



County Health
Rankings & Roadmaps

Webinar

Leveraging media to transform public health
narratives and policy

October 21, 2025

countyhealthrankings.org



University of Wisconsin
Population Health Institute
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Support
provided by



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Guidelines

1
Share
successes and
lessons learned

2
Offer
resources

3
Build
knowledge

4
Listen
for multiple
perspectives



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Disclosures

- Views do not represent the University of Wisconsin Madison or the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.
- Expertise of a CHR&R team of 35+ members is reflected and highly valued.
- Funding support from RWJF is appreciated.



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We value



University of Wisconsin
Population Health Institute
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Collaboration

Innovation

Integrity

Courage

Inclusion

Excellence



Join the conversation

Question and Answer

Welcome to Q&A
Questions you ask will show up here. Only host and panelists will be able to see all questions.

Where can I find strategies to address children in poverty?

☐ Send anonymously

Who can see your questions?

Webinar Chat

Me to Everyone

JL Hi Everyone, I'm James, from Madison, WI.

Zoomhost CHRR to Everyone

Hello James and welcome to today's webinar.

Who can see your messages?

To: Everyone

Your text can be seen by panelists and other attendees



Group agreements

1. Listen actively
2. Participate fully
3. Speak from your experience
4. Lead with curiosity
5. Be conscious of body language
6. Expect ambiguity
7. Be accountable



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Why Media Engagement is Essential

- Shapes understanding of health
- Builds trust with accurate info
- Inspires action & accountability



Photo by Hartono Creative Studio on Unsplash



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Welcome



Linda Villarosa
Journalist, author and
educator



Rinku Sen
Executive director
Narrative Initiative



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Discussion group

When: Following the webinar

What: Share ideas, ask questions

How: Zoom

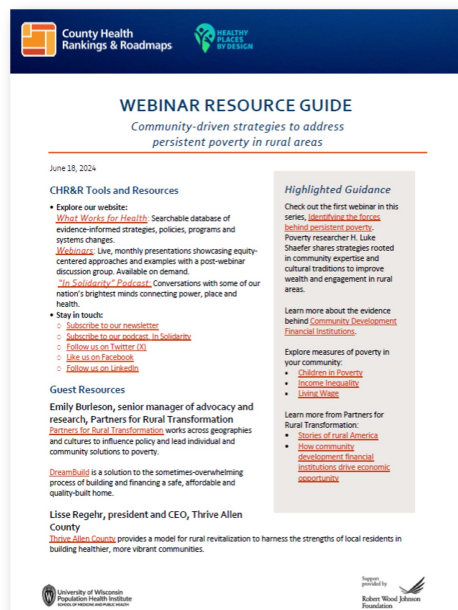
Why: Deepen learning



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Resource guide

Coming to your inbox soon



Opinion article



What’s an op-ed/opinion story?

Opinion

COLUMNISTS · GUEST ESSAYS · EDITORIALS · THE POINT · LETTERS · SUNDAY OPINION · OPINION VIDEO · OP-DOCS · OPINION AUDIO · MORE

GUEST ESSAY

Where Trump Is Vulnerable and How to Act on It

People and institutions of civil society must coordinate against him.

3h ago · By HENRY J. FARRELL

Photo illustration by Philotheus Nisch for The New York Times

The Gaza I Once Knew Is Gone

After two years of war, one Gazan tells of what was lost.

5h ago · By GHADA ABDOULFATTAH

GUEST ESSAY

Relax, America, There Is Life After Nonstick Pans

America will be better off without nonstick pans: healthier, safer and perhaps even more skilled at cooking.

2h ago · By ANDREW ZIMMERN

GUEST ESSAY

Can Trump End This Impossibly Cruel Practice?

Under Trump, the N.I.H. is encouraging alternatives that use human cells rather than dogs, cats and monkeys.

3h ago · By DEBORAH BLUM

Op-ed/Opinion article

**A feature story with a clear opinion.
Its goal: to persuade people to your
point of view.**

What must a good opinion story have?

- News hook – why this topic right now?
- Audience – must be relevant and interesting to readers/viewers/listeners
- Must have a distinct point of view
- Usually has some controversy



The best op-ed piece convinces you with emotion.

**Anger, humor
...and other genuine,
relatable feelings.**

**As well as straight-up
facts, information and
research....**

VERY IMPORTANT

If the reader doesn't know what you think—and early on—something is DESPERATELY wrong!

Use facts, statistics and studies to support your arguments.

Try not to be boring, preachy or overly technical.

Think 800 to 1,000 words



Include a “con” to balance out your “pros.” In other words, concede a point to the other side.

Otherwise, you sound smug.

**Conclude with a paragraph that draws the piece together.
At best, a call to action.**

How to pitch?

New York Times Opinion Guest Essays

Learn more about New York Times Opinion guest essays, including how to submit a guest essay for review and publication.

New York Times Opinion guest essays deliver an argument in the author's voice, based on fact and drawn from expertise or experience. Our goal is to offer readers a robust range of ideas on newsworthy events or issues of broad public concern from people outside The New York Times.

We welcome ideas for submissions in all media, including audio, illustration, data and visualization.

If you'd like to submit a **video guest essay**, please visit [New York Times Opinion Video guest essay](#) for more information on the submission process.

OPINION VOICES

Submitting an article to Op-Ed

10

The Los Angeles Times welcomes opinion articles on any subject. Submissions must be exclusive to us, meaning they have been sent only to us, not published online or in print elsewhere, including on personal blogs or social media channels. Most published articles are about 750 to 1,000 words in length.

Some general submission guidelines:

Submit an op-ed

Please use our [op-ed submission form](#).

What's an op-ed?

Taking its name from its traditional position opposite the editorial page of a newspaper, an op-ed is an opinion essay written by a staff columnist or an outside contributor. It should have a clear point of view or argument supported by specific evidence. It does not represent the opinions of the Washington Post — in fact, it may often contradict the opinion of The Post's Editors Board.

What are the guidelines for op-ed submissions?

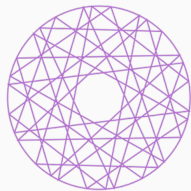
Guardian US opinion pitch guidelines

Are you interested in being published on the US opinion page for the Guardian? Great! We happily accept submissions, but we ask you to read (and thoughtfully abide by) a few simple guidelines before you send us your pitch.

NARRATIVE INITIATIVE

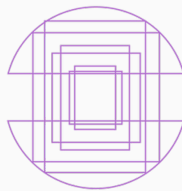
We collaborate with social movements to transform deeply held beliefs and values in order to make equity and justice the foundations of multiracial democracy.

How We Do Our Work



We Recruit Great Changemakers

We gather social justice leaders across fields by offering programs and projects for starting or deepening narrative practice.



We Develop Practitioner Leadership

We study current and historic narrative change efforts. We consider their relationships to social movements, their tactics and approaches, to build leadership internally and among peers.



We Help Craft and Support Narrative Interventions

We lean into the power of connection, interdependence, and shared stakes with communities across racial, class, gender, ability and other boundaries.

Narrative Initiative

narrative ^{1 of 2} noun

nar·ra·tive (ˈner-ə-tiv) 'na-rə-

[Synonyms of narrative >](#)

1 a : something that is narrated : STORY, ACCOUNT

He is writing a detailed *narrative* of his life on the island.

b : a way of presenting or understanding a situation or series of events that reflects and promotes a particular point of view or set of values

The rise of the Tea Party and the weakness of the Obama economy have fueled a Republican *narrative* about Big Government as a threat to liberty ...
— Michael Grunwald

The media *narrative* around Kelly's appointment had two central ideas ... :
He would calm and professionalize the White House, and he would provide a more measured leadership style than his boss.
— Perry Bacon, Jr.



Narrative Initiative

Narrative Defined

Narrative The themes and ideas that are carried through collections of stories.

Deep Narrative The stickiest themes and ideas that have permeated stories for more than 50 years.

Emotion + Evidence + Reinforcement

Narrative Initiative



Masking is a
personal choice

If you get sick,
it's your fault

Individualism

One for one

Freedom

Humans
compete

We save lives together

These solutions are working

Collective Care and Responsibility

All for all

Humans cooperate

Fairness

How to identify mis/disinformation

Consider the source and targeted audience

Too bad or too good to be true?

What values are embedded?

How to Decide?

Relationship with audience

No myth busting

Narrative Initiative



Narrative Initiative

Myth Busting Traps

- Repeating the lie and diminishing action
 - Technocratic fact check
 - Jargon
 - Outrage Amplification
 - Wrong value

Ex vaccine mandates “It’s the law” vs “It’s healthy.”

“Follow the science” vs “Protect health.”

Moving a narrative with people power requires **polyvocal** approaches to organizing and communications.



Narrative Initiative



Narrative Initiative

Good Habits

- Audience first orientation and clarity
- Get your stories together
- People, not policies
- Remember basic human feelings

Sample Narrative Goals

Reframing

Amplifying

Attaching

Countering

Pivoting

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How to Gather Stories

- Note stories of survival and thriving, show people collectively caring
- More action, less fear - flip order
- Story process:
 - Write it all down (master doc)
 - Theme, characters, action, timeline
 - Practice for time
 - Subtract layers of detail to make 30 second, 1 minute, 2 minute versions.
 - Use at every opportunity, refine.

NARRATIVE INITIATIVE NEWSLETTER SIGN-UP



Deepen your understanding of narrative

- Sign up for our next narrative training
<https://forms.gle/KBaAjMa6DcdtJ6cK9>
- Check out <http://narrativesforhealth.org>
 - NFH Guide
 - In Action resource
- Reach out to us at
narrativesforhealth@chrr.wisc.edu





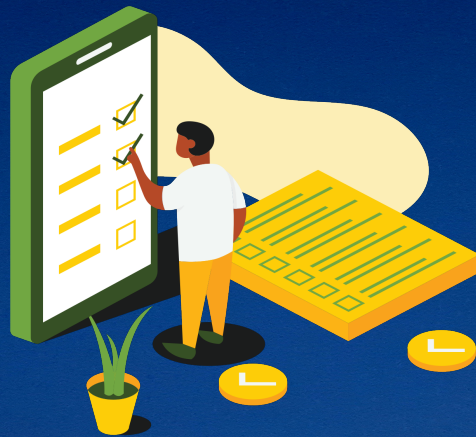
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Questions?



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Click on survey in the chat





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Upcoming webinar:

November 18, 2025

**Leveraging rural
assets for
economic
resilience**



Bonita Robertson-Hardy
The Aspen Institute



Julianna Dodson
Radically Rural



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Join us!



Julie
Sweetland
FrameWorks
Institute



Jeff
Niederdeppe
Cornell
University



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