

DRAFT AND TEST YOUR STORY WITH YOUR COLLEAGUES DURING A MEETING

1. START WITH THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

Quick exercise | (5-10 minutes)

What change are we trying to explain and to whom?



Are we sharing information, or inviting people into a shared story?



Is this structured in a way colleagues and stakeholders can follow and remember?



What narrative helps explain why this decision or trade-off matters?



2. TURN STRATEGY INTO STORY

A quick exercise for strategies, plans or policy notes:

a. Identify:



The problem being addressed

The shift in approach

The actions proposed

The change expected

b. Rewrite it as a short narrative.

Quick exercise (10 minutes – using an existing document)



Take one paragraph from a strategy or report and rewrite it using this structure:

Because [problem], the city decided to [shift].

This means [action], so that [expected change].

3. STRENGTHEN YOUR STORY STRUCTURE

Use this simple structure when framing an initiative:

Who is directly affected?



What is the real barrier?



What will change in concrete terms?



What are we asking others to do?



Quick exercise (individual or small group – 10 minutes)

Pick one ongoing project and complete this sentence:

“Today, [who] face [problem]. With this initiative, [what changes], so that [result].”

If the sentence feels vague, your story needs sharpening. So ask “why does this matter?” repeatedly.

4. TEST AND REFINE YOUR LANGUAGE AND FORMATS

Exercise 1

Test your language



Take a paragraph from a report
Remove jargon, acronyms and passive verbs
Rewrite it in plain language

Quick exercise (5–10 minutes – peer test)

Share both versions with a colleague from another department:

“Which one would you repeat to someone else?”

Use the version that travels.

Exercise 2

Test a different format



Take one initiative
Translate it into another format
(short story, visual, walk, discussion)
Quick exercise (team use – 15 minutes)

In a small group, assign different formats to the same project:

One writes a short story
One sketches a visual
One describes it as a guided walk

Compare by asking:

What became clearer?
What was harder to explain?

5. OPEN AND SUSTAIN THE NARRATIVE

Keep storytelling part of your routine work:

Whose perspectives are visible - and whose are missing?

What feedback have we received?

Does our narrative still reflect reality?

Quick exercise (10 minutes - team routine)

At the end of a meeting, ask:

What has changed since last time?



What story are we telling about this project now?



Is it still accurate?



Note one adjustment to test before the next meeting.