So you want to start an SJN community...

What is an SJN community? The Solutions Journalism Network launched its first community in the fall of 2015 in the Bay Area. Since then, it has launched groups in New York, Washington D.C., Seattle, Portland, Los Angeles, and most recently, internationally Paris and Uganda. These groups are led by volunteer coordinators, journalists who are intimately familiar with the local media ecosystem, committed to the solutions approach, and eager to reshape their city or state’s media coverage of an issue. Together, under the leadership of the coordinator, journalists move through SJN’s curriculum together, strengthening their reporting, building connections to local media professionals, and celebrating the awesome solutions stories published by members.
**Who you are:** You are a local journalist and a natural and zealous community builder who enjoys bringing people together. You've long wondered why the news tends to only highlight corrupt individuals or failed institutions. You've conversely wondered why most of the non-apocalyptic stories the media usually covers are from the lens of “therapy pig comforts airport travelers” or “7 easy ways to end world poverty” angle. You understand what solutions journalism is and what it isn't. You’re interested in increasing the quality and quantity of solutions journalism stories in your region by facilitating peer-to-peer learning on the solutions reporting process and connecting the right individuals to the right resources and people.

**Our goal:** to train, support, and connect local journalists doing solutions reporting.

**Our strategy:** The guiding force through this process will be what we call the “Cohort Curriculum.” Cohorts—or the groups of local journalists that go through the training process together—kick off with an SJN training, which can be led by an SJN staff member in person or via a webinar. These 2-hour trainings explain and explore what solutions journalism is, why it’s important, and, most importantly, how to do it. It provides an important grounding in the solutions approach.

The second stage in the process is the story workshop. These are usually smaller events that can vary greatly, and are tailored to the people who come. The idea is that they walk away from the training with a story idea, marinate on it for a couple weeks, and then follow-up with this story workshop, meant to explore the reporting approach a bit more in-depth, and develop story ideas. These workshops can be combined with a “hard-skill” event or can be separate. Hard-skill events are ways to bring in local journalist experts who can share skills applicable to all journalists, whether in the solutions approach or not. Examples include podcasting workshops, interviewing techniques, engagement strategies, and data/evidence workshops. Finally, a gathering is held recognizing those who have published
solutions stories, featuring them on a panel, interviewing them for a local publication, toasting at happy hours—the possibilities are endless!

**What you commit to:** You commit to holding two “Cohort Curricula” per year—roughly 8 events in total: 2 trainings, at least 2 story workshops, and 2-3 “skills-based” workshops, and 2 celebratory events, like happy hours or panel discussions of local journos who have published. The CCs can be held over the course of a month, or can be spread out over 2-3 months, depending on what works best for your local community.

**What support we’ll provide:** We’ll provide you with the names of journalists in your area that have already expressed interested in solutions journalism (i.e. subscribed to our newsletter or joined the Hub). We’ll provide a small pot of funds for events. While the funds likely aren’t enough to hold trainings on a boat while eating gold flake-encrusted popcorn, it will enable you to cover small expenses like event food and beverages, space rental, printing handouts/resources, honoraria for guest speakers/presenters, etc.

**What you get:** Networking, connections, community-building experience…existential fulfillment? Too much of a stretch? Okay, then we’ll also throw in a free ticket to the SJN summit, held November 8-10, 2018. For the most active communities—number of people recruited, faithful rolling out of the curriculum, and the conversion rate (workshop attendees who publish SJ)—we’ll also throw a fabulous fete at the end of the year, and coordinators will receive a cash prize.

**How to get started:** Fill out this brief application/statement of interest and we’ll get back to you shortly! Feel free to email SJN Director of Communities Samantha McCann with any interim questions: samantha@solutionsjournalism.org.