

# NARRATIVE STRATEGY CHECKLIST



## Core narrative(s): What fundamental truth anchors this campaign?

If you could establish one core belief with this campaign, what would it be?

### Examples:

- Animals are someone, not something
- Black Lives Matter; Love is love

## Map the landscape: Understand the context in order to shift it

- What **harmful** narratives are we up against and need to weaken?
- What **helpful** narratives already exist that we could reinforce?
- Would it be helpful to reinforce any of these tested **persuasive narratives**?
  - Social progress / Animal abilities / Bigger us / Values & morality

## North star: What future do you want people to picture?

What compelling sentence communicates this campaign's inspiring vision?

### Examples:

- A future where forests and oceans are alive with animals living life on their terms.
- A future where everyone is free to love who they want to.

## Core frame(s): How you define the issue shapes what seems possible

Frame the issue in away that connects with shared values and make the solution feel obvious.

### Examples:

- Farming animals is harmful to animals, farmers and the planet = system change
- Everyone deserves to love and marry who they choose = marriage equality

## Know your audiences: Who are you trying to move?

- Which audience is most likely to **care** and be motivated to take action?
- Which audience is **conflicted** – believing both helpful and harmful narratives about the issue – and needs to be persuaded?
- **Test:** Would someone who likes animals but hasn't thought deeply about this issue find the campaign relatable and reasonable?

## Stories that transform: Does it take people on a journey?



When telling stories (investigations, sanctuary stories, campaign actions), use these elements:

- **Characters:** Who's the protagonist taking action? (Hero) Who's affected? (Victim) What stands in the way of a better future? (Villain)
- **Emotion:** What do you want people to feel? Balance difficult emotions with more hopeful ones. Connect to how your audience wants to feel about themselves.
- **Conflict:** What's at stake? What creates urgency?
- **Transformation:** What changes? What becomes possible?
- **Meaning:** What's the takeaway? How does it connect to core narrative(s), values + vision?

## Messages that persuade: Does it connect with audiences on multiple levels?



- **Aspirational:** Does it connect with who people want to be and the society they want?
- **Social proof:** Does it show people that others care about this issue and are taking action?
- **Engaging:** Does it spark curiosity or reflection?
- **Emotional:** Does it connect with people's hearts as well as their heads?
- **Simple:** Is it clear and memorable?
- **Message structure:** Values > Problem > Solution > Vision > Action

## Words that can help: What everyday language can deepen our story?



Words shape thinking. Choose language that reflects your core narrative(s) and values:

- Use who/they/she/he/their individual name; avoid *it*.
- Use cows/chickens/sea animals; avoid *livestock/poultry/seafood*.
- Use killing/farming animals; avoid *culling/animal farming*.
- Use animal neighbours/our animal cousins; avoid *non-humans/voiceless*.

## Quick A/B social media test: Understand what works

1. Duplicate a message.
2. Version A = original.  
Version B = change ONE thing (e.g. word, image, ask).
3. Track simple metrics: likes, shares, link clicks, comments etc.
4. Pick the winner. Test this variable 2+ more times with different messages.
5. If Version B continues to perform better, save the winning element (e.g. word, image, ask) in your team style guide.

Unsure how to apply this?  
Contact us for a quick chat  
or drop us a line on the  
**Slack #ask channel.**

