

Top Ten Tips for Creating Funder-Useful Impact Statements

1. Write your statement in simple, plain English that can be understood by a non-technical reader.
2. Avoid “wiggle” words. Academics equivocate or use ambiguous expressions to avoid commitment to the facts. To the lay reader, these introduce an element of weakness or improbability to the impact statement.
3. The impact statement is not a technical communication and need not comply with technical writing standards. As much as possible, write in the active voice. Say, “*The team crossed resistant selections with susceptible selections . . .*” rather than “*Resistant selections were crossed with susceptible selections . . .*” Personal pronouns ARE permitted. (I, we . . .)
4. Start your impact statement with a description of the situation – state the problem in simple terms, explaining it to someone with no knowledge of the situation why it is a problem. Express the challenges to the grower or *audience for the research or project* because of this situation. This provides context for the audience for the impact statement.
5. Make a simple declarative statement of the goal of your project, immediately after the situation. “*The goal of this project is to . . .*” Some writers may find it more productive to begin the writing process with this sentence, and then describe the situation.
6. Methodology has very little space in an impact statement. Say that you conducted studies or experiments, ran field trials, or applied the latest technology. If outputs from the work have been useful tools or other resources, say so. Then tell what happened or changed – that’s the impact.
7. Quantitative measures of change make an impact statement memorable, even if they are based on assumptions (which you state clearly). “*Assuming 80% of growers adopt this technology, enough water will be saved in the production of 500,000 acres of commodity X to provide the indoor water needs of Well-Known City Y.*” Use National Ag Statistics Service data, American Water Works Association, US Census Data, and so forth.
8. Avoid jargon. Substitute common terms for technical language commonly used in your field. Convert specialized units into English units – no acre feet, no cubic meters, no micro-grams, no hectares.
9. Keep your sentences short; if you have used a semi-colon, you’ve probably said too much.
10. Your last sentence is the crescendo of the impact statement – promise “value.” Give it some punch. Remember, if as an academic, you feel somewhat uncomfortable with what you’ve written, it’s probably a good impact statement.

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