



2025
A-MARK
PRIZES
IMPACT
REPORT

December 31, 2025



I. Chairman's Letter 1

- Letter from A-Mark Board Chair Justin Jampol (page 1)

II. Overview 4

- A-Mark's Programs (p. 4)
- Map: A-Mark Programs Across the United States (p. 5)

III. A-Mark Prize Hosts 6

- A-Mark Prize By the Numbers (p.6)
- Challenges in Administering the Prize (p. 6)
- Repeat Winners (p. 7)
- Chart: A-Mark Prize Hosts (p. 9)
- Host Feedback (p. 11)

IV. A-Mark Prize Winners 14

- Winner Feedback Themes (p. 14)
- Winner Feedback Highlights (p. 16)
- Full Feedback - Winners' Quotes (p. 21)

I. Chairman's Letter

In 2024, the A-Mark Foundation took an important step by revisiting and refining our mission. We clarified our purpose to focus squarely on supporting and promoting journalism, with a special emphasis on investigative reporting. That work matters because investigative reporting strengthens democratic institutions, informs the public, and often requires time, resources, and editorial courage that are increasingly difficult to sustain. Reaffirming this focus sharpened our direction and guided every decision that followed.

The impact of that clarity became evident in 2025. In a single year, the A-Mark Prize for Investigative Reporting expanded from one state to 30 states, dramatically increasing our national footprint. Through collaborations with press clubs and associations across the country, the A-Mark Prize recognizes outstanding investigative reporting in communities large and small. The Prize honors work that exposed wrongdoing, examined systemic failures, or brought critical public issues to light. We are proud of how quickly this program has grown and of the journalists whose work it celebrates.

While expanding the Prizes was a major milestone, it was not our only focus. In 2025, we also launched two new scholarship initiatives designed to invest in the future of journalism. The A-Mark Journalism Master's Scholarship supports graduate students in journalism. The A-Mark Student Journalism Award supports community college students who are actively working on their campus news outlets. These programs reflect our belief that strong journalism depends on a strong pipeline of talent, and that opportunity should reach students at multiple stages of their education.

Supporting student journalists is essential to the long term health of the field. Early hands-on experience builds skills, confidence, and a commitment to public service. By investing in students today, we help ensure that investigative reporting remains vibrant and resilient tomorrow.

As we look ahead, our mission remains clear. We are continuing our efforts to establish an A-Mark Prize in every state, recognizing the best investigative reporting in the country and elevating work that serves the public interest. With each new state added, we move closer to that goal and deepen our impact nationwide. We will also continue to add scholarships at more universities and community colleges.

None of this progress would be possible without the dedication of reporters, the news outlets that publish their work, press clubs and associations, journalism educators, and the university and community college foundations and development teams who share our commitment to excellence in reporting. On behalf of the board, I am grateful for their work and proud of what the A-Mark Foundation has accomplished. We look forward to building on this momentum in the years ahead and to continuing our support for journalism that informs, investigates, and holds power to account.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Justinian Jampol". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Justinian Jampol
Chairman of the Board
A-Mark Foundation



Above: 1st and 3rd place winners in North Dakota. Below: 1st place winner in South Carolina, alongside winners in other categories.



II. Overview

In 2025, the A-Mark Foundation advanced its work through three core programs that reflect our commitment to supporting and promoting investigative reporting:

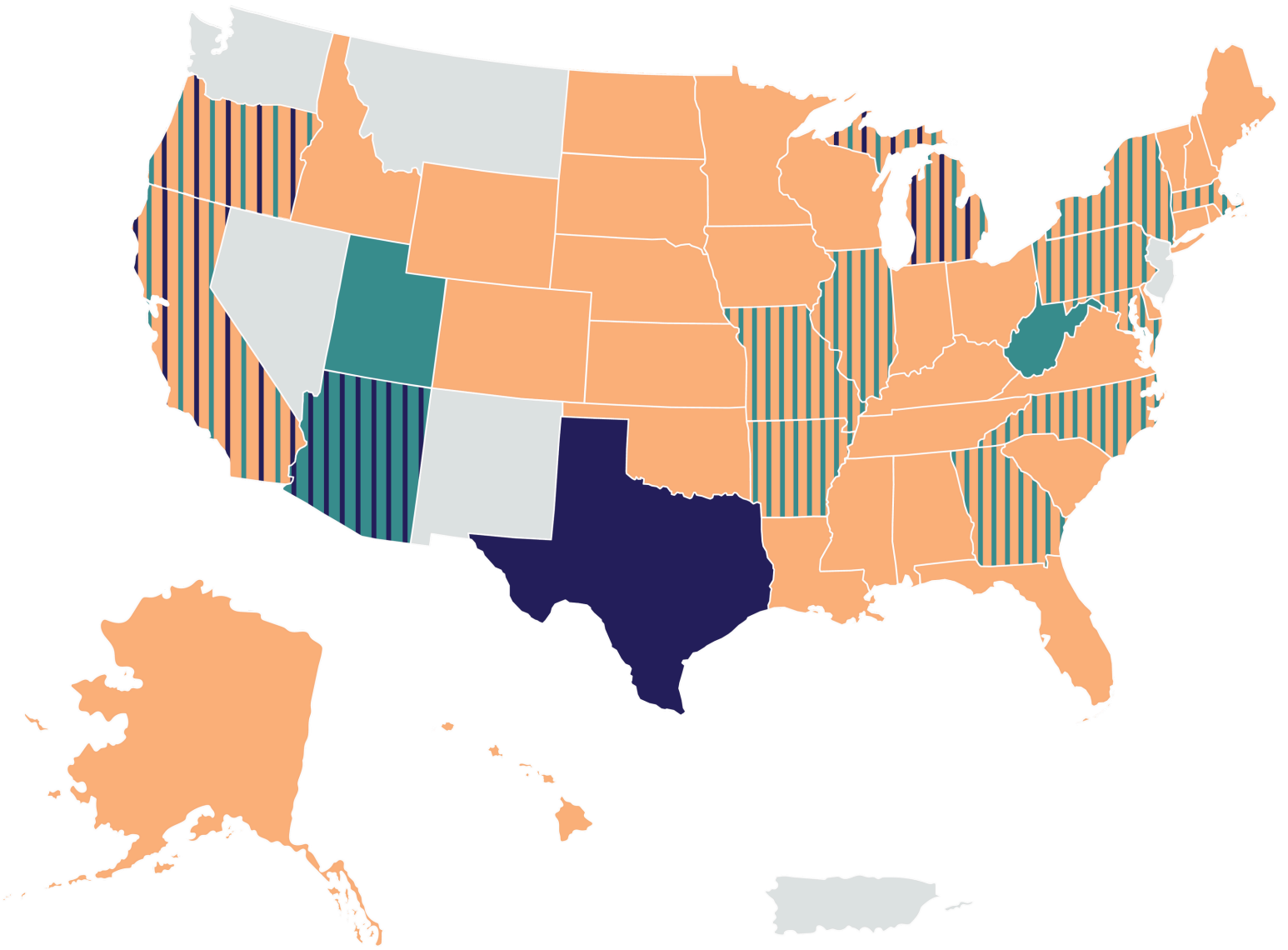
1. **The A-Mark Prize for Investigative Reporting**, which recognizes outstanding investigative reporting in each state.
2. **The A-Mark Journalism Master's Scholarships**, which support master's students pursuing journalism graduate degrees.
3. **The A-Mark Student Journalism Awards**, which support community college journalists working on student newspapers.

By the end of this year, A-Mark had established **30 A-Mark Prizes, 23 Journalism Master's Scholarships**, and **9 A-Mark Student Journalism Awards**. Together, these programs extend across the United States, as shown by the map on the next page.

This year-end impact report focuses on the A-Mark Prize, which just completed its first year of nationwide expansion after a two-year pilot program in California. The following pages highlight insights from prize hosts and winning journalists, illustrating how the Prize supports investigative reporting, elevates impactful work, and brings visibility to journalism that serves the public interest.

The two scholarship programs launched in the fall of 2025 and are currently in their first year of implementation. While these initiatives are still in progress and do not yet have outcomes to report, they represent a significant investment in the future of journalism and will be a growing focus of impact reporting in the years ahead.

A-Mark Programs in the U.S.



-  A-Mark Prize for Investigative Reporting
-  A-Mark Journalism Master's Scholarship
-  A-Mark Student Journalism Award
-  A-Mark Prize, Journalism Master's Scholarship, and Student Journalism Award
-  A-Mark Prize and Journalism Master's Scholarship
-  A-Mark Journalism Master's Scholarship and Student Journalism Award

III. A-Mark Prize Hosts

2025 A-Mark Prizes By The Numbers

- **30** States awarded an A-Mark Prize in 2025
- **90** Winning investigative pieces
- **150+** Journalists recognized
- **\$15,000** Prize money awarded per state
- **\$542,295** Spent on A-Mark Prizes in 2025, including prize money, marketing, and administrative fees
- **41 States and D.C.** will award an A-Mark Prize in 2026
- **474+** A-Mark Prize entries nationwide

Challenges in Administering the Prize

- Three states that planned to award an A-Mark Prize this year were unsuccessful due to a low number of entries.
- Prize hosts said it was challenging to get smaller outlets to participate, who were reluctant to compete against outlets with more resources. Even still, many small outlets did win around the country.
- Prize hosts also experienced a learning curve with administering the prize in terms of collecting tax forms and disbursing the winnings.

Repeat Winners

In this year's awards, 11 states had winners from different investigative teams within the same media outlet, including one full sweep (Spotlight PA took 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place in Pennsylvania). Feedback from seven A-Mark Prize hosts unanimously agreed that they are not concerned to see an outlet win multiple times, emphasizing a few key points.

First, they account for potential bias in how they set up the judging (a mix of judges from different mediums or reciprocal judging with another state, for example). Second, in states with a limited number of outlets doing great investigative reporting, it isn't a surprise to see those outlets selected as repeat winners. Third, many states did have a wide variety of winners ranging from small start up newsrooms to outlets with more resources.

Some specific quotes from the Prize hosts:

- "I think we need to go with the best journalism, even if it's from the same person."
- "Repeat winners can be inspiring and motivating to others."
- "If we start knocking off winners, what are we left with at that point?"
- "We do want to recognize what was truly the best reporting each year."
- "The A-Mark Prize brought in some major outlets that hadn't participated in recent years. Excluding them after a win would result in them not entering other categories."
- "We'll address this by reaching out to smaller outlets to encourage them to participate so we can get more diversity in our winners."
- "Our awards are routinely swept by the one outlet doing this kind of work, but they really are the best stories of the year."

Our recommendation is to continue tracking the duplicate winners to see how it unfolds over time. If the same outlets win year over year, we'll dig into those locations to learn more.



Above: 1st place winners in Arkansas. Below: Winners in Hawaii.



Chart: A-Mark Prize Hosts

	A. State	B. Awarding Body	C. # 2025 Entries
1	Alaska	Alaska Press Club	14
2	Arkansas	Arkansas Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ)	16
3	California	California: Los Angeles Press Club	21
4	Colorado	Colorado Press Association	?
5	Connecticut	New England Newspaper & Press Association	11
6	Florida	Florida SPJ	30
7	Georgia	Atlanta Press Club	14
8	Hawaii	Hawaii SPJ Pro Chapter	13
9	Illinois	Chicago Headline Club	19
10	Indiana	Indiana SPJ	8
11	Kansas	Kansas Press Association	67
12	Kentucky	SPJ Louisville Pro Chapter	3
13	Louisiana	Louisiana SPJ	16
14	Massachusetts	New England Newspaper & Press Association	15
15	Michigan	Michigan SPJ, Detroit Chapter	21
16	Minnesota	Minnesota SPJ	25
17	Missouri	Missouri Press Association	17
18	Nebraska	Nebraska Press Association Foundation	27
19	New York	New York Press Association	50
20	North Carolina	North Carolina Press Association	42
21	North Dakota	North Dakota Newspaper Association	12
22	Ohio	Press Club of Cleveland	22
23	Oklahoma	Oklahoma Press Association	11

Chart: A-Mark Prize Hosts Continued

	A. State	B. Awarding Body	C. # 2025 Entries
24	Oregon	Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association	17
25	Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania NewsMedia Association	23
26	Rhode Island	New England Newspaper & Press Association	11
27	South Carolina	South Carolina Press Association	32
28	South Dakota	South Dakota NewsMedia Association	14
29	Vermont	New England Newspaper & Press Association	19
30	Wisconsin	Wisconsin Newspaper Association	22

Selected Host Feedback

- **Chicago Headline Club (Illinois):** “Cash prizes are always appreciated, and I think this specific contest is beneficial to journalism overall and will prompt more local journalists to think about pushing hard for information in the coming year.”
- **Nebraska Press Association Foundation:** “We are deeply grateful to the A-Mark Foundation for the opportunity to offer this contest to Nebraska journalists. Their support helped us shine a light on meaningful, in-depth reporting happening across our state.”
- **Indiana SPJ:** “There was a lot of buzz and cheering when the prize money was announced and huge applause from the winning tables. The prize gives people something to aspire to and highlights the very best work!”
- **Atlanta Press Club (Georgia):** “We received good feedback about the excitement and amount of the prize money! Everyone was very enthused to see the support from a national level towards journalism.”
- **Hawaii SPJ:** “Thank you for helping make journalism exciting again.”
- **Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association:** “[The winners] were energized, felt appreciated and made them hungry to do another story they can submit.”
- **South Dakota NewsMedia Association:** “The award helped to highlight the importance of and need for more investigative journalism in our state.”

Selected Host Feedback Continued

- **Florida SPJ:** “What the hell could possibly be better? This was as perfect as you can get. We are so grateful to the A-Mark Foundation. Your support directly strengthens SPJ Florida’s ability to recognize and support high-impact investigative reporting that holds power accountable across our state.
- **SPJ Detroit (Michigan):** “Tracey was wonderful to work with. Helpful, responsive, cordial -- all in all, a great partner.”
- **Missouri Press Association:** “Offering the A-Mark Prize gave us a completely new angle to promote our editorial contest at a time when many of our members are older industry veterans who don't get as excited for contests as they once did.”
- **South Carolina Press Association:** “We heard from some news organizations that did not enter last year who are excited to compete in this year's contest because of the excitement generated from last year's A-Mark Prizes.”
- **SPJ Louisiana:** “Not only did the contest fuel an increase in our chapter membership it also increased revenue.”
- **Arkansas SPJ:** “This prize elevated our contest and our event! We would like to continue this partnership for as long as possible and are already planning for next year. This has been a wonderful experience!”



Above: 1st place winners in Indiana. Below: 1st place winners in Florida.



IV. A-Mark Prize Winners

We emailed 153 journalists who won an A-Mark Prize this year, and 53 responded with their answers to our three questions:

1. **Did your investigative piece lead to any concrete changes (e.g. policy changes, public awareness, legal action)?**
2. **Did winning the A-Mark Prize have any impact on you, either professionally or personally?**
3. **Did your win affect how your outlet prioritizes or supports investigative work?**

6. Winner Feedback Themes

QUESTION 1: DID YOUR INVESTIGATIVE PIECE LEAD TO ANY CONCRETE CHANGES (E.G. POLICY CHANGES, PUBLIC AWARENESS, LEGAL ACTION)?

- **Legal and Administrative Action:** Several stories prompted investigations, news laws, or court rulings, such as overturned convictions, indictments, or federal and state probes.
- **Increased Public Awareness and Discourse:** Many journalists reported a shift in public understanding or conversation, describing audience response or pressure on officials.
- **Accountability and Institutional Change:** A number of winners noted that their reporting forced organizations or agencies to confront misconduct, revise procedures, or respond publicly, especially in government, law enforcement, and healthcare.

QUESTION 2: DID WINNING THE A-MARK PRIZE HAVE ANY IMPACT ON YOU, EITHER PROFESSIONALLY OR PERSONALLY?

- **Professional Validation and Credibility:** Journalists widely described the award as affirming the value of their work and strengthening their professional reputation and career advancement.
- **Motivation and Renewed Commitment:** Many said the recognition rekindled passion or confidence during a time of burnout or uncertainty, inspiring them to pursue more ambitious investigative projects.
- **Financial Relief and Practical Benefit:** The cash component was repeatedly highlighted as rare and meaningful, helping pay debts, fund childcare, take a vacation, put money in savings, or invest in training.

QUESTION 3: DID YOUR WIN AFFECT HOW YOUR OUTLET PRIORITIZES OR SUPPORTS INVESTIGATIVE WORK?

- **Organizational Pride and Morale Boost:** Winning often elevated newsroom morale, creating pride across teams and motivation to follow up the win with more great reporting.
- **Increased Institutional Support and Resources:** Some newsrooms responded by allocating more funding, time, or training for investigative projects, or using prize funds for professional development and equipment.
- **Reinforcement of Existing Commitment:** Most outlets already valued investigative reporting; the prize validated and strengthened that commitment, reassuring leadership and staff that these projects matter.

Winner Feedback Highlights: Five Selected Responses to Each Question

QUESTION 1: DID YOUR INVESTIGATIVE PIECE LEAD TO ANY CONCRETE CHANGES (E.G. POLICY CHANGES, PUBLIC AWARENESS, LEGAL ACTION)?

“Our Recovery Inc. investigation exposed widespread Medicaid fraud within Minnesota’s addiction recovery industry, directly prompting federal and state criminal probes, an FBI raid, and multiple federal wire fraud indictments. Two of the state’s largest recovery service providers were shut down. Beyond enforcement, our reporting helped drive a series of legislative and policy reforms aimed at preventing future abuse - changes now codified in state law.”
-A.J. Lagoe, KARE-TV, Minnesota 1st place

“Our investigation prompted immediate outrage from elected officials and more than a dozen bills at the state Capitol this year, including five substantial measures proposing financial relief and consumer protections for long-term care insurance policyholders and prospective buyers. Lawmakers introduced proposals to cap annual rate hikes and provide tax breaks for policyholders.”
-Jenna Carlesso, Connecticut Mirror, Connecticut 1st place

“Following our reporting on Vermont’s wind-down of motel-based shelter for families – and the reality that families with children were setting up camp because they lacked other options – state officials opened two family shelters for the 2024-2025 winter season. Our reporting challenging the ‘magnet theory’ of homelessness also made a big impact on the public’s understanding of homelessness in Vermont, prompting op-eds, discussion at the Statehouse, and an avalanche of audience response to my email inbox.”
-Carly Berlin, VTDigger and Vermont Public, Vermont 1st place

“There's been a pretty dramatic recent development, yes. My columns addressed how little information the state of Hawai'i releases about child maltreatment deaths or near-deaths. One of the cases I wrote about involved Isabella Kalua, a 6-year-old who disappeared and is presumed dead. Her foster/adoptive parents are now facing second degree murder charges.”
-John Hill, Honolulu Civil Beat, Hawaii 3rd place

“Ramsey County immediately issued a moratorium on billing people who called the crisis hotline. The county later apologized and changed its policy. The legislature followed up the following year with new legislation preventing counties from charging for crisis hotline services.”
-Joe Augustine, KMSP-TV, Minnesota 2nd place

QUESTION 2: DID WINNING THE A-MARK PRIZE HAVE ANY IMPACT ON YOU, EITHER PROFESSIONALLY OR PERSONALLY?

“Winning the A-Mark foundation was also deeply impactful for me personally. And I have to say, even though I'm not one who is fueled by financial motivation, the money attached to the prize really made it feel special on a whole other level.

While I've won several press association awards in the past, none before had a cash prize. It told me that there are still people and organizations out there who understand and appreciate the value of this work, and are willing to invest in it. So BIG thank you. Knowing the work is valued gave me more motivation to keep pushing journalistically, just in general.”
-Adam Stone, The Examiner News, New York 2nd place

“Winning the A-Mark prize was the most exciting and rewarding moment of my professional life thus far. I felt – and still feel – truly honored. It redoubled my commitment to producing quality investigations, knowing that hard work does not go unnoticed. I am so grateful to the A-Mark Foundation for the vote of confidence.”

-Jane Winik Sartwell, Carolina Public Press, North Carolina 2nd place

“Both personally and professionally, the A-Mark prize was a sign of positive affirmation: Validation for months of challenging work, and proof that I'm moving in the right direction in my career as I continue to pursue complex, impactful investigative stories. I also have immense gratitude for this prize coming with a cash award. That kind of investment shows a real, tangible recognition for quality reporting. It also gives us journalists longevity and can make this a more sustainable path. For me, some of the prize money went toward a long-awaited vacation.”

-Kaya Williams, Aspen Public Radio, Colorado 2nd place

“In terms of how winning the prize impacted me, it was a great honor that came at a time when I was personally feeling pretty burnt out in this field. There are many reasons why this job is challenging and it often involves more criticism than praise. I didn't realize just how much I needed to be told that I was doing a good job and that I deserved to be recognized for it.”

-Krista Johnson, The Courier Journal, Kentucky 1st place

“Awards in journalism very rarely come with money. And I would be remiss if I didn't mention how much this can mean in a profession where we aren't raking in the big bucks. With the A-Mark Prize, I was able to pay off some credit card and student loan debt, pay a car bill and put some away in savings. This was huge for me!”

-Hadley Barndollar, MassLive, Massachusetts 1st place

QUESTION 3: DID YOUR WIN AFFECT HOW YOUR OUTLET PRIORITIZES OR SUPPORTS INVESTIGATIVE WORK?

“Absolutely. The kind of work we do takes time and resources – sometimes a year or more of reporting and production. That requires trust and investment. Recognition like A-Mark’s, along with the accompanying financial support, helps make the next big investigation possible. It’s both a validation and an incentive to keep pursuing ambitious, difficult stories.”

-Trevor Aaronson, Audible & Western Sound, Florida 1st place

“In an era of tightening newsroom budgets, the A-Mark Prize provided tangible reinforcement - helping us sustain innovation, invest in tools, and expand training opportunities that directly enhance our station’s ability to pursue accountability reporting.”

-A.J. Lagoe, KARE-TV, Minnesota 1st place

“The financial aspect allowed me to attend trainings that helped me grow as an investigative reporter. This opportunity would not have been in the budget otherwise. Thank you so much.”

-Isabel Cleary, NBC4 WCMH, Ohio 3rd place

“Our editors viewed the A-Mark Prize as further evidence this kind of investigative work is worth doing. We spent months digging through records to report and write this story, while also juggling other responsibilities. The award helps validate the value of that work and encourages continued support of it.”

- Dan Horn, The Cincinnati Enquirer, Ohio 2nd place

“We added the \$2,500 award for the outlet directly to our investigative reporting fund, which covers project costs like records fees and travel for investigative work.”

-Emilie Munson, Times Union, New York 1st place



Above: Nebraska's 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners; Photo Credit: Michael Carnes.
 Below: 1st place winners in Kansas.



Full Feedback - Winners' Quotes

Below are the full responses from the A-Mark Prize winners who responded to our three questions, presented in alphabetical order by state, followed by feedback from those who requested anonymity.

1. Did your investigative piece lead to any concrete changes (e.g. policy changes, public awareness, legal action)?
2. Did winning the A-Mark Prize have any impact on you, either professionally or personally?
3. Did your win affect how your outlet prioritizes or supports investigative work?

Alaska	
3rd	<p>Winning piece: Nat Herz, "This oil platform stopped pumping 30 years ago. Alaska still won't make the owner tear it down.," Alaska Public Media</p> <p>"Thanks for this note, and for the A-Mark Foundation's generous support of the prize in Alaska. No direct policy changes as a result of my story, though I would say anecdotally that I feel like I've heard a little bit more public discourse and awareness around the issue my story covered, which was the decommissioning of old oil production equipment.</p> <p>As far as a personal impact, the cash prize was really pleasant and a significant amount of money for me and was personally rewarding, though I personally don't think or talk much about prizes/awards/etc in the context of my work.</p> <p>And I would say generally speaking that as a small publisher, my work is really guided by whatever feels most important for readers and the public to understand, and that the prize isn't going to change/won't change that – but I would say that it does feel pretty nice and validating to know that it's out there as a possible reward for the time and effort that it takes to do good investigative journalism."</p>

Arkansas	
1st	<p>Winning piece: Jessica Ranck, "Corruption in Van Buren County," KARK and Fox 16</p> <p>"Thank you so much for reaching out, and thanks again for the congratulations.</p> <p>I worked on my story submission for well over a year. I am happy to report, I was able to offer</p>

Arkansas	
	<p>some resolve for those who reached out to begin with. However, the case is still ongoing and updates are likely to keep coming throughout the year. Last summer, our station got word that the person at the center of allegations, Derek Adams, had resigned from the Van Buren Co. Sheriff's Office. The department says it was due to 'personal reasons' though some credit my story to the change in leadership. Ronnie Dollar ended up winning his criminal case against the sheriff's office, and the charges he faced were dropped. There is currently a civil case going through federal court. Dollar claims he was unfairly arrested, that is set to be heard October 14.</p> <p>I am still in disbelief from the award ceremony and am honored to have been awarded Arkansas' first A-Mark Prize. Since my recognition, I have been promoted to morning anchor and will continue to write investigations. I feel as if winning the award solidified my position at the station and am now trusted to cover some of the top stories.</p> <p>KARK and FOX16 has always put time and effort into its Investigations department. This has only continued since winning the award. Thanks again for reaching out. I am truly honored to have won this award."</p>

Colorado	
1st	<p>Winning piece: Sam Tabachnik and Shelly Bradbury, "How Pueblo weaponizes contempt of court to inflate jail time for minor crimes," Denver Post</p> <p>Sam T: "1. Our story led the ACLU to file a series of legal challenges surrounding the legality of these jail sentences. A district court judge ultimately ruled Pueblo's practice to be unconstitutional, leading to the immediate release of several inmates.</p> <p>2. Winning the A-Mark represented a huge honor. I was immensely humbled to receive the accolades in such a competitive field.</p> <p>3. The Denver Post has always given me the time and space to work on longer-term investigations. Awards such as these make it more likely editors will continue to devote the time, resources and editing to these important projects."</p>
2nd	<p>Winning piece: Kaya Williams and Laurine Lasalle, "Series on the process of selling St. Benedict's Monastery," Aspen Public Radio and Aspen Journalism</p> <p>Kaya W: "Thank you so much for the congrats – it was an honor for all of us to receive the prize this year.</p> <p>1. So far, the primary change has been public awareness. The potential sale of St. Benedict's monastery was a topic of broad fascination but little information in our community, and my reporting uncovered information that even some people involved in the process weren't aware</p>

Winning reporters answered three questions:

1. Did your investigative piece lead to any concrete changes?
2. Did winning the A-Mark Prize have any impact on you?
3. Did your win affect how your outlet prioritizes or supports investigative work?

Colorado	
	<p>of. For instance, several people who made proposals to establish a conservation easement on the monastery got little, if any, explanation as to why those offers were rebuffed. My ongoing outreach to higher-ups in the Trappist order finally brought some answers about who was calling the shots and how they decided to list the property without an easement attached. It has also helped a much larger audience grasp the significance of the property. I've also heard from others looking to develop a solution that would preserve the monastery, as they, too, seek information about decision-makers and the sale review process.</p> <p>2. Both personally and professionally, the A-Mark prize was a sign of positive affirmation: Validation for months of challenging work, and proof that I'm moving in the right direction in my career as I continue to pursue complex, impactful investigative stories. It's part and parcel of the work to worry whether we're doing a story justice, and it feels really, really good to have that work recognized at such a high level in addition to reader feedback. Winning the prize also enabled me to attend the Colorado Press Association conference free of charge, where I gained valuable reporting skills and connections with other journalists.</p> <p>But long before the prize was awarded, it was already influencing my work. The application for this prize, and the questions it asked, prompted me to think critically about the idea of responsive journalism and consider what other stories I might pursue in response to community needs. In that way, it hasn't just served me, but also, hopefully, audiences in our community. I also have immense gratitude for this prize coming with a cash award. That kind of investment shows a real, tangible recognition for quality reporting. It also gives us journalists longevity and can make this a more sustainable path. (For me, some of the prize money went toward a long-awaited vacation. :))</p> <p>3. Aspen Journalism, which was a crucial partner in this work, is already dedicated almost exclusively to investigative work but did show enthusiasm and kudos for the prize. I no longer work for Aspen Public Radio, so can't speak directly to how much this specific prize has affected their approach since, but I can say the prize was celebrated by the station and that I've seen a growing commitment to investigative work there in recent years. (This story would not have been possible without the flexibility to dedicate some of my time to reporting and writing it; separately, APR and Aspen Journalism have collaborated on a social justice reporting position, with a journalist producing excellent investigative work over the past year; and APR often sends one or two reporters to the Investigative Reporters and Editors conference for professional development.)”</p>

Connecticut	
1st	<p>Winning piece: Jenna Carlesso, Dave Altimari, Katy Golvala, and Andrew Brown, “Priced Out,” The Connecticut Mirror</p> <p>Jenna C: “Thanks for reaching out and for sponsoring these amazing awards. We’re so</p>

Winning reporters answered three questions:

1. Did your investigative piece lead to any concrete changes?
2. Did winning the A-Mark Prize have any impact on you?
3. Did your win affect how your outlet prioritizes or supports investigative work?

Connecticut	
	<p>honored to have received the prize.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Our investigation prompted immediate outrage from elected officials and more than a dozen bills at the state Capitol this year, including five substantial measures proposing financial relief and consumer protections for long-term care insurance policyholders and prospective buyers. Lawmakers introduced proposals to cap annual rate hikes and provide tax breaks for policyholders. Our investigation was also referenced during public hearings at the Capitol. 2. Winning the A-Mark Prize was very inspirational for me and encouraged me to pitch another large-scale project that I'll be tackling this coming year. The recognition also helps give me confidence in my journalistic instincts and news judgment. 3. Our outlet continues to be committed to investigative reporting and is buoyed by honors like the A-Mark Prize. The prize money helps support our reporting efforts, including for copies of records, travel and other expenses. Thank you again for this incredible recognition."
3rd	<p>Winning piece: Dave Altimari and Ginny Monk, "On the Hook," The Connecticut Mirror</p> <p>Ginny M: "1. Yes! Our investigation led to a massive overhaul of the state's towing laws.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Yes – the prize did have an impact on me in a couple ways. First, this project was a lot of long and hard work. Journalists are rarely recognized for our work, and this was a good moment when we were. Secondly, the prize money is helping me pay for a graduate degree focused on creative writing, which is helping to make my writing and work better. 3. This one I fear I'm not sure, especially as it's been rather recent. I do think that generally, winning awards like this helps affirm further investigations into these topics. We are currently continuing with our investigative work into towing."

Florida	
1st	<p>Winning piece: Trevor Aaronson and Eleanor Knight, "Pulse: The Untold Story," Audible & Western Sound</p> <p>Trevor A: "1. It definitely changed public awareness and understanding of the shooting, which was our primary goal – to correct the false narrative that had taken hold. Measuring that impact is difficult beyond anecdotal evidence, but the response was significant. Our series was endorsed by GLAAD, and in addition to winning the A-Mark Prize, it received a Peabody Award. The onePulse Foundation, which had raised money for years to build a Pulse museum based on that false narrative, folded shortly before our series was released. While we can't say with certainty that the two events were connected, we were told there was a relationship.</p>

Winning reporters answered three questions:

1. Did your investigative piece lead to any concrete changes?
2. Did winning the A-Mark Prize have any impact on you?
3. Did your win affect how your outlet prioritizes or supports investigative work?

Florida	
	<p>2. Winning an award is always meaningful, especially one of A-Mark’s stature. Professionally, it reaffirmed the value of long-form investigative storytelling.</p> <p>3. Absolutely. The kind of work we do takes time and resources — sometimes a year or more of reporting and production. That requires trust and investment. Recognition like A-Mark’s, along with the accompanying financial support, helps make the next big investigation possible. It’s both a validation and an incentive to keep pursuing ambitious, difficult stories.”</p> <p>—</p> <p>Eleanor K: “First, thank you so much for reaching out. I am so grateful to be an A-Mark award winner. The A-Mark award truly built up my character. I mean that sincerely.</p> <p>As a young journalist, this recognition ignited a new confidence in me as a writer. I did not take the traditional route into journalism. I completed my undergraduate and graduate studies in social sciences and data—so I constantly consider my place in this field and ask myself: what makes someone a journalist?</p> <p>Pulse was one of the first projects I worked on after graduating, and it taught me how to truly approach a story with care. I was out in the field for the first time, meeting survivors and listening to their accounts. I learned to go into conversations with empathy first, honoring the trust people had placed in me by sharing traumatic memories and raw emotion.</p> <p>Being honored with the A-Mark award made me feel seen in a way I needed, but had not yet felt. Since the ceremony, I’ve been writing more boldly, pursuing ideas, stories, and thoughts I once shelved for good. I grew up in a household where my opinion and emotion were not tolerated, and at 26, I’m still working to dismantle that foundation of rejection. I often say I ‘fell’ into this line of work by accident, but that would undersell how deeply life changing it is. Journalism is my form of exposure therapy. I am learning to share my voice and stand up for others in need after being taught to stay silent.</p> <p>The A-Mark award didn’t just honor past work—it shifted how I see my future in this field. I am truly honored, from the bottom of my heart.”</p>
2nd	<p>Winning piece: Kylie McGivern, Randy Wright, and Melanie Payne, “Pay to Stay: Incarceration Fees Stifle Former Felons Series,” WFTS-TV</p> <p>Kylie M: “ 1. Our research showed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prosecutors, judges and even lawmakers didn’t know this law existed. • Incarceration costs are not listed when someone is incarcerated in every county. There are big differences in how the law is being applied. • Liens to collect incarceration fees were filed by the Florida Department of Corrections primarily to stifle or in retaliation for inmates filing civil rights suits. <p>Since our investigation, a lawmaker filed a bill that would have eliminated incarceration fees. It failed. But we have heard from at least one more lawmaker who is interested in pursuing this</p>

Winning reporters answered three questions:

1. Did your investigative piece lead to any concrete changes?
2. Did winning the A-Mark Prize have any impact on you?
3. Did your win affect how your outlet prioritizes or supports investigative work?

Florida	
	<p>issue further, so that people incarcerated are not charged for a cell they did not occupy, because they were already released. The Fines and Fees Justice Center is also now in contact with Shelby Hoffman, who was at the center of our investigation, to discuss including her in potential litigation.</p> <p>2. Professionally, it was such an honor to be named as a finalist for the A-Mark Prize, especially as the only broadcast television finalist. It was validating to see the work we do and the topics we take on, recognized. A lot of news outlets would not take on a topic like this. Anything involving incarceration, prisoners, re-entry into society, etc., many news outlets shy away from because of a perceived lack of interest, care or empathy toward this population. Shelby Hoffman, who was at the center of our coverage, had a lot of courage to come forward and be open and vulnerable with the challenges she overcame in her life, and question the system she has worked hard to be released from. It was her initial email that opened the door to our series of reporting.</p> <p>3. Thankfully, Tampa Bay 28 is – and has been – incredibly supportive of investigative work. We were grateful for the cash prize, to further support the work we do.”</p>
3rd	<p>Winning piece: Caroline Brauchler and Jennifer Hunt Murty, “Deaths in Custody at the Marion County Jail,” Ocala Gazette</p> <p>Caroline B: “To be recognized by the Society of Professional Journalists and the A-Mark Foundation on this scale is such a huge honor—one that bolsters our ability to continue the hard work we pride ourselves on. Our focus remains steadfast on fighting for the mentally ill and less fortunate people who are dying or being neglected or while incarcerated.”</p>
Georgia	
1st	<p>Winning piece: Carrie Teegardin and Danny Robbins, “Hidden Homicides: Violence, chaos and secrecy inside the Georgia prison system,” The Atlanta Journal-Constitution</p> <p>Danny R: “Re question 1, yes, our stories led to Gov. Brian Kemp seeking \$600 million in additional funding for the Georgia prison system to hire more officers, fix broken locks and deal with other issues. The governor’s request was ultimately approved by the legislature.</p> <p>Re question 2, yes, Carrie Teegardin and I were honored to get this recognition.</p> <p>Re question 3, yes, I believe winning this award contributed to the AJC’s longstanding support for the reporters and editors on its investigative team. Many thanks to the A-Mark Foundation for its sponsorship of this contest.”</p>
2nd	<p>Winning piece: Katherine Landergan and Stephanie Lamm, “Left on Hold: Metro 911 callers are often left waiting,” The Atlanta Journal-Constitution</p>

Winning reporters answered three questions:

1. Did your investigative piece lead to any concrete changes?
2. Did winning the A-Mark Prize have any impact on you?
3. Did your win affect how your outlet prioritizes or supports investigative work?

Georgia	
	<p>Katherine L: "1. After our series ran, we did see a significant improvement in 911 services in the metro Atlanta area.</p> <p>2. Yes, this award very much impacted Stephanie Lamm and I personally and professionally! We were so thrilled to be recognized. Our news outlet very much prioritizes investigative reporting and this type of recognition is important to our news organization. We both greatly appreciated the recognition and it motivated us to continue to work together as a duo.</p> <p>3. We are very lucky to work at a news outlet that prioritizes investigative reporting. I think the recognition helped show our newsroom that a series doesn't necessarily have to take 6+ months or a year to uncover serious harm."</p>

Hawaii	
2nd	<p>Winning piece: Lynn Kawano, Peter Tang, and Monet Sadural, "Dozens of Oahu drivers arrested, jailed for DUI despite tests showing no alcohol in their systems," Hawaii News Now</p> <p>Lynn K: "I am happy to respond and grateful for A-Mark for the award and prize... it really made a difference.</p> <p>1. Absolutely the piece led to change and continues to make a difference. The investigation was about sober drivers being arrested for DUI despite breathalyzer tests of 0.00. After our first piece, the police department had the officers on the Traffic Enforcement team undergo new training. More drivers also came forward to describe their own arrests and the difficulty that caused. As a result, the ACLU Hawaii filed a class action lawsuit against the dept. seeking additional policy changes. The plaintiffs are not asking for a financial judgement, rather real results in the form of more oversight and supervision.</p> <p>2. Winning the A-Mark prize for the first time had a wonderful impact on me both professionally and personally. Winning awards is not why I do investigative journalism but getting recognition for the work is reassuring that it has impacts not only on the people in the stories but on the people watching the stories. Those who have not been arrested wrongfully can still see the problems with it and understand why it needs to be exposed, changed. Personally, I used the money to purchase an Insta360 camera package and I have since used it on more investigative stories since.</p> <p>3. The win did affect how the station views investigative work. Our News Director, Matt Piacente, already saw the benefits of an investigative team but after the station won the award Piacente said it is affirmation that people want to consume more of these projects. The iteam crews are given more time and resources to develop these pieces."</p>
3rd	<p>Winning piece: John Hill, "Child Welfare Secrecy," Honolulu Civil Beat</p>

Winning reporters answered three questions:

1. Did your investigative piece lead to any concrete changes?
2. Did winning the A-Mark Prize have any impact on you?
3. Did your win affect how your outlet prioritizes or supports investigative work?

Hawaii

"1. As it happens, there's been a pretty dramatic recent development, yes. My columns addressed how little information the state of Hawai'i releases about child maltreatment deaths or near-deaths. One of the cases I wrote about involved Isabella Kalua, a 6-year-old who disappeared and is presumed dead. Her foster/adoptive parents are now facing second degree murder charges.

The state had released even less information than normal about this case, offering a variety of excuses. First, it said that because Isabella's body has never been recovered, it remained uncertain that she had died and so the state was not required under federal law to release any information about how it handled her case. Then, when a judge declared her dead, the state said that the judge did not specify it was from abuse, another criteria for reporting under the federal law.

As a result of my columns on this subject, the Public First Law Center filed a motion to open up Isabella's Family Court records to the public. A Family Court judge rejected the motion, saying that the required redactions would give the public an incomplete picture of the state's actions. Public First appealed to the Hawai'i Supreme Court, and last week, the court reversed the lower court and said Isabella's court records must be made public, with appropriate redactions. So the public will finally get some insight into why the state decided to place Isabella with the Kaluas and recommended that they adopt her, despite evidence of abuse and backgrounds that could have disqualified them.

That should happen in about a month and of course we will cover it. Public First is also helping us in another case involving child welfare secrecy.

2. I can't say that it had an impact professionally -- though of course it always helps to have your work recognized -- but on a personal level, Hawai'i is an expensive place to live on a journalist's income and the money was most welcome.

3. Honolulu Civil Beat was already committed to investigative work, but the award certainly further validates that commitment and shows that it is valued. Thanks!!!"

Indiana

2nd **Winning piece:** Hayleigh Colombo, James Briggs, Tony Cook, and Kayla Dwyer, "Sexual Harassment in Indiana Politics," IndyStar

James B: "Thank you for the opportunity to offer feedback!"

1. Yes, a person accused of sexual harassment lost his job; the Indianapolis mayor's office instituted reforms and has been subject to over a year of investigations; and the reporting led to additional investigations, including most recently revelations of potential improper influence

Winning reporters answered three questions:

1. Did your investigative piece lead to any concrete changes?
2. Did winning the A-Mark Prize have any impact on you?
3. Did your win affect how your outlet prioritizes or supports investigative work?

Indiana	
	<p>over city contracts.</p> <p>2. Yes, it came as a huge surprise to me and it was affirming to simply know the work was appreciated. This was a difficult project on many levels and it was easy to wonder whether the work mattered. This award provides a definitive answer: yes. I'm extremely grateful for the recognition, as well as the financial award.</p> <p>3. It reinforced the importance of investigative work and I think it provided motivation and incentive for others to do high-level investigative journalism."</p>
3rd	<p>Winning piece: Emily Hopkins, Tyler Fenwick, and Jenna Watson, "Broken Housing," <i>Mirror Indy</i></p> <p>Tyler F: "1. I've noticed more pointed scrutiny of the Indianapolis Housing Agency since our investigation, both from the general public and other local media. The agency was under federal takeover when our investigation was published, and that's still the case today, so any policy changes likely wouldn't come until later.</p> <p>2. I think winning the A-Mark Prize helped give a boost in credibility both to me professionally and Mirror Indy as a news organization. We are still relatively new (turning 2 in December), so that kind of recognition goes a long way in solidifying our place in the local news landscape.</p> <p>3. Thankfully, Mirror Indy has supported investigative work since its inception. So it's difficult to say if the win affected how we support investigative work as an organization. We continue to publish investigations, including follow-up coverage of the Indianapolis Housing Agency."</p> <p>—</p> <p>Emily H: "1. Our investigation into the Indianapolis Housing Agency increased the public awareness about the deep systemic issues that contributed to its decline. While some were aware that the agency had been placed into receivership, few knew the extent of the problems, which dated back two decades. In the wake of our reporting, we have been able to help individuals who rely on IHA assistance to navigate an opaque system.</p> <p>2. Last year was a bit of a homecoming for me after completing a two-year investigative fellowship in Chicago. This was the first major investigation I have led in Indianapolis, and it is personally very gratifying to have that work recognized by the judges of the A-Mark awards.</p> <p>3. As 2024 was our first full year in existence, recognition like this helps justify the importance of investigative journalism even for a community newsroom. It certainly helps us make the case for continued watchdog coverage."</p>

Kentucky	
1st	Winning piece: Josh Wood, Krista Johnson, and Rob Byers, "The Cost of Empire," <i>The Courier</i>

Winning reporters answered three questions:

1. Did your investigative piece lead to any concrete changes?
2. Did winning the A-Mark Prize have any impact on you?
3. Did your win affect how your outlet prioritizes or supports investigative work?

Kentucky

Journal

Rob B: “Thank you! Here are my thoughts on these questions, in relation to our 1st- and 2nd-place award-winning projects – Cost of Empire and Silence & Secrets.

1. Yes, each of our A-Mark Prize-winning projects made an impact. Silence & Secrets, our investigation into child sex abuse by Kentucky school coaches, led to two new laws being passed during this year’s legislative session aimed at raising awareness of the problem.

2. Being recognized for our work always has an impact, both professionally and personally: professionally, in its ability to further promote the work and the journalists who made it happen; personally, because it’s always nice to know there are folks out there who care.

3. The Courier Journal has long been known as a publication that prioritizes investigative reporting, and we will continue along that path.”

—
Krista J: “The A-Mark Prize was very unexpected and welcomed, I appreciate your foundation for supporting local journalism.

A significant result of our investigative piece was that the local church that housed the private school we wrote about decided to end its lease agreement with the school after reading our series. The school had been at that location for more than 20 years but church leaders said they were horrified by the allegations made by former students of the school, then further horrified by the lack of concern among school leadership to address those issues.

‘The allegations of public shaming, the allegations of groups including LGBTQ+ folk being specifically targeted, is unacceptable to our congregation, and we were horrified to read the allegations in the paper,’ the church’s co-pastor Jordan Conley told *The Courier Journal*.

The series also led former students of the school to launch a website calling for accountability and urging other students to come forward with their experiences of mistreatment.

In terms of how winning the prize impacted me, it was a great honor that came at a time when I was personally feeling pretty burnt out in this field. There are many reasons why this job is challenging and it often involves more criticism than praise. I didn’t realize just how much I needed to be told that I was doing a good job and that I deserved to be recognized for it.”

2nd

Winning piece: Stephanie Kuzdym and Rob Byers, “Silence & Secrets: an investigation into child sex abuse by Kentucky’s coaches,” *The Courier Journal*

Stephanie K: “1. Yes, Silence & Secrets lead to concrete changes. Two of three bills connected to the project passed and Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear signed them into law, including the first in Kentucky General Assembly history to focus on sexual abuse in athletics. The second law bans communication between district employees and students, if not on a pre-approved

Winning reporters answered three questions:

1. Did your investigative piece lead to any concrete changes?
2. Did winning the A-Mark Prize have any impact on you?
3. Did your win affect how your outlet prioritizes or supports investigative work?

Kentucky

third-party traceable form of communication.

We've also followed up on the coaches' trials, which because we put them in the spotlight, has drawn more local media attention.

2. Yes! In a few ways. Personally, it validated the hard work spent on digging through the most disgusting topic I've encountered yet. Professionally, it gave me resources to continue to dig. Also, I used some of the funds to improve my equipment that I use to help me navigate thousands of pages of documents.

3. Our newsroom prioritizes and supports these in-depth projects. It's not in our make-up to stray from that, BUT the A-Mark Foundation's support just increases that newsroom support because we have more to do more, meaning holding more of the powerful accountable and shining a light in places that remain in the darkness and giving a voice to more of those who otherwise would not be heard. So thank you A-Mark Foundation for seeing us and our hard work."

Louisiana

3rd

Winning piece: Natalie McLendon, "Lake Charles mayor slams nonprofit leader for online criticism, leading her to resign," Louisiana Illuminator

Natalie M: "1. My investigative piece on the City of Lake Charles public records involved a lawsuit for records access. The city turned over the specific records we originally requested (emails from the former mayor that the city alleged were not public due to attorney-client privilege) before a full judicial review could occur. Additionally, the city changed its policies on public records access, offering clarity and a more economical fee structure. For example, the records I originally requested cost more than \$300. If I were to request those same records today, the cost would be \$35 per flash drive. Still somewhat prohibitive, but much more accessible.

2. Winning the A-Mark Prize had a positive impact on me professionally and personally. It strengthened my credibility with readers and sources, allowing for deeper coverage of tribal governance. Overall, it affirmed to me that regional reporting, even if independent, has a place and encouraged me to pursue other challenging stories.

3. I work as a freelance journalist."

Winning reporters answered three questions:

1. Did your investigative piece lead to any concrete changes?
2. Did winning the A-Mark Prize have any impact on you?
3. Did your win affect how your outlet prioritizes or supports investigative work?

Massachusetts	
1st	<p>Winning piece: Hadley Barndollar, “Pill Presses,” MassLive</p> <p>“I was honored to receive the A-Mark Prize in Massachusetts – it was so exciting.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Since our series on pill press machines published, two bills were filed in the Massachusetts House of Representatives focused on pill press regulation and enforcement. Those are currently making their way through the hearing and committee processes. In addition, a top U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration official in Massachusetts remarked the following about the series: ‘This is a very unreported (or even never reported) issue. This has to spur something. It’s outstanding.’ 2. The award has tremendous impact both professionally and personally, recognizing a series that I devoted nearly a year of my life to and lifting its profile within the New England journalism community. Also, awards in journalism very rarely come with money. And I would be remiss if I didn’t mention how much this can mean in a profession where we aren’t raking in the big bucks. With the A-Mark Prize, I was able to pay off some credit card and student loan debt, pay a car bill and put some away in savings. This was huge for me! 3. MassLive has been working to elevate its enterprise and investigative journalism as a core pillar of our strategic plan for the future. The A-Mark Prize was widely celebrated in our newsroom. In addition, the prize money received by the organization ultimately went back into the community – as part of our DEI committee efforts to volunteer locally and provide those organizations with one-time donations of support. In this case, it was a soup kitchen called The Haley House in Boston’s South End.”
3rd	<p>Winning piece: Greta Jochem, “Highview Nursing Home,” <i>The Republican</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> “1. The story definitely brought about more public awareness. I heard from many people in the community about it. Several months after the story was published, the facility announced it was closing. I can’t know for sure how the reporting impacted that, but the timing of the story suggests it may have had an impact on their decision to close. 2. Working as a journalist can be hard when there’s a lot happening in the world and fewer people to cover it. It’s really rewarding to be recognized for your hard work! I really appreciate the award. 3. The newspaper is supportive of investigative work like this, and to me, this award reinforced that.”

Minnesota	
1st	<p>Winning piece: A.J. Lagoe, Steve Eckert, Gary Knox, and Kelly Dietz, “KARE 11 Investigates:</p>

Winning reporters answered three questions:

1. Did your investigative piece lead to any concrete changes?
2. Did winning the A-Mark Prize have any impact on you?
3. Did your win affect how your outlet prioritizes or supports investigative work?

Minnesota	
	<p>Recovery Inc.,” KARE-TV</p> <p>AJ L: “Thank you and thanks to the A-Mark Foundation! I’ve cc’d the rest of the team so you’ll have their contact – but I’m sure they’d second the answers below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes. Our Recovery Inc. investigation exposed widespread Medicaid fraud within Minnesota’s addiction recovery industry, directly prompting federal and state criminal probes, an FBI raid, and multiple federal wire fraud indictments. Two of the state’s largest recovery service providers were shut down. Beyond enforcement, our reporting helped drive a series of legislative and policy reforms aimed at preventing future abuse - changes now codified in state law. 2. Absolutely. We reinvested the A-Mark Prize funds into our journalism - purchasing new field equipment (compact gimbal cameras and microphones) that we now use daily to elevate our reporting. The award also made possible professional development travel for team members that our newsroom budget could not cover. In short, the prize strengthened both our craft and our capacity to produce high-impact investigative work. 3. KARE 11 has long made investigative journalism a core mission. That commitment is industry leading and remains unwavering. But in an era of tightening newsroom budgets, the A-Mark Prize provided tangible reinforcement - helping us sustain innovation, invest in tools, and expand training opportunities that directly enhance our station’s ability to pursue accountability reporting.”
2nd	<p>Winning piece: Nathan O’Neal, Casey Hooker, and Joe Augustine, “Costly Crisis,” KMSP-TV</p> <p>Joe A: “Our team was honored to be recognized by the A-Mark Foundation.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes. Ramsey County immediately issued a moratorium on billing people who called the crisis hotline. The county later apologized and changed its policy. The legislature followed up the following year with new legislation preventing counties from charging for crisis hotline services. 2. Yes. The field of entries clearly consisted of high-quality work, and we were very proud to be part of that. The judge’s comments affirmed some of our own thinking about the stories and their impact. 3. Fortunately, our television station has been and remains committed to investigative work. I believe the A-Mark Prize stands out in that it financially incentivizes applicants compared to other awards in which the price of admission deters participation. As newsroom budgets continue to tighten, these types of awards are appreciated. Finally, the low-cost barrier and transparency on judging comments reduces the feeling of “pay for play” that exists with other awards.”
3rd	<p>Winning piece: Deena Winter and Patrick Coolican, “How fraudsters have gamed Minnesota government for millions,” an investigative series, Minnesota Reformer</p> <p>Patrick C: “1. Our investigative pieces were about fraud in government programs; it’s hard to disentangle our investigations with federal investigations, but suffice to say we’ve now seen</p>

Winning reporters answered three questions:

1. Did your investigative piece lead to any concrete changes?
2. Did winning the A-Mark Prize have any impact on you?
3. Did your win affect how your outlet prioritizes or supports investigative work?

Minnesota	
	<p>search warrant raids and indictments related to the program fraud we investigated as well as widespread public understanding of the problem. Eg: We report on potential fraud at an autism provider; federal indictment of the same place about a year later.</p> <p>2. The Reformer team was proud of the achievement, especially given the size of our newsroom and the strength of the competition. The award reinforced our belief in our mission, to do accountability journalism. We used a portion of the prize money to host a team dinner that included spouses and partners. It was a first for us and a special way to commemorate our work.</p> <p>3. While we were at the team dinner, I said a toast that included something about how we need to focus on the work, and if we do that day after day, then maybe we'll wind up in the same place in a year, saying another toast at another fancy dinner. I was joking: We do the work because it needs doing, but I'm not blind to the extra incentive that comes with winning a cash prize. In short, it was a huge deal for me and our entire team."</p> <p>Deena W: "1. Yes, our reporting on fraud culminated in the governor finally paying attention to the issue, legislation being introduced, and now it is becoming a huge issue in the governor's race next year. I believe that our constant hammering on the issue really pushed things over the edge.</p> <p>2. I've won many journalism awards over the years, but this is the first time I believe they came with any money. It was a nice little bonus and I believe the organization giving it is doing something important nationwide.</p> <p>3. I don't work at that outlet anymore so I couldn't say for sure. I have moved onto a bigger news outlet. Thank you for your generosity."</p>

Nebraska	
1st	<p>Winning piece: Chris Dunker and Andrew Wegley, "Pillen's Plan Saves Him \$1 Million in Taxes," <i>Lincoln Journal Star</i></p> <p>Andrew W: "1. Our story on the Nebraska governor's property tax plan + what he stood to gain from it didn't directly lead to any concrete changes, but lawmakers ultimately did kill his plan in the Legislature, and some cited our story as they railed against his "Reverse Robinhood scheme." It's unlikely that his plan would have passed without our story, but it also shed new light on the exact scope of the governor's wealth, which was previously unreported, and continues to inform debate over property tax reform today.</p> <p>3. In short, no. The Lincoln Journal Star, as long as I've been here, has liked the idea of investigative work, but is just incapable of prioritizing it. We are a daily print newspaper with 7</p>

Winning reporters answered three questions:

1. Did your investigative piece lead to any concrete changes?
2. Did winning the A-Mark Prize have any impact on you?
3. Did your win affect how your outlet prioritizes or supports investigative work?

Nebraska

news reporters. We spend most of our time worried about the next day's paper, or the next Sunday paper, but don't frequently look far beyond that. Even when projects are greenlit, they're worked on on an as-you-have-time basis and rarely a reporter's true priority for longer than a few days at a time. I can't imagine a world in which, now or in the future, we will actually have the resources to prioritize investigative journalism."

—

Chris D: "1. Our story about the Gov. Jim Pillen's tax plan did a few things, but it might be tough to measure the tangible outcome. First, I think it answered a question that was asked repeatedly around the Capitol about how the governor would benefit from the policy he was pushing. We believe it gave readers a look at how wealthy their elected leader was in the amount of property and business interests he has.

But, ultimately, the plan he put forward had been rejected twice before. There weren't really any new changes to it (just that he called the Legislature back for a special session) so it was likely doomed to fail anyway.

2. Yes, I believe winning the A-Mark Prize helped demonstrate to our readers that we are doing important journalism with limited resources. We like to say that we punch above our weight at the Journal Star, and being recognized in this way certainly has put some heft behind that. I have been asked to speak to a couple of groups (an organization of retired faculty at a local college, and a large coffee group that meets to discuss politics and other topics of interest) to talk about the project. I have put A-Mark Prize Award Winner on my resume, but have not applied for any positions at this point.

3. We have a small staff (that is even smaller now than it was when we won the award) so it can be difficult to carve out time to do investigative work while trying to fill the daily paper. I think it has inspired others in our newsroom to think critically about how they can dig deeper into the areas they cover and served as a model for the kind of work we believe we can do."

2nd

Winning piece: Sara Gentzler and Alex Richards, "Ricketts' Riches: How a wealthy governor and his family changed Nebraska politics," *Flatwater Free Press*

Alex R: "1. I think the series I worked on with Sara Gentzler helped an interested public understand just how much influence a very prominent family was wielding in Nebraska's political arena. Most people knew they were extremely influential, but we were able to quantify it and show the ramifications without hyperbole. Any future reporting on Nebraska's governance or political evolution can reach back to build from these established facts.

2. I'm up for tenure this year at Syracuse University's Newhouse School of Public Communications, so it definitely did not hurt my CV or detract from my explanation of creative work and how it fits into my larger faculty agenda!"

Winning reporters answered three questions:

1. Did your investigative piece lead to any concrete changes?
2. Did winning the A-Mark Prize have any impact on you?
3. Did your win affect how your outlet prioritizes or supports investigative work?

New York

1st

Winning piece: Emilie Munson, Chris Hippensteel, Brendan Lyons, Taylor Johnston, and Alexandra Harris, "Serious police car crashes are spiking in New York, causing injuries and deaths," *Times Union*

Emilie (for the team): "We are so grateful for the support of the A-Mark Foundation.

Below are responses on behalf of me and my other colleagues who were also recipients.

1. The reporting led to more public awareness about the dangers of police pursuits in New York and the lack of public information about the use of this police tactic. It prompted some lawmakers and advocates to call for action to address this issue in June 2024. At least one lawmaker has been working on developing legislation in response to our reporting since that time.

2. The prize was a great honor for us professionally and personally. We deeply appreciate the recognition of our work and the financial support of the A-Mark Foundation.

3. The Times Union has championed exemplary investigative reporting and continues to do so after receiving this prize. We added the \$2,500 award for the outlet directly to our investigative reporting fund, which covers project costs like records fees and travel for investigative work."

2nd

Winning piece: Adam Stone, "Corporate Care Series," *The Examiner News*

"Thanks so much for reaching out, and for the award. It is a deeply meaningful honor. The series did have a significant impact in terms of change. Beyond raising next level awareness, I'd say one of the most concrete examples is the inclusion of my reporting as evidence in a major legal action.

On a more local level, the massive attention the series received led to apparent efforts by area Optum leadership to address patient concerns. I've included a link to a relevant letter from Optum that speaks to that.

Winning the A-Mark foundation was also deeply impactful for me personally. And I have to say, even though I'm not one who is fueled by financial motivation, the money attached to the prize really made it feel special on a whole other level. While I've won several press association awards in the past, none before had a cash prize. It told me that there are still people and organizations out there who understand and appreciate the value of this work, and are willing to invest in it. So BIG thank you. Knowing the work is valued gave me more motivation to keep pushing journalistically, just in general.

And, yes, on a related note, it did and does affect efforts to do more investigative work in the future. In fact, next month, on Nov. 5, we're set to launch Sick Care, a national podcast from Peabody award-winning producers that builds off my written reporting you awarded. The night I won the A-Mark Prize was the night I started telling colleagues about the podcast plans.

Winning reporters answered three questions:

1. Did your investigative piece lead to any concrete changes?
2. Did winning the A-Mark Prize have any impact on you?
3. Did your win affect how your outlet prioritizes or supports investigative work?

New York	
	Somehow winning the award gave me the extra confidence to start talking more publicly about the project we're going to soon debut."

North Carolina	
1st	<p>Winning piece: Dan Kane and David Raynor, "The Power & Secrecy Project," <i>The News & Observer</i></p> <p>Dan K: "Thank you so much for reaching out. I have been wanting to thank the A-Mark Foundation for this honor. It was a very special night - the reaction in the banquet hall to our win told me many of the state's print and online journalists really connected with this work. The other finalists did excellent work as well.</p> <p>1. Power & Secrecy had a big focus on legislative spending that benefited insiders, and in two cases a federal grand jury picked up on our work. The grand jury had (apparently) begun its work with another legislative expenditure I had exposed three years earlier. After we reported on a flurry of subpoenas through the end of last year, things got very quiet after President Trump took office. We have a new U.S. attorney who showed little knowledge of our reports or the grand jury's actions. It is not at all clear that this investigation is continuing. We also saw efforts at legislative reforms, though the folks running the legislature (and responsible for the issues we've reported) have not embraced them. We have seen a significant drop in pork in the budget bills, but none of the legislative leaders are publicly saying our reporting had anything to do with that.</p> <p>2. It was a truly special moment to be announced as the winner in a banquet room full of the state's top print and online journalists, and hear their robust applause. I could tell a lot of them were familiar with my reporting, and probably had a pretty good idea how hard it was to do a series that took on an institution that continues to grow in power. It's also a tremendously great feeling to know that there are people and foundations such as A-Mark who recognize how important it is to build up investigative reporting at the state and local level. What's been happening at our level over the past 20 years is like a never ending nightmare. There are all kinds of important stories people in these communities aren't seeing.</p> <p>3. Even before I came here in 1997 the N&O was prioritizing investigative work with a small team of reporters and plenty of digging by beat reporters. We've kept the team going, but all the cutbacks have particularly hurt us at the beat level. Those reporters have had their territories expanded so much that it's hard for them to break free of the daily grind. My hope, though, is that this will help spark more training and collaboration throughout the newsroom, and result in more short and long term investigative stories. It's a little early to say we are moving in that direction, but that's the case I'll be making when our I-team (which includes two reporters from The Charlotte Observer) meets for a retreat next month."</p>
2nd	Winning piece: Jane Winik Sartwell, "Deserting Women," Carolina Public Press

Winning reporters answered three questions:

1. Did your investigative piece lead to any concrete changes?
2. Did winning the A-Mark Prize have any impact on you?
3. Did your win affect how your outlet prioritizes or supports investigative work?

North Carolina	
	<p>“Thank you so much for the opportunity to provide feedback.</p> <p>(1) The most concrete effect so far has been public awareness – no policy changes or legal action, yet. During reporting, I made several legislators aware of my findings. Since winning the prize, I've had the opportunity to speak to college students about the project. I believe that quantifying the problem of dwindling maternity care will help activists point to concrete numbers when discussing the issue.</p> <p>(2) Winning the A-Mark prize was the most exciting and rewarding moment of my professional life thus far. I felt – and still feel – truly honored. It redoubled my commitment to producing quality investigations, knowing that hard work does not go unnoticed. I am so grateful to the A-Mark Foundation for the vote of confidence.</p> <p>(3) Even though Carolina Public Press already prioritizes investigative work, this prize had a real effect on the excitement around projects like this one, both in myself, my colleagues, and the higher-ups. It has made a difference in the culture, I think.</p> <p>Once again, thank you so much! What an honor.”</p>
3rd	<p>Winning piece: Andrew R. Jones, “Asheville’s Mission Hospital,” Asheville Watchdog</p> <p>“Thank you to A-Mark for recognizing the Watchdog's work! It was an honor to be among this year's winners.</p> <p>1. Yes, the ongoing work highlighted in this award has prompted community outcry and several investigations into quality of care at Mission Hospital. Our work is frequently highlighted in press conferences held by the local health care reform group. The hospital recently made commitments to hire more nurses and staff.</p> <p>2. Very much so. This is the most significant recognition I've ever received for my investigative work. I aim for the highest quality reporting and the most impactful service to my community and recognition like this tells me I'm headed in the right direction.</p> <p>3. I think it bolstered what the Watchdog has known for years: health care reporting and especially investigative endeavors are a major pillar of our mission. We'll continue to invest resources in this work for a long time, especially as the crisis in hospital care seems to be only beginning here in Asheville.”</p>

North Dakota	
2nd	<p>Winning piece: Sav Kelly, “Shooting in Polk County,” <i>Grand Forks Herald</i></p> <p>“1) I believe my coverage of Lucas Gilbertson’s fatal shooting in rural Polk County raised</p>

Winning reporters answered three questions:

1. Did your investigative piece lead to any concrete changes?
2. Did winning the A-Mark Prize have any impact on you?
3. Did your win affect how your outlet prioritizes or supports investigative work?

North Dakota	
	<p>awareness about Aeiiso Schrage, the officer who killed Gilbertson; the connections between law enforcement and prosecutors in smaller communities; and the Pine to Prairie Task Force, which Schrage is a member of and allows undercover status that, if not for the lawsuit filed against Schrage, would have concealed his identity as the shooter.</p> <p>I now hear from people in jail who have read my stories and have concerns about the Pine to Prairie Task Force, area law enforcement and/or conflicts of interest, so I believe my coverage has made people feel comfortable reaching out with their own concerns.</p> <p>2) It had an impact on me personally, because it was a significant amount of money that has provided me with some financial security.</p> <p>3) I believe the Grand Forks Herald always supports investigative work, however, the paper runs largely on smaller, day-to-day coverage. I think there is a balance to be found, and we are working on it."</p>

Ohio	
2nd	<p>Winning piece: Dan Horn and Amber Hunt, "Cincinnati homicide cases unravel after deals with informants," <i>The Cincinnati Enquirer</i></p> <p>Dan H: "We appreciate the foundation's interest and its sponsorship of the A-Mark Prize.</p> <p>Regarding your questions:</p> <p>Our story on the government's use of informants in homicide cases drew attention to several criminal convictions that were making their way through the appeals process or had already gone through that process. A defendant in one of those cases was freed just a few months after our story published when prosecutors abruptly dropped their efforts to keep him in prison.</p> <p>Our story also became an issue in the Hamilton County prosecutor's race in the November election. The incumbent who was overseeing many of these cases launched a 'conviction integrity unit' soon after our first story published to review convictions and prosecutions. That prosecutor later lost the election and was replaced by a prosecutor who has promised to review the office's use of informants.</p> <p>And yes, our editors viewed the A-Mark Prize as further evidence this kind of investigative work is worth doing. We spent months digging through records to report and write this story, while also juggling other responsibilities. The award helps validate the value of that work and encourages continued support of it."</p>
3rd	<p>Winning piece: Isabel Cleary, "On the Dark Web: Uncovering the City Hack," NBC4 WCMH</p>

Winning reporters answered three questions:

1. Did your investigative piece lead to any concrete changes?
2. Did winning the A-Mark Prize have any impact on you?
3. Did your win affect how your outlet prioritizes or supports investigative work?

Ohio	
	<p>"1. Yes, after our original reporting the city started offering credit monitoring services to everyone impacted by the breach. It also increased public awareness, with multiple people still pushing the city on the issue to this day.</p> <p>2. Winning the A-Mark Prize was truly an honor. As an investigative reporter towards the beginning of my career, it really helped my self confidence in my career path. Professionally, it allowed for investments in investigative trainings.</p> <p>3. Yes, the financial aspect allowed me to attend trainings that helped me grow as an investigative reporter. This opportunity would not have been in the budget otherwise. Thank you so much."</p>

Oklahoma	
3rd	<p>Winning piece: Ruby Topalian, "Pay or your son dies: Oklahoma inmates' families extorted by inside gangs," <i>Oklahoma Watch</i></p> <p>"1. The Oklahoma Department of Corrections investigation into the extortion of Cynthia (the central voice platformed in the story) concluded that her incarcerated son was behind the extortion. Cynthia always believed this was an attempt to close their case early. Subsequently, she learned from an investigator that a district attorney's office was opening a case against her son. She had emailed the investigator constantly to try to discern what was happening with the case but he didn't respond. 15 days after the article was published, the investigator finally emailed to say the district attorney's office was closing the case.</p> <p>2. Yes, absolutely. When I broke this story, I was just nineteen. Having the opportunity to become a real investigative reporter and to truly help someone with my work at this age, was the most formative experience of my journalistic career, if not my life, so far. It cemented my love for investigative reporting and affirmed to me that this is what I want to spend my life doing. Being recognized through an A-Mark Prize emphasized to me that I'm really on the right path. I don't do journalism for the awards but as a young reporter, this recognition has helped keep me on track when doubts creep in about whether I have "what it takes."</p> <p>3. I was an intern at Oklahoma Watch so I cannot say for sure but I know that this win meant a lot to the entire team."</p>

Oregon	
1st	<p>Winning piece: Noelle Crombie and Mike Rogoway, "A CEO's Secrets," <i>The Oregonian</i></p>

Winning reporters answered three questions:

1. Did your investigative piece lead to any concrete changes?
2. Did winning the A-Mark Prize have any impact on you?
3. Did your win affect how your outlet prioritizes or supports investigative work?

Oregon	
	<p>Mike R: “1. Yes, the company fired the CEO we had been writing about. It put him on leave five days after our initial report. The CEO’s exit has triggered additional activity, including his own suit against the company and an additional allegation against him. Moreover, our reporting has been meaningful to the people he admitted abusing in the 1980s, when he was a high school teacher, and I know current and former employees are very gratified that pervasive misconduct they witnessed has been addressed, at last.</p> <p>2. It’s always satisfying for journalists to have their work recognized. Our primary goal, of course, is to inform the public and I take this award as a signal that people appreciate why this topic was important and why reform was appropriate.</p> <p>3. I believe The Oregonian appreciates professional recognition in the same way I do – as a signifier of the value of public interest journalism. This award is a manifestation of that, demonstrating that our peers also see value in the time and effort the organization puts into reporting information that produces meaningful change.”</p>

Pennsylvania	
2nd	<p>Winning piece: Angela Couloumbis, “Unprotected,” Spotlight PA</p> <p>“1. My investigation uncovered how Pennsylvania’s government-run safety net for vulnerable older adults has been failing for years to keep them safe from abuse and neglect. Following Spotlight PA’s reporting, a state representative introduced legislation requiring the state Department of Aging to publish information on its website about how well each of the 52 county aging agencies are faring in protecting those older adults.</p> <p>The department has also started publishing some information about how quickly county agencies are completing investigations into allegations of abuse and neglect involving older adults in their care.</p> <p>And a state senator is separately seeking support for legislation that would require the department to create multi-disciplinary teams at the county level to review the circumstances when older adults die while their cases are under active investigation.</p> <p>2. Absolutely. I was deeply honored to have my work recognized, and that has only strengthened my resolve to keep reporting on the issue until there are fewer older adults being left at risk by the very system they rely on.</p> <p>Importantly: this award also served as an acknowledgment of the sources (some of whom put their livelihoods at risk to speak with me) who helped make the stories possible. Some of them have worked for years to be heard -- and be taken seriously -- when raising alarms about problems in the state’s older adult safety network.</p>

Winning reporters answered three questions:

1. Did your investigative piece lead to any concrete changes?
2. Did winning the A-Mark Prize have any impact on you?
3. Did your win affect how your outlet prioritizes or supports investigative work?

Pennsylvania	
	3. I am lucky to work for a news organization like Spotlight PA, which was founded on the premise that accountability and investigative journalism is sorely needed in statehouses. But we can't do that work without the additional financial support from respected organizations like yours. We are deeply grateful for that support, and will use it to continue our mission into the future of holding government and public officials accountable."

Vermont	
1st	<p>Winning piece: Carly Berlin, "Emergency Shelters," VTDigger and Vermont Public</p> <p>"1. Following our reporting on Vermont's wind-down of motel-based shelter for families – and the reality that families with children were setting up camp because they lacked other options – state officials opened two family shelters for the 2024-2025 winter season. Our reporting challenging the 'magnet theory' of homelessness also made a big impact on the public's understanding of homelessness in Vermont, prompting op-eds, discussion at the Statehouse, and an avalanche of audience response to my email inbox.</p> <p>2. It's wonderful to get recognition for challenging work, and for that honor to come along with a monetary prize. It gives me more license in my newsroom to pitch ambitious, enterprise projects.</p> <p>3. It hasn't been long enough to say, but I hope it does in the future!"</p>

Wisconsin	
1st	<p>Winning piece: Kelli Arseneau, Drake Bentley, Ashley Luthern, Laura Schulte, and Vanessa Swales, "Wisconsin Prison Crisis," <i>Milwaukee Journal Sentinel</i></p> <p>Drake B: "Thank you to the foundation for highlighting our work.</p> <p>1. Coverage of "Wisconsin's prison crisis" for the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and USA Today Wisconsin Network brought increased public awareness to the state's broken system of incarceration. This has been over 2½ years of reporting and counting. The deaths of prisoners at Waupun Correctional Institution led to both criminal and civil cases. Prison staff have been convicted. Our reporting has been cited in ongoing civil litigation surrounding the deaths of prisoners Cameron Williams and Dean Hoffmann. In his budget proposal, Gov. Tony Evers proposed prison reform, but no policy changes made it into the final budget, which was negotiated with the Republican-led state Legislature. In recent months however, despite this lack of support from the Republican-led state legislature, the governor persisted and the bipartisan state building commission unanimously approved spending \$15 million to proceed with planning for Evers' proposed prison reforms.</p>

Winning reporters answered three questions:

1. Did your investigative piece lead to any concrete changes?
2. Did winning the A-Mark Prize have any impact on you?
3. Did your win affect how your outlet prioritizes or supports investigative work?

Wisconsin	
	<p>2. I am forever grateful to be an inaugural winner of the Wisconsin A-Mark Prize. Recognizing our work had a positive impact on my professional career. It was one thing to win a Milwaukee Press Club Award, but the A-Mark Prize is special because it highlights the best investigative work in this state and others. To be able to say that I'm an award-winning investigative journalist is humbling and that was made possible by you all.</p> <p>3. The Journal Sentinel has a storied history of investigative reporting, but the prison coverage was one of the first efforts under new leadership in the investigations division and the newsroom as a whole. This reporting helped bring about collaboration in the newsroom, which is something the Journal Sentinel is one of the best at when done correctly."</p>
2nd	<p>Winning piece: Cleo Krejci, "The Gray Zone," <i>Milwaukee Journal Sentinel</i></p> <p>"1. It definitely led to public awareness and calls for legislative action on the part of lawmakers. It also got the attention of state lobbyists who are directly involved in regulation and oversight of the assisted living industry. Many, many people also contacted me to share their own stories about family members who have languished in struggling assisted living facilities.</p> <p>2. Yes, the award certainly helped in my personal career growth. The money also helped significantly, given I don't make much in my salary (about \$44K before taxes).</p> <p>3. We have an investigative team with investigative reporters. Anyone can write an investigative story or pitch a project. So, the newsroom absolutely supports it, despite pressures from the company (Gannett / USA Today) to consistently produce quick, short stories."</p>

Anonymous - Anonymity was requested for the following feedback	
	<p>"I don't have much to say beyond I'm grateful that the prize has a cash award and not just for the first place winner. My share of the award paid for my youngest to attend daycare this year."</p> <p>–</p> <p>"1. Yes. Following the newspaper's investigations, 10 people saw their contempt of court convictions and sentences erased, and nine of those people were immediately released from jail. A district court judge ruled the city's practice was unconstitutional, and the city stopped using contempt of court to punish people for missing court dates.</p> <p>The reporting also prompted changes to state law. One change prohibited a person's failure to appear for a court hearing from forming the basis of a municipal criminal charge. Separately, a bill that aimed to bar municipal courts from imposing more severe sentences than state courts for the same crimes passed the legislature but was vetoed by the Governor.</p>

Winning reporters answered three questions:

1. Did your investigative piece lead to any concrete changes?
2. Did winning the A-Mark Prize have any impact on you?
3. Did your win affect how your outlet prioritizes or supports investigative work?

2. The award was gratifying to win -- it was great to be recognized -- but more practically, the \$2,500 that was my share of the prize money represents a 3.5% raise/bonus for this year -- and that's very significant considering our company has given reporters 3% raises only twice over the last decade. Every bit of extra money in this profession helps me stay in journalism a little longer.

3. My outlet already values investigative work, but it is my understanding that the editors plan to spend at least some of the newsroom's share of the prize money to send more reporters to professional training (including investigative training) over the next year.”

–

“1. I believe it did raise awareness about some of the problems with policing in remote corners of the state, especially when it’s done by the State Police. A local police chief answers to the mayor or township supervisor. A sheriff faces voters every four years. State Police answer only to the governor, for whom they also provide personal protection. No governor of either party has been eager to reform the State Police, who are mostly held accountable by the courts when lawsuits are filed. Local media lack the resources to do this kind of deep dive into the conduct of police and they were grateful for our efforts. Some even used their platforms to amplify our story. I continue to get emails about the case more than a year after its launch. A State Senator mentioned our story in a call he made for reforms to the State Police, though none have been enacted to date.

2. It was a real thrill to win the A-Mark Prize. I’ve won other awards over the course of my career, but I’ve never received one that included a cash component. I truly salute you for adding this. I’m convinced journalists are historically underpaid for the amount of work they do and the responsibilities they bear. It is nice that someone out there recognizes this and rewards good work. News of the award went out far and wide and it was great to hear from friends, relatives, coworkers past and present, that our work had been recognized.

3. I don’t believe it changed a lot for us. My outlet has long been committed to investigative journalism. If anything, it did remind us that investigative work matters to readers, to the community at large and to the people who evaluate journalism.”

–

“I left the outlet last year so I'm not sure I can fully answer your questions, but I know a city council member in the city was going to make an inquiry to the police department when we started asking questions about their policy on police chases. I'm not sure if he wound up proposing any changes. I believe the series raised public awareness, I got several emails from readers who talked about their own experiences as bystanders in police chases. If my memory serves me correctly, at least one of the stories got over 20,000 pageviews, but the outlet would have more exact audience data.

It was a professional honor to receive the award and personally, the money helped me with a hefty, unexpected expense. Since I have left the outlet, I'm not sure if it impacted their future investigative efforts, but I certainly hope it did!”

–

Winning reporters answered three questions:

1. Did your investigative piece lead to any concrete changes?
2. Did winning the A-Mark Prize have any impact on you?
3. Did your win affect how your outlet prioritizes or supports investigative work?

“My colleagues and I were thrilled to earn this award, and we continue to be inspired to produce impactful investigative storytelling that makes a difference in our state.

1. Yes, it helped raise public concern about the accuracy of sobriety testing and questioning the police on why this is happening. It gives people the opportunity to speak up and say that this is wrong when they see others have gone through the same situation.

2. Winning this award was such an honor, it definitely validated what we do every day. Striving to get the best story to serve the state.

3. Yes, it led to more investigative stories and working with a team that supports a good interest in getting stories out to the community.”

-

“Once again thank you and the Foundation.

1. Ironically, our story that finished third led to the complete overhaul of the state’s more than 100-year-old statute. There were several bills that were proposed but none that made it out of committee. It is a vexing national issue that no one has really come up with a solution.

2. The fact our still relatively small non-profit had won was quite an accomplishment for our team. On a personal level I appreciated that the award came with a financial stipend. I’ve been doing this for a long time, have won many awards but few offer a monetary prize and journalists in general are underpaid and always have been and, in this day, and age to have an award that offers a cash prize is important.

3. As a smaller non-profit that has committed to a three-member investigative team to have stories acknowledged for prizes is important because it shows that the commitment is worthwhile. As a long-time investigative reporter, I’ve never done the work for prizes but from an organization standpoint having our work recognized reinforced the commitment that has been made and will make it easier to fundraise in the future.”

-

“Please pass along my sincere thanks to everyone at the foundation for the award.

1. Our reporting marked the beginning of an ongoing investigation into the alarming number of deaths (four times the national average) at the local county jail and the county’s medical contract with the medical centers which provide inmate healthcare. Because our reporting continues, it’s difficult to fully measure the scope of its impact.

Still, we’ve already seen meaningful developments. State legislation has recently been filed to address the inappropriate and dangerous practices [highlighted in our reporting]. We believe our reporting has helped illustrate the tragic consequences of that systemic failure.

Winning reporters answered three questions:

1. Did your investigative piece lead to any concrete changes?
2. Did winning the A-Mark Prize have any impact on you?
3. Did your win affect how your outlet prioritizes or supports investigative work?

Our coverage also brought these issues to the attention of a [related nonprofit] group, which, after learning of the deaths through our reporting, investigated several cases and directed the sheriff to [make changes].

Beyond policy, the series significantly heightened public awareness and informed legal action. Families of those who died in custody—and a former jail medical liaison who filed a whistleblower lawsuit—have cited our independent findings in their pursuit of accountability.

2. Winning the A-Mark Prize reaffirmed the power and necessity of local, independent journalism in small communities. Professionally, the recognition was affirming. The accompanying financial award helped offset the substantial costs of this multi-year investigation—expenses that conservatively exceed \$40,000.

Personally, what keeps me up at night is the frustration that this level of accountability reporting—so clearly valued by the public—remains so difficult to sustain. The challenge isn't only financial; it's also deeply personal. Investigating and publishing stories that hold the most powerful person in your community to account carries real risks, especially when combined with the strain of how to keep the lights on. The award was both an honor and a reminder of the personal and professional costs of doing this work.

3. I believe investigative journalism should not be a luxury reserved for large, well-funded outlets—it's essential to the health of a community and to democracy itself. The A-Mark recognition helped demonstrate to our readers and supporters the recognized value of this kind of watchdog journalism. I sometimes wonder if they grasp how lucky they are to have a small outlet willing to report in a ring at a level well above our weight class.

It validated our model: small, independent, and unafraid to pursue the truth, no matter where it leads. Yet the central question remains—can we sustain it? That uncertainty continues to drive our efforts to do as much as we can while we can.”

—

“1. Concrete is hard to document, but abstractly I would say yes. My work has pushed the city and related organizers to strengthen the quality of care. I know that they read my stories (they tell me as such) and that it helps guide their work and relationships to the [vulnerable population].

2. Professionally: yes, it gave me a great boost to my resume and boosted the authority of my newsroom, a great plus as we are small and any recognition helps raise our profile! Personally: yes, the prize money was a big, big help for me financially.

3. Absolutely. My editor has been pushing me and others to sharpen our skillset in data and investigative work after the recognition. Not necessarily in the hopes of winning again, but just to prove that our first win isn't an anomaly!”

—

Winning reporters answered three questions:

1. Did your investigative piece lead to any concrete changes?
2. Did winning the A-Mark Prize have any impact on you?
3. Did your win affect how your outlet prioritizes or supports investigative work?

“1. The coverage of the grant led to a criminal investigation spearheaded by the state attorney general and, recently, a law enforcement raid of the state department. That investigation is ongoing as is our separate investigative coverage. The articles, as well as a broader series of stories, have led to changes to state legislative rules. The state Legislature currently is working to cement those rules into law.

2. Winning the A-Mark Prize gave the reporting more exposure. For me, that was very rewarding because my goal is to tell readers how their money is being spent and that exposure increased the number of people who are now aware of the decisions their lawmakers are making. Personally, it was very humbling to receive the award. There are a lot of people behind the scenes who made this reporting possible and I know I wouldn't have been able to do it without their support.

3. Fortunately, I work at an outlet that, while requiring quite a bit in daily content, also knows the value of allocating time and resources for investigative work. I believe the award has underscored the importance of that type of journalism.”

Winning reporters answered three questions:

1. Did your investigative piece lead to any concrete changes?
2. Did winning the A-Mark Prize have any impact on you?
3. Did your win affect how your outlet prioritizes or supports investigative work?



**FOR A COPY OF THIS REPORT, VISIT
AMARKFOUNDATION.ORG.**

Contact info@amarkfoundation.org for any comments or questions.