

EXECUTIVE

SUMMARY



INTRODUCTION



Media landscapes throughout the United States are in disrepair. Covid-19 accelerated a media industry trend of layoffs, cuts, and closures in journalism. Nationwide protests after the police killing of George Floyd forced a reckoning at many media outlets about the trauma caused to communities of color by the industry's failure to cover them in a humanistic, holistic manner, as well as by its neglect in hiring, developing, and fairly compensating journalists of color. Added to this was a contentious presidential election in which millions of voters were inundated with misinformation and lies spread by elected officials and some media outlets, resulting in many Americans disputing the election results and some even attacking the Capitol on January 6, 2021.

And yet there is still reason to hope.

The Listening Post Collective (LPC) is a U.S. based project of Internews, an international media support organization that supports independent media in 100 countries, from radio stations in refugee camps, to hyperlocal news outlets, to individual activists and reporters.

Amid the backdrop of a difficult year, the LPC stepped in to ask community media partners around the country what they needed to ensure that they could serve their communities with essential news and information. We were able to provide critical support to over 27 partners, primarily from BIPOC/Immigrant communities, with services ranging from grant writing, copy-editing, to micro-grants.

This rapid response also came at the end of our 3-year strategic plan; and thus 2020 really pushed us to test our capabilities and helped to set the stage for our next phase of work.

LPC HIGHLIGHTS

- Founded by Jesse Hardman in 2013
- Launched to bring Internews's international experience and strategies around serving community information needs to the U.S. We've since conducted 9 Information Ecosystem Assessments and 10 Information Needs Assessments
- The first project focused on rebuilding and adapting trusted information networks in post-Katrina New Orleans; it pioneered sharing civic news and information via SMS
- It also inspired a "Playbook," which we launched in 2017, and outlines a 7-step community engagement process to assist media outlets and community groups in creating their own Listening Post-inspired news and information platforms
- At least 75 people and/or organizations have used the LPC playbook in communities throughout the country
- Since 2017, we've raised over \$2.5 million to support LPC programs across the US.

Civic Media: Media that fosters civic engagement.



OUR VISION: A FUTURE WHERE CIVIC POWER IS STRENGTHENED BY EQUITABLE, CIVIC MEDIA

Our Mission

We partner with people and organizations to develop local news and information solutions that help communities thrive.

Our Core Values

Listening is our greatest tool

We start with listening. We ask questions that help us understand how we can be of service to communities.

Trust is earned

We earn trust by being transparent about what is driving our work, what we think, what we don't know, and we show up for the people we work with.

Cultivating local power is essential

We help build power by providing tools and advice that help partners understand community needs and identify ways to help strengthen and sustain their work

Being adaptable and responsive strengthens collaborations

There isn't one tool, process, or approach in building news and information solutions for communities. We develop toolkits, playbooks and strategies that are adaptable and meet partners where they are.

Equitable media requires culturally relevant solutions and transformative investments

We center immigrant and BIPOC partners and meet their needs in culturally competent and linguistically accessible ways. We invest our time, talent and resources to help these partners, and we advocate for their work to funders, institutions, and peers.

OUR WORK: WE DEVELOP CIVIC MEDIA + POWER BUILDING RESOURCES

We invest in civic media design and conduct local research, as well as create tools and resources to help partners plan and implement solutions that enable civic participation.

We also provide power-building resources for our partners, meaning that we develop opportunities to share and support ideas, research, systems, and practices that build power and strengthen equitable media.



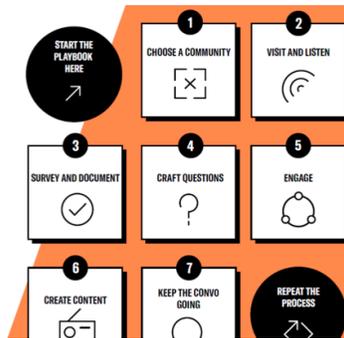
IEAS + INAS

Tools to help partners understand geographic or topical information ecosystems



Seed Funding + Microgrants

Funding to launch or incentivize projects in news deserts



LPC Playbook

Civic media design tools that equip community members to launch news and information projects



Help Desk + Partner Support

Personalized support for BIPOC/Immigrant news and information leaders

Equitable Media: A truly representative industry that includes media organizations, enterprises, and projects—both new and old, for-profit and nonprofit—by and for people of color. *

**As defined by the Ford Foundation/Transform Media 2020 report 'Investing in Equitable News and Media Projects'*

News Desert(s): Places that historically, or more recently, have found themselves without access to daily, local news and information, or lacking in equitable representation in existing media.

EQUITABLE, CIVIC MEDIA IS ESSENTIAL TO OUR DEMOCRACY

After decades of media consolidation,

national news has been politicized by a powerful few, and local news has been close to decimated. Without strong local news and information ecosystems rooted in the community, especially in BIPOC/immigrant areas, civic engagement declines.

This consolidation of power has created a civic vacuum filled with bad actors that have propagated mis and disinformation, damaging the pillars of American democracy. There are a number of challenges we face as we strive to build healthy news ecosystems.

The historic and expanding news desert threatens to diminish civic engagement (and fuels mis/disinformation) 1, 2

- Numerous studies are fairly unanimous in finding that erosions in local news are tied to drops in civic engagement, and this can be especially detrimental for BIPOC/Immigrant communities.
- With social media filling local news voids - there has been an unprecedented rise in mis/disinformation and a collective media literacy that has not kept pace.

News and information solutions don't always address community needs 3,4,5

- News and information baselining needs to begin with efforts to understand community information needs and whether or not they're being met.
- Without bold ideas for community support and new revenue models, start-ups struggle to fill the gaps of what has been lost.

BIPOC/Immigrant media leaders need more support + advocacy systems 6,7

- Equitable media founders face a number of barriers when seeking early stage support, including: bias, lack of networks, lack of early technical and business support, and lack of mentoring.
- Local journalism has become what economists call a public good, meaning that it provides a civically essential service and yet businesses cannot make money providing it. Therefore, the core problem—insufficient funding for local, labor-intensive reporting—will not likely be solved through mere commercial innovation.
- In addition to capacity-empowering support, equitable media needs a public policy strategy that represents its interests in any government intervention that targets the local news landscape.

1.<https://localnewslab.org/2018/06/20/how-we-know-journalism-is-good-for-democracy/>

2.<https://www.cjr.org/analysis/for-bipoc-communities-local-news-crisis-extends-beyond-major-cities.php>

3.<http://henryjenkins.org/blog/2021/5/16/how-journalists-might-better-meet-the-information-needs-of-communities-an-interview-with-andrea-wenzel>

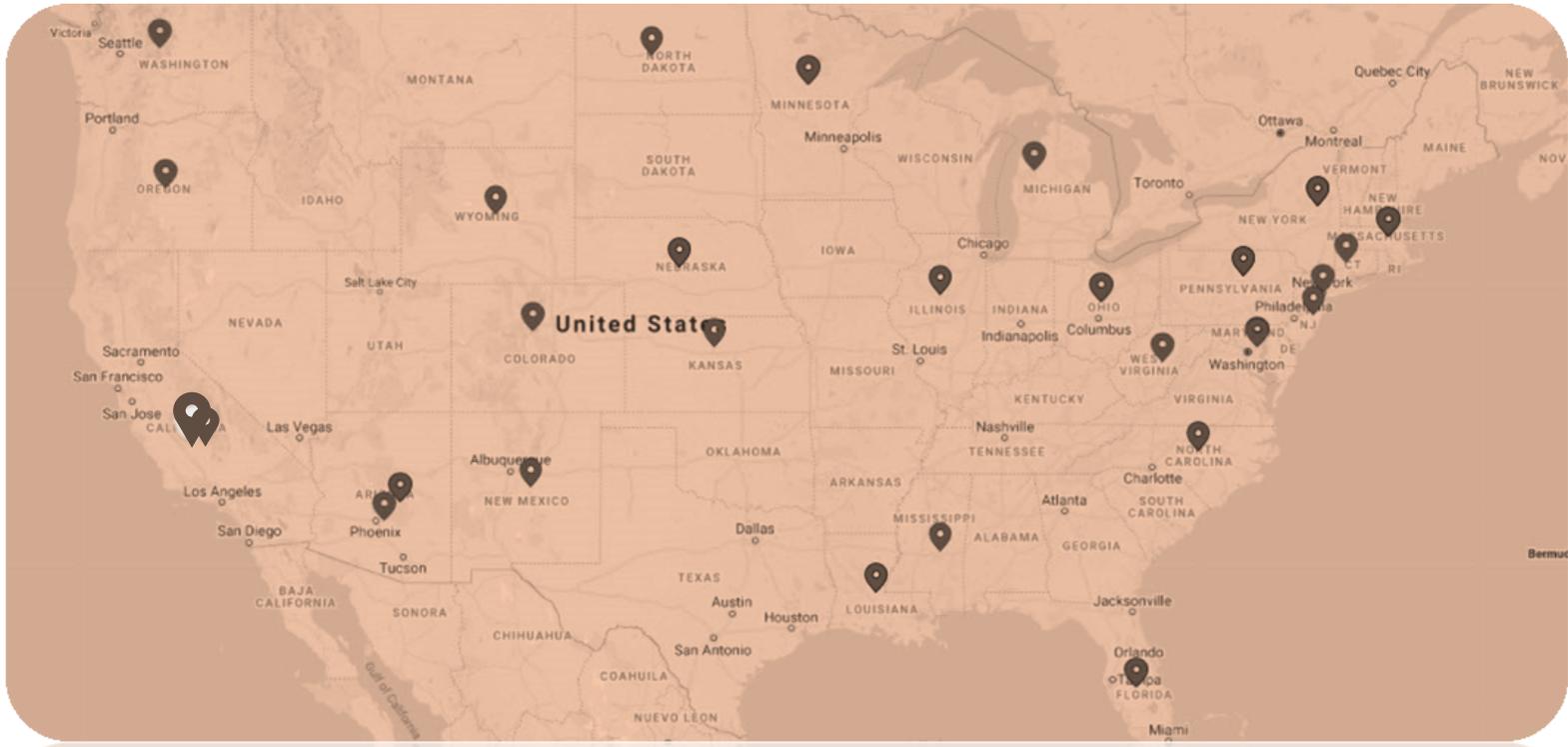
4.https://ssir.org/articles/entry/philanthropy_and_the_future_of_local_news

5.http://files.theimpactarchitects.com/ecosystems/executive_summary.pdf

6.<http://transformfinance.org/briefings/investing-in-equitable-news-and-media-projects>

7.<https://washingtonmonthly.com/magazine/november-december-2020/the-coming-era-of-civic-news/>

WE'RE UNIQUELY SITUATED TO TAKE ON THIS WORK



01 Experience

We draw on 40 years of global experience building healthy media and information environments, especially in vulnerable communities

02 Tools

Our listening, design, and engagement tools guide us towards a deep and authentic understanding of how to support communities (Information Ecosystem/Needs Assessments and Engagement Playbooks)

A NEW STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR LPC 2021-2024

01

Listen and Seed

- Impact the most vulnerable communities by targeting U.S news deserts with our civic media design process

02

Build Power

- Create transformative opportunities for equitable media leaders to foster their power

03

Be Seen

- Raise our profile as a leader in civic media design and as an advocate for equitable media

04

Build For Impact

- Scale our impact by strengthening our organizational capacity

A NEW STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR LPC 2021-2024

01

Listen and Seed

- Conduct yearly IEAs or INAs in to understand pressing news and information needs
- Invest in at least 5 community proposals to seed local news and information solutions with high potential to impact civic engagement
- Support on-the-ground media literacy/civics 101 programming in every community we work in

Build Power

02

- Serve at least 10 equitable media leaders/organizations a year from BIPOC and immigrant communities with a support plan that is tailored to them
- Provide essential support by forming a bench of coaches to serve our partners with wide-ranging expertise from business development, copy editing, translation, legal, impact assessments etc.
- Create a space for partners to share knowledge with one another and grow their influence
- Identify funding opportunities for partners and co-design collaborative proposals

A NEW STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR LPC 2021-2024

03

Be Seen

- Transform our core LPC playbook into an engaging digital learning platform that incentivizes launching new civic media projects
- Amplify our visibility by upgrading our digital platforms and editorial content schedule
- Work with Internews to influence U.S policy around investments in local journalism and civic engagement

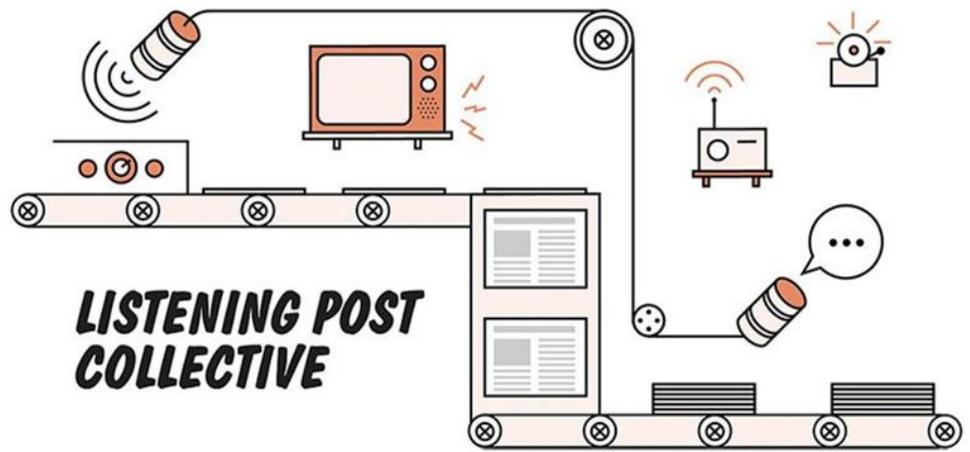
04

Build For Impact

- Diversify our funding sources to support our strategic objectives
- Improve our backend systems
- Transition non-core projects
- Collect data and build impact assessments into every project

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our thanks to the community of partners and colleagues that shared their ideas and insights with us.



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