Access Humboldt // Future of Community Information
Workshop Agenda (draft 3)

SUPPORT STAFF: Sean McLaughlin, Heather Equinoss, 2 workshop "runners," tech

MATERIALS: Laptops, handouts (ecosystem, scavenger hunt), large printouts of templates, whiteboard, food, cords and power strip

TIME REQUIRED: 2.5 hours

PART 1: Forming the Community [30:00]

Introductions Go-Around   [5:00]

Access Humboldt / Knight Intro speech   [5:00]
Sean

> ACCESS HUMBOLDT INTRO GOES HERE
>
> This transitions into a brief overview of Knight's project and why we're doing it that goes something like this:
>
> *Four years ago, the Knight Foundation launched a high-level inquiry — the Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy — to look at these questions. The Commission concluded that leaders and the general public needed more concrete ways of assessing the flow of their local news and information to understand how these connections improve their community and to inform local action to improve it.*
>
> *Based on the Commission's findings, Knight developed the "Community Information Toolkit," a process designed to help you determine whether your media ecology is healthy and to understand why that matters to your work. Access Humboldt is honored to have been selected by the Knight Foundation to carry out this Toolkit in Humboldt County. This is the first time Knight has ever sponsored a project in our region, and we're very excited to have all of you here to be a part of it.*
>
> *This effort is part of Access Humboldt's ongoing efforts to develop "local voices through community media." So, we hope that this process will help community leaders like you to harness the power of information to advance your goals for a better community.*
>
> *And now I'd like to introduce Heather Equinoss of the Humboldt Area Foundation, who will be facilitating many of the activities on our agenda.*

Facilitator Intro Speech   [5:00]

Heather

Access Humboldt has invited me here today to help guide the group through the Information Toolkit process. We're going to build our understanding of the importance of information for communities, consider how we can strengthen our community through information exchange, plan projects that will strengthen our efforts through the strategic use of information, and see who wants to be involved moving forward. That's the way the agenda flows and I'll explain each section in more depth as we move along. But first let's get a sense of who's in the room and start the process of building our community. We'll begin with two short exercises that will quickly connect our group with both the topic and each other.

Pair and Share   [10:00]
Heather

Ask participants to stand and partner with someone they don't know very well. Pose a question, and give groups 2 minutes to discuss. Switch partners and questions 5 times. Sample questions include:

- Why are YOU here today?
- Where do you get most of your information these days?
- Why does free flow of information matter to a community?
- How would better information improve how your organization functions?
- What are your hopes for today? What is success from your perspective?

Pair and Share report-back

Go through some of the questions from "Pair and Share." What did people hear from their partners?

What is this meeting about?   [5:00]
Sean

SEAN provides REAL-WORLD EXAMPLES FROM HUMBOLDT. KEEP IT SHORT.

Healthy information ecosystem is a hallmark of a transparent and accountable government, a central feature of an effective nonprofit sector, and an essential component of a successful, ethical private sector.

Without information, our community faces problems in the dark - people need "*to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.* " *Whatever the challenge or opportunity that our community faces, there's undoubtedly a role for higher quality and better information exchange.*

Free flowing news and information from diverse, local and competitive sources is essential to the healthy functioning of communities. It is like an intellectual ecosystem for democracy, sustaining discourse and nourishing civic engagement.

But what does this mean, in practical terms? Think about how our efforts to reform education systems suffer when parents make choices about where to send their children without quality information about school performance; how governance and public accountability deteriorate when there is limited transparency and local reporting; how our public health suffers when people lack the digital skills to find online medical information. The information explosion has brought us a world in which great details of faraway disasters are available at the touch of a button, yet an understanding of local school board issues evades us. Many of our community challenges are exacerbated when information on the issues we care about doesn't exist, or if people can't easily access, engage and share that information.

Pass out the "Information Ecosystem" graphic.

ELEMENTS OF A COMMUNITY INFORMATION ECOSYSTEM
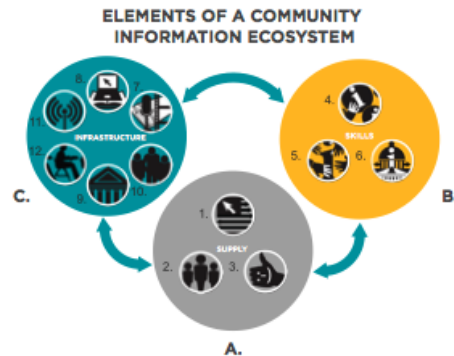
It might help to visualize the community information ecosystem as a vast web of interrelated elements. It is helpful to divide these elements into three broad categories:

1. *SUPPLY*
   - *The news and information in a community wanted and needed by the citizens and the institutions that serve them.*
   - *This includes government information, community news, and quality of life information on topics such as health, education, social services, and culture.*
2. *SKILLS*
   - *Digital and media literacy – an individual or institution's ability to find and exchange information.*
3. *INFRASTRUCTURE*
   - *The quality of local journalism and reporting.*
   - *The availability of broadband Internet and digital literacy training.*
   - *The vibrancy of community anchor institutions, such as schools, libraries, and non-profits.*

PART 2: Identifying Challenges and Articulating a Vision [30:00]

Intro   [5:00]   *Sean transitions
to Heather*

How can we improve our information ecosystem? Well, before we know what to do – or even what can be done – we need a compelling vision for our community, one linked to our known challenges and opportunities. To define our vision, we're going to use a tool called the "Getting Started" template.

Begin by defining the community your group wants to discuss. We're all here representing Humboldt County, but you may wish to select a smaller group based on geography, demographics, or interest in a particular issue.

Next, think about the opportunities and challenges facing your community. Simply naming the challenges we face is an important part of this process – so don't worry about solving the problems or sorting them!

Then consider how community issues relate to our discussion of the "media ecosystem." For example:

- *What is the level of local news coverage on the issues you care about? Is it shrinking or expanding?*
- *How abundant and readily available is information about employment services, public transit, emergency services, and healthcare?*
- *Are the people you work with able to access online resources?*
- *Is there broadband in your neighborhood? If adults or youth in your community do not have Internet at home, are they able to access online information at other locations?*

Getting Started (small groups)   [20:00]

Divide participants into groups of 3-4. Each group should have an <u>oversized printout of the getting started template</u>. Encourage groups to designate a note taker who fills out the template, and a reporter who will share their findings at the end of the activity. Remind groups to involve everyone, listen and ask questions, and respect diverse perspectives – this is brainstorming, not a debate. Allow time for groups to work on the "Getting Started" template.

Report back and discussion   [10:00]

Sean/Heather

Small groups post their templates on the wall and summarize their findings for the larger group. Discuss areas of alignment and difference.

[[SHORT BREAK – set up laptops for Scavenger Hunt]]

PART 3: Information Scavenger Hunt [60:00]

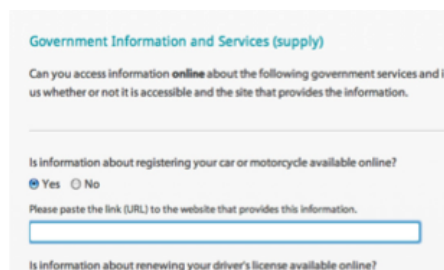Intro   [5:00]
Sean/Heather

Welcome back. You've no doubt noticed the laptops, which mean our next activity is going to be a little technical – don't panic! If your group encounters any technical problems (say you're PC people and we've given you a Mac!) just let someone from Access Humboldt help you out.

Instruct participants to form small groups (3-4 people), each group with one laptop. Discourage groups from the "Getting Started" activity from reforming. Pass out paper copies of the Information Scavenger Hunt.

This activity, the "Information Scavenger Hunt," is a quick and fun way for us to do some basic research about our experience with information access in Humboldt County. In some sense, it doesn't matter how good the sources of information are, or how strong the infrastructure is, if people cannot navigate the system! And by putting ourselves in the role of information consumers, we can better understand how well our own organizations are serving the public.

Take a look at some of the questions on the scavenger hunt sheet. Your group is welcome to use any resources, from the internet to a phone call to your own memory, but wherever possible try to answer with a website URL – that's the "www.example.com/blahblah/etc." If a question is proving too hard, just skip it. After all, if it takes more than a few minutes to find the information you're seeking, it isn't very accessible. I'm going to put thirty minutes on the clock, and then we'll share some of our observations.

Information Scavenger Hunt (small groups)   [30:00 minutes]

Groups of 3-4 complete the Information Scavenger Hunt. Encourage groups

to designate a reporter to fill out the sheet, and to take turns using the computer. Access Humboldt "runners" provide technical assistance. Announce the time at 10:00 and 5:00 minutes remaining.

Report back and discussion   [20:00]
Heather/Sean

Facilitate an open conversation for groups to share their experiences filling out the Information Scavenger Hunt. This conversation is a central focus of the workshop. Possible conversation starters:
- *Are the findings better or worse than you expected?*
- *What surprises you?*
- *Where are the obvious areas requiring attention?*

Sean mentions that data from the scavenger hunt will be added to ongoing research, and that the results will be sent to workshop participants.

[[LONGER BREAK]]

PART 4: Developing a Plan [35 minutes]

Pair and Share   [3:00]

What are the most successful community initiatives you have participated in? What made them successful?

Intro   [5:00]
Heather

Write down features of successful community initiatives suggested by the pairs.

Now we'll work with a tool similar to the "Getting Started" template we used earlier. This tool, the "Moving Forward" template, will help us identify ideas that will improve or enhance the information ecosystem in our community and that are tied to community improvement goals.

Begin by defining your vision – what changes would you like to see happen based on our discussion today? What are the challenges and barriers to realizing that vision? I'm sure "lack of funding" will be at the top of the list, but it's never the only barrier. Try to dig deeper into some of our other underlying challenges.

What is the role of information in achieving your goals? For each barrier you identified, think of one way in which information can be part of the solution. Then move on to your action plan. What needs to take place, who needs to be at the table, and what resources will be required?

Moving Forward (full group)   [20:00]

Heather

Remind groups that this is high level planning, and try not to get too deep into the details. Facilitate a large group discussion as the "Moving Forward" template is filled out.

Help the group to narrow down their list of suggestions. Which initiatives could be joined under a single banner? What areas of focus have emerged? If there are too many options still on the table, use a straw poll to help participants select those of the most immediate concern.

Straw Poll / Discussion [10:00]
Heather

Show a chart, slide, or handout of the five levels of commitment:

- Five   Yes, and I'll take a leadership role
- Four   Yes, and I'll support the leaders
- Three Yes, and I'll be a solid team player
- Two   Perhaps, if something solid gets rolling
- One   Not likely
- Zero   No

Distribute paper ballots.

We want to anonymously gauge your level of ongoing interest. Don't need to sign your name and don't feel badly if you don't have the time or energy to stay involved. You've already made a huge contribution by being here today We just want to see who honestly wants to continue with these initiatives moving forward.

While the ballots are being tabulated, lead a group discussion around these questions:

- What common themes did you hear today? What differences?
- What are your hopes for community information?
- What are the post important things you learned today?

Share the straw poll results.

Wrap Up   [5:00]   *Sean*

Share thoughts about how the project might unfold in the future.

Sunshine Week & Freedom of Information Day - enlist support for these efforts.

State Access Humboldt's ongoing commitment to advance the Knight Commission goals and invite collaboration.

Access Humboldt will engage participants who would like to stay involved in future and to share their contact info with one another.

Thank everyone.

Thank you and g'night!