

The background features a dark purple field on the left, transitioning into a series of geometric shapes on the right. These include a teal triangle with diagonal stripes, a large yellow square, a red triangle, and several teal and purple triangles and squares of various sizes and orientations.

# Unleashing the Power of Collaboration

A Toolkit for Community Newsrooms

Bridget Thoreson  
NYPA, March 2025



## **Bridget Thoreson**

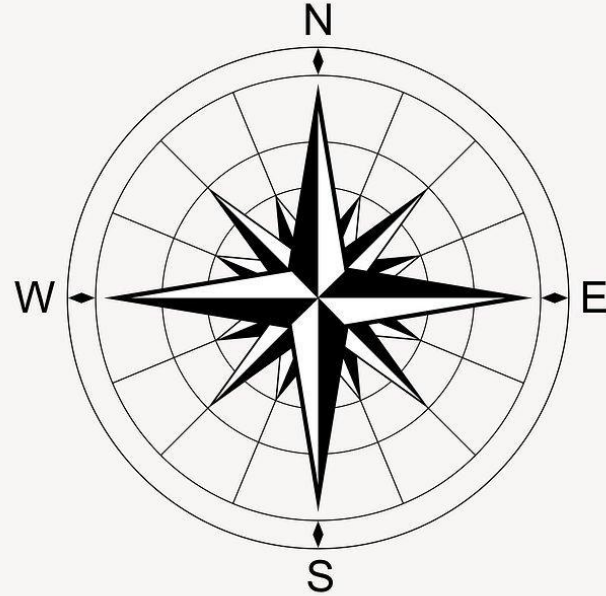
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## TODAY'S SESSION

- Presentation: Collaboration Toolkit lessons learned
- Small groups: Build your own collaboration
- Getting started
- Staying connected





What does it take...  
for community-centered  
newsrooms to collaborate?

# Defining editorial collaboration

- Producing journalism together that would not be possible separately

## **Corcoran Is Sinking, and We Might Know Why.**

We are excited to announce the publication of our latest partner project with SJV Water and The New York Times on the sinking of a small town in California's San Joaquin Valley.

# Building community-based collaborations



Attendees work together at the Collaborative Journalism Summit during the RJI & INN workshop: Expand your impact and resources. Photo: Will Allen-DuPraw.

- INN and RJI built a toolkit based on in-depth interviews with 39 outlets.
- Goal: overcome barriers for community-based outlets to collaborate.



Planet  
Detroit

RESOLVE PHILLY

The Seattle Times



The  
Salt Lake  
Tribune

MISSISSIPPI  
FREE PRESS

THE APPEAL



black  
voice  
news

Newsrooms by geography served

National

18.0%

Regional

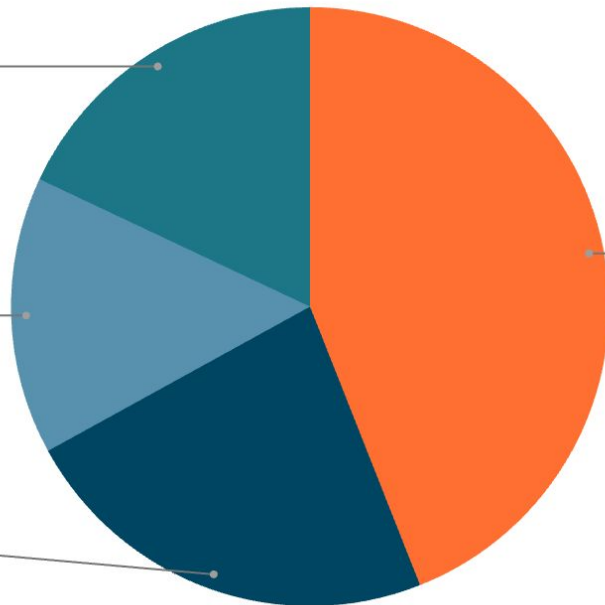
15.0%

State

23.0%

Local

44.0%





“It helps us think bigger thoughts. It helps us leverage our resources. It helps us see the bigger picture.”

- Carla Baranauckas, Montclair  
Local News



# Key insights from newsroom interviews

1

**“Collaboration” means  
different things to  
different newsrooms**



“It's like kids in a sandbox. They don't have to share.”

- Dee Hall, Wisconsin Watch

# Key insights from newsroom interviews

1

“Collaboration” means  
different things to different  
newsrooms

2

**Often seen as “dessert”**

# Key insights from newsroom interviews

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“Collaboration” means  
different things to different  
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2

Often seen as “dessert”

3

**Biggest challenges:  
communication, project  
management**

# Key insights from newsroom interviews

1

“Collaboration” means  
different things to different  
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2

Often seen as “dessert”

3

Biggest challenges:  
communication, project  
management

4

**Funding is  
uncertain/unclear**

# Key insights from newsroom interviews

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Biggest challenges:  
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Funding is  
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**Impact measurement is  
crucial**

# Key insights from newsroom interviews

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“Collaboration” means  
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Biggest challenges:  
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Funding is  
uncertain/unclear

5

Impact measurement is  
crucial

6

**Communities not always  
at the core**

# Collaboration setup

- Build
- Fund
- Manage

## Collaboration Worksheet

Individual: What can your newsroom contribute to a collab

Group: Share your potential contributions with your group & then decide together what your collaboration will look like / be

Group: assign roles to those at your table and define what these mean for your collaboration

Project facilitator	
Promotion facilitator	
Content facilitator	
Funding facilitator	
Community engagement facilitator	
Other	

Group: Mission/values alignment

What are our shared values and mission for this project?





“When you see opportunities to really marry expertise, I think that’s where you want to run.”


- Sara Hebel, Open Campus

# Building a collaboration

- Finding partners
  - What's your goal?
  - Who shares that goal or could achieve their own goal through collaboration?
  - How can you work together equitably?
  - When should you walk away?

## Building equity in journalism collaborations

By Angilee Shah



A collaborative journalism  
guide from the Center  
for Cooperative Media at  
Montclair State University



“It generally works better to focus on something where there aren’t lots of people established on that beat already.”

- Eugene Sonn, Resolve Philly



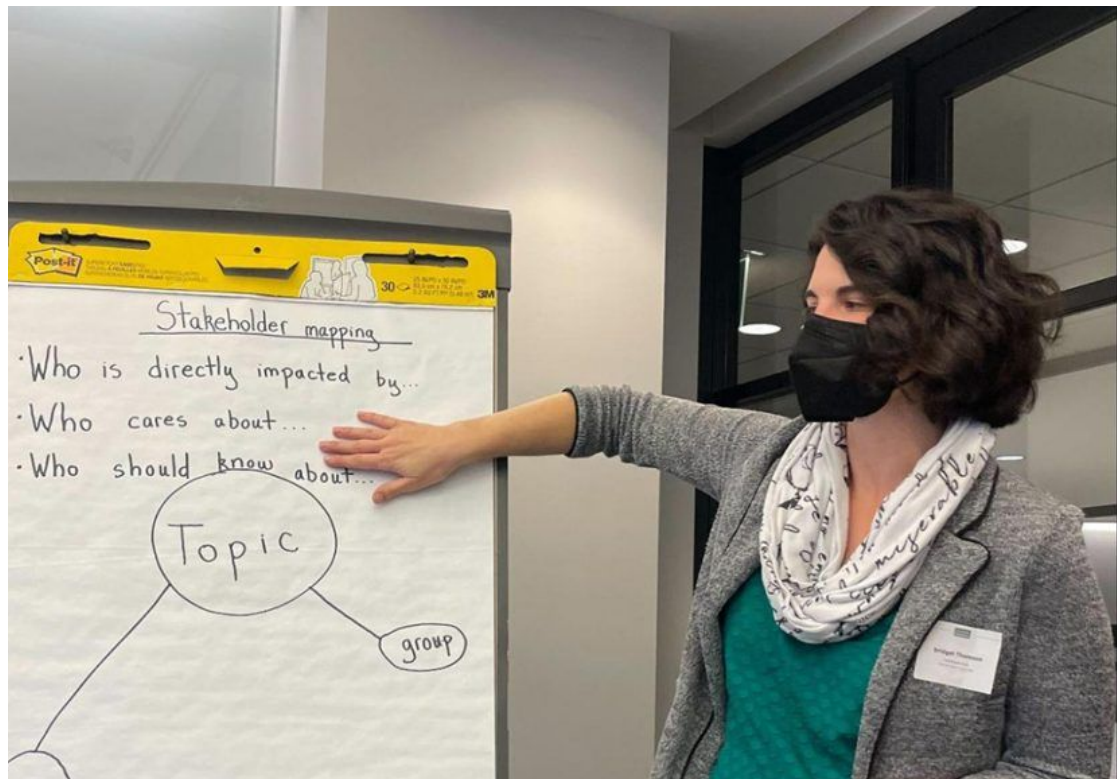
# Funding a collaboration

- Expenses
  - Resource costs
  - Infrastructure costs
  - Additional hires
- Revenue
  - Grants and foundations (most common funding source in the early stages)
  - Sponsorships
  - Individual donations



# Managing a collaboration

- Setting expectations
- Herding cats
  - Meetings
  - Deadlines
  - Communication channels
- Tracking milestones
- Measuring impact






## Collaboration Toolkit

INN and RJI embarked upon this project with the goal to build a resource to help newsrooms collaborate in sustainable, useful and serviceable ways. We heard from our members (INN) and partners (RJI) that collaborations are harder than they need to be, so we built this toolkit to help journalists break down some of those barriers and expand their impact and resources.

We want you to be able to use this guide to inform your own collaborative work. We hope you mark up these pages, make copies, share links and suggest additions. Our nightmare is that this is consigned to gather dust. Our dream is that you find it a valuable resource that informs your decisions at every step of the collaboration process. Even if that means walking away from projects or partners because they're not a good fit.

### This toolkit includes:

- A searchable database to help you find collaboration partners
- Budgeting guidance
- Revenue streams from philanthropic to events and sponsored content
- Project management guidance
- Templates in each section for you to utilize 

Produced by Kat Duncan and Bridget Thoreson // Launched Feb 2024

Additional contributions to this toolkit by the Local Media Association and the Wichita Journalism Collaborative // January 2025



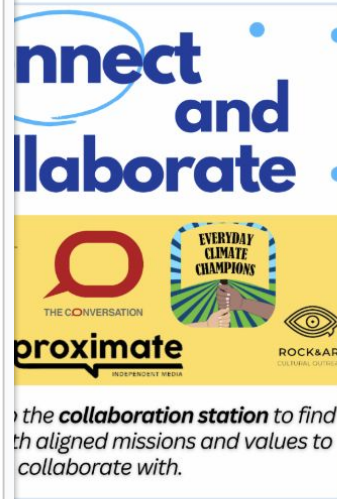
Find the guide online at [rjionline.org/collaboration-toolkit](https://rjionline.org/collaboration-toolkit)

Want to connect with us? Find Kat Duncan at [Duncank@rjionline.org](mailto:Duncank@rjionline.org)

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## collaboration

[self to the collaboration station to help potential](#)  
igned mission, values and/or audience.



o the **collaboration station** to find  
th aligned missions and values to  
collaborate with.

[tners for your project](#), mission and audience.

poration is ensuring you have clear communication  
e on shared expectations. This includes how the  
funding and the mission of the project.

# What's inside the Collaboration Toolkit

## Searchable Database

Find collaboration partners for your projects. Easily filter and connect with potential collaborators.

## Funding Guidance

Detailed funding guidance and ready-to-use templates to assist you in securing financial support for your collaborations.

## Project Management

Comprehensive templates to streamline your collaborative efforts from start to finish.

## Research Findings

Findings from our interviews with newsrooms on common challenges with collaborations.

## Key Roles

Appoint staff to important functions for the collaboration.

## Discussion Worksheet

Guided questions to discuss setting up a collaborative journalism project.



## Questions?

Get the toolkit: [rjionline.org/collaboration-toolkit](https://rjionline.org/collaboration-toolkit)



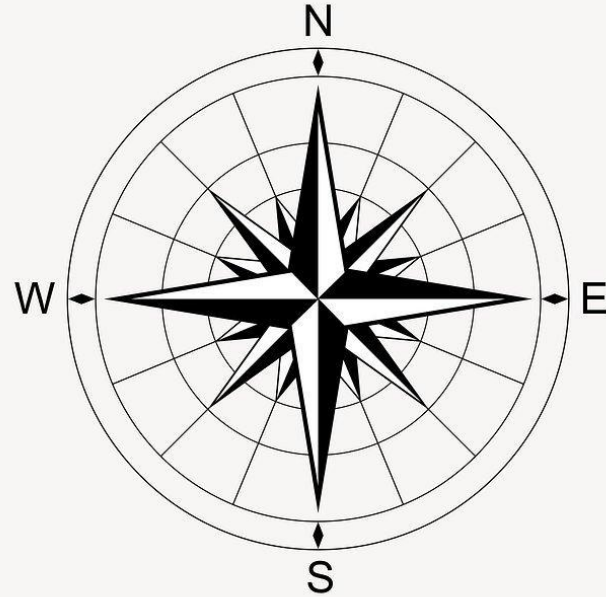
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*Thanks to Kat Duncan at RJI for partnering on this project.*

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# Collaboration toolkit

- Design a pilot reporting collaboration in your group.
  - Example: Housing insecurity in your area
  - Or use your own idea

## Collaboration Worksheet

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Other	

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What are our shared values and mission for this project?

# Page 1, Contributions, Roles, Mission/values

# 10:00

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Group: Mission/values alignment

What are our shared values and mission for this project?

# Page 2, Mission/values, Communication

# 10:00

What will success look like when we are done?

How will this collab serve our communities?

How will we measure impact?

## Group: Communication

How do we agree to work with each other? (code of conduct)

How will we make decisions?

How will we settle disagreements?

How will we handle someone dropping out or unable to continue?

How will we sign off on work prior to publishing/completion?

What are our dealbreakers (cause the project to stop/end before finishing)?

# Page 3, Funding, Conclusion

# 10:00

## Group: Funding

What would additional funding be utilized for?

Do we want to raise funding individually or as a collective? Why?

What type of funding are we willing to accept? And from where/who?

What types of funding or sources of funding would be definite 'nos'?

## Group: Conclusion

The main challenges we identified to achieving this collaboration

The main needs we identified (that we cannot do/supply ourselves)

Anything else we think would help us be successful if provided/offered by a third party

# Collaboration toolkit: Discussion

- What surprised you about the conversation?
- What did you learn that you could apply to your own work?

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Other	

Group: Mission/values alignment

What are our shared values and mission for this project?

## Bonus resources!

Source diversity tracking:

[rjionline.org/source-diversity-tracking-to-ol/](https://rjionline.org/source-diversity-tracking-to-ol/)

API stop doing:

[americanpressinstitute.org/make-your-stop-doing-list](https://americanpressinstitute.org/make-your-stop-doing-list)





How do I start working on collaborations?

# My journey: Journalism > Marketing > Consulting



2008-2015

- Reporter
- Online Editor
- Local Editor



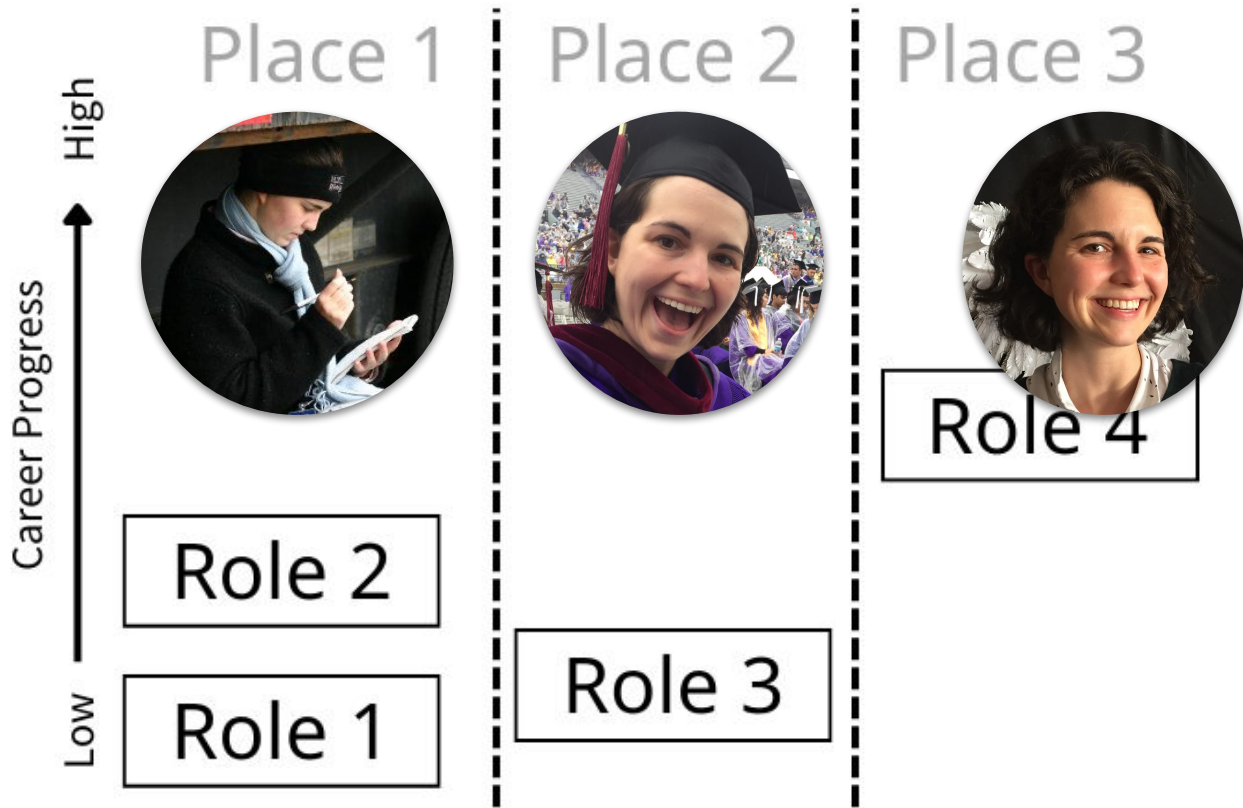
2015-2018

- Audience Development Specialist

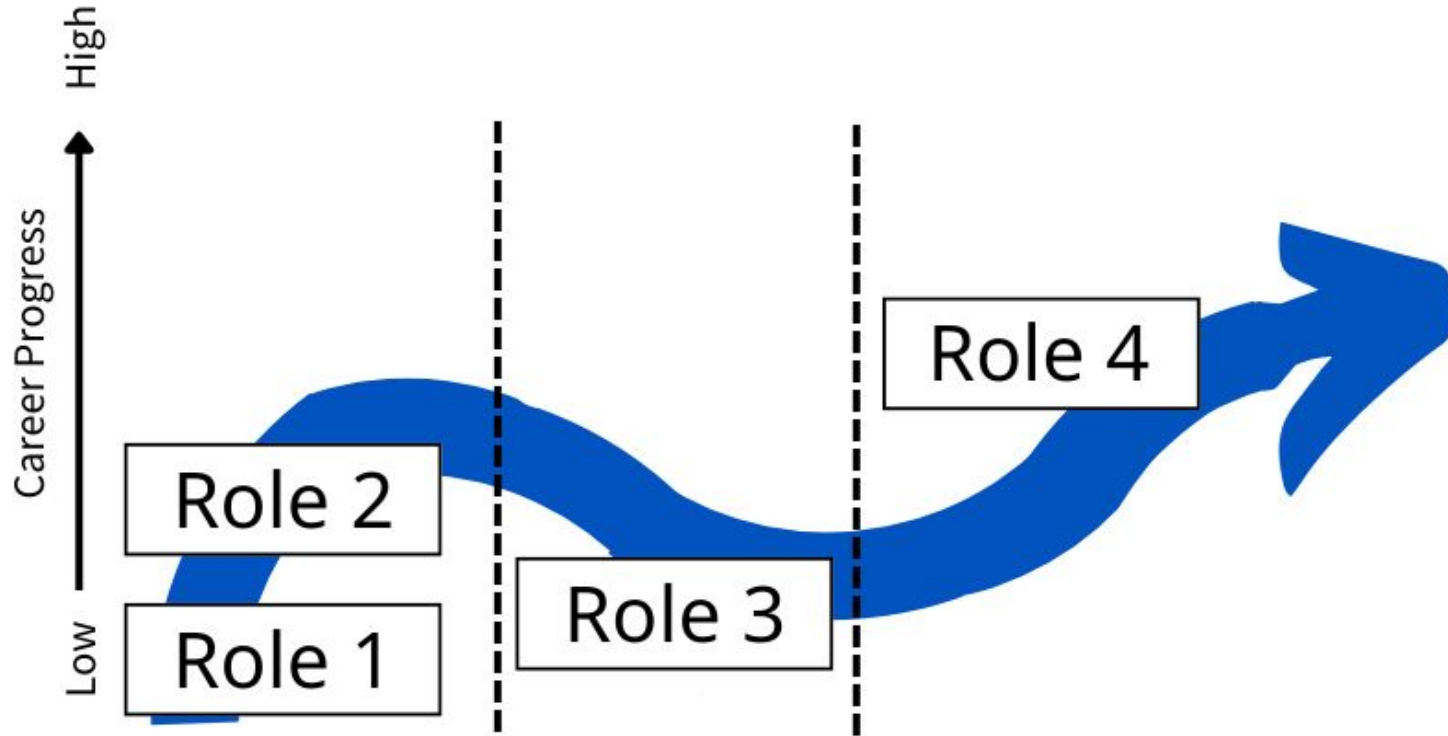


2018-present

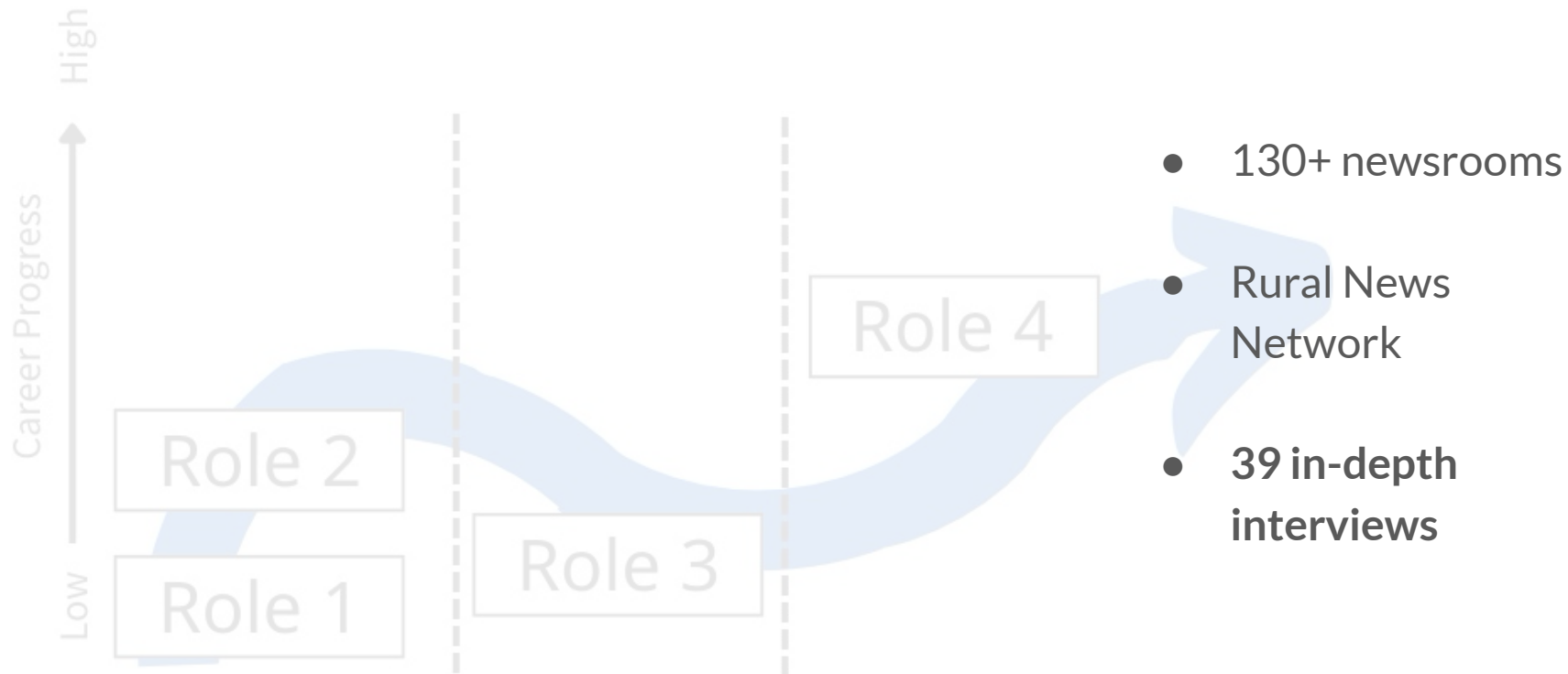
- Consultant
- Director, Collaborations
- CPO/Dream Wrangler



# My journey: Journalism > Marketing > Consulting



# My journey: Journalism > Marketing > Consulting



# Qualities of a strong collaboration project manager



- ✓ Curious
- ✓ Mission-focused
- ✓ Keeps everything on track
- ✓ Communicates well

Attendees work together at the Collaborative Journalism Summit during the RJI & INN workshop: Expand your impact and resources. Photo: Will Allen-DuPraw.



## Staying connected



Contact:  
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- Get the toolkit:  
[rjionline.org/collaboration-toolkit](https://rjionline.org/collaboration-toolkit)
- Explore Your Career River: 30 days free  
[CareerRiver.Substack.com/NavigatorChat](https://CareerRiver.Substack.com/NavigatorChat)



- Center for Cooperative Media:  
[centerforcooperativemedia.org](https://centerforcooperativemedia.org)