



Why Bother? How these Key Insights Can Help You

You'll be able to:

Get Stories First

As you come to understand your community in a deeper way, you will hear about events, trends and people's concerns long before they reach the official world of politics, where they tend to get framed in official jargon and technical terms.

Expand Sources and Voices

As you dig deeper into your community and engage people, you will discover an expanded group of "go-to" civic places and sources to understand people's concerns better. These sources will provide authentic voices and perspectives, allowing coverage to reflect the community more authentically.

Ask Better Questions

This work can help you gain insights to frame tougher and more probing interviews, not only with residents but also with mayors, business leaders, officials and other sources. For instance, having a deeper understanding of the context of people's concerns might prompt you to ask a city official how a recent proposal accounts for those concerns and, if not, why it doesn't.

See More Possibilities for Framing Stories

You can gain a rich sense of the dimensions of community concerns, issues and events; the context in which people think about a topic or challenge; the various perspectives that are in play; the emotions at work; the ambivalence people experience; and the nature of their struggle to make sense of things. These insights can lead to new possibilities for stories.

Write Harder-Hitting Stories

You can create an edge that cuts to the core of people's concerns by knowing what and how the community thinks; gaining a clearer sense of the underlying tensions that are at work; and uncovering different dimensions of concerns, perspectives and voices. This can help you produce stories that report the authentic tension rather than conflict that is based on extreme views and often leads readers to turn away from news coverage.

Uncover Your Preconceived Views

Like all people, you come to your work with your own personal experiences, ideas and beliefs. By aggressively engaging people and learning about your community, you can begin to uncover and understand your own preconceived views and become more aware of those views when reporting.