



## Impact Story Guide

Impact stories are tremendously helpful to show the Walmart Foundation the personal impact 4-H Healthy Habits programming is having on youth participants and teen leaders across the U.S. Our partners don't just want to know 'WHAT' you did, but 'WHY' it mattered. Go beyond an event that was held or a curriculum that was taught to show the true impact that the experience had on an individual or the community.

Below are some examples of impact stories and some things to think about as you are beginning to write your own.

### Example

*This month more than 100 youth attended the Healthy Habits Fun Fest held at Eagleview Middle School. Teen leaders led a variety of workshop sessions on MyPlate, food budgeting and healthy snacks. Attendees left with a variety of recipes they can use to cook healthy meals at home with their families.*

While the details and logistics of the event are important, try to take it a step further and incorporate personal stories of teens and/or youth who took part in the event.

- Were there any challenges that the teen leaders faced in putting together the event? How did they overcome them?
- How are attendees using what they learned?
- Did the event/lesson inspire teens/youth to want to learn more about healthy living?
- Are they sharing what they have learned with other community/family members?

### Identifying Great Impact Stories

#### 1. Listen actively when you engage with 4-H'ers, parents and volunteers

As a 4-H professional, you already do this every day. Thankfully, this is half the battle. The key to turning these frequent interactions into great impact stories is actively listening for details that show that kids are engaged and the programming is making a difference.

#### 2. Think like a reporter

When speaking to kids, parents and volunteers, imagine you're a reporter looking to write a story about your programming. Think of the context of what the programming is trying to achieve: are kids learning to solve problems that affect the local community? Are they learning skills that will be applicable to their lives and careers?

- Look for examples of individual impact: Are there certain kids or teens who seem to be getting a lot out of their experience? How is the program affecting them specifically?



- Take notes and pictures: It's impossible to remember quotes, conversations and details when you're also running a whole 4-H program. That's why it's critical to bring a notepad (or phone or tablet) and take notes as you facilitate programming. Use it to record things like which youth and teens are most engaged. Write down quotes from kids and teens about what they are doing and what it means to them. If possible, bring a camera or smartphone to take photos of the kids in action—and don't forget to write down notes on who's in the photos and what they are doing.
- Be sure any kids/teens you are planning to feature in an impact story fill out this release: <http://4-h.org/media-information-release/>.

### 3. Follow up and get the rest of the story

As you know, 4-H programming often has a lasting impact on youth that grows over time. As you're thinking about writing impact stories, look back through your notes and check in with kids, parents, and volunteers periodically to see whether they are continuing to develop skills or working to solve a community issue. These stories don't need to demonstrate life-changing impact—sometimes a simple anecdote can show how youth carry their 4-H skills and experiences with them.

## Writing Great Stories

Many stories follow a similar pattern called “narrative structure.” When you're writing an impact story, it can be helpful to frame out the story into the elements of a common narrative structure. Doing this will help you organize your thoughts, and keep the story focused, compelling and relevant.

### 1. “The Hook” draws your reader in

Think of your hook as a catchy introduction designed to grab your readers' attention. It should draw people in and make them want to keep reading. For impact story-writing, hooks will usually take the form of an interesting statistic, a quote, an anecdote, a question or a bold statement. There is no secret formula, but it can be helpful to write the hook *after* you write the rest of the story.

### 2. “The Challenge” brings context and meaning to the story

Now that you've gotten your readers' attention with a solid hook, you need them to understand what your story is about and why they should care. In impact story writing, the challenge can take many forms. In profiling a specific youth or group of youths, the challenge will likely introduce who they are and explain the primary issue(s) they were having. Perhaps they were struggling in school, or were uninterested in learning math, or lacking direction in school—whatever it is, you want to explain the issue in detail and why it matters.



3. **“The Turning Point” is the climax of the story**

Now that you’ve set up the challenge and given context for why it matters, it’s time to show how your work and 4-H helped solve the problem. This is where we get to the impact. There are many ways 4-H impacts communities and young people, big and small. We want to tell the whole story. You’ll want to describe how your subject overcame their challenge(s). You want to get as descriptive as you can. Get quotes and anecdotes from your subject, and anyone else who can speak to their transformation or impact (parents, teachers).

4. **“The Ending” brings it all together**

The ending ties everything together and points to the future. You don’t need to prove that you solved the world’s problems. Try to resolve the story as much as you can, but feel free to acknowledge that there is more work to be done.