Everyday Democracy

Ideas & Tools for Community Change

COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

About Everyday Democracy

Everyday Democracy is a project of The Paul J. Aicher Foundation, a private operating foundation dedicated to strengthening deliberative democracy and improving the quality of public life in the United States. Since its inception, Everyday Democracy, based in Hartford, CT, has worked with more than 600 communities by providing advice, training, tools and resources. It also partners with national and local organizations to strengthen the field of dialogue and deliberation and promote a stronger, more equitable democracy. Everyday Democracy's vision is a democracy where all voices are valued, and where participation and racial equity become a permanent part of the way we work as a country at the local, state and national levels.

About Dialogue to Change

Dialogue to Change is an adaptable approach to community engagement that is grounded in years of experience and learning with communities throughout the U.S.

In our process, diverse groups of people meet over several weeks, taking part in activities that build trust, provide opportunities to share honestly, learn about an issue, and work together on solutions and action.

The role of communications in community change work

Communications plays a role in the success of every Dialogue to Change effort – from the very beginning when a coalition recruits its first facilitators and participants to sharing successes after the action steps have been implemented.

It's important to begin capturing photos, videos, interviews, and stories from the very beginning of the planning stages when there is a lot of excitement about the potential for change. That will help you illustrate the shift in your community and show how far you've come.

This guide is designed to be a comprehensive toolkit to help you recruit people to your community change effort, work with the media, and tell your story in many different formats along the way. It will help you capture key moments of change in your community work, get the word out about your initiative, and tell the story about the progress you've made so you can build on that momentum moving forward.

Everyday Democracy's Communications Toolkit

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Everyday Democracy
Ideas & Tools for Community Change

Capturing Your Community's Story

Every community has a story to tell! Stories can be used to inspire people to join your cause, motivate funders to donate time and money, and spread the word so other people can learn from your success.

It's important to start capturing your story early in the process. The transformation is what makes a great story, and you want to be sure to capture people's hopes and aspirations (or challenges), as well as some behind the scenes moments before you start implementing a project.

Think about what you want the theme or message of your story to have. Identify what you are trying to accomplish so you can choose the appropriate people to interview and to help frame the story.

Almost any type of storytelling, plays, movies, books, etc., have a few main components: an introduction to the set up and conflict, response to the conflict, and a resolution or a snapshot of how things are different because of the conflict.

When storytelling, sharing personal stories is often most effective in helping to get your points across. Zooming in on one person's struggle allows room to broaden the lens and show how the larger community is affected too. Think of someone your audience can identify or empathize with to be the main focus of the story.

Follow this guide to unravel your story and make it work for your theme:

Part 1: Introduction

Thinking about your situation, what does the audience need to know? Here are some things to establish in your story:

- Where is the story taking place?
- Who are the main characters?
  (zoom in on one person and make the story specifically about them)
- What are they doing?
- Why are they there?

At the end of the setup, answer these questions:

- What's the conflict? (the "uh-oh" factor)
- What caused that conflict?

Part 2: Response to the conflict

Next, you want to portray the response and reaction to the "uh-oh" factor. Show how the problem or conflict is affecting people and why it's negative; the goal is to write your story in a way that makes other people care by adding emotion. Spotlight a common struggle that a lot of people are going through. This is where you'll broaden your lens to capture how widespread the problem has become and how badly people need change. People will wonder, "How will this story end?" Here are some questions to consider:

- How is this conflict affecting this person?
- What obstacles does this person need to overcome?
- Why are the obstacles appearing?
- How does this individual's story represent the larger problem? (relate the personal story to the bigger picture)
- How do the obstacles negatively affect the whole society?
- Who, specifically, is it affecting? (i.e., a specific race, gender, groups of people)
- Who's preventing change?

Part 3: Resolution

To end your story, you want to show how the conflict has changed your main character and society around them. Show how life is different because of your efforts:

- What has been done to overcome the conflict?
- What are people's lives like now?
- What can be done to continue progress?

Formats

There are many ways you can share your story: press release, blog post, video story, photo series with captions, podcast, and social media posts are a few common ways to spread the word.

Final Tips

It's easier for audiences to connect with a character when they know his or her voice. Use direct quotes when you can. Focus on "showing" scenes using details and descriptions that appeal to the senses, so people can get a feel for the story's environment, instead of simply stating facts. Remember, you're sharing a story to make a change or impact in relation to your theme, so always tailor your story with this in mind.

Story Example: The Path to a Unified Community

Wagner celebrates their successes in the annual Labor Day parade

After using dialogue to address poverty and build prosperity, residents of the rural town of Wagner, S.D., realized that there was something holding them back from making real progress: they needed to address the long history of racial inequity and tensions between the white people living in the town and the American Indians living nearby.

The racial tensions run deep, spanning many generations. In 2008, they began the first of many ongoing rounds of dialogues to address divisive issues in a peaceful manner. Eliminating racism and unpacking historical trauma won't happen overnight, and Wagner residents are committed to achieving their vision of a unified community.

Subtle changes can be seen throughout the town: Some American Indians have invited white people to attend traditional events and ceremonies. A movie theater owned by a white person displays a "Thank you" sign in both English and the local native language. And, more American Indians are moving into town.

Dialogue to Change was implemented in the school system as well. As a result, teachers are more intentional about creating inclusive curriculums. Native symbols and ceremonies are now being incorporated into school functions. More American Indians are attending school events typically viewed as "white," such as prom.

Efforts are being made to build relationships beyond the dialogues through book clubs, film screenings, and informal gatherings of Dialogue to Change alumni.

To this day, Wagner residents continue to meet in small groups to discuss important issues. They can point to many larger successes from their efforts including:

- The establishment of a small business incubator. Half of the board members are American Indian, and half are white.
- The redefinition of the Secretary of Indian Affairs position as a liaison between the state government and the American Indian community. This position was formerly housed in the same department as tourism.
- A significant increase in graduation rates of American Indians, which is now 30%. Before the program, very few American Indians graduated high school.

Building a Visual Library

Visual media is dominating the web. Posts with visual content receive more visits and engagement. Images are easier for people to process than text alone, and they're easier and more fun to share. With so much information streaming in from many different sources, images can help cut through the clutter and grab attention.

Having visual content on your website, blog, and social media pages is critical to getting your message out and should be part of your communications plan. Here are tips for building your own visual library:

1. Think about what kinds of images you need for each of your communication channels

You may want images for your website articles, donation pages, social media pages, or print promotional materials, but it's important to be specific – do you need updated pictures of a certain initiative or individual you're featuring? Do you need images to tell the story about your work for your website? Do you need horizontal images for your Facebook banner, or vertical ones for Pinterest? Thinking this through in advance can help you or your staff prepare for photo opportunities.

2. Identify areas where you need more images

Compare your list of images needed with your current visual library. Where are the gaps?

First, make sure the images you already have access to are up-to-date. You may have a lot of photos in your library, but if the photos look particularly dated, with fashion or hairstyles from a different decade, you probably won't want to put them in your new promotional materials. However, they can be great images to demonstrate how far your organization has come, so they're great visual aids on a historical timeline.

Next, think about what kinds of images you would like more of. For example, you may have many photos of people sitting in circles and talking to each other during the dialogue phase. However, it would be helpful to have more photos of people working on action ideas after the dialogues such as planting community gardens, talking with their mayor, or establishing after-school programs. Since you know where the gaps are, you can focus your efforts on gathering specific types of images instead of capturing every moment at every event.

Ideally, each time you have an event or visit a program, there is one person whose only job is to take photos. Due to budget or staff capacity, this may not always be possible, so it's important to set realistic goals. Choose 2-3 times during important events to take pictures so you can focus on other tasks the rest of the time.

Ideas of images to build your visual library:

- your services in action
- surroundings of communities you serve
- portraits of key people in your stories
- before and after photos
- photos from events and trainings
- screenshots from your videos
- "behind-the-scenes" photos in your office
- user-generated content from social media
- illustrations, cartoons, artwork, or graphics related to your work
- stock photos from free websites
- images of resources that would benefit the people you serve

3. Hone your photography skills

You don't need to be a professional photographer or have an expensive camera to take photos for your community effort. In fact, in delicate situations an expensive camera can make people feel uncomfortable and unwilling to be photographed. Whether you're using top-of-the-line equipment or your smartphone, remember to practice basic skills:

Pay attention to lighting: Fluorescent lighting isn't very flattering, so use natural light from windows or go outdoors if possible. Make sure your subject is facing the light source from a window or the sun. This helps avoid backlight which causes your subject to appear dark. If it's a bright sunny day, take pictures in the shade to avoid squinting and to create a more evenly toned photo.

Think about how to frame the image: Including the background can show context, while a close-up of one person can show emotion.

Watch out for clutter: A table with half-eaten food or a busy background with piles of papers can make a great shot look messy. Pay attention to your surroundings and zoom in, remove the clutter, choose a different backdrop, or take the picture from a different angle to create a cleaner image.

Take a variety of photos: It's easy to get comfortable taking pictures from one spot in the room, but if you don't move around, all your photos will look similar. Get close to the action: take photos of groups, individuals, people in action, people posing for the camera, and written materials such as flyers, signs, or information packets. It's easier to tell the story about your event or program if you have different kinds of photos to work with.

4. Use tools to edit and remix images

Once you have your library, you'll probably find that there are a small group of photos you use frequently that show off your initiatives. Be careful about overusing them – that's exactly why you need to continue building your visual library. Free tools such as Canva, PicMonkey, or PixlrExpress are easy-to-use tools to create collages or edit photos.
https://www.canva.com/
https://www.picmonkey.com/
https://pixlr.com/express/

Before and after editing in PixlrExpress

5. *Create an organization system*

Gather all your photos, graphics, publication cover designs, video screenshots, and any other visual content you have. Think about how to organize your content in a way that would be easy to navigate for new people working in your organization.

6. *Use tags to make searching easier*

As your photo library continues to grow, it's helpful to use tags to find what you need quickly. Often times organizations save photos on a computer or shared drive in folders labeled with the event name or location. However, when you may want to use a photo of someone speaking or people working on action ideas in a flyer or social media post, it can be challenging to find specific types of images as your visual library grows. If your photos are tagged, it'll be much easier to find photos for promotional materials.

By tagging your photos, you can sort your library in multiple ways. We recommend Google Photos, which is useful if you have a shared network drive. You can also use Flickr or Dropbox, which are good options if you frequently upload photos from mobile devices and if you want to quickly share your images.

To make tagging useful, go beyond obvious tags like people or location. Also include tags like "looking at the camera" or "smiling," which can help further sort your images. Make a list of common tags so you and your fellow teammates use the same terms. For example, if one person says "pair" and someone else says "two people," then you'll only see a fraction of the images when you search one of the terms. Additionally, use tags like "edited," "collage," or "illustration" to help distinguish between different types of content.

https://www.flickr.com/
https://www.google.com/photos/
https://www.dropbox.com/

Creating a Video Story

Your community has a story to tell, and video could be the best way to tell it. How can you make a video if you've never done this before? We have some steps you can follow to help make your video story look professional, even if this is your first time:

Part 1: Choosing your equipment

Camera

Most camcorders sold today shoot in high definition (HD). Even most smartphones and tablets are claiming to produce HD video, and they can be a lifesaver if your camera is out of commission or if you don't have the budget for one. Using smartphones is a great option if you are planning on posting short clips from your phone directly to social media, especially for live events. However, smartphones can only take you so far if you are planning on using features like zoom, manual focus, or installing an external microphone.

Even though smartphones can record HD video, the quality isn't the same as a dedicated camera. If you are looking to produce high quality videos for your website or even social media, you should invest in a camera for this purpose.

For limited budgets, you could purchase a point and shoot camera with HD video capabilities. If you have some room in your budget, a DSLR camera with video capabilities will produce high quality videos.

Tripod

A video that is constantly shaking and moving in and out of focus can be very distracting. A tripod will help your video look more professional by keeping your image steady. Full-sized tripods start at about $20, so it's a relatively small investment for a big improvement in the quality of your videos. If you don't have a tripod, put your camera on any stable level surface.

External microphone

If you only use your camera's built-in microphone, your audio quality will be poor because the built-in microphone picks up every sound around it. For example, if filming outdoors, the wind may completely destroy your audio. External microphones start at about $25, and this is another great investment that will make your audio sound clean and professional. To save

yourself time putting the video and audio together in the editing phase, make sure you're using a camera that you can plug in your external microphone into.

Part 2: Mapping the content

Write down a list of shots you want to see in your final video. For example, if you are videotaping an opening ceremony, you might want to capture shots of the venue, speeches, entertainment, and interviews of the guests.

Focus on getting a variety of shots to capture what's happening throughout the day. Use the agenda to help you identify key moments to film instead of trying to capture every moment. A little bit of planning can help you organize your videotaping priorities as well as save your camera's battery life and space in your memory card.

Don't spend too much time capturing official speeches. While they are often inspiring during live events, they lose some of the energy when you view a recording afterwards. Instead, focus your time on getting people's reactions to the speeches or other highlights of the event. Brief interviews with participants give your video story a personal touch and make your video more interesting.

Prepare questions in advance such as "What is one word you would use to describe the event today?" or "What was your favorite activity and why?" Start with one of your scripted questions, and then have an organic dialogue with your interviewee to hear their own story.

You could also do more in-depth interviews that are 10-20 minutes long with key people in your story. Find people who are knowledgeable about the topic you want to discuss and people who have a great on-camera personality.

Part 3: Video recording basics

Typically, there are three types of stable shots used in videography: wide, medium and close-up. Each type of shot refers to how far the camera is from your subject.

Your subject can be anything you are focusing on, such as a person, a group of people, or an object. For example, if the subject of your video is a group of kids playing on a playground, a wide shot allows the audience to see how many kids are there, the immediate environment and the area around them. A medium shot is closer, allowing the audience to see more of the

subject and less of the setting and environment around them (i.e. a mom pushing her child on a swing). In a close-up shot, the camera is close to the subject, eliminating the surrounding environment (i.e. a child's happy face).

For best quality of close-up shots, avoid using digital zoom. Instead, physically move the camera closer to your subject so you maintain the sharpness and quality of your footage.

Try to get all three kinds of shots to make your final video more dynamic and interesting. Have a few wide shots to give the audience some context: where the event was held and how many people participated. Then focus on medium and close-up shots, especially on people's facial expressions and emotions.

Unless you are recording an interview, try taking some footage from a position other than eye level - get on the ground or get up high. This makes your video more dynamic and interesting to watch.

Wide shot:

Medium shot:

Close-up shot:

Part 4: Interviewing basics

Interviews give life to your story, whether it's a 10-second clip of someone saying what their favorite part of the event was or a 10-minute story of how the community has changed over the last few years. No matter what the length of your interview is, here are a few things to think about:

The background: Find a background that helps tell your story. For example, you can film a teacher sitting in their classroom or a mother advocating for more outdoor playtime standing in a local park. A good background adds value and credibility to your video interview.

Lighting: Make sure your interviewee is properly lit. Avoid dark corners of offices and hallways. If there is backlighting from a window or the sun, change locations so the light is in front of the person.

Noise: Avoid crowded rooms and outdoor locations that are windy or have a lot of traffic. Especially if you don't have an external microphone, find a place that is as quiet as possible.

Ask open-ended questions: Never ask questions that produce "yes or no" answers – instead, ask "what," "how," or "why." For example, instead of asking, "Did you like the event today?" you could ask, "What part of today was your favorite, and why?"

Give helpful reminders to the interviewee: Remind your interviewee to speak in full sentences and to incorporate the question into the answer. Also, make sure to pause before answering or asking a question. This will make the editing easier, especially if you want your questions be removed from your final video clip.

Stay silent: While your subject is responding, it is best to stay silent. Even short responses from you like "yes" or "uh huh" will be distracting and you won't be able to edit those out of your final video. To acknowledge that you're listening, maintain eye contact and nod your head.

Help calm their nerves: Not everyone is comfortable in front of a camera, so you may need to spend a few minutes discussing the topic before you start recording. Small things like telling jokes or turning off the red light on the camera can help put your interviewee at ease. If there is ever a point where the interviewee didn't know they were being filmed, be sure to ask permission to use those clips in your video.

Part 5: Editing

In this final step, assemble the footage with music, titles and graphics into a complete video. Here are some options for video editing software:

- Use free video editing software, like iMovie (for Mac) or Windows Movie Maker (for PC).
- Tools like Animoto or Magisto can assist you in editing a short video or slideshow.
- Have more control in the editing process with Adobe Premiere Elements.
- Hire someone else to take on the editing using UpWork or Fiverr.

https://animoto.com/
https://www.magisto.com/
https://www.upwork.com/
https://www.fiverr.com/

Regardless of the software you are working with, there are a few basic editing techniques you should know:

Avoid motion in the first camera shot of your video clip: Instead, start with a static, wide-angle shot to establish the location where the action is going to take place. Once you established the location, start adding close-up shots, introducing the participants of the event and then move on to details and interviews.

Have smooth transitions: Your audience shouldn't be startled or confused by transitions from one clip to another. One way to avoid this is to put different kinds of shots next to each other. This is extremely important when working with close-up shots. For example, a close-up shot of a book lying on the table with another close-up shot with different book lying on the table would result in something called a "jump cut," meaning an abrupt transition from one scene to another. The same goes for placing two shots together where you used a camera motion (zoom or panoramic shot). If you have any camera movement in one shot, it would be better in most cases to put a stable shot after it.

Avoid holding on one camera angle for a long period of time: For example, during a speech or an interview, instead of showing several minutes of the person talking to the camera, insert some meaningful photos, graphics, or other video clips that visually support the story.

Video Examples

https://youtu.be/ShG9PDEwVQ4

https://youtu.be/4lFNAeZbgkA

https://youtu.be/Na_Sy588B3s

Social Media Best Practices

Using social media in community efforts can be a low-cost way to help recruit participants and spread the word about your success. Here are some tips to help you leverage social media in your community work:

Have a clear goal

To maximize your chances for success, be clear about what you want to do. Your goals could be to build interest, share information, or let people know about upcoming events.

Realize that there will be a time commitment involved

One of the appeals for using social media is that it's free. The service is free, but your time isn't. Even if it's just a half an hour a week, it still needs to be worked into your schedule.

Go where your audience is

First, decide who you are trying to reach and how best you might reach them. Asking is the best way to find out where your demographic spends their time online. You could put a survey in your next *email or* ask at your next meeting. Facebook and Twitter are currently the most popular social media networks for community programs.

Facebook group or page – what's the difference? With Facebook, you can create a group or a page (or both). Use a group if you want to approve people before they join, make the posts private, and have more of a two-way conversation with members. Facebook groups are a good option for working groups, so you can stay in touch and collaborate between in-person meetings. Facebook pages are open and visible to anyone who goes to your link. Since pages are more public than groups, they can be used to share information with the general public as well as with participants. Most Dialogue to Change programs that use Facebook have a page instead of a group.

Examples of programs that use Facebook:

- NH Listens - https://www.facebook.com/NHListens
- CT Civic Ambassadors - https://www.facebook.com/CTCivicAmbassadors/
- Many Voices – One Community - https://www.facebook.com/mvocva/
- Stratford CARE - https://www.facebook.com/StratfordCARE

Twitter
In 280 characters or fewer you can use Twitter to send reminders and updates on your program's latest news. You can also link to pictures, videos, news articles, or blog posts. Of all the tools listed here, Twitter is probably the easiest to set up and maintain.

Start with only one social media outlet

Learning the ins and outs of each social media outlet takes time and starting more than one might spread your efforts too thin. If you've had a presence on one outlet for a while, take a step back and think about why it is or isn't successful to build on your strengths.

Promote it

No matter how much time and effort you put into designing and producing content for your page, group, profile or account, it will gather dust if you don't tell people about it. Put a prominent link on your website and e-newsletter. Put logos and your URL on flyers or handouts. Mention it at every meeting. Tell people to spread the word. Ask your partners to share your content, and repost their relevant content. Post on other organization's Facebook walls when appropriate (not too often!) and use their hashtags/handles to make sure they know you are doing the same.

Use tools to help you manage your accounts

You can monitor your accounts and schedule posts in advance using free or low-cost options. We recommend Buffer or Hootsuite to help you schedule and analyze your posts. Both have a free version with more than enough features for community initiatives. If you'd like to upgrade for more advanced features, paid plans start at about $10/month.
https://buffer.com/
https://hootsuite.com/

Post regularly

If you're promoting your page well but you haven't posted anything for a few months, people aren't going to want to join. Even when you're first starting out, it's important to post on a

regular basis. At a minimum, we'd recommend posting once a week to each social media profile.

Post a variety of content

If all you want to do is remind people about meetings, you might want to stick with email instead of jumping on social media. To build a presence on social media, mix up your posts with things like upcoming community events, behind-the-scenes photos at your meetings, articles related to your issue, and photos from your community and past events. Be creative and don't be afraid to use humor when appropriate.

Listen to your fans/followers

Social media is interactive. If you're not getting any responses on your Facebook page, ask them what they'd like to see posted. Reply to comments whenever possible. Take note in meetings of things that would be interesting to share online. Once you build up a following, experiment with different types of posts to see what your fans respond to.

Raising Visibility with Earned Media: Tips and Tools

When should you connect with the media?

To announce your Dialogue to Change program: Use the news media to spread the word about your program and to recruit facilitators and participants. News releases are the most common method of informing the media of newsworthy activities and soliciting their coverage of them. News releases are distributed to the news media through a media list that you develop. These lists should be updated regularly as media reporters have high turnover rates and new media outlets are entering the market more regularly. Public service announcements may be another way to raise awareness of your program.

During the time the dialogues are meeting, there are a number of media activities to consider in order to generate awareness about the process. These could include:

- Inviting reporters to attend a dialogue. If you do pursue this, make sure you establish some ground rules with respect to the confidentiality of the discussion participants. You do not want the free flow of ideas at the dialogues to be inhibited by the possibility of publication of participants' comments.
- Sending out news releases to keep reporters up-to-date on the scope and progress of the program.
- Placing coalition leaders on radio and TV talk shows.
- Placing op-ed pieces in newspapers.

To generate news coverage for kickoffs and action forums: Media should be invited to attend the event through a media advisory or media alert. You may also want to hold a news conference or set aside some time for media availability just after the event to answer any questions reporters may have about the process and results to come.

Promoting coverage of program results: You will want to encourage ongoing media coverage of the results of your Dialogue to Change program. This will keep the community and participants informed about the positive outcomes of the effort and encourage future use of Dialogue to Change efforts to address other pressing community issues. Consider the following activities:

- Press releases about tangible results.
- Follow-up calls to key reporters to keep them abreast of what has happened and to request stories about the results.

What should you have prepared?

Press packet: One of the first things you will want to get ready for your media relations effort is a press packet. A press packet is a folder that contains background information and facts on your organization and your program. You can give it to reporters when they cover events related to your program or if they call you requesting background information. Items you might want to include in your press packet:

- Annual report or other organizational capabilities pieces
- Specific information on your program
- A handout on the Dialogue to Change process (if used)
- Names and biographies of those involved (if appropriate)
- Fact sheets about your organization
- Contact page that may include office hours, phone numbers and email addresses
- Related stories, articles or media coverage

Media list: A media list is a list of reporters or editors at all the media outlets that you would like to cover your program. It is important that you get your news releases in the hands of the right people to generate coverage. The list should include the names, email addresses and phone numbers of reporters or editors at newspapers, radio and television stations, magazines and newsletters and bloggers in your community. Identify targeted media outlets and reporters by reading local newspapers (print and online), including neighborhood and special-audience papers, magazines and newsletters and listening to radio and TV news and public affairs shows. Ideally, you will develop a relationship with key reporters.

- Ask around in your network to see if others have a media list that would be worth sharing with you.
- Use media websites, social media sites and telephone books as other sources of contact information.
- Continue to update your list with new information or when new reporters cover the program.

Press release or news release: News releases announce something that is newsworthy and of interest to the media. They are written in a journalistic style called the "inverted pyramid," which means that the most important information is included at the beginning, with less important information to follow. They should be written objectively and give all sides to an issue. Editorializing should only be done in quotes attributed to individuals.

- The first paragraph, called the lead, should include the "who," "what," "when," "where" and "why" of what you want to say.
- Subsequent paragraphs should expand on this information in a descending order of importance with the least important information at the end of the release.
- News releases should be as short as possible – one page, rarely longer than three pages.
- Make sure all facts are accurate in your release.
- Include a contact name and telephone number for reporters to call for further info.
- Distribute news release to media one week before you want to generate news coverage.

Be sure to add an organizational signature to your releases, for anyone who is unfamiliar with your organization or its mission. Here is an example of Everyday Democracy's Press Release signature paragraph:

> ***Everyday Democracy*** *is a project of The Paul J. Aicher Foundation, a private operating foundation dedicated to strengthening deliberative democracy and improving the quality of public life in the United States. Since its inception, Everyday Democracy, based in Hartford, CT, has worked with more than 600 communities by providing advice, training, tools and resources. It also partners with national and local organizations to strengthen the field of dialogue and deliberation and promote a stronger, more equitable democracy. Everyday Democracy's vision is a democracy where all voices are valued, and where participation and racial equity become a permanent part of the way we work as a country at the local, state and national levels. More information is at https://www.everyday-democracy.org/*

Media advisory or alert (for events): A media advisory or media alert informs the news media in advance about an event to solicit their coverage of it. It is brief and includes the "what," "when," "where," "visual opportunities" and "contact information" for an event. The media advisory can be accompanied by a press release giving more detailed information about the event.

- One week before the event, email the media advisory and accompanying news release to each media outlet on your media list.
- The day before the event, email the news release again to your media list.
- The morning of your event, call the reporters and television assignment editors on your media list and suggest why their coverage of the event would be of interest to their readers or viewers. Answer questions they may have and thank them for their time.
- Be available to take any call-backs from reporters with questions about the event.
- At the event, welcome reporters at a press check-in table where you can get their names, who they represent and answer any of their questions. Tell them what to expect during the event - names of speakers, people they may want to interview, etc.

News conferences: A news conference is used to announce breaking news of such importance that you want to announce it simultaneously to reporters and be available to answer their questions immediately. News conferences should only be held when the news is compelling enough for reporters to show up. While news may seem exciting for the organization, it is rare that the media will set aside time to attend an event.

Sometimes a "media availability" could be considered instead of a press conference. This is a more informal way of inviting journalists to learn about your story. For these events, you simply need to gather your topic "experts" and be prepared for important questions. There are no speeches, presentations or panel discussions. Reporters just want answers, and this is an efficient way of providing them. Here are some pointers for both:

- Announce a news conference or media availability to the news media through a media advisory that you fax to them.
- Set up a room for your news conference or media availability. Have a table or podium for the speakers and chairs for reporters. Leave room in the press seating area for television camera operators to stand with their camera tripods.
- Have reporters check in at a press table. Keep track of who attends and what news organization they represent.
- Hand out necessary factual or background information to reporters when they check in.

For press conferences:

- Have one or two key speakers give brief remarks (five minutes or less). They should speak from a podium or table that can accommodate reporters' microphones. They should introduce themselves and have well-planned remarks that include the most important messages.
- After the remarks are completed, have your speakers take questions from reporters one at a time.
- Announce an end to the questioning when appropriate.
- Have spokespeople offer to make themselves available individually to reporters at the close of the session.
- Record the proceedings with an audio recorder for your future reference.

NOTE: These events may also be offered to reporters "virtually" via Zoom Meetings or Go-to-Webinar. Benefits of conducting these events virtually include easy sharing of graphs and presentations, opportunities to interact with the journalists, and overall convenience. Limitations include few opportunities for photos, and that video quality is insufficient for TV News journalists.

Proactive public relations strategies

Public service announcements: You may want to use public service announcements on local radio and TV stations as a means to recruit volunteers. Public service announcements (PSAs) are brief on-air announcements that some radio and television stations run as a community service. They might be an ideal way to help recruit facilitators and participants for your program. The announcements are selected for airing for a specific period of time.

- Find out if any of your local radio or television stations air public service announcements. You can do this by calling the stations and asking for their public affairs or community affairs directors. If they do air them, find out the lengths they prefer - usually 15 seconds, 30 seconds or 60 seconds - and any other requirements.
- Write the announcements so that they conform to the required timing. The best way to check the timing is to read the copy aloud with a timer. Keep the language simple and make sure that it is written for the ear since it will be read on air.
- Send the PSAs to the station. Include a cover letter indicating why you are requesting they run them and specify the time period during which you would like them to air.

Opinion pages: One way to increase visibility for your dialogue program is to have it featured on the opinion pages of your community's newspaper. There are usually three ways to appear on the opinion pages: in editorials, letters to the editor and op-ed pieces.

Editorials - Editorials are opinion articles that appear on the editorial page of the newspaper. They are written by editorial writers and usually express a point of view on a given issue. You can try to generate editorial support for your program by:

- Writing the editor of the editorial page explaining why the program is important to the community and including background information to support your case.
- Requesting a meeting with the editorial board of the newspaper to present an overview of your dialogue-to-change program and why it merits the paper's support. The editorial board of a newspaper usually includes the publisher, senior editors, editorial writers and

sometimes reporters who cover a particular issue. You can request the meeting through a letter and follow up with a call.

- If a meeting date is arranged, be thoroughly prepared for the meeting by taking along background information in press packets for the attendees and having the points you would like to cover clearly in mind.

Letters to the editor - Letters to the editor appear on the opinion pages of newspapers and serve as a way for readers to express their opinions about important issues, recent news coverage or editorials. They are an important part of the public dialogue about issues and can impact public-policy decisions. You can suggest that program participants or coalition members send letters to the editor around the time of the kickoff. When writing letters to the editor:

- Make them timely.
- Stick to one main point.
- Keep them short, typically 50-200 words.
- Send them to the address indicated in the address box on the editorial page.
- Do not use a letter to the editor to promote an event or your organization – it will not be posted.

Op-ed pieces - Op-ed pieces are opinion articles that appear opposite the newspaper's editorials and are written by guest writers. They express an opinion about an issue and are longer and more in-depth than letters to the editor. To try to place an op-ed piece, you can contact the editorial page editor with your idea for such an article. Be sure to have your subject and supporting arguments well thought out. When writing an op-ed piece:

- Keep it to no more than 750 words in length.
- Reflect a strong point of view on a timely issue.
- Include supporting evidence to back up your stance with two or three convincing facts.

Media talk shows: The appearance of someone from your Dialogue to Change program on a radio or television talk show is another great way to spread the word about your program. Television talk shows usually have guests appear in person, while guests on radio shows may either visit the studio or call in on the telephone.

Reactive media responses

No one knows when the media will contact you for information, or for a reaction to current news or events. Media interviews can be friendly or they can be investigative or even hostile. Here are some pointers:

- **Be prepared:** Always keep your key organizational messages handy should the media call you on any topic. These should be no more than three "takeaways" you want anyone to have regardless of why you are being contacted.
- **Respond quickly:** You want to be known as a reliable source in your community when it comes to the dialogue approach, community engag and addressing problems and challenges in your community.
- **Know what you will say:** If an event has happened and the media wants your input, prepare brief responses as soon as the event has happened, so you can be responsive.
- **Know what you do not need to say:** You do not need to answer every question asked. Always try to weave in your key messages in your responses.

Media Alert (or Advisory) Template

[YOUR LOGO]

This template is for events that you want reporters to attend

MEDIA ALERT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
[DATE]

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
[Contact Name, Title, Phone and Email]

YOUR EVENT TITLE

[Your City, State] –

YOUR CONTENT

BE SURE TO INCLUDE KEY INFORMATION IN THE FIRST SENTENCE OR PARAGRAPH

Your lead paragraph needs to provide the essential information. It needs to provide the who, what, when, where, why, and how of your news story.

Your body content should be like a news story. Put the most essential information at the top and the least important at the bottom. Some journalist call this "the inverted pyramid" structure. It's the structure of all news stories, and it should be the structure of all your press releases.

Quotes – Quotes provide credibility and connectivity to the information you are sharing. Be sure to provide at least one quote that supports the points you are making.

YOUR SIGNATURE

[Your Organization, a mission focused description and your website address**]**

Everyday Democracy is a project of The Paul J. Aicher Foundation, a private operating foundation dedicated to strengthening deliberative democracy and improving the quality of public life in the United States. Since its inception, Everyday Democracy, based in Hartford, CT, has worked with more than 600 communities by providing advice, training, tools and resources. It also partners with national and local organizations to strengthen the field of dialogue and deliberation and promote a stronger, more equitable democracy. Everyday Democracy's vision is a democracy where all voices are valued, and where participation and racial equity become a permanent part of the way we work as a country at the local, state and national levels. More information is at https://www.everyday-democracy.org/

Press Release Template

[YOUR LOGO]

This template is for non-event news that you want reporters to cover or supplement info for events

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
[DATE]

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
[Contact Name, Title, Phone and Email]

YOUR RELEASE TITLE – make it meaningful to the media

[Your City, State] –

YOUR CONTENT

BE SURE TO INCLUDE KEY INFORMATION IN THE FIRST SENTENCE OR PARAGRAPH

Your lead paragraph needs to provide the essential information. It needs to provide the who, what, when, where, why, and how of your news story.

Your body content should be like a news story. Put the most essential information at the top and the least important at the bottom. Some journalist call this "the inverted pyramid" structure. It's the structure of all news stories, and it should be the structure of all your press releases.

Quotes – Quotes provide credibility and connectivity to the information you are sharing. Be sure to provide at least one quote that supports the points you are making.

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Press Release Example

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
November 13, 2018

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Shelby Brown, Managing Director, sbrown@everyday-democracy.org

A Time to Talk: a Dialogue about Poverty, Criminal Justice and Race
With Keynoter, Peter Edelman, author of Not a Crime to be Poor

HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT. As people throughout the state and country lose faith that there is any resemblance of equity in our jail, prison, sentencing and overall justice systems, an action-driven collaborative in Connecticut is organizing a day of dialogue and deliberation, led by the national non-profit, Everyday Democracy. The collaborative includes: ACLU Smart Justice Connecticut; Capital Community College, Community Capacity Builders, Community Solutions, City of Hartford, the Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy, Katal Center for Health, Equity and Justice and Phoenix Association.

It is no secret that there is inequity in our social justice systems in our nation and state. Though some may be surprised to know that there are more African American men incarcerated in the U.S. than the total prison populations in India, Argentina, Canada, Lebanon, Japan, Germany, Finland, Israel and England combined.

In Connecticut alone, our collaboration partner the ACLU Smart Justice of Connecticut reports:
• 334% increase in Connecticut's incarcerated population since 1968, far outpacing population growth and crime.
• Only five states are worse than Connecticut when it comes to disproportionately imprisoning Black adults.
• Only seven states are worse than Connecticut when it comes to disproportionately imprisoning Latino adults.
• Connecticut budgets more money for its prison and jail system than for its public health department, DMV, anti-discrimination agency, and more.

The collaborative is planning this day of dialogue to include a broad cross section of Connecticut residents that include not only those who may have been justice involved or justice impacted, but also elected officials, community agencies, businesses and support networks throughout the state, to address and develop action steps toward correcting the inequities in the system

Saturday, November 17, 2018
Chrysalis Center
255 Homestead Avenue, Hartford, Connecticut
12 noon – 4:00pm

Registration and Lunch Available from 11-12.
Registration is required. https://www.eventbrite.com/e/a-time-to-talk-poverty-criminal-justice-and-race-tickets-51466407410

Speakers and Panelists Expected to Participate at the Day of Dialogue include:

- Peter Edelman, Georgetown University Law Center (Keynote)
- Shelby Brown, Managing Director, Everyday Democracy (Host)
- Andrew Clark, CCSU-IMRP
- Anderson Curtis, ACLU Smart Justice
- Gus Marks-Hamilton, ACLU Smart Justice
- Anna Maria Rivera, CT Bail Fund
- Judge Erika Tindall, CT Superior Court
- Richard Frieder, Community Capacity Builders

Registration for attendees is required.

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Flyer Templates

We've included six flyer templates that you can customize to recruit facilitators and dialogue participants, announce a kick-off event, and invite people to join an action team. They are designed to be attention-getting, easy to read and to have elements that are important for you to communicate to those who may be interested in taking part.

The templates include sample language and images, but you can customize each to include the information about your own Dialogue to Change effort. The flyers are also designed to be printed or sent electronically via email. When saved as an image (instead of a PDF), they can also be shared on social media.

Access the Google Slide or PowerPoint templates here: http://bit.ly/evdem-flyer-templates

BE PART OF CHANGE

Become a facilitator for dialogues to build a stronger community

Each dialogue group of 8-12 people will meet once a week for four weeks. The facilitator plays a crucial role in these dialogues to make sure everyone's voices are heard and to capture ideas from the group.

The "Our Town, Our Voices, Our Solutions" program is designed to involve people from all walks of life in working on ways to strengthen our community.

Saturday, November 8
from 9am-5pm

1234 Main St.,
Anytown, CT 55555

For questions or to register, contact Maria at 555-555-5555 or maria@emailaddress.com

This is a free training where you will learn valuable skills to make a difference in your community. Lunch and snacks will be served.

Flyer template courtesy of Everyday-Democracy.org

LET'S BUILD A COMMUNITY WHERE EVERYONE CAN SUCCEED

BE PART OF CHANGE

Join the conversation and take action to make this a reality.

This is your chance to join others in productive dialogue that will generate immediate action to make our community a place where everyone can succeed.

Your viewpoint is critical!

Join others in conversations and share ideas on how to make our community thrive.

SATURDAY | NOVEMBER 8 | FROM 12-2PM

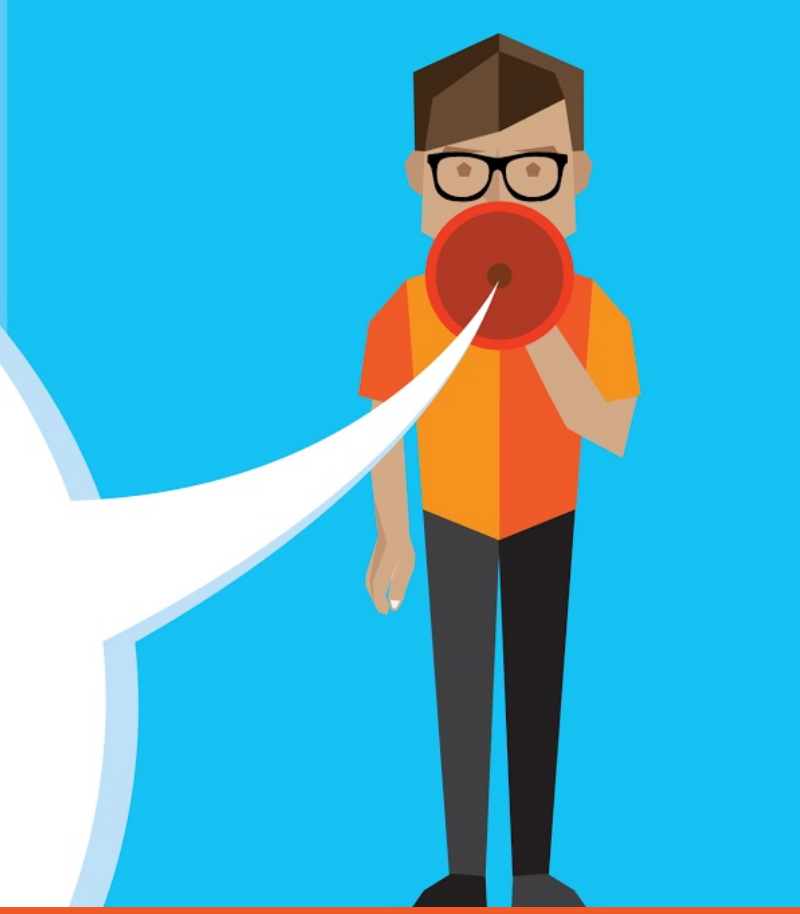
Free event | Lunch will be served | Childcare and Spanish and sign language interpretation available

1234 Main St., Anytown, CT 55555

For questions or to register, contact Maria: 555-555-5555 or maria@emailaddress.com

Flyer template courtesy of Everyday-Democracy.org

VOICE YOUR OPINION



About this important issue

Community dialogue circles on our changing community

- Free event
- Lunch will be served
- Childcare and Spanish and sign language interpretation provided

We want to hear from you!

Saturday, November 8

from 12-2pm

1234 Main St., Anytown, CT 55555

For questions or to register,
contact Maria at 555-555-5555 or email:
maria@emailaddress.com

Your opinion matters

Flyer template courtesy of Everyday-Democracy.org

WE NEED YOU

To help shape the future of our community

WHAT IT IS: Community dialogues will be held once a week for four weeks. Participants will be divided into groups of 8-12 people and each group will have at least one trained facilitator. After the dialogues, the community will come together in an action forum to share ideas and develop a plan for next steps.

WHO IS INVITED: Everyone who wants to voice their opinion and make a difference.

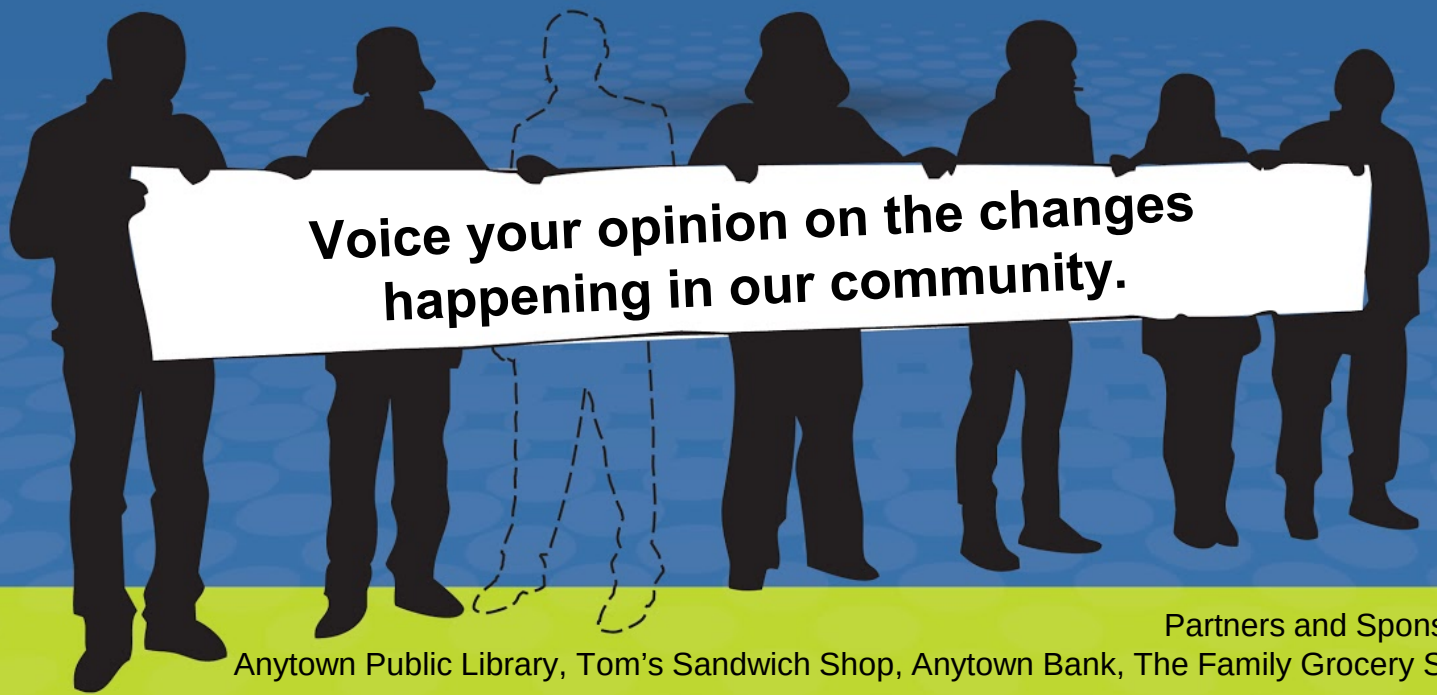
WHAT TO BRING: Your unique perspective and life experiences and an openness to hear what others have to say.

WHEN: Once a week for the first four weeks in October.
There are three options available:
Tuesdays, 6-8pm | Thursdays, 5-7pm
Saturdays, 10am-12pm

DETAILS: These are free events. Refreshments will be served. Childcare and Spanish and sign language interpretation provided. Please let Maria know when you register if you will need childcare or interpretation services.

WHERE: 1234 Main St., Anytown, CT 55555

For questions and to register:
Contact Maria at 555-555-5555
or maria@emailaddress.com.



Partners and Sponsors:
Anytown Public Library, Tom's Sandwich Shop, Anytown Bank, The Family Grocery Store

Flyer template courtesy of Everyday-Democracy.org

JOIN US FOR A KICK-OFF EVENT AND BE PART OF CHANGE !

We all want our community to thrive. The "Our Town, Our Voices, Our Solutions" program is designed to involve people from all walks of life in working on ways to strengthen our community. Join us in celebrating the start of this new program, and make your voice heard about the changes you'd like to see.

This is a free, family-friendly event with live music, games, snacks, face painting and prizes. Teenagers and adults are also invited to participate in a 30-minute sample dialogue to experience what it's like to participate in this unique program. Childcare and Spanish and sign language interpretation will be provided during the sample dialogue.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 8 FROM 3-6PM

LOCATION: 1234 Main St., Anytown, CT 55555

QUESTIONS? Contact Maria at 555-555-5555 or maria@email.com

PARTNERS AND SPONSORS: Anytown Public Library, Tom's Sandwich Shop, Anytown Bank, The Family Grocery Store

Flyer template courtesy of Everyday-Democracy.org

INSERT SPONSOR LOGOS HERE

TURN YOUR IDEAS INTO ACTION!

Join Us!

Attend An Action Forum To Share Ideas And Make Plans To Move Toward Change

- Community dialogue circles on building prosperity
- Free event
- Lunch will be served
- Childcare and Spanish and sign language interpretation available

Saturday, November 8 from 12-2pm

1234 Main St., Anytown, CT 55555
For questions or to register, contact Maria at 555-555-5555 or maria@emailaddress.com

Flyer template courtesy of Everyday-Democracy.org