

# Funding Advice Bureau

## SYFAB guide to...

# Impact and outcomes

Monitoring and evaluation has always been an important, if not very exciting part of delivering projects; groups can see what people think of their activities, and alter what they do in the light of feedback. It also gives an indication of the value of their work.

There is an increasing trend for funders to ask what outcomes or impact a project will deliver. This involves thinking at the start what you hope to achieve, rather than checking at the end how it went. In this information sheet we explain how to work out what impact your project will have, and how to measure that through setting outcomes.

You will see how to arrive at a set of outcomes, and devise simple ways of measuring them.

## Outcome Funding

Monitoring and evaluation is beginning to become even more important, with a recent trend for funders to explore the impact a project is having, rather than simply how many people took part. They may also talk about 'an outcome focused approach'. These both refer to the same thing – what difference did your project make? Twenty people might have attended a training course, but did they learn anything? You might produce online information for your clients, but did it help them?

It is becoming increasingly important for groups to be able to address this, but it can raise some tricky questions about how you measure some of it. Counting heads at an event is easy, but finding out what they learned is much harder. This information sheet will help you step by step through the process.

## Need and aim of the project

Groups will often want to fund an activity but may

not have thought about the aims – this is a key step in determining impact and asks WHY you want to do something. A sports session might be fun, but it will also improve children's activity levels and confidence. Identifying a need is the key first step. When funding is tight, projects addressing the greatest need will be favoured. The need will inform the aim: childhood obesity is a problem, so the aim of the project is to tackle it. If the need is that older people are isolated, the aim will be to involve them in their community.

## Outcomes - what changes?

To decide whether you are achieving your aim, you will need to set 'outcomes' – these are measures of the change your activity has achieved. Not to be confused with 'outputs' which relate to head counts – eg '20 children attended a session' is an output, '20 children showing increased levels of exercise' is a change and therefore an outcome.

There might be several outcomes to meet the aim. If you want to address childhood obesity, you could help children take more exercise, or eat more healthily, or address self-esteem issues. A childhood obesity project may choose to address one of these outcomes or all of them.

Funders often ask you to be specific about outcomes, so you need to think about what a project might achieve, eg '100 children will have increased physical activity levels by the end of the summer holidays'.

## Activities - how to deliver the outcomes

What activity will best deliver the outcomes? You may already have one in mind, but it may be worth thinking through other possible activities to be sure you've picked the best one.

If childhood obesity is a problem, and your outcome is to make children fitter, should you run sports sessions? Dance? Do family walks? Loan out bicycles? Issue pedometers? These are all activities that could deliver the same outcome.

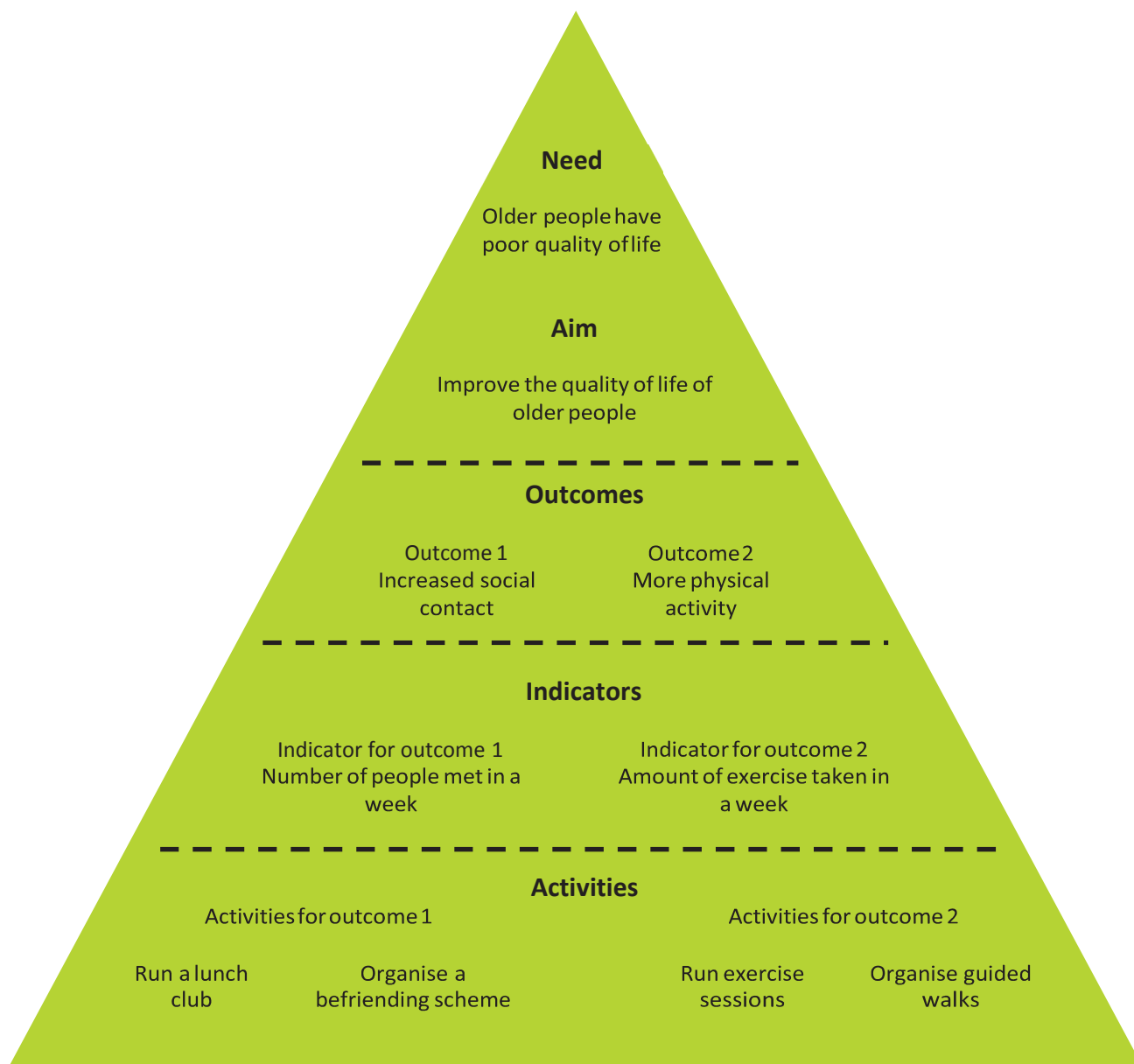
## Indicators – what do you measure?

'Performance indicators' is the jargon expression for this. It might be physical measurements, factual information on achievements or people's opinions on how they feel. It's very important to decide at the start what you are going to measure so you can gather the right information. If you need to record someone's change during the course of a project, it's helpful to know how they felt at the start.

## Evidence - proving it

Collect the information you need, and compare it against your plans or funder's requirements. This might be a single event like an online survey, or two events - recording data at the start of involvement and then again at the end and working out how many people show a change.



To illustrate this, here are some examples of what might be done. A key point is that each aim has two outcomes related to it (there could be others) and each outcome has two activities (you could add more). A funder may well ask why you selected a particular activity to deliver the outcome so it's useful to have thought through the other possibilities.



## How to measure

It's rare to be able to use clear measurements - for example, a 10 second drop in how long someone takes to do an exercise. Usually things are less definitive: self-reporting crops up a lot, and is a simple but effective way of showing change. You need to set up a scale and ask people to mark where they think they fit at the start of an activity and do it again at the end. Collect the results and check how many have moved up, down or stayed the same. For example:

How would you rate your anxiety level? Please circle one:

1	2	3	4	5
				
Very low				High

You could use the same format for knowledge, skills, levels of social contact etc. It's not very scientific but it does clearly indicate how people feel they have changed and that is important to know.

Assessment by the leader of a session can also be very useful – they will see how someone's confidence has increased during a programme, or how well people have learned new skills so their input can be very useful in demonstrating impact.

Keep it simple – a key point. If the funder asks, you need to collect the information but don't make it a burden. If people complete a registration form, can you add a couple of questions that you can then follow up at the end to gauge impact? Can it be a fun part of the session, like a quiz or graffiti wall? Add smiley faces to the self-reporting to make it friendlier.

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## It's not just for the funder

Use the information - you do your duty by telling the funder but it's also likely to be useful for you to look at. For example, which activities have the greatest or least impact? How could you improve your activities, or attract people who don't currently use them?

## Further reading and resources

NCVO:

[www.ncvo.org.uk/practical-support](http://www.ncvo.org.uk/practical-support)

Jelly Baby Tree - to help people identify how they're feeling

[stwilfridsteachingandlearningblog.files.wordpress.com/2016/05/5403547cf5a1180ce844725de14884ed.jpg](https://stwilfridsteachingandlearningblog.files.wordpress.com/2016/05/5403547cf5a1180ce844725de14884ed.jpg)

Big Lottery Fund:

[www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/funding/funding-guidance/applying-for-funding/aims-and-outcomes](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/funding/funding-guidance/applying-for-funding/aims-and-outcomes)

'Principles into Practice' :

[www.thinknpc.org/publications/principles-into-practice/](http://www.thinknpc.org/publications/principles-into-practice/)

Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale – a widely recognised and therefore transferrable tool

[www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/med/research/platform/wemwbs/](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/med/research/platform/wemwbs/)

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