Planning Programs with Outcomes in Mind

Outcome Measurement

This section is organized around the ten terms presented here, taking you through terminology, concepts and examples to help you apply Outcome Measurement inside your own organization.

Each of these concepts is illustrated using an existing community based health promotion initiative as an example: The Broadway Youth Volunteer Program.

Short Term Outcomes
Capturing the potential of Activities and their Outputs.
(page 5 - 10)

Intermediate Outcomes
Achieving desirable changes for people, organizations and communities. *(page 5 -12)*

Outputs
The direct results of your activities.
(page 5 - 8)

Long Term Outcomes
The vision of a preferred future.
(page 5 - 14)

Indicators
How you know you're achieving the results you seek. *(page 5 -17)*

Activities
What you do to create changes *(page 5 - 7)*

Opportunities & Obstacles
What's helping and hindering your project?
(page 5 -15)

Inputs
Resources you need to create results.
(page 5 - 6)

Calibrating your Direction
Reviewing organizational priorities. *(page 5 - 4)*

Outcome Measurement Framework
Putting these Outcome Measurement terms to work.
(page 5 - 19)

Getting Started

How to get started on an Outcome Measurement Framework

Outcome Measurement is a Cyclical Process

"We live life forward and experience it backwards."

– Soren Kierkegaard

It's hard to construct an Outcome Measurement Framework in one sitting. It usually happens over several sessions.

Make the most of the different learning styles in your group; there are always some people who like to think "long range" and "big picture" first (Long Term Outcome), and then work backward to identify the more concrete Activities and Outputs. There will also be people who like to start concretely with Activities and then work toward the big picture. Accommodate both learning styles by moving back and forth along the "logic chain."

1. Brainstorm

Form a group. Brainstorm the things your organization does and why you are doing them. Consider the questions set out under *Calibrating Your Direction* on page 20. Write down all your ideas.

2. Categorize

Try putting the results of your brainstorming exercises into the categories you are familiar with from reading this guide (Tool 5). Some groups like to start with Activities because that is what you experience everyday. Do not dwell here. Get some rough categories down and move on. You will want to nail down your Long Term Outcome as soon as possible, so that as an organization, you know where you are heading.

3. Refine

Refine the information in each category, group activities into sets, check that your Outputs flow into Short Term, Intermediate and Long Term Outcomes, and that all the statements accurately reflect what you are doing and planning to change. List all your Opportunities and Obstacles identified when you first calibrated your direction.

4. Develop Indicators

You probably already have some indicators. Add more. Brainstorm different ways of collecting the information. Then run all the indicators through the checklist on Page 20. Choose the best ones for your organization or your particular project (Tool 6).

We cover all the steps in creating an Outcome Measurement Framework in the following pages. However, if you want a really quick guide, turn to Tool 7 - Outcome Measurement-at-a-Glance.

Theory and Practice are Always Different

There are just too many variables for your organization to control all of them. This is true even when you think you have a sound Framework including realistic, logical flow linking Inputs to Long Term Outcome, accompanying indicators and well anticipated Opportunities and Obstacles. Projects rarely unfold as expected. That's okay. Frameworks should be living documents. They should guide your work, but be adaptable as your experience builds and the context continues to change. The degree to which you can alter your Framework during a project is a something for discussion between you and your funding organization.

Splash & Ripple

An Image of Outcome Measurement

For every project idea there are multitudes of people with ideas of what should be done and what can be changed. When these more diverse points of view are included in the planning process, the project is richer for it. Unfortunately the language of *Outcome Measurement* is often a barrier to participation. This is where images or metaphors can help. Here is one image to help people understand and use Outcome Measurement.

Imagine what happens when a rock is dropped into a pond.

The rock is like a material *Input*, the person holding the rock is like a human resource *Input*. The act of dropping the rock is like an *Activity*. When the rock reaches the water, it creates a *SPLASH*. These are your *Outputs*. The *RIPPLES*, spreading out from the splash are like your *Outcomes*, short, medium and long term. The edge of the pond represents the geographic and population boundaries of your project.

"A picture is worth a thousand words."

- Anonymous

There are six guiding ideas inside this image:

Time

Splashes (Outputs) become Ripples (Outcomes) which move outward over time. The idea is that Outputs are immediate and flow directly from Activities. Short Term Outcomes are closely linked to Outputs. They describe the related "potential" generated by the Activity and its Output. Intermediate Outcomes take the lifetime of your project to show and are at least one step removed from Activities. Long Term Outcomes take longer than the life of your project to show and are many stages removed from Activities.

Sphere of Influence

Splashes cover a smaller area than ripples do. This suggests that an Activity and its Output involve a relatively small number of people, but that just as a splash yields ever widening ripples, the benefits of the Activity and its Output spread beyond the initial group of participants to include other people. It is in this ripples zone that a project generates important social changes.

Control

As splashes become ripples, control diminishes. You have considerable control over Inputs, Activities and even Outputs up to when the splash occurs in the pond, but after that you have less and less control.

Context

The ripples (Outcomes) take their own course, affected by other disturbances in the pond. You can influence the ripples, at least those ripples that are closer to the original splash. To use this influence, you must know how to deal with the other disturbances in the pond, i.e. Opportunities and Obstacles.

At the outer edges of the pond, where the ripples are wide and distant from the splash, your influence has diminished further. Here, at the level of Long Term Outcome, all you can do is contribute to the big picture and the long-range changes you seek.

Learning and Improvement

Every splash and ripple sequence is an experiment. The more you know about the Splash and Ripple effect of your project, the better able you are to add to or alter your Inputs and Activities to yield better results. Using this image: you can drop the rocks in differently, by dropping in bigger rocks, or dropping in fewer or more.

Relationships

There are obvious connections between the dropping of the rock (activity) and the outer ripple (what you are aiming to change). In outcome measurement, these relationships are described in the Outcome Measurement Framework. Read on!

Calibrating your Direction

Reviewing Organizational Priorities

"If you are not sure where you're going, you are liable to end up some place else."

– Robert Mager

Looking Outward

- What is happening in your environment?
- What issues/opportunities most need to be addressed?
- Who will benefit?
- What timeframe is needed to make a difference?
- Who are possible partners/ funders/clients?

Looking Inward

- What is our mission/mandate?
- What are our best skills/ resources?

TIP

In this guide, we refer to "your project," but you can apply Outcome Measurement to an individual job description, a project, a program, a department or your entire organization. You need to decide which scale makes most sense for your organization. Applying it to individual projects makes sense since they are often managed and funded separately.

Before charting Activities, Outputs, Short Term Outcome, Intermediate Outcome and Long Term Outcome statements for a program, it is important to review your program in the context of your organization and community. This involves an "outward" look at the issues and opportunities you could address, and an "inward" look at your organization's mission, skills and resources. Taking time for preparatory thinking speeds up your planning process and sharpens your focus. In doing so, you should be clear about the following:

- The priority issues/opportunities that exist, and those that fall within your organization's mission or mandate and capability, e.g. - you may see that your organization is well-positioned to address community concerns about "street involved youth, sleeping in front of local businesses." The issue is "hot," you have the contacts, and it fits your mandate.

- Spatial/geographic boundaries for the project (if any), such as a municipality, city neighbourhood or region, e.g. - in a project to address "street involved youth, sleeping in front of local businesses," the boundaries might be confined to a particular neighbourhood or business district.

- Population boundaries (if any), such as youth, e.g. - in the same project, the boundaries might be youth with addictions.

- Particular groups (individuals, family and friends, other organizations/institutions) that might have a role to play in the project's Outputs, Short Term Outcomes, Intermediate Outcomes and Long Term Outcome, e.g. - community leaders, youth serving groups, health agencies, community centres.

- The amount of time you need to address your priority issues/opportunity, e.g. - six months to participate in a participatory study of "youth homelessness and addictions in the downtown," two months to engage the public in discussion of findings for a total of eight months.

Our Example

The Broadway Youth Volunteer Program

The Broadway Youth Resources Society's Youth Volunteer Program is a community health project similar to many other SMART Fund supported initiatives. As you read through the guide, you'll find examples of how this project's work would be described using Outcome Measurement language.

Each component is put together at the end in an Outcome Measurement Framework. This is a term you'll see again, which refers to the overall plan.

You'll find the complete Youth Volunteer Program Outcome Measurement Framework at the end of this section.

The Youth Volunteer Program

SITUATION ASSESSMENT
for the Broadway Youth Volunteer Program

Some youth in Vancouver's Mount Pleasant area are at risk of becoming engaged in substance abuse, criminal activity, leaving school early, and the sex trade. In 1996 service providers and youth identified the need for outreach and storefront drop-in services for youth. The program stems from a belief that at-risk youth are best served through programs that are empowering and youth-focused. The BYRC believes that positive outcomes are most likely to be achieved when youth are involved in project design and implementation. However, at risk youth often have unstable lives and their involvement is characterized by high participant turnover. Significant support is required to maintain involvement. The BYRC, in collaboration with its community partners, is well situated to provide this support.

Timeframe: 2005-2008

> **TIP**
>
> Before launching into a listing of activities, outputs and outcomes, determine who is designing and implementing the activities and who is experiencing change as a result of participating in the activities.

Inputs

The Resources You Need to Create Results

Inputs include:

Human Resources

For example: staff, volunteers, consultant time

Material Resources

For example: supplies, room rental, equipment.

This is the stage where you create a list of what you need to carry out the project. Consider, for example:

- **Staffing**: What skill sets? How many staff positions? How many volunteer hours?
- **Office or meeting space**: Size? Location?
- **Equipment**: Computers? Chairs? Tools?
- **Materials**: Stationery? Training text books? Bus tickets?

Having a good understanding of your INPUT requirements helps you to draft a **budget**. Remember that your claims about Outputs and Short, Intermediate and Long Term Outcomes are based on receiving a certain amount of money. If you receive less funding, you will need to modify these anticipated results.

INPUTS
for the Broadway Youth Volunteer Program

Although the BYRC has not yet made a complete list of inputs, they know they will eventually need:

- Full-time Volunteer Program Project Coordinator
- Supervisory support
- Office space and supplies
- Office equipment - computer, desk, chairs, phone, fax
- Transportation
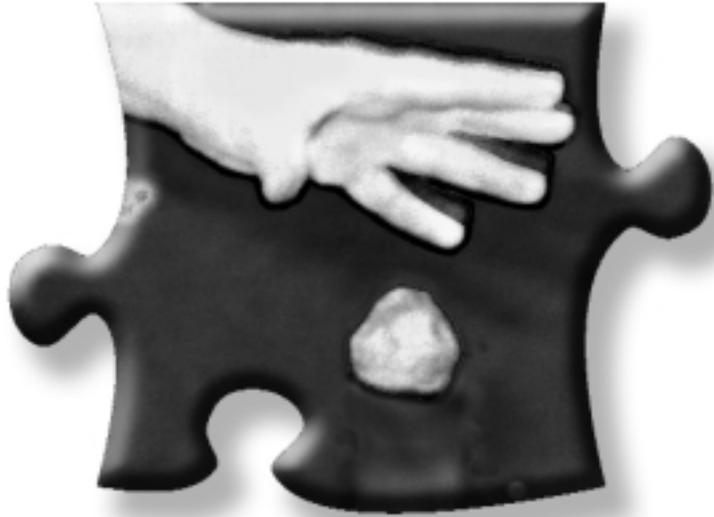
Activities

What you do to create changes

Activities are what you do with your Inputs.

The challenge is to group your list of activities into between five and eight "sets" or "clusters." If you have too many activities listed, it's very difficult to keep track of your progress.

Common headings include:

- Promotion/Public Relations
- Mentoring
- Facilitation
- Education
- Networking
- Awareness Raising
- Advocacy
- Peer Support
- Training
- Resource Design & Development
- Partnership Building

Under these headings, you can write short paragraphs describing what the project is DOING.

ACTIVITIES
for the Broadway Youth Volunteer Program

When BYRC staff did their situation assessment, they talked with other community partners about ways to get youth involved in their community and the centre. The assessment produced the idea to develop the Youth Volunteer Program at the centre and to link youth involved with the program to other community groups. Because this initial work took place before the project, it does not appear under their current Activities.

Here are the Activity sets that the Equity Coalition came up with:

- **Design Volunteer Program and Youth Advisory:** determine needs; identify and design activities, protocols and policies.
- **Engage Community Partners:** identify potential partners; provide information on program, consult on program design.
- **Recruit and Train:** determine needs; determine and develop selection criteria and protocol, develop and implement training program.
- **Coordinate Volunteers:** match them to programs in the Centre and community; support development of materials supervise and monitor.
- **Youth Advisory:** Support and facilitate a process where youth participate in project decision-making.
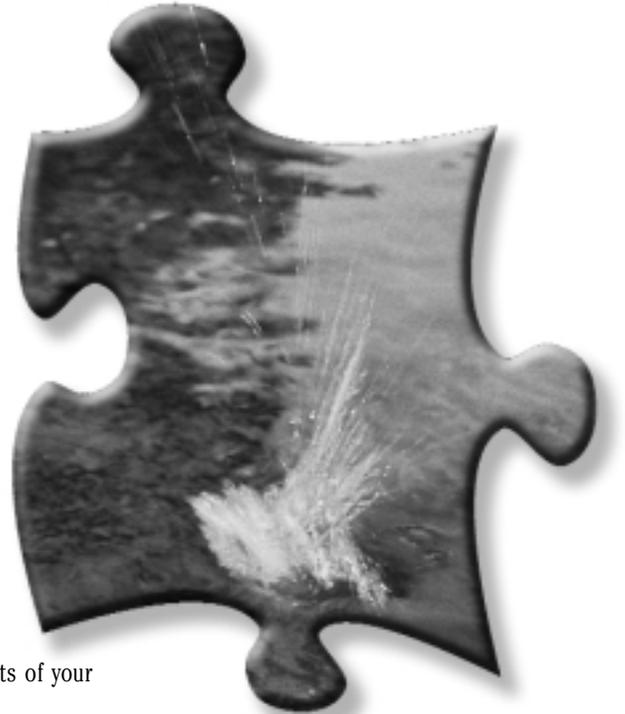

Outputs

The direct results of your activities

Usually each Output relates to one Activity, which is the direct "product" or "deliverable" of that Activity.

Sphere of Influence - limited to the creation of products, usually those that can be counted such as people trained or materials produced.

Time Observable - usually coincides with completion of the Activity.

Degree of Control - a lot.

Output Characteristics

- Outputs are the most immediate results of your project Activities.

- Outputs occur at the completion of each Activity. You have a lot of control over what is produced at this point.

- Each Output relates directly to an Activity, so you should have at least as many Outputs as Activities. Often an Activity has more than one Output.

- An Output illustrates the volume of work done under the Activity.

- An Output is the product of an Activity such as a poster, people contacted, a policy submission, or a training session.

- Outputs are often stated using numbers, such as number of participants or number of materials produced.

- Just as splashes create ever-widening ripples, Outputs create the conditions for Project Outcomes: Short, Intermediate and Long Term.

OUTPUTS
for the Broadway Youth Volunteer Program

The project team has developed the Outputs for each of the activity sets. Notice how they're worded in the active (present) tense. They show potential being created which will be unleashed in the Outcomes.

Activity: Design Volunteer Program and Youth Advisory: determine needs; determine and design activities, protocols and policies

Output: Needs assessment report
Volunteer manual

Activity: Engage Community Partners identify potential partners; provide information on program; consult on program design

Output: 10 community partners
Program Plan

Activity: Recruit and Train: determine needs; determine and develop selection criteria and protocol; develop and implement training program.

Output: Number and type of participants trained
Number of trainings held

Activity: Coordinate volunteers: match them to programs in the BYRC and community; support development of materials; supervise and monitor.

Output: Number and type of participants who are matched
Number of programs in which volunteers participate

Activity: Youth Advisory: Support and facilitate a process through which youth participate in project decision-making.

Output: Number of youth who participate in decision-making process
Number and type of decisions and actions taken by volunteers

Outcomes

Outcomes are the changes in individuals and groups that your project will bring about or influence if the planned activities are undertaken in the proposed way. Unlike objectives that describe what you want to achieve, a good outcome describes:

- Who changed, i.e. the individuals or groups
- What change has occurred for those individuals or groups
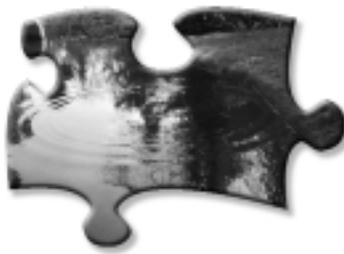
An outcome statement should describe a changed state that can be measured and identify a particular point of change. For example: Program participants have the right set of skills and knowledge to train other young people on how to deal with racism incidents. It is important to have clearly crafted outcome statements so that you have a foundation for measuring the change when monitoring or evaluating.

There are three levels of outcomes:

- Short-term
- Intermediate
- Long-term

What we can see in a more detailed examination of each outcome level is that they are linked to each other and follow from the activities and outputs. If any part of the chain is not properly linked, the chances of reaching the intermediate outcomes are diminished. And the chances of achieving the long-term change are arguably very low indeed.

TIP

One way to envision an outcome statement is to imagine what the situation was for a particular group before the activity was carried out, and the situation you expect to exist after the activity has taken place. The new situation flows from the combination of activities and outputs. A description of the particular group in the new situation is your outcome statement.

Short Term Outcomes

Capturing the potential for qualitative change that is created through Activities and their Outputs

Short Term Outcomes are the fraternal twins of Outputs. Where the Output describes the product of an Activity, the Short Term Outcome describes the potential created by the product. There are as many Short Term Outcomes as there are Activity-Output combinations.

Sphere of Influence – remains limited to immediate change among those participating in the Activity or using the product.

When Observable – within the timeframe of the project following the completion of the Activity.

Degree of Control – less than Outputs but more than Intermediate Outcomes.

Characteristics of Short Term Outcomes

- Short Term Outcomes may describe an immediate benefit among those people directly participating in an Activity, (e.g. the knowledge or ideas that participants take away from the session).

- Short Term Outcomes may describe how people use a product to create the key changes sought by the Project (e.g. taking the details for an upcoming meeting from an eye catching poster and subsequently attending the event).

- Each Short Term Outcome relates directly to an Activity and its Output(s).

- Short Term Outcomes capture the "potential" for continued change created through Activities and their Outputs.

Short Term Outcomes are the first "ripples" of a project Activity. Often, Short Term Outcomes describe the potential for participants to know or do something different following an Activity. Sometimes they describe what users of a product or audiences of a message do or know, that they did not do or know before the Activity. Here are some SMART Fund examples:

SMART Fund Example:

1. In Peer Support Groups: The youth who participated in a workshop on communication now have the knowledge needed to practice new behavior when they return home. This is the Short Term Outcome. The conditions have been set. Whether the individual is able to apply this knowledge when she/he returns home is less certain, but very important to the success of the project. Application of the knowledge, ie., new behavior, is the Intermediate Outcome.

2. In a Coalition to Address Isolation Amongst Seniors: The seniors and community agencies participating in the meetings to form a coalition develop a shared understanding of the issues, current services, and gaps that might exist. This is a short-term outcome. There is a change in awareness that is the foundation for working together as a coalition.

3. Consumer Newsletter: Members of Mental Health Consumer Group identify and describe their experience with living and working in the community and begin to recognize what experiences might be useful to others. This is an important short-term outcome. Confidence in their own experience is the beginning stage of empowerment and self-advocacy.

4. Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT) Diversity Training: Community groups receive clear and concise information about training that will help them understand and combat homophobia. This awareness is a change - or a Short Term Outcome - that leads to a commitment to supporting the program in their agency.

SHORT TERM OUTCOMES
for the Broadway Youth Volunteer Program

The BYRC has identified four Short Term Outcomes that flow from the Outputs of the project:

- Volunteer and Youth Advisory Programs are designed as empowering & youth focused.
- Youth participants have new knowledge, skills and confidence to support other youth seeking program resources.
- A core of competent volunteers is deployed to support BYRC programs and gain further personal development.
- Youth gain knowledge, skills and experience in negotiating, consensus building and recognizing Obstacles in relation to decision-making.

Intermediate Outcomes

Achieving desirable changes for people, organizations and communities

Intermediate Outcomes are more than one step removed from Activities, are fewer in number (usually two to four), and flow from the unleashing of the potential contained in a combination of several Short Term Outcomes.

Sphere of Influence -
Expanding into wider settings.

When Observable -
Should be observable at or shortly after the end of the project.

Degree of Control -
Much less than with Outputs and Short Term Outcomes, but still direct influence.

TIP

Many of us have been trained to write goal and objective statements in a way that describes what is to be done. "...to inform local media about issues facing visible minorities in Anytown and assist them to cover these issues in a more culturally sensitive way." An outcome statement describes what is different, what has changed as a result of your Activities: "Local media outlets frame stories with greater sensitivity and make use of locally available contact people."

Characteristics of Intermediate Outcomes

• Each Intermediate Outcome flows naturally from several of the Short Term Outcomes, so there will be fewer Intermediate Outcomes than Short Term Outcomes.

• Intermediate Outcomes point to the key changes that directly relate to your project. These are changes you think your project can create.

• Each change represents the unleashing of the potential created by your Activities and their Outputs and Short Term Outcomes.

Intermediate Outcomes relate to the individuals who directly participate in activities, but like ripples in a pond, they go beyond those individuals to include: the families, friends, or community contacts of those individuals.

Intermediate Outcomes often take more time to see but should be achievable within the life of your project.

You do not have full control over Intermediate Outcomes because they are at least one step removed from your Activities and can be easily influenced by outside influences. But it is still very important to manage your project to achieve intermediate outcomes because these are concrete changes you are trying to bring about through your work.

SMART Fund Examples:

In peer support projects, Intermediate Outcomes may relate to what individual clients actually do with the problem solving support they receive (the Activity and its Output/Short Term Outcome).

They may also relate to desired changes in relations between the individual and their family or colleagues. If you add up these individual Outcomes, you can demonstrate your project's coverage within a particular community or target group.

In coalition projects, Intermediate Outcomes may relate to the way in which individual organizations work more effectively, how they work with their peer organization more collaboratively, or how they influence decision-makers more convincingly.

In projects designed to increase self-advocacy capacity, you might be looking for Intermediate Outcomes like: more people actively involved, better connections to local services and supports, or innovative group initiatives. By working together, different groups in a community achieve better connections affecting the way people support each other and access preventative health services.

In projects designed to raise awareness, Intermediate Outcomes may relate to: what individual project participants do differently in their lives with the knowledge, tools, or strategies gained in training activities; or expected changes in those who surround the participants, like their peers and managers. You might be looking for changes in policies or in service delivery, or for something less concrete but equally important like a more inclusive and welcoming work environment.

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES
for the Broadway Youth Volunteer Program

Here are three Intermediate Outcomes the Youth Volunteer Program has identified. You can see that they don't exactly match the number of Short Term Outcomes, in the way that Short Term Outcomes match up with Outputs and Activities. Instead, there are three Intermediate Outcomes flowing from five Short Term Outcomes.

Two things to notice

- The potential created through Activities, their Outputs and Short Term Outcomes is unfolding into desirable and achievable changes
- Like ripples, the benefits generated through Activities, their Outputs and Short Term Outcomes are spreading outward to involve others

Sample Intermediate Outcomes

1. Personal Growth – Youth integrate the knowledge and skills learned through their volunteer activities into their daily lives, making informed and healthy lifestyle decisions.

2. Organizational Approach – The BYRC routinely engages young people in design, implementation, and evaluation of centre programming.

3. Youth in Community – Youth employ their new knowledge and skills volunteering within their community.

Long Term Outcome

Toward longer term change

This is the goal or vision that your project is aiming for. This goal or vision describes the bigger picture and longer term changes.

Sphere of Influence -
expanding into yet wider settings.

When Observable –
beyond the lifetime of your project.

Degree of Control –
very little, only indirect influence.

Characteristics of Long Term Outcomes

- The Long Term Outcome is your vision of a preferred future. It underlines why the project is important to the broader community.

- Aim for one statement that describes this preferred future.

The Long Term Outcome is like the more distant, outer ripples of a splash that take time to appear. Long Term Outcomes tend to affect a wide audience.

As a project's influence lessens – as the ripples become more distant – the project encounters more and more influences or ripples from other sources. Together they create a dynamic to which the project contributes but does not control.

SMART Fund Example:

Community members experience improved health and well being through stronger connections with their community.

LONG TERM OUTCOME
for the Broadway Youth Volunteer Program

At risk youth in Mount Pleasant use and benefit from health services designed and implemented in a way that meets their specific needs.

Opportunities & Obstacles

What's helping and hindering your project?

These forces can be found affecting every part of your project: Inputs, Activities, Outputs, Outcomes and Long Term Outcome.

They can be found at every scale: family, community, national and international, and inside and outside your organization.

They can be generated by: humans or by forces of nature (e.g. the weather).

The more you know about these influences, the better prepared you are to manage them by doing Activities differently.

You may use the positive Opportunities to increase the effect of the changes you bring about. For example: Your Mayor is a "champion" for multiculturalism; invite her to chair a task force on building diversity in the City's administration and moderate a panel at a regional diversity forum for civic administrators.

You may be able to revise your plans to minimize the effect of the negative Obstacles. For example: You may change workshop dates to avoid religious holidays.

EXAMPLE

from the BYRC

Opportunities:

- BYRC is involved in a network of community agencies that are prepared to support youth volunteer involvement in their agency.

Obstacles:

- The provincial government department responsible for youth services has been eliminated and programs cut.

List the Opportunities and Obstacles, then decide if you can modify your Framework to maximize the effect of the Opportunities and minimize the effect of the Obstacles. You may find that some of them are too big for you to influence.

Opportunities & Obstacles

Assumptions and Risks – the Necessary Conditions for Success

Sometimes the opportunities and risks present themselves on such a large scale that you have little or no control over them. Knowing this, you may need to make some assumptions on which the project's success is based.

They are the conditions that need to be in place for your project to have the intended results. For example: The school board allocates resources to support its commitment to English as a second language learning.

Risk refers to the probability that the necessary conditions will not be in place.

Add a short explanation of the risk, which can be stated as high, medium or low.

Assessing risk involves bringing together your best collective understanding of the project and its context. Occasionally with large, complex projects, funding bodies may require a more formal risk analysis. Once risk is assessed, it is important to review your activity plan once again to ensure you have strategies in place to manage the risk where possible.

ASSUMPTIONS
for the Broadway Youth Volunteer Program

- BYRC is able to respond to the changes suggested by the Youth Advisory Committee.
  Risk: Low

- The characteristics of youth in Mount Pleasant area do not change dramatically during the life of the project.
  Risk: Medium

- Community groups see net advantage of investing time in supporting youth volunteers in their agencies.
  Risk: Medium

Indicators

How you know you're achieving the results you seek

Indicators point to the information that you need to gather to know if the project is making a difference. They represent the most meaningful identifiers of changes made. Writing meaningful indicator statements is very challenging.
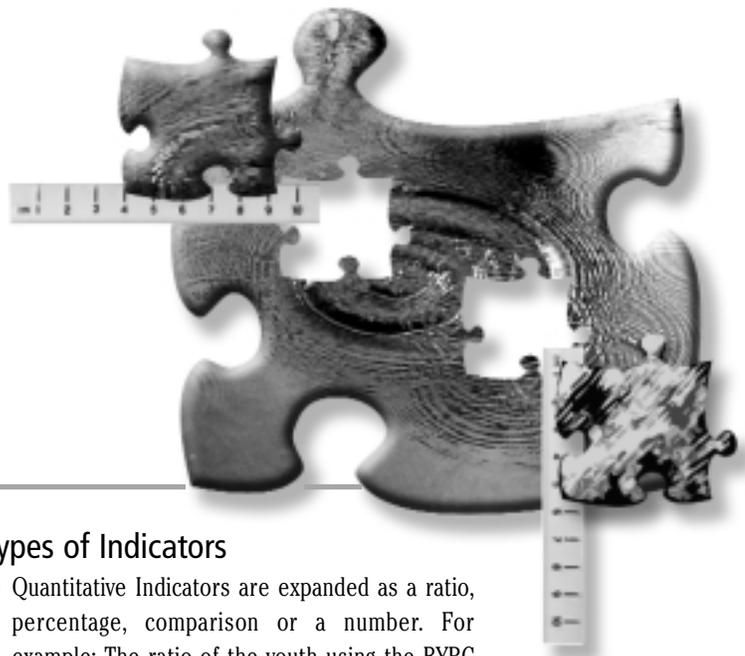
Characteristics

- They should be identified for Short, Intermediate and Long Term Outcomes
- Output statements are often expressed as indicators
- Each indicator must be finely tuned to ensure that it best measures the specific Output or Outcome statement
- Both qualitative and quantitative indicators should be used so that you capture the richness of the experience
- Each should provide information that helps the project improve
- Each must be cost-effective to use
- Look for only 1-2 indicators for each outcome in smaller projects, 3-4 indicators in larger projects

It's like an Airplane Cockpit…

Imagine the dials and displays inside the cockpit of an airplane. These provide important information to pilots about the performance of the plane, including: its position in relation to its destination, wind speed, altitude and fuel level. Without these indicators, pilots have very little to guide them on their journey. Pilots do not use all the dials at once, and sometimes it takes a combination of dials and displays to give them all the information they need at a specific point in time. For pilots and project managers alike, indicators are important for navigation.

Putting indicators to work, requires a variety of information gathering tools. Tools are discussed under "Measuring Change" on Page 26.

Types of Indicators

- Quantitative Indicators are expanded as a ratio, percentage, comparison or a number. For example: The ratio of the youth using the BYRC who participate in the Volunteer Program.
- Qualitative Indicators describe a change or a comparison between two states or situations. For example: Changes in perceived levels of self-confidence among youth involved in volunteering.
- Target indicators includes a level that you are aiming to achieve. For example: 20% of trained volunteers offer their time to support other community-based initiatives.
- Neutral Indicators simply names the information necessary to show progress. For example, a neutral indicator may read as: proportion of trained volunteers who offer their time to support other community-based initiatives.
- Directional indicate that the level will go up or down. Example: the percentage of volunteers who offer their time and support. Other community based indicators will increase.

Using Indicators

For each indicator you must be able to determine:

- Where you will get the information;
- What method you will use;
- Who will gather it;
- When will it be gathered.

This information provides the basis for Measuring Change (page 22).

Indicators

How you know you're achieving
the results you seek

INDICATORS
for the Broadway Youth Volunteer Program

Staff and volunteers have developed quite a few indicators, both qualitative and quantitative, to measure Outputs, Short Term Outcomes, Intermediate Outcomes and Long Term Outcomes. There are too many to list here but they are listed in the information Gathering Plan Appendix 2. The Team chose which indicators were best for their organization using the following "Indicator Test."

Indicator Test

You could use a very large number of indicators to gather information, some of which would require hiring more staff just to collect and summarize the data. It is better not to go overboard, only choose the indicators that provide the most meaningful information. Indicators should be cost-effective, accurate, and useful to your organization.

Generate a list of candidate indicators for your Output and Outcome statement(s). Use this checklist to help you decide which of these indicators work best.

For each indicator statement, ask...

Number each statement you wish to test, then for each question post the number at the appropriate place on the line.

1. Accuracy - Does it measure the result?

2. Is it cost-effective to collect the information?

3. Can information be gathered without invading privacy?

4. Does the information help project managers understand how the project is affecting men and women, and/or specific groups of people differently?

5. Does it give useful information with which to make management decisions?

6. Will the information communicate well to stakeholders – including funding bodies?

YES	NO
YES	NO
YES	NO
YES	NO
YES	NO
YES	NO

As you test your selected indicators with these questions you may realize that you can:

a) Improve your indicator - make it clearer to understand, or more specific to the Output or Outcome you want to measure;

b) Improve your Output, Short Term, Intermediate or Long Term Outcome statements.

Feel free to do either. Even then, you may not have the best possible indicator. Look for improvements over time as you put them into practice.

Outcome Measurement Framework

Putting Outcome Measurement to work

We have introduced the key terms of Outcome Measurement. These help to identify actions and desired results, and to decide how to measure progress toward those results. You have now essentially completed an Outcome Measurement Framework.

What Can You Do with this Framework?

This framework can now be an active, living tool to be used on a day to day basis. Here are some ways we think it can be used. In time you will find other ways to use the framework in your own practice.

Communicate Intent

Use your Framework to plan or clarify the project internally, as well as explain your project idea to potential sponsors. A Framework can provide a powerful summary of:
- What you intend to DO
- What you intend to CHANGE
- WHY the project is important
- Your resource requirements

Manage the Project

Once your project has been accepted, the real work begins. With your Outcome Measurement Framework in hand, you can walk through the inputs and activities to develop an operation plan including a detailed budget, program plan, staff plan, program schedule and facility schedule. Use this process to begin planning beyond the project for sustainability of the work.

Monitor and Evaluate

With the project underway, use your Outcome Measurement Framework to MONITOR your progress or EVALUATE what has been achieved. Both are part of regular project management, assessing whether the change you said would occur ("theory of change") actually occurred in this project.

For further detail on Monitoring and Evaluation is provided in Section 7.

Modify

Information generated through monitoring and evaluation provides insight at many levels within a project.
- Involving participant or beneficiary groups can enrich their understanding and create additional momentum towards the desired change.
- Managers, field staff and volunteers are able to examine the information and modify as appropriate. Or, they may want to revise part of your Outcome Measurement Framework based on your new understanding of the project.
- Using the Activity, Output and Outcome statements, you can write reports for funders that show progress against what was agreed upon and expected.

Accountability through Communication

Having used the Outcome Measurement Framework to build support, manage and monitor your project, you are now in a good position to communicate your work to those who have an interest in your project: participants, the broader community, and the funding organization. Because you used the Framework throughout the project cycle and the information helped you to adapt to changing conditions, you are also in a good position to describe what worked well, what did not and what changes were made to ensure the Outcomes could be achieved. More detail on communicating your work is provided in Section 8.

"Experience seems to be like the shining of a bright lantern. It suddenly makes clear in the mind what was already there, perhaps, but dim."

- Walter de la Mare

Example

Outcome Measurement
Youth Volunteer Program

How?

INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS
	Design Program Determine program need; identify community partners; determine and design activities, protocols and policies.	• # of needs identified • # of community partners involved • Volunteer training manual • Youth Advisory protocols
• Volunteer/Youth Advisory Coordinator 1 FTE • Supervisory support 1 FTE • Office space and supplies • Office equipment (computer, desk, chairs, phone, fax) • Transportation	**Recruit and Train** Identify volunteer training requirements; determine and develop selection criteria and protocol; develop and implement training program.	• # and type of participants trained by cultural group • # of trainings held
	Coordinate Volunteers Match volunteers to appropriate programs in the Centre and community; supervise and monitor them as appropriate.	• # and type of participants who are matched • # of programs in which volunteers participate
	Youth Advisory Support and facilitate a process through which youth participate in project decision-making.	• # of youth who participate in decision-making process • # decisions and actions taken by volunteers

Purpose

To provide at-risk-youth with meaningful volunteer opportunities in the Centre and in the community, so access for and service provision to youth can be improved and the capacity of youth to make healthy lifestyle decisions strengthened to gain human service skills, develop a healthy social network, and work with other community members to address community issues.

Situation Assessment

Some youth in the Mount Pleasant area are at risk of becoming engaged in substance abuse, criminal activity, leaving school early and the sex trade. In 1996 service providers and youth identified the need for outreach and storefront drop-in services for youth. The BYRC Program was developed to provide these services. The BYRC believes that at-risk youth are best served through programs that are empowering and youth-focused, most likely to be achieved when youth are involved in the design and implementation. However, at risk youth often have unstable lives and their involvement is characterized by high participant turnover. Significant support is required to maintain involvement. The BYRC in collaboration with its community partners is well situated to provide this support.

Timeframe: 2005-2008

What we want — Why?

SHORT TERM OUTCOMES	INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES	LONG TERM OUTCOMES
Volunteer and Youth Advisory Programs are designed as empowering and youth focused.	**Personal Growth** Youth integrate the knowledge and skills learned through their volunteer activities into their daily lives, making informed and healthy lifestyle decisions.	
Youth participants have new knowledge, skills and confidence to support other youth seeking program resources.	**BYRC Approach** BYRC routinely engages young people in the design, implementation, and evaluation of centre programming.	At risk youth in CHA #5 use and benefit from health services designed and implemented in a way that meets their specific needs.
A core of competent volunteers is deployed; they support BYRC programs and gain further personal development.	**Youth in Community** Youth use their new knowledge and skills volunteering, or in paid positions within their community.	
Youth gain knowledge, skills and experience in negotiating, consensus building and recognizing Obstacles in relation to decision-making.		

Tool 5

Outcome Measurement Worksheet

INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS

What we want — Why?

SHORT TERM OUTCOMES	INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES	LONG TERM OUTCOMES

Tool 6

Identifying
Outcome Indicators

Purpose

To help you generate some Indicators that identify what you will monitor during the project and what you could evaluate at the end of the project to demonstrate your results.

Description

This tool helps you go beyond writing the Activity, Output, Outcome and Impact statements. It concentrates on Indicators - the pieces of information you need to show that your project is making progress. Under each Short-term and Intermediate heading are a set of indicator ideas. Each has a check box. Your task is to identify those indicator statements that best fit with your project at the Activity-Output and at the Outcome and Impact stages. On the basis of this task you can then generate your own list of indicators. At the end of the tool is a space to write your own draft indicators.

When to Use

- At the beginning of any new project
- After your group has developed an Outcome Measurement Framework and is preparing a Monitoring Plan

How to Use

Step 1: Review the introductory information on indicators in the Guide.

Step 2: Review the possible indicators for sample short-term outcomes. Check those indicators that are most relevant to your project idea. Adapt these to fit your project, creating a list of possible indicators.

Step 3: Review the above step with intermediate outcomes.

Step 4: Use the indicator checklist to help your group select the strongest indicator. Assemble your final list of indicators using the worksheets

Step 1: Reviewing Information About Outcome Indicators

Indicators indicate! They can be qualitative, showing some kind of before and-after Change in a condition or quality that clearly indicates progress (or lack of progress), or quantitative, representing a count of something.

You need just enough indicators to capture key details of your project's performance, but not so many that you are overwhelmed with information. Is there a magic number? Not really, but you need at least one indicator for each short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcome.

How do you know when you have a good indicator? The indicator checklist in Step 4 will help you determine how good an indicator is for providing evidence of change.

Indicators may look a little different as you move from short-term to intermediate to long-term outcomes. These differences are set out in the boxes below and on the next page.

Short-Term Outcome Indicators

- Give an idea of the quality of change that has been created by the activity.

- Predict the likelihood of achieving your intermediate outcomes.

- Should be tracked regularly. This is often called monitoring. The information should be gathered as the activities are unfolding.

- Indicators at this level are the immediate changes experienced by participants in your activities, and are often changes in information and awareness.

- You should have your short-term outcome statements and their indicators in mind as you carry out your activities. It is good to know this information as soon as possible, because it may cause you to do something different while your project is still underway.

Intermediate Outcome Indicators

- These indicators should point to the kinds of changes you can expect at the end of the project, or shortly thereafter.

- Sometimes you have to find people after the activities have ended to find out what difference the project has made to them. This can be tricky, especially for projects with a large public audience.

- You should have your intermediate outcome statements and their indicators in mind as you carry out your activities.

- The good news is that you don't have to gather this information as frequently.

Long-Term Outcome Indicators

- These indicators point to the changes you can expect after the project is complete.

- Your project will have contributed to these changes, but others will also have contributed. Usually your organization, alone, is not responsible for collecting long-term change information.

- From time to time, impact evaluations or sectoral studies are carried out by funding agencies, policy research bodies, or coalitions.

Step 2: Identifying Short-term Outcome Indicators

On the following page is a chart of examples of sample indicators for sample short-term outcomes for five levels of community capacity building: individual, family/peer, organizational, and community and institution.

1. Check the outcome statements that are most relevant to your project activities. Consider the list of sample indicators and select those that best fit your project.

2. On a flipchart, write down the indicators you have selected and adapt them to fit your project.

3. If one of your outcome statement does not match the list provided, draft appropriate outcome statements using these as a guide.

Short Term Outcome Indicator Examples

Level of Capacity Building: Individual Capacity

Short Term Outcome	Indicator Examples
• Participants/volunteers are able to apply the skills they have learned to new situations	• % of participants who demonstrate an understanding of the skills required • % of participants who indicate a greater feeling of confidence in participating as a volunteer • Examples of situations where volunteers used skills appropriately
• Participants/volunteers are beginning to feel ownership and responsibility for the services they receive/attend/deliver through the project	• % of participants interested in volunteering for the project • % increase in participation on advisory committee • Observed changes in how volunteers relate to the program
• Participants/volunteers have an awareness and understanding of community events/services/decision-making processes	• % of participants who indicate that they have an improved awareness of community events • Extent to which participants can describe community events/services and decision-making processes
• Participants/volunteers feel support and comfort from socializing with peers in the project	• % of participants who indicate that they feel supported by their peers • Ways described by participants that they are supported
• Participants/volunteers are aware of the services and programs available to them in their community	• % of participants who can describe how to access programs • Ways in which participants are accessing services • Examples of ways volunteers provide information to participants
• Participants/volunteers access appropriate services and programs in their community	• Ways in which participants are accessing services • Degree to which there is a fit between the type of services being accessed and the needs • % of participants accessing services that they learned about through the program
• Participants/volunteers have confidence to participate in community-based programs	• Degree to which participants describe a change n confidence and comfort level with participating • % of participants who indicate that they feel more confident • Examples of activities participants participate in that they would not have otherwise
• Consumers know where to access housing and service information in their community	• % of consumers who can readily describe where to access housing and services • Change in level of knowledge of housing and services

Short Term Outcome Indicator Examples

Level of Capacity Building: Family/peer Capacity

Short Term Outcome	Indicator Examples
• Families understand the value of communication and play/recreation with their children	• % of families that can describe appropriate communication • % of families who can describe the value of play/recreation • % of families who can identify changes they can make to improve communication and play/recreation opportunities
• Families better understand the health needs of their family member with mental health issues/chronic illness	• % of families who indicate a change in awareness of the health needs of their family member • Examples of change in awareness
• Individuals with mental health issues/chronic illness understand their rights to self-advocacy	• % of individuals who can identify their rights to self advocacy • Extent of understanding of rights to self advocacy
• Families feel supported in providing care because they received respite support	• % of families who indicate that they feel supported • % of families received respite versus those who applied • Ways in which the respite care makes a difference
• The family members and consumers are gaining self confidence by voluntarily participating in planning and organizing group activities	• % of families who can describe an increased confidence in participating • Ways in which family members are participating

Level of Capacity Building: Organizational Capacity

Short Term Outcome	Indicator Examples
• The program is strengthened by input from consumers and their representatives	• Examples of program changes that are made because of advisory committee input
• Community programs and services are planned and assessed regularly with community involvement	• Increase in the proportion of community organizations/agencies who support staff and volunteer training to develop planning and evaluation skills with community stakeholders
• Community organizations are able to identify organizational capacity needs	• Change in the way the organization assesses its own capacity - scope and process of inquiry
• Agencies serving seniors have trained and updated staff to provide info on housing and services for seniors.	• % of agencies who indicate that they have trained staff that they can refer to internally
• Training and support is re-enforced with accessible printed material	• % of workshops participants and consumers who believe the material is relevant and timely
• Community kitchen participants empowered and take on ownership of program	• % of participants who are increasing their involvement in food preparation • Examples of participants demonstrating independence and ability to run kitchen

Short Term Outcome Indicator Examples

Level of Capacity Building: Community Capacity

Short Term Outcome	Indicator Examples
• The community experiences are being heard in the decision-making process	• The degree to which consultation participants know how their input is to be used and how it will be reported back to them • % of participants who feel heard
• Building managers better understand needs of senior tenants.	• % of participants who can describe a better understanding of the needs of seniors • Examples of ways understanding has changed
• Community groups are working together to provide integrated services	• Change in the ways community organizations/agencies encourage their staff and volunteers to enhance their networking skills • # and type of collaborative relationships formed • Ways in which resources are used more effectively
• Interagency networks are formalized and working together effectively	• # and type of meetings held • Examples of working together

Level of Capacity Building: Institutional Capacity

Short Term Outcome	Indicator Examples
• Inter-organizational networks identify health policies required or changes needed	• Degree to which the network can identify areas for them to be involved in health policy changes • Degree to which organizations plan for involvement in policy input or change processes
• Decision-makers are open to input from consumers and program participants	• Examples of where programs or policies have provided opportunities for input • Degree to which policy makers and program managers understand the value of consumer input

Step 2: Identifying Intermediate Outcome Indicators

On the following pages are charts of sample indicators for intermediate outcomes the same fiver levels of community capacity building: individual, family/peer, organizational, community, institutional.

1. Check the outcome statements that are most relevant to your project activities. Consider the list of sample indicators and select those that best fit your project.

2. On a flipchart, write down the indicators you have selected and adapt them to fit your project.

3. If one of your outcome statements does not match the list provided, draft an appropriate outcome statement using these as a guide.

Intermediate Outcome Indicator Examples

Level of Capacity Building: Individual Capacity

Intermediate Outcome	Indicator Examples
• Participants/volunteers are empowered through influence on decisions about the function and direction of the project	• Examples of influence on decisions about function and direction of the project • % of parents/volunteers who can describe how they have been empowered.
• Participating seniors better functioning enabling them cope better with their problems.	• % of people who describe a change in functioning levels • Examples of how the changed functioning levels affects their ability to cope with day to day problems
• Older adults feel a sense of worth and societal contribution supporting their peers in difficulty and in their own lives	• % of peer counselors who describe a stronger sense of contribution • Ways in which SPC are responding to the needs of their peers
• High risk women experiencing domestic violence are less isolated, feel safer, are accessing available services, and are following through with the criminal justice system.	• % of women surveyed who report feeling safer • Change in the way individual women are accessing services and the justice system
• Parents and youth understand health issues and services and have increased confidence in their ability to access services.	• % of participants who can describe situations about how they dealt with health issues differently as a result of participating in this program
• The confidence of individual mental health consumers is strengthened enabling them to participate as peer supporters and in other leadership roles	• % of participants who express interest in participating in other roles • Changes in confidence level described by peer supporters

Level of Capacity Building: Organizational capacity

Intermediate Outcome	Indicator Examples
• The organization supports coordinated, effective intervention with domestic violence cases.	• Change in the organization's pattern of response to domestic violence cases – information flow, timeliness of response, use of resources outside the organization • Change in the % of cases effectively addressed

Intermediate Outcome Indicator Examples

Level of Capacity Building: Community capacity

Intermediate Outcome	Indicator Examples
• Community programs act to increase capacity of individuals, families, communities and institutions	• Presence of policies which support and promote community capacity building • Examples of new activities that build capacity • Examples of how change in capacity has changed the opportunities for the community
• Existing health care and other services in the community have a resource that enhances their ability to address the needs of the client.	• Ways in which the program interacts with other health and community organizations • % of organizations who perceive that they know what resources to access and are accessing those resources
• Volunteerism increases as volunteers deepen commitment to program and seniors	• % of volunteers who feel connected and committed to their community • % of volunteers who feel an increased sense of wellbeing
• Recurrent homelessness and shelter use is reduced.	• % of recurrent clients is reduced
• Members of each immigrant and refugee community are skilled and have resources to support each other to understand Canadian approaches to parenting and sexual health.	• % change in number of self help groups per ethnic group • Type of support provided • Examples of other community resources used

Level of Capacity Building: Institutional Capacity

Intermediate Outcome	Indicator Examples
• Community agencies/police and probation are working together in a coordinated way to strengthen service delivery and working relationships	• Examples of how the institutional structure is working together differently than they were before program • Changes in services made possible through collaboration
• Mainstream organizations and service providers are building capacity to provide culturally relevant services to LGTB people	• Examples of organizations who are building capacity • Degree to which organizations can describe their change in capacity to provide culturally relevant services
• Members of target populations are participating in the health care system as service providers.	• % of community agencies who have employees from target populations • % of participants who perceive that service providers are representative of their language/ethnicity
• Health programs and policy are strengthened through consumer input	• Examples of where programs or policies have changed as a result of consumer input • Participant perception of how their views were considered

Step 4: Choosing the Best Indicators

There are seldom perfect indicators. Here is an assessment scale to help you select the best indicators from the ones you have developed.

Number each of your possible outcome indicator statements. Then, for each question in the assessment scale, place the number of the indicator at the point on yes – no continuum that best answers the questions.

Select those indicators that are the most accurate, most cost-effective, and most useful as a management tool.

For each outcome indicator statement, ask yourself:

Number each statement you wish to test, then for each question post the number at the appropriate place on the line.

1. **Accuracy**: Is it accurate? Is it always going to measure what you need to know, or could it be telling you something else?

YES   NO

2. **Cost-effectiveness**: Is it cost-effective to collect the information?

YES   NO

3. **Privacy**: Can information be gathered without invading privacy and breaching confidentiality?

YES   NO

4. **Representativeness**: Does the information help your group understand how the project is affecting men and women, and specific groups of people differently?

YES   NO

5. **Usefulness**: Does it give useful information with which to make management decisions?

YES   NO

6. **Meaningfulness**: Will the information communicate well to stakeholders, including funders?

YES   NO

As you test your proposed indicators, you may realize that you want to:

- improve your indicator by making it clearer to understand, or more specific to the outcome you want to measure
- improve your outcome statement

Feel free to do either. Even then, you may not have the best possible indicator. Look for improvements over time as you put them into practice.

Tool 7

Outcome Measurement at a Glance

	Defining Characteristic	Who is Affected	When Observable	Degree of Management Control	Splash and Ripple Analogy
Inputs...	...are the human and physical resources that make the initiative possible - the people, equipment, supplies and other ingredients. ...give you the essential information for budgeting.				...are like THE PERSON AND THE ROCK
Activities...	...describe the essential work of the initiative - how the Inputs are to be combined. ...are to be summarized in between 5 to 8 statements.	...are written from the vantage point of those instigating the work (e.g. managers, staff facilitators, volunteers).			...are like DROPPING THE ROCK
Outputs...	...are the most direct and immediate results. Its usually something that can be counted. Each Output relates to one Activity.	...refers to the product of your activities (e.g. number of participants).	...are observable as you complete the activity.	...allow you substantial control - not total though; there are often surprises during implementation.	...are like CREATING THE SPLASH
Short Term Outcomes...	...create the potential for Intermediate and Long Term Outcomes to occur. Each Short Term Outcome relates to one Output.	...often refers to an immediate benefit among those people directly participating in an activity (e.g. trainees).	...are observable within the timeframe of the project.	...allow you less control than Outputs, though you still have a significant amount of control.	...are like THE MOST IMMEDIATE RIPPLES
Intermediate Term Outcomes...	...are several steps removed from Activities. ...describe the key changes you want to make in the initiative. ...are fewer in number; each flows naturally from several of the Short Term Outcomes.	...expand into wider settings - includes those who are directly involved in Activities, but goes beyond those direct participants to include the families, organizations, or neighbourhoods surrounding them. ...may also include those people or workplaces who use or are influenced by products created in the initiative.	...are observable at or shortly after the completion of the initiative.	..allow you direct influence - you must keep your sights set on the Outcomes; then manage activities for the best chance of success - learn by doing, adapt as you go. Caution:: you should be reasonably confident in your claims, since you may be responsible for bringing them about.	...are like THE MIDDLE RIPPLES
Long Term Outcome...	...is the picture of a preferred future; the reason why it is important to do the initiative. ...describes a scenario that is close enough to show a real contribution to the desired change, yet big enough and far enough out on the horizon to be visionary.	...may expand into yet wider settings to include societies, districts, communities, professions, whole organizations.	...are observable well after the initiative has been completed.	...allow you only indirect influence - the initiative will not achieve the vision, only contribute toward it.	...are like the OUTER RIPPLES