Outcomes Guide: Tips for applicants

In 2018, nib foundation has taken steps to improve how we work with our grant recipients to measure and report outcomes. Question 6 of our Community Grant application form has been revised to better capture the intended outcomes of the projects we fund.

The purpose of this document is to assist you to prepare an application for nib foundation's Community Grant.

Why measure outcomes?

We understand outcome measurement can be challenging, however we also believe that accurately assessing if a project has achieved its intended results is important for both funders and the organisations delivering programs. The not for profit sector is increasingly shifting focus from only capturing the outputs or deliverables of projects and moving towards also measuring the change experienced by the beneficiaries of community programs.

We believe that introducing a more robust outcome measurement process into our Community Grants will have the following benefits:

- Improving our knowledge of what works, and equally as important, what doesn't work, to inform future practice.
- Assisting with the design of the project and giving focus to how the proposed approach and its deliverables will lead to the achievement of outcomes.
- Identifying clear, tangible, short term outcomes ensures the goals of the project are realistic and achievable given our Community Grants are one-off 12 month grants.
- Giving participants a voice to express if the project has achieved a positive result for them.
- Contributing to project sustainability by giving our partners the opportunity to build evidence of the effectiveness of their program to share with other funders.

Applicant organisations have varying levels of experience in measuring outcomes. For organisations just starting out on an outcome measurement journey, our approach is designed to introduce simple project specific outcomes measurement without requiring a comprehensive Logic Model or Theory of Change. For organisations that already have established outcomes frameworks, this approach should align neatly to the short term outcomes within these frameworks.

What do we mean when we say…?

Outcome Statement: What is the change?

This is the measurable change that you anticipate the funded project will make. This short and simple statement will describe how the beneficiaries will be better off as a result of the project. This is generally an improvement in the knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviours or environment of the people that have been involved in the project.

Outcome Statements may also be referred to as 'short term outcomes' in 'Program Logics' or 'Theory of Change' models.

Data Collection Method: How will you measure the change?

This refers to the way you intend to collect the data which will inform the achievement of the outcome. Think about how you will access the data, the tool you will use and who will be responsible for collecting the data.

Common methods of measuring change in beneficiaries include; pre and post surveys, client feedback surveys, informal interviews, focus groups, existing outcomes measurement tools, and validated survey tools. These are just some of the commonly used approaches; however there may be other methods appropriate to your project that you can tell us about by selecting "Other" in the Data Collection Method options.

Indicator of Success: How much change will be achieved?

This statement is the target. It will depict the amount of change that is intended to be achieved from the project. It will identify the success rate of the project, stating the proportion of beneficiaries that obtain the outcome.

Indicators of Success will use the data collected to report against the outcomes statement.

Tips and Hints:

- **Outcomes not outputs:** It is important to differentiate between outputs and outcomes. Outputs are the activities or milestones your project will deliver or the quantity of delivery to be achieved. This content will be captured in the implementation planning for your project rather than in your outcomes measurement approach. Common outputs include; number of sessions held, number of participants accessing the program, or number of referrals made, and these belong in Q5 Implementation Plan.

- **Choosing the right approach:** The right approach will fit seamlessly with delivery of the project. It will be the right mode and happen at the right time. Think about what works best for your project. A common mistake here is overcomplicating data collection. We do not want outcomes measurement to be onerous.

- **Strategy and insight:** Data is most useful when it provides relevant insights, so think about measures that are important to your organisation's mission and strategy and don't be tempted to select an outcome simply because it's easy to measure.

- **Are there existing tools:** Using established tools which have been tried and tested can increase the validity of your outcomes measurement. It's a good idea to use tools already being implemented by your organisation or sector if they measure the desired outcomes of the project.

- **A combination of collection methods:** Consider the option of using different methods to measure different outcomes. Consider using different methods with different target groups or at different points of time. The combination of methods will reflect what is most suitable to the project you are delivering.

- **Appropriateness:** Data collection methods need to be suitable for the nature and sensitivity of the program. For example, it may be more appropriate for a practitioner to collect outcomes data in an informal interview with a client if there is an existing relationship and the outcomes are of a sensitive nature. Conversely, a project which engages a large number of participants for a less intensive program may deliver a client feedback survey.

Example outcomes measurement approaches

'Project A' context: A water safety agency is delivering learn to swim classes and beach safety workshops for CaLD youth.

Long term goal: Reduce the drowning incidents of CaLD and refugee youth.

Outcome 1:

Outcome Statement	Participating CaLD youth have increased swimming ability
Data Collection Method	Professional Judgement
Indicator of Success	80% of students who are observed to have increased swimming ability by an Aus-Swim Instructor

Outcome 2:

Outcome Statement	Participating CaLD youth have increased understanding about beach safety and the risks of swimming unsupervised
Data Collection Method	Focus groups
Indicator of Success	90% of participating CaLD youth are able to identify beach risks and responses to these risks

'Project B' context:
A youth mental health organisation develops a series of electronic resources and delivers workshops to carers of young people with anxiety.

Long term goal:
Carers understand the importance of self-care and are better equipped to support the young people in their care. The home environment promotes good mental health and assists recovery.

Outcome 1

Outcome Statement	Carers have increased awareness and improved knowledge about anxiety
Data Collection Method	Client feedback surveys
Indicator of Success	75% of participating carers report that the workshops helped them to better recognise and understand the signs and symptoms of anxiety

Outcome 2

Outcome Statement	Carers have an increased ability to communicate safely and effectively about anxiety
Data Collection Method	Pre and post surveys and/or client feedback surveys
Indicator of Success	80% of participating carers reporting feeling more comfortable having difficult conversations with the young people in their care

Outcome 3

Outcome Statement	Carers have an increased application of self-care strategies
Data Collection Method	Client feedback surveys
Indicator of Success	80% of participating carers report an increased use of mindfulness practices or mental health apps to manage stress