

Newsroom Collaboration Helps Ensure Expanded Local Coverage

Stephen Langel

Greater collaboration among news outlets helps ensure local coverage in an age of [declining revenue](#)¹ and layoffs of reporters nationwide. This a timely and important development as a 2019 study found that there is a steep decline in local news coverage in Northeast Ohio, which has numerous negative effects.

A study of the [Northeast Ohio's news ecosystem](#)² found a 61% decline in the number of journalists in Cleveland and a 54% decline in Akron since 2004. This study, which was commissioned by the [Cleveland Foundation](#)³ and the [Knight Foundation](#),⁴ found that only 28% of news content in Cleveland focused on local issues and only 16% in Akron.

These findings are significant as the study, "Northeast Ohio's Local News and Information Ecosystem," concluded that a healthy ecosystem is essential to ensure:

- Accountability for those in power
- Civic engagement
- Informed decision-making
- Governmental transparency
- Public health
- Political participation and representation

Because of the negative impact of insufficient local news coverage, the study concluded that "whatever your primary issue of concern, your second issue should be media." The good news is that many Ohio organizations, along with national groups with a local connection, are working together towards enhancing local journalism in Ohio:

- **Spectrum News**⁵ – Spectrum just launched a news app to provide comprehensive coverage of local news. In Ohio, Spectrum uses its reporters in Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati, Dayton, and Toledo in partnership with outside content providers to ensure comprehensive coverage of local issues. Spectrum is taking the same approach in New York, California, Florida, Texas, North Carolina, Massachusetts, Wisconsin, and Kentucky.

¹ <https://savejournalism.org/#bigtech>

² <https://www.clevelandfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/CLE-AKR-Knight-slides.pdf>

³ <https://www.clevelandfoundation.org/news/supporting-community-news-and-information/>

⁴ <https://knightfoundation.org/programs/journalism/>

⁵ <https://spectrumlocalnews.com/app>

- **Gannett Ohio** – As detailed in [a story by Thom Fladung⁶](#), the Managing Partner of Hennes Communications, Gannett Ohio is using its [21 daily and more than 30 weekly newspapers](#) to cover Ohio news from a variety of angles.
- **The Northeast Ohio Journalism Collaborative** – Sharon Broussard, former editorial writer for the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, oversees a collaboration of 18 newsrooms and community partners stretching from Akron to Buckeye-Shaker. According to Broussard, the collaborative is “sharing reporters, resources and story ideas to amplify our coverage of creative, evidence-based ideas that are helping Greater Cleveland survive the pandemic.”
- **Your Voice Ohio⁷** – Former Managing Editor at the *Akron Beacon Journal*, Doug Oplinger, directs Your Voice Ohio, which is the largest journalism collaborative in the country. The organization encourages dialogue between journalists and community members to ensure stories address local interests and include community members’ perspectives. *Your Voice Ohio* currently comprises more than 50 news outlets that are collaborating on election and pandemic coverage.
- **Eye on Ohio⁸** – Lucia Walinchus is Eye on Ohio, the Ohio Center for Investigative Journalism’s Executive Director. Eye on Ohio pledges to “collaborate when possible with other media partners.” Its mission is to “promote the public good by pursuing in-depth, underreported and high-impact journalism which exposes injustice and explores its consequences.”
- **Report for America⁹** – Report for America is a national service program that bolsters local news by placing young journalists into local newsrooms to report on under-covered issues and communities. Report for America’s Director of Local Sustainability and Development Todd Franko is the former Editor of the *Youngstown Vindicator*.
- **Solution Journalism Network¹⁰** – Solution Journalism Network supports local journalism through training, financial support, and convening groups of

⁶ <https://www.crisiscommunications.com/in-ohio-a-newspaper-giant-is-beginning-to-flex-its-reporting-muscle/>

⁷ <https://yourvoiceohio.org/>

⁸ <https://eyeonohio.com/>

⁹ <https://www.reportforamerica.org/>

¹⁰ <https://www.solutionsjournalism.org/>

journalists to learn, share, and collaborate on stories focused on solutions to social problems. Solution Journalism Network provides financial assistance to various collaborative newsgroups, including Eye on Ohio. Carolyn Robinson is the organization's Regional Director for the Midwest and is based in Ohio.

These organizations provide hope for the future of journalism by helping to stem the decline in local news coverage. This is a welcome and necessary development that benefits us all.

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