



TOMODACHI Story Jam for Youth with Disabilities

Empowering a new generation of Japanese and American youth leaders with disabilities through digital storytelling

TOMODACHI Story Jam is an 8-week digital storytelling and youth leadership program that brings together Japanese and American college students and young professionals with disabilities to collectively explore experiences in the time of COVID-19. We want to share and discuss moments when you felt deeply challenged by access barriers, how you navigated these challenges, and what you learned about yourself during or post-pandemic.

About Story Jam

TOMODACHI Story Jam aims to equip Japanese and American youth with disabilities with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to use digital storytelling to **advocate for themselves and others in their communities**. It is an opportunity to interact with peers from Japan and the US and learn about each other's cultures. Story Jam will introduce you to digital storytelling, both as a process and method to explore and describe your pandemic experiences in a way that speaks to a broader community.

TOMODACHI Story Jam activities

Story Jam Sessions. We will host Story Jam Sessions at 8pm Eastern Time and 9am Japan Time on Zoom. We will determine the days based on participant availability.

- **Peer Mentorship & Support.** Between sessions, you can support and mentor each other to develop your emerging stories. We will facilitate and offer support and encouragement throughout the program via an online chat platform.
- **Your Advocacy Story.** You will capture your story in a 2 to 4-minute video, which we will feature at a public online event.
- **Engagement Opportunities.** During Story Jam, you can engage with alumni of the [TOMODACHI Disability Leadership in America Program](#), which

What is Digital Storytelling?

Digital storytelling uses smart phones, tablets, and computers to amplify our voices and bring our stories to life. Connecting through stories is important, particularly in difficult times like a pandemic. Our stories can foster connection with people all over the world!



Story Jam Session Topics

- Introduction to digital storytelling for disability and social justice advocacy
- Discussion about how access barriers can change and be resolved
- Building an effective advocacy story, including script writing and writing prompts
- Group sharing of story ideas and drafts, including peer feedback
- Introduction to mobile filmmaking, editing, and captioning, including accessibility considerations
- Self-reflection about filmmaking and disability advocacy storytelling
- Discussion of effective story sharing strategies, including target audiences and outlets

trained 19 Japanese youth with disabilities in the US on disability leadership and advocacy. You will also meet US and Japanese disability activists, disabled storytellers, and advocates from the [Northrop Grumman](#) Disability Employee Resource Group, The Voice, who will discuss access barriers and the role of advocacy in Japan and the US.

- **Celebration.** At the end of the 8 weeks, we will host a 90-minute, public online celebration to share your Story Jam advocacy stories.

Who can apply for Story Jam?

You do not need prior experience in digital storytelling to apply for this program. However, to apply, you must:

1. Be a Japanese or American individual with a disability between ages 18 and 35
2. Be a student currently enrolled at a Japanese or American college, or a young professional (e.g., part-time, full-time, self-employed)
3. Have basic English language skills (conversation, reading, and writing), or if you are Deaf, have basic English language reading and writing skills and, ideally, basic American Sign Language skills
4. Have a computer (PC or Mac) with an updated web browser, Internet access, and a mobile phone*
5. Have a compelling story about your experience of navigating the COVID-19 pandemic at college, work, or other areas of life (e.g., relationships), and lessons learned
6. Be willing to complete an 8-week digital storytelling and youth leadership program and participate in a public online event
7. Give permission to have your digital story be shared at a public online event and published elsewhere

We encourage individuals with any types of disabilities to apply. We will provide American Sign Language interpretation and English Live captions (CART) upon request.

**We can provide stipends to help with Internet-related costs, if needed.*

How to apply:

[Apply online](#) or
via the QR code below.



[Download the application here in a word doc](#) or
via the QR Code below.

Email the completed form to Miwa.Tanabe@umb.edu



Applications are due **JULY 9 at 12 noon
Eastern Standard Time and
12 noon Japan time.**

Important Dates: Application & Selection Process

July 9

Online application closes.

A panel of ICI program staff and TOMODACHI staff and alumni will review all applications and select candidates.

July 19

Candidates announced.

July

Candidate interviews held.

We will invite candidates to participate in a brief, 20-minute interview with ICI program staff, conducted in English over Zoom. The purpose of the interview is to get to know you and learn about your story and advocacy message. We will share the results from the interviews with the panel.

August 9

Finalists announced.

The panel will select the 10 finalists.

September– November

Story Jam and Youth Leadership Program

Mid-November (Date TBD)

TOMODACHI public online event

To ask questions and learn more about Story Jam, contact:

Dr. Heike Boeltzig-Brown, Program Director

Heike.Boeltzig-Brown@umb.edu

Miwa Tanabe, Program Coordinator

Miwa.Tanabe@umb.edu



Institute for Community Inclusion
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON



Story Jam is part of the [TOMODACHI Initiative](#), a public-private partnership between the [U.S.-Japan Council](#) and the US Embassy in Tokyo. The program is supported by [Northrop Grumman Corporation](#) and implemented by the [Institute for Community Inclusion \(ICI\) at UMass Boston](#).

Story Jam is part of ICI's Japan-focused disability initiative "Inclusion Matters."