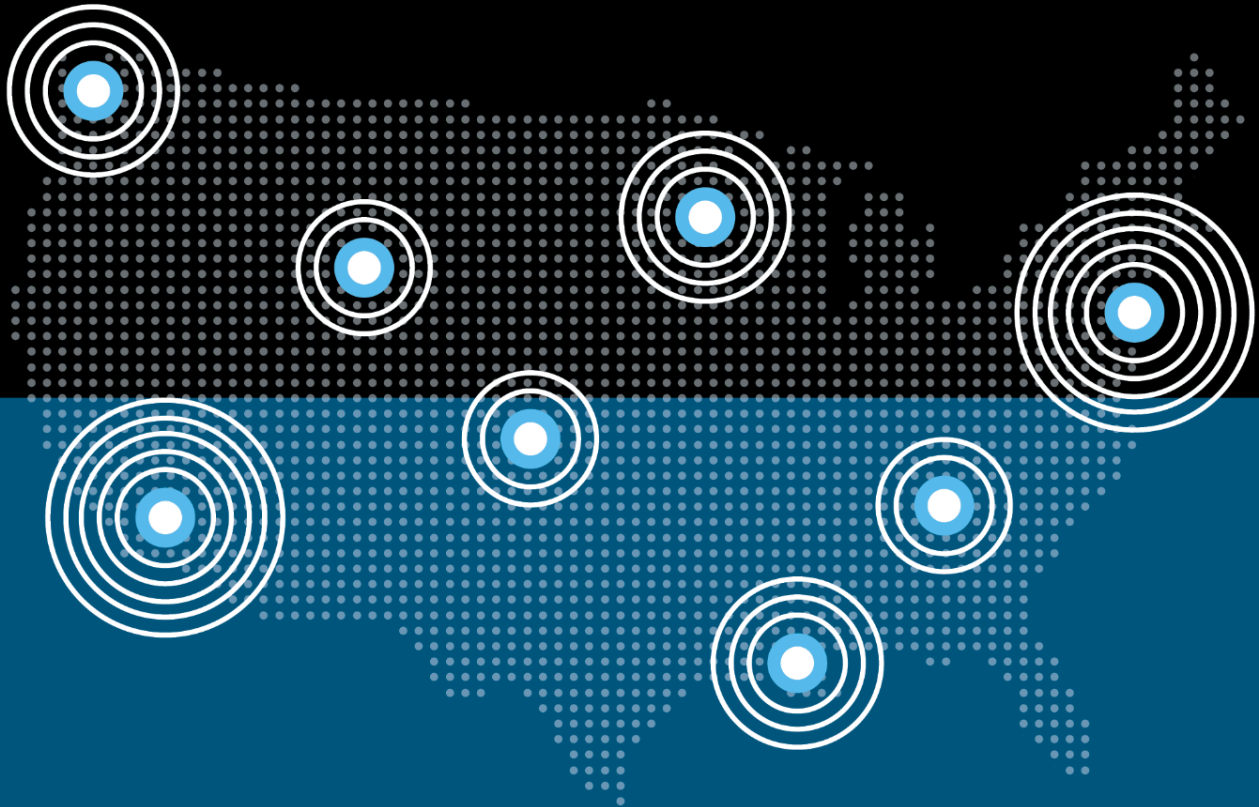


LOCAL NEWS IMPACT CONSORTIUM

Newsroom Census/Ecosystem Mapping Toolkit



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ABOUT THIS REPORT

A Collaborative and Open-source Approach to the Study of Community Information Needs

This report is a collaboration between the University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication and the Local News Impact Consortium (LNIC), a open-source initiative that unites researchers, journalists, and funders to rebuild sustainable, data-driven local news ecosystems.

About the author

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INTRODUCTION

Creating a Baseline for Ongoing Analysis of the Health of Local News

As virtually everyone involved in journalism knows, during the current decade, the urgency of the local news crisis has deepened across the United States.

A [report](#) from the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University found local newspapers around the country closed at a higher rate in 2023 than the year before, for an average of about two closures per week—and a total of almost 2,900 newspapers lost since 2005. Major cuts at large news organizations around the country, such as a 20% reduction in staff at the Los Angeles Times, have intensified the sense of crisis, prompting The Atlantic to ask, “[Is American Journalism Headed Toward an ‘Extinction-Level Event’?](#)” Budgets and staff at many news outlets have sharply declined, while AI-generated “news” and misinformation proliferate online – and while American democracy itself is facing unprecedented challenges.

In response to this crisis, the [Local News Impact Consortium](#) was formed in 2024 with a mission to develop and share research methods and open-source tools to inform residents, journalists, and philanthropy as they seek to rebuild local news ecosystems in communities across the United States.

One key to rebuilding local news is very basic: Documenting what still exists. Researchers, practitioners, funders, and concerned citizens need to develop a baseline understanding of what news organizations are still producing news in and for their communities. Gathering that information in a systematic and thorough way can also provide crucial insights into questions like:

- How much news-production capacity exists in your community?
- What types of news media are available to people in your community?
- Where are local news outlets clustered, geographically speaking, and what areas of the community/region/state are in danger of becoming “news deserts” that lack a locally-based news outlet?

Moreover, creating a newsroom census also creates a baseline for ongoing, longitudinal analysis of the health of local news ecosystems. Ideally, a newsroom census is a living document, an ongoing project of monitoring what might be declining and also what is growing within the ecosystem, to measure how it is changing over time.

This toolkit focuses on creating a “census” of news outlets that exist within a given geographic area—an important way of documenting the local news production capacity within a geographic area. Ideally, you will gather your data and document your work in ways that allow for replication later.

Who is this toolkit designed for?

- Researchers – both academic and non-academic. This toolkit is designed to be accessible for a broad range of researchers, including those without extensive research experience.
- Practitioners from newsrooms, journalistic organizations, foundations, and civic and community organizations who are guiding or participating in efforts to understand and document.
- Local Press Forward chapters who are answering the call to “[access \[or\] conduct research on their local news ecosystem](#).”

What does this toolkit enable readers to do?

This toolkit will center around five main steps to plan your approach to systematically documenting local media outlets in a given geographic locale:

- **STEP 1:** Defining the geographical scope of your news census
- **STEP 2:** Deciding on inclusion and exclusion criteria (i.e. which news outlets should “count”?)
- **STEP 3:** Documenting existing news outlets within your geographical area (i.e. creating a “census”)
- **STEP 4:** Gathering information about characteristics of these newsrooms (and potentially, other organizations that are providing information to local communities) including preparing to map those outlets by gathering information needed by mapping software
- **STEP 5:** Analyzing, publishing, and sharing your findings

What is not included in this toolkit?

This toolkit does not include opinion survey-based approaches to documenting local news ecosystems (for example, surveying news audiences to determine what local news sources they pay attention to). This and other alternative approaches to studying local news ecosystems are discussed in the Overview of Approaches to Analyzing Local News section below, with some links to helpful resources.

Why create a census of local news outlets?

Assessing the health of local news in any particular geographic area often starts with simply understanding what outlets are currently producing news and information for the public in that area. Creating a census of news organizations that exist within a state, region, city, or other geographic locale can be a crucial step in what is often referred to as “local news ecosystem assessment.” This work can be critically important for various stakeholders, including:

- Funders and philanthropists who want to think about where their investments might make the greatest impact

- Policy makers who want to think about which communities/constituencies currently have more or less access to relevant local news
- Research centers or civic organizations that want to kickstart a public conversation about the local news crisis
- Journalism support organizations such as local Press Forward chapters who need to create a baseline understanding of the state of local news and/or assess current capacity for news production and provision in their geographic area.

Is creating a newsroom census the right approach for your goals?

This toolkit focuses on creating a “census” of news outlets that exist within a given geographic area—an important way of documenting the local news production capacity within a geographic area and measuring the health of the local news ecosystem.

Before we dive into the steps to create a newsroom census, it’s important to pause to consider whether that research approach is the right fit for your purposes. There are several approaches to assessing the health of local news in a geographic area, and some approaches may be better suited to certain kinds of contexts and objectives. You may decide that one of these alternatives is better suited to your aims. You may also employ more than one approach in order to build a more comprehensive picture of local news in your area.

NOTE: It’s important to keep your timeline and resources in mind. If you need to move quickly or you have fewer resources available, it will probably be necessary to keep your research as simple as possible.

Alternative Approach 1: Mapping coverage areas instead of mapping the physical location of news outlets

In some geographic locales, being able to map the physical, brick and mortar location of news outlets might matter less than being able to map how those outlets define the communities they aim to serve. This may be especially true in densely populated areas and/or in areas with overlapping media markets, such as border regions of states. In New Jersey, for example, as news researcher Sarah Stonbely notes, “people’s lives rarely stay within municipal boundaries — their jobs, grocery stores, entertainment venues, and places of worship are often one, two, three, or more municipalities away. Therefore the local news that is of relevance is not only about the municipality in which they live, but also about a larger region” (Stonbely 2021). Mapping coverage areas also accounts for the varying intended audiences of outlets within a locale. For example, some outlets, such as ProPublica’s [Regional Newsrooms](#), explicitly set out to produce news for cross-state audiences. For an in-depth discussion of the mapping coverage areas approach, see Stonbely, 2021 (p. 10-17; available [here](#)).

NOTE: Mapping coverage areas can be used rather than or in addition to counting and mapping outlets themselves.

Alternative Approach 2: Documenting local news content

Instead of or in addition to counting and mapping the news outlets that exist within a given geographic area, researchers can focus on performing some kind of content analysis to document how much and what kinds of local news and information are being provided by those outlets. Particularly as local newsroom resources shrink, it can be just as important to understand what they are able to produce as to document that they exist.

For example, you can examine news content to assess how local outlets cover various areas within a geographic locale. A 2020 report on [Chicago's local news](#) analyzed which sections of the city were referenced most often in news stories. Other content variables include whether the preponderance of news carried by an outlet focuses on news events happening locally rather than focusing on national or out-of-state news (although, as mentioned above, out-of-state coverage can be highly locally relevant in some regions, such as in communities that lie along state borders). Another potential variable is to document how much of the coverage carried by an outlet is produced by reporters at that outlet, versus news produced by national news outlets, wire services, statewide news collaborations, etc.

Analyzing local news content can be challenging and resource intensive, however. Challenges of this approach include paywalls that block access to content, platform software used by some smaller outlets that is difficult to “scrape”, and the hours and care required to manually code news content.

NOTE: Content analysis can be used in addition to counting and mapping outlets themselves.

Alternative Approach 3: Audience studies

Yet another approach is to consider [what news audiences are paying attention to](#) within a given geographic area. From this perspective, even if a number of news outlets exist in a community and they are regularly producing actual local news content, that might not matter if few people are engaging with that content. This more audience-centric approach requires different methods than the ones we provide in this toolkit.

Quantitative methods like [surveys](#) or audience data such as that provided for a fee by firms like [comScore](#) (which tracks the browsing behavior of a large panel of Internet users), [Nielsen](#) (including Nielsen Audio, formerly Arbitron, for radio data), or qualitative methods like focus groups and [community listening sessions](#) can all provide important insights on local residents' news habits and community information needs. (The [LNIC working group](#) on Audiences and the Public will be offering resources for this work.)

Computational approaches are also emerging for geo-mapping web domains to see where news links are clicked and shared (Yang et al. 2025; see also the [LNIC Working Group](#) on computational methods). Computational approaches have the advantage of also being able to account for things like community Facebook groups that are [taking the place](#) of shuttered local newspapers in some communities. [Combining surveys and computational approaches](#) can also reveal discrepancies in what the media is covering and what the public perceives the media as covering.

NOTE: Audience analysis can be used rather than or in addition to counting and mapping news outlets themselves.

Limitations to our approach

This toolkit focuses on creating a census of news-producing outlets in a given geographic area. We believe this is a foundational step for understanding local news and information assets and gaps. But there are limitations to this approach that should be acknowledged.

One limitation, as noted above, is that the physical location of newsrooms may not correspond to the audiences actually served by an outlet. The physical address of an outlet that produces statewide news, for example, will not be a good indicator of its intended audience. Moreover, as more news outlets are acquired by multi-state conglomerates, not only does the content they carry often become [less truly local](#), newsrooms may be merged, meaning that multiple news websites that feature different community names on their mastheads may be produced by a single newsroom. Also, as online news organizations like Axios expand their “local” sites to cities nationwide, they may not list and may not even have a physical newsroom space in each city.

Also, simply counting local outlets and documenting their characteristics “does not accurately estimate the quality, scale, or diversity of [news] topics provided to the community” (Khanom et al 2023). Indeed, documenting newsrooms actually tells us far less than we might like about how much news is being produced within a particular geographic locale, or what its quality is, or which communities, issues, and events receive more coverage than others. That’s one reason supplementing your newsroom census with additional news content analysis can be very useful.

Nevertheless, creating a census of local news outlets can be an important step toward measuring the local news production capacity within a given geographic locale and measuring the health of the local news ecosystem. It also creates a starting point for continuing to monitor the ecosystem over time.

We recommend that researchers plan to carefully document their work so it can be replicated again at future points in time, and that they give some thought to the cadence of ongoing work (i.e, “how often will we collect this data and publish a report?”). We also recommend that researchers define the changes they would like to monitor over time, which will be helpful to inform questions asked and methodologies used.

MAPPING YOUR LOCAL NEWS ECOSYSTEM

5 Steps Toward Mapping your Local News Ecosystem: A Minimum Foundational Approach

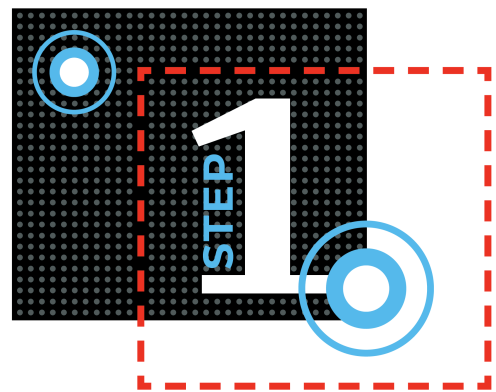
The guidelines and suggestions provided here are compiled from recent local news ecosystem analyses from around the country, including [Impact Architects' Local News and Information Ecosystem](#) assessment tools and state-level assessments conducted by various researchers and organizations, including [Colorado](#), [Maryland](#), [Minnesota](#), [Montana](#), [Nebraska](#), [New Jersey](#), [Oregon](#), [Washington](#), and [Wyoming](#).

Step 1: Define Geographic Boundaries

Drawing the geographic boundaries of the area to be studied is an essential first step.

Most news census projects thus far have focused on mapping news outlets within whole states (see the list above), though some have looked at particular cities or counties, including [Philadelphia](#) and [Chicago](#). In order to know what to count and map, you'll need to decide if the appropriate geographic boundary for your study is the state lines, county lines, or city limits—or if you want to examine a multi-state region.

It's also worth considering whether your goal is to document outlets that physically exist within a locale, or to also capture outlets that serve portions of that locale from bordering areas. In densely populated regions with overlapping media markets, such as the Philadelphia/New Jersey area, or in states with border communities that are served by the neighboring state's media, such as the Columbia Gorge region of Washington and Oregon,



observing state boundaries may not be entirely useful—again, depending on the researchers’ aims (Stonbely 2021). In some states, whole cities or regions are served by out-of-state news outlets in ways that will not be captured if the analysis is limited to outlets physically located within state borders. This can be particularly true of television news, since each broadcast television station serves a Designated Market Area (DMA). Some DMAs cross state lines, and typically, several counties are nested within a DMA. Another example is the increasing number of collaborative journalism initiatives that are changing the shape of local news by partnering across state lines—such as the public radio [Midwest Newsroom](#), a collaboration between NPR and member stations that focuses on Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska.

On the other hand, if the aim is to document the state’s own capacity for local news production—for example, in order to advocate for state legislation to support local news—counting and mapping only the outlets within state boundaries makes sense. State boundaries also create a very easy-to-understand approach to mapping local news—easier for the researcher than trying to capture relevant out of state outlets, and straightforward for readers as well.

Whichever approach you choose, your local news census will need to be transparent about whether outlets located outside of state lines are included in your census.

Another important consideration is the “breadth versus depth” trade-off: Does your research aim to offer detailed insights on a smaller geographical area, or to gather more limited data from a broader area? Confronting this trade-off may be unavoidable, depending on the resources available for conducting your census. You may simply not have the time and research assistance necessary for an extremely detailed assessment of an entire state’s news ecosystem, for example. But even less-resourced researchers will be able to create a statewide census of news outlets and gather some basic data about each outlet.

Similarly, will you include “hyperlocal” outlets whose coverage and reach are more narrowly focused on small sub-areas? Some small online news outlets, print-only neighborhood newspapers, and neighborhood social media sites provide a valuable service for their communities, but can be more difficult to identify than traditional newspapers, TV and radio stations. You’ll want to decide whether such outlets are important to include in your master list, or if that is a level of detail that you will not have the resources to capture.

Finally, it’s important to note that as the number of news outlets—particularly newspapers—around the country shrinks, and those that remain increasingly are acquired by large multi-state chains or conglomerates, what counts as “local” news deserves some thought. Today’s information landscape is increasingly controlled by a shrinking number of parent companies. A growing body of research indicates that newspapers acquired by multi-state conglomerate ownership, [particularly by private equity firms and hedge funds](#), tend to reduce their actual local news coverage (Peterson & Dunaway, 2024). While we do not recommend excluding non-locally owned outlets from your analysis—which would likely keep many television stations from being included, for example—researchers may want to gather data on whether the news outlets located in their area are owned by local or by out of state owners, as discussed further below. As also discussed further below, researchers may want to gather data on how “local” the orientation of local news really is—for example, by analyzing how much

news content from news outlets in your geographic region is produced by locally-based reporters and/or is focused on events and issues in local communities.

So, before launching a local newsroom census, it's important to think carefully about what will count as "local" news.

In this toolkit, we suggest defining "local" news in terms of news produced by, for, and about local geographic communities. (It is important to note the distinction between media serving *geographic* communities versus other kinds of communities, such as linguistic or racial/ethnic communities. We discuss below ways of capturing information about outlets that define their audiences in these terms more than geographic terms.) We also strongly suggest being very clear about your decisions. A recent local news census out of [Washington state](#) offers a particularly clear discussion of how "local" news outlets were identified:

"To meet locality criteria, the outlet must be either a) located in Washington and primarily oriented to a Washington community or b) located outside of Washington but primarily oriented to a Washington community. To meet the first criterion, an outlet is located in Washington if its physical address or mailing address (if a physical address is unavailable) are in Washington and its primary audience is a Washington community. To meet the second criterion, an outlet may be considered local if it is not located in Washington but its primary audience or one of its primary audiences is a Washington community, evident in a Washington demonym in the outlet's name, substantial circulation or broadcast in a Washington community, or an explicit description that the outlet serves a Washington community."

Step 2: Define Inclusion Criteria

Just as clear decisions need to be made up front about geographic boundaries and scope, it's also important to decide what will count as "news"—that is, deciding on criteria for which types of outlets you will include in and which (if any) outlets should not be included.

In this section we discuss considerations around what medium types to include/exclude; what types of organizations beyond traditional newsrooms you may or may not want to include; and what types of content you may want to document as you create your inclusion criteria.



Types of Media

An obvious place to begin mapping local news is with newspapers, which are the anchor institutions for local news production in many communities. The well-known [State of Local News](#) reports by Penny Abernathy and the Medill School at Northwestern University have attempted to map all newspapers across the country since 2016, providing an important baseline for measuring the rapid shrinking of local news.

Focusing on newspapers is a critical place to start because they tend to provide much of the original news reporting in any locale and to set the agenda for other local area media—which is why some scholars refer to newspapers as “[keystone media](#).” But they are not the only species in the local news ecosystem. [Local television](#) still draws comparatively large audiences and many stations are well-positioned to help fill gaps in local news; [public radio](#) also fills local news gaps (though commercial radio is [far less likely](#) to do so); and local podcasts, magazines, low-power TV and smaller affiliate stations and community newsletters may offer important (even if less frequent) local public affairs coverage. And even as print newspapers decline, more digital-first and hyper-local publications have emerged to fill local news and information gaps.

Meanwhile, virtually all traditional news outlets have developed some kind of digital presence, and in many areas of the country those websites are key, even dominant, components of the local news ecosystem. And many news consumers today—even in so-called “news deserts” – [encounter news via social media](#), including Facebook groups and other social media sites that have emerged in the void left by the closure of local newspapers. Some are even using other technologies, like text messaging, to reach their audiences. Researchers will therefore need to decide which kinds of media to document in their local news ecosystem.

At a minimum, we suggest researchers include all identifiable newspapers, television and radio broadcast stations, and digital journalism sites that are physically located within a particular geographic region. We suggest being as comprehensive as possible, while recognizing that some types of media—particularly small print-only community newspapers and community social media sites—can be challenging to document.

Another basic and important decision is whether to require that a news outlet have some kind of website in order to be included in your census, or whether you will also try to identify small print publications and other outlets that do not have a digital presence.

Especially if time and resources are limited, we recommend starting only with outlets that have a digital presence/URL. This method is likely to capture all of the most significant outlets in your geographic area along with most smaller outlets, and can be added to later through focus groups, audience surveys, reader surveys, and other methods.

Of course, it may also be important – depending on the purposes of your study – to include very small non-digital outlets that may be harder to discover. Are you more interested in documenting all news producing outlets that exist in your geographic locale, no matter how small, or in identifying the most widely used and potentially influential outlets (which, almost by definition, will have a digital presence)? From one perspective, small hyper

local news outlets, whether in print or online, are important if one wants to thoroughly document all organizations contributing news and information in a local news ecosystem. On the other hand, small hyper-local outlets are [unlikely](#) to gain much audience reach or web traffic.

Generally speaking, we recommend that researchers aim to be as inclusive as possible in documenting local news providers given the time and resources available, and also try to incorporate measures of audience size/reach when possible.

Another important decision is whether your census will include news outlets that publish or broadcast in languages other than English. A truly complete local newsroom census should make every effort to include non-English news outlets.

We discuss in the next section some strategies for identifying such outlets in your geographic area. Similarly, a truly complete census of local news outlets should include outlets owned by and/or serving racial, ethnic, gender, religious, and communities of identity. As discussed below, producing a newsroom census that is fully inclusive is illuminating and well worth the effort.

Types of Newsrooms/Organizations

While it may seem self-evident that a “news” census will focus on traditional news media, the information landscape has changed so dramatically in recent years that it is worthwhile to think carefully about the types of organizations you will include in your census. For example, as resources for trained reporting staff shrink, more newsrooms have turned to interns and [citizen volunteers](#) to help them cover local news. In some communities, the closure of the local newspaper has prompted local residents without journalism training or experience to [start their own](#) social media-based community news service; [in many communities](#), local news is being provided by student journalists at local student newspapers or working for traditional newsrooms. Moreover, in many places, [local civic organizations](#) and mutual aid organizations have become critical information resources—particularly for immigrant and linguistic minority communities.

In today’s complex information environment, a significant amount of civically-relevant information available to the public is not produced by journalists, but rather by community and civic organizations, government agencies, public relations strategic communicators, social media users, etc.

So, a relevant consideration is whether your census will include non-journalistic organizations. A study of local news in New Jersey (Stonbely 2021) discusses this challenge:

“Under some definitions of local news, a chamber of commerce, for example, might qualify, as some provide local economic information on their websites. Likewise, a local lifestyle magazine will often include personal health or local cultural news, though often based on a press release or in advertorial

format. We chose not to include information-producing civic institutions or lifestyle outlets because the primary sources of information feeding them (the government in the former case, businesses and press releases in the latter) have an incentive to provide only flattering information; with the acknowledgement that they may be important information providers for some members of a community.”

In [subsequent work](#), however, Stonbely has argued for thinking more expansively about where people get their news and information, noting that “people’s critical information needs are now met by all manner of local organizations, largely through social media.” From this perspective, mapping local news ecosystems should focus “on all civic information providers: local news outlets, yes, but also the communications of schools, chambers of commerce, health institutions, and small businesses. In other words, the public-information-producing organizations that constitute the infrastructure of community information and news landscapes.” A key consideration here is whether your project will have the time and resources required to identify all such organizations, and how you will go about it (see Overview of Approaches to Analyzing Local News above for ideas).

We suggest being as inclusive as possible, while recognizing the need to draw boundaries between journalistically produced news and other forms of local information.

In particular, researchers may want to distinguish between news that adheres to standard journalistic practices like multi-sourcing and fact-checking and other kinds of more selective or opinionated content (a step which will require some content analysis in addition to the news census research described in this toolkit), or between content produced for a public audience versus information shared among more selective or closed groups, such as on social media sites.

Researchers may opt to also include in their analysis other types of local media, such as Facebook groups, Instagram pages, and other social media sites. For example, a news mapping project in Colorado [included these sources](#) by interviewing residents in each county to see what media they turn to for local news. Similarly, the authors of the [Montana](#) news census say they “cast a wide net when considering what is meant by ‘local news and information outlets.’ We included print, digital, radio, and broadcast outlets in our inventory—as well as innovative and nontraditional models like longform podcasts and curated newsletters.”

Yet another consideration is whether your census will include partisan news sources.

On this question, approaches have varied. Based on interviews with members of the public that indicated the wide range of sources residents turn to for news and information, the local news census produced by the [Colorado News Collaborative](#) includes some outlets that define themselves in partisan terms, “because doing so reflects the reality of where people are getting their news and information in the area.” In another example, the author of a recent news census report out of [Minnesota](#) notes that their census includes some outlets that are “to some extent even beyond the boundaries of conventional journalism:

“We take a deliberately broad definition for what we include in our data knowing as we do that many people rely on a range of sources outside of professional journalism to stay informed about local information. We have therefore included in our news outlet census many sources, including commercial radio or single author digital creators, who may not consider themselves journalists but who nonetheless are an important conduit for local information in some communities.”

A particularly important and challenging consideration is how to treat the digital non-journalistic, often partisan outlets colloquially known as “[pink slime](#).”

These are “organizations that mimic local news outlets but push partisan politics or corporate communications without disclaimers or adherence to other good journalistic practices” (Moore et al 2024), outlets people may end up visiting when they search the Internet or turn to social media for local news. (Many of these sites are named in ways that suggest they are locally-based, even if they are not). One [estimate](#) suggests there are as many such outlets as there are legitimate newspapers in the United States; as of 2020, the largest operator of these sites, Metric Media, had at least 1,200 of these online outlets across multiple states. While some of these sites do offer some legitimate information, it is typically not written or vetted by journalists (and in fact much of their content is AI-generated and auto-populated across sites) and is mixed in with opinion pieces, press releases, and other non-journalistic material that is often not clearly labeled as such.

There is no clear consensus about how to treat these kinds of outlets. From one perspective, if these sites exist in your geographic area, perhaps it is important to document them as one potential source of local “news”—even though that news may be of dubious value. On the other hand, including pink slime sites in a report on “local news” could further blur the boundaries between journalistically-produced news and other kinds. One approach is to identify all outlets operated by known pink slime purveyors within the state or region by consulting sources like Bengani (2022) and either a) exclude them outright from the master list; or b) visit those sites to verify whether humanly-written, locally-relevant information appears prominently and often enough to justify inclusion in the master list; or c) simply document all such sites, being sure to clearly label them. In either case, best practice calls for clear categorization of all outlets and an explanation for readers to understand why various outlets have or have not been included in your master list.

Whatever the researcher ultimately determines the census should include, we stress the importance of being transparent about inclusion and exclusion criteria.

If the rationale underlying those decisions is clear, readers will have the necessary information to determine how to make sense of your findings.

Types of Content

A third consideration is whether you will examine the content of a news outlet before deciding whether to include it in your master list. There are two general approaches here: You can make a priori decisions about what

kinds of media to include in your master list without looking at the content they produce; or, you can incorporate at least some minimal examination of content before deciding whether an outlet should be included.

In the first approach, you decide up front which types of outlets will be included or excluded, without examining the types of content they actually produce. Some studies (e.g., [Oregon's](#) 2022 statewide ecosystem assessment) exclude commercial radio stations, for example, based on [research](#) suggesting that few carry much local news. A recent report on Minnesota's journalism ecosystem includes a [good example of a clear, concise explanation](#) of how that research team decided what outlets to include without looking at the content outlets produce.

In the second approach, you commit the time to examine each outlet before deciding whether to include it. For example, except for its a priori exclusion of commercial radio stations, the [Oregon](#) news census is based on a simple content analysis that determined whether an outlet “a) appears to publish at least some local news content at least monthly, and b) produces original local journalism c) covering issues of local civic relevance.” (A valuable resource in this regard is the “[critical information needs](#)” criteria developed by Friedland et al [2012].) A [2021 report](#) on New Jersey's local news describes its inclusion criteria this way:

“The local news providers studied here include those that would be recognized as “traditional” journalism outlets — newspapers, local television, and radio stations airing local news at the top and bottom of the hour. Also included were digital-native online newspapers, many of which are owned and/or staffed by former legacy-outlet reporters, as well as qualifying magazines serving ethnic, LGBTQ, and religious communities, if they provide regular local news as defined above about these communities or institutions.”

To the extent that you decide not to exclude certain outlets a priori, but rather to examine them first before deciding whether to include them in your census, there are several things to look for.

In general, we recommend that researchers invest time in visiting the website for each outlet to determine if the outlet carries at least some minimal level of civically relevant, locally focused news. Outlets that do not, can either be excluded from the master list, or included in the list but coded in a way that will allow you to distinguish between them and the other outlets in your list.

Again, the recent [Washington state](#) report provides a clear example of one approach to drawing boundaries around what kinds of news outlets and news content to include in a local news census:

“To meet the content quality threshold for inclusion in the database, the outlet must meet four main criteria, including that it must a) regularly publish substantial content on a website or social media page that is b) original, c) journalistic, and d) locally relevant. Substantial content that is published regularly means that the outlet has published content in the past 30 days that is substantial in length (e.g., an article of at least 300 words, video or audio of at least one minute). Original content means that the outlet has published content that was created by the outlet's staff rather than by another outlet located outside of the community or by another organization. Journalistic content means that, in the past month, the outlet has published information that is “a ‘reported’ story or when a content creator gathered information from spokespersons, experts, documents and other sources and attributed information in

the story to those sources.” Locally relevant content refers to, in the past month, the outlet has published content that is about or of specific interest to the community in which the outlet is located or to which it is oriented.”

Step 3: Create a Master List of News Outlets and Organizations

After deciding what types of media/organizations/content you intend to include in your census, the next task is to assemble a master list of relevant news outlets in your chosen geographic area.



This is not necessarily a straightforward task. No single complete list is likely to already exist (though in some locales there may be exceptions). Your master list will likely need to be assembled from various sources. It will be useful to cross-check information from one resource against information provided in others, as the information in any one place may not be complete or up to date. In this section, we focus first on the steps that are easiest and least resource-intensive.

The [Impact Architects](#)’ “playbook” for conducting information ecosystem analysis suggests some essential starting places for creating a master list of local news outlets:

- The [State of Local News Project](#) maintains a database of newspapers and other news outlets in each state. While this database is an essential starting place for mapping local news in your geographic area, be aware that it may not reflect all local news outlets, both because of changes in the local news landscape over time, and because it is challenging for non-locally based researchers to identify all outlets across an entire state or region.
- In addition, the [Institute for Nonprofit News \(INN\) network directory](#) lists over 500 independent nonprofit newsrooms around the country, vetted for editorial independence, financial transparency, and original reporting.
- The [Center for Community Media](#)’s [Maps and Directories](#) page lists a number of additional state-level directories, including ethnic media in specific geographic locales.

Beyond these foundational resources, other resources for identifying local media in your area may include state government agencies. Some states maintain a list of newspapers; in Oregon, for example, it's the Secretary of State's "[Oregon Blue Book](#)."

A number of other resources exist for identifying television and radio stations in your locale. Local broadcast stations can be identified using the Corporation for Public Broadcasting "[member finder](#)" station lists. The National Federation of Community Broadcasters' [Member Map](#) shows member stations throughout North America. Because the number of TV stations in any locale is relatively small compared with local newspapers, it is relatively easy to simply do a manual search for all statewide broadcast network affiliate stations (ABC, CBS, NBC, PBS, and Fox), as well as local Univision and Telemundo stations where applicable. Local satellite stations can be found using the [FCC's geographic search](#). [Media Cloud](#) includes a free, searchable listing of state-level news outlets, and although as of this writing the database did not appear to be up to date, it could provide another starting place.

Additional Publicly Available Resources:

- [ABYZ News Links](#)
- [Library of Congress's Newspaper Directory](#)
- [Local Independent Online News Publishers \(LION\) Current Members list](#)
- [National Newspaper Association's Member Map](#)
- [onlinenewspapers.com](#)
- Local associations of newspapers, broadcasters, etc., which may provide public membership listings

Additional Resources Available for a Fee:

- [Editor & Publisher International Yearbook](#): Contains a section dedicated to "community" newspapers (print and digital).
- [Cision](#)
- [Prowly](#)
- [BIA/Kelsey](#)
- [tveyes.com](#)

If these resources aren't working for your locale or seem incomplete, there may be a Wikipedia entry on newspapers/media in your state or city—though that would need to be double checked for accurate and up to date information, and may not include all outlets. Researchers can also do Google searches (e.g. "News about XXX"). Online sources like Wikipedia may also have relevant lists, though of course these lists would need vetting for accuracy and should not necessarily be considered complete.

Just as no complete master list of local news outlets in your area is likely to already exist, available lists of non-English news outlets may be limited, incomplete, and/or require additional vetting.

Researchers should also be aware of any significant non-English speaking populations in your state, and conduct searches using that language (e.g. “periodico Springfield”). For example, the National Association of Hispanic Publications has a [member list](#), though it includes a variety of publications beyond traditional newspapers. The Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism published [The State of Latino News Media](#) in 2019; those data are now dated but could provide a useful starting place as well.

Making sure your newsroom census includes non-English language news outlets can be especially challenging, as these outlets may be under-resourced, have limited circulation, or perhaps have no online presence. CUNY’s Center for Community Journalism has some directories that may prove helpful (<https://www.journalism.cuny.edu/centers/center-community-media/>).

This work may require supplementing internet searches with outreach to local institutions and organizations. For example, the [National Association of Hispanic Journalists](#) maintains a directory of local chapters, one of which might be able to help you identify Spanish language media in your locale. Local universities with journalism departments and local civic organizations may be able to help connect you with linguistic and other minority media in your state.

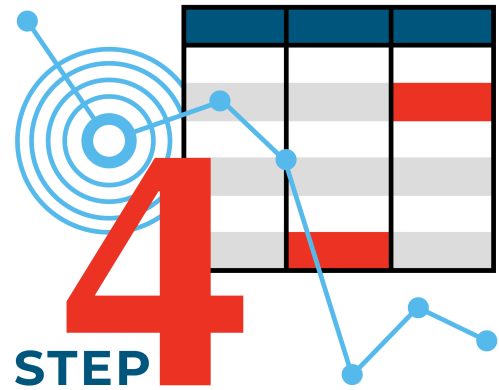
Another way to build out a master list to identify smaller outlets is to conduct surveys or hold interviews, focus groups, or community workshops where people can volunteer the names of local sources they pay attention to. This can be especially helpful for identifying small print publications, hyper-local news sites, and community social media sites that people turn to for local news and information (see Overview of Approaches to Analyzing Local News above).

Finally, it’s important to note that comparing and de-duplicating various lists of outlets that your research may generate can be time-consuming and must be done carefully.

Try to implement strict version control protocols (i.e. make sure everyone is working on the same list) by keeping your data in Google docs, Airtable, or some other platform that is accessible by everyone involved and automatically updates with any changes. We also recommend noting where you learned about each outlet – particular for any that lack a digital presence – in case the information needs to be checked or verified later.

Step 4: Gather Data on Outlets in the Master List

Here we provide an overview of some important information to gather. It's important to note that there are many potential data points that a well-resourced research team could gather, and some kinds of information about news outlets are easier to find than others.



Once your master list has been created, you should compile some basic data on each outlet. This will lay the basis for creating an actual map of news outlets in your state or other locale, and help you answer key questions such as which geographic areas are most heavily served by local news outlets and which are relatively under-served; the proportion of newspapers versus other kinds of news outlets serving your geographic locale; and what kinds of ownership and business models characterize the news outlets in your locale.

We focus here on the information that is the most foundational and easiest to find. Further below, we provide a supplementary list of a) more detailed information about news outlets that researchers may want to invest in gathering and b) additional information about counties or municipalities that can be gathered to enhance your news ecosystem assessment.

[Download templates for data collection, including CSV files, instructions, and sample data, from our website, localnewsimpact.org >](https://localnewsimpact.org)

10 Recommended Data Points to Gather on Local News Outlets

The information in this section can for the most part be gathered directly from news outlets' websites, supplemented in some cases by additional online searching.

DATA POINT 1: Outlet name, as it appears on their website or masthead.

DATA POINT 2: Digital location or URL of outlet's website

Most news outlets today tend to have some kind of web presence, although for very small legacy newspapers, that may simply be a collection of digitized PDFs or an itemized list of links to news stories. As noted above, a fundamental inclusion question is whether to require that a news outlet have some

kind of website in order to be included in your census—a convenient way of delineating what will and will not be included—or whether you will also try to identify small print publications or other outlets that do not have any digital presence.

DATA POINT 3: Physical location

Office or newsroom address, with separate categories for city and county. Physical addresses or geo-location information is what will enable the literal mapping of news outlets in your geographic region. So, even if you do not have immediate plans to create a map of news outlets in your locale, gathering this information can allow you or others to do so later.

In most cases it should be possible to find a physical address on an outlet’s website. If television station addresses prove difficult to find, the [FCC’s public inspection files](#) will provide physical addresses.

Note: The websites for some news outlets may not list a physical address, and in some cases of chain ownership, separate websites may be managed by the same underlying newsroom. The [Oregon report](#), for example, counts websites with separate URLs and different daily content as separate “outlets” in their database, but readers should note that these may or may not correspond to different underlying bricks-and-mortar news outlets.

DATA POINT 4: Founding year or the year the outlet was started.

DATA POINT 5: Media outlet type

Categorizing a news outlet into one outlet type can in some cases be a bit challenging. For example, as most newspapers have by now developed some kind of digital presence and many have reduced or dropped their print product, what makes them a “newspaper” any more? Researchers may wish to distinguish between “legacy” newspapers – outlets that historically were print publications – versus “digital news sites” that originated online as one way of making these distinctions.

Our recommended categories can help deal with this challenge by distinguishing among outlets that still appear in print only, those that are digital only—either legacy newspapers that have now dropped their print product, or digital news start-ups—and those that have both a print and a digital product.

Similarly, more public radio stations today consider themselves “multimedia” news providers rather than simply as radio stations. So it may be helpful to think, as Impact Architects suggests, in terms of the “primary distribution medium” of each outlet.

Recommended categories:

- Print only
- Digital only
- Print and digital
- Broadcast television

- Public radio
- Commercial radio: Other.

When categorizing TV and radio stations, researchers may wish to distinguish “relay” stations, which are transmitters that rebroadcast signals from a main station and do not generally produce original content. This is especially important to the extent that the goal of your research is to document the capacity for local news production in your geographic locale.

DATA POINT 6: Frequency of publication

Publication frequency (i.e., the consistency of an outlet’s news production) can provide useful information, when aggregated, about the news production capacity within a given geographic locale. Recommended categories:

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- For broadcast outlets, this will generally be ‘daily’.

Frequency of publication may be difficult to discern for digital-only news outlets, which may publish irregularly; one solution is to add “regularly” (meaning updates and new content appear more than once a week) and “irregularly” (meaning once or twice a month) as options. If a digital outlet publishes less frequently than every month, they are likely not an important local news provider and the researcher may decide not to include them. Ethnic media may be exceptions as they are sometimes more active on social media and publish only infrequently to their websites.

DATA POINT 7: Community/communities served, as defined by the outlet.

Many news sites describe on their home or “about” pages the geographic communities they serve. Researchers should note if an outlet serves a particular community of identity, rather than of geography (e.g. African American/Black, Hispanic/Latino, Asian/Asian American, Native American, Hyperlocal, Gay/Lesbian/LGBTQ+, etc). These outlets can be vital information sources for these communities, and documenting them provides an additional valuable layer to local ecosystem assessment. If an outlet offers news in a language other than English, that is important to note as well.

DATA POINT 8: Owner, the individual(s) or company that owns the outlet.

As conglomerate ownership of newspapers increases, the actual ownership of local newspapers may be becoming harder to track. In Oregon, for example, Carpenter Media Group purchased three dozen local newspapers in 2024, but as of early 2025, few of those newspapers’ websites listed Carpenter Media as their owner. The original owners (EO Media or Pamplin Media) were still listed as owners months after the sale—even after Carpenter began merging and closing some outlets. For helpful guidance on how to establish the ownership of outlets, see [Impact Architects](#)’ News & Information Ecosystem Playbook.

DATA POINT 9: Owner location, in- versus out-of-state owner, based on the owner/corporate parent’s physical/geographical address.

As [Impact Architects](#) points out in their Playbook, “Identifying the ownership structure of a publication takes some manual work, but it is important information to better understand just how ‘local’ the local publication is.”

DATA POINT 10: Business model

This last variable in our “Key Variables” list is a simplified way of thinking about the ownership structure of media in your local ecosystem—and this information is relatively easy to determine with some online searching. Recommended categories:

- Commercial
- Non-profit or public media

This simplified dichotomy between commercially operated media versus non-profit and public media builds on research showing the [fundamentally different “logics”](#) that shape the amount and type of public service-oriented news an outlet is likely to produce. Put simply, commercially operated outlets are, on average, less likely to invest in an ongoing way in watchdog reporting, public affairs information, and viewpoint diversity as are nonprofit and “public” media (which in this context does not refer to ownership per se, but rather simply to media that are freely available to all, not operated for profit, and that receive some public funding). There are certainly variations in this pattern, and researchers should be careful not to overgeneralize based on this variable: Some privately-owned newspapers, for example, have a long history of strong public service orientation. Documenting the overall mix of commercial versus non-profit media in your local ecosystem can nevertheless be valuable.

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Six Additional News Outlet Data

In this section, we highlight a more nuanced way of analyzing media ownership. Research teams with adequate time and resources to do some additional digging may want to add some or all of the following variables.

DATA POINT 11: Local news originators vs curators

Depending on the goals of the project, it can be valuable to distinguish outlets that produce original news from those that largely re-package content produced by others. For example, an [ecosystem assessment in New Jersey](#) released in 2020 distinguished local news “originators” from all other news outlets in each municipality. A 2021 report on local news in [Colorado](#) not only mapped news outlets per county, but also did some content analysis to determine the number of original local news stories those outlets produced

on a single weekday. A similar approach was adopted by a recent report on [Montana](#)'s local news ecosystem, which distinguished between "local and regional news creators (those producing original news content) and curators (those repackaging original news content)." This variable can be very useful as a measure of the news production capacity within a geographic locale.

DATA POINT 12: Scope of coverage

As discussed in the **Overview of Approaches to Analyzing Local News** section above, it can be very useful to try to document the communities or geographic scope each news outlet seeks to serve (what we might call their "aspirational coverage area"). As discussed earlier, coding only the physical location of an outlet may not reveal much about the radius of coverage each outlet actually provides. Coding for actual coverage area can be challenging, however.

To do a thorough job requires extensive manual or computer-assisted content analysis. However, even low-resource research teams can record how each outlet defines the scope of coverage it seeks to offer. For example, many newspapers' mastheads include a mission statement or other verbiage indicating the communities they seek to serve, which can simply be copied and pasted into your database. Again, only some form of careful audience studies can actually determine the real extent of a news outlets' reach, and only systematic content analysis can discover to what extent they are regularly producing stories about the local communities they aim to serve.

Nevertheless, documenting each outlet's aspirational coverage area can fill in the picture of local news provision in your geographic locale. For example, once that information is gathered, it is possible to create categories of aspirational coverage areas:

- Hyper-local/neighborhood
- City-wide
- Statewide
- Regional

DATA POINT 13: Audience size

Relatedly, it can be very useful to document the reach of the news outlets in your geographic locale. Documenting audience size takes some additional work and will not always be possible for every outlet. And it requires looking at different sources of data, potentially including direct correspondence with news outlets and/or examining their materials for advertisers and sponsors, often called "media kits." Types of audience size data include:

- Daily or weekly print circulation, as reported by print publications
- Digital traffic, as measured by, for example, unique monthly visitors and/or time spent on an outlet's webpages (with the latter being a more precise measure—see Hindman (2011).
- Some tools you can use (some require a fee) for this kind of audience data are:
 - [Comscore](#): Offers industry-standard audience measurement with third-party-verified traffic and demographic data.

- [Similarweb](#): Offers data on web traffic volume, top traffic sources (direct, referral, search, social), visitor geography, engagement metrics (e.g., time on site, bounce rate).
- [SEMrush](#): The traffic analytics tool offers web traffic estimates, audience overlap, top pages, engagement metrics, and traffic sources.
- Social media reach: Total followers across platforms (Facebook, Twitter/X, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok) can indicate community engagement, though follower counts don't always translate to active readership. Note that audience data can vary significantly in reliability. Third-party estimates may not align with outlet-reported numbers, and social media followers don't necessarily indicate local readership. When possible, note your data source and collection date, as these metrics can change rapidly.

DATA POINT 14: News production capacity

Measures of news production capacity provide insight on the ability of a news outlet to produce and deliver quality local news to its community. Researchers may examine an outlet's operating budget (i.e., its ability to fund staff, news production, etc.), and/or its editorial staff levels (i.e., its ability to cover beats and produce news stories). Obtaining this data can be challenging, but is possible given adequate research time and resources—see the [recent local news assessment out of Washington state](#) for one example, which reports the results of an intensive effort to gather survey data from newsrooms around that state. Well-designed surveys can potentially work to glean this information, although newsroom owners/editors may not wish this information to be reported publicly. In that case, the information can be aggregated, and your report can focus on aggregate newsroom capacity in your locale, rather than reporting budgets and staffing levels for each individual newsroom.

DATA POINT 15: Ownership structure

Researchers can determine if each outlet in their locale is a single holding (e.g. a family newspaper) or one of multiple holdings by a corporate owner. If multiple, it can be useful to determine the number of holdings of the parent company. This can be measured as either an exact count or in terms of categories—e.g., 2-5 total holdings, 6-10, 11-20, etc.

DATA POINT 16: Nature of ownership

With some additional online searching, researchers can usually determine whether the parent company of a newspaper or commercial radio or TV station is:

- Privately owned
- Publicly-traded but privately owned (i.e. owner retains majority of shares), or
- Publicly-traded and shareholder-controlled

This information can be useful for characterizing the incentive structure of the entities that shape the information ecosystem in your locale (Hamilton 2004; Dunaway 2008; 2013).

Note: A simpler categorization that may be easier for researchers to determine is to simply distinguish between privately held versus publicly-traded media companies.

In addition, researchers may wish to document whether the newspapers, television stations and radio stations in their locale are owned by investment firms, including hedge funds or private equity firms. As documented in a growing number of studies, acquisitions by hedge funds and private equity firms are particularly likely to result in staffing cuts and other cost-saving moves that negatively impact the quality of local news (LeBrun et al 2022; Peterson & Dunaway 2024). For example, the [Colorado Media Project](#) tracked this variable for news outlets in that state and found that hedge funds own 19 of that state's largest newspapers and nearly one-fourth of the state's print news circulation.

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Enhancing Research with Additional Data on States, Counties, and Metropolitan Areas

If you are conducting a state-level or regional news ecosystem assessment, it can be greatly enhanced by gathering demographic and other information specific to that state and even the counties within it. Doing so can reveal the characteristics that correlate with the number of news outlets in each county, for instance. This information can be important for guiding interventions to improve local news production capacity. For example, areas of a state with fewer socioeconomic resources may have a harder time sustaining for-profit news outlets, which rely on advertising, subscriptions, events, and other revenue sources that may be in short supply in that region.

The following county-level information can be gathered through the [U.S. Census Bureau](#); the [Local News Catalyst toolkit](#) has gathered some of this information into a user-friendly database searchable by state, county, and zip code.

- **Revenue sources:** Understanding how local news outlets fund operations provides insight into their sustainability and independence. As traditional advertising revenue declines, many outlets now rely on multiple income streams including subscriptions, grants, donations, events, and sponsored content. This data can be challenging to obtain since outlets rarely publish detailed financial information. Look for revenue clues in "about" pages, media kits, annual reports (for nonprofits), or through direct outreach.
- **Population size and density:** Prior research suggests a clear relationship between how populated certain geographic areas are and how many news outlets are located there. Population size and population density are therefore important indicators of the conditions likely to sustain or inhibit a thriving local news ecosystem. "News deserts"--areas where local residents are under-served by or have limited access to local news--are particularly likely to develop in sparsely populated areas (see for example Saiz-Echezarreta et al 2024).

- **Income levels:** Related to population size and density, the income levels of geographic areas are [clearly related to](#) how much access communities have to local news (see also Usher 2021). The Census Bureau tracks data on median household income, per capita income, and the proportion of persons living in poverty in each U.S. county.
- **Education levels:** Again, closely related to population size/density and income levels, education levels in an area can be clearly correlated with the availability of local news. The Census Bureau tracks data on the proportion of high school graduates and the proportion of people holding higher degrees in all U.S. counties.
- **Age:** The Census Bureau tracks data on the proportion of population under 18/over 65, along with other age-related data.
- **Racial/ethnic demographics:** The Census Bureau tracks data on the percentages of Black, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, American Indian, and other racial and ethnic minority residents in counties across the U.S.
- **Urbanization:** In addition, researchers may want to categorize counties into rural, urban, or suburban. Factors that impact local news availability like population density, income, and education levels are often correlated with these categories, which can provide a handy way of displaying and explaining your findings to various audiences. (As we will discuss further below, displaying your data in terms of rural versus urbanized regions can be an effective way to portray your local news ecosystem).

While this information can be extrapolated from the U.S. Census data, such as determining whether each county is more rural, suburban, or urban by dividing each county's population density by its square mile area, the [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#) provides data on the degree of urbanization of U.S. counties.

Other variables can be useful for measuring the civic capacity, political characteristics, and overall civic health of various communities within a geographic locale, including:

- **Number of schools, colleges, and universities:** The [National Center for Education Statistics](#) database includes this data by ZIP code.
- **Percentage of registered eligible voters**
- **Partisanship:** Vote choice estimates for the 2016 and 2020 elections can be found in the [Cooperative Election Study](#) databases.
- **Amount of philanthropic investment in media:** The [Media Impact Funders](#) database pulls from foundations' financial reports to show "the full scope of philanthropically-funded media projects" in areas around the world.

Other resources can provide useful county-level data, including the [Local Journalist Index 2025](#), created by MuckRack and Rebuild Local News. This site maps the number of working journalists in each county of the U.S., calculated as "local journalist equivalents" to account for part-time employment, reporters who cover more than one county, etc. These data can provide critical context and additional depth to your local newsroom census.

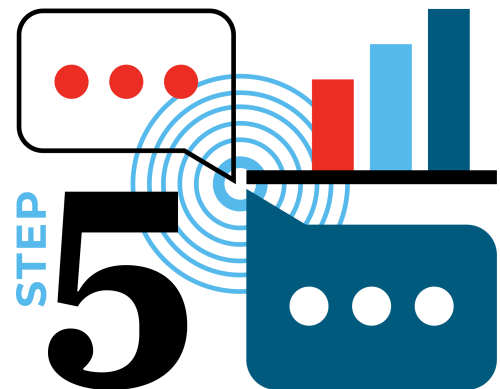
Another useful resource is the [Civic Information Index](#), which "uses data to map drivers of engaged, informed, equitable, and healthy communities nationwide," with a particular focus on "recognizing journalism as part of the

broader civic health ecosystem.” It provides county-level data and shows how each county compares to others nationwide on variables including:

- **Percent of households with broadband:** A useful measure of how easily residents of a county can access our increasingly digital news and information environment
- **Average literacy score:** A useful measure of how easily residents of a county can make use of print or text-based media
- **Percentage of residents living in high poverty neighborhoods**
- **Rate of unemployment**
- **Voter turnout:** A useful measure of civic engagement levels
- **Volunteer rate:** A useful measure of residents’ capacity for community engagement
- **Local news outlets per county:** The Civic Information Index also includes a count of local news outlets per county, but local researchers should do their own research to cross-check that number.

Step 5: Analyze, Publish, and Share Your Data

Once the information for all outlets on your master list have been gathered, you have many options for assessing what the data reveal about your local news ecosystem.



We focus here on a few basic steps, and we encourage readers to refer to the local news assessment reports listed in the Appendix for further ideas and inspiration. At a minimum, you should plan for the following:

1. Pre-release your database to subject matter experts

Pre-release your database to a select and trusted audience of local journalism leaders, researchers, and others who can probe the data for outlets that may be missing or key information that may be incorrect.

2. Publish the full master list publicly

Publish the full master list publicly in a format that does not allow readers to make changes (to protect the integrity of the data). (Some researchers particularly like the data visualization tool [Tableau](#) for building interactive dashboards and other visualizations).

3. Welcome public input

You can set up a link that allows readers to offer corrections and suggestions that your team will vet before making any adjustments to the database. NOTE that if you plan to allow for public input and adjustments to the database after publication, you'll want to note prominently in your report and on your website that the data are a work in progress and subject to change over time. Otherwise, you can save all suggestions and corrections for the next iteration of your report – remembering that the best case scenario is to update your data periodically and plan to produce ongoing reports (see the discussion of longitudinal analysis in the Introduction above).

4. Calculate frequencies and percentages of all quantitative variables.

These simple statistics can tell a powerful story. For example, what percentage of counties in your state have only one or two local news outlets, and how does that compare to other areas of the state? What are the demographic characteristics of those counties? How many outlets in your locale are locally-owned versus owned by out-of-state entities? How many are regularly producing original local news, versus primarily curating content from other sources? While more sophisticated analyses are also possible (for example, correlations between county characteristics and the characteristics of newsrooms) given enough time, resources, and expertise on your team, simple statistics are the easiest to convey to a wide variety of audiences.

5. Produce a report that highlights key findings.

Your report can be as concise or as detailed as you have the capacity to produce, and depending on what audiences you want to reach. When writing your report and/or designing a website, keep your intended audiences in mind: What are the positive signs along with the gaps or challenges your audiences will be most interested in? For example, in general, potential funders may want to learn what counties, regions, or communities of identity in your state are currently least well-served by local media. Policy-makers may want to know what proportion of local media are locally-owned, or how many journalists on average are employed by local newsrooms. Also, visually representing where outlets are concentrated and where they are more sparsely distributed can be a powerful way to represent the state of local news in your locale. We suggest perusing the various reports cited here for ideas.

6. Provide a webinar or public event to share the findings

If possible, provide a webinar or public event to share the findings of your report with key audiences, including funders, local Press Forward chapters, journalism support organizations, local experts, community leaders, policy-makers, or other key constituencies. Extra credit: Record the webinar or event then upload and share on your website and social [media](#).

Be sure to contact the LNIC so we can include the report in our [larger collection of news studies](#).

CONCLUSION

There are many approaches to solving the media crisis in our communities and country.

This toolkit attempts to harness the resources of the research community to understand our local media ecosystems and strengthen our democracy. Understanding what actually exists in your community or state is a first step toward protecting and nurturing a robust local news ecosystem. The LNIC see this toolkit as a living document, we welcome all feedback and suggestions. This is a community effort. We're open to collaboration and sharing resources.

Join the Local News Impact Consortium

The Local News Impact Consortium is a new approach to a national emergency. The LNIC is an independent research project led by researchers at Rutgers University, University of Texas – Austin, University of Missouri, Northwestern University, University of Minnesota, and University of Oregon. We are building a strong coalition of researchers, journalists, founders, and funders to work together to revive local news ecosystems across the country. By contributing to our growth, participating in working groups, or engaging with the tools we're building, you can help ensure local communities have access to trustworthy news and information. Learn more and get involved at www.localnewsimpact.org/contact/.

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APPENDIX

Example Newsroom Census/Local Ecosystem Analysis Reports

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