

Storytelling with Data

Featuring: Irena Asmundson and Mark Benak

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name, organization &
state in the chat.*

Key takeaways:

Storytelling with Data - *January 16, 2025*

- **Storytelling can offer a common, data-based starting point:** When a political or ideological divide makes it difficult to talk to each other, storytelling with data can bring us back to our shared problems and options to build empathy across partisan divides.
- **Considering your audience is an essential part of creating your storytelling:** Your organizational goals and KPIs are important, but when storytelling with data, considering your audience is equally important. Who will consume each artifact you publish? What is their familiarity with this issue? What are their motivations and goals? Tailoring your messaging to these considerations can maximize the impact of your story.
- **Data means more with context:** Numbers alone may not indicate the scale, trend, or impact of an issue to your audience. Building narrative around your data can help your audience answer key questions like is this number big or small? Does it indicate a change from the past, or a direction we want to move in for the future?
- **Presenting data requires a viewpoint, and transparency keeps it non-partisan:** When policy organizations choose what data or indicators to track and publish, we are showing what issues and groups of people we focus on. When defining the problems in our communities, we are implicitly defining the problem and what success looks like. Being explicit and transparent helps us stay open to discussion, which is what makes it non-partisan.
- **Narratives can catalyze the audience:** As a best practice, showing the audience how they can be the hero in the story can move them towards policy changes that improve the lives of your state's residents.



STATES FOR THE FUTURE

A Data to Policy Network

States for the Future is a **learning community** bringing state policy professionals together around **data**, **research**, and **action**.

Learn more & explore our data platform: www.statesforthefuture.org

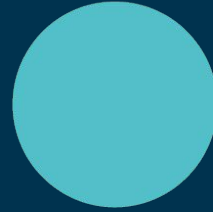
Our Shared Values:

- We know that **good policy is grounded in quality data and research, not ideology.**
- We see the necessity of making data actionable and using it to drive toward **real-world solutions.**
- We believe that states should be guided by **long-term strategic plans** to address the many challenges they face.
- We value the role of tracking and **understanding equity gaps** in developing meaningful solutions.
- We recognize that there are multiple approaches to developing solutions. The **diversity of our organizations and states is a strength** that can be leveraged to achieve shared goals.
- We are committed to **collaborating and sharing best practices** so we can build capacity within our individual organizations and drive innovative policy-making

Today's Speakers:

Irena

Asmundson &
Mark Benak



PRACTICAL
IDEALISM
ECONOMICS



**IMAGINE
NEW MEXICO**

Storytelling With Data

Getting on the same page
with your community

Practical Idealism Economics and
Imagine New Mexico



Storytelling Basics

- Save the cat! Three acts: cat in a tree, what you try, cat is safe.
- Data = > information when audience knows context:
- Problem: who is the audience, what do they want, what is the problem?
- Options: what are the options we can choose from?
- Success: what does success look like?
- Bottom line: tell the story before the audience makes one up!

Imagine New Mexico

- 501©(3) with a mission to improve the lives of New Mexicans
- Looking to catalyze other non-profits
- Focus on health care first
- Success is coordinated efforts, community of practice
- Success for community non-profits is more efficient operations (better health, less stress)

Clarity Questions

- What's the point of view? Is this data good or bad?
- What's the context? Is this number big or small?
- What's happening? Are the numbers changing? What's the trend?
- What's the big picture? How does the data add up?

Health in New Mexico: Story Elements

- Problem: What can we measure? What indicators are available?
- Are they good or bad? By what metric?
- Options: What is happening now? What has been tried here? What has been tried elsewhere?

Health Data Comparators

- New Mexico Dept of Health: <https://ibis.doh.nm.gov>
- US Federal Government, Centers for Disease Control: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/index.html>
- World Bank (for int'l): <https://data.worldbank.org/topic/health>
- KFF (compiled): <https://www.kff.org/statedata/>
- Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (consultant): <https://www.healthdata.org>
- States for the Future! <https://data.statesforthefuture.org>
- Urban Institute: <https://www.urban.org/data-tools>

Choices

- Framing: how much narrative do you want?
- Updates: how frequently are updates posted?
- Contributors: is this INM-driven, or can others contribute?
- Budget: what resources are you willing to devote?

Existing Debates

- Is healthcare a right?
- What should happen in emergencies? Who is responsible?
- Are private or public systems better?
- Should we punish people who make risky choices?
- Who should pay for capacity investments?