

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:
 - Has a place in basic research or teaching programs
 - May be necessary to use early in some programs
 - Can help explain a project's importance
 - 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)