

# OUTCOMES VS. IMPACTS

Communicating the results of Extension’s efforts via stories provides context and makes our work more relatable and relevant. Stories create a bridge between our organizational values and the personal values of our audiences – this is how we demonstrate real value.

**In addition to sharing the immediate outcomes of our efforts, Extension stories should illustrate meaningful impacts.** But what are the differences between outcomes and impacts? And why should we focus on impacts?

OUTCOMES	IMPACTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Reflect short- to medium-term results</li> <li>&gt; Quantify changes in learning and actions/behaviors</li> <li>&gt; Doesn’t show future change or potential impact</li> <li>&gt; Answers the question: “What have we done lately?”</li> </ul> <p><b>EXAMPLE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Number of workshop attendees</li> <li>&gt; People shopping at farmers markets</li> <li>&gt; Participants engaging in more physical activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Reflect long-term change (or the potential for meaningful change)</li> <li>&gt; Illustrate shifts in broader societal conditions</li> <li>&gt; Answers the question: “Why should this matter to me?”</li> </ul> <p><b>EXAMPLE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Reductions in obesity</li> <li>&gt; Improvements in climate conditions</li> <li>&gt; Economic growth</li> </ul>

## REPORTING SCENARIO

### OUTCOME

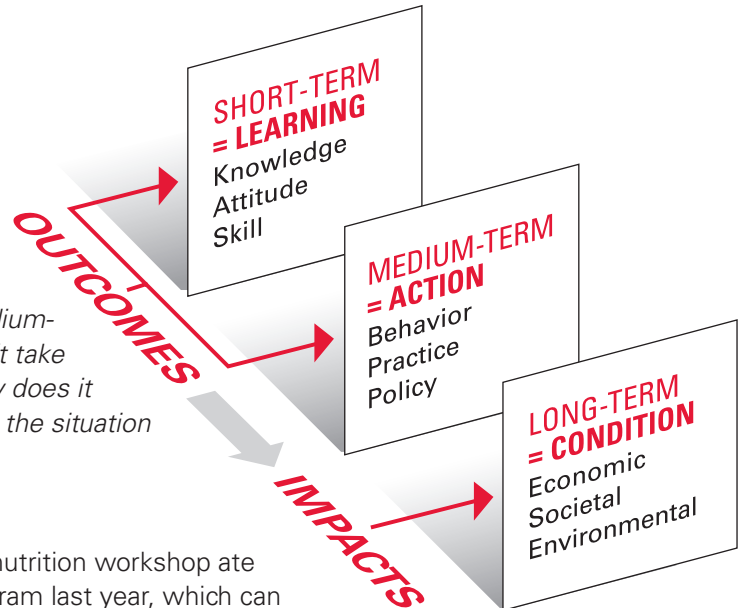
An agent reports that 50 participants of their local nutrition workshop ate more fruits and vegetables after attending the program last year, which is a 17% increase from the prior year.

*This is good info that demonstrates short- and medium-term outcomes (learning and actions), but it doesn’t take the extra step to convey the long-term impact. Why does it matter that they ate more fresh produce? How has the situation improved as a result?*

### IMPACT

An agent reports that 50 participants of their local nutrition workshop ate more fruits and vegetables after attending the program last year, which can help mitigate the state’s 32% adult obesity rate and free up state healthcare dollars to address other timely issues.

Even a 1% decrease in hospital visits in North Carolina (for diseases associated with poor diet and/or lack of exercise) would result in nearly \$24 million in cost savings.



*Note the difference it makes to go beyond the program outcome. Impacts don’t have to be foregone conclusions; they just need to reflect the realistic long-term potential of your work and how it can facilitate positive societal changes.*

Find more storytelling resources at [go.ncsu.edu/Extension-Storytelling](http://go.ncsu.edu/Extension-Storytelling)