

Case study: Enlace Latino NC

Enlace Latino NC joined the GNI Startups Lab with a big goal — adding new ways to earn revenue beyond grants from foundations. “For a long time, we’ve struggled to answer the following question,” Enlace Latino NC wrote in their sustainability audit questionnaire. “How do we get our audience and our own community to support us financially? Are there specific audience segments to tap into? What is a reasonable ask?”

Enlace Latino NC also shared that they felt hesitant about how to align revenue opportunities with their mission to empower the communities of Latino immigrants in North Carolina.

“Enlace came into the program having pretty firm ideas about what their audience would and would not do. Over the course of our time together, they began to recognize that their deep knowledge of their audience should and could be used to open doors and ideas beyond content,” explained GNI Startups Lab coach Lillian Ruiz.

Through its participation in the GNI Startup Lab, Enlace Latino NC:

- **Ad sales:** Targeting health care and employment sectors, the team signed up four new advertisers, one of which evolved into a sponsorship. Total revenue was \$2,500. Advertising and sponsorship are similar. However, advertising typically is aimed at promoting sales of products or services while goals for sponsorship may more often be name recognition and or goodwill by association with a worthwhile community resource. Enlace learned that sponsorship more closely aligns with their newsroom’s mission and products, like podcasts aimed at sharing immigration news to Spanish-speaking migrant workers.
- **Donor conversions:** The nonprofit organization had limited success with efforts to convert readers to donors. It reported seven donations totalling \$345. In a survey, the Enlace team found moderate interest among readers in donating.

Paola Jaramillo, Enlace’s co-founder and executive director, said having a coach and a program that encouraged an experimentation mindset were key benefits underpinning the publication’s progress toward sustainability.

“The GNI Startups Lab allowed us to discover the business side of running a newsroom,” Jaramillo said. “Specifically, exploring diverse revenue streams. Before, our ideas were just that: ideas. But the program gave us the resources and funding to actually play around with them and make mistakes that we learned from along the way. We will carry this experiment mindset with us on our path towards a more sustainable future for our newsroom.”

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“Enlace Latino NC has a powerful relationship with their audience, and helping them explore where they could go with that was really eye-opening for both parties,” Ruiz said. “By the end, they could really see themselves as an innovative community leader with options to offer their community and those that serve them and were able to develop efforts that will be beneficial to them in the long run.”

What's next? The Enlace Hispanic NC team plans to develop sponsorship package templates and reach out to potential clients. Based on a reader survey, the team is also developing a narrative for NewsMatch, the foundation-supported year-end fundraising campaign for nonprofit outlets.