

#SEJ2024 Post-Conference Survey – Summary of Results

Top-Line Results (from survey of 272 respondents):

- 98% of survey respondents would recommend the conference to their colleagues
- 93% said the conference made them better equipped to cover environmental issues
- Respondents said networking offers the most value to attendees, followed by a deeper understanding of the issues, and speakers.
- 35% said they would file stories from the conference.

About the Attendees (from registration data):

1153 total attendees

- **695 general attendees reporting out of 788 total:**
 - 36% identified as non-white
 - 53% identified as female or non-binary
- **168 speakers and organizers reporting out of 365 total:**
 - 36% identified as non-white
 - 58% identified as female or non-binary

Conference Events:

- **Workshops:**
 - Policy at a Watershed Scale: Local Lessons, Collective Solutions: 75% Excellent or Very Good
 - Combating Climate and Science Disinformation: 82% Excellent or Very Good
 - Covering the Energy Transition: Who Wins, Who Loses: 85% Excellent or Very Good
- **Plenary Sessions:**
 - Opening reception and dinner: 80% Excellent or Very Good
 - U.S. EPA Administrator Michael Regan Keynote and Q&A: 78% Excellent or Very Good
 - Opening Plenary. Election 2024: How Will Climate Change Matter: 77% Excellent or Very Good
 - Closing Plenary. Battling Disinformation, Fending Off Despair and Staying Relevant: What's the Future for Environmental Journalism: 73% Excellent or Very Good
- **Thursday tours:** Every tour received mostly Excellent or Very Good rankings. Two tours received 100% Excellent or Very Good ratings: Revolutionary Raptors and The Energy Underneath Your Feet
- **Networking Events:**
 - Exhibit Tables: 60% of attendees visited them and they received great comments.

- Independent Hospitality Receptions: 65% attended and they garnered good reviews.
- Networking Happy Hour: 39% attended and 68% rated them Excellent or Very Good.
- **Friday Concurrent Sessions (panels):** mostly Excellent or Very Good ratings.
- **Saturday Mini-workshops:** mostly Excellent or Very Good ratings.
- **Saturday Mini-tours:** 37% participated, mostly Excellent or Very Good reviews
- **Saturday dinner and dance party:** 79% Excellent or Very Good reviews
- **Sunday Breakfast, Books and Birds:** 18% attended and 89% rated it Excellent or Very Good.

Selected Open-Ended Responses:

I learned a whole lot about covering energy and the energy transition, even more about FOIA than I thought I already knew, how to talk to whistleblowers, and so much more. I think what helped across the board was the amount of time these sessions got (e.g. whole-day workshops, 2+ hour workshops). We were able to get into a LOT, and I think that depth really helped me feel a little more sturdy with actionable takeaways from each session.

I especially liked the workshops day. The one I participated in was about the energy transition, and I really appreciated getting a chance to focus on a specific part of the environmental beat with experts who are doing the same. I also appreciated the tour day! It was great to change things up a little bit, especially as sitting for talks for multiple days in a row can get tiring and it was nice to have the option to learn while stretching my legs. The last time I was at an SEJ conference was 2019, so perhaps this isn't the first year events like these have been implemented, but I really liked it.

I always leave this conference more motivated, feeling supported by a community that sees the world in a similar way to me, and I really loved the field trip to Hawk Mountain.

I thought that a lot of the seminars were really helpful, and I learned a lot from them. I particularly liked the seminar on covering the environmental impacts of war, and the plenary about covering the environment in an election year. And as always, the networking was very helpful!

Administrator Regan was a great get, and his overview of upcoming EPA rulemaking was helpful.

Speakers were largely terrific. Moderators were great. I love the beat dinners. I always learn a lot and meet new people.

Fantastic conversations with colleagues sparked by thought-provoking panels and plenaries. Connecting with editors and potential sources made this conference very meaty and one-stop shopping for all things environment, especially climate change.

The conference has informed my thoughts on climate issues and how other journalists are working to report and make impacts. How to get resources, connect with other reporters, and research work.

The SEJ conference this year was pretty terrific, as usual, and I am impressed and grateful that the US EPA came out in force. Not just the administrator, but his staff of regional PIOs.

This conference did a great job reminding me of core tenants of good journalism and good communication. It was great to touch base with my peers and learn about what they're doing and what struggles/opportunities they're seeing. It was also nice because my work tends to be pretty "big picture" theoretical stuff. It was great to be reminded that energy and environmental policies, at the end of the day, affect people -- not just the value of cells on a table or lines on a graph. I felt like I had been recalibrated.

Each year, I walk away from SEJ with new data tools and sources to help better inform my reporting. I learned a ton at this conference in terms of subject matter, but also was inspired to try new approaches. The best sessions I attended were "Communicate, Don't (Just) Infuriate" and Saturday's "How to turn environmental and disaster data into stories." But the field trips and networking opportunities also were amazing. This conference really is unique.

Lots of new story ideas and insights into existing and upcoming issues and events. New angles for stories and new ways to market them.

I enjoyed the amount of panels and tours surrounding environmental justice from a lot of different angles.

I found the conference invigorating, in terms of learning more about some new topics I haven't covered before, meeting other journalists and talking about issues we cover and meeting new experts.

Since I am the only one in my newsroom who covers the environment, it is extremely helpful to be surrounded by other people who think about this as intensely and as often as I do.

The wealth of knowledge shown by expert environmental journalists and speakers helped me learn how to frame coverage of topics from bugs to indigenous environmental knowledge.

I appreciated the various experts who talked about how to better frame environmental stories and employ different kinds of narratives so that readers will be better educated, not only about the particular environmental issue but also about how science works.

provocative plenaries, great brainstorming at craft sessions, deep dives into beat issues, lots of time to talk in-depth with expert speakers and catch up with colleagues!

The sessions I attended were a mix of background, discussion of ways to cover various angles of the environmental beat in new and better ways, and how-to's on the tools and databases that exist to find information and story leads. All of them were incredibly useful and relevant for me, especially the mini-workshop on public records and the session on IRA funding and how to track it.

It was great hearing from other knowledgeable reporters covering issues I cover or want to cover better. They provided great insight and resources.

It was really valuable to me to get to learn the basics of several topics that might not otherwise come up on my local beat.

It is one of the most important environmental journalism conferences in the world and the organization is changing and progressing in exciting ways in terms of making the industry more inclusive.

It is a great experience to meet people across the world in the field. I attended with a small student group and the impact I saw it have on the journalists in my group was immense and they grew more than ever before. This was such a wonderful experience and I am so glad that we went.

It was an amazing experience to meet fellow journalists, hear from experts, and specifically get to go out in the world on our tours to actually experience what we are reporting on.

I've seen the change in demographic at this conference and would now feel comfortable telling other journalists of color to come, especially as there are groups like the Uproot Project to help foster their growth. I think it's a great place for newer journalists to meet others in the beat as well.

This is a tremendous conference that provides training, story ideas, field trips, and FUN.

I've been to two SEJ conferences so far, and both times I've been so impressed by the programming! The tours add such a valuable experience to the conference, and the rest of the panels also offer a great range. Plus it's always just a special chance to connect with tons of people who are all thinking about and working on similar topics, but from such a variety of approaches.

It's my favorite conference of all professional conferences. The opportunity to connect with colleagues on the same beat is inspiring and rejuvenating. I love SEJ!

I learned a lot at SEJ, both in practical tips that I can immediately apply to my reporting and story ideas as well as in broader, more aspirational goals. The sessions were relevant and timely and networking felt natural and helpful.

It was very helpful and very specialized for such a niche field. There was such a wide variety of science communicators which was surprising and exciting to see. I loved the broad interdisciplinary approach as well as the emphasis on bringing people together and helping them bond on a personal level, like the beat dinners and mini workshops.

As a veteran attendee of numerous SEJ conferences, I find they provide an annual recharge of my journalistic batteries. I gain background and contacts on issues to cover, and I learn new skills or tips for enhancing my reporting or story telling. Plus, I'm inspired and motivated by meeting and sharing experiences with other journalists wrestling with situations similar to mine.

At a time when we're pulled in so many directions due to work, SEJ is a great opportunity to pause

and focus on expanding our skills, meeting new people, and learning new approaches to reporting/storytelling.

It's where all the cool kids are. Seriously, there's so much to learn, not only from the panels, but colleagues. It's also a way to feel connected to a larger group of committed journalists.

Best, most efficient journalism conference that I attend. The subject matter is an important draw for me. But the organization, structure keep me coming back. The tours alone are an important concept to continue to replicate.

There's no better place to connect with fellow environmental journalists, meet new people and learn about issues that are both national and hyperlocal. It's spiritually fulfilling to be around so many colleagues — especially in the era of remote (and rapidly dwindling) newsrooms. I always leave feeling invigorated and inspired to do better work.

It really is THE place to be if you want to expand your environmental journalism circle and dive deep into conversations about how to cover the environment.

This conference was enlightening and inspiring in that it reminded me why I want to continue to cover environmental issues. Beyond the practical tools and information learned, I loved how so much of this conference helped us celebrate the environment and world around us. It was great to network and learn from others' passions.

This is one of the best conferences I've attended. I recommend all industry journalists and editors attend and sign up to SEJ. I went last year, which was phenomenal, and I was in Philly. I'm trying to encourage more people to go next year in Tempe.

Beyond any other journalism organization I am part of, none has the breadth of members, the volume of youth, and diversity of people who participate at the SEJ conference.

This is my absolute favorite conference and have benefited most from it compared to others I've attended. I look forward to it every year.

Responses from Non-Journalists/Public Relations Professionals

I met a number of journalists from my region and deepened/broadened connections.

Great networking, was able to offer myself as a resource to journalists.

I was able to connect with several journalists we work with and plan to work with in the future, including key partners as well.

meeting with reporters at SEJ always helps me do my job better!

Such a great place for media professionals, reporters, educators, and experts to connect.

I have recommended the conference to other corporate communications practitioners at energy companies like mine because it provides insight into perspectives different from our own and helps to ensure broader horizons when considering environmental matters.

It's the best resource for meeting current and new environmental journalists so they know there is a science-based resource for them as part of their coverage.

I recommend the conference all the time to both journalists and PR people! It's hands down the only useful conference I've ever attended. The ability to meet with tons of journalists and PR people is incredibly valuable and helps remind me why I do what I do.

It was such an amazing place to meet, mingle, and network with journalists and environmental communicators from everywhere, I have never had such a fruitful opportunity to make as many points of contact and network before.

It is the single best conference to meet environmental reporters and to learn from speakers at the conference. It is also a good place to gain visibility for my organization that has a climate focus.

Concrete Outcomes Reported by Attendees:

I met some wonderful people that I want to tap as mentors and colleagues. I also made connections with experts and advocates who joined us on our environmental justice field trip and am already in touch with a couple of them.

As an editor at a magazine that relies on freelancers, I find attending this conference so valuable, and it greatly increases the opportunity to network with freelance journalists. Having access to dozens of freelancers allows us, as a magazine, to cover issues in a timely, expert fashion while also keeping us in the know in terms of who to reach out to and when. As someone who lives in Baltimore, this year's SEJ conference helped me understand the dynamics at play right in my own proverbial backyard.

There is nothing better than meeting people in person even in our remote-forward world. For example, someone I met at a previous SEJ conference recommended me for my current job.

I gleaned additional information and insight in issues I cover, as well as tips on techniques for gathering information via public records.

Development of a new workshop for investigative environmental issues.

I established contact with a number of journalists including editors from Mongabay to expand coverage of my stories in going global.

I met freelance journalists who could become contributors to my publication.

I got a better idea on how to communicate environmental issues to the community and satisfy multiple community needs on this beat.

I met some of my reporting heroes. Visited with old friends. Connected with possible new partners. All good.

The conference helped me better focus on an idea for a cross-border investigative project that I want to develop and better understand how to initiate the research. In addition, I contacted other journalists who offered their support if I needed advice or help.

As an editor, I got to connect with freelancers who might be interested in pitching my publication. And generally, I was able to build valuable relationships in person!

I spoke to several editors and sources that I wouldn't have otherwise. Casual conversation over lunch or at a reception can lead to important connections.

I got an idea for a story, and I picked up ideas about ways of sustaining nonprofit journalism.

I connected with UPenn experts and was able to collaborate with them on a panel discussion. Truly an invaluable experience.

I brought a dozen students to the conference. Each are reporting on a skills session they covered. These reports will be used on our website and in the classroom.

Met with funders, made professional connections, learned tips for engagement.

It helped me develop a new series.

I have a short list of new story ideas and got in touch with several PR folks who have story ideas I am likely interested in pursuing.

I got 18 applicants for jobs I posted from my newsroom, got several freelance pitches and at least a dozen potential publishing partners.

I wouldn't have found multiple collaboration opportunities on new reporting or got 10-15+ story tips without the networking.

I got a tip from a source at the SEJ reception that led to a scoop!

I met editors who would be less likely to open a pitch from me without having met me via introductions from other esteemed editors/reporters; I received invitations to pitch; and I met people on the PR/comms side who may be able to assist me with tracking down sources for stories I'm working on.

Was able to hear some government and industry officials who normally hide from journalists.

I met some editors I've worked with or want to work with; I learned how to access a lot of different databases I didn't know existed; and I came away with a few article ideas.

How did attendees pay for the conference registration and travel?

- 48% by their employers
- 26% by self
- 24% by SEJ waiver or fellowship
- 11% by other fellowship or grant

Comments from Attendees Receiving Fellowships/Waivers:

I was an SEJ Uproot Fellow, and undoubtedly without this support I wouldn't be able to attend the conference.

I would not have been able to attend this conference without this fellowship, and I'm deeply grateful for it. My small paper didn't have the funds to send me anywhere this year. The email with all the steps was my guide and I completed them immediately. It was probably pretty straightforward because of that.

Since my newsroom does not cover costs for going to a conference, I would not have been able to attend without the fellowship. I'm really grateful to Uproot and SEJ for keeping this fellowship happening; so many people I spoke to were in the same boat as me, attending SEJ on a fellowship because they would not have been able to go otherwise. As newsrooms struggle across the country and these budgets for conferences are frequently cut, I really see it as one of the most important offerings that SEJ has.

I was definitely not able to attend without the support I was given by these organizations. I am so extremely thankful because I did do as many workshops and met as many people as possible and I feel it has changed my view on how I consume for the rest of my life! The process of registering was a little long, but very straight forward.

I so appreciated having my registration reduced in return for moderating a concurrent session. It helped make the conference more affordable for me, which was important given that travel to Philly from the west coast was expensive.

The SEJ fellowship was crucial to my attendance given the financial challenges my news organization has faced this year, including budget cuts for conference attendance, and the subsequent layoffs of our news staff. I'm truly grateful to have had this opportunity to attend the conference despite all of those challenges. Thank you so much.

I couldn't have attended SEJ without the SHERF program. I'm so thankful for the fellowship and the opportunity to attend SEJ -- after learning so much and meeting so many amazing people, I will push to attend this conference moving forward in my career!

Grant support enabled our entire team to attend together. Without this opportunity, we would not be able to work as effectively as a team.

I definitely could not afford to attend with the help of Uproot. I'd like to attend again and build a deeper relationship with them as well as SEJ to get more diversity at the conference

I couldn't have attended the conference without it. I've been wanting to go to this conference for several years and didn't have the opportunity until this year. I think that waiver, support/fellowships will help diversify conference goers and include more young reporters at smaller outlets.

I could not have attended, moderated or been a panelist without SEJ support, and am grateful for it. I work for a small paper and the conference costs are high.