

OK, I want to support my local news ecosystem. How do I get started?

We recommend deep listening and informed action. Starting with an ecosystem assessment can provide you with a comprehensive understanding of how the local news ecosystem is functioning, what its needs are, and how to make it stronger.

How do I assess my local news ecosystem?

The field of news and information ecosystem study is relatively new, but growing fast. Democracy Fund has conducted numerous assessments with local funders and is pulling together examples and resources into a “how-to” guide, which will be released soon.

You don’t have to do this alone — in fact, partner funders and local organizations can help you build on previous research and deepen your understanding of the ecosystem. Look for the “ecosystem builders” who can be advocates and trusted advisors for this effort.

Your approach should reflect the context of your community. The key is to put a place and its people at the center of the assessment. Start with questions such as:

- Are people’s information needs being met and how?
- Are they able to make informed decisions and contribute meaningfully to the community?
- How are they getting and processing information?
- How does this differ across race, gender, income, and age?



ABOUT ECOSYSTEM BUILDERS

Ecosystem builders are leaders in your community who are designing new models for local news. They are innovative, connected deeply to communities, and hold many relationships across the ecosystem.

How can I learn more about news ecosystems and supporting local news?

We are releasing a guide to assessing local news ecosystems for funders soon. Contact Teresa Gorman, senior program associate for local news at Democracy Fund, at tgorman@democracyfund.org for more information and to receive the guide upon publication. In the meantime, go to localnewslab.org for resources, case studies, and new ideas about sustaining local news, and follow us on [@thelocalnewslab](https://twitter.com/thelocalnewslab) for updates.

Portions of this document are excerpted from a forthcoming report on assessing your local news ecosystem by Fiona Morgan, and a series of blog posts on news ecosystems by Nancy Watzman on localnewslab.org. Cover illustration by Joyce Rice.



Local News Lab

The Local News Lab is a testing ground for the future of local journalism that supports people and their efforts to experiment with new ways of reporting, engaging communities, and sustaining news organizations of all sizes.