

OUTREACH PROJECTS

APPLIED ACTIVITY:

ORAL HISTORY INITIATIVE

Purpose:

Launch an oral history initiative to connect community members of diverse generations within your immediate and extended communities. Archive personal stories, organizational histories, and stories pertaining to your organization's history.

What you will need:

Project Participants

- Project team, including: interviewers, question writers, digital preservationist, archivist
- Interviewees or subjects
- A recording device, options:
 - Tascam or Zoom recorders with two microphones (for interviewer, interviewee)
 - Smart phone with recording capabilities
 - Zoom Conferencing software
 - Computer (to transfer files)
 - Hard drive or cloud-based storage (to save and backup files)
- A digital for sharing the oral histories with your community, options:
 - Website
 - Vimeo or Youtube
- A listening station within your organization's space
- Release forms
- A quiet place to sit and talk
- Approximately 30 minutes

Directions:

1. Decide on a topic for your oral history initiative. In launching this project, a new collection will be created. What are documentation goals and objectives

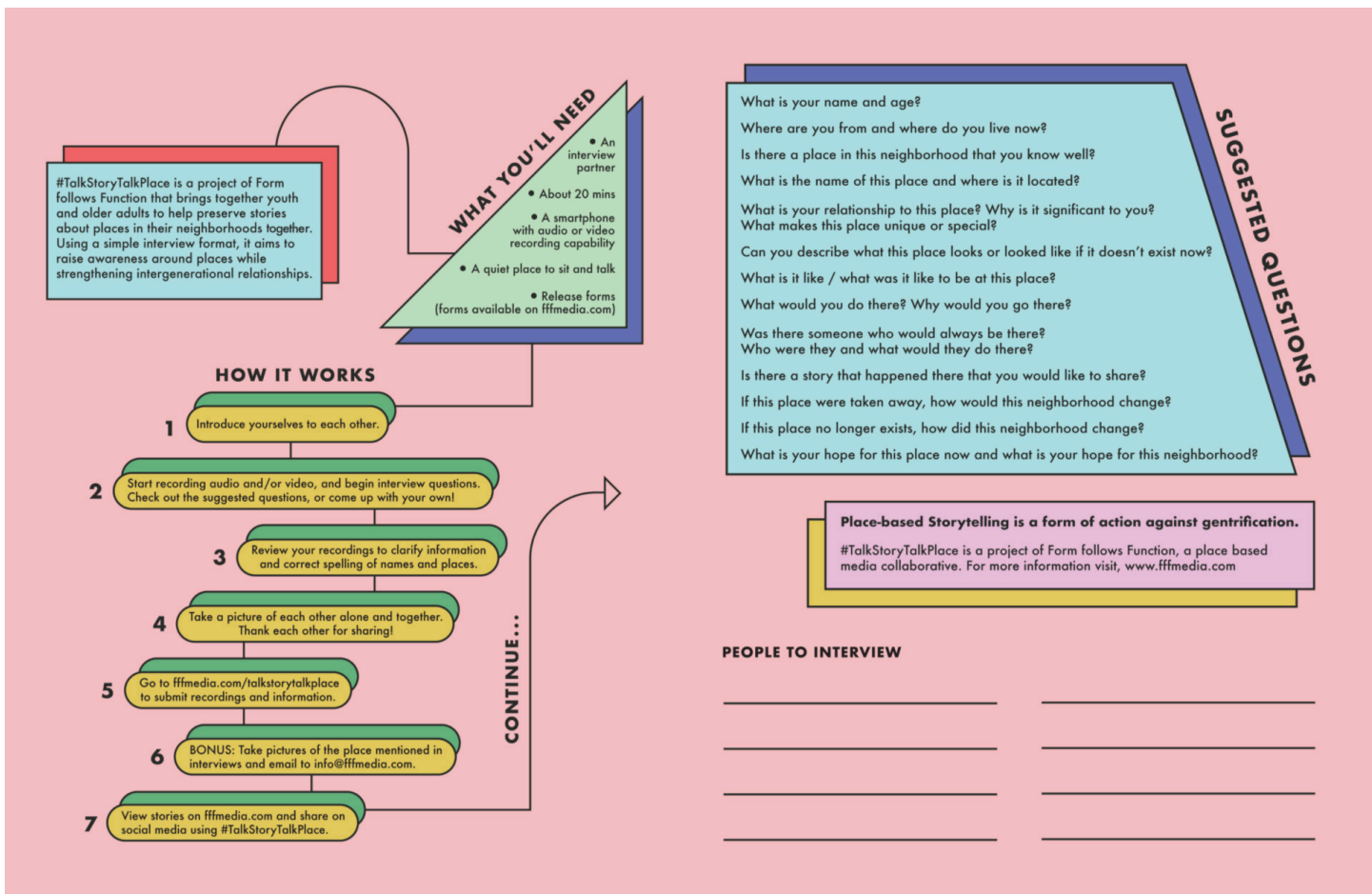
Potential topics:

- Younger members interview community elders
- Institutional history of the organization
- Personal histories of the members of your community/organization
- Personal connection to the neighborhood of your organization
- Document a specific cultural happening, such as a former collective, gathering space, or activist movement.

2. Build a project team. Deciding on the particular staff, intern, and volunteers will depend on their interests, skill sets, and ability to commit to the project within the designated timeline.
3. Have an initial project planning meeting with your team. In this meeting, tackle the following action items:
 - Decide team members' responsibilities. Potential roles include (note that some roles might be shared or combined):
 - Interviewer
 - Question writer
 - Digital preservationist
 - Processing archivist
 - Access archivist
 - Transcript writer
 - Create a project timeline. Account for time it will take to interview subjects, create transcripts, archive the files, and digitally preserve the project.
 - Define the mission and topic of the oral history initiative in detail
 - Draft a list of prospective interviewees
4. Schedule a place and time to interview the first subject.
5. Draft a series of questions for the first interviewee. As a team, decide whether interviewees within the series will be asked the same set of questions or if each interviewee will receive a unique set of questions.
 - Reference the FFF Media #TalkStoryTalkPlace graphic for question and format ideas. Adapt for your project.
6. Conduct your first oral history interview.
 - Before beginning, be sure to familiarize yourself with your recording device and technology. If it makes you feel more comfortable, practice a mock-interview ahead of the official one with one of your team members.
 - Utilize the UCLA Center for Oral History Research [resource page](#) for guidance on conducting interviews and using audio equipment
7. Once the interview is complete, take the following actions:
 - Ask your interviewee to sign the release form (Appendix II). Once signed, give the release form to the archivist and digital preservationist for safe-keeping.
 - Deliver the file to the digital archivist to properly store and archive the materials. Follow the guidelines of the NDSA Levels of Preservation and Digital Sustainance: Mini-Manual for Community Archivists.
 - Give the files to the transcript writer to create a written transcript of the interview. Once completed, the transfer writer should deliver the transcript to the digital preservationist.

8. Repeat steps four through seven, for as many interviewees as desired.
9. After interviews are completed and digitally preserved, the processing archivist and access archivist should work together to write a finding aid for the collection and individual items and strategize a plan for making the interviews publicly available.
 - Access to the interviews might be made available on Vimeo, via the archive's website, or through a content management system. Note that some interviews might have restrictions, based on the wishes and requests of the interviewee. Take privacy needs into consideration when sharing the interviews.
10. Continue the process of interviewing people and add to the collection over time and add to the collection for as long as necessary and beneficial. Whenever possible, invite members of the community of various ages to participate.
10. There are many possibilities of how the oral history project may evolve. Meet with community members on a semi-regular basis to discuss future happenings with the collection. Possible creative outcomes include:
 - Re-interpreting the oral histories by performing stories from the recordings with community members
 - Create a compilation of clips and add related pictures and video, and share on social media or Vimeo.
 - Ask community patrons to listen and submit commentary and reactions to hearing the stories on the recordings.

ORAL HISTORY INITIATIVE APPENDIX I: # TALKSTORYTALKPLACE INFOGRAPHIC BY DEBBIE J. CHO



Graphic courtesy of [FFF Media](http://www.ffmedia.com), the Los Angeles Contemporary Archive, and WAPOW, and Debbie L. Cho.

Created by FORM follows FUNCTION and implemented by the Los Angeles Contemporary Archive, #TalkStoryTalkPlace is an intergenerational participatory documentary project about places using an oral place-based history method. The project is a means for youth to engage with older adults to help preserve stories about places in their neighborhoods.

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APPENDIX II: LEGAL AGREEMENT RELEASE FORM

SAMPLE LEGAL AGREEMENT

I, _____, do hereby give to _____ the series of interviews _____ recorded with me beginning on or about _____ to be used for any research, educational, or other purpose that _____ may deem appropriate. I give these as an unrestricted gift and I transfer to _____ all right, title, and interest, including copyright. I understand that I may still use the information in the recordings myself without seeking permission from _____.

I have read and agree to _____'s Use Policy, which outlines the current and likely future uses of interviews donated to _____ collection.

Unless otherwise specified above, I place no restrictions on access to and use of the interviews.

Interviewee (Signature)

(Typed Name)

(Address)

(Phone Number)

(E-mail Address)

(Date)

Release form courtesy of the UCLA Center for Oral History Research.