



Outcomes Work Definitions

There are a variety of ways that results-oriented language has been treated. Terms such as “outcome”, “impact”, “goal” and “objective” are sometimes used interchangeably or without precision. Consider what could be achieved if our consistent use of language contributes to shared understanding, collective action and impact!

Outcomes terminology connects our vision for the program to the things we measure in order to understand if we are making progress toward that vision. We can then gauge whether we are making a difference in the lives of our clients. The language used here will appear in the Foundation’s grant materials, and so it is important for grant applicants to understand and utilize the terms consistently.

Impact Statement: *a vision for the best possible end state.*

Your logic model begins with the “**Impact Statement**”. You start by telling us the *vision* for what you want to see happen. The Impact Statement is aspirational and may not be achievable in the near term. If, for example, you were crafting an Impact Statement about community safety, it might read something like:

“Our neighborhood will be free of violent crime -- a place where residents feel safe for themselves and their children”.

This is a statement of the ideal condition to be realized. It may not be completely achievable in the short-term, but it is the vision that is driving your program – the ultimate intent. The Impact Statement should be aligned with your mission and/or vision statement.

Outcome:

A change in behavior, condition or status. There are potentially three levels of outcome measures:

- **Short-term Outcomes** are often related to *learning*. For many programs a first step is to develop changes in awareness, knowledge, attitude, skills and motivations of the target audience. For example, a short-term outcome for an employment program might be for the participants to develop soft skills. You should be able to actually measure skill acquisition, and the number of participants acquiring a baseline skill level.

- **Intermediate Outcomes** measure something that, once short-term outcomes are achieved, becomes *actionable*. Once the employment program participants acquire a sufficient level of skill and knowledge, they are prepared to apply for and potentially obtain employment. Your Intermediate Outcome measures could indicate how many participants have applied for and/or obtained employment. Indicators for a program working with pregnant teens to achieve healthy births might include the frequency of prenatal visits, maintaining proper diet and weight, not smoking or drinking alcohol.
- **Project End (or Long-term) Outcomes** measure what is being realized by the participants because of completion of the Intermediate Outcomes. They reflect a change in condition or status. Following the employment model example, a potential Project End Outcome could be that participants have increased their income and improved the stability of their families. Again, these are *measurable* changes. And, their achievement indicates that you are moving toward the vision you set forth in your Impact Statement.

Outputs: *The activities, services, events or products of your project.*

Outputs are the important things that you do in order to progress toward the Outcome. They are usually more easily measurable than outcomes. Examples of outputs are: Providing counseling sessions for clients; meals served; training or educational sessions conducted; housing provided. An output of a community garden program might be the total weight of fruits and vegetables harvested, toward the result of reducing hunger or improving nutrition in the neighborhood.

Target Population Baseline:

The current condition or performance of your target population.

The baseline characterizes the current status of your clients. Presumably your programs or interventions will result in an improvement over the baseline, or maintain the baseline in the face of threatening environmental conditions. Determining a baseline is critical to doing outcomes work. Without a baseline or having a clear picture of the experiences of your target population it is impossible to measure a program's impact.

Baselines can be expressed both through metrics and narrative. The narrative should describe the aspects of the target population that you are working to change. Metrics provide a specific way to understand the baseline: e.g. *Only 50% of the youths in our target population are on track to graduate on time.*

If you have been managing a program you may already have a data set by which you can set a baseline. Other sources for baseline data include needs assessments, research studies, census information, school performance data, City planning documents, etc. You may also use staff observations about client behavior to inform your baseline.