

MU Extension's research connection

Introduction

As a land-grant institution, the University of Missouri (MU) has a distinct mandate to address opportunities and challenges impacting Missourians by the delivery of research-based solutions and economic development opportunities. These solutions and opportunities prepare future professionals and leaders, grow the state's economy, and improve the quality of life and economic viability for all Missourians.

Public and private funding to implement this historical and legislative mandate is becoming increasingly more competitive. At the same time, many funding agencies are requiring investigators to explain the impact of their research on local communities as part of their proposal review criteria. For example, in 2011, the U.S. Congress mandated that any proposed projects submitted for funding to the National Science Foundation (NSF) must be evaluated based upon the following two criteria:

- **Intellectual merit** — the potential for the funded project to advance knowledge
- **Broader impacts** — the potential for the funded project to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes

Although not always called broader impacts by other funding agencies, many are also embracing impact measures in their call for proposals and the evaluation criteria for proposed and funded proposals. In order to support faculty as they develop and submit competitive proposals in this changing environment, MU established the **Broader Impacts Network (BIN)** in 2012. MU Extension's mission to bring research-based solutions to citizens across the state led to a natural partnership between MU Extension and the BIN with the goals of:

- Increasing awareness of and faculty knowledge concerning the changing expectations related to broader impacts;
- Enhancing faculty understanding of the role MU Extension System could play in extending campus research out of the lab and into communities; and

- Developing the national model for the integration of campus research and Extension through Broader Impacts Network support.



Broader Impacts Network role

The Broader Impacts Network assists researchers across the UM System in the development, implementation and evaluation of high-quality broader impacts activities related to their research proposals. The BIN accomplishes this by:

- Providing training — BIN offers seminars and workshops for research faculty on various topics, such as creating a broader impacts plan, developing a NSF CAREER proposal and broader impact assessment;
- Offering one-on-one project technical assistance and consultation; and
- Identifying possible collaborators.

MU Extension role

For over 100 years, MU Extension has developed, delivered and evaluated university research-based educational programming and technical assistance to the people of Missouri. In support of researchers, MU Extension can:

- Gather stakeholder input that inform the need and identify the scope of a research proposal or broader impacts plan.
- Identify the project's target audience - including underrepresented populations and issue-focused populations.
- Find venues to implement broader impacts activities.

- Present findings to the public or special interest groups.
- Design and conduct project/program evaluations.
- Partner with research faculty on research projects.

BIN & MU Extension joint activities and resources

Resources databases: Researchers now have easy access to Extension and MU resources through two searchable databases. The first allows investigators to search for potential broader impacts programs across the state to collaborate with by key word. The second allows investigators to connect with other researchers — both on campus and with MU Extension — by research interest. Both tools are very valuable for new and seasoned faculty alike.

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