

Module 4: Building solutions journalism into your workflow

Hi, and welcome to Module Four of Solutions Journalism. New ways of elevating your reporting and engaging audiences. We are wrapping things up with building solutions journalism into your workflow. We will be discussing dispelling misconceptions about solutions journalism. Also, our special guest speaker this week, Swati Sunjata of the Fire Solutions Journalism Network lead fellow based in India, will unpack for us what a solutions journalism whisperer is. The three phases of a solution work stream planning, execution, and processing of the story. We will also go over how to propose a solutions journalism story or series and how to measure success, which isn't always about focusing on what's working problems. Screen solutions whisper many problem-oriented stories plane crashes, police shootings, disease epidemics, and even a water main break are in your face, and demand coverage. But solutions-oriented stories, on the other hand, are rarely breaking news. As with much enterprise reporting, newsworthy responses are likely to go undiscovered unless reporters deliberately surface and investigate them. Are you ready to bring solutions journalism into your newsroom in a sustained way? Here are some best practices gleaned from solutions journalism networks, and collaborations with newsrooms on how to integrate solutions journalism into your workflow first. Anticipate and head off Misconceptions. For many journalists, the idea of solutions journalism resonates immediately. But some are confused by the approach or even the term solutions journalism. They might worry that it sounds like advocacy, PR, or feel-good news. Some are just uncomfortable trying something new. In module one, we define solutions journalism as rigorous, compelling coverage of responses to social problems reporting done with the highest of journalistic standards. Remember, solutions stories must contain the four pillars of response, insights, evidence, and limitations. Also, watch out for Impostors misidentified as solutions journalism. In the second video of Module Two, we went over misconceptions about what solutions journalism is. Please be sure to review that material. Second, be prepared to reexamine your coverage. Priorities for editors Interested in Solutions Journalism. The question is when to invest scarce newsroom resources in these types of stories. Ultimately, it means reckoning with the questions. What are the most relevant, most valuable stories that we can bring to our audiences? What's missing from the public conversation and what stories are we doing just because we've always done that? The resource pressures in journalism today are leading many editors to rethink core assumptions about their coverage needs. In practical terms, this may mean asking questions like Do we need to cover the school board meeting again? Or is our reporter's time better spent examining how schools are changing their approach to discipline? Or do we need to focus on the latest school shooting? Or should we send a reporter to a nearby city that is that has an approach to reducing gun violence that seems to be working? Next. Seek out champions, and identify editors or writers. Anyone who can encourage colleagues to systematically ask, Is there a solutions angle to this story? Who's doing it? Better find people who feel strongly about bringing solutions journalism into the newsroom. Ask them to keep the momentum going, even amid the crush of daily deadlines. If possible, designate champions at different desks to ask these questions over time as reporters gain experience with solutions journalism. This response will become reflexive. Reporters begin to instinctively ask questions that they had not before, and they naturally become thought partners or mentors for others. Propose a story or series. It helps to have some actionable and relevant story ideas in mind. When you're introducing solutions journalism to newsroom staff, these ideas should illuminate the potential for solutions journalism to build on or round out priority coverage areas. The idea is to move the discussion from the hypothetical to the operational from Should we do solutions journalism to How about this story? Explain how a story fills a key gap in your coverage. Then who will work on it? What's the social media plan? Encourage journalists to pitch

solutions-oriented stories, but don't wait until they get started. Look for openings as news breaks. As reporters come to you with ideas and as coverage plans unfold in daily staff meetings. Be mindful of opportunities to bring the solutions lens into coverage. The simple question is there a solutions angle here that can quickly turn an editorial conversation towards a richer and more productive news strategy? Set specific targets. As an editor, the easiest way to integrate solutions into our news coverage is to ask reporters to do it and give them the time to do it. Be explicit about what you'd like to see. Maybe it's one solutions-oriented story a month. Or maybe it said every reporter should include the question Who's doing it better in an investigation? Finally, highlight quality solutions. Reporting editors can further support the practice by rewarding reporters who produce quality solutions journalism. Rewards can be as simple as congratulations for a job well done. Frontpage billing or recognition within the newsroom for journalists who help others seek creative ways to break free of old reporting habits. Sometimes press associations and other journalism organizations will do the awarding themselves. Thanks for watching. In the next video, our guest, Swati Sanyal, part of DA Solutions Journalism Network lead fellow based in India, will help us increase the number of readers, viewers, and listeners who are just tired of the gloom and doom stories by integrating solutions journalism in our editorial menus. I'll see you at the forums.