

Data Storytelling Toolkit: Quick Start Checklist

A simple guide for creating your LHD's data story


The Nutrition Policy Institute (NPI) developed this *Data Storytelling Toolkit* to help LHDs turn program and evaluation data into meaningful stories that communicate program reach and impact. The toolkit has been designed to be adaptable, so your team can create more than one story to meet the needs of diverse stakeholders. Use the checklist below to get started.

1. Gather your toolkit materials

- Data story template: [Canva document](#) with instructions for customization
- Plain text template (optional): Word version to assist with planning and drafting
- Data tables: Excel spreadsheet with all data needed to customize your data story ([LHD OneDrive Folders](#))
- Data story repository: Samples and examples from other jurisdictions for inspiration ([Google Drive](#))


2. Set up your draft

- Log into Canva or create a free account.
- Using the provided link above, navigate to the Canva data story template, which opens to a master file set to 'view only.'
- To get started with your customization, you must copy this file to *your* Canva account. Navigate to **file**, select **make a copy**. A new window will open in your browser with an editable copy of the report only visible to you.

 *Want to collaborate on this document with members of your team? This support article will show you how: ['Share your Canva design and collaborate with anyone'](#)*


3. Define your story

- Determine your audience (e.g., partners, community members, decision-makers)
- Determine your goal (e.g., to demonstrate impact, to garner buy-in)
- Decide what you want to highlight (e.g., outcomes, success stories/quotes, reach)

 *When building your draft, keep only the sections relevant to your purpose. See our [effective communication guide](#) for strategies on making your story resonate with specific groups.*

4. Populate your draft with data

- Pull in data from the data tables into the template. The data tables contain all quantitative data needed to fill in the template, organized in the same order.
- Identify where to add your local data throughout the template by locating the placeholders (e.g., "XXX").
- Refer to comments throughout the template for helpful tips and instructions

 *Some may find it easier to fill in data and/or refine content first in the plain text version of the template, before editing the Canva document.*

5. Customize your design

- Edit text and visuals to align with your LHD's message
- Remove sections of the template where you have no data or that are not suited to your story
- Add photos, quotes, or partner highlights to bring your story to life

💡 *Note: When adding new graphics or elements in Canva, look out for the crown icon—it denotes "Pro" items that require payment upon file download. The template is built entirely with free components, so you can create a polished final product at no cost.*

💡 *New to Canva? Canva has a wealth of [support](#) available to users. Consider checking out their ['editing and design' help page](#) or their ['Canva for Beginners' YouTube playlist](#).*

6. Finalize your story

- Review with a colleague for clarity and to ensure no placeholders remain.
- To export your final product, navigate to the **share** button, then select **download**.
- Double-check accessibility and Section 508 compliance.

💡 *While the Data Story Template has been formatted to align with CFHL branding and [Section 508 accessibility best practices](#), complex documents like this contain elements that may not be auto-tagged accurately for assistive technology. To ensure full accessibility, please review and adjust your document in Adobe or equivalent software before sharing digitally. To learn more about accessible PDFs, [check out this YouTube video](#).*

7. Share your story

- Present, print, or email your data story!
- Share your customized story with us at EvaluateSNAPed@ucanr.edu!

Ideas for Customizing the Data Story Template

If your LHD is meeting with a school district to plan PSE efforts - You may find only specific sections of the *Data Story Template* are relevant, and omitting less applicable sections will yield a more compelling product. You may also want to limit the story to include only data related to PSE efforts, or interventions with youth or in the school setting.

If your LHD has small sample sizes or missing data for specific placeholders - You may find that some of the ways the *Data Story Template* summarizes information don't make sense for your LHD, especially if your LHD is small or has a limited amount of data. We have noted some places where this may be true with comments in the template that suggest ways to handle this situation. In many cases, it will make most sense to simply omit specific pieces.

If your LHD is giving a formal presentation at a community meeting - If your LHD is giving a slide-based presentation, you can take advantage of the *Data Tables* to add relevant data elements to your slides. Canva has a wealth of images and data visualizations you can pull into your slides as well. You might consider modifying the *Data Story Template* to include relevant sections and print them for meeting participants.