

How to tell your project's story

What makes a story

Before you get started, always ask:

1. Who is your audience?
2. What is your goal?
3. What message can you craft to connect your audience with your goal?

When does your work become a “story”?

- **Superlatives:** First, Most, Earliest, Highest, Lowest, Best, Biggest, etc.
- **Significant milestones:** Discovery; Measured a significant impact from your work in the surrounding communities; Published in a peer-reviewed journal with a significant finding; Received new funding of a significant amount, etc.
- **Anecdotes or personal stories:** When someone connected with your work, whether a critical partner or a single participant, has a compelling personal story to share about the experience of the project or its impact.
- **Opportunities:** When there is a chance that readers might want to join in, whether by attending an event, taking a widely circulated survey or other activity.

When you notice a potential story taking shape in your work, please send Horticulture CRSP an email to alert us, so that we might be able to help you craft your story, find an outlet and share your work.

Deciding what to write: Measure the facts you wish to communicate against the following:

- timeliness – how recently did it happen?
- proximity – how close is it to the audience and the point of publication or broadcast?
- importance – what is the significance of the story – and who really cares?
- policy – how does a publication, radio or TV station view different events?

Components of popular writing:

The opinions, attitudes and beliefs of readers shape their interests and reactions. People strive to reduce tension in their lives by seeking solutions, which makes them interested in certain elements reported by the media. These may include:

- conflict – all types of struggles of the human condition;
- progress – improvements people make to the status quo;
- oddness – rare, out-of-the-ordinary ideas, events or situations;
- human interest – ideas, events or situations that strongly affect human emotions.

Excerpts from: Scientific Writing for Agricultural Research Scientists, http://publications.cta.int/media/publications/downloads/1700_PDF_1.pdf

Branding: It is important, but it should not be your primary focus.

1. Do it right. <http://hortcrsp.ucdavis.edu/main/forPIs.html> has basics for Horticulture CRSP projects, including Horticulture CRSP and USAID logos. Using branding/logos correctly not only gives credit where it is due, but also makes your content more shareable by other organizations.
2. Your content should be the primary focus, not logos, as your content is the most important. Good content means more readers and reflects well on the brands of the logos you include.

Photo tip for branding: Wear your university! Consider wearing a shirt or name badge with your organization's logo or other insignia visible for easy identification and branding when you will be photographed working.



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Taking your best photos

Take photos of your project as you go!

1. The more photos you take, the better.
2. Best photos show you and your partners in the process of actually doing something
3. Take a variety of types of photos:
 - **Scene-setters** that show landscape, show us what horticulture looks like where you're working
 - **Close-ups** of fruits or vegetables or tools that you are using—whether with hands, in the ground, on the vine, in harvest, or at market
 - **Mid-range** show a person or 2-3 people doing something, either waist-up or whole-body (try not to crop out just their feet!).
4. Who is in the photos:
 - **Best:** Photos of people who are involved in your project, whether as partners, collaborators, participants or recipients. Include their names when sending to us if possible.
 - **Less good:** Anonymous people—woman in market, man in field, etc.
 - **Less good:** People as props, back drops or scene decor
 - **Less good:** Photos with children
5. What is in the photos: Action! People doing things
 - **Faces** = good (backs of heads/butts = less good)
 - **Best:** Faces are recognizable
 - **Best:** What the people are doing is recognizable/clearly visible
 - Whatever people are looking at should also be in the picture

Highlights from USAID's imagery guidelines:

- Make an emotional connection
- Show positive benefits of your work
- Focus on success



Avoid:

- Stagnant shots of buildings
- Images that showcase despair
- Photos in which the activity is unclear, no emotion is displayed or the individuals are merely standing in front of a sign



USAID's complete Graphic Standards Manual is available at <http://www.usaid.gov/branding/gsm>

Caption information:

Please collect this information when taking the photos and share with us.

- When and where the photo was taken
- Who is IN the photo (if multiple, then left to right or include identifying description, e.g. "man in blue shirt")
- Who took the photo
- What is happening in the photo

This is the best-case scenario. If you do not have this information, please send us what information you do have along with photos; we will still find ways to use them.

When sending photos to Horticulture CRSP:

- Please send us the original photo files (.jpg), unedited, as large as possible.
- Please do not edit your photos before sending them to us.
- If emailing photos is a problem, try zipping them into a folder and uploading to us at <http://ucanr.edu/hortcrsp/photo-upload> (with an email so we can confirm receipt).