

Best Practices for Storytelling and Narrative Sovereignty

A Guide for Frontline Organizations and Allies

Rachel Marston, Nina Lutz, and Dr. Katlyn Turner



TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION	1
How to Use This Guide	2
The Storytelling Process	2
II. THREE GOLDEN RULES FOR STORYTELLING	3
III. BEST PRACTICES	4
Phase 1: Preparation and Initial Engagement	4
• For External Storytellers	4
• For Frontline Storytellers	5
Phase 2: Approach & Relationship Building	6
• For External Storytellers	6
• For Frontline Storytellers	7
Phase 3: Crafting Stories, Narratives, & Storytellers	8
• For External Storytellers	8
• For Frontline Storytellers	10
Phase 4: Delivering and Sharing Stories & Narratives	11
• For External Storytellers	11
• For Frontline Storytellers	12
Phase 5: Story Stewardship & Legacy	13
• For External Storytellers	13
• For Frontline Storytellers	14
Bonus Phase: Storytelling and Fundraising	15
• For External Storytellers	15
• For Frontline Storytellers	16

On the Cover

At 2025 Street Works Earth, "***Mean. Equity.***" by **Anjali Deshmukh** and **Ernest Verrett** of Street Works invited participants to dive into community beading, telling the story of wealth inequality and climate warming from 1890-present. Photo by Felix Masi.

INTRODUCTION

FRI's Storytelling and Narrative Sovereignty Guide responds to increasing awareness and attention to environmental and climate justice communities from news outlets, event organizers, content creators, policymakers, and others, especially as the impacts of climate change become increasingly severe and widespread. These institutions are eager for frontline knowledge and stories but, throughout the storytelling process, they may unintentionally create harm, erode trust, and prevent long-term investment in communities. This is particularly prevalent in an era of rapidly changing social and political norms around storytelling. As a response, a new set of storytellers is emerging to support frontline groups in telling their stories safely, authentically, and compellingly.

Created based on interviews with representatives from frontline community-based organizations (CBOS) and storytellers, this guide includes:

- **BEST PRACTICES FOR FRONTLINE ORGANIZATIONS** to document, build, create, advocate, and deploy narratives on their own terms.
- **BEST PRACTICES FOR EXTERNAL COLLABORATORS** (journalists, videographers, photographers, policymakers, NGOs, tech companies, etc) to best support the capacity and power of communities to create and control their own narratives, document and protect lived experiences, and share knowledge and stories on their own terms.

A frontline community-based organization is a local, state, or Indigenous nonprofit organization, unincorporated group, or small for-profit business that represents and/or supports a specific frontline community and its residents and stakeholders. Frontline CBOs also represent or serve a particular population from many communities and geographic areas, but which face shared experiences of environmental injustice and climate challenges.

We center an active definition of **frontline communities** in our work. Frontline communities are those facing disproportionate environmental, social, and economic injustices exacerbated by climate change; our previous research ([Marston et al 2025](#)) suggests that frontline communities are not passively experiencing the impacts of climate change, but actively resisting the oppressive systems that create environmental harms and fighting for the wellbeing of their communities.

Four Types of Frontline Communities

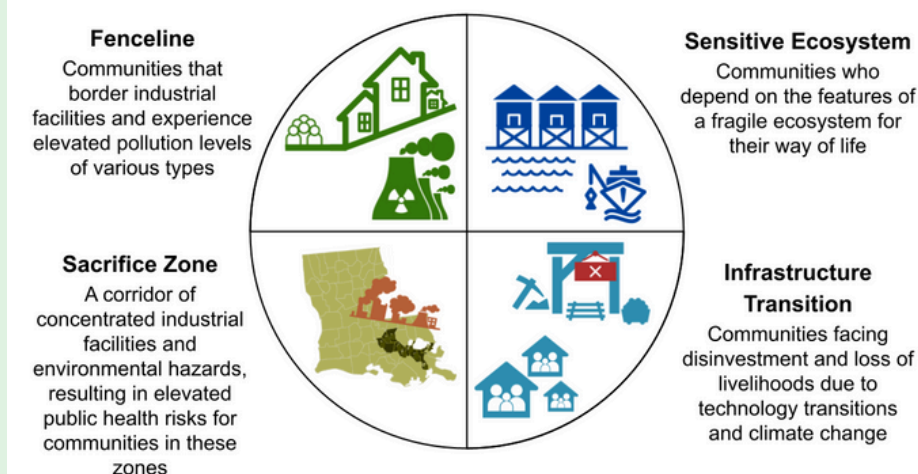


Figure 1: Frontline communities as defined by our last study, focusing on an empirical landscape of frontline community definitions and needs ([Marston et al 2025](#)).

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide depicts a perfect representation of a storytelling process. Because storytelling in real life is messy, **the best practices, “dos” and “don’ts”, and suggested actions presented throughout this guide are principles, not prescriptions.** Further, there is no “one-size-fits-all” storytelling process for frontline CBOs. We hope readers will adapt these storytelling processes and principles to their organizational contexts, using this guide to inform norms around storytelling in their work.

We also recognize that, particularly in traditionally fast-paced storytelling mediums like journalism, storytellers may be unable to implement these recommendations immediately; however, we hope storytellers collaborating with frontline communities will enact these principles where possible. Doing so can set the tone for more equitable, trusting, and relationship-based collaborations industry-wide. The recommendations presented in this guide are intended to apply to storytelling practices across mediums and platforms, but **may not always reflect best practices for work with journalists**, who typically operate with unique and specific professional norms. This guide is intended to serve as a **living, iterative document**, and we will circulate more specifics about work with journalists as they are available.

THE STORYTELLING PROCESS

Our research shows that there are **five** key phases of a storytelling collaboration between frontline community based organizations (CBOs) and external collaborators.



Figure 2: Five phases of a safe storytelling process.

Within these five phases, we have provided a list of **Dos, Don’ts**, and **Suggested Actions** for both frontline CBOs and their external collaborators, as well as a few **“Golden Rules” for storytelling** that apply broadly across all phases, particularly for external storytellers. For frontline organizations, these golden rules apply when considering how best to protect your community storytellers as they interface with external stakeholders.

THREE GOLDEN RULES FOR STORYTELLING

1. PRIORITIZE TRUST OVER SPEED. WITHOUT TRUST, THERE IS NO STORY.



- **What does this mean?** High urgency and quick review traditionally determine the timelines of external collaborators (e.g. NGOs, journalists, policymakers). Meanwhile, many frontline organizations work on multiple campaigns or issues at any given time, with small (sometimes volunteer) bodies of staff. When external collaborators rush CBO staff to engage in a project, they can assume importance over the existing workload of their community collaborators, breaking trust in the process. Moving at the speed of trust means seeing your collaborators (CBO staff and External Storytellers alike) on a person-to-person level and committing to building a process built from strong relationships.
- **What does this look like?** In an era of rapid news cycles and instantaneous access to information, storytelling processes are often rushed as is. Prioritizing trust looks different across all phases: taking time to build a strong relationship at the outset of a project, continually checking in during story production, and clear communication and flexibility around timelines and review, for example.

2. SEEK ACTIVE CONSENT THROUGHOUT EVERY PART OF THE STORYTELLING PROCESS.



- **What does this mean?** Consent is a participatory process, rather than a one way street. It is specific, reversible, and ongoing. Consent is not coerced or assumed, but open-ended. Understand and accept that consent can be retracted. Honor when people want to pull things.
- **What does this look like?** Seeking active consent looks like: asking open-ended questions (e.g. “here are some options, what do you think of these?”). Not using an implied yes e.g. “this looks good right?”. Providing multiple options for engagement. Being clear about how materials will be and won’t be used, and following through with that. Do not ask for additional or unexpected consent at the last minute. For example, asking “by the way, are you okay if this is recorded?” is not active consent.

3. SOME STORIES ARE NOT MEANT TO BE TOLD.



- **What does this mean?** For many frontline communities, stories are an integral part of community identity; because these histories are complex and rooted in history, some stories might not be fit to be shared outside of the community. They might be sacred, they might contain private or sensitive information, or the storyteller may not want their story told for a variety of reasons. For example, some stories, though powerful, are not safe to tell right now—for example related to sensitive immigration status or LGBTQ+ identity. It is the responsibility of External Storytellers to respect this.
- **What does this look like?** For frontline CBOs, this principle might be discussing privacy and sharing with your community members and storytellers. For external storytellers, this means deferring to your community collaborators about the appropriateness of telling a story.

PHASE 1: PREPARATION AND INITIAL ENGAGEMENT

This phase encompasses a period of reflection and research that both external collaborators and frontline organizations should undertake before storytelling. These practices are level setting principles that frontline orgs, communities, and external collaborators need to know before beginning a collaboration or a project with each other. These relate to frames of reference, what the purpose of each entity is, and what certain things (e.g. stories, ownership of content, social media accounts) mean to each entity.

FOR EXTERNAL COLLABORATORS



DOS

- Understand that access—to CBOs, their time, and their expertise—is conditional.
- Understand that, for frontline organizations, **stories** and storytelling are central to their work and that, for some, community stories are also community identity.
- Understand differences in time, urgency, and prioritization when approaching a collaboration.
- Prepare to uplift lived experiences—**narratives**, anecdotes, and history.
- Plan in advance to accommodate community partners' schedules, norms, and preferences for engagement.

WHAT ARE NARRATIVE AND STORY?

Based on our research, many frontline storytellers view **stories** as experiences and histories that can be shared in a multitude of ways. **Narrative** is a set of stories told in a specific way for a specific purpose.



DON'TS

- Presume you know everything about a community from what is online or what you have heard.
- Overemphasize the importance of quantitative data, trends, and statistics or assume that scientific knowledge is the only source of truth. Some community stories work with this kind of data, and others do not. Both are valuable.
- Assume that your relationship and engagement will be within your working hours.
- Wait until the last minute to begin engaging with a community or a CBO.
- Assume communities are the same, even if they appear similar. Community contexts are different, even when they may be facing similar fights. One frontline doesn't speak for them all.

SUGGESTED ACTIONS FOR EXTERNAL COLLABORATORS



1. Talk to colleagues or other storytellers who frequently work with frontline communities.
2. Take time to reflect on the ways that you and your organization are different from the community you're approaching. Also reflect on the ways in which you're similar.
3. Do background research on the community you're reaching out to rather than expecting to be taught everything. Gain an early understanding of who is telling this story and why.

FOR FRONTLINE STORYTELLERS



DOS

- Understand your story, why you would like to tell it, and who is best to tell it.
- Examine how your organization or community decides what to share, with whom, and when
- Talk to other communities and organizations about their experiences in storytelling and working with external storytellers.
- Understand the **code-switching** norms of your potential collaborators.
- Set boundaries on your time, expertise, and energy. How much time are you willing to devote to storytelling, particularly with collaborators?
- Expect no less than respectful decorum from external collaborators. Remember: they need you just as much as you need them

CODE SWITCHING is the labor associated with moving between spaces and how one has to communicate differently in different spaces. Examples include: using professional vs. casual language, differing norms regarding communication software (e.g. using email vs. signal or text), or navigating different ways to establish an “understanding” (e.g. written contracts, handshakes, invitations to meetings).



DON'TS

- Feel like you have to mold yourself to the norms of the external collaborator
- Feel like you have to accept every storytelling opportunity if the time doesn't feel right, or if an opportunity feels like a poor fit for your organization.
- Assume external collaborators will know everything about your community, your organization, or cultural norms on how to work together

SUGGESTED ACTIONS FOR FRONTLINE STORYTELLERS



1. Build a community or organizational decisionmaking process for telling stories. Whether that's just one person, a group of staff, your board, or a vote at community meetings, it's critical to discuss who is making the decisions and why.
2. Decide what story you would like to tell, who you would like to share your story with, and discuss exactly what kind of result, impact, or benefit you'd like to achieve from telling that story.
3. Research the types of storytellers you could potentially work with and the benefits of their different mediums and platforms for your community.
4. Decide if you would like to work with an external storyteller, such as a journalist, photographer, scientist, or artist, to tell your story.

PHASE 2: APPROACH & RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

These best practices relate to initiating and maintaining relationships between frontline CBOs, communities, and external collaborators—understanding that project outcomes and management are different from relationship building and management.

FOR EXTERNAL COLLABORATORS



DOS

- Before engaging, prepare to build lasting relationships with community collaborators rather than one-time engagements.
- When possible and appropriate, compensate community storytellers for their expertise. See the callout box below for examples.
- Ensure your relationships with community collaborators are defined by mutual benefit: e.g. knowledge, expertise, exposure, votes, etc.
- Get to know your community collaborators on a person-to-person level, and commit adequate time to doing so.



DON'TS

- Assume that one email or phone call is sufficient outreach or relationship building.
- Build a one-way relationship defined by your needs. This is extractive.
- Over-steer conversations to try and get to a “point”.
- Listen to respond.

COMPENSATION could be monetary, but also could be access to resources, labor, expertise, among other priorities. To the extent that you are able, approach compensation open-endedly. Ask “what types of compensation might be interesting to you?” rather than assuming. Though many frontline communities prioritize unrestricted funding, some folks might prefer technical assistance or expertise instead. This may provide alternative frameworks of compensation for those unable to provide monetary funds. For certain disciplines, like journalism, compensation in any form can be construed as a breach of professional ethics. However, we encourage external collaborators to consider how their engagement with frontline storytellers can complement the storytellers' interests when possible.

SUGGESTED ACTIONS FOR EXTERNAL COLLABORATORS



1. Develop a process for entering into a formal agreement with a community or organization (e.g. an MOU) that prioritizes community ownership or co-ownership over content and ongoing consent processes.
2. Develop multiple different compensation models for varied community contexts.
3. Before beginning story production or development, discuss your “why” with your community collaborators. Why this story, and why now? Ask them the same in return, and ensure you understand exactly why your collaborators want to tell a particular story.

FOR FRONTLINE STORYTELLERS



DOS

- Get to know your storytelling partners on a person-to-person level.
- Ensure your relationships with external collaborators are defined by mutual benefit: e.g. shared knowledge, expertise, exposure, votes, funding, etc.
- Trust your gut when approaching relationships with external collaborators. If a relationship does not feel right, do not feel pressured to pursue it.



DON'TS

- Be shy: ask questions when they come up, and share your hesitations or queries with potential collaborators. How they respond is key!
- Push into the story preparation phase too quickly. Take as much time as you need to express your priorities, needs, and desired impact in a storytelling collaboration.
- Hesitate to pull out of a collaboration if it is not going well. Ensure MOUs reserve the right for your organization to do so if necessary.



2025 Street Works Earth, by Street Works. Photo by Felix Masi

SUGGESTED ACTIONS FOR FRONTLINE STORYTELLERS



1. Vet potential collaborators: look into their past work and ask them to share about these experiences.
2. Have a plan in place for ensuring you have ownership over desired content (e.g. through an MOU or other contract with your external collaborator.). Though they should have these processes in place, and the onus should not be on you, have a backup and be prepared to speak up. Explicitly state what content you'd like access to or ownership over and how you'd like to use it.

PHASE 3: CRAFTING STORIES, NARRATIVES, & STORYTELLERS

The “how” of telling a specific story or narrative begins here. These recommendations relate to planning and creating a story or narrative and preparing storytellers to share in different venues (e.g. interviews, social media, interactions with journalists, videos, public comments, public speaking). This is perhaps the most intentional stage of a collaboration: planning how you want to tell a story, what you want to say, who you’re going to talk to, who is telling the story, and what the story’s impact will be.

FOR EXTERNAL COLLABORATORS



DOS

- Understand that stories do not always have a pragmatic goal
- Understand that narratives, contrary to story—often have a pragmatic goal, proactively or reactively.
- Trust that the community knows what stories should be told and which should not.
- Understand different contexts and histories—e.g. Black/African American, Indigenous, Asian American, Pacific Islander, Latinx, Central American, South American, Appalachian, varied immigrant communities—and understand how these histories influence how stories are told and the costs and benefits of sharing a particular story.
- Understand who is considered an appropriate audience for this story and their boundaries. Communities consent specifically to who is included in their story audiences and who isn’t. Just because you may have access to a story doesn’t mean it is for everyone.
- Tailor your storytelling medium and processes for different communities according to their community context, stated goals, and priorities.



DON'TS

- Assume stories are transferable between communities. For example, two communities facing the same pollutant, even if geographically close, will have different stories.
- Pressure your collaborators to tell stories in a way that does not align with their community’s goals and the ethos of their organization.
- Over-steer conversations to try and get to a “point”.
- Assume you know what’s best for a community in their storytelling journey
- Assume that norms and storytelling methods are transferable between communities—what worked for one community does not necessarily work for another, and the costs and benefits of storytelling will differ between communities.
- Assume you have sole ownership of the content (e.g. photo and video) created with a community.



SUGGESTED ACTIONS FOR EXTERNAL COLLABORATORS

- 1.** Begin your collaboration with an honest discussion with your community collaborators regarding the pros and cons of telling particular stories, and of different storytelling venues.
- 2.** Listen to your frontline collaborators regarding the audiences to whom certain stories should be communicated, how they should be told, and what impact they're intended to achieve. If you are told a story is inappropriate to share, do not share it.
- 3.** During a collaboration, check in regularly with your community collaborators to ensure you are meeting their needs and expectations.
- 4.** If recording, photo, and video are involved, remember to get consent from any involved community members, not just your CBO collaborators, in a way that works for the community (e.g. verbal, written).
- 5.** Share proofs, preprints, and drafts with all community collaborators and allow ample time for their comments and revisions. CBOs are busy, and they may not get back to you immediately. For disciplines in which this is not a norm (i.e. traditional journalism), recognize that lack of review processes can create harm when working with frontline storytellers. Consider how you might be able to lessen the risk of harm.



FOR FRONTLINE STORYTELLERS



DOS

- Assume that your events and public comments can be recorded by a variety of actors.
- Make sure your storyteller has support and resources from within your organization, like media training or public speaking support.
- Protect your storytellers. Especially when community members are voluntarily telling their stories, they put themselves in a vulnerable position. Prioritize their psychological safety and remind them that they can opt out at any time.
- Ensure that, if desired and appropriate, individual community members will have access to the content they help create alongside the CBO or organization.



DON'TS

- If speaking to a journalist, reporter, or politician, don't assume you are off the record unless you are told so or you ask. Even then, this is an informal verbal commitment, so be cautious what you share.
- Pursue a storytelling medium that might not work for your community context.
- Assume that all community members will want to tell their stories or feel comfortable doing so, or that any given storyteller will know the best way to tell your community's story.

SUGGESTED ACTIONS FOR FRONTLINE STORYTELLERS



1. Decide what audience you'd like to reach with your storytelling—whether that's internal to your community, external to the general public, or more specific (e.g. policymakers or scientists)—and ensure any collaborators are on the same page.
2. Prepare your community storytellers appropriately for the storytelling venue. For example, ensure they are appropriately briefed and media trained if approaching media, or, if telling personal stories (e.g. oral history), make sure they feel comfortable telling personal stories and understand exactly how their stories will be used. This also includes the option to opt out of storytelling at any part of the process.
3. Monitor your inbox for proofs, preprints, and drafts to review. This process is critical to ensure your story is represented accurately and intentionally as possible. If possible, ensure that all mentioned individuals and community members have an opportunity to weigh in.

PHASE 4: DELIVERING AND SHARING STORIES AND NARRATIVES

These recommendations consider the immediate impact—virality, shares, action/votes, successful partnership, etc—of stories and narratives. During this phase, you're prepping for the moment at which you lose control of the story and narrative, and it opens itself up to remix and reaction from the community, intended audience, and general public.

FOR EXTERNAL COLLABORATORS



DOS

- Tailor your distribution networks and opportunities to the community's intent.
- Be intentional about your messaging when you share a community's story.
- Ensure any distribution plans prioritize the needs of your community collaborators.



DON'TS

- Push a community or organization into publishing or distributing their story in a specific way.
- Promote engagement in spaces that might be harmful to the community-based organization or the community storytellers.
- Release a story without getting a final, clear confirmation from your community collaborators.

SUGGESTED ACTIONS FOR EXTERNAL COLLABORATORS



1. Co-develop a distribution plan with your community collaborators built for their desired audiences and networks.
2. Before sharing a story you helped develop, ensure that all content is accessible for community collaborators, even if they did not explicitly express the desire to own content. It is a best practice to make all content fairly available for your collaborators. Share these final documents, photos, videos, or other products with your community collaborators ahead of a release date, even if they have already reviewed.
3. Clearly communicate the story's release date to your community collaborators so they can share amongst their networks. Ideally, determine the content's release date based on your community collaborators' desired timing.
4. If you are responsible for releasing and sharing a story, be as communicative as possible around responses and reactions. Your community collaborators should be reaping the benefits from engagement.

FOR FRONTLINE STORYTELLERS



DOS

- Be intentional about the medium in which you're telling, sharing, or preserving your story. The medium shifts how viewers will receive the information.
- Construct and deliver stories proactively and expect questions.
- Gently and firmly correct inaccurate assumptions and stereotypes.
- Recognize that once something is published, it is in the public domain, and recognize the permanency of internet contributions.
- Be prepared to monitor social media, emails, and other accounts when your story is published.
- Stay grounded, and remember your community and your organization exist before, during, and after a particular story.
- Have boundaries around engaging with stories and narratives after they're published.



DON'TS

- Feel pressured to publish every aspect of your intended story, whether in print or online.
- Assume that your story will always reach the audiences you intend.
- Assume that sharing your story means that everyone will agree with your points of view.
- Get caught up in reactions to your shared stories.

SUGGESTED ACTIONS FOR FRONTLINE STORYTELLERS



1. Develop a distribution plan ahead of your story's release to ensure it reaches the right audiences. If you're working with an external storyteller, you can collaborate with them, if desired. This plan should include processes for monitoring reactions to your story via social media, how you might respond to certain reactions, and who is in charge of responding.
2. Ask for proofs, preprints, and final reviews if you are working with an external storyteller and have not yet received them. For disciplines like journalism, it is rare to receive proofs before an article is published. Before you speak to a journalist, try to set clear expectations around review and consent. Unless otherwise agreed upon, when you engage with a journalist, there is no legal or professional expectation that you will be able to review what they create before it is published.
3. Share your story with your desired audiences, and be proud of the work you've done to this point!

2025 Street Works Earth, by Street Works. Photo by Felix Masi



PHASE 5: STORY STEWARDSHIP AND LEGACY

The language and nuances of particular issues change over time—for example, between policy administrations. These recommendations discuss agile framing, presentation, stewardship, and archiving of stories; the goal is creating stories that are adaptable in changing times while staying grounded in a community's truth.

FOR EXTERNAL COLLABORATORS



DOS

- Understand that frontline communities exist in long term, cyclical memory and different eras. The same story may be told in different ways and emphasizing different features based upon the prevailing social attitudes or policy climate.
- Understand that, when you tell a story, you're committing to long-term stewardship of that story.
- Pursue continued storytelling opportunities with community collaborators you've worked with before to feed into long-term, mutualistic relationships.



DON'TS

- Stop engaging with a community storyteller or collaborator because you perceive the engagement or storytelling process complete.

SUGGESTED ACTIONS FOR EXTERNAL COLLABORATORS



1. Have a discussion with your community collaborators about how involved they would like you to be in stewarding this story. For example: would your community collaborators like you to host a video on your website, or on their own?
2. Since stewardship is a long-term relationship, continue to reach out to your community collaborators to check in on their story. This could be regarding the product itself (e.g. whether they would like it to be re-shared or updated), or regarding the people behind the story (e.g. how is that campaign going?).
3. Spot opportunities for continued engagement that would support the community's needs and priorities (e.g. film festivals, grant opportunities, publications).

FOR FRONTLINE STORYTELLERS



DOS

- Understand that, by putting a story into the world, you are committing to stewarding that story in the long term.
- Recognize that the way you tell a story—the medium (e.g. journalism, oral history, documentary, art installation)—affects that story’s legacy and who has access to that legacy.
- Accept that your story may be told in ways that don’t align with its original intent or context. Have a response plan for this scenario.
- Keep an archive or story vault of the stories your organization has shared in the past in case they are, for some reason, removed or recast in a way that doesn’t align with their original intent.



DON'TS

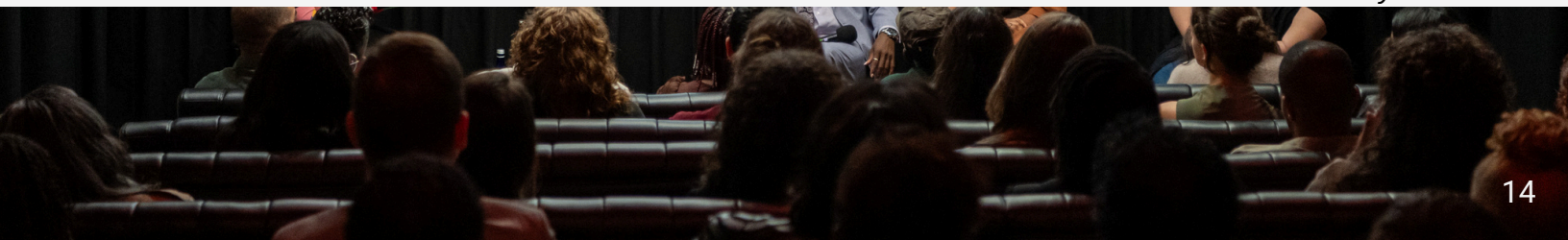
- Underestimate the power of archival storytelling and documentation—e.g. oral history—that can provide witness to history in a way that other kinds of storytelling may not.

SUGGESTED ACTIONS FOR FRONTLINE STORYTELLERS



1. Have a debrief discussion after a story’s distribution. Within your organization, discuss whether the story reached its intended audience, achieved the desired impact, and whether the process met your needs and expectations.
2. Decide if you’d like to continue sharing this story, and how you would like to steward it going forward. For example: Would you like to periodically share this across your networks? Where will this story “live” in the future? (e.g. your website?) Will it need to be updated or edited in the future?
3. If you worked with an external storyteller, decide whether that storyteller will have a role in the stewardship of that story and, if so, clearly communicate this. Additionally, decide if you’d like to work with that storyteller again in the future.

Photo by Jeff Weiner



BONUS PHASE: FUNDRAISING AND STORYTELLING

For many CBOs—particularly those who rely on grant funding as their primary organizational income—fundraising itself is a critical and labor-intensive form of storytelling. This bonus phase of the storytelling process covers best practices for storytelling in a fundraising context and strategically including community stories in grant writing. External Storytellers might seek CBOs as partners on grant applications; this section provides guidance on how to avoid extractive behavior when pursuing funding in partnership with CBOs.

FOR EXTERNAL COLLABORATORS



DOS

- Make relationships early. Do not wait until a funding call or opportunity arises to reach out, work along existing, strong, two-way relationships.
- Make sure the grant is a good fit and makes sense for the timeline and capacity of applying for and executing the grant.
- Be clear if approached by a CBO for working on a grant about the financial and capacity limitations and needs of your organization.



DON'TS

- Partner with CBOs to achieve funding without distributing the funding equitably.
- Push community collaborators or partners to tell certain stories. Some stories are not meant to be told, even if they are “fundable”.
- Write a grant intending to partner with a frontline organization at the last minute who is available to “slot in”.
- Define success, goals, and milestones for collaborative grant projects without your frontline partners

SUGGESTED ACTIONS FOR EXTERNAL COLLABORATORS



1. Opportunity spot for funding opportunities that you can forward to CBOs that you have worked with before, or that would be potential partnership opportunities.
2. Tell authentic stories instead of the story-of-the-day or the most “fundable” thing. Fundraising with communities means staying true to the intent and desired impact of their story and work.

FOR FRONTLINE STORYTELLERS



DOS

- Understand that fundraising follows a specific, impact-driven narrative format that may or may not align with your organization's specific storytelling practices.
- Recognize the difference between story and narrative, and the effectiveness of mobilizing strategic narrative in grant writing.
- Tell authentic stories instead of the story-of-the-day or the most "fundable" thing.



DON'TS

- Force your community's stories and narratives to fit a grant opportunity that's not aligned with your values.
- Apply for every opportunity just to apply. Instead, focus on the ones that are the best fit and best trade-offs for capacity of application.
- Use the exact same story for each grant proposal, unless appropriate and a good fit for the opportunity. If you do use a story multiple times and mention a community member or community storyteller, ask for consent each time.
- Rush to tell a compelling story in a grant application.

SUGGESTED ACTIONS FOR FRONTLINE STORYTELLERS



1. Identify which stories you would most like to tell and which have the most impact. Consider how stories resonate with different audiences and how you can best frame them to impact different funders.
2. Set clear goals and objectives for your organization, and determine how stories fit into those goals. From there, you can build a fundraising narrative.
3. Seek grant writing support and staff training early if you are able. If not, seek open-source resources to support staff in understanding the norms of grant writing.