

CatchLight: Strategic Goals and Impact

Goals (2022)

Build long-term, sustainable and replicable collaborative model for visual journalism

- Launch CatchLight Local visual desk in California with successful membership model that delights customers: newsrooms/ fellows measured by number of members/returning customers, quality of community engagements and professional advancements on fellows. (At least five newsroom members in 2022 and up to ten in 2023).
- Place long-term (three-year) CatchLight Visual Journalism Fellows in Local newsrooms in California (at least four in 2022 and up to ten in 2023).
- Build strong and long term collaborations with diverse media companies and community organizations where our Fellows and the Visual Desk operate.
- Create a strong, nuanced and engaging visual representation of California to be measured by increase in audience engagement, community engagement and awards.
- Build sustainability models to replicate in other regions.

Establish long term financial sustainability of the organization by diversifying revenue streams

- Achieve revenues of \$2.415 million, a 12% increase from last year's revenues.
- Diversify revenue streams: Increase the number of major donors by 67% and amount of average donation by 15%.
- Increase CatchLight's fundraising capacity by adding another member to the development team.
- Test out creative services revenue models with two to three experiments, totalling revenues of at least \$70k.
- Build strong corporate sponsorship revenue stream up to \$80k next year from \$20k in 2021.
- Build a successful membership model for newsrooms with revenues of at least \$40k in 2022.

Successfully scale organization and achieve team and operational excellence:

- Successfully grow the team from four staff in 2021 to eight in 2022.
- Further increase team and board diversity where both staff and contractors/fellows and board reflect the demographic diversity of the communities we serve. Recruit two new board members to serve on CatchLight board.
- Build a strong organizational structure where the team feels both empowered and supported with clear and actionable goals to establish CatchLight as a great place to work.
- Improve workflows and systems including Content Management and Customer management systems to achieve greater efficiency.

Establish CatchLight as a major force at the nexus of visual storytelling, art, media and social change:

- Build out strong cultural programming establishing CatchLight as a major organization in the field
- Host a successful and free to the public CatchLight Visual Storytelling Summit with key players in the field and attracting a large SF-based audience, reaching an estimated audience of 200+ in person, and 5,000 online.

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- Build a successful programmatic lecture series based on strong Cultural programming partnerships: ICA SF, McEvoy, Minnesota Street Projects, SFAC, Aperture.
- Increase brand recognition and brand projection across events and digital media: Redesign website.

Impact

CatchLight uses three different measures of impact for its CatchLight Local program overall, measuring the ability of visual journalism to deeply engage audiences and build greater sustainability for newsrooms:

- Impact on audience engagement and sustainability for newsrooms
- Impact on journalists' career and growth
- Impact on the communities served by the newsroom

The metrics below outline the dimensions of impact resulting from our two pilots. Our Bay Area pilot placed three journalists full time in three different newsrooms for a period of nine months from November 2019 until June 2020 in collaboration with Report for America, working with a CatchLight Visual Editor. Our Chicago pilot placed five visual journalists working part-time in five Chicago newsrooms in collaboration with the Institute for Nonprofit News (INN) and a CatchLight Visual Editor.

Impact On Newsroom Engagement And Sustainability For Newsrooms

On average, CatchLight projects led to greater story engagement, according to metrics newsrooms use to track results, determine what content is resonating and strategize for growth. Those results pointed to visual journalism's importance for our partner newsrooms.

- At each of our three Bay Area newsroom partners, 85% of the visual stories produced by CatchLight had an engagement rate higher than the newsroom's average.
- The 18 CatchLight Visual Desk projects published by our partner newsrooms enjoyed an average 37% increase in engagement time per story.
- At The Salinas Californian, Local Fellow David Rodríguez Muñoz' visual posts on Instagram doubled the number of followers for the newspaper's Instagram account, from 3,200 to 6,595, creating a larger funnel for subscribers.
- The Local Visual Desk's visual projects have received competitive awards including a Best of Gannett award for "Best Collaboration" and a San Francisco Press Club award for best "Photo Series."

In terms of program sustainability:

- Out of the three newsrooms we worked with in our first pilot in the Bay Area, two continued as CatchLight partners: Bay City News and The Salinas Californian. The San Francisco Public Press has expressed interest in renewing their membership to the CatchLight Local Visual Desk as well, pointing to long term value and sustainability of the program.

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A key lesson learned about sustainability:

Our Bay Area and Chicago pilot programs differed in an important manner: In the Bay Area, CatchLight subsidized Fellows' salaries, with the partner newsroom footing the remainder. However, in Chicago, while CatchLight also subsidized Fellows' salaries, the Institute for Nonprofit News, which was a project partner and funder, covered the newsrooms' share of the Fellows' salaries. Also, in the Bay Area, the Fellows worked full time, while in Chicago, they worked part time.

The Bay Area model yielded better results in the longer term because, in our conclusion, the Chicago newsrooms had less of a stake in the outcome. Fellows produced successful and compelling visual journalism projects in both pilot locations. But in Chicago, Fellows, because of the part-time nature of their employment, were integrated less effectively into their respective newsrooms and, ultimately, the newsrooms showed a slightly less discernible shift toward long term adoption of visual journalism.

Impact On Visual Journalists' Careers And Growth

- From our first pilot in the Bay Area, two out of the three CatchLight Local Fellows, visual journalists whose salaries we subsidized — David Rodríguez Muñoz at The Salinas Californian and Yesica Prado at San Francisco Public Press — were subsequently hired by their newsrooms with no subsidy, pointing to long term impact of our program on photojournalists' careers.
- From our second pilot, in Chicago, one of five Local Fellows were hired on by project partners.
- Following their Local Fellowships, several Fellows have gone on to be awarded other prestigious fellowships including a National Geographic Explorer Fellowship and a JSK Fellowship at Stanford University.

Impact On The Engagement Of The Community

Community engagement is a central part of the CatchLight Local program. All Local Fellows that are part of our CatchLight Local Visual Desk and newsrooms have to commit to a community engagement intervention as part of joining the desk. Our work starts with community listening sessions and always places the information and representation needs of the community at the center of our work. We leverage the unique power of visual journalism to bring this representation back to communities through exhibitions in public places, public information campaigns and education programs.

Thanks to the very nature of visual journalism — Fellows have to actively reach out to and always maintain a physical presence in the communities their newsrooms serve. They become the public face of local journalism in those neighborhoods, helping preserve a connection between their newsrooms and communities that are starved for journalism's attention and suffering disproportionate impacts from COVID-19. CatchLight Local's visual journalists

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become trusted messengers. CatchLight Local Fellows' visual journalism in Bay Area and Chicago newsrooms have had an undeniable and lasting impact in their communities.

From spurring support for California immigrant families, to creating visual archives that countered the narrative of a long-maligned Chicago neighborhood, CatchLight Local Fellows demonstrated that quality visual journalism can change how people think, act and see.

CatchLight Fellow David Rodríguez Muñoz's seventh-month coverage of two immigrant families in Monterey County, explored food insecurity, housing, and education inequities following the onset of COVID-19. His work

garnered nationwide attention and led to an outpouring of help for the people he profiled. One of the family members Muñoz documented was hired as a Mixtec translator during the course of the series, distributing forward a benefit to her community.

Muñoz's work was featured in the [Media Impact Project at USC Annenberg](#), [published in USA Today](#), and attracted donations of food and supplies from close to home and as far as Texas.

One resident asked if she could provide ongoing donations of food to the family for the duration of the project. Over five months, she dropped off hundreds of dollars of meat and produce so that the family of seven could have nutritious food.

"The family was in awe as much as I was because they didn't think this kind of help was possible. It absolutely helped them survive the pandemic. The simple necessities of food and diapers made them so happy. That's where the title for the final story, "Our stories have power," came from," Muñoz said.



At the start of the COVID 19 pandemic, CatchLight Local Fellow Yesica Prado, who has been living in her RV since going to college at Berkeley and had been [documenting the impact of parking policies on vehicle dwellers in Berkeley and San Francisco](#) worked with her newsroom the San Francisco Public Press to bring key health information about COVID and how to access critical sanitation and food resources to the unhoused community of San Francisco and Berkeley.

Prado distributed 500+ dashboard posters with [hyper-local resource guides](#) in English and Spanish to help to bridge a critical information gap for vehicle dwellers early in the

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pandemic when information was changing rapidly and residents could no longer access the cafes, libraries, or other public spaces for which they typically relied on for internet access.

Prado also documented her own life in her vehicle during COVID with [a short documentary film](#) that helped broad audiences understand the challenges of vehicular living.

Also in the Bay Area, the work of two of our pilot CatchLight Local fellows, Yesica Prado and Felix Uribe, is currently featured in an exhibition at San Francisco City Hall: [Care in the Time of COVID](#), engaging a broad and diverse audience. The visual journalism that we subsidized reflects underserved communities in new and uncommon ways — and can travel to different locations and audiences, extending its impact through panels, public art exhibitions and other programs.

In Chicago, [CatchLight Fellow Samantha Cabrera Friend](#) demonstrated the power of visual journalism in countering long-held and damaging narratives. She collaborated with ProPublica on its investigation into the history of Garfield Park, a historically Black neighborhood on the city's West Side. Cabrera Friend's work helped illustrate the fact that the neighborhood's struggles stemmed from government neglect and disinvestment, not from riots following the 1968 assassination of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.



At the same time, Cabrera Friend worked closely with residents to create [a visual archive of Garfield Park](#), establishing a living, official record of their place in history, which had often been obscured or misrepresented. That project, *Meeting History: the Garfield Park Public Archive*, was also exhibited at Chicago's Legler Public Library.