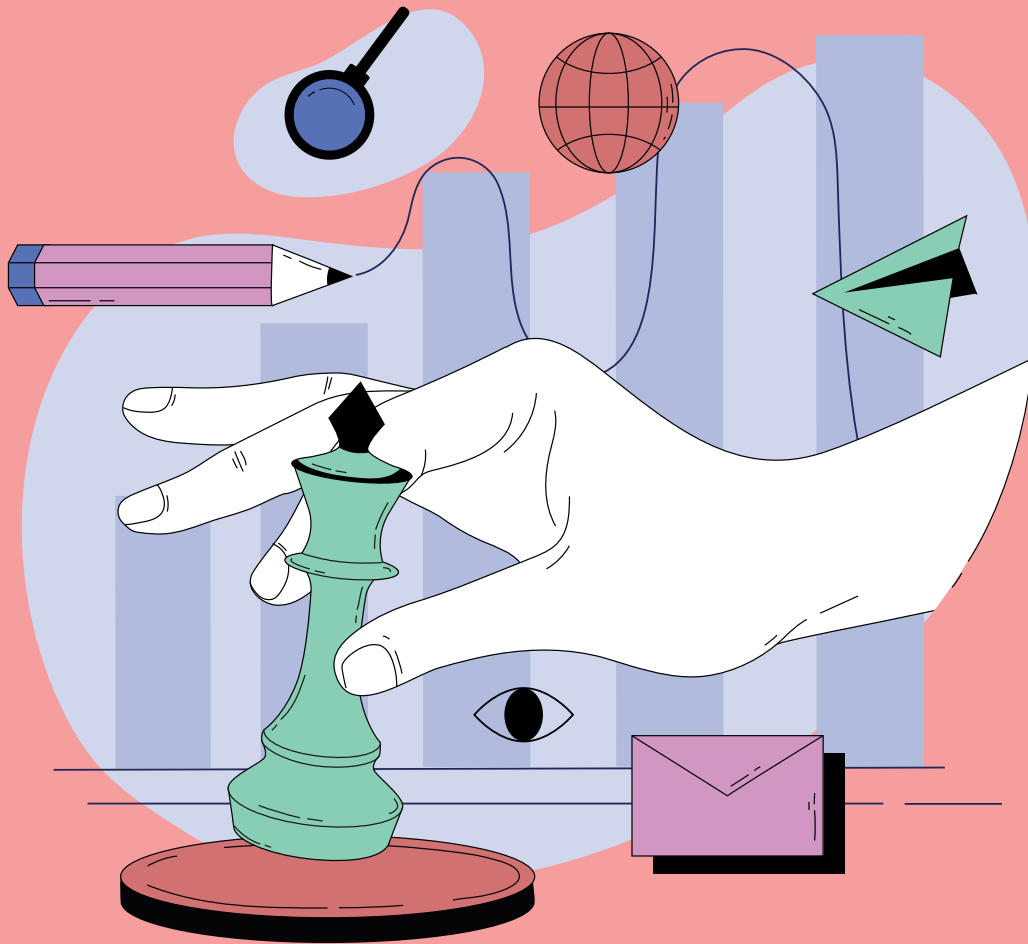


Building a sustainable media with solutions and constructive journalism



Strategies and tools to strengthen solutions journalism





In this last resource of the series "Building a sustainable media with solutions and constructive journalism," we explore how newsrooms can use a range of strategies and tools to strengthen their practice of solutions journalism and grow its visibility to attract a range of potential financial backers.

Signposting & media literacy

In the context of news consumer's growing anxiety, among other issues, caused by the information they're exposed to, media organisations have an opportunity to show and tell their audiences that they are approaching reporting differently.

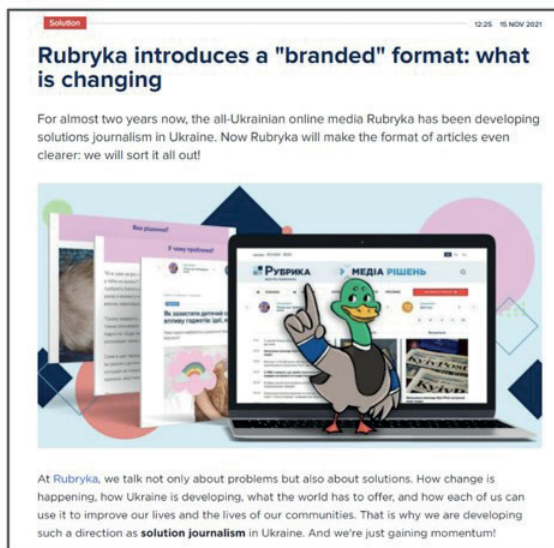
Even for the most avid public, identifying solutions reporting may not always be obvious. And media professionals are split on whether to give it prominence as a distinct form of journalism.

On the one hand there are those who believe that solutions journalism is just good journalism. Because it adheres to the highest standards

of reporting, engaging numerous and nuanced sources, while thoroughly explaining and providing evidence for what works and doesn't in a response to a social problem, it does not warrant being highlighted in any particular way. In their view, audiences will likely be receptive enough to the information and narrative angles of a story to find and recognise it as solutions journalism.

In addition, audiences may also be turned off by the concept of solutions reporting. During the course of audience research, some journalists have anecdotally heard members of the public explain how this editorial approach could feel like they're being told to think well about a singular way to tackle an issue. While this may stem from a misunderstanding of the thorough journalistic work it involves, labelling the content as such could contribute to pigeon-hole the work and divert attention.

On the other hand, some in the sector see the situation differently. A more constructive approach to reporting on the world offers an opportunity to prove that journalism doesn't necessarily need to be heavily skewed towards



*Photo: Rubryka, a Ukrainian solutions journalism-focused publication, has adopted a very proactive way of communicating about its editorial approach



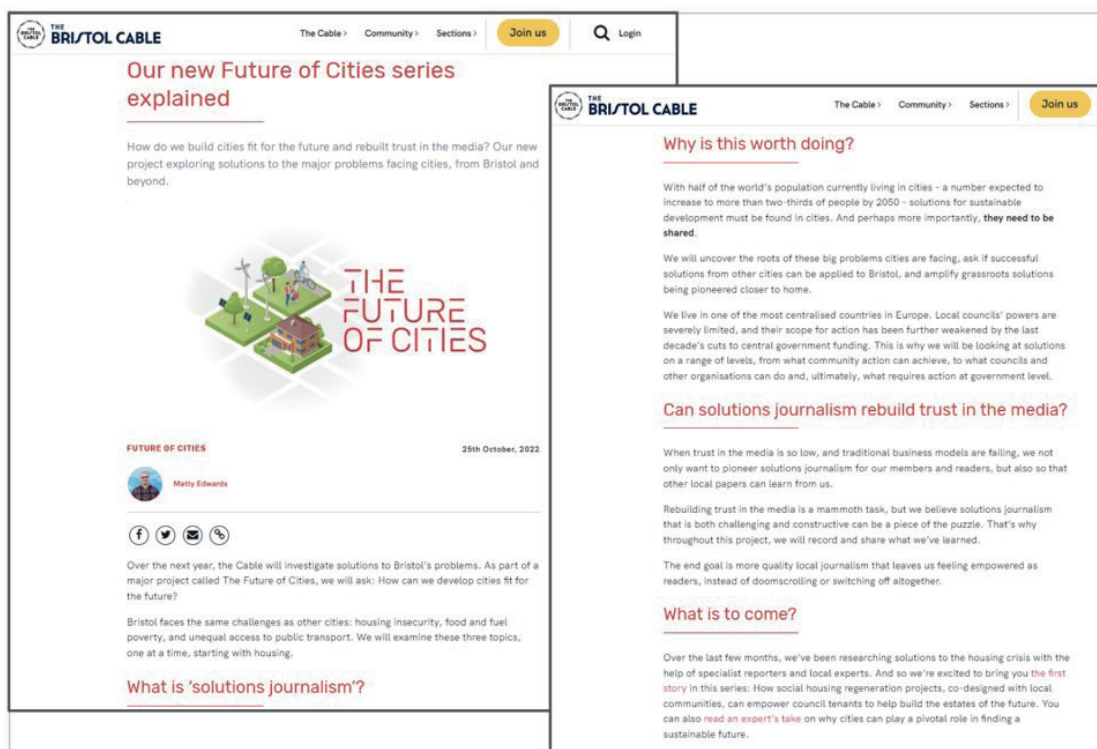
covering problems. They see an opening to do some media literacy and explain how journalists make decisions about what they cover and how. The information world is so complex that offering behind-the-scenes perspectives and being up-front about it can play a role in building understanding and buy-in. The logic goes that this would also help build healthier habits for information consumers.

Clearly explaining and labelling solutions journalism as a separate editorial product is a means for media organisations to enrich the information ecosystem of the communities they serve. [Trusting News](#), an organisation that works with journalists to evolve their practices

in order to actively earn trust, wrote a piece titled [“If you’re doing solutions journalism, don’t forget to tell your audience”](#).

While both of these perspectives are valid, it’s up to the news organisation to decide what strategy would work best to be transparent about or showcase its solutions oriented work ([see resource #2](#)).

From labels and logos, to distinct sections on the website, editor’s notes, editorials and specifically curated newsletters, media outlets have adopted a range of communication tactics to make solutions reporting more or less salient to the eyes of their audiences.



*Photo: The Bristol Cable, a local media cooperative in the U.K., produced solutions-oriented reporting series and explained the rationale for the editorial choices.

Here is a [slide deck compiling some stand-out examples](#) of signposting and messaging used by media organisations and [some guidance](#) for how you can create consistency with this work.



Self-assessment & goal-setting tool

As seen in [Resource #1](#) of this series, creating cultural shifts in editorial practice within a news organisation doesn't happen overnight. It requires a broad scope of more general strategic and smaller tactical interventions. These can be implemented over time, through various phases of development at a pace deemed most suitable to each news organisation.

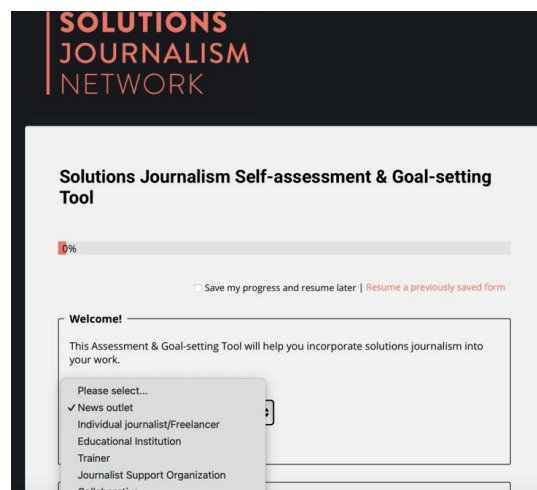


Drawing from tools and processes used to generate strategic change, the Solutions Journalism Network built its own tool to help guide various types of actors in the journalism industry refine their solutions-oriented work: [Solutions Journalism Self-Assessment and Goal-setting tool](#).

It exists in several bespoke versions for different types of stakeholders in the journalism industry: newsrooms, individual journalists and freelancers, trainers, educational institutions, journalism support organisations, and collaboratives.

The survey-based evaluation tool is designed around a range of development areas and questions that invite users to reflect on the various aspects of their work where solutions journalism could be incorporated. By filling out the form, they set a benchmark for where their practice is at and identify goals to attain. The tool can be used repeatedly to track progress over time, with the possibility to log reflections on challenges and opportunities to pursue.

Several links to additional resources and tools, which can be used to strategise to achieve goals, are incorporated in the follow up email users receive.



*Photo: The opening section of the Solutions Journalism Self-assessment & Goal-setting Tool

Impact Tracking

Tracking the impact of an editorial approach can help demonstrate its value and consolidate its practice within a newsroom, which is particularly relevant when engaging with financial stakeholders, as evidenced in [Resource #4](#). This requires setting up an infrastructure and workflows to ensure adequate information-gathering about the effects of reporting.

This [Impact Tracking Guide](#) explains how news organisations can create a culture of impact tracking within news organisations by outlining a process to develop impact priorities and workflows. It is designed to help journalists and editors layout clear ideas for the type of effect and impact they anticipate from their reporting, as well as getting clarity on various metrics and methods to go about measuring it. A worksheet linked in the guide involves formulating an impact hypothesis and elaborating a strategy to maximise the chances of attaining the stated outcome. Finally, this tool also showcases how newsrooms have highlighted the impact of their work to a range of different stakeholders.



Our reporting on <TOPIC> will <DESIRED OR POTENTIAL IMPACT> for <AUDIENCE SEGMENT X>. We will measure this impact through <MEASUREMENT or METRIC>.

Example 1

Our reporting on public transport accessibility will increase a sense of empowerment to advocate for change for underserved members of the community. We will measure this impact through baseline and post-reporting audience surveys.

*Photo: Example of impact hypothesis.

This [Impact Tracker](#) form used by the Solutions Journalism Network can serve as a model for news organisations to copy to help them gather information. The tool is designed to get the user to identify a specific type of impact connected to their solutions journalism work such as accountability, community action and audience engagement (see tool developed by Impact Architects as well). It then invites a deeper explanation of the connection between the two, to ascertain that there is a link of causation between the reporting and an outcome.

SJN also has [an impact database](#) on its website, listing various examples that media organisations practicing solutions journalism have demonstrated related to their work.

Getting support for your solutions and constructive journalism

The following organisations regularly produce resources, offer funding and provide guidance to help news organisations advance their practice of solutions and constructive journalism.

[Constructive Journalism Institute](#)

Based in Aarhus, Denmark, this organisation, founded in 2017, has primarily supported news organisations in Scandinavia to emphasize reporting that is more solutions-focused, balanced and connects society.

Their fellowship for news leaders has helped disseminate the practice of constructive journalism in numerous large and smaller newsrooms.

Among other services and tools, they recently developed an AI tool, the [Constructive News Mirror](#), that can assess a newsroom's production of constructive journalism content. It was developed using a large language model, trained on curated content selected by journalists and editors involved in the production of constructive journalism. A weekly report for editors and summaries of information for staff is produced drawing on data generated by the tool.

[Solutions Journalism Network](#)

The organisation, initially founded in the U.S. in 2013 and now operating globally, focuses on:

- Supporting entrepreneurial actors in bringing solutions journalism to their audiences and communities (by training solutions journalism trainers, educators and editors, and partnering with other journalism support organizations)
- Connecting communities of learning by convening like-minded journalism actors to reinforce and accelerate learning and practice change across networks (you can sign up to [SJN's directory](#) here!)
- Amplifying and disseminating insights about innovation in journalism and in society, and collects its impact.

[Transitions](#)

Founded in 1999, Transitions is a non-profit organisation based in Prague, Czech Republic. Their mission is to help build trust in independent, professional journalism and to foster a critically minded, informed, and engaged public, with a special focus on the post-communist countries of Europe and the former Soviet Union. They do this through the publication of Transitions – an online, English-language magazine, which provides in-depth analysis and opinion on this region – as well as journalism training and news literacy programs.



Their efforts have thus focused on spreading knowledge of solutions journalism throughout CEE, and then handing out subgrants for reporters to try firsthand, with their support and mentoring, this type of reporting.

Their website includes a newly redesigned [SoJo resource center](#), which includes the first online, interactive solutions journalism [course](#).

