Recipe for an Effective Success Story

What really decides whether or not a success story is effective is whether or not it meets the information needs of those who receive it and meets the purposes of the authors. What works for one audience and one purpose may be inappropriate for another. With that caveat in mind, the examples below illustrate the key ingredients of a story useful for federal and state reporting.

Example 1

**Title:** Farmland Protection

**Nugget:** Educational and planning efforts to protect viable agricultural lands in collaboration with the Finger Lakes Land Trust have resulted in the protection of 1,100 acres of farmland.

**Issue/Needs:** Statewide and nationally, farmland is being lost to development at a rapid pace. The loss of productive farmland has direct impacts on community character, environmental quality (reduced water quality), increased taxes, and the elimination of any future local food production. Agricultural landowners are not aware of many options available to keep their land in agriculture or how to transfer the farm to the next generation. Without proper planning and knowledge, many farms our split up, sold or subdivided as a way to keep cash flow or keep them viable. Often, farms are lost from one generation to the next as valuable frontage lots are sold and the farm dies from a "thousand cuts".

**Extension Response:** Partnering with the Finger Lakes Land Trust, CCE Yates county educators provided several educational workshops, press releases, direct landowner contacts, and direct mailings on the options available to protect farmland including voluntary and purchased conservation easements.

**Outcomes/Impacts:** A 500 acre farm was protected this year with the purchase of development rights using a grant from the Department of Agriculture and Markets. Two farms are nearing completion of a purchase of development rights project. Several other farms are in the process of completing a voluntary easement project. Several towns have or are incorporating agricultural protection measures in their comprehensive plans or local ag protection program. Educational and planning efforts to protect viable agricultural lands in collaboration with the Finger Lakes Land Trust has resulted in the protection of 1,100 acres of farmland.
Example 2

Title: Fast Foods & Sugary Drinks

Nugget: Youth in after school, summer recreation programs at school wellness fairs and community events gained knowledge about how to make healthier food and drink choices will participating in hands-on activities involving math skills

Issue/Needs: According to a publication from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, "F as in Fat", Obese American children and teenagers today are on track to have poor health throughout their adult lives. Overall, this next generation of Americans could be the first to have shorter, less healthy lives than their parents. The Center for Disease Control can be cited as listing the "...shift in diet toward the increased intake of energy-dense foods that are high in fats and sugars..." as one of the main causes of the childhood obesity epidemic. This epidemic is growing in seriousness and anyone who is concerned about the physical and economic health of our nation is tuned into the subject of childhood obesity.

Extension Response: Over 557 youth, ages 8-15 in an after school program, 3 summer recreation programs, 2 school fairs and a community event compared sugar and fat content in popular drinks and fast foods. The youth used math skills to translate grams of sugar and fat into teaspoons and created a visual by measuring the number of teaspoons in their favorite food and drink choices. Youth then worked to make alternative choices that are lower in sugar and fat and contain more nutrients, such as low-fat milk. Participants also made simple low-fat, low-sugar, high protein, high fiber recipes to sample and take away as examples of healthier choices. Youth involved in this program practiced a variety of life skills including healthy lifestyle choices, decision making, wise use of resources, and self-discipline.

Outcomes/Impacts: 72% of youth gained practical skills reading and interpreting nutrition labels on beverage containers 83% of youth demonstrated improved attitudes around healthy food and drink choices by trying different foods and drinks and 50% of the youth requested seconds of the items they tasted. 48% of the youth expressed surprise, disappointment and disgust over the amount of sugar and fat in their favorite fast foods and sugary drinks. 33% of the youth set goals to decrease the number of sugary drinks they take in each day.

Some Key Ingredients

• Concise, results-focused “Impact Nugget”
• Issue/Need statement conveys importance in specific terms, using local data when available.
• Extension Response clearly describes what CCE contributed, acknowledging collaborators as appropriate. Strongest stories typically cut across multiple activities
• Outcomes/Impacts focus on documented, quantified results and emphasize practice changes whenever possible. If you don’t have results yet, it may be too soon to tell the story.