



KINDER FOUNDATION

American
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Project

Local Coalition to Launch Nonprofit Newsroom in Houston

With over \$20M committed from five seed funders, the goal is delivering daily, high-quality, community-oriented journalism

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HOUSTON —January 19, 2022 — In an effort to enhance the region’s journalism ecosystem and answer the community’s calls for additional news coverage, three of Houston’s leading philanthropies—Houston Endowment, the Kinder Foundation, and Arnold Ventures—are launching an independent nonprofit news operation in Houston that will emerge as one of the largest in the country.

The project was born from a two-year research effort, led by the American Journalism Project, which relied on focus groups, community listening sessions, and surveys conducted in four different languages, as well as content analyses of existing coverage to examine local information gaps and news needs.

With an anticipated launch in late 2022 or early 2023 on multiple platforms, the new nonprofit news organization will elevate the voices of Houstonians and address the needs of the community as identified in the American Journalism Project’s extensive research. Its wide-ranging coverage will be available for free to readers as well as other news organizations. The American Journalism Project is also serving as a seed funder, along with the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, and is incubating and shepherding the establishment of the new organization. More than \$20 million has been raised for the initiative so far.

The creation of this organization builds on the nonprofit news movement in Texas, which is home to nonprofits like the Texas Tribune, a nonprofit, nonpartisan, digital-first publication covering public policy, politics, government and statewide issues. It will be sustained by a combination of philanthropy, memberships, and sponsorship revenue. It will uphold the highest standards of journalism — philanthropic foundations will not have editorial control, review, oversight, or influence over the content being created or distributed.

“All Houstonians deserve to be informed about the issues that impact their lives,” said Ann Stern, president and CEO of Houston Endowment. “This investment answers our community’s call for more information that meets their needs. We are thrilled to support the expansion of local reporting in Greater Houston – combining the highest standards of journalism with an innovative community-focused reporting model.”

“I am hopeful that our efforts will produce impartial, high quality journalism that will benefit and inform all Houstonians.” said Rich Kinder, chairman of the Kinder Foundation and executive chairman of Kinder



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Morgan. “This additional newsroom for Houston is supported because of an existing need, and we see this as a way of augmenting the current journalistic industry that informs our city.”

“Commercial news organizations across the United States have rapidly declined in recent years, a trend that directly undermines the foundations of American democracy,” said Laura Arnold, co-founder and co-chair of Arnold Ventures. “A free press is essential, and until the industry finds its footing, philanthropy must do its part to help strengthen and safeguard the Fourth Estate. We have long invested in nonprofit journalism, and we are honored to support the establishment of a robust newsroom endeavor in our hometown.”

“Local newsrooms are vital civic institutions in their communities,” said Sarabeth Berman, CEO of the American Journalism Project. “This partnership marks a major step into a new era for local journalism—it’s a demonstration of how local foundations can play a critical role in building and sustaining newsrooms, and changing the trajectory of local journalism.”

A local search committee comprised of civic, business and nonprofit leaders will immediately begin work to conduct an open search for a founding management team, including an Editor-in-Chief and a CEO for the region-wide network. Job descriptions can be found at <http://localnewsforhouston.org/jobs>.

The search committee will include:

- Ann Stern, President & CEO, Houston Endowment
- Dr. Anne Chao, Manager of the Houston Asian American Archive, Rice University
- Armando Perez, Executive Vice President, H-E-B Houston, chairman, United Way Greater Houston
- Jeff Cohen, Executive Vice President, Arnold Ventures
- Reginald DesRosches, Howard R. Hughes Provost and President-Elect, Rice University
- Rich Kinder, chairman, Kinder Foundation, and Executive Chairman, Kinder Morgan Inc.

The organization’s name, news coverage strategies, and office location will be determined by its new leadership. The management team will be expected to hire and deploy an experienced, diverse workforce and pursue innovative models and emerging best practices in engaging community members to help inform the newsroom’s priorities. It will strive to be the center of conversation about Houston’s critical issues, bridge communities, and foster community engagement, while building a vibrant and active following.

The organization has established an introductory web page at localnewsforhouston.org, where applications for the CEO and editor-in-chief are currently being accepted.



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About Houston Endowment

[Houston Endowment](#) is a private foundation that partners with others to achieve a vibrant and inclusive region where all residents can thrive. We advance equity of opportunity through deep commitments to PreK-12 public education and civic engagement; support cultural assets that engage and connect us; and drive sustainable change across our region.

About Arnold Ventures

[Arnold Ventures](#) is a philanthropy dedicated to tackling some of the most pressing problems in the United States. We invest in sustainable change, building it from the ground up based on research, deep thinking, and a strong foundation of evidence. We drive public conversation, craft policy, and inspire action through education and advocacy.

About the Kinder Foundation

The [Kinder Foundation](#) supports greater Houston as a model city for economic opportunity and quality of life by providing grants in the areas of urban green space, education, and quality of life. Our priority is to make impactful gifts that transform Houston in significant ways and help people realize a healthy and rewarding quality of life.

About the American Journalism Project

The [American Journalism Project](#) is a venture philanthropy dedicated to local news. We believe local journalism is a public good and are reimagining its future by building a model to finance and sustain the local news our democracy requires. We make grants to local nonprofit news organizations to build their revenue and business operations, partner with communities to launch new organizations, and mentor leaders as they grow and sustain their newsrooms. Our work with local philanthropy and startups is made possible in part by the Google News Initiative (GNI), whose support includes access to GNI-developed products, resources, and programs.

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