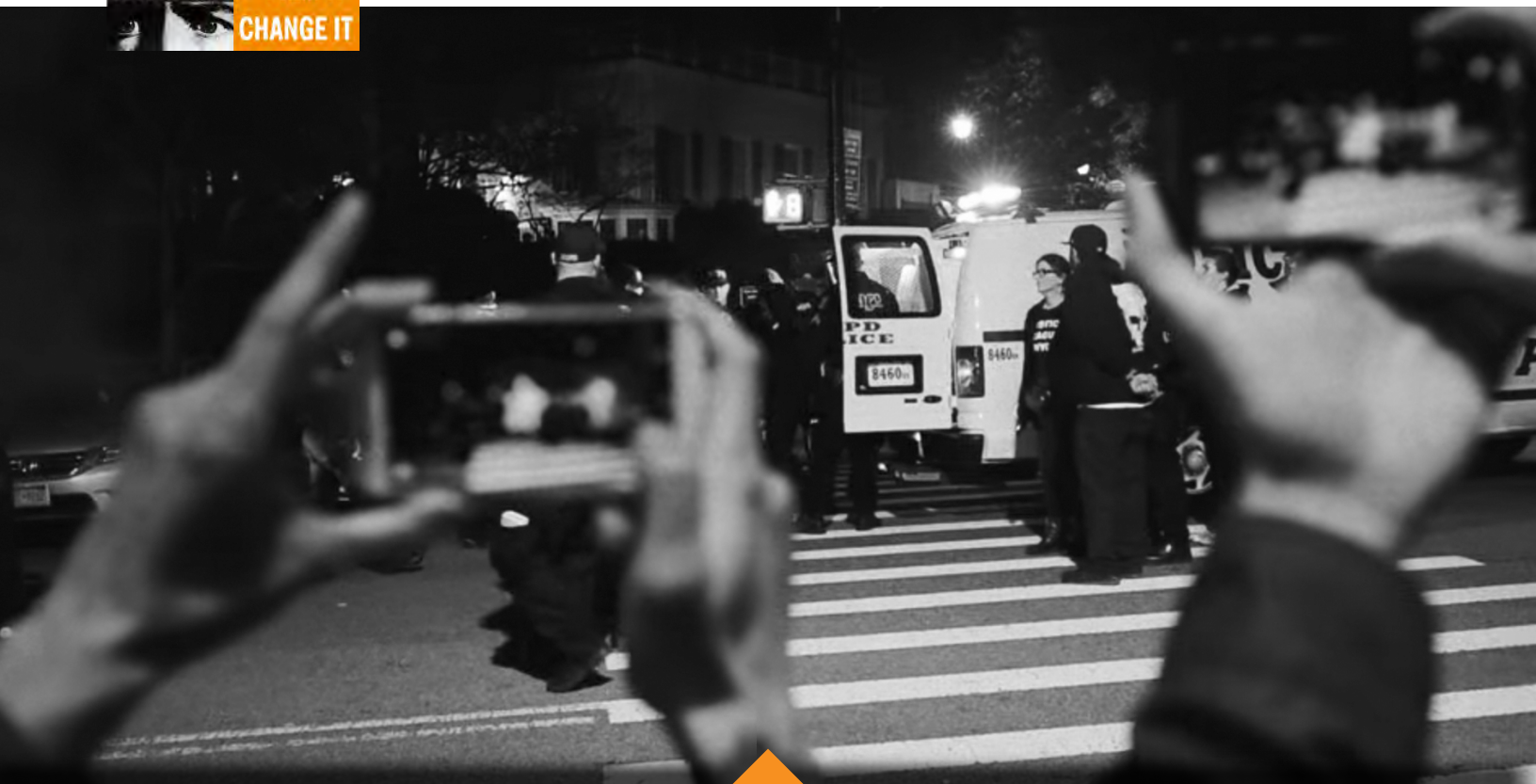




NAME



# Planning Workbook: Police Violence Video Database

## El Grito de Sunset Park Use Case

### Process at a Glance



## Plan

Defining Need, Establishing  
Scope, Collection Plan



## Archive

Digitize, Verify, Preserve,  
Develop Metadata Schema



## Analyze

Analysis, Visualization,  
Creating Context and Narrative



## Share

Release Findings &  
Curation Toolkit

### About this Workbook

This workbook was developed by WITNESS and El Grito de Sunset Park, a community-based organization in Brooklyn, to share our learnings and suggested basic practices for organizing, preserving and analyzing large collections of police violence videos. This guidance stems from our collaborative project, Profiling the Police ([elgrito.witness.org](http://elgrito.witness.org)).

The workbook walks you step-by-step through the process of planning, archiving, and gleaning data from video collections of police abuse documentation. It includes worksheets and guidance on specific issues such as defining your project, ethics, consent and security. It also offers examples of how we addressed these issues in our project.

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# Overview

## ABOUT THIS PROJECT

In 23 U.S. states, including New York, the law explicitly exempts records of police misconduct from public view. In others, records are secret in practice because police departments routinely withhold them under vague legal standards or in spite of court precedents.

El Grito de Sunset Park, in partnership with the U.S. Program at WITNESS, is aggregating, digitizing, logging, metatagging and analyzing eyewitness video taken by neighborhood activists that capture law enforcement abuses in Brooklyn's 72nd Precinct. The goal of the project is to create a database that shows patterns of discrimination and abuse at the precinct and officer levels.

We built a website ([elgrito.witness.org](http://elgrito.witness.org)) to model visually compelling ways of sharing findings from the database. The website offers overviews of our findings and research and an example officer profile who appeared in multiple videos and has been named in numerous civil rights lawsuits.

## ABOUT THE WORKBOOK & TOOLKIT

The worksheets here and the complete toolkit ([elgrito.witness.org/portfolio/elgritocase](http://elgrito.witness.org/portfolio/elgritocase)) are your guide to basic practices that will help ensure that the videos can be used to expose discrimination and abuse, and support the process of bringing perpetrators to justice and freeing the wrongly accused.

# Planning Your Project

**DISCOVERY: Why do this? Putting people first, confirming need.**

The PLANNING phase (sometimes called DISCOVERY) is an information-gathering process meant to dig deep into the details of what human rights problem your initiative is trying to solve. Scope and depth of research and inquiry will vary from project to project, but the results are the same — valuable data.

The more information you gather, interpret, and comprehend from different users and stakeholders, the more prepared you will be to create a process, tool, prototype or product that provides a deliverable that meets an unmet need.

**THE BIG IDEA: What problem are you solving for?**

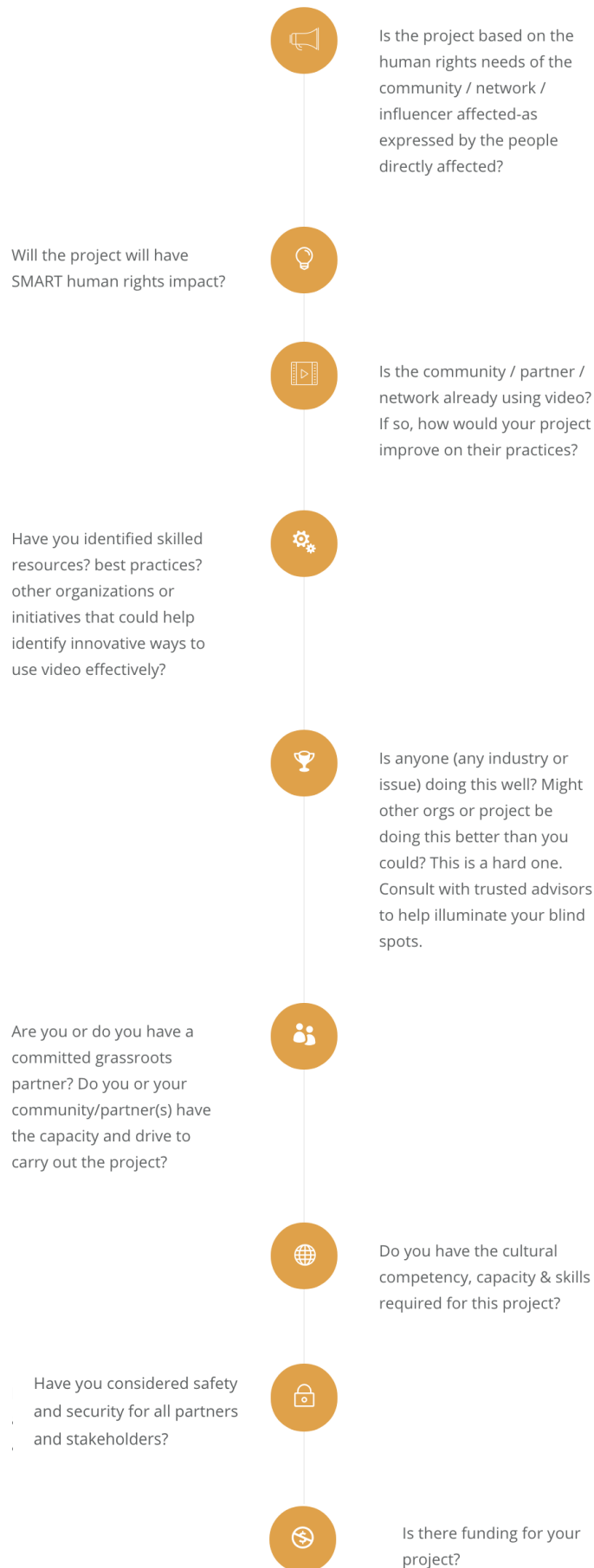
If you are unable to clearly and succinctly describe the need your solution is addressing, it's unlikely that your work will meet your expectations. To confirm that there is a need for what you're proposing, describe:

- The problems you're solving and why
- The stories you're helping people tell
- The gap you're filling and opportunity you're creating
- The time/money you're helping people save
- Who has the need for the solution you're providing

**THE BIG NEED: What gaps are you addressing? Can you fill them? Is anyone else doing this?**

Passion and skill can result in innovative and timely responses to urgent, even global, need. But, even projects with the best intention and thoughtful leadership will fall short of success if they are not properly scoped and resourced.

Before going on, consider the questions we've posted on the following page.



# Planning Your Project, continued

## TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT: Is it for You?

If your project involves developing new technology, proceed with caution.

If your project is designed to be a technology innovation, remember your cutting edge idea of a couple of months ago, could be old news tomorrow. The most important thing about problem solving that includes technology, is first assuring that there is a need. If someone or some organization is already doing something similar — consider partnering. If there is an existing technology you can configure or leverage in some way, do that first.

There can be a significant cost when creating new technical solutions, whether it is hardware or software. And it's not just in the development, but also in sustaining that solution. Hopefully, your brilliant idea fills a pressing need and you have a good plan to implement it. The best/worst thing that can happen is that it becomes widely embraced and users come to depend on it.

Unless you are an experienced software or hardware development organization — with the resources to launch, distribute, train, provide support to end users, and evolve your solution to keep pace with the light speed churn of hardware and software, or with fickle end user loyalties — you are setting yourself up for failure. Launching applications that don't function as advertised, or are unstable can have real negative impact on the reputation of your organization. The tech world is filled with great ideas and projects that did not succeed because they could not execute and sustain their solutions.

Another big challenge to overcome will be making users aware of your initiatives as well as getting users to adopt your solution. A new app or site that requires users to change their digital habits can have a rough time getting widely adopted. Stick with your strengths, form coalitions, partner. There is incredible risk in launching technical products.

There is never “never” with technology innovation. But, as a human rights organization, instead of building new technology yourself, consider creating a prototype or a use case study to shop around to potential development partners, or to influence the road maps of existing platforms and tools.

If software or hardware development is the only solution, and if you aren't scared yet — more power to you!

We've created worksheets and workflows to help you think through the details of your project and scope for success.

# Project Plan + Scope Worksheet page 1 of 5

**DISCOVERY: WHY DO THIS? WHAT IS THE SCOPE?**

What thematic issues will be addressed when the project is successfully completed? (e.g. systemic police abuse, extrajudicial killings, land grabs, etc.)

What are the immediate challenges?

# Project Plan + Scope Worksheet page 2 of 5

**WHAT PROBLEM ARE YOU SOLVING FOR?**

What problem(s) are you solving for? Are they technical, structural, etc? Describe succinctly.

What gap are you filling? What opportunity(ies) are you creating? What resource savings or efficiencies are you creating?

Have you tried to address this problem in the past? If so, how were you successful? How did your solution fall short?



# Project Plan + Scope Worksheet page 3 of 5

## DESCRIBE THE NEED

Who is your solution for? How will they benefit? How will you engage them in the planning, design and testing process?

Is finding a solution for this problem a priority for stakeholders?

# Project Plan + Scope Worksheet page 4 of 5

## PROJECT GOALS

What issues will be addressed when the project is successfully completed?

What stories do you want to tell?

What types of assets will you create? e.g. filemaker pro database, spreadsheet, news articles, interactive website, guidance and training resources, etc.

# Project Plan + Scope Worksheet page 5 of 5

## LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Are their others addressing this problem? If so, who? How have their projects succeeded or failed?

What is your partnership strategy? How might you leverage existing findings, technologies, and practices to advance your goals?

## TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT

How will you use technology for your solution? What technologies are you using and why?

Are you prototyping your solution? If so, describe the technologies you'll be prototyping with

Are you developing your solution? If so, describe the technologies you'll be developing with

# Project Plan + Scope Worksheet page 1 of 4

## El Grito de Sunset Park Project Plan

### WHY DO THIS?

For over 18 years\*, El Grito's substantial collection of eyewitness video capturing police abuse, has not been safely stored, documented or analyzed. Most of the information about the incidents captured is antedoctal and known mostly by the organization's founder. This significant collection of video needs to be archived properly so that journalists, attorneys, data scientists, and advocacy organizations can access it. A well documented collection will help tell the stories of violence suffered by the people of Sunset Park, Brooklyn at the hands of the NYPD and push forward advocacy efforts around justice and accountability.

\*For this project, we only collected footage from 2002-2014.

### PROBLEM WE'RE SOLVING FOR

The WITNESS / El Grito partnership is a collaborative effort to create practical, innovative and sustainable ways to tell the story of police abuse with impact.

The work here represents the first phase of creating an ongoing curation and archiving practice that will continue to evolve for El Grito, as well as serve as a model for other copwatch groups, or anyone managing eyewitness videos to expose human rights abuses.

After several planning (or "discovery") meetings with El Grito and other stakeholders, we concluded we'd work with a small sample of El Grito's video to:

- create practices and workflows for ongoing

- management of the El Grito archives
- explore existing curation platforms and sketch out possible content flows for future platforms
- create a new, compelling way to tell the story of police abuse in Sunset Park
- create a curation "toolkit" including our research notes, step-by-step instructions, scripts, spreadsheets, etc. used in this project to support El Grito and others in managing their ever growing video collections
- create a metadata model for describing videos of policing incidents and misconduct

### DESCRIBING the NEED

#### IMMEDIATE CHALLENGES

Thousands of videos from 18 years of documented police abuse, stored on various media and devices. Knowledge about the content and encounters with the police are stored in the brains of a few people.

#### STORIES WE WANT TO TELL

Police abuse is happening in Sunset Park with impunity. These incidents are not isolated to a few officers and the NYPD is complicit in the ongoing abuse.

### PROJECT GOALS

#### GAP WE'RE FILLING, OPPORTUNITY WE'RE CREATING

El Grito's video content in aggregate showed a more powerful story than a single video. This collection of videos points to patterns of discrimination and abuse inflicted by the NYPD for over 14 years.

# Project Plan + Scope Worksheet page 2 of 4

## El Grito de Sunset Park Project Plan

### **GAP WE'RE FILLING, OPPORTUNITY WE'RE CREATING, CONTINUED**

Because laws in New York State make it nearly impossible for the public to access disciplinary records about police officers, this project helps address a glaring information gap and can strengthen advocacy efforts around transparency and accountability.

Creating examples and practices to glean data and stories from video collections would be invaluable to many constituencies exposing human rights abuse, including: journalists, attorneys, archivists, educators, funders, activists and advocacy organizations.

### **RESOURCE SAVINGS / CREATING EFFICIENCIES**

Finding low to no cost solutions for aggregating, digitizing (as needed) and cataloging El Grito's videos.

### **LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS**

After initial "discovery" sessions with the El Grito team, we reached out to journalists, data scientists, attorneys, legal services organizations, as well as other copwatch groups and advocacy organizations that had already created police abuse incident tracking projects or were in various phases of design or development.

Biggest takeaways were:

- there are other projects tracking data about policing, but none are currently using video, nor are their systems considering videos as assets
- there can never be a one-size-fits all solution, each organization has location specific needs (e.g., legal, political, security, etc.) that can't be shoe-horned into a single platform
- spend time with the video content to design taxonomies and meta-tagging schemas. Extensive data design sessions up front are labor intensive and not as effective. Your schemas should be dynamic.
- safely storing content in a way that maintains privacy of contributors is a priority; video assets compound that challenge
- verification and metatagging is labor intensive and the most expensive part of all projects

### **TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT**

The scope of this project did not include technical development. We did analyze and test existing platforms and designed an interactive prototype in Wordpress. And, we've documented ideas for development next steps. There are universal needs for automation and creation of data standards that warrant further exploration.

# Project Plan + Scope Worksheet page 3 of 4

## El Grito de Sunset Park Project Plan

### Problem Statement

Below is an Illustrated way to share what challenges our project would be addressing. Concise, visual representations of the problem you are solving for is an ideal way to help message project objectives to potential partners and advisors and act as a touchstone as you scope each phase of your projects.

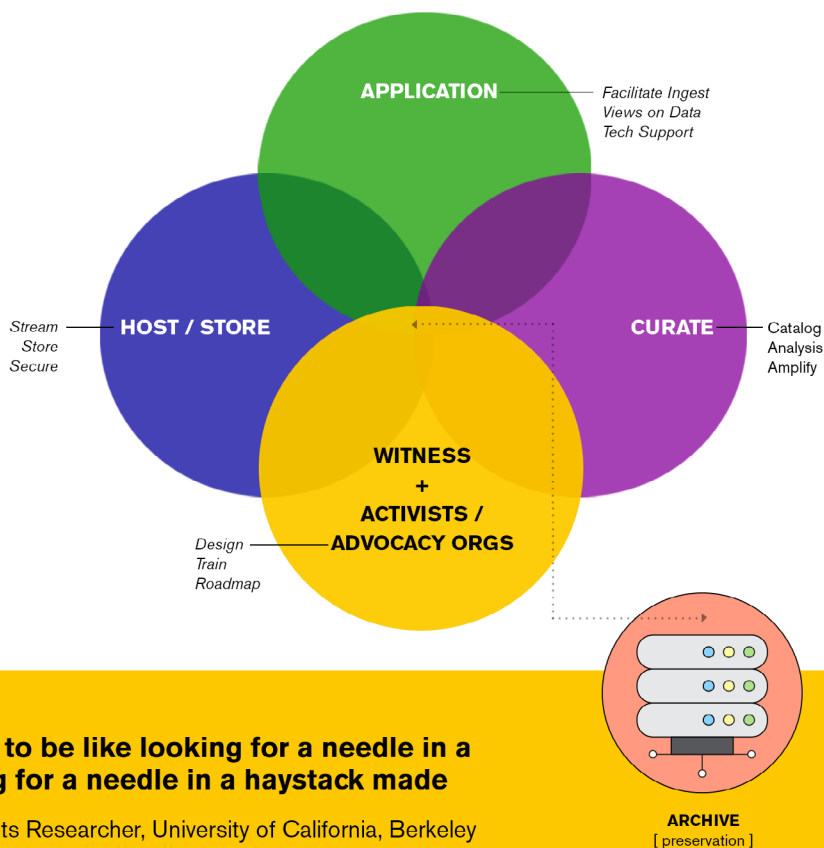
Problem we are solving for

**Reducing barriers to managing, and finding meaning in, collections of eyewitness video.**

Solution

**Create Human Rights Video Curation methodologies and tools that enable collecting, curating, corroborating, analyzing, and visualizing eyewitness video as a data source to expose patterns of discrimination and abuse.**

Simplifying ingest, verification & metatagging  
Safe/secure storage of video and related assets  
Data analysis & visualization  
Non-technical users, "artisanal" option  
Flexible & extensible  
Technical support & sustainability

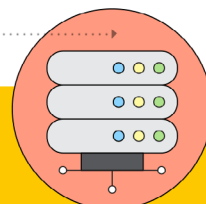


“

**Finding a relevant video used to be like looking for a needle in a haystack. Now it's like looking for a needle in a haystack made of needles.**

”

- Human Rights Researcher, University of California, Berkeley



**ARCHIVE**  
[ preservation ]

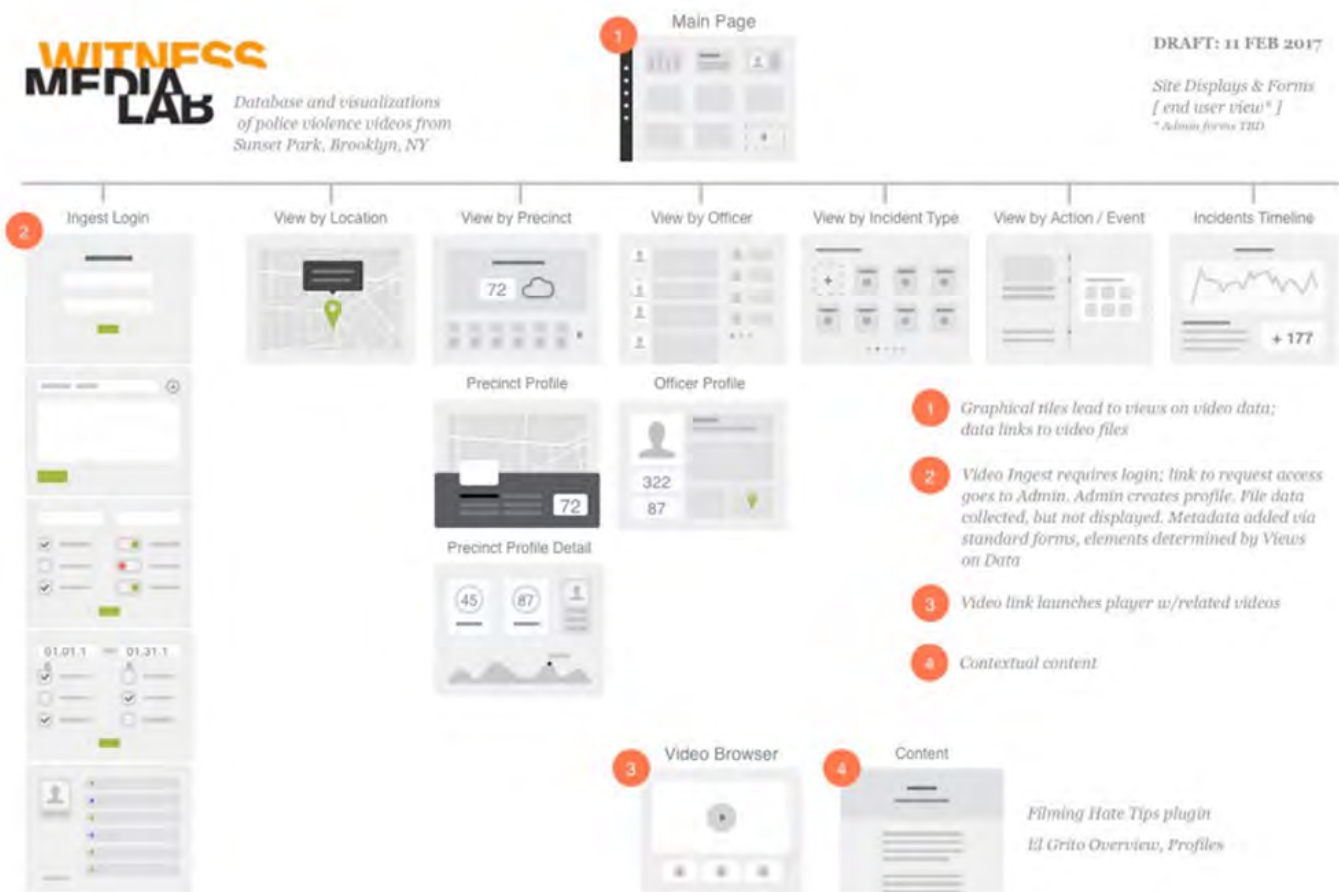
# Project Plan + Scope Worksheet page 4 of 4

## El Grito de Sunset Park Project Plan

### Proposed Content Flow Map: Curation Platform Sketch

Content maps provide the opportunity for everyone involved in the production process to share their visions and ideas for the solution. Visualizing ideas is a very effective way to have all project collaborators participate in the design of the solution, regardless of their role.

Although we did not develop a Curation Platform for this project, this fully imagined solution guided us through discussions of not only functional priorities for El Grito, but identified solutions and challenges for security, accessibility, sustainability and development resources.



# Collection Policy Worksheet page 1 of 5

## WHAT IS A COLLECTION POLICY?

Selection is key to archiving. This worksheet can help you create and document your criteria for selection — i.e. what categories of videos you aim to collect, and what you don't want to collect. This could be criteria based on date ranges, type of event, creators, formats, etc.

Once you have created your collection policy using this worksheet, make sure to familiarize your team with the criteria so they can follow it consistently. Everything that falls within the collection scope should be selected for collection. If it seems like too much, you can adjust the collection scope -- but don't leave it up to each team member to make arbitrary selection decisions based on personal assessment of quality or perceived usefulness, etc.

## WHY DO YOU NEED A COLLECTING / SELECTION POLICY?

- To ensure that what you're collecting supports the goal of the organization and/or project.
- To ensure that the archived collection is intentional and accountable for what it says it is (e.g. "This collection represents the video we recorded during the Puerto Rican Pride Parade 2010-2015.") and not an arbitrary collection of "stuff we happened to keep".
- To make sure you aren't spending resources saving content you don't actually need.
- To guide volunteers who are doing the selection, acting as a re-orienting tool when they get lost in the weeds, and so that selection is done consistently across the team.
- To enable users down the line to understand the scope and intent of the collection and how decisions were made.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER AND DOCUMENT

**How does the collection support the goal / mission of the organization, project or archive?**

## CONTENT SCOPE

**What subject matter of your collection?**



# Collection Policy Worksheet page 2 of 5

**Geographic location covered:**

**Time Period Covered:**

## **SOURCES & FORMATS**

**Which sources or creators will you collect videos and materials from?**

**Any specific video formats/encodings preferred or not preferred?**

**Will certain formats that are difficult to use (e.g. proprietary drone video format) be transcoded to another format before ingest?**

**Will both the original format and the transcoded master be collected?**

# Collection Policy Worksheet page 3 of 5

**Will you collect older videotape formats?**

Keep in mind that videotapes are obsolete and need to be digitized or re-formatted to digital files. Do you have the capacity to digitize the videotape formats you intend to collect?

**Any specific document formats collected or not collected? Will you be collecting any other types of files or documentation?** (e.g. .jpeg, .doc, .pdf, .mp3, physical documents)

**Does the collection only include unique materials that do not exist elsewhere (i.e. original recordings), or non-unique materials (e.g. news clips, videos downloaded from other groups, etc.) also?**

**Does the collection only include material that can be traced to a source and verified, or does it include material whose provenance is unknown and whose content is unverified?**

# Collection Policy Worksheet page 4 of 5

**Does the collection include unaltered raw footage only, or edited / altered (e.g. bugged, rotated, stabilized, slo-mo) versions as well? What types of edited / altered versions are collected and not collected?**

**Does the collection only include camera original files and earliest-generation masters, or transcoded derivatives (e.g. access copies) as well? What transcoded copies are collected and not collected?**

**How are hidden files (e.g. filenames that begin with a "." like ".Trashes") dealt with, keeping in mind evidentiary and security considerations?**

## PERMISSIONS & RIGHTS

**Does the collection only include material that the organization has the rights to make accessible and/or re-use, or does it also include material that the organization does not have the rights to make accessible or re-use?** (See page 28 for Ethical Guidelines and Consent Form suggestions)

# Collection Policy Worksheet page 5 of 5

**Will you collect videos in which informed consent was NOT given by people who appear in the video? If so, what is the policy regarding access and re-use of these videos?**

**What types of privacy and/or security measures are you taking to protect the collection, the collectors and those who appear in the videos?**

## **AUTHORITY**

**Under what circumstances can something be removed / deleted from the collection?**

**Who is making these decisions about the collecting policy?**

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

**Activists' Guide to Archiving Video** (<https://archiving.witness.org/>)

**DatNav Guide: Guide to Navigating Digital Data in Human Rights Research**

(<https://library.witness.org/product/datnav-guide-to-navigating-digital-data-in-human-rights-research/>)

# Collection Policy Worksheet page 1 of 3

## El Grito de Sunset Park Collection Policy

### HOW DOES THE COLLECTION SUPPORT THE GOAL / MISSION OF THE ORGANIZATION?

This collection will support the efforts of El Grito de Sunset Park and WITNESS to digitize, organize, curate and analyze videos of police abuse from the Sunset Park Puerto Rican Day Parade in Brooklyn, NY. This use case project will inform our efforts to build more sustainable systems and workflows for managing, analyzing and curating large sets of police abuse videos. Though the videos in the collection focus on officers in the 72nd Precinct, the collection will be used to support broader advocacy efforts around police accountability in New York.

Due to limited resources and capacity for this use case project, we will focus on a narrow scope for this collection, the Puerto Rican Day Parade and an example officer profile. While this collection will not grow over time, El Grito plans to apply these methodologies and tactics to a more comprehensive collection of their work, which will continue to grow and expand through new submissions from local residents, copwatchers and eyewitnesses.

The original sources for the assets in this collection include 29 miniDV tapes provided by El Grito and a hard drive with over 200GB of footage, images and files. Not all of this content fell into the scope of our collection policy and was not included in the collection.

### WHAT IS THE SCOPE OF THE COLLECTION IN TERMS OF THE CONTENT?

#### Subject matter:

Incidents of police abuse and aggressive behavior in Sunset Park, with a specific focus on incidents during the Sunset Park Puerto Rican Day Parade.

#### Sources or creators:

El Grito de Sunset Park, Copwatchers, eyewitnesses, surveillance footage

#### Geographic location covered:

Neighborhood of Sunset Park, Brooklyn

#### Time period covered:

2002-2014

### WHAT FORMATS ARE COLLECTED?

#### Video

#### Any specific video formats/encodings preferred or not preferred?

- This collection will accept miniDV tapes (DV and HDV) and all types of digital files.

#### Will certain formats that are difficult to use (e.g. proprietary drone video format) be transcoded to another format before ingest? Will both the original format and the transcoded master be collected?

- All digital formats will be collected in the original format received. In the case of duplicate content on different formats, we will try to determine which file was the camera original file or closest to the camera original file. MiniDV tapes will be captured as Quicktime wrapped DV or MPEG-2 files, depending on the source (DV or HDV) with H.264 mp4 access files.

# Collection Policy Worksheet page 2 of 3

## El Grito de Sunset Park Collection Policy

- We anticipate the quality of some MiniDV tapes will be compromised, which may cause issues during the digitization process, such as such as timecode breaks or dropped frames, which could lead to the creation of hundreds of files per tape. If this occurs with a tape, we will put all the digitized files together in a folder titled with the unique ID of the tape, plus the date the tape was filmed (when possible). For tapes that produce too many clips to manage, we will stitch these together to create a single one so we don't have to enter every clip into the database. Find more guidance on Stitching & Compression [here](#).
- This collection will contain a combination of unique materials, including original video recordings, and non-unique materials, such as news clips, social media photos of officers and/or victims, videos posted online by others and copies of files produced by others.

**Will you collect older videotape formats? Keep in mind that videotapes are obsolete and need to be digitized or re-formatted to digital files. Do you have the capacity to digitize the videotape formats you intend to collect?**

- For this collection we are gathering and digitizing miniDV/HDV tapes filmed during the Sunset Park Puerto Rican Day parade.

### Documents

**Any specific document formats collected or not collected?**

- All document formats included on the initial drive submitted by El Grito are to be included (including .jpg, pdf and .doc).

**Should the collection only include unique materials that do not exist elsewhere (i.e. original recordings), or non-unique materials (e.g. news clips, videos downloaded from other groups, etc.) also?**

**Should the collection only include material that can be traced to a source and verified, or does it include material whose provenance is unknown and whose content is unverified?**

- The collection will include verified and unverified material. It will include videos for which we may not have complete information (e.g. filmer, exact date, names of victims, etc.)

**Should the collection include unaltered raw footage only, or edited / altered (e.g. bugged, rotated, stabilized, slo-mo) versions as well? What types of edited / altered versions are collected and not collected?**

- This collection will include both raw footage, as well as edited footage (including footage that has been rotated and edited together from multiple videos). We will not include footage that was copied or edited/bugged with Facebook info or logos.

**Should the collection only include camera original files and earliest-generation masters, or transcoded derivatives (e.g. access copies) as well? What transcoded copies are collected and not collected?**

- No, the collection will include a mix of camera original files, as well as derivatives.

# Collection Policy Worksheet page 3 of 3

## El Grito de Sunset Park Collection Policy

In instances where there are multiple files, including the original and a duplicate or edited version, we will collect only the original.

**Should the collection only include material that the organization has the rights to make accessible and/or re-use, or does it also include material that the organization does not have the rights to make accessible or re-use?**

- The collection will include a mix of materials that El Grito and WITNESS have the rights to make accessible and re-use, as well as some files that cannot be made accessible without explicit permission of the filmer and/or people shown in the videos.
- In this iteration of the database, we do not include a column to indicate rights/usage information, but we would recommend doing so moving forward.

**How are hidden files (e.g. filenames that begin with a "." like ".Trashes") dealt with, keeping in mind evidentiary and security considerations?**

- We will not collect hidden files

**Under what circumstances can something be removed / deleted from the collection?**

- No items will be removed or deleted without explicit consent from El Grito.

**What types of privacy and/or security measures are you taking to protect the collection, the collectors and those who appear in the videos?**

- We will not collect any videos that show potentially incriminating behavior by civilians. To protect sensitive details and identities, we will follow WITNESS' ethical guidelines and best practices for securing informed consent before releasing any new content. We will collect content that may identify victims of abuses, with the understanding that we will contact them and give them the option to obscure or redact information before we make it public or reshare content that is already public (while making it clear that they will still be identifiable based on public media reports and other versions of the videos online).

**Who is making these decisions about the collecting policy?**

- This policy takes into account numerous conversations and meetings between WITNESS and EL Grito. The policy was drafted by WITNESS and reviewed and approved by El Grito.

# Retention Plan Worksheet page 1 of 3

## WHAT IS A RETENTION PLAN?

Related to a collecting / selecting policy, which defines what you put into your archive, a retention plan (or “retention schedule”) defines how and how long you plan to preserve certain collected materials, and how/when you will dispose of them.

## WHY IS A RETENTION PLAN USEFUL?

- To make sure you retain the materials needed to fulfil the goals of the organization.
- To make sure you do not expose the organization or those implicated in the materials to risks/liability by holding onto materials too long.
- To make sure you do not expose the organization or those implicated in the materials to risks/liability by not holding onto materials as may be legally required.
- To make sure materials are kept or disposed of in intentional and secure ways.

## QUESTIONS to CONSIDER

**What external factors might impact how long you need to retain certain materials in your collection?** Examples: lawsuits, agreements with partners, licensing terms, consent forms or releases, etc.

**What internal factors might impact how long you need to retain certain materials in your collection?** Examples: upcoming documentary production, want to keep organizational history, limitations on storage capacity, etc.



# Retention Plan Worksheet page 2 of 3

**What are all the different types of materials in your collection that might have different retention needs/requirements?** Make a list:

**For each type of material, what is the length of time that each type should be retained, or what is the condition that would trigger its disposal?**

Examples:

Videos involved in lawsuit: Keep in perpetuity.

Videos showing activity unrelated to incident that can incriminate community member: Dispose immediately.

# Retention Plan Worksheet page 3 of 3

**For each type of material, how should documents be kept?**

This includes considering the type of storage space, cost of storage, security issues (theft, water damage, etc.) and the cost of retrieving any material stored offsite.

**For each type of material, once the retention period is up, how should the material be disposed of or removed from the collection?**

Examples: permanently delete all copies and records of existence; remove from public / online only; permanently delete all copies but keep catalog records; transfer to another archive; etc.)

**Who is authorized to dispose of materials, and who is authorized to make changes to the retention policy?**

# Retention Plan Worksheet page 1 of 1

## El Grito de Sunset Park Retention Plan

The set of videos, images and documents used in the El Grito de Sunset Park project will be curated in accordance with our collection policy (see page 21).

### **What internal/external factors might impact how long you need to retain certain materials in your collection?**

Because this project requires the support of various team members and volunteers, we will upload the collection to a shared Google Drive so the content is easier to be analyzed and organized by multiple people. Prior to the launch of the project, all files in this Google Drive account will be removed.

Additionally, the full collection will be stored on two encrypted hard drives. El Grito will be responsible for one drive and WITNESS will manage the other drive.

### **For each type of material, what is the length of time that each type should be retained, or what is the condition that would trigger its disposal?**

Because this is a finite project, there will be no additions to this specific collection once we finish the project. However, El Grito anticipates growing and adding to the collection in the future. A new collection and retention policy will need to be drafted as that work moves forward.

### **Who is authorized to dispose of materials, and who is authorized to make changes to the retention policy?**

El Grito de Sunset Park has the authority to dispose of materials and make changes to the retention policy.

# Ethical Guidelines Worksheet page 1 of 3

**THIS WORKSHEET IS AN EXCERPT OF WITNESS' "Ethical Guidelines: Using Eyewitness Videos in Human Rights Advocacy and Reporting"**

Download the full manual: <https://library.witness.org/product/video-as-evidence-ethical-guidelines/>

## **WHY DEVELOP ETHICAL STANDARDS ?**

This worksheet will guide you through the process of establishing ethical guidelines for how you will use and share the videos in your collection.

Eyewitness video footage may provide valuable documentation of human rights violations. In some cases, these videos are the only visual documentation of abuse, and can provide critical answers to questions surrounding a story or an investigation. Yet deciding if and how to share the footage publicly is rarely a simple process.

Some eyewitness videos have the potential to put individuals and communities at greater risk of harm if shared widely or misused. Many videos found online were never meant to be public in the first place. Others were taken with the intent to cause fear, inflict harm or incite violence.

Deciding if and how to curate eyewitness videos is rarely an easy process. Here are some things to consider as you develop your own standards for safely and ethically using eyewitness video for advocacy:

**Will you seek the consent of individuals filmed? How? In what situations will you collect or share videos without the consent of the individuals filmed?**

**How will you determine when to protect the privacy and anonymity of those filmed? What protective measures will you take?**

**Will you blur the faces of victims of abuse? Children? Activists? Perpetrators?**

# Ethical Guidelines Worksheet page 2 of 3

## **How will you share video footage publicly?**

Link to the original online video? Embed the video within your online content? Create a new version on your own channel?

## **How will you indicate to your audience the source and context of the footage?**

## **What practices will you put in place to verify the content of the videos? How will you make viewers aware that the content has been verified?**

## **If you have not verified what the video depicts with certainty, how will you decide whether to use it and how to acknowledge uncertainties about it to viewers?**

# Ethical Guidelines Worksheet

page 3 of 3

**When the footage contains graphic content, do you share, embed, or link to it? How do you warn viewers?**

**When footage is created by perpetrators of abuse, do you share the video?**

Link to the original? Provide a screengrab? Refuse to distribute any element of the imagery?

**If you require consent, how will you secure it? What are you asking them to consent to?**

**When and how will you protect the privacy and anonymity of those filmed?**

# Ethical Guidelines Worksheet page 1 of 1

## El Grito de Sunset Park Ethical Guidelines

### **Will you seek the consent of individuals filmed? How? In what situations will you collect or share videos without the consent of the individuals filmed?**

One of our main ethical concerns throughout this project was securing permission from those involved in the incidents of police abuse featured in the officer profile on our website (including videos, images and legal documents).

Even though the videos, images and documents are publicly available on social media, PACER (legal document site) and news articles about the incidents, we wanted to avoid revictimization or bringing unexpected/wanted attention to their cases without their knowledge or consent.

### **If you require consent, how will you secure it? What are you asking them to consent to?**

Working in collaboration with El Grito we developed consent letters that informed each person/family about the project, our advocacy objectives and values.

The letters included information and screenshots of all media and documents included on the website. We also offered the option to blur their identity and conceal their name on our site, while making it clear that we couldn't remove their image/name from everywhere it appears online.

Check out an example of our [consent letter](#).

### **How will you share video footage publicly?**

Because the majority of the videos we used on the Profiling the Police website were already publicly available, we included links to the videos on El Grito's YouTube page. Videos that were not already public were discussed with El Grito before uploading to their page.

### **What practices will you put in place to verify the content of the videos? How will you make viewers aware that the content has been verified?**

Working with members of El Grito who documented many of the videos made it easier to verify the authenticity of the content. Additionally we followed WITNESS' guidelines for verifying eyewitness videos. See below for more information.

# Verification Standards page 1 of 3

## THIS GUIDANCE IS AN EXCERPT OF WITNESS' VERIFYING EYEWITNESS VIDEOS GUIDELINES

Download the full guide: <https://library.witness.org/product/video-as-evidence-verifying-eyewitness-video/>

### WHY DEVELOP VERIFICATION STANDARDS?

Videos taken by perpetrators, victims and witnesses of abuse can prompt news coverage, inform investigations, and support legal proceedings. In some cases, these videos are the only visual documentation of abuse and can shine a light on unknown or unconfirmed facts of a human rights violation.

However, to use such videos effectively, analysts must verify whether a video is what it purports to be. This is an excerpt which covers techniques and tools to help verify that a video found online or sent by a source can be trusted as an authentic recording of a particular event.

Determine, to the highest degree possible, when and where a video was taken and what it documents is authentic, so that news media, human rights advocates, investigators, analysts, lawyers and courts can trust the substance of the video and use it to piece together a full story about a human rights violation.

Throughout the El Grito Database project we verified the locations and details of each video using WITNESS' standard verification methodology. The steps outlined below reflect that methodology and this workflow will continue to be used as new content is received by El Grito.

## FOUR STEPS TO VERIFYING EYEWITNESS VIDEO

### STEP 1: Preserve The Video & Document the Verification Process

If you believe the video may be valuable for media advocacy, human rights advocacy or investigations, it is important to preserve the video along with documentation of your process for verifying that it is authentic footage of a particular event on a specific date and time.

**Download the video:** Online videos can swiftly disappear, especially ones that are controversial or graphic. If an online video contains important information about a human rights issue, save a copy of the video, along with information included with the original upload site such as the user, title, and description. If the video is removed or made private by the user, bear in mind that that may be due to security concerns for the filmer, uploader, or individuals who appear in the video.

**Document the verification process:** As you go through the process outlined below, document how you determined that the video was filmed at a particular location, date, and time and is of a specific event. Archive the documentation with the saved video file.



# Verification Standards page 2 of 3

## **STEP 2: Is the Video the Original Upload?**

The closer you can get to an original video file, the higher the likelihood is that you can trust that its description is accurate. Videos are often re-uploaded to YouTube, Facebook, and other platforms with misleading titles, descriptions, edits, and/or translations by individuals who had nothing to do with filming them. Here are a few ways to determine if a video is the original upload:

- Google reverse image search
- Uploader's online history
- Contact the uploader

## **STEP 3: Where Was the Video Taken?**

To verify that the video was taken in an alleged location, use satellite images, maps, and other photos or videos taken in that location to corroborate that it was indeed filmed there. The following are some helpful resources:

- Google Maps and Google Earth
- Scrutinize audio and visual clues (uniforms, accents, flags, font on signs, etc.)

## **STEP 4: When Was the Video Taken?**

YouTube and other video sharing sites stamp videos with the time and date they were uploaded. However, the timestamp only indicates when the video was uploaded, not when it was originally filmed. Also, the date and time given may not correspond to the time zone of the uploader's location, but rather the time zone of the online platform's offices. Here are some methods to assist in verifying when the video was filmed:

- Narration (some filmers will state the date, time, location, etc.)
- Visual indicators (landmarks, weather/shadows, etc.)
- Corroborate (other eyewitness, news media or social media accounts)

# Verification Standards page 3 of 3

## El Grito de Sunset Park Verification Standards

### VERIFIED



Through careful analysis of the video and details provided by local sources or filmers, we have confirmed that the content in the video is authentic.

Our verification process is based on these WITNESS' guidelines for verifying eyewitness videos.

### IN REVIEW



When a video or incident is labeled "In Review" it means we are doing the research required to be labeled "verified."

### INCIDENT REPORTED



These are incidents that have been directly submitted by the community. Before anything is made public, we go through the rigorous steps of verification.

In some cases we may post initial information about the incident to solicit additional media or reports.

# Security & Legal Risks Worksheet page 1 of 4

It's important to think through possible legal and security risks that authors, contributors, victims might face during the planning, creation and launch of your project. **When thinking through physical and digital security risks, remember: security is hardly ever just about one person. It's about taking responsibility for how your actions could affect others. It's part of organizing and planning.**

While specific legal and digital/physical security considerations will be unique to each project, here are some suggested questions to discuss with your team, partners and advisors (these questions are similar to the "threat modeling" or "risk assessment" many security trainers use).

***As you answer these questions, remember to keep the community and holistic nature of security threats in mind.***

## SECURITY

**WHAT types of legal and security (physical and digital) risks might you or others face for being involved in this work?**

**If you are planning to make your work publicly available, what kind of backlash do you anticipate? What additional threats might this present?**

**WHO faces risks in relation to the project?** Filmers, victims, families of victims, researchers, database users, etc.?

# Security & Legal Risks Worksheet page 2 of 4

**Are you publishing any content that might expose personal details or identities?** e.g. videos, photos, legal documents, correspondence, etc.

**WHAT do you need to protect? Be specific.** e.g. your videos, the data you collected, your emails, your home address or phone number, your place of employment, legal documents, etc.

**WHO do you need to protect it from?** e.g. Police, Immigration officials, online trolls, employer, etc.

**What is the ACTUAL risk? How motivated are the threatening parties? How easy is it for them to get the information you're trying to protect?**

**WHAT happens if they do get it?**

# Security & Legal Risks Worksheet page 3 of 4

**WHAT** kind of security risks are you and others involved in the project willing to take? What risks are you **NOT** willing to take?

**HOW** do you communicate risks to other people?

**HOW** can you best protect your work and video collection online and offline?

**For public facing projects, what steps can you take to prepare to respond to possible backlash in advance?** e.g. create a crisis response communications plan, share security plans with everyone involved (including colleagues, officemates, families, etc.), give key figures a heads up (media outlets, journalists, commanding officers, etc.), create and distribute talking points to all partners and advisors to better control the narrative.

# Security & Legal Risks Worksheet page 4 of 4

**If creating a website or platform, do you need a legal disclaimer about the content on the site? If accepting submissions, what content you are or are not willing to accept?** If you are open to receiving or soliciting information, can you provide a secure way for people to submit content? If you are creating a website or making your data publicly available, make sure to be transparent and inform your visitors what type, if any, data is being **tracked and/or** used about them on your site.

## ADDITIONAL SECURITY RESOURCES

Anti-Doxing Guide from Equality Labs: <https://medium.com/@EqualityLabs/anti-doxing-guide-for-activists-facing-attacks-from-the-alt-right-ec6c290f543c>

Digital Security for Activists 101: <https://blog.witness.org/2016/11/getting-started-digital-security/>

WITNESS' Ethical Guidelines: Using Eyewitness videos in Human Rights Reporting and Advocacy <https://library.witness.org/product/video-as-evidence-ethical-guidelines/>

Vice: "The Price of Filming Police Violence" [https://motherboard.vice.com/en\\_us/article/evqw9z/filming-police-brutality-retaliation](https://motherboard.vice.com/en_us/article/evqw9z/filming-police-brutality-retaliation)

# Security & Legal Risks Worksheet page 1 of 8

## Hypothetical Risk Assessments

**These hypothetical examples and risk assessments will help you identify potential risks and how to mitigate them.**

### **HYPOTHETICAL EXAMPLE #1 - Em**

Em is a copwatcher in New York City. They are one of the main folks who has both filmed the police and helped catalog the videos for an archive. They are working on community organizing with families whose loved ones were killed by police violence. They are a non-binary trans person and their family is from Puerto Rico. A lot of their extended family lives in the same neighborhood they work in and grew up in. They also still live there. They only told people about being non-binary recently, and most of their family doesn't know. Even many of the people they work with in the community don't know. Their picture on their NY state ID matches neither their current name nor appearance. They have a day job at an expensive daycare, where they are not public about being genderqueer and go by the name on their driver's license- partly because the women brag a lot about how they only have women working on their staff. Copwatching is a huge part of their life, and one of the only things that helps them deal with the wealthy and somewhat conservative white women they work with, and the harassment they deal with on the streets and online. They rely on their job to make ends meet, as they don't have savings and their family can't afford to support them. Em has been copwatching for five years. They give trainings, and traveled to Ferguson and Baltimore a few years ago to work with people there. They have been working on a police violence video archive with a local non-profit organization. The archive is public. Though the archive is hosted on that organization's servers, Em's participation is clear.

### **HYPOTHETICAL EXAMPLE #2 - Dave**

Dave is an attorney. He lives in North Seattle. He is from a middle-class and very liberal family in San Francisco. He just graduated from law school at Stanford a few years ago. He identifies as an anarchist, and has been active providing legal support to anti-racist activists, both white allies and groups led by people of color. He was also active during law school, providing legal support to people protesting against white supremacists. His job lets him bill hours for a lot of the work he does for free with activists, since all his bosses are old leftie activists. He's white and cisgender. He's working on a police violence database with a group of radical attorneys and a local group that investigates police violence with video and open-source investigations. It's focused on the Seattle Police Department, in particular police violence from the central part of the city (Pike Place Market and the Central District) down south to Rainier Valley. The database is not public, but its existence is well-known in the activist community and people oftentimes send Dave and other people who are working on it unsolicited videos and information about complex civil rights violations.

# Security & Legal Risks Worksheet page 2 of 8

## Hypothetical Risk Assessments

### Sample Risk Assessment for Em and Dave

***WHAT types of legal and security (physical, digital, and emotional) risks might you or others face for being involved in this work?***

Anyone involved in this work could be targeted by police officers (on or off duty) and groups like “Blue Lives Matter,” aggressive supporters of police officers who have organized online and offline to target activists. As discussed below, these groups have various ways of surveilling you and figuring out who you are. This is not a hypothetical threat- people involved in work against police violence have reported obvious increased surveillance- such as having a police car always parked outside their home or having police cars follow them slowly. They’ve also reported threatening phone calls and targeted online harassment on social media sites.

In protests, organizers have been clearly targeted for arrest. It’s well known that police are surveilling social media, and have many other forms of surveillance available to them. Finally, even if nothing else happens, this work can be incredibly traumatic. It’s important to keep that trauma in mind and get support where needed.

Anyone involved in work around police violence who also experiences structural oppression because of who they are is likely to have exponentially higher risk. So, a white cis man with a law degree and the privilege to be vocal about their politics like Dave, is going to have a very different risk profile from Em, a queer person of color who relies on income from a job where their bosses have no idea how important they are and don’t support their political work. **Furthermore, having an identification card that doesn’t match their current appearance is something police could use as an excuse to harass Em.**



# Security & Legal Risks Worksheet page 3 of 8

## Hypothetical Risk Assessments

### ***WHO faces risks in relation to the project? Filmers, victims, families of victims, researchers, database users, etc.?***

Everyone involved in the project faces risks- from the moment a video is created to the moment someone accesses it on the database. However, it's also important to keep in mind that others not directly involved in the project could face risks too. For example, the WHO could include:

- People who film (like Em); police will notice and target anyone pointing a camera at them
- Targets of police violence documented on video - these individuals and/or their families could face further repercussions or harassment if the video gets widespread coverage. They could also face trauma and revictimization by constant media coverage of the incident
- Other at-risk people captured in films, like people with undocumented status or people who are on probation or parole
- Anyone accidentally captured on video- police could harass those people later as witnesses
- People who directly receive videos via messages, email, or physical copies like USB drives (like Dave, but also potentially people who are not involved in the project)
- People who reach out to the creators of any police violence database, especially if they are trying to share their own story or media
- People working on the less public side of projects, including attorneys like Dave or archivists
- People building the database and anyone who provides technical support
- Friends, family, and loved ones of anyone involved in creating the database
- People who access the database

One important thing to note about our hypothetical activists is where they live and work. Em and Dave both live in the same jurisdiction as they work in, which means the overall police department that they have to deal with every day are also the ones they are profiling- the Seattle Police Department and the New York Police Department. But it's not that simple. One important difference is that Dave lives far away from the city he came from and from his family. He also lives in a different precinct than the ones he is focusing on, which might make a difference (Police precincts are smaller divisions within police departments that have their own buildings). That separation could make a difference- after all, just like any other workplace, police are likely to share gossip and interesting stories, and so the risk that an activist is known to the police is likely even higher if they are physically in the same precinct they are working in.

Em lives and has family in the same neighborhood. What's more, they grew up in the neighborhood, they have been some of the same officers for years and years now, and their project is public. They are likely known to police, as is their family.

# Security & Legal Risks Worksheet page 4 of 8

## Hypothetical Risk Assessments

### ***HOW do you communicate risks to those people?***

It's important to sit down and have a conversation with the people closest to you about the risks involved in your work, particularly if you are launching a public project. Em should sit down with their family and talk about their work and what it might repercussions it might have on Em as an individual and the family as a whole. If Dave or Em have housemates, they should also talk to them. Everyone working on the project should be going through these questions together.

Also think about ways you can communicate risks to others who access the site but that you might not have direct contact. For example, include a warning on your website about exactly what information you collect and warn people not to contact you with videos or personal stories without talking first. If possible, provide more secure ways to contact you- for example, start with a phone call and then meet in person, put up a Signal messaging number, etc. If you're working with other local groups or organizers to do outreach about a public facing project, be sure to include discussions about security as part of the outreach planning.

### ***WHAT do you need to protect? Be specific. e.g. your videos, the data you collected, your emails, home address or phone number, place of employment, legal documents, etc.***

Be creative in how you think about this- WHAT you need to protect can include pieces of information and physical things. You should definitely be thinking about information on your phone and computer like contacts, messaging histories, and location information.

And in any project, data and files need to be protected. That includes videos and other files like photos or audio; phones, USB drives or other physical devices that carry that information; and physical copies of notes as well as electronic copies.

Communications are also incredibly important. That means things like phone calls, emails, texts, and Facebook messages, but also in person conversations. On a more overarching level, it means organizing strategies.

Location information is also important- if Em was out filming the police, they should think about whether or not to have GPS turned on. Consider that there are surveillance cameras all over in many cities. So, for instance, you could be called in as a witness even if the video you capture isn't public, but if you are captured on surveillance footage.

# Security & Legal Risks Worksheet page 5 of 8

## Hypothetical Risk Assessments

### ***WHAT do you need to protect? (CONTINUED)***

This is certainly not an exhaustive list, but one more specific thing to consider is whether you are trying to keep the existence of your project itself a secret. In this case, Dave has to take even more measures than Em to ensure that no one gives away the existence of the database by posting something on social media or leaking the information in another way. Unfortunately, given that many people know the database exists, this is likely to be difficult and Dave guesses the police have already figured out that the database exists. This puts them at potential risks for being subpoenaed.

Em has some particular risks as a trans person in a hostile work environment. They need their job, and they want to protect their gender identity and the fact that they do political work. Dave doesn't face these risks, as his employer knows what he does and even supports it. Em also faces a serious emotional risk- having their gender identity exposed in their community before they are ready could cause them serious stress and damage relationships and their organizing efforts.

### ***WHO do you need to protect it from? e.g. Police, Immigration officials, online trolls, employer, etc.***

There are very few absolutes in risk assessments, but you can depend on the need to protect yourself from the police. As discussed in other questions, what this actually means will vary greatly depending on who you are, where you are, and whether your project is public.

In addition to this natural risk, it's also important to think about other government parties, including Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and other law enforcement bodies. Keep in mind that local police do share information with federal law enforcement, including the FBI, ICE, and other agencies.

**This is something that both Em and Dave should consider: public records requests and leaked documents have made it clear that the FBI and Department of Homeland Security are specifically interested in Black Lives Matter and anti-fascist organizing. These agencies have created new definitions of domestic security threats to encompass organizing efforts, and have used social media surveillance and data-sharing to target and track activists.** By traveling to both Ferguson and Baltimore, places that were subjected to heavy surveillance, Em may have become known to federal agencies. And by publicly identifying as an anarchist and working with anti-fascist activists, Dave may also be known to federal agencies.

# Security & Legal Risks Worksheet page 6 of 8

## Hypothetical Risk Assessments

### ***WHO do you need to protect it from? (CONTINUED)***

In recent years, it has also become more and more important to think about being targeted by online trolls- people who consider themselves patriotic, nationalistic, retired or off-duty police officers, or others. That means thinking a lot about social media, as well as potentially trying to get their personal data off of websites like [spokeo.com](http://spokeo.com).

As noted above, Em has a particular risk from their hostile work environment. They want to keep information about their gender and political work from their boss, so their boss can be considered an adversary.

Other parties you might want to consider include corporations like Facebook (who could share your data with the police, and are certainly targets for open source investigations), school officials, prosecutors, local public officials like city council people, or stalkers.

### ***What is the ACTUAL risk? How motivated are the threatening parties? How easy is it for them to get the information you're trying to protect?***

This is a very subjective question, that requires some understanding of the situation where you live, what exactly you will be doing, how high profile the project or individuals involved in the project are, what technology your opponents have access to, and what is happening in the current political moment.

Let's take Em as an example. Em is pretty high profile to the government. They are working directly with survivors of police violence. As their profile shows, they are a real powerhouse, which makes them a tempting target.

The current political climate is incredibly hostile to social movements fighting for justice. **Em has possibly captured the attention of federal law enforcement, although that's probably not their primary threat. Federal law enforcement has access to an incredible amount of data, but while they probably have Em's picture or name stored somewhere, it's less likely that they are actively pursuing EM (though possible). On the other hand, the NYPD is probably very motivated to disrupt Em's work, and in particular any officers that have been personally featured in the database.** And, unfortunately, the NYPD also has vast amounts of surveillance technology and information at its fingertips. So, Em has a lot to do to stay safe.

# Security & Legal Risks Worksheet page 7 of 8

## Hypothetical Risk Assessments

### ***What is the ACTUAL risk? (CONTINUED)***

Dave may be at somewhat less risk due to the secretive nature of that project, as well as a slightly less well-equipped and dangerous police department. **Like Em, he may be known to federal law enforcement, but that's not his biggest threat. He can focus his biggest efforts on keeping the project and communications secret, and if he begins to suspect that it is public and that members of the project have been exposed, he can then take further efforts with regards to physical safety.**

Of course, some police departments act with far more public impunity than others. That doesn't mean that any police department can't be dangerous- the Seattle Police Department (SPD) has lots of rules governing what they can and can't do, but they still kill people of color. However, there's certainly a difference between dealing with, say, SPD and the New York Police Department. SPD has more rules, but they also have access to more technology, higher paid officers, and in general more resources. NYPD is notorious for intimidating and threatening people, but they likely have less access to cutting-edge technology. NYPD also has a long history of threatening witnesses and activists.

### ***What happens if they do get it? In particular, if you are planning to make your work publicly available, what kind of backlash do you anticipate? What additional threats might this present?***

People who film videos of police violence often face harassment, increased surveillance, online and offline threats. This Vice article, ["The Price of Filming Police Violence"](#) outlines several cases in which filmmakers were targeted for their role in exposing police abuse.

These threats can also occur to people who publish or share videos of police abuse. Even if your work is not made publicly available, as noted in Dave's case, it may be an open secret that it exists. This doesn't give the police as much motivation as they would have with an eyewitness to violence like Em, but it is not risk free.

But there are also specific personal risks. Em could lose their job if it is revealed to the conservative, rich white women that they work for that they are "not a woman." Their political activities could be a problem at work as well. They really need that job, so it's not a small risk.

As noted above, harassment of families and loved ones is also possible. Some activists have reported their teenage children seeing police cars after a particularly impactful press conference or other action. There have also been cases of constant "prank" calls or even threatening calls, as well as being followed and harassed by police.

# Security & Legal Risks Worksheet page 8 of 8

## Hypothetical Risk Assessments

***What kind of security risks are you and others involved in the project WILLING to take?  
What risks are you NOT WILLING to take?***

This is a deeply personal question. Security guides that purport to tell you what risks you can and cannot take are doing you a disservice. Go through this process carefully, and at the end you will have a concise outline that can help you make this decision. Some groups are willing to risk arrest and harassment. Some are not. That's a personal decision.

However, it is especially important that people in a project who have less personal risk due to various types of privilege- like Dave- are cognizant of the risks others in their groups may face, and do not expose others to risk without informed consent. For example, Dave may be willing to have his name shared with activists in the community who want to speak to him, whereas someone else who has kids, lives in the same neighborhood they work in, or is a person of color who is already more likely to be targeted by the police may not want to take that risk. That means discussing what the potential risk is, if it's not clear, and being clear on who is and is not willing to take it.

***Are you publishing any content that might expose personal details or identities? e.g. videos, photos, legal documents, correspondence, etc***

Keep in mind that police technology is much more powerful than it used to be. Even videos that only show partial faces could be processed with powerful facial recognition software. Tattoos and other distinguishing features could be stored in police databases. If you are publishing content that might expose identities, think about how you can anonymize it with face blurring technology or other means. If you can't, you should ensure that you are checking with each person whose identity might be exposed.

**You should also carefully review any documents you are publishing. Legal documents regularly include personal information, in particular home addresses and phone numbers. While these documents are already public, publishing them in a database makes it more likely that this information can be found and used against someone, such as a survivor of police violence who has sued the police.**

# Additional Notes & Ideas



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