Leading the Conversation
Reframing How You Talk About Your Nonprofit
Midland, TX
Nonprofit Management Center
26 April 2018
National Human Services Assembly

Our members reach and support nearly every household in America
Creating a New Narrative

• Public’s Current View
• Sparking a New Dialogue
• Applying the New Frame
FrameWorks Institute

• Strategic Frame Analysis®
  – Evidence-based, multi-disciplinary communications research.
  – Empirically identify the most effective ways to reframe social issues.
  – Grounded in an understanding of cultural models and neuroscience.
What Are Human Services?
Reflection
In these tough times people need more support, not less! This is no time to cut funding to human service issues.

In tough economic times, people who get those programs have a better quality of life than the rest of us! Must be nice to have someone else pick up the tab...

Source: FrameWorks Institute, You Say They Think, 2014.
We are failing to do right by children and youth. Child poverty, youth homelessness, and juvenile delinquency threaten the health and well-being of the next generation. Isn’t it time to invest more?

What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger! Poor kids have to fight to overcome adversity, which makes them tougher and ultimately more successful. It helps if they have good strong parents behind them, helping them make the right choices.

Source: FrameWorks Institute, You Say They Think, 2014.
Mental Shortcuts

Unfortunately, this is how the brain works:

Sir! We are receiving information that conflicts with the core belief system!

Get rid of it.
Cultural Models
Cultural Models

7 DAY FORECAST

SUN MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT

STORMY 42° 45° 45° 40° 45° 1250°

38° 40° 35° 30° 1147°
What is well-being?

- Financial Self-Sufficiency
- Physical Health

What threatens well-being?

- Lack of Willpower
- Bad Parents
- Dangerous Communities

Human Services SWAMP

How do we improve well-being?

- Individuals are Responsible
- Government is Inept and Corrupt
- Informal Networks

What are human services and how do they work?

- Cognitive Hole
- Direct Services
- Kindness and Charity
- Only the Basics and Temporary
• Vulnerable/At-risk
• Needy/Worthy
• Charity
• Argue, Snark, Shame
• Repeating the Myth
Avoid Correcting Mistakes

- Misremembered the myths as true.
- Got worse over time.
- Attributed false info to the CDC.

Where Does Swamp-Thinking Lead?

- Funding (public and private)
- Contracts (structure, delays, lack of COLAs)
- Policy Development (work reqs, drug testing)
- Limited Engagement (advocacy, volunteering)
Explanatory Tone

- Sensible
- Doable
- All in this Together

Source: FrameWorks Institute, Taking Tone Seriously as a Frame Cue, 2002.
What cultural models might “eat” this message?

Growing up in poverty increases the chances that an American will continue to live in poverty as an adult. That's of course bad for the people directly affected and also bad for the economy. Furthermore, it casts a long shadow on The American Dream.

The real tragedy here is that we know what programs work to combat intergenerational poverty. We simply fail to support them.

A common response to intergenerational poverty is to scale back forms of direct aid to families — welfare, food stamps, etc. — that are frequently labeled as creating dependency. This position flies in opposition to the facts. Research shows that giving aid to a family increases the chances that a child will not continue to live in poverty as an adult. If we want to end intergenerational poverty in America, we should be giving families more aid — not less.

To state the obvious, money is a big deal. Having more money makes all sorts of things possible — a healthier diet, higher quality child care, a move to a safer environment, a trip to a museum or other experiences that expand a child's world. Kids with access to any of these things are more likely to thrive.
Episodic vs Thematic

- About Individuals
- Events-oriented
- Psychological
- Defines Issues as Private
- Appeal to Consumers
- Better Information

Fix the Person

- About Issues
- Trends-oriented
- Political/Environmental
- Defines Issues as Public
- Appeal to Citizens
- Better Policies

Fix the Condition
The Solution: Framing
I'M NOT ARGUING...
I'M EXPLAINING WHY I'M RIGHT
Why does framing matter?

People will respond differently to the same core idea depending on how the idea is described.
Shift the Conversation

Shift the Conversation

What if cigarette ads told the Truth?

Research-based Communications

Sample
4000+ online participants - nationally representative sample

Random assignment to a treatment group

Treatment Groups
1. Frame A
2. Frame B
3. Frame C
4. Control (No Prime)

Outcome Measures
• Attitudes
• Knowledge
• Policy Support

Analysis
Diffs btwn treatment and control groups (controlling for demographic variability)
A Well-Framed Story Arc:
Answering the public’s big questions about social issues

- Why does this matter?
- What’s this about? How does this work?
- If it’s not working, why not?
- What can we do about it?

- VALUES
- METAPHORS
- EXAMPLES
- EXPLANATIONS
- PRINCIPLES
- EFFICACY
- SOLUTIONS
Human Potential:
Human services help everyone to reach our potential, so we can all contribute fully to our communities.
Human Potential

Your issue matters because...

“When we support well-being, we make sure that everyone can reach their potential and fully contribute to our communities.”

Redirect public perceptions from:

• Individuals are Responsible
• Well-Being = Financial Self-Sufficiency
• Well-Being = Physical Health

Conveys human services as:

• Applicable to everyone
• When people reach their full potential, everyone benefits
Which Value works? That’s an empirical question.

**VALUE:**
- Autonomy
- Opportunity for All
- Compassion
- Human Potential

Percentage point increase in policy support vs. control:
- **Autonomy:** 2.4, 3.2 (Not Statistically Significant)
- **Opportunity for All:** 2.5, 0.8 (Not Statistically Significant)
- **Compassion:** 2.8, 1.3, 3.6 (Statistically Significant)
- **Human Potential:** 5.4, 3.9, 4.4 (Statistically Significant)

* = Statistically Significant \( p < .10 \)
This #HungerActionMonth, join @FeedingAmerica to help people reach their full potential: bit.ly/29JTnv7.
Human Potential

Center on Poverty
@GtownLawPovCntr

How do you make sure that everyone has the chance to shine, to unleash the potential they have to contribute - @SenatorHassan
#UnequalStart
For America to reach its full economic and moral potential, all kids must have the opportunity to thrive: [bit.ly/2i28S7d](https://bit.ly/2i28S7d)
Framed with Vulnerable

HSC strengthens the not-for-profit human services sector’s ability to improve the lives of New Yorkers in need.

Reframed with Potential

HSC strengthens New York’s nonprofit human services sector, ensuring all New Yorkers, across diverse neighborhoods, cultures, and generations reach their full potential.
Every human being shares the same human need for food, water, and a safe place to live. In fact, you could say these are the ingredients for good health.

By five years old, our food and fitness preferences are often set. Which makes the link between our childhood and adult health strong. It’s also easier to learn a good habit than break a bad one!

Roughly one-third of Texas children are overweight or obese. HealthStart fills the urgent need for early health education today so our children and communities can thrive tomorrow.

Health Start helps children to build strong brains and bodies so they can reach their full potential and contribute to our communities. We do this by working with childcare centers, schools, and health care clinics so children can establish good health habits early in life.

Roughly one-third of Texas children are overweight or obese, which can lead to significant health problems later in life. By five years old, our food and fitness preferences are often set. Which makes the link between our childhood and adult health strong. It’s also easier to learn a good habit than break a bad one!
Framing Activity

“What do you do?”
We often answer this question with our title or our organization. What if we responded with the WHY of what we do?

Imagine that you’re introducing yourself at a party or networking event.

Set up your work with Human Potential, using the Value before mentioning particulars.

Example: I’m Nancy, and my work makes sure that the gifts and talents of older Americans remain available to our communities after they retire. I run a program that taps their skills for volunteer-run organizations.

Write your introduction on an index card. Then we will share them with the group.
Metaphors Help You Navigate the Swamp

Uses the power of analogy to channel attention to certain features of an issue - and redirect attention away from others.
A Well-Framed Story Arc:
Answering the public’s big questions about social issues

**Human Potential:**
Human services help everyone to reach our potential, so we can all contribute fully to our communities

**Construction:**
Well-being is built, by a team, over time

*Why does this matter?*

*What’s this about? How does this work?*

*If it’s not working, why not?*

*What can we do about it?*
Building Well-Being

Emphasizes *the need for support and reinforcement* throughout a lifetime

Describes well-being as something much *more than meeting basic needs*

Implies a sense of *communal responsibility* (can’t build a house by yourself!)

Source: FrameWorks Institute, Talking Human Services MessageMemo, 2015
‘We can’t let the social safety net become a hammock.’
Building A Greater Community
Community well-being is the set of values, principles, policies and programs which enable everyone to reach their potential and fully contribute to a community.

The mission of the Human Services Collaborative is to build a greater Peoria area by recognizing the impact of—and leveraging support for—everyone’s well-being.

Well-being is built just like a home is built.
A home is not a collection of boards and nails and shingles. It contains all those pieces and more, but it doesn’t become a great place to live until everything is correctly fastened together.

Similarly, a community provides well-being when everyone can access economic stability as well as educational, cultural and social opportunities; everyone has medical care; and everyone feels cared for and safe. Only then can individuals reach their full potential.
Framed with Crisis + Individual

For over 50 years, Caritas of Austin has been a turning point in peoples’ lives. Each year, we serve thousands of families and individuals who do not have a stable place to call home. Through comprehensive, relationship-based services, we turn crisis into stability and empowers people toward the life they want. We believe that a thriving community derives its strength from providing all members the opportunity to be self-reliant.

Reframed with Explanation

Caritas of Austin believes that when every person has a stable place to call home, they can realize their full potential and contribute to our community. We build wellbeing by making sure that people have a safe home, access to healthy groceries, jobs that provide a reliable living wage, and educational opportunities to learn life skills. All of us need a sturdy foundation and layers of support in our lives to thrive; that’s what creates a strong community. Our innovative, personalized and proven approach to building wellbeing and ending homelessness creates a more vibrant Austin for everyone.
Framed with Crisis

Austin Travis County Integral Care provides community-based behavioral health and developmental disabilities services in Travis County, administering an annual budget of $72 million of local, state and federal funding at 46 physical facilities. In the last year, Integral Care served more than 26,000 individuals and families, offering numerous services and programs year-round. Individuals receiving services at Integral Care are often in dire need of care and have a single or combined diagnosis of developmental disabilities, persistent mental illnesses, and/or substance use.

Reframed with Explanation

Integral Care helps build health and well-being so everyone has the foundation to reach their full potential. We support adults and children living with mental illness, substance use disorder and intellectual and developmental disabilities in Travis County. Our services include a 24-hour helpline for anyone who needs immediate support, ongoing counseling to improve mental health, drug and alcohol treatment to help with recovery, and housing to regain health and independence. Integral Care helps provide a strong foundation for well-being.
A Well-Framed Story Arc:
Answering the public’s big questions about social issues

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**Construction:**
Well-being is built, by a team, over time.

**Construction:**
Shaky foundations, missing materials, life’s storms can all negatively impact wellbeing.

What’s this about? How does this work?
If it’s not working, why not?
What can we do about it?
ABOUT US
One Voice Central Texas is a coalition of the leadership of over 85 nonprofit health and human service organizations unified by the common value that people come first. We represent the community’s support network for children and the elderly, opportunity youth, the hungry and the homeless, persons with disabilities, those who are illiterate, those who are immigrants, and victims of violence. We are also the voice for all of the rapidly growing populations in our community who are unable to access a standard of living that supports their health, safety, security, and general welfare.

OUR MISSION:
The mission of One Voice Central Texas is to convey the human service needs of the Austin area community to policy makers and the public and to support member organizations in meeting these needs.

WHO WE ARE
One Voice Central Texas is a coalition of the leadership of almost one hundred nonprofit health and human service organizations working to make sure that everyone can contribute to our community and thrive. We represent the integrated network of human services that connects everyone of all ages and circumstances to social resources, opportunities, and support so that each person can reach their highest potential. We are the voice for those in the community who may have difficulty weathering the life storms that affect all of us.

OUR MISSION:
One Voice Central Texas influences and educates policy makers and the public about what it takes for everyone in our community to thrive, and ensures our members have the tools and resources to be effective.
Our nonprofit organization is dedicated to helping those in need live healthy, productive lives. Since 1899, we have supported and empowered America’s most vulnerable groups, including veterans, seniors, people with disabilities, the homeless, those recovering from addictions, and other at-risk individuals. In collaboration with other nonprofits, we are able to advocate for the most vulnerable among us.
Framing Activity

Your group will be assigned a broad area of human services work.

Work together to “map” different examples of that work to the Construction metaphor. Try to come up with about 5 examples and how you might describe them using this tested Explanatory Metaphor.

*Quality Health Care* = reinforces a weakening foundation or builds resilience over time

*Basic needs assistance* = essential materials for maintaining a sturdy structure that can weather life’s storms

*Mentors* = architects helping to design a young person’s future

Bonus points for creativity! Double bonus points for using the Reframe Card!

Work for 15 minutes, then we’ll share out.
A Well-Framed Story Arc:
Answering the public’s big questions about social issues

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**Construction:**
Shaky foundations, missing materials, life’s storms can all negatively impact wellbeing.

**Construction:**
Well-being is about planning and maintenance.

**Life Cycle Examples**
Demonstrate how programs support well-being throughout life, show the scope of human services, and highlight prevention.

**Why does this matter?**

**What’s this about?**
How does this work?

**If it’s not working, why not?**

**What can we do about it?**
Examples Help You Navigate the Swamp

Illustrate particular facets of an issue, focusing on those that deepen understanding, motivate engagement, and drive policy support.
Life Cycle Examples

• **Be specific. Drop jargon.** Offer concrete examples to help people understand what the term means.

• **Provide examples of planning, prevention, and remediation.** Offering examples of the different types of services, reinforces a broader understanding of the functions of human services.

• **Emphasize a diverse array of recipients.** Given the default assumption that human services are *only* for people living in poverty, use examples to illustrate how we *all* rely on human services at points in our lives. *Broadening understanding of recipients is critical to cultivate support for human services.*

Source: FrameWorks Institute, Handed to them on a Plate: Map the Gaps Report, 2013.
Life Cycle Example

Our state relies on nonprofits to build and support well-being so that our state’s residents have what they need at every stage of life to do well socially, emotionally, financially, and physically.

This includes delivering services in early childhood that establish a solid foundation for health and development, providing the safe places and social resources that young people need to thrive, making sure that adults have access to good jobs and affordable homes, and ensuring that older adults are able to remain connected to their communities.
Framed with Crisis and Fatalism

Leading the Conversation

Framed with Vulnerable Populations

Hunger is everywhere: It’s in your community and very likely in your children’s school. Many people think that direct aid to working families – welfare, food banks, even tax credits – create dependency. “Let’s give people a hand up, not a hand out,” they say. This belief may make for a nifty sound bite, but it flies in opposition to the facts. Research shows that if you give aid to a family, you increase the chances that the child will not live in poverty as an adult. If we want to end poverty in America, we need to give families more support, not less.

Reframed with Construction/Storms/Life Cycle

When people are hit by an unexpected life storm—such as getting laid off during a recession or needing to care for an aging parent—we help to rebuild their well-being with a variety of human services. This includes advocating for income assistance and maintaining robust food banks – both useful tools for creating a strong foundation and a thriving community. We know from our research that well-nourished children do better in school, adults with access to healthy food are less likely to suffer from diabetes and obesity, while older adults need good nutrition to stay robust and active in their community.
Which of these *Life Cycle* Examples is framed most strategically?

a) Violence threatens Americans in every stage of life: infant neglect, childhood sexual trauma, and elder abuse are all occurring at epidemic proportions in our society.

b) When we establish a strong foundation for well-being through early learning programs, build on it through advocacy for youth development, and shore it up through opportunities to stay engaged throughout adulthood and later life, we make sure that our communities remain safe and vibrant.

c) Children who participate in early learning programs have benefits throughout their lifespan, from academic gains in elementary school, to decreased absences from school as adolescents, to reduced involvement in crime as adults.
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c) Children who participate in early learning programs have benefits throughout their lifespan, from academic gains in elementary school, to decreased absences from school as adolescents, to reduced involvement in crime as adults.
The Alliance for Strong Families and Communities believes that our country thrives when everyone is able to reach their full potential. Our strategic action network of hundreds of social sector organizations across the nation works with millions of people each day to help them build, maintain, and restore their physical, emotional, social, and economic well-being...

To guide our policy focus and collective advocacy efforts, the Alliance network launched a series of conversations to identify the foundational and structural building blocks that all families and communities need to foster well-being over the lifespan...

The following represents the building blocks that are essential for creating and sustaining the well-being of families and communities...
The following represents the building blocks that are essential for creating and sustaining the well-being of families and communities:

- Employment that provides sustainable income, economic mobility, and comprehensive workforce supports
- Affordable, preventive, fully integrated health care, regardless of income
- Healthy, livable homes in safe, secure neighborhoods
- Safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments, including quality care options across the lifespan
- Educational success that begins with nurturing and supportive families and continues with early childhood development through post-secondary advancement
Collective Action

A Blueprint for Strong Families and Communities
Public Policy Platform

Alliance
alliance1.org
AVOID

Leaving “human services” for the public to define narrowly

Charity work

Safety net for the vulnerable

PROBLEM PROBLEM PROBLEM PROBLEM solution?

ADVANCE

Broader, fuller picture of the sector: research, advocacy, direct services

Skilled, essential profession

Varying supports for all kinds of people

problem SOLUTIONS SOLUTIONS SOLUTIONS
Reframing is Most Effective with a Complete Narrative

Percentage Point Increase in Policy Support vs. Control

Statistical Significance
$p \leq .05 = *$

Source: FrameWorks Institute, Talking Human Services MessageMemo, 2015
• Join the Reframing Network Newsletter
• Request a Workshop or Presentation
• Explore Additional Tools and Resources

http://www.nationalassembly.org/get_involved
Get Started on Reframing

http://frameworksinstitute.org/toolkits/humanservices
Framing Activity

Write a brief description of your organization using the Building Well-Being Narrative Arc.

• Remember WHY

• Be Explicit about Community Benefits

• Assume Zero Information

• Use the Life Span to Normalize and Expand

• Ditch the Jargon
A Well-Framed Story Arc:
Answering the public’s big questions about social issues

Why does this matter?

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What’s this about? How does this work?

Construction:
Well-being is built, by a team, over time

If it’s not working, why not?

Construction:
Shaky foundations, missing materials, life’s storms can all negatively impact wellbeing

What can we do about it?

Construction:
Well-being is about planning and maintenance

Life Cycle Examples
Demonstrate how programs support well-being throughout life, show the scope of human services, and highlight prevention.
Five Tips for Successful Reframing Implementation

1. **Commit to the Building Well-Being Narrative**
   - Mind the Swamp
   - Engage with Potential, Explain with Construction, Normalize with the Life Cycle

2. **Start with the Basics**
   - About Us, Boilerplate, Mission Statement

3. **Get Organizational Buy-in**
   - Executive Director, Board
   - Communications, Development, Advocacy Staff

4. **Institutionalize**
   - Brand Guidelines
   - Communications, Fundraising, Advocacy Strategies AND Procedures
   - Staff/Board Onboarding

5. **Embrace the Awkward (it gets easier)**
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