

U.S. Amateur Radio — Who Are We?

Research to Inform ARDC's Grantmaking, Outreach, and Future Investment

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Confidential proposal · For ARDC internal evaluation and discussion

The Assignment

ARDC has asked several excellent starting questions for evidence-based investment

Who are U.S. amateur radio operators?

Why ARDC needs it

To understand who amateur radio is reaching today, which populations may be underrepresented, and how grantmaking can be guided by evidence rather than assumptions.

Where do they get technical information?

Why ARDC needs it

To see where operators actually go for technical information, so ARDC and its grantees can communicate, educate, and support learning through the channels people use.

What got them involved in amateur radio?

Why ARDC needs it

To understand the influences, experiences, and learning paths that bring people into amateur radio, so ARDC can support pathways that work and identify gaps.

The Opportunity is Bigger

Use ARDC's three questions to seed a durable, open research asset for U.S. amateur radio

Not a one-time survey; a foundational asset enabling ongoing, repeatable research.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESEARCH ASSET ARDC AND THE COMMUNITY NEED

Representative

Anchored in the FCC ULS population frame.

Multidimensional

Describes people, participation, pathways, behavior, and context.

Queryable

Supports broad profiles and narrow analytic slices.

Open & Reusable

Documented data and methods for community research.

Extensible & Repeatable

Add new measures and sources — and support longitudinal research over time.

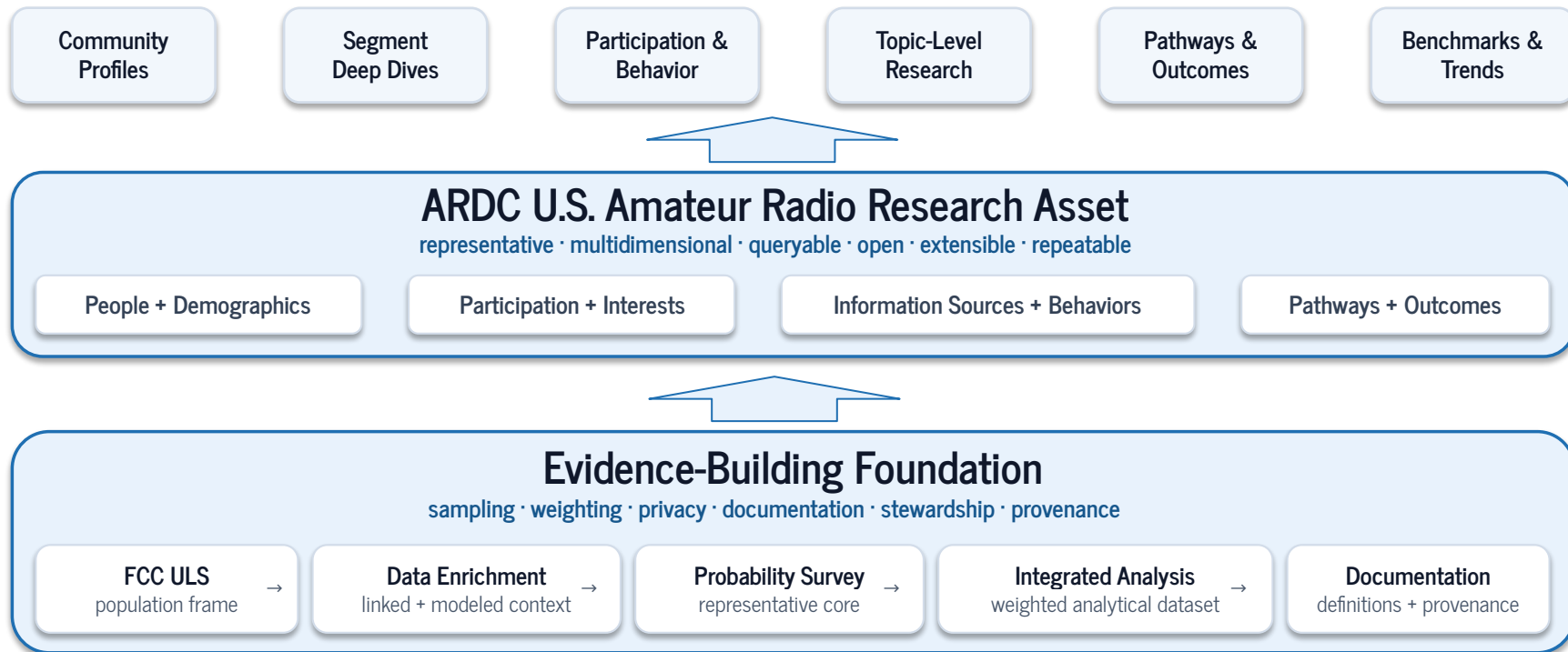
Decision-Driven

Measures what ARDC needs to guide grantmaking and outreach.

Proposed Research Architecture

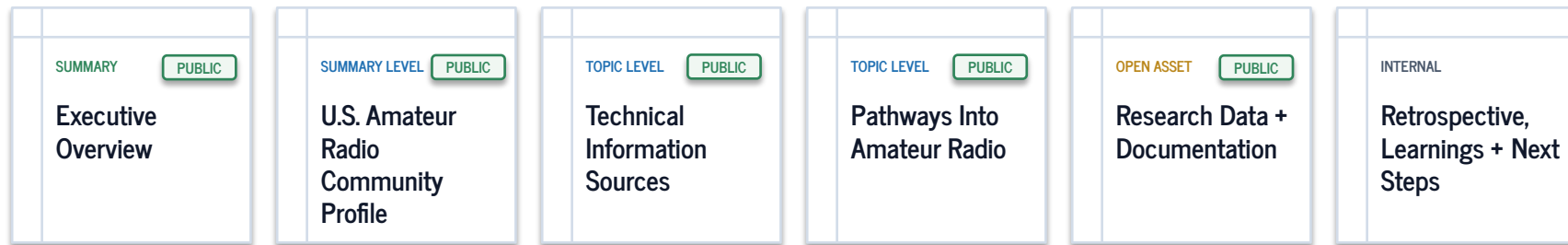
Start with a defensible data foundation, curate it and build reports and insight on top of it

Analysis & Research Outputs



What ARDC Gets from This Project

A public research package, an internal learning cycle, and a reusable data asset



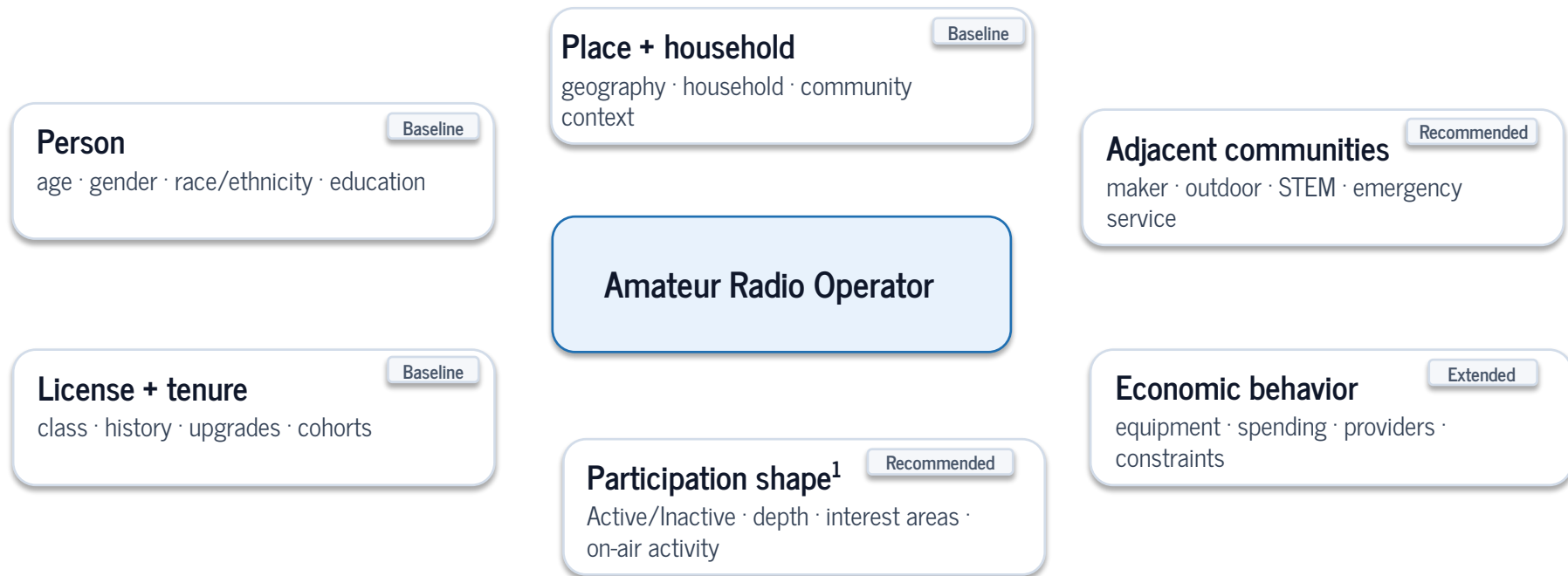
Publication-ready from the start

- The Executive Overview and Core Reports will be designed as public-facing ARDC research.
- Internal materials can separately capture retrospective learnings, operational lessons, and recommended next steps.

¹ Restricted-use data will be retained under appropriate privacy controls.

ARDC Question 1 — What Is the Amateur Radio Community Profile?

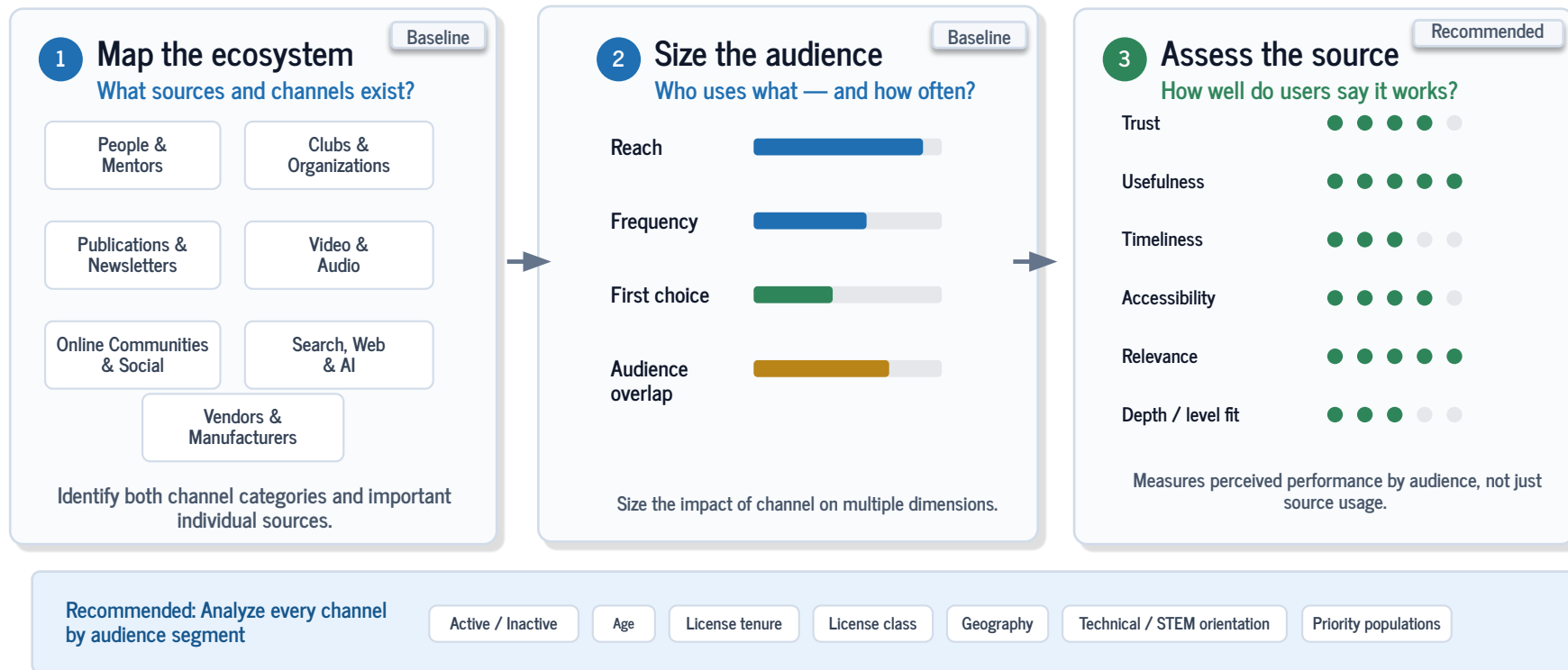
The profile is not one attribute; it is a set of facets that together describe people and participation in amateur radio



¹ Recommended adds Active/Inactive, participation depth, interest areas, and technical/STEM-oriented segmentation.

ARDC Question 2 — Where Do You Get Technical Information?

Map the information ecosystem, size its audiences, and understand which sources work best for which operators.



Result: not just a list of sources, but an information map ARDC can use for outreach, grantee guidance, and priority communities.

ARDC Question 3 — What Got You Involved in Amateur Radio?

Separate key entry path milestones — then compare which pathways are associated with sustained participation.

ENTRY PATHWAY STAGES

Baseline

1 Exposure

How was amateur radio first introduced?

- family/friend
- school/STEM
- emergency service
- media
- adjacent hobby
- career/tech

2 Motivation

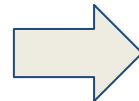
Why did it become worth pursuing?

- technical curiosity
- community Service
- personal emergency preparedness
- outdoor activities
- competition

3 Learn + License

How did interest become a license?

- self-study
- online course
- club class
- mentor/Elmer



PARTICIPATION OUTCOMES

Recommended

Active / Inactive

Depth + type of participation

Technical learning + experimentation

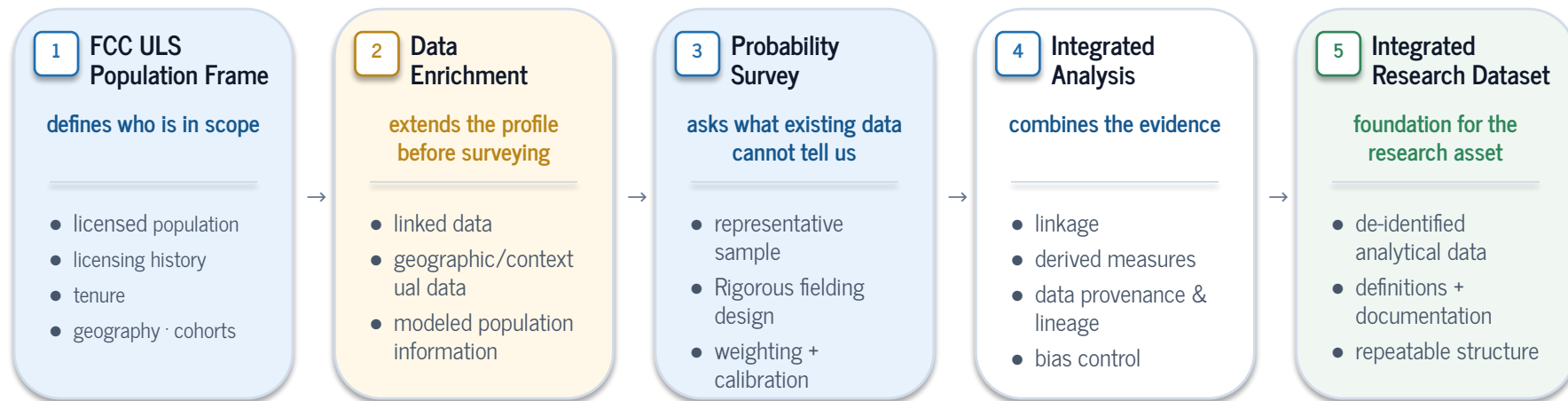
Community involvement

On-air activity

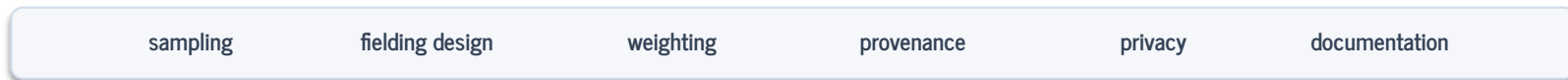
Growth or disengagement

The Evidence-Building Foundation

Start with the licensed population, enrich what is already knowable, survey for what remains unknown.



METHODOLOGICAL DISCIPLINE END-TO-END



Scope and Investment Options

Three levels of investment, from a rigorous core to deeper insight.

Baseline

~\$90K

Answer the assignment as posed

- Representative national study
- Demographics, geography, licensing profile
- Technical source categories, named sources, reach and frequency
- Exposure, motivation, learning/licensing pathways
- Core reports + research dataset

Recommended

~\$115K

Add the highest-value decision insight

- Everything in Baseline
- Active / Inactive and participation profile
- Interest areas, including technical/STEM orientation
- Information-source assessment
- Pathways and post-license outcomes
- Selective enrichment or oversampling where high-value

Extended

up to ~\$150K

Develop more of the asset's potential

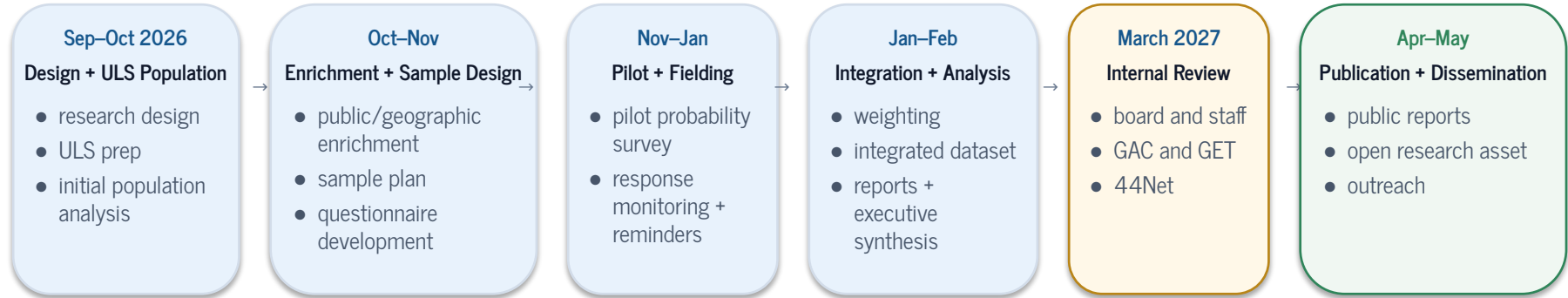
- Everything in Recommended
- Deeper priority-population and crossed-segment analysis
- Broader enrichment and larger oversamples
- Advanced participation / engagement modeling
- Selected qualitative or specialized studies
- Stronger repeat-wave / longitudinal design

Package estimates represent total project investment. Jim's professional services are fixed-fee/installments; other vendors can be contracted and paid directly by ARDC.

Project Schedule

The calendar is stable across scope levels: build the evidence foundation first, then field, integrate, review, and publish.

TARGET TIMELINE



Higher tier options change depth, precision, and deliverables more than the overall calendar.

Why Jim

One accountable lead combining research leadership, data expertise, amateur-radio knowledge, and strategic judgment.

Market Research + Data-Driven Strategy

Design research programs that answer investment-level decision questions, not merely investigation/exploration.

FCC ULS Experience

Years working with ULS structure, licensing history, and analytical possibilities.

Amateur Radio Domain Knowledge

Enough domain fluency to know which distinctions actually matter in the real community.

Data + Research Asset Thinking

Build reusable datasets, definitions, and reports that support future analysis and benchmarking.

Five Methodological Questions to Get Right

Some of the important design issues behind a credible national study

1. What is the sampling strategy?
2. How will we identify and control important sources of bias?
3. What should we build internally, and where should we use outside specialists?
4. What should our stance be on privacy?
5. How do we include youth safely and responsibly?