Public Interest Infrastructure Assessment Framework

Overview
This framework empowers community media organizations to evaluate whether their technology choices align with public interest values, drawing from successful models like JamiiAfrica's privacy-first forums and CGNet Swara's offline-capable voice platform.

Context Mapping (Week 1)
Interview 5-10 diverse partners spanning urban digital newsrooms to rural audio platforms. Document their current tool ecosystems, pain points in technology decisions, and gaps between stated values and actual practice.

Framework Architecture (Weeks 2-3)
Design an assessment matrix:

1. Privacy & Security measuring surveillance resistance, data control and anonymity capabilities.

2. Community Ownership assessing local language support, governance participation and content control.

3. Sustainability evaluating platform independence, cost structures, resilience to deplatforming.

Each category maps to specific tool-needs with weighted scoring based on organizational priorities. JamiiAfrica would weight privacy highest given their whistleblower focus, while CGNet prioritizes community ownership for tribal language preservation.

Trade-off Modelling (Week 3)
Develop scenario modelling that visualizes tensions between reach and privacy, efficiency and control. The framework helps organizations understand that WhatsApp's 90% reach comes with 15% public interest alignment—making explicit the hidden costs of "free" platforms through data extraction.

This data approach positions IMS as an innovator. The framework guides organizations toward strategic tool combinations, using Signal for sensitive sources, forums for community building, broadcast channels for public content.

Interactive Prototype (Weeks 4-5)
Build a Streamlit app allowing organizations to (and support them in the process):

- Input their operational context (connectivity, literacy, regulatory pressure)

- Adjust value weights based on mission priorities

- Receive scored recommendations with implementation roadmaps

- Export assessment reports for donor communication

This easy-to-use app would show real-time visualizations of current versus target states and gap analyses with priority rankings.

Validation Testing (Week 6)
Deploy with three pilot partners representing different contexts:

- High-regulation environment (like JamiiAfrica in Tanzania)
- Low-connectivity setting (like CGNet in Indian forests)
- Hybrid urban-rural operation

Success metrics would be something like up to 80% of partners find recommendations actionable, with 50% making concrete tool changes and assessment time for partners reduced from days or even weeks to hours**.**

Key Challenges & Mitigation
Context Diversity
Tool assessments for urban Tanzania won't work for rural India. Pre-made regional templates ("East Africa Urban", "South Asia Rural") that users can customize.

Evolving Tools
Assess tool categories, not brands, so "encrypted messengers" not "Signal."

Technical Capacity
Users are journalists and activists and are often not data people. Use plain language and explainers. Show what JamiiAfrica cares about that "keeps sources anonymous" instead of "implements Tor protocol."

IMS Requirements

- 80-120 hours staff time across six weeks.
- Access to partner organizations for testing.
- Regional context briefs and regulatory summaries.
- Existing tool evaluation documentation.

Deliverables
App assessment tool with algorithmic scoring, implementation guide with localized examples, donor communication templates demonstrating value alignment, and recommendations for framework expansion.

This prototype transforms public interest principles into concrete technology decisions, helping community media navigate the complex trade-offs between reaching audiences and protecting communities, between efficiency and values, between convenience and control.