

YOUTH INNOVATION IN RURAL AMERICA TOOLKIT



YOUTH WORKBOOK

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ABOUT MUSEUM ON MAIN STREET

Museum of Main Street (MoMS) is a one-of-a-kind cultural project that has been sharing the Smithsonian's resources with rural America since 1994. It is a partnership of the Smithsonian and your state humanities council that serves small-town museums and cultural institutions and residents of rural America.

One-fifth of all Americans live in rural areas and one-half of all U.S. museums are located in small towns. Museum on Main Street provides these institutions with access to resources they may not otherwise have and assists them in making lasting improvements that advance their institution's objectives. MoMS combines the prestige of Smithsonian exhibitions, the program expertise of state humanities councils, and the remarkable volunteerism and unique histories of small rural towns. To date, MoMS exhibitions have traveled to over 1,900 towns with populations of 500-20,000 in all 50 states plus one territory.

Currently, there are three exhibitions touring via Museum on Main Street:

- Crossroads: Change in Rural America
- · Voices and Votes: Democracy in America
- Spark! Places of Innovation

All Museum on Main Street exhibitions focus on broad topics of American history and give host museums the opportunity, with support from state humanities councils, to create their own educational programs, cultural activities, and exhibitions that center on their local heritage.

Museum on Main Street exhibitions are intended to be a platform around which communities look at their own history and culture. The Youth in Rural America project is a part of this larger localization that engages young people and adds to the youth voice to the community activity.

Consisting of freestanding kiosks, audio, video, interactive components, and original objects, MoMS exhibitions are small-format, limited security exhibitions that are hosted at six to eight venues in the state for approximately six weeks each.

To learn more about exhibition resources and tour schedules, visit www.museumonmainstreet.org.

WELCOME

How might you tell the story of innovation in your community? Inspired by *Spark! Places of Innovation*, which highlights innovation in rural America, this hands-on toolkit will empower you to be agents of change for innovation in your community.

Along the way, you will learn more about yourselves and your local community. The Youth Innovation in Rural America project runs from February to May, 2023. You will become a curator collecting pieces that will help you tell the story of innovation in your own community through research, interviews, and storytelling. What that story is and what it looks like is up to you.

This project is broken down into eight steps, each introduced by a guiding question. Each step includes hands-on activities, guiding questions, and helpful resources to aid you in the completion of your project with support from your facilitator.

In June, students, teachers, and community leaders are invited to join the Rural Youth Innovation Summit via Zoom to share their projects and discuss the impact of their experiences. Not able to complete your project in time for the summit? No problem! We invite participants to share their work from any stage in the project timeline. We encourage participants to continue working on their project after the summit concludes and share their completed projects at the next summit in June 2024. We can't wait to see your projects and hear your story about innovation in your community!

PROJECT TIMELINE

STEP/GUIDING QUESTION	LEARNING GOAL TIME AL	LOTMENT
GUIDING QUESTION 1 What is design, invention, and innovation?	Understand the difference between design, invention, and innovation.	1 Week
GUIDING QUESTION 2 What is community innovation?	Explore the types of innovation and characteristics of innovation in <i>Spark! Places of Innovation</i> and through examples from your community.	1 Week
GUIDING QUESTION 3 What do you want to learn from your community and how will you find that information?	Brainstorm and finalize story ideas and conduct preliminary research to learn more about local history.	1 Month
GUIDING QUESTION 4 What is cultural storytelling and how do you create a great story about innovation?	Become familiar with cultural storytelling and how to apply it to your story.	2 Weeks
GUIDING QUESTION 5 How are stories told? How will you tell your community innovation story?	Become familiar with different forms of storytelling and decide on a project format.	2 Weeks
GUIDING QUESTION 6 What is your story?	Create the final product and complete the story.	1 Month
GUIDING QUESTION 7 Where does your story go now?	Share the story with the community and with MoMS partners.	N/A
GUIDING QUESTION 8 What's next? How can you stay active in learning about important things happening in your hometown?	Foster an understanding of the importance of staying active within a local community and attain the tools to do so, even after this project.	N/A

UNDERSTANDING DESIGN, INVENTION, AND INNOVATION

SECTION 1

UNDERSTANDING DESIGN, INVENTION, AND INNOVATION

GUIDING QUESTION 1

INTRODUCTION

The story of human history is written in inventions and innovations. People are problem solvers, inventors, and innovators. All it takes is a spark—an idea—to get started. In small towns across America, communities are turning problems into real solutions. This innovative spirit is crucial to sustaining the vitality of rural places and feeds the nation's continuous need for fresh thinking and new solutions. This sort of fresh thinking and problem solving is the design process.

In this section, you'll gain an understanding for design, invention, and innovation through hands-on activities that spark your creativity and encourage a problem-solving mindset.

DESIGN

Design is a process that leads to innovation. Design is all around us. From the clothes you wear to the chair you sit on; we use design every day. Designers work to solve a problem by thinking about what a user needs and often go through many versions of their design before they can share their final product with consumers

Let's look at an example from Spark! Places of Innovation.

THE DESIGN PROBLEM

In the 1930's, one inspired tourist to Door County, Wisconsin saw a need for pitting cherries faster in the home.

THE DESIGN SOLUTION

He invented a mechanical cherry pitter that fit over a mason jar and was easy for anyone to use.

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Now, it's your turn. Take a few seconds to look around your space. What examples of design do you

UNDERSTANDING DESIGN, INVENTION, AND INNOVATION

GUIDING QUESTION 1

INVENTION

Now that we've defined design, let's explore invention. When we invent, we create a product or process based on completely new ideas. Two famous inventors are Thomas Edison and Alexander Graham Bell. Thomas Edison was an American inventor including the phonograph, motion picture camera, and the electric light bulb. Alexander Graham Bell is credited with inventing the telephone. Now, it's your turn to invent.

In this scenario, you've brought too much to school and your backpack doesn't fit in your locker. Your challenge is to combine two objects from your backpack to make room in your locker. The items in your backpack are listed below.

- Pencil
- Notebook
- Eraser
- Lunch Box
- Ruler
- Sharpener
- Stapler
- Calculator

ACTIVITY STEPS

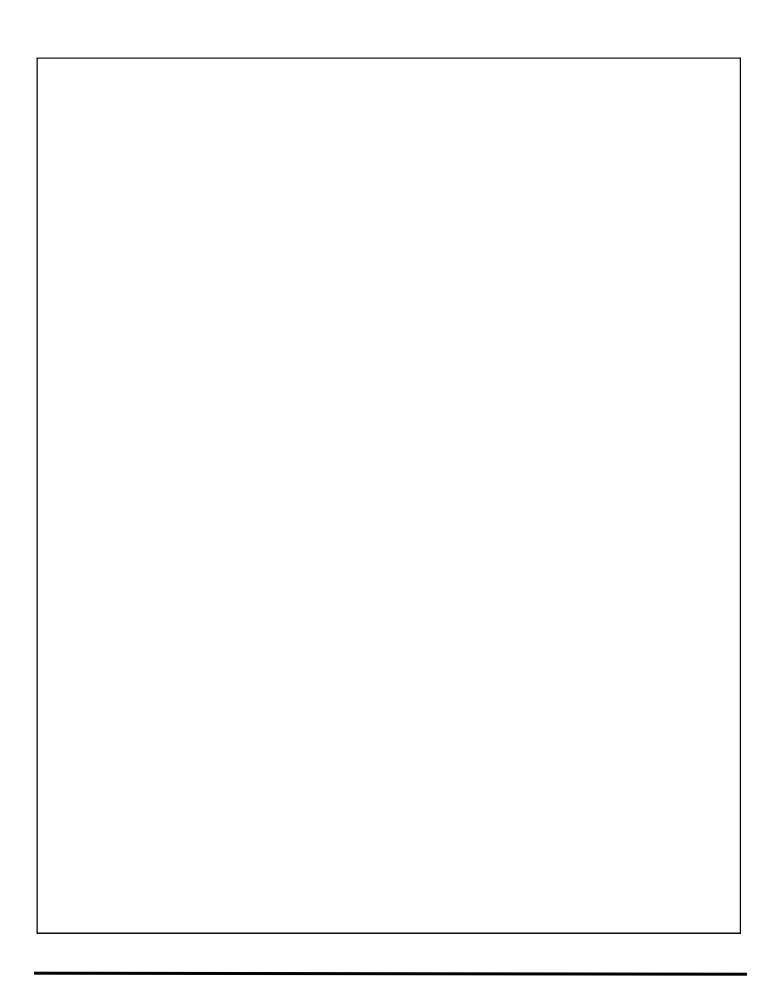
Choose two objects from the list above to combine into one invention.

Then, use the graphic organizer below to make a list of the "functions" and "features" of each object. A function is what the object helps you do. Features are the aesthetic of the object which can include color, material, or texture that make an object unique.

Once your list is complete, use the space on the following page to write or draw your ideas. Your invention does not have to be based on something real. Let your imagination go wild. As you brainstorm, think about this:

- What functions and/or features would you include from both objects in your new invention?
- What would your invention look like? Would the shape, color, or material change?

Object	Function	Features
Pencil	To Write	Eraser, colorful, smooth texture, shiny, thin, easy to hold



UNDERSTANDING DESIGN, INVENTION, AND INNOVATION

GUIDING QUESTION 1
INNOVATION
When we innovate, we introduce a method, idea, or invention into use that creates a new way of doing or thinking. The telephone was an invention, but the first smartphone was an innovation. It was a change made to an existing product to improve its use. The first car was an invention because it was the first motorized way to travel. Today, Uber is an innovation in transportation to find new ways to get us from point A to point B.
Use the space below to write or draw another example of an innovation. It could be an example from your community or beyond.

UNDERSTANDING DESIGN, INVENTION, AND INNOVATION

GUIDING QUESTION 1

GRAB BAG INVENTING ACTIVITY
Now that we've explored examples of design, innovation, and invention, let's put them all into practice. Grab Bag Inventing is a quick, low-stakes activity that uses simple materials. In small groups, work together to brainstorm an invention challenge, build a possible solution, and share your process and ideas using the materials provided by your facilitator. Once you've finished, use the space below to reflect on your experience.
My invention challenge was
We invented

One challenge we had to overcome was

SECTION 2

GUIDING QUESTION 2

INTRODUCTION

Innovation can happen any place. But places of sustained invention and innovation have common characteristics:

- Leadership: Creative thinkers who act as a catalyst
- · Communication: Open and free-flowing collaboration
- · Risk-taking: Willingness to try, fail, and try again
- · Funding: Creative fundraising and use of resources
- · Diversity: Welcoming different opinions and perspectives
- Self- Expression: Independent thinking and nonconformity
- · Flexibility: Open-mindedness, willingness to compromise
- · Knowledge: Sharing ideas, skills, and expertise

When combined with other unique assets of communities, and lots of hard work, innovation has a chance to flourish. People in small towns are revitalizing old neighborhoods, rejuvenating historic business districts, establishing local industries, creating festivals and cultural attractions, and much more. They are discovering hidden potential in their places and generating ideas that bring that potential to life.

Spark! Places of Innovation features stories from over 30 communities across the nation. For every community, there is a unique combination of history, resources, leadership, collaboration, and opportunity that resulted in invention and innovation—socially, artistically, technologically, or culturally.

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CASE STUDY EXPLORATION

Let's look a little closer at some of the communities featured in *Spark! Places of Innovation*. In small groups, review the video resources. Then, reflect and discuss using the guiding questions below and match the case study with the type of innovation(s). What are the possibilities for innovation in your community? You may find that a case study connects to more than one type of innovation. That's ok! Use the space below to keep track of your conversations.

Case Study Name and Location	Type of Innovation(s)	How would your town solve this problem? Who are the stakeholders in your community that could support this effort?

REFLECT		
Reflect on your own com in the space below.	munity's story. Discuss th	ne questions with your group and share your responses
What challenges has y	our community overcome	?
What strengths does yo	our town possess?	
Where are the opportu	nities to innovate for the f	uture?

GUIDING QUESTION 2

CITIZEN INNOVATION GAME

Inspired by the stories you've seen in *Spark! Places of Innovation*, have you ever wondered "what if" for your community? Here's your chance to design creative solutions to challenges, and talk about it with others.

HOW TO PLAY

Divide into small groups of 3-4 players.

Each group will receive three sets of cards: Value, Question, and Design Tactic.

To start the game, each player should select one Value card that holds the most meaning to them. Players can only have one Value card each.

For each round, one player will be designated as the "Community Leader". Chose one player to be the Community Leader. The Community Leader should shuffle and pass out 4 Design Tactic cards to each of the other players. Don't share your Design Tactic cards with the other players.

Now, the Community Leader will flip over the top card of the Challenge stack.

The other players will need to select one solution from among their 4 Design Tactic Cards as a solution to the Challenge card. Sometimes you might have to think outside the box with your solutions.

Then, each player should take turns sharing why they chose that solution, how it can be innovative, and how it aligns with their Value card.

After all players have shared their solutions, the Community Leader will select their favorite solution and explain why they chose it.

For the next round, shuffle all cards, choose a new value, and a new Community Leader. After three rounds, reflect on your experience.

REFLECT

Reflect on your experience playing Citizen Innovation. Discuss the questions with your group and share your responses in the space below.

What was your favorite Challenge-Tactic?

How did you handle the cards you were dealt?

What did you learn through your participation in this activity? How might it inform your project?

SECTION 3

GUIDING QUESTION 3

CHOOSING YOUR STORY TOPIC

Now that you have learned more about the design process and have a stronger understanding of community innovations across the nation through *Spark! Places of Innovation* it's your turn to imagine the possibilities in your own town. What's next for your community? Your story will focus on one or more characteristics of innovation that's present in your community. It's time to pick your topic!

In small groups, brainstorm local innovations, inventions or community topics that come to mind. Think about what interests you in your community—is there a statue of someone? An old building? A current topic your town is trying to address like climate change?

Make a list together using the space below. There are no bad ideas! This is the time to collect as many ideas as possible!

Community Innovations	Community Inventions	Current Topics

Now that we have a list, let's narrow it down. With your small group, choose 1 topic that you are interested in exploring further as you tell the story of innovation in your community. Can't decide? Put it to a vote! In the space below, write down the topic you'll explore further and the type of characteristic of innovation that it connects to.

Characteristics of Innovation:

- Leadership: Creative thinkers who act as a catalyst
- Communication: Open and free-flowing collaboration
- Risk-taking: Willingness to try, fail, and try again
- Funding: Creative fundraising and use of resources
- Diversity: Welcoming different opinions and perspectives
- Self- Expression: Independent thinking and nonconformity
- · Flexibility: Open-mindedness, willingness to compromise
- Knowledge: Sharing ideas, skills, and expertise

Topic	Characteristic of Innovation
Innovative tools my community is using to combat climate change	Leadership

How does this topic connect to the characteristic of innovation and what story does it tell?

Why did your group choose this topic and what are you most excited to discover as you dig deep into this topic?

GUIDING QUESTION 3

ASSETS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Now that we've identified the topic for our story of community innovation, it's important that we find additional information to help guide our project. What's happening in your town? Beginning from what you know from memory, create a list of the specific resources in your community.

Use the categories below to organize your list:

Category	Resource(s)
Physical/Infrastructure (buildings and sewage services)	1. 2. 3. 4.
Financial (grants and subsidies)	1. 2. 3. 4.
Human (notable individuals and historic figures)	1. 2. 3. 4.
Intellectual (special skills and capabilities)	1. 2. 3. 4.

Political (elected officials and community groups)	1. 2. 3. 4.
Natural (parks, native plant species, and natural phenomena)	1. 2. 3. 4.
Social (volunteer groups, clubs, and teams)	1. 2. 3. 4.
Cultural (unique histories, local food, and special customs)	1. 2. 3. 4.
Artistic (artists, art, and murals)	1. 2. 3. 4.
Technological (technology innovations that shape your community)	1. 2. 3. 4.

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DIG DEEP: RESEARCHING YOUR TOPIC

It's time to dig deep! For this part of the project, you will be conducting research about the topic you chose in the previous activity. Research is at the foundation for all science, history, and storytelling. It's important that you explore local and online resources and conduct interviews to learn about your community and dig deep into your story ideas.

READ AND WATCH: STORYTELLING TRAINING: RESEARCH AND CONTENT GATHERING

To get started, navigate through <u>Storytelling Training</u>: <u>Research and Content Gathering</u>. This learning lab takes you through ten steps of storytelling, from picking a theme or overall topic to starting to create your story. This learning lab also covers sources, interviewing, and citing. While navigating through this resource, respond to the guiding questions using the space below.

What is a secondary source? Share an example of a secondary source.
What are some ways that you can get the most out of your web searches and ensure they are believable?

What is a primary source? What are some examples of primary sources and where do you think you can find examples of primary sources in your community?
What are three things you learned about effective interviewing?
ON YOUR OWN: READ AND EXPLORE
The Storytelling Toolkit: Research Tips This toolkit covers four main research topics: The Basics of Research, Citing Your Sources, Using Online Content, and How to Use Archives.
The Storytelling Toolkit: Interviewing This toolkit offers helpful tips on interviewing and oral history, from contacting potential interviewees to conducting the interview itself.

Use the space bel connect to your to	search notes a	as you investig	ate primary ar	nd secondary s	ources that

GUIDING OUESTION 3

DIG DEEP: INTERVIEWING

Through the resources above, we now have a better understanding of interviewing and story gathering. Make a list of who you plan to interview—either in-person, via phone, or Zoom—and questions you might want to ask them to help you learn more about your topic. Apply your research to your interview questions to expand your knowledge of what you've already learned. Use the space below to identify who you will interview and at least three questions that you plan to ask during the interview. Once complete, share your questions with another group or facilitator to get feedback and refine further.

Before you begin the interview process, identify the roles your group will take on when interviewing to ensure you get all the information you need. Who will be the note taker? Who will record the interview, who will be asking the questions? Discuss the different roles as a group so you are prepared for your interview.

Name of Interviewee	Draft Interview Questions	Notes/Feedback

INTERVIEW	
Full Name	
Date of Interview	
Interview Questions	
Interview Notes	
INTERVIEW	
Full Name	
Date of Interview	
Interview Questions	
Interview Notes	

POST-INTERVIEW REFLECTION

Did anything from the interview surprise you?
Did the interviewee share opinions that agreed or disagreed with your other findings?
How will you incorporate the interview into your story about community innovation?

ELEMENTS OF STORYTELLING

SECTION 4

ELEMENTS OF STORYTELLING

GUIDING QUESTION 4
INTRODUCTION
Cultural stories come from people who lived through an event or experienced something. They don't always have to be about history, wars, or significant events. It can be about music, food, school, local places, nature, television or media, sports, family, work, or growing up. The stories we tell can also include innovative changes and problem solving that we have experienced. Anyone can tell a cultural story—even you! In this section, we'll learn more about cultural storytelling and how we can apply it to our own projects about community innovation.
WATCH: THE POWER OF CULTURAL STORYTELLING AND PLACE-BASED NARRATIVE To get started, watch the video, The Power of Cultural Storytelling and Place-Based Narrative to learn more about cultural storytelling. While watching the video, respond to the guiding questions using the space below.
What are the elements of storytelling?
What is cultural storytelling and why is it important?

What examples of cultural storytelling are there in your community?
How can you integrate cultural storytelling into your own project?
What else did you learn and how will you apply it to your story about innovation?

WATCH: CULTURAL STORYTELLING: THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY

Next, let's explore the elements of good and bad storytelling through this video, <u>Cultural Storytelling:</u> <u>The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly</u>. While watching the video, respond to the guiding questions using the space below.

What are the elements of great storytelling?
What should we avoid when telling stories?
What else did you learn and how will you apply it to your story about innovation?

ELEMENTS OF STORYTELLING

GUIDING QUESTION 4

STORYTELLING CUBE ACTIVITY

Let's apply what we've learned so far about cultural storytelling to try and tell our own, personal stories.

Role the storytelling cube to determine the topic of your story.

Then, think about a personal experience that you have had that connects to the topic. It could be a anything from a sports game to concert you attended.

Write down your story in the space below. Once complete, turn to a neighbor and share your experience.

		-		

ELEMENTS OF STORYTELLING

GUIDING QUESTION 4

STORYTELLING ARC ACTIVITY

A story arc is a device used by readers and writers to understand the make-up of a story.

Exposition: The exposition also refers to the introduction. It contains the background necessary for the reader to understand the rest of the story, such as geographic setting and the identity of major characters.

Rising Action: The rising action is the sequence of events that move the characters from the beginning of the story to the climax. There is usually a problem that the character needs to solve or overcome and may spark a quest as the character responds to the problem. This could be the moment where your community decided that change was needed.

Climax: This is the turning point of the story. This may include the solution to the problem.

Falling Action: This is the wrap-up information that the author gives after the climax is reached. The character takes steps to reach the story's conclusion.

Resolution: The resolution is the conclusion of the story.

ACTIVITY STEPS

Use the story arc template to tell the story of a movie, book, show, or anything else that you are already familiar with. Once complete, share your work with a neighbor.

Then, in your small group, use the same story arc template to tell the story of your local community that you chose in guiding question 3: Choosing Your Topic. Once complete, discuss your story arc with other groups. Are your stories similar or different?

REFLECT

After going through this exercise, discuss the questions with your group and share your responses in the space below.

What additional information do you need to tell your story of innovation in your community? Did you have any gaps in your story?

Why is this story important to your community and how can it inform change on a larger scale?

RESOLUTION	The resolution is the conclusion of the story. How does the story end?					
FALLING ACTION	The falling action is the wrap-up information that comes after the climax. What steps do your characters take to reach the end of the story?					

CLIMAX	The climax is the turning point in the story. How do the characters in your story resolve the problem?			
RISING ACTION	The rising action is the sequence of events that move the characters from the beginning of the story to the climax. What is the problem that the characters in your story need to solve? In your story, this could be where your community decided that a change was needed and it sparked an idea.			
EXPOSITION	The exposition is the introduction. The introduction includes geographic setting and identifying major characters in your story.			

UNDERSTANDING STORY FORMATS

UNDERSTANDING STORY FORMATS

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STORY FORMATS

Storytelling can take many forms, from a podcast to an art show, to a poem or play. As you explore examples of storytelling formats with your facilitator, use the space below to take notes. Focus on the craft, structure, and format of the examples rather than the content.

Storytelling Format Type	How would this storytelling format help you tell your story of community innovation?	What is missing from this format that you will need to tell your story of community innovation?
Written Narrative	It would allow for me to include a lot of descriptive detail	It's missing dynamic elements that I might want to include

There are so many way which story format will	ys to tell the story of i be the best way to ge	innovation in your commur et your ideas across and w	nity. In your small group, discuss why you chose that story format.

CREATING YOUR STORIES

CREATING YOUR STORIES

GUIDING QUESTION 6

WHAT IS YOUR STORY?

Now that you've done the research, chose your topic and characteristic of innovation, conducted your interviews, and thought about what storytelling method works best for you, it's time to tell your story! As you work with your small group to finalize your project, use the space below to sketch out format ideas or take notes. Your facilitator will share additional resources as needed to help you tell your story.

TIPS

As a group, discuss your individual roles as you navigate through the creation of your story. What are you each responsible for? What will you do together? Ensure that you check-in with each other regularly.

Ask for help! As you navigate through creating your story, you may find that you have more questions or, need access to additional resources. Check-in with your facilitator to ensure you have what you need

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CREATING YOUR STORIES

GUIDING QUESTION 6

FEEDBACK

Feedback is an important part of any project's life cycle. It helps us consider things from another angle or viewpoint. Feedback is a two-way street. When you finish a first draft of your story in its intended format, share it with a neighbor, teacher, community leader, or any other stakeholders that might provide helpful feedback. Continue to get feedback as you make changes to improve your story. It is up to you to decide how much, if any, feedback you incorporate into your project.

TIPS

GIVING FEEDBACK	GETTING FEEDBACK
 Be focused and specific Talk about the situation, not the person Give praise where it is due Be kind and sincere Listen 	 Listen Write everything down Don't try to explain or excuse Ask clarifying questions Take it or leave it Practice gratitude

Use the space below to keep track of the feedback you receive.

Who is giving you feedback?	What do they like most about your story?	What could you improve, change, or add to your story to make it better?	What other feedback do they have for you?

SHARING YOUR STORIES

SHARING YOUR STORIES

GUIDING QUESTION 7

SHARING YOUR PROJECTS ONLINE

Congratulations! You've finished telling the story of innovation in your community. Now, it's time to find your story a home.

HOW TO SHARE YOUR WORK

<u>Submit</u> your final projects. Please label your project with the subject matter and town, state. You do not need to include your names.

Share with us a brief description of your project. You can utilize the reflection questions in the next section as a guide. Please label your document with the first and last name of participants in your group. You can submit your description using the same link as your project.

Share with your community! Display your projects at a local cultural organization like a museum or library. Host a premiere for your project and have the whole red-carpet experience. Share your observations and ideas with community leaders.

Share on social media

CALL TO ACTION

CALL TO ACTION

GUIDING QUESTION 8
CALL TO ACTION
Now that you've completed your innovation story project, you have a stronger understanding of and connection to your own community. It's important to continue your involvement as an advocate for innovation in your hometown. Share your story with your community and continue to stay active in learning about important things in your hometown. From attending and participating in community events to joining an organization to proposing a new idea, there are so many ways to get involved in your community.
Use the space below to share how you'll continue to stay active in your town.
REFLECT ON YOUR EXPERIENCE
My group told the story of

The hardest part of the process was
My favorite part of the process was
Lwould improve our project by
I would improve our project by

One challenge we had to overcome was
What have you learned about yourself and innovation in your community through this project?