

YARG STORYTELLING TOOLKIT

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Toolkit Overview: Developing Youth Success Stories

The most effective way to attract potential partners, employers, and participants and engage the community in your work is to tell the stories of your program and participant successes. As a follow-up to the October Peer-to-Peer webinar, *Their Voice, Their Story: Developing Youth Success Stories*, your YARG team has created this toolkit for promoting your program through storytelling.

While facts and figures are essential measures of a program's reach and impact, people outside your organization want to know what kind of impact your program has on a human level. How is it changing peoples' lives? A compelling, personalized account of how an individual youth gained the confidence to interview for a job or first discovered their career potential is infinitely more effective at capturing attention and demonstrating the benefits of apprenticeship. So, along with collecting data, you should be collecting stories.

This toolkit provides all the advice and information you need to make collecting and disseminating success stories a standard and highly effective practice in your outreach and marketing efforts. It is intended to be both instructive and actionable.

It begins by preparing you for the writing process, showing how to apply the "Ps" of marketing, which remind you to consider:

- **People** – The audience you want to attract and the messages that best connect with them.
- **Program** – Your program's needs and successes, which might yield exciting story material.
- **Position and Platform** – Where your stories will be placed to reach your audience and what media you will use.

The toolkit then gives in-depth guidance on 508 compliance to ensure the materials you create are accessible to all. In addition, there are case studies with examples of grantee marketing collateral that showcase how others have utilized youth and program stories. Lastly, there are actionable workbook pages that will assist you in developing the framework of your program success stories.

This is a reference that will be invaluable to everyone in your organization. Please share it!





The Art of Storytelling

Developing a strong narrative involves imagination and practice, particularly when connecting your success stories to the needs of your target audience. With all the information you may want to convey to your various stakeholders, this may seem like an overwhelming task. Where to begin? This tool kit will simplify the process by enabling you to use the “4 Ps”: People, Program, Position, and Platform.



People

Know your target audience.

It is always helpful to start with some basic questions.

- ✓ Who would be interested in your story?
- ✓ Who will benefit and react most strongly?
- ✓ How will the audience help your programmatic needs?

It is crucial to clearly identify your target audience in order to write a story that will capture their interest, keep them engaged, and persuade them to take action.

Perform some research to establish your target audience before you put pen to paper. The information you collect may include demographics, needs, pain points, opinions, behaviors, etc. This will provide critical guidance in laying the groundwork for your story.



Program

Define your message.

Your story should have a central message, regardless of its length or how you plan to communicate it. Whether it's a one-page flyer, a ten-minute presentation, or a brief social media post, establishing your main point is as important as laying the foundation of a house.

- ✓ What is the purpose of your narrative?
- ✓ Raising money or recruiting participants or employers?
- ✓ Defining a service or promoting a cause?

Try to summarize your story in six to ten words to help clarify this. If you cannot accomplish that, then maybe your message lacks focus and clarity.

Select a Story That Best Highlights Your Participants or Programs

Determine the type of success story you want to tell by considering the emotions you want to evoke and the actions you want your audience to take as a result of your story.



Create Action – You want your audience to be moved to the action or change that your story urges. So, your narrative should feature the successful experience of someone just like your reader (or viewer) to indicate that they may be able to do the same.

What Are Your Human-Centered Stories – Sincerely describe your difficulties, setbacks, and successes. People today value and identify with organizations that market honestly. Your storytelling should reflect the unique aspects of your program and the impact you have made in young people's lives.

Delivery Value – Tell a story based on familiar emotions, characters, and situations so the audience can understand how the story connects to their own lives. They will start to see themselves in the story.

Storytelling Do's and Don'ts	
Don't	Do
Use jargon or business-speak	Use visuals to show your ideas
Focus too much on yourself or your brand	Know your audience
Leave plot holes	Outline your plot and core message
Make your characters too perfect	Be honest
Skim over the details	Go deep
Sell your CTA too hard	Make it useful
Overcomplicate the story	Leave room for imagination



Position and Platform

Establish your call-to-action, story medium, and share.

Now that you have developed the right story for the right target audience, you need to determine what action you want your audience to take as well as the medium in which they will interact with your stories.

- ✓ What precisely do you want your audience to do after interacting with your stories?
- ✓ Do you want them to partner with you, become a program participant, follow or like your program on social media, or something else?
- ✓ What platform is best for reaching this particular group?

You will also want to ensure that the success stories you are putting out into the world align with your programmatic or organizational goals.

Choose your medium.

The type of story you want to tell (along with your budget and scheduling constraints) will determine how and where you present your story.

Consider all possible formats and platforms for telling your story:



Written Word – Flyers, articles, and blog posts are just a few examples of written-word stories. They may contain some visuals but are primarily text-based. This is the simplest way to tell a story. It can be a testimonial from youth participants or employers, a participant profile, or a specific program highlight.

Spoken Word – When participating in a presentation, pitch, or panel, you tell oral stories in person. One example is a presentation for students and parents during a PTA meeting. While these require some public speaking expertise, they can be extremely effective because of their "live," unfiltered character and the personal connections they encourage.

Digital Word – This medium encompasses various forms of digital storytelling: video, animation, and gamification, all of which can be circulated through social media or other digital means. For lively, visual narratives with strong emotional resonance, videos are a powerful and effective approach.

Share with the world.

Encourage stakeholders to sign your mailing list and use an e-blast service to reach them. Upload photos and post stories to social media. And don't forget to contact your local print and broadcast press, who are often receptive to human interest and "good news" stories.

Remember that sharing your success has a cumulative effect. Using effective storytelling in your outreach will not only increase your visibility in the short term. It will also strengthen your program overall and position it for long-term growth, propelling you and your participants to even further success.

508 Compliance

On August 7, 1998, President Clinton signed the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998, which covers access to federally funded programs and services. Federal agencies must ensure that publicly available services and information are accessible to employees and members of the public with disabilities to the extent that access does not pose an "undue burden."

What does marketing ADA compliance mean?

Assistive technology is widely used by persons with disabilities to access digital and analog information. Being ADA compliant means that any content you provide electronically or in print – whether through a website, email, flier, or poster – must be designed to allow assistive technology and people with disabilities to access it.

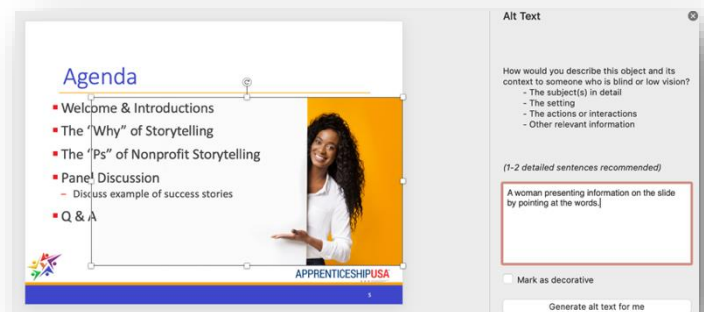
Some considerations when thinking about accessibility in digital marketing include background images, font style, file format, pop-up boxes, and links, to name a few. For



more information on 508 compliance, please refer to the GSA 508 Compliance website: <https://www.section508.gov/>.

Alt text in digital marketing

- Alternative text (alt text) provides text descriptions for images, graphics, icons, or even tables. Without this alt text, any image you use in materials or social media posts is not readable for people using assistive technology.



Caption this! Close Captions versus Subtitles

For your audience to truly experience your program stories, the use of videos can be next level. Video files should include subtitles and audio descriptions of what's happening for deaf or hard of hearing viewers.

- Closed captions** are created to allow the hearing impaired to fully experience the video, **including background sounds and speaker changes**.
- Subtitles** assume the viewer hears the audio and, as a result, **do not contain the background sounds or notifications** of speaker changes.



Grantee Case Studies

AMIKids, Inc.

People:

Community partners were the target audience for the flyer. AMI Kids were able to partner with Florida Champions and St. Pete Works.

Program:

The flyer was used for attracting program partners at community meetings. They recruited about three partners who were providing services to the same population of program participants as AMI Kids.

Position and Platform:

The flyer was used at community meetings to attract program partners. Through target market research, AMI Kids was able to find the right individuals who were a part of their target audience at a community meeting. The use of flyers provided the right information for their target audience. At the meeting they were able to position themselves to build a



network of people and organizations to help them recruit participants. They also tried free radio time to promote their program.



AMKids®
PRE-APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM
Education | Training | Certification

Secure your future in a **Construction Industry Trade** such as **Electrical, Plumbing, Carpentry, Pipefitting and Masonry.**

**If You are 16 years or older,
The AMkids Pre-Apprenticeship Program may be right for YOU!**

WE PROVIDE...	REQUIREMENTS	PARTNERS
▪ FREE access to Construction Trade Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAP) ▪ FREE job shadowing, mentoring, academics & support services ▪ \$300 upon completion of program	▪ Must be between the ages of 16 - 24 WE ARE a program dedicated to serving youth and providing clear pathways to becoming a certified professional	

CALL to SIGN UP:
Mackenzie Pohrte - Business Recruiter
(727-212-5657)


st.petersburg
Cohort of Champions
stpete.org/MBSK

Champions Technical Academy
Presented by AMkids
Contacts for Champions Technical Academy:
Sergio Curry: sergio.curry@stpete.org
Carlos Daniels: carlos.daniels@stpete.org
Richard Prince: 727-430-8669



Easterseals Serving Greater Cincinnati

People:

Employer Partners were the target population for the video.

Program:

The video shows a success story with one of Easterseals' employer partners, Valley Interior Systems, Inc., who has expanded access to apprenticeship and increased Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility. The employer shares their positive experience with hiring Cincinnati youth into apprenticeships. Apprenticeship Isaias Gamboa shares why the program focuses on DEIA and recruiting youth who don't typically enter an apprenticeship. The video also includes a participant sharing their own story.

Position and Platform:

Easterseals used the employer-centered video when they were looking for employers to onboard for their new Facilities Maintenance Registered Apprenticeship program. Seeing the experience with Valley Interior Systems, Inc. in that video motivated employers to partner with Easterseals.

Overall, Easterseals used a multi-tiered approach to marketing. They conducted a focus group with employers and youth participants. Easterseals' research found where their audience finds information, and they developed marketing strategies based on that.



To access: <https://vimeo.com/571311084> Password: Easterseals



Apprenticeship Carolina

People:

Youth, Parents/Guardians, and Employers were the target audience for social media content.

Program:

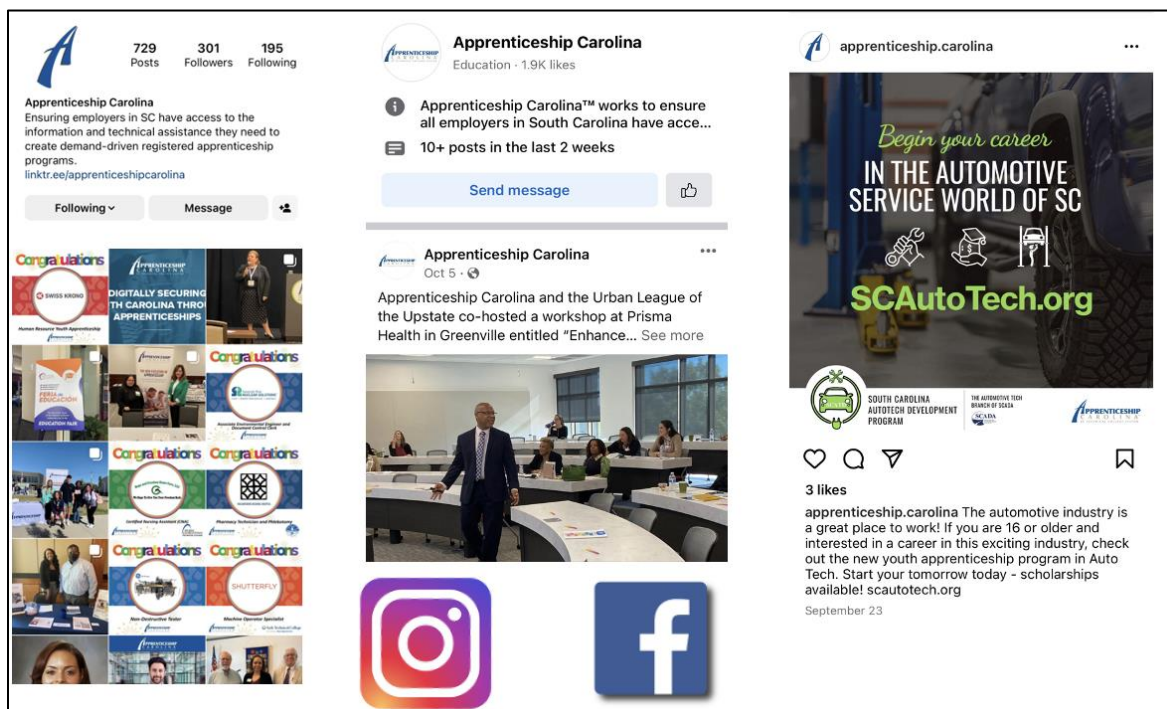
Apprenticeship Carolina asks all their teams to submit a picture and caption to the communications division monthly to tell stories that connect with people from all over the region (since they have a statewide grant). All divisions who do outreach in the agency have a Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter account. The communications office takes the team's content and posts it to social media.

Position and Platform:

Apprenticeship Carolina has an extensive marketing initiative. They have leveraged grant funds to do some new and innovative marketing, including purchasing paid advertising on Facebook and Instagram. They specifically have targeted ads in the regions and age groups they are targeting.

LinkedIn has been effective in reaching parents and employers. One example is a software developer program they posted about, which gained much interest from employers.

They also leverage partners to share social media, since they have followers beyond those of Apprenticeship Carolina. These posts can have a wide reach. CNN saw one post this past summer and contacted Apprenticeship Carolina for an interview.





CareerWise Colorado

People:

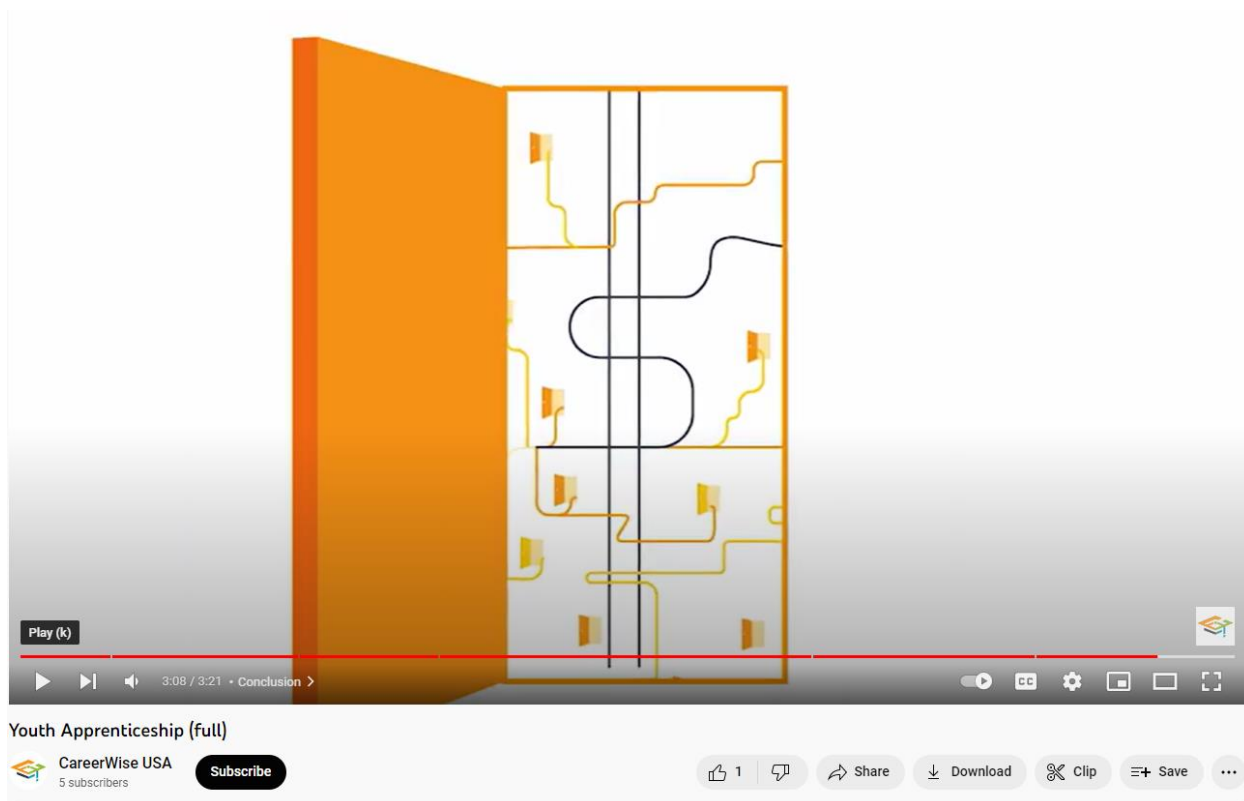
Youth and young adults who would be interested in the apprenticeship program were the target audience.

Program:

The video was intended to bring awareness to youth. CareerWise showcased the benefits of youth apprenticeship as a new concept for the modern knowledge economy.

Position and Platform:

The film has been used in CareerWise presentations, on the website, social media, and for paid media spots. The video would be able to achieve an even wider reach with a larger paid media budget.



To access: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9J5gWAttTVI>



Worksheet: Developing Your Story

THE PEOPLE

Who is the target audience? (e.g., students, parents, employers, etc.)

Where will you find your target audience? (e.g., schools, industry associations, etc.)

What audience needs/problems can you solve through the program and story you are telling? (e.g., career pathway, recruitment, etc.)

How will they help your program? (e.g., job placement, filling open program slots, etc.)



THE PROGRAM MESSAGE

What is a program success? (e.g., livable wage jobs for participants, pool of qualified candidates, etc.)

How does this program success address or appeal to your target audience?

What problem/need/pain point does your story solve for your target audience?

What action do you want your target audience to take from your message?
(e.g., become an employer partner, join as a participant, etc.)



THE POSITION AND PLATFORM

What is the best way to reach your target audience? (e.g., presentations, flyers, social media, etc.)

What do you need to develop your materials? (e.g., social media presence, design software, student pictures in action, etc.)

Who do you need to help develop your story and materials? (e.g., student testimonials – video or written, employer testimonials, etc.)

Conclude your analysis with the following:

Are there other resources needed to develop my program success stories?

When my audience hears/sees our success stories, I want my audience to
