

Why Impact Statements?

Impact statements demonstrate how our work makes a difference in the lives of people, communities, and the environment. Documenting the results of our efforts is also increasingly expected by funders and stakeholders. Those of us in the public sector identify and illustrate how our work makes a difference in our clientele's economic, environmental, and social well-being through impact statements and impact reports.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture asks land-grant universities to collect and submit information on impacts of teaching, research, and Cooperative Extension programs.

At the federal level, impact statements are shared with members of Congress and other key decision makers. In Tennessee, impact statements are used to highlight the value of our work to our congressional delegation, members of the Tennessee General Assembly, and other supporters and stakeholders.

Impact reporting is important because it:

- Is required by our funding agencies
- Demonstrates the difference we make in people's lives, communities, and the environment
- Improves visibility of programs (local, state, national).
- Generates support
- Builds greater understanding of our programs by the public; illustrates our accountability

Impact reporting is important to land-grant faculty and staff because:

- Improves the visibility of your work
- Your work is exposed to potential funders
- Stakeholders are asking for it
- It lessens urgent requests for program examples, etc.
- It can summarize and celebrate a job well done

What is Impact?

Impact means the reportable and verifiable difference a land-grant program makes in the lives of people. Impacts are the documented results of a program, course, or research project.

Impact reporting:

- Describes the positive change we make in social, economic, and environmental conditions in Tennessee, the nation, and around the world
- Provides public accountability
- Shows the economic value of our work through:
 - Increased income

- Savings
- Increased productivity
- Value added
- Expected values of outcomes
- Multiplier effect
- Increased quality of life (health, education, etc.)
- Non-market benefits (cost effectiveness, e.g.)
- Values of indirect outcomes
- High rates of return on investment
- Provides teaching/learning, research/discovery, and extension and outreach/engagement program accountability
- Shows a return on investment
- Fosters better public understanding of the whole picture of teaching/learning, research/discovery, and extension and outreach/engagement
- Provides a reputation that improves future funding opportunities
- Increases awareness of programs within the institution

An impact statement is a brief summary, in lay terms, of the economic, environmental, and/or social impact of our efforts. It states accomplishments and their payoff to society by answering the questions:

- Who cares?
- So what?

Our impact audiences include:

- State officials
- Federal officials
- Local governing bodies
- General public
- Peers
- External funding sources
- Industry representatives
- Alumni
- Students

These audiences have:

- Some influence and control over our programs
- Want information for decision-making
- Have many people competing for their attention
- Want quantifiable differences brought about by investments in our programs