



# Writing Impact Statements for Sea Grant Annual Reporting

Brooke Carney  
February 27, 2018





# Purpose and Scope

This webinar will provide guidance and tips on writing strong impact statements

NOT this webinar: info on using PIER, performance metrics, any other info on annual reports

Questions about PIER will not be addressed during this webinar.



# Webinar Goals

1. Provide definitions for impacts and accomplishments
2. Review uses and audiences of impact statements
3. Present best practices for writing impacts statements
4. Analyze good examples of impact statements
5. Answer questions



# Introduction to Impacts

- Written impact and accomplishment statements provide a method of descriptive reporting for Sea Grant programs.
- They make up one major component of each Sea Grant program's annual report.
- Annual reports are due June 8, 2018 for work completed February 1, 2017 to January 30, 2018.



# Definitions



## Definitions - Impacts

Impact statements should effectively describe the significant economic, societal and/or environmental benefits of our research, extension, education and communications work



## Definitions - Impacts

- Impact statements are concise, 250 words or less.
- Impact statements are written for a lay audience.
- Impact statements are can stand alone; they need no additional explanation.



# Definitions - Impacts

Impact statements answer the “so what?” or “who cares?”

- Change the way a group of professionals does business
- Measurable economic benefit
- Measurable change in fish population due to restoration efforts
- Leveraging funds to receive larger grant



# Definitions - Accomplishments

Accomplishments effectively describe the key actions, activities or products resulting from Sea Grant activities.

Accomplishments reflect ongoing activities or key results that may not yet have had a significant economic, societal and/or environmental benefit, but lay the foundation for one.



# Definitions - Accomplishments

- Accomplishments document important milestones.
- Accomplishments are Sea Grant outputs.
- Accomplishments feed into impacts.
- Accomplishments answer questions of accountability.



# Uses and Audiences



# Uses and Audiences

- Qualitative component of Sea Grant program evaluation, for Sea Grant audiences
- Requests for information on Sea Grant's impacts to executive and legislative audiences
- Central component to national communications
- National Sea Grant Advisory Board's biennial report to Congress on the "state of Sea Grant"



# Uses and Audiences: Sea Grant Reporting

The screenshot shows the NOAA Sea Grant website's navigation menu and a list of annual report guidance documents. The 'Annual Reports' menu item is highlighted in a dark blue box. The list includes links to PDFs for the years 2014-2017, as well as specific guidance for impact statements and performance metrics.

 [Funding Opportunities](#) [Knauss Fellowship](#) [Strategic Planning](#) [Implementation](#) [Omnibus](#) [Evaluation, Reporting](#) [Forms and Templates](#) 

## 2014 - 2017 Annual Report Guidance

[2017 Annual Report Guidance \(PDF\)](#)  
[2016 Annual Report Guidance \(PDF\)](#)  
[2015 Annual Report Guidance \(PDF\)](#)  
[2016 Guidance for Impact Statements \(PDF\)](#)  
[Writing Impacts - Slides from Webinar hosted April 2017 \(PDF\)](#)  
[Performance Measure and Metric Guidance and Definitions 2014 - 2017 \(PDF\)](#)  
[Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation \(PIE\) Guidance 2014 - 2017 \(PDF\)](#)

[Return to Sea Grant's main website, \[seagrant.noaa.gov\]\(http://seagrant.noaa.gov\)](#)

[NOAA Privacy Statement](#) | [Web Accessibility Statement](#) | [Disclaimer for External Links](#) | [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration \(NOAA\)](#) | [U.S. Department of Commerce](#) | [NOAA Research](#)  
© Copyright 2018 by NOAA

[Seagrant.noaa.gov/insideseagrant/Evaluation-Reporting/Annual-Reports](http://Seagrant.noaa.gov/insideseagrant/Evaluation-Reporting/Annual-Reports)



## Uses and Audiences: Sea Grant Reporting

- Annual report on progress
- Four year evaluation



## Uses and Audiences: Executive and Legislative requests for information

- Requests for information often come as “taskers” to National Sea Grant Office
- Short turnaround; need access to the best stories quickly
- Examples: NOAA Blue Book, NOAA Strategic Planning, formal reports, presentations by leadership, policy development



## Uses and Audiences: National Communications

- Website information
- Program factsheets
- Remarks by National Sea Grant Office staff (custom talks and Sea Grant 101)
- Conversations with partners; demonstrate Sea Grant's ability to achieve goals
- Reports and publications, including the NSGAB's biennial report to Congress



# Best Practices



# Best Practices: Quantity

- Feature Impact: Best of the best, up to 20 at any given time, spread over many years or clustered on latest year
- Impact: Answer the so what, no more than 20 per year recommended
- Accomplishment: No limit\*

\*Flag outstanding accomplishments for NSGO Communications



# Best Practices for Impact Statements

- Write and categorize with the audiences in mind.
- All audiences need to be able to quickly identify your program's best stories.



# Best Practices for Impact Statements

An impact statement should answer the “so what” of the work.

- Provide context on how work by Sea Grant has resulted in a positive change to society.
- An impact to one person or business can be as powerful of a story as a story with a lot of zeros associated with it.



# Best Practices for Impact Statements

- Clearly distinguish between true impacts to society, as opposed to Sea Grant accomplishments (i.e., outputs or activities);
- Clearly define the role that Sea Grant played in the impact or accomplishment;



# Best Practices for Impact Statements

An impact statement should focus on the outcomes of the work rather than efforts of staff members.

- Focus on the positive change
- Back up with data to show how it was measured, **if available and appropriate**



# Best Practices for Impact Statements

Make sure your program's impact statements are

- Verifiable
- Written in a consistent tense
- Fall within the report period time frame
- Articulate a defined Sea Grant role
- Written for a lay audience
- Attached to a relevant project



# Writing Impacts Statements



# Writing Impact Statements

## Body:

- Title
- Recap
- Relevance
- Response
- Results

## Other details:

- Focus area
- Focus area goal(s)
- **Partner(s)**
- Associated  
Project(s)



# Writing Impact Statements

## Length

- Titles should be no more than 120 characters;
- Recaps should be no more than 500 characters;
- Body no more than 250 words;



# Writing Impact Statements – 4Rs

Recap:

- A one sentence recapitulation that captures the essence of the preceding three points.



# Writing Impact Statements – 4Rs

## Relevance:

- Why did our program conduct this effort?
- What needs were originally expressed for this work?
- What was the situation/problem and why was it a problem?
- What aspects of your current implementation plan are addressed?



# Writing Impact Statements – 4Rs

## Response:

- What did our program do?
- Who were the principal partners, collaborators, contributors?
- What were the key elements?
- Who was the target audience?



# Writing Impact Statements – 4Rs

## Result:

- What is the social, and/or economic, and/or environmental payoff of our work?
- Who benefitted?
- How?
- What happened as a result of the work described?
- How was information collected to verify the impacts (surveys, observation, etc.)?
- What was the geographic scope of the impact?



Examples



# Impact or Accomplishment?

Sea Grant research leads to first commercial enterprise cultivating edible kelp in U.S.

**IMPACT**

Sea Grant supports citizen science programs

**ACCOMPLISHMENT**



# Impact or Accomplishment?

Oklahoma Sea Grant hosts seventh annual conference for young fly fishermen.

Oklahoma Sea Grant's Young Fly Fishermen conference spurs similar conference in Mexico.



# Impact or Accomplishment?

Colorado-Nebraska Sea Grant trains 77 in HACCP-based seafood processing; economic impact exceeds \$1.97 million



## National Office Review of Impact & Accomplishments

- Program officers review within one month
- Looking for sensitive topics that might call negative attention to Sea Grant, NOAA or other federal agencies
  - Examples: political lobbying, advocacy
  - We expect you to catch typos and grammar issues before submitting



Questions?



Webinar on  
Performance Measure Reporting  
Tuesday, March 13 at 4:30 pm Eastern