

# Narrative Report

## ■ GUIDELINES ■

Extension staff are asked to report educational programming efforts and impacts to county commissioners, legislators, their district director, assistant director, advisory councils and others.

The recipients of this information usually have a limited amount of time and are looking for key stories, words or data that demonstrate program successes and impacts on the citizens of North Dakota.

Reporting is important, and identifying the audience you are targeting for your reports is key to getting the right information to the right group of people.

Refer to the following guidelines when developing your reports.

### Program Success

- Summarize efforts from a team perspective when possible. Provide staff names, positions and the geographic area they work, such as Suzie Smith; Extension agent, agriculture, Grand Forks and Walsh counties. Include each person on staff or the project, and submit one combined report. For county-based staff, reports are due quarterly to your district director. More often is encouraged. Check with your district director about the reporting expectations of your county commissioners. Some county commissioners may require additional reporting in the form of statistics or a calendar.
- Report on educational programs that have had or will have an impact on the lives of local citizens. Focus on community assets and personal comments from participants about how Extension education is helping create positive change. (*Examples are available upon request from your district director.*)
- Use simple language in your report.
- Reporting program accomplishments is an ongoing process. When developing a narrative report for the first time on a specific program, your report might include only these first five criteria: the name of the program, a sentence or two defining the desired change, the collaborative efforts (assets) that will happen or have occurred (inputs), Extension's role in this program (inputs) and your intended audience. Consider the inputs, outputs and outcomes from the Logic Model in your report.

The next time you report on this program, you may include the accomplishments starting with the name of the program through quotes from participants (output). Each time you feature this program effort in a narrative report, the information becomes more detailed. The final report would focus on outcomes.

### **The criteria to use in reporting might include:**

- Name of the program
- A sentence on the approach to positive change and how change is being addressed by this program
- Program outcomes (stated in terms of the targeted audience)
- Collaborative efforts with community-based partners/research faculty/specialists (input)
- Extension's role (input)
- Involvement of volunteers
- Audience type (working poor, youth, adult volunteers, producers, paraprofessionals, professionals, etc.)
- Number of components/activities designed to meet the outcomes associated with this program (Extension's teaching role, media briefs, newsletter articles, workshops/programs, focus groups, etc.) (outputs)
- Quotes from participants. (Ask the participants' permission to use their name and quotes in your report.) Your county may have a permission form that the participant signs, releasing you to use his or her comments. Quotes should be exact.
- Photos might also draw attention to a story.

### **Outcome measures to report:**

- Number of participants impacted by the program(s)
  - Knowledge gained; opinion changed; skills improved
  - Reactions of participants (testimonials, requests for additional or new information)
  - Adoption of practices
  - Social, economic and environmental change as a result of the program(s) (outcomes)
- Follow-up reports could call attention to this same program. The follow-up report might include some evaluation data on the changes that have occurred, such as the number of participants who adopted a specific behavior and how adopting the new behavior changed their life and/or their community. (This would be a result of achieving one or more of the outcomes.)

- As you develop your report, put on the "hat" of the reader. What does this person or group of individuals want to know?

Is it behavior change in a particular population? Is it a reduction in the amount of pesticides used on crops and a reduction in the cost per acre to produce the product? Is it a reduced incidence of chronic illness in the county population (long term)? Is it a decline in the number of child abuse cases? Debt reduction? Faster pasture-to-market movement of cattle? Increased participation of youth in community service?

- Answer the question, "So what?"

- It's not necessary for you to report on every educational activity each time. Report when significant progress is achieved.

- Word count: 250 or fewer. Be brief and concise in your report.

- Proofread! Use spell check on your word processing program. Spell out acronyms. Have a co-worker read your report to check for errors in punctuation or grammar that you might have missed. A second pair of eyes sometimes can catch an error the writer missed.

- Read your story out loud. If it sounds strange out loud, you probably need to make sentence changes.

- These guidelines for county narrative reports are very similar to the guidelines for an Impact Report. Drop this report into the Impact Report Template. The Web site is:

*[www.ag.ndsu.edu/ext-emp/evaluation/reports.html](http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/ext-emp/evaluation/reports.html) — then click on *Impact Report Template*.*

A minimum of one Impact Report a year is required of all full-time Extension agents. You are helping all of us market the NDSU Extension Service and your county programs.