



CENTER FOR COOPERATIVE MEDIA

THE STATE OF ETHNIC AND COMMUNITY MEDIA IN NEW JERSEY

The role and resilience of in-language and community-focused newsrooms through the pandemic and beyond

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BY ANTHONY ADVINCULA



ABOUT THE CENTER

The Center for Cooperative Media is a primarily grant-funded organization based at Montclair State University's School of Communication and Media in New Jersey. The Center's mission is to grow and strengthen local journalism and support an informed society in New Jersey and beyond, which it does through creating community, collaboration and research. Now in its 10 year, the Center receives operational funding from Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, Democracy Fund, and Montclair State University, and has received project-based funding from Rita Allen Foundation, the NJ Civic Information Consortium and others.



The Center coordinates statewide and regional reporting, connecting dozens of local news and information providers through its flagship project, the NJ News Commons. The Center also conducts and publishes research on emerging ideas and best practices, focusing on collaboration, business models and ecosystem mapping. It convenes the annual, national Collaborative Journalism Summit and is the only organization worldwide that studies collaboration in journalism. The Center's annual reports offer a detailed history of programs and impact.

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INTRODUCTION

The Center for Cooperative Media at Montclair State University first published “[The state of ethnic and community media serving New Jersey](#)” report in 2019. The report sought — for the first time — to quantify the volume of ethnic and community media outlets in New Jersey and provide qualitative data about their businesses, audience and key characteristics.

The Center updated this analysis in 2022 and early 2023, conducting another comprehensive and statewide sweep of the community and ethnic news outlets in the Garden State. The Center sought to again examine their demographic and geographical information, social media presence, key audience and distribution and, most importantly, analyze whether the sector has grown or declined over a period of time.

The collected data shows where these vibrant and diverse ethnic and community news organizations are located in the state and what language or medium they use to inform their audiences and communities. With updated social media and website information, these data also serve as metrics on how they utilize digital and print platforms and formats, how they get their revenue, and how their audience seeks out news and information.

The role of ethnic and community media in informing communities is more crucial than ever before, particularly given the fact that the [population of Latino, Asian, African and European immigrants in the state has nearly tripled in recent decades](#). Nearly [one-quarter of the state's population is foreign-born](#), while one in six residents is a native-born U.S. citizen with at least one immigrant parent.

There is a strong correlation between the sustainability of in-language news organizations and the population of diaspora communities: When there is a significant growth in immigrant and ethnic populations in a particular area, the ethnic and community media sector thrives. Although ethnic and community news outlets do their best to attract mainstream advertisers, the majority of advertising still comes from businesses and services in their own communities.

Census data show that New Jersey is [becoming a majority non-white state](#), with more than 18% of its population identifying as Hispanic, 12% Black, 6% Asian, and 10% with two or more races. The top countries of origin for immigrants include India, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Ecuador, the Philippines, and Brazil.

Ethnic and community media play a crucial role in addressing the journalistic biases and failures of mainstream media to cover the perspectives of immigrants and people of color. These communities often find that the stories in mainstream media do not reflect their own lived experiences and cultures, whether in the framing or delivery. Ethnic and community media, in particular, have the unique ability to engage in community journalism that reaches and serves these audiences in ways that mainstream media cannot.

To illustrate, according to the findings of a recent Documented study, 77% of Chinese respondents living in New York City don't find themselves well represented in the news, and 33% of them mentioned “quality” as an issue they have with the current [mainstream] media coverage of their community.

Further, when asked about English-language media covering Chinese immigrants, 83% of respondents said “their main issue with the coverage was that it lacked closeness — it was not relevant to their daily lives or communities or was not in their language.”

In many ways, what sets ethnic and community media apart is that most immigrant and ethnic audiences tend to be more interested in hyperlocal news about their own communities. The issues, in other words, that affect the daily lives of their community members or stories that are about and for their communities are considered far more interesting than the general news.



The Documented study also revealed that, for Caribbean immigrants, “66% of the respondents said public benefits programs are the main topics they are interested in when consuming immigration news. For Haitians, 74% of respondents say they are most interested in “news that affects undocumented immigrants.”

As most local publications in New Jersey do not have the full capacity to reach non-English-speaking communities, ethnic and community media function as the persuasion tool, producing and repurposing in-language content that matters to their audiences.

The COVID-19 pandemic made the inequality in accessing firsthand and timely information much worse. Government agencies did not provide enough information in languages other than English, as they had limited resources to deal with an unprecedented health crisis. As a result, ethnic and community news outlets were greatly affected, and their audiences were left with little information. This made it even harder for these groups to stay informed during the pandemic.

Let’s take the case of Latinos in the state. While New Jersey’s Latino population exceeded 2 million residents for the first time in 2020, many Latinos still live in news deserts and have limited access to reliable information. This is mostly due to language barriers and a lack of information translated into Spanish.

But, at the same time, the pandemic also underscored the indispensable role of ethnic and community media as lifelines to immigrant families and underserved communities. For example, the Chinese, Korean and Filipino publications in the state—and not USA Today, The New York Times, The Washington Post, or any other national news outlets—were the primary source of information about anti-hate crimes and for essential workers who risked their own lives during the pandemic.

As summed up by Jongwon Lee, immigration attorney and contributing reporter for Korean-language news wire agency, Yonhap News: “When the world didn’t even know what was going on and what was happening around us, ethnic media, for many of us, was the one that we could trust and rely on.”

OUR APPROACH

The analyses in this report are mainly based on the Center’s updated list of ethnic and ethnic media in the state. These updates, by way of online research and direct communication with publishers, editors and reporters, were carried out mainly between January and September 2022, mapping out the current ethnic and community media landscape.

There have been a number of ethnic and community news outlets in the state that shut down, temporarily or permanently, in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. Others have ceased their print editions and shifted to digital, and a few have relocated to a different city or state but have continued to cover stories and distribute their publications in New Jersey.

As more and more businesses have resumed since mid-2022, however, the Center has discovered several new ethnic and community news outlets in the state. Many of them are online startups that aim to deliver hyperlocal news and information to their target audience. Others have resumed production after Covid-19.

It is important to note that some news organizations may not be included in this report because they did not yet exist when we were gathering the information for this updated report. Another reason is that they may have started up during this interval and, unfortunately, become dormant due to budgetary and administrative constraints.

Since 2019, the Center has kept a public-facing database of ethnic and community media serving New Jersey. The database includes the communities served and the languages in which the news organizations publish, among other data points. Findings from the updated database are discussed below.

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

Who are NJ's ethnic and community media?

New Jersey is home to at least 140 ethnic and community media (ECM) organizations. This includes 94 daily and weekly newspapers and periodicals, 35 radio stations, and 11 television channels, reflecting New Jersey as one of the most culturally vibrant, ethnically, racially and linguistically diverse states in the country.

These media cover stories about African, African American, Asian, European, Latino, and Middle Eastern communities, and other stories that affect or interest the myriad diaspora communities in the state. For example, a publication may write about the first Pakistani immigrant to be elected to the State House of Representatives and about U.S. general elections.

Notably, while some of these outlets are headquartered in neighboring states and cities, like Philadelphia or New York City, their daily or weekly reporting coverage focuses largely on New Jersey. That is because — as in the case of Bangla Patrika and Urdu News — the community they serve may be significantly higher in New Jersey than in the place where their offices are geographically based.

In-language media

A majority (85%) of these ethnic and community media are in-language, meaning they publish or broadcast their stories in a language other than English. We have documented local journalism outlets publishing in Spanish, Arabic, Urdu, Chinese, Korean, Hungarian, Polish, Hindi, Gujarati, Punjabi, Ukrainian, Italian, Portuguese, Tagalog, Bangla and Turkish, among others.

According to the NJ Department of Health, using the American Survey Data, about 70% of New Jerseyans speak one or two languages at home in addition to English.

But not all ethnic and community media in New Jersey are in-language. Currently, all the Black media in the state, as well as the majority, if not all, of Filipino and South Indian print publications, are in English or they are bilingual.



Ten of the news outlets identified serve the Chinese community; five Korean; five Filipino; two Arab; two Muslim; one Pakistani; and one Hungarian. Of these, all but one Muslim and the Filipino news organizations, are published in-language.

140

There are at least 140 ethnic and community news outlets in New Jersey, which is an increase of 21 news outlets since 2019.

25%

Roughly 25% of ethnic and community media in NJ serve Asian American communities, while 22% serve Latinos.

16

At least 16 new outlets, mostly online platforms, currently serve the Black community.

85%

About 85% of ethnic and community media in New Jersey are in-language, and publish or broadcast in more than 15 languages other than English.

10%

In fiscal year 2022, based on the interviews the Center was able to conduct with publishers and editors, about 10% of ethnic media news outlets received advertising from NJ state agencies.

For-profit vs. non-profit

Ethnic media in New Jersey are by and large family-owned and operating for profit. Most of them, except for those that are being run by corporations or media companies, have publishers who are immigrants or first-generation immigrants—and are active leaders in their communities.

The Korea Daily, The Korea Times, Sing Tao Daily, World Journal, Zaman Amerika, The Filipino Channel, Univision and Telemundo, to name a few, are examples of ethnic media in the state that are part of major corporations or a large media group, with news bureaus in major cities, including Los Angeles, Chicago, San Francisco, Atlanta, and in their countries of origin.

Because publishers and staff members are mostly bilingual and directly embedded in the community (many are community leaders and their families go to the same community church, for example), they are able to report on stories from the perspective of their readers, listeners or viewers, using sources and resources that are familiar to immigrants and people of color communities.

Staff members

The majority of ethnic media in New Jersey work on a shoestring budget and have small staffs. An ethnic media newsroom with a staff size between 10 and 15, including freelancers, is a relatively large organization.

Sometimes not all staff members are based here. New Jersey Hispano and The Latino Spirit are both Spanish-language news organizations that have staff members — mainly reporters, editors, and translators — located in New Jersey while their digital team is based elsewhere. The digital management (e.g., posting stories online, creating graphics and placing photos and videos) of New Jersey Hispano and The Latino Spirit are outsourced from Peru and Colombia, respectively.

It's also common for ethnic media to have lone-wolf reporters serving at least 100,000 readers or more in their communities. Don Tagala of ABS-CBN News/The Filipino Channel; Mohsin Zaheer of Urdu News; and Mark Tyler of Atlantic City Focus are a “newsroom of one person,” reporting, editing and almost running the entire editorial operations of their news organization in the state.

Where are NJ's ethnic and community media?

The majority of ethnic and community media in New Jersey are primarily located in Hudson, Passaic, Middlesex, Union and Essex counties, where the majority of their target audiences reside.

The dispersion of ethnic and community media in recent decades coincides with the fact that more and more immigrants are moving to the suburbs and smaller places, following overall population settlement patterns. In a national study conducted by Brookings in 2000, 56% of the immigrants living in the largest metro areas lived in the suburbs. By 2013, that share had increased to 61%.

For example, New Jersey Hispano, Americano Newspaper, Latinos Unidos de NJ, El Especialito and La Voz are all centrally located in areas with large Latino immigrant populations. Nearly 85% of residents in Union City, 78% in Perth Amboy, 71% in Passaic City, and 59% in Elizabeth are Latino or Hispanic.

Reporte Hispano and The Latino Spirit are both located in Princeton, but their coverage areas are also focused on the aforementioned counties. According to Kleibeel Marciano, editor of Reporte Hispano, if there is “the least coverage for the newspaper,” it would be the southern part of the state because, “geographically, it may be a bit out of our area.”

New Jersey is home to nearly 1.5 million African Americans, making up 16% of the state's total population.

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Atlantic City Focus in Atlantic City; and the Trenton Journal, Black In Jersey, and The Nubian News in Trenton.



Al Día is located in Philadelphia and serves as the primary Spanish-language publication in southern New Jersey, including the Trenton and Camden areas. Korean, South Asian, Filipino and Chinese news outlets are located in Hudson, Middlesex and Bergen Counties. The majority of Black media—mostly online—is centered in Essex, Mercer and Atlantic Counties.

News India Times, an English-language South Asian publication, is based in Jersey City—home to the highest concentration of Asian Indians in the Western Hemisphere. Gujarat Darpan and broadcast channels ITV Gold and TV Asia serve South Asians in Middlesex County, which is known as “Little India,” because it has the country’s highest concentration of Asian Indians.

Bangla Patrika and Urdu News, while their offices are located in New York City, they largely serve Passaic and Essex Counties. The state counties with the largest Pakistani populations include Middlesex, Hudson and Bergen, and the municipality with the most Pakistani residents is Jersey City. In addition, the Bangladeshi population in the state has grown dramatically in recent years. In 2012, Mohammed Akhtaruzzaman won the city council race in the 2nd Ward, making him New Jersey’s first Bangladeshi American elected official. The current 2nd Ward Councilman is Bangladeshi Shahin Khalique, who defeated Akhtaruzzaman in 2016 as well as in 2020.

The Asian Journal and The Filipino Channel (TFC) are the largest print and broadcast outlets, respectively, that serve Filipino Americans. Most are based in Jersey City, where the Five Corners on Newark Avenue is dubbed as the “Little Manila.” Jersey City has the second highest percentage of Filipino residents of any New Jersey town behind Bergenfield.

Likewise, NJ Urban News, Public Square Amplified and The Newark Times are located in Newark; Atlantic City Focus in Atlantic City; and the Trenton Journal, Black In Jersey, and The Nubian News in Trenton. New Jersey is home to nearly 1.5 million African Americans, making up 16% of the total state population. The counties with the largest concentrations of non-Hispanic Black populations higher than the state’s average include Essex (37.5%), Union (19.5%), Mercer (18.7%), Camden (18.2%), Cumberland (17%), and Burlington (16.2%).

What platforms do ethnic and community media use?

Digital access has dramatically expanded the distribution and circulation of ethnic media outlets. Although they cover mainly hyperlocal news, their digital presence—on websites, social media platforms and, more recently, mobile-based apps—allows these news organizations to reach audiences far beyond their geographical location.

Nearly all ethnic and community news outlets have some form of online edition, showcasing their original and aggregated stories as well as digital ads. But website management depends on the news outlet’s resources and manpower. It is not uncommon to find several ethnic media outlets that only rely on a basic digital publishing platform, like Issuu.com, to post their content.

The reality is that having an updated multimedia online edition, with photographs, videos and text, means additional overhead costs for small, under-resourced in-language publications or radio stations. And this is the reason that some of them, like New Jersey Hispano and The Latino Spirit, outsource labor abroad for their website management.

“The online edition, clearly, needs regular maintenance,” said Kalpesh Shah, chief executive officer of Gujarat Darpan. “But it is our secondary priority because we rely mostly on subscriptions. Our subscribers get a copy of the magazine in the mail.”

But other ethnic media have a completely different strategy: they shut down their print publications and, instead, put all resources in their online edition.



NJ's ethnic and community media outlets are widely on Facebook. More than 90% have a Facebook page and post stories there.

Chinese-language news outlets use WeChat, Korean-language media use KakaoTalk, and WhatsApp is popular with South Asian outlets.

Recently, mobile messaging platforms are more popular with ethnic and community media including WhatsApp, WeChat, KakaoTalk and Messenger.

Insufficient manpower and a lack of knowledge and skills on how to enhance their content on Facebook have limited the benefits of the platform for many ethnic media outlets.

The Hungarian weekly Amerikai Nepszava, for example, is one of the oldest running publications in the United States. It ended its print edition in 2019 and since then its online publication has reached Hungarian Americans not only in New Jersey but also in Florida, Ohio, and California.

To date, nearly 50 in-language publications in New Jersey — particularly the Asian and Latino news outlets with largest circulation and distribution in the state — still offer print copies in addition to a digital edition. For the Black-owned media, The Nubian News is the only publication that caters to the African American community with a print edition.

When it comes to social media, New Jersey's ethnic and community media outlets are widely on Facebook. More than 90% have a Facebook page and post their stories there.

However, many of these Facebook accounts are not regularly updated; a number of ethnic media outlets are inactive on the platform. Insufficient manpower and a lack of knowledge and skills on how to enhance their content on Facebook have limited the benefits of the platform for many ethnic media outlets.

In recent years, mobile-based messaging platforms have become more popular with ethnic and community media including WhatsApp, WeChat, KakaoTalk and Messenger.

Chinese-language news outlets use WeChat, a Chinese multi-purpose messaging platform. This is similar for Korean-language media, which primarily use KakaoTalk, a Korean messaging platform. WhatsApp is generally popular with South Asian ethnic media outlets.

While WhatsApp messaging is more popular among U.S. Latinos than Instagram and Twitter, most of the Spanish-language news outlets in New Jersey hardly use WhatsApp to share with and distribute their content to their audiences. A study in 2019 showed that more than 30 million U.S. Latinos use WhatsApp far ahead than other platforms. Diego Maya, whose publication The Latino Spirit uses WhatsApp, said that while the platform is economical, employing a digital person to monitor news and upload stories, as well as engage the audiences, can be costly for the publication.

Notably, when there is an ongoing newsworthy national or international trend or breaking news that impacts their communities, such as presidential and general elections, natural calamities, or a devastating tragedy, these mobile messaging apps are critical lifelines for ethnic and community media audiences. A Documented survey on Chinese and Caribbean audiences showed that most respondents (65%) said WeChat is the main platform they consume news, followed by newspapers or websites (55%).

According to April Xu, a former reporter for Sing Tao Daily who now works for Documented, when Donald Trump first ran for U.S. president in 2016, the activity on WeChat exploded. "At that time, almost every Chinese immigrant I know in the U.S. used WeChat to get their information on the election and Donald Trump," she said.

Nearly identical behavior was observed by Korean-language news outlets that use KakaoTalk. "I remember, right after the Atlanta shooting that killed Korean immigrant workers in a massage parlor, Koreans went to KakaoTalk to interact, express their opinions and get first-hand information about the shooting and victims. The messages were blowing up," said Phillip Sungyong Han, editor of Miju News in Ridgefield.

Growth or decline: The pandemic effect

The pandemic dealt a major blow to news organizations across the United States, but ethnic and community media in New Jersey were among the hardest hit.

Because many employers closed or lost their businesses due to Covid-19, the number of ads in ethnic and community media also declined significantly. With closed restaurants, bodegas and grocery stores, ethnic



media with print editions also lost the places where they usually distribute their publications, completely losing their visibility.

About 75% of Brazilian Press' ad revenue, a publication based in Newark, comes from classified ads and ads placed by local retail and restaurants, according to Brazilian Press president Silvio De Souza. When businesses shut down, those ads vanished.

Like hundreds of news organizations in the country, ethnic media in the state also laid off staff due to the impact of an unprecedented health crisis. The number of their originally-produced stories were tremendously reduced, and many of them relied on news wire for their content.

"For more than two years, I remember, we worked on the paper from home," said Han of Miju News. "We didn't go out to gather stories. We did everything on the phone or through the use of the Internet."

COVID shutdown

At the height of the pandemic, a number of publishers of ethnic media made the hardest decision of their journalism career: close down completely or close down the print edition and turn entirely digital. It was particularly difficult for small ethnic news outlets that rely mainly on ads and have no other resources to stay afloat.

A few, especially those ethnic news organizations in New Jersey that have been historically operating for decades, like America Oggi—which was founded in 1988 and served as the biggest Italian-language daily in the world outside Italy—also made a decision to sell the business side or merge with another media company that could assume the operational expenses. In 2022, the rights of America Oggi were acquired by America Domani, which is now being run by a veteran Italian journalist based in Rome.

New Jersey lost at least 10 ethnic media publications to the pandemic, including The African Sun Times (last activity on Twitter was January 2020), Bellavista Magazine, El Hispano (last updated post was March 2020), the Black Professional News, Newark Black News, and Noticiero Colombiano Hispano. A number of them were already struggling before the coronavirus reached the American shores, but their business operations became impossible to sustain during the pandemic.

The two historic Filipino American newspapers—The Filipino Express and The Filipino Reporter—which were established in the early 1980s in New Jersey and New York, respectively, also closed down. Both tried to shift to digital as they struggled financially due to shrinking advertisements and subscribers, but eventually completely succumbed to the coronavirus pandemic.

Post-pandemic

Despite the financial gloom brought about by the pandemic, there is a lot to learn from the creativity, innovation and actions taken by New Jersey's ethnic and community media in their efforts for survival. Publishers, realizing that the pandemic altered the way people access their news and information, have developed outside-the-box strategies to strengthen their operations.

Here lies the ultimate paradox: While the pandemic decimated the primary advertising base of ethnic and community media, the consumption and demand for more and urgent content from their communities has increased significantly. The views of stories and engagement online have gone up, surpassing the pre-pandemic numbers, according to Diego Maya, publisher and editor of The Latino Spirit, and subscriptions and memberships are growing.

That is one of the most pressing reasons that a number of ethnic and community media turned completely digital. It may be hard to turn their backs on print editions, but it has saved them thousands of dollars by not



printing and delivering copies of their newspapers. Arab Astoria, India Abroad, Amerikai Nepszava and The Filipino Channel, among others, shifted entirely to digital media.

Remarkably, the pandemic also inspired several Black journalists to establish digital news organizations, including Black In Jersey, The Trenton Journal and Atlantic City Focus.

“African American residents have long contributed so much to the life of Atlantic City, and yet, a news and information portal that serves the Black community was nonexistent,” said Mark Tyler, publisher and editor of Atlantic City Focus.

Sustainability

In 2022, ethnic and community media had a virtual press briefing with then newly reelected New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy to discuss the services and programs that his administration offers to immigrants and advertising support for ethnic and community media in the state.

Of the 140 ethnic and community media in the state, only about 15 of them receive ads from state or city agencies. Yet, running government advertising has proven to be an important source of revenue for other small news outlets. In New York City, for example, former Mayor Bill de Blasio signed in 2019 an executive order requiring all city agencies to spend at least 50% of their print and digital publication advertising in the 350 community and ethnic media outlets in the city.

The following year, during the pandemic, California Gov. Gavin Newsom also launched an initiative to help print and online outlets get a share of state advertisement budgets, leading to the state placing nearly \$10 million in advertising dollars to more than 500 ethnic and community media outlets.

Currently, the bulk of ad revenue that New Jersey ethnic and community media receive is through classified ads and ads from community-based businesses and services. Only about 5% of them, based on interviews, receive larger ads from business corporations, like Verizon, Macy’s, Spectrum and similar companies.

CONCLUSION

In a state where about 25% of the population are immigrants or foreign-born and at least 35 languages other than English are spoken at home and in public schools, ethnic and community media are certainly here to stay. The recent surge of newly-arrived immigrants, refugees and asylum-seekers in New Jersey and the growing population of African Americans and second-generation Latino and Asian Americans moving to the suburbs and small cities will likely sustain the market base for ethnic and community media.

However, the coronavirus pandemic, inflation, the Great Resignation and political instability contributed to the devastation of the ethnic and community media sector, as it did for other news organizations across the country. Advertising revenue fell dramatically. Many of their niche distribution areas—restaurants, grocery stores, delis and community centers—shut down. And their readership, most particularly for the print edition, shrank to its lowest levels. As a result, a number of these news outlets were forced to close down or shift to digital journalism.

Interestingly, these crises had also a positive impact: it played up the significant and critical social role of ethnic and community media, highlighting some of the ways in which they become essential to societal responses to these crises.

It was under those particular tenets that three Black community news outlets — Black In Jersey, The Atlantic City Focus and The Trenton Journal — were established, replenishing the dearth of Black publishers in the state. “It was the pandemic that really forced me to launch the publication, because I saw how my community needed it,” said Tennyson Donyea Coleman, founder of Black In Jersey.

It was for similar reasons that the America Oggi, OSM! Magazine, The Filipino Channel, Amerikai Nepszava and Reporte Hispano decided to innovate and strategize digitally, in order to sustain their newsrooms and continue to serve as community lifelines.

But while their commitment to their communities remains strong and faithful, it cannot be denied that advertising resources continue to decline. Less than 15% of New Jersey's ethnic and community media—an estimate based on interviews with publishers—received state or city advertising dollars in 2022. The advertising opportunities from retail businesses and services in their communities, now that most of them have reopened, serve as the bread-and-butter for their operations.

During the peak of the pandemic, at least 15 of these ethnic and community media earned stipends for a series of reporting fellowships. While it didn't have a major impact on their financial revenue, it helped fund some of their stories, boosting their content and, consequently, their readership.

In the 2019 State of Ethnic and Community Media report, the Center concluded that “because of their age and their closeness to community, many have not yet fully embraced the digital transformation, though there are notable exceptions.” This has tremendously changed, fortunately. In the last three years, mainly because of the pandemic, nearly all ethnic and community news organizations in the state have a digital presence, utilizing the boundless power of the Internet to expand, connect and inform their target audience.

However, if there is anything that needs to be improved in their digital advancement, ethnic and community media still lags far behind most of the general market media when it comes to utilizing social media platforms for financial benefits. The lack of manpower, and even content and social media management skills, prevents ethnic and community media from maximizing opportunities for revenue and brand awareness.

The Center also found in 2019 a desire among ethnic and community media outlets to collaborate with mainstream outlets. Since then at least 10 reporters and editors from ethnic and community media embarked on partnerships with major English-language news outlets across the state.

One particular example, recently, is the [NJ News Commons Spanish Translation News Service](#), which creates stronger relationships between the major mainstream news partners and six Spanish-language news outlets in New Jersey by translating English-language statewide stories into Spanish. Those relationships will also result in other collaborative projects.

RECOMMENDATIONS



State and city agencies should allocate advertising dollars for ethnic and community media.

Even among the legacy and historic ethnic news organizations, conversion from print to digital has been a new terrain. It has been challenging for them to make some profits online. And, at the end of the day, the issue around sustainability boils down to generating revenue to keep their news outlets afloat.

Advertising dollars from government agencies could be essential to meet the financial needs of ethnic and community media. When California and New York states each allocated \$10 million and \$15.8 million, respectively, and enforced city and state agencies by virtue of an Executive Order to spend at least half of their annual print and digital advertising budgets with ethnic and community media outlets, it mitigated some financial struggles and helped them publish without interruptions, even in the time of pandemic.

“It also provides a template that can later be scaled for requiring state agencies to include the full spectrum of ethnic media—including hyper-local outlets traditionally excluded in media buys by advertising agencies—in their public awareness campaigns to our underserved communities,” said Sandy Close, executive director of San Francisco-based Ethnic Media Services.



Increase community-based journalism collaborations. As evidenced by recent journalism collaborative projects in New Jersey, ethnic and community media and the communities that they serve benefit from partnerships. For example, during the gubernatorial election in 2017, a collaborative reporting project between ethnic and general-market media resulted in more political discussions and, likely, more informed voters in neighborhoods across New Jersey. Both sectors, indeed, need each other.

When news organizations team up together to reach new audiences, it can be a win for everyone. These collaborations can grow the reach and engagement, build awareness, create valuable partnerships, expand customer base, and drive revenue. They are also a great way to foster valuable relationships.



Foundations should support New Jersey ethnic and community media. While most ethnic media organizations are for-profit, foundations could prioritize funding capacity-building initiatives for in-language and community-based newsrooms in the state. Whether through reporting fellowships, digital enhancement, content management, or research and landscape studies, foundations can help build a stronger future for ethnic and community media.

Since 2017 the Knight Foundation, for example, suggested a number of strategies to support local media, with a total funding of \$300 million over the next five years. So far none of the in-language publications in New Jersey have been a direct recipient. However, three ethnic and community media publications received a grant from the [Google News Equity Fund](#), which helped the news outlet enhance their digital edition, attract more views and increase online-based ad revenue.



More training, educational and cultural competency workshops are needed. These training and workshops should be organized for both the mainstream and ethnic and community media to get better acquainted with issues in communities and help mitigate cultural biases in reporting. When everyone is in the same room, talking about the same issues, it can break down barriers.



APPENDIX A: Glossary of terms

Advertisement: A paid message used to promote a product, service, or idea, often targeting specific audiences in order to generate revenue and support for the advertiser.

American Survey Data: Data collected through the American Community Survey, an ongoing survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau that provides detailed demographic, social, economic, and housing information about the U.S. population.

Asian Indian: Refers to people of Indian descent and those who come originally from India.

Community Journalism: A type of journalism that focuses on reporting news and information relevant to specific communities, often with an emphasis on local issues, culture, and perspectives.

Diaspora Communities: Communities of people living outside their country of origin, often maintaining cultural connections with their homeland.

Ethnic and Community Media (ECM): Media organizations that specifically serve and represent the interests, perspectives, languages, and cultural backgrounds of diverse ethnic, racial, and immigrant communities.

Fiscal Year (FY): A 12-month period used for financial planning, budgeting, and reporting by organizations and governments.

Firsthand Information: Information obtained directly from the original source, rather than through secondhand or third-party sources.

Hyperlocal News: News that is focused on a specific community or neighborhood, addressing issues and topics relevant to that local area.

In-Language: Media content published or broadcast in languages other than English, catering to the language preferences of specific ethnic or immigrant communities.

Online Startups: New media organizations that are primarily based on the internet, often with lower operating costs and more flexible structures than traditional print or broadcast media outlets.

Public-facing Database: An online database that is accessible to the general public, providing searchable information on a specific topic or area of interest.

South Asian: People whose ethnic backgrounds are from South Asian countries, including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, the Maldives and Sri Lanka.



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