

# FARM TO FOOD ASSISTANCE

STORYTELLING GUIDE

---

**A Practical Guide to Planning, Interviewing,  
Writing, and Publishing an Impactful Profile Story**



**groundwork**  
CENTER FOR RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

*In partnership with  
The Wallace Center | National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition  
Food Systems Leadership Network*



**Wallace Center**  
AT WINROCK INTERNATIONAL



**NATIONAL  
SUSTAINABLE  
AGRICULTURE  
COALITION**

**FOOD SYSTEMS  
LEADERSHIP NETWORK**

# Welcome to the Storytelling Guide

**FARM TO FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS STRENGTHEN LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS WHILE IMPROVING ACCESS TO FRESH, NUTRITIOUS FOOD.**

---

Stories about these programs help:

- Educate policymakers
- Demonstrate real-world impact
- Elevate farmers and communities
- Build support for policies like LFPA\* that fund farm to food assistance work
- Strengthen local food systems

This workbook will guide you through the process of:

Identifying a story focused on a single individual

Planning interviews

Writing a compelling article

Preparing your story for publication

\*Local Food Purchasing Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program - a USDA initiative that funded locally produced food for underserved communities from 2022-2025

## **Links to example stories:**

[An Investment that Delivers: How Local Food Hubs Support Farmers and Families \(WNC From the Ground Up, North Carolina\)](#)

[Feeding People, Reviving Culture: A South Dakota Success Story \(Cheyenne River Buffalo Company, South Dakota\)](#)

[Local Food, Lasting Returns: What Texas Gains When We Invest in Farmers \(Common Market Texas, Texas\)](#)



# Step 1: Identify Your Story

TAKE A FEW MINUTES TO THINK ABOUT  
THE STORY YOU WANT TO TELL.

---

**What program or effort could you write about?**

**It's important that your 750-word story focuses on a single individual. Who might be the focus of your story?**

Possible examples:

- A farmer selling food through LFPA
- A food pantry manager distributing healthy food to people in need
- A food hub coordinator
- A volunteer or staff member at a food program
- A community member receiving food
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s):

---

---

**What happened?**

Describe the event, program, or change you want to highlight.

---

---

---

---

# Step 2: Why Does This Story Matter?

**STORIES ARE POWERFUL WHEN THEY CONNECT INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES TO BROADER IMPACTS.**

---

**What impact does your subject's story show?**

- Supporting farmers and farm businesses
- Increasing access to fresh, nutritious food
- Strengthening local supply chains
- Investing in local and regional economies
- Improving community health
- Building community connection

**In your own words, why does this story matter?**

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Who is your audience for the story?**

- General public
- Potential funders
- State legislators
- Federal legislators
- Journalists/news outlets
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**What messages will resonate with your audience?**

Farm to Food Assistance programs like LFPA are a win-win because they pair local/regional/American economic investment with increased food access for those in need. These programs:

- Support farmers of all scales
- Build reliable domestic markets and robust local supply chains
- Improve the healthful quality of food provided at pantries, schools and other community places
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

“

**WE NEED INVESTMENTS IN PROVEN, POPULAR  
AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMS THAT DRIVE  
INNOVATION, OPEN MARKET OPPORTUNITIES,  
AND KEEP FARMERS ON THE LAND**

# Step 3: Write Your Story Mission

BEFORE WRITING, CREATE A MISSION STATEMENT FOR YOUR STORY.

---

**Mission statements establish the point of the piece and create clarity for what's included, what's excluded, and content flow.**

**Example:**

*"My mission for this story is to share the experience of Jayme Murray to illustrate how LFPA funds can have a multilayered impact: stimulating entrepreneurship, providing nutritional food, and building cultural spirit. The advocacy goal is to help decision makers see this type of program as investing in American small businesses."*

**Your Mission Statement**

Draft a preliminary mission statement when you begin reporting and revise for a final version when you are about to begin writing.

My mission for this story is to share the experience of:

---

to illustrate how:

---

which leads to:

---

so that:

---

---

# Step 4: Prepare for Interviews

INTERVIEWING IS THE FOUNDATION OF A STRONG STORY.

---

## Identify People to Interview

### Who should you talk to?

Keep in mind, this is a 750-word profile of a single individual, so other sources are not likely to be quoted or identified. Make it clear to them that this is a background information interview. In this story, lots of programmatic detail should not crowd out details that build the main subject's sense of humanity and spirit—you need the reader to bond with that person.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## Before Scheduling the Interview

### Make sure to communicate with your subject(s):

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recording plans          | <input type="checkbox"/> Opportunity for subject review |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Written consent          | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo expectations             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Timeline for publication | <input type="checkbox"/> Stipend (if applicable)        |

## Background Research

Before the interview, begin a notes file where you'd add preliminary reporting information and links to online resources.

Farm or organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Website or background info: \_\_\_\_\_

# Step 5: Build Your Interview Questions

**STRONG QUESTIONS INVITE PEOPLE TO TELL STORIES  
RATHER THAN GIVE SHORT ANSWERS.**

---

## **Origin Story**

**How did the person first become involved in this program?**

Your question: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Turning Point**

**Ask about moments when the program made a difference.**

Your question: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Everyday Details**

**Ask about specific moments or routines.**

Your question: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Impact**

**Ask how the program affected their work or community.**

Your question: \_\_\_\_\_

—

## **Looking Ahead**

**Ask about the future.**

Your question: \_\_\_\_\_

# Step 6: Capture Details During the Interview

GREAT STORIES INCLUDE SPECIFIC DETAILS.

---

**Specific details show humanity and community impact. Details can also give your story a visual vitality.**

**While interviewing, look, listen for:**

- Physical spaces (fields, trucks, food pantry shelves)
- Up-close (What's the make and model of that truck you mentioned...what's hanging from the rearview mirror?)
- Sounds, smells, and textures
- Everyday routines
- Emotional reactions
- Memorable quotes

**Tips for your interview:**

- If you're on video call online or phone, plan to type notes and record with permission from your subject
- Ask your subject for permission to transcribe with an online transcriber
- If in person, write hand notes and record audio when possible. Shoot "digital notes" – photos and videos with your camera
- If possible, do a preliminary interview with your subject by phone before doing in-person visit.

# Step 7: Write Your Story

**A 750-WORD STORY OFTEN FOLLOWS A SIMPLE STRUCTURE. YOU CAN DO THIS CHRONOLOGICALLY AND USE DETAIL, QUOTES AND OTHER LANGUAGE TO ILLUSTRATE HIGHER LEVEL TALKING POINTS.**

---

750 words can translate to about seven or eight paragraphs. When formatted, this often ends up being a three page printed document, which is short enough to be approachable, but long enough to include rich details and broad-level talking points.

## **Beginning**

**Introduce the main person in your story.**

Describe a scene or moment.

Opening idea: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## **Middle**

**Explain what happened and why it matters.**

Include quotes and context.

Key points: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## **Ending**

**Close with the larger significance of the story.**

Possible ending idea: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Step 8: Tips for Shooting a Great Portrait Photo

---

## Planning and Preparation:

- Plan by scouting locations and use props to add depth
- Optimal Timing: Prioritize shooting during the "golden hours" (hour or two after sunrise or before sunset) for soft lighting
- Choose a location that reflects the theme of the shoot
- Get close to your subject, and also use wide angle shots
- Engage with your subject to get relaxed expressions
- Use portrait mode for blurred backgrounds
- Take more photos than you think you need—20 to 50 is good.

“

**THERE IS ONE THING THE PHOTOGRAPH MUST  
CONTAIN, THE HUMANITY OF THE MOMENT.**

— Robert Frank

# Step 9: Revise and Prepare for Publication

USE THIS CHECKLIST BEFORE PUBLISHING YOUR STORY.

---

## Revision checklist

- Has your subject(s) reviewed the piece?
- Are quotes clear and accurate?
- Are details vivid and specific?
- Is the broader impact clear?
- Is the formatting effective and are all photos in place?

## Subject Review

**Send the story draft to your interview subject and allow time for feedback.**

Notes or edits from the subject:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### **Final Publishing Plans**

- Consider using Canva for a more polished format for websites, newsletters or printed materials
- Arrange for printing needs in advance of tabling events or other distribution

**Suggested Canva Template designed by The Wallace Center for 750-word stories: <http://bit.ly/4b8vTRP>**

### **CONCLUSION:**

Share your story and celebrate your success! Your work uplifting farm-to-food assistance stories is meaningful, and critical to the continued success and sustainability of these efforts.