

Whether you are in front of a room full of strangers, a neighborhood group, in front of an elected official, or even with your trusted friends and family, the fastest way to connect with your audience is through storytelling. However, the story you tell—and how you tell it—matters.

At the Rural Center, we believe that our state's rural people should shape the narrative around our state's rural places, and we have held true to this practice for more than 30 years. Below, you'll find some tips and tricks for effective storytelling we have learned over the years.

Storytelling for Change

When telling a story, always remember that YOUR voice matters.

- Your voice drives the change that will directly affect you, your community, and your future. Your voice is authentic, and authentic storytelling resonates more strongly with a diverse range of audiences.

Good story structure is important; it is the difference between grabbing attention and keeping attention.

- Not every detail is needed; focus on the critical components. Stories need a beginning, middle, and end in order to make sense. When telling your story, make sure these components are clearly identifiable. Re-emphasize your key takeaways.

Weaving in supporting material like data and statistics gives you more credibility and your story more impact.

- Incorporating accurate, verified, and reliable data and statistics boosts your credibility with your audience—meaning they will be more inclined to trust you and act on the information you give them.

Tips for Storytelling with Legislators

- Practice beforehand! Speaking with your legislator can be nerve-wracking, but practicing before you meet with them can help quell any nerves.
- Whether you are engaging with your legislator virtually by phone or Zoom—or in person, when the time comes—keep your speaking pace and tone of voice in mind.
 - Speak at a pace where it is easy enough to receive every detail of the story you are telling.
 - Tone of voice and strategic inflection points help emphasize key points.
- Eye contact helps keep you engaged with your audience
- Do you and your legislator have anything in common?
If so, incorporate that into your message!

Do you have a story to tell about your community's access to broadband, health insurance, small business development supports or other policy issues? If so, the Rural Counts team would love to hear from you!
Email us at advocacy@ncruralcenter.org