Welcome to the

Equitable Storytelling Workshop

Co-hosted by

@ComNetworkSEA  #ComNetLive  @SUFamHomeless
Equitable Storytelling
A workshop for Seattle communicators
December 3, 2019
Presenters

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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.

Now Accepting Applications for Family Connections Grant Pool

The Request for Applications is now open. Applications are due by 11:59 PM on the last day of the Grant Cycle.

What we accomplished in 2018

$52.7M
Invested in making King County a welcoming place where everyone can thrive

220+
Partners leveraged BBK funding and expertise to strengthen their communities

1,355+
Hours of technical assistance leveraged by communities

400+
New and continuing programs

16,700+
Families and youth were assisted

1,920+
Families and youth were assisted

3,870+
People received health care
Communities Building Impact

Best Starts for Kids 2018 ANNUAL REPORT
Approval/ Review Processes
Community Expertise
How to get started
Ethical storytelling tactics to put values into practice
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

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<th>Populations Centered…</th>
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<td>None</td>
<td>People Experiencing Homelessness</td>
<td>People Experiencing Homelessness, Youth</td>
<td>Asian &amp; Pacific Islander Women, White Women</td>
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<td>Women</td>
<td>DV/SA Survivors, People Experiencing Homelessness, Women</td>
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### Populations Centered Over Time

- March
- April
- May
- June
- July
- August
- September
- October
- November
- December
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!

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
As a brand, Best Starts is:

- Positive
- Warm
- Relational
- Human
- Genuine
We focus on our vision and the positive things we want to see.

**Let’s sort!**

**Positive**

**DO**

- Show enthusiasm and pride
- Focus on the good

**AVOID**

- Scare tactics
- Sensationalize
- Frame based on deficit
We love kids and babies and we’re not afraid to say it!

**DO**

- Use language that connects to readers’ emotions (“love”)
- Invite audiences to share our vision and join us

**AVOID**

- Use detached, academic language
We connect with people through our shared vision for kids and families.

**DO**

- 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)

**AVOID**
Let’s sort!

Human

We strive to write like real people.

**DO**

- Write in plain English
- Prioritize photos of people as much as possible
- Use abbreviations and acronyms once we’ve introduced them first

**AVOID**

- Use abbreviations and acronyms
- Break grammar rules in favor of sounding human
We are honest and sincere.

Genuine

Let’s sort!

**DO**
- Acknowledge areas where we are still learning or striving to be better
- Discuss racism and other structural inequities and their impacts directly

**AVOID**
- Use sarcasm
- “Spin” or share disingenuous information
- Share useful information and be a credible source of information

35
Now that you know the Best Starts brand is...
Look under your seats
GUESS WHICH?
Which one does Best Starts for Kids prefer? Avoid? Why??

Option A

Option B
GUESS WHICH?

Option A

WE LIKE...

VS.

WE AVOID...

Option B

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
Infants vs. Baby/babies

Use baby or babies as a noun as it is warmer. Infant is okay as an adjective (infant screening)
Defaulting to abuse reflects judgment, stigma and often ignorance about addiction.
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 are worth it, no matter the cost.
GUESS WHICH?

Families and caregivers vs. Parents

Avoid using parents on its own—there are many ways to be a family.
Calling it the justice system when it is often unjust is incongruent.
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)
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.
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
The word “target” has violent implications for certain communities.
**GUESS WHICH?**

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