What Stories: YES does

• CATALYST sparks activity and change for young people in rural communities.

• IMMEDIATE GAINS in technology and 21st century skills while also focusing on local history.

• RIPPLE EFFECTS impact participants, communities and the Smithsonian’s ability to document rural life in the American Experience.

Evaluation (2016)
5 communities,
4 states,
2 MoMS exhibitions,
203 youth participants
FINDING 1 Catalyst for increasing resources and opportunities for youth in rural communities.

First technology project:
- **70%** youth participants
- **50%** project leaders
- **33%** educators

First public history project:
- **65%** youth participants
- **100%** educators
- **25%** project leaders

“We actually had **people calling to ask if they could be interviewed by the students.**” —Historical Society Director, Lawrenceville, IL

- **Increased community engagement** with local history.
- **Over 1000 people** were introduced to local stories at events.

Youth Participant Age Breakdown by State

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>High School</th>
<th>Middle School</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
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<td>Minnesota</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
FINDING 2 Youth participants increased technology use and practiced 21st century learning skills.

Q. How often have you had the opportunity to do the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>PRE</th>
<th>POST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sample and remix media content</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate validity of information sources</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search for information, synthesize it</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pool information and compare notes</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet people who are different from you</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct research using historical materials</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct and oral history interview</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Even though kids have phones, the tech has been really helpful because it’s more complex and enables us to create something really professional, documentary quality.”

—Technology Leader, Gulfport, MS

50% increase in moderate to great deal of HD video recorder use

28% increase in moderate to great deal of digital storage & transport device use
FINDING 3 Oral history collection increased.

“Figuring out questions and how to interview people was the most challenging and most rewarding for [youth].” —Project Leader, Mahomet, IL

60 new oral history interviews were conducted and explored:

- Political issues
- Recurring floods
- Immigration
- Modern agriculture
- First female NFL referee
- Veterans

“It’s better that it wasn’t done in school because it was something that I had to take responsibility for and complete instead of just trying to get an A.” —Student, 8th grade, Lanesboro, MN
FINDING 4 Young people feel appreciated by adults and adults recognize the talents and contributions of young people.

BEFORE Stories: YES
34% agreed that adults listened to young people
AFTER Stories: YES
82% agreed that adults listen to young people

“This project and working with these three young women is the highlight of my career.”

–Project and Technology Leader, Lanesboro, MN
FINDING 5 Adults and youth increase their understanding of how their community contributes to U.S. history.

“Through this program I learned that there is so much history I never knew about such as Whirlpool, shipping companies, and the farming businesses that were once here.”—Student, St. Joseph, MI

“This has been a challenge, but I have enjoyed working with folks I don’t normally work with. It has caused me to be more aware of our local history and to become more active in the historical society.”—Project Leader and Retired Teacher, Lawrenceville, IL

BEFORE Stories: YES  
39% of youth were either neutral or believed that their local community did not make a contribution to U.S. history  
30% of youth said it was true or very true that their community made a contribution to U.S. History  
22% of youth were neutral about community’s contribution to U.S. history

AFTER Stories: YES  
8%  
50%  
8%

IMPROVEMENT  
31%  
20%  
14%
FINDING 6 Stories: YES involved members of communities in local history, some for the first time.

Youth interviewed elected officials, veterans, business owners, athletes, and other young people.

“The community so thoroughly supported us it is hard to know where to begin. The daily newspaper, the weekly newspaper, the radio station, a TV station, our own staff production team, the mayor, the County Board of Commissioners, the merchants, the Rotary, the Chamber of Commerce, the Retired Teachers' Organization, the Churches and so many individuals embraced the project.” —Historical Society Director, Lawrenceville, IL
**FINDING 7** An archive of rural stories and oral histories is accumulating and has potential use in communities, for researchers, and the Smithsonian.