

Creating County Highlights

Ohio State University Extension



What are County Highlights?

A separate County Highlights is written for each county. It is a one-page (2-sided) information sheet that contains one county's most significant program accomplishments. Your County Highlights is included in the educational materials your state and federal legislators receive at various times. The accomplishments are written as short, concise bullet statements. Each bullet statement is a written "sound bite" that can be read by the average person in 10 to 20 seconds. They catch and hold the attention of busy people. County Highlights provide a quick overview of the wide range of worthwhile educational programs and services that were delivered to the residents in your county in recent months and years.

Who writes the County Highlights?

Each county is unique and each has a variety of successful programs to share every year. We rely on you and your county team to decide which programs and events to include and which ones to mention first. **Only you know which programs best tell Extension's story for your county.**

You need to provide the impressive results and the details. There are several options. You can:

- Use the impact statements you wrote for your Report of Results. Often, they work perfectly with a few little adjustments.
- Use the template on the next page. Make as many copies as you need and fill in the blanks. If you use the template, we will write the actual highlight for you.
- Use a combination of your impact statements for some programs and complete the template for others.

The Office of Program Development and Evaluation and the Section of Communication and Technology work together to organize the information that is submitted by each county, do some minor editing, and then create the actual "County Highlights."

What do county program staff need to do?

- A. Start by reading each others' impact statements in the Reports of Results to see how closely they conform to the following County Highlights Guidelines.
 1. Brief and clear
 2. Can be read aloud in 10 to 20 seconds
 3. Identifies the target audience
 4. Identifies major program components
 5. Identifies the program outcomes in terms of what the audience is doing or will do differently
 6. Includes how and when the results were measured
 7. Refers to program outcomes in terms of the economic, environmental, social and/or impact on the family, neighborhood, community, or other larger group when possible
 8. Mentions significant partners, funders, etc. when appropriate
- B. Modify the statements.
- C. Each agent rank orders the impact statements they wrote from most significant to least significant.
- D. The County team combines all the impact statements.
 1. Review the statements from the same or similar programs that could be combined into one "highlight."
 2. Rank order the adjusted impact statements as they should appear in the County Highlights.
 3. List ranked programs by Program Emphasis Area or as a ranked list without program headings. The County team should decide which format to use.
- E. Read the entire set of impact statements.
 1. Does this set of impact statements in this order accurately reflect your county's most significant contributions to the community?
 2. Does each impact statement meet the guidelines listed above?
- F. Mail a diskette with the finalized ordered list of impact statements or E-mail as an attachment to williamson.84@osu.edu. This will become your county's highlights.

Is help available?

Yes, the Program Development and Evaluation Team are available to work with your county unit or with individuals. Email or call. We would be glad to visit by phone or come to your county and work with you and your staff. Let us know. Below is a list of PDE Team members including e-mail addresses and phone numbers.

Dave Williamson	Williamson.84@osu.edu	614-292-5089
Suzanne Steel	Steel.7@osu.edu	614-292-9637

Checklist For Impressive County Highlight Bullet Statements (and to Avoid Pitfalls)

Use this checklist to see if you have successfully avoided the common pitfalls. Again, let someone else read what you have written and make suggestions.

Overall

- ___A. All program emphasis areas are represented (ANR, FCS, 4-H, & CD).
- ___B. Prioritize the impact statements (most important to least important) under the appropriate program emphasis area or if they are listed without program emphasis area headings, they are listed in order of importance. The county team agrees on the content and order of statements.
- ___C. Limit the number of impact statements to one page (two sides). A masthead will be added to the front side of the document.
- ___D. This list of highlights accurately reflects the work your county team has done or completed during the past 12 months.

Content

- ___E. When someone else reads it they say, "wow!" or "So what."
- ___F. You have accurately described and included specifics, such as...
 - Size and character of your audience.
 - Location of the event
 - How customers benefitted - one or two major benefits
 - What customers are doing differently as a result of your work
 - The time frame
- ___G. Information is quantified with crisp and simple rounded numbers.
 - Numbers rather than words (when possible)
 - \$ values for income, savings, in-kind contributions
- ___H. Everything is factual and can be supported with documentation.
- ___I. Sentences are short and precise, free of flowery or wordy embellishment.

Construction

- ___J. Every individual highlight can be read aloud at normal speed in less than 20 seconds.
- ___K. Every highlight is long enough to be understood, and short enough to be read.
- ___L. Extra words that cluttered the meaning and complicated the message are deleted.
- ___M. Several short sentences are used rather than long, complex sentences filled with "ands."

Clarity

- ___N. You avoided the following:
 - Extension jargon (or explained it if you used it.)
 - Using initials before spelling out what they mean.
 - Vague comparative statements.
 - Judgmental words unless you can prove them.
- ___O. Repeated use of your county's name has been eliminated since the highlights are on a dedicated page.

Impact Statement Worksheet: Examples of what to write

Person in charge of the program _____ Email _____ County _____ Phone # _____

Program Title _____

Date(s) of program _____ Length of Program _____ Location of Program _____

1. **The target audience** (Examples: young mothers, 4th graders, small business operators, absentee land owners, beekeepers, pond owners, men over 65, two-income families, garden center owners, houseplant owners)

Number that participated _____ **Number that completed** _____

2. **Rationale** for conducting the learning event
A. What were your reasons?
3. **What baseline information did you have that this was an important topic?** (Example: Newspaper article, Health Dept Report, Advisory Committee, Personal observations, Community request)
4. **What program objectives were met?** (Examples: Fewer food poisoning incidents, increased junior leadership participation, increased parent involvement, Participants saving money each week, healthier ponds)
5. **What benefit(s) did the participants receive?** (Higher yields, more peaceful family meals, improved credit, dry basements, used less fertilizer, wise decision making)
6. **How many participants benefitted?**
7. **Major measurable benefit stated in numbers, \$\$\$, %'s** (Give it a try.)
8. **Teaching method(s) used**
A. How did you involve the participants ?(Example: They explored, calculated, practiced, analyzed, tried, applied, etc.)
B. How did you make the information meaningful? (Examples: Role playing, case studies, tour, panel discussion, demonstration)
9. **Specific knowledge/skills participants plan to use immediately or in the next six months** (Examples: plan to try using a list next time I shop, will use it next time I water the lawn, will talk with coworkers, will share with my children, will discuss with my doctor)
10. **Method used to collect evidence** (Examples: Pre, mid-point and/or post tests, personal observation of work done during learning event, group discussion and summary at the end, monitoring questions and requests for assistance, follow up phone survey or visit, compare

Prepared by Jackie LaMuth and Dave Williamson (8/98), Ohio State University Extension.