Source tracking to improve your journalism

Case studies with newsroom partners using Source Matters

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Product portfolio:

- Metrics for News
- Source Matters

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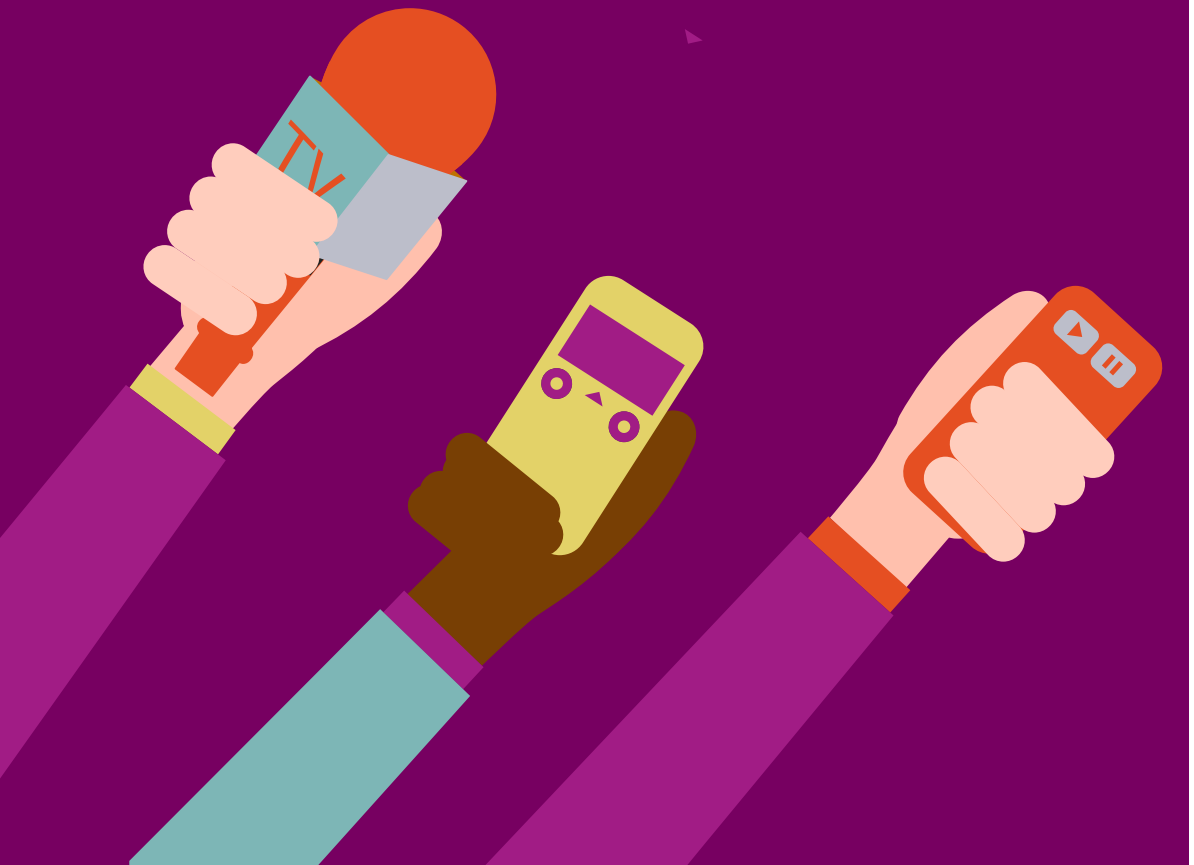
Today's agenda

1. Why to track sources
2. How to track sources
3. Newsroom examples
4. The ROI of source tracking
5. Sign up to learn more about Source Matters

Consider your sources



Personal inventory

Write down the name of the last person you interviewed or spoke with for business purposes and identify their:

- **racial/ethnic background**
- **approximate age**
- **gender**
- **neighborhood**
- **official title**

Why to track sources

Many of us at Wisconsin Public Radio have long recognized that the vast majority of sources heard in our news coverage and talk shows are white. The lack of diversity in the voices heard on-air is a problem that many newsrooms have struggled with and are trying with urgency to address.

Hannah Haynes

WPR

Understanding and reflecting the communities you serve is a fundamental responsibility of every news organization.

Source audit

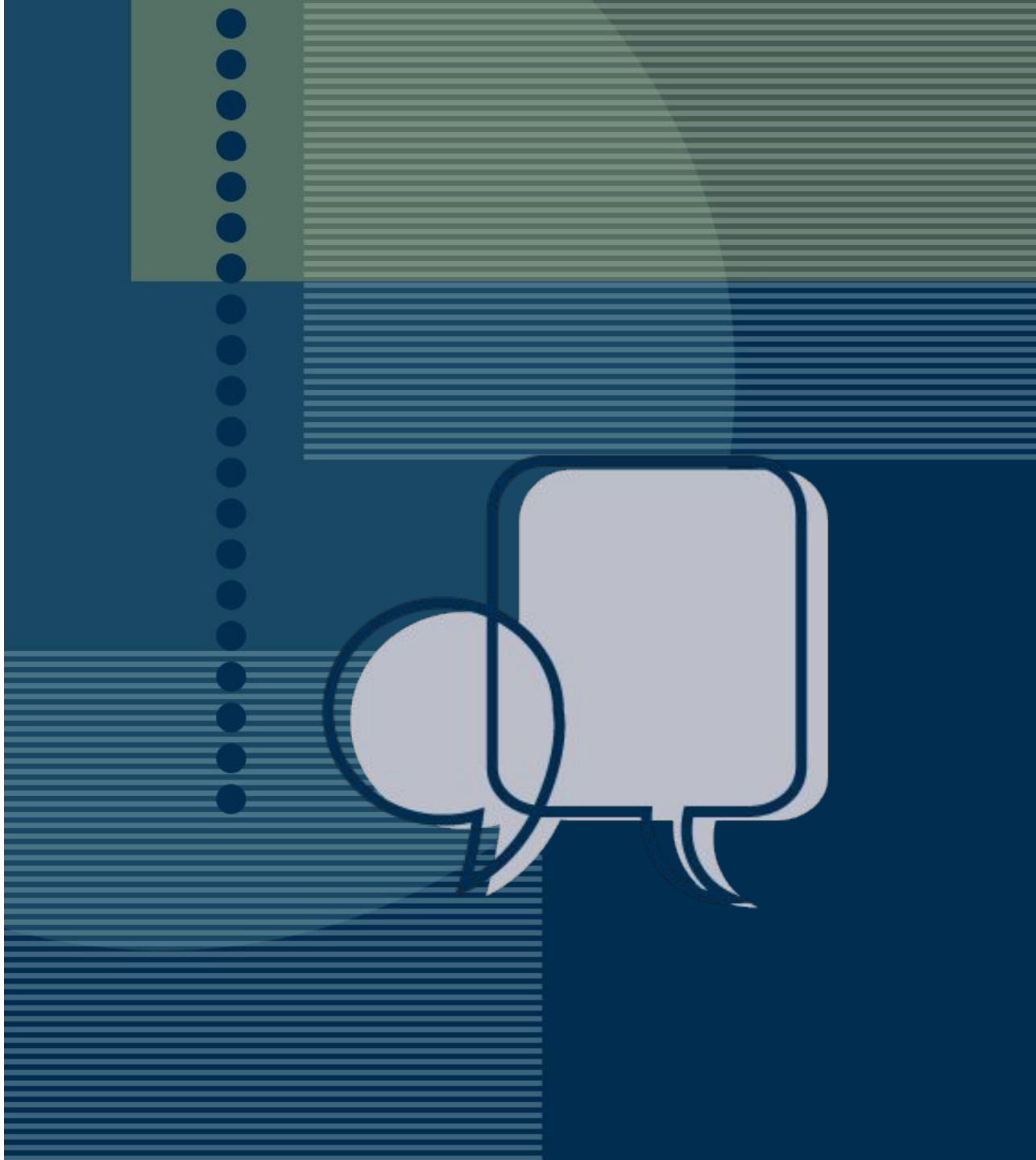
A retrospective look at past work alone.

Source tracking

Ongoing efforts to track sources “in real time.”

Source audits can answer:

- Can we practice better, more inclusive journalism by tracking the diversity of our sources?
- How do we become a more culturally competent newsroom?
- Can we sound, read and look more like the communities we cover?



The sources journalists quote affects:

- Whose stories get told
- How stories are told
- Who the news is for and about
- What communities are served
- Who is seen, heard and listened to

SOURCE MATTERS

SOURCE MATTERS

An award-winning tool that tracks the diversity of sources in your news stories and helps you improve coverage

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KEY FEATURES

- AUTOMATED
- CUSTOMIZABLE
- IMPACTFUL
- DASHBOARDS
- AUTHORS & TOPICS
- EASY INTEGRATION

Source Matters' value is critical to our newsroom, allowing us to hold ourselves accountable and to humanize our news sources. It helps us learn more about the people we serve, and most importantly see those we are not reaching.

Colorado Public Radio

65 newsrooms

KPBS on **why** to start source tracking

Mission

KPBS upholds the fundamental responsibility to reflect the diverse voices and perspectives of the communities we serve. Tracking the sources in our news coverage shows our commitment to ethical and inclusive journalism. Who we talk to greatly impacts how we tell stories and influences public discourse. By tracking source demographic information KPBS strives to be transparent, accountable and fair in our coverage.

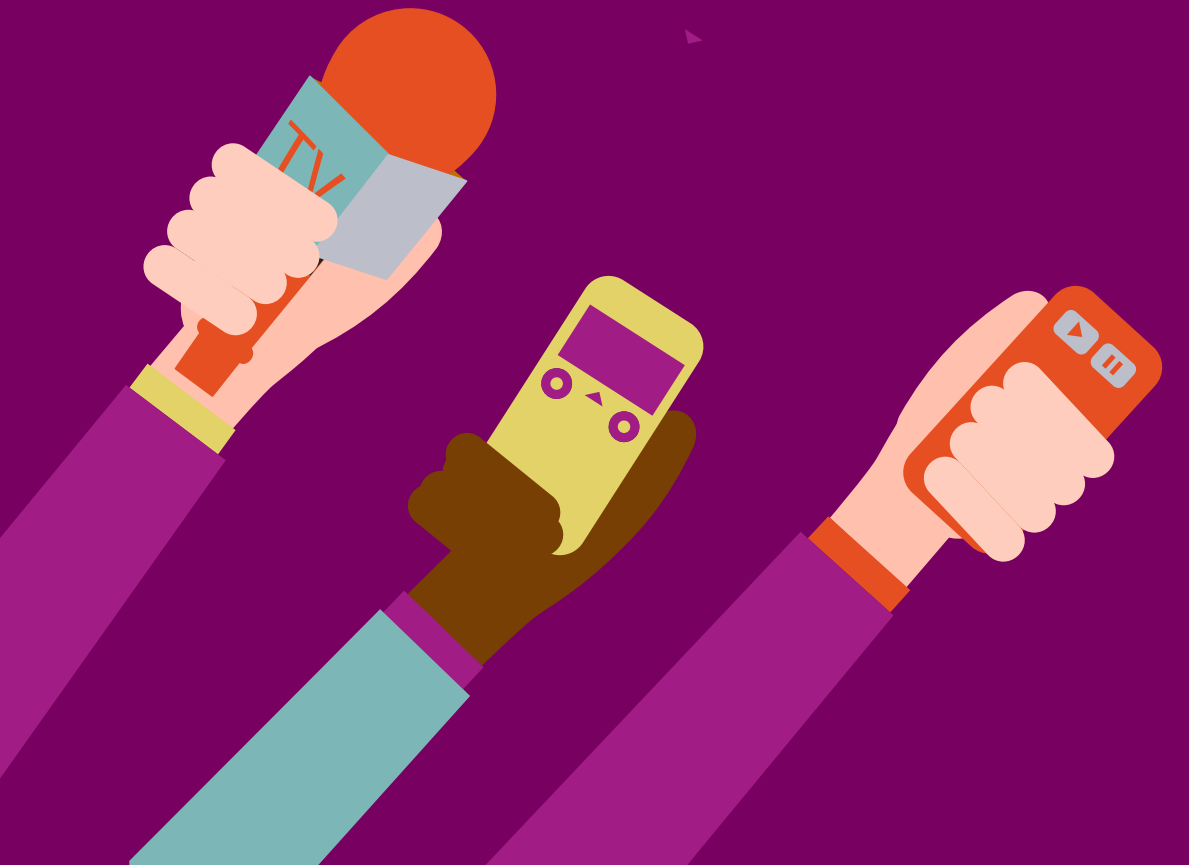
Why track sources?

1. Reflecting Community Diversity: When our reporting mirrors the diverse communities covered, we ensure a more comprehensive and accurate portrayal of the issues affecting our region by capturing varied perspectives and experiences that add depth and authenticity of our reporting. It also allows members of diverse communities to see themselves in our reporting.

2. Accountability and Improvement: Source tracking allows us to evaluate our coverage, identify disparities, set benchmarks for improvement, and measure progress over time.

3. Transparency and Trust: We are committed to fostering trust by providing transparent insights into our sourcing practices, thus enabling our audiences to hold us accountable.

Identify your why



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Before you start:

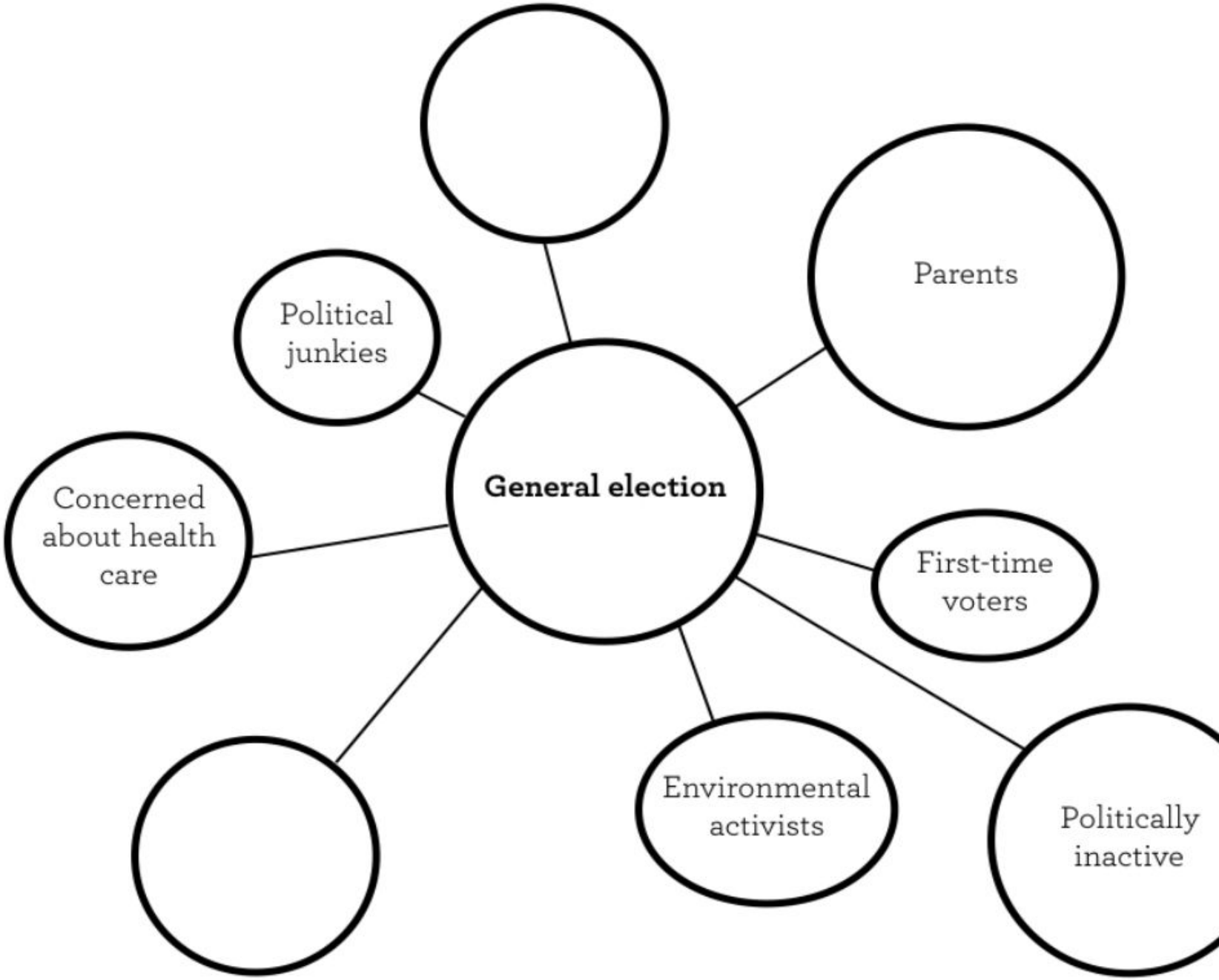
- Why do you want to track or audit your sources?
- What do you hope to learn?
- How will you use this data?

How to track sources

From free to paid tools, you can pick the route that's best for your newsroom.

Source diversity begins with source development

Network mapping can help you identify new sources.



Tools to track and broaden sources

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Public databases

DIY Google Docs

Source Matters

Free source trackers

Benefits of Source Matters:

⏰ Automatically identify sources

✏️ Categorize source identities

📊 Analyze the data

🙌 Meet newsroom goals

What to track

Even when demographics may seem homogenous

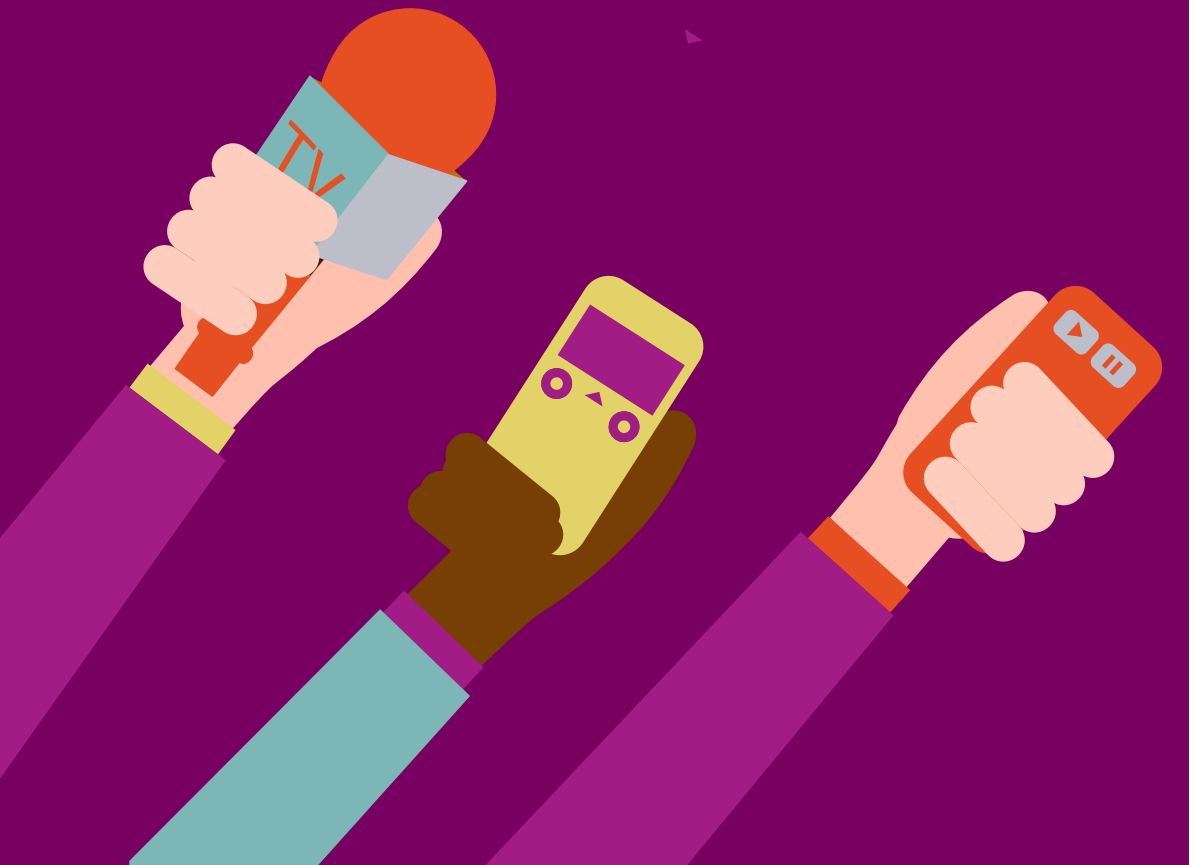
Sample categories to track by source:

- Gender identity
- Age
- Race/ethnicity
- Role in the story
- Location
- Primary or secondary source
- Political ideology

So you can learn:

- Who do we quote the most?
- Whose perspectives dominate our journalism?
- How does that differ by topic or coverage area?
- Where are there opportunities to be more inclusive?
- Where do we fall short?

Form a hypothesis



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Consider current coverage:

Are there people whose voices should be represented in your current coverage who are being ignored or underrepresented?

Newsroom example: Colorado Public Radio

Accountability and outreach at Colorado Public Radio

Community meetings

- Set agenda
- Editors only
- Off the record
- Goal: Learn about organizations and make community connections

Community listening

- Focused on particular reporting projects, topics or issues
- Beat reporters included
- Goal: Listen to community experiences

Community partnerships

- Commitment to diversity shows up in coverage, sourcing and events

Social Media Deadlines
MONEY

CPR meeting with

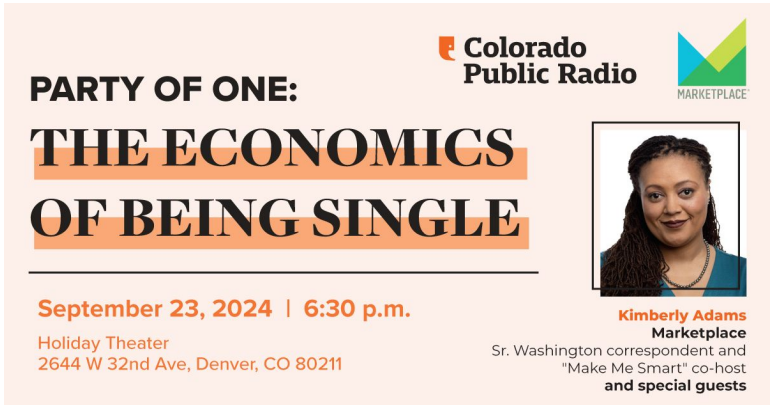
MAKE A CHESS MOVE

https://www.makeachessmove.org/

Agenda (with lunch!)

- Introductions
- Moderated community conversation
  - What do you know about us? What makes us different?
  - Community needs (city and state)
  - What needs to be known or covered?
  - What do Colorado youth want from media?
- Q&A
- Intentional connections

Community partnerships



Source Matters at CPR

Strategies since 2022

- Get the newsroom talking about diversity in sources, audience, staff, events, etc.
- Build or identify a shared dissatisfaction with how well you're currently reflecting a certain community
- Show you're serious about diversity by making source tracking part of the workflow
- Impressions are just hypotheses until they are measured.

Public Report

NEWS

CPR News, Denverite and KRCC are tracking source diversity to monitor inclusivity in news coverage

We have taken the bold step of documenting and publishing the diversity of the people included in our news coverage.

By Sherkiya Wedgeworth

[Full 2023 Report]

Newsroom example: San Antonio Report

San Antonio Report Source Matters data

Race/ethnicity	San Antonio Report	San Antonio Census	Bexar County Census
White	44%	23%	26%
Black	5%	7%	9%
Hispanic/Latinx	27%	66%	61%

Results from early tracking informed goal-setting.

Race/ethnicity	SA Report 2023	SA Report 2024	San Antonio Census	Bexar County Census
White	42%	39%	23%	26%
Black	8%	8%	7%	9%
Hispanic/Latinx	40%	42%	66%	61%

Newsroom focused on goal of increasing Latinx representation.

Sourcing goals at San Antonio Report

Community sprints

- Source data Informed new storytelling goals
- South Side sprint with 3 reporters
- Community-centered stories

COMMUNITY

Crumbling walls and questions: South Side community center gets grim diagnosis

by **Raquel Torres**
March 14, 2024

ARTS & CULTURE

Afghan refugee students find ‘connection and belonging’ on the cricket field

by **Raquel Torres**
February 21, 2024

Jun 1 to Nov 30, 2024

Report contains 1880 tagged sources (83.5% of 2.25K sources)

Highlights

- Use of **Middle Eastern or North African sources increased** by 175% since the last collection period
- Use of **Male sources increased** by 19% since the last collection period (Jump to Gender)
- Use of **0 to 17 sources increased** by 38% since the last collection period (Jump to Birth year)
- Use of **Medical sources increased** by 114% since the last collection period (Jump to Source backgro
- Use of **Circumstance of news event sources increased** by 9% since the last collection period (Jump

The most-common **Race / ethnicity** in these stories was **Hispanic/Latinx**

click to review Race / ethnicity of sources for all stories >>

Are any categories of source **Race / ethnicity** below expectations?

RACE / ETHNICITY	PERCENT OF SOURCES	COMPARED TO ORGANIZATION AVERAGE	PERCENT CHANGE WITHIN PERIOD
White	28%	▼ 11 points	▲ 20%
Black	8%	Same	▼ 34%
Hispanic/Latinx	49%	▲ 8 points	▲ 20%
Asian	3%	▼ 1 point	▼ 77%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	3%	▼ 1 point	▲ 43%

The most-common **Gender** in these stories was **Male**

click to review Gender of sources for all stories >>

Are any categories of source **Gender** below expectations?

GENDER	PERCENT OF SOURCES	COMPARED TO ORGANIZATION AVERAGE	PERCENT CHANGE WITHIN PERIOD
Male	51%	▼ 10 points	▲ 21%
Female	48%	▲ 10 points	▼ 14%
Non-binary	1%	▲ 1 point	Unchanged

The most-common **Source background** in these stories was **General public**

click to review Source background of sources for all stories >>

Are any categories of source **Source background** below expectations?

SOURCE BACKGROUND	PERCENT OF SOURCES	COMPARED TO ORGANIZATION AVERAGE	PERCENT CHANGE WITHIN PERIOD
Political	13%	▼ 15 points	▲ 202%
Government (non-political)	16%	▼ 3 points	▼ 37%
Law enforcement/official	9%	▲ 7 points	▲ 324%
Nonprofit/think tank	20%	▲ 6 points	▲ 4%
Journalist/author/artist	1%	▼ 2 points	Unchanged

What worked?

Colorado Public Radio:

- Group tagging efforts
- Source tracking is part of employee reviews

San Antonio Report:

- Using Google Forms
- Fun habit builders: Bingo, shoutouts, bracelets

San Antonio Report source questionnaire

The San Antonio Report is trying to do a better job of representing our city in our news coverage. As part of this effort, we're collecting some information on who we talk to for our stories. These questions will help us make sure you're identified correctly in our internal tracker. This information has no bearing on the interview we just did, nor will your individual data be shared beyond our team.

blanca@sareport.org Switch account

Not shared

Full name

Your answer

What year were you born?

Your answer

How would you describe your gender?

- female
- male
- nonbinary

What didn't work?

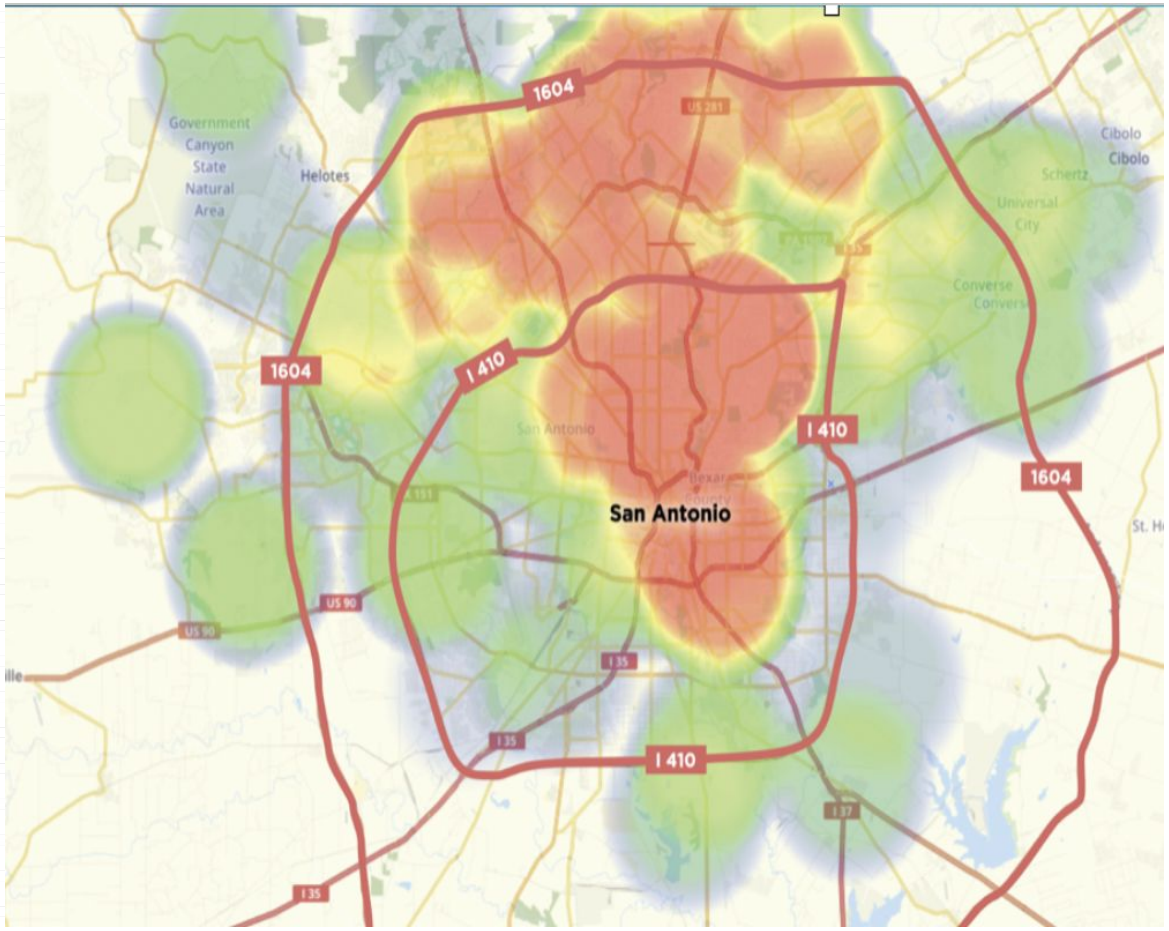
- Tracking city council districts (switched to focused parts of the city)
- Tracking in breaking news situations

The ROI of source tracking

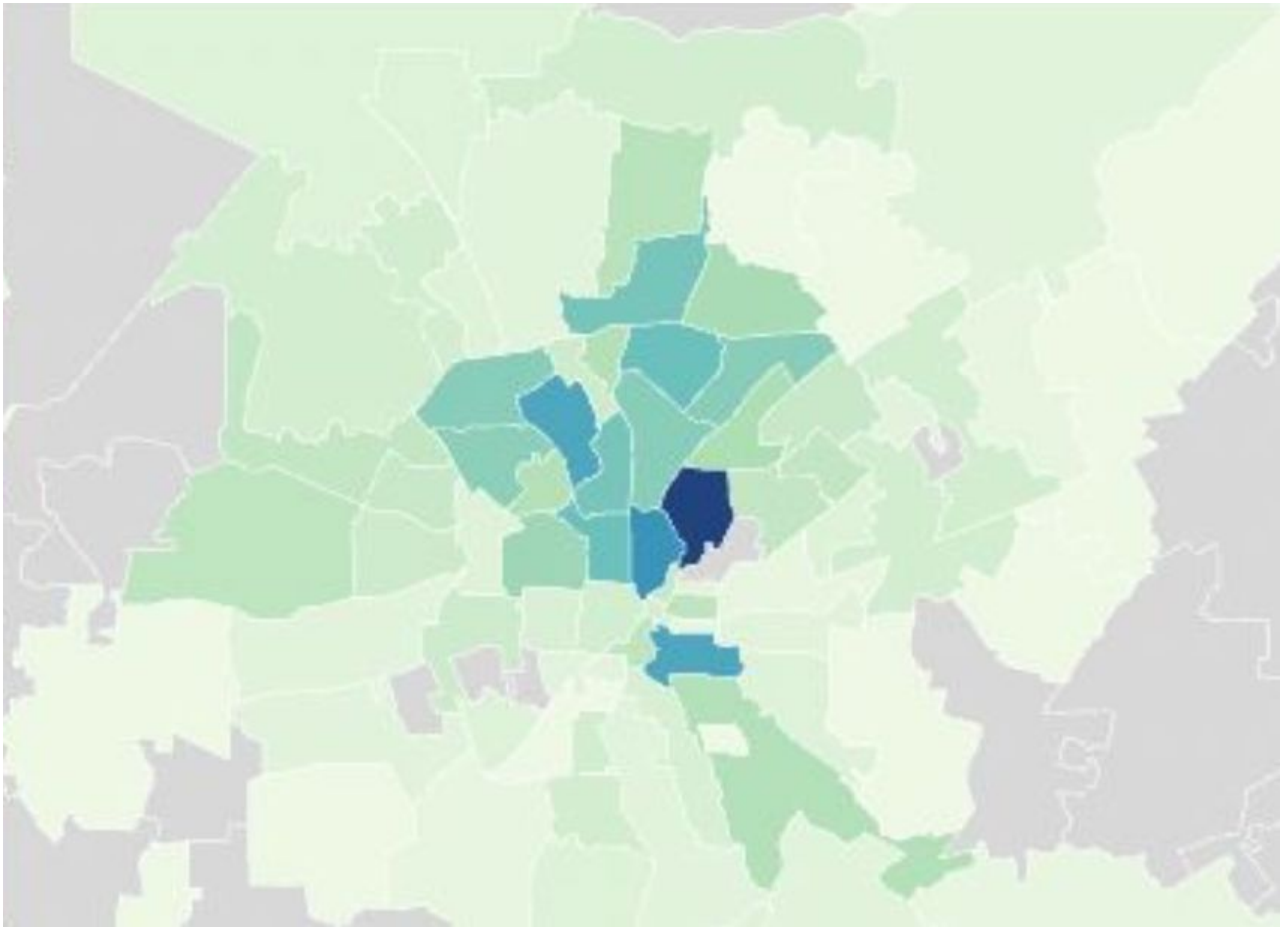
From what you learn to what you earn... in relationship building, trust, audience growth and even financial support

SAR: Audience Survey

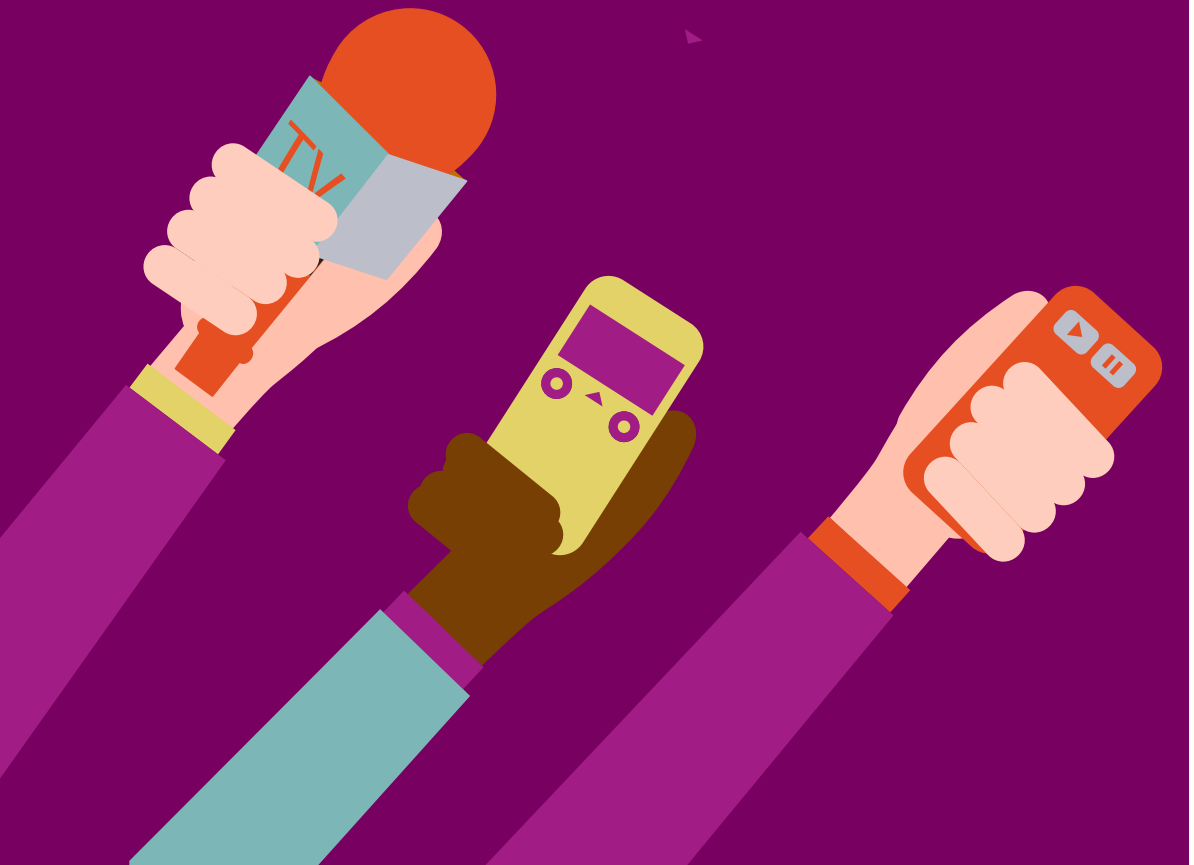
2021



2024



Sourcing challenges



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What are some of the sourcing challenges you face in your communities?

Connect with API

- Access these slides: **bit.ly/4iDKPs3**
- Subscribe to our newsletter: **bit.ly/getNTK**
- **Digital Transformation Guide**
- **Develop your influencer strategy**
- **Open role: Community Engagement Director**

Keep in touch:

Sign up for a Source Matters demo: Register here

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