

## Adapted from the Louisiana State University AgCenter

### What is an impact report?

Not everything you do has “impact,” as we define it for this reporting system, nor should it. Impact reports are not activity reports. Organizing a field day is a valuable activity but not one with impact. Impact is the difference your programs make in people’s lives.

Format:

Situation/Problem (100-150 words)

Action (100-150 words)

Impact (200-300 words)

**As you think about what you have accomplished over the course of the service-learning project, ask yourself these questions**

- What is different because of what I did?
- What did this activity do for the community'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 research, teaching and service
- obtain future funding
- increase awareness of all programs

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
- 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 programs when they can emphasize outcomes
- results in a product they can replicate or support repeating

**Impact reporting is important to you as faculty because**

- this kind of reporting makes sense to the public
- you are disseminating knowledge important as a whole work model for public service and outreach
- you are contributing to scientific literacy (or agricultural literacy or food literacy or....)
- 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
- community leaders
- local governing bodies
- state officials
- federal officials
- your peers
- external funding source
- industry representatives
- UGA upper administration
- media
- community leaders

### 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

Finding a vaccine for brucellosis has had an economic impact on Louisiana.

The Beauregard sweet potato put Louisiana back in the sweet potato business and the economic value to the state can be documented.

The city of Lafayette sent people to the compost facility operator training school, and now their composting facility saves the city about \$1.5 million per year.

***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 project. This is especially true for basic research and work with youth and families, teaching and long-term efforts. If this describes your work, consider including potential impact. Tell us:

- the most likely benefactors of the research or education project.
- 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.*