Narratives for Health
In Action: Assess and Monitor

Since 2021, Narratives for Health has worked with hundreds of public health departments and nonprofits, advocacy organizations and others across the country. The goal is to develop a shared understanding around narrative to shift mindsets on what drives health and equity and to organize for and operationalize the changes we seek.

Narratives for Health has compiled more than 60 examples of ways narrative change has been implemented into health and equity work — examples that can inspire and advance your narrative efforts. This document highlights one of five categories. View the full resource here.

What are narratives?
Narratives, or values-based themes of stories, help us understand our world and what is possible. They call attention to what Frederick W. Mayor states as "who we are, what we believe and what we value." Narrative change is an organizing tool to see shared values actualized in our communities and in the decisions we make.

How does Narratives for Health support narrative change?
Regardless of where you are on your narrative change journey, Narratives for Health can support. After completion of a Narratives for Health training, participants can join our monthly community of practice sessions. The community of practice is a space to share and learn from others on how to diffuse and deploy narratives and discuss how to lead with shared health equity values in conversation with others. Narratives for Health also offers paired support with narrative organizers and partners. Contact us to join a training or learn more about the support we offer.

What are transformative narratives and the transformative narrative draft?
Through rounds of engagement within the train-the-facilitator series, Narratives for Health, along with over 300 organizations, created the Health Equity Transformative Narrative draft to elevate shared values that reflect a world where everyone can thrive and affect decision making. Because there are harmful narratives used in society that influence how we operate, the draft offers shared values that uplift health and equity to change what is possible.

Find that and more in our Narratives for Health guide, which is a free, public resource that includes concepts, models, recommendations and tools to aid organizations delving into narrative change.

Assess and Monitor

Some organizations have audited their own public documents to determine if they are successfully incorporating the transformative narrative or inadvertently pushing out a dominant narrative. Narrative change can take between five and ten years. Therefore, most of our Narrative Builders are not at the stage of evaluating the outcomes of their narrative change strategies. Narratives for Health continues to build infrastructure in order to get organizations at the stage of evaluating how narrative change strategies have changed the public narrative and dominant worldviews.

Audit your products. One national public health entity audits materials to determine whether their organizational values are showing up in their work. They audit their documents, webinars, podcasts, tools, discussions and publications to identify the prominent narratives. The organization also reviews public-facing publications with an eye toward narratives. In another example, a state health agency shared how they audit their work to understand whether it reflects the narratives and values they want to uphold. This includes evaluating and asserting their values. They identify gaps between the agency's current and desired practices and think about strategies to animate and operationalize their values.

Conduct a brief survey. A state association of public health leaders created a health equity survey and one-pager based on the health equity transformative narrative. The survey went out to several local health departments and asked them to assess whether their work aligned with transformative narratives.