

Schwartz Prize Nominating Statement
Wisconsin Humanities Council
Beyond the Headlines

“Our problems *have* solutions. Can we find the knowledge that we need –
and that we trust – to solve them?”

Pulitzer nominees Joan Garrett McClane and Joy Lukachick Smith; a local activist and survivor of drug addiction, incarceration and poverty Sarah Ferber, and Dominique Broussard, a university scholar whose work focuses on media’s effect on public opinion, answer questions in Eau Claire.



INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade, many of the political divisions that mark national politics dug deep divides through Wisconsin’s communities. The polarization felt new and uncomfortable as neighbors who never used to discuss politics discovered that every local issue had become political. Most noticeable since the Wisconsin Uprising of 2011 was the impact of social media and partisan “look alike” media on public perceptions about the quality and fairness of the news, which led many to question even mainstream news sources. As a Council, we tried to figure out how we could talk about media literacy, and how some partisan media were contributing to racial tensions surrounding Black Lives Matter and protests over the Dakota Access Pipeline. We began talking with potential partners who raised issues about news deserts in Wisconsin and the issue of “ghost papers” and consolidations that were leading to less coverage and a hollowing out of local news.

When the Federation announced the request for proposals for “Democracy and the Informed Citizen,” a partnership between the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Pulitzer Prizes to highlight the important role of quality journalism in a democracy, we saw this as an opportunity to address multiple issues we’d been thinking about: from declining trust in news media to reliance on social media and the intentional misrepresentation of information. We realized citizens need to be able to trust that they have accurate information to understand and tackle the

various issues our communities face. We recognized the important role that independent and vibrant news media have in serving this need.

But how do you get people to come out and talk about journalism?

We assumed that the only people who would show up already knew that journalism mattered. We needed to reach the people who wanted to fix things but didn't know where to start. We organized our project, *Beyond the Headlines (BTH)*, on the premise that citizens and journalists would come together, face-to-face, if they felt that they were confronting local issues. The local issues piece became key for us; we wanted to let the community pick a "wicked issue" to use as a lens for examining the role of quality journalism in a democracy.

We initially built a statewide network of partners and local steering committees in five cities across the state. In the end, we were able to host four programs. The topics chosen *are* wicked, and serendipitously two cities independently decided that their program should be about "building trust," a nod to the fracturing of long-time relationships that politics has inserted in our state's communities. In Madison we organized a workshop for journalists and community leaders on "Wisconsin's Water Future"; Wausau focused on "Building Trust: Law Enforcement, the Media and You"; Eau Claire tackled "Building Trust: Eau Claire and its Journalists Engage on Poverty"; and Superior focused on "Communicating in a News Desert."

We designed *BTH* to be flexible and community-driven. We wanted a hybrid project that gave the community ownership of the issue, while following Council guidance and direction. We wanted this council-conducted program not to be a "one and done" but to start a conversation that would continue long after the project came to the community.

What we ended up designing was something that looked very different from our initial ideas. In many ways, it was more successful than hoped, and in many ways a lot more work. It led to staff and Council exploration of new approaches for working with partners, communities, social media, websites and even scholars. It was an incredible journey of relationship-building in communities across the state, digging into new academic partnerships, problem-solving, and really thinking about how to reach diverse audiences who might not turn out for a conversation about "journalism" or "democracy."

"In my mind it's criminal that news outlets in smaller towns and larger cities alike are shrinking or dying. They are the heartbeat of a democracy that can't function without watchdogs and informed citizens. All communities need sustenance and depth beyond a headlines service." Elizabeth McGowan, Pulitzer Prize Recipient, in *ON Reporting*, published by the Wisconsin Humanities Council.

PROJECT GOALS AND STRUCTURE

In our initial feelers out to communities as we prepared our letter of intent and application for “Democracy and the Informed Citizen,” we realized this wasn’t merely a project about WHC fostering a deeper conversation on media literacy and democracy -- as passionate as we are about that. Thanks to our focus on local issues, it also resonated deeply with our community partners. They were hungry and grateful for this program; they were so moved and passionate that many offered to work with other communities to expand the reach of the project and share their experience. They volunteered to be part of videos to promote the program. They left their comfort zones to talk frankly about issues such as the impact of race on law enforcement and the media. Our partners devoted long hours to helping build programming that was for and about *their* communities.

The Goals:

- To hold frank conversations about the state of news media and the media’s importance in supporting informed citizens who can meaningfully engage in the public policy decisions that affect them.
- To provide the journalists and communities with whom we worked access to resources to help them better do their jobs (informing the public) or be better consumers (critically analyzing media).
- To create public awareness of the rigorous standards that journalists adhere to.
- To demonstrate the value of journalism by showing the public quality journalism by Pulitzer honorees and other state and local luminaries.
- To build the capacity of local organizations to continue these conversations after our program ended.
- To explore new methods of evaluation, digital communications and social media for Council-conducted programming; through this exploration, we hoped to become better at what we do as an organization.

Our partners also had goals:

- To gain more citizen engagement on community issues,
- To demonstrate the value of robust local journalism,
- To advance their own credibility, and
- To build their own connections with each other.

We think we did a pretty good job of achieving our goals, and then some.



"Law Enforcement, The Media and You" in Wausau included facilitated discussions exploring various issues in a series of public events. This program focused on Race in Media.

The Project:

Local, Local, Local

We went into each community with the idea that conversation must be part of the project. We didn't simply want "sage on a stage" approaches to the discussion. In Wisconsin, part of the emergent distrust has included distrust of the academy (the University of Wisconsin) and anyone hailing from Madison (the seat of state government), who can be seen as elitist snobs. Many of the people we were reaching out to had never encountered the WHC. That fact that we are based in Madison could trigger distrust.

That meant that first and foremost, the project had to have local buy-in and local leadership. We couldn't talk about local media without participation from local media themselves. Through new partnerships with the Wisconsin Broadcasters Association and Wisconsin Newspaper Association, we identified and reached out to local media, then worked with those local media to reach even deeper into the community. We also formed a partnership with Wisconsin Public Radio, which had a presence in each of the cities chosen for the project. We worked with academic programs in journalism that focused on ethics and how media framing can create stigma and affect political discourse. We included on steering committees local civic and business leaders, and social justice advocates who deepened our relationships in these communities. We called on environmental historians, tribal leaders, English professors,

novelists, and practitioners in fields relevant to the topics our partners chose. About 90 percent of these relationships were new to us. Thus, our project involved an intense period of building trust in these communities and selling not only the goals of the program, but the mission of the Wisconsin Humanities Council. We needed their trust to talk about issues that were in many ways raw and open wounds in those communities.

And in many cases these wounds were deep. We asked our partners to choose topics that the community cared about. In our guidance we asked committees to select themes based on something media had already been covering, and/or that had significant local interest and relevance. We sought topics for which we could draw on scholars and Pulitzer honorees and that lent themselves to deep conversation.

By focusing on *local* issues and highlighting *local* journalists and community leaders, while bringing in expertise, we built deep and lasting relationships with the communities. In many cases, people who came to be valuable members of our local steering committees had never heard of us before, but now have asked us to call on them for anything they can help with. The largest team, at 17, helped illustrate the value of our approach to the community: they built new and better relationships among themselves even as they were building a relationship with us. One news editor said early on that their regular meetings and discussion of the content of the *BTH* program had helped law enforcement and local media come to understand one another better. By understanding why they do things the way they do, they have a more productive relationship. It was an unintended result they found almost as rewarding as the project itself.

We spent a lot of time branding and ensuring that our partners and partner media used that brand.

New Ways of Communicating

As we thought through the design of this project, we knew we didn't want to put a bunch of people on a podium with passive recipients observing quietly from their seats. We know that to make meaningful change, people need to see each other, talk with each other, find the humanity in each other. We knew many of these discussions would need to be facilitated.

While members of our staff had various degrees of experience in facilitation, we decided that before we promised to facilitate discussions as part of a project, we needed to test the premise. We worked with the Wisconsin Institute for Public Policy and Service (WIPPS), which would become a partner in our Wausau project, to conduct staff training in facilitation. We then partnered with a Madison-based news outlet, *The Capital Times*, and its "Idea Festival" for an opportunity to put our skills to the test and test our relationship with this potential Madison news partner. We hosted a facilitated discussion following a panel on the opioid epidemic in Wisconsin. All of the panelists, including two members of the State Legislature, chose to join us



in the discussion. The experience was powerful, emotional, and it also reinforced the notion that when it comes to these wicked issues, half the battle for people is their need to be heard. They wanted to talk frankly about their issues and have their legislators listen. They wanted *something* to come from the time they spent in conversation. We shared that experience with our legislative partners, the newspaper, the participants, and ultimately on our organizational website:

<https://www.wisconsinhumanities.org/wisconsin-and-the-opioid-crisis/>

This sense of the Council being a convener and sharer of information that we collected was a bit different for us. But this experience played an important role when our Superior partners asked us to conduct focus groups and surveys and produce a report that would help them see how the community felt about its news sources. See the results of the focus groups and survey here:

(<https://beyondtheheadlineswisconsin.org/resources/beyond-the-headlines-superior-communicating-in-a-news-desert-survey-results>)

As our Council was also in the throes of thinking about how we reach new audiences and communicate with those we serve, we used this opportunity to try new ways of communicating *digitally*. We worked with a new marketing firm to design a mobile-friendly, event-focused website that would provide up-to-date information on events, background on the projects, and resources that would help both journalists and residents better serve their communities.

This involved not only the lengthy process of website design, working through the look, and teaching a new vendor the culture of our work, but also training staff on a new web platform (CMS Craft) and a different approach to website design from our organizational site (See <https://beyondtheheadlineswisconsin.org/>).

Designing a new website meant finding a way to bring people in. Thus, we contracted with a digital communications consultant affiliated with another partner (UW Department of Life Sciences Communication) to work with us on strategies for building our *BTH* brand, using our social media more effectively, working with videos to gain more “clicks,” and coordinating our efforts among our communication tools.

We thus made bolder movements into Facebook, Facebook video, Zoom (for recording interviews with participants that could be turned into Facebook videos) and Eventbrite, which allowed us more opportunities to boost our social media posts and reach new audiences. We were guided in posting items that would be more likely to engage our followers, as well as creating social shares and sample Tweets and Facebook posts for our partners to share. It was also a new experience for us in that these efforts did increase engagement, including with people who often had strong views about those wicked issues. Managing social media as part of a broader communications strategy involving the website and its resources (such as studies about news deserts or results of programs or local earned media stories) has given us greater insights into all of our communications platforms. We were also new to Eventbrite, and the opportunities it posed for us to capture the data of those interested, and to follow up for evaluation and to promote other events.

The encouragement to post short videos on social media led us to contract with a new partner to produce a professional short informational video about *BTH* that was intended to last beyond the life of the project (located here: <https://beyondtheheadlineswisconsin.org/about>) to explain the issues we were concerned about.

“We’re losing the identity of smaller communities.” (*Focus group participant, Superior, “Communicating in a News Desert”*)

One of the more interesting aspects for us has been the wider appearance of our organization in news media recently. With statewide and local media partners, we ended up with far more earned media than we had experienced before. For example, Wisconsin Public Radio included the WHC in a one-hour discussion of the BTH project for a regional

show called *Route 51* (listen here: <https://www.wpr.org/shows/route-51-may-3-2018>) and WPR affiliate KUWS recorded our public forum in Superior (listen here <https://beyondtheheadlineswisconsin.org/resources/recording-of-superior-beyond-the-headlines>). These, among other resources linked to from our website are among many new ways we communicated this program. (Some media coverage captured here <https://beyondtheheadlineswisconsin.org/resources>).

Through our Wausau partners, WIPPS and UW-Marathon County (now UW- Stevens Point at Wausau) we also explored the use of a Snap polling app that allowed us to register in real-time the perspectives of the people in the room. Use of this app during facilitated discussions gave us a starting point from which conversations naturally flowed. “Wow, 90 percent of you think media are biased!” was a shocker for a news director facilitating a discussion with those doubters in the room.

Outreach to new audiences was an important component of this project. Our typical audience is largely aware of the importance of news media and less likely to assume it is intentionally misinterpreting information. Even that audience, we learned quickly, could benefit from learning a bit more about how journalism is done. We relied a great deal on our local partners to tap into their networks, creating social shares that encouraged them to tag all the partners involved to reach into their social media followings. We also asked them to email their partners, distribute posters, post items on calendars and we asked media to widely share upcoming event information to their consumers. Social media like Eventbrite also recommend local events through the app to people who might not otherwise have been reached through networks. In this way, we reached thousands of people who had never engaged with us before, and many of those opted to learn more about our programs.

Community Based Programs

Wisconsin's Water Future, held in Madison, brought journalists and local leaders to a workshop on the state's water stories, giving them a cultural perspective as well as access to resources and science experts.

Please see the individual city locations for a list of panelists and experts at each event:

<https://beyondtheheadlineswisconsin.org/>



Madison

Madison is a place rich in resources, issues, and the people with ideas for solving them. We decided that in our state capital, we should do something for the whole state, rather than something local. While much of the focus of “Democracy and the Informed Citizen” appeared to be directed at convincing the public of the importance of journalism, we also knew that shrinking newsrooms and lean resources meant many reporters simply couldn’t tackle big stories and do them justice. We saw this as both an ethical issue for journalism, and an opportunity for Beyond the Headlines; the Center for Journalism Ethics’ upcoming annual conference, which was focusing on “fake news,” became a way to forge a new partnership, add value to both programs and cross-promote.

We worked with our statewide media partners to reach out to the smaller, rural or independent media producers and invited them to a *BTH* workshop to explore Wisconsin’s Water Future. The complexity of Wisconsin’s water stories mean that few reporters have the background or time to do more than work from the contents of interested parties’ press releases. Our Wisconsin Newspaper Association and Wisconsin Broadcaster Association partners reached out to their networks and some provided stipends for reporters who couldn’t afford the trip, bringing in print, broadcast and digital media representatives from across the state. We reached out as well to local leaders in government and policy, drawing local government leaders and even a Congressional aide. Our program opened with a live Zoom greeting from an Ojibwe educator and tribal leader from the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (listen to Dylan Jennings’ greeting here: <https://beyondtheheadlineswisconsin.org/resources/beyond-the-headlines-opening-remarks-by-dylan-jennings>) and the in-person essay from an internationally known environmental historian, Curt Meine. The two set the humanities tone to place a scientific discussion in cultural context. Among our panelists were Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources representatives,

who had become very difficult to access for journalists, specialists in riverine, fisheries and Great Lakes issues, and even a representative of a concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO) who was willing to take the hot seat on groundwater contamination.

Wausau



Wausau’s panel, “Shining a Light on Democracy” wrapped up the series and included a facilitated discussion asking city leaders, law enforcement and journalists to talk about the role media has in society to inform the public and protect democracy, explore the successes and think through what needs to be done.

The Wausau steering committee, at 17, was the largest, made up of virtually every media outlet in the

greater Wausau area, the leaders of three law enforcement agencies, representatives of community activist organizations serving minorities, and city government. We had already more or less organized the committee while developing our grant proposal and thus they were ready to hit the ground running, having begun to build relationships even between rival media outlets.

For the kickoff event, we created a two-part panel, starting with a professor from the Center for Journalism Ethics who moderated a discussion that included a Pulitzer-winning editor with insights into covering law enforcement and an internationally recognized law enforcement leader. The second half of the panel involved local media and law enforcement representatives who were able to localize the “big picture” provided by the experts. The kickoff was followed by four facilitated discussions over the next few months involving issues from credibility to race to transparency in government.

More than 400 turned out for a sold-out event of original music, poetry and essay readings by local writers on the theme of poverty and the important role journalism plays in telling those stories. The Eau Claire event in October 2018 was one of more than a dozen scheduled by the committee.

Eau Claire

This group began with the goal of extending a community group's citywide discussion of poverty. They saw a discussion of news coverage of income insecurity, and media contributions to stereotypes and stigma, to be a natural next step in their efforts. They designed a seriously ambitious series of events throughout October. The steering committee involved about an equal number of media and social service organizations that serve the poor. In our initial discussion, competing media made the decision to work together to create joint, deep coverage of poverty issues. Our ambitious steering committee members ran a film series exploring media coverage of poverty, a book discussion of "The Elements of Journalism," an art and essay contest inspired by how poverty is covered in media, and a sold-out evening of original readings and music on the theme. The sold-out headliner event to close the month included Pulitzer award nominees who had written a series about poverty in Chattanooga, a journalism scholar who explores the effects of public opinion and stigma, and a local activist who has faced down poverty, drug addiction and incarceration. The highly emotional panel was followed by a facilitated discussion that had attendees leaving excited that the conversation would continue. The final event for this project was a networking breakfast bringing journalists and non-profit providers of services to the poor together to build understanding.



Minnesota Public Television's Greg Groell moderates a panel that includes Wisconsin Public Radio reporter Danielle Kaeding, KBJR news director Kevin Jacobsen, Duluth Media Group editor Katie Rohman, National Bank of Commerce Community Bank President Bruce Thompson and Superior Mayor Jim Paine. The panel discussed the concerns the community expressed in surveys and focus groups.



Superior

Scholars consider Superior a news desert since it lacks a daily newspaper dedicated to Superior. Most news comes from Duluth, leaving Wisconsin residents feeling more connected to Minnesota. For members of our steering committee, two recent emergencies highlighted that issue when media were slow to report on evacuation routes or road closures in Wisconsin. “News” was released via the mayor’s personal Facebook feed, which sometimes conflicted with that released by emergency management. Locals said that even during recent elections, local media didn’t immediately carry Wisconsin poll results and many feel disconnected from their own state. At the behest of the committee, WHC conducted a series of focus groups in November and December to gain a sense of community use of news media and how people stay connected to their community. We used the results of these focus groups to help build an online survey, and to shape a headliner event that winter that focused on the impact of being a news desert. Speakers included researchers, analysts and journalists who have been tackling the issues of the changing media landscape and how communities can remain informed, followed by a panel of local panelists including media, business and government leaders to answer the issues raised in the report.

IMPACT

BTH was an often-emotional investment in local journalism. Evaluations showed not only engagement with the themes, but often demonstrated reflection on issues that were underlying the themes. The evaluations also reliably indicated attendees’ greater understanding of the need to be informed and the role local journalism can play. The majority of respondents gained humanities-based insights into being informed as well, commenting on their needs to be engaged in their communities to solve local problems.

We drew more than 850 to more than 40 discussion/conversation activities, more than 400 to a performance, almost 12,000 to our website, and tens of thousands more were exposed via media/social media coverage. One hour-long radio program that focused on BTH has an estimated reach of 480,000 alone. Our programs were highlighted on television and news

broadcasts in at least three of the cities we worked in. We formed about 50 new partnerships with organizations we had not worked with before.

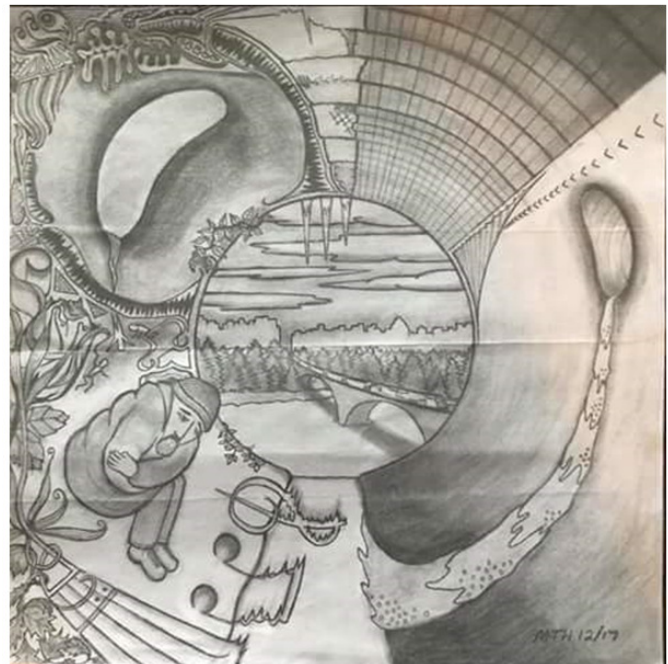
We highlighted quality journalism, especially from our Pulitzer honorees, who included Elizabeth McGowan (read her contribution here: <https://beyondtheheadlineswisconsin.org/resources/interview-with-pulitzer-prize-winning-wisconsin-reporter-elizabeth-mcgowan>) , Mike Leary, and Joan Garrett McClane and Joy Lukachick Smith, plus local journalists who collectively had dozens of honors and awards.

We also engaged humanities scholars like Curt Meine (environmental historian and writer), David Shih (English professor) and Charitie Hyman (Anthropology fellow), and other academics like Mary Nienow (Sociology), Jan Larson (Journalism and Communications), Kathleen Culver (Ethics and Journalism), Jesse Holcomb (Journalism), and Erinn Whitaker (Journalism), Ken Bradbury (State Geologist) Steve Carpenter (Limnology) and Eric Giordano (Political Science); and cultural practitioners including Hmong liaison and pastor Yauo Yang and Ojibwe tribal officer Dylan Jennings, and numerous creative writers.

Wausau committee members found that much of this project led not just to bridge-building in the committee, but also with members of the community who had wavered in their trust. According to participants:

What would you tell others about this?

“I feel like this conversation could have lasted for several hours.”
“Riveting discussion on a most relevant issue that more community members should come to in the next four months.”
“A part of building trust is to meet the people behind and within the stories.”
“Engagement is important. Get involved and make your voice heard!”



What was your key take away?

“There is a common desire for the pursuit of truth within our community.”
“That our local law enforcement & media professionals are truly professional and conscientious ... they were honest about their strengths and biases.”

The winning art entry in Eau Claire’s contest, by Matthew Hey, expressed visions of self vs. stereotype from a perspective of poverty.

"I value the interactions with the discussion group. It helped to open my mind to groups I rarely interact with."
"I probably should dedicate more time to engaging myself in local meetings and issues."

Eau Claire community advocates pegged *BTH* as the natural continuation of their discussion of poverty and as we concluded our project the city was talking about policy changes involving poverty. Attendees were excited to continue talking.

What would you tell others about this event?

"We must support local journalists and entities to tell the stories of our community."
"The discussion helped to illuminate how the media can help inform your community."
"These discussions need to be done across chamber, businesses and governmental bodies."
"The power of a personal story."
"The need and role of investigative reporting in creating an informed public."

"As we explore poverty in the Chippewa Valley I encourage us all to see the enemy of indifference that pierces into the hearts of many. We can't fight for a cause we don't care about. We can all read statistics about poverty, but how many times do we look at the statistics and imagine we are looking into the face of a friend, a parent, a sibling? Imagine the child begging on the street as your future son or daughter; or grandchild. Or perhaps it's looking in the mirror. It's time we all come out of the shadows and voice our truth." From Sandra McKinney's winning essay in *Eau Claire's* examination of how we tell the story of poverty.

What was a key take away?

"An honest, truthful, supported media presence is critical to a community; the economies of local media prevent/inhibit telling the whole story."
"We need to read widely & think about what we read."

Residents of **Superior** and Douglas County, feeling "forgotten" by state leadership 300 miles away, felt heard and national researchers spoke directly to their needs. One participant later reported that she thinks about the project almost daily. Arguably, the most-important outcome came as speakers and committee members met in the bar to brainstorm ways to improve coverage of Superior, with some of our speakers offering resources for the local journalism community. Comments from the project focused on the needs yet to be met as they raised awareness of the issue:

"There is an opportunity to grow community news organizations in news desert areas if we can provide compelling models for communities to follow."
"Printed newspapers will always be beneficial to a community."
"Unfortunately, I thought I was the only one in the area who was concerned about this issue."

“It’s very hard to know what’s going on in the community.”

“Facebook makes me aware there is something going on ... but I feel like we are really lacking anything in TV or newspapers that is controversial or any in-depth analysis or investigation.... It’s all very light. Like light beer. I want whiskey.”

“We’re in a media wasteland down in southern Douglas County.... They don’t care about us.”

“We’re losing the identity of smaller communities.”

Moderator Ron Seely guides the conversation with environmental historian Curt Meine, DNR’s Adrian Stocks, State Geologist Ken Bradbury, and CAFO operator Brent Cousin on issues of water quantity.



The almost 70 **Madison** workshop attendees appreciated Native and natural history perspectives that placed the state’s water

issues in a cultural and historical context. Journalists connected with difficult-to-reach experts with international standing. Participants reported that they had found story ideas at the event, gained access to information they weren’t aware of and attendees have since accessed website resources.

[This workshop helps me by] “Allowing me to use more data in my stories.”

“I learned that there are a lot of records accessible to the media and that there are officials at the DNR and other agencies able to help interpret docs.”

“We need to communicate better stories about how water impacts our daily lives – what can we do to improve, protect and monitor our FRESH waters.”

“More steps need to be taken to translate the science and data into action steps.”

“Thank you for robust Q&A and discussion between the panelists!”

After the events we have spoken with participants who have wanted to remain involved and take the message to other communities. Our steering committee members have remained interested, engaged and eager to continue the conversation. Discussions began in some communities about ways to collaborate among journalists, connect community organizations with journalists and to broaden the means of communication within communities on key topics. The communities we’ve worked in have eagerly embraced the program and expressed a desire to continue.

New relationships with media seem to have benefitted the WHC in general as we've seen an uptick in coverage of our activities. We think this project has also built capacity for our own organization with staff better-trained in digital communications and facilitation and more experience building teams in far-flung communities. Overall, we built trust, credibility and relationships in several communities in ways we had not worked there before.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

This project was made possible by a \$35,693 grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, in partnership with the Pulitzer Prizes and administered by the Federation of State Humanities Councils in support of Mellon's "Democracy and the Informed Citizen" initiative. The project received additional support from the National Endowment for the Humanities of \$41,677, which included program staff time, travel, audio-visual production, costs for speaker and consultant fees and advertising, promotion and website in excess of the grant. In Eau Claire, prizes for the essay and art contest were funded with \$600 from the Mahmoud S Taman Foundation. In Superior, refreshments were paid for by National Bank of Commerce.

The majority of the project's grant funds went to consultant and speakers' fees (\$19,622) and advertising and promotions (\$22,233), which included the cost of the website development. The website production was an important element of this program and one that will continue to be used and updated going forward.

It's important to note, as well, significant in-kind contributions of promotion, venues, meeting space, conference call services, travel, printing and copying of posters, and time serving as panelists and moderators by our committee members who did not request any remuneration. Some gave us their personal time, while others had their time covered willingly by their employer.



SHORT DESCRIPTION

Beyond the Headlines, launched in 2018, worked with communities across Wisconsin to use locally significant “wicked” issues as a lens through which to explore the role of media in a democracy. Programs examined issues like the state’s water quality and quantity, poverty, law enforcement practices, and the challenges of communicating in a news desert, as means to help local residents see the media’s role in providing information citizens need in order to meaningfully participate in civic life. By examining important local issues, we were able to use the humanities to have deep conversations and share stories that helped heal divides and demonstrated the impact journalism can have on those issues. Working with more than 50 partners in 4 communities we reached thousands of people who had never been exposed to the Wisconsin Humanities Council before, and who came away from our events moved, engaged and determined to be a part of the conversation.

For more information about Beyond the Headlines, the community-based projects and the many events that were held, please see our website www.beyondtheheadlineswisconsin.org