

LEARN THE PARTS OF AN IMPACT STORY.

Some impact reports or forms use different terms than the ones listed here, but the intent of all impact statements is the same; the basic principles outlined here still apply.

WHAT IS the ISSUE, WHY WAS IT an ISSUE & FOR WHOM IS IT an ISSUE?

- Connect to **hot topics**.
- Make people **care**.

WHAT WAS DONE?

- Describe **major** activities.
- Tell **who** was involved.
- Be **brief** and **clear**.
- **Don't** go on and on about theory.
- **No jargon**.
- Highlight **innovation**.

WHAT WAS LEARNED or PRODUCED?

- Share **major** findings.
- **Don't** list tons of data.
- Share **important** tools, products, workshops, and other outputs.

WHAT WERE the IMPACTS?

- **Why** do the results and outputs matter?
- **Who** was impacted?
- **Where** did the impact occur?
- **How big** was the impact?



IMPACT = CHANGE IN

- Knowledge
- Behavior
- Economic, environmental, or social condition

PUBLIC VALUE

- Go beyond program participants or a specific study site.
- How does the project or program affect the general public or a broader area?

CAN'T IDENTIFY IMPACTS?

- Think about **potential** impacts.
- Explain how your work creates a foundation for **future** impacts.
- Describe the **ripple effect**.
- Show how your work **played a part** in certain impacts.
- Share **anecdotes** as examples.
- Remember: at the start of a project, **plan** how you will **measure** impacts.

IDENTIFY THE PARTS OF YOUR IMPACT STORY.

jot down notes and key words to answer the following questions and start building your impact statement.

- What issue is being addressed?
- Who cares about this issue?
- Why do they care about the issue?
- What did the project/program do to address the issue?
- Who was involved?
- Did the project/program use any unique or innovative methods or tools?
- What were the major results or outputs?
- What impacts did the project/program have or could it have?
- Who was impacted?
- Where did this impact occur?
- How big was this impact?

USE YOUR NOTES TO WRITE AN IMPACT STATEMENT.

DID YOU REMEMBER TO:

- NOT run on about **methods/theory**?
- NOT use **jargon**?
- Write with an **active** voice?
- Be **clear** and **concise**?
- Use numbers to show **magnitude**?
- Include a **link** or **contact** for more information?

FINESSE YOUR IMPACT STATEMENT.

FORMATTING TIPS:

When you are not given a form to structure your impact statement, you have to decide how to best present your work.

- Keep it **organized** (e.g., group your impacts by type of impact or by objective).
- Use **formatting** (e.g., headings, bullets, font styles) to break up and draw attention to information.
- Focus on the **highlights**.
- Include **links** or **attachments** to supplemental materials.
- Include **visual aids/photos**.

Sometimes, you will be asked to use a form to report impacts.

- Follow the **instructions**.
- Fill out **all** sections.
- Submit **on time**.

WRITING FOR A SPECIFIC AUDIENCE?

GENERAL PUBLIC

- Big “so what” **hook** at the beginning
- Make it *relatable* (use **visuals** or **analogies**)
- Be *straightforward* and *transparent*
- Share **anecdotal impacts**

MEDIA

- Start with the impact—the “**big news**”
- Show how your work is *unique/innovative*
- Use **keywords** and connect to **timely topics**
- Share supporting **data** in supplemental materials

LEGISLATORS/POLICYMAKERS

- Relate your work to **national issues** or **topics/communities** the representative cares about
- Focus on *measured* impacts and **ROI**
- Show the *public value*
- **Include an ask**: what is still needed; what’s next

FUNDERS/PARTNERS

- Relate your work to **topics/communities** the organization cares about
- Connect your impacts to your original **objectives**
- Focus on *measured* impacts and **ROI**

UNIVERSITIES

- Emphasize the role of any **special tools, labs, expertise** at your institution
- Show how your university is *making a difference*

SOCIAL MEDIA

- Keep it **super short** and to the point
- Use **hashtags** to connect to conversations
- **Tag** the accounts of people/institutions involved
- Use *high-quality, simple visuals*
- **Engage** with followers

GOOD TIMING

- Share your impacts when people are primed to **pay attention**.
- Have impact statements *on hand* in case of unexpected requests or opportunities.
- Know when conversations related to your work are taking place so you can **join**.

FOR ALL AUDIENCES:

- Build **relationships** (familiarity, trust)
- Identify **who did the work** and **funding sources**.
- Provide a way to **get in touch** and **learn more**.

IMPACT STATEMENT EXAMPLES PACKET

DISCLAIMER: Please do NOT use the following impact statements outside of training purposes. While these examples are based on real cases, they have been modified and are NOT intended to provide information. The examples may include inaccuracies, confusing statements, made-up names, and broken links—this is intentional for training purposes.

NOTE: Your institution’s reporting process may use a format that differs from the examples in this packet. Please reference these examples for inspiration not as exact models. Please be sure to follow the specific process and guidelines set by your institution.

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EXAMPLE 1: Recognizing findings versus impacts

1a: Research findings with no impact

Studies showed that RPM influences the inflammatory process expression of IL6, PTGES3, MUC1 and SOD1 in bovine cytological smear samples.

Cows fed high Ca and low Ca in a fully-acidified diet prepartum had improved days to first ovulation.

Critique:

- The two statements above are really short and it should be easy to see that they are not complete impact statements. They are shown here as reminder that findings are not impacts.
 - Impact statements need to provide context about what sort of issue this work is addressing and why the finding matters.
- This example also shows how disorienting jargon can be.
 - Impact statements need to use much plainer language.

1b: Research findings with impact

Currently, dairy cattle are kept in different pens based on production and are fed according to the average needs of that pen, but within those pens, some cows are genetically inferior and require additional nutrients, such as protein, while others will require less than average. The economic impact of these variances is estimated between \$2 billion to \$10 billion yearly in the U.S. To reduce losses, Virginia Tech animal science researchers created advanced computer algorithms and models to optimize cattle feedings. This self-learning system can identify cows with health or production problems, optimize dietary requirements for each cow, and control feeding at the milking robots. The system has been tested for about a year now, and farmers who adopted the technology have saved money by not overfeeding or underfeeding cows.

Critique:

- Explains the issues concisely and attaches a value to the issue, which helps readers understand the importance of the work.
- Tells us who did what for the action
- Shares an output—the algorithm, model—and gives a bit of explanation about what it does and who will use it and why
- Shares a change in behavior and economic impact—some dairy farmers adopted the tool and saved money
 - Would be even better if they reported the magnitude of that change

1c: Research outputs with impact on industry

Necrotic enteritis is a fatal intestinal disease that afflicts mostly young broiler chickens and costs \$6 billion per year worldwide. Antibiotics are traditionally used to prevent and treat the disease, but due to concern about the emergence of antibiotic-resistant pathogens, nearly 4 billion chickens in the U.S. (about half of the total) are raised without antibiotics. To provide these poultry producers with effective alternatives, Penn State scientists looked into flavonoids as a way to reduce inflammation, boost immunity, and improve performance. Penn State maize geneticists developed a new high-flavonoid corn variety, PennHFD. Poultry Science researchers found that chicks fed a PennHFD-based diet had a 48% lower incidence of intestinal lesions, higher body weight gain, and a 23% lower mortality rate than the chicks fed the control diet. These findings pave the way for a patent to develop a PennHFD-based therapy to prevent and treat necrotic enteritis. Researchers expect this treatment option will begin making a difference in the poultry industry in just a few years once research on dosage is completed.

Critique:

- Explains the jargon “necrotic enteritis” and “PennHFD”
- Tells us the magnitude of the issue—which is a good way of alluding to the estimate potential magnitude of impact
- This example keeps the response pretty simple—easy to see who did what and understand the basics of the different research and development components
- Focuses in on a few key results/findings.
- Explains how these findings will be used and how they could translate into impact on poultry health
- Could be bolstered by providing estimates of how much money this new feed could save poultry producers.
- Would be even better if the statement circled back and connected those industry impacts to broader economic impacts and public value
- Describes how this work sets up potential for impacts and explains the steps needed to get there

1d: Research outputs with impact on industry and public value

Significant yield and quality losses can occur if farmers dig peanuts too early or too late. Existing tools and methods for determining when peanuts are at the right maturity to harvest can be inaccurate and difficult to use.

As part of a [project](#) funded by USDA NIFA and the Georgia Peanut Board, I worked with [name] and [name] to design the [Peanut Pod Blasting Method](#), an innovative, but simple way to accurately determine peanut maturity and the best time to harvest. Working with Cooperative Extension, my team was able to demonstrate the tool to farmers across the state.

In 2015, farmers using this method saved an average of 300 pounds of peanuts per acre and increased gross returns by \$60 per acre (based on the 2015 contract price of peanuts). Statewide, that's an extra 173 million pounds of peanuts worth an estimated \$35 million.

By developing a new, more accurate method to determine optimal peanut harvest time, we have helped farmers meet growing consumer demand for high-quality peanuts. Georgia is a top producer of peanuts, and sustaining the industry also supports the state's economy.

Critique:

- Know who did the work and who funded
- Explains the issue concisely in simple terms
- Very briefly says what was done and lists the key output (new method)
- Doesn't go into too much technical detail about the method but hyperlinks to more information
- Uses numbers to show the magnitude
 - Included insight into their calculations
- Focuses on change in economic condition, peanut farmers, peanut industry
 - Could stop there for certain audiences—that's still an impact—but the statement goes on to suggest the potential public value and attaches an estimated value

1e: Research findings/outputs with potential impact

Chickpeas are an attractive crop option because they do not require nitrogen fertilizers, which can pollute bodies of water and contribute to greenhouse gas emissions. Chickpeas could present a new crop option for farmers in north-central Wyoming, but farmers have relatively little information about optimal management practices and which varieties are best for growing conditions in the region. Without this information, farmers may waste time and money on unsuccessful varieties and excess irrigation, nutrients, and other inputs.

During 2020 and 2021, Jim Heitholt (Powell Research and Extension Center) conducted chickpea trials of six different varieties to understand how factors such as phosphorous fertilization rate and irrigation level affect yield. When irrigation was reduced by 20%, the average yield across the six varieties (2,988 pounds per acre) was similar to the average yield under full irrigation (2,997 pounds per acre). In particular, two varieties, Frontier and Orion, had the highest yields under deficit irrigation and may prove to have good drought tolerance. During the trials, the level of phosphorous fertilization had no effect on chickpea yield.

These findings help confirm that chickpeas can be grown successfully with low inputs and provide farmers with specific guidance on how to successfully grow chickpeas in Wyoming. Information from these trials could encourage more farmers in Wyoming to grow chickpeas. Replacing resource-intensive crops with chickpeas could lower farmers' production costs.

Because chickpeas require less water and fertilizer, planting them could improve public and environmental health by reducing agriculture's impacts on soil, water, and global warming.

Critique:

- Presents the various aspects of the issue in simple terms and identifies a specific audience who cares about that issue
- Describes the work simply and focuses on key findings and outputs that are related to the issues raised in the first paragraph
- Explains why the results matter and how they might be used
- The public value is stated in pretty general terms but it's better to have it than to not have it; it helps connect the findings/outputs back to the issue and helps non-expert audiences understand the potential societal and environmental impact of the work

EXAMPLE 2: Contributions to larger research effort

To protect crop yield and quality, much of the Midwest uses underground pipes or “tiles” to channel excess water from fields, but drainage water can also carry chemicals from the field into rivers, lakes, and groundwater. In particular, nitrate pollution can be harmful to humans and aquatic life and can impair commercial and recreational fishing.

I am part of a team of researchers from 22 land-grant universities working with USDA scientists and industry partners to reduce the environmental impacts of agricultural drainage. My lab’s contributions have included designing bioreactors that filter 90% of nitrate from drainage water and a model to calculate the optimal spacing for these bioreactors. Working with Extension professionals, I have helped increase farmers’ knowledge about drainage management and helped them implement bioreactors on their land.

Between 2012 and 2017, farmers in 12 states have used our recommendations and tools to improve drainage on over 40,000 acres, keeping about 300,000 pounds of nitrate out of the Mississippi River. These farmers also saw improved crop yields after improving drainage. While the project’s other research and Extension efforts played a part, there is consensus among the group that my lab’s contributions played a key role in the impacts that we have seen so far. If we can continue to improve drainage at this scale, we could significantly reduce water quality problems and help ensure a stable source of food for consumers and predictable profits for farmers.

Critique:

- This example shows how an individual research or research team can talk about the impact of their contributions to a larger project.
- Though the issue this work addresses is complex, this statement focuses on nitrate, which helps keep the statement more concise and cohesive and easier to understand.
- Defines the jargon “tiles” in simple terms.
- This example could be strengthened if a few more details were provided to illustrate how the new bioreactor is unique or better than previous methods/tools.
- This example might be improved by the inclusion of a good quote or success story from one of the farmers could also help bring the impacts to life and ground the work in some specific, tangible impacts.
- Shares a few key results and changes in knowledge and environmental condition.
- Provides a generalized statement at the end to describe the potential public value.

EXAMPLE 3: Recognizing Extension activities versus impacts

3a: Extension activities/outputs

In 2022, I conducted 25 EFNEP courses in 19 counties across West Virginia to address childhood obesity. These events reached 1,763 youths.

Critique:

- We can see that an Extension professional led a lot of activities that reached a lot of youths in West Virginia—but those are actions and outputs, not impacts.
- An impact report needs to describe how those events made a difference in the problem (obesity) and the target audience (youths in West Virginia).
 - Did the youths learn anything? Did they change their behaviors? Do they have better health reports now?
 - Ideally, those are the kinds of things that should be in an impact statement.
 - There may be reasons why those things can't be reported—maybe they weren't measured.
 - If that's the case, find some way to talk about potential for impact

3b: Extension activities/outputs with quantitative and anecdotal impact

In West Virginia, youth obesity is higher than the national average, but many families lack access to knowledge about food and nutrition that can help them make healthy choices.

As part of the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) implemented by West Virginia Cooperative Extension, I led a six-week course to teach 600 high school students in West Virginia about nutrition, meal planning, and cooking skills.

Ninety-five percent of students showed improved nutrition knowledge and skills. One year after the course, a mother reported that her son now helps plan grocery lists, cooks meals at home instead of eating fast food, and is training to be a chef. Over the past year, the family has saved money on food expenses, spent more time together as a family, and had better health reports at their check-ups. "I never dreamed how a simple class could change my family's daily life and future so much and help my wallet at the same time," she said.

By teaching high schoolers how to make nutritious choices, my team is supporting the lifelong health and resilience of these individuals as well as their families and communities across West Virginia.

Critique:

- Plainly and concisely describes the issue that the work is addressing
- Tells us how the work is connected to ongoing programs and then mentions the specific course that the impact statement is going to focus on
 - We might want to know a little more about the course, especially if there was anything unique or innovative about the approach to help make the work stand out
- Reports a measured change in knowledge and skills
- The anecdote brings the course and its wide range of impacts to life—it makes the impacts easy to relate to and makes it easy to imagine the ripple effect of this work beyond just the individual program participants to their families, communities, etc.
 - Pairing the qualitative and quantitative data works well

3c: Extension program description with poor anecdote

People across the country have become concerned about pollinator health. To raise awareness of how forest managers can enhance pollinator resources in their forests, I developed an online course for Oregon State University Extension Service called Woodland Pollinator Stewards. More than 20 landowners from four counties participated. I delivered over 12 hours of instruction and led weekly discussion sessions. Participants also interacted online and attended three field trips. Afterward, one landowner shared, “The learning was fun, applicable to my goals.”

Critique:

- We have a sense of the issue, but it is a little too vague for some audiences
 - Instead of stating that people are concerned, explain briefly what the concern is
 - The phrase “pollinator resources” could be considered jargon
 - An example of what a pollinator resource is would be helpful
- We do know who did the work and have some details about the program, but it’s missing change—impact
 - We need to see how those workshops changed the participants or community or environment in some way
- The anecdote is not strong, it does not help provide evidence of impact
 - Why is it important that the learning was “fun”?
 - What were that landowner’s goals and how did the program help meet them?

3d: Extension program with impact on knowledge, behavior

Pollinators are a key part of ecosystem health and critical for agriculture, but many bee populations have dwindled in recent years. Oregon’s private forests provide critical habitat for many native bee species. To help forest managers protect and enhance bee habitat, I developed an online course, Woodland Pollinator Stewards, which provides landowners with instruction, discussion sessions, and field trips.

After the course, participants reported a 95% increase in knowledge of bee biology and possible pollinator habitat enhancements. Participating landowners have already enhanced habitat on over 1,700 acres with plans for an additional 900 acres within the next five years. Private woodlands make up a large portion of Oregon’s forested land, so these outcomes play a vital role in protecting the state’s native bees.

Critique:

- This version builds out into a complete impact statement
- It adds data about changes in knowledge and behavior/condition with numbers to show the magnitude of those changes
- It could be improved by examples of some of the enhancements done or some data that talks about how the bee populations are doing after the enhancements compared to before

EXAMPLE 4: Teaching impacts

Agricultural literacy is essential to understanding how our food systems work, making healthy, safe food choices, evaluating news and information about food and agriculture, and encouraging the next generation of farmers. Unfortunately, fewer and fewer young people are exposed to agriculture in their personal lives or educational paths.

Since 2019, I have offered a class on agriculture that is open to all students, but because students are limited in the number of elective classes that they can take, few students outside the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences were taking the course. Knowing that this class could make a powerful impression on students who have no connection to agriculture, in 2023, I incorporated multicultural elements into the class curriculum. After doing so, I was able to get the course approved to fulfill the World Languages and Culture section of the UGA core graduation requirements. This has led to increased class enrollment by students outside of the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. Students in this class now come from a wide variety of majors and few have agricultural backgrounds.

The class has greatly improved students' agricultural literacy, which Prior to the class, students are given a "test" to evaluate their knowledge of agriculture and related issues. Most students answered fewer than 50% of the questions correctly. After the class, the vast majority of the students answered 90% or more of same questions (and many additional questions) correctly, indicate huge increases in knowledge.

The class also increased interest in pursuing a career in agriculture or related fields. During the course, the Georgia Farm Bureau sponsored field trips during which students saw real farm operations and met local farmers. Many students shared that they impressed with the education and excitement these farmers had for their careers and by how modern the farm operations were. Forty percent of the students in the 2023 Fall Semester class and 2024 Spring Semester class said that they would consider agriculture as a career after speaking with a farmer compared to only 6-8% of the students prior to the farmer meetings.

Critique:

- This statement is concise and focused on the impacts and how they connect back to the issue.
- The statement does a nice job describing a few key changes in knowledge, awareness, and attitude as well as potential changes in behavior (pursuing careers in ag) and shares the magnitude of these changes.
- I think this statement would be improved by adding some information about the multicultural aspects of the course. The statement mentions that adding this element was essential to increasing class enrollment and impact, so it would be nice to know more about these innovations to the course.
 - That's a pretty nitpicky but I mention it as a good reminder to make sure your statements are telling a cohesive story
 - And make sure you take opportunities to highlight innovation in your work