Articulating Programmatic Impacts in Extension

Carl Evensen
Interim Associate Dean/Director Cooperative Extension
College of Tropical Agriculture & Human Resources
University of Hawai‘i at Manoa
Impacts in Extension

“the positive difference we make in people’s lives as a result of the programs we conduct”

(Keith Diem, JOE 2003)

• Answers the questions, “so what” & “who cares”
• Impacts measure
  ✓ change in knowledge
  ✓ change in behavior
  ✓ change in condition
Need for Impact Assessment

• Government demands accountability
  - Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA). (links budget allocations to program accomplishments) “Reduce waste & inefficiency”
  - State Legislators want to know how we serve their constituents.

• Administrators need for reporting
  (at program, department & college levels)

• The public wants to know the value of our programs.

• Better coordination and planning to improve program effectiveness.
Models of Documenting Impact

• **Bennett’s Hierarchy**
  - Claude Bennett (JOE, 1975)
  - Seven-link “chain of events” which document program impacts

- Progressive increase in “impact”, in ascending the hierarchy, approaching practice change and end results.
• **Logic Model**
  - A planning tool which emphasizes the results of effective programs
  - **Outputs** are about the program; **Outcomes** are about participants
  - **Short-term outcomes** are immediate, (changes in awareness, knowledge, skills)
  - **Medium-term outcomes** are intermediate, (changes in behaviors, decisions, actions)
  - **Long-term outcomes** are final outcomes, (changes in social, economic and environmental conditions)
  - Often used program planning & grant writing.
Planning for Impact Assessment

• To begin, start with the “end” (Diem, 2003)
  - Measuring impact is part of evaluation
  - Evaluation needs to be considered while a program is being developed, as well as during delivery and after completion
  - Identify the intended end results at the beginning of the program
• Measure program results using suitable evaluation methods (Diem, 2003) & (Diem, 2002)

✓ There are three ways to evaluate impact on your clients:
1. Ask them
2. Test them
3. Observe them

- **Surveys** (questionnaires, program follow-ups, interviews)
- **Pre-tests, Post-test;** Post-test with control comparison
- **Observations** (direct observation of participants, or review info from sources like Census data or government reports)
Examples of Impact Objectives
(Diem, 2003)

**KASA** *(Knowledge, Attitudes, Skills, Aspirations) Change*

- Two-thirds of farmers attending will learn how to apply herbicides properly.
- Ninety percent of citizens participating in the voter education course will report being likelier to vote in the next election.
- Seventy percent of sixth-grade students will be more interested in science careers.
- Sixty percent of home gardeners will understand the value of composting lawn clippings.

Notice, all these objectives are measurable.
**Practice Change**--*improved methods of action adopted*
- Ten grain producers will employ conservation tillage methods.
- Fifty percent of program participants will follow guidelines of the USDA food pyramid in meal preparation.
- Seventy-five percent of teenage smokers attending the workshop will quit smoking within 6 months.

**End Results**--*broader outcomes, effects, and benefits*
- Non-point-source pollution will be reduced by 50%.
- Fatal farm accidents will be reduced by one-third.
- Twenty fewer families will be on public assistance.
- Twenty-five percent of business owners participating will increase operating profits by at least 10% within one year.
- Within 2 years, 75% of homeowners participating will reduce consumer credit interest payments by 10%.
Impact Statements

• Concise and meaningful overviews of program results.
• Go beyond explaining “what” or “how” to answer questions about “who cares” and “so what”?

Writing an Impact Statement (Virginia Tech)
(follow a simple formula)
• Issue or problem statement
• Action statement – how does your work make a different?
• Impacts – the benefits (qualitative or quantitative
• Who was responsible
• Contact information
Sample Impact Statements (LSU Ag Center)

- Shade tree workshop explained that a recommended variety tree, properly planted and maintained, tree will save a homeowner an average of $250 annually for 20 years or a total savings of $5000.
- Advising a homeowner on the best grass variety according to soil test results saved an estimated $100 annually for 30 years on reduced fertilizer and herbicide use for a $3000 savings.
- Homeowner composting of all grass clippings and tree leaves reduced overall community landfill tonnage by 5% resulting in extending the useful life of the sanitary landfill by an additional 4.5 years and a cost savings of 1.5 million dollars.
- Properly identifying a pest problem saved client $15 and prevented unneeded application of pesticide in the environment.
Useful References on Programmatic Impact

- Bennett, C. 1975. Up the Hierarchy. JOE, 13(2).