

# Oops, we broke the article machine

#ONA13, #articlemachine, @AmPress

## INSTRUCTIONS

Momentarily you will work in assigned groups. Each group has a hypothetical story scenario. We want you to brainstorm as freely as possible new ways to cover the story, or present your reporting, that opens up coverage—that sees alternative storytelling not as a bell or whistle, but each form having its own different strengths. Appoint a note-taker for each group. One of us will help facilitate and/or keep you on track for time. You'll present your best ideas briefly at the end of the session.

Remember, for this session, you may not use the traditional news story as a solution to storytelling. The article machine is broken.

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## SCENARIO 3: Multi-week story

You work in the D.C. bureau of a regional newspaper and TV operation, the St. Louis Herald and WSLH, and are part of a small team covering the federal government shutdown. You need to explain why it's happening, what might resolve it, how it affects your readers, the many stakeholders and the country as a whole, how it fits in historical context, etc. You may not write any articles.

*Curious where to start? Look at the back of this sheet for some questions to think about.*

# Questions to think about

## Consider the challenges of your audience in this scenario:

Who are the potential types of readers you want to serve? (i.e., taxpayers, government workers, etc. There are many.)

What does each reader group need from you? What might prevent them from understanding?

- What are the critical defining terms that people need to know?
- Who are the major actors in the story they should be able to identify and what should they know about them?
- What are the key system functions people need to understand (how a shutdown works, what needs to occur to end it)?
- What spin, lies or misconceptions should be debunked and what are engaging ways to do that?
- How does it affect my life?
- Short-term effects of the shutdown
- Longer-term effects of the shutdown (economic impact, etc.)

## Some of your storytelling decisions:

How could you use multimedia to deliver aspects of this coverage? What combinations of video, audio, images, etc.?

How could you use data and visualization, like maps, charts, infographics?

What can you do through social media engagement?

## Story levels: **Good stories are more than just facts -- How do you serve all three levels?**

How will you deliver the facts about what's happening in this story as it develops?

How will you deliver analysis and sensemaking?

How will you capture the emotional impact and human reaction and tell that story?