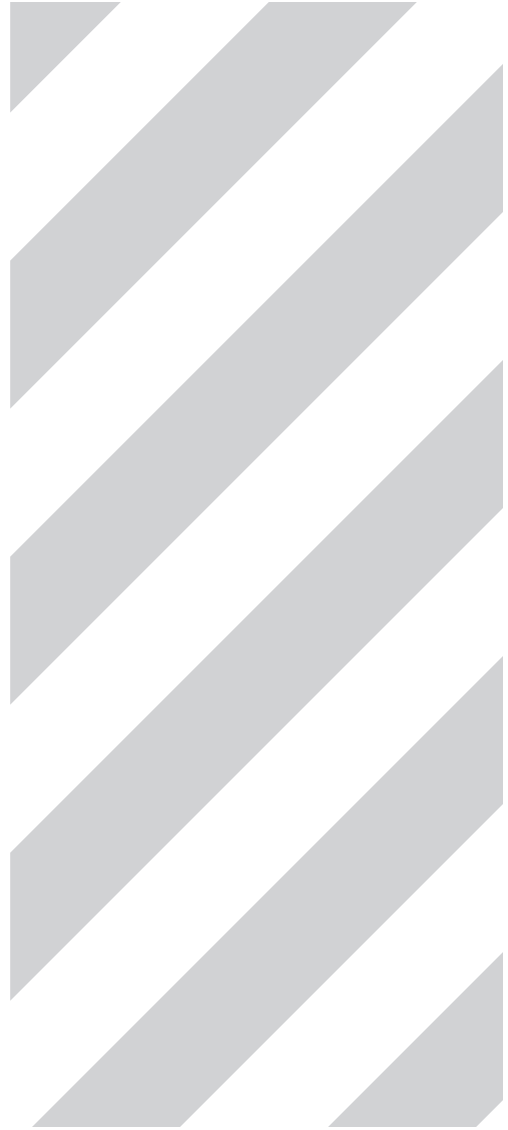


# TELL YOUR STORY



**Story-telling is one of our most powerful tools as organizers and movement builders.** The following sessions developed through close collaboration with [Marshall Ganz](#) and our friends at the [New Organizing Institute](#) discuss why story-telling matters and some methods for harnessing the power of stories most effectively.

# INTRODUCTION TO TELLING YOUR STORY + STORY OF SELF — 1.5 HOURS

## BACKGROUND

The majority of these sessions will focus on story-telling in the context of actual public speaking (to all different sorts of audiences). However, the substance of these ideas can extend to story-telling through other communications processes as well—through email blasts, blog posts, online social media, even through the campaign itself, making your campaign the vehicle for telling and creating a collective story. But for now, just keep that thought in the back of your mind and let's dive into it.

## STORY-TELLING IS A PRACTICE OF LEADERSHIP

Your story is the “why” of organizing—the art of translating values into action through stories. It is an iterative discussion process through which individuals, communities, and nations construct their identity, make choices, and inspire action.

### **Each of us has a compelling story to tell**

Each of us has a story that can move others. As you learn this skill of story-telling, you will be able to tell a compelling story that includes elements that identify yourself, your audience and your strategy to others. In addition, you will gain practice in hearing and coaching others to tell a good story.

## WHY TELL STORIES? TWO WAYS OF KNOWING OR INTERPRETING

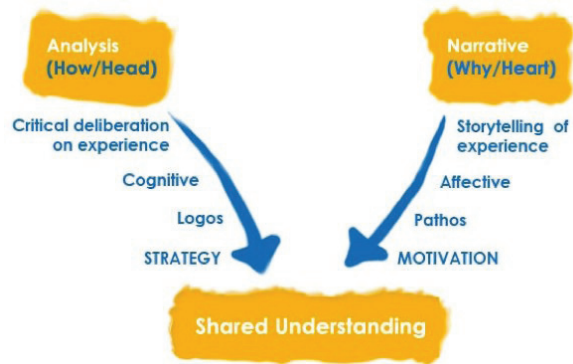
Leaders employ both the “head” and the “heart” in order to mobilize others to act effectively on behalf of shared values. In other words, they engage people in interpreting why they should change their world—their motivation—and how they can act to change it—their strategy.

Many leaders are often good at the analysis side of public speaking—and focus on presenting a good argument or strategy. Alternately, other leaders tell their personal story—but it is often a tale of heart-break that educates us about the challenge but doesn't highlight the choices and the potential for hopeful outcomes.

Our story-telling work here is an effort to tell a story that involves the head and heart AND moves people to use their hands and feet in action.

**The key to this story-telling is understanding that values inspire action through emotion.**

Emotions inform us of what we value in ourselves, in others, and in the world, and enable us to express the motivational content of our values to others. In other words, because we experience values emotionally, they are what actually move us to act; it is not just the idea that we ought to act. Because stories allow us to express our values not as abstract principles, but as lived experience, they have the power to move others too.

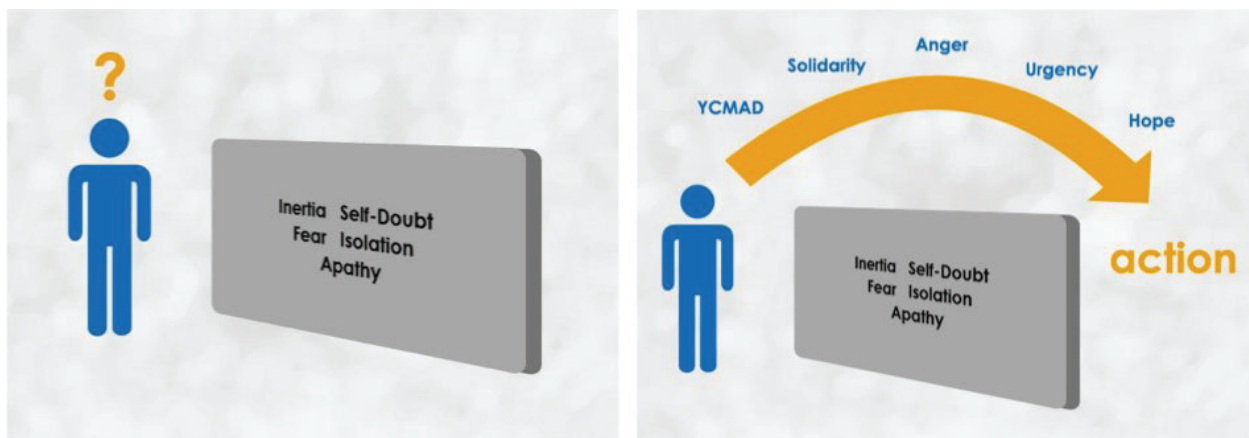


**Some emotions inhibit action, but other emotions facilitate action.**

Action is inhibited by inertia, fear, self-doubt, isolation, and apathy. Action is facilitated by urgency, hope, YCMAD (you can make a difference), solidarity, and anger. Stories mobilize emotions that urge us to take action and help us overcome emotions that inhibit us from action.

**The story-telling method we will work through here combines a story of self, a story of us, and a story of now.**

The process of creating your story is fluid and iterative and can start at any place. Once you develop your story of self, story of us, and story of now, you'll probably want to go back to the beginning to clarify the links between them.



**A "STORY OF SELF" TELLS WHY WE HAVE BEEN CALLED TO SERVE.**

The story of self expresses the values or experiences that call each person to take leadership on climate change. The key focus is on choice points, moments in our lives when values are formed because of a need to choose in the face of great uncertainty. When did you first care about being heard, learn that you

were concerned about climate change, wanted to protect the planet, wanted to ensure clean air, clean water for yourself and others, learn to love nature or appreciate being outdoors, care for social justice or overcoming social strife linked with resource or climate issues? Why? When did you feel you had to do something about it? Why did you feel you could? What were the circumstances? What specific choice did you make?

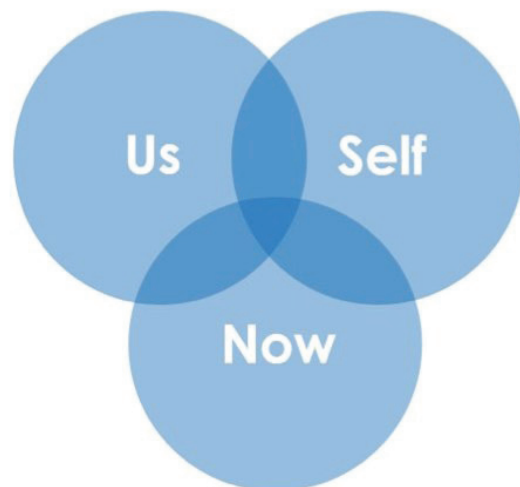
**A “story of us” communicates the values and experiences that a community, organization, campaign or movement shares and what capacity or resources that community of “us” has to accomplish its goals.**

Just as with a person, the key is choice points in the life of the community and/or those moments that express the values, experiences, past challenges and resources of the community or “us” that will take action. For example, tying a current effort to win a campaign to a past campus campaign victory and describing the effort it took to win, the people who worked hard to make it happen, their capabilities, their values, etc. is a story of us.



**A “story of now” communicates the urgent challenge we are called upon to face now and calls us to action.**

The story of now articulates the urgent challenge in specific detail. It also includes a description of the path we can take to achieve goals relative to the mission—the unique strategy or set of ideas that will help us to overcome the challenge we face and succeed. The story of now includes an ask that summons the audience to a specific action they can do to achieve our collective mission. Finally, the story lays out in detail a vision for the potential outcome we could achieve if our strategy succeeds.



## **LINKING SELF, US, NOW**

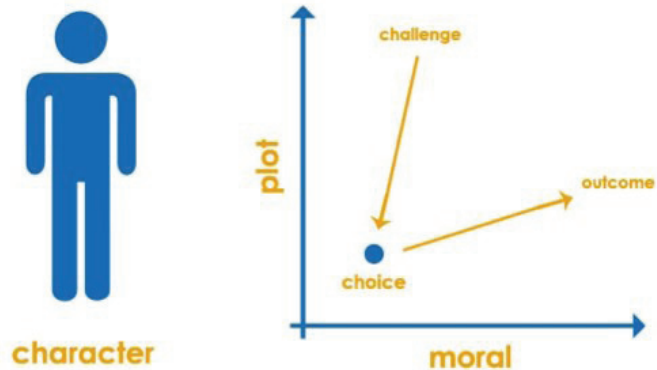
You are looking for the link between these three stories, the place where they overlap, to help explain why you are called to this work of building a clean energy future, why we are called to act with you, and why we are called to act now. This means being very selective about the story you tell—for example not trying to tell your whole biography when you tell your story of self.

The Three Key Elements of Story-telling Structure:

## Narrative Structure

### Challenge—Choice—Outcome

A plot begins with an unexpected challenge that confronts a character with an urgent need to pay attention, to make a choice, a choice for which s/he is unprepared. The choice yields an outcome -- and the outcome teaches a moral.



Because we can empathetically identify with the character, we can “feel” the moral. We not only hear “about” someone’s courage; we can also be inspired by it.

The story of the character and their effort to engage around values engages the listener in their own challenge, choice, and outcome relative to the story. Each story should include the challenge, the choice and the outcome. It’s not enough to say—I was scared. You need to say—I was very scared, I needed to decide, and when I did, I learned it was possible.

## INCORPORATING CHALLENGE, CHOICE, AND OUTCOME IN YOUR OWN STORY

There are some key questions you need to answer as you consider the choices you have made in your life and the path you have taken that brought you to this point in time as a leader. Once you identify the specific relevant choice point, perhaps your decision to choose an environmental career, dig deeper by answering the following questions.

**Challenge:** Why did you feel it was a challenge? What was so challenging about it? Why was it **your** challenge?

**Choice:** Why did you make the choice you did? Where did you get the courage (or not)? Where did you get the hope (or not)? How did it feel?

**Outcome:** How did the outcome feel? Why did it feel that way? What did it teach you? What do you want to teach us? How do you want us to feel?

A word about challenge. Sometimes people see the word challenge and think that they need to describe the misfortunes of their lives. Keep in mind that a struggle might be one of your own choosing—a high mountain you decided to climb as much as a hole you managed to climb out of. Any number of things may have been a challenge to you and be the source of a good story to inspire others.

# PEER COACHING 101

## DO

- Say what works first in the story, focusing on specifics.
- Identify both the CHALLENGE and the HOPE in the story.
- Clarify choice points, the moment when one thing happened instead of another.
- Connect the dots in the narrative, helping to illuminate how someone got from here to there.
- Look for themes.
- Ask questions about the intended audience and the desired action or response.

## DON'T

**Offer vague, abstract "feel good" comments, unless you've established the context.**

What does the story teller learn from "you did a great job", as opposed to, "the way you described your moment of choice made me feel very hopeful because..."

**Make value judgments about the story teller's voice or the validity of the point they want to make.**

The key here is that a person find ways to express themselves in their own voice—word choice, humor, metaphor, etc. Of course they need to know if choices they've made communicate what they want to communicate.

**Think about what you're going to say about your story while someone else is saying theirs.** You should allow yourself to take a risk with your story by diving in. Focus on others stories so you can help them with their efforts and then you can get the same sort of help from them.

**Underestimate the power of someone's story. If it doesn't "work" for you, think about why it doesn't, and more importantly, why it would for someone else.**

# TEAM WORK: PRACTICING YOUR STORY OF SELF

## GOALS

The teamwork you're asked to do here is to coach each other in how to tell your story of self. One goal is for you to begin learning how to tell your personal story of why you are called to organize to help win a clean energy future.

Another goal is to begin learning how to coach others' stories by listening carefully, offering feedback, asking questions, etc. In this way you can develop leadership in others, as well as yourself. Be prepared to take some risks, and support your team members as they step out on the limb themselves!

A final goal is to practice working as part of a team. As you work together, think about the dynamics in your team. Practice your norms and help your other team members take leadership on their chosen roles.

1.	Gather in your team. Timekeeper begins keeping time.	5 min
2.	Take time as individuals to silently develop your "story of self" using the worksheet on the next page.	10 min
3.	Tell your story to your team members and respond to each other—each person takes 2 min. to tell their stories and the group has 3. min to offer feedback. Story of Self Coach leads the team in giving feedback to each storyteller.  NOTE: You have just 2 minutes to tell your story. Stick to this limit. Make sure your timekeeper cuts you off. This encourages focus and makes sure everyone has a chance.	45 min
4.	Choose your most able story teller to tell their story before the larger group. Give them pointers to prep again to tell their story a third time.	10 min

# WORKSHEET

## “STORY OF SELF”

**What are the experiences and values that call you to take leadership on climate and clean energy?**

If you're having trouble getting started, here are some key elements and types of experiences that may have contributed to your current choice to take leadership as a community organizer on clean energy.

FAMILY & CHILDHOOD	LIFE CHOICES	ORGANIZER EXPERIENCE
Parents/Family	School	Role Models
Growing Up Experiences	Career	First organizing experience
Your Community	Partner/Family	First awareness of the environment
Role Models	Hobbies/Interests/Talents	A key moment in nature
School	Experiences—Finding Passion	Your current experience in Power Shift
	Overcoming Challenges	

Focus on one key story—one event, or one place or one important relationship. Take some time to think about the elements of your story in the context of the challenge, choice and outcome. In this case, the outcome might also be the thing you learned, in addition to what actually happened.

Remember, the purpose of story of self is to begin to create common ground with your audience by telling a story that reflects the values that brought you here to work on building a clean energy future, and where those values come from. So choose a story of self that reflects values you will later call on in your stories of us and now.

CHALLENGE	CHOICE	OUTCOME
What was the specific challenge you faced?	What was the specific choice you made?	What happened as a result of your choice? What hope can it give us?



**Record Feedback/Comments from Your Team Members On Your Story Here:**

**Coaching Your Team's "Story of Self"**

As you hear each other's stories, keeping track of the details of each person's story will help you to provide feedback and remember details about people on your team later. Use the grid below to track your team's stories.

NAME	CHALLENGE	CHOICE	OUTCOME	NOTES/THEMES

# STORY OF US — 1 HOUR

Now that you've had a while to reflect on both your own personal story let's shift to telling the larger story of our movement. Remember that an organizer doesn't just tell his or her story, and talking just about the science and policy tends to make peoples' eyes glaze over. That's why it's important to talk about the "story of us" so as to implicate and engage people in your activism.

**A "story of us" communicates the values and experiences that a community, organization, campaign, or movement shares and what capacity or resources that community of "us" has to accomplish its goals.**

Just as with a person, the key is specific points in the life of the community and/or those moments that express the values, experiences, past challenges and resources of the community or "us" that will take action. For example, tying a current effort to win a campaign to a past campus campaign victory and describing the effort it took to win, the people who worked hard to make it happen, their capabilities, their values, etc. is a story of us.

# TEAM WORK: PRACTICING THE STORY OF US

## GOALS

The teamwork you're asked to do here is to coach each other in how to tell your story of us. One goal is for you to begin learning how to tell your community's story of why you in particular have the capacity to help address climate change and build a clean energy future.

Another goal is to begin learning how to coach others' stories by listening carefully, offering feedback, asking questions, etc. In this way you can develop leadership in others, as well as yourself. Be prepared to take some risks, and support your team members as they step out on the limb themselves!

A final goal is to practice working as part of a team. As you work together, think about the dynamics in your team. Practice your norms and help your other team members take leadership on their chosen roles.

1.	Gather in your team. Timekeeper begins keeping time.	5 min
2.	Take time as a group to figure out who your "us" is and then begin developing your story using the worksheets below.	10 min
3.	<p>Tell your story to your team members and respond to each other—each person takes 2 min. to tell their stories and the</p> <p>Group has 3. min to offer feedback. Story of Us Coach leads the team in giving feedback to each storyteller.</p> <p><b>NOTE:</b> You have just 2 minutes to tell your story. Stick to this limit. Make sure your timekeeper cuts you off. This encourages focus and makes sure everyone has a chance.</p>	30 min
4.	<p>Choose your most able story teller to tell their story before the larger group.</p> <p>Give them pointers to prep again to tell their story a third time.</p>	10 min

# WORKSHEET

## “STORY OF US”

Remember, the purpose of the story of us is to create a sense of community among individuals who may or may not yet see themselves as a community and to give them hope that they can make a difference. Your goal here is to tell a story that evokes our shared values as your audience, and shows why we in particular are called to take responsibility for action now.

Your story of us may be a story of what we’ve already done together, challenges we’ve already faced and outcomes we’ve achieved. Or it may be a story of some of our shared heroes, challenges they faced and outcomes they’ve achieved. Hearing how we’ve met challenges in the past gives us hope that we can face new challenges together.

Brainstorm all the stories you know of about your audience and their collective story and experience. Your story of us may change each time you are talking to a different group of people.

<b>Who are some of the “us”s that you’re a part of? (Your generation, your learning team, the international climate movement, 350.org) Which “us” is most relevant as an audience here at this workshop?</b>
<b>What are some stories of this audience that give you an indication of their shared purpose and the goals of this group? What are their values?</b>
<b>What are some shared stories that give you a sense of the strengths and capacities of your audience/ community?</b>
<b>What are some stories of your generation or of the climate movement that give you the belief that together they could work to join you in creating real tangible change in the world?</b>

Now choose one of the stories you brainstormed above to flesh out in vivid detail.

<b>CHALLENGE</b>	<b>CHOICE</b>	<b>OUTCOME</b>
What was the challenge we faced?	What specific choice did we make? What action did we take?	What happened as a result of our choice? What hope can it give us?

**Record Feedback/Comments from Your Team Members On Your Story Here:**

# COACHING YOUR TEAM'S "STORY OF US"

As you hear each other's stories, keeping track of the details of each person's story will help you to provide feedback and remember details about people on your team later. Use the grid below to track your team's stories.

Name	Challenge	Choice	Outcome	Notes/Themes

# THE STORY OF NOW – 1.5 HOUR

Now to the third part of this story-telling method.

Many elements of the Story of Now should be familiar. There's a challenge, but instead of being in the past, it's in the present. There's hope, but instead of something that happened in the past, it's in the future. And there's a choice, but instead of being a choice we once made, it's a choice we must make now. And that's why it's a "story of now".

## **Linking Your Story of Now to Story of Self and Story of Us**

Now we know why you've been called to a particular mission, we know something of who it is you want to call upon to join you in that mission, so what action does that mission require of us right here, right now, in this place?

A "story of now" is urgent, it requires dropping other things and paying attention, it is rooted in the values you celebrated in your story of self and us, and requires action.

## **The Elements of a Story of Now**

- The strategy—your plan to achieve your goal.
- A strategic "hopeful" choice that each person in your audience can make
- A specific ask for each person that involves a commitment of time, resources before they leave.
- A vivid description of what collectively can be achieved if we take action together.

## **Why It Matters**

The choice we're called on to make is a choice to take strategic action now. Leaders who only describe problems, but fail to identify action that their community can take to address the problem aren't very good leaders. If you are called to address a real challenge, a challenge so urgent you have motivated us to face it as well, then you also have a responsibility to invite us to join you in action that has some chance of success. A "story of now" is not simply a call to make a choice to act—it is a call to "hopeful" action.

## **What is Strategy?**

The story of now is a story of strategy—how my action, added up with other people's action could, with a reasonable amount of hope, be expected to achieve a clear outcome that would help us meet our goal.

The challenge of strategy is building toward key peaks of collective action that aren't random, and don't just happen and dissolve into nothingness afterwards. The challenge is identifying actions that will help to build capacity and momentum that can launch your campaign toward the next peak, and the next peak, until you have enough power to win the change you seek.

Often when working on our story of now we realize we really don't have a clear, actionable or motivating

strategy. Working on story of now can be a way to re-evaluate our strategy and to engage others in strategizing with us.

### **Strategy is motivated.**

We strategize in response to urgent challenges or unusual opportunities to turn our goals into specific outcomes. Consider Gandhi's salt march—to what challenge did Gandhi respond? What was his motivating goal? Was his goal just to halt the British monopoly on salt production, or was it to make progress toward the goal of achieving freedom from British rule? How did he turn a large goal into an achievable but meaningful outcome?

### **Strategy is intentional.**

Strategy is a theory of how we can turn what we have (resources) into what we need (power) to get what we want (outcomes). It is a hypothesis that we can use certain tactics to achieve specific outcomes. What clear outcome was Gandhi trying to? How could poor Indians reasonably believe that the action they were being asked to take could make a difference? What clear outcome were they trying to achieve? How would they know if they had met it?

### **Strategy is creative.**

Challenging the status quo requires making up for our lack of resources, with greater resourcefulness, like the story of David and Goliath. Creative strategists don't just fall back on the same old tactics to build their campaigns. They look for tactics that will build power by engaging as many people as possible, and they think creatively about how to turn the resources they have into what they need to win. For example, during the salt march, the resignations of local leaders refusing to submit to British rule was a creative way to meet an urgent strategic need—gathering more people to move the march ahead.

### **Strategy is a verb**

(Something we do), not a noun (something we have). We can see that repeatedly in the story of the salt march, and this is a core strength of the 350 campaign. As we work toward our outcome we need to build in time to learn from our successes and failures and to adapt our tactics to become more and more effective. We constantly seek out new opportunities that could help us mobilize more people or resources for our effort, and we think creatively about how to turn challenges into opportunities.

## **FOUR STRATEGIC QUESTIONS**

**1. What's the Motivating Goal:** What threats to your common interests must you face? What opportunities must you act upon?



**2. What's the Outcome:** specific, focused, measurable (how will the world be changed?). On what outcome can you focus? What outcomes are nested within that outcome? How much time do you have to achieve these outcomes? What is the scope (time) and scale (size) of this outcome?

**3. Which Tactics will you use?** Why these and not others? Criteria include:

- Will it influence the outcome you're hoping to achieve? How?
- Will it use your resources creatively? How?
- Will it create organizational capacity? How?
- Will it develop leadership? How?

**4. When will you use them?** Consider the dynamics of campaigns, which tactics will you use when, what will be the sequence, how can you make the most of momentum, etc.?

As you work on developing your strategy as part of figuring out your story of now, remember that strategy is not something done by an individual alone in a secretive dark corner somewhere. Strategy is best created in a strategic team. It is very important to think about who serves on your strategy team, how it works, and how well. Does your team have a clear common purpose? Do you deliberate well together? Do you operate with consistent norms? Is it clear who's on the team? Is your team's authority to strategize clear?

As you continue to create your strategy in the face of new challenges and opportunities, your story of now will become clearer and more focused.

# TEAM WORK: PRACTICING THE STORY OF NOW

## GOALS

The teamwork you're asked to do here is to coach each other in how to tell your story of now. The goal of this team work session is to focus on outcomes you could work together to achieve to advance your common interests. Which urgent challenges or opportunities do you have to face?

What could you achieve if you could face them together? What are some possible outcomes? What might be some of the tactics you could use? How might you continue to strategize together?

As you work together as a learning team, continue to think about the dynamics in your team. Practice your norms and help your other team members take leadership on their chosen roles.

1.	Gather in your team. Timekeeper begins keeping time.	5 min
2.	Take time as individuals to silently develop your "story of now" using the worksheet on the next 2 pages.	10 min
3.	<p>Tell your story to your team members and respond to each other—each person takes 2 min. to tell their stories and the group has 3. min to offer feedback.</p> <p>Story of Now Coach leads the team in giving feedback to each storyteller.</p> <p><b>NOTE:</b> You have just 2 minutes to tell your story. Stick to this limit. Make sure your timekeeper cuts you off. This encourages focus and makes sure everyone has a chance.</p>	30 min
4.	<p>Choose your most able story teller to tell their story before the larger group.</p> <p>Give them pointers to prep again to tell their story a third time.</p>	10 min

# WORKSHEET

## “STORY OF NOW”

Use these questions to help you to put together your story of now. You should draw on your own current work on climate change to fill in the answers to the questions below.

Take a moment to reflect here on your challenge. What makes it urgent to you and your audience? Why must you collectively take action now? Once you have identified that, you then need to lay down your strategy—what you think you can do together to confront the challenge. Most importantly, what is the action step that people can take to join you in collective action towards a solution.

**Why is it urgent to take on clean energy now? What makes it urgent relative to other problems? Who are you serving in your community and the world by taking on leadership in this area?**

**What is your strategy to help alleviate the problem, create real tangible change? How will you know that you have developed an effective solution? What will the outcome look like if you are successful?**

**What is the single most important first step(s) can people take to join you in this strategy? What form will their commitment take? Is it clear what they should do? Is it clear when they should do it?**

Now flesh out your story of now in vivid detail.

CHALLENGE	CHOICE	OUTCOME
What is the challenge we face? What images make that challenge real?	What specific choice are you asking us to make? What specific action should we take and when?	What specific outcome could happen as a result of our choice? What hope can it give us?

Record Feedback/Comments from Your Team Members Here:

# COACHING YOUR TEAM'S "STORY OF NOW"

As you hear each other's stories, keeping track of the details of each person's story will help you to provide feedback and remember details about people on your team later. Use the grid below to track your team's stories.

Name	Challenge	Choice	Outcome	Notes/Themes