



Telling Compelling Stories of Change and Impact

Future Skills Centre (FSC)'s Community of Practice (CoP) is a pan-Canadian network for fellow skills and workforce development stakeholders across diverse sectors and industries to connect, share, and learn from each other. As part of the CoP, Research Impact Canada, in collaboration with FSC and Magnet, is piloting themed Peer Learning Groups to facilitate an open discussion among peers in an informal and safe shared space.

The three-session Peer Learning Group Pilot will help service providers share best practices, resources, and tips in three main areas: influencing public policy and connecting with policymakers, telling compelling stories of change and impact, and measuring and evaluating impact. This pilot will also help FSC determine how to continue improving these peer learning offerings so they better fit the needs of service providers.

The second of the three-part series took place on Zoom on August 15, 2022 from 12:00pm - 1:30pm EST. We invite you to explore some of the ideas and resources from the session below.

We would also encourage you to join FSC's Community of Practice by signing up for a free account on the Community of Practice Platform to access news, events, resources, and networks, and to continue engaging with professionals in the skills and workforce development sector.

GRAPHIC SUMMARY



WHAT WE HEARD: BIG CHALLENGES & STRATEGIES FOR ACTION

1. Connecting with diverse audiences

"How can skills and workforce development practitioners effectively reach target audiences through storytelling?"

Proposed strategies:

- **Know your audience and involve them early on in shaping the stories that you want to tell through a survey.** Ask them what they are interested in hearing, what their needs are, what they will find relevant or useful and how they will use that information. Compile that feedback in an [audience profile worksheet](#). This will shape the analysis and the facts to be collected and selected for the story.
- **Diversify the storytelling methods.** Recognize that people have different learning styles and ways of processing information. Stories can be shared through infographics, photos, or videos. We heard suggestions of writing a 1-page executive summary and a 2-page report-brief in addition to the full report.
- **Understand the cultural climate that your audience is coming from or working in.** Cultural context can influence learning styles, group activity practices, and agenda setting. Our group talked about cultural contexts when working with Indigenous communities and working with those in Atlantic Canada.
- **There is no single 'elevator pitch' that will work for everyone.** The same story should be relayed differently depending on the audience. You have to know what motivates the audience and what a motivating call to action means to them.

Resources:

[Why Knowing Your Audience is Your Most Important Knowledge Asset](#)

[How to Do Audience Research For Nonprofit Communications](#)

2. Respecting the dignity of the storyteller

"How can skills and workforce development practitioners ensure storytelling is mutually beneficial and less extractive of program participants?"

Proposed strategies:

- **Utilize key performance indexes (numbers and graphs) to tell a story that highlights the hard work of frontline workers while preserving the anonymity of interviewed individuals.** We don't need to attach a name to every story in order to successfully tell people the good work that we do.
- **Make sure the participants have agency in how their personal story is told.** Prioritize their needs of safety and integrity and check-in often to ensure their comfort in how and where their story is shared.
- **Treat the participants as partners and involve them early on in the storytelling process** to really understand their needs and learn from each other. Be sensible to the realities of some of the stigmas that go with some of the issues they face.
- **Always offer the choice to opt-out at any time.** Inform the participants that they can opt out before or after the publication of their story, with no effect on their service from the program. If declined, commit that your organization will take their statements off any platforms their story is published on.

Resources:

[Storytelling- Humanize the Numbers: Self-paced online course on ethical and inclusive storytelling](#)

[7 ways to tell stories ethically: The journey from exploited program participant to empowered storyteller](#)

3. Finding a purpose

"What can skills and workforce development practitioners do after storytelling? How do we put stories into action?"



Proposed strategies:

- **If the purpose is to fundraise, use stories to support and validate your ask.** Avoid solely recycling stories just to make your funders happy. Use stories to show an unmet need or a real complex challenge that the funder needs to be aware of.
- **Remember that as service providers, you are the experts** who can best advise policymakers.
- **Prepare a story impact model beforehand.** Identify the impact that you want to make before you even develop the story. Why are we sharing the story? So what? Think about the 5 W's (who, what, where, when, why) that need to be addressed in the story.
- **Articulate clear goals:** Communicate to the audience exactly what you want from them. For example, is it to spread the word or raise money?
- **Support stories with numbers and data** to advance the aim of the storytelling through measurable evidence.
- **Plan out your engagement strategy:** Set the voice and tone of your story and the platforms where you will be sharing them, identify and nurture influencers that can help promote your cause, grow your community to know where your audience is, and respond to the audience in real time.

Resources:

[Telling Stories with Purpose: Interactive Lessons to on strategy, content and engagement for impactful storytelling](#)

[A Guide to Storytelling for nonprofits](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

9 Powerful Examples of Nonprofit Storytelling

This article is for nonprofits wishing to engage fundraisers and persuade them through stories to invest time and money to advance the organization's cause. It highlights 9 key considerations and techniques that storytellers should think of to secure the audience's buy-in and provides concrete examples on how these techniques could be implemented.

Digital Storytelling for Social Impact

This study by Rockefeller Foundation is a guidebook on how to craft a compelling story with examples of best practices, insights, and tips on how to create content, build capacity to tell stories, utilize social media platforms, and measure the impact of shared stories.

Inspiring Donors for Harvard School of Public Health

This article presents a successful model for an aspirational campaign and brand narrative that the Harvard School of Public Health worked on to engage stakeholders, attract new donors, and raise a total of 933 million dollars.

What Really Makes a Good Story?

This article highlights the main elements that impactful stories have in common and the key considerations for effective storytelling.

Tips for Translating Research Data Into a Story

This article is a guide for those who wish to share data in a more compelling way. It provides practical tips on how to reword quantitative information into relatable and memorable insights.

Personal Storytelling and Advocacy- Meeting Report

This report by Open Society Foundations is a reference for those using storytelling in the context of advocacy and policy change. It addresses a number of questions such as: Under what conditions does storytelling work? How do we approach storytelling for advocacy ethically, in a way that does not instrumentalize people? How do we create the conditions for stories to be listened to? What is our responsibility to listen, as well as tell stories? How do we best evaluate storytelling and its impact on policy in the short term, as well as shifts in societal narratives and culture in the longer term?

Social Dynamics of Storytelling: Implications for Story-Base Design

This paper summarizes how power, risk, and collaboration influence storytelling, describes methods used by professional story elicitors, and draws implications for story-base design.

Storytelling Institute

This institute at South Mountain Community College offers a variety of training and resources to help professionals enhance their presentations, teachings, and relationships with customers through storytelling skills.

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