Narrative

NARRATIVE LANDSCAPE MAPPING

This worksheet is designed to help you answer the key questions that you will encounter during the second phase of your narrative change project:

- **What are the existing dominant narratives?**
- **What evidence can you find?**

Step 1: Narrative Landscape Research

Research Inquiry.

Based on your hypotheses about the dominant narrative (See Worksheet #1), what are you hoping to learn through your narrative landscape research?

Review Existing Research.

Identify and review existing narrative or messaging research related to your change goal and primary audience. What did you learn? What do you still need to learn through your own original narrative landscape research?

Conduct Original Research.

Learn how your narrative is operationalized by your audiences by: conducting an audit of news/social media, reviewing communications and messaging materials from peer organizations or institutions active in your sector, and/or interviewing a set of stakeholders who have a deep understanding of the narratives at-work in the pathways space.

Media Audit Sources.

What publications, social media platforms, websites, or other sources will you include in your media, social listening or messaging audit? Consider the diversity of sources (e.g., audience, geography, political perspective, type of media) and the number of stories you will include.

Analysis.

Start by analyzing the stories in individual pieces of content. We recommend looking for a variety of analytical factors to consider as you review each piece of content. You do not need to use every single analytical factor for each article. Review the list and add any other factors that will help you to answer your research questions.

Next you will analyze the pattern of stories that will enable you to see and understand the way in which narratives are operationalized across multiple content pieces.

Story Analysis

1. **Problem Statements:** How are problems being framed? What is at stake?

2. **Solution Statements:** How are the solutions being framed? Who is helped by a particular solution? Who is responsible for the solution?

3. **Assumptions:** What does someone have to believe to accept the problem and/or solution as true?

4. **Values:** What values are reflected in the story? (e.g., equality, meritocracy)

5. **Language:** What words are used to describe your issue? Is it favorable, neutral or biased against your issue?

6. **Messengers:** What types of messengers tell the story or are quoted? (e.g., educator, mentor, student, policymaker)

7. **Youth and Parent Voice:** How and where do you see young people's voices and parents' voices included in the story?

8. **Experts:** Who is positioned as the expert(s) on your issue?

9. **Data/Evidence:** What types of data or evidence do your messengers share or use? (e.g., data, anecdotes, lived experience, etc.)

10. **Images:** What images, if any, are included? Who is pictured? Doing what?

11. **Power:** Who has power in this story? How is the story attempting to keep the status quo in place to maintain a group's power, or empower a group that has been historically excluded or marginalized. Who stands to benefit?

12. **Reader Comments:** Are reader comments in support, against, or neutral on your issue?

Pattern Analysis

1. **Narrative:** How are you seeing the narratives that influence your issue appearing in the content you have reviewed thus far?

2. **Voice:** Are specific types of people consistently elevated as experts on your issue area, while others are missing or silent?

3. **Support or Opposition:** Is the media coverage supportive of or opposed to your issue, or is it presented in a balanced way?

Insights.

Summarize the 5-10 high-level, overall insights you learned from your narrative landscape research. We recommend that you compile your research in a presentation or report, so you can share it with others. Be sure to include a summary of the research methodologies, data sources and search terms you used.

Your insights may address the following questions:

- What narratives did you observe?

- How are these narratives operationalized in media, culture, institutions, systems, etc.?

- How did your research confirm or revise your thinking about the dominant narrative affecting your work? What additional nuance did you discover?

- What patterns do you observe about power and the underlying assumptions in the stories you examined?

- What else do you want to learn about dominant narratives and your audiences' mindsets?

Step 3: Potential Narrative Interventions

Potential Interventions.

Based on your analysis, what do you think your narrative intervention needs to be?

Are you seeking to:

- Create a new narrative;

- Counter a harmful narrative;

- Amplify a helpful narrative;

- Reframe an existing narrative; or

- Attach new meaning or a new context to an existing narrative?

Priority Audiences.

Reflecting on what you have learned so far by mapping the narrative landscape, and keeping in mind your change goal, are there any modifications or additions you would make to your priority audiences? Which one or two audiences do you want to learn more about?

Audience Inquiry.

What do you want to learn about your priority audiences?

The Pathways Narrative Project