

It's important to begin any storytelling project with intention. Before you start making things, you should have a clear sense of who you're trying to reach, what you're trying to say and the scope of your project (on all platforms). **This blueprint is designed to help.**

Read through the entire blueprint first. When you're ready to dive in, fill it out in the order presented. You don't have to answer everything right away and you should feel free to make changes later. Once completed, this blueprint should serve as a "north star" that will help you focus and prioritize throughout the creative process.

① What are you calling this project? (1-5 min.)

Working titles are fine. You can write more than one. Be willing to come back to this!

② What are you making? (10-15 min.)

When you consider what you're making, it's important to take a moment to think more broadly about its characteristics — from who it is intended to reach to what differentiates it.

In this section, take a few moments to fill out the "Mad Libs"-style project description on the right. This may feel hard! But take a stab at each line. There are prompts later in the blueprint that will help you hone this section, so don't spend too much time on it now. Your responses, like in the rest of the worksheet, can change over time.

For	_____
	<i>[audience]</i>
who	_____
	<i>[need or opportunity]</i>
our project is a	_____
	<i>[format]</i>
that	_____
	<i>[key benefit for the audience]</i>
Unlike	_____
	<i>[alternatives]</i>
our project	_____
	<i>[how it's different]</i>

③ Who's on the project team and what are their roles? Who are the other stakeholders? (10-30 min.)

Your answer to #2 should have provided some definition for your project. Use it to inform the roles of each person on your team as it relates to this project. Include other immediate stakeholders — like your news director, station manager, etc. — and indicate their roles, too. Feel free to use illustrations.



④ Who is your audience? (45-60 min.)

This is the biggest question of all! In order to create a successful project, you need to have a clear sense of the audience and who you're targeting.

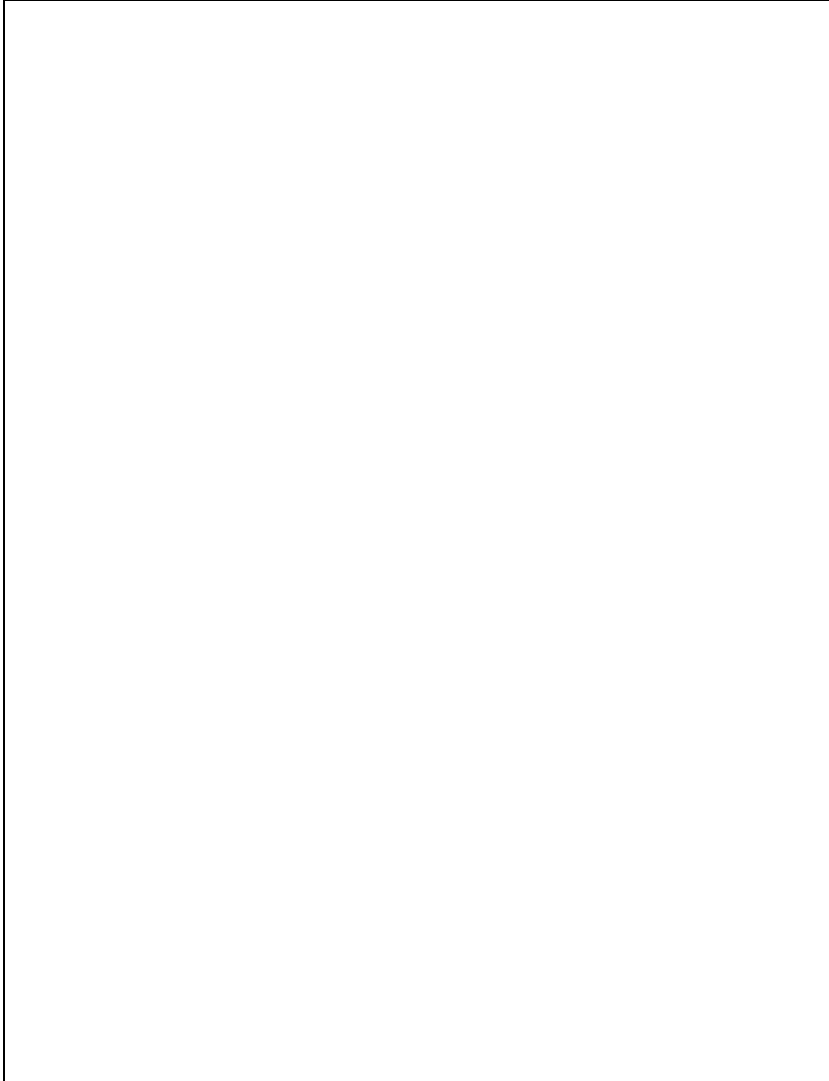
*Imagine a couple types of listeners/readers, then create a sticky note for each and attach it below. Use illustrations — stick figures are fine, they just serve as a reminder you're making stories for **humans**. After you identify a few primary audiences (be selective!), consider secondary ones like influencers and skeptics. (**Examples:** Parents of elementary school students; early-career millennial women; first-time voters.)*

<i>PRIMARY</i>	<i>SECONDARY</i>
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Note: You may need more space than this page allows, so feel free to use a whiteboard or wall for this exercise.

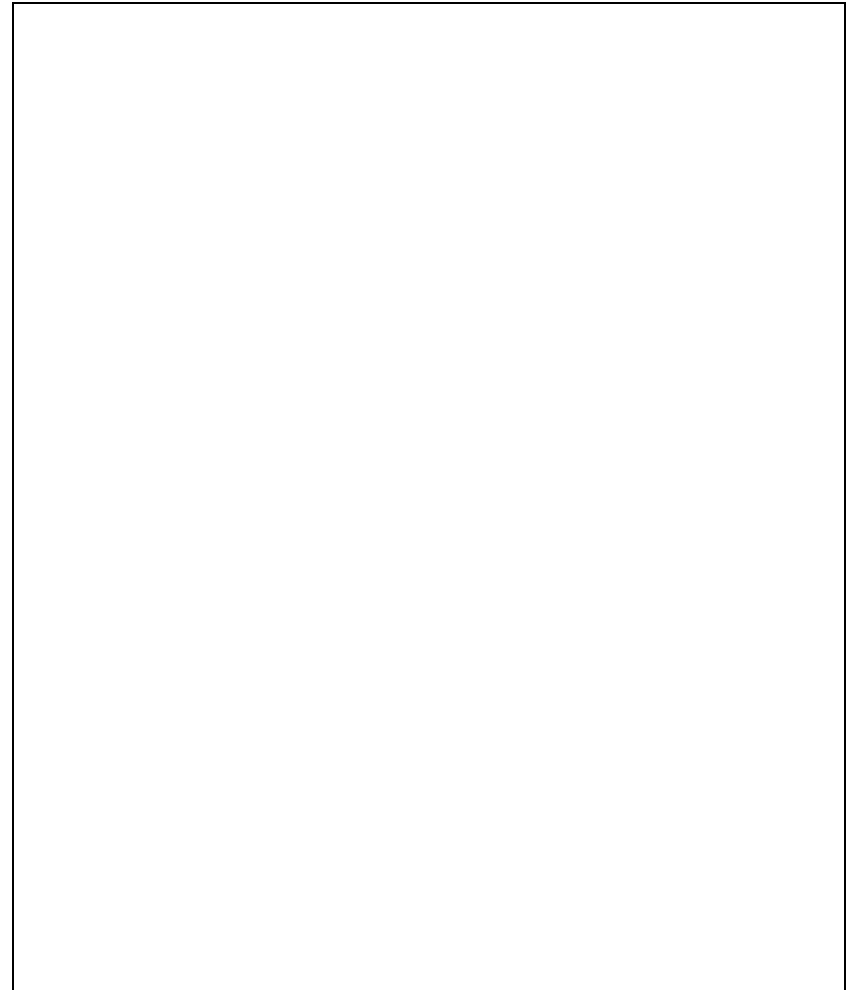
- ⑤ How will this project benefit your audience?
(15-20 min.)

*Will it inform them? Empower them? Connect them to other people?
Inspire them to take action? Improve their lives? Change policies?*



- ⑥ How will you engage your audience
outside of the broadcast/podcast?
(30-60 min.)

*Think about how you might use things like callouts and live events to
engage your audience and reach them wherever they are (which
won't always be plugged in and listening).*



⑦ What is your project's timeframe? (1-5 min.)

Is this a one-off? A short-term series? Something you hope will run indefinitely?

⑧ What does success look like? (10-20 min.)

Think about different types of goals: short- and long-term, tangible and intangible, measurable and immeasurable.

Examples: *Newsroom buy-in results in stories airing on the station; XX podcast downloads, page views or social media mentions; broadcast awards; collaboration with or pick-up by other stations or NPR; people copy you (imitation = flattery and all that)*

⑨ Test drive your project concept — sketch a sample episode or story: (60-90 min.)

These six questions (available in poster form at n.pr/storyquestions) may help you focus a single story in the project:

- 1.) *What is my story's driving question?*
- 2.) *What is it **not** about?*
- 3.) *How will I ensure my story is fair to the people and ideas it represents?*
- 4.) *How will I engage my audience — and hold them?*
- 5.) *What are my dream “ingredients?”*
- 6.) *What will the audience remember when it's over?*

As you answer the questions above and sketch a sample story in the box below, consider whether it fulfills the vision you've laid out in the previous pages. If not, does something here (or earlier) need to change?

⑩ Describe your project in one memorable sentence: (15-30 min.)

This description is both an elevator pitch and statement of purpose. Consider posting it in a visible place so you can reference it often. Use it as a gut check against what you're doing, wherever you are in the process. It, like the rest of the blueprint, can change. But it will help you prioritize and stay focused.

Roadmap

You did it! Now that you have an idea of what you’re making and a blueprint to guide you, it’s time to start plotting out a roadmap and setting deadlines.

Your roadmap should be realistic and feasible (launching a podcast in two weeks probably isn’t going to happen). Take care to ensure it reflects everything you’ve outlined above. We’ve included a sample week below and templates you can photocopy on pages 9 and 10.

<i>Sample Week</i>		
Goal(s): <i>What you intend to accomplish by the end of the week?</i>	To-do: <i>List the action items necessary to complete your goal.</i>	Obstacles: <i>What do you need to overcome to accomplish the goal?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete script for first episode 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish pulling tape • First edit • Rewrite • Second edit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting time with editor • Troubleshoot licensing issue with ProTools

Communicate — and iterate

As your project starts to pick up steam, make sure you build in space for **check-ins** and “**retrospectives**.”

Consider holding short “scrum” meetings where everyone takes turns sharing what they’ve worked on related to the project. These should be short — 15 minutes max (it helps if you make everyone stand up).

After you’ve completed an episode/story or hit some other milestone, hold a retrospective meeting where you can talk as a team about what worked, what didn’t and what you’ll try differently next time.

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