THE CONVERSATION

2026 Impact Report



THE CONVERSATION

Powering knowledge. Protecting truth.

We know people everywhere are hungry for knowledge – deeply researched and evidence-based. This is why our mission at The Conversation is more important than ever.

Over the past year, we've worked harder than ever to cut through the noise, meet people where they are, and deliver thousands of stories to millions of readers. As media evolves, so do we: we expanded ambitiously into video-first journalism to turn complex research into highly visual, shareable and engaging stories.

We are also stepping into the gap created by a shrinking press. As traditional newsrooms hollow out and local papers vanish, accountability journalism faces an existential crisis. Fewer and fewer outlets have the resources to devote to investigative journalism. We are filling that void. By pairing investigative rigor with the deep expertise of scholars, we are helping to expose wrongdoing and defend transparency.

And we are expanding our reach, finding and sharing local solutions from Pittsburgh to Perth that the world should know about. Through efforts like our newly launched global health initiative, we elevate lifesaving ideas and solutions that might otherwise stay under the radar.

Reliable knowledge is a right, not a luxury. While vital reporting continues to disappear behind paywalls, our stories will always remain free and open to everyone.

None of this happens without you. To our readers, donors, funders and university partners: Thank you for backing this mission.

We could not do this without you. We are fired up, focused and ready to drive this vital work forward together with you!

THE CONVERSATION

Who we are

The Conversation U.S. is a nonprofit, independent news organization and part of a global group founded in Australia in 2011. **Today, The Conversation U.S. is the most-read nonprofit news source in the United States** and is joined by editions in Africa, Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Indonesia, New Zealand, Spain and the United Kingdom. Germany will be joining in early 2027!



The Conversation network is the largest producer of research-based news in the world that is entirely free to read and republish. Our mission is simple: unlock the knowledge of researchers and scientists for the public good.

THE CONVERSATION

How we work

We have a unique model where our experienced team collaborates with researchers and scientists who have spent years studying a topic. Our editors shape and sculpt their work – then we share it with you, our readers.

01



Find the questions

Our editors keep their eye on what is important news for the public to know about. They put out daily calls to our network of university researchers and scientists across the country and the world. Meanwhile, scholars from all over regularly pitch us timely, essential and fascinating topics straight from their research.

02



Shape the story

When a pitch gets the green light, our editors team up with experts to translate complex research into clear, compelling content – whether in writing or as a video.

03



Share the stories

Once live on our site, each story is free for media partners across the country to republish, landing our stories in national outlets and local daily papers alike.

04



Make a difference

Out in the world, these stories make a real difference, sparking curiosity in young minds, giving readers news they can use everyday, and equipping leaders to shape helpful policies.

Putting a spotlight on deed fraud in Detroit



Deed fraud victim Kim Page sits on her front steps in Detroit on June 12, 2026.



Donovan McCarty
Michigan State University

For Kim Page, buying her first home on Detroit's far east side in 2021 was the moment when a lifelong dream finally came within reach.

"Deed fraud can cause vulnerable Detroiters to lose their homes – here's why it's hard to catch the thieves" follows Kim as she fights to keep her home. Importantly, the story also explains how deed fraud works and why it's so difficult to detect. Ultimately, this reporting became a critical tool - bringing an under-the-radar crisis straight to policymakers and securing real relief for victims of deed fraud.

The piece was written by Donovan McCarty, who represents victims of deed fraud through Michigan State University's Housing Justice Clinic. After the article was published, Donovan was approached by other attorneys willing to take pro bono cases, giving more homeowners access to meaningful representation. He has also been contacted by housing advocates from Virginia and Arizona interested in working on legislation in their states to help keep homes safe.

The story was featured on Bridge Detroit's homepage, and their team produced a video to complement the article, which has received thousands of views on Instagram, TikTok and other social media platforms.

And in a sign that policymakers are noticing, Michigan Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib "liked" the story.

Read the story

Dive right in... or not



Pittsburgh's three rivers are monitored for water quality under federal Clean Water Act standards.



Daniel Bain
University of Pittsburgh

Should you swim in your city river?

The Conversation's local team found out when it published "Should you swim in Pittsburgh's rivers? A water researcher breaks down the answer" by geography and environmental science professor Daniel Bain of the University of Pittsburgh. It's a lifestyle story that's also about policy. Everyone seemed curious about the answer, with the story republished in more than a dozen Pittsburgh media outlets. Other journalists reported their own versions. The Conversation editor Meg St-Esprit was even featured on City Cast Pittsburgh, where she talked about academic research and her own love of river swimming. The local attention led to pickups by USA Today and Yahoo News.

Read the story

By the way, the answer is yes: Sometimes it's OK to swim in Pittsburgh's rivers – but definitely not after a strong rainstorm.

From The Conversation to conversations at the UN



Every family with older loved ones living in areas that can be affected by disasters needs a disaster plan.



Lee Ann Rawlins Williams
University of North Dakota

In “5 tips for hurricane disaster planning with aging parents starting now, before the storms,” Lee Ann Rawlins Williams, who studies disaster preparedness and response, provided a practical road map for families to help older adults prepare for emergencies. We knew this would be valuable information for our readers – but we didn’t expect it to influence conversations at the United Nations.

“Publishing with The Conversation has changed the trajectory of things for me,” the University of North Dakota Professor of Education, Health and Behavior Studies said.

Following publication, Williams was invited to Geneva for a session hosted by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, where she connected with policymakers and representatives from countries interested in disaster preparedness and response.

That invitation led to another invitation to consult on accessibility with the U.N. Library and Archives in Geneva, followed by another to join the U.N.’s first Intergovernmental Working Group on the Human Rights of Older Persons in July 2026.

“I never thought I'd be sitting in these seats,” she said, reflecting on the opportunity to participate in discussions alongside international policymakers.

“My hope is that my research and work with the United Nations will help bridge the gap between research, policy and practice, ensuring that the experiences and needs of vulnerable populations (particularly older adults and people with disabilities) are reflected in decisions that affect their lives.”

Read the story

Curious kids prompt one of the year's most popular stories



Watch out! There are high-voltage wires here!



Rui Bo
Missouri University of Science and Technology

"What are those orange balls on some power lines?" asked 8 year old Maggie from West Chester, Pennsylvania.

It turns out more than 730,000 people were curious about the same thing, and an electrical engineering professor at Missouri University of Science and Technology, Rui Bo, had the answer.

"It seemed simple, yet it was something many people, including my own kids, had wondered about. I thought it would be a great opportunity to ... make engineering more accessible and engaging to a general audience," Bo said.

The story, part of our Curious Kids series, was one of The Conversation's most popular this year, alongside Do It Yourself (DIY) repairs and how to bypass the Strait of Hormuz. While it may seem surprising a story like this would land at the top of our list, a sense of curiosity fuels so much of our work. In fact, our editors have worked with scholars to answer over 300 questions from kids all over the world, covering everything from dinosaur DNA to why dogs play with trash.

And those orange balls? They help pilots see power lines so airplanes and helicopters don't crash into them. Who knew? A researcher!

Read the story

THE CONVERSATION

Stories that count

In the past year, we published more than 2,500 articles. From helping our readers understand the war with Iran to answering questions about orange balls on power lines to providing tips to make your brain more resilient, there was something in The Conversation for everyone.

These were the top stories that informed, educated and stoked curiosity with millions of readers across the globe:

01  Quitting alcohol changes the brain and can increase the risk of compulsive drinking - new research in mice

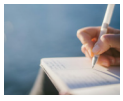
02  Massive eye drop recall reflects ongoing issues with manufacturing and FDA inspection

03  Denmark's generous child care and parental leave policies erase 80% of the 'motherhood penalty' for working moms

04  Today's bans on DIY repairs of everything from cell phones to tractors grew out of Hollywood's fear of videotaping

05  What are those orange balls on some power lines?

06  Bypass the Strait of Hormuz with nuclear explosives? The US studied that in Panama and Colombia in the 1960s

07  Writing builds resilience by changing your brain, helping you face everyday challenges

08  Why 78 degrees isn't the right thermostat setting for everyone during a heat wave

09  Getting $750 a month didn't end homelessness - but our study shows it still improved the lives of homeless people

10  The real reason many Americans are cutting ties with their parents and siblings

THE CONVERSATION

Financials

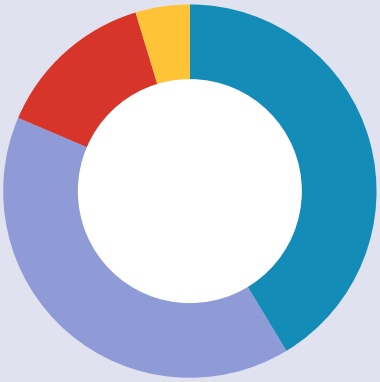
In less than five years, The Conversation U.S. has significantly increased its annual operating budget from approximately $3.8 million to $6.4 million in Fiscal Year 2026. This generous increase in support from our donors, partners and funders has allowed us to launch new initiatives, from accountability to global health, increase our video and multimedia content, and reach new audiences across the country and world.

$6.4 million

Annual operating budget in fiscal year 2026

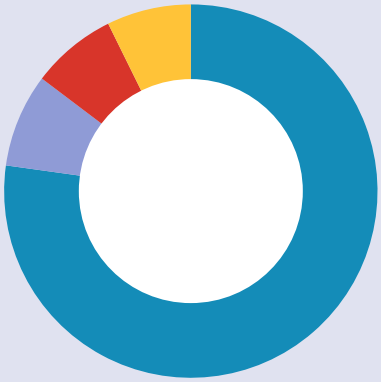


Revenue



Foundations / Grants	**41.4%**
Universities	**40.1%**
Individual contributions	**13.9%**
Other	**4.7%**

Expenses



Program	**77.2%**
Technology	**8.1%**
Fundraising	**7.4%**
Operations	**7.3%**

THE CONVERSATION

Your support powers our work

Donations from individuals power our work. An important source of unrestricted income, financial contributions from people just like you fuel our future and allow us to give you news you can trust, use and share.

Our donors do far more than fund our work. They are active partners in The Conversation community. They share ideas and resources, show up to our events and champion our mission every step of the way.



Rajiv Parihar

Rajiv Parihar can't recall how he stumbled upon The Conversation almost seven years ago. But we've been a part of his life since COVID-19, when he was looking for a trusted source of news and information. He cares about science and facts, and so evidence-based journalism is a natural draw for him. This thoughtful engineer who made his way to California from Canada tends to care deeply about the things that matter to him. And we're grateful that The Conversation is on that list!

> *As the amount of AI-generated slop increases, I find it pays to be more selective about the quality of one's information diet," says Rajiv. "Two key considerations come to mind: the 'distance' from primary sources of information, and the 'quality' in the coverage in terms of covering key considerations around an issue. In both these areas, The Conversation excels, both in its reliance on high-quality sources of information and its balance of coverage of considerations around an issue. I am happy to support high-quality, well-curated sources of information.*

THE CONVERSATION

Your support powers our work



Ruth Schimel

Ruth Schimel is a career and life management consultant and author of books that cover how people can access their capacity for courage. Since Ruth started reading The Conversation in 2023, she has also become a generous supporter of our work and mission. Stories from The Conversation often make it into Ruth's monthly newsletters, which offer readers ideas and information to spark curiosity.

> *The Conversation is a unique source of pithy, apt, accessible information of depth for which there are no comparisons," she says. "What I like about The Conversation is the range and depth of information. It's always quite timely, and the quality is very high in terms of information. I share the information quite widely with my range of people, and it's in my newsletter fairly often. What I enjoy is that I keep learning from it, and it's presented in small batches, which is rather difficult to do, because, often, a lot of information has a bit too much 'blah blah blah' in it, and there is no 'blah blah blah' in The Conversation – excuse my pun. You're doing a good job.*

For more information about Ruth's books and newsletter, please visit her website at ruthschimel.com.

THE CONVERSATION

Help write our next chapter

I have had the privilege of leading, learning and building alongside the extraordinary Conversation team for more than seven years.

What started as a bold idea – pairing academic researchers with seasoned journalists – has grown into a nationally trusted newsroom **that is now the most-read nonprofit news source in the U.S.** That evolution is a direct testament to our brilliant team, and to you: the incredible readers, donors and partners who have championed us every step of the way.

But as misinformation surges and quality reporting increasingly disappears behind paywalls, the demand for evidence-based journalism is only growing.

That is why we are plotting an ambitious future. We're aiming to expand our local newsrooms to help city and town news outlets access more expert-based journalism; we're ramping up our accountability reporting so researchers can help fill the void left by the decline of investigative reporting; and we're making sure our technology is up to the task of a modern newsroom.

We have the road map to scale our impact, but we cannot do it alone. Quality journalism shouldn't come with a cover charge, and keeping it free takes a community.

For those who support us, thank you. You are ensuring knowledge remains free for everyone, and I am so grateful. If you have not donated yet, I hope you will stand with us as we step into this next era.



Beth Daley
Executive Editor and General Manager

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Our funders help keep reliable knowledge free and open to everyone.





















































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