Engagement isn't measured with the same metrics as other news initiatives and outcomes. It's more than the number of people who came to events or the metrics for a web or social media piece (though those things ARE important!).

It's less tangible, and because it's less tangible, it's harder to track. But if you don't track it, how do you prove to others – like your skeptical colleagues, your reluctant organization leadership, or the funders you need to finance the work – that it's worth doing and investing in? You have to track it, or it might as well not have happened.

America Amplified describes five different kinds of engagement impact:

Individual
- Readers/listeners/viewers are engaging with and utilizing the station's work, both understanding issues that impact their lives and how to contribute to solutions.

Community/Network
- New networks form and existing communities and networks are strengthened as a result of station reporting.

Institutional
- Community, corporate, and government institutions act on and reference the station's reporting.

Media Amplification
- Stations engage as experts and thought leaders in their local news ecosystem.

Organizational
- Impact is seen as an integral part of stations as organizations, interconnected to all reporting topics, and contributes to their overall sustainability.

You can start with these five metrics as you think about the kinds of impact you want to achieve and capture from your engagement work. This is not an exhaustive list! You can create your own taxonomy if that helps you do and record your work.

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America Amplified

Just like figuring out your own metrics for impact, newsrooms must come up with their own ways of keeping track of that impact. In general, though, we recommend:

- **Make it something everyone owns.**
  - Train everyone on your definition of impact and have everyone who touches your project keep an eye out for instances of that impact.
- **Establish a cadence for recording impact.**
  - Maybe that's once a week. Maybe that's biweekly. Put regular time on the calendar to make sure you've recorded the most recent instances of impact.
  - Bonus if you can build a habit of recording the impact as or soon after it happens. The sooner you capture it, the fresher and more accurate it's going to be (and honestly, the more likely it's going to get recorded at all).
- **Record your impact in a centralized, accessible location.**
  - This could be a spreadsheet on Google or on an internal server, or a Slack channel, or something similar. It just needs to be easily accessed by anyone responsible for monitoring impact.
- Go over the impact with the need-to-know parties regularly.
  - Beyond the people who are doing the project and recording the impact, those parties are:
    - Your marketing and development teams. They can fundraise around this.
    - Your editorial and station-level management. They want to know that what you're doing is working, so they can continue to support it.
    - Other peers in the newsroom/station. They want to know if these efforts bear fruit, especially if they're asked to join a similar effort later.
    - Your community, including partners who helped you organize the initiatives! Tell them of the successes you created together.

The America Amplified Impact Tracker

America Amplified worked with Impact Architects to create an impact tracker for the 2024 election project. It is still available for your use.

- Here is an overview of the impact tracker: <u>Impact Tracker Overview from Impact Architects</u>
- And a guide on how to download a copy of that Impact Tracker: <u>How-to: Get Your Own Impact Tracker</u>

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Impact Tracking (continued)

Further reading
- Impact Architect's advice on building an internal workflow for tracking impact: <u>Making workflows work for you: What's the best impact tracking process for your team?</u>
- Impact Architect's advice on using your impact tracking data to build an impact report: <u>Five Questions to Ask When Building Your Impact Report</u>
- America Amplified's <u>Impact Report from the 2024 elections project</u>