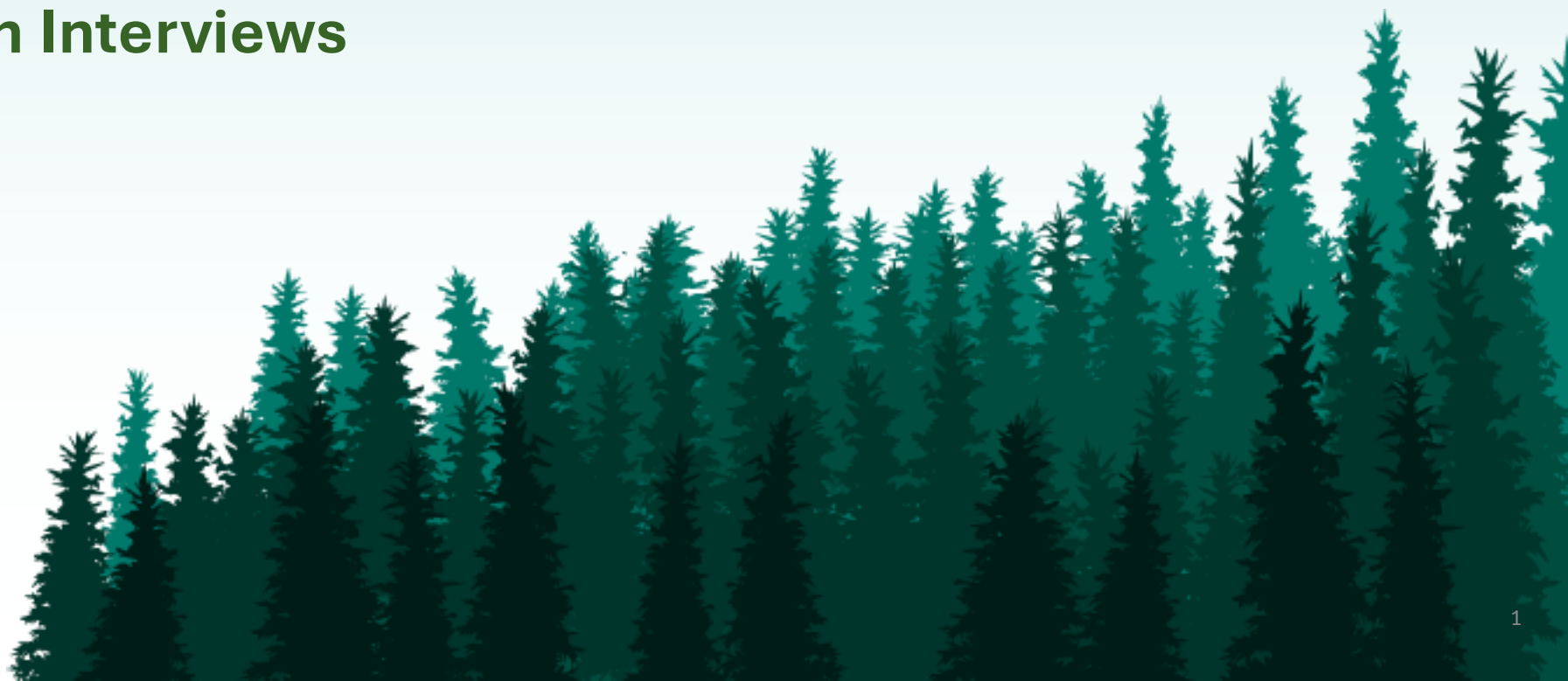




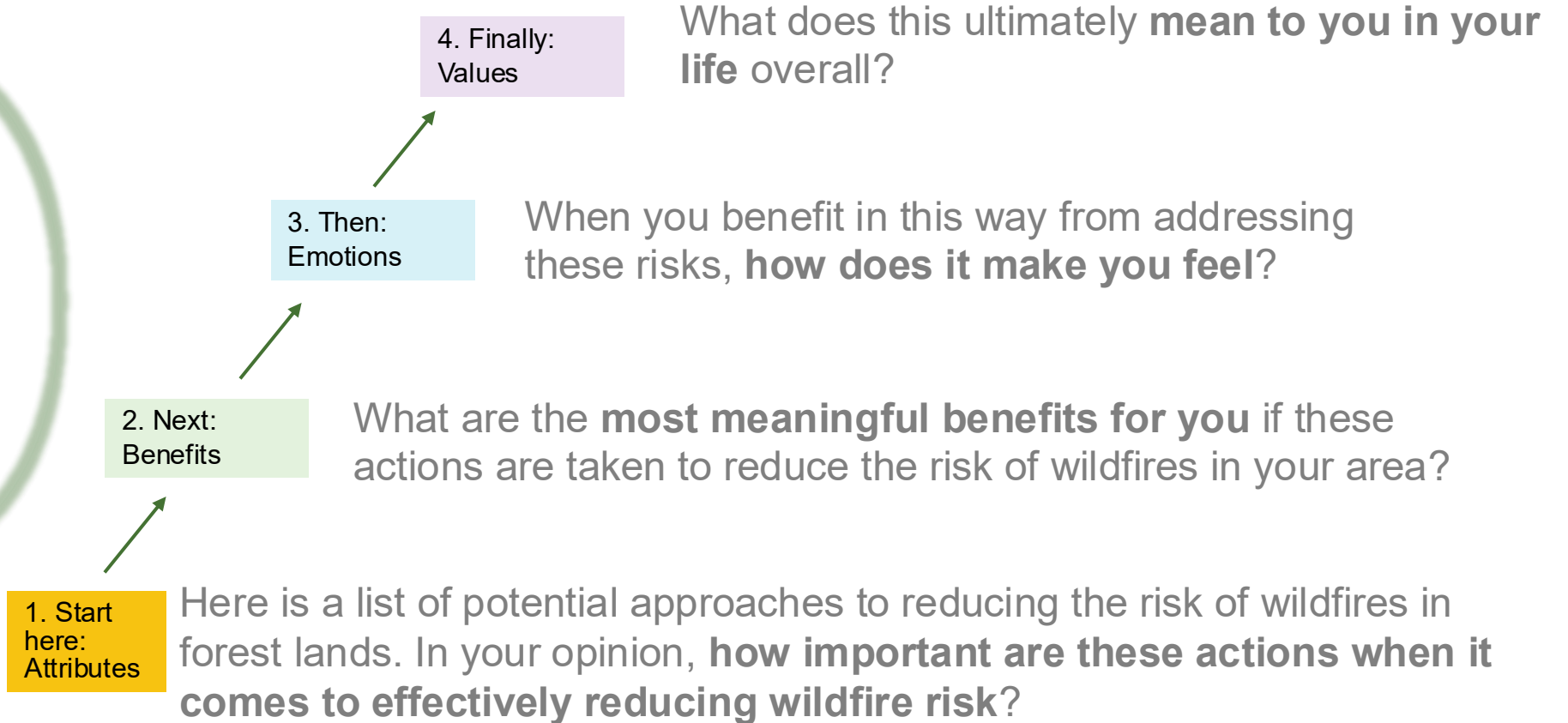
Values-Based Storytelling: Audience Insights from Surveys & In-Depth Interviews

9/17/25



Values-Based Approach

Our research relied on 2,000+ interviews – **including more than 500 in Colorado** – to identify how people think about actions that reduce the risk of wildfire. The goal is to understand how attributes and benefits associated with forest management practices “map” to high-level values. Our personal values are the forces that motivate our behavior and can change or shape our opinions.



What We Learned



80% of People Support Wildfire Management Practices

- The vast majority of people value and are predisposed towards action to manage our forests for the future and contain the risk of uncontrolled wildfire.

68% of People are Motivated by a Common Set of Values

- Namely - -reservation of Home, Community and Forest Enjoyment *Through Active Management*

65% of People Have Not Heard of a Wider Vision & Plan for Protecting Our Forests

- It's important we let people know we can protect what they value.

Key Insights

- Information is generally not persuasive to Anti's
 - Anti views tend to be an entrenched response to a belief we should leave the forest alone.
 - Vast majority of public are invested in supporting solutions but lack trust and awareness of the larger plan for managing uncontrolled fires, as well as their own personal role within such plans.
- Personalized communication matters more than group values
 - Group values and identity will not decide how a person evaluates this issue. Partisan or demographic identity are less important than personal perspective.
 - The more personalized the message and benefits, the more persuasive.
- Our opportunity is in “platforming persuadables” vs. reacting to anti's
 - Given that the vast majority of people want a solution, it is important to emphasize and center their concerns; avoid letting a vocal minority dominate the conversation around a shared future.
 - The best way to Platform Persuadable Voices is by focusing on communicating benefits.

How to Platform Persuadables

Start with what we all agree on:

- Forests are vital to happiness and the identity of those that live near them. There are deep concerns about uncontrolled wildfire and its impacts—including its impact on my way of life.
- The public is invested in supporting solutions but lacks trust and awareness of the larger plan for managing uncontrolled fires, as well as their own personal role within such plans.
- Safety, positivity, and stewardship are motivating. Fear is paralyzing.

Focus on the Personalized, Audience-Specific Benefits > Attributes, Actions, and Details:

- The personal-benefits to the audience of a managed forest are more persuasive than the detailed attributes, approaches, and features we use to secure those benefits.
- Personal benefits that improve a feeling of safety and relief are important in helping people appreciate the end stewardship goals we are pursuing together.



Exercise: Attributes to Benefits

- How are the specific tactics, approaches, or attributes of a given project or forest management practice beneficial personally to each individual we're communicating with?

Example: Features Tell, Benefits Sell

Reducing fuel is an example of a benefit-centric message because fuel reduction connects to keeping their home and communities safe.

- Thinning and prescribed burns are tools — but the real message is the benefit they deliver: less fuel for dangerous fires.
- **Focus on the benefit, not the feature** — outcomes such as safer forests and safer homes.

Interactive Exercise

Take a moment and list 3 benefits that result from projects in your community, and what audience's might care about those benefits.

Preliminary Messaging Recap from Research

Lean in on...

- Connecting forest health directly to daily life.
- Using plain, positive language (“keep,” “protect,” “care for”) rather than technical jargon.
- Focusing on benefits that can be seen, felt, or experienced (clean water, open trails, safe homes).
- Using analogies (gardening, home maintenance, personal health) to make concepts relatable.
- Describing the forest as a living system that protects the community — and needs care in return.

Try to avoid...

- Leading with fire, fear, or disaster scenarios — it overwhelms and disengages. Always open with benefits and shared values.
- Overemphasizing specific tactics (thinning, burns) in general messaging — introduce them later if needed.
- Relying on abstract policy terms like “resilience” without explaining what it means in everyday life.
- Talking about “serving the greater good” without tying it to personal benefit.

Join Us: Become a Values Validator!

Restoring and preserving healthy forests requires trust (permission) and means (funding). We need buy-in from public stakeholders that our work will restore the health of natural habitats. We need resources to do the work.

We are here to help you strengthen public-trust and platform issue-champions. Enhance your storytelling-skills by:

- Requesting a Workshop on Values-Based Communication for Your Organization
- Requesting a copy of our Values-Based Message Playbook

Contact Audrey Miles-Cherney or Reid Armstrong for more information

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