

# Storytelling for Impact: How to Tailor Your Impact Story for Specific Audiences

## Introduction

Good stories are often human stories. And great, human-centered stories make you feel connected, inspire change, and motivate action. For community-based organizations (CBOs), understanding each funder's interests and priorities so that you can modify your impact story as needed to craft a variety of compelling narratives that each appeal to a specific audience is critical to strengthening your financial sustainability and expanding your influence.

Key stakeholders in the workforce development sector—private philanthropy, government leaders, community partners, employers, and others—have a wide range of interests, spheres of influence, and motives for engaging with your organization. By tailoring your impact story to each of your key audiences, you can ensure that your messaging is clear and speaks directly to what your stakeholders value most. This JFF ***Storytelling for Impact*** guide builds on JFF's ***Understanding Impact*** resource and offers examples of practical approaches to tailoring your impact story to specific audiences.

## Step 1: Map your key stakeholders and audiences for your impact story.

Start by listing out all the key audience groups that you are currently sharing your impact story with or would like to include in the future.

**Table 1. Example Worksheet: Audience Mapping to Customize Your Impact Story**

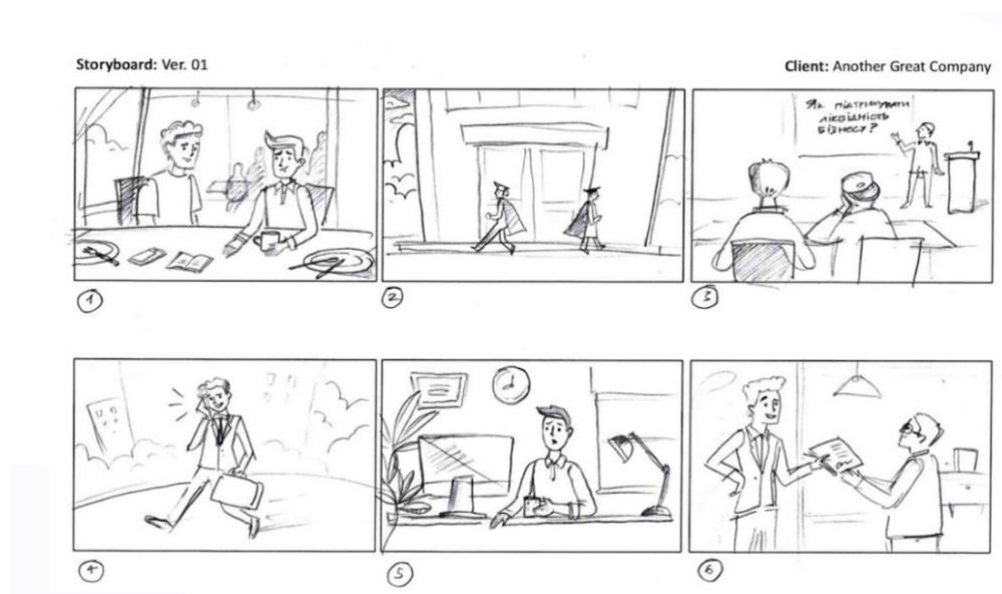
<b>Audience</b> <i>Who are you aiming to reach?</i>	<b>Values Alignment</b> <i>What do they care about? What do they value?</i>	<b>Call to Action</b> <i>What action do you want your audience to take?</i>	<b>Priority</b> <i>What is the priority for engaging this audience?</i>
Health-focused private foundations	Understanding the human (individual, family, and community) impact of job training programs	Set up a meeting to learn more about my organization	High

## Step 2: Develop your impact storyboard for one key audience.

It can be challenging to tell a compelling impact story that appeals equally to every audience, because each organization has unique values and needs. To focus your impact story, select one audience that you've assigned a high priority to and map out the story that you are looking to tell. Consider the following questions:

1. How can you draw your audience in at the beginning of your story? What is your hook?
2. What do you want your audience to know/feel/do after hearing your story? What is your call to action?
3. What emotions do you want to evoke during your story?
4. What supporting evidence will strengthen your story?

A simple digital or paper storyboard can help you visualize the key moments you want to highlight in your impact story, as illustrated in this example.



**Source:** "How to Create a Storyboard for a Recruitment Video?" TalentLyft, May 19, 2020, <https://www.talentlyft.com/blog/how-to-create-a-storyboard-for-a-recruitment-video>.

## Step 3: Identify what supporting data is needed.

After visualizing the story you want to tell, you will need to identify what supporting data will be needed. Refer to JFF's [Understanding Impact](#) resource to explore different methods for capturing your impact data and consider the following questions:

1. What data do you already have that can help you tell your impact story?
2. What additional data do you need to collect to tell your impact story? What additional evidence can strengthen your impact story?

#### **Step 4: Explore different storytelling approaches and mediums.**

Selecting an appropriate approach and medium that will resonate with your audience and help to illustrate your story is critical. A few different examples of approaches to consider include:

##### **Approach #1: Human-Centered Impact Stories**

1. **Potential mediums:** Success stories or videos featuring participants, podcasts interviewing participants, photos from job training programs, day-in-the-life stories and journals, conferences, workshops, site visits featuring participants, and newsletter stories
2. **Examples of tools:** Audacity (podcasts); Adobe, iMovie, Canva, Loom, Vimeo (videos)
3. **Useful approach for:** Human-centered impact stories allow organizations to go beyond the numbers and to humanize their impact, which is often a key priority for philanthropic organizations. Focusing on individual transformation creates a personal connection and can help to increase empathy for the challenges participants face.
4. **Example:** Participant success stories from hospitality training academy featured in ["Workforce Training Center Helps California Hospitality Workers"](#) on PBS SoCal

##### **Approach #2: Tracking Impact Over Time**

1. **Potential mediums:** Data visualization showing impact over time, blog posts from alumni of your programs, and videos that highlight before/after stories of participants
2. **Examples of tools:** Tableau, Canva, Looker Studio
3. **Useful approach for:** Tracking impact over a longer time horizon can help illustrate the systems-level impact of job training programs that goes beyond typical participant job placement and wage data. This is also a helpful approach to illustrate how job training programs impact not only the individuals who graduate, but also the communities and regions they belong to.

4. **Example:** Through a series of short blogs and publications, [Teach For America's Alumni Impact Stories](#) share the long-term impact of their programs on alumni, who often grow their careers in education and advocacy. Their stories focus on how former corps members have continued to influence the education system and communities that have been underserved by public and private institutions years after completing their service.

### Approach #3: Interactive Storytelling

1. **Potential mediums:** Clickable infographics, video- and photo-journalism series, and interactive features on organization websites and/or social media platforms
2. **Examples of tools:** Infogram, Canva, Piktochart, Visme, Marq
3. **Useful approach for:** Interactive elements that engage the audience more deeply by allowing them to explore impact stories, data, and multimedia at their own pace, making the experience more personalized and transporting.
4. **Example:** Through the documentary-style video series, [The Journey](#), one of Charity Water's staff takes his audience on a tour of Charity Water's work across the African continent. Each episode allows the audience to experience first-hand field visits to illustrate the impact of Charity Water's work on the ground.

### Step 5: Develop a plan to bring your impact stories to life.

To move from your early storyboard concept to a polished version ready for your target audience(s), you need to identify who within your organization will be able to help bring your impact stories to life. Start by identifying what types of skills will be needed to do this based on the approach and medium you selected (e.g., video production and editing, data visualization). Once you've identified the skills needed, determine whether you have those skills available within your organization or if you will need to hire external consultants or staff.

For additional practical guidance and tips for engaging funders, refer to JFF's [Securing Funds—Strategic Funder Communications & Outreach](#) resource.

### Additional Resources:

[Bridgespan Group: How to Create Nonprofit Stories That Inspire](#)  
[StoryboardThat: Create a Training Program](#)  
[IDEO.org's Design Kit: Storyboard](#)