

Turning Community Insights into Strategy

Reflection Questions for Local Public Media News Organizations

How to Use the Workbook & Questions

Once you have a clearer picture of your community - who lives there, how they engage, and how your area compares to others - these questions can help you start turning that knowledge into meaningful action.

The questions below are designed to prompt reflection, spark discussion, and guide decision-making across your organization. Some questions focus on your overall strategy and mission. Others zoom in on editorial priorities, how to better serve your community, or how to tell your story to funders and partners. A few are geared toward identifying communities like yours so you can learn from what's working elsewhere. You can use these questions to:

- Sharpen your focus and priorities
- Challenge long-held assumptions
- Uncover new opportunities or gaps
- Strengthen your case to funders and partners
- Learn from peers in similar communities

You don't need to answer every question. Choose the ones that spark ideas or challenge your thinking. Use them to guide team conversations, planning sessions, or funding proposals. These questions aren't about having the perfect answer - they're about uncovering the right opportunities to explore.

1. Organizational Strategy & Focus

Are we aligned with what our community truly needs?

- What do the data suggest about the biggest opportunities or needs in our community - and are we aligned with them?

- Are we allocating our limited resources (staff, funding, time) in ways that reflect local realities?
- Which assumptions about our community does this data challenge or confirm?
- What are we currently doing that may not be as important in this context - and what might we need to start or stop?
- How can we use this data to help set (or reset) our strategic priorities for the year ahead?
- How does our work support civic life in our region, and how could we do more?

2. Editorial & Newsroom Priorities

Who are we reaching, what are we covering, and what might be missing?

- Which groups or geographies in our community are underrepresented in our coverage - and why?
- Are our beats, story formats, and sources reflective of the full diversity of our community?
- Are there specific community attributes (language, education, connectivity) that suggest a need to change how we deliver information?
- How are we helping people navigate civic life - especially those who may be disengaged or marginalized?
- Where might we be duplicating coverage that other outlets already provide - and what's missing that no one is covering?

3. Telling Your Story to Funders and Supporters

Use insights to support funding, partnerships, and public understanding of your impact.

- What data points best illustrate the need for our work - and the gap we're helping to fill?
- How can we use this data to show funders that we are tuned in to the needs of our entire community, not just current audiences?

- Are there specific demographic or civic trends that help explain why this moment is critical for investment?
- How do we communicate our role in strengthening civic life, trust, or access to local information?
- Are there comparisons (with national or regional averages) that help underscore the urgency, opportunity, or uniqueness of our situation?

4. Comparing with Other Communities

Look beyond your borders to find peers, partners, and inspiration.

- What other communities in the U.S. share similar demographic, civic, or socioeconomic characteristics with ours?
- Are there local news organizations operating in those places - and what can we learn from how they serve their audiences?
- What strategies are other organizations using to reach or engage populations similar to ours (e.g., multilingual communities, rural residents, college students, tribal communities)?
- How does funding for local media in those similar communities compare to ours?
- Are there formats, partnerships, or business models being tested elsewhere that might translate well to our context?
- What are they prioritizing - and what have they decided *not* to do?
- Could we reach out to one or two organizations in communities like ours for a peer conversation or shared learning session?

More support is available from Local News Catalyst at www.localnewscatalyst.org

