CALL FOR PROPOSALS

ISWNE/IRJCI: Strengthening Community News 2027

The International Society of Weekly Newspaper Editors (ISWNE) and the **Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues** (IRJCI) at the University of Kentucky are seeking proposals for papers that provide **insight** and **guidance** on general issues and/or everyday problems that confront community newspapers and their newsrooms, with particular reference to weekly general-interest publications with circulations under 10,000.

The competition's ultimate goal is to engage academicians and community newspaper journalists in productive "conversations about community journalism."

Proposals will first be peer-reviewed by faculty with expertise in community journalism. Final selection of the papers to be written will be made by a panel of working and retired community journalists who will evaluate the proposals on the basis of their **potential value to newsrooms.**

Completed papers will undergo a final academic peer review prior to publication in an issue of ISWNE's *Grassroots Editor*. The schedule has been set up to ensure publication of all accepted papers by December 2027 or sooner.

Proposals from graduate students are especially encouraged, as are proposals with an international focus, or reflecting an international perspective on community papers' newsrooms.

One paper will be selected by the community journalists panel for **presentation at the 2027 ISWNE conference** scheduled for July 21-25 in Indianapolis. ISWNE and the ISWNE Foundation will provide the author with a complimentary conference registration as well as $250 toward travel. The paper's author will be expected to make whatever arrangements are necessary to attend this conference or to present on Zoom.

A **second-place paper** also will be selected and the authors of both top papers will receive complimentary one-year memberships in ISWNE.

Focus

Papers should deal with topics relevant to the newsrooms of community weeklies, ***particularly*** those with small staffs and circulations under 10,000. The papers should **provide useful guidance** on general issues and/or everyday problems that such newsrooms may face.

Examples could include legal, political or ethical issues; alternative print/digital integration models; or surveys to determine successful techniques for staff recruitment/retention, for boosting online presence or to elicit "best practices" for special editions. Roundups of how states handle Sunshine Law violations or how papers train young reporters to be alert for such violations would also be of interest. So would explorations of new ways to convey information to a local audience (*e.g.*, using AI) and how to monetize them. These, of course, are only some of the many areas on which research could focus.

Note that ISWNE members have access to the organization's Hotline, where topics of current interest to weekly newsrooms are regularly discussed. Non-members may request temporary access