

# **INFORMED CITIZEN AKRON**



**June 2-4, 2016**

# INFORMED CITIZEN AKRON

Improving Issue-Based Media Coverage in the  
2016 Presidential Election

## PROCESS

Beginning Thursday, June 2nd, and extending through Saturday, June 4th, a demographically-balanced panel of eighteen Akron-area residents met at the University of Akron Student Center to participate in the Informed Citizen Akron project.

Participants were randomly selected and stratified to represent the population of Summit County, and were paid \$400 plus travel and childcare expenses for the entirety of their time commitment. Citizen Jurors gathered to identify their priorities for the media coverage, and developed recommendations for media partners to test using strategies identified by the jurors from expert testimony.

The citizens were given the charge to learn from media experts, to deliberate, and to generate recommendations for how local and Ohio-based media partners can improve issue-based coverage during the 2016 presidential election.

## DAY 1

Panelists meet one another and discuss goals and expectations for the 3 days

Panelists engage in a simulation exercise as an introduction to the process of assessing information and working together to achieve shared results

Presentation on newsroom operations by Doug Oplinger  
(*Akron Beacon Journal*)

Presentation on political polling by Michelle Henry  
(*Center for Marketing & Opinion Research*)

## DAY 2

Revisiting the issues identified by polling and considering benefits and obstacles of adopting strategies

Presentation by Jake Batsell (*Southern Methodist University*) on different strategies for engaged journalism

Presentation by Fiona Morgan (*Free Press*) on the importance of engaged journalism & methods for productive in-person events

Presentation by Michelle Ferrier (*Ohio University*) on media deserts, and media innovation to expand access to high-quality media in them

Presentation by Ellen Mayer (*Hearken*) on citizen-generated content and the Hearken model

Presentation by Andrew Haeg (*Groundsource*) on strategies which generate citizen-provided coverage

Identifying the value of various strategies, and crafting the statement for journalists and neighbors

## DAY 3

Jurors finalize media recommendations and provide rationale for each recommendation

Q&A with Doug Oplinger to review remaining questions related to the newspaper industry

Identifying criteria for evaluating strategies and progress

Final comments, wrap up and evaluations

# STATEMENT TO OUR NEIGHBORS

Journalism is not as easy as it looks. Media organizations have to decide which stories to cover with limited staff, time, and other resources. It can also be challenging, especially during election season, to cover many issues, opinions, and candidates while staying neutral. There are many different sources of news and platforms for distributing news. There are also many opportunities for media to engage their audience by using email, social media, SMS/text messaging, face to face conversations, and more. Ohioans can get more involved in seeking information.

# STATEMENT TO MEDIA & JOURNALISTS

Not everyone has the same opinion, but many have similar interests and concerns. We need answers to the complex questions. We'd like journalists to provide clear, concise, accurate, and accessible information and links to other resources so we can explore issues in greater depth. We'd like a greater focus on our local communities, including tying major or national issues to local events and concerns. We'd also like journalists to identify solutions to challenging issues, or if they can't, provide resources so we can work to develop our own solutions.

# TOP MEDIA ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

## **1. Engaging all demographics to identify the most important issues to the community and use their input to frame media coverage.**

There is a great diversity of stories and interests in our community and they deserve to be heard. The inclusion of underrepresented individuals in this process is essential. Opening this dialogue helps articulate community needs and demonstrates the media's value of these communities, which will in turn enhance the trust between the community and the media. This helps the community feel more engaged/empowered in the news/media, influencing them to become involved in the election.

## **2. Clearly organizing accurate information in a way that is easily accessible and researchable to people.**

Providing easy access to accurate information helps the media earn the trust of the public. This allows a greater variety of people to make more informed decisions and establishes trust between readers and media.

## **3. Fact checking statements by candidates and others.**

The media can support informing citizens by providing high-quality analyses of voting records, statements about current pertinent issues and potential conflicts of interest. Citizens cannot make informed decisions based off of inaccurate information, and must be able to trust that the information they consume is truthful e.g. a truth-o-meter analyzing candidates' statements.

## **4. Interactive engagement, such as quizzes to engage readers and test their knowledge.**

Journalists can use interactive engagement to understand knowledge deficits in the community and use that information to shape coverage; as well as compelling the audience to see what they do and don't know, in order to encourage them to become more informed on the issues at hand.

## **5. Text-based engagement to receive news**

Reaches a younger, larger audience at low cost and is convenient and quick.

## **6. News as a conversation between readers and journalists.**

It empowers the readers to become more involved in the process and shaping media coverage to be more relevant, interesting, and engaging.

# PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

DEMOGRAPHIC	SUMMIT COUNTY PERCENTAGE	CITY OF AKRON	IDEAL # OF PARTICIPANTS	ACTUAL # OF PARTICIPANTS
<b>GENDER</b>				
Female	52%	52%	9	9
Male	48%	48%	9	9
<b>RACE/ETHNICITY</b>				
Caucasian/White	80%	62%	12	12
Persons of Color/Multiracial	20%	38%	6	6
<b>PARTY AFFILIATION</b>				
Democrat	50%	n/a	9	5
No Party, Other	10%	n/a	2	8
Republican	40%	n/a	7	5
<b>AGE</b>				
18-39	40%	27%	5	5
40-64	40%	42%	8	8
65 & over	20%	31%	5	5
<b>LOCATION</b>				
Akron	n/a	54%	10	10
Greater Akron	46%	n/a	8	8
<b>INCOME</b>				
Less than \$15,000	14%	15%	3	3
\$15,000-24,999	11%	13%	2	3
\$25,000-\$34,999	11%	13%	2	2
\$35,000-\$49,999	14%	17%	3	3
\$50,000-\$74,999	19%	21%	3	3
\$75,000-\$99,999	12%	10%	2	3
\$100,000+	19%	11%	3	1
<b>EDUCATION</b>				
Less than High School	14%	n/a	3	3
High School or GED	34%	n/a	6	4
Some College	22%	n/a	4	6
Associate's/Bachelor's	22%	n/a	4	3
Graduate degree	8%	n/a	1	2
<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>

# PARTICIPANT QUOTES

**“This panel’s discussion were both informative and eye-opening for me.** I learned about some of the issues journalists face when trying to report the news. I hope this panel’s discussions help to further create more connections between the media and the public.”

“I have a better understanding of how I can help my community. I learned that media and news companies really do care about our opinions; I learned about some tools that help media connect with their audience; and **I was able to engage with some smart minds within my community that offered insight to the issues.** The speakers were amazing and I fully endorse the Jefferson Center’s mission to cultivate others by providing valuable solutions and resources. Thanks for the opportunity.”

“I felt greeted and welcomed to openly share my thoughts, beliefs and opinions — all without judgement. **It truly opened my mind about the challenges faced within the media.** Facilitators all were outstanding and engaging with all of the participants. I am thankful for the opportunity to participate in this valuable group.”



[HELLO@YOURVOTEOHIO.ORG](mailto:HELLO@YOURVOTEOHIO.ORG)

[YOURVOTEOHIO.ORG](http://YOURVOTEOHIO.ORG)

[@YOURVOTEOH](https://twitter.com/YOURVOTEOH)

Your Vote Ohio is a collaboration of various Ohio media institutions (newspapers, TV, and radio) who know that elections are important, and that Ohio voters care about media coverage that moves beyond the horse race. Thanks to funding from the Knight Foundation, we have the opportunity to create new election coverage in collaboration with Ohio residents.



[AROCKWAY@JEFFERSON-CENTER.ORG](mailto:AROCKWAY@JEFFERSON-CENTER.ORG)

[JEFFERSON-CENTER.ORG](http://JEFFERSON-CENTER.ORG)

[@JEFFERSONCTR](https://twitter.com/JEFFERSONCTR)

The Jefferson Center is a nonpartisan nonprofit that engages Americans directly to solve shared challenges and craft better policy. Our mission is to strengthen democracy by advancing informed, citizen-developed solutions to challenging public issues. While the primary tool we employ for education and deliberation is the Citizens Jury, we are continuously designing, testing, and exploring new methods of high quality, inclusive engagement.

# INFORMED CITIZEN AKRON



August 11-13, 2016

# INFORMED CITIZEN AKRON

Improving Candidate-Focused Media Coverage in the 2016 Presidential Election

## PROCESS

Beginning Thursday, August 11th, and extending through Saturday, August 13th, a demographically-balanced panel of eighteen Akron-area residents met at the University of Akron Student Center to participate in a Citizens Jury for Informed Citizen Akron.

Participants were randomly selected and stratified to represent the population of Summit County, and were paid \$400 plus travel and childcare expenses for the entirety of their time commitment. Citizen Jurors gathered to learn from political experts, to deliberate and discuss information about presidential candidates and the presidency itself, and generate recommendations for Ohio media.

The participants were charged with evaluating the ways in which local and Ohio-based media partners can shift their coverage to help voters better evaluate candidates and make more informed electoral decisions during the 2016 election.



# SCHEDULE

## DAY 1

Panelists meet one another and discuss goals and expectations for the 3 days

Panelists review the first Informed Citizen Akron jury's final report

Panelists engage in a simulation exercise as an introduction to the process of assessing information and working together to achieve shared results

Presentation on political journalism and today's challenges in newsrooms by Doug Livingston  
(*Akron Beacon Journal*)

Presentation on political polling by Dr. John Green  
(*Ray C. Bliss Institute of Applied Politics*)

## DAY 2

Panelists evaluate the roles and responsibilities of the President

Presentation by Dr. Stephen Brooks (*Ray C. Bliss Institute of Applied Politics*) on traditional campaigning

Presentation by C. Daniel Myers (*University of Minnesota*) on the psychology of political decision-making and information processing

Panelists identify their most valued qualities and traits of presidential candidates

Panelists assess past Akron Beacon Journal political coverage for clarity and informativeness

## DAY 3

Jurors draft statements about campaigns, voter decision-making, and presidential roles and responsibilities

Jurors generate strategies for the media to use to convey necessary information

Final comments, wrap up and evaluations

*The following statements were created by the Informed Citizen Akron panelists to highlight information valuable to voters, media partners, and all Ohioans in considering the 2016 Presidential Election and coverage of future elections.*

## LOCAL NEWS IS CHANGING

Media outlets and newspapers such as the Akron Beacon Journal are facing difficulties with changing technology and shifts in how people get their news and information, especially with more people getting news and information from 24-hour TV news and the internet. They are faced with a lack of financial resources as revenues and subscriptions decline and are without clear options for getting money through their website. This has led to a large decline in the number of reporters and staff available to cover local issues, and less involvement and engagement with the community. It has also led to changes in how national stories are covered by re-publishing stories that are published elsewhere.

We feel it is important for the Beacon Journal and other local media to find their niche and reconnect with local readers so that people can see the paper as a community benefit and provide information we can't find anywhere else. This is a challenge, however, since there are so many news sources online and nationally and because reporters have to make decisions about balancing the following tensions when deciding what to cover and what their readers truly want to read:

- Depth vs. Breadth
- Local vs. State vs. National
- Breaking News vs. Daily Stories vs. Ongoing, Long-term Coverage
- Sensational headlines vs. Analysis
- Policies, Positions, and Issues vs. Personal Characteristics and Background

# HOW VOTERS DECIDE

People typically choose their political affiliation based on three factors: parental influence, peer influence and/or a defining issue. Most people identify with one political party, whether or not they realize it; true independents are rare.

If third party candidates are able to overcome the significant existing legal barriers to appear on the ballot, they still face challenges in generating popular support due to how deeply-rooted the two-party system is in American society.

Citizens are given an overload of information, both positive and negative towards their political affiliation. In the case of negative information, voters discount and rationalize negative information about their candidate, while focusing on negative information about their opposition.

Both reporters and readers need to be aware of their own biases in order to process information effectively.



# HOW POLLING WORKS

Polling is a way to collect information about citizen opinions on issues, candidates, and other topics. Polling has changed drastically from face-to-face polling to polling by phone, and polling from other sources like cell phones and computer surveys.

A good poll has certain characteristics and is done in a specific way to get the best and most scientific results.

- Respondents must be selected randomly.
- Polling shouldn't be designed to support certain positions or be skewed to align with survey taker's positions.
- Survey takers should be neutral and unbiased in constructing and conducting the poll.
- Data and questions asked in survey should be available to the public.

Organizations conducting polls face some challenges in ensuring accuracy.

- Women may be more likely to answer the phone, introducing potential bias.
- Only certain people have computer access or land lines.
- Cell phones present special problems for contacting the respondents.
- Polls can take up a lot of time and be difficult for people to participate in because of their length or format.

Advantages of current polling include the availability and use of open-ended responses and recording verbatim responses, which can generate more information and provide more detail about diverse opinions among subgroups.

It is important as a citizen to be involved in the polling process if given the opportunity because that makes the results more accurate and representative.

# HOW CAMPAIGNS OPERATE

There are three types of voters from the perspective of a campaign: supporters, undecideds, and opponents. These voters are typically split 45%/10%/45%. Although 80% self-identify as independent, only about 10% of voters are true independents, with most leaning toward one major party or the other.

Candidates may pursue undecided voters depending on their position in the polls, with leading candidates usually focused on turning out supporters to vote, while trailing candidates may focus on swaying undecided voters.

Campaigns employ personal contact, earned media, and macro- and micro-targeting to communicate with voters.

- Earned media is essentially free publicity, both positive and negative. Candidates attract earned media by making statements about breaking events, saying outrageous things, volunteering, or attending public events.
- Macro-targeting includes paid media, like television advertising or mailers.
- Micro-targeting uses personal data (and campaigns have more data about you than you realize) to target individual voters with tailored advertising and outreach.
- Campaigns target specific demographics to energize or demobilize certain voters.
- Traditional campaigns (relying on micro-targeting and macro-targeting) differ from non-traditional campaigns (relying on earned media and other low-cost strategies).



# PRESIDENTIAL ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Presidential roles and responsibilities are outlined in the Constitution, yet most people are unclear about those roles and responsibilities.

The President must understand the role and responsibility of each branch of government, and act accordingly. The President should rely on their cabinet and advisors to be informed.

The President is responsible for implementing and enforcing the laws written by Congress and needs to work with Congress for the good of the country.

Citizens expect the President to represent the American people, work for the public's interests, and provide leadership. This includes engaging all citizens and all legislators, serving as a role model and a source of inspiration for the country, and representing the country both domestically and internationally.

## QUALITIES OF EFFECTIVE PRESIDENTS

### 1. **Political Knowledge**

Possessing a strong understanding of the Constitution, public policy, the capacity and limitations of government, and the concerns of citizens will lead to more effective policy and decision-making.

### 2. **Patriotism**

A passion and drive to do what is best for the country, and optimism about what can be done.

### 3. **Vision**

It is important to have a clear plan and vision for where the U.S. is going. Vision, in this case, is synonymous with the ability to anticipate and guide the future of the country.

### 4. **Honesty and Integrity**

Acting with honesty and integrity engenders trust from the public.

### 5. **Consistency**

It is critical for the President to act with consistency, without wavering in the face of negative or positive reactions. The President must stick with their promises to the country and stated goals, and have a background that corresponds with these goals.

# RANKED IDEAS FOR OHIO MEDIA

1. **Hold candidates accountable** to their campaign promises once elected.
  - Compare promises with real-world outcomes.
  - Discuss the impact of candidates' policies on Ohio after elected.
2. **Compare the concerns** of the public (identified through public polling) to the promises of candidates in their campaign communications.
3. **Present campaign ideas** and positions, and ask candidates to outline a plan for implementation once elected (including plan for working with Congress).
4. **Analyze the impact** and results of existing policies candidates have already implemented or advocated for in their career or political experience.
5. **Present the track records** and accomplishments of candidates in a comparative format (such as a table or chart).
6. **Create customized election coverage hubs** tailored to areas of interest (veterans, Millennials, older adults, other communities of interest) presented in an ongoing format where new stories and candidate info is updated daily/weekly and targeted towards specific demographics/communities/issues.
7. **Outline the potential impact** of candidates' policies on Ohio.
8. **Combine “sensational” headlines** with factual reports and data.
  - Sensational may sell newspapers, but readers want and need long-term, in-depth, informative coverage.
9. **Use in-person and online forums** to allow citizens to generate questions for media to ask of candidates or campaign staff throughout campaign.
10. **Assess the personal qualities** and characteristics of the candidates.

# WHAT WE CAN DO AS OHIOANS

- **Take part in organized conversations.**

In our community and country, we have to talk about the issues we care about.

- **Don't share hyper-sensational articles on social media.**

Be selective about what you read, avoiding “clickbait” stories that don't provide high-quality information.

- **Acknowledge positive stories.**

There are positive stories and ideas happening in our community. We have to focus on solutions to our problems, not just the problems.

- **Listen, be open-minded, and surround yourself with open-minded people.**

Concentrate first on points of agreement with people and consider their attitudes and experiences. When you do this, you can learn new things, explore new ideas, and react less negatively to different opinions.

- **Confront personal self-interest and selfishness while still confronting social injustice.**

Volunteer, donate, act charitably, and step up to help others.

- **Listen to understand, don't listen to respond.**

- **Organize to make change.**

We have power when we work together, and can make change happen.



# PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

DEMOGRAPHIC	SUMMIT COUNTY PERCENTAGE	CITY OF AKRON	IDEAL # OF PARTICIPANTS	ACTUAL # OF PARTICIPANTS
<b>GENDER</b>				
Female	52%	52%	9	9
Male	48%	48%	9	9
<b>RACE/ETHNICITY</b>				
Caucasian/White	80%	62%	12	11
Persons of Color/Multiracial	20%	38%	6	7
<b>PARTY AFFILIATION</b>				
Democrat	50%	n/a	9	7
No Party, Other	10%	n/a	2	6
Republican	40%	n/a	7	5
<b>AGE</b>				
18-39	40%	27%	5	4
40-64	40%	42%	8	9
65 & over	20%	31%	5	5
<b>LOCATION</b>				
Akron	n/a	54%	10	9
Greater Akron	46%	n/a	8	9
<b>INCOME</b>				
Less than \$15,000	14%	15%	3	4
\$15,000-24,999	11%	13%	2	3
\$25,000-\$34,999	11%	13%	2	1
\$35,000-\$49,999	14%	17%	3	2
\$50,000-\$74,999	19%	21%	3	2
\$75,000-\$99,999	12%	10%	2	2
\$100,000+	19%	11%	3	3
Prefer not to answer	n/a	n/a	n/a	1
<b>EDUCATION</b>				
Less than High School	14%	n/a	3	1
High School or GED	34%	n/a	6	3
Some College	22%	n/a	4	5
Associate's/Bachelor's	22%	n/a	4	8
Graduate degree	8%	n/a	1	1
<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>

# PARTICIPANT QUOTES

**“I thoroughly enjoyed being part of this group. The conversations and discussions were honest, heart-felt and sometimes eye-opening.**

Although the group was very diverse, we all found common ground in our concerns, ideas and recommendations. I was very proud of our final product. Participation by attendees was excellent and it was great to learn different perspectives on common issues. Well worth the time.”

“I was hesitant to partake in this event due to my discomfort voicing my opinions, but I have been delightfully surprised. **I enjoyed coming together as a community regardless of race, age, sex, and working together to help the media,** which will in turn help us with the election decision I have ahead of me. I look forward to what the ABJ has in store for us!”

“I really enjoyed sitting on this panel as I have learned so much. **I used to feel like I was on the outside looking in, and after this experience I feel like I’m on the inside.** I know more about the media, politics and how they both work, and learned a lot from my wonderful group members. Thank you for these three days.”

“I am honored to be a part of this group. **We learned a lot here together and even with diverse lifestyles and professions, we still have views in common.** Engaging with speakers from the ABJ, University of Akron, and other sources opened my eyes to a lot of things I was unaware of. I hope this opportunity comes again, not only for myself but for others in our community.”



HELLO@YOURVOTEOHIO.ORG

YOURVOTEOHIO.ORG

@YOURVOTEOH

Your Vote Ohio is a collaboration of various Ohio media institutions (newspapers, TV, and radio) who know that elections are important, and that Ohio voters care about media coverage that moves beyond the horse race. Thanks to funding from the Knight Foundation, we have the opportunity to create new election coverage in collaboration with Ohio residents.



AROCKWAY@JEFFERSON-CENTER.ORG

JEFFERSON-CENTER.ORG

@JEFFERSONCTR

The Jefferson Center is a nonpartisan nonprofit that engages Americans directly to solve shared challenges and craft better policy. Our mission is to strengthen democracy by advancing informed, citizen-developed solutions to challenging public issues. While the primary tool we employ for education and deliberation is the Citizens Jury, we are continuously designing, testing, and exploring new methods of high quality, inclusive engagement.

# **INFORMED CITIZEN AKRON**



**September 22-24, 2016**

# INFORMED CITIZEN AKRON

Improving Local Media Coverage in the 2016  
Presidential Election and Beyond

## PROCESS

Beginning Thursday, September 22nd, and extending through Saturday, September 24th, a demographically-balanced panel of eighteen Akron-area residents met at the Akron Beacon Journal to participate in a Citizens Jury for Informed Citizen Akron.

Participants were randomly selected and stratified to represent the population of Summit County, and were paid a \$400 stipend, plus travel and childcare expenses, for their 3-day commitment. Citizen Jurors gathered to learn from media experts, to deliberate on the best existing tools for journalists, and generate recommendations for Ohio media's coverage of the election and issues of community concern.

The participants were charged with evaluating the role(s) or niche(s) they would like to see local and Ohio-based media partners fill in order to better serve Ohio residents during the 2016 Presidential Election and beyond.



# SCHEDULE

## DAY 1

Panelists meet one another and discuss goals and expectations for the 3 days

Presentation on political journalism and today's challenges in newsrooms by Doug Oplinger  
(*Akron Beacon Journal*)

Panelists review the first and second Informed Citizen Akron final reports

Presentation on Social Journalism by Carrie Brown  
(*CUNY Graduate School of Journalism*)

Presentation on Accountability Journalism by Jane Elizabeth  
(*American Press Institute*)

## DAY 2

Panelists evaluate available tools for media / citizen engagement

Panelists generate questions and engage in Q&A with media experts, Molly de Aguiar (*Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation*) and Fiona Morgan (*Free Press*)

Panelists explore and evaluate the Akron Beacon Journal's daily newspaper

Panelists and media discuss heroin epidemic and the media's coverage of the heroin epidemic

## DAY 3

Panelists evaluate national and local issue-based coverage  
Akron Beacon Journal and WKSU representatives answer questions about local media

Panelists prioritize roles for local and Ohio media, with benefits and drawbacks of each role

Panelists create a statement for Ohioans and local media

Final comments, wrap up, and evaluations

# LOCAL MEDIA DEPENDS ON EVERYONE

Our local news organizations matter. Local news tends to be the most accurate in covering issues in our community and tends to be the most trusted source of news for the majority of citizens. Journalism at all levels, including at the local level, is changing. Fewer people are paying for news, and local media generates significantly less money from advertising revenue than even 15 years ago. As a result, there are fewer reporters trying to do more: cover more stories, take their own photos and video, and post online and on social media.

Still, journalists and local media organizations have responsibilities to the community. Journalists need to be accountable to the public for what they report and how they report it, and they need to clearly acknowledge mistakes when they make them. Local news media should be the voice for, to, and of the community.

Citizens, too, have responsibilities to our communities. We need to take a more active role in becoming and staying informed, recognizing that news and important issues are often complex. We should also support our local media in any way we can. Our opinions, comments, feedback, and clicks make a difference!

For our communities to thrive, citizens and local media need to interact more. Local media must seek direction from the community about what needs to be covered. As citizens, we need to make our voices heard so that our stories are told and our perspectives and opinions help shape public conversations about important issues. Our communities are diverse, and the only way we can capture that diversity is by listening to and engaging the whole community.

Thankfully, there are many different approaches to improving journalism and strengthening the role of journalism in our communities. We focused on *Accountability Journalism*, *Citizen-Led Journalism*, and *Social Journalism*, which we discuss in more detail below.

**ACCOUNTABILITY JOURNALISM** involves news organizations which take the lead in monitoring and evaluating the claims and actions of politicians and other leaders. Accountability journalism likely emphasizes data, provides context, and evaluates the degree of truth in claims. “Fact-checking,” or assessing the truth of a person’s or group’s statement or claim, is a key and prominent aspect of accountability journalism. The term “accountability journalism” can also refer to “watchdog” journalism.

**(25 votes)**

### Goals

The primary goals and objectives of accountability journalism are to inform and educate readers and audiences about key issues and events. This is done by concentrating on facts, data, and information focused by theme (such as schools, local elected officials, local funding, demographic information, or crime at the community level). When this happens effectively it can generate deeper involvement and trust among readers, which can lead to increased sales or readership and stronger relationships between community members, media organizations, and journalists.

### Strengths

The strengths of accountability journalism include accuracy and clarity of information and data leading to efficient use of readers’ time. This approach can generate a consistent source of content. Stories may focus on negative, salacious events, scandals, or the discovery and presentation of negative information to help generate interest and sales, while informing community members. When news organizations provide reliable information, it can lead to them becoming a trusted community resource.

### Weaknesses

The primary drawbacks of this approach include the potential for stories to lack context and the human element by focusing on descriptions of events, information, or data. This can create conflict, tension, and friction among community members and can keep people from accessing stories if they feel alienated by coverage. This strategy can be a major resource drain on media organizations and journalists if information is difficult to obtain and verify, and may take away creativity from the reporting process. These stories can overwhelm audiences with data and information that prove a point, but may not be of value to the individual.

## Tools and Strategies for Implementing Accountability Journalism

**1. Infographics** help present complex information in a short, visual format. Infographics may be useful in helping people understand a complicated issue or lots of statistics more quickly.

*Benefits of infographics:*

- Accessible and can be easily shared on social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
- Help make difficult information simple, can help digest in-depth articles and analyze statistics, and allow audience or reader to make decisions based on facts
- Unbiased

**2. Community events** can help journalists identify important community themes and priorities; uncover new stories and sources; build new relationships with a broader community; bring together diverse groups in the community; educate community members or build awareness of an issue; generate ideas from community members; and/or raise revenue.

*Benefits of community events:*

- Identify themes and priorities for investigation and research
- Hear directly from community members of different backgrounds as well as community leaders
- Transparency in priority-setting can build trust, clarity, familiarity, and ultimately foster community

**3. Training citizen journalists** occurs when community members are trained by journalists to report on local issues, particularly in areas or neighborhoods where coverage is limited, lacking, or misrepresenting the community.

*Benefits of training citizen journalists:*

- People with local knowledge and expertise can support journalists and build capacity which can improve accuracy, build relationships, generate empathy, and improve trust
- Citizens can see themselves and their community involved in solving problems

**CITIZEN-LED JOURNALISM** considers the average citizen the authority on determining the information and news they need and how that news should be reported. The degree of influence of citizens in local media can vary. Citizen-led journalism may involve local media helping citizens do their own reporting and storytelling or utilizing direct citizen engagement to solicit feedback from citizens throughout the reporting process (identify stories or information needs, provide feedback to the reporter throughout the story cycle, evaluate the final story, and decide which stories or information to cover next based on that story). **(15 votes)**

### Goals

The primary objectives of citizen-led journalism are to involve citizens directly in sharing their stories, perspectives, and ideas; identify a clear sense of what matters to the community; better inform readers by providing more information about community issues from the perspective of diverse citizens; empower people to take action in their communities; and develop a shared ownership of community issues –where citizens are active partners in addressing issues and hold one another accountable for achieving results.

### Strengths

The benefits of citizen-led journalism include: greater cost effectiveness for both local media organizations and the overall community, because citizens are able to contribute directly to the work of local media and other community organizations; a stronger connection to one's community, where community members can relate to the news and see themselves and their perspectives in the news; better information about the community, where citizens can see the perspectives and stories of others they may never otherwise interact with.

### Weaknesses

The drawbacks of citizen-led journalism include: a potential decline in quality of journalism, since the average citizen may not be an authority on issues where a professional journalist may have greater expertise, and most citizens don't have expensive technical equipment, resulting in (for example) grainy videos; difficulty in deciding which perspectives get shared, resulting in disappointment when someone doesn't see themselves in the news; less trust in journalism, because involved citizens may be more motivated by self-interest and their own personal biases than professional journalists.

## Tools and Strategies for Implementing Citizen-led Journalism

**1. Solutions Journalism** encourages journalists to write about the most promising solutions to issues the community faces based on evidence and compelling data, without advocating for any specific solution.

*Benefits of Solutions Journalism:*

- A powerful antidote to negativity and apathy, combating the reality that people feel desensitized to problems and bad news
- Citizens will focus more on taking ownership of and solving problems in their community
- The community will have more knowledge of ideas, solutions, and sources for help on challenging issues

**2. Training citizen journalists** occurs when some news organizations and nonprofits directly train and work with members of their community to report on local issues, particularly in areas or neighborhoods where media presence is limited, lacking, non-inclusive, or misrepresenting the community.

*Benefits of training citizen journalists:*

- The ability to explore issues and stories professional journalists aren't able to cover
- Individuals that receive training may become professional journalists, diversifying the makeup of a news organization; these individuals may also go on to take other leadership roles in their community
- Individuals may see citizen reporting as more legitimate and more trustworthy because the journalist comes from their same community, encouraging individuals to be more honest and open when engaging with citizen journalists

**3. Community events** hosted by news organizations can help journalists uncover new stories and sources; build new relationships with a broader community; bring together diverse groups in the community; educate community members or build awareness of an issue; generate ideas from community members; and/or raise revenue.

### *Benefits of community events:*

- A better understanding of the community
- Additional revenue to support the sustainability of the news organization, by raising money directly or consulting with other organizations about hosting community events
- Serving as a model for other communities, institutions, and groups to host productive community engagement events

**SOCIAL JOURNALISM** operates with the understanding that journalism should create work that is considered a public service, not a product. To achieve this, journalists must work closely with the communities to identify the information they need and provide it directly in their reporting; this approach takes shape as a mixture of community organizing, data management, education, and more. Social journalism, above all, focuses on collaboration with the community and investment in its future. **(14 votes)**

### **Goals**

The primary goals and objectives of social journalism are to develop a collaborative relationship with the community; receive feedback and direction from the public for engaging coverage ideas; and empower citizens by giving them an active voice in the journalistic process. When this happens effectively, it can improve the public's trust in the media, raise readership levels by providing content that is relevant and interesting to the community, and increase the number of opportunities for citizens to use their voice.

### **Strengths**

Coverage that incorporates feedback from citizens will more directly reflect their concerns, priorities, and questions; as a result, citizens will have more interest in reading the article in its entirety, and it may perform overall better online. This supports the media organization's financial sustainability. When citizens see that coverage has been tailored to their interests, it will support a collaborative relationship that imagines journalists as partners with the community and journalism as an open discussion. Social journalism also gives an opportunity for community members to engage directly (online and in-person) with journalists, strengthening the

relationship between the community and the media, and building trust. Finally, social journalism directly engages citizens and empowers them, by providing them with solutions to make positive change in their community.

## Weaknesses

The primary drawbacks of social journalism include the potentially large commitment of human resources and financial support in adopting this strategy; newsrooms already face tighter budgets and reduced staff due to decreased revenue, so this commitment can be difficult for local media organizations to make. Additionally, because this strategy focuses on the involvement of individuals, it is vulnerable to subjectivity. The tools used to implement social journalism must ensure that individuals most vocal about their opinions are heard equally to those who may not share their opinions as loudly. Relying on citizens' subjectivity in deciding subjects for coverage can also risk citizens missing the information they need, while they might be getting the information they want. Lastly, social journalism requires a large amount of cooperation from journalists and citizens, and this may be difficult to achieve.

## Tools and Strategies for Implementing Social Journalism

**1. Solutions Journalism** is a tool used to provide alternate narratives and potential answers to problems facing the local community; this tool does not seek to change minds, but to show the community possibilities.

*Benefits of Solutions Journalism:*

- Informs citizens of possible actions they can take to solve problems, and empowers them to take those actions
- Opens up discussion of challenging and/or sensitive topics within the community
- Can unite communities together to face a challenging issue
- Provides a sense of hope to the community in dealing with the problem

**2. Crowd-powered Journalism** is a tool which relies on the community's support and depends on the community providing media organizations with information relating to topics for coverage. While other social journalism tools can require resources from media organizations, crowd-powered journalism reduces the burden of data-gathering for newsrooms.

*Benefits of Crowd-powered Journalism:*

- Citizens engage directly with media organizations which increases their personal connection with the project and media organization
- Costs next to nothing for newsrooms, and saves them money overall; because citizens are supplying the labor of data collection, journalists are able to focus on other parts of the coverage

**3. Community events** bring people together and unite them in addressing a certain topic of concern to the community. These typically take place in person, but could potentially include some type of online presence, in order to engage with as many citizens as possible.

*Benefits of community events:*

- Communities are strengthened by in-person interaction which allows people to meet their neighbors
- Organizing in-person events provides another way to demonstrate the media's commitment to the community
- Holding live events creates an additional opportunity for the community to discuss problems, solutions, and actions that will improve the community



# PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

DEMOGRAPHIC	SUMMIT COUNTY PERCENTAGE	CITY OF AKRON	IDEAL # OF PARTICIPANTS	ACTUAL # OF PARTICIPANTS
<b>GENDER</b>				
Female	52%	52%	9	9
Male	48%	48%	9	9
<b>RACE/ETHNICITY</b>				
Caucasian/White	80%	62%	12	12
Persons of Color/Multiracial	20%	38%	6	6
<b>PARTY AFFILIATION</b>				
Democrat	50%	n/a	9	10
No Party, Other	10%	n/a	2	2
Republican	40%	n/a	7	6
<b>AGE</b>				
18-39	40%	27%	5	5
40-64	40%	42%	8	8
65 & over	20%	31%	5	5
<b>LOCATION</b>				
Akron	n/a	54%	8	8
Greater Akron	46%	n/a	10	10
<b>INCOME</b>				
Less than \$15,000	14%	15%	3	3
\$15,000-24,999	11%	13%	2	3
\$25,000-\$34,999	11%	13%	2	3
\$35,000-\$49,999	14%	17%	3	1
\$50,000-\$74,999	19%	21%	3	0
\$75,000-\$99,999	12%	10%	2	2
\$100,000+	19%	11%	3	2
Prefer not to answer	n/a	n/a	n/a	4
<b>EDUCATION</b>				
Less than High School	14%	n/a	3	1
High School or GED	34%	n/a	6	5
Some College	22%	n/a	4	5
Associate's/Bachelor's	22%	n/a	4	4
Graduate degree	8%	n/a	1	3
<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>

# PARTICIPANT QUOTES

“Forums such as these are an invaluable tool for encouraging citizens to step outside of their relatively secluded circle of day-to-day relationships. **A great deal is made about treasuring our diversity, but we too often pass on opportunities to experience – let alone confront – it. Being with, and collaborating with, this very diverse, very engaging, and very interesting group has been a joy.**”



“Thank you to the Jefferson Center & Akron Beacon Journal for inviting us to this event. I learned a lot about things you just never really think about, especially concerning the media and journalism. **It gave me a newfound respect for all the journalists and news reporters, to see just exactly how time consuming, expensive, and exhausting the job can be.** Thank you ABJ, for being a trusted source of news for Akron.”

“**I have really enjoyed the information and discussions from the diverse group and all of the hard work of the Jefferson Center staff.** Everything was well-run and efficient. I especially appreciated the input from journalism experts...Thank you!”

“Thank you for giving me this opportunity. I have gained a lot of insight on media and journalism that I never knew existed. **Seeing how much citizens like myself can help our communities by working with reporters makes me excited, and want to do more.** Thank you again for this opportunity.”



[HELLO@YOURVOTEOHIO.ORG](mailto:HELLO@YOURVOTEOHIO.ORG)

[YOURVOTEOHIO.ORG](http://YOURVOTEOHIO.ORG)

[@YOURVOTEOH](https://twitter.com/YOURVOTEOH)

Your Vote Ohio is a collaboration of various Ohio media institutions (newspapers, TV, and radio) who know that elections are important, and that Ohio voters care about media coverage that moves beyond the horse race. Thanks to funding from the Knight Foundation, we have the opportunity to create new election coverage in collaboration with Ohio residents.



[HELLO@JEFFERSON-CENTER.ORG](mailto:HELLO@JEFFERSON-CENTER.ORG)

[JEFFERSON-CENTER.ORG](http://JEFFERSON-CENTER.ORG)

[@JEFFERSONCTR](https://twitter.com/JEFFERSONCTR)

The Jefferson Center is a nonpartisan nonprofit that engages Americans directly to solve shared challenges and craft better policy. Our mission is to strengthen democracy by advancing informed, citizen-developed solutions to challenging public issues. While the primary tool we employ for education and deliberation is the Citizens Jury, we are continuously designing, testing, and exploring new methods of high quality, inclusive engagement.