

# Top examples

This is a running, non-exhaustive list of examples, inspiration, and practical guidance to support Advancing Democracy Innovation Fund projects. It reflects approaches newsrooms across the country are already testing across engagement, solutions journalism, voter guides, and civic information. Please feel free to suggest examples, notes, or resources as your project evolves.

Questions? [Jaisal@solutionsjournalism.org](mailto:Jaisal@solutionsjournalism.org).

**ICYMI: Join our [Democracy Peer Network](#)**

## **BUILDING TRUST**

- [Guide: How to Create an FAQ About Your Reporting](#)
- [Examples from Capital B and WITF](#)
- [Elections Trust Kit](#)
- [Transparency Trust Kit](#)
- [Explain your election coverage goals with a mission statement and FAQ page - Trusting News](#)
- [Define and share your mission for covering the election - Trusting News](#)
- Building Trust with Sources  
<https://trustingnews.org/trustkits/sourcing-trust/>
- Anti-Polarization Checklist <https://bit.ly/trustingnewspolarization>

## **ENGAGEMENT:**

- Residents turn out to 'Flip the Script' at first-ever Mat-Su Sentinel election connection event:  
<https://www.matsusentinel.com/residents-turn-out-to-flip-the-script-at-first-ever-mat-su-sentinel-election-connection-event/>
- **Webinar: Engagement Strategies to Strengthen Your Democracy Reporting**  
[Watch](#) here and view the [deck here](#).

## **VOTER GUIDES:**

- DRAFT: [Guide to creating solutions-focused voter guides](#)
- Austin Common used art and engaged journalism to reach young, non-regular news readers ahead of Austin's tax-rate election in November 2025. The

newsroom created [an illustrated voter guide](#) about Proposition Q, which affects city funding for homelessness services, parks and affordability.

- Amy shared lessons and impact from their illustrated voter guide at a recent Peer Network meeting:

<https://zoom.us/clips/share/t9zIS9pDTvuRLqUAQ64kfQ>

## ENGAGEMENT VIDEOS:

- The Arizona Republic [produced a six-part multimedia civic engagement series demystifying local governance](#) through short video explainers covering topics ranging from how to report potholes to how residents can influence city decisions before council votes. The Republic is now engaged with civic partners to host in-person events extending through January 2026, with plans to scale the project statewide.

## SOLUTIONS JOURNALISM:

- **WATCH: Introduction to Solutions Journalism for Beat Reporters** [View the slide deck, resources and watch recording.](#)
- This [worksheet](#) contains all resources from the session and is designed to help you plan your next solutions journalism stories (view-only, make a copy to save).
- Texas Standard has produced a series of solutions-focused stories on adult education, including reporting [on a little-known Mexican government program](#) that partners with US-based organizations to provide classes to Mexican immigrants. Their other stories include:
  - [‘Love your neighbor as yourself’: Texas churches expand English programs for immigrant students](#)
  - [Immigrants with degrees often struggle to find jobs. Adult education programs are trying to help](#)
  - [Adult education programs finally got federal funding. But for some, the damage was already done.](#)
- The Seattle Times did a [solutions story](#) on what Washington state’s overwhelmed Enchantments region — strained by surging tourism and a collapse in Forest Service staffing — can learn from Colorado’s Maroon Bells system, which has successfully managed crowding. They are also hosting two public discussions to share what they found through their reporting.

- [Police Reform: How To Fix A Watchdog That Will Barely Bark, Let Alone Bite](#) (Honolulu Civil Beat, Jun. 1, 2025)
- [Flexible zoning in NKY builds more varied housing](#) (Link NKY, May 14, 2025)
- [Affordable housing alternatives in NKY: Tackling cost & supply](#)(Link NKY, May 14, 2025)
- [Dallas County's vote centers increase voter convenience but not turnout](#) (Dallas Free Press, Apr. 25, 2025)
- [Vernal Takes a 'Pretty Big Step' to Help Add Businesses and Homes to its Downtown](#) (The Salt Lake Tribune, Apr. 8, 2025)
- [Amid a Housing Crisis, This Utah Program is Helping Increase Homeownership Opportunities](#) (The Salt Lake Tribune, Apr. 3, 2025)
- [These cities give residents a say in the budgets. Is Atlanta next?](#) (Atlanta Civic Circle, Apr. 2, 2025)
- [NKY by the Numbers: Learning loss in BCSD](#) (Link NKY, Mar. 31, 2025)
- [Could participatory budgeting give Atlantans a voice in city spending?](#) (Atlanta Civic Circle, Mar. 19, 2025)
- [Louisiana Expanded Internet Access Through a Federal Program — Now the Future is Uncertain](#) (The Current, Mar. 18, 2025)
- [How One Washington County Is Making Progress on Homelessness](#) (Northwest Public Broadcasting, Mar. 12, 2025)
- [How to give students a quick start in chip manufacturing](#) (Knox Pages, Mar. 5, 2025)
- [Community Connections: How Indianapolis Partnered Up When the Haitians Came](#) (Haitian Times, Mar. 4, 2025)
- [Kansas Sought Homelessness Success Stories. It Stumbled On a Cautionary Tale, Too.](#) (The Journal, Feb. 26, 2025)
- [Beyond the Chip: What can Mount Vernon learn from Sherwood's growth strategy?](#) (Richland Source, Jan. 23, 2025)
- [Where Art Thou, Rebuild?](#) (The Philadelphia Citizen, Jan. 22, 2025)
- [How The Pandemic Shutdown Opened Up Public Access To The Legislature](#) (Honolulu Civil Beat, Jan. 19, 2025)
- [How do the Atlanta Inspector General's powers compare to other cities?](#) (Atlanta Civic Circle, Dec. 19, 2024)
- [Wisconsin Advocates Push Home Energy Efficiency Program Funded With Inflation Reduction Act Dollars](#) (WUWM, Nov. 19, 2024)

# Inspiring Impacts

- Link Nky's [solutions piece](#), for example, became the most-viewed solutions journalism story the outlet has ever published.
- The Salt Lake Tribune received very strong engagement for a story on [the housing crisis](#) when it was told through the perspective of one woman who found affordable housing through a state program. A related Instagram video got 300,242 views, with 11,482 likes, 278 comments and 6,990 shares. It also had 1,157 views on TikTok and 1,767 views on YouTube
- The Texas Standard's social media post featuring its [story](#) on how one nonprofit was making progress against the state's seemingly intractable adult literacy crisis received 177,000 views—99% of which came from people who weren't regular audience members.
- LinkNky said that their package of reporting on solutions to the housing shortage had strong community engagement <https://linknky.com/housing-solutions/> *"We have gotten more page views, users and reach on social media with this project than we have on any other solutions project we have undertaken. We also have a higher number of people signed up to go to our corresponding event, which is on the same topic and features some of the same people we interviewed.*
- Northwest Public Broadcasting hosted an in-person, open house-style event that focused on its story, "[How one Washington county is making progress on homelessness.](#)" *"It was incredibly powerful to hear from our community about our work. One person in attendance said they felt excited by our solutions work, and that it was something they thought was relevant and refreshing in today's climate."*
- Two members of the Honolulu City Charter Commission contacted Civil Beat editor Patti Epler in response to her article on the [Honolulu Police Commission](#). One indicated he is "ready to move" on the "fantastic" suggestions outlined in the solutions article. Another said "I read your thoughtful piece on police reform with great interest. I hope we will see more like it on other pressing issues...Rest assured, we'll [councilmembers] be paying attention." Epler described the coaching received through the fellowship as *"extraordinarily helpful.*

# Peer Network

## Peer Network Videos:

Amy Stansbury of The Austin Common Shared lessons and impact from their illustrated voter guide on a major tax measure on the November ballot. Here's Amy's presentation:

<https://zoom.us/clips/share/t9zIS9pDTvuRLqUAQ64kfQ>

- Here's the Voter guide: <https://theaustincommon.com/elections-101/>
  
- Hugo Balta shared an update on his innovation fund project: [From Crisis to Community: Tackling Double-Up Homelessness Through Compadrazgo](#)
- Hanadi Jordan of Partnership for Public Service introduced the Partnership for Public Service and its new tool, the Federal Harms Tracker – Cost to Your Community <https://ourpublicservice.org/federal-harms-tracker/cost-to-your-community>. [Watch the presentation here.](#)
- Anthony Vetrano, also Partnership for Public Service, discussed how journalists can [the Cost to Your Community interactive map, which shows district-level impacts of federal funding cuts. The Partnership also answered questions about their tool and other resources.](#)

# Trainings & Resources

Here are links to Advancing Democracy trainings resources that begin by crafting mission statements with Trusting News, continue with a deep dive into best practices for community engagement with Hearken, and then learn best practices for reporting on how communities are addressing their biggest challenges with the Solutions Journalism Network.

#### SELF GUIDED COURSE:

[A Better Way to Cover Civic Life: Building Trust Through Listening and Solutions Reporting](#), our free Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) in partnership with the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas, offering a step-by-step introduction to each of these core skills and practical guidance for journalists and newsrooms to start applying them. **This course is free and open to any and everyone.** [Register here.](#)

#### PUBLIC WEBINAR SERIES:

We begin by crafting mission statements with Trusting News, continue with a deep dive into best practices for community engagement with Hearken, and then learn best practices for reporting on how communities are addressing their biggest challenges with the Solutions Journalism Network.

**2025 Webinar Series:** Provides an introduction to the core Advancing Democracy Skills of **trust building**, **engagement** and **solutions journalism**. Expand the menus below to view all resources.

#### **Mission Statements for Democracy and Civic Life Coverage**

The [recording of the webinar](#) and accompanying [slide deck](#).

Resources:

- [Trusting News homepage](#)
- [Sign up for the Trust Tips newsletter](#)
- [Guide: How to Create an FAQ About Your Reporting](#)
- [Examples from Capital B and WITF](#)
- [Transparency Trust Kit](#)
- Additional newsroom examples we shared:
  - [Capital B mission statement](#)
  - [WyoFile](#)
  - [Nevada Independent](#)

- [NH Latino News](#)
- [CPR](#)
- [Texas Tribune](#)
- [AJC](#)
- [Tucson Sentinel](#)
- [Vallejo Sun](#)
- [USA Today Ohio](#)

## **Listen First - Engagement Strategies to Strengthen Your Democracy Reporting (Part 1 of 2)**

[Watch](#) here and view the [deck here](#).

Resources:

- The Citizens Agenda Approach <https://www.thecitizensagenda.org/>
- Research on the impact of Advancing Democracy's approach: <https://www.solutionsjournalism.org/news/political-news-changing>
- Comment Management Guidelines <https://trustingnews.org/trustkits/comments/>
- Feedback Collection and Response <https://trustingnews.org/trustkits/feedback/>
- Community Listening Guide <https://trustingnews.org/trustkits/listening/>
- Building Trust with Sources <https://trustingnews.org/trustkits/sourcing-trust/>
- Anti-Polarization Checklist <https://bit.ly/trustingnewspolarization>
- Election Coverage Styles: <https://medium.com/we-are-hearken/which-style-of-election-coverage-is-your-newsroom-voting-for-410bab3a6a23>
- Engagement Strategies Presentation [https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1j6KYDNL0dJvZjkDaj6gvVRJNlEiA1eH1CrwNFWqIYvE/edit?slide=id.g36243f414e4\\_0\\_87#slide=id.g36243f414e4\\_0\\_87](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1j6KYDNL0dJvZjkDaj6gvVRJNlEiA1eH1CrwNFWqIYvE/edit?slide=id.g36243f414e4_0_87#slide=id.g36243f414e4_0_87)
- Recording: [Community Listening Sessions Webinar](#)
- Trust-building checklist (for new newsrooms) <https://trustingnews.org/checklists-start-earning-trust-level-up-trust-building/>

## **Listen First - Engagement Strategies to Strengthen Your Democracy Reporting (2 of 2)**

View [the deck](#) and [recording](#) from this session

Resources:

- Citizens Agenda methodology and resources: [citizensagenda.org](http://citizensagenda.org)
- Listening Post Collective Playbook: [Access the guide](#)
- Community Informed Reporting Guide from Solutions Journalism Network: [Read the guide](#)
- PACE "How to Talk Bridge-y" resource for engaging across political divides: [View the resource](#)
- Watch Ken Schneck from the Buckeye Flame lead an insightful discussion on the "Art of Hosting": [View recording](#) (Passcode: +uni%!4x)
- Ken's presentation deck and resources on community convening and socially just conversations
- The Buckeye Flame podcast featuring LookOut: [Listen here](#)

### **Introduction to Solutions Journalism for Beat Reporters- Part 1 of 2**

View [the slide deck](#), [resources](#) and watch [recording](#).

**Resources:**

- This [worksheet](#) contains all resources from the session and is designed to help you plan your next solutions journalism stories (view-only, make a copy to save).

Sometimes the idea of introducing solutions journalism into a beat or newsroom feels overwhelming. As always, we're here to help. We're co-hosting a pair of webinars designed to bust some myths, erase the nerves and give you the skills to actually do it.

Part 1 focused on the key elements of solutions reporting, featuring the tenets of the practice and some great examples.

### **Building Solutions Journalism Into Your Beat (2 of 2)**

Part two focused on integrating it into your beat or across a newsroom. **Watch the [recording of the session](#) and [view the slide deck](#).** This [worksheet](#) contains all the resources and takeaways from this session.

### **How Journalism Can Foster Understanding in a Polarized World**

[Watch a recording of the session](#) and [view the slide deck](#).

Resources:

- Pew Research – How Americans feel about news: <https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/2025/05/13/what-is-news/#how-americans-feel-about-news>
- Pew Research – How Americans view journalists: <https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/2025/08/20/how-americans-view-journalists-and-their-role-in-society/>
- Gallup – Trust in media: <https://news.gallup.com/poll/651977/americans-trust-media-remains-trend-low.aspx>
- Center for Media Engagement – Connecting with conservative audiences: <https://mediaengagement.org/research/how-to-connect-with-conservative-news-audiences/>
- More in Common – Perception Gap: <https://perceptiongap.us/>



#### Toolkits & Guides

- Trust Kits: <https://trustingnews.org/trustkits/>
- Complicating the Narratives Toolkit: <https://www.solutionsjournalism.org/learning-lab/toolkits-guides/complicating-narratives-toolkit/pillar-two-go-beneath-problem/22>
- Words that build trust: <http://bit.ly/trustingnewswords>
- Trusting News Dimensions: <http://trustingnews.org/dimensions/>
- Dimensions of Difference Trainings: <https://trustingnews.org/dimensions/dimensions-of-difference-trainings/>
- Sourcing Trust: <https://trustingnews.org/sourcing-trust/>
- Step-by-step guide for talking with people who don't trust news: <https://medium.com/trusting-news/step-by-step-guide-how-journalists-can-talk-to-people-who-dont-trust-news-and-build-trust-doing-37d094fde09d>
- Trusting News on polarization: <http://bit.ly/trustingnewspolarization>

#### Examples & Inspiration

- Reproductive Rights Today newsletter: <https://www.newsfromthestates.com/newsletter/reproductive-rights-today>

- Tangle Editorial Policy: <https://www.readtangle.com/tangle-editorial-policy/>
- Nieman Lab – Journalists and communities: <https://www.niemanlab.org/2021/12/being-honest-about-how-journalists-are-different-from-their-communities/>
- Instagram post: <https://www.instagram.com/p/C2Qta-0tBlh/>
- AllSides Similarity Tool: <https://www.allsides.com/similarity>

### **Covering threats to democracy from a solutions lens**

Watch the recording <https://solu.news/eb40c2> and the slide deck here: <https://solu.news/x9cc/>

Resources:

- Journalists are covering a range of threats to democracy: political violence, rising polarization, and crackdowns on free speech. Solutions journalism provides a rigorous framework to cover these stories in ways that empower communities, avoid divisive narratives and prevent news avoidance. Join us for a one-hour, virtual training that will provide journalists with story ideas, frameworks, and best practices to cover challenges to democracy without fueling despair. Learn how to re-engage audiences and strengthen democratic discourse through solutions-focused reporting.

Guests:

- George Chidi, politics and democracy reporter for Guardian US based in the south-east  
Story spotlight: [How Baltimore's violent crime rate hit an all-time low: 'This is not magic. It's hard work'](#)
- **Lisa Kurian Philip**, Higher Education Reporter at WBEZ Chicago/Open Campus Media.  
Story spotlight: [Student group banned by DePaul continues to run covert birth control delivery service](#)
- Brandon Tensley, National Politics Reporter, Capital B  
Story spotlight: [No One Was Helping Black Transgender Youth. So These Parents Stepped In.](#)

**Solutions Reporting on Federal Cuts w/ Big Local News**  
**[Watch the recording](#) and [view the presentation deck](#),**

We also encourage you to [sign up for updates from Advancing Democracy](#) and join our Peer Network, which meets monthly to provide a collaborative space for journalists committed to strengthening these skills.