



Chicago Independent Media Alliance

#SaveChicagoMedia

Journalism for the people, by the people:

A fundraiser to support 40+ independent Chicago media outlets

**A total of \$160,000 raised by more than a thousand
donors, including matches by foundations**

Organized by the Chicago Reader

May 8–June 5, 2020



About CIMA

The Chicago Independent Media Alliance (CIMA) is made up of 65 outlets covering the African American, Latinx, Asian American, immigrant, LGBTQ, and other Chicago communities. CIMA believes there is no better way to reach the city's most marginalized and underserved communities than through local media outlets for and by those communities. We stand for information, accessibility, and equity.

CIMA is a project of the *Chicago Reader* created in the summer of 2019. The creation of CIMA came out of a need for a different business model in journalism. As we watched legacy newsrooms shrink and startup ventures fold, the need for an alliance of independent and local media was crucial. There had been past all-volunteer attempts to build coalitions, but without staffing, they failed. The *Chicago Reader* wanted to test a new model, and applied for grants to cover a staffed project.

In the summer of 2019, we began the second phase of our start-up. For the second phase of our start-up, project manager Yazmin Dominguez created a short survey in which we could collect information on the outlets' overall operations. We asked for information on each outlet's business or nonprofit model, audience demographics, and their interests toward collaboration on various fronts (editorial, business, etc.). Our goal was to get a strong understanding of Chicago's independent media ecosystem.

In order to be a part of CIMA, we ask interested outlets to only fill out the survey as their way of opting in. Membership is free. All questions are optional as we understand not all may have this information handy or feel comfortable sharing insider information on their day-to-day operations.

A wide net was cast when researching outlets to invite to the alliance. In the summer of 2019, we sent our survey to 103 media outlets or media-related organizations. By fall of 2019, we had 51 respondents. Since then we have had a total 65 join the alliance, two of those who opted in during our recent fundraising campaign.

Outlets in our alliance represent the wide range of Chicago's independent media landscape. Any type of media entity can opt in to CIMA; our only restriction is that they not be corporate entities. We have the 65 outlets divided by the following categories:

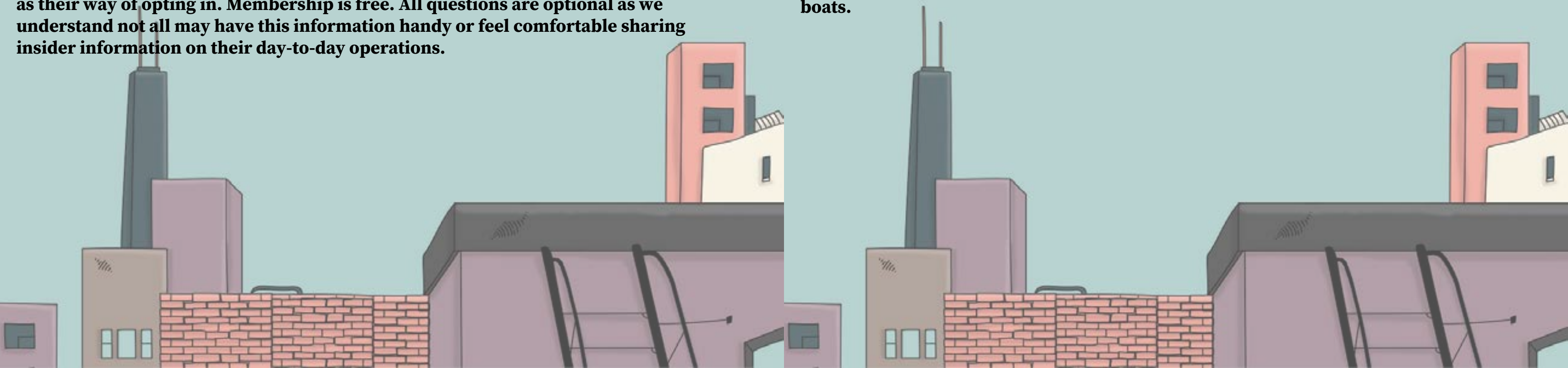
26 Print and Digital

25 Digital Only

13 Radio, Podcast, and Broadcast

1 Media Training Group

Outlets range from hyper-local neighborhood papers, such as *Hyde Park Herald* and *North Lawndale Community News*, to non-traditional broadcast entities such as *Kartemquin Films* and *SoapBox Productions and Organizing*. There are also foreign-language papers for non-POC, like the Polish and Ukrainian communities. We emphasize reaching out to non-English-based outlets who report for diverse communities that may be hard to reach for traditional outlets. *Korea Times* and *La Raza Newspaper* are active partners in CIMA and we hope to increase the diversity of our outlets as we continue our mission to lift all boats.



Journalism in Crisis: CIMA and COVID-19

Our first-ever joint fundraiser for CIMA came as an emergency response to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. In mid-March, the *Chicago Reader* found itself in a unique and dangerous economic situation. We quickly realized CIMA members were also facing sudden layoffs, severe budget cuts, and potential closures. We had been thinking about a large joint fundraiser for 2021, but the unprecedented crisis accelerated these plans.

In late March, we surveyed publishers and leaders of independent media companies in CIMA to assess the financial effect of COVID-19 on their business. We asked outlets to compare revenue losses from advertisers, donors and members, and special events from 2019 to 2020. We asked outlets if they had the resources to cover COVID-19 in order to assess future pandemic coverage from independent media.

Twenty-eight outlets of the then 51 responded with their data, which we then turned into a CIMA and COVID-19 report. Our biggest takeaways are listed below. Please see Appendix A for the full report.

When surveyed 63 percent (17 out of 28 outlets) anticipated a decrease ranging between \$300 and \$247,150 from advertisers between March 1 and May 1 in 2020. This estimate was compared to their income from the same time frame in 2019. The average amount lost between the 17 outlets was \$24,788.24.

When respondents were asked to estimate the revenue loss from special events/benefits in 2020 compared to 2019, 50 percent (14 of 28) of outlets reported anticipating decreases ranging from \$200 to \$150,000. The average being \$17,585.71.

When asked if they had resources and finances to cover COVID-19, 26.7 percent of respondents (15 of 28) responded they need additional funds to cover costs for additional reporting.

From our CIMA and COVID-19 report, we understood that the majority of Chicago's independent media were being deeply impacted by the current health and economic crisis. As a response to COVID-19, national news outlets were assessing the situation globally. While this information is important, it leaves the average citizen unaware of the effect of the health crisis on their communities and neighbors. This is where local media fills the information gaps. Local media delivers authentic, community-driven journalism. Hyperlocal media outlets report on stories that matter most to communities largely affected by this and any future health crisis.

Unfortunately, judging by our survey responses and from conversations from CIMA members, community media outlets in our city are not getting the resources they need and are facing the real possibility of closure.

After completing our CIMA and COVID-19 report, we sent our report to five major foundations:

Field Foundation

MacArthur Foundation

McCormick Foundation

Joyce Foundation

Chicago Community Trust

We surveyed our members and 37 (representing 43 media outlets) decided to join us in launching Chicago's first-ever joint media fundraiser, an unprecedented campaign.

A list of all 43 independent media outlets who opted in to the CIMA fundraiser can be found on the next page.



Participating Partners

[AirGo Radio:](#) Podcast and media hub showcasing people reshaping Chicago for the more equitable and creative.

[Better Government Association:](#) The BGA’s in-depth investigative reporting exposes failings in Chicago and Illinois government.

[Chicago Crusader:](#) The Chicago Crusader is Chicago’s number one African American weekly newspaper.

[Chicago Music Guide:](#) Your guide to great music in Chicago. Music Promotions, resources and more.

[Chicago Public Square:](#) Free daily email news roundup for Chicago. The Reader poll’s pick for Best Blog.

[Chicago Reader:](#) The Reader, founded 1971, is Chicago’s in-depth and curated guide to culture, politics, and more.

[The Chicago Reporter:](#) The Chicago Reporter is an investigative news organization focused on race, poverty and income inequality.

[CHIRP Radio:](#) CHIRP is your live, local community radio station focused on independent music and culture.

[Cicero Independiente:](#) A volunteer-run, bilingual, independent news outlet for and by residents of Cicero.

[City Bureau:](#) Nonprofit civic journalism lab serving Chicago’s south and west sides

[E3 Radio:](#) E3 Radio is an online station playing queer and independent music. Queer radio done right.

[Free Spirit Media:](#) Opportunities for emerging creators (ages 14-25), primarily from communities of color, to produce and create.

Growing Community Media with **[Austin Weekly News](#)** (West Side of Chicago from Garfield Park to Austin and **[Wednesday Journal of Oak Park & River Forest](#)** (independent, intensely local, covering Oak Park and River Forest).

[Hyde Park Herald:](#) Hyde Park Herald is a weekly community newspaper rich in history and journalistic excellence.

Inside Publications: Skyline, Inside Booster, News Star newspapers: Your friendly 110-year-old neighborhood newspapers, serving Chicago’s north side.

[Injustice Watch:](#) Injustice Watch is an investigative newsroom that exposes systemic inequities in the justice system.

[Invisible Institute:](#) Invisible Institute works to enhance the capacity of citizens to hold public institutions accountable.

[Kartemquin Films:](#) Kartemquin Films supports independent filmmakers producing social issue documentaries, fostering a more engaged society.

[Korea Times Chicago:](#) Most widely distributed daily publication for Korean news in Chicago.

[La Raza Newspaper:](#) The voice of Chicago’s Latino community for 50 years. La voz de la comunidad latina en Chicago por 50 años.

[Left Out Magazine:](#) Independent journalism, politics, culture, analysis, and debate by and about working-class Black people.

[Loop North News:](#) Loop North News serves the Loop and Near North neighborhoods of downtown Chicago.

[NewCity:](#) The publication of record for Chicago culture.

North Lawndale Community News: Providing news and information on resources and events that improve the lifestyle of individuals and families.

[Public Narrative:](#) Public Narrative exists to balance public health, safety and education narratives affecting marginalized communities.

[Rebellious Magazine for Women:](#) Rebellious Magazine for Women is a feminist news and culture website founded in 2012.

[Rivet Radio:](#) Rivet tells the world’s stories and makes them engaging and fun.

[Sixty Inches from Center:](#) Midwest-focused arts publication and archiving organization that supports BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, disability, and women’s culture.

[SoapBox Productions and Organizing:](#) Film and social activism non-profit specializing in multimedia storytelling for equity and structural change.

[South Shore Current Magazine:](#) Good news from Chicago’s Cultural Soul Coast—the southeast and southern shore communities.

[South Side Weekly:](#) Independent, nonprofit newspaper for and about the south side of Chicago.

[Streetwise:](#) Empowering those facing homelessness with access to employment to work toward self-sufficiency with dignity.

[StudentsXpress Magazine:](#) A magazine of art and writing by students in CPS, preK-8th grade.

[The Beverly Review:](#) Weekly newspaper covering Beverly Hills, Morgan Park, and Mt. Greenwood.

[The Daily Line:](#) The Daily Line does critical reporting on policy and politics for professionals.

[Third Coast Review:](#) Chicago’s online arts and culture magazine, specializing in quirky, underground aspects of the arts scene.

[West of the Ryan Current Magazine:](#) Good News from Chinatown to Roseland—on the south side, west of the Dan Ryan.

[The West Side Current Magazine:](#) Good news from Chicago’s west side—focused on pride, honor, and value of community.

[Windy City Times:](#) Windy City Times is an award-winning newspaper serving the Chicagoland LGBTQ community since 1985.

Process of Campaign Fruition

In April, after reviewing the results of our CIMA and COVID-19 report, we assessed our needs to create a fundraiser with 42 other media outlets. We contracted with a web developer early in the month to create www.savechicagomedia.org. A donation website where the public would have the option to donate to one or multiple outlets or split their donated amount amongst outlets of their choosing. For easy fund distribution and to avoid working with any agency, we decided to work with Stripe, a software platform that would assist in transferring raised funds directly to the outlet's bank account at the end of the campaign. Contributions were not tax-deductible.

Matching Foundation Funds

Chicago Reader publisher Tracy Baim worked to connect with foundations, seeking matches for funds raised. Our initial goal was \$40,000 in foundation or individual matches, but ultimately we were able to get close to \$60,000. Some funds came from individuals, who preferred to have the tax-deductible option of giving to the Crossroads Fund, the host of the matching funds. There were two anonymous foundations who gave \$2,500 each.

The rest of the matches were:

- Joseph & Bessie Feinberg Foundation, \$5,000
- The Lloyd A. Fry Foundation, \$6,000
- The Robert R. McCormick Foundation, \$20,000
- The Joyce Foundation, \$20,000

We utilized the *Reader's* design team to create a branding for the campaign. The slogan “Journalism for the people, by the people” was decided on as it embodied the root of our belief in local media and the campaign. CIMA worked with a video animator to create a short animation with a script and voice over. It was narrated by Kevin Coval, a popular voice in Chicago's literary and media world. Yazmin Dominguez, CIMA's media partnership coordinator, narrated the voice-over in Spanish for our Latinx audiences. In our next campaign, we will create promotional videos in various languages that accurately reflect all of the outlet's audiences.

Promotional Videos

[CIMA: Help Save Chicago Media](#)

[CIMA: Ayuda a Salvar los Medios de Chicago](#)

We held our first virtual meeting with all 43 participating outlets on March 23 informing them of the creation of the fundraiser. We asked all outlets to promote the fundraiser on all their channels such as their website, newspaper, podcasts, email newsletters, and social media sites. CIMA created Facebook and Twitter accounts in order to promote the campaign and reshare member content. We each used #SaveChicagoMedia to promote the campaign on Twitter.

We believe this method was the most effective as it was no cost and reached all of our participating audiences across Chicago and nearby suburbs. All participating outlets were asked for their advertisement dimensions and the Reader design team created specific ads for each of them. We shared raw InDesign files with members in order for them to edit ads to best suit their tone for their unique audiences. Campaign promotional advertisements were made for Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Campaign branding and design can be seen in the following pages.

Social media ads shared with outlets:

Twitter



Instagram



Facebook



PRINT ADS

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| | | |
|--|---|------------------------------------|
| AirGo Radio | Hyde Park Herald | Sixty Inches from Center |
| Better Government Association | Inside Publications: Skyline, Inside Booster, News Star | SoapBox Productions and Organizing |
| Chicago Crusader | Injustice Watch | South Shore Current Magazine |
| Chicago Music Guide | Invisible Institute | South Side Weekly |
| Chicago Public Square | Kartemquin Films | Streetwise |
| Chicago Reader | Korea Times Chicago | StudentsXpress Magazine |
| The Chicago Reporter | La Raza Newspaper | The Beverly Review |
| CHIRP Radio | Left Out Magazine | The Daily Line |
| Cicero Independiente | Loop North News | The TRIBE |
| City Bureau | New City | Third Coast Review |
| E3 Radio | North Lawndale Community News | West of the Ryan Current Magazine |
| Free Spirit Media | Public Narrative | The West Side Current Magazine |
| Growing Community Media: Austin Weekly News and Wednesday Journal of Oak Park & River Forest | Rebellious Magazine for Women | Windy City Times |
| | Rivet Radio | |

Independent Media outlets in Chicago remain curious about the spectrum of human experience in the most resilient, incredible and segregated city in the world.

Through integrity and grit, journalists comb the streets to find out what is happening from the people who know best, everyday Chicagoans.

savechicagomedia.org



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We rely on independent media to provide a myriad of human experiences in a city that is often bifurcated along the viaducts of class and race.

savechicagomedia.org



Studs Terkel's epitaph reads "Curiosity did not kill this cat."

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savechicagomedia.org



Fundraiser Promotion Stats

Web Campaign

We also ran a web campaign on chicagoreader.com.

CIMA Web ads had 50,000 impressions on chicagoreader.com from May 8 to June 5 and 123 clicks (0.25% CTR click-through rate)

Best performing ad: 320x50 animated GIF had 23,041 impressions, 85 clicks (0.37% CTR)

Best performing day for that ad: Friday, June 5: 8,839 impressions, 46 clicks (0.52% CTR)

Best day overall by clicks: Friday, June 5: 17,854 impressions, 60 clicks (0.34% CTR)

Best day overall by CTR: Sunday, June 10: 112 impressions, 1 click (0.89% CTR)

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Facebook Ads

We boosted two Facebook posts—one video and one social launch announcement—where the boost included a “Donate Now” button directly to savechicagomedia.org.

Facebook post on May 8

33,123 people reached
16,356 video views
113 reactions, comments, shares
77 likes
7 loves
3 comments
26 shares
95 link clicks
195 clicks to play

\$100 boost of the video post over 7 days

May 8, 2020-May 15, 2020
1,488 people reached
5,869 ThruPlays (plays of 15” or more)
(\$0.02 per ThruPlay)
15,887 video views
94 link clicks (to savechicagomedia.org or one of the videos on YouTube)
5 comments
22 shares

Reached
33.4% women & 66.6% men

Biggest gender/age group:
15% men 45-54
followed by 14% women 45-44

Facebook post on May 16

46,958 people reached
2,480 engagements
462 reactions, comments, shares
338 likes
45 loves
1 wow
2 comments
76 shares
710 link clicks

\$100 boost of the video post over 5 days

May 20, 2020-May 25, 2020
11,808 people reached
198 link clicks (\$0.81 per link clicks)
123 landing page views
1 page like
1 comment
24 shares

Reached
53.3% women & 46.7% men

Biggest gender/age group:
12% women 55-64 and women 65+ next biggest group
followed by 11% men 35-44

\$200 boost over 8 days

May 27, 2020-June 4, 2020
42,120 people reached
505 link clicks (\$0.65 per link click)
308 landing page views
1 page like
41 shares

Reached 64.2% women & 35.8% men

Biggest gender/age group:
17% women 25-34
followed by 16% women 35-44

‘Chicago Needs Indie Media’ Facebook Live Discussions

As a final push during the final week of the campaign, CIMA’s media partnership coordinator, Yazmin Dominguez, organized three Facebook Live discussions with 4-7 publishers per session. Topics of conversation were based on the effect of COVID-19 on their organization, why local media matters, and media’s responsibility of covering the ongoing Black Lives Matter movement.

Chicago Needs Indie Media Pt 1

Panelists included: Jesus Del Toro, publisher of *La Raza*; Daniel Kisslinger, Cohost and Co-executive producer of *AirGo Radio*; Sheila Solomon, strategic alliance liaison of *Rivet*, and Maira Khwaja of *Invisible Institute*.

Chicago Needs Indie Media Pt 2

Panelists included: Tracy Baim, *Chicago Reader* publisher and *Windy City Times* owner; Charlie Meyerson, *Chicago Public Square* publisher; David Hamilton, creative director of *StreetWise*; Nancy Bishop, publisher of *Third Coast Review*; Ron Roenigk, publisher of *Inside Publications*, and Isaac Lewis Jr., publisher of *North Lawndale Community News*.

Chicago Needs Indie Media Pt 3

Panelists included: Karen Hawkins, Co-Editor-in-Chief of the *Chicago Reader* and *Rebellious Magazine* owner; Tracy Baim, publisher of *Chicago Reader* and *Windy City Times* owner, Randall Weissman, publisher of *Hyde Park Herald*; Shawn Campbell, general manager of *CHIRP Radio*, Anna DeShawn, owner and host of *E3 Radio*.



Landing page was www.savechicagomedia.org via the "Donate Now" button

CIMA Fundraiser In the News

We sent our press release to high-profile media organizations and foundations for potential coverage. Our CIMA fundraiser was also promoted by members of the alliance. Below you will find links to various cross-promotions and features. This includes CIMA member's exclusive use of promotional ads, a personal letter to funders from Tracy Baim, blog posts and articles from well-known media critics such as Robert Feder.

[Roberservations: Independent Media Outlets Launch Joint Fundraiser](#)

[Chicago Reader: Investing in local news is more important than ever](#)

[Chicago Reader: 40+ Chicago Media Outlets Launch Joint Fundraiser](#)

[Chicago Music Guide: Sounds of Chicago](#)

[MediaPost: 43 Chicago Media Outlets Launch Fundraising Campaign](#)

[Ms. Dempster St.: Indy Chicago media collaborate to stay afloat](#)

[Fox32Chicago: Fundraising campaign aims to bolster financial support Chicago's independent media outlets](#)

[WTTW: The Vital Role of Community Newspapers like 'The Korea Times Chicago'](#)

[Rebellious Magazine for Women: Save Chicago Media, An Update on the](#)

[#SaveChicagoMedia](#)

[Artemisia, A Chicago Podcast: Interview with Tracy Baim](#)

[WBEZ's Reset with Jenn White: Local News Outlets Partner for 'Save Chicago Media' Fundraiser](#)

[Chicago Ideas: Chicago Reader Creatively Adapts to Save Community News](#)

[Windy City Times: #SaveChicagoMedia Newsletter sent to 6,500 subscribers.](#)

[The NonProfit Times: 43 Chicago Media Outlets Plan Fundraising Some NPO](#)

[Conversions](#)

[E3 Radio: Stopping the Music](#)

[Chicago Public Square Promotion](#)

[New City: Tracy Baim and Her Quest to Save Chicago Media](#)

[Chicago Crusader: Last Chance to #SaveChicagoMedia](#)

[Jam TV Show: Thursday, May 21, 2020](#)

[WBEZ: The Chicago Reader fights for survival](#)

[Rebellious: Omg! We Raised \\$160,000 to save Chicago media](#)

[COVID-19 pandemic hits Chicago media hard. 'There's never been a more challenging time for newsrooms.'](#)

[Sustaining Journalism in a pandemic: 'We need each other'](#)

[The Constant Media Gardener: Fast-rising coordinator ripping out roots of journalism issues](#)

Results

Our original target amount was \$60,000. At the end of the campaign, we raised exactly \$104,480.00 with the help of over 1,000 donors. After fees, our grand total raised was \$101,108.71. The grand total was reached by individual and group donations.

An additional nearly \$60,000 was raised in matching funds from foundations.

The hard costs were \$3,500 for the website developer and \$600 for video animation. There was a 5% fee for the matching fund and hosting.

The Crossroads Fund administered the match. In the initiation of our campaign, we decided funds would match the individual amount raised. Throughout the campaign, near the second week, we realized that most donations (about two-thirds) were to all outlets at once, and individual donations to specific outlets were lower when compared to those donated to the pooled amount. Therefore, halfway through the campaign, we switched strategies. The match worked this way: The first match was for the direct contributions to specific outlets, to incentivize them to push the campaign. Any remaining match funds were split among all outlets evenly.

We believe our campaign was successful as we surpassed our revenue goal in the third week of the month-long campaign. We believe our fundraising efforts introduced CIMA to the general public. A project that was only known to the Chicago Reader and participating outlets is now publicly known. We saw a striking increase in our social media followers on Facebook and Twitter.

A breakdown of the funds raised can be found on the next page.

| | Individual Raised | Pooled Funds | Stripe Funds | Matched Funds |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| AirGo Radio | \$79.02 | \$1,735.73 | \$1,814.75 | \$547.52 |
| Better Government Association | \$206.90 | \$1,735.73 | \$1,942.72 | \$675.40 |
| Beverly Review | \$319.17 | \$1,735.73 | \$2,054.90 | \$787.67 |
| Chicago Crusader | \$112.99 | \$1,735.73 | \$1,848.72 | \$581.49 |
| Chicago Music Guide | \$228.63 | \$1,735.73 | \$1,964.36 | \$697.13 |
| Chicago Public Square | \$207.46 | \$1,735.73 | \$1,943.19 | \$675.96 |
| Chicago Reader | \$5,411.86 | \$1,735.73 | \$7,147.59 | \$5,880.36 |
| Chicago Reporter | \$539.71 | \$1,735.73 | \$2,275.44 | \$1,008.21 |
| CHIRP Radio | \$2,664.17 | \$1,735.73 | \$4,399.90 | \$3,132.67 |
| Cicero Independiente | \$27.90 | \$1,735.73 | \$1,763.63 | \$496.40 |
| City Bureau | \$391.85 | \$1,735.73 | \$2,127.58 | \$860.35 |
| Daily Line | \$114.22 | \$1,735.73 | \$1,849.95 | \$582.72 |
| E3 Radio | \$1,164.77 | \$1,735.73 | \$2,900.50 | \$1,633.27 |
| Free Spirit Media | \$21.26 | \$1,735.73 | \$1,756.99 | \$489.76 |
| Growing Community Media | \$432.34 | \$1,735.73 | \$2,168.07 | \$900.84 |
| Hyde Park Herald | \$795.27 | \$1,735.73 | \$2,531.00 | \$1,263.77 |
| Injustice Watch | \$143.70 | \$1,735.73 | \$1,879.43 | \$612.20 |
| Inside Publications | \$1,221.24 | \$1,735.73 | \$2,956.97 | \$1,689.74 |
| Invisible Institute | \$326.98 | \$1,735.73 | \$2,062.71 | \$795.48 |
| Kartemquin Films | \$193.46 | \$1,735.73 | \$1,929.19 | \$661.96 |
| Korea Times | \$4,979.65 | \$1,735.73 | \$6,715.38 | \$5,448.15 |
| La Raza | \$294.69 | \$1,735.73 | \$2,030.42 | \$763.19 |
| Left Out Magazine | \$44.40 | \$1,735.73 | \$1,780.13 | \$512.90 |
| Loop North | \$43.04 | \$1,735.73 | \$1,778.77 | \$511.54 |
| New City | \$1,180.60 | \$1,735.73 | \$2,916.33 | \$1,649.10 |
| North Lawndale Community News | \$1,150.10 | \$1,735.73 | \$2,885.83 | \$1,618.60 |
| Public Narrative | \$69.00 | \$1,735.73 | \$1,804.73 | \$537.50 |
| Rebellious Magazine for Women | \$8,089.92 | \$1,735.73 | \$9,825.65 | \$8,558.42 |
| Rivet | \$44.35 | \$1,735.73 | \$1,780.08 | \$512.85 |
| Sixty Inches From Center | \$49.46 | \$1,735.73 | \$1,785.19 | \$517.96 |
| Soapbox Production & Organizing | \$21.25 | \$1,735.73 | \$1,756.98 | \$489.75 |
| Current Magazines | \$659.82 | \$1,735.73 | \$2,395.55 | \$1,128.32 |
| South Side Weekly | \$429.21 | \$1,735.73 | \$2,164.94 | \$897.71 |
| StreetWise | \$845.76 | \$1,735.73 | \$2,581.49 | \$1,314.26 |
| Student Xpress Magazine | \$0.96 | \$1,735.73 | \$1,736.69 | \$469.46 |
| Third Coast Review | \$253.24 | \$1,735.73 | \$1,988.97 | \$721.74 |
| Windy City Times | \$4,128.26 | \$1,735.73 | \$5,863.99 | \$4,596.76 |
| | \$36,886.61 | \$64,222.01 | \$101,108.71 | \$54,221.11 |

Feedback and Lessons

The campaign ended Friday, June 5 after two months of creation and implementation. Many lessons were learned along the way. We did extend it two more days because we were so close to \$100,000, and those final two days netted more than \$10,000 in new donations. A final step in the process was creating a Google form where we asked for feedback from participants on the overall implementation of the campaign. We had 11 participating outlets submit the survey back.

We asked five questions pertaining to their thoughts on improvements for next year, what they would change if a similar fundraiser was organized in 2021, feedback on promotion and coordination, and what aspects of the campaign they wished were communicated clearer. Lastly, we asked in what ways would they like to be more involved in CIMA.

Suggestions for 2021

Respondents gave broad answers when asked for improvements for a 2021 campaign. From using a different word rather than “Save” in the slogan to more specifics on CIMA’s strategy. There was an advocate for CIMA to set up an option for an ongoing donations platform for yearly/monthly support. There was even a suggestion for CIMA to start our own email newsletter. CIMA members suggested extending the length of the fundraiser, taking checks and cash (we only took credit card donations), and hosting a public event post-COVID.

A better website interface for next year was a general consensus both on the front and back end. For example, streamlining and clarifying the UI/UX design. Add Auth0 to the Google login in order to make credit card transactions more secure. One outlet suggested the implementation of a unique identifier link for each outlet that could be easily shared. This would allow all donations to be attributed to the donor and be attributed to the organization donated to even when they donated to all.

There were also suggestions on participation guidelines for outlets. The collective match for all outlets was appreciated, but it was suggested CIMA set a minimum amount individual outlets must raise in order to ensure all participants are doing their best efforts and ensures equal participation. Outlets liked the timeframe of the campaign (May/June) since most fundraising for nonprofits takes place from late March to early September. The goal in 2021 is possibly the end of March.

Finally, a suggestion is to have all funds go through a foundation so that all donations would be tax deductible. Obviously, more matching funds would also be ideal.

Promotion

Many respondents gave specific feedback when it came to promotion. Internal and external promotion was very crucial for this campaign's success. One outlet would have liked promotion to have been further streamlined. It was suggested that the clearer the goal, the general public would be more inclined to donate. One outlet wished for more outreach to and from downtown media. Outlets suggested we use an ad agency to correlate materials and attempt to have donated ads from the city, Cook County, CTA, and Metra. Outlets liked the Facebook live Q and A's, but would have liked to see more during the entire month, not only the last week. Some wished we shared more data about the demographics of communities CIMA serves. If possible, CIMA members would like to see public events to promote and raise awareness.

Coordination

While outlets understood the necessity of a fast campaign some suggested we create teams for fundraising, promotion, website creation, etc. The example was given of a planning committee working on fundraising strategies and who then present ideas to the rest of the group therefore the entire CIMA group can make decisions together.

Outlets wished to see periodic reports on planning and funds raised during the campaign. Some expressed confusion with how the matching funds worked. Others wanted direct access to fundraising dashboards. Others wanted to see more participation from other less active outlets. It was expressed that committees may increase participation. Most expressed interest in creating or participating in talent banks so they can share their strengths with others.

Involvement

All 11 outlets expressed interest in being more involved as their capacity allows. Some expressed they have a strong background in fundraising and would like to train others in effective fundraising strategies. Levels of involvement varied amongst outlets. Some agreed to meet with donors in future fundraisers others wanted to be more hands on in relation to site design and campaign tools.

Next Steps

This emergency CIMA campaign really surpassed our expectations. For something discussed and launched in a few short weeks, we were so excited to see participation from a wide range of media outlets, and support from more than 1,000 people and a half dozen foundations.

One of the most important lessons learned is that collaboration not only works, it also brings new people and new support to the table. Some people or institutions are more attracted to efforts that mobilize a larger group of participants. It does not take away from individual fundraising efforts, it complements them.

And perhaps the biggest learning in this pilot is that a significant number of people, even if they were directed to the fundraiser by their favorite media outlet, actually opted to have their donation split evenly among all 43 outlets. This is a vital takeaway.

We believe an annual joint media fundraising campaign could bring in far more donors and overall money into this media ecosystem. We look to expand CIMA, and this effort, for a joint fundraiser end of first quarter of 2021.

Support of media by and for communities not only is the right thing to do, it is the only way to make sure we continue to have authentic voices covering all aspects of our diverse city.

Sincerely,

Tracy Baim, publisher, Chicago Reader

Karen Hawkins, co editor-in-chief, Chicago Reader

Yazmin Dominguez, media partnerships coordinator, Chicago Reader and CIMA