DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
RESEARCH & EXTENSION
University of Arkansas System

Writing for Impact

Impact Statement Writing for Extension & Research Faculty

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Division of Agriculture

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Today's Agenda

- Why impact statements?
- What should be included in a strong impact statement
  - Examples of Extension and Research impact statement components
  - Questions to ask when writing an impact statement
- Tips, Tricks, & Common Mistakes

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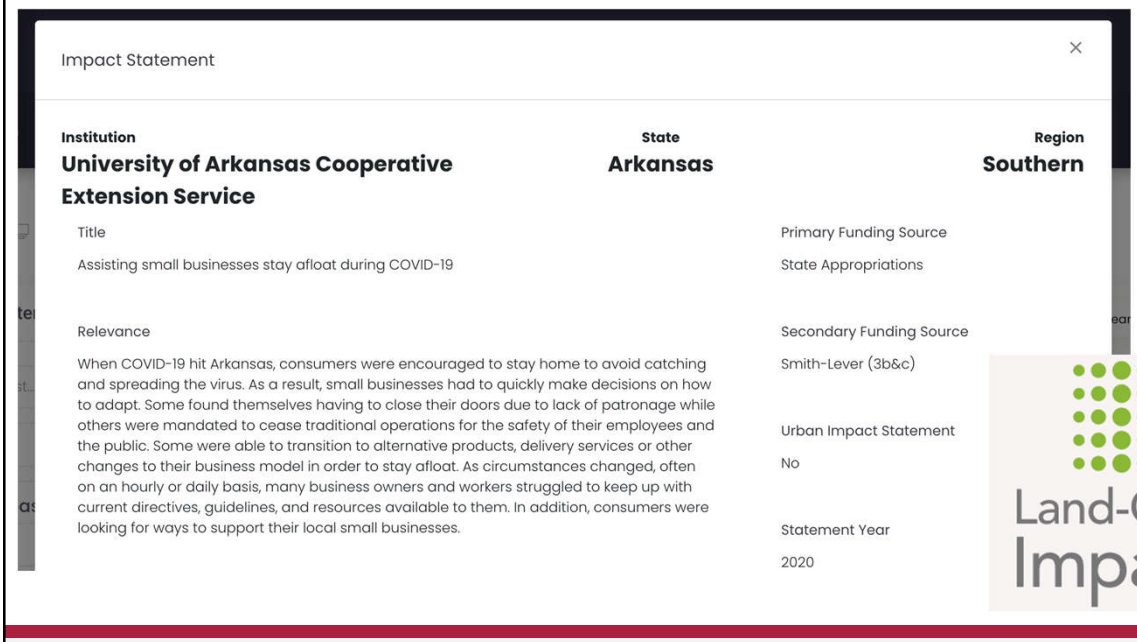
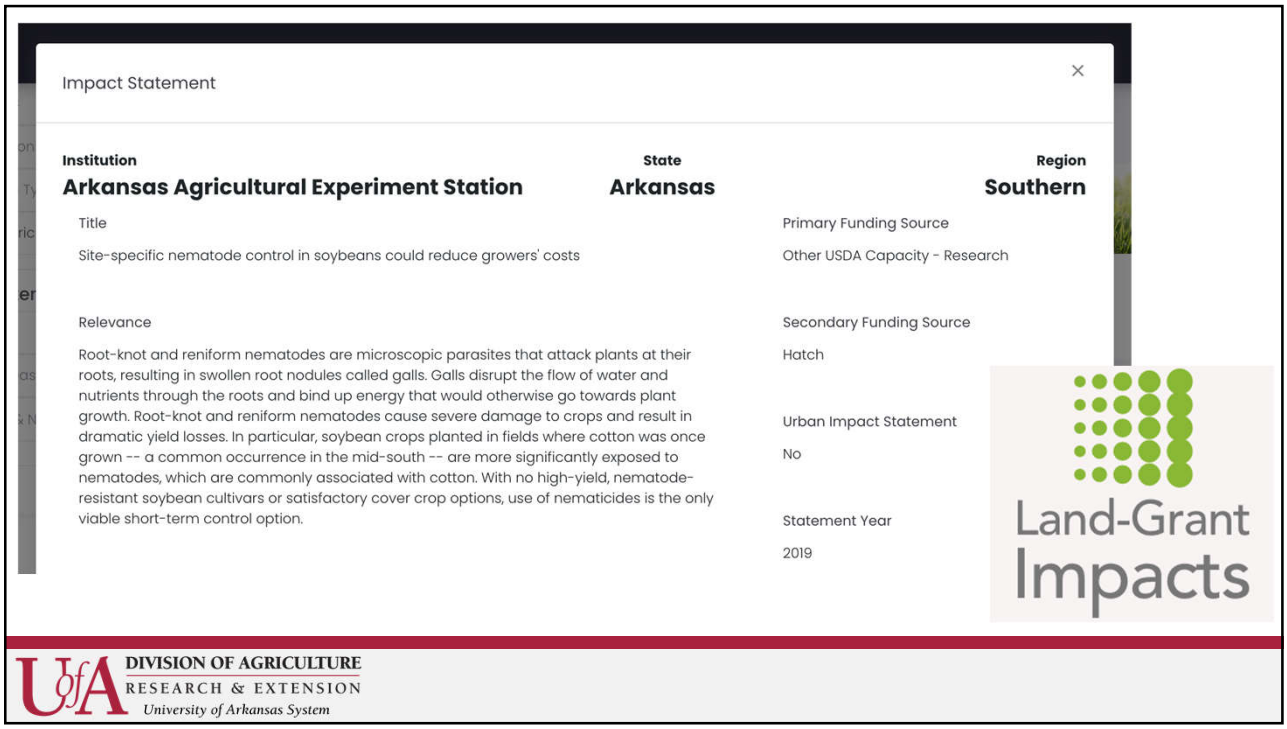
Why does it matter?

Accountability to stakeholders

(Good) Impact statements very useful

You're most qualified to talk about your work




Impact Statement
Institution
Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station
State
Arkansas
Region
Southern
Title
Site-specific nematode control in soybeans could reduce growers' costs
Primary Funding Source
Other USDA Capacity - Research
Relevance
Root-knot and reniform nematodes are microscopic parasites that attack plants at their roots, resulting in swollen root nodules called galls. Galls disrupt the flow of water and nutrients through the roots and bind up energy that would otherwise go towards plant growth. Root-knot and reniform nematodes cause severe damage to crops and result in dramatic yield losses. In particular, soybean crops planted in fields where cotton was once grown -- a common occurrence in the mid-south -- are more significantly exposed to nematodes, which are commonly associated with cotton. With no high-yield, nematode-resistant soybean cultivars or satisfactory cover crop options, use of nematicides is the only viable short-term control option.
Secondary Funding Source
Hatch
Urban Impact Statement
No
Statement Year
2019
Land-Grant Impacts
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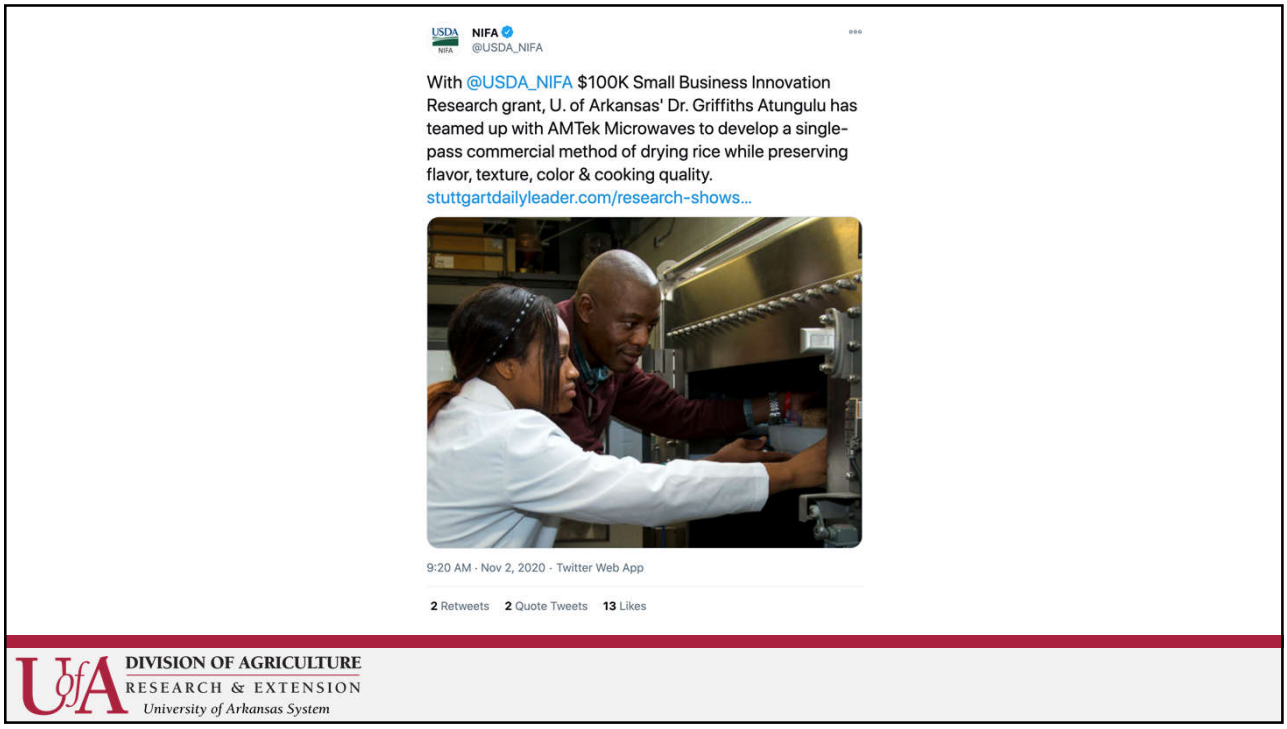
NIFA
@USDA_NIFA
With @USDA_NIFA $100K Small Business Innovation Research grant, U. of Arkansas' Dr. Griffiths Atungulu has teamed up with AMTek Microwaves to develop a single-pass commercial method of drying rice while preserving flavor, texture, color & cooking quality.
stuttgartdailyleader.com/research-shows...
9:20 AM · Nov 2, 2020 · Twitter Web App
2 Retweets 2 Quote Tweets 13 Likes
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USDA Science
@USDAScience

How is food grown safely without soil?

@usda_nifa funded Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station researchers are working to outsmart waterborne pathogens in hydroponic systems. 💦🦠
bit.ly/outsmartpathog...

#hydroponics #planthealth #foodsafety

You and 2 others

9:17 AM · Aug 12, 2020 · Twitter Web App

6 Retweets 1 Quote Tweet 8 Likes

NIFA
@USDA_NIFA

To learn more about the work of Professor Gibson and other recipients of @USDA_NIFA's nearly $14 million in Rapid Response grants, visit nifa.usda.gov/press-release/...

#FoodSystems #agriculture #research #foodsafety

> **Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station** @ArkAgResearch · Sep 14
> AAES food scientist Kristen Gibson is leading a multi-institutional research team in a $987,000 @USDA_NIFA rapid response grant project to ensure that dine-in restaurant customers will not be exposed to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes #COVID19.
>
> Details aaes.uark.edu/covid19foodsaf...

9:41 AM · Sep 16, 2020 · Twitter Web App

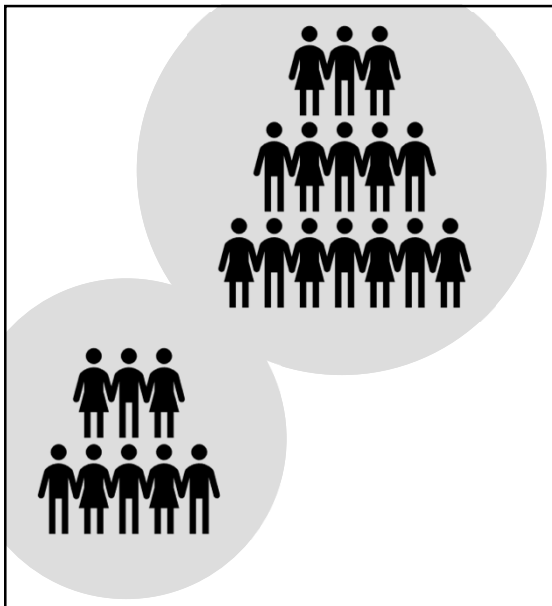
4 Retweets 5 Likes

Purposes & Uses for Impact Statements

- Faculty Service Reviews
- Communication Efforts
- Grant reports
- REEport
- Internal review/evaluation- improvements, continuation
- Continued & Future Support- Stakeholders, Granters, Volunteers, NIFA

Know what's being asked

- What are the specific requirements?
- Include photos or graphics?
- Word count or page limit?
- Who are you writing for?
- Impacts are impacts – repurpose!



Audience

- Who are they?
- What do they want to know?
  - Money
  - Education
  - Health
  - Environment

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The Ideal Impact Statement

1. Issue/Problem/Relevance	What was the issue your project addressed? Why is the issue important (public value)?
2. Actions/Response	How did you accomplish your goals? What activities did you carry out to address the problem and achieve the desired results? Who did the work? When and where?
3. Outcomes/Results	What changed because of your actions? Who benefitted? To what extent? Potential/future benefits?

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The Key Eight Questions

Issue/Problem/ Relevance	Actions/Response	Outcomes/Results
• What? • Why?	• How? • Who? • When? • Where? • With Whom?	• How much?

What makes a good impact statement?

Good	Bad
Specific	Vague
Accessible	Excessive Jargon
Problem, Process, Results	No structure

The Issue or Problem: "What" and "Why"

- **What** issue, challenge, or gap did you set out to address? **What** are you trying to achieve (goals/objectives)?
- **Why** is this issue significant? Why does it merit public dollars?

The Issue or Problem: "What" and "Why"

- **What** was/is the food/agricultural research question or problem?
- **What** were you trying to learn?
- **Who** might use your research findings and to what purpose?

Definitions

Goal: a specified accomplishment to be achieved at some point in the future. It is typically aspirational and far-reaching; points toward the significance or public value of the proposed program/project.

Example: Ensure that U.S. farms and ranches are economically viable and profitable enterprises by mitigating production risk.

Definitions

Objectives: Achievable milestones or targets to be reached. They are action-oriented and usually include a **VERB** describing what needs to change.

Example: Reduce annual expenditures of hay by X% by adopting new grazing practices that keep animals on pasture for more months of the year.

Best Practices for Issue/Problem (What & Why)

1. Provide data, where possible, to support the project's significance.
2. Identify your target audience or beneficiaries when explaining the significance. How much more need exists?

Issue/Problem Statement: Extension	
PURPOSE: Extension disseminates information that people can use to improve their quality of life.	
Questions	➢ What issue(s) is your project addressing? ➢ Why is this issue significant (could be at the individual, local, regional, or national level)?
Arkansas ranks 49th in the nation for overall health. Rural Arkansans have fewer opportunities to engage in health-promoting programs… The Extension Wellness Ambassador Program (EWAP) fills this gap by providing a lay health leadership development program… EWAP [will] increase access [to health programs] in rural communities by training volunteers around locally relevant health-related issues.	

Issue/Problem Statement: Research	
PURPOSE: Research contributes to a larger body of knowledge in pursuit of a solution.	
Questions	➢ What was/is the food/agricultural research question or problem? ➢ What were you trying to learn? ➢ Who might use your research findings and to what purpose?
Researchers previously learned that the blast fungus manipulates rice plasmodesmata (PD) for disease development….researchers studied how fungal infection impacts PD structure and if it controls the sizes of molecules that pass through PD. … this research opens a new front in plant-fungal pathogen research, with the potential to provide many novel targets for disease control and crop enhancement.	

Actions/Response: "How?"

B. Methods:

- Research or educational methods in greater detail
- More likely to write for your peer group

Definitions

Outputs: Things that are produced as we achieve our objectives. They are tangible products that can be counted as a result of our activities. Output measures are useful for monitoring progress.

Examples:

- # of farmers enrolled in production risk management course
- # of new grazing practices taught
- # of trials conducted

Best Practices: "How"

1. Begin with the end in mind when trying to explain the causal relationship between activities and outputs; outputs to outcomes (see Goals and Objectives)
2. Adopt and use a good project planning tool and method Logic models; Theory of change/pathways modeling; mapping

Best Practices: "How"

Context

- Tell us why you trained a particular demographic or targeted a specific field of science or geographical area.
- Remember that large numbers are NOT always better
- Give us actual numbers (numerator and denominator). Percentages cannot be aggregated.

"Who, When, Where, and with Whom?"

- Who performed the work?
- When and where was the work performed? (dates or ranges of dates; locations)
- Did you train volunteers to assist in delivery of your program?
- Did you partner with another organization?

Action/Response: Extension	
Questions	➢ What methods were taken to address issue outlined? ➢ Who was reached? ➢ Were there any partnerships? ➢ What outputs were generated? ➢ Were volunteers trained to deliver the program?

Public Policy Center (PPC) staff begin the education process by monitoring legislative action and citizen-petition submissions and sending monthly email newsletters about potential future ballot issues. As the election neared, fact sheets were created to include how each proposal will appear on the ballot, answers to basic questions about each Issue, and reasons people may support or oppose the proposal. Fact sheets are reviewed by faculty experts, external legal and subject matter experts, supporter and opponent groups, and Extension administration and legal counsel. Finalized fact sheets were compiled into a comprehensive voter guide. Other educational materials and social were created for county agents, along with trainings on how to utilize the materials.

A total of 32,000 voter guides were printed for the November 2018 general election. Electronically, voter guides were downloaded 25,086 times. Ballot Issue education web pages, YouTube videos and social media posts attracted 497,460 views. The monthly Ballot News and Notes electronic newsletter had 2,052 subscribers.

Action/Response: Research	
Questions	➢ What research methods were used? ➢ How many trials/plots/varieties were examined? ➢ Extension programs integrated into project?

Three on-farm locations were identified that contained PPO-resistant pigweed at Gregory, Crawfordsville and Marion, AR. Over 30 trials in Roundup Ready, Liberty Link, Xtend and Enlist technologies were conducted to develop best management recommendations in each system. In addition, pigweed samples were taken across the state to determine the spread of PPO-resistant pigweed. Field tours and agent trainings were conducted multiple times throughout the season to educate clientele on recommendations for PPO-resistant pigweed moving forward.

Results: "How Much?" or "So What?"

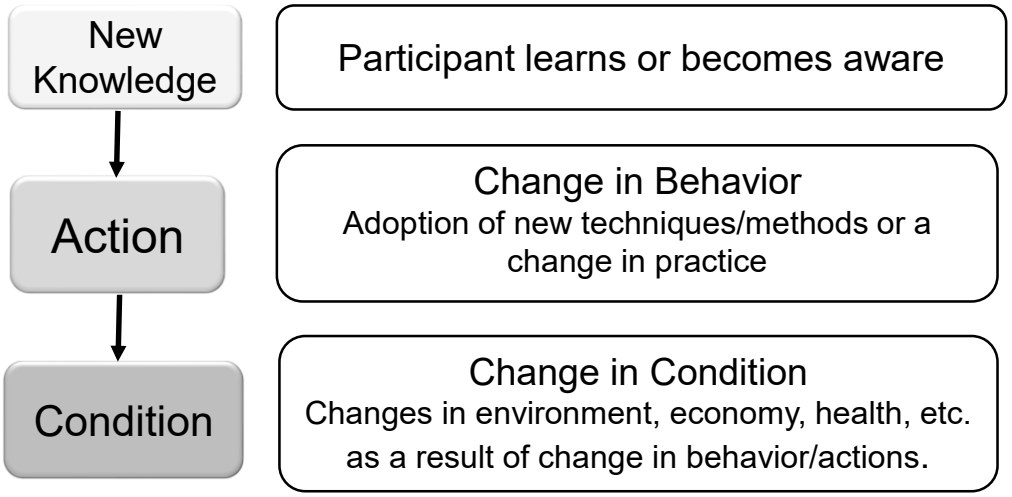
- How much did you accomplish?
- What changes resulted from your efforts? What was the magnitude of the change?
- To what extent did you meet your objectives?
- Who benefited from your efforts (directly, indirectly)? How? How much?

Definitions

Outcomes: Outcomes are changes in condition that we want to see when we reach our goal. They typically start with a value change (e.g., increase in X).

- # of farmers who adopted new grazing methods
- # of additional days animals are on pasture
- % reduction in hay consumption or expenditures

Types of Outcomes



Results: Extension

- How many people i) gained new knowledge? ii) achieved a change in behavior? iii) realized a difference in their condition as a result of the program?
- Provide actual numbers, not %, for participants when reporting outcomes
- Evidence of change, evaluation methods, measurement
- If possible, indicate the additional need in a county or state for the program/service.
- Economic impact?

Results: Extension	
Questions	➢What changes occurred due to the program? ➢How do we know? Evaluation results? ➢Potential changes from continued adoption?
The Division of Agriculture educational efforts in cotton to promote practices to improve soil health in conjunction with the Arkansas Discovery Farms resulted in a yield increase of 9% over a three-year evaluation. We also noted an 11% reduction in cost per unit of production which translates to approximately $60/acre. Reductions in metrics used by the supply chain to document sustainability in our three -year study closely match the 10-year goals set by the U.S. Cotton Industry.	

Results: Research

- What did you learn?
- Why are your results or findings significant?
- How will you or others use these findings to make additional progress (basic research) or mitigate the issue for producers, homeowners, etc. (applied)?
- Does this lead to future research?

Results: Research	
Questions	➢How did this expand the knowledge base? ➢Why are your results or findings significant? ➢Does this lead to future research?
Data generated from research conducted in 2001 is being used to characterize soil and plant nutrition needs of rice and soybean when these crops are grown in rotation which should improve our understanding of soil testing and plant nutrition relationships for rotations involving rice. Such information is provided to the Cooperative Extension Service for grower use and also considered in new fertilizer recommendations when appropriate. For example, new Zn fertilizer recommendations in the form of low-cost Zn application methods (i.e., Zn seed treatments) have been adopted by growers and are being used on an estimated 200,000 to 400,000 acres of rice grown in Arkansas.	

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Common Errors to Avoid

- No impact reported.
- Dollars reported are not focused on the intended outcome of the program.
- Not showing economic impact when formulas are available or can easily be figured.
- Being too general / being too specific.
- Giving more credit to other organizations and agencies.
- Impacts focused on internal activities, trainings, or programs.

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Common Errors to Avoid

- Title lacks description or creativity.
- Not proof-reading before submitting.
- Excessive jargon.
- Using acronyms or program names.
- Writing in first person.
- Not paying attention to character or page limits.

Helpful Tips

- Utilize data already collected
  - Evaluations
  - AIMS/REEport/Webneers/EARS data
- Quotes, stories, etc.
  - Reader will relate more
- Photographs, if report allows it

Wrap-up

- Why impact statements?
- Remember the 8 key questions
- Focus on results
- Finishing touches (proofread!)

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Questions?

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