

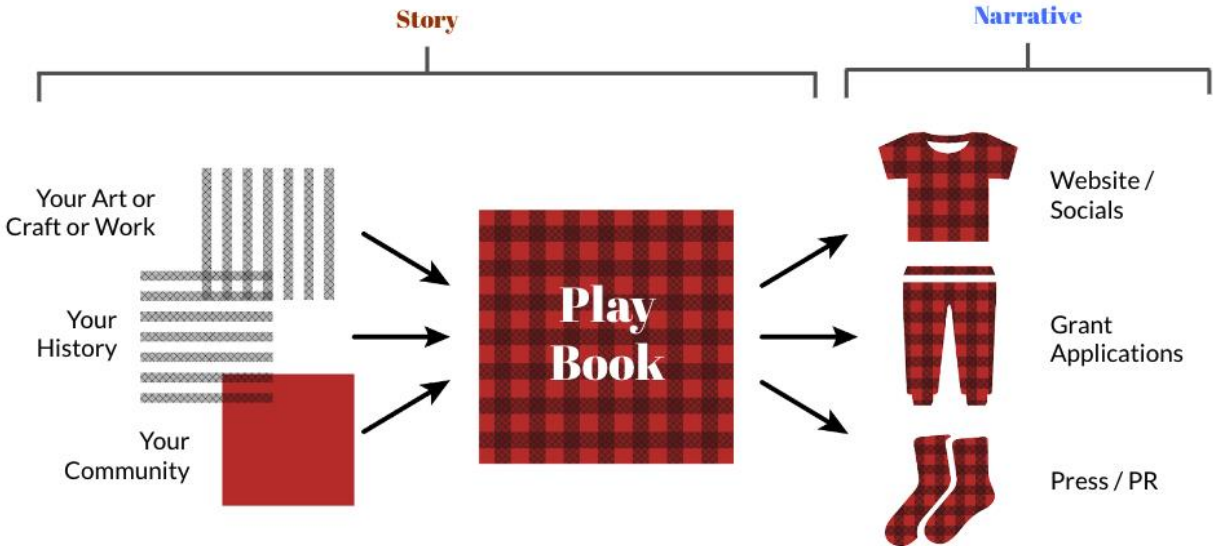
Get Your Story Straight

By Flannel & Blade

Why Your Story Matters

If you are doing Creative Placemaking, then your team is probably a weird mashup of stakeholders and people who don't know each other that well. If you're a mashup of artists and government folks, you talk different languages.

In storytelling—like books and films—the story, in its simplest form, is about a character and the things that happen to them. A story has a beginning, middle, and end. In non-profit land, we are swimming in a sea of stories and every story matters. In such an environment, how can you make sense and meaning of things, much less get everyone aligned around a shared common story? That's the role and power of narrative.



Defining the Frame

Narrative is an overarching concept that influences thought, meaning and decision-making. A good narrative will use a range of stories to illustrate, animate and validate its message. Narrative gives meaning to a broader vision, a view of what's possible, and at this time in our history, that's more important than ever.

Andy Goodman, a nationally recognized author, speaker, and consultant in the field of public interest communications has [this to say on storytelling](#).

Use this document with your team to help arrive at a solid story of who you are, what you do, why you do what you do, etc. From here, you can then create narratives in the form of content to share your story.

People need to understand who you are and what you're doing FAST. If done right, you can get more:

- press
- funding/grantmakers
- inspiration for others
- selling products.

If this is your first funding opportunity, this can be a foot in the door for other funding sources.

If I Had More Time, I'd Have Written You a Shorter Letter

All members of your nonprofit team need to be prepared to share what your organization stands for, what you do, and why you are important. If a community member asks about your nonprofit, every person involved in your organization needs to be able to answer accurately and succinctly and in a similar way. Perfect your elevator pitch so people can easily understand both your organization's role in your community and the wider world. An elevator pitch is a quick, engaging summary of the work you do. It should be simple, easily understood and memorable. Increasingly, elevator pitches aren't done in person, rather they are exchanged via email, websites, chats, videos, etc. No matter how you are giving your pitch, make sure it is succinct and informative, while also emphasizing the emotional component of your work. We like this little Madlibs exercise we dreamed up. Fill in the blanks.

Madlibs Exercise

[**NAME**] is [**DOING**] for [**WHOM**] in [**GEOGRAPHY**] because [**WHY**] by [**YOUR SUPERPOWERS**].

There are many ways to get to the goods. Here are six of the best from [Dan Pink](#).

Playbook

The purpose of your Playbook is to be a repository of everything you say about yourselves as an organization or a project. Especially when working with multiple organizations, people and partnerships, it is imperative that everyone co-creates the content, agrees with it, and gets behind it. It can be used for website updates, brochures and case studies, grants and proposals, and whatever else you need. The Playbook is a living document that should be revisited and updated at least quarterly to ensure it is fit for its purpose, continues to speak in your voice and explains what you do and why.

Here's an outline to get you started:

It often follows the traditional website navigation format, but we understand that many of your projects will fall under an already existing website (or two.) It is still vital to get these nailed for your project. It may also shine a light on some questions you may have about your own organization's identity and story.

- Executive summary
- Our history
- Our mission
- Our goals
- How we do our work
- Why our work matters

- Who we serve
- Our unique programming
- Plans for this year and beyond
- Budget/funding now and future
- Partners and funders
- Team and bios

A Thousand Ways to Tell a Story

Now it's time to "cut your flannel." There are endless ways to tell your story, and we bet you can think of a few off the top of your head. In fact, you've probably already experienced quite a few narratives today (including this worksheet!). Blogs, social media posts, newsletters and more are all important vehicles (or channels) that we can use to tell stories. Leveraging these media to get your story across to different audiences will help you create meaningful content and meet your people where they're at. Some channels you may consider using are:

- Social media (Linked In, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok)
 - Psst: [The Ultimate Social Media Guide for Nonprofits](#), written by Tatiana Morand, goes into detail on which platform is best for the job and why
- Website/partner website
- Newsletter (all participating partners)
- Press/PR
- Conferences/speaking engagements/keynotes
- Op-eds, blogs, white papers
- Word of mouth
- The artwork itself.