

## Module 4: Measuring Success

In the first video, we talked about how to integrate solutions journalism into your workflow in a sustained way. Then our guest speaker, Swati Sanyal, turfed our unpack for us. What to solutions Journalism Whisperer and shared best practices of the three Faces of a solution as journalism workstream now. Let's tackle. Measuring success by focusing on what's working. Solutions-oriented stories can reframe problems in a way that sparks new thinking among policymakers, practitioners, and community members alike. Solutions Journalism highlights responses to social problems with a verifiable, evidence-based record of success, and data can help journalists discover those places that appear to have found a better way. Because when the impact of a response can be measured with numbers, it's easy to identify potential high performers and data. Those better performers are positive deviance outliers that might provide a tip to a place or policy that has found success and is making a difference. In the second video of Module Two, we talked about how positive deviants lurk in data that might point you to those successful responses. But even as solutions journalism grows in acceptance and popularity around the world, relatively few news outlets pursue solutions stories by hunting for positive deviance. Certain challenges are endemic to all forms of social entrepreneurship. Impact, measurement, and evaluation are one of these big challenges. Sometimes what seems like a great idea to solve a social or environmental problem fails, or worse, it does more harm than good. How do we know whether a program works? How do we differentiate between programs that are backed up with strong evidence as opposed to the ones that are just great PR? What kinds of evidence do we need to see? How do we differentiate between outputs and actual outcomes? In the first of this week's readings, an evidence-based way to help fix our broken politics. The article features a rethinking of how town hall meetings are produced to elevate political discourse. If elected representatives have a few hours to speak with constituents, here's what they should do. Discuss policy issues online with a small group of randomly selected constituents. Participants appreciate the opportunity to speak with their representatives. Rate them more highly and are more likely to vote for them even months later. The evidence supporting this method of engaging constituents was so compelling that researchers presented their work to new members of Congress. In the second reading, The Bold Plan to Save Africa's Largest Forests, Peter Young of the BBC reports on an intervention intended to save Africa's largest rainforest from deforestation. Under an innovative scheme in the Democratic Republic of Congo, indigenous communities are obtaining the legal right to own and manage the forests where they reside. This ownership has shown success in slowing deforestation of the Congo rainforest and creating new economic opportunities for residents in these villages. Rather than just being an add-on community, forestry is now being considered a mainstream model for forest management. Now, whether you work for a legacy media of television, radio, and print or an independent digital news outlet, it's a business that needs to be economically self-sustaining, an enterprise with short and long-term monetary gains. So the perpetual question regarding measuring success is if media organizations produce solutions journalism. Will they generate more revenue? And the quick answer is yes. The third reading focus on the extraordinary challenges of 2020 12, newsrooms that formed the Solutions Journalism Revenue Project, a yearlong community of practice, they found that incorporating solutions journalism into their reporting had a positive effect on their bottom line. Nine out of the 12 newsrooms in the AARP, 75% generated nearly \$1.5 million in new revenue related to solutions journalism between 2019 and 2021 across the rest of the network. SJ and News Partners. Generated an additional \$1.2 million tied to their solutions journalism in 2020. Most of the revenue raised by participants was to support operational costs and larger editorial projects, not just solutions journalism. While some said more evidence was needed to demonstrate effective strategies, all participants in the SRP

cohort expressed some confidence that solutions journalism can contribute to their ability to generate revenue. There is value in focusing on solutions journalism while pursuing revenue growth, particularly when fundraising, institutional and individual funders as well as business sponsors, are eager to support this reporting approach. For me, the ultimate litmus test in measuring the success of solutions journalism is the audience. Research released by the Solutions Journalism Network reveals the extent to which audiences respond to solutions journalism in ways that can strengthen local news. Among the top takeaways, 83% of respondents said they trusted the solutions journalism story, compared to just 55% who said the same about a problem-focused story as news avoidance and distrust grow. Solutions Journalism has rapidly grown from an extra to a must-have for newsrooms. Building or repairing relationships with their community. And we've concluded solutions, journalism, and new ways of elevating your reporting and engaging audiences. I hope the class has been as rewarding for you as it's been for me. I appreciate your time and attention. Good luck pursuing solutions Journalism. I hope you will keep in touch. Until next time. I'm Hugo Walter, publisher of the Latino News Network. Farewell.