Impacts with Impact

An Impact Statement:

- Is a brief summary
- Is in lay terms (social, environmental, economic)
- States accomplishments and the payoffs to society in ways non-scientists can understand, relate to, and appreciate
- Answers the key questions:
  - So what?
  - Who cares and why?
- Reports the differences your programs are making in people’s lives

Not every successful program makes a successful impact statement!

Impact is Not:

- For your scientific peers
- An activities report
- Just the number of people you reached
- A description of the process
- A technical report or scientific paper
- A long, detailed account

Possible Impact Statement Outline:

- Topic or title
- Issue
- What has been done
- Actual or Potential Change in Social/ Individual Well-being; Economic Value or Efficiency; Environmental Quality

Helpful Tools for Tough Topics:

Many projects or programs in the social sciences do not lend themselves well to quantifying impacts and writing corresponding impact statements. Some examples are prevention programs, long-term projects, teaching, and basic research. However, one can:

Focus on Potential Impact, which may include:

- Examples of expected outcomes (impacts)
- Most likely benefactors of the program
• Extrapolating early results to wider outcomes
• Realistic timelines for expected outcomes
• REMEMBER - Potential Impact:
  o Has a place in basic research or teaching programs
  o May be necessary to use early in some programs
  o Can help explain a project’s importance
  o DOES NOT replace solid evaluation and impact assessment

**Use Anecdotes:**
• Are single, quantifiable examples of change
• Put a human face on the project
• Complement facts and figure
• Can be very powerful
• Mean more than figures
• May not connect with certain audiences

**Report Accomplishments to Date**

**Use Testimonials from those whom your program has helped or served**

**Before Writing an Impact Statement, ask yourself:**

• Did the program increase knowledge?
• How did people use this knowledge?
• What are the public benefits?
• Has it changed behavior or situations?
• Was the change social, economic, environmental, policy or a combination?
• Is there data that quantifies changes?

**Tips for Writing Good Impact Statements:**

• Remember the rules of good writing
• Write for real folks
• Do not make exaggerated claims
• Write for 10th grade level
• Use clear and simple language (no jargon)
• Try to avoid acronyms; if they are necessary, spell them out
• Tell about the differences your program has made
• Longer is not necessarily better
• Use a casual style
• Keep sentences short
• Cover process only briefly
• Use active voice

Thomas M. Archer, Ph.D.
Ohio State University Extension
October 31, 2001
Based on a PowerPoint Presentation by Suzanne Steel
Ohio State University Extension
Revised October 2021 by Debby Lewis, Ph.D. (lewis.205@osu.edu)