



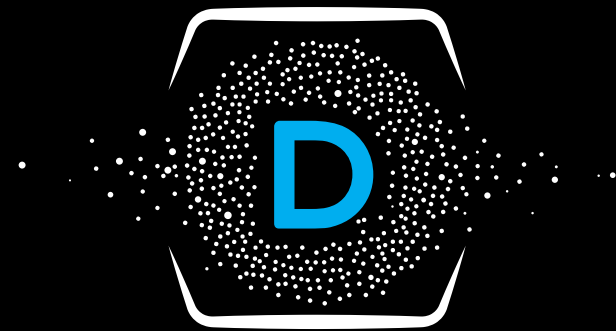
# DECODING THE DISTRIBUTION OF DATA FOR DEMOCRACY

ADVOCACY, RESEARCH, ARCHIVE & DESIGN LAB

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BY KAREEM COLLIE

**Educate and inform the whole mass of the people... They are the only sure reliance for the preservation of our liberty. –*Thomas Jefferson***



**LAB D is a research and design lab whose mission is to support the free flow of news and information to the public through journalism.** It is the fusion of four components that work together to increase, support and sustain the flow of information through the practice of journalism, to educate and inform the public, thereby strengthening their engagement in the democratic process.

## RESEARCH

Keeping pace with the constantly shifting media culture of the 21st century

- Conducting research in mass communication, journalism and democracy

## ADVOCACY

Promote excellence in journalism and in its continued role as a tool for strengthening Democracy

- lobbying to strengthen distribution of information to the public
- Education programming in journalism and democracy

## ARCHIVING

A source for best practices, current tools, strategies, and conversations in the news media

- Design and development of digital archive
- Supporting research and design efforts

## DESIGN

Creating innovative products and strategies for the advancement of journalism and the distribution of knowledge

- Strategy and design for advancing journalism



*What is the role of journalism in*  
DEMOCRACY?

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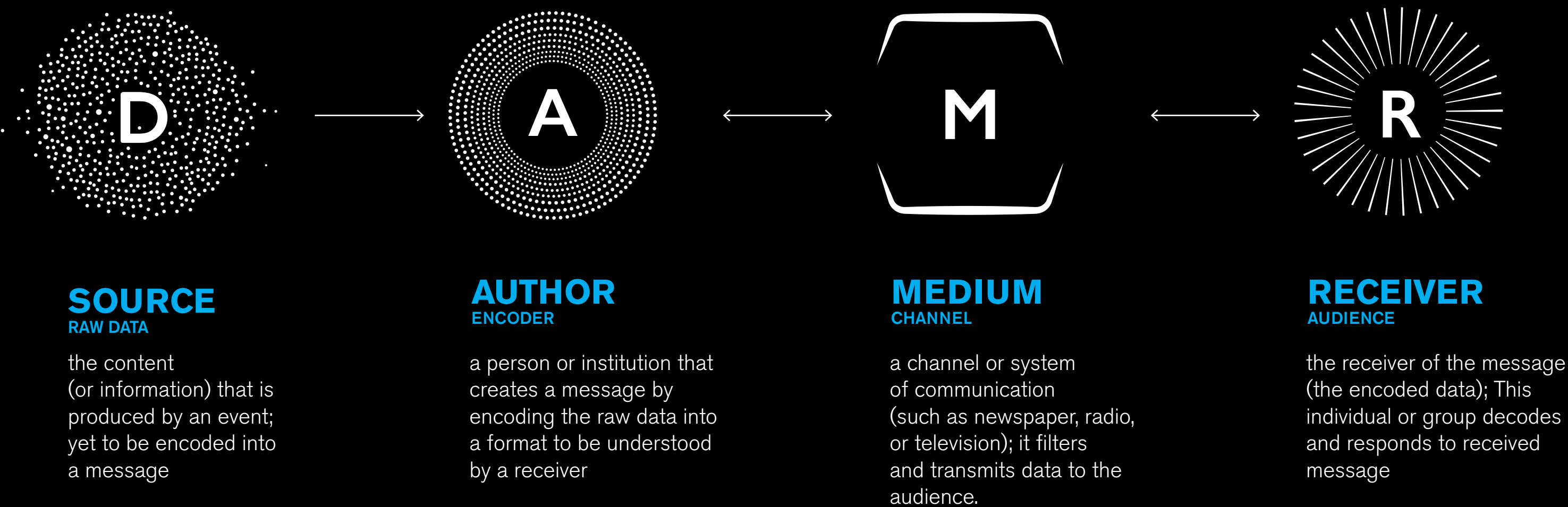


**Journalism is an essential part of the democratic process.** It educates and informs the public of issues and events; supports civic engagement, and holds accountable our government.

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**“Reporting the news – undergirds democracy by explaining complicated events, issues, and process in clear language.”** – *Reconstruction of American Journalism*  
Downie and Schudson

This diagram shows a basic model of the journalistic process.  
It references communication research models



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**During the past two decades, changes in the way the public engages news media have presented major challenges to the industry,** particularly in the area of investigative research and explanatory reporting. Some examples of change:

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A decline in ad **REVENUE** has (a) caused news organization to move away from investigative journalism (b) necessitated by a decline in the work force deficits.

The **TECHNOLOGY** landscape (a) has decentralized the sources of information (b) while changes faster than our traditional institutions can keep up with.

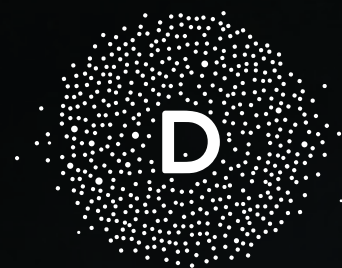
Changes in the **MEDIA CULTURE** (a) like the rise in citizen journalism and social media (b) have turned away youth from traditional news formats.



*What is the current state of  
journalism and the distribution of*

# DATA?

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## The Big Picture

### BROADCAST NEWS AND SPECTACLE

Punditry and  
Massive walls

### DECENTRALIZING AD REVENUE

Audience Migrates  
To Sources

### BIAS REPORTING

Contrasting Narrative  
In Reporting

### DECLINE IN INVESTIGATIVE AND EXPLANATORY JOURNALISM

Obamacare Coverage

### SOCIAL MEDIA AND HOW THE YOUNGER GENERATION SEES NEWS

New Channels for  
Communication

### CITIZEN JOURNALISM

Boston Bomber  
Reddit.com Fiasco





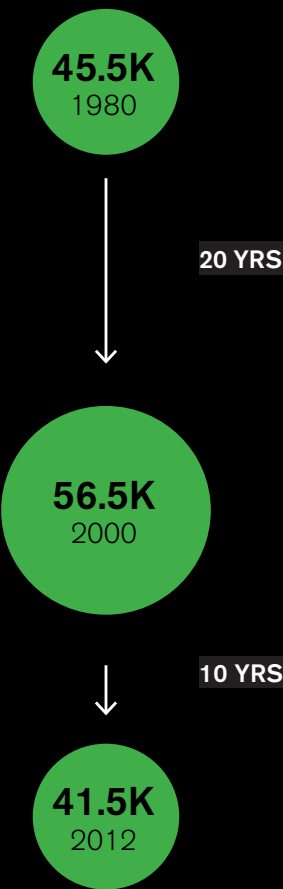
**The Big Picture:** A few of the major issues impacting the flow of quality educational information to the public.

**ECONOMICS**

A decline in revenue has caused a 30% decline in newsroom staff over the past decade. The sharpest drop started in 2006. This is the lowest since 1978.

Daily U.S. Newsroom Work Force 1980–2013

Source:  
The Information Needs  
Of Communities.  
2011 FCC Report

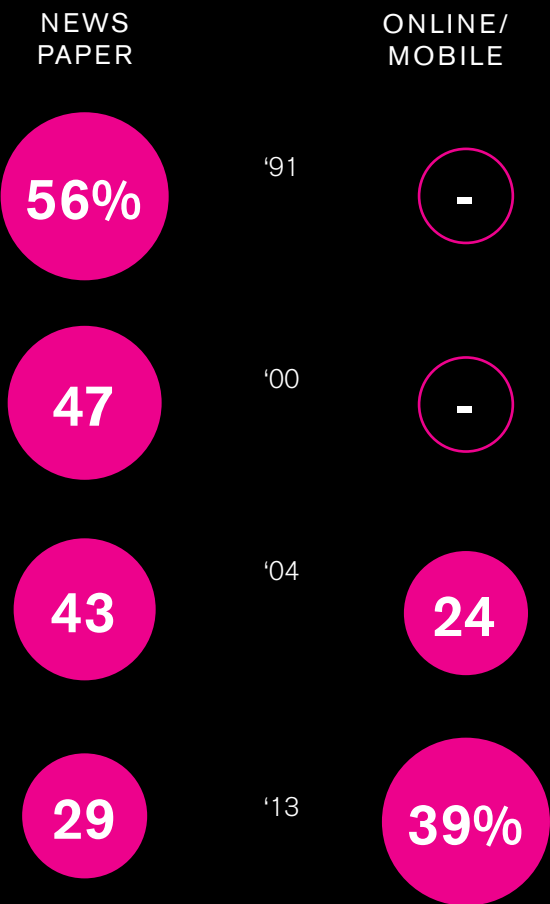


**TECHNOLOGY**

New technologies have had a decentralizing effect on where the audience goes to receive their news. This shift was most dramatic btw 2004-2006 with the introduction of mobile devices.

Where People Got Their News Yesterday

Source:  
Pew Research  
Center  
2012 Survey

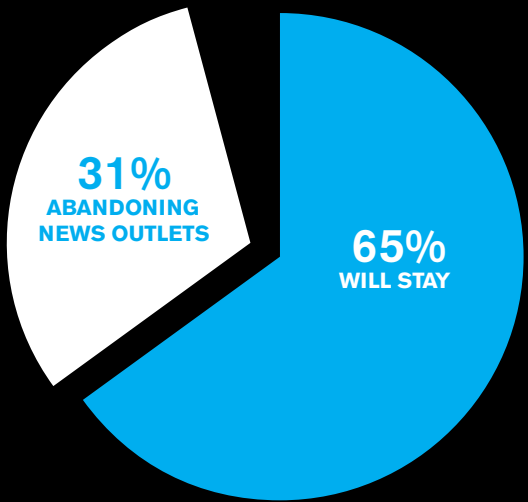


**MEDIA CULTURE**

Nearly one-third—31%—of people say they have deserted a particular news outlet because it no longer provided the news and information they had grown accustomed to.

Americans Show Signs of Leaving a News Outlet

Source:  
Pew Research  
Center  
2013 Survey



**To frame the current state of news media we will view the industry through the lens of** (a) Economics: The flow of revenue within the industry (b) Technology: The introduction of news access points (c) Media Culture: The public's engagement with media.

### ISSUES CREATED BY DECLINE IN REVENUE

- **Decline in staff and manpower**
- Decline in local newspapers
- Decline in investigative reporting
- **Increased opinion based news**
- Loss of smaller local news organizations
- Decline in quality sources
- **Decline in quality of reporting**
- Free access to information
- Greater reliance on fewer sources (e.g. AP & Reuters)

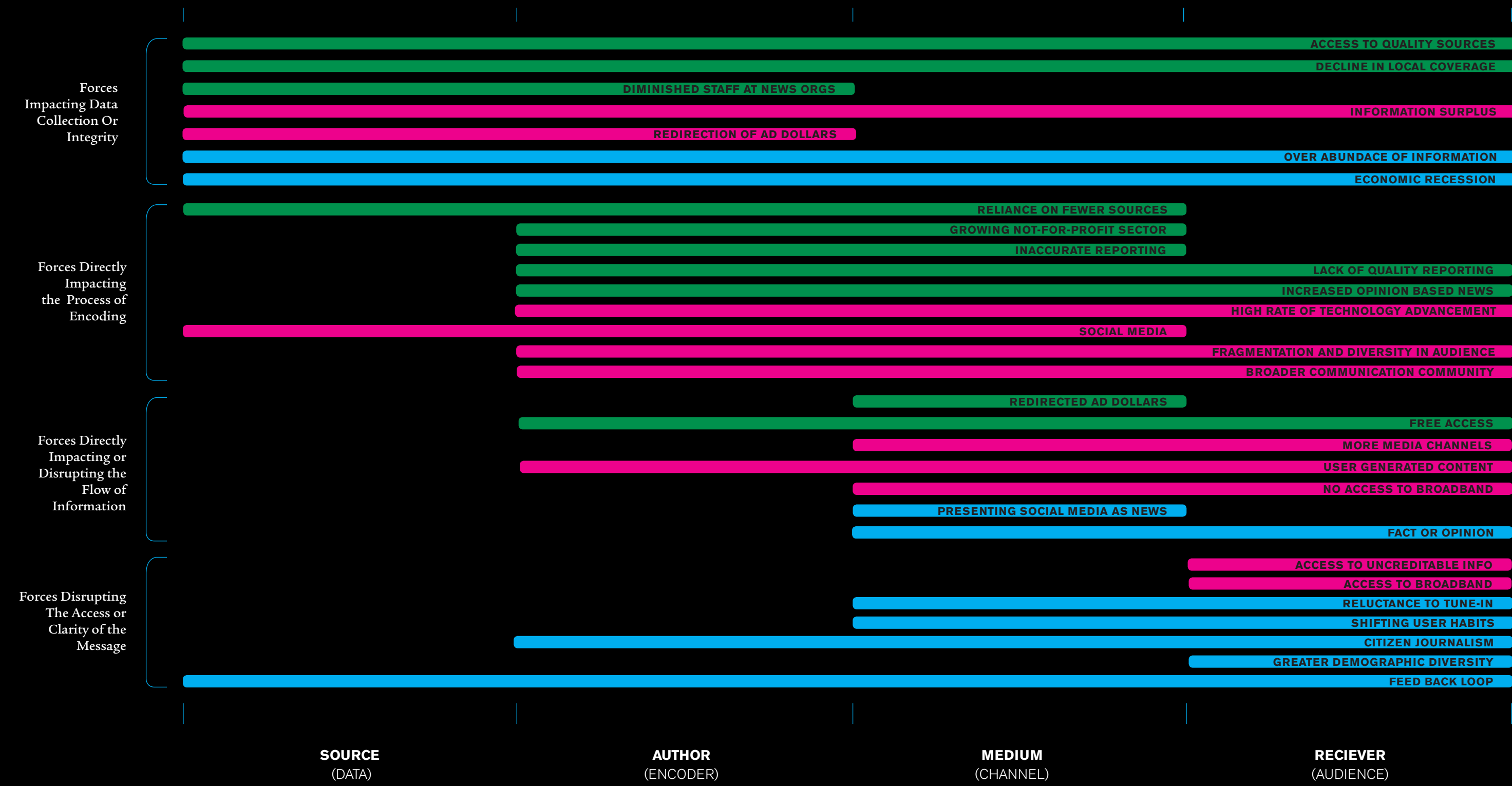
### SIDE EFFECTS OF TECHNOLOGY ON MEDIA INDUSTRY

- **Redirection of ad dollars**
- More available media channels
- Broadening of communication community
- **Greater fragmentation and diversity in audience**
- Surplus of available information
- More access to uncreditable information
- Free access to information
- **Proliferation of user generated content (Citizen Journalism)**
- High rate of tech advancement
- Disenfranchising those without access to technology

### ISSUES CREATED BY SHIFTS IN MEDIA CULTURE

- Constantly shifting user habits
- Audience generated content (Citizen Journalism)
- **News organization publishing social media content as news**
- Greater user feedback loop
- Polarized political environment
- **Blurred lines of opinion and fact**
- Disinterest or reluctance to tune-in to news
- Prolonged economic recession
- Greater demographic diversity

**Dissecting the flow to visualize the problems:** This chart shows the challenges impacting the flow of information along the communication model.

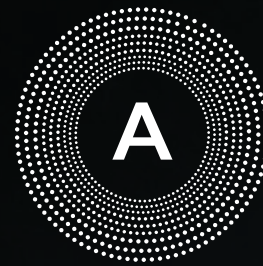




# DECODING

*and visualize the problem?*

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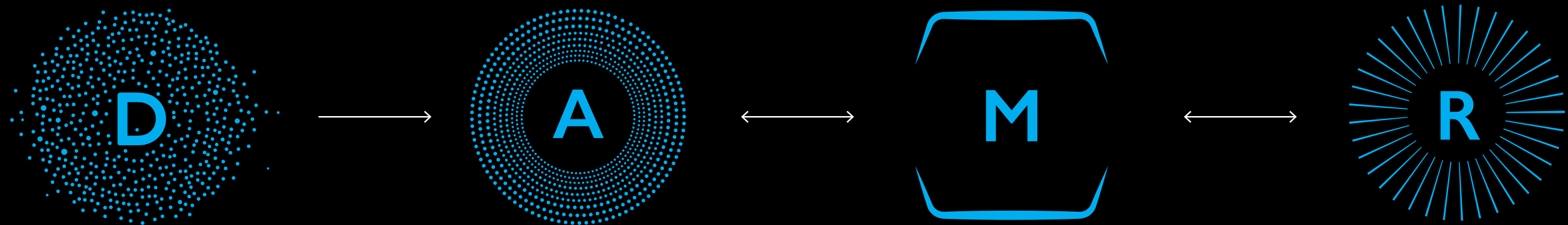
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**The following sections illustrate the core processes of LAB D**

1. **Decoding:** Research + Digital Archiving of current tools, text and strategies
  2. **Design:** Research + Design using the digital archive as a cross referencing tool for ideation for strategic planning and product design
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CROSS REFERENCING

*Issues Created by Sifts in Technology, Revenue  
and Media Culture to Find New Opportunities*



**What they Say:** There is a growing body of literature concerned with the current climate of journalism and its role in our democracy. The list below highlights some OPPORTUNITIES supported in the text.

The following list references publications on the struggle within the industry and the question of journalists as “stewards” of Democracy:

Informing Communities:  
Sustaining Democracy in the Digital Age  
*2009 Knight Commission Report*

The Information Needs  
Of Communities  
*2011 Federal Communications Commission*

The Reconstruction of American Journalism  
*Leonard Downie & Michael Schudson*

Reluctant Stewards:  
Journalism in a Democratic Society  
*Michael Schudson*

**GOVERNMENT SUPPORT**

- Local government
- Changes to tax policy
- FCC stronger policies
- Offering 501(c)(3) status
- Open Government/ Transparency
- More Support through Public Broadcasting

**CROWD SOURCING**

- Annotation
- Content aggregation
- User populated content
- User directed content

**SIMPLIFY COMMUNICATIONS**

- Graphic visualization
- Simplifying information
- Structure
- Alternative ways of presenting

**POLICING TRUTHINESS**

- Fact-checking
- Hold accountable false information

**COUNTER BALANCE TONE**

- Adversarial journalism
- Bias reporting
- Investigative journalism

**CITIZEN JOURNALISM**

- Freelance journalist group

**ALTERNATIVE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES IN INDUSTRY**

- Collaboration with “competitors”
- Pool resources
- Micro-payments
- Sector based journalism

**UNIVERSITY SUPPORT**

- Collaboration with news organizations
- Collaboration with local communities
- Develop active & professional news organizations

**ALTERNATIVE DATA SOURCE**

- Polling data
- Open Data
- Digital Archiving

**ALTERNATIVE MEDIA CHANNELS**

- Local level support

**CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT**

- Local community organizations
- Partnership with the Audiences

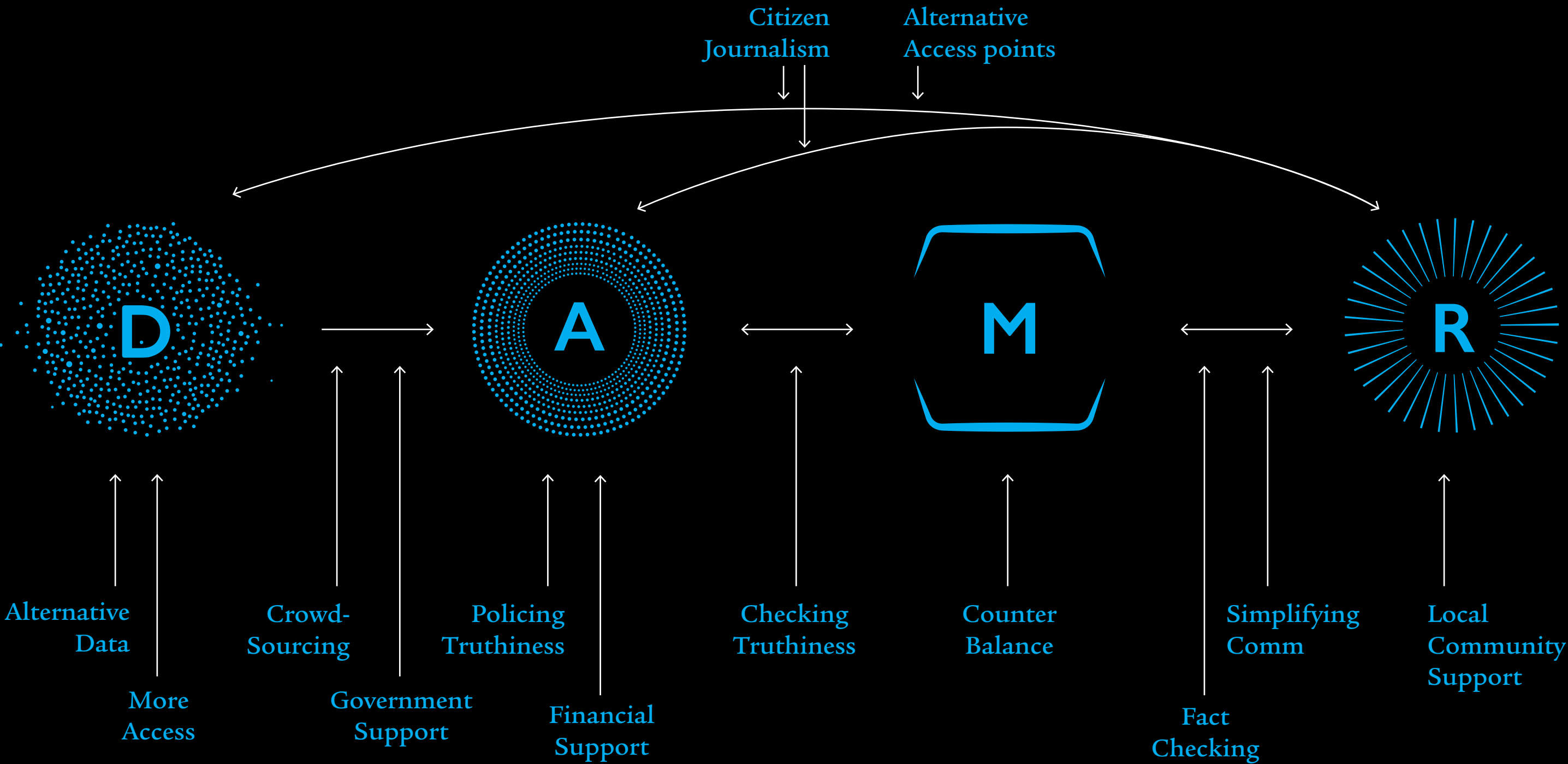
**PRIVATE SECTOR SUPPORT**

- Funding
- Partnerships

**NOT-FOR-PROFITS**

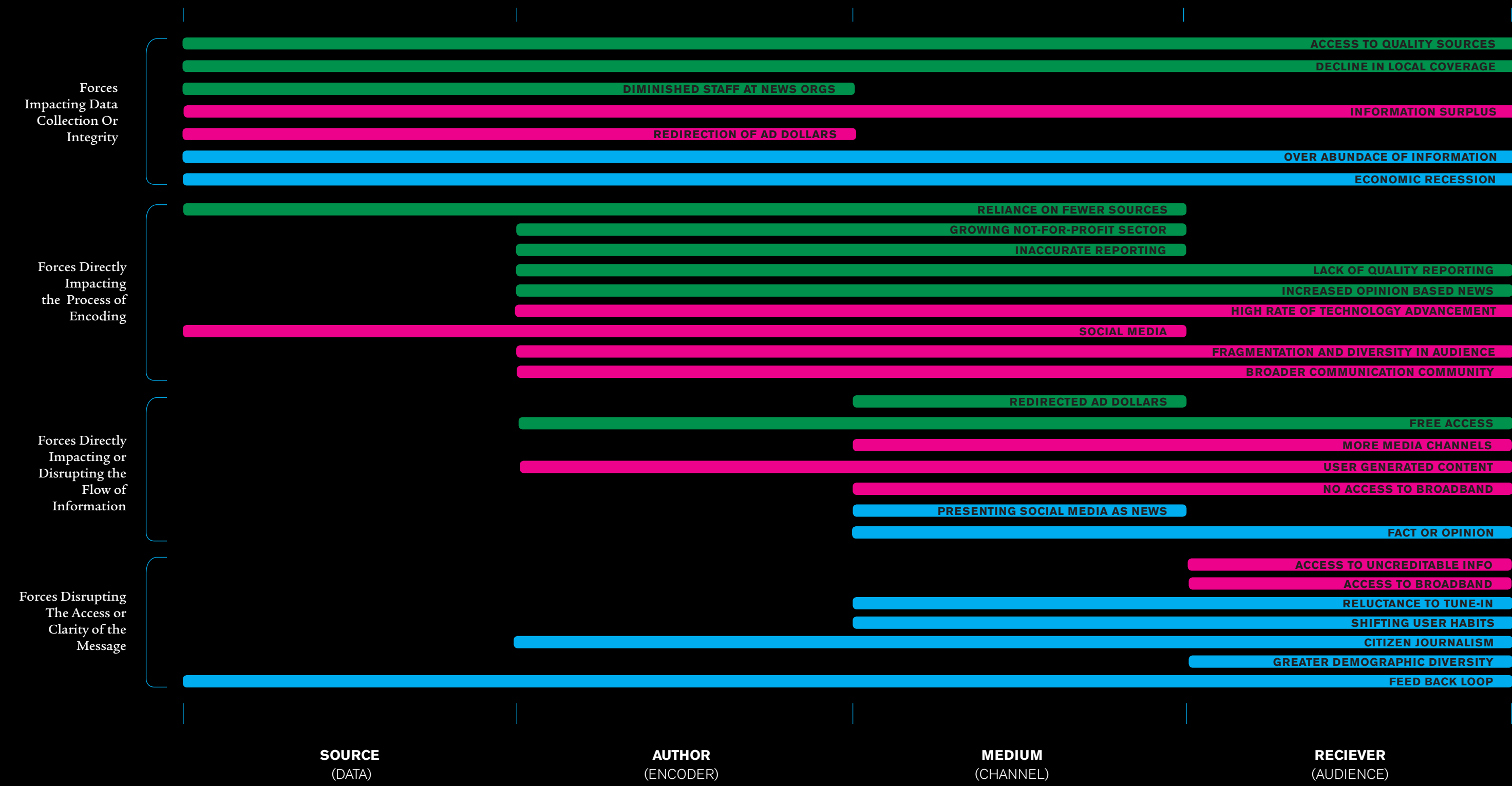
- Local community organizations
- Sector based journalism
- Funding and Advocacy Groups
- More “watchdog” reporting

**Undergirding the System:** Where can we add support and strengthen the flow of information to the public?





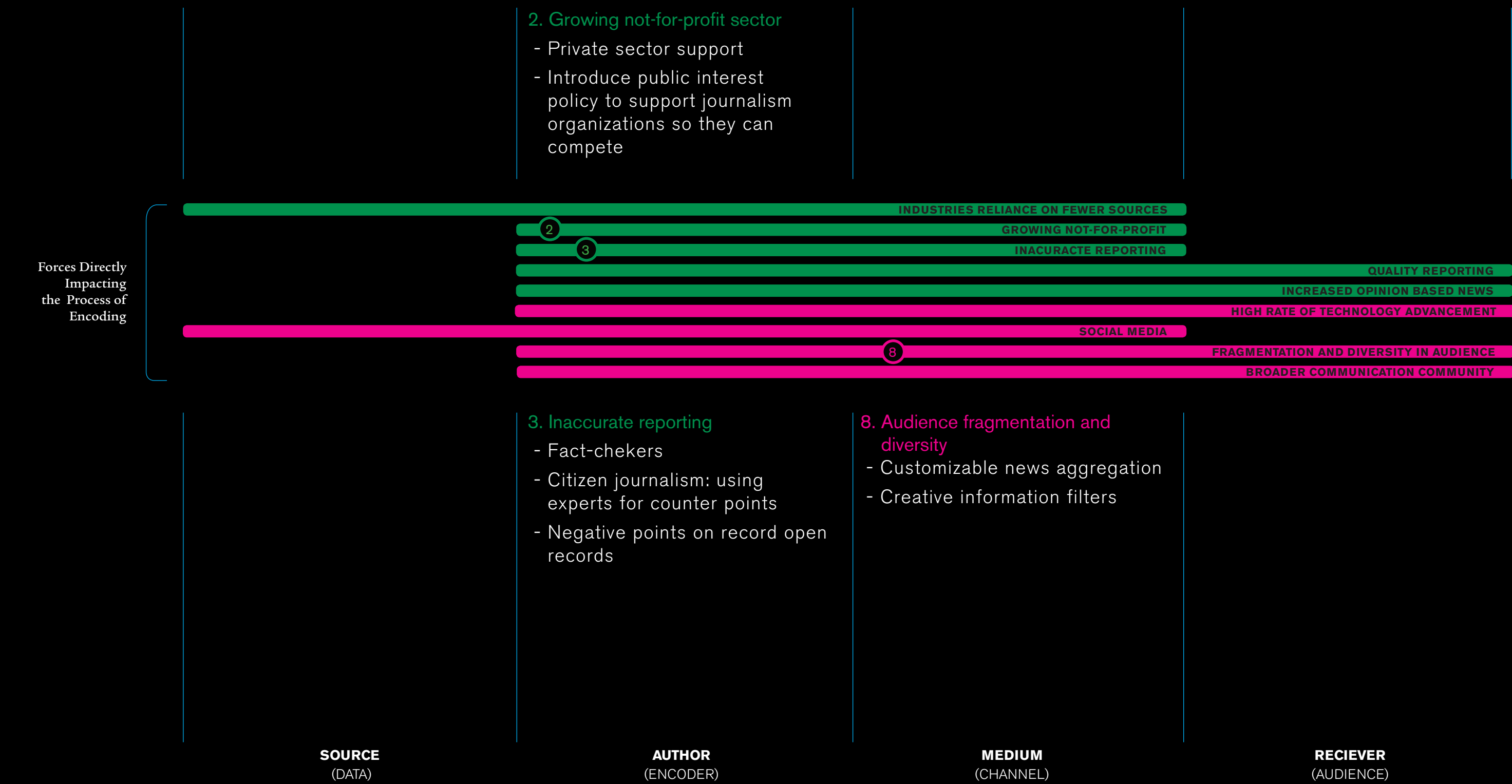
Decoding The Process: What are some opportunities considering *What They Say*?



**Decoding Data:** What opportunities are available to positively increase access to relevant information sources?



**Decoding Authorship:** What opportunities are available to positively impact the authorship of raw data? And increase the clarity of the message?



Archiving: Compare and contrast– Knowing the Landscape.

SUPPORT

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

PRIVATE SECTOR SUPPORT

NOT-FOR-PROFITS

UNIVERSITY SUPPORT

CONTENT

CROWD SOURCING

ALTERNATIVE DATA SOURCE

SIMPLIFY COMMUNICATIONS

CITIZEN JOURNALISM

SAFE GUARDS

COUNTER BALANCE TONE

POLICING TRUTHINESS

STRUCTURAL

CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

ALTERNATIVE ORGANIZATIONAL  
STRUCTURE

ALTERNATIVE MEDIA CHANNELS

Abbreviated news stories. Reduce  
content into smaller bits of information.  
Meant for use on mobile Devices:

Summly

Uses algorithm

Wavii

Uses algorithm

Circa

Produced by editorial staff

Twitter (Headline aggregates)

Produced by editorial staff

Using informational graphics and  
enhanced user experience:

Good.is

Public interest infographics

Visual.ly

Infographics archive

News articles with interactive or  
integrated user experience

USing HTML 5

Parallax Scrolling

Pros- Good at summarization long articles.  
Allows for access to greater amount of  
content shorter times.

Cons- Algorithm based apps don't do a good  
job with all formats. Twitter headlines only  
give you very short bits of info; you must go  
on to longer article to get full story

Pros- Offers alternative perspective; offers  
information in a digestible fashion; often  
easy to read and engaging.

Cons- Time consuming to develop; can over  
simplify.



**Archiving Existing Tools & Strategies:** What are some of the tools being used today to enhance the flow of information to the public?

SUPPORT

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

PRIVATE SECTOR SUPPORT

NOT-FOR-PROFITS

UNIVERSITY SUPPORT

CONTENT

CROWD SOURCING

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STRUCTURE

ALTERNATIVE MEDIA CHANNELS

Federal Support:

- Evolve tax codes
- Stronger transparency policy
- Revise old laws
- Revise Public Broadcast funding and focus
- Competitive universal broadband standards

Local Support:

- Community information infrastructure
- Introduce stronger media literacy in schools
- Greater transparency
- Introduce and advertise local online presence

*Pros- Revised legislation will remove some burden of ad revenue from news organizations. Create a larger body of available content.*

*Cons- Transforming government policy is time consuming and near in possible*

**Archiving:** Discovering Best Practices– What can we find out once we analyze current tools and practices?

SUPPORT

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ALTERNATIVE ORGANIZATIONAL  
STRUCTURE

ALTERNATIVE MEDIA CHANNELS

Political fact checking sites and blogs supported by reputable institutions:

**factchek.org**  
*University of Pennsylvania*

**politifact.com**  
*St. Petersburg Times*

**The Fact Checker**  
*Washington Post*

*Pros- Keeps an eye on rhetoric and spin in politics and in news, and polices each other.*

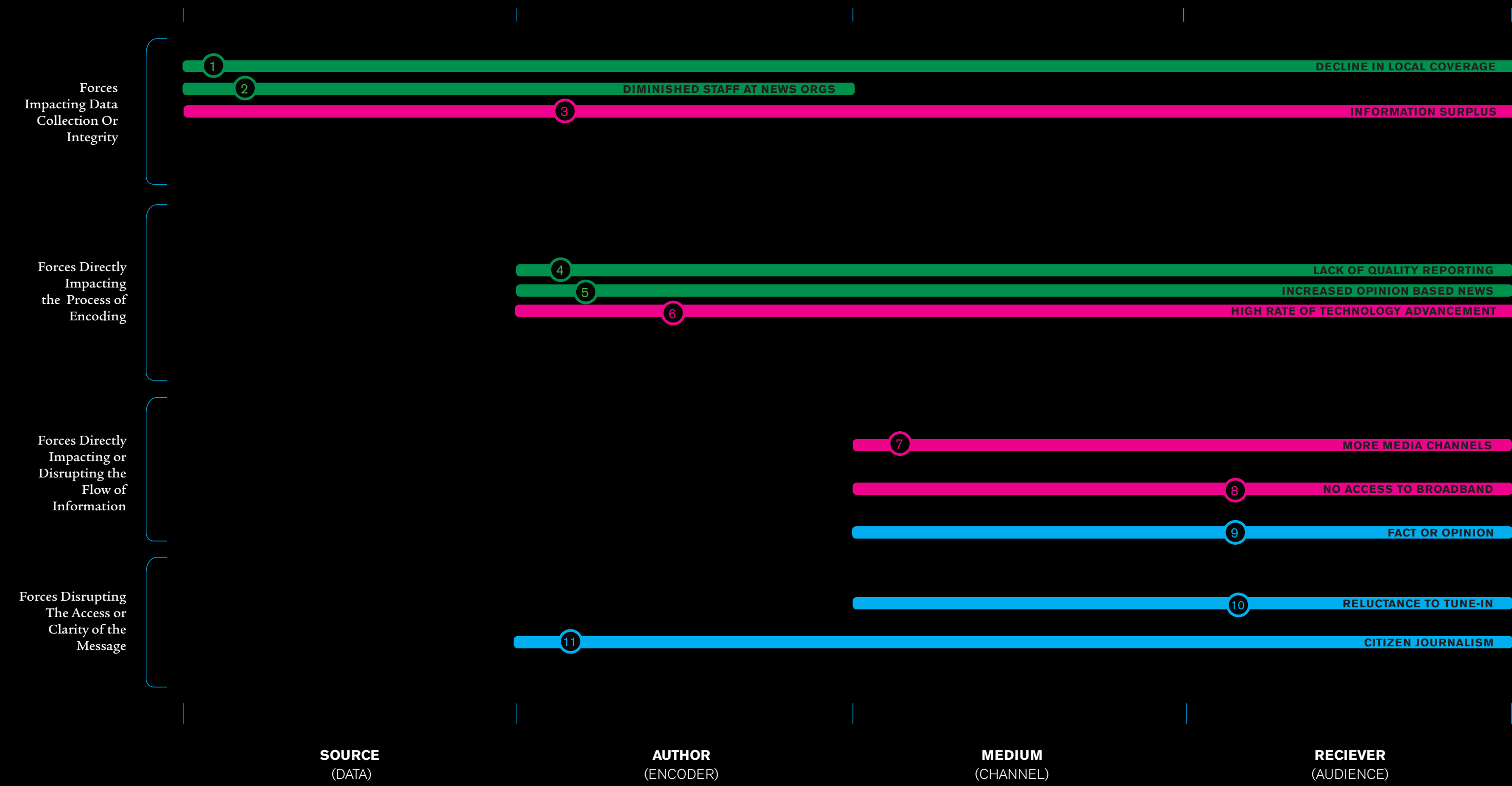
*Cons- Often partisan point of view.*

*Design and planning to strengthen and support the*  
**DISTRIBUTION**  
*of quality information to the public.*

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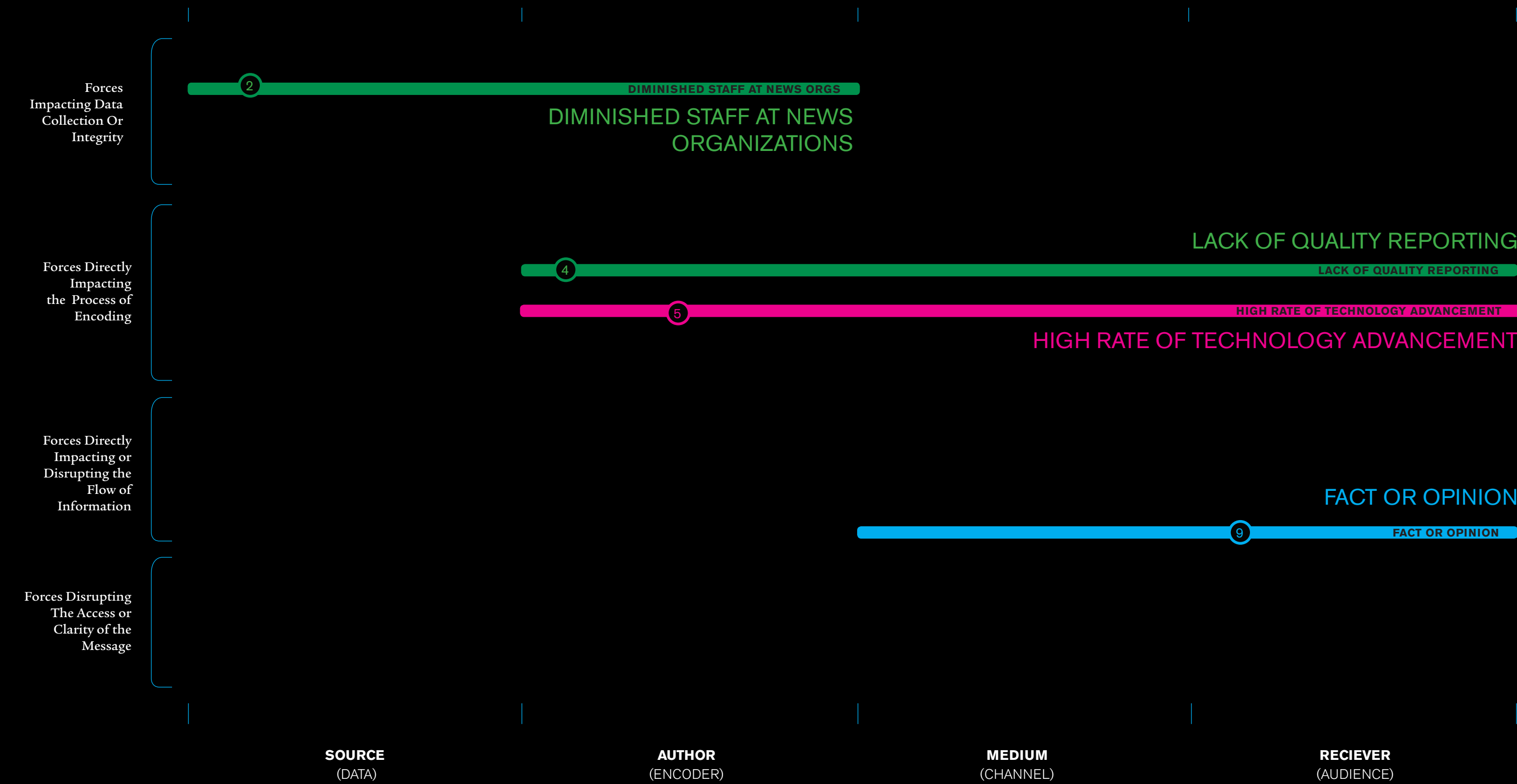


**Creating Opportunities:** By cross referencing the following set what new product and/or strategic opportunities can be created?





**Opportunity One:** A need for quality funded investigative reporting supported through channels that support technological advancement and experimentation.



## WRITE FOR AMERICA FELLOWSHIP

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2 4 5 9

The *Write For America Fellowship* brings together a diverse group of graduates from a variety backgrounds to do field based investigative journalism projects.

### Who would fit the program

#### Post Baccalaureate & Graduate Students

- Recent Undergraduate who studied journalism, writing, communications or english
- Graduate students interested in specific research projects would submit a proposal

### How the Fellowship works

#### Format and Structure

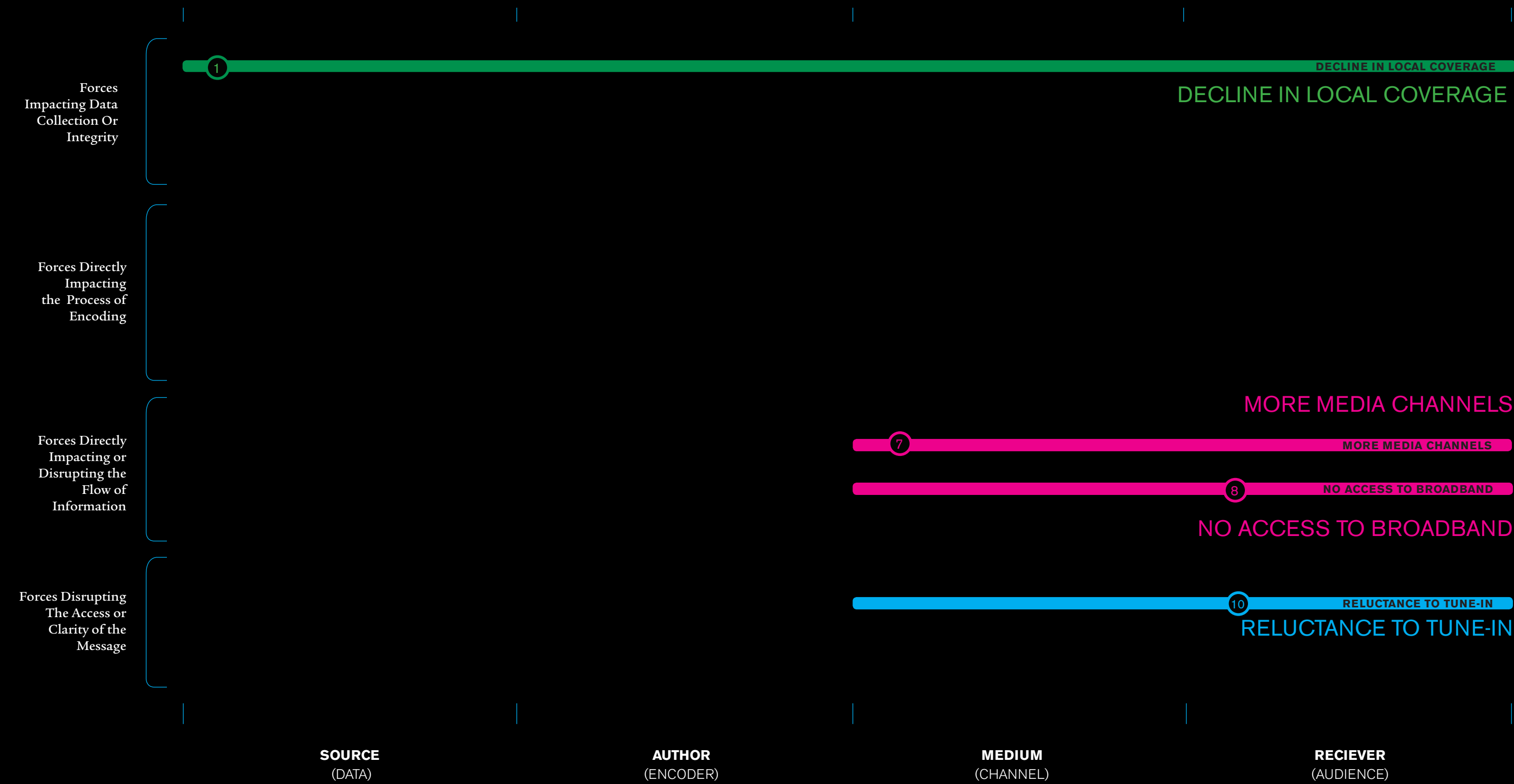
- Four Week Journalism Boot camp
- 6-18 month fellowship
- Connected with Public Broadcasting Program
- Local schools
- Fellows would receive a stipend

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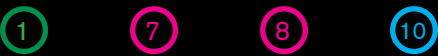
### The goal of the fellowship:

- Strengthen integrity of the practice of journalism
- Support local level information needs
- Support long-form research oriented journalism

**Opportunity Two:** A need for more local coverage in communities with low access to broadband and low interest to tune-in.



# THE IRON CORE



School based journalism program who’s core is the local community. The core connects, informs, generates news and distributes it as short form, wild posting through out disenfranchised communities.

## IRON CORE AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM

### After school Program Details

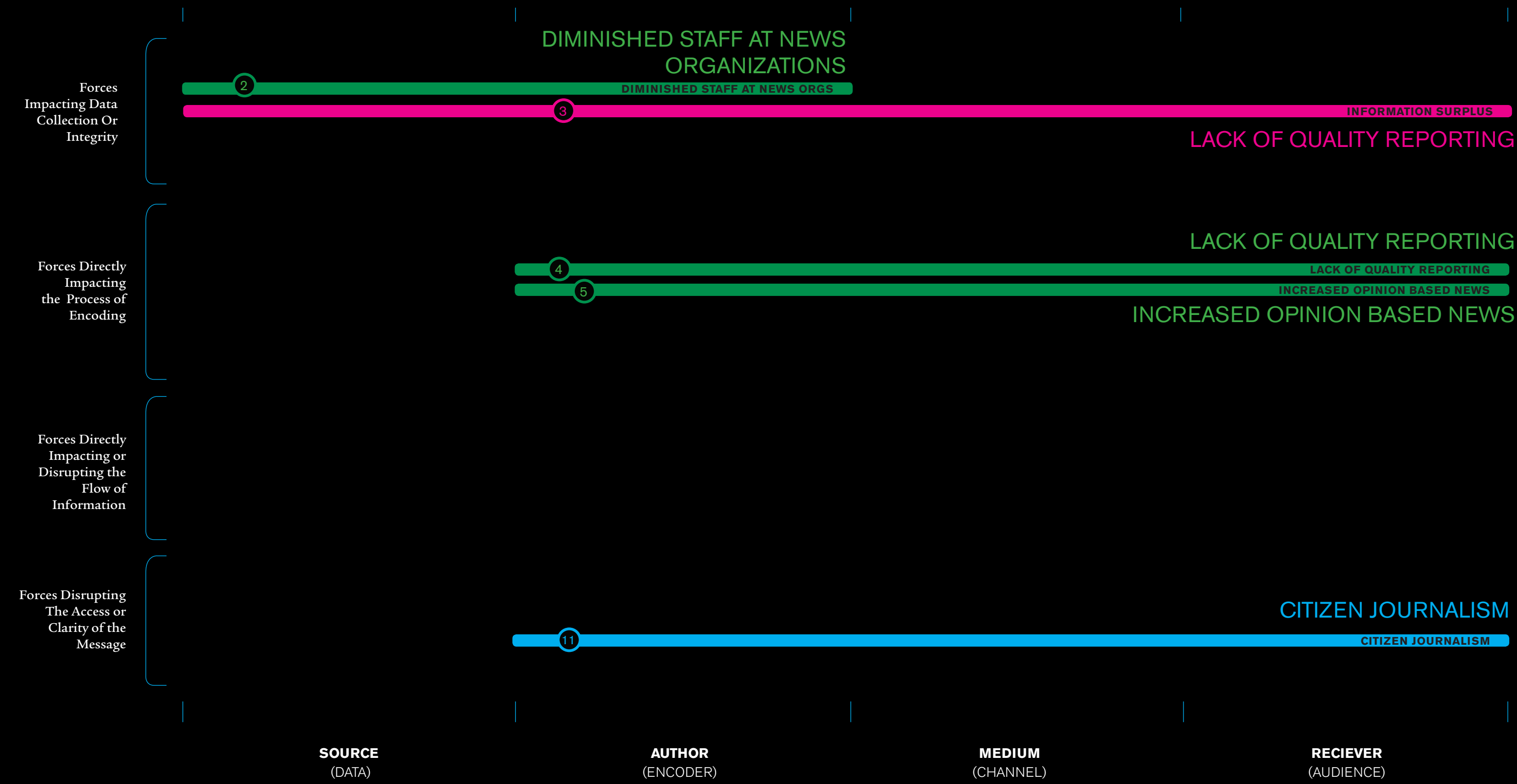
- This program focuses on reaching underserved and technological disenfranchised communities
- A community based program where students research and translate important news stories into short pointed (Twitter Length Snippets)
- The research, translation and design of content would be done by school kids as a part of a program promoting:
  - Community evolvement
  - Information circulation
  - Research and critical thinking
  - Writing
- Through a democratically driven process students would decide on which article should be posted and where.
- The resulting materials would be printed and posted as Wild Posting in local neighborhood in various formats at distinct high impact locations.
- Each poster will have a short 150 to 200 character headline for quick read and refer to a basic HTML driven web portal that can easily translate on the various mobile devices.

### The goal of the fellowship:

- Increase local community awareness of current events
- Develop students skills with media analysis, writing and comprehension
- Students develop mentoring relationships with professionals (or Writing Fellows)

*Alex S. Jones, director of the Shorenstein Center— argues that there is an “iron core”... that core is “what is some-times called ‘accountability news,’ because it is the form of news whose purpose is to hold government and those with power accountable.”*

**Opportunity Three:** A need for the funding of quality investigative reporting that can make use of the abundance of information and an engaged citizenry.





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# ENGAGE.US

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2 3 4 5 11

Engage.us is a non-for-profit news organization. They will engage their constituents through an online and mobile news app. Once a week it distributes up dates of current news stories. As advocates of social change, *Engage* goes a few steps further than simply distributing the news to its audience, it asks that the audience to engage in topics that inform their local and national interests. **There would be two basic user feedback loops:**

## ENGAGE

**Directing users to an action or event where they can directly effect their environment**

- As a non-for-profit Engage would act as advocate, lobbyist, and activist for the support for journalism in the interest of democracy.
- By publishing once a week Engage focus on specific topics and do in-depth reporting on topics involving public knowledge and voice

## OPINION

**Simple user based opinion polls “Yes, No or Maybe”**

- Engage acts as advocate for bipartisan public interests
- The simple “yes, no or maybe” tallies would be used for polling certain ideas and topics
- Audience participation will keep registered users engaged and foster a greater since of democratic evolvment

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## Engage.us goals:

- Advocate for policy change and better practices
- Develop an informed support base
- Create data for public knowledge

# THE [D]ESIGN IDEA LAB

Ultimately the hope is that the tools discussed in the this and the previous section will offer new ways of visualizing, approaching and designing strategy and products for distributing information to the our community.

*Other design ideas using this system:*

## WIKICLEAR

**My concept is to create an online news paper that compares, contrast and deconstructs the points and facets of complex issues through the open souring of content.**

- 1
- 2
- 4
- 7
- 8

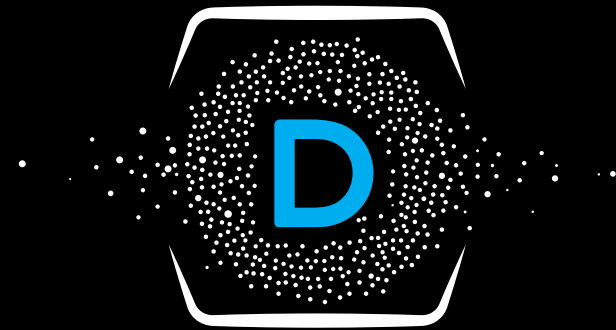
- Its purpose is to outline the facts about current issues and events by reducing the elements of the event and conversations to tables and information graphics (for direct comparison and parsing of information) to create clarity on broad complex issues.
- The content would be sourced through crowdsourcing (i.e Wikipedia)
- Registered users would input information into a series of online forms that would direct the information
- There would also be a team to maintain and oversee the flow of content

## COUNTERPOINT

**Through the use of *smart disclosure* user would generate a customizable news aggregate. The articles will automatically pull counter points to the article.**

- 2
- 4
- 5
- 8

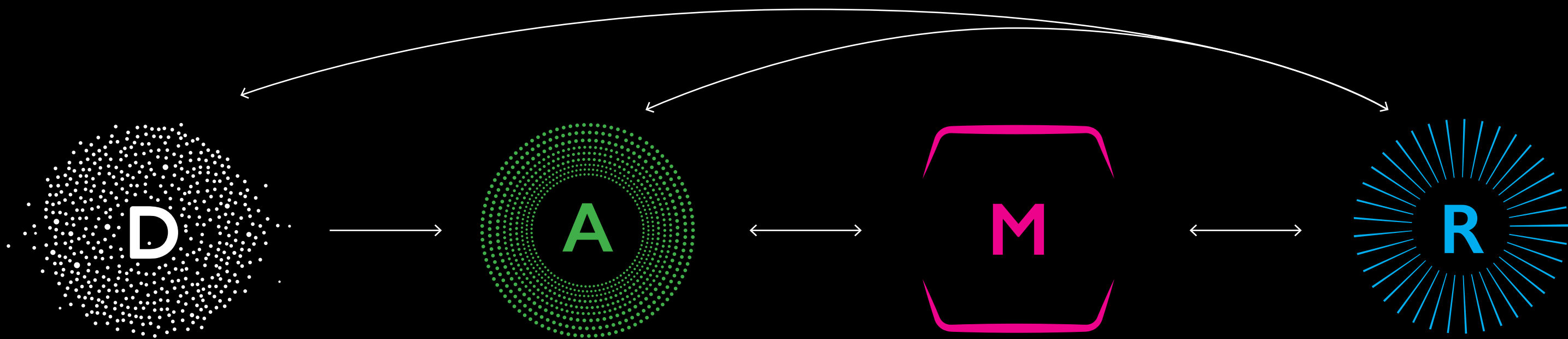
- National and pocal political coverage
- Introduce users to alternative voices and opinions to round out conversation.



**[D] is the coalescence of several weeks of research into the challenges and opportunities in transforming or positively impacting the current state of American News Media.**

I imagine [D] finding a place in a university or a similar institution with the means to pull all the parts discussed together into a whole:

- 
- **Advocacy** for a better flow of information to support the knowledge base need to sustain a democracy community.
  - **Researching** to stay versed in the state of journalism at any giving time.
  - **Digital Archiving** of tools, strategies and literature to underpin the research of present, past and future trends.
  - **Design** strategy and product development for public and market use.



Source readings:

Informing Communities: Sustaining  
Democracy in the Digital Age  
2009 Knight Commission Report

The Information Needs Of Communities  
2011 Federal Communications Commission

The Reconstruction of American Journalism  
Leonard Downie & Michael Schudson

Reluctant Stewards:  
Journalism in a Democratic Society  
Michael Schudson

BIASED NEWS OR BIASED PUBLIC?  
An examination of audiences’ perceived news  
bias in an authoritarian press system  
Stella C. Chia and Mark Cenite

Truth or Consequences:  
Where is Watchdog Journalism Today?  
Nieman Reports / By Dan Froomkin

The Voice of God is Dead  
American Journalism Review / By Jenna Heath

Mass Communication Theory  
Denis McQuail’s

Communication Models for the Study of Mass  
Denis McQuail’s & Sven Windahl

Hard Pressed  
Thomas E. Patterson interview

Alex Jones On ‘Losing The News,’  
And Why It Matters :  
npr.org interview

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Larry Sanger  
Creator of Infobot; Wiki Founder; Professor at Ohio  
State

Nicholas Mirzoeff  
Professor NYU

Stephen Duncombe  
Professor NYU

RESEARCH AND DESIGN OF [D]:  
Decoding the Distribution of Data for  
Democracy

Kareem Dimitrious Collie / 12.16.2013