

# ArcGIS StoryMap Best Practices

Before considering or pitching a StoryMap for your content, work with Communications to fill out the [planning worksheet](#) and submit it to [webhelp@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:webhelp@wsdot.wa.gov). The Web Content Council will review the planning worksheet to determine if a StoryMap is appropriate for your content.

## StoryMap publication process:

The StoryMap publication process is a collaboration between StoryMap creators, Communications, and the WSDOT Online Map Support Team. This document outlines the StoryMap approval process steps and provides information and guidance on StoryMap best practices, data management, training, and other resources.

**Step 1** – Make sure you have the resources you need to create and maintain the StoryMap, including subject matter experts, web content editors, and data stewards that are trained to create, manage, and archive the StoryMap, supporting data, and content.

**Step 2** - Get approval from your senior manager to create and share your StoryMap.

**Step 3** - After you have approval from the Council and your manager to create a StoryMap, get in touch with the [Online Map Support Team](#) early in the planning process. We can set up accounts in the [WSDOT Online Map Center](#) (ArcGIS Online), connect you to training, and provide guidance on data management.

**Step 4** - Follow the recommendations in this guidance document to start creating your StoryMap. Check in early and often with Communications and the Online Map Support Team to get feedback as you develop your StoryMap. Allow plenty of time to create the StoryMap and guide it through the WSDOT review process.

## What makes a great StoryMap?

### Includes an interactive spatial element

Though it may be tempting to use a StoryMap just to tell a visual story for your content, only content with a spatial element will be considered for this platform. As it suggests in the name, StoryMaps combine maps, text and other multimedia content to create an interactive user experience. If there is no spatial element of the story, the Web Team will work with you to find a more appropriate platform to share your content.

### Tells a story

Again, as the name suggests, StoryMaps should guide the user through a narrative arc.

If you've been approved for a StoryMap, you might want to start the process by creating an outline. Think about the journey you want the user to go on. As a user scrolls, the StoryMap platform literally 'guides' them through content – you might want to follow a chronological timeline or take users on a voyage from place to place.

Regardless of the story you are trying to tell, there should be a narrative driving the user interactions.

The story should also be able to stand alone without a great deal of background information. I.e., if the user has to read a report first to understand the context of the StoryMap information, a StoryMap probably isn't the appropriate platform.

Here are some additional resources on how to organize and tell a great story:

[Planning and outlining your story: How to set yourself up for success](#)

[Nine steps to great storytelling](#)

## Isn't the main communication tool for the content

Due to their visual nature and navigation structure, it's hard to communicate a great deal of information through a StoryMap. StoryMaps should be used as a supplemental tool to communicate a specific set of information to a specific audience.

## Follows WSDOT communication and writing for the web guidelines

Like all WSDOT web content, StoryMaps must follow our communications standards. Use the following resources as you create your content:

- [WSDOT Web Toolkit](#)
- [Communications Manual and Style Guide](#)
- [Web Work Teams Channel](#)

## High-quality visuals

Any content considered for a StoryMap should have a visual aspect outside of maps. As a multimedia platform, StoryMaps spotlight and emphasize images. Consider if your content lends itself well to photos before pitching a StoryMap.

## Considers your audience

Due to their visual nature, StoryMaps don't always translate well for people who have low vision or use assistive technology, like screen readers. Therefore, it's important when creating your StoryMap, to use built-in accessibility features such as alt text for visuals and the WSDOT StoryMap theme which has accessible fonts, color, and contrast. To learn more about how to make your StoryMap accessible, please refer to the following resources and tools:

- [Getting started with accessible storytelling](#)
- [Writing accessible ArcGIS StoryMaps content](#)
- [ColorBrewer – color blind friendly palettes](#)
- [Color blindness simulator tool](#)

## StoryMaps: under the hood

### Learn how to build a StoryMap

The following ArcGIS Online (AGOL) and StoryMap training and resources will help get you started building your StoryMap:

- [ArcGIS Online Basics](#)
- [ArcGIS Online Resources](#)
- [Esri YouTube ArcGIS Online Playlist](#)
- [Esri ArcGIS Online Blog](#)
- [Getting started with ArcGIS StoryMaps](#)
- [StoryMap tutorials](#)
- [Esri YouTube StoryMap Playlist](#)
- [StoryMap FAQs](#)
- [StoryMap Blogs](#)

### Data sources, data management, and documentation

A publicly shared StoryMap contains web maps, data layers, and other web content that are also shared with the public. As part of the review process for sharing public content in the Online Map Center, please follow these guidelines, and the standards in the [WSDOT Online Map Center User Guide](#), to document and manage your StoryMap and content.

- Have a designated data steward that is responsible for managing the StoryMap, data and content. If the assigned data steward is going to change, work with the [Online Map Support Team](#) to transfer the content to the new data steward.
- It's best to use WSDOT data that is publicly shared in the [WSDOT Online Map Center](#) (AGOL) and/or public data in AGOL from other authoritative sources. If you would like to share data that is not already available in AGOL, please follow the data sharing standards in the Online Map Center User Guide.
- To help users verify that your StoryMap is an authoritative, WSDOT StoryMap, the StoryMap and content should be documented with information such as description, contact information, data sources, use constraints, etc. Additional information about content documentation standards can be found in the Online Map Center User Guide.
- If you have new WSDOT data that you plan to share in your StoryMap, it may be beneficial to our stakeholders and the public, if the data is shared long-term, as an enterprise (authoritative) dataset. Additional time may be needed to steward the data through the enterprise data sharing process.

### Is not long-term storage location – for content, files, or otherwise

StoryMaps should have an expiration date, and only kept up for as long as they are relevant. You should not create them with the intention of using it as a long-term web location for your content.

If you have additional questions about StoryMaps or the review process, please contact [webhelp@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:webhelp@wsdot.wa.gov) or the [Online Map Support Team](#).