



## Conversation & Coffee

### ■ WHAT IS IT?

[Honolulu Civil Beat](#) invites readers and donors into its newsroom each month for a coffee-and-discussion event with editors and reporters, including general manager [Patti Epler](#). People ask questions; Civil Beat explains how it reports news. “It’s all about creating a more organic, grounded relationship with our readers,” director of philanthropy [Ben Nishimoto](#) said. “If we’re going to demand accountability and transparency from government and those we cover, then we have an obligation to be accountable and transparent as well.”



### ■ WHO'S BEHIND IT?

Launched in 2010 as a commercial news site, Civil Beat [transitioned six years later](#) to a nonprofit, member-supported model. In 2017, Civil Beat was named the [best overall news site](#) in Hawaii for a seventh straight year. The morning coffee series — an idea that Civil Beat picked up from [Voice of San Diego](#) — is run by membership and events manager [Mariko Chang](#).

### ■ DOES IT WORK?

Conversation & Coffee’s reach is small (averaging about 35 guests). But Chang says the program has been valuable. At one event, a guest shared that she felt inundated by news online and was struggling to teach her kids how to identify reliable sources; in response, Civil Beat partnered with the [Hawaii State Public Library System](#) to launch a series of news literacy events, including [one in May 2017](#) on information overload.



### ■ HOW TO DO IT

Civil Beat arranges a circle of chairs in the newsroom and provides coffee, tea, and pastries. Epler shares an update and asks for feedback on the site’s coverage. She then invites questions from the group. An hour-long conversation flows freely. Civil Beat editors sit on the perimeter of the circle, and stay afterwards for one-on-one chats. Civil Beat also takes its show on the road, [hosting events at coffee shops](#) around the state.