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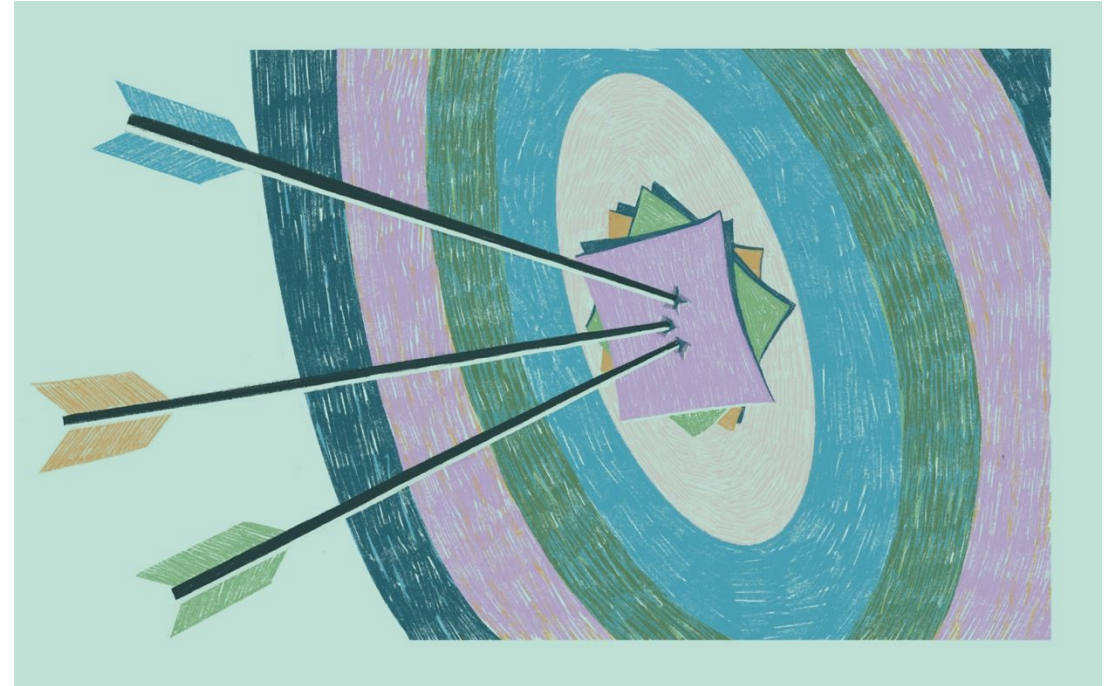
Center for Outcomes
Research and Education

Storytelling with Data

August 14, 2025

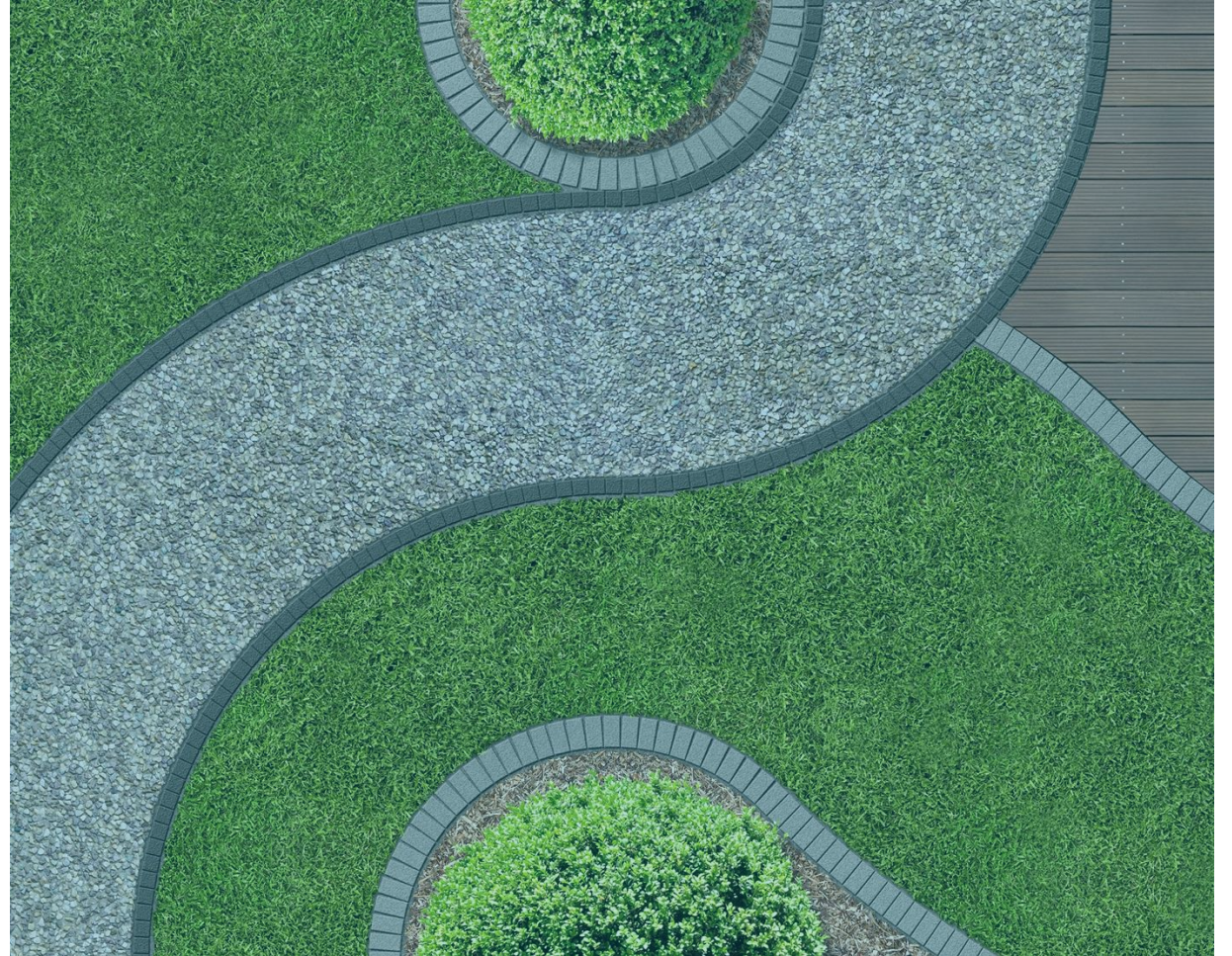
Webinar Objectives

- ❖ Why use storytelling
- ❖ Tailor your story for different audiences
- ❖ Understand what it means to tell a story with data



Agenda

1. Welcome
2. What is storytelling with data
3. Understanding your audience
4. Story elements
 - Data
 - Narrative
 - Visualizations
5. Bringing it all together



Acknowledging our Context

Land Acknowledgment

Land acknowledgment alone is not enough. It's merely a starting point.

Ask yourself: How do I plan to take action to support Indigenous communities?

Examples of how to act include:

- Supporting Indigenous organizations by donating your time and/or money.
- Supporting Indigenous-led grassroots change movements and campaigns.
- Committing to returning land. Local, state, and federal governments around the world are currently returning land to Indigenous people. Individuals are returning their land, too.

[A guide to Indigenous land acknowledgment - Native Governance Center](#)

March on Washington Anniversary

August 28th marks the 62nd anniversary of the March on Washington, one of the largest rallies for human rights in US history. Today we celebrate their activism, and reflect on the power of community in organizing to achieve change.

Our Work With Community

Data for Change is a space for us to connect, build community, and drive improvement. The work you do is invaluable and we are here to support you.

Upcoming Data for Change Events



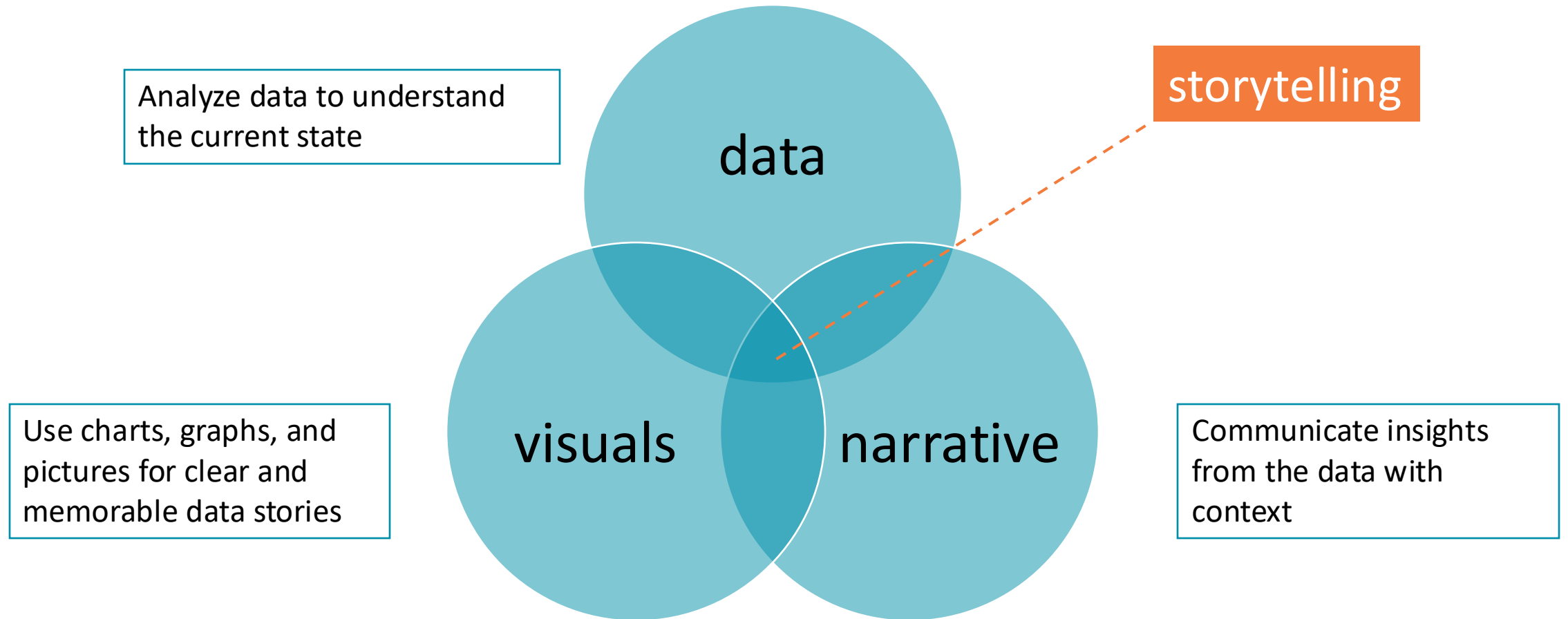
Southern OR in-person event on September 23rd: logic model workshop! [Register here](#)

Introduction to data storytelling

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What is storytelling with data?



Why should you tell stories?



Effective Data Storytelling by Brent Dykes

- Neural coupling: hearing stories releases dopamine, making it easier to remember the experience accurately
- Stories make it easier for you to share what is important, and for audiences to focus on your point

Activity: in the chat, share a time when you heard a data story that convinced you. What made it convincing? What stood out?

What can you do with stories?

Answer questions like:

What do we know
about our participants?

What is the impact of
this program?

What can we do to
reach our goals?



Advocate for your program or community

Share lessons and insights

Identify needs and build a compelling case

Where can you tell stories?

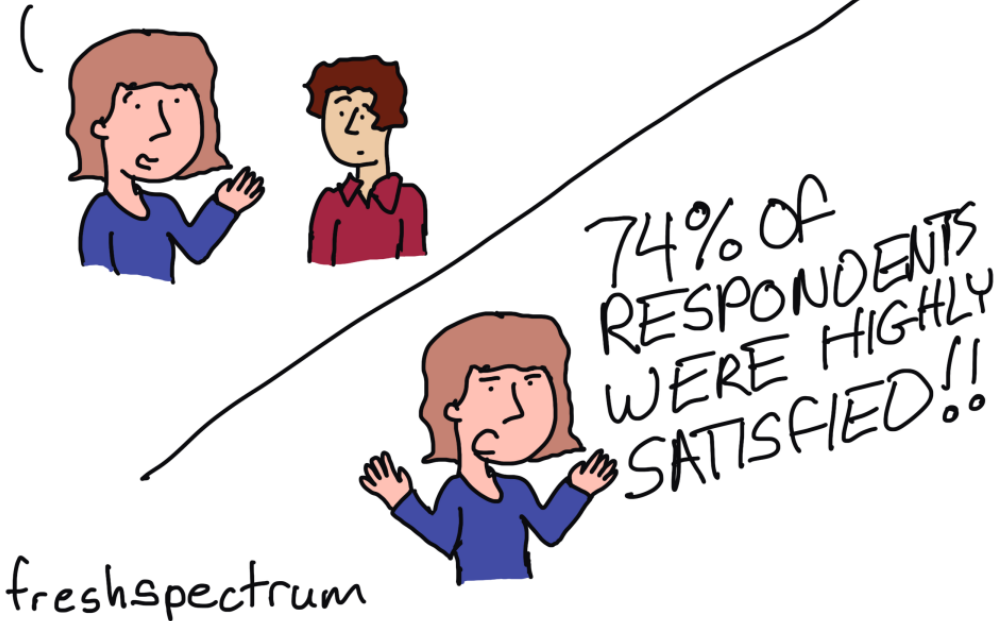
External

- Funder communications
- Community forums
- Partners

Internal

- Board of Trustees
- Staff meetings
- Leadership team

Data storytelling is old news.
I practice data story yelling.



Understand your
audience



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Why tailor your story to the audience?

- Your audience is the heart of any storytelling effort
- The better you understand your audience's goals and concerns, the more likely you are to achieve your objective and your desired outcomes.
- It's important to spend some time figuring out what makes your audience tick



Who is the audience?

Audience	Approach	Tips for engagement
Community	Align values	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide examples and anecdotes• Integrate community-driven priorities
Managers	Be exhaustive and informative	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Address resources required, effort/impact, and funding• Provide appendices or resources
Executives	Be brief and rigorous	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Address risk, cost, and landscape• Provide materials for asynchronous review
Funders	Be thorough and show value	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Address funder priorities• Show strategy and vision

What does the audience need?



What level of detail will the audience understand?

Data can overwhelm or distract



What kind of stories will the audience connect with?

Anecdotes
Client feedback
Illustrations



What do you want the audience to do?

Approve a plan
Provide input
Make a decision

Story elements

Data, visuals, and narrative

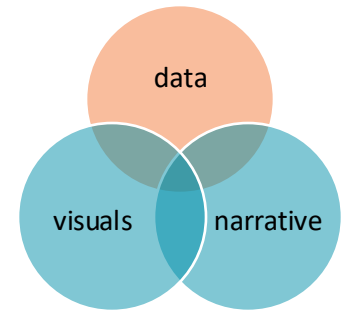
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Data

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Make sure your data story is valuable

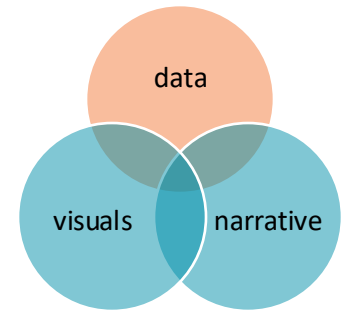


- Make sure you have the right set of data – complete, accurate, relevant
- Spend time reviewing and analyzing the data in relation to the question you are trying to answer
- It can be tempting to cherry pick certain datasets or data points. Aim to look at the whole picture.



DO WE TRUST THIS DATA?

Data analysis



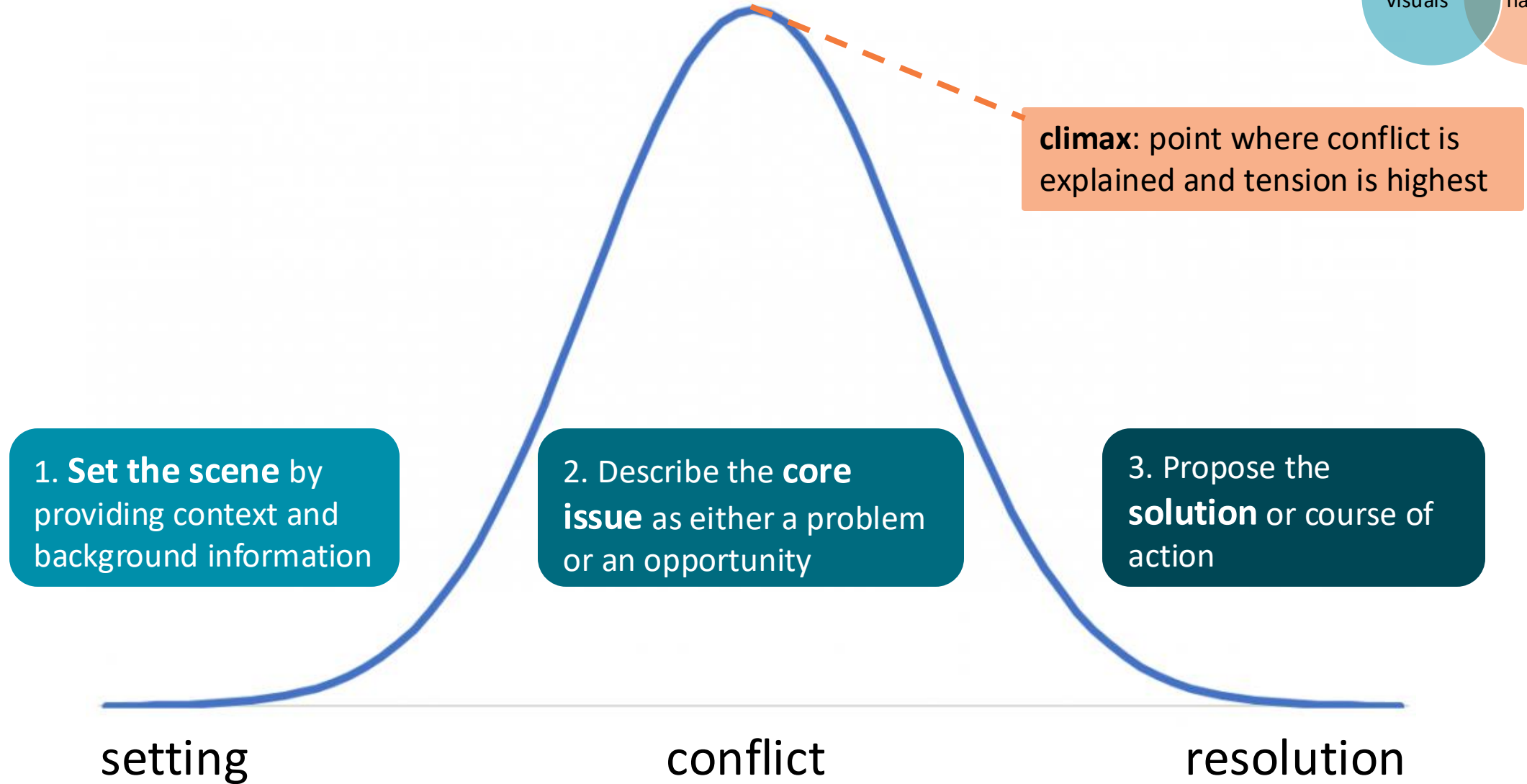
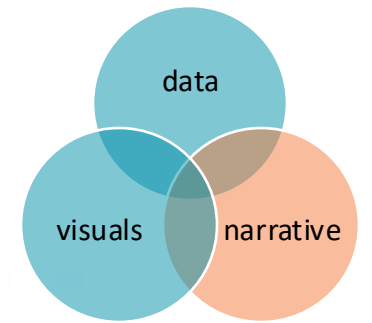
What is the story you want to tell?	What questions do you need to answer?	What data do you need to tell the story?
Program success (process)	Do our programs meet the needs of participants and staff?	Client feedback surveys, staff listening sessions
Client outcomes (impact)	Do our programs improve lives?	Client intake forms, annual surveys, and CHW follow-up

- **Logic models:** map the data you collect and gaps in data
- **Data inventories:** identify baseline data collection needs across all programs and functions, extraneous collection

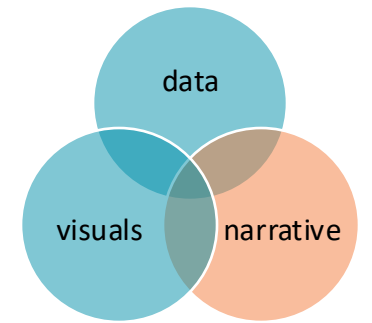
Narrative

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Narrative structure



Types of narrative structures



Chronological

Start at the beginning

Step by step approach

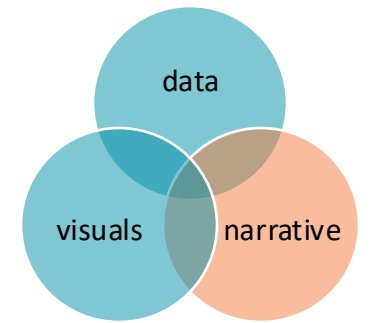
Call to action



Lead with the 'big idea'

Explain how audience can make it happen

What is your “big idea”?



Point of View

- What is your particular view on the subject?
- What idea are you trying to convince people to adopt?
- What perspective are you trying to form



Stakes

- What will happen if people accept your point of view and act upon it?
- What are the negative consequences of inaction?



Big Idea

Point of View + Stakes

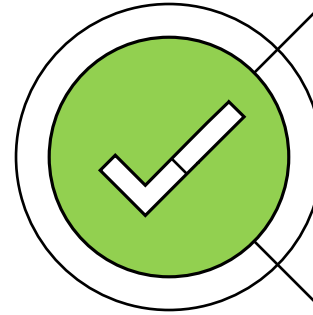
Write the Big Idea in a complete sentence and make sure to include a verb

How to build your big idea

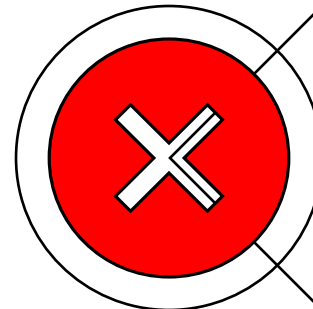
In her book DataStory, author Nancy Duarte calls the big idea the “Data Point of View” (DataPOV)

The DataPOV combines these two elements:

- 1. What action needs to be taken**
- 2. What is at stake**

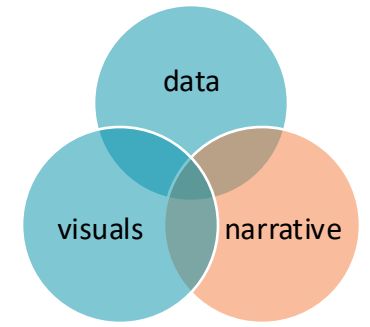


DataPOV: The funding from this grant will expand our transitional housing program and eliminate the waitlist, providing housing for 40% more participants

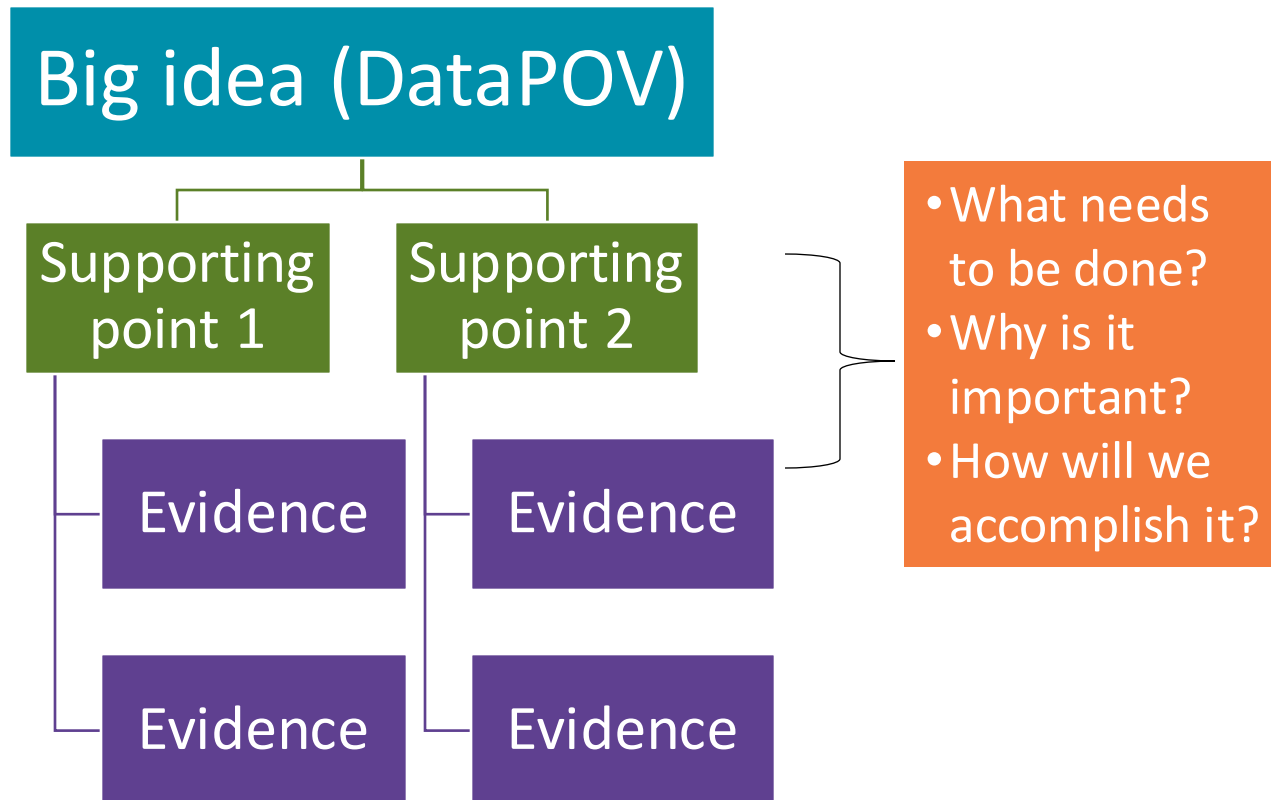


NOT a DataPOV: This grant will help expand our transitional housing program

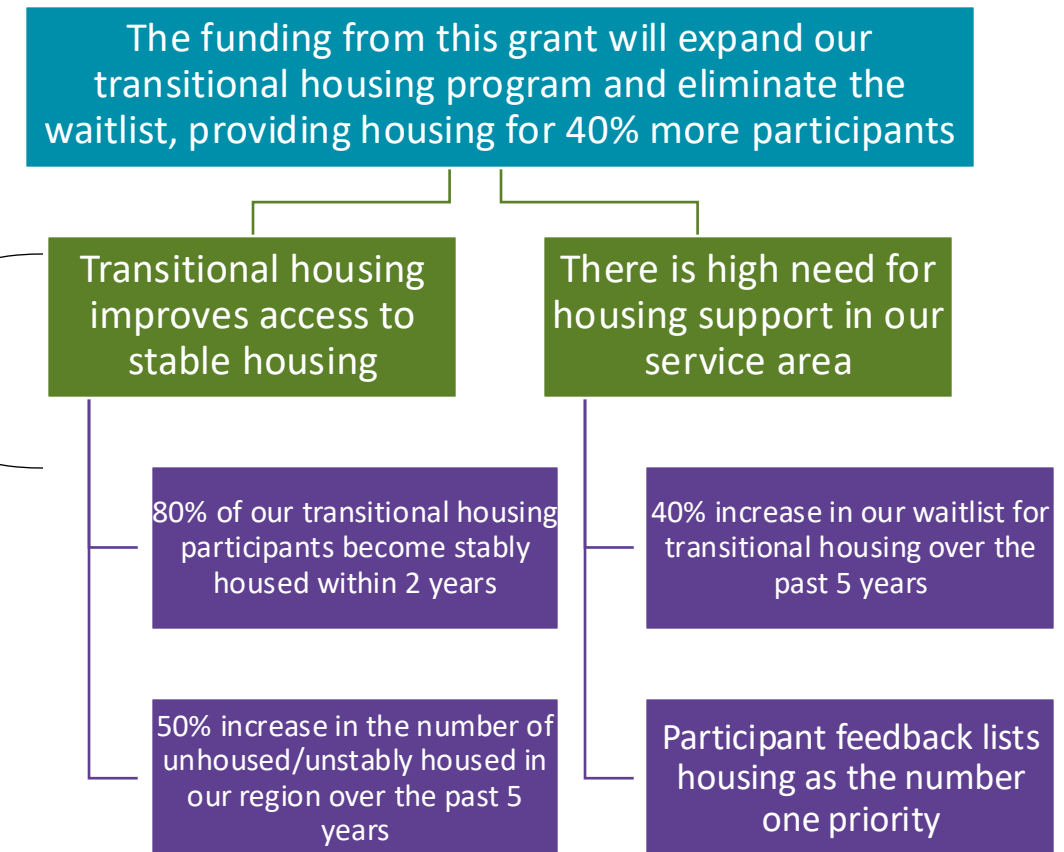
Build a recommendation tree

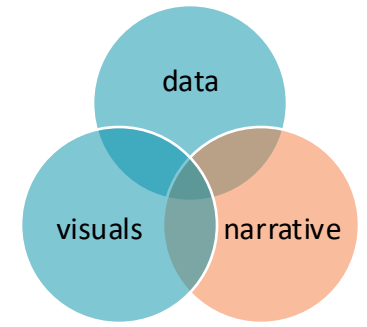


Recommendation tree outline



Recommendation tree example





Activity – formulating your big idea

- 1. Reflect:** Reflect on a time when you had to present an idea, course of action, or opportunity. Think about the story you told then, and come up with a ‘big idea’ based on the format we just discussed. (5 minutes)

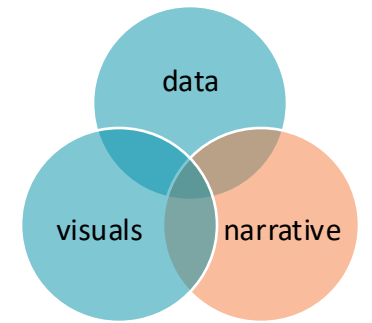
Examples:

- *“The funding from this grant will expand our transitional housing program and eliminate the waitlist, providing housing for 30% more participants”*
- *“Creating a pickup site for food pantry participants to pick up boxes will increase the number of people utilizing pantry services by 30%”*

Activity – discuss your big idea

- **Discuss:** In small groups, discuss your ‘big ideas’ and provide feedback (10 minutes)
 - What evidence did you have? What evidence did you need?
 - If this was a past example, what was the result? What would you do differently?
 - What was the audience, and how would you tailor your message to the audience?

Make it memorable and engaging



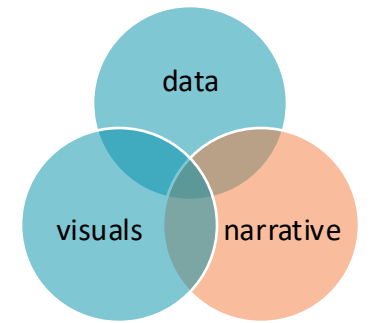
Use repetition

- Tell your audience what you are going to tell them
- Tell them your big idea
- Remind them of what you told them

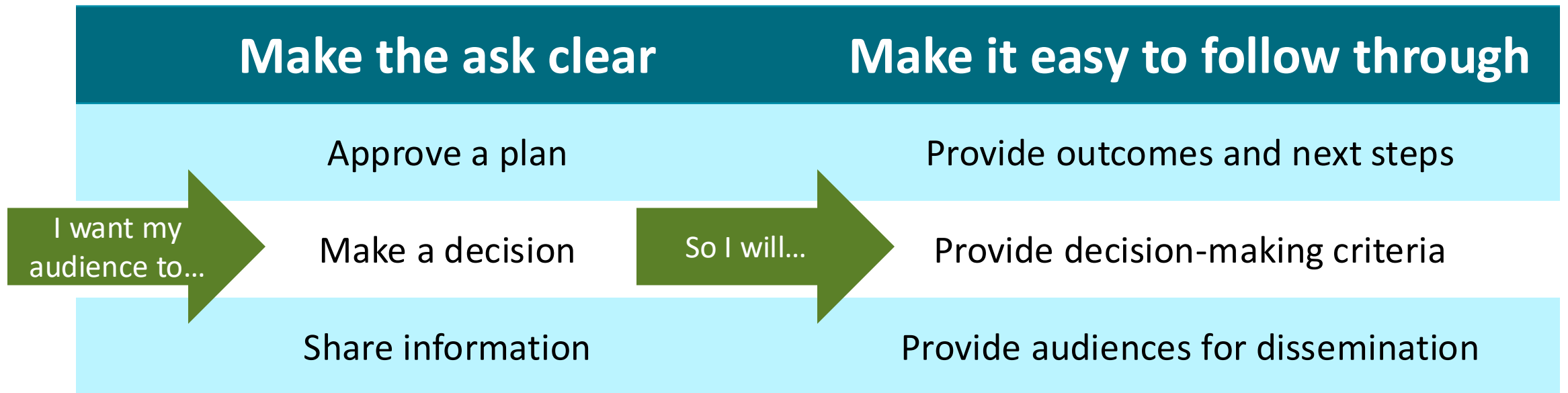
Anecdotes and quotes humanize data and make abstract ideas tangible

- Example comment from a client feedback survey: *“the transitional housing program was a lifeline that allowed me to keep my job, and empowered me to get my own place.”*

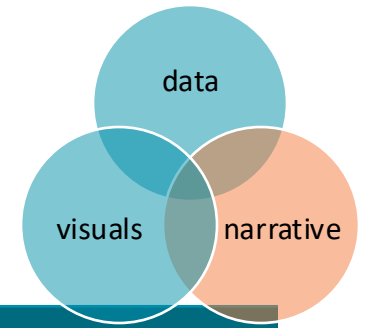
Call to action



Your audience should walk away knowing what they are going to do with the information you provided



Example call to action

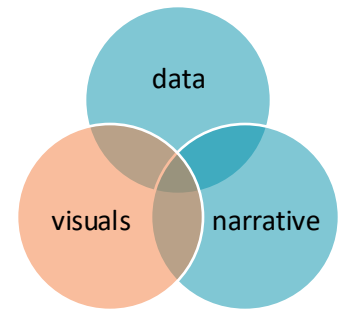


Make the ask clear		Make it easy to follow through	Example
I want my audience to...	Approve a plan	Provide outcomes and next steps	<i>We are asking you to reallocate 3 food pantry staff for a drive-through food box pickup zone so participants can conveniently access services</i>
	Make a decision	Provide decision-making criteria	<i>We are asking you to approve this economic development grant so our small business development program can support minority owned businesses in the community</i>
	Share information	Provide audiences for dissemination	<i>We are asking you to present this opportunity analysis to the Board of Trustees to make informed decisions about new partnerships</i>

Optional activity: using the Big Idea you shared in your small groups, develop a call to action and share it in the chat!

Visualizations






Bringing visuals into your story

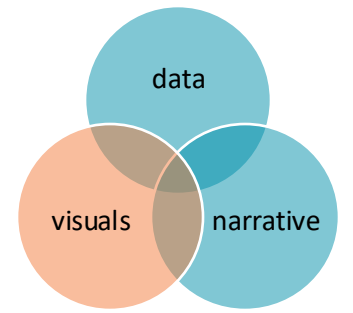


- Visuals turn complex data into something your audience can instantly act on
- Charts, graphs, diagrams, and even short videos can help you clarify patterns, highlight changes, or emphasize contrasts.

Housing Status	Sense of Belonging scores (higher is better)				
	1	2	3	4	5
Own	2	3	5	8	7
Rent	4	6	7	5	3
Unhoused	8	7	5	3	2

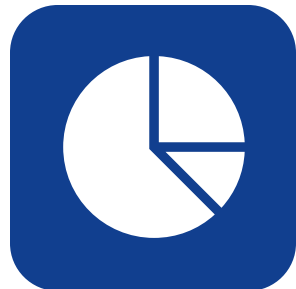
VS

Housing Status	Sense of Belonging scores				
					
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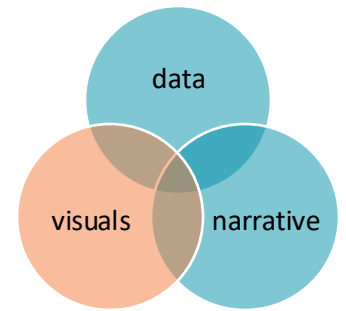
Keeping things simple

- Simple, commonly used charts -- **bar, pie/donut, or line charts** – help your audience quickly and clearly grasp your point
- More complex visuals may look impressive BUT they add mental labor and pull attention away from the key insights



Data for Change Resources

- [Introduction to Data Visualization](#)
- [Principles of Data Visualizations](#)



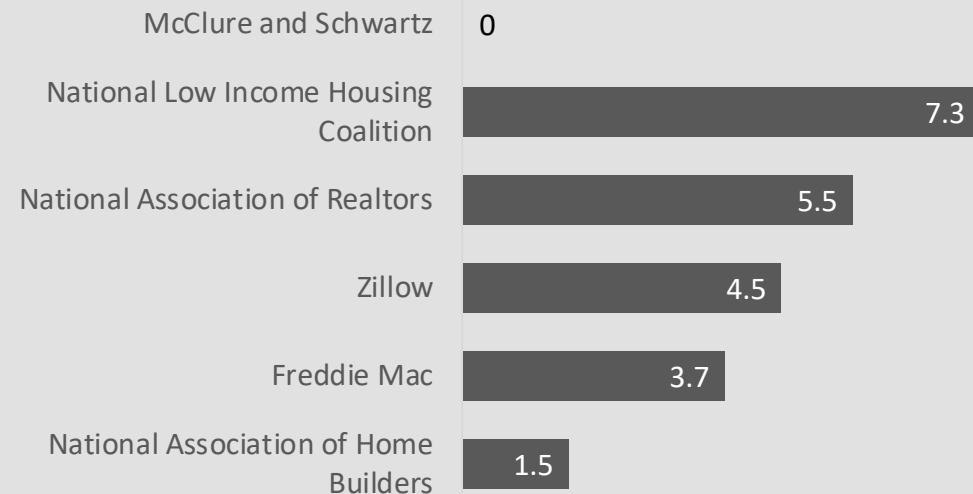
Highlight important information

Clear, simple chart titles and descriptive observations help support your story

- A straight-forward, neutral chart title conveys what (**noun**), when (**dates**), and how (**units**) measurement happened
- A descriptive observation helps highlight the important information

Housing Shortage Estimates Vary Widely

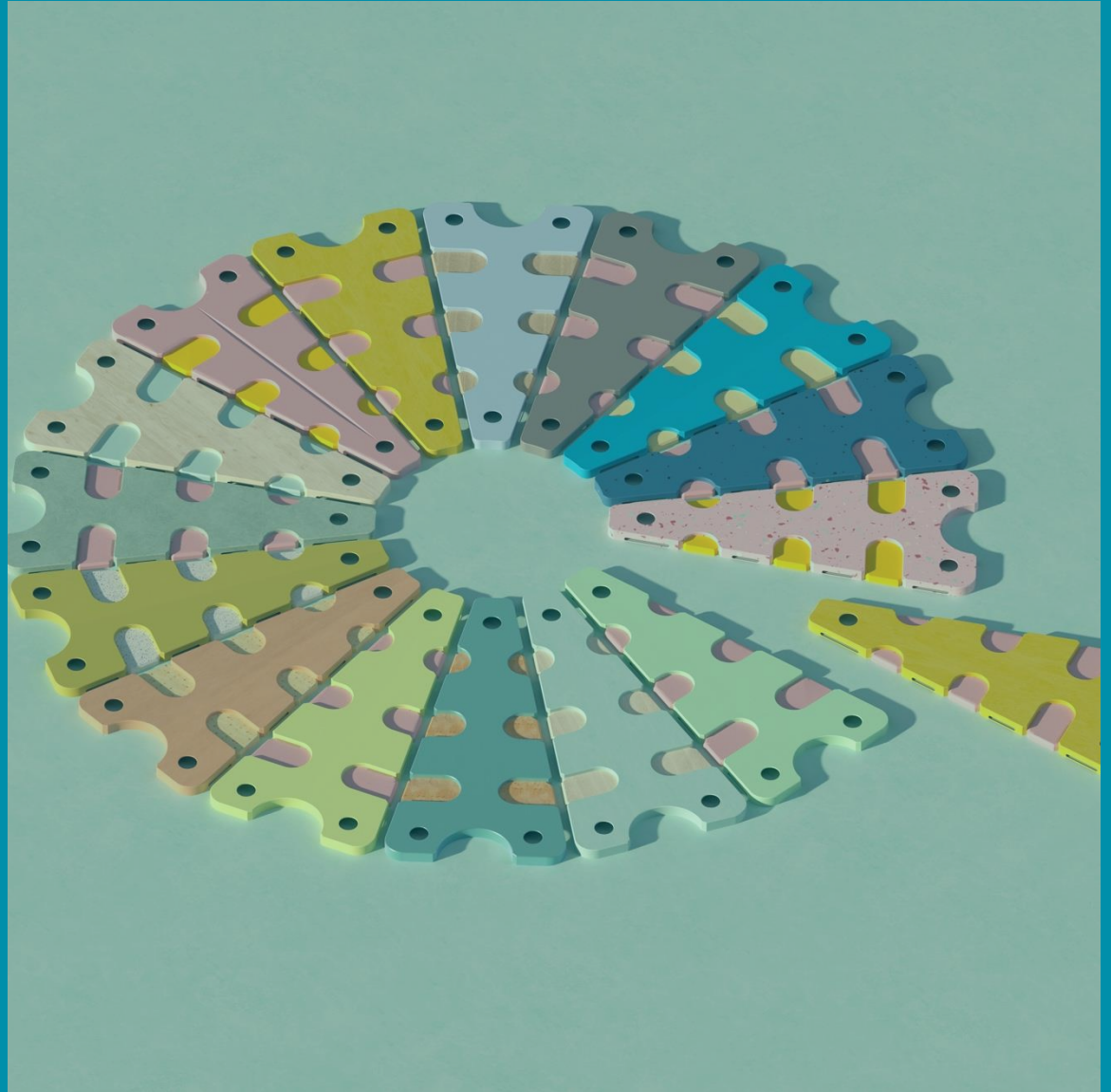
2025 National Housing Shortage Estimates (in millions) by Organization



Source: [Urban Institute Bringing the Housing Shortage Into Sharper Focus](#)

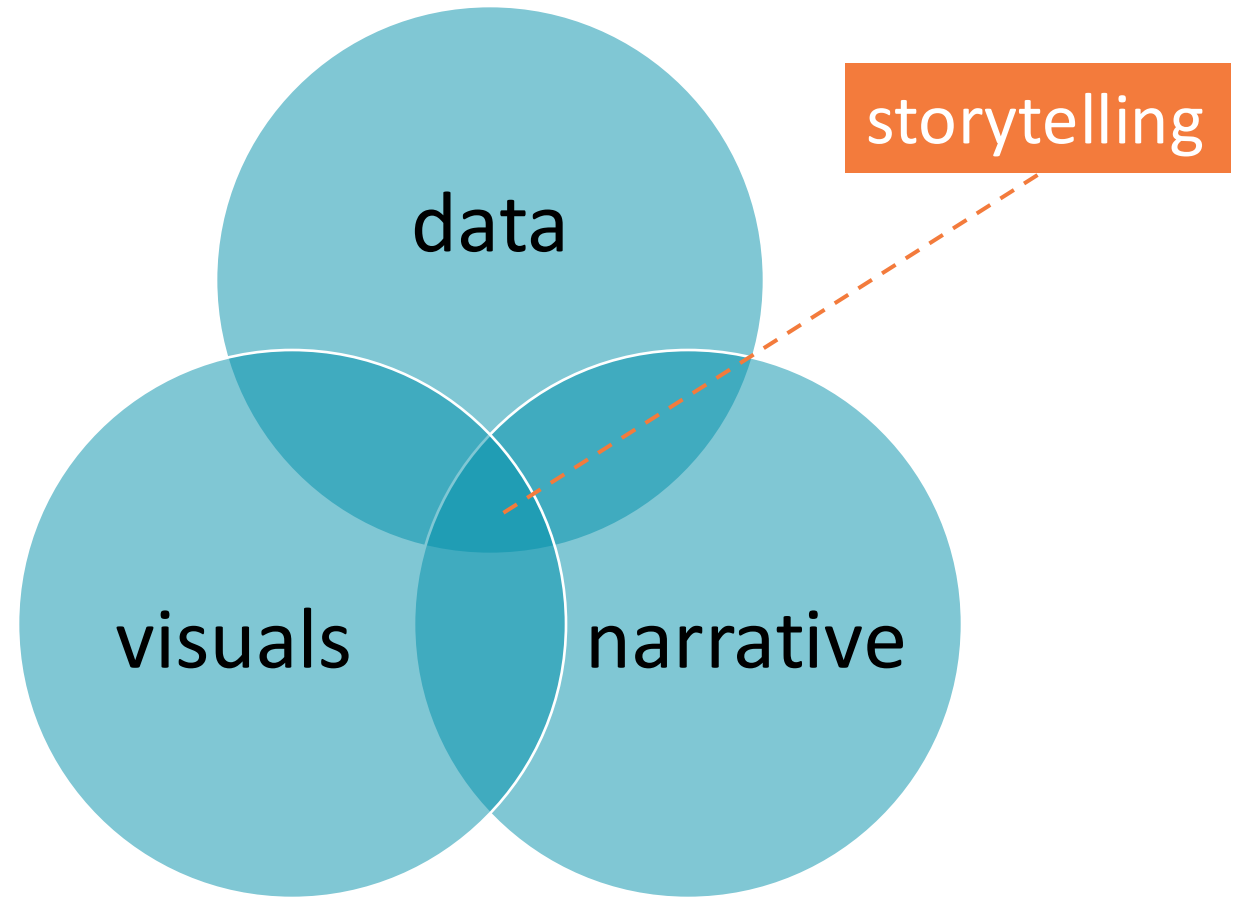
Bringing it all
together

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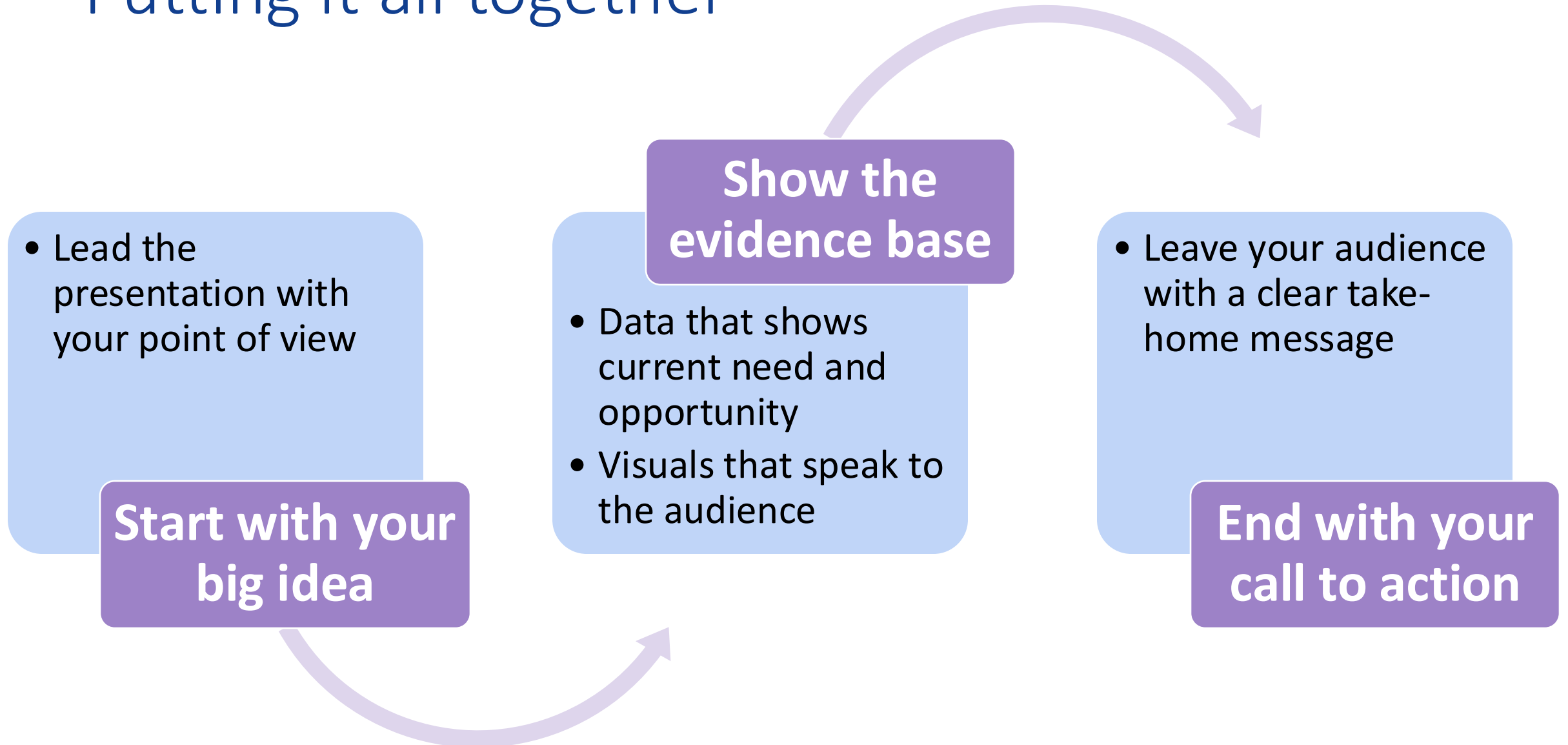


Building a story

Data storytelling is how we move from **making sense of data** through analytic processes, to **making meaning of data** through action



Putting it all together



Telling your story to the community

Program participants

- *Action:* What do you want your participants to do (e.g., provide input, refer others, etc.)?
- *Stakes:* How do you center client needs? How are data used data to improve services?
- *Channels:* Simple infographics with one or two data points, data parties

Individual donors & volunteers

- *Action:* What is your call to action for the individual (e.g., donate, volunteer, advocate, etc.)?
- *Stakes:* What do volunteers contribute? How does your organization impact the community?
- *Channels:* Blog posts, newsletters, and social media

Funders

- *Action:* What is your call to action for the individual (e.g., fund, advocate, etc.)
- *Stakes:* What makes your organization unique? What do you do better than anyone?
- *Channels:* Annual report, executive summary, presentation

Key takeaways

Data storytelling makes it easier for you to share what is important, and for audiences to focus on your point

Build a clear big idea by describing what is at stake and what action should be taken

Build your data stories on a solid foundation of data collection and analysis. Enhance your data stories with simple, clear data visuals

Use data storytelling internally to advocate for ideas, improvements, or opportunities; and externally to highlight the value of your programs

Q&A

Please complete the survey!
<https://forms.office.com/r/YS240hV2st>

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Center for Outcomes
Research and Education

www.providenceoregon.org/CORE

Resources

CORE



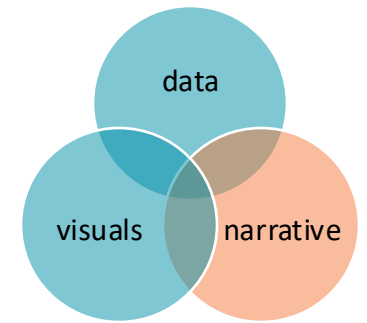
10 Types of Data Stories (Tom Davenport, Keeping Up with the Quants)

Dimension	Story Type
Time	1. Past
	2. Present
	3. Future
Focus	4. What happened?
	5. Why did it happen?
	6. How to address what happened
Depth	7. “CSI stories” – small, ad hoc analysis
	8. “Eureka! Stories” – in-depth analysis
Method	9. Correlation stories
	10. Causation stories

What type of decision is to be made?

Decision type	Data needed	Example
Discrete	One data point for validation	Measure how client participation rises with a policy change
Operational	Monitoring ongoing performance	Track expected outcomes or watching for unexplained anomalies
Strategic	Synthesizing multiple data sources to make decisions about the future	Decide whether to enter a new partnership based on internal and external factors

Make it memorable and engaging



Use repetition

- Tell your audience what you are going to tell them
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Anecdotes and quotes humanize data and make abstract numbers tangible

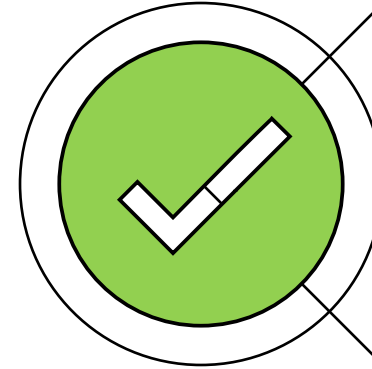
- Example comment from a client feedback survey: *“When I began coming to the center, I only came to shop in the food pantry. Now, I come to the center and have 3 appointments with each of the services. I love coming in, but I don’t have time to go shopping anymore – being able to pick up a box of food in a drive-through would be so convenient!”*

How to build your big idea

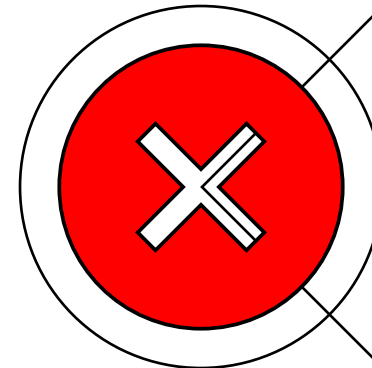
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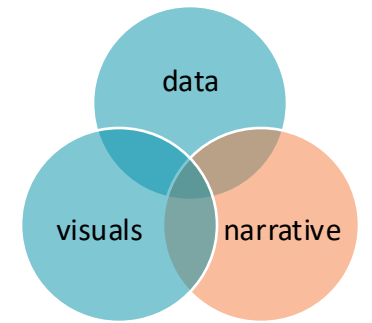


DataPOV:
creating a pickup site for food pantry clients to pick up boxes will increase the number of people utilizing pantry services by 30%

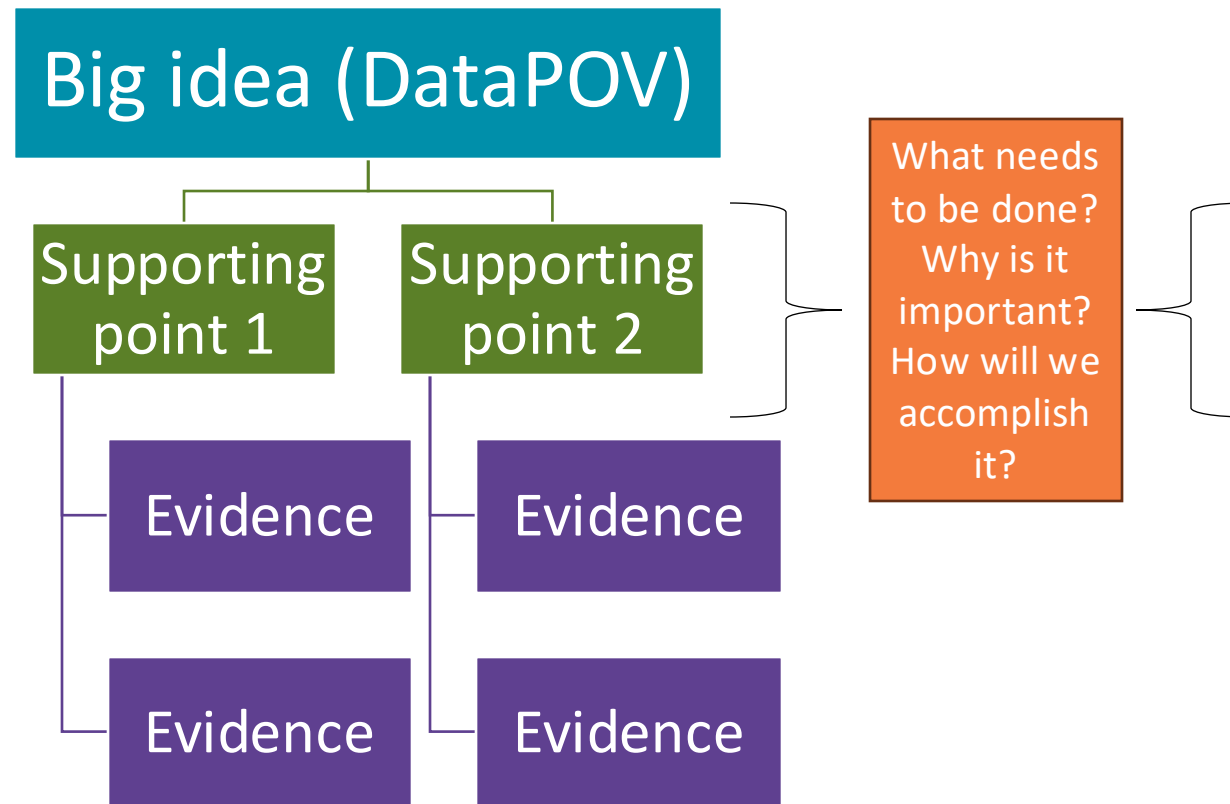


NOT a DataPOV:
change the food pantry pickup to boxes

Build a recommendation tree



Recommendation tree outline



Recommendation tree example

