



**news  
creator  
corps**

# **2025 Annual Report**

**Access to good information is more critical than ever.**

More than 3,500 local news outlets have closed in the last 20 years, and legacy media is under attack. The rise of misinformation and the loss of community news reduces civic engagement and decreases government accountability.

# We are News Creator Corps

**News Creators Corps is a movement to ensure everyone has access to accurate and trustworthy information.**

We invest in content creators and community messengers so they can better share facts, debunk misinformation, and empower their audiences with information.

## Letter from the Executive Director

We launched News Creator Corps in September with one premise in mind: Instead of telling people to stop getting their news from social media, what if we made it better? And if communities could access quality information through creators, what could that mean for news deserts and those underserved by mainstream media?

The ripple effect of this work is vast. During our pilot program, not only were creators learning to bolster their work through credible sourcing and public records, but their audiences were also gaining media literacy tools alongside them. When people have access to accurate information, they make better decisions for themselves and their families—and they show up more fully in their communities.

We are incredibly bullish on the opportunities ahead. Democracy depends on an informed citizenry, and in too many places, the infrastructure for trustworthy local information has collapsed. As we move into 2026, we're doubling down on NCC's core values, focusing our programs on the communities that need them most: underrepresented demographics, college and high school students, and rural areas. Together, we're not just training creators—we're rebuilding the information pipelines that strengthen civic life.



**Rachel Lobdell**  
rachel@newscreatorcoprs.org

## Strategic Objectives



Support creators and trusted community messengers as a vital piece of the information economy



Build a nationwide network of community messengers, creating new information pipelines to safeguard democracy and improve civic engagement



Focus on communities underserved by mainstream media, like communities of color and local news deserts



Train creators to bolster their communities with misinformation and media literacy strategies

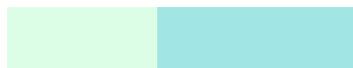
## The Information Landscape

In today’s fractured media and information landscape where people are more distrusting of traditional media outlets than ever before, millions of Americans are increasingly looking to social media influencers and online content creators for their news—regardless of these creators’ professional backgrounds or expertise. Audiences are drawn to accounts run by people over brands, and, for the first time, more Americans get news from social media than any other source.

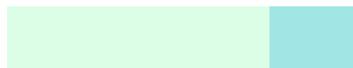
More than 3,500 local news outlets have closed in the last 20 years, and legacy media is under attack. Most reporting lives behind expensive paywalls.



20% of Americans consume news from creators



43% of Americans under 30 consume news from creators



75% of creators do not have a journalism background

## The Creator Approach

As the new trusted voices of our time, content creators have both an outsized influence on shaping public opinion, as well as an outsized responsibility to get the information they are delivering to their audiences right.

By developing talent and community among creators, we are creating new information pipelines to safeguard democracy and dramatically increase the volume of fact-based, locally-centered civic education content online. Our work is informed by a wide-body of research ranging from the correlation of access to local news and increased civic participation to landscape assessments on disinformation-focused and extremist influencers.

News Creator Corps cohorts develop tangible content sourcing, fact-checking, and production skills, as well as real community, in order to keep learning, growing, and expanding their influential work beyond NCC.

## The NCC Team



**Rachel Lobdell**  
Executive Director

Rachel has spent nearly two decades working in local and national news, focusing on editorial strategies that grow audiences by connecting them to content, products, and experiences that help them live their best lives. Her experience spans audience development, community engagement, and innovative journalism approaches that prioritize serving underrepresented communities.



**Annemarie Dooling**  
Program Manager

Annemarie has focused on building community around information for 15 years, both independently and in national newsrooms. She studies happiness and information systems at the University of Pennsylvania and writes about culture. Her expertise in community building and information systems positions her ideally to manage NCC's fellowship programs and creator support initiatives.



**Maya Srikrishnan**  
Researcher

Maya is a veteran journalist and journalist trainer with over a decade of experience. Her work has appeared in the Center for Public Integrity, Voice of San Diego, and the Los Angeles Times. She has helped lead training programs for the Asian American Journalists Association and the Diversity Pledge Institute. Maya brings deep journalism expertise and training experience to develop and refine NCC's curriculum and impact measurement.



The News Creator Corps launch party, held at Talea in New York City in September, brought newsroom leaders, academics, creators, and supporters together.

## Advisory Board

**Katie Grossbard**

Attorney, Impact Strategist and Content Creator

**Damon Kiesow**

Knight Chair in Journalism Innovation  
University of Missouri

**Samantha Ragland**

Senior Vice President, Journalism Strategy  
American Press Institute



## THE INAUGURAL CLASS

**20** creators

**12** states and territories

**50%** creators serving primarily audiences of color

**1,600,000+** social reach



I started posting online without knowing where it might lead, and it feels incredibly special to have been seen and offered an opportunity like NCC. This experience has been invaluable. I am better because of it.

—Adriana Goblirsch, 2025 fellow

## Trusted Creator Fellowship

Our flagship program is a training fellowship for information-focused content creators. Our cohorts are made up of independent creators who provide a service to their community, whether that's restaurant openings, public health information, parenting discussions, or local stories. The fellowship teaches tactical skills like fact-checking, sourcing, and interviewing to ensure the creators are disseminating accurate information and connects content creators with publishing partners to expand the reach of accurate and trustworthy information.

### The Pilot

The creators in our pilot spanned topic areas, covering everything from national politics and local issues to travel, food, parenting, and sports. They came to the program with audiences on TikTok, Instagram, Threads, Substack, and other social sites.

The 9-week program ran October–December 2025. Creators met weekly for 90-minute virtual trainings from NCC staff and expert trainers and incorporated what they learned into their content creation work.

## Meet A Few Of The Creators



**Stephanie Valdez**

@steph.olution | Instagram  
10,000 followers  
Nevada

Stephanie covers education, politics, pop culture, and religion through the lens of empowering Las Vegas residents to be informed and get involved.



**David Rushing**

@yorus | Threads  
92,700 followers  
North Carolina

Dubbed the “Mayor of NBA Threads,” David curates conversations around news and cultural events taking place within and around the NBA.



**Courtney White**

@courthousecouture | TikTok  
80,900 followers  
Texas

Courtney utilizes her expertise as a lawyer to bring a unique perspective to discussing popular trials, politics, and cultural events.



**Ali Van Fleet**

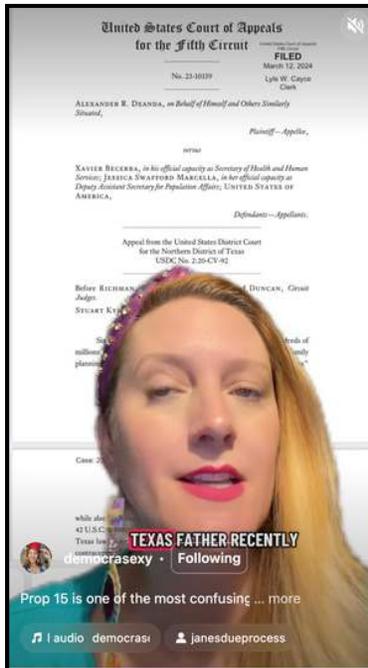
@alivanfleet | TikTok  
25,600 followers  
Texas

Drawing on her work as a meteorologist, Ali makes complex science feel clear, approachable, and human.



NCC did an excellent job of putting together a diverse group with varied perspectives, and very quickly, it helped me to refine the way I presented certain kinds of content. —Anonymous survey response

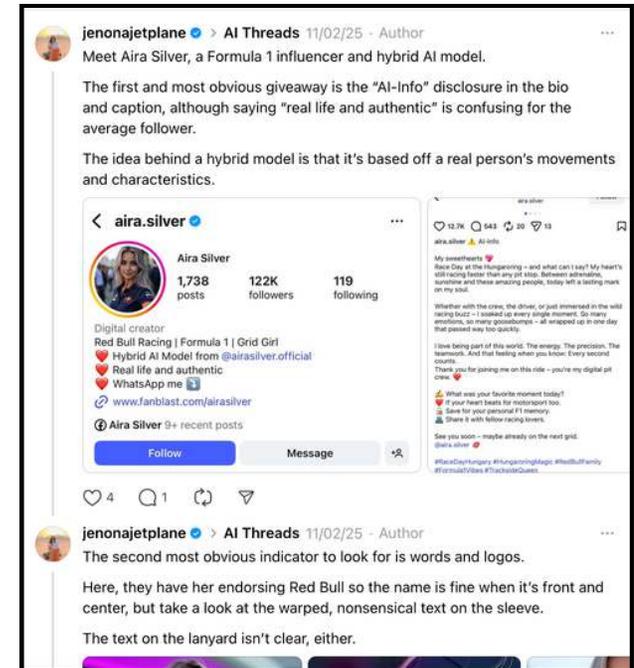
## Selected Posts



Becky Bullard (8,805 followers) created a post using court documents to explain an upcoming local proposition.



James Cave (12,000 followers) used the skills he learned in the public records training to report on the H2A program, and his post did well with local audiences.



After the training class on AI, Jen Ruiz (268,300 followers) created a thread showing her community how to spot AI travel influencers.



The piece of content ended up performing better than anything I've ever published to my account!  
—Becky Bullard, 2025 fellow

## Fellowship Trainers

Broadcast, academia, tech and business experts, as well as seasoned journalists of print and television



### Adriana Lacy

Adriana is the CEO of Field Nine Group, where she leads Influencer Journalism, a first-of-its-kind agency that helps news orgs collaborate with creators to strengthen trust and engagement. Recognized on the Forbes 30 Under 30 list, Adriana's newsroom experience includes The New York Times, The Los Angeles Times, and Axios.



### Imaeyen Ibanga

Imaeyen is a presenter, documentarian, and senior producer. The Murrow Awards, The Gracies, and New York Emmys all have recently recognized her work.



### Jessica Parker

With over 17 years of experience in travel PR, Jessica works across the full spectrum of the industry from airlines to tourism boards. Her expertise spans influencer relations, brand partnerships, and innovative campaigns that bring destinations and experiences to life.



### Leslie Koch

Leslie has led creator and social insights teams at TelevisaUnivision, CNN, and HBO, collaborating across cultures and time zones to deliver measurable business results. She founded the Salt Lake City chapter of The AI Collective.



### Steven Potter

Steven has been a reporter for more than 20 years. On every beat — from politics to entertainment — he's chased down access to public records. For the past decade, he's served on the Wisconsin Freedom of Information Council.



### Joy Mayer

Joy founded Trusting News in 2016 after a 20-year career in newsrooms and teaching. She spent 12 years at the Missouri School of Journalism, where she created an audience engagement curriculum and a community outreach team at the Columbia Missourian.

Additional trainers with expertise in interviewing skills and reading medical and academic research also presented to the fellowship class.

## Learning Objectives

### Are creators seeking support and resources around ensuring the information they provide to their communities is accurate?

A resounding yes. 149 creators applied for just 20 spots in the inaugural fellowship, and hundreds have subscribed to NCC's newsletter and followed our social channels. 225 applied for the Spring 2026 class.

### Which training modules are most beneficial to the creators?

The fellows reported that learning to find and cite credible sources, to file Freedom of Information Act requests, and the best practices around being transparent with your community to be the most meaningful.

### Can the Trusted Creator Fellowship meaningfully improve creator skills?

At the start and completion of the program, we asked: On a scale from 1 to 5, how confident do you feel in sharing accurate information? In October, they averaged an answer of 3.95. In December, 4.475.

### How does the class build community in between trainings?

The creators were actively engaged during the training sessions, always prepared with questions and often staying on longer to keep the discussion going. As primarily independent workers, they found great value in the fellowship's community and talked daily on Discord. On platforms, they often amplified each others content by sharing or leaving comments.

### How does training impact partnerships opportunities for the creators?

NCC's talent pipeline is incredibly valuable to partners, which allows them to breathe a sigh of relief knowing they have found creators who are dedicated to accuracy and have been through intensive training. Fellows reported they were able to utilize their status as a fellow to move previous business opportunities forward.

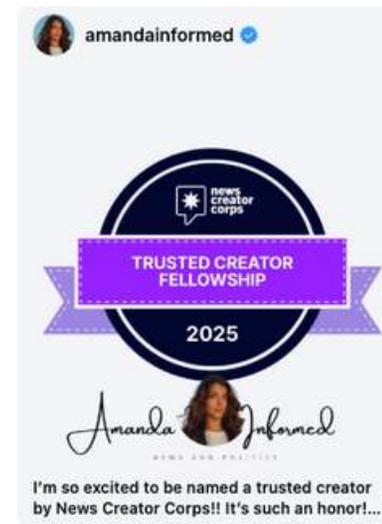
**100%** of creators would recommend the Trusted Creator Fellowship to another creator



### What's the most useful new skill you've learned so far?

"Understanding how to weave things like source citing and public records into my content in a way that doesn't take the audience out of the lightheartedness of some of the subject matter has been fun."

—Anonymous survey response



Upon graduation, fellows earned a badge.

## Partnerships & Ecosystem Building

News Creator Corps established partnerships with publishers, data support organizations, and training programs to provide fellows with resources and opportunities to grow their businesses and produce deeper forms of content.



## Collaboration Examples



Zackory Kirk (209,300 followers) amplified a Grist story about coal plants impacting his home state of Georgia.



Angel Barragan (326,400 followers) partnered with The Trace to bring a new facet to his immigration reporting: how many ICE incidents involved gun violence.

## Media Coverage

News Creator Corps has quickly emerged as an expert in the information-focused creator space.

### **NiemanLab**

**A new fellowship is all about putting the news in news creator**

October 28, 2025

### **Net Influencer**

**News Creator Corps: The Nonprofit Turning Creators Into Trusted Messengers**

December 16, 2025

### **THE WRAP.**

**Creatorverse: Creator Talent Agencies, Once Mocked, Are Now the Future**

September 11, 2025

### **CREATOR SPOTLIGHT**

**Podcast interview: Journalism skills every creator should know**

December 23, 2025

## Looking Ahead

### Fellowship Programs

News Creator Corps will run the Trusted Creator Fellowship program twice in 2026, while expanding into training and coaching programs for additional cohorts:

- High school students
- College students
- Creators in rural communities

### Research

We are compiling original research that is producing valuable insights into pay structures for creators, best practices for newsroom-creator partnerships, and more.



Comparing my understanding before/after, I feel far better-equipped now with the tools I gained from this experience. My approach to making content has shifted, and I'm even more committed to building my community's trust and keeping them informed. This program has made me a stronger creator.

—Stephanie Valdez, 2025 fellow

### The Collective

Graduates from our fellowship programs are invited to join The Collective, a community group that provides ongoing resources, support, and opportunities for creators. Our talent pipeline is valuable to news organizations, nonprofits, PR firms, and other publishers eager to connect with creators.

### Events

In an effort to maximize our impact, we are hosting webinars and IRL events to train more creators and connect with communities to learn more about how they think about misinformation and civic engagement.



At an in-person training event in Philadelphia in December, we taught local creators how to find and utilize public records. It's safe to assume the level of note taking is unprecedented in this bar.

## How To Get Involved

### For Creators

We are building our network of creators, and we'd love for you to join us. Apply for one of our fellowship programs, join one of our events, or reach out about collaborating on a project. Signing up for our weekly newsletter is the best way to stay updated on everything we're launching in 2026.

### For Funders

We can't do this work without you. Your support not only supercharges the creator ecosystem, but it directly advances civic engagement in the communities that need it most. Reach out to executive director Rachel Lobdell to chat more about how you can invest in one of our programs.

### For Partners

We partner with content creators, news organizations, journalism schools, high school classes, nonprofit organizations, and public relations professionals in our programs. We'd love to learn more about your work and how we can make the information economy stronger together.

### For Supporters

We are all part of the information ecosystem, whether that's as members sharing information or receiving it. We're building a coalition that's dedicated to making social platforms a place where audiences can get truthful information, and we'd love for you to join us. Stay connect with us through our weekly newsletter, on LinkedIn, or on Instagram.



**Reach out to executive director Rachel Lobdell**  
[rachel@newscreatorcoprs.org](mailto:rachel@newscreatorcoprs.org)