

SEDI Deep Experience Learning Community

# Ethical storytelling for social change

## Workshop 1: Starting points

13 February 2026





“When I think of the Acknowledgement of Country, I think of the land and the relationship of First Nations people, its plants, its waterways. **Everything this land was before First Contact.**

There are the waterways through the piece that feeds the plant life. I’ve placed us within the plants, to show our connection to them. **We aren’t separate from country, but exist with it, as a bond that can’t be broken.”**

[Charlotte Allingham](#) – Wiradjuri, Ngiyampaa woman from Central West New South Wales (living in Naarm)

# if I write a poem *by Jazz Money*

This poem was first published by  
University of Queensland Press in  
Jazz Money's debut poetry collection,  
*how to make a basket*, 2021

and if I write a poem  
it's so that our children  
will read some truth  
of their family

and if I write  
it's because our story  
hasn't been written

by us  
for us

I write a poem  
because I love this Country  
I write a word  
because I love my daughter  
who isn't yet born

**“This is *precisely* the time when artists go to work. There is no time for despair, no place for self-pity, no need for silence, no room for fear. We speak, we write, we do language. That is how civilizations heal. I know the world is bruised and bleeding, and though it is important not to ignore its pain, it is also critical to refuse to succumb to its malevolence. Like failure, chaos contains information that can lead to knowledge—even wisdom. Like art.”**

*—Toni Morrison*

# Today's workshop

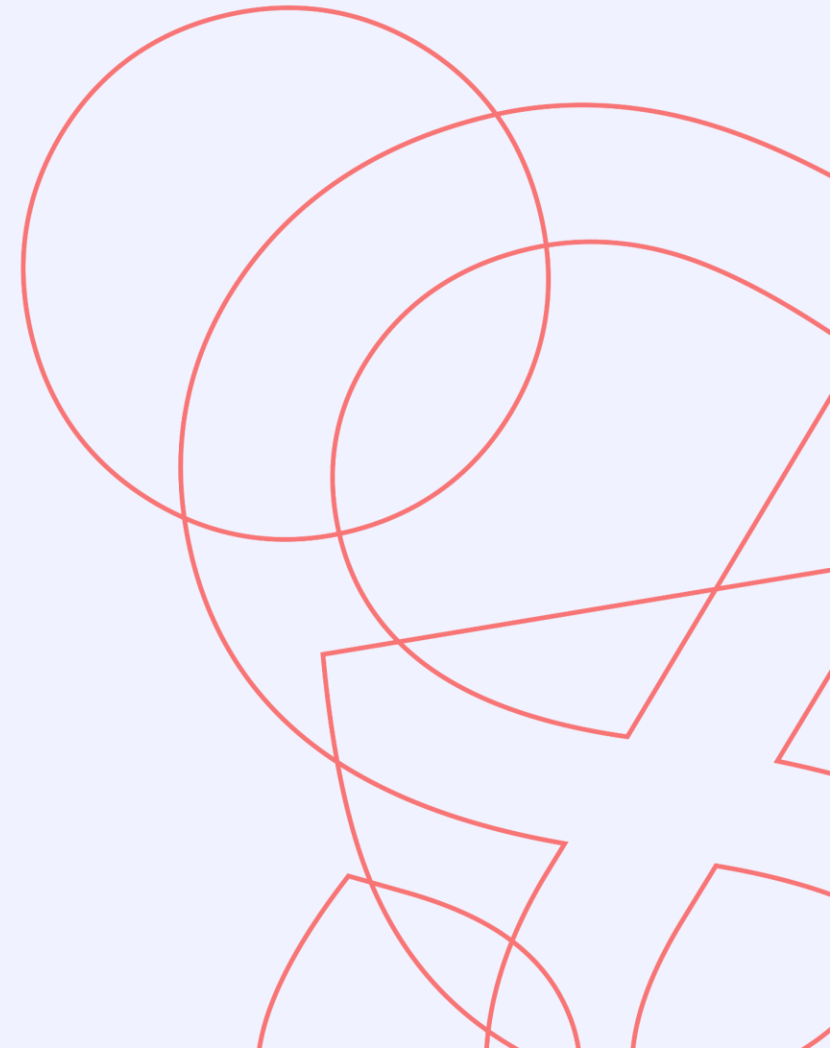


# Workshop arc

1. Starting points 	2. Going deeper	3. Getting specific
<p>What brings us together?            What values and driving purpose do we share?</p>	<p>What do we want to challenge, change and build?</p>	<p>What advice do want to give so that more people and systems tell better stories?</p>
<p>Friday 13 Feb 2026            10am – 2pm (AEDT)</p>	<p>Tuesday 3 March 2026            10am – 2pm (AEDT)</p>	<p>Wed 1 April 2026            10.00-14.00 (AEDT)</p>

# Aims and purpose

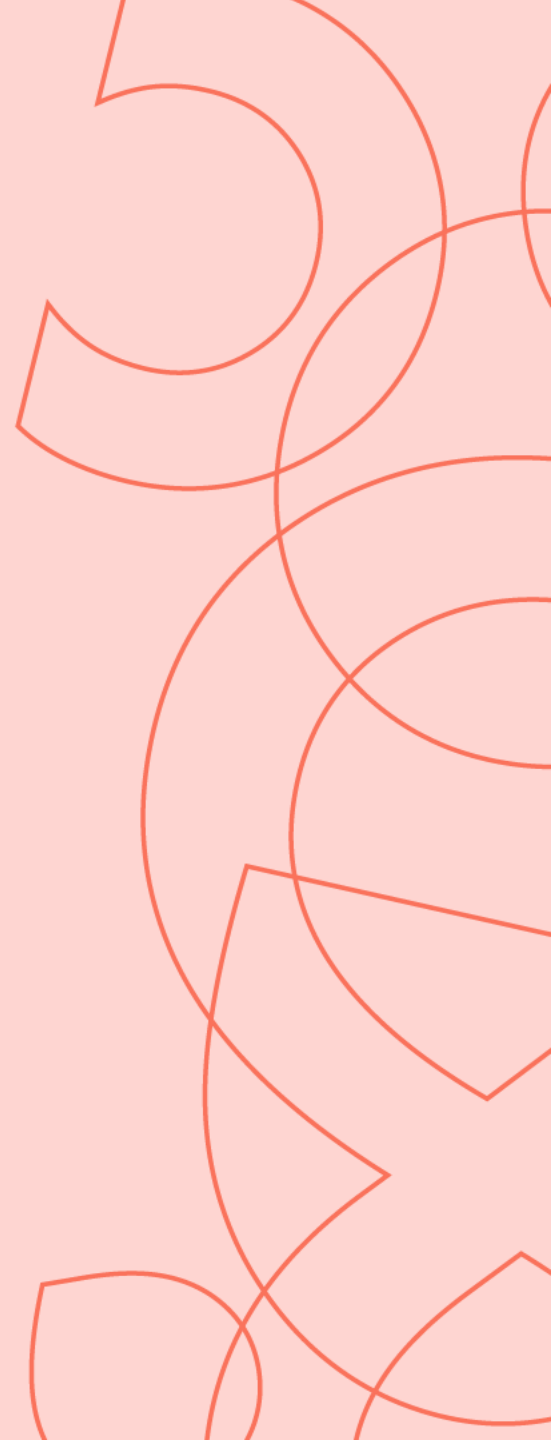
- Arrive together
- Surface what matters and drives us
- Build relational foundations
- Begin to build shared ground:  
ethical storytelling, collective learning  
and potential impact



# Session agenda

Timing		Activity
10.00-10.15	15 mins	Introduction & set up
10.15-10.45	30 mins	Checking in & grounding
10.45-11.30	45 mins	Playback of themes
11.30-12.00	30 mins	Group agreements
<b>12.00-12.30</b>	<b>30 mins</b>	<b>Stretch break 🐾</b>
12.30-13.15	45 mins	Building the field
13.15-13.45	30 mins	Developing as practitioners
13.45-14.00	15 mins	Check-out and next steps

# About this Learning Community



# Membership

Organisation	Member(s)
<a href="#">Burnie Works</a> (TAS)	Alan Radford
<a href="#">Centre for Stories</a> (WA)	Luisa Mitchell
<a href="#">Expand Your Library</a> (QLD)	Jenae Tien Jenkins
<a href="#">FIGJAM</a> (VIC)	Nina
	Georgia
	Sara
<a href="#">Garuwa</a> (NSW)	Maya Ghattas
<a href="#">Launch Housing</a> (VIC)	Ella D'Abbs
	Alexa Tsoulis-Ray
<a href="#">Quite Contrary Studios</a> (VIC)	Mary Nguyen

# Learning Community Team



## Morgan Cataldo (she/her) Wurundjeri Country (VIC)

Morgan is a practice innovator and strategist who supports organisations to move beyond surface-level gestures toward genuine systemic transformation. As the founder of [morgan&co](#) and author of leading work on institutional change, she is known for discerning the patterns that hold institutions in cycles of reform – and for charting pathways that make deeper change possible.

She is a white, disabled, queer, cisgender woman descended from English, French, Irish, Scottish and Sicilian settler-colonials and immigrants. Born and raised on Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Country, Morgan's early life was shaped by experiences of health, homelessness and mental health systems. She began her professional life as a harm reduction peer worker – carrying forward the wisdom of lived experience into her community development and systems change work.

# Learning Community Team



## Perrie Ballantyne (she/her) Wurundjeri Country (VIC)

Perrie is an innovation strategist and practitioner who has worked alongside social innovators in Europe and Australia for more than two decades. She is a trusted partner for ambitious initiatives that invite diverse collaborators – communities, services, philanthropy, universities and government – to work together in new ways.

She is a white, cisgender woman of Scottish and Irish ancestry, raised on Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Country. After almost 20 years in Europe, she has returned to Narm to continue her commitment to building futures shaped by justice and community leadership. Perrie has long held a dedication to challenging inequitable systems and supporting community-led change.

# Learning Community Team






## Dr. Amar Freya (they/them) Wurundjeri Country (VIC)

Dr. Amar Freya is a migrant, non-binary person of colour with lived and living experience of family violence, mental ill health, and neurodivergence. They completed their PhD in 2022 at Monash in which they examined the experiences of family violence within the Indian-Australian community and the help seeking behaviours of victim survivors and were awarded the Mollie Holman medal for the Faculty of Education.

Since then, Amar has worked as Senior Prevention Officer at Monash University, as Postdoctoral Researcher at Swinburne University, and as a Training Advisor at Our Watch. Currently, Amar is employed as a survivor advocate at Safe and Equal and teaches Criminology at Monash University while working as a couple's and ADHD counsellor.

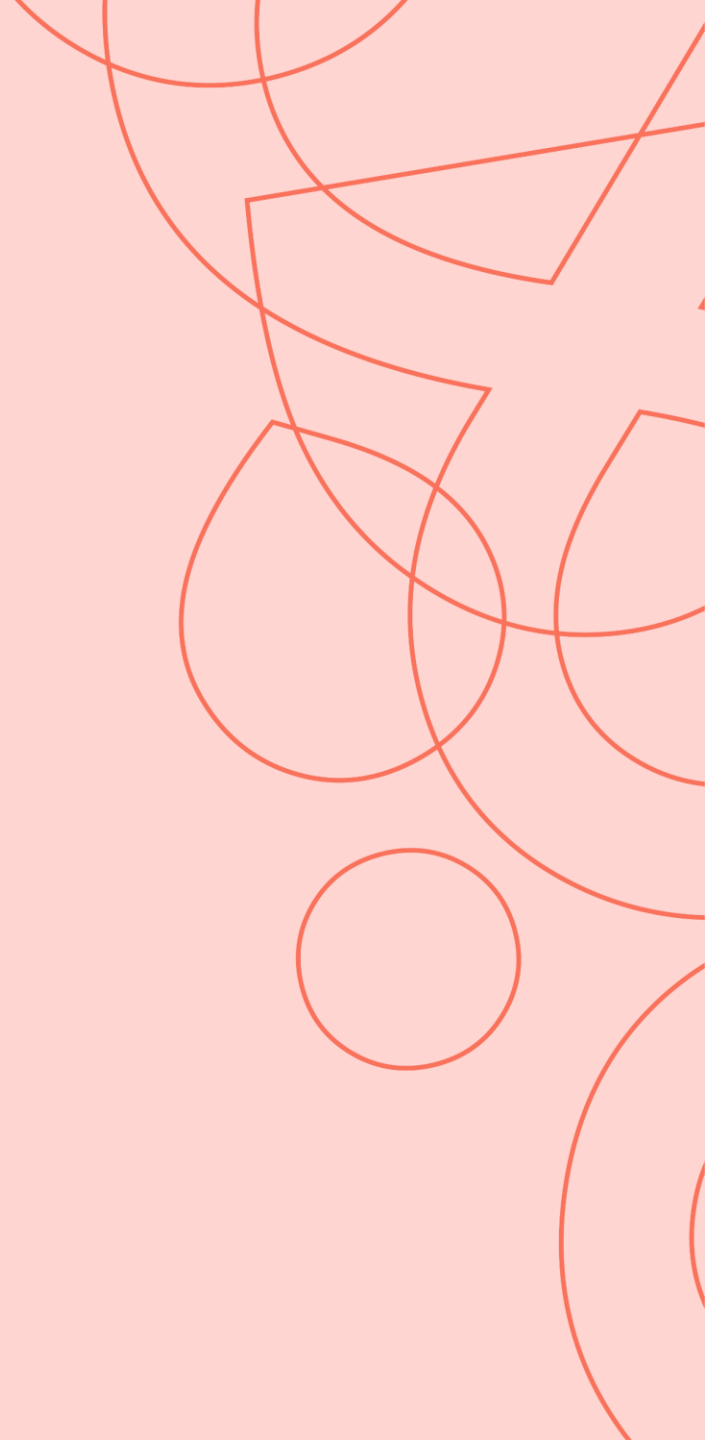
# Our commitment to SEDI

Phase	Focus	Activities
<b>Phase 1</b> Months 1-3	Design & recruitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and share EOI</li> <li>• Select LC members</li> <li>• Onboarding</li> </ul>
<b>Phase 2</b> Months 4-9	Convening & drafting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate x3 workshops</li> <li>• Draft resource</li> <li>• Internal testing</li> </ul>
<b>Phase 3</b> Months 10-12	Testing & launching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wider testing</li> <li>• Integration of feedback</li> <li>• Open Learning Event</li> </ul>

# Anchors for our process

<p>You matter in this engagement, not just your practice and output.</p> <p>(the people) 🧑</p>	<p>We orient towards dignity and relationship, resisting extractive dynamics.</p> <p>(the ethic) 🎯</p>	<p>We learn by sharing and making sense of things together.</p> <p>(the approach) 📊</p>	<p>We aim to influence practice and strengthen a field, not just create a resource.</p> <p>(the ambition) 🚀</p>
<p>We hold power and care together.</p> <p>(the politics) ⚖️</p>	<p>We practise storytelling as a relational act, not a content exchange.</p> <p>(the practice) 🤝</p>	<p>We orient to wider systems and ecosystems, holding individual practice in a broader context.</p> <p>(the frame) 🖼️</p>	

# Checking in & grounding



# Check-in & grounding

- **What brings you here?**  
What do you hope this space makes possible?
- **Tell us about your work**  
What is your context and how do you work with stories?
- **Bonus question**  
Something random about you 🐱



# Playback of themes



# What we heard from your EOI's

## We asked everyone four questions:

1. What do you want from this Learning Community?
2. What storytelling practices inspire you?
3. What storytelling practices trouble you?
4. What would you most like to be in conversation about?

# 1. What you want from this LC

Share knowledge and reflections, exchange practices and learn from each other.

Work with people who are committed to storytelling as a way to liberation, healing and justice and who understand how storytelling practices can result in the opposite.

Develop resources and supports for better storytelling and against harmful practices.

"We're drawn to this learning community because its commitment to telling liberatory stories rooted in justice resonates with our values and lived experience."

"I am aware of the risks and harm in storytelling, and the need for resources and practices to be empowering and non-extractive."

"We would like to create further opportunities ... and reduce 'ethical' barriers that deem our community members too 'high risk' to participate in storytelling, restricting the true narrative."

## 2. Inspiring storytelling practices

First Nations practitioners in Australia and abroad	Truth telling and restorative circles	Non-traditional ways of storytelling: art, music and spoken word
Deeper listening and confirming my understanding and learnings gained	Intergenerational story transfer	Live storytelling and face-to-face opportunities
Using film, multimedia and digital skills to amplify stories	Cross-cultural narratives	Impact Producing (emphasis on community distribution)

# 3. Troubling storytelling practices

<p>Trauma porn, weaponised vulnerability, flattening complexity, ventriloquism</p>	<p>People being asked to share without safe environments or in transactional ways</p>	<p>When storytelling is used primarily to evoke emotion or achieve funding outcomes but fails to centre the wellbeing and dignity of those whose stories are being told</p>
<p>Snippets prioritised on social media platforms which train the brain to digest things in short bursts</p>	<p>Lack of consent, agency and shared ownership of stories</p>	
<p>Taking a deficit lens to marginalised communities rather than highlighting strengths</p>	<p>Extraction and commodification of people's lived experience</p>	<p>Lack of awareness of power and power dynamics</p>

# 3. Troubling storytelling practices

<p>Asking closed questions of people when stories are being shared</p>	<p>Inconsistency in processes of recruitment, consent and support (even within an organisation)</p>
<p>Co-opting stories into narratives that don't align and cherry-picking information</p>	<p>Reducing people's experience and identity to fit a narrative that benefits an organisation</p>
<p>Extractive storytelling and its harms – people feeling used, exposed or destabilised, or being identified and unsafe</p>	<p>Editing and reframing cultural and community narratives to fit mainstream perspectives, resulting in loss of nuance and the deeper truths stories hold</p>

# 4. Conversations we want to have

<p>Working with stories in ways that create change and shift things</p>	<p>Understanding the tensions between organisational storytelling and what matters to community/lived experts</p>	<p>Building structures and supports for each other where we share resources, ideas and risks ... opportunities for ongoing peer support and attention to the care and wellbeing of those who do the work.</p>
<p>Practices that enhance choice and dignity and enable working with people in ways that are enjoyable, meaningful and that bring benefit</p>	<p>Impact distribution models – so that each of our established communities and audiences can access powerful and resonant stories</p>	
<p>Embedding good practices within organisations and supporting resource poor organisations (not just relying on individuals to do the work well)</p>	<p>Designing new economies of value – getting clear on who we will and won't accept money from, who we collaborate with and support</p>	

“I want to experience strength and hope, things that build joy, power and solidarity. I need to also have experiences of **learning and knowledge sharing** by people who have overcome personal, structural and systemic struggles, how they did this and the tools and strategies that will help support and guide others. **This is how I believe we create collective resistance and can rise together.** We build trust in these ways which can only be found in deep relationship and in these moments is where love is found and deep care can take place. We become community.”

# We want an LC that ...

Centres dignity  
as a practice,  
not a principle

Treats storytelling  
as political,  
relational, and  
power-aware

Builds collective  
infrastructure and  
new economies of  
care

Cultivates the  
courage to tell  
truths that disrupt  
power

Recognises that  
stories can expose  
people to real-world  
harm, as well as  
possibility

Moves beyond  
extraction and  
commodification

Honours cultural  
specificity and  
narrative  
sovereignty

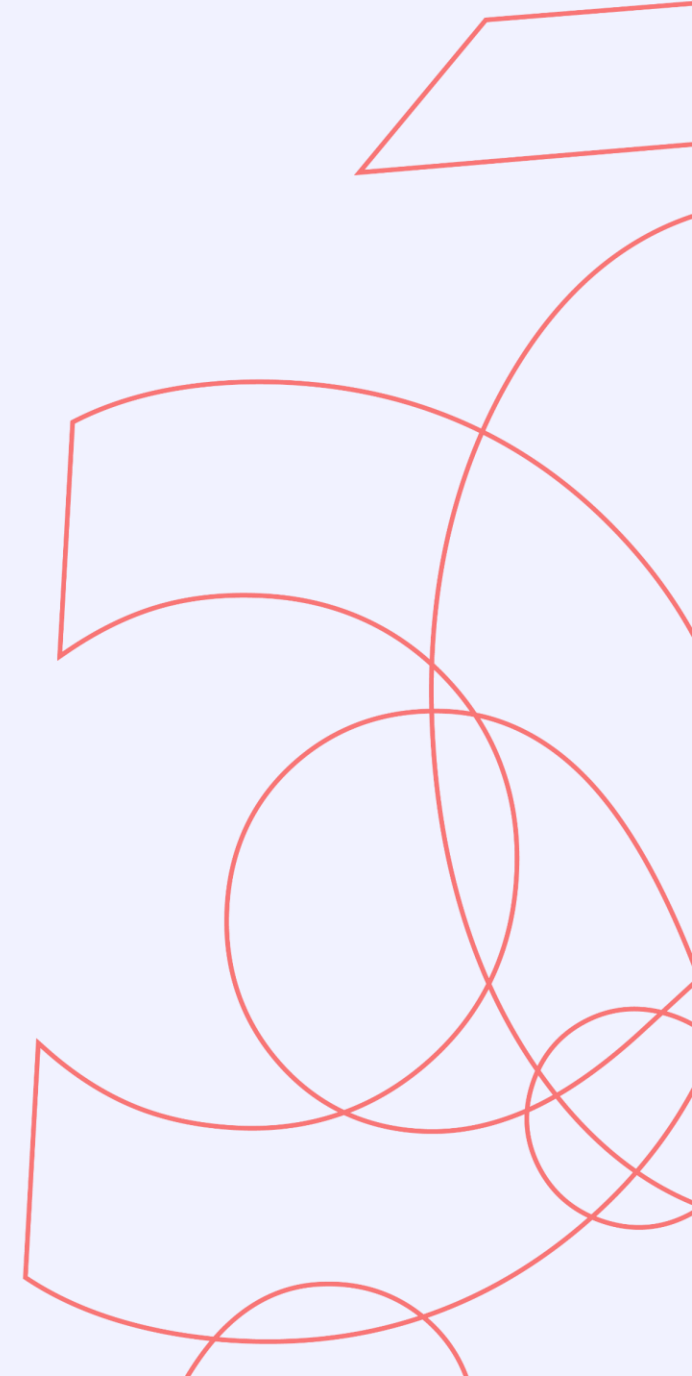
Strengthens ethical,  
justice-oriented  
methodologies

Grapples honestly  
with risk, safety and  
responsibility

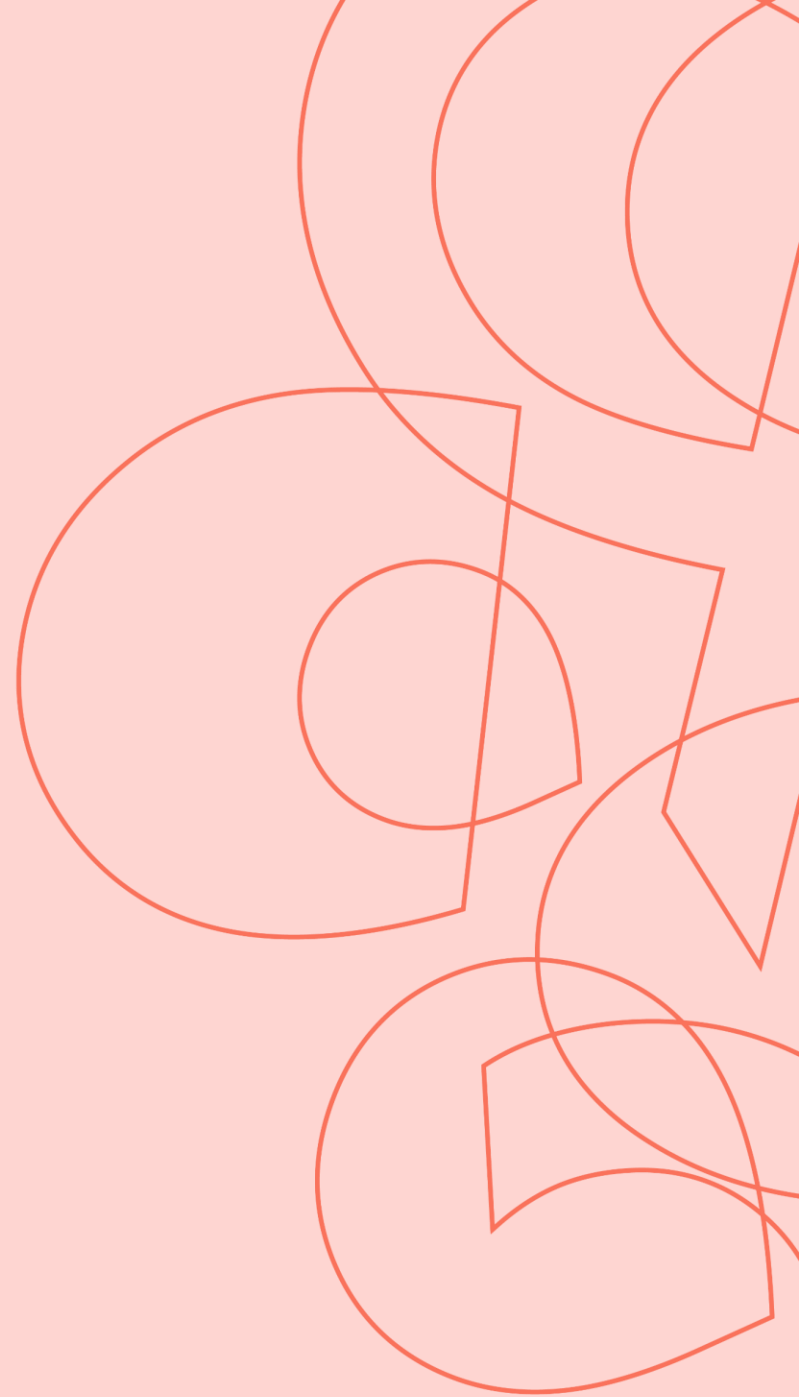
Seeks alignment,  
depth and  
transformation:  
within ourselves,  
communities,  
systems and places

# Playback of themes

- What resonates?
- Does anything feel surprising?
- Is anything missing?

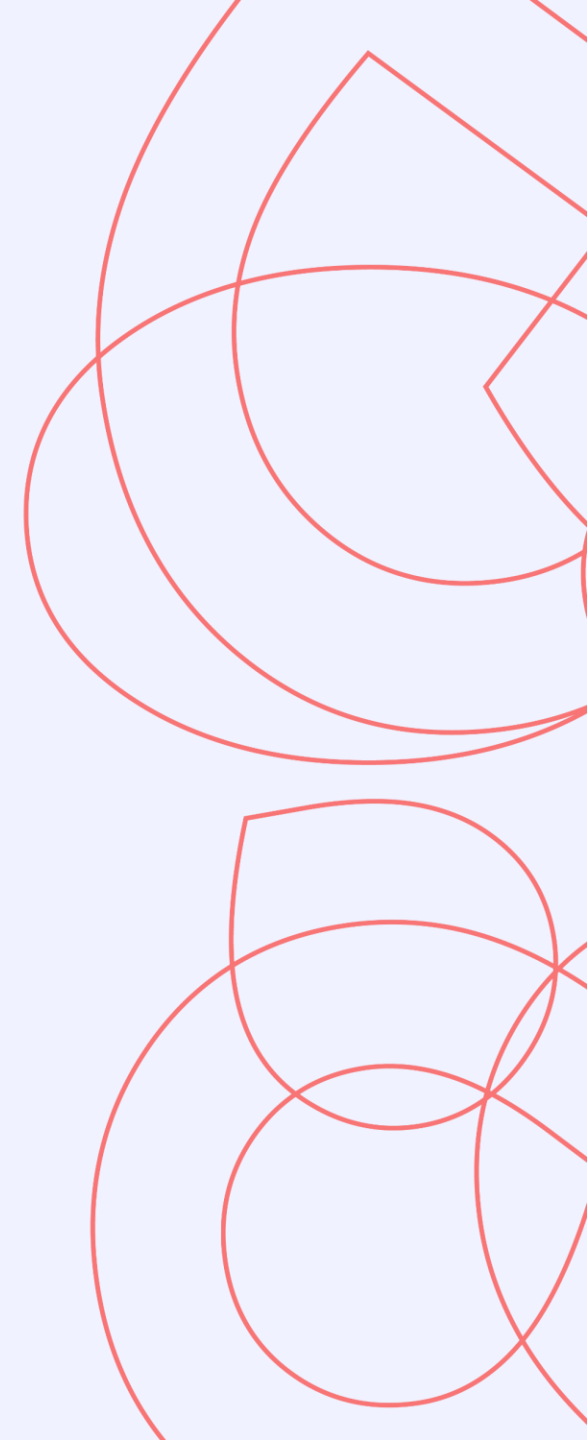


# Group agreements



# Group agreements

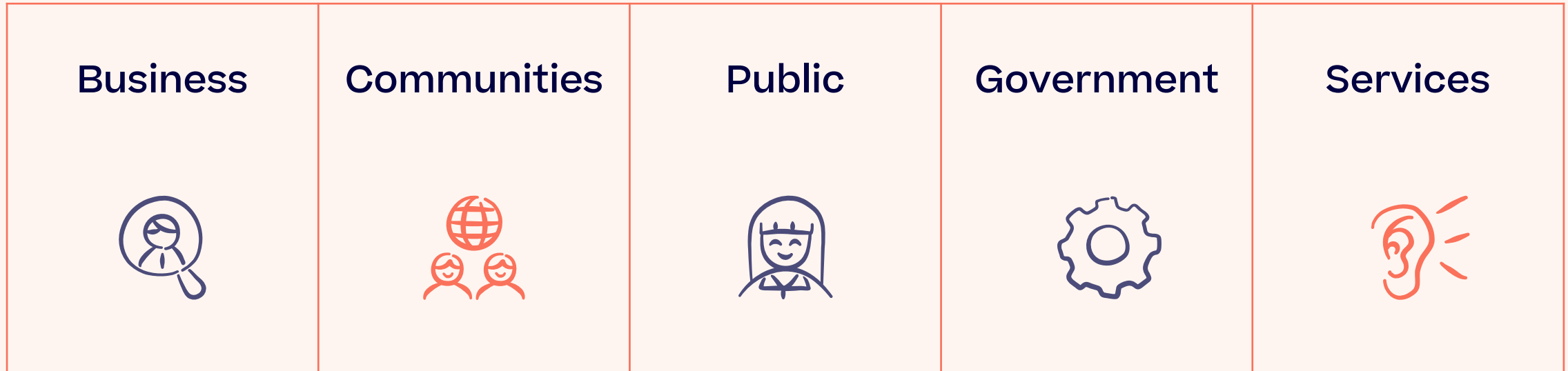
- What do we need to feel safe enough to do this work well, and how might dignifying practice take shape for this group?
- What working agreements will help us get there?
- What do we do if something doesn't feel right in this space?



**What's the work  
we want to do  
together?**



# Building the field



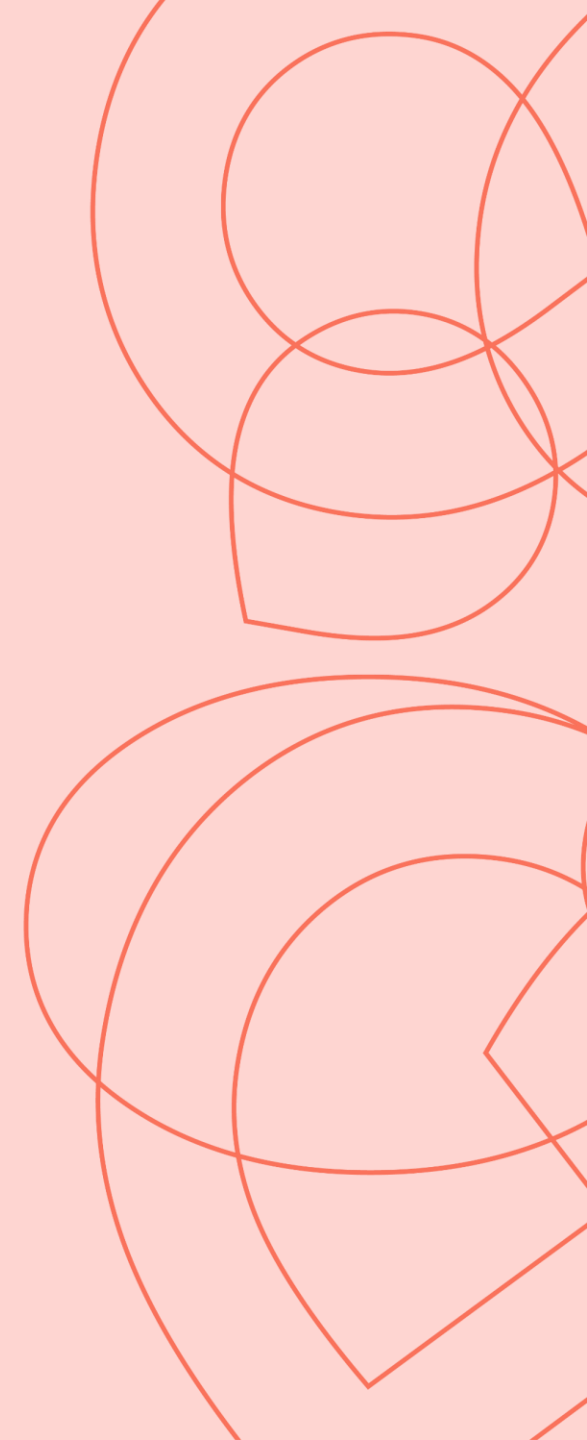
Are there priorities we are hoping to address?  
What do we want to work on together?

# Developing our own practice

- Is there anything we would like to learn (or unlearn)?
- Is there anything that makes this work harder than it needs to be right now?
- What support would make ethical storytelling practice more possible in your context?



# Checking out & next steps



# Check out

- Is anything feeling more possible now than it did this morning?
- Are there any truths about storytelling that feel clearer?
- One-word describing where you're landing

# Next workshop

1. Starting points 	2. Going deeper 	3. Getting specific
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**IT IS IN YOUR SELF-INTEREST  
TO FIND A WAY  
TO BE VERY TENDER**

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**Thank you**

