

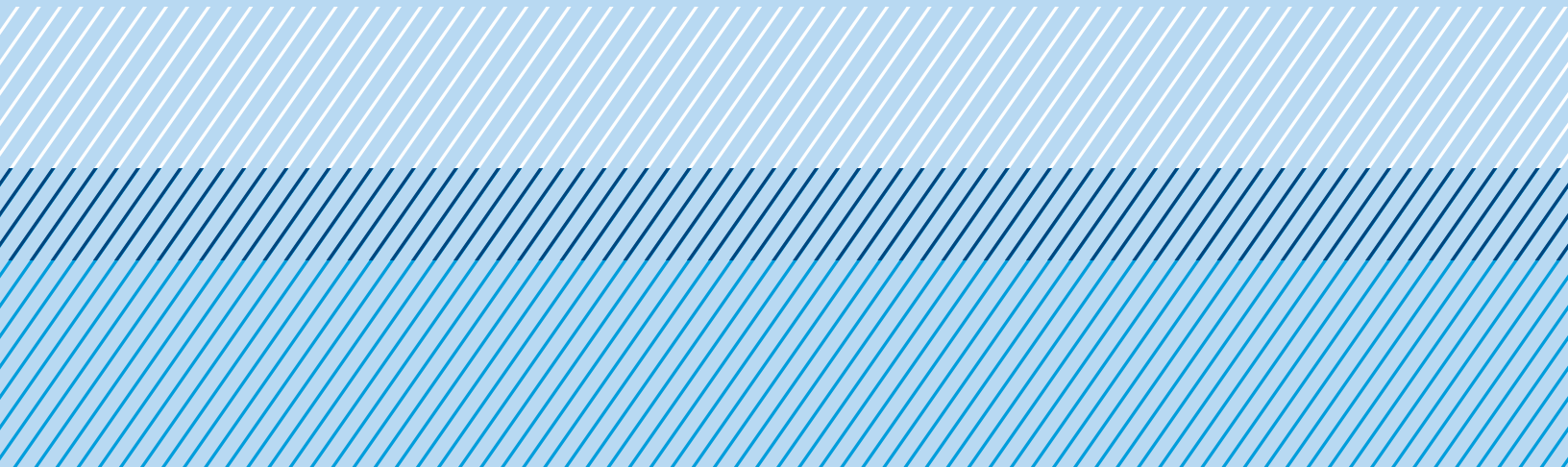


Case Studies: How Four Community Information Projects Went from Idea to Impact

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Prepared by FSG and Network Impact
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Summary: Lessons from the Field

Making positive change happen in communities requires the free flow of quality information. We need it to achieve the results we want in education, public safety, environmental protection, youth development – and just about any other issue that we care about. If the news and information environment is in trouble, so is civic life.

Community and place-based foundations across the country are recognizing that, in an increasingly digital world, credible news and information are among the most powerful tools they have to spark community change. Over the five years of the Knight Community Information Challenge (KCIC), more than 80 foundations have invested in various media projects – strengthening local and state reporting, encouraging citizen dialogue and supporting digital literacy skills – to advance their goals for a better community.

As the KCIC has progressed, it has become clear that many community and place-based foundations are well positioned to engage successfully in local news and information efforts because of their:

- Broad commitment to civic leadership;
- Strong partnerships with local nonprofits and community organizations;
- Existing relationships with city and state government;
- Perceived role as a trusted intermediary in facilitating community discussions.

This report offers four case studies on how different foundations used information to improve the healthy functioning of their communities. The cases highlight the following: Why did each foundation support local media? How did it connect to their strategic priorities? What steps did they take to make their project successful? And what impact has it had on the issues they care about?

Sharing these cases we hope provides valuable lessons for other foundations considering supporting local news and information efforts and broadening their commitment to using media and technology to engage residents.

Community Case Studies

The case studies profile projects supported by the **Community Foundation of New Jersey**, the **Hawaii Community Foundation**, **Incourage Community Foundation** and the **Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque**.

1) Supporting quality journalism to inform community dialogue about state policy.

We profile the Community Foundation of New Jersey's support to NJ Spotlight, an online news source that provides in-depth reporting on education, the environment, energy, healthcare and public finance issues to increase government accountability and inform dialogue about policy decisions.

Other challenge projects with similar goals include: The Lens – School Board Coverage (Greater New Orleans Community Foundation) and Oklahoma Watch (Tulsa Community Foundation).

2) Building youth communication and digital literacy skills.

We look at HIKI NO, the nation's first statewide student news network, supported by the Hawaii Community Foundation. Developed in partnership with PBS and over 50 local schools in Hawaii, the project is designed to help youth share their stories and develop communication skills, and to build a cadre of teachers with digital media training.

Other challenge projects with similar goals include: Youth-on-Air (Community Foundation of Utah) and Public Access TV (Long Beach Community Foundation).

3) Strengthening a community's civic health through local information exchange.

We examine Incourage Community Foundation's efforts to increase the availability of local news, build people's capacity to access information and support civic engagement in south Wood County, Wisconsin. The foundation has worked on a range of projects, such as expanding a local dispatch alert system, improving Internet access in schools and libraries, integrating digital skills training into workforce development programs and supporting community dialogue.

Other challenge projects with similar goals include: GrowNY (Community Foundation of Greater Buffalo) and Community News Matters (Chicago Community Trust).

4) Promoting engagement with environmental information to spark citizen action.

We profile the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque's activities to promote environmentally-friendly practices through the launch of Dubuque2.0. The initiative includes an interactive online information hub featuring games and contests to help residents monitor and reduce their energy and water footprints, as well as community outreach at places like farmers markets and cultural events.

Other challenge projects with similar goals include: the Food Information Center (Blue Grass Community Foundation) and YouChoose Bay Area Initiative (Silicon Valley Community Foundation).

	New Jersey	Hawaii	Wood County	Dubuque
Primary objective	Fill an information gap (policy coverage)	Build communication and digital literacy skills among citizens	Generate demand for information and community dialogue	Motivate individual behavior change
Target population	Policy makers and "civic actors" in New Jersey (pop. 8.8M)	PBS viewers in Hawaii (pop. 1.4M); youth in grades 6-12 (~115K students)	Residents of south Wood County (pop. 46K)	Dubuque residents (pop. 58K)
Geographic focus	Small, densely-populated state	Small island state (geographically disconnected)	Rural county	City

Lessons from the Field

The cases offer important lessons that community and place-based foundations might want to consider in designing and managing their local news and information projects.

Lessons on Design and Planning

1) Assess your community's needs and information behaviors – first.

Understanding how residents obtain information and the kinds of content they need or want helped community foundations refine their project goals and activities. As part of the Dubuque2.0, project staffers used a series of "community café" forums to surface community priorities and identify strategies most likely to motivate residents to engage in eco-friendly practices. In south Wood County, Incourage set aside its initial plans to create an online news site after surveys and focus groups revealed that more than a third of low-income families in the area did not use the Internet. In response, the foundation shifted its efforts to include facilitating civic dialogue and building digital literacy skills.

2) Focus on a specific audience.

Identifying a well-defined audience helped local news projects clarify their goals and continually refine their efforts with their community's needs in mind. For example, after conducting a careful market "gap" analysis prior to its launch, NJ Spotlight decided to target policymakers and others who shape state policy decisions, rather than a general news audience. This vision has helped the site attract a niche community that relies heavily on its coverage of education, energy and environmental issues.

3) Identify opportunities to build stronger information channels within existing community programs.

By focusing on the information needs of local residents, community foundations often identified ways to improve existing programs that lacked strong communication channels. For example, the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque recognized that the city-backed Sustainable Dubuque Initiative had support from policymakers, businesses and civic leaders, but was struggling to connect deeply with residents. To fill this missing link, it launched Dubuque2.0 to engage citizens in adopting eco-friendly habits.

Lessons on Community Engagement

1) Make community data personal.

Audiences are much more likely to act on data that is uniquely tailored to them, and that helps them understand their personal behaviors and how they compare with others. For example, Dubuque2.0's "smart meter" feature, created in partnership with IBM's Smarter Cities program, allowed residents to view data about their water and energy consumption, and compare it to others in their neighborhood. This feature proved addictive among users, inspiring changes in people's environmental practices, rather than just awareness.

2) Promote shared deliberation and engagement with local information.

Providing ways for individuals to engage with local data and openly deliberate its implications helped projects achieve their broader community goals. For example, NJ Spotlight coupled its reporting on the controversial topic of teacher tenure reform with moderated roundtables that gave legislators, schools, teacher unions and parents the chance to discuss what good teacher evaluations looked like.

3) Use digital training and mobile phones to reach people with limited internet access.

Community foundations engaged people with limited internet access and digital literacy skills (e.g., seniors, English as a Second Language populations and low-income families), by including project activities that went beyond the web. Dubuque2.0, for example, provided seniors with basic Internet training to access online material on reducing energy and water use. It also set up booths with information on environmentally-friendly practices at farmer's markets and local festivals. Likewise, Incentive experimented with SMS text alerts and telephone hotlines to distribute news about job training and community services to under- and unemployed workers with limited computer skills.

Lessons on Project Development

1) Draw on available media and technology expertise.

The advice of partners and external experts was pivotal in helping community foundations develop their projects. Incentive's relationship with the MIT Center for Civic Media and IT specialists at local schools and universities brought needed expertise in supporting its media and technology funding. Similarly, NJ Spotlight built its effort on the knowledge and experience of two veteran reporters that had developed strong followers, reputations and contacts in the education and environment fields.

2) Create well-branded partnerships to accelerate participation.

Strong partnerships with top-tier media organizations helped local information projects build credibility and broader community involvement. HIKI NO's affiliation with PBS Hawaii provided statewide reach and significant prestige that helped motivate students to sign up and remain involved. Similarly, Dubuque2.0 benefited from partnerships the community foundation forged with nearly two dozen local organizations, universities and corporations.

3) Look beyond philanthropy to help sustain your effort.

Foundation grants will undoubtedly continue to be an important source of funding for many local news and information projects. Some of the projects profiled were able to complement their philanthropic support through other creative ways. For example, one-third of the NJ Spotlight's income now comes from content sharing agreements, events and advertising. And in the case of Dubuque2.0, the initiative has found a long-term home by merging with the city's Sustainable Dubuque initiative, where it will receive a full-time staff member for at least two years funded by the city.

We hope you will dig deeper into these case studies to find more lessons that can help shape the way you approach meeting local information needs.

NJ Spotlight: Building Transparency and Improving State Policy Debates



Since 2009, the Community Foundation of New Jersey (CFNJ) has helped support the online news site NJ Spotlight. Like many states, New Jersey faced declines in the coverage of state policy issues, leaving lawmakers and voters with limited information to inform debates or develop quality legislation. By funding NJ Spotlight, CFNJ hoped to preserve the media’s watchdog role in the state, foster accountable government and ensure informed decisions on issues the foundation cared about, such as education, the environment and health care. In two years, NJ Spotlight has established itself as a critical information source for policy makers and an important community voice in discussions about teacher tenure reform, wind farm development and other hot-button issues. NJ Spotlight is one venture in a broader, national trend of nonprofit media outlets providing quality news and reporting on local issues.

New Jersey Community Foundation

Established: 1979

Location: Morristown, NJ

Asset size: \$217 million

Staff: 9

Mission: Connect donors to organizations, issues and communities important to them over time, and provide ongoing leadership on issues critical to the health of New Jersey.

Decline in State-Level Media

Much of the country has seen a decline in investigative reporting and local news coverage. As a recent FCC report highlights, from 2003 to 2010, the membership of Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE) shrank more than 25 percent from 5,391 to 4,000.¹ New Jersey has suffered similar changes in reporting. The Star Ledger, the primary statewide newspaper, offered buyouts to 151 reporters (40 percent of the newsroom) in 2008 and reduced its coverage of state Legislature events and in-depth features on policy issues, such as education and the environment. In 2011, Gov. Chris Christie cut government funding for public television and radio. As a result, the New Jersey Network (NJN) TV station (a PBS member) dissolved in June 2011 and was replaced with a scaled back version, NJTV. NJN's nine public radio stations were also sold to New York Public Radio (WNYC) and Philadelphia (WHYY).²

These changes meant many New Jersey residents turned to The New York Times and The Philadelphia Inquirer for regional and national news, but had no clear options for in-depth coverage of New Jersey-specific state policy issues. "New Jersey became a state without a means of public discussion," explained former



state Assembly and Senate member Gordon MacInnes. "There used to be county papers everywhere, most with bureaus at the state house. Interested citizens could turn to their local paper to know what was happening in the Legislature, but that's no longer the case."

An Information Strategy Emerges

The Community Foundation of New Jersey clearly saw the problems of government accountability and community discussion that the state's shrinking reporting would lead to. As then-foundation board member Ingrid Reed explained,

"Communities did not have access to information that would help them understand the problems they were facing and the solutions they might craft. [We] needed some way for people to understand what was happening in Trenton [the state capital] and connect that to issues that affected their lives."

The foundation was particularly concerned that declines in media coverage were happening at a time of intense public debate; recently elected Gov. Christie was proposing aggressive fiscal, educational and social reforms amid heavy controversy.³ A credible information source to promote transparency and support fact-based discussions was needed more than ever.

In January of 2009, the foundation began conversations with two veteran Star Ledger reporters, John Mooney and Dusty McNichol, who had accepted buyout deals during the paper's restructuring. Both men had spent more than two decades in New Jersey journalism and had sizeable followings. The two proposed to start a

¹ Waldman, Steven. "The information needs of communities," FCC, July 2011

² NJN was a member of PBS for television and NPR for radio, broadcasting NPR programming as well as producing its own programming, mostly focused on New Jersey issues. NJN's TV network, which had studios in Trenton and Newark, covered all of New Jersey, plus parts of Pennsylvania, New York, Connecticut and Delaware.

³ In 2011, a New Jersey Superior Court judge ruled that Gov. Chris Christie's nearly \$1 billion in education cuts left the state unable to meet its obligations to more than one million children, violating the state's school funding formula.

new online news service, NJ Spotlight, to provide in-depth reporting and to host in-person discussions and panels focused on state-level policy.

CFNJ ultimately established a partnership with NJ Spotlight, becoming the site's most significant funder and serving as a partner in its start-up and development. The foundation's active engagement with NJ Spotlight marked a shift in its work, moving beyond managing donor-advised funds directed toward education, health and social issues to informing community conversations about key issues. As CFNJ President Hans Dekker observed, "We didn't make an arms-length grant. We had a real shared sense of ownership over the project." CFNJ – and Dekker in particular – pushed the NJ Spotlight team to come up with a business plan, and provided funding for a planning process before underwriting the site launch.

Building an Audience

NJ Spotlight launched in May 2010, with an initial focus on education, energy and environmental issues. The site grew to include daily and weekly email digests, voter guides, school report cards, policy "explainer" pieces and opinion articles from guest contributors. To engage policy makers and advocates offline, NJ Spotlight launched a series of in-person roundtables, hosted on issues such as solar energy and charter schools. The roundtables enlisted well-known panelists to represent different sides of the issues, and were moderated by neutral reporters.

As the site grew, the Knight Foundation's Community Information Challenge, the William Penn Foundation, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation and J-Lab provided additional funding. Publisher Kevin Harold also started developing the site's earned revenue streams, contacting corporate sponsors and advertisers.

NJ Spotlight has steadily built an audience for its content. In 2012, NJ Spotlight consistently averaged more than 50,000 monthly visits. It also has 4,000 subscribers to its daily and weekly digests.

NJ Spotlight aligned with the foundation's goals and had elements that positioned it well to inform smart discussion about community issues:

- A focus on state-level *policy* coverage, rather than general news (e.g. sports, crime, politics).
- A clearly defined *target audience* – policy makers, government officials, community leaders, advocacy groups and interested citizens.
- A plan for *organizational sustainability*, which included generating revenue through in-person events, corporate sponsorships, and advertising.
- Well-respected professional reporters with expertise and strong reputations.

Distributors of NJ Spotlight Content

TV

- WNYC (\$6,000/month)
- WHYY (\$1,600/month)
- NJ Television (no formal or paid agreement)
- Caucus NJ & Capitol Report (formal agreement, not paid)

Radio

- WNYC (no formal agreement)
- NY & NJ Public Radio (\$6,000/month)
- WHYY Public Radio (\$1,200/month)
- WBGO Radio (no formal or paid agreement)

Print/Online News

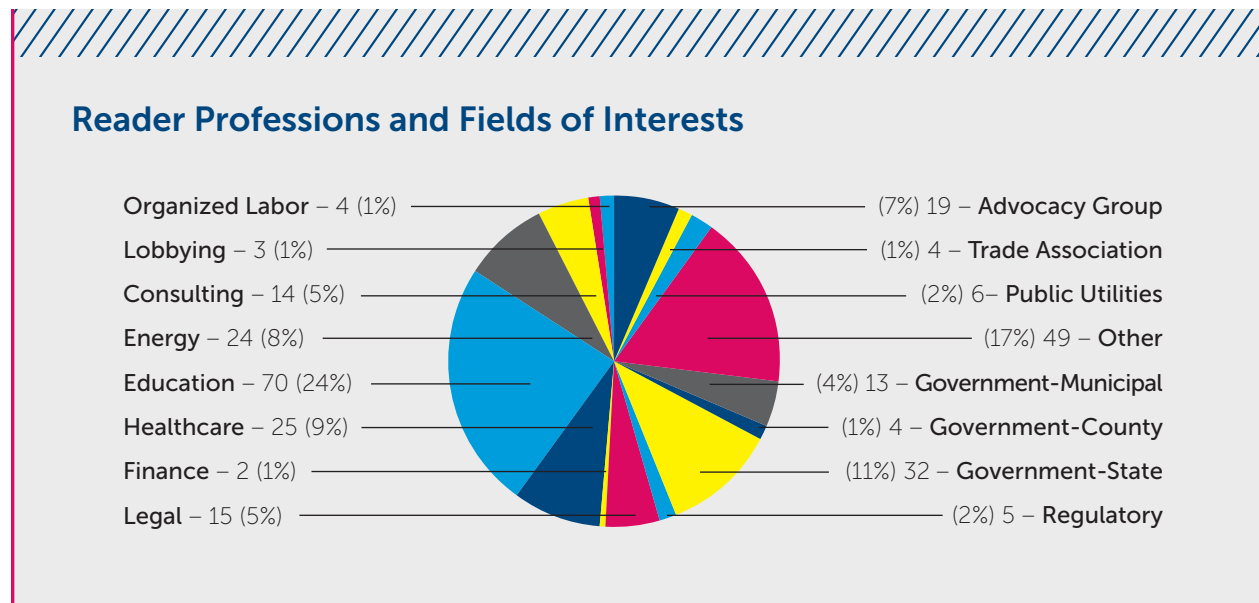
- Newsworks (part of WHYY agreement)
- Philly.com (formal agreement, not paid)
- Patch.com (no formal or paid agreement)
- Politicker NJ (no formal or paid agreement)

While NJ Spotlight’s reach is much less than the general readership of the Star Ledger, the site has succeeded in attracting its more focused target audience: government officials, policymakers and aides, school superintendents, advocates and academics.⁴

Twenty-four percent of NJ Spotlight readers surveyed work in education, 16 percent in government (state, county and municipal), 9 percent in health care and 8 percent in energy.⁵ Eighty-nine percent of surveyed NJ Spotlight readers reported forwarding at least one story to another person.⁶

NJ Spotlight stories also reach additional readers through formal content-sharing agreements with WNYC and WHYY and informal agreements with

Philly.com, Patch.com and others. The formal sharing agreements involve providing content for the respective websites, commentary on programming (including a weekly podcast with WHYY) and cooperation on individual reporting projects. The WHYY contract stipulates exclusive access to certain South Jersey stories, which means that NJ Spotlight can’t offer these stories to other media outlets for at least two days. NJ Spotlight recently signed on as a partner in a new statewide, collaborative media effort through Montclair State University, also supported through the Knight Community Information Challenge. The New Jersey News Commons will help local news outlets collaborate in their coverage of issues such as health care, natural disasters and crime, which have both local and statewide effects.⁷



⁴ The Star Ledger’s weekday readership is around 278,000.

⁵ At least 94 percent of readers surveyed had received a bachelor’s degree or higher, and 93 percent of those who stated their income earned above \$50,000 annually. (June 2012, n=289)

⁶ Reader survey conducted in June 2012; n=289 responses.

⁷ “A New Approach to News.” <http://www.montclair.edu/news/article.php?ArticleID=10236&ChannelID=28>. Accessed Nov. 4, 2012.



Shaping Public Education Debates

With high readership among policy makers and a reputation for fair and credible reporting, NJ Spotlight has played a strong role in informing state education policy discussions.

As Shelley Skinner, deputy director of the advocacy group Better Education for Kids notes, "NJ Spotlight provides the best topical, in-depth coverage in Trenton. ... For our organization, and for all organizations focused on policy issues in New Jersey, NJ Spotlight is the touchstone."



For example, NJ Spotlight's coverage of state deliberations played a critical role in the August 2012 passage of a teacher tenure reform bill. For over two years, a group of legislators led by State Senator Teresa Ruiz worked to revise teacher protection laws in the state, including implementing yearly teacher evaluations, removing the guarantee of tenure for underperforming teachers, and ensuring that talented tenured teachers maintained strong performance.⁸

NJ Spotlight reporting supported dialogue among legislators, schools and teachers about what good teacher evaluations looked like and how the rules would be implemented. NJ Spotlight published more than 100 stories on the topic and facilitated a panel on tenure reform, attended by more than 125 teachers, community activists and parents, and representatives from the state's Department of Education and the teacher's union (New Jersey Education Association).

The tenure reform bill ultimately received the support of the teachers' union and passed unanimously –

"NJ Spotlight is shining light on a regulatory delay, and playing the watchdog role that was missing at the state level."

Robert Marshall
Executive Director of the New Jersey Energy Coalition

an almost unheard of event in New Jersey, according to Skinner: "Usually we'd be on opposite sides with the union, but [NJ Spotlight] enabled us to roll up our sleeves and have a more productive conversation." As Sen. Ruiz, who led the group of legislators working on tenure reform, explained: "NJ Spotlight helped bring a lens to what was happening behind closed doors. People could understand the reasons for the bill, and that was a benefit."

⁸ Shumay, T, "NJ's Christie Signs Teacher Tenure Reform Into Law," The Foundry, Aug. 7, 2012.

NJ Spotlight has quickly become a primary source of information for stakeholders involved in state energy and environmental issues. As Robert Marshall of the New Jersey Energy Coalition noted, “You can count on seeing coverage of regulatory stuff in Trenton. I don’t even need to go to certain meetings now – I can see what went on in NJ Spotlight, and understand the viewpoints of different constituencies just by reading.”

Soon after launching, a NJ Spotlight story showed that the state’s largest power supplier had failed to pay a required surcharge (used for clean energy programs) on its utility bills for the past decade, and instead passed more than \$5 billion in fees directly on to customer.⁹ The report triggered a call for an

investigation by the attorney general’s office and prompted a hearing before the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities.¹⁰ There is now an ongoing state review of the surcharge program.

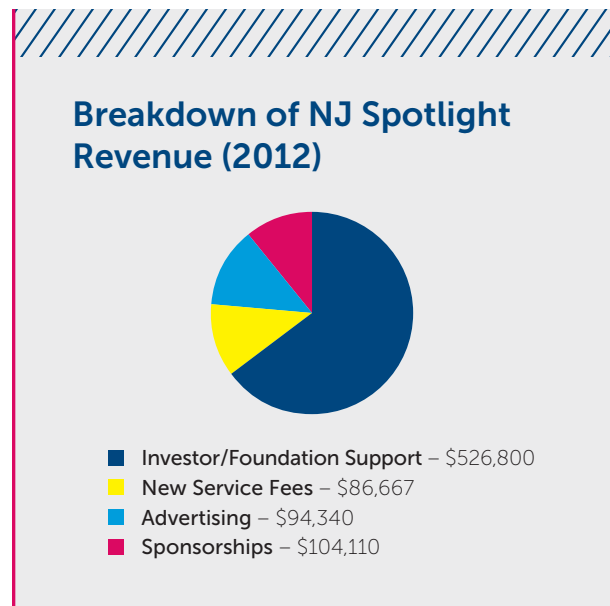
A recent NJ Spotlight article also exposed the Christie administration’s 16 month delay in adopting regulations that would enable developers to secure financing for the Fishermen’s Atlantic City offshore wind farm and help create well-paying green jobs. The project received its final permit in July 2012. Fishermen’s Energy, the company overseeing the project, now plans to build the first demonstration offshore wind farm in the United States, “making the New Jersey resort the birthplace of offshore wind in the Americas.”¹¹

Business Model: Present and Future

NJ Spotlight’s projected revenues for 2012 were just over \$811,000, with one-third (\$285,000) coming from earned revenue sources (see chart). NJ Spotlight hopes to grow its earned revenue streams to one-half of total revenues, through a continued focus on content sharing fees, advertising and sponsorships (such as the New Jersey Education Association’s recent sponsorship of a panel on teacher evaluation).¹²

Alongside earned revenues, philanthropic support will continue to be core to NJ Spotlight’s operations. “We thought there was a time when philanthropy might not need to be involved,” said former CFNJ board member Ingrid Reed. “We could provide seed money and NJ Spotlight would produce content and manage the site, while also earning revenues by developing subscription newsletters. But creating our own revenue stream in that manner was going to take time and expertise to develop.” CFNJ has signaled that it will *not* continue to be the primary philanthropic funder in perpetuity. According to foundation President Dekker, a consortium of local funders

working on issues covered in NJ Spotlight (such as education and the environment) will be required to support its ongoing efforts.



⁹ Adapted from: FSG, “Leadership Profile: Community Foundation of New Jersey.” <http://www.knightfoundation.org/publications/leadership-profile-community-foundation-new-jersey>. Accessed Oct. 28, 2012.

¹⁰ NJ Spotlight, “AG Investigation Requested in PSEG Power Deal,” May 8, 2010

¹¹ <http://www.philly.com/philly/blogs/greenliving/Atlantic-City-wind-farm-receives-final-permit.html>

¹² NJ Spotlight’s earned revenues are significantly above average; one Knight Foundation study of seven nonprofit news sources found that the projects raised 90 percent of their funds from contributed dollars (from foundations and individual donors) with less than 10 percent coming from earned income sources such as events, advertising and syndication. http://www.knightfoundation.org/media/uploads/publication_pdfs/13664_KF_NPNews_Overview_10-17-2.pdf



The Texas Tribune

Like the New Jersey Spotlight, The Texas Tribune is a 501(c)3 supported by individual contributions, major gifts, corporate sponsorships, and foundation grants. The Tribune also generates earned revenue from events and specialty publications. In 2012, the Texas Tribune raised more than \$4.5 million, compared to approximately \$4.2 million in expenses. A third of the organization's revenue came from corporate underwriting, through site and event sponsorships

Lessons Learned

Lesson 1: Be clear about your focus and your audience.

NJ Spotlight conducted a careful market “gap” analysis and developed a robust business plan prior to launch. Through the process, NJ Spotlight narrowed its initial issue focus (education, energy, health care and environment) and defined a clear audience (policy decision makers and civic actors in the state). This vision allowed NJ Spotlight to attract an audience that relies heavily on its content.

Lesson 2: Focus on building a quality brand.

NJ Spotlight through its reporting and facilitation has come to be viewed as a trusted, neutral arbiter in the community. NJ Spotlight's professional reporters with expertise, contacts and large followings helped develop the site's reputation and build its brand in the state. While not possible in every setting, recruiting writers with journalism training and specialized knowledge is likely to yield high reputational returns.

Lesson 3: Create a blended revenue model.

One-third of NJ Spotlight's revenue comes from earned income, split evenly between content sharing fees, advertising and sponsorships. While philanthropy will likely always play a core role in the operating model, NJ Spotlight has demonstrated that meaningful earned income is possible and can support long-term financial sustainability. NJ Spotlight's progress in this area is due, in part, to recruiting corporate sponsors and advertisers. Other online news sites, such as The Texas Tribune have also been able to generate earned-income sources of revenue.¹³

¹³ <http://www.texastribune.org/about/>. Accessed Nov. 4, 2012

HIKI NO: Youth Journalism to Foster Digital Literacy and Build Diverse Community Stories



The Hawaii Community Foundation supported the establishment of PBS Hawaii’s HIKI NO program, the nation’s first statewide student news network. HIKI NO (meaning “can do” in Hawaiian) builds digital media skills that allow young people to use technology and share their stories. Over three seasons, it has become a popular PBS Hawaii program and has invested heavily in teacher training and established relationships with over 80 schools across the state. The project has advanced the community foundation’s work in youth development and helped celebrate Hawaii’s dispersed island cultures. As Hawaii Community Foundation President Kelvin Taketa observes, “[HIKI NO] serves the state by bringing stories to light that would otherwise not be seen. Because of HIKI NO, we are learning more about the diverse communities that make up Hawaii.”

An Island Community: Shifting Education and Information Needs

Hawaii faces challenges common to geographically dispersed communities. Roughly 70 percent of the state’s residents and most news outlets are based in Oahu, often leading to Oahu-centric coverage. “You’ll only see stories [about the other islands] if something huge happens, which doesn’t allow people to get a sense of those communities,” said Robert

Pennybacker, a PBS Hawaii vice president.¹ In talking about Hawaii’s multiethnic population, Donna Tanoue, HIKI NO funder and president of the Bank of Hawaii Foundation, notes that “there are stories unique to every community on every island. Yet a representative mosaic of news coverage across islands and cultures has been difficult to achieve.”

¹ Klinefelter, M., “Tying the State Together,” *American Journalism Review*, September 2010. http://www.pbshawaii.org/Press%20Release%20PDF%20%20/AJR_Hiki%20No.pdf

The 2009 merger of Honolulu’s three commercial television news operations, and the 2010 closure of the Honolulu Star Bulletin, the second largest daily newspaper in the state, further reduced the number of reporters and the diversity of voices covering community issues. In addition to these challenges, the state has been plagued by public education cuts. In 2009, under the weight of a \$1 billion state deficit, Hawaii became the first state to institute “furlough Fridays,” trimming 17 days off the academic calendar. Drastic cuts to enrichment activities such as art, music and after-school sports followed. As a result, many youths – particularly those from low-income backgrounds – were unable to access quality opportunities for growth and development.



HIKI NO: A Strategy Emerges

In the midst of statewide media consolidation and drastic public education cuts, PBS Hawaii President Leslie Wilcox believed that her organization could help address the state’s news and youth development challenges. PBS had several assets to contribute, including broadcast expertise, a statewide audience, a strong commitment to education and connections to schools. Wilcox hoped to establish a statewide student news network, with middle and high school students producing a weekly television and online broadcast. The effort was inspired by the achievements of a local student news network, Searider Productions, housed at Waianae High School on the remote western edge of Oahu. Searider Productions had produced award-winning news content and developed a successful for-profit venture providing digital media services to the community.

Wilcox believed that PBS Hawaii could be a key partner in spreading a similar youth-voice model throughout the state to:

- Foster communication, storytelling and workforce skills among Hawaii’s students.
- Build the capacity of teachers to foster ongoing media-based learning in their classrooms.
- Cover stories in places and communities often ignored by mainstream media to support a greater sense of connection across the state.

Getting Prepared and Launching

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting provided PBS Hawaii with a \$200,000 start-up grant to establish HIKI NO. Additional funding for HIKI NO soon followed from the Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation, the Kellogg Foundation, the Clarence T.C. Ching Foundation and the Hawaii Community Foundation (HCF). With its investment, HCF aimed to diversify the information available about Hawaii’s many geographic and cultural communities and to build youth communication skills.

Central to the project’s early momentum was its ability to attract a number of partners, including support from the Department of Education, local rotary clubs and major corporate sponsors, as well as in-kind technical support from Waianae’s Searider Productions and its for-profit arm Makaha Studios, tw telecom, Commercial Data Systems and a local law firm.

Hawaii Community Foundation

Established: 1916

Location: Honolulu, Hawaii

Asset size: \$521 million

Staff: 59

Mission: The Hawaii Community Foundation helps people make a difference by inspiring the spirit of giving and by investing in people and solutions to benefit every island community.

In HIKI NO's first year, PBS Hawaii recruited many public, private, and charter school partners. PBS then conducted teacher training workshops throughout the state to build teachers' digital literacy. A Teacher Steering Committee was established with teachers across four islands, and several anchor schools with established digital media programs were recruited to provide informal mentorship to others.

Teachers were provided with curriculum for digital media courses in their schools, which included lesson plans on journalistic ethics, guidelines on production processes, student story "pitch sheets," tips for quality audio and video shots, and editing. PBS Hawaii made available basic media equipment on four islands for schools with limited or no in-house media technology. PBS established a virtual newsroom for students across islands to pitch ideas, submit draft scripts, upload broadcast quality video and develop newscasts.² One school would serve as a "home base" for each episode, and draft stories would be sent to PBS Hawaii's Honolulu headquarters for feedback to ensure productions met PBS's quality standards.

After a year of preparation, HIKI NO's first season premiered on Feb. 28, 2011. Fifty-four public, private and charter schools from diverse communities on four

islands created 12 original, 30-minute news programs, premiering on Mondays and repeating various times during the week. The first episode explored Facebook rules, laptops in schools, night football, a basketball coach, robots, farming and friendship.³ Popular topics in the first season included environmental issues, traditional Hawaiian foods, sports, youth facing adversity, finding identity and other topics important to youth.

HIKI NO Partnerships

Partner	Type
Clarence T.C. Ching Foundation	Foundation
Atherton Family Foundation	Foundation
W.K. Kellogg Foundation	Foundation
Cooke Foundation, Ltd.	Foundation
Hawaii Community Foundation	Foundation
Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation	Foundation
Corporation for Public Broadcasting	Nonprofit
tw telecom	Corporate
Commercial Data Systems (in-kind)	Corporate
KTA Super Stores	Corporate
Makaha Studios	Corporate
George Mason Fund	Individual
Stupski Family Fund	Individual

² Ibid

³ Temple, J., "Looking for Inspiration? Check Out HIKI NO," Honolulu Civil Beat, February 24 2011. <http://www.civilbeat.com/posts/2011/02/23/9241-looking-for-inspiration-check-out-hiki-no/>

Project Progress

Now entering its fourth season, HIKI NO has expanded to include more than 500 students from 80 partner schools across all of Hawaii's seven main islands.

A quarter of the state's public schools now participate in the program, along with various private schools. In recognition of the interest generated, PBS moved the program to a prominent time slot on Thursdays at 7:30 p.m.

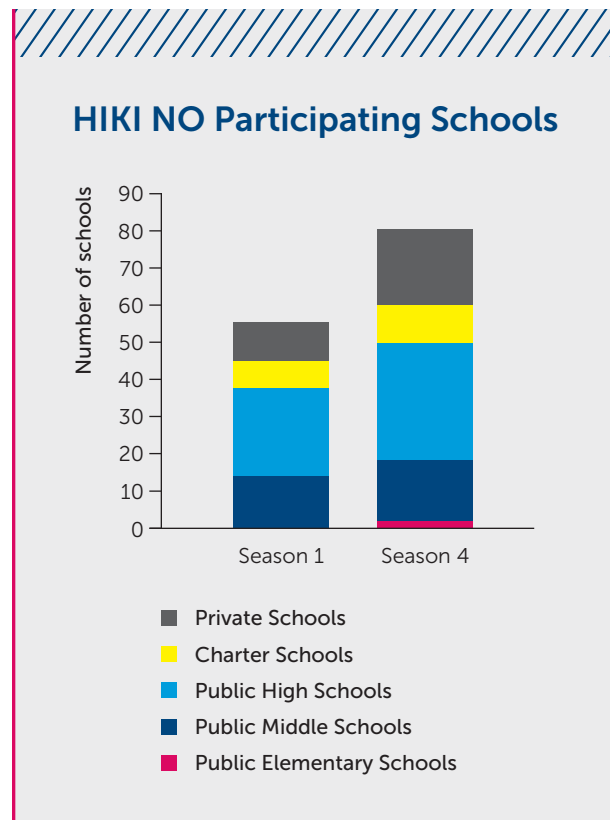
Nielson ratings show that 3,700 households (including 6,100 adults aged 18 and over) in the Honolulu media market regularly watch HIKI NO. This approaches 1 percent of designated market households, in line with other popular prime-time PBS programming such as the NewsHour.⁴ HIKI NO website traffic has been modest, constituting 10 percent of PBS Hawaii online page views.

Supporting teacher digital literacy: HIKI NO staff report that the "single most important" outcome of the work has been to "build the capacity of Hawaii's media teachers and students to tell compelling and authentic digital stories about their communities." At the start of the program, 80 percent of the teachers recruited did not have expertise in digital media or broadcasting. PBS invested heavily in teacher training to instill technology and communication skills. The train-the-teacher model has been central to the work, as PBS Hawaii President Leslie Wilcox explains: "Kids graduate and teachers will be the ones to keep this going. So we're putting a large percent of our budget into training and to acquiring digital assets so we can equip more teachers with the right skills."

Building youth skills and fostering self-confidence: All HIKI NO teachers report that their students have improved communication and collaboration skills as a result of the program. Eighty-four percent of the 54 teachers surveyed by PBS in May 2011 agreed that their students have learned to tell a compelling story about an issue important to them.⁴ Susan Yim, HIKI NO managing editor noted, "In the process of doing broadcast journalism, students learn to be informed citizens. They're encouraged to be curious, ask questions, think critically and be creative."⁵

⁴ HIKI NO report to the Knight Foundation, September 2012.

⁵ Klinefelter, "Tying the State"



For some students, the lessons of HIKI NO apply beyond broadcast journalism. As student Nikki Davis observed, "I learned how to talk to people in the business world, how to sound business-like. I also learned how to get turned down – we'd have to regroup and collaborate to pitch a new idea. It's very different from high school – where they still kind of baby you." The feedback and high quality expected by PBS Hawaii's team (sometimes through several rounds of edits) has stretched students' skills. "HIKI NO has given our students more confidence in what they're capable of doing," said middle school teacher Kevin Matsunaga. "I tell my students that their goal should be to have stories on HIKI NO. The students that are able to do this are so proud, and push themselves to do even more. Their confidence is really boosted."

Stories produced for HIKI NO by the Ni'ihau School of Kekaha have become a particular source of pride. Students at this K-12 charter school on the remote

western side of Kauai have produced five HIKI NO stories and anchored two entire episodes in their near-extinct Ni‘ihau dialect. As teacher Haunani Seward describes:

“Knowing how to speak the Ni‘ihau language is not something most of our students would initially feel proud of because it is stigmatized. We lead the state in incarcerations and poverty. But the media program allows kids to showcase what they can do. The language becomes an asset, and kids see that speaking it is a good thing.”

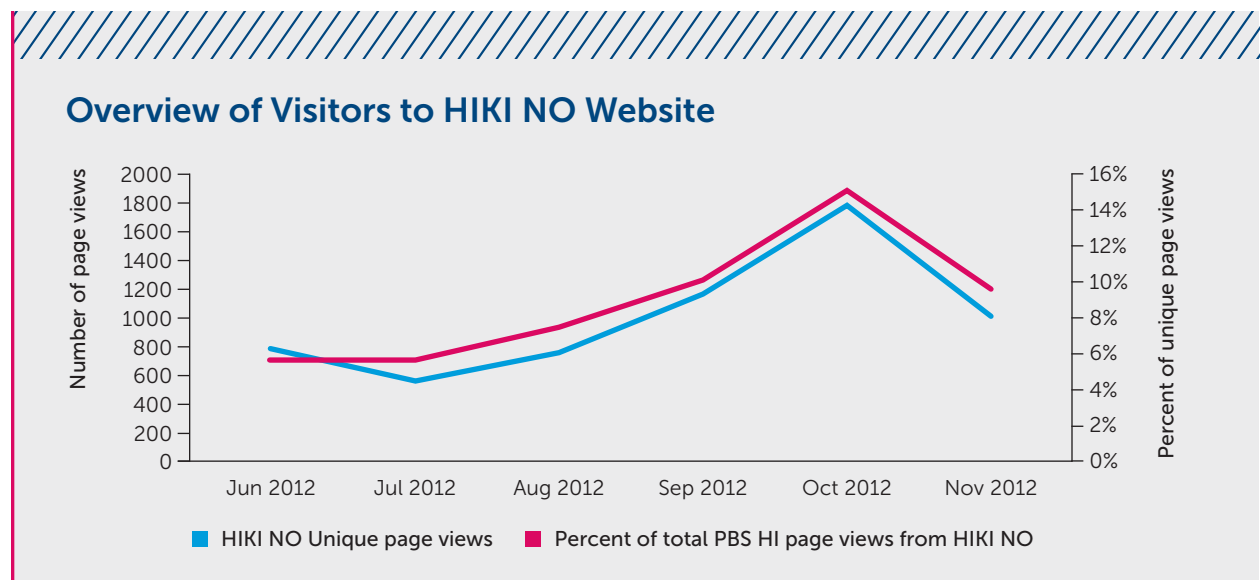
Enabling youth to share their unique viewpoints:

Over three seasons, students have generated original stories on topics ranging from the ancient practices of rock salt production in Kauai and a new plastic bag ban on Maui to the environmental and human threats of “shark safaris” in Oahu. “HIKI NO stories aren’t breaking news, but they’re a little deeper – stories taking us into students’ towns or islands and stories that they think are important,” said PBS Hawaii grant writer Lynn Haff. And in some cases, HIKI NO students provided the only press coverage of a topic, reflecting their unique interests and viewpoints.

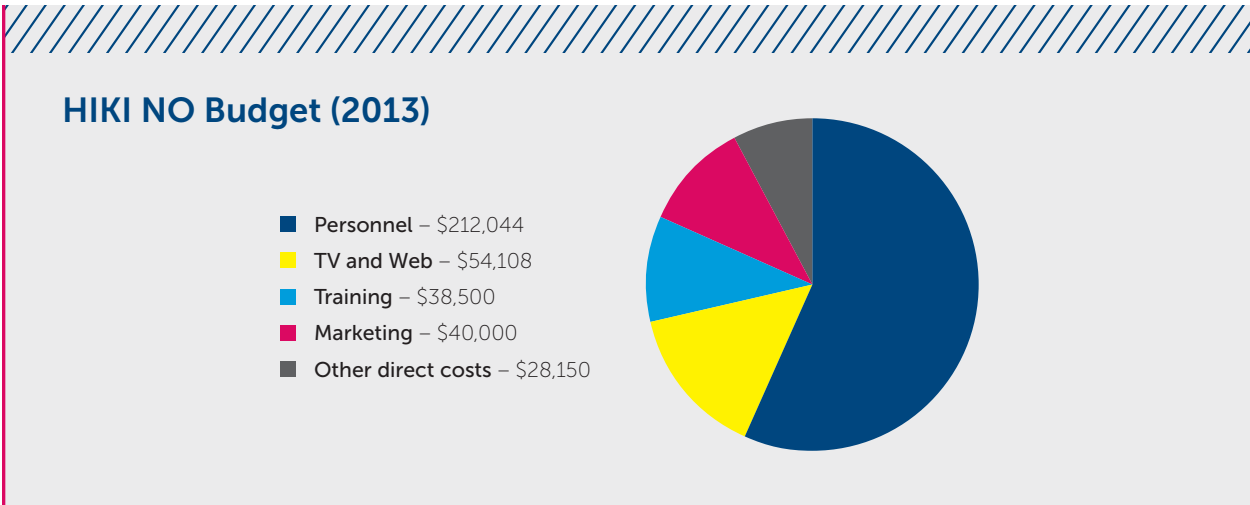
Youths have also succeeded in securing interviews and drawing out perspectives where professional

journalists may have failed. A story about a boy who became a father at Moanalua High School showed the challenges of balancing parenthood with school and friends, an honest portrayal told in a unique youth voice. “They have stories about teen pregnancy on MTV,” said student Nikki Davis. “But it’s different when the story is told by someone you can identify with, who is actually from Hawaii.”

Engaging a youth audience: HIKI NO has successfully engaged youth in the production of the program, but been less successful in building a regular youth audience for its content. While PBS has not conducted a formal audience study, several teachers and students suggested that the television program has attracted the same audience as other popular PBS shows: older adults. Younger viewers may tune in more infrequently, when a show they produced is being aired, or when the program features their school or community. As Candy Suiso of Searider Productions notes “Students don’t run home to watch the news”. In response to viewership trends, Searider Productions moved completely online. “Our main audience is students, and they rarely watch TV. They watch everything online and on their different devices, and they want to be able to tune in at any time,” noted Suiso. Likewise, as of December 2012 HIKI NO’s social media presence is small, and represents an area that could be further exploited to engage a broader youth audience.⁶



⁶ Approximately 550 users “like” the program on Facebook, and just over 400 followers on Twitter.



Tackling operational sustainability: HIKI NO has reached a critical mass of Hawaii schools. The challenge now will be to sustain the high-touch, high-quality guidance to participating teachers. To do this, HIKI NO will require long-term funding from key partners and will need to further promote a “train the trainer” model. HIKI NO has begun initial conversations with Hawaii’s Department of Education to absorb some of the training costs and hopes to integrate the

program into the state’s language arts curriculum. At the same time, PBS Hawaii is pursuing internal funding sources to continue supporting teacher training. HIKI NO founders have also begun talks with the PBS NewsHour and Texas PBS to replicate the program in Texas, and are developing a youth media tool kit for other cities and states to draw on when launching their own programs.

Lessons Learned

Lesson 1: Build peer support networks for teachers.

PBS Hawaii’s intensive mentorship of teachers and sponsorship of teacher-training conferences created a strong environment for supporting youth learning and enabling HIKI NO to grow. Peer mentorship from a core group of experienced “champion” teachers has also helped struggling schools to stay involved with HIKI NO.

Lesson 2: Use news content from youth to complement mainstream media sources.

In addition to covering the types of stories featured on other news outlets, youths covered specialized stories adults may not have pursued, and with a different voice. This diversified the information available about the community.

Lesson 3: Go beyond television to reach and engage youth.

While adults follow the show, generating youth-to-youth dialogue and building a steady youth audience have been challenging for HIKI NO. Generating more searchable online content and more effectively using social media tools may help address these challenges, as young people may not regularly tune in to early evening TV programming.

Lesson 4: Partner with a top-tier media organization to drive student motivation and engagement.

PBS Hawaii’s broad audience and high expectations raised the stakes for students participating in HIKI NO and created a sense of prestige and pride around the program. With a less respected or exacting partner, students likely would not have felt the same pressure to perform, or the same sense of accomplishment when their stories ultimately aired across the state.

Revitalization in Central Wisconsin: How the Inccourage Community Foundation Used Information to Build Hope and Speed Community Change



To members of the rural communities of south Wood County, Wisconsin, the shrinking of local news reporting was not their highest concern. The large, locally owned paper mills that had buoyed the regional economy for more than a century had all significantly downsized between 2000 and 2010, with nearly 40 percent of total employment lost by 2005. Residents scrambled to find new jobs, but the few openings available required different skills than the ones they offered. Many younger employees left the area, leaving behind an aging workforce with specialized skills, looking for jobs that no longer existed.

These workforce problems topped the list of issues for Inccourage Community Foundation. But they weren't the only worry, for the dramatic changes in the paper industry had left a dearth of local leadership. As corporations exited, so did executives, their families and corporate philanthropies. The community depended on the mills for more than jobs; mill executives had been local leaders, serving as public officials and benefactors. The community was left with a pressing need to shift its culture and orientation – one that Inccourage hoped to help address but could certainly not meet alone.

With time, experimentation and the leadership of Inccourage's CEO, Kelly Ryan, it was understood that the best and most sustainable solution would be for community members to come up with a collective solution to their economic troubles. In order to catalyze community change, residents would need more robust communication channels with relevant local information flowing through them. And so, while Inccourage did not originally intend to tackle local news and information challenges in south Wood, the foundation and its partners eventually took it on, realizing that information was critical to the broader strategy of catalyzing transformative change in this hard-hit community.

A Community in Crisis

Wisconsin, once the headquarters for some of the world's largest paper mills, lost 35 percent of its paper mill jobs between 2000 and 2010. In south Wood County, the decline was sudden and steep when its locally owned mill, Consolidated Papers Inc., was sold to a multinational corporation and downsized. Consolidated Papers had provided well-paying jobs since 1864. Changes in mill ownership ended a tacit arrangement whereby mill owners did more than provide employment; the community depended upon the company for leadership and philanthropy. Said long-time resident and Inourage board member Helen Jungwirth: "We inherited a paternalistic culture, and with that came a strong sense of entitlement as well as dependency on others to find solutions and get things done."

"What happened in the paper industry was really traumatic, and the effect in the community was significant."

Resident of south Wood County

When the mill downsized, the information landscape in south Wood also shifted. For decades, residents had relied on The Daily Tribune and a local radio station for community news. The Daily Tribune was an afternoon daily that published eight full sections and enjoyed a paid circulation of 14,000 – once considered high for a region populated by about 40,000. Consolidated Papers also produced a widely read company newsletter, News Chips, which included general community information and job listings. Because television broadcasting from Wausau, 60 miles to the north, rarely covered south Wood news in depth, residents had relied on these local outlets. After 2000, a single publisher purchased the Daily Tribune, along with other local papers in the county, and reduced south Wood news to a single page. And despite appeals from residents to restore local coverage, the paper's attention to south Wood continued to decline; soon local circulation was down 63 percent. In addition, the new mill owners halted publication of News Chips as part of its downsizing.



South Wood County

Population: 44,778, distributed between 13 towns, villages and cities

Largest city: Wisconsin Rapids

Median household income: \$51,301

Declining manufacturing sector:
32% of jobs lost since 2000

Readers of The Daily Tribune expressed frustration that the newspaper, like the mill, had set their community's needs aside. A former publisher recalled,

"With so many people unemployed, there was a heightened demand for reliable information about the local economy, about jobs and prospects for a recovery. We knew our readers needed that regular coverage, but the decline in local news was part of a larger adjustment in our industry. There wasn't much we could do."

At the time of the sale of the company and subsequent mill closures, elected representatives in south Wood admitted they were unprepared to deal with economic challenges of this magnitude. As a Wisconsin Rapids councilman said, "We were a ship adrift."

An Information Strategy is Born

Given the significance of the economic crisis, Incourage and the Wisconsin Rapids Chamber of Commerce came together to discuss how they could create greater impact. They forged a close partnership and created a vision for shifting the culture in south Wood so that people could more easily help themselves and each other. It soon became clear to the broader community that the relative handful of institutions that remained in south Wood could not alone reverse the effects of the economic downturn. What was needed was a shift from the expectation that “someone else will take care of it” to a more participatory approach that supported an informed and engaged citizenry.

Change isn’t easy, even in the best of times. So to foster new relationship and leadership skills among community members, Incourage invited experts from Ki ThoughtBridge, a consulting firm, to provide adaptive skills training based on ideas developed by Harvard’s Negotiation Project. The goal was to equip leaders with skills for promoting citizen engagement in community problem solving.¹ More than 100 residents from all sectors of the community were coached through the initiative.

The central premise of the training was that if local residents were to become more effective leaders and address complex issues, they would need to build trust. This was especially difficult because many residents were experiencing symptoms of loss – confusion, apathy, cynicism and anger – due to their economic troubles. Such powerful emotions could block progress. Better communication was an antidote to these obstacles and a key to building trust.

From Individual to Collective Change

Witnessing the power of these intensely personal communication skills, Incourage began to consider how communications and information could contribute to creating a healthier civic culture.

Incourage Community Foundation

Established: 1994

Location: South Wood County, Wisconsin

Asset size: \$30 million

Staff: 16

Key goals:

- Turn everyday people into everyone’s leaders
- Support a new economy that works for all people
- Increase access to information across the digital divide
- Create partnerships that intensify impact for the community

At that same time, Incourage learned about the Knight Community Information Challenge (KCIC), and the ideas began to spark for Ryan and her board.

Incourage originally planned to use KCIC resources to create an online news outlet to fill the gap left by the shrinking local newspaper. However, based on what she and her board chair – a retired Gannett publisher – learned about the digital divide at a media seminar sponsored by Knight Foundation², Incourage decided to temporarily set this idea aside, realizing that an online source would not reach the intended audience and could conceivably marginalize residents without Internet access. Instead, Incourage initiated a survey and series of focus groups to better understand how residents obtained information and what kinds of content they needed or wanted. A Digital Divide Survey conducted in 2009 revealed how residents accessed and used computers and the Internet. Subsequent focus groups addressed a

¹ A detailed description of this unique curriculum developed by Katherine Tyler Scott and Irma Tyler-Wood of Ki ThoughtBridge can be found in the summer 2012 edition of the National Civic Review.

² Incourage’s CEO Kelly Ryan and board Chair Helen Jungwirth attended the Knight Foundation’s Media Learning Seminar in 2009.

broader range of topics and gave participants the opportunity to explore and identify local information resources and gaps.

Incourage was committed to ensuring that its community conversations were inclusive.³ So with support from MIT's Center for Civic Media, they conducted focus groups to document the information needs of low-income residents and unemployed workers. In all, more than 800 people offered their perspectives on the quality and accessibility of information in their community. Important insights emerged:

- Information flows were shifting and fragmented. People relied increasingly on family, friends and colleagues for community news and information after the newspaper coverage dwindled. Often, either everyone had heard of a particular resource, or no one had. Critical information about local services appeared to be circulating in relatively closed social networks.⁴
- Online access was increasing in south Wood County, but more than a third of low income families surveyed did not use the Internet. Nearly 55 percent of low income residents between the ages of 18 and 24 did not have a computer at home, and unemployed mill workers often had limited computer skills.
- Local service organizations increasingly relied on alternate means of reaching people. Examples included collaborating with schools to place flyers in children's backpacks and posting notices in local coffee shops.

"We didn't start with an expansive understanding of information. It was a process of dynamic learning for us linked to a conversation about culture."

Kelly Ryan

CEO, Incourage Community Foundation

Incourage's early involvement with the community showed how information can catalyze citizen engagement, and how engagement can lead to greater information consumption. They saw residents share concerns about conditions in their community; come forward with ideas to solve community problems; be heard by community leaders and by each other; and become motivated to find and use more accurate, relevant information in their decision making.

Through the focus groups, more than 80 residents stepped forward to help develop solutions to address community information challenges. Examples include "tech days" promoted by a focus group participant who later gathered information about the demand for computer classes in her area and worked with library leaders and the foundation to create them. "I saw folks go from small, (not believing their ideas made a difference), to big (my ideas can make a difference and I want to learn more)," recalls Incourage's Liz Everson. In her view, catalyzing this "virtuous cycle" is a crucial component of Incourage's work because it challenges old habits of disengagement. Says CEO Kelly Ryan: "It is promoting culture change – residents begin to understand that they have power and can make a difference."

³ Survey and focus group research included people of different ages, income and employment status.

⁴ This is consistent with the observations of sociologists like Mark Granovetter who find that people with strong ties tend to know the same things. Weak ties or "bridges" that link network clusters are needed to discover new information.

Three Pillars of Community Revitalization: Access, Capacity, Engagement

Based on what it learned from the Digital Divide Survey and focus groups, Incentive invested in a range of projects to increase the availability of local information, build people's capacity to access information and support civic engagement. Incentive created an advisory committee to partner with the foundation and learn from its information-related investments. Chaired by an Incentive board member, the committee included representatives from the area's K-12 school systems, libraries, a senior citizens association, the local technical college, as well as the director of technology of the largest K-12 system in the area and an information technology specialist from the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point.



Access: Supporting the expansion of Nixle

Incentive expanded access to local information through Nixle, the national platform for police and public safety advocates. The service sends alert messages to residents via SMS, email and the Web about neighborhood-level issues, including public safety and health concerns. Incentive learned that Nixle was used locally by the Wood County Dispatch Center, but the foundation's focus groups showed that most south Wood residents had not heard of the service. Incentive expanded use of Nixle in south

"We read the Knight Commission Report early on and it was hugely influential. We continue to think about access, capacity and engagement as core components of our information approach."

Kelly Ryan
CEO, Incentive Community Foundation

Wood, bringing the Nixle service new partners such as K-12 schools, area hospitals, the health department and the United Way. Now the expanded service includes updates on education, health and community issues as well public safety announcements.

Incentive also funded a Nixle public awareness campaign in 2011. Nixle users in south Wood County have since increased ten-fold, from 600 to 6,335 subscribers – including more than 3,000 residents who follow Nixle on Facebook. Nixle updates also are now embedded in 16 message boards on local websites. The number of messages released through Nixle varies depending on need, from five or more daily messages during emergencies to as few as one or two times per week.

Nixle provides timely, actionable information to residents. For instance, in October 2012 when an elderly driver, who suffered from dementia, was reported missing an alert message was sent out over Nixle with a description of the vehicle. With the help of a Nixle subscriber, the woman was safely found in less than an hour.



Capacity: Building residents' digital technology skills

Incourage's advisory committee members, including representatives from schools, technical colleges and libraries, worked together to create enhanced digital literacy curricula that built on basic skills courses. With Incourage's support, two communities (Rudolph and Port Edwards) that lacked libraries and viable Internet access points used their schools as a home base for new computer and Internet labs. Residents in these communities, including 6,000 school children, now have free access to a computer and can connect to the Internet. The foundation also supported libraries in south Wood to provide extended access to computers, free computer training and digital literacy classes for all residents.

Engagement: Connecting new information with existing workforce development programs

To address pressing workforce issues plaguing the community, Incourage had invested deeply in creating Workforce Central, a National Fund for Workforce Solutions site and a multisector workforce training initiative to serve south Wood businesses and workers. Through the early focus groups it conducted in its KCIC project, the foundation recognized gaps in how organizations that served job seekers shared information with each other and with potential workers. Incourage also saw opportunities to connect local agencies, organizations and businesses and

enable them to share information on how education and support services for job seekers can be more efficiently integrated and aligned with employer needs. Thus, the foundation began to intentionally map and use information in its systems change work.

This has resulted in simple fixes, such as an agreement from the city of Wisconsin Rapids to lower transportation costs for trainees who attend classes at a local technical college, to more complex collaborations, such as the launch of a new shared curriculum on specific training for locally available jobs. Greater awareness about the connections between access to information and job growth has also prompted Workforce Central partners to incorporate digital literacy into credential training for under- and unemployed workers, including former mill workers with limited computer skills.

In the summer of 2012, Incourage also launched a new information platform called What's Up. Designed by the MIT Media Lab, What's Up aggregates and disseminates news from local calendars about events, job training and community services. The information is made available through online postings as well as SMS messages, physical digital signs, telephone hotlines, and posters and paper flyers in public places like grocery stores and job centers. Twenty local service providers have registered to post announcements with What's Up, and Workforce Central service providers have distributed nearly 1,000 informational cards to raise awareness among their clients about the new information service. Since the online component launched in June 2012, traffic to the What's Up site has been limited so far, with 137 monthly unique visitors in October.

"Data alone cannot make a community stronger, but a shared understanding of what data tells us about local life, and how it is changing, can start a conversation."

Kelly Ryan
CEO, Incourage Community Foundation

Engagement: Community surveys and conversations

In the fall of 2011, Incourage developed and later launched a survey asking residents about the challenges facing their community, local strengths and their vision for the future. The survey was administered through telephone interviews, online and print surveys and in-person community meetings. Since March of 2012, over 75 community conversations have been hosted with more than 500 people involved. Perhaps the most important outcome of the conversations was that residents were actively inspired to participate. Many reported with surprise that, in some cases, their least-engaged neighbors and friends turned up at public meetings. "Several people in the community conversations came from organizations that I had not seen participate before," observed one resident.

In a related effort, Incourage invested in "Vital Signs," a community indicators project that for the first time aggregated sub-county-level data on issues such as employment, homelessness, child care and wages. A condensed summary reflecting a decade of local information was distributed in early 2011 to 2,000 residents and organizations. In July 2012, Incourage partnered with UW – Madison's Center on Wisconsin Strategy (COWS) to reformat Vital Signs as a discussion document and present it to municipal leaders, media, businesses, social service agencies, the local technical college and K-12 schools. Since then the indicators have been used in many venues, including by the Wisconsin Rapids municipal government and county government, and by local businesses for planning, and by schools and community colleges as a teacher orientation tool.



Workforce Central

In 2008, Incourage Community Foundation initiated Workforce Central as a strategic, systems-change effort to address the growing workforce and economic challenges facing south Wood. The program offers workforce training through a partnership between employers, government, philanthropy and educational and service providers. Workforce Central in south Wood County is one of only two rural National Fund for Workforce Solutions sites in the United States.

A Community in Transition

In the last four years, Incourage and its partners have contributed to a more diverse and robust information ecosystem in south Wood County. New information resources are now available and in more forms: online, offline, via digital signs and SMS and voice messages. The foundation's investments in local libraries and schools have increased residents' access to computers and the Internet, and their skills necessary to participate in an increasingly digital economy. Perhaps most important, the process of gathering and sharing information appears to have had a positive impact on the cultural environment. The overwhelming response rate for the community survey launched in 2012 is a sign that large numbers of south Wood residents are now ready to contribute to a broad-based community process: more than 4,100 residents completed the survey, and 59 percent of residents reported being interested in participating in future discussions to help develop a community plan. "Five years ago, this kind of thing would have been unthinkable," noted one resident. Hearing that more than 4,000 people took the survey, another observed, "We feel now that we need to make things happen. Before, we felt like someone else would take care of it."

"It used to be that we sat back and waited for information to be delivered to our doorstep. We have a long way to go, but people are now leaning forward. Leaning forward to answer a survey, leaning forward to learn from the results, asking - what part can I do?"

Resident of south Wood County

Finally, a key result of Incourage's efforts is an information ecosystem that is less reliant on a few dominant sources. "What we learned along the way," observes Ryan, "is that information has its own ecosystem and reflects the culture of a community ... in order to upend a culture that is paternal, dependent and with a strong sense of entitlement, you have to include information in your change strategy."



Next Steps

Incourage's community survey revealed several priority areas, including fostering creative thinking and new ideas, strengthening the local economy and creating new opportunities for young adults and families.

The foundation will now focus on grassroots efforts, providing community organizing training for residents as well as for foundation board members and staff.

Recently, Incourage purchased the old Daily Tribune building, which the newspaper had vacated due to downsizing. The foundation's vision is to restore and convert the building into a "town square" for civic discourse and engagement, turning it into a lasting symbol of the shifts under way in south Wood. Located on the riverfront in an area once dominated and controlled by paper mills, the best use of the facility will be determined through a community planning process.



Daily Tribune building to become a center of civic discourse and engagement

Lessons Learned

Over the last decade, Incourage has moved away from traditional responsive grant making approaches and toward making use of all of its resources – human, financial and reputational – to actively catalyze change. In the process, it has developed a much more nuanced understanding of information’s role in communities and, in particular, of the role information can play in promoting social change.

“In systems change, you have some levers. Information is one of them.”

Kelly Ryan
CEO, Incourage Community Foundation

Lesson 1: Take an open and participatory approach, and model it.

Incourage began its work to address the challenges of shrinking local news by acknowledging it didn’t have a solution. Instead it embraced a consultative role, partnering with local service providers and businesses, and engaging residents through surveys, focus groups and discussions to map their news environment and identify shortfalls. Facilitating these exchanges promoted individual participation, helped identify and build on existing community assets (such as the Nixle dispatch platform and local workforce collaborative) and challenged the dominant local culture of paternalism and dependency.

Lesson 2: Ask the experts.

The advice of partners and external experts was pivotal in Incourage’s journey. At various times, consultations with the leaders of other place-based foundations, community development experts and with Knight Foundation through the KCIC helped to focus thinking. Incourage’s work with the MIT Center for Civic Media influenced its understanding of the personal and practical as well as the deeper communal information needs of the south Wood community. And since some of Incourage’s investments have been in technologies that are experimental in the south Wood context, Incourage’s ongoing relationship with MIT brought needed technical expertise.

Lesson 3: Advance on all fronts: access, capacity and engagement.

Not every community has information deficits in all three of these areas, but they are interconnected. In order for citizens to use information productively, whether in private or in public roles, reliable information must be available, citizens must be able to make effective use of it; and relevant information should be made public so it can be deliberated openly. In south Wood’s case, there has been substantial progress on each of these fronts.

Lesson 4: Focus on the demand as well as supply.

Nurturing demand for accurate, relevant information may be more challenging than ensuring supply. Incourage’s work on the supply side was relatively straightforward, whereas its work on the “demand side” was more challenging, in part due to prevailing social norms. The foundation’s strategy has been to boost citizens’ appetites for information by seeding substantive and useful knowledge into community deliberations.

Lesson 5: Think long-term.

Community foundations are uniquely positioned to take a long-term view and Incourage is using this as a strategic advantage, betting that investments in creating and sustaining a healthy information ecosystem will pay off in the form of more effective community change.

Dubuque2.0: How the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque Used Environmental Information to Spark Citizen Action



If you care about climate change, it's easy to tune in to breaking news from remote places like Doha, Qatar, where the latest carbon emissions deals were cut at the 2012 U.N. climate talks. What's hard is to find usable information about pollution in your hometown, or to unearth the best ways to conserve resources in your own locale.

The Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque (CFGD) in Iowa recognized this disconnect in the "think global, act local" mantra. The foundation seized an opportunity to gather local environmental information and share it with residents of this Midwestern community in ways that inspired Dubuquers to conserve energy, use less water and adopt other environmentally friendly practices. But rather than launch a static "green" website that few people were likely to visit (even if they knew about it), the foundation took a more creative approach. It developed an interactive online information hub featuring games, contests and other ways for community members to get involved, and coupled the site with real-world outreach at places like farmers markets and cultural events. The approach was also highly leveraged: The foundation tapped into the Sustainable Dubuque campaign launched by City Hall and joined with sustainability efforts of companies such as IBM. To these campaigns, the foundation brought a critical missing link – the awareness and participation of individual residents. In so doing, the foundation experienced the value of successful community leadership and witnessed the impact that can be achieved when local residents can access and engage with the right information, at the right time, in the right form.

Moving Dubuque Toward a Greener and More Sustainable Future

To understand why the CFGD took on the challenge of environmental sustainability, consider the community's history of economic struggle. In the wake of the 1980s Midwest farm crisis and the collapse of local manufacturing nationwide, unemployment rates in Dubuque had reached 23 percent.¹ Meanwhile, the region was hemorrhaging young workers. "There was a saying, 'Would the last person out of Dubuque please turn out the lights,'" said Michelle Rios, a former recruiter at the Greater Dubuque Development Corporation.²

"We had a lot of great resources in the community that people didn't know about. There was no landing place for all of these pieces to come together. We were missing a lot of opportunities."

City of Dubuque Staff Member

Given this context, Dubuque made a remarkable transformation. The city today has well-developed health care, education, tourism, publishing and financial service sectors. Companies such as IBM are now major employers. The turnaround even sparked a campaign by local business and civic leaders – "Come back to your future, come home to Dubuque" – to meet the new demand for skilled workers.³

Dubuque had rebranded itself as a forward-looking city embracing new ideas. By 2005, the Dubuque City Council had chosen environmental sustainability as a top priority and launched initiatives designed to encourage recycling, create more green space and improve water quality, as well as upgrade public transit and revitalize parts of downtown. "Cities that get out in front on sustainability will have competitive economic advantages in the future," said Mayor Ron Buol.⁴

The activities coalesced into Sustainable Dubuque, a City Council-adopted initiative that today encompasses dozens of environmental, economic and social efforts, from methane capture and tree planting, to investments in museums and more accessible transit stops for the disabled.

The citywide Sustainable Dubuque initiative was developed through a two-year process that included community input. A core component of the initial vision was for local citizens to lead and participate in sustainability practices. Early on, Sustainable Dubuque had the support of policymakers and business and civic leaders, but the initiative initially struggled to connect deeply with the broader community. For instance, an early version of the Sustainable Dubuque website was designed to be an interactive information hub for environmental issues, but its success was limited. Some users couldn't find the information that they required to change their behavior (such as how to reduce energy or water consumption) so they emailed the program coordinator for advice, creating

Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque

Established: 2001

Location: Dubuque, Iowa

Asset size: \$34 million

Staff: 13

Mission: The Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque, as the primary philanthropic organization in the region, connects people, ideas and resources to improve lives in northeast Iowa.

¹ Iowa Association of Business and Industry, http://www.iowaabi.org/documents/filelibrary/presentations/Dubuque_Economic_Development_Panel_028D22F8D878A.pdf. Accessed Nov. 19, 2012.

² Johnson, Dirk. "Dubuque Journal; Hear Ye! 'Come Back to Your Future.'" The New York Times, July 16, 1998.

³ Ibid

⁴ "About Sustainable Dubuque", <http://ia-dubuque.civicplus.com/index.aspx?NID=1257>. Accessed Oct. 18, 2012.

substantial inefficiencies. Other residents faced different challenges: They lacked strong Internet skills, or didn't know how to connect with sustainability training and discussions in the community, while others were simply unaware of the initiative. For example, the nonprofit Green Dubuque held weekly "green drinks" events at local bars where residents could discuss sustainability issues. But the events were not well-publicized and few people outside Dubuque's environmental inner circle attended.

The Missing Link: Citizen Engagement

Eric Dregne, vice president of programs at the CFGD, recognized this missing component, and he believed the foundation could provide the link to engaging residents in green action. The timing was perfect: The foundation's board had recently earmarked resources for developing the CFGD's role as a community leader. And the board had asked foundation staff to convene community groups and educate citizens about critical local issues.⁵ With clear momentum for sustainability at the citywide policy level, and the missing piece of community involvement, the opportunity was a natural fit for the foundation.

With a strong mandate from the board and a clear need in the community, Dregne and his team began to develop a strategy for community engagement around local environment issues, dubbed Dubuque2.0. Foundation staff first spent several months building their understanding of how CFGD could transform Dubuque's existing environmental sustainability initiatives into resident-driven efforts, and studying how improved information sharing could contribute to success. They assembled a steering committee of leaders from businesses, city government, nonprofits, colleges and other grassroots organizations to guide their work. CFGD also forged partnerships with nearly two dozen local organizations; the partners included several groups that had never worked together or exchanged information before (see sidebar). And in order to engage grassroots Dubuque residents, the foundation held a series of "community café" forums at which residents shared their priorities and needs related to environmental change.

Dubuque2.0 Partnerships

Partner	Type
Green Dubuque	Nonprofit
Dubuque Main Street	Nonprofit
City of Dubuque	Government
Iowa Office of Energy Independence	Government
Loras College	Educational Institution
Clarke University	Educational Institution
University of Dubuque	Educational Institution
Northeast Iowa Community College	Educational Institution
Iowa State Extension	Educational Institution
Dubuque Public Schools	Educational Institution
Sustainable City Network	Corporation
Alliant Energy	Corporation
Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce	Corporation
Dubuque Fighting Saints	Corporation
Premier Bank	Corporation
Mystique Casino	Corporation
Telegraph Herald	Media

⁵ Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque, Initial Application for Funding from the Knight Community Information Challenge.

Connecting Citizens with the Issues

The strategy for Dubuque2.0 complemented the citywide work already under way through Sustainable Dubuque, and focused first on connecting with residents and equipping and motivating them to reduce their carbon and water footprints. The approach included both online and offline components. These elements included live community conversations and distribution of online and offline surveys to residents to understand their environmental priorities and needs. Dubuque2.0 also included a robust and interactive Web portal designed to complement the earlier city-sponsored Sustainable Dubuque site (which had proved too static) through Twitter feeds, a Facebook page, as well as community events, games and contests.

The Web-based information hub formed the center of Dubuque2.0's strategy, and the site evolved as the foundation learned more about how to effectively engage citizens in environmental action. For instance, the hub included links to a "green asset map" – a website tagged with local resources for sustainable living such as bike paths, farmers markets and green businesses. It also contained a carbon calculator for users to estimate their carbon footprints, along with a "sustainability tool kit" with advice on how to conserve energy and reduce waste. The idea was that as the site gained traction, community members would add their own tags and refresh the site with ideas for green activities, but the green asset map never took off. The tool did not generate external user input and was mainly managed and tagged by the Dubuque2.0 team.

Other initiatives were better suited to active community participation – particularly games and prize competitions with both online and offline ways to play. In one partnership with Sustainable Dubuque, Dubuque2.0 organized the Sustainability Challenge game, which featured practices to reduce carbon and water footprints. Participants could sign up for the 11-week game through the Dubuque2.0 web portal; received points by attending offline demonstrations of new energy and water-saving technologies, attending community events and accessing website pages with practical tips on how to reduce energy usage.

For example, participants could gain points by employing energy-saving practices at home such as line-drying clothes or helping to clean up a river. The more than 1,000 registered participants in the contest were incentivized by weekly prizes such as park season passes and gift cards, and a grand prize of \$5,000 presented during the final celebration.

Another winning initiative was conducted in partnership with the IBM-sponsored Smarter Cities pilot program. Three hundred Dubuque residents had received free IBM "smart" water meters to monitor usage in their homes. Users of the meters could log on to the IBM portal through the Dubuque2.0 website to view historical trends and real-time data on their water usage, coupled with information about how their choices affected their water costs and the environment. Users received personalized recommendations about how to reduce their water use, and they could connect with others online to share ideas and tips. An important aspect of program was a feature which allowed users to anonymously

Funding for Change

The Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque provided office and staff support to Dubuque2.0's staff and volunteers, and facilitated dialogue among key actors. It committed \$50,000 of its unrestricted funds to the effort. Another \$75,000 from Alliant Energy and a joint contribution of \$75,000 from Mystique Casino and the Dubuque Racing Association provided adequate seed funding to get the initiative started. This funding was matched by a \$205,000 grant from the Knight Foundation Community Information Challenge (KCIC), which then inspired \$50,000 in additional funding from a local paper, the Telegraph Herald. Later, an additional \$50,000 was leveraged from the Iowa Office of Energy Independence to support engagement efforts around Smarter Water/Electricity efforts.

compare their water use with neighbors participating in the pilot. The entire program proved addictive: Some smart water meter users reported checking their usage statistics often, sometimes almost obsessively. "Looking at the Web portal is one of the things I did at noon every day, in order to check my daily use," said one resident. Trainings provided by Dubuque2.0 were

critical for ensuring that residents could effectively access and use the smart meter data on the Web portal.

With both the Sustainability Challenge game and the IBM Smarter Water program, CFGD's Dubuque2.0 provided that critical missing link of citizen involvement.

What Worked Well?

It turns out that the Dubuque2.0 Web portal proved to be a useful organizing platform for the many online and offline events associated with the program. The site provided links to a range of information, including newly published research on sustainability topics and policy issues relevant to Dubuque, such as the city's recycling protocols and the use of smart meters to track energy use. And although the Web hub was a major piece of Dubuque2.0's work, the strategy also emphasized reaching people where they were. As Eric Dregne said, "We were keen to link online and offline activities, and to develop versions of our materials for people without Internet access."

Three pieces of the Dubuque2.0 strategy emerged as particularly successful ways to use information to engage residents and compel them to take action.

1) Community cafés and resident surveys drive understanding about sustainability priorities and needs.

Before finalizing its approach, Dubuque2.0 had hosted more than a dozen community cafes and forums for residents (generally 30-50 people attended each event) to come together and talk about sustainability issues. Ongoing community conversations also gave residents a platform to talk about such environmental policy issues as plastic bag regulations, water meter improvements and carbon emission targets. This led to greater understanding and support for regulations in some cases. Also, a community survey helped discover community priorities and inform plans to address gaps in resources and services.

2) Personalized data about resource use and neighbor benchmarks inspire action.

The IBM-sponsored Smarter Cities pilot program was a success because users could also compare their water use with that of neighbors, and they received information *specifically tailored* to their homes. IBM also launched a weekly competition with prizes to encourage users to reduce water use and inspire other environmentally friendly behavior. The Smarter Water pilot was followed by the Smarter Electricity pilot; both are currently being expanded. Training provided by Dubuque2.0 was critical for ensuring that residents could effectively access and use the smart meter data in the Web portal; Dubuque2.0 ultimately became the community engagement arm of the Smarter Cities program.

3) Online and offline community games generate action and friendly competition around sustainability.

The Sustainability Challenge game organized by Dubuque2.0 and Sustainable Dubuque encouraged residents to attend sustainability-themed training events and begin practices to reduce their carbon and water footprints. The online and offline components facilitated action rather than passive observation, and the cash prizes and point system provided incentives for behavior changes.

Through these activities, Dubuque2.0 played a critical role in ensuring that residents could take advantage of the city's many sustainability resources and that resident engagement infused and influenced many elements of the city's overarching sustainability efforts, both online and offline.

Some components of the Dubuque2.0 strategy proved to be less effective. These included:

- An online discussion board about sustainability, which was embedded in the Dubuque2.0 website. It was hard to encourage visitors to comment on the discussion board, partially because the technology was cumbersome (messages needed to be approved by the foundation’s communications intern), and partially because it never had enough activity to become a destination in its own right. This meant that the majority of messages were posted by the Dubuque2.0 team, and the level of community engagement was limited.
- Use of Twitter to spread messages to new audiences. This was ineffective since the few Twitter followers that the project attracted were already highly informed and engaged.
- The “green asset” map. As mentioned above, this tool did not generate user and community input and was mainly managed and tagged by the Dubuque2.0 team.

Results: Heightened Awareness and Behavior Changes

Three years after the launch of Dubuque2.0, evidence shows that this citizen engagement effort (along with the broader Sustainable Dubuque initiative) has contributed to several major changes:

Greater access to and sharing of sustainability

information: More than 5,500 unique users – roughly 10 percent of the city’s population – have visited Dubuque2.0 since its inception. The initiative has created a useful platform to ensure that sustainability messages reach their intended audiences. As a leader of the nonprofit Green Dubuque noted, “Before Dubuque2.0, important messages about this work weren’t reaching people. Now when Green Dubuque calls people about policy initiatives, the community understands better what we’re talking about. The channels have been created to get the information out there around issues like this.” As another resident commented, “People have gotten much more used to hearing the sustainability vocabulary. It’s a part of how we think now.”

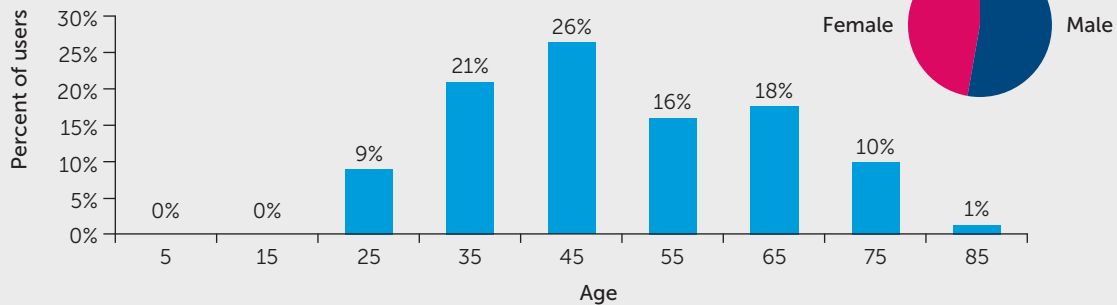
Personalized water and energy usage data provided through the IBM Smarter Cities pilots prompted lively discussion in the community about personal energy habits, and in some case, a compulsive tracking of personal energy consumption. It also prompted broader expansion of the idea: Loras College, a local

liberal arts college, used the Dubuque2.0 platform to launch a student competition, where dorms equipped with smart meters competed against one another to reduce their energy use.

Early signs of behavior change: Dubuque2.0 and related sustainability efforts in the community have also contributed to early signs of behavior change. In one survey, 69 percent of Dubuque2.0 website users indicated that they were doing more than in the past to promote sustainability in their homes and communities. “Because of my involvement in Dubuque2.0,” noted one young resident, “I now grow a garden, participated in a cleanup of our main street and ride the bus more often.” Residents involved in the IBM Smarter Cities pilot decreased their water use by 6.6 percent on average.

By focusing on engagement, Dubuque2.0 has strengthened community connections and helped create a sense of shared responsibility. Residents have started to realize the importance of engaging their neighbors and families, and that it takes many residents to make progress on an issue like sustainability. For example, a mother of two decided to talk to her neighbor about recycling after noting that he never put out any trash to be recycled. In her words: “Part of what Dubuque2.0 did was to help everyone take responsibility for sustainability.”

Dubuque2.0 User Demographics



Note: Statistics are based on a survey of a sample of Dubuque2.0 users
N=114 (representing 2% of Dubuque2.0 users)

Increased focus on community engagement:

Finally, the community engagement strategy employed by Dubuque2.0 has begun to influence how the city of Dubuque approaches its work on other social issues. The city government recently hired a community engagement specialist and is developing a Web-based platform for increasing resident involvement in issues such as building strong neighborhoods and connecting citizens to volunteer opportunities. And CFGD reports that it has increased its own capacity to catalyze community engagement. The foundation plans to use these new community engagement skills to address local poverty concerns. And both board and staff report more alignment and a better appreciation for the role of an information-based community engagement strategy in driving progress on important issues.

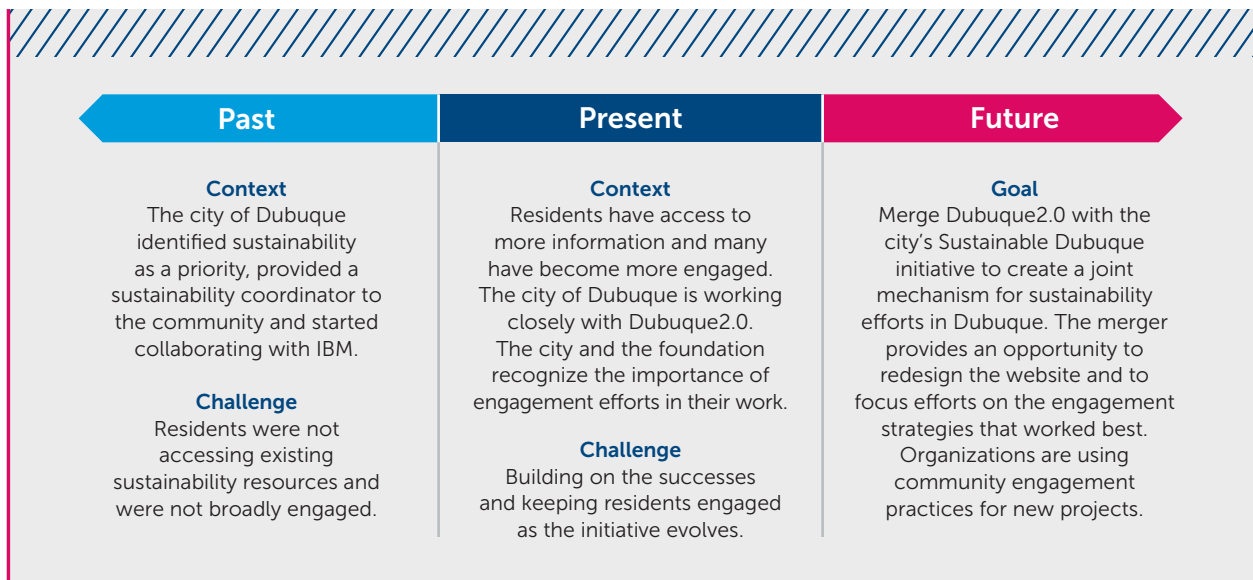
"I think because I was involved with 2.0 I got to know more people in the community for whom this was a passion and an interest. This allows you to start talking to each other and asking how can we do x y and z. It connected me with a lot of people and I am still in touch with some of them."

Local Nonprofit Leader

The Future of Dubuque2.0

The Dubuque2.0 platform is being integrated into Sustainable Dubuque, rather than remaining a separate entity. Program leaders believe this will make the initiative more financially viable by tying in to existing funding streams, and will ensure a long-term home for community engagement around sustainability and environmental issues. The joint venture will receive financial support from the city in the form of a full staff member for at least the first two years, and will gradually evolve into an independent community organization.

The foundation will continue to play a leading role on the new steering committee and has committed half of a staff member's time for the first year. This gradual transition fits well with the foundation's early focus on creating an effective exit strategy. The extended support from the foundation and the city is also intended to give the new entity an opportunity to develop and test its financial model. A possible membership model for some website tools is being evaluated, which could generate revenue to support the platform.



Lessons Learned

Lesson 1: Ensure that information leads to human engagement and offline action.

Live human interaction is needed to make things spark. The foundation focused on engagement from the start and never thought of Dubuque2.0 as “just a website.” It was a comprehensive community engagement tool, with many online and offline entry points. Several features on the Dubuque2.0 website, such as the Dubuque Sustainability Challenge game and the water- and energy-use dashboards, encouraged users to make short-term behavior changes or attend in-person events.

Lesson 2: Build on existing resources and be open to a wide range of partnerships.

Nearly every start-up Web-based initiative struggles to generate enough content to ensure wide and sustained appeal. To address this challenge, Dubuque2.0 was designed to serve as an organizing hub for content that already existed. The Web portal provided links to IBM’s Smarter Cities pilots, to relevant city websites, and to reports and events sponsored by other organizations. Additional material was developed where gaps were identified, such as a green asset map that showed the locations of parks, sustainable businesses and events.

Lesson 3: Plan to reach audiences with limited Internet access for true community engagement.

At well-attended community events, such as the farmer’s market, community service days and festivals, the foundation set up information booths informing people about the website and providing paper copies of Web materials for people without Internet access. Citizens could also play a paper version of the Dubuque Sustainability Challenge. One retired teacher became involved with Dubuque2.0 by using the print version of the sustainability tool kit, manually filling in a journal every day with notes about her water and energy consumption. This offline approach ensured that a broader swath of the community was engaged in sustainability efforts. SMS texts could have been another way to reach audiences without regular Internet access.

Lesson 4: Design a multifaceted and adaptable strategy for community engagement.

The foundation and the steering committee adopted an experimental mindset in the work, trying many more approaches than the handful that really stuck. This led to a wider variety of touch points for residents to become engaged. The multipronged approach enabled Dubuque2.0 to reach as many people as possible and remain open to and flexible about the ways residents were excited to engage. As a result, the program’s components were never “complete” or “finished” but evolved as the community foundation and partners better understood the needs of the community and the strengths of different engagement strategies.

About

John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

Knight Foundation supports transformational ideas that promote quality journalism, advance media innovation, engage communities and foster the arts. We believe that democracy thrives when people and communities are informed and engaged.

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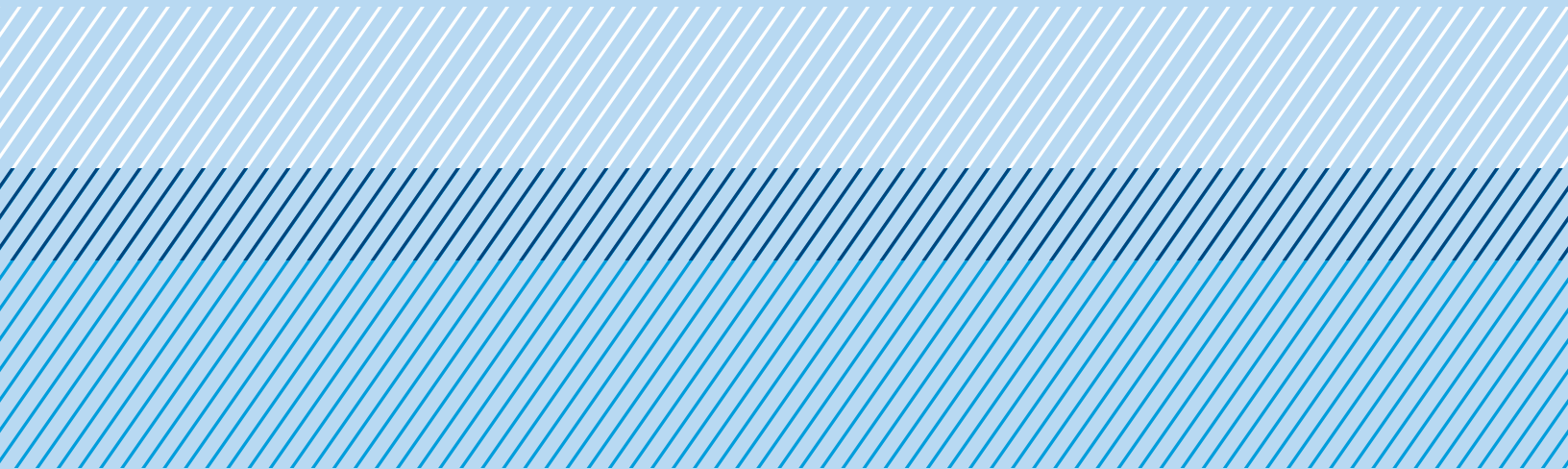
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