

PROMOTE - Using Your Story for Change

After finishing the stories, there are a few activities you can do with participants to get them thinking about how they intend to use their story as a tool for change. Consider how the community digital storytelling movement uses stories.

- Within communities - stories to preserve, document, heal. Often these stories are used to promote change at the individual level, also known as **behavioral change**.
- Among communities - stories for organizing, empathy, within and among communities to organize and build coalitions.
- Outside communities - stories for advocacy—external audience, fundraising. These stories can be used to influence decision-makers to make **policy, systems, and environmental changes**.

As you work on a “distribution plan,” consider the following...

- How will the story be viewed? Alone ? With a presenter? In a group?
- Where can you share your story, possible venues? Who is the intended audience?
- What themes/issues are raised?
- Who will be potential allies in getting your story to your intended audiences online? Can they link to/blog about/promote your piece?
- Who can you invite to a community forum or screening to view the stories?

Curriculum/ Accompanying Materials

- What are different goals you have for showing these stories?
- Which stories might best support which goals?
- Will it be useful to develop accompanying materials such as background information, prewritten postcards or letters to representatives? If so, what information would they contain?
- Consider making a facilitator’s guide with questions to consider before and after watching the stories?
- What are possible action items to follow story sharing?
- If your story addresses a specific topic, you might want to bring along phone numbers, resource lists, etc. that represent current efforts to address an issue or problem.

PROMOTE – Sharing stories with decision-makers

Stories can help the decision maker capture the meaning of the issue – not just the logical argument. The meaning of the issue taps into our emotion and imagination, and makes us care enough to work for change. Below are some key strategies to reach the hearts and minds of decision makers.

- **The story is at the heart of it:** Research shows that stories beat data. We will remember an interesting story while the numbers slip away. Start your meeting with a powerful digital or spoken story to draw in your audience to the topic, or use a story as the “clincher,” which brings together the data into a human shape.
- **Less is more:** Heaping on more stories, more statistics, and more requests of the decision maker will not necessarily help the decision maker understand more or commit more readily to help make a change. Choose the most powerful digital story, the most telling statistic or two related to the story, and let these sink in during the presentation while resisting the urge to pile on more information.
- **Research the decision makers:** What do these decision makers care about? What is their record on the issue you’re presenting? Does anyone in the group have any connections or previous experiences with these decision makers?
- **Have a clear “ask”:** What would you like these decision makers to do in response to your presentation? Ask them for a meaningful, manageable commitment.

Sample Agenda:

Time	Agenda Item	Main points
10 min	Agenda and Introductions	-State the purpose of the meeting, the time available, and the agenda
15 min	Presentation of issue: Key story	-Presentation of key story. -Presentation of the policy issue you’d like to see change. Connect the issue to the story you have shown. Example: <i>“The experience of X in this story illustrates why we’d like to see this policy change...”</i>
5 min	Reactions	-Opportunity for the decision maker to respond and ask questions. Example: <i>“How do you see this issue affecting our community?”</i>
5 min	Commitment-building questions	-Pose the questions; give time for a response -Follow up with questions if the responses were vague or evasive
5 min	Summary and next steps	-Recap main points of the meeting, highlighting the need for change -Summarize the next steps with this person -Thank the decision maker for joining you, and take a photo!
20-30 min	Post-Meeting (after the decision maker has departed)	-What worked well in this meeting? What could we have done differently? -What did we learn from this decision-maker? -What are our next steps?

Another framework to use for discussion and action: *Problem Posing*

A methodology designed by Paulo Freire using “codes” to prompt discussion, analysis, and action. A “code” can be a picture, a story, a song, a video, anything that brings up issues related to the group. In this case, the code is the story.

What is happening here?	How can we relate to this?
Why is it happening?	What can we do about it?