



Now *That's* Impact!

Identifying and communicating true public impact in your research, teaching, and extension programs is essential to developing and maintaining the trust and support of your stakeholders. Lawmakers, our stakeholders and the public all ask, “What’s the return on investments in land-grant research, extension and teaching?” As communicators, we have to help researchers, faculty and others understand the essence of impact. Too often, they report attendance figures, meetings held, a new grant or recognition for their program as impact. While some of these provide context and fulfill official accountability reporting, none show true *impact*.

What is Impact?

- ✚ Impact is the reportable, quantifiable *difference, or potential difference*, that your program makes in real people’s lives. It reports payoffs and benefits to society. The focus is on public – not internal or personal – benefit. It’s the answer to, “What’s In It For ME?”
- ✚ Impact is *change or potential change* in one or more key areas:
 - Economic.
 - Environmental.
 - Social.
 - Health and well-being.

How Do I Report Impact?

- ✚ An impact statement is a brief summary, in lay terms, that:
 - Highlights the *difference* your program is making for the public good.
 - Concisely summarizes what you did to achieve this difference.
 - Clearly states payoffs to society.
 - Answers key questions: So what? Who cares? Why?
- ✚ An impact statement is not:
 - Just more paperwork.
 - A long, detailed report.
 - Numbers of people reached, meetings held, acres served. These provide context but, alone, they don’t capture the element of change essential to good impact.
 - A detailed description of the process or what’s been done.
 - A list of additional grants, honors, recognition for organizers.
- ✚ Be specific. Report economic, environmental, social or health/well-being impact in terms of:
 - Knowledge gained and how that knowledge is applied.
 - Behavior or attitude changes.
 - Practice or situation changes.
 - Results of those behavior, attitude, practice or situation changes.

- ✚ Effective impact statements:
 - Provide quantifiable evidence of change or difference the program made. (It really is all about the money. Bucks are the gold standard. Audiences want to know the return of investment.)
 - Give other evidence, such as testimonials or anecdotes.
 - Realistically project potential benefit for work in progress.
 - Provide only enough detail to be easily understood.
 - Highlight public benefits, outcomes, payoffs.

- ✚ To consistently show real impact, you must program to produce it.
 - Know what you want to measure.
 - Build around issues, not events.
 - Respond to the situation.

Who Is YOUR Impact Audience?

- ✚ Write impact statements for:
 - State and federal decision makers (reporting needs).
 - Local decision makers, supporters.
 - Taxpayers, stakeholders, commodity groups.
 - Current and potential funders or partners.

- ✚ Write a strong “why” or issue/problem statement:
 - Do a Google search to quantify the problem.
 - Use reliable sources – Centers for Disease Control, EPA, USDA, etc.
 - Find “why” details in research grant proposals.

- ✚ For difficult impacts – basic research, emerging issues, 4-H, FCS, academics – try:
 - Testimonials
 - Anecdotes
 - If x then y statements – potential impacts

How Do I Use Impacts?

- ✚ Reuse and repackage for:
 - Annual reports, legislative briefings, constituent letters.
 - Web sites, searchable databases.
 - Speeches, fact sheets, displays, posters, newsletters.
 - Media tip sheets, story pitches, PSAs.
 - Background for supporters, collaborators, advisory, alumni groups.
 - Grants and funding applications, federal reports.

<http://www.csrees.usda.gov/newsroom/impacts/impacts.html>