# Marketplace Getting constructive stories published



**Handout**

**Pitching a constructive solutions story**

A pitch summarizes the proposed story, explains its importance and relevance, how it’ll be produced and why the journalist pitching it is the best person to tell it. A pitch of a solutions story answers the same questions but puts a focus on a problem and a response being tried out to tackle it.

Pitching a solutions story can be more complicated because some editors still find them suspect. You’ll want to flag a few things very clearly in your pitch.

**Why this story? So what?** A solutions pitch is more likely to be accepted if the story relates to conversations the audience are having. The scope of the problem will affect what type of publication should be targeted; local, national, regional or international. Often there is a backstory to the solution that can make a pitch stand out to busy editors. In a constructive journalism pitch, data is needed. Research is crucial.

**What’s the proof?** Talk about indicators you’ve found that show this response is worth investigating. Think hard data, multiple credible sources, the kind of thing that helps the editor quickly see that you’re invested in a rigorous investigation.

**Who are your sources?** Good solutions stories talk to people affected by the response being tried out, not just the initiators or heads of organizations. Make sure the editor knows you’re speaking to the people targeted in this response. What do they think about it? In addition, including an outside voice, such as an independent expert, can also add credibility to your pitch.

**What’s not working?** Make sure your story contains an important element of a good solutions story: limitations. If including what’s not working so well in a response, you fend off accusations that your proposed story would simply be PR for an organization.

**Why now?** Lookfor a news peg that will tell the editor why this story should be written now as opposed to last week or a year from now. If there’s not a current news peg, the amount of time that has passed could act as the peg (example: “This initiative started three years ago, and I’d like to look into the impact of its work so far.”).If an initiative or a group had a target by a certain time (example: educating 1,000 girls from xxx town by the end of the year), that could be the peg. Anniversaries, holidays or “international days” can also be pegs but remember, planning for these usually starts months before the date in question.

**Why me?** You should explain why you are the best person to produce the story. Talk about your expertise or track record with these kinds of stories. Mention sources and characters you have access to or an approach that could make the story stand out.