

Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues

Strategic Plan

2017-2022

MISSION

The Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues (IRJCI) strives to be the primary source of help and inspiration for rural journalists who want to learn about issues that affect their communities, how to cover them, and how to help define the public agenda in their community through strong reporting and commentary – especially on broad regional, state or national issues that have local impact but few reliable, local sources.

STRATEGIC VISION

From its unique niche in American journalism and academia, the Institute upholds the standards of journalism that serve democracy and community; helps show Americans how journalism can best render those services effectively at a time of creative destruction in the news business and of change in rural America; and finds partners to support those causes and its mission.

STRATEGIC PLAN

Goals, Objectives and Strategies

Goal 1: **Help rural journalists help their communities**

Objective 1.1 **Provide the information and inspiration needed to effectively shape public agendas.**

Strategy 1.1.1: **The Institute website and social-media platforms will be better maintained** and used to promote The Rural Blog and other programs of the Institute.

Strategy 1.1.2 **The monthly Into the Issues column** will be offered to state newspaper and broadcast associations. (already done)

Objective 1.2 **Build a true national community of rural journalists who can help each other.**

Strategy 1.2.1 Rural America has thousands of excellent journalists, but all too often they are the only person in their newsroom who fits that description. The Institute will build the community through increased outreach efforts through journalism organizations, state newspaper associations and broadcast groups.

Objective 1.3 **Continue focus on four major issue areas: education, environment and energy, economic development, and health care.**

Strategy 1.3.1 **The Institute will fulfill its Extension role** of conveying the latest knowledge and best practices in these issue areas to rural journalists for the benefit of their communities.

Strategy 1.3.2 **The Institute will convene public meetings to discuss issues affecting rural America, beginning in Central Appalachia.**

Goal 2: **Develop the human and economic resources of the Institute in order to achieve a clear and stable place and funding in the School, the College, and the University**

Objective 2.1 **Make the National Advisory Board more significant and functional by 1) systematizing fund raising efforts that will stabilize and secure the Institute, and 2) providing programming to meet the clientele needs**

Strategy 2.1.1 **Each member will participate** in philanthropic or program activities, or both.

Tactic 2.1.1.1 **Revise and properly size** the structure of the Advisory Board

Tactic 2.1.1.2 **Appoint each member** to either the Programming or Philanthropy committee

Tactic 2.1.1.3 **Develop bylaws** based on College National Advisory Board; set meeting schedule that doesn't conflict w/NAB

Objective 2.2 **Seek enhanced funding or other support through 2018, placing emphasis on our historical areas of interest: healthcare, economic development, education and the environment**

Strategy 2.2.1 **Develop marketing plan** to increase the profile and visibility of the Institute (see Strategy 1.3.2).

Strategy 2.2.2 Make full use of available student and professional assistance

Tactic 2.2.2.1 Utilize graduate assistants and interns from within the College and from other colleges

Tactic 2.2.2.2 Identify and utilize retired or moonlighting professionals to perform various tasks

Strategy 2.2.3 Seek targeted grants and contracts

Tactic 2.2.3.1 Approach Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky for increased funding to enhance *Kentucky Health News* and research efforts, and explore possible commercialization

Tactic 2.2.3.2 Identify other funding sources (e.g., Hearst Foundation, Brown-Forman, SOAR) for targeted projects

Tactic 2.2.3.3 Explore opportunities for joint ventures in which the Institute will be a co-sponsor (e.g., UK Health Literacy Conference)

Strategy 2.2.4 Explore use of *Kentucky Health News* as a model for funded work in other issue areas (i.e., fund a research assistant for a program on environmental issues).

Strategy 2.2.5 Explore possibilities of offering memberships in the Institute to build support and partnerships

Objective 2.3 Offer increasingly valuable services to our clientele and partners, some of which would involve payment of fees

Strategy 2.3.1 Obtain funding and personnel to employ a Journalist In Residence at the earliest possible date

Strategy 2.3.2 Develop a schedule of webinars on a wide range of topics

Objective 2.4 Develop, implement and manage a 5-year fundraising campaign to raise \$5 million for the Institute endowment to name the Institute for founder Al Smith and/or other journalist(s) with significant name recognition, resources and/or contacts to enlarge the staff to a level adequate for the Institute to fulfill its mission and strategic vision.

Strategy 2.4.1 Include campaign in college-level funding priorities

- Tactic 2.4.1.1** **Draft a plan** in coordination with the College and University's philanthropy offices
- Tactic 2.4.1.2** **Select champion(s)** to lead the five-year campaign
- Tactic 2.4.1.3** **Appoint a small work group** to initiate and oversee the five-year effort

Strategy 2.4.2 **Allocate endowment resources** to support salaries, travel, graduate assistants, and fellowships.

Objective 2.5 **Work with internal University partners to enhance the Institute's role in teaching, research and service.**

Strategy 2.5.1 **As a high-profile entity interested in a wide range of issues, the Institute will look for opportunities** to work with a wide range of University partners on issues such as health, education, economic development, and environment and energy.

Objective 2.6 **Work with external academic partners outside the University to advance the Institute's mission and vision.**

Strategy 2.6.1 **Collaborate with the Institute's 28 academic partners** at universities in 18 states to advance our shared interests in advancing journalism education, research and public service.

Objective 2.7 **Continue research into rural and community newspaper editorial policies and practices, circulation patterns and other topics.**

Strategy 2.7.1 **Collaborate** with the Institute's academic partners on research.

Strategy 2.7.2 **Seek funding of a .25 FTE research assistant** to lend continuity to research and attract research grants.

Objective 2.8 Create national community of rural journalists

Strategy 2.8.1 Increase regular communication with clientele via Mailchimp, Institute listserv, SPJ Community Journalism Community, state press publications, and national media publications.

Tactic 2.8.1.1 Schedule periodic communication with each list, using graduate assistants or interns.

Objective 2.9 Develop metrics and analytics to measure outcomes and use of resources (e.g., effect of blog items, Into to the Issues columns, other publications)

Goal 3: Stand tall for the service of journalism to democracy

Objective 3.1 Recognize and promote the work of rural journalists who excel in community service.

Strategy 3.1.1 The Institute presents the Tom and Pat Gish Award for courage, integrity and tenacity in rural journalism, and in conjunction with the Society of Professional Journalists Bluegrass Chapter presents the Al Smith Award for public service through journalism by a Kentuckian.

Strategy 3.1.2 The Al Smith Awards Dinner will become a signature event.

Tactic 3.1.2.1 Present other awards to Kentucky journalists in recognition of good work

Objective 3.2 Promote watchdog journalism and open government.

Strategy 3.2.1 At a time when news organizations are less able or willing to conduct investigative reporting and mount legal challenges to government secrecy, the Institute will remind rural journalists and their employers of their First Amendment responsibilities.

Strategy 3.2.2 In Kentucky it will work with the Scripps Howard First Amendment Center in the School of Journalism and Media.

Objective 3.3 **Promote the mission of community service to those in the news business.**

Strategy 3.3.1 At a time when news organizations often sacrifice quality in their hunger for audience, the Institute will **remind them of their obligation to serve community and democracy** by providing the news and information their audiences need, not just what their readers, viewers and listeners may want.