



## Building Public Value Messages for Extension

In Extension, we are often called upon to provide evidence of our programs' *private value* to program participants, including such factors as time saved, dollars earned or health benefits increased. But, Extension also creates *public value* when our programs benefit others in the community — those who do not participate in our programs directly.

Fiscal pressures on federal, state and county governments make the need to demonstrate our public value increasingly urgent. More than that, by understanding and substantiating the public benefits our programs provide, we can be confident that Extension, as a publicly funded organization, is doing what it is truly meant to do.

### Elements of a public value message:

- Is directed to a specific stakeholder (non- Extension participant stakeholder)
- focuses on the outcome that matters to the stakeholder
- uses the stakeholder's language
- is free of jargon and empty words (and acronyms)
- is believable
- is short
- is about a specific program; a Named Program for Extension
- doesn't focus on the participants' learning step
- doesn't focus on the program's private value
- tells us how non-participants- the greater community, state, world – benefit from the program
- makes the case for public funding

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### Definitions

**Public value:** The public value of an Extension program is the value of that program to non-participants.

Extension programs create public value by meeting one or more of the following criteria:

- Narrowing an information gap
- Addressing crucial concerns about fairness
- Benefitting those who do not participate in the program
- Reducing costs for others
- Improving market outcomes

**Stakeholder:** Public value messages are formulated for specific stakeholders. In the public value context, a stakeholder for an extension program is a non-participant, whose support for the program is valued.

Examples include county and state government officials, program partners and donors.

## **Template for Public Value Messages**

The essence of a public value message can be formulated using this template:

When you support \_\_\_\_\_ program,

Participants will \_\_\_\_\_

*(changes)*

Which leads to \_\_\_\_\_

*(outcomes)*

Which will benefit other community members by \_\_\_\_\_.

*(public value)*

## **Examples of Public Value Statements - 4-H focus**

### 4-H grows future scientists

4-H project work helps youth explore interests from animal science to aerospace, resulting in increased interest in science at a rate three times that of non-4-H peers. Interest in science is a predictor for young people to choose science-related careers. This interest in science, along with 4-H members' 70 percent greater likelihood to go to college than youth participating in other out-of-school programs, is helping grow future scientists. Future scientists are critical to our state, national and global economy; three-quarters of Missouri's \$10.6 billion in products and services exported in 2005 were science, engineering and technology-based industries (Lerner and Lerner, Wave 6; MERIC).

### 4-H LIFE

By supporting University of Missouri Extension's 4-H LIFE program, children of offenders make healthier choices and get along better with others, thus saving taxpayers \$56,885\* per child by breaking the tough cycle of intergenerational incarceration. The 4-H LIFE Program served 326 youth and their families in 2008 for a projected savings of \$18,544,510.

Source: <http://extension.missouri.edu/staff/publicvalue.aspx>