



Ocean
State
Media



PBS



2025

Impact Report

INFORMING.

REFLECTING.

CONNECTING.





**“It feels good to get
answers to questions
you want to know.”**

This could be a quote from any Ocean State Media journalist. But it came from Jaden Chichon, a fifth grader at Alfred Lima Elementary School in Providence.

Jaden is part of the Lima News Crew, a student-run newsroom where fifth graders report on issues shaping their school community and beyond. They interview classmates and teachers, as well as leaders from across the state, including the mayor and governor. They report in both English and Spanish and dig for answers to questions that matter to them and their families.

Our education team helped launch this special newsroom. What began as a deeply local story resonated far beyond Rhode Island — ultimately earning national recognition and airing on PBS NewsHour.

This is why Ocean State Media exists. Not just to deliver news, but to make sure every Rhode Islander — from fifth graders in Providence to fishermen in Galilee — can see themselves in the stories we tell and can trust us to tell them truthfully.

This is the power and promise of Ocean State Media.

Our Purpose

We are Ocean State Media. And We are Listening.

In a time of noise, we are choosing to listen. In an era of division, we are building connection. In a rapidly shifting media landscape, we are doubling down on place — on the people, stories, questions and cultures that define Rhode Island.

We are reimagining what public media can be — with, for and about

- **Deeply local:** Rooted in our neighborhoods and communities.
- **Widely available:** Wherever you are, we're there with you.
- **Relevant:** Keeping up with the times and meeting them with urgency.
- **Distinctive:** Content that feels like Rhode Island and couldn't come from anywhere else.
- **Community-centered:** Driven by listening, learning, and connection.

Ocean State Media isn't just a service — it's a relationship. And now more than ever, we are creating a local media experience that informs, connects and represents us all.



A Year of Transformation

This 2025 Impact Report marks the first chapter of Ocean State Media, formed through the 2024 merger of Rhode Island PBS and The Public's Radio. It shows what is possible when a local media outlet commits to listening to its audience and building community with them.

In 2025, we:

- **Moved our entire team under one roof for the first time**
- **Spent months listening to more than 1,000 Rhode Islanders about what public media should be and rebranded around what we heard**
- **Held nearly 80 live events across the region to hear directly from people about what matters most to them**
- **Started telling stories across multiple platforms to meet people where they are**



In August, when Congress eliminated federal funding for public media — resulting in a \$1.1 million annual loss for Ocean State Media — Rhode Islanders responded in an unprecedented way. They said this is ours, and we’re not letting it go.

By year’s end, individual giving had increased by more than half a million dollars — a powerful vote of confidence from our community. For that, we wholeheartedly say thank you.

But this report isn’t about funding, or even our journalism — important as both are. It’s about what happens when a community and its storytellers become partners. When journalism informs not just with facts, but with context that helps people understand. Informing, connecting, and reflecting Rhode Island. That’s been our promise since Day One of this new chapter for public media in our state. This report shows what happens when we work to deliver on that promise.



Informing

When it matters most

December 13, 2025.

It was a Saturday night on Brown University's campus. Students were studying and preparing for finals. Friends were meeting for dinner.

Then, gunfire.

Two students were killed. Nine others were injured. A gunman disappeared into the darkness. Shock and fear gripped the Brown campus and beyond — terrifying families, neighborhoods, and communities. For days our state held its breath.

Ocean State Media reporters responded immediately and remained on the scene around the clock in the days that followed.

Our journalists led NPR's national coverage for eight straight days. But more importantly, we were there for Rhode Islanders — for the parents and friends constantly refreshing our website to look for updates, for the students afraid to leave their dorms, for the residents wanting answers.

Our coverage reached over 300,000 people, reflecting how many people turned to us for accurate, trustworthy reporting during a moment of profound uncertainty. The responses to our reporting offered a powerful reminder of why this work matters.

In moments of crisis, journalism does more than inform. It steadies us. It cuts through fear with facts. It reminds us that we are not alone.

That week in December revealed what local journalism does at its best: it shows up in the hardest moments and refuses to look away.

“My daughter was on campus that night. Thank you for treating this with the seriousness it deserved while giving us the information we desperately needed.”



Informing

When accountability leads to action

In March, an investigation by our journalists revealed children as young as 14 were working overnight shifts in New Bedford fish plants — handling sharp knives and heavy machinery when they should have been asleep in their beds. Within days, a legislator proposed new protections. By summer, federal investigations had begun.

In the fall, we reported that the Rhode Island Police Officers Commission on Standards and Training was not providing legally required transparency. The day after our reporting, the agency began publishing abuse case details — something they had never done before.

When SNAP benefits were suspended during the October government shutdown, we talked to a single mother in Central Falls trying to feed her three children, an elderly couple visiting a food bank for the first time, and

multiple families forced to choose between groceries and rent. Thanks to widespread media attention, Rhode Islanders stepped up, generously donating food and funds.

This is what informing Rhode Island means: covering the issues that shape people's lives and drive meaningful action — while recognizing that behind every headline and statistic is a person with a story worth telling.



Connecting

Where community comes together

In September, we hosted “Be My Neighbor Day” at Meeting Street School in Providence, inspired by Mister Rogers and built around giving back. This was a completely new idea for us and we weren’t sure what to expect.

We hoped 75 people would attend. 250 showed up. Families drove from across the state to be there. Kids assembled birthday boxes for neighbors experiencing homelessness. Families visited 14 different activity stations run by community partners. They took photos with Daniel Tiger and Katerina Kitty Cat.

Families connected with other families.
Organizations found new volunteers.

**That’s what it means to build connection:
creating spaces where people can come
together — not as audiences, but as
neighbors.**

“Thank you for having Be My Neighbor Day. My kids loved it. Donating and giving back were big topics of conversation in our house afterward. That’s what we needed.”



Connecting

Listening first

In 2025, we held nearly 80 live events, reaching over 4,400 Rhode Islanders. A sold-out 900-person crowd joined us for an evening with Ken Burns in October to discuss his new documentary, *The American Revolution*, at Rhode Island College.

Fifty educators gathered the next day for a corresponding professional development workshop.

Throughout the year, we hosted film screenings in Newport, a brewery panel in Pawtucket, political roundtables in Providence, and community conversations across the state.

We showed up, first and foremost, to listen and learn.



Reflecting

Meeting people where they are

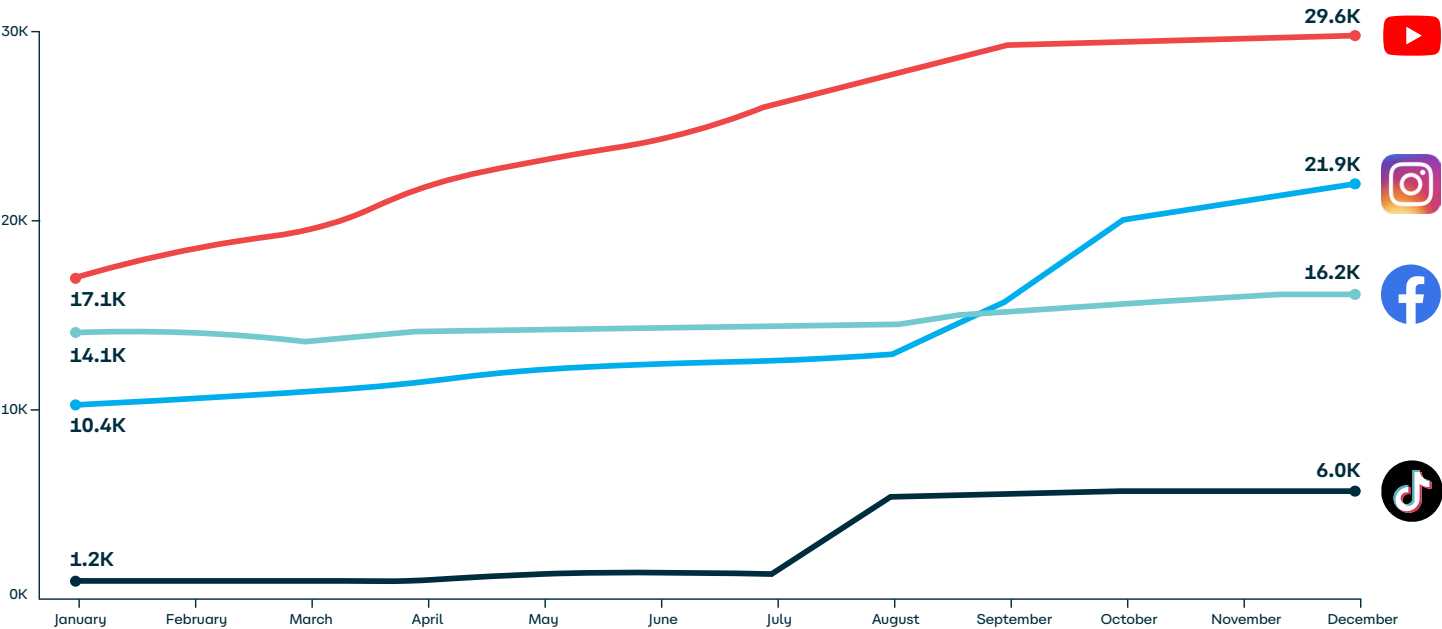
An essential lesson we learned this year: to truly reflect and engage Rhode Islanders, they need to be able to find us.

This year we intentionally began creating content for the places and platforms where people spend much of their time – on YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and Reddit, a new platform for OSM where we’ve already amassed **1.8 million views**.

We asked our journalists to be themselves – curious, funny, and creative. We created content that people would want to watch and share.

One Instagram reel explaining tiny ocean creatures called salps reached **3.3 million views**. A YouTube feature about the secret apartment hidden inside Providence Place Mall got **1.3 million views**. Our TikToks broke down complex policy issues in less than a minute. Our web traffic increased by **78 percent**.

Subscriber/Follower Growth



Overall, our digital reach grew 78% in 2025.

We are now reaching Rhode Islanders who never before listened to NPR or watched PBS. Younger people, more diverse communities, people who care deeply about local journalism but consume it differently.



Reflecting

Giving voice to local creators

In 2025, we partnered with seven new local documentary filmmakers for the first time — Rhode Islanders telling distinctly Rhode Island stories about our coastline, our economy, and our culture.

We also strengthened the pipeline of future local storytellers. Our PEG (public access) studios trained 190 new producers across the state and supported over 1,400 hours of original public access programming.

This is local media at its best: giving people the tools and opportunities they need to tell their own stories.

Award-Winning Journalism

In 2025, Ocean State Media won four regional Emmy Awards, two national Edward R. Murrow Awards, and accolades from the Investigative Reporters & Editors, the Public Media Journalists Association, and the National Headliner Awards.

Ocean State Media also contributed more stories to PBS NewsHour than any other PBS member station in the country, highlighting something fundamental about the brand and quality of our journalism: it is both hyperlocal and worthy of national attention.

Awards and recognition don't drive our work, but they do reflect the rigor, independence, and quality behind it.





What This Makes Possible

In 2025, we built a strong foundation. In 2026, we will go bigger, aim higher, and reach farther.

We are expanding our coverage, moving to one signal on the dial (103.7 FM), growing our donor base, deepening our partnerships, elevating distinctly local voices, and continuing to listen and learn from our neighbors.

Our Team

Executive Leadership

Pam Johnston

President and CEO

Mary-Catherine Armstrong

Chief Operating Officer

Paul Singer

Chief Strategy and Audience Officer

Colleen Kenyon

Chief Community and Education Officer

Raymond J. Dutelle, Jr.

Chief People (HR) Officer

Mike Steffon

Chief Revenue and Growth Officer

Ocean State Media Board of Directors

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Scot Jones

Rajani Mahadevan

Gina McDonald

Kendall Moore

Susan Rittscher

Pablo Rodriguez

Merrill Sherman

Carolyn Wiesenbahn

Thank You

To our team — your creativity, integrity, and relentless commitment to community-centered storytelling shapes everything we do. You made this year possible.

To our board members — thank you for your guidance, stewardship, and belief in our mission during a defining year of growth and change.

To our community partners — your collaboration and trust allow us to listen more deeply and serve more meaningfully. To the grandmother in Cranston who contributed \$25. To the couple in Barrington who gave \$5,000. To the URI student who set up a monthly gift. To the hundreds of Rhode Islanders who supported Ocean State Media for the first time this year — your generosity, engagement, and trust sustain this work in ways both visible and unseen.

You did more than support Ocean State Media in 2025. You affirmed something essential: when journalism serves community rather than profit, when media connects people rather than divides, and when storytelling reflects the full breadth and complexity of a place, people respond — with trust, with investment, and with partnership.

This is the work we will continue building together.

With gratitude,
Pam Johnston
President & CEO
Ocean State Media



www.oceanstatemedia.org



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