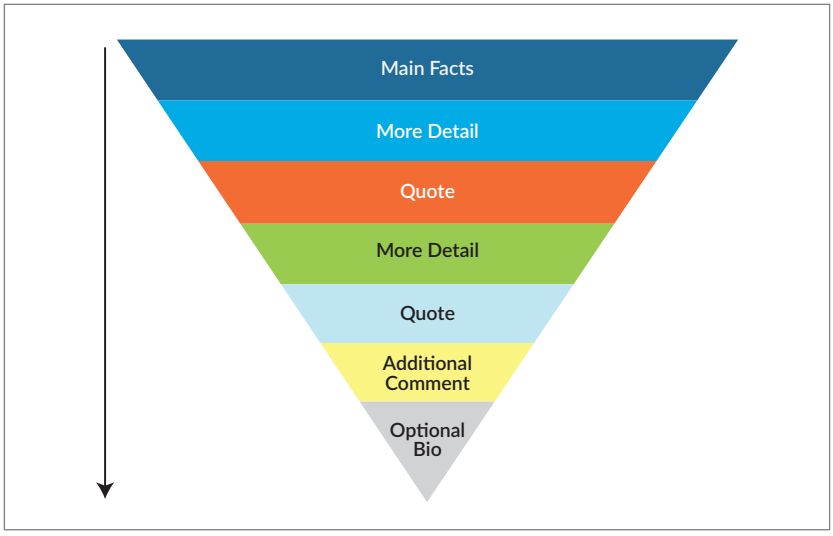
Tips for Writing a Bank Street News Story

Bank Street publishes original news stories about select events, programs, and initiatives on the Headlines section of the website. Articles are between 600–800 words long, use plain language, and are editorial in tone for easy readability. Below are some tips for how to write a news story.

News Story Guidelines

- The 5Ws are the most important elements in all news articles: Who, What, When, Where, and Why. The majority of 5W factual information should be shared within the first half of the story and all 5W information should be included somewhere within every article.
- News articles follow the inverted pyramid formula of journalism, starting with the most important information and prioritizing the 5Ws throughout the piece.



- Quotes are used in news articles to provide additional information that builds on the facts of the story. Quotes should not repeat information that has already been shared in the article. Instead, quotes should add more information, summarize a specific point of view, and/or add additional value to the story in some way. Use a minimum of one source and one quote per story and a maximum of two to three sources for quotes per story, when possible. Name and title attribution should be given for every source and stated in full in the first usage.
- Paragraphs should contain one to three sentences each. When possible, each sentence should contain no more than 15–20 words. The first line of a news story, however, is typically a little longer in length and contains between 25–35 words.
- In addition to the 5Ws, Bank Street news stories highlight the following information when possible:
  - Areas of impact
  - Project outcomes, including data points when available
  - Areas of cross collaboration between divisions

Basic Content Outline

- The first paragraph of a news article, called the "lead," draws people into the story. There are two types of leads: a summary lead and a descriptive lead. In general:
  - Summary leads are used in straight news stories and are fact-based. They typically include some of the basic 5Ws and prioritize the most important information first. This type of lead is usually one to two sentences long.
  - Descriptive leads use creative writing to draw the reader in and are typically used in long-form feature stories, although they can be used in straight news stories as well. Descriptive leads use writing techniques such as anecdotes or observational storytelling and are usually at least two paragraphs in length. If any of the 5Ws are not used in the descriptive lead, they should be prioritized following the lead in the order of importance to the reader.
- Below is a basic outline for a news story using a summary lead:
  - Lead (one paragraph)
  - Additional background information/5Ws (one paragraph)
  - Quote about the news (a quote is typically placed as the third paragraph)
  - More in-depth information about the news, including supporting facts (1–3 paragraphs)
  - Additional quote relating directly to the information provided in the previous paragraph
  - More information about the news (1–3 sentences max per paragraph; 1–3 paragraphs)
  - Additional quote relating directly to the information provided in the previous paragraph and/or summarizing the story and/or the project's impact

Bank Street Style Norms

- Explore Bank Street's **Headlines** for examples of published news coverage
- Reference the **Editorial Style Guide** for Bank Street norms
- Secure copy approval from project leaders and sources
- Carefully proofread your copy before dissemination or publication
- Articles for publication on the Headlines section of the website are reviewed by the Communications Team before potential publication