

Story Collection Worksheet

HUMAN EDITION

How to Capture
Powerful Stories
That Inspire
Giving

Best for: Human services,
healthcare, education, youth
programs, homelessness
services, etc.

Story Collection Guide – Human Edition

How to Capture Powerful Stories That Inspire Giving

Use this worksheet to collect stories of individuals who have experienced transformation through your nonprofit's work.

Stories are one of the most powerful ways to connect with donors.

A well-told story makes people feel something—and when donors feel, they give. The key to a great fundraising story is showing the transformation that happens because of donor support.

This worksheet will help you:

- Identify the key details of a compelling story
- Capture the emotional moments that inspire giving
- Make it easy for anyone—fundraisers, program staff, volunteers—to collect impactful stories

How to Use This Worksheet

- **Page 3:** The blank Story Collection Worksheet – use this to document real stories.
- **Page 6:** A filled-out example – this shows what a completed worksheet looks like, so you can see how each section should be filled out. This example will help you feel confident in using the worksheet effectively.

Who should use this?

- Fundraising and communications staff
- Program staff working directly with beneficiaries
- Volunteers who interact with people impacted by your nonprofit's work

Where can you use these stories?

- Fundraising appeals (emails, letters, social media)
- Donor thank-you letters and reports
- Newsletters and impact reports
- Speaking engagements and grant applications

Pro Tips for Collecting Great Stories

Ask open-ended questions

- If talking to a beneficiary: Instead of "Did you like the program?" ask: "What was life like before you joined?"
- If talking to a program staff member: Instead of "Was it helpful?" ask: "Can you describe a moment when you saw a big change happen?"

Capture emotions, not just facts

- What did the beneficiary feel at their lowest point?
- How did they feel when things changed?
- If collecting a story from program staff, ask: "How did you feel witnessing the transformation?"

Look for the turning point

- The best stories have a "before" and "after."
- What made the change possible? (Spoiler: It's often donor support!)
- If program staff are telling the story, ask: "What was the moment you knew things were getting better?"

Write like you're telling a friend

- Keep it simple, clear, and personal.
- Avoid organizational jargon—focus on people and moments.

Some stories will come directly from beneficiaries, while others will come from program staff who witnessed the transformation. Both perspectives are valuable. If collecting a secondhand story, focus on the specific moments that show change happening.

Now, turn the page to start collecting powerful stories!

Story Collection Worksheet

(For Organizations with Human Beneficiaries)

Use this worksheet to capture the essential details of a story that connects donors to your mission. Fill out as much as possible to create a strong, relatable narrative.

The Heart of the Story

Who is the story about?

(Name or a pseudonym, age, role in the story, relationship to the organization.)

- Name: _____
- Age/Role: _____
- Connection to the organization: _____

What challenge or struggle are they facing?

(Describe the problem in clear, emotional terms. Be specific.)

The Turning Point

What happened that started to change things?

(Describe the moment of transformation or intervention, focusing on the emotional stakes.)

How did the organization or donors help?

(Detail the role of the organization and how support made a difference.)

The Outcome

What is the result now?

(Show the impact clearly. What's better or different because of the help provided?)

How does this story show the value of donor support?

(Tie the donor's role into the outcome. Use emotional language to emphasize their importance.)

Capturing the Moment

Describe a powerful moment in the story:

(What moment stands out visually or emotionally? Example: "Tears of joy when the new wheelchair arrived.")

Include a quote, if possible:

(Write down a meaningful or emotional statement directly from the person featured in the story.)

Story Permissions

Do we have permission to share this story?

(Ensure the person featured understands how their story will be used.)

Yes No

Notes on permissions: _____

Supporting Details

Date and Location of the Story:

Additional Background Information (if relevant):

Tips for Story Collectors

1. Listen carefully and write down emotions, not just facts.
2. Ask open-ended questions like “How did you feel when...?”
3. Use sensory details to make the story vivid (e.g., sights, sounds, smells).
4. Take a photo, if appropriate, to accompany the story (get permission first!).

This worksheet is designed to help anyone—whether a fundraiser, program staff, or volunteer—quickly and effectively collect stories that inspire action.

Want more storytelling-driven fundraising tips? Go to:

<https://nonprofitstorytellingconference.com>

If you found this helpful, please forward it to a friend who could benefit from collecting stories.

Get help raising more money. Come to the Nonprofit Storytelling Conference. For more information, go to:

<https://nonprofitstorytellingconference.com>

Story Collection Worksheet – Filled Out Example Version

(For Organizations with Human Beneficiaries)

Use this worksheet to capture the essential details of a story that connects donors to your mission. Fill out as much as possible to create a strong, relatable narrative.

The Heart of the Story

Who is the story about?

(Name or a pseudonym, age, role in the story, relationship to the organization.)

- Name: *Maria*
- Age/Role: *12 years old, student in our literacy program*
- Connection to the organization: *Maria joined our after-school tutoring sessions because she was struggling with reading at grade level.*

What challenge or struggle are they facing?

(Describe the problem in clear, emotional terms. Be specific.)

Maria was in the fourth grade but reading at a first-grade level. She would pretend to be sick to avoid reading out loud in class. Her teacher said she might have to repeat the grade if she didn't catch up.

The Turning Point

What happened that started to change things?

(Describe the moment of transformation or intervention, focusing on the emotional stakes.)

Maria's mother enrolled her in our free tutoring program, where she was paired with a volunteer named Emily. Emily discovered that Maria had trouble recognizing letter patterns, and they began working on phonics together.

How did the organization or donors help?

(Detail the role of the organization and how support made a difference.)

Because of donor support, Maria had access to personalized tutoring, new books, and learning games. The one-on-one attention helped her gain confidence and improve her skills.

The Outcome

What is the result now?

(Show the impact clearly. What's better or different because of the help provided?)

After six months in the program, Maria moved up two reading levels and now loves reading aloud in class. Her teacher says she's on track to move to fifth grade with her peers.

How does this story show the value of donor support?

(Tie the donor's role into the outcome. Use emotional language to emphasize their importance.)

Because of donors, Maria no longer dreads reading. Instead, she proudly reads bedtime stories to her younger brother. Your support gave her more than literacy—it gave her confidence and a brighter future.

Capturing the Moment

Describe a powerful moment in the story:

(What moment stands out visually or emotionally? Example: "Tears of joy when the new wheelchair arrived.")

The first time Maria read an entire book by herself, she jumped up and shouted, "I did it!" Her tutor, Emily, teared up and gave her a high five.

Include a quote, if possible:

(Write down a meaningful or emotional statement directly from the person featured in the story.)

"I used to be scared of books. Now I love them!" – Maria

Story Permissions

Do we have permission to share this story?

(Ensure the person featured understands how their story will be used.)

Yes No

Notes on permissions: Maria's mother signed a release form allowing us to share her story and use a photo for fundraising materials.

Supporting Details

Date and Location of the Story:

March 2024, XYZ Community Center

Additional Background Information (if relevant):

Maria's school district has a 40% literacy rate among third graders. Our program helps close this gap by providing free tutoring to low-income students.

Tips for Story Collectors

1. Listen carefully and write down emotions, not just facts.
2. Ask open-ended questions like "How did you feel when...?"
3. Use sensory details to make the story vivid (e.g., sights, sounds, smells).
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