

EXECUTIVE DECK · LONG-FORM REPORT COMPANION

Where your entity sits *in this picture.*

A structural map of the US progressive-media cohort. The atlas presents the picture; cohort principals draw their own operational conclusions.

PROJECT TITLE

Progressive Media Ecosystem Atlas (US)

VERSION · DATE

v1.1 · May 2026

UNIVERSE

197 entities · 12 sections · 10+ clusters

The foundational diagnostic.

5–15x

u p s t r e a m s u p p l i e r r a t i o

The cohort produces investigative and accountability journalism that mainstream legacy press cites at roughly five-to-fifteen times the rate at which it cites mainstream press back.

This reframes the cohort's structural position.

From *alternative* — receiving, repackaging, editorializing the news mainstream press produces — to **upstream supplier**: the source of editorial substance that downstream legacy synthesis depends on.

METHODOLOGY

Section 12 hard-floor citation counts • Pulitzer-event anchors across project window • structured citation flow analysis • documented in Phase 8b §3.

The cohort universe.

ENTITIES

SECTIONS

CLUSTERS

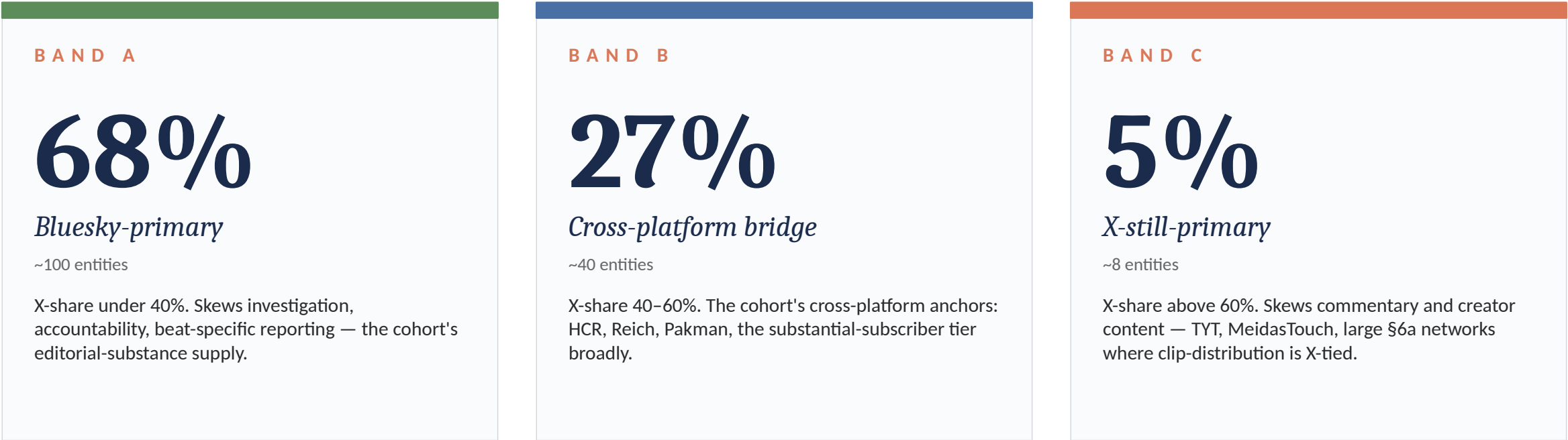
CITATION BANDS



Clusters capture citation and partnership coherence — they cut across sections.

Cluster E (nonprofit investigative) in §3 · Cluster C (Substack-anchor) in §4 · Cluster G (worker-cooperative) in §6d · Section 11 spans multiple clusters.

The cohort has bifurcated by platform.



The bifurcation tracks editorial substance. The 5–15× supply flows substantially through Band A; audience-reach amplification flows substantially through Band C. The two functions connect through Band B's bridge entities.

Consolidation versus diffusion.

RIGHT-CODED ECOSYSTEM

~10–15 anchor entities

Consolidated

Daily Wire • Newsmax • Turning Point Media • Breitbart • Fox News as institutional anchor

Substantial operational scale • coordinated narrative production • centralized funder relationships • lower internal-coordination cost.

PROGRESSIVE COHORT

197 entities • 12 sections

Diffuse

Disparate ownership • disparate funders • editorial diversity • local-and-regional capacity (Section 9) without right-coded equivalent at scale.

Resilience against single-entity failure • narrative-innovation surface area • coordination cost is the resilience trade-off.

Structural observation, not normative judgment. The asymmetry has consequences for both ecosystems. Cohort connective-tissue stress points (Slide 9) are the diffusion-and-resilience trade-off made visible.

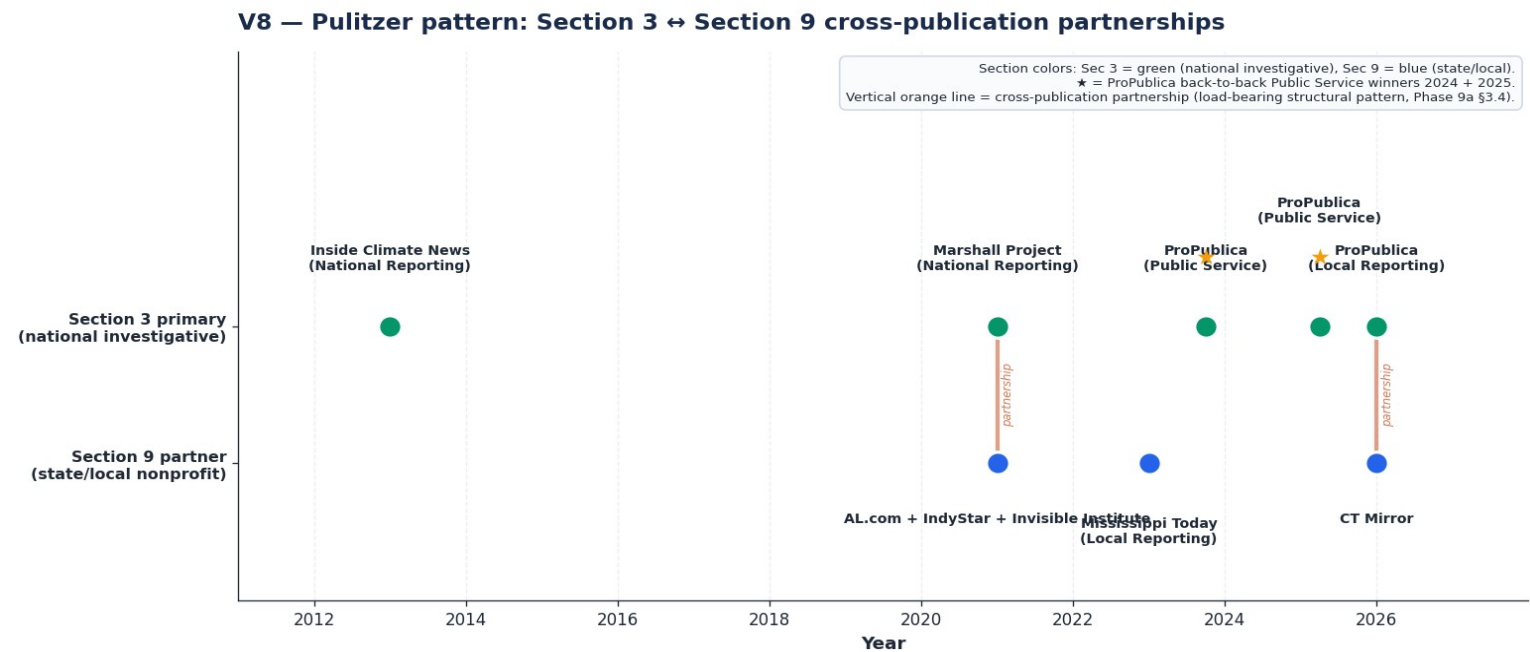
The 501(c)(3) regulatory mechanism.

Structural, not motivational.

IRS rules prohibit substantial partisan political advocacy by 501(c)(3) organizations. This does not require 501(c)(3) entities to be less progressive than LLC entities — they are not. It requires their editorial form to respect the partisan-advocacy boundary. **The downstream effect is a structural correlation between funder concentration and editorial form.**



Coordination precedent, externally validated.



Source: Phase 1 spine + Phase 9a §3.4. Coverage may be incomplete for cohort Pulitzer recognitions before 2020; refresh-cycle work should backfill 2014-2019 cases.

THE PATTERN

State-nonprofit (Section 9) reporting paired with national investigative-nonprofit (Section 3) amplification, recognized across five-plus years of Pulitzer cycles.

WHY IT MATTERS

Anchored on institutional infrastructure *difficult for the right-coded ecosystem to replicate*. Right-coded state-nonprofit infrastructure is essentially absent.

2021

Mauled

Marshall Project + AL.com + IndyStar + Invisible Institute — National Reporting (four-way)

2023 • 2024 • 2025

Backchannel • Friends of the Court • Life of the Mother

Mississippi Today Local Reporting; ProPublica back-to-back Public Service

2026

On the Hook

ProPublica + CT Mirror — Local Reporting (state-nonprofit + national-hub)

Coordination already in motion.

CROOKED MEDIA AS COORDINATING HUB

3 formal cross-cluster pairings.

No other cohort entity participates in three formal cross-cluster pairings. Most participate in zero or one.

SpeechCenter

Crooked × The Bulwark
Cluster A → Cluster D

Liberal Tiers

Crooked × BTC + Chorus cluster
Cluster A → Cluster B

Crooked on MS Now

Crooked × Versant (post-MSNBC)
Cluster A → Cluster I

WORKER-COOPERATIVE TIER (§ 6 d)

Labor-departure interface.

8 entities (2020–2024). Labor-shock events at legacy media convert into worker-cooperative formation: editorial labor remains in journalism via a different ownership structure.

2020 Defector ex-Deadspin / G/O	2022 Hell Gate ex-Gothamist / WNYC	2023 404 Media ex-Vice Motherboard
2023 Aftermath ex-Kotaku / G/O	2024 Hearing Things ex-Pitchfork / Condé Nast	2024 The 51st ex-DCist / WAMU

These are the cohort's already-existing coordination patterns — not prescriptions. The atlas documents what is, not what should be.

What's likely to break.

Aggregator-keystone tier ~60% within 24 months Public Notice (Rupar, one-person) + MeidasTouch (no durable monetization). Watch: Daily Bluesky cadence cessation • Substack tier cuts • MeidasTouch layoff posture	Bridge-keystone (Strict Scrutiny) ~60% within 36 months Three-host academic-conversation structure; bridges Cluster J → Cluster A. Watch: Host dean / chair appointments • federal judiciary or DOJ transitions • show cadence
Foundation withdrawal ~40% within 36 months OSF wind-down already in motion; Ford flat-to-declining. Small Cluster E entities most exposed. Watch: Strategic-plan updates • grant-program closures • senior program-officer departures	Substack platform pivot ~50% within 36 months Newton/Platformer 2024 departure as leading indicator. Cluster C is platform-defined. Watch: Major creator platform-criticism posts • competing-platform feature parity • departure cascade
TRANSITIONING ENTITY • MONITORING CBS News under Bari Weiss as Editor-in-Chief Appointed October 2025 (Paramount Skydance / Ellison)	
6 MONTHS Nov 2026 Editorial-pattern shift on 3+ beats? 12 MONTHS May 2027 Citation-rate vs 2024–25 baseline? 24 MONTHS May 2028 Full reclassification decision	

When to revisit.

LAYER-SPECIFIC REFRESH CADENCE

L1 — Entity universe	Annual (Q4→Q1)
L2 — Financial structure	Annual (with 990 cycle)
L3 — Audience & reach	Semi-annual
L4 — Editorial form & stance	Event-driven + annual review
L5 — Network & citation	Annual (platform-pivot interrupts)

CROSS-CUTTING • 6-MONTH STRESS-POINT SCAN

Focused review of the four stress points + CBS News + secondary watching priors. Output: 1–2 page memo confirming status-quo or triggering off-cycle layer updates.

SCHEDULED ACTION CALENDAR

Nov 2026	First 6-month stress-point scan
Six months after report publication; tests four forward priors against accumulated evidence	
Q1 2027	First annual atlas refresh (v2.0)
Entity-universe updates • 990 cycle • audience figures • stance shifts • citation rebalancing	
May 2027	CBS News 12-month window
Citation-rate analysis vs 2024–25 baseline; load-bearing decision-point	
May 2028	CBS News 24-month window

Full reclassification decision • forward applicability boundary

Locate your entity in this picture.

A structural-position checklist. Cohort principals use this to see where their institution sits on the map — the operational conclusions are theirs to draw.

SECTION / SUB-COHORT Where does the entity primarily sit? \$1 Legacy · \$2 Digital · \$3 Nonprofit-investigative · \$4 Substack · \$5 Explainer · \$6a–6d Creator-LLC/coop · \$7 Socialist · \$8 Specialty · \$9 State/local · \$10 Watchdog · \$11 Beat-creator · \$12 Adjacent	CLUSTER Which structural cluster (A–J, multi)? A Crooked · B Chorus · C Substack-anchor · D Bulwark · E Nonprofit-investigative · F Substack-departed · G Worker-cooperative · H Academic/think-tank · I Cable-progressive · J Academic-law · multi for bridges	CITATION BAND Bluesky-primary, bridge, or X-primary? Band A (X-share under 40%) · Band B (40–60%) · Band C (above 60%). Editorial team's actual platform activity, not nominal account presence.
BUSINESS MODEL What's the primary revenue anchor? Sub (subscription-led) · Mixed (foundation + reader) · Owner (private patient capital) · Funder (501(c)(3) foundation) · Coop (worker-cooperative member revenue) · Corp (corporate-network subsidiary)	FUNDER CONCENTRATION Low / Medium / Medium-High / High? Low: no single funder above ~20%. High: above ~60% or single-owner / single-foundation anchored. Bimodal across sections — most \$4/6a/6b at Low; \$12 uniformly Medium-High.	EXPOSED STRESS POINTS Which of the four does the entity face? Aggregator-keystone tier · Bridge-keystone risk · Foundation withdrawal · Substack platform pivot. Plus CBS News watching prior + Bulwark watching prior where relevant.

Per-entity coding is in the Phase 9b CSV (Drive folder). The atlas presents the structural picture; conclusions remain with the cohort.