

Storytelling for Influence Session Description and Pre-Work

North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

2026 North Carolina Public Health Preparedness and Response Symposium

Session Facilitator

Heidi Schultz, PhD

Professor, of Business Communication and Storytelling

Kenan-Flagler Business School

UNC-Chapel Hill

Program Details

- Date: May 6, 2026
- Time: 1:00 PM – 5:00 PM (4-hour interactive session)
- Location: Benton Convention Center, Winston-Salem, NC

Session Description

In our session together, you will explore how to use storytelling in planning and preparedness contexts, where you have the greatest opportunity to influence decisions, priorities, and coordination before an event occurs.

You will develop practical skills for using storytelling as a tool that you can apply immediately in your day-to-day work. This session focuses on using storytelling to ensure recommendations are understood in time to shape what happens next.

Session Objectives

By the end of the session, participants will be able to:

1. Understand storytelling as a strategic communication tool
2. Apply a structured storytelling framework
3. Identify and use storytelling in key professional contexts to influence decisions and priorities.

Pre-Work

To maximize the relevance and application of the session, spend about 20 minutes before our session on this pre-work. Think about a specific real event or situation that took place in which NCDHHS Public Health Preparedness and Response (PHP&R) was involved, such as a severe weather event, public health emergency, preparedness exercise, or coordination effort, and focus on how planning or coordination influenced what did or did not happen as a result. Then please answer these questions:

- Where did the event or situation happen? (be specific)
- When did the event or situation happen? (be specific)
- What happened? (be specific)
- Who was impacted? (be specific)
- How were the impacted individuals impacted? (be specific)
- How was PHP&R involved in planning and preparedness in anticipation of an event like this one? (be specific)
- How effective was PHP&R's planning and preparedness in anticipation of an event like this one? (be specific)
- What lesson(s) do you take away from your responses to the questions? (be specific)

You will develop a story from the thinking work that fits into a larger communication task. Email me if you have questions. I look forward to our session. Heidi_Schultz@unc.edu