

What is an  
Extension Story?

# DEFINITION:

Extension stories are intentional, strategic and rooted in our mission to grow North Carolina.

**Our world-leading faculty and exceptional field faculty** — who are at the forefront of innovation and discovery — provide high-tech, high-touch expertise to serve the unique needs of diverse clients.

**Our extensive partnerships with agriculture, business, industry, education and government** create a unique culture of collaboration that increases productivity and fuels economic development.

**Our trusted research-based programs and technical assistance** provide solutions and empower clients to make better-informed decisions.

**Our leadership in experiential education** equips clients to effectively transfer knowledge and skills into practical application.

## Brand Promise

Enrich the lives, land and economies of North Carolinians  
... in short, *we grow North Carolina*

Trusted research-based programs and technical assistance

- ◆ Leadership in experiential education

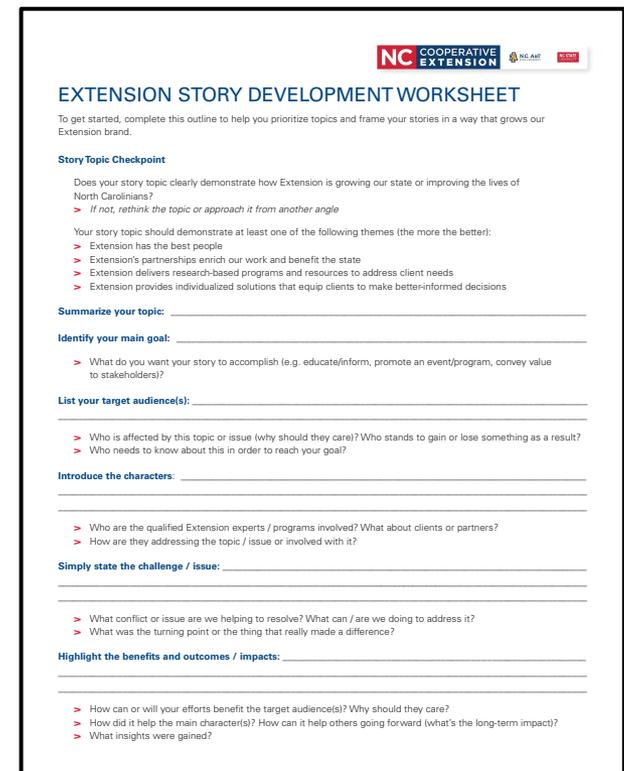
### Brand Personality

- ◆ Innovative
- ◆ Intellectual
- ◆ Purposeful
- ◆ Trusted
- ◆ Caring

# Identifying a Good Extension Story

## Must reinforce our mission to grow North Carolina, always

- Highlight our people (best in the business)
- Convey breadth / value of our partnerships
- Demonstrate trusted, research-based resources and programs
- Emphasize hands-on / experiential education and individualized solutions



The image shows a worksheet titled "EXTENSION STORY DEVELOPMENT WORKSHEET" with the NC Cooperative Extension logo at the top right. The worksheet is designed to help users prioritize topics and frame their stories. It includes several sections with instructions and bullet points:

- Story Topic Checkpoint:** Asks if the story topic clearly demonstrates how Extension is growing the state or improving lives. If not, it suggests rethinking the topic or approach.
- Themes:** Lists themes such as having the best people, enriching work and state through partnerships, delivering research-based programs, and providing individualized solutions.
- Summarize your topic:** A line for a brief summary.
- Identify your main goal:** A line for the main goal, with a prompt: "What do you want your story to accomplish (e.g. educate/inform, promote an event/program, convey value to stakeholders)?"
- List your target audience(s):** A line for the target audience, with prompts: "Who is affected by this topic or issue (why should they care)? Who stands to gain or lose something as a result?" and "Who needs to know about this in order to reach your goal?"
- Introduce the characters:** A line for characters, with prompts: "Who are the qualified Extension experts / programs involved? What about clients or partners?" and "How are they addressing the topic / issue or involved with it?"
- Simply state the challenge / issue:** A line for the challenge, with prompts: "What conflict or issue are we helping to resolve? What can / are we doing to address it?" and "What was the turning point or the thing that really made a difference?"
- Highlight the benefits and outcomes / impacts:** A line for benefits, with prompts: "How can or will your efforts benefit the target audience(s)? Why should they care?", "How did it help the main character(s)? How can it help others going forward (what's the long-term impact)?", and "What insights were gained?"

View Story Worksheet at:  
[go.ncsu.edu/Extension-Storytelling](http://go.ncsu.edu/Extension-Storytelling)

# What Can Stories Do for Extension?

Bring data  
to life  
(make it relatable)

Forge  
emotional  
connections

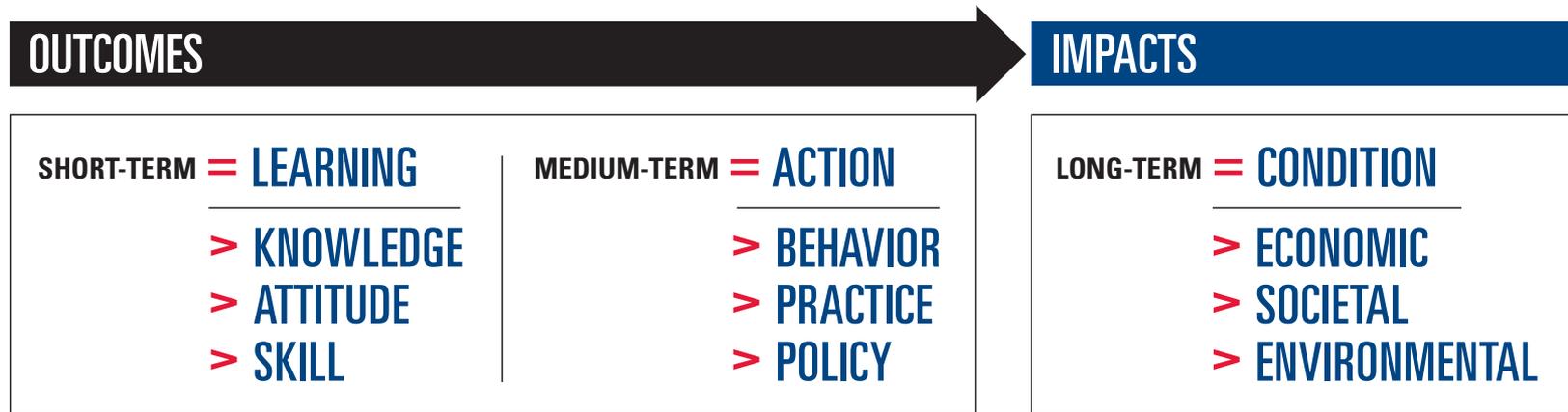
Reinforce key  
information /  
issues

Make what we  
do memorable  
(lasting impression)

Grow the brand

# Understanding Meaningful Impacts

# Outcomes vs. Impacts



Conveying **short/medium-term outcomes** in your stories is important (e.g. number of workshop attendees or people buying from farmers markets), but it does not reflect long-term value and opportunity.

Strive to demonstrate significant **long-term impacts** as well, which illustrate meaningful change or the potential for such change (e.g. economic growth, reductions in obesity or improvements in environmental conditions).

## OUTCOMES

- > Reflect short- to medium-term results
- > Quantify changes in learning and actions/behaviors
- > Doesn't show future change or potential impact
- > Answers the question: "What have we done lately?"

### EXAMPLE

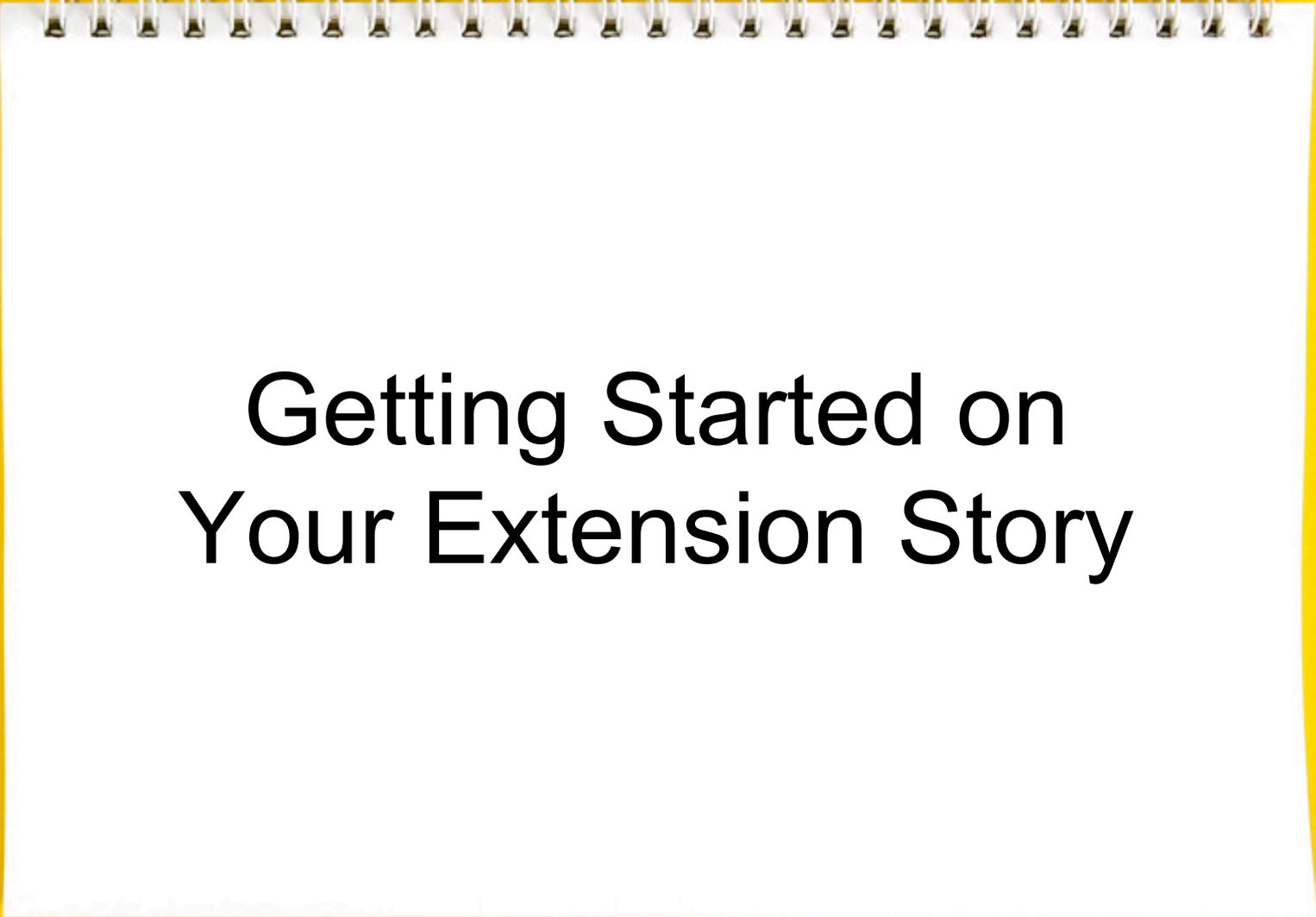
- > Number of workshop attendees
- > People shopping at farmers markets
- > Participants engaging in more physical activity

## IMPACTS

- > Reflect long-term change (or the potential for meaningful change)
- > Illustrate shifts in broader societal conditions
- > Answers the question: "Why should this matter to me?"

### EXAMPLE

- > Reductions in obesity
- > Improvements in climate conditions
- > Economic growth



# Getting Started on Your Extension Story

WHAT IS THE  
**GOAL?**



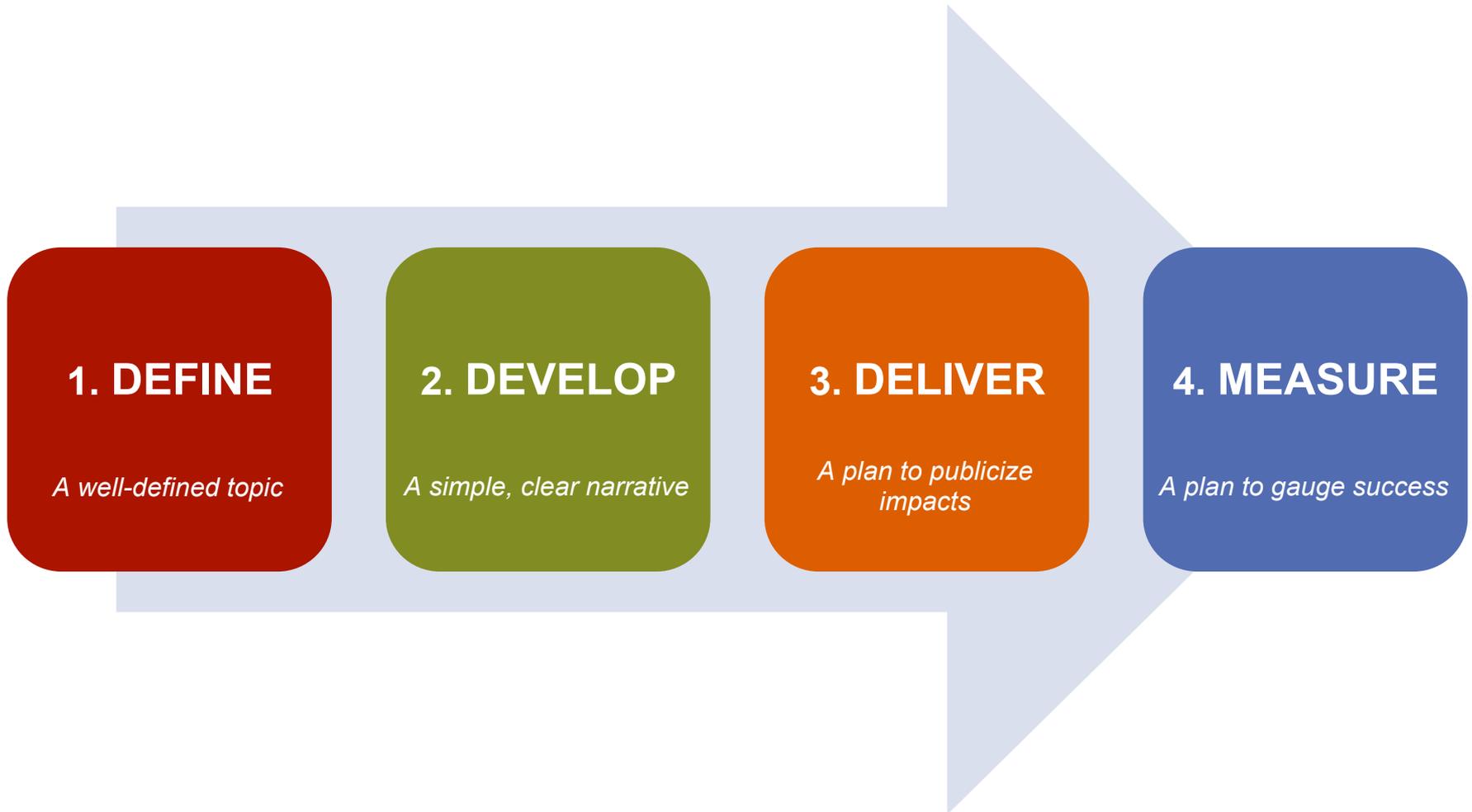
**What are you trying to accomplish?  
What should happen as a result?**

Seeking funding?

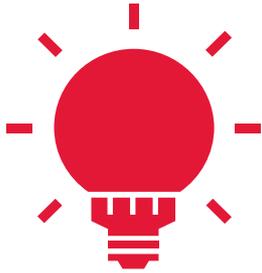
Promoting impacts?

Increasing participation?

# Story Development Steps



# Story Development Steps



## 1 DEFINE A well-defined topic

- > Confirm the story topic
- > Ensure it supports our mission
- > Identify your audience



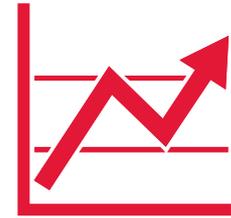
## 2 DEVELOP A clear, simple narrative

- > Filter and frame the story using Extension Story Checklist
- > Introduce the characters, setting and challenge
- > Highlight benefits and impact for target audience



## 3 DELIVER A plan to publicize impacts

- > Select relevant external communication channels  
*Where does your target go for information?*
- > Identify internal communication channels  
*Where should your story be posted internally?*
- > Identify your audience



## 4 MEASURE A plan to gauge success

- > Define your success metrics up front during program planning
- > Compile available data/metrics (based on where you distributed your story)



## **Confirm the story topic**

- Does the topic show how Extension is growing our state and/or improving lives of North Carolinians?
- Do we have a practical, research-based solution or information to offer?

## **Identify your audience**

- Who needs to know about it?
- Who is affected – why should they care?



**Reinforce one or more of these themes –  
use our Story Development Worksheet!**

- Extension has the best people
- Our partnerships enrich our work, benefit N.C.
- Extension is a leader in hands-on education and individualized solutions
- Deliver trusted, research-based resources (equip people to make better-informed decisions)



## **Introduce your characters and setting**

- Who are the Extension experts involved? Clients / partners too?
- How are they involved with the issue?

## **Simply state the challenge**

- What issue are your “characters” working to resolve?
- Why does it matter (what are the implications for audience)?

## **Highlight benefits / impacts for the audience**

- How are / did Extension address issue? Why should audience care?
- Make the outcomes / impacts relatable (what does it mean for their family, community, constituents, etc.)



DEFINE

DEVELOP

**DELIVER**

MEASURE

## **Make a plan to publicize your story**

- \*Where does your target audience go for info (social media, newspaper, radio/TV, community groups)?
- How could this be shared internally? (Newsletters, webpages, reporting systems, etc.)



DEFINE

DEVELOP

DELIVER

**MEASURE**

## Was your story heard?

- Compile available data / metrics (based on where story is shared)
  - Social media channel user analytics (views, likes, shares)
  - Newsletters subscriber figures (open / click rates)
  - Media outlet online ad kits (subscribers, viewers, impressions)
- Determine your success metrics as part of your program plan
  - E.g. If it's a web-based goal, make sure you have Google Analytics
  - If you need staff to “count” something, plan ahead of time

Find more storytelling resources at:

**[go.ncsu.edu/Extension-Storytelling](https://go.ncsu.edu/Extension-Storytelling)**