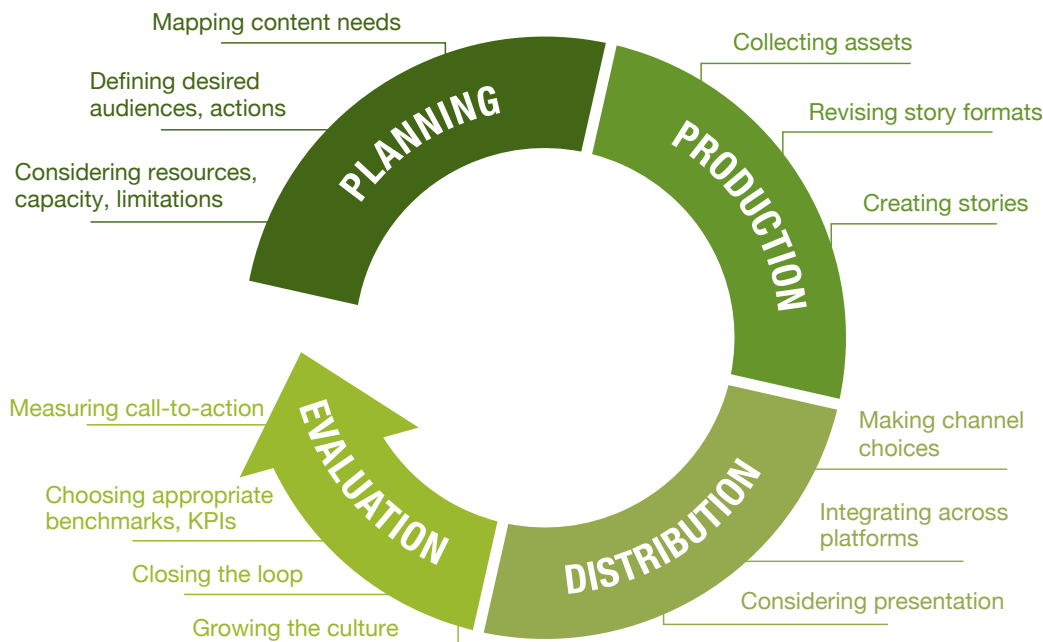# Strategic Story Cycle Checklist

Key questions to consider throughout the life cycle of nonprofit stories

STRATEGIC STORY CYCLE

Mapping content needs

Defining desired audiences, actions

Considering resources, capacity, limitations

PLANNING

Collecting assets

Revising story formats

Creating stories

PRODUCTION

Making channel choices

Integrating across platforms

Considering presentation

DISTRIBUTION

Measuring call-to-action

Choosing appropriate benchmarks, KPIs

Closing the loop

Growing the culture

EVALUATION

1. PLANNING

✓ How does this story fit in with your overall communications strategy for the year?

✓ What are the other content needs of the communications/fundraising/program staff that can be met while collecting and producing this story?

✓ Who is the target audience of this story?

✓ What's the purpose? What do you want your audience to do after viewing/reading/experiencing this story?

✓ How will the story be shared? On which platforms and in which media?

✓ What is the budget for this story?

✓ Who will be producing the story? In-house or outside expertise?

2. PRODUCTION

COLLECTION

✓ What's your "wish-list" of assets to be collected? (rough story board)

- In what format? (audio – both interview and ambient sounds, photo, written notes/quotes, video footage)

- What key messages/themes are you hoping will be conveyed through the collected assets?

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- How will you collect these assets? (Staff, beneficiary/client submissions, crowdsourcing/contests)
- How might you salvage material if there's human or technological error during the collection process?

CREATION

- How will you catalogue the assets collected?
- How will you adjust your "wish list"/story board based on the assets you've obtained?
- How will you catalogue the finished stories?
- Can the stories be repurposed into multiple formats or for multiple channels?

3. DISTRIBUTION

- How can you ensure that the presentation enhances (or at least doesn't detract from) the story content?
- How can the story be shared across multiple channels, simultaneously or in sequence?
- How can you share the story across weeks/months by tailoring the message?
- Which platforms most naturally lend themselves to sharing this story? (Consider story length, absence/presence of compelling visuals, emotional content and strength of "hook")
- How can you engage your supporters around the "launch" of this story?

4. EVALUATION

- How can the call-to-action (decided in the Planning phase) best be measured?
- What are the appropriate benchmarks and key performance indicators for this objective?
- How can you close the loop with the story subject and ensure that s/he is happy with the portrayal and aware of the impact?
- How can you share the evaluation results with your organization to help build and grow the internal storytelling culture?