

# impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

## Ripple Effects Mapping: Skill building for Extension educators across the state

### AT A GLANCE

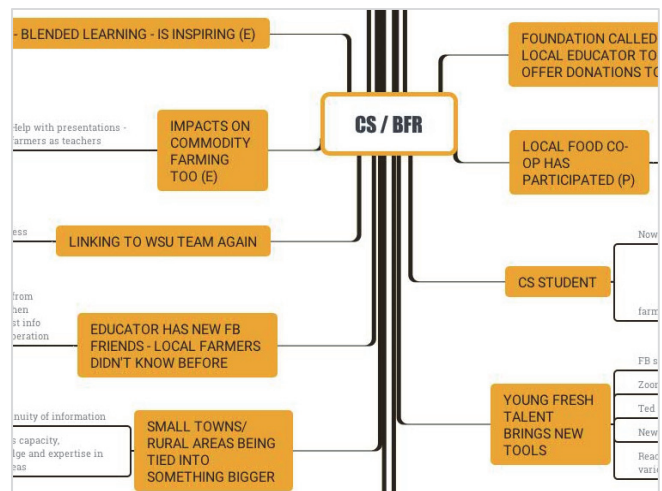
UI Extension educators use Ripple Effects Mapping to evaluate program impacts across Idaho as a way for communities to identify and celebrate their successes.

### The Situation

University of Idaho Extension educators play a critical role in helping communities understand and take action to address their local challenges. Extension provides educational opportunities and leadership, collaborating with community groups to address locally-identified community needs. Extension professionals reside in the communities they serve and are invested in community vibrancy and quality of life. Their efforts often result in meaningful outcomes, helping Idaho people create community development opportunities for positive local impacts.

By partnering with local citizens and organizations, UI Extension helps create and accomplish a thriving, prosperous, healthy Idaho. Celebrating success along the way is critical to maintaining citizen engagement and reporting impacts of Extension projects. Creating and showing community impact is also critical to securing support for Extension programs and locally-driven initiatives.

Outcomes related to community partnerships can be difficult to report and evaluate. Educators are challenged to go beyond head counts of class participants and post-workshop evaluations to validate



A visual of the REM tool captures the intended and unintended outcomes of UI Extension community projects.

the results of their work on projects with community partners.

### Our Response

Ripple Effects Mapping (REM), addresses evaluation challenges utilizing elements of Appreciative Inquiry, mind mapping, and participatory qualitative analysis to engage the public and celebrate local successes. Lorie Higgins (University of Idaho) and Debra Hansen (Washington State University Extension) were instrumental in developing the REM evaluation technique and providing regional and national trainings for others to learn this innovative tool.

UI Extension Educator Melissa Hamilton received a "UI Extension Critical Issues Grant" to host a training

on how to effectively utilize the REM tool to evaluate program impacts. The training was held on the University of Idaho Moscow campus in November 2017. Extension educators and community collaborators who develop and deliver Cultivating Success™ small farms programs and community development programs were invited to attend. Thirteen participants attended. Participants included UI Extension educators, WSU and U of I professors, non-profit board members and an AmeriCorps volunteer. Two surveys were employed to assess Extension educators implementation of the REM technique. The first survey was completed at the workshop and the other was distributed to participants twenty months after the training.

### Program Outcomes

Immediately after the training, the workshop participants indicated that they intended to apply the REM tool to multiple projects including Master Gardeners, 4-H, food coalitions and Cultivating Success™ beginning farmer/rancher programs around the state.

Twenty months after the training, post-surveys were sent to participants of the 2017 Moscow training. Sixty-six percent of the attendees participated in the follow-up survey. Eighty-eight percent of survey participants reported that the training prepared them to implement the REM tool in their communities. Sixty-three percent of respondents reported that they had used REM evaluation with at least one group in their community. Master Gardeners, 4-H leaders, food coalitions, non-profits, community development associations and community review projects engaged with the REM tool.

Trained facilitators that conducted REM reported the tool generated a visual map that engaged community

participants to identify their many “wins and accomplishments.” The result was an increased enthusiasm and energy for community work. Community members were able to identify linkages between projects, programs and community impacts that were not immediately observable without identifying the ripple effects that one activity or action had on another.

The 2017 REM training participants who had not yet conducted a REM evaluation indicated on the post-survey they were likely to conduct a REM in the future.

A total of eight ripple effects maps have been created as a result of the training since 2017. Overall, some educators adopted this technique more readily than others. When implementing a REM, program participants found that it was helpful to have two experienced people available to conduct the process. Not having a second trained facilitator was identified as a barrier to using the technique for some of the trained REM educators.

The predominant challenge for implementation of this technique was community time. Several of the survey responses indicated that it was difficult to ask for two hours of community members time to successfully implement this technique without participants needing to arrive late or leave early.

The power of one ripple is unknown. However, fostering the ability for citizens to create positive ripples in their communities is one of the objectives of the Cooperative Extension System. UI Extension is there to help and evaluate success along the way.

“Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.” — Robert Kennedy 1966

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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