The Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting is a nonprofit, nonpartisan newsroom within Louisville Public Media, a 501(c)3 corporation that operates three public radio stations, including 89.3 WFPL News, a full-time NPR affiliate. KyCIR works with 89.3 WFPL News and other news partners across the region to produce original reporting in the public interest. A member of the Investigative News Network, we produce journalism that affects you, your neighborhood and your commonwealth.

Our mission is to protect society’s most vulnerable citizens, expose wrongdoing in the public and private sectors, increase transparency in government and hold leaders accountable, all in accordance with journalism’s highest standards.

Many newsrooms today are facing difficult choices. Some are shrinking staff and cutting back on investigative reporting, which takes precious time and resources.

But at KyCIR, we believe this in-depth reporting is not a luxury, but a necessity. We produce deeply researched journalism that shines a light on major problems in our city and state and spurs solutions.

We are members of the community. Our work is funded and supported by the community.

“I am heartened to see that the tradition of muckraking and the value it lends to our lives and society still survives. Keep it up. You will NEVER run out of material!”

— Rick Freeman, Louisville
“That Kentucky has its own investigative reporting center based in PUBLIC media is boast-worthy and deserving of support. KyCIR provides oft-lacking CONTEXT, including historical, so citizens can ‘make sense’ of and act on today’s important societal issues, individually and collectively.”

— Ramona R. Rush, former dean, University of Kentucky School of Communications

“To fight corruption in Kentucky is no small matter given how pervasive and ingrained it seems to be. I imagine it takes some courage and is not without some level of threat. I hope you all at KYCIR and LPM keep this integrity going and fend off efforts to curtail good investigative reporting.”

— Larry Howe-Kerr, Louisville

“Louisville has the best public radio system in the country... Also impressed with the KyCIR. Love the stories they’ve produced. Keep up the good work.”

— Colin Mulhall, Louisville
A Note From Our Editor

Our investigations in 2015 exposed a deadly jail system in Kentucky, uncovered rampant nepotism, revealed illegal state board appointments and more.

We’ve proven what bold, ambitious journalism can accomplish.

In a single year, our work, which probed some of the darkest corners of our commonwealth, has prompted state legislation and criminal investigations.

We’ve taken an active role in fighting for transparency. We successfully sued the University of Louisville and won the release of a high-profile financial review that school officials sought to keep secret.

Pushing for openness, questioning politicians, holding the powerful accountable: This is what we do. And in our second year as a newsroom, we are seeing results.

From snaring a regional and national journalism award to reaching readers across the region, we continue to build and grow this mission-driven newsroom.

In 2015, we published more than 100 stories and reached you on every platform: on the radio, on the web, in print and on video. We’ve built co-publishing relationships with more than 30 news outlets across the region and saw our audience across all platforms double.

This year, we will build on our successes, expand our newsroom, increase our partnerships and most importantly, keep committing bold, ambitious journalism.

It’s not easy. Powerful institutions don’t always comply with the law. Phone calls sometimes go unreturned. Doors are slammed in our faces. We are used to roadblocks. But we remain undeterred because we believe in this mission and in a better Kentucky.

In closing, we thank you, our readers and listeners. We thank our donors who help make this newsroom possible. And we thank our sources, tipsters and citizens who care greatly about accountability, fairness and the future of the commonwealth.

Sincerely,

Brendan McCarthy
Managing Editor
KY Center for Investigative Reporting
KyCIR Staff

Brendan McCarthy – Managing Editor

McCarthy is a veteran newspaper and television investigative reporter. He previously worked as a criminal justice reporter in New Orleans.

He was a 2009 Pulitzer Prize finalist and won a George Polk Award, a Mike Berger Award and an Emmy, among other honors. He has written for The Times-Picayune in New Orleans, the Chicago Tribune, Boston Globe and Philadelphia Inquirer.

R.G. Dunlop – Reporter

Dunlop is a veteran investigative reporter whose work has exposed government corruption and resulted in numerous reforms in Kentucky.

He worked 35 years at The Courier-Journal in a variety of positions, including Eastern Kentucky bureau chief, legal affairs reporter, city editor and state enterprise reporter. He is a three-time finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and was twice a member of teams that won George Polk Awards.

James McNair – Reporter

McNair is a veteran investigator who specializes in business and finance issues.

He has worked as a staff reporter for the Miami Herald and the Cincinnati Enquirer, among other newspapers.

His reporting has unearthed fraudulent schemes and unethical business practices, as well as numerous swindles and scams. He most recently worked as an independent researcher for a hedge fund.
KyCIR launched its website in March 2014. In 2015, the newsroom published 101 articles/posts. We reached millions of people through several platforms. Here’s a breakdown of our reach:

- 3.59 million impressions
- 31 other news outlets have published our work
- 1,000+ Facebook followers
- 1,000+ Twitter followers

Impressions are defined as the number of people exposed to our stories. We calculated this by factoring in web traffic, average radio listenership and the circulation of publications that ran our work.
Our Work in 2015

GOVERNMENT

Only in Kentucky: Jailers Without Jails

We revealed that a third of the state’s elected jailers had no jails to run, exposing an inefficient that costs Kentucky taxpayers about $2 million annually. The series prompted legislation.

Kentucky Money the Fuel for Cross-Border Casinos, Other State Budgets

Our newsroom analyzed tax revenues and found that neighboring states netted a total of $3.9 billion in taxes in the past decade from casinos on the north bank of the Ohio River. The state House Speaker later cited us in pledging a constitutional amendment to allow casinos.

Kentucky Nepotism: In Hiring, County Officials Can — and Do — Turn to Relatives

We uncovered a patchwork of county ethics policies, many legalizing nepotism, many with rules so infused with loopholes that public officials readily bring their relatives aboard.

ACCOUNTABILITY & TRANSPARENCY

Public Accountability

We sued the University of Louisville over its failure to release a financial auditor’s review. We eventually settled the suit, winning the release of these records.

We also filed a motion to intervene, and make depositions public, in a sexual harassment lawsuit filed against the Legislative Research Commission by two former staffers. The case settled out of court.
CRIMINAL JUSTICE

**Kentucky Justice? Kicked Out of the Commonwealth**

We revealed that Carrollton police sprung a mentally ill man from jail against a judge’s orders, gave him $20 and put him on a bus bound for Florida. The county’s police chief and a veteran officer were later indicted.

**Trouble Behind Bars**

An investigation found preventable county jail deaths that provoked little to no follow-up, as well as failures at all levels of government. Not even the state Department of Corrections knows who is dying in county jails and why.

**Dying for Dollars**

Our investigation exposed a jail health care system that runs counter to national and state standards, and falls far short of meeting medical needs.

EDUCATION

**Democrat-Heavy College Boards Run Counter to State Law**

We uncovered state university boards stacked with Democrats — in clear violation of the law. Many of Gov. Steve Beshear’s appointees were also donors to his campaigns.
OUR CONTINUED IMPACT

The Congressman, His Wife, and the Lobbyist

Nine months after we reported on his questionable ties to lobbyists, a congressional ethics subcommittee began investigating U.S. Rep. Ed Whitfield’s links to his wife’s lobbying. We also revealed this year that Whitfield gave a political boost to a failing tech company on whose board she served.

Troubled Tiger Exhibit Puts Public’s Safety At Risk

Following our expose on a tiger wildlife sanctuary in Southern Indiana, a state legislator pushed for increased regulations for exotic animal owners. The U.S. Department of Agriculture later cited the wildlife exhibit at the center of our investigation.

Kentucky’s Pension System Keeps Public in the Dark

We previously uncovered the opaque dealings of the state’s underfunded, $15 billion dollar pension system and won more public disclosure. Recently we revealed that its annual investment expenses were running 75 percent higher than reported in previous years.

“The KyCIR team is doing the best investigative work in the state, tackling tough stories and issues that otherwise would go unnoticed. Not only does it reveal wrongdoing, it also gets results.”

— Bennie Ivory, former editor of The Courier-Journal newspaper, KyCIR advisory board member
“KyCIR has been doing an excellent job digging into significant issues. The work shows a genuine understanding of important issues and the necessary maturity to make difficult stories understandable. Their work is important. Their results are terrific.”

— Edward Manassah, Executive Director, Institute for Media, Culture and Ethics at Bellarmine University, KyCIR advisory board member

Published By

**Newspapers**

The Lexington Herald-Leader
The Courier-Journal
Cincinnati Enquirer
News & Tribune (Jeffersonville, Indiana)
Kentucky Standard
Frankfort Journal
Bowling Green Daily News
Paducah Sun
Ashland Independent
Grant County News
Appalachian News-Express

Floyd County Chronicle
Mt. Sterling Advocate
Edmonton Herald-News
Hart County News-Herald
The Banner Republican
The Barren County Progress
The Monroe County Citizen
The Salyersville Independent
The Carroll County News-Democrat
Farmer’s Pride

**Online**

WCPO
Florida Center for Investigative Reporting
River City News

KY Forward
Southern Investigative Reporting Foundation

**Radio**

89.3 WFPL News
WKYU
WKMS

WEKU
WNKU
Award-Winning Journalism

SIDNEY AWARD

The Sidney Hillman Foundation’s national award honors the best “journalism in the service of the common good.”

January 2015 – Only in Kentucky: Jailers Without Jails

GREEN EYESHADE

The Society of Professional Journalists’ annual Green Eyeshade awards honor the best online, radio, print and television journalism in the southeastern United States.

Investigative Reporting (Online) – 1st Place, The Congressman, His Wife and the Lobbyist
Investigative Reporting (Radio) – 2nd Place, Troubled Tiger Exhibit Puts Public’s Safety At Risk

KENTUCKY ASSOCIATED PRESS BROADCASTERS

Best Long Enterprise Reporting (Radio) – 1st Place, As Sewage Spills and Stench Plague Louisville Mobile Home Park, Company On Notice

INDIANA ASSOCIATED PRESS MEDIA EDITORS

Best Enterprise Story – 1st Place, Troubled Tiger Exhibit Puts Public’s Safety At Risk
Best News Series – 1st Place, Troubled Tiger Exhibit Puts Public’s Safety At Risk

SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS

Government/Politics Reporting (Radio) – 1st Place
Business Reporting (Radio) – 1st Place
Investigative Reporting (Radio) – 1st Place, 2nd Place, 3rd Place
Investigative Reporting (Online) – 1st Place, 2nd Place, 3rd Place
Government/Politics Reporting (Online) – 1st Place, 2nd Place, 3rd Place

We previously were awarded a national and regional Edward R. Murrow award and honors from the Kentucky Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers.
“The Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting recently told the story of Kentucky’s 41 counties without jails that continue to spend money on elected jailers... It’s time for legislative leaders to investigate the serious public safety problems that arise from this fragmented, outdated system and use the power the constitution gives them to enact solutions.”

— Lexington Herald-Leader editorial (Jan 2015)

“This story exemplifies the best of local news reporting. Dunlop and Ryan took on the entrenched power structure and won.”

— Lindsay Beyerstein, Sidney Hillman Foundation (Feb 2015)

“The Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting has the whole bizarre story.”

— Gawker (May 2015)

“The Kentucky Attorney General’s Office launched an investigation last week into the Carrollton Police Department... The investigation came to light in an article published Thursday by the Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting, based in Louisville.”

— Carrollton News-Democrat (June 2015)

“An in-depth investigative series by the Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting revealed several major issues facing Kentucky jails and the estimated 20,000 people currently residing in them... These problems are not out of our possibility to fix, and even though they affect those guilty of committing crimes, Kentuckians should hold each other to a higher standard to ensure that all our citizens receive basic human care.”

— Kentucky Kernel editorial (Oct 2015)

“Hard to believe, but all these scenarios have played out in Kentucky, according to a troubling report on nepotism in county government by the Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting.”

— Lexington Herald-Leader editorial (Nov 2015)

“[T]he sort of compelling, in-depth investigative journalism that is too rare these days, yet so important and necessary to provoke and affect fundamental, essential change. It not only deserves but demands attention and recognition.”

— Kentucky Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers (Oct 2015)
KyCIR Advisory Council

The Advisory Council serves to provide ongoing feedback on the work produced by the Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting. The purpose of the council is to represent the diverse interests of the public in regular meetings with KyCIR, and to serve as ambassadors in the community.

The Advisory Council meets quarterly and reviews the program goals and significant decisions of KyCIR, and advises management on whether the newsroom is meeting the needs of the communities it serves. The role of the council is solely advisory in nature.

MEMBERS:

Molly Bingham                Ed Manassah
Jason Falls                  Caroline Pieroni
Bennie L. Ivory              Stacie Shain
Stanley K. Macdonald        Kay Stewart

Our Supporters

We aim to have a diverse set of financial backers and supporters, including community members, philanthropists and local and national foundations.

Donors have no control over our newsroom, our work or our editorial decisions. We do not accept money from political parties, political action committees, politicians or others whose donation may directly affect our independence or public perception of our operations.

Two substantial grants to LPM, earmarked for an investigative newsroom, helped establish KyCIR in mid-2013. Local businessman Ed Hart donated $250,000 and the Louisville-based C.E. & S. Foundation provided a grant of $190,000.

In 2015, the C.E. & S. Foundation pledged an additional $600,000. It is KyCIR’s largest donor.

“Thank you for all the great work you do... all the great listening and in-house investigative reporting. We are so fortunate to have such stellar public radio broadcasting here in the Louisville area.”

— Marianne Ratledge, Louisville
In October 2014, the University of Louisville, which has donated to Louisville Public Media for many years, earmarked $10,000 to KyCIR as part of a larger LPM donation. Our newsroom has previously reported on the institution and will continue to report on it. Articles on U of L from October 2014 forward contain a disclosure noting the donation. In 2015, U of L donated an additional $3,000.

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membership@kycir.org

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Louisville, KY 40202

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Let us know what you think and how we can serve you better.