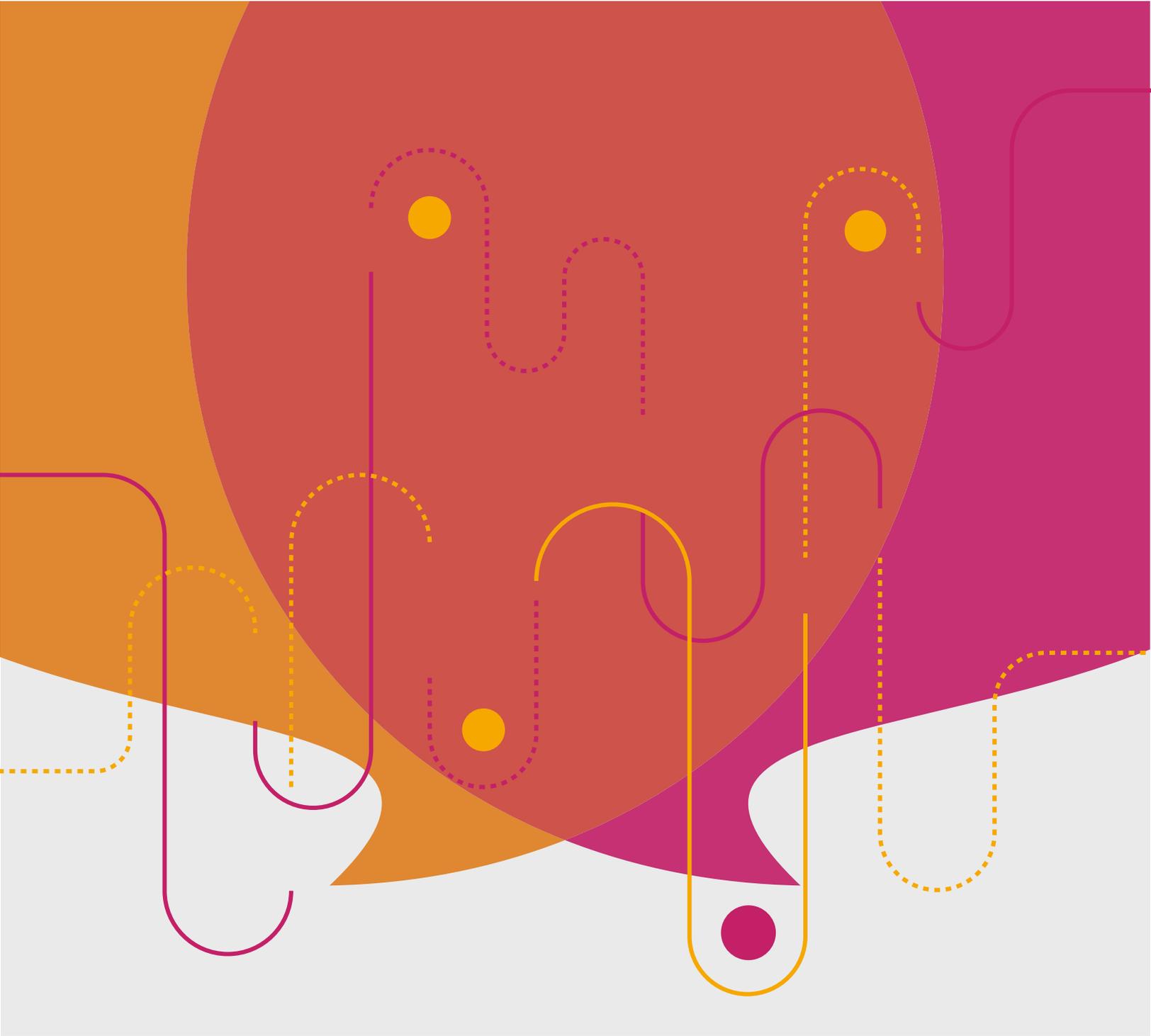


Measuring Narrative Change

July 2019 | Version 1.0



Introduction

The Importance of Narratives

Narratives are commonly held ideas about people and society, which coalesce as the result of the language, stories, and messages we hear every day from many different sources. We use narratives to make sense of the world: we rely on them as a means of ordering, simplifying, and attributing meaning to the information we receive and the events we experience.

Narratives are powerful because they have the potential to influence the beliefs and behaviors of individuals and shape institutional practices. They permeate our cultural, social, and political spheres and often play an important role in entrenching inequities. They can, for instance, perpetuate harmful beliefs about particular groups of people as well as inaccurately characterize the root causes of social issues and, as a corollary, what should or can be done about them.¹

As a result, changing the narrative is often a vital component of social justice work. Narrative change is the process of constructing and promoting narratives that challenge existing ones to drive social change. It is the effort to “tell a better story, move hearts and minds, and drive lasting policy and culture change.”² Building and promoting new narratives about an issue can challenge dominant paradigms, reframe existing understandings of social problems, and offer new solutions—and can inspire people to take action that is responsive to those new understandings and solutions.

Purpose of This Guide

Narrative plays an important role in shaping our social world, and as such, narrative change strategies can be critical tools in achieving social impact goals. However, measuring and evaluating narrative change efforts can be challenging because their results can be hard to quantify and the mechanisms through which they impact social change are complex, long term, and often nonlinear. As an important strategic tool, though, we believe there are ways to meaningfully measure progress and to learn and adjust along the way.

In this context, this guide is intended to help practitioners:

- » **Identify key outcomes and indicators** relevant to various aspects of narrative change work
- » **Access existing tools, frameworks, and resources** for measuring some of these outcomes

In its current form, this document is very much intended to be version 1.0—we welcome input and feedback as we continue to develop its content. A later version with more tools, resources, and examples from the field is expected in early 2021.

1. Kaleta, J. & Carrasco, J. (2019, Feb 15). Flipping the script: A moral and economic case for narrative change. Retrieved from <https://www.livingcities.org/blog/1280-flipping-the-script-a-moral-and-economic-case-for-narrative-change>.

2. The Opportunity Agenda. (n.d.). Communications & culture for narrative change. Retrieved from <https://www.opportunityagenda.org/approach/communications-culture-narrative-change>.

Challenges in Measuring Narrative Change

Fundamentally, narrative change is about shifting the way people think, creating new frames for the way they interpret and respond to the things they see, hear, and experience. It's also about shifting narrative power, changing who gets to tell stories, certainly, but at a deeper level, who gets to claim authority, define issues, and assign meaning to those issues. These are not easy things to measure! And compounding this is the challenge of understanding how these changes might be contributing to broader shifts in structural and institutional power.

As noted previously, measuring narrative change and evaluating its impacts presents certain challenges because the outcomes that you're looking for—from changing the discursive framing of an issue to the longer-term goal of moving hearts and minds—tend to be hard to quantify. Additionally, the mechanisms through which narrative works to effect social change are complex, involving lots of different actors and activities, and may defy linear models of cause and effect. They also operate over a long-time horizon, making it hard to capture short-term results.

Given all this, how can we tell if a narrative change strategy is working? Here, we suggest some of the intermediate outcomes that may be helpful signposts when it comes to answering this question, providing some guidance on identifying and measuring the types of changes you might expect to see on the path to a new public narrative and its resulting social impacts.

A Framework for Measuring Narrative Change

This guide draws on the “four baskets” approach developed by Narrative Initiative, which identifies the key capacities necessary for narrative change:³

- » **Create:** the act of generating a new narrative
- » **Translate:** expressing the narrative in ways many different audiences can connect with
- » **Drive:** moving your narrative in public through various strategic interventions
- » **Observe together:** mapping the narrative landscape to understand where and how your narrative is being adopted, and where improvements can be made

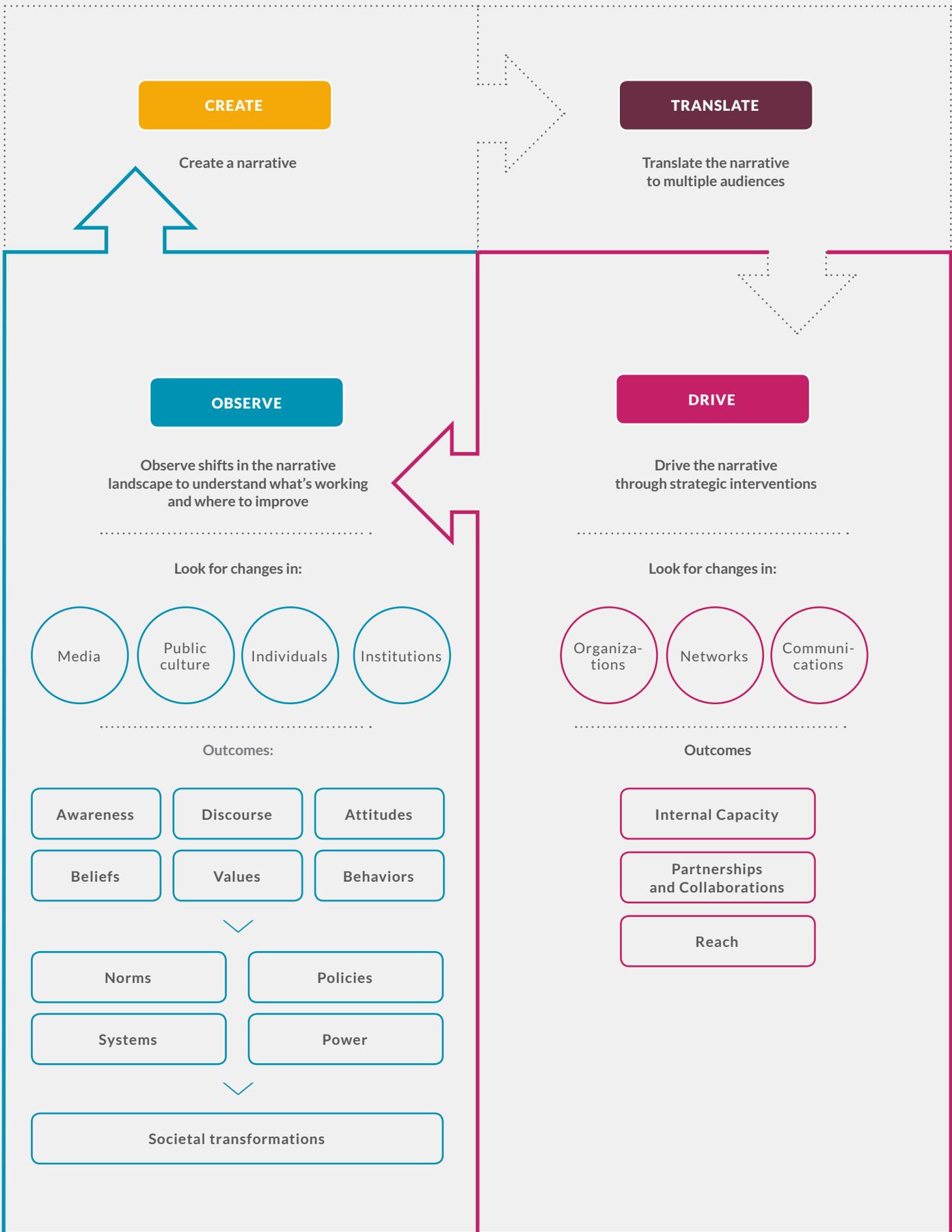
Because we are primarily concerned here with the identification and measurement of outcomes, we focus on the latter two capacities: drive and observe. This is not intended as a “how-to” guide for narrative change so engages less with questions of creation and translation. However, these capacities are discussed briefly where they have implications for measurement and evaluation, and we also provide resources for devising strategy and crafting narratives in an appendix to this document.

3. The Narrative Initiative. (2019, May 15). Narrative change: A working definition (and some related terms). Retrieved from https://narrativeinitiative.org/blog/narrative-change-a-working-definition-and-related-terms/?mc_cid=142a950221&mc_eid=ca9036f5c9.



Image credit: Narrative Initiative

Figure 2 Framework for Narrative Change Outcomes



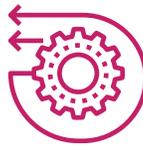
Outline of This Document

The remainder of this document is organized into three sections, which address different aspects of measuring narrative change outcomes:



Questions to Consider

This section outlines some key strategic and methodological considerations that it may be helpful to think through as early as possible, as they will have implications for any measurement and evaluation approach.



Driving the Narrative

This section will consider the outcomes related to driving narratives, including organizational capacity, partnerships and collaboration, and reach.



Observing the Narrative

This section will consider the outcomes related to observing the narrative, including its adoption in media and cultural discourse and its impacts on individual attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, as well as some consideration of longer-term systems changes.

The latter two sections will include the following: an overview of why these outcome categories are useful for measuring narrative change, some examples of relevant outcomes and indicators,⁴ and some available resources for identifying and measuring these outcomes. We also provide some assessment of “level of lift” associated with each of the resources. For example:

		
Low Lift	Medium Lift	High Lift
<p>Low lift might entail reviewing a resource to better understand what approaches are relevant to your work or using automated tools to track reach.</p>	<p>Medium lift may include analyzing a sample of media content or conducting small focus groups.</p>	<p>High lift might include large-scale survey research or undertaking more complex policy analysis.</p>

4. Because this document is focused on potential outcomes associated with narrative change—which is where the challenge for measurement often lies—we do not spend as much time considering more traditional communications and engagement output metrics, though they are addressed in places where we believe they have relevance for outcomes of interest (for instance, we provide some indicators of reach in sections focused on driving the narrative).



Measuring Narrative Change Outcomes: Questions to Consider

What do you want your narrative to do?

Understanding exactly what your narrative needs to do is important for measurement because it will help to establish the outcomes that are most relevant to and appropriate for your strategy and its aims.

What are you up against?

The first step here is thinking about what you are up against in terms of existing narratives and what you will need to do to counter them. An invaluable resource in this respect is [Narrative Power Analysis](#), which is a method of systematically examining the narratives that currently underpin systems of power in order to challenge them. It deconstructs the elements and assumptions of “status quo” narratives and helps to identify the particular points of intervention at which they can be challenged or where there is a place for a new narrative to be inserted.

A worksheet for carrying out narrative power analysis can be found [here](#).

What approach will you take?

From there, it can be helpful to think about what approaches are best suited to changing these narratives. Some approaches you might take include the following:⁵

- » **Create:** take advantage of white space in the current landscape to grow a new narrative
- » **Counter:** undermine an unfavorable narrative and propagate a narrative that decreases its impact
- » **Amplify:** articulate an existing narrative more widely via new messengers and channels to increase its impact
- » **Reframe:** change the logic of an unfavorable narrative to support a more favorable one
- » **Attach:** revise an existing narrative to connect it more explicitly with your issue and framing

The approach that you decide to take has implications for what you end up measuring. For example, if the aim is to grow a new narrative or amplify an existing one, a meaningful measure may be the presence of a specific narrative in media, public debate, or other forums where it had previously been absent. However, if the aim is to counter a dominant narrative, it may be more meaningful to look qualitatively at changes over time in how that issue is reported on and discussed in those forums.

5. Adapted from [Protagonist's](#) typology of strategies for narrative change campaigns

What type of changes are you interested in?

Narrative is a broad and encompassing concept, so it can be helpful to think about its constituent components and which of these you are interested in measuring. For example, you might be interested in tracking changes in the following: language, stories, frames, and messages.

Language

One component of narrative change is changing the language that is used to describe or talk about an issue, community, or group. This may include propagating and measuring the use of language that emphasizes humanity, dignity, and solidarity; that refers to people in accurate and respectful ways; and that uses positive, asset-based vocabulary, imagery, and metaphors. It is important to recognize that language can mean different things to different people, even when deployed as part of a comprehensive strategy, and that different changes in language may be relevant for different audiences. While the increased use and salience of language does not necessarily equate to narrative change, shifts in language can denote changes in the cues, concepts, and ideas people associate with an issue.

Stories (and who tells them)

Another component of narrative change is changing the salient stories that are told about an issue. Stories “transmit a society’s ideas, beliefs [and] behaviors . . . from one person to another” and “collectively create the culture we live in.”⁶ As such, they can have a profound impact on how people interpret the world and act within it. This makes them a critical component of narrative change: telling new stories lays the groundwork for broader narrative shifts by engendering empathy and offering new interpretations of social problems and their solutions. Tracking who gets to tell these stories is also important: changes in who gets to tell stories—whose voices are amplified and considered authoritative—also signals shifts in narrative and, ultimately, other forms of power.

Frames

Another aspect of narrative change to look for is change in the frames through which issues are presented and viewed. Frames are the “organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world”⁷; they are the cognitive contexts within which the information people receive acquires meaning.⁸ While they are a part of our cognition, frames can also be constructed—framing can be understood as “the subtle selection of certain aspects of an issue in order to cue a specific response.”⁹ Changes in the framing of an issue can be seen through the language and stories used but are also more encompassing than these: framing also includes considerations such as metaphors, images, choice of messenger, the order in which information is presented, or the foregrounding of particular values.

Messages

Finally, you might be interested in tracking changes in messages. Messages can be understood as the “takeaways” that flow logically from the language, stories, and frames used to talk about an issue: what is the specific interpretation, ask, or action that the target audience comes away with?¹⁰

As is evident, none of these categories are mutually exclusive, and there may be substantial overlap, but understanding which of these you want or are able to measure and what that tells you about what types of change are happening can help to underpin your measurement efforts.

6. Narrative Initiative. (2017). Toward new gravity. Retrieved from https://narrativeinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/TheNarrativeInitiative_TowardNewGravity.pdf

7. Reese, S. D. (2001). Prologue—Framing public life. In Reese, S. D., Gandy, O. H., Grant, A. E. (Eds.), *Framing public life: Perspectives on media and our understanding of the social world*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

8. Ganz, M. (2001). The power of story in social movements. *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association*, Anaheim, California, August 18–21, 2001.

9. Frameworks. (n.d.). Strategic frame analysis. Retrieved from <https://www.frameworksinstitute.org/sfa-overview.html>.

10. Race Forward. (2014). Moving the race conversation forward. Retrieved from https://act.colorlines.com/acton/attachment/1069/f-0114/1/-/-/-/1/Racial_Discourse_Part_1.PDF.

How will you capture change over time?

Given the nature of this work, a key consideration for any approach you might take to measurement is capturing *change*. There are various ways you can think about this:

- » **Pre- and post-intervention:** this involves capturing a baseline measurement for any of the outcomes you're interested in. Ideally, this would be done before you start to implement your strategy but, if not, can be carried out at whichever point you're currently at; this will still allow you to see changes in these outcomes over time.
- » **Targeted and non-targeted populations:** this involves measuring outcomes among different groups of people, looking at populations that have been exposed to your interventions compared to those who have not. This might, for instance, be geographically based (i.e., a place where you ran a campaign and a place where you didn't) or demographically based (i.e., a particular age range that you targeted with your messages and one you did not).

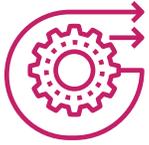
How will you think about your role in achieving outcomes?

It can also be helpful to understand what contribution your organization is positioned to make in the broader ecosystem of actors working on this issue, particularly given the inherently collaborative nature of narrative change work and the fact that it's aimed at fostering complex social and political outcomes and so doesn't function in isolation from other advocacy and programmatic efforts.

Different organizations are positioned to make different contributions to narrative change outcomes depending on their resources, connections, and capacities. Thinking about the specific role your organization is best placed to play is important because it helps you make a fair assessment of the types of outcomes you can expect to see as a result of your efforts.

For guidance and suggestions on understanding different roles in narrative change, see the following:

- » Jim Coe's and Rhonda Schlangen's [No Royal Road \(2019\) for a framework for assessing contributions to advocacy campaigns](#) that is highly applicable to narrative change efforts. This framework suggests a number of different types of roles an organization can play in this type of work, from seed sower to team contributor to primary actor.
- » The Active Voice Lab's [set of horticulture metaphors for actors engaged in narrative work](#), which helps answer questions about what role an organization is well positioned to play. These roles include, "trowels," who dig deep into issues to plant seeds of change, or "sprinklers," who facilitate new growth in narratives from a wide array of storytellers.



Driving the Narrative: Outcomes and Resources

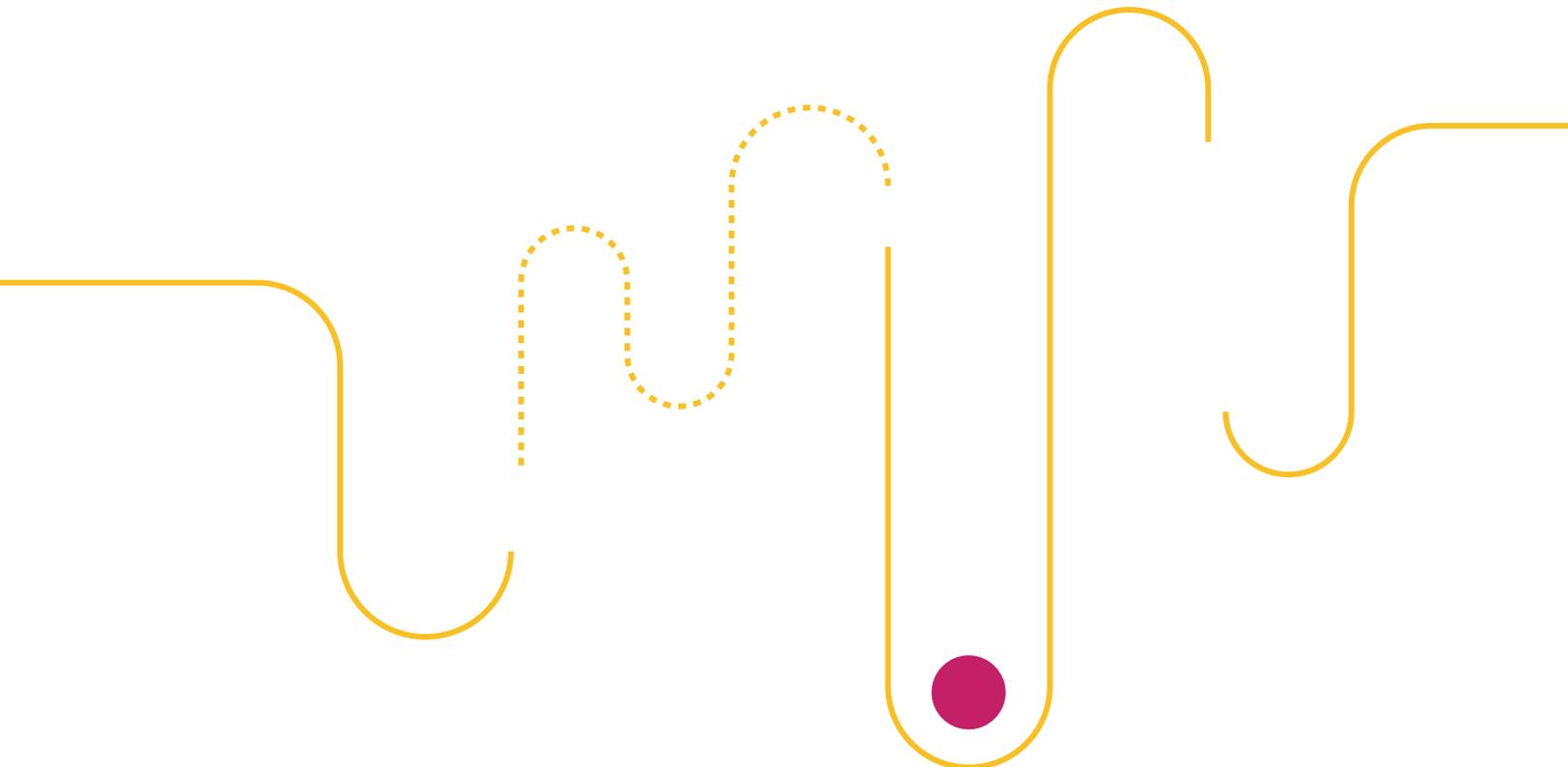
With those broad considerations in mind, we now turn to measuring specific components of narrative change.

When it comes to thinking about the outcomes of narrative change efforts, a key question is whether or not you're actually getting your message out or, to put it another way, whether you are driving your narrative. This encompasses a number of operational considerations: Is your strategy being well implemented, and is it appropriate to the task? Are the right actors involved? Are your messages reaching the people they need to reach?

There are several categories of intermediate outcomes that may be useful to consider when it comes to understanding the progress being made in driving the narrative:

- **Internal capacity**
- **Partnerships and collaborations**
- **Reach**

As noted previously, the sections that follow will give an overview of why these outcome categories are useful for measuring narrative change, provide some examples of relevant outcomes and indicators (this list is by no means exhaustive, but can be used to prompt thinking), and then highlight some available resources for identifying and measuring outcomes.



→ Internal Capacity

Rationale: Narrative change is a long and complex process and requires a particular set of resources and skills. This includes strategic and communications capacity as well as appropriate staffing, funding, structures, and systems. Building these resources, skills, and capacities are not necessarily ends in themselves, but they *are* vital to the effective implementation of narrative change strategies.

Where will you see change?

Organization as a whole

Leadership within organizations

Teams within organization

Individual staff members

Sample Outcomes for Internal Capacity

Sample Outcome	Sample Indicators
Changes in leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Leaders from narrative change campaigns taking on increasing role in organization » Number of requests from other organizations for support in narrative change efforts » Support provided to other organizations working on narrative change
Improved technical capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Number of staff trained in technical capacities relevant to narrative change (e.g., community engagement, message development, strategic communications, network building) » Number of staff reporting an increase in their own technical skills relevant to narrative change » Number of staff or other stakeholders reporting an increase in team/department/organization's technical capacity to engage in narrative change activities
Improved capacity for strategic planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Number of staff trained in strategic planning relevant to narrative change » Number of staff reporting an increase in their own skills relevant to strategic planning » Number of staff or other stakeholders reporting that organization has clear priorities, strategies, and goals related to narrative change
Improved financial stability and resource availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Increase in or maintenance of adequate staff for narrative change work » Increase in organizational budget dedicated to narrative change activities

Resources for Internal Capacity

Resource	When to use it	What it is	Level of lift
<p><u>Measuring Impact: An Organizer's Toolkit to Evaluate Communications Effectiveness</u></p> <p>Center for Media Justice</p>	<p>When you're looking to assess improvements in your organization's infrastructure and capacity for communications-related work and to better understand if that work has been planned and executed well</p>	<p>A toolkit providing a series of self-assessments of organizational capacity for carrying out communications strategies as well as for evaluating the appropriateness and effectiveness of strategies themselves</p>	<p>Medium <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p><u>Informing Advocacy and Communications Capacity Building Efforts: A Culturally Responsive Tool for Assessment</u></p> <p>ORS Impact, Using Evidence, Sawaya Consulting, The Khana Group</p>	<p>When you're looking for an example of a tool that measures organizational capacity in areas that are broadly applicable to narrative change</p>	<p>A survey instrument and interview protocol that can be used in tandem for assessing advocacy and communications capacity</p>	<p>Medium <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p><u>Organizational capacity assessment tools database</u></p> <p>Hewlett Foundation</p>	<p>When you're looking for existing tools that can be used to assess capacity, which may contain components relevant to narrative change</p>	<p>A spreadsheet of organizational capacity assessment tools (There is also a document providing guidance on which might be most appropriate for a given context)</p>	<p>High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>(many different tools to review and potential modification needed)</p>

→ Partnerships and Collaborations

Rationale: Narrative change happens within an ecosystem: by its very nature, it needs messages to be amplified, maintained, and reproduced through many different channels and by many different voices. This requires systematic and ongoing collaboration with a broad coalition of partners, be they individual actors or organizations. Because they are so vital to the process, understanding the development of partnerships and coalitions and how well positioned they are to advance narrative change can be very valuable when it comes to measuring narrative change efforts.

BUILDING POWERFUL NETWORKS FOR NARRATIVE CHANGE—BLUEPRINT FOR BELONGING

Led by the Haas Institute, the *Blueprint for Belonging* project is a collaboration between over 20 organizations in California, aimed at achieving transformative social outcomes through narrative change. Collaboration is at the heart of this model because “collectively, we share the analysis that in order to achieve transformative change in California, we need to develop a meta-narrative that underpins the work across individual movements, issues, and policies.”

To this end, the project engages with a wide range of sectors that may have an impact on building and sustaining narratives—“community based power building, electoral field work, government, media, labor, philanthropy, faith, advocacy, academia, policy and legal”—and has built a large network to support alignment and intention around narrative work across all of these various fields.

Where will you see change?



Sample Outcomes for Partnerships and Collaborations

Sample Outcome	Sample Indicators
Increased number of partners supporting issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Number of formal or informal connections with key individuals or organizations » Number of key individuals or organizations publicly stating support for issue
Increased level of collaboration between partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Number of key individuals or organizations directly involved in narrative change intervention or campaign » Increased frequency and intensity of communications between partners » Increased levels of trust between partners
Increased alignment of efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Development of shared vision and strategy for narrative change » Increased number of joint campaigns and activities around narrative change » Increased sharing of resources between organizations
Increased strategic breadth of partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Number of new individuals or organizations with key strategic resources or skill sets engaged

Resources for Partnerships and Collaborations

Resource	When to use it	What it is	Level of lift
<p><u>Advancing the Measurement of Collective Community Capacity to Address Adverse Childhood Experiences and Resilience</u></p> <p>Community Science</p>	<p>When you are looking for examples of tools that you can use to assess the capacity and collaborative strength of coalitions</p>	<p>A report outlining the development, implementation, and results of a collective capacity assessment around adverse childhood events. It gives an overview of the concepts and methods used for assessing collective capacity and examples of surveys and tools for measurement</p>	<p>Low ■ □ □ (review)</p> <p>Medium ■ ■ □ (implementing tools)</p>
<p><u>Network Health Scorecard</u></p> <p>Network Impact</p>	<p>When you want to assess the performance, functioning, and capacity of a network that you lead or belong to, with narrative change outcomes in mind</p>	<p>A short scorecard for rating various aspects of a network's performance</p>	<p>Low ■ □ □ (if used as an internal tool)</p> <p>High ■ ■ ■ (if used with all external partners as intended)</p>
<p><u>Network Evaluation in Practice: Approaches and Applications</u></p> <p>Network Impact and Center for Evaluation Innovation</p>	<p>When you want to understand the frameworks used to evaluate networks, to see what might be relevant to your work</p>	<p>An article outlining an evaluation framework for network assessment, network connectivity, network health, and network results; also has case examples</p>	<p>Low ■ □ □ (review)</p> <p>High ■ ■ ■ (implementing network evaluation)</p>
<p><u>Social network survey</u></p> <p>Graham Durant-Law</p>	<p>If you want to conduct a network analysis and are looking for an example of a survey instrument</p>	<p>A social network survey for individuals that could also be adapted for organizations; designed to identify connections between people, the type of support and information that flows through those connections, and the value that is placed on them</p>	<p>High ■ ■ ■</p>

→ Reach

Rationale: You can't change a narrative if your messages aren't reaching the people they need to. Understanding the reach of your narrative interventions can therefore be a useful intermediate outcome to measure in order to make sure you're getting your message out to your intended audiences. Of course, this doesn't tell you whether or not your messages are having a particular impact; but it does allow you to see how many people are seeing them and who those people are, which are important operational considerations for this stage of driving the narrative.

Where will you see change?

This will depend on what you choose to measure but might include the following:



(e.g., in sharing or subscription behavior, event attendance)



(e.g., posts, comments)



(e.g., like, shares, etc.)

Sample Outcomes for Reach

Sample Outcome	Sample Indicators
<p>Increased reach of messages</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Number of pageviews » Number of sign-ups to newsletters etc. » Number of views/downloads of online content » Number of social media likes, shares, posts, comments, and etc. » Number of click-throughs from emails » Number of mentions on blogs or media sites » Number of people attending events

Resources for Reach

Resource	When to use it	What it is	Level of lift
<p><u>Communications monitoring, evaluating and learning toolkit</u></p> <p>Overseas Development Institute</p>	<p>When you're looking for examples of tools that you can use to assess the capacity and collaborative strength of coalitions</p>	<p>A report outlining the development, implementation, and results of a collective capacity assessment around adverse childhood events, which gives an overview of the concepts and methods used for assessing collective capacity and examples of surveys and tools for measurement</p>	<p>Low ■ □ □ (review)</p> <p>Medium ■ ■ □ (implementing tools)</p>
<p><u>Integrated Evaluation Framework</u></p> <p>Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication</p>	<p>When you want to assess the performance, functioning, and capacity of a network that you lead or belong to, with narrative change outcomes in mind</p>	<p>A short scorecard for rating various aspects of a network's performance</p>	<p>Low ■ □ □ (if used as an internal tool)</p> <p>High ■ ■ ■ (if used with all external partners as intended)</p>
<p><u>A pragmatic guide to monitoring and evaluating research communications using digital tools</u></p> <p>Overseas Development Institute</p>	<p>When you want to understand the frameworks used to evaluate networks, to see what might be relevant to your work</p>	<p>An article outlining an evaluation framework for network assessment, network connectivity, network health, and network results; also has case examples</p>	<p>Low ■ □ □ (review)</p> <p>High ■ ■ ■ (implementing network evaluation)</p>



Observing the Narrative: Outcomes and Resources

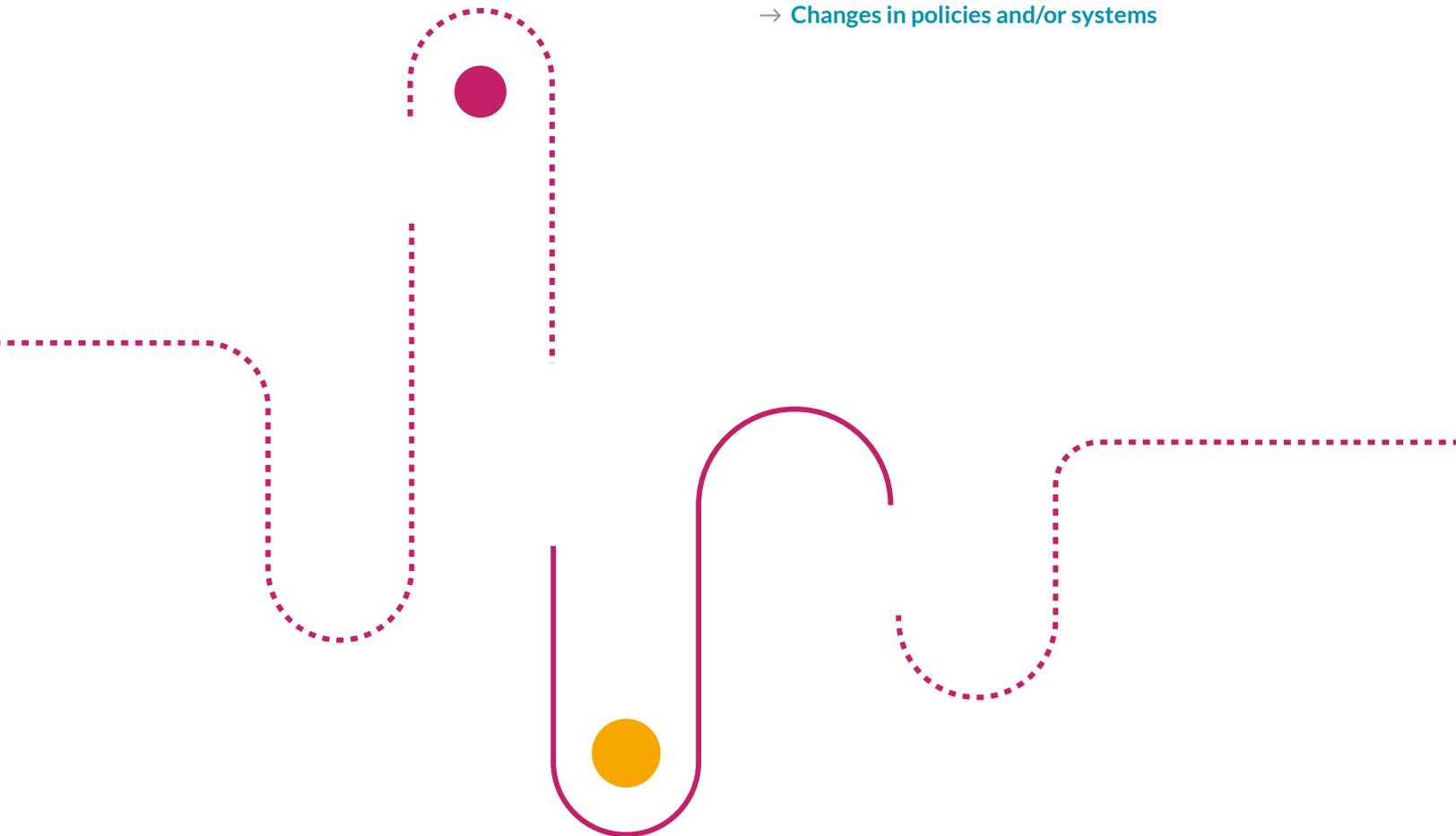
This leads us to our second aspect—and perhaps the most intuitive when it comes to thinking of outcomes—of narrative change: is your narrative being adopted? There are several ways to think about this question: Does public discourse increasingly reflect your narrative frame? Are the ways people think and feel about the issue aligned with your narrative frame? And are individuals and institutions behaving differently as a result?

These are, admittedly, big questions, and we can break them down into several categories of intermediate outcomes that might be useful to consider:

- **Changes in media and cultural discourse**
- **Changes in people's attitudes and beliefs**
- **Changes in people's behavior**

We can also consider how these affect broader institutional or systemic outcomes:

- **Changes in policies and/or systems**



→ Changes in Media and Cultural Discourse

Rationale: One of the ways in which narrative change can function to promote social justice goals is to challenge assumptions and reframe issues in our public discourse, which is heavily shaped by the news media, social media, and popular culture—such as the television shows we watch. Changing narratives in these spheres opens up discursive space around social problems and can be both a marker of and inspire changes in attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. As such, changes in which narrative frames are salient in our cultural discourse is an important intermediate outcome for narrative change.

Where will you see change?

Print Media

Social Media

Broadcast Media

(including digital journalism, television shows, and advertising)

TRACKING THE DISCOURSE ON RACE—RACE FORWARD

With the aim of reshaping and reforming the way in which race and racism is talked about in the United States, in 2014 Race Forward published a report called *Moving the Race Conversation Forward*. Recognizing media discourse as a key driver of harmful narratives that can stifle people's engagement with and understanding of racism, they conducted a content analysis of over 1200 news articles and television transcripts, coding them according to how they talked about race and racism.

Through this analysis, they found that most mainstream media content is not “systemically aware”: that is, two thirds of articles about racism focus on individual-level prejudices and actions rather than highlighting the systemic nature of racism. Thus, the media largely advances “unproductive” narratives about racism as an individual rather than structural problem, which has clear repercussions for accurately characterizing the root causes of and surfacing appropriate solutions to racial inequity.

While this particular case involved a study of existing narratives, analyzing the content of media discourse over time can also be a useful way to chart changes in narratives, which has important implications for how issues are understood and responded to.

Sample Outcomes for Changes in Media and Cultural Discourse

Sample Outcome	Sample Indicators
<p>Narrative frame has increasing visibility across different forms of media</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Number of uses of specific language and messaging in print and broadcast media » Number of uses of relevant research and data in print and broadcast media » Volume of specific language, phrases, hashtags, and graphics on social media » Use of specific language and messaging by key individuals/influencers on social media
<p>Messengers have increasing visibility and authority</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Number of requests from journalists for comment, made to your organization or partner organizations » Number of requests from journalists for comment, made to community representatives » Number of comments from organizations and community representatives appearing in print media » Number of appearances by representatives of organization, partners, or communities
<p>Issue increasingly framed in desired ways across different forms of media</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Number of media articles that used desired framing to talk about issue » Volume of content using desired framing on social media (posts, tweets, comments, etc.) » Share of voice on social media compared to other narrative framings » Number of broadcast media articles or segments that use desired framing to talk about the issue » Storylines, themes, characters in television/film etc. reflecting desired framing of issue

Resources for Changes in Media and Cultural Discourse

Resource	When to use it	What it is	Level of lift
<p><u>Content Analysis Guide</u> Colorado State University</p>	<p>When you want to analyze the content of media to understand how an issue is being talked about or framed</p>	<p>Guides to conducting content analysis: a method for coding texts and quantitatively and qualitatively analyzing the presence of language or concepts, comparing them to alternative ones, and assessing the meanings they convey</p>	<p>Medium / High ■ ■ ■ □ ■ ■ ■ ■ (depending on the volume of content)</p>
<p><u>Guide to Qualitative Content Analysis</u> Zhang and Wildemuth</p>	<p>When you want to see examples of how other organizations have assessed aspects of narrative using content analysis</p>	<p>Case studies of content analysis examining representations of particular communities and regions across various media</p>	<p>Low ■ □ □ □ (review)</p>
<p><u>Moving the Race Conversation Forward</u> Race Forward</p>	<p>When you want to see examples of how other organizations have assessed aspects of narrative using content analysis</p>	<p>Case studies of content analysis examining representations of particular communities and regions across various media</p>	<p>Low ■ □ □ □ (review)</p>
<p><u>Africa in the Media</u> <u>Immigration Nation</u> Media Impact Project</p>	<p>When you want to see examples of how other organizations have assessed aspects of narrative using content analysis</p>	<p>Case studies of content analysis examining representations of particular communities and regions across various media</p>	<p>Low ■ □ □ □ (review)</p>

→ Changes in People’s Attitudes and Beliefs

Rationale: Narrative change can be aimed at changing people’s attitudes and beliefs about an issue or to strengthen or activate their existing ones (that may be latent or less salient than others they hold). These changes are important interim outcomes to capture because they can lead to changes in people’s behavior, both in terms of their interpersonal interactions and their professional or political actions—with the idea that ultimately these will build to broader strategic or systemic goals.¹¹

Where will you see change?

Individuals within Target Audiences

Individuals in General Public

(in the longer term)

CHANGING ATTITUDES AROUND GENDER—OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

Based on a multi-year, multi-country study, the Overseas Development Institute recently produced a report on [How communications can change social norms around adolescent girls](#). While this was not explicitly a narrative change effort, it had many relevant features: the communications programs under study involved multiple approaches; used a range of messages about gender roles, relations, and expectations; and engaged many different actors. These programs were also aimed at shifting people’s understandings of gender equality, with the anticipated result of changing their attitudes (and eventually behaviors) toward adolescent girls, particularly with regard to education and early marriage.

Through reviewing program documentation and conducting semi-structured interviews and focus groups in each country, researchers identified changes in attitudes at the individual, household, and community level. Overall, they showed positive changes in attitudes toward girls’ education, sexual harassment, child marriage, and equitable relationships between siblings (although the extent of these changes varied from level to level). They were also able to identify challenges, including the need for expanded reach and coverage of messages; increased targeting of boys, parents, and other community members; and ensuring that translations were appropriate for local contexts.

This study highlights many areas of potential interest when it comes to understandings of narrative change: how communications strategies can be used to change narratives, the effect this has on people’s attitudes or values, approaches to measuring these changes, and what lessons might be learnt along the way.

11. Davidson, B. (2016). Narrative change and the Open Society Public Health Program. Retrieved from https://onthinktanks.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/20160711_Narrative-change-paper-1.pdf.

Sample Outcomes for Changes in People’s Attitudes and Beliefs

Sample Outcome	Sample Indicators
Increased issue recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Number or percentage of people reporting they are aware of the issue » Number or percentage of people demonstrating basic knowledge/understanding of your narrative framing of issue
Increased alignment of attitudes and beliefs with issue framing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Number or percentage of people using desired language to speak about issue » Number or percentage of people in agreement with narrative framing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agree with explanation of root causes of issue - Agree with proposed solutions - Express desired attitudes toward or beliefs about affected communities
Increased salience of issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Number or percentage of people considering issue very important or urgent
Value shift in line with issue framing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Number or percentage of people expressing intention to act in desired ways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share messages or engage others - Engage in collective action - Provide financial support » Number or percentage of people expressing feeling of shared interests, mutual responsibility etc.

Resources for Changes in People’s Attitudes and Beliefs

Resource	When to use it	What it is	Level of lift
<p><u>Methods of Measuring Public Opinion</u></p> <p>Russell G. Brooker and Todd Schaefer</p>	<p>When you are trying to decide which methods to use to capture information on people’s values and attitudes toward or beliefs about a social issue</p>	<p>A paper that gives an overview of qualitative and quantitative, and formal and informal methods of measuring public opinion, including when each may be appropriate</p>	<p>Low <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> (review)</p> <p>Medium / High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (implementing any of the methods)</p>
<p><u>European Social Survey Source Questionnaire</u></p> <p>World Values Survey</p>	<p>When you need inspiration for or examples of existing survey questions about people’s values and attitudes toward or beliefs about a social issue—for examples, root causes, proposed solutions, attitudes toward communities</p>	<p>Questionnaires used in the European Social Survey and World Values Survey, used to monitor changing attitudes and values across a range of social topics</p>	<p>Medium / High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (implementation; depends on length of survey, sample sizes, etc.)</p>
<p><u>Handbook of Data Collection Tools: Shifts in Social Norms</u></p> <p>ORS Impact</p>	<p>When you are trying to decide which methods to use to capture information on people’s values and attitudes toward or beliefs about a social issue</p> <p>When you need inspiration for or examples of existing survey questions about people’s values and attitudes toward or beliefs about a social issue</p>	<p>Examples of data collection tools for measuring social norms: includes interview protocols for individuals and focus groups, participant observation checklists, and survey samples, as well as methodological notes</p>	<p>Low <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> (review)</p> <p>Medium / High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (implementation; depends on length of survey, sample sizes, etc.)</p>
<p><u>Constructing a Theory of Planned Behavior Questionnaire</u></p> <p>Icek Ajzen</p>	<p>When you need ideas for developing a tool to understand people’s intentions to act or behave in certain ways</p>	<p>Guide providing methodological guidance on and examples of people’s understandings of and intentions to engage in particular behaviors</p>	<p>Medium / High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (implementation; depends on length of survey, sample sizes, etc.)</p>

→ Changes in People’s Behavior

Rationale: As we have seen, narrative change can be aimed at changing people’s beliefs and attitudes, and often, the longer-term hope is that this will lead to changes in people’s behavior around an issue or toward a group of people.¹² A key question to ask is if people are changing their behavior to align with the aims of the narrative change strategy.

It can of course be difficult to attribute changes in behavior to changes in narrative, as most narrative change efforts are not geared toward specific behavioral asks and are instead focusing on creating the overarching conditions in which these behaviors become more likely. However, given that narratives offer particular interpretations of a problem and—importantly—how it can be solved, there is scope to make convincing links between narrative and behavior change.

Where will you see change?

Individuals within Target Audiences

Individuals in General Public

(in the longer term)

Sample Outcomes for Changes in People’s Behavior

Sample Outcome	Sample Indicators
<p>Increased engagement in behaviors in support of organizations or coalitions engaged in narrative change work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Number of people participating in relevant events/workshops/trainings » Number of people making financial contributions
<p>Increased engagement in behaviors in support of issue (that reflect narrative framing)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Number of people participating in actions in support of issue, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Petitions - Letters - Organizing - Community forums - Mobilizations - Donations » Number of people reporting changes in their behavior in line with new narrative framing

12. Davidson, B. (2016). Narrative change and the Open Society Public Health Program. Retrieved from https://onthinktanks.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/20160711_Narrative-change-paper-1.pdf.

Resources for Changes in People’s Behavior

Many of the resources listed previously (such as surveys or observation checklists) for measuring people’s attitudes and beliefs are relevant to or could be adapted for assessing behavior change.

Resource	When to use it	What it is	Level of lift
<p><u>Community toolbox: Behavioral surveys</u></p> <p>University of Kansas</p>	<p>When you want to get an overview of the steps involved in surveying people’s behaviors</p>	<p>A short resource providing an introduction to behavioral surveys, when they can be used, and how to conduct them; also includes a checklist of their main features</p>	<p>Low <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>(review)</p>
<p><u>Measurement Instrument Database for the Social Sciences (MIDSS)</u></p> <p>Search: “behavior”</p>	<p>When you are looking for existing examples of or inspiration for surveys used to assess behavior</p>	<p>A database of social science survey instruments</p>	<p>Medium <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>(several examples to review)</p> <p>High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>(implementation)</p>

→ Changes in Policies and/or Systems

Rationale: The types of changes in discourse and individual attitudes and behaviors outlined in previous sections can work cumulatively to shape broader systemic changes. It follows, then, that narratives can play a profound role in shaping institutional and policy processes.¹³ As decision makers become aware of and engage with new narratives, these narratives can embed themselves in decision-making processes—and in the resulting policies and practices themselves.

Where will you see change?

Individual decision makers

Decision-making processes

Legislation or policies

Guidelines and regulations

Institutional practices

We noted previously that it can be difficult to attribute changes in behavior to changes in narrative, and this is as true at the political and institutional level as it is at the individual one. However, because narrative change seeks to propose particular solutions to social issues, links can be made between, for instance, particular policy changes and changes in narrative. Moreover, it is also possible to look for specific language or framing in policy documents themselves: some of the resources we provide in this section are specifically designed to answer questions about which narratives underpin and drive policy changes.

SHIFTING NARRATIVES ABOUT POVERTY FOR BETTER POLICY—US PARTNERSHIP ON MOBILITY FROM POVERTY

In their report [Changing the Narrative](#), the US Partnership on Mobility from Poverty pinpoints why narratives about poverty can have such important implications for policy: misleading narratives, such as the idea that escaping poverty is a matter of personal responsibility and hard work, “constrain our ability to better understand poverty in America. Absent that understanding, it is difficult to motivate and design effective policies to support people on pathways out of poverty.”

Their work illustrates how narrative change plays a vital role in promoting systemic approaches to tackling poverty and shaping the kinds of policy solutions one can offer. They propose several axes along which narrative change can contribute to these kind of outcomes:

- » *More accurate narratives about poverty will lead to more effective policy—including approaches that increase access to education, quality jobs, and benefits and which pay specific attention to the impacts of race, gender, age, geography, and so on.*
- » *More accurate narratives about poverty will support the development of policies and programs that recognize the agency, dignity, strength, and resilience of people living in poverty.*

They also highlight changes in social norms (including people’s attitudes and behaviors) that are likely to arise from changing the narrative about poverty, noting that “dispelling harmful narratives will reduce the stigma people in poverty face and support social inclusion and mobility.”

13. Davidson, B. (2016). Narrative change and the Open Society Public Health Program. Retrieved from https://onthinktanks.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/20160711_Narrative-change-paper-1.pdf.

Sample Outcomes for Changes in Policies and/or Systems

Sample Outcome	Sample Indicators
Policy or other debates frame issue in alignment with narrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » New policy debates emerge around issue (in cases where issue was not on the agenda) » Desired language used to describe issue and communities » Problem and solutions framed in ways that reflect changed narrative
Increased political will	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Number of decision makers indicating increased willingness to take desired action on issue » Legislation introduced that reflects framing of problem and appropriate solutions
Improvements in policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Community representation and engagement in policy mechanisms and process » Policies that reflect framing of problem and appropriate solutions passed » Policies that reflect framing implemented » Harmful legislation or policies averted (reflecting narrative change efforts)
Improvements in institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Community representation and engagement in institutional mechanisms and processes » Shifts in resource allocation and distribution in line with issue framing » Regulations or practices around issue amended or increased

Resources for Changes in Policies and/or Systems

The resources for content analysis shared previously are relevant here, as they can be used to analyze the content of policy debates and documents or the content of documentation or media related to changes in regulations, processes, practices, and so on.

Resource	When to use it	What it is	Level of lift
<p><u>I2L2: Impact= Influence+ Leverage+ Learning</u></p> <p>ORS Impact</p>	<p>When you are trying to identify which policy and institutional outcomes or indicators might be most relevant to your work</p>	<p>A resource that provides concrete examples of systems-level outcomes and an overarching framework for understanding the types of change they represent (and how these interact)</p>	<p>Low </p> <p>(review and identification))</p>
<p><u>Handbook of Data Collection Tools: Improved Policies</u></p> <p>ORS Impact</p>	<p>When you are looking for examples of modifiable tools that can be used to track policies, their components, and their implementation</p>	<p>Examples of data collection tools for measuring changes in policy</p>	<p>Low </p> <p>(review)</p> <p>Medium / High </p> <p>(carrying out tracking, depending on tool)</p>
<p><u>Narrative Policy Framework (NPF)</u></p> <p>Jones and McBeth</p>	<p>When you want to understand more about the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of assessing which narratives are shaping policy changes and through which mechanisms</p>	<p>An article introducing the methodology for NPF, which empirically tests for connections between how narratives impact public opinion and how that then impacts elite and institutional decisions</p>	<p>Low </p> <p>(review)</p> <p>High </p> <p>(carrying out the analysis)</p>

Conclusion

Narrative change is a complex, messy, nonlinear process, but it also has the potential to drive social change in powerful ways. This means that measuring narrative change—both in terms of understanding shifts in narrative and the results of those shifts—is simultaneously highly challenging and extremely valuable.

With this guide, we have aimed to provide a framework for thinking about the potential outcomes of narrative change as well as a set of curated resources that can help those engaged in narrative change efforts to identify the metrics and approaches that are most relevant to their work; better understand available methods for measurement; and to access existing data collection tools that are either ready to use or can be modified to answer specific questions.

As noted in the introduction, however, this is not intended as a definitive guide to measuring narrative change: it is a first version of a product that we hope will continue to evolve as we receive feedback from those working in this field and grappling with the challenges it presents. Our hope is that it will act as a starting point from which we can continue to strengthen our collective understanding of the outcomes and ultimate impacts of narrative change, and how we can measure them in meaningful ways.

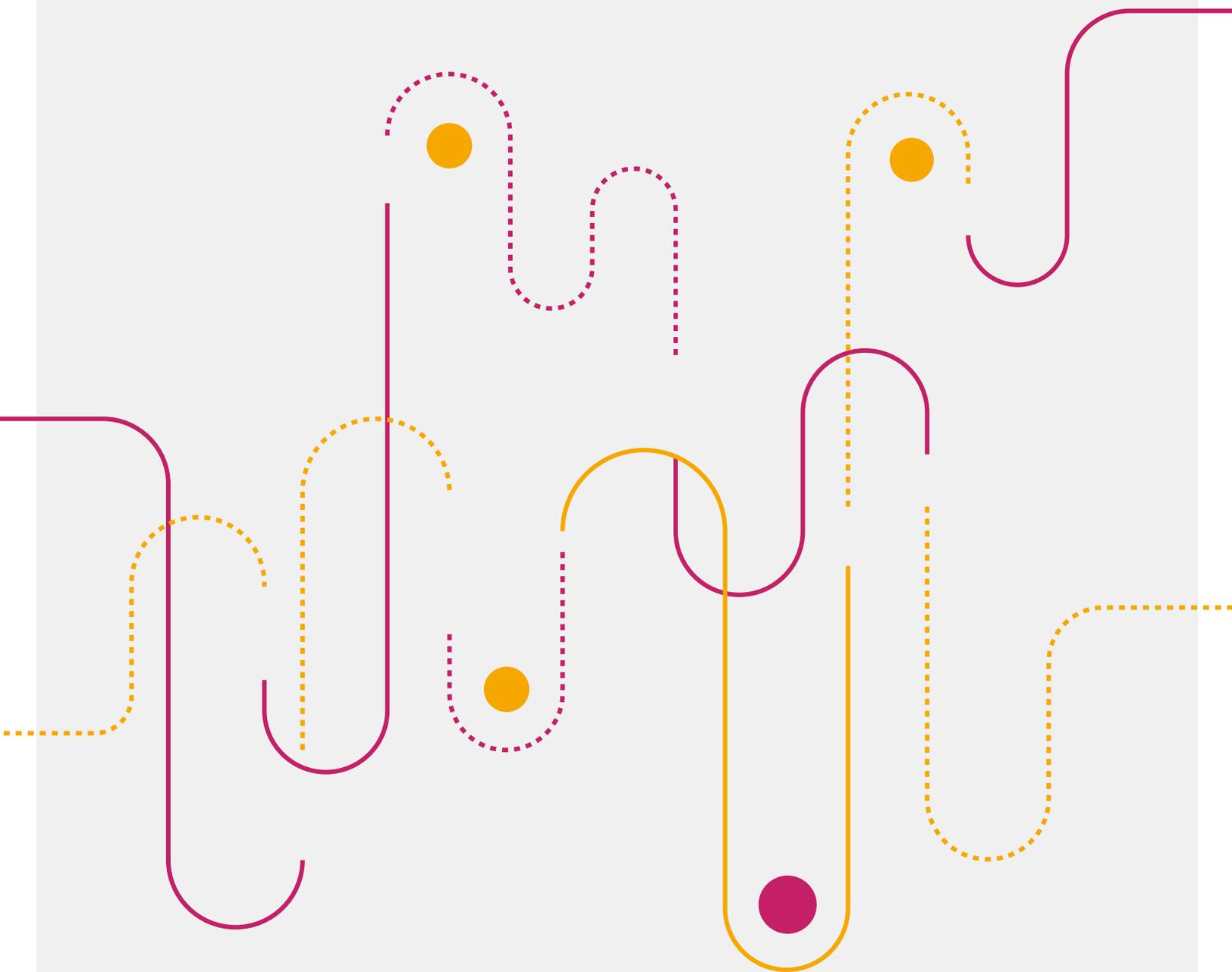
If you have suggestions or would like to provide feedback on this document, please email us at ors@orsimpact.com with the subject line: Measuring narrative change.

Appendix

Narrative Change Planning and Strategy Tools

While this guide is focused on the measurement and evaluation of narrative change rather than how you go about it, there are many other resources that exist to help organizations plan their narrative change strategies:

- **International Center for Policy Advocacy: [Reframing Narratives Toolkit](#)**
A step-by-step resource for building a narrative change campaign. Provides guidance and targeted questions to consider in five key areas: finding a focus and opening, building out elements, preparing for responses, running the campaign, and evaluating reach and uptake
- **The Counter-Narrative Toolkit**
An online resource for countering extremist narratives, with best practice guides, case studies, and tutorials in the following areas: planning a campaign, creating content, and promoting a campaign
- **Narrative Power Analysis worksheet**
A worksheet for systematically identifying and deconstructing the narratives that currently underpin systems of power and for identifying points of intervention for challenging existing narratives or seeding new ones
- **The Opportunity Agenda: [Vision, Values, and Voice Communication Toolkit](#)**
A toolkit providing framing principles and strategies “that support the long-term movement of hearts and minds,” guidance on applying them to short-term victories, and tips and examples of tactics and messaging strategies
- **Frameworks Institute: [Toolkits](#)**
Toolkits drawing on research conducted by Frameworks on a range of social issues, which include talking points, quick-start guides to incorporating core framing elements into messaging, model responses, slides, and editorials
- **Perception Institute and Executives’ Alliance for Boys and Men of Color, [His Story: Shifting Narratives for Boys and Men of Color Toolkit](#)**
A resource that breaks down narrative change into nine distinct strategic domains and provides guidance about their components: research, rapid response, media monitoring, engaging influencers, cultural strategy, content generation, dissemination, engagement, and evaluation
- **National Criminal Justice and Public Health Alliance: [Developing a Transformational Criminal Justice Narrative Toolkit](#)**
A toolkit providing a six-step guide and a set of exercises for developing transformational public narratives: finding people, building relationships, developing shared understandings, identifying existing narratives, developing transformational narratives, and developing an action plan
- **National Association of County and City Health Officials: [Advancing Public Narrative for Health Equity and Social Justice](#)**
A comprehensive toolkit that provides a range of prompts and activities for making existing narratives visible, developing critical observation skills for recognizing and disrupting these narratives, and connecting these insights to developing transformative alternative narratives
- **Public Interest Research Group: [Framing Equality Toolkit](#)**
A toolkit containing highly practical guidance, activities, and tools that can be used for understanding existing frames, creating new ones, and then testing and refining them.
- **ReThink Health: [Toolkit for Developing a Public Narrative](#)**
A selection of materials including videos, group exercises, and worksheets for developing individual and community stories and linking these together to create a public narrative.
- **Reclaiming Native Truth: [Narrative Change Strategy](#)**
A strategic document that can be used as an exemplar, outlining a framework for and theory of narrative change and identifying a set of objectives, stakeholders, and activities across several key areas: media, pop culture and the arts, philanthropy, policy and practice, education, and collaborative support structures



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