



The Provincetown Independent 2021 Annual Benefit Report

Letter from the Publisher and Editor

The *Provincetown Independent* turned two this year. For a young newspaper like this one, growth in readership is crucial — an indication we're on the right track, helping people be more informed about and engaged in civic and cultural life.

From January to December 2021, our paid circulation grew by 25.6 percent, from 3,525 to 4,427. That growth energized our sense of purpose.

In a year that began with an attack on democracy — the Jan. 6 storming of the Capitol and the denial of the election results — the dangerous power of misinformation came into stark focus. We recommitted ourselves to reporting on civic life and civil engagement at the grassroots.

With support from our nonprofit partner, the Local Journalism Project, we worked to bring young reporters into the profession and involve them in covering town meetings and holding public officials to account. This work has a dual purpose: improving the scope and depth of our news coverage and educating aspiring journalists in the skills, principles, and ethics of our profession.

As the four towns of the Outer Cape began to emerge from the isolation that followed the outbreak of Covid-19, some of the pandemic's long-term effects came into view.

One was a demographic shift that seemed like it might be temporary. As people from cities sought refuge from pandemic stresses in our relatively remote towns, housing prices soared and the availability of year-round rentals plummeted. An employment crisis ensued, affecting nonprofits, government, businesses, and tourism. At the newspaper, too, we found recruiting new employees did not get easier.

Our reporting traced this progression as well as possible solutions, which mainly focused on affordable housing.

During the summer, the Outer Cape experienced another shock related to the seasonal economy: “the Provincetown cluster,” as the national press called it, was a Delta variant Covid outbreak during the high season so many local businesses depend on for survival. We were not done covering the pandemic as a public health issue after all.

The Provincetown Independent Inc. is a Massachusetts benefit corporation. By organizing the business this way, we committed ourselves to high standards of accountability and transparency. Preparing this report is part of that.

In January 2021, 15 months after launching the *Independent*, we reached a goal we had hoped to achieve before publishing the first issue: raising \$375,000 in start-up capital. Still, that sum is only half of what our business plan called for in our projections, which foresaw breaking even in Year 5.

Late in 2021, feeling more secure in having survived the financial uncertainty created by the pandemic, we began to assess our progress against that initial business plan and research ways to raise the remainder of our start-up capital.

In April 2021, the *Independent* won 14 awards in the annual Better Newspaper competition of the New England Newspaper and Press Association, including first place in health reporting, science/technology reporting, environmental reporting, sports reporting, and overall design and presentation. Only four other weekly newspapers in all of New England won more awards in the competition.

We ended the year more convinced than ever that high quality is the key to success. That idea does not often show up in recent news stories about the decline of newspapers and the need for a new “business model” for local journalism. Our model seems to be working, and it is based on a simple and old-fashioned premise: do good work.

Teresa Parker, Publisher
and Edward Miller, Editor

I. Our Mission

The *Independent* exists for the public good of our Outer Cape community. Our mission is to produce a high-quality local newspaper devoted to civic engagement, appreciation of culture, and contributing to a more sustainable year-round economy.

II. Inspiration

We continue to be inspired by this special place and by the people who live here. We want to uphold the traditions of open-mindedness, creativity, hard work, and devotion to the commons that best define our community.

Our vision is to tell stories that celebrate all that is good here and to examine the challenges bravely.

We consider ourselves part of a growing movement to defend journalism at the grassroots and believe it is essential to a democratic and just society. We are grateful to be in a community that sees that journalism matters.

III. Guiding Principles: Accountability and Transparency

This document is the Provincetown Independent Inc.'s Benefit Report for the year 2021. It lays out both our goals as a benefit corporation and our progress toward achieving those goals in our second full year of operation.

The Provincetown Independent Inc. was incorporated in January 2019 as a Massachusetts Benefit Corporation. Benefit corporations are held to higher standards of accountability and transparency than other businesses. Their directors are required to consider the impact of the corporation's business activities and practices on all stakeholders, and to publish an annual report of the corporation's performance on a range of social, environmental, and community standards.

IV. Ownership, Governance, and Board Compensation

Other than the publisher and editor, shareholders play no role in guiding the journalism produced by the *Independent*.

As of December 31, 2021, the shareholders in the Provincetown Independent Inc. were:

Louis Black, Austin, Texas, and Wellfleet, Mass.
Jim Campen & Phyllis Ewen, Cambridge and Wellfleet, Mass.
Ben deRuyter, Brewster, Mass.
Mike Dillon, Provincetown, Mass.
John & Yvette Dubinsky, St. Louis, Mo. and Truro, Mass.
Doug Freeman, Newton and Wellfleet, Mass.
Fred and Barbara Grant, Truro, Mass.
David Keller & Mary Maxwell, Truro, Mass.
Edmond Macri, Provincetown, Mass.
Dick Meyer, Washington, D.C. and Truro, Mass.
Edward Miller & Teresa Parker, Wellfleet, Mass.
Irma Ruckstuhl, Truro, Mass.
George Thomas Ryan, Eastham, Mass.
Dean Stein & Curt Sharp, Provincetown, Mass.

Wil Sullivan & Janet Hymowitz, Wellfleet, Mass.
Jay Vivian & Barbara Wood, Truro, Mass.
Carol Warshawsky, Truro, Mass.

The directors of the corporation are Teresa Parker, Edward Miller, and John Dubinsky. Board members received no compensation from the corporation in their capacity as members of the board.

V. Performance Assessment

Selection of Third-Party Standard

Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 156E provides that this annual report should include an assessment of the overall social and environmental performance of the benefit corporation against a third-party standard. The Provincetown Independent Inc. has used the third-party standard framework created by the nonprofit B Lab, supplemented by performance standards specific to a community newspaper suggested by year-round and part-time residents of the four Outer Cape towns, and certified by an independent benefit officer, Carl Sussman of Newton and Wellfleet, Mass., who has prepared this report.

There is no financial or governance relationship between the Provincetown Independent Inc. and either the B Lab or the benefit officer, Carl Sussman, that might materially affect their ability to serve as third-party standard creators.

2021 Performance Assessment—General Public Benefit

In its second year of operation, the Provincetown Independent Inc. published 52 weekly issues.

Adding year-round jobs to the local economy is one of our goals. In 2021, we went from 9 full-time-equivalent year-round employees to 12.3 employees.

Public interest journalism works only if people are reading the newspaper. We started the year with 2,921 subscribers and ended with 3,801. Our paid weekly circulation, including newsstand sales, increased from 3,525 to 4,427. Unique page views of our website increased from a monthly average of 75,767 in 2020 to 102,620 in 2021.

We added two new preferred-stock investors, bringing the total to 16 and the total amount of capital raised to \$375,000, our start-up investment goal. Continued engagement with potential investors will be needed to become self-sustaining.

2021 Performance Assessment—Specific Public Benefit

In each of the following four areas, we have listed the specific benefits that the *Independent* seeks to achieve and provided a score of achieved benefits for the year 2021, the corporation's

third year of operation. This same scale was used last year and will be used in future benefit reports.

A. Environment

1. Publish at least three articles per month on critical environmental issues facing the communities of the Outer Cape, including climate change and sea-level rise. *Grade: 75 articles published during 2021, or 6.25 per month — standard exceeded.*
2. Recycle all paper, plastics, glass, and metal used in office and newspaper production and distribution, as far as practicable. *Grade: standard achieved.*
3. Keep the number of recycled copies of the newspaper because of newsstand returns under 10 percent of the total number of copies printed. *Grade: standard achieved.*
4. Use recycled, biodegradable, and nontoxic products in all office operations, as far as practicable. *Grade: standard achieved.*

Environment Score: 4 of 4 standards achieved

B. Workers and Diversity

1. Publish at least three articles per month on issues of Outer Cape diversity, demographics, working conditions, and housing. *Grade: 87 articles published during 2021, or 7.25 per month — standard exceeded.*
2. Develop, promote, and practice a nondiscrimination policy for employees. *Grade: standard achieved.*
3. Develop, promote, and practice a sexual harassment policy for employees. *Grade: standard achieved.*
4. Provide health insurance coverage with at least 60-percent company payment of premiums to all employees working 30 hours per week or more. *Grade: standard achieved.*
5. Provide paid sick days, vacation, and personal days for all employees. *Grade: standard achieved.*
6. Provide family leave for full-time employees for pregnancy/childbirth and extended family health emergencies. *Grade: standard achieved.*
7. Offer professional development opportunities for employees to develop skills relevant to their jobs. *Grade: standard achieved.*
8. Offer a company-sponsored retirement savings plan for all employees. *Grade: standard not achieved.*

Workers and Diversity Score: 7 of 8 standards achieved

C. Community

1. Publish at least four articles per month on civics and local government. *Grade: 138 articles published in 2021, or 11.5 per month — standard exceeded.*
2. Publish at least two articles per month on issues specifically affecting the LGBTQ community. *Grade: 19 articles published in 2021, or 1.6 articles per month — standard not achieved.*
3. Publish at least two articles per month on children, schools, and family life. *Grade: 35 articles published in 2021, or 2.9 per month — standard exceeded.*

4. Publish at least two articles per month on access to health care and social welfare. *Grade: 56 articles published in 2021, or 4.7 per month — standard exceeded.*
5. Publish at least three articles per month on fishing, farming, and the local economy. *Grade: 92 articles published in 2021, or 7.7 per month — standard exceeded.*
6. Ensure that ownership of the corporation is local, with at least half of the shareholders being full-time residents of Cape Cod. *Grade: 12 of 17 shareholders are full-time Cape Cod residents — standard exceeded.*
7. Avoid outsourcing of jobs and business operations to off-Cape workers and companies. *Grade: standard achieved.*
8. Provide regular opportunities for readers and customers to express their opinions and register complaints with the editorial and business directors. *Grade: standard achieved.*
9. Devote space on the editorial pages for at least nine letters to the editor per month as a measure of public engagement. *Grade: 192 letters published in 2021, or 16 per month — standard exceeded.*
10. Whenever possible, use local suppliers of goods and services, including banking and payroll. *Grade: standard achieved.*
11. Protect the privacy of subscribers by holding all personal information confidential, not selling or trading subscriber lists, and ensuring that third-party subscription services do not harvest personal information. *Grade: standard achieved.*

Community Score: 10 of 11 standards achieved

D. Governance

1. Keep board of directors informed of the company's social and environmental performance through monthly board meetings. *Grade: standard not achieved.*
2. Provide all employees with company financial information (except salaries) at least quarterly. *Grade: standard not achieved.*
3. Publish accurate data on the newspaper's circulation annually. *Grade: standard achieved.*
4. Publicly disclose names of all shareholders in the corporation. *Grade: standard achieved.*
5. Publicly disclose names of all donors to the nonprofit affiliate of the company with the amounts of their donations. *Grade: standard not achieved.*
6. Develop and publish a statement of ethical principles and avoiding conflicts of interest for employees to refer to in the practice of news gathering, reporting, fact checking, and correcting errors. *Grade: standard not achieved.*

Governance Score: 2 of 6 standards achieved

Overall 2021 Score, Specific Public Benefit: 23 of 29 standards achieved

VI. Benefit Director and Benefit Officer

The corporation's benefit director is John Dubinsky.

John Dubinsky, Benefit Director
Provincetown Independent
P.O. Box 1034
Provincetown, MA 02657

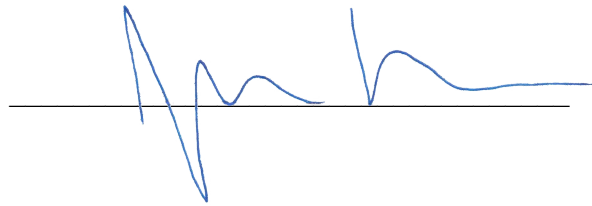
The corporation's benefit officer is Carl Sussman.

Carl Sussman, president
Sussman Associates
125 Franklin Street
Newton, MA 02458

Statement of the Benefit Director

It is my opinion that the Provincetown Independent Inc. has acted in accordance with its general and specific public benefit purposes in all material respects during 2021, the period covered by this report, and that the directors and officers have complied with the provisions of sections 10 and 12 of Mass. General Laws Chapter 156E: Benefit Corporations. It is also my opinion that the directors and officers have used sound and reasonable judgment in determining corporate actions and the best interests of the benefit corporation in all respects. The *Provincetown Independent's* status as a benefit corporation, in my opinion, has contributed to the overall positive view of this newspaper in the community and among shareholders, employees, advertisers, and readers. The *Independent* is growing rapidly but is not yet at the stage of producing a positive return to investors.

John Dubinsky, Benefit Director



Certification of the Benefit Officer

I hereby certify that the information presented in this annual benefit report for the Provincetown Independent Inc. for the year 2021 is accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Carl Sussman, Benefit Officer

