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**Storytelling for Advocacy & Fundraising Cohort (2026 Winter)
Request for Applications**

An 8-course storytelling training series intended to equip leaders from 20 Inland-Empire serving nonprofit organizations, with annual budgets above \$300,000, with the tools and knowledge to build a storytelling culture at their organizations that inspires action through advocacy and funding. Each participating organization will receive a \$1,500 grant upon successful completion of the training sessions. To apply, [click here](#).

Overview

Across the nonprofit sector, leaders are navigating increasingly complex challenges: competing for attention in a crowded media environment, making the case for funding in a shifting philanthropic landscape, and advocating for policy change in an era of heightened polarization. Yet too often, their most potent tool, storytelling, is underdeveloped or underutilized.

Stories have the power to build empathy, shift perceptions, mobilize resources, and inspire action in ways data alone cannot. But telling stories responsibly, especially when they involve lived experience, requires skill, care, and strategic alignment with advocacy and fundraising goals.

To support NPOs in building their storytelling capacity, IEHPF hosted an IE Vibrant Health Forum in May 2025, titled [Storytelling for Impact: Tools to Inspire & Influence Change](#). Through participant feedback, the need for additional training was lifted up. In response, IEHPF has partners with Kristen Caloca, [KMC Social Impact Strategies](#), to develop a program that combines theoretical understanding and practical skills to enhance nonprofit leaders' ability to lift the stories of their clients in ethical and effective ways.

The **IEHPF Storytelling for Advocacy & Fundraising Cohort (2026 Winter)** will equip nonprofit leaders with the frameworks, tools, and peer support they need to harness storytelling to inspire change, particularly given the urgency of now and changes in funding that will impact communities.

Organizations will be able to select up to 2 staff and/or board members to participate in an **8-class storytelling training program, with opportunities for individual coaching sessions** with an IE-based strategic communications expert. In total, 20 organizations will be selected for this training opportunity.

This training is funded by IEHP Foundation and will be provided at no cost to participants. Additionally, organizations with participants who successfully complete the training will receive a \$1,500 grant, intended to build the organization's capacity and infrastructure for effective storytelling.

Training Goals & Objectives

The overall goal of the **IEHPF Storytelling for Advocacy & Fundraising Cohort (2026 Winter)** is to develop an informed and engaged cohort of nonprofit professionals who are equipped with the skills

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necessary to develop an ethical, effective and sustainable storytelling culture for their organization. This overall goal will be accomplished through the following learning objectives:

- Connection with peers in similar roles and causes, cultivating a trusted network for collaboration and feedback.
- Learning and applying storytelling frameworks for advocacy and fundraising that inspire action and investment.
- Integrating trauma-informed and ethical storytelling practices that honor the dignity of those whose stories are shared.
- Adapting stories to multiple audiences, from policymakers to donors, ensuring resonance and alignment with organizational strategy.
- Building a sustainable storytelling culture within their organization that extends beyond the cohort

Sessions will integrate peer learning, lecture-style presentations, small-group activities, and real-world case examples that bridge theory to practice.

Storytelling Coach

The training and coaching sessions will be led by Kristen Caloca – a local and award-winning strategist, trusted advisor, and social impact leader with over 22 years of experience helping organizations amplify their voice, scale their impact, and strengthen their resilience in the Inland Empire and beyond. [Click here](#) to learn more about her background and experiences.

Participant Expectations

There are two requirements for participants to successfully complete the training program and receive a certificate of completion and \$1,500 capacity building grant for their organization: attendance and reporting.

- **Class Attendance:** Each organization **must identify at least one participant** to attend all classes in their entirety, as classes are not recorded and each class provides a foundation for the class to come.
- **Main Participant:** This team member must be either a part-time or full-time staff member of the organization. Their primary job responsibilities should include marketing and communications activities and deliverables. To fulfill the class attendance requirement, the same main participant from the organization must attend all classes and complete all homework assignments.

- **Coaching Sessions:** Participants are also encouraged to schedule coaching sessions, as needed with the Storytelling Coach.
- **Time Commitment:** Homework will be assigned for each class and it is anticipated that homework assignments will take approximately 2 hours to complete. In total, considering both homework and class time, participants should anticipate a commitment of approximately 4 hours per week from January – April 2026.
- **Class Location:** All class sessions will take place in-person at IEHP Center for Learning & Innovation in Rancho Cucamonga. [Click here](#) for the Schedule of Classes to see the exact dates, times and locations for the classes.
- **Additional Participant:** Organizations have the option to include an additional participant in the cohort. This can be anyone within the organization who might benefit from the training sessions, such as an executive leader or board member. The IEHP Foundation is offering this option in response to feedback highlighting the need for spaces where multiple leaders from the same organization can learn and collaborate. It's important to note that including this additional participant is not a requirement of the grant.
- **Reporting Expectations:** To capture the impact of the training, main participants will be required to complete two surveys. Each survey is intended to be completed by the leaders who attended the classes and access to the survey will be provided via email no less than two weeks before the completion deadline. Each survey is anticipated to take no more than 30 minutes to complete.
 1. **First Post Survey** due May 1, 2026, by 5pm PT. An email will be sent during the week of the last class.
 2. **Second Post Survey** due August 31, 2026, by 5pm PT. An email will be sent no later than Monday, August 17, 2026.

Optional feedback surveys will be provided after classes for participants to ask questions and provide immediate feedback on the classes.

Eligibility & Criteria

Nonprofit, public benefit organizations with evidence of tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and:

- Have been operating for no less than 3 years (2022 – present).
- Have had an annual operating budget over \$300,000 for the past 3 years (2022 – present).

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- Are headquartered and/or have a significant presence in Riverside and/or San Bernardino County
- Have programs/services primarily serve **Inland Empire children, youth or families** from one or more of the following IEHPF priority populations:
 - Low-income households and/or those living in poverty
 - Rural and remote communities
 - Communities experiencing the poorest health outcomes. This includes cities with a Healthy Places Index (HPI) score lower than the 25th percentile. For more information about HPI, [click here](#).
- Provide direct services, lead collective action and/or engage in advocacy efforts focused on at least one of IEHPF's priority Vital Condition action areas below. For more information about Vital Conditions for Health & Well-Being, [click here](#).
 - Basic Needs for Health & Safety
 - Access to healthy food and nutrition services
 - Reducing unhealthy behaviors and addictions
 - Access to physical health services
 - Access to mental health services
 - Meaningful Work & Wealth
 - Access to education programs/ career pathways for healthcare workforce
 - Access to education programs/career pathway for social service workforce
 - Humane Housing
 - Access to safe living conditions for unhoused families
 - Access to affordable housing for housing insecure
 - Access to home ownership
- Have a 2025 Candid Guidestar Seal of Transparency rating of either gold or platinum. [Click here](#) to learn more about how to obtain this status.
- Have two organizational representatives who can commit to attending the 8 class sessions and completing homework assignments. These representatives must include an Executive Leader with decision-making authority and a Communications Leader with marketing and communications responsibilities.

Organizations that are **not** eligible to apply include:

- Fiscally sponsored organizations
- Private foundations
- 501(c)(4) organizations

Organizations who are part of the 2025-2026 Champions for Vibrant Health Leadership Network **may** be eligible to apply. Please email grants@iehpfoundation.org to determine eligibility.

Evaluation of Applications

A total of 20 organizations will be selected to participate in the cohort. Applications will be reviewed by IEHP Foundation staff and volunteers, with evaluation criteria aligned with IEHP Foundation’s mission, values and priority populations.

In particular, special consideration will be given to how applicants demonstrate how participation in this grant program will help expand the **ARCH** of their organizational strength. ARCH includes:

- **Accountability** to funders and community by being operationally efficient through healthy finances and strong leadership.
- **Results-oriented** by striving to achieve results that are identifiable, measurable, demonstrate progress and provide opportunities for learning and improvement.
- **Connectedness** to community and partnership networks, coalitions and collaborations.
- **Health Outcomes** by improving organization’s position to be a trusted messenger of health to IEHPF’s priority populations through improving health outcomes related to IEHPF’s priority Vital Condition action areas.

Key Dates and Deadlines

- **September 30, 2025:** Application Opens
- **October 14, 2025:** Virtual Information Session, live, from 2pm – 3pm PT. [Click here](#) to register.
- **October 20, 2025:** Recording of Virtual Information Session available on IEHPF website at <https://iehpfoundation.org/grants/>.
- **November 3, 2025:** Applications due by 5:00 pm PT.
- **December 8, 2025:** Applicants notified of final selection status via email by 5:00 pm PT.
- **January 12 – April 24, 2026:** Bi-weekly class sessions (see [Class Schedule](#)).
- **May 1, 2026:** First Post Survey Due by 5pm PT.
- **May 4 - 8, 2026:** Grant payments remitted to organizations who successfully completed post survey and met attendance requirements.
- **August 17, 2026:** Second Post Survey Sent.
- **August 31, 2026:** Second Post Survey due by 5pm PT*.

Failure to complete the program requirements may jeopardize eligibility for future IEHPF grants.

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How To Apply

Applications must be submitted in IEHP Foundation's grant management system **no later than Monday, November 3, 2025, by 5:00 pm PT**. To access the grant management system, [click here](#).

To preview the full grant application, [click here](#). Late applications will not be considered.

Communications

Email communications regarding the status of your application will come from IEHP Foundation Grants <administrator@grantinterface.com> or grants@iehpfoundation.org. Make sure both these email addresses are marked safe on your server to avoid communications being blocked or sent to a SPAM folder.

Additional Questions

For any additional questions, comments or accommodation needs, please email Sara Omari, Grants & Strategy Manager, at grants@iehpfoundation.org. Please allow 1 – 3 business days for a response.