

Inland Empire

Information Ecosystem Assessment | condensed
version

by Listening Post Collective

August 2021



About

This Report



**LISTENING POST
COLLECTIVE**
a project of Internews

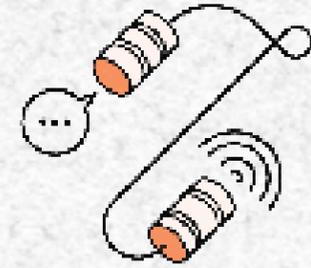
The Listening Post Collective (LPC) is a U.S. based project of Internews, an international media support organization that supports independent media in 100 countries, from radio stations in refugee camps, to hyperlocal news outlets, to individual activists and reporters.

LPC partners with people and organizations in the United States to develop local news and information solutions that help communities thrive, envisioning a future in which civic power is strengthened by equitable civic media.

We are working in the San Bernardino and Riverside communities in partnership with the Irvine Foundation, which recognizes civic information

and local journalism as key factors in promoting greater economic progress and stability. Our joint goals for this report are to showcase the supply and demand sides of the local information ecosystem, to highlight real perspectives and experiences from people in the community, and to offer our recommendations for how to activate and inspire a healthier information ecosystem in the future. Following this assessment, LPC will release a request for proposals to interested media makers and community information sharers in the San Bernardino and Riverside communities. Using this report as a blueprint, LPC will work with the selected grantees to invest in community-driven information projects.

This document is a condensed version of our assessment, you can read the full report here.



Get involved in reimagining the information ecosystem of the Inland Empire:

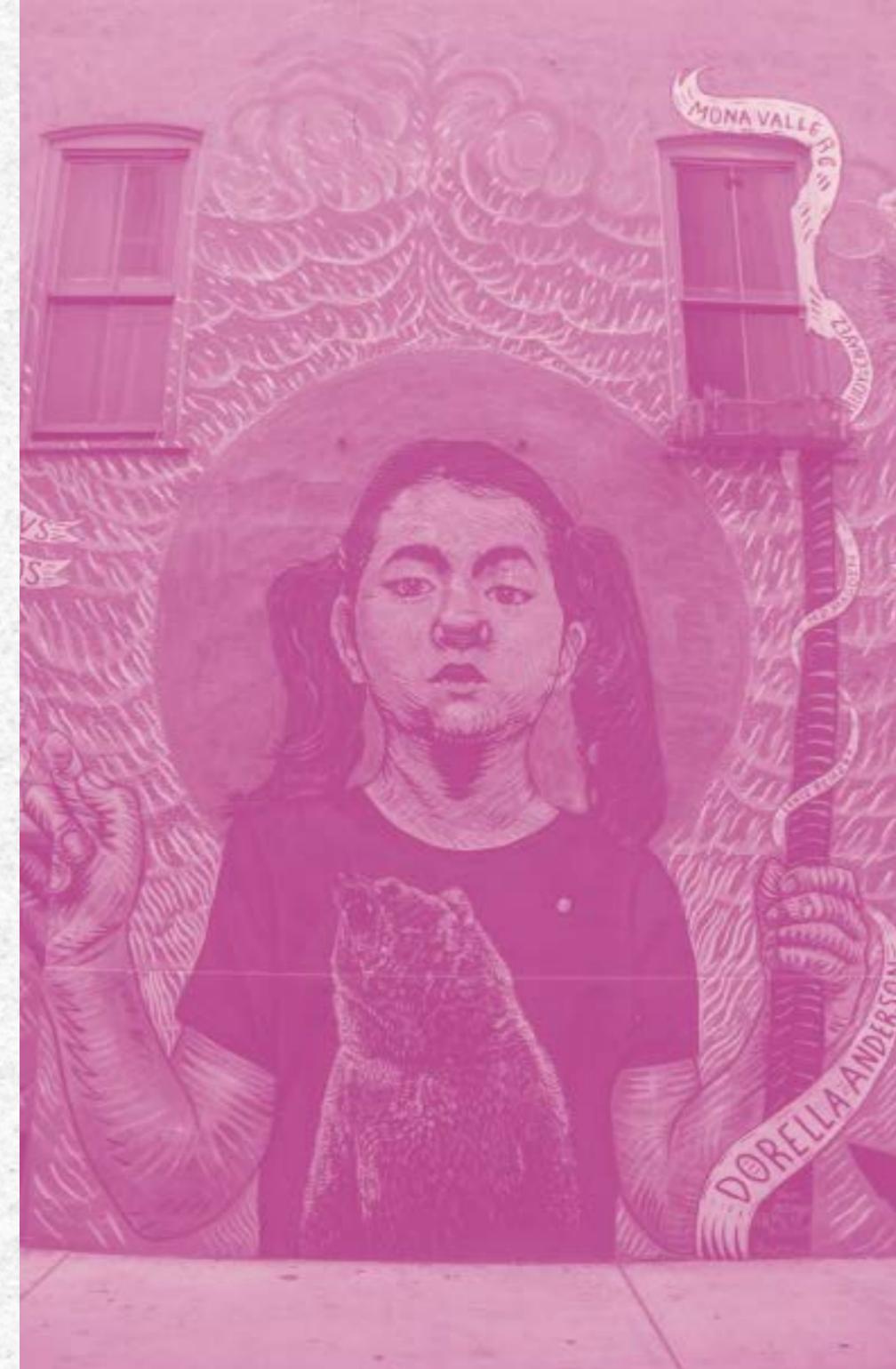
Email us at
info@listeningpostcollective.org



Follow the project
[@ielistingpostcollective](https://www.instagram.com/ielistingpostcollective)

Report funded by

 The James Irvine Foundation



Introduction



At first glance, the Inland Empire (IE) would likely seem the poster child for what many in the media industry call a “news desert.” The region of around four million residents has two legacy newspapers that have fallen on hard times. It has a majority Latino population, yet little bilingual or Spanish language local media. Many residents default to consuming media from Los Angeles, which often focuses its coverage of the IE on crime.

Looking more closely, it is evident that the IE actually has a vibrant information ecosystem driven by community-led efforts that has existed for more than a century. What would become *The Press-Enterprise* newspaper was started by a local pharmacist in the late 1800s. In the late 1960s, a group of local Black

and Latino activists from San Bernardino and Riverside started the newspaper *El Chicano*, which recently celebrated its 50th anniversary. Nowadays, locally inspired media in the area has a similar spirit, albeit the platforms have changed. For example, one local resident started sharing rundowns of the San Bernardino City Council meetings on Instagram because she experienced the city website as difficult to navigate and knew that many working parents, like her, didn't have the time to research the topics being discussed, including how to ask a question or share a comment on the site. In another instance, a group of Riverside College students didn't want to relocate to L.A. to pursue their media arts interests, so they created a production company in the IE to give young adults a

space in which to create and develop their talent. Also, an IE reporter who didn't see a pathway to impacting local news outlets from within started his own site focusing on his passion, environmental and climate issues.

It is against this chaotic backdrop that we took a magnifying glass to how important local

news moves around the IE, how residents feel about their media options, and what kinds of innovations and investments might help strengthen the local information ecosystem.



DEMAND:

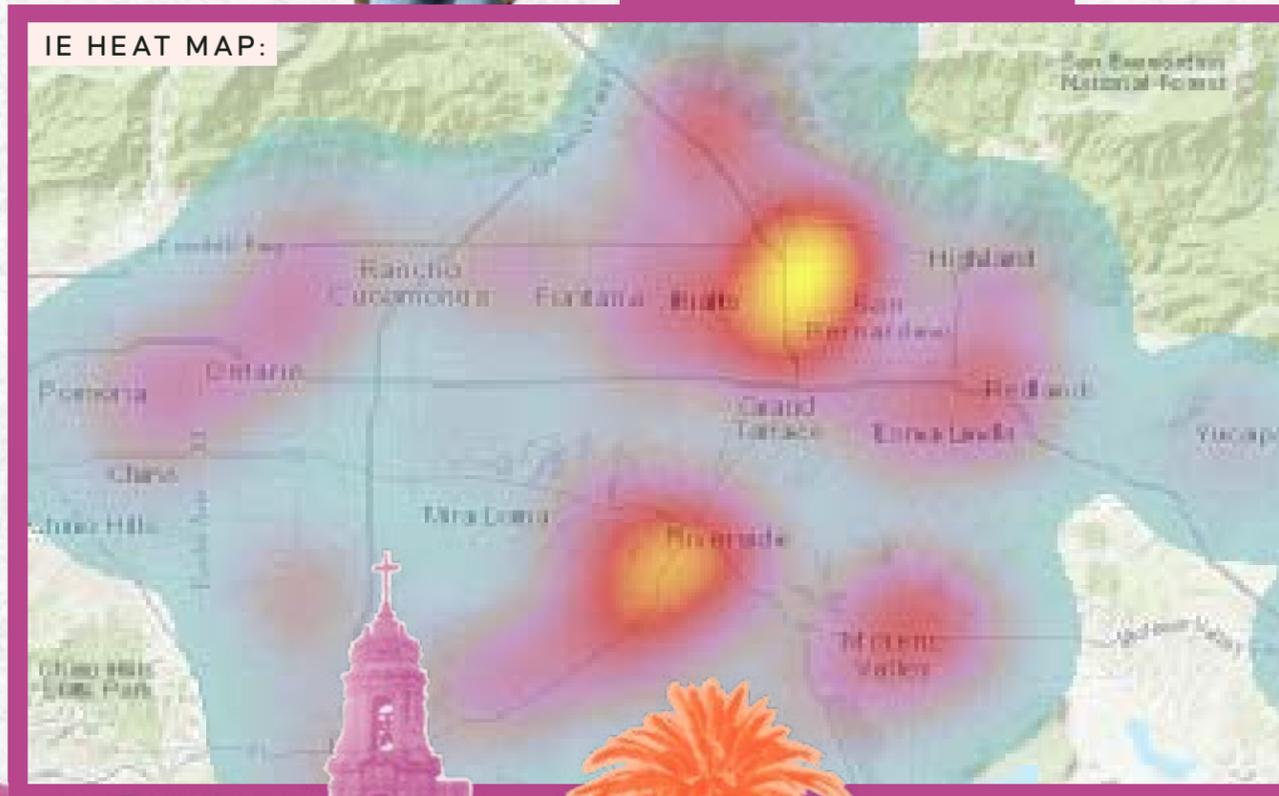
How local citizens share local news and information, and what they want and need from news and information sharers

We spent a year listening to people throughout the IE, seeking to understand how residents interact with the local media, as well as with informal and non-media sources; what their needs and concerns around local news and information are; and what their vision for a better information ecosystem looks like. We asked 300 local residents from around Riverside and San Bernardino 17 questions as part of our goal of understanding their habits, preferences, and access when it comes to local news and information.



Survey Heat Map

We made a [map](#) of where the people who took our survey live in the IE. The largest concentrations of data sharers are in and around the cities of San Bernardino and Riverside, although we also had some participants from areas as far away as Victorville and Perris.



HERE IS A LOOK AT WHERE SURVEY TAKERS LIVE IN THE IE

Key Survey Findings

Here are some of the data points that stood out to us from our survey:

We asked people about their **primary sources** for local news and information

1. Facebook
2. Local media websites
3. Instagram
4. Friends and Family

We also asked people **the best way to reach out** to them with local news and information

1. Email
2. Instagram
3. SMS
4. Facebook

People shared the **3 topics** they most wanted to hear more about

1. Local Government
2. Community Events
3. Public Health



Other data points of interest included

30%
of respondents said they'd be willing to pay \$5 a month for local news and information

82%
of the respondents indicated that social media is the main way they learn about pandemic-related assistance in the IE

44%
of survey respondents said politics sometimes plays a role in where they get their local news and information

Local Media



Paulette Brown-Hinds publisher Black Voice News

Paulette Brown-Hinds said that when she was growing up, there were two things her parents emphasized as being super important, education and public education. One pertained to school, and the other pertained to how her parents, who ran

a newspaper, viewed the role of the local media. “The things people need to know to be good citizens of the community” and “important information people need to make good decisions about their lives.”

Anthony Victoria publisher and reporter The Frontline Observer

Riverside resident Anthony Victoria has worked for most of his career to bring light to the environmental issues IE residents face, namely, some of the worst air pollution in the country. He has investigated these topics working for local environmental justice organizations and local media. Victoria mentioned that similar

to his own experience, many of the best writers, photographers, and documenters in the IE are self-taught. “The talent is always there, the spark and the passion are there,” said Victoria, “but there’s a lack of resources and training because of where we live and where we come from.”

Community Information Sharers

Kenesha Boyd Verdemont Revitalization Project

Every other week, Kenesha Boyd, cofounder of the Verdemont Revitalization Project (VRP), posts slides on Instagram explaining the issues on the agenda of the San Bernardino City Council meeting and how people can participate. Her goal is for local residents to be better informed about what

is happening locally. “People are forming opinions based on partial information they may see on Facebook, as opposed to having a more comprehensive understanding.”

Robert Porter I Love San Bernardino Facebook Group

Robert Porter runs one of the largest Facebook groups in the IE. At almost 30,000 members, I Love San Bernardino!!!!!!! is the latest incarnation of a Facebook group that Porter has been hosting since 2012. Porter says that he and his fellow admins take a light touch when

it comes to moderating the group’s mix of classified posts, recommendations, and memes. “If they start getting too Trumpy or too Nancy Pelosi, if they get like that, then I get rid of them. Most of the time, though, I let them talk it through,” he said.

SUPPLY:

Who is sharing local news and information with residents and how they are doing it

We also interviewed more than 50 local media actors and community information sharers about the IEs information ecosystem. Here’s a sample of who we spoke to and what they shared.





IE Information Ecosystem Assessment

Ideas to Enhance the Local Information Ecosystem

As part of our research we worked with community members to develop some ideas for how to strengthen the Inland Empire's information ecosystem. Here's a few of those recommendations.



1.

Create a local civic media fund to support community-led journalism efforts

One respondent to our survey pointed out that "local information is essential and has value. Good journalism is not free of charge." Another wondered if better financial support for civic media might be "paid through taxes." With any effort to strengthen an information ecosystem, the question of sustainability emerges. We recommend exploring how IE-area foundations and other sources of philanthropy could create an ongoing civic fund to support local media.

2.

Establish a community media hub

Many of the photographers, designers, and writers we connected with indicated they were self-taught and wished there was a hub where they could convene and share their experiences and work and develop their interests further. Creating a physical hub, which would foster a digital presence and opportunities to engage in these varied activities, would provide a trusted space where IE residents could engage with journalism and media and develop a positive relationship with the community information ecosystem.



3.



Spanish language media resource focused specifically on Latino community information needs

We received extensive comments in the course of our research calling for more Spanish-language local news and information. We support ideas for Spanish language media partnerships with existing outlets and community organizations, or a new stand-alone effort, to aggregate and translate a daily Spanish-language bulletin of important IE-focused news and information that would be shared in a variety of digital and offline formats.

4.

Paid journalism opportunities for local BIPOC talent

We received lots of feedback from community members around race and media including, "I think we need more journalists of color, and we need more historical context as it relates to the issues we are dealing with now." We would like to see an annual scholarship created for up to five aspiring local journalists that either funds an intern position with an existing outlet in the IE, offers funding to help them complete a civic-minded reporting project, or helps them create a new media startup that fills a gap in the community information ecosystem.



We want to hear your **BIG IDEA** on how to increase community information sharing in the Inland Empire!



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Now through October 15, 2021, the Listening Post Collective is seeking proposals from local residents, community based organizations, and media professionals in Riverside and San Bernardino to develop equitable local news and information solutions that help communities in the IE thrive.

Click on this link to propose your community information project idea:
www.listeningpostcollective.org/inlandempirerfp

WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR

The successful proposal(s) will address some of the specific news or information related issues facing the Inland Empire and specifically reflect some of the insights, recommendations, and ideas published in the Information Ecosystem Assessment.

Grant Details:

Applicants can request up to **\$25,000** for their proposals.

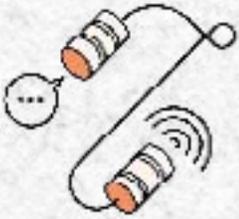
In addition to grant funding, winning proposals get up to **3 years of coaching and support** as they develop their project.

DON'T FORGET!!!

the deadline for applications is **Oct 15, 2021**

www.listeningpostcollective.org/inlandempirerfp





Do you want to learn more about our assessment findings and ideas for improving community news and information flow in the IE?

Read our full research report here:



www.listeningpostcollective.org/



Follow the project
[@ielistingpostcollective](https://www.instagram.com/ielistingpostcollective)