

Case for Support/Storytelling Tool

Exercise: Telling Your Story



When talking with community members and potential partners, it's important to share a consistent and compelling story that draws people in to learn more about your vision for the future of your community and the role that infrastructure investments can play in bringing that vision to fruition. You may have only a short amount of time to communicate or "pitch" the story and get them interested in learning more. This worksheet is designed to help you communicate a compelling vision for the future in a way that connects with that person's interests, so that they can envision themselves as part of the story.

1) Prepare: Take 5-10 minutes to develop a story "pitch" that tells the community's story and why the infrastructure investments you have prioritized are needed to create positive change for the future of your community.

1a) Consider your audience: Who is your target audience? What is their main concern or interest?

1b) Consider yourself as a storyteller: Why did you get involved? What do you hope will change in the community as a result of this work?

1c) Develop a compelling story: Using Pixar's rules of storytelling (at right), write down a title and synopsis of your story. As you develop your synopsis, consider the following questions:

- What is the dramatic story that will capture your audience's attention?
- How is this question answered by the end?

2) Practice: Find a partner, tell them who your audience is, and practice sharing your thoughts. Aim for sharing everything you wrote down in two minutes or less.

Pixar's Rules of Storytelling

Title: _____

Synopsis: Once upon a time there was _____. Every day, _____. One day, _____. Because of that, _____. Because of that, _____. Until finally, _____.

3) Ask for Feedback: Ask your partner for feedback and take notes on their feedback. Questions could include:

- Check to make sure they clearly understood your story. (What did you take away from my story about our community? What infrastructure investments are we seeking? What role could these infrastructure investments play in creating positive change for us?)
- Could you give me some feedback on how I presented the information? (What was effective or compelling? What could be improved?)
- How do you think the audience will receive what I am saying?
- Did I meet the time goal of two minutes?

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Amplifying Your Story

Once you craft your story, it can be a powerful tool for making the case to stakeholders for funding and other support for your project. A few tip, tricks and considerations to help you get your story out there in ways that are memorable and resonate:

- 1) Share your story/case making with any of your project partners and anyone who may be talking about the project and your needs publicly. This will help both ensure consistency in how the project is described in a compelling and clear way, it will also create a repetitive drum beat that hopefully your key stakeholders (and those you need to influence) will hear many times.
- 2) Use pictures, audio and even video from your phone to pair with the story you developed to help make your story and what is happening in your community come to life.
- 3) Tell a story about an individual, family, or neighborhood block and their experience to humanize the impact.
- 4) Think about a short-hand for your story [think tagline, headline or bumper sticker] that partners or coalition members can use regularly to evoke the larger story in communication settings where you aren't able to tell the full story.

Identifying a Spokesperson

When it comes to speaking to the media or presenting at a community meeting or convening, identify a spokesperson or short list of spokespeople who will represent the project. This will help ensure that there is a consistent voice(s) sharing the latest project details, needs and status of the project.

Engaging Stakeholders

When it comes to reaching and influencing the priority stakeholders you have identified in your roadmapping process and sharing your story, remember that depending on who you are trying to reach you will need to use different storytelling vehicles (social media, earned media, your website, presentations, community meetings, 1:1 conversations, etc.).