Healthy News & Information Ecosystem Impact
Playbook

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IMPACT ARCHITECTS

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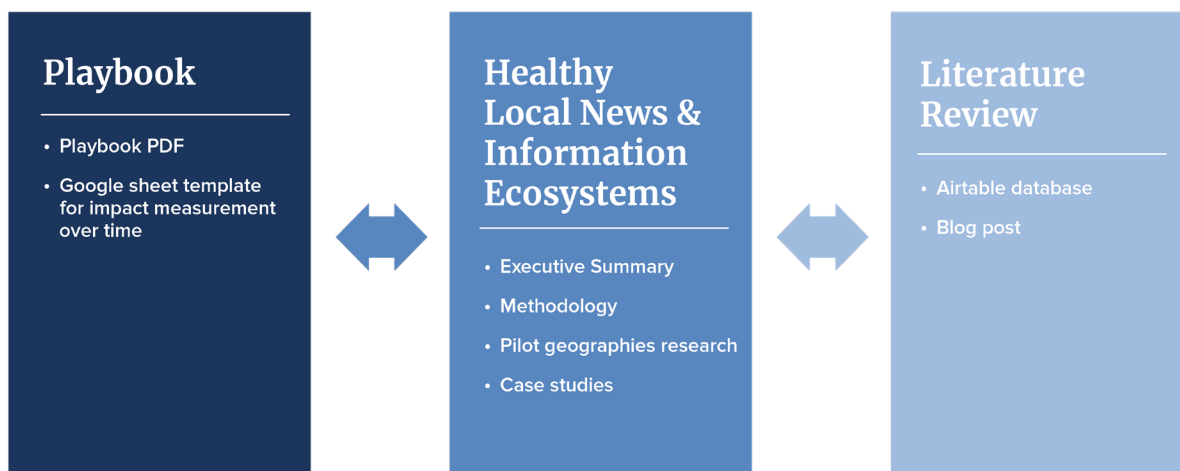**IMPACT** ARCHITECTS

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01.

Introduction

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Introduction

Communities require accurate, fact based, equitably produced, and accessible local news and information in order to thrive. Whether you're a community group, organization, newsroom, or foundation interested in supporting local news and information, this Playbook is designed to help you define your community and set baseline news and information ecosystem health indicators as a starting point to identify new opportunities to support robust your local ecosystem.

This playbook is part of a larger project and is based on a literature review and a framework that we applied in nine geographies in the United States, but we see opportunities to adapt it to other contexts. If you're curious about what the output of this Playbook might be, each chapter in the full report is our application of the framework in a single news and information ecosystem. You can find the executive summary here and the full report here.

Playbook

- Playbook PDF
- Google sheet template for impact measurement over time

Healthy Local News & Information Ecosystems

- Executive Summary
- Methodology
- Pilot geographies research
- Case studies

Literature Review

- Airtable database
- Blog post

This framework will allow you to compare your community's news and information ecosystem to others across the United States. These comparison metrics are not considered benchmarks or targets, but instead are here to serve as guideposts to contextualize your unique and complex community. Instead of cross-community comparisons, we encourage you to assess your community's health over time, track trends in the health of your news and information ecosystem, and see in what areas the needle is moving.

The playbook will walk you through:

- **Baselining the health of your community's news and information ecosystem in three broad categories:**

  - **Community indicators**

  - **Local information providers**

  - **Relationships between community and information providers**

- **Identifying opportunities to use your resources to strengthen your community's news and information ecosystem.**

- **Finding relevant case studies to see how similar communities are addressing shared challenges and opportunities.**

- **Charting a course for using the framework to periodically update your baseline, see how the situation in your community is shifting, and identify new opportunities as they emerge.**

In each section, we provide definitions and prompting questions with blank spaces for you to document your ideas. We also provide tables with news and information ecosystem health indicators, definitions, national averages or averages based on our research, links to publicly available data sources, and empty boxes for you to fill out with your community's data. Also available is a complementary workbook as a Google sheet that you can use to baseline your community and update after a year or two; the sheet will then automatically calculate your ecosystem's change over time.

For the interactive workbook in a Google sheet, go here.

02.
Setting Baselines

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Setting Baselines

Defining Your Ecosystem

The first step in setting a baseline for your local news and information ecosystem is to define its boundaries. What is the community that you are looking to understand and support? What are it's geographic boundaries?[1] Is it a city or town? A county or a region? Or maybe even a whole state?

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GO DEEPER

It can be helpful to research the Metropolitan or Micropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) and Core Based Statistical Area (CBSA) that encompasses your community. Is your community the major population center in this area? Or is there another population center that encompasses a higher percentage of the population of the MSA and CBSA? While MSAs and CBSAs do not always align with municipal, county, or state boundaries, understanding your ecosystem in this context can be helpful and is important to understanding data available at the level of MSAs and CBSAs.

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[1] This assessment framework was built to be applied to a defined geographic area, though with creativity and flexibility you could also apply it to a community defined through another characteristic.

Understanding Your Community

The community indicators are the quantitative and qualitative metrics that provide deeper insight and understanding into who makes up your community and what is the health of the community with respect to individual well-being, community cohesion, and civic engagement. The community baseline includes demographic information like age, race and ethnicity, as well as economic factors, education level, voting behavior, and community satisfaction. Much of this information is already publicly available from government agencies.

Who is in your community?

You can use the US Census Bureau Quick Facts to find your community's demographic information.

Demographics	Definition	United States	Your Community
Population	Total Population	327,167,439	
% under 18	Percent of population under age of 18	22%	
% over 65	Percent of population under over age of 65	16%	
% White	Percent of population identifying as white	75%	
% Black / African - American	Percent of population identifying as Black or African/American	14%	
% Hispanic / Latinx	Percent of population identifying as Hispanic/ Latinx	18%	
% Asian / Asian American / Pacific Islander	Percent of population identifying as Asian, Asian American, and Pacific Islander	7%	
% Native American	Percent of population identifying as Native American	1%	
Group important in your community			
Group important in your community			
Group important in your community			
Group important in your community			
Group important in your community			

We provide space for percentages of your community identifying as white, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latinx, Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander, and Native American, as these are the racial and ethnic groups tracked in the U.S. census. However, there are multitudes of identities and communities across the country, and as you seek to understand your community, it is important to expand and adjust this framework to speak to your unique context. We particularly recommend looking around your community and asking:

- Who comprises the LGBTQ+ community in your ecosystem?
- What immigrant communities are present in your ecosystem?
- Are there other linguistic groups in your community?

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Economics	Definition	United States	Your Community
Median Household Income	Median household income of population	$61,937	
Per Capita Income	Per Capita income of population	$33,831	
Poverty Rate	Poverty rate of population	13.10%	

When looking at the basic economics, it's also good to research the main industries in your community. Who are the largest employers? What are the historical industries and how have they changed over time?

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Education	Definition		United States	Your Community
High School Degree	High School Graduates include people whose highest degree was a high school diploma or its equivalent, people who attended college but did not receive a degree, and people who received an associate's, bachelor's, master's, or professional or doctorate degree.	US Census Bureau Quick Facts	90%	
Bachelor's Degree	Percent population who have received a bachelor's degree from a college or university, or a master's, professional, or doctorate degree	US Census Bureau Quick Facts	36%	
Literacy Rate	Functionally literate with reading and math skills at a 4th grade level or higher	World Population Review, Literacy by State, supplemented by manual research. Look into local literacy nonprofits, and government programs for recent, accurate, numbers.	79%	

What information infrastructure and resources are available to community members?

Resources & Infrastructure	Definition	Data Source	Comparison Metric	Your Community
Households with Computer	Number of households with a computer	US Census Bureau Quick Facts	89%	
Broadband Access	Percent of population with access to broadband internet	US Census Bureau Quick Facts	80%	
Universities	Number of accredited universities in the community	Schools and universities by zip code	n/a	
Population per University	Population divided by number of universities in the community		45,093	
Libraries	Number of libraries, library branches, and bookmobiles in the community	Local Library.gov	n/a	
Population per Library	Population divided by number of libraries in the community		30,395	

Community Satisfaction	Level to which residents feel interpersonal trust and/or a sense of belonging or attachment to their community	State of American Well-Being, Gallup Sharecare 2017 Community Well-Being Rankings - Community Factor Index converted to percentage	50%	
Voter Turnout 2018	Percent of population participating in most recent presidential, midterm, or local municipal elections	Voter Participation Rate by Congressional district, Manual Research	47%	

What information does my community need more of?

Understanding your community's information needs is of critical importance, and there are various approaches to conducting an information needs assessment.

First, see if anyone has already done an information needs assessment in your community. Use manual research, including internet searches, as well as research into funders, philanthropic actors, and research institutions active in your community. Look for reports, research, or publications which address information needs, including those outlining the landscape of information providers, such as journalism organizations.

- **How long ago did they do the assessment?**

- **How was the assessment done?**

- **How expansive was the assessment, and what elements of the community did it focus on?**

Resources & Infrastructure Cont.	Definition		Your Community
Prior Information Needs Study	Presence of any prior information needs study	Yes/No	
Prior Ecosystem Study	Presence of any prior information or journalism ecosystem studies	Yes/No	

If your community has already participated in an information needs assessment, what were the findings? What sectors of the community are underserved? Are there linguistic groups without news and information available in their preferred language? Are there information needs that are not being met? What kinds of information are already being met?

If no one has done an information needs assessment, there are a few methods through which you can discover the information needs of your community, each with their own pros and cons. You can view the following table as a menu of different types of information needs assessments and adopt as many or as few as time and resources allow.

Type of info needs assessment	Who's doing it well?	Pros	Cons	Time Required	Investment Required	Tools and Resources
Digital Survey	Community foundations	Customizable; Engagement activity with local partners	Difficult to get representative sample	Low	Low	Survey Monkey; Google Forms
Digital marketing survey (Google Marketing Insights)		Customizable; Guaranteed representative sample	Question limit and structural constraints	Low	High	Google Marketing Insights surveys
Focus Groups at Workshops	Listening Post Collective; El Tímpano	Depth of knowledge; Equitable knowledge gained across sectors of the community	Resources required	Medium - High	Depends on incentives and payment structure	In person; Virtually - Zoom (if less than 45min) or Google Meet
Individual Interviews		Depth of knowledge	Time intensive	High	Depends on incentives and payment structure	Outlier; Ground-source
Paper survey conducted in person	Listening Post Collective	Customizable; Can reach a variety of community members	Time intensive; Reliant upon in-person interactions	High	Medium	
SMS Survey	Outlier; El Tímpano	Hybrid quantitative data + community surveying	Cost; Reliability of tech platforms	Medium	Medium - High	Outlier; Ground-source
Data Analysis of Publicly Available Data	Outlier	Economical	Cannot define scope or geographic boundary of data; May need statistical software	High	Low	Census Data, 211 Data, Pew Local Journalism, Knight/ Gallup American Trends Panel

Once you understand the information needs of your community, you can look at the "supply side" - the information that is already available in your community.

Understanding Information Providers

Information providers are the people, organizations, and institutions providing information to your community. In our research, we focused on journalistic information providers as a primary source of news and information, recognizing that fact-based reporting is a critical ingredient to any local news and information ecosystem. However, we recognize that there are many other sources of local news and information, from online groups on Facebook and Nextdoor to church and community organization newsletters, and we encourage you to go deep in surfacing these sources of news and information in your own ecosystem baselining.

Here, we walk you through how to conduct a landscape analysis to identify journalism organizations contributing to your local news and information ecosystem, and provide prompting questions for thinking about other sources of information.

Journalism Organizations

Journalism organizations are those that employ professional journalists to do fact-based local reporting and abide by professional norms, ethics, and standards. We suggest your first step in creating a landscape of information providers be to get a comprehensive understanding of all journalism organizations in your community. There are a number of databases you can use to build this database, though none are fully comprehensive.

1. UNC News Deserts Database
2. New York Times Database (Data contributed by Association of Alternative Newsmedia (AAN), the Institute for Nonprofit News (INN), Local Independent Online News Publishers (LION), the National Association of Hispanic Publications (NAHP), the News Media Alliance (NMA), the National Newspaper Association (NNA) and the National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA))
3. Local journalism associations
4. Knight Civic Bright Spots Map
5. FCC License Coverage Maps
6. LION (Local Independent Online News) Publishers Database
7. Center for Community Media Reports and Databases

We recommend building a spreadsheet to track each journalism organization, its digital URL, focus, and publication frequency. Once you have a deeper understanding of the publications, you can look at them in aggregate. How many are there? How many per capita in your community? [2]

Information Providers	Definition	Comparison Metric*	Your Community
Number of Organizations	Number of journalism organizations based within the community		
Population per Organization	Population divided by number of journalism organizations in the community	22,548	

*For the Information Providers section, comparison metrics are averages from the nine pilot geographies in our Healthy News and Information Research Report. It may be helpful to review the data in the research report on the individual geography most similar to your community. Even better is to track your own community over time.

In addition to a basic documenting of news publications, we also recommend a more systematic assessment of each organization's medium and ownership structure. For example: is a publication a print newspaper, a digital-only site, a television station, a radio station or a magazine? For broadcast television stations and radio stations, in particular, check that a local broadcaster actually has a local newsroom, and is not just a re-broadcaster of content coming from a nearby city.

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[2] *How do you know which publications to include?
This can be more of an art than a science. Look at the content and publication frequency of each publication. Does it publish regularly? Does it provide new, and local news and information not found elsewhere? Is it focused only on your community?

Information Providers: Mediums	Definition	Data Sources	Comparison Metric	Your Community	
				Number	**Percentage**
Newspapers	Number of Newspapers in the community	News Deserts Database	51%		
Television Stations	Number of broadcast television stations in the community	FCC License Coverage Maps, PBS Member Organizations, Manual Research	25%		
Radio Stations	Number of broadcast radio stations in the community	News Deserts Database, NPR Member Organizations, Manual Research	15%		
Digital	Number of digital publications in the community	News Deserts, Online Organizations	15%		

Identifying the ownership structure of a publication takes some manual work, but it's important information to better understand just how "local" the publication is, as well as the incentive structure under which it's operating.

Sometimes, it can be tricky to figure out who or what owns a publication. You can start by looking at the "About" page of a publication. Many publications will share their history, and you can follow ownership transers until you arrive at present day. Most nonprofits will prominently display their 501(c)3 status. For radio and television stations, th emenu at the bottom of their websites will take you to the public FCC license, which makes public the comapny that holds the license. You can then look up the company to see if it is local or an affiliate of a national corporation.

Commercial, for-profit media might be privately owned, owned by a national chain, or owned by an investment firm. These differences are important to note as they have implications for how and why newsrooms make decisions about coverage, the kinds of resources they have available for reporting, and their relationship to the local community. For this reason, we break out independent for-profit media, meaning organizations that are not under corporate or public ownership and are not affiliated with any larger media organization either locally or nationally.

Most nonprofits will prominently display their 501(c)3 status, but you can also consult databases from organizations such as the Institute for Nonprofit News (INN).

Information Providers: Business Models	Definition	Data Sources	Comparison Metric	Your Community	
				Number	Percentage
Nonprofit	Number of nonprofit journalism organizations in the community	INN Membership, Manual Research	21%		
Public Media	Number of public media companies in the community	News Deserts Database, NPR & PBS Member Organizations, Manual Research	4%		
National Broadcast Chain	Number of nationally-affiliated television broadcast stations in the community	FCC License Coverage Maps, Manual Research	22%		
National Newspaper Chain	Number of national chain newspapers in the community	News Deserts Database	15%		
Independent For Profit	Number of independent, for-profit, journalism organizations in the community	Manual Research	37%		

It can be useful to organize all the outlets you find in your community in a table organizing both their formats and their business models. You can use the table below to see where your community has many or few of a specific category of outlet.

	Independent	National Chain	Nonprofit/University	Public Media
Digital				
Magazine				
Newspaper				
Radio				
Television				

Now look at media supporting specific aspects of your community. Are there community and BIPOC serving media? Are there LGBTQ+ serving publications? Are there organizations publishing in languages other than English? How do these publications compare with the demographics of your community?

Looking broadly at the United States, we developed indicators for the two largest communities most historically underserved by the mainstream media: the African-American/Black community and the Latinx/Hispanic community. Based on the demographic information you found in the community section, you should research the media organizations present for any ethnic linguistic, or identity group in your community.

Information Providers: BIPOC Serving Media	Definition	Data Sources	Your Community
			Number
African American / Black	Number of media outlets in community produced for and by the African-American, Black, Afro-Caribbean community	**News Deserts Database, CUNY Center for Community Media**	
Population per outlet	Population identifying as African-American/Black divided by the number of media outlets in community produced for and by the African-American, Black, Afro-Caribbean community		
Hispanic / Latinx	Number of media outlets in community produced for and by the Latinx or Hispanic community, or in Spanish	**State of the Latino News, News Deserts Database**, Manual Research	
Population per outlet	Population identifying as Latinx/Hispanic, divided by the number of media outlets in community produced for and by the Latinx or Hispanic community, or in Spanish		
Asian / Asian American / Pacific Islander	Number of media outlets in community produced for and by the Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander community	**News Deserts Database**, Manual Research	
Population per outlet	Population identifying as Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander, divided by the number of media outlets in community produced for and by the Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander community		
Native American	Number of media outlets in community produced for and by the Native American community	**American Indian Media Today Report**, **News Deserts Database**, Manual Research	
Population per outlet	Population identifying as Native American, divided by the number of media outlets in community produced for and by the Native American		
* Group important in your community			

In addition to understanding the diversity of types of publications in your local news and information ecosystem, it's important to understand the diversity of all the people (e.g., journalists in the community) producing news and information, as well as the sources that are included in reporting. Healthy ecosystems have equitable representation of all sectors of the community inside newsrooms, as well as equitable representation of diverse community perspectives included as sources in reporting.

Currently, there are few publicly available data points with respect to journalist diversity or source diversity, a symptom of the lack of attention and investment that has gone toward understanding equitable inclusion and representation in journalism at a systemic level. The American Society of News Editors (ASNE) has employed an annual Newsroom Employment Diversity Survey of news organizations' racial and ethnic diversity. However, because organizations opt-in to participate with little incentive, participation is low and there are often only a couple of participants per metropolitan area, if any at all. Some newsrooms have done independent source diversity audits and made these public, although most have not.

Start by checking if any information providers in your community have participated in the ASNE survey. Next, go through your database of information providers to see if any have publicly reported their staff demographics, source diversity information, or have written about internal diversity initiatives.
In general, ask how diverse are the journalists who provide your local news and information, and how closely do they mirror the composition of your community?

Information Providers: Diversity	Definition	Data Sources	Your Community
			Number
Journalist Diversity	Racial and gender diversity of journalists in journalism organizations in the community	ASNE Diversity Survey, Manual Research	
Source Diversity	Racial and gender diversity of sources quoted in the journalistic output of the community in the last 12 months	Manual Research	

The last component of a healthy information provider sector is collaboration between and among organizations. Collaborations are important because they can contribute to increased reporting power across smaller organizations, more data reporting, critical stories reaching diverse sectors of the community, and more. You can get a sense for collaboration across your community's information ecosystem by looking to see if and how information providers are connected.

Collaboration

Understanding collaboration is a largely qualitative undertaking and will require you to do some gumshoe research to unearth the often unseen links among information providers. If there is a backbone organization, start there.

The Center for Cooperative Media at Montclair State University has both a database of collaborative journalism projects, and a useful framework for understanding and classifying possible types of collaboration. Ongoing collaborations nearly always require the presence of a backbone or coordinating organization.

	One-Time or Finite Collaborative Reporting Project	Ongoing or Open-Ended Collaborative Reporting Project
Partners create content separately	Temporary & Separate	Ongoing & Separate
Partners work together to create content	Temporary & Co-creating	Ongoing & Co-creating
Partners share content, data, and resources at organizational level	Temporary & Integrated	Ongoing & Integrated

Think about the information providers in your community and how they connect and work with one another. In your research, did you find any collaborations, partnerships, or content sharing agreements? Are these ongoing and continuing or individual projects? Are there any organizations specifically working on or funding collaboration among information providers? What would a collaborative news and information ecosystem look like in your community? What would it take to get there? Who would need to be involved?

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Non–Journalistic Information Providers

While this framework focuses on traditional journalistic organizations, information originating from non-journalistic sources - community organizations, government sources, online groups, social media, or word of mouth to name a few - can play an important, but quite variable role in communities. Outside of traditional media organizations, what are the other major information sources in your community? Do people often share information by word of mouth, through community organizations, on social media or online platforms (such as Nextdoor, or private Facebook groups?) Are there churches or other community groups with robust newsletters? Think about how these play a role in your community's information flows, as well as how they interact with the traditional journalistic sources you outlined above

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Finally, look at the philanthropic funding for your community's information ecosystem. Using the Media Impact Funders Map through the Foundation Center, you can start to find philanthropic donors for journalism news and information in your community going back to 2009. You can also identify other local foundations and check their websites to learn more about the types of organizations they support that are contributing to the local news and information ecosystem. Individual donors are more difficult to identify, but also make up an important financial base for nonprofit news.

With this information, you can start to answer questions like: How much money has been invested, and by how many donors? How many organizations have received funding? What is the dollar amount invested per capita?

Information Providers: Journalism Funding	Definition	Comparison Metric	Your Community
			Number
Philanthropic Dollars Since 2009	Number of philanthropic dollars invested in media and information in the community since 2009	$18,749,444	
Funders	Number of philanthropic funders invested in media and information in the community since 2009	68	
Recipients	Number of recipients of philanthropic funding for media and information in the community since 2009	31	
Invested Per Capita	Number of philanthropic dollars invested in media and information in the community since 2009, divided by the population of the community	$20.63	

Information Providers and Community

Once you have a clear understanding of the information wants and needs of your community, as well as the characteristics of information providers and the type of information being distributed, you can look at the relationship between the two. Strong relationships, often measured by "trust in news," are necessary for ensuring that fact-based information flows across a news and information ecosystem, contributing to individual well-being, community cohesion, and accountable institutions.

Pew Research Center has developed surveys to better understand individuals' relationships with journalists and journalism organizations. For example, in 2019, Pew surveyed 35,000 adults in the United States about their relationships with local news and published the results in an easy to use interactive. For those areas for which there are not enough responses, estimates are provided, grouping the area with other areas that are similar in demographics.

To set your own community and information provider relationship baseline, you can use 11 indicators from the Pew Local News Dynamics study.

Information Providers & Community	Definition	Comparison Metric	Your Community
			Percentage
Representation and Proximity			
% Who say local journalists are in touch with the community	Percent of adults in community who say journalists are in touch with the community	63%	
% Who have spoken with a journalist	Percent of adults in community who say they have spoken with a journalist	21%	
% Who say their local news source mostly covers the area where they live	Percent of adults in community who say the local news primarily covers the area in which they live (vs another area, such as a nearby city)	51%	
% Who say their local news Includes people like them in their stories	Percent of adults who say their local news does well at including people like them in their stories	58%	
Financial Support			
% Who pay for local news	Percent of adults who have paid for local news in the past year	14%	
Perceptions of Information Providers - % Who Say Their Local News:			
Reports news accurately	Percent of adults who say their local news does well at reporting the news accurately	71%	
Keeps an eye on local political leaders	Percent of adults who say their local news does well at keeping an eye on local political leaders	66%	
Provides news that they use daily	Percent of adults who say their local news does well at providing news that they use daily	67%	
Covers news stories thoroughly	Percent of adults who say their local news does well at covering news stories thoroughly	65%	
Are transparent about their reporting	Percent of adults who say their local news does well at being transparent about their reporting	62%	
Does well at dealing fairly with all sides	Percent of adults who say their local news does well at dealing fairly with all sides	62%	

In addition to these indicators, what information surfaced in your community information needs assessments about community members' relationships with journalism and journalists? Do you have other, qualitative information about historic relationships between sectors of your community and local journalism organizations that might need to be addressed.

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03.
Interpreting
Your Results

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Interpreting Your Results: Identifying Strengths and Opportunities

After taking stock of your community, its local information providers, and the relationship between the two, you will have both a set of indicators off which to benchmark your community, as well as qualitative information on the state of the ecosystem today. If you plug these numbers into the workbook template, it will automatically calculate if your community is low, average, or high for each indicator relative to comparison metrics.

Where are there strengths and weaknesses in your ecosystem? Are these new, or legacy elements of your community? How sustainable and consistent does the ecosystem seem over time? Consider the "weaknesses" in your community as opportunities: with smart investment, support, and capacity, these are the places where you can create the greatest change in the ecosystem as a whole.

INFORMATION PROVIDERS

INFORMATION PROVIDERS & COMMUNITY

HEALTHY NEWS & INFORMATION ECOSYSTEM
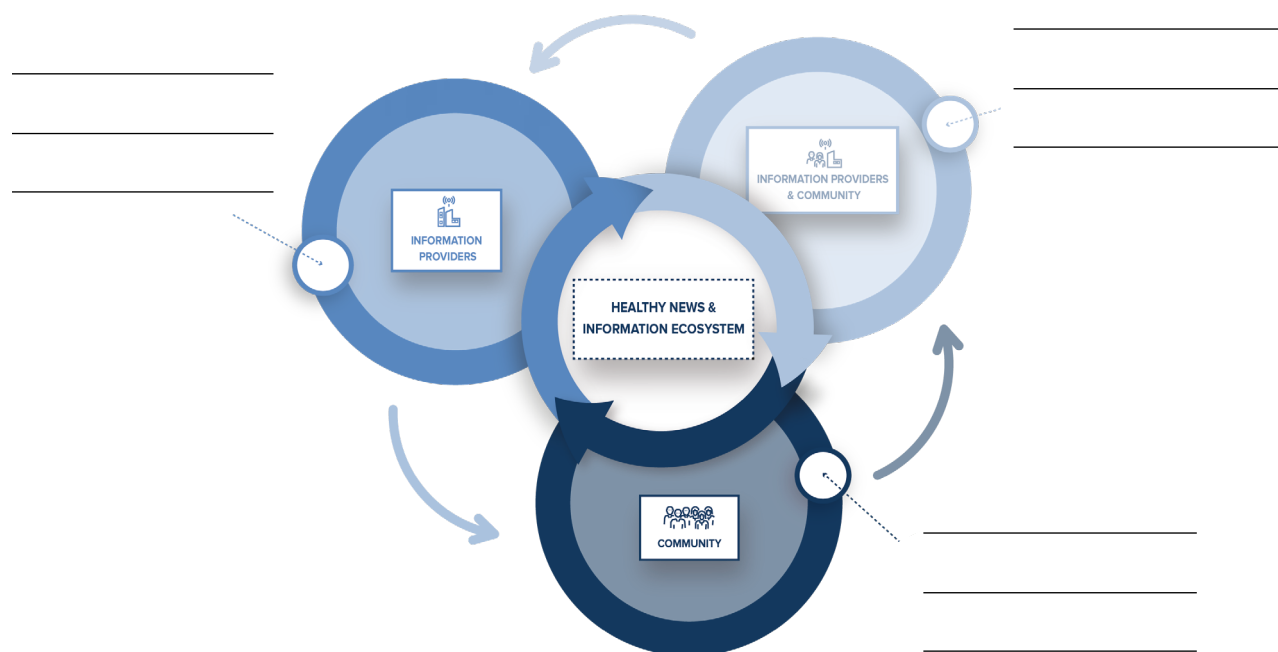
COMMUNITY

Key Elements

INFORMATION PROVIDERS

COLLABORATION

DIVERSITY

BIPOC SERVING & COMMUNITY MEDIA

TYPE OF MEDIA

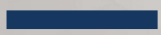**JOURNALISM ORGANIZATION BUSINESS MODELS**

PHILANTHROPIC INVESTMENT

COMMUNITY TRUST

04.

Build Your Strategy

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Build Your Strategy

Every community is different, and your strategy to strengthen your ecosystem will need to reflect its nuance and complexity. Write down your ideas for strengthening your local news and information ecosystem in the following areas, as applicable to your news and information ecosystem.

Information needs assessment:

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Presence of information providers:

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Format of information providers:

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Business models of information providers:

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Diversity of information providers:

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Collaboration among information providers:

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Information providers and community engagement:

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As you identify areas of opportunity, check out these relevant case studies, available in the full report, for ideas and inspiration.

Community **Understand who they are and their** **information needs**	**Information Providers**	**Information Providers &** **Community**
Conduct Information Needs Assessments • Outlier Media Needs Assessments in Detroit and Macon • Boulder County Digital Survey with the Community Foundation of Boulder County • New Mexico Google Market Insights Survey • The Oaklandside Community Listening Tours • El Tímpano Information Ecosystem Assessment • Lenfest Institute for Journalism focus groups in Philadelphia • Listening Post Collective Playbook	**Invest in the Number, Format and Ownership of News Organizations** • McClatchy/Google Compass Experiment in Youngstown, Ohio (Mahoning Matters) and Longmont, Colorado (Longmont Leader)	**Invest in Engagement Efforts** • Curious City from WBEZ Chicago • Gather, Journalists in Relationship to Community
	Strengthen and Build Collaboration • Center for Collaborative Journalism in Macon • New Mexico Local News Fund Resolve Philly • Colorado Media Project • Charlotte Journalism Collaborative	
	Invest in New Partnerships • Community Foundation of Boulder County and KGNU	
	Deepen Diversity, Equity and Inclusion • WHYY Cultural Competency Project • City Bureau in Chicago • KGNU Equity Reporting Initiative in Boulder • Journalist census	

STRATEGY – Understanding Your Community's Needs

Conduct Information Needs Assessments

- **Outlier Media**, a Detroit, Mi based nonprofit, has a framework for conducting community information needs assessments using a combination of publicly available data and SMS community surveys. See a full case study about Outlier Media in our chapter about Detroit, MI.

- **El Tímpano** is a nonprofit media organization based in Oakland, CA. Madeleine Bair, founder of El Tímpano, working with Listening Post Collective from Internews, conducted an information ecosystem assessment of Latino Immigrants in Oakland from 2017-2018. The assessment focused on monolingual Spanish- and Mam-speaking residents, and is based on conversations with about 300 residents and two dozen community leaders. Read more about El Tímpano in a case study in our chapter about Oakland, CA.

- **The Lenfest Institute for Journalism**, a Philadelphia based nonprofit journalism support organization, and the parent company of the Philadelphia Inquirer, has the central goal "to improve and sustain the local information ecosystems in cities around the country." In late 2018, the Institute piloted focus groups in Philadelphia with the aim of "understanding the information needs and consumption habits of those who navigate these ecosystems in their daily lives." To learn more about their methodology and findings, read the chapter about Philadelphia, PA.

Invest in Community Listening Tours

- **The Oaklandside**, in Oakland, CA holds a commitment to listening as one of its foundational goals. The Oaklandside developed a community listening process, spearheaded by consultant Cole Goins, which included hosting conversations with community stakeholders, developing partnerships with high school groups, arts organizations, and local festivals, and inviting local residents to share their visions of the headlines they wanted to read about Oakland. Read more about their listening tour in our chapter study on Oakland.

STRATEGY – Number, Format, and Ownership of Information Providers

Invest in Building New Organizations

- **The Compass Experiment**, launched in 2019 as a joint initiative by McClatchy and the Google News Initiative, was described as a "local news laboratory founded … to explore new sustainable business models for local news." The experiment included two McClatchy affiliated news sites, **Mahoning Matters** in Youngstown, Ohio, and the **Longmont Leader** in Longmont, Colorado. Read more about these initiatives in the chapters on Boulder, CO and Youngstown OH in the full report. The Compass Experiment announced in February, 2021 that it will transfer ownership and management of the Longmont Leader to Village Media and Mahoning Matters to McClatchy.

STRATEGY – Strengthen Collaboration

Identify the Barriers and Benefits to Collaboration

- **The New Mexico Local News Fund (NMLNF)** produced a roundtable and report on Collaborative Journalism in New Mexico in July 2019. It identified challenges for journalism in New Mexico in serving audiences, providing networking and training, combating "parachute journalism," and a general lack of resources and capacity, which could all be addressed through stronger collaboration. Read more about NMLNF in the chapter about New Mexico.

Invest in Institutions Driving Collaboration

- The **Center for Collaborative Journalism** at Mercer University in Macon, Georgia, houses offices of two local journalism outlets, and pioneered a "teaching hospital" model that allows journalism students to embed in the organizations and facilitate collaboration across the ecosystem. Read more about CCJ in the chaptber about Macon-Bibb County, GA.

Invest in Collaboratives

- The **Charlotte Journalism Collaborative** is a nine member collaborative in Charlotte, North Carolina, which produces stories around a central theme or issue for the community. Read more about the collaborative in our chapter about study of Charlotte.

- The **Colorado Media Project** in Denver, Colorado, runs a state-wide news collaborative called the COlab. The COlab is both a physical space as well as an online resource hub bringing together outlets across the state. Read more about the hub in our case study on Boulder County, CO.

- **Resolve Philly** is a nonprofit in Philadelphia that grew out of a project of the Solutions Journalism Network. Resolve Philly brings together more than 19 local news organizations to provide in-depth, nuanced, and solutions-oriented reporting around specific issues in Philadelphia. Read more about Resolve Philly in our case study in the chapter about Philadelphia, PA.

Invest in Organizational Partnerships

- In Oakland, California, the collaboration between **El Tímpano**, a nonprofit, community organization and news outlet, and **The Oaklandside**, a new nonprofit newsroom, shows how coalition journalism can better deliver information to all sectors of the community compared to a journalistic ecosystem based on competition. The partnership includes weekly meetings to address information needs identified by El Tímpano, as well as opportunities for translations of The Oaklandside's reporting that could be beneficial to El Tímpano's audience. Read more about both organizations in our Oakland, CA chapter.

STRATEGY – Deepen Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Invest in the Cultural Competency of News Organizations

- **WHYY**, the NPR and PBS affiliate in Philadelphia, institutionalized an effort to increase "cultural competency," which they define as "understanding the nuances of the communities we cover, building relationships that further our knowledge and ability to accurately cover these communities, and recognizing and doing something about our own skewed lenses and how they impact the narratives we present." [3] Read more about the initiative in our chapter about Philadelphia, PA.

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[3] Wenzel, Andrea. "Sourcing Diversity: WHYY and the rocky road to "cultural competency". Columbia Journalism Review, September 30, 2019, https://www.cjr.org/tow_center_reports/public-radio-cultural-competency.php

Invest in New Information Providers Serving Historically Underserved Communities

- **Community Foundation Boulder County** partnered with local community radio station **KGNU** to develop the Equity Reporting Initiative, originally launched with a TRENDS podcast that would focus on untold stories of inequity in Boulder County, surfaced through the Foundation's biennial TRENDS report. CFBC has also supported a TRENDS Reporting Fellowship for local reporters to participate in trainings by experts about structural inequality and do deep enterprise, investigative, and solutions-oriented reporting, launched a TRENDS Diaries initiative for community members to share their personal stories around COVID-19, and created a solutions fund for community members to support community-led solutions to problems surfaced in the TRENDS reporting initiatives. Read more about the Equiry Reporting Initiative in the Boulder, CO chapter.

- **City Bureau**, a nonprofit civic news organization serving the South and West Sides of Chicago, is pioneering a new model for community journalism in the city, which they have also expanded to Detroit, MI in a partnership with WDET and to Cleveland, OH. City Bureau describes its work as "bringing people together to produce media that is impactful, equitable and responsive to the public." Read more about City Bureau's approach in a case study in our chapter about Chicago, IL.

STRATEGY – Strengthen the Relationship Between Information Providers and the Community

Invest in Journalism Engagement Projects

- **WBEZ**, the NPR affiliate in Chicago, runs a program called Curious City, where journalists choose stories based on audience submitted questions, and developed a strategy for outreach specifically in communities from which they received fewer questions and story requests. Read more about Curious City in our chapter about Chicago, IL.

- **Gather**, a platform and slack group supporting "community-minded" journalists, has a guide to walk you through how journalists can be in relationship with a community. The tool-kit walks through building relationships and trust, and staying accountable to your community. Read the complete guide here.

Invest in Partnerships Between Information Providers and Community Organizations

- **Community Foundation Boulder County**, after identifying information gaps in the community, developed an initiative to increase both the coverage of issues of inequity in Boulder County using data and human stories, as well as the amount of quality information accessible to non-native English speakers in Boulder County; the foundation also provides pathways for residents to get involved in community-led solutions. Read more about their work in our chapter about Boulder County, CO.

These are just a few ways that new organizations, investments, research, or innovations are currently contributing to strengthening news and information ecosystems in the United States, all of which you can read more about in the full report. There are countless ways to invest in and strengthen your ecosystem, and in turn, your community.

05.
Learn & Measure

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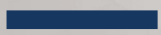
Learn and Measure Over Time

News and information ecosystems are not static. The framework provided here is a snapshot of your community, which can be updated periodically to track change. In using this framework, you likely found places where the data felt superficial or insufficient and you need to go deeper, hosting community conversations, digging around online communities to see how they're sharing information, or speaking with local community groups and organizations to find out how they think about sharing information with their community members.

As you take this baseline information, identify gaps and opportunities, and develop and implement strategies to support your healthy news and information ecosystem, things will begin to shift. While system-level change is often slow, remember that you can return to your baseline and update the indicators each year (or two) to track how your community, information providers, and their relationships are evolving.

When you update your community news and information ecosystem health indicators, you will likely find that new opportunities emerge, and you can update your strategies accordingly.

We hope this framework provides a structure for creating a baseline, developing a strategy, and fostering an environment of ongoing learning that will continuously enrich both the news and information ecosystems and the overall health of your community.