Knight Community Information Challenge: 2011 Evaluation Findings

Prepared for:

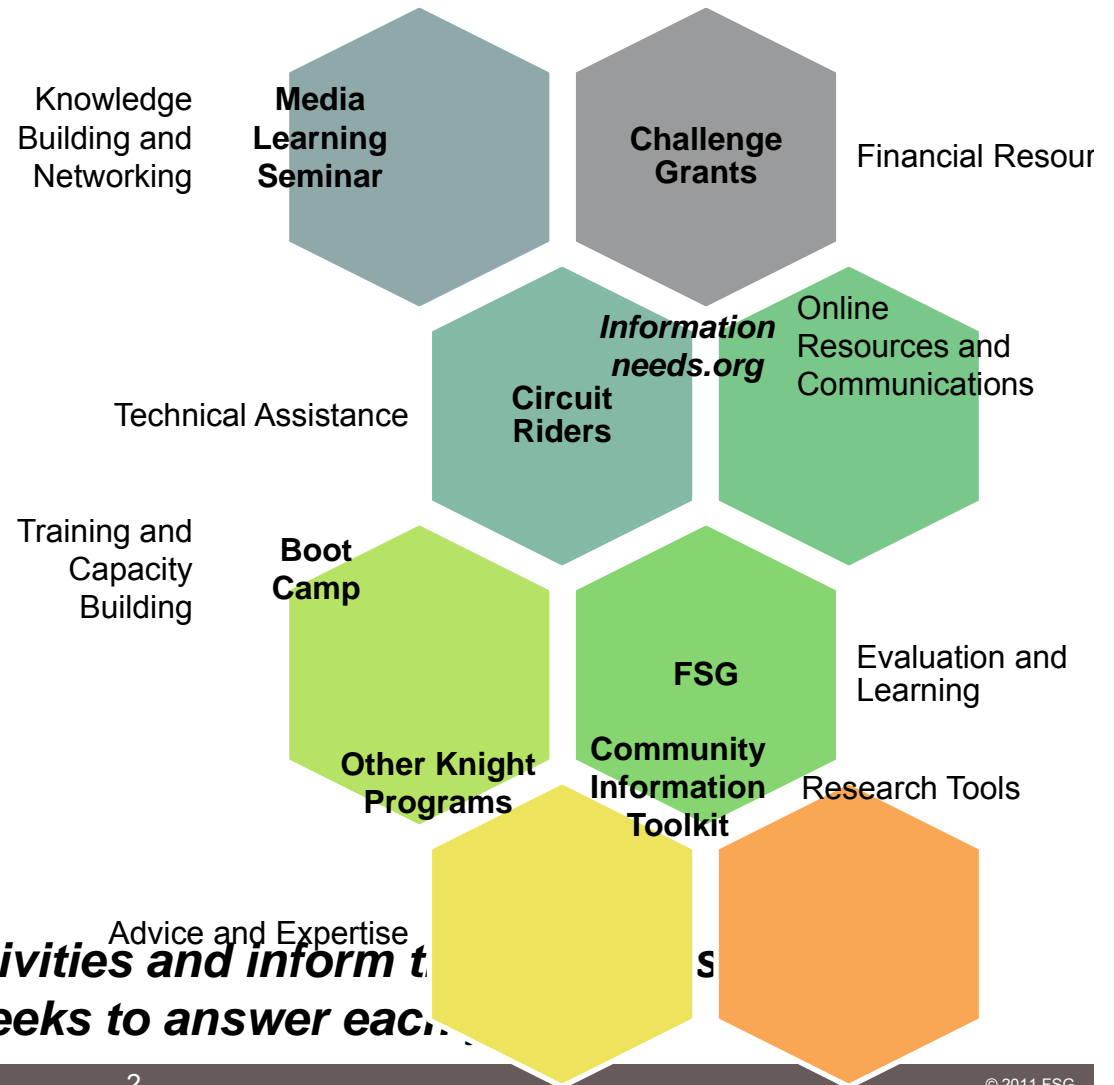**MLS Participants &**

KF **Knight Foundation**

February 2012

The Knight Community Information Challenge (KCIC) Has Taken a Multipronged Approach to Achieve Two Overarching Goals

Goals of the KCIC

1. Increase the **engagement of community and place-based foundations** in helping meet communities' information needs

2. Create more **informed and engaged communities** through projects that address community information needs

KCIC Activities

Knowledge Building and Networking

Media Learning Seminar

Challenge Grants

Financial Resour

Information needs.org

Online Resources and Communications

Technical Assistance

Circuit Riders

Training and Capacity Building

Boot Camp

FSG

Evaluation and Learning

Other Knight Programs

Community Information Toolkit

Research Tools

Advice and Expertise

These goals guide KCIC activities and inform t   s evaluation seeks to answer each

KCIC Challenge Grants Have Supported 76 Different Community Information Projects Across North America

KCIC Challenge Grants

- Over the past 4 years, Knight has provided **funding to 71 community and place-based foundations**

- These foundations have supported **76 different community information projects** that seek to address information needs across a variety of issues (e.g., access to local news, health, education, environment)

- Knight has given **$14.3M** in matching grants to support community information projects

Knight Foundation will fund its fifth and final round of KCIC grantees under the current initiative this year

The KCIC Has Contributed to Increased Foundation Engagement in Information and Media In a Number of Key Ways

Key achievements in the first three years include:

- Increased **foundation and board awareness** about the importance of media and communication

- Catalyzed **experimentation** for new community information projects

- Increased **collaboration** among a broad range of community actors to address local information needs

- Increased the **capacity** of foundations and their partners to use media tools and approaches across all areas of their work

- **Supported** community-level change in information ecosystems

The following slides present key findings from the 2011 KCIC evaluation
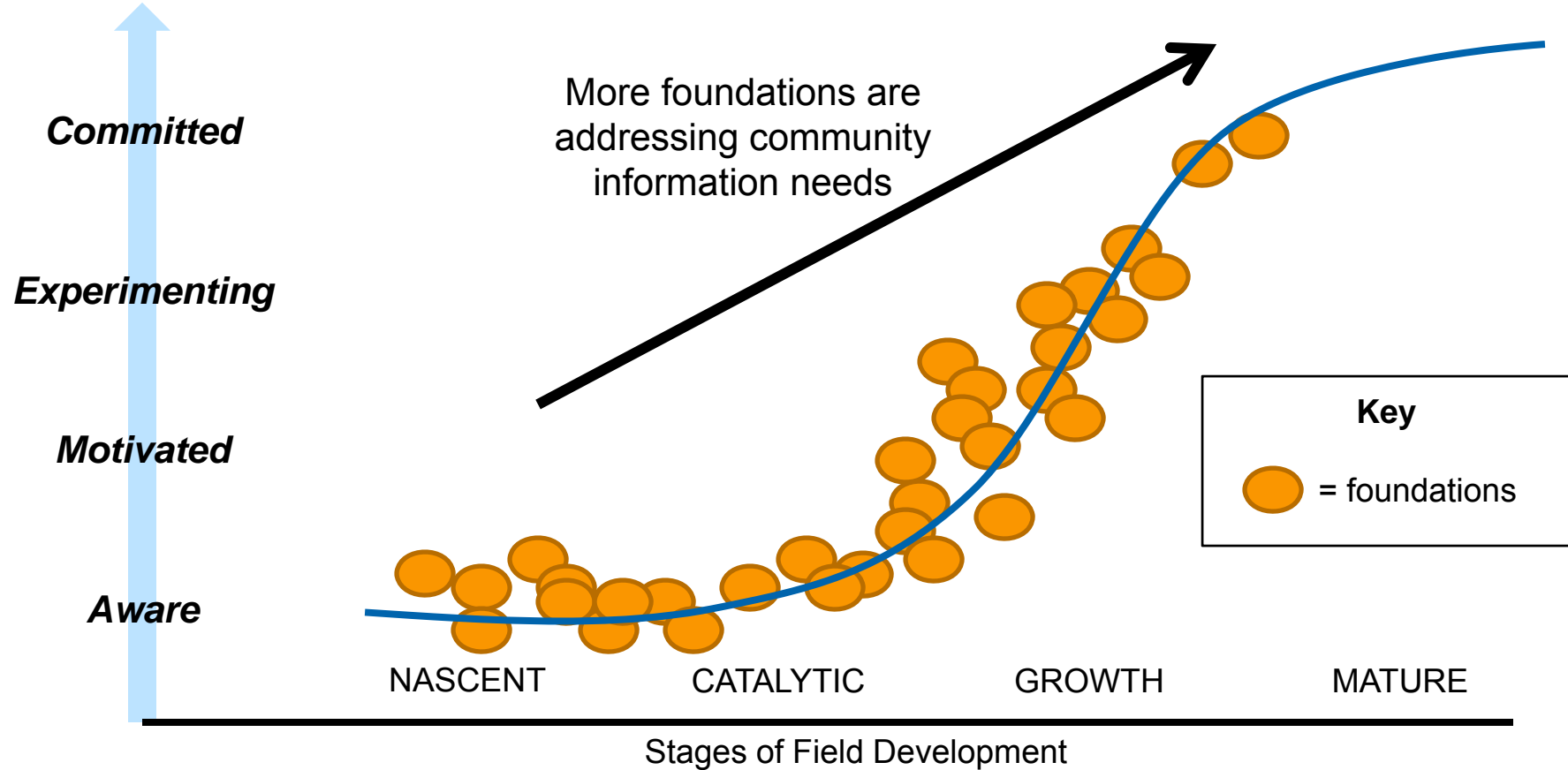
Key Findings From the 2011 KCIC Evaluation

1. Community and placed-based foundations are increasingly engaged in addressing community information needs

2. Foundations committed to addressing community information needs exhibit four key characteristics

3. Grantees have been successful in raising additional resources to support their KCIC projects

4. Grantees have contributed to other community information projects beyond their KCIC project

5. Foundations are utilizing a variety of partnership models to address community information needs

6. KCIC projects have generally aimed to address four elements of an information-healthy community: quality journalism, ready access to credible information, citizen voice, and public libraries or other centers for information

7. Information projects are achieving a wide range of outcomes that strengthen their community

8. Several foundation and project-level factors influence the likely success of community information projects

Findings detailed on the following slides

Key Finding #1: Community and Placed-Based Foundations Are Increasingly Engaged in Addressing Community Information Needs

Increased Foundation Engagement on Information Needs

Committed

Experimenting

Motivated

Aware

More foundations are addressing community information needs

Key

⬤ = foundations

NASCENT   CATALYTIC   GROWTH   MATURE

Stages of Field Development

Foundations' engagement in information and media varies from awareness to a more sustained commitment to information

Foundations Progress Along a Path of Engagement with Information and Media

Stages of Engagement

How Foundations Progress along the Engagement Path

Committed

How can I embed information and media into the core work of our foundation?
- Committed foundations see information and media as **aligned with their foundation's strategies** to address many community issues
- Foundations support community information needs beyond their KCIC projects

Experimenting

How can I address my community's information needs?
- **Peer support and an infusion of cash** has led to experimentation and an opportunity to learn

Motivated

Why should my foundation care?
- **Visible decline** in local news and reporting has motivated many foundations to support information and media projects in their communities
- Supporting information and media represents an opportunity to **strengthen foundation leadership**
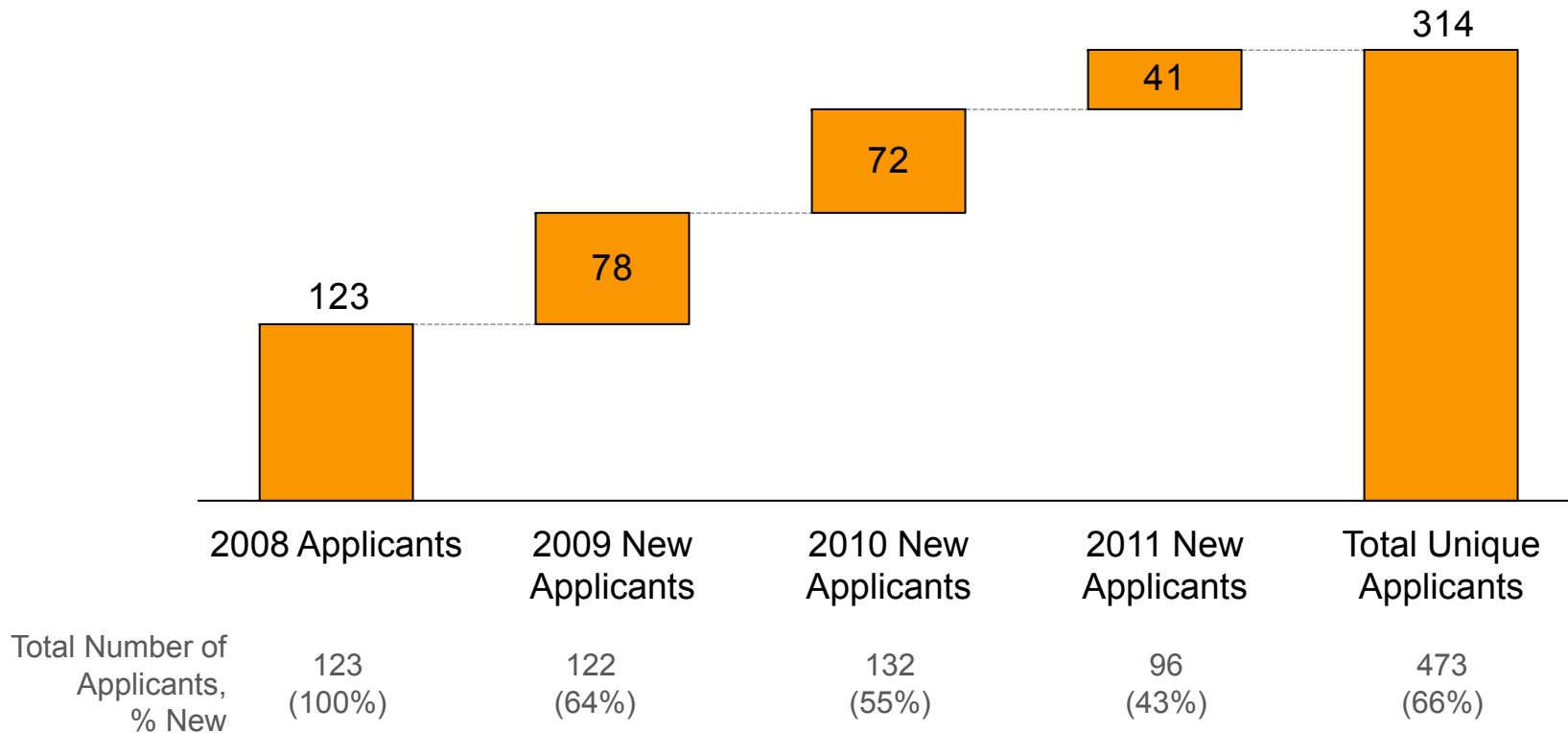
Aware

What are information needs? Is this a problem in my community?
- **Convenings and field-building reports** contribute to greater awareness about information needs

Knight has helped catalyze many community and place-based foundations at the earlier stages of this progression

More than 300 Community and Place-based Foundations Have Applied to Participate in the Community Information Challenge

Applicants to the KCIC, 2008-2011

	2008 Applicants	2009 New Applicants	2010 New Applicants	2011 New Applicants	Total Unique Applicants
Total Number of Applicants, % New	123 (100%)	122 (64%)	132 (55%)	96 (43%)	473 (66%)

There have been fewer new community and place-based foundation applicants to the KCIC over time, suggesting field-wide penetration

Key Finding #2: Foundations That Are Committed to Addressing Community Information Needs Exhibit Four Key Characteristics

Characteristics of Engagement among the "Committed"

Local Knowledge:

- Understanding among foundation leadership and board members of the community's information needs

Investment:

- Multi-year commitment to information and media across multiple projects
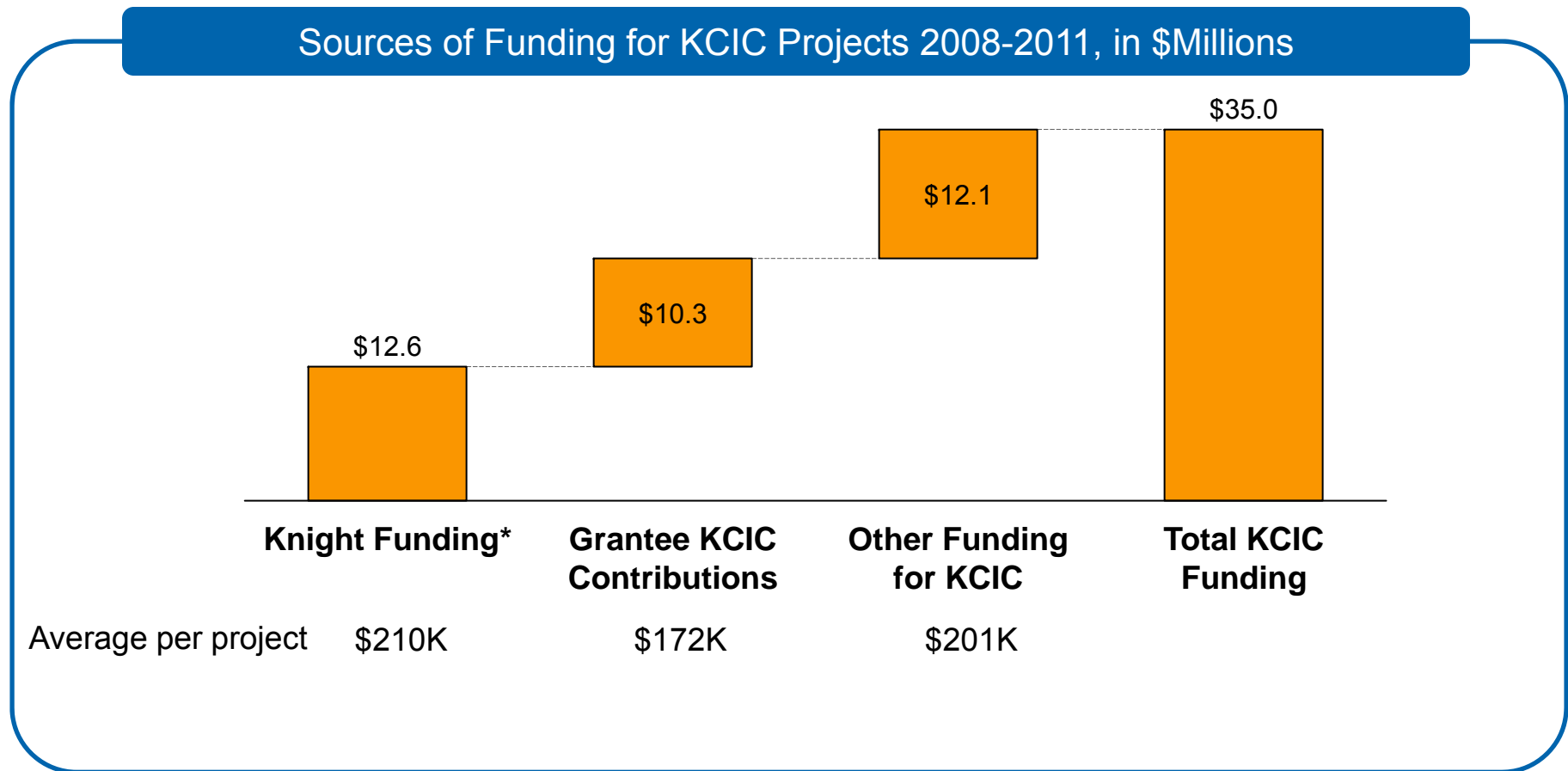
Sustained Commitment:

- Information is integrated into the way the foundation "does business" (e.g., aligned with the foundation's strategy and operations)

Leadership:

- Foundation is using information and media to be a community leader and is perceived as being an information leader

As foundations become highly engaged in information and media, they are more likely to display local knowledge, continued investment, sustained commitment, and information leadership

## Key Finding #3: Grantees Have Been Successful in Raising Additional Resources to Support Their KCIC Projects

Sources of Funding for KCIC Projects 2008-2011, in $Millions

$35.0

$12.1

$10.3

$12.6

	Knight Funding*	Grantee KCIC Contributions	Other Funding for KCIC	Total KCIC Funding
Average per project	$210K	$172K	$201K	

Knight Foundation has leveraged a combined $22.4M to date for Knight Community Information Challenge projects

Note: Funding analyzed for KCIC projects from Rounds 1-3. Knight Foundation funded 19 projects with an additional $1.7M in 2011 (Round 4), not included in the figure above.
Source: KCIC Grantee Survey 2009, 2010, 2011 (n=60, excluding Palm Beach CF and 2011 data from two KCIC grantees)
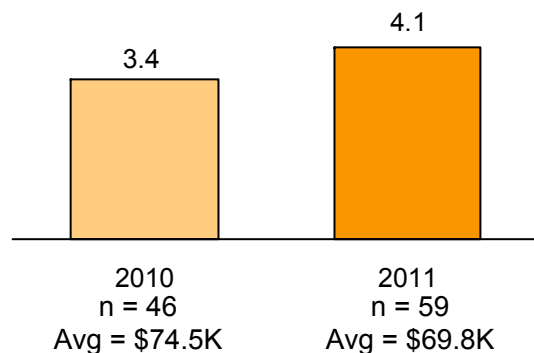
KCIC Grantees Receive Support from Many Other Funders to support their KCIC Projects, Including National Foundations

All Grantees (Rounds 1-3)

Number of Grantees Receiving Funding
from Private Foundations (Rounds 1-3)

24
(59%)
2010

28
(65%)
2011
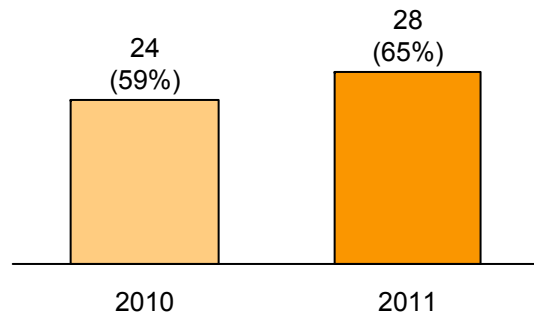
Contributions of Private Foundations to
KCIC Projects, in $Millions (Rounds 1-3)

3.4
2010
n = 46
Avg = $74.5K

4.1
2011
n = 59
Avg = $69.8K

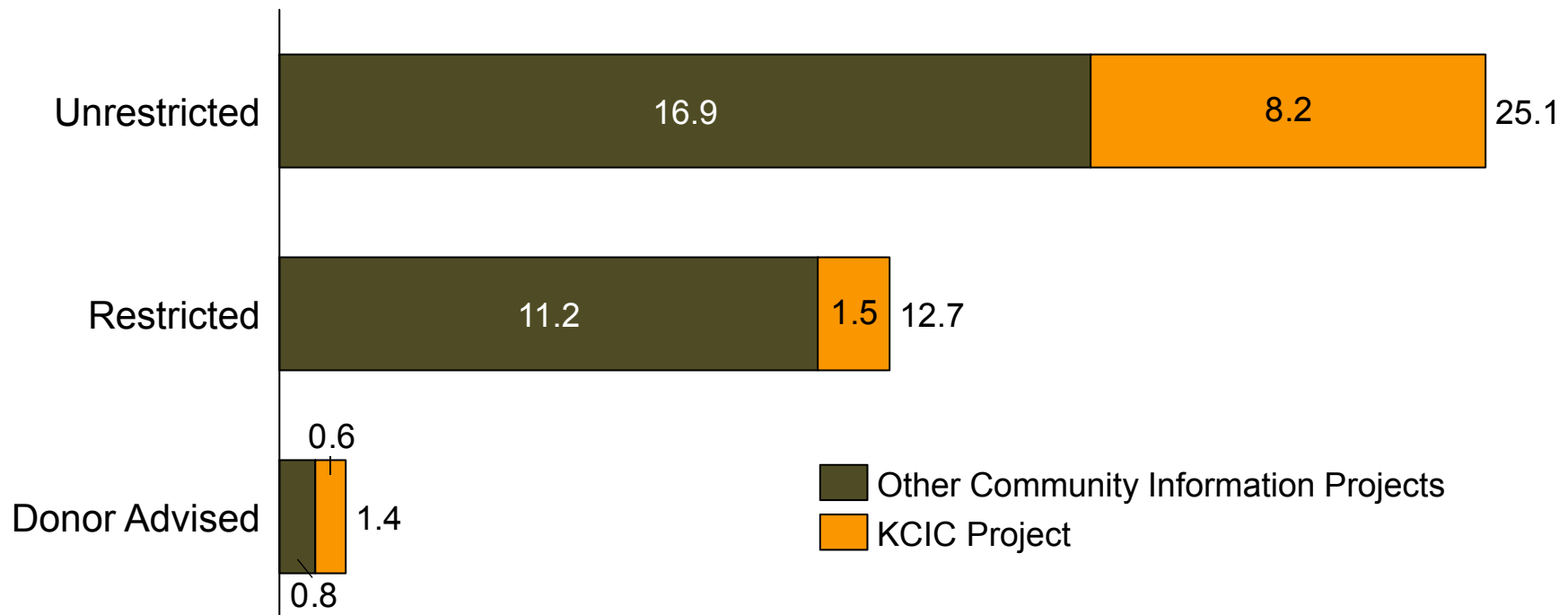| National Foundations	KCIC Grantee (grant award)
W.K. Kellogg Foundation	Hawaii CF
McCormick Foundation	Chicago CT
MacArthur Foundation	Chicago CT
Surdna Foundation	Greater New Orleans Foundation
Open Society Foundations	Greater New Orleans Foundation
William and Flora Hewlett Foundation	Silicon Valley CF
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation	South Alabama CF
Bush Foundation	Minnesota CF
PBS Foundation	The Cleveland Foundation
Adobe Foundation	The Cleveland Foundation
Greater Educational Foundation of America	Gulf Coast CF
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation	The Seattle Foundation

Funding from these foundations was reported in both the 2010 and 2011 surveys

These overlaps may represent opportunities for greater collaboration

Key Finding #4: Grantees Report Contributing to other Community Information Projects Beyond their KCIC Project

All Grantees (Rounds 1-3)

Cumulative Grantee Funding for Community Information Projects by Source, in $Millions

Unrestricted: 16.9 | 8.2 → 25.1
Restricted: 11.2 | 1.5 → 12.7
Donor Advised: 0.6, 1.4, 0.8

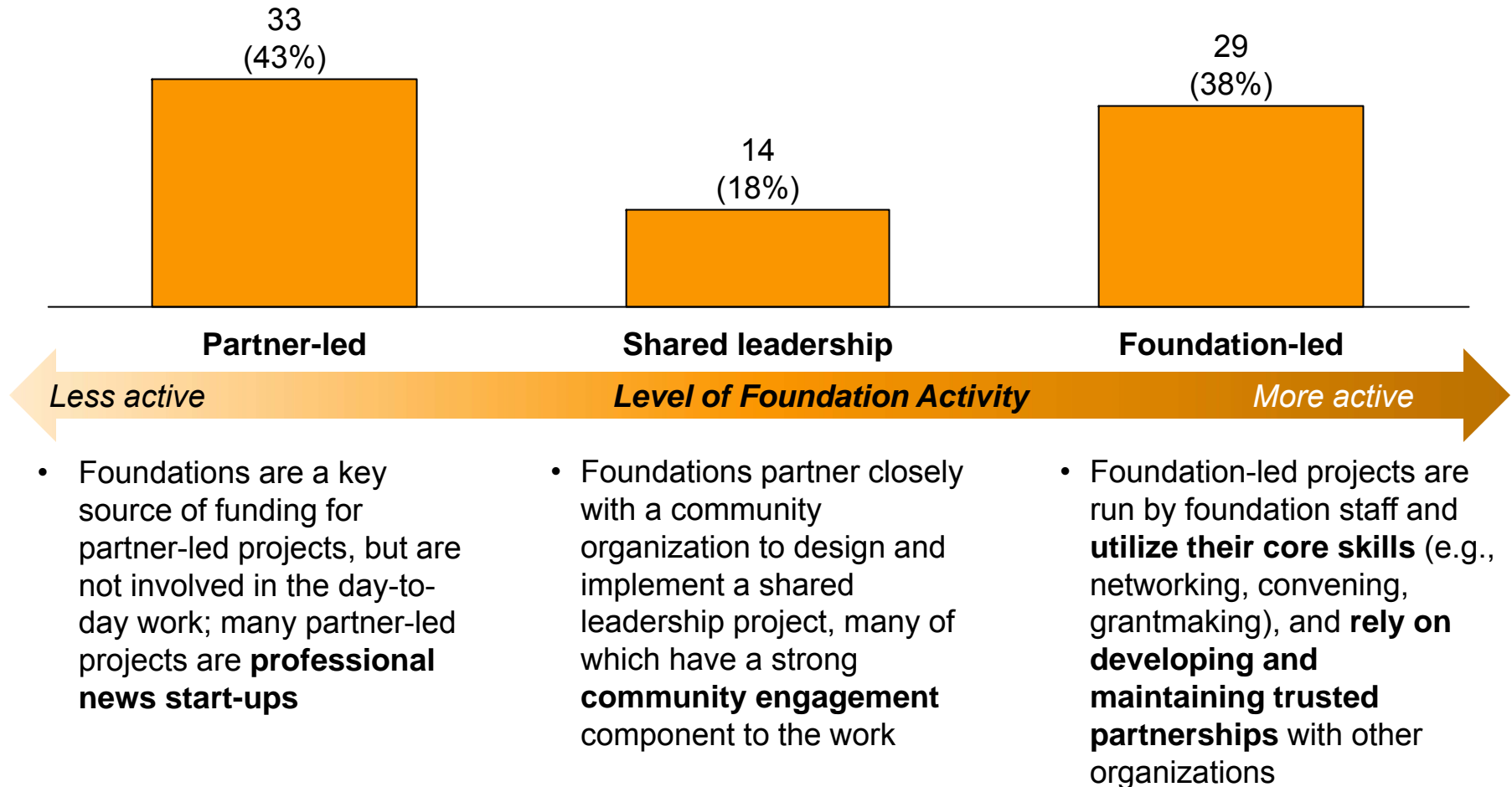Legend:
- Other Community Information Projects
- KCIC Project

Grantees funded in Rounds 1-3 have contributed a total of $28.9M to other information projects in their community

Note: Funding reflects both contributions to the KCIC and to other community information projects among Rounds 1-3 since 2009

Key Finding #5: Foundations Are Utilizing a Variety of Partnership Models to Address Community Information Needs

Foundation Role in KCIC Projects

33 (43%)	**14 (18%)**	**29 (38%)**
Partner-led	**Shared leadership**	**Foundation-led**

Less active — *Level of Foundation Activity* — *More active*

- Foundations are a key source of funding for partner-led projects, but are not involved in the day-to-day work; many partner-led projects are **professional news start-ups**

- Foundations partner closely with a community organization to design and implement a shared leadership project, many of which have a strong **community engagement** component to the work

- Foundation-led projects are run by foundation staff and **utilize their core skills** (e.g., networking, convening, grantmaking), and **rely on developing and maintaining trusted partnerships** with other organizations

Foundations' involvement in community information projects varies

KCIC Projects Illustrate that Communities Need Access to Information and the Capacity to Use It in Order to Engage

Maximizing Access to Credible Information*

- The **West Anniston Foundation** has created new local radio programming, *West Anniston Today*, to ensure community members have access to highly relevant, credible information about local health and environmental issues, e.g., toxic waste clean-up efforts

Strengthening Capacity to Engage with Information*

- The **Hawaii Community Foundation** supports the work of PBS, which has trained more than 450 students in 54 schools across the state to write and produce documentary videos about their communities, while in the process, building their skills as producers and literacy as consumers of digital media

Promoting Engagement in Public Life*

- The **Central Carolina Community Foundation** has trained seniors in the community to build their digital literacy skills and has created new venues for them to participate in local town hall meetings and other public forums

* The Knight Commission articulated the fulfillment of these three objectives as fundamental to achieving informed communities

Source: Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy, May 2009; FSG Analysis

Key Finding #6: KCIC Projects Primarily Aim to Address Four Elements of an Information-Healthy Community

Quality Journalism

KCIC projects to date: 26
Example: The Community Foundation Serving Boulder − *I-News*
I-News helps major state media organizations generate important content, leading to a more informed population. In addition, the project has educated reporters to help them master journalistic and technical skills with the goal of improving the quality of reporting emerging from existing newsrooms.

Ready Access to Information that Enhances Quality of Life

KCIC projects to date: 21
Example: Incourage Community Foundation − *Community Information 2.0*
Among several information projects, *Community Information 2.0* launched a digital signage network to communicate free and low-cost services to low-income residents in rural Wisconsin. These signs are addressing local information silos and helping residents become more informed of key services.

Citizens with Opportunities to Have their Voices Heard

KCIC projects to date: 19
Example: Minnesota Community Foundation − *MN Idea Open*
MN idea Open was founded on the idea that many citizens have good ideas in solving local issues, but they often do not have the mechanism to elevate innovate solutions. The Minnesota CF partnered with Ashoka's Changemakers to facilitate statewide challenges that enable users to enter ideas, comment on them, and vote. Minnesotans across the state have been able to engage and provide meaningful input on pressing social issues.

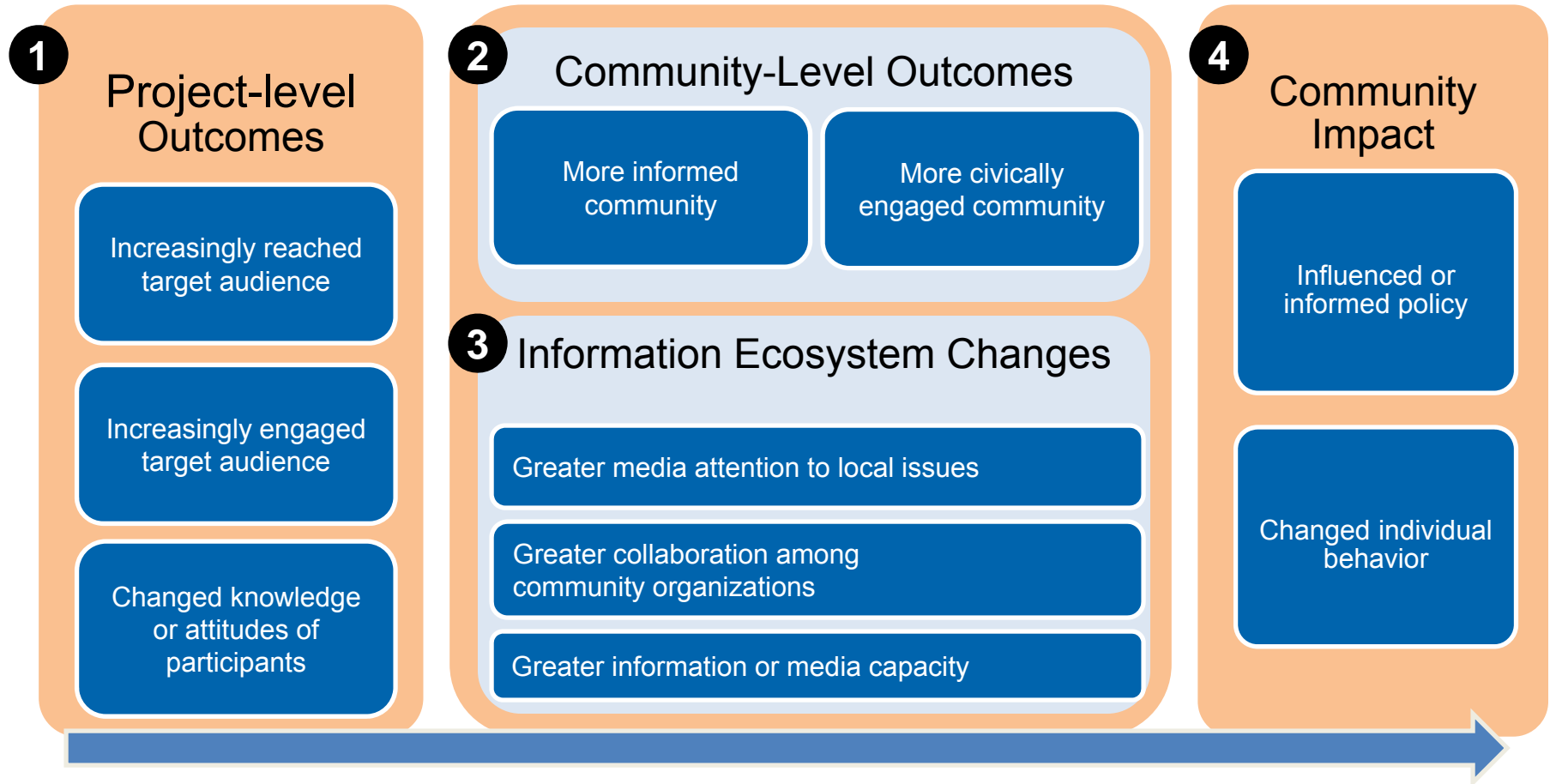**Vibrant Public Libraries and/or Centers for Information**

KCIC projects to date: 9
Example: Akron Community Foundation – *The Akronist*
The Akronist publishes local media and content not found in mainstream media for Akron's residents. Over 360 residents have been trained to generate high quality local content. The program's media training center has conducted outreach to young children, college students, the unemployed, and older residents resulting in greater media literacy across a spectrum of target populations.

Note: One KCIC grantee was not included above because their KCIC funding is being used to fund a variety of different community information projects
Source: Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy, May 2009; FSG Synthesis (KCIC Grantees Rounds 1-4)

Key Finding #7: Information Projects Are Achieving a Wide Range of Outcomes that Strengthen the Information Ecosystem

1 Project-level Outcomes

- Increasingly reached target audience
- Increasingly engaged target audience
- Changed knowledge or attitudes of participants

2 Community-Level Outcomes

- More informed community
- More civically engaged community

3 Information Ecosystem Changes

- Greater media attention to local issues
- Greater collaboration among community organizations
- Greater information or media capacity

4 Community Impact

- Influenced or informed policy
- Changed individual behavior

Outcomes may differ depending on whether a project is focused on "informing" or "engaging" communities or changing the ecosystem

EXAMPLE: Information Projects Have Informed and Influenced Policy Decisions and Changed Individuals' Behavior

Area of Impact

Representative Examples

Influenced or Informed Policy

- Greater New Orleans Foundation: *The Lens'* coverage of a little-known public-budgeting law has caused two judges, the district attorney, and the coroner to publicly say they will **make their budgets more accessible to the community** and, for the first time, **hold open budget hearings**

- Tulsa Community Foundation: Due in part to *Oklahoma Watch's* extensive coverage, the **Oklahoma Legislature passed House Bill 2131**, an important first step in addressing some of the chronic problems with the overall prison system

Changed Individual Behavior

- The Raymond Wean Foundation: *News Outlet* stories have **triggered action by local residents**. For example, *News Outlet* reported that a local facility was unable to adequately care for its mentally ill residents. As city officials considered closing the facility, a group stepped forward to help **improve the conditions in the struggling facility** so that it could adequately house and care for its clients

- Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque: Saw increased voluntary participation in efforts to sustain local resources (e.g., a 6.6% **reduction in water use from those they engaged**, and increased interest in participating in other Smarter City Initiatives). The Smarter Water initiative has expanded to 4000 households (all on a voluntary basis)

Note: Data is all self-reported by grantees and their partners.

EXAMPLE: Changes at the Information Ecosystem Level Are Reported by Several KCIC Grantees

Area of Impact

Representative Examples

Greater Media Attention to Local Issues

- Community Foundation of New Jersey: *NJ Spotlight's* major media partners are **reporting more on state government issues covered by *NJ Spotlight*** staff. Patch.com picked up *NJ Spotlight* stories nearly 360 times from March to September

- The New York Community Trust: As a result of the issues related to immigration that *Feet in 2 Worlds'* journalists have investigated and pursued, **dozens of stories have been picked up online, on air, and in the print media**

Greater Collaboration among Organizations

- Silicon Valley Community Foundation: Through education and better communication facilitated by the *YouChoose Bay Area Initiative*, **advocacy organizations have improved their working relationship** with governmental regional planning organizations, resulting in more ambitious emission-reduction targets for the Bay Area

Greater Information or Media Capacity

- The California Endowment: New America Media has provided media production equipment to partner organizations, like the YMCA, which provides ongoing access to tools for creating multimedia projects

- ACT for Alexandria: *ACTion Alexandria's* social media training for community nonprofits has helped build the capacity of nonprofits to **develop the internal tools and skills to successfully run online fundraising campaigns**

Note: Data is all self-reported by grantees and their partners.

EXAMPLE: Community Information Projects Are Contributing to More Informed and Civically Engaged Communities

Area of Impact   *Representative Examples*

More Informed Community

- Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo: Educational articles regarding environmental issues in and around Buffalo are published on the *GrowWNY* website and are often picked up by other larger media outlets, which **provide a medium for many residents to learn and dialogue about environmental issues**

- Community Foundation of North Florida: *The Village Square* has hosted a number of well-attended informational community forums on local political issues, such as human rights and Florida's fiscal crisis. **Residents had the opportunity to learn about the issues and voice their thoughts**

More Civically Engaged Community

- Hawaii Community Foundation: 77% of students participating in *HIKI NO,* a statewide student news network, felt that their **participation gave them a chance to raise their voice about an issue or issues they care about**

- Incourage Community Foundation: Community focus groups have actively engaged more than 800 residents in **developing solutions to address digital divide issues** in rural Wisconsin. Three task force groups, with representatives from of 13 organizations, are implementing these solutions

Note: Data is self-reported by grantees and their partners.

Key Finding #8: Several Foundation and Project-Level Factors Can Influence the Success of Community Information Projects

Factors for Project Success

- ❑ **A knowledgeable champion** who is committed to the project

- ❑ **Effective leadership** and **management** of the process

- ❑ **The right partnerships** to provide needed resources, perspectives and expertise

- ❑ Grounding in an understood **community need** for a specific **target audience**

- ❑ **Dedicated capacity** that can manage growth, *particularly in the start-up phase*

- ❑ Early planning to support long-term **sustainability** of the project

- ❑ **Strong communications**, **outreach** and **awareness building** strategies that are tailored for online and offline audiences

- ❑ **Attention to quality content** and information that is relevant to the community

- ❑ **Integration of information and media into the foundation's work** beyond the project

- ❑ **Commitment** and **"mind share"** of foundation leadership

- ❑ **Alignment** with the foundation's **strategic priorities**

Knight Foundation Has Made Significant Progress Against Both of Its Key Goals

Goal 1: Increase the **engagement of community and place-based foundations** in helping meet communities' information needs

- Foundations are more **aware** of and **motivated** to **experiment** with addressing community information needs

- Community and placed-based foundations are **increasingly engaged** in addressing community information needs, but **level of engagement varies**

- Foundations are utilizing a **variety of partnership models** to address community information needs

Goal 2: Create more **informed and engaged communities** through projects that address community information needs

- KCIC projects primarily aim to **enhance quality journalism**, ready **access to information**, **citizen voice**, and public libraries or other **centers of information**

- **Partners play an important role** in funding and supporting community information projects

- Information projects are **achieving a wide range of outcomes** that strengthen their community information ecosystem

These evaluation findings will help Knight Foundation determine, in part, how to continue to support the development of information healthy communities