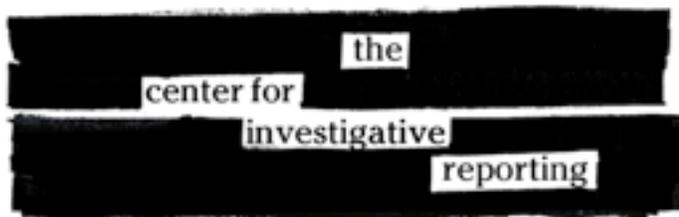


# From Storytelling to Solutions: Why Capital Public Radio is Embracing Community Engagement



[CAPRADIO.ORG/HUNGER](http://CAPRADIO.ORG/HUNGER)

Bringing the community together to share stories and experiences.



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# Table of Contents

I. Executive Summary .....	4
II. Introduction .....	6
a. How do we more deeply involve the public in public media? .....	6
b. The Challenge: Hunger in Sacramento County.....	7
c. The Approach: Community Engagement .....	8
III. What is Hidden Hunger? .....	9
IV. So What? .....	14
a. Impact Framework.....	15
b. Impact of Hidden Hunger .....	16
V. Conclusions .....	30
VI. Recommendations .....	32

# Executive Summary

Capital Public Radio's Hidden Hunger project is a model for community engagement before, during, and after the traditional reporting process. It serves as an example for how a news organization can partner with community members and community-based organizations to develop deeply reported, informative, emotionally captivating, and impactful content.

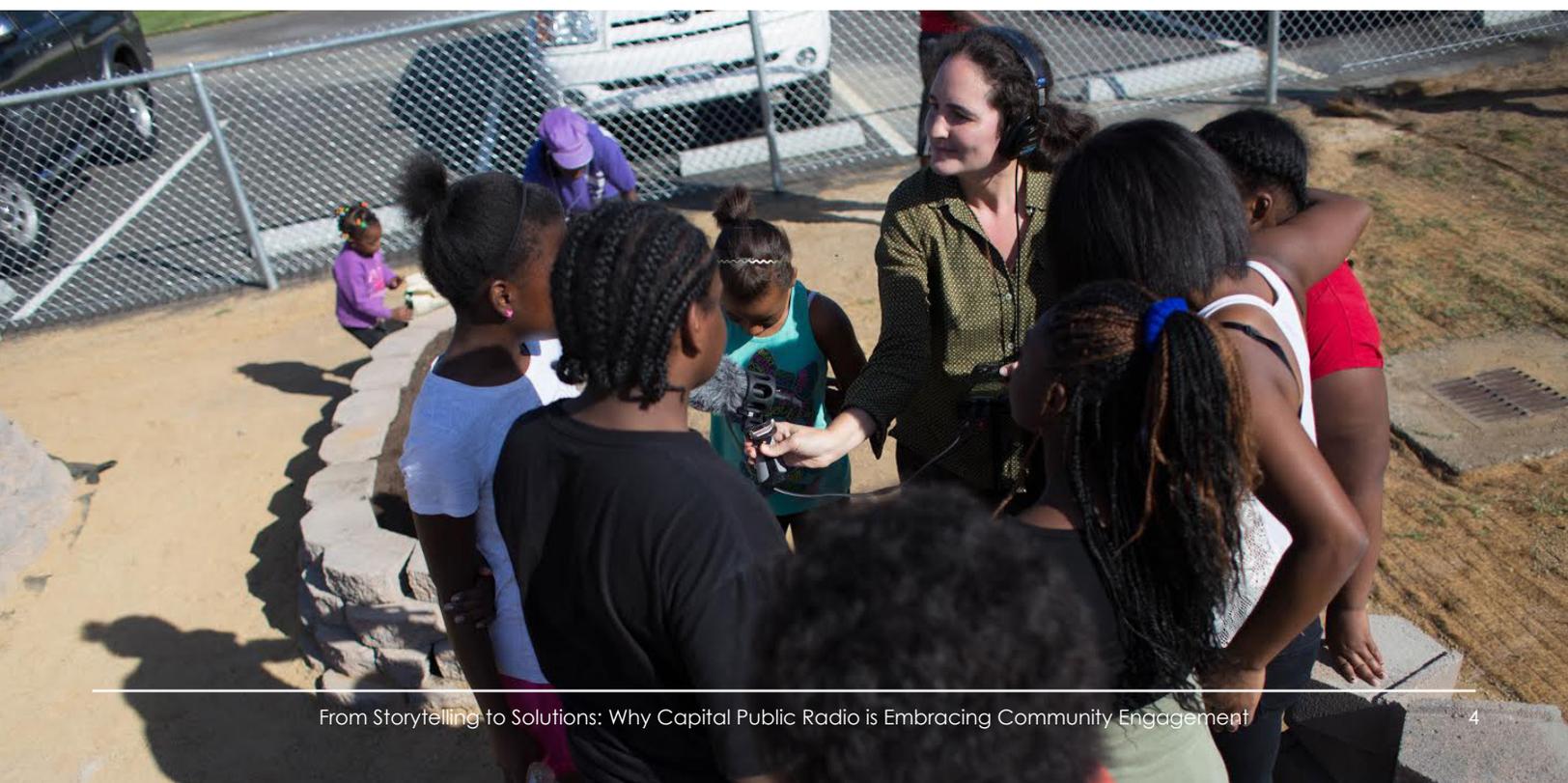
This model and the lessons it provides can serve as a starting point for continued and deepened community engagement at CapRadio. However, this model requires an investment in human and material resources dedicated to community engagement, as well as a unique mindset that values community partnerships.

The model can also serve to inform the current national conversation about the role of journalism – and particularly of public media – in a participatory media era. Specifically, this project is an example of a process through which journalists

can help surface community level solutions to pressing civic issues.

During the Hidden Hunger project, CapRadio participated as an equal partner with community organizations and networks focused on addressing hunger in Sacramento County to shape the story that the station ultimately told through its high quality audio productions. Furthermore, CapRadio invited community members to tell their own stories through the [Hidden Hunger Storybooth](#).

By highlighting voices, organizations, and experiences not often broadcast on public radio airwaves, CapRadio demonstrated to community members that it is a station striving to be truly public, in the deepest sense of the word. This effort increased trust and deepened relationships between CapRadio and its audiences, both old and new.



CapRadio's community engagement included in-person events. At these events, CapRadio generated new networks by linking previously disparate communities. These networks of policymakers, business leaders, local residents, CapRadio listeners, and community leaders are now working together to address hunger in Sacramento County.

And the increased awareness and discussion of solutions has led to real world change, as exemplified by the case of John Still K-8 school. In this case, CapRadio's audience has taken action to contribute to solving the problem of hunger in their community and developed strong, collaborative relationships that span cultural, economic, and racial divides.

Through this process, CapRadio has designed an effective mobile storybooth unit and process, elaborated a strategy and methodology for hosting dynamic public conversations, and proactively worked to assess the successes and challenges associated with community engagement. In fact, the response from the community and the station's experience has been so overwhelmingly positive that CapRadio has rebranded its documentary unit to reflect the value of community engagement.

To ensure CapRadio's continued success in developing and implementing community engagement we recommend the following:

1. Continue commitment to CapRadio's community engagement and allocate resources to this endeavor.
2. Involve CapRadio staff reporters more deeply in community engagement.
3. Broadly communicate CapRadio's model of community engagement with the Sacramento community and beyond.
4. Report on more solutions.
5. Engage in the national conversation and field building around community engagement.

# How do we more deeply involve the **public** in **public media**?

What happens when a public radio station engages with a community – not necessarily its core audience – to help inform, steer, and develop stories? This is the question Capital Public Radio explored over the past two years, with great success. While station leadership recognizes the ethical challenges community engagement poses with regard to upholding journalistic principles, they have worked through these difficulties to create a framework for this type of work that strengthens community networks, results in real changes in CapRadio audiences, and enhances the station’s content production.

Capital Public Radio’s award-winning multimedia documentary series, *The View From Here (TVFH)*, has historically produced one-hour public radio documentaries, with accompanying long-form articles published online. However, CapRadio

leadership, including Senior Editor for Innovation and *TVFH* producer Catherine Stifter, had a strong desire to make the program more inclusive and based on deeper public engagement.

In striving to be a public media station that represents the diverse public of the greater Sacramento region, CapRadio contracted with participatory media maker jesikah maria ross in the summer of 2014 to further explore ways to integrate community engagement (CE) into the documentary radio production process. In this evaluation, we will consider the transformative influence of the Hidden Hunger<sup>1</sup> project on participants, CapRadio’s audience and on the station itself.

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<sup>1</sup> When we refer to Hidden Hunger, we are talking about the project as a whole. Particular CapRadio broadcast programs and/or segments will be italicized throughout.



## The Challenge:

# **Hunger** in Sacramento County

Despite Sacramento County's agricultural abundance, hunger is a central issue for an estimated 245,000 households in the region, including 88,000 children. Each day, 50,000 residents in Sacramento County struggle to find their next meal. From July 2014 through July 2015, CapRadio worked together with community partners to address this challenge through the Hidden Hunger project. This project tells stories of people who face food insecurity and those working to alleviate hunger through deep community engagement, extensive content production and public events.

CapRadio engaged with a diverse group of community stakeholders working to alleviate hunger in Sacramento County to determine the community's information needs with regard to hunger, define project goals, and develop strategies for content production, distribution, and engagement. CapRadio defines community engagement as working collaboratively to discover, understand, and voice community needs, concerns and aspirations.



**Community engagement:  
Working collaboratively to  
discover, understand, and  
voice community needs,  
concerns and aspirations.**

Ultimately, the Hidden Hunger project has:

- **Strengthened relationships** among CapRadio, the community, and the station's audience;
- **Increased awareness** about hunger in Sacramento County;
- **Catalyzed new alliances** among previously siloed anti-hunger groups and **strengthened existing networks** working to reduce hunger in Sacramento County;
- Established **community engagement as an integral component** of both documentary projects and Capital Public Radio's broader mission; and
- **Generated a model and methods** for engaged journalism that can contribute to real world change.

# The Approach:

## **Community Engagement**

CapRadio staff – including community engagement specialist, editorial staff, radio producers, and leadership – worked with community members to develop a plan for addressing hunger in Sacramento County. The station and the Coordinating Council (explained in detail below) collaboratively developed the following goals for the Hidden Hunger project:

- **Raise awareness** about the diversity, depth and scale of hunger in Sacramento County;
- **Build understanding** of those experiencing food insecurity in Sacramento County;
- **Create content for and with partner organizations** to engage the wider public in addressing hunger in Sacramento County;
- **Create opportunities** for Sacramento County area residents to get involved in addressing this community-wide issue and generating creative responses;
- **Strengthen the network** of organizations working on food insecurity in the region; and
- **Raise the profile of CapRadio's public service mission and value.**



# What is *Hidden Hunger*?

Capital Public Radio's Hidden Hunger project consisted of ten major elements:

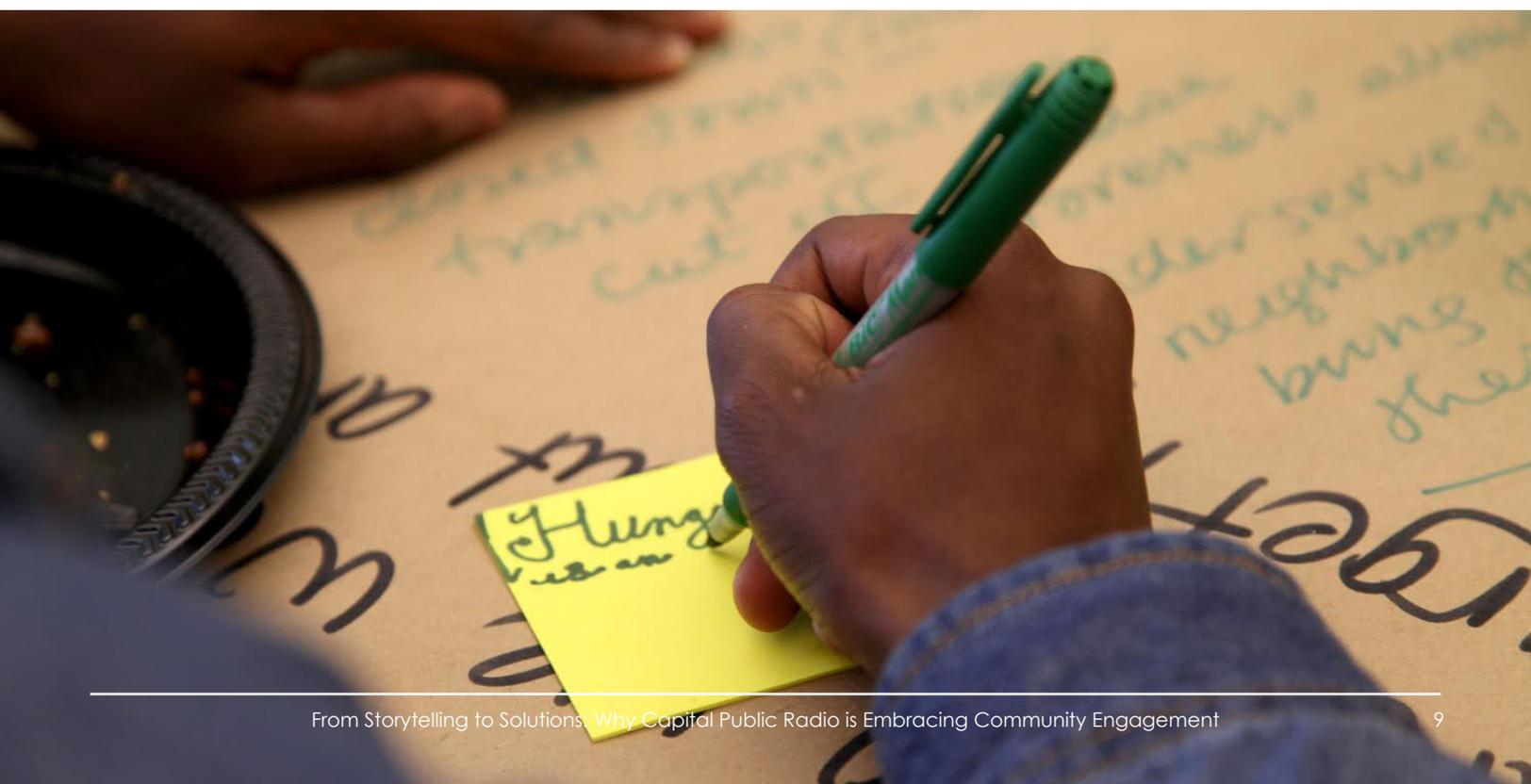
1. Two community stakeholder convenings;
2. Coordinating Council;
3. Community engagement plan, which served as an MOU;
4. Mobile storybooth;
5. Cause marketing;
6. Insight with Beth Ruyak series;
7. One-hour *TVFH* radio documentary;
8. Live broadcast party;
9. Training workshop and online toolkit;
10. High profile public conversation series.

Capital Public Radio's Jesikah Maria Ross led the Hidden Hunger community engagement initiative. This component of the project was based on community engagement theories and methods she developed in her experience as a participatory media maker and community organizer.

By involving community organizations, CapRadio worked to generate content that was both relevant and compelling and that could be used by community members to raise awareness of the causes and impacts of hunger and contribute to alleviating hunger in the region.

Additionally, community engagement efforts allowed CapRadio to reach communities and constituencies beyond the organization's current audience, reflect a wider diversity of voices, and demonstrate the station's value.

Senior Editor for Innovation Catherine Stifter led the internal content production of the *The View From Here: Hidden Hunger* documentary.



## 1. Stakeholder Convenings

CapRadio hosted community convenings in July and August 2014, bringing together CapRadio journalists with a diverse array of stakeholders working on food insecurity issues. Stakeholders included clergy, urban farmers, food bank directors, healthcare workers, food policy advocates, school staff, community leaders, and government officials. The first three-hour convening used an adapted World Cafe<sup>2</sup> method and included a meal. The second was designed as a work session, where participants took the goals and ideas generated during the first convening, mapped out various approaches to realizing them, identified frames and project goals, and pinpointed important issues to include in the project. The information gathered during these convenings was used to develop the Convening Report, which was then shared back with participants.

<sup>2</sup> For more information see <http://www.theworldcafe.com>.

## 2. Coordinating Council

During the process of organizing the community convenings, Jesika Maria Ross developed relationships with participants. Through these relationships, she recruited four coalitions – The American Academy of Pediatrics, Grow Sacramento, Sacramento Food Systems Collaborative, and Sacramento Hunger Coalition – to partner with CapRadio on the Hidden Hunger project (logos pictured below). She then formed a Coordinating Council made up of representatives from each coalition. This council was responsible for co-creating, guiding, and implementing the CE plan, as well as promoting the project among their networks. Ross organized and facilitated monthly meetings of the Coordinating Council and reported out notes from each meeting. During these meetings, she participated as a member and acted as a liaison between the Coordinating Council and CapRadio.



### 3. Community Engagement Plan

The Coordinating Council represented the wide range of anti-hunger groups in the region: urban farmers/gardeners, community health workers, food bank staff, and food policy advocates. The Council, which met monthly from October 2014 through May 2015, represented approximately 50 community groups in Sacramento County. The Coordinating Council and Jessica Maria Ross developed and ratified a CE plan document, committing to guide the project and to assist with implementation and project promotion.

### 4. Mobile Storybooth

The Storybooth is a portable recording studio designed to travel to different sites and invite individuals grappling with food insecurity to record their stories.

The Storybooth visited five sites – four food banks and a community health center – and collected 45 stories. Ultimately, 42 interviews were featured on [www.hiddenhungerstorybooth.com](http://www.hiddenhungerstorybooth.com), an interactive website Ross created that featured storyteller photos, audio clips, and transcripts, as well as resources for community conversations about hunger. Coordinating Council members and convening attendees helped to identify many of the Storybooth participants to ensure that issues and stories highlighted addressed community concerns and met the goals outlined in the CE Plan.



### 5. Cause Marketing

During the fall fund drive in September 2014, CapRadio invited donors to take action on the issue of hunger by giving part of their public radio donation to local food banks. To highlight the faces and facets of food insecurity, CapRadio created and broadcast “image spots” during the drive featuring stories and images from the Hidden Hunger Storybooth. CapRadio’s Fall 2014 fund drive generated a total of \$2,520.29 for 21 food banks. This was a 43% increase from 2013’s contributions. During the week of December 1st through 4th, CapRadio’s daily talk show, *Insight with Beth Ruyak*, broadcast a series of segments as part of the Hidden Hunger project. To develop these segments, *Insight with Beth Ruyak*’s Executive Producer, Jen Picard, attended a Coordinating Council meeting where Ross facilitated group conversations and council members identified stories and sources.

## 6. Insight with Beth Ruyak Series

CapRadio produced an hour-long radio documentary called *The View From Here: Hidden Hunger* about food insecurity in two of Sacramento's overlooked neighborhoods. Each of the two reporters attended one of the community stakeholder convenings. The reporters, multimedia producer, and interns met weekly with TVFH Senior Producer, Catherine Stifter. At these meetings, Ross shared updates about developments happening in the community and potential sources.

## 7. Radio Documentary

CapRadio hosted a rough-cut listening session prior to airing the documentary and invited the Coordinating Council to provide feedback. The Coordinating Council did not identify any changes to be made. Feedback collected from council participants was overwhelmingly positive; participants emphasized that they felt respected and valued as a result of their contributions.

The [radio documentary](#) aired on Friday, December 5, 2014.

## 8. Live Broadcast Party

CapRadio hosted a live broadcast party at the station for the airing of the radio documentary. Individuals whose stories were featured as part of TVFH: *Hidden Hunger*, partner organizations, Coordinating Council members, and the media makers (reporters, producers, editors, and station leadership) attended the party.

Before the documentary aired, all attendees were introduced to one another, Jessica Maria Ross outlined the project, Catherine Stifter provided context, and there was a shared meal. After the broadcast, participants shared their reflections and responses to the stories. During this time and through the various activities, new connections were made among attendees and existing relationships were strengthened.





## 10. Interactive Public Conversations

The Coordinating Council members felt strongly that they wanted to continue the conversation that had been generated by Hidden Hunger and take advantage of its momentum. CapRadio agreed.

In early 2015, ross brought on The Village Square as a partner to help host public conversations on “Hunger in the Farm-to-Fork Capital.” These conversations, held in May and June of 2015, created a space where area residents could connect with one another, engage with the topic in a new way, and hear views on hunger beyond their personal experience.

Part dinner party, part civic meeting, and part literary salon, these participatory events used Hidden Hunger’s compelling audio stories and images to spark dialogue and problem-solving across a group of diverse stakeholders. Event goals included:

- Raise awareness about the causes and impacts of hunger;
- Build understanding and empathy for those grappling with food insecurity;
- Create forums for residents to explore the issue together; and
- Generate opportunities for greater civic involvement.

## 9. Training Workshop and Online Tool Kit

CapRadio, together with the Health Education Council,<sup>3</sup> designed and conducted a training workshop for community health workers from 15 counties in California. This workshop was open to all of the Coalition partner member organizations. It was designed to train participants how to use the Hidden Hunger Storybooth website to lead community conversations about hunger. During the interactive workshop, ross explained how to plan and host a community conversation. She also reviewed digital resource materials she created in collaboration with Coordinating Council and discussed strategies for using and adapting the materials in various community contexts. The online toolkit of materials was made publicly available on the Hidden Hunger Storybooth website.

<sup>3</sup> The Health Education Council is part of the Sacramento Hunger Coalition and participated on the Hidden Hunger Coordinating Council as a Hidden Hunger community partner. Their HEAL Collaborative offers quarterly workshops for community health workers from 15 counties.

# So what?

The Hidden Hunger project consisted of both community engagement activities and traditional broadcast content. The *Insight with Beth Ruyak* segments and hour-long radio documentary effectively combined statistics and first-person storytelling to reveal the depth and scale of hunger in Sacramento County. Both programs showed the diverse faces of hunger in an effort to change the perception of hunger and illuminated the experiences of those living with food insecurity in Sacramento County. The Hidden Hunger project produced a broad array of materials, including a [digital storybooth](#), written articles, an interactive food map, info graphics, photo galleries, and a series of short videos.

The content produced elevates the voices of Sacramento residents hailing from diverse socioeconomic, cultural, and linguistic communities. These voices are often omitted from stories told by and through public radio.

The Hidden Hunger project effectively and poignantly exposes why all members of the Sacramento County community have a stake in the issue of hunger. It connects hunger with students and schools, elderly residents, minimum wage laws, and Sacramento's celebrated status as the "farm-to-fork capital."

In the following pages, we explore the ways in which Hidden Hunger affected the CapRadio audience, participants in the community convenings, those who told their stories on air and through the Storybooth, and CapRadio as an institution.



# Impact Framework

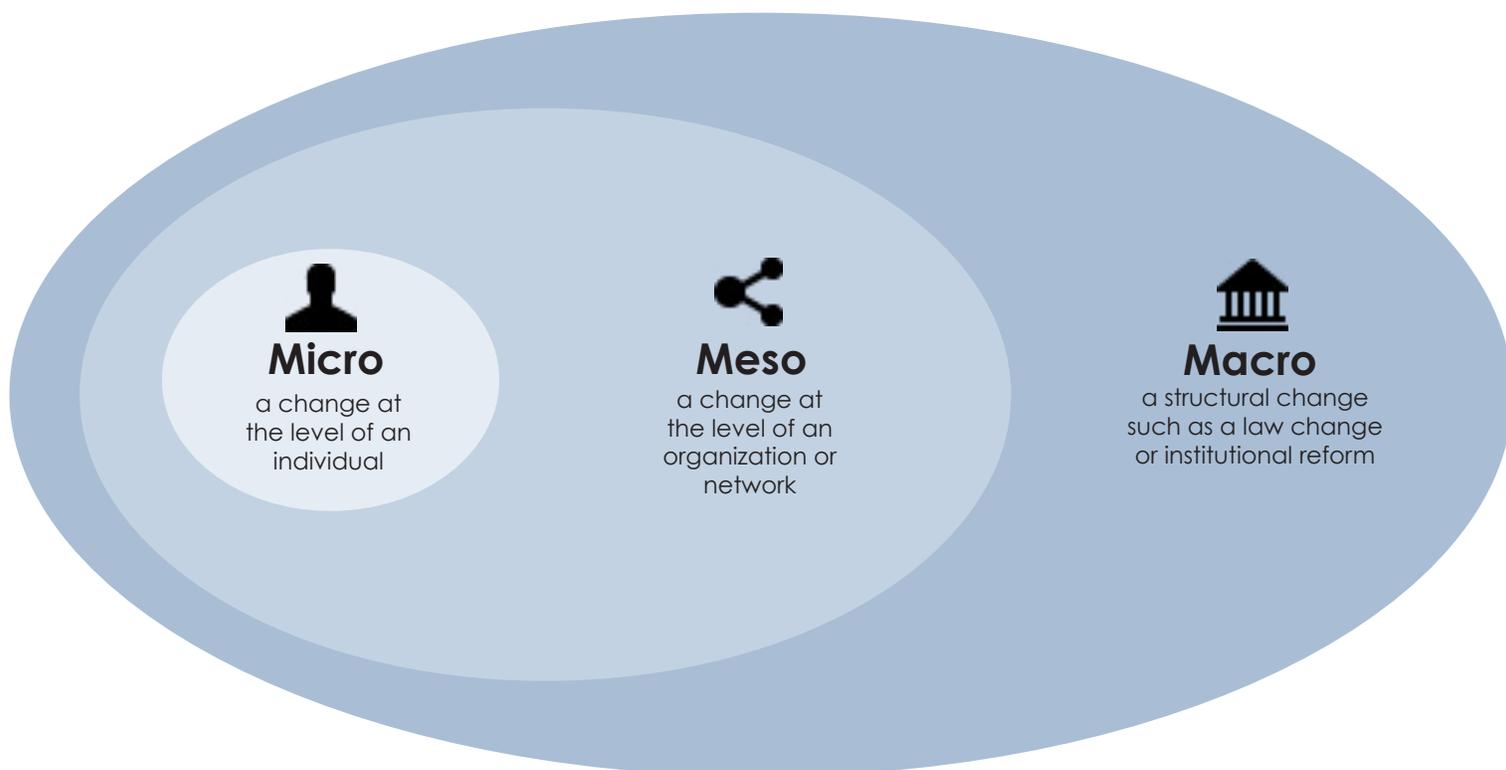
At CIR Lindsay Green-Barber, Ph.D. has developed an impact framework that includes three categories of impact: macro, a structural change such as a law change or institutional reform; meso, a change at the level of an organization or network; and micro, change at the level of an individual.

There are two main utilities to applying this framework to an organization or project. First, it provides scaffolding for understanding impact and organizing complex information (i.e., creating qualitative data sets). Second, each category requires a different methodology for measurement. By applying the framework, organizations can more quickly identify the appropriate method and necessary data for understanding their impact.

Hidden Hunger's impact fits this framework well. *TVFH: Hidden Hunger* and *Insight with Beth Ruyak* segments had **micro impact on CapRadio audience** and **spurred them to take action**. The in-person community events resulted in **strengthened networks** and **new network formation**, examples of **meso impacts**. The USDA has spearheaded a new program at John Still K-8, an **institutional change** that is a classic **macro impact**.

Hidden Hunger also had a reflexive impact on CapRadio, resulting in **organizational, structural changes (macro impact)** and a **renewed commitment to being an active member of the Sacramento County community (meso impact)**.

The following impact narrative separates impact by type and has utilized different methodologies to draw conclusions.



## CapRadio's broadcast audience became aware of the problem and *took action*.

CapRadio's audience reported that they were profoundly affected by the *TVFH: Hidden Hunger* radio documentary. Audience members reported increased awareness of hunger in Sacramento County, and many of them took action. They emphasized that they felt empowered to learn that there were efforts they could join to address the problem. This feedback indicates that it was important not only that CapRadio reported on the problem, but also on possible solutions.

Of the documentary, one listener said:

"It definitely has increased awareness of hunger in our community, and I think that the primary goal was to do that. I know that it's reached outside of our own community, and I'm aware that it's also helped a number of the projects that are highlighted in the documentary itself. Those are all key things in my mind that stand out."



"There's a Meadowview everywhere and there's a Granite Bay everywhere and we need bridges like Capital Public Radio to bring those two communities together."

- Trici Jones, Friends From Granite Bay

www.TheViewFromHere.org  
#SacHiddenHunger



***I think the radio documentary on Hidden Hunger is one of the most profound pieces done about a critical issue in our region.***

**— Capital Public Radio  
Listener**

Another listener eloquently stated: "I think the radio documentary on *Hidden Hunger* is one of the most profound pieces done about a critical issue in our region."

But listeners did not just feel differently or know more about hunger in Sacramento County after hearing *TVFH: Hidden Hunger*—they took action. Amaya Weiss, a learning support specialist at John Still K-8 School, was featured in an *Insight with Beth Ruyak* segment and the radio documentary. At the school, Weiss stocks and maintains a family resource center that she calls the "Hope Closet," where she allows families to choose any food and/or clothes they need. On the day Weiss' story was broadcast on CapRadio, she says that by the time she returned to school, there were already community members dropping off food, canned goods, and clothing.

Since then, the Sacramento Chinese Community Service Center, Apria Healthcare, the Community Medical Centers of Stockton, and UC Davis Elk Grove have contributed food, toiletries, and other resources to the Hope Closet. Others community members – school district administrators, mothers from Granite Bay, a dentist, a surgeon, and lawyers – have donated their time and material resources. One community member delivered a refrigerator to Weiss after hearing the radio documentary. Assembly member Jim Cooper’s office sponsored a family night at the school. Sara Lee committed to donating hundreds of loaves of bread to the Hope Closet.

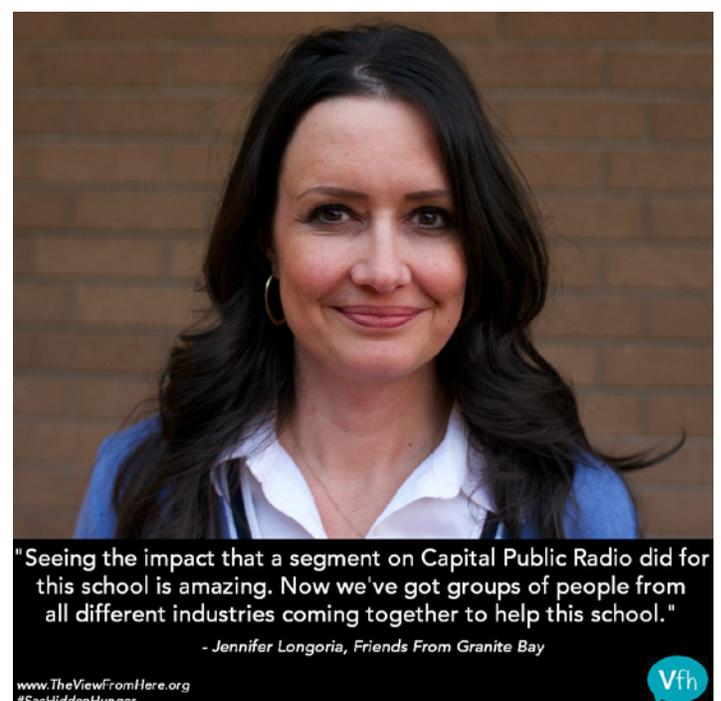
The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in San Francisco also reached out to Weiss after hearing her story on NPR. The Department visited John Still with a team of five people, plus the USDA Director of Nutrition Services. The USDA then began collaborating with the Sacramento City Unified School District’s (SCUSD) Department of Nutrition Services and stayed in touch with Weiss directly. John Still K-8 is now one of two pilot sites in Sacramento for the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, a federal grant administered through SCUSD’s Nutrition Services Department that provides students and teachers with fruit and vegetables three times a week. According to Weiss, “We would never have had that attention or been on the map without Capital Public Radio, I absolutely believe that. CapRadio is responsible for John Still being considered for this grant.”



In order to cope with the increased resources and attention, Weiss formed the John Still K-8 Community Collaborative. Since January 2015, the collaborative has held monthly meetings of 15 – 20 people, including area residents, staff of elected officials, policymakers, John Still alumni, teachers and staff, food bank representatives, the Sacramento Housing Authority, and members of the Friends of Granite Bay, a group formed specifically to participate in this collaborative. Several of the Hidden Hunger Coordinating Council members, including Dr. Zoey Goore and Randy Stannard, also joined this collaborative.

Since the collaborative formed, it has worked with the Sacramento District Dental Society to provide dental screening to 975 students, generated sponsorship for monthly family nights from the private donors and churches, and distributed over two tons of produce to the Meadowview community with support from Soil Borne Farms. The collaborative is currently working on projects with two organizations: 1) Common Vision's Orchard Installation Program, planting orchards at John Still School; and 2) The Yisrael Family Farm, setting up a farmer's market to sell produce grown in a newly established garden at the school.

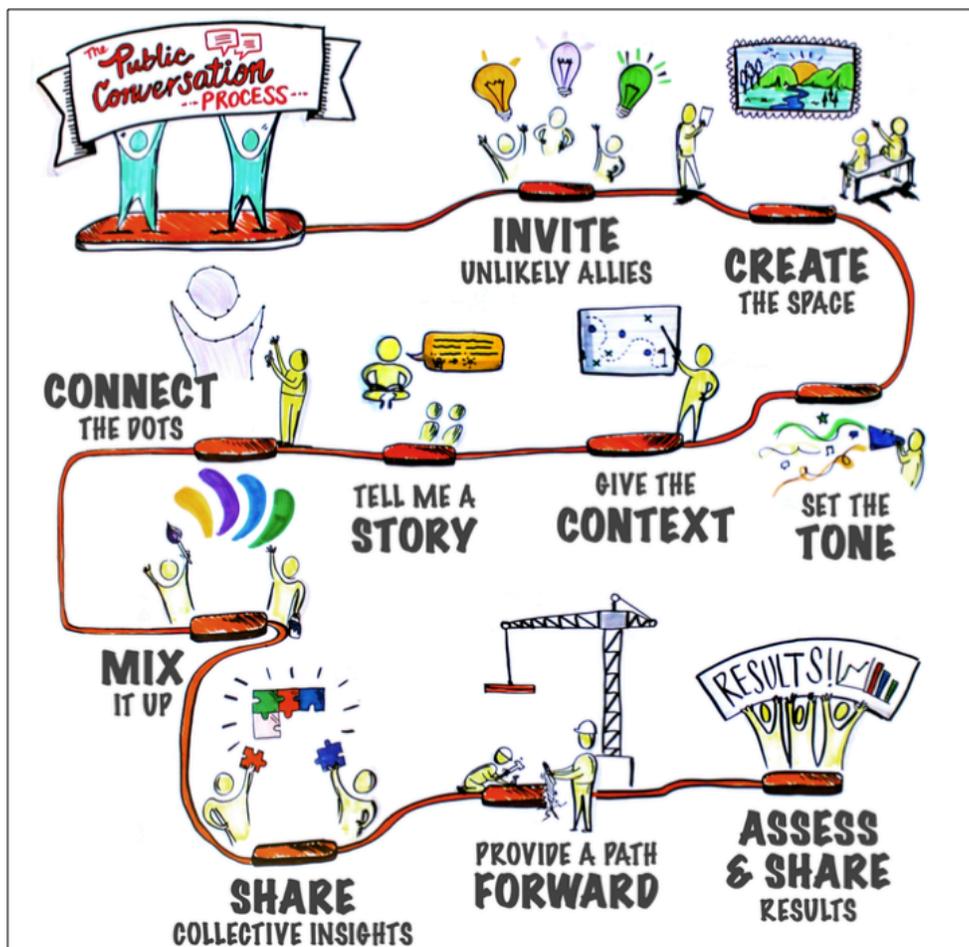
The audio, web content, and community engagement materials CapRadio created for the Hidden Hunger project have been used by influential individuals, thus contributing to how the discussion about hunger is framed and the solutions that are proposed. For example, Robbie Abelon, District Director for Assemblymember Jim Cooper, said "Ever since the story came out, people from outside the region and also here locally have turned their attention to tackle some of the issues that have been here long standing."



# People who participated in community conversations made *new connections*, made plans for *collaborative work*, and felt *greater trust* in Capital Public Radio.

The community conversation events reached new audiences, connecting CapRadio with residents from different parts of Sacramento, people experiencing food insecurity, and those deeply embedded in the movement to end hunger. Approximately 250 people attended these three-hour events, held on consecutive Wednesday evenings from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. CapRadio and event partner, The Village Square, invested significant time and resources reaching out to a wide array of constituencies to create a highly designed and interactive story-based experience.

Investing time and energy to ensure that the event audience reflected a diverse cross-section of Sacramento County residents paid off. In post-event surveys, many participants said they appreciated the diversity of attendees and the conversation that this breadth of experience generated. One respondent said, “I loved that there were people from all walks of life, but all from Sacramento County.”



The post-event surveys also indicated the ways in which this type of in-person event can affect participants and their lives.

“I loved the sense of community fostered at this event, putting together people from all sectors of the population who have different life experiences. Even when there was a difference of opinion, there remained a sense of respect stemming from the fact all were there with interest in the same issue: hunger in OUR city.”

“I like that this event is happening. We need more opportunities to engage each other in supportive environments and have conversations about important questions.”

“I gained the opportunity to be with open and honest community members who shared their stories of hunger. Those first hand accounts were really powerful. I also gained the ability to get in touch with local organizations that make a difference in the community.”

“I had an opportunity to meet and talk with people that I didn’t know. And the discussions provided me an opportunity to consider possible ways in which I can contribute to a broader conversation.”

These interactive public events included powerful public radio stories,<sup>4</sup> lightning presentations from community leaders, and a series of small group conversations where participants explored their thoughts and feelings about the stories they heard. The event included food, music, and a pop-up art exhibition featuring images from the Hidden Hunger Storybooth. The event also involved a graphic recorder that visually mapped the audience’s insights, discoveries, needs, and solutions.

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<sup>4</sup> Neurological studies indicate that when a human is actively engaged in a story (watching, listening, reading, etc.), she or he is more likely and able to feel empathy.



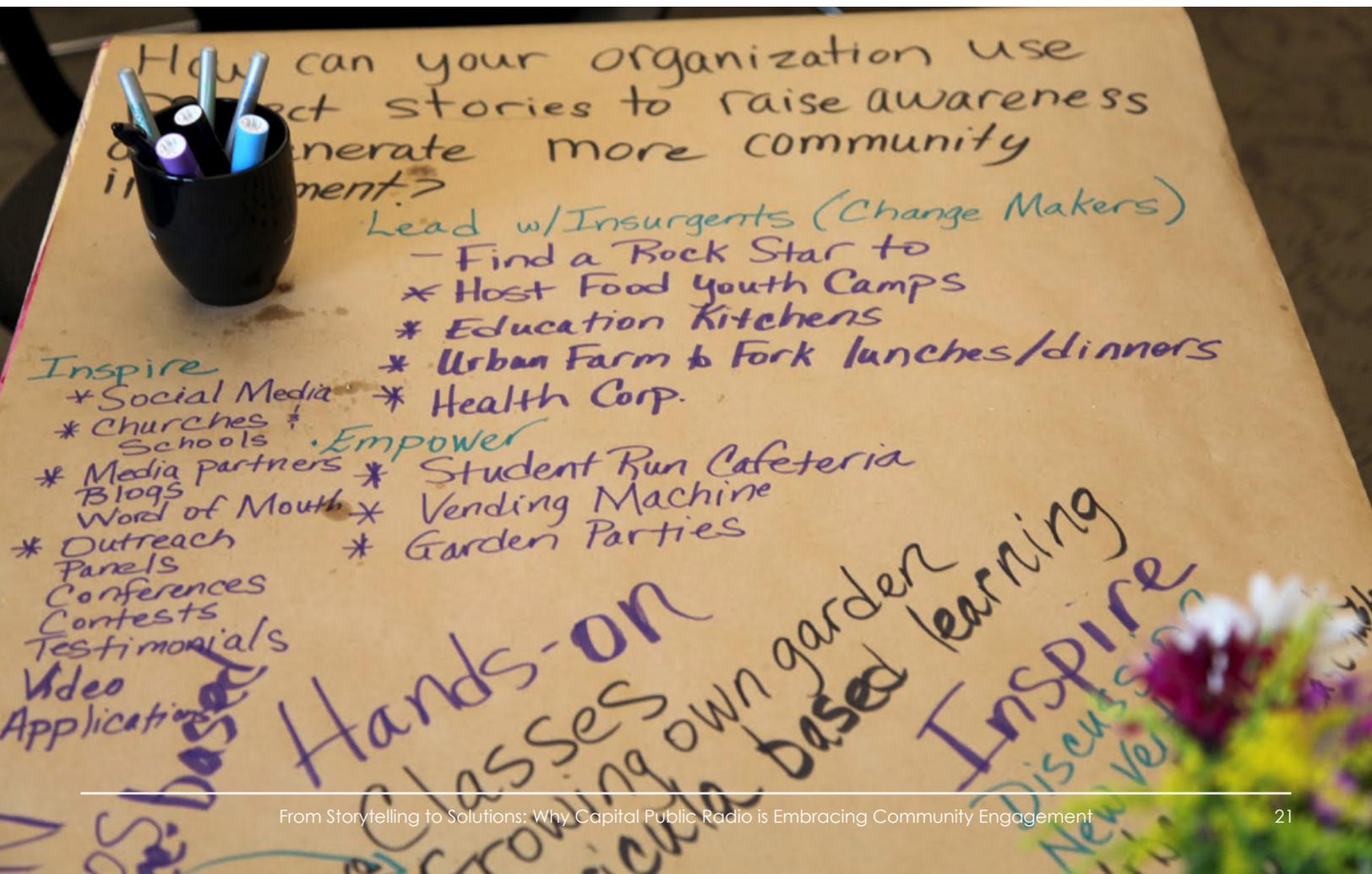
At the end of the event, participants could explore ways to become more involved by visiting information kiosks. They were also invited to complete a note-to-self postcard with a key takeaway from the experience. CapRadio mailed the postcards to participants one month later. This strategy generated opportunities for continued activity around hunger in Sacramento, as well as a continued relationship between participants and the station.

The overwhelming feedback from public event participants (communicated through a follow-up email survey) was that a single public conversation did not provide enough time. Participants said they wanted more events like this, more time together, and to embark on more shared work. Participants felt empowered by their new knowledge and networks, and while the audience as a whole

**I loved that there were people from all walks of life, but all from Sacramento County. — Community Conversation Participant**

mapped “The Way Forward” (following page), individuals were unsure how they would be able to participate directly in the future work.

Based on community feedback, the process of sustained community engagement substantially changed the relationship between CapRadio and participants. Those involved with the Hidden Hunger project said that the station has come to represent them and their voices in new and more tangible ways.





# Coordinating Council members *formed new networks, strengthened existing networks, and became invested in CapRadio.*

While the Hidden Hunger project had broad impact on traditional CapRadio audiences and others who participated in public facing events, perhaps the project's deepest impact was on those directly involved in the project planning and content creation.

The planning and content production processes created new spaces for collaboration among groups, some of which had not previously worked together closely. The processes gave these groups the opportunity to engage in cross-sector conversations about hunger in Sacramento County. Coordinating Council participants emphasized both the importance of these conversations and CapRadio's role as a facilitator.

Deep and meaningful relationships were also catalyzed among Coordinating Council members. Networks were strengthened and new, shared work has taken place. For example, Randy Stanndard of Grow Sacramento and Eileen Thomas from the River City Food Bank had previously met and knew of each other's work. But as a result of collaborating on the Coordinating Council, Stannard organized a way for the Harvest Sacramento's gleaning program to donate regularly collected fruits and vegetables to the River City Food Bank. And Stannard involved fellow Coordinating Council member Todd McPherson from the Sacramento Chinese

Service Center to help get the produce to the food bank. In fact, all Coordinating Council members reported that they formed new relationships or strengthened existing ones through this project.

Randy Stannard of Grow Sacramento, a non-profit group focused on developing urban farms and gardens, said:

"One of the reasons why I was excited about participating was that it was an opportunity to work with Capital Public Radio, which is a pretty unique opportunity. Their ability to be an effective mouthpiece out to a large number of people and put out professional messages and stories is something that I really appreciate and wanted to be a part of."



Dawn Dunlap, a Coordinating Council member representing the Sacramento Hunger Coalition and Sacramento Natural Food Coop, echoed Stannard’s point when she stated, “The continued investment of Capital Public Radio and its continued involvement in this issue helped bring more awareness of hunger in Sacramento.”

In addition to strengthening existing relationships and creating new ones, the Hidden Hunger project changed partners’ relationships to CapRadio. In a survey of Coordinating Council members, 100% of respondents said they felt more invested in Capital Public Radio as a result of their participation in the project.

Through this project, participants came to see CapRadio as an ally in their work to serve the Sacramento community—including those living with hunger. Coordinating Council Member Zoey Goore of the American Academy of Pediatrics succinctly summed up this commonly shared sentiment when she said:

“I don’t think I realized that public radio was interested in community engagement projects, or helping to coordinate community engagement

***[Before Hidden Hunger,] I thought that they did more reporting on what’s going on as opposed to actually being involved in what’s going on.***

**— Dr. Zoey Goore**

projects. I thought that they did more reporting on what’s going on as opposed to actually being involved in what’s going on.”

Todd McPherson of the Chinese Service Center and Coordinating Council Member elaborated:

“I already held Public Radio in high regard, but being able to witness and participate the process of creating Hidden Hunger gave me a new respect for the work you all do. Especially the fact that the station was explicitly committed to the participatory grassroots process. I am also impressed that the station has committed to stay involved beyond the documentary publishing date. It shows great integrity and a deeper understating of what’s going on with hunger.”





Eileen Thomas, Executive Director of River City Food Bank and a Coordinating Council Member, has been active in the anti-hunger movement for more than 14 years. However, she said that the various anti-hunger organizations have not worked together to create “a cohesive message, cause, or project.” Of Hidden Hunger, she says, “it created a unifying hub, bringing a wide variety of stakeholder groups together to collaborate for the common good.”

One member of the Coordinating Council, Randy Stannard of Grow Sacramento, shared that because of Hidden Hunger, his organization has new allies in congressional and assembly offices. Stannard also explained the network effect of the project:

“I met Amaya over at John Still, and reconnected with Eileen at the Sac Food Bank, and Zoey [from the American Academy of Pediatrics]. I think the project really helped re-coalesce a group around food and hunger.”

Coordinating Council Member Eileen Thomas said that the shared live broadcast party was, “kind of a magical moment, because it brought all of the emotions and all of the people together.” The partnership that developed between participants and CapRadio was more than a content production agreement, it was a deep relationship based on trust and a shared vision.

The Hidden Hunger content has also proven to be a resource for participating organizations in their own work. For example, the River City Food Bank has been able to “use the interviews of the participants in the Storybooth for our public relations and with volunteers.” Grow Sacramento uses Storybooth clips in its volunteer orientation efforts. The Sacramento Hunger Coalition has presented project content at conferences and quarterly meetings. Other Coordinating Council members reported sharing the content through their newsletters, social networks, and Twitter campaigns.

Thus, Hidden Hunger did not only strengthen existing networks as it was designed to do, but it surpassed its own project goals by creating new networks that have since embarked on shared work.

# Storytellers were empowered, both psychically and materially.

Storytellers highlighted the value of sharing their experiences with the broader Sacramento County community. They emphasized that CapRadio has a unique ability to amplify their voices and share their stories with those who might not be aware of the prevalence of problems – like hunger – in Sacramento. They viewed the opportunity to tell their stories as a strategic way to garner additional support, resources, and awareness for their organizations and the families they serve.

Amaya Weiss from John Still Elementary School said:

“I’ve been reminded that many people do not know about the barriers that families face in low-income neighborhoods from the crime, poverty, and food insecurity. I’ve learned how much people care; strangers from Granite Bay, doctors, citizens that I wouldn’t have otherwise met had they not heard my voice.”

***I’ve been reminded that many people do not know about the barriers that families face in low-income neighborhoods from the crime, poverty, and food insecurity.***  
***-Amaya Weiss***

The community conversations and the content produced not only raised awareness about food insecurity in Sacramento County, but the planning process and content creation also generated creative responses to the issue and created opportunities for Sacramento County residents to get involved in dealing with this community-wide problem. Coordinating Council members reported feeling reinvigorated and reenergized by the conversations and opportunity to engage in designing solutions together with colleagues and community members. In the words of Eileen Thomas, “The project certainly served the Sacramento Hunger Coalition well by giving us a little shot of energy, and it’s brought us new members and people who are interested in working through the Coalition to prevent hunger.”





# CapRadio internalized the community engagement process and is in the midst of a *transformation*.

The community engagement process associated with Hidden Hunger has had a transformative effect internally at CapRadio. Community engagement has had a multitude of benefits for reporters, including strengthened relationships with audiences,<sup>5</sup> generating new audiences, and gaining access to diverse sources and innovative story ideas. As a result, CapRadio has committed itself fully to continued community engagement.

The documentary unit has rebranded itself around community engagement. All “community voice” content created through community engagement efforts now carries CapRadio branding. Catherine Stifter, Senior Editor for Innovation and producer of *TVFH* documentary series, expressed joy that CapRadio has come to understand the value of community engagement during the reporting process as it leads to a greater diversity of perspectives in the final work.



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<sup>5</sup> 5 CapRadio audience members who participated in public events communicated they felt more connected with CapRadio and that the station was presenting them with new information about their community.

The Capital Public Radio documentary program, *The View From Here*, now states:

- *The View From Here* is committed to in-depth, thought-provoking, and intimate first-person stories.
- Community engagement is how we discover, develop, and report the powerful stories that connect us and help build stronger communities.
- *The View From Here* explores one topic for a year, asking questions and seeking solutions, providing opportunities to reflect and respond as we learn together.
- We produce on-air documentary stories with longer documentary packages for CapRadio and other public radio organizations, design digital and photographic pieces for our website and social media conversations, and share our work through community events, public exhibits, and presentations.

Going even further, Chief Content Officer Joe Barr plans to incorporate community engagement into all content at CapRadio, from news to music. He explains, “Through our work with jesikah, we started to see that community engagement could work as part of the news department in general to get more nuance in our stories and more voices that reflect the demographics of California.”

CapRadio Chief Operating Officer and Chief Finance Officer, Jun Reina, further emphasized the importance of continued community engagement for the sustainability of the organization. His view is that as a public radio station, CapRadio has a responsibility to engage with the whole public of its listening area.

As CapRadio embarks on more deeply integrated community engagement projects, the station has hired jesikah maria ross as Senior Community Engagement Strategist to lead this work.

And community engagement does not end with content creation. Barr says that it is now, “actually physically affecting how we at CapRadio do our work.” During a building redesign, community engagement principles played into plans for the new structure. Director of Marketing & Public Relations, Constance Crawford, was so impressed by the engagement process that she has developed an internal engagement plan to include CapRadio staff in the process of setting the organization’s marketing strategy for the upcoming year.



# Conclusions

Capital Public Radio's Hidden Hunger project is a model for community engagement before, during, and after the traditional reporting process. It can serve as a model for how a news organization can partner with community members and community-based organizations to develop deeply reported, informative, emotionally captivating, and impactful content. CapRadio brought their deep understanding of the facts around hunger in Sacramento County and participated as an equal partner in Coordinating Council meetings, allowing the needs, challenges, frustrations, and successes of these partners to shape the story that the station ultimately told through its high quality audio productions.

Furthermore, CapRadio invited community members to tell their own stories through the Hidden Hunger Storybooth, signaling their respect for the community knowledge of individuals and the work of coalition partners. The Storybooth website effectively amplifies the voices of Sacramento community members – many of whom are not part of CapRadio's member base—in order to generate a new type of community conversation.

By highlighting voices, organizations, and experiences not often broadcast on public radio airwaves, CapRadio demonstrated to community members that it is a station striving to be truly public, in the deepest sense of the word. This effort increased trust and deepened relationships between CapRadio and its audiences, both old and new.



# HIDDEN HUNGER: Storybooth

Food Insecurity Throughout Sacramento County

CapRadio's engagement with the Sacramento anti-hunger community did not end with the documentary broadcast. Through in-person events, CapRadio generated new networks by linking previously disparate communities. These networks of policymakers, business leaders, local residents, CapRadio listeners, and community leaders are now working together to address hunger in Sacramento County.

The increased awareness and discussion of solutions has led to real world change, as exemplified by the case of John Still K-8 school. In this case, CapRadio's audience has taken action to contribute to solving the problem of hunger in their community and developed strong, collaborative relationships that span cultural, economic, and racial divides.

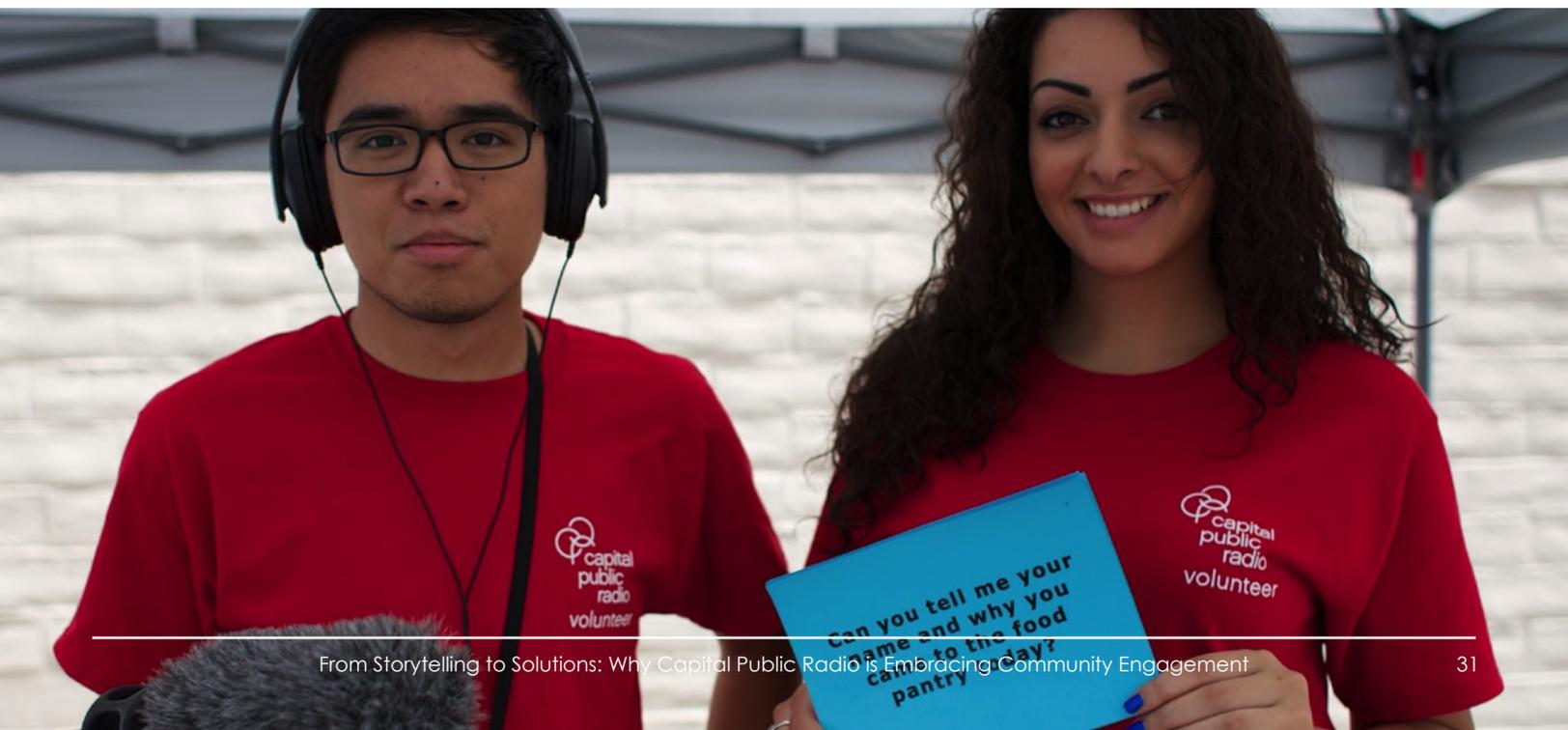
Through this process, CapRadio has designed an effective mobile storybooth unit and process, elaborated a strategy and methodology for hosting dynamic public conversations, and proactively worked to assess the successes and challenges associated with community engagement. In fact, the response from the community and the station's

experience has been so overwhelmingly positive that it has rebranded its documentary unit to reflect the value of community engagement.

This model and the lessons it provides can serve as a starting point for continued and deepened community engagement at CapRadio. However, this model requires an investment in human and material resources dedicated to community engagement, as well as a unique mindset that values community partnerships.

The model can also serve to inform the current national conversation on the role of journalism – and particularly of public media – in a participatory media era. Specifically, this project is an example of a process through which journalists can help surface community level solutions to pressing civic issues.

To ensure CapRadio's continued success in developing and implementing community engagement we provide recommendations in the following section.



# Recommendations

## 1. Continue commitment to CapRadio's Community Engagement, including allocating resources to this endeavor.

Capital Public Radio's audience has clearly and unequivocally indicated they would like to participate in additional community engagement events, especially live, action-oriented events. Coordinating Council members believe that the willingness of these new allies to work together to address hunger in Sacramento County was due, in large part, to the power of CapRadio as a trusted community beacon of information.

One challenge CapRadio staff noted is that doing live public events requires additional project funds (food, speakers, supplies, promotion) as well as significant staff time. To plan and implement future public events designed to achieve similar goals, the station will need to allocate resources for these activities.

Another challenge CapRadio staff identified is that of the hand off: at what moment does the station transition away from community engagement on a project. While it is difficult to decide the right time in the life cycle of a project to stop engaging with community partners and residents, if there is sustained, consistent community engagement across topics, "leaving" a project ceases to be an abandoning of the community, but instead is a shifting of engagement to other initiatives or topics.

This work requires consistent human and material resources. We recommend that the station develop a budget and fundraising plan specifically for community engagement through the newsroom.



## 2. Involve CapRadio staff reporters more deeply in community engagement.

CCO Joe Barr identifies many benefits of community engagement to reporters, including: increased access to sources; leads on stories; and a diversity of perspectives that can contribute to reporting. In the case of *TVFH: Hidden Hunger*, freelance reporters worked with CapRadio's Catherine Stifter to produce the hour-long radio documentary.

As CapRadio strives to reflect and engage the diverse California public it serves, organizational leadership has been innovative and willing to take risks in developing a new model for sustained community engagement. CapRadio's participation in the radio documentary broadcast party and public events signals a strong dedication to this work. Reporters who participated in these events also said they were energized by the connections they made there. Encouraging reporters to participate in these community engagement efforts will continue to strengthen the work of CapRadio, affirm the station's position in the community, and potentially contribute to sustainability through membership opportunities.

## 3. Report on more solutions.

People who participated in the in-person events, as well as CapRadio audience members who took action after hearing broadcast elements of *Hidden Hunger*, emphasized the importance of learning what actions they could take to help address the challenge of hunger in Sacramento County. The station should continue to explore solutions to problems, including highlighting community organizations, groups, or individuals who are working to solve problems in the region.



## 4. Broadly communicate CapRadio’s model of community engagement with the Sacramento community and beyond.

CapRadio’s community engagement activities and content have emerged as a hub for shared work among Sacramento County community members. The success of this hub depends in large part upon the pooling of skills and expertise of CapRadio station staff, interested communities, and CapRadio’s audience.

All involved in Hidden Hunger, including community members, Coordinating Council members, and CapRadio staff, emphasized the critical role of Jesika Maria Ross to the success of Hidden Hunger and CapRadio’s community engagement initiative. Ross’s professionalism, enthusiasm, curiosity, and unique training and skills allow her to successfully serve as a bridge between the newsroom and the community. Furthermore, Ross is a trained social scientist with a professional background in community organizing and participatory media. The success of Ross’s approach to community engagement

suggests that these projects benefit from leadership by individuals with a particular skillset that is potentially quite different from that of a journalist.

By developing a formalized, yet malleable, model of community engagement CapRadio will be able to more effectively communicate the role and importance of community engagement with its staff, audience, and community partners, while also creating a blueprint other engagement specialists can draw from to design their own projects. And, by committing to continued engagement, community members’ perceived cost of staying involved with CapRadio would shift in favor of perceived benefits.

This model will also serve as a resource to the field of nonprofit media, which is currently experimenting with the how, why, and what of community engagement.

### Capital Public Radio Community Engagement



## 5. Engage in field building activities.

In public media and nonprofit journalism, community engagement is more than a trend—it's the new normal. Yet, for many organizations, community engagement is a process fraught with trial and error, an uncertainty about the relative value of online vs. offline engagement, and a lack of understanding about the relationship between community engagement and organizational sustainability. CapRadio's model offers preliminary answers to some of these questions.

The station should continue to work with peers across the country to refine strategies and models for community engagement and to participate in building a national community of practice that is based on rigorous inquiry, measurement, and evaluation.