

LOCAL NEXT LAB

The local news crisis raises the urgency for researchers to test how innovations in the industry actually work to rebuild audience trust, reduce polarization, and sustain journalism.

But crisis also means innovation: as places try new ways to deliver the news to non-traditional audiences, they need to know what works – and make sure that the entire industry can benefit. That's where we come in.



Our Approach

- Design causal tests of newsroom innovations, measure results, and share findings widely
- Connect innovative newsrooms and funders seeking evidence of impact.
- Building on proven partnerships with:
 - Knight Foundation
 - Carnegie Corporation
 - Trusting News
 - Solutions Journalism Network
 - American Journalism Project

Year One (2025-26)

Newsroom Experiments — Current partnerships (sponsored by W.K. Kellogg Foundation) testing strategies to reduce polarization and rebuild trust. *(completed and shared by May 2026)*

Research Database — In partnership with Democracy Fund and Rebuild Local News, building a searchable database to advance policy analysis and academic research. *(beta in April, full launch in June)*

Essential operating expenses to maximize impact of current work and build for scale:

- **Project Management** (\$12,000–\$15,000): Professional coordination across multiple workstreams
- **Student Research Support** (\$5,000–\$10,000): Graduate and undergraduate assistants for database development, experimental implementation, and analysis
- **Platform & Convening** (\$3,000–\$5,000): Research database and initial convenings

What We Can Do:

- Support for second cohort of newsroom partners following current WKKF-funded pilots
- Beta research database debuting April 2025, full launch June 2025
- Short courses & convenings in Washington, DC
- Position Syracuse as the place for research on local news and democracy

NEXT STEPS

1. Build infrastructure (time, student support, survey funds) for future partnerships
2. Find national partners to create future cohorts (chains, companies, networks of funding)
3. Improve and maintain research database
4. Integrate students through research assistant and classroom experiences