

Welcome to the Equitable Storytelling Workshop

Co-hosted by



@ComNetworkSEA



SEATTLE UNIVERSITY

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@SUFamHomeless





● **Equitable Storytelling**
A workshop for Seattle communicators

December 3, 2019

 King County
Best Starts for
KIDS

eliminating racism
empowering women
ywca
Seattle | King | Snohomish

● Presenters

Erin Murphy, Communications Specialist, Public Health – Seattle & King County, Best Starts for Kids Initiative

Eric Bronson, Digital Advocacy & Engagement Manager – YWCA Seattle | King | Snohomish

Vy Tran, Prenatal to Five Workforce Development Lead, Best Starts for Kids Initiative, King County Developmental Disabilities and Early Childhood Supports Division

● Purpose/Objective

- **Share knowledge and build skills to strive towards ethical and equitable storytelling and communications**
- **Ethical storytelling**
- **Equitable storytelling**

● Agenda

- **Building a brand on values**
- **Logistics matter**
- **Practice!**

Equitable Storytelling

Best Starts for Kids case study





BEST STARTS FOR KIDS

● Happy, Healthy, Safe and Thriving

We want to see babies born healthy, kids thrive, and young people grow up to be happy, healthy, successful adults.

STRATEGIES AND INVESTMENTS



- Investing Early (P-5)
- Sustaining the Gain (5-24)
- Communities Matter
- Homelessness Prevention
- Data and Evaluation

HIGH LEVEL IMPACT

\$52.7M

Invested across
King County in 2018

220+

Community
partners

400+

New and
continuing programs

Brand Management

Values based

Strengths based

Racial equity prioritized





BEST STARTS VALUES

- **Equity**
- **Transparency**
- **Relationships**
- **Community-Oriented**

CHILDREN & YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD EQUITY STATEMENT

- **Equity is an ardent journey toward well-being as defined by the affected**
- **Equity is disruptive and uncomfortable and not voluntary**
- **Equity is fundamental to the community we want to build**

[Full statement can be found here.](#)

Storytelling Products

Best Starts for Kids Blog
We want every child and family in King County to be happy, healthy, safe and thriving.

Blog Home | Best Starts Website | Children | Youth and Young Adults | Communities of Opportunity

Now Accepting Family Connections
The Request for Proposals is now open. Family Connections is the Gain for the Community.

What we accomplished in 2018

- \$52.7M invested in making King County a welcoming place where everyone can thrive
- 220+ partners leveraged BSK funding and expertise to strengthen their communities
- 1,355+ hours of technical assistance leveraged by communities
- 400+ new and continuing programs
- 16,700+ children received food, essential
- 1,920+ families and youth were assisted
- 3,870+ young people took part in youth

● Storytelling Products



Visual Communications



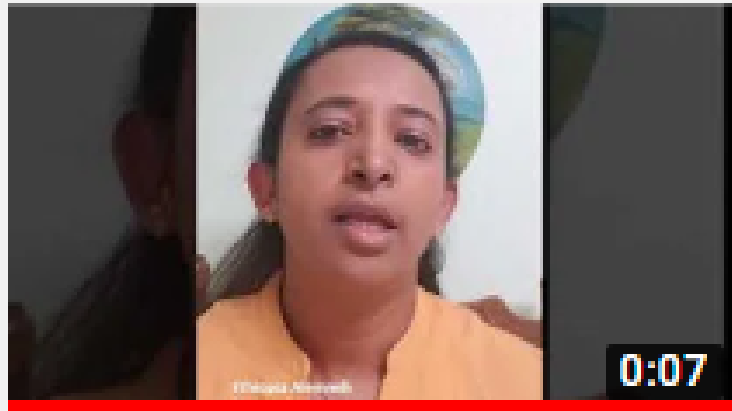




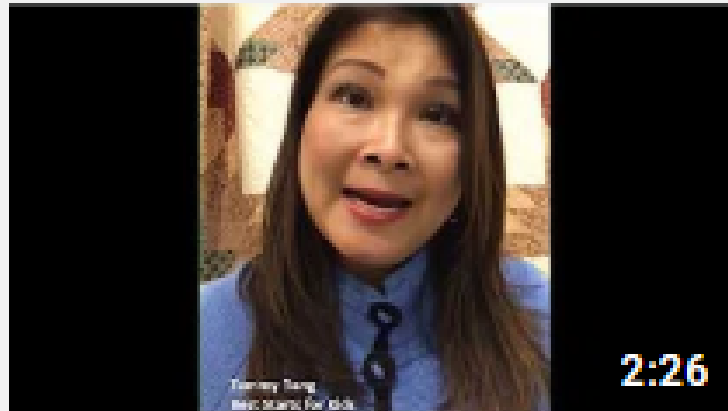
Approval/ Review Processes



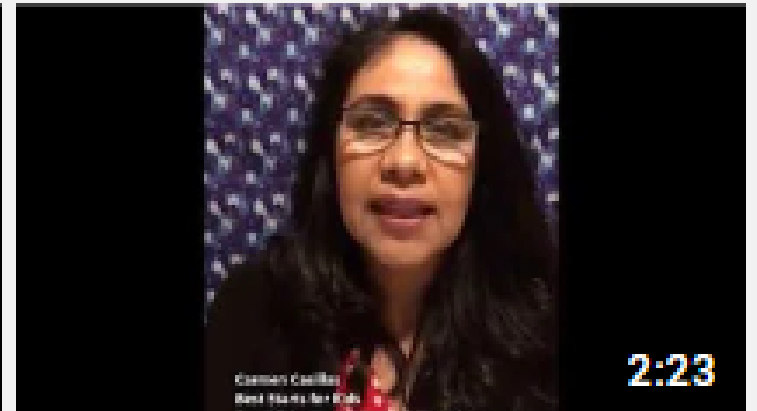
Community Expertise



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Khảo sát sức khỏe Sự Khởi Đầu Tốt Nhất Dành Cho Trẻ...



Que es la encuesta de Salud de Mejor Comienzo Para Lo...

How to get started

Ethical storytelling tactics to put values into practice





YWCA SEATTLE | KING | SNOHOMISH

● Eliminating racism & empowering women

Our Vision: A healthy community transformed by racial and gender equity, where women and girls of color have equal access to opportunity, and there is social justice for all people.

Story belongs to the Storyteller



—● Anonymity

Made up names (Pseudonyms)

Using only first names

Silhouette photos

Limit identifying information

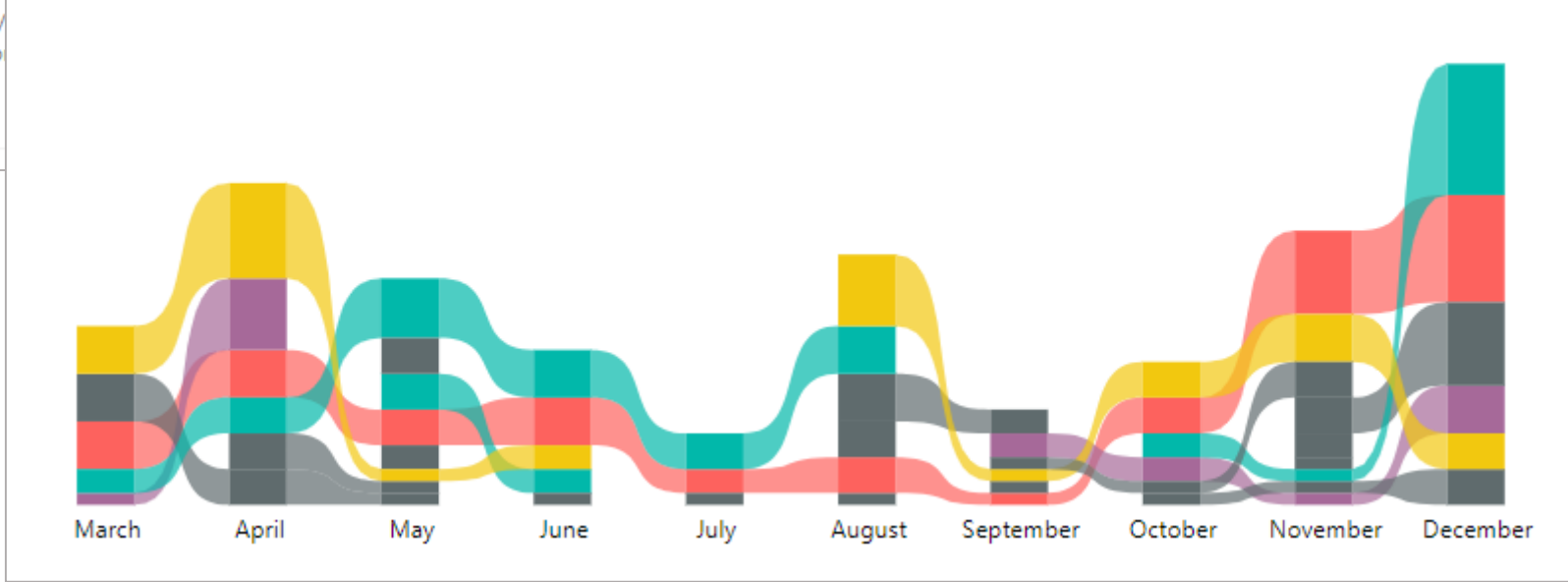
Protecting minors



Measurement and Accountability

Blog Identity	Guest Author	Populations Centered	Populations Quoted	Shown In Photos
YWCA	None	People Experiencing Homelessness	People Experiencing Homelessness, Youth	Asian & Pacific Islander Women, White Women
YWCA	Internal	Women	DV/SA Survivors, People Experiencing Homelessness, Women	Asian & Pacific Islander Women, White Women
Firesteel	None	Women	DV/SA Survivors	Asian & Pacific Islander Women, White Women
YWCA	None	DV/SA Survivors, Women		

Populations Centered Over Time



● Representation

King County's Black population

6%

Percentage of people experiencing homelessness in K.C. who are Black

32%

- There is no ethical storytelling without equitable storytelling
- People of color disproportionately experience homelessness
- Homelessness is particularly acute for Black and indigenous Americans
- Tell stories that reflect the range of experiences

Accommodations

- Providing transportation help
- Childcare
- Scheduling flexibility
- Partnering with other organizations
- Multiple options for how to tell a story



Let's practice!

Values



Voice



Words



Let's practice!



The screenshot shows the Microsoft Word interface. The title bar reads "Word | Communications > CommsToolkit | BSK Guide to Equitable Storytelling - Saved". The ribbon is set to "Home" and includes options for "Simplified Ribbon" and the user "Tran, Vy-DCHS". The ribbon tabs are "File", "Home", "Insert", "Layout", "References", "Review", "View", and "Help". The "Home" tab is active, showing font settings (Calibri (Body), size 11), paragraph alignment, and list creation tools. The document content includes a header area, a paragraph about equity guides, a paragraph about the communications team's questions, a section header "Equitable Storytelling", and a bulleted list of four questions.

Equity guides Best Starts for Kids as defined in the [Children and Youth Advisory Board equity statement](#).

The Best Starts for Kids communications team uses the following questions when creating messaging and stories so that our materials are equitable and accountable to the communities that we partner with and support.

Equitable Storytelling

- How does this story help build a beloved community?
- What dominant narratives does this story help to reframe or disrupt so that harmful myths are not perpetuated?
- What words and messages can be used to reflect and celebrate strengths rather than deficits (real or perceived)?
- Are we being intentionally representative? What visuals should be included? Do they showcase diversity and appropriately reflect the community or person in the story?



BEST STARTS VALUES

- **Equity**
- **Transparency**
- **Relationships**
- **Community-Oriented**

VOICE

As a brand, Best Starts is:



● Positive

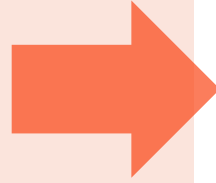
● Warm

● Relational

● Human

● Genuine

Let's sort!



Positive

We focus on our vision and the positive things we want to see.

Show enthusiasm
and pride

Sensationalize

DO

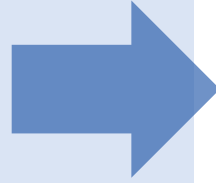
Scare tactics

Focus on the good

Frame based on
deficit

AVOID

Let's sort!



Warm

We love kids and babies and we're not afraid to say it!

Use language that connects to readers' emotions ("love")

Invite audiences to share our vision and join us

DO

Use detached, academic language

AVOID

Let's sort!



Relational

Give credit to
community for their
ideas and successes

Frame a person or
group as apart from a
norm

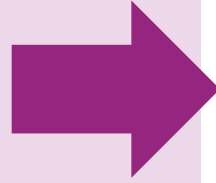
Write in the first person, use 'we' and 'our'
(except in formal communication such as
Annual Reports)

We connect with people
through our shared vision
for kids and families.

DO

AVOID

Let's sort!



Write in plain English

Use abbreviations and acronyms

Prioritize photos of people as much as possible

Break grammar rules in favor of sounding human

Use abbreviations and acronyms once we've introduced them first

Human

We strive to write like real people.

DO

AVOID

Let's sort!



Genuine

We are honest and sincere.

Acknowledge areas where we are still learning or striving to be better

Use sarcasm

"Spin" or share disingenuous information

Discuss racism and other structural inequities and their impacts directly

Share useful information and be a credible source of information

DO

AVOID

VOICE

Now that you know the Best Starts brand is...



● Positive

● Warm

● Relational

● Human

● Genuine



Look under
your seats

GUESS WHICH?

Which one does Best Starts for Kids prefer? Avoid? Why??



Option **A**



Option **B**

—● GUESS WHICH?

Option A

vs.

Option B

WE LIKE...

?

WE AVOID...

?

WHY

?

REMEMBER!



Language evolves

There are always exceptions to the “rule”

Use your best judgment

Use preferred choices as guidance, rather than hard rules

—● GUESS WHICH?

Option A

vs.

Option B

WE LIKE...

?

WE AVOID...

?

WHY

?

GUESS WHICH?

Infants

VS.

Baby/babies

USAGE NOTES

Use baby or babies as a noun as it is warmer. Infant is okay as an adjective (infant screening)

GUESS WHICH?

Substance
abuse

vs.

Substance
use

USAGE
NOTES

Defaulting to abuse reflects judgment,
stigma and often ignorance about addiction

GUESS WHICH?

Community
benefit

vs.

Return on
investment

USAGE NOTES

Do not justify Best Starts for Kids in terms of dollars saved within other systems or other frames of return on investment. We believe babies, kids and families and worth it, no matter the cost.

GUESS WHICH?

Families and
caregivers

vs.

Parents

USAGE
NOTES

Avoid using parents on its own—there are many ways to be a family

GUESS WHICH?

Justice
System

vs.

Legal
System

USAGE
NOTES

Calling it the justice system when it is often unjust is incongruent

GUESS WHICH?

Hardly reached
populations

VS.

Hard to reach
populations

**USAGE
NOTES**

We want to frame in ways that put the onus back on the system, as opposed to individuals/people

GUESS WHICH?

Youth who have
experienced
challenges

VS.

At risk youth,
vulnerable youth

USAGE NOTES

Avoid “at-risk” or similar wording at all costs. This is classic deficit framing (not strengths-based)

GUESS WHICH?

Person-first language

(e.g. person with a disability, person experiencing homelessness)

VS.

Identity-first language

(e.g. disabled person, homeless person)

USAGE NOTES

In cases where someone has self-identified using disability-first language, respect how they identify.

People are not defined by their negative experiences but they can also claim the experience how they choose. They may not perceive something as negative for example.

GUESS WHICH?

Young person,
young people

VS.

Teens, youth(s),
adolescents

USAGE NOTES

Young people is preferred, or children and youth people if referring to younger aged groups. Youth and young adults okay together. Avoid youth on its own except as adjective (youth development). Okay to vary terms to avoid repetition.

● GUESS WHICH?

Grant,
contract

vs.

Support,
partnership

USAGE
NOTES

We want to be relational rather than transactional

● GUESS WHICH?

Target
population

vs.

Population of
focus

USAGE NOTES

The word “target” has violent implications for certain communities

GUESS WHICH?

Strengthening
community-led
efforts

vs.

Empowering/serving
communities

USAGE NOTES

Avoid words that are othering, like “these groups”; speak in terms of the collective, not just from the funder voice (e.g. “Together, we....”, “work with”, “in partnership with”)

GUESS WHICH?

Toxic Stress

VS.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)

USAGE NOTES

Focus on **resilience** and **neuroplasticity** when discussing trauma (children are resilient, children's brains continue to grow, develop, and adapt). Avoid focusing on individual experiences of trauma (ACES). Do not place blame on individuals or communities. Broaden to discuss the role of institutions and systems in perpetuating trauma.

GUESS WHICH?

Resident, community member

vs.

Citizen

USAGE NOTES

We want to be as inclusive and non-othering as possible. Citizenship also has a very problematic and racist history for communities of color.

REMEMBER!



Language evolves

There are always exceptions to the “rule”

Use your best judgment

Use preferred choices as guidance, rather than hard rules

— Thank you!

Questions?

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eliminating racism
empowering women

ywca

Seattle | King | Snohomish

