



TGKVF Capacity Building- Virtual Training

The Art of Outcomes: Writing one that makes an impact

Tuesday, April 25, 2023 10:00 A.M. to 11:30 A.M. (EST)

Session Description:


You work for an organization that's trying to make an impact; the mission is your why. But when you talk with funders about your outcomes, you have trouble articulating the specific change you are creating. Many of us believe that our work matters. We see it in our communities, and we know our programs make a difference. This 90-minute workshop will explore how to translate this impactful work into compelling- and measurable- outcome statements. We will provide content and opportunities to workshop outcomes from the perspective of a funder. Whether you are an expert or a beginner, you will walk away with at least a few new ideas for crafting compelling outcomes in your work.

Session Objectives:


- Participants can define an outcome
- Participants feel more comfortable assessing outcome statements
- Participants practice a formula for crafting outcome statements
- Participants leave with at least one additional tool to craft outcome statements that make an impact

What is an Outcome?

- A concise statement about an anticipated change in knowledge, attitude, behavior or belief.
- Found in grant application processes, logic models, theory of change statements.
- Commonly associated with a funding or organization planning process.
- Something we want to achieve to improve our world.

1.  A. He will eat.
B. He will sleep.
C. He will shower.

He is hungry.

2.  A. The plants will die.
B. The plants will grow.
C. The plants will not grow.

They water the plants.

Get the Basics: Key Terms, Definitions, Concepts

Need- An identified issue, sourced locally by your organization or through a feedback process, which, when addressed would result in increased happiness, condition, or other for those in the community.

Activities – These are the services provided as part of the project, or the steps taken to implement the project. Activities might include planning meetings, training events, purchases made, community meetings facilitated or something else.

Output- A measure or count of products or services delivered as a result of your program activities. When thinking about potential outputs, consider how many items, trainings, events, materials or organizations were counted as part of the data collection targets for your project.

Outcome -A concise statement about an anticipated change in knowledge, attitude, behavior or belief. When thinking about the potential outcomes for your project, consider how the change will be made and to what/whom it will apply. A list of action verbs for reference is included in this packet of materials.

- changes in timeliness, accuracy, or responsiveness for key administrative projects,
- changes in efficiency, effectiveness, scale or reach for a capacity building project,
- changes in understanding, knowledge, awareness, appreciation for an operational aspect of your organization or program,
- statements that change individual knowledge or behavior.

3 Step Formula

Step #1: Define the Audience. Determine who will experience change as a result of your work. (Students, Parents, Nature Preserve trails, theater goers, Symphony attendees, residents of X neighborhood, service commissions, public agencies, nonprofits in Charleston, etc.)

Step #2: Choose an action word/phrase. State what is being learned, improved, decreased, or developed.

Step #3: Condition Statement. Identify under what condition change will occur and in what amount or timeframe.

Examples:

- 325 of 500 Capital High School students who currently use tobacco products daily **will decrease use by 50%** as a result of attending tobacco education programs offered between September 2024-May 2025.
- 200 out of 300 individuals housed overnight in an emergency shelter in Logan **will experience improved access to employment and social supports** as a result of acquiring their birth certificates.
- A city health department **will expand efficiency and effectiveness of its services to the community** through a community-informed strategic planning process to be completed by June 2024.
- Twenty-five community nonprofits **will increase volunteer hours donated** through development of monthly volunteer recognition programs.

Project Planning Worksheet

1. Describe the Need. What do you want to change? (This is a great place to think about answering the 5 W's – Who, What, When, Where and Why?)

2. Plan Activities to Address the Issue- This is Your Intervention. What activity will facilitate the change and *why do you think so?* (The activities will be the How- and link to the 5 W's above.)

3. Be Sure It is Measurable. How will you see the change when it occurs? What tools (Like an Excel spreadsheet, a weight or measure, a pre and posttest, or an online portal report will help you collect data for your project outcomes?)

4. How will you test or get feedback on your idea- does it have the effect you expected?

5. Document Your Learning Process. How might you improve the project before implementing it fully? Does research exist to help justify that the actions will have an impact? What about observed progress from other communities or in your own organization?

Bloom's Taxonomy Action Verbs

| DEFINITIONS | KNOWLEDGE | COMPREHENSION | APPLICATION | ANALYSIS | SYNTHESIS | EVALUATION |
|---------------------------|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| Bloom's Definition | Remember previously learned information. | Demonstrate an understanding of the facts. | Apply knowledge to actual situations. | Break down objects or ideas into simpler parts and find evidence to support generalizations. | Compile component ideas into a new whole or propose alternative solutions. | Make and defend judgements based on internal evidence or external criteria. |
| Verbs | Arrange Define Describe Duplicate Identify Label List Match Memorize Name Order Outline Recognize Relate Recall Repeat Reproduce Select State | Classify Convert Defend Describe Discuss Distinguish Estimate Explain Express Extend Generalize Give examples Identify Indicate Infer Locate Paraphrase Predict Recognize Rewrite Review Select Summarize Translate | Apply Change Choose Compute Demonstrate Discover Dramatize Employ Illustrate Interpret Manipulate Modify Operate Practice Predict Prepare Produce Relate Schedule Show Sketch Solve Use Write | Analyze Appraise Breakdown Calculate Categorize Compare Contrast Criticize Diagram Differentiate Discriminate Distinguish Examine Experiment Identify Illustrate Infer Model Outline Point out Question Relate Select Separate Subdivide Test | Arrange Assemble Categorize Collect Combine Comply Compose Construct Create Design Develop Devise Explain Formulate Generate Plan Prepare Rearrange Reconstruct Relate Recognize Revise Rewrite Setup Summarize Synthesize Tell Write | Appraise Argue Assess Attach Choose Compare Conclude Contrast Defend Describe Discriminate Estimate Evaluate Explain Judge Justify Interpret Relate Predict Rate Select Summarize Support Value |

More on Bloom's Taxonomy

Benjamin Bloom is an American Educational Psychologist who contributed to the science of learning. The action verb list above is associated with Bloom's Taxonomy, part of an education framework used primarily by teachers but with applications in other fields.

Bloom's taxonomy discusses the conditions necessary for cognitive change. The [Vanderbilt Center for Teaching provides additional resources.](#)



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Outcome Self-Assessment Checklist

| | Yes | No |
|--|-----|----|
| Outcome statement is consistent with other sections of the application or project plan including budget, narrative, activities, etc. | | |
| Outcome statement reflects the primary or major purpose of the request rather than a sub or side part. | | |
| The population counted towards the outcome is the population that received services through the project. | | |
| The Outcome is predictable based on review of the application, budget, activities, and output targets. | | |
| Outcome targets are smaller than or the same, but not larger than, output targets with some exceptions. | | |
| Outcome clearly identifies what will be counted/measured. | | |
| Typically includes actual numbers rather than percentages. In either case, the outcome should describe a measurement that is possible based on the information provided. | | |
| Outcome language is easily understood by stakeholders and external reviewers. It is clearly and simply explained. | | |
| Outcome has a clear, direct connection to broader organization goals and mission. | | |
| Is realistic and cost-effective to measure. | | |
| Describes a change that is valuable for community/recipients. | | |
| Is timely and relevant for the organization and stakeholders. | | |
| Represents a significant change which is valuable for the community served. | | |
| Is likely to be achieved as a result of implementation of the project activities. | | |
| Does not reflect an overall or community-level change that is outside the scope of the project proposed. | | |
| Is realistic and achievable. | | |

Other Notes:

Activity 1: Identifying Outcome Statements

Using the basic definitions provided, decide whether you think the statements below represent outcomes or something else.

| Applicant Statement A. Activity: A task completed as part of the project. B. Output: A count of something (participants, classes, products, etc.) C. Outcome: A concise statement representing change that occurs as a result of the activities and outputs. D. Something not listed here. | A. Activity B. Output C. Outcome D. Other |
|---|--|
| 80% of Smith Middle School students feel prepared for High School. | |
| Five-year outcomes for the project include an increase in enrollment [+200], increased retention rate [to at least 40%], and an increased number of degrees awarded [at least 40 additional degrees per year]. | |
| Prepare teachers to fully implement, with fidelity, curricula upgrades in all schools (Years 1-2). Intensive, continuous professional development for teachers and leaders. Family support focused on removing barriers to attendance. Expansion of proven resources from Communities in Schools to unserved students. | |
| Of the 150 children who participate in the program, VeggieCorps projects that 90 of them will meet the definition of increased health knowledge. This represents 60% of the students who participate. | |
| 220 of 400 (55%) elderly [targeted for a nursing home] receiving 30 hours of assistance, will remain "in their homes at least 4 months after service". | |
| 60 of 100 (60%) members receiving 40 hours of training will pass 1st Responders certification as trainers. | |
| 300 of 500 (60%) saplings planted will be rated as "thriving" by the Salty State Forest Dept. six months after planting | |
| 132 of 220 (60%) tutees [behind 2 grade levels], receiving 30 hours of tutoring, will increase reading skill by 1 grade level | |
| The Fourth World Writers Collective will weave these stories together to document; the environmental degradation caused by climate change, resource extraction and local pollutants; the loss of sovereignty, land and tradition due to colonization; and the socio-cultural and economic inequalities that Salty residents face, first hand. It will be designed to allow audiences to understand these interrelated forces and to help Salty residents advocate for their own future. | |
| 500 Individuals will improve knowledge about use of fresh produce through our cooking classes and produce delivery programs. | |
| This project will help Smith and Salty Senior Services Collective to secure additional funding to serve more seniors in the County. | |
| 250 aged 55+ residents of Salty will attend workforce certification classes over a 10-month period | |
| 75 of 200 aged 55+ residents of Salty who receive workforce certifications will be placed in employment as a result. | |
| 20 nonprofits will improve efficiency of service delivery as a result of capacity building training as measured by a post-test survey. | |



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Activity 2: Assessing Outcome Statements

Instructions: You have joined a group of volunteer reviewers serving with your local community foundation. You are asked to provide feedback on outcome statements and recommendations for funding for a fresh batch of applicants. Applicants will have an opportunity to improve their applications before funding decisions are made. Use the Outcome Self-Assessment Checklist in this packet to prepare your feedback.

| Applicant Submitted Outcome Statement | Reviewer Panel Feedback |
|--|-------------------------|
| A. This project will provide a process and delivery of a final strategic plan in a clear, easily consumed, format. | |
| B. 500 Individuals will improve knowledge about use of fresh produce through our cooking classes and produce delivery programs | |
| C. Educate up to 40 individuals in workshops for improv comedy. It will improve access to this knowledge and training and help generate community-development conversations about shared projects to improve the town. | |
| D. No child is hungry. | |

Activity 3: Drafting Your Outcome Statement

Instructions: Now that you have refreshed your knowledge, and practiced working through examples with your group, it's your turn. This is where the ART and SCIENCE of writing an outcome combine. Use the Outcome Writing Worksheet in this packet to draft or edit a statement about a project or program you are currently working on. If you don't have one in mind, select an example from Activity 1 in this guide that we didn't discuss. Work through the 4 M's – Meaningful, Manageable, Measurable and Mission. Does your outcome statement fit within all four? Is it clear, concise and logical? Practice putting the tools to use now. Then work with your small group to share your outcome statement and get feedback from your peers.



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Answer Key: Identifying Outcome Statements

The statements below occurred in federal, state and private grant applications which were primarily posted on publicly available websites. Identifying information has been changed to protect anonymity. This key is for your consideration and practice only. It is not a recommendation of strong outcomes statements.

| Applicant Statement A. Activity: A task completed as part of the project. B. Output: A count of something (participants, classes, products, etc.) C. Outcome: A concise statement representing change that occurs as a result of the activities and outputs. D. Something not listed here. | A. B. C. D. | Notes |
|--|--|--|
| *80% of Smith Middle School students feel prepared for High School. | C or D | This may be a target, an activity, or an outcome. We can't tell if the amount stated is a change or in which direction. |
| *Five-year outcomes for the project include an increase in enrollment [+200], increased retention rate [to at least 40%], and an increased number of degrees awarded [at least 40 additional degrees per year]. | C | This represents a positive change within a clear timeframe. |
| *Prepare teachers to fully implement, with fidelity, curricula upgrades in all schools (Years 1-2). Intensive, continuous professional development for teachers and leaders. Family support focused on removing barriers to attendance. Expansion of proven resources from Communities in Schools to unserved students. | A | While this list includes great targets, it doesn't articulate a change in knowledge, behavior, or condition. This is a list of activities. |
| Of the 150 children who participate in the program, VeggieCorps projects that 90 of them will meet the definition of increased health knowledge. This represents 60% of the students who participate. | C | This is a change in knowledge for a subset of the children served. |
| *220 of 400 (55%) elderly [targeted for a nursing home] receiving 30 hours of assistance, will remain "in their homes at least 4 months after service". | B and C | This describes the number of elderly who receive assistance (an output) and the condition that must be met in order for the individual to be counted (remain in home 4 months). |
| *60 of 100 (60%) members receiving 40 hours of training will pass 1st Responders certification as trainers. | C | This is an Outcome. It describes a change in condition for individuals. |
| *300 of 500 (60%) saplings planted will be rated as "thriving" by the Salty State Forest Dept. six months after planting | C | This is an Outcome. Saplings planted will be rated as thriving after six months. |
| *132 of 220 (60%) tutees [behind 2 grade levels], receiving 30 hours of tutoring, will increase reading skill by 1 grade level | C | This is an Outcome. We know that the original students were falling behind in reading by 2 grade levels, how much tutoring they receive, and the change (increase by 1 grade) as a result. |
| *The Fourth World Writers Collective will weave these stories together to document; the environmental degradation caused by climate change, resource extraction and local pollutants; the loss of sovereignty, land and tradition due to colonization; and the socio-cultural and economic inequalities that Salty residents face, first hand. It will be designed to allow audiences to understand these interrelated forces and to help Salty residents advocate for their own future. | C | The statement lists learning objectives and the impact that will occur as a result. |
| 500 Individuals will improve knowledge about use of fresh produce through our cooking classes and produce delivery programs. | C | Improved knowledge is an outcome. |
| This project will help Smith and Salty Senior Services Collective to secure additional funding to serve more seniors in the County. | C | Securing additional funding is an outcome. |
| 250 aged 55+ residents of Salty will attend workforce certification classes over a 10-month period | B | This is a count of attendees in classes. This is an Output. |
| 75 of 200 aged 55+ residents of Salty who receive workforce certifications will be placed in employment as a result. | C | This is a change in condition. It represents a medium-term outcome. |
| 20 nonprofits will improve efficiency of service delivery as a result of capacity building training as measured by a post-test survey. | C | This is an outcome. It measures an organization change in efficiency. |

*Found in federal and state applications which received funding.

Examples - Award Transparency Websites (Just a few)

- [National Endowment for the Arts](#)
- [U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary & Secondary Education](#)
- [U.S. Department of Education, Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions Program](#)
- [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development](#)
- [Bureau of Reclamation Grants](#)
- [AmeriCorps Funded Grants](#)
- [U.S. Department of Agriculture Recent Awards](#)

Additional Information & Resources

- Vanderbilt Center for Teaching, <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/>
- University of Wisconsin Extension, <https://logicmodel.extension.wisc.edu/introduction-overview/section-2-more-about-outcomes/2-14-outcome-statements/>
- Foundant Technologies, <https://resources.foundant.com/blog/crafting-unbeatable-outcome-statements-with-a-twist-a-fill-in-the-blanks-model>
- West Virginia Nonprofit Association Principles & Practices, <https://wvnpa.org/content/uploads/principlesandpractices.pdf> (#8: Outcomes & Evaluation)
- West Virginia Grant Resource Centers, <https://wvgrantcenters.com/>