

Reporting on Federal Cuts Through a Solutions Journalism Lens

Historic federal funding cuts are affecting communities across the country, from disaster preparedness and veterans' health care to biomedical research and environmental protection. Federal agencies have increasingly stopped publishing data so [Resources to Report on Federal Cuts in Your State](#), published by Partnership for Public Service, are helping journalists identify what's being cut and who is affected in your community.

This companion resource is designed for journalists who want to report on these changes through a solutions journalism lens. It can help answer questions such as:

- Can we rigorously assess the effectiveness of the programs before and after?
- How are states, cities and communities responding to the funding cuts?

This guide outlines two ways to report on federal cuts through a solutions lens, alongside two stories that apply that approach.

Apply the Four Pillars to Federal Funding Cuts

Track one: <i>Report on the federal program as a response.</i> Example one: Louisiana expanded internet access through a federal program— now the future is uncertain The Current, March 2025	Track two: <i>Report on responses to the funding cuts</i> Example two: Lost your USAID funding? These aid matchmakers have a solution, The Christian Science Monitor, August 2025
Response A specific, coordinated effort addressing the problem — a program, policy or initiative, not a vague trend or feel-good moment. This section describes how the response works.	
How did the federal program address the social challenge?	How are governments, nonprofits, researchers or communities responding to federal cuts?
The response from story one: Cajun Broadband is a locally-owned ISP that leveraged grants to build fiber networks. GUMBO 1.0 — a \$176M+ grant program connecting 65,000 locations across 48 parishes via fiber optic expansion	The response from story two: Project Resource Optimization (PRO) started with a spreadsheet of 22,000 USAID-funded programs and applied a cost-effectiveness filter to identify the most impactful projects. PRO matched non-traditional donors (individuals, foundations) with specific funding needs.

Evidence: How do we know whether the response is working/worked? This section can include interviews with people directly impacted, current or former government employees, independent evaluations, data, government reports, academic research and/or expert interviews.	
How do we know if the federal program was effective?	What evidence suggests these new responses are making a difference?
The evidence from story one: Cajun Broadband connected 600 homes and businesses in St. Martin Parish through ARPA funds. 1,000+ homes and businesses connected in Iberia Parish via GUMBO 1.0. Cajun Broadband has completed 65% of GUMBO 1.0 grants, with 80% of fiber in the ground	The evidence from story two: \$26 million secured globally for 24 projects. \$6.7 million for 5 Nigerian initiatives. On-the-ground testimonials.
Limitations: What are barriers to scaling? What problem has the response not solved? Were there genuine concerns or issues with the program before the funding was cut? Who isn't being reached, and what's been tried and failed? <i>Who wasn't being served? What challenges remain? What gaps can the new response not fill in?</i>	
The limitations from story one: Fixed wireless is still vulnerable to storm outages common in coastal Louisiana. Much of Iberia Parish remains unserved or underserved even after GUMBO 1.0. BEAD funding freeze by the Trump administration leaves GUMBO 2.0 and 10,000+ additional connections in limbo	The limitations from story two: PRO isn't replacing USAID, it's rescuing a small fraction of what was lost. The donor base consists largely of people with little experience in international development. A second phase of the project still has not found funding to sustain its efforts.
Insights: What can be learned from the program's successes and shortcomings? What might be replicated by other communities? Is there a "secret sauce" others could adopt to address their problems?	
Insights from story one: The combination of federal treasury funds, state grant administration, and locally-owned providers is presented as a successful model. Providing free service to firehouses, community centers, and churches created both goodwill and essential public infrastructure	Insights from story two: The focus on life-saving effectiveness (not just urgency) helped PRO make a compelling case to donors unfamiliar with global aid.

The [Solutions Story Tracker®](#) contains more than 17,000 vetted solutions journalism stories. Below are examples of stories covering responses to federal cuts.

- [One of the Most Effective Programs to Reduce Child Hunger Is Caught in DOGE Limbo](#)
- [AmeriCorps workers are doing good all over Colorado. Why is DOGE cutting its funding?](#)
- [DOGE abruptly cut a program for teens with disabilities. This student is 'devastated'](#)
- [Connecticut Serves 1.75 Million Free Summer Meals As Federal Cuts Hit School Nutrition](#)
- [Despite federal cuts to higher ed, Mass. free community college presses on, transforming students' lives](#)
- [This program helps 6 million families pay their energy bills. Here's what's at risk if it's cut.](#)
- [Dallas ended downtown homelessness. White House wants to change the rules.](#)
- [The Scramble to Save Rural Health Care From DOGE](#)
- [They lost their jobs and funding under Trump. What did communities lose?](#)

Additional resources:

- Webinar: Solutions Reporting on Federal Cuts w/ Big Local News
[Watch the recording](#) and [view the presentation deck](#).
- [Democracy Solutions Story Map](#)