

Storytelling Framework for Recovery and Resilience Building



Introduction

Storytelling as a tool for strengthening communities has a long history across diverse populations. When aligned with local traditions, storytelling becomes a powerful tool for driving recovery efforts in the wake of disasters by emphasizing **Authenticity, Inclusivity, Hope & Resilience, and Actionability**.

Grounded in these principles, this Storytelling for Recovery and Resilience Framework organizes the recovery process into four interconnected phases. Together, these principles and phases leverage the vast tradition of storytelling to build a strategic approach for recovery and long-term resilience.

- **Heal:** Create safe spaces for open communication to acknowledge collective experiences.
- **Collect:** Gather lived experiences that reflect diverse voices.
- **Contextualize:** Analyze and frame these stories within broader social and systemic contexts.

- **Amplify:** Elevate narratives that foster collaboration and community agency.
- **Mobilize:** Turn insights into actionable recovery and planning strategies that align with shared goals.

The Principles

AUTHENTICITY

Stories must reflect the genuine experiences of individuals and communities affected by the crisis. Authentic narratives build trust, ensuring recovery efforts are grounded in real needs and challenges.

Why It Matters: Real stories humanize the crisis and create a foundation for meaningful action.

INCLUSIVITY

Include diverse voices, especially those of marginalized or vulnerable groups, to ensure all perspectives are represented. Inclusive storytelling fosters equity and aligns solutions with the needs of the entire community.

Why It Matters: A full spectrum of voices leads to more comprehensive and effective recovery strategies.

HOPE & RESILIENCE

Balance stories of hardship with those that highlight resilience, unity, and progress. These narratives inspire communities to envision a better future and motivate stakeholders to act.

Why it Matters: Hope sustains momentum and empowers people to move forward despite challenges.

ACTIONABILITY

Stories should drive solutions by illuminating pathways for recovery and resilience. Use narratives to align stakeholders, mobilize resources, and inspire collective action.

Why it Matters: Stories that lead to clear actions ensure recovery efforts result in tangible, lasting impact.

How it Works



Heal: Preparing the Community for Storytelling

Build emotional resilience and trust within the community, ensuring participants feel supported to share their experiences authentically during the storytelling process.



Collect: Gathering Community Narratives

Using Public Works Partners' Community Justice Index as a guide, build an archive of community experiences highlighting challenges, trauma, loss, resilience and opportunity.



Contextualize: Analyzing and Framing Stories

Synthesize individual experiences into collective insights that guide strategic planning.



Amplify: Elevating Stories to Build Community Agency

Supporting community ownership and agency, ensuring that recovery is inclusive and participatory.



Mobilize: Aligning Stories with Recovery Actions

Build a shared vision that aligns stakeholders around actionable steps, promotes recovery and resilience, and guides resource development strategies.

Heal



Preparing the Community for Storytelling

Before gathering stories, it's essential to create safe spaces and processes that promote emotional healing, trust, and readiness for sharing. This phase focuses on acknowledging trauma, building trust, and ensuring participants feel supported to share their experiences.

Build emotional resilience and trust within the community, ensuring participants feel supported to share their experiences authentically during the storytelling process.

ACTIVITIES

- **Provide Support Resources:** Partner with mental health professionals, community leaders, and support groups to offer counseling and emotional support.
- **Host Healing Circles:** Organize community-led gatherings, such as healing circles, ciphers or memorial events, to foster collective reflection and connection.
- **Set Ground Rules for Safety:** Co-develop guidelines for sharing stories in a way that respects boundaries, confidentiality, and emotional well-being.
- **Recognize Shared Loss and Resilience:** Acknowledge the collective experience of the crisis through public ceremonies, art installations, or other community-centered activities.
- **Aligning Around the Function of Storytelling:** Discuss the role of storytelling in facilitating healing, recovery, and systemic change, aligning expectations and ensuring transparency.

TOOLS

Facilitated Healing Platforms: Use apps like Calm or Headspace for mental health support, or partner with local mental health professionals for in-person counseling.

Trauma-Informed Frameworks: Introduce Public Works Partners' Community Justice Index. Adopt other approaches like the Sanctuary Model or Psychological First Aid for safe engagement.

Community Engagement Tools: Utilize platforms like Neighborland or Zoom to coordinate inclusive healing activities.

Creative Healing Initiatives: Collaborate with local artists to create murals, memory walls, or collective art projects.

Collect



Gathering Community Narratives

Drawing from the Heal phase, the next step involves gathering authentic stories from individuals and groups impacted by the crisis. With support systems like peer counseling, we will utilize restorative justice practices and community engagement to highlight systemic issues that may have contributed to trauma. This process ensures diverse voices are represented, and the community's experiences are preserved.

Using Public Works Partners' Community Justice Index as a guide, build an archive of community experiences highlighting challenges, trauma, loss, resilience and opportunity

ACTIVITIES

- Explore **Public Works Partners' Community Justice Index**: Using a trauma-informed lens, conduct interviews, oral histories, and focus groups to gather first-hand accounts.
- Use creative and accessible mediums such as videos, podcasts, and visual art to record stories.
- Create inclusive platforms for marginalized or vulnerable groups to share their perspectives.
- Begin to develop a set of co-created statements for a resilient and just community as themes for storytelling

TOOLS

Survey Platforms: Use tools like Google Forms or SurveyMonkey to collect broad input. Multi-media platforms such as Padlet utilize various forms of data collection.

Recording Equipment: High-quality audio and video equipment or apps like Rev and Otter.ai for transcription.

Story Collection Apps: Tools like StoryCorps or Gather Voices for structured story submissions.

Community Mapping: Platforms like Maptionnaire to geolocate and visualize where stories originate.

Visual Storytelling Tools: Canva or Adobe Spark for creating story graphics.

Contextualize



Synthesize individual experiences into collective insights that guide strategic planning.

ACTIVITIES

- Leverage Public Works Partners' Community Justice Index:
- Identify recurring themes, such as unmet needs, moments of solidarity, or systemic gaps.
- Based on the co-created statements from the previous phase, contextualize stories within broader social, economic, and environmental systems.
- Develop a narrative that balances acknowledgment of the crisis with hope for recovery.

TOOLS

Qualitative Analysis Software: NVivo or Atlas.ti for coding and analyzing narrative themes.

Data Visualization Tools: Tableau or Power BI to display recurring themes and systemic patterns.

Collaboration Platforms: Miro or Jamboard for team brainstorming and narrative framing.

Historical Research Tools: Archives or databases like JSTOR for providing context to current stories.

Analyzing and Framing Stories

In this phase, stories are analyzed to uncover patterns, shared values, and systemic challenges. This analysis will mirror back to the community, letting them know that their collective voices are heard and that this opportunity for healing is taken seriously. It will also help inform leaders to develop a comprehensive understanding of the crisis and frame recovery efforts around the community's lived realities.

Amplify



Supporting community ownership and agency, ensuring that recovery is inclusive and participatory.

ACTIVITIES

- Share stories in public forums, town halls, and digital platforms to foster dialogue.
- Highlight examples of resilience to inspire hope and encourage action.
- Use storytelling to promote equity by spotlighting the experiences of historically underserved groups.

TOOLS

Community Engagement Platforms: Zoom, TownHall, or Neighborland for virtual or in-person forums.

Social Media Management Tools: Hootsuite or Buffer for sharing stories widely across platforms.

Accessible Content Creation Tools: Subtitles and translation tools like Amara or DeepL to ensure inclusivity.

Interactive Digital Platforms: StoryMap JS or ThingLink is used to showcase stories interactively.

Elevating Stories to Build Community Agency

Stories are tools for guiding communities' recovery. This phase amplifies and elevates the collective experience, laying the groundwork for collaboration.

Mobilize



Aligning Stories with Recovery Actions

The final phase leverages storytelling to drive action. Stories are integrated into strategies for recovery and resilience, helping align stakeholders and build momentum to enact systemic change.

Build a shared vision that aligns stakeholders around actionable steps, promotes recovery and resilience, and guides resource development strategies.

ACTIVITIES

- Develop communication campaigns to share recovery goals and progress, rooted in community stories.
- Use narratives to advocate for funding, policy change, or programmatic support.
- Ensure impact strategies can be measured by a set of justice metrics co-created in the Contextualize phase. These metrics will guide the implementation of the values and priorities revealed through storytelling.

TOOLS

Campaign Platforms: NationBuilder or Action Network for building and managing advocacy campaigns.

Grant Writing Tools: Instrumentl or GrantStation to connect narratives to funding opportunities.

Progress Tracking Software: Trello or Asana for mapping recovery milestones and actions.

Advocacy Tools: Platforms like Change.org for mobilizing community support for policy changes.

How to Apply this Framework

In the wake of a disaster, storytelling serves as a powerful tool to humanize the need for resources and inspire cross-sector collaboration. By capturing and sharing narratives, communities can foster healing, inform recovery strategies, and mobilize critical support.

POST-CRISIS RECOVERY: REBUILDING THROUGH STORIES

After a disaster, storytelling helps communities come together, process collective trauma, and drive meaningful action. Stories can:

- **Create Spaces for Healing and Solidarity:** Sharing personal accounts fosters a sense of togetherness and emotional recovery, reinforcing the strength of community bonds.
- **Inform Housing Recovery Strategies:** Collecting stories from displaced families sheds light on the most urgent housing needs and helps shape equitable, effective recovery plans.
- **Mobilize Support Through Volunteer Narratives:** Showcasing the dedication and impact of volunteer efforts encourages further engagement, strengthening partnerships and drawing in additional resources.
- **Guide Recovery with Trauma-Informed Values:** Documenting lived experiences allows communities to establish priorities that acknowledge and address collective trauma, ensuring recovery efforts are both compassionate and sustainable.

RESILIENCE BUILDING: PREPARING FOR FUTURE CHALLENGES

Beyond recovery, storytelling plays a crucial role in building long-term resilience. By highlighting past experiences and community-led solutions, stories empower communities to proactively prepare for future crises.

- **Showcasing Past Successes:** Stories of resilience—how communities navigated previous crises—can serve as blueprints for effective response strategies.
- **Elevating Community-Driven Initiatives:** Highlighting local projects that strengthen infrastructure and social networks demonstrates proactive resilience and encourages investment in long-term preparedness.
- **Introducing the Community Justice Index:** A collective visioning tool, the index helps communities articulate principles of justice and equity. By integrating these principles into recovery planning, communities can develop trauma-informed strategies that are ready to deploy when disasters strike.

Through storytelling, communities can not only rebuild after crises but also fortify themselves against future challenges, ensuring that resilience is woven into the fabric of recovery efforts.

Outcomes & Measuring Results

INTENDED OUTCOMES

- 1** Strengthening Trust Among Community Members and Stakeholders
- 2** Driving Equity by Ensuring All Voices Are Heard and Reflected in Solutions
- 3** Creating Actionable Insights That Address Systemic Gaps
- 4** Building Momentum for Future Preparedness and Response Efforts

Strengthening Trust Among Community Members and Stakeholders

METRICS

- Survey Results: Pre- and post-engagement trust surveys to measure perceived transparency, inclusion, and trustworthiness of recovery efforts.
- Participation Rates: Number and diversity of individuals engaging in storytelling activities (e.g., workshops, forums).
- Collaboration Indicators: Number of new partnerships or collaborations formed as a result of the process.
- Community Sentiment Analysis: Monitor social media, public comments, and feedback for trust-related keywords (e.g., "collaboration," "support," "trustworthy").

DATA COLLECTION

- Online surveys (Google Forms, SurveyMonkey)
- Sentiment analysis tools (Hootsuite Insights, Brandwatch)

Driving Equity by Ensuring All Voices Are Heard and Reflected in Solutions

METRICS

- Demographic Representation: Compare participant demographics (e.g., age, gender, race, income level) to the community profile to ensure diverse engagement.
- Equity Assessment: Analyze how solutions reflect the priorities of marginalized groups (e.g., through thematic coding of stories).
- Inclusion Metrics: Track the number of targeted outreach events for underserved groups and their participation rates.

DATA COLLECTION

- Equity dashboards (Tableau, Power BI)
- Focus groups or stakeholder interviews with marginalized populations

Creating Actionable Insights That Address Systemic Gaps

METRICS

- Community Justice Index Stories Utilized: Monitor how many community stories, values, and priorities elevated through the Community Justice Index were successfully transformed into actionable insights for planners and policymakers.
- Insight Utilization: Track how many identified systemic gaps or insights are integrated into recovery strategies, policies, or funding applications.
- Policy/Program Changes: Measure the number and scope of new or revised policies, programs, or initiatives influenced by the storytelling process.
- Stakeholder Feedback: Evaluate satisfaction with the relevance and impact of identified insights on strategic planning.

DATA COLLECTION

- Stakeholder interviews or post-project evaluations
 - Strategy and project management tracking tools (Asana, Smartsheet)
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Building Momentum for Future Preparedness and Response Efforts

METRICS

- Funding Secured: Measure the total funding allocated to recovery or resilience projects linked to storytelling outcomes.
- Preparedness Drills/Programs: Count the number of new preparedness initiatives or plans developed based on the framework.
- Stakeholder Continuity: Track the percentage of stakeholders or community groups committed to ongoing engagement.
- Community Resilience Indicators: Use metrics like reduced response times, increased volunteerism, or participation in resilience-building programs.

DATA COLLECTION

- Grant reporting platforms (Instrumentl, Fluxx)
 - Volunteer tracking software (GivePulse, Volgistics)
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Learn how to Apply this Framework

To schedule a consultation, contact **Moe Magali**, Director of Business Development at Public Works Partners, at mmagali@publicworkspartners.com.

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