



# Safe Routes Partnership *Storytelling* Resource Guide

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Sharing stories for social change.

[saferoutespartnership.org](https://saferoutespartnership.org)

## Resource Guide Citations

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- 1 Artist at Work: Micah Bazant, Collaborative Designer and Illustrator. Rewire.News. June 30, 2017. <https://rewire.news/article/2017/06/30/artist-work-micah-bazant-collaborative-designer-illustrator/>
  - 2 How to Reimagine the World. Forward Together. <https://forwardtogether.org/tools/how-to-reimagine-the-world/>
  - 3 Consent Flowchart Developed by Pueblo Planning
  - 4 UCLA Oral History Project. <http://oralhistory.library.ucla.edu/interviewGuidelines.html>
  - 5 *ibid.*
  - 6 *ibid.*
  - 7 *ibid.*
  - 8 Oral History Primer from CSULB. <http://cla.csulb.edu/departments/history/oral-history-program/an-oral-history-primer/>
  - 9 UCLA Oral History Project. <http://oralhistory.library.ucla.edu/interviewGuidelines.html>
  - 10 Oral History Primer from CSULB. <http://cla.csulb.edu/departments/history/oral-history-program/an-oral-history-primer/>
  - 11 Step-by-Step Guide to Oral History. [http://dohistory.org/on\\_your\\_own/toolkit/oralHistory.html](http://dohistory.org/on_your_own/toolkit/oralHistory.html)
  - 12 Oral History Primer from CSULB. <http://cla.csulb.edu/departments/history/oral-history-program/an-oral-history-primer/>
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  - 15 Step-by-Step Guide to Oral History. [http://dohistory.org/on\\_your\\_own/toolkit/oralHistory.html](http://dohistory.org/on_your_own/toolkit/oralHistory.html)
  - 16 Oral History Primer from CSULB. <http://cla.csulb.edu/departments/history/oral-history-program/an-oral-history-primer/>
  - 17 Adapted from Center for Storybased Strategies. [storybasedstrategy.org](http://storybasedstrategy.org)
  - 18 *ibid.*
  - 19 The Understory Workshop. Mixte Communications and Diamond and Branch. November 28, 2018.
  - 20 Stories and Co-Creation Framework Developed by Pueblo Planning
  - 21 UCLA Oral History Project. Sample Legal Agreement. <http://oralhistory.library.ucla.edu/interviewGuidelines.html>
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# Resource Guide Background

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Storytelling is the process of sharing and interpreting experiences (collecting, curating, and sharing out a human experience). Storytelling is a powerful force to move hearts, minds, and influence public policy. Pueblo Planning, in collaboration with Safe Routes Partnership, curated a set of storytelling resources to provide partner organizations with support to share their stories and help facilitate processes for residents to share their own story. The goal of providing these resources is to support partners to effectively tell the stories of their work, center the voices of our communities, and translate stories into actionable community-based strategies.

Pueblo Planning interviewed community partners and staff in order to better understand their successes and needs regarding effective storytelling and curated a set of resources that respond directly to the key themes that were shared during these conversations. There are so many great storytelling resources available, and as we put this resource guide together, we compiled resources that directly responded to the five common themes we heard from partners and staff during the interviews, which include:

- Ensuring a consensual storytelling process;
- Facilitating spaces for people to share their own stories;
- Moving from stories to strategies where residents are involved in the process of grant writing, creation of materials, development of strategies;
- Connecting stories to action; and
- Facilitating the storytelling process.

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# Consent and Storytelling

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The following are key lessons from Micah Bazant, Collaborative Designer and Illustrator, on collaboration principles for artists and social justice organizers. These lessons are geared towards artists but also apply to storytelling processes. These principles are integrated into the consent flowchart (on next page). The following excerpts are from the article “How to Reimagine the World” and an interview with Micah Bazant from Rewire.News.<sup>1</sup>

## **Focus on the Process**

“The process of creating art and building relationships is equally as important as the final product. We place emphasis on promoting healing, building relationships and capacity, sharing technical skills, and nurturing cultural leadership. Have courageous conversations that can challenge ingrained biases or ideas. Different projects will require different processes, some will be more participatory and collective than others.”

## **Relationship Building**

“Just as relationship building is key to community organizing, cultural work is more powerful when it evolves through and is accountable to, strong, authentic, non-transactional relationships. We prioritize partnerships with artists who have strong, existing relationships with the communities and grassroots organizing centered in the work. Long-term relationship building creates the trust and mutual understanding crucial for both large projects and rapid response.”

## **Creative Collaboration**

“And those stories are told with the full consent and creative collaboration of those affected by a system of oppressions; the resulting art has often been sold to aid its subjects and co-creators, contributing to funeral expenses, costs of living, or bail.”

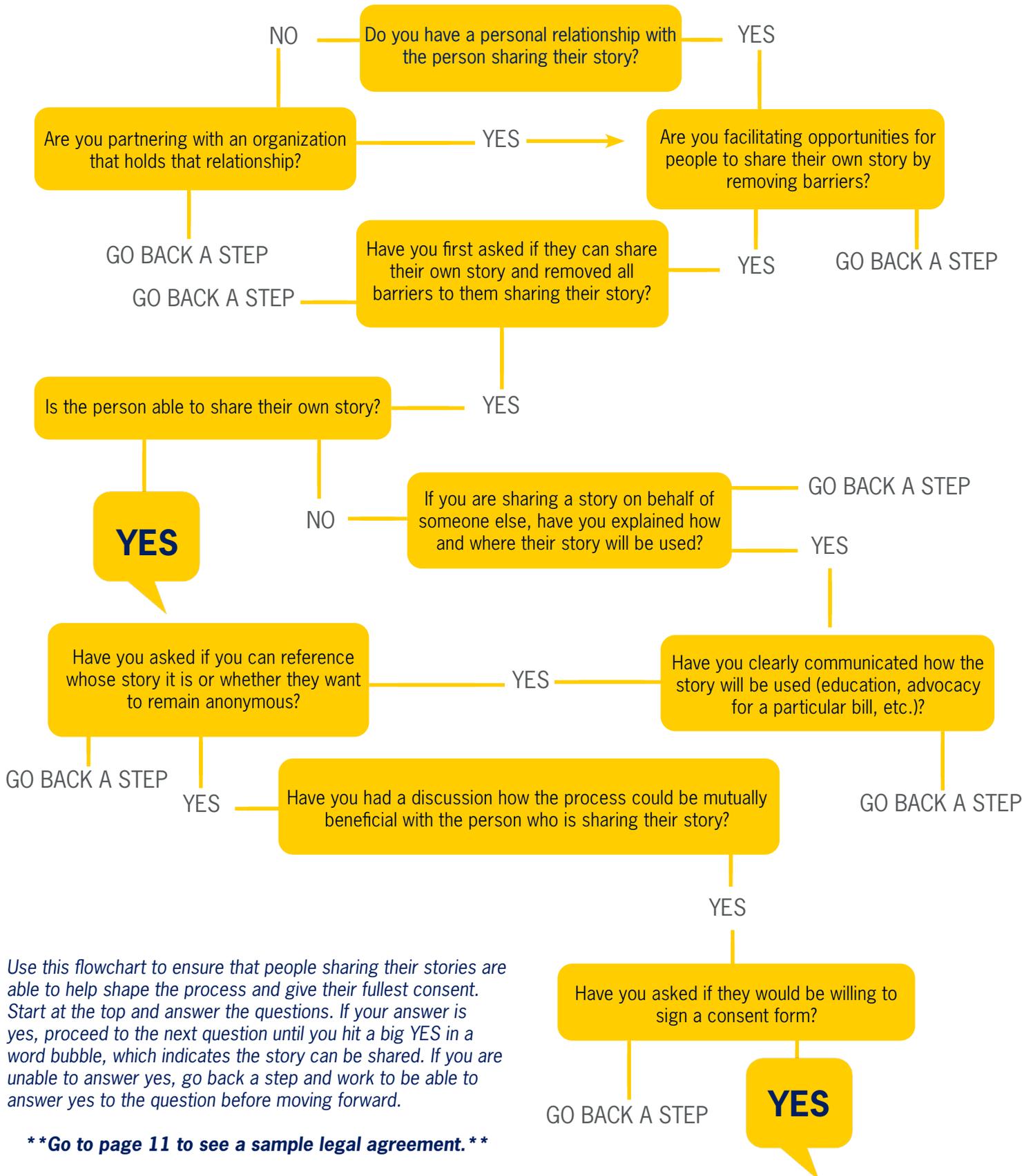
## **Being Aware of Privilege**

“I try to always be aware of privilege throughout the entire process from the idea creation to how it’s being distributed. Who needs to be coming up with this idea? Who do I need to be in conversation with? Who gets to give feedback on the process? Who is sharing it? How is it being shared? What language is used? Who reviews that language? Are we making prints? Is it being sold? Where is that money going?”

# Consent Flowchart<sup>2</sup>

START  
HERE!

Consent is more than just asking for permission once. It is about ongoing co-creation and relationship building.



Use this flowchart to ensure that people sharing their stories are able to help shape the process and give their fullest consent. Start at the top and answer the questions. If your answer is yes, proceed to the next question until you hit a big YES in a word bubble, which indicates the story can be shared. If you are unable to answer yes, go back a step and work to be able to answer yes to the question before moving forward.

**\*\*Go to page 11 to see a sample legal agreement.\*\***

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# How to Facilitate the Storytelling Process

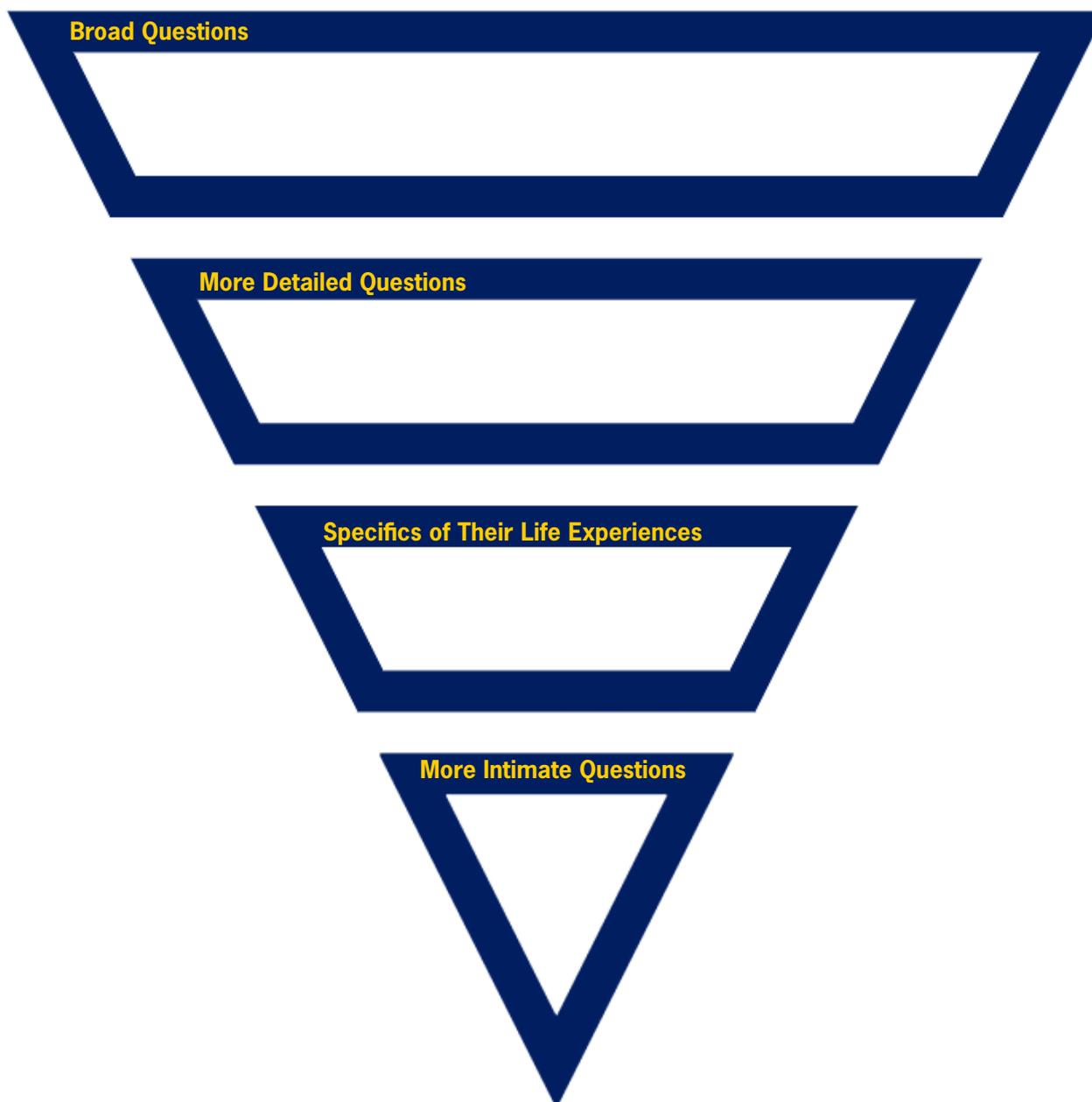
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The following tips are directly cited and reorganized from the UCLA Oral History Project, *Step-by-Step Guide to Oral History*, and an *Oral History Primer* from CSULB.

## ***Start Broad and Build Rapport First***

Approach the conversation with a broad and open-ended question that allows the interviewee to describe their experiences at length. Questions that begin with “Tell me about . . .” or “Can you describe . . .” stimulate the interviewee’s memory and allows the person to generate their own story. In general, ask broad, general questions first, followed by questions asking for more detail.

Do not begin an interview with highly personal or sensitive questions; as the interviewee becomes more comfortable with the interviewer, they will open up more and will often be willing to discuss issues they would not have in the beginning. What is of interest is the story of the interviewee’s experience, not just facts or opinions. Try to get the specifics of their lived experiences rather than what they think other people felt or did.<sup>3</sup>



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### **Ask Open-Ended Questions**

Yes-or-no questions are useful to clarify a specific detail but should otherwise be avoided because they do not generate rich, full answers that open-ended questions do. Similarly, leading questions – those that begin “Don’t you think that . . .” – and either/or questions that allow for only a couple of options should be avoided. Such questions inhibit opportunities to hear the interviewee’s own thoughts on an issue.<sup>4</sup>

### **Do not Interrupt**

The general rule is to not interrupt the interviewee because it disrupts the flow of the narrative and breaks the speaker’s concentration. Wait until the interviewee completes a story or train of thought to ask a follow-up question or introduce a new topic. With exceptionally long-winded interviewees, it may be necessary to jump in to set expectations at the beginning of each interview session about how much needs to be covered.<sup>5</sup>

### **Follow-up Questions**

Once an interviewee has finished answering a question, be ready with follow-up questions for greater detail, context, clarification, and evaluation. Much of the interviewer’s role is to be alert to what the interviewee does not say and to help them expand the story so it is more meaningful for others.<sup>6</sup>

### **Keep Focused**

Questions should be concise and focused. Try to be as precise as possible, and ask only one question at a time. Avoid having the questions feel disconnected by clearly indicating shifts in direction. For example, use the following transitions: “We’ve talked about X, but now I’d like to move on to . . .”<sup>8</sup>

### **Actively Listen**

Engage in concentrated, attentive listening.<sup>9</sup> Be a good listener, using body language such as looking at the interviewee, nodding, and smiling to encourage and give the message, “I am interested.”<sup>10</sup>

### **Be Patient**

Don’t jump in to ask a question if the narrator pauses. Give it time; they might be collecting their thoughts, searching for the memory. Don’t interrupt or change the topic until you are sure the narrator is finished.<sup>7</sup>

### **Be Flexible**

Each interview is tailored to the individual, even if you are covering the same general topics with a group of people. You want to get the most complete information you can. If a line of inquiry takes you in a direction for which you are not prepared, you might have to defer the discussion so that you can first do more background research.<sup>11</sup>

### **Be Polite**

Be polite, but be searching, i.e. if something seems to fly in the face of what we know about a period/an event, inquire more deeply to understand why your narrator’s experience doesn’t seem to fit. Digging deeper will help you uncover more about this person’s story.<sup>12</sup>

### **Respect the Interviewees Wishes**

For instance, if they ask you to turn off the tape recorder, you should do so. If they tell you something they would like to keep private and you think it is important to share, try to see how they would feel comfortable sharing this information publicly. If ultimately the individual wants to keep the information private, remember to respect their wishes. Sometimes, it is possible to obtain a more candid interview if the narrator remains anonymous, however, it is preferable to have the narrator use their name.<sup>13</sup>

### **Verbal Encouragement**

If necessary, use verbal encouragement such as “This is wonderful information!” or “How interesting!” Be careful not to pepper the interview with verbal encouragement such as “uh-huh,” said at the same time the interviewee is speaking.<sup>14</sup>

### **Watch for Non-Verbal Cues**

In addition to the various behaviors that can be observed such as pauses and laughter you should keep track of non-verbal behavior that might help you in your analysis. For example, if the narrator seems to become particularly nervous, or distracted at specific points, you might want to take this into consideration as you listen back.<sup>15</sup>

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# Imagine Your Audience<sup>16</sup>

*Make sure to fill out a separate sheet for each type of audience you are seeking to connect with. This profile will help you develop your message and identify which stories to share and how to curate them for greatest impact.*

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Who are they?/Demographics

---

What are their digital habits?

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Where do they get their information?

---

Education/Jobs

---

What movies, shows, books and entertainment do they consume?

---

Relationship to Organization

**NAME:**

---

What hopes, dreams, fears, and biases do they hold?

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Other important information

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# Stories to Strategies<sup>17</sup>

**Audience:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Make sure to fill out a separate sheet for each type of audience you are seeking to connect with.*

**Goal:** \_\_\_\_\_

*What specific change are you trying to achieve? For example, is the goal to raise awareness about an issue, fundraise, or influence a policy decision?*

**Action:** \_\_\_\_\_

*What is the desired ACTION you want your audience to take?*

<b>Story(ies)</b>	<b>Message</b>	<b>Channel</b>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Event</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Blogs and Articles</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Media Relations</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Email</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Social Media</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Art Installation</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Podcast</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Video</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</li><li>_____</li><li>_____</li><li>_____</li></ul>

**Tone:** \_\_\_\_\_

*What kind of tone do you want to strike with the story?*

## Purpose

Informing/ Educating

Persuading

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

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# Choosing the Right Channel<sup>18</sup>

*There are various channels you can use to communicate your message through sharing stories. There are benefits and drawbacks for each channel and there are elements to keep in mind when determining which channel to use. The following highlights a few of the most common channels and directly cites the work of Mixte Communications and Diamond and Branch.*



## Event

*Coordinating a meeting, press briefing, convention, rally, team building activity, or party to attract and engage with your target audience.*

### Benefits

- Generation of media attention
- Opportunities to capture content for your other communications
- Allows meaningful connections with your target audience
- Attraction of new people to build your mailing list
- Awareness raising for your organization and service offerings

### Drawbacks

- You have only one opportunity to get it right
- Event space, promotional materials and props cost money
- Event planning is a job in and of itself
- Attendance can be susceptible to things like weather or a competing event
- It can be a challenge to drive attendance to first-time events

### Use if you have:

- Time to plan and host your own events
- The ability to stand out at other's events
- The need for experiential moments with the audience
- An embedded audience of followers or a partnership that brings followers
- A way to capture information from your attendees

### Avoid if you have:

- Limited time and/or budgets
- A lack of attention to detail
- No following of loyal fans
- Large geographic footprint



## Blogs and Articles

*Blogs and articles content present organizations with the unique opportunity to speak directly to their audiences. Content that is useful, relevant, moving, helpful, or entertaining can engage your people with your messages in lasting ways.*

### Benefits

- Articles become a permanent asset with ongoing value
- Good content with the right keywords can be great for SEO
- Content can be re-used in social media, white papers, email and other formats
- Highly targeted and relevant content can speak directly to audience concerns

### Drawbacks

- High-quality content can be costly or labor-intensive to create
- Time-sensitive content needs to be maintained to be valuable
- Poor site organization can hide good content
- Content without distribution might go unnoticed

### Use if you have:

- An existing audience
- Time to build your audience
- Keyword opportunities
- Ongoing resources
- Growth goals
- Great stories to tell

### Avoid if you have:

- Limited or unreliable resources
- Strict legal oversight
- Unclear goals
- Outdated website or content management system



## Media Relations

**Media relations is building relationships with editors and journalists at a given media outlet to influence what and how they cover stories. The goal is to insert your campaign into their story with the purpose of informing the public about your campaign.**

### Benefits

- It's free
- Offers third-party endorsement
- It can reinforce your campaign
- Attracts new leads to your website
- People put more trust into news than ads

### Drawbacks

- It can be hard to measure effectiveness
- You have no control over the final story
- No guarantee of coverage
- It's difficult to target audiences
- It takes time to build relationships with the media
- Stories can take months to run

### Use if you have:

- Patience to let it work
- Relationships with media or time to cultivate them
- Budget to hire a media expert
- Interesting stories to share
- Reach people in large geographic areas

### Avoid if you have:

- A hyper-local reach
- A poor, outdated website
- An outdated or nonexistent content management system
- Limited time to execute a marketing campaign



## Email Marketing

**Email marketing uses a company's own email program to directly communicate and build a relationship with supporters who voluntarily sign up to receive emails.**

### Benefits

- Control of messages sent to each audience
- Affordable direct marketing
- Easy to measure and demonstrate growth
- Easy to split up different audience lists

### Drawbacks

- Growing and maintaining email lists takes time
- Subscribers need to opt-in to receive emails
- Not all recipients will open your email
- Some email content may be flagged as spam
- It can take time to do properly

### Use if you have:

- Inbound channels in place
- A way to capture emails from your audience
- Helpful or interesting information to share
- Limited budgets
- Highly visited website with new visitors
- New items for sale, events or promotions regularly

### Avoid if you have:

- An outdated content management system
- Lack of attention to detail
- Trouble writing concisely



## Social Media

**Social media platforms allow individuals and organizations to interact like never before. Engaging with donors, community members, advocates, and other audiences on the platforms where they already spend time presents a huge opportunity to connect. Social media engagement can foster loyalty and trust among your audiences.**

### Benefits

- Using platforms that are free and already have your audience on them
- Easily provide a satisfying resolution or pleasing experience to your users
- Powerful opportunity to authentically connect with users

### Drawbacks

- It requires consistency to engage with people and stay relevant

### Use if you have:

- Social media savvy base and target audience
- Creative resources
- An active online community

### Avoid if you have:

- Limited or unreliable resources to consistently create content
- Strict legal oversight
- Chronically delayed response to inquiries

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# Stories and Co-Creation<sup>19</sup>

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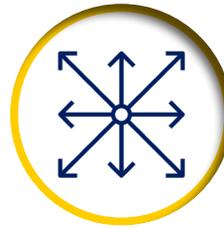
## Listen

Listen to individual stories and document them (written, audio, video).



## Identify

Identify key themes and organize them in categories (i.e., program, policy, community healing).



## Share

Share back with the folks you collected the stories from and ask if the themes resonate with them, or if something was missed or mischaracterized.



## Collaborate

Collaborate with the folks who shared the stories to co-create materials, grant narratives, policy, programs, etc. Building trust takes time. Build in time to cultivate relationships into your budgets and timelines.

## Map Out Your Process for Collaboration

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*Whose story(ies) will we seek?*

*How will you document it?*

*How much time will be allocated to ensure we can circle back with people?*

*What are you planning to collaborate on (co-creation of materials, grant writing, policy or program development, etc.)?*

*What are the key themes? Write in after you document the stories.*

## SAMPLE LEGAL AGREEMENT<sup>20</sup>

I, \_\_\_\_\_, do hereby give to \_\_\_\_\_  
the series of interviews \_\_\_\_\_ recorded with me beginning on  
or about \_\_\_\_\_ to be used for any research, educational,  
advocacy, fundraising, or any other purpose that \_\_\_\_\_ may deem  
appropriate. I give these as an unrestricted gift and I transfer to \_\_\_\_\_  
all right, title, and interest, including copyright. I understand that I may still use the information in the  
recordings myself without seeking permission from \_\_\_\_\_.

Unless otherwise specified above, I place no restrictions on access to and use of the interviews.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Interviewee (Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Typed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date