An impact report is a brief summary, in ordinary language, of the economic, environmental or social benefits of our efforts. It states accomplishments and their payoff to society. An impact report answers the questions: So what? Who cares? **Impact is the difference your programs make in people's lives.**

Ask yourself...
- What is different because of what I did?
- What did this activity do for my community's or state's economy?
- What anecdotal evidence do I have?
- What examples do I have of the effects of the effort?
- What is the potential for impact?

Impact reporting provides a way to:
- Illustrate the significance of the land-grant effort
- Show accountability
- Demonstrate a return on investment
- Foster a better public understanding of the whole picture of extension
- Obtain future funding
- Increase awareness of specific programs

Communicating impact goes beyond the number of the programs you've conducted or meetings held. Impact is what has happened or may happen as a result of those programs or meetings.

Administrators care because impact reporting
- Illustrates our accountability
- Improves visibility of programs (local, state, national)
- Generates support materials for lobbying (local, state, national)
- Provides a repository of anecdotes for speeches and letters
- Helps organize focus for initiatives and program themes
- Helps build the public's understanding of programs
- Sells education programs that have outcomes
- Results in a product that can be reused

Staff care because impact reporting:
- Makes sense to local stakeholders
- Contributes to a greater understanding of subject matter
- Provides an opportunity to showcase your work for program examples, story ideas, reports, speeches, marketing
- Exposes your work to potential funders

Communicators care because impact reporting:
- Provides great story ideas
- Adds depth to our reporting
- Helps us re-purpose your content through various communication tools
- Helps us plan information campaigns

Stakeholders care about impact reporting because they:
- Exercise some control over your programs
- Want information vital to decisions
- Look for quantifiable difference through investments in your programs

Cut through the clutter. Know there is a lot of competition for your targeted audience/ stakeholder's attention. Give your audience and stakeholders the information they need.

Know your audience/stakeholders
- General public
- Local governing bodies
- State officials
- Federal officials
- Peers
- External funders
- Industry representatives

Impact Checklist
- Does it answer, "So what?"
- Does it answer, "Who cares?"
- Does it show change in economic value or efficiency?
- Does is show change in environmental quality?
- Does it show improvement in social or individual well-being?
- Plan for impact when developing your program (expected outcomes).

Writing Checklist
- Simple language with no jargon, no acronyms
- Be specific. Show your evidence. Use some facts and figures.
- Be brief. Be concise.
- No vague words (for example: very, few, almost, some, highly, often, nearly, significant)
- Use active voice, not passive.
- Provide anecdotes.
- Use bullets to emphasize your points.

Having trouble describing your project's impact? Then, report potential impact.
Sometimes it's hard to define or quantify the impact of your activity or program. This is especially true when providing recommendations without means of a follow-up evaluation or participating in public education at community events. Tell us:

- The most likely benefactors of the activity
- What you expect the outcome to be and why
- An idea of how long it would take to reach expected outcomes
- Real or hypothetical examples of expected outcomes

A Suggested Format for Writing About Impact

There is no single "right" format for sharing impact, but effective reports generally contain three main elements:

1) Issue -- who cares and why?
In one paragraph, explain the problem or issue you're trying to solve and its importance. Ask yourself: What prompted this work? How important is this issue to a certain region, the state or nation? Are people suffering from this problem? If so, how?

The issue paragraph:
- Is the attention-getter that tells who should care and why.
- Is a brief problem/issues statement.
- Tells why this information is important and provides context.
- Briefly sets the stage, outlines the situation.
- Frames the scope of the issue or problem you're addressing.
- May mention potential public payoffs.

2) What's been done?
In one or two paragraphs, describe what you did to solve a problem or address the issue. Provide brief details of the project that are meaningful to nonscientists to explain what you've done.

The "what's been done" section:
- Is a brief, overview of activities and processes so people know the context.
- Lists scope, number of years or people served, acres tested, etc.
- Provides only the "gist," not many details.

3) Impact

Here's where you quantify changes resulting from your work, if possible. In case of potential impact, here's where to use your estimates or anecdotes. Ask yourself: Did I solve a problem or make progress on a solution? What were the economic, environmental or social gains? Who benefited and how?

The impact paragraph:
- Is the heart of your report.
- Quantifies economic, environmental or social change.
- Relates to real people and real-world problems.
- Reinforces "so what" and "who cares."
- Reports scope of the outcome.
- May be a testimonial or anecdote.
- May include potential impact or outcome.

Optional for impact reports: Partners, Funding, Contacts
- List your name, address, phone and e-mail contact for further information.
- You may want to mention partners or major collaborators.
- For some reports, it's important to list funding sources.

Note: The people who can best tell our story are the people who have been affected by our programs. Let someone else say how great the program is through testimonials or anecdotes, which will be much more effective than when you do it.

Questions? Contact Kris Boone, department head, Department of Communications and Agricultural Education, *kboone@ksu.edu;* Elaine Edwards, coordinator, News Media and Marketing Services, *elainee@ ksu.edu;* or Pat Melgares, coordinator, Marketing, *melgares@ksu.edu.*

For additional resources: *www.communications.ksu.edu/impact.*

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Some of the information provided is adapted from *How to Write an Impact Statement,* LSU Ag Center

Knowledge for Life

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