Data Storytelling 101: Laying the Groundwork for CBO Impact
FAQ Sheet

<u>Supporting Your Staff in Data Storytelling</u>

1. How do we support other staff to "tell their stories" in a timely manner?

   Supporting staff storytelling: Develop a storytelling toolkit with guidelines and prompts. Provide templates or prompts to help them structure their stories.
   Example: A template for staff to fill with their experiences, focusing on the impact of their work.

2. About how long does it take to develop a muscle for data story telling?

   Developing a data storytelling skill set: Attend webinars/workshops, practice regularly, seek feedback, and learn from examples. The time to develop proficiency varies, but consistent practice over several months can lead to noticeable improvement.
   Example: Take a project your CBO has completed, analyze the data for key results, and try to frame those results in a story format that illustrates the project's impact on the community. This practice of analyzing data, crafting narratives, and seeking feedback will gradually enhance your data storytelling abilities.

<u>Tailoring to Your Audience</u>

1. When you segment your audience, how to you target your messages? Separate/different stories?

   Segmenting and targeting messages: Tailor messages by considering the interests, needs, and preferred communication channels of each segment. Use different stories or adjust the angle of a single story to resonate with each group.
   Example: For younger audiences, use social media stories; for donors, detailed reports showing outcomes and impact.

2. How can we tailor data narratives for funders versus community members/potential participants? Should they be entirely different?

   Tailoring data narratives for funders vs. community members: For funders, focus on quantitative outcomes and ROI. For community members, highlight personal stories and qualitative impacts.
   Example: Use a graph to show a program's success rate to funders, and share a beneficiary's story in a newsletter for the community.

3. How would you approach an audience that is resistant to the data being presented?

Engaging an audience resistant to data: Use familiar and relatable narratives to frame the data, reducing defensiveness.
Example: If presenting data on a sensitive issue like addiction, start with a community success story to open a dialogue.

4. More and more grantmakers are saying "don't add fluff, just the facts." How do we balance this with storytelling?

Balancing "just the facts" with storytelling: Find the narrative within the data. Even factual presentations can include a brief story that illustrates the data's real-world impact.
Example: Start with a striking fact, such as "Our food assistance program reached 300 families last month," then add a brief, real-life story of a family who benefited, illustrating the impact beyond numbers. This approach keeps the narrative factual and grounded in data while making it relatable and engaging through personal stories.
Example 2: Our support group increased participants' overall well-being by 40%," and pair it with a story of someone who found community and support through the program, illustrating the transformative power of connection and shared experiences. This method effectively marries hard data with human experience, making the impact more tangible and relatable.

5. Does this mean crafting different products for each audience?

Crafting different products for each audience: Yes, tailoring content to each audience's preferences and needs ensures your message is effectively communicated.
Example: A CBO could create an infographic summarizing key mental health statistics or design informative brochures with easy-to-understand mental health tips and local resource guides for the general public. Create engaging videos for social media to connect with younger individuals, highlighting personal stories of mental health resilience. For healthcare professionals, develop detailed evidence-based practices for mental health support. Each piece of content communicates the same core message but is tailored to the preferences and information needs of different groups, ensuring the message is both accessible and actionable for everyone involved. This maximizes impact and understanding across diverse groups.

Data Ethics and Sensitivity

1. How can an organization practice informed consent for folks with disabilities in good faith and not take advantage or have the perception of taking advantage?

Informed consent with disabilities: Practice transparency about how stories will be used and ensure communication is accessible, offering alternatives for providing

consent that accommodate different abilities.
Example: Providing consent forms in easy-to-read formats or using verbal consent processes documented by a neutral third party.

2. How can we shape data to engage folks with sensitive data, like maternal mortality statistics, without triggering folks or causing fear?

   Engaging with sensitive data: Use data to highlight solutions and progress, framing statistics within stories of resilience and community strength to avoid triggering fear. Frame data within positive narratives.
   Example: "While addressing maternal mortality, we focus on the lives saved and improvements made."

3. If we lead with data, it may reinforce negative stereotypes, blame individuals, or present conditions as naturally occurring. How do we engage communities as part of the data planning process before we convey which data is important to get a story?

   Avoiding negative stereotypes in data storytelling: Involve the community in identifying meaningful data and stories. Engage them in conversations about what data should be collected and how it's presented. This collaborative approach ensures the data storytelling respects community perspectives and highlights strengths rather than deficits.
   Example: A CBO that provides mental health services could engage the community in creating a survey, focusing on areas they find crucial for mental wellness. Rather than highlighting negative stats like anxiety levels, emphasize the positive outcomes from initiatives such as counseling services or group activities. This strategy shifts the story to celebrate community achievements and collective efforts in enhancing mental health, demonstrating the impactful role of community input and action in crafting uplifting narratives.

4. Isn't there a danger of categorizing people too much in data?

   Avoiding over-categorization in data: Use data to highlight commonalities and shared experiences rather than differences, fostering a sense of community and inclusivity.
   Example: When reporting on a mental health initiative, instead of breaking down outcomes by numerous demographic categories, they could highlight overall improvements in community wellness and specific stories of change. This approach emphasizes unity and common objectives, reducing the risk of inadvertently creating divisions or reinforcing stereotypes.

<u>Working With Limited Data</u>

1. How do you portray data showing no improvement or worse improvement to an accreditation body?

   Portraying no improvement to accreditors: Emphasize transparency, lessons learned, and planned steps for improvement to maintain trust and credibility.
   Example: "Despite challenges, here's how we're addressing areas needing improvement."

2. How do you tell a story when the organization is new and doesn't have much data? Or when you're not a direct service provider or provide services to other CBOs it's lots of "behind the scenes" work, stories seem harder to find?

   Storytelling for new organizations or indirect service providers: Highlight mission, vision, and potential impact, highlighting partnerships and behind-the-scenes work that supports direct service providers.
   Example 1: "Even without direct service data, our training program for educators aims to reach over 1,000 students in its first year." This shows your behind-the-scenes work's broad impact, even if it's not directly visible.

3. What if it is a new program and we have no data about how it is going?

   Storytelling for new programs: Focus on potential impact, pilot results, or related success stories.
   Example: If your program is new, share data and stories from similar initiatives to illustrate expected outcomes.

4. What strategies do you recommend to present cost savings when you're working with limited data?

   Presenting cost savings with limited data: Use projections and case studies to illustrate potential savings, highlighting similar successful interventions and their outcomes. Use analogies to relate costs to familiar scenarios.
   Example: "The cost savings from our program could fund a local community center for a year."

<u>Shaping Your Data Story</u>

1. How do I pick one primary focus/topic that I want to illustrate? What criteria should I consider for picking this primary focus/topic?

   Choosing a primary focus: Consider what aspect of your work is most impactful, aligns with your mission, and resonates with your audience's interests or needs. In

short, consider impact, relevance, and data availability.
Example: "We chose mental health awareness due to its rising importance and our successful interventions in this area."

2. When conveying an important public health message on social media, which matters most — visualization or storytelling description?

    Importance of visualization vs. storytelling in social media: Balance is key. A compelling visual can grab attention, but the accompanying story provides depth.
    Example: Pair an impactful infographic on health disparities with a short, personal story to engage and inform.

3. How do you incorporate narratives in a way that both still follows required formats but also provides additional context funders might not be getting from exclusively data?

    Incorporating narratives in required reporting formats: Add a qualitative section or case studies to your reports. This can provide context to the data and make the impact more relatable.
    Example: Alongside quantitative metrics in a report, include a testimonial from someone positively affected by your services.

4. How do you tell the story of the time it takes to help one client?

    Telling individual client stories: Focus on the journey, challenges overcome, and the impact of your services on their life, using timelines or milestones to illustrate progress.
    Example: "From initial contact to successful outcome, follow Maria's journey through our program over six months."

5. What do you think is the most effective type of data story (infographic, video, short report, blog, etc.) for the general public, youth, parents, and for policymakers?

    Effective data story type for diverse audiences: Choose the format based on the audience's preferences and the complexity of the message—infographics for quick insights, videos for emotional engagement.
    Example: Infographics for the general public, detailed reports for policymakers.

6. Any guidelines about how to judge the length of a storytelling event?

    Determining the length of storytelling events: Consider your audience's attention span and the complexity of the data. Short, focused stories are generally more effective.