Top Tips Guide
Getting Outcomes Right

one East Midlands
Getting voices heard, shaping change

Introduction

This series of Top Tip Guides has been produced to support Third Sector learning providers so that they will be better informed on key issues and the use of effective standard practices.

Getting outcomes right - Top Tips

1. Keep your outcomes as concise as possible
2. Use single not compound outcomes
3. Link your outcomes to your organisation
4. Focus on what you know
5. Develop an outcomes strategy for your organisation

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Definitions

Aim: describes why the organisation exists and the difference it wants to make. Aims can be overall or specific (see below)

Inputs: resources put into an organisation to carry out an activity. Inputs may be human, material, financial or expressed as time

Objectives: describe the planned areas of activity by which a project is going to achieve its aims

Outcomes: the changes, benefits learning or other effects that happen as a result of services and activities provided by an organisation (see soft and hard outcomes)

Outputs: the activities, services and products provided by an organisation

Overall aim: describe why the organisation exists and the broad effect it wants to have. It summarises the difference that an organisation wants to make. It is often linked to the mission, vision or purpose of an organisation (see specific aims)

Soft and hard outcomes: soft outcomes are typically defined as intangible, a matter of degree and more difficult to measure. They are commonly used for changes in attitude, self-perception or certain skills areas.

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These are often, but not always, intermediate outcomes. **Hard outcomes** are defined as quantitative and often more easily measurable.

Specific aims: statements about the particular differences an organisation hopes to make to its user group. These usually stem from needs of the user group

Targets: specify the quantity and quality of outputs and outcomes aspired to. They are specific measurable and time-bound results.

Source - The Gio Project, Cornbrook, Enterprise Centre, 70 Quenby Street, Hulme ,Manchester M15 4HW. Tel 0161 832 0934 email hello@gioproject.org.uk; web www.gioproject.org.uk

Resources

- **NCVO** http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/advice-support/funding-finance/income-sources/resources-signposts-outcomes-assessment Articles and explanations of the increasing focus by funders on funding for outcomes.

- Charities Evaluation Services Charities Evaluation Services (CES) produce several guides and workbooks on outcome management and monitoring and evaluation. They are clearly written and provide a good starting point for research into the subject.
  Your Project and its Outcomes is a CES booklet explaining what outcomes are and how to go about identifying and assessing them. It is a plain language guide containing step-by-step advice and case studies.

- The Big Lottery Fund is an outcomes funder and provide guidance for applicants on how to demonstrate the difference their intended project makes. Even if you are not applying to the Big Lottery Fund, the publication (pdf 132 kb) provides a good general overview.

- **ACEVO** (http://www.acevo.org.uk/Services+Resources) has a range of support services to help third sector organisations become more efficient and effective. Support is available for a range of areas including Impact Reporting, Partnership Programme; Working with Local Authorities; Full Cost Recovery; Income Generation; Procurement and Commissioning of public services; Consortia Support

- Impact Briefing: Putting Impact at the Heart of the Tendering Process
  Finance Hub, acevo and Development Trust Association, April 2008
  This briefing shows how to put outcomes and impact at the heart of tendering and commissioning for public services. By doing this, both third sector providers and commissioners can meet the needs of people and communities more effectively.

- Measuring Value: A Guide to Social Return on Investment
  New Economics Foundation (nef), May 2008. nef has pioneered the use of 'Social Return on Investment' in the UK as a method of proving the wider social value created by companies and organisations with a social purpose.