



# Telling the story of your HMRF program

Compelling stories about your program are key to sustaining it—the more people know about your program, the more likely they are to support it. Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood (HMRF) programs can use nFORM and CQI data to identify the most compelling stories to share. Stories that demonstrate strategic approaches to overcoming challenges and achieving the program’s mission are particularly compelling. For example, programs can share how they used innovative recruitment strategies to increase enrollment or adapted workshop implementation to improve participation. The GAME framework (Figure 1) is a useful tool for developing your program’s stories.

**Goals.** Clearly articulating the story you want to tell and your goals for sharing it will help focus your messaging on what is pertinent to a given audience. Make sure your communication goals are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound), so your team can track how well communication strategies are working.

**Audiences.** Who should hear your story? Different audiences have different interests in your program. For instance, if you want to share how your program used CQI to address recruitment challenges, community members may want to know how expanding the program’s reach benefited the community; program staff may be interested in effective recruitment methods and how to sustain them. Consider your call to action for each audience—are you asking community members to spread the word about your program, and staff to implement new methods? Develop a persona for each audience to help clarify what messages and calls to action will resonate.

**Messages.** Drawing on a range of perspectives and data points, craft messages that help your program reach its communication goals.

- If a key goal is to generate community support for the program, consider the perspectives and concerns of that audience and emphasize how the program addresses them. Use your audience persona to craft messages, and test draft messages with your audience to gather feedback and help refine the messages.

**Figure 1: GAME framework for effective communications**



- Identify the data points needed to support each message, data sources, and the data literacy of each audience. Use nFORM data tools—including the QPR/PPR performance metrics, query tool, operational reports, and data export—to access quantitative information on enrollment, participation, client outcomes, and program operations. For example, you can use enrollment data from the query tool to show how your program’s reach has expanded over the course of the grant. Draw on data from other information systems and sources—including progress narratives, interviews, focus groups, and CQI efforts (e.g. road test results, trackers)—to help key messages resonate with audiences.

### Additional Resources

Check out the [February 2025 CQI/nFORM office hours](#) for more information about using nFORM and CQI data for strategic communication.

Use the [CQI communication protocol template](#) on the HMRF Grant Resources site to help plan communications with different audiences.

**Expressions.** Consider the modes of communication that best serve your goals, audiences, and messages.

- Your communication **goals** will influence the mode. If the goal is to build awareness, one-way communication may be sufficient. However, if the goal is to involve the community in recruiting clients who will benefit from your program, allow for interactive communication and discussion.
- How does each **audience** seek out and absorb information—online (social media), verbal (community event), or written (article, infographic, or fact sheet)? What charts or visuals can you use to clearly convey your program’s progress?
- And **messages** influence mode, in that the number and complexity of your messages should inform how you communicate them. Develop anchor content to tell your program’s whole journey, and a story bank of targeted messages for each audience. Track which audience received each story and how they responded.

**Developing your program’s story.** Use the GAME prompts in the example below to develop your own program’s stories.

<b>Goals</b> What story do you want to share and why? What are your SMART goals?	Our program successfully reached its goal of recruiting new parents, which allowed us to expand within the community. We want to share this story to generate community support for the program and to ensure staff understand good implementation. Our related SMART goals are to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Generate support from two new partner organizations in the community by April 2025</li> <li>2. Update staff training to include promising practices by April 2025, and train every staff member on these practices by June 2025</li> </ol>	
<b>Audiences</b> Who needs to hear this story? What are their perspectives and concerns?	Community members are concerned about high rates of family instability in the community.	Staff need to be aware of promising practices for recruiting new parents.
<b>Messages</b> What messages and data points will resonate with each audience? What strategies support effective communication?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use community data to demonstrate the need to support new parents (e.g., statistics on child welfare system involvement or lack of parenting programs)</li> <li>- Use nFORM data on client characteristics and participation rates to show who the program has reached via its parenting programs</li> <li>- Use parenting skills acquired, program satisfaction, and other exit survey data to show how the program has helped participants</li> </ul> <b>-Key strategy: When crafting messages, assume limited familiarity with the program and low data literacy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use nFORM, CQI, and staff interview data to demonstrate the need for and benefit of following promising practices to recruit new parents</li> <li>- Share which partners referred the most clients to the program, how clients heard about the program, and characteristics of who the program served over time to highlight bright spots and challenges</li> <li>- Incorporate quotes and messages from staff interviews into the training to help motivate staff receiving training</li> </ul> <b>-Key strategy: Practices covered in the training must feel feasible or staff will be reluctant to implement them</b>

### Expression

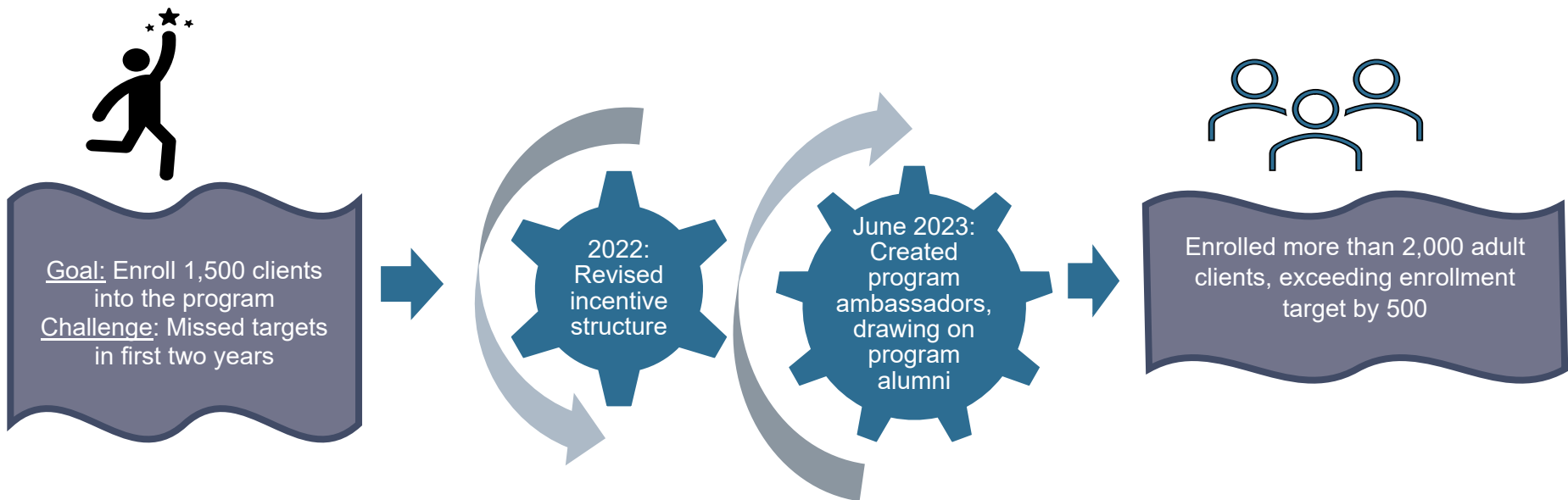
What mode(s) will be used to convey each message?-

Create an infographic to distribute to key partners and share more broadly on agency social media channels. Participate in community meetings to present findings, answer questions, and distribute the infographic.

Develop onboarding and refresher trainings and monitor staff to ensure practices are implemented correctly.

As in Figure 2, summarize your program's improvement story in an easy-to-interpret format (such as an infographic) that shares your challenge, efforts to improve (both successful and unsuccessful), and outcomes.

**Figure 2: Example infographic – Improving program recruitment and enrollment**



This resource was written by Annie Buonasina, Allon Kalisher, and Scott Richman of Mathematica in collaboration with the Administration for Children and Families' Office of Family Assistance (OFA) and Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) (contract #HHSP233201500035I/75P00120F37054). OPRE Project Officers: Rebecca Hjelm and Harmanpreet Bhatti. Mathematica Project Director: Grace Roemer.