

## Story and Photo Tips

A resource to help select images and anecdotes that reflect Creating Connection principles.

### Background

One of the most powerful ways to communicate is through stories and images—these play a key role in bringing your work to life and conveying the type of experience people can look forward to and expect.

Consider the themes contained in Creating Connection's core message when you are selecting photos and stories to include in your material:

*Sharing **creative experiences** and **expressing our creativity** build powerful **connections** with the people we're closest to, with our community and the world around us, and with ourselves. Creativity is in everyone and all around us. Exploring and experiencing **creative expression** enriches our lives and communities.*

### Tips

**Emphasize how you help **connect** people with those closest to them, with their community and the world around them, and with themselves.**

- Show how a community comes together to share a special moment.
- Highlight pre- or post-event interactions.
- Tell stories about the unique bonds that are formed through the course of your work—including likely connections (friends and family) and unlikely connections (people you never would have met otherwise).
- Reflect the diversity of your stakeholders—both current and desired. The following audiences consider creative expression as highly valued and very important to them: millennials, women of all ages, parents of younger children, and people of color.
- Put the audience in the picture, whether they are exploring creative expression around them or sharing their own creativity.
- Give an inside look or behind-the-scenes view, such as the work that went into getting a production ready, scenes from rehearsal, the studio, etc.

**Show **active participation**—not only passive observers or audiences.**

- Rather than selecting only images of performers on the stage, or a tranquil audience, choose a blend of photography that conveys the reactions and the powerful range of emotions that are felt by the crowd.
- Highlight the more interactive elements of your programming—where the audience is a direct contributor. Research shows that people crave more of this active engagement. Include images and videos of audience and community members interacting with artists, presenters, and each other.
- Tell the story of audience and community experiences with your work.

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Highlight stories and images that show the **benefits** people want and value from creative expression.

- Tell audience-centric stories that get to the heart of what’s “in it” for them, and why connection is so valuable: **growth**, **voice**, **well-being**, and **happiness**. (See examples and prompt questions in the Message Guide.)

Where possible or appropriate, lead with the phrase **“creative expression”** instead of **“arts and culture.”**

- Research tells us that “creative expression” is a more inclusive phrase than “arts and culture.” By leading with “creative expression,” you might bring more people into the conversation who might not otherwise pay attention, participate, see value, or feel welcome.
- After leading with “creative expression,” where appropriate, use “arts and culture” to convey shared meaning.

Be **accessible**. Use a **welcoming, conversational, approachable, and inviting tone**.

- Avoid any unnecessary insider jargon and acronyms.
- Where possible, ask questions and provide opportunities for dialogue, response, and feedback
- Diversify who tells your story. Invite multiple members of your organization, your audience, and community members to serve as messengers and to share their perspectives, their story, and your story.

