Inland Empire Information Ecosystem Assessment by Listening Post Collective August 2021
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The Listening Post Collective (LPC) is a U.S. based project of Internews, an international media support organization that assists 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 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.

This Report
The first step of any project LPC undertakes is to conduct an extensive research process known as an Information Ecosystem Assessment (IEA). Borrowed from environmental studies, the term “information ecosystem” describes the flow of news and information between people, media, and organizations within a community. We believe that IEAs, such as this one focusing on California’s Inland Empire, are a crucial part of determining how to bolster community-led news efforts, protect residents against misinformation, and ensure there is equity in media coverage. Numerous recent studies have explored the impact of local news coverage on the core qualities of a healthy democracy, such as people’s political knowledge, voting rates, and number of citizens who run for political office. While nuances exist among them, the studies are fairly unanimous in finding that erosions in local news are tied to drops in civic engagement, which can be especially detrimental for BIPOC/Immigrant communities.

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.
Research Collaborators

Andres Garcia is the communications lead for the People’s Collective for Environmental Justice. He was born and raised in San Bernardino and currently resides in the Inland Empire. He runs Strange Truth, a personal brand and media project based in the City of San Bernardino.

Olivia Henry is a master’s student at the University of California, Davis, studying local news and cooperative development. She recently served as a graduate intern for the University of California Cooperative Extension, the Sustainable Economies Law Center, and The Mendocino Voice. Olivia previously worked as a consultant for the Listening Post Collective in support of community information projects in California’s Central Valley.

Additional Thanks

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And thanks to the Listening Post Collective staff members Carolyn Powers, Marisol Hernandez, and Eric Corzine for their contributions to this assessment.

Media that fosters civic engagement.

Civic Media:

Individual or collective acts focused on addressing issues of public concern.

Civic Engagement:
Civic Power:
Power that is exercised by local residents to influence civic life through a variety of channels.

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

Equity:
Equity is the distribution of resources and opportunities to address imbalanced social systems.

Equitable:
Characterized by equity or fairness.

Media Literacy:
The ability to spot misinformation, assess credible sources and claims, explain how the professional news media operate, and use the media to participate in one’s community.
Residents, civic organizations, government entities, and other actors within a community that participate in the flow of important local news and information.

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

Community Information Sharers:
Residents, civic organizations, government entities, and other actors within a community that participate in the flow of important local news and information.

Information Ecosystem:
The flow of news and information between people, media, and organizations within a community.

Information Ecosystem Assessment (IEA):
An analytical framework that captures all dimensions of the relationship between information supply and information demand, including an understanding of how people and communities find, share, value, trust, and share information in their own local contexts, whether it comes from the media or not.
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.

At first glance, the Inland Empire (IE) would likely seem the poster child for what many in the media industry call a “news desert.” This 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.

Some of the most impactful, in-depth reporting on what is happening in the IE is done by national outlets, but outside reporters often lack an understanding of local nuance and the history of the area, and national stories are rarely accessible to local audiences. Local high school media arts teacher Natasha Flores Naranjo explained the process of getting the media to cover the IE this way: “It’s all about who you know. If it’s something positive. If it’s something negative, it gets covered for sure.”

Looking more closely, it is evident that the IE actually has a vibrant information ecosystem driven by community-led efforts, which has existed for more Text Continues >>>
Our goal with this assessment was to better understand how the residents of the IE obtain the local news they need to participate in their communities and the challenges they face in getting information on essential topics such as education, public health, public safety, race, jobs, environment, government, and more. Our research period overlapped with the first year of the coronavirus, forcing us to pivot from our favored in-person listening strategies to digital methods for connecting with and learning from IE community members. Covid-19 also forced us to adapt our community survey, normally a postcard with 4 or 5 questions, and deliver it online. Our digital data collection gave us the opportunity to ask more questions, 17 in total, and capture additional information on topics such as demographics, how politics influences information consumption, and what people’s threshold is for paying for local news.

We spent the first few months reaching out to a variety of community actors around the IE, including journalists, community organizers, current and former public officials, teachers, business owners, and more. In all, we spoke in-depth to more than 50 IE community members. These conversations covered a wide range of topics related to people’s experiences living in the IE, but ultimately centered around the information needs in the community. Some of these conversations are captured in depth and some are included in the larger points and spirit of this document.

To keep in touch with these community entities and actors and let them know how our work was progressing, we started a monthly email newsletter. We later added a bi-weekly Instagram Live to chat with community actors and share their work and ideas on how to improve local information access around a variety of topics in the IE.

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To keep in touch with these community entities and actors and let them know how our work was progressing, we started a monthly email newsletter. We later added a bi-weekly Instagram Live to chat with community actors and share their work and ideas on how to improve local information access around a variety of topics in the IE.
During this assessment, our team read, watched, and listened to IE media outlets to see what was being covered. We also spent hours scouring social media to see what information residents, community groups, local NGOs, government agencies, and others were sharing. We joined Facebook groups, Zoom calls, watched YouTube School Board meetings, read church IG bulletins, and attended community meetings.

While our community survey took a while to gain traction, in no small part due to the pandemic, we were able to reach our goal of gathering 300 unique surveys from community members in the IE. Normally, we would be meeting people out in the community at events and spaces where people traditionally congregate, but supplemented our outreach by using a paid social media strategy that incentivized participation. We shared our survey through Zoom events, newsletters, radio interviews, social media posts, Instagram Live events, and email chains. Local community groups and media, including ICUC, KCAA radio, Inland Empire Community Foundation, Voice Media Ventures, UC Riverside, Cal State University San Bernardino, and others, partnered with us to share our survey.

Because of the geographic size of the IE and the proliferation of local Facebook groups and Instagram pages, we centered our data collection efforts in these digital spaces. We created banners promoting our survey, placed Facebook ads, and invited local IE IG pages to share the link. We also shared specific survey questions in local Facebook groups and promoted our survey in community Zoom calls.

We acknowledge that our reliance on digital pathways to share our survey resulted in a bias towards respondents who were digitally-savvy and had time to complete an online survey. Also, keep in mind that some of our data samples may be too small to make generalizations. We are interested in continuing to collect data, especially out in the community, as part of our future work in the IE.

The first 300 people to fill out our short 10-minute survey are eligible to receive a $20 e-gift card from Target.

**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.

**Survey Disclaimers**

This research is a snapshot of the community information flow, and we acknowledge that many important Inland Empire voices were not included in this project. We also acknowledge that while we did explore local information sharing on many different platforms, we did not do as deep a dive on Twitter, Tik Tok, Next Door, as some other digital spaces that were mentioned with more frequency by local residents. Our assessment is not an academic study. It is a pairing of quantitative data and anecdotal insights from our conversations with community leaders and media makers with years of experience in on-the-ground observation. Because of Covid-19, we were forced to utilize mainly digital methods to try and reach the local respondents. With that in mind, our data showing a preference for Facebook is naturally skewed by the fact that many people came into contact with our survey on that platform.
Supply: Who is sharing local news and information with residents and how they are doing it

This section contains an overview of those on the media production side — the local content creators, community information sharers, journalists, documenters, and publishers who contribute to the local information ecosystem. In these profiles, we examine policy and regulation impacts, local business and sustainability challenges, and the personal missions and values that keep these vital media sources and information sharers going.
Gilberto Esquivel has proven that local information access for bilingual and predominantly Spanish-speaking residents in the IE wasn’t always so hard in the 1980s and 1990s. Esquivel said, “I had to go out and interview the mayor, the principal, the school’s county supervisor, and then people in the community as to what the biggest issues that needed to be focused on. Unfortunately, the federal government changed the rules around media ownership throughout the 1980s and 1990s, requiring media companies to dominate local markets without providing much reporting from radio or television stations. We have to go back and interview people from scratch, he would at least try to have reporters on the ground in communities, versus going digital, focusing on government agendas and secondary source, as opposed to starting with government agendas and working backwards from there.”

Ryan Hagen says that trying to cover the IE is a unique endeavor. Any one of the myriad of mid-sized communities in the IE would be a major metro area in most states, “and they would have a newspaper just dedicated to that city of 100,000 that would have five, six, or seven reporters. We have one reporter who is covering multiple cities of that size,” said Hagen. Hagen has been with the Southern California News Group, which owns both the San Bernardino Sun and Riverside Press-Enterprise, for a decade. He has seen these newsrooms shrink, and what were originally two distinct papers now have mostly identical content. “I think there’s also a long-time readers’ frustration with the smaller amount of coverage than there used to be in the past,” said Hagen. And for younger news consumers, “so many people, because they’re not raised reading the paper every day, they don’t necessarily know where to go for reliable news and how to tell what is reliable and what’s not.”

If Hagen could start a new organization covering the IE from scratch, he would at least cover his beat, which is the local government, very differently. “I would try to have reporters more grounded in communities. Use city governments or county governments as a secondary source, as opposed to starting with government agendas and working backwards from there,” he said. Hagen also mentioned that they would deliver content mostly digitally, focusing on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, “as that’s where people will actually see the content.”

The local alternative newspaper IE Weekly, which has been around in the area’s legacy newspapers, The Press-Enterprise and The Sun, which have become physically thinner, have almost identical content. “I think there’s also a long-time readers’ frustration with the smaller amount of coverage than there used to be in the past,” said Hagen. And for younger news consumers, “so many people, because they’re not raised reading the paper every day, they don’t necessarily know where to go for reliable news and how to tell what is reliable and what’s not.”

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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,” is how she described it. With parents like hers, it’s no surprise that Brown-Hinds went on to be an educator and a publisher, running Voice Media Ventures, an LA-based company that is the umbrella for news sites such as Black Voice News and the IE Voice.

Brown-Hinds stated that she is trying to sustain an outlet focused on Black and Brown communities, which has meant recruiting a different kind of person to work with. “Normally, people who train in journalism want to go work at the LA Times,” she said. Community journalists are a different group, she pointed out, not necessarily folks who have studied the discipline but people who feel a need to inform their neighbors and an obligation to hold local leaders accountable.

Brown-Hinds said that to evolve and sustain the outlet her parents ran in the 1980s and 1990s, she has had to pivot from relying solely on their ad-based funding model, something many legacy Black media newspapers have struggled with also. She has added components to her larger business umbrella, such as a company that does educational tours of Underground Railroad sites, which helps to fund some of the journalism she is interested in doing. More recently, she has received grants that focus on mapping and data around California’s Black population and plans to do in-depth reporting on that. She is also developing donor and sponsor models for her media work.

Ron Redfern former CEO, president, and publisher of the Riverside Press-Enterprise

Ron Redfern keeps his ear to the ground in Riverside, where he ran the local Press Enterprise newspaper for eight years until 2013. Redfern still lives in Riverside and picks up valuable tips on topics such as ethics and spending issues in local government. But he said that little of it is reflected in the paper he used to run, which has seen its budget and staff decimated by various owners since he retired. “None of those stories are getting out”, said Redfern, “and I think that hurts the local community.”

Redfern mentioned that in the absence of a reliable local news source, he has noticed people looking to city or county websites for the information they need. “But they’re not getting a lot of analysis, not getting a lot of perspective. They’re not seeing a lot of pros and cons associated with the decisions of officials,” he said.

Redfern thinks there is room for some new local news ideas in Riverside and would like to see something that focuses on analytical reporting on local issues and investigative content, in order to check local government. “If you could do some good analytical reporting on local issues and government issues, City Council, the County, I think you really help the community a lot to be more aware of and more informed about what’s going on,” he said.

However, Redfern is worried that a new local digital platform would struggle to gain traction because people’s online habits are often fully formed. “If you can’t build an audience and you can’t effectively compete with the big players (Google and Facebook) for eyeballs, you’re just eventually going to drain out (of funds),” he said. To create a connection with the community he pointed out, any new digital platforms should consider making a print supplement to circulate at local businesses and civic spaces to establish an identity offline as well as online.
When the coronavirus first hit the IE, local public radio host Lillian Vasquez, along with her colleagues Rick Dulock, Shareen Awaad, and David Fleming, launched a new show on 91.9 KVCR called “Inland Edition” to make sure the voices who could help residents navigate Covid-19 had a megaphone. She began interviewing state and local government officials, heads of local schools, hospital administrators, business leaders, and others about how residents could keep their families safe and engaged in the community throughout the pandemic. “We talked about doing the show on a Thursday,” said Vasquez, “and had it on the air the following Tuesday.” Vasquez said that after six months, the show went from twice a week to once a week, enabling her to keep up with her more light-hearted arts and culture program, “Lifestyles with Lillian Vasquez.”

Vasquez has worked for 25 years with KVCR, a public TV and radio outlet licensed in the San Bernardino Community College District, which reaches across the IE. She believes in her outlet’s public service content, but said that it’s always been a challenge to connect with the ever-changing and growing population in the IE: “When we’re preaching to our choir, it’s our regular listeners, but it’s a challenge to get new people to check us out, and since we rely on the community to help fund the station, it’s even more challenging.”

Vasquez said that funding public programming has always been a struggle in the IE. She hustled to secure financial support for the Covid-focused program, but in general, “it’s tough to find the funds required to sustain local news programming. We have over four million people in the IE, and we should have our own nightly newscast on television, she said.” Her station looked into this idea but struggled to fund it. “We would love to try it again, but it is a huge endeavor.”
Riverside resident Anthony Victoria is the son of a truck driver and a former warehouse worker, so when it comes to the impact the IE’s logistics industries have had on his health and the lives of his loved ones, he has a strong opinion. “I’m only one voice of the thousands who suffer from horrible air pollution because of this industry,” he wrote on his Instagram page @eyeofthebarrio. “I’ve lost people too soon because of this extractive and violent industry.”

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 and found a passion for both. “I did my job as a journalist, but personally, I’m rooted in social justice,” said Victoria. And he’s now combining these two interests as part of the new outlet he launched, The Frontline Observer, Chronicles of the Environmental Justice Movement.

Victoria mentioned that similar to his own experience, many of the best writers, photographers, and documenters in the IE are self-taught, meaning they struggle to find work at local mainstream outlets. “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.” As a result of this dynamic, he said, some of the most authentic coverage of the IE turns up on social media and online. Victoria stated that residents are looking for new, more representational local news sources because the legacy media “haven’t done their job when it comes to covering the community equitably.”
Wallace Allen
publisher Westside Story newspaper

Wallace Allen started a newspaper in junior high and has been involved with the media his entire adult life. He helped start a Black newspaper in college at San Jose State and, in 1987, "we started the Westside Story newspaper in my garage," he said, referring to his San Bernardino based paper. Allen has since expanded his reach to radio, hosting the IE public affairs Sunday morning show "Empire Talks Back," on the local station KCAA, which is also shared as a podcast.

Allen points out that coverage of the Black community has been problematic since the dawn of newspapers a few centuries ago, "my thoughts on the first newspapers are that they were used in America to chase down escaped slaves." While acknowledging that the U.S. media culture has evolved, he claims that "it is also the cornerstone for racism."

The IE has had a variety of Black-run newspapers in the past few decades, a fact that shouldn’t be seen as unique, said Allen. "Black news is not unusual for Black people. It’s only something special when other people do it," he said, pointing to the local legacy media’s tendency to see the Black community as the "other." "We’ve got three Black City Council members out of seven in San Bernardino now. So that’s a lead story for the daily paper, because that’s unusual to them." He emphasized that his readers are more interested in what those City Council members are accomplishing and what issues they are trying to address that impact the community.
Community Information Sharers

While all communities need capable journalists to cover issues of importance, the reality is that key local news and information sharing is also the work of civic organizations, local government, and even individual residents. These actors often have established the networks and local trust that many media outlets struggle to maintain or build. They also have important insights on how best to reach community members with key news via newsletters, SMS chains, Instagram feeds, community events, phone trees, and more. Importantly, they know how to make local information accessible, such as translating content into Spanish, synthesizing important news articles into social media banners, and organizing forums on Zoom.

When it comes to informing a community, this level of flexibility helps to ensure that people have a baseline of information about important topics, such as housing, public health, education, employment, security, government, and so on. These valuable community actors can help existing local journalism reach more people, as well as help steer residents towards verified sources of information and away from social media pages that traffic in rumor and opinion.

In the case of the IE, a region that has seen a drastic drop-off in traditional local media coverage due to the instability of legacy outlets, changes in federal regulations around local media ownership, and the proliferation of Facebook groups and unverified information, community actors have become some of the most important information providers. Environmental activists, religious-based groups, artists, labor organizers, and individuals who simply saw information gaps they felt inspired to fill are all key components of the IE’s information ecosystem. Let’s hear from a few of them.

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,” worried Boyd. She is concerned that a lack of transparency from the city government and a reliance on word of mouth and social media leave many folks confused as to who and what to believe about what is taking place in their community.

Boyd works at a full-time job and shares local information in the evenings after her kids go to sleep. Her VRP site focuses on civic information, and she hires local designers and photographers to help out with the posts. She launched VRP a few years ago because she felt that a small group of connected people were controlling the information flow in her area. Boyd wanted to get more people involved on issues such as redevelopment of the downtown area, stating that “we are a community, everyone should be involved, it shouldn’t just be one person or a select group of people who are deciding what goes on in our neighborhood.”
Anthony Benitez and Dre Bonales

Future First

A few months into the pandemic, local media maker Anthony Benitez needed a job. He had been working in the film industry, commuting to L.A. from the IE, but that work dried up with Covid restrictions. He turned to the growing industry many IE residents rely on, logistics. “I had to do something, so I worked at Amazon for like three months. It got to the point where I just had to quit because it wasn’t good for my mental health,” Benitez said. Ten hours a day in a warehouse gave him a lot of time to think about how he did want to spend his time, which was telling the stories of the people of the IE.

Benitez teamed up with a crew of other local creatives, many of whom he met at Riverside College, to form the media collaborative Future First. Part of Future First’s goal is to stem the tide of local creative talent leaving for L.A. and encourage people to stay put in the IE. “We have a community here. We have a lot of opportunities here. That’s what I always wanted to build for,” said Benitez.

Working out of San Bernardino’s Garcia Arts Center, Future First has been producing films and videos, shooting music videos, and launching a podcast called Nobodies. The podcast features IE-based creatives who, according to Future First’s Dre Bonales, are “trying their hardest to at least have some sort of voice and put themselves out there.” Bonales mentioned that many IE creatives are self-taught due to a lack of resources in the community, and she wants to establish a space where people can grow their talents. “I want to be able to help people from my community because I don’t want the IE to be seen as second best. I want us to be seen as equal.”
Debra Craig worked for The Press-Enterprise in the 1990s. She was a news assistant in the Moreno Valley office, cutting out news articles to file in the paper archive and driving to the police station to see the log and get the city planning office to check permits. The job and the office are long gone, but Craig said it was good training for what she does now, which is running Moreno Valley Matters, a Facebook page with more than 10,000 followers. She started the group in 2013 as part of an effort to recall the then Moreno Valley Mayor Tom Owings. Craig later turned the page into a general interest news and information source. She creates posts by looking at The Press-Enterprise website, the county sheriff’s Facebook page, press releases, and reader tips. The most regular posts are about crime, Craig says: “That’s the one area everyone wants to know more about – why did they hear gunshots, why did they see 10 police cars.” Craig says that she and her fellow moderators do their best to fact check, but admits that they have some irregular staff, he could count on regular coverage of labor issues, consistent staff, he could count on regular coverage of labor issues, which are a major interest in a region dominated by the logistics industry. But it’s hard to develop lasting relationships with the IE media. “When you have that turnover, and you don’t know who you’re talking to, every time there’s someone new, that’s a problem,” said Koosji. And the absence of that daily watchdog presence looking at corruption around development projects and proliferation of warehouses hurts the IE. “You used to see a story break, and somebody would lose their job as a result, but that’s not happening anymore.”

Koosji mentioned that back when the local media had more consistent staff, he could count on regular coverage of labor issues, which are a major interest in a region dominated by the logistics industry. But it’s hard to develop lasting relationships with the IE media. “When you have that turnover, and you don’t know who you’re talking to, every time there’s someone new, that’s a problem,” said Koosji. And the absence of that daily watchdog presence looking at corruption around development projects and proliferation of warehouses hurts the IE. “You used to see a story break, and somebody would lose their job as a result, but that’s not happening anymore.”

Koosji said that his team turns even in-depth investigative reporting that is related to workers’ rights in the growing logistics industry in the IE into a Spanish language text message or an IG post. “Even if it was accessible, a lot of people wouldn’t just read a four-page article about this stuff,” said Koosji, explaining why WWRC’s article summaries are so useful.

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Building Resilient Communities
Debra Williams has spent the pandemic trying to connect IE residents to relief resources. Her non-profit organization, Building Resilient Communities (BRC), has been instrumental in providing PPEs and organizing sites for Covid-19 tests and vaccines. “If we put it in the mainstream newspapers, then all of the reservations are going to be taken up by people who may not be in those communities that we’re trying to reach,” said Williams. Her solution, partnering with faith-based organizations and churches in the area. As she explained, “The way that we’ve succeeded really across the board, and primarily with African-American and Latino communities, has been through churches.” Williams said she wanted to create access to health assistance and information at locations people in the IE regularly frequent instead of them struggling to search for it. With close ties to the Diocese of San Bernardino and organizations for other denominations, churches play a key role in outreach for the BRC.

Connecting spiritual faith, community service, and emergency preparedness is nothing new to Williams, who founded her organization the IE in 2012 with those principles in mind. “There are systemic issues that impact people if they are not getting sufficient information about disasters, including their ability to recover,” she said. Building Resilient Communities utilizes local, state, and national information networks to develop its own strategies for outreach. What it learns is shared through churches; multiple platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram; and its personal messaging database. Williams receives alerts from city and county systems, usually through text messages, and hopes that the BRC can incorporate mass texting into its outreach. Williams explained: “I’m not your typical resident because I think about being behind the curtain and in front of the curtain. We’re a part of the process (of local information sharing). We’re in the system.”
Jorge Osvaldo Heredia
Garcia Center for the Arts

Jorge Heredia works out of an old brick fire station near downtown San Bernardino. Heredia gives a tour of the historic space, now known as the Garcia Center for the Arts, and the rooms are filled with creative endeavors, such as comic books, ceramics, a performance stage with piano, and even a full-on stage set with comfy chairs for a talk show. Heredia is establishing a space where people can reflect in a variety of ways on what's happening in the community. "Encouraging more people to share their stories and tell who they are and what their beliefs and values are is very important, and I think doing that through art is quite powerful," he said.

Heredia is seeking to acknowledge and address some of San Bernardino's pressing issues through his arts center. For example, he is establishing a community garden in an adjacent lot to address the lack of local food access. "There were a couple of grocery stores that were nearby, but they recently closed down," he said; now, it's a 30-to-40-minute walk to a grocery store.

At another community garden about 15 minutes away, Heredia commissioned a mural that covers a shipping container overlooking the space. The garden has been a lifeline during Covid-19, offering gardening plots and food assistance to local, predominantly Spanish-speaking families. The garden is hemmed in by an enormous logistics warehouse on one side and a road filled with logistics tractor trailer traffic on the other. "I feel like everything is intertwined," said Heredia, reflecting on life in the IE. "There's a lot of compromise, a lot of discussion and conversation that needs to be had around here."
Cecilia Lozano

Cal State University, San Bernardino student Cecilia Lozano has been taking a few media courses lately, including a newspaper class. She is a first-generation immigrant who grew up in Fontana and is trying to figure out where she might fit in professionally when she graduates. Right now, she’s trying to decide if journalism or art and design might be her career paths. “As a Latina, you just don’t hear about it. Like, are there Hispanics working for movies, or popular mural artists out there?” Lozano wondered out loud. She said these examples aren’t just to guide her, but to help convince her parents that she knows what she’s doing. “If I were to tell my dad, oh, I’m majoring in art. It’s like, how are you going to pay your bills with that?” she said.

Lozano mentioned that to her dad, who has cleaned warehouses in the IE for 25 years, and her mom, who has mostly worked at home, journalism is a little bit abstract. They only speak Spanish and rely mostly on Univision and on the radio a little bit for news. “It’s just the quick headlines of what’s going on, but it doesn’t dive too deeply into the issues,” she said. “It doesn’t really provide a solution or resources if they have questions.”

Lozano is pretty sure that what she has seen watching Univision over her parents’ shoulders could be improved upon, especially in terms of educating viewers on how to find the local resources they need. “A lot of schools are doing everything online. And some parents might not know how to fully use email or create login stuff. So they don’t really stay informed,” she observed.

Kathy Allavie

Riverside School Board

Covid-19 changed many things in the Riverside Unified School District, including attendance at local school board meetings. School board member Kathy Allavie said that during the height of the pandemic, more than 500 people were showing up for the meetings, which were moved to Zoom for safety. “I can count on one and finger how many times we’ve had that many people at a board meeting,” said the school board veteran of 16 years.

These attendees, mostly parents of local students, had a lot of questions. “They didn’t understand what we were doing, why we couldn’t open the schools up, and the role the teachers played in the decisions,” she said. In order to answer as many of these important questions as possible, the school district produced a series of YouTube videos featuring the superintendent and other officials. “You have to watch a long time in the hope that they’re going to address one of your questions,” said Allavie.

A few years ago, some of that question-asking and news sharing would have come from the dedicated schools reporter at the Riverside Press-Enterprise (PE) newspaper. “We knew this reporter, and the reporter would call us and we would talk to this reporter, and there was a real information flow there,” she said. But with downsizing at the local paper, that effort disappeared. Now the school district sends some press releases to the PE in the hopes of some important information getting out. But mostly they’ve had to learn how to be their own information channel for local residents. “I don’t believe there’s any other way you can get information about school,” said Allavie.
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.

Porter has turned the popularity of his group into other media opportunities, including shows on KCAA Radio and a Facebook Live show, both of which have business sponsors and draw high-profile guests. Porter is outspoken on local politics and throws his weight behind campaigns and initiatives. He realizes that his large local platforms make him attractive to local candidates and elected officials, but he sees this as part of an exchange. “Politicians use me, but I also use them for their telephone numbers [to get information],” Porter said.

Porter said he hopes his Facebook group is a news resource for residents, but finds that journalism is the least popular content he shares. “[To get engagement], I can use sweet words, such as “free,” or I can post a selfie or ask people to post about their childhood in San Bernardino. But you post a news article and don’t even get a like.”
IE Information Ecosystem Assessment

Demand: How local residents share local news and information, and what they want and need from news and information sharers

This section uncovers our months of listening to people throughout the IE. We sought to learn how IE 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. As described in the Methods section, we asked 300 local residents 17 questions as part of our goal of understanding their habits, preferences, and access when it comes to local news and information.
Demographics

The vast majority of the respondents to our survey were in the age range 18–40. Two-thirds of the respondents identified as female.

Residents who identify as Latino comprised almost 46% of the survey takers. Around 30% of the respondents were white, 13% Asian American, and 9% Black. These numbers largely line up with 2020 census data that shows a majority Latino region with a growing Asian American population.

People reported a wide range of income brackets — 38% said their annual incomes were between 50 and 75k, 15% earn between 15 and 30k, and another 15% make 30k to 50k.

As part of our interest in highlighting the unique information needs of BIPOC communities in the IE, we will be highlighting specific demographic trends in some of our survey data.
### Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between $50,000 and $74,999</td>
<td>38.44% 113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between $15,000 and $29,999</td>
<td>15.31% 45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between $30,000 and $49,999</td>
<td>13.61% 40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Under $15,000</td>
<td>10.54% 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between $75,000 and $99,999</td>
<td>10.54% 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between $100,000 and $150,000</td>
<td>8.16% 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over $150,000</td>
<td>3.40% 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>38.44% 294</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Race/Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Latino, Latina, Latinx or Hispanic</td>
<td>46.40% 103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White or Caucasian</td>
<td>32.88% 73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Asian American</td>
<td>13.06% 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>8.56% 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>5.41% 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
<td>1.35% 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Eastern or North African</td>
<td>0.90% 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondents: 222</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q17 The annual income for my entire household is

Answered: 294 Skipped: 6

Q16 Please select the population group or groups that you most closely identify with from the list below:

Answered: 222 Skipped: 78
Our initial questions were designed to gain a baseline understanding of how IE residents get and share important local news and information, and what the sources of that information are. We aimed to hear what issues people wanted to see more reporting on, what technology they rely on to access local news and information, and, specifically, what sources they have trusted during the pandemic for obtaining Covid-19 specific information. We also wanted to gauge the influence of politics on people’s choices around where they look for news and information and whether or not they would be willing to pay money on a monthly basis for local news that was useful to them. We rounded out the survey with an open-ended question inviting people to share any additional thoughts on the state of local news and information in the IE. People did not disappoint, sharing pages of suggestions and solutions. Let’s take a look at what the data we collected told us.
When something that matters to you or your community happens, where do you hear about it first?

The survey respondents listed Facebook as the primary way they hear about community news and information in the IE. Local news websites, such as www.sbsun.com, https://theievoice.com/, and http://iecn.com, were second at 45%, and both Instagram and friends and family came in a close third at around 43%. In terms of traditional media 30% of respondents reported that they relied on TV, 19% said newspapers, and 13% selected radio.
What is the most effective way to deliver news and information about the Inland Empire to you?

Around 53% of the respondents indicated that email was the most effective way to share news and information about the IE with them. Instagram was second at 49%, followed by SMS, which 47% of the survey takers said is a good way for them to get the news. Local Facebook groups also factored into people’s news habits. Of the legacy media choices, TV rated the highest at 22%, followed by radio at 13%, and newspapers at 10%. 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANSWER CHOICES</th>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>53.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>49.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text/SMS</td>
<td>47.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Facebook group</td>
<td>42.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td>37.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>26.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV</td>
<td>22.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>13.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>10.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Hub (Neighborhood Center, Public Health Clinic, etc.)</td>
<td>7.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>6.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td>0.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church</td>
<td>0.33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents: 300
When you share local Inland Empire journalism with friends and family, what is the original source of that information?

When it comes to the origin of the news and information people share, legacy media plays a bigger role, according to the data we collected. Los Angeles TV affiliate ABC7, which does some coverage of the IE, rated the highest at 52%. The two local newspapers, The Press-Enterprise and The Sun, both were listed by around 40% of the respondents. The LA Times, which traditionally has had a reporter based in the IE, also was listed by more than a third of the survey takers. Other local sources that people said they relied on include the local NPR affiliate KVCR, which 12% of people listed, and the print and digital site Inland Empire Today, which garnered 11%.
What local social media accounts, websites, or people do you trust for Inland Empire community news and information?

This open-ended question garnered a wide range of responses. Here is a sampling of what people shared. See Appendix B for the full list.

- Newsletters for local politicians
- The Mexican Consulate
- University of California Riverside alumni network
- Moreno Valley Matters Instagram page
- If there was a YouTube channel that focused on IE news, I’d watch the hell out of that.
- The live incident feed for Riverside County
- City and County Twitter accounts
- TODEC Legal Center for information about farm workers’ rights and help for agricultural workers
- IE-specific hashtags
- KTLA (PBS in Los Angeles)
- Local non-profits, such as Inland Congregations United for Change, CCAEJ, eyeofthebarrio, and blacklivesmatterie
- What’s Going On in Riverside Facebook group
- I wouldn’t say I trust any of the people on “What’s Happening in Riverside County” because they are all loons, but they link to a lot of credible content.

What local topics and issues do you wish you had more information about?

We gave the respondents a list of 14 community topics to consider for this question, such as public health, education, and the environment. Local government, community events, and public health were the top three choices, while jobs, public safety, and housing also rated high on people’s lists.

For Black respondents community events rated the highest, followed by public health and jobs. Latino survey takers rated community events, public health, and local government as their top 3 choices. Interestingly, Asian American respondents rated community events as their 8th highest choice. They rated public health the highest, followed by local government and public safety.

1. Local Government       42.67%
2. Community Events       35.33%
3. Public Health          34.67%
Is there a specific Inland Empire story or issue you’d like to see investigated?

This open-ended question garnered a wide range of responses. Here is a sampling of what people shared. See Appendix C for the full list:

- Downtown San Bernardino redevelopment
- Interviews with those that are disenfranchised, laborers, victims and survivors of sexism and racism in public and private spaces (schools, workplaces), undocumented people, people that are incarcerated, disabled people that are also incarcerated, and former/current sex workers. I feel that these narratives are not often represented in mass media, but rather through fictional shows – for example, investigations on the IE prison system and private companies that exploit incarcerated peoples (the LA Times did something like this).
- How are QT/BIPoC, low income/homeless youth, and adults being assisted in the IE during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- We need more resources for the local community. We shouldn’t have to leave the area to make and enjoy our lives. There is so much potential in San Bernardino to thrive as a city and community.
- Non-profit abuse and fraud.
- La policia. El sistema legal y la justicia en las cortes.
- Dark money in elections; corruption at the city/county levels of government.
- Job transition of high school or natives of Riverside County and the resources they need to succeed.
- School districts ignoring the needs of the special education students during distance learning.
- Housing and why some communities are resistant to higher density housing, public transportation, and the environmental impact of sprawl.

What technology do you use regularly and how do you get online?

In terms of what technology people have access to and how they use it to connect to the Internet, 98% of the respondents said they had access to a smartphone, while around 70% indicated they had access to a laptop computer. Most people, around 86%, rely on their home Wi-Fi subscriptions to go online regularly.
During the pandemic, where are you finding information about unemployment, rent or utility relief, and individual and small business loans?

As part of our research, we also wanted to capture a snapshot of how people were accessing information specific to the Covid-19 issues they are experiencing. Around 82% of the respondents indicated that social media is the main way they learn about pandemic-related assistance. Around half said friends and family provide them with crucial Covid-19 information, while 31% of the respondents cited TV as an important source of coronavirus information. Government and social service organizations also rated high as an information resource during the pandemic, as well as churches and local non-profits.

It’s worth noting that for Asian American respondents, friends and family tied social media as the most important ways people learned about relief resources during the pandemic. They also highly rated government sources. Black survey takers said social media was most important, followed by television and government. Latinos shared that social media was also their number one way to get this important Covid information, followed by friends and family, and television.

82% Social Media
My political views inform where I get my local news

Because we conducted this survey during the 2020 U.S. presidential election season, we also wanted to capture the phenomenon of residents increasingly aligning their news access with their political views. 44% of the respondents to our survey said that their political views sometimes dictate where they seek information. Another 21% said that politics usually have a role to play in where they get their local news.

Latino respondents to this survey tracked slightly differently on this question, saying that politics sometimes dictated where they got their news 50% of the time. Black and Asian American respondents to this survey tracked similarly to the overall response rates.

What would you be willing to pay for quality local news and information?

We were interested in establishing people’s threshold for financially supporting on a monthly basis local information sources that serve the community. Nearly half of the respondents indicated that they would not pay for local media. More than a third said they would be willing to pay $5 a month for community news, with 11% open to paying $10 a month for local news and information.

A few respondents also shared more personalized data on these questions. Their answers included “nothing, because it’s free online already”; “$3 a month”; four people wrote in “$20”; and one person wondered if this financial support might be “paid through taxes.” That last answer is actually a reality in the state of New Jersey, where a civic information bill was recently passed that designated half a million dollars in taxpayer money to be shared with non-profit local media in the state.

37% of Black respondents said they’d be willing to pay $5 a month for local news and information, the same percentage as those who said they would not pay for local news. 20% of Asian American respondents indicated they would be willing to pay $5 a month, compared to 68% saying they wouldn’t pay anything. Latino respondents had similar numbers to the overall data, half said they wouldn’t pay anything for local news and 38% said they would pay $5 a month.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANSWER CHOICES</th>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
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<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>63.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually</td>
<td>21.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>44.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>12.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>15.67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| TOTAL           | 300       |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANSWER CHOICES</th>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$0 a month</td>
<td>49.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$5 a month</td>
<td>34.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10 a month</td>
<td>11.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$15 a month</td>
<td>1.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>4.33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| TOTAL           | 300       |
This open-ended question garnered a wide range of responses. Here is a sampling of what people shared. See Appendix D for the full list:

- More journalists are needed to provide original local reporting that I can trust.
- My parents and many of my friends’ parents do not speak English. It would be nice to have translations available in Spanish and Chinese.
- The news is meant to inform people of what is going on around them but still allows people to draw their own conclusions after their research. What we have now is a mainstream media circus where it’s all about the headlines that cater to one party or another and mostly rile up the fan bases and instigate lies, hate, and false news. We need to turn away from that and return to what journalism really is about.
- News that is unbiased, investigative news, news for the people. Bring back journalism!!
- The news is meant to inform people of what is going on around them but still allow people to draw their own conclusions after their research. What we have now is a mainstream media circus where it’s all about the headlines that cater to one party or another and mostly rile up the fan bases and instigate lies, hate, and false news. We need to turn away from that and return to what journalism really is about.
- If there was an emergency, either a natural disaster or one caused by humans, it would be very hard to find information. I don’t trust any method to get news. Journalism in this area seems to be so politically motivated. I consider myself a centrist and since I live in Yucaipa, a lot of our news is right-leaning and biased. I would like to see more middle-of-the-road reporting.

In addition to looking at our raw data, we took a deeper dive to look at how age impacts people’s habits when it comes to local news and information. Here are a few of the points that stood out to us:

**Age Based Data Analysis**

We also cross referenced data on age and ethnicity/race as it pertains to BIPOC communities. Here are a few of the points that stood out:

**Data that reflects the Black community:**
- 18-34 year olds cited Twitter as a preferred source of local news
- 18-54 year olds cited community events as the most important topic
- 18-54 year olds cited websites as a top preferred platform
- 45+ year olds cited TV and family and friends as preferred sources of local news

**Data that reflects the Latino community:**
- 18-44 year olds (and under 18) cited Instagram as the top preferred platform
- 18-44 year olds cited public health, housing, and community events as the most important topics
- 35-54 year olds cited email as the top preferred platform
- 55-64 year olds cited websites as the top preferred platform

**Data that reflects the Asian American community:**
- 18-54 year olds cited public health as the most important topic
- 18-54 year olds cited Facebook and family and friends as preferred sources of local news
- 25-44 year olds cited local Facebook groups as the top preferred platform
- 55-64 year olds cited community events and public safety/security as the most important topics

**Under 18:**
- Immigration/Citizenship and the environment were the most important topics to respondents under the age of 18
- Instagram and text messaging are effective ways of delivering news and information

**18-34:**
- Local Government, Community Events, Public Health and Jobs is a shared interest among all age demographics, especially important to 18-54 year olds
- Instagram and text messages are effective ways of delivering news and information, with the 25-34 cohort sharing that Facebook groups are equally as effective
- Facebook groups are the most effective way of receiving news and information
- Text messaging is also an effective way of delivering news and information

**35-44:**
- E-mail is cited as an effective way of reaching all age demographics, particularly with 35-64 year olds
- Text messaging was cited as an effective way of reaching 35-64 year olds

*see Appendix E for data tables related to age
Insights and Recommendations

Considering our survey data and extended conversations with community members, we wanted to share some ideas for how to enhance the Inland Empire’s general news and information ecosystem. We have broken this section down into three parts; first, we provided suggestions for ecosystem wide efforts, services, and support systems that can improve the overall information environment in the Inland Empire; second, we outlined specific ideas for local media that might help improve information access and more equitable coverage in the Inland Empire; and lastly, we shared ideas for community members interested in local media capability and looking to help improve access to reliable civic information.

As we mentioned at the start of the document, this assessment is meant to inspire community-led initiatives, startups, collaborations, and support systems that can address some of the information gaps and news issues that were revealed in our research. Our hope is that these suggestions will be built upon, transformed, and borrowed from, as part of our ensuing request for proposals from the IE community.

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.

In 2018, the state of New Jersey passed a bill that allocated a half a million tax dollars for a Civic Information Consortium. The goal is to provide regular funding to community-focused media around the state. Similarly, in Fresno, where we recently assessed community information needs, the Central Valley Foundation established an Impact Media and Measurement Fund to “increase civic agency for both informing and engaging residents, as well as increasing transparency and accountability in achieving community goals.”

It takes a variety of approaches to sustain a healthy local information ecosystem. As shown in our data, there is some willingness from residents to support local reporting on a monthly basis, but that is only part of the solution. Civic and foundational support has historically helped foster community service media efforts and enabled local voices dedicated to better and more reliable information flow in their neighborhoods to survive and thrive. While there are national grants and funds that local media can tap into, having a local funding effort creates ongoing relationships and synergy between local communities and the media that seek to serve them. We recommend exploring how IE-area foundations and other sources of philanthropy could create an ongoing civic fund to support local
Establish a community hub and workshop for area residents who want to take writing, photography, and audio/video production workshops, develop reporting projects, or simply have a home base for their local media project.

IE residents told us time and again that the area lacked formal opportunities for people interested in the media arts. While there are programs at the high school level and local college courses in print and broadcast media, once people graduate, it is hard for them to find opportunities to build on those skills or learn new ones. Many of the photographers, designers, and writers we connected with also 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 would provide a trusted space where IE residents could engage with journalism and media and develop a positive relationship with the community information ecosystem. San Bernardino’s Garcia Center for the Arts is one existing physical space that could be engaged in hosting this sort of hub, and we know there are lots of other potential local sites as well.

One respondent to our survey said, “I would like to help in the editing or publishing of local material to aggregate information and make it more clear and easier to understand.” This is a great offer rooted in the idea of making local news better and more accessible.

Piggybacking on the idea of establishing a media hub in the IE, it would be helpful to staff that space with an editor/developer who could assist local media makers in everything from a simple copy edit of some reporting they would like to share, to strategizing what platforms on which to publish important local information. Ideally, this person would serve as a sort of mentor to the local IE media community, someone who could establish a more comprehensive understanding of and relationship with journalism for residents who may be struggling to know what information they can trust.
Spanish language media resource focused specifically on Latino community information needs in the Inland Empire

We received extensive comments in the course of our research calling for more Spanish-language local news and information. For example, “Most of our community is Mexican, Hispanic, and Latinos, so it would be good to have our news in Spanish.” Indeed, the IE is a majority Latino region, and the lack of accessible local information in Spanish is a huge issue. There are few, if any, dedicated IE news initiatives in Spanish that reach a wide audience with a comprehensive look at the region. Many younger bilingual Latino community members we spoke with indicated that in the absence of professional news sources, their families relied on them to act as navigators in ensuring they had the relevant news on situations such as the pandemic.

We support the formation of either a partnership with an existing local media outlet or community organization, 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 formats, including a dedicated WhatsApp Group, in which key information could be shared via text and audio messages for people with literacy issues; existing Spanish-language IE-specific Facebook groups; and a print supplement distributed through networks of churches, employment centers, and local businesses frequented by Spanish-speaking residents.

Community Fact-Checking Service

With a drop in coverage from local media outlets and a parallel proliferation of local social media pages and groups, many IE residents reported that it has become increasingly difficult to know what information to trust. One person told us, “It’s difficult to distinguish good from bad sources in this area.” Another respondent suggested a solution to this problem. “Maybe have a ‘verified’ site. Like all the news we get off of social media from regular people. Have someone check and verify the correct info and repost or try to post and verify it before citizens do; then you would have something worth paying for.”

An IE community fact-checking service should be created to proactively investigate local misinformation and share corrections with residents. There are a myriad of training resources around rumor tracking and misinformation that could be included in a local media literacy course for residents. Another goal would be the creation of a service or volunteer team of trained individuals willing to field community questions around rumors and to investigate cases of misinformation and then publish sourced responses for the community to see. Lastly, an active discussion group of local information sharers, journalists, and concerned residents could also provide a productive space for countering misinformation and disinformation, as well as team up on creating solutions to local challenges.
INSIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6. Paid journalism opportunities for local BIPOC talent

We were not surprised to receive feedback from community members along these lines: “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.” Equity in media has always been an issue, not just in hiring, but in the ability of many outlets to claim objectivity when that concept has traditionally been defined by white editors and journalists. The reality is that a comprehensive understanding of the issues that impact a community has always been hampered by a lack of diverse voices and coverage.

One of the main barriers to diversifying journalism is creating paid opportunities for aspiring BIPOC media makers, so they can focus on building that skillset without struggling to make ends meet. As part of our recommendation to create a local fund to support media in the IE, 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.

While an abundance of useful local information has never been more available, it has also never been more spread out across a variety of platforms. It’s not as simple as picking up the local newspaper and finding what you need to know on a given day. Many people recommended the creation of a service that focuses specifically on explaining civic processes and listing community resources and opportunities. One person wrote, “It’d be nice if there was a section that would be for resources for people who need different services from the government to be able to find help. Each week there could be resources for a different government service, one week small business loans, the next where to get help for special needs families, etc.” Another person added, “I think the most effective way to reach me with the news would be through a community e-newsletter with top headlines and stories. I might even be willing to pay a small subscription fee.”

There are some existing digital efforts seeking to keep people civically engaged, including the Verdemont Revitalization Project and Hey Riverside. It would be a good idea to expand on those efforts and establish a designated “News You Can Use” service (e.g., FB page, email newsletter, IG feed) in San Bernardino and Riverside that shares explainers on local government and important topics and provides a weekly civics calendar to keep people up to date on local resources and meetings they can access.

7. News You Can Use initiative focused on explanatory reporting around civic issues and local government
Topic-focused reporting collaboration between IE-based media that is shared in a variety of formats, languages, and platforms.

Many IE residents were very vocal with us about certain topics they would like to see covered in more depth and for that reporting to be more accessible and not behind paywalls. For example, they listed housing instability, local development, and the ongoing impact of the logistics industry. Concerning the latter, one person shared that “warehouses are popping up everywhere. I’d like to see a study on the environmental impacts. I have asthma and I absolutely hate seeing the smog every single day here.”

One idea would be to create a reporting collaboration among IE-based media to tackle different aspects of these issues. This collaboration would emphasize the use of a variety of platforms (print, radio, social media, newsletters), languages, and methods (community meetings, flyers, Instagram Live) in order to reach diverse audiences, thus extending the reach of the materials developed as part of this project.

As we have established throughout this assessment, many locals feel inundated with digital media, yet less clear on what’s true and what sources to trust. There is a growing media literacy movement in the U.S. looking to educate residents on how to be more discerning when it comes to the news and information they encounter online.

We would like to see a partnership with CSUSB, UC Riverside, Moreno Valley, San Bernardino, and Riverside Colleges, local high school media arts programs, and other interested local learning institutions to help develop a media literacy curriculum for college and high school classrooms, as well as learning materials for the larger community. Aspects of this curriculum could be delivered in a short seminar in churches, parent groups, and other community spaces that residents have identified.
Ideas for Local Media:

Additionally, we wanted to share a few specific ideas with local media and community members that might help improve information access and more equitable coverage in the Inland Empire.

If you work in local journalism in the IE here are 5 things that surfaced in our research we thought might be useful.

1. Partner with a neighborhood organization or community center to host some listening sessions with community members. See what kinds of questions people have about local topics and what ways your organization can best follow up with them with the results of your reporting.
2. Find a way to share some of your reporting in Spanish. This effort doesn’t have to be full on translations of articles, it can be as simple as a topic focused WhatsApp group where people can ask questions and get verified informative answers.
3. If you’re looking to hire interns or staff, prioritize local talent. There are a plethora of IE based Universities, Colleges and Community Colleges teaching media arts, establishing longer term relationships with them can help you benefit from the students they are developing.
4. If you are focused predominantly on sharing your reporting digitally, explore ways in which you can connect with the community offline. Things like community events, physical bulletins or posters, and partnerships with local libraries can expand community trust in your reporting.
5. Partner with other media in the region. The Inland Empire is too diverse and geographically expansive for a single modern outlet to cover comprehensively, find ways to create or expand content partnerships with other media so you can better serve your community.

Ideas for Community Members:

If you’re a community information sharer or simply a community member who cares about civic information, here’s a list of 5 things we hope might be useful.

1. Find a way to support a local media outlet, whether through a subscription, membership, volunteering, or you can even offer to be a source about a topic that you’re knowledgeable about or that matters deeply to you.
2. Choose one public meeting to attend regularly (i.e., City Council, School Board, County Board of Supervisors, etc.). The better-informed community members are about what’s happening in their areas, the better they can assess the state of their local media and whether or not coverage reflects the realities of the community. In Riverside, the Instagram feed for Hey Riverside lists many of the community meetings you can access. In San Bernardino, check out the Verdant Revitalization Project’s Instagram feed for City Council meeting previews and guidance on how to attend and make a comment.
3. Balance the local news and information you see on social media with a check of local media outlets and official sources like government websites to make sure you have an accurate understanding of an event or topic affecting your community. The answers are out there; it just takes digging these days to know what you need to know.
4. Talk to your local library or community center about hosting regular community meetings around important topics that impact the area. Invite local media to come to listen and learn from residents about issues they are passionate about.
5. Explore learning more about media literacy to maximize your exposure to verified local news and information and protect your family and community against misinformation and rumors. Check out the websites mediactive.com and mediademicynow.org for information and educational materials about media literacy.

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Appendix A:

1. Adam Wedeking, KUC - Faith organizer
2. Alejandra Molina, Former Press Enterprise reporter
3. Anthony Vileboek moderator and media host
4. Marian Betsennze, Journalism professor, CSUSB
5. Armando Camarina, Communications strategist
6. Barbara Simon, Black Lives Matter IE, activist
7. Benjimen Wood, Pamona Economic Opportunity Center
8. Bergis Jules, Black Voice News
9. Broderick Durr, Black Lives Matter IE, activist
10. Candice Mays, Reporter for Black Voice News

Appendix B:

1. IE news
2. Patch
3. Moreno Valley Matters
4. Facebook is the only source that I would trust specifically, doesn’t really reach me since I only have Instagram
5. friendship, family/friends
6. Radio, friends
7. Facebook: What’s Happening Fontana, Fontana Police
8. Facebook, city websites, county websites.
9. Facebook: What’s Happening Fontana, Fontana Police Department

Facebook

10. Twitter
11. Snapchat
12. KX315 group on Facebook. I love San Bernardino on Instagram
13. Twitter
14. Local news abc7, ktla5, fox11, lahoodmedia various ig pages, reddit, 4chan
15. the hollywood
16. IE Black Berets
17. Sabrina Cervantes Facebook page
18. Facebook
19. Facebook
20. Nextdoor, Facebook
21. Polices Activity in Corona. We are Temescal Valley
22. Mountain reporter
23. Facebook groups
24. What’s happening on Riverside group on Facebook
25. SBCUSD Facebook Page, San Bernardino County Facebook Page
26. Operation New Hope / Inland Empire FB group
27. Nextdoor
28. Facebook group, city websites, county websites.
29. Facebook: What’s Happening Fontana, Fontana Police Department
30. IE Information Ecosystem Assessment // The Listeners Post-Collective

Facebook

2. Facebook
3. Instagram
4. Twitter
5. Snapchat
6. Reddit
7. Facebook
8. Facebook
9. Facebook
10. Facebook
Twitter accounts

- Riverside County Facebook group is really good for fast updates.
- I use Google news local a lot. They lead to other sources.
- Various Facebook groups, community newsletter (LakeHills)
- What’s happening in Riverside
- The Listening Post Collective
- The Listening Post Collective

Facebook pages

- Riverside County Facebook group on Facebook
- The San Bernardino Sun on Facebook
- Facebook local pages
- The San Bernardino Sun
- The Sun
- Citizens and law enforcement press releases
- Twitter accounts
- Twitter, Facebook, Nextdoor, and newspapers
- What’s going on in Riverside County Facebook Group
- Nextdoor
- Facebok group - What’s happening in Riverside County
- Riverside City Facebook page
- Riverside County group on Facebook
- Riverside County” because they are all loons, but they link to a lot of credible content.
- LA Times, NBC7
- Riverside County Facebook page
- Twitter
- Nextdoor, Facebook community group, church
- Twitter, Facebook, Nextdoor, and newspapers
- What’s going on in Riverside Facebook group
- Various Facebook groups
- Rob McMillan
- Usually independent journalist
- The Listening Post Collective
- THE LISTENING POST COLLECTIVE
- IE INFORMATION ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT

Websites

- Various local elected officials sites and newsletters or posts.
- What’s going on in Riverside
- Facebook local pages
- The Listening Post Collective
- IE INFORMATION ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT

Twitter

- @sbamericagram and Twitter: nonprofits like Inland Congregations United for Change, CCAEJ, eyeofthebarrio, blacksivesmatterie
- eyeofthebarrio @strangetruths
- SBPD Insta
- Farmers of the barrio, elizabeth ayala.
- The Listening Post Collective
- LA Times talks about the IE. The What’s Going On In Riverside Facebook group
- abc ne
- sbpd
- KESQ
- ABC 7
- Twitter
- @ilo
- ABQ
- @morenovalleymatters on ig/fb do have many community
- Tiktok
- @e
- SBPD Insta
- TikTok
- What’s Going On In Riverside
- Riverside County group on Facebook
- LAist some
- Riverside County
- Los Angeles Times, the san bernardino sun. What’s going on in riverside.
- United for Change, CCAEJ, eyeofthebarrio, blacksivesmatterie
- The Listening Post Collective
- IE INFORMATION ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT

Other

- Localize Facebook groups and social media accounts of elected officials
- The Listening Post Collective
- Rob McMillan
- Usually I ge
- Rob McMillan
- @morenovalleymatters on ig/fb do have many community
- Tiktok
- @e
- SBPD Insta
- TikTok
- What’s Going On In Riverside
- Riverside County group on Facebook
- LAist some
- Riverside County
- Los Angeles Times, the san bernardino sun. What’s going on in riverside.
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- The Listening Post Collective
- IE INFORMATION ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT

Appendix C:

- Too many to count
- Crumbling downtown San Bernardino
- Rise in crime and homelessness and what is being done about it
- The implementation of walmart to the city of eastvale.
- The World Logistics Center
- Immigration
- The world has gone mad. Local police are overwhelmed but doing a good job investigating and bringing parties involved to justice.
- Abandoned Rondeads Mall
- Human trafficking and drug trafficking
- Dark money in elections, corruption at the city/county levels of government.
- Warehouses are popping up everywhere. I’d like to see a study on the environmental impacts. I have aroma and I absolutely hate
I am in Black, Indigenous, Immigrant perspectives interested in learning more about local politics - what is being done? I'd like to know why Chuck Conder leaves his Christmas lights up all year. kinda trashy. I'd like to know why Chuck Conder leaves his Christmas lights up all year. Kinda trashy. I'd like to know why Chuck Conder leaves his Christmas lights up all year. Kinda trashy. I'd like to know why Chuck Conder leaves his Christmas lights up all year. Kinda trashy. I'd like to know why Chuck Conder leaves his Christmas lights up all year. Kinda trashy. I'd like to know why Chuck Conder leaves his Christmas lights up all year. Kinda trashy. I'd like to know why Chuck Conder leaves his Christmas lights up all year. Kinda trashy. I'd like to know why Chuck Conder leaves his Christmas lights up all year. Kinda trashy. I'd like to know why Chuck Conder leaves his Christmas lights up all year. Kinda trashy. I'd like to know why Chuck Conder leaves his Christmas lights up all year. Kinda trashy. I'd like to know why Chuck Conder leaves his Christmas lights up all year. Kinda trashy. I'd like to know why Chuck Conder leaves his Christmas lights up all year. Kinda trashy. I'd like to know why Chuck Conder leaves his Christmas lights up all year. Kinda trashy. I'd like to know why Chuck Conder leaves his Christmas lights up all year. Kinda trashy. I'd like to know why Chuck Conder leaves his Christmas lights up all year. Kinda trashy.
Environmental health issues
Community programs for jobs
Alternative forms of transportation, becoming a more bike and pedestrian-friendly region
We need more resources for the local community. We shouldn’t have to leave the area to make and enjoy our lives. There’s so much potential in San Bernardo to thrive as a city and community.
Amazon warehouses; corrupt developers
Mayor of San Bernardo
These damn warehouses and the environmental effects
We need help getting stories for Boot Bance
The logistics growth in the IE
The High speed railway being built in Colton and their involvement with amsoil. Which Navarro (Mayor of Colton is on the railway planning) and the SB airport committee has
SB City Council Cannabis Play for Pay
Homelessness in San Bernardo and Riverside
Impact of Covid 19 on local businesses
Jobs
Water and the environment
Better ways for distant learning
The history of San Bernardo through a real communities of color perspective. Development, business, and warehouse expansion updates.
Would love to hear more local stories. How people are making a living, struggles and accomplishments
Rentals properties
The California Exodus
Would love more information on voting records and history of candidates when local elections come around. I hear rumors of who’s corrupt or who’s a good candidate but have very little hard evidence beyond their own websites.
COVID-19 updates
I’d like for there to be more information about the salton sea released to the people / stress the importance of cleaning up the area
Gentrification
I’m looking at how cities doing w/ rent? Are there evictions currently happening?
Not at the moment.
Mental health of soccer club being built here in the Thermal region. Also the issues of the Satton Sea and what’s being done to fix it.
The situation happening in the Oasis mobile park and what will be happening.
Human trafficking
I would like to see more front-page coverage given to local government involvement.
I would like to see more historical investigations around politics, schools, and the culture of development and economics as it pertains to those affected. There is too much information on warehouses.
Business deals made with the city government to provide jobs through warehouse development.
How the rise in warehouses really impacts our communities and the environment.
Questions and the changes it will bring to the community.
Corruption in our local government - Amount of warehouses being built. (Specifically amazon) - Police brutality - Lack or resources for our youth
Help for the homeless and marijuana dispensaries
Amazon warehouses

Appendix

There needs to be an unbiased approach to news and journalism. The news is meant to inform people of what is going on around them but still allow the people to draw their own conclusions after much research. What we have now is a mainstream media circus show where it’s all about the headlines that cater to one party or another and mostly to rile up the fan bases and instigate lies, hate, and false news. We need to turn away from that and return to what journalism really is about. No one organization can cover enough items to make a substantial impact. There are so many corrupt developers
There seems to be a lack of a “definitive” source for any news in the IE. It seems that there is an agenda everywhere.
It seems as though everyone is less biased and more accessible. Local information is essential and has value. Good journalism is not free of charge.
My parents and many of my friends’ parents do not speak English. It’d be nice to have translations available in Spanish and Chinese.
I’m just accessible to the youth and want to spread it to homeland and unaware. More verification a la información compartida y eliminar de las noticias
Las noticias deberían estar disponibles para el público. Las noticias de alguien que no sepa de la historia. In my opinion, the news media does not focus enough on accurate, factual, unopinionated information. As an elderly retired person, I’m disappointed watching how the media now provides personal perception, the channel or the news shows bias.
I have made it a point to interact with the stories presented.
There should be a news channel about the inland empire instead of multiple of Los Angeles and surrounding areas.
I’ve noticed the local paper is pretty right wing, and it makes me sad that is that what’s being fed to people. Newspapers should not be so biased.
More information about public safety and security
Newspapers have the power to investigate news, be the people. Bring back journalism!
Thanks
If there was an emergency - natural disasters or human caused it would be very hard to find info. I don’t trust any method to get news. Journalism in this area seems like it caters to the rich. Especial the Pahranagat Enterprise. There should be free news but I know nothing is free

IE INFORMATION ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT /// THE LISTENING POST COLLECTIVE

Emergency for deaf community
I would definitely be willing to pay more for access to a number of papers online rather than just one. I also love to be able to download the whole edition once a day, but sometimes really good stories I’d like to read but it’s not in my immediate area I don’t want to pay a subscription for.
Sometimes really good stories I’d like to read but it’s not in my immediate area. I don’t want to pay a subscription for.
Maybe have a “verified” site. Like all the news we get off of social media from regular people. Have someone check and verify the correct info and repost or try to post and verify it before citizens do so then you’ll have something worth paying for.
More streamline manner of giving information out to it’s residents about the issues and agenda.
I wish we had a better social media outlet for corona.
Media needs to find a way to disseminate information that is not behind a paywall. There is too many sources of information nowadays and the paywall just don’t reach a large audience. No one organization can cover enough items to make a substantial impact. There are so many sources. We need to turn away from that and return to what journalism really is about.
I would like for more local coverage about how our local schools are getting through the pandemic and the strategic planning of testing the students and students for COVID-19 in the Inland Empire.
We need a station on TV that is dedicated to reporting about
Appendix E:

Because we are looking at age, and also Age and Race, there's actually 32 sets of data. It's a data for questions 1, 2, and 5 from our survey and put in the context of:

01. General
02. Black residents
03. Asian residents
04. Latino residents

General Data Chart 1
Respondents

Q15: 65+ (G)

Q15: 55-64

Q15: 45-54

Q15: 35-44

Q15: 25-34

Q15: Under

General Data Chart 2

General Data Chart 3
### Black Data Chart 1

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<th>Local Government</th>
<th>Family Relationship</th>
<th>TV</th>
<th>Radio</th>
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### Black Data Chart 2

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<th>Instagram</th>
<th>Local Facebook Group</th>
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<th>Radio</th>
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### Asian American Data Chart 1

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| Asian American Data Chart 2

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### Asian American Data Chart 2

**Q15: 65+**
- (F)
- (E)
- (D)
- (C)

**Q15: 45-54**
- (D)
- (C)

**Q15: 35-44**
- (C)

**Q15: 18-24**
- (A)

### Asian American Data Chart 3

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### Latino Data Chart 1

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