Using the “but for” attribution principle to document program impacts

Webinar for NDSU Extension
January 16, 2019

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Extension Center for Community Vitality
OVERVIEW

- Why? Benefits of collecting indicator data
- The North Central Indicators
- Defining “impact”
- The “but for” rule
- Tips for collecting data
CRED NATIONAL INDICATORS TEAM --
WHAT’S DRIVING US? THE NEED TO:

- Tell compelling stories at state, local, and national levels about the collective impact of our community and economic development work

- Improve our ability to:
  - Gather and assess collective impacts and leverage each other’s strengths
  - Develop support for CRED programming
  - Make strategic decisions regarding the importance, value, and potential of CRED program
NATIONAL CRED INDICATORS TEAM
BENEFITS OF COLLECTING INDICATOR DATA

- Need to convince state and federal funders that Extension programs are a good investment
- Data collection can also be used for scholarship and program improvement
THE NORTH CENTRAL INDICATORS

- Reported since 2010!
- Southern region of U.S. also does reporting
- CRED programming and staffing in Northeast and West regions more sparse, harder to report impacts
More than $202 Million of impacts and 14,344 jobs created or saved

States reported value of volunteer hours, as well as dollar efficiencies and savings, bringing the total impact to $202M. Our impacts stem from innovative, science-based approaches developed in partnership with our stakeholders. The programming associated with these impacts varies according to community needs and the creativity of university-based and other partners. To provide an idea of the types of programming used to generate our impacts, we provide several examples.

**Businesses and Jobs**
- 746 Businesses created (8 states reporting)
- 6153 Jobs created (10 states reporting)
- 11,916 Jobs retained (7 states reporting)
- 685 Business plans developed (8 states reporting)

**Dollar Values**
- $397,995 Volunteer hours leveraged to deliver programs (7 states reporting)
- $1,958,874 Organization and/or community-generated volunteer hours (9 states reporting)
- $14,578,428 Grants and resources leveraged/generated by communities (11 states reporting)
- $2,612,183 Efficiencies and savings (3 states reporting)
- $182,082,700 Resources leveraged by businesses (8 states reporting)

**Participation**
- 2,474 New leadership roles & opportunities undertaken (11 states reporting)
- 718 Community or organizational, plans/policies adopted/implemented (10 states reporting)
- 1,192 Community or organizational, plans/policies adopted/implemented (10 states reporting)
- 120,153 Volunteer hours for community generated work (10 states reporting)
DEFINING “IMPACT”

- Changes in condition that can be attributed to the Extension program.
- Attribution is key. Would the change in condition have happened if not for Extension? That’s the idea of the “but for” rule.
- Some prefer the term “contribution” over “attribution.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inputs</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Outcomes-Impacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What we invest:</strong> Faculty/staff, volunteer &amp; research time &amp; expertise, travel and materials, etc.</td>
<td><strong>What we do:</strong> Research, teaching, extension, coaching, facilitating, technical assistance</td>
<td><strong>Who we reach:</strong> Communities and their formal &amp; informal leaders, businesses, governments and non-profits.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Indicators Covered in Paper – See Table 7**  
**Participation Indicators** #1 to #6  
**Action Indicators** #7 to #12  
**Impact Indicators** #13 to #23

**Source:** Adapted from North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, 2007.

- Increased knowledge & understanding for economic trends and conditions and community strategies for achieving their desired future
- Increased resources leveraged
- Increased networks and partnerships
- More informed decision-making and leadership
- Reduced poverty
- Creation, retention and expansion of sustainable economic opportunities
- Increased wealth and income
**Figure 1: Difference between “before and after” and “impacts”**

*Number of community and organizational policies or plans implemented*

Impact reporting: the difference between total number and number that can't be claimed by Extension (e.g. 22 in 2010, 39 in 2015)

- **Not directly linked to Extension programming**
- **Total**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Not directly linked to Extension programming</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td></td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td></td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td></td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## North Central States 2017 Impact Indicators

**Definition** — General principle: attribution. Someone from outside Extension must be willing to state the program produced the result.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of business plans developed</td>
<td>Includes formal business plans and informal strategic changes. Use attribution principle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of community or organizational plans/policies developed</td>
<td>Includes formally adopted plans by official agencies as well as strategies. Use attribution principle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of community or organizational, plans/policies adopted and/or implemented</td>
<td>Includes plans (as above) wholly or partially adopted or implemented. Use attribution principle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of businesses created</td>
<td>New business start ups or firms that moved into the area. Use attribution principle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of jobs created/</td>
<td>New jobs in the area as a result of programs. Use attribution principle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of jobs retained</td>
<td>Existing jobs that were at risk, protected by programs. Use attribution principle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dollar value of volunteer hours leveraged to deliver programs</td>
<td>Count hours provided by individuals in executing the program (include volunteer hours required for certification).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Independent Sector value)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dollar value of organization and/or community-generated volunteer hours</td>
<td>Count hours indirectly generated by programs. Example: person receiving training recruits additional volunteers. Use attribution principle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(based on Independent Sector hr value)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of volunteer hours for community generated work</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dollar value of efficiencies and savings</td>
<td>Count savings through improved processes and approaches due to programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dollar value of grants and resources leveraged/generated by communities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dollar value of resources leveraged by businesses</td>
<td>Includes loans and investments. Use attribution principle.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE “BUT FOR” RULE

- Origins in tort law
- “Someone from outside Extension is willing to state that the Extension program was a crucial factor in producing the program’s impact.”
- Used after project/program completion
- Outsiders have little vested interest
DATA COLLECTION TIPS

- “But for” question – Would your group have developed the plan if you hadn’t participated in the Extension program?
- What is one thing you have done differently as a result of the Extension program?
DATA COLLECTION TIPS

- End of year survey with staff

For which indicator are you reporting progress?

- Number of participants reporting new leadership roles and opportunities undertaken
- Number of business plans developed
- Number of community or organizational plans/policies developed
- Number of community and organizational policies/plans adopted and/or implemented
- No. of businesses created
- No. of jobs created
- No. of jobs retained
- Dollar value of volunteer hours leveraged to deliver programs
- Dollar value of organization and/or community-generated volunteer hours
- Number of volunteer hours for community generated work
- Dollar value of efficiencies and savings
- Dollar value of grants and resources leveraged/generated by communities
- Dollar value of resources leveraged by businesses
DATA COLLECTION TIPS

- End of year survey with staff

What is the progress you are reporting for the selected indicator?

Provide the contact information for the contact that can verify this progress

Name
Title and Organization
Telephone Number
Email Address

If you have any files to attach, please do so here.
DATA COLLECTION TIPS

- Stakeholder follow-up
- Suggestion: first interview Extension educator, get name of community stakeholder
- Interview or survey community stakeholder
- Use “but for” language
DATA COLLECTION TIPS

- Keep track of local program champions
- Build ongoing relationships with participants
- Develop a “go back and check” expectation with them
- If possible, employ students to help with follow-up data collection!
DATA COLLECTION TIPS

- Use Community Capacities Framework to think about “but for” questions . . .

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capital</th>
<th>(I wouldn’t show the names of the capitals in the survey)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civic</td>
<td>Did the study/report influence any community or economic development decisions? If yes, please describe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic</td>
<td>Did the study/report create opportunities to engage the public in community or economic development decision-making? If yes, please describe?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human</td>
<td>Did the study/report provide new knowledge or lead to new insights about the economy? If yes, please describe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human</td>
<td>Please estimate the number of people who gained new knowledge from the study/report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>Did the study/report influence business or economic development activity in the community? If yes, please describe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>Did the study/report influence philanthropic activity in the community? If yes, please describe.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DATA COLLECTION TIPS

- Use Community Capitals Framework to think about “but for” questions . . .

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<tbody>
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<td>Social</td>
<td>Did the sharing of the report promote new or stronger connections among organizations in the community? If yes, please describe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Built</td>
<td>Did the study/report influence activity or decisions about construction or maintenance of buildings or infrastructure, including streets or roads? If yes, please describe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>Did the study/report influence activity or decisions about community cultural events such as celebrations, museum exhibits, festivals or county fairs? If yes, please describe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>Did the study/report influence efforts to promote diversity in your community or organization (e.g., interaction among people of different ages, different cultural backgrounds or different economic backgrounds)? If yes, please describe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural</td>
<td>Did the study/report influence efforts to protect natural resources in your community? If yes, please describe.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DATA COLLECTION TIPS

- Ask “but for” questions during Ripple Effects Mapping
- Ask key stakeholders which “ripples” would not have happened if not for the Extension program.
Thank you!

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