

## **Table 1: Critical Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy<sup>1</sup>**

### 1. Emergencies and risks

Individuals, neighborhoods, and communities need access to emergency information on platforms that are universally accessible and in languages understood by the large majority of the local population, including information on dangerous weather; environmental and other biohazardous outbreaks; and public safety threats, including terrorism, amber alerts, and other threats to public order and safety. Further, all citizens need access to information on policing and public safety.

### 2. Health

All members of communities need access to information on health and healthcare, including information on family and public health in accessible languages and platforms; information on the availability, quality, and cost of health care for accessibility, lowering costs, and ensuring that markets function properly, including variations by neighborhood and city region; the availability of public health information, programs, and services, including wellness care and clinics and hospitals; timely information in accessible language on the spread of disease and vaccination; timely access to information about health campaigns and interventions.

### 3. Education

Communities need access to information on all aspects of the educational system, particularly during a period when education is a central matter for public debate, decision-making, and resource allocation, including: the quality and administration of school systems at a community-wide level; the quality of schools within specific neighborhoods and geographic regions; information about educational opportunities, including school performance assessments, enrichment, tutoring, afterschool care and programs; information about school alternatives, including charters; information about adult education, including language courses, job training, and GED programs, as well as opportunities for higher education.

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<sup>1</sup> Under a slightly different title, this list originally appeared as Table 1 in Philip M. Napoli, Sarah Stonbelly, Kathleen McCollough, and Bryce Renninger, *Assessing the Health of Local Journalism Ecosystems: A Comparative Analysis of Three New Jersey Communities* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University's School of Communication and Information, 2015), pg. 21. Napoli and co-authors say they derived their list from Lewis Friedland and others, *Review of the Literature Regarding Critical Information Needs of the American Public* (Washington, D.C.: Federal Communications Commission, 2012), available at <http://goo.gl/Z6fwvv>. See also Steven Waldman, *Information Needs of Communities* (Washington, D.C.: Federal Communications Commission, 2011), available at <http://goo.gl/WJCCS7>.

#### 4. Transportation Systems

All members need timely information about transportation across multiple accessible platforms, including: information about essential transportation services including mass transit at the neighborhood, city, and regional levels; traffic and road conditions, including those related to weather and closings; timely access to public debate on transportation at all layers of the community, including roads and mass transit.

#### 5. Environment and Planning:

Communities need access to both short and long-term information on the environment, as well as planning issues that may affect the quality of lives in neighborhoods, cities, and metropolitan regions, including: the quality of local and regional water and air, timely alerts of hazards, and longer term issues of sustainability; the distribution of actual and potential environmental hazards by neighborhood, city region, and metropolitan area, including toxic hazards and brownfields; natural resource development issues that affect the health and quality of life and economic development of communities; information on access to environmental regions, including activity for restoration of watersheds and habitat, and opportunities for recreation.

#### 6. Economic Development

Individuals, neighborhoods, and communities need access to a broad range of economic information, including: employment information and opportunities within the region; job training and retraining, apprenticeship, and other sources of reskilling and advancement; information on small business opportunities, including startup assistance and capital resources; information on major economic development initiatives affecting all community levels.

#### 7. Civic Information

Communities need information about major civic institutions, nonprofit organizations, and associations, including their services, accessibility, and opportunities for participation in: libraries and community-based information services; cultural and arts information; recreational opportunities; nonprofit groups and associations; community-based social services and programs; and religious institutions and programs.

#### 8. Political Life

In a federal democracy, citizens need information on local, regional, county, state, and federal candidates at all units of governance, including: information on elected and

voluntary neighborhood councils; school boards; city council and alder elections; city regions; and county elections; timely information on public meetings and issues, including outcomes; information on where and how to register to vote, including requirements for identification and absentee ballots; information on state-level issues where they impact local policy formation and decisions.