



# Pitching Your Project:

Using credibility, passion, and  
logic to make a compelling case  
for funders

Presented by Dr. Nico Wood Kos  
[nicowoodkos@gmail.com](mailto:nicowoodkos@gmail.com)



Nico Wood Kos is grant writer, interpretive park ranger, and professional storyteller with a PhD in Communication.

She has written more than 30 successful grant proposals to city, county, and state-level agencies, as well as universities, nonprofit groups, and philanthropic organizations.

She chairs the grants committee for Electric Peak Arts Council and oversees the evaluation and distribution of grants by North Yellowstone Education Foundation's Connect! Grants program.

She lives in Mammoth Hot Springs, Yellowstone with her husband and two daughters.



# Pitching Your Project: an overview



# Pitching Your Project: an overview

- Telling a great story



# Pitching Your Project: an overview

- Telling a great story
- Reading RFPs

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- Telling a great story
- Reading RFPs
- Persuasion- Ethos, Pathos, Logos

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- Telling a great story
- Reading RFPs
- Persuasion- Ethos, Pathos, Logos
- Practical application

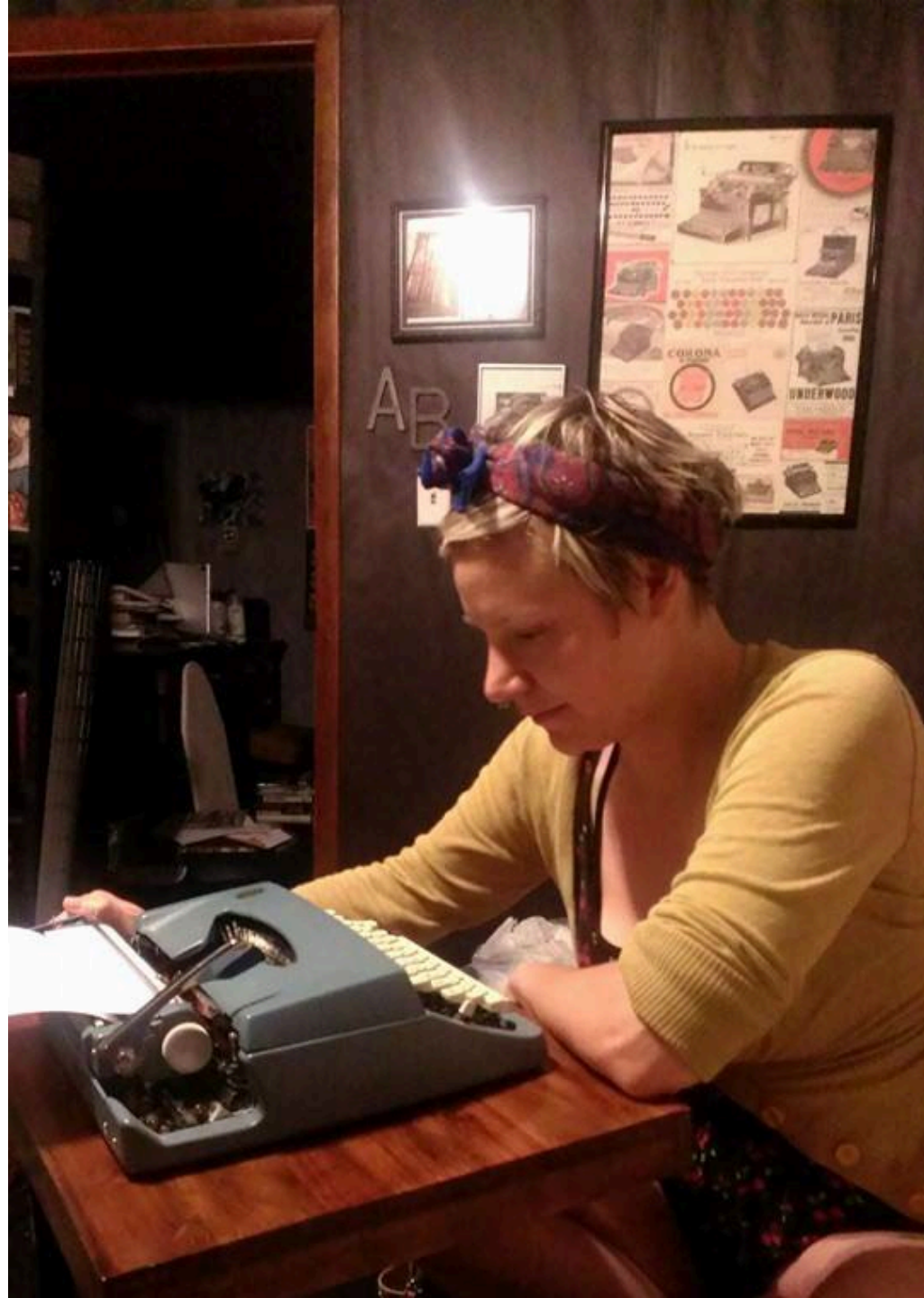
# WHAT IS CREATIVITY?

"Creativity is a crushing chore and a glorious mystery. The work wants to be made, and it wants to be made through you."

— ELIZABETH GILBERT

#BIGMAGIC





Student for  
23 years



immeasurably  
specific  
&  
a smidgen  
pretentious



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Student for  
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2 pages a day



immeasurably  
specific  
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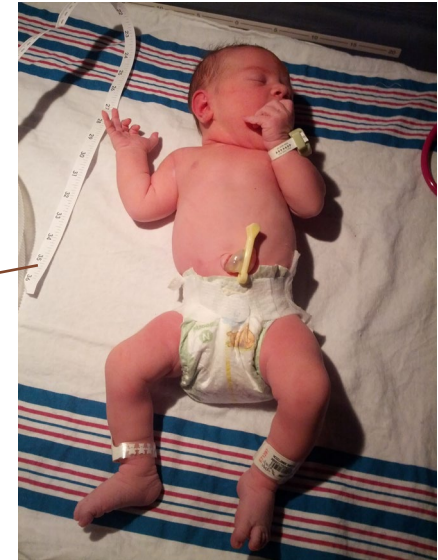


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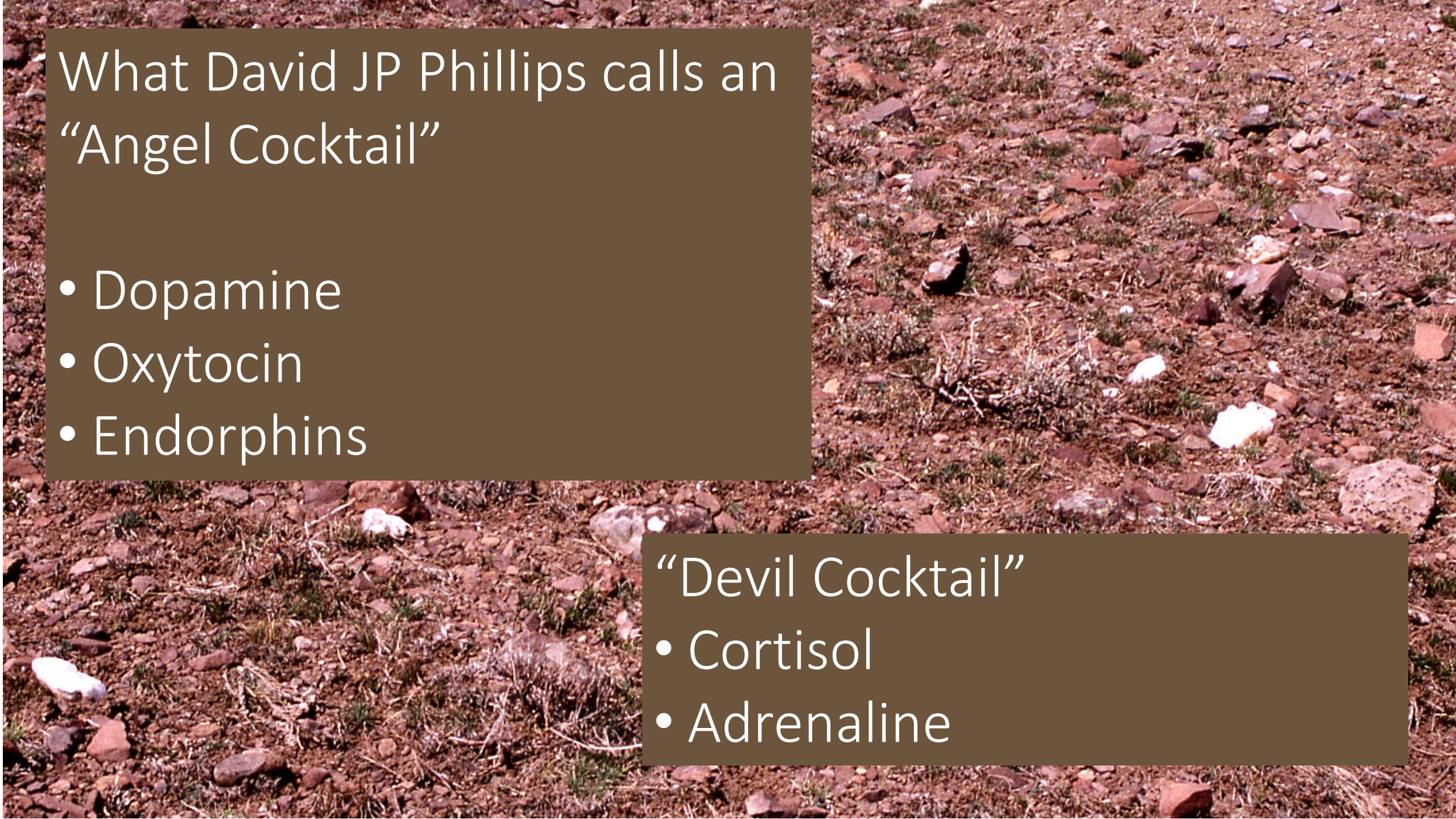


Communication Theorist Walter R. Fisher calls human beings “homo narrans,” explaining that it is fundamental to human nature to make sense of our world through stories.

# What David JP Phillips calls an “Angel Cocktail”

- Dopamine
- Oxytocin
- Endorphins





# What David JP Phillips calls an “Angel Cocktail”

- Dopamine
- Oxytocin
- Endorphins


## “Devil Cocktail”

- Cortisol
- Adrenaline



What is a pitch?

An “elevator pitch” is a two-minute description of your project that includes all of the relevant information you’d want a potential supporter to know.

A photograph of a rugged mountain landscape. In the foreground, a gravelly path leads towards a rocky slope. To the left, a dark, gnarled tree trunk is visible. The background shows steep, light-colored rock faces under bright sunlight. A semi-transparent dark green rectangle is centered over the image, containing white text.

Don't take extra time, space, or  
characters to communicate  
something you could have said with  
less.





Ethos

Pathos

Logos



Ethos

Pathos

“In a **grant** proposal,  
you’re  
not reporting, you’re  
selling.” - Julie Cwikla

Logos



Ethos

Pathos

Logos



Ethos

credibility and reliability

Pathos

Logos

A bronze statue of a bearded man, likely a philosopher, is shown in profile, facing right. The statue is weathered and has a green patina. It is set against a clear blue sky. To the left, a portion of a red-tiled roof is visible. Three text boxes are overlaid on the image: 'Ethos' in a light blue box at the top right, 'Pathos' in a light blue box on the left, and 'Logos' in a light blue box on the right. Below each of these is a red box containing a definition: 'credibility and reliability' for Ethos, 'emotion and empathy' for Pathos, and an empty box for Logos.

Ethos

credibility and reliability

Pathos

emotion and  
empathy

Logos

A bronze statue of a bearded man, likely a philosopher, is shown in profile. The statue is weathered and has a greenish patina. It is set against a bright blue sky. To the left, there are reddish-brown architectural elements, possibly part of a building. Three text boxes are overlaid on the image: 'Ethos' in a light blue box, 'credibility and reliability' in an orange box, 'Pathos' in a light blue box, 'emotion and empathy' in an orange box, and 'Logos' in a light blue box, 'rationality and the presentation of facts' in an orange box.

Ethos

credibility and reliability

Pathos

emotion and  
empathy

Logos

rationality and  
the presentation  
of facts



# Ethos

I'm telling you have a Ph.D., I am revealing myself to be an authentic person who struggles with writing.



# Ethos

I'm telling you have a Ph.D., I am revealing myself to be an authentic person who struggles with writing.

# Pathos

I'm talking about my baby and my writing as though it is a baby.



# Ethos

I'm telling you have a Ph.D., I am revealing myself to be an authentic person who struggles with writing.

# Pathos

I'm talking about my baby and my writing as though it is a baby.

# Logos

I am describing how I rationally and meticulously worked to overcome my fears and write.



What is your project?



The background image is a landscape photograph. On the left, a river flows through a valley. The right side of the image shows a steep, rocky hillside with sparse vegetation. Two dark green rectangular boxes with white text are overlaid on the image.

# What is your project?

- What you'll do



# What is your project?

- What you'll do
- How you'll do it



# What is your project?

- What you'll do
- How you'll do it
- When you'll do it

Pathos



# Pathos

“Pulling at their heartstrings”



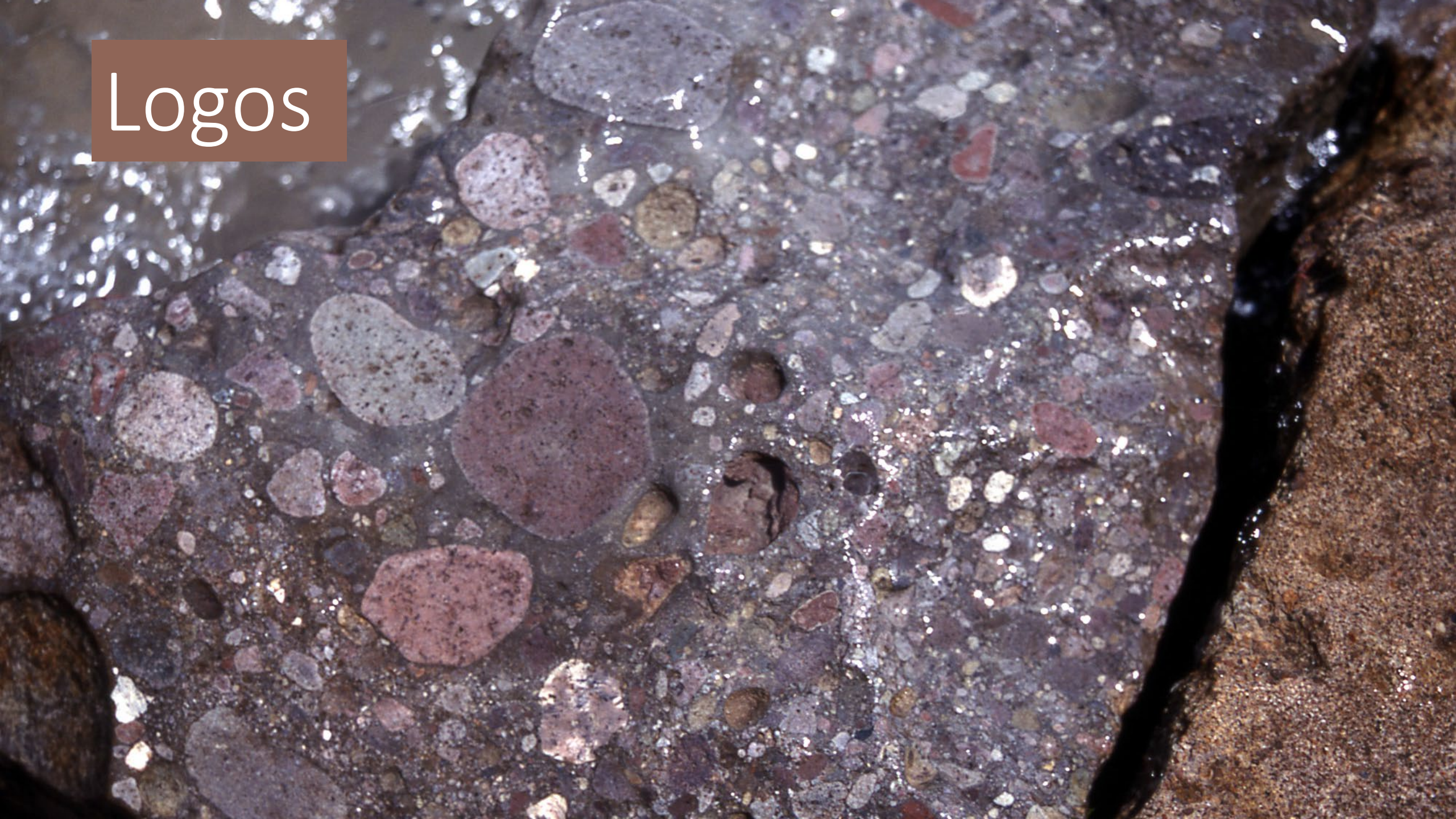
# Pathos

“Pulling at their heartstrings”

Think in terms of *needs*:

- Who are you serving?
- What is the nature of their need?
- What might happen if this need is not met?

Logos



# Logos

Logic always has something to prove.



# Logos

Logic always has something to prove.

- Data and Statistics
- Clarity of ideas
  - Does your project make sense?
  - Is your timeline rational?
  - Is your budget sound?



Ethos



# Ethos

Impressions of your character, intentions, and abilities.

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Prior (or extrinsic):  
The credibility you bring to a pitch because of your experience or reputation

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Prior (or extrinsic):  
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Demonstrated (or intrinsic):  
The credibility you display through the act of communicating.



# Ethos

Impressions of your character, intentions, and abilities.

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Impressions of your character, intentions, and abilities.

- Credibility of your organization

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Impressions of your character, intentions, and abilities.

- Credibility of your organization
- Credibility of your project

# Ethos

Impressions of your character, intentions, and abilities.

- Credibility of your organization
- Credibility of your project
- Local credibility

# Demonstrating Credibility



An aerial photograph of a dry, cracked landscape. The ground is a mix of dark brown and reddish-brown soil, with numerous deep, winding cracks. Sparse, low-lying vegetation is scattered across the terrain. A prominent, light-colored, curved path or road runs diagonally across the lower half of the image.

# Demonstrating Credibility

- Sharing personal experience or firsthand knowledge

An aerial photograph of a dry, cracked landscape. The ground is a mix of light brown and dark grey, with numerous deep, winding cracks. Sparse, low-lying vegetation is scattered across the terrain. A prominent, dark, winding line, possibly a dry riverbed or a crack, runs diagonally across the upper half of the image. The overall scene suggests a harsh, arid environment.

# Demonstrating Credibility

- Sharing personal experience or firsthand knowledge
- Providing sound research

# Demonstrating Credibility

- Sharing personal experience or firsthand knowledge
- Providing sound research
- Following instructions

# Demonstrating Credibility

- Sharing personal experience or firsthand knowledge \*pathos\*
- Providing sound research
- Following instructions

# Demonstrating Credibility

- Sharing personal experience or firsthand knowledge \*pathos\*
- Providing sound research \*logos\*
- Following instructions

# Demonstrating Credibility

- Sharing personal experience or firsthand knowledge \*pathos\*
- Providing sound research \*logos\*
- Following instructions
- Most powerful & comprehensive



Park County Special Education Co-op  
Grant Application 2020

What does rural mean to you?

For us, it means unobstructed sunrises over the mountains. It means breathtaking animals waltzing through our backyards. It means a snowmobile ride to and from school.

Rural means both distance and connection: where the span between homes may be farther, yet the kinship between people is brass-bound. Unfortunately, living in rural Park County can also mean lack of access to mental and behavioral health care.

Statistics from the Center for Disease Control tell us that Montana is facing a mental health epidemic. And yet, if you look at figures from the Health Resources and Services Administration, we have less than a quarter of the recommended number of mental-health care providers to serve our population. More often than not, children in rural communities do not have access to the tools they need to thrive. The Park County Special Education Co-op seeks to change this.

With your support, we will work to provide mental and behavioral health services to students in Park County Rural Schools. We will hire both a Behavior Analyst and a School-based therapist who will work together across rural Park County. These positions will provide Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions for students, as well as much needed support for staff, parents, and the community. We will also hire a Project Supervisor to ensure that this important work gets done.

Park County is filled with people who value beauty over convenience. People who relish both self-reliance and collective community growth. Here in Park County, we are willing to make sacrifices for the lifestyle we love. The mental and behavioral health of our children should not be one of them.

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proj.  
descr.

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logos

ethos

pathos

276 words

2 min. 14 sec.

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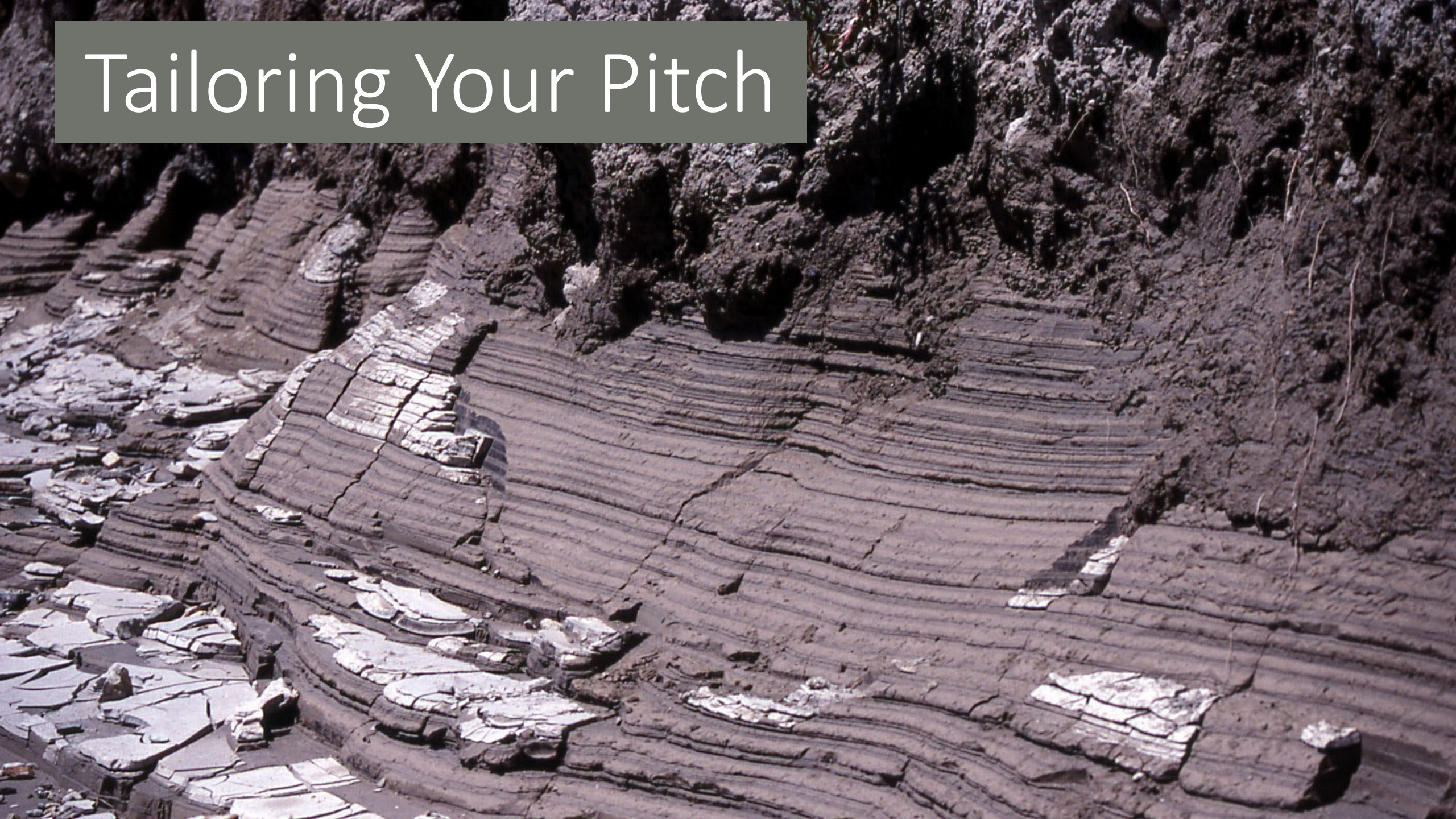
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logos  
ethos

pathos

# Tailoring Your Pitch



# Tailoring Your Pitch

- Reconnaissance work
- Usually very easy!
- Look at website, request for proposal, and any additional materials included with the grant
- Search for key works

## APPLY FOR A GRANT

# Apply for a Community Grant

### Apply for a Grant



Community Grant

Collaborative Grant

The Park County Community Foundation awards annual grants to nonprofit and local government entities serving people living or working in Park County, Montana.

We offer two types of community grant opportunities. Please select from the options below for eligibility information.

Fiscal year 2023 grant opportunities: \$173,000 available for community grant funding. Applications due by October 15, 2023.

APPLY FOR A GRANT

# Apply for a Community Grant

**Health, Safety, and  
Education**

**Economic Performance**

**Housing and  
Affordability**

**Small Town and Rural  
Lifestyle**

**Landscapes and Natural  
Beauty**

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Change is in the air, or in Park County, you might say it's blowing in the wind. New people, new businesses, new issues, and new challenges.

"I think affordable housing is one of the biggest issues, and probably the most difficult to solve."

Every day local nonprofits, schools, healthcare providers, businesses, and governments plan for the future to better serve our changing community.

"We need to be proactive about restoring some of the social services that have left our community."

But what actual data about Park County informs their decisions? How do they separate facts from personal experience? How do they coordinate their efforts with other organizations? Have they considered what kind of community we want to live in 10, 20, or 30 years from now?

We Will Park County is a citizen-informed initiative of the Park County Community Foundation that aims to answer those questions.

"There is going to be growth, there is going to be change. As we need, as a community, to make sure that all of us are playing a part in that change."

Through an online survey that elicited more than 600 responses from throughout the county, 8 focus groups in Wilsall, Clyde Park, Livingston, Emigrant, Gardiner, and Cooke City, and dozens of other community conversations, you've told us your concerns, and you're vision for Park County's future.

"I'd like to see an economy where we have a bit more balance between farming, mining, timber, tourism . . ."

"I think that the vibrancy of a community and the health of a community is really reliant on people's access to healthcare."

"We need to focus on maintaining our intercultural background, the multi-generational families that founded, established here, homesteaded, and have held it for so long."

"I think it's really important to plan for the future because it's an incredible opportunity for us to mold the community in the vision that we want."

Even with the diversity in our county, some key concerns and priorities emerged and gelled into a common vision. Around Health, Safety, & Education, a diversified economy, around housing & affordability, around a small town sense of community and rural lifestyle, and Park County's landscapes and natural beauty.

But this vision won't amount to much if we don't back it up with actual data to help us predict and measure progress toward that vision.

With the help of economists from the University of Montana, Headwaters Economics, and more, We Will Park County has identified key metrics in these five core areas that will help us focus our resources and energy.

But it's not just for us. This data will be continuously collected, tracked, and available via a web-based portal, for any organization, business, government, or nonprofit that seeks to better serve our community.

Park County citizens have said loud and clear what their concerns are and what they want their future to be. We hope you'll embrace this vision in your organization, and use this data to make more focused decisions, better collaborate with others, and serve the community that we love more effectively.

ethos

logos

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project  
descrip.

pathos

# Practical Application



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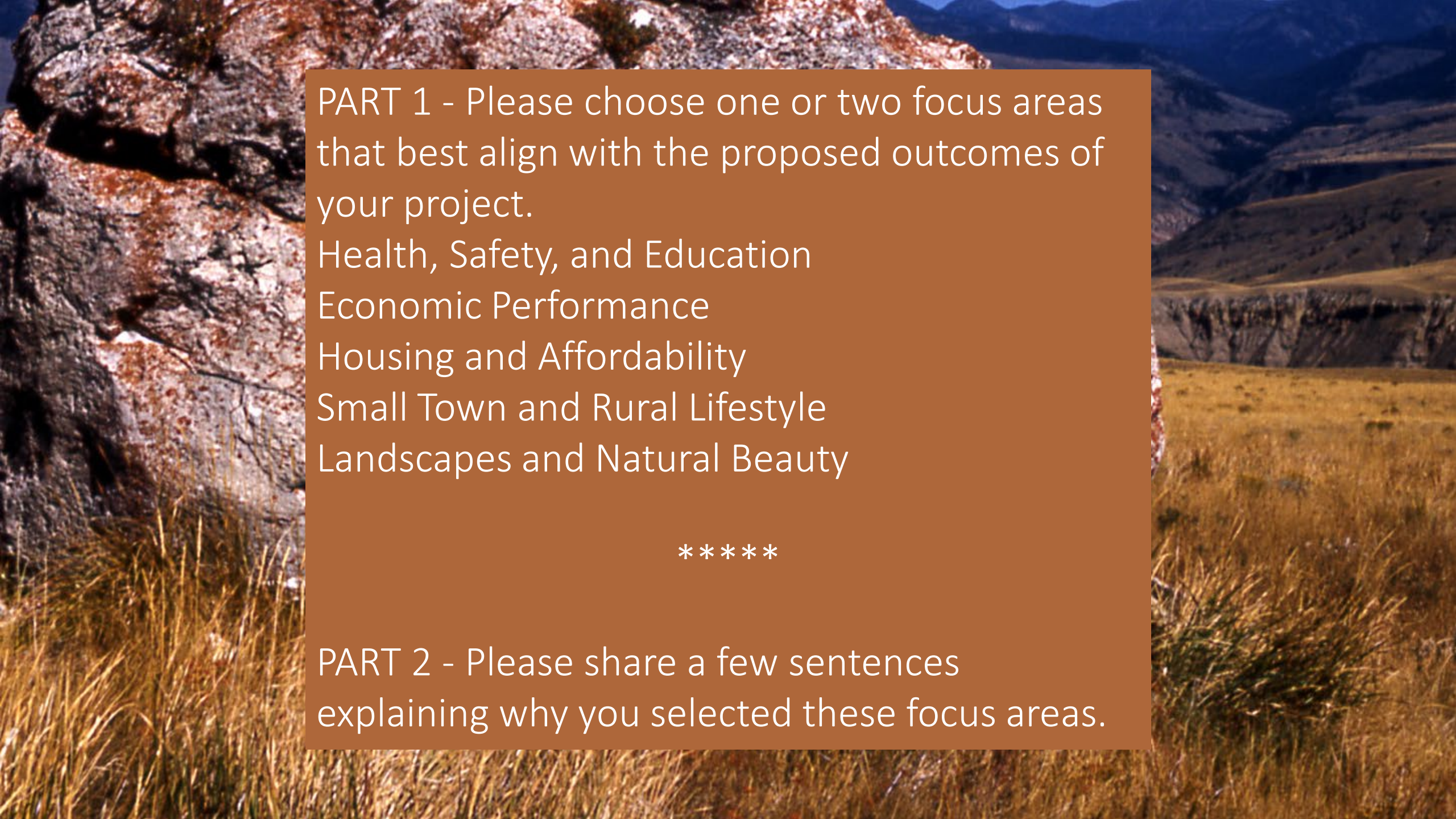
Ethos, pathos, & logos -> brevity & precision



# Practical Application

Ethos, pathos, & logos -> brevity & precision

- You don't need to use all the characters
- "Second Draft = First Draft minus 10%"
- Look for opportunities to "pitch" with the application



PART 1 - Please choose one or two focus areas that best align with the proposed outcomes of your project.

Health, Safety, and Education

Economic Performance

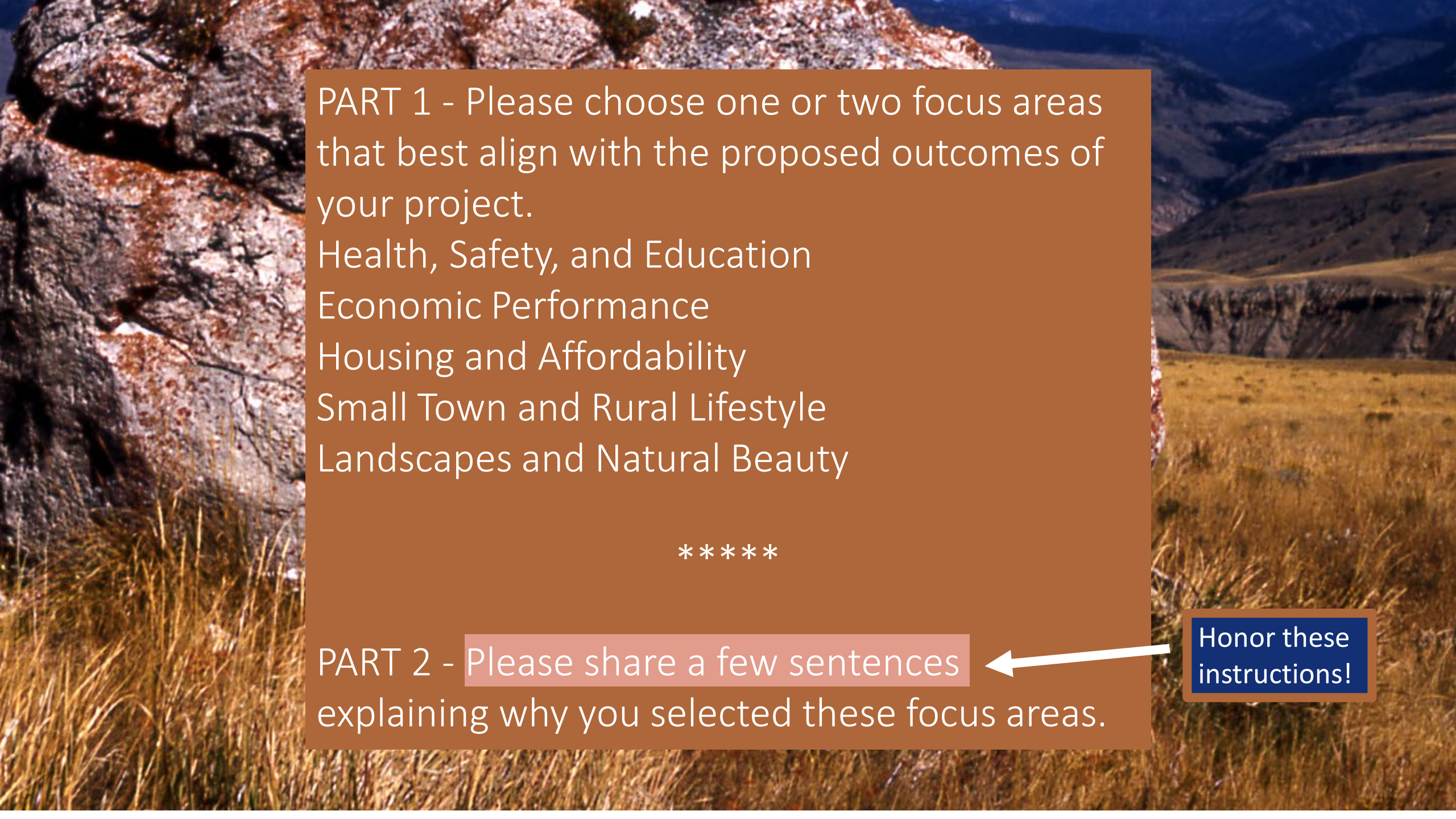
Housing and Affordability

Small Town and Rural Lifestyle

Landscapes and Natural Beauty

\*\*\*\*\*

PART 2 - Please share a few sentences explaining why you selected these focus areas.



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\*\*\*\*\*

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Honor these instructions!



Big Deal!

PART 1 - Please choose one or two focus areas that best align with the proposed outcomes of your project.

Health, Safety, and Education

Economic Performance

Housing and Affordability

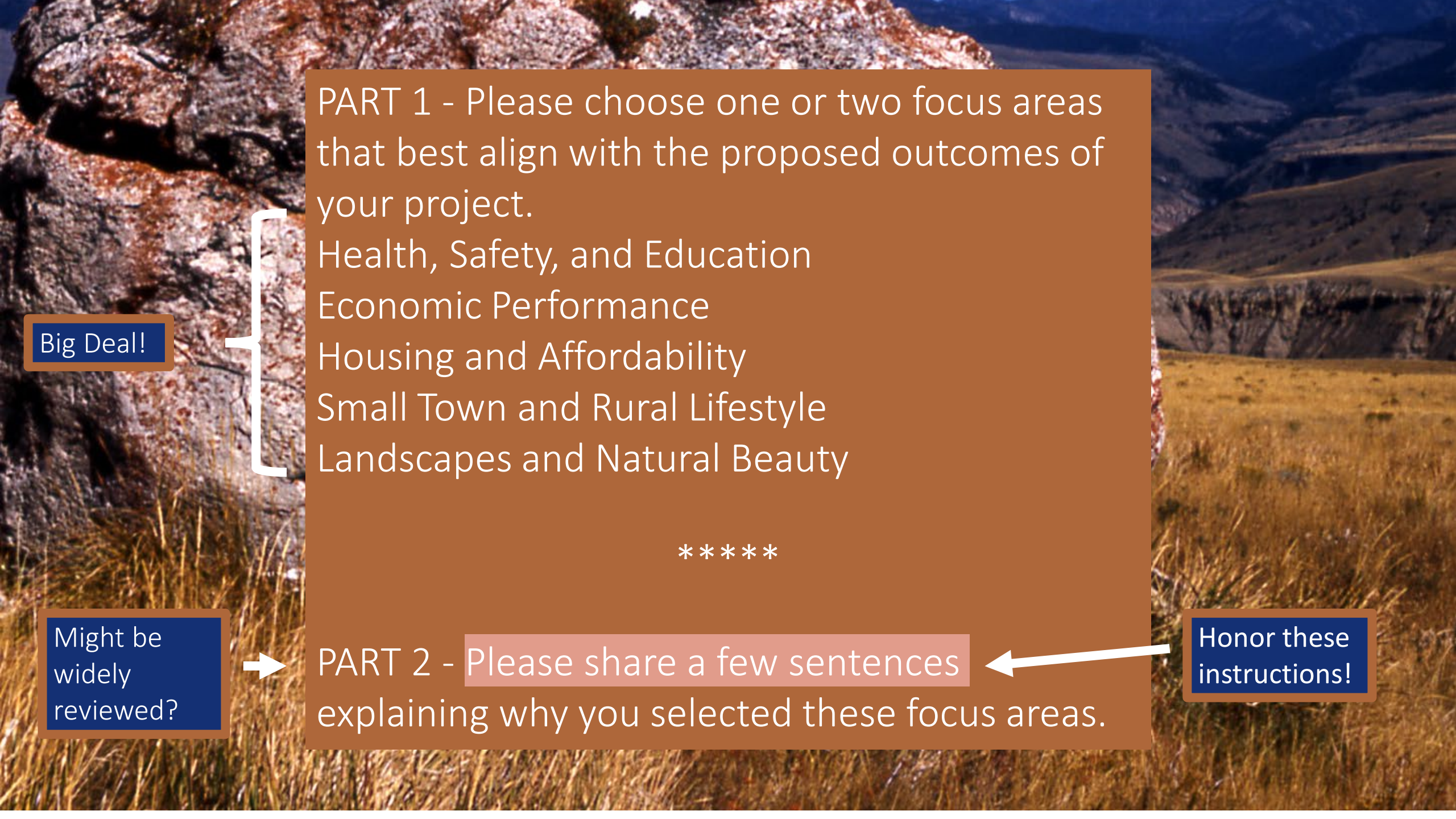
Small Town and Rural Lifestyle

Landscapes and Natural Beauty

\*\*\*\*\*

PART 2 - Please share a few sentences explaining why you selected these focus areas.

Honor these instructions!



PART 1 - Please choose one or two focus areas that best align with the proposed outcomes of your project.

Health, Safety, and Education  
Economic Performance  
Housing and Affordability  
Small Town and Rural Lifestyle  
Landscapes and Natural Beauty

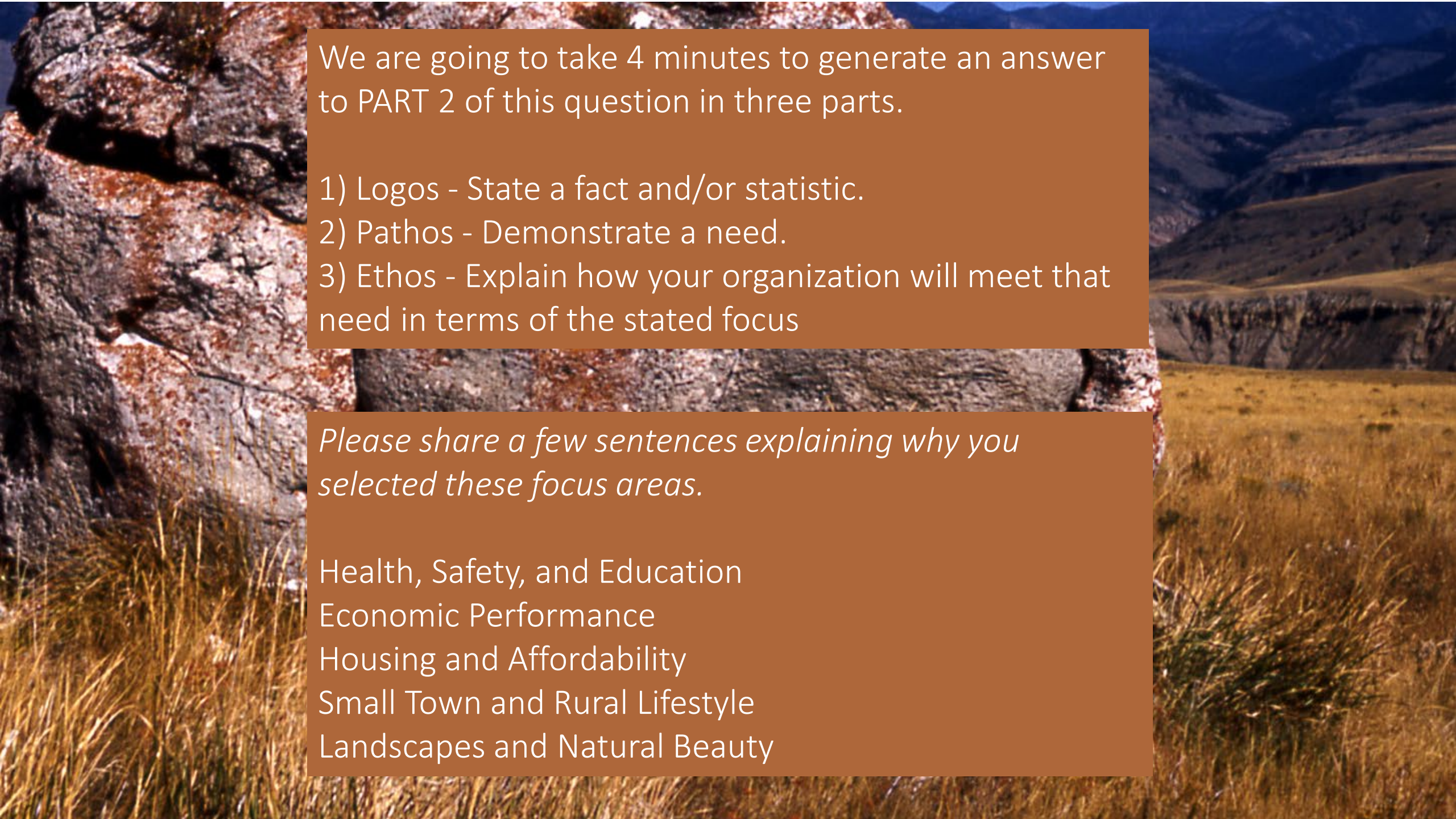
Big Deal!

\*\*\*\*\*

Might be  
widely  
reviewed?

PART 2 - Please share a few sentences explaining why you selected these focus areas.

Honor these  
instructions!

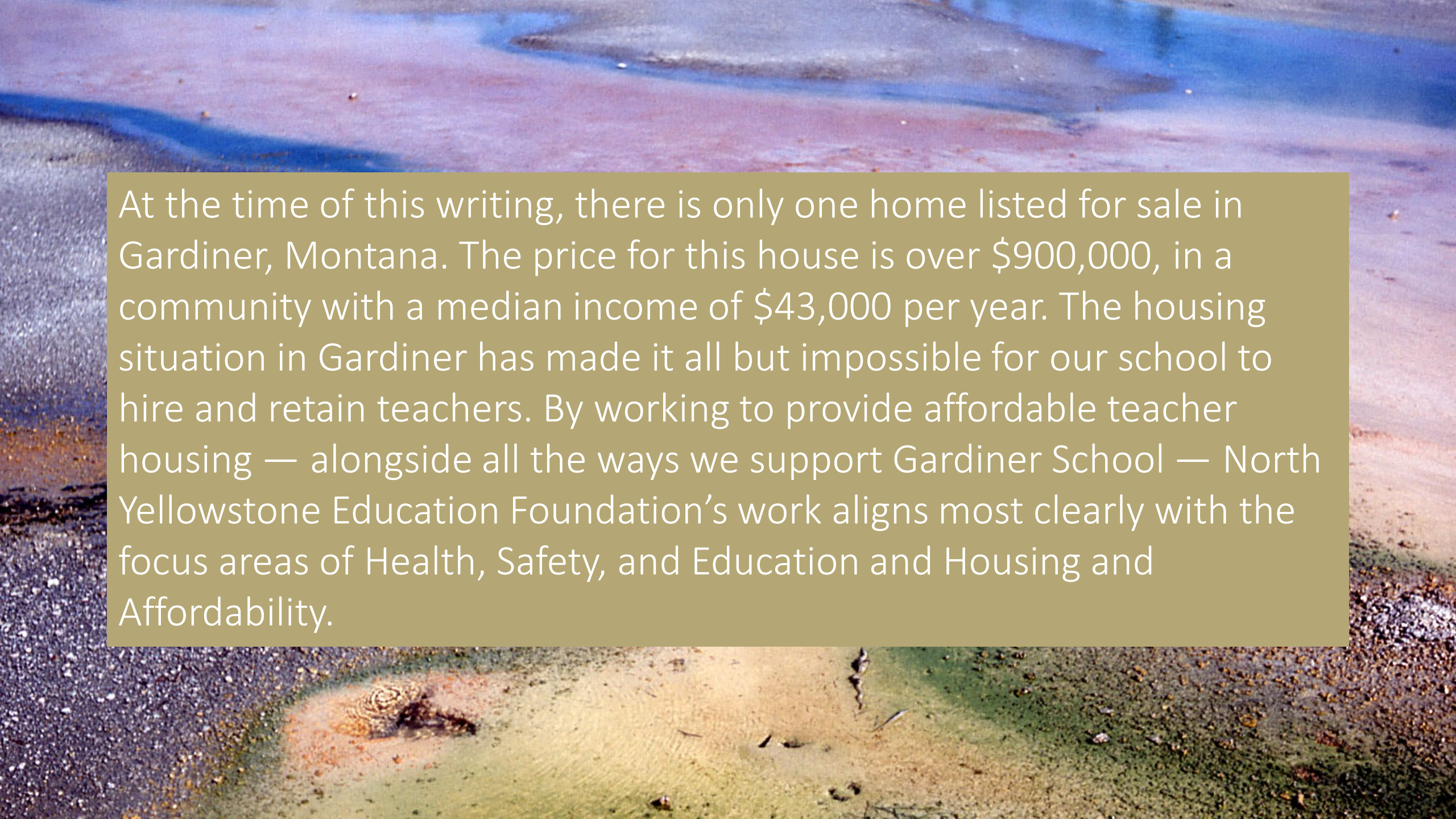


We are going to take 4 minutes to generate an answer to PART 2 of this question in three parts.

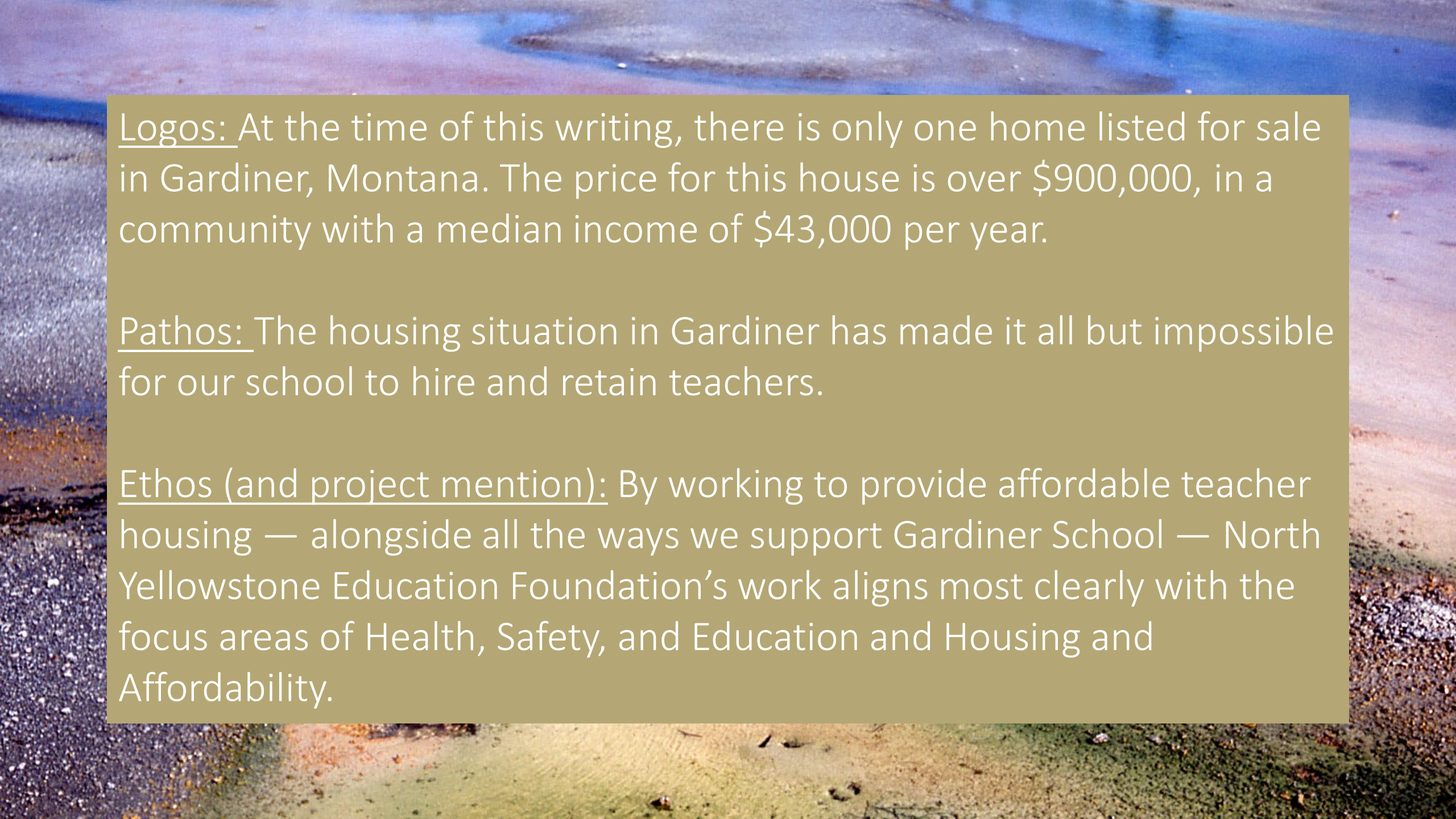
- 1) Logos - State a fact and/or statistic.
- 2) Pathos - Demonstrate a need.
- 3) Ethos - Explain how your organization will meet that need in terms of the stated focus

*Please share a few sentences explaining why you selected these focus areas.*

Health, Safety, and Education  
Economic Performance  
Housing and Affordability  
Small Town and Rural Lifestyle  
Landscapes and Natural Beauty



At the time of this writing, there is only one home listed for sale in Gardiner, Montana. The price for this house is over \$900,000, in a community with a median income of \$43,000 per year. The housing situation in Gardiner has made it all but impossible for our school to hire and retain teachers. By working to provide affordable teacher housing — alongside all the ways we support Gardiner School — North Yellowstone Education Foundation's work aligns most clearly with the focus areas of Health, Safety, and Education and Housing and Affordability.



Logos: At the time of this writing, there is only one home listed for sale in Gardiner, Montana. The price for this house is over \$900,000, in a community with a median income of \$43,000 per year.

Pathos: The housing situation in Gardiner has made it all but impossible for our school to hire and retain teachers.

Ethos (and project mention): By working to provide affordable teacher housing — alongside all the ways we support Gardiner School — North Yellowstone Education Foundation's work aligns most clearly with the focus areas of Health, Safety, and Education and Housing and Affordability.



# Conclusion

Anytime you speak about your project, you want your words to:

- Paint a picture
- Stir an emotion
- Seem doable, realistic, and real



# Conclusion

- Crisp, concise project description
- Ethos, pathos, and logos
- Enthusiastic, efficient, and wildly effective

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and non-profit consultant

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# Additional Resources

- [Grant Readiness](#)
- [Using Data to Tell Your Best Story](#)
- [Word Cloud](#)
- [Words to Minutes](#)
- [We Will Park County](#)

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