

# Memorandum of understanding: Stories of AC

## *A collaborative restorative narrative series*

This memorandum is intended to guide and support collaboration among the partners of Stories of AC (herein referred to as “Stories of AC” and “the project”) and does not compel any legal, financial or any other binding obligations upon collaborative partners.

### Partners

This memorandum is an agreement between the Stories of AC partners, which includes as of December 2018 This is AC, Stockton University, Leadership Studio, Press of Atlantic City, SNJ Today, Route 40, Atlantic City Times, Breaking AC, Free Press, and the Center for Cooperative Media.

### Structure

This collaborative is comprised of signatory partner outlets listed above and will be coordinated by Free Press, an advocacy organization that will liaison with community partners in Atlantic City, and the Center for Cooperative Media, a journalism support organization that will liaison with the media partners. New members may be added at the discretion of coordinators in accordance with agreement to this MOU, and with notice to all current partners. Stockton University will be the grant-seeking organization and will coordinate all funding.

### Project purpose

The purpose of Stories of AC is to showcase Atlantic City through a restorative narrative lens, one that highlights the resiliency, creativity and spirit of the people who live there.

Restorative narrative is best described as a “strength-based” approach to media. The term refers to journalism or storytelling that highlights the assets of a particular individual or community instead of the deficits and shortcomings.

### Project scope

The first phase of Stories of AC will involve community partners led by the Leadership Studio in Atlantic City who will source restorative narrative stories, assisted by Free Press. Those stories will then be presented to media partners, assisted by the Center for Cooperative Media, who will then research/write/publish/broadcast the stories on an agreed-upon co-publication date. That will be followed the next day with in an in-person storytellers event.

This is envisioned to be the launching point for a broader, longer-term effort, where community partners and local newsrooms continue to work together to “Stories of AC” to elevate unheard



community perspectives and help journalists build trusted relationships with the people of the city.

## **Project details and timeline**

### **DECEMBER 2018**

- Project plan finalized with the convening group.
- Plan for funding put into place.
- Funding proposal submitted to the NJ Community News and Information Fund at the Community Foundation of New Jersey, a partnership of the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation and John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

### **JANUARY 2018**

- Meeting with Leadership Studio (representing community partners) and media partners. At this meeting the media partners will discuss how they typically make news selections, what they look for in stories, what makes a good profile, and how they'll approach the project. We hope this will give folks from the Leadership Studio and community partners some food for thought as they go out and source stories. Also at this meeting, we will discuss the different forms of media we will use -- written word, video, audio, etc.
- After the meeting, Free Press and the Center will work with the Leadership Studio on an outreach plan for sourcing stories with community partners.
- Funds secured, plans put into place for distributing money.
- Infrastructure set up for documenting sharing and ongoing conversation.
- Logo and common branding created and shared.
- Website set up with basic information.

### **FEBRUARY-MARCH 2019**

- Outreach begins, and the Leadership Studio works with Free Press and the Center to discuss the potential story sources and compile a strong list of six.
- By the end of February, we plan to have the six stories lined up and will host a second meeting between the Leadership Studio and media partners, in which the Leadership Studio will pitch the stories, we'll discuss them, and media partners will self-assign and volunteer to take each one.

- Co-publication date in April finalized.
- Event date in April finalized.
- Leadership Studio begins planning for April storytellers event.

#### **APRIL 2019**

- Media partners work on their stories.
- Plan put into place for content-sharing and shared language between the news orgs.
- Leadership Studio and media partners begin marketing for event.

#### **MAY 2019**

- Stories published.
- Event held.
- Post-event meeting among all the partners is held to discuss what worked in the project, what didn't, and what they could do together next.
- Article documenting the project and replicable toolkit published by Free Press and the Center.

### **Funding**

To execute the plan as laid out above, external funding is needed. For this first phase of the project, Stories of AC will approach the New Jersey Local News Lab at the Community Foundation of New Jersey via the Dodge Foundation for funding.

A cost estimate is below:

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>COST</b>
Grant to Leadership Studio for costs related to community outreach and coordination, story sourcing, being the lead on-the-ground project manager, engaging others as needed	\$5,000
Storytellers event (including food, space rental, AV)	\$3,500
Grants to individual media partners (\$1,000	\$6,000

each for stories and participation)	
Marketing, for outreach, promotion of stories and promotion of event	\$1,500
Website costs (initial setup, Wordpress theme, hosting, graphics)	\$500
Documentation of the project, including survey of partners involved and creation of toolkit for replication	\$2,000
<b>TOTAL COST</b>	<b>\$18,500</b>

## Roles and expectations

Each organization's roles for the project include:

- Stockton University: Apply for funding, disburse funding according to budget outlined above, submit final grant report; also will serve as a media partner:
- Center for Cooperative Media: Stefanie Murray and Joe Amditis will serve as project managers and will coordinate team phone calls, meetings, shared Google Drive folder, branding, shared language guidelines, logo and marketing materials, story production and editing, story sharing, story publishing, documentation, the main website and social media.
- Free Press: Mike Rispoli will serve as a project manager and will coordinate team meetings, preparation of community members, solicitation for stories by community members, selection of stories, pitching stories to media partners, and support for the storytellers event.
- Alexandra Nunzi, Co-Founder Leadership Studio and community partner, will serve as a main liaison for community partners and will organize the storytellers event.
- Evan Sanchez, co-founder of This is AC, co-founder of Authentic City Partners & Hayday Coffee and community partner, will serve as a main liaison for community partners and will organize the storytellers event.
- Route 40, Elinor Comlay, media partner, will participate in conference calls, write/assign one of the stories, share the story in advance for cross-posting, link to share a link to the story as soon as it is published, assist with marketing and attend the storytellers event.
- SNJ Today, Megan Wolf, media partner, will participate in conference calls, write/assign one of the stories, share the story in advance for cross-posting, share a link to the story as soon as it is published, assist with marketing and attend the storytellers event.
- Press of Atlantic City, Buzz Keough, media partner, will participate in conference calls, write/assign one of the stories, share the story in advance for cross-posting, share a link to the story as soon as it is published, assist with marketing and attend the storytellers event.
- Atlantic City Times, Earl Harvey, media partner, will participate in conference calls, write/assign one of the stories, share the story in advance for cross-posting, share a link

to the story as soon as it is published, assist with marketing and attend the storytellers event.

- IVOH, Ilsa Flanagan, will support the project with coaching around restorative narrative.

All stories produced for the project by newsroom partners will be available for republication/broadcast by any other newsroom partner but will always give credit to where the reporting originated. All media partners will be encouraged to cross-publish each other's content and share all content on their social media platforms.

Reporting partners grant permission for the This is AC website to republish headlines, subheads, photographs, captions and excerpts from submitted articles to posts that will be visible on the project site but link directly to the related partner URLs.

### **Decision-making**

Decisions that significantly impact the purpose, direction, or operations of this collaborative will be made via consensus when possible and majority-vote when necessary among partners. Decisions dealing with the day-to-day work of the members will be decided between those involved, with input from Free Press and the Center for Cooperative Media.

### **Branding**

This collaborative effort should be referred to publicly as "Stories of AC" and note that the project is supported by funding from the NJ Community News and Information Fund at the Community Foundation of New Jersey, a partnership of the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation and John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. Additional details about shared language and branding will be stored in the shared project Google Drive folder.

### **Acceptance of these terms**

By participating in the project, each partner is expressing acceptance of the terms of this MOU.