Deepening Engagement *for* Lasting Impact

A Framework for Measuring Media Performance & Results

PREPARED FOR: **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation**

PREPARED BY: **Learning for Action**

October 2013

FORWARD

Media matters. We believe in the power of informing and engaging communities for a variety of purposes, from building democracy and civil society to helping bring an end to the world's most challenging social problems. With the pace of innovation today, the possibilities of achieving our shared goals through media are more exciting than ever.

And, the landscape is shifting. With technology advancing at break-neck speed, media organizations have to understand what works not only to stay relevant in an environment of rapid and at-times radical developments, but also to make the case in an increasingly competitive environment. As important, technology provides an opportunity to more easily engage our communities, promote participation, receive feedback and use data to help make decisions.

You've spoken, and we've responded, with some guidance and a shared point of view. Our media partners working with us at the Gates and Knight Foundations—indeed, many of you reading this now—often ask us what we believe good media measurement looks like, and for support in getting to "good." We commissioned the work that led to this guide in direct response to your requests.

It's been a year in the making, because it's taken time to collect your views and heed your warnings. *Don't go it alone.* We convened dozens of diverse stakeholders in three cities over six months to gain real-world insights and ground this guide in practice. *Coordinate the work with other grantmakers.* Each convening included leading philanthropic media funders. *Be inclusive in terms of platforms and cultural contexts.* We brought in non-U.S.-based media makers and funders, and worked to ensure representation across channels and platforms, as well as from journalists and entertainment media.

We remain haunted by your loudest warning: *As soon as you commit something to writing, it will become outdated.* This is a challenge that we invite you to help us address. We want this guide to be a living document, and commit to regular updates and improvements.

No single document can guide all efforts or cover all circumstances, but we hope this guide will ground readers in important context. Going forward, the Foundations will be working together to provide one-on-one technical assistance to our grantees. Working with institutes such as USC's Annenberg School of Communication, we will develop case studies and best practices to share across the field, with the goal of stimulating media measurement efforts to good, better, or even best.

Dan Green	Mayur Patel
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	John S. and James L. Knight Foundation
Strategic Media Partnerships	Journalism & Media Innovation Program

Acknowledgements

Between December 2011 and June 2012, the Gates and Knight Foundations conducted three convenings of foundation representatives, media professionals, academics, and evaluators to explore opportunities to strengthen the field's approach to media impact evaluation. The meetings included participation from a variety of media funders, including BRITDOC Foundation, Ford Foundation, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Open Society Foundations, The Sundance Institute, Grantmakers in Film and Electronic Media, and Skoll Foundation; diverse media organizations such as The New York Times, NPR, Viacom, the Guardian, LinkTV, Bloomberg, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting; and evaluation experts from consultancies and educational institutions, including the USC Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism, Missouri School of Journalism, The Center for Evaluation Innovation, and Harvard University. Subsequently, a working group of funders, practitioners and evaluators distilled the insights from the convenings and produced this guide. The group included Joaquin Alvarado, Chief Strategy Officer for the Center for Investigative Reporting; Jason Carmel, Director of Marketing Sciences for POSSIBLE Worldwide; Dana Chinn, faculty member at USC Annenberg; Jessica Clark, media strategist for AIR, Inc.; Hannah Eaves, former Vice President of Digital & Engagement, LinkTV; Mohamed Nanabhay, co-founder Signalnoi.se, former Head of Online, Al Jazeera English; and representatives from the Gates and Knight Foundations.

Learning for Action (LFA) facilitated the process and co-authored the guide. LFA provides strategy and evaluation services that enhance the impact and sustainability of social sector organizations across the U.S. and beyond.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE IMPACT MANDATE: STAYING RELEVANT IN A CHANGING WORLD

When, why, and in what ways does our work matter? How do we demonstrate value? How can make more informed decisions to strengthen our work? Creators and funders of media and journalism are grappling with these questions more profoundly than ever before. The traditional ways of measuring success—content quality and audience size—no longer offer assurance that our work is relevant, effective, or sustainable. The new standard asks not just who we are reaching and how our content is being received, but whether or not our work is making a difference that matters: ***What is our impact?***

As funders gravitate toward outcomes-focused programming, media makers and distributors are increasingly embracing the impact mandate as the ultimate path to sustainability. The media and thought leaders who came together to build this framework agree that **demonstrating impact is key to survival in a time of industry upheaval**:

- New kinds of decentralized connectivity—from the rise of the smartphone to the emergence of search and social networking as the primary ways people find and share content—have made distribution a central challenge and opportunity.
- Media makers are being forced to develop complex, cross-platform strategies, leveraging traditional, digital, mobile, and events to reach increasingly diverse communities.
- Interactive technologies are empowering audiences while providing media makers with new access to data about who is engaging, and how and why they are doing it.
- The public and investors increasingly expect accountability, and want to see proof that organizations are run effectively and produce meaningful results—especially if they receive grant and public money.

The challenge for public media and community-focused communications initiatives is to become more *essential* in a world that faces social and environmental challenges of unprecedented complexity. We must preserve and build on our credibility with our communities. Media grantees and funders alike will become more successful the more we can demonstrate the efficacy of our work, and that our work is making a meaningful difference in people's lives.

MEDIA WITH A PURPOSE

We use the terms *media* and *journalism* to refer to organizations or projects that use public communications as a central strategy for achieving community outcomes. Traditional journalism, public health campaigns, policy and social advocacy projects are all examples of work that seeks to create value for communities and to produce results that cannot be measured monetarily. (Journalism builds knowledge; health campaigns shift individual behaviors and social norms; advocacy projects motivate individuals to build movements and propel systemic change.) The specific impacts vary, but the media efforts we are exploring are designed to affect people, not drive profits (although revenue generation may be a concurrent necessity). Our definition includes community-oriented media projects undertaken by commercial media, businesses and nonprofit organizations.

IMPACT

We define *impact* as change that happens to individuals, groups, organizations, systems, and social or physical conditions. Typically long-term and affected by many variables, impact represents the ultimate purpose of community-focused media efforts—it's how the world is different as a result of our work.

"This concept of impact—as currently defined—is very subjective and complex.... It's not easy, nor is it perfect or precise, but it deserves experimentation and effort in trying. And it won't improve if no one starts somewhere."

—Greg Linch
The Washington Post

A Strategic Investment in Measurement Can Be Transformative

Media measurement is complex and, for many, a daunting undertaking that sometimes feels like a distraction from the core work of making and distributing quality content. Yet the opportunity to use measurement to make our work, our organizations, and our field stronger has never been more urgent, or promising. The proliferation of interactive communications technologies offers a wealth of real-time data about our audiences and how best to engage and influence them. In this context, evaluation offers media makers and funders a much-needed compass, a way to get to know the consumers/users of our content in order to build a more sustainable business. Measurement helps us become more strategic and focused, allocate resources more powerfully, collaborate more successfully, and increase our relevance so that we reach more people and change their lives more deeply.

"For public media makers, commercial measurements designed to track purchases or ad impressions aren't always enough to assess whether a media project contributes meaningfully to public life."

—Jessica Clark, AIR Media Strategist

To realize the full potential of measurement, we must work together to overcome several challenges:

- **There is no universally embraced method for measuring media engagement and impact**. Evaluation frameworks are proliferating within individual organizations and foundations, but the field today operates without a coordinating mechanism or knowledge management resource that consolidates, organizes, and shares the many tools and frameworks in use.
- **Evaluating media impact is not an exact science; the "right" approach to measurement depends on context.** No single approach for measuring impact works for all media projects. The development of useful evaluation metrics looks different for projects with policy change goals versus those focused on creating engaged or information-literate communities, for example. Moreover, today's media projects are designed in a rapidly evolving technology environment; evaluating innovation adds a layer of challenge because the appropriate metrics may not be apparent at the outset of something new and unique.
- **Funders struggle to find the right balance between standardization and customization.** There is a tension between developing tools that apply to multiple organizations and projects, while preserving a level of detail that is useful to each individual organization in a portfolio or cohort.
- **Media makers struggle to find the right balance between too much and too little investment in evaluation.** Knowing what to measure in order to reveal actionable insights—and conversely, what not to measure because it is a distraction and a waste of resources—is getting more difficult as platforms and data sources multiply. Measuring media can be expensive, difficult, and resource intensive, even for organizations that understand the ultimate benefits.

This guide is a response to these challenges—a call to action combined with some of the best thinking about how media and journalism can most easily and meaningfully use targeted evaluation to make our initiatives more sustainable, the connections with our communities stronger, and our impact deeper and longer-lasting.

Getting the Most from this Guide

With this guide, we aim to provide an accessible entry point plus useful reference material that journalism and entertainment media producers, distributors and funders can use to think about, design, and implement engagement and impact evaluation strategies.

There is no "cookie cutter" solution to media measurement, no single set of ideal metrics and measurement practices we can suggest that will be right for your project. Instead, this guide offers a suggested thinking process—an overview of options and techniques along with the key questions you should be asking yourself and your partners. The answers to these questions will help build clarity about the measurement approach that is right for your organization or project.

"We are awash in metrics, and we have the ability to engage with readers at scale in ways that would have been impossible (or impossibly expensive) in an analog world. The problem now is figuring out which data to pay attention to and which to ignore."

—Aron Pilhofer,
The New York Times

The guide has been formatted to be useful to people at all levels of familiarity with media evaluation. The next section begins by presenting a core framework: four "building blocks" that distill a diverse set of evaluation frameworks into a straightforward process you can use to plan a new measurement effort. We follow with a discussion of each phase of the evaluation process, offering examples from the media world and tips for both basic and advanced measurement methods.

There's a lot to absorb, so to make it digestible and practical we have included **planning worksheets** at the end of each section along with a list of **recommended resources**: tools, how-to instructions, white papers, articles, and books you can turn to for more support in specific areas.

Despite the inclusion of worksheets and suggested tools, we hope readers will approach this resource first and foremost as a thought piece—a contribution to a complex conversation we are having as a field of collaborators, rather than as a set of prescriptive instructions for how to do media measurement. We invite you to consider the ideas in this guide, to question and challenge them, to embrace some and reject others. We look forward to a continuing dialog.

TO EXPLORE THESE QUESTIONS …	***START HERE …***
▪ What are the core elements of successful media evaluation efforts? ▪ What should a start-to-finish approach for measuring media engagement and impact look like?	**The Building Blocks of Media Measurement** (page 4)
▪ How do we set meaningful, realistic goals? ▪ How can we use goal-setting to ensure that the measurement we do will give us actionable insights?	**Setting Concrete, Meaningful Goals** (page 6)
▪ How do we learn more about the people we are reaching? ▪ How can we use knowledge of our communities to focus our work?	**Understanding Your Community** (page 11)
▪ What should we be measuring to track community engagement with our work? ▪ How do we benchmark our performance?	**Measuring the Quantity and Quality of Engagement** (page 18)
▪ What do we measure to show that our work is contributing to meaningful, lasting change for our organization or our communities?	**Demonstrating Impact** (page 29)
▪ What can we learn from other media measurement frameworks and efforts? ▪ Where else can we get practical tools and tips for implementing media evaluation?	**Appendix: Resources** (page 47)

In this section

- *What are the core elements of successful media evaluation efforts?*
- *What should a start-to-finish approach for measuring media engagement and impact look like?*

THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF MEDIA MEASUREMENT

The concepts introduced in this chapter are a blueprint for designing and implementing a focused, practical measurement strategy.

The approach to media measurement we present is as much about shaping and refining your work as it is about proving effectiveness. For ultimate success, evaluating media must be approached as a discipline that is built over time and integrated within a program's core.

Impact measurement efforts are most relevant when you have a premise—about how the work you are doing today will create meaningful change tomorrow—that can be tested and refined. To help you articulate your premise in a way that is measurable, we propose four distinct building blocks of media evaluation, and provide concrete suggestions and ideas for how you can accomplish each step. Each building block is a powerful way to strengthen your work, build relevance, and create sustainability. Each piece builds on the others to create a comprehensive picture of the level of engagement and impact your project has with your community.

1. **Setting Goals** is a discipline to focus your work on the core intentions regarding who is to be reached and to what end. Goal-setting establishes expectations and builds agreement among stakeholders about what counts as success, and how you will know it when you see it. This step ideally happens before a project launches, but goals also can be "retrofitted," and for all projects, your goals should be confirmed or adjusted as you move through the other building blocks. Goal-setting is as important for educational and awareness-building efforts as for advocacy initiatives.

2. **Understanding Community** provides insight into the people you engage with your work, or what media organizations traditionally have referred to as "audience." This step should start before a project begins, and continue throughout. Many projects use research into communities, done both before and during a project, to shape implementation and refine goals.

3. **Measuring Engagement** provides insight into your performance: how broadly and deeply are people engaging with your content? This work takes place before or during project launch (to establish baseline where possible) and throughout implementation.

4. **Demonstrating Impact** provides insight into the connections between your work and the ultimate effects. Impact can be assessed over the lifetime of a project as well as retrospectively to understand how your efforts contributed to cumulative changes.

When planning a media project and its evaluation, it makes sense to first consider the question of intended impact, working backward and then forward through the building blocks to clarify how the work you do in the near term will produce future results. From an implementation standpoint, however, you will likely move through the four building blocks in logical progression, which is how we present them in the next sections.

BUILDING BLOCK #1:

SETTING CONCRETE, MEANINGFUL GOALS

In this section

- *How do we set meaningful, realistic goals for our work?*
- *How can we use goal-setting to ensure that the measurement we do will give us actionable insights?*

Why Is This Important?

All journalism and public media, by definition, are undertaken not only to reach a community but also to make some kind of difference in or for that community. Making a difference ranges from building awareness and knowledge, to motivating behaviors, to changing policies.

The goal-setting process answers the question: *What are you trying to accomplish, and with whom?* Meaningful evaluations—much like successful programs—are anchored to clear goals. The goal-setting process entails exploring, agreeing upon, and articulating the community your project aims to engage as well as the impact it is intended to have, ideally early in project planning. Goal-setting provides an opportunity to articulate assumptions, and ensure that all stakeholders agree on the most meaningful outcomes.

GOALS

Measureable, observable, time-bound results you hope to see from your work; what you will take responsibility for achieving

The process of committing to concrete goals is sometimes intimidating and may feel constraining. Yet we cannot learn and grow stronger unless we are clear about what we are testing and refining. The goal-setting process is foundational because doing it well requires you to think about the other three building blocks of media measurement—including defining what "engagement" means in the context of your communications effort.

"Metrics are powerful tools for insight and decision-making. But they are not ends in themselves because they will never exactly represent what is important. That's why the first step in choosing metrics is to articulate what you want to measure, regardless of whether or not there's an easy way to measure it. . . . Metrics are just proxies for our real goals."

—Jonathan Stray, Journalist

Goal-Setting in the Media World

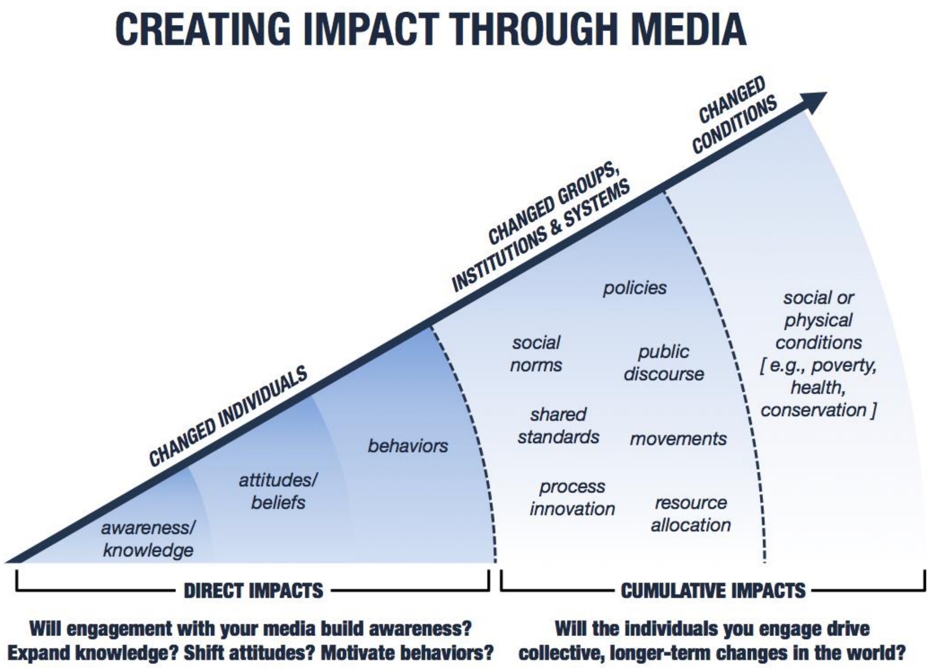
Skipping the upfront step of articulating specific, measurable goals is one of the most common obstacles to effective media measurement. Many media organizations are familiar with and able to track indicators of reach and engagement that in the commercial world have monetary value, such as audience size and demographics. Understanding impact, however, is trickier. Public interest media, journalism, and other community-focused communications efforts usually seek results that are not easily monetized. Effort must go into the process of mapping the connections among the groups we reach, how well we engage them, and the intended public interest end results. Historically, established benchmarks for community-focused media are rare, and sources of baseline data can be elusive or nonexistent. Adding to the measurement challenge is the amount of innovation occurring in the media space: valid comparisons and benchmarks may, by definition, not be available for new approaches, efforts, and technologies.

Begin With Clarity about Your Intended Impact

When setting goals, first consider the big picture of what you hope your project will accomplish. Ask fundamental questions about what success looks like from the 10,000-foot level before focusing on ground-level details of how your project will drive those outcomes:

- What is the ultimate impact you are trying to achieve?
- Is your purpose to increase awareness or knowledge? Do you hope to influence attitudes, shift opinions, build empowerment or increase a community's self-efficacy? Is your goal to motivate specific behaviors? One-time actions? Permanent changes in habits?

- Are you trying to create change that builds on and goes beyond the individual level? Is your work intended to affect organizations? Systems? Social or physical conditions?



> *"For public broadcasters, there are ways of having impact without being an advocate for public policy. It's about creating value in the community, which stems from public broadcasters' ability to convene community and thought leaders, facilitate dialogue, raise awareness about local issues, and collaborate with others."*
>
> *—Charles Meyer, National Center for Media Engagement*

All communications efforts are built by engaging individual people. If you want to create change at the group or systems level, it's important to recognize the difference between getting individuals who see your media to behave in a certain way, and having those behaviors integrated as norms, policies or shared practices. You may get some individuals to recycle, for example, without getting a community to embrace recycling as a core value and custom. Media can change individual attitudes and behaviors—sometimes quite quickly—but those direct impacts typically precede longer-term, cumulative, self-sustaining change.

Map the Ways Your Work Is Intended to Create Change

Regardless of the change you seek to advance, you need to have a clear theory of how and why your work will advance that outcome. Funders often rely on tried-and-true social sector evaluation tools such as the *logic model* or *theory of change* (see **RESOURCES**), but the template you use is not as important as the underlying concept: imagine your project's eventual success and write that story. The beginning of your story should state clearly where you are today (the current conditions you hope to change); the middle should explain the actions you will take and the effects you believe those actions will have on specific people (who is reached and how they are engaged); and the end of the story should reveal what you believe will have changed in the world as a result—and how you would recognize this change. Your intended impact is, in effect, how you want the story to end. Consider:

- Whom will you need to reach to advance these changes? Whom are you reaching today? Do you need to reach a new community? A more targeted community? A larger community?
- What kinds of engagement do you believe will be necessary to produce the desired impact? What can be accomplished through passive exposure to content? What would interactive and more participatory engagement with your content

> *"All innovation begins with vision. It's what happens next that is critical. . . . Only by building a model of customer behavior and then showing our ability to use our product or service to change it over time can we establish real facts about the validity of our vision."*
>
> —*Eric Ries,* The Lean Startup

look like and accomplish? How might you engage your community from the outset to help design and create the work, rather than just receive and consume it?

- How long will it take to see an impact?
- What does success look like? How will you know you've been successful? What will be early signs of progress? What will be the ultimate indicator of success?
- What's realistic given your resources?

If you can tell the story of your project's development, implementation and impact in straightforward language that would make sense to someone in your target community, you will have a solid blueprint from which to identify your most important goals. This is critical for achieving alignment with funders and other partners, and is one of the most practical benefits of good goal-setting.

HOW DO YOU SET GOALS WITHOUT BASELINE DATA?

- ✓ Don't assume you don't have data. The next three sections offer advice on how to leverage existing data sources and gather new data. Pull together those resources to help you set realistic, meaningful goals.
- ✓ Look for comparable projects, both inside and outside your organization, to gain insight into baseline conditions.
- ✓ Benchmark against yourself. Start collecting data as soon as you are able and watch the trend line over time.
- ✓ When you don't have hard data, make reasonable, qualitatively informed assumptions and note them clearly. Testing these assumptions then becomes an evaluation objective.

Depending on your project, your goals may be focused on one or on a range of different communities. Some projects have long-term, large-scale social impact goals, while others are meant to achieve more immediate ends such as increasing awareness, educating a population, or raising funds for a cause. Some goals will be achieved while a project is being implemented, while others may not be evident until long after the project is over.

MEDIA MEASUREMENT IN ACTION: EXAMPLE GOAL STATEMENTS

Strong goal statements articulate intended results for community (*whom* you will reach), engagement (*how* they will interact with your content) and impact (*what will change* as a result).

PROJECT	WEAK GOAL STATEMENT	STRONGER GOAL STATEMENT
Local online news project	"Do for print and Web journalism what public broadcasting has done for radio and television"	"Increase awareness among members of the general public in New Orleans regarding issues that directly affect them such as land use, transportation, and community planning by providing clear, non-partisan information and research through online content and facilitated convenings, so that they can make informed decisions that protect and build on the distinctive character of the area"
Regional advocacy effort	"Produce quality reporting that will be widely distributed via mainstream media that will contribute to meaningful dialogue on environmental issues important to Southern California"	"Partner with local and regional news organizations to investigate air quality and related environmental issues in Southern California (Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino counties) so that more residents and businesses participate in discussions about public policies that affect their health and business growth"
Documentary film	"Create a space within the national cultural dialog where the voices of women in combat can be heard"	"Through PBS broadcast, online engagement, festival and community screenings, and screenings for key policymakers and opinion leaders, increase and reframe the conversation about the expanding role of women in the military to promote gender equity by advancing policy change and strengthening grassroots and national networks of women's groups, veterans advocates, and health care providers"

RESOURCES FOR SETTING GOALS

- Evaluation for Organizational Learning: Basic Concepts and Practical Tools (LFA Group, 2011)

See the appendix for more information and a link to this resource

In an ideal scenario, you will have strong, clear goals at the outset of your initiative that are informed by solid data. A more common scenario, however, is that your organization comes up with provisional goals based on informed assumptions. These assumptions are then vetted and finalized during project implementation.

Refining goals is appropriate when it becomes apparent that a goal is not realistic or when there is disagreement among stakeholders on its importance. The process of revising expectations is vital: it's not about moving the goalposts, but about figuring out where truly meaningful goalposts should be anchored to better reflect the reality in which you are working.

Each of the next three sections of this guide—on community, engagement, and impact—offers a more in-depth discussion about how to assess specific dimensions of your work. Look at those sections to understand more about your options for measuring results, and then use those ideas to help you formulate relevant goals.

SEVEN TIPS FOR SETTING GOALS

1. Set goals and design the evaluation during the project-planning phase. This helps with measurement—identifying what to measure from the start—and makes it easier to design your media project to drive intended outcomes. (If you are faced with beginning evaluation after your project has already launched, see **What if you're not at the beginning?**, on page 29.)
2. Write the story of your project, describing the key steps along your path from where you are starting to the ultimate impact you will achieve. Consider using an evaluation framework template like the theory of change or logic model to help you map the connections between your work and goals.
3. Articulate intended results for community (*who* you will reach), engagement (*how* they will interact with your content) and impact (*what will change* as a result). Activities are not goals; your goals are changes resulting from your activities. Benchmarking against yourself—where you are now versus where you want to be—will allow you to see progress as your project unfolds.
4. Choose a few meaningful, focused goals instead of trying to measuring everything your project does. Remember that you want to pick goals that help you build confidence you are on the right track, not prove every aspect of your work. Choose a handful of goals and associated metrics that are the best-available proxies for success, and can be feasibly achieved and measured within a time-bound period.
5. Be realistic. Consider what you can feasibly achieve within a time-limited period.
6. Look for contribution/correlation, not attribution/causation. Articulate the ways you would expect to see your work contribute toward outcomes that go beyond mere engagement—but which you might not be able to "claim" as the direct result of your work exclusively.
7. Refine your goals as your project progresses. While it is ideal to stick close to the original goals assigned at the beginning of a project, goals are often based on preliminary data or assumptions that are put to the test once your project launches. Adjusted goals are reflections of the learning you accomplish through your work.

PLANNING WORKSHEET

Setting Goals

To clarify *what you are trying to accomplish* and *with whom,* answer the following questions. Where you don't have definitive answers, jot down initial thinking, **note any assumptions**, and note who else you will consult (e.g., internal and external stakeholders) to build clarity and consensus around a strong goal.

What would long-term success look like? Consider your organization's mission and the specific purpose of this project, and reflect on the following:

What is the current condition you hope to change? What is the difference you are trying to achieve with respect to this need or problem? *Consider: Are you hoping to contribute to changes at the individual level? Within a group? In specific social or physical conditions?*	
How will this project advance the impact you've just outlined? *Consider: How do you intend to affect individuals, organizations, and/or systems in your community? Is there an interim change you need to see (such as influence attitudes, shift opinions, or increase self-efficacy) before the ultimate long-term impact (such as behavior change or policy change) can be achieved?*	

Whom are you targeting? How quickly will you see results?

Whom will you need to reach to advance the changes you've outlined above? *Consider: Whom are you reaching today? Do you need to reach a new community? A more targeted community? A larger community? Be as specific as possible.*	
What are the critical engagement activities? *Consider: How might you engage your community from the outset to help design and create the work? What can you accomplish through passive types of community outreach? Through interactive/ participatory engagement?*	
Beyond engagement, what impact do you believe your work will produce on your target community? How will you recognize this impact? *Consider: What changes would you expect soon after exposure to your media? What changes would take longer to manifest?*	

Summarize your answers in a project goal statement that states *who* you will engage, *how they will interact* with your content, *how they will be changed* as a result, and *what ultimate change* will be advanced.

In this section

- *How do you learn more about the people you are reaching?*
- *How can you use knowledge of your communities to focus your work?*

BUILDING BLOCK #2:
UNDERSTANDING YOUR COMMUNITY

Who is engaging with your content? This basic question—often referred to in terms such as audience, reach, exposure and penetration—is where the research work of your measurement efforts begins.

Historically, public media projects often work with little actionable information about their communities. Aside from basic measures of audience size and high-level demographics, such as age, they operate with little information about who is connecting with their content. For community-focused media projects, however, success usually depends as much on *whom* you reach as on *how many* you reach. To understand your true impact, and to build actionable plans to deepen or expand engagement, you must first understand your community.

Begin with the basics and, over time, build from there. Whether your goal is to reach more people, to reach specific groups of people, or both, the knowledge you develop about the characteristics, attitudes and behaviors of the people who engage with your content is probably the most valuable data you will have at your disposal.

TARGET COMMUNITY

The people you seek to engage in the course of creating and distributing your project

ACTUAL COMMUNITY

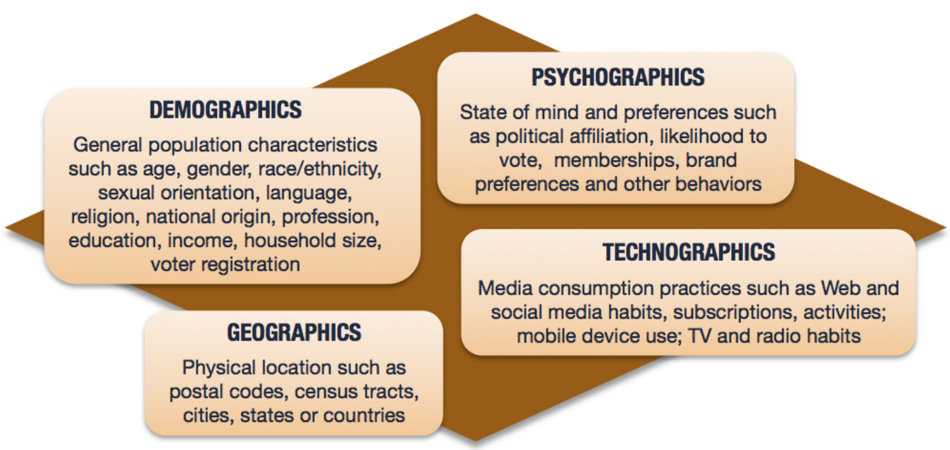
The people you successfully engage

FROM "AUDIENCE" TO "COMMUNITY"

While "audience" has traditionally referred to *consumers* of content, "community" reflects the possibility of readers and viewers as co-creators: contributors to a rich conversation and unforeseen directions and actions, often taking place across multiple platforms. "Community" also emphasizes that the people who engage with your content are connected to each other, and that these relationships are often important for driving higher-level impact such as civic engagement or social change. Each person who engages with your content joins and potentially strengthens a community of shared interest.

What Can You Measure? What Should You Measure?

To help you describe your community, consider a range of attributes and behaviors relevant to the goals of your initiative:



Zeroing in on the most relevant characteristics of your community is part science, part art. Not every attribute or behavior matters. Goal-setting is the time to ask yourself, which community characteristics are most critical to drive your intended impact? For the project to be successful, who needs to be touched and moved by your content? If your project seeks to build awareness or knowledge, who needs that information most? If your project seeks to change attitudes or drive behavior, who do you most want to reach? Why?

"I tend to think of journalism in terms of empowerment; it's a service we perform for members of a community. ***Community used to mean 'town' but the definition is and must be more complex now****.... If I had a live map of the web broken down by interests in some way, there are all sorts of ways I could focus my reporting. I could look at the map to see where the people affected by the story congregate online, and find sources there. When I had something to publish, I would know where to post the link. And I could discover who I'm missing, who I'm not thinking of and not serving in my reporting, and challenge the categories by which I group people."*

—Jonathan Stray, Journalist

For example, are you trying to affect childhood obesity rates by promoting healthier grocery purchases and eating habits in the home? You need to reach a specific demographic (i.e., families with children living at home). Are you trying to sway "moveable middle" voters about a social issue? You need to reach a specific psychographic (which may, in fact, overlap with a specific demographic). Are you trying to mobilize neighborhood residents to tackle gang violence? You need to reach people in a specific geography (and, perhaps, specific psychographics and demographics, such as members of neighborhood PTAs, or neighborhood business owners). Are you trying to promote awareness about public health services in a region where there is low access to digital media but relatively high use of mobile phones? You need to design a program to reach a specific technographic profile.

Or, are you trying to build greater and more diverse public participation in the healthcare debate? You need to reach people who are currently not participating, with an understanding of which groups are underrepresented—potentially a combination of demographic, psychographic, geographic and technographic characteristics. Is your primary objective to grow the largest-possible engaged community, irrespective of specific characteristics—for example, a traditional radio news show that seeks to boost total listenership? You need to understand the relevant attributes and behaviors of your current community and, with additional data about market size, develop strategies that expand your reach either within or beyond that group.

How you choose to describe your current and target communities reflects a core strategic choice that most organizations, both nonprofit and commercial, struggle to resolve:

> ***Should you be going after more people like the ones you already reach? Should you be targeting people you have not previously reached or considered? Or is your community large enough, and your priority is to deepen engagement with your existing community? Are your impact***

MEDIA MEASUREMENT IN ACTION: *WELCOME TO SHELBYVILLE*

Active Voice, which develops and support community engagement campaigns for social issue documentaries, uses what they call the "Beyond the Choir" approach for thinking about important stakeholders. For *Welcome to Shelbyville*, Kim Snyder's 2011 documentary about immigration in the heart of America's Bible Belt, Active Voice pinpointed several target communities using a variety of attributes and behaviors and focused specifically on "beyond the choir" stakeholders to achieve the goal of "building bridges between newcomer immigrants and long-term residents in demographically changing communities."

PASSING THE "SO WHAT?" TEST

Just because you can collect data doesn't make it useful. Basic demographics are sometimes simple to gather, but may offer information of little actionable value.

Gender, for example, is one of the most easily accessed attributes. These data may be relevant if you are intentionally trying to reach gender-specific groups (e.g., fathers or mothers). Conversely, if you are trying to reach men and women alike, or need to understand if your content is more successful engaging one gender, it would be relevant to know the gender profile of your actual community. For most projects, however, knowing how your community breaks down by gender won't tell you anything meaningful about your performance, and it won't help you shape your work.

Every metric you track on an ongoing basis should pass the "so what?" test: Do you want to see a particular result? And do you know what you will do if your results vary from that target? If you can't answer yes to both questions, the metric is most likely a distraction from other, more important and *actionable* performance data.

objectives advanced most by focusing on increasing the* number *of people you reach, the* diversity *of whom you reach, or the* depth of their engagement *with your content?

There is no right answer, except the one that is right for your project given your impact goals. ("I don't know" is usually a more honest answer—and definitely more helpful in pinpointing where you need to focus your measurement efforts—than "all of the above.") Bringing definition to your current and target communities will help you answer these questions, and build strategies that reflect those choices, through actionable information. The clearer and more specific you are about your near- and long-term objectives for building community, the easier it will be to identify a small number of concrete metrics to help you assess your progress.

Gathering Data about Community

The reality for most public media efforts is that human and financial resources are limited. You cannot afford to measure everything, and even well-resourced projects should be discriminating when choosing what to measure.

Once you have an initial idea about what you want to measure to understand your community—a hypothesis about the key attributes and behaviors for the people you want to reach and, in the case of efforts underway, for the people who are already connecting with your content—you need to consider your options for data collection. Which of your proposed metrics could be gathered quickly and inexpensively? Which would require more sustained investment? Beyond the preliminary set of metrics you imagined, are additional data available to you that could offer meaningful insights about your community? By considering what would give the most insight *and* what's relatively affordable and straightforward to collect, you can narrow your list of potential metrics and choose a few indicators that will serve as a yardstick for your effort to build community.

Most public media projects rely on two broad categories of sources for insight into community.

1. **Begin with existing data or data already gathered by others.** From your own membership database or those of your partners, to publicly available information, you can often tap into existing resources for information about community. These include:

Relationship Management Databases	Most organizations have lists of people they've been in contact with in some way—e-mail newsletters, event registrations, donors, etc. Often these lists are consolidated into a database (e.g., Salesforce.com) so that you can analyze who you're reaching now, how often, and how. Increasingly, these databases are able to track engagement data as well (e.g., e-mail open rates). If you have a database but don't see the particular information you need, consider using a third-party database developer to append relevant attribute and behavior data to your existing record set.
Existing Research	Check to see what information you and your partners have on your community already, such as market research, articles and white papers. Libraries and academic institutions are also great resources. Look for studies on topics related to your goals, including evaluations of similar projects. In the U.S., the website data.gov is a great place to start, where you'll find links to census data and information on health and healthcare, education, conservation, public safety, and other public interest subjects.
Distribution Channels	Are you distributing your content through a specific partner? Your distributor may be able to provide data about the people who engage. Ask about the availability of Nielsen ratings for TV, Arbitron

MAKING INFORMED ASSUMPTIONS IS OK

In the absence of the data you'd really like, use information you can access to make informed assumptions. Even if your project doesn't have a strong precedent, you may be able to imagine ways your community is likely to be connected with similar projects or groups. **Alternatively, consult an expert.** From marketing firms to academics, experienced researchers can help reveal the characteristics of your community—through their own research or by consulting on how to approach yours—that most shape your ultimate impact.

"The first step is to define an audience that not only can be measured but which also can be targeted with specific content and services, just as e-commerce businesses do. It's tough to define success if the goal is to be all things to all people.

"KPIs need targets to be useful. 'We want 500 ninth- and tenth-graders who have met with a counselor to sign up for our new e-mail newsletter about preparing for college.' Maybe that's just a guess based on an estimate that there are about 2,000 9th and 10th graders in total. But it's a start, and it gives more direction than 'We hope everyone signs up for it.' After you launch it's essential to regularly evaluate whether you've set not only the right targets but also the right KPIs."

—Dana Chinn,
USC Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism

for radio, and TruMedia or CognoVision for billboards. For films in festivals, ask for attendance data. If you have NGO partners who are disseminating or collaborating in the creation of content, tap into their information resources to learn about their constituents.

Advertising If you invest in paid advertisements, you may have access to demographic information and other data you can use to understand who is responding to your content. More critically, you should be tracking click-throughs or referrals to a designated landing page in order to track conversions that originate with your ads.

2. **A second, increasingly powerful type of information can be generated in the course of your media work.** Digital platform analytics are becoming much more important because they are low-cost and offer significant opportunities to learn about your community. In addition, the simplest way to understand whom you're reaching may be to ask them—asking them is itself a form of engagement. Some of the most powerful ways to develop knowledge about community use techniques that gather information from the end user, either directly or via linked online data. In particular, media projects should be intentional and look for creative ways to mine the following sources:

Digital Behavior and Social Profile Data If you have a website that sees significant traffic, you can infer information about your community using a tool such as Google Analytics. What **referral sources** are driving traffic? Which **search terms** are people using to find your site? Can you cross-reference site traffic with your email database to learn more about who is motivated to respond to your invitation to connect?

If you have an established social media presence or application on your site, you can learn a lot about your users through their **social profile data**. As of this writing, Facebook is the dominant social networking platform throughout much of the world (with country- or language-specific exceptions, such as VK for Russian speakers and RenRen in China). Depending on how much each user provides, you can tell a great deal about the people who "like" your project on Facebook or who register or log in to your site through a Facebook plugin: who their friends are, what brands they like, where they are located, how old they are, whether they are married, and so on. Use Facebook Insights to understand your community *beyond their relationship to you.* Knowing that your community cares about issues directly related to your content—say, environmental conservation—is probably not helpful; knowing that a significant portion of your engaged community shops regularly at REI, loves yogurt, subscribes to *The Economist* and has a certain level of attained education, on the other hand, may suggest new ways to deepen your relationship or find new people who would be likely to connect with your content.

Customized Site Navigation and Content One of the easiest ways to segment your online community is to offer distinct content for each segment, or group. Health insurers know exactly who they are reaching—providers, current insurance plan members, and consumers who are shopping for a new plan—because they create top-level filters that ask users to self-identify in order to access specific kinds of content. Crayola lets its users say whether they are a parent, teacher or child. Offering customized resources gives users something that's "just for them," and it gives you information about who is coming to your site.

Registration Data Particularly if you offer an incentive for users to sign up—such as access to special content, or the ability to contribute to the conversation—you have a chance to ask more about your community's interests, preferences, and demographics. While some believe you should keep most questions optional to minimize the barrier for engagement, others argue that it's reasonable to require information that's essential to tracking your priority audiences: if someone is willing to register, there must be some reason and some degree of trust that has been built. Explain why you are asking and how you intend to use (and protect) the data. This is the beginning of a relationship and engagement where there's an exchange of value—your community members give information about themselves to get something they wants, and your organization has the info needed to serve the community better. Over time, registration data will give you information you can use to develop hypotheses about where and how to find your target community.

Polls Less onerous to develop (or complete) than a survey, polls that ask users to "vote" on one or two questions can build highly focused insights about the people who are connecting with your content. Most SMS platforms also have low-cost polling functionality—a favorite engagement technique for entertainment broadcasters that also has public interest applications.

Surveys Surveys can be a useful tool for understanding the motivations of your community. By asking them directly, you can often get detailed information impossible to get from other sources, such as what media platforms and sources they use the most, what caused them to engage them with your content, and other relevant characteristics (which vary depending on your project goals).

"Finding target audiences is absolutely crucial, but one key aspect to any campaign that uses global 'broadcast' media platforms (including Twitter and YouTube, for instance) is that you must brace yourself for exposure to the broadest possible audience. You have to imagine how your media content may be consumed and used by people who fundamentally disagree *with the presumptions behind your work and the implicit value system in your messaging."*

—Johanna Blakley, USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center

Sizing Your Community

A key question you should be able to answer is "How big is my target community?" Unless you understand the size of your potential community, you won't have a way to gauge your performance. Put another way, engagement metrics need denominators. If you reach 1,000 people, that might be a fantastic result if your entire potential community is only twice that size (1,000 out of 2,000). Will you feel the same sense of achievement if your target community has over one million people?

Market sizing is easy to do if you are a car company. Audi knows exactly who can afford to purchase their cars. It's equally straightforward for providers of financial services: there are only 300,000 financial advisors in the country, so if you hope to market your product through financial advisors, your target is limited to people who have that degree or job title.

For public interest issues, however, it is often more difficult to project your potential community size. Public health campaigns may have rigorously researched targets, but for most other community-oriented media, community size is more of a guessing game. Everybody wants to eradicate cancer, but who cares enough to donate to the American Cancer Society? In theory, everyone has the potential to care about a news story, but how many people need to see an article for it to be considered a success? Public media campaigns often default to the idea that "our target community should be the entire country," but this does not reflect reality and effectively sets the bar so high as to be meaningless.

Your best option is to look at competitive or historical benchmarks and, using that as a starting point, treat sizing your community as an iterative task. Instead of trying

RESOURCES FOR UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY

How-To/Instructional

- See, Say, Feel, Do: Social Media Metrics that Matter (Fenton, 2011)
- Measuring the Online Impact of Your Information Project (Knight Foundation, 2012)
- How User Personas Can Improve Your SEO Strategy (KISSmetrics, 2012)
- Content Marketing Personas (Eisenberg, 2012)
- Measuring the Networked Nonprofit (Beth Kanter and Katie Delahaye Paine, Jossey-Bass, 2012)

Online Services and Tools

- Google Analytics
- Online surveys such as SurveyMonkey, QuestionPro, Zoomerang, and Google Consumer Surveys
- Bitly
- Hootsuite

See the appendix for more information and links to these resources

to figure out, *What is the universe of people who care about my issue?,* consider how many people you have engaged previously and aim try to improve that by 15%. Or look at what your peers have accomplished, and build off that benchmark.

"Measurement is a comparative tool," argue Beth Kanter and Katie Delahaye Paine in their book, *Measuring the Networked Nonprofit* (see **RESOURCES**). "Doing a benchmark study of similar organizations doesn't have to be an elaborate or time-consuming burden." They offer an example of a national project involving 20 organizational partners that planned to use Twitter as a central tool and needed to set targets. The project's communications director worried: "I didn't want to pick a number out of the air: one that was too high and created unrealistic expectations, or one that was so low that we easily made it." Their solution was to do a "quick and dirty" benchmark study by interviewing their collaborators to understand their existing Twitter activities and results. This allowed them to develop information-based assumptions about how many people they could expect to engage.

Ultimately, your targets need to reflect what's possible—based on past experience of your organization or of peers—but also *what's necessary to achieve your desired impact.* To make a meaningful difference given your planned investment, how many people will you need to reach? If you hope to shift community behaviors or norms, how many people would constitute a tipping point? If you intend to build awareness and knowledge about an important issue, how many people would need to be touched for this knowledge to influence your community's discourse? Again, your best source of reconnaisance on these kinds of questions is likely to be partners and peers who have done similar projects.

Segmenting Your Community

While sizing your community is essential, creating relevant groupings within your community is what will help you engage people more effectively. Segmentation identifies people who will likely respond in similar ways due to shared characteristics. Segmentation is always beneficial; even if your community goal is just to increase total reach, understanding how your community consumes and shares content allows you to leverage community behavior to increase your reach faster.

Some organizations find personas a useful way to organize their approach to segmentation. **Persona development** assigns personalities to your target segments. Personas help you empathize with the members of your target community, and make it easier to build commitment to targeting from project teams by allowing people to feel *why* you're using unique approaches for one group versus another. For example, an education reform project seeking to foster dialog and collaboration among parents, teachers, school officials and local politicians might go through the exercise of describing a persona for each distinct group they are trying to reach. Personas are especially useful for projects that seek to engage diverse stakeholder groups—individuals with unique defining characteristics, attitudes, and preferences for using media.

Through persona development or simple descriptions of key community segments, your objective is to develop a clear definition of the essential characteristics of your target community.

PLANNING WORKSHEET

Understanding Community

To plan measurement that helps you understand *who will be engaging with your content?,* answer the following questions. Where you don't have definitive answers, write down your best guesses and **note the assumptions** underlying those hunches.

What should you be measuring? Considering the ultimate impact your work seeks to advance, ask yourself what your ideal engaged community would look like, reflecting on the following questions:

Describe your target community. Are you trying to engage niche or broad group(s)? **What are their most relevant demographic, psychographic, geographic and technographic characteristics, considering your project's focus?** *Consider: Are you hoping to reach a niche group with unique characteristics? Or is your impact most likely to be achieved by reaching a broad and diverse group?*	
How big is each segment of your target community? What's your realistic market potential? *Consider: What are the meaningful sub-segments of our overall community? How does membership in these segments potentially affect how we need to think about engaging them and achieving our impact?*	
What would you most like to know about who you are actually reaching? About who is not engaging? *Consider: What information about your community would give you a new or better way to reach the people you most want to reach?*	

In this section

- *What should we be measuring to track community engagement with our work?*
- *How do we benchmark our performance?*

BUILDING BLOCK #3:

MEASURING THE QUANTITY AND QUALITY OF ENGAGEMENT

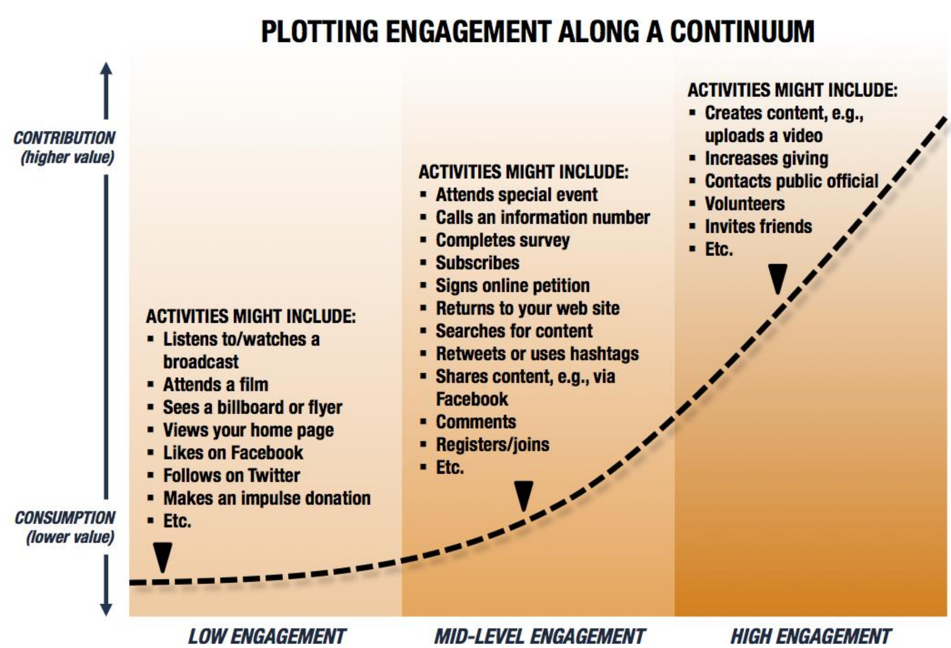
How is your community engaging with your content? How often and how deeply are people connecting with your project? The quantity and quality of engagement are fundamental components of understanding success.

What Does "Engagement" Mean For Your Project?

The word "engagement" is used a great deal, and media makers and funders have struggled to agree on a single way of expressing this complex concept, let alone measure it. We embrace an expansive definition and argue that the first critical task any manager faces when planning a measurement effort is to go through the difficult task of articulating what engagement looks like *for a given project, using a given platform, in a given context.* To start, you need to develop a clear understanding of the **specific actions you want individuals in your community to take in relation to your content.**

> ***ENGAGEMENT***
> All of the various ways that communities interact with, contribute to, and build on your content

Start by contemplating the full range of ways you want your community to interact with you. It's often helpful to think about activities as reflections of low engagement, mid-level engagement, or high engagement. Media measurement frameworks commonly track engagement along such a continuum, with anchor points from "passive to active" types of engagement or described in terms of "discoverers to seekers to generators" or "consumers to contributors."



We offer this continuum for illustrative purposes and include examples of engagement "moments" from both offline and online platforms. Specific types of engagement will vary by project and platform. *Donating,* for example, may not be a way you expect your community to engage with your content. **You should define**

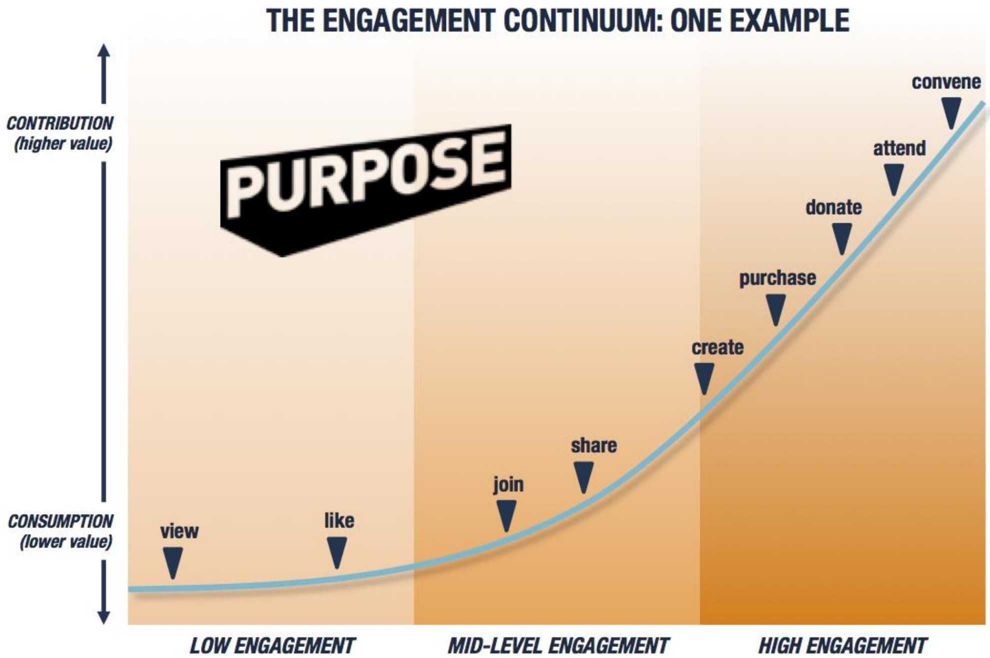
> *"From an analytics perspective, engagement is the things people do when interacting with our content. There are things we want them to do, and things they want to do. When you align those two things, that's engagement.*
>
> *"You need to understand not only what people are doing but **what you want them to do.** Newspapers tend to struggle with the second part: What do you want people to do on the site? What are the most valuable things people can do? Without focus or goals, [measuring engagement] is a meaningless exercise."*
>
> —*James Robinson,*
> The New York Times

engagement based on the purposes of your project, your target community and your chosen platforms. For an alternative, three-level engagement framework explicitly designed for journalism applications, consider the resource developed by Joy Mayer and Reuben Stern for the Reynolds Journalism Institute (see **RESOURCES**). The Mayer/Stern approach considers tiered levels of engagement, which they've divided into Community Outreach, Conversation, and Collaboration.

Although these approaches encourage you to think about engagement as a logical, linear progression, we all know the real world is messier. The point is to articulate a plausible story about how you expect a typical member of your target community to grow progressively more engaged with your content. Not every individual in your community will move sequentially "up the ladder." As a group, however, you are likely to see larger numbers of people at the entry points of the continuum, and fewer people taking the actions described at the high-engagement end of the scale. The amount of time it takes to move your community to deeper engagement will also vary, and may depend on factors beyond your control (such as current events). Again, the point is to describe your reasonable, informed intentions for initiating contact and then deepening connections with your community.

Outcomes-oriented projects should have one or more clearly defined, high-value end points, where you hope to get as many people as possible to complete specific actions such as talking about an issue with a friend, making a donation, signing a petition, etc. (Purely educational initiatives may not have an "action" end point, but can still be expressed in terms of milestones that reflect deepening awareness and knowledge.) Plotting engagement on a continuum allows you to chart progress toward major milestones—what traditional marketers call "**conversions**."

Across your entire community, collectively, these engagement activities build sequentially, and can even be thought of as a "ladder" or "funnel" of progressively more important actions your project seeks to motivate. Different types of participation can be thought of as representing lower- or higher-value engagement, i.e., interaction that is less or more likely to lead to impacts such as increased



Adapted from Purpose and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

This is an engagement continuum developed by PURPOSE, an organization that develops and launches "technology-driven social and consumer movements to mobilize large-scale, purposeful action." PURPOSE leverages the reach of the internet to create on-the-ground activists in cities around the globe. The continuum reflects their understanding of key milestones—or "conversions"—individuals in their community commonly pass as they become more deeply engaged.

PURPOSE notes: "To build and scale communities, we have developed a model that creates low-barrier entry points and progressively builds commitment." The highest form of engagement in this model is when community members convene (host) in-person activities.

What are the entry points for your initiative? What are the key engagement "moments" for your distribution platform(s)? For your target community segments?

knowledge, changed attitudes or shifts in behavior. Lower-value engagement is often a precursor to higher-value engagement: someone gets initial exposure to content, and only over time begins to interact more deeply (e.g., sharing, commenting, contributing). Conversion should look very different for a journalism project, a documentary film, or strategic communications campaign—but every impact-oriented media effort has an engagement continuum that reflects its community, platforms and intended results.

Different members of your community will be engaging simultaneously at many points along the continuum. Highly interactive engagement may follow more passive types, or it may come earlier in a project's evolution. For example, journalism often engages community to help plan and shape projects. These stakeholder engagement and relationship development efforts may precede and accompany media creation and distribution, but should count as high-value engagement in the "contribution" category. Even direct engagement with media content does not always build in a strictly linear fashion; it may take only a single exposure to content, for example, to trigger an "impulse donation." Should that count as deep engagement? Incidental exposure can and often does have a meaningful effect. (Traditional advertising depends on this.) For cross-platform projects in particular, passive participation on one platform can be accompanied by more active participation on another.

Beyond the obvious conversion activities, it is important to think creatively about how you can *create* engagement opportunities that will help you learn more about what motivates people to get involved, do more, and even share personal information about their interests. This means being inventive about new types of content you can offer—information people can access, surveys they can complete, games they can play, images they can share, etc. There is an emerging point of view that *every* media project should be multi-platform in order to successfully drive and measure engagement.

For your project…

- What are the pathways you envision for each community segment to become engaged?
- What are the critical milestones or moments—key "conversions"—that you can measure to chart a deepening relationship with your community?
- What action(s) do you most want individuals in your community to do in relation to your content?

Selecting Meaningful Engagement Metrics

Often—and, especially with the growing prevalence of digital platforms—the sheer volume of data available on your project can be overwhelming. For every conversion you seek to motivate, there may be multiple metrics you could track. A critical step in planning your evaluation is to sift through the variety of data points you have available to determine which to include as Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)—the handful of metrics you will monitor over time as proxies of your progress and ultimate success.

Your choice of engagement metrics will largely be determined by which platforms you are using to distribute your content. In particular, consider distinct options for offline or traditional media (where there are limited options for collecting data) and online media (where there is more built-in interactivity that generates data you can track).

OFFLINE MEDIA	ONLINE MEDIA
▪ Print (newspapers, magazines, books, direct mail) ▪ Linear broadcast (TV, radio) ▪ Offline audio/video recordings; video games ▪ Outdoor Media (billboards, placards) ▪ Events (film, theater, readings, community forums, etc.)	▪ Web (including similar content as traditional mass media but more interactive or end-user controlled, e.g., blogs, podcasts, click-through advertising, etc.) ▪ Social media ▪ Mobile (including SMS)

Offline media usually have low inherent interactivity. While there may in fact be high *engagement* with offline media, there are fewer options for the end user to interact: content is typically pushed, and end-user participation is mostly a yes/no decision about whether to consume. Most critically for our purposes, it is typically more difficult and expensive to capture engagement data through offline media. Place-based events represent an important exception among offline platforms: depending on their format, events can be highly interactive and offer some of the richest opportunities to gather information about participants. Ironically, the proliferation of online media platforms has brought new attention to offline events as a way to boost engagement, raise revenue and build greater connections with communities. Radio and television broadcasters, newspapers and magazines—from Public Radio International's *This American Life* to *The Economist*—offer numerous examples of media organizations that are meeting their communities face-to-face.

Online media have built-in potential for interactivity, and are often more complex. Online media have content that is both pushed and pulled, consumed but also created and manipulated. There are more options for end-user interactivity and more opportunities to differentiate types of engagement. The very act of engagement often yields data. At the same time, interactivity is not the same thing as engagement. Online activities that are technically interactive (such as Facebook "likes") may not be indicators of meaningful connection with your community.

The distinction between offline and online media measurement options suggests two important strategies. First, **your options for affordable and timely measurement increase significantly if you include online platforms in your project design.** Second, even if you stay focused on an offline platform and choose not to build a dedicated online offering, **you are likely to have a measureable online presence** through general social media, like Facebook, and a growing set of location-based and entertainment-focused social networking sites, such as Foursquare and GetGlue. (These are all U.S.-based examples, but similar social networking sites are emerging around the globe.) If you are really interested in understanding the reach of your traditional media content, you need to understand the opportunities presented by online media.

There is no single set of metrics you *should* choose to assess engagement, either for offline or online platforms. Whole books have been written about the plethora of options available for measuring your community's exposure, consumption, and contribution to your work (see **RESOURCES**). As a jumping-off point, the following tables offer a selection of common data points for offline and online media, indicating low-, medium- and high-interest engagement.

“**Offline media should always have a call to action and a way for people to respond in some way that can be tracked.** *A postcard, a flyer, a banner—you can always ask someone to go to a specific URL or even a low-tech phone line where you can track how many people called and what information they need. There are still some target audiences that can be reached far more effectively with print and info lines.*”

—Dana Chinn,
USC Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism

SAMPLE METRICS: OFFLINE MEDIA		
LOW ENGAGEMENT	**MID-LEVEL ENGAGEMENT**	**HIGH ENGAGEMENT**
▪ Circulation/ Subscriber Base ▪ Average Viewership/ Listenership ▪ Total Film Festival Attendance ▪ Traffic (billboards)	▪ Broadcast Ratings ▪ Box-Office Sales ▪ Event Attendance (passive) ▪ Comment Cards ▪ Completed Surveys ▪ GetGlue Check-ins ▪ Foursquare Check-ins ▪ Phone Calls ▪ SMS Counts	▪ Sign-up Forms ▪ Purchases ▪ Pledges/Donations ▪ Event Attendance (participatory) ▪ Hashtag Usage ▪ Social Mentions

SAMPLE METRICS: ONLINE MEDIA		
LOW ENGAGEMENT	**MID-LEVEL ENGAGEMENT**	**HIGH ENGAGEMENT**
▪ New Visitors ▪ Unique Visitors ▪ Traffic Sources ▪ Pageviews ▪ Bounce Rate ▪ Exit Pages ▪ Email Opens ▪ Facebook “Likes”/ Twitter Followers ▪ Advertising Impressions	▪ Return Visitors ▪ Pages/Interactions Per Visit ▪ Click-through Rate ▪ Internal Searches ▪ Content Views ▪ Content Shares ▪ Content Ratings ▪ Downloads ▪ Comments Posted/# of Commenters ▪ Photos Posted ▪ Video/Podcast Completions ▪ RSS Subscribers ▪ Newsletter Subscribers ▪ GetGlue Check-ins	▪ Social Soft Mentions (casual) ▪ Social Hard Mentions (advocate) ▪ Form Completions ▪ Event Registrations ▪ Completed Surveys ▪ Webinar Attendees ▪ Chat/Forum Participants ▪ Online Community Leaders ▪ Purchases ▪ Pledges/Donations ▪ Hashtag Usage

It’s important to note that the assignment of metrics to categories such as “low, mid-level, and high engagement” requires more nuance than we have reflected in the tables above. Is signing an online petition truly a higher form of engagement than dedicating 90 minutes to watch a film? Activity/passivity are not always direct reflections of the degree of engagement, nor are these metrics consistent across all contexts and projects. You need to take the time to develop a rationale that’s right for *your* communications effort and community. The most important question is, which forms of engagement will get your closer to your goals? High engagement is not always a requirement to achieve your goals; in some contexts, passive contact with larger numbers of community members may matter more.

Not all metrics are created equal. The question quickly becomes, “What *really* matters? How do I decide what to use to understand, evaluate, and improve my project?” We offer four tips to help you narrow your options and focus on actionable engagement metrics.

"No matter what your goal or your cause, engagement is never revealed by just one metric; it will always be indicated by a range of actions. The key is to measure on a regular basis and associate shift in engagement with the activities or content that you are posting."

—*Beth Kanter and Katie Delahaye Paine,* Measuring the Networked Nonprofit

1. **Begin with metrics from the four platforms that offer the most insight.** Today the majority of media and journalism efforts find the fastest, easiest and most actionable information through data gathering and analysis of four core communications activities:

   - **Email** (and the closely related Google Groups/Yahoo Groups platforms) builds on a highly controllable, defined dataset—your contact/membership database or those of key partners. A variety of email analytics supports are available to help you (see **RESOURCES**).

   - **Web analytics** offer increasingly powerful ways to leverage data generated through your website. In particular, look at Goals and Funnels within Google Analytics (see **RESOURCES**) as a way to chart progressively deeper engagement through your web site.

   - **Facebook** is the dominant social networking platform, far outstripping all other social media as a place where you can connect with a more diverse cross-section of people. (See Facebook Insights in **RESOURCES.**) Twitter is a distant second with a much narrower, self-selecting base of users, but for some projects can offer real-time insight about the "conversation" you are nurturing.

   - **Events** are opportunities to collect both quantitative and qualitative data, and to link members of your community to online content that will foster continued and deepening engagement.

   For other offline platforms such as print, TV, film and radio, use referral mechanisms with trackable calls to action, with phone numbers or links to online content through services such as Bitly (see **RESOURCES**). If your target community has low access to or usage of the internet, SMS may be another priority channel for both program design and measurement.

2. **Get clear about what each proposed metric actually measures.** Especially for some of the newer online metrics, the details matter. A common threshold for counting an online "viewer" is three seconds, for example, which means that content may not even be fully loaded when a user is declared a viewer. Social

GETTING BEYOND "VANITY METRICS"

There's no single list of vanity metrics to avoid, but there are some "usual suspects." Facebook "likes," pageviews and hits, visitors, time on site, number of comments posted, smartphone app downloads, tweets and email open rates each can be important at certain moments for certain projects, but they have high potential to be "noise." Out of context, there is no way to know what these data points mean, and what counts as success.

Most useful engagement metrics are expressed as ratios: the number of individuals who do any desired action needs to be understood as a proportion of what is possible. This is one reason why sizing your target community is so important (see page 15). You must develop an understanding—or informed assumption—of *how many* people might reasonably be expected to complete each conversion milestone. Only then will you be able to go beyond metrics that merely describe activity, to those that help you assess performance, pinpoint cause and effect, and strengthen your work.

Also, look at medians and distributions rather than averages. With pageviews, for example, dividing total pageviews by total unique visitors (UVs) might suggest an average of 3 page views per UV, without revealing whether one person had 100 pageviews and 50 had just one, etc. Look at the distribution (Page Depth in Google Analytics) to see how many visits stopped with a single pageview, how many involved two pageviews, etc. Be wary of averages that obscure the most important aspects of your performance.

Mentions (e.g., tweets) sound impressive, but you have to ask if trending in the online conversation is itself a meaningful achievement, irrespective of the content of those tweets. Twitter followers and Facebook "likes" are notoriously opaque ways to track customer or community relationships. Take the time to understand the details about each potential metric: How is it defined? How is it collected? Who else in either public or commercial media environments uses this metric? What do they do with that information—other than report it?

3. **Focus on conversions and clarify your denominators.** Metrics must correlate with the key engagement activites you are hoping to drive. For most conversions, success should be expressed as a ratio or percentage: what you achieved divided by the potential.

   For example, if your conversion target is to recruit new members to a social cause by screening a film on college campuses, you would determine your conversion rate to assess the return on that investment: take the number who join and divide by the number of event attendees. What percentage of the recipients of an email campaign click-through to your site? Of those, what portion looks at key content? What portion shares content with their friends? What portion registers to participate in an event? Each of these ratios tells you more than the raw number alone. (If you have high click-through rates from the email campaign but few of those visitors "convert" to do the high-engagement actions, it helps you pinpoint the weak links in your chain of engagement.)

   Look at your engagement continuum as a series of connected hurdles which each member of your engaged community surmounts as they become more deeply connected with your content: What percentage of your community is lost between the low and mid-level portion of the engagement continuum? Between mid-level and high?

   One of the most consistently actionable conversion rate metrics uses **referral source**, both on the web and on other platforms, as a denominator. Knowing where your community is coming from will help you understand whether you are reaching your intended target and can offer insights that will help you expand or focus your community outreach. Web analytics has a lot to offer in this area. Offline platforms must actively ask for this information, but "how did you learn about us?" is one of the easiest questions to pose at events or via SMS polls.

4. **Start small and learn as you go.** A useful practice is to pick five or six metrics that intuitively seem important—perhaps a couple each for low-, medium-, and high-engagement milestones. Set reasonable targets based on clear assumptions (for example, derived from results from a previous similar effort, or through informal consultation with peers who have done similar work). Then, imagine scenarios where you generate numbers that meet, exceed and fall short of your targets. For each scenario, ask yourself:

   - What would I learn about our performance?
   - What action(s) would I take to turn this insight into an opportunity to improve our performance? Would this metric help me pinpoint a specific problem we need to overcome or a particular success we could build on?
   - Does this metric help me understand connections between engagement and impact?—i.e., which low- and mid-level engagement actions are most likely to

"Take the number of hits to a company website. Let's say we have 40,000 hits this month—a new record. What do we need to do to get more hits? Well, that depends. Where are the new hits coming from? Is it from 40,000 new customers or from one guy with an extremely active web browser? Are the hits the result of a new marketing campaign or PR push? What is a hit, anyway? Does each page in the browser count as one hit, or do all the embedded images and multimedia content count as well? Those who have sat in a meeting debating the units of measurement in a report will recognize this problem."

—*Eric Ries,* The Lean Startup

"Twitter and Facebook are fine, but SMS is more important in certain countries. There are lots of examples of basic SMS campaigns with well-established practices and millions of users. It's relatively cheap to do and has higher penetration than Facebook or Twitter, even in the U.S."

—*Joaquin Alvarado,* Center for Investigative Reporting lead eventually to high-engagement actions that are proxies for changed awareness, knowledge or behavior?

This is another way of describing the "so what?" test (discussed previously in the UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY section, on page 13). If you cannot create a clear course of action you would take in response to three scenarios—meeting, exceeding, and falling short of your targets for each metric—go back to the drawing board to find indicators that offer useful insights.

Gathering Engagement Data

Many of the methods outlined for gathering data about community are equally applicable for engagement metrics. Your primary data sources on engagement will be digital analytics tools, content distributors, third party tools, social profiles, and surveys.

> For digital content, most engagement KPIs can be easily captured through common digital and social reporting tools such as Google Analytics or HootSuite (see **RESOURCES**). These analysis and reporting tools suggest a range of potential metrics, along with different ways to customize the data to suit your needs. Google Analytics offers extensive documentation on how to track various metrics, with easy-to-implement page code and relatively easy event tracking, which can be especially useful for action KPIs such as form completions or donations. As noted in the previous section, **Understanding Community**, you should look for ways to correlate engagement KPIs with relevant demographic and behavioral data, for example through linked social profile data.

For offline engagement metrics, the distributor is the first place you should turn for data. Broadcasters, publishers and outdoor media companies often have direct ways of measuring interaction with your campaign or can point you to resources that can help. Nielsen is expanding as an offline measurement resource, pushing from broadcast into radio and film as well. When a digital counterpart exists, you may be able to use the online rate as a proxy for offline engagement—for example, using online article-reads as a share of views to estimate share of print subscribers who read the article.

You should also look for ways to collect data from community partners. For public broadcasters working on raising awareness about a community issue, for example, the most relevant data is often revealed when partners track increases in calls or referrals to their services. This can be an affordable way to gather compelling data, but it requires up-front preparation to identify and agree on the right metrics and to establish baseline performance, as well as commitment from partners to track and provide the information.

Making Sense of the "Soup:" Interpreting Your Engagement Data

Successful analytics will allow you to assess your overall performance, and will offer insights for refining and strengthening your work and its effects on your community. We offer the following principles to help you make the most of your engagement data:

1. **Pinpoint your most and least successful conversions.** As you move up the engagement continuum you created for your project, where are you most successfully reaching each target community segment? Where are there unexpected or disappointing drop-offs in the sequence of conversions? Next, develop hypotheses about why you are gaining or losing traction at each of

RESOURCES FOR MEASURING ENGAGEMENT

How-To/Instructional

- Managing Nonprofit News Sites with Web Analytics (Dana Chinn, 2011)
- Public Media Social Media Handbook (iStrategy Labs, 2011)
- Measuring the Online Impact of Your Information Project (Knight Foundation, 2012)
- Measuring the Networked Nonprofit (Beth Kanter and Katie Delahaye Paine, Jossey-Bass, 2012)

Frameworks and White Papers

- A Resource for Newsrooms: Identifying and Measuring Audience Engagement Efforts (Joy Mayer and Reuben Stern, 2011)

Case Studies

- Getting Local: How Nonprofit News Ventures Seek Sustainability (Knight Foundation, 2011)
- Measuring Community Engagement: A Case Study from Chicago Public Media (Breeze Richardson, 2011)

Online Services and Tools

- Google Analytics
- Online surveys such as SurveyMonkey, QuestionPro, and Zoomerang
- Bitly
- Hootsuite
- CrazyEgg
- SocialFlow
- Chartbeat

See the appendix for more information and links to these resources

these steps. For example, if a key conversion for your project is the amount of time spent and content accessed when a new community members firsts visits your website, and you have a high number of new users but a low percentage who click more than one page past your home page, this suggests places where you might need to refocus or refine your work. You may need to unpack your performance beyond the KPIs. For example, to understand more about why people are not spending more time on your site, you could look at which pages have the lowest and highest exit rates (when the user leaves to another site); if your site search function leads to a high exit rate, for example, it suggests that users are not finding what they are looking for, which in turn might suggest a range of possible problems that you could focus on—from improved search engine functionality, to the development of new content addressing your community's interests.

2. **Compare your results across segments, platforms and cohorts.** One of the best ways to identify performance drivers is to look for trends and anomolies across different groupings. If you have distinct target community segments (e.g., teachers, parents, and students), it's important to consider their engagement activities separately and relative to one another. Similarly, look to compare and correlate performance across platforms, e.g., broadcast versus social media. TV and radio content with companion web and social media presence often sees meaningful upticks in digital traffic when broadcasts occur, offering opportunities to understand who is viewing those offline broadcasts and what kinds of content they find most relevant and meaningful.

   Cohort analysis lets you break your community into groups that offer meaningful comparisons. Do some of your site visitors return regularly while others visit only once? Do some recipients of your email campaign click through to web content or join your Facebook page, while others do not? Is one in-person community forum well-attended while another falls short? Are people who come to your site via social media links spending more time with your content or connecting with different content than those coming via paid search? The challenge is to tease out differences between these "cohorts" that will help you understand why they behave differently.

SENTIMENT ANALYSIS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

We are in the early days of understanding how to track and take action based on the nature of the conversations that we are influencing, but not controlling. How do you get beyond measuring the volume of the conversation, to understand its true meaning?

Manual analysis of high-volume Facebook posts or Twitter hashtags is daunting and difficult to make objective. Begin by tracking the conversation over a period of time when you see shifts in traffic—say, three months. Identify moments when traffic spiked and focus on the conversation threads that were most active on those days. Categorize those posts by subject and sentiments expressed. This will illuminate which topics generate the most engagement. Similarly, look to see who your top posters are and which topics fuel their interest. In this way, you can more actively grow and shape the social media conversation by generating content that leverages the interests of your most deeply engaged community members.

3. **Use qualitative data to reveal the true value of quantitative engagement metrics.** Most things that we are able to count are transactional in nature. Real engagement, on the other hand, is fundamentally about nurturing relationships. You won't have an accurate picture of your engagement through numbers alone. More-interactive forms of engagement call for qualitative assessment, such as **sentiment analysis**. The number of tweets or Facebook comments about your content or topic may be a

good or bad thing, depending on the nature of those posts. Although tools exist to support large-scale social media sentiment analysis (see **RESOURCES**), often you can learn the most from your community through a manual review. Editorial and production staff are often keeping close tabs on responses from users and influencers, and they are a valuable source of anecdotal, qualitative data that can deepen understanding of more quantitative assessment processes. Are people talking about you? If so, what are they saying? And how do you correct problems or take advantage of positive conversation? What aspects of your content are resonating the most and generating the most discussion?

Sentiment analysis is among several innovative practices in online engagement analytics. Others include **Net Promoter Scoring** and other techniques for measuring customer satisfaction and propensity to champion your work; **Klout** and similar approaches for identifying the key influencers within your community; **heat mapping** analytics to help you understand the drivers of user behavior on your website; and others. For media and journalism initiatives that have already mastered the basics of measuring engagement, these developing and relatively more sophisticated approaches offer additional ways to advance our learning.

Ultimately, every public interest media effort that is serious about measuring engagement needs to begin by building clarity about what *you* mean by engagement. Once you have mapped the specific actions you hope to see taken by your community as they connect with, share, influence and help create a conversation with your media, you can look for creative ways to track those actions—your Key Performance Indicators.

Yet what remains is perhaps the most important question: how is this engagement building awareness and knowledge? Creating a sense of empowerment and self-efficacy? Shifting attitudes? Influence behaviors? How are we making a difference? In the next section, we explore ways to answer these questions, building on the engagement metrics you've already gathered as well as considering additional research methods.

WHAT IF YOU'RE NOT AT THE BEGINNING? MEASUREMENT FOR A MEDIA PROJECT THAT'S ALREADY UNDERWAY

Although evaluation design may be easiest when done concurrently with program design, it's never too late to learn from what you're doing. You still need to begin by articulating a clear path that connects project activities with intended goals, even if it is "reverse engineered" from work that's already live. It's most important to focus on the present and moving forward: What's most valuable about the project at this moment? Given the evolution of the work to date, what is the current goal? What activities are you implementing? What should those activities accomplish? How will this advance your ultimate goal?

A lack of baseline data may be frustrating, but it shouldn't paralyze you or leave you feeling that you can never understand your progress. One upside of metrics in the media space is that there often are historical records that can be retrieved to help you establish a baseline, from Google Analytics to Facebook "likes." If historical data cannot be accessed, work from what you know today and build out from there. To assess change, retrospective questions are often a great substitute for before-and-after measurements. Sometimes this means you have to ask people to reflect on how things are different for them since exposure to or participation in your media project, and to what extent they attribute these changes to that experience.

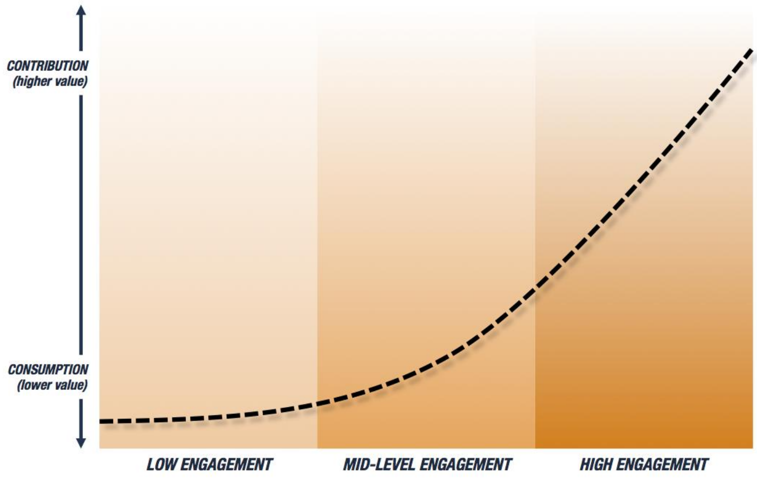
Indeed, many evaluation questions are framed better with the benefit of hindsight. You have greater clarity today about which questions are important to ask, and you probably have a better sense of what's truly important to understand: what's innovative, what's been most successful, and what might be stuck. Remember that the purpose of evaluation is not to prove the return on your investment, but to drive improvement and build confidence in the efficacy of your efforts.

PLANNING WORKSHEET

Measuring Engagement

To plan measurement that helps you understand *how much and how deeply your community is engaging with your content,* answer the following questions. Where you don't have definitive answers, write down your best guesses and **note the assumptions** underlying those hunches.

What should you be measuring? Considering who you are trying to reach and your distribution platform(s), ask yourself what your ideal engagement would look like, reflecting on the following questions:

What action(s) do you most want individuals in each segment of your target community to do in relation to your content? *Consider: What are the entry points for people to connect with your initiative? What are the key "conversions" that signify deeper engagement? How do these actions tie back to your overall goals?*	
For each distribution platform, what are your "conversions": ▪ **What are the key low-, medium-, and high-engagement actions?** ▪ **Plot your project's engagement continuum—list the conversions (milestones) you believe are most important for each segment of your community to pass as they become more deeply engaged**	
For key conversions, what % of each target community segment do you expect to reach, and in what timeframes?	
For each conversion, what metric offers the most actionable insight? *Consider: Would this metric help you pinpoint a specific problem you need to overcome or a particular success you could build on? What action(s) would you take to turn this insight into an opportunity to improve performance?*	
Which quantitative metrics need qualitative analysis to be meaningful? *Consider: What opportunities are there to gather information about how your community members think and feel?*	

In this section

- *What do we measure to show that our work is contributing to meaningful, lasting change for our organization or our communities?*

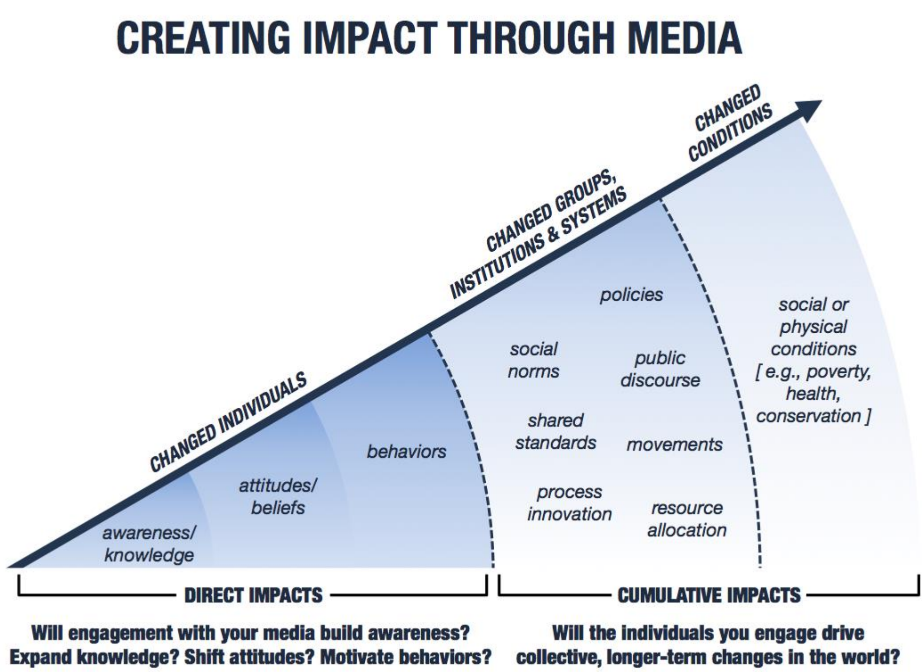
BUILDING BLOCK #4:
Demonstrating Impact

How is your media project changing your engaged community? What change is your work advancing beyond your engaged community? As previously noted, journalism and community-focused media, by definition, are undertaken not only to reach a community but also to make some kind of difference in or for that community. This is as relevant for a project with the goal of building information literacy as for one seeking to drive improvements in health disparities or reductions in education achievement gaps. **Are we building community awareness as we had intended? Are attitudes and beliefs shifting among members of our community in ways that reflect the influence of our media? Are people acting in new ways that we had hoped in response to our campaign?**

> ***IMPACT***
>
> Changes among individuals, groups, organizations, systems, and social or physical conditions that your work helps to advance.
>
> *Here we use* impact *in the same way that conventional evaluation uses the term* outcomes, *referring to the desired change among a target community. Conventional social sector evaluation uses* impact *to refer to long-range change that can take many years to come to fruition, or broad-scale, population-level change that often requires a far-reaching public policy or societal intervention to achieve.*

A Continuum of Impact

The impacts of media efforts can range from increasing knowledge to changing systems, policy, and social norms. Individual-level impacts (e.g., shifts in awareness, attitudes or changes in behavior) may represent a media effort's desired end result, or these changed individuals can catalyze cumulative effects that result in better systems and improved social or physical conditions. Key influencers—power holders in a given setting or community—may champion process innovations, draft and lobby for policy change, or allocate resources; when a political leader acts as a result of media, *their action may represent the desired impact*. Depending on your community, the goal may be to successfully engage and convert people from consumers of media to influencers, either as empowered individuals or as organized groups with strength in numbers. Identify your impact goals across the continuum, considering how they relate to one



another, as well as how they build upon your engagement goals.

What Does Engagement Tell You About Impact?

As discussed previously, engagement deepens from exposure to consumption to contribution. Movement toward consumption and contribution can signal a propensity for changes in knowledge, attitudes and behavior. Contribution—representing the deepest level of engagement—in and of itself *may* reflect a behavior that can be measured by metrics such as monetary donation to your organization, campaign or cause that signal both engagement *and* impact. However, don't simply mistake engagement for impact: whether engagement leads to real change is a constant test, requiring ongoing assessment and feedback that ideally digs deeper into understanding the actual effects of consumption and contribution.

Some of the online social reporting tools described at the end of the **Measuring Engagement** section can be leveraged to help you understand whether you are having an effect on awareness, understanding and propensity to act, through sentiment analysis. For example, a media initiative may use live events and social media platforms to introduce a community to an issue area, affect knowledge and attitudes within that community, and influence the discourse within that community around the issue. In this example, you may measure engagement in the following ways:

1. **Exposure**: Number of people who attend the live event
2. **Consumption**: Number of attendees who you successfully direct to your social media platform
3. **Contribution**: Number of visitors to the platform who generate re-postings, tweets, comments, etc.

If you are measuring engagement, then you already have this information. Building on the initial analysis, you may also measure impact on knowledge, attitudes, and potentially the propensity for changed behavior by conducting a **content analysis** or **sentiment analysis** on comments generated. **How do visitors feel about your event and/or the topic introduced? What do they perceive as the meaning behind the event? What information have they shared and how have they shared it?** Categorize answers to these questions thematically to generate actionable insights about the success of your strategy in meeting short-term impact goals. Stories, anecdotes, and testimonials can contextualize understanding and enrich communication about impact—just beware of over-generalizing from outliers that may be compelling but not representative.

USING WHAT'S AVAILABLE TO UNDERSTAND IMPACT

- Look into who is collecting data on your community and when data collection is scheduled to occur. Public agencies and governments often collect health, education, justice, and welfare data at regular intervals. These data often can be segmented by demographics and geography.
- Are there other media initiatives with similar goals? What data have they collected?
- Is there formative research that's been conducted with your community? What does it tell you about your strategy, goals and potential for impact?

What Else Should You Measure to Understand Your Impact?

Engagement metrics are a starting point. After you've reviewed the data generated by your engagement measurement process, go back to consider your impact goals. **What insights regarding impact does analysis of your engagement metrics reveal? In addition to the information you already have, what else do you need to understand your impact?**

"The dominant professional ethos [in journalism] has often been uncomfortable with the idea of having any effect at all, fearing 'advocacy' or 'activism.' While it's sometimes relevant to ask about the political choices in an act of journalism, the idea of complete neutrality is a blatant contradiction if journalism is important to democracy. Then there is the assumption, long invisible, that news organizations have done their job when a story is published. That stops far short of the user, and confuses output with effect."

—Jonathan Stray

Existing frameworks for thinking about the relationship between engagement and impact provide helpful springboards. For example, in writing about evaluation of public communication campaigns, Coffman suggests exploring the influence of distribution, placement, and exposure on changes in knowledge, behaviors, and policies. In *Designing for Impact*, Clark and Abrash provide a framework for evaluating social justice documentary films that links production, distribution, and engagement goals (audience reach, targeting key stakeholders, and encouraging interaction beyond viewership to stimulate learning, debate and action) to impact goals (in this case, influence, defined as making an issue visible or changing the frame in which it is publicly discussed for the purpose of reaching influentials, changing practice and policy, and network building).

The following defines each type of impact described in our continuum and offers sample indicators and measurement approaches.

Measuring Impacts on Individuals

Media-influenced impacts on individuals can include raising awareness, increasing knowledge, shifting attitudes and beliefs, and changing behaviors. While these impacts are often discussed and measured discretely, they are in fact more often closely inter-related. The field of public health is rich with behavior change theories, such as Prochaska's Stages of Behavior Change model, that describe the path to engaging in healthier behaviors as starting with awareness about the risks associated with a harmful behavior.

Prochaska's Stages of Behavior Change Model

Unaware that there are any risks associated with a given behavior (e.g., smoking)	*Becoming aware of risks and thinking about making a change in behaviors*	*Taking steps towards behavior change such as getting additional information and seeking peer support*	*Engaging in the new behavior (e.g., reducing or quitting smoking)*	*Ongoing engagement in the new behavior, which may involve new routines, social networks, etc.*

As the model suggests, moving through the stages of behavior change involves:

- **Raising awareness—**the process of creating consciousness about an issue, need, problem, solution, approach, or other phenomenon. Awareness can be thought of as a first step in both building knowledge and shifting attitudes. In evaluating media work, assessing awareness is often the same as assessing engagement.
- **Increasing knowledge—**the process of acquiring and understanding information regarding the context, cause, effects, implications, or other relevant details surrounding an issue, event, or circumstance. Increasing knowledge is often considered a necessary but insufficient step in the process of behavior change (except, perhaps, among highly motivated and resource-rich communities).
- **Shifting attitudes** and **shaping beliefs—**the process of challenging or affirming previously held values and assumptions to the point of moving or forming a position on an issue. Shifting attitudes and shaping beliefs may require additional knowledge or experiences beyond having raised awareness.

The table below provides sample indicators and measurement approaches for these individual-level impacts.

> *"Many continue to seek ways to counter a national 'civic recession' marked by declining rates of voting, participation in public meetings and volunteerism. … At their most powerful, [documentaries] catalyze and support issue-based networks that connect individuals with relevant organizations and empower participants not only to learn about and discuss shared problems, but to organize for action and respond to breaking developments. In this way, documentaries feed both social movements and the broader public sphere."*
>
> *— Jessica Clark & Barbara Abrash*
> Social Justice Documentary: Designing for Impact

SAMPLE INDICATORS AND MEASUREMENT APPROACHES FOR INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL IMPACTS

INDIVIDUAL IMPACT TYPE	SAMPLE INDICATORS	SAMPLE MEASUREMENT APPROACHES
Raising Awareness	▪ Number of searches using key words from a campaign or message ▪ Self-reported level of awareness	▪ Google Analytics: Trends over time (new key words showing up in searches, frequency of key word usage) ▪ General Community Survey: To what extent are you aware of the 'Just Say No' campaign? (Responses on a 5-point scale from Not at All to Very Aware)
Increasing Knowledge	▪ Scores on tests of knowledge ▪ Self-reported change in knowledge ▪ Self-reported depth of knowledge and understanding	▪ Pre- and Post-Exposure Target Community Surveys: Name three ways you can reduce pollution in your community. ▪ Post-Exposure Target Community Survey: How much did you learn about reducing pollution in your community? (Responses on a 5-point scale from Nothing to A Significant Amount) ▪ Interviews with Key Stakeholders: What did you learn about pollution in your community? In what ways has your understanding of the problem changed?
Shifting Attitudes and Shaping Beliefs	▪ Self-reported change in attitudes ▪ Self-reported change in beliefs	▪ Public Opinion Polling and Pre- and Post-Exposure Target Community Surveys: To what degree do you agree with the following statement: "Pollution is a problem in my neighborhood." (Responses on a 5-point scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree) ▪ Post-Exposure Target Community Survey: In what way has your attitude towards fighting pollution in your neighborhood changed as a result of the campaign? (Responses on a 5-point scale from Much More in Support to Much More Opposed) ▪ Focus Groups with Key Stakeholders: How has exposure to the campaign influenced your attitudes and beliefs about pollution in your neighborhood? Are you now more in favor or against efforts to fight pollution? Why?
Changing Behaviors	▪ Self-reported change in behaviors ▪ Observed change in behaviors ▪ Prevalence rates of engagement in behavior	▪ Brief Street Intercept Survey in Target Community: How often do you recycle? (Response on a 5-point scale from Never to Always) ▪ Field Observation Logs: Staff observe members of the community and systematically note the frequency of engagement in targeted behaviors ▪ Public Records: Volume of trash collected from street cleaning (Dept. of Public Works); rates of crime (Police Dept.); rates of substance use (Dept. of Public Health)

> *"Measuring how many people read a story is something any web administrator should be able to do. Audience doesn't necessarily equal impact."*
>
> *—Ethan Zuckerman, Berkman Center for Internet and Society*

Measuring Impacts on Systems

Impact evaluation at the systems level examines changes in culture, policies and procedures within and across organizations that result in new or different resource and information flows, streamlined and increased access, improved quality, enhanced efficiency, or greater consumer/community empowerment. Systems change is dynamic, developmental, non-linear, and complex. As an iterative process—often involving many years of "two steps forward, one step back"—evaluating systems change requires identifying markers of progress along the path to impact to know (and demonstrate) the work is on track. The process of achieving and evaluating systems change can be understood using the framework below, adapted from *A Framework for Understanding Systems Change* by K. Linkins and J. Brya, Desert Vista Consulting (see **RESOURCES**).

A FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING AND MEASURING THE PROCESS OF SYSTEMS CHANGE

SYSTEMS CHANGE DOMAIN	DESCRIPTION	INDICATORS AND MEASUREMENT APPROACHES
Understanding the Problem	Gather information on community needs, gaps in services or information, and barriers to accessing services or information	▪ Refer to sections on Understanding Community and Increasing Knowledge above
Raising Awareness and Visibility	Build awareness of problem and generate momentum for change across stakeholders	▪ Refer to section on Raising Awareness above ▪ Also consider: o New partners identified [measured through interviews] o New networks and coalitions formed [measured through observation or interviews] o Size of networks and coalitions [measured through enrollment and membership rosters]
Facilitating Partnerships and Collaboration	Strengthen existing and build new partnerships across sectors and silos	▪ Formation of interdisciplinary/cross-organizational committees [measured through interviews, observation, review of meeting minutes] ▪ Number and frequency of meetings and information-sharing opportunities [measured through interviews, progress reports, meeting minutes] ▪ Formal agreements in place for sharing information and/or responsibilities [measured through review of MOU or contract]

TIPS FOR DEVELOPING SURVEYS

- Focus on crafting closed-ended questions (questions with various "check box" response options). Be sure that response options are mutually exclusive.
- For continuous variables (e.g., age or income), provide ranges or let respondents write in their answer and categorize the responses in the analysis.
- Avoid asking two questions in one: look out for the words "and" and "or" in your survey questions.
- Provide clear, concise and complete instructions for completing and submitting the survey.
- Provide an "Other" or "Don't Know" option whenever appropriate (and think through when it is appropriate to force a response within your pre-determined categories).
- Use appropriate language levels and cultural references.
- Consider providing incentives as a way to encourage response and reduce concerns regarding response bias.
- Always pilot test any survey you develop before launching it full scale.

SYSTEMS CHANGE DOMAIN	DESCRIPTION	INDICATORS AND MEASUREMENT APPROACHES
Building Collective Accountability	Advance beyond the interests of individual organizations to focus on broader issues affecting the community	▪ Data are collected directly from target community to inform planning and approach [measured through satisfaction surveys, program records] ▪ Partner organizations collaborate/advocate on common policy goals and outcomes (e.g., high level briefings to policymakers, drafting legislation) [measured through interviews, review of meeting minutes] ▪ Leaders who can facilitate policy change are identified, engaged, and commit to change [measured through interviews, review of meeting minutes]

Ultimately, systems change work can result in far-reaching and lasting impacts:

- **Newly developed, shared, and implemented standards.** Media efforts may advocate for the development of standards of quality for the care of a particular health issue, standards of treatment of a community according to generally accepted (or newly won through policy change or shifts in cultural norms) human rights, or standards of quality and ethics in generating and reporting information. Evaluating the development of standards generally involves a review of those standards; evaluating the dissemination and use of standards generally involves interviewing practitioners; and evaluating the implementation of standards generally involves surveying members of the target community.
- **Innovations to processes.** Media efforts may shed light on and contribute to processes that result in new ways of interacting and organizing people or organizations in relation to one another. As discussed in the "Facilitating Partnerships and Collaborations" domain of systems change above, these process innovations may create efficiencies or entirely new possibilities that save time and money while enabling greater reach and access to information or services. Evaluating process innovations generally involves interviews with insiders who can describe the "old and new ways of doing business" (with a focus on the benefits of the new way) and tracking indicators of efficiency and reach.
- **Changes in policies.** Media can contribute to policy change as a result of shifting public opinion among the electorate or political will among a small group of decision makers. The Harvard Family Research Project's *The Evaluation Exchange* issue focused on advocacy and policy change(see **RESOURCES**) provides a seminal resource on evaluating this kind of work, including a menu of common outcomes such as shifts in social norms, strengthened organizational capacity, strengthened alliances, and strengthened base of support, in addition to new and improved policies. Evaluating policy outcomes can involve an array of methods including the bellwether methodology to "determine where an issue is positioned in the policy agenda queue, how lawmakers and other influentials are thinking and talking about it, and how likely they are to act on it." Successful policy work also often involves creating champions for a cause; the Center for Evaluation Innovation-commissioned paper, "Champions and 'Champion-ness': Measuring Efforts to Create Champions for Policy Change" (see **RESOURCES**) describes traits of champions and provides a methodology for assessing champions' increasing commitment and action for a campaign or cause.
- **Shifts in resource allocation.** Media designed to advocate for an issue or community may result in changes to how resources are allocated such that there

is a greater or more equitable allocation for the issue or community. Budget monitoring is the most common approach to evaluating shifts in resource allocation. In case where budget information is not readily available, it may be necessary to interview key stakeholders.

What Can You Measure and How?

Measurement approaches fall into two broad categories: **quantitative** and **qualitative**. Typically, the best measurement efforts use a combination of the two, either in sequence or in tandem, to derive the fullest understanding of impact. Quantitative data include epidemiological, economic, and other types of social statistics collected and maintained by public institutions, think tanks, and polling firms as well as data generated through surveys created for a specific purpose.

Surveys answer a range of impact questions: **To what extent have knowledge and awareness increased among members of our community? Are community members more likely to engage in particular behaviors that our media encourages? How frequently have members of our community engaged in behaviors we've promoted?** With the advent of online tools such as SurveyMonkey and Zoomerang, it has become relatively easy, quick, and low-cost to field self-administered surveys. These tools also can become your systems for storing data over time, and they produce a variety of relatively easy-to-understand reports. When developing surveys, think carefully about how you frame survey, interview, and focus group questions so as not to lead respondents (see **Tips for Developing Surveys** and **Tips for Developing Interview and Focus Group Protocols**).

Survey research involves constructing an approach to sampling members of your community in a way that reduces concerns about bias—the extent to which who you heard from represents the community as a whole. To assess concerns about sample bias, **collect information on the characteristics of respondents** that will allow you to know how representative they are of your community as a whole on key dimensions that may affect the desired impact (e.g., income, gender, geography, etc.). To reduce sample bias, consider **providing an incentive** for responding to the survey (such as a small-value gift card for 100% of respondents or a high-value gift card for one to three randomly selected respondents). Incentives encourage those who do not have a stake in influencing the results—those who are neither the choir nor the naysayers—to respond from a more neutral place of motivation.

Understanding the effects of media on individual, group, and systemic change requires information about *how* people use and share information; *when* it is used by key influencers; and whether or not observed change can be *linked to exposure* to your media.

Qualitative data provides nuanced information and surfaces pathways or levers of change that may otherwise go unnoticed. By understanding *how* change occurs, you can better tailor your project to reach your community and your goals by making the connection between exposure to specific media content and how that exposure influenced subsequent changes in awareness, attitudes or behavior. Qualitative data can be gathered through **interviews** or **focus groups**. Interview various types of stakeholders who have important perspectives on your desired impact; these may include: community opinion leaders, policymakers, representatives of other media organizations, and meaningful segments of your community. Focus groups are essentially group interview conversations composed of eight to ten individuals who share something in common, namely the experience of your media project.

TIPS FOR DEVELOPING INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOLS

Qualitative data collection involves the use of a protocol with pre-determined questions and topics. In preparing your protocol:

- Develop a list of questions that relate directly to your impact goals and key performance indicators.
- Organize questions into a set of topics. Focus group protocols should have 4-8 broad questions. One-on-one interview protocols can vary in length depending on the amount of time you will be able to spend with each respondent. Each question should include probes to guide the interviewer or facilitator to get examples or go deeper.
- Questioning should begin with the broadest, least sensitive topics and move into specific or more sensitive areas as the interview or focus group progresses. Protocols should flow logically between topics.
- Always pilot test protocols to make sure the questions are understandable and elicit the types of information that you seek.

"Public interest media makers want to know how users are applying news and information in their personal and civic lives, not just whether they're purchasing something as a result of exposure to a product."

—*Jessica Clark and Tracy Van Slyke*

Qualitative methods involve smaller numbers of respondents, use open-ended questions, and are better at answering "how" and "why" as opposed to "what," "when," and "who" questions that surveys are good at answering. However, these methods can be more time-consuming and resource-intensive to implement than surveys.

Interviews and focus groups can be used in conjunction with survey data. You may want to conduct interviews to understand the issues about which to develop a survey. Or, you may use quantitative data to create criteria for creating a sample with whom to conduct interviews and focus groups; after conducting a survey, it may become clear that you need to understand more deeply how particular segments of a community think and feel about your content.

There are several **online tools** that help you to understand how your project is positioned in relationship to other like-minded efforts: networks, movements, public discourse, etc. One in particular, Issue Crawler, is a network visualization tool that "crawls" the Internet in search of organizational and issue relationships. You can map the positioning, relevance or primacy of your organization in relation to a given issue area or network of other organizations. This can be useful if your goal is to facilitate movement building or to shift or influence the public discourse on an issue.

If the research is being done in-house, surveys and focus groups may be more effective than one-on-one interviews as respondents may not be comfortable offering honest, critical feedback in direct dialog with a representative of the effort being assessed. Focus groups also offer "safety in numbers" and can be more likely to get to the bottom of thorny issues in the way that confidential interviews administered by third-party evaluators are capable of surfacing.

MEDIA MEASUREMENT IN ACTION: NPR'S INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING

npr

Over the last few years, NPR has prioritized investigative reporting as a key area of value creation for its community and a way to stand out from other news sources. NPR's ability to tell whether or not this strategy is working is critical to ensure the long-term vitality and sustainability of the organization, and helps its leaders, partners, advertisers and funders plan future investments. Ben Robins, NPR's Senior Manager for Programming Research, says the key research goal is to "get the voice of the listener into the conversation, helping shape the content."

By learning how the community responds to programming, NPR can evolve to become more relevant and meaningful, and demonstrate results. "If we can show that a person who listens to an investigative report will share it with friends, perhaps through online social media, or write and encourage policymakers to make changes, that's a good way to show impact.

"Ratings are critical, but you want to get metrics beyond just audience reach."

To assess community engagement with an investigative report on Black Lung and medical care for miners in Virginia and West Virginia, NPR fielded a survey on its website and Facebook pages on two dates when stories from the series had run. Questions included:

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each statement below? [5-point scale]
- This story presented information I had not heard elsewhere
- This story led me to think about the topic from a new perspective
- This story reflects what I expect to hear on public radio
- I feel that this story was well-researched
- I feel that I learned something new from this story

Are there any actions you have taken, or plan to take, based on this story? *Please select all that apply.*
- Forward the story to a friend, colleague, or family member
- Share this story on a social media page (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
- Comment on this story on a website, blog or social media page
- Contact a public official about this issue
- Talk about the story with a friend, colleague, or family member
- Do further research or look for additional information on this issue
- Do further research on current or proposed legislation regarding this issue
- Other (please specify)

Common Considerations in Impact Measurement

Attribution versus Contribution. As the number of factors influencing impact increases, so does difficulty demonstrating a causal relationship between a media project and its impact. It is generally more appropriate to explore how media have *contributed* to impact, rather than to make causal claims about impact.

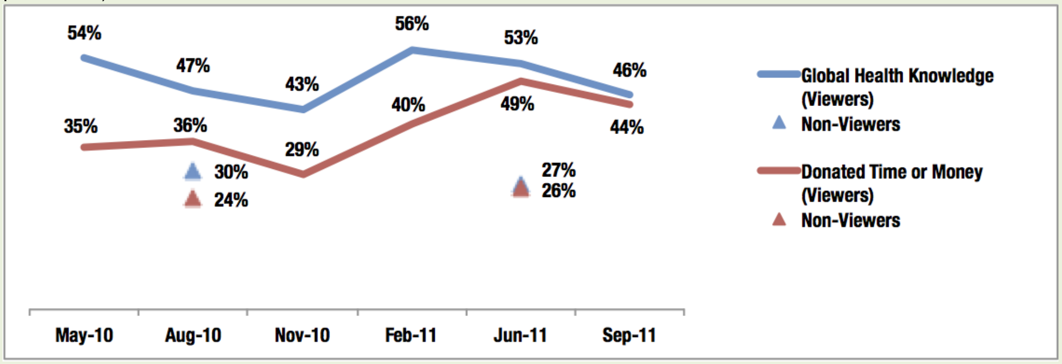
Correlation and Causation. Another common pitfall is mistaking correlation for causation. Generally speaking, causation cannot be established between content and impact, particularly with larger scale goals such as changed policies and conditions. Rather, look for a correlation among the reach of your media, degree of engagement, and evidence of impact to infer that a contribution has been made to the change. For example, a popular media campaign to influence policy reform may measure the appearance of campaign language in published documents, speeches, and the agenda of key influencers, such as community leaders and policymakers. The hypothesis is that policymakers are influenced by shifts in constituent discourse. The aim was to influence the discourse, mobilize communities around a specific issue, and eventually gain a champion at the policy level who will include the issue on their agenda. You don't know for sure if this will happen, but you research the relationship between legislators and constituents, and try to leverage these relationships and the agenda-making process to call attention to the issue.

Timing. Change takes time. Goal-setting is the exercise of creating an informed hypothesis about how and over what period of time change is likely to occur, given the depth and intensity of a media effort. Evaluators in the social sector commonly use the following timeframes to characterize impacts: short term (0-1 year), medium term (1-3 years) and long term (3-5+ years). Consider impact assessment throughout the lifecycle of your project, upon its conclusion, and at a pre-determined follow-up time period. Factors that may influence timing of impact

MEDIA MEASUREMENT IN ACTION: GLOBAL HEALTH COVERAGE ON *PBS NEWSHOUR*

The NEWS HOUR

In recent years, *PBS NewsHour* developed a global health programming initiative with increased on-air and online content. To assess the effects of these efforts, they commissioned a study that benchmarked changes in viewer awareness and attitudes by surveying six different groups of viewers over a 16-month period. Two groups of *NewsHour* non-viewers were also surveyed to determine how their views on global health compared with the *NewsHour* community. ("Viewers" were defined as anyone 18+ who watched *NewsHour* or visited *NewsHour* online least once per week.)



Although the show's community reported a slight decline in their knowledge about issues related to global health, their donations of time and money increased. Both knowledge and giving were significantly higher than among non-viewers.

Global Health Knowledge: % respondents indicating they were "experts on the topic" or "could hold decent conversation."
Source: GfK Media

STUDY DESIGN: WHAT QUESTIONS ARE YOU TRYING TO ANSWER?

Are people who engaged with our media project any different now than they were before they experienced the project? *What was our contribution?*

- **Non-Experimental Design:** This design requires information about your community **before** (pre) your media project is introduced and **after** (post) it concludes. You are making a comparison within your community at two different points in time. If you can, collect baseline data about your community (or a sample of your community), before the project is announced publicly. (You want to minimize the "noise" as best you can when setting your benchmark. The less anyone knows about the project, the less they can inadvertently be influenced by anything other than the specific activities you want to measure.) If baseline data are not available, you can do a retrospective pre-test to approximate what your community knew, felt or how they behaved before the project began. (See **WHAT IF YOU'RE NOT AT THE BEGINNING?** for additional guidance on what to do when you don't have baseline data.)

Can changes in our community be linked directly to the activities of our media project? *Can we attribute changes to our work?*

- **Quasi-Experimental Designs:** These designs involve comparisons of groups of people who have been exposed to your media project with those who have not been exposed. At the outset of your project, choose groups with similar characteristics to one another (demographic, geographic, technographic, etc.) and assign one as the "unexposed" and the other as the "exposed" group. Roll out your media project with your "exposed" group and later collect impact data and compare changes in attitude, beliefs and behaviors (or the impact areas you are interested in) across the two groups.
- **Case Study:** Start with the observed change (e.g., a policy change, shift in the public discourse or resource allocation, etc.). You want to find out how and when your media project affected the change you've observed. Work backwards, using "process tracing." You might conduct interviews with policymakers, lobbyists, and other key-influencers and ask them how and when they became aware of the issue or need your media promoted. You may also interview community leaders in your target community to learn whether and how they leveraged your media to drive collective action or policy reform.

measurement include:

- The period of time over which the project is implemented
- Attainment of engagement goals
- Fiscal years, election schedules, census data availability, etc.
- Political or financial benefit of having or releasing findings at a given time
- Study design

What's In It for Us?

While external pressures may be driving greater attention and focus on demonstrating the impact of engagement through media, the core purpose of measuring impact is to create the feedback loops needed to know what did and did not work to ensure the relevance and sustainability of ongoing efforts. In the maelstrom of the digital revolution, in a world where former measures of success are no longer relevant, media organizations are faced with a choice between engaging with impact measurement proactively, and thus being able to define appropriate goals and metrics internally, or being held to account for an external stakeholders' definition of success. The challenges of impact measurement are the new practices and capacities it requires of us; the promise is in the self-determination and sustainability it affords.

Case Examples

The following provides a few examples of demonstrating the impact of a diverse set of media projects.

Courtesy of: Abgeordnetenwatch.de

Abgeordnetenwatch (Parliament Watch)

In 2004, a referendum passed in Hamburg provided constituents more power both to elect parliamentary candidates and to vote them out of office. Prior to the reform, voters cast one ballot for a party and not for a specific candidate. The new law provided an opportunity for increased civic engagement, but voters found themselves confronted with a shortage of information about candidate political positions and voting records. Candidates, on the other hand, had limited means of sharing campaign information with voters and the media. Gregor Hackmack, an Ashoka Fellow, conceived Abgeordnetenwatch.de (Parliament Watch) to provide a neutral, online platform that fosters direct citizen-politician dialogue, tracks politicians' public positions and votes to hold them accountable, and promotes this information through existing media channels.

Target Community: German electorate and Parliamentary candidates.

Engagement: The platform asks voters, members of parliament (MPs) and candidates to engage in different ways. Candidates and MPs are asked to complete an online profile (pictured above). The profile includes a short biography and information about the constituency the candidate or MP represents. Once the profile is complete, the candidate's voting record, including positions and voting frequencies, automatically populates the profile. Voters who visit the platform may submit questions to their elected officials or candidates. The candidates in turn answer voter questions, and the site tallies the candidate's response rate.

Impact: How has the media project changed the quality of the relationship between constituents and elected officials?

Engagement metrics provide:

- Number of profiles completed by MPs as a proportion of all those eligible
- Number of questions submitted by constituents
- The frequency with which questions are submitted and answered
- Number of articles citing information accessed through the platform

What else do you need to know?

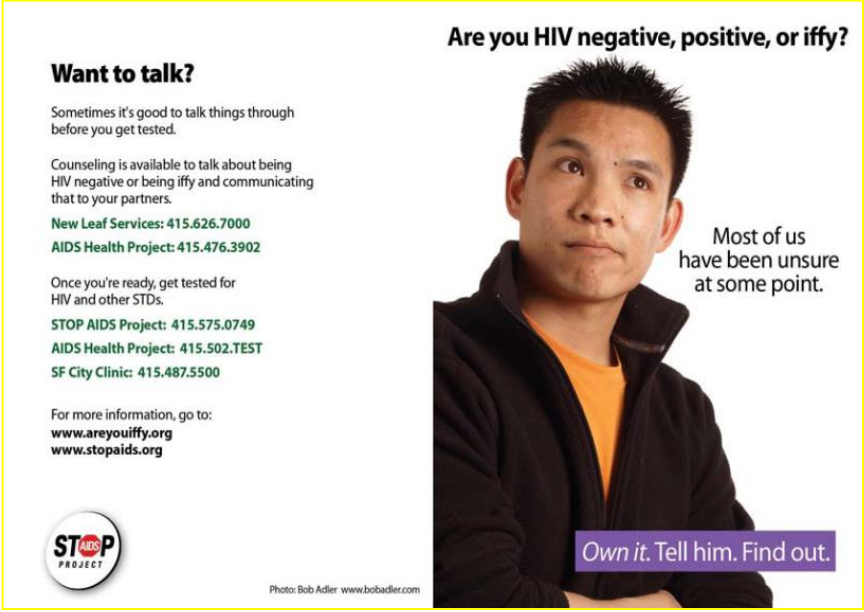
- How has the quality of dialogue between voters and MPs changed as a result of the media project?
- How has the media project influenced or contributed to balanced reporting on politics in Germany?
- How has the site increased civic engagement in Germany?

The questions submitted to politicians and the quality and frequency of responses to voter questions increase the dialogue between voters and MPs. An analysis of the types of questions asked might surface important insights about the existing gaps in political literacy and may help to generate opportunities for content and platform innovation.

IMPACT GOALS	IMPACT KPIs
Individual ▪ Increased access to quality political information (knowledge/awareness) ▪ Provide an opportunity for direct dialogue between individuals and politicians (behavior) **Institution/Groups** ▪ Contribute to new norms for discourse with constituents ▪ New norms/capacity for political reporting among journalists ▪ Increased civic participation in political process ▪ More effective and responsive government	▪ Voter awareness of political issues and candidate positions ▪ Dissemination of platform content through traditional media ▪ Public trust in Abgeordnetenwatch.de as a neutral source ▪ Dialogue between constituents and MPs ▪ Greater transparency of government ▪ Visibility of the platform among key stakeholders ▪ Voter perception of access to elected officials

How can you measure these impacts?

- Interview MPs with profiles on the platform to learn why they chose to participate in the project and what they have gained from their participation. How has the quality of their engagement with voters changed their work or the way they vote?
- Survey voters before an election to ascertain their awareness of political candidates and the candidate stances on political issues. Where did they get candidate information? Where do they go to get more information?
- Focus group with constituents to learn whether they feel they have greater access to candidates now than they did before the project began. To what do they attribute this change?



The Smart Sex Initiative

Through its Smart Sex Initiative, HIV-prevention agency STOP AIDS Project (San Francisco) aims to influence social norms, provide thought-provoking information and build skills to reduce HIV infection. The initiative's theory of change is based on an Information-Motivation-Behavior model: information regarding sexual health, motivation to take action on this information, and behavioral skills for taking action are essential influencers of the initiation and maintenance of sexual health behaviors.

Target Community: Men who have Sex with Men (MSM) who practice serosorting—choosing sexual partners with concordant HIV status to their own. Community forums, focus groups and 'man-on-the-street interviews' at bars and other social venues identify segments of the MSM community to focus on for messaging.

Engagement: The initiative uses mass media, such as billboards and posters; social events within the target community; a Facebook page to encourage dialogue within the community; live workshops with gay, bisexual and transgendered (GBT) men; and trainings with public opinion leaders to (a) increase community knowledge about the spectrum of risk; (b) increase testing; and (c) introduce a third conceptual category—"iffy"—to the HIV-status binary ("positive"/"negative").

Impact: How is our media campaign influencing knowledge, attitudes and behavior change in the MSM community?

Engagement metrics counted the number of workshop, training, and social event participants. At the end of the workshop or event, participants were encouraged to continue conversations online. Once on social media, participants were asked how they learned about the initiative. Visitors to the online platform exchanged ideas and comments about the topical areas and skill sets introduced in the workshop: testing, communication about disclosure and HIV risk. Project staff collected these comments and conducted content analysis to ascertain the sentiment associated with the comments, indications of new knowledge and the propensity of this new knowledge to translate to behavioral change.

What else do you need to know?

Has behavior in the MSM community been affected by this media initiative?

The campaign articulated goals focused on individuals as well as groups and conditions. By influencing individual behaviors and practices, the campaign aimed to change social norms around disclosure to decrease HIV transmission. In order to attribute change in behavior to the media initiative, STOP AIDS needed to know who was aware of the campaign and whether individual attitudes or behavior had changed in response to the campaign messages.

IMPACT GOALS	IMPACT KPIs
Individual ▪ Knowledge: understand acute infection, spectrum of risk and types of HIV testing available ▪ Behavior: communication with partners about risk behavior, increased frequency of testing	▪ Understand the meaning of the media campaign ▪ Disclosure of HIV status ▪ Frequency of HIV testing ▪ Understand risk associated with serosorting
Group ▪ Influence social norms around regularity of HIV-status disclosure and discussion of risk	▪ Unprotected sex among HIV-negative and HIV-unknown MSM ▪ HIV testing among MSM who are HIV-negative or unknown status ▪ Dialogue about disclosure of HIV status
Conditions ▪ Decrease HIV infection among MSM	▪ HIV incidence ▪ HIV prevalence

How can you measure the impact?

The MSM community was widely surveyed during the lifecycle of the initiative. The organization integrated media exposure-related questions into an existing San Francisco Department of Public Health survey that requested information about sexual behavior and knowledge for an existing study on serosorting. This approach enabled the organization to reach more people within the MSM community, and collect information about HIV status, attitudes about disclosure, sexual behavior and exposure to the media project in one survey. The initiative was further evaluated by conducting street-based surveys about the social marketing campaigns during STOP AIDS Project's own outreach activities.

In both sets of surveys, respondents were asked whether they'd seen the campaign and whether the campaign had influenced their behavior or attitudes. They also answered questions about their sexual behavior and disclosure practices with their partners. In this way, program staff were able to assess the extent to which the campaign prompted a change in attitudes and practices among those who had seen the media materials, and to determine whether the messages were reaching and affecting the intended audience.

In addition, MSM participating in STOP AIDS workshops related to serosorting, disclosure, and other HIV risk-reduction topics completed baseline and follow-up surveys that asked similar evaluation and behavior change questions. The ability of program staff to contact these participants several months after the workshops enabled an assessment of changes in practices and behaviors related to the campaigns' messages over time.

American Public Media's Public Insight Network (PIN)

Summary: Created in 2003, Public Insight Network (PIN) is a model of journalism that brings together public engagement, the knowledge-sharing capacity of the internet, and high journalistic standards. The model has been adopted by 50 media organizations, including public radio stations, public television stations, traditional newspapers, online newspapers, and other nonprofit newsrooms and programs, and includes more than 150,000 sources, helping "journalists and citizens reach beyond pundits, PR professionals and polemics to inform themselves and each other." Each partner organization employs a journalist that works alongside reporters, editors, and producers to distill the insights generated when PIN sources are queried, and to identify sources that other journalists at the organization may want to contact in order to develop stories. Journalists use source-generated insights to uncover stories that would not have been found otherwise, and in so doing create a platform for community-informed journalistic collaboration. American Public Media (APM) wanted to understand PIN's impact on communities, the factors that facilitated impact, and the extent to which the PIN platform made a difference.

WDET, a public radio station in Detroit, adopted PIN as an online tool to facilitate discussions, generate dialogue and invite Detroiters to engage with the news station and with each other. WDET produced Crossing the Lines, a series of community meetings held in neighborhoods and surrounding suburbs, to generate a productive discussion in Detroit focused on mending geographic, racial and social divides. The station facilitated community meetings to discuss the pressing issues of community identity, needs and opportunities, with a principal goal of improving the region by creating a sense of community that was not divided by lines of geography, race, and income. WDET invited communities to participate in meetings using PIN, but on-the-ground community organizing techniques were critical for connecting with non-traditional audiences, gaining their trust, and bringing them into the Crossing the Lines discussions. PIN also contributed to the communications strategy to generate further dialogue about the community meetings among listeners.

Target Community: Residents of Metro Detroit.

Engagement: Community meetings were the primary means of engaging Detroit residents. WDET encouraged participation in the meetings through PIN and on-the-ground community organizing. The meetings and short stories that featured individual community members were recorded and broadcast the next day on the news station and online.

Impact: APM sought to answer these questions to understand progress towards impact goals:

- How have PIN stories had an impact on the community?
- What is the depth and breadth of that impact?
- What is the role of the PIN platform in contributing to community change?

RESOURCES FOR DEMONSTRATING IMPACT

How-To/Instructional

- See, Say, Feel, Do: Social Media Metrics that Matter (Fenton, 2011)
- A Handbook of Data Collection Tools: Companion to "A Guide to Measuring Advocacy and Policy," (Organizational Research Services)
- IMPACT: A Practical Guide to Evaluating Community Information Projects (Knight Foundation, 2011)

Frameworks and White Papers

- Social Justice Documentary: Designing for Impact (Jessica Clark and Barbara Abrash, 2011)
- A Framework for Understanding Systems Change (Linkins, K. and Brya, J., Desert Vista Consulting, 2011)
- The Evaluation Exchange (Harvard Family Research Project, 2007)
- Champions and "Championness": Measuring Efforts to Create Champions for Policy Change (David Devlin-Foltz and Lisa Molinaro, Center for Evaluation Innovation, 2010)

Case Studies

- Assessing Creative Media's Social Impact (The Fledgling Fund, 2008)

Online Services and Tools

- Sparkwi.se
- Klout
- Tools and Resources for Assessing Social Impact (TRASI)
- Issue Crawler

See the appendix for more information and links to these resources

IMPACT GOALS	IMPACT KPIs
▪ Increased dialogue within communities ▪ Increased understanding of communities across community lines ▪ New opportunities for communities to work together to address community issues ▪ Increased diversity and engagement in PIN	▪ Emergence of community solutions ▪ Relationship building and alliances developed ▪ Community visibility in Metro Detroit ▪ Surfacing of shared issues on which to take action ▪ Resonance of PIN stories within the community

How can you measure impact?

Sources and methods included:

- Interviews with community engagement teams at the newsrooms
- Interviews with PIN journalists
- Interviews with sources
- Interviews with members of the community
- Interviews with the PIN Analyst

An open-ended interview protocol was created for each type of source, and respondents were asked to provide their perspectives on questions such as:

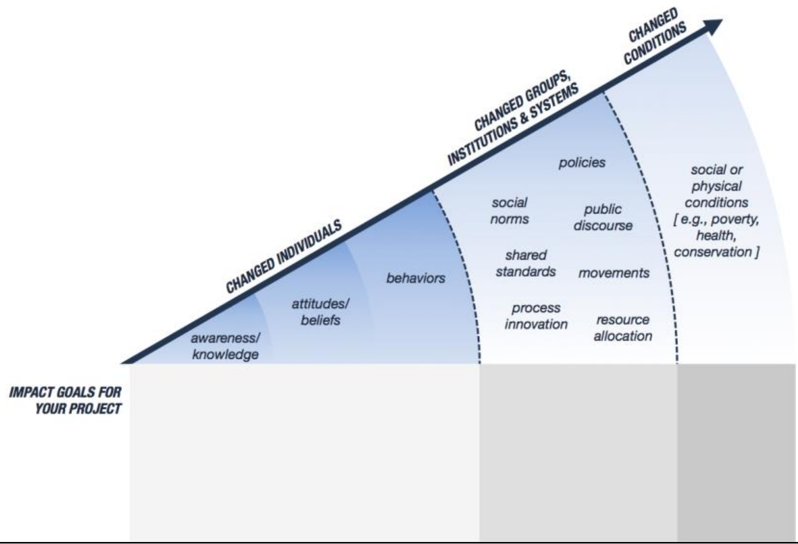
- What issues were brought into a discursive arena for these communities?
- Are people thinking differently about an issue? Provide an example of this.
- Did a new issue salience, and a new vocabulary in which to think of a particular issue, provide some community members with an impetus to take action?
- What attributes of the community enabled the stories to have the impact they did?
- Did communication mode make a difference to how the story and the community impact unfolded?

PLANNING WORKSHEET

Demonstrating Impact

To plan measurement that helps you understand *how your media is creating change within and beyond members of your engaged community,* answer the following questions. Where you don't have definitive answers, write down your best guesses and note the assumptions underlying those hunches.

What should you be measuring? Considering who you are trying to reach, your distribution platform(s), and your impact goals, ask yourself what your ideal understanding of impact would look like:

Plot your project's impact goals on the continuum: *Consider: Which of your goals can be measured in the short-term and what can only be measured in the long-term?*	
How would you know you have achieved success (as defined by your impact goal) if you "saw" it? What piece(s) of information would indicate that success has been achieved? *Consider: What have you learned from assessing engagement that might inform your understanding of impact? What else would you need to know, and from whom would you need to know it?*	
What are the potential sources of information for these indicators of success? *Consider: How can I get information from community members and other stakeholders? Is contact information readily available for a survey effort? From whom would interviews or focus groups be more appropriate?*	
What is the level of certainty needed regarding the relationship between our efforts and the observed impact? *Consider: What research design will satisfy stakeholders' needs for certainty about your contribution to change (versus attribution)?*	
What is the level of resource and capacity available for impact data	

collection? *Consider: Do you have the in-house skill and capacity to implement the surveys, interviews, etc. needed? If not, can you find outside help (intern, pro bono consultant, fee-for-service evaluator)? What is the available budget?*	
What is the context in which change occurs? *Consider: What factors are you aware of that might facilitate or interfere with your success?*	

APPENDIX: RESOURCES

BUILDING BLOCK #1—GOAL SETTING

HOW-TO/INSTRUCTIONAL		
NAME	**DESCRIPTION**	**LINK**
Evaluation for Organizational Learning: Basic Concepts and Practical Tools (LFA Group, 2011)	A resource providing and introduction and overview of evaluation for nonprofit organizations, a discussion of what types of evaluation are appropriate in different situations, and a discussion of evaluation tools. The guide contains explanations of the importance of Theories of Change and Logic Models, and steps to develop these frameworks.	http://www.lfagroup.com/pdfs/Evaluation_Handbook_9_23_11_v2.pdf

FRAMEWORKS AND WHITE PAPERS		
NAME	**DESCRIPTION**	**LINK**
Good to Great and the Social Sectors (Jim Collins, 2005)	A respected monograph that translates key concepts from Collins's *Good to Great* best-seller into the nonprofit context. Offers strong advice around developing clear mission focus and related goals.	http://www.jimcollins.com/books/g2g-ss.html

BUILDING BLOCK #2—UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY

HOW-TO/INSTRUCTIONAL		
NAME	**DESCRIPTION**	**LINK**
See, Say, Feel, Do: Social Media Metrics that Matter (Fenton, 2012)	This guide is designed to help integrate social media efforts into your overall communications strategy, and describes how to measure the return on investment (ROI) of your communications efforts. It lists specific metrics for "doing," "saying," "seeing," and "feeling."	http://www.fenton.com/resources/see-say-feel-do/
Measuring the Online Impact of Your Information Project (Knight Foundation, 2012)	A starting point, for how organizations can begin to sift through the copious amounts of data available using Google Analytics and to focus on the metrics that can best inform their decision making. It provides practical guidance to practitioners and funders of community information projects on how to begin to measure online impact, understanding that with more time and resources, organizations can go much further in understanding their online activities and connecting them to their project-specific impact goals.	http://www.knightfoundation.org/media/uploads/publication_pdfs/Measuring-the-Online-Impact-of-Information-Projects-092910-FINAL_1.pdf

ONLINE SERVICES AND TOOLS*		
NAME	**DESCRIPTION**	**LINK**
Website Analytics: Google Analytics	Google Analytics is a service offered by Google that generates detailed statistics about the visits to a website. It is the most widely used website statistics service. It can track visitors from all referrers, including search engines, display advertising, pay-per-click networks, email marketing, and digital collateral such as links within PDF documents. The basic service is free of charge and a premium version is available for a fee.	http://www.google.com/analytics/
Online surveys: QuestionPro SurveyMonkey Zoomerang	Online survey tools can help you to understand how customers perceive your content qualitatively, as well as determine the extent of change your media has engendered. Since many media goals are perception-based or without perfect quantifiable measurement, surveys help fill in the blanks.	http://www.questionpro.com/ www.surveymonkey.com/ http://www.zoomerang.com/
Link Share Analysis: bit.ly	Bit.ly is a URL Shortening tool, which allows you to take any sort of link and create a compact version which you can then distribute. You can measure clicks to the shortened link that you created as well as the performance of other shortened links for the same destination. Bit.ly allows you limited editing of your short URL to be more user friendly. URL shorteners and link monitoring tools allow you to discern the effect of specific activities by share while retaining all original referral parameters to keep analytics intact.	www.bitly.com
Social Analysis and Monitoring: Hootsuite	HootSuite allows you to manage your social media presence across several different tools and measure your reach, influence, growth, activity, etc. By integrating with Twitter, Facebook Insights, Google +, Google Analytics, and more, you can observe several key metrics by Social Platform, create your own reports, and even integrate with your Google analytics account to overlay social indicators on web performance. One great advantage to using a tool such as Hootsuite, or observing Facebook insights directly, is that it can allow for more clear demographic and interest based audience monitoring due to the information provided by social media users.	www.hootsuite.com

* This is a curated list of recommended online tools and services. Many more tools similar to the ones listed here exist. A more comprehensive directory of tools can be found beginning on page 22 of this document: https://mediaengage.box.com/shared/53siimiihhnyjclft6go

BUILDING BLOCK #3—MEASURING ENGAGEMENT

HOW-TO/INSTRUCTIONAL		
NAME	DESCRIPTION	LINK
Managing Nonprofit News Sites with Web Analytics (Dana Chinn, 2011)	This PowerPoint presentation provides an introduction to web analytics and other means of measuring success for nonprofit news organizations. It provides context for, as well as an explanation of, web analytics. Chinn stresses the importance of defining a target audience, using metrics for internal decision-making, and measuring desired outcomes (such as whether people acted) rather than visitors or time spent on a page. She also describes tools for measuring interaction with social media and mobile phones.	http://www.slideshare.net/DanaChinn/using-web-analytics-to-manage-nonprofit-news-sites
Public Media Social Media Handbook (iStrategy Labs, 2011)	This document is a social media toolkit for public media stations. It contains information about relevant tools and social media outlets, and how to use them to develop effective campaigns for fundraising, programming and engagement. It also includes case studies of past successful uses of social media, as well as tools and services to use to monitor social media.	https://mediaengage.box.com/shared/53siimiihhnyjclft6go
Measuring the Online Impact of Your Information Project (Knight Foundation, 2012)	A starting point for how organizations can begin to sift through the data available using Google Analytics and to focus on the metrics that can best inform their decision making. It provides practical guidance to practitioners and funders of community information projects on how to begin to measure online impact, understanding that with more time and resources, organizations can go much further in understanding their online activities and connecting them to their project-specific impact goals.	http://www.knightfoundation.org/media/uploads/publication_pdfs/Measuring-the-Online-Impact-of-Information-Projects-092910-FINAL_1.pdf
Measuring the Networked Nonprofit (Beth Kanter and Katie Delahaye Paine, Jossey-Bass, 2012)	A primer on building and measuring social media, including an overview of basic measurement concepts and practices.	http://www.bethkanter.org/measure-netnon/

FRAMEWORKS AND WHITE PAPERS		
NAME	DESCRIPTION	LINK
A Resource for Newsrooms: Identifying and Measuring Audience Engagement Efforts (Joy Mayer and Reuben Stern, 2011)	This resource summarizes the key takeaways from a convening of journalists interested in measuring audience engagement. Their measurement framework has three categories: Community Outreach; Conversation; and Collaboration. For each category, key strategies and metrics are suggested and their potential value explained.	http://rjionline.org/sites/default/files/theengagementmetric-fullreport-spring2011.pdf

CASE STUDIES		
NAME	DESCRIPTION	LINK
Getting Local: How Nonprofit News Ventures Seek Sustainability (Knight Foundation, 2011)	Analysis of nonprofit news sites that are filling community information gaps. This report argues for a more holistic look at sustainability that encompasses social value, economic value, and organizational capacity. It stresses the importance of audience engagement, innovation, and diversity of funding.	http://www.knightfoundation.org/media/uploads/publication_pdfs/13664_KF_NPNews_Overview_10-17-2.pdf

Measuring Community Engagement: A Case Study from Chicago Public Media (Breeze Richardson, 2011)	A blog post that describes specific metrics Chicago Public Media has developed to assess the full range of engagement with the community it serves.	http://rjionline.org/blog/measuring-community-engagement-case-study-chicago-public-media

ONLINE SERVICES AND TOOLS †		
NAME	**DESCRIPTION**	**LINK**
Website Analytics: Google Analytics	Google Analytics is a service offered by Google that generates detailed statistics about the visits to a website. It is the most widely used website statistics service. It can track visitors from all referrers, including search engines, display advertising, pay-per-click networks, email marketing, and digital collateral such as links within PDF documents. The basic service is free of charge and a premium version is available for a fee.	http://www.google.com/analytics/
Online surveys: QuestionPro SurveyMonkey Zoomerang	Online survey tools can help you to understand how customers perceive your content qualitatively, as well as determine the extent of change your media has engendered. Since many media goals are perception-based or without perfect quantifiable measurement, surveys help fill in the blanks.	http://www.questionpro.com/ www.surveymonkey.com/ http://www.zoomerang.com/
Link Share Analysis: bit.ly	Bit.ly is a URL Shortening tool, which allows you to take any sort of link and create a compact version which you can then distribute. You can measure clicks to the shortened link that you created as well as the performance of other shortened links for the same destination. Bit.ly allows you limited editing of your short URL to be more user friendly. URL shorteners and link monitoring tools allow you to discern the effect of specific activities by share while retaining all original referral parameters to keep analytics intact.	www.bitly.com
Social Analysis and Monitoring: Hootsuite	HootSuite allows you to manage your social media presence across several different tools and measure your reach, influence, growth, activity, etc. By integrating with Twitter, Facebook Insights, Google +, Google Analytics, and more, you can observe several key metrics by Social Platform, create your own reports, and even integrate with your Google analytics account to overlay social indicators on web performance. One advantage to using a tool such as Hootsuite, or observing Facebook insights directly, is that it can allow for more clear demographic and interest based audience monitoring due to the information provided by social media users.	www.hootsuite.com

† This is a curated list of recommended online tools and services. Many more tools similar to the ones listed here exist. A more comprehensive directory of tools can be found beginning on page 22 of this document: https://mediaengage.box.com/shared/53siimiihhnyjclft6go

Heat Mapping: CrazyEgg	A tracking software to understand how people are viewing and interacting with your website. Heat mapping often involves overlaying eye-tracking software, mouse-tracking, and/or click tracking data over your site, so you can literally visualize what is the most compelling to your visitors. Heat Mapping can help you continually improve your site, by using data to put the most compelling content in more visible locations.	http://www.crazyegg.com/
SocialFlow	SocialFlow is a social media platform that helps organizations and companies to increase their audience engagement on various social networks. It uses data from Twitter and Bitly, along with proprietary algorithms, to optimize the delivery of messages on social networks. By understanding and utilizing key metrics of engagement, such as clicks per Tweet and clicks per Follower, users can grow their social media following.	http://www.socialflow.com/
Chartbeat	Chartbeat provides real-time analytics to Websites and blogs. It shows visitors, load times, and referring sites on a minute-by-minute basis. The service also provides alerts the second your Website crashes or slows to a crawl.	www.chartbeat.com

BUILDING BLOCK #4—DEMONSTRATING IMPACT

HOW-TO/INSTRUCTIONAL		
NAME	**DESCRIPTION**	**LINK**
A Handbook of Data Collection Tools: Companion to "A Guide to Measuring Advocacy and Policy," (Organizational Research Services)	This handbook of data collection tools has examples of practical tools and processes for collecting useful information from policy and advocacy efforts. The examples are actual or modified tools used for evaluating existing campaigns or related efforts. The authors aimed to identify a wide range of data collection methods rather than rely primarily on traditional pre/post surveys and wide opinion polling. When possible, we included innovative applications of tools or methods to provide a broad range of options for grantees and funders. Each outcome area includes several data collection options and relevant methodological notes on ways to implement or adapt particular methods.	http://www.organizationalresearch.com/publicationsandresources/a_handbook_of_data_collection_tools.pdf
IMPACT: A Practical Guide to Evaluating Community Information Projects (Knight Foundation, 2011)	This guide offers a change framework that can be used by organizations that seek to expand access to and engagement with information necessary for civic engagement. This framework reveals the hierarchical connections between expanded engagement (project outputs and outcomes) and change (community-level outcomes, information ecosystem changes, and community impact).	http://www.knightfoundation.org/media/uploads/publication_pdfs/Impact-a-guide-to-Evaluating_Community_Info_Projects.pdf

FRAMEWORKS AND WHITE PAPERS		
NAME	**DESCRIPTION**	**LINK**
Social Justice Documentary: Designing for Impact (Jessica Clark, and Barbara Abrash, 2011)	This working paper examines state-of-the art methodologies for strategic design and evaluation of social issue documentaries. The report's recommendations are informed by lessons from case studies of six representative films.	http://www.centerforsocialmedia.org/sites/default/files/documents/pages/designing_for_impact.pdf
A Framework for Understanding Systems Change (Linkins, K. and Brya, J., Desert Vista Consulting, 2011)	A proposed approach "developed to address the challenge of assessing and documenting systems change accomplishments of grantee organizations that vary considerably in terms of their intervention models, community contexts, partnership relationships, and knowledge of how to make systems change happen."	http://proposalspace.com/publishdocs/122/download
The Evaluation Exchange: "Advocacy and Policy Change" (Volume XIII, Number 1, Harvard Family Research Project, 2007)	A respected analysis describing "how advocacy and policy change evaluations differ from other evaluations and offer[ing] examples of what those differences look like in real-life evaluation practice."	http://www.hfrp.org/var/hfrp/storage/original/application/6bdf92c3d7e970e7270588109e23b678.pdf
Champions and "Champion-ness": Measuring Efforts to Create Champions for Policy Change (David Devlin-Foltz and Lisa Molinaro, Center for Evaluation Innovation, 2010)	A research brief "defining (a) what it means to be a champion for policy change, and (b) how to track progress in developing champions."	http://www.aspeninstitute.org/sites/default/files/content/docs/pubs/Champions_and_Championness_Aug2010.pdf

CASE STUDIES		
NAME	**DESCRIPTION**	**LINK**
Assessing Creative Media's Social Impact (The Fledgling Fund, 2008)	This paper explores the use of documentary films that are linked to coordinated outreach efforts as change agents. It describes three films that illustrate how effective community engagement and outreach campaigns can magnify the social impact of documentary films.	http://www.thefledglingfund.org/media/pdf/ImpactPaper.pdf

ONLINE SERVICES AND TOOLS		
NAME	**DESCRIPTION**	**LINK**
Big Picture analysis: Sparkwi.se	Sparkwise is an easy-to-use and free visualizing tool. You can create custom dashboards which you can share, and even post back on your site through a simple interface. Data are refreshed and uploaded nightly, making maintenance a breeze. You can even upload data from an Excel or Google spreadsheet, making online and offline data comparisons simple. Out-of-the-box, Sparkwise allows for simple integration of Google Analytics data, but a limited amount of metrics.	http://sparkwi.se/
Social Change: Klout	Klout is an aggregate measure of how influential you are across social media channels. It uses several social media KPIs to gauge your overall influence. Signing up is simple, and only requires you to connect to your social media accounts to pull in data from each source. You can add specific topics to measure your influence on, which will be extremely helpful to gauge your impact. Monitoring your score before and after your media will help measure how effective it was in influencing perception	www.Klout.com
Tools and Resources for Assessing Social Impact (TRASI)	This website, run by the Foundation Center, includes a selection of tools used by nonprofits and foundations to measure impact.	http://trasi.foundationcenter.org/
Network Visualization: Issue Crawler	A network visualization tool that 'crawls' the internet in search of organizational and issue relationships. You can map the positioning, relevance or primacy of your organization in relation to a given issue area or network of other organizations. This can be invaluable if your goal is related to movement building or related to shifting or influencing the public discourse.	https://www.issuecrawler.net/
Market Research: GreenBook	The market research industry's rolodex, GreenBook is the classic resource for vendors of all sizes across the country.	http://www.greenbook.org/