

Documenting Public Value of Extension – Why & How *

Extension is expected to quantify the value of its programs beyond the individuals who directly benefit from them. Stakeholders are demanding accountability that shows how our programs impact the public good.

- Show that ANR programs contribute to changes in economic, environmental, or social conditions in Iowa;
- Increase public awareness of the impact Extension programs have on a greater good;
- Increase awareness of ANR programming among representatives in the agricultural sector;
- Boost support of Extension from university leadership; and
- Improve public and legislative support.

The question I hear most is “How do we even measure public value?”. We do this by showing how ANR **Extension programs can trigger changes** that benefit more than the individuals who participated in a particular event. To get this perspective, include a question in your program evaluation that addresses a broader benefit related to your program.

You want to **make a connection** for those who are not directly associated with agriculture between your Extension program and a possible and/or eventual change in social, economic, or environmental conditions. Another way to look at this is to ask “What general ‘good’ is not likely to occur if my Extension program didn’t exist?”

Describe how Extension, through its programs, has **contributed to a greater good**. You don’t need to prove that Extension was solely responsible for the contribution to show your program’s value.

One way to show public value would be to describe how your program complements or supports local retail agribusinesses (suppliers, dealers, coops) because of Extension’s interaction with that sector through education

and/or recommendations.

- You’ve improved clients’ lives, not just their farming operation.
- Your program contributed to ‘Main Street’ vitality.

Consider what the **future** would look like **without Extension input** ... for the farmer, local business, community, or state and how changes in recommended practices may have impacted a client’s or community’s wellbeing.

Another way would be to collect data that shows Extension had the major influence on a particular audience compared to other resources. A survey question measuring this aspect could ask:

1) Rank the importance of the following information sources in influencing your decision to [specific practice or recommendation presented]?

	<u>Very</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Not much</u>
Fertilizer dealer			
Other farmers			
Extension recommendation			
Seed dealer			
Ag retailer			
Consultant			

A third way to document the public value of your program would be to determine the multiplier effect. Ask participants of a particular program how many people they will contact with the information Extension presented. Again, you are pointing out the contribution your program has made to more than the individuals who directly benefited.

* Companion tip sheets with examples of agriculture-related public value statements are available under the titles *Documenting Public Value of Extension – Examples*, ANR Evaluation Tip Sheet # 5 and *Claiming Public Value – from Outcome to Impact*, ANR Evaluation Tip Sheet #6.

ANR Evaluation Tip Sheet # 3. For more information or assistance in evaluation, contact:
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