

# Personalizing Your Local Success Story

As a local elected official, you know your communities the best. You know the wants and needs of your neighborhoods and how best to meet them. When sharing the importance of local decision-making with your residents, it's vital to highlight success stories of how local self-government helped make the difference in improving a project or delivering a solution. Showcasing the success of "local voices making local choices" can get your residents more engaged and involved. It's important to have a process to ensure your residents support your ideas and initiatives. Follow these steps to develop an example of when your city solved a local problem with a local solution:

## Step 1.

**Get started by identifying key issues.** Review the ordinances and policy directives that your city/town/village has passed in the last year. Make a list of those directly related to a local issue or concern such as:

- Pandemic response efforts
- Community safety
- Neighborhood preservation
- Utility bill assistance
- Youth outreach programs
- Rental assistance programs
- Water supply integrity.

## Step 2.

**Measure responses.** Record how many individual residents contacted you (emails, calls, meetings, showed up at a commission meeting, etc.) regarding each of these issues. Also, make sure to read your local newspaper(s) including the op-ed sections where residents will voice their opinions on topics of concern to them.

## Step 3.

**Find out what resonates.** Cull your list down to those issues with greater community engagement. Highlight those that had an overall positive reception by residents and may have garnered coverage in the press.

## Step 4.

**Determine what's important to you.** Identify the three issues on your list that you are passionate about and focus on those.

## Step 5.

**Create your "elevator speech" about local decision-making.** Develop a 30-second explanation of local self-government in action for each of your issues. Make sure you answer these questions:

1. What was the issue?
2. What solution did your Council/Commission propose?
3. What was the impact in the community?

*Example:*

*"Our residents and small businesses were adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, potentially resulting in thousands of residents and businesses either unable to pay their utility bills or pay their employees. Our commission responded by establishing a utility bill assistance program for residents, which allowed hundreds of families to keep the lights on in their homes and enabled their children to continue their education virtually. For local businesses, we implemented a small business loan program that allowed owners to keep their staff as they transitioned their business to respond to the changing dynamics the pandemic presented. This helped ensure hundreds of residents continued to earn a paycheck and provide for their families. We made these decisions here, together. This is the definition of local decision-making: local officials supporting their communities the best way they know how."*

## Step 6.

**Practice your example and try to make it easy to understand.** You want to talk about local decision-making in simple ways that everyone can appreciate and support. Keep practicing your speech so the message is perfected.

## Step 7.

**You're ready!** You should have a passionate group of residents ready to support your initiatives to better your community and embrace local decision-making. Good luck!