

CHECKLIST FOR DEVELOPING A SUCCESS STORY



This checklist can help you develop success stories to highlight your program's achievements. Success stories are a powerful way to communicate your program's achievements, get support from current and potential partners, decision makers, and funders, and contribute to the knowledge of what works in community health. The key to a good success story is in framing the message to reach your intended audience to communicate how well your program is working in your community.

WHAT MAKES A COMPELLING STORY?

Compelling success stories are memorable, relatable, and inspiring. They touch readers at an emotional level and motivate them to take action. Good stories show change and paint a picture of how this change is making a positive difference in people's lives. As you write your program's success story, keep your audience in mind. Think about how to convey your story in a way that matters to your audience and inspires them to support your program's efforts.

WHO IS YOUR AUDIENCE?

Identify your audience before you begin writing a success story. Recognize their interests, needs, and concerns. What do they care about? What achievements will be meaningful to them? Your audience can include:

- Current and potential partners
- Decision makers
- Funders

RESOURCES

[NCCDPHP Success Story Application: nccd.cdc.gov/nccdsuccessstories](http://nccd.cdc.gov/nccdsuccessstories)

Use this free online tool to help you turn your success stories into polished, two-page documents ready to share.

[Impact and Value: Telling your Program's Story](#)
Division of Oral Health, NCCDPHP

FORMATTING TIPS

- Two-page success stories can be easy to read while providing enough detail about the program. Consider your audience and the purpose of your story to determine the best format and length.
- Keep paragraphs short. Use bullets to break up blocks of text and to highlight important points.
- Use graphic displays of your data and photos that complement your story.
- Avoid wordiness; use plain language (<http://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/developmaterials/PlainLanguage.html>)
- Include references to data or publications cited.
- Provide contact information for your organization.

ADDITIONAL TIPS

- Start with the single most important message you wanted to convey in one simple sentence.
- Convey your core message and why the solution doesn't happen naturally. Discuss the issue gap and then describe the solution. For example, X number of teenagers entering high school this year will die of smoking related health issues if...(place your solution here).
- Make your issue concrete and memorable to your intended audience. For example: "In 2010, before the program was established... if you sat the children [in the program] at picnic tables end to end, it would roughly measure the length of one NBA basketball court. In 2012... if you sat this group down at picnic tables end to end, it would roughly measure the length of three NFL football fields. This shows a 746% increase in participation in... just 2 years."
- Present your data in a way that will engage your audience to action.

1 TITLE

Does the title

- Grab your readers' attention and capture the success of the story?
- Use an action verb to bring your story to life?
- Avoid jargon?

2 SUMMARY

Does the summary section

- Immediately convey what was accomplished and why the audience should care?
- Include key points about the challenge, solution, and results that you want readers to remember?
- Present the most exciting and compelling information?

3 CHALLENGE

Does the challenge section

- Focus on a single issue?
- Describe the health issue being addressed, and explain why this issue is important?
- Use state or local data to describe the problem, including health and economic burden?
- Specify the populations that were affected?

4 SOLUTION

Does the solution section

- Describe the intervention or activity that was implemented?
- Provide a description of the target audience?
- Detail the specific components of the intervention
 - **WHERE** and **WHEN** the activity took place and **HOW** it addressed the problem?
 - **WHO** was involved, including major partners?
 - **WHAT** innovative approaches and culturally tailored activities were used?

5 RESULTS

Does the results section

- Present key outcomes that demonstrate how the intervention or activity had an impact (e.g., how many people were reached? What practices/behaviors changed? How much money was saved? Were any policies changed or developed?)
- Present key outcomes that demonstrate how the intervention or activity addressed the challenge
 - Quantify your results and outcomes
 - Contextualize your data and discuss implications

6 SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS

Does the sustainable success section

- Describe how the program is planning to build on this story's success?
- Describe the next goals and steps to continue or enhance the program?
- Describe how the program plans to achieve those goals?

7 YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

Does the success story

- Indicate how the reader can become involved in the program's efforts?
- Share what you would like them to do after reading your story?
- Link to a website where they can learn more about your program or similar activities?

8 QUOTE TESTIMONIAL

Does the success story

- Include quotes or testimonials about individuals who were affected to personalize the need for or impact of the effort?

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Chronic Disease
Prevention and Health Promotion
Office of Communication

CONTACT NCCDPHP SUCCESS STORY: nccdsuccessstories@cdc.gov
SUCCESS STORIES APPLICATION: nccd.cdc.gov/nccdsuccessstories
Adapted from "Developing a Success Story" by the NCCDPHP Office on Smoking and Health.