



What if we could reinvent local news?
That's what **NEWS VOICES** is all about.

News Voices: North Carolina launched in April 2017 to forge connections between North Carolinians and the newsrooms that serve them.

We think newsrooms produce better journalism when reporters listen to the concerns of everyday people and incorporate those perspectives in their work.

We believe this is a critical moment to build bridges between journalism and civic life. Healthy communities need quality local news, and people need timely, credible, factual information on which to base their decisions and inform their advocacy. The future of journalism and the future of democracy are intertwined.

News Voices hosts public conversations to help local people set the news agenda. We partner with newsrooms to help reporters tap into the knowledge and goodwill of the people they serve. We work to elevate the voices of local residents, especially those of people of color and other communities that the media have too often harmed or failed to cover. And we advocate for sustainable funding for public-interest journalism and community-information projects.

Together we can ensure that local journalism serves community needs.

Why North Carolina?

The economic, demographic and political trends now happening across the country have been playing out in North Carolina for some time. The state's media landscape is also changing – from the shrinking staff and influence of its newspapers to the rise of promising journalism startups – in ways that reflect national trends.

The urban-rural divide that defines North Carolina's politics is also reflected in its media. While the state is home to two of the nation's top-25 broadcast markets, suburban and rural communities rely on small community newspapers that are growing more consolidated all the time. No matter where you live in the Tar Heel State, it's getting harder to find coverage of local school boards, town councils and how lawmakers' decisions in Raleigh affect your life. And while the state is growing more racially and ethnically diverse, newsrooms lack the diversity to represent residents' varied perspectives.

Yet North Carolina is also home to a handful of stalwart locally owned outlets, strong public-broadcasting stations and trusted ethnic media. High-quality nonprofit news organizations are beginning to fill the gaps in reporting on health, education and the environment statewide and in providing regional news in the west and on the coast. All of these organizations enjoy community goodwill, but some need help translating that support into financial sustainability. Nascent partnerships are forming, and institutions such as universities and philanthropic organizations are eager to learn how they can help nurture a stronger news ecology in the state.

News Voices: North Carolina will shore up those initiatives and help build collaborations between residents and newsrooms across the state.

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Where we'll work: We're beginning our community-engagement initiatives in Charlotte and the Triangle, and we anticipate working in places like Asheville, the Triad and Wilmington.

How we work: We play the role of connector and bridge builder, holding people and communities at the center of our work as we reach out to journalists and other media makers. We offer capacity to newsrooms so they can engage the public, creating opportunities for reporters to listen to and connect with residents. We lend support to community groups and find ways they can contribute quality information to the local news ecosystem. We raise up the perspectives of people who have historically been left out of public conversations. We connect newsrooms and civic organizations to creative, innovative engagement projects in other parts of the country. We're setting out to find the stories that need to be told and build the connections and partnerships to tell them.

What we'll do: We'll host small gatherings, trainings, conference calls and public forums. We'll foster collaborations between newsrooms and community groups, drawing on the best practices for engaged journalism from across the country. We'll strengthen networks of journalists, media makers and people who care about quality local news and information, building stronger bonds statewide to foster better and more sustainable news coverage of North Carolina.

The big idea: We aim to put in motion a virtuous cycle of trust, quality news and sustainable media: As newsrooms engage their communities and allow them to help set the news agenda, reporters will have greater insights about local concerns and start to regard their readers, viewers and listeners as constituents, not consumers. As community members come to believe their perspectives are heard, valued and reflected in local coverage, they will trust their local newsrooms more. This sense of empowerment and trust will lead to personal investment and financial support for local media and deeper support for journalism and press freedom.

Join us

To make News Voices work, we need to partner with the people who live in North Carolina: journalists, community leaders, activists, academics, artists, philanthropists, faith leaders and other community members. If we join together, we can give voice to stories that matter and help those stories make a strong impact. We can make North Carolina a model for the future of news.

Visit newsvoices.org to sign up for updates.

Want to get involved? [Email our team.](#)



News Voices: North Carolina Director Fiona Morgan is based in Durham. Reach her at fmorgan@freepress.net.



News Voices: North Carolina Organizer Alicia Bell is based in Charlotte. Reach them at abell@freepress.net.

Who we are

News Voices is a project of Free Press, a 501(c)(3) nonpartisan organization that fights for your rights to connect and communicate. Free Press is working to create a world where people have the information and opportunities they need to tell their own stories, hold leaders accountable, and participate in our democracy. We fight to save the free and open internet, curb runaway media consolidation, protect press freedom, and ensure diverse voices are represented in our media.

We engage in political advocacy through our companion 501(c)(4) organization, the Free Press Action Fund, lobbying Congress and state legislatures to serve the public interest.

Free Press and the Free Press Action Fund don't take a cent from business, government or political parties. We rely solely on the generosity of individual donors and charitable foundations to fuel our work.

Free Press has more than 900,000 members nationwide and more than 17,000 members in North Carolina. We have members in all 100 counties of the Tar Heel State, and in both Murphy and Manteo. Becoming a member means signing up to receive email alerts from us, which we tailor to your interests. We'll let you know about opportunities to sign petitions, call lawmakers, attend events or take other actions to support a better media system.

The News Voices project is made possible thanks to the generous support of the Democracy Fund, and many private foundations, public charities and individuals that provide general support for our work, including thousands of committed people like you.



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NEWS VOICES: NORTH CAROLINA

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