SJN ANNUAL REPORT 2017

If we built it would they come? That was our concern prior to SJN's inaugural Solutions Summit, which we convened in the shadow of Utah's Wasatch mountains in early November 2017. It was our first attempt to bring members of our emerging tribe together.





OUR IMPACT

in 2017

CURRICULUM | NEWSROOM PRACTICE CHANGE | JOURNALIST PRACTICE CHANGE | KNOWLEDGE DISSEMINATION



CURRICULUM

Our core training in solutions journalism is the foundation of all we do.

LEARN MORE



TOPLINE STATS



10,297

total journalists trained in person or online



4

languages in which Learning Lab can be accessed (so far)



NEWSROOM PRACTICE CHANGE

Our partnerships with news organizations around the country— and now, around the world—form the backbone of the network.

LEARN MORE



TOPLINE STATS



140 newsrooms with broad institutional and editorial support for solutions journalism



6 collaboratives, encompassing 57 print, digital, radio, and broadcast news outlets

44%

of engaged newsrooms regularly produce solutions journalism.



Added our first broadcast partner newsroom

JOURNALIST PRACTICE CHANGE

How do we drive the adoption of solutions journalism among individual journalists?

LEARN MORE

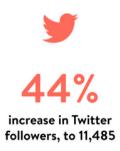




1,077
Hub members



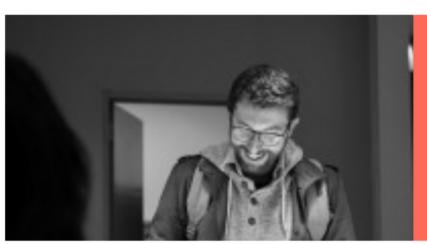
7
local communities



1,314 Facebook group members



HYZZ W



KNOWLEDGE DISSEMINATION

A critical mass of solutions journalism, distributed via the Solutions Story Tracker*, and targeted products such as SolutionsU*, drives more productive public discourse and change how citizens engage with social issues.

LEARN MORE



2,800

stories

in the Solutions Story Tracker®, our searchable archive of solutions journalism.



56

non-journalism university courses integrating solutions journalism



6

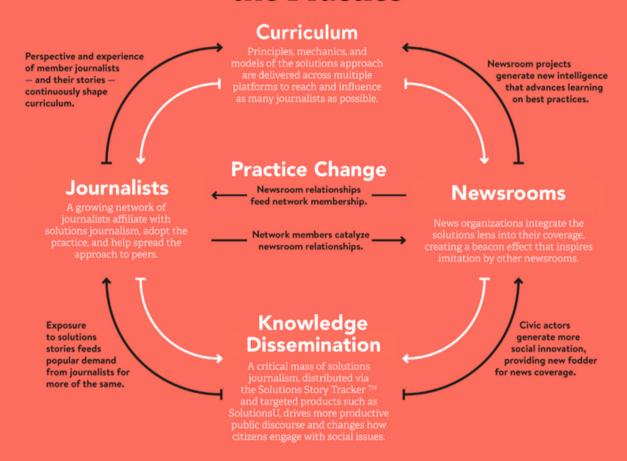
student and faculty workshops, reaching nearly 350 teachers and learners.



40+

SPREADING

the Practice



2017 FINANCIAL UPDATES

LEARN MORE



Cash payments made to newsroom partners were \$998,000, up from \$964,000 in 2016.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY updates

SJN continued to strive to meet best practices in nonprofit administration.

 SJN launched an expansion that will enlarge our staff by 50% in 2018, with the biggest increases in our newsroom and finance/admin teams.

- We contracted with Angela Park, a respected consultant, to help launch an organization-wide initiative on diversity equity and inclusion.
- Honeyguide Media, which was previousl fiscally sponsored by SJN, received its tax exempt status from the IRS and became an independent organization.
- SJN was pleased to retain EisnerAmper as its independent auditor in 2017. In addition, SJN continued to retain Kiwi Partners for selected accounting support

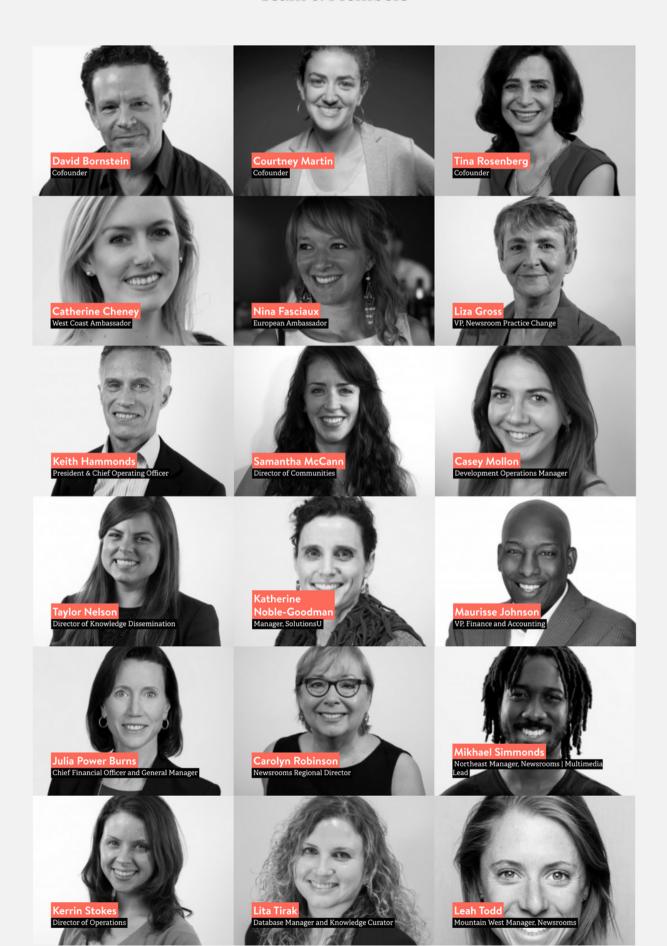
FUNDING PARTNERS

- HORACE GOLDSMITH FOUNDATION
- COMMUNITY FOUNDATION FOR GREATER BUFFALO
- THE COMMONWEALTH FUND
- EMERSON COLLECTIVE
- EINHORN FAMILY CHARITABLE TRUST
- THE ANNE E. CASEY FOUNDATION
- BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION
- DRAPER RICHARDS KAPLAN FOUNDATION
- CALIFORNIA HEALTHCARE FOUNDATION
- LOR FOUNDATION
- NELLIE MAE EDUCATION FOUNDATION
- NOVO FOUNDATION
- ONWARD AND UPWARD CHARITABLE TRUST
- SUSAN DAVIS
- PEERY FOUNDATION
- COURTNEY E. MARTIN & JOHN CARY
- ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION
- RITA ALLEN FOUNDATION
- SILICON VALLEY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
- THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION

- · REID FAMILY FOUNDATION
- · DAVID BOARDMAN
- · SARIKA BANSAL
- TINA ROSENBERG
- HEWLETT FOUNDATION
- . DAVID BORNSTEIN & ABIGAIL GAMPEL
- DEAN FURBUSH
- ENDOWMENT FOR HEALTH
- · JESSAMYN & ALI SHAMS-LAU
- JOHN S. AND JAMES L. KNIGHT FOUNDATION
- FORD FOUNDATION
- · JOSEPH J. DYER
- INNOVATE FOUNDATION
- LEGACY VENTURE
- PAUL P. DOSBERG CHARITABLE FUND
- WILLIAM JAMES FOUNDATION
- ENLIGHT FOUNDATION
- DEMOCRACY FUND
- WALTON FAMILY FOUNDATION
- · HELLER HOUSEHOLD
- · DAVIS HOUSEHOLD
- THE JEANNIE TSEND AND COLIN RUST CHARITABLE FUND

OUR PEOPLE

Team & Members







Volunteer City Coordinators

Michaela Haas Los Angeles Coordinator Ruksana Hussain Los Angeles Coordinator Alison Krupnick
Puget Sound Coordinator

David Lippoff
Portland Coordinator

Gregory Scruggs
Puget Sound Coordinator

Sandi Villareal DC Coordinator

Board Members



2017 Financial Updates

Total Solutions Journalism Network accrual basis operating expenses decreased by 14% to \$3.3 million for the full year 2017. This was down from \$3.8 million total accrual basis expenses in 2016.

Program expenses associated with newsroom collaborations, journalism school work, and the growth of our journalist network accounted for 78% of total expenses in 2017, compared to 87% in 2016.

The overhead ratio—including expenses associated with fundraising—was 21% in 2017, compared to 14% in 2016. The appearance of an increase in the overhead ratio was driven by the move to full accrual basis for multi-year expense commitments. On a cash basis, the overhead ratio in 2017 was approximately 18% and in 2016 was approximately 19%.

Our Impact in 2017

Knowledge Dissemination

In August, we launched our latest version of the Solutions Story Tracker®, which by year-end contained over 2,800 stories tagged by issue and problem-solving approach and mapped by the location of the reported effort. We believe the Story Tracker® is a distinctive knowledge asset that can provide high value to journalists, citizens, and actors across society. We also introduced SolutionsU®, a suite of tools to help educators and students easily find, integrate, and share solutions stories to support teaching and learning of social innovation and other topics.

Since launch, the Story Tracker® and SolutionsU® combined have attracted nearly 27,000 unique page views, with the lowest bounce rates of any section of the SJN website. Some 63% of views for all users and 92% of views for returning users resulted in clicking to view a story—rates that we believe indicate high utility.

We will continue to expand and enhance the Story Tracker*. We have hired nine part-time "Story Fellows," guided by a full-time supervisor, to discover, vet, and tag relevant stories. Each fellow will take ownership of a coverage "beat," surfacing emerging ideas and trends in issue areas such as health, education, and the environment. This augmented manual approach will allow us to expand the Tracker* to 5,000 stories by the end of 2018—not an exhaustive catalog of all solutions journalism, but a large slice of the best solutions stories across issue areas.

We support faculty in developing and sharing teaching materials based on solutions stories in a range of disciplines. Since August, SolutionsU® has delivered student and faculty workshops at five universities, reaching nearly 350 teachers and learners. Our community of registered educators and students grew to 170 and 345 respectively. In addition, we have launched SolutionsU® branded Twitter and Facebook channels and a monthly educator newsletter.

The upshot: 37 faculty have used solutions stories in 56 courses—including 30 courses in the most recent semester alone, in disciplines ranging from anthropology to business to public policy. We anticipate that by end of 2018, at least 200 faculty will be using solutions stories in their teaching.

TOPLINE STATS

2,800 stories in the Solutions Story Tracker®, our searchable archive of solutions journalism.

56 non-journalism university courses integrating solutions journalism.

6 student and faculty workshops, reaching nearly 350 teachers and learners.

40+ presentations at conferences and industry events, including the Obama Foundation Summit, the Google News Lab Summit, and the International Festival of Journalism

In addition to our work with universities, we have begun launching services to test demand in other sectors. Starting in September 2017, we partnered with the Chronicle of Philanthropy to pilot a cobranded section in their weekly newsletter, which has 75,000 subscribers. Each week, we send three stories from the Story Tracker®, which the Chronicle includes in its newsletter with our logo and a blurb about the Story Tracker®. These newsletters have accounted for a significant and growing percentage of clickthroughs to stories. Over the next year, our newsletter experiments will help us better understand how we brand and build awareness of the Story Tracker® for end customers, serving our goal of increasing demand for solutions journalism.

What We've Learned

The Solutions Story Tracker® is nearing a critical mass of stories, allowing us to create products and services that provide distinctive intelligence. By curating collections on particular topics or issues, we can take a bird's eye view of trends in social change around the world, showing regional variations in social innovations and creating opportunities to break down silos between those addressing the same problems.

Where We're Headed in 2017

We have invited leaders from more than 20 universities and organizations — pioneers in the fields of social innovation, social entrepreneurship, and social change — to join our inaugural SolutionsU® Innovation Advisory. They will help us identify opportunities, challenges, and trends within the field of higher education, while adapting and testing our strategy.

Our Impact in 2017

Journalist Practice Change

We relaunched our website, solutionsjournalism.org, in late August. This soup-to-nuts re-think included the debut of Learning Lab (see Curriculum section), the revamped Solutions Story Tracker®, and an overhaul of the Hub — not to mention significant improvements to the basic infrastructure of the site. We hosted the Solutions Journalism Summit, the first big gathering of some of our most dedicated followers. And we rolled out our Cohort Curriculum in six communities around the country (and one abroad).

Membership of the Hub (journalist-only member network) reached 1,077 by the end of 2017. When we relaunched our website, we killed off our old Hub membership list, with the intention of re-focusing our community on journalists only. Of our new members, 42% say they've been trained by SJN, either in person or online. And roughly 9% have stories in the Tracker, a much higher rate than before the relaunch. These are both positive indicators; our opportunity now is to build on that base of engaged members to deepen affiliation and advance practice change.

1,077 Hub members.

7 local communities.

1,314 Facebook group members.

The Solutions Journalism Summit, held in November, brought together 89 journalists and j-school professors from around the country (and a few from abroad) seeking connections, support, and celebration. The feedback was extraordinarily positive: 97% said the summit enabled them to meet peers with whom they otherwise would not have connected; and 97% also said they gained new insights and understandings they will incorporate into their work.

In the eight months since the summit, there have been more than 100 anecdotes by around 75% of summit attendees doing something related to solutions journalism, from publishing stories and research studies, to raising tens of thousands of dollars for dedicated solutions coverage and winning state and national journalism prizes for solutions series. They've helped us create a research plan and guide to reporting short Solo pieces and SoJo on video. We've featured their work in Twitter chats and Facebook lives, and they've featured each other's work in podcasts and live events. They have shifted the lens by which they are approaching writing editorials, and have become evangelists for us. They've taken selfens with each other in at least four different states in three different countries. We are convinced that the summit drove deeper engagement with the solutions approach and forged connections that have enabled journalists and journalism educators to learn from each other.

We rolled out a volunteer-led community strategy fully in the fall after a test run with the Portland community last March. We started communities in Seattle, Los Angeles, Washington D.C., and Paris, launching cohort curriculum event series in those and three other cities—the Bay Area, Portland, and New York City. Since July, we have trained 96 people in eight in-person workshops. Additionally, we have trained 194 people in five webinars, a 30% increase in participation

The 14 journalists we supported as Freelance Fund grantees have published, without hassles or delays, in some of the best publications in the world. Stories have appeared in *The New York Times* "Fixes" column (Greg Scruggs, our Seattle coordinator, on wildfire protection in Oregon), *The New York Times* (Natalie Schachar on Mexico's seismic network, days after the Mexico City earthquake in the fall), *The Guardian* (former NYT photographer Fred Conrad on drug courts in Appalachia), *Grist* (Pulitzer-Prize winner Elizabeth McGowan reporting on a Buffalo suburb rebuilding a post-coal economy), and *Next City* (Johnny Magdaleno on San Antonio's fight for preservation of certain districts within the city). McGowan's story, which made NY Times columnist David Leonhard's list of the year's top stories from local/regional publications, induced Grist's editors to produce an entire series on the topic.

Our work with journalism schools expanded; we continue to see these institutions as a highly leveraged investment in seeding future capacity. Fourteen universities have embedded solutions journalism in course curricula—including Virginia Commonwealth University; Northeastern Illinois University; and the Universities of Nebraska and Florida—five of those via a module and six with an entire semesterlong course. The University of Toronto's Munk School is close to making a four-week solutions module a fixture in its Global Affairs Fellowship in Global Journalism. Texas State University is planning a solutions journalism concentration.

44% increase in Twitter followers, to 11,485

14 journalism schools teaching solutions journalism

What We've Learned

The Freelance Fund travel grant program has been successful in very different ways than we had expected. We've heard anecdotally that this is one of the best things we offer, and that no other organization is offering microgrants in this way—story-based, not a big administrative lift to apply for and enough money to make it worth the effort, and (of course) solutions-oriented.

Where We're Headed in 2018

New community launches further afield, including our first community in Africa. With our support, the University of Oregon's Catalyst Project will launch a "boot camp" for j-school professors from across the country in July 2018. "The Catalyst Journalism Project: Investigation + Solutions for Oregon's Future" is an initiative designed to produce an academic solutions journalism "hub," including the capacity to train faculty at other schools to bring the solutions lens into their classrooms.

Newsrooms Practice Change

PARTNERSHIPS



By year-end, solutions journalism had achieved broad institutional and editorial support within 140 news organizations. Simply put, it's easier for us to get in newsrooms' doors—and many more editors and news directors are coming to us. The resulting newsroom projects included projects on education, health, prisoner reentry, rural sustainability, and other issues, with many featuring strong audience and community engagement components. Some highlights:

Education: In addition to "Education Lab," our ongoing, five-year-long partnership with The Seattle Times, we have pursued multiple projects. SJN partnered with the Connecticut Mirror to produce a series on bilingual education programs and student achievement. KCPT, the public TV station in Kansas City, completed a sojo series on charter vs public education for a 30-minute TV special and many print stories that were also translated into Spanish for their site and a local Hispanic newspaper. Alabama Media Group, in partnership with Spaceship Media, produced a dialogue with over 100 teachers to inform its reporting on school re-segregation. The Ohio Valley ReSource, a collaborative of seven public radio stations in Kentucky, West Virginia and Ohio, is focusing on reimagining education in the post-coal economy—bringing together reporters from its education, health, and workplace beats to provide a synthetic systems view of

Prisoner reentry: The Philadelphia Solutions Reporting Collaborative, conceived by SJN in 2016, was a groundbreaking effort by 15 diverse news outlets in Philadelphia, as well as Temple University and Muhlenberg College, to report on responses to the challenge of prisoner reentry in that city. In all, the Collaborative published or broadcast over 200 stories on reentry and organized over a dozen audience engagement activities, including a hackathon and a grand finale event that was attended by the mayor and other city dignitaries. The Reentry Project's reporting brought about concrete government action, such as the extension of a visitation program and the use of special equipment for inmates with hearing disabilities. It also furthered community-wide awareness of the plight of returning citizens. Perhaps most gratifying, the newsroom partners agreed to spin out the collaborative from SJN into its own independent entity - and received funding from the Lenfest Institute to pursue solutions reporting on other issues.

Rural sustainability: In June, we launched "State of Change," a ninemonth-long collaboration of 13 New Mexico news organizations to explore economic resiliency of rural communities in the state. This represents an extension and enlargement of our "Small Towns, Big Change" project last year. We also launched "The Montana Gap," a similar collaboration of 12 newsrooms in western Montana in October, looking at the growing divide between tech-fueled boomtowns and rural communities losing jobs and population. SJN is partnering in this effort with High Country News, a highly respected regional publication that provides project management; and Headwaters Economics, a regional economic research firm, that brings data training and research support.

TOPLINE STATS

140 newsrooms with broad institutional and editorial support for solutions journalism

6 collaboratives, encompassing 57 print, digital, radio, and broadcast news outlets

44%

of engaged newsrooms regularly produce solutions journalism.

Added our first broadcast partner newsroom

Gentrification: The Tennessean in Nashville completed an extensive series on property taxes that sparked intense discussion and interest in the community, at one point even trending competitively online against coverage of the Predators, the city's beloved hockey team. This series was complemented by public forums and panels.

Health: The Atlantic and The Washington Monthly produced solutions-based projects that examined efforts across the United States to reduce health care costs, while maintaining or improving health care quality, for the 5% of patients whose care accounts for an estimated 50% of U.S. health spending.

Urban planning: In the aftermath of hurricane Harvey, *The Houston Chronicle* produced a sojo series on prudent urban planning and water management. *The Chronicle* team traveled to the Netherlands to gain insights and sponsored a public discussion highlighting its reporting.

Urban blight: WEWS Channel 5 in Cleveland is actively engaged in a sojo series on urban blight in that city — our first significant engagement with a commercial television station.

What We've Learned

We completed our first comprehensive survey of newsroom leaders to assess if our approach produces institutional and attitudinal changes in the newsrooms we've worked with. Spoiler alert: It does. We spoke with representatives at 84 newsrooms in our network. Of those, 96% said that there is institutional support for solutions journalism. And 44% said that they were integrating solutions journalism into their newsroom coverage at a relatively high level. Impressively, 94% of respondents expressed support for the Solutions Journalism Network.

Our Impact in 2017

Curriculum

In August, SJN introduced "Learning Lab," an online platform for curriculum resources. This new product set marked a pivotal shift in how we organize and disseminate our curriculum. Gone are static, downloadable PDFs: as an interactive, easily-adaptable suite of online courses, our training can now be modified and expanded as new insights surface. The online format allows easy movement from the toolkits themselves to sample stories in the Story Tracker*; blog posts that expand upon a topic and bring in voices from the network; quizzes that engage users more deeply on important topics; and opportunities to drill down further via new beat-specific guides. The "choose-your-own-adventure" setup encourages users to hone in on specific questions or to scan learning that increasingly reflects the knowledge and experience of our wider network of journalists.

Since August, we have had over 400 course initiations — somewhat lower than expected, but a substantial improvement from previous traffic to our curricular content. (Of those, about 9% completed a toolkit, indicating that the guides are used as tactical resources.) Including downloads of our old PDF-form toolkits in the first half of the year (152) and attendees at in-person or live webinar SJN trainings (844), exposures to our curriculum totaled 1,458.

Where We're Headed in 2018

We will kick off our three-year Renewing Democracy initiative, focused on coverage of efforts by people and institutions to reinvigorate democracy in communities across the country. We hope to bring new newsroom partners into this project with a new competition-style approach.

We will expand our newsroom networks in New England and the South, with an emphasis on ethnic media and commercial broadcast partners.

TOPLINE STATS

10,297 total journalists trained in person or online.

4 languages in which Learning Lab can be accessed (so far) We expect to see significant growth in traffic via our new toolkit translations, which targeting our emerging audiences outside the U.S. Learning Lab launched with the Basic Toolkit in English, French, and Spanish. In December 2017 we released a Bahasa Indonesian translation, bringing our potential global reach to over 2 billion. A Chinese translation was released in early 2018, to be followed by versions in Arabic, Russian, and other languages.

What We've Learned

Our biggest knowledge asset is now our network: Increasingly, the experience and perspective of journalists and newsrooms will inform our curriculum – and Learning Lab allows us the flexibility to continually enrich our teaching materials with timely case studies and insights from that network. What's more, we're relying on partnerships with local media development organizations to translate those resources, meeting growing demand for our resources outside the U.S.

Where We're Headed in 2018

Our online curriculum will be available in as many as 11 languages by the end of 2018, including Arabic, Russian, Korean, Polish, Czech, and Romanian. We will release new toolkits to equip editors and journalism school professors, as well as new resources on engagement, investigative reporting and solutions, and visual solutions journalism.

OUR STORY

Letter from the Founders

If we built it would they come? That was our concern prior to SJN's inaugural Solutions Summit, which we convened in the shadow of Utah's Wasatch mountains in early November 2017. It was our first attempt to bring members of our emerging tribe together.

And it turned out to be a good idea! Not only did folks show up; participants were as thrilled to find one another as we were to meet them. We spent three electric days with close to 100 journalists, j-school faculty and researchers, from leaders of national news organizations to freelancers to reporters at small-town outlets from a dozen states.

Here's a public secret: There are loads of journalists who are eager to do rigorous reporting that better reflects, and respects, the full spectrum of activity and experience in the communities they cover. Many have told us that solutions journalism has helped them round out their coverage, providing a framework (grounded in journalistic ethics) to tell stories about how people are struggling to adapt to a wide range of challenges.

At the summit, they discovered colleagues who felt the same. "This is the first time I've been with a group of journalists and actually felt like I belonged," said Alaska Public Media reporter Anne Hillman, echoing a sentiment we heard repeatedly over the weekend.

In many ways, 2017 was a pivotal year for journalism. Alongside continued newspaper closures and attacks on the press, we saw a resurgence in public support for journalism and considerable reflection among journalists about their role in the country's challenges. For SJN, the year was all-out. Our newsroom team dramatically expanded its reach; our network grew substantially; we catalyzed newsroom projects and streams of coverage that led to meaningful impact in news organizations and communities. We relaunched a website designed for the needs of journalists; we built SolutionsU*, a major step forward to connect solutions stories to broad civic audiences. We expanded our Learning Lab, where you'll now find resources in Spanish, French, Indonesian, and Chinese — driven by local demand.

Most satisfying, solutions journalism has become an accepted category in news. We rarely have to explain to journalists what it means, or defend it. This has created a new problem for us, a good problem, that we're grappling with: we get more requests from newsrooms than we can currently accommodate. How do we shift our model to reach more? We were even asked to consult on "Wyatt Cenac's Problem Areas," a new HBO comedy anchored in solutions reporting.

All of this work is animated by the conviction that people are desperate for change. When you see the world through a frame of crisis and conflict, the result is suffering and division. We seek to provide a balance: to re-focus more of our collective attention on plausible possibilities to build something better. Who's having success? What's promising? What's worth trying?

For us, encouraging journalists to ask these questions is just the beginning. Once news organizations start helping their communities learn about options, things change. Audiences begin paying closer attention. They want to build better communities. They express appreciation. They feel more truthfully reflected, so they trust more, and are willing to engage in more respectful conversations. They even show more willingness to pay for news.

This may seem obvious, but it needs to be continually reiterated. To present an accurate view of reality, alongside the world's corruption, negligence and prejudice, the news also must reveal the world's integrity, competence and tolerance. But not in a feel-good way, not as light fare at Thanksgiving, or hero worship that oversimplifies problems. The goal is to build awareness and understanding, to curse darkness when necessary and light candles so we can endeavor to repair. With this lens, we will come to know our neighbors more faithfully, and this may help society move beyond the fears and wounds that have engendered so much division and tribalism.

As always, we're grateful and honored to work with you towards this goal.

With appreciation, David Bornstein Courtney Martin Tina Rosenberg