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SUBMISSION DEADLINE

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SLINGSHOT CHALLENGE

Participant Toolkit

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

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INTRODUCTION

Is there an environmental issue impacting your local community that you would love to see solved? The **SLINGSHOT CHALLENGE** is your chance to make an impact!

WHAT IS THE SLINGSHOT CHALLENGE?

The **Slingshot Challenge** is a global youth environmental challenge that gives young people like you a chance to be heard and take action.

It is your opportunity to look at your local community and **IDENTIFY** an environmental issue and a solution idea to address it. Your issue and solution idea should be related to one of the 5 focus areas:

- Clean the **Air**
- Restore the **Ocean**
- Protect **Nature**
- Reduce **Waste**
- Address **Climate Change**

Then you will **CREATE** a **1-minute video** describing your issue and solution idea that you will **SHARE** with the world by submitting to the Slingshot challenge.

HOW DO YOU PARTICIPATE IN THE SLINGSHOT CHALLENGE?

- **JOIN!** Register for the challenge at **slingshotchallenge.org**
- **GET STARTED!** Use this toolkit to guide you through the main phases of the challenge—identifying a local **environmental issue and solution idea** to address it. There are tons of resources to help along the way!
- **SUBMIT!** Create a compelling 1-minute video to share your local issue and proposed solution & submit it to the challenge!

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE SLINGSHOT CHALLENGE?

Youth ages 13–18

Individuals or groups of up to 6 people.

Long-time activists, first-time innovators and **anyone who wants to see their local community become the best it can be!**



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE PARTICIPANT

Join Maya in the Slingshot Community!

Maya **IDENTIFIED** the issue of plastic waste in her school community, so she started **Dishes on Demand** to address it. Then, she **CREATED** a 1-minute video that explained her unique idea of involving classmates and community members to make an impact by using reusable dishes and **SHARED** her idea with the world by submitting to the Slingshot Challenge.

INTRODUCTION | **GETTING STARTED**

Use this toolkit to ***identify*** your local environmental issue and solution idea, ***create*** the 1-minute video that explains how you will take action, and ***share*** your ideas with the world. The ideas and worksheets in this kit will help you identify, create and share a terrific Slingshot Challenge solution and video submission.

ARE YOU A FIRST TIME CHANGEMAKER? How exciting! Here are some resources to help you along your journey:

- First, check out the **IDENTIFY** section of the toolkit. Here you will find resources to help you identify a local **issue** in your community and brainstorm a **solution idea** to address it.
- Join a **Solution Design Lab** to brainstorm with your peers or attend an **Office Hour** for 1-1 help with your solution idea.
- Once you have your solution idea, the **CREATE** section will walk you through making your 1-minute video. Be sure to check out the Selection Criteria Explained to learn more about what to include.
- Check out the example **Timelines** to help you plan out your work.
- Lastly, the **SHARE** section will give you all the details for submitting your video to the challenge and sharing your story with the world!

ALREADY HAVE A GREAT SOLUTION IDEA OR PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED TO THE CHALLENGE? Sharing your story and iteration are critical to changemaking. We're glad to have you part of the Slingshot Community!

- If you want help refining your solution idea to make sure it is Slingshot Challenge material register to attend a Redesign Lab or Office Hour for 1-1 help. There are also resources like the **Selection Criteria Explained** and **7 Tips for Repeat Submitters** to help.
- Then check out the **SHARE** section of the toolkit. It will help you create your 1-minute video and strengthen your storytelling to make sure you have a strong Slingshot submission!

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Visit our Support Center:
bit.ly/3dy0q0g
or email us at
Slingshot@ngs.org.



Be like **Cash**

Cash **IDENTIFIED** the issue of large amounts of fishing line waste in his local rivers so he started **Lines of Hope** to address it. Then, he **CREATED** a 1-minute video that explained his unique idea of involving community members to help with waste collection and recycling efforts. Cash **SHARED** his idea with the world by submitting to the Slingshot Challenge for the first time in 2024. He then implemented and scaled his solution and resubmitted a new video to the challenge the following year that highlighted his growing impact.



Be like **William, Ulises, Diana, Perla and Sasha**

This group of young people **IDENTIFIED** the issue of declining bird species in their local community so they started **Semilla De Esperanza** to address it. Then, they **CREATED** a 1-minute video that explained their multifaceted-solution of community education and action opportunities and **SHARED** their idea with the world by submitting to the Slingshot Challenge.



Be like **Chidiebele**

Chidebele **IDENTIFIED** the issue of limited access to consistent electricity for school children in his community so he created **TerraBox** to address it. Then, he **CREATED** a 1-minute video that explained his innovative idea of an interactive STEM kit that teaches youth to harness solar energy and the power of engineering and **SHARED** his idea with the world by submitting to the Slingshot Challenge.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE PARTICIPANTS

INTRODUCTION | **AMPLIFY YOUR IMPACT**

The Slingshot Challenge is an opportunity to use your voice! Joining the challenge gives you a chance to spread your message, build impact, and create a ripple effect of change across the world. Sign up at **SlingshotChallenge.org** to receive challenge updates and make your account at **slingshot.videosforchange.org**

YOUR TEAM AND YOUR PROJECT:



You can work by yourself or in a team of up to six members. Your project can be an extension of your work from a previous Slingshot Challenge.



Everyone in your team must register at **Videos for Change** and anyone under 18 must get parental consent when creating their account. All team members must be 13-18 years old at the time of submission.



Your project needs to focus on an environmental issue in your community related to the Slingshot Challenge topic areas.

REQUIREMENTS FOR YOUR VIDEO:



Your video must be no longer than one minute, must be in either English or Spanish, and files must be no larger than 200MB.



You can film on any equipment, including your phone, and your video can be filmed in either horizontal (landscape) format or vertical (portrait) format.



All content must be original or copyright-free and we recommend avoiding the use of AI-generated content such as images, video, or script writing. If your video is selected for final consideration, you may be asked to supply information about the source of your content, including AI generators and common use websites.

Join the Slingshot Challenge!

The Slingshot Challenge is an innovative youth challenge that gives young problem-solvers, advocates, and stewards for the planet a chance to focus their message and be heard. Participants are eligible for incredible opportunities, awards, and world-class events.

To get involved, set up your account: **slingshot.videosforchange.org**

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC EXPLORERS

National Geographic Explorers are changemakers from around the globe who are passionate about our planet and making it a better place. Explorers are addressing the world's most pressing problems. Learn more about their work below and think about how their projects connect to your passions. **There are special awards in the Slingshot Challenge for videos that draw connections to Explorers.**

Think about ways you can make a difference like...

Young Explorer **Sruthi Gurudev,** who created an online magazine to engage other young people in Ocean Conservation.

Conservationist **Marina Rivero,** who is committed to educating her community about an unusual and endangered animal in their backyards.

Marine Ecologist **Angelo Brenardino** who protects mangrove forests to preserve unique habitats and combat global climate change.

See more stories of National Geographic Explorers at **nationalgeographic.com/impact/explorers** or search for Explorers from your community in the directory: **explorer-directory.nationalgeographic.org**

SLINGSHOT CHALLENGE AWARD RECIPIENTS

You can also draw inspiration from previous Slingshot Challenge award recipients. *Can you develop a plan to...*

Prevent electronic waste at your school like **Let's Talk E-Waste** in Bahrain?

Encourage cycling and sustainable transportation around your school and neighborhood like the **Resolving the Plight of Smog** team in Lahore, Pakistan?

Fight to protect nature from pollution threats like **Tahirah Naicker** from South Africa or **Lila y su sueño de la cuna azul** in Tena, Ecuador?

Prototype an invention that can help our planet like **Reforest AI** or the **Trovador** robot.

See videos from all of the 2026 award recipients at **bit.ly/4cHyJxs**

GET SUPPORT

Guidance & Resources: This Participant Toolkit contains guides and resources like worksheets and graphic organizers that will help you complete all phases of the challenge.

Virtual Events with Experts: You can join virtual events like our Solution Design Labs where you can work with National Geographic Explorers, previous Slingshot Awardees, and other Slingshot participants around the world to brainstorm new ideas for your submission. Sign up for these events **here**.

1-1 Help: Join Office Hours! During these sessions you can ask questions and receive more individualized support directly from a National Geographic Explorer. We even have special office hours for repeat participants called Redesign Labs during which you can receive individualized feedback on your previous submission. So whether it's your first time submitting, or your third time, you can get the help you need. Register **here**.



IDENTIFY

PHOTO: RACHNA REDDY/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

IDENTIFY | **CHOOSING AN ISSUE**

The National Geographic Society uses the power of science, exploration, education, and storytelling to illuminate and protect the wonder of our world. Now, it is your turn.

WHAT MATTERS TO YOU?

Your video could be inspired by personal experiences, other people's stories, something impacting your community specifically, or an issue affecting the planet as a whole. Genuine passion will hook your audience and move them to act. If you're working in a team, give everyone the chance to share their ideas and be a part of the decision-making process. Your video must address at least one of these five topic areas:

CLEAN THE AIR
Reducing the pollution we put into the air and finding ways to remove it

RESTORE THE OCEAN
Curbing pollution and promoting sustainable use of our ocean

PROTECT NATURE
Preserving and improving habitats for wildlife all over the world

REDUCE WASTE
Innovating ways to reduce and reuse waste

ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE
Limiting our carbon footprint to prevent climate change

PAST SLINGSHOT SUBMISSIONS HAVE TACKLED THESE ISSUES IN THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITY:

- Air Pollution
- Animal Rights
- Clean Energy
- Climate Change
- Community Education
- Deforestation
- Drainage
- Food Waste
- Land Conservation
- Overfishing
- Plastic Pollution
- Policy Ideas
- Protecting Wildlife
- Reducing/Reusing Waste
- Sustainable Practices
- Wasteful Consumption
- Water Quality



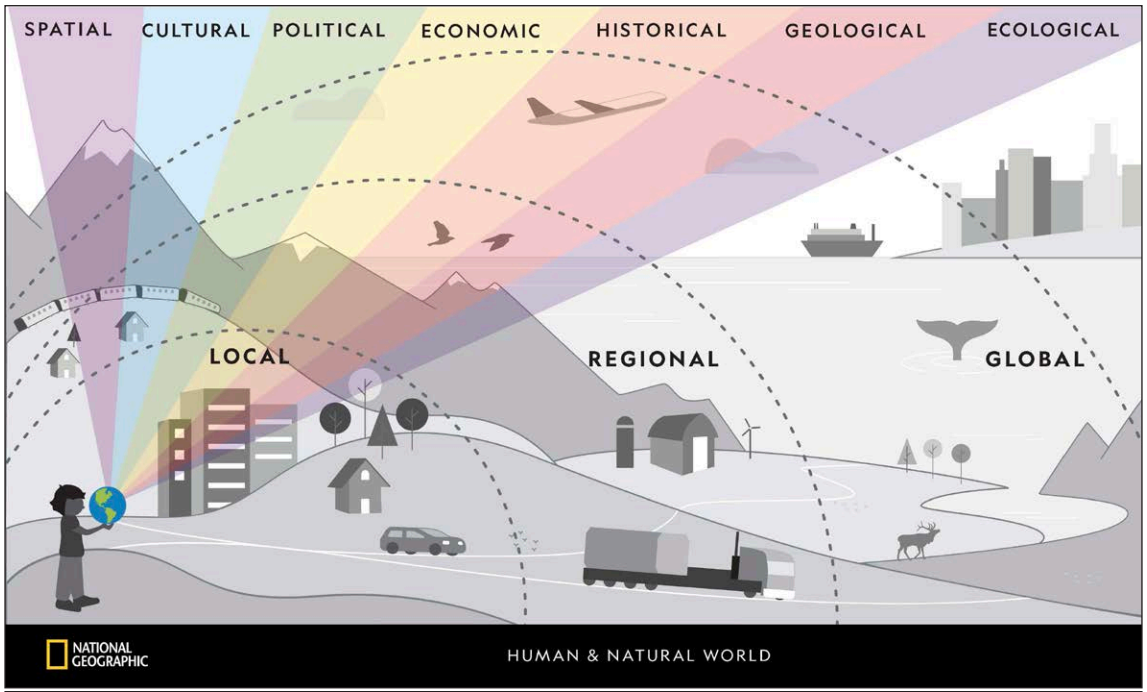
PHOTO: KEITH SUTTER/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

GET LOCAL

Global problems have local roots. National Geographic Explorers are always learning more about the communities where they work so that they can see the different causes and impacts of a problem then develop solutions that will work in their location. Focus your work on the community around you, the issues you see, and the actions you and your community can take.

DO THE RESEARCH

Creating a story that paints a "real" picture of your chosen issue will take some research. Start by looking at several sources to make sure the data matches up. There's so much information online that it can sometimes be tricky to filter through to find the most reliable sources. Check that the organization is respected or that the person sharing the information is an expert. Also, consider how different members of a community might view the same issue very differently. You might even want to interview community members or take surveys.



National Geographic Explorers consider critical world issues through a variety of lenses to understand how the human and natural world interact. They also think about how these issues are important at local, regional, and global scales.

INFOGRAPHIC: NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

CONSIDER THE WHOLE COMMUNITY

A lot of environmental issues are complicated. Solving one problem can introduce new problems. Think about why people are making certain choices, especially if you are thinking about asking them to change their behavior. Many National Geographic Explorers develop their ideas by working with very different groups inside a community. In your video, use language that will connect with the community; people are more likely to listen to your ideas if you show you are listening to them.

IDENTIFY | **DISCOVERING YOUR COMMUNITY**

You are more powerful than you know! You and the communities you are a part of impact the environment every day. The actions you take and the choices you make can help your community contribute to a cleaner, healthier world.

Use this sheet to think about the ways you spend your time and how you interact with the environment. Think about your **school, family, neighborhood, athletics, activities, hobbies, religion and cultural groups.** Who are you with when you do these things? These communities will become your allies in change!

Download this worksheet: **bit.ly/4caENyi**. See sample **here**.

Places/Activities:		Places/Activities:		Places/Activities:	
What I do there:		What I do there:		What I do there:	
The people I am with:	How we impact the environment:	The people I am with:	How we impact the environment:	The people I am with:	How we impact the environment:

IDENTIFY | DEFINING YOUR COMMUNITY ISSUE

This brainstorming activity will help you think about the causes and impacts of the problem you have chosen in your community. Think about the cause of the problem and the effects it has on the human and natural world. Once you have completed the diagram, use it to focus your video on one cause that you hope to address with your solution. Download this worksheet: **bit.ly/4c9L5Lz**. See samples **here** and **here**.

PROBLEM *(For example, plastic pollution entering water systems)*

Which topic areas apply to your problem? ☐ **AIR** ☐ **OCEAN** ☐ **NATURE** ☐ **WASTE** ☐ **CLIMATE CHANGE**

IMPACTS In what ways does your problem affect the human and natural world?

CAUSES What are some factors that create this problem?

IDENTIFY | **DESIGNING YOUR SOLUTION**

Once you have identified your problem and its causes, choose the cause that you are going to address in your community. Do some additional research. How have others, including National Geographic Explorers, addressed this problem? Use the Guiding Questions to add detail to your solution. Download this worksheet: **bit.ly/4bZLZKB**
See samples **here** and **here**.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">MY PROBLEM:

MY COMMUNITY:</td></tr>
<tr><td>CAUSE:</td><td rowspan="2">MY SOURCES:</td></tr>
<tr><td>DETAILS ABOUT CAUSE IN LOCATION:</td></tr>
<tr><td>MY SOLUTION:</td><td rowspan="3">MY INSPIRATION:</td></tr>
<tr><td>DETAILS ABOUT MY SOLUTION PROPOSAL:</td></tr>
<tr><td>HOW MY SOLUTION WILL ADDRESS THE CAUSE:</td></tr>
</table>

SOLUTION GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- What is one cause to this problem that is local?
- How can that problem be addressed through local actions that you and other community members can take right now?
- How does your solution work to fix your problem?
- Why is this solution appropriate for your community and the different people in it?
- Does your solution allow for easy community participation?
- Is your solution unique and innovative? Has it been done before?
- Who from the community will help implement this solution?
- What tools or traditions does your community have that it can use to its advantage?

IDENTIFY | **SOLUTION IMPACT TEMPLATE**

Use this diagram to outline how your solution will impact your community. First consider the people it will impact and the things it could change and list them in the Word Bank. Then use the web to identify what that impact could be. Download this worksheet: **bit.ly/3WFkaD3**. See samples **here** and **here**.

WORD BANK

PEOPLE	THINGS

IMPACT

WHO/WHAT:

HOW:

IMPACT

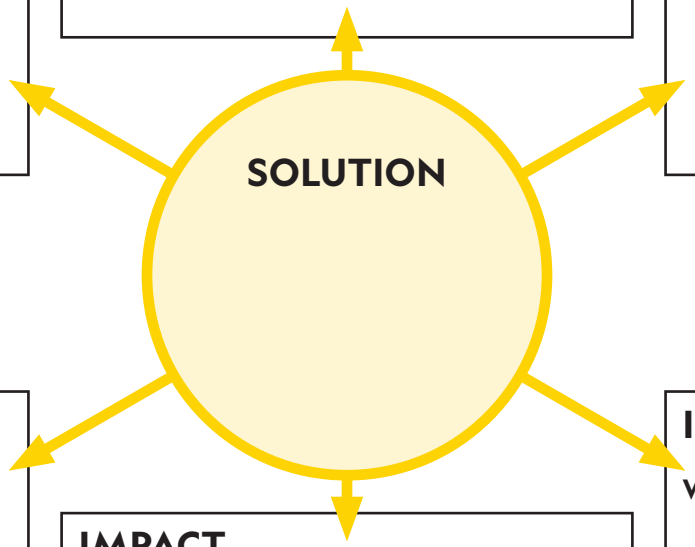
WHO/WHAT:

HOW:

IMPACT

WHO/WHAT:

HOW:



IMPACT

WHO/WHAT:

HOW:

IMPACT

WHO/WHAT:

HOW:

IMPACT

WHO/WHAT:

HOW:



CREATE

PHOTO: REBECCA HALE/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

CREATE | FROM GREAT IDEA TO COMPELLING STORY

You have identified an issue that matters to you, analyzed that issue, and outlined a solution. Now, it is time to create a video that brings attention to your issue, illuminates the problem, and inspires others to join you in the solution. National Geographic Explorers practice giving "lightning talks," short presentations of no more than one to three minutes that introduce audiences to their work and call them to care and act. See an example of an Explorer lightning talk here: **bit.ly/3QXIDhP**

It's time to focus on what you want your audience to think, feel, and do and to tell a story that inspires these changes. The tools in this section will help you outline and create your story. There are also links to inspirational and helpful resources from National Geographic, including a series of videos created by Sandesh Kadur, an award-winning filmmaker.

BUILD A SENSE OF UNITY

Most of the biggest issues we face need collective action (people working together toward a shared goal). Sometimes, alone, we can feel powerless, but remember that all change starts with an idea and committed people! Using unifying words like "together", "we", and "our" will make your audience feel part of a supportive community trying to achieve a shared vision.

MAKE THEM WANT TO ACT

Great stories have the power to shape our aspirations and stir our imaginations. Bring to life the benefits of taking action and show your audience a positive picture of what change could look like in the eyes of one person or in the world.

BREAK DOWN THE PROBLEM

Global issues are big, but there are simple everyday ways to help make a change. Break down the problem and pick one thing that you want to focus on. Build an emotional connection and show your audience how their actions will make a mark. What they do matters!

MAKE THEM HOPEFUL

Often the end of a story is the most memorable part. One way to motivate your audience is by making them feel hopeful about the path forward. Think creatively about how you can leave an uplifting feeling that makes your call to action stick. You could use upbeat music, positive language, vibrant visuals, or encouraging statistics that build a sense of hope and empowerment.

Many National Geographic Explorers are storytellers who use their voices to urge others to protect our world. National Geographic Explorer Sandesh Kadur is an award-winning filmmaker who uses film and photography to illuminate and protect critical areas in India. Sandesh shares his inspiration and provides tips for young storytellers in a video for National Geographic here:

bit.ly/3LyzXfM



PHOTO: REBECCA DROBIS

CREATE | **FOCUS SHEET**

Use this focus sheet to create a clear vision for your video. Refer back to this sheet as you make your video to check that you're on track! Download this worksheet: **bit.ly/4dmuQfq**. See samples **here** and **here**.

PROBLEM
What is the problem?

SOLUTION
What is your solution?

LEARN
What will you teach your audience about this topic? What does your audience need to learn about this topic?

CARE
How will you make your audience care about your topic?

ACT
What is your call to action for your audience? What can people do to address this problem?

CREATE | CHOOSE A STYLE OF VIDEO

There are lots of video styles you can use to bring your ideas to life. Here are some examples to help decide the right style for you. Don't be limited; you have creative freedom! The most important thing is choosing a style to suit your needs, resources, and skills.



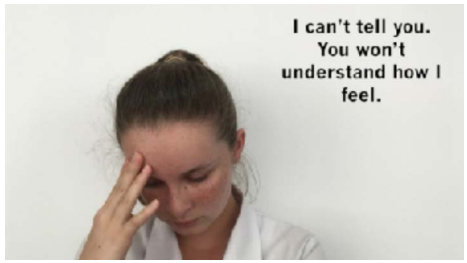
LIVE-ACTION

Shooting a live-action video gives you hands-on filmmaking experience. It's a powerful way to represent real life and create a relatable connection to emotionally hook your audience. You need to be creative with the resources that you have available to bring your story to life in an authentic way. You can provide live interviews and tours of a location like **Off Bottom Oysters** or use "actors" to tell a story like **Give Your Clothes a Second Life**.



ANIMATION

Animation is a creative alternative to shooting a live-action video. It allows your imagination to run freely; you can set any scene and create all kinds of characters without needing physical resources. The possibilities are limitless! If you have experience using animation software or want to learn, it's a great way to take a unique approach to telling your story. You can mix animation with live action like **Manual Sobre la Agricultura (Agriculture Handbook)** or try your hand at full 2D animation like **Paint-O-Beans Paint.**



IMAGES AND TEXT

Using images (such as photos, drawings, maps, and graphics) and text is a simple but powerful way to communicate your key message. You need to capture, create, or source a series of symbolic images you can use to effectively piece your story together. Visual storytelling can be a great way to guide what you want your audience to think, feel, and do, especially if you have limited resources. Create a simple visual presentation like **ReefSound** or a complex collage like **Mazah: Food Waste Fighting App.** Consider using a slideshow program or another presentation software such as **ESRI StoryMaps: bit.ly/3LVWDqs** (**See great examples here: bit.ly/4728gJ7**).

PHOTOS COURTESY OF VIDEOS FOR CHANGE EXCEPT (TOP) MARK THEISSEN/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

CREATE | **SHOT TYPES**



WIDE SHOT

Shows the whole area. Good for showing where and when the video is set.



CLOSE-UP

Shows a particular part of the subject, usually a face. Good for more emotional dialogue.



LONG SHOT

Shows people from head to toe. Good for introducing people and action.



EXTREME CLOSE-UP

Shows detail about one part of the subject. Good for reaction shots and showing extreme emotions.



MEDIUM SHOT

Shows people from the waist up. Good for highlighting gestures and motion.



OVER THE SHOULDER

Shot from behind the person. Good for showing what people are doing and for interviews.



MEDIUM CLOSE-UP

Shows people in more detail, usually the head and shoulders. Good for basic, “neutral” dialogue.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF VIDEOS FOR CHANGE

CREATE | **STORYBOARDING**

Storyboards are your secret weapon so you get all the ingredients you need for your video and make your shoot run smoothly and efficiently. Filmmakers use them to visualize each shot, communicate their ideas, and organize the right equipment. Remember to introduce your issue to hook your audience, use the middle to create an emotional impact, and have a clear call to action at the end!

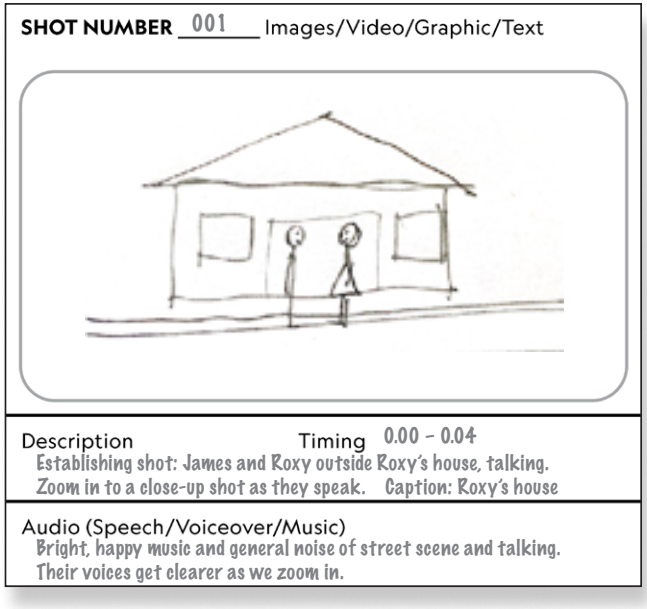
National Geographic Explorer Sandesh Kadur recommends piecing together your visual images to create a sequence that draws viewers into your story. To see Sandesh shoot a sequence, watch the Production and Shooting Tips sections here

bit.ly/3R3LlBg

SHOT NUMBER Add a number here so you can order your shots and refer to them when setting up/directing/editing.

IMAGES/VIDEO/GRAPHIC/TEXT Draw a rough sketch here of what will appear on the screen at this point during the video (e.g., your characters acting something out, a talking head, photos). Don't worry, you don't have to be an artist! Stick figures are fine, as long as you can get the message across.

EXAMPLE



DESCRIPTION Here, you describe what is happening in the shot, including what your characters are doing and anything important about the background or setting. You can describe how close the camera is to the characters (close-up, mid- shot, establishing shot) and any moves you want the camera to make (zoom in, zoom out, pan left, etc.)

AUDIO/SPEECH/VOICE-OVER/MUSIC Write down the sound that will go over the images/video/graphic (e.g., a person being interviewed, a narrator explaining what the photos show, music tracks, sound effects).

TIMING Here, you need to estimate how long this image/video/graphic/scene will be on the screen.

The following page is a template you can use for your storyboard

CREATE | STORYBOARD TEMPLATE

Download this worksheet: **bit.ly/4fgRmbr**

See samples **here** and **here**

VIDEO TITLE:

SHOT NUMBER _____ Images/Video/Graphic/Text	**SHOT NUMBER** _____ Images/Video/Graphic/Text	**SHOT NUMBER** _____ Images/Video/Graphic/Text
Description Timing	Description Timing	Description Timing
Audio (Speech/Voice-over/Music)	Audio (Speech/Voice-over/Music)	Audio (Speech/Voice-over/Music)

SHOT NUMBER _____ Images/Video/Graphic/Text	**SHOT NUMBER** _____ Images/Video/Graphic/Text	**SHOT NUMBER** _____ Images/Video/Graphic/Text
Description Timing	Description Timing	Description Timing
Audio (Speech/Voice-over/Music)	Audio (Speech/Voice-over/Music)	Audio (Speech/Voice-over/Music)

CREATE | PREPARE FOR YOUR TASKS

It's time to think about the types of jobs and responsibilities involved in creating a video. This can be a chance to build on your skills or to try something new! Think about your video style and what tasks you will need to accomplish.



SCRIPT WRITING Turn your ideas and storyboard into a script by communicating your message in a simple yet interesting way. Think carefully about how the story includes what you want your audience to think, feel, and do. Remember, you have only one minute!



PRODUCING Make sure that your creation process is organized, on schedule, and follows the Slingshot Challenge guidelines. Producing also involves preparing equipment, any extra resources or materials you will need, and filming locations.



FILMING Filming involves operating the camera and filming the video. It requires focus, awareness of different shot types and lighting, and familiarity with your equipment.



DIRECTING Guide your video to make sure that the overall idea is communicated well. Directing is about bringing creativity into the story, sound, and camera techniques to bring your story to life. Directing also includes ensuring that every element of the video is cohesive.



ACTING Acting involves memorizing a script, rehearsing, and feeling confident in front of the camera. An actor could be live in-video, or audio on a voice-over.



ANIMATION If your video includes animation, you will need to consider the use of sound, text, and /or visuals to tell your story and communicate your message. Depending on the type of animation you choose to include, you may need to be familiar with a specific program or application.



EDITING Gather your footage, audio, and other resources to bring your story together and create the final product. You may need to use an editing software program to finish your video.



SOUND EDITING Make sure the best audio is captured through recording on a separate device or checking for background noise during a shoot. Sound editing also involves finding music and effects to maximize your video's impact.

Now for the exciting part, creating your video! Here are a few important reminders before you bring your story to life.



GET CONSENT

By joining the challenge, your video gets the chance to be shared at social media events around the world! To be eligible for these amazing opportunities, you need to make sure you have consent from anyone who appears in your video. It's much easier to get these permissions as you go rather than afterward. It can be really frustrating if you find out that you can't share it because one of your actors hasn't given consent! You can find details at: **videosforchange.org/competitions**. To learn more about permissions for using people and locations in your video and see a sample personal release, check out these guides: **Ethics of Nonfiction Storytelling (bit.ly/3UQxOQM)** and **Legal Issues to Consider in Storytelling (bit.ly/3BY27wf).**



CREATE A BACKUP

You may need to make some changes to your finished video, so make sure you save your drafts and not just the exported video to make it easy to edit. It's also a good idea to create a backup of the raw footage, visuals, audio, etc., on a separate device, just in case!



USE ORIGINAL OR COPYRIGHT-FREE MATERIAL

If you want the chance for global exposure, all of the content in your video must be original or copyright-free. It's illegal to take someone else's content without their permission. We also encourage you to avoid using AI or AI-generated images. If you must use them please make sure all uses are clearly labeled with text on the screen. The most powerful videos are the ones that are creative and unique!



STAY SAFE

It's so important that you stay safe while creating your video. Avoid any risktaking or harmful behavior and follow social distancing guidelines if relevant. Get permission from a responsible adult before filming, take them with you if meeting new people, and never give out personal details.

MORE TIPS & TUTORIALS

For additional tips, including ways to get the best video using your phone and other simple tools, check out the suggestions on the Videos for Change resources site:

https://videosforchange.org/resources-library

CREATE | EDITING TIPS AND TRICKS

To take your video from good to great, invest time in editing. You don't need expensive tools, but you will need to think critically and creatively about what will make your video have the most impact. Use the tips below to make your message of illuminating and protecting the wonder of our world as powerful as possible.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

Think critically about what information your audience needs to have the impact you want. In most cases, less is more! Keep it simple; cut out anything that isn't a key part of the story.

If the key parts of the story are there, your audience will piece together their own meaning, rather than having to tell them every single detail! This will also help to keep their attention. You can find free editing tools online, such as Canva, Veed, ClipChamp, HitFilm, Kapwing, and Filmora.

MAKE IT VISUAL

Think creatively about the way that you're sharing information. Can you "show" instead of "tell"? Symbolic visuals can be a powerful way to communicate ideas and cut down dialogue or action that isn't needed. Remember, a picture can paint a thousand words!

GET GREAT SOUND

Have you ever watched a video in which the sound was too quiet, too loud, or too hard to understand? Chances are you lost interest pretty quickly! Getting great sound is so important. Sound is also one of the best ways to make your audience have an emotional reaction that makes them want to do something to help. This might include using music, backing tracks, or effects that emphasize a feeling or highlight important details. Voiceover is another tool that helps give insight and enhance meaning. To ensure your message is heard, don't speed up your audio to fit the one-minute time limit. Instead, try to hone your messaging to fit the time.

USE TEXT TO GET EFFECT

A lot of text on screen can be boring! But if used well, it can help highlight a key statement or a call to action and make the message stick. Remember to choose an easy-to-read font, keep it short, allow enough time for your audience to read and absorb the information, and double-check the spelling!

In the video "Editing Your Story," you can watch Explorer Sandesh Kadur discuss how to organize and back up your footage, assemble it all, add music and sound, and ask friends and family to review. Sandesh also discusses tips for editing interviews, but don't worry if you do not choose to include one in your video.

bit.ly/3R3LlBg

CREATE | COPYRIGHT-FREE SITES

Copyright is a legal right given to people who have created content (e.g., music, photos, text) to protect their intellectual property. This allows creators (e.g., artists, musicians, game designers) to be fairly paid so they can make a living out of their work. It's illegal to take someone else's content and use it in your video without their permission. The good news is that there are lots of websites where you can access copyright-free images, music, and sound effects to use in your video. Here are a few good ones:



IMAGES

- **unsplash.com**
- **pexels.com**
- **pixabay.com**



MUSIC

- **purple-planet.com**
- **freemusicarchive.org**
- **youtube.com/c/audiolibrary-channel**



SOUND EFFECTS

- **freesound.org/browse/**
- **soundbible.com/free-sound-effects-1.html**
- **youtube.com/c/AudioLibrarySoundEffects**

CREDITS

Just like in any film, make sure you include credits at the end! This can be as simple as a one-second slide at the end of your video. Credits must reference anything you used while planning or creating your video that was created by someone else, such as a book, website, or video you used for your research.

Who made it _____,
what it is _____,
where you found it _____.

For example, if in your video you used information from the article "One Bottle at a Time" from the National Geographic Resource Library, your citation would look like this:

> **National Geographic Society, "One Bottle at a Time", https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/one-bottle-time**

You should also include the names and roles of everyone who helped create your video, but for privacy reasons please include first names only.

CREATE | SELECTION CRITERIA

This checklist will help you understand the key elements of a Slingshot Challenge video and make sure you've got things covered. These are the things that the selection panelists will be looking for! Once you've got all of your content, use the questions to guide your final review. Download this checklist: **bit.ly/4fpmhCs**

ISSUE COMMUNICATED EFFECTIVELY

- [ ] Does the video and solution address an environmental issue related to one of the five topic areas?
- [ ] Does the video make a compelling, evidence-based case for why the issue matters?

EMOTIONAL IMPACT

- [ ] Does the video build empathy, giving the audience a reason to care and take action?
- [ ] Does the participant(s) demonstrate a sincere personal connection to the topic?

UNIQUE/CREATIVE

- [ ] Does the solution present a creative and/or original approach to address the issue?

EFFECTIVE USE OF VIDEO-MAKING TECHNIQUES

- [ ] Does the video meet the technical entry requirements: one minute, created from original or copyright-free material?
- [ ] Can the video and audio be clearly understood by the audience?
- [ ] Does the video use unique storytelling techniques (i.e., styles, shot types) that provides a compelling message?

CLEAR, ACHIEVABLE CALL TO ACTION

- [ ] Is the solution clear, achievable and realistic?
- [ ] Would the solution result in a relevant and measurable impact?

EXPLORER CONNECTION

- [ ] Does the video reference inspiration or ideas from a National Geographic Explorer?

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

- [ ] Does the solution clearly address a specific issue in the community and involve community members as collaborators?

The National Geographic selection panel will consider each of these categories individually. **Remember, there are special awards for drawing connections to National Geographic Explorers.**

CREATE | FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Can teams of youth submit? If so, what is the maximum number of participants in a team?

Youth may choose to work individually or in a team of up to six participants. All participants must be 13-18 years old. Regardless of whether you work individually or in a team, all solutions will be expected to involve collaboration with peers, stakeholders, and/or marginalized communities.

What are the steps youth must take to submit as a team?

When submitting in teams, note that all team members must individually join the team via the Videos for Change site. In addition, all team members must receive individual parent/guardian or educator permission, and all team members must accept the final video submission to ensure every team member is properly credited and recognized. These consents will be sent to the email address you provided when creating your Slingshot Challenge Videos for Change account.

Can I participate again if I submitted a video last year?

Yes, you can submit a video that elaborates on your project from last year or introduces a new project. Please remember that reviewers change from year-to-year, so you will have to introduce your project as if it is brand new.

Is parental permission required for submissions?

Parental permission is required for submission for youth under 18. When registering, youth are prompted to enter a parent email address. The parent must click the "I Consent" button in the email before the video project can be submitted. If you are in a team, all team members' parents must provide consent before the video project can be submitted.

Educators can provide consent on behalf of a student, after receiving consent from their parent outside of Videos for Change, as well.

Should my educator or nonprofit leader sign up as a member of my team?

No. Due to age restrictions for the challenge, educators and nonprofit leaders should not join a submission as an official member of the team, as this will disallow the video from being submitted. Instead, youth should list the educator or nonprofit leader's name in the relevant demographic field of the video submission profile if they wish for them to be associated with submission.

How will I know if my video submission went through successfully?

You can confirm your submission was successfully submitted by checking the status column of your video submission in your Videos for Change account. In addition, you will receive an email confirmation.



SHARE

PHOTO: PROSTOCK-STUDIO/SHUTTERSTOCK

SHARE | REACH AND IMPACT

Congratulations on creating your Slingshot Challenge video! Now it's time to get your message out there. There are lots of ways to share your video and to continue to engage with National Geographic Explorers and changemakers.

CHECK OUT OTHER SLINGSHOT CHALLENGE VIDEOS

Young people from all over the world are contributing their videos to the Slingshot Challenge. Check out their submissions at **slingshot.videosforchange.org** and vote for your favorite for the People's Choice Award starting May 2027.

HARNESS THE POWER OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media helps you reach large numbers of people worldwide and get your message heard on a big scale! With billions of video views online every day, how will you cut through the noise and stand out from the crowd? Make sure your video image and description are exciting, surprising, or enticing! Use the hashtag **#SlingshotChallenge** to connect to others in the challenge. The best way to get a person's or an organization's attention is to tag them. Tagging high-profile influencers or organizations dedicated to your chosen issue is a great way to tap into their community of followers. Please note, however, you do not have to post your video to social media to enter the challenge.

SUBMIT YOUR VIDEO TO SLINGSHOT

The Slingshot Challenge submissions will be reviewed by National Geographic Explorers and experts. A small number of videos will be selected to receive funding from the National Geographic Society that can help young changemakers further their journey. Make sure you submit your video by February 5, 2027 at **slingshot.videosforchange.org.** We welcome multiple video submissions.

When you upload a video to the Slingshot Challenge, your video will also be entered in other opportunities through Videos for Change. These opportunities amplify the voices of young changemakers, like you, from across the world! These programs are a chance to have your video shared and even win an award. All of the details are at **videosforchange.org/competitions**

STAY CONNECTED WITH NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC EXPLORERS

During this challenge, you learned more about National Geographic Explorers across the globe who are working to illuminate and protect the wonder of our world. You can continue to connect with Explorers through Explorer Classroom, weekly live YouTube conversations with some of our most exciting Explorers. Learn more here: **www.nationalgeographic.org/tickets/explorer-classroom/**

What is Videos for Change?

To implement the Slingshot Challenge, the National Geographic Society has collaborated with Videos for Change, a worldwide community of young people creating short-form video content on issues that matter most to them. Through Videos for Change, young filmmakers can also have their Slingshot videos screened at film festivals and connect with broadcast and social media partners. Find all of the latest details at **videosforchange.org**.

SHARE | INSIGHTS AND INSPIRATION

Reflection is an important step in any learning. It gives you a chance to think about how you have grown and what you will do next. When you share your personal reflections with others, they can see inside your thinking process and be inspired to take action as well.
A **vox pop** is a short, direct-to-camera video that shows your reflection process. You can make one yourself or create them with your team by interviewing one other. Use the questions below to guide your reflection and add your own.

WHAT IS THE SLINGSHOT CHALLENGE ALL ABOUT?

- Can young people really illuminate and protect the wonder of our world?
- Why is video such a powerful way to reach others?

WHAT MOTIVATED AND INSPIRED YOU?

- Why are you passionate about your issue?
- What do you want your audience to think, feel, and do?

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

- How will this impact different areas of your life?
- What advice would you give to other young people involved in the Slingshot Challenge?

WHAT WILL YOU DO NEXT?

- How will you continue to work for change on your issue? What is your next step?
- If you could meet one National Geographic Explorer you learned about during this challenge, who would it be and why? What would you ask them?



PHOTO: MARK THIESSEN/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

ADD YOUR OWN QUESTIONS:

-
-
-
-
-

SLINGSHOT

CHALLENGE • 2026–2027 DETAILS

TIMELINE 2026–2027

The 2026–2027 Slingshot Challenge will celebrate and spotlight the creativity and capacity of youth to become the next generation of global stewards.

- **9 SEPTEMBER 2026** CHALLENGE OPENS
- **5 FEBRUARY 2027** SUBMISSION DEADLINE
- **MAY 2027** AWARD RECIPIENTS ANNOUNCED; PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD VOTING OPENS

AWARDS

- Slingshot Challenge Award Recipients may receive up to **$10,000** in funding. Teams will split the award funding.
- Award recipients will join a global community of alumni who are engaging with the Society and its Explorers to continue learning and building their leadership skills as they take action on behalf of the planet.
- All submitters will receive a **digital award** and be invited to a virtual celebration



PHOTO: CADY HERRING

Questions?
Visit our Support Center:
bit.ly/3dy0q0g

or email us at
Slingshot@ngs.org

SAMPLE PLANNING SHEETS

The following sample planning sheets show examples of how you can use the worksheets to brainstorm an idea and plan out your video.



