

RECIPES FOR CHANGE



BRINGING
NEIGHBORHOOD
PROJECTS TO LIFE,
BLOCK BY BLOCK

Asset-based community development (ABCD)

For the uninitiated: what is asset-based community development (ABCD)?

ABCD is about going into a community and working off of what's already there—its existing assets—to help it develop. An asset could be a street, a senior center, a school, a corner store, a long-time neighbor—or a new neighbor, an empty lot, a park, a playground, a church... You name it!

How did ABCD begin?

It was developed by the Asset-Based Community Development Institute at Northwestern University, and its premise is to start and stay positive. In any type of social enterprise, we're always seeking to solve a problem: crime, illiteracy, the school-to-prison pipeline, what have you. When we go into our work focusing so much on those negatives, we can miss some of the positives. ABCD keeps leaders focused on the assets they already have.

How does ABCD relate to the types of neighborhood projects ioby leaders do?

WHO WE SPOKE TO:

Essence Jackson
Program Coordinator at Livable Memphis, a program of the Community Development Council of Greater Memphis that supports the development of healthy, vibrant, and sustainable neighborhoods throughout the Memphis region, with a special focus on growth, development, and increasing public participation in decision-making.



Say you want to start a community garden, but the only space you can find is an old parking lot. Think of the lot as an asset and go from there: even if it's all paved over, you can make a raised bed garden. It's still something you can use; it's an asset. If you're doing a project in a school, an asset could be the space you use to host the kids, even if it's not your dream space. Of course, the kids themselves are not the problem to be solved—they're also your assets! ABCD is all about identifying and using what you have, instead of dwelling on what's missing.

How can leaders explain the benefits of ABCD to their stakeholders who might not be familiar with it, or who are skeptical?

Remind them that what we're doing in social enterprise is inherently collaborative. It just doesn't make good long-term sense to do it any other way. Ask them to put themselves in

residents' shoes. Say, "Think about your neighborhood. What if changes started occurring there without your knowledge. How would that feel to you?" They would probably feel slighted and wouldn't be invested in the project going forward. It wouldn't be sustainable. It's just the Golden Rule.

What are some alternative approaches to ABCD? Can you explain why they're not as helpful to the success of neighborhood projects?

When a leader just comes in and dictates, we call that a God complex. It doesn't work because it's exclusionary and can even cripple communities. When I was in AmeriCorps, we talked a lot about how short-term missions don't work. Like the American church group who traveled to rural Africa to install a well in a village—but they didn't teach the villagers how to fix it. So when it broke, the villagers had to wait a year for the Americans to come back. They stayed reliant on the church instead of being empowered to lead themselves. It would have been better for the church to ask who among them would like to learn how to maintain the well. They could have been creating community wealth and employment instead of resentment and dependency.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- The Asset-Based Community Development Institute
- The Center for Transforming Communities (This Memphis organization uses ABCD very well)
- The book "When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor...and Yourself"
- The book "Community: The Structure of Belonging," by Peter Block

How can I use ABCD?

Before you do any project—before you even start using ABCD as a methodology—make your first step figuring out if the neighborhood actually wants to do what you have in mind.

Often, when government or other local leaders come into a neighborhood from outside and say, "We're going to do XYZ here" and don't ask people first, residents won't feel good about the change and won't help it to succeed. So before you get started with anything, make sure to ask around—on the street, in church, at school—if people like the idea. If you get positive reactions, you can start pulling in public participation.

- Hold public meetings, open houses, and focus groups
- Conduct surveys door to door and ask people who like the idea if they want to help.

Do they have any changes to suggest to the proposed plan? Would they want to help reach out to local elected officials? Could they brainstorm fundraising ideas with you?



People need to feel a stake in the process. They need to feel empowered and have a voice, or they won't stay involved. (Plus, of course, these people's skills comprise some of the assets your project will need to succeed!) Inviting this kind of leadership involvement is also the key to keeping momentum once your project is underway.

Getting Buy-in for Big, Bold (or Contentious) Ideas

If three or more of the following conditions apply, you might be dealing with a big, bold, or potentially contentious project:

- You don't have any money
- You don't have the necessary permissions
- You're dealing with a sensitive or "hot button" issue that people have strong opinions about, or a high-attention piece of property
- There are multiple kinds of stakeholders involved

Why is it important for me to seek approval from the community for my big, bold idea?

One, these kinds of projects generally influence the public realm—remember that you're working in our backyard, not your own. Two, your project will be easier to accomplish with a team and volunteers backing you up—and it's actually very beneficial to get that backup from multiple people with diverse perspectives. You know how you think about your project, but conversations with others will help you shape your ideas and ultimately improve your outcomes.

WHO WE SPOKE TO:

Tommy Paccello

Attorney and city planner, and currently president of the Memphis Medical District Collaborative, a nonprofit community development organization. Speaks regularly on civic innovation and urban issues.



What kinds of people and entities should I be looking to connect with?

Every situation is different, but in all cases you want to think about who will be affected by your project. This usually includes:

- The residents near your project site (not necessarily every single person, but the closest ones for sure)
- Small business owners near your project site
- Users of any nearby parks
- Owners of any private property nearby
- Local government officials and agencies. You want to make sure you won't be disrupting any of their pre-existing plans, and they can help you get beneficial publicity and permissions.

When you're looking for partners, choose people who understand the big picture of what you want to get done, and those with skillsets outside your own whose strengths will complement yours.

How do I deal with haters?

Make accommodations for skepticism and criticism.

After reminding people that your project is only temporary, make sure you listen to their concerns and address them as fully as you can. If they're worried about large crowds at your event, for example, be sure to adhere to strict start and end times, hire security, provide trash cans, etc. Be considerate and try to understand their side.

Frame your idea as a community conversation.

Sure, you have a specific project in mind, but you can also stress that the underlying purpose of what you're doing is to make the community better, bring neighbors together, etc. Orienting people back to your larger goal can keep them from obsessing over the details.

Don't get discouraged.

While you want to consider all the feedback you get, don't abandon your project just because some Negative Nelly is throwing unnecessary shade. Just say you appreciate their thoughts and want to be a good neighbor, then continue on with your team.

Tommy's Tips for Getting Buy-In for Big Ideas:

Reach out

Research who's done similar projects elsewhere and give them a shout; people are almost always happy to offer their advice and support. In community development, we're all learning as we go and want to see each other succeed.



Measure everything.

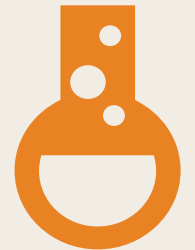
Take a survey of people's opinions, promote a hashtag and run searches on it, keep tabs on donations pledged and collected... Everywhere you can, track community engagement metrics. They're great for proving you have neighborhood support for your idea, and they can help you improve your methods as you see what works for people and what doesn't. You'll always be surprised by something.

Find your hook

Is there a crisis or recent news event that can make the case for your project's relevance and importance? If the issue you're focused on is already on people's minds, make that the introduction to what you want to do and why.

This is only a test.

No matter the nature of your project, it usually works well to plan it as a pilot, and think of it as an experiment to see what works before attempting to make anything permanent. Most cities today are using a "test, then invest" innovation model. So explain that you're doing things on a small scale first—sell the idea of small change!



Be honest.

Don't make promises. Remember that trying something big and bold is a gamble. Reiterate that you've all got a lot to gain and little to lose by trying, then report your outcomes to your stakeholders honestly.

Involving Your Neighbors & Local Stakeholders

Most grassroots projects are about issues of collective concern, need all the helping hands and help with funding they can get, and benefit from the good ideas of a variety of people.

What is a stakeholder?

A stakeholder is anyone who will be impacted by your project. When you're thinking about who to involve, think about what your goals are. If your project is hyper-local, like cleaning up an empty lot on of your block, your primary stakeholders might just be your immediate neighbors. But if you're doing something in a school, then students, parents, teachers, and administrators might all be major stakeholders.

Whoever you choose to talk to initially, ask them who else you should be talking to! They'll help make sure you don't leave any important stones unturned.

WHO WE SPOKE TO:

Siphne Sylve
Memphis-based visual artist, musician, and DJ. Also Project Manager at the UrbanArt Commission, which employs artists to create meaningful public art that transforms spaces and environments across the city.



When should I start approaching people?

You can think through your whole plan—"this is my idea and how I see it unfolding"—and then ask for people's help, start by relating your idea only and ask for people's ideas to help make a plan, or think about how you're likely to be received in either case ("this person is crazy!" or "hmm, I'd like to get in on the ground floor of that"), and act from there.

How can I keep people engaged as time goes on?

Think and talk about your project in terms of what you're doing together—not what you're doing for your neighbors or vice-versa. This is a group effort.

Be open: to new people, new ideas, new outcomes. You're not a dictator! **Keep your focus on making positive change—not on getting your way.** If someone takes the time to critique your idea, thank them for their input and consider what you can get out of it.

And be open to new goals appearing: sometimes a project can change while it's in process and make it better than you imagined.

Don't try to badger anyone into participating. If people want to get involved, they will. If they don't, move on.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- "Building Communities, Not Audiences: The Future of the Arts in the United States," by Doug Borwick
- "Engaging Art: The Next Great Transformation of America's Cultural Life," edited by Steven J. Tepper and Bill Ivey
- The Philadelphia Mural Art Program has a great approach to engagement that's worth studying

Siphne's Tips for Involving Neighbors and Stakeholders:

1 Know what you want.



Do you want this person or group to help you build a raised bed for a garden?
To make phone calls for your fundraiser?
To introduce you to someone you want to talk to? People like clarity; make your "ask" clear every time you reach out.

2 Know what your stakeholders want

Why do you think this person or group is interested in what you're doing? Tailor your pitch to speak to them. Your neighbor might be interested in a cleaner park because he takes his toddler there every day; someone from the mayor's office might think more about how parks relate to the city's environmental goals. Think through how you can reach different people with different points.



3 Talk to everyone directly.

Face to face is best, whenever possible!

4 Stay on the same page.

Start meetings by reminding people of your goals, then recap the progress you've already made and state what's on the agenda to do next.

5 Understand your people.

Your group might prefer to use email to stay in touch—or maybe phone, text, or Facebook instead. Ask them how they like to work before you institute any systems.



6 Break it down.

If you're working with more than a handful of people regularly, consider breaking your group into committees so you can focus on each of your tasks more easily, avoid super-long meetings, and make sure everyone feels relevant.

Engaging with Local Electeds and Agencies

How can I determine which officials or agencies might be able to help me?

You can start by contacting agencies that seem relevant to your project on the surface: the Department of Transportation for a bus shelter project, or Parks & Recreation for a community garden. They'll tell you if you're in the right place, or where to go if you're not. Or you can contact a local elected official's office and ask if they can direct you. Depending on where you live, this could be your city council member, senator, congressperson, community board chairperson, or other representative.

What should I do during my first meeting with an official or agency?

Be really clear about what you want to do, and about what you're asking from them. Are you asking for a permit?

WHO WE SPOKE TO:

David Bragdon

Served as the elected president of the Metro Council in Portland, Oregon for eight years. Now Executive Director of TransitCenter, a civic philanthropy that advocates for improved urban transportation.



For an endorsement? For someone to come out and do an assessment? Also think ahead of time about what you can offer them in return for their support. Will you invite them to attend a ribbon cutting or speak at your event? Will you give them shout-outs in your social media? Identify some specific ways you can be prepared to share the credit.

What are some common mistakes I can avoid?

Threatening or getting angry doesn't usually lead to progress—especially if you're trying to do something constructive. If you want to stop something bad from happening—like keeping a toxic waste dump out of your school zone—it's not inappropriate to be strong and confrontational. But if you're trying to work together to create and build something positive for your neighborhood, it's counterproductive to be combative. No one wants to be told, "You can't do your job right, so I'm going to step in and do it for you." Remember that spirit of cooperation.

Any last thoughts?

You'll learn as you go who can help you with what. Much of it is structural, but some of it is not: it's also about personality. You may find a particular staffer in a mayor's office who takes a personal interest in your project and goes the extra mile to help it succeed. So remember it's not all about what's on paper, it's also about personal relationships. Seize on the best ones you find and cultivate them!

What are some good reasons to reach out to local elected officials and agencies with my neighborhood improvement ideas?

- 1 You might need regulatory permission, for example if your project involves public property
- 2 You might be able to get funding
- 3 You can seek cooperation and endorsements to help bring your project to life—and prevent misunderstandings about your intentions
- 4 You stand to gain some prominence and press, as officials and agencies can command media coverage

David's tools for approaching officials and agencies:

Get in the spirit of cooperation.

No matter who you're talking to, remember that you're trying to get something good done and would like their cooperation to make it happen.

See where your objectives align.

If your project is an after-school healthy cooking class, check to see if your city's Department of Education has set goals for stopping childhood obesity. Emphasize any similarities you find between your goals and theirs.



Connect early.

If an elected official thinks your project will be good for their district, they can help get it off the ground. Lead with the notion that you're trying to make their neighborhood better. (P.S.: Electeds know that what's good for their neighborhood is also good for their own publicity.)

Make it snappy!

Keep your presentations succinct, and don't expect people to read too much. Bring visual aids that can help tell your story quickly and vividly, like photographs, drawings, charts, and graphs.



Recruiting & managing volunteers

1 Why might I want to volunteer help for my neighborhood project?

It's good manners. It's insulting to live somewhere and just be told, "This is what's going to happen here." You're working where people live! So don't wait until design or implementation; tell them your ideas at the beginning.

Residents have good ideas!

No one knows a neighborhood like a neighbor. They can really help you brainstorm and make your ideas better. Ask them what they want to see.

Buy-in = stability. When people are involved in—or even just

informed about—a project from the get-go, they're more likely to feel a sense of ownership and support it as time goes on. That could mean giving it their time, their money, or just their vocal support.



WHO WE SPOKE TO:

Rebecca Matlock Hutchinson
Site Director of Soulsville, USA.
Has worked in the Department of Neighborhood Redevelopment with the City of Memphis Division of Housing and Community Development.



2 What are some tasks volunteers do or responsibilities they have in local projects?

It's always person by person. **Ask people what they like to do and what they'd like to learn more about**, then make a list of your needs and try to make some matches.

Common volunteer roles in neighborhood projects include:

- Painting
- Planting
- Supervising children while they do those things!
- Passing out flyers
- Manning the sign-in table at events
- Making phone calls
- Introducing the project to their connections in churches, schools, or other organizations
- Building a website or managing a social media account
- Recruiting other volunteers

*Remember that people want to be asked to help! They'll come to meetings and just sit back unless you go up and ask them—then they'll usually jump at the chance. **People just want a personal invitation.***

3 Where should I look to find volunteers?

School and church leadership are good leads, as are **neighborhood associations**. If people are involved with those things, they already have an interest in their community. Developing a relationship with school leadership can also pave the way to recruiting student volunteers.

4 How do I know who will make a good volunteer?

I'll ask anybody! But if you hear people talking about community issues or see them at meetings, that's a good sign that they'll be receptive. And even if you don't get them to volunteer, always make sure the people in your neighborhood are aware of what you're doing. Regardless of whether they participate, they appreciate knowing what's going on. Plus, many do come out eventually—people like to join a bandwagon! I even like to talk to folks from other areas because they may still have good ideas, come to a meeting, or even move here. You just never know. Cast a wide net.

5 How can I prevent or manage conflicts?

Nothing you plan will be perfect, and some people will always criticize and find fault. **Just be diplomatic: say thank you for the suggestion, and you'll think about doing it next time.** If people get bossy with other volunteers, you can remind them gently that everything's okay; this is not that serious. Or you can reassign them: direct them to a task where they're not interacting so much with others. Say, "Let's move you over here. I think you'd be better at this."

Anything else?

Always get volunteers' contact info! Make sure all volunteers sign in at your events so you can say thank you and keep them in the loop.

How do I keep my volunteers happy and engaged?

Keep 'em posted. This is the number one way—especially in a place where people have historically felt disenfranchised. When they know what's happening and feel they can express their opinion, that gains you credibility, respect, and trust.

Don't make assumptions! Outright ask them: they might know someone or be interested in something you might never have guessed.

Esouse the benefits. People want to know that what they're doing is making a difference. Explain that even things that might seem small (like picking up trash) are key steps toward the larger goal (beautifying the neighborhood). Make sure they understand how what they're doing helps the bigger picture, and that without them, your project would not succeed.

Good old fashioned gratitude. Always provide food, drinks, and the right tools for the job, and make sure people are comfortable. Thank-you letters, certificates, t-shirts, and volunteer picnics are other inexpensive but important gestures.

Mark your milestones. When you've reached a goal or passed an anniversary, celebrate it! Put it in writing in emails, on flyers, with posters... Make sure people know what all their work is adding up to, and let them share the success with you.



How to Create Compelling Visuals

“Visuals” means communicating ideas in a way that people can understand quickly and easily, even if they have no knowledge about a topic or the vocabulary to talk about it.

Visuals can also inspire people, as well as inform them. They can spark a call to action. Photos, charts, graphs, diagrams, videos, illustrations... All of these can be used in outreach materials like flyers, posters, and websites to get people’s attention, convey why your issue is important, and compel them to participate.

If visuals are well-designed and attractive, they can draw people in in an immediate way that non-visuals can’t.

They can also help you to communicate universally, and to reinforce your idea’s “brand.” If you’re producing flyers, postcards, a website, and a banner, use the same “visual system” every time. That means the same colors, same logo (if you have one), same font, same layout, etc—to the extent

WHO WE SPOKE TO:

Dylan House
Community Design Director at Hester Street Collaborative, and works to engage people in shaping their neighborhood spaces. He likes building things, visualizing information, and exploring cities on his bicycle.



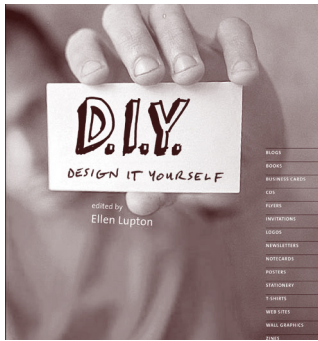
possible. That familiarity of a repeated look makes people feel they’re a part of something stable and reliable.

In addition to the usual flyers, posters, and photographs you might prepare before holding an event or launching a campaign, think about what visuals you can incorporate into your project in real time.

If you’re holding a fundraiser to start a community garden, you could provide attendees—kids and adults—with markers and a simple outline of the space on paper. Then ask them to draw how they envision the garden being laid out, the amenities it should have, or what you should grow there. You might get some great new ideas, but even if the responses are outlandish, you’ve just given your constituents a feeling of ownership in your project and tapped into their imaginations. Those are both key elements of successful community campaigns.

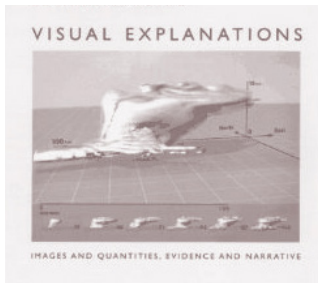
You still need people-power behind everything you do.

Pretty pictures are great and can help sell your cause, but more than anything, you need the right hands, hearts, and minds to make progress. Think about the difference in engagement between a smiling, friendly person handing out a flyer, versus taping it to a lamppost and just hoping someone will read it!



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Ellen Lupton's books about graphic design, particularly *DIY: Design It Yourself*, range from novice to expert level and are all terrific



Edward Tufte's book *Visual Explanations* explains graphic design as a communication tool



Always look to other folks you've seen do visuals well—organizations as well as individuals. Study your favorites and get inspired by the work they do. One I love is the Center for Urban Pedagogy.

Dylan's Rules for Creating Persuasive Visuals:

1 Everything needs to tell a story.



This applies to your verbal messaging as well as images. Don't just show data or tell a nice story for the sake of it; make sure everything you say has a purpose: to support your overarching goals.

2 Show support for your project visually.

If you're writing a report, put your neighbors' positive comments in a bigger font and highlight them in a different color. If you've talked with all the residents on your block about your idea and 80% of them support it, show that in a bright pie chart. Citing support for your project will be vital to its success, and showing it visually helps make sure it's eye-catching and easily understood.

3 Don't muddy the waters.



Flyers that are crammed top-to-bottom with graphics or text, colors or fonts that are constantly changing, or low-resolution images that look blurry or pixelated will all make it harder for people to understand your message. Keep it simple, clean, and consistent. Remember that visuals won't help if people can't understand them—or can't stand to look at them!

Getting press for your project

Identify the right media outlets
and write a winning pitch

1 What types of press should I seek out?

Start hyperlocal: People often reach too high at the beginning—they read the *New York Times* every day, so they want to pitch their story there, but that’s not likely to work. Outlets like neighborhood blogs and local weekly papers are generally the first stop for proposing an idea, a place to “earn your first ink.” Hyperlocal coverage trickles up and informs bigger outlets, and it provides a more legitimate basis for follow-up and amplification than a cold-call pitch.



Remember that direct communication—like going door to door, or canvassing on the street—and online avenues like social media and email lists are other good options. Pitching your project to third-party media outlets should only be one part of your overall press strategy.

WHO WE SPOKE TO:

Wiley Norvell
NYC Mayor Bill de Blasio’s
Communications Advisor for Housing
and Economic Development.
Has coordinated press outreach on
some of the Mayor’s signature issues.



2 How can I choose the best outlets to contact?

Identify your champions: reporters or outlets who have shown a prior commitment to the problem you’re focusing on. For example, if you’re working on a child hunger-related project, the *New York Daily News* could be a press ally, as they have a longstanding campaign against that issue. **Do some research!**

Find a hook: Look for opportunities to communicate about your issue in the context of stories that aren’t your own. Primarily, you’ll want to seek out press for your own initiative, but when things happen in the news that are somehow related, you can also appeal to the press by **talking about how your project connects to them.** For example, if you want to improve pedestrian crossings in your neighborhood and the city reports on a traffic fatality, you can write to a media outlet about the importance and timeliness of your project with that event as your “hook.” This strategy comes with the added benefit of introducing yourself to reporters as a plugged-in source for future comment on current events that relate to your issue.

3 How should I pitch to media outlets?

Before you write a pitch, make sure you understand **where you fit in the context of your project**. Are you starting from scratch with a new idea? Or picking up where someone else left off? What is the history of your issue that's brought it to where it is today? You want to be seen as an authority on your idea, so **spend a little time getting to know your place in the bigger picture**.

Keep it short! Limit your pitches to three or four sentences. The people who read these queries are busy, underpaid, and working in a frenetic environment. Breaking through only happens when you recognize this and write a compassionately brief and clear pitch.

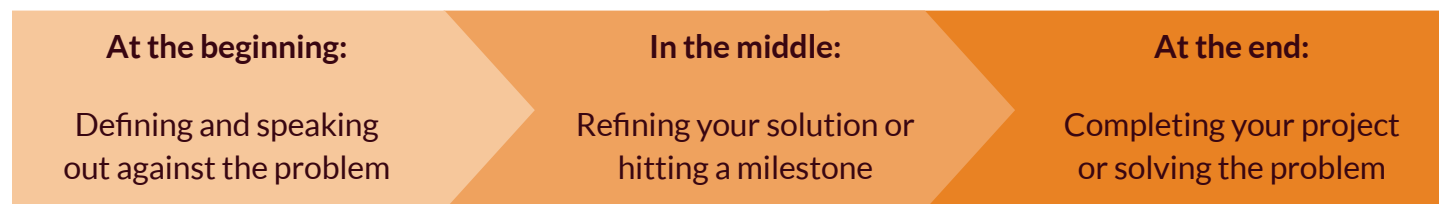
Convey the newsworthiness of your idea upfront, and give only a brief introduction to what you're doing—this is not the place for an explanation of every facet.

Structure your pitch like this:



4 When should I seek press?

You'll want different press at different stages of a project's timeline. One classic formula is:



Getting press during multiple phases of your project will help reach more people and keep momentum up.

Why seek press coverage?

Getting your story told by the media can help convince influence-makers, elected officials, businesses, and the general public to support you and take action on your behalf—whether that means funding, an endorsement, volunteer time, or something else. **Think of press as a vehicle for engagement.**

When you're trying to get a good idea off the ground, you often have to work long and hard for a while before experiencing a win. **Press coverage can provide encouragement:** it shows you have capacity, substance, something of interest—important ingredients in building and sustaining movements.

What if the reporter gets it wrong?

I've never read a story without erroneous details in it. Don't sweat the small stuff. If there's something really big that's wrong, or you've been misrepresented, a quick call or email to the reporter will often fix it. Be civil. Be polite. Compliment the piece before you ask for a change. If that doesn't work, Twitter and Genius are good ways to get your take out there. Just remember working with the media is all about personal relationships. Don't burn a bridge you'll need later on.

Telling your story with video

It's an especially compelling medium through which to share your work and gain support

Stories are powerful.

They help people wrap their minds around big ideas. They create empathy and relatability, and allow people to more easily picture what ideas “look like” versus just hearing them described factually.

No one can argue with a personal story!

When you frame your issue or project around the experience of individuals, it's a lot harder for other people to dispute it. The statement “A community garden would be good for our neighborhood” is debatable, but your statement, “I had some of the best experiences of my childhood in our community garden” is not.

WHO WE SPOKE TO:

Liz Morrison
Director of Public Policy Content
for Airbnb. Formerly a video
producer for the Obama 2012
campaign, Idealist.org, and a lot of
“stupid” reality and non-fiction TV.



Video connects with people quickly.

Video has become an indispensable part of organizing, because it communicates to people on multiple levels: voices, music, imagery, before-and-after time lapse comparisons... Nothing reaches the heartstrings faster! Plus it's easier for many busy people to watch a video than to read an article.

Liz's Top Five Video Storytelling Tips:

1 Clearly identify your goal and audience.

What do you want to **accomplish** by making this video? Who is the **audience** you need to help you do it? What **action** do you want them to take? What **information and motivation** do they need in order to act? Work on your video with the answers to these questions at the front of your mind.

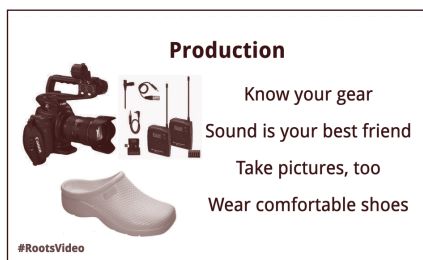
ADDITIONAL HELP:



You don't need a big production crew or expensive equipment! If you have a smartphone or a webcam, you can make a good video. If you want to invest a little extra money, you can trick out your existing tech with add-ons like a **sturdy clip-on microphone** (under \$100) that will up your sound game.



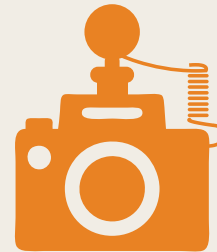
Peruse great, free resources online. **Vimeo Video School** is a solid go-to, or search YouTube for topics like “iMovie editing tutorial.”



For more step-by-step guidance in planning out a video production process for your campaign, check out **this slide deck** I made for a conference a few years ago:
<http://bit.ly/2bgZonl>

2 Spend more time planning than you think you need.

So much of your video happens before you hit “record;” **good planning sets you up for success**. Think through your **logistics** (where and when will you shoot? who will be involved?, etc), but also make a **list of specific visuals** you want to capture (a pretty sunset? an intersection at rush hour?), **who will be on camera and when, what they will say**, etc. Planning is usually about 40% of the video production process.



3 Don't rely on editing to fix your production mistakes.

Here's a Film School 101 lesson: Never say, “We'll fix it in post-production.” Make sure you're getting **good sound** and that you're happy with how the video looks **while you're shooting**. Nothing's worse than realizing after you've wrapped that you're missing something you need.

4 Share your rough draft for feedback!

It's easy to get attached; to fall in love with your work and not see its flaws. But **showing your rough draft to people you trust—and being open to their notes**—will always make your end product better.

5 Make sure there's a clear call to action.

Video is great for getting people fired up; be sure you harness that energy by **telling viewers what they can do to take action now**. Spell out your web address, ask them to calendar the time and date of your event, point them to your petition. Tell them what they can do to help while they're still watching.