

Storybranch Collaboration Handbook

Building meaningful impact together

Version 1.0

Clear expectations protect creativity, relationships and meaningful work.

How to use this handbook

This handbook describes Storybranch's shared culture and practical ways of working. It applies to team members, advisors, volunteers, students, contractors and other collaborators unless a project-specific agreement states otherwise.

It is not an employment contract, consultancy agreement, intellectual-property agreement, confidentiality agreement or substitute for applicable law. Scope, payment, ownership, confidentiality and other legal terms must be confirmed in the appropriate written agreement for each collaboration.



Author: B. Ivón Hassel. Year, 2026.

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1. Welcome

Thank you for considering contributing your time, knowledge, creativity or experience to Storybranch.

Storybranch is an early-stage interdisciplinary organization. Collaborators may help shape not only projects, but also the culture, systems and standards through which the organization grows.

Our founding purpose begins with the belief that sustainable futures should be cultivated early, while recognizing that children grow within families, schools, communities, professions and institutions. Collaboration across generations and disciplines is therefore central to Storybranch's mission.

This handbook provides a common foundation for working with clarity, respect and integrity. It explains what collaborators can expect from Storybranch and what Storybranch asks in return.

2. Our collaboration philosophy

Complex environmental and social challenges cannot be addressed by one discipline, profession or organization. Storybranch brings together science, education, engineering, storytelling, design, technology, cultural knowledge and professional practice.

We value difference because it can improve questions, reveal blind spots and strengthen decisions. Diversity of perspective is useful only when people can participate meaningfully, understand how decisions are made and challenge ideas without being diminished.

Collaboration is therefore more than dividing tasks. It is the process of combining knowledge responsibly, learning across boundaries and creating outcomes that no participant could produce alone.

Our shared purpose provides direction. Our diversity provides strength. Our relationships provide resilience.

3. Start with clarity

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Before substantial work begins, every collaboration should have an agreed scope. The level of formality depends on the project, but ambiguity about expectations, compensation or ownership should not be treated as flexibility.

Project essentials

- Purpose and intended outcomes.
- Roles, responsibilities and decision authority.
- Expected tasks, deliverables and quality standards.
- Timeline, milestones and review points.
- Estimated time commitment and availability.
- Whether the work is paid, voluntary, academic, advisory or exploratory.
- Expenses and which costs require advance approval.
- Confidentiality, data handling and publication expectations.
- Intellectual-property ownership, licenses, attribution and portfolio use.
- How either party may pause or end the collaboration.

When a role is voluntary or initially unpaid, Storybranch will state this clearly before work begins. Future funding, employment, equity or payment must never be implied unless documented in a separate written agreement.

Roles may change; consent must not be assumed

Early-stage projects evolve. When scope, responsibilities or commercial use changes materially, the agreement should be revisited. Previous consent to one task or use does not automatically authorize a different one.

4. Psychological safety and respectful participation

Psychological safety is a shared belief that people can take interpersonal risks, such as asking questions, admitting uncertainty, reporting mistakes or challenging an idea, without fear of humiliation or retaliation. Research links psychological safety with learning behavior in teams (Edmondson, 1999).

At Storybranch, collaborators should be able to:

- ask questions without being treated as uninformed;
- share early or incomplete ideas when clearly identified as drafts;
- say “I do not know” and request support;
- raise scientific, ethical, practical or interpersonal concerns;
- challenge assumptions respectfully, regardless of seniority;
- acknowledge mistakes and help correct them;

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- decline work that falls outside an agreed role or capacity.

Psychological safety does not mean avoiding standards, accountability or difficult conversations. It means addressing problems directly while protecting dignity and focusing on evidence, behavior and impact rather than personal attack.

Respect is not the same as assumed positive intent

We try to interpret ambiguity generously, but positive intent does not erase harmful impact. When concerns are raised, we listen, clarify, document what is needed and act proportionately. Repeated disrespect, discrimination, harassment, retaliation or misuse of power is incompatible with Storybranch collaboration.

5. Communication

Communicate with context

State what you need, why it matters, the relevant deadline and who is responsible for the next step.

Communicate early

Raise delays, uncertainty, capacity changes and risks as soon as reasonably possible. Early notice creates options.

Choose the right channel

Use meetings for discussion and sensitive topics; use written records for decisions, responsibilities and information that others may need later.

Listen to understand

Ask questions before defending a position. Summarize what you heard when the issue is complex or contested.

Respect language and working differences

Storybranch collaborates across cultures, professions and communication styles. Avoid unnecessary jargon, explain acronyms and provide time for reflection when possible.

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Protect confidentiality

Share information only with people who are authorized and need it for the work. Do not move confidential material into personal platforms or public tools without approval.

6. Working together

Ownership and follow-through

Taking ownership means understanding the task, confirming expectations, making progress visible, asking for help when needed and following through. It does not mean working alone or concealing problems.

Decision-making

Decision authority should be explicit. Some decisions are delegated to a task owner; others require consultation, scientific review, founder approval, partner approval or a formal agreement. Consultation does not always mean consensus, but relevant perspectives should be considered before decisions with significant consequences are made.

Documentation

Important decisions, assumptions, sources, versions, meeting outcomes and next steps should be recorded in the agreed workspace. Documentation supports continuity, transparency and responsible reuse of knowledge.

Evidence and quality review

Claims presented as scientific must be traceable to appropriate sources. Creative translation must not alter scientific meaning. Projects should identify who is responsible for subject-matter review, educational review, technical validation and final approval.

Iteration

Drafts, prototypes and tests are welcome when their status is clear. Changing a position in response to stronger evidence is a sign of learning, not inconsistency.

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7. Knowledge, culture and community collaboration

Storybranch may work with scientific knowledge, professional practice, lived experience and Indigenous and local knowledge. These forms of knowledge are not interchangeable; each has distinct methods, contexts, authorities and responsibilities.

When collaboration involves Indigenous Peoples, local communities, cultural heritage or knowledge held by a community, the community and relevant knowledge holders must have a meaningful role in deciding how the knowledge is documented, interpreted, attributed, shared and used.

UNESCO's ethical principles place communities in the primary role and call for transparent dialogue, negotiation, consultation, respect for customary access and free, prior, sustained and informed consent (UNESCO, 2015).

Storybranch commitments

- Do not extract knowledge or use cultural identity as decoration.
- Identify appropriate community representatives and knowledge holders rather than assuming one person speaks for everyone.
- Agree on consent, attribution, access, ownership, benefit-sharing and permitted uses before publication or commercial development.
- Respect knowledge that is sacred, sensitive, restricted or not intended for public dissemination.
- Provide communities with meaningful opportunities to review representations that concern them.
- Avoid describing living knowledge as static, anonymous or belonging to the public simply because it has been shared.
- Revisit consent if the purpose, audience, technology or commercial use changes.

8. Ideas, intellectual property and attribution

Creative exchange depends on trust, but trust is not a substitute for clear ownership terms. Intellectual property, licenses, confidentiality, publication rights, portfolio use and attribution must be defined in the relevant project agreement.

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Pre-existing work

Materials, methods, characters, data, designs or code created before a collaboration remain with their existing owner unless a written agreement says otherwise.

New work

Ownership of outputs created during a project must be agreed before substantial production begins. Different outputs within one project may have different ownership or licensing arrangements.

Attribution

Credit should reflect actual contribution and applicable professional or academic standards. Attribution does not by itself transfer ownership.

Confidential information

Unpublished strategies, research, personal data, technical material and partner information must be handled according to the project agreement and applicable requirements.

Portfolio and public communication

Collaborators must obtain approval before sharing work, screenshots, drafts, partner names or project details publicly. Approval may depend on timing, confidentiality and third-party rights.

9. Feedback, disagreement and conflict

Feedback should improve the work and support learning. It should be specific, proportionate, timely and connected to the project's purpose, evidence or agreed standards.

When giving feedback

- Describe the issue or observation before proposing a solution.
- Explain why it matters and identify the relevant standard, evidence or audience need.
- Distinguish personal preference from a required correction.
- Address the work or behavior, not the person's character.
- Recognize strengths as well as areas for revision.

When receiving feedback

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- Listen and ask questions before responding.
- Confirm what is required, optional or still open for discussion.
- Consider evidence and impact, not only intention.
- Document agreed changes and unresolved points.

Escalating concerns

When a disagreement cannot be resolved directly, raise it with the project lead or founder. Serious concerns involving safety, discrimination, harassment, confidentiality, ethics, research integrity, intellectual property or misuse of community knowledge should be escalated promptly and documented appropriately.

10. Boundaries, time and well-being

Meaningful work must be sustainable for the people doing it. Storybranch does not expect collaborators to place the organization at the center of their lives.

Availability, response times and working hours should be discussed rather than assumed. Not every message requires an immediate answer, and urgency should not be created unnecessarily.

Collaborators should communicate when health, family, employment, study or other responsibilities affect their capacity. Storybranch will respond with respect and, where possible, adapt scope or timing.

Flexibility is reciprocal: it requires early communication, realistic commitments and respect for the dependencies created by shared work.

11. Pausing or ending a collaboration

Collaborations may end because a project is complete, priorities change, funding is unavailable, capacity changes or the relationship is no longer effective. Ending a collaboration should be handled clearly and respectfully.

- Communicate the decision and effective date.
- Confirm any remaining deliverables, payments or approved expenses.
- Return or transfer files, access credentials, equipment and confidential materials.
- Document the status of unfinished work and decisions.
- Confirm continuing confidentiality, ownership and attribution obligations.
- Remove system access that is no longer required.
- Where appropriate, hold a short learning review.

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12. A living handbook

This handbook reflects Storybranch's current stage and will evolve as the organization learns. Changes should improve clarity, fairness, scientific integrity and the quality of collaboration—not merely make procedures more convenient.

Material revisions should be dated, communicated to current collaborators and aligned with Storybranch's legal agreements, governance and foundational documents.



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Appendix A — Collaboration commitments

As a Storybranch collaborator, I will strive to:

- understand and honor the scope of my role;
- communicate clearly and raise concerns early;
- listen to understand and challenge ideas respectfully;
- ground scientific claims in evidence and acknowledge uncertainty;
- protect confidential information and third-party rights;
- respect cultural context, community authority and consent;
- document decisions and make progress visible;
- welcome feedback and correct mistakes;
- respect time, boundaries and well-being;
- contribute with honesty, care and professionalism.

Storybranch, in return, commits to:

- state expectations, compensation and ownership terms clearly;
- foster psychological safety without weakening accountability;
- value contributions fairly and communicate decisions transparently;
- provide reasonable access to information, feedback and support;
- protect scientific integrity, confidentiality and ethical standards;
- respect Indigenous Peoples, local communities and knowledge holders;
- avoid implying future payment, employment or equity without written agreement;
- address concerns and harmful conduct responsibly;
- continue improving its systems and ways of working.

Appendix B — Project start checklist

- Project purpose and audience confirmed.
- Roles and decision authority confirmed.
- Deliverables, milestones and review process confirmed.
- Time commitment and availability discussed.
- Payment, voluntary status and expenses documented.
- Intellectual property, licenses and attribution documented.
- Confidentiality, data and publication terms documented.
- Scientific, educational, technical and ethical reviewers identified.
- Community consent and governance requirements identified where relevant.
- Communication channel and file location agreed.
- Pause and exit process understood.

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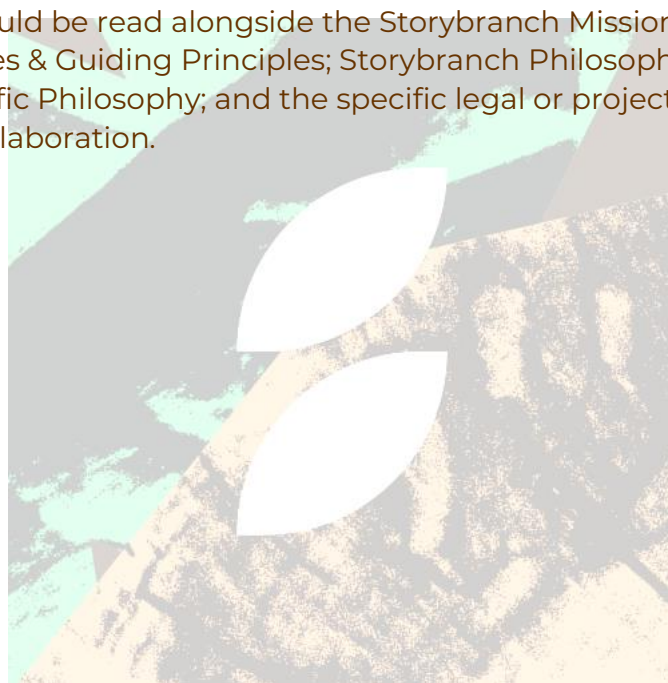
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Document relationship

This handbook should be read alongside the Storybranch Mission, Vision, Purpose & Identity; Core Values & Guiding Principles; Storybranch Philosophy; Educational Philosophy; Scientific Philosophy; and the specific legal or project agreement governing each collaboration.



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