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# NIFA Reporting Web Conference

August 9, 2012

INVESTING IN SCIENCE | SECURING OUR FUTURE



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## Katelyn Sellers



Katelyn is the Lead for the State Plan of Work and Annual Report process. She also leads the Multistate Research Fund and will transition into the lead business role for REEport over the next year. Katelyn supports the planning, development, coordination, and delivery of accountability and financial reporting from agency information systems. She is also responsible for conducting business process analyses and implementing related efficiency improvements.

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- E-mail questions to [rwc@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:rwc@nifa.usda.gov)
- E-mail topic suggestions to [rwc@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:rwc@nifa.usda.gov)
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# Today's Topics:

- REEPort Update
  - Beta Testing and Schedule
- POW Outcomes Workshop
  - Entering outcomes into the software
  - What the NIFA NPLs commented on this year
  - How to better distinguish between outputs and outcomes
  - Making sure your outcome tells a story of success

**E-mail questions to [rwc@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:rwc@nifa.usda.gov)**



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# REEport Update

- Beta Testing began August 6<sup>th</sup>!
- 10 Land Grants have volunteered to do the testing.
- They are testing the entire functionality of REEport, including site administration and all modules.

E-mail questions to [rwc@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:rwc@nifa.usda.gov)



# What's Site Administration?

- Setting up a “Site”
  - Adding new users, deleting users
  - Assigning and editing roles for those users
  - Setting workflow permission (i.e. “who gets to submit reports to NIFA”)
  - Setting standard project number prefixes
  - Entering information on signatory authorities



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# What's a "module" in REEPort?

A module is a section in the software that guides you through all the necessary data fields you must enter for a particular report.

The report types (making up 4 modules) are:

**Project Initiation**

**Progress Report**

**Financial Report**

**Final Report**

A fifth module is called "Project Changes," which is the module used for making and submitting changes to an already active project.

**E-mail questions to [rwc@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:rwc@nifa.usda.gov)**



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# Beta Testing in the Modules

- Creating and submitting new formula projects
  - Receiving decisions from NPLs
- Submitting new non-formula projects (real project data is being imported)
- Submitting progress reports and final reports
- Submitting project changes on active projects.

E-mail questions to [rwc@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:rwc@nifa.usda.gov)



# Steps to Full Deployment

- Beta Testing to last at least 30 days
- PARS/IT will implement fixes/changes in 30-60 days; time dependent on amount of fixes needed.
- Training site planned to be opened to all users in the Fall
- Official Production deployment TBD
  - Dependent on USDA-wide data consolidation



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- Reporting Web Conferences
  - <http://nifa.usda.gov/rwc>
- REEport Email box
  - [reeport@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:reeport@nifa.usda.gov)
- REEport Implementation Web Page
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**Note: Using the email [REEport@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:REEport@nifa.usda.gov) will reach all of the above staff and is your best bet for getting you the fastest response!**

**E-mail questions to [rwc@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:rwc@nifa.usda.gov)**



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# Outcomes Writing Workshop

- Entering outcomes into the software
- What the NIFA NPLs commented on this year
- How to better distinguish between outputs and outcomes
- Making sure your outcome tells a story of success



# Entering Outcomes in the Software

- Occurs first in the Plan of Work
  - Those same outcomes are prepopulated in the associated Annual Report.
  - New measures may be added in the AR.
- Done under the “Planned Programs” tab and “State Defined Outcomes” sub-tab.
- Should be entered as single measures, line by line.
  - This applies even if multiple measures support one general “outcome story.”
  - The “outcomes story” is only entered in the AR.

# Entering Outcomes into the Software

## Plan of Work Screenshot:

Notice in the blue box how four separate measures have been entered that are all associated with one particular activity type/outcome story.

This is the BEST way to make sure your measure can be quantitatively captured when you eventually report against it in the AR.

The screenshot shows the Plan of Work software interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links: Home, About POW, Contact Us, REEIS, Log Out, and Back to Portal. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with links: Plan Overview, Merit Review Process, Evaluation of Multis & Joint Activities, Stakeholder Input, Planned Programs, Situation, Assumptions, Inputs, Activity, Outputs, State Defined Outputs, State Defined Outcome (highlighted with a red underline), Ext. Factors, and Evaluation. Below the navigation bars, there are two links: View Outcome Target Measures and Add Outcome Target Measure (highlighted with a red underline). The main content area is titled "Name of the Planned Program. Youth Development". Below this is a section titled "V.(I) State Defined Outcomes" with a question mark icon. The list of outcomes includes:

- Percentage of pre-service teachers and educators who participate in CLL training will self-report a 1 to 3-point increase in confidence/knowledge in teaching MyPyramid concepts and the origins of food. Edit Delete
- As reported by educators, percentage of youth participating in CLL lessons who increased their knowledge of the MyPyramid and making healthy food choices. Edit Delete
- As reported by educators, percentage of youth participating in CLL lessons who made healthy food choices; tried new foods; and made healthier food choices during snacks, lunch, and class parties. Edit Delete
- As reported by educators, percentage of youth participating in CLL lessons who increased their knowledge regarding growing food from plants. Edit Delete
- As reported by educators, percentage of youth gardeners participating in CLL lessons who improve their vegetable consumption. Edit Delete
- Percentage of 4-Hers in grades 6 ? 12 taking the FSQA certification test who self-report improved techniques and practices in livestock record keeping, medications, food product safety, and ethics. Edit Delete
- Percentage of youth who participated in Iowa 4-H STEM programs who self reported an increase in STEM process skills necessary to be successful in STEM courses and careers. Edit Delete
- Percentage of youth from randomly selected 4-H clubs who self-report they demonstrate outstanding communication skills in sending and receiving written, visual, and oral messages after being engaged in 4-H club experiences. Edit Delete
- Percentage of youth from randomly selected 4-H clubs who self-report they demonstrate productive citizenship skills by being fair and trustworthy, identifying community needs, organizing service learning projects, and participating in community issues after being engaged in 4-H club experiences. Edit Delete

# Annual Report Screenshot:

Click “Edit” next to any of the outcome measures in order to report the quantitative and qualitative data you’ve collected.

Note difference (shown by red circles) between measures prepopulated from POW and those added in the AR(you cannot delete the prepopulated ones).

The screenshot shows a web interface for reporting outcome measures. At the top is a navigation bar with links: Home, About POW, Contact Us, REEIS, Log Out, and Back to Portal. Below this is a secondary menu with links: Report Overview, Merit Review Process, Stakeholder Input, Planned Programs (highlighted), Summary, Knowledge Areas, Inputs, Activity, Outputs, State Defined Outputs, State Defined Outcomes (highlighted), Ext. Factors, and Evaluation.

The main content area is titled "IV (F): State Defined Outcome Measures" with a question mark icon. Underneath, it says "Name of the Planned Program." followed by "Iowa Youth Development".

A list of outcome measures follows, each with a description and an "Edit" button:

- Communication: Percentage of youth who participate in a 4-H experience will self-report a 1-point increase in skills or knowledge in the content areas of writing a speech/presentation, delivering a speech/presentation, developing supportive visuals, recognizing and utilizing active listening skills, asking clarifying questions, sharing ideas, communicating non-verbal messages and expressing feelings appropriately. Edit
- Communication: Percentage of youth who participate in a 4-H experience will self-report that they practice effective communication skills in sending and receiving written, visual and oral messages. Edit
- Citizenship: Percentage of youth who participate in a 4-H experience will self report a 1-point increase in skills or knowledge in the content areas of practicing good character, planning and organizing service learning events, and actively engaging in local, state and national issues. Edit
- Citizenship: Percentage of youth who participate in a 4-H experience will self-report that they demonstrate good character traits, service learning, planning and organizational skills, and engagement in community issues. Edit
- Leadership: Percentage of youth who participate in a 4-H experience will self report a 1 point increase in skills or knowledge in the content areas of setting goals, working cooperatively in a team, communication effectively, and making decisions based on data and the opinions of others, honoring individuals differences and handling conflict. Edit
- Leadership: Percentage of youth who participate in a 4-H experience will self report that they demonstrate the ability to influence and support others in a positive manner for a common goal. Edit
- Percentage of pre-service teachers and educators who participate in Connecting Learning and Living (CLL) training will self-report a 1 to 3-point increase in confidence/knowledge in teaching MyPyramid concepts and the origins of food. Edit Delete
- As reported by educators, percentage of youth participating in Connecting Learning and Living (CLL) lessons who increased their knowledge of the MyPyramid and making healthy food choices. Edit Delete

The "Edit" button for the second-to-last measure and the "Edit Delete" button for the last measure are circled in red in the original image. A blue box highlights the last two measures.

# Screenshot of the “Edit” page in the Annual Report:

Notice that the number reported in the “actual” box should correspond to the quantitative measure mentioned in the outcome measure box at the top (i.e. percentage=79).

The issue, what has been done, and results boxes – this is where you tell your outcome story!

Outcome Measures	
As reported by educators, <u>percentage</u> of youth participating in Connecting Learning and Living (CLL)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Not Reporting on this Outcome Measure	
<b>2. Outcome Type</b>	
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Change in Knowledge Outcome Measure	
<input type="radio"/> Change in Action Outcome Measure	
<input type="radio"/> Change in Condition Outcome Measure	
Enter by Quantitative and/or Qualitative Method Below as appropriate	
Quantitative Outcome	
Year	Actual
2011	<input type="text" value="79"/>
Qualitative Outcome or Impact Statement	
<b>Issue (Who cares and Why): (6 to 8 Lines Max)</b>	
Iowa ranks 15th highest in obesity/overweight prevalence and is in the bottom 10% of fruit and vegetable consumption in the United States. Youth ages 8 to 18 sit in front of a screen for an average of 7 hours and 23 minutes each day and prefer being indoors rather than going outdoors. Youth and adults are disconnected with the natural	
<b>What has been done: (6 to 8 Lines Max)</b>	
? 102 teachers and 53 youth educators (155 total) who engaged in 6 hours of CLL nutrition and food origin lessons, and who represent 7,739 youth, completed the annual online survey. ? MyPyramid is used as a starting point within CLL lessons to help educators identify food groups, understand the importance of eating a	
<b>Results: (10 to 12 Lines Max)</b>	
? Educators reported that 60% to 100% of their students (79% average) showed an increase in knowledge about the food they eat and the importance of making healthier food choices	



# What the NIFA NPLs said this year: RE: Outcomes

- The Executive Summary/Overview at the beginning is helpful for pointing us in the right direction. We understand that not every single program will have a great “outcomes story” to report, so point us to the highlights, the programs that did realize great success.
- The “State Defined Outcomes” section in the AR is where we look to find evidence of past performance; a lot of states wrote about “performance” and “results” in the activities sections of their ARs. This makes it more difficult to hone in on success stories.
- There still seems to be confusion between outputs and outcomes; states need to do a better job of distinguishing between them and listing them correctly in their respective sections.
- There were many cases where outcome measures were “technically” correct in that they listed a measurable indicator, provided the quantitative actual data, and gave a qualitative statement BUT the statement did not demonstrate the public value of the funding.



# Let's address those issues one by one...

## 1. Executive Summary:

- This is not where you want to describe outcomes but it should be able to “stand alone” in that a person can read it and say “Ok, they had X number of Programs, 3 of which realized great success in the areas of A, B, and C.”
- The Summary should act like an abstract and highlight some of the most important points/sections the reader will come across in the report; it should not just be an introduction to the LGU and how it operates.



## 2. State Defined Outcomes section vs. Activities box in the Software

- If you enter descriptions of success stories in the activities section, they are liable to be “lost in the shuffle.”
- NIFA realizes that some states do this because the outcomes section is not set up very well in order to report small “tidbits” (1-2 liners) of successes; we are looking into ways that this can be changes.



### 3. Distinguishing Between Outputs & Outcomes

- Think of an output as a **measurable “product”** that results from a certain activity, whereas an outcome is **change** in something.
- An output is tangible – you can see the “product.”
  - Examples: websites, publications, patents, trainees
- Remember, producing outputs *leads* to outcomes.
  - You can train people to be able to educate children on healthy eating, but just having trained them (the output) doesn’t necessarily result in children practicing healthy eating (the outcome).



# Entering Outputs in the Software

Notice how they are all indicated by “number of” instead of a measurable change in something.

Think about how you can “see” the products of those output statements (tangible numbers of things).

Home | About POW | Contact Us | REEIS | Log Out | Back to Portal

Plan Overview | Merit Review Process | Evaluation of Multis & Joint Activities | Stakeholder Input | Planned Programs

Situation | Assumptions | Inputs | Activity | Outputs | State Defined Outputs | State Defined Outcome | Ext. Factors | Evaluation

[Add new Output Measure](#)

**Name of the Planned Program.**  
*Youth Development*

**V.(H) State Defined Outputs** ?

Number of volunteers completing one training per year.	Edit	Delete
Number of children and youth who participate in 4-H Afterschool.	Edit	Delete
Number of local 4-H partnerships initiated or strengthened.	Edit	Delete
Number of new clubs developed using innovative and emerging 4-H club models.	Edit	Delete
Number of 4-H livestock exhibitors certified in Food Safety and Quality Assurance (FSQA).	Edit	Delete
Number of 4-H'ers enrolled in Foods, Nutrition, Physical Health, and Fitness project areas.	Edit	Delete
Number of 4-H?ers enrolled in Science, Engineering, and Technology (SET) project areas.	Edit	Delete
Number of 4-H?ers enrolled in Citizenship, Communication, and Leadership project areas.	Edit	Delete
Number of pre-service teachers and educators trained in Connecting Learning & Living Curricula on connecting youth with MyPyramid concepts and understanding the origins of food.	Edit	Delete
Number of youth reached by educators trained in Connecting Learning & Living Curricula (agriculture, environmental, food, and nutrition emphasis).	Edit	Delete



## 4. Writing Better Qualitative Outcomes = Shows the Public Value

- ***We are essentially asking you to telling a story in 6-10 lines.***
- This is done by filling in the ‘issues’, ‘what has been done’, and ‘results’ text boxes in the AR.
  - If you only entered one measure associated with a particular outcome type and activity (an activity of some sort that resulted in a change in knowledge, action or condition), then you should fill in these boxes as they relate to that one activity/measure.
  - ***BUT, if you entered multiple measures that fall under one activity...***



## Telling your outcome story (cont.)

...then you should create an outcome “story” within the boxes that ties together all of your measures into one “impact” statement.

Note: This does not need to be repeated for every associated measure (although you can if you choose); you can just choose to enter into the boxes for ONE of the associated measures.



# Example

These four outcome measures/indicators are all associated with the same activity; the results of this activity (i.e. the data from the indicators) should be combined to show the public value of the funding of that activity. This only needs to be done once in the “edit” section of one of those measures (although some states do choose to repeat it in all the measures, which is OK).

## Name of the Planned Program.

### Youth Development

#### V.(I) State Defined Outcomes

Percentage of pre-service teachers and educators who participate in CLL training will self-report a 1 to 3-point increase in confidence/knowledge in teaching MyPyramid concepts and the origins of food.	Edit
As reported by educators, percentage of youth participating in CLL lessons who increased their knowledge of the MyPyramid and making healthy food choices.	Edit
As reported by educators, percentage of youth participating in CLL lessons who made healthy food choices; tried new foods; and made healthier food choices during snacks, lunch, and class parties.	Edit
As reported by educators, percentage of youth participating in CLL lessons who increased their knowledge regarding growing food from plants.	Edit
As reported by educators, percentage of youth gardeners participating in CLL lessons who improve their vegetable consumption.	Edit
Percentage of 4-Hers in grades 6 ? 12 taking the FSQA certification test who self-report improved techniques and practices in livestock record keeping, medications, food product safety, and ethics.	Edit
Percentage of youth who participated in Iowa 4-H STEM programs who self reported an increase in STEM process skills necessary to be successful in STEM courses and careers.	Edit
Percentage of youth from randomly selected 4-H clubs who self-report they demonstrate outstanding communication skills in sending and receiving written, visual, and oral messages after being engaged in 4-H club experiences.	Edit
Percentage of youth from randomly selected 4-H clubs who self-report they demonstrate productive citizenship skills by being fair and trustworthy, identifying community needs, organizing service learning projects, and participating in community issues after being engaged in 4-H club experiences.	Edit

# Example

Clicking on the “edit” section for only one measure means you’ll get this screen.

If there are multiple measures all having to do with the same “issue” and “what has been done” then you can/should (if applicable) combine them into one “results” story in the 3<sup>rd</sup> box.

Outcome Measures	
As reported by educators, <u>percentage</u> of youth participating in Connecting Learning and Living (CLL)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Not Reporting on this Outcome Measure	
<b>2. Outcome Type</b>	
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Change in Knowledge Outcome Measure	
<input type="radio"/> Change in Action Outcome Measure	
<input type="radio"/> Change in Condition Outcome Measure	
Enter by Quantitative and/or Qualitative Method Below as appropriate	
Quantitative Outcome	
Year	Actual
2011	<input type="text" value="79"/>
Qualitative Outcome or Impact Statement	
<b>Issue (Who cares and Why): (6 to 8 Lines Max)</b>	
Iowa ranks 15th highest in obesity/overweight prevalence and is in the bottom 10% of fruit and vegetable consumption in the United States. Youth ages 8 to 18 sit in front of a screen for an average of 7 hours and 23 minutes each day and prefer being indoors rather than going outdoors. Youth and adults are disconnected with the natural	
<b>What has been done: (6 to 8 Lines Max)</b>	
? 102 teachers and 53 youth educators (155 total) who engaged in 6 hours of CLL nutrition and food origin lessons, and who represent 7,739 youth, completed the annual online survey. ? MyPyramid is used as a starting point within CLL lessons to help educators identify food groups, understand the importance of eating a	
<b>Results: (10 to 12 Lines Max)</b>	
? Educators reported that 60% to 100% of their students (79% average) showed an increase in knowledge about the food they eat and the importance of making healthier food choices.	



# What do we mean by public value?

- **Ask:** Why is the program important to constituents?
- Example: One outcome measure in this year's AR was the "Percentage of youth increasing knowledge and skills in youth entrepreneurship."
  - In the qualitative description, the state described one teen venture earning \$138.00 selling a product to restaurants.
  - This is great, but may not be significant.
- To illustrate significance, here is a revised example:
  - As a result of the Youth Entrepreneurship Program and teens becoming contributing young adults to society, X teens in the Superior Court Juvenile Program were prevented from incarceration, which saved X dollars in annual cost in the juvenile system.
  - ***This demonstrates public value and highlights for decision makers why funding this initiative is important.***



## When entering outcomes in the POW and AR, ask yourself:

- Are the quantitative outcome measures actually measurable and if they are, do we have the evaluation tools in place to do so?
  - These tools/methodologies should be explained in the “evaluation” section of the AR.
- Do the qualitative descriptions demonstrate impact/public value?
  - Do they describe a clear progression of what the issue was, what was done, and what the results were?
  - **Is there at least ONE sentence that a reader can hone in on and say “THAT is why this funding is important”** (in the “results” box).
- Overall, does the outcome statement itself effectively combine quantitative measures with qualitative description?
  - An impact statement should not just be a listing of data, survey results, outputs, etc.



## When writing the qualitative description:

- Be direct and to the point - NIFA encourages brevity!
- Don't make language overly formal or scientific to the point of being obscure.
  - Remember that we use your outcome statements for many purposes and that they reach many types of audiences, many of whom do NOT have scientific backgrounds!
- *Write your outcome story as if it will need to grab people's attention on the front page of a newspaper; make it clear that THIS story has an IMPACT on people/the community/the state.*



## How to form the best qualitative description:

- Make sure you are describing a clear progression between the three parts of an outcome statement/paragraph:
  1. What was/is the issue problem in your state/region/community, etc.?

Or, if there is not a problem per se, what is the overall topic of the research/extension activities, and why does it matter to the given community?
  2. What was done to address that issue or in relation to the topic of #1?
  3. What changes in knowledge, action(s), or condition(s) occurred as a result of #2 and how does this help the larger community?
- Remember to include specific numbers that capture the positive changes.
  - We love to see figures for percentage increases, dollars saved, dollars earned, value increases, etc.



# Good progression makes for a stronger story/impact.



1. General Topic
2. Specific Action Taken to address the general topic
3. Results of the action are reported in specific quantitative terms and at least one specific qualitative sentence (“This research will have lasting effects on...”) in order to show the public value.



# Example of Lack of Progression/Impact

In one qualitative statement, it was stated:

1. Helping youth become involved in their communities increases perception of self-worth and leads to healthier choices.
2. High school students were taught a class on invasive species and then volunteered to remove invasive species from public parklands.
3. 32 acres of parkland were cleared of invasive species.



## The NPL Commented:

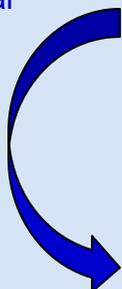
- Although it is commendable that invasive species were removed from 32 acres of parkland, what issue does that address, and what benefit does that have for the parklands and environment?
- There is no connection between the issue, activity, and results. Will the people trained continue to use the information to change something in particular? Is invasive species a problem (economic in nature) in the current area?
- If the *impact* of this work on the environment could be reported, this would be a solid outcome statement.”



# Example of Good Progression/Impact

## Issue:

General



During the past five years, Colorado wheat farmers have planted an average of **20% of their fields to newly released and improved wheat varieties**. This is a faster adoption rate of improved wheat varieties than for growers from comparable states.

Specific  
Related Action



## What has been done:

The Colorado State University (CSU) Extension Wheat Improvement Work Team provided 18% of the total investment in developing and promoting CSU wheat varieties.

## Results:

Report of what  
the Action did  
– here,  
increase in  
income and  
ROI

Plantings of improved wheat varieties increased Colorado farmers' farm gate income by \$12,840,000 in 2012. **Extension's share (18%) of this impact for the Colorado wheat industry is \$2,311,000, or about \$13.70 returned for each \$1.00 invested.**



# Summary on Writing Better Outcomes

- Enter Measures/indicators individually in the POW and report the quantitative data in the AR.
- Where applicable, combine multiple measures to create one strong qualitative statement.
- Qualitative statements should be concise and show progression from the issue, to what was done, to what the results were.
  - At least ONE SENTENCE (in the “results” box) should highlight the **public value** of the activity supported by the funding.



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# Questions?

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# See you in October!

- Next NIFA Reporting Web Conference is scheduled for Thursday, October 11, 2012.
- Topics: Updates on REEport Testing/Implementation and Plan of Work Software Changes
- E-mail topic suggestions for RWC to [rwc@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:rwc@nifa.usda.gov)
- Visit the conference web site at [www.nifa.usda.gov/rwc](http://www.nifa.usda.gov/rwc) for:
  - The recording of this conference
  - The slides from this conference
  - Announcements

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