CRAFTING AN IMPACT STORY

Stories show the real impact behind the work, turning services and funding into meaningful change in someone's life. An impact story has a beginning, a middle, and an end:

Start With a HOOK

- The first sentence is your opportunity to grab the reader's attention and show them why this story matters.
- Avoid starting with background information or program details. Instead, begin with a moment, a feeling, or a line that sparks curiosity or emotion.

BEGINNING – Set Up the Challenge

- Describe the problem or obstacle the person was facing.
- Use specific, descriptive language. How did the situation affect them emotionally? How did it affect their children or family? Help the reader understand what was at stake.

MIDDLE – A Turning Point

- What changed, and how did United Way's support make that change possible? What specific service, resource, or opportunity did the grant make available?
- How did the grant empower the client to overcome their challenge? Highlight their determination and resilience and show how this support helped remove a barrier or open a door.

END – What Is Different Now?

- Be specific about what has improved.
- What tangible changes have happened? What looks different in their daily life? How has their outlook or sense of possibility shifted?

TIPS:

- **The client is the hero of the story.** Your program provides tools, support, and opportunity – but the client is the one doing the hard work. Avoid positioning your organization as the hero or the client as a passive recipient of services.
- **Avoid jargon.** Skip acronyms, technical terms, and industry language. Write for someone who has never heard of your program before.
- **Keep it simple**. Detail makes a story feel real, but some information is not relevant to the story you are telling. Trim out tangents that aren't part of your beginning, middle, and end.
- **Show, don't tell**. Instead of saying "Maria is doing better in school now", say "Maria has gone from getting Cs to getting A's. She says that for the first time ever, she is excited to go to school."