The News Creators Project

A research study focused on deepening understanding of news creators

June 2025

❯ Exec Summary

Project Overview

The News Creator Project is an industry research initiative - led by FT Strategies and WAN-IFRA and supported by the Google News Initiative - designed to explore the News Creator ecosystem (individuals and organizations covering news primarily on social or video platforms), their financial sustainability and their ability to produce reliable, accurate information that benefits audiences.

The project sought to answer three core questions:
- How can we deeply understand and segment News Creators in a way that is valuable to them and the wider news ecosystem?
- What guidelines and best practices can help News Creators produce accurate and trustworthy content?
- How financially sustainable are News Creators today, and what factors drive performance?

This initiative draws on:
- In-depth interviews with 15+ creators and 25+ Advisory Board experts, including creators from YouTube, TikTok, Substack and Instagram.
- A synthesis of academic research, platform standards and real-world creator practices.
- Existing frameworks and journalism principles, adapted for the creator context.

This work led to the creation of three resources:
1. A segmentation taxonomy to help funders, platforms and peers better understand and navigate the News Creator space
2. A set of co-created information guidelines designed to help creators produce accurate, reliable and valuable information
3. A Diagnostic where creators can assess their financial sustainability and receive recommendations on where they need to improve and how

We hope this initiative contributes to a more inclusive and forward-looking conversation - one that recognizes News Creators as a vital part of the information ecosystem, and can provide guidance on how they can grow and succeed.

Exec Summary: News Creator Segmentation

Background
- News Creators are often referred to as a homogenous group, but in reality they vary enormously in approach, background and style.

What we did
- We analyzed the News Creator ecosystem across formats, sourcing methods, topics and geographies to understand the different clusters within the industry.
- We validated those initial clusters through meetings with Advisory Board members, News Creators and plotting known examples.

What we have produced
- We have developed a typology with three primary roles:
  - Investigators - uncover new information through original reporting
  - Explainers - simplify complex news and make it engaging / comprehensible
  - Commentators - offer opinions and perspectives on the news

How it can be used
- Helps funders, platforms, and partners understand the role a creator plays in the news information ecosystem.
- Enables creators to connect with peers, unlock opportunities, and better position themselves within a diverse ecosystem.

Our News Creator Segmentation
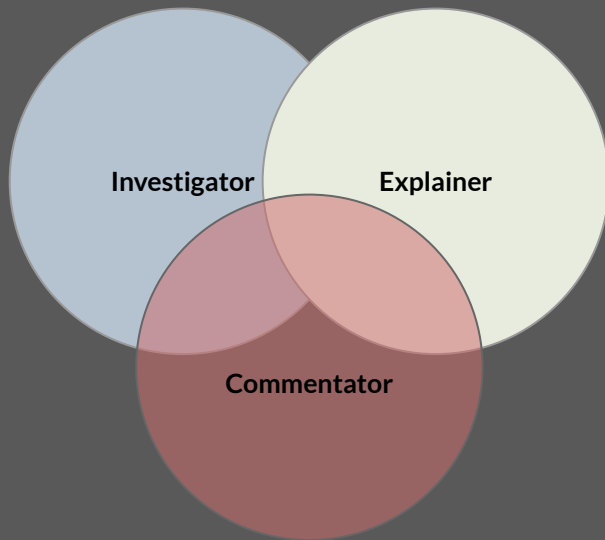
Exec Summary: Information Guidelines

Background
- News Creators play a growing role in today's information ecosystem, but operate without shared codes of conduct and face fragmented platform guidelines.
- To support credibility and trust, there's a need for information guidelines tailored to how creators work.

What we did
- We interviewed 15+ News Creators and 24 Advisory Board Members to get their point of view on appropriate information guidelines for News Creators.
- We complemented this with a literature review of existing trust resources, platform standards and journalistic principles.

What we have produced
- We combined these elements to create a set of Information Credibility Guidelines (on the right hand side). To make these as practical as possible, we have also created a checklist with best practice examples from Creators.

How it can be used
- News Creators can use these Guidelines as a resource to improve standards and signal to platforms / potential partners their responsible approach.
- Platforms could - in future - use it to inform algorithms and content promotion.

Our Information Credibility Guidelines

Accuracy
Sharing correct, properly sourced information and clearly correcting mistakes

Integrity
Acting honestly, fairly and ethically when gathering and presenting information

Transparency
Being open about who you are, how you work and any potential conflicts of interest

Exec Summary: Financial Sustainability

Background
- To date, it has been difficult to assess the financial sustainability of the News Creator segment because of a lack of data (especially for smaller creators).
- News Creators need access to tools and information to help them build resilient businesses that can survive and thrive long-term.

What we did
- We interviewed News Creators and asked them to volunteer information on their financial position. We also asked them to share the key milestones on their path to financial sustainability.

What we have produced
- We developed a 30+ question Financial Sustainability Diagnostic for News Creators, built around four key dimensions: financial resilience, audience engagement, monetization, and operational foundations.
- The Diagnostic is adapted to what's important for creators - such as revenue predictability, cost management and managing burnout.

How it can be used
- The Diagnostic provides News Creators will a tool that helps them take a more strategic and structured approach to growth and financial sustainability. It also signals credibility to funders and partners — enabling targeted support aligned to their specific goals and challenges.

Our Financial Sustainability Framework

🏛 **Financial Resilience**

💰 **Monetization**

👁 **Product & Audience**

⚙ **Foundations**

Financial Sustainability
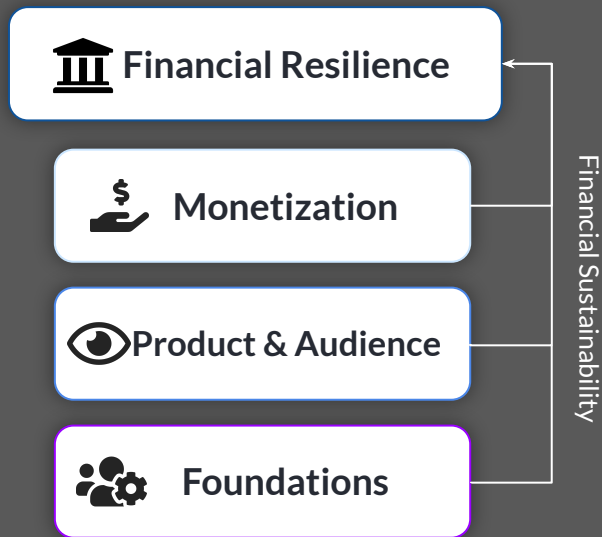
Exec Summary: Challenges & Opportunities

Background
- Our research has shown how News Creators navigate a shifting information landscape, build trust through their own standards and grapple with financial pressures.

What we did
- We synthesized findings across News Creator interviews, Advisory Board meetings and interviews, and prior research to identify 11 core themes.

What we have produced
- A synthesis of 11 themes that reflect the varied realities of creators — from recognition and platform dynamics to personal standards and working conditions.
- A clearer understanding of the News Creator ecosystem that surfaces both shared challenges and context-specific needs, laying the groundwork for more tailored support.

How it can be used
- These themes can be used to build a clearer understanding of the News Creator ecosystem and specifically their challenges & opportunities.
- We hope this information can help platforms, funders and partners empathize with this community and enable stronger collaboration.

Key Themes

Shift in online behavior

Complex relations with traditional media

Lack formal recognition

Some markets raise more challenges

Adopt self-determined standards

Often reject traditional notion of objectivity

Guidelines must fit creator context

AI can offer support and bring challenges

Maintaining financial sustainability is hard

Platform dynamics present challenges

Burnout is a major issue

Exec Summary: Our Recommendations

Background
- News Creators play a growing role in the information ecosystem, but lack the support systems they need to thrive.

What we did
- We synthesized insights from interviews, Advisory Board input, and field research to identify key areas where targeted interventions could improve outcomes for News Creators and strengthen the wider ecosystem.

What we have produced
- A set of six actionable recommendations that address key structural gaps for News Creators — including the need for creator-specific training, tools, funding models and support mechanisms, especially for those in underrepresented or high-risk environments.

How it can be used
- These recommendations provide a roadmap for funders, platforms, news organizations and support groups to co-create tailored initiatives in support of News Creators.

Recommendations

Offer ethics, verification, fact-checking and responsible sharing training

Build recognition schemes that reward impactful, credible creator journalism

Encourage platforms to prioritize responsible and original reporting through algorithms

Develop structured support programmes that guide creators toward financial sustainability

Create funding pathways that treat creators as small, independent news businesses

Localize support for creators working in restricted, low-income, or high-risk markets

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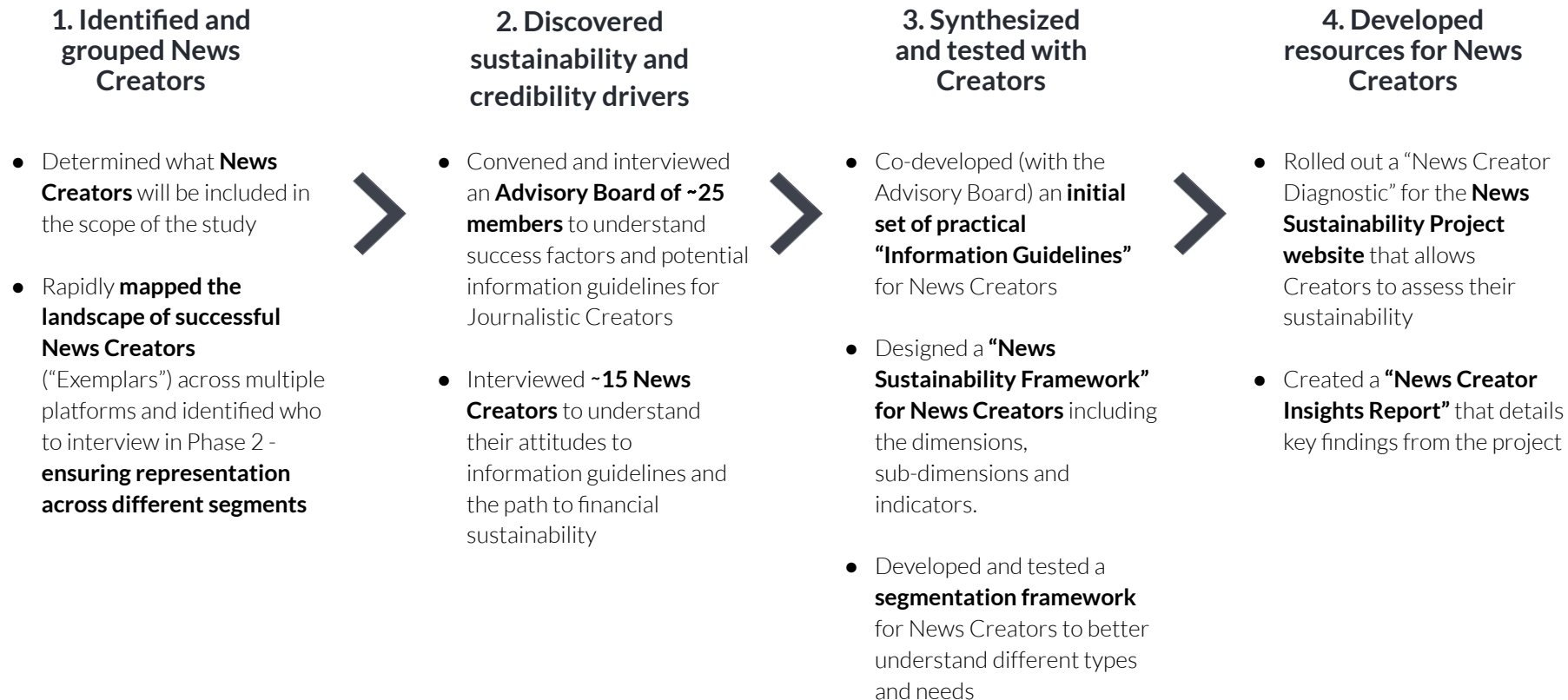
6. **Our Recommendations**

❭ Project Objective and Approach

The News Creator Project is designed to answer three core questions

1 **What are the different groups of News Creators in the market?**

What are different roles played by news creators? What distinguishes different groups from one another?

2 **What are a suitable set of information guidelines for News Creators?**

What are a common set of guidelines that News Creators could follow to ensure that their audiences are provided with accurate, helpful and transparent information?

3 **How financially sustainable are News Creators? What drives sustainability?**

What drives strong financial performance? What challenges are News Creators facing and how are they overcoming them?

To achieve those aims, we designed a four phase research project

1. Identified and grouped News Creators

- Determined what **News Creators** will be included in the scope of the study

- Rapidly **mapped the landscape of successful News Creators** ("Exemplars") across multiple platforms and identified who to interview in Phase 2 - **ensuring representation across different segments**

2. Discovered sustainability and credibility drivers

- Convened and interviewed an **Advisory Board of ~25 members** to understand success factors and potential information guidelines for Journalistic Creators

- Interviewed ~**15 News Creators** to understand their attitudes to information guidelines and the path to financial sustainability

3. Synthesized and tested with Creators

- Co-developed (with the Advisory Board) an **initial set of practical "Information Guidelines"** for News Creators

- Designed a **"News Sustainability Framework" for News Creators** including the dimensions, sub-dimensions and indicators.

- Developed and tested a **segmentation framework** for News Creators to better understand different types and needs

4. Developed resources for News Creators

- Rolled out a "News Creator Diagnostic" for the **News Sustainability Project website** that allows Creators to assess their sustainability

- Created a **"News Creator Insights Report"** that details key findings from the project

But first, what do we mean by a News Creator?

Emerging News Voices

- "Emerging News Voices" represent the **growing alternative media ecosystem** that is increasingly attracting the attention of audiences and challenging traditional news organizations.

- Emerging News Voices encompass **digital-native news organisations, online personalities and influencers** and **News Creators**.

News Creator

Within this, is a segment **' News Creators'** – an individual or small team that **consistently creates and shares news-related content** - original reporting, explanation, or commentary - **primarily via social, video, or digital-first platforms** (e.g. TikTok, YouTube, Substack, Instagram).

News Creators differ from other Emerging News Voices as they **operate primarily on social media platforms** and adhere to information guidelines of **Accuracy**, **Integrity** and **Transparency**.

Critical to our approach has been the constant involvement of a diverse set of News Creators

Creator selection process

News Creators that were interviewed (followers)

Creators were intentionally selected to reflect a diverse and representative cross-section of the News Creator ecosystem. Selection criteria ensured variation across:

- **Geography** – Representation from multiple regions including Asia, Africa, North America and Australia

- **Topic and mission** – Coverage included politics, science, tech, public interest, satire and civic education.

- **Formats and platforms** – Creators spanned video (YouTube, TikTok, Instagram), text (newsletters, Substack) and audio.

- **Audience size** – Ranged from niche and emerging to large-scale creators with millions of followers.

- **Identity and political spectrum** – Included creators across ideological viewpoints and with varied backgrounds.

- **Akash Banerjee** – *The DeshBhakt*, (YT: 5m+)
- **V Spehar** – *Under the Desk News*, (TikTok: 3m+)
- **Adeola Fayehun** – *YouTuber*, (YT:800k+)
- **Isaac Saul** – *Tangle News* (Newsletter: 320k+)
- **David Hundeyin** – *Investigative Journalist* (SS: 60k+)
- **Cenk Uygur** – *The Young Turks* (YT: 6m+)
- **Johnny Dickson** – *No Lab Coat Required* (YT: 250k)
- **Fisayo Fosudo** – *Tech YouTuber* (YT: 750k+)
- **Adam Cole** – *Howtown* (YT: 900k+)
- **Johnathan Chua** – *The Daily Ketchup* (YT: 100k+)
- **Sam Koslowski** – *The Daily Aus* (YT: 600k+)
- ***Chris Cillizza*** – *So What? (YT: 97k , Newsletter: 32k)*
- ***Matt Brown*** – *Extra Points (Beehiiv: 34k)*
- ***Tatton Spiller*** – *Simple Politics (Insta: 880k)*
- ***Tara Palmeri*** - *The Red Letter (SS: N/A; YT: 26k)*

YT = YouTube, SS = Substack, Insta = Instagram

Note: These creators are intended to represent a broad cross-section of styles and viewpoints. Inclusion here does not imply endorsement of their views or content.

We have also complemented their views with an exceptional Advisory Board

Trust and ethics experts	Industry leaders	Creator experts	Academics/researchers

Trust and ethics experts

Joy Mayer — Director, **Trusting News**

John Daniszewski — Head of Standards, **AP**

Saeed Ahmed — VP, News for Digital Platforms, **AP**

Sally Lehman — CEO, **Trust Project**

Industry leaders

Janine Warner — Exec Director, **Sembra Media**

Florencia Aza — Programs Director, **Sembra Media**

Zuliana Lainez — SVP, **Int'l Fed of Journalists**

Tendik Tynystanov — Director of Strategy & Impact, **TRF**

Cherilyn Ireton — Director, **World Editor Forum**

Ben Reininga — Fellow, **Nieman Berkman-Klein**

Hugh Carnegy — Senior editor, **Financial Times**

Dr. Christian Heise — CEO, **Hamburg Media School**

Sharon Moshavi — President, **ICFJ**

Creator experts

Mylene Flicka — Founder, **Irawo**

Liz Kelly Nelson — Founder, **Project C**

Sruthi Gottipati — Founder, **Spot On**

Vitus Spehar — Creator, **Under The Desk News**

Academics/researchers

Emily Roseman — Director (Research), **Shorenstein**

Laura Manley — Executive Director (Media), **Shorenstein**

Summer Harlow — Associate Director, **Knight Center for Americans**

Ryan Kellett — Fellow, **Nieman Berkman-Klein**

Jeremy Gilbert — Knight Chair, **Medill School of Journalism**

Tim Franklin — Director, **Medill Local News Initiative**

Adeline Hulin — Chief of Unit (Media), **UNESCO**

Lisa McDonald — Chief Operating Officer, **Storyful**
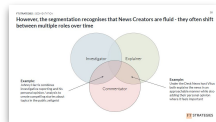
Amelia Di Nardo — Intelligence Manager, **Storyful**

In collaboration with:

The culmination of this project is four resources that are designed to help both News Creators and the news ecosystem

| Resources	Who it is designed for	How it helps support the industry
News Creator Segmentation	Platforms, funders, news organizations, support organisations and News Creators themselves	Provides a shared language to understand the different types of News Creators based on their contributions to the news information ecosystem - enabling better-targeted support, partnerships and discovery
Information Guidelines	News Creators (both new and established)	Offers a practical framework for responsible journalism based on News Creator best practice, co-developed with industry experts and creators
News Creator Diagnostic	News Creators (both new and established)	Helps creators reflect on their practices and identify areas for improvement - across information credibility and financial sustainability
Insights & Recommendations	Platforms, funders, news organizations, support organisations and News Creators themselves	Provides a detailed view of the current experience of News Creators that participated in our research, including insights from our Advisory Board

❯ News Creator Segmentation
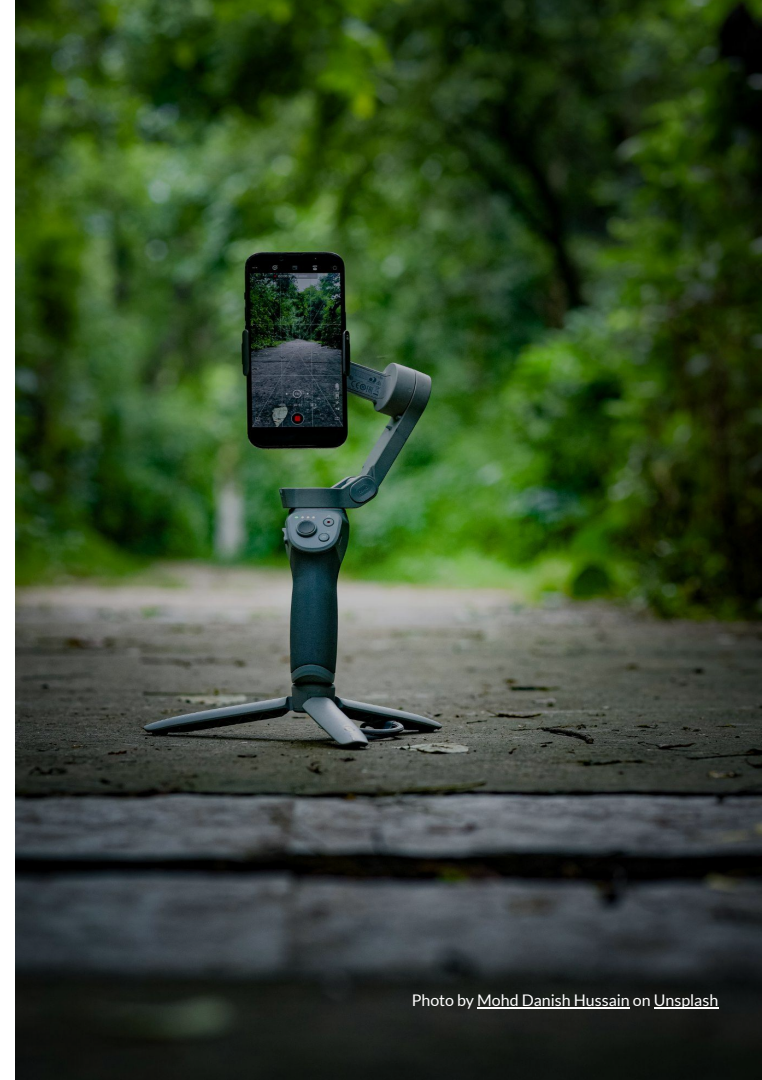
To date, News Creators have often been referred to as a homogenous group, but in reality they vary enormously in approach, background and style

Understanding the spectrum of News Creators

1 From industry experts we hear that they "generally sort of lump them [News Creators] all together whether they're speaking to millions of people or not…"

2 Discussions about "News Creators" frequently default to naming "a handful of people", overlooking the vast and diverse ecosystem beyond these prominent figures

3 Independent News Creators span multiple camps - platform natives, media migrants, and more - producing everything from reporting to commentary, entertainment and life advice. Many blur traditional lines, merging journalism with creator formats.

Challenges of a one-size-fits-all narrative

- **Limited monetisation opportunities:** Creators are often excluded from sponsorship and advertising deals because the category lacks a unified, 'brand-safe' reputation.

- **Fragmented ecosystem engagement:** Funders, news organisations and support networks struggle to navigate the creator landscape, making it difficult to identify credible or strategic partners.

- **Low peer visibility and collaboration:** Creators have limited awareness of others doing similar work, leading to duplication of effort, missed opportunities for collaboration and slower collective learning.

Source: [1]Interviews with Creators and AB members

The purpose of segmenting News Creators is to provide greater access to funding, facilitate peer-to-peer collaboration and build greater understanding of this group

Benefits of segmentation ✔

- **Access to partnership and sponsorship deals** by helping news organizations and advertisers more deeply understand news creators and inform who to partner with or support

- **Access to grants and other industry support** by helping philanthropists and industry actors identify News Creators with specific attributes (e.g. focused on climate, conducting investigations, covering a specific geography).

- **Greater peer-to-peer collaboration** by helping News Creators identify other creators they may be able to partner with.

- **Deeper understanding of the News Creators ecosystem** by making it clear that there is a variety of different types of News Creator and that they offer different things to audiences.

Known limitations

- **News Creators fluidly transition between segments** and often play multiple roles and shift focus over time depending on context, audience, or opportunity.

- **Segmentation should evolve** as it is a living framework that will grow with ongoing insights, examples and emerging formats.

- **More data will strengthen this:** Future iterations should be increasingly informed by creator feedback, platform insights, and quantitative signals.

Irrespective of their segments, we plan to tag News Creators based on what they cover, how they source and how they tell their stories

Tags	Description	Sub-Tags
Topic	The main subject a News Creator focuses on	Politics, Business / Finance, Technology, Climate, Culture, Health, Security, Science, Sports, Education, Crime, Gender, Generalist (no specific topic focus)
Geography	The place or community the News Creator focuses on	Specific Country (e.g. Nigeria) , Specific Region/Locality (e.g. Texas), Specific Community (e.g. Latino communities), Global (no specific geographic focus)
Sourcing	The way the News Creator gathers information	Field-based, Desk Research, Data Analysis, News Source Aggregation, Hosted Interviews, Crowdsourcing
Commentary	The presence of the News Creators opinion, perspectives, analysis or personal take	Commentary (i.e. opinion-driven), Analysis, No Commentary or Analysis

Note: Tags are indicative and can be expanded

Our research surfaced three categories of News Creator – while Creators may belong to multiple categories or move between them – most have a primary role

Investigator	Explainer	Commentator
Description		
• "**Investigators**" uncover **new information** through **in-depth original research and reporting**. This segment is **analogous to reporters in traditional newsrooms**.	• "**Explainers**" helps audiences **make sense of events and the news** by making it **simple, digestible and engaging**.	• "**Commentators**" interpret and react to events and the news bringing **their opinions, perspectives** and **personal judgement** into their content.
Characteristics		
• Uses **primary sources**, **fieldwork**, or **publicly available documents** • Focuses on **uncovering new information** making it, generally speaking, more resource intensive	• Relies on **secondary sources** (e.g. mainstream news organisations or published journals) • Delivers **well structured content** that is **information dense**	• Relies on **existing sources or coverage, layering their own interpretation** or perspective on top • Focuses on **framing issues through a specific lens or worldview**

Examples underscore that many News Creators have a 'primary' role that they perform on behalf of their audiences

Examples

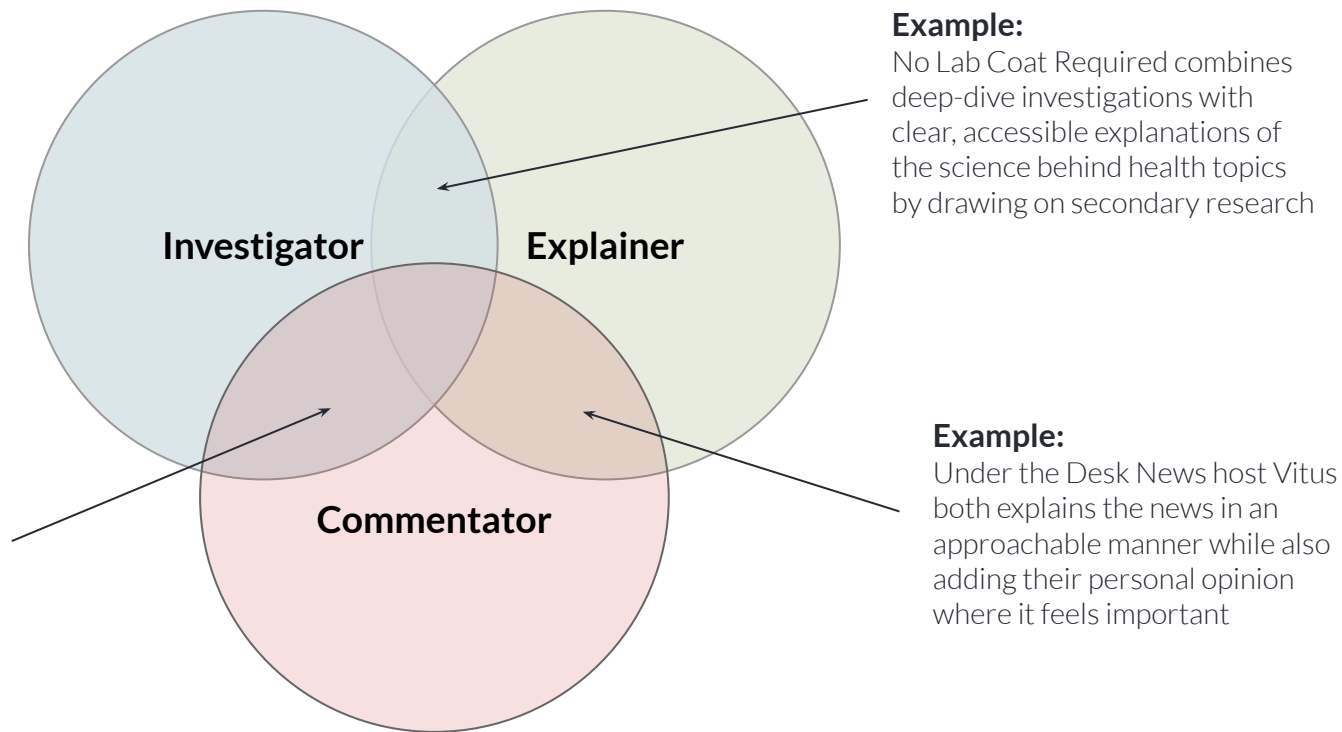| Investigator	Explainer	Commentator
Bisan Owda	The Daily Aus	Adeola Fayehun
Johnny Harris	Simple Politics	The Deshbhakt
David Hundeyin	Omar Agamy	Chris Cillizza
Howtown	Under The Desk News	Nikita Redkar
No Lab Coat Required	Tangle News	The Young Turks
Cleo Abram	TLDR News	Mehdi Hasan

However, the segmentation recognizes that News Creators are fluid - they often shift between multiple roles over time

Investigator

Explainer

Commentator

Example:
No Lab Coat Required combines deep-dive investigations with clear, accessible explanations of the science behind health topics by drawing on secondary research

Example:
Johnny Harris combines investigative reporting and his personal opinion / analysis to create compelling stories about topics in the public zeitgeist

Example:
Under the Desk News host Vitus both explains the news in an approachable manner while also adding their personal opinion where it feels important

> Information Guidelines

News Creators occupy an increasingly important role in the information ecosystem and yet they currently lack systemic support or training

1 • **Creators are central to today's news ecosystem**, yet lack a shared set of professional standards - unlike traditional journalists who rely on pre-existing codes of conduct and journalistic standards.[1]

2 • **Industry organisations like UNESCO warn that influencers need urgent fact-checking training**, as they increasingly shape public opinion but often lack the skills or incentives to verify information before sharing it.[2]

3 • **Platform guidelines are fragmented, with differing expectations across social media platforms**, making it hard for creators to know what "credible" looks like universally.[1]

4 • **Interviews with creators and Advisory Board members revealed a demand for clearer guidance**, especially for those covering news, civic, or social issues who want to build trust without mimicking legacy journalism.[1]

5 • **Current trust guidelines and journalism principles aren't always fit for News Creators** - e.g. they do not have equivalent resources to verify information and/or the platforms they operate on do not have the functionality to adhere to principles (e.g. appropriate sourcing) .[1]

6 • **Information guidelines would empower creators to maintain their voice** and style while creating trustworthy, reliable information.[1]

Source: [1] Interviews with News Creators and Advisory Board, [2] The Guardian, 'Online influencers need 'urgent' fact-checking training, warns Unesco' (2025)

We reviewed journalistic standards, interviewed News Creators and Advisory Board members to understand what these information guidelines could be

1

News Creator Interviews (15+)

e.g. The Young Turks

2

Advisory Board Opinions

e.g. Storyful, SembraMedia

3

Creator and Journalism reports

e.g. Knight Center

Content Creators and Journalists: Redefining News and Credibility in the Digital Age

4

Resources on Trust in News

e.g. Trust Project, Trusting News

5

Platform standards

e.g. YouTube, Twitch

6

Known journalistic principles

e.g. ethical journalism network

Our information guidelines support the creation of accurate, trustworthy content and help identify responsible News Creators

External Information Guidelines to assist
News Creators

FT STRATEGIES | INFORMATION GUIDELINES   13

Our team and the larger working group feel that these principles can form the basis
of a set of information guidelines for news creators

Accuracy

Sharing correct, properly sourced information and clearly correcting mistakes

What you produce / Content

Integrity

Acting honestly, fairly and ethically when gathering and presenting information

How you behave / Behaviour

Transparency

Being open about who you are, how you work and any potential conflicts of interest

Why you do it / Motivation

To bring those principles to life, we have provided a set of practical guidelines (in the subsequent slides) that are based on the existing practices of responsible news creators

FT STRATEGIES

Target Group: News Creators (both new and established)

- **Offers a practical and adaptable framework** for responsible journalism rooted in News Creator best practice.

- **Supports professionalisation of content for News Creators** through clear information guidelines around accuracy, transparency and integrity.

- **Helps creators build trust with audiences and platforms** by signalling responsible behavior.

- **Can support access to better advertising or brand deals** by helping creators align with brand safety standards.

- **Could be used in future to inform platform algorithms and content promotion**

- **Developed with creators** and industry experts, increasing relevance and adoption.

The information guidelines are a tool to recognize and elevate responsible News Creators - not to restrict or impose

What they are ✔

- **A framework to support accurate, transparent** and trustworthy news content

- **A tool to recognize and elevate** responsible News Creators

- **A flexible guide informed by industry best practices** and public interest values

- **A resource for funders**, platforms, and partners to assess quality and credibility

- **An evolving reference point** for News Creators

What they are not ✖

- **A mandatory checklist** or compliance requirement

- **A one-size-fits-all** guideline for every creator or platform

- **A restriction on creativity**, editorial independence, or innovation

- **A gatekeeping tool** to exclude creators with alternative formats or styles

- **A substitute for local laws,** platform policies or community guidelines

When speaking to News Creators, there was a clear convergence around three principles — Accuracy, Integrity and Transparency

Accuracy

"Getting your facts right, double and triple **checking facts**... is a gold standard that should never change."

"I just want to tell the most simple calm possible form of the truth and that means making sure you **are accurate with the facts**"

"**Getting something wrong is a death sentence** for someone in my line of work. The temptation is to loosen up when you go visual — but I won't trade accuracy for reach."

Integrity

"As a creator, **there's no editor-in-chief checking your tone or headlines** — it's all on you. If you're not guided by integrity, you'll lose the room fast."

"Integrity - especially avoiding anything bad or **accepting money without disclosure** - are basic standards we should all support."

"Acting **honestly, fairly and ethically,** we can't dispute."

Transparency

"I think the notion of **transparency - showing your work, putting your biases** on the table - is a critical part of being a creator."

"News Creators **don't have institutions behind us**. Our independence and funding need to be visible — otherwise we're just influencers with agendas."

When speaking to the Advisory Board, there was a clear convergence around three principles — Accuracy, Integrity and Transparency

Accuracy

"Objectivity may feel outdated, but **truthfulness never is**. What matters most today is making sure what you report is 100% true"

"Adherence to search for **accuracy and truth" should apply to both journalists and influencers"**

"At a minimum, all you can expect is for News Creators to have a **commitment to using credible facts and sources**" - *Standards Expert*

Integrity

"Underlying principles like **accuracy, truth, transparency**, and **honesty** should apply to both journalists and influencers" - *Standards Expert (Advisory Board)*

"To succeed long-term, **creators need more than reach—they need a core of integrity.** Credibility isn't optional; it's the foundation."

"**Integrity is a basic standard needed**, alongside accuracy and transparency, especially given the prevalence of fake news and AI"

Transparency

"For News Creators, **trust is built through transparency and connection**—even when that means being open about your point of view. Unlike traditional journalism, authenticity can matter more than detachment."

"Wherever people turn to information, I think they **should be able to tell what the goals of that information is**, where it comes from, in what spirit and process and sort of ethical framework it was created."

Our team and the larger working group feel that these principles can form the basis of a set of information guidelines for News Creators

Accuracy

Sharing correct, properly sourced information and clearly correcting mistakes

What you produce / Content

Integrity

Acting honestly, fairly and ethically when gathering and presenting information

How you behave / Behavior

Transparency

Being open about who you are, how you work and any potential conflicts of interest

Why you do it / Motivation

To bring those principles to life, we have provided a set of practical guidelines (in the subsequent slides) that are based on the existing practices of responsible News Creators

Accuracy - Sharing correct, properly sourced information and clearly correcting mistakes

Checklist

Examples

☑ **Review key facts or figures** - including names, dates, figures, quotes - **before uploading the content**. Where possible, cross-check facts with more than one reliable source, especially for controversial or sensitive topics.

The Deshbhakt (aka Akash Banerjee) emphasizes the shift in his content creation process toward rigorous fact-based reporting, driven by audience demand for clear, reliable information. Akash and his team have embedded double-checking, fact-checking and deep research into their workflow, with research phase consuming a significant portion of time.

☑ **Prioritize independent primary sources** (e.g. academic papers) or **secondary sources that verify the information themselves** (e.g. Associated Press)

Howtown (aka Adam Cole and Joss Fong) consistently prioritize primary sources, drawing directly from peer-reviewed studies and interviews with the scientists behind them. Rather than summarizing secondhand reporting, they trace claims back to their origin to ensure accuracy and depth.

☑ Be **upfront when you are uncertain or full information isn't available** and **openly correct any mistakes that you make**

Tangle News (aka Isaac Saul) features a prominently placed corrections box at the top of each newsletter, where he explains the mistake, how it happened, when the last correction was made and how many corrections they have made in the history of their reporting – highlighting his own errors and openly publishing reader critiques.

Integrity - Acting honestly, fairly and ethically when gathering and presenting information

Checklist

☑ **Clearly label or indicate the difference between factual information** and your opinions / personal take

☑ **Name the source of the information and credit other people's work** (where possible) by providing links back to the original work

☑ **Be mindful about how your content may impact other people's lives before uploading it** - for example, it could cause them some kind of physical or psychological harm (discrimination, hostility, or violence)

Examples

Tangle News (aka Isaac Saul) clearly separates fact from opinion by structuring each newsletter with a dedicated "My Take" section, distinct from the factual summary and viewpoints from the left and right. This consistent format signals to readers exactly when they're encountering analysis versus reported information.

No Lab Coat Required (aka Johnny Cole Dickson) links all citations in the YouTube description and goes further by sharing a Quizlet with report names, links, and specific excerpts used in the video. Now a "Top Creator" on Quizlet, Johnny receives regular praise for this transparent, in-depth approach.

The Daily Ketchup (aka Johnathan Chua) discusses producing micro-documentaries on sensitive topics, applying animations to help people visualize these issues, with the intention of creating a "social impact" and showing support to these communities.

Transparency - Being open about who you are, how you work and any potential conflicts of interest

Checklist

Examples

Give your audiences **visibility on who is behind the content** (including relevant background, experience or lived expertise) and **anything that might influence the coverage or your independence** (what is covered or how it is covered)

Extra Points (aka Matt Brown) clearly outlines his background in education policy and higher education in his About page, and regularly references it in his reporting to show how it shapes his coverage. He also discloses personal ties and funding sources, giving readers clear context on what might influence his work.

Be **open about who owns your channel / company, your sources or funding** and **any conflict of interest** resulting from your financial situation

TLDR News stands out for its financial transparency—clearly disclosing income from sponsorships, Patreon, ads, and merchandize. A dedicated "How We're Funded" page outlines their business model and editorial independence, and sponsored content is always clearly marked in both video and description.

Encourage audiences to provide their feedback or questions and respond to that in a constructive way

Simple Politics (aka Tatton Spiller) builds trust by engaging directly with his audience - responding to feedback, answering DMs and framing himself as a "human friend talking you through what's going on." He fosters ongoing dialogue and even checks in with donors quarterly to ensure continued, ethical support.

If you want more detailed information on how to adhere to our information guidelines – across video, audio and text – you can find those in the appendix

Example

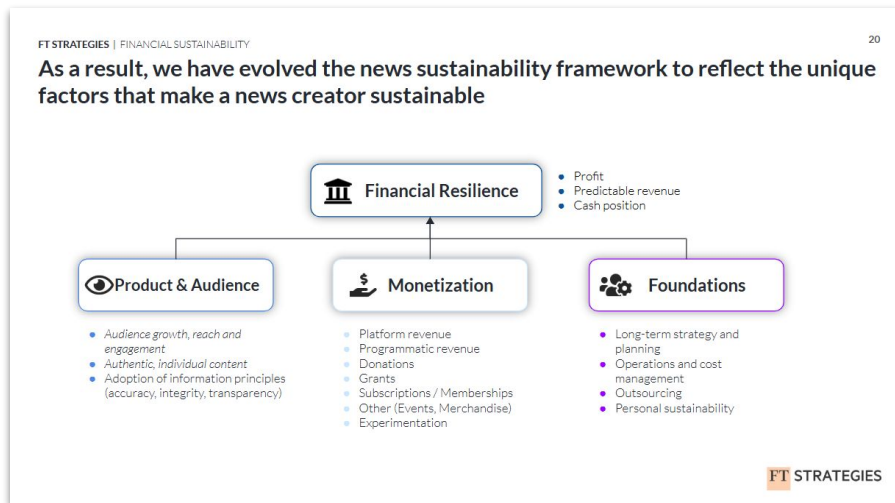**Integrity - Acting honestly, fairly and ethically when gathering and presenting information**

Checklist

☑ **Clearly label or indicate the difference between factual information** and your opinions / personal take

Examples

Video:
- Say it directly: "Here are the facts" vs. "In my opinion…"
- Use on-screen text overlays or captions to flag opinions vs. reports
- On TikTok, consider adding text like "my take" in corner overlays or closed captions

Audio:
- Use clear verbal signposting: "Based on the data…" / "Now here's what I think…"
- Transition between factual reporting and commentary using music or tone shift

Written:
- Use headings or phrasing like "The Facts" vs. "My View"
- Italics or section breaks can help delineate clearly
- Add inline context: "According to X… Here's how I interpret that"

❯ **Financial Sustainability**
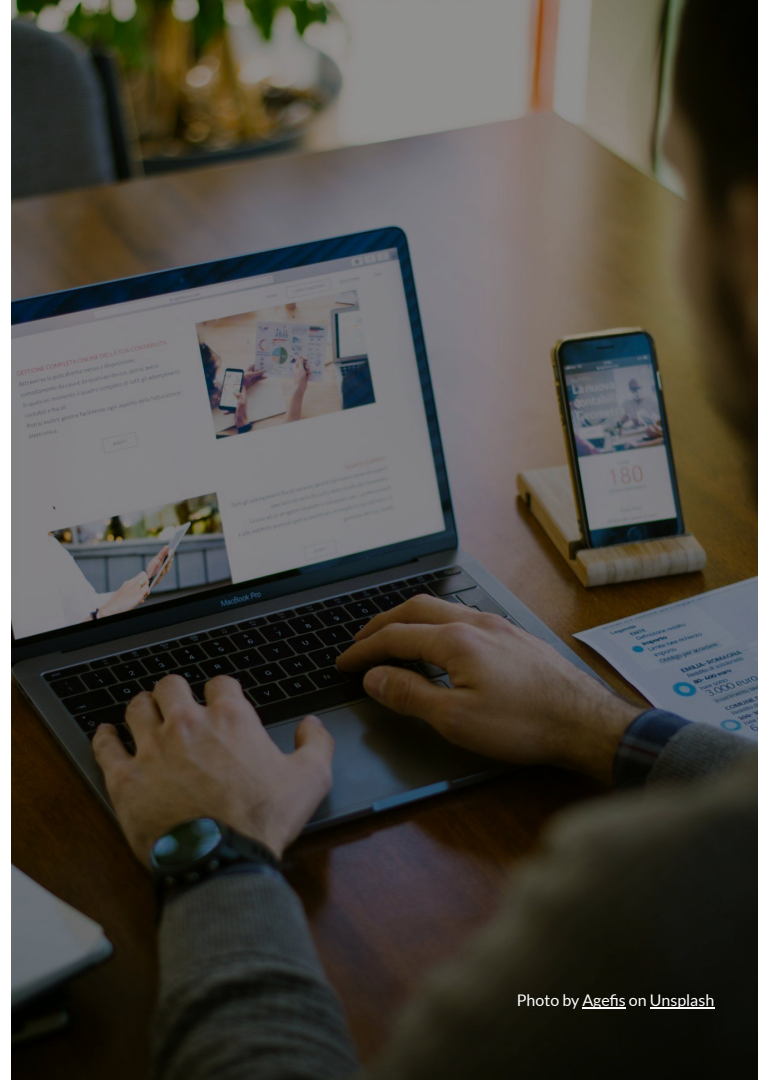
Our News Creator Diagnostic is designed to help creators assess their financial sustainability and identify areas for improvement

External Diagnostic for News Creators to assess their performance

FT STRATEGIES | FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY — 20

As a result, we have evolved the news sustainability framework to reflect the unique factors that make a news creator sustainable

Financial Resilience
- Profit
- Predictable revenue
- Cash position

Product & Audience
- Audience growth, reach and engagement
- Authentic, individual content
- Adoption of information principles (accuracy, integrity, transparency)

Monetization
- Platform revenue
- Programmatic revenue
- Donations
- Grants
- Subscriptions / Memberships
- Other (Events, Merchandise)
- Experimentation

Foundations
- Long-term strategy and planning
- Operations and cost management
- Outsourcing
- Personal sustainability

FT STRATEGIES

**Target Group: News Creators (both new and established)**

- **Helps creators take stock of their audience engagement, financial resilience and platform presence** - enabling a shift from reactive content-making to intentional, long-term planning.

- **Encourages creators to take a strategic view of their growth**, not just audience numbers.

- **Can serve as a credible signal to funders, partners, or platforms** that a creator is committed to responsible practice.

- **Allows support organisations and accelerators to tailor interventions** (training, funding, partnerships) based on actual creator needs, rather than one-size-fits-all solutions.

We previously created a sustainability framework for news publishers that details four core dimensions - all of which apply in the News Creator context
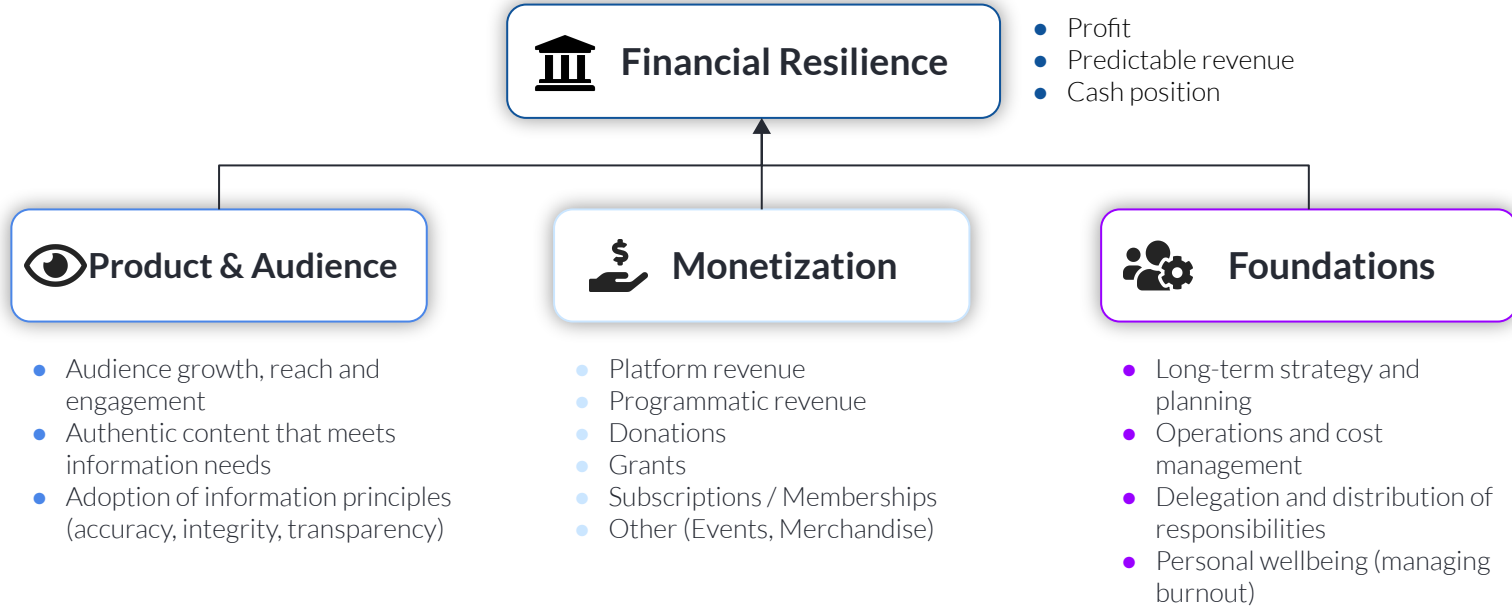
News Sustainability Framework (2024)
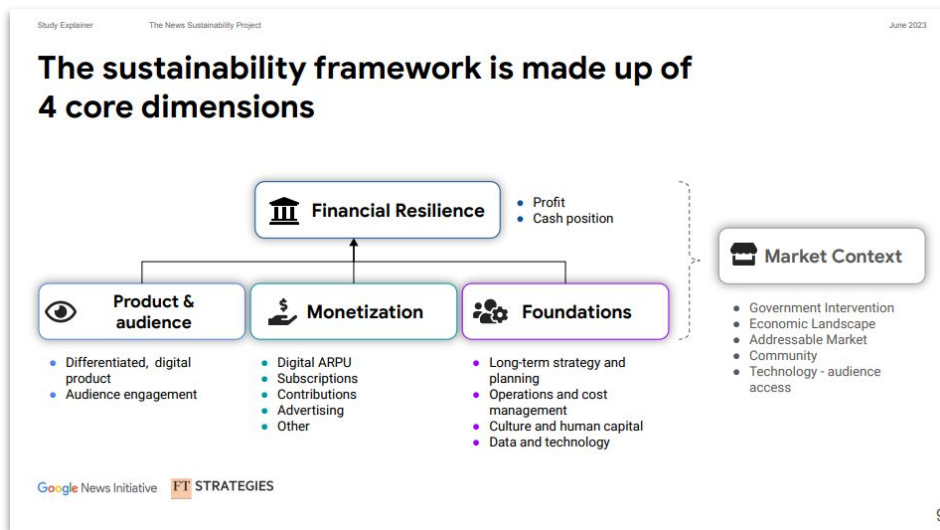
- **Financial Resilience:** Both news publishers and News Creators need to manage profit, cashflow, liquidity and costs to stay financially stable and navigate risk.

- **Product & Audience:** Success for both depends on offering clear value to a defined audience through differentiated content and consistent engagement.

- **Monetization:** Sustaining operations requires generating revenue from multiple sources - whether through subscriptions, ads, donations or partnerships.

- **Foundations:** Long-term sustainability is built on effective planning, streamlined operations, and having in place core capabilities - regardless of team size.

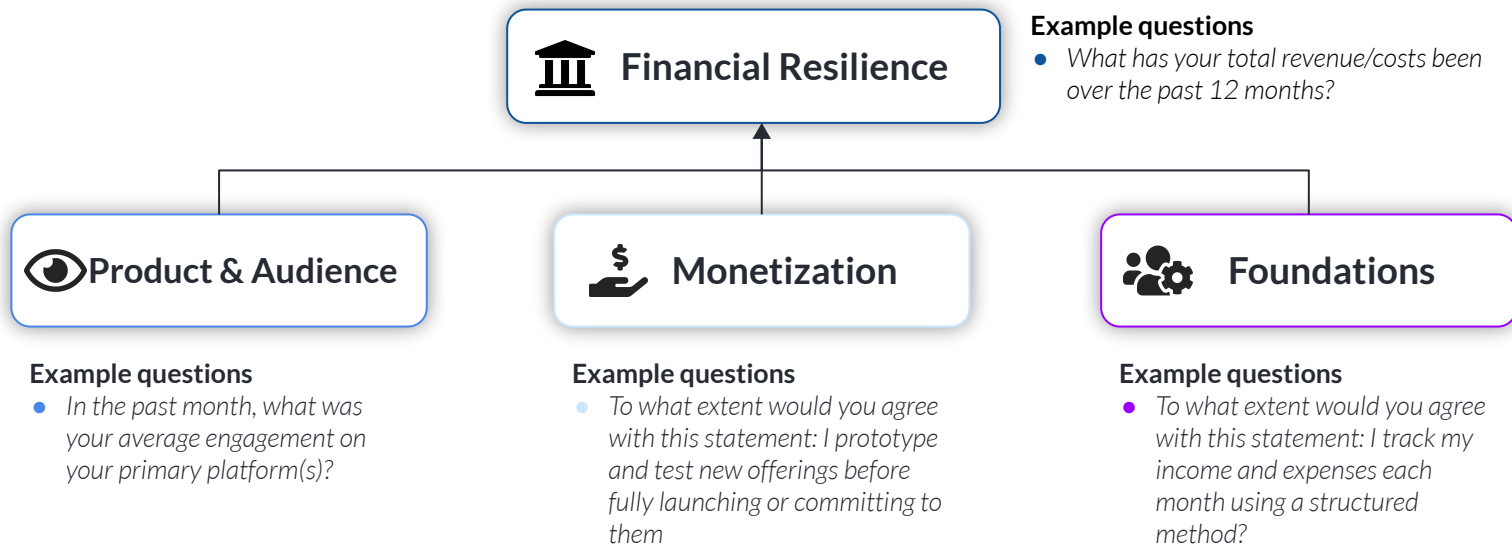# While sharing the same top-level dimensions, there are subtle differences within each dimension

Financial Resilience	Product & Audience	Monetization	Foundations
News Publisher			
• Focus on maximising profitability and securing solid cash position to mitigate future revenue shocks	• Focus on differentiated, digital-first products, backed by user research and team-led innovation cycles	• Monetization is typically centered around print, digital subscriptions and digital advertising with a few, complementary revenue streams	• High degree of operational discipline centred around established business units (HR, tech, finance, strategy)
News Creator			
• Emphasis on improving revenue predictability and basic cost management with a view to secure short-term sustainability	• Focus on personal voice, frequent output and constant experimentation with content formats and platforms	• Monetization is more scrappy and experimental - donations, platform revenue, brand deals, merch - with a trial-and-error mindset	• Foundations are more personal and fluid, including delegation (if any), content scheduling, burnout prevention and workflow hacks

As a result, we have evolved the news sustainability framework to reflect the unique factors that make a News Creator sustainable

Financial Resilience

- Profit
- Predictable revenue
- Cash position

Product & Audience

- Audience growth, reach and engagement
- Authentic content that meets information needs
- Adoption of information principles (accuracy, integrity, transparency)

Monetization

- Platform revenue
- Programmatic revenue
- Donations
- Grants
- Subscriptions / Memberships
- Other (Events, Merchandise)

Foundations

- Long-term strategy and planning
- Operations and cost management
- Delegation and distribution of responsibilities
- Personal wellbeing (managing burnout)

Rooted in the framework, is a Diagnostic with 30+ questions that enables an assessment of sustainability readiness for a News Creator

🏛 **Financial Resilience**

Example questions
- *What has your total revenue/costs been over the past 12 months?*

👁 **Product & Audience**

💲 **Monetization**

👥⚙ **Foundations**

Example questions
- *In the past month, what was your average engagement on your primary platform(s)?*

Example questions
- *To what extent would you agree with this statement: I prototype and test new offerings before fully launching or committing to them*

Example questions
- *To what extent would you agree with this statement: I track my income and expenses each month using a structured method?*

Scoring is based off a weighting of 33% Financial Resilience, 25% Product & Audience, 17% Monetization, 25% Business Foundations. This reflects the heightened important of financial performance in sustainability readiness.

❯ Challenges & Opportunities for News Creators

Photo by <u>Redd Francisco</u> on <u>Unsplash</u>

Our research shows how News Creators navigate a shifting information landscape, build trust through their own standards and grapple with financial pressures

Creators navigate a complex, evolving news ecosystem

News Creators are navigating a shifting and complex information landscape, marked by evolving roles, changing media relationships, growing audience expectations and regional challenges.

Creators strive for accurate valuable content

News Creators are striving to produce accurate and trustworthy content, often through self-defined standards that reflect their values and context in the midst of evolving technologies.

Sustainability remains a challenge for Creators

News Creators are financially vulnerable, driven by unpredictable revenue streams and the difficulties of navigating platform algorithms whilst battling severe burnout.

Creators navigate a complex, evolving news ecosystem

Theme 1. The rise of News Creators is part of a wider shift in online behavior and the information landscape

Theme 2. Relations between News Creators and traditional media are complex and changing

Theme 3. News Creators lack formal recognition which may be having a negative consequence on their sustainability

Theme 4. In some markets being a News Creator is extremely challenging - fear of arrest, government interference and an inability to monetize content are all very real

Theme 1: The rise of News Creators is part of a wider shift in online behavior and the information landscape

Key insights

1 News Creators have many appealing qualities - relatability and authenticity, adaptation to new formats, editorial freedom, playfulness, transparency and other effective audience engagement techniques.

2 At the same time, traditional news organizations have struggled to adapt to changing audience preferences (e.g. language and formats) and a significant portion of consumers indicate they struggle to trust publishers despite claims of objectivity

3 News Creators are also benefiting from changes in wider society – and specifically a greater reliance on social and video platforms as an access point to everything online - shopping, information, news, entertainment, messaging/communication.

What we heard

"...a lot of people are choosing to... get to know creators... And to spend more of their trust on individuals who seem relatable, who seem transparent and authentic, who seem like they know what they're talking about…" *- Advisory Board Member*

" I think we are seeing a broad industry trend of *'attentional reallocation'*. A lot of people are taking the time they used to spend in one place and putting it in another place." *- Advisory Board Member*

"People look to independent creators because they are their trusted messengers and their interlocutors for how they understand the world" *- Advisory Board Member*

Theme 2: Relations between News Creators and Traditional Media are complex and changing

Key insights

1 Many News Creators make use of traditional media for basic facts and information that they then use in their content. They acknowledge the vital role that this reporting plays in their operations.

2 Some traditional news organizations are actively working with News Creators, while others view this emerging class with skepticism - given perceptions of loose adherence to journalistic standards and norms.

3 Despite initial resistance, there are successful examples of collaboration e.g. experimental newsroom collaboration in Chile that brought together journalists, creators, and activists.

What we heard

"…the way they [News Creators] do accuracy is almost outsourced verification. They take "the Financial Times or AP or whoever cite it… we would be sort of proud if they cite us and that wouldn't be a problem as long as they do properly cite…"
- Advisory Board Member

"…Our work is built on the foundation of what journalists do. We make every effort to give credit, showcase their reporting, and provide backlinks. We're not here to challenge journalism - we're here to support and elevate good journalism…" *- News Creator*

"…We saw this in action during the experimental newsroom we ran last year at World Press Freedom Day in Chile. It was incredible to have journalists, creators, and activists all working side by side in the same newsroom…." *- News Creator*

Theme 3: News Creators lack formal recognition which may be having a negative consequence on their sustainability

Key insights

1 Some News Creators intentionally distance themselves from traditional media or the label of 'journalist', aiming to present a trustworthy alternative that isn't bound by conflicts of interest, institutional compromize or limitations on creative/editorial freedom.

2 News Creators complained that they were often lumped in with 'influencers' - a group they didn't feel associated to, citing different goals (e.g. maximising engagement), looser information standards, or questionable ethics.

3 The lack of formal recognition of 'News Creators' as a distinct class means that the group often lack peer support, idea-sharing and commercial deals that traditional journalists and news organisations benefit from.

What we heard

"…I did not want to be referred to as a journalist. I thought it was such a loaded term. I just wanted to be a TikToker - then I started to learn about what journalistic ethics were… and I realized I have these things. I don't know that that is everybody who becomes a News Creator's goal…" *- News Creator*

"…We've really struggled with this idea of being called News Creators because we are trying to be a respected professional excellent news organisation…" *- News Creator*

"…Creators feel the need to come together—not necessarily as a union or guild, but as some kind of association—where they can discuss ethical standards and define what it means to be a News Creator. They need a space for support… for navigating legal issues, and for addressing the many challenges they face that traditional journalists often don't…" *- Advisory Board*

Theme 4: In some markets, being a News Creator is extremely challenging - fear of arrest, government interference and an inability to monetize content are all very real

Key insights

1 In some countries, governments censor both traditional and digital platforms, close down channels or arrest individuals. This often means that News Creators have to relocate to a foreign country or self-censor / avoid politically sensitive content to continue operations.

2 News Creators that operate in economically challenging markets (e.g. low disposable income, high inflation, low CPMs) or those with poor infrastructure (e.g. limited access to payment providers) find it especially difficult to achieve financial sustainability. Many we spoke to in those markets had full or part-time jobs to supplement their income.

3 News Creators (e.g Maritza Felix from Conecta Arizona) can fill critical information gaps in underserved communities, acting as the "primary source of news for their entire village" where traditional media or funding is absent.

What we heard

"…Governments in countries like Venezuela and Cuba… not only captured traditional media, they control the internet. They block domain names, they block all kinds of things… it's really hard to build a following locally…" *- Advisory Board Member*

"…In places like Argentina, inflation is so extreme that people need money immediately—waiting for platform monetization just isn't an option. Journalists juggle multiple jobs, and audiences are prioritizing food over paying for content… *- Advisory Board Member*

"…Platforms don't support monetization in Francophone Africa—so creators have to register accounts in France just to access basic features. Stripe doesn't work here, so getting paid is nearly impossible."… *- Advisory Board Member*

Creators set their own, often familiar, standards

Theme 5. News Creators are adopting their own, typically self or audience influenced standards, that have similarities to those traditionally seen in journalism

Theme 6. Many News Creators do not sign up to the traditional notion of objectivity and favor being open and sharing their personal viewpoint

Theme 7. Information standards or guidelines designed for News Creators may prove helpful, but must fit the creator context if they are going to work

Theme 8. While AI can support content creation and verification, it also introduces risks including bias, misinformation and a lack of transparency

Theme 5: News Creators are adopting their own, typically self or audience determined standards, that broadly align to those already seen in journalism

Key insights

1 The majority of News Creators we spoke to — from a journalism background or not — adopt practices that are familiar in most newsrooms (sourcing, fact-checking, and ensuring commercial interests don't influence editorial standards).

2 Some News Creators formalize their ethics, while others draw on their personal values. In both cases, creators describe feeling deeply accountable to their audiences, with two saying the accountability felt greater than when they worked for a news organization.

3 Operating outside of traditional news organizations, many feel that they do not have access to the institutional resources that support reliable reporting (e.g. fact-checking or legal). However, this sometimes leads to heightened vigilance - a self-imposed ethical bar that compensates for the absence of formal oversight.

What we heard

"... I make sure that I'm sharing correct and properly sourced information. 60% of my time goes into research. Even my jokes are written into the script. I don't just talk - everything is fact-checked. If I make a mistake, I say so…" *- News Creator*

"…People tell me, 'You're the only news source I trust.' That's not a compliment, that's pressure. But it's why I do what I do…You need to learn the weight and the responsibility of the publish button. You need to be the best version of yourself and be honest, transparent and fair. I now send this newsletter to 400,000 and that matters a lot to me…" *- News Creator*

Theme 6: Many News Creators do not sign up to the traditional notion of objectivity and favor being open and sharing their personal viewpoint

Key insights

1 Creators hold diverse, often non-traditional, views on objectivity, with some arguing that complete neutrality is unattainable or even undesirable in favor of transparency about your own perspective.

2 Many Creators emphasize that they are commentators, and that their purpose (and unique selling point) is to give their own perspective on the news.

3 Similar to opinion writers for traditional news organizations, responsible News Creators still ground their opinions in facts and figures – often from reputable sources.

What we heard

"I've never tried to convince people that I don't have an opinion. The mainstream media tries to negotiate this idea of objectivity - which is outdated. It favors the oppressor and doesn't age well. I'm not platforming harmful ideas to appear neutral…" *- News Creator*

"…The pursuit of journalism isn't about being the arbiter of truth, it's about providing information that you can back up. If you want to provide your opinions in your work, which I do, it's important to balance with the views of people who disagree too" *- News Creator*

"I read the New York Times and publications like the that, only for the facts — any framing, narrative building, or biased elements, I just totally ignore. I love anything that gives me numbers, because I can discern everything else myself." *- News Creator*

Theme 7: Information standards or guidelines designed for News Creators may prove helpful, but must fit the creator context if they are going to work

Key insights

1 There is general agreement, especially from responsible News Creators and ecosystem actors, that a set of information guidelines could prove a helpful resource.

2 Standards or guidelines should not stop News Creators from using their own style, language, tone or aesthetic. There must be a perceived value in adopting guidelines, for themselves (e.g. access to brand deals or improvement in how their content is surfaced across platforms) and audiences.

3 Creators prefer self-determination, and may feel such standards could reinforce existing power structures. A way around that might be a co-creation approach, and focusing on "guidelines" instead.

What we heard

"…I think you have to make it have value, for example having a blue check means a lot to people because it validates them. …If there's a set of standards, I'll follow it. But it has to mean something to the audience too - not just be a token. That's what I worry about with trying to standardize creators: unless the audience cares, it doesn't work…" *- News Creator*

"…standards only work if they reflect the realities of the News Creator context…instead of imposing top-down frameworks, we need bottom-up, interoperable approaches that feel self-serving to creators - grounded in their workflows, their audiences, and their definitions of value…" *- Advisory Board Member*

"…Content creators should help legitimize the work of other creators through a set of standards that you can checklist yourself against to make sure we are all adhering to a set of values…" *- Advisory Board Member*

Theme 8: While AI can support content creation and verification, it also introduces risks including bias, misinformation and a lack of transparency

Key insights

1 AI is transforming content workflows - supercharging individual creators, lowering production costs and enabling round-the-clock output.

2 AI has intensified the risk of misinformation by making it easier to fabricate convincing but false content. Creators must be equipped to navigate a landscape where truthful information is harder to identify and verify.

3 Even in an AI information ecosystem, human creativity, transparency and honesty remain vital. Audiences will increasingly seek cues to distinguish real from fake, making visible human input and ethical clarity more valuable than ever.

What we heard

"...iit is definitely speeding up both the creation process and the distribution part. AI can significantly lower the cost of news production and even enable 24/7 news coverage without any human input...there's real potential for increased challenges around bias, misinformation and accountability" *- News Creator*

"...I've seen a video where a president—who doesn't speak English—was fabricated to speak fluently, and people believed it...AI can manufacture entire situations that never happened...and people can't tell the difference. The problem is, we're not seeing enough education around how to distinguish AI content"... *- Advisory Board Member*

"...creators have a tendency... to be holding on to their humanness more than other parts of the publishing industry... *- Advisory Board Member*

Sustainability remains a challenge for News Creators

Theme 9. News Creators can achieve financial sustainability - but reaching it, and maintaining it - is extremely challenging and never assured

Theme 10. Platform dynamics, particularly algorithms, present significant challenges for News Creators

Theme 11. Burnout is a major issue for News Creators, driven by constant content demands and the need to juggle editorial and business responsibilities

Theme 9: News Creators can achieve financial sustainability - but reaching it, and maintaining it - is extremely challenging and never assured

Key insights

1 News Creators with large followings often struggle financially—or earn far less than expected—because of uncertainty around audience engagement and ad monetization. Memberships / subscriptions are still in their infancy outside of newsletters.

2 Although designed to support journalism, many government interventions and funding mechanisms - like tax credits or platform deals - tend to favor established institutions over entrepreneurial creators.

3 While there is no perfect formula, those who are financially sustainable produce regular high quality content, build direct relationships with audiences (in the pursuit of direct audience revenue) and are financially disciplined.

What we heard

"Even though I have over 250K YouTube subscribers, I've had months where I get $14K - and then the next month it drops to $8K, then $5K, then below $4K, and it breaks my heart to see. I'm dipping into savings. It's not sustainable yet…" *- News Creator*

"I'm lucky, I live in Bogotá and my wife supports me. If I still lived in New York, I couldn't afford to do this…" *- News Creator*

"…Even though we have millions of views each month, we get about $6,000 from AdSense. That pays for one person's salary. That's it. You can't survive on that…" *- News Creator*

Theme 10: Platform dynamics, particularly algorithms, present significant challenges for News Creators

Key insights

1 Creators depend on platforms to reach audiences; however, many expressed their frustration when it comes to reach, algorithms, monetization models and unclear processes.

2 Algorithms are described as constantly changing and unpredictable ("waves"). There is a perception that they may favour sensational or partisan content over nuanced or balanced reporting.

3 Creators express a strong desire for platforms to provide better tools for news content, such as annotations, hyperlinks for updates or sources, and features for linking related content.

What we heard

"…We're in the worst algorithm we've ever seen. You have to be 'consistent' - which is code for being an extremist in your views. If you add any nuance, the algorithm will take away 90% of your audience. It punishes diversity. Right now, the algorithm punishes the truth. It only wants repetition. It wants mania. That's how you grow…" *- News Creator*

"…citing sources - while good hygiene - doesn't always work well for engagement…platforms like TikTok are badly designed for that…while tech-enabled tools like green screen exist, the tools are neutral and can just as easily be used to spread misinformation…" *- Advisory Board Member*

Theme 11: Burnout is a major issue for News Creators, driven by constant content demands and the need to juggle editorial and business responsibilities

Key insights

1 News Creators operate under relentless pressure to stay visible on platforms, where even brief pauses can harm their reach. They often work alone, lacking the peer support and professional infrastructure that traditional journalists have, which can lead to burnout.

2 Creators aren't just making content—they're also managing a business. From finances and marketing to fundraising, they often handle it all without formal training, leaving them vulnerable to stress and fatigue.

3 News Creators are professionalizing by building teams, delegating responsibilities and outsourcing tasks—enabling them to move beyond solo operations, mitigate burnout, improve consistency and build more scalable, sustainable businesses.

What we heard

"…I have to start prepping now because I need to solicit, edit, pay, and schedule freelance stories for the entire time I'm gone. Even in the off-season, I'd be penalized for taking a week off. There's also social pressure—when you're taking subscriptions, like the Financial Times does, you can't just say, 'We're taking two weeks off to get drunk in Spain.' People would be upset. So you have to keep going. It's a lot of work…" - *News Creator*

"…I was kind of burnt out—it was a lot of work. I didn't really want to take on something as labor-intensive as starting a channel, because I knew it would demand a lot of time…" *- News Creator*

"…Getting management was a really validating step for me—it made me feel like an adult educator, not just a creator…my manager handles the admin side of things—accounting, legal, brand deals—and it's worth every penny…" *- News Creator*

> **Our Recommendations**

Recommendation 1: Offer ethics, verification, fact-checking and responsible sharing training tailored to creators - especially for AI use

Why

- Many News Creators lack formal journalism training and don't have access to the resources they need to produce consistently accurate and trustworthy information – e.g. lawyers to assess contentious stories or colleagues to fact-check content.

- As they increasingly use AI for creation and editing, the risk of spreading bias, misinformation, or undisclosed synthetic content grows - especially without editorial oversight.

- Building this capacity is vital to upholding trust in the ecosystem.

How the News Media Ecosystem can help

- Develop modular, creator-friendly learning resources covering sourcing, verification, corrections and AI-specific risks (e.g. hallucination, disclosure, deepfakes).

- Offer certification or badging to signal credibility. Deliver through workshops, video explainers and toolkits - in partnership with creator-led orgs like Project C or platform education teams.

- Consider ethics or legal hotlines or advisory groups, similar to those used in journalism schools or NGOs, could provide real-time decision-making support.

Recommendation 2: Build recognition schemes that reward impactful, credible creator journalism

Why

- Creators producing high-quality news content often struggle to get noticed by sponsors, platforms, or the public.

- Recognition can motivate adherence to information guidelines or standards, build community and unlock better visibility and monetization - especially for emerging or underrepresented voices.

How the News Media Ecosystem can help

- Launch awards, curated lists and visible partnerships that celebrate creators that adhere to credible information guidelines.

- Tie recognition to adherence to transparent practices (e.g. proper sourcing, corrections, bias disclosure).

- Build community through alumni groups, spotlight campaigns and cross-creator promotion.

- Partner with news orgs, platforms, and funders to ensure recognition leads to real opportunities (funding, revenue-sharing, events).

Recommendation 3: Encourage platforms to prioritize original reporting and responsible information sharing through algorithms and tools

Why

- Platforms currently lack signals to elevate News Creators over other emerging voices
- Platforms can do more to identify, elevate and support News Creators who are adhering to credible information guidelines.

How the News Media Ecosystem can help

- Platforms should co-design creator tooling that supports journalistic integrity e.g. overlays for "Corrections", AI-generated citation checkers, funding disclosure fields, source-linking features in short-form video and persistent creator bios e.g. a "Transparency" tab alongside "About" and "Community", explaining background or affiliations.

- These features should be tested with creators for usability and platform design could distinguish between news content and general entertainment - particularly for short-form video and livestream environments.

- Adoption of such tools could inform how content is surfaced on platforms or eligibility for different monetization schemes.

Recommendation 4: Develop structured support programmes that guide creators toward financial sustainability

Why

- While some creators succeed through trial and error, most need a structured path to grow - from audience development to monetization and burnout prevention.

- Without clear guidance, creators can stagnate, struggle with mental health, or burn out entirely.

How the News Media Ecosystem can help

- Establish structured programmes (e.g. accelerators, mentorship schemes, incubators) that help creators set goals, build sustainable business models and avoid burnout.

- These could be tiered by maturity (early vs. growth stage) and include coaching on metrics, income planning, outsourcing and creator wellness.

- Peer-to-peer support (like the Project C model) could be baked in to build community and reduce isolation.

Recommendation 5: Create funding pathways that treat creators as small, independent news businesses

Why

- Most News Creators operate solo or in micro-teams, wearing every hat from journalist to marketer to CFO.

- Yet most funding, training, and support schemes are built for institutions.

- Treating creators as legitimate small businesses - with access to capital, financial tools, and operational advice - is vital to unlocking their long-term sustainability.

How the News Media Ecosystem can help

- Offer tailored funding schemes (e.g., working capital grants, seed investment, no-strings microgrants), create accelerators focused on creator business skills, and provide tools like accounting templates, income projection calculators and planning kits.

- Encourage partnerships with fintech, legal, or HR service providers to offer discounted or bundled support.

- Position creators as micro-enterprises worthy of public support - not just "influencers" or hobbyists.

Recommendation 6: Localize support for creators working in restricted, low-income, or high-risk markets

Why

- News Creators in markets like Venezuela, Cuba and parts of Francophone Africa face systemic barriers - from government censorship to lack of payment infrastructure.

- These creators often provide the only source of news in their communities but are excluded from mainstream monetization and support pathways.

How the News Media Ecosystem can help

- Build dedicated support for creators in fragile contexts: think cross-border grant distribution, secure publishing infrastructure, legal defense funds or libel insurance and access to offline training where internet censorship is high.

- Platforms could adapt onboarding and monetization flows for underbanked regions and provide alternative payment options (e.g., crypto wallets, partner banks).

- Funders could also explore region-specific cohorts or partnerships with diaspora organizations to build visibility and resilience.

Thank you to all the contributors:

Information Guidelines Appendix

Integrity - Acting honestly, fairly and ethically when gathering and presenting information

Checklist

☑ **Clearly label or indicate the difference between factual information** and your opinions / personal take

Examples

Video:

- Say it directly: "Here are the facts" vs. "In my opinion…"
- Use on-screen text overlays or captions to flag opinions vs. reports
- On TikTok, consider adding text like "my take" in corner overlays or closed captions

Audio:

- Use clear verbal signposting: "According to… Based on the data… In a report from…" / "Now here's what I think…"
- Transition between factual reporting and commentary using music or tone shift

Written:

- Use headings or phrasing like "The Facts" vs. "My View"
- Italics or section breaks can help delineate clearly
- Add inline context: "According to X… Here's how I interpret that"

Integrity - Acting honestly, fairly and ethically when gathering and presenting information

Checklist

☑ **Name the source of the information and credit other people's work** (where possible) by providing links back to the original work

Examples

Video:

- Mention the source verbally and display a link or source name onscreen

- Use the YouTube video description to link full sources

- TikTok: verbally cite in-video + mention source in caption or pinned comment

Audio:

- Mention the source during the episode ("Credit to…"), ideally with short context

- Include links or citations in show notes / episode description

Written:

- Use hyperlinks for direct attribution: "as reported by [source]"

- Include footnotes or a "Sources" section at the end when linking out isn't possible

Transparency - Being open about who you are, how you work and any potential conflicts of interest

Checklist

Give your audiences **visibility on who is behind the content** (including relevant background, experience or lived expertise) and **anything that might influence the coverage or your independence** (what is covered or how it is covered)

Examples

Video:

- Mention your background or lived experience briefly on camera
- Include a line in your "About" section or intro slide with context
- TikTok bio or pinned intro video can help build that long-term trust

Audio:

- Introduce yourself with a consistent short bio at the start or end
- Share your background during discussions when relevant to the topic

Written:

- Add a short bio in the footer ("Written by X, a former [role]...")
- Use sidebars or intros to explain your perspective on the issue

Transparency - Being open about who you are, how you work and any potential conflicts of interest

Checklist

☑ Be **open about who owns your channel / company, your sources or funding** and **any conflict of interest** resulting from your financial situation

Examples

Video:

- Mention it on screen or in voiceover: "This video was made possible by…"

- Include disclaimers or funding info in the video description

- Pin a comment stating affiliations or sponsor independence

Audio:

- Say it clearly in intro or outro: "Supported by…" or "No sponsors — funded by our listeners"

- Add disclosure in show notes or episode descriptions

Written:

- Include a funding statement at the bottom: "This article was supported by…"

- Create a transparency or funding section if part of a larger newsletter site

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Examples

Video:

- Use call-to-action phrases: "What do you think? Drop a comment below"
- Respond in the comments or in a follow-up video
- Use polls or Q&A features (YouTube Community, TikTok replies)

Audio:

- Ask for voice memos, emails, or reviews during episodes
- Feature listener questions/comments in future episodes

Written:

- End with: "Reply to this email — I read every response"
- Embed a survey or quick question link

Encourage audiences to provide their feedback or questions and respond to that in a constructive way

- Add reader comments/feedback in future newsletters or follow-ups