Several law enforcement agencies, including the Mexican Army and National Guard, responded to an altercation between migrants and immigration agents at a downtown Juárez hotel in March 2023. (Courtesy La Verdad)

Kaitlyn Melendez, now 13, was with her grandfather, David Johnson, when he was among 23 people shot to death by Patrick Crusius at an El Paso Walmart on Aug. 3, 2019. She was accompanied by a service dog as she gave a victim impact statement Wednesday, July 5, at the first day of Crusius’ sentencing hearing. (Nacho Garcia Jr./El Paso Matters)

Protestors who say that the city failed to seek community input in the police chief hiring process demonstrate outside of the Museum of Art in September 2023. (Corrie Boudreaux/El Paso Matters)

Karina García was hugged by her brother Memo during her quinceañera in December. Their father was among 23 people killed in El Paso’s 2019 mass shooting. (Corrie Boudreaux/El Paso Matters)
Letter from the CEO

In 2023, El Paso Matters continued to grow in its mission of providing news that helps El Pasoans better understand their community, and use that information to help shape changes that are important to them.

Our reporters repeatedly shared stories that otherwise would have gone untold – a deeply investigated report about shocking mistreatment of women police officers by their fellow officers; a disturbing rise in felony arrests for THC vaping at schools; the impact of climate change in what proved to be El Paso’s hottest year on record; a moving story about the quinceañera of a girl who lost her father in the 2019 mass shooting.

Our reporters also provided deep coverage of the May elections, which included the controversial Proposition K. We have the only reporters in El Paso focusing on issues like education, health care and the environment. In 2023, we launched the El Paso Matters Book Club, which celebrated El Paso authors and connected them with a local audience hungry for their work.

And El Pasoans increasingly turn to El Paso Matters for news. At a time when news organizations around the country lost readership and viewership, our audience continued to grow in 2023. The number of page views at elpasomatters.org has doubled in the past two years. Few news organizations in the country have seen that kind of growth.

At the same time, we have expanded our business operations to help build sustainability for the future. While we continue to receive strong support from major national and regional foundations, we increased the amount of money we raised from El Pasoans this year. We hired veteran advertising salesman Bill Pitchkolan to be our business development director, and he built a strong sponsorship program that allowed local businesses to support the work of El Paso Matters and connect with our audience.

We are grateful for the support we have received in El Paso and elsewhere, and look forward to expanding our impact in 2024.

With gratitude,

Robert Moore,
Founder and CEO
A Border Patrol agent holds back a group of people as migrants wait to surrender themselves at the station on Oregon Street in May 2023. (Corrie Boudreaux/El Paso Matters)

A group of migrants waits on the concrete bank of the Rio Grande as Border Patrol agents call for transport vans in September 2023. (Corrie Boudreaux/El Paso Matters)

A group of migrants manage to cross the concertina wire barrier at the Rio Grande in September 2023. (Corrie Boudreaux/El Paso Matters)

Because of our location, El Paso has increasingly been in the national news in recent years, and 2023 was no different. El Paso Matters reporters often break national news, or provide important context often missing in national media outlets.
Another major national story that played out in 2023 was the criminal case of the gunman in the 2019 racist shooting at an El Paso Walmart. El Paso Matters was the first news organization to report that the gunman would plead guilty to federal charges that would carry multiple life prison sentences. We also reported on the continuing slow pace in prosecution of state capital murder charges that could carry the death penalty. For federal court hearings, El Paso Matters hired sketch artist Nacho Garcia Jr. to capture events, since cameras were not permitted. We shared the sketches with news organizations around the country.

As Gov. Greg Abbott increased Texas’ challenge to the federal government’s traditional role in immigration enforcement, several important stories played out in El Paso. The county government is a lead plaintiff in a lawsuit challenging a new law that would allow local police in Texas to enforce immigration law. And El Paso Matters, in a joint report with KTEP public radio, detailed the harrowing story of a local family forced off the road and held at gunpoint by agents with the Texas Department of Public Safety in October. (Angela Kocherga/El Paso Matters)

Illustrator Nacho Garcia Jr.
El Paso Matters reporter Victoria Rossi spent more than a year investigating sexual harassment and abuse that El Paso women police officers faced at the hands of their fellow officers. Her reporting documented a culture of misogyny in the Police Department that made it difficult if not impossible for women to serve.

In Texas, possession of vape devices with even the smallest amounts of THC - the active ingredient in marijuana - is a felony. In a four-part series, education reporter Claudia Silva reported that the number of El Paso teens facing such felony charges tripled to almost 700 between 2021 and 2022, and continued to rise in 2023. Silva’s series explored solutions to the problem and provided parents with critical information they needed to know.

Guillermo “Memo” García was grievously wounded in the Aug. 3, 2019, mass shooting, and succumbed eight months later. Reporter Priscilla Totiyapungprasert spent months with the family as they prepared for the December quinceañera of daughter Katrina. The story by Totiyapungprasert and photos by Corrie Boudreaux explored the pain the family suffers more than three years later, and how they’ve rebuilt their lives.
One of our guiding principles at El Paso Matters is to focus on topics that other media in El Paso aren’t getting to. At the end of 2023, we had the only two reporters among El Paso news organizations focused on education, the only environment reporter, the only immigration reporter, and the only health care reporter.

We are the only news organization in El Paso that consistently provides voter guides during elections. In 2023, we provided guides in English and Spanish, in print and online. These guides allow voters to compare candidates’ stances on issues, helping them decide how they want to vote. El Paso Matters never makes recommendations on how voters should cast ballots. Our mission is to provide voters with election information so they can decide for themselves.

Collaborative Journalism

From our beginning in 2020, El Paso Matters has relied on partnerships and collaborations to enhance our journalism, reach larger audiences, and bring important work from other media to our audience. The most important partnership has been the Puente News Collaborative, which brings together El Paso and Juárez news organizations to report on the region’s most important issues.

Our partners at La Verdad produced gut-wrenching coverage of a fire that killed dozens of migrants at a detention center near the Juárez side of Paso del Norte Bridge.

We also shared important reporting from the El Paso Times on a record number of deaths among migrants trying to cross the border in the El Paso region.

El Paso Public Libraries was a key partner in two initiatives in 2023. They hosted author meetings as part of our El Paso Matters Book Club, and also distributed voter guides for May elections.
At El Paso Matters, our reporting team is majority women – providing stories from unique points of view that connect with the public we serve.

More than half of El Paso County residents are women. Many want to read stories that relate to them without perpetuating harmful gender stereotypes.

Corrie Boudreaux, Elida S. Perez, Cindy Ramírez, Claudia Lorena Silva and Priscilla Totiyapungrprasert exemplify more than diversity and inclusion in the newsroom. Their reporting on government accountability, education, health and immigration is unwaveringly tough – but approached with an empathy that takes into account the human factor in any story.

They provide relatable and empathetic perspectives on a variety of topics, including reproductive rights, birthing options, sexual harassment in the workplace, representation in government and the LGBTQ community.

Priscilla, for example, in the last year wrote about the city being without a health director for more than a year and about area birthing centers and services offered to the transgender community. In reporting about the city’s new police chief, Elida focused on how the department leader plans to address what many describe as a hostile workplace for women. In her dual role as reporter and assistant editor, Cindy leads content planning, ensuring stories are diverse and reflective of our demographics.

As news influences policy, it is imperative that our reporting presents women’s needs and views.

At a time when newsrooms often fail to reflect the communities they serve, our team of women reporters are helping give women and other underrepresented groups a voice.
Celebrating El Paso Authors

The El Paso Matters Book Club launched in February 2023 and we have so much to celebrate:

**NEARLY 1,000**

subscribers to the book club newsletter

**OVER 50**

attendees at each bi-monthly book club gathering hosted at El Paso Library branches across the city

**MORE THAN 300**

El Paso Matters Book Club books sold by Literarity Book Shop. Owner Bill Clark donated the proceeds of those sales to El Paso Matters

We started the El Paso Matters Book Club to highlight and showcase local authors and celebrate what makes El Paso unique. Our book club brings readers exclusive author interviews and book reviews. Our bi-monthly book club gatherings, consistently drawing over 50 attendees, have created a space for meaningful conversations and connections, and have fostered a deeper connection with the city we call home. Throughout our first year, we have become a community united by a shared love for local books and their authors, a profound appreciation for reading, and a genuine care for the heart and soul of El Paso.

Our book selections spanned a diverse range of perspectives and voices, including:

- **Nobody’s Pilgrims** by Sergio Troncoso
- **Thirty Talks Weird Love** by Alexandria Narváez Varela
- **Educating the Enemy: Teaching Nazis and Mexicans in the Cold War Borderlands** by Jona Perrillo
- **¡Andale, Prieta!** by Yasmin Ramirez
- **All They Will Call You** by Tim Z. Hernandez

In 2024, we will continue our literary journey across the city by visiting even more El Paso Public Library branches. We also plan to collaborate closely with the creative writing departments at El Paso Community College and the University of Texas at El Paso by hosting writing workshops that are open to the public.
In a year when local news organizations across the country saw sharp declines in audience, El Paso Matters saw strong growth in 2023. The number of times our stories were read online almost doubled compared to 2021. More and more people are becoming aware of our work, and we’re filling a critical need in the region’s news and information ecosystem.

Readership on elpasomatters.org grew by 18% in 2023 compared to the prior year.

SOCIAL MEDIA:

We use social media channels to extend our reach. We let El Pasoans know about our stories, but we also engage with them for feedback and story ideas. In 2023, El Paso Matters significantly increased our reach on Instagram to 584,200 unique users in 2023, a 232% increase from the previous year.
Supporting El Paso Matters

Top donors to El Paso Matters since our incorporation in 2019. Thank you for your support!

$1,000,000 and Above
American Journalism Project, a one-time grant to build sustainable business practices

$500,000 - $999,999
Emerson Collective

$250,000 - $499,999
Arnold Ventures
Microsoft

$100,000 - $249,999
Center for Gender and Reproductive Equity
El Paso Community Foundation
Inasmuch Foundation
Meta Journalism Project (formerly Facebook Journalism Project)
Open Campus Media

$20,000 - $99,999 (cont.)
Kasco Ventures
Martha Hood and Will Jewell
Meadows Foundation
Miami Foundation via the Institute for Nonprofit News
NewsMatch program
Rapoport Foundation
Report for America
Richard Castro
Sams Legate
WestStar Bank
Woody and Gayle Hunt
Family Foundation

$10,000 - $19,999
Brooks Family Foundation
Gwen Pulido and Raymond Telles

$5,000 - $9,999 (cont.)
Lenfest Institute for Journalism and Local Media Association
Simone Cox
Steve Ortega
Solutions Journalism Network
Ted Houghlin
Walmart Foundation
Walton Family Foundation

$2,500 - $4,999
Danny and Marie Olivas
Ebetuel ‘Beto’ Pallares
Ed Escudero
Eliot Shapleigh
Elsa Borrego
Eric Pearson and Julie Summerford Pearson
Kassie and Joey Kadow
Laura Rodriguez
Ogechika Azuzie
Rebecca and Alan Krasne
Richard and Bobette Lange
Rosalinda Natividad
Sandra Almanzan
Steve and Angie Tures
Tracy Yellen
Western Heritage Bank

El Paso Matters by the numbers:

Over **1,000** individual donors since our founding in 2019

Added **366** new donors in 2023

Our number of individual donors increased by **33%** between 2022 and 2023, and the amount received from individual donors increased by more than **20%**

Donors came from **28** states and **3** countries in 2023

El Paso revenues by source, 2023

- **$1,100,873** in **Foundation or Corporate Grants**
- **$256,498** in **Individual Donors**
- **$70,362** in **Online or Event Sponsorships**
IMPACT QUOTES:

As an El Pasoan, I really feel that news reporting should be local and connected to what is happening on the streets and be factual. El Paso Matters gives me what I’m looking for in all regards. Please, keep up the great journalism.
- Carl J.

It is essential that the rest of the US and the world receive accurate and timely news about the border.
- Emily W.

El Paso Matters gives me insightful news I can’t get anywhere else. I rely on it to keep me informed of local issues.
- Elinora P.

High-quality local journalism is incredibly important to communities, but it is increasingly difficult to find. I’m aware that contributions keep localized journalism afloat and want to give where I can.
- Miguel A.

El Paso Matters
Local Sponsors

In 2023, we hired Bill Pitchkolan as our Business Development Director to implement new opportunities for businesses to reach El Paso Matters’ audience with advertising and sponsorships. This growing revenue stream will provide additional funding for El Paso Matters’ journalism and mission.

Businesses such as Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso, Mission Chevrolet, Visiting Angels and Copenhagen Imports are supporting El Paso Matters and connecting to audiences they want to reach. Several nonprofit organizations such as the Rio Grande Cancer Foundation and Basketball in the Barrio, ran successful fundraising campaigns with El Paso Matters during the El Paso Giving Day event.

Partnerships can take a creative turn. A conversation with the owner of Aurellia’s Bottle Shop and Brewhouse, Justin Gibson, culminated in a Mexican-American lager brewed specifically for El Paso Matters. A public launch of the beer was held in October and was well attended. The beer was sold at Aurellia’s and retail outlets in El Paso, including Whole Foods, and Aurellia’s donated the profits to El Paso Matters. This project resulted in funds for El Paso Matters, some good PR and a positive relationship with a up-and-coming young business owner in the community. And it produced a really good beer.

In 2024, El Paso Matters will increasingly use events to expand the reach of our journalism. Our sponsors will help make this growth possible.
El Paso faces a number of crucial transitions in 2024. The City Council will choose a new city manager. El Pasoans will elect a new mayor, because Oscar Leeser has served the maximum two terms allowed by the City Charter. We’ll also elect a new sheriff and one new state representative, because incumbents chose not to run.

Elections start with party primaries on March 5, with runoffs in many races likely coming a few weeks later. The general election in November will see Texans voting for a U.S. senator. In El Paso, Republicans have contested only a handful of local races, so most of the local partisan contests will be settled in the primaries. But El Pasoans will elect City Council members in four districts, in addition to the mayor’s race. Runoffs could come in December. It will be a long election year.

El Paso and the border likely will play a major role in the 2024 presidential election campaign. One key goal of El Paso Matters is to provide accurate and contextualized reporting because national reporting on the border often is incomplete or inaccurate. And Texas has passed a number of new laws that aim to reshape two centuries of immigration being the constitutional domain of the federal government. Our reporters will focus on immigration and border security issues this year.

As we diversify our revenue streams to build a sustainable news organization, El Paso Matters will offer sponsorship opportunities to local businesses and organizations that help pay for our journalism and connect those organizations with our audience. We also will pursue funding from a new national program called Press Forward that has promised to make $500 million available over the next five years to support local journalism. We believe El Paso Matters is well positioned to compete for grants from this and other national funders. If we can grow our revenue from local and national donors, we anticipate being able to add several new journalists in 2024 to enhance our service to El Paso.