Impact Examples: late 2019 and 2020

**Cross-Pollination:** Through solutions journalism, a community learns about something happening elsewhere, which sparks discussion and/or action.

**Washington Monthly and The Washington Post [February-March 2020]:** Eric Cortellessa of the Washington Monthly wrote a solutions story about Utah's vote-by-mail system, followed by an opinion piece (published in The Washington Post) that focused on Maryland ("Maryland can save its election by letting people vote at home"). Maryland then adopted the approach, starting with a small special election. Cortellessa followed up to see what happened, and found that the switch had some success, with turnout increasing 10 percentage points compared with a primary election a few months before.

**The Local [June 2020]:** With schools around the world trying to figure out how to bring children back during COVID-19, The Local, an English-language digital news publisher in Europe, reported on a successful strategy in Denmark — keeping children outdoors much of the day. (This story was a part of a series entitled "Confronting Coronavirus.") After reading that piece, teachers in Piedmont, Italy, the region with the second-highest number of coronavirus cases in that nation, tried out many of the same measures. The Local reported on this development in "Can Outdoor Teaching Enable Italy to Safely Reopen Schools?" Piedmont's results were good, and additional schools in Italy reopened after seeing the results.

**The Daily Yonder [October 2020]:** Freelance journalist Meg McIntyre — through the Solutions Journalism Exchange — wrote a story for the Daily Yonder on a solar-powered broadband initiative that's increasing Internet access in parts of rural Virginia. According to Adam Giorgi, a digital strategist for the Daily Yonder, a reader forwarded McIntyre's story to someone who works in rural education in Kentucky, where a similar project has now cropped up.

**Accountability or Institutional Change:** Solutions journalism holds leaders accountable, which results in a change in policy, law or practice.

**The Plain Dealer [July 2019]:** The Plain Dealer of Cleveland tackled the problem of childhood lead poisoning in its city with a series of stories that included a solutions-focused look at how other cities were doing a better job of preventing poisoning in the first place. The reporters said the solutions stories were key in sparking change because they showed Cleveland had options it wasn't pursuing. Most recently, in July 2019, the Cleveland City Council passed a landmark law requiring any property built before 1978 to be certified as lead-free before it can be rented.
USA Today Network [December 2019]: A four-part series by the USA Today Network, which exposed a “predator pipeline” in which athletes suspended or expelled for sexual assault at one college were accepted at other institutions, led to policy change. Two colleges immediately pledged to change how they vet athletes who seek transfers and adopted policies similar those featured in the solutions story in the series, and members of Congress issued a bipartisan call for an independent study of NCAA policies. Under pressure, the NCAA announced it would review its policies. Reporter Kenny Jacoby, who studied solutions journalism at the University of Oregon, said the series wouldn’t have had the impact he wanted unless he showed readers a possible path forward. “And here we’re seeing some direct evidence that the solutions component has helped bring that about,” he said.

Charlotte Journalism Collaborative (CJC) [September-October 2019]: In its solutions reporting on the high cost of housing, the CJC wrote about how housing vouchers (the so-called golden tickets to housing for many low-income people) often expired before recipients could use them. The collaborative followed that story with solutions-focused reports on what other places were doing to prevent that problem. Ultimately, the Charlotte Housing Authority voted to give families with federal housing vouchers more time to use the rental assistance — one of the solutions the CJC featured.

CTMirror [October 2019]: Twelve hours after the CTMirror published a story that explored the investments other states were making to maximize participation in the census, the governor’s office scheduled a press conference to announce Connecticut had decided to invest $500,000.

The Current [May 2020]: The Current influenced policy in Lafayette, Louisiana, with a solutions journalism article showing how other jurisdictions in the state were allocating part of their CARES Act relief money to housing assistance, which Lafayette Parish refused to do. The story was republished by two other publications in the state, adding scrutiny to the parish’s initial decision and emboldening council members, local housing activists and organizations to pressure decision makers. Ultimately, the parish’s leaders agreed to redirect $200,000 of its housing funds to help vulnerable people pay for rent, mortgages and shelter assistance during the pandemic.

Engagement and/or Trust: Solutions coverage leads to increased engagement and/or trust between a community and a newsroom, or with a particular issue.

WXIA-TV [November 2019]: WXIA in Atlanta ran “Caged in Cruelty,” a two-part series on animal abuse reforms, comparing the effectiveness of Pennsylvania’s approach to reducing these incidents with the status quo in Georgia. Within three days of WXIA’s story, a lawmaker who had been debating what to do scheduled a meeting with legislative staff to draft a bill for the upcoming legislative session. Two community meetings to discuss how to push for those reforms were also scheduled. Impressed by the depth of knowledge in this story, Reddit asked WXIA to conduct an “Ask Me Anything” forum that received more than 864 comments and questions in six hours.

Richland Source [May 2020]: Using solutions journalism principles to “complicate the narratives” (a process taught by the Solutions Journalism Network to counter polarization by adapting techniques used by professional mediators), the Richland Source, in partnership with a local barber, invited residents of Mansfield, Ohio, to an open, honest discussion called “Shop Talk.” Richland Source publisher Jay Allred led the first discussion on May 31. “The conversation was honest, vulnerable and woven through with deep empathy and respect,” Allred said. “It was also astonishing in its healing power.”
**Are We Europe [June 2020]:** This European multimedia magazine published its very first issue called “The Silver Lining,” which was entirely dedicated to stories of solidarity and responses to the COVID-19 crisis across Europe. Editor-in-Chief Kyrill Hartog said all the publication’s measures of success — social media metrics, readership targets and website traffic — grew substantially in the week it launched the magazine, and on some channels the reach and engagement grew by 550 percent. Hartog said the issue also grew immediately into a 50,000-euro partner project (co-funded by the European Cultural Foundation, Robert Bosch Stiftung, and others) called Summer of Solidarity (summerofsolidarity.eu). This project is a consortium of over 50 media organizations, and Are We Europe was asked to be a part of the core editorial team, in charge of story production, commissions and social media outreach.

**Mediacités [June 2020]:** Mediacités, a French digital and investigative publication that operates in four major cities across France, produces community-driven collaborative reporting projects. As the pandemic reshaped social life in April 2020, the newsroom turned to its audience to glean story ideas for a solutions journalism series titled “Transforming our cities after the coronavirus.” With a focus on how to preserve social cohesion, it solicited ideas around topics such as local businesses, transport, housing, nature and solidarity. Readers submitted 175 suggestions using the website’s engagement platform called #DansMaVille (#InMyTown), which led Mediacités’ newsroom to identify 28 potential stories; to date, it has published 14 articles. The digital publication received the 2020 Innovation Award from Médias en Seine for this work.

**Montgomery Advertiser [August 2020]:** A series of solutions stories focused on the Black community in Montgomery, Alabama, built trust that has resulted in better reporting and positive outcomes for the Montgomery Advertiser, which previously had served mostly white people in a city where the majority of residents are Black. Over two years, reporter Krista Johnson, who is white, focused a lot of her reporting on issues important to the Black community, such as an effort to turn one neighborhood into a Purpose-Built Community, after a successful Atlanta revitalization program. The number of Black subscribers is up, part of an overall increase in readership that Bro Krift, the paper’s executive editor, reported was greater than at any other Gannett paper in 2019.

**Washington City Paper [November 2020]:** Washington City Paper tracked the people who participated in its solutions-focused Voters Guide project, finding that they were more engaged than other readers. Participants were the people who responded when the paper asked its audience to name the issues that were most important to them, published the answers in its voters guide and then followed up with some solutions reporting on those issues. Since the guide was published, participants who were not already Washington City Paper members were twice as likely to become members as nonparticipating newsletter subscribers. The rate at which this group opened the paper’s newsletters also increased significantly.

**Revenue:** Evidence of increased income for the news organization based on solutions journalism activities, verticals, campaigns, etc.

**Resolve Philly [April 2020]:** Resolve Philly in Philadelphia was one of the initial recipients of the Philadelphia COVID-19 Community Information Fund, created by the Independence Public Media Foundation (IPMF), the Lenfest Institute for Journalism, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, and the
Knight-Lenfest Local News Transformation Fund. Resolve, which leads a collaborative of 24 Philadelphia-area news organizations, received $1 million to serve as “the backbone for a coordinated citywide crisis-response plan that provides news and information access, and is powered by its partners and other local organizations and institutions.” Plans called for gathering and disseminating information on COVID-19 in several languages, including Spanish. Solutions journalism will be a significant part of this project.

**Milwaukee Journal Sentinel [June 2020]:** The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel received $100,000 for a solutions-driven project called “Milwaukee’s Promise,” led by reporter James E. Causey. This project, launched in June 2020, is focused on how to build a place where every life is valued regardless of skin color, which Causey says Milwaukee used to do to a much greater degree. The project also attracted support from the Greater Milwaukee Foundation, which gave an additional grant to support the work of a Journal Sentinel photographer.

**The Community Voice [July 2020]:** The Community Voice in Wichita, Kansas, created a solutions-driven reporting project called the “The Criminalization of Poverty” as part of the Solutions Journalism Revenue Project. An introduction to the first article of the series (“They Stopped Suspending Licenses and Fine Collections Went Up”), explained the publication was “looking for solutions that work.” It used the same language in letters sent out to potential sponsors. In the first few months of fundraising, the publication raised $6,000 from private businesses and a foundation.

**Nice-Matin [October 2020]:** Employees of Nice-Matin saved the newspaper from bankruptcy in 2015 by becoming cooperative owners and launching a solutions journalism desk. In 2019, subscriptions had climbed 600% in three years, with solutions articles driving twice the number of subscriber conversions and keeping readers engaged three times longer compared with other content. Journalist Sophie Casals told the Membership Puzzle Project that solutions journalism led people “back to news” and increased reader trust.

**Flint Beat [December 2020]:** Flint Beat in Michigan expanded its newsroom capacity and focused on making solutions journalism a core part of its mission. This helped raise $7,525 from major donors from the city of Flint and beyond. A membership program is currently being launched, with the aim of tapping an audience that has repeatedly expressed support for the newsroom's journalism, which marries accountability with trying to understand what works for the city.