BEAT REPORTING
What is a **BEAT**?

- **Specific areas covered regularly by a specific reporter**

- **TYPICAL BEATS INCLUDE:**
  - City & County Government
  - Education
  - Police
  - Religion
  - Science/Environment/Medicine
  - Business
  - Sports
Beat Reporters

☐ A good reporter is:
  ■ Familiar with general background
  ■ Knows specific language of area
  ■ Asks right questions
  ■ Recognizes newsworthy info
  ■ Writes understandable stories for unfamiliar readers
- Beat Story Ideas
  - Regular coverage
  - Journalist enterprise—often more in-depth

- Beat reporters tell audiences not only what is happening, but how to get involved.
How to cover a BEAT:

- **Be Prepared**
  - Research background & talk to sources

- **Be Alert**
  - Know who will benefit from coverage
  - Note who is for & against it

- **Be Persistent**
  - Insist on clear answers
  - Follow-up slow developments

- **Be There**
  - No substitute for personal contact

- **Be Accurate**
  - Reflective listen and clarify

- **Be Wary**
  - You are a reporter not participant
    - Write for readers not sources
Reporting Tips

- Beat reporting is like gardening…news is cultivated & grows slowly
  - Regular follow-up
  - Don’t give up!

- Building Relationships:
  - Build goodwill
  - Don’t shun good news
  - Protect sources if necessary

- Ask questions…
  - Does it make sense to me?
  - How can I make sense to my readers?
Writing for Readers

- **Translate**
  - Make technical, specialized language clear

- **Make your writing human**
  - State how information will impact real people

- **Think of the public pocket book**
  - Find out how much it cost the public

- **Get out of the office**
  - Go where news is happening
  - Don’t rely on other accounts (web, reports, etc.)

- **Ask the readers’ questions**
Practical Principles for Beat Reporters

○ Information is Power

○ Money is key
  ■ The budget is the blueprint

○ Distributing power and money is politics