

THE VOICES OF HOUSING AND ENERGY POLICY A STORY TOOLKIT



energyefficiencyforall.org

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THE VOICES OF HOUSING AND ENERGY POLICY

Energy Efficiency for All (EEFA) and the Network of Energy Water and Health in Affordable Buildings (NEWHAB) are building a storybank for members to support local, state and federal advocacy efforts. This toolkit is designed to take you step by step through collecting a story for advocacy purposes. From finding the right story, structuring your interviews, and submitting your story to the EEFA Storybank, this toolkit will help you develop your skills and support our shared advocacy efforts. While every story is unique, we are trying to streamline the story template so that we are building a unified voice for our story campaign.

AS YOU MOVE THROUGH THIS PROCESS REMEMBER:

- Inviting someone to share a personal story with you is a first step in that person becoming their own advocate. Storytelling can be a strategy for base building on specific advocacy efforts.
- Story collecting takes time. Think about how much time a reporter takes to write a 500 word story.

10	SNAPSHOT: CREATING A STORY IN 6 STEPS!
	Think of a person whose perspective is valuable for advocacy and/or implementation efforts.
2	Connect with the person and set up a time to talk.
3	If you have never interviewed someone, practice interviewing someone.
4	Do the interview.
5	Fill out the Story Report or call the Story Bank Hotline.
6	Wait for a member of the Story Team to follow up with you about the next steps and how this story may be made accessible for you and other EEFA and NEWHAB members.

THIS TOOLKIT INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING:

- Finding someone to share their story
- Prep, Documentation, Supplies, and Research
- Interview Structure
- Interview Questions
- Sharing back your story with the Storybank
- Post Interview Follow-up
- Story checklist
- Engaging with Residents: Nuance and Complexities
- Sample Introduction Script



STEP ONE: Before you begin, ask yourself questions **STEP TWO:** Build off existing relationships

STEP THREE: Reach out STEP FOUR: Create a contact list

STEP ONE

BEFORE YOU BEGIN, ASK YOURSELF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- What type of story am I looking for that will appeal to my target audience? A weatherization story? A successful building owner retrofit story? A tenant story?
- 2 Who might have that kind of story?
- (3) Do I already have an existing relationship with that person? Skip to Step Three.
- (4) If I don't know someone, who do I know that might have existing relationship with a person like this? *Proceed to Step Two.*

STEP TWO

BUILD OFF OF EXISTING RELATIONSHIPS

If you aren't working directly with residents, property managers, or building owners, etc. reach out to people you know that might have these existing relationships.

Gathering stories may mean you are entering a community in which you are an outsider. As an outsider, it's critical that you build trust with people who have relationships to people on the ground and learn about the complex political and historical dynamics that may inform someone's story.

If you are active in EEFA, check in with State Leads and coalition members to hear their suggestions about how to engage with specific communities. Let those closest to the ground help you develop a list of people to interview. Remember, collecting a story may be a step towards encouraging someone to becoming their own advocate.

Check in with your contact: Will they be there the day of the interview? Are they setting it up for you? Are they putting you in direct contact with the person(s)?

Clarify: How is that person currently connected with the local EEFA Coalition partners?

STEP THREE

REACH OUT AND BE TRANSPARENT ABOUT WHAT YOU ARE LOOKING FOR

Email and call the person(s) you would like to interview. Be very specific about your reasons for the interview and name the particular programs you'd like to hear about.

STEP FOUR

CREATE A CONTACT LIST

As you are reaching out to folks create a list of contacts to track your communication effort. Here is a **<u>Contact List template</u>** for you to use. Once you have your interview scheduled there are a few things you'll need to do to get your ducks in a row.

STEP ONE: Prepare

STEP TWO: Document

STEP THREE: Gather Supplies **STEP FOUR:** Conduct Research

STEP ONE

PREPARE: CLARIFY YOUR QUESTIONS.

Review the questions you'd like to ask in advance. There is a list in this toolkit and you should develop additional ones that are specific to your needs. Print the questions out and take them with you. *If you've never interviewed someone before, practice ahead of time with someone that isn't an expert in housing or energy policy.* **Seriously, don't skip this step.**

STEP TWO

DOCUMENT: MAKE A GAME PLAN FOR YOUR DOCUMENTATION.

Depending on the circumstance you'll be documenting the interview with an audio recorder and taking a few photos. Make sure your equipment is charged.



AUDIO TIPS

If you are recording with your phone the audio will be of nominal quality. As much as possible keep the phone as close as possible to the speaker.



PHOTO TIPS

Ideally, you get a medium or closeup portrait-style picture of the person. If they aren't comfortable with doing a portrait then ask about taking a picture of their hands or feet/shoes. If you are at their house, take a closeup of a household object. Check out the website **www.humansofnewyork.com** for inspiration on taking photos. Take a picture of the building and an object in their home if possible.





VIDEO

After your interview, if the person shared a particularly riveting story, we may want to invest in videography. This, of course, depends on resident (and owner/manager) willingness, so please check in with them about this possibility if you see an opportunity for a good video. Follow up with the EEFA National Story Team about logistics and support for this.

STEP THREE

GATHER SUPPLIES: MOSTLY PRINTING

- Print a <u>media release form</u> to bring.
- Print EEFA fact sheets to bring just in case you need to demostrate EEFA's work.
- Print copies of the EEFA/NEWHAB Story Sheet to leave with the person.
- If you need documentation equipment, you should get that.

STEP FOUR

CONDUCT RESEARCH: LEARN ABOUT THE PLACE

Before the interview, see what you can learn about the neighborhood and building. If this information isn't readily available, then ask these questions during the interview.

Building Statistics:

- How many families/residents are in the building?
- What is special about their community / building?
- What federal programs does this building/resident benefit from? (rental assistance, LIHEAP, WAP, LIHTC, etc.)
- What is the name of the neighborhood / community?

Congressional Statistics

- What is the Congressional district and who are the Representatives/Senators?
- If known, what is the total federal dollars allocated to this district for each of the EEFA priority programs? NOTE: This information can be challenging to collect.



Interview Structure



STEP ONE: Make Introductions STEP TWO: Ask Questions STEP THREE: Express Gratitude and Next Steps

AS YOU THINK ABOUT THE STRUCTURE OF YOUR INTERVIEW REMEMBER THAT YOUR STORY GOALS ARE:



- Observe the environment and listen for descriptions that can create a picture of their home for someone who has never been in that community.
- This may be an opportunity to educate the interviewee on what programs are at risk.
- You are listening for a deeper understanding of how programs have impacted lives.
- You are gathering specific information that can amplify their perspective for your target audience.

STEP ONE

MAKE INTRODUCTIONS



Introduce yourself, including who you are working for and the purpose of the story collecting project.



Ask the individual to explain their understanding of why you wanted to talk with them. If they aren't clear, then give them more details about what you are doing. Give them an EEFA Fact Sheet if that seems helpful.



- Be transparent about how their story may be used. Point out your documentation device (phone, camera, etc). Get contact info and media waiver signed or verbal agreement audio recorded.
- Setup camera or audio equipment if you are using that.
- Ask if they have questions for you before you start the interview.
- Ask them to introduce themselves. Specifically, have them finish the phrase "My name is
 And I am a ... (occupation, veteran, parent, etc.)
- Click here for a sample "Introduction Script"



STEP TWO

ASK QUESTIONS

- Use the questions as a springboard and remain curious for the conversation to lead into unexpected directions.
- Remember to give context before questions. Example... "The Trump Administration is considering ... (reducing funding, cutting the program, etc) for programs like: WAP, Rental Assistance, etc." Or "The Utility Commission is limiting the amount of funding for ..." Or "knowing that some Senators and Representatives are considering reducing funding and eliminating these programs..."



THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS SHOULD BE ASKED IN ALL INTERVIEWS FOR CONTINUITY AND TO BUILD OUT OUR ADVOCACY TOOLS.

(1) What does having (or providing) a safe, affordable, and comfortable home mean to you?

If your representative was here right now, what would you say to that person?
 Ask the person to finish the phrase..."I would like INSERT THE NAME OF THE REPRESENTATIVE OR SENATOR to know..."

STEP THREE

EXPRESS GRATITUDE AND NEXT STEPS



- Take photos.
- Thank them for their time.
- Let them know your next steps and how you are going to follow up.
- Invite them to get involved with NEWHAB / EEFA and advocacy efforts.
- Share the EEFA / NEWHAB Story Bank form with them and encourage them to have their friends call.

Interview Questions

Building on the basic structure of the interview you'll need to select a set of questions. Here are several basic sets of questions that you can mix and match depending on who you are talking with.

Pick a set of questions:

- A. Resident / Tenant
- B. Building Owners and Property Managers
- C. Business Owners / Implementers (Workers) / Job Creators
- D. Additional Questions on Affordable Housing and Energy Efficiency

Questions for Everyone

STEP ONE

INTRODUCTIONS AND THE BASICS



Start Recording here...

Finish the phrase "My name is And I am a ... (occupation, veteran*, parent, building owner, age, etc.)

* If the person is a veteran, find out branch of the military, years of service, etc.

STEP TWO

STANDARD QUESTIONS

Which set of questions you use will vary based on the person you are interviewing. However, the following questions should be asked in all interviews for continuity and to build out our advocacy tools.

- (1) What does having (or providing) a safe, affordable, and comfortable home mean to you?
- Imagine someone has never been to your community / home before. How would you describe this place for them?
- (3) If your representative was here right now, what would you say to that person?
 - Ask the person to finish the phrase..."I would like my INSERT THE NAME OF THE REPRESENTATIVE/ SENATOR to know..."

STEP THREE

GRATITUDE AND NEXT STEPS

Thank you! Here are our next steps and I will follow-up... I invite you to get involved with NEWHAB / EEFA and our advocacy efforts.

Resident / Tenant Questions

STEP ONE

INTRODUCTIONS AND THE BASICS



Start Recording here...

Finish the phrase "My name is And I am a ... (occupation, veteran*, parent, building owner, age, etc.)

*If the person is a veteran, find out branch of the military, years of service, etc.

STEP TWO

QUESTIONS

Start with the Now: Current Home.

- (1) Tell me how long have you been living at this property?
- Imagine someone has never been to your community / home before. How would you describe this place for them?
- (3) What does having a safe, affordable and comfortable home mean to you?
- (4) How much was your rent / energy bills before? What are they now? What do you do with the savings?
- 5 Tell me about where were you living before this property. How has living in this home impacted your quality of life? What choices did you have? Where would you live if not in your current home?

Talk about Programs: What's at stake? What's important?

- ① Can you tell me about the programs you have benefited from and what they provided? (rental assistance, LIHEAP, WAP, LIHTC, etc.)
- (2) How did you hear about those programs?
- $(\mathbf{3})$ What are the biggest benefits from the program(s) that you've experienced?
- Tell me about where you were living before. How much were you paying for rent? Where would you live if not in your current home?

Amplify their voice and perspective. (Pick at least two of these)

- 1 What is important for your elected officials to understand about how these programs affect you and your family?
- 2 What specific things should members of Congress know about the federal (housing or energy) programs from which you have benefited? What should they think about before they vote on cutting funding?
- 3 If your Representative or Senator was here right now, what would you say to that person? Please finish the phrase:"I would like my INSERT THE NAME OF THE REPRESENTATIVE/SENATOR to know..."

STEP THREE

GRATITUDE AND NEXT STEPS

Thank you! Here are our next steps and I will follow up... I invite you to get involved with NEWHAB / EEFA and our advocacy efforts.

Building Owners and Property Managers

STEP ONE

INTRODUCTIONS AND THE BASICS

Start Recording here...



Finish the phrase "My name is And I am a ... (developer, building owner, veteran*, building owner, etc.) *If the person is a veteran, find out branch of the military, years of service, etc.

STEP TWO

QUESTIONS

Start with the Now: Current Home.

- (1) How long have you have owned / worked with this property?
- Imagine someone has never been to this community / building before. How would you describe this building for them?
- (3) What does providing a safe, affordable and comfortable home mean to you?

Talk about Programs: What's at stake? What's important?

- (1) Tell me about the programs you have participated in and what they provided? (WAP, LIHTC, LIHEAP, etc.)
- (2) How did you hear about those programs?
- (3) What are the biggest benefits from the program(s) that you've experienced?
- Tell me about this property before the upgrades. How much were your bills prior? What are they now? How does this make a difference in your building budget? What do you do with the savings?
- (5) What have you noticed in terms of impact on residents?

Amplify their voice and perspective. (Pick at least two of these)

- 1 What is important for your elected officials to understand about how these programs affect your properties?
- 2 What specific things should Members of Congress know about the federal (housing or energy) programs from which you have benefited? What should they think about before they vote on cutting funding?
- 3 If your Representative or Senator was here right now, what would you say to that person? Can you finish the phrase:"I would like my INSERT THE NAME OF THE REPRESENTATIVE/SENATOR to know..."

STEP THREE

GRATITUDE AND NEXT STEPS

Thank you! Here are our next steps and I will follow up... I invite you to get involved with NEWHAB / EEFA and our advocacy efforts.

Small Business Owners / Implementers (Workers) / Job Creators

STEP ONE

INTRODUCTIONS AND THE BASICS



Start Recording here...

Finish the phrase "My name is And I am a... (business owner that provides... veteran*, or make a living as a.... etc.) *If the person is a veteran, find out branch of the military, years of service, etc.

STEP TWO

QUESTIONS

Start with the Now: Current Work.

- 1) Tell me about your company/job.
- Imagine someone has never heard of XYZ work before. How would you describe your work and the impact of your work?
- 3 Tell me about what you've personally seen as the impact of your work. What does providing a safe, affordable and comfortable home mean to you?

Talk about Programs: What's at stake? What's important?

- (1) What programs does your company participate in?
- (2) How did you hear about those programs?
- 3 What are the benefits from the program(s) that you've experienced? How do those benefits translate to your workers?
- (4) Tell me about a specific property you worked on and describe the before and after of your work.
- (5) What does having / providing an energy efficiency job mean to you?

Amplify their voice and perspective. (Pick at least two of these)

- 1 What is important for your elected officials to understand about how these programs affect your business / job / work?
- 2 What specific things should members of Congress know about the federal (housing or energy) programs which you use? What should they think about before they vote on cutting funding?
- 3 If your Representative or Senator was here right now, what would you say to that person? Can you finish the phrase: "I would like my INSERT THE NAME OF THE REPRESENTATIVE/SENATOR to know..."

STEP THREE

GRATITUDE AND NEXT STEPS

Thank you! Here are our next steps and I will follow up... I invite you to get involved with NEWHAB / EEFA and our advocacy efforts.

Additional questions about Affordable Housing and Energy Efficiency

Affordable Housing

- How does having rental assistance and/or Low-Income Housing Tax Credits ease your rent burden? What can you afford that you would have to give up without housing assistance?
- How has having housing assistance affected your daily life?

Optional questions if you are trying to draw comparisons between past and present.

- Tell me about where you were living before. What are the similarities and differences between your previous home and here?
- Who are the people, places, and things that make this particular community special?
- What opportunities can you access because you live here? (better jobs, schools, transportation, safety?)

Energy Efficiency

"We often talk about Energy Efficiency and I'm curious have you noticed any of the following in your home..."

- Does the house stay warm/cool longer?
- (2) Less drafty? Less dust?
- 3 More comfortable? Are there other things you've noticed about this home compared to places you've lived before?
- (4) How much money do you think you've saved from this program?
- (5) How have the changes impacted your day-to-day life?

Share back your story with the Storybank

STEP ONE: Download

STEP TWO: Write up

STEP THREE: Submit

STEP ONE

DOWNLOAD

Download your audio and photos to your computer. Format files with State, First Name of interviewee, and a one/two word description of person. Ex: VA Jackie Resident; PA Sam Worker; MI Devon Building Owner

STEP TWO

WRITE-UP

Once you have completed the interview please fill out the following **<u>Story Report</u>** to write your story and upload your audio/photos.

STEP THREE

SUBMIT

After you have submitted the Story Report someone from the EEFA National Story Team will be in touch with you.





Post Interview Follow-up

STEP ONE: Contact EEFA National Story Team **STEP TWO:** Update Local EEFA Coalition Members **STEP THREE:** Follow up with Interviewee

STEP ONE

CONTACT EEFA NATIONAL STORY TEAM

If you heard a particularly compelling story then let the EEFA National Story Team know. You will then start a conversation about the timing, resources, and potential of developing a short video.

STEP TWO

UPDATE LOCAL EEFA COALITION MEMBERS

- 1 Send an update to the EEFA State Lead *and* your original point of contact for the interviewee. Let them know if there are next steps they may want to follow up with in regards to the person you spoke with. If this person is interested in getting more involved with the coalition, then help support that bridge to getting them connected.
- (2) If the interviewee seems like a potential advocate, discuss that with the EEFA State Lead. Determine next steps for following through on base building towards those being impacted becoming advocates.

STEP THREE

FOLLOW UP WITH INTERVIEWEE

- (1) If they provide an email address, send them a follow up thank you note.
- 2 Once the EEFA Story Profile is complete for the individual, share it with them so they can see how great their story turned out!
- (3) Invite them again to get involved with Coalition Advocacy efforts.

Engaging with Residents: Nuances and Complexities

Each state, coalition, and community will have its own considerations about how to best engage with residents. It's critical that you have a transparent conversation about the strategies for engagement and a discussion about what is equitable for residents and contributes to base building.

Incentives

The Virginia EEFA Coalition offered \$20 Visa gift cards to prospective interviewees. They were connected to prospective interviewees via property owners and/or managers who were part of the EEFA network of local and state housing groups.

Owners/managers may be hesitant to connect an "outsider" with their residents for a variety of reasons. The offer of a gift card may be viewed by the owner/manager as a welcome "leave-behind" for residents' time. You may want to consider other types of incentives for owners/managers/residents if it's necessary.

Base Building

In order to shift the paradigm of power to the people most impacted we are striving to not only collect resident stories, but to amplify and make their voices heard by policymakers. We want residents to have substantive engagement with our coalitions and our advocacy. In the interview process, explore their interest in participating in our coalition's work. This could take a variety of forms, depending on what's appropriate and interesting to the resident. A resident might be willing to be included on a distribution list of messages about coalition activities, and/or participate in conversations online. They could be invited to coalition meetings or utility hearings. Be open to possibilities of what this could look like.

Story checklist

THINGS TO PRINT AND TAKE WITH YOU:

- 🗖 Media Waiver
- List of Questions
- Storybank call in form
- EEFA Fact Sheets

THINGS TO TAKE WITH YOU:

- Audio recording device
- Camera (could be on your phone)
- Paper / Pen
- Business Cards

Sample Introduction Script

Ashley: Hello, my name is Ashley Sparks and I work for the Natural Resources Defense Council. We are collecting stories about rental assistance and Mr. Rogers your building manager suggested that we talk with you. Thank you for agreeing to spend a few minutes with me.

Ms. Erma: You're welcome.

Ashley: Ms. Erma, did you know that the Trump Administration is considering cutting funding for the rental assistance program?

Ms. Erma: NO!

Ashley: Yes. My colleagues and I are collecting stories to share with legislators about how important that program is to making sure that folks like you have a safe and comfortable home. Here's a fact sheet about the program I work for. (*Hands Ms. Erma a fact sheet*)

Ms. Erma: Thank you. Did you want me to read this now?

Ashley: No, you can read it later. I'd like to interview you now if that's OK, but first I wanted to tell you about how I'm going to document this story. We're using an audio recorder on my phone, so whenever you are talking I'll keep the phone close to you. Before we start, would you sign this media waiver? (*hands her the waiver and a pen*)

Ms. Erma: What are you going to do with the audio?

Ashley: We are creating profiles of individuals that will posted on our website. We'll be sharing your profile with your Congressional Representative Wilson Phillips and Senator Adams. *While she signs the waiver, double check that your audio is geared up and ready to go.*

Ashley: Ms. Erma, do you have any questions before we begin?

Ms. Erma: Nope. I'm ready!

Ashley: I'm going to start recording now. Can you complete the following sentence: "My name is And I'm a (retired teacher, veteran, parent).

Ideally, you want to understand what type of WORK this person did or does. From here go into the interview questions.