



Best Practices and Programming Guide

June 2017



What is 365Stories Digital Storytelling Network?

Digital stories are online personal narratives, frequently employing multimedia components of narrative, text, images, and sound, that foster dialogue and empower vulnerable voices. The 365Stories Digital Storytelling Network, developed in 2015 by the Regional Public Engagement Specialist (REPS) office at U.S. Embassy Jakarta and currently supported by the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs' Collaboratory and the Bureau of International Information Programs, offers digital storytelling training and mentoring through American Spaces to youth in the ASEAN region, providing opportunities to blend indigenous forms of oral storytelling with contemporary social media-making passions. Thus far, we have trained approximately 350 young people in 10 regional workshops in Indonesia and Malaysia. Participants have gone on to produce over 50 online, multimedia stories, many of which can be seen on the 365Stories [Tumblr](#) site.

365Stories supports young people in expressing themselves in persuasive and compelling manners, honing their digital literacy, writing, and critical thinking skills while enabling them to develop virtual connections and build online audiences. Amplifying the Bureau of East Asia and Pacific Affairs Joint Regional Strategy's goal of increasing the dignity of the region's peoples through supporting an informed citizenry capable of holding their government accountable, 365Stories equips youth to directly challenge negative and extremist messages and present accurate, balanced local accounts of matters on critical common priorities and shared interests including environmental protection; empowerment of girls and women; modeling tolerance; and promoting a healthy civil society.

While developed for the ASEAN region, the low-cost, short-form training methodologies of 365Stories are potentially applicable for other American Spaces in other regions. Thus, we offer this abbreviated best practices and programming guide, with more details, templates, sample presentations, etc. available upon request from myamericajakarta@state.gov. For further best practices related to storytelling and other sample projects, please contact ecacollaboratory@state.gov.

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Workshop Elements

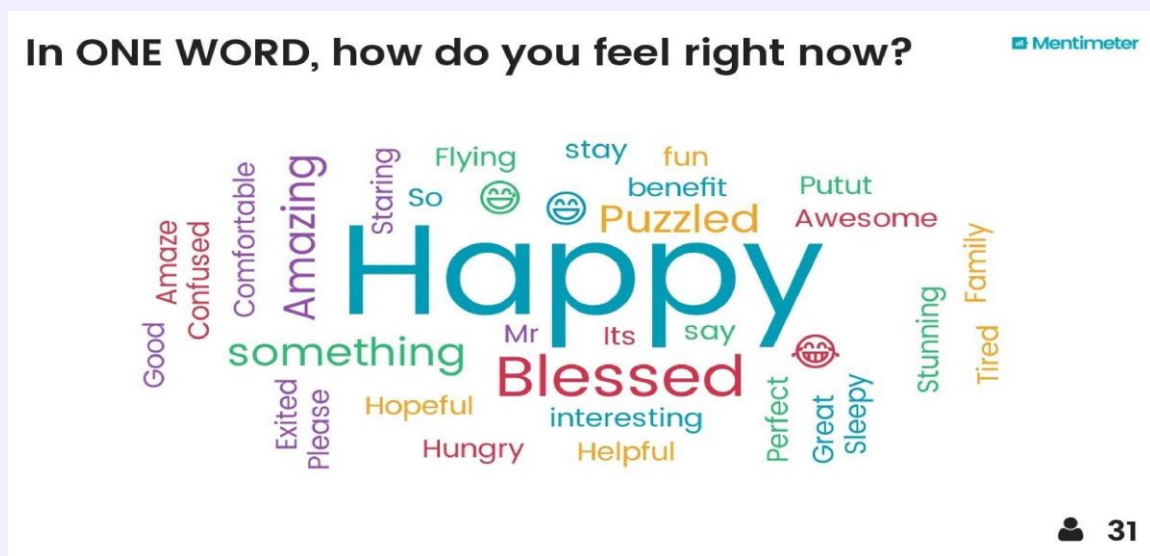
One-day (or two half-day) workshops provide the time to communicate basic digital storytelling ideas and to help participants get organized with their storytelling projects. Here are some specific recommendations:

- ❑ **Theory of digital storytelling:** session(s) led by an expert focusing on the craft of storytelling, as well as concepts of news literacy and journalistic ethics (see Appendix 2 for a sample content overview).
- ❑ **Techniques of digital storytelling:** session(s) led by an expert focusing on putting together an effective story, choice of tools and platforms, building online audiences, etc (see Appendix 1 for a sample content overview).
- ❑ **Trainers:** to sufficiently communicate the theoretical and technical aspects of digital storytelling, consider partnering a journalist or storytelling practitioner with a video-maker or vlogger as trainers. See Appendix 2 for 365Stories trainer profiles.



- ❑ **Small-group discussions and brainstorming:** with this type of content, facilitated processes for small-group discussions and brainstorming are valuable. See Appendix 3 for sample group brainstorming questions.
- ❑ **Expert feedback and mentoring:** build in workshop time for consultations with experts on individual and group ideas.

- ❑ **Thematic orientation:** identify a primary set of themes for your digital storytelling workshop that tie in with Mission goals and help keep participants focused For example, in a workshop focused on environmental protection, we asked participants to choose one of the following primary themes for their stories: clean air/water, wildlife conservation, transportation, and green living. In another workshop, we asked participants to tackle broader themes of girls and women, diversity, democracy, and nature.
- ❑ **Platform-agnostic:** consider sharing about multiple platforms for digital storytelling (Steller, Instagram, YouTube, Tumblr, etc.) and discussing the benefits of each, not favoring one over the other.
- ❑ **Live polling:** you may want to employ live polling to gauge audience sentiment during the workshops. For example, we used a free online polling tool called Mentimeter to engage our participants (see Appendix 4 for sample polls). This also helped participants feel comfortable with Mentimeter when it came time for our digital storytelling competition, when we used this tool for live voting on winning stories.



Live Polling

Branding

When hosting a digital storytelling workshop or series, develop a clear brand from the outset.

- ❑ Design a series name/tagline: For example, “365Stories Digital Storytelling Network: Everyone can be a reporter. Help your community tell its stories.”

- ❑ Establish a graphic identity.
- ❑ Create a site for showcasing storytelling content. For example, we used [Tumblr](#), but a YouTube channel could also be used.
- ❑ Establish a hashtag that can be used across different social media platforms. For example, #365storiesdsn

Technical Requirements

- ❑ Provide wifi at the American Space (best possible bandwidth).
- ❑ Encourage participants to bring the device(s) they plan to use to create their digital story (computer, tablet, smartphone, video camera, etc).
- ❑ Make laptops, tablets, etc. available at the American Space to those who may not have them.
- ❑ Offer the American Space's technical and information assistance for participants who will research, edit, and beta test their digital stories.



Participant Selection

In selecting digital storytelling workshop participants:

- ❑ Determine your selection criteria. For example, priority participants for 365Stories workshops included young leaders from Islamic boarding schools, rural areas, and small NGOs, particularly those who had no prior involvement with the American Spaces hosting workshops in their communities.
- ❑ Try to keep workshops small (maximum of 25 participants) to allow for effective group work and ample feedback from trainers.
- ❑ Consider issuing a call for participants in conjunction with the American Space hosting the workshop; applicants should be asked to submit a short statement detailing their goals and how they expect the experience to affect their communities and themselves. American Spaces staff could take the lead in selecting participants (taking into account participant selection criteria).
- ❑ Develop a short pre-survey for selected participants to better understand their expectations, skill sets, needs, etc. For example, see Appendix 5 for sample pre-survey questions.

Digital Storytelling Competitions

While a competitive competition is not a critical follow-up to digital storytelling workshops, it can encourage participants to build upon what they learned with a tangible product. After experimenting with a few methods of running digital storytelling competitions, here are our best practices.

- ❑ Choose a theme/set of themes around which to anchor the competition.
- ❑ Consider allowing participants to work individually or in groups, as needs dictate.
- ❑ Build in a mechanism for further mentoring/feedback/beta-testing from workshop trainers and American Space staffers, after the workshop.
- ❑ Establish a reasonable time limit for video stories (for example, no longer than 3 minutes).

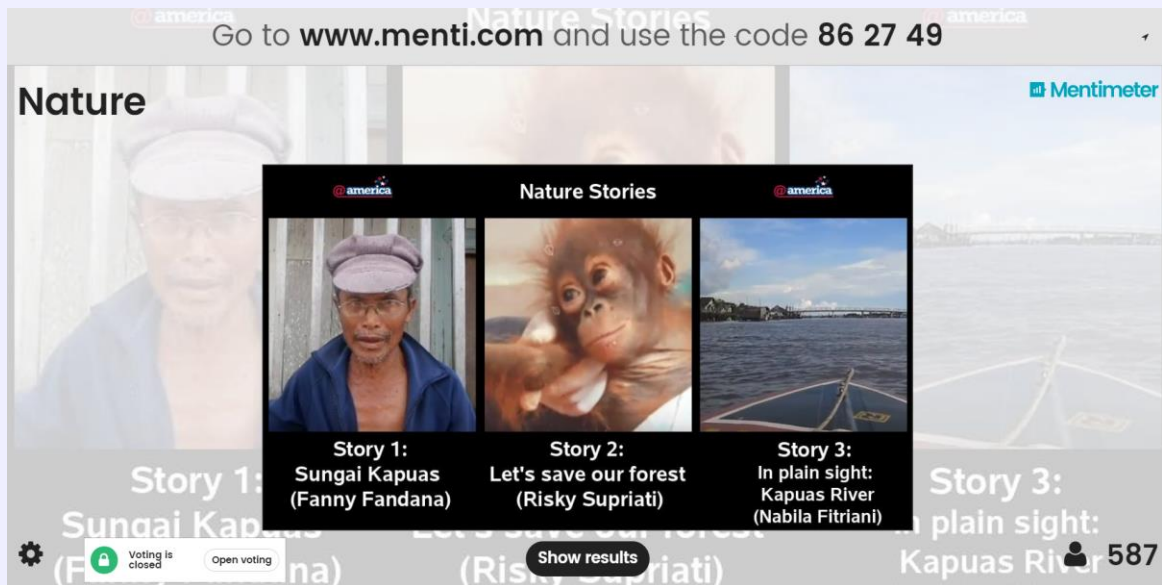


Online competition

- ❑ Allow participants to create/present their digital stories on whatever native online platform suits them best (Steller, Instagram, YouTube, etc.).
- ❑ Select a platform to aggregate digital stories to enable them to be in all one place, for purposes of voting and showcasing (we used Tumblr).
- ❑ Conduct online voting via the aggregated platform. For example, to select digital storytelling semifinalists, we opted to crowdsource public voting on digital stories using Tumblr, actively promoting voting via social media channels, and selecting the semifinalists based on the number of likes they received. A juried approach to voting also works.

Live competition

- ❑ Consider tying in some public speaking/story pitching training or coaching to the event.
- ❑ Establish time guidelines for story introductions and demonstrations.
- ❑ For non-juried voting, consider how to structure the voting to enable maximum audience participation/ engagement. For example, 365Stories used Mentimeter to enable live audiences in 4 American Spaces, as well as those tuning into the competition's livestream, to simultaneously vote on winners.



Online Voting

Follow-up

Following up with your workshop participants is critical to determining your program's impact. Here are some best practices.

- ❑ Run a simple end-of-day workshop survey (see [example](#)).
- ❑ Conduct a post-survey (schedule for 1 month after the workshop to determine how concepts are sticking). See Appendix 6 for sample post-survey questions.
- ❑ Honor/share the resulting work via Embassy and Space social media channels.
- ❑ If you run a competition, consider engaging the semi-finalists in leading further programming in their Spaces/communities (showing their work, sharing what they learned about digital storytelling, moderating virtual exchange programs with American storytellers).

Appendices

Appendix 1: Sample Content Overview

Theoretical content

- Storytelling traditions/why we tell stories (inform, persuade, sell, etc.).
- News literacy (telling fact from fiction, news hoaxes, entertainment vs. news).
- Profession of journalism (fact checking, going out into the field to get full stories, telling stories in the public interest and not for propagandistic or financial reasons, keeping a balanced perspective, watchdog role of journalists).
- Importance of involving public in dialogue about the topic, setting up two-way communication with audience.
- Digital storytelling formats/examples ([StoryCenter](#), [USAID Stories](#), [StoryCorps](#), [Humans of New York](#))
- Putting together a story (understanding your underlying message, using personal experience, elements of an effective story)

Technical content

- State of documentary/educational video content industry in Indonesia (shifts in platforms and consumption trends, role of ratings; challenges in building audiences; perceived common problems, such as inadequate background research, push to the mainstream/sensationalism).
- Explanation of production planning process (production values, interviewing technique, linear/nonlinear structures, storyboarding, etc – finding the right platform for a story, using technology and creativity to the fullest to bring your story to life, storytelling as an art form).
- Using available equipment to achieve the best recording results.
- Audio/video production norms/tips.
- Role of editing in keeping audience attention.
- Increasing the publishing value/marketability of your digital stories.
- Youtube vlogging best practices, content creation, and audience development strategies.
- Introduction to the [Steller](#) digital storytelling app/community.

Appendix 2: Sample Trainer Profiles:

Theoretical content

- Aulia Masna, independent journalist who focuses on the business and innovations in technology industry, mobile experiences, and development of the digital economy.
- Sebastian Partogi, *Jakarta Post* journalist who focuses on human rights, education, business, and lifestyle.

Technical content

- Dennis Adishwara, founder and CEO at Layaria, one of Indonesia's first multi-platform online video content creator networks.
- Gerald Sebastian Fudiman, Co-Founder of YouTube's Kok Bisa? channel that creates and provides animated educational videos aimed at educating audiences about diverse topics such as STEM, Indonesian culture and society, psychology, geography, politics, etc.
- Deddy Avianto, independent graphic designer, video producer, blogger for advertising industry.

Appendix 3: Sample Group Brainstorming Questions

Each person speaks, others listen/provide feedback.

- Around which theme are you most interested in anchoring your story?
 - Women and girls
 - Diversity
 - Nature
 - Democracy
- Try to express in a sentence or two what your initial idea might be for your story.
- What do you think your audience should know, or what message should they get after engaging with your story?
- What obstacles do you anticipate in creating your story?
- Which format(s) do you intend to use (photo, video, text, hybrid, etc.)
- On which platform will you launch your story (Tumblr, Steller, Instagram, etc.)

Appendix 4: Sample Audience Polls (Mentimeter)

- **Poll 1:** In one word, how do you feel right now (word cloud, conducted upon arrival, halfway through, and at end of workshop to gauge participants' sentiments).
- **Poll 2:** What is your main expectation of today's workshop (conducted during intro session)
 - Get to know new people
 - Be inspired
 - Have a good time
 - Learn something new
 - Other
- **Poll 3:** Your favorite social media platform is (conducted during intro session)
 - Twitter
 - Instagram
 - Facebook
 - Snapchat
 - Steller
- **Poll 4:** Are you ready? (set up with a series of emojis reflecting participants' current feelings, conducted before launching into theoretical session)

Appendix 5: Sample Pre-survey:

- What is your top goal for attending this workshop?
- Do you have any past experience with making videos or producing digital stories? If yes, please explain briefly, providing links to your work, if possible:
- We prefer that you bring your own wifi-enabled device (the same one you would be using to create your digital story). Please let us know which device you will bring:
 - Tablet
 - Smartphone
 - Laptop
 - I do not have a device and will need to borrow one for the workshop
- Which social media platforms do you current use?
 - Twitter
 - Instagram
 - Facebook
 - Snapchat
 - Steller
 - Wordpress
 - Other (describe)

Appendix 6: Sample Post-survey

- On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “strongly disagree” and 5 being “strongly agree,” please give us your feedback on the following statements:
 - The 365Stories DSN workshop has helped me understand the reasons why citizen journalism and digital storytelling are important.
 - In the 365Stories DSN workshop, I learned the basics of planning and executing a digital story.
 - I want to make more digital stories.
 - I want to have more chances to learn about digital storytelling.
- Did you participate in the 365Stories DSN competition by submitting a digital story to Tumblr? (Yes/No)
- If yes, was this a good experience for you? (Yes/No)
- If no, why did you decide not to participate?
 - I didn’t have enough time
 - I didn’t have the right equipment
 - I didn’t know what to do
 - I wasn’t interested
 - Other (explain)
- Did you participate in the 365Stories DSN semi-finals at @america? (Yes/No)
- If yes, was this a good experience for you? (Yes/No)
 - Comment:
- If yes, what are your next steps for continuing your digital storytelling work?
- Do you have any other feedback for us?