2017 report for the Council of Europe, [Information Disorder: Towards an Interdisciplinary Framework for research and policy making](#).

disinformation, and malinformation). These show how the public sphere in the media, social media, private messaging and other forms of communication are being manipulated and polluted.<sup>18</sup> This has knock-on effects for the integrity of public debate, for social cohesion and trust, and even for electoral and government processes. The realisation that this has been happening has provoked a worldwide crisis of trust in information and communication, focused largely but not exclusively on the role of the major tech platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Google. (This is a hugely complex issue, which it is not the purpose of this primer to address, but we have pointed to more specialised or dedicated resources where appropriate.<sup>19</sup>)

### ***Civil society and media have more in common***

As a result, press and media freedom can no longer be considered wholly separately from other civil society pressures and restrictions. Over the past three years, and as ‘closing space’ has become the new normal, donors, civil society and, significantly, the media industry itself has come to realise that the fortunes of civil society and media are interlinked. What some characterise as a “war on journalism”,<sup>20</sup> from the USA to Turkey, from Poland to India, damages the overall quality of democracy, open societies, the ability of civil society to do its job, and ultimately the ability of citizens to be informed, and to understand and claim their rights.

As such, Ariadne members and their grantees have a stake in the health both of the journalism and media sector, and of the broader information ecosystem.

### ***Potential to make a difference***

This looks like an overwhelmingly dark picture – but there are many, many bright spots, opportunities and allies in the struggle, and there is much to be excited about. In some senses, there has never been *more* potential for progress. The rise of networked investigative journalism, the re-discovery of audience engagement and collaboration, the slow adoption of an R&D mindset in the media industry and in its donors, and the ability of journalism to open the eyes of the world to, yes, misdeeds, but also to wonder.

This guide aims to provide members who are interested in beginning to fund the media, or already do in ad hoc ways, and would like to be more structured about it, with a basic framing related to particular areas of concern and opportunity, links to quality analysis and practical resources, and to point to specialist peers and intermediaries.

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<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Dipayan Ghosh and Ben Scott’s report on precision tracking technologies, *Digital Deceit* (New America Foundation, 2018)

<sup>19</sup> A good starting point on the issue of trust in journalism is the Centre for Media Transition’s 2018 [Public Trust in Journalism: An Annotated Bibliography](#). This pulls together public opinion data, academic literature, and professional journalistic perspectives from around the world.

<sup>20</sup> The International Federation of Journalists referred to a ‘war on journalism’ in 2015: <https://www.nuj.org.uk/news/ifj-denounces-war-on-journalism-ahead-of-press-freedom-day/>.

## The main approaches to funding journalism and media

Writ large, there are two main approaches to funding journalism and media:<sup>21</sup>

→ an **intrinsic approach**, which takes the view that media are a public good, an end in themselves, and need support, funding or investment because of the benefit they bring to society. In this approach, funders are more likely to give multi-year core or unrestricted funding, to fund organisations that contribute to the field's infrastructure and enabling environment (law, media policy, research, safety), and to encourage or support recipients to determine their own goals and measures of success. They respect editorial independence and do not request special access.

This approach - in general - comes from funders who have longer experience, specialist staff, or a dedicated in-house unit for media grantmaking. It is also increasingly featuring in place-based grantmakers' thinking. Media may well explicitly form part of the funder's overall mission. You might hear this referred to in some contexts as a 'media development' approach.

→ an **instrumental approach**, in which media are seen as a means to an end, for example as an important and trusted vehicle for thematic messages, or a way of investigating and exposing corruption in a topic area. In this approach, funders are more likely to provide project or restricted funds for specific purposes or desired outcomes, and to require and invest in evidence of impact.

This approach is often taken by funders (including civil society organisations<sup>22</sup>) who have other, often thematic goals, to which media contribute. Media will be one of the tools that contributes to, but is not a key part of, their mission. Where this focuses more on the content that is produced, for example, this might be referred to by some as 'media **for** development'.

Those who fund the media sit in different places along this spectrum, sometimes even within the same funding institutions (for example, the Program on Independent Journalism in the Open Society Foundations takes a 'journalism first' approach, where other programs might take a theme-led approach to journalism). Most of the funders interviewed for this guide come from an intrinsic perspective, and as such, the guidance that follows is comes broadly from that approach. However, instrumental approaches are also highlighted, especially in the advice on outcomes and impact, considering that many Ariadne readers might initially incline more towards this approach.

## Who funds the media?

As there are many types of journalism and media organisations, there are many types of funder and types of support they offer. Within the term 'funders', numerous different kinds of entity are included or implied. From private foundations to charitable trusts,

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<sup>21</sup> In his [chapter](#) in the *OECD Governance Practitioner's Handbook* (2015), James Deane divides these into four approaches, anchored in democratic and human rights objectives, accountability objectives, conflict and stability objectives, and communication for development objectives.

<sup>22</sup> Some civil society organisations provide training, resources and funding to media in relation to the topics they focus on. The Natural Resource Governance Institute, for example, [provides training to local journalists](#) in resource-rich countries.

from operating foundations to bilateral agencies of governments, from crowdfunding sites to investors, there are many different actors funding and investing in the media.

For the purposes of this guide we take a broad definition of funders to mean entities spending their own money to support third parties in civil society and the media, to support and sustain journalism, media and information in the public interest. (There are EU and other sources of public funding for media, such as the Creative Europe programme,<sup>23</sup> and the proposed InvestEU instrument,<sup>24</sup> but we will not cover these in this resource.) Alongside this we also make reference to investors, by which we mean broadly speaking those who invest in public-interest media businesses and other entities from a mission-driven perspective, but with a view to making a financial return.

## **Where do I find out who is funding what and where?**

Data on how much funding goes to the media sector globally has historically been very difficult to gauge accurately. Where it is published, it is often uneven, incomplete or inaccurate, with different donors using different terminology, tags and fields to record grants. Media and journalism form a subsidiary part of many grants, for example, but this is often not recorded in funders' own internal systems, making it difficult and laborious to research. That said, on the available evidence, philanthropic funding to the media and civil society supporting the media in Europe is still low, compared to the USA.

Over and above the uneven state of data about funding and philanthropy worldwide - although this is improving - donors have often been wary of releasing data about media grants for fear of, for example, compromising grantees.<sup>25</sup> As societal expectations of transparency have grown, foreign funding restrictions spread to more countries, and open standards about how to record and share data about grantmaking develop,<sup>26</sup> there is now greater latitude to release and make use of data about who, what and where donors fund.

### ***Sources of information and data on funding levels***

#### **Foundation Center and Media Impact Funders - [Media grantmaking maps](#)**

While this does not yet include some key journalism grantmakers like Adessium Foundation, the data do offer a helpful and granular insight into the range of grants and support being made, the kinds of funders and organisations offering support to the media, intermediaries and fundermediaries, and the range of recipient organisations. It is possible to query the data in useful ways, and the categorisation is quite detailed.

#### **[The Center for International Media Assistance \(CIMA\)](#)**

CIMA is part of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), a US Congress-funded entity to promote democratic values in the world. It has tried to build a picture of who the major private and bilateral media funders are, and what and where they are funding,

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<sup>23</sup> See [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/budget-may2018-creative-europe\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/budget-may2018-creative-europe_en.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> See [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/publications/investeu-programme\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/publications/investeu-programme_en)

<sup>25</sup> In 2018 Ariadne, 360Giving and The Engine Room received a grant from the Digital Civil Society Lab to explore how human rights grantmakers view sharing data: <https://www.theengineroom.org/responsible-data-conversation-guide-funders>.

<sup>26</sup> Including 360Giving: <https://www.threesixtygiving.org/support/>

through a [self-reported survey](#) sent every 2 years, though this has proved to be quite uneven. CIMA has also created profiles of individual donor organisations that provide significant funds or wield significant influence in the field, which are also varied in depth and actionable insight.

### ***Analyses of funder expenditure on media***

These are relatively few and far between, and all are constrained by the lack of data (and in some cases, the lack of philanthropy), but the reports shared below give some insights into the current philanthropic landscape for journalism in three EU countries on the one hand, and on the other, what EU-level support for the media, whether in the Eastern Partner countries or in developing countries, looks like.

- Journalism Funders Forum reports for [UK](#), [Germany](#), [France](#) (all 2017)
- [Financing Quality Journalism](#) – Pieter Oostlander, Teun Gautier, Sam van Dyck (Shaerpa for Adessium Foundation, 2015)
- European Commission - [Mapping EU Media Support 2000-2010](#)
- Eastern Partnership - [EU Support to Eastern Partner Countries 2007-2015](#)

Academic analysis of funder expenditure is also beginning to grow, in for example, [the humanitarian media field](#).

### **What is journalism?**

There is **no single definition** of what journalism is, who is a journalist, and what skills or credentials they need in order to be able to practice journalism.<sup>27</sup> Journalism has evolved radically over the last three decades, and continues to do so. Furthermore it means different things in different contexts - from country to country, from national to local, from medium to medium, from community to community. If pressed for a working definition, synthesising from experience, interviews and desk research, I would offer the following:

*Journalism is an activity, a mindset, a process and set of products that present tested, verified facts and information to a public in an organised way, to transparent editorial standards. It has developed codes of conduct and ethical practices over time, and, while these vary from context to context, they often include similar core tenets.*

### ***Journalism as defined under international freedom of expression standards***

That said, international freedom of expression standards provide helpful 'functional' definitions that take account of the radical changes in communication over the past twenty years.

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<sup>27</sup> As noted in the Media Legal Defence Initiative's [Training Manual on International and Comparative Media and Freedom of Expression Law](#), "The [Inter-American Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression](#) states that: "[t]he requirement of a university degree for the practice of journalism constitute[s] an unlawful restriction of freedom of expression." The three special mandates on freedom of expression at the OAS, UN and OSCE have stated that: "[T]here should be no legal restrictions on who may practise journalism."



In paragraph 44 of its [General Comment 34](#), the UN's Human Rights Council stated:

*"Journalism is a function shared by a wide range of actors, including professional full-time reporters and analysts, as well as bloggers and others who engage in forms of self-publication in print, on the internet or elsewhere, and general State systems of registration or licensing of journalists are incompatible with [freedom of expression as a vehicle for transparency and accountability]."*

And, as noted by UK freedom of expression NGO Article 19 in 2013:<sup>28</sup>

*The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (COE) has adopted an equally broad definition<sup>29</sup> of the term 'journalist' [as "any natural or legal person who is regularly or professionally engaged in the collection and dissemination of information to the public via any means of mass communication."]*

*It has also called on member states to:*

*– Adopt a new, broad notion of media which encompasses all actors involved in the production and dissemination, to potentially large numbers of people, of content (for example information, analysis, comment, opinion, education, culture, art and entertainment in text, audio, visual, audiovisual or other form) and applications which are designed to facilitate interactive mass communication (for example social networks) or other content-based large-scale interactive experiences (for example online games), while retaining (in all these cases) editorial control or oversight of the contents.*

### ***Shifting boundaries, participants, methods***

Taking a pragmatic view, many do describe journalism as a profession, occupation or trade, with broadly agreed practices, transparent processes, and codes of conduct – but these are not exclusive to journalists working in established, mainstream newsroom contexts.<sup>30</sup> Journalism can be performed by professional, semi-professional, or amateur groups, networks or individuals that might be publicly or privately funded, non-profit, for-profit, charitable, community-led, cooperative, or other forms – and funders do support any and all of these and more besides.

Journalism is no longer one, singular, linear process owned by one person, unit or outlet - it increasingly involves different people and entities (including civil society) through multiple types of inputs and processes that intersect and overlap, from citizen participation to whistleblowers and leaks, from 'shoe leather' to digital forensic techniques. Cross-border collaboration between investigative journalists has become one of the most prominent and effective new forms of journalism,<sup>31</sup> and is driving an understanding that collaboration, even between competitors, can be a powerful force for the public interest. Some civil society groups employ journalists or journalistic techniques

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<sup>28</sup> Article 19 Policy Brief, [The Right to Blog](#) (2013)

<sup>29</sup> COE Recommendation No. R (2000)7 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the right of journalists not to disclose their sources of information, adopted 8 March 2000

<sup>30</sup> Mark Deuze and Tamara Witschge, [Beyond journalism: Theorizing the transformation of journalism](#) ([Journalism](#) 19(2), 2017)

<sup>31</sup> [Global Teamwork: the rise of collaboration in investigative journalism](#), ed. Richard Sambrook (Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2018)

– or even, like Greenpeace UK and the Tax Justice Network (TJN), set up editorially independent journalism units.<sup>32</sup>

These new forms of journalism lead to tensions and debates over evolving range of ethical approaches, as Peters and Tandoc<sup>33</sup> note, citing a definition of citizen journalism:

*“An alternative and activist form of newsgathering and reporting that functions outside mainstream media institutions, often as a repose to shortcoming in the professional journalistic field, that uses similar journalistic practices but is driven by different objectives and ideals and relies on alternative sources of legitimacy than traditional or mainstream journalism.”<sup>34</sup>*

Funders who work with media-producing social movements, or activist media collectives, for example, may recognise or encounter some of these questions.

### ***A set of products***

There is an ever-growing number of forms journalism can take, from analogue to digital, static to mobile, verbal to visual, including:

- print/text (e.g. newspapers, magazines, newsletters, community information boards)
- video (e.g. television, online video, documentary<sup>35</sup>)
- images (e.g. infographics, photojournalism, graphic journalism, editorial cartoons)
- audio (e.g. radio, podcasts)
- interactives (e.g. data visualisations, newsgames, interactive objects)
- sensors (e.g. pollution monitors, internet of things, drones)
- events (e.g. live journalism events, theatre)

### **What kinds of entities are involved in journalism?**

What counts as journalism, and what constitutes ‘good’ journalism is a hotly and constantly debated topic within the industry, in philanthropic circles and in society more broadly. For the purposes of this introductory resource, and since Ariadne funders work in a wide variety of settings, we follow the broad view of media and journalism outlined in the previous section, in order to offer the widest relevance possible.

It is worth making clear at the outset, however, that the part of the journalism field that most funders are usually interested in supporting - whether intrinsic or instrumental - is journalism that is manifestly in the public interest, that seeks to hold power to account in some way, that seeks to expose wrongdoing, that increases public understanding of complex or difficult issues. Many funders interviewed or surveyed for this guide expressed greater interest in investigative journalism, fact-checking and verification techniques than in other areas of journalism, such as journalism that is driven by or

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<sup>32</sup> Greenpeace set up Energy Desk, rebooted as [Unearthed](#), and TJN incubated [Finance Uncovered](#).

<sup>33</sup> Jonathan Peters & Edson C. Tandoc, Jr., *“People who aren’t really reporters at all, who have no professional qualifications”: Defining a Journalist and Deciding Who May Claim The Privileges*, 2013 N.Y.U. J. LEGIS. & PUB. POL’Y QUORUM 34.

<sup>34</sup> Courtney C. Radsch, *The revolutions will be blogged: Cyberactivism and the 4th estate in Egypt* (2013) (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, American University), cited in Peters and Tandoc, *ibid*.

<sup>35</sup> While documentary producers can be in this category, this guide does not focus on documentary film. There are resources available through Doc Society, starting with [this overview](#).



responds to citizen participation or solutions. Regardless, these parts of the journalism field and industry are in general the hardest to sustain commercially.

Most funders are not – in general – interested in parts of journalism and media that are more akin to entertainment (and which perhaps attract more revenue) – although this can change where the funder’s aim is, for example, to convey key or lifeline information to large audiences, in health or humanitarian settings, or to elevate the voices of those traditionally or systematically under-represented in or marginalised from the media.

There are many forms of organisation and network that are involved in parts of the journalism and media field, including organisations or groups that:

- **produce journalism** – from huge global or national media brands like the BBC, CNN and the Washington Post, to small investigative units like [Follow The Money](#) in the Netherlands; this can also include – though some disagree<sup>36</sup> – NGO-born but editorially independent investigative journalism units like [Greenpeace’s Unearthed](#), Tax Justice Network spinout [Finance Uncovered](#), and US-based [Transparentem](#); civic newsrooms; data visualisation studios; or even media created by activists or social movements, in some contexts.
- **contribute to network building** – field infrastructure organisations ranging from the [Global Forum for Media Development](#) or GFMD (mainly for media development organisations) to industry associations and bodies (the [World Association for Newspapers](#) or WAN-IFRA, [Global Editors Network](#)), or in-person bringing journalists together with technologists ([Hacks/Hackers](#)) or organising conferences (the [International Journalism Festival](#) in Perugia, for example)
- **produce and circulate knowledge on or about journalism** – university departments, research consultancies, monitoring and evaluation experts, journalists who cover the media as a beat, and some donors (see Section 3.5)
- **focus on questions of sustainability**, viability and new business or operating models for journalism – including innovation funds and challenges like [Startups for News](#), media labs such as the [Global Alliance for Media Innovation](#), and support hubs and turnkey fundraising solutions like the US-based [News Revenue Hub](#)
- **work on journalism’s enabling environment** (e.g. issues of policy, law, regulation and infrastructure, labour rights, safety), or that contribute to the free flow of information (e.g. through protection, data, content, training and tools). These include right to information (RTI) groups, open data groups, lawyers, policy advocates and those portions of civil society that work on media development (e.g. [GFMD members](#) like [Article 19](#)) - but also previously separate areas like digital rights.
- **provide a range of technology services to the media** such as hosting, distribution, transcription, advertising, content management, data analysis, communication and collaboration tools, and other services; as well as the major social media platforms who exercise significant power within media markets across the world (and are themselves supporting media and journalism through funding and other means).

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<sup>36</sup> BBC Radio 4’s *The Media Show* dedicated a large part of an August 2018 edition to journalism funded by NGOs and donors, including Unearthed: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0bcddwt>.

## What trends and needs affecting public interest journalism and media should funders pay attention to?

As noted at several points in this resource, there are multiple, significant big-picture developments and challenges that anyone funding in the journalism and media sector needs to be aware of. In this resource, we cover a snapshot of some of these trends.

The list below - drawing on input from expert interviewees, survey respondents and desk research – notes a selection of areas of the field that may merit particular attention from donors interested in human rights, social justice and transparency:

### *Technology and platforms:*

- The pace of technology-driven change and volatility in the sector is unrelenting, impacting on newsgathering, reporting, production, distribution, promotion, consumption and all aspects of the journalism process. Journalistic practices and ethics are evolving in relation to these new developments.
- Few organisations and companies are able to dedicate funds to support R&D, innovation and experimentation. Outside of Google's DNI Fund, and until InvestEU begins, there appears to be little coordinated and large-scale public-interest-focused risk capital to develop new ideas and approaches for journalism media in Europe.
- Groups building technology specifically for use in journalism – from content management systems to automated transcription services, from verification and fact-checking technologies to sensors/drones, from safety and security to distribution – report finding it hard to access philanthropic funds, and donors express a wariness of supporting them.

### *Direct threats to independent media and its supporters:*

- Threats to journalists and journalism organisations are multiplying and increasing in sophistication and speed, particularly but not exclusively from governments or state-backed actors – journalists in Europe appear now to be considered legitimate targets for inflammatory rhetoric or for physical attack.
- Media in many countries are being captured by people who seek to undermine or marginalise human rights discourse, often as proxies or allies of illiberal governments.
- Closing space and new laws affect the media's freedom to operate, and funders' freedom to work in unfettered cross-border ways.<sup>37</sup>
- Civil society groups supporting the media – whether focused on policy, law and regulation, research, capacity-building, freedom of expression, conflict reporting, and many other areas – say they are also finding it harder to raise funds as, among other factors, donors are now also receiving more requests for funds from media organisations old and new directly.

### *Finance and business models:*

- Collapse of traditional revenue sources (advertising, subscriptions) continues, and for most, the shortfall in resources will likely never be made up by new sources of income (donations, membership, sponsorship, events), leaving most public interest media in a precarious position.
- In particular, local news across Europe is widely felt to be in crisis, with ruinous consequences for local scrutiny and accountability.

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<sup>37</sup> Although European philanthropic infrastructure organisations have been engaging - [with apparent success](#) - with the EU on this in 2018.

- Public service media (where they exist) are struggling to transform amid a questioning of their role, assaults on their independence, and cuts to their budgets.
- It's difficult to make media businesses work in the current financial climate, and many promising startups and initiatives fail.
- Non-profit and thematic newsrooms can be a powerful addition to the landscape, but struggle to grow, and in many European countries (notably Germany, UK) aren't eligible for charitable status under current laws.
- Journalism cooperatives can provide, in a number of EU countries,<sup>38</sup> one answer to issues of ownership and legitimacy.
- Some grantees in emerging economies are encouraged by intermediaries or donors to pursue digital advertising opportunities<sup>39</sup> – which can bring diminishing returns, and ethical concerns, in that they subject citizens to targeted advertising in places where data and consumer protection laws are not as strong as in the EU.

#### *Disinformation, misinformation and malinformation*

- Recent journalistic and other investigations have revealed the extent to which the digital public sphere - including search and social media - is being manipulated, leading to concerns about how this can erode public trust in media / information/ democratic processes, social cohesion and even the integrity of democratic processes – and journalism is, in places, part of the problem.
- Well-funded state-backed semi-journalistic outlets like RT or CCTV, and other, partisan outlets such as Breitbart and its imitators, are to some extent splintering and distorting the field linked to media capture and digitization of public sphere.

#### *Culture shift:*

- Unlike in civil society (in general), the very nature of the work in journalism is competitive, although there are experiments with a more collaborative and commons-based work, as the field faces increased threats. Donors too are actively seeking more collaboration and connection.
- Growing acknowledgement by the industry (in some places) of gender disparities and other structural power imbalances in media worldwide – including gender pay gaps, discrimination, exclusions (e.g. socio-economic or ethnic) and harassment.

We welcome your input on other trends and challenges of concern to donors thinking about funding media and journalism.

## **What kinds of support do funders offer the field?**

In the interests of readability, we have chosen to provide only a top-level list of types of funding in this briefing, rather than going into significant detail. We hope that readers will be able to extrapolate from the information we have provided, their own experience of grantmaking, and the additional resources and examples we have pointed to throughout the document.

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<sup>38</sup> Catalina Albeanu [summarized four case studies](#) for journalism.co.uk, based on a [panel discussion](#) at the International Journalism Festival in 2017.

<sup>39</sup> Caribou Digital/Mozilla report, [Paying Attention to the Poor – Digital Advertising in Emerging Markets](#)

Depending on the kinds of entities a particular funder is permitted to support, there are a number of ways in which they can help, including the following:

- Core, multi-year grants are strongly preferred by recipients (as noted in Ariadne's [2018 Forecast](#))
- project grants or, as in the Google DNI, product funds
- contractual work
- pooling funds with other donors, such as in the [Civitates Fund](#)
- regranting through an expert intermediary, such as an international, regional or national media development organisation
- loans - recoverable in some instances
- investments - directly by [some funders, as a way of preserving media plurality](#), or through organisations like [MDIE](#), or in partnership with [blockchain journalism startup Civil](#)
- paying for outside expertise for grantees, e.g. business consulting, or supporting field catalyst organisations like the News Revenue Hub
- funding individuals through fellowships, networks, exchanges, trainings
- prizes or awards such as the [Amnesty awards](#), or the [European Press Prize](#)
- funds for transformation of a legacy entity, such as upgrading a newspaper's digital operations
- innovation or challenge funds - such as [SAMIP](#) or the [Prague Center for Civil Society](#)
- match-funding crowdfunding campaigns - with helpful research and reality-checks at [Through The Cracks](#), [Nesta](#), and [Pew](#)
- funding research, policy or, where permitted, advocacy work
- supporting coverage of innovation in media, and circulation of knowledge
- participatory funds - allowing the field to determine where money goes
- funding a cohort - as in [MacArthur's Nigeria Program](#)
- incentivising collaboration within or across borders
- non-financial assistance - in addition to financial resources, other support can be valuable, including convening or connecting grantees, providing introductions to other funders or potential supporters

Funders in the field also spend a lot of time thinking about how they can make their systems and funding instruments more effective and efficient for the field. Depending on demand within the Ariadne community, this may be a concrete area to design follow-up webinars or trainings with peer funders.

## **Finding, connecting with and learning from other funders and investors and other sources of support and ideas**

While toolkits can be a useful springboard for thinking about particular grantmaking methods in a foundation or funder, they are usually only the starting point, and can't be adopted wholesale. Each funder has its own mission, and its own institutional, programmatic and interpersonal dynamics, and requires tailored analysis and advice on how specifically to move forward. As noted in a 2017 Hewlett Foundation scan of "how foundations access and use knowledge" in the USA,<sup>40</sup> most grantmakers surveyed got their information from other funders, or their grantees. Some donors have developed special mechanisms to address this lack of internal expertise or cohesion - the EU, for

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<sup>40</sup> See <https://hewlett.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Hewlett-Field-Scan-Report.pdf>

example, developed a Technical Advisory Facility called [Media4Democracy](#)<sup>41</sup> to advise its delegations around the world on how best to support freedom of expression, freedom of information and journalism.

The media field in Europe - unlike many other fields where common objectives are easier to identify and coalesce around - has long struggled<sup>42</sup> to find a permanent forum where donors with diverse experiences and approaches can come together, share ideas and experiences, develop new skills, and build a collective identity and momentum (although the Journalism Funders Forum, explained below, has potential, now that it has the commitment of a group of six donors, to fulfil part of this role).

There has been, for example, no equivalent of Ariadne for journalism and media donors – a stable and settled network dedicated to professional discussion, development and exchange purely among donors. When media donors – including bilaterals – have met in the past, meetings have been as much about the differences as the commonalities, about the why and how, as about the what. In comparison with, for example, the public health or humanitarian fields, where coordination is strongly codified and there is a sense of the need for trust and transparency between field actors, over and above competition, the journalism and media field in most places lags behind.

### ***Funder networks with a partial focus on media and journalism***

[Civitates Fund](#), Brussels – hosted by the Network of European Foundations (NEF), this new pooled fund, bringing together 16 European foundations, has two sub-funds: on combating ‘shrinking space’, and on the public discourse and the digitisation of the public sphere. The foundations involved vary greatly in their experience in and approaches to funding media, and it is being keenly watched.

[Democracy Network, European Foundation Centre](#) - meeting twice a year, this network of European donors aims to “explore, network and learn from peers on different topics relating to European Democracy”, including journalism. Spearheaded by the King Baudouin Foundation (Belgium), it aims “to facilitate more effective philanthropic support to strengthen democratic values and participation in Europe through cooperation and information exchange and to create a sustainable, broad-based platform of independent foundations working towards a stronger European democracy.” It has three focus areas:

- Participatory democracy and active citizenship
- New technologies and the impact on democracy
- Transparency of institutions

[Media Impact Funders](#) – a US-based network of funders spanning the intrinsic to instrumental spectrum, but with a collective focus on how to secure and measure impact, and providing links to useful impact measurement resources and tools.

[Expertenkreis für Qualitätsjournalismus](#), Germany – this “Expert Circle”, part of the German association of foundations (Bundesverband Deutscher Stiftungen), is a nascent

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<sup>41</sup> Disclosure – the author’s wife works as the Key Expert for this Facility

<sup>42</sup> in 2012, Eric Newton of the Knight Foundation wrote at length about the efforts to encourage media funders to network, both in the USA and in Europe: <https://knightfoundation.org/articles/who-are-journalism-and-media-funders-why-do-they-meet-and-now-what>.

and growing group of foundations, local and national, that want to develop a shared space to learn and exchange information and experiences with funding media and journalism. It provides a potential model for how funders can organise on the national level to bring more cohesion and momentum to media funding. It complements other German language spaces such as [FoME](#) (the media development forum for German organisations and donors).

### ***Interfaces between donors and the field***

[Journalism Funders Forum](#) - Initiated by the [European Journalism Centre](#), the JFF<sup>43</sup> is aimed at connecting journalists and funders, and improving collaboration between the two parties. It seeks to build a no-solicitation common space in which donors and the journalism field in Europe can come together to discuss – under the Chatham House Rule – issues, solutions and potential collaboration, including helping each other navigate and establish ethical principles for funding media. It has held open-registration national events in London, Paris and Hamburg, alongside preliminary research reports about the media and philanthropy environment in each country, and a closed Ideas Day meeting with invited participants from across Europe from which emerged a [set of areas for potential collaboration](#). The JFF has convened informal side-meetings for interested donors at a range of different conferences and events during 2018, including the International Journalism Festival in Perugia, DataHarvest in Mechelen, Belgium, and the Campfire Festival in Düsseldorf, Germany.

### ***Organisations with mission/mandate to interact with donors***

[Global Forum for Media Development or GFMD](#) (Brussels) - A network of over 200 groups working with and supporting the media around the world, originally strongly supported by the “traditional media donors” such as Open Society Foundations, but latterly less so. It exists to promote collaboration in the media development field, strengthen knowledge, standards and skills-sharing, support member- and peer-led advocacy on media freedom issues, and promote research, analysis and evaluation. Most members are NGOs - from big international northern-based organisations like Article 19, Internews, International Media Support, BBC Media Action and Free Press Unlimited, to regional groups like ARIJ (MENA), MISA (Southern Africa) and SEENPM (Southeast Europe), and national organisations like ABRAJI (Brazil). Latterly the network has begun to include an growing number of members from the media industry itself, including investigative networks, newspapers and other independent media like Malaysiakini. It has a democratic governance structure, with regional caucuses and an elected representative board.

[Center for International Media Assistance or CIMA](#) (Washington DC) – part of the US National Endowment for Democracy, CIMA’s mission is to “improve U.S. efforts to promote independent media in developing countries around the world” by supporting “media development donors, implementers, and civil society actors on best practices and solutions for improving media systems [focusing on] effectiveness, sustainability, innovation, and funding.” To do this, CIMA “conducts research, produces written analysis, convenes experts, and develops networks of thought leaders.”

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<sup>43</sup> With funding from Open Society, Adessium Foundation, Schoepflin Stiftung, Gates Foundation, News Integrity Initiative, Stichting Democratie & Media



## Section 2: Advice from Experienced Donors

This section offers very practical principles for how to get started in funding in journalism and media, and draws on interviews with eleven donor representatives, surveys with a further twenty, and desk research.

Readers may find that there are fewer examples of successful or model initiatives in this section than expected. Although they covered a wide range of areas for possible interventions, and types of organisations or groups that might benefit from philanthropic support, our interviewees were cautious about pointing to specific interventions that they would counsel others to pay attention to. They explained this partly by the fast-moving and volatile environment in which journalism and media operate, and by experience that **fixed examples and models are less important than an overall mindset of responding and adapting to that environment.**

We welcome feedback on this draft guidance both from those with experience in the field, and those with practical questions that they would like to see answered.

### *Pressures on grantmakers*

Grantmakers are often under considerable time pressure to determine a strategy for new or emerging areas. During the interviews for this guide, some grantmakers reported that, once responsibilities across multiple portfolios were taken account of, they often have just two to four weeks to scope and understand a new field, to decide and recommend a grantmaking strategy for up to three years, and to start identifying potential grantees. Establishing the benchmarks for how this will be internally evaluated are also perceived as complicated and potentially risky, especially for a field in which public-interest imperatives cross-cut with commercial and other imperatives. This can lead to conservative or herd instincts in decision-making, which doesn't help the growth or diversity of the field.

We hope that the following practical advice - which will evolve and improve with your feedback - helps mitigate some of these pressures, and offers, if not shortcuts, then waymarks along paths travelled by other, more experienced donors.

### **Is journalism relevant to your mission, and if so, how?**

*Decide if you are funding because you want to support the journalism field or ecosystem (a field or intrinsic approach), or because journalism helps you achieve a thematic or other goal (an instrumental approach).*

This is a key decision and needs careful consideration with regard to the kinds of outcomes you are looking for. Different kinds of funders will find one or the other of these approaches a more natural fit.

A mission that explicitly relates, for example, to **democracy, transparency, good governance, accountability, participation, justice, or open societies** would generally find support for journalism as a field a more natural fit. Increasingly, funders whose

mission relates to a particular geographical area are thinking about the crucial role that information and communication plays in place-based settings, including support for local media. This could also involve supporting groups that work on improving the overall environment for journalism, media and the free flow of information.

If your mission is focused on a **thematic goal, or a particular part of society, or securing a type of policy change**, it may feel more relevant to support particular aspects of journalism - such as journalism related to a particular theme, or strengthening the participation of an under-represented group - in which case, it is always worth thinking about, and articulating, if and how this will contribute to and impact on the wider journalism and information ecosystem.

One Ariadne donor interviewed talked explicitly about the “important role [journalism has] to play in telling stories about important societal issues and to help society in the conversation it has with itself. It makes sure that a great variety of perspectives is represented in this conversation, and that is an in-depth conversation - [providing] multi-perspective context and analysis.” This donor has steadily moved from an instrumental approach when they started funding, to one where they now fund the field, and the broader information ecosystem of which journalism is a key part.

It’s also a crucial constraint to think about what kinds of organisations you are permitted to support, and what the regulatory structures local to you permit you to support in terms of journalism. If you can only fund registered charities, for example, in the UK and Germany, journalism is still not a charitable object, meaning that it is more complicated and potentially more expensive to support certain kinds of grantees. Calls for this to be changed are growing in a number of countries, from Australia and Canada, to Germany and the UK.<sup>44</sup>

## **What kinds of support for journalism are relevant to your mission?**

Once you are clear on the type of journalism and media funding that is relevant to your mission, and the parameters within which you can fund, you will need to examine the different kinds of funding and support you will offer. In addition to desk research, outside expertise - from more experienced donors, from intermediary organisations such as media development CSOs, or expert consultants - can help to identify the right needs in the field to respond to. There is a lot of grey literature and growing amounts of academic literature looking at the efficacy of different kinds of support for journalism in a wide variety of societies, and peer donor support is also a helpful resource here.

Many donors are particularly interested in supporting investigative journalism at the moment. This might be the right strategy for your foundation to take, but equally it might be an innovation fund, local news, or community engagement strategies, or to put your money into an existing pooled fund. A small selection of examples might include:

- Donors concerned about the quality of information in the public sphere, for example, might explore supporting outlets involved in the production of quality journalism, fact-checking, verification, media literacy or other organisations in the wider information ecosystem.

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<sup>44</sup> The most recent analysis was produced by Robert Picard et al, in [The impact of charity and tax law/regulation on not-for-profit news organisations](#) (Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2016)



- Those focused on holding power to account might choose to support the investigative journalism field through its infrastructure organisations, cross-border networks, intermediary funds, national or local investigative units, or through collaborations between journalism organisations and civil society (or civil society groups doing investigations, like Global Witness).
- Donors concerned about sustainability, viability or resilience of various kinds of media - including public-service, private, community, non-profit - might offer support either directly to potential grantees, through a field catalyst<sup>45</sup> like the News Revenue Hub, or through an innovation fund to experiment with new engagement models, diverse revenue sources, alternative ownership models such as co-operatives, or new technologies.
- Others might support the advancement of women in the industry, or of marginalised populations or voices, through networks, research, fellowships, or support for content.
- Some donors might be more comfortable working through a pooled or collaborative fund, sharing the risk with other donors, or working with mission-driven investors.
- And yet others might focus on journalists' safety and security, or on media law, policy and regulation.

Whatever forms of support you explore, do ensure you conduct a thorough risk analysis of your support for journalism, just as you would for any other area.

## **Finding potential grantees**

*Assess which tools will give you the best chance of finding a sufficient range of potential grantees to consider, whether through commissioning field or country scans, searching grantmaking data portals, referrals from trusted partners or peers, or open calls.*

A small survey of Ariadne funders, and interviews with a slightly wider range of donor organisations, indicate that the majority of funders prefer closed application processes. Broadly speaking, some donors have open calls in order to attract a range of potential grantees, and others find more targeted grantees through research, recommendation and serendipity. As with any other area of grantmaking, each approach has its advantages and disadvantages, and its implications for the field.

Many donors in the media funding space report that they struggle with finding a regular stream of potential new grantees or investees, and that this can lead to a certain lack of diversity in the groups that end up receiving support. There are many methods to counteract this - commissioning knowledgeable regional or local experts or firms to conduct a field scan in a particular region or country, for example, or talking to other funders or media development groups working in a particular area. Even if they provide only partial data, using tools like the Media Impact Funders maps or [GrantNav](#) can help provide a snapshot of the diversity of groups it is possible to support (and of course, you could release your own data to these standards too!).

Expert donors say don't be afraid to ask questions - to other, more experienced donors in Ariadne or beyond, to experienced intermediary organisations, or through fora like the Journalism Funders Forum - or to engage field experts to help you scope out the right form

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<sup>45</sup> For a description of the 'field catalyst', see Taz Hussein, Matt Plummer and Bill Breen, [How Field Catalysts Galvanize Social Change](#) (SSIR, Winter 2018)

of intervention. Mission-driven investors such as MDIF and North Base Media are often an excellent source of insight into the strengths and weaknesses of particular locations, organisations, forms of support and sub-fields.

### ***Methods to broaden the pool of applicants***

**Open calls**, if properly structured and handled, can be a productive way of expanding that pipeline - some of the donors interviewed do operate them, often made more specific around a particular location, method or topic. There are risks, including a large volume of applications, or a number of poor applications. If you are in a position to conduct open calls or application processes, and depending on the geographical or thematic range of applicants you are hoping to attract, you may need to conduct outreach (including by travelling to locations), simplify and translate the call for applications and associated materials, engage experts to act as external reviewers of applications alongside your in-house staff, and even, as in the case of some recent innovation funds working with media in emerging markets, support the shortlisted applications to workshop and improve their ideas.

If you prefer to **target your potential grantees**, and you have a particular area or topic in mind, make sure to carry out scans of the field and other funding available, conduct interviews with experts (media, thematic and geographic) on the local and regional level, and speak to a range of people to get sufficient referrals. Most of the donors interviewed for this guide do not conduct large open calls. These donors report that they hear about new initiatives through **internal or external donor colleagues, geographical or thematic donor networks, their existing or recent grantees, and through targeted research**. This is in some senses more controllable and manageable, especially for donors giving smaller amounts, but at the same time risks a bias towards those who are already known, or who have good connections.

Many groups report in this field (and of course other fields) that it can be very hard to get onto donors' radar without the support of intermediaries. As one organisation put it, "if you're in, you're in, but if you're not, it's very hard to get a fair hearing."

### **Design a clear and accessible application process**

*Be clear about what opportunities are available, be clear about criteria, and try to design an application process that is simpler and easier for journalism groups*

**Design a clear and accessible call for proposals and application process that are framed in language that is relevant to the journalism field.** Media development organisations are practised at bridging the language and processes of funding, civil society and the media. Frontline journalism organisations, especially ones that are precarious, will not have a specialist fundraiser, and won't necessarily understand, for example, how to frame things from a human rights perspective, or what an impact framework or theory of change might be. Don't be afraid to ask field experts - including groups that deal with these processes a lot, like the European Journalism Centre or media development organisations - for feedback on making the call for proposals and application process more effective.

Processes like the Digital News Initiative have managed to create an effective application process that works for a wide variety of stakeholders - media large and small, civil society and academics. Observe or request information about others' application processes and borrow or adapt freely where it makes sense.

### ***Protecting applicants' and grantees' editorial independence***

**Try not to place too many restrictions** on the grantees, where possible, though giving examples of what you might consider successful outcomes might be helpful to applicants. Incentivising particular behaviour through your application criteria might be relevant, such as suggesting open-sourcing tools or methods to the wider ecosystem, or encouraging but not requiring collaborations with other types of groups, such as civil society organisations. Try to be clear when you are expecting your notions to be challenged, and where you are not.

It is a reality that many donors or donor programmes will want to place some parameters around their funding, such as offering funding for journalism on particular topics. Specialised journalism donors emphasise that, while they recognise this reality, that funders should be absolutely clear upfront that they will **respect applicants' and grantees' editorial independence and decision-making, and will not interfere or ask for special access**. Perhaps this should even be formulated into a policy.

For a helpful outline of the kinds of principles that donors can and should espouse, see the American Press Institute's set of "[best practices for ensuring editorial independence](#)", with practical advice on ethical practices and red-lines for [funders](#), [non-profit newsrooms](#), and [for-profit media](#).

### **Build a diverse application assessment team**

*Have diverse expertise and experience on staff or on call to ensure that you can assess applications in a fair, up-to-date and multi-disciplinary way, don't paper over your ignorance, and try to track and share data about applications and grants.*

As a donor with particular experience with open calls recommended, **ensure there is diversity of thought in the assessment process**. Journalism/media is a hugely varied and wide field, and it's possible to be expert in it, yet not know about things someone else would consider entirely fundamental. The wider the range you hope to cover, the more diverse the expertise you'll need.

Be clear-eyed about the strengths and weaknesses in the expertise of the person or team that is assessing the applications, as part of ensuring that the decision-making process is robust. As one experienced journalist new to the grantmaking field put it, "**don't paper over your ignorance.**"

You don't necessarily need to have a specialist programme, or even specialist staff, but it may be advisable to contract in outside expertise. Your advisers do need, however, to understand what you do, and **why journalism is relevant to you** - whether that is human rights, transparency, anti-corruption, innovation, health or another area.

**Empower your external experts** as part of the decision-making team, not merely as advisers. It may make sense to **rotate out your expert advisers** so you don't get too cosy with them, but develop them into a pool that you can vary in its composition according to your needs.

To the extent that is possible for you, **track and share your application data**, and make the grants data open as well, through 360Giving or other standards.

## **Deciding on grantees**

*Respect and protect editorial independence in contracts, in agreements and in practice, pay attention to and support grantees on areas where they might be vulnerable, consider where you might supplement funds with other kinds of support, and be aware that – at the moment – few media can entirely self-sustain.*

Both interviewed grantees and recent advice on the ethics of funding media (e.g. [Schiffrin, 2017](#), or the American Press Institute's [best practices for ensuring editorial independence](#)) emphasise that donors, particularly those with a thematic mission, need to follow ethical guidelines and professional respect in contracts and agreements – they must not exert disproportionate power over the grantee, and they must respect and protect editorial independence, as noted above. Making this clear will help with more open and candid conversations on other areas of discussion with potential grantees.

When assessing and doing due diligence on your potential grantees – whether through references, or online research – make sure to pay attention to areas where organisations might have weaknesses or blind spots, but be worried about admitting they need support, such as safety and security, gender, race, or data collection and protection.

If you want to help organisations develop stronger prospects for sustainability, and reducing their long-term reliance on donor funds, also consider how you might provide ongoing and/or in-depth specialised support to organisations through consultants, partnerships, twinning with other experienced media, field catalysts, or other means.

Develop a tolerance for mixed revenues – most public interest media won't ever fully self-sustain, and even hard-nosed media investors such as MDIF and North Base are clear-eyed about this. The aim in many places may be to have a flotilla of strong enough, good enough media that serve the public interest, and that are resilient and adaptive.

Finally, be prepared for failure, and unexpected twists and turns along the way.

## **Openness and transparency in journalism funding**

*State publicly why you are supporting journalism and media, especially if it is a new or non-traditional area for your organisation, share your grants data, and reinforce and empower your grantees' ethical funding policies and red-lines.*

The media's independence has rested in part on not being over-reliant on any particular source of revenue, transparency about these sources, and on having very clear firewalls between commercial and editorial. As more organisations turn to philanthropic funding,

this is going to apply to philanthropic sources of income too – indeed many already publish which funders provide them with funds, whether in order to show their work is valued, to pre-empt criticism, or because they routinely disclose all funds received.

As well as clearly articulating in a public way why and how they support journalism, to the extent possible – and where it wouldn't cause harm – funders should be transparent about whom they support (or at least mirror where their grantees state it publicly). Given the uneven state of data about media funding, do consider how existing efforts to provide data about grantmaking under international standards such as 360Giving can better include media or journalism tags or other means.

Funders should also ask their grantees whether they have a clearly articulated ethical funding policy, and their own red-lines about the relationship with funders – for example, not accepting funds for specific stories or investigations, not providing pre-publication access or sign-off to donors, and rejecting all outside editorial influence.

### **Assessing whether your funding is working: outcomes, impact, change**

Finally, this is worth considering in slightly more depth because defining and demonstrating 'impact' was one of the areas covered by interviewees where there was most uncertainty. The sheer quantity of publishing about how to measure media impact – some of this driven and funded by donors – is striking, and shows that articulating why journalism matters – something that the media industry largely took as a given – has become a pressing new concern for frontline journalism organisations.

As in many other areas of funding and philanthropy, including human rights and social justice, perspectives on the methods and value of measurement in media funding vary hugely. Every funder has an underlying idea of why they are giving money to a particular cause or organisation, and of what they would like to see happen as a result of their funding – whether they describe it as impact, outcomes, change or otherwise.

For donors supporting the media, this causal relationship is generally speaking even harder (and, some believe, impossible or counterproductive<sup>46</sup>) to map and measure, and this has given rise to a number of different kinds of approaches and workarounds. As noted earlier in this guide, there are two main ways of thinking about this.

#### **Are you supporting the media because you think it is a public good, essential to open societies, and ought to be developed, strengthened and defended?**

Broadly speaking, donors at this end of the spectrum say they work with the grantee organisation to understand what they are trying to achieve, and to help them design metrics to track their performance and progress towards these goals – but that these goals are self-determined. Some donors in this area, particularly those working with smaller, poorly-resourced or threatened organisations, place very light, if any, reporting burdens on media grantees.

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<sup>46</sup> Benson's 2016 working paper at NYU questioned [whether impact and sustainability are incompatible](#).

**Or are you supporting the media because it can be used to raise, influence or advance issues you care about, such as development, human rights, social justice, or the environment?**

Donors towards this end of the spectrum are likely to have a stronger idea of the change they want to see, and are more likely to see the media as a vehicle for thematic information, as a means of exposing wrongdoing in a particular thematic area, or of promoting behaviour change. Some funders – particularly those with their origins in tech wealth – are extremely strict about data and analytics, how their grantees track and think about impact, and have funded academic/civil society research in this domain.

**Most funders fall somewhere in the middle.** They want to know their funding is achieving what they think they want it to achieve, that their grantees have some idea of how to capture and use this to learn and improve, but they don't want to overburden their grantees unduly with data collection and reporting requirements.

All organisations, whether donors or grantees, need to understand and grasp the opportunity of the data- and information-driven world we live in, and should develop greater capacity to understand, manage and use data of various kinds to work better.

*Why is impact a sensitive issue in respect of journalism?*

This has a particular set of sensitivities, because the media has a status as an independent recorder and observer of, and commenter on, society at large, but also as a key locus of public debate and reflection of how societies understand themselves. Journalism should be independent of its sources of funding and revenue, but in practice, this is not always the case with philanthropic funding.

***Changing relationship between funders and the media***

In the past, this conversation was mainly had between donors and NGOs working in media development and communication for development, and was largely rooted in work in the developing world or emerging democracies, with the field asked to demonstrate its effectiveness. The global crisis in the journalism industry has forced even mainstream media in rich countries to seek philanthropic funding, and with this have come questions about impact, which, in the main, mainstream journalists never had to deal with systematically before.<sup>47</sup>

Methods of [media measurement](#) were often crude in the [analogue/electronic era](#), but there was a general consensus around these methods – Nielsen Ratings, circulation figures and so on. They centred on volume, rather than quality, or interaction and engagement. This has become more pronounced since the advent of digital media, wherein everything has merged into one digital interface, in which everything is

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<sup>47</sup> It is also bringing greater scrutiny of donors themselves. As this [2012 EC paper](#) on using a political economy approach to freedom of expression said, "Internal organisational incentives and cultures in donor agencies themselves are among the most significant obstacles to putting politics into practice. For example - information asymmetries, rapid staff turnover, pressures to disburse aid and to 'do more with less' staffing, as well as the need to comply with reporting requirements and demonstrate effectiveness can also prevent more realistic and politically feasible ways of working."



potentially trackable and quantifiable. The sheer quantity of measurable interactions has redefined the nature of the public sphere.

The [rise of foundation-funded non-profit media](#) in the USA has accelerated the conversation between donors and the journalism field, and, this has raised new and wider questions about the nature and purpose of journalism, and the ethics of funding journalism – as noted in previous sections, in this [very practical set of ethical guidelines](#) for funders of non-profit news and media in the USA, and this extremely candid CIMA report into [how northern donors interact with newsrooms in the global South](#). It might be argued that it has also given rise to forms of journalism more responsive to donors, such as forms of journalism that explicitly seek to report on solutions to social ills, such as ‘constructive journalism’ or ‘solutions journalism’.<sup>48</sup>

The theoretical research base about the media is very large, and there are numerous schools of thought, disciplines and approaches.<sup>49</sup> Neither grantmakers, media-focused civil society nor journalists themselves are particularly literate in these theories and analytical methods. (In light of this, we have kept the academic references in this resource as light as possible, but have pointed to other resources, such as annotated bibliographies, for those who would like to go deeper.)

### ***Selected Resources on Impact:***

*Selection of accessible articles and reports on media and impact:*

[Can We Measure Media Impact – Surveying the Field](#) - Anya Schiffrin and Ethan Zuckerman (SSIR, 2015)

[Can We Measure Media Impact – Reading Between the Lines](#) - Chip Giller and Katherine Wroth of Grist Magazine (SSIR, 2015)

[The Case for Media Impact](#) – Lindsay Green-Barber and Fergus Pitt (Tow Center, 2017)

[Non-Profit Journalism: Issues Around Impact](#) – Richard J Tofel (On ProPublica - LFA for Gates Foundation)

[Investigative Journalism Works: the Mechanism of Impact](#) – Christo Hird (The Bureau of Investigative Journalism for Adessium, 2018)

*Networks related to monitoring and evaluation:*

- In addition to Media Impact Funders resources, the [Pelican Community](#) is a global network of learning, monitoring and evaluation professionals.
- [MetricsShift](#), part of the MediaShift project, covers and assesses different methods and tools for gauging performance and impact of journalism and media.

*Selection of tools and approaches:*

Journalism organisations may be ill-equipped or erratic at keeping the kind of granular information useful for documenting evidence of impact that donors more used to working with civil society might consider routine. Supporting grantees to think more clearly and deliberately about the impact they want to see may be as light-touch as sharing tools and resources with them, including some of the following:

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<sup>48</sup> [This 2018 paper](#), by Wagemans, Witschge & Harbers, is a well-balanced analysis of the ideologies and ideas behind ‘solutions journalism’, ‘constructive journalism’ and related concepts.

<sup>49</sup> Academic networks like [IAMCR](#) are a good way to keep abreast of the incredible diversity of research and thinking in the field - scroll through their [2018 conference programme](#), for example.

- Media Impact Funders' [impact glossary](#), detailing ways of thinking about what impact might mean in journalism, and where to find it.
- BOND's Impact Builder, a [spreadsheet of potential indicators](#) for different sectors
- The Center for Investigative Reporting's [open source ImpactTracker software](#), is used by the UK's Bureau of Investigative Journalism and others
- [Metrics.news](#) - Malaysian independent news site Malaysiakini developed a pilot product through which donors/investors, publishers and journalists can view and track their Google Analytics data and performance.
- The [Evaluation toolbox](#) in the Impact Field Guide, while documentary-focused, provides a systematic view on how some media might approach impact.
- The Impact Producer role emerged from the [impact documentary field](#), and has been floated as potentially useful in journalism by the Gates Foundation's Miguel Castro as an [idea to watch in 2018](#), and the UK's Bureau of Investigative Journalism also included it as a recommendation in their [2018 report on journalism and impact](#).



## Section 3: Specific areas of opportunity and threat

There are numerous areas within the field of journalism to which donors can make a difference. This section selects five areas that emerged from the interviews, survey and desk research, outlining briefly why these are of particular interest and discussion at the moment, highlighting some key donors and actors in the field, and pointing to deeper reading and resources.

### 1. Funding Information Ecosystems

Interviews with donors for this project raised concerns that a long-overdue surge in funding for journalism threatens to mask the need to address systemic weaknesses in the wider information ecosystem. This includes a wider range of other information organisations and actors, many of which Ariadne member donors already support.

These might include open data groups, civic tech, media, communications and technology policy groups, legal support, consumers' and citizens' advice groups, and right to information organisations – or indeed human rights organisations working with investigative or journalistic methods. Some of these groups focus on meeting the information needs of communities they serve, and others seek to improve the enabling environment for the free flow of public-interest information. And like much of civil society, these actors are under pressure and under attack.

#### *Fragmentation and silos in the funding environment*

But fragmentation and silos – in some cases, competition – in both funding and the field hampers the ability to organise better and push back, let alone protect existing gains.

In many funders, specialised programs focused on media or other aspects of the information environment, where they exist, tend to be quite small, and organised around institutional boxes and incentives that do not correspond well to how fields themselves actually function. Traditional journalism programs, for example, might struggle to fund hybrid organisations like civic or thematic newsrooms, or data-driven advocacy groups, or campaigning NGOs that use rigorous investigative methods. Thematic funders might choose to support content on themes they care about rather than strengthening organisations with a track record of covering these same areas.

As such, there are few funders (or programs) that take – or can take – a genuinely ecosystem view. They tend instead to narrow their focus on specific slices of the field, focus countries or a particular challenge facing the field. Furthermore, journalism donors have struggled to coordinate with other, adjacent fields such as open data, digital rights or humanitarian information – and vice-versa.

#### *Funders taking an ecosystem approach*

Within the media sector, funders who are taking an ecosystem approach, and are finding it productive, include a number in the US, including the Knight Foundation, the Democracy Fund, the Geraldine R Dodge Foundation, and the Wyncote Foundation, which recently

published a [study on media funding for place-based grantmakers](#). In Europe, while funders like Adessium do take a similarly holistic view, there are fewer funders working on a similar scale to those in the USA outside of Google's Digital News Initiative Innovation Fund (DNI Fund). This fund accepts applications from across the whole European news and information ecosystem – including from transparency groups, lawyers, and activists, as long as they are contributing to the overall quality of the news and information ecosystem. Its approach, however, is catalytic (sparking innovation in lots of places and sub-fields) rather than strategic (thinking about how to bolster specific areas of weakness or opportunity), perhaps as a result of its scale (~€25m per round), and its last round takes place in autumn 2018.

Donors take different approaches by integrating support to information in a wide range of sectors to achieve development or democracy outcomes. As Shanti Kalathil outlines in her 2017 CIMA paper, [A Slowly Shifting Field](#), some donors are moving towards a “broader view that encompasses the importance of the entire information ecosystem.” Part of this is to recognise that no single sector or type of actor or kind of institution – journalism included – is responsible for or capable of serving all society's or citizens' information and communication needs. For the overall system to remain healthy, actors of different kinds and different focus need support and stitching together, as this – as interviewees told us – does not happen naturally and organically. And for this to happen, those with resources to support the system themselves need to coordinate, align and determine division of labour.

An information ecosystem approach could bring significant added value to, for example, the following areas for potential funding:

- Thematic sectors: anti-corruption, health, education, gender, sexual minorities, exclusion, natural resource governance
- Critical democratic infrastructure: elections, parliament, local government, judiciary
- Viability, resilience, adaptive capacity of groups: income diversity, access to investment or other funding, physical and digital safety, access to technology
- Public-interest information: the Right to Information sector, open data sector, citizen complaints, consumer rights, whistleblowing, algorithmic transparency and accountability, think tanks, press and media freedom groups
- Investigation: exposing wrongdoing, holding the powerful and corrupt to account, including investigations carried out by journalists, human rights organisations, environmental organisations and many others

### ***Practical steps to information ecosystem thinking***

Donors can take a variety of steps to begin considering what a more holistic approach might look like, beginning with integrating an ecosystem approach more systematically within existing structures, grantee relationships and application and evaluation processes. This could range from basic steps such as asking grantees to identify other information actors in their local, national or international ecosystems with whom they are interdependent, to more involved steps, like reviewing programme strategies in common to find existing practical points of collaboration, or bringing together journalism, media or information-related grantees from different portfolios that overlap in specific locations or in another frame. Other considerations might include:

- Approaching the information environment from the citizens' perspective: What are their information needs? What do they need to know or access in order to participate and claim their rights? Which actors meet these needs?
- Funding and strategies are fragmented across funders, intermediaries, media, civil society, other actors. Funders could counteract this fragmentation by acting beyond their own institutional incentives through networks, collaborations, opening up and pooling data and so on.
- Reviewing how apparently distinct sub-fields overlap and might need to work together: media development, press freedom, freedom of expression, freedom of information, open data, local journalism, digital rights and so on.
- Approaching from the frame within SDGs 16.10 (See, for example, [sdgtoolkit.org](http://sdgtoolkit.org)).

Information ecosystem thinking is particularly suited to place-based work: how information circulates, who controls production and distribution, who controls access, and how these interact with power make sense to those working in a place-based way.

*How does one find out about an information ecosystem?*

Whether a funder has a dedicated media programme, a staff member with media expertise, or neither, deciding to fund media needs to be underpinned by an understanding of the information environment in which they are intervening. This is particularly crucial when funding in sensitive, repressive or fragile environments, where media interventions can have disproportionate and unforeseen consequences.

Media environments are, now more than ever, rapidly changing, and research about them can date rapidly. Media policy is converging more and more with technology and information policy, and has never been more crucial to the public interest, yet funding for public-interest media policy research and advocacy has declined over the past five years, said donor interviewees.<sup>50</sup>

Furthermore, media are now interdependent with technology and other sectors, necessitating an understanding of a wide variety of technical, business, marketing, engagement and other concerns.

When needing to find out more about an individual country's or region's information environment, funders can – and should – turn to a range of possible resources, networks and institutions that provide high-quality data, research and analysis about many different aspects, in many parts of the world.

When asked about where they get their information about the media sector and media environments, donors cited:

- Their grantees
- Peer funders
- Information from funder networks

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<sup>50</sup> Shanti Kalathil observes in *Slowly Shifting Field* that funding for research on media and media development is also in decline, and is seen as a low priority for donors.

*Other sources might include:*

**Media landscape reports** produced by units or institutions with a strong public interest ethos such as the recent Media Landscapes by the [European Journalism Centre and Free Press Unlimited](#), and, at the beginning of this decade, [OSF's Mapping Digital Media](#).

**CSOs that work to research, map, analyse and advocate** for the journalism and media sectors from a public interest perspective. Many, like the media development groups, are listed as [members of GFMD](#), but here is a further selection of organisations of particular interest across Europe:

- [European Journalism Centre](#) (EJC)
- [European Journalism Observatory](#) (EJO)
- [FOME](#) (Germany's forum on media development)
- [Fjum](#) (Austria, German-speaking field)
- [FuJo](#) (Ireland)
- [CMDS](#) – The Centre for Media, Data and Society at the CEU in Budapest
- [Media Power Monitor](#) - an offshoot publication of CMDS
- [CMPF](#) - part of the EUI in Florence

Latin America:

- [Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas](#): centre for news, research, expertise and training related to journalism and innovation in the Americas and the Caribbean
- [Sembra Media](#) - research firm focused on the media and information sectors, with a partnership with Omidyar Network

In Sub-Saharan Africa, there are many regional and national organisations, but one of the most interesting sources of insight is [CFI.fr](#) - not least because it covers and supports non-Anglophone environments too.

In Asia, the field is a little more fragmented, though a fair picture can be pieced together across sources like [SEAPA](#) and [Splice](#), as well as donors like [Konrad Adenauer](#).

## 2. Investigative Journalism

The field of investigative journalism has a small set of specialised donors - including Open Society's Program on Independent Journalism and Adessium Foundation - who often speak with and offer advice to other donors thinking about entering the field. They protect their grantees' independence: never restricting or prescribing what they can or should investigate, and never involving themselves in editorial matters.

Investigative journalism can be a particularly attractive mode of journalism to those coming from a human rights, social justice, transparency or democracy grounding, and donors of this type do often make funds available for, for example, thematic investigations related to corruption, natural resources, and so on.

Investigative journalism seeks to expose wrongdoing, uncover hidden patterns, and hold power to account. With recent high-profile international and cross-border investigations like the *Panama Papers* gaining both huge international attention and sparking actual policy change and innovation, supporting investigative journalism may be a good starting point for a funder that has not previously supported journalism as a field.

*“Investigative journalism is skill-intensive—drawing on the very best journalists—and resource-intensive, as reporters’ time is taken up with long projects that don’t immediately bear fruit. In many areas where media assistance is required, are such skills and resources adequate to support the push for investigative journalism without compromising the needs for everyday news coverage? It is just not clear whether donors have shifted their focus based on a well-founded assessment of the situation, or whether investigative journalism has simply come into fashion along with the current interest in anti-corruption and good governance. It seems likely that donors have elevated investigative journalism as a kind of shorthand for tackling corruption, but perhaps without much consideration of what media partners actually need.”* (Shanti Kalathil, 2017)<sup>51</sup>

If investigative journalism really is the right option for a funder, then there are many entry-points to supporting the field. There are investigative units or teams within existing mainstream media, standalone investigative units, non-profit investigative organisations, and increasingly, mass collaborations between investigative journalists across borders (e.g. International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), the Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), European Investigative Collaborations (EIC), Black Sea, Journalism++) or within a country (such as the UK’s Bureau Local, which Correctiv is adapting for Germany). New techniques and tools are being developed and deployed across the field, including in Europe. Just as in the broader media, local investigative journalism is under-resourced and under-networked.

International, regional or national networks for investigative reporters, such as the Global Investigative Journalism Network (GIJN),<sup>52</sup> Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ), and African Network of Centres for Investigative Reporting (ANCIR), provide important connective tissue and circulation of knowledge in the field, both through their digital communications and resources and through in-person conferences and events.

### **3. Countering misinformation and disinformation<sup>53</sup>**

The quality of information in society is critical to its proper functioning, and in the digital era, threats to the quality of information have multiplied rapidly. While there is clearly a crisis specific to how information can be created and spread in and between networked societies, the phenomenon has existed for as long as communication itself. Interviewees with experience of working or funding in Central and Eastern Europe, for example, noted the region has long experience of these phenomena.

In the context of what is to some degree a moral panic about misinformation, funders are rightly concerned about the harms it can wreak, and are asking themselves what they can do. Rather than outline specific steps in what is an extremely quickly evolving space, as a starting point we recommend some foundational reading, and following or engaging with networks that bring together multi-disciplinary thinking on these issues.

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<sup>51</sup> Kalathil’s observation might also apply to increased donor support for fact-checking initiatives.

<sup>52</sup> Ellen Hume and Susan Abbott, on [GIJN and the future of investigative journalism](#), including a robust section on “avoiding founder’s syndrome” (2017):

<sup>53</sup> Leading experts prefer to avoid using the term ‘fake news’, given that it is inexact, has been weaponised against independent news media, and used to further erode public trust. First Draft News has produced, for example, a widely circulated [breakdown of the different facets of disinformation](#).

## Key reading:

[A Field Guide to Fake News and Other Information Disorders](#) - a practical guide to understanding and navigating the world of misinformation (2017)

[Information Disorder: An Interdisciplinary Framework](#) - landmark report defining the landscape of misinformation, disinformation and malinformation, commissioned by the Council of Europe, and written by Claire Wardle and Hossein Derakhshan. (2017)

[You Think You Want Media Literacy... Do You?](#) - provocative talk by founder of Data & Society danah boyd (2018)

## A selection of key networks and research:

[First Draft Coalition](#) - “fights mis- and disinformation through fieldwork, research and education.” Led by Claire Wardle, it also has [research partners around the world](#).

[Credibility Coalition](#) - (incorporating the [Misinfocon conference](#)) – journalists, technologists, policy advocates, and many others “committed to improving our information ecosystems and media literacy through transparent and collaborative exploration”, and researching “scientific and systematic ways to assess reliable information, and whether they can be applied at scale.” They maintain a regularly updated [list of major projects aiming to counter misinformation](#).

**EU High-Level Expert Group** on Fake News and Online Disinformation - [Report](#) and a [response from First Draft](#).

**Data & Society** (USA) – Media Manipulation Initiative:  
<https://datasociety.net/research/media-manipulation/>

**European Endowment for Democracy** – Russian-language Media [Report](#) and [related work](#)

## *A note on fact-checking*

**Fact-checking** has [grown steadily as a field](#) in the past ten years particularly. Sparked partly by the development and success of Politifact in the USA, there are now more than a [hundred active fact-checking projects](#) around the world, many of them active all year round, not only during special events such as elections. Groups of journalists have come together around a number of elections in recent years to collaborate on fact-checking and debunking political statements and news stories during elections in the UK, France, Germany, Sweden and elsewhere.

Some donors are attracted to funding fact-checking units because they provide a high-profile, tangible intervention, if usually relatively small-scale or low-volume. They provide a signal of probity, quality and watchdogging to the rest of the journalistic and political environment.

The efficacy of fact-checking at countering misinformation is the subject of much debate, including in the field itself, partly because fact-checking itself has been ‘weaponised’ as



part of political point-scoring, and partly because the sheer scale and speed of misinformation is felt to easily outstrip efforts to counter it. Some projects are attempting to automate parts of the fact-checking process – notably Factmata and Full Fact – but these are nascent efforts.

The best starting point for donors interested in exploring the world of factchecking is the Poynter-hosted [International Factcheckers Network](#), which has a [strict code of conduct](#), and includes many of the 100+ groups noted earlier.

#### **4. Supporting media to engage with citizens**

Part of the crisis that continues to engulf media worldwide is related to widely reported declining levels of trust in media.<sup>54</sup> The soul-searching of the US and UK media over how they failed to anticipate the election of Donald Trump or the outcome of the Brexit vote is merely the latest version of an age-old critique of media that, in order to regain that trust, they need to re-engage with audiences, communities and citizens from a wider range of places, and a wider range of socio-economic backgrounds. Funders interested in the social role of journalism have responded with a series of funds to promote “engaged journalism” – like Robert Bosch Stiftung’s support of the Agora Center’s [Finding Common Ground](#), and the Facebook-funded News Integrity Initiative’s support for the European Journalism Centre’s [Engaged Journalism Accelerator](#).

The media development sector – including groups like [Panos](#), [Internews](#), and BBC Media Action – have long experience of supporting developing country media to engage with their audiences, and putting people at the sharp end of change at the heart of journalism. Current European and US anxieties like bridging urban/rural divides, addressing the exclusion of women and minorities from management, newsrooms and content, ensuring journalists have access to new technologies that make their work better and safer, and helping media diversify their revenue sources, have been at the core of the media development sector for decades. Internews even adapted some of these methods into a new organisation focused on [newsrooms and engagement in the USA](#).

Meanwhile, new forms of interpersonal communication offer both huge engagement and business opportunities, and huge potential for misinformation. Many contemporary media have developed expertise in using social networks and messaging platforms like WhatsApp and Telegram to connect with and solicit views from citizens. In Asia, entire media companies exist only within social networks and messaging platforms, and in Turkey, the journalism network [140journos](#) survives through social networks.<sup>55</sup>

Doing engagement properly, however, takes time and money. Chicago-based [Hearken](#) helps 70+ newsrooms around the world integrate interaction with and listening to audiences into the editorial process in an efficient and streamlined way. Similar ventures like [GroundSource](#) are also growing strongly, meeting the need for media organisations to engage more meaningfully with audiences and citizens.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> See Elaine McKewon’s [Public Trust in Journalism: An Annotated Bibliography](#). (Centre for Media Transition, University of Technology Sydney, 2018).

<sup>55</sup> Burcu Baykurt, ‘[Supporting Citizen Journalism in Turkey](#)’ (Tow Center for Digital Journalism, 2015)

<sup>56</sup> Groundsource and Hearken launched, with support from US funders, a new Community Listening and Engagement Fund (CLEF), which announced its [second round of grants](#) in August 2018.

A European startup that has proved influential is [De Correspondent](#), inspired by the work of journalist and anthropologist [Joris Luyendijk](#), and funded by Ariadne member, [Stichting Democratie & Media](#). De Correspondent's founders, Ernst-Jan Pfauth and Rob Wijnberg, chose to build an ad-free platform, with paying members, for whom journalists are conversation leaders, keeping a public and collaborative notebook with their audiences. This membership model has led to the establishment of their own research project on engagement and other alternative financing models for journalism, the [Membership Puzzle Project](#) – an essential read, as is their recent [report on audience revenue and engagement](#) (looking at donations, subscriptions and membership models).

## 5. Supporting transformation, innovation and experimentation

Public-interest media in Europe, as elsewhere, are under pressure to innovate – to come up with new ways to report, engage, sustain themselves and distribute – but many, they and their donors tell us, do not yet have the resources to invest in systematic or regular R&D. This affects both digital media and upstarts as well as legacy media and incumbents, though for varied reasons – pressure on public media budgets, management inertia, lack of in-house expertise, investor pressure for growth.

The last three years have brought an unexpected increase in private funding related to transformation, innovation and experimentation, alongside large but cumbersome EU funds. Google became at one stroke the largest private funder of journalism in Europe with its Digital News Initiative Innovation Fund ('DNI Fund') promising €150m over three years to help transform the European news ecosystem – by some distance the most dramatic corporate or philanthropic intervention in the journalism landscape for some time. Other funds, such as the Prototype Fund, the Prague Centre for Civil Society's innovation fund, and several other much smaller scale funds exist to address more restricted geographic, journalistic or technological pieces of the landscape.

In the USA, this culture has had longer to develop and a wider range of institutions and funding mechanisms to advance it, notably the Knight Foundation's Community Information Challenge and News Challenge, which encouraged applicants – almost all US-based – to share their projects openly for feedback and peer review. While the News Challenge's results were mixed,<sup>57</sup> its approach of encouraging a research and development (R&D) mindset in the news and information industry (backed by solid research into the information needs of communities, and by a belief that supporting the wider information ecosystem was the right approach) has been extremely influential.

### *What are innovation, transformation and experimentation?*

While it is often difficult to pin down exactly what is meant by 'innovation' in as diverse a continent as Europe, it is clearer to articulate what 'transformation' in journalism means. Our interviewees specialised in transformation funding say that organisations should be

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<sup>57</sup> Lilly Weinberg, Comms Director of the Knight Foundation, said in an [interview](#) that the Community Information Challenge was "successful in fostering experimentation, raising awareness about the importance of local journalism, and getting funders to realize that "information is a core component of everything you are working on." It was not as successful, she said, "at embedding this work in funders' strategies" for the long term." For more on the Knight Foundation, see also [articles](#) by Seth C. Lewis.



able to adapt their legacy practices and assumptions to a new, digital-first environment, adopt new workflows, manage and use data as a core driver of their business, understand how to develop new products and services, and become less reliant on traditional sources of income. This applies as much to large corporate media as it does to public or local media.

Experimentation too is easier to define as more akin to R&D – trying things out, changing things, discarding things that don't work, iterating on things that do. It is an approach partly driven by a Silicon Valley mindset. This comes alongside a growing number of 'media labs' in universities, public and private media companies, such as those represented in [GAMI](#), or the Global Alliance for Media Innovation, and government-backed centres like the UK's Catapult Network.

In these areas, funders can play a catalytic role – giving resource-constrained but energetic people the room to breathe, the license to think and tinker, and try things out, rather than having to deal with the pressures of scraping along.

### ***Foundations need more in-house or on-tap technical expertise***

As part of this, funders have had to build a better understanding of technology in many varied contexts – what it is, the differences between different technologies, how much it costs. Most foundations still do not have natural expertise in this area, either on staff or at board level, and this skills gap can affect decision-making adversely. Funders also need to be cognizant of the reality that adversaries of their work will pay for and use high-level tech expertise – and that even in places where these concerns seem remote, governments and other authorities are increasingly turning to technology to surveil and control information environments, limit and track speech, and further clip the work and freedom of media and civil society. People's lives will increasingly be shaped by technologies, even if they themselves don't have access to it.

### ***Resources: Innovation, experimentation and trends in journalism and media around the world***

#### *Academic and industry research and analysis:*

- Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, Oxford - publishes the very high-quality annual [Reuters Digital News Report](#).
- Amy Webb, founder of the Future Today Institute, publishes an essential [annual Trends Report](#) that has a significant journalism and media focus
- Columbia University's [Tow Center](#) has published a number of highly influential [reports and analyses](#) of the [changing journalism landscape](#) – with a US bias, but applicable in Europe.
- CEU's [Centre for Media, Data, and Society](#)

#### *Donor-supported reports about innovative media organisations:*

- [Publishing for Peanuts: Innovation and the Journalism Start-up](#) (2015) - profiles of 50 journalism units, start-ups and organisations around the world (Columbia SIPA for OSF)
- [Inflection Point: Impact, Threats, Sustainability - A Study of Latin American Digital Media Entrepreneurs](#) (Sembra Media for Omidyar)

- [Innovators in Latin American Journalism](#) - overview of journalism innovation across the continent, with practical guidance for practitioners, available in Spanish, Portuguese, English (Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas)

#### *Journalism on journalism:*

- Harvard's [Nieman Lab](#) has received funding from OSF to expand out its already excellent media innovation coverage to a wider swath of the globe; it also solicits thought-provoking [annual predictions](#) from a wide range of media practitioners, innovators and researchers.
- [Journalism.co.uk](#) publishes many stories about innovations in journalism in the UK and increasingly across Europe.
- [The Splice Newsroom](#) - led by former Yahoo! News editor Alan Soon, a unit offering news, analysis and services on media and innovation in Asia, and branching out into media investments in the region in partnership with Civil.
- Al Jazeera's [Listening Post](#) is more analytical and political than most mainstream media-focused broadcast programmes.
- Index On Censorship, Autumn 2014 edition offered a glimpse into [innovation in journalism around the world](#).

#### *Networks:*

- [Global Alliance for Media Innovation](#) (GAMI) - a growing network of media labs and innovation hubs across Europe, North America and increasingly other parts of the world, hosted by WAN-IFRA.
- [Hacks/Hackers](#) - set up in the USA in 2009 to bring together programmers (hackers) with journalists (hacks), this is now in [30+ cities and regions worldwide](#), including many in Europe.<sup>58</sup> They vary in resources, activities and size, but collectively members number in the thousands. An important route to sharing information about tools, grants and events related to journalism, as their [blog/newsletter](#) shows.
- [OpenNews](#) - incubated at Mozilla, and now part of [Community Partners](#), this "connects a network of developers, designers, journalists, and editors to collaborate on open technologies and processes within journalism."

#### *Notable Innovation Funds*

- [Google Digital News Initiative Innovation Fund](#) - three-year, €150m pan-European fund [supporting projects contributing to, innovating in and transforming the European news ecosystem and ending in late 2018](#). It includes many examples of [grants made to organisations in transparency, civic tech, and investigative journalism](#) and is part of [broader initiative](#) helping co-create products for, support research on, and develop new skills in the news industry worldwide.
- [Prague Civil Society Centre](#) - runs numerous programmes focused on innovation in revenue, technology, engagement, both for civil society and investigative journalism.
- [SAMIP](#) - South Africa Media Innovation Program - "a \$4 million, three-year media initiative to accelerate digital media innovation among independent media outlets and encourage new entrants. The program will provide funding and capacity building [from MDIF] to organisations selected to participate."
- [innovateAFRICA](#) - a \$1m pan-African mini-DNI, making [22 awards](#) in 2017.

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<sup>58</sup> Amsterdam, Antwerp, Barcelona, Belfast, Berlin, Birmingham, Bologna, Brussels, Canterbury, Denmark, Dublin, Edinburgh, Hamburg, Helsinki, Lausanne, London, Madrid, Manchester, Milan, Minsk, Paris, Prague, South Wales, Venice, Vienna, Warsaw, Zurich

*Events:*

- [Media Party](#) – annual 1,500-person conference in Buenos Aires, offshoot of Hacks/Hackers Buenos Aires.
- [Media Indaba Africa](#) – African version of Media Party conference, organised by Hacks/Hackers Africa
- See also [JournalismCalendar.org](#), which is maintained by OSF's Program on Independent Journalism.