Dear County Directors:

As we work to show the impact of Ohio State University Extension, your assistance is critical. Our state, federal and local elected officials — Representatives, Senators and County Commissioners — want to know what we are doing in their backyard for their constituents.

That’s where the County Highlights come in. Of all the publications we use with elected officials, County Highlights are the most effective at sharing local impact information.

This year, please submit your county highlights to your regional director no later than Thursday, Oct. 9.

This document is not intended to showcase everything you do, but to highlight work that directly addresses critical issues in your county. Because the audience for this document is busy, research tells us to keep it brief. Please keep your overall word count to 1,000 words.

As you did last year, please report your successes under our impact areas. Each county highlight sheet will be organized by these areas:

- Strengthening Families and Communities
- Preparing Youth for Success
- Enhancing Agriculture and the Environment
- Advancing Employment and Income Opportunities

Listed below are some tips from CFAES Communications on effective impact writing. If you have questions about how to write impact or highlight statements, contact Mauricio Espinoza at espinoza.15@osu.edu or 330-621-6541.

I’m looking forward to hearing more about your great work in the counties this year. Thank you for your assistance!

Sincerely,
Keith Smith, Ph.D.
Associate Vice President, Agricultural Administration
Associate Dean CFAES, Director, Ohio State University Extension and
Gist Chair in Extension Education and Leadership

**What is Impact?**
Identifying and fleshing out true public impact in your extension, teaching and research programs is essential to developing effective impact reporting. Demand for impact information increases as lawmakers, the public and our partners all want to know about the return on investments in land-grant research, extension and teaching.
Defining Impact

- Basically, impact is the reportable, quantifiable difference, or potential difference, that your program is making in real people’s lives. It reports payoffs and benefits to society. The focus is on public – not internal or personal – benefit.

- Impact is change or potential change in one or more key areas:
  - Economic
  - Environmental
  - Social
  - Health and well-being

Reporting Impact

- An impact statement is a brief summary, in lay terms, that:
  - Highlights the difference your program is making for the public good.
  - Concisely summarizes what you did to achieve this difference.
  - Clearly states payoffs to society.
  - Answers key questions: So what? Who cares? Why?

- An impact statement is not:
  - A long, detailed report.
  - Numbers of people reached, meetings held, acres served. These provide context, but alone, they don’t capture the element of change essential to good impact.
  - A detailed description of the process or what’s been done.
  - A list of additional grants, honors, recognition for organizers.

- Be specific. Report economic, environmental, social or health/well-being impact in terms of:
  - Knowledge gained and how that knowledge is applied.
  - Behavior or attitude changes.
  - Practice or situation changes.
  - Results of those behavior, attitude, practice or situation changes.

- Effective impact statements:
  - Provide quantifiable evidence of change or difference the program made.
    (It really is all about the money. Dollars are the gold standard. Audiences want to know the return on investment.)
  - Give other evidence, such as testimonials or anecdotes.
  - Realistically project potential benefit for work in progress.
  - Provide only enough detail to be easily understood.
  - Highlight public benefits, outcomes, payoffs.
To consistently show real impact, you must program to produce it.

- Know what you want to measure.
- Build around issues, not events.
- Respond to the situation.

**Impact Audiences**

- Write impact statements for:
  - State and federal decision makers (reporting needs).
  - Local decision makers, supporters.
  - Taxpayers, stakeholders, commodity groups.
  - Current and potential funders or partners.

**Impact Tips and Tricks**

- Reuse and repackage for:
  - Annual reports, legislative briefings, constituent letters.
  - Web sites, searchable databases.
  - Speeches, fact sheets, displays, posters, newsletters.
  - Media tip sheets, story pitches, PSAs.
  - Background for supporters, collaborators, advisory, alumni groups.
  - Grants and funding applications, federal reports.

- Write a strong “why” or issue/problem statement:
  - Do a Google search to quantify the problem.
  - Use reliable sources – Centers for Disease Control, EPA, USDA, etc.
  - Find “why” details in grant proposals.

- For difficult impacts – basic research, emerging issues, 4-H, FCS, academics – try:
  - Testimonials
  - Anecdotes
  - If x then y statements – potential impacts