

Handout 2: Story Structure Worksheet

Your Story + The Numbers Workshop

Dayton Democracy Summit | October 27, 2025

THE FRAMEWORK: Turning Stories into Data-Backed Advocacy

Good advocacy tells a story with evidence. Use this worksheet to strengthen your community story with data.

The Structure:

1. **SETUP** → Who/what/where - set the scene
 2. **PROBLEM** → What's wrong? What needs to change?
 3. **DATA POINT** → Numbers that prove it matters
 4. **IMPACT** → Why should people care? Who's affected?
 5. **CALL TO ACTION** → What specific change do you want?

STEP 1: Your Original Story

Write your story below (or have someone tell it to the group):

What community issue do you care about?

STEP 2: Break Down Your Story

Map your story to the framework. Which parts do you already have?

Element	What You Have	Strength (1-5)
SETUP Who, what, where?		<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5
PROBLEM What's wrong?		<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5
DATA/EVIDENCE Proof it matters		<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5
IMPACT Who's affected? Why care?		<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5
CALL TO ACTION Specific change wanted		<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5

Which element is WEAKEST right now? _____

STEP 3: Identify Data Inflection Points

Inflection points are places where adding data would make your story more powerful.

Read through your story and mark places where you:

- Make a claim without evidence ("rents are too high")
- Use vague language ("many people," "often," "rarely")
- Want to show scope ("this affects everyone")
- Need to prove something changed ("it's gotten worse")
- Want to compare ("worse than other cities")

YOUR INFLECTION POINTS:

1. What claim or statement needs data?

What type of data would strengthen it? Numbers Percentages Comparison Trend

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What type of data would strengthen it? Numbers Percentages Comparison Trend

STEP 4: Find Your Data

Use your Data Source Guide (Handout 1) to find data for each inflection point.

What I Need	Where to Look	What I Found
Ex: Average rent in my neighborhood	Apartments.com	\$752/month for 1BR

HELPFUL SEARCH TIPS:

- Start with local sources (Dayton/Montgomery County)
 - Look for the most recent data (within 1-2 years)
 - Find 2-3 data points to choose the strongest
 - Write down the source and date!
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STEP 5: Integrate Data Into Your Story

Now rewrite your story with data integrated at the inflection points.

BEFORE & AFTER EXAMPLE:

✗ BEFORE (Weak):

"Rents in my neighborhood are too expensive. Many families are struggling to pay rent and some have to move. The city should do something about affordable housing."

✓ AFTER (Strong):

"In Old North Dayton, average rent for a one-bedroom apartment is \$752/month (Apartments.com, 2025). For a single mom working full-time at minimum wage (\$10.45/hour), that's 67% of her monthly income—more than double the recommended 30%. Last year, 450 families in Montgomery County requested emergency rental assistance (Montgomery County Community Indicators, 2024), a 23% increase from 2023. The city should expand its Housing Trust Fund by \$2 million to create 100 new affordable housing units."

See the difference? The data shows:

- Specific rent amount (not just "expensive")

- Who's affected and why (67% of income)
 - Scope of the problem (450 families, 23% increase)
 - Specific solution (expand fund, create 100 units)
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YOUR STORY WITH DATA:

SETUP: (*Who, what, where - set the scene*)

PROBLEM: (*What's wrong?*)

DATA POINT(S): (*Numbers that prove it matters - include source!*)

Source: _____ Date: _____

Source: _____ Date: _____

IMPACT: (*Why should people care? Who's affected?*)

CALL TO ACTION: (*What specific change do you want?*)

STEP 6: Check Your Work

Read your revised story out loud. Does it have:

- A clear setup that sets the scene?
 - A specific problem clearly stated?
 - At least 2-3 data points with sources cited?
 - Context that shows why people should care?
 - A specific, actionable solution?
 - Concrete details instead of vague language?
 - A human element (who's affected)?
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PRO TIPS

Make data memorable:

- Use comparisons people understand: "That's like filling the Nutter Center 3 times"
- Use percentages AND raw numbers: "27% (that's 1 in 4 families)"
- Round for speech, keep exact for writing

Avoid these mistakes:

-  Too many numbers (overwhelming)
-  Numbers without context ("12,000 people" - is that a lot?)
-  Data without a story (boring)
-  Story without data (unpersuasive)

The sweet spot: 2-3 powerful data points that support a compelling human story.

Next Steps After the Workshop:

1. **Refine:** Take this worksheet and polish your story
 2. **Verify:** Double-check your data sources
 3. **Practice:** Tell it to a friend
 4. **Use it:** Share at city council, write an op-ed, post on social media
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Questions or need help finding data?

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