

Applying Narrative

There are many ways to apply a transformative narrative to your work. What follows are just a few areas for implementations, along with some real world examples from health equity narrative projects in Wisconsin and Minnesota.



**Data,
Evaluation,
+ Research**



Comms



**Policy
Advocacy**



**Relationship
+ Container
Building**



**Strategic
+ Program
Planning**

Data, Evaluation, + Research



- Refer to the narrative to help inform which data and measures you choose and how you talk about them.
- When data reflects a dominant narrative, what added community and historical context could deepen your audience's understanding? Challenge the dominant narrative with a transformative narrative.
- What new research or evaluation would help advance the transformative narrative?
- How might you conduct research and evaluation differently using the transformative narrative? How would your collaborations change?

Communications

- **Draw from the transformative narrative to create talking points** for a campaign, a speaking engagement, or for responding to the press/media.
- **Integrate elements of the narrative into your written communications** (newsletters, social media, website content, reports, and publications). Pull specific concepts from the narrative to ground your messaging in your transformative vision.
- **Check your communication frames against the transformative narrative.** When creating or reviewing materials, ask yourself: Does this piece reflect the values embodied in the transformative narrative? Does it unintentionally repeat or strengthen dominant narratives?

Strategic + Program Planning

Consider the narrative changes you'd like to see as you engage in strategic planning and program planning:

- Are there new programs or activities you'd like to start that would advance the transformative narrative?
- Are there programs or activities that you're currently doing that unintentionally support dominant narratives?
- What might you do differently?

Policy Advocacy

Use the transformative narrative as a tool to evaluate and deepen your policy and advocacy work:

- Are there policies you could propose that advance the transformative narrative, even as "messaging bills"?
- Do the policies you're already advocating for advance the transformative narrative or the dominant narrative?
- Are the communications in your advocacy advancing the transformative narrative?
- What activities could you integrate into your advocacy campaign that demonstrate and embody the transformative narrative?

Relationship + Container Building

- **Share the transformative narrative** with your colleagues, coworkers, and movement community.
- **Use it as a discussion tool** to help define shared values and to talk about the dominant narratives we are up against.
- **Use the transformative narrative to co-create group agreements** and set a container that grounds your relationships and work together.

Case Examples

Healthiest State Initiative

University of Wisconsin
– Madison Population
Health Institute

Healthy Minnesota Partnership

Minnesota Department
of Health

The story: Healthiest State Initiative

Members from the Healthiest State Initiative at the University of Wisconsin–Madison Population Health Institute worked to identify dominant themes in the public health narrative in Wisconsin, and the resulting messages, policies, and practices that hindered health equity efforts. The group developed a transformative narrative, which was quickly deployed when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Elements of the narrative were then observed in the Governor’s remarks and local health department messaging.

The story: Healthy Minnesota Partnership

The Healthy Minnesota Partnership brought together community partners and the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) to reveal dominant narratives about what creates health. They then engaged in conversations with a wide range of people to identify and promote new narratives. These were deployed to support specific issue areas, including a report on the connection between income and health. This report ultimately influenced the debate on an increased to the minimum wage in Minnesota.

Additional Resources for Applying Narrative

[Redefining Who Belongs: Narrative Strategy for Belonging](#) – Report from the Othering & Belonging Institute offering key learnings and case studies of how different groups have put narrative into action.

[Race Class Narrative Resources](#) – Materials from We Make the Future’s Race Class Narrative with examples and frameworks for translating a narrative into messaging and communications.

