

Impact Statements: Tell Your Story

Suzanne Steel
Communications and Technology



What is impact

- Reportable, quantifiable difference we make in people's lives/world issues
- Brief summary
- Layman's terms

Impact captures

- Social, environmental, health or economic outcomes
- Accomplishments/payoffs
- Public benefit (vs. benefit to organization)

Key questions:

- What did we do? (*brief description!*)
- Who cares?
- Why do they care?

Good Impacts Show Change

- Economic value or efficiency
- Environmental benefits
- Social well-being
- Health and well-being

Specific Change

- Knowledge gained and how it's used
- Behavior, attitude change
- Practice or situation change
- Results of these changes

What's not impact

- Numbers of people reached or meetings held
- Description of process or activities
- Long, detailed technical account

Audience focus

- Who are you writing for?
- What is important to them?
- What do they need to know in order to make decisions?
- What are their hot buttons?

Primary audiences

- Elected officials/aides
- Stakeholders
- Government officials
- Grant givers
- Key influential people
- Who else?

What are their hot buttons?

- Economy
- Jobs
- What else?

Describe your audience

- Busy
- Nontechnical
- Know a little about a lot
- What other descriptors?

Tailor your message

- Choose your content based on audience knowledge
- Choose writing style based on audience knowledge
- Choose packaging and delivery based on audience knowledge

Choose your content

- Not every great research effort or Extension program makes a great impact statement
- Choose examples that will make your audience do what you want them to do (ie., approve more funding)

Write for your audience

- Clear
- Concise
- Accurate

Write to the non-scientist

- Pretend you're telling mom, neighbor, cousin
- No jargon
- No acronyms

Minimalist writing

- Just the pertinent facts
- Concise
- Just enough process to explain the story
- Spend most of your words on **IMPACT**

Accurate

- Reputation depends on accuracy
- Protect our reliable reputation
- Don't exaggerate

Guts of impact

- Why did you do what you did?
- How did you do what you did (*brief!*)?
- What was the outcome of what you did?

Why?

- Describe the real-world problem you are addressing, ie:
 - Need for alternative energy sources
 - Need for domestic source of rubber
 - High rates of injuries on farms

How?

- Briefly explain your role in the solution
- Provide just enough process to give context

What?

- How finding will improve a real world problem
- Impact on lives, businesses, communities, future research
- Must go beyond number of people reached

Quantifiable impact

- Economic: \$ saved/earned, reduction in input costs
- Health: fewer illnesses, deaths
- Social: jobs created
- Environment: decrease in pesticides needed

Qualifiable impact

- Anecdotes: after our workshop, 16 families pledged to conduct farm safety audits
- Potential impact: if we can divert just 10 percent of municipal waste, then . . .
- Testimonials: “This research has the potential to save my business . . .”

Thank you!

- Questions?

Suzanne Steel
Director, Strategic Communications
steel.7@osu.edu
614-292-2011