

FALL REV UP 2026

FINDING, TELLING, AMPLIFYING YOUR STORY



VIRGINIA
Main Street

Letterpress
Communications

WELCOME!

TELL ME...

Who are you?

What do you do?

What is your favorite place on
your Main Street?

THE LETTERPRESS TEAM





MARKETING MOMENT



Tell me the facts and I'll learn.
Tell me the truth and I'll
believe. But tell me a story and
it will live in my heart forever."

Native American Proverb

FINDING YOUR STORY

THREE WORDS



Finding Your Story

What's the REAL story?

- *What story do we tell ourselves?*
- *What story do visitors tell?*
- *What story do new residents tell?*

Progress vs Preservation

- *What are you preserving?*
- *Where are you progressing?*

YOUR TURN!
FIND YOUR STORY



BRAIN BREAK

TELLING YOUR STORY



Telling Your Story

Who are your storytellers?

- *Internal vs External*

How will you tell your story?

- *Written, Visual, Data*

Where will you share your story?

- *Owned, Earned & Paid Channels*

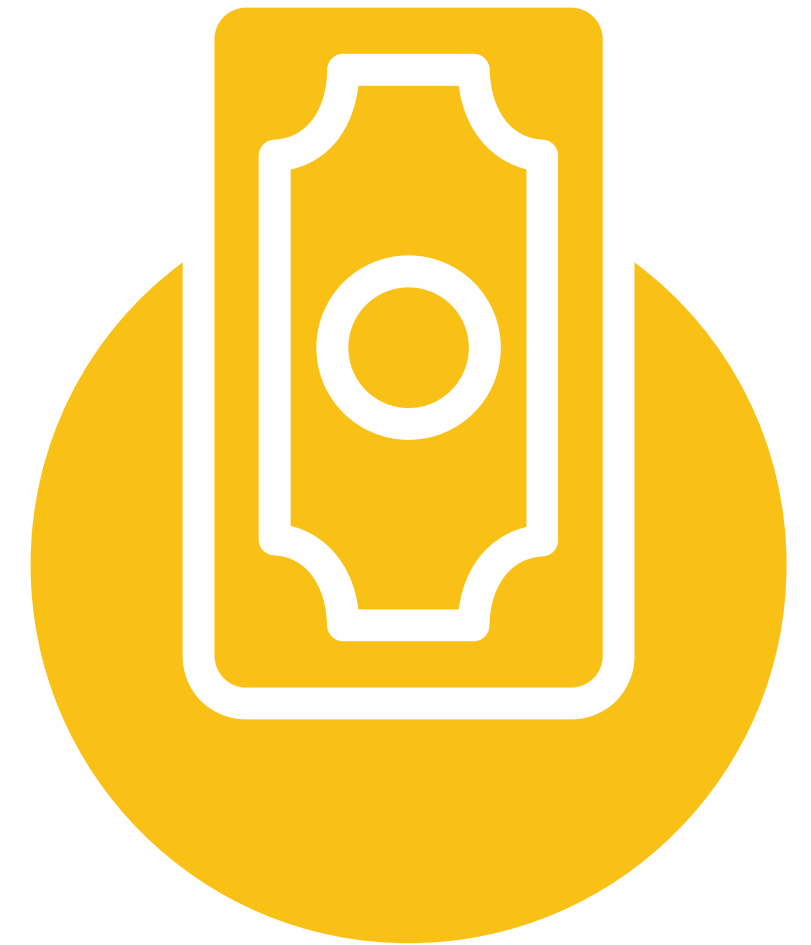
COMMUNICATIONS CHANNELS



Owned



Earned



Paid



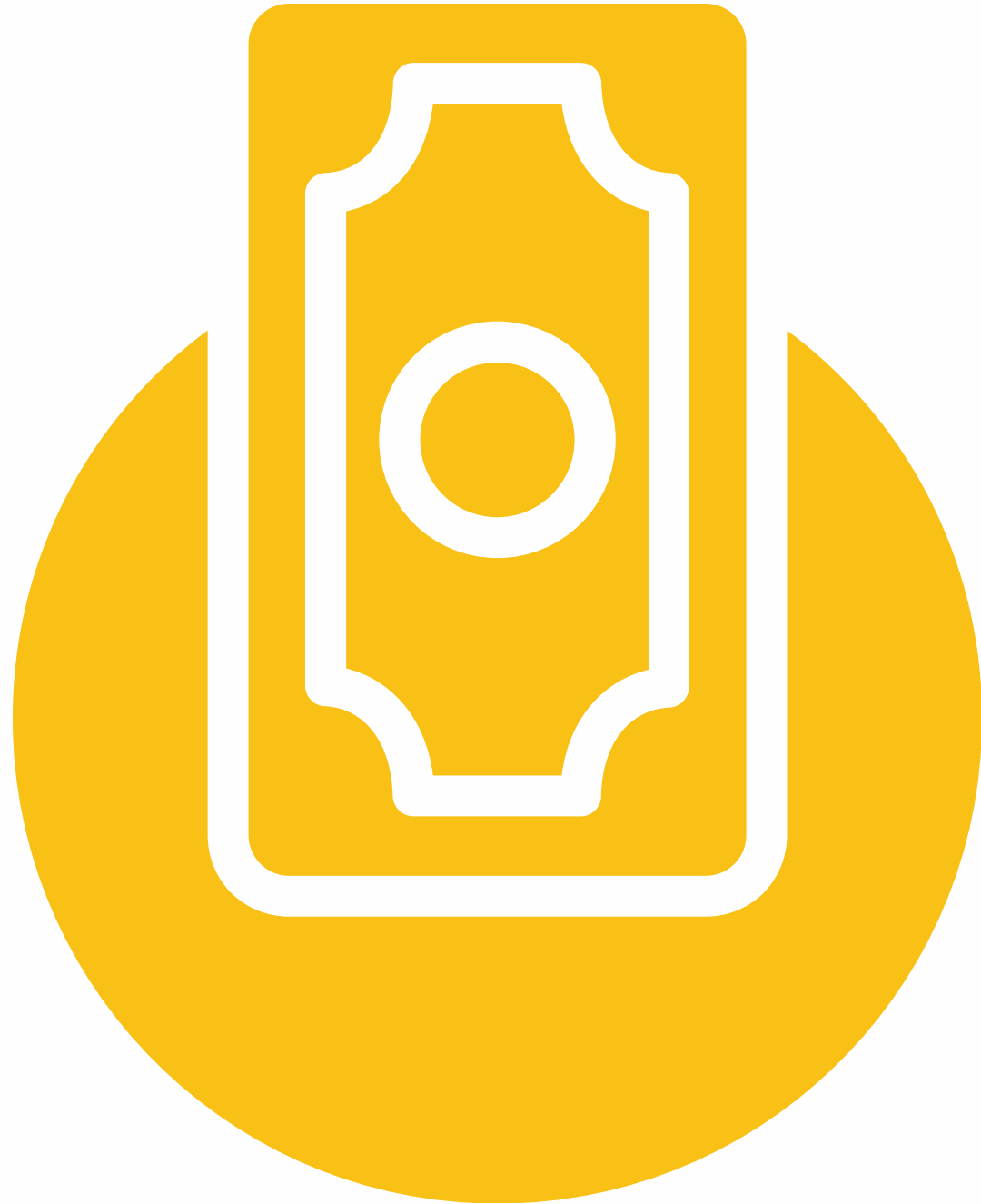
OWNED CHANNELS

- Website
- Newsletter
- Contacts
- Google Business
- Social Media (Rented)
 - Facebook
 - Instagram
 - LinkedIn



EARNED CHANNELS

- Word of Mouth
- Reviews (Digital Word of Mouth)
- Media/Press coverage
- Social Media
 - Likes
 - Shares
 - Comments



PAID CHANNELS

- Digital Ads
- Social Media Ads
- Print Ads
- Radio/TV
- Community Sponsorships



Add Data to Your Story

Numbers Really Matter

- *Data gives your story credibility*

Meaningful Metrics

- *Choose the right numbers.*

Avoid Data Overload

All you need is one solid stat.

YOUR TURN!
TELL YOUR STORY



LUNCH!

**TAKE BETTER PHOTOS,
TELL BETTER STORIES,**



Visual Storytelling

Showing your mission in action—one real moment at a time.



People don't connect to programs.

They connect to people, moments, and impact. Your photos are often the first—and most lasting—impression of your work.

The 5 Photos Every Nonprofit Needs

Cover shot – one powerful, emotional image

Action shots – people doing the work (not posing)

Impact shots – the result (before/after, outcome)

Detail shots – hands, tools, small moments

Context shots – wide shots showing place/community



What makes a photo work in your annual report?

- Emotion > perfection
- Real moments > posed moments
- Specific stories > generic smiles

Strong storytelling photos often come from candid, imperfect moments that capture feeling, not just faces

**YOU HAVE A CAMERA
IN YOUR POCKET!**



Three Simple Rules for Fantastic Photography

- Rule of thirds
- Get closer
- Change your angle

Let's explore these some more...

Rule of Thirds

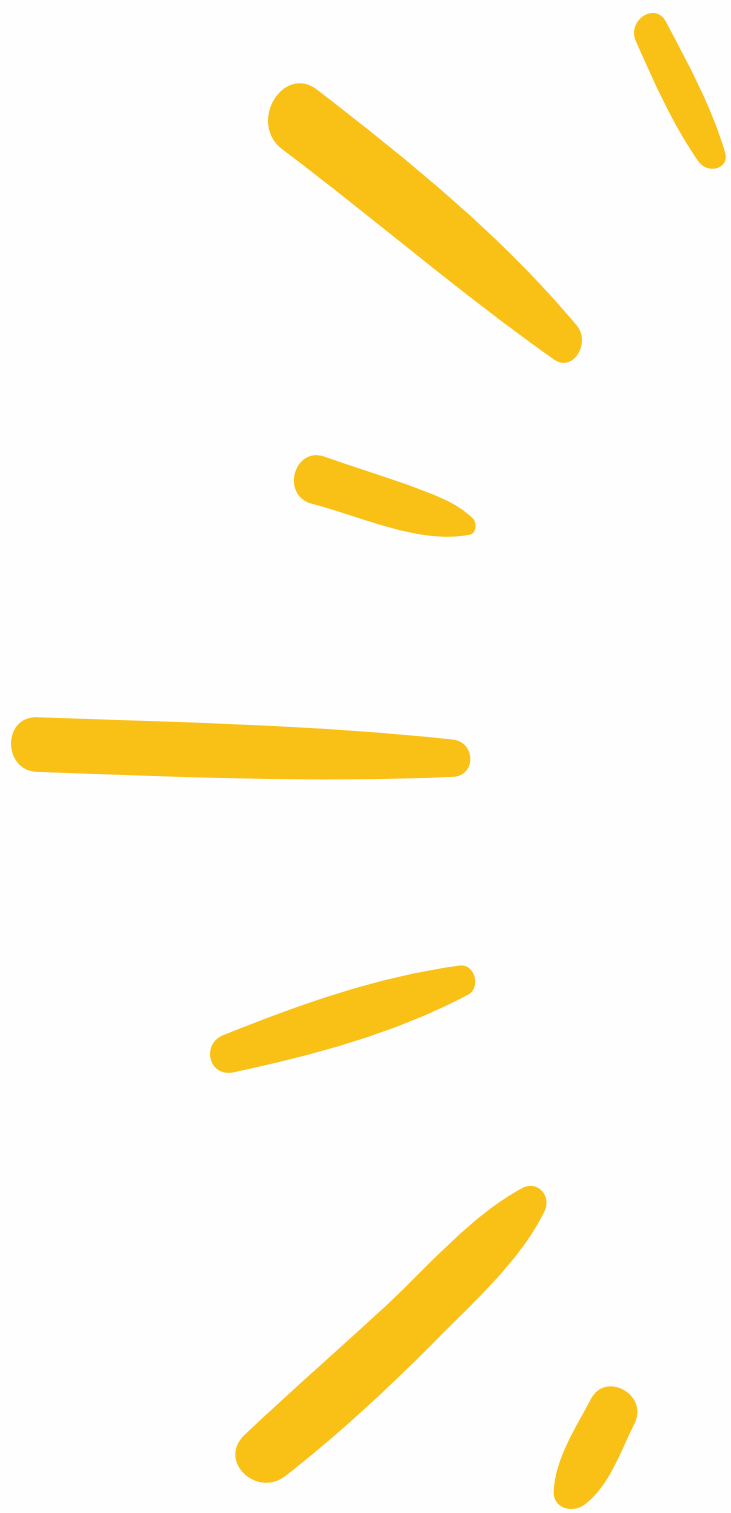


Get closer



New Angle

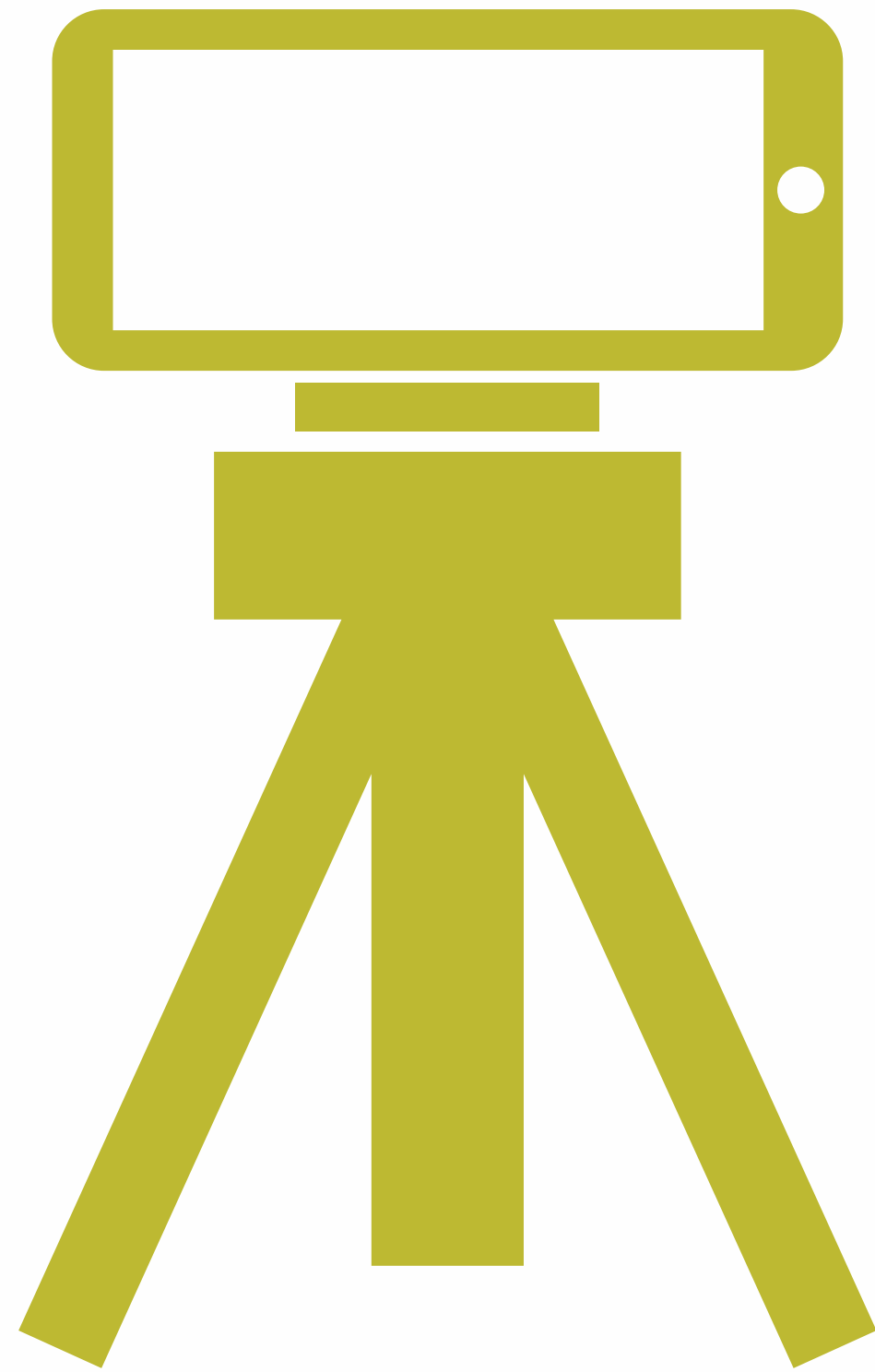




Lighting Cheat Code

- Face your subject toward light
- Avoid overhead/yellow light
- Step into shade outdoors

Natural, soft light consistently produces more flattering and usable images



TIPS & TRICKS

- Frame each photo/video as you are shooting — don't rely on editing in your post.
- Take more than one shot!
 - Don't forget to shoot what's around you. You may need that b-roll.
- Take your photos from a different perspective.
- Get close — don't rely on zoom.
- Play with your shutter speeds.
- Stabilize your phone.
- Casual is okay.

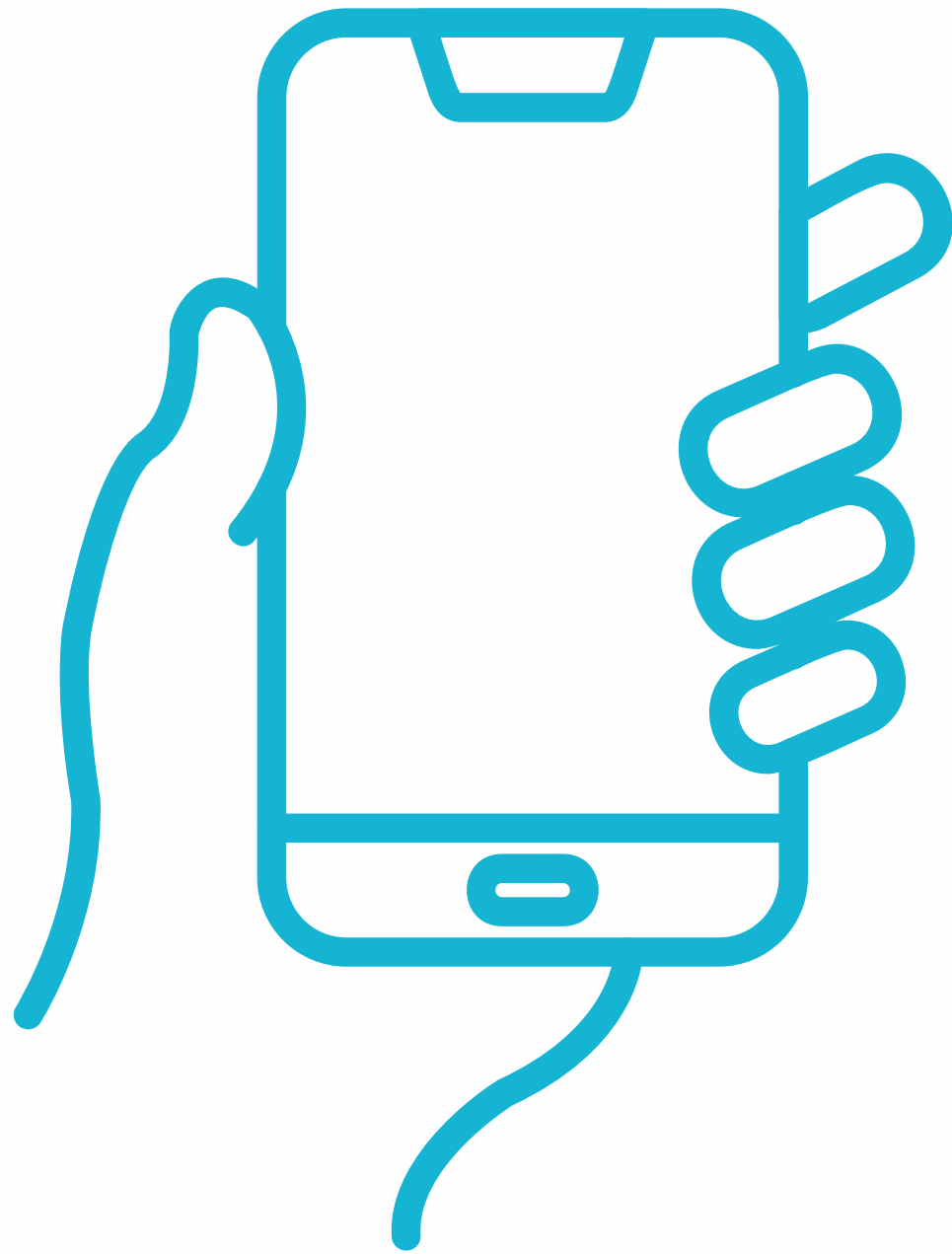


Photo Ethics & Consent

- Ask permission when appropriate
- Avoid exploitative imagery
- Show dignity, not just need
- Represent people accurately

LET'S PRACTICE!



Group Photo Challenge

- An Action Shot
- A Detail Shot
- An Emotion Shot

Split up into groups and explore inside and outside to practice the principles.



Five Minute “Fixes”

- Crop
- Brightness
- Contrast
- Straighten

**Editing will enhance your photo,
but can't fix a bad one.**



BRAIN BREAK & EDITING

AMPLIFYING YOUR STORY



Amplify Your Story

Foundational Communications

- *Content Pillars*
- *Consistent Data & Visual Collection*

Your Content

- *Start slow. Build your capacity.*

Earned & Paid Communication

- *Get a little help from your friends.*

CONTENT MARKETING

Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly-defined audience — and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action.

CONTENT PILLARS

PROMOTIONAL

EDUCATIONAL

INSPIRATIONAL

ENTERTAINING

Don't forget about community!

YOUR TURN!
AMPLIFY YOUR STORY



Resources + Tips

Brand & Messaging Guide Outline
VMS Press Release Kit

Tips & Tricks

- Get organized now!
- Prioritize foundational collateral.
- Plan for 30+ years.



Brand & Messaging Guide
DOWNLOAD THE TEMPLATE

VIRGINIA MAIN STREET
PRESS RELEASE KIT

A MAIN STREET COMMUNITY
GUIDE TO EARNED MEDIA

Letterpress
Communications

VIRGINIA
MAIN
STREET
VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT
OF HOUSING AND
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Earned Media Resource
DOWNLOAD THE GUIDE



Questions + Discoveries

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