



Evidence of Impact:

Informing Legislators to Improve Decision-Making

Sarah A. Bradford
Valerie K. York
B. Jan Middendorf
Janice R. Cole



Office of Educational Innovation and Evaluation
Kansas State University

Overview

- Our office serves as evaluator of Kan-ed, a statewide broadband network initiative.
- We collect data related to the impact of the network and services on its constituents.
- We increase the value and meaningful use of the data by compiling it into legislative packets for the legislative session, to assist Kan-ed in securing continued state funding.
- We will discuss the methods used and presentation of data to legislators, as well as future plans.

What is Kan-ed?

- A statewide broadband network initiative
 - Created by the Kansas Legislature and administered through the Kansas Board of Regents
- Its purpose is to provide resources and expand the collaboration capabilities of its member institutions:
 - K-12 school districts
 - higher education institutions
 - hospitals
 - libraries
- Currently funded through Kansas Universal Service Fund
 - Each year, Kan-ed must advocate for continued funding by responding to legislator requests and presenting evidence of initiative impact

Our Role

- Collect evidence of network impact
 - Telephone interviews
 - Online surveys
 - Email follow up
- Compile Kan-ed impact data into legislative packets tailored to each legislator
 - Senators and house representatives
 - Presents data only for members in their district

Legislative Packets

Component 1. Data Summary Sheet

- a list of all Kan-ed members in their district
- indications of which members use various Kan-ed resources
- the amount of funding and equipment received by each member from Kan-ed to assist with network connectivity

Legislative Packets

Component 2. Collection of Impact Statements

- quotes taken from members in their district or region about how they use the Kan-ed network and resources
- covers each of the four constituent groups, when possible
- names of individuals and organizations included when permission is granted

Legislative Packets

Component 3. Impact Story

- one-page editorial style article that describes the impact of Kan-ed
- usually related to one specific member from their district or region
- more detailed than impact statements

Future Steps

- Advocacy Packet - a tool-kit
 - get members thinking about advocacy and help them understand why their local advocacy is important
 - present tools for actions any member can take and a boiler plate for emails and other contact
 - provide information members could share with legislators

Future Steps

- Website Feedback Survey
 - Offers a convenient link on the Kan-ed website to provide feedback to Kan-ed
 - Will allow an easy opportunity for any member to provide statements to Kan-ed at any time of day, any time of the year
 - Its availability will be advertised through the Kan-ed listserv

Goals

- To reach out to Kan-ed members as potential and important advocates
- To solicit feedback about network impact
- To increase the quality of evaluation data
 - by motivating members to get involved by providing them with information and specific steps to take to advocate for the network
 - advocacy is more likely if there is a quick and simple guide

Closing Comments

- Evaluators collect impact data for most projects
- Many evaluators work on projects for which project leadership must periodically advocate for continued funding from the state or another source
- This presentation reveals
 - how one office contributes to the advocacy effort
 - how the value and meaningful use of the evaluation is improved by tailoring informational packets to legislators
 - how the quality of impact data can be improved through use of member advocacy packets

Closing Comments

- Policymakers and other decision makers can make better decisions if they have good information.
- The results of evaluation are an important component for understanding project impact and determining program priorities.
- The focus and presentation of information must fit the audience to be successful.
 - brief material
 - Information that describes real outcomes
 - Constituent-based information
 - Personal impact stories

Questions?

