Independence Public Media Foundation Announces 75 Grants Totaling $4 Million

PHILADELPHIA, August 11, 2021 – The Independence Public Media Foundation (IPMF), announces grants totaling $4 million to community media-makers, journalism, film and digital equity projects with an emphasis on supporting projects led by underrepresented communities and with a commitment to justice.

IPMF collaborated with the HealthSpark Foundation and the Knight-Lenfest Local News Transformation Fund to award $2.3 million to 47 organizations through its Community Voices Fund open call. The foundation also awarded $1 million to 18 organizations through its Digital Equity Fund open call, as well as nearly $750,000 in continued support for key IPMF partners.

“We are grateful to our partners at HealthSpark and the Knight-Lenfest Local News Transformation Fund for helping to expand media making opportunities in the Philly region. What unites our three foundations is the belief that communities should lead the fact-finding and storytelling around the issues they care about. These grants will help them do that,” said Molly de Aguiar, IPMF President.

Read IPMF Program Officer Nuala Cabral’s essay on what the foundation’s board and staff prioritized during this grants review process.

Organizations and individuals from the tri-state area submitted a wide range of media making proposals to the Community Voices Fund. Of those who applied, the funding partners prioritized voices and leaders from communities traditionally underrepresented in philanthropy, with a special emphasis on LGBTQ+, AAPI and Indigenous communities.

"These organizations, projects, collectives and initiatives aren’t only voices of the community, they are calls to action to strengthen and inspire our collective communities by addressing the systems that need to be reimagined and reinvented so justice is possible,” said Roxann Stafford, managing director of the Knight-Lenfest Local News Transformation Fund.

The fund will include grants to:

- The South Asian American Digital Archive (75,000), an organization that documents, preserves, and shares stories of South Asian Americans. They will create the Philadelphia Archival Creators Fellowship to support three fellows’ documenting and
archiving of stories from Bhutanese, Bangladeshi, and Mayalee communities in Philadelphia.

- Communitas Arts + Culture, LLC ($65,270), a thought and action lab composed of artists and cultural workers focused on building community, equity and social justice in and through arts and culture work. Communitas will create the “Drag Oral Arts History Project” to document the lived experiences and cultural perspectives of members from Philadelphia’s drag and queer arts community.

- Nehad Khader’s “UNTITLED: Prisoners Film” ($25,000) tells the untold history about a group of incarcerated women who, along with their families, changed their prison conditions.

- FunTimes Magazine ($100,000), a trusted information source for the African Diaspora in the Delaware Valley. Through their Vaccine Hesitancy campaign, FunTimes will mitigate the African and Caribbean communities’ COVID vaccine hesitancy and create awareness of vaccine safety through storytelling, feature articles, and virtual and live presentations with diaspora physicians and medical personnel.

“As we continually assess HealthSpark’s impact in advancing greater racial and social justice within the social safety net, we recognize the value that news, information, and community-driven media have on our public discourse,” said Russell Johnson, president and CEO of HealthSpark Foundation. “These grant projects offer an immense opportunity to shift that discourse to be more diverse, inclusive, and representative of the myriad of voices and experiences in our communities.”

Digital Equity Fund Grants

In addition to the Community Voices Fund, IPMF awarded grants to help communities get and stay connected to the internet and to access the information and resources they need to have agency and thrive. Highlights of the Digital Equity Fund grants include:

- Philly Community Wireless (PCW) ($200,000), builds community-owned and -operated internet infrastructures. PCW will build internet infrastructures in North Philadelphia that will democratize internet access, promote digital literacy, and fight digital inequity through free, net-neutral broadband service.
• The Organizing Center ($75,000), which provides training and coaching to build strong movements for social justice, will build the capacity of Black, brown and poor-people’s organizations to advocate for the broadband and digital inclusion resources they need from the local, state, and federal government.

“The pandemic has underscored the urgency of digital equity and its ties to structural inequality. We believe that access to devices and fast, stable internet is a utility—not a luxury,” said Nuala Cabral, IPMF program officer. “This grant cycle was an opportunity to support community efforts responding to this need as well as the knowledge gaps around how to navigate this technology.”

IPMF invited experts from diverse backgrounds and a deep understanding of the local media-making, journalism, and digital equity landscape to help review proposals for both funds. They include:

**Digital Equity Fund Review Team**

• **Sylvie Gallier Howard** has a deep understanding of the digital equity landscape in Philadelphia and extensive experience leading economic development work, focused on small businesses, entrepreneurship, neighborhood revitalization, and workforce development.

• **Joy Porchia** is a literacy advocate and community activist in the Detroit Metropolitan area, and founder & CEO of Joyfilled Educational Services.

• **Piper Carter** is a Detroit-based artist, community organizer and Founding Member of the Detroit Digital Justice Coalition.

**Community Voices Fund Review Team**

• **Roopa Vasudevan** is a media artist and scholar who explores the relationships between emerging technologies and society.

• **Juliana Feliciano Reyes** is a writer and investigative reporter at The Philadelphia Inquirer. She's president of the Philly chapter of the Asian American Journalists Association.

• **Emma Hertz** is the director of external affairs at HealthSpark Foundation. She has spent the last ten years in the public and nonprofit sectors serving in a variety of frontline and leadership roles. Her career has focused on building bridges between community partners to create innovative solutions to community challenges.
● **Chinwe Onyekere** is the director of equity & inclusion at HealthSpark Foundation. She is responsible for developing and implementing the strategic vision for equity and social justice within the foundation and with its community partners.

● **Roxann Stafford** is the managing director of the Knight-Lenfest Local News Transformation Fund. She brings together the worlds of social impact, entrepreneurship and investing with a focus on justice, interdependence and well-being.

**Continued Support to Key Nonprofit Partners**

IPMF will provide continued support for grantees building a strong, connected, and community-led media ecosystem. Grants were awarded to grantees that the foundation has either identified as a key partner or given two-year grants in 2019. The grants include:

● A one-year grant to BlackStar ($125,000), home of the annual BlackStar Film Festival, celebrates and provides platforms for visionary Black, Brown, and Indigenous artists. The grant will support BlackStar's Philadelphia Filmmaker Lab, which will build new structures of support for BIPOC filmmakers while expanding job opportunities for BIPOC film crews throughout Philadelphia.

● A two-year grant to Taller Puertorriqueño ($170,000), an organization dedicated to preserving, developing, and promoting Puerto Rican arts and culture. The grant will support, deepen, and evolve Taller's Eugenio M. de Hostos archive's usability and expand the multimedia programming and output of the Hostos Archive, focusing on social justice and advocacy through community access to self-authored stories.

Click [HERE](#) to see a full listing of all 75 grants.

**About Independence Public Media Foundation**

The Independence Public Media Foundation funds and supports creative, community-centered media and media making across Greater Philadelphia. The Foundation's goals reflect an expansive definition of media, including journalism, digital literacy, and creative expression, as a pathway for building power with communities. Through grant-making and other programs, IPMF supports building and strengthening networks of people who are creating and sharing information, ideas, and stories for change and justice.

**About HealthSpark Foundation**
HealthSpark is a private, independent foundation in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, just outside Philadelphia. Their mission is to invest in nonprofit organizations, networks, and coalitions promoting a more just and healthy community.

About Knight-Lenfest Local News Transformation Fund
With a focus on sustainability and equity, The Knight-Lenfest Local News Transformation Fund, is designed to strengthen local journalism at scale through supporting journalistic excellence and serving the information needs of communities. The Knight-Lenfest Fund collaborates with news organizations, leaders, and communities to grow capacity; meet the technology, business, and audience realities of the future; and produce outstanding journalism that helps communities thrive by increasing their agency. The Knight-Lenfest Fund uses a mutual-aid approach to journalism, where news and information can be a vehicle for solidarity. The Fund believes that journalism is at its best when it is of service.

The Knight-Lenfest Local News Transformation Fund is an independent joint venture fund formed by the Knight Foundation and The Lenfest Institute for Journalism.

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