TELLING YOUR STORY
SHARING THE IMPACT

One of the best ways to share the impact of our work is through storytelling. An effective story immediately puts the audience in a place that they can visualize exactly what problem our work solves for the community and provides an example of how they can take action. Every organization has a founding story, every nonprofit professional has a personal story of how they connect with their cause and social impact programs create new stories every day.

United Way is looking for a detailed glimpse at someone who has benefitted from your work. A good story will have the following elements:

- A Main character who is experiencing a challenge
- Explanation of how your organization is solving this problem through the UW funded program
- There must be a compelling call to action to mobilize supporters to want to join us in this fight – explaining why is this important
- End the story with the impact on the person/family.
- Include a photo, video, or other media.

Effective storytelling is not reiterating datapoints or the process of how your organization works, rather it is an emotional connection that brings the audience into your work. When building your story ask yourself these key questions:

- Does it demand attention?
- Is the need compelling?
- Is it convincing?
- Is the problem defined in human and emotional terms?
- Does it make a case for action?
- Focuses on the problem not the process?

Looking for inspiration on making your story compelling? Watch this TedTalk that helps identify the shift in how we can approach our storytelling by including the vision for our work.... WHY is very compelling... not the what.

Partner Program Story Example:

Nick is 17 years old, loves his little sisters, his dog and riding his bike. Nick has CRASH Syndrome, which includes intellectual disability, seizures and hydrocephalus. He also has difficulty speaking and walking. Nick's younger sisters spend all summer outside, on their bikes. Nick used to join them, but three summers ago, he outgrew his adaptive bike and could no longer participate in the family fun.

Adaptive bikes can cost from $900 to $2,000! They need modifications that ensure safety, such as seat belts, rounded handlebars that tilt and lift, foot pedals that are adjustable and a handle bar in the back for caregivers to push, brake and drive. For Nick, his adaptive bike helped him cruise the neighborhood, keep up with his sisters and offered many health benefits, including improving leg strength, balance, endurance and fitness.

With grant funding, UCP was able to purchase a new bike specially made just for Nick in his favorite color, red. UCP added torso guards, a head rest, parental breaks, foot pedals with straps and of course, a helmet!

Now Nick can zoom around right next to his siblings and friends throughout his neighborhood. When you think of independence, picture Nick with his red bike, cruising down the street with his sisters and friends. This was possible through the generosity of donors who invested in our mission to support clients just like Nick.
It all starts with a character.

To tell your story, you must have a character to follow. This gives your audience someone to identify with and care about. This is who they hope for, fear for, and cheer for. So who is your character? Someone affected by your cause.

**GIVE THE AUDIENCE DETAILS**

A character and story are more relatable when you include the little details. Give the audience something concrete to remember. Does the character have children or a pet? Do they have a favorite hobby or hangout?

**ESTABLISH THEIR GOALS**

Your character has some kind of goal or desire; perhaps it is to provide for their family or become a doctor. Their efforts to get what they want are what moves the story forward.

**THE VILLAIN**

A compelling way to present the obstacle in your character's way is to portray it as a villain. The villain doesn't have to be a person—it just needs to be an opponent your donors can rally to defeat.
Take action!
Now, with help from your organization, your character must face the challenges in front of them.

EMPOWER DONORS TO BECOME PART OF THE STORY
Show how your organization helps the character reach a happy ending. This is the time to highlight how donors and your nonprofit work together to support the protagonist.

End with impact.
As the story comes to a close, show what you have accomplished together. What progress has the character made toward their goal? How has this partnership changed lives for the better?

CONTINUE THE STORY
If your story is meant to appeal for donations, the audience needs to know that the fight isn’t over. You can convey this by showing how your organization is planning to help others and tackle new challenges. Invite your audience to become a part of the greater story by donating or creating a fundraising page.