



tiny news collective Strategic Plan

2025-27

Introduction

Welcome to the 2025-27 Tiny News Collective Strategic Plan.

This plan marks the beginning of the next phase of our development as a journalism support and service organization and as a collective of visionary, mission-driven entrepreneurs who are changing the face of local and community news.

This moment is a critical time of change, tumult and rebirth in media and journalism, as old systems wither and new ones sprout. The political, economic and technology environment continues to put pressure on what it means to be a truth-teller and a community connector. We see our role as a gardener and nurturer of a new permaculture, one that is more sustainable, adaptable and resilient for the future.

Tiny News Collective is at the forefront of a movement to grow and democratize local news. We lower the barrier for entry to aspiring news entrepreneurs and help news flourish in underserved markets, making communities healthier and democracy stronger in the process. We place a special emphasis on supporting communities that have historically faced systemic barriers to opportunity, including those impacted by racial, economic, linguistic and geographic disparities. We are steadfast in our belief in the power of small solutions to effect big change. That can mean starting small and growing with intentionality or starting and remaining small because that's what a community needs. The news industry needs to learn from many more small experiments in order to weave together a stronger fabric of informed, engaged and connected communities, and TNC is primed to support those experiments.

This strategic plan comes at an inflection point for Tiny News Collective. TNC is transitioning from an early-stage organization to a growing one. With that comes the need to refresh our mission, articulate our values and define next steps and goals in our development. We do that in the spirit of transparency and accountability, and we recognize the role that current and future members, partners, funders and donors, industry leaders and fellow travelers play in our success.

I am excited to share this road map of the next few years of Tiny News Collective's evolution. We invite you to join our movement, and we look forward to having you by our side.

With gratitude,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy L. Kovac-Ashley".

Amy L. Kovac-Ashley
Executive Director
Tiny News Collective

About Tiny News Collective

Tiny News Collective (TNC) is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that exists to support early-stage news entrepreneurs across the United States who provide community-rooted news and information and opportunities for deep community connection.

The organization began in 2020 as a collaborative project between News Catalyst, a program that was housed at Temple University's Klein College of Media and Communication, and LION Publishers, along with a group of industry leaders and partners. In 2022, TNC hired its first full-time dedicated staff members, and in 2024, it spun off from News Catalyst and hired its first full-time executive director.

The founders of TNC set out to answer the simple question of **who needs help and isn't receiving it in local news**. As they examined the landscape further, they focused on small startups, noticing that most don't begin with deep-pocketed investors and splashy coverage in industry press. Instead, most are created by one or two founders who are passionate about news and information and motivated to serve their communities, with limited resources and no outside help. That led to a hypothesis about what could happen if local and community news founders had access to basic core support around technology, operations, finance and product strategy while contributing to and tapping into the wisdom of other entrepreneurs. What we have found is that real change can happen.



“Joining the Tiny News Collective was a critical step in the Mat-Su Sentinel’s launch plan. As a one-person operation that is literally tiny, access to the knowledge of the collective and the resources, training, mentorship, fiscal sponsorship and financial *support provided by TNC was and is key to the Sentinel’s continued success.*”

— **AMY BUSHATZ**
FOUNDER, MAT-SU SENTINEL

The Collective's goal isn't to save local journalism. Rather, TNC equips people to build something new, better and more imaginative: a thriving, vibrant and diverse news and information environment built from the ground up that meets community needs and knits shared experiences into a sense of community belonging. We aim to support people who have been historically excluded from media and media ownership and to lower barriers for them to launch, nurture and sustain community-centered news businesses.

Between active and alumni members, we have served more than 70 news outlets and more than 90 founders in 26 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. We support solopreneurs and co-founders alike, and these entrepreneurs come from a broad spectrum of professional and socioeconomic backgrounds, lived experiences and personal identities, as well as different geographies — rural, urban and suburban. They drive our constantly evolving services and support and make the Collective what it is: an encouraging learning community that practices mutual aid.



“Tiny News Collective’s workshops, fiscal sponsorship and robust community of other journalism entrepreneurs has been invaluable as we figure out how to build an advisory board, what insurance we need, how to run a successful crowdfunding campaign and more. One of the best parts of building this outlet has been connecting with other founders who are thrilled to share what they’ve learned. *We’re not alone in this effort to build a different kind of newsroom.* Thanks TNC!”

— **NUALA BISHARI**
COFOUNDER, COYOTE MEDIA COLLECTIVE

About the Plan

During the first half of 2025, TNC's leadership team led the work of building this plan, with participation from our board and staff and support from our strategy consultant, Bene Cipolla of Allium Partners. Through interviews, surveys and discussions, we consulted the following stakeholders for input to help shape our plan:

Board

Staff

**Technology
Partners**

**Program
Partners**

Members

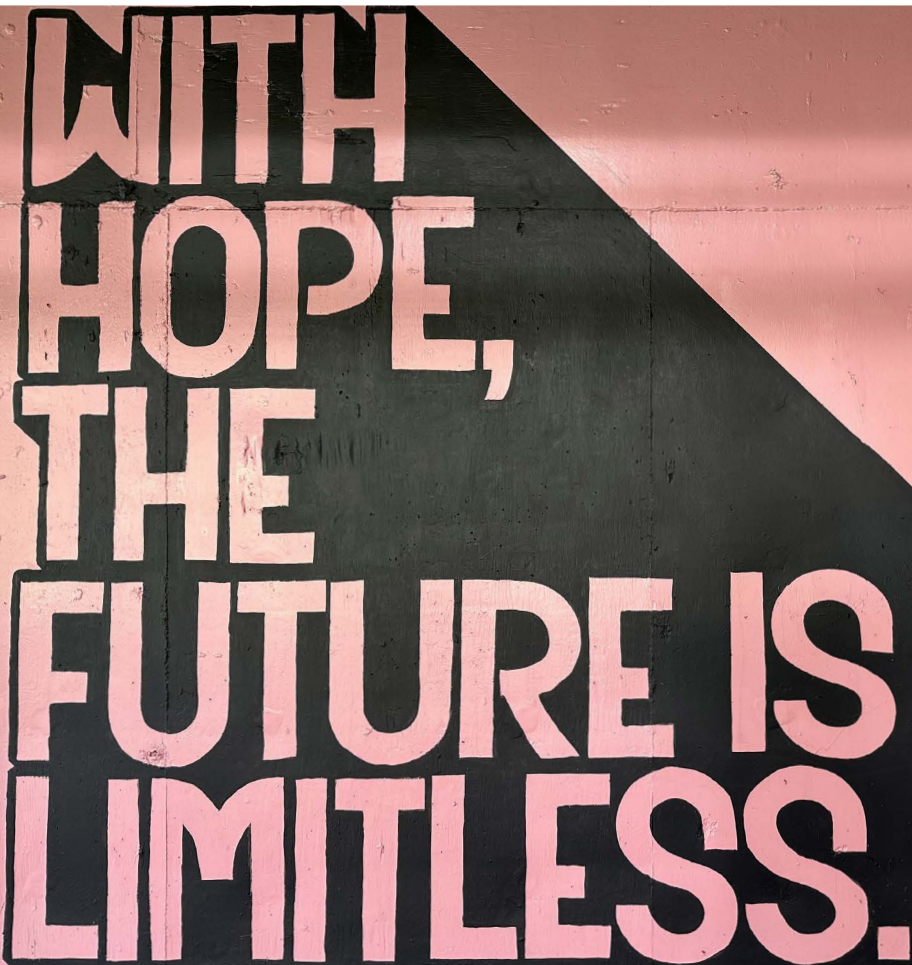
Funders

Through this work, we updated our mission, created belief statements and developed a set of core values, which evolved from an initial set of principles developed by our co-founders. These provided a strong foundation to build upon and identify the priorities that will best advance our mission over the next two and a half years. Each priority includes key objectives to measure our progress and hold ourselves accountable to serving our members, our team, the journalism industry and local communities all over the United States in need of a thriving, vibrant and diverse news and information ecosystem.



Our Mission

We equip visionary news entrepreneurs in underserved communities to transform journalism from the ground up, making it *more equitable, accessible and connected*. Through coaching, tools and strategic support, Tiny News Collective nurtures a network of indie media founders to *launch and grow community-rooted news organizations that endure*.



WITH
HOPE,
THE
FUTURE IS
LIMITLESS.

Our Vision

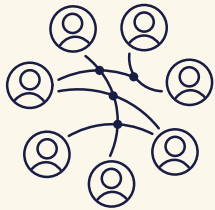
We believe that all communities deserve **a thriving, vibrant and diverse** news and information ecosystem.

We believe that **news products must be more imaginative, relevant and culturally conscious** in order for communities to be accurately informed, engaged and connected and for democracy to flourish.

We believe in the purpose and power of **small, indie publishers** — both those who have come before and those who are charting the future — to make a material difference in the quality of life of their communities.

We believe that the ethos of **mutual aid and collective action** equips news entrepreneurs to go farther together, allowing for more robust shared learning and resources to aid in their sustainability.

Our Values



COMMUNITY

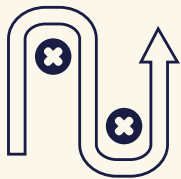
Strong communities make strong media, and strong media makes strong communities. We help build connections that strengthen local news — and the people who rely on it. We believe a community rooted in curiosity, joy and solidarity is essential to equipping founders to transform journalism.

INTEGRITY

We act with honesty and transparency in all that we do. We build relationships with members, partners and communities at the speed of trust. As a service and support organization, we are committed to clarity and accountability, and as a movement builder within journalism, we recognize that justice must underpin our work.



RESOURCEFULNESS



We embrace the power of abundance and creativity, of finding a way even when the path isn't clearly tread. We honor the legacy of publishers outside the mainstream — in independent, community-rooted and justice-oriented media — who have expanded boundaries and built with resourcefulness, and we seek to build new, resilient systems that last. We nurture and celebrate the agility of community-rooted media entrepreneurs.

TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT

We might be tiny, but our goal is not: We aim to have a transformative impact on individuals, the journalism industry and communities at large, challenging ideas of who can be a media entrepreneur, what journalism can be and do and how communities build connection and a shared understanding.



HOPE



We believe hope is an action we take. We practice it every day as we support the entrepreneurs who are building the future of local and community news. Hope fuels our ability to be clear-eyed about today, envision the possibilities of tomorrow and experience joy in taking the steps to get there.

Strategic Priorities 2025-27

★ Grow TNC membership in breadth and depth

We expect to broaden the scope of our membership across the country as well as to nurture the growth of news outlets in geographic clusters to buttress local ecosystems. We envision membership growth that will include traditional journalists striking out on their own, community members stepping up to fill gaps left behind when news outlets close and people in the creator community who eschew the label of journalist but who serve important local and community news audiences. We also envision stronger member support as our Collective grows, both from the resources TNC can provide and from the mutual aid that members offer to each other.

→ GOALS

- Double the # of members served (current and alumni members)
- 75% of members serving or representing underserved groups
- 75% of members are engaged or highly engaged

→ HOW WE'LL DO IT

- Define and articulate the member journey so that we can understand where TNC can uniquely have the most impact and lean into being a true collective
- Seek mission-aligned local and national partnerships to provide relevant services to members and to seed/find new members
- Review and evolve existing member service offerings, including technology, to make sure they match members' needs
- Define what it means to be a member collective, with support from membership



“We’re always grateful for the service from Tiny News Collective. *It’s by far the greatest investment, with tangible results* for Ethiopique. Thank you team TNC!”

— **HENOK MENGISTU**
FOUNDER, ETHIOPIQUE



Build team and board capacity to meet the moment

We will strengthen our organizational infrastructure to support the growing Collective and to ensure that TNC has a thriving, people-focused internal culture. We are a small but mighty team that wears many hats, and we will need to grow smartly and prudently in number and specialized skill sets in order to meet the needs of our members. We want to right-size workloads, facilitate opportunities and recognition for team members and continue to foster a connected, inclusive team culture where everyone feels a sense of joy and belonging and can connect their work to TNC's mission and impact. Our board will complete its transition from a founding board to a governance and sustaining board.

→ GOALS

- 10 team members (combination of FTE, part-time, regular contractors)
- 11 board members

→ HOW WE'LL DO IT

- Chart our future organizational growth based on anticipated needs
- Create efficient, effective systems to support those we serve (members, fiscally sponsored projects) and the people who make up TNC the organization
- Ensure our values are woven throughout our work
- Build and nurture a hopeful, inclusive and resourceful workforce and work culture
- Grow the board, with diversified skill sets, lived experiences, capacity to give

★ Elevate and enhance our field building in service of TNC's members and mission

We are working hard to counteract the bias toward large, established news organizations that persists across the journalism industry, but not enough people know about Tiny News Collective yet. We need to build more awareness of the work that we do and to amplify and center the innovative ways that our members serve their communities so that we can help facilitate more resources flowing to this work. Our goal is to cement our reputation as a trusted service and support organization and to be recognized for our excellence for the specific role we play in the journalism and civic information landscape.

➔ GOALS

- Double the amount of content we publish on our owned channels featuring members/their work and TNC's mission and values
- Increase and track impact of external media mentions, appearances and thought leadership for both TNC + members

➔ HOW WE'LL DO IT

- Get loud about TNC's mission, solutions and value proposition
- Platform and lift up how our members are creatively serving their communities
- Define and articulate our impact metrics



One of the untapped benefits that TNC offers is fiscal sponsorship for premium members. *Getting this set up early in a startup phase gives founders time to operate and grow their outlet on their time* without being dependent on waiting for IRS determination. The fiscal sponsorship got TLN around \$18,000 in donations.

—**JULIO RICARDO VARELA**
FOUNDER, THE LATINO NEWSLETTER

★ Develop and diversify our revenue lines for increased impact, sustainability

Critical to our ability to meet the moment is generating the revenue required to maintain, enhance and build on our work now and into the future. That includes creating and nurturing a larger community of supporters, from institutional funders to individual donors, and increasing our earned revenue. True to our values, we will seek out and deepen strategic, mission-aligned partnerships that will sustain our smart, intentional growth.

➔ GOALS

- Grow operating budget by 25%
- Reduce reliance on institutional funders to 70 percent of operating budget by the 2028 budget year
- Grow earned revenue (fiscal sponsorship fees, membership and consulting) and major donors to 30 percent of operating budget by 2028

➔ HOW WE'LL DO IT

- Expand the number of institutional funders that support us with multiyear grants, with an emphasis on unrestricted funding
- Create and grow a major donors program
- Streamline and build out our fiscal sponsorship business, with a focus on attracting clients at the highest percentage rate
- Grow consulting business through strategic partnerships
- Ensure strong financial practices and grow financial skill sets on the board and staff

Our Impact

If Tiny News Collective is successful, it will result in these impacts:

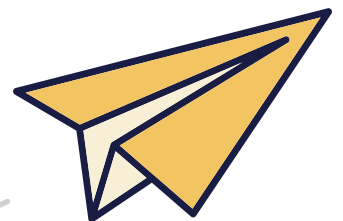
- ✓ **Communities will have a vibrant and diverse array of news and information outlets that meet their needs and improve their quality of life.**
- ✓ **The face of the media industry will be forever changed.**
- ✓ **The news ecosystem will welcome, celebrate and learn from new publishers.**
- ✓ **The path to becoming a news founder will be more accessible and less isolating for aspiring entrepreneurs, no matter their economic, racial, ethnic, gender background.**

This impact will take time to fully materialize, and will take time to track. Tiny News Collective will regularly assess its impact on these points and share progress along the way.

Acknowledgements

In its first five years, Tiny News Collective has tested a hypothesis about the support community-rooted news entrepreneurs need and built a strong foundation for providing that support through a high-touch, networked approach. As we look to the next two and a half years, the ambitious goals we have set forth in this strategic plan will help us manifest the larger impact we aspire to have on news entrepreneurship, the news ecosystem and industry and communities at large. Using this plan as a guide, Tiny News Collective will adapt to the challenges and changing dynamics of the information environment, holding steadfast to our values and maintaining our focus on collective care, service and action.

We recognize the time and effort that many people contributed to this effort: Courtney Bengtson, Amy Bushatz, Aidan Berger, Gina Chua, Nancy Flores, Andrea Faye Hart, Adam Huttler, Alex Kisielewski, Julie & Andrew Klingenstein, Marc Lavalley, Rashad Mahmood, Aron Pilhofer, Silvia Rivera, Julio Ricardo Varela, Liliana Velazquez, Allium Partners and Sarah Sommers Design. We also thank the membership of Tiny News Collective for their feedback and engagement throughout this process.



TINY NEWS COLLECTIVE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Lillian Ruiz, *Chair*

Tyler Fisher, *Secretary*

Jillian Bauer-Reese, *Treasurer*

Kara Meyberg-Guzman, *Immediate Past Chair*

Amy Austin, *Member*

TINY NEWS COLLECTIVE TEAM

Amy L. Kovac-Ashley, *Executive Director*

Elaine Díaz Rodríguez, *Membership Director*

Erica Perel, *Operations Director*

Jason Tompkins, *Finance Manager*

Madison Karas, *Product Manager/Project Manager for R&D*

Fernando Diaz, *Member Tech Services*

Cathy Sarisky, *Member Ghost Support*

TINY NEWS COLLECTIVE FUNDERS



**The Andrew and Julie
Klingenstein Family Fund**



Calls to Action

We need your support to help us realize the vision and impact set forth in this strategic plan.

If our vision and the goals we have outlined to achieve it resonate with you, here are five ways that you can get involved:



FOLLOW — We offer a number of ways to follow our work. We invite you to sign up for our monthly newsletter, The Big Blast from Tiny News. It offers a fresh look at what we and our members are up to. Readers tell us it's a bright spot in the journalism landscape, and we hope you'll agree. You may also follow us on LinkedIn, where we post regular updates about what our members are doing and learning.



JOIN — We seek members who are focused on serving their communities' news and information needs from the ground up, whether you are a solopreneur or a group of co-founders. We work with members from pre-launch through their first phases of development. For more information on becoming a member, reach out to us for a conversation.

For organizations that are past their startup stage but are mission- and values-aligned with TNC, we offer fiscal sponsorship to support growing revenue from philanthropic sources. For more information on our fiscal sponsorship services, request a meeting with us.



PARTNER — We were forged in collaboration and know we cannot do this work alone. We invite opportunities to partner on providing member services and tools, finding and seeding community-rooted startups and supporting a new permaculture of news and information for communities across the country. We also seek to contribute to other values-aligned organizations and coalitions with shared goals.



SUPPORT — Help us meet our new, ambitious goals while continuing to address the deeper needs of news neglect and news deserts. Make an investment in reimagining local and community news and commit to helping us deliver long-term returns in civic engagement, relevant local information and sustainable local networks.



ACCOUNTABILITY — Help us stay accountable to meeting our goals effectively and efficiently and living by our values. Let us know if what we are doing is working, what we can do more of and what we can do differently.



tiny news collective

tinynewsco.org | team@tinynewsco.org

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