



Case for Support: Press Forward Chicago



Who

Press Forward Chicago is part of a national movement of funders supporting sustainability in local journalism. While the decline of local news outlets is well-documented, there are also exciting new models of collaboration and innovation. We seek to create a thriving information ecosystem. The national Press Forward initiative and 36 local Press Forward chapters are already deploying tens of millions of dollars to support local journalism. The Chicago fund, based at The Chicago Community Trust and supported by The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, is backed by more than a dozen key funders.

What

Journalism documents everything from public policy and politics to arts and culture. It also serves a critical role in times of crisis, from environmental disasters to pandemics. Journalism strengthens the social fabric of a community and serves as a watchdog for its resources. At its core, journalism is about fact-based information.

Where

The way that information is shared has changed seismically in recent decades. Journalists get their stories to the public through traditional newsprint and broadcast airwaves, but also through email newsletters, websites, podcasts, social media, and myriad new technologies. While the means to reach readers and listeners is now more accessible, the cost of producing quality journalism is still high.

When

The time to act is now. The decline in local news and accurate information continues at a devastating pace. Press Forward's five-year plan is to leave local media stronger, with more collaboration, more funders supporting the sharing of news and information, and new resources and tools to thrive.

Why

Without the media, corruption grows and culture withers. We lose a connection to our neighbors, and studies show we end up paying more taxes for lower quality services. We also have witnessed first-hand the impact of disinformation on our democracy. Whatever issue you care about, journalism plays a central role in amplifying that work.

How

The Press Forward movement seeks to replicate and scale the things that are working in journalism *right now*, with an aim for local outlets to achieve long-term sustainability. Individual media outlets will benefit through direct funding and the support of shared services, trainings, and collaborations. In Chicago, we awarded \$1.6 million in our first round of grants, focused on diversifying revenue streams and filling gaps in coverage. In 2025, we will deploy \$2 million more to media outlets for capacity-building and shared backend services. Our goal at Press Forward Chicago is to raise \$20 million over five years. We have already raised more than half of that goal.

Now

We are excited about the opportunity to support the local and hyperlocal outlets that serve the Chicago region's diverse neighborhoods and populations. They are scrappy and follow in the footsteps of legendary journalists of Chicago's past, from Ida B. Wells to Studs Terkel.

The work of Block Club Chicago, City Bureau, Cicero Independiente, and more than 150 other local media outlets inspires and drives us in this work. There is a chance to help strengthen the muscle of local news and information.

We know how to do it. We need your support to get it done.

Please contact Press Forward Chicago Executive Director Tracy Baim for more information, tbaim@cct.org or 773-387-2394.

INAUGURAL PRESS FORWARD CHICAGO FUNDERS



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