



REIMAGINING SOCIAL CHANGE

BOSTON GENEVA SAN FRANCISCO SEATTLE WASHINGTON, DC FSG.ORG

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
Journalism and Media Enduring
Commitment: Synthesis Report
(2015-2020)

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CONTENTS

- A. Executive Summary 3
- B. Introduction 7
- C. Journalism and Media Strategy Theory of Change 8
 - Journalism and Media Context: mid-2000s to 2015 8
 - Journalism and Media Strategy Theory of Change: 2015-2020 11
 - The Three Modules of the Journalism and Media Strategy 14
 - The Journalism and Media Strategy Approaches 15
 - Expected Journalism and Media Strategy Outcomes 15
- D. Journalism and Media Strategy Implementation 18
- E. Evaluation Framework 27
 - Approach to Data Collection 27
 - Measuring Progress Toward Outcomes 28
 - Assessing Contribution 29
 - Limitations of Data Collection and Analytic Methods 29
- F. What We Are Learning 31
 - What We Are Learning About the Landscape: 2015-2020 31
 - What We Are Learning About Progress Toward Outcomes 38
 - Professional Nonprofit Reporting 39
 - Nonfiction Multimedia Storytelling 50
 - Participatory Civic Media 62
 - Contributions Toward Long-term Outcomes 73
 - Feedback for the Foundation 78
 - What We Are Learning About the Theory of Change 82
- G. Conclusions 94
- H. Endnotes 97

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Journalism and Media (JAM) strategy is an Enduring Commitment of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation (the Foundation). Since revising their strategy in 2015, the JAM program has sought to **strengthen U.S. democracy by supporting accurate, just, and inclusive news and narratives that inform, engage, and activate people within the United States to build a more equitable future.** Implemented through three unique yet complementary modules – Professional Nonprofit Reporting (PNR), Nonfiction Multimedia Storytelling (NFM), and Participatory Civic Media (PCM) – the program’s theory of change posits that by fostering strong organizations; addressing barriers to media creation and consumption; and promoting learning, leadership, innovation, and field-building opportunities, the JAM strategy will contribute to intended positive changes for grantee organizations and the field that will enable them to contribute to long-term changes in multiple aspects of U.S. democracy.

The revised strategy marked the beginning of several key shifts in the JAM team’s approach to its work. Most notably, the new strategy added a portfolio of work – the PCM module – and shifted from a focus on support for legacy organizations toward an emphasis on support for emerging and Black-, Indigenous-, and people of color-led (BIPOC-led) organizations, including intentional efforts to shift power away from the Foundation through the use of intermediaries. Multi-year general operating support and flexible project support remained hallmarks of the team’s approach. As of June 2020, **the JAM strategy had made 174 grants totaling just under \$116 million in approved funding across the three modules.**

The goal of this paper is to provide the latest information from the ongoing evaluation of the JAM strategy, facilitate learning, and serve as one input that contributes to the strategy review process. The evidence presented explores **the evolution of the landscape and resulting windows of opportunity, the strategy’s progress to date, and the validity of its theory of change and key assumptions.**

Overall, the landscape shows a window of continued opportunity, as threats and challenges have been exacerbated in recent years. The journalism and media field continues to face threats from governments, is vulnerable to the spread of mis- and disinformation, is threatened by low levels of public trust in the media, and is facing a lack of sustained and unrestricted funding from philanthropy and other funders. In this context, the JAM strategy is providing critical and outsized support to organizations and individuals in the field.

The strategy has demonstrated substantial progress to date. Across each of the modules, the JAM strategy significantly contributed to grantees’ and the field’s progress toward outcomes that ultimately support democratic ideals. Equipped with flexible, core support, grantees built internal capacity to develop their organizations to become stronger and more stable, including increasing internal structural equity.¹ In doing so, grantees were better able to support individuals and other key

¹ By **internal structural equity**, we are referring to efforts by an organization to use internal procedures and processes that deliberately seek to eliminate the enduring barriers that disproportionately affect people from historically marginalized communities (including BIPOC, immigrants, refugees, women, and LGBTQIA+ populations) in order to create a culture and space that is just and inclusive.

stakeholders in the field with the resources, tools, and supports necessary to create, disseminate, and engage with content and the civic sphere.

With greater organizational strength and stability came increased capacity to tell stories that humanized issues by including the voices and perspectives of people and communities most impacted.

In effect, grantees shifted narratives to include more voices of and stories for and about BIPOC, immigrants, refugees, and other historically underrepresented communities. An assessment of *how* grantees were talking about issues, using the COVID-19 pandemic and immigration as examples, showed that grantees were focused on telling the stories of marginalized populations, how they were experiencing exacerbated economic and social inequities, and failures of the U.S. government's response to the pandemic and immigration issues. By focusing on underrepresented and underreported stories in this way, grantees fulfilled their critical public service function of informing their audiences and equipping them with the information they needed to take action.

Numerous grantees documented engagement with their work and resulting action to hold individuals and institutions accountable. In the PCM module in particular, grantees fostered greater self-expression and engagement with campaigns and causes of import to communities most affected by the issues, including youth and BIPOC. Some NFM grantees noted a growing intentionality around encouraging action related to the issues they covered in their work, via an increasing focus on post-production engagement and / or impact producing. And PNR grantees continued to create high-quality, award-winning content. In turn, across all three modules – PNR, NFM, and PCM – grantees noted actions taken by individuals, elected officials, and others in response to content created by or supported by their work.

In regards to the JAM strategy's value-add, general operating support and field building activities were two areas in which the JAM strategy provided particularly unique and impactful supports to grantees. General operating support was consistently highlighted as an approach that enabled grantees to grow, build infrastructure and capacity, experiment and take risks, weather political and economic turmoil, and, frequently, leverage funds from other organizations. Grantee convenings, formal and informal connections, and other field-building supports enabled grantees to network and collaborate in new ways and, in the case of PCM, further define an otherwise nascent space.

However, additional efforts are needed to elevate the voices and self-expression of BIPOC; LGBTQIA+ people;ⁱⁱ undocumented people; and people with disabilities. The field remains a challenging place for these communities to create and disseminate content and engage in the civic sphere through digital media, and shifting field dynamics continue to disproportionately impact BIPOC, LGBTQIA+ populations, undocumented people, and people with disabilities. They continue to be excluded from opportunities, face barriers to advancement, are frequently the targets of threats, and are disproportionately impacted by disruptive events, like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Given what we learned about the landscape and the JAM strategy's progress toward intended outcomes, FSG believes the theory of change and key assumptions remain valid. Organizational

ⁱⁱ LGBTQIA+ is an abbreviation used throughout this document to refer to people who identify as any of the following: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender / transsexual, queer / questioning, intersex, asexual / allies, non-binary/genderqueer, or other (+).

strength and stability were found to be necessary precursors for the rest of the outcomes. In particular, we found that financial stability and internal structural equity were crucially important for grantee organizations. Financial stability enabled organizations to be flexible, adapt, and grow capacities (including internal structural equity) that were necessary to do responsive work. Internal structural equity was vital to ensuring that the work considered and incorporated diverse perspectives on issues, and ultimately that more accurate, just, and inclusive news and narratives were generated and made more visible.

Finally, as an Enduring Commitment, the JAM strategy is designed to support and contribute to a set of incontrovertible values of import to the Foundation. Rather than being held accountable to long-term goals or outcomes that are to be achieved in a particular timeframe, Enduring Commitments are intended to contribute in meaningful ways to the advancement of key ideals over an extended period of time. This is in recognition of the fact that change in complex contexts is not linear, is influenced by a host of external factors, takes time to achieve, and that certain ideals – such as a strengthened democracy – are a continual pursuit.

Within this context, the evaluation surfaced important grantee-level contributions toward the long-term outcomes the JAM strategy seeks to influence. Overall, grantees reported high, and in many cases increasing, levels of engagement among audiences with content, campaigns, and other opportunities created and / or supported by grantee organizations. They reported working to create and / or support creation of high-quality content; opportunities for meaningful public dialogue, often across ideological lines; and efforts to advance research and policy change about issues covered by grantees' work. Lastly, numerous grantees noted instances in which content that they created and / or supported contributed to actions taken by people in positions of power and the institutions in which such people worked. All of these efforts constitute important contributions toward the JAM strategy's long-term outcomes.

However, as is to be expected with an Enduring Commitment, the JAM strategy's long-term outcomes have not yet been "achieved" at the national level. Despite the strategy's substantial contributions in many areas, the quality of U.S. democracy is declining, civic engagement remains low among some populations,ⁱⁱⁱ and political polarization is high, suggesting a lack of national unity. This does *not* mean that the program's efforts – and those of grantees, as individual organizations and in the collective – have not contributed in meaningful, significant ways. Rather, it speaks to the fact that now, more than ever, there is a need to create and foster the conditions necessary for a strong democracy that supports a more equitable future for all.

Toward this aim, as the JAM team reflects on implications of these findings for its future strategy, we offer the following questions:

1. How do racism and power influence the ecosystem, and how or in what ways might the JAM strategy leverage a "deep equity" and systems change lens to address resulting inequities?

ⁱⁱⁱ It is worth noting that current trends are evolving rapidly within the context of the 2020 election cycle – signs point to potentially record-setting levels of voter engagement, despite significant anti-democratic efforts to suppress and invalidate voting.

2. What roles do social media platforms play in the ecosystem, and how or in what ways might the JAM strategy address the simultaneous opportunities and threats they present?
3. What is the role of mis- and disinformation in the ecosystem, and how or in what ways might the JAM strategy address their root causes and effects?
4. In addition to the JAM strategy's general operating and project-based support, what technical assistance supports do grantees and the field need to support continued development?
5. How might the JAM program further support ongoing learning and collaboration among grantees, including supporting key changes both within and across grantees (e.g., through communities of practice)?
6. How might the JAM program continue to shift power away from the Foundation (i.e., through the use of intermediaries) without further exacerbating gatekeeping dynamics?

B. INTRODUCTION

Since 2017, FSG has partnered with the MacArthur Foundation (the Foundation) to evaluate and learn from the grantmaking and non-grantmaking activities of the Journalism and Media (JAM) Enduring Commitment. As the JAM strategy's Evaluation and Learning Partner, FSG aims to serve as a critical friend to the JAM team, probing the logic underpinning the strategy through the refinement and documentation of the strategy's theory of change, and collecting robust quantitative and qualitative data, bringing those data to bear during learning-oriented discussions.

This report is intended to provide information to inform the JAM team's strategy review process that will begin in December 2020. The learnings presented here are the culmination of evaluation activities conducted in 2019-2020 designed to answer three overarching questions:

1. **Journalism and media landscape:** Does the landscape suggest a value-add role for the JAM team to play with windows of opportunity for progress toward significant, meaningful contributions?
2. **Progress toward outcomes:** Does progress to date demonstrate significant, meaningful contributions? Does the implementation to date reflect a high-quality, effective program with possibility for meaningful results?
3. **Theory of change:** Is the current theory of change (and accompanying assumptions) adequate to reach the intended significant, meaningful contributions?

This report begins by providing a summary of the strategy's theory of change and strategic implementation to date, as well as an overview of the evaluation framework. These sections are followed by the "What We Are Learning" section, which focuses on answering the three overarching questions enumerated above. The last section of the report details our final conclusions.

C. THE JOURNALISM AND MEDIA STRATEGY'S THEORY OF CHANGE

This section describes the JAM strategy's theory of change for the current strategy period (2015-2020), including shifts in the landscape from the mid-2000s to 2015 that influenced development of the current theory of change.

The JAM strategy is an Enduring Commitment for the Foundation, grounded in a set of core values held by the institution. In June 2015, the Foundation's Board endorsed the updated strategy, continuing a long-standing tradition of support for independent reporting and narrative storytelling, while also recognizing that changes in the media environment and the United States (U.S.) context provided new opportunities and challenges that the JAM strategy could and should address.

The Foundation believes that independent and alternative journalism and media are essential levers for positive change in American democracy. The United States is currently experiencing an era where mainstream news is often incomplete and more concerned about profit; disinformation campaigns seek to confuse and polarize; and public and corporate figures attempt to disparage or silence the press, as well as individuals that would speak out against them. As a result, large segments of the American public are misinformed, disengaged, and cynical about their role as civic actors and agents for social change. In this environment, fully aware of the forces working against accuracy, truth, authentic representation, mutual respect, inclusion, and equity, the JAM team aspires to support journalism and media that:

- Propagate accurate, just, and inclusive news and narratives, which highlight critical analyses of the historical, social, racial, cultural, economic, and political forces that have given rise to current issues;
- Explore underreported or misunderstood issues;
- Include, strengthen, and amplify diverse perspectives; and
- Engender deep and nuanced understanding about current events.

To better understand the JAM strategy, it is important to start by illuminating the context in which it was developed.

JOURNALISM AND MEDIA CONTEXT: MID-2000S TO 2015

Professional Nonprofit Reporting Context

Around 2007, rapid changes began occurring that substantially changed the face of professional nonprofit reporting (PNR) and journalism.¹ At this time, the broader industry and market experienced the impact of the rise of online news aggregators [e.g., the Huffington Post (2005), BuzzFeed (2006), Breitbart (2007)] and social media [e.g., Facebook's news feed (2006), Twitter (2006)], which focused on repurposing content and offering it to readers free of charge. Due in large part to these new market entrants, the field experienced a rapid shift in advertising revenue—historically the primary source of revenue for the industry—being drawn away from traditional news sources toward online news aggregators, social media, and search advertising platforms (e.g., Google).² Classified advertisements, a

major source of revenue for smaller local newspapers, also shifted toward the then-new and free Craigslist.

Between 2007 and 2008, newspaper advertising revenues fell by 23 percent, and were further exacerbated by the 2007-2008 Recession which doubled the revenue losses in the news industry. As a result, reporting resources quickly declined, news organizations and outlets conducted massive staff layoffs, and many local and regional outlets folded.³ Large legacy news organizations like The New York Times and the Boston Globe adapted in order to survive, but did so by dramatically scaling back their investigative reporting and coverage of international, local, and state government news.⁴ Many laid-off reporters turned to freelance work, which can be unpredictable and low-paid – if paid at all. Others, mainly investigative and beat reporters, built new nonprofit news organizations, with philanthropic dollars providing the seed funding.⁵ As of mid-2020, more than 300 nonprofit news organizations have been launched in the United States since 2005 and have received over \$249 million in philanthropic support.⁶

These trends directly influenced the type and format of content production, with online platforms increasingly looking to the volume of “likes” and clicks to determine what content to publish. Simultaneously, media coverage narrowed to focus on a few continuing storylines, resulting in the exclusion of a multitude of topics and stories. In 2008, a Pew Research study found that two stories – the war in Iraq and the 2008 presidential campaign – attracted a substantial amount of the media’s energy and resources and filled more than a quarter of the space allotted to news.⁷

In addition, the media and news consumption habits of those living in the United States were beginning to shift during this time period. Increasingly, Americans were reading their news online versus in hard-copy newspapers and magazines, and were turning to “on-demand” platforms for their news. From 2007 to 2008, the number of Americans who regularly went online for news increased by 19 percent, seeking platforms that could “tell them what they want to know, when they want to know it.”⁸

Nonfiction Multimedia Context

Around the early- to mid-2000s, two key trends fundamentally shifted the nonfiction media (NFM) landscape. First, seminal documentaries were produced that captivated audiences through their portrayal of major social issues and systemic inequities. Films such as *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004), *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006), and *Food, Inc.* (2008), and these later films, *Waiting for Superman* (2010), *The Invisible War* (2012), and *Blackfish* (2013), not only were commercialized and reached mass audiences and generated unprecedented revenue, but investigated and questioned narratives around education, politics, the environment, and other social issues.⁹ Some films were disseminated with accompanying impact campaigns designed to catalyze viewers to take action. In an era of media conglomeration, documentaries came to represent an alternative medium that could both question traditional media channels and ways of disseminating information as well as build social awareness and catalyze social impact. During the mid- to late-aughts, the documentary field experienced increased investment from social entrepreneurs and saw the emergence of funding organizations and nonprofits aimed at leveraging documentary to drive social change.¹⁰

It is important to note, however, that films often characterized as key markers in the history of the documentary medium were predominantly produced and directed by White men with access to generational wealth. The positive reception of these films – and their filmmakers – by the media and the public functioned to exclude and effectively erase the work of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) makers and BIPOC-led organizations during and predating this period, including *Eyes on the Prize* (1987); *Who Killed Vincent Chin?* (1987); *The Murder of Emmett Till* (2003) and a postcard campaign which led to the U.S. Justice Department re-opening of the case;¹¹ *The Green Book: Guide to Freedom* (2010); *Freedom Riders* (2010); *9.70* (2012); and *Miners Shot Down* (2014).¹²

Second, 2007 marked the emergence of streaming platforms. The introduction of new, adaptive streaming technology in 2007 led to its adoption by multiple platforms, including Netflix, Apple, Microsoft, and Adobe.¹³ These companies applied a long-form approach to their series and film content – defined by slow-developing narratives that aligned well with documentary but was incompatible with broadcast television and theatrical film – which encouraged binge-watching on their platforms in the convenience of one’s home.¹⁴ Netflix in particular changed the landscape by not only providing content through its platform but also producing it, with the fictional series *House of Cards* (2013) becoming the first Netflix-produced show to premiere.¹⁵

The confluence of the commercialization of documentary film and the rise of streaming platforms shaped the funding structure for NFM, where makers increasingly had to be entrepreneurs seeking out multiple revenue streams to support their work.¹⁶ In addition, new forms of NFM such as podcasting also emerged that adopted a similar long-form format as documentary and connected with audiences through streaming channels.¹⁷

Participatory Civic Media Context

Participatory Civic Media (PCM) is fundamentally interdisciplinary, cutting across multiple fields and spheres including civics, civic technology, civic engagement, media literacy, participatory politics, journalism, NFM, and pop culture and entertainment media. The establishment of the Research Network on Youth Participatory Politics, supported by the Foundation, was a key marker in the development of the PCM space.¹⁸ It sought to reimagine civic engagement, civic education, and citizen journalism by equipping young people, whose engagement had historically declined, with the tools and resources necessary to be good civic actors.¹⁹ PCM functions to connect stories, individuals, and communities to form larger, cross-network, and movement-building narratives to ultimately reclaim and create power, particularly for young people and BIPOC. It is important to note that because the PCM space is new and a fully defined field does not exist, available research is somewhat limited.

Thus, PCM in the mid-aughts to 2015 was marked less by singular events and more by the confluence of multiple trends. During this period, definitions of civic media expanded to encompass the social, cultural, and community contexts that determine how individuals engage as citizens, activists, and journalists.²⁰ The participatory component of civic media in particular came to the fore through the use of media and technology to engage in the public sphere, build social connections and community, strengthen individual and community agency, and increase institutional accountability.²¹ The rise of social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) during this period contributed to the field’s

development, offering a mass organizing function for activists to build awareness of and support for social issues, and to include the voices of people and communities who had experienced marginalization and barriers to participation.²² For example, activist-led organizations focused on engaging and mobilizing BIPOC to hold institutions and people in positions of power accountable.²³ In addition, media literacy and civic engagement curriculum experienced changes as practitioners sought to bridge young people's interest in digital platforms and the creation of content online with participation in the civic sphere.²⁴

The baseline period also saw the launch of several movements by BIPOC, women, young people, and people from other historically marginalized and underrepresented groups.²⁵ Movements such as Me Too (beginning in 2006) and the Black Lives Matter movement (beginning in 2013), were founded through grassroots activism, and leveraged social media hashtags to build widespread momentum and catalyze change. These efforts continue to have influence today, as multiple movements use participatory media and organizing practices to spread awareness, including the March for Our Lives, Time's Up, and the continued Black Lives Matter movement.

JOURNALISM AND MEDIA STRATEGY THEORY OF CHANGE: 2015-2020

In response to these trends in the landscape, the Foundation developed and approved a new JAM strategy in 2015. To make the thinking underlying the new strategy explicit, the JAM program worked with FSG to articulate and document a corresponding theory of change in 2017-2018. While the theory of change was designed to reflect the strategy developed in 2015, it also reflected the evolution of the team's thinking since the strategy's approval.

The ultimate goal of the current strategy is to **strengthen U.S. democracy by supporting accurate, just, and inclusive news and narratives that inform, engage, and activate people within the United States to build a more equitable future.** The JAM strategy's working definitions of accurate, just, and inclusive news and narratives appear in the box on the next page.

Accurate news and narratives: Stories about current events and issues that authentically represent and reflect the individuals, communities, and issues at the heart of the story; provide important context, especially about social dynamics that have been historically underrepresented in mainstream media; are rigorously reported and based in facts and evidence; and are, taken together, accepted as truth and make up a collectively-held world view or perspective.

Just news and narratives: Stories about current events and issues that are fair; reveal systemic social context and their impacts on people and communities, especially those who have been historically marginalized; aim to bring abuse of power and harmful negligence to account; inspire civic engagement and action; and are, taken together, accepted as truth and make up a collectively-held world view or perspective.

Inclusive news and narratives: Stories that provide multiple points of view on a topic, including stories told by the people and communities most affected by the issues on which the story focuses; promote self-reflection, empathy, and mutual respect; and are, taken together, accepted as truth and make up a collectively-held world view or perspective.

The JAM strategy theory of change (**Figure 1**, page 13) articulates the strategy's intended pathway to confront challenges in the information environment in order to strengthen democracy. The hypothesis underlying the JAM strategy is:

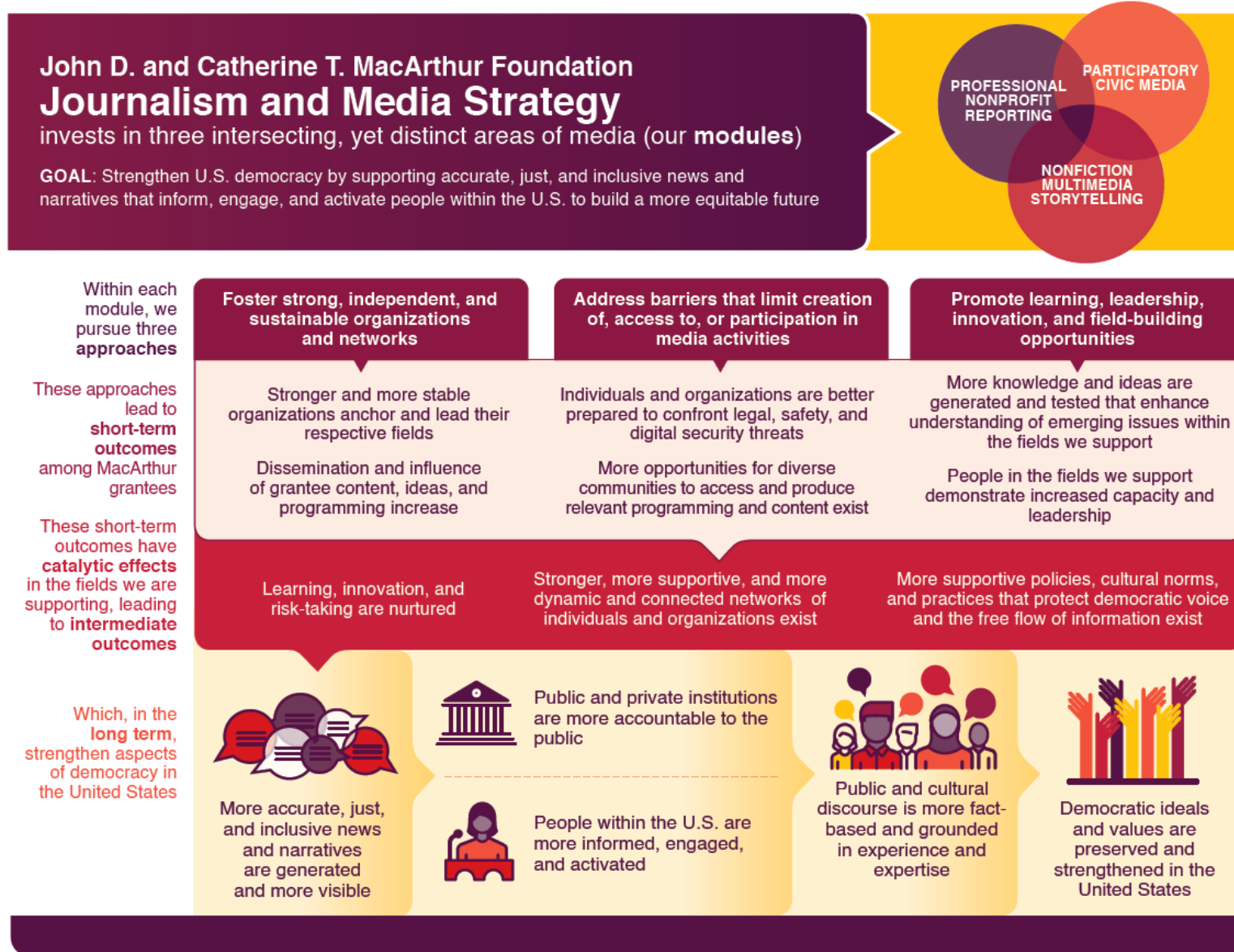
If the Foundation invests, via the JAM strategy, in the PNR, NFM, and PCM modules to foster strong organizations; address the barriers to creating, accessing, and participating in media activities; and promote learning, leadership, innovation, and field-building opportunities,

then the JAM strategy will result in intended positive changes for grantee organizations, their networks and their fields, enabling them to contribute to long-term changes in multiple aspects of U.S. democracy.

A theory of change is a detailed description of a strategy, which the Foundation defines as a set of pathways designed to effect change. It communicates the specific change we seek to achieve, and how we believe that change will occur. In other words, it articulates the connection between our planned work and our intended results. It also identifies the underlying assumptions and unknowns that influence the shape and success of our strategy.

Importantly, the theory of change for the JAM strategy does not follow a linear process and does not have a defined end point; rather, the work is interconnected and dynamic. The outcomes build upon each other in a circular, reinforcing process, where a stronger democracy will feed back into the media sector, prompting even more organizations to produce, support, and enable accurate, just, and inclusive news and narratives. This will, in turn, continue to strengthen democratic norms and institutions in the United States. Each of these elements of the JAM strategy theory of change is explored in more detail in the following section.

Figure 1: Journalism and Media Theory of Change



THE THREE MODULES OF THE JOURNALISM AND MEDIA STRATEGY^{iv}

The JAM strategy seeks to support journalism and media to inform and inspire people within the United States to demand and build a more equitable nation consistent with the promise of American democracy. The strategy recognizes and supports three distinct and complementary areas, or modules, of media – PNR, NFM, and PCM – because these areas of media can be drivers of influence and change in public discourse, cultural norms, and policymaking.



The **PNR module** focuses on revealing abuses of power and systemic social problems, and educating the public about significant, urgent, and under-reported issues. While for-profit news organizations also perform this function, often, a dependence on market-based profitability undermines the public service function of the press. Through this module, the JAM strategy supports a set of nonprofit journalism organizations that conduct intensive explanatory and investigative reporting and create high-quality journalism that brings accurate, reliable, and consequential information to audiences wherever they may be. These outlets also provide coverage of communities that have been historically underrepresented in mainstream media and conduct investigatory journalism into issues not often covered elsewhere.

The **NFM module** focuses on bringing to light the human stories behind issues, events, and policies. With new platforms available and increased demand from the public for such stories, there are more ways for audiences to find and experience documentaries and other media, but much of the major corporate funding is focused on White filmmakers. Some documentary media organizations focus their energy on supporting artistic, compelling, and original nonfiction media that fairly and responsibly tackles social issues from a variety of viewpoints. These organizations also create inclusive pathways for new content creators from diverse backgrounds to hone their craft and produce work that has an impact. An even smaller subset of organizations successfully present and disseminate this nonfiction work, ensuring that these projects reach broad and targeted audiences, connect relevant advocates and activists, and reach their full potential for informing policy change. The JAM strategy supports these organizations and, through them, fosters independent documentary projects via re-granting and holistic, creative support with a focus on BIPOC filmmakers.

The **PCM module** focuses on amplifying the voices of young people and those from historically underrepresented and marginalized communities – particularly BIPOC; LGBTQIA+ populations;^v undocumented people; and people with disabilities. Although digital media has facilitated engagement in civic and political life in new ways—especially among younger people—the impetus and capability to do so remains unevenly distributed. Unlike the PNR and NFM fields, the PCM field is still emerging and

^{iv} Module-level theories of change are included in **Annex 1.1**.

^v LGBTQIA+ is an abbreviation used throughout this document to refer to people who identify as any of the following: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender / transsexual, queer / questioning, intersex, asexual / allies, non-binary/genderqueer, or other (+).

does not yet have a mature ecosystem of organizations and networks designed to support and foster the learning, creation, completion, presentation, and distribution of PCM. Of the organizations that do exist and work in this space, many are nascent or isolated from one another, and do not have access to the type of support systems that promote peer-to-peer learning, networking, and organizational development. The JAM grantmaking strategy in PCM is designed to grow the infrastructure for and strengthen this field so that it can effectively expand. This is expected to accelerate the participation of people within the United States – especially young people and people from historically underrepresented and marginalized communities – in using new media tools, platforms, and practices to shape cultural norms and policy outcomes in ways that contribute to a stronger, more inclusive, and more participatory U.S. democracy.

THE JOURNALISM AND MEDIA STRATEGY APPROACHES

Across all three modules – PNR, NFM, and PCM – the strategy involves three approaches:^{vi}

Foster strong, independent, and sustainable organizations and networks

Address barriers that limit creation of, access to, or participation in media activities

Promote learning, leadership, innovation, and field-building opportunities

Taken together, these approaches respond to specific challenges and opportunities presented by rapid technological developments, an ever-changing media marketplace, funding pressures faced by the media sector, and changes to the ways in which people within the United States produce, consume, and engage with media. According to the theory of change, the JAM strategy posits that these approaches will strengthen and connect the media sector to more effectively ensure that all people within the United States – and especially those from historically underrepresented and marginalized communities – are able to contribute to a public dialogue that shapes cultural norms and policy outcomes. The JAM strategy utilizes these three approaches in all three of its modules, as depicted in each module’s theory of change.

EXPECTED JOURNALISM AND MEDIA STRATEGY OUTCOMES

By pursuing the three approaches of fostering strong organizations; addressing barriers; and promoting learning, leadership, innovation, and field-building opportunities, the JAM strategy expects to see a set of changes or outcomes that will *contribute* to its goal of preserving and strengthening democratic ideals and values in the United States.^{vii} These desired outcomes represent changes that are expected to occur along varying time horizons and among different target populations and areas of media:

^{vi} The Foundation defines “approach” as a component of a strategy that represents a pathway to change (e.g. advocacy, communications campaign). Each approach may include numerous activities (e.g., research and development, convening).

^{vii} The Foundation defines “outcomes” as the short-term and intermediate changes among target audiences, individuals, communities, organizations, and policies that are the direct results of our strategy. Long-term outcomes are aspirational changes in a population, community, or system in which our strategy operates. A subset of JAM grantees reviewed and provided feedback on draft outcomes in November 2017.

- **Short-term Outcomes:** Changes occur among target organizations, media makers and journalists, and communities as a direct result of the strategy
- **Intermediate-term Outcomes:** Changes help create ripple effects within and across the fields that JAM supports as a direct and indirect result of the strategy
- **Long-term Outcomes:** Field-level changes contribute to strengthening critical aspects of democracy in the United States as an indirect result of the strategy

Short-term Outcomes

The following short-term outcomes refer to expected changes among target organizations, media makers and journalists, and communities:

Stronger and more stable organizations anchor and lead their respective fields	Individuals and organizations are better prepared to confront legal, safety, and digital security threats	More knowledge and ideas are generated and tested that enhance understanding of emerging issues within the fields we support
Dissemination and influence of grantee content, ideas, and programming increase	More opportunities for diverse communities to access and produce relevant programming and content exist	People in the fields we support demonstrate increased capacity and leadership

While these six outcomes are relevant across the strategy as a whole, the outcomes are customized within each module to better reflect the specific goal of each module. These module-specific outcomes are also reflected in the three module-level theories of change included in **Annex 1.1**.

Intermediate Outcomes

The JAM strategy posits that the short-term outcomes above will have ripple effects within and across the fields it supports. These ripple effects are referred to as **intermediate outcomes**. Specifically, within each of module, the JAM strategy aims to contribute to the following intermediate outcomes:

Learning, innovation, and risk-taking are nurtured	Stronger, more supportive, and more dynamic and connected networks of individuals and organizations exist	More supportive policies, cultural norms, and practices that protect democratic voice and the free flow of information exist
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As with the short-term outcomes, the JAM strategy seeks module-specific evidence of change within each of its modules, as detailed in the module-level theories of change in **Annex 1.1**.

Long-term Outcomes

Ultimately, the goal of the JAM strategy is to contribute to strengthening key aspects of democracy in the United States through the generation and dissemination of accurate, just, and inclusive news and narratives. The hypothesis underlying the JAM strategy is that as more accurate, just, and inclusive news and narratives proliferate, these news and narratives will contribute to four additional **long-term outcomes** related to strengthening democracy in the United States:



As previously mentioned, the theory of change for the JAM strategy does not follow a linear process and does not have a defined end point. The outcomes build upon each other and are complementary. The work is ultimately about supporting democratic ideals to create a better future for all people, through a commitment to the values of justice, equity, and fairness and a culture of learning, transparency, and accountability.

D. JOURNALISM AND MEDIA STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

This section describes the JAM team’s approach to strategy implementation during the strategy period (2015-2020).

While many aspects of the strategy approved in 2015 reflected strengths of the program in the past – including the continued commitment to providing multi-year general operating support – the new strategy also emphasized a number of key shifts in the JAM team’s approach to grantmaking. These shifts included support for new and / or emerging organizations, organizations for and / or led by BIPOC, and support for women- and BIPOC-led intermediaries to shift power away from the Foundation to those with a deeper knowledge of the communities in which they worked.

These shifts were a departure from past practices that strongly preferred veteran leaders and established organizations, which had historically resulted in providing less support to organizations led by BIPOC. As a program with a long-term horizon, the JAM team saw their responsibilities as nurturing new leaders and media institutions that reflected the diversity of lived experience in the United States and were needed for the media, cultural, and political realities of the strategy period, as well as those of the future.

IMPLEMENTATION OVERVIEW

In making decisions about funding, the JAM team looked for organizations and opportunities that could provide a new or needed point of view or way of approaching the work, fill gaps left by more established organizations, and / or address the needs of a new generation of storytellers.

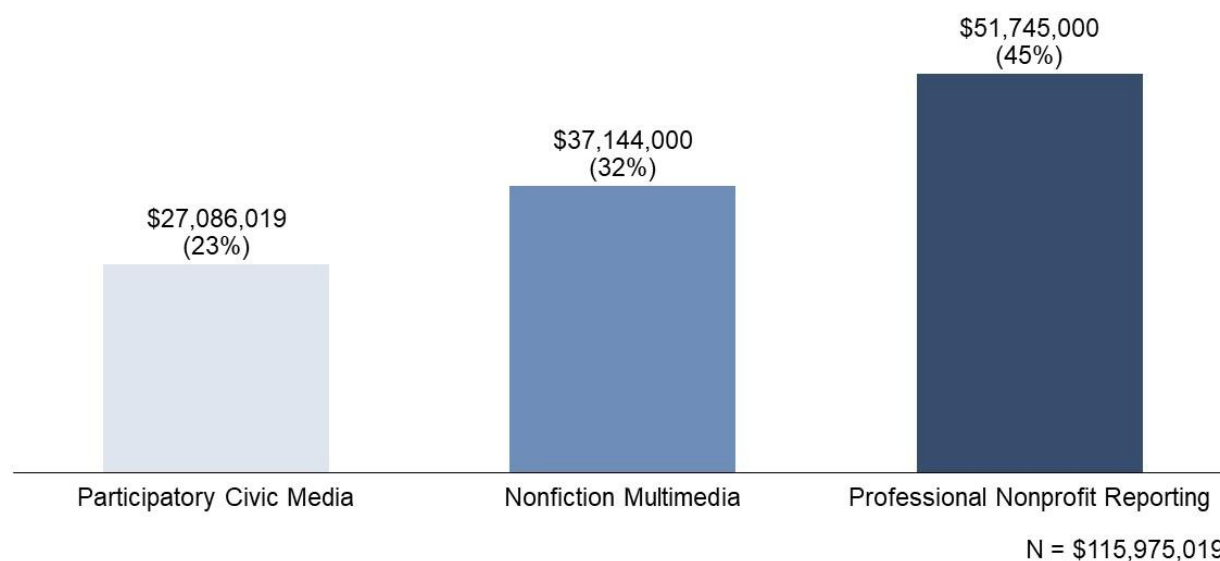
Overview of the JAM Portfolio during the strategy period:^{viii}

\$115,975,019	Invested
107	Grantees
174	Grants

As shown in **Figure 2**, at the module level, PNR received the greatest investment over the course of the strategy period (45 percent), followed by NFM (32 percent) and PCM (23 percent). Total amounts of funding approved were greatest in 2015, the first year of the strategy, and 2018, the third year of the strategy. These trends were driven by a large spike in PNR investment in the first year of the strategy (2015) and a similar spike in PCM investments in the third year (2018).

^{viii} This analysis is based on data from the Foundation’s grants management system (GMS) and only includes grants that were made beginning in 2015 and / or active as of June 31, 2020. It does not include x-grants, a category of small grants (i.e. under \$30,000) that support grantees’ expenses to plan, attend, and / or hold an event (e.g., film festival, conference, grantee convening). When x-grants are included, the team invested \$116,514,119 in 213 grants for 119 organizations. For this analysis, grantees that receive funds from intermediaries or fiscal sponsors were counted as the grantee the Foundation was ultimately seeking to support.

Figure 2: Amount and percentage of approved funding by module during the strategy period:^{ix}



Of JAM’s three approaches, the majority of money (59 percent) was invested in fostering strong, independent, and sustainable organizations and networks, followed by addressing barriers that limit creation of, access to, or participation in media activities (24 percent), and promoting learning, leadership, innovation, and field-building opportunities (17 percent).

In total, 22 no-cost extensions were granted for 18 grants during the strategy period.^x Fifty percent of these no-cost extensions were for grants in the PCM module.

SUPPORT FOR NEW AND / OR SMALL ORGANIZATIONS

Another core characteristic of the new strategy was the JAM team’s deliberate effort to support emerging BIPOC leaders and nascent organizations, based on the belief that these organizations are often well positioned to meet emerging needs and fill gaps not addressed by larger, more established media organizations.

Overall, JAM invested in organizations with operating budgets that ranged in size from \$247,000 to \$374,000,000, with a median operating budget of \$3,721,025.^{xi} However, these figures do not include data from organizations supported by fiscal sponsors, which tend to be smaller, and universities, which have substantial operating budgets and are not the focus of JAM’s organizational capacity building efforts. As a proportion of total approved funding, investments in organizations with operating budgets under \$6,000,000, including organizations with unknown operating budgets who were supported by fiscal sponsors, increased over the course of the strategy period and accounted for the majority of

^{ix} FSG analyzed data provided by the Foundation’s GMS on JAM grantmaking during the timeframe of 2015 through June 30, 2020.

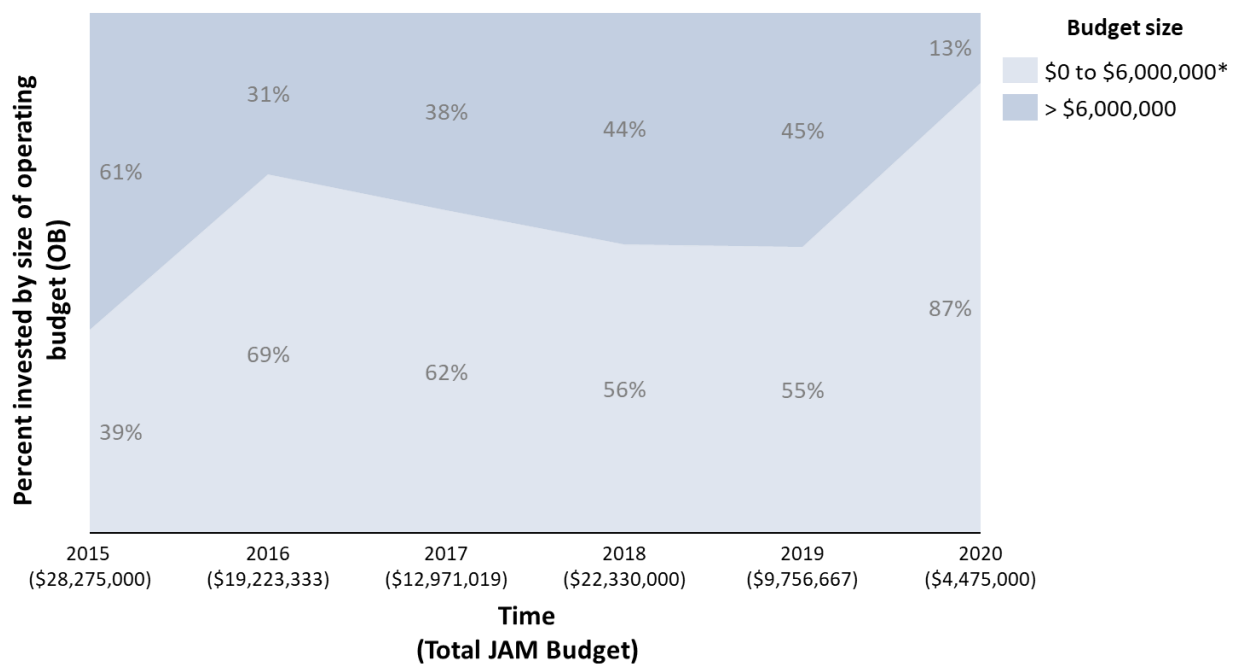
^x This represents just 10 percent of all grants made during the strategy period.

^{xi} FSG analyzed operating budget data provided by the Foundation’s GMS for this purpose. The most recent operating budget provided to GMS was used for this analysis.

investments overall (**Figure 3**).^{xii} At the module level, NFM invested the greatest proportion of total spending in organizations with operating budgets under \$6,000,000 (72 percent of total funding approved), followed by PCM (68 percent of total funding approved).

Within that group of smaller organizations, the JAM team supported 10 organizations that provide fiscals sponsorship for 14 other organizations, campaigns, or funds. In total, this accounted for four percent of approved funding during the strategy period, with PCM allocating the greatest proportion of its approved funding to fiscal sponsors (13 percent). Fiscal sponsors were utilized as a way to reach and support smaller, more nascent organizations, campaigns, or funds that might not otherwise receive philanthropic support.

Figure 3: Percentage of approved funding by grantee operating budget during the strategy period:^{xiii}



* Includes organizations with unknown operating budgets who are supported by fiscal sponsors; excludes universities.

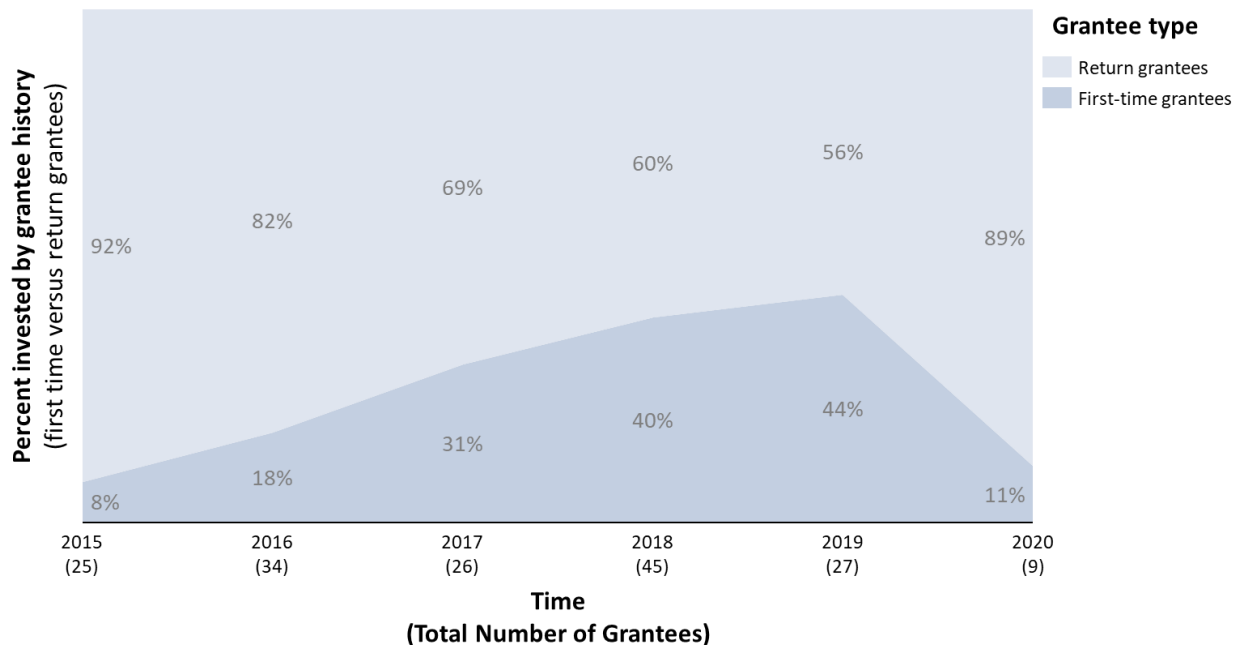
While some JAM grantees have a long history with the Foundation (including some who have been grantees since early 1980s), most JAM grantees have received only one (44 percent) or two (31 percent) grants from the Foundation to date, via the JAM program.^{xiv} Over the course of the strategy period itself, the JAM program increasingly supported first-time grantees. In 2015, only eight percent of supported grantees were first-time grantees. By 2019, that number had increased to 44 percent of supported grantees, with PCM supporting the greatest proportion of first-time grantees; 58 percent of all PCM grantees were first-time grantees (**Figure 4**).

^{xii} This analysis excludes universities, and there were no data available for three non-university-based grantees.

^{xiii} FSG analyzed operating budget data provided by the Foundation's GMS for this purpose. The most recent operating budget provided to GMS was used for this analysis.

^{xiv} A few JAM grantees have also received grants from other Foundation programs (i.e. Technology in the Public Interest).

Figure 4: Percentage of first-time grantees compared to return grantees over the strategy period^{xv}



SUPPORT FOR ORGANIZATIONS LED BY AND FOR BLACK, INDIGENOUS, AND / OR PEOPLE OF COLOR

Recognizing that opportunities for professional development and access to philanthropic capital have historically been limited for BIPOC, the JAM team prioritized identifying and supporting BIPOC-led organizations that created and / or supported the creation of content for the communities they represented. This represented a shift from the prior strategy, which placed greater emphasis on supporting legacy organizations.

Overall, the most common populations served by grantee organizations were journalists or individuals generally (i.e., no specific sub-population) or those serving communities of color or underrepresented communities broadly.^{xvi} However, trends in the populations served by grantees evolved over the course of the strategy’s implementation. In 2015, 71 percent of approved funding went to organizations serving general audiences. By 2019, this number had declined to 44 percent, with 25 percent going to communities of color or underrepresented communities broadly. This shift was largely driven by investment in PCM grantees, a greater proportion of which supported communities of color and young people, including specific focuses on young BIPOC and young people in underrepresented geographies. A similar shift occurred, although to a lesser extent, within the NFM module.

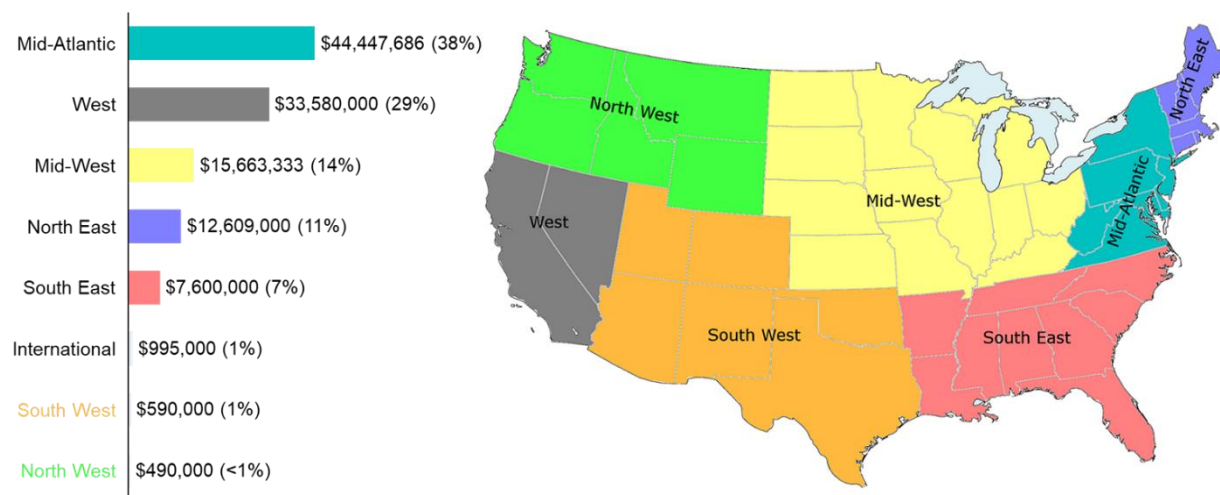
Geographically, the majority of investment went to organizations headquartered in the Mid-Atlantic region (38 percent), which included New York City, and the West (29 percent), which included Los

^{xv} FSG analyzed data provided by the Foundation’s GMS on JAM grantmaking during the timeframe of 2015 through June 30, 2020. Note that the data included for 2020 reflects six months of the year, whereas the other years reflect a full 12 months.

^{xvi} Categories for populations served were identified by FSG through website and grant report review.

Angeles (**Figure 5**). New York and Los Angeles are two cities that are well-known as hubs for journalism and media organizations. Individuals supported by JAM grantees were primarily from these regions, with the largest presence typically in New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago.²⁶ These trends did not differ dramatically by module or over time.

Figure 5: Amount and percentage of approved funding during the strategy period by geographic location of grantee organization^{xvii}



SUPPORT FOR MULTI-YEAR GENERAL OPERATING EXPENSES

As an Enduring Commitment, the JAM team is focused on building strong institutions that can serve as standard-bearers for creativity, integrity, and inclusion in the media field. One way the team did this was by providing multi-year general operating support. It is worth noting that the JAM team has been a vanguard in this arena. A recent report using data about the grantmaking practices of over 150 foundations from the Center for Effective Philanthropy’s Grantee Perceptions Report found that in the ten-year period prior to the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, 57 percent of grants made were multi-year and 21 percent were for general operating support, but only 12 percent were for multi-year general operating support. The report also found that nonprofit leaders reported that receiving multi-year general operating support can result in numerous benefits to the health of their organizations – the ability to plan for the future, the opportunity to focus on their work, and the capacity to invest in staff – and, ultimately, can increase the impact they can have on society.²⁷

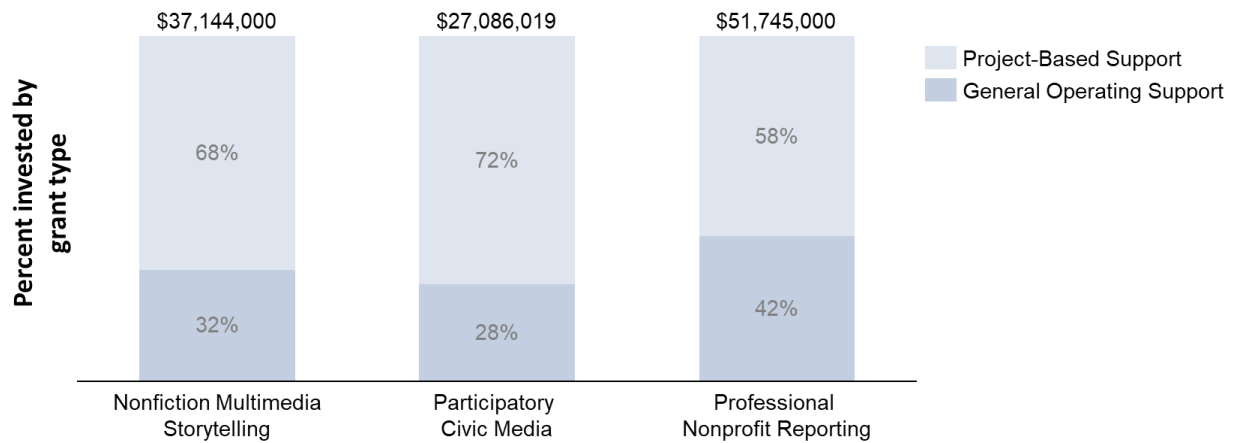
Overall, JAM has approved 36 percent of their funding for general operating support grants, with the remainder going to project-based support grants (64 percent).^{xviii} Of grants made for general operating support, 86 percent were for periods longer than one year. It is also worth noting that the JAM team reported the majority of project-based support was also flexible. The team made few traditional, non-

^{xvii} FSG analyzed data provided by the Foundation’s GMS on JAM grantmaking during the timeframe of 2015 through June 30, 2020.

^{xviii} This determination was made based on type of grant application used – Template A or Template B.

flexible project-based grants during the strategy period.^{xix} As shown in **Figure 6**, within modules, the proportion of project-based support grants versus general operating support grants was the greatest for PCM (72 percent of approved funds) and lowest for PNR (58 percent of approved funds), with NFM falling in between (68 percent). These trends did not vary dramatically over the course of the strategy.

Figure 6: Amount and percentage of approved funding during the strategy period by type of support and module^{xx}



SUPPORT FOR INTERMEDIARIES

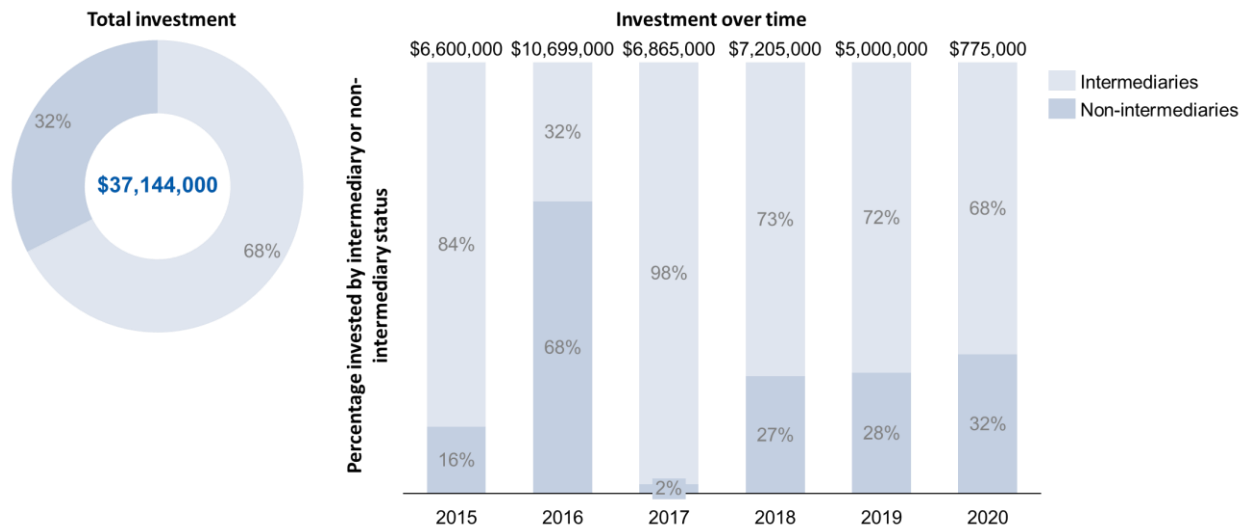
The baseline period (mid-2000s to 2015) also marked a shift in strategy within the NFM module. Prior to the development and approval of the new strategy, the JAM program moved away from providing direct funding to documentary filmmakers toward providing funding for intermediary organizations to re-grant funds to filmmakers, provide professional and creative support to filmmakers, and strengthen and build the field.

Overall, 68 percent of all NFM funding during the strategy period went to intermediaries (**Figure 7**) in an effort to shift power away from the Foundation, increase the geographic diversity of grantees, and provide support to more organizations led by women and BIPOC. Financial support for NFM intermediaries was fairly consistent over the course of the strategy period, with the exception of a spike in funding in 2016 and subsequent drop in 2017 (**Figure 7**).

^{xix} We were unable to verify this using GMS data.

^{xx} FSG analyzed data provided by the Foundation’s GMS on JAM grantmaking during the timeframe of 2015 through June 30, 2020.

Figure 7: Amount and percentage of approved funding during the strategy period by intermediary status for NFM^{xxi}



OTHER IMPORTANT SUPPORTS

In addition to financial supports, the JAM team supported grantees in several other key ways over the course of the strategy. These included:

- **Thought partnership:** Program Officers made themselves available to grantees to talk through challenges, lessons learned, and how shifting field dynamics were impacting grantees’ work.
- **Connections with other grantees:** Program Officers facilitated connections among grantees by making one-on-one introductions as well as hosting grantee convenings. The JAM team connected grantees both within and across modules to foster cross-module networking and collaboration.
- **Participation at high-profile events:** Program Officers leveraged their own power and positions to elevate the voices of grantees. For example, the team bought spots on high-profile panels for grantees and / or ensured grantees were invited along with the JAM team to important industry events, such as the Cannes Film Festival.

CROSS-STRATEGY COLLABORATION AT THE FOUNDATION

The JAM team did not work in a silo from other teams at the Foundation. For example, the JAM team’s work naturally intersected with that of the Technology in the Public Interest program. The two teams had several joint grants related to research, policy, and practice around media manipulation, First Amendment protections, digital threats, platform accountability, and reporting on technology. In addition, the JAM team also had several grants that overlapped with the Chicago Commitment’s Culture, Equity and Arts portfolio. Finally, many of the Big Bet program areas engaged in media and

^{xxi} FSG analyzed data provided by the Foundation’s GMS on JAM grantmaking during the timeframe of 2015 through June 30, 2020. Note that the data included for 2020 reflects six months of the year, whereas the other years reflect a full 12 months.

communications-related grantmaking for which the JAM team was often consulted. In the cases of the On Nigeria and Criminal Justice programs, which both include journalism and media as elements of their strategies, JAM Senior Program Officers Jen Humke and Lauren Pabst both served as Internal Advisors to those teams. Periodic consultations with the Nuclear Challenges and Climate Solutions programs took place when those teams considered specific journalism and media-related grants.

RESPONSE TO COVID-19 AND THE RACIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT

In 2020, toward the end of the strategy period, the COVID-19 pandemic emerged and sent shockwaves through much of the world. Also during this time, the police killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor and the citizen killing of Ahmaud Arbery re-elevated a generations-long conversation around racism and police brutality in America, sparking peaceful protests in cities nation-wide and a reckoning amongst individuals, organizations, institutions, and entire sectors (including philanthropy) about their role in perpetuating these systemic injustices.

JAM grantees – particularly BIPOC-led organizations and those serving BIPOC communities – were directly impacted by the confluence of these events. The COVID-19 pandemic and the shelter-in-place restrictions substantially limited grantees’ operations and programming at a time when their reporting and support for storytelling on the events and impacts of COVID-19 and racial injustice were most needed. For some grantees, this was a time when they needed to pause their day-to-day activities, and instead provide support, advocate alongside, and just be with their communities.

Both JAM and the Foundation as a whole sought to be responsive and adapt to grantees’ needs at this time. The JAM team co-led the development of the COVID-19 Journalism Emergency Fund, which disbursed over \$400,000 to small and independent news outlets in Chicago serving communities most affected by the pandemic. For existing grantees, the JAM program offered flexibility, including extensions for reporting requirements or use of verbal reports, no-cost extensions, and reallocation of approved budgets. In addition, the Foundation reaffirmed its commitment to principles of the Just Imperative, and JAM communicated its continued support for organizations spearheading equitable and just practices in journalism and media.

ALIGNMENT WITH THE JUST IMPERATIVE

Development and implementation of the JAM strategy are deeply linked with the values of the Foundation’s Just Imperative. The strategy doesn’t just intersect with the Just Imperative; it is a direct expression of it. In the Foundation’s parlance, the strategy is targeted – it has an explicit focus on promoting equity.

As it relates to implementation, the FSG evaluation team saw this commitment manifest through the JAM team’s approach in several ways. The team is committed to:

- **Supporting new and emerging organizations** that are led by and represent the communities they serve, that fill gaps not addressed by established organizations, and that meet emerging needs, particularly for BIPOC, LGBTQIA+ populations, undocumented people, and people with disabilities.
- **Challenging traditional notions** of organizational “capacity,” which may limit organizational eligibility for grants and have been shown to favor White-led organizations. This was evidenced through their support for smaller organizations and those supported by fiscal sponsors.
- **Engaging with individuals outside of their networks** to ensure that connections – and ultimately granting – are less dictated by power and privilege in order to support access for those who have been historically marginalized. This was evidenced through their support to new or first-time grantees.
- **Shifting power** away from the Foundation toward BIPOC- and female-led organizations. This was evidenced by the use of intermediaries, particularly in the NFM module.

An example of more equitable grantcraft in practice: The JAM team has a small portfolio of grants (six, as of June 2020) in Chicago that, in many ways, exemplify how its approach to grantcraft lives into the Just Imperative. Administered as part of the Jack Fuller Legacy Initiative, which aims to strengthen journalism and media in Chicago, grantmaking to these Chicago-based groups included support for BIPOC-led media organizations that are working to create and disseminate more accurate news and narratives about Chicago’s often mis- or under-represented communities. This portfolio provided a laboratory to pilot a more explicit focus on support for BIPOC-led or majority BIPOC-staffed organizations that were not driven by legacy relationships; support programs and departments (rather than whole organizations) that had an explicit focus on equity-related issues; and use a local intermediary for re-granting purposes in an effort to shift power toward, and place decision-making authority with, a local peer funder whose everyday work is closer to the Chicago communities the JAM team intended to reach and serve.

E. EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

This section summarizes the evaluation framework. FSG grounded our approach to evaluation in a **utilization- and learning-focused** methodology intended to support the JAM team’s ongoing learning, while seeking answers to the following guiding questions:^{xxii}

1. **Journalism and media landscape:** Does the landscape suggest a value-add role for the Foundation with windows of opportunity for progress toward significant, meaningful contributions?
2. **Progress toward outcomes:** Does progress to date demonstrate significant, meaningful contributions? Does the implementation to date reflect a high-quality, effective program with possibility for meaningful results?
3. **Theory of change:** Is the current theory of change (and accompanying assumptions) adequate to reach the intended significant, meaningful contributions?

APPROACH TO DATA COLLECTION

To answer these questions, FSG utilized a **mixed methods** evaluation design that involved collecting both qualitative and quantitative data. FSG used traditional **concurrent triangulation** – qualitative data brought depth, nuance, and detail that complemented quantitative data, resulting in a more holistic picture of the landscape, progress toward outcomes, and the theory of change.^{xxiii} Qualitative and quantitative data collection methods by guiding question are summarized in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Guiding question by data collection method

Key informant Interviews	Grantee Survey	Secondary Research	Convening Observation	Grant Reports	Media Monitoring
Journalism and media landscape: Does the landscape suggest a value-add role for the Foundation with windows of opportunity for progress toward significant, meaningful contributions?					
X		X			
Progress toward outcomes: Does progress to date demonstrate significant, meaningful contributions? Does the implementation to date reflect a high-quality, effective program with possibility for meaningful results?					
X	X	X	X	X	X
Theory of change: Is the current theory of change (and accompanying assumptions) adequate to reach the intended significant, meaningful contributions?					
X	X		X		

For additional details regard data collection methods, sampling, and response rates, please see **Annex 1.5**. Data collection tools can be found in **Annex 2**.

^{xxii} Please see **Annex 1.4** for a full list of evaluation questions.

^{xxiii} Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2017). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Sage publications.

MEASURING PROGRESS TOWARD OUTCOMES

FSG collected data on progress toward **all outcomes for the module-level and strategy-level theories of change**. This measurement approach was grounded in a set of unique measures that aimed to accommodate the highly dynamic and qualitative nature of JAM outcomes.^{xxiv} Progress toward each outcome was then determined using a set of rubrics designed to capture the extent to which there has been momentum toward the changes being pursued by the JAM strategy.

Progress Toward Short and Intermediate Outcomes

- **Short-term outcomes** were assessed using a grantee survey, grantee interviews, and analysis of grant reports to understand changes in grantee organizations related to organizational strength, stability, internal structural equity, capacity, the programming and supports offered to individuals and networks, and individual and organizational safety and security. These data provided an internal perspective from grantee organizations across all three modules about progress toward short-term outcomes. Interviews with people external to these organizations, including field experts and a selection of media makers (e.g., documentary filmmakers) who participated in programming provided by NFM grantee organizations, complemented these data.^{xxv} Interviews with the media makers focused on their experiences with programming and support provided by NFM grantee organizations, and how these opportunities contributed to their media-making capacity.
- **Intermediate outcomes** were also assessed through the grantee survey, a review of grant reports, and interviews with grantees, experts in fields relevant to the JAM strategy, funders, and NFM media makers.^{xxvi} While NFM media makers were able to provide insight into the direct experience of those actually creating and engaging with media, “experts” offered valuable field-level insights related to infrastructure, connections and collaboration, research, and innovation, as well as key policies, practices, and norms. As with short-term outcomes, data collected from grantees were complemented by data from external stakeholders to better understand contributions made to the field, and progress toward the intermediate, field-level outcomes. FSG also interviewed a set of journalism and media funders to understand overall development and evolution of the field. For the most part, FSG did not seek funders’ perspectives on the contribution of individual JAM grantees to the field. Rather, FSG asked about trends in the field and the JAM strategy’s broader contribution.
- **Long-term outcomes** were more challenging to assess. JAM’s long-term outcomes involve systems-level changes in complex contexts that are characterized by non-linear change, unpredictability, and dynamism. Furthermore, unlike the Foundation’s Big Bet Programs in which a particular timeframe or end date is identified for when long-term outcomes are

^{xxiv} Measures are quantitative or qualitative indicators that provide a reliable means to gauge progress against an identified outcome.

^{xxv} As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (see the Limitations section of this report for additional details), the number of interviews conducted with media makers was reduced, and limited to the NFM module.

^{xxvi} As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (see the Limitations section of this report for additional details), the number of interviews conducted with media makers was reduced, and limited to the NFM module.

expected to be achieved, Enduring Commitments such as the JAM program are intended to continually pursue their long-term outcomes. For example, the long-term outcome “Democratic ideals and values are preserved and strengthened in the United States” can never be considered achieved or completed, because preserving democracy requires continual attention and work. However, data were collected from grantees to gauge their progress, and these data were complemented by secondary research and data from external stakeholders to better understand how the work of grantees contributed toward long-term outcomes at the field-level.

ASSESSING CONTRIBUTION

FSG utilized a process for assessing the JAM strategy’s contribution to outcomes achieved by grantees that was designed for **complex contexts** in which numerous factors (including those external to the Foundation) contribute to effecting change. In these contexts, trying to demonstrate that one particular factor or strategy “caused” an effect is not appropriate. Rather, the aim of such analyses is to show if or how a program or funder is an important influencing factor and in what contexts.²⁸

As such, to assess contribution, FSG paid close attention to context and sought to identify areas in which the JAM strategy provided a unique contribution, meaning the outcome would not have occurred without the JAM strategy’s support or it would have occurred in a very different way. FSG focused assessment on outcomes where **direct** contribution was most plausible based on JAM’s theory of change, with a particular emphasis on understanding organizational strength and stability, given JAM’s emphasis on providing multi-year general operating support to grantees. Field-building as a result of grantee connection and convening was also elevated by grantees through thematic analysis. FSG did not conduct this analysis where contributions were more **indirect**, and thus made less sense to assess in a complex context (meaning FSG did not conduct this analysis for long-term outcomes).

LIMITATIONS OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYTIC METHODS

While data collection was rigorously planned for and conducted, there were certain limitations that influenced the amount of data collected for this report. For a complete list of limitations, please see **Annex 1.8**. What we are highlighting here are the two primary limitations – data collection efforts during a pandemic and period of civil unrest in the United States.

Data collection was originally scheduled to begin in early spring 2020, just as the COVID-19 pandemic emerged in the United States and began dramatically disrupting daily life for people, communities, and organizations around the country. Wanting to be respectful of the challenging context in which grantees and other stakeholders (e.g., experts and other funders) were operating, the JAM team made the decision to pause all data collection activities. When data collection activities were set to begin for a second time, two months later, civil unrest broke out across the country as a result of the killing of George Floyd by police in late May 2020. Again, recognizing that many of JAM’s grantees, other funders, and experts in the field were working on the front lines of the racial justice movement during an ongoing public health crisis, the JAM team decided to emphasize the optional nature of participation in the evaluation’s data collection activities.

These two factors – pausing data collection and limiting follow up to encourage participation in surveys and interviews – resulted in a reduction in the overall amount of data collection completed during the evaluation period, as well as lower than typical response rates for the data collection activities that were conducted.^{xxvii} Qualitative data collection activities planned for 2020 were reduced by approximately 50 percent and no interviews were conducted with journalism and media makers or community-based organizations, as originally planned.^{xxviii}

Despite these limitations, the evaluation team has confidence in the data presented and the conclusions drawn. The evaluation design benefited from a strong, mixed methods approach that utilized triangulation to support validity. The team also made concerted efforts to be transparent about the quantity of voices that contributed to a certain idea by using the following phrases to describe amounts: one, a couple (two), several (three to eight), many or numerous (more than eight but less than half of the participating or responding group), or most (if more than half).

^{xxvii} Response rates are available in **Annex 1.5**.

^{xxviii} Interviews were conducted with NFM makers in 2019.

F. WHAT WE ARE LEARNING

This section explores what the evaluation has surfaced about the landscape, progress toward outcomes, and JAM’s theory of change. It seeks to answer the following questions:

1. **Journalism and media landscape:** Does the landscape suggest a value-add role for the Foundation with windows of opportunity for progress toward significant, meaningful contributions?
2. **Progress toward outcomes:** Does progress to date demonstrate significant, meaningful contributions? Does the implementation to date reflect a high-quality, effective program with possibility for meaningful results?
3. **Theory of change:** Are the current theory of change and accompanying assumptions adequate to reach the intended significant, meaningful contributions?

WHAT WE ARE LEARNING ABOUT THE LANDSCAPE: 2015-2020

Overall Assessment: Does the landscape suggest a value-add role for the Foundation with windows of opportunity for progress toward significant, meaningful contributions?

Our assessment of the journalism and media landscape suggests that **there continues to be a clear window of opportunity for the Foundation to play a meaningful role.** In the face of troubling trends, including threats to journalism and media from governments, the spread of mis- and disinformation by hostile actors, the disproportionate power held by social media and online platforms, low levels of public trust in the media, and a lack of sustained and unrestricted funding from philanthropy and other funders, the JAM strategy is providing critical and outsized support to networks, organizations, and individuals in the field.

The following section outlines the continued evolution of key trends identified in the “Journalism and Media Context: mid-2000s to 2015” section of this report. It begins with an overview at the strategy level, followed by a deeper exploration of the key issues affecting each of the strategy’s three modules.

Broader Journalism and Media Environment

The JAM strategy is currently situated in a fragmented media environment.²⁹ Online news aggregators, media conglomerates, and social media platforms have shifted critical advertising revenue away from newsrooms, resulting in the collapse of local and commercial news.³⁰ These actors continue to shape content production, dissemination, consumption, and public trust by establishing proprietary barriers (e.g., not releasing user data for public study and instead using it for targeted advertising) to producing and accessing objective and local news.³¹

Trust in media remains near historic lows, with almost two-thirds (64 percent) of the American public reporting concern about the accuracy of the information they receive and “fake news,” as well as the extent to which the media is effectively fulfilling its public service function.³² The public’s trust in media has also diminished over the course of the strategy period due to perceptions of bias in reporting and

news media pushing a specific political agenda.³³ In addition, the modes by which people obtain news and information have diversified, contributing to confusion among the public and journalists alike in distinguishing the accuracy and factuality of sources.³⁴

Independent media and journalism face heightened threats from governments, including democratic and authoritarian governments. In the United States, the Trump administration's rhetoric and policies have sought to limit the freedom of expression and safety of journalists, and question their accuracy by labeling them "fake news" and "enemies of the people."³⁵ Similar efforts by foreign governments include overt and violent attacks on the press and independent media.³⁶

In addition, mis- and disinformation are increasingly threatening the journalism and media landscape and the ability to produce, disseminate, and access accurate, just, and inclusive news and narratives.³⁷ Mis- and disinformation come in multiple forms with varying degrees of intended harm.³⁸ The more malicious types of mis- and disinformation that use false, manipulated, and / or fabricated content for political influence and propaganda are of particular concern for democracy because of the threat they pose to the factuality of information and the ways in which they target journalists, political opponents, and specific populations (e.g., women, BIPOC).³⁹ Mis- and disinformation are particularly damaging with regards to the public's access and ability to discern accurate news and information, leading to the sharing of inaccurate information and decline in public trust in the news media.⁴⁰ Additionally, mis- and disinformation are disproportionately targeted at BIPOC, and often spread false narratives about BIPOC communities.⁴¹ While social media and online platforms can have positive effects in supporting individuals' self-expression and civic engagement because of low barriers to accessing and publishing content, they have also played a core role in the proliferation of mis- and disinformation where automated accounts and hostile campaigns promote and amplify fake news and narratives.⁴²

Multiple sectors including nonprofit, government, education, and the private sector are working to combat mis- and disinformation, including by holding platforms accountable with efforts aimed at increasing transparency about who is funding ads on social media and developing fact-checking tools.⁴³ Schools and community organizations are engaging in media literacy efforts to build students' and the public's ability to discern credible information.⁴⁴ While various interventions have proven effective in improving media literacy, platforms such as Facebook, Google, and Twitter have taken limited action toward combatting mis- and disinformation, targeting isolated cases of mis- and disinformation – such as those aimed at promoting conspiracy theories and voter suppression – as opposed to more comprehensive approaches across their platforms.⁴⁵

Meanwhile, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the journalism and media field is still in the midst of being assessed, understood, and addressed by news and media organizations, institutions, and the public.⁴⁶ Further complicating this understanding is the way in which political partisanship skews coverage of the pandemic both in the United States and in other countries, as the pandemic has received greater media coverage from media organizations in the political center and to the left and less attention from media organizations on the political right.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, it is clear that the pandemic has exacerbated the trends that the sector was previously experiencing, including demonstrating communities' increasing reliance on local news for trusted information; removing critical safety nets and supports for freelance journalists, filmmakers, and contractors; and disproportionately impacting

journalists, filmmakers, and BIPOC via layoffs and further diminished opportunities and funding.⁴⁸ Mis- and disinformation is currently spreading related to COVID-19, in some cases due to inaccuracy, and in others as a result of more sinister aims, such as sowing discord in a community for political gain.⁴⁹ Mis- and disinformation have been particularly prevalent on social media during this time, and reflect how public health crises are often used to spread mis- and disinformation by playing into stereotypes, biases, and fear, especially against BIPOC, refugees, and immigrants.⁵⁰ On the other hand, the pandemic has also highlighted individuals' and communities' increasing reliance on multiple media forms (including social networks, virtual meeting software, and mobile software applications) to connect.⁵¹ Youth activism via civic and digital media in particular is proliferating during the current crisis.⁵²

Professional Nonprofit Reporting

The field of journalism and independent news media has traditionally coalesced around several key tenets when considering its public service function: a responsibility to inform and educate on events to equip the public to take action; to hold institutions accountable; and to act with freedom and independence from political or commercial interest.⁵³ While a free and independent press is protected under the U.S. Constitution,⁵⁴ the confluence of economic, social, and political events and trends are contributing to shifts in the extent to which the independent news field is able to fulfill this function, and definitions of “news media” and how the American public conceptualizes and perceives it are changing. In some cases, the definition of the news media now goes beyond mainstream and commercial news, and has become an umbrella term encompassing areas including journalism, reporting, information- and knowledge-sharing, cultural expression and the arts, public relations and advertising, and activism.⁵⁵

The philanthropic funding landscape for PNR is made up of several major foundations who fund a wide variety of journalism approaches and types of work. For the most part, the foundations contributing significant support have been funding media-related work for decades. While the amount of money flowing to journalism from U.S.-based foundations is significant (\$880 million in 2017), it is small in proportion to the growing need from (and competition amongst) nonprofit news organizations, and is primarily sourced from a few sizable national foundations and provided to a handful of large, established nonprofit news organizations.⁵⁶ Despite efforts by some funders to support organizations' capacity-building, pipeline initiatives, and practices related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), funding tends to not directly serve racial and ethnic groups, women and girls, or LGBTQIA+ populations, as only 10 percent of the \$1.2 billion in funding for journalism in 2015 focused on these populations.⁵⁷ Furthermore, while funding for nonprofit news organizations, local news, and specific areas of journalism such as advocacy and investigative journalism increased overall in the aftermath of the 2016 election, few foundations provide substantial, unrestricted dollars to journalism and sustain their funding long-term.⁵⁸ The lack of general operating support and sustained funding forces nonprofit newsrooms such as those in the PNR portfolio to compete with one another for scarce general operating funds, accept grants restricted by time period or topic area, or find other ways to diversify their revenue sources.⁵⁹

Over the last several years, with the public increasingly consuming news on demand on digital platforms, the PNR field has seen an increase in the avenues by which people communicate, share, and

obtain information and news.⁶⁰ There are increased opportunities to start new media organizations, reduced barriers to production tools and licensure, and increased access to open-source, publicly-available data and information to inform reporting.⁶¹ However, these platforms have also brought negative consequences, including rendering accurate and credible content indiscernible and contributing to suspicion about “fake news” amongst the public; eroding trust in the news media; reducing the public’s attention span for news; increasing government and corporate surveillance of journalists; and perpetuating threats against reporters and news organizations.⁶²

The PNR field also continues to experience challenges with DEI. A key underlying issue is the lack of annual studies conducted on newsroom diversity, and among those that are conducted, low levels of participation that make it difficult to ascertain a full, accurate picture of diversity within organizations.⁶³ In its most recent diversity survey in 2018 (which included questions related to race, gender, and sexual orientation in newsrooms), the News Leaders Association (NLA) reported historically low participation rates from newsrooms.^{xxix} Only around 17 percent responded (293 of the 1,700 newsrooms that were asked to participate), and NLA announced in 2020 that it would be pausing its efforts as a result.⁶⁴ Among the data that do exist, newsrooms remain predominantly White and male, do not reflect the populations they serve, and are less diverse than the overall U.S. workforce.⁶⁵ In addition to the sector’s lack of accountability for collecting data on representation and diversity, these disparities are reflective of status quo hiring practices built around qualifications and credentials that are less accessible to BIPOC and women. They also are reflective of the explicit threats of violence and harassment aimed at journalists of color and women journalists that may prevent members of these communities from entering the field in the first place or to leave the field.⁶⁶ The field has struggled to retain BIPOC journalists, many of whom have stopped doing journalism completely.⁶⁷

Another key challenge facing nonprofit journalism is the threat and risk facing individual journalists in doing their jobs on a daily basis. With the rise of authoritarian governments, censorship, and attacks on the press, violence against journalists has increased, with particular risk of harm for freelancers, reporters of color, and female reporters who often lack access to the necessary financial, legal, safety, and medical supports necessary to effectively protect themselves.⁶⁸ Several organizations (with foundation support) exist to help journalists maintain all dimensions of safety, including physical, emotional, digital, and legal security.⁶⁹ The most common types of resources offered include emergency response support, information about digital and physical safety risks, training and education for reporters and organizations about how to protect themselves and get help if needed, counseling and mental health supports for those experiencing and exposed to trauma in the work, and legal help.⁷⁰ While funders in the PNR space support these efforts, they lack a shared understanding of the risks journalists face and how to appropriately mitigate and respond to them, and their approach to organizational, informational, and physical security for grantees needs to be better coordinated.⁷¹

Nonfiction Multimedia Storytelling

Storytelling through various nonfiction media is a powerful tool by which communities build strength, engage in dialogue, develop solutions, and establish solidarity across communities.⁷² In the midst of mis-

^{xxix} The News Leaders Association was formerly known as the American Society of News Editors, or ASNE.

and disinformation, NFM provides a platform for people to tell their own stories and convey their unique perspectives and their truths.⁷³ In this way, NFM is considered to have dual defining characteristics, both as a form of creative expression and as a reflection of truth and facts.⁷⁴ NFM, such as documentaries and podcasts, also support agency by telling stories that might not otherwise be told and by catalyzing audiences to action through greater proximity with the projects' characters.⁷⁵ These media have a unique ability to engage audiences and catalyze them to action because of their appeal to human emotions and ability to educate, inform, entertain, and spark discussion.⁷⁶

Key funders in the NFM field include private foundations, nonprofit intermediaries, and independent government organizations who provide funding and fiscal sponsorship for NFM.⁷⁷ JAM support continues to be a key lever sustaining the field and this work, particularly for documentaries, and has shifted toward funding intermediary organizations rather than individual makers.⁷⁸ The NFM field is also being shaped by increased funding from streaming platforms and corporations, largely in response to increased demand for NFM content.⁷⁹ The growth in popularity of these media is considered to be reflective of the public's growing interest in stories they can believe in, particularly in the context of attacks on the press and the spread of mis- and disinformation.⁸⁰ The rise of platforms (e.g., Netflix, Amazon Prime, HBO) that can offer full funding for documentary projects and a large breadth of scale given their international audiences has led to increased documentary production, and have become one of the main sources of revenue for documentary makers.⁸¹ Similarly, podcasts, which have historically been sustained through listener donations and foundation support, have experienced greater funding, and are increasingly being funded by corporations and commercial outlets through advertising as well as these platforms producing their own content.⁸²

However, despite the variety of private and philanthropic funding streams available, less than one-fifth (19 percent) of directors and producers received a full salary from their most recent documentary film, while a third (37 percent) reported receiving no salary.⁸³ In the crowded podcasting space, while some corporations provide targeted funding for podcast creators of color, funding support and attention primarily go to shows created by White makers, resulting in gatekeeping that goes against the notion that the podcasting medium is open and inclusive.⁸⁴ These trends raise questions about equity and editorial independence with regards to the content that these funders will and will not fund based on corporate or political interests.⁸⁵ The documentary field in general lacks editorial guidelines, making it susceptible to vested interests that can influence or even bias content and the stories that are told. As a result, it can become increasingly difficult for audiences to discern fact from fiction, news from fake news, and accurate information from mis- and disinformation.⁸⁶

Technology continues to have a profound impact on the production, distribution, and consumption of NFM content. Advances in technology and the creation of relatively inexpensive yet high-quality equipment have lowered production barriers for documentary filmmakers and podcasters.⁸⁷ Makers are continuing to experiment with other forms of technology such as virtual reality to engage audiences.⁸⁸ In addition, technology is contributing to growth in consumer demand, with the portability of content on smartphones and other handheld devices enabling greater opportunities for consumption.⁸⁹

The support system for NFM filmmakers includes membership organizations, targeted funds, resource / information centers, screenings, and film festivals.⁹⁰ However, filmmakers of color, female filmmakers,

LGBTQIA+ filmmakers, and filmmakers with disabilities continue to experience barriers and forms of exclusion, including underrepresentation of filmmakers from these groups in the field (reflective of the broader film industry), underfunding and a lack of sustained funding for projects, a lack of high-profile opportunities, and the tokenization of filmmakers to tell a specific story about their identity or respond to market demand.⁹¹ These inequities are further exacerbated by field trends and contextual shifts; for example, as podcasting continues to be industrialized and corporatized, BIPOC makers and makers from underrepresented groups are even less likely to receive funding opportunities and support than they already receive.⁹² Additionally, with the COVID-19 crisis, makers of color, who already experience underfunding compared to their White peers, are experiencing even more limited funding due to the pandemic, at the same time that their communities are disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and the need to tell their stories increases.⁹³

The NFM and storytelling field is also at a key inflection point in the context of a national reckoning around racism and increased urgency to achieve racial equity. New models of media-making are coming to the fore, which seek to break out of a White dominant cultural paradigm that prioritizes perfectionism, quantity over quality, individual over community, either / or thinking, and transactional relationships. Instead, models of “just filmmaking,” “media justice,” and “media reparations” value deep relationships between storytellers and communities; community ownership of storytelling; respect for and inclusion of a diversity of lived experiences, identities, and cultures; equitable compensation for BIPOC storytellers; and reinvestment in and reparations for BIPOC communities and storytellers that have historically faced and continue to experience barriers to accessing resources because of racist policies and practices.⁹⁴

Participatory Civic Media

Participatory civic media is a key vehicle by which individuals’ voices and perspectives are shared and connected with the self-expression of others and ultimately contributes to the development of public opinion, which is central to influencing policy and ensuring that democratic ideals are upheld.⁹⁵ In addition, PCM is a mechanism by which individuals and communities – particularly BIPOC and other groups that have been historically marginalized – can engage directly with the public as opposed to having to navigate through institutions and organizational structures that undervalue them.⁹⁶

Movements including Me Too and Black Lives Matter have demonstrated the public’s use of social media hashtags and posts for social activism, including to spread awareness about their issues, build connections across individuals and communities, and catalyze the public to push governments to hold criminals, abusers, and people in positions of power accountable.⁹⁷

The range of organizations and groups using participatory media for civic purposes is expansive, and includes social movements, individuals, and communities that have been historically marginalized, including BIPOC.⁹⁸ One primary demographic group using participatory media is young people: through the use of social media, online pop culture, and other digital spaces, young people use these tools to educate themselves about civic and social issues, build networks, protest, volunteer, and develop their self-expression.⁹⁹ Young people’s digital civic engagement is correlated with a greater likelihood to engage in offline civic engagement, such as voting and other forms of civic and political participation.¹⁰⁰

Schools and education settings use participatory media to support students' civic engagement, in large part because civic engagement is critical to supporting young people's developmental outcomes, agency, and empowerment.¹⁰¹ Media literacy education plays a particularly important role in support of agency and civic engagement among young people by creating opportunities for young people to interact with media that are relevant to their individual lived experiences, supporting their ability to discern inaccurate and false media content.¹⁰² However, only 33 states implement K-12 curriculum focused on media literacy and the role / influence of media.¹⁰³

Social media and online platforms have become a primary medium by which individuals engage civically.¹⁰⁴ The low barriers to entry afforded by social media have introduced new platforms for individuals to create content to advance a social cause, to elevate underrepresented voices, and for the public to consume news and information.¹⁰⁵ Young people in particular have created new modes of communication using digital media that reflect their unique experiences and agency, and engaged in the debate on journalistic ethics. Examples include the hashtag “#IfTheyGunnedMeDown” which went viral after the police killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO in 2014 as a response to the injustice and the media's victim-blaming portrayal of Michael Brown; the use of live features during the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline at Standing Rock to capture disparities in how state police reported their activities and what was captured on video and through real-time social media posts; and the filming of the police killing of George Floyd, which played an instrumental role in ensuring that the public learned about his killing by police and that the officers involved were identified.¹⁰⁶

However, these trends in technology have also created challenges and barriers related to production, dissemination, and consumption. Because media is consumed across various platforms in non-linear ways, individuals must be able to navigate and discern the accuracy of media across multiple formats and sources.¹⁰⁷ This aspect of media literacy is critical, particularly in the context of mis- and disinformation, online harassment (which often targets journalists, women, and BIPOC), and other efforts to reduce engagement and silence communities.¹⁰⁸ Power is disproportionately held by online platforms, whose financial resources and algorithms can considerably influence what types of content are disseminated, and to whom.¹⁰⁹ In addition, a lack of access to broadband poses a barrier for the 15 percent of the population who also live in “civic deserts” and lack access to offline civic engagement opportunities.¹¹⁰

While the PCM module does not have direct peer funders due to its unique focus, a handful of funders have recently launched portfolios that sit at the intersection of democracy, media, civic engagement, technology, and culture change. This includes Democracy Fund's initiative funding movement media, Omidyar Network's democracy program focused on civic engagement and storytelling, Open Society Foundation's work around racial justice, and the Ford Foundation's Technology and Society program.¹¹¹ Philanthropic support will continue to be critical in lifting up the work in the PCM space, and sustained, general operating support in particular will help ensure that civic media organizations are able to operate more independently from external influence, including from funders.¹¹²

WHAT WE ARE LEARNING ABOUT PROGRESS TOWARD OUTCOMES

Overall Assessment: Does progress to date demonstrate significant, meaningful contributions? Does the implementation to date reflect a high-quality, effective program with possibility for meaningful results?

Across each of the modules, our overall assessment found that **the JAM strategy’s contribution toward the outcomes in the theory of change were significant and meaningful.** Equipped with core support to develop their organizations to become stronger and more stable, grantees supported individuals and other key stakeholders in the field with the resources, tools, and supports necessary to tell their stories in meaningful ways to a variety of audiences. In turn, these efforts *contributed* to the creation and dissemination of more accurate, just, and inclusive news and narratives, shaping the actions of policymakers, institutions, people in positions of power, and the public. At the same time, we saw the value of the modules’ complementary nature, including evidence of increasingly blurred boundaries between the work that each of the modules seek to support, as well as the outcomes they achieve.

From an implementation perspective, the JAM team’s emphasis on providing multi-year, general operating support to grantees was central to the strategy’s success. It was this support that enabled organizations to experiment and take risks, maintain editorial independence, and weather political and economic shocks that could otherwise threaten the sustainability of their organizations.

Despite these strengths, the assessment also highlighted the continued need for the JAM strategy’s support to sustain and advance these efforts moving forward. Remaining opportunities are highlighted in Tables 3, 4 and 5 and highlight the need for continued efforts to build internal structural equity among some organizations and stakeholders; address threats and risks to BIPOC and women journalists and filmmakers; address pipeline and career pathways limitations that act as barriers to career advancement for BIPOC and women filmmakers; and efforts to provide additional opportunities for grantees – especially those in PCM – to connect, collaborate, and learn.

The following sections provide an assessment of progress toward short-, intermediate-, and long-term outcomes. We start with a module-level analysis of progress, focusing on short- and intermediate-term outcomes, contributions by the JAM strategy, and remaining gaps and needs. We then provide a section on progress toward long-term outcomes at the strategy level and close with a presentation of feedback from grantees on the implementation of the strategy, overall. Color coding graphically illustrates interpretations of progress toward each outcome as depicted in **Table 2.**

Table 2: Levels of Progress

Level of progress	Description
Substantial	Evidence of substantial progress
Moderate	Evidence of moderate progress
Limited	Evidence of limited progress
Insufficient evidence	Not enough evidence to make a determination

Professional Nonprofit Reporting

Over the course of the strategy period, the PNR module supported 44 grantees with 65 grants totaling \$51,745,000 in approved funding.^{xxx} These grantees represented a set of nonprofit journalism organizations that conducted intensive explanatory and investigative reporting and created high-quality journalism that brought accurate, reliable, and consequential information to audiences. These outlets also provided coverage of communities that have been historically underrepresented in mainstream media – including BIPOC, LGBTQIA+ populations, undocumented people, and people with disabilities – and conducted investigatory journalism into issues not often covered elsewhere.

Grantee organizations in the PNR module can generally be categorized into eight areas (note: these are not mutually exclusive, as some grantees cut across multiple areas):

- **Content-producing and capacity building organizations** focused on investigative reporting and community-based reporting, or those that provide capacity building supports for individual reporters and journalists
- **Place-based reporting organizations** generally focused on content creation by or for distinct geographies, communities, and groups
- **Organizations providing key safety and security supports** for journalists and reporters
- **Organizations elevating first amendment rights, press freedom, and legal supports** for journalists
- **Organizations building the field** including journalism funders and networks providing key supports to organizations and the broader journalism field; convening / event-producing organizations; and research-based organizations contributing to the field’s understanding of key trends and their impact on journalism and media
- **Organizations advancing racial equity and justice** in newsrooms and media

^{xxx} This count includes any grantee who has received a PNR grant; if only counting grantees whose primary categorization is PNR, the grantee count is 41. These figures include grants active between 2015 and June 2020; they exclude x-grants.

Progress Toward Short and Intermediate Outcomes

STRONGER AND MORE STABLE ORGANIZATIONS ANCHOR AND LEAD THEIR RESPECTIVE FIELDS

Grantee-level progress	Substantial
Level of measurement	Grantee-level change
Sub-outcomes assessed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizations are financially stable with more diversified funding • Organizations have stronger leadership • Organizations have stronger internal structural equity • Organizations can adapt to changes in the media ecosystem and stand up to threats • Organizations are seen as credible and / or trusted by the public • Organizations produce more content that meets the highest journalism and ethics standards

The evaluation showed substantial progress toward the strategy’s aim to support stronger and more stable organizations within the PNR module.

Grantee data showed that financial capacity is one of the key factors driving strength and stability of an organization. Grantees who responded to the 2019 or 2020 surveys reported the presence of several elements of organizational strength and stability: having editorial independence, the abilities to adapt and experiment, and the shoring up of internal capacities (internal structural equity)^{xxxii} in order to create a culture and space that is just and inclusive. Financial capacity was generally stable in recent years among grantees, with several grantees reporting a surplus for at least one year between 2015 and 2018 in the 2019 survey, and a majority of those reporting a surplus in fiscal year 2018.^{xxxiii} In addition, several grantees indicated in the 2020 grantee survey that they had greater and more diversified financial resources in 2020 relative to 2015.

However, organizations still faced challenges, including a continued reliance on philanthropic support, the restricted nature of this support, and competition amongst organizations for limited funds. They also reported anxiety about a looming recession, and tightening their expenditures as a precaution. These challenges are exacerbated by the current funding landscape for PNR, where the amount of money allocated to nonprofit news organizations is small in proportion to these organizations’ needs and where few funders provide substantial and unrestricted dollars to journalism.¹¹³

In terms of internal structural equity, PNR grantees who responded to the 2019 or 2020 surveys considered DEI a priority in recruiting, hiring, supporting, retaining, and promoting staff. Numerous grantees rated their policies and practices as well-developed or exemplary for prioritizing DEI in recruitment. However, when it came to building internal knowledge, skills, and capacities related to DEI,

^{xxxii} We have defined internal structural equity as efforts to use internal procedures and processes that deliberately seek to eliminate the enduring barriers that disproportionately affect people from historically marginalized communities (including BIPOC, immigrants, refugees, women, and LGBTQIA+ populations).

^{xxxiii} Grantees who reported a surplus at some point between 2015 and 2018 reported, on average, a surplus for three years during that period.

fewer grantees believed they had well-developed or exemplary practices for building the capacity of board members in particular. These data suggest – in the context of a lack of available data related to news organizations’ diversity in the wider PNR field¹¹⁴ – that while grantees were leaders amongst journalism organizations in centering DEI in their practices and work, they still had opportunities to grow and learn. It is important to note that the PNR theory of change was not applied as a frame to evaluate grantee organizations until the fourth or fifth year of their grants, and thus they were not informed of internal structural equity as an intended outcome of the PNR strategy until that time.

As for organizational staffing and leadership, benchmarking suggests staff and leadership diversity are greater among grantees compared to other organizations. In addition, leaders of PNR grantee organizations were generally working to ensure staff members were aware of organizational strategy, and in many cases were enlisting staff to provide input into and feedback on organizational priorities and direction. Grantees who responded to the 2019 grantee survey reported growth in recent years in terms of the number of full-time staff as well as increased capacity of staff employed. In addition to building out editorial teams, grantees noted hiring new leaders to support a new stream of work or strategy (e.g., Director of Digital Strategy), and bringing on support staff to manage the organization’s growing operations (e.g., Human Resources Managers).

Grantees reported that their organizations were experimenting and innovating in a variety of ways in order to meet their audiences where they were and to stay competitive. Several grantees believed they had sufficient control over, and flexibility with, their resources to be able to experiment, innovate, and cover developing issues as they arose. Similarly, many grantees who responded to the 2020 survey indicated that their capacity to adapt to changes in the media ecosystem had increased since 2015. Common areas of experimentation and innovation included new forms of engaging audiences, collaborating with reporters and / or organizations to produce and disseminate content, and utilizing technology to make stories more immersive and interactive.

For grantee organizations to maintain and grow their audiences (and potentially their base of donors and / or subscribers) and continue to raise funds, the public must perceive news organizations and the content they produce as credible and trustworthy. Thus, for organizations to understand how the public and their audiences perceive them and their work, it is critical for grantee organizations to collect data about their reputation. Several grantees reported collecting data from their audiences and / or the public about their credibility and trustworthiness, but these data were not available to the evaluation team as part of this evaluation.

Lastly, a majority of organizations that responded to the 2020 grantee survey indicated that their capacity to produce high quality content increased since 2015.

MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR DIVERSE COMMUNITIES TO ACCESS AND PRODUCE RELEVANT PROGRAMMING AND CONTENT EXIST

Grantee-level progress	Substantial
Level of measurement	Grantee-level change
Sub-outcomes assessed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizations’ audiences are more diverse • Organizations’ content includes a better representation of diverse perspectives and voices • Organizations engage and support more diverse makers

PNR grantees made substantial progress toward creating more opportunities for diverse communities to access and produce relevant programming. They did so by engaging and supporting BIPOC, women, and young reporters; supporting greater representation of voices in content; and making concerted efforts to reach more diverse audiences.

Grantees engaged and supported more reporters from underrepresented groups – and particularly BIPOC, women, and young people – by facilitating opportunities both within their organizations and at the field level to produce content. However, media monitoring analysis indicated that geographic diversity of supported reporters is still limited overall, with the majority of U.S.-based reporters being based in the major hubs of New York (20 percent), Washington DC (18 percent), Illinois (17 percent) and California (16 percent).¹¹⁵

Grantees drew connections between having staff, leadership, and board members that reflected the identities and lived experiences of the communities they served in order to accurately represent diverse voices and experiences in their content. In seeking to diversify their talent pipeline and that of the nonprofit news field, grantees facilitated internships and fellowships aimed at supporting reporters of color, conducted outreach at events hosted by local and BIPOC-led organizations and networks, provided scholarships to ensure the participation of BIPOC reporters at events, diversified their panelists at events and convenings to be inclusive of BIPOC and women, and engaged in diversity management trainings to build more inclusive newsrooms. In addition, several grantees reported tracking the diversity of their reporters and sources to ensure the inclusion of BIPOC and women in their reporting – which runs counter to the larger trend in the field of lack of available data related to news organizations’ diversity.¹¹⁶

In addition to diversifying their talent pipeline, grantees built trust, targeted their outreach, and developed relationships with community members, organizations, and local news outlets to include more diverse and nuanced perspectives and voices in their reporting. Grantees supported the involvement of the people and communities whose stories were being told as participants and storytellers. As a result, grantees’ reporting was, in their words, more “authentic,” effectively “breaking norms about who owns the story” and “telling stories with dignity and precision.”

In addition, grantees took explicit measures to ensure that their audiences were more diverse. Grantees reported employing surveys, community outreach, listening tours, audience insight teams, partnerships

with community organizations and news outlets, and investments in data analytics to learn about their audiences’ demographics, engagement, and information needs. With these data, several grantees targeted their dissemination efforts to historically underrepresented and marginalized groups. Several grantees designed programs dedicated to reaching communities that are typically underrepresented in and underserved by the media, including communities of color, women, and young people. Grantees also tailored the format by which information was shared. One grantee partnered with a Spanish language media organization to target their content dissemination to Spanish-speaking populations. In addition, with the public increasingly consuming news “on-demand” on digital platforms,¹¹⁷ grantees who responded to the 2019 grantee survey reported using new platforms and formats including social media; in-person and online streaming events; and visual / audio formats such as podcasts, interactive platforms, and virtual reality (VR) to meet their audiences where they were. A few grantees reported that they saw changes in their audience as a result of these efforts, particularly increasing engagement among younger populations.

Despite progress, grantees also experienced challenges, particularly related to hiring and retaining BIPOC staff. Grantees’ ability to diversify their staff largely hinged on compensation, and despite their efforts to provide good-paying jobs, staying competitive with commercial media and other employers was challenging given the trend of journalists leaving the field. A few grantees noted a struggle with retaining staff of color, citing a lack of internal capacity and supports such as mentors of color, competitive opportunities elsewhere, and poaching by commercial media. The broader journalism field is also experiencing similar challenges, in large part due to a history and culture that has and continues to exclude BIPOC. Newsrooms generally remain predominantly White, status quo hiring practices built around qualifications and credentials that are less accessible to BIPOC continue to exist, and explicit threats of violence and harassment aimed at journalists of color have increased.¹¹⁸ These challenges present a continued opportunity for the JAM strategy to provide dedicated funding to support both grantees in hiring and retaining BIPOC staff and the field in sustaining a pipeline of reporters from underrepresented communities.

INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS BETTER UNDERSTAND AND ARE BETTER PREPARED TO CONFRONT LEGAL, SAFETY, AND DIGITAL SECURITY THREATS

Grantee-level progress	Moderate
Level of measurement	Grantee-level change
Sub-outcomes assessed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals and organizations are better prepared to stand up to threats from multiple sources

PNR grantees made moderate progress toward supporting individuals and organizations to better understand and be better prepared to confront legal, safety, and digital security threats, and noted opportunities for continued progress.

Grantees have gone to great lengths to protect their organizations and staff from a range of threats and risks. A majority of grantees that responded to the 2019 survey noted changes in the amount, type, and / or severity of threats experienced over the strategy period, with several highlighting that the overall

climate for journalism had become increasingly hostile, notably spurred by political leaders. Journalists had been subject to online harassment, including doxing (especially of female reporters), litigation warfare, threats of physical violence, and cybersecurity attacks. To improve preparedness, organizations reported making significant investments in physical security for their offices, education and training for staff, and to some extent, cybersecurity measures. Some had even made the expensive investment in hazardous environment training for their staff.

However, the severity and frequency of such attacks only increased over the strategy period, limiting the extent to which such threats and risks can be overcome. Support – whether monetary, in-kind, or by building connections between organizations to share resources – needs to keep up with the increasing nature of such threats and risks, especially in order to keep female journalists and journalists of color in the field. A few grantees reported developing programs or protocols that had the potential to become a field-wide resource. However, greater support is needed to increase the sharing of such resources – and hence level of preparedness – among organizations.^{xxxiii} Additionally, more support is needed to ensure gender diversity in the field, as female journalists are more frequently subject to harassment, threats, and violence,¹¹⁹ and there remains a need for greater mental health support. A few grantees noted that reporting from dangerous environments and on traumatic events impacts staff mental health.

THE PROFESSIONAL NONPROFIT REPORTING FIELD IS STRONGER

Grantee-level progress	Substantial
Level of measurement	Grantee-level change
Sub-outcomes assessed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More opportunities exist to gather and share information • Demand for reporting collaborations increases • More research is produced that informs the field and serves as the basis for advocacy • Organizations have more awareness of and connections to their communities • Norms and narratives shift to be more supportive of journalism • More supportive policies, values, norms, and institutions that protect democratic voice and the free flow of information exist

Overall, PNR grantees made substantial progress toward building a stronger PNR field, with evidence suggesting initial success, particularly in supporting connectedness and collaboration. In addition, there are some areas where new efforts will be required, particularly at the level of norms and institutions, in order to maintain the existing infrastructure and strengthen the field further.

In terms of connectedness and collaboration, grantees have made important progress over the strategy period. Grantees reported increased production of research that informed the field and served as a basis for advocacy efforts. In addition, grantees reported in the 2019 survey that they consistently organized, presented at, and attended convenings, conferences, or other meetings in order to share information

^{xxxiii} See the PNR Progress toward Outcomes section “The Professional Nonprofit Reporting field is stronger” for more details.

and make connections. Moreover, many grantees have engaged in reporting collaborations with other organizations – including with peer grantees and other nonprofit news organizations – to produce and disseminate content. In the 2019 survey, several grantees reported that more opportunities existed to gather and share information as a result of their work and, in interviews and grant reports, noted collaborations with peer organizations and reporters. Partnering was cost-effective, as it leveraged organizations’ individual strengths, and helped them to reach new and different audiences. In particular, several grantees noted partnering with local and regional outlets in order to “be sure we’re not simply preaching to the choir.”

Partnerships can also protect organizations against undervaluing of content. One way in which organizations have reached mutually beneficial agreements that do this is by ensuring that both partners invest resources in producing content. For example, one organization may focus on the data analysis while another handles the field production and editing. Given the promise of this form of co-investment, continued support, such as hosting convenings and making individual connections for organizations, could help foster collaboration among grantees and subsequently strengthen this aspect of the field.

As it relates to norms, narratives, and institutions that are supportive of journalism, grantee organizations have done important work, including developing protocols to ensure journalists’ safety, training and convening journalists and others on safety and security, providing pro bono support to journalists and other investigative storytellers facing legal issues, and conducting research and advocacy to support press freedom in the United States and abroad. In addition, grantees reported more supportive policies, values, norms, and institutions that protect democratic voice and the free flow of information.

However, despite these efforts, the norms and institutions that make up the supportive ecosystem for journalism shifted to become more hostile toward journalists. Under the Trump administration, the U.S. government actively undermined and suppressed the media, which are activities typical of authoritarian governments; there was an overall decrease in respect for the profession, and a culture of distrust toward the media; and, the field witnessed the emergence of new technologies that have enabled new forms of censorship.¹²⁰

Grantee efforts had a palliative effect on the field, and greater investment will be required to prevent greater erosion of these norms and institutions. One opportunity for providing greater support is in the coordination and sharing of existing resources between organizations. Organizations that are developing resources have shown results. For example, one organization cited that 100 percent of locally-based reporters they trained said that the training and protocols they received “mitigated nearly all of the physical and emotional threats they faced.” Such organizations are trying to spread the word, and an elevated platform provided by a funder and / or direct connections to other organizations that could use such resources would help strengthen this aspect of the field.

MORE ACCURATE, JUST, AND INCLUSIVE NARRATIVES ARE GENERATED AND MORE VISIBLE

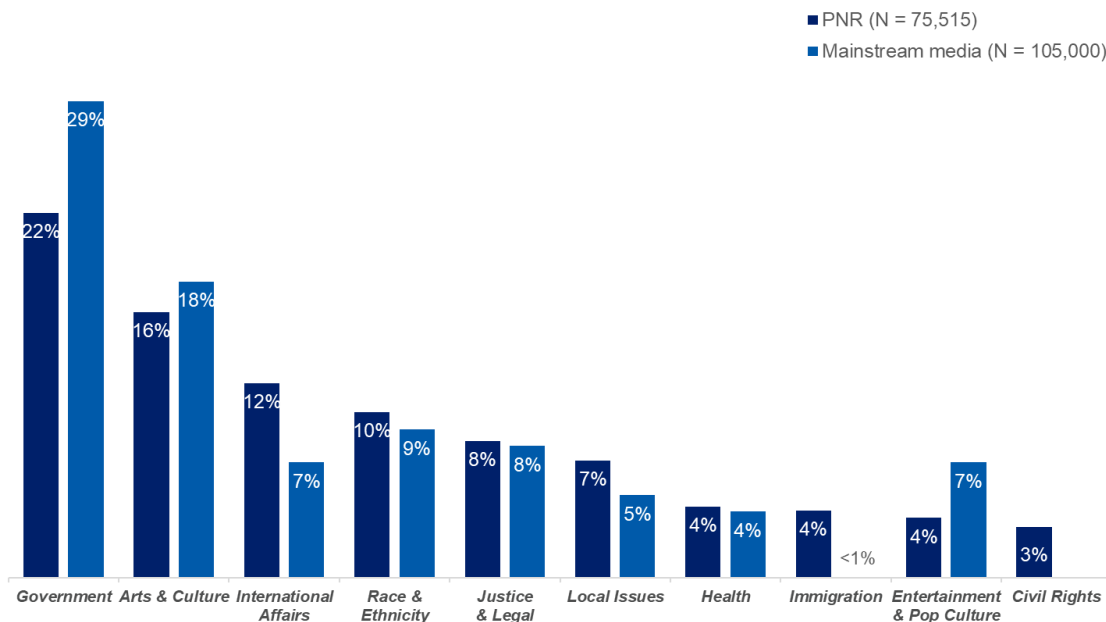
Grantee-level progress	Substantial
Level of measurement	Grantee-level change
Sub-outcomes assessed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizations’ content lifts up and uncovers underrepresented and underreported stories • Dissemination and influence of grantee content, ideas, and programming increases, including through being picked up by other outlets

Grantees made substantial progress toward the generation and visibility of more accurate, just, and inclusive news and narratives.

Grantees’ content predominantly focused on uncovering and lifting up underrepresented and underreported stories about BIPOC, immigrants, and local communities. They paid particular attention to elevating stories receiving a lack of coverage by other media, as well as stories about communities and populations experiencing historical marginalization. Grantees played a key role in filling gaps left by mainstream media and institutions, delving into issues with a depth and nuance that, in their words, was “vital to underrepresented communities.”

Overall, as shown in **Figure 8**, media monitoring found that PNR grantees produce the majority of their content on government issues (22 percent) and arts and culture (16 percent), followed by international affairs (12 percent) and race and ethnicity (10 percent). The analysis also showed that smaller organizations were placing a greater emphasis on race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, and science and technology than their larger peers, and that PNR grantees produced a greater proportion of content focused on international affairs, local issues, civil rights, and immigration when compared to mainstream media (**Figure 8**). An assessment of *how* grantees were talking about issues, using the COVID-19 pandemic and immigration as examples, showed that grantees were focused on telling the stories of marginalized populations, exacerbated economic and social inequities, and failures of the government’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic and immigration.

Figure 8: Top ten topics among PNR grantees by volume of content produced^{xxxiv}



To uncover these stories, grantees used deep investigative reporting, dedicated staff capacity, partnerships with media outlets and community organizations, multiple channels for distribution, and the inclusion of underrepresented voices and perspectives – including BIPOC – as part of storytelling.^{xxxv} Grantees also reported that they built trust with their sources and the communities they served, demonstrating a commitment to telling stories that humanized issues by including the voices and perspectives of people and communities most impacted. In effect, grantees shifted the narrative around whose stories are heard and valued. By focusing on underrepresented and underreported stories, grantees fulfilled their critical public service function of informing their audiences and equipping them with the information they needed to take action.

Grantees also increased their dissemination of content, ideas, and programming, including through other outlets. Several grantees that responded to the 2019 survey reported that partnerships with peer organizations, local and national outlets, social media platforms, educational institutions, and commercial media enabled grantees to reach a wider and more diverse audience. In addition, several grantees who responded to the 2019 survey used multiple formats and platforms for dissemination – including podcasts, social media, print, TV, and convenings – to meet the evolving information needs and habits of their audiences and adapt to the public’s increased consumption of news on social media and online platforms.¹²¹ Several grantees also reported accompanying their content dissemination with engagement campaigns – providing in-person and online forums for audiences to interact more closely with the content and reporters – and targeting their dissemination efforts on the communities most

^{xxxiv} This graph only includes the top 10 categories identified in the analysis. N = pieces of media, including articles, blogs, and press releases; percentages show percentages of total pieces of media that cover a given topic. Pieces of media were published between January 2018 and April 2020. The source is media monitoring analysis.

^{xxxv} See the PNR Progress Toward Outcomes section “More opportunities for diverse communities to access and produce relevant programming and content exist” for more detail.

affected by the issues they reported on in order to support them with information needed to effect change. Several grantees emphasized that while their efforts did not explicitly seek to promote policy advocacy, they aimed to build awareness and support the ownership and action of communities.

Understanding the Foundation's Contribution: Professional Nonprofit Reporting

In surveys and interviews, grantees and experts highlighted two areas in which the Foundation's contribution was greatest – supporting organizational strength and stability and building the field.

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTH AND STABILITY

As previously mentioned, strong and stable organizations are the crucial bedrock upon which the JAM theory of change rests. Without strong and stable organizations, many of the other outcomes in the PNR theory of change (and the overall JAM theory of change) would not be achievable. One of the findings of this evaluation is about the vital nature of financial capacity and flexibility to the strength and stability of organizations. A solid financial footing with a healthy share of unrestricted funding allows organizations to nimbly adapt to changes in the landscape, maintain editorial independence, and invest in building internal capacities, including hiring and training staff from a variety of background and experience levels. Without this, it is difficult to envision a situation in which organizations would be able to carry out their work in making more accurate, just, and inclusive narratives visible and influencing change. Numerous organizations also mentioned that project-based support and public funding inhibits innovation, and that only multi-year general operating support, like that which they receive from the JAM strategy, allows them to take risks. Several grantees explicitly reported that the JAM strategy contributed to improved financial resources during the strategy period.

For these reasons, the JAM strategy's provision of multi-year general operating support was critical in bolstering the financial capacity, and thus other capacities, of these organizations. Moreover, some organizations mentioned that their ability to get unrestricted support from the JAM strategy was a signal to other funders about their organization's credibility, potentially contributing to the leverage of additional funds.

FIELD-BUILDING THROUGH CONVENING AND NETWORKING

By organizing convenings of grantee organizations, the JAM strategy helped to strengthen connections between organizations and build the field. Several grantees expressed appreciation for these opportunities. Beyond that, such events allowed organizations to highlight resources they had created (e.g., DEI hiring guide, safety resources), potentially paving the way for such resources to be shared more widely to the field's benefit. Leaders of several organizations also discussed the value of the peer and funder connections that the JAM team helped facilitate.

Remaining Needs and Gaps: Professional Non-Profit Reporting

While grantees made notable progress against outcomes, the evaluation also highlighted remaining gaps and opportunities. **Table 3** outlines these gaps and opportunities in greater detail.

Table 3: Key needs, gaps, and opportunities for the PNR module and field to consider addressing in the future

<i>Key needs and gaps based on the data</i>	<i>Opportunities for the JAM strategy based on FSG interpretation</i>
There is a lack of multi-year and unrestricted funding for nonprofit news organizations.	The JAM program can sustain (and, where possible, increase) its multi-year general operating support to grantees, as it is a key source of the field’s financial capacity. In addition, the Foundation can continue to play an active role in catalyzing other funders (including beyond philanthropy) to provide support.
Grantees consider DEI a priority for their organizations, but need support to build their internal capacity, knowledge, and skills.	The JAM program can continue to provide capacity-building funds to attend trainings, workshops, convenings, and access shared resources.
Grantees and the field struggle with retaining BIPOC reporters due to a thin pipeline, competitive hiring, and internal cultures that are not always inclusive of BIPOC.	The JAM program can provide dedicated funding to organizations seeking to build a pipeline of BIPOC reporters and other kinds of internal supports to increase retention and support advancement.
There is a need for dedicated funding to support initiatives aimed at ending violence and threats directed at journalists of color and female journalists.	The JAM program can continue to invest in organizations that develop protections and safe environments for journalists and news organizations, and support sharing of relevant resources across and between organizations.
Grantees need continued support to address and combat mis- and disinformation.	The JAM program can further support building the capacity of nonprofit newsrooms and reporters to combat the spread of mis- and disinformation. In addition, the JAM program can continue to play a connector role between grantees through the coordination and sharing of effective resources for mitigating mis- and disinformation threats.

Nonfiction Multimedia Storytelling

Over the course of the strategy period, the NFM module supported 29 grantees with 51 grants totaling \$37,144,000 in approved funding.^{xxxvi} These grantees represented organizations that focused their energy on creating and supporting artistic, compelling, and original NFM content that creatively and journalistically explored social issues from a variety of viewpoints. The NFM module also supported a subset of organizations that presented and disseminated this nonfiction work, ensuring that projects reached broad and targeted audiences, connected relevant advocates and activists, and reached their full potential for informing policy change.

Grantee organizations in the NFM module can generally be categorized into six areas (note: these are not mutually exclusive, as some grantees cut across multiple areas):

- **Intermediary organizations providing re-granting and support to makers**
- **Organizations focused on content production and dissemination**, including impact campaigns
- **Organizations focused on field-building** through professional development supports for makers and organizations facilitating convenings and events

Progress toward Short and Intermediate Outcomes

STRONGER AND MORE STABLE ORGANIZATIONS ANCHOR AND LEAD THEIR RESPECTIVE FIELDS

Grantee-level progress	Substantial
Level of measurement	Grantee-level change
Sub-outcomes assessed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organizations are financially stable with more diversified funding• Organizations have stronger internal structural equity• Organizations have increased capacity / flexibility to adapt to changes in the media ecosystem• Organizations produce more high-quality content

Grantees made substantial progress toward this outcome, demonstrating increased organizational capacity across multiple dimensions. Grantees reported greater financial capacity, stronger internal structural equity, and an increase in high quality content – among other important improvements.

Grantees who responded to the 2020 survey reported increased financial capacity, including diversified and stable revenue streams to support programs and operations. Grantees reported receiving large grants and financial support from other funders beyond the Foundation as well as increased earned revenue during the strategy period. These data points reflect a field-level trend of sustained support from foundations in the documentary space; however, it remains to be seen how the influx of funding from streaming platforms and corporations to the NFM space will affect grantees' capacity moving forward.¹²²

^{xxxvi} These figures includes grants active between 2015 and June 2020; they exclude x-grants.

In addition, most of the grantees that responded to the 2020 survey implemented practices with explicit and measurable goals around internal structural equity, including hiring, retention, training, compensation, and professional development. Several grantees reported taking an explicit approach to embedding equity in programming by supporting makers from historically underrepresented and marginalized groups (including BIPOC and women) with professional development supports, community-building, and convenings. A few grantees solicited feedback from makers and audiences through interviews and surveys on the extent to which racial equity is centered in all aspects of their programming, and adapted their operations and practices to be responsive to that feedback. Grantees embedded DEI in their practices in spite of trends in the broader NFM landscape, where a lack of sustained funding, opportunities, and supports continue to present barriers for BIPOC and women makers.¹²³

Grantees' organizational capacity was central to their ability to support makers from underrepresented communities, expand programming to new audiences, gain recognition and additional funding, remain competitive in the media landscape, deepen partnerships with media outlets and communities, and experiment with new forms of media storytelling. Grantees drew direct links between their capacity and their ability to provide supports to makers in the form of fellowships, labs, and contracts; to provide re-granting and discretionary funds to makers; and to take what might be considered risks on the makers or types of content they support, particularly among makers and content that might not otherwise receive funding.

Lastly, several grantees that responded to the 2020 survey noted increased capacity to adapt to changes in the media ecosystem and to support the production of high-quality content. Grantees also demonstrated growth in the development of strategic plans and documents; increased staff capacity; improved digital and communications strategies to reach audiences where they are; improved technology, systems, and operational infrastructure; more opportunities to facilitate fellowships, trainings, convenings, and professional development supports for makers; and expanded evaluative capacity to assess audiences' perceptions of their programming and opportunities.

However, grantees also reported threats and hostility from political actors (reflective of threats against the journalism and media field more broadly),¹²⁴ competition from commercial media platforms, and a lack of sustained funding in the NFM field. Grantees reported that fewer funders were willing to provide the critical general operating support they needed, which limited grantees' ability to provide for basic operational needs, to grow in areas they knew were important (e.g., developing a strategic plan), and particularly hurt smaller organizations that tended to be BIPOC-led. Several grantees noted the challenge of internal transitions, particularly in being able to remain competitive when recruiting and hiring talent. In addition, given increased consumption of NFM content on streaming platforms and mobile devices,¹²⁵ grantees also faced tremendous pressure to innovate and adapt to technological changes in their industries in order to remain competitive and up-to-date.

MAKERS DEMONSTRATE INCREASED CAPACITY

Grantee-level progress	Substantial
Level of measurement	Grantee-level change
Sub-outcomes assessed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Makers have increased access to information re: filmmaking, technology, business• More diverse makers are able to see their vision to completion

Grantee organizations reported substantial progress in supporting increased capacity for makers that, in many instances, have contributed to the completion of projects among makers.

The majority of grantees that responded to the 2020 survey reported supporting makers through capacity building opportunities that included fellowships, mentorship, trainings, and networking opportunities, as well as direct financial support to complete projects. Many of these supports were directed toward early and / or mid-career professionals, including women, makers of color, and, increasingly, makers from underrepresented geographies. However, media monitoring analysis indicated that grantee-supported makers are still primarily concentrated in the major hubs of New York (34 percent) and California (21 percent), followed by Massachusetts (12 percent).¹²⁶

Nonfiction multimedia makers supported by these organizations reported receiving beneficial supports and resources across the continuum of the filmmaking process. In particular, filmmakers appreciated the monetary support. Several filmmakers noted that it would not have been possible to begin or continue working on their film without a grant from one or more of the intermediary organizations funded by the JAM strategy.

A sense of community and connections to other filmmakers – whether in a cohort form, through introductions, or even coaching from someone at the intermediary organization – was also highlighted as valuable by both grantee organizations and the makers they supported, especially BIPOC makers.

What’s more, the evidence suggests that these activities have supported completion of projects for diverse makers. Several grantees reported that as a result of their organization’s contribution, women and makers of color were better able to see their projects through to completion at the end of the strategy period.

Despite these successes, the evaluation highlighted several remaining challenges and opportunities. Grantees were split on the extent to which makers had increased access to information related to making, technology, and business as a result of their organizations’ engagement. Makers noted that access to funding remained an issue, especially for filmmakers not located in the documentary hubs of Los Angeles and New York City and for filmmakers of color, female filmmakers, LGBTQIA+ filmmakers, and filmmakers with disabilities. These communities continued to experience barriers including a lack of high-profile opportunities, and the tokenization of filmmakers to tell a specific story about their identity or respond to market demand.¹²⁷

Additionally, NFM makers noted that there remains a broader lack of support at certain stages in the filmmaking process. One maker pointed out a need for more training to help potential filmmakers enter the field; another wished there was more funding and support for the impact stage (for example, to be able to hire an Impact Producer); and others noted that more support is needed during the distribution phase, particularly when it comes to navigating an industry that may not understand the historical connections or importance of a story by and for communities of color and / or women. One grantee also reported that while diversity and representation for early-career filmmakers had increased, diversity declines at later stages of the career pathway. As a result, there remains a need to support professional advancement for mid-career BIPOC in the industry.

These inequities are further exacerbated by field trends and contextual shifts. For example, as podcasting continues to be industrialized and corporatized, BIPOC creators and creators from other underrepresented groups are even less likely to receive funding opportunities and support.¹²⁸

NEW AND DIFFERENT APPROACHES / PRACTICES / FORMATS IN THE NFM FIELD ARE CREATED

Grantee-level progress	Substantial
Level of measurement	Grantee-level change
Sub-outcomes assessed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More diverse makers supported by grantees have access to making work for emerging platforms • Grantee organizations experiment more with emerging forms of NFM

Grantee organizations reported substantial progress in the use of and support for new or different approaches, practices, and formats in the nonfiction multimedia space. Overall, grantees reported using new technologies and approaches themselves, supporting makers to use new technologies and approaches through capacity building and financing, as well as contributing to the field through research and thought leadership to support use of new and emerging technologies and platforms.

To support makers in accessing and using new technologies, approaches, and platforms, grantees who responded to the 2020 survey reported providing capacity-building opportunities – often in the form of fellowships, mentorship programs, and workshops – and / or grants or other financial support for projects. Many of these supports were targeted at underrepresented communities of makers, including women and BIPOC, and focused on the use of virtual reality, creation and dissemination of documentary shorts, and use of other immersive and multimedia approaches. Several grantees that responded to the 2020 survey reported that a greater number of diverse makers had access to emerging platforms (e.g., virtual reality) to produce and distribute their work as a result of their organizations’ engagement. It will be important to continue to support emerging talent, including with audience and user engagement with content, particularly among BIPOC makers.

Grantees also noted that the fields of virtual reality, immersive storytelling, and other emerging technologies are rapidly growing. NFM content is increasingly being consumed on mobile devices and streaming platforms, and makers are increasingly experimenting with new forms of interactive

technology.¹²⁹ One grantee noted that this is a critical juncture at which to support BIPOC communities to ensure that those communities can find their footing in the space from the very start and become recognized by organizations, institutions, and resource-holders as the experts they are.

Finally, one grantee reported important contributions to field building, contributing research on the uses, potential, and implications of new technologies and methodologies in emerging forms of documentary film and journalism. Their work was disseminated through various publications, conferences, and convenings.

NONFICTION MULTIMEDIA STORYTELLING FIELD IS STRONGER

Grantee-level progress	Substantial
Level of measurement	Grantee-level change
Sub-outcomes assessed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field stays on the cutting edge of new technologies and approaches for storytelling • Organizations are more able and willing to take risks on content and new makers • Makers and organizations in the field reflect the diversity of the U.S. • Stronger connections and more collaborations exist among makers, between makers and news outlets, and between makers and community activists • Grantee organizations experiment more with emerging forms of NFM

Grantee organizations reported substantial progress in supporting a stronger NFM field, including greater representation within organizations, willingness to take risks on content and new makers, ability to stay on top of new trends and emerging technologies, and stronger connections and collaborations.

In the 2020 survey, several grantees reported they were working with makers from historically marginalized or underrepresented groups much more or somewhat more compared to 2015; although they reported that organizations and makers in the field reflected the diversity of the United States only moderately. Similarly, in response to the 2020 survey, a number of grantees reported taking more risks on new makers compared to 2015, and said they were working with new or first-time filmmakers more than they were in 2015. Grantees noted moderate to moderately high levels of risk-taking in the field as a whole. In addition, numerous grantees were providing supports to, or often featuring the work of, new or first-time makers and, even more frequently, makers from underrepresented communities.^{xxxvii}

As it relates to the use of emerging technology, several grantee organizations supported the field to stay on top of emerging technologies through the creation and dissemination of research via publications, conferences, and convenings. Examples include research on the uses, potential, and implications of new

^{xxxvii} For more information on supports provided to makers, including those from underrepresented communities, please see the NFM Progress Toward Outcomes section “Makers demonstrate increased capacity.”

technologies and methodologies in emerging forms of documentary and journalism with a focus on the representation of realities; and research on the potential of co-creative production practices to educate and connect publics, build bridges, foster dialogues, illuminate and critique emerging technologies, increase representation and inclusion, and shift commonly held narratives.

Several grantees also organized conferences or other convenings specific to emergent technology in nonfiction multimedia. These gatherings provided space to share best and emerging practices in new media technologies, including virtual reality, interactive and immersive documentary, and co-creation, and placed a specific focus on creating space for underrepresented communities, including young people, and Black communities.^{xxxviii} In the field as a whole, grantees noted moderately high levels of a willingness and ability to stay on the cutting edge of emerging technologies, the highest of any factor explored as part of this outcome.

Lastly, grantees noted numerous efforts to support greater connection and collaboration. Between makers, connection and collaboration was often facilitated through capacity building activities (e.g., fellowships).^{xxxix} However, there were also examples of efforts that were more directly about connection and networking over capacity building (e.g., a national network that works to increase the visibility and support of an underrepresented group in the documentary field). Across data sources, grantees reported that their organizations had contributed to greater connection and collaboration between makers. In addition, makers included in media monitoring analysis had an average of 21 Twitter connections with other makers (i.e., following another maker) supported by grantees and 13 reciprocal connections (i.e., makers who follow each other).¹³⁰

Grantees also shared examples of connections and collaborations with news organizations and social justice organizations. Five grantees reported that their organizations had contributed to greater connection and collaboration between makers and communities or activists. A few grantees reported that their organizations had contributed to greater connection and collaboration between makers and news organizations.

^{xxxviii} More information on grantees' use of, and support for individual makers' use of, emergent technology can be found under the NFM Progress Toward Outcomes section "New and different approaches / practices / formats in the NFM field are created."

^{xxxix} See NFM Progress Toward Outcomes section "Makers demonstrate increased capacity" for more detail.

MORE ACCURATE, JUST, AND INCLUSIVE NARRATIVES ARE GENERATED AND MORE VISIBLE

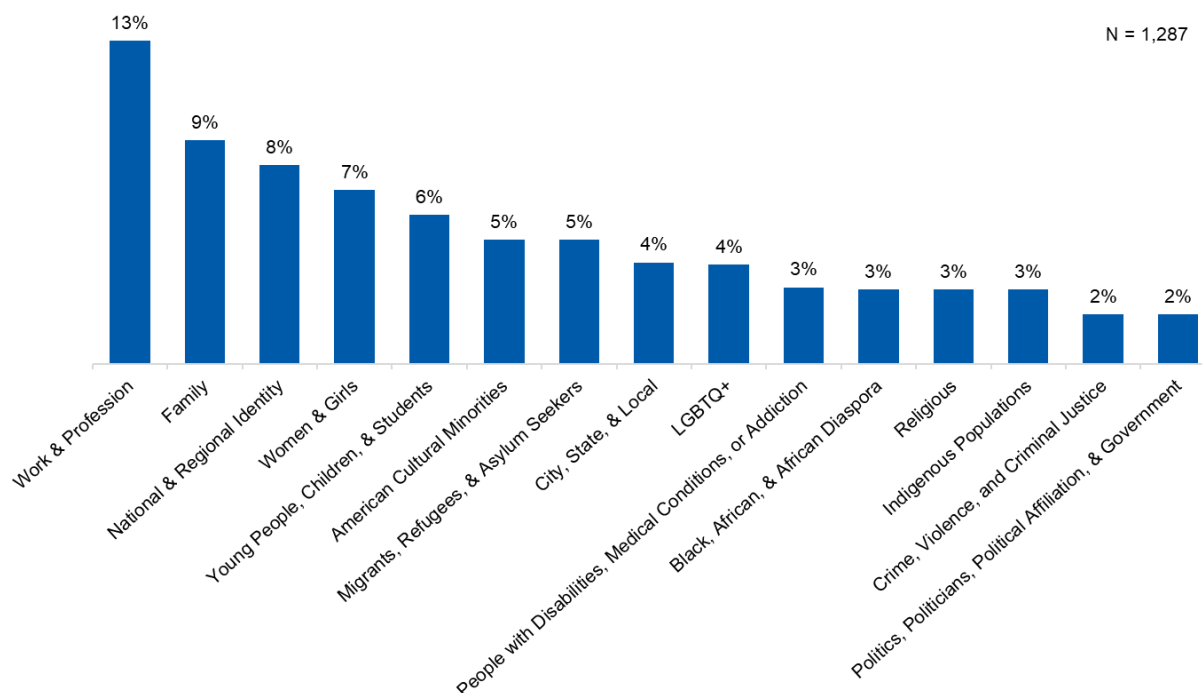
Grantee-level progress	Substantial
Level of measurement	Grantee-level change
Sub-outcomes assessed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content is available in multiple formats (new contexts, newer platforms) to reach audiences where they are • Organizations disseminate content to a wider audience on their own or through partners • More people in the country have viewed / accessed grantee content • More affirming stories are generated that speak to the experiences of affected / marginalized communities

Overall, grantees demonstrated substantial progress toward this outcome through increased creation of content, dissemination, and an increase in stories reflecting the experiences of BIPOC.

Many grantees and makers emphasized the importance of ensuring that those telling the story reflected the communities and groups they served. Grantees created content that responded to current events, countered divisive narratives, and drew connections across individuals, communities, organizations, and movements that might not otherwise have been a part of the conversation.

Media monitoring analyses highlighted the vast array of topics covered by NFM grantees, as well as proportionally higher levels of engagement with topics related to work and profession; family; and American cultural minorities (**Figure 9**). Narrative frame analyses of two issues (the COVID-19 pandemic and immigration) showed that grantees were telling stories that focused on marginalized populations, exacerbated economic and social inequities, and failures of the government’s response.

Figure 9: Top fifteen topics among NFM grantees by volume of content^{xl}



Several grantees noted how greater staff, Board, and leadership diversity had improved their ability to build relationships with and support storytelling of the communities they served. However, several grantees and makers highlighted a continued need to create more opportunities for people from historically underrepresented and marginalized groups (including BIPOC, women, and immigrants) to tell their stories.

Most grantees reported increased viewership of and engagement with their content, with some grantees reporting thousands to millions of impressions,^{xli} as a result of experimenting with and using multiple platforms (e.g., online and streaming) and interactive formats (e.g., virtual reality, broadcast, audio, short films, and social media).^{xlii}

As reported in the 2020 survey and through interviews and grant reports, grantees said that partnerships played a key role for grantees' content dissemination across multimedia channels, including with peer organizations, national nonprofits, universities, and commercial media platforms. For several grantees, partnerships with local communities in particular helped to diversify their audiences, enabling them to, as one grantee described, "reach a new audience we had never heard from before."

^{xl} This graph only includes the top 15 categories identified in the analysis. N = pieces of media, including articles, blogs, and press releases; percentages show percentages of total pieces of media that cover a given topic. Pieces of media were published between January 2018 and April 2020. The source is media monitoring analysis.

^{xli} "Impressions" refers to the number of times a piece of content was opened, read, liked, or otherwise engaged with.

^{xlii} See NFM Progress Toward Outcome section "New and different approaches / practices / formats in the NFM field are created" for more detail.

In addition, many grantees noted how collaboration with local makers, community organizations, and local outlets not only increased their dissemination of content, but also deepened audience engagement. By co-facilitating in-person events such as community screenings, often with educational guides and informative material accompanying their films, grantees sparked dialogue around the issues raised in their films that reflected what was most important to local communities. Several grantees designed these events with a focus on the communities most affected by the issues in their films, targeting their outreach to communities with large proportions of specific populations, providing stipends to support access to the events, and inviting the people portrayed in the films to speak about their experiences and connect with the audience.

GRANTEE CONTENT IS PICKED UP BY MEDIA OUTLETS AND DISSEMINATED BROADLY AND STRATEGICALLY

Grantee-level progress	Substantial
Level of measurement	Grantee-level change
Sub-outcomes assessed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audiences have a better understanding of nuanced issues • Civil society groups / communities use content to further their work

Grantees made substantial progress toward this outcome, as content was picked up by a variety of outlets and organizations and used by community-based and civil society organizations to advance their work. However, no data were available to assess audience understanding of nuanced issues within the scope of this evaluation.

Grantees reported that their content was picked up by a variety of different outlets and organizations, including nonprofits, universities, public media, commercial media, local outlets, and national outlets. In addition, several grantees secured distribution deals with streaming platforms. Both grantees’ content and the makers who grantees supported received recognition in the form of awards, which contributed to content being picked up by other outlets and increased access to funding.^{xliii}

Several grantees’ content was leveraged by community-based and civil society organizations to advance their work. Both grantees and the makers they supported worked directly with these organizations to facilitate audience engagement around issues raised in their content, including through convenings, community screenings, and Q&A sessions. For example, one grantee partnered with community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, advocacy organizations, and local government to drive dialogue around gun violence and support for transgender youth. In addition, grantees and makers described their content being used as tools to support community organizing, community awareness and rallying support, and fundraising.^{xliv}

^{xliii} See the NFM Progress Toward Outcomes section “More accurate, just, and inclusive news and narratives are generated and more visible” for more information on other factors that supported dissemination.

^{xliv} See the NFM Progress Toward Outcomes section “More accurate, just, and inclusive news and narratives are generated and more visible” for more information.

Understanding the Foundation’s Contribution: Nonfiction Multimedia Storytelling

In surveys and interviews, grantees and experts highlighted two areas in which the JAM strategy’s contribution is greatest – supporting organizational strength and stability and building the field.

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTH AND STABILITY

In the NFM theory of change – as in the overall JAM theory of change – strong and stable organizations were critical for achieving all other outcomes. Grantee organizations required a healthy and stable financial base in order to provide financial resources and other supports to makers; produce and disseminate high-quality content; and experiment with new technologies, formats and platforms.

Organizations noted that the JAM program was one of the few funders in the field that provided multi-year general operating support, and that this critical funding enabled them to test out innovative approaches to media-making and work with visionary makers. The multi-year general operating support that the JAM strategy provides grantees has been crucial for bolstering organizations’ financial capacity, and thus all other capacities. Grantee organizations also reported that the JAM strategy’s support “acted as a vote of confidence” that helped attract other funders. Of the grantees who reported increased financial capacity over the course of the strategy period, several reported that the JAM strategy contributed greatly to that shift.

The need for financial stability was especially felt by the intermediary organizations supported through the NFM portfolio, as they resourced not only their internal capacity to offer programming and fellowships but also re-granted vital funding to makers. Moreover, many of the intermediaries funded by the JAM strategy were dedicated to or existed solely for supporting makers historically underrepresented in the field, serving as important pipelines for diversifying NFM content creation – and ultimately changing what stories were being told.

FIELD-BUILDING THROUGH CONVENING AND NETWORKING

Organizations pointed to the JAM program’s grantee convenings as important field-building opportunities. Coming together at these events helped organizations make new connections, further develop relationships, collectively problem-solve for common challenges, and identify opportunities for partnership and advocacy. Grantees mentioned that they and others in the field saw the JAM team as an expert and leader on several fronts, and that they learned about new organizations, ideas, and research in the field just by looking to whom else the JAM strategy is funding.

Remaining Needs and Gaps: Nonfiction Multimedia Storytelling

While grantees made notable progress against outcomes, the evaluation also highlighted remaining gaps and opportunities. **Table 4** outlines these gaps and opportunities in greater detail.

Table 4: Key needs, gaps, and opportunities for the NFM module and field to consider addressing in the future

<i>Key needs and gaps based on the data</i>	<i>Opportunities for the JAM strategy based on FSG interpretation</i>
There is a lack of sustained, general operating support for grantees, which acutely impacts organizations led by BIPOC.	The JAM program should sustain, maintain, and, where possible, increase its general operating support in the NFM field as it is a key source of the field’s financial capacity. In addition, the JAM program can continue to play an active role in catalyzing other funders (beyond philanthropy) to provide support.
There is a continued need among grantees to build their awareness and internal capacity to embed DEI into their practices to achieve internal structural equity.	The JAM program can facilitate and support convenings for grantees to share practices related to DEI.
BIPOC makers, female makers, and makers not based in coastal hubs disproportionately lack access to funding for their work.	The NFM portfolio can more explicitly use race, gender, and geography as decision-making factors to expand the breadth of makers served. In addition, the JAM program can provide targeted funding to support increased financial capacity, technical capacity, and connection-building opportunities between makers and key stakeholders (e.g., peers, intermediary organizations, community-based organizations).
There is a need to support a pipeline of underrepresented makers into the field through equitable recruitment, hiring, and advancement practices.	Targeted funding can support grantees in recruiting, hiring, and retaining makers of color and from other marginalized groups.
There is a need for greater support particularly among BIPOC makers to use emerging platforms and technologies in storytelling.	The JAM program can provide targeted funding for grantees to develop programs, fellowships, and labs for BIPOC makers interested in experimenting with emerging forms of NFM.
There is a need to more deeply engage local communities around the issues portrayed in NFM in order to build local ownership and catalyze action.	The JAM program can support grantees to develop local engagement campaigns and events surrounding makers’ content and work.

There is a need to ensure that makers who may fall outside of traditional networks and face barriers to participation are included in this portfolio, and that support for grantees does not perpetuate gatekeeping.

This approach can be done well and can help the JAM program reach more organizations, but extra care may need to be given to *how* intermediaries choose the makers they support to ensure that makers facing disproportionate barriers (typically BIPOC, women, immigrants, makers with disabilities) are reached.

Participatory Civic Media

Participatory Civic Media is the strategy’s newest module. Over the course of the strategy period, the PCM module supported 36 grantees – many of which were new or emerging organizations – with 58 grants totaling \$27,086,019 in approved funding.^{xlv} These grantees supported, strengthened, and connected organizations, individuals, and experts who were tapping the power of participatory media to inject new voices into public debate. The module aimed to accelerate the participation of people within the United States—especially young people and BIPOC—in using new media tools, platforms, and practices to shape cultural norms and policy outcomes in ways that contribute to a stronger, more inclusive, and more participatory U.S. democracy.

Grantee organizations in the PCM module can generally be categorized into four areas:

- **Digital-first organizations** that have established online, identity-based communities who use PCM tools to build civic and political power
- **Identity-based funders** who support storytelling in their communities and hold media outlets accountable to accurate storytelling
- **Field-building organizations** who provide fiscal sponsorship and spaces for people and groups to convene, engage in training, and explore new ideas in the PCM space
- **Organizations focused on building media literacy**, particularly in media deserts and in support of youth media-making

Progress toward Short-term and Intermediate Outcomes

STRONGER AND MORE STABLE ORGANIZATIONS ANCHOR AND HELP TO DEFINE A PARTICIPATORY CIVIC MEDIA FIELD

Grantee-level progress	Moderate
Level of measurement	Grantee-level change
Sub-outcomes assessed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizations have financial stability / diversified funding • Organizations have strong leadership • Organizations have stronger internal structural equity • Organizations develop programming aimed at building skills and creating opportunities • Organizations experiment to shape new media practices and standards • Individuals build and lead their networks and organizations

Overall, evaluation data indicated moderate progress toward this outcome, pointing to a continued need for support to sustain organizational capacity, operations, and programming. This is not surprising, given that many of the organizations PCM supports are new or emerging, as is the field itself.

^{xlv} These figures includes grants active between 2015 and June 2020; they exclude x-grants.

Several grantees who responded to the 2020 survey reported being financially stable with diverse and stable revenue streams, increased revenue, fundraising strategies, and financial reserves to support their programming and operations. Grantees received varying support from other funders – some have received ongoing support, while others have seen support decline, particularly general operating support. Philanthropic support for PCM is challenging to assess because much of the funding is allocated through other portfolios and subject matter; however, it remains one of the key sources of funding for the broader civic engagement field, along with financing from local government and impact investing (which goes primarily to youth media organizations).¹³¹ Several grantees noted a need for greater and sustained financial resources and staff capacity to implement their programming.

Over the strategy period, several grantees experienced increased leadership capacity, even amidst leadership transitions. Several grantees reported developing strategic plans, often in partnership with consultants, to set their organizational strategic direction. Many grantees increased staff capacity, hired for new roles in order to support their operational infrastructure, and adapted programming to better serve individuals, networks, and communities. However, given that many grantees have small numbers of staff and face a competitive market for talent, grantees had to adapt and be resourceful with how they deployed their staff. Many grantees continue to need more staff to meet the needs of individuals, networks, and the communities they serve. In addition, several grantees that responded to the 2020 survey reported that they were able to withstand threats such as mis- and disinformation, as well as legal and safety threats. These aspects of organizational capacity were particularly critical for grantees providing re-granting and fiscal sponsorship, often to stand up to new and emerging threats.

Several grantees that responded to the 2020 survey had increased their internal diversity among staff, leadership, and board members since 2015 (or their founding, if more recently). They implemented practices to support their internal structural equity, including in recruiting, hiring, retention, compensation, and people development. For example, one grantee partnered with an organization specializing in building racially equitable practices to develop internal policies centered on staff of color. In implementing these practices, grantees reported an ongoing process and dialogue both within their organizations and externally with partners and funders around racial equity, and found that their internal diversity across race, gender, and lived experiences was critical to building trust with and ultimately serving their communities effectively.

With increased organizational capacity, grantees were equipped with the resources necessary to experiment with new forms of media. Grantees diversified content and used social media, mobile platforms, documentary, podcasts, in-person engagement, and unconventional platforms to meet people where they were with timely information, launch campaigns responding to an urgent need, and mobilize groups. Several grantees aligned these efforts with expanded marketing and communications, and developed partnerships with media organizations and experts to help advance these practices. Several grantees invested in their technology infrastructure, including re-designing their websites to support digital programming, and increasing their capacity through dedicated staff to collect data on and serve network members and audiences. In addition, several grantees reported an increase in their development of programming aimed at building skills and creating opportunities for makers, creators, and audiences to create or engage with content.

Grantees’ programming built skills and opportunities for members of their networks, increasing their access to new tools, technology, financial supports, networking, trainings, workshops, fellowships, research, and safety supports, with an intentional focus on supporting BIPOC and women members as well as people from different geographies. In response to data from surveys, interviews, and other data collection methods, grantees expanded programming to respond to communities’ needs, and supported and elevated the voices of the communities they serve through events, campaigns, and connections with other organizations and stakeholders. Additionally, grantees leveraged partnerships with nonprofit and public media organizations, social justice and civil society organizations, schools, and community-based organizations to implement and expand programming to support members of their networks.

PEOPLE HAVE INCREASED CAPACITY AND OPPORTUNITIES TO USE PCM

Grantee-level progress	Moderate
Level of measurement	Grantee-level change
Sub-outcomes assessed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More individuals have confidence in and believe they have the opportunity and ability to create change • More individuals have the media and digital literacy skills necessary to engage in / create PCM • PCM makers have more awareness and understanding of risks and threats and how to protect themselves

Overall, grantees made moderate progress toward this outcome by building the capacity of individuals and community groups to use new participatory platforms and practices to express their civic and political opinions and preferences. Grantees demonstrated provision of important supports to individuals and network members, but provided limited evidence of change in the confidence of their audiences to create content and their understanding of risks.

Through grantees’ work, more individuals and groups increased their media and digital literacy skills. According to the 2020 survey results, grantees’ activities included trainings, workshops, technical assistance, fellowships, events, and community-building opportunities to elevate the voices of young people and BIPOC. In interviews and grant reports, one grantee reported providing trainings for young people on how to use social media as an organizing tool; one grantee leveraged spoken word performances to hold up the voices of young people; and another grantee convened community members to strategize how they could collectively address attacks against the press.

Through these programming opportunities, grantees equipped emerging leaders who were using participatory tools and practices with skillsets that were critical to advancing their careers, whether with media platforms, newsrooms, community-based organizations, advocacy organizations, or governments. For several grantees, increased capacity was evidenced by a growing membership base, as well as audience engagement with their programming. In addition, a couple of grantees reported that

individuals had increased awareness of and capacity to protect themselves against risks and threats as a result of their organizations’ engagement.^{xlvi}

A few grantees surveyed network members who participated in their programming and found that participants developed new skills, formed connections, had increased opportunities to express themselves on issues that were important to them, felt increased confidence as leaders, and learned new ways to disseminate their messages and expand their advocacy efforts. In addition, grantees advanced media literacy efforts particularly in education settings, including by supporting young people in identifying and combatting mis- and disinformation, as well as developing students’ journalistic writing skills to encourage them to focus on audience engagement.

A key element of building the capacity of individuals and small groups to use participatory media practices was to ensure the conditions were in place for them to engage as their full selves: for example, one grantee found that in working with young BIPOC from underserved communities, the lack of resources in young peoples’ environment created barriers for them to engage, so they focused intentionally on supporting access in addition to building technical skills. In this way, grantees met their network members where they were, and emphasized the importance of internal diversity in order to connect meaningfully with individuals and groups.

Similarly, at the field level, young people and BIPOC in particular demonstrated increased capacity to use participatory media practices and platforms to elevate their voices. Digital campaigns including the viral hashtag “#IfTheyGunnedMeDown” after the police killing of Michael Brown in 2014; the use of live features during the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline at Standing Rock; and the filming of the police killing of George Floyd exemplified the power of the public to not only build awareness of injustices and social issues, but hold institutions and people in positions of power accountable.¹³²

THE PARTICIPATORY CIVIC MEDIA FIELD EXISTS AND IS STRONGER

Grantee-level progress	Substantial
Level of measurement	Grantee-level change
Sub-outcomes assessed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders (including the JAM team) have a better understanding of the dynamics of the emerging field • Connections between people and organizations in the PCM field are stronger • More opportunities exist for peer learning and collaboration • Better infrastructure is created / exists in the field (e.g., tools, resources, funding opportunities) • Young organizations and leaders have a support network

Overall, grantees demonstrated substantial progress toward this outcome through increased connections, opportunities for peer learning and collaboration, and stronger infrastructure.

^{xlvi} The PCM module did not make grants to reduce threats to individuals, as has been done in the PNR module.

Grantees played a key connector role across individuals, network members, organizations, and other stakeholders to advance participatory media practices. Many grantees reported using online and in-person convenings to build community across geographies and contexts; establishing networks of organizations serving members and their communities; convening a broad set of stakeholders across documentary, journalism, policy, and community-based organizations; and encouraging funders to support civic media and storytelling. In addition, grantees leveraged other spaces such as workshops and trainings to provide physical space for their network members to workshop, collaborate, and amplify their narratives. However, in response to the 2020 survey, only two grantees reported that connections between people and organizations in the field were sufficiently strong.

Outside of these events, grantees partnered with and built coalitions with peer organizations and other grantees to share lessons learned, resources, and data, and to align strategies. Partners included community-based organizations, racial and economic justice organizations, schools and educational institutions, and networks – including, in several cases, networks of young people.

Grantees also built the field’s infrastructure by developing toolkits and curriculum to support learning on civic engagement and journalism, designing digital organizing tools and trainings, and providing professional development. For example, one grantee developed an action alert tool providing up-to-date information on how issues are being discussed on social media as well as access to shared partner reports in order to support smaller organizations in producing content and implementing their programming. In addition, grantees conducted and disseminated research to the field in the form of studies, reports, and publications. One grantee conducted media monitoring on commercial media’s coverage of a specific community and issue. Grantees did not report an increase in funding opportunities, suggesting that this remains a key area of need in the field. In fact, two grantees reported that there was insufficient infrastructure (e.g., tools, resources, funding opportunities) in the civic media field generally.

CONNECTIONS BETWEEN PCM ORGANIZATIONS AND MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS ARE STRONGER

Grantee-level progress	Moderate
Level of measurement	Grantee-level change
Sub-outcomes assessed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizations are more strategic about the channels they use to share civic media content to influence cultural norms and policy outcomes • Connections between PCM actors and popular culture / entertainment media are stronger • Connections between PCM actors and reporting / media actors are stronger • Organizations coordinate better on narrative frames of key issues

Overall, grantees demonstrated moderate progress toward this outcome through increased connections with popular culture, entertainment media, and other media actors; more strategic dissemination

channels; and, in several cases, coordination on narrative frames of key issues. However, there remain opportunities to strengthen partnerships, particularly with commercial media, and increase coordination on narrative framing.

Numerous grantees partnered with commercial news outlets to disseminate content and support civic engagement, sometimes in creative ways. A few grantees focused on sharing first-hand, rapid response reporting with mainstream news outlets to quickly elevate and disseminate content to a wide audience. In addition, many grantees partnered with celebrities, influencers, and people in the entertainment media space to develop collaborative projects such as plays, films, and tools for journalists and advocates; to support fundraising; and to launch campaigns focused on civic engagement.

Many grantees also demonstrated strategic approaches to disseminating civic media content. Grantees used social media to expand their audience and reach, engage their audiences live on issues that directly impacted them, and to equip audiences with news and information necessary to act quickly. One grantee translated its research into an online, downloadable toolkit to increase access for young people. However, given streaming platforms' considerable influence over what types of content are disseminated and to whom,¹³³ a few grantees used other platforms like email and newsletters to engage their audiences, and avoided social platforms. To support strategic dissemination efforts, grantees invested in staff capacity for audience development to more strategically engage audiences across different platforms.

Finally, a few grantees also sought to change the practices of entertainment and news media around how they tell stories, who is centered, and the extent to which their stories are accurate and fact-based. For example, one grantee created a guide for entertainment media professionals on how to accurately disseminate content about specific populations, while another grantee partnered with a major media outlet to change the types of words they used to tell stories about specific groups and communities.

Grantees also noted connections with other media and their network members. Media monitoring analysis found that PCM grantee network members had an average of 56 connections with individuals associated with other modules, and that 83 percent of PCM network members' connections were with PNR grantees.¹³⁴ However, several grantees noted challenges in working with commercial media. While partnerships generally supported increased dissemination and amplification of content, one grantee noted an instance in which the opposite was true – a partnership with one outlet hindered broader access to the grantee's work. In that instance, the outlet had the first right to use the data published by the grantee, giving the outlet the power to decide what from the dataset was shared more widely. The grantee noted that the relationship may have actually hindered their ability to reach more audiences of color. As it relates to working with commercial media to shift narratives, another grantee noted the challenge of aligning campaigns with the priorities of major media companies, who may be influenced by viewership and revenue over accuracy in storytelling.

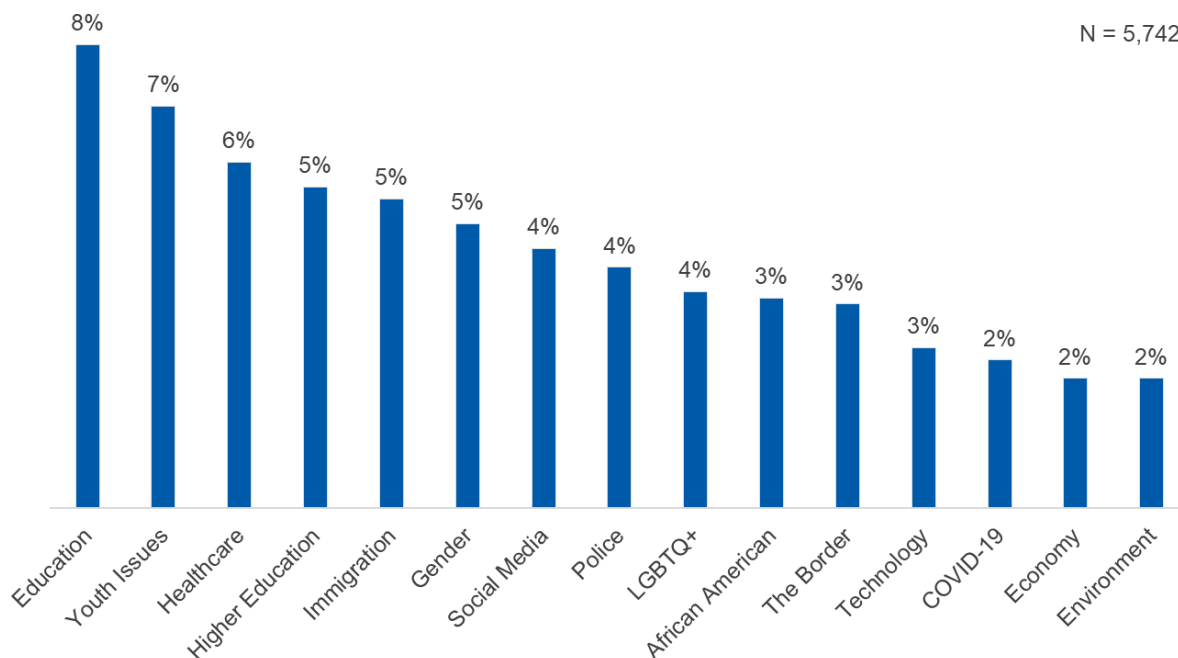
MORE ACCURATE, JUST, AND INCLUSIVE NARRATIVES ARE GENERATED AND MORE VISIBLE

Grantee-level progress	Moderate
Level of measurement	Grantee-level change
Sub-outcomes assessed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Broader array of voices is represented in popular culture, news, entertainment media, and nonfiction multimedia• Audiences have more exposure to and a better understanding of nuanced issues

Grantees made moderate progress toward the generation and visibility of more accurate, just, and inclusive news and narratives. Grantees reported that their network members included a broad array of voices in creating and disseminating PCM content, but reported limited evidence of increased understanding of nuanced issues among their audiences.

Grantees supported the creation and dissemination of content and campaigns that elevated the stories of young people, Asian American community members, Black community members and Black women in particular, Muslim American community members, the Latinx community, immigrant and undocumented communities, tribal communities, and regional stories from the South and Appalachia. According to media monitoring analyses, stories spanned a wide variety of topics, but most frequently focused on issues related to education, young people, healthcare, and higher education, among other topics (**Figure 10**). Media monitoring narrative frame analyses for two issues (the COVID-19 pandemic and immigration) showed that grantees were telling stories focused on marginalized populations, exacerbated economic and social inequities, and failures of the government’s response.

Figure 10: Top fifteen topics among PCM grantees by volume of content^{xlvii}



Grantees supported the creation of more accurate, just and inclusive narratives by creating, and supporting others to create, content and campaigns, often by building capacity, creating opportunities to engage,^{xlviii} and leveraging partnerships with advocacy or social justice organizations. A subset of grantees also worked with media or pop culture organizations to refine the narratives generated and disseminated by those organizations.^{xlix}

Many grantees reported large dissemination and engagement numbers, with a handful citing increased engagement numbers over the course of the strategy period. In one example, a grantee shared that they had 500,000 supporters when they started working with the JAM program, and now engage roughly 8.5 million people a month. For some, this may have been due to new investments in infrastructure (e.g., new building, website) and capacity to support engagement (i.e., staff), as well as partnerships with mainstream and ethnic media sources to support dissemination and amplification of content. Placements in ethnic media sources also meant grantees were more likely to reach audiences who reflected the voices they were working to elevate. Finally, a handful of grantees also noted growing geographic footprints into areas including North Carolina, Georgia, Texas, and Mississippi, among others.

^{xlvii} This graph only includes the top 15 categories identified in the analysis. N = pieces of media, including articles, blogs, and press releases; percentages show percentages of total pieces of media that cover a given topic. Pieces of media were published between January 2018 and April 2020. The source is media monitoring analysis.

^{xlviii} See the PCM Progress Toward Outcomes section “Stronger and more stable organizations anchor and define the civic media field” for more details.

^{xlix} See the PCM Progress Toward Outcomes section “Connections between PCM organizations and media organizations are stronger” for more details.

As a result of these efforts, a majority of grantees that responded to the 2020 survey reported that network members had more exposure to and a better understanding of nuanced issues – particularly those that were important to BIPOC, LGBTQIA+ populations, undocumented people, and people with disabilities.

MORE PEOPLE HAVE THE DESIRE TO SHARE THEIR IDEAS AND VALUES THROUGH PCM

Grantee-level progress	Moderate
Level of measurement	Grantee-level change
Sub-outcomes assessed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More people are inspired to share their voices / stories via PCM • More people take action to share their voices / stories via PCM

Grantees made moderate progress toward the outcome of more people having the desire to share their ideas and values through PCM. Data suggesting “inspiration” were limited, but data reported about engagement with content and people taking action showed progress.

Several grantees reported that more people were inspired and took action to share their voices and stories as an expression of their civic engagement; however, limited additional data on people’s inspiration were available for analysis.

In addition, grantees reported increased social media and digital engagement as a result of their work.ⁱ In grant reports, a handful of grantees reported high levels of engagement with PCM campaigns, with grantees amassing thousands of signatures, emails, and other actions. Campaigns included efforts to defend undocumented adoptees from deportation, protect urban Asian American community spaces from gentrification, pressure large tech companies to support equal access to housing, pressure big banks to divest from the private prison industry, and advocate against family separation policies.

Greater engagement with content and campaigns may have been, at least in part, driven by new investment in infrastructure (e.g., new buildings and websites) and capacity to support engagement (i.e., staff), as well as partnerships with mainstream and ethnic media sources to support dissemination and amplification of content.ⁱⁱ

Many of the groups supported by the PCM module intentionally sought to engage young people and BIPOC. However, for a smaller subset, this focus was more recent, and some noted opportunities for continued progress. In one example, one grantee intentionally provided additional capacity building supports for underrepresented communities, while another increased efforts to create content in multiple languages.

ⁱ See progress toward the outcome, “More accurate, just, and inclusive news and narratives are generated and more visible” for more details.

ⁱⁱ See the PCM outcome, “Connections between PCM organizations and media organizations are stronger” for more details.

Understanding the Foundation's Contribution: Participatory Civic Media

In surveys and interviews, grantees and experts highlighted two areas in which the JAM strategy's contribution is greatest: supporting organizational strength and stability, and building the field.

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTH AND STABILITY

The importance of multi-year general operating support from the JAM program for organizations' strength and stability cannot be understated. Organizations across the three modules of the JAM strategy noted that few media funders offer general operating support, but this is especially true for PCM organizations, as the field of PCM is emergent and still being defined and thus less likely to be on major funders' radars. The type of support provided by the JAM program contributed to greater financial capacity, which allowed organizations to hire staff; develop and offer programming, training and other opportunities to build PCM network members' capacity; launch and execute impact campaigns; and collaborate to build the field and relationships with media, communities, civic leaders, and others. Among grantees who reported improved financial capacity over the course of the strategy period, the majority reported that the JAM program contributed to that shift.

Organizations highlighted that the JAM funding sends an important signal to other funders, helping to catalyze other financial support for their work. Beyond that, leaders noted that JAM program staff also advocate for the organizations they support to their partners and contacts in the field. This has helped PCM organizations – many of whom were founded more recently, and are largely staffed by people historically underrepresented in the media field and often misrepresented in media portrayals (including BIPOC, women, young people, people who identify as LGBTQIA+, those who don't live on a U.S. coast) – be seen as “credible” and garner attention to their cause and work.

FIELD-BUILDING THROUGH SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH, CONVENING, AND NETWORKING

Grantees and experts alike pointed to JAM's support for the research and thought leadership that created the original infrastructure for the PCM space over a decade ago and continues to sustain it today as hugely influential. They also mentioned the JAM team's leadership in bringing together the individuals and organizations the JAM program supported through the PCM portfolio at convenings. Leaders of several grantee organizations mentioned that the 2018 PCM convening was the first time they learned about and met others doing similar and complementary work, and that this opportunity jump-started partnerships and seeded new ideas. Leaders also mentioned that the JAM program lends its support to grantee-initiated convenings and events.

Remaining Needs and Gaps: Participatory Civic Media

While grantees made notable progress against outcomes, the evaluation also highlighted remaining gaps and opportunities. **Table 5** outlines these gaps and opportunities in greater detail.

Table 5: Key needs, gaps, and opportunities for the PCM module and field to consider addressing in the future

<i>Key needs and gaps based on the data</i>	<i>Opportunities for the JAM strategy based on FSG interpretation</i>
Given unsteady support from other funders due to grantees falling at the intersection of multiple fields and a lack of long-term funding, grantees continue to need sustained, general operating support not only to maintain their capacity and operations, but to effectively and adaptively support their network members and communities.	The JAM program can sustain (and, where possible, increase) its general operating support in the PCM space as it is a key source (in fact, one of the only dedicated sources) of the field’s financial capacity. In addition, the JAM program can continue to play an active role in catalyzing other funders (including beyond philanthropy) to provide support.
While grantees are predominantly led by BIPOC and are making progress toward centering equity in their organizations, they reported a need for ongoing support to continue to build their internal capacity.	The JAM program can provide capacity-building funds to attend trainings, workshops, convenings, and access shared resources.
There is a continued need to support connection-building across people engaging in PCM, not only for the purpose of sharing resources and strategies, but in building community and mobilizing groups.	The JAM program can continue to provide project-based grants focused on convenings and other events to help expand networks and collaboration with one another. In addition, the JAM strategy can continue to actively connect organizations in the field to encourage relationship-building.

Contributions Toward Long-term Outcomes

The JAM program is an Enduring Commitment, meaning that its strategy is designed to contribute over time to a set of incontrovertible values held by the Foundation, as represented by long-term outcomes.^{lii} As such, the evaluation is intended to understand if progress being made across modules is aligned with and contributing to the long-term outcomes of the JAM strategy, which in this case, illustrate the Foundation’s valuing of U.S. democratic ideals. Findings from this assessment are highlighted in the following section.

PEOPLE WITHIN THE UNITED STATES. ARE MORE INFORMED, ENGAGED, AND ACTIVATED (PNR / NFM / PCM)

In the long-term, the hope is that content produced and disseminated by these organizations will inform individual members of the public and civil society groups, and compel them to take action. Overall, grantees reported high, and in many cases increasing, levels of engagement with content; however, opportunities to support broader public activation remain.

Within the PCM module in particular, some grantees reported high levels of engagement with grantee supported campaigns, with grantees amassing thousands of signatures, emails, and other actions.^{liii} Grantees also reported other consequential actions taken by individuals in positions of power, government agencies, and civil society groups in response to grantee content.

Despite important contributions made by the JAM strategy, nationally, most Americans did not report high levels of civic engagement as of 2018. According to Pew Research and the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI), only 21 percent of Americans were considered “highly engaged” for the 12 months prior to when the survey was conducted, and relatively few Americans said that their interest in civic or political activities had increased between 2016 and 2018. Approximately 20 percent said they had become more likely to take part in civic or political activities, with 30 percent reporting their engagement had lessened during the same time period. A little over one-third (35 percent) of Americans reported being somewhat politically engaged, having participated in one to three of these political activities in the prior year (2017).¹³⁵

However, it is also worth noting that engagement patterns likely differ by population and are evolving rapidly in the current moment. A 2020 poll by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement found that youth (18 to 29 year olds) were more active, engaged, and committed to change in June 2020 compared to recent years and that engagement numbers were generally similar across racial and ethnic groups. As one example, among 25-29 year olds, White youth (27 percent), Black youth (30 percent), Asian youth (28 percent), and Latinx youth (32 percent) reported participating in demonstrations at similar rates, while all youth reported an overall increase in participation in demonstration from 16 percent in 2018 to 27 percent in 2020.¹³⁶

^{lii} This is contrast to Big Bets, which are designed to make significant and meaningful impacts on pressing issues within a limited timeframe.

^{liii} See the PCM Progress Toward Outcomes section “More people have the desire to share their ideas and values through PCM” for more details.

Thus, while organizations are generally making progress toward informing their audiences, civic engagement behavior at the national level does not appear to have substantially shifted in recent years, and appears to have remained low as of 2018. It should be noted that the studies cited were conducted prior to the 2018 midterm elections, which saw a large surge in political engagement (as signified by voting).

PUBLIC AND CULTURAL DISCOURSE IS MORE FACT-BASED AND GROUNDED IN EXPERIENCE AND EXPERTISE (PNR / NFM / PCM)

A second long-term goal of the JAM strategy is to encourage public and cultural discourse that is more fact-based and grounded in experience and expertise.

Overall, grantees worked to create and / or support creation of content that was high quality, to create opportunities for engagement and meaningful public dialogue (often across political party lines), and to advance research and policy change that addressed those same issues. For example, several PNR grantees addressed mis- and disinformation through field-level discussions on approaches to preventing and responding to their spread, and dedicating staff capacity to focus on these issues. In addition, several PCM grantees either worked with mainstream media sources to educate journalists about biased sources or advanced research and dialogue to support relevant policy change.

Despite the JAM team's important contributions, nationally, Americans believe U.S. political discourse has become less fact-based (78 percent) and less substantive (60 percent). In June 2019, Pew Research found that Americans perceived this shift to be driven, at least in part, by the current administration. A majority (55 percent) said President Trump had changed the tone and nature of political debate for the worse (84 percent among Democrats and 23 percent among Republicans).¹³⁷ Others pointed to the negative role of social media and echo chambers in reducing public trust in the media.¹³⁸

While grantees' content does contribute toward greater availability of fact-based content, the evaluation team sees continued opportunities to support fact-based discourse, particularly by combating mis- and disinformation. Additionally, the external influences described here, and covered in more detail in the *Landscape* section, are extremely strong. This has resulted in an environment in which making overall progress toward this outcome is extremely challenging.

NEW VOICES SHAPE POLICY NORMS AND OUTCOMES AND BUILD UNITY IN THE COUNTRY (PCM)

In the long-term, the hope is that new voices are elevated and heard, and contribute to shaping new policy norms and building unity in the country.

Overall, PCM grantees reported contributing to increased capacity of network members and subsequent engagement with content, campaigns, and other PCM-related activities, supporting the creation and dissemination of more accurate, just, and inclusive news and narratives.

In turn, numerous PCM grantees reported instances in which their content, content produced by those they support, or other similar efforts contributed to policy change.

While grantee content has influenced the actions of those in power, it is unclear to what extent it has contributed to broader public unity. Recent polls indicate a strong, and growing, partisan divide in the United States. A 2019 Gallup poll found a 79 percentage point difference between Republicans' and Democrats' job approval ratings of President Donald Trump – the largest difference Gallup had ever measured up until that point.¹³⁹ Similarly, a 2020 Pew Research study found most Americans were more likely to see strong conflicts between Democrats and Republicans in 2020 than they were in 2016. As of 2020, 91 percent of Americans said that conflicts between the party coalitions were either strong or very strong. Additionally, 59 percent said strong or very strong conflicts existed between rich people and poor people, and about half of Americans said there were strong conflicts between Black and White people.¹⁴⁰

Therefore, while organizations are generally making progress toward shaping policy norms and outcomes, the extent to which these efforts are shaping broader unity in the United States are less clear. On the contrary, many believe the United States is becoming increasingly partisan and divided.

CONTENT INFLUENCES OR COMPELS PEOPLE IN POSITIONS OF POWER TO TAKE ACTION (PNR / NFM); PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS ARE MORE ACCOUNTABLE TO THE PUBLIC (PNR / NFM)

A fourth and final long-term goal of the media and journalism strategy is to increase accountability of public and private institutions.

Numerous grantees across the NFM and PNR modules reported instances in which their content or content produced by those they supported contributed to actions taken by people in positions of power. Grantees' content has been used for and cited as having an influence on policy. In some cases, content resulted in legal action, including investigations being started, orders by federal judges, and criminal justice decisions. In these ways, organizations' content have contributed to people in positions of power – and the institutions in which they work – to take action. Grantees' contribution to accountability and institutional action is further explored under the long-term outcome, "Public and private institutions are more accountable to the public."

Across the NFM and PNR modules, numerous grantees reported that content they have supported or created contributed to actions taken across a range of geographies, communities, and issue areas. For example, nonfiction multimedia pieces led to the release of wrongly convicted individuals, the resignation of Ministers of foreign governments, and a commitment from the U.S. Department of Justice to reduce and eventually end its use of private prisons. In addition, investigative journalism led to actions such as criminal investigations of law enforcement, a Congressional inquiry, and reforms within the U.S. Border Patrol.

Despite important grantee contributions, a majority of American believe that those with more wealth hold greater influence over government, that government officials don't face consequences for their actions (e.g., misconduct), and are frustrated by the lack of institutional transparency.¹⁴¹ The Economist's Democracy Index for the United States indicates a steady, although slight, decline in the status of U.S. democracy between 2015 and 2019, the most recent year of the index. As of 2019, the United States was categorized as a "flawed democracy" and ranked 25th in the world, down from 17th in

2010. The U.S.' status was first lowered to a "flawed democracy" in 2016 due to increasing frustration with public institutions and growing distrust as a result of controversial political events such as President Trump's executive orders banning travel from majority Muslim countries and concerns about Russian interference in elections, amidst growing Republican support for the administration.¹⁴²

A Final Note on Complementarity of the Modules

While the strategy's three modules employ somewhat unique approaches, they all aim to achieve a common set of goals: a more active, informed, and engaged public that can help shift norms and policies and hold institutions accountable in support of democratic ideals. We saw evidence of increasingly blurred boundaries between the work the modules seek to support and the outcomes they achieve. For example, PNR organizations were more readily looking to documentary shorts for compelling content; activists and social justice organizations leveraged both NFM and PCM content for their work; and PNR and PCM organizations came together to address misinformation and collaborate at the intersection of justice, racial equity, and data justice. Additionally, media monitoring analyses indicated content produced across modules has similar narrative frames (i.e., the way content created by modules covers a given topic). This trend was likely occurring naturally as a result of evolving needs and dynamics in the field, but may also have been supported by the JAM program's intentional efforts to support cross-module networking and connections.

A Final Note on COVID-19 and the Racial Justice Movement

The JAM team must continue to watch the COVID-19 pandemic as it unfolds given its direct impact on grantees and the communities they serve. In interviews, grantees noted ways in which they have adapted to better support those they serve amidst the pandemic, including by providing professional development trainings for remote workers, helping individuals advocate for and access COVID-19 emergency response funds and other sources of funding, and providing more resources online (which they noted has increased access to those resources). The JAM program also shared reports of grantees reallocating flexible funding in ways that were critical to grantee sustainability, providing leadership and guidance to other organizations and sectors as part of the transition to a digital work environment, and providing emergency funds and technical support to others.

Despite these adaptations, grantees also indicated that the pandemic has dramatically affected their work, which may influence the strategy's progress toward outcomes in the future. Organizations noted significant concerns about financial stability in the face of the economic downturn and reductions in philanthropic funding. They highlighted challenges organizing and engaging audiences since in-person events have been cancelled or severely limited. They also reported that individuals were struggling (e.g., freelancers are losing work or are unable to work) and these issues are disproportionately impacting BIPOC journalists, filmmakers, and individuals because of marginalization, racism, and a lack of access to resources. Grantees also noted that additional funding for organizations, funding for BIPOC makers, and mental health supports for staff and the individuals they serve are sorely needed.

It is also important for JAM and the Foundation writ large to not compartmentalize the killings of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, and Breonna Taylor and the subsequent protests and calls-to-action as

unique events. As articulated by JAM and Foundation staff, there is an increased need not only to support and invest in BIPOC-led and BIPOC-serving organizations, but to leverage all of the Foundation’s assets, including its financial resources, network and connections, national and cross-sector influence, and prominent voice to sustain and lead in these efforts.^{liv} To do this, JAM and the Foundation need to continue to reflect internally, revisiting the Just Imperative and breaking out of traditional ways of thinking and acting. As Yvonne Darkwa-Poku, Senior Program Officer for On Nigeria, remarked: “We are in a critical moment in time at the Foundation, with an opportunity to contribute to dismantling the structures of systemic racism through the Just Imperative. If we consciously apply the principles of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion in our Foundation culture, grantmaking, and in our relationships beyond the Foundation, our efforts would significantly contribute to the kind of world in which we all aspire to live.”

A Final Note on Equity and the Just Imperative

As mentioned earlier in this report, the values of the Just Imperative are deeply aligned with the JAM team’s strategy. In fact, the strategy has an explicit focus on centering equity. The evaluation team saw this commitment manifest in the JAM team’s approach to how they implement their strategy and, in many instances, their grantees’ approach to the work and achievement of certain outcomes. Grantees demonstrated improvements in internal structural equity, but highlighted a continued need to increase internal capacity related to DEI, particularly among leadership and board members. While many grantees explicitly served, or provided supports to, underrepresented communities, they noted challenges and lessons learned. Examples included requirements for upfront investment or travel that limited participation for low-income populations in programming, as well as the need to expand their supports to groups not yet included in programming, such as those with disabilities. They also noted that the field as a whole remains a challenging environment for BIPOC, women, LGBTQIA+ populations, undocumented people, and people with disabilities – groups that continue to be given limited access to funding and are left out of opportunities – and that shifting field dynamics often disproportionately impact these same communities (e.g., COVID-19, the racial justice movement, and the looming economic downturn). Thus, while grantees are making important strides, continuing to support, advance, and champion equity will remain critical to achieving the strategy’s long-term goals.

^{liv} See MacArthur’s [“Perspectives”](#) on philanthropy, privilege, and racial justice.

Feedback for the Foundation

This section includes feedback from grantee organizations for the JAM program on its grantmaking and non-grantmaking activities.

Grantmaking Support

Grantee organizations appreciate many things about their working relationship with the Foundation and the JAM program team. They mentioned that the JAM program's long-term vision, ability to identify potential talent and promising organizations, and supports for building the field set the JAM program apart from other funders in the field.

"[The JAM team] has a real ability to look beyond just the typical aspects, the usual suspects of what a nonprofit news organization is. If I'm right about where we and the journalism field will be 20 years from now, MacArthur will definitely be the partner that made it happen."

– Grantee

Across the three modules, grantee organizations emphasized how appreciative they were of the JAM program's financial support – especially the fact that JAM provides multi-year general operating support. In interviews, organizational leaders shared many aspects of their work for which unrestricted support has been critical. Unrestricted support from the JAM program has enabled organizations to:

- stabilize their finances;
- build operational and physical infrastructure;
- attract, hire, support, and retain talented staff from underrepresented backgrounds;
- experiment with new technologies, formats, and platforms for producing and disseminating content;
- protect their organizations, staff members, and individuals they support from harm; and
- be flexible in how they use their resources to innovate, investigate emerging issues, and pivot as needed in the ever-changing media, political, social, and economic landscapes.

Organizations highlighted that the commitment to multi-year general operating support is one of the reasons why the Foundation stands out in the funding field. They noted that the JAM program is one of the few to offer this type of support, which is necessary for sustainable, long-term planning.

"As the philanthropic landscape evolves, fewer and fewer major funders focus on general support grants. The way for [us] to thrive in the long-run is to continue to build stability and invest in talent, research, and training. More common short-term program and / or project grants often don't provide basic institutional needs like staff training, facilities costs, tech upgrades, and the ability to create a cash reserve for unexpected costs. [We] value the support from the Foundation because it affords the operational security for the organization to learn, evaluate, take risks, and grow."

– Grantee

Organizations that received funding from the JAM program when they were new or at a critical juncture were especially grateful, and shared that in their experience, few funders are interested in supporting new startup outlets.

“Thank God for organizations like MacArthur, because we’ve learned that it’s easy to ignore the little guy, that there are a lot of places that are looking to support tried and true legacy organizations. We think what we do matters, but we’ve found that for some places because we’re small, because we’re not that old, that it is incredibly hard to get the support that we need. Support like MacArthur’s can mean the difference.”

– Grantee

Some grantee organizations mentioned that the Foundation’s name carries significant weight in the field and had already helped them catalyze other funding. Leaders mentioned that other funders respect the Foundation as a longtime leader in this work, and that JAM’s support for their organizations was a signal to other funders of their organizational credibility and worthiness as an investment.

“The MacArthur support really helped us make the case to other supporters that unrestricted multi-year giving has transformational potential. That was really critical both in terms of the actual support and its demonstrative value to other supporters.”

– Grantee

“Being able to say that MacArthur is funding us and has made that level of commitment is a real imprimatur of excellence for us. I think it probably makes other funders that we’re talking to look at us a little closer, maybe open some doors for us.”

– Grantee

Field-Building and Other Non-Grantmaking Supports

Grantees across the JAM portfolio shared that non-financial support from the JAM program in the form of thought partnership and advocacy on their behalf had been immensely helpful. A few organizations underwent significant leadership transitions or merger processes during the strategy period, and noted how much they appreciated being able to talk through what was happening with their program officer and tap their expertise for managing these changes as smoothly as possible.

Leaders of grantee organizations frequently highlighted the JAM team’s proactivity, authenticity, and genuine care for organizations and their staffs. They noted that many funders hold their cards close and take more of a transactional stance with grantees; in contrast, the JAM team frequently go beyond grantees’ expectations to help them think strategically and tackle challenges.

“[Their support] does not stop at the general support. Beyond that, they work with us to make sure that we are getting networked and plugged into the right spaces, making introductions to other funders, inviting us to events where we can make different connections. They’ve also introduced us to various partners that we’ve done programmatic work with that’s really elevated our own work. There are a lot of funders that I have worked with over the years who are like, “Here’s your money. We trust you. Let us know how it goes,” and MacArthur is very much like, “Here’s your money. We trust you and also we’re

here every step along the way.” It’s not just lip service. They actually show up and are proactive, and it makes it easier to lean on them because you realize how genuine they’re being in that offer.”

– Grantee

Several grantee organizations expressed that they would like to see the JAM team more actively use their role as a leader in the field to push other funders to give unrestricted, multi-year funding. One funder mentioned that a reason that there may be few foundations supporting investigative journalism is that it may just not be on their radar. This suggests that an important role for foundations like MacArthur that currently support journalism and media is to help other funders understand the importance of funding media and how to approach doing so.

A few grantees also mentioned that the JAM program could help them generate more funding by introducing organization leaders to other funders in the Foundation’s networks. Said one leader, “The most important thing you can get from funders honestly is leads into other funders.”

“It’s going to be necessary in the future for MacArthur and others to encourage family foundations, local foundations, and regional foundations to support their local journalism entities. I think all the funders that are in this space need to be leaders to get other funders to join in this effort.”

– Grantee

Several leaders of grantee organizations mentioned that introductions to other organizations or individuals in the Foundation’s orbit who are doing complementary or interesting work could be beneficial as well. One leader also noted that connections between different types of media organizations across the three JAM modules could help break down silos, generate creativity, and ultimately catalyze impact.

“MacArthur could further advance our work by serving as an advocate for this approach both with other funders and with peer organizations. By showing others the impact of breaking down the lines between “serious” media or journalism and creative work that centers the personal narratives of members of frontline communities, MacArthur can bring greater resources to voices who are telling their own stories about critical issues in authentic, compelling, and inspiring ways in a new media environment.”

– Grantee

Grantee leaders mentioned that attending grantee convenings hosted by the JAM program had been very helpful. They appreciated the opportunity to interact with other organizations doing similar work, whether the organizations had been partnering for years or were meeting for the first time. Leaders of organizations within each module who attended their respective convenings mentioned that they came away from such events with new relationships and new ideas for collaborating; as such, these events served as important field-building opportunities.

“The convening was one of the most tangible and helpful of the sort we have been a part of in its aim to introduce leaders from organizations to one another for true thought partnership and information sharing, and we would love there to be more. Convenings, meet-ups, annual problem solving labs, or actual work sessions as touchpoints for funded organizations and their project leaders would help us to

problem-solve our work and potentially save time and foreseeable issues by bouncing ideas off folks truly doing similar work.”
– Grantee

Grantee organizations across the three modules mentioned that they would welcome more opportunities to meet and exchange ideas. Beyond that, PNR organizations mentioned a few areas where they felt the JAM program could help coordinate knowledge-building for the field and sharing across grantee organizations. These areas included collaborating to learn about and implement best practices related to protecting individual staff members and organizations against security threats, as well as DEI efforts.

WHAT WE ARE LEARNING ABOUT THE THEORY OF CHANGE

Overall Assessment: Are the current theory of change and accompanying assumptions adequate to reach the intended significant, meaningful contributions?


FSG believes the theory of change and accompanying assumptions to be generally valid to contribute to the intended long-term outcomes. The emphasis on the strength and stability of organizations as a necessary precursor for the rest of the outcomes holds. In particular, the evaluation team found that financial stability and internal structural equity are crucially important for grantee organizations. Financial stability enables organizations to be flexible, adapt, and build capacities (including internal structural equity) that are necessary to do responsive work. Internal structural equity is vital to ensuring that the work is done well, and that more accurate, just, and inclusive news and narratives are generated and more visible.




However, it must be noted that a multitude of contextual factors in journalism and the media ecosystem may affect progress and are out of grantees' control. Grantee organizations' work provides important information to the public, and organizations can do everything in their power to disseminate the information and ensure it reaches the public – **but whether or not the public is then more informed, engaged, and activated depends in large part on factors outside grantees' (and the current strategy's) control.** What individuals and the public do once they are informed by grantee content depends on a host of individual and structural factors. **In addition to recognizing the limitations of the supply-side nature of the JAM strategy, the evaluation team sees opportunity to more explicitly call out equity and the role of systems change throughout the theory of change.**




Status of Assumptions and Known Unknowns



The logic underlying the overall JAM and module-level theories of change requires that a number of assumptions hold true. The data collected by FSG during the evaluation period allowed us to make determinations about the degree to which evidence confirms or invalidates these assumptions.





Key:  High  Medium  Low  Needs more information



Assumption		Degree of Confirmation from Data Collected to Date	
Assumptions within the full JAM strategy	Organizations that receive JAM support will focus on building their internal structural equity.	 High	The degree of confirmation for this assumption was high . Many grantees implemented policies and practices aimed at building greater internal structural equity within their organizations. These efforts included an explicit focus on diversifying their organizations through inclusive recruitment, hiring, people

			development, advancement, retention, and culture-building practices.
	<p>Stronger and more stable organizations – in particular, those that demonstrate internal structural equity – are better positioned to build the capacity of and support BIPOC and other historically marginalized groups.</p>	 <p>Medium</p>	<p>The degree of confirmation for this assumption was medium. Many grantees drew connections between the strength of their internal capacity and their ability to support journalists, filmmakers, and other individuals, particularly BIPOC. While these grantees intentionally sought to diversify internally to reflect the individuals and communities they served, several highlighted challenges in hiring and retaining diverse talent due to a competitive landscape as well as status quo hiring practices in the field built around White men.</p>
	<p>By supporting the work of BIPOC and other historically marginalized groups, more accurate, just, and inclusive news and narratives will be generated and made more visible.</p>	 <p>High</p>	<p>The degree of confirmation for this assumption was high. The extent to which the individuals grantees supported reflected the identities and lived experiences of the communities they served was critical to reporters', filmmakers', and other individuals' capacity to tell more accurate, just, and inclusive narratives. Many grantees and the individuals they supported were intentional about building relationships with local communities to better tell their stories, and working to diversify their staff in order to authentically lift up underrepresented stories.</p>
	<p>The public trusts journalism and media content and will be informed, engaged, and activated by it.</p>	 <p>Medium</p>	<p>The degree of confirmation for this assumption was medium. Many grantees reported individuals, groups, and communities being more informed and engaged as a result of their work, and even catalyzed to take action on the issues they presented. However, at the field level, the public's trust in journalism and media declined as a</p>

			result of attacks on the press, a fragmented media environment, and the spread of mis- and disinformation.
	More accurate, just, and inclusive news and narratives have the potential to and do hold private and public institutions accountable.	 High	The degree of confirmation for this assumption was high . Grantees highlighted numerous examples of their stories and content providing a foundation upon which organizations, communities, and the public held institutions and people in positions of power accountable. In many cases, without grantees’ efforts and contributions, issues and injustices would likely have gone unreported.
	The three modules cohere and complement one another to collectively influence change in journalism and media.	 High	The degree of confirmation for this assumption was high . Grantees’ work highlighted the complementary nature of the three modules: grantees in each module built their internal capacity to support individuals, thereby strengthening the field and producing more accurate, just, and inclusive narratives holding institutions and people in positions of power accountable. In addition, several grantees highlighted the natural overlap across PNR, NFM, and PCM, providing examples of leveraging different mediums, formats, and reporting practices to tell stories.
Assumptions within the PNR module	Reporting organizations will build stronger connections with communities in order to better tell their stories from their perspective, including working with journalists from those communities.	 High	The degree of confirmation for this assumption was high . Grantees recognized the importance of being connected to communities and acted on this in differing ways. Some organizations partnered with local or regional affiliates and / or news outlets to stay aware of and share stories with local communities. Others ensured that people from the communities reported on were the storytellers, and

	<p>Research produced by grantee organizations will be used by organizations in the field to further strengthen and stabilize their organizations, and serve as the basis for advocacy.</p>	 <p>High</p>	<p>maintained strong connections with communities in this way.</p> <p>The degree of confirmation for this assumption was high. Among research-producing grantees, their research was leveraged by peer organizations and news outlets to inform their reporting practices, how they engaged with specific populations (e.g., young people), and their efforts to build their internal capacity to withstand and mitigate threats. In addition, many grantees’ reporting was leveraged by civil society organizations to support their advocacy efforts and social impact campaigns, and proved instrumental in holding institutions and people in positions of power accountable.</p>
	<p>Promoting learning, leadership, innovation, and field-building opportunities will contribute to shifting norms and narratives to be more supportive of journalism, as well as more supportive policies, values, norms, and institutions that protect democratic voice and the free flow of information.</p>	 <p>Medium</p>	<p>The degree of confirmation for this assumption was medium. Grantees provided many examples of convenings, shared resources, and partnerships with individuals, peer organizations, news outlets, commercial media, and other stakeholders to promote learning, leadership, innovation, and field-building. While these efforts contributed to more accurate, just, and inclusive news and narratives, they were limited in shifting broader norms and narratives around journalism due to a multitude of threats to the journalism and nonprofit reporting landscape.</p>

Assumptions within the NFM module	<p>Grantee organizations provide the types of support that individuals – particularly BIPOC and people from other historically underrepresented and marginalized communities – most need.</p>	 High	<p>The degree of confirmation for this assumption was high. Grantees described providing many supports to reporters, filmmakers, and other individuals, including networking opportunities, access to new platforms, financial resources, mentorship, and technical supports. Several grantees reported providing supports specifically to BIPOC reporters, filmmakers, and other individuals.</p>
	<p>By fostering strong, independent, and sustainable organizations and networks, NFM organizations will become stronger and more stable and will lead their respective fields.</p>	 High	<p>The degree of confirmation for this assumption was high. Grantees’ strengthened internal capacity was directly tied to their ability to produce and disseminate content, to partner with individuals and other stakeholders, and to serve as leaders in the broader NFM field.</p>
	<p>Supporting individual grantee organizations’ capacity and efforts to foster connections between grantee organizations will, together, contribute to a stronger NFM field.</p>	 High	<p>The degree of confirmation for this assumption was high. Grantees described substantial benefit from efforts to foster connections and relationships with their peers, including in the form of convenings and formal partnerships. These connections contributed to shared learnings and resources, greater capacity to withstand threats, and increased dissemination of content.</p>
Assumptions within the PCM module	<p>Grantee organizations reach, engage, and are led by people from historically underrepresented and marginalized groups, supporting them with skill-building and tools to use PCM in their communities.</p>	 High	<p>The degree of confirmation for this assumption was high. Grantees were intentional about reaching, engaging, and – to the extent possible – being led by BIPOC. These efforts were particularly aided by having internal staff reflect the identities and lived experiences of the communities they were serving. Through their engagement, grantees equipped</p>

			individuals and groups with tools, resources, and platforms to tell their stories authentically.
	Promoting learning, leadership, innovation, and field-building opportunities will help a PCM field coalesce around shared practices.	 High	The degree of confirmation for this assumption was high . Many grantees described convenings, coalitions, toolkits, events, trainings, and workshops to support connections amongst individuals, peer organizations, networks, and other groups. These efforts contributed to both shared practices within the PCM space and greater capacity for stakeholders to continue to define the space.
	Media organizations are willing to work with PCM organizations and individuals and share / provide a platform for their content in order to shift narratives.	 Medium	The degree of confirmation for this assumption was medium . Several grantees found willing partners among peer media organizations, commercial media organizations, and social media platforms to support content production and dissemination. However, some grantees experienced challenges with editorial independence and the extent to which these media organizations dictated the terms of their partnership.

Knowns Unknowns: Updated Status

The following section describes the current status of the strategy’s “known unknowns,” including the status of three new known unknowns related to mis- and disinformation, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the impact of social justice movements. The current status of known unknowns was updated over the course of the evaluation to help inform the JAM team’s understanding of known unknowns moving forward.

Media Consumption and Behavior

How and in what ways are young people consuming and producing media? Many young people engage in media consumption and creation in ways that are markedly different from those of previous

generations, often using social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.^{lv} Young people's high rates of consumption of media on social channels presents cause for concern given a fragmented media environment and the spread of mis- and disinformation on these platforms. However, the production of media by young people on social platforms offers new opportunity, particularly in the PCM space, where young people are able to tell stories live and in a way that reaches a wide and diverse audience.

How and in what ways is the media's credibility among the public changing? According to a 2020 Gallup poll, Americans' trust in the media "to report the news fully, accurately and fairly" has fallen to its lowest levels since the survey started in 1972. Only around 40 percent of respondents said they had a great deal or fair amount of trust in the media.¹⁴³ The media's credibility among the public is further threatened by the spread of mis- and disinformation, which has blurred the line between fact and fiction.

Will audiences continue to segregate themselves into echo chambers that reinforce their own beliefs? Currently, audiences seem to be continuing to self-segregate into echo chambers. The proliferation of social media has made it easier for individuals to distance themselves from viewpoints that differ from their own. The Pew Research Center found that these echo chambers are created by individuals' desire to avoid confrontation in a negative political climate and a refusal to consider opposing viewpoints.¹⁴⁴ The emergence of political echo chambers has been taken to an extreme particularly by conservative, far-right, and White supremacist groups who have sown mis- and disinformation and led racist, misogynistic, and xenophobic attacks against BIPOC, women, and other individuals and groups.¹⁴⁵

Media Supply

What role do / should technology firms play in filtering what news their users see? Platforms and algorithms designed and controlled by corporations are increasingly dictating and influencing what people see and know about their community and world. In light of mis-information and disinformation spreading on social media platforms, groups and organizations are clamoring for these companies to perform verification or a fact-checking function. Advocates for freedom of expression argue that this would be a dangerous transfer of even more power to these largely opaque companies. Nevertheless, public pressure has catalyzed some platforms to enact changes in their filtering process; however, these efforts have been limited, and far from comprehensive.

How will collapsing business models continue to affect media outlets? Legacy media, particularly newspapers and television news, find themselves in an increasingly competitive and commercial environment, often leading to business decisions that move them away from fulfilling the public service watchdog functions of a free and independent press. In addition, the dearth of funding in the journalism and media landscape continues to present challenges to media organizations' capacity, causing some to fold and others to pursue more diverse revenue mixes (e.g., support from streaming platforms).

^{lv} Youth are defined by Pew Research as age 17 and under, and young adults are defined as 18-24.

Impact of Threats to Media Makers

What threats will journalists, media makers, and civic media organizations continue to experience (e.g., legal, physical, digital security)? Journalists and civic media organizations worldwide are being harmed and even killed for their reporting and sharing of views. In the foreword to the Committee to Protect Journalists' annual report, Christiane Amanpour describes the multitude of threats: "From government surveillance and censorship to computer hacking, from physical attacks to imprisonment, kidnapping and murder, the aim is to limit or otherwise control the flow of information — an increasingly complicated effort, with higher and higher stakes."¹⁴⁶ These threats continue to persist, and particularly target historically marginalized and underrepresented groups, including BIPOC and women.

Impact of Mis- and Disinformation

How will mis- and disinformation continue to evolve and influence our democratic processes, discourse, and engagement with journalism and media? Mis- and disinformation continues to spread with the rise of online platforms, muddying the public's ability to discern fact from fiction, creating confusion, increasing distrust in the media, and contributing to social and political polarization. In addition, mis- and disinformation are proliferating beyond the journalism and media landscape in other spheres of democracy as well, including related to voting and elections.

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Will makers, organizations, and funders in the journalism and media landscape be able to survive the COVID-19 pandemic? The COVID-19 pandemic has substantially reduced the capacity of journalism and media organizations and individuals to pursue their work, and has disproportionately impacted BIPOC. As some news organizations have folded and individuals (particularly BIPOC) and funders have left the sector, the extent to which the pandemic continues will determine the severity of its impact on the field.

Impact of Social Justice Movements

How will public discourse and action around racial justice and equity influence the practices and policies of journalism and media organizations? The killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, and the police shooting of Jacob Blake, have reignited a national conversation around racial violence and systemic oppression, with organizations across sectors making explicit commitments around racial equity. This energy and momentum is contributing to some journalism and media organizations – as well as funders, online platforms, and other stakeholders in the landscape – building more equitable practices related to recruitment, hiring, and retention, and rethinking their relationships with the communities they serve.

Recommended Changes to the Theory of Change

In light of what the evaluation surfaced about the journalism and media landscape, progress toward the outcomes in the JAM theory of change, and the validity and adequacy of the theory of change, FSG recommends the following potential updates to the JAM program's theories of change.

Figure 11: Strategy-level Recommendations

Throughout: While the long-term outcomes in the theory of change (TOC) hinge on actions taken by an informed and engaged public, consumers of grantee content are only mentioned in a few places in the TOCs. Several assumptions also relate to audiences and their relationship to grantee content. It may be worth calling out, as assumptions or contextual variables, how audience reception and uptake of / engagement with grantees' work is crucial for achieving many of the long-term outcomes, yet is not directly influenced by the JAM TOC (the JAM TOC is a supply side strategy).

Throughout: Consider calling out equity even more explicitly, across relevant outcomes and modules. For, example, consider changing "People in the fields we support demonstrate increased capacity and leadership" to "JAM supported leaders and makers from underrepresented communities demonstrate increased capacity and leadership." This could also be done across module level TOCs.

Goal: Consider acknowledging the explicit role of systems change. It's not just about creating content to change minds; it's about disrupting systems of injustice / inequity that act as barriers to creating that content in the first place – all in service of advancing democratic ideals.

Short-term: Consider adding an explicit reference to organizations being better prepared to combat mis- and disinformation.

Short-term: Pull out internal structural equity to make it its own short-term outcome, rather than consider it part of "Stronger and more stable organizations anchor and lead their own fields."

Short-term: In the module-level theories of change, dissemination of grantee content is considered an intermediate outcome, typically embedded under "More accurate, just, and inclusive news and narratives are generated and more visible" but appears as a short-term outcome for the strategy-level theory of change. To remedy this disconnect, we recommend that dissemination and influence of grantee content be removed as a short-term outcome and also embedded under "More accurate, just, and inclusive news and narratives are generated and more visible."

Long-term: This linear visual may inaccurately represent the interplay between fact-based public discourse, private / public institutional accountability to the public, and people in the United States being informed, engaged and activated. We recommend displaying these three outcomes in a reinforcing circle rather than linearly.

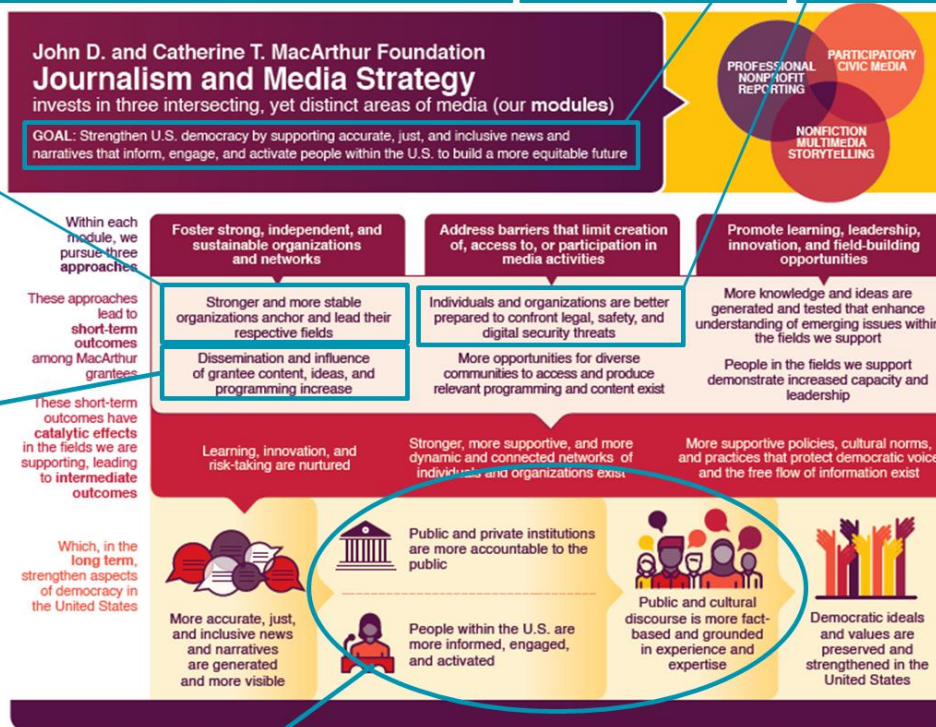


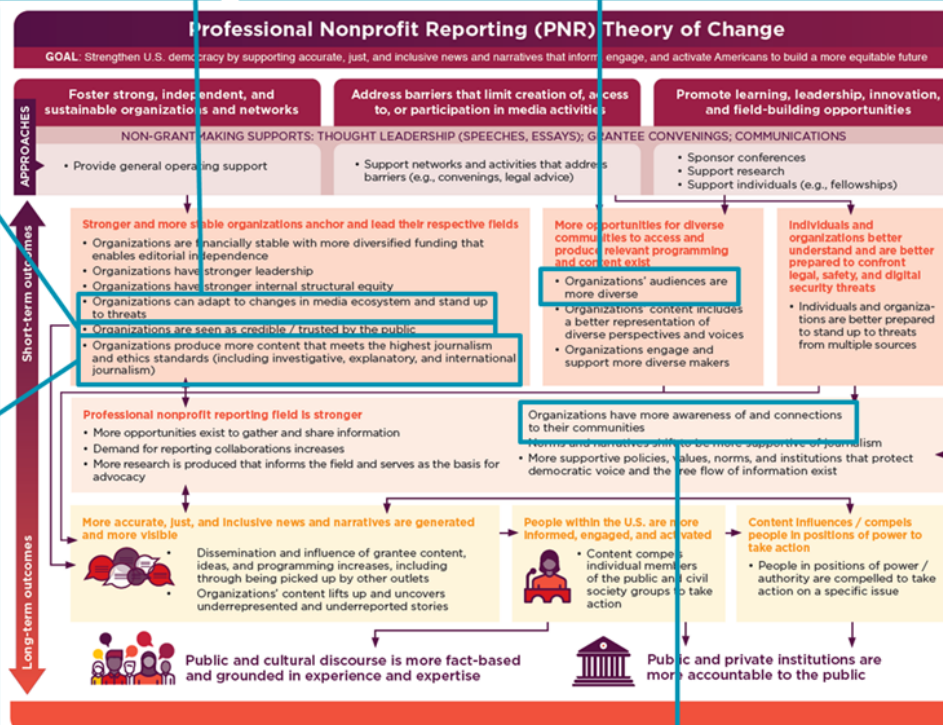
Figure 12: PNR Recommendations

Short-term: The “stand up to threats” component of this outcome is redundant with the separate short-term outcome *“Individuals and organizations better understand and are better prepared to confront legal, safety, and digital security threats.”* We recommend rewriting this sub-outcome to be just about organizational adaptability.

Short-term: In the short-term, outcomes are about organizational factors. As such, the first bullet should instead be about organizations’ intentional efforts to reach more diverse audiences; whether their audiences are more diverse as a result of their efforts may be more of an intermediate outcome. Rewrite this sub-outcome as *“Organizations make intentional and concerted efforts to reach and engage more diverse audiences.”*

Short-term: Consider changing this outcome to be an outcome that is within direct control of the grantee (e.g., *“Organizations track and actively work to build public trust in their work”*) or make this an assumption on which functioning of the TOC hinges.

Short-term: Is this about producing more content overall, or improving the quality / ethical standards to which journalism adheres? Consider rewriting as *“Organizations produce more content (e.g., investigative, explanatory, international journalism), all of which meets the highest journalism and ethics standards”* or separating into two outcomes: *“Organizations produce more content (e.g., investigative, explanatory, international journalism)”* and *“Organizations’ content meets the highest journalism and ethics standards.”* Note that creation of content that is just and inclusive is already captured under the related intermediate outcome.



Intermediate: If the organizations noted here are grantee organizations only, this sub-outcome may be better situated under the long-term outcome *“More accurate, just, and inclusive news and narratives are generated and more visible.”* If it is about organizations across the field also having more awareness of and connections to their communities after seeing grantee organizations do this successfully, rewrite this sub-outcome as *“Across the field, organizations have more awareness of and connections to their communities.”*

Figure 13: NFM Recommendations

Short-term: Rewrite this bullet point to be “Makers have increased access to the information and resources they need.” The second half of the current clause is overly prescriptive about the types of information, and many makers and organizations made the point that access to resources (financial and other) is as important, if not more, than information.

Short-term: As currently framed, this outcome appears to be about grantees’ or grantee-supported makers’ ability to access and use emerging forms of NFM. Consider editing the language of the outcome to reflect that, “Makers demonstrate increased capacity to access and use emerging forms of NFM.” This could be merged with the existing maker capacity outcome. Or, if this is truly a field-level outcome, embed this under the existing outcome, “Nonfiction multimedia storytelling field is stronger,” to the extent it is not redundant.

Short-term: Add a bullet point about organizational / leadership capacity. FSG heard in interviews and read in grant reports about the importance of strong leadership and adequate organizational capacity, and the short-term outcomes in theories of change for PNR and PCM include this as a component of the “Stronger and stable organizations anchor and lead their respective fields” short-term outcome.

Intermediate- to short-term: If it is about grantee organizations becoming more able and willing to take risks, this sub-outcome should be moved to be part of the short-term outcome “Stronger and more stable outcomes anchor and lead their respective fields.” If this means that non-grantee organizations are also more able and willing to take risks, rewrite the sub-outcome to clarify: “Across the field, organizations are more able and willing to take risks on content and new makers.”

Long-term: Dissemination of content is already captured under, “More accurate, just, and inclusive narratives are generated and more visible.” Consider moving both sub-outcomes here under the long-term outcome “People within the U.S. are more informed, engaged, and activated,” and, like the in PNR theory of change, moving the outcome forward in the theory of change.

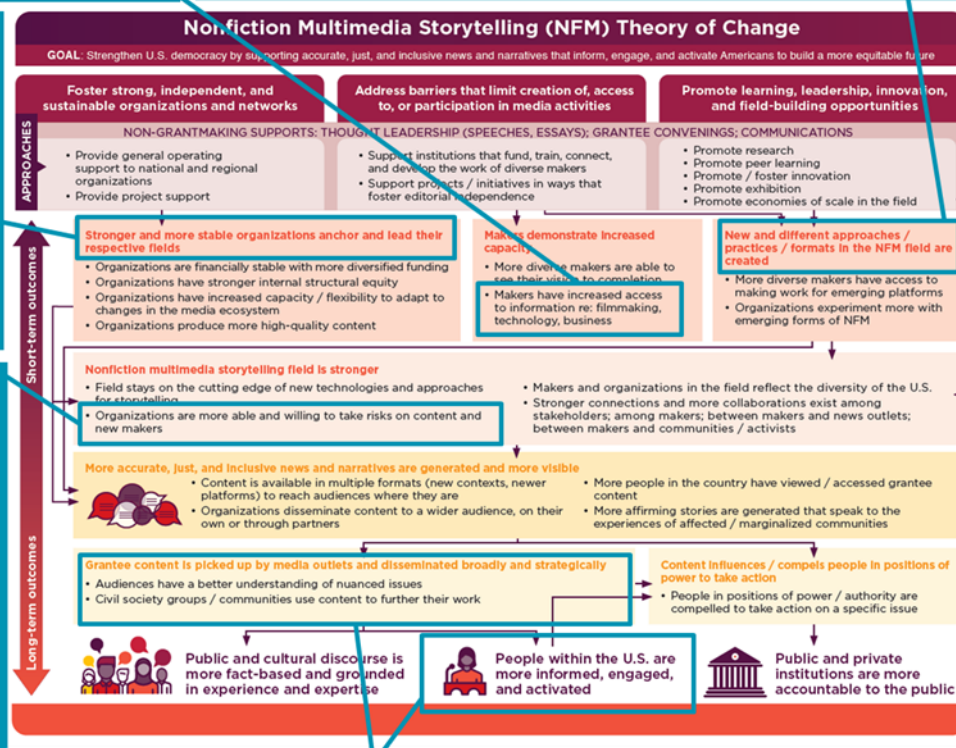
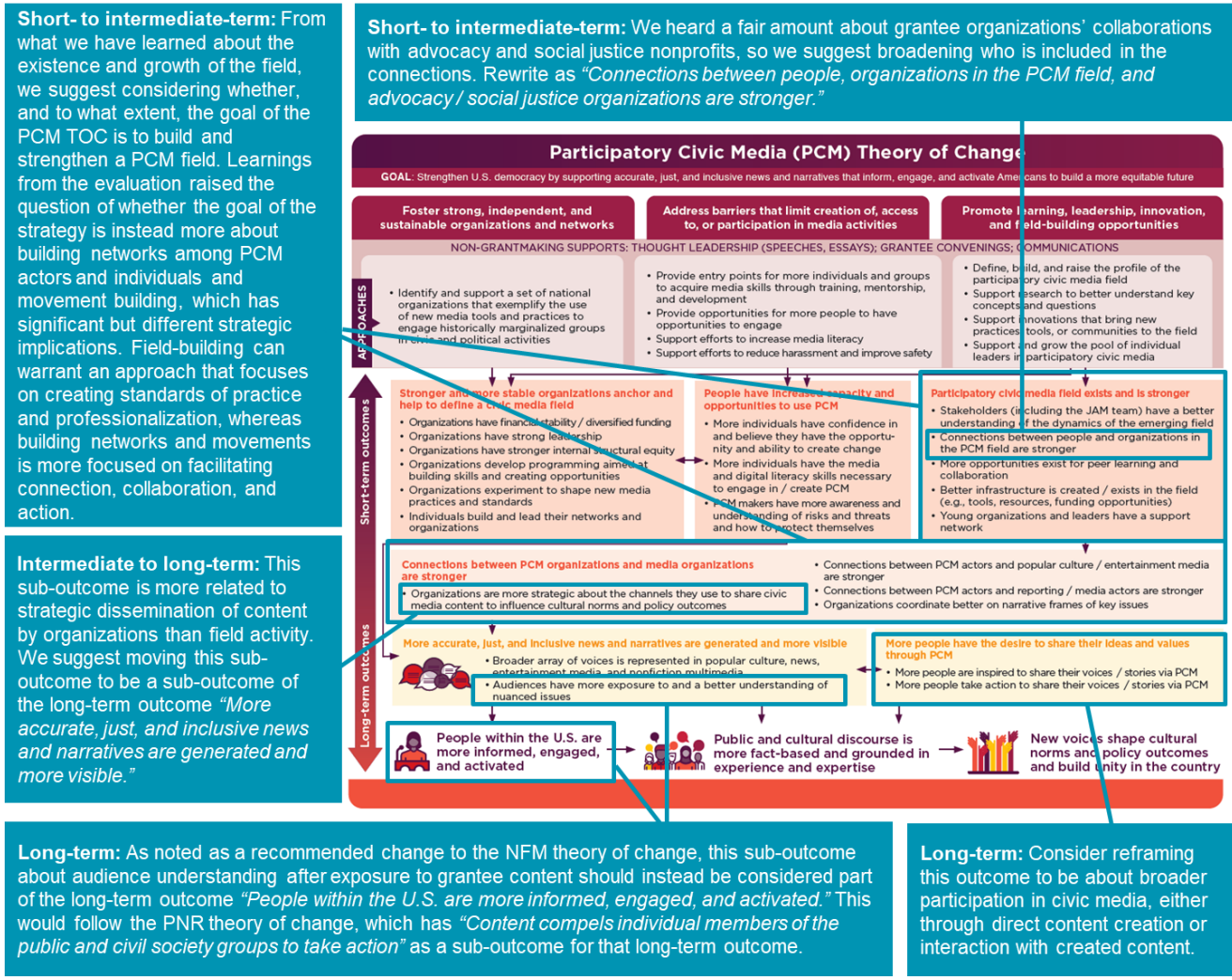


Figure 14: PCM Recommendations



Intermediate to long-term: This sub-outcome is more related to strategic dissemination of content by organizations than field activity. We suggest moving this sub-outcome to be a sub-outcome of the long-term outcome *"More accurate, just, and inclusive news and narratives are generated and more visible."*

Long-term: As noted as a recommended change to the NFM theory of change, this sub-outcome about audience understanding after exposure to grantee content should instead be considered part of the long-term outcome *"People within the U.S. are more informed, engaged, and activated."* This would follow the PNR theory of change, which has *"Content compels individual members of the public and civil society groups to take action"* as a sub-outcome for that long-term outcome.

Long-term: Consider reframing this outcome to be about broader participation in civic media, either through direct content creation or interaction with created content.

G. CONCLUSIONS

Since 2015, the JAM strategy has supported mission-driven nonprofit journalism and media organizations that are working to provide the public with the information it needs to support rigorous critical thinking and informed decision-making, as well as with the opportunity and tools to share authentic and alternative perspectives necessary for a robust civic dialogue.

Now, in 2020, the JAM team is pausing to review the strategy and make decisions about its direction moving forward. The goal of this evaluation was to answer three overarching questions about the landscape, progress toward outcomes, and the adequacy of the current theory of change, in order to inform that process.

Overall, our assessment of the journalism and media landscape suggests that there continues to be a clear window of opportunity for the JAM strategy to play a meaningful role in the media and journalism ecosystem. The JAM program is providing critical and outsized support to organizations and individuals in the field at a time of threats to journalism and media from governments, the spread of mis- and disinformation by hostile actors, the disproportionate power held by social and online platforms, low levels of public trust in the media, and a lack of sustained and unrestricted funding from philanthropy and other funders.

Across each of the modules, our overall assessment yielded that the JAM strategy significantly contributed to grantees' and the field's progress toward the outcomes in the theory of change. With increased organizational strength and stability, grantees provided individuals and other key stakeholders in the field with the resources, tools, and supports necessary to tell their stories in meaningful ways. More accurate, just, and inclusive news and narratives were generated and disseminated, shaping the actions of policymakers, institutions, people in positions of power, and the public.

As it relates to the theory of change, FSG believes it to be valid. Strength and stability of organizations were a necessary precursor for the rest of the outcomes. In particular, FSG found that financial stability and internal structural equity were crucially important for grantee organizations. Financial stability enabled organizations to be flexible, adapt, and grow capacities (including internal structural equity) that were necessary to do responsive work. Internal structural equity was vital to ensuring that the work was done well, and that more accurate, just, and inclusive news and narratives were generated and more visible.

Finally, as an Enduring Commitment, the JAM strategy is designed to support and contribute to a set of incontrovertible values of import to the Foundation. Rather than being held accountable to long-term goals or outcomes that are achievable in a particular timeframe, Enduring Commitments are intended to contribute in meaningful ways to the advancement of key ideals over an extended period of time. This is in recognition of the fact that change in complex contexts is not linear, is influenced by a host of external factors, and takes time to achieve. Hence, while the evaluation surfaced important grantee level contribution toward the long-term outcomes the JAM program seeks to influence, such as numerous instances in which grantee content was used to hold individuals or institutions accountable,

the outcomes the JAM program aims to change remain relevant issues that continue to challenge the health of U.S. democracy.

As the FSG team reflects on implications of these findings for its future strategy, we offer the following final questions:

1. How do racism and power influence the ecosystem, and how or in what ways might the JAM strategy leverage a “deep equity” and systems change lens to address resulting inequities?

While we could name and discuss questions of systems change and equity separately, we are choosing to present them together because of a belief that systems change and *deep* equity are inextricably linked. As Change Elemental explains it, systems change that does not address equity leaves important elements of the system unchanged, and equity without systems change is neither deep nor comprehensive.^{lvi} The ultimate goal of the JAM program is one of equity. As stated in the JAM program’s theory of change, the goal is to support *a more equitable future* by way of a stronger democracy. FSG would argue that, to achieve this, one must change, and arguably disrupt, the systems that have historically held inequities in place. This includes explicitly acknowledging **power** and **racism** as drivers of historical and present-day allocation of resources and opportunity (or lack thereof). Using a systems change lens with an equity orientation may offer new and useful ways to think about how the strategy can and should intervene in the media ecosystem to create change (e.g., through systems levers including policy, practices, resource flows, power dynamics, relationships, and mental models).^{lvii}

2. What roles do social media platforms play in the ecosystem, and how or in what ways might the JAM strategy address the simultaneous opportunity and threat they present?

In the landscape section of this report and elsewhere, we have highlighted the significant influence of social media platforms on content creation, dissemination, and engagement. On the one hand, social media platforms and their associated technologies have democratized the information space and created a public square by reducing barriers to content creation and access to information and creating virtual space for connection, collaboration, and civic action. On the other, algorithms drive the information people see, and platforms have been used to spread mis- and disinformation, which, combined, has created confusion, seeded doubt in the stability of our democracy, and contributed to social and political polarization. The significant role social media platforms play in the media ecosystem, and the opportunities and threats they present, cannot be understated.

3. What is the role of mis- and disinformation in the ecosystem, and how or in what ways might the JAM strategy address them?

Mis- and disinformation continue to spread with the rise of online platforms, muddying the public’s ability to discern fact from fiction, contributing to sharing of inaccurate information and a decline in public trust in the news media. In addition, mis- and disinformation are disproportionately impacting BIPOC communities and individuals, by both spreading mis- and disinformation *within* BIPOC communities and spreading mis- and disinformation *about* BIPOC communities that undermines the

^{lvi} See Change Elemental’s [“Systems Change and Deep Equity”](#) for more information.

^{lvii} See FSG’s [“The Water of Systems Change”](#) for more information.

creation and dissemination of more accurate, just, and inclusive narratives. As a result, mis- and disinformation pose an increasing threat to our democracy by attempting to undermine public confidence and influence voting and elections. Considering how and to what extent the JAM strategy addresses mis- and disinformation will be important moving forward.

4. In addition to the JAM strategy's general operating and project-based support, what technical assistance supports are needed to guide grantees' ongoing development?

As many organizations in the JAM portfolio are experiencing challenges in the context of a global pandemic and a national reckoning around systemic racism, there is a need to support both emerging and established organizations as they continue to grow and adapt. For emerging organizations, this might look like general operating support that includes technical assistance to guide their strategic planning efforts. For established organizations grappling with fundamental questions around what it means to center racial equity, this might manifest as technical assistance for leadership and staff to engage in trainings and workshops to advance these conversations internally and with those they serve.

5. How might the JAM program further support ongoing learning and collaboration among grantees, including supporting key changes both within and across grantees (i.e., through communities of practice)?

In grantee interviews and grant reports, FSG heard loud and clear that grantees valued grantee convenings and the opportunities they provided to connect with and learn from peers, both in the convenings themselves and after as a result of new or stronger relationships. Given how valuable these opportunities were, communities of practice or similar mechanisms that create on-going, intentional space for connection, collaboration, and learning, may be other ways to support grantees while contributing to the strategy's goal around building the field and networks, and increasing connection and collaboration.

6. How might the JAM program continue to shift power away from the Foundation (i.e., through the use of intermediaries) without further exacerbating gatekeeping dynamics?

Conscious of the inequities inherent in philanthropy and who gives and receives funding and resources, the JAM strategy (particularly in the NFM module) sought to address this issue by funding intermediary organizations led by BIPOC and women with stronger connections to the people and communities ultimately served through the work. While this approach has enabled organizations rooted in their local communities to address their specific needs through re-granting and the re-allocation of resources, it has also raised a question of gatekeeping, and the extent to which people and groups facing disproportionate barriers are still being limited or excluded from accessing resources and opportunities. Working with intermediary organizations to collect, synthesize, and co-review data on those populations facing acute barriers can help to ensure that they take a targeted approach in their re-granting and engagement activities. In addition, JAM can work with intermediaries to reflect on their own processes and systems to determine where there might be biases built into how they propose, recruit, select, and support makers.

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