

I What is a success story?

A success story shows Extension making a difference in people's lives. More than a list of events or activities, it describes a positive change and shows how that change benefits the people of Wisconsin. A good success story uses evidence from evaluation to show the value of Extension.

You can write a success story about an entire program or part of a program that is particularly noteworthy and significant. It may be about an innovation, emergency response or outstanding effort. The program may be complete or in an earlier stage of development but with important accomplishments to describe. You could even write a success story several years after a program's completion when you have collected evidence of long-term impact. For a multi-year initiative, you may write a series of success stories that describe significant but different changes that occur over the years.

Whatever you choose to write about, your story should show Extension making Wisconsin a better place to live – for individuals, families, organizations, businesses, local governments and communities.

II What goes into a success story: SRRE

Situation: What prompted the program?

Response: How did Extension respond? (inputs and outputs)

Results: Who benefited? What resulted? (outcomes)

Evidence: What's the evidence? (evaluation)

Situation: Tell why Extension started the program. What problem, issue or concern needed addressing? Who cares? Who are the key stakeholders? The opening should make the case for why Extension stepped in.

For help with Situation, link to Program Planning materials at <http://www1.uwex.edu/ces/apps/programplanning/> and enter your password; or connect to the Logic Model web course, Module 1 at <http://www1.uwex.edu/ces/lmcourse>

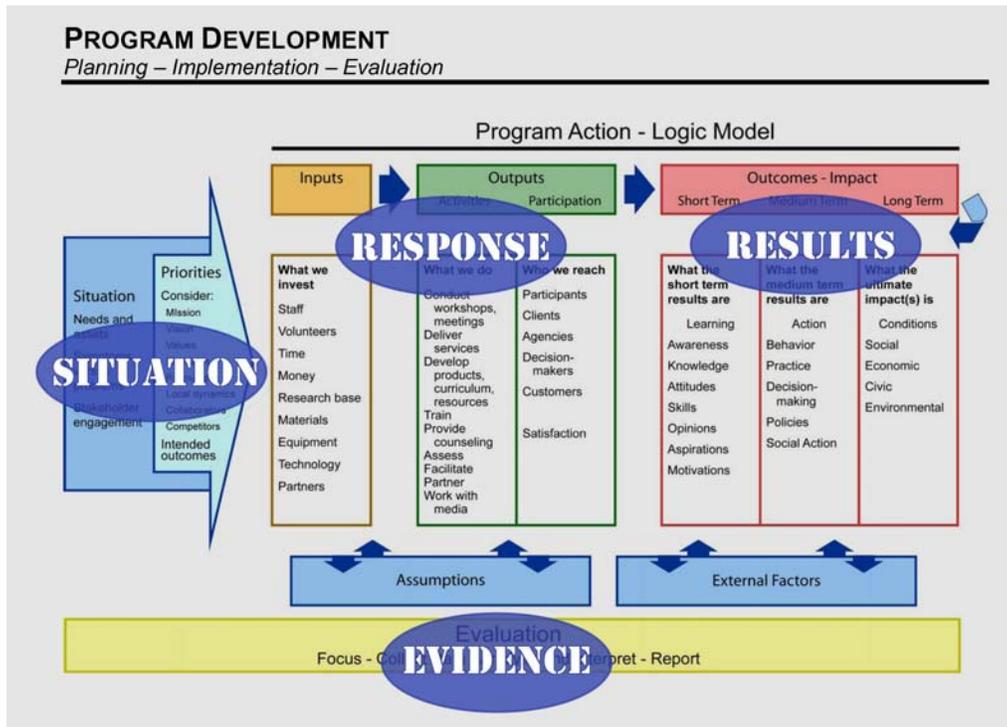
Response: Describe Extension's response including inputs (staff, funding, volunteers, research, expertise) and outputs. Outputs include activities (teaching,

facilitation, product development) and people reached (number of people and demographics). Describe partnerships and external funding sources. Be sure to spell out Extension's role in programming. Although we often work with other agencies and teams, it's important to emphasize Extension's contribution. See below for "[How do you write a success story for a collaborative program?](#)"

Results: Use quantitative and qualitative data to describe important outcomes (changes and benefits) achieved as a result of Extension's response. Who benefited and how? Outcomes include changes in knowledge, skills, motivation, behavior, decision making, practices, policies, social action, social, economic and environmental conditions. Describe outcomes in terms of value or meaning. For example, "Thirty participants increased their knowledge of safe food-handling practices (outcome). This should lead to better food-handling practices and fewer food-borne illnesses" (expected value). In other words, help the reader understand the meaning behind the change. Link to existing research, if possible, and include future plans or lessons learned based on results.

Evidence: Briefly describe how you evaluated the program to attain the reported evidence. Include the data collection method (pre- or post-test surveys, interviews, testimonials), sample (number and how selected), response rate and the date of data collection. Remember – a good success story depends on credible information.

SRRE reflects UW-Extension's program development model as seen in the following graphic:



How do you write a success story for a collaborative program?

Often we work with others as we conduct programs. Partnering and collaboration are part of how we do Extension work. You may wonder how you can take credit or write a success story when a project involves teamwork. In any project it's important to document your achievements, contributions and role in a collaborative effort. When you write a success story, describe your role in the "response" section. Tell what you did as part of the total effort. It's important for readers to understand Extension's role and how that role contributes to the results.

III Success story template

Template that individuals can fill in; with instructions for completing and transferring to web:

<http://www1.uwex.edu/ces/techservices/prs/teamtemplates.cfm>

In the template's narrative section include the following headings – SITUATION, RESPONSE, RESULTS, EVIDENCE -- and write your success story as a story rather than separate, disconnected sections.

Formatting features:

- Times New Roman, 12 point
- Single space within paragraphs, double space between paragraphs
- Left justify headers and text
- Bold headers
- 1.5-inch margins
- Short paragraphs and active tense
- Names, not "this agent"
- Avoid bullets, special fonts or features since they may not transfer to the web

To fit the Planning and Results System, a success story cannot exceed 4,000 characters. To stay within the limit, compose your story in MS Word and use "word count" under Tools to do a character count. Make sure your story fits before copying it into the Planning and Results System.

IV Examples

Click on the following to see an example success story from each program area. Also, you will find an example with explanatory notes for each.

- [Agricultural and Natural Resources](#)
- [Community, Natural Resource and Economic Development](#)
- [Family Living](#)
- [4-H Youth Development](#)

V How do success stories differ from impact statements? Impact indicators? Annual accomplishment reports?

Impact statement

An impact statement is a short paragraph with five to nine sentences that describes specific results.

- ◇ Length: 75 word-maximum
- ◇ Focus: who benefited and how?
- ◇ Data: numeric or narrative data that show value

Examples:

Mary Maker, CRD educator, worked with eight local government units to implement the PASER Road Management System. To date, six units have completed plans. As a result, all six are eligible for more state transportation dollars.

Jeff Jeffies, Makin County educator, is helping 25 farm families deal with the financial and emotional issues of property transfer. To date, 17 families have developed agreements for the successful transfer of property to the next generation. Two families decided not to proceed further. Six are still in discussion.

Second graders in two cities received education in nutrition, food safety and physical activity using a new set of lessons developed by North Dakota State University. Follow-up tests for one city show 95 percent of the children brought lesson newsletters home, 86 percent tried new foods and 42 percent chose healthier foods as a result of the five-week program. (CSREES example)

Black County Summer camp relies on youth leaders to serve as counselors and resource staff for 120 youth, ages 9-12. Before camp, youth leaders receive 12 hours of training. In comparing pre- and post-camp skills, 90 percent of the youth staff reported increased communications skills, 80 percent reported growth in their conflict resolution skills and 50 percent reported an increase in their ability to teach others a skill.

Link to "Impact Primer" on Purdue web site. This web site was developed with USDA/CSREES for federal impact reporting.

<http://www.agcom.purdue.edu/AgCom/news/impact/impactbkgrd.html>

Impact indicator

An indicator signals something. For example, smoke indicates fire. Healthy food choices indicate a healthy diet. An impact indicator, then, shows an impact or change. Often, describing an impact requires several indicators.

Examples of indicators:

- Number and percent of participants who qualify for a checking and savings account at the end of the program
- Number and percent of participants who demonstrate skill in direct marketing
- Number and percent of participating students of color who choose science as a career option
- Percent of shoreline in vegetative or natural buffers
- Ordinance passed for storm water management
- Number and percent of dairy producers who adopt a production and/or labor management practice based on information acquired from Extension

Self-directed teams identify desired outcomes and impact indicators for specific outcomes. These are listed on the team web page within the Planning and Results System.

Annual accomplishment reports

Academic departments require an annual accomplishment report (or equivalent document) as part of the UWEX Tenure Portfolio. Do not file the annual accomplishment report in the Planning and Results System. Probationary faculty will find expectations for annual accomplishment reports in the following locations:

- Articles of Faculty Governance Appendix II.B
- Your program area and/or academic department

VI Why write success stories?

- ◇ To show accountability for public funds
- ◇ To verify that we are using resources to make a positive difference in people's lives
- ◇ To share successes so individuals in and out of Extension can learn from our results
- ◇ To spread the word about Extension as a valuable resource
- ◇ To show that numbers alone don't tell the whole story of Extension
- ◇ To reflect and learn from our work
- ◇ To practice good scholarship

VII How are success stories used?

Administrators, program leaders, communications specialists, Extension legislative liaisons and Extension staff around the state periodically review success stories on the Planning and Reporting System. The following sections list a few of the ways these individuals use success stories in their everyday work.

By UWEX administration:

- In impact briefings for legislative visits
- As stories for the UWEX annual report
- In legislative packets for the March leadership delegation to D.C.
- In introductory papers when visiting newly elected officials, such as Governor Doyle's cabinet
- In presentations at the annual WACEC meeting
- In speeches for the Chancellor, UW President, Dean and Associate Dean
- For news stories and public information
- In internal communications such as the Dean's monthly message

By program leaders:

- In response to requests from legislative and other elected officials
- To assess team progress in relation to plans
- To share information among partners and generate interest among potential partners
- To help internal UW System partners better understand Extension's work and value
- For federal reporting purposes
- To post on program-area web sites
- As a source of news stories for local media
- To document activities and accomplishments of faculty and staff
- As input for nominating individuals for awards and presentations

By you:

Perhaps the No. 1 user of success stories is you. Hopefully, you are using your success stories in a variety of ways, including:

- In performance reviews
- As part of your tenure review documentation
- In county annual reports and monthly reports to stakeholders
- In communications with local elected officials
- To share the value of Extension with partners and generate interest among potential partners
- To celebrate achievements with colleagues and stakeholders
- To keep up with colleagues' accomplishments around the state

VIII What makes a good success story?

A good success story:

- Describes results that are valued by clients
- Contains compelling, significant facts
- Catches your attention
- Tells who benefits
- Answers: “So what?”
- Spells out Extension’s role in achieving results
- Is easy to read and understand
- Identifies key partners and funders

IX When do you submit success stories?

- When you have something significant to report and evaluation data to back it up
- When you are proud of a program or initiative
- On an ongoing basis – don’t wait until the end of the year

X Writing tips

It's one thing to have a good story to tell. It's another to write it so that people will want to read it. Use the following tips and many resources on the Internet for help in writing your success stories.

- Use active voice.
Example: Passive: Wells were tested by 80 percent of the participants.
Active: Eighty percent of the participants tested their wells.
For help: http://www.blm.gov/nhp/NPR/hdbk_11.html
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_actpass.html
- Use short, complete sentences.
For help: http://www.blm.gov/nhp/NPR/handbk_12.html
- Be concise.
- Choose simple words.
- Avoid jargon.
- Avoid acronyms.
- Use your name, program name or county name rather than "this agent," "Extension" or "I."
- Write in paragraph style in complete sentences.

Ask your communications specialist for help.

XI Success story checklist

Use the success story checklist at the end of this document to check your success story.

Ask a colleague or communications specialist to review your success story before copying it to the Planning and Results System.

XII Questions and answers

1. How do I write success stories on the same program over consecutive years?

Answer: When you have significant results in a multi-year program, report the new results. You may want to identify stories by date, for example, "Lakeshore Management 2003," "Lakeshore Management 2004."

2. Much of my programming is multi-year in nature; there isn't a neat relationship between what I do in a given year and what results. In fact, results may not appear for several years. How do I report this?

Answer: Even though you may engage in multiple activities that interact and evolve over time, keep track of the resources and series of events or activities that make up an initiative or program. These resources and events are inputs and outputs that lead to outcomes. Document outcomes when they occur and link them to the inputs and outputs that occurred previously.

3. Can I include photos, graphics or illustrations?

Answer: No. The electronic Planning and Results System only accommodates text. However, if you do have photos or other graphics, indicate that in your success story. They'll come in handy for communications specialists compiling fact sheets, news stories and annual reports.

4. Can I write a success story that spans more than one year?

Answer: Yes

5. How should I write about events or activities that don't constitute a success story?

Answer: Consider writing an impact statement, developing a news story with your communications specialist, or sharing the event in a newsletter, committee report or on your office bulletin board.

6. My success story is too long for the Planning and Reporting System. What should I do?

Answer: Edit. Edit. Edit. Keep the vital information. Use short sentences and simple words.

7. Can I write a success story about one person?

Answer: Extension programs usually target more than one person. However, showing how an Extension program benefits one individual gives a story human interest and often makes compelling reading. A single testimonial doesn't constitute a success story, however, describing the personal impact of an Extension program adds powerful evidence of a program's potential value.

8. How do I craft a success story that shows my role in a collaborative?

Answer: see link to help screen for describing your role in a collaborative or team effort.

APPENDICES AND LINKS

[How do I write a success story for a collaborative program?](#)

[Success story template](#)

[Success story examples](#)

- [Agricultural and Natural Resources](#)
- [Community, Natural Resource and Economic Development](#)
- [Family Living](#)
- [4-H Youth Development](#)

[Success story checklist](#)

[Links to program areas](#)

Success story template

Formatting features:

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TITLE

Situation:

Response:

Results:

Evidence:

Success story example

Agriculture and Natural Resources

Crediting on-farm nutrients

Situation: Manure disposal poses a challenge for Green County livestock producers, owing to a high number of cows on a limited land base. In fact, Green County ranks fourth in the nation in number of cows per square mile. As part of their production process, farmers apply nitrogen-rich manure to crops. However, many farmers don't credit the manure as part of their fertilizer application, which results in excess nitrogen in the soil.

Nitrogen overapplication has two drawbacks: it raises the cost of production and boosts nitrate levels in surface and groundwater, which could lead to contaminated lakes, streams and wells. So not only was this practice costing farmers money, it posed potential environmental and public health hazards.

Response: To address the issue, UW-Extension Agricultural Educator Mark Mayer brought together local manure haulers, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the Green County Farm Service Agency, the Natural Resources Conservation Service and a UWEX soils specialist. Working with these partners, Mayer conducted three manure management seminars tailored to Green County dairy and livestock farmers. Topics included spreading regulations, manure management and crediting, advantages and disadvantages of commercial application, and guidelines for applying sludge products to cropland.

Ninety farmers (13 percent of the livestock producers in Green County) and agribusiness people attended one or more of the seminars. Mayer raised additional awareness of the issue by writing stories in the county newsletter and local newspaper and through six radio broadcasts, reaching more than 1,500 livestock producers.

Results: As a result of Mayer's efforts, more than 40 farmers have begun crediting nitrogen in manure and sludge on their crops and are applying less synthetic fertilizer. On average, producers saved more than \$1,500 per farm and will realize an estimated \$40,000 of additional net income when they take the full nutrient credit. These farmers have indicated they will follow recommended practices to credit manure as fertilizer. Research shows that farmers save about \$10 per acre by crediting nitrogen.

In his work with Green County producers, Mayer will continue to stress the economic and environmental benefits of crediting manure and other nitrogen-producing crops. These actions saved farmers money and helped prevent a potential health hazard.

Evidence: To assess the seminar series' impact, Mayer conducted a post-seminar survey, with 76 of 90 participants completing surveys. Results show that the seminars motivated farmers to change their nutrient crediting practices. Phone surveys completed with all participants three months after the program show that 40 farmers either developed a nutrient management plan or made recommended changes.

Example with notes

Agriculture and Natural Resources

Crediting on-farm nutrients

Situation: Manure disposal poses a challenge for Green County livestock producers, owing to a high number of cows on a limited land base. In fact, Green County ranks fourth in the nation in number of cows per square mile. As part of their production process, farmers apply nitrogen-rich manure to crops. However, many farmers don't credit the manure as part of their fertilizer application, which results in excess nitrogen in the soil.

Situation: Describes issue and makes the case for Extension's involvement.

Nitrogen overapplication has two drawbacks: it raises the cost of production and boosts nitrate levels in surface and groundwater, which could lead to contaminated lakes, streams and wells. So not only was this practice costing farmers money, it posed potential environmental and public health hazards.

Clearly presents the problem and why we should care- nitrogen overapplication poses environmental and health hazards.

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Response: Describes Extension's response, stakeholders and partnerships.

Spells out Extension's role in programming.

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Clearly tells who and how many were reached.

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Results: Describes results valued by clients; gives the number of farmers and shows how they changed behavior and practices- and saved money- as a result of Extension's response. Answers the question: "So what?"

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Describes Extension's next step-continue to work with farmers and stress benefits of crediting manure.

Evidence: Describes data collection methods (post-seminar surveys and follow-up phone surveys), response rates and when data were collected.

Overall: Concise, easy to read and understand. Uses active voice and gives significant, compelling facts.

Success story example

Community, Natural Resource and Economic Development

Building a countywide economic development group

Situation: In 2002, a group of business and county government leaders from across Washburn County came together with a common desire: create a single economic development contact point for the entire county. At the time, only Shell Lake had a formal economic development group. Other cities, towns and villages lacked access to the many skills – financial, planning, networking, human resources and business management – needed to grow their communities. To ensure an economically vibrant future, county leaders started the Washburn County Economic Development Corporation. At first, the new organization lacked structure, mission, goals and operating procedures.

Response: Washburn County CNRED Educator Beverly Stencel responded, drawing on years of experience in organizational and leadership development. She worked with the group on strategic planning, helping county leaders develop a plan of action, write a mission statement, assess local needs, set goals and create bylaws. She facilitated meetings and developed Power Points, overheads and a brochure for use by board members in presentations to municipalities throughout the county. As an ongoing advisor, Stencel helped create a job description for a director, develop business surveys and find grant dollars. In short, she helped the young organization get on its feet, develop goals and become self-sustaining.

Results: In just a year, the new organization has achieved major results. For example, the corporation hired a director and part-time staff member, won a \$12,500 block grant, conducted a business retention and expansion study, helped an existing business find financing to expand and recruited a new business into the county. What's more, the corporation recently developed a school-business partnership with all four of the county's school districts and won a Northern Edge Initiative grant (one of 15 grants available to Wisconsin's 29 northernmost counties) to support that partnership.

Corporation members rated Stencel's impact on this project as "very high." She created an organizational structure, giving the group a process and a timetable for completing steps. In the words of one respondent, "She was a big part of helping get it started, and she continues to be a big part of it. She gave us ideas and examples of how we could set this up. We had a blueprint to follow and Bev brought that to us." From another, "Stencel's organizational expertise got us up and running more quickly than we'd have been able to do with out her."

Evidence: To document Extension's role in achieving these results, Stencel conducted a modified focus-group interview with all corporation members and phone interviews with

five stakeholders. She included specific questions that helped identify the specific role that Extension played in this collaborative effort. Results show the unique and important contribution Extension made.

Example with notes

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Situation: Clearly describes locally identified problem- lack of a single economic development contact point for the county- and sets the stage for Extension's involvement.

Explains why Extension stepped in- the new organization lacked structure, mission, goals and operating procedures.

Response: Describes Extension's unique ability to respond- Stencel's years of experience in organizational and leadership development.

Spells out her specific role and actions in creating the new entity.

Tells who was reached.

Results: Describes significant, compelling results; provides specifics that help the reader understand the value of Extension's effort.

Answers: "So what?" that Extension responded.

Corporation members rated Stencel’s impact on this project as “very high.” She created an organizational structure, giving the group a process and a timetable for completing steps. In the words of one respondent, “She was a big part of helping get it started, and she continues to be a big part of it. She gave us ideas and examples of how we could set this up. We had a blueprint to follow and Bev brought that to us.” From another, “Stencel’s organizational expertise got us up and running more quickly than we’d have been able to do with out her.”

Includes several personal statements drawn from evaluation data showing the value of Extension’s role.

Evaluation: To document Extension’s role in achieving these results, Stencel conducted a modified focus-group interview with all corporation members and phone interviews with five stakeholders. She included specific questions that helped identify the specific role that Extension played in this collaborative effort. Results show the unique and important contribution Extension made.

Evidence: Describes data collection methods (modified focus group and phone interviews); number of respondents and type of questions asked.

Overall: Tells an interesting, compelling story. Concise, easy to read and understand.

Success story example

Family Living

Curriculum for divorcing parents

Situation: In Wisconsin, divorce affects 18,000 children every year. An estimated third of today's children will experience a divorce before age 18. For a child, divorce can mean a new home, new siblings, new school, new relationships, changed economic and social status. Emotions – anger, resentment, grief, sadness – run rampant. In short, divorce turns a child's life upside-down, with ripple effects on families, friends, neighbors, schools and communities. Because divorce creates such chaos, not just within families but communities, a great need exists for teaching tools that model practical how-to coping strategies and appropriate behaviors for parents.

Response: Family Living Educator Joan LeFebvre had worked directly with divorced parents in Vilas County since the early 90s. In an effort to go a step further and reach parent educators, she formed a partnership with UW-Extension Child Development Specialist Dave Riley and Extension educators representing Adams, Forest, Florence, Green, Waupaca and Bayfield counties. Together, they created “Successful Co-Parenting,” a train-the-trainer curriculum that gives participants the materials, experience and approach for helping divorcing families. The four-hour curriculum was specifically designed to fit a state law that recommends four hours of parent education for divorced parents.

In June of 2002, LeFebvre and other educators held a statewide training for professionals who work with divorcing, separated or never-married parents. Altogether, 24 individuals from around the state attended, representing family resource centers, mental health services, Head Start, family court and other agencies. Among other things, the curriculum helps educators show parents how to avoid putting kids in the middle, use specific strategies tailored to children's behavior and adopt a business-like relationship when dealing with children.

Results: LeFebvre and her colleagues created a much-needed tool with practical, ready-to-use resources for educators around the state who work with families struggling with divorce. The new curriculum fits the state's four-hour education recommendation for divorcing parents, making widespread adoption likely.

Feedback from the statewide training was overwhelmingly positive. Overall, 95 percent of the participants said they intend to use the curriculum in their parent education work. Of those, 57 percent said they will definitely use the curriculum, while 38 percent said they will probably use it. One individual said that since she'd never personally gone through a divorce, she didn't think she could teach the curriculum. Taking the training showed her that she could be a capable teacher without having experienced a divorce.

Participants said benefits of taking the training included interacting with others in similar fields, brainstorming ideas, role playing, working through materials and trying out activities.

Successful Co-Parenting is now on UW-Extension's web site, <http://www1.uwex.edu/ces/flp/apps/flrc/intres/index.cfm>, available to family living educators around the state for their own use or in their work with other agencies. This story shows Extension educators working together to build an innovative, well-researched product for social workers, parent educators and others to help families successfully cope with the difficult issues surrounding divorce.

Evidence: All participants completed a post-training questionnaire designed to measure learning and intent to use the curriculum. The results reported above provide evidence of the training's merit. Extension educators plan a follow-up telephone survey in the spring of 2004 to see if participants who say they intend to use the curriculum actually do so. Educators also plan to monitor website "hits" to measure ongoing use of the curriculum.

Example with notes

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Situation: Paints a concise and powerful picture of the problem; a compelling situation for Extension response.

Response: Family Living Educator Joan LeFebvre had worked directly with divorced parents in Vilas County since the early 90s. In an effort to go a step further and reach parent educators, she formed a partnership with UW-Extension Child Development Specialist Dave Riley and Extension educators representing Adams, Forest, Florence, Green, Waupaca and Bayfield counties. Together, they created "Successful Co-Parenting," a train-the-trainer curriculum that gives participants the materials, experience and approach for helping divorcing families. The four-hour curriculum was specifically designed to fit a state law that recommends four hours of parent education for divorced parents.

Response: Describes Extension's unique contributions- LeFebvre's experience, networks, partnership with university researchers- and solution.

Spells out Extension's role in programming.

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Tells who and how many were reached.

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Results: Describes results and who benefits- parent educators around the state. Answers: "So what?" and "Who cares?" Links the curriculum to state recommendation and points out the likelihood of widespread adoption.

new curriculum fits the state's four-hour education recommendation for divorcing parents, making widespread adoption likely.

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Includes quantitative and qualitative data from evaluation to specify and clarify value to participants.

Participants said benefits of taking the training included interacting with others in similar fields, brainstorming ideas, role playing, working through materials and trying out activities.

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Describes the expected potential value of the resource. Elaborates on Extension's value- a network of educators working together.

Evidence: All participants completed a post-training questionnaire designed to measure learning and intent to use the curriculum. The results reported above provide evidence of the training's merit. Extension educators plan a follow-up telephone survey in the spring of 2004 to see if participants who say they intend to use the curriculum actually do so. Educators also plan to monitor website "hits" to measure ongoing use of the curriculum.

Evidence: Describes data collection (post-training questionnaire), number of respondents (all), and the next step (follow-up telephone survey and monitoring website hits).

Overall: Uses active voice and is easy to read and understand.

Success story example

4-H Youth Development

Youth character education

Situation: A survey done during Extension’s 2000-2003 planning cycle showed that Ozaukee County elementary school youth face problems at school including bullying, lack of acceptance and not enough positive activities. Such problems can lead to an unsafe school environment, affecting kids, parents, teachers and, ultimately, the entire community. Good decision-making, communications and problem-solving skills can help kids cope. That’s where UW-Extension came in.

Response: To address the issue, 4-H Youth Development Educator, Kay Buelke Schroeder, first met with the guidance counselor and principal at Kennedy Elementary School. Working together, they created a plan to use a local 4-H group, the 4-H Ambassadors, to teach character education to 44 students in two fourth grade classrooms at Kennedy Elementary. They modified an Iowa Extension curriculum built on Native American values designed to build trust, respect and caring. They called the program the Circle of Courage.

To prepare 4-H members for their role as teachers, Schroeder and Extension Assistant Terri Green worked with the Ambassadors on speaking, presentation and facilitation skills. Fourteen 4-H members, from 6th grade to high school, learned to teach lessons on belonging, mastery, independence and generosity. The Ambassadors stressed getting along with others, making good decisions, accepting differences and independent thinking. They used teamwork activities, role play and facilitated discussions, encouraging fourth graders to express opinions, solve problems and create journals. With adult support, 4-H members taught 12 hour-long lessons at Kennedy Elementary.

Results: Circle of Courage had a tremendous impact – on the 44 fourth-grade students, Kennedy Elementary’s classroom teachers and the young 4-H teachers. This is the first time older youth partnered with adults in developing a curriculum for younger students and subsequently presented the classroom lessons.

A mid-point survey showed that 76 percent of the fourth-grade students more often shared their thoughts and showed concern for others. Eighty-four percent felt they listened to others and made responsible decisions more often. Between the first semester and the end of the second semester, 16 percent more students said they include others more often, and 9 percent more students said they help others more in the classroom.

Teachers also gained. Fourth-grade teachers continue to use the decision-making model and “I message” (“I feel” instead of “You did”) statements taught by 4-H Ambassadors.

As for the 14 Ambassadors, they became more organized, more self-confident and better speakers, according to self-assessments done at the start and end of the program.

Kennedy Elementary's guidance counselor had this to say about the program: "What made Circle of Courage such an excellent program . . . is the emotional connection created between the Ambassadors and students. This was a personally and professionally rewarding experience."

4-H Ambassadors have taught character education at Kennedy Elementary for the past three years. Next year they'll teach at a new elementary school.

Evidence: We used a mix of evaluation methods, including written surveys, self-assessments, class sharing, observation and journaling, to better understand the value of this program for fourth-grade students, teachers and 4-H members. All 44 fourth-grade students completed evaluation surveys at the start, midpoint and end of the project. 4-H Ambassadors completed written assessments of their presentation skills before and after the program, and kept a written record of their progress by answering journal questions, such as "what impact did you have on the students today?" and "what would you have liked to improve about today's program?" Classroom teachers evaluated 4-H members' presentation skills and subject matter after each lesson the Ambassadors taught.

Example with notes

4-H Youth Development

Youth character education

Situation: A survey done during Extension's 2000-2003 planning cycle showed that Ozaukee County elementary school youth face problems at school including bullying, lack of acceptance and not enough positive activities. Such problems can lead to an unsafe school environment, affecting kids, parents, teachers and, ultimately, the entire community. Good decision-making, communications and problem-solving skills can help kids cope. That's where UW-Extension came in.

Situation: Clearly describes the problem, tells how the problem was identified and answers: "Who cares?" References the knowledge base- what such problems can lead to and what can help- and sets the stage for Extension involvement.

Response: To address the issue, 4-H Youth Development Educator, Kay Buelke Schroeder, first met with the guidance counselor and principal at Kennedy Elementary School. Working together, they created a plan to use a local 4-H group, the 4-H Ambassadors, to teach character education to 44 students in two fourth grade classrooms at Kennedy Elementary. They modified an Iowa Extension curriculum built on Native American values designed to build trust, respect and caring. They called the program the Circle of Courage.

Response: Describes Extension's response, partnerships, stakeholders and plan of action.

To prepare 4-H members for their role as teachers, Schroeder and Extension Assistant Terri Green worked with the Ambassadors on speaking, presentation and facilitation skills. Fourteen 4-H members, from 6th grade to high school, learned to teach lessons on belonging, mastery, independence and generosity. The Ambassadors stressed getting along with others, making good decisions, accepting differences and independent thinking. They used teamwork activities, role play and facilitated discussions, encouraging fourth graders to express opinions, solve problems and create journals. With adult support, 4-H members taught 12 hour-long lessons at Kennedy Elementary.

Includes enough detail to clearly define the program: who, what, when, where, and how. Offers concise, critical information about the Circle of Courage.

Tells who and how many participated.

Results: Circle of Courage had a tremendous impact – on the 44 fourth-grade students, Kennedy Elementary's classroom teachers and the young 4-H teachers. This is the first time older youth partnered with adults in developing a curriculum for younger students and subsequently presented the classroom lessons.

Results: Clearly tells who benefited: students, 4-H Ambassadors and teachers. Includes a compelling "first."

Reports how they benefited.

A mid-point survey showed that 76 percent of the fourth-grade students more often shared their thoughts and showed concern for others. Eighty-four percent felt they listened to others and made responsible decisions more often. Between the first semester and the end of the second semester, 16 percent more students said they include others more often, and 9 percent more students said they help others more in the classroom.

Reports results based on evaluations completed by fourth-grade students.

Teachers also gained. Fourth-grade teachers continue to use the decision-making model and “I message” (“I feel” instead of “You did”) statements taught by 4-H Ambassadors.

Reports results based on observation of fourth-grade teachers.

As for the 14 Ambassadors, they became more organized, more self-confident and better speakers, according to self-assessments done at the start and end of the program.

Reports results based on self-assessments completed by 4-H members.

Kennedy Elementary’s guidance counselor had this to say about the program: “What made Circle of Courage such an excellent program . . . is the emotional connection created between the Ambassadors and students. This was a personally and professionally rewarding experience.”

Includes personal testimony to further show program’s value.

4-H Ambassadors have taught character education at Kennedy Elementary for the past three years. Next year they’ll teach at a new elementary school.

Tells Extension’s next step.

Evidence: We used a mix of evaluation methods, including written surveys, self-assessments, class sharing, observation and journaling, to better understand the value of this program for fourth-grade students, teachers and 4-H members. All 44 fourth-grade students completed evaluation surveys at the start, midpoint and end of the project. 4-H Ambassadors completed written assessments of their presentation skills before and after the program, and kept a written record of their progress by answering journal questions, such as “what impact did you have on the students today?” and “what would you have liked to improve about today’s program?” Classroom teachers evaluated 4-H members’ presentation skills and subject matter after each lesson the Ambassadors taught.

Evidence: Points to the mix of methods used to collect data; which method was used for each group, response numbers, and examples of questions asked.

Overall: Easy to read, compelling and concise; topical, short paragraphs

Success story checklist: How good is your success story? Use this checklist to find out. Or ask a colleague or communications specialist to review your story using this checklist.

Title

	Rating scale				Comments
	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	
SITUATION					
a) Clearly describes an important issue or concern - why we should care					
b) Shows that issue or need is appropriate for Extension response					
c) Includes data demonstrating need					
RESPONSE (inputs and outputs)					
a) Spells out Extension's role/contribution					
b) Identifies participants: numbers and demographics of individuals, businesses, and/or communities that were reached					
c) Identifies partnerships, if applicable					
d) Identifies funding sources, if applicable					
RESULTS (outcomes-impact)					
a) Tells who benefited and how					
b) Uses numeric and/or narrative data to describe important outcomes					
c) Answers "So what?" Makes value clear to reader					
d) Links story to research, if appropriate					
e) States future plans based on results					
For multi-year effort					
a) Shows important progress for the reporting period					
b) Links work across years					
EVIDENCE (evaluation)					
a) Describes data collection method					
b) Includes sample (number and how selected)					
c) Provides response rate					
d) Tells when data were collected					
WRITING STYLE					
a) Active voice					
b) Reads like a story					
c) Compelling and significant facts					
d) No jargon or acronyms					
e) Concise, complete sentences					
f) Names/titles, not "this agent"					