

How to Write an Impact Statement:

What is an impact report?

Not everything you do has "impact," nor should it. Impact reports are not activity reports. Organizing a plant health care clinic is a valuable activity but not one with impact. Impact is the difference your programs make in people's lives.

As you think about what you have accomplished, ask yourself these questions:

- 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 the LSU AgCenter's research, teaching and service
- obtain future funding
- increase awareness of the LMG Extension Volunteer Program

An impact report is a brief summary, in ordinary language, of the economic, environmental or social results of our efforts. It states accomplishments and their payoff to society. An impact report answers the questions:

So what? Who cares?

Why should you care?

Impact reporting is important to our administrators because it:

- illustrates our accountability
- improves visibility of programs (local, state, national)
- generates support materials for lobbying (local, state, national)
- is a repository of anecdotes for speeches and letters
- helps organize their focus for initiatives and program themes
- helps build greater understanding of our programs by the public
- is easier to sell education programs when they can emphasize outcomes
- results in a product they can reuse

Impact reporting is important to you as LMG Extension Volunteers because:

- this kind of reporting makes sense to the public
- you are contributing to consumer horticulture literacy
- it cuts the number of urgent requests you get for program examples, story ideas.
- your work will get more exposure
- your work is exposed to potential funders

Impact reporting is important for public relations because:

- it is a source of story ideas
- it adds depth to reporting
- it gets everybody doing similar reports, making it easier to generate communication tools
- it makes it easier to plan information campaigns

Who is your audience?

- the general public
- local governing bodies
- state officials
- federal officials
- your peers
- external funding sources
- industry representatives

These audience members:

- exercise some kind of control over your programs
- generally want only information vital to decisions
- have lots of competition for their attention
- are asking for quantifiable differences brought about by investments in your program

What makes a good impact report?

An impact report is a brief summary, in lay terms, of the social, environmental or economic outcomes of your efforts. It states accomplishments and payoff to society.

A good impact report answers the questions "**So what?**" and "**Who cares?**"

A good impact report illustrates change in at least one of the following areas:

- Economic value or efficiency
- Environmental quality
- Social/individual well-being

Shade tree workshop explained that a recommended variety tree, properly planted and maintained, tree will save a homeowner an average of \$250 annually for 20 years or a total savings of \$5000.

Advising a homeowner on the best grass variety according to soil test results saved an estimated \$100 annually for 30 years on reduced fertilizer and herbicide use for a \$3000 savings/

Homeowner composting of all grass clippings and tree leaves reduced overall community landfill tonnage by 5% resulting in extending the useful life of the sanitary landfill by an additional 4.5 years and a cost savings of 1.5 million dollars.

Properly identifying a pest problem saved client \$15 and prevented unneeded application of pesticide in the environment.

Workshop reached 76 people on 'Methods to Garden Safely'. An evaluation completed at the conclusion of the presentation indicated that 64% learned techniques new to them and 89% think that practicing the information presented will reduce their discomfort associated with gardening, especially neck, hand and lower back. This will result in a more productive life and reduce medically related costs.

A radio spot on 'Protecting Yourself from Harmful UV Rays' reached an audience of 52,000. Details were provided on both UVA and UVB and the risk of skin cancer for gardeners. If practices are followed, current research shows that 67% of the population will reduce their chance of skin cancer by 50% resulting in a better and possibly longer life.

That's impact!

Quick tips on writing

1) It takes two to communicate: a sender and a receiver

Writing is not an end in itself. You want the receiver to understand what you have now come to understand.

Write in their language with words they understand. Think of a 25-year-old congressional aid as you write. How can you make this person understand the impact of your efforts?

No jargon

No acronyms

Don't assume audience knows what a "BMP" is without explaining it.

If you have to use unique terms, explain them.

2) Be specific

Show your evidence. Use some, not a lot, of facts and figures. You will have to do some digging.

3) Anecdotes are your friends

The people who can best tell our story are the people who have been affected by our programs. If someone else can say how great you are, it is so much more effective than when you do it.

Having trouble describing your project's impact?

Then, report **potential** impact

Sometimes it's hard to define or quantify the impact of your volunteer activity. This is especially true when providing recommendations without means of a followup or participating in public education at community events. If this describes your work, consider including potential impact. Tell us:

- the most likely benefactors of the volunteer 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.

Example of a potential impact statement:

We bought special software for classroom computers. The students learned to analyze the total true cost of producing food products. Using the same software industry uses makes these students ready for the job market and ready to enhance the food economy.

Anecdotes can be powerful! Consider these for hard-to-quantify statements.

Example of an anecdotal impact statement:

Farmer says the university saved her life. A radio report on rabies symptoms in cattle was produced and distributed. Farmer heard on her local station and thought she had a cow with the symptoms. Called the vet -- no. A second opinion -- no rabies. Cow dies and the farmer sends it for testing. Test positive for transmittable rabies. The farmer got immediate treatment. And credits the radio report with describing things well enough to save her life.