

Using Data to Tell a Story



This worksheet is intended to be used as a guide to build storytelling when using data for advocacy. If you haven't already, check out our Data Center video series as it will help you use this tool.

connect

Identify the data you are interested in using and use it to build a story. You can find data about economic well-being, education, health, family, community, and safety on the [Data Center](#).

01

Population of Interest:

e.g. children, youth, adults

02

Geographic Location:

e.g. city, county, state

03

Timeframe:

e.g. 2020; 2010-2020

04

Data Topic:

Enter topic of data based on steps 1-3

05

Story Subject:

Connect steps 1-4 to develop a story subject sentence. For example, "The percentage of children living in poverty over the past ten years."



contextualize

Think through the context of the data, such as data changes, reasons why these data are high or low, and the effects these data may have on other parts of life for the population of interest.

01

Trends in the Data:

Observe data & identify trends, e.g. decreases and/or increases

02

Social Math: Consider social math, such as “16% of children lived in poverty” translates to “Almost 1 in 6 children living in poverty.”

03

Systems, policies, programs: Think through systems, policies, and programs that have been created, or not created, to impact this data. List those here.

04

Intersectional Impact: What impact do these data have on other areas of the population’s life? For example, children living in poverty may also be experiencing food insecurity, housing instability. List those here.



disaggregate

When possible, it is important to disaggregate data, which means to break down the data into groups by a characteristic. Characteristics we will commonly disaggregate data by include: racial/ethnic identity, gender, and/or age group. By rooting your story in equity, we can show a clearer story and create solutions to impact historically and presently under resourced populations.

01

Data disaggregated:

Is this data available disaggregated by racial/ethnic identity? By gender? By age? If so, use disaggregated data and note how you're using it here.

Note: you can disaggregate data by more than one characteristic if available.

02

Disparities:

What disparities, or differences, do you see between racial/ethnic identity? Or the by gender? Or by age groups? Note these disparities here to use for your story.



present

Present your disaggregated data with a clear call to action title and chart labels. As a reminder, avoid stigmatizing or contributing to harmful stereotypes when presenting data. Instead, frame the data differences and any inequities about the system and not the people.

01

Call to Action Title:

Choose a title for your visualization that is a call to action.

02

Labels:

Clearly label your chart, including the x-axis, y-axis, and legend. Be sure to select legend colors & categories.

03

Notes on Nuances:

Include notes on missing data or data that could be further disaggregated.



storytelling

Data and data visuals are just parts of the puzzle. Let's put them together to tell a compelling story.

01

Develop Story including these key points:

- The problem and evidence (your data!)
- The systemic issues
- The impact on the population
- Solutions needed