

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


- ✦ Trusted research-based programs and technical assistance
- ✦ Leadership in experiential education



Brand Personality

- ✦ Innovative
- ✦ Intellectual
- ✦ Purposeful
- ✦ Trusted
- ✦ Caring

Recognizing a Good Extension Story

- Reinforce our mission to grow North Carolina
- Educate and inspire positive change
- Highlight our people (best in the business)
- Emphasize high-tech / high-touch – individualized solutions
- Empowered decision-making
- Deliver research-based solutions to North Carolinians



NC COOPERATIVE EXTENSION  

EXTENSION STORY CHECKLIST: CORE COMPONENTS OF EXTENSION STORIES

Rather than a standard dictionary definition, an Extension story can be identified by the key elements that comprise it. Subject matter, topic, tone, purpose. In particular, pay attention to the "5 Ps"—Purpose, People, Partnerships, Programs and Process—which emphasize our unique value proposition and differentiate us in the market.

This tool is meant as a basic checklist to help you prioritize topics and frame your stories in a way that grows our collective Extension brand identity. When developing your stories - or vetting existing stories - use this checklist to guide you.

You must be able to check the first two boxes for all stories:

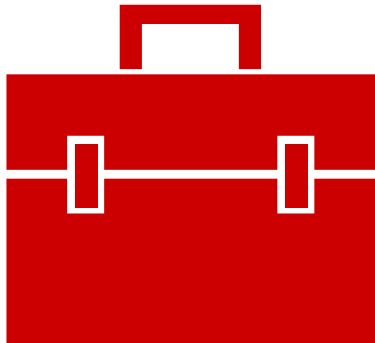
- > PURPOSE—Does this story or topic show how Extension improves the life of North Carolinians and/or grows the state? ☐
- > PURPOSE—Does this story or topic teach others a lesson about how to do something differently or inspire them to make a positive change? ☐

You should be able to check at least one of the next four boxes, but you don't have to check every one (the more the better):

- > PEOPLE—Does this story or topic show how Extension's people provide high-tech, high-touch service to clients and communities in our state? ☐
- > PARTNERSHIPS—Does this story or topic show how Extension's partnerships (local or statewide) position us to benefit the state? ☐
- > PROGRAMS—Does this story or topic show how Extension develops and/or implements programs that deliver university research into the field to address client needs? ☐
- > PROCESS—Does this story or topic show how Extension provides individualized solutions that empower clients and help them make better-informed decisions? ☐

Find more storytelling resources at go.ncsu.edu/Extension-Storytelling

View Story Checklist at:
go.ncsu.edu/Extension-Storytelling



HOW TO BUILD AN EXTENSION STORY

START WITH THE

WHY?



What is your GOAL?

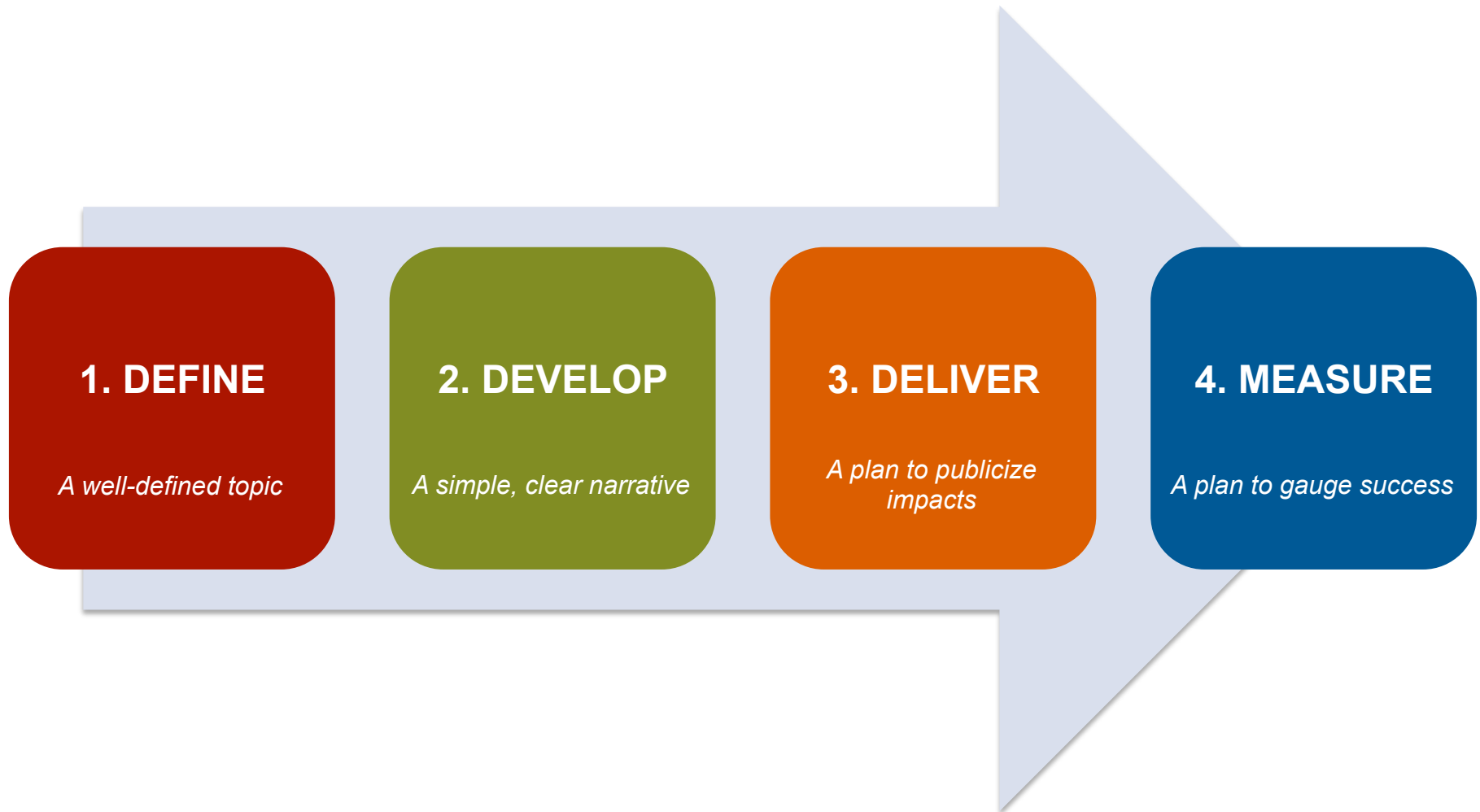
What are you trying to accomplish?

Seeking funding?

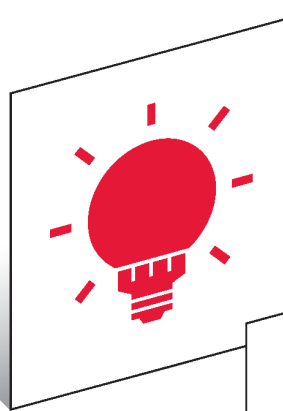
Promoting impacts?

Grow participation?

Story Development Steps



Story Development Handout



1. DEFINE

A well-defined topic

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



2. DEVELOP

A clear, simple narrative

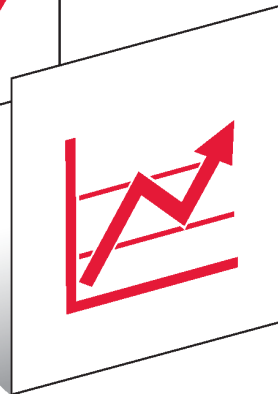
- > Filter and frame the story using Extension Story Checklist
- > Introduce the characters, setting and challenge
- > Highlight benefits and impact for target audience



3. DELIVER

A plan to publicize impacts

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



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)



DEFINE

DEVELOP

DELIVER

MEASURE

Confirm the story topic

- Does the topic show how Extension is growing N.C.?
- Is the topic relevant or timely to North Carolinians?

Identify your audience

- Who needs to know about it? Why should they care?



Use the Story Checklist!

- Best faculty and field personnel in the business
- Partnerships enrich our work and benefit state
- Research-based programs and resources
- Leaders in hands-on / individualized solutions



DEFINE

DEVELOP

DELIVER

MEASURE

Introduce your characters and setting

- Who are the Extension experts involved? Where and when?

Simply state the challenge

- What conflict / issue are your “characters” facing?
- Why does it matter (what are the implications)?

Make the results meaningful to the audience

- How did Extension (characters) address the issue?
- Convey the outcomes / impacts in a way the audience can relate to (what does it mean for their town, constituents, etc.)



DEFINE

DEVELOP

DELIVER

MEASURE

Plan to publicize your story

- Where does your target audience get info?
- What format do the channels require?
- How could this be shared internally?



DEFINE

DEVELOP

DELIVER

MEASURE

Was your story heard?

- Compile available metrics (based on where story was shared)
 - Social media channels user analytics (views, likes, shares)
 - Newsletters subscriber figures and open / click rates
 - Media advertising kits online (subscribers, viewers, impressions)
- Determine success metrics as part of your program plan
 - E.g. For web-based goals, make sure you have Google Analytics
 - If you need staff to help “count” something, plan ahead of time

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