The Essential Guide to Narrative Change:
Insights from the Voices for Economic Opportunity Incubator

PURPOSE

2022

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BACKGROUND

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Welcome to the Essential Guide to Narrative Change. If you are reading this, it likely means you are interested in doing the work of narrative change and could use some help. Maybe you're just starting out with an interest in what it means to do narrative change, or maybe you're already doing narrative change work and you want to strengthen your ideas. You may work in a nonprofit, academia, or advocacy. Regardless of your experience or organizational background, our guide will give you a basic understanding of what narrative change is and how to do it well.

This guide is based on lessons learned from the Voices for Economic Opportunity Incubator, which was designed to facilitate innovation for narrative change relating to poverty and economic mobility. However, the lessons and methods can be applied to narrative change efforts related to other issues. In the spirit of movement generosity, our hope is to share our findings with you so that you can expand your skills as a storyteller and changemaker.

ABOUT PURPOSE

Purpose is a social impact agency based in New York City that builds and supports movements to advance the fight for an open, just, and habitable world.

The Voices for Economic Opportunity Incubator was one of Purpose's Labs, which bring new actors, new ideas, and new power together to drive transformational change on the world's most pressing issues. We connect philanthropies, activists, businesses, multilateral institutions, and NGOs to shift public narratives, build support across entrenched divides, and propel policy change. Learn more at **www.purpose.com**.

ABOUT THE VOICES FOR ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY INCUBATOR

In 2019, the Voices for Economic Opportunity Grand Challenge was launched to "establish ways to offer alternatives to confusing, conflicting, and just plain inaccurate accounts about what poverty is, why it happens, to whom it happens, and how to address it."[1] This Challenge, the first-ever Grand Challenge to be focused on the United States, sought organizations with creative concepts "to elevate diverse voices and broaden the national conversation about poverty and economic

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[1] BMGF, "Changing the National Conversation About Poverty and Economic Mobility"

mobility" through "the actual stories of those that experience poverty—in a way that represents the core factors and challenges."[2]

Ultimately, 28 organizations were awarded $100,000 to produce a narrative change project addressing issues of poverty and economic mobility. To support these organizations in their efforts to develop these projects, Purpose designed and implemented the Voices for Economic Opportunity Incubator.

Key partners of the Challenge and the Voices Incubator included the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the James Irvine Foundation, the Omidyar Network, the Raikes Foundation, the Schultz Family Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation.

CHAPTER 1: AN INTRODUCTION TO NARRATIVE CHANGE

WHAT IS NARRATIVE CHANGE?

"Narrative change" is an expansive term. Just as "change" is both a verb and a noun, "narrative change" is both a process and an outcome. Narrative change, as defined by the Voices Incubator, is the strategy of shifting the patterns embedded in the stories we tell in culture, which, in turn, shifts the way people understand the world. If we can change the story, we can create the conditions for impactful work to win.

Narrative change in the Voices for Economic Opportunity Incubator context aimed to "establish ways to offer alternatives to confusing, conflicting, and just plain inaccurate accounts about what poverty is, why it happens, to whom it happens, and how to address it."[3], particularly in regard to systemic barriers to economic mobility. The Voices Incubator largely focused on strategic communications and grassroots organizing activities, but there are many approaches that can shift patterns in our culture's stories.

Narrative change is not an endeavor reserved for those with large budgets or networks. You may already be doing it! Narrative change projects come in many shapes and sizes, from communications toolkits to feature films, lesson plans to rural community development—even

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[2] Ibid; BMGF, "Global Grand Challenges: Voices for Economic Opportunity"

[3] BMGF, "Changing the National Conversation About Poverty and Economic Mobility"

handwritten neighborhood flyers.

WHY IS NARRATIVE CHANGE IMPORTANT?

"Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign. But stories can also be used to empower, and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people. But stories can also repair that broken dignity." —Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, author

The modern information ecosystem propagates misleading, distorted, and often completely inaccurate narratives about poverty and economic mobility. This prevalence of false narratives is true for many issues and has been for centuries. Moreover, some of these false or misleading narratives are deeply rooted in our cultures.

Widespread belief in these harmful narratives undermines efforts to address injustices and move toward change, including efforts to explicitly call for particular solutions. When narrative change efforts are successful, they can be a catalyst for other types of societal or structural change to occur. By winning over an audience ideologically, you may then be able to encourage further commitment and actions such as sharing your content, signing up for a newsletter, donating, or voting for policy changes.

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR NARRATIVE CHANGE

UNDERSTANDING NARRATIVE CHANGE STRATEGY

In this chapter we'll explore how to build a narrative change strategy that is realistic, specific, and action-oriented. Whose opinions, beliefs, or behaviors must change for you to reach your goal? How will you reach those people? How will you know if you've been successful? These are key questions to answer when building your strategy.

First, what do we mean when we say "strategy"? We're referring to a general plan to achieve one or more long-term narrative change goals. Your strategy is the guide for why and how you'll create change. It should define your plan for sharing messages and materials with your particular audience(s).

It's important to remember that narrative change is a long-term proposition, given that cultural and societal narratives have been reinforced over generations through media, politics, and the stories we're told. Take for instance the American Dream: the idea that if you work hard you can climb the

economic ladder. For many in the US, this simply isn't true—but for others, the American Dream represents their own experiences, so believing in this narrative is integral to their very identities. Addressing these longstanding narratives that are tied to multifaceted issues such as poverty inherently requires an expansive and intersectional approach. Poverty is complex in that when we try to change others' viewpoints about people and communities experiencing poverty, we are often grappling with underlying biases related to age, race, geography, gender, health, mental health, sexuality, disability, and other forms of marginalization. Therefore, we should be clear-eyed about the fact that changing these harmful narratives is challenging and won't happen overnight.

So, while you want to be ambitious, you should first set goals that are realistic. This means outlining a strategy to achieve the goals that are practical given your organizational budget, positioning, core competencies, etc.

One major consideration when building your strategy is mobilization versus persuasion. Mobilization is getting people who are ideologically aligned with you to take greater action. Persuasion is shifting the mindsets of people who have opposing views. These actions are not mutually exclusive, and both are important, but your organization may be better placed to do one or the other given realities such as your organization's strengths or where you are located. Should your focus be to inspire action or change minds?

➔ **TIP:** Because narrative change is an uphill battle, there is power in numbers. Expand your reach by leveraging partnerships and community to enhance your work. What other organizations share your narrative change goals? How might you collaborate?

HOW TO BUILD A NARRATIVE CHANGE STRATEGY

The following template includes the five key elements you'll need to determine your narrative change strategy. We call this template a theory of change. Each strategic element in the template is explained in detail in this chapter. For an even more robust planning tool, see our creative brief template here.

> *THEORY OF CHANGE - This narrative change project aims to* ***[1. Goal]***. *With it, I hope to shift* ***[2. Audience]*** *from* ***[Belief/Action]*** *to* ***[Belief/Action]***. *I will do this by* ***[3. Tactics]***. *This content will reach my audience via* ***[4. Distribution Plan]***. *I will know if I'm successful by* ***[5. Measurement and Evaluation]***.

Before you start, it's important to remember that all the strategic elements in your theory of change should work in harmony. In other words, your audience selection should inform your distribution plan, your tactics should be informed by your goal, and so on. These elements must add up to one holistic strategy that is logical and feasible as a unit—or you will wind up with a disjointed, unworkable plan.

Another consideration is what information can guide your thinking. What resources already exist that you might want to consult before continuing your planning? Have people conducted research or shared knowledge about your topic of interest, proposed target audiences, messages relating to the topic, different campaign tactics and their effectiveness, etc?

1. **Identify your goal –** Your goal is the overarching, positive vision of what your project hopes to achieve related to changing a harmful or false narrative.

   Ask yourself: What needs to change and why? Who would benefit from this change? What positive narrative would replace existing harmful narratives? What goal can your organization accomplish?

   ➜ *TIP:* The key here is to match your organizational core competencies to your ultimate goals. As previously stated, your aims should be ambitious yet attainable.

   > *INSIGHT FROM THE INCUBATOR:* Individual stories are not necessarily capable of bringing about narrative change. One of the greatest challenges of narrative change work lies in conveying a systems narrative. Highlighting the systemic nature of societal problems through a collection of stories can be key to achieving your narrative change goal. Lifting up stories of people experiencing challenges such as poverty may be the appropriate approach to narrative change from an ethical standpoint, but we've found it is not a silver bullet solution. Individuals do not necessarily present their stories in a way that speaks to systemic issues in society and can even unintentionally reinforce harmful narratives. Transforming individual stories into a cohesive, effective narrative requires a high level of creative and narrative skill to navigate the conflicts that inevitably emerge between honoring storytellers' agency and advancing a narrative that clearly articulates poverty's systemic causes. It's important to keep systems in mind when identifying your goal and as you refine the stories you've gathered in order to meet that goal.

2. **Select your audience –** Your audience includes both who you hope to move and what you want to move them to do. An audience, sometimes called a "target audience," is simply a group of people defined by any characteristic that seems important (race, age, gender, immigration status, ideology, location, etc.). Remember, an audience that you do not have the ability to engage with is not part of a sound strategy.

   Ask yourself: Can we reach this audience? What is our ability to communicate with them? How does communication with this audience further our strategic goals? What beliefs do

they currently hold that we want to shift? What habits, interests, or value systems help us to understand those beliefs? How do we want to shift those beliefs? What will we ask this audience to do (what is our call to action)?

→ **TIP:** Think about the size of your audience. In narrative change work, the more people reached the better. However, it may be most *effective* to focus intensively on a smaller group of people if it means that you can sway or mobilize them successfully.

> **INSIGHT FROM THE INCUBATOR:** Identifying and understanding audiences is essential—but challenging for many organizations. In order to effectively engage in the narrative change space, organizations should develop a solid understanding regarding how to identify audiences and how to reach those groups in an effective way. We found that many participants in the incubator had a tendency to target groups with similar beliefs, values, or ideologies to their own. However, if the objective is narrative change, targeting groups that *already* align with your efforts won't be effective. To avoid this echochamber, consider which audience actually needs convincing or persuading and understand that this group may be distinctly different from the audiences you have historically targeted.

3. **Identify tactics** – Tactics are the mechanics that help you reach your target audience. Your tactics are *how* you hope to do the work. Make sure your tactics are something that your organization has experience in and a sufficient budget for, or that your strategy includes a plan to fill any gaps required for new tasks. Be specific about how your tactics will further your goals. You should be able to articulate, "If I do *X*, I expect *Y* to happen as a result."

Ask yourself: What can you do to accomplish the goals you are identifying? What are the key activities and tasks involved? What format will your work take? What organizational strengths can you leverage to do the work? Do you need to hire contractors or find a partner to help?

→ **TIP:** Studying existing, successful narrative change work is a great way to get inspired and come up with your own tactics. Focus on campaigns or movements that share your target audience, formats, or resources. What can you learn from them? You can find successful projects on an organization's website, through trending hashtags, in viral social media campaigns, or even through design and

communication awards. Learn more about measurement and evaluation in chapter 4 and use those learnings to understand if a project has been successful.

> **INSIGHT FROM THE INCUBATOR:** Classic message-framing best practices hold true in narrative change work. With narrative change inherently being a communications effort, we expected to rely on basic principles of strategic communications[4] for this work—and this expectation held true. Audiences' receptivity to narrative change messaging developed in the incubator hinged on the extent to which we targeted it to their values, language, and life context. For example, incubator participants that centered their core narratives around family values or freedom — values often important to more conservative audiences — often showed success in shifting those audiences on systemic issues that inhibit economic mobility, such as wages or circumstance..

4. **Develop your distribution plan –** Your distribution plan is the method you intend to use to get your content in front of your target audience. This includes the channels by which you'll reach your audience (Facebook, TikTok, television, radio, billboards, etc.). Your content has to reach people in order to grab their attention and have an impact.

   Ask yourself: How will my tactics get to my audience? How many people will the tactics reach, and how often? What channel does my audience pay attention to? If I put my content in front of people in the way I envision, how will it resonate with them? Will they understand the words, relate to the storytellers, etc.? Will it move my audience in the direction I want?

   → **TIP:** If you have planned to use particular tactics without fully identifying how those tactics will reach your target audience, this is the time to revisit your strategy. If you are considering tactics that are unlikely to reach your proposed target audience, you should use alternate tactics *or* change your target audience.

   > **INSIGHT FROM THE INCUBATOR**: Distribution is a core element of a sound narrative change strategy, and arguably more important than employing the exact right message**.** Identifying the perfect message, story, or piece of

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[4] "Strategic communications" is a broad term that refers to any effort to communicate with set expectations for what the communication is designed to achieve. Narrative change can be a goal or outcome of those strategic communications; strategic communications is one approach of many to accomplish narrative change.

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content to support a given goal should probably be less emphasized than it is—and distribution and amplification should be more of a focus for narrative change work. Consider your project's potential for wide dissemination: do you have a convincing approach to reaching a large number of people, beyond a simple distribution on small social media pages and a hope that something will go viral? You should have a clear, reasonable path toward a greater audience size that does not otherwise rely on external events outside of your control, such as a major media outlet picking up the story.

5. **Plan for <u>measurement and evaluation</u> –** As mentioned, narrative change is work that can take years to achieve. In the meantime, we often need ways to measure and evaluate short-term progress toward a long-term goal. Every project is unique in terms of the types of metrics that could be most useful in monitoring progress. It is critical to think through what elements of your work you want to measure, how you will conduct those measurements, and how you will use the results. In this guide, we'll focus on two important elements of narrative change work that often merit specific measurement: <u>reach</u> and <u>impact</u>.

Measuring <u>reach</u> is identifying whether people are literally seeing, hearing, or otherwise encountering your content. Are your tactics reaching the number of people you planned to reach? Are they reaching the right people—the audience with whom you had intended to engage?

Measuring <u>impact</u> means evaluating to what degree your work is delivering the outcome that you planned for. Note that the specific outcomes you are trying to achieve will be different in each project, and thus the impact that you want to measure will also be different. For instance, is the tactic that you are executing persuading or mobilizing people in the way you intended?

Ask yourself: What components of my work are important to track, intermittently or on an ongoing basis? For instance, number of signups on a website, views on a video, number of social media posts from allies, money raised, etc. Then ask: What does success look like in each of those components? If you are tracking views on a video you produced, do you expect to have 1,000 people watch it in the first week or 100,000 people? Note that there generally is no "right" answer to these questions—but establishing expectations and ways to monitor if you are matching those expectations is a key part of planning.

INSIGHT FROM THE INCUBATOR: Through surveys and coaching interviews, we know that incubator participants understood that research and testing were investments worthy of their time and energy. However, many conversations demonstrated that organizations didn't truly understand *why* that was the case. There was a general lack of recognition that research was a means to an end, and not an end itself. In other words, groups were sometimes eager to engage in research without having a clear idea of what decisions, if any, their findings might be used to inform. It's important to remember that measurement and evaluation should be built into your strategic planning from the start and your plan should help you iterate throughout your project journey. Don't think of measurement and evaluation as a separate deliverable, but rather as a tool that will enhance each stage of your project work. Learn more about this in chapter 4.

EXAMPLE: See below for an example of a completed theory of change formula.

This narrative change project aims to [**1. Goal:** provide fundamental labor protections and fair wages to all childcare workers in Ohio]. With it, I hope to shift [**2. Audience:** employers of childcare workers in Ohio] from [**Belief:** giving little thought to the working conditions and compensation of childcare workers or blatantly undervaluing their work] to [**Belief:** believing that childcare workers deserve fair pay and benefits for their hard work].

I will do this by [**3. Tactics:** highlighting the unfair treatment of childcare workers through 10-15–second videos that advertise satirical job opportunities without time off, healthcare, safe working conditions, or retirement benefits to underscore that the expectation for safety net programs and livable wages should extend to childcare workers]. This content will reach my audience via [**4. Distribution:** pre-roll YouTube ads and LinkedIn ads that drive viewers to a website landing page with statistics on injustices and a list of actions employers can take].

I will know if I'm successful by [**5. Measurement/Evaluation:** reaching 10,000 employers through the various tactics and measuring employers' attitudes toward childcare work via two surveys].

CHAPTER 3: TACTICS FOR NARRATIVE CHANGE

UNDERSTANDING TACTICS FOR NARRATIVE CHANGE

"Focus on the mechanics of how an idea spreads, not just the idea itself." —Jonah Peretti, *BuzzFeed co-founder*

In this chapter we'll explore how to execute your narrative change strategy, focusing on the creation and dissemination of your work.

Tactics are the specific actions you take to accomplish your narrative change strategy. Your strategy is the planning, and tactics are the doing. This guide cannot cover all possible tactics for narrative change, such as legislative advocacy or community organizing. It will focus on strategic communications, or the purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfill its goals, through creative development and distribution. In other words, this guide will be most useful to those who are creating some kind of visual, audio, or text material and putting that out into the world in some way.

Narrative change is inherently a communications effort, so tactics here really come down to messages. How are your messages produced and distributed, and who are they distributed to?

> **STRATEGY CHECK!** It is assumed that you have thought through the overall fit of your tactics in the strategic planning phase. As you develop the mechanics of your campaign, you may realize that the tactics you chose are not suitable (for example, they won't reach your target audience). If this is the case, you can and *should* back away from the tactics and revisit them in your strategy.

HOW TO DEVELOP TACTICS FOR NARRATIVE CHANGE

Production
Put simply, production is making things. It's the process of creating products, programming, or content to bring your ideas to life. Production typically requires a team of people in various roles—such as a writer, designer, editor, and developer—to make content. Production is the stage in which your project moves from theory to practice. You should emerge with content that is ready to be viewed or heard by your intended audience.

➜ **TIP:** Beware of bias! As you choose your tactics for narrative change and to produce your work, equity should always be top of mind:
- Check your own bias when developing content to ensure that you're not making creative decisions based on assumptions about your audience or impacted communities. Make sure you're tailoring your content to your audience rather than your project team.
- When choosing imagery or language in your work, depict communities and individuals with dignity and respect, avoid stereotyping, be sensitive to stigma and discrimination, and avoid representation that reinforces harmful narratives.
- Make sure your work is accessible to people with a wide range of abilities.
- Support BIPOC vendors and creatives where you can and find avenues for community involvement in your work.
- Most importantly, do your research. It's your responsibility as a creator to employ equitable practices from start to finish.

Production and distribution (discussed in the next section) go hand in hand. They should inform one another, and you should have a plan for each before executing your work. It all comes down to what's possible given your capacities and what will be most effective in engaging your audience.

With that in mind, consider what forms of content will resonate with your audience. What service, content, or experience are you creating to fulfill your goal? Think critically about your material to ensure that showing your content to your audience will change their opinions. Depending on your tactics, the "ideas" you want to get across may be produced in different ways—e.g., a short video that you will ask supporters to share on their social page, a 30-second radio ad that asks supporters to visit a website, or a door cling that encourages supporters to attend a town hall meeting.

➜ **TIP:** One path to narrative change is lifting up community voices by leveraging real stories of those impacted by the issue highlighted in your work. However, in taking this approach, it's important to find a balance—establishing ethical practices that don't threaten the integrity of a person's story while also ensuring that the story furthers your narrative change goal. If you do plan to use community stories in your project, remember that it's your job as a practitioner to "package" those stories by determining how they are framed and edited. Share your work-in-progress content with storytellers early and often to ensure that they can maintain control over how their story is told and that you have time to make changes if necessary.

Production planning should always be rooted in what will reach and/or impact your audience best. When measuring impact, make sure that your work doesn't simply communicate with people that are ideologically aligned, thus only reinforcing their beliefs. This won't create change. When measuring the reach of your project, make sure people will actually consume the content you

make. For example, a three-hour video is likely not the best solution to hold the attention of a large audience.

An important first step when executing narrative change work is identifying your message and specific language. The first questions to explore are those relating to how to talk about your issue overall. What is the problem you want to name or the story you want to tell? How do you want to lift it up to audiences such that it has the impact you want? Which specific words will you use? How do you name solutions to problems or call people to particular actions? How does your messaging directly fit into your broader strategic plan? See below for two tactics that should strengthen your project production.

Tactic 1 - Tailored Messaging

It's important to craft messages that are aligned with the format you've chosen to produce, appropriate for the platform or channel you've chosen for distribution, and compelling for the audience.

- If working with stories gathered from impacted communities, look for themes among the stories that align with your narrative change goal. If starting with your own key messages, pick two or three that are most important to deliver to your audience.

- Then simply write a message in your own words. Keep in mind that if you're working with stories gathered from an impacted community, you should not change direct quotes without permission. Collaborating with community members on messaging is a great way to develop messaging that fits your goal without misrepresenting their intent or experience.

- Next, consider the values of your audience and what language resonates with or deters them. Rewrite your message, doing your best to tailor the framing of that message to your audience. Again, ensure any storytellers are given the opportunity to provide feedback.

- Add your call to action. Articulate what your audience should do.

- Lastly, adjust the length and format of your message to make sure it's the right fit for your production and distribution plans (e.g., a short script, a headline and call to action, a social media caption).

Tactic 2 - Content Mapping

One way to uncover gaps in your production plan, and thus to find ways to improve it, is to understand the journey that people will experience with your project. Think through the

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steps someone in your audience would take when encountering your campaign or program. How would they initially become aware of your campaign or program? Which content would they encounter first (social media post, website, poster)? Where might that initial content lead them next (sign-up webpage, longer-form video, donation platform)? Which step in the journey should lead them to take action? How will you give them the ability to take action? At any point will they be able to share your content? How? Plan out every step that your audience will take from start to finish.

> **STRATEGY CHECK!** Go back to your audience and theory of change when production planning—if you are producing a piece of creative content, can you clearly articulate what you hope would happen with your target audience once they see it?

Always keep in mind that people have to experience the content you produce. If people must actively seek out your content, that will eliminate potential viewers, readers, or listeners, making engagement less likely for those who aren't ideologically aligned. This is why production and distribution planning are intrinsically linked.

→ **TIP:** During the production phase, consider what testing and measurement methods you might employ to gauge if your content will be effective. See chapter 4 for tips on how to gather information by testing a small-scale version of your work.

Distribution

If production is making things, distribution is sharing those things with the world. In this stage your work "goes live," and your content is delivered to your audience. It's important to note that your distribution plan should meet your audience on the channels, also called media placements, that they frequent and prefer. Does your audience view TikTok videos, listen to the radio on their commute, or tweet on Twitter? Distribution is key to ensuring the content you produce sees the light of day.

Consider: where will your content live? What physical and digital platforms do you have access to? What physical and digital platforms does your target audience engage with?

> **STRATEGY CHECK!** Your distribution plan should not only consider your audience's habits, but also the format of content that is best suited for the channels you've selected. For example, if you've chosen the channel YouTube, your content must be a video. If you've chosen a podcast, your content must be audio.

Promotion Tactics - POSE

POSE is an acronym for paid, owned, shared, and earned media—the different ways you might promote your project. There are benefits and drawbacks to each promotion type, so it's about finding the right fit for your unique plan. If you're on a tight budget, focus on earned and shared media. Paid media is expensive, building an audience to share owned media with takes time, and going viral is rare. Focus your efforts on developing content that partners and platforms can't ignore. If you can't rely on the blunt force of a large advertising campaign to reach your audience, your best bet is to leverage other strengths you bring—the emotions your project stirs, the cleverness of your campaign, your sense of humor, or the urgency of your work. All of these ingredients are very helpful in garnering attention. See below for examples of each media category.

- *Paid media* is best for those with an advertising budget. This includes:
    - social media ads
    - boosted content
    - other paid digital ads: banners, programmatic ads
    - TV ads: broadcast, cable, streaming
    - radio ads
    - out-of-home ads: billboards, transit ads
- *Owned media* is best for those with an existing audience or supporter base. This includes:
    - email marketing
    - website content
    - content marketing: community stories, contests, quizzes
    - webinars, events, and trainings
    - publications: reports, articles, blog posts
- *Shared media* is best for those with a small budget or those interested in community engagement. This includes:
    - organic social media: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn, YouTube
    - engagement from devoted audiences: critics, loyalists, advocates
    - user- and community-generated content
- *Earned media* is best for those without a large advertising budget. This includes:
    - media relations (public relations, or PR)
    - influencer relations, including micro-influencers
    - public appearances: festivals, events, panels, keynotes
    - partnerships: co-branding, barter

○ word-of-mouth

Content Tactics - Hero, Hub, Hygiene

This framework helps prioritize your content and repurpose assets in a way that helps make your production and distribution plans strategic and efficient. If you're building a narrative change campaign, try to produce content in each of the three categories below.

- *Hero* - Hero content is your main content and the best opportunity for storytelling. It's often large-scale, evocative content that raises awareness, disrupts, engages, or inspires your audience to act. Hero content is often made with a higher budget, but is designed to create a lasting impact. In other words, it's your 'big bet'. For example, a two-minute video.
- *Hub* - Hub content is the destination, or home, for your hero and hygiene content. The hub is regularly updated so that people can keep discovering more content and have a reason to return. For example, a website or YouTube channel.
- *Hygiene* - Hygiene content is regular, focused content that helps you maintain your audience's attention and gives your campaign a longer lifespan. This content tends to be found through relevant searches, keywords, or referrals from the hero content and will pull in your audience based on interest. For example, behind-the-scenes content or weekly updates on an issue.

➔ *TIP:* Double dip! Consider ways that you might edit or alter the content you already have to fit another content category. For instance, if your hero content is a 60-second video, you could create 5-10–second clips of the video or even still images to be used on your hub or as hygiene content. Repurposing the content you have is typically a cost-effective way to extend the reach of your project.

CHAPTER 4: MEASUREMENT & EVALUATION

TYPES OF MEASUREMENT & EVALUATION

As mentioned previously, it is hard to measure and evaluate "narrative change" writ large because it is a large-scale, long term, abstract goal. Therefore when you think about evaluating your work, you should think about the components you know correlate directionally with overall success. Evaluation work can be done in a testing environment or in the real world as programs and campaigns are executed. Measurement and evaluation is not a separate process, but rather a step

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that should be built into each stage of the work that you're already doing. See the image below for an example of a research-informed journey that your project could leverage.

The Ideal Research-Informed Journey		
1	A leadership team identifies the program's goals and key progress indicators.	
2	The team conducts and/or reviews baseline research to understand proposed topics of focus, relevant audiences, and tactics.	
3	Referencing information from step 2, the team develops strategies, tactics, and content geared towards maximizing the likelihood of achieving their goals within real-world contexts, timelines, and budgets.	
4	The team evaluates their chosen strategies, tactics, and content in terms of their effectiveness and reach.	
5	Referencing findings from step 4, the team iterates on their strategies, tactics, and content.	
6	At program completion, the team evaluates individual workstreams and the cumulative work accomplished.	

STAGES OF MEASUREMENT & EVALUATION

Measurement can happen at four stages during your process—before you develop your project, as you plan and prepare your project for launch, during your campaign or program, and after the project ends.

Before - It's best to start by conducting and/or reviewing baseline research that sets the stage for your project. What do you already know about the issue space or audience you'll focus on? What existing campaigns or programs are out there that you should be aware of? Has research been conducted on your audience? During the planning phase, explore this information and use it to strengthen the direction of your project.

Example 1 - Do a landscape analysis in which you assess the strengths, resources, and needs of a particular community as well as the harmful narratives affecting them that you'll be working to change. To get a complete picture, look at the work

being done in alignment with your narrative change goal as well as in opposition to it. This initial search is about understanding what's out there so that you can respond in a strategic way.

While planning - Sometimes we engage in measurement as a quick test to help inform a decision before embarking on a larger commitment. This is the stage in which you might test a prototype of your idea or a scaled-down version of your content to gut check the impact it has on your intended audience. This way, you can pivot strategically to strengthen the work and make it more effective moving forward. Think of this phase as "try before you buy."

> **Example 1 -** Test different versions of your content before spending a lot of money to use a particular video in an ad; identify which version has the greatest impact on target audiences.

> **Example 2 -** Run a poll or conduct an informal survey (e.g., at a conference or other gathering) to evaluate a target audience's reactions to different phrases or wording describing a key issue.

During - Sometimes we measure as an exercise to check that we're staying on track midway through a program or campaign. This type of measurement should be conducted in such a way that it can guide changes to your project. In this phase, you've committed to content and now you're seeing how that content is performing.

> **Example 1 -** Once you're halfway through your program or campaign, has your audience grown to the degree you had hoped? Checking the number of new followers or viewers, if on a social or video platform, can give you the answer.

> **Example 2 -** After your program or campaign has launched, check your audience's response to the work to gauge the impact you're having on them. You can check this through social media comments, likes or dislikes, surveys, etc. Are your audience's attitudes or beliefs starting to change as you'd hoped? Why or why not?

After - Sometimes measurement is used to assess what we've accomplished. Providing totals at the end of a project can help explain your work to partners and help you consider whether this work is worth doing going forward. Measurement that happens after a program or campaign ends can be a holistic snapshot of the persuasion or mobilization that your project accomplished.

> **Example 1 -** Count the total number of social media posts/reposts from allies using your content or hashtags.

Example 2 - Check the total number of petition signatures.

Example 3 - Determine the total number of people whose perspectives changed on a topic after viewing your content (perhaps through a survey).

→ *TIP*: Measurement and evaluation is a complex topic. Many vendors offer services or tools to help with the goals outlined in this section, such as polls or focus groups that evaluate the effectiveness of messaging or platforms that test the impact of a short video with different audiences. Some of these services can be very helpful and informative in developing and executing effective programs. That said, they can be expensive. Prior to investing in a costly project of this nature, be sure that the potential learnings it may bring you are worth it in the context of your entire program: remember that money spent on measurement and evaluation work is money that is no longer available for your core efforts to communicate with audiences. Sometimes it may be more practical to consider quick, informal methods of evaluating your work. This is also important to consider when working with funders so that they can account for the full cost of your efforts.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Whether you're a novice or an experienced practitioner, you can come back to the methods outlined in this guide time and again to help strengthen your work. Narrative change means playing the long game, which is why the strategies shared here can help you get started on a new project or help you reach your goals with existing ones. In fact, this guide can even inform those of you who are not executing the work, but rather looking to fund or support it, by providing the language and key steps needed to accomplish narrative change.

Narrative change, though at times complex and challenging, can be a significant driver of truth, representation, and ultimately, justice. As this new field of work continues to evolve and grow, so too will the methods we employ to change hearts and minds. We are excited to play our part in the campaigns and movements that support narrative change and are dedicated to sharing our insights with those who are aligned to our mission for a more open, just, and habitable world.

While this guide serves as a high-level introduction to narrative change, we welcome inquiries for those interested in continuing and further developing your own narrative change efforts. To learn more about our Labs and how we might collaborate, contact Purpose at **weare@purpose.com**.

*Views and opinions expressed in this content are that of Purpose and do not reflect the opinions of partners