



PARTNER, PHILANTHROPY  
(CHIEF PHILANTHROPY OFFICER)

AMERICAN JOURNALISM PROJECT

Location – Remote

[American Journalism Project](#)



The Aspen Leadership Group is proud to partner with the American Journalism Project in the search for a Partner, Philanthropy (Chief Philanthropy Officer).

The Partner, Philanthropy is a key role at the highest level in a new enterprise that is fast-moving and fluid. With oversight and guidance from and in collaboration with the Board of Directors and other staff, the Partner, Philanthropy will serve as a pivotal early leadership team member and an active participant in making strategic decisions affecting the American Journalism Project (AJP). In partnership with the Managing Director, the Partner, Philanthropy will be responsible for all fundraising and development activities, and will help forge new relationships to build AJP's visibility, impact, and financial resources.

The Partner, Philanthropy will have primary responsibility for implementing the infrastructure needed to secure a \$50 million venture philanthropy fund to accelerate the growth of the first portfolio of 25-35 promising civic news organizations (CNOs) in cities and states across the country and to establish a second fund beginning in 2020-21. In collaboration with the Managing Director and Board, the Partner, Philanthropy will establish and oversee all methods of raising funds to include the solicitation of major gifts, as well as corporate and foundation grants. The Partner, Philanthropy will expand and diversify AJP's donor base and pipeline and work closely with other team members to secure funding for AJP's first and follow on funds. In addition, the Partner, Philanthropy will work closely with the Board of Directors and support board members as they take on a more active fundraising role. The Partner, Philanthropy will serve as a primary resource to civic news organizations in AJP's portfolio as they develop their own sources of local support. As such, the Partner, Philanthropy will provide regular input to the team on the portfolio's fundraising and revenue generation strategies and execution and suggest specific supports needed to improve.

The American Journalism Project is a first-of-its-kind initiative to sustain and grow the independent local press essential to our democracy. Its aim is to counter the current, stunning, and growing market failure in local news by catalyzing \$1 billion annually for local news. AJP launched in February with \$42 million in lead support from major national funders including the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, Arnold Ventures, Emerson Collective, Craig Newmark Philanthropies, Christopher Buck, and the Facebook Journalism Project. AJP was co-founded by two of the most successful visionaries and accomplished leaders in local news over the last decade: Elizabeth Green, who co-founded and runs the national education news organization Chalkbeat, and John Thornton, who founded the pioneering Texas Tribune.

In other social sectors, venture philanthropy has rapidly scaled new ecosystems of strong, sustainable organizations that fill gaps left by the market. AJP is the first venture philanthropy firm to focus on local news as a social enterprise and public good.

The American Journalism Project is urgently needed because market forces have failed local news, and American democracy has been put at risk. The mission of AJP is grounded in its understanding of the severity, urgency, and scope of the crisis at hand. At the center of this crisis, newspapers have lost roughly half their revenue since the Great Recession with a commensurate collapse in fact-based reporting and newsgathering. No American industry of such combined size and civic importance has endured such an economically devastating decade.

AJP seeks to catalyze the growth of civic news organizations in communities and cities across the nation. These news organizations, primarily nonprofit, are distinguished by their public service mission and commitment to meeting the critical information needs of communities in areas such as government and elections, education, and public health and infrastructure. Like the nonprofit organizations started by AJP's co-founders, they are sustained by a mix of sophisticated commercial revenue and charitable fundraising. AJP will provide transformative grants and work arm-in-arm with grantees to ensure their future sustainability.

Furthermore, AJP believes it is essential that the next generation of civic news organizations be led by, supported by, and look like the public they serve. AJP is committed to empowering all voices and perspectives – to lift up leaders and communities of color, and others previously underrepresented. AJP is raising and will invest the dollars required to build diverse teams of journalists, staff, and volunteers to serve diverse communities of readers. The civic news ecosystem is beginning anew and has an opportunity to authentically build more equitable organizations and leadership structures than those previously constructed in communities across the U.S.

## **REPORTING RELATIONSHIPS**

The Partner, Philanthropy will report to the Co-founder and Managing Director, John Thornton.

## **PRINCIPAL OPPORTUNITIES**

A preponderance of data makes the case for the urgency of the American Journalism Project. Without intervention, the number of reporting jobs in local newsrooms will have decreased nearly two-thirds since the beginning of the Great Recession in 2008. The resulting decline in news coverage of state and local government and key issues like education and affordable housing have led to less informed voting, declining political participation, and more fertile territory for public corruption. By joining AJP, the Partner, Philanthropy will help to mobilize a movement to sustain and grow the independent local press that is essential to our democracy.

While the need is great, AJP has already proven itself up to the task. The introduction of this new position comes at a time when the AJP is gaining momentum, having launched in February with \$42 million in lead funding commitments, a nationally recognized Board of Directors, and its three exceptional first hires. AJP has already earned the support of visionary philanthropists through its networked approach to fundraising and field-building and the reputation of its founding team. Our supportive ecosystem brings together national, regional, and local philanthropy with thought leaders and civic news organizations, creating important learning opportunities and incentives not just for AJP, but for all investors and contributors. We are excited to find a passionate and experienced fundraiser and community builder to join our team and help us build a new media that is governed and sustained by the public it serves.

## PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

### **Fundraising and Development**

The Partner, Philanthropy will

- work independently to define fundraising goals, and provide the tools, support, and resources to meet them;
- develop and lead annual and fund-based fundraising plans for individual and institutional donors and prospects;
- oversee a strategic events program and ensure the success of key fundraising events; and
- lead and/or participate in major fundraising solicitations.

### **Stewardship**

The Partner, Philanthropy will

- establish and oversee systems for gift management, reporting, and stewardship;
- maintain a portfolio of major donors;
- prepare senior staff and board for fundraising, cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship; and
- assist with board development and management.

### **Portfolio Support**

The Partner, Philanthropy will

- coach and support senior staff at civic news organizations on strategic and tactical fundraising plans for individual and institutional donors; and
- participate in the search and hiring process for advancement staff at portfolio CNOs.

## KEY COLLEAGUES



**Elizabeth Green**

**Co-founder and Board Chair**

Elizabeth is Co-founder, CEO, and Editor-in-Chief of Chalkbeat, the nonprofit news organization dedicated to telling the story of education in America, one community at a time. Founded in 2014, Chalkbeat is now one of the nation's largest and fastest-growing nonprofit news organizations, with reporters in seven locations. Elizabeth is also the author of *Building a Better Teacher*, the *New York Times Book Review* notable book of 2014 and bestseller.



**John Thornton**

**Co-founder and Managing Director**

John has been a venture capitalist at Austin Ventures since 1990, where he has co-led the technology practice for more than two decades. He also co-founded venture capital firm Elsewhere Partners in 2017. In 2008, John founded the Texas Tribune, the only member-supported, digital-first, nonpartisan media organization that informs Texan – and engages with them – about public policy, politics, government, and statewide issues.



**Jason Alcorn**

**Vice President of Operations**

Jason joins AJP after two years as project director for NewsMatch, a national matching-gift campaign that in November and December 2018 raised \$7.6 million for nonprofit newsrooms through a national challenge match, wrap-around coaching and support, and a national campaign to promote giving to journalism among donors. He has worked as a consultant with Democracy Fund, the Institute for Nonprofit News, and local nonprofit newsrooms and served as

Associate Director of InvestigateWest, a nonprofit investigative news organization in Seattle. Jason is currently an advisor to the Listening Post Collective and Migratory Notes.



**Anna Nirmala**

**Director of Portfolio Development**

Anna joins American Journalism Project from Hearken, a groundbreaking woman-owned company that facilitated a unique public-powered model for journalism and has more than 100 newsroom partners around the world. As Director of Business Development, she was responsible for the company's revenue growth and enterprise client management. Anna was previously a management consultant at PricewaterhouseCoopers, focusing on Strategy & Operations for Fortune 500 companies, nonprofit organizations, and small

businesses.



**Gonzalo del Peon**

**Associate**

Gonzalo is a graduate of NYU's Studio 20 master's program on digital journalism and innovation, where he focused on mission and revenue alignment in news. Since 2017, he has been a researcher for the Membership Puzzle Project and was the American Press Institute's 2018 summer fellow, where he studied audience-focused revenue diversification and user research practices within news organizations. Gonzalo graduated from The New School with a BBA in Strategic

Design and Management and a minor in Journalism + Design.

## CANDIDATE QUALIFICATIONS AND QUALITIES

The American Journalism Project seeks a Partner, Philanthropy with

- superior communication skills, both written and oral, and the ability to influence and engage a highly sophisticated pool of donors;
- demonstrated experience in seeking and securing seven- to eight-figure gifts;
- tangible experience expanding and cultivating existing donor relationships over time;
- strong organizational skills with attention to detail;
- the ability to work both independently without close oversight, but also as a team player who will productively engage with others at varying levels of seniority within and outside AJP;
- a flexible and adaptable style – a leader who can positively impact both strategic and tactical fundraising initiatives;
- a high level of energy, a passion for AJP's mission, and a commitment to high quality local news for every community; and
- knowledge of and experience in the field of journalism (preferred).

A bachelor's degree is required for this position as is at least ten years of professional experience in nonprofit organizations with demonstrated success in a development function (managing and forging relationships with multiple donor sources), preferably on a national level. A master's degree is preferred.

### **DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION**

The American Journalism Project believes that every community deserves access to high quality local news.

It is committed to diversity and building an inclusive environment for people of all backgrounds and ages. It is taking steps to meet that commitment. AJP especially encourages members of traditionally underrepresented communities to apply, including women, people of color, LGBTQ people, and people that are differently abled. AJP knows there are great candidates who won't fit everything described above, or who have important skills that have not been considered. If that's you, please don't hesitate to apply and tell us about yourself.

### **SALARY & BENEFITS**

The American Journalism Project offers a competitive salary and comprehensive benefits.

### **LOCATION**

The Partner, Philanthropy may work remotely from any location in the United States. Staff members are currently located in Washington, D.C., New York City, and Austin, Texas. This position requires significant travel.

### **APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS**

All applications must be accompanied by a cover letter and résumé. Before submitting your materials, please review them for accuracy. Review of applications will begin immediately, and will continue until the successful candidate has been selected.

*To apply for this position, visit: <https://opportunities.aspenleadershipgroup.com/opportunities/516>.*

*To nominate a candidate, please contact Angelique Grant: [angelique@aspenleadershipgroup.com](mailto:angelique@aspenleadershipgroup.com).*

*All inquiries will be held in confidence.*