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Audio Transcript

Episode 235 of "[E&P Reports](#)" Vodcast Series
with Mike Blinder

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The banner features the E&P Reports Vodcast logo on the left, a camera lens and microphone on the right, and the URL EditorandPublisher.com/Vodcasts in the center. Below the banner are three video thumbnails. The top-left thumbnail shows Frank Mungeam, Chief Innovation Officer of the Local Media Association. The top-right thumbnail shows Mike Blinder, Publisher of E&P Magazine. The bottom-center thumbnail shows Bill Cotter, President of the Pennsylvania NewsMedia Association. The E&P logo and 'Episode Sponsor BLOX DIGITAL' are also present in the bottom right of the banner area.

[Local Media Association, Pennsylvania NewsMedia Association partner to create Fundraising Lab](#)

In a groundbreaking move to bolster local journalism across Pennsylvania, the Local Media Association (LMA) and the Pennsylvania NewsMedia Association (PNA) have joined forces to launch the Pennsylvania Fundraising Lab. This innovative partnership aims to equip publishers with the essential skills and strategies needed to secure philanthropic funding for reporting projects. E&P speaks with Frank Mungeam, LMA chief innovation officer, and Bill Cotter, PNA president about the initiative and how news media outlets can learn how to tap into these funds.



0:00:03.8 Speaker 1: This is E&P Reports, a vodcast from Editor and Publisher Magazine, the authoritative voice of news media since 1884, serving newspapers, broadcast, digital, and all forms of news publishing.

0:00:19.3 Mike Blinder: And warm greetings. Once again, Mike Blinder, publisher, E&P magazine. As always, we start the episode by asking those that are listening to this program on a podcast platform to follow, watching on YouTube, there is a subscribe button below, a bell to the right. Click those things and you'll get an update each and every time we upload a new episode of this weekly vodcast series dedicated to the news publishing industry we call E&P Reports. I have an old friend, Bill Cotter, president of the Pennsylvania News Media Association. Hey Bill, how you doing?

0:00:57.3 Bill Cotter: Hi, Mike. Good morning. Thanks for having us.

0:01:00.8 MB: I checked you, you're all sales man. I was looking... I was stalking you in LinkedIn. Senior sales manager, Pittsburgh Post Gazette. You worked for one of my favorite companies, Trib Total Media, which was one of my first clients in 2001 way back in the old days. And then of course you did a stint in Adams in Maryland running the regional group there. And now you are working for one of the most innovative associations in the industry. Congratulations, Bill. This is recent, right?

0:01:29.2 BC: Thank you. Thank you. Yes. I've been here about a year and just very, very blessed, excited about the Pennsylvania News Media Association. Currently, we serve about 250 members across the commonwealth of Pennsylvania and from small to medium to large. And we have a lot of exciting things going on in PA.

0:01:50.3 MB: We have Frank Mungeam. Frank, you are Chief Innovation Officer at Local Media Association. Full disclosure, I used to do a conferences with Nancy Lane when it was called Suburban Newspapers of America. That's how old I am, Frank. But you've been around for a while. You were Knight Professor of Practice Newsroom Innovation at the Cronkite School of Mass Communications, Director of Digital Content at Gannett Broadcast. You've got like... You've got spectrum in your blood, right? Radio and tv.

0:02:24.3 Frank Mungeam: Yeah, I'm a lifer in local, but mostly in broadcast actually.

0:02:28.3 MB: Yeah.

0:02:28.4 FM: So the last few years at LMA has been interesting 'cause we've worked with a lot of print digital publishers. So it's yeah, we've got all the bases now.

0:02:37.2 MB: You're a nerd like me because you were in the digital sphere like I was way back in the dark ages. But you were station manager at WHRB in Cambridge in the '80s.

0:02:46.3 FM: Oh my gosh. Yes.

0:02:47.1 MB: I was station manager of WLAM, Lewiston, Maine, and WKZS, Portland, Maine in



the '80s.

0:02:52.8 FM: I love that you caught that. My joke is, you wanna learn leadership, try being in charge of a bunch of volunteer smart ALEC college students. [laughter] So that was like the hardest leadership job I ever had, getting a bunch of people who were like, I'm smarter than you are, I'm as smart as you are. And they're all volunteer. What are you gonna do? Fire them? Yes. It was a great point to learn about broadcasting.

0:03:16.4 MB: We're not gonna be discussing our past, we're gonna be discussing the present and the future 'cause there's some very exciting stuff going on in Pennsylvania, which I hope continues to kind of be implemented and propagate around the country. It's called the Local Media Association PNA Foundation Pennsylvania Fundraising Lab. And this is exciting stuff because it really helps finance that critical local journalism we need. And we're gonna unpack all of this on the backside of this message.

0:03:47.3 S1: This episode of E&P Reports is exclusively sponsored by BLOX Digital, formerly TownNews. Even though the name has changed, their commitment to the media industry is as strong as ever. BLOX Digital is now even better positioned to deliver integrated solutions like content management, audience development, advertising revenue, video management, and more. Join the over 2000 news publishers worldwide that power their ongoing digital transformation with BLOX Digital, serving over 141 million monthly users who view over 6.5 billion pages of content each year. You can trust BLOX Digital to empower you, to connect you at scale with the community you need to reach. BLOX Digital, formerly TownNews now reimagined to help meet the news publishing challenges of tomorrow and beyond. Learn more at bloxdigital.com.

0:04:52.4 MB: All right. Frank, I'm gonna start with you. But I'm gonna date stamp this program, if I may. We're recording on a holiday called Passover. I don't know if you're familiar with the holiday, Frank, but it says there's a Seder that takes place where it all kicks off with the youngest child saying to the oldest member at the table, tell me the story of Passover by saying, why is this night different from all other nights? So I gotta ask you, why is Pennsylvania different from all other states? Why did the bad segue, right, Frank? I tried to put it together, but why did the LMA focus on Pennsylvania and put together this lab? What was it? Was it fertile? Right people, right resources that was just a... Why there first?

0:05:35.4 FM: Yeah, I think you alluded to it in your intro with Bill. So Bill and John, leadership wise, it's a state that has... It's the right time, the right opportunity, and for us at Local Media Association, it's the logical next expansion of the lab for journalism funding. We've been doing it for three years, launched in 2020 with funding from Google News Initiative. We've now trained over 100 newsrooms. They've raised over \$23 million. So with Press Forward, and especially with these Press Forward local fundraising chapters opening, we really were interested in expanding to the state level. John, who is colleagues with Bill at the Press Association, had just completed our lab, knew firsthand the power. Bill and John reached out and we started a conversation with Bill really not that many months ago about how might we take the lessons, learnings, and impact of the national lab and tailor it to a state level and really increase the impact by having everybody in the fundraising experience share the geography in common of their own state and develop deeper relationships with their local fundraisers, which is really where it happens. It all begins at the local

level.

0:06:51.9 MB: Quickly, give me the elevator pitch on what the lab is. It's been around for three years, \$23 million raised to support local journalism. The lab is designed to teach us how to get money from the philanthropic world, correct?

0:07:07.6 FM: Yeah. And to keep our analogy going, it's teaching fishing, not handing out fish. So it's a six-month cohort learning format. We meet as a group every other week for six months and bring in outside experts, expert in philanthropic fundraising for journalism. And then it's peer-to-peer learning as the... Usually it's a cohort of 12 to 20 newsrooms help each other, and we have, I think the secret sauce is a best in class group of coaches. Jennifer Preston, formerly VP of Knight Foundation, Joaquin Alvarado, who helped The Seattle Times back in the day develop their sort of leading edge for-profit newsroom philanthropy program. So it's one-on-one coaching. It's cohort learning and peer-to-peer training, six-month program that gets a newsroom ready to make the ask and incorporate philanthropy, not as a magic bullet and not as a savior, but as one pillar for sustaining their local newsroom going forward.

0:08:10.4 MB: Now, Bill, your association is now going to be watched just by a lot of states and a lot of associations to see how you can coordinate all this knowledge and then bring it down to the street with your members. It's very exciting, but it must be very time consuming. Can you give us an idea of what and how you're implementing this as we speak within PNA?

0:08:34.3 BC: Well, we've got a great team around us. Obviously, Frank and the coaches, Liz White, who's gonna be one of the coaches as well, we're very, very excited about. And John Durr, as Frank said, participated in a lab a couple years ago. He was able to use that knowledge to get \$100,000 grant from the Lenfest Institution here in Philadelphia. So we know that this has impact. We know firsthand that it has impact. Lenfest, Jim Friedlich and his team of coaches are also going to be on our team to help us with programming for this cohort. So we're excited because we have a lot of support from LMA, from Lenfest, and we have a team of folks here at PNA. My staff, we have 24 folks at PNA, 12 on the MANSI side and 12 on the PNA side. And so we have a team of about five folks that are working. John Durr, myself, our new executive director of our foundation, Tanya Henderson, she'll be very, very involved. We will have a total of 12. Right now we have 17 applications. We're expecting another five more, so there is a lot of interest as you would expect, and there's some really exciting projects that some of our newsrooms are applying for.

0:09:52.9 MB: Well, what gets you in and what do you gotta show you to be part of this lab since you're gonna have to pair some people out? What are the criteria, Bill?

0:10:03.1 BC: Certainly the criteria for us along with Frank and his team, the great thing is that Frank has done this for a few years. They are gonna help guide us with these projects. This morning I was talking to John, who's at the NAM conference in Chicago this morning, and we are gonna put probably all 20 of these applications in separate folders. We will get them off to Frank. We already have a meeting scheduled with Frank tomorrow afternoon to go through each application to see the validity of the project, but also see the commitment. One of the things that Frank has stressed, and we started working with Frank and Jennifer back in November. So this has been about a four or five month process and we wanna make sure that there is a commitment from the top of these

organizations, the CEO, the publisher, we've gotta make sure... 'Cause it's a very much a time commitment, we wanna make sure in that application and there needs to be a letter from the CEO or publisher that this project and this commitment from their staff is one that they will hold true for the next six months.

0:11:09.8 FM: And I'll just... Mike, if I can just add quickly. So we have the benefit of the rear view mirror. 100 newsrooms have gone through the LMA lab. And if I were to shorten it down, the two things that most predict success of the newsroom that graduates from the lab are, first of all, that leadership is deeply involved all the way through the experience, they don't hand this off. And the second thing is that the fundraising projects selected truly responds to a community need and uses journalism in a proactive solutions-oriented way. And when you have those two things, people in the community come together 'cause that's the kind of journalism that helps solve real problems and makes your community better. And if you have a strong local brand and a track record of community service, you will find support for your work.

0:12:03.5 MB: We may have a listener or viewer or two, he said sarcastically, Frank, that doesn't reside in the Keystone State. If someone has interest right now saying, I did not know it was so easy or at least so accessible for me to join a world of knowledgeable people that know how to tap in to the money that is just growing to support local journalism. Can they contact LMA, get into the next round? What...

0:12:31.3 FM: Absolutely. Literally, my email address, tell me the best way on your podcast to do that. She reached out to me. I've literally had a couple of state PAs reach out to me since our announcement with Bill and team. And the other thing I'd say, and thank you again to Google News Initiative, that's been the founding funder and sustaining funder of our lab. I've published two different industry reports. My colleagues, Josh [0:12:56.6] _____, the intro one is 42 pages, the new one with Advanced Methods it's 51. So it's case studies of how other newsrooms have done this. That is a terrific place to start for any newsroom. And then we will have another national cohort of the lab for journalism funding this summer. So there are three different ways folks can get involved.

0:13:17.5 MB: And that email address is?

0:13:19.9 FM: Frank.mungeam@localmedia.org.

0:13:23.3 MB: May I spell your last name, sir?

0:13:25.3 FM: Yes.

0:13:26.5 MB: M-U-N-G-E-A-M. Correct?

0:13:30.0 FM: Correct. And I would be so remiss if I didn't thank Knight Foundation, which is the funder that's enabled us to expand to offering state cohort experiences. So with PNA Foundation as our partner funder, all the newsrooms that have this experience in PA, it's thanks to those two supporting organization.

0:13:52.6 MB: Bill, if someone wants to get more information from you and learn more about



what's up, not just with this amazing lab you're launching in Pennsylvania, but all the other initiatives and ways that you're helping to keep local journalism alive and thriving within your state, what's your contact information, Bill?

0:14:10.6 BC: So it's bcotter@pa-news.org.

0:14:19.4 MB: There you go. Gentlemen, thanks for making this a reality. I'm pretty confident other states will be coming on board shortly. I just know how it works. When you have someone like Bill who incubates a product, it starts to pollinate around. And Bill, thank you for your hard work as well within the PNA. We've been a partner of yours for years at ENP. Both you gentlemen, stay well, keep up the fight.

0:14:43.7 BC: All right, thank you, Mike.

0:14:44.5 FM: Thank you so much.

0:14:45.6 BC: Appreciate it.