



GUIDE TO USING OUTCOMES TO MEASURE SUCCESS, WITH EXAMPLE METRICS

Introduction

Organizations and communities need effective evaluations systems in order to measure the outcomes of their programmatic efforts. Outcome-based evaluation is a systematic and motivational way to evaluate results. It helps communicate successes, identify opportunities for improvement, and increases accountability. **It allows managers to determine if they are making their desired impact.**

Outcomes, not Inputs, Activities or Waypoints

The inputs, activities, and waypoints of a project are important and significant, but the resources devoted to the program/project (**Inputs** such as staff time, dollars, volunteers, etc.), the actions taken by the program (**Activities** like providing job training or offering free rides to work), or even important markers of progress (**Waypoints** like convening a committee or buying a bus) don't answer the key question: **What impact has been made?** Successful outcome-based performance management answers that question with results.

Outcome based evaluation asks, **“What has changed in the lives of individuals, families, organizations, or the community as the result of this program [or project]?”**¹ By asking, “So what?” we can evaluate the effectiveness of our inputs and activities.

For examples, by asking,

“So what if 120 staff hours have been invested in providing job training? Is the community better able to find and keep good jobs? Are they doing that?”

we understand better if the staff time invested in job training programs or dollars invested in buying a bus to provide rides to work is making the impact we want to see in people's lives. This allows us to be more efficient and effective with our **inputs** and **activities**, therefore achieving better **results**.

Types of Outcomes

ROI recommends using two types of outcomes: **capacity** outcomes and **realized** outcomes.

We may not always have control over realized outcomes, but the program does have control over **capacity outcomes**. Capacity outcomes are the direct products of our activities. These may be things like the number of citizens that participated in job training, the number of rides given to work, or the number of work-based learning opportunities provided.

¹ Reisman, Jane and Judith Clegg. Outcomes for Success! (Seattle, WA: The Evaluation Forum, 2000)



Realized outcomes flow from our vision for the project, our desired impact. They are more global in nature and follow capacity outcomes. These are benefits or changes to lives of those affected. Continuing with the above example, improving the quality of life for residents may be the overall vision. A program could then set “improving prosperity by helping residents find and maintain living-wage employment” as it’s desired impact. Realized outcomes may be ‘20% more residents have maintained a living-wage job for 6 months this year than last year’ or ‘job training participants improved mock interview scores by 50%’ or ‘15% reduction in job vacancy numbers at key regional employers.’ These are results that we can attribute to our efforts. These specific and measurable realized outcomes came directly from capacity outcomes.

An example of performance management from the NAEH family conference is provided at the end of this document. Note that it uses ‘outputs’ in place of capacity outcomes.

Determining Outcomes

For the purposes of Ready Communities Implementation Grants, some of the work has already been done. Your county’s Quality of Place and Workforce Attraction Plan should already identify strategic priorities for the county (desired impact/vision). You can use these to determine specific realized outcomes if the plan does not already include them. By determining what you can control to achieve those realized outcomes, you develop your capacity outcomes.

ROI recommends using a logic model to determine both sets of outcomes. A template is provided below. Start with the goal in mind and work from right to left. By using the “so that...” method, you should then be able to see how things flow from left to right.

Example: Invest 150 hours of staff time *so that* we can provide five workforce training workshops *so that* 250 community residents can receive high-quality job training *so that* they will see a 50% improvement in interview skills *so that* regional prosperity is improved because more residents find and maintain living-wage employment.

Resources	Activities	Capacity Outcomes	Realized Outcomes	VISION / DESIRED IMPACT

A sample logic model from *Outcomes for Success!* is also provided at the end of this document. Please note it calls realized outcomes simply outcomes and capacity outcomes ‘outputs.’ You can access the full article here: <https://www.unr.edu/Documents/liberal-arts/writing-center/Outcomes%20for%20success.pdf>



Determining Metrics/Indicators

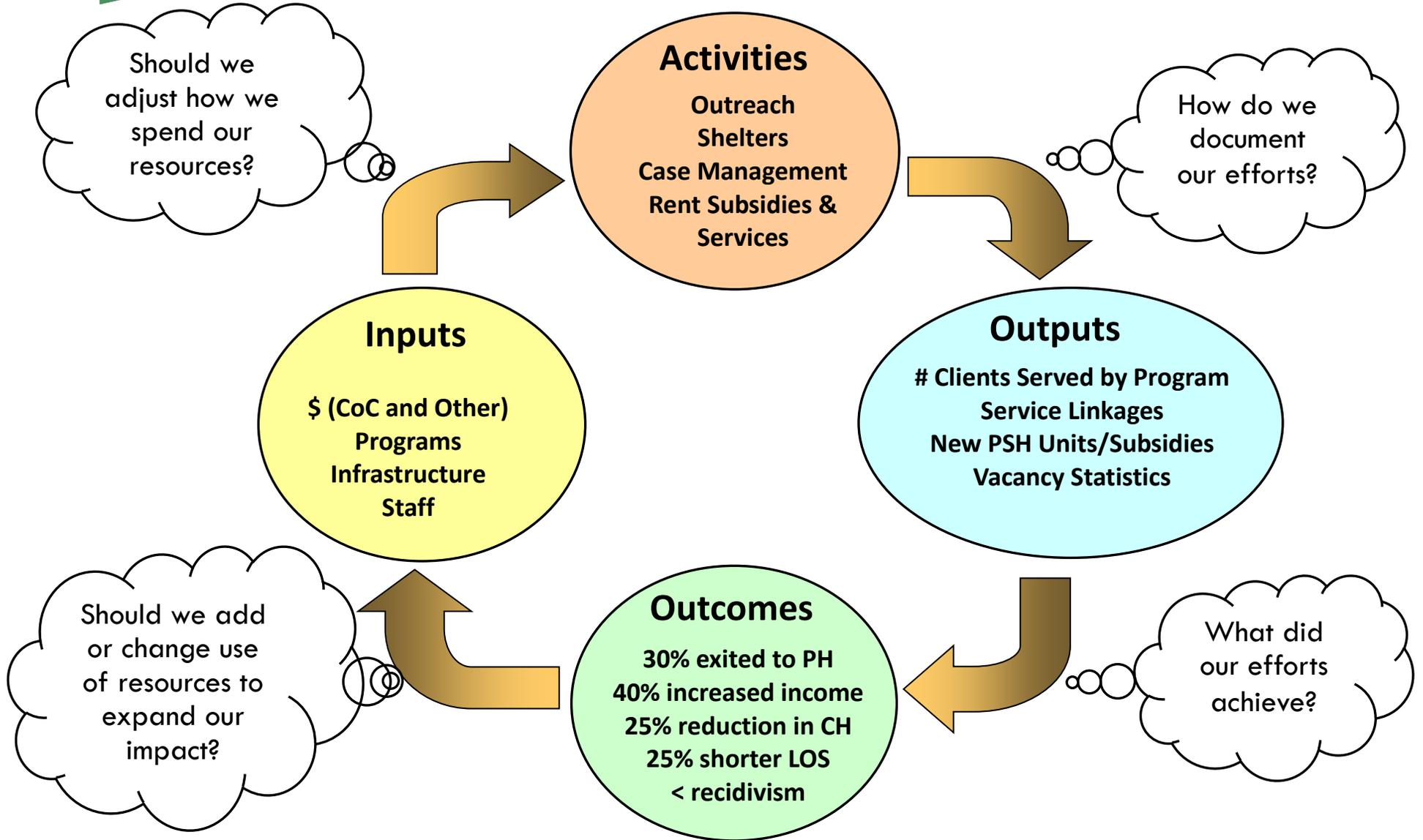
Measurement is an essential part of effective performance management. When we ask, “What change will the community experience within a month, a year, or five years of the project?” we also need to ask, “How will we measure that impact?” Results and impacts need to be quantified if we are to measure success. In addition to the link above, here is useful resource for developing indicators:

<http://strengtheningnonprofits.org/resources/guidebooks/measuringoutcomes.pdf>

Example Metrics

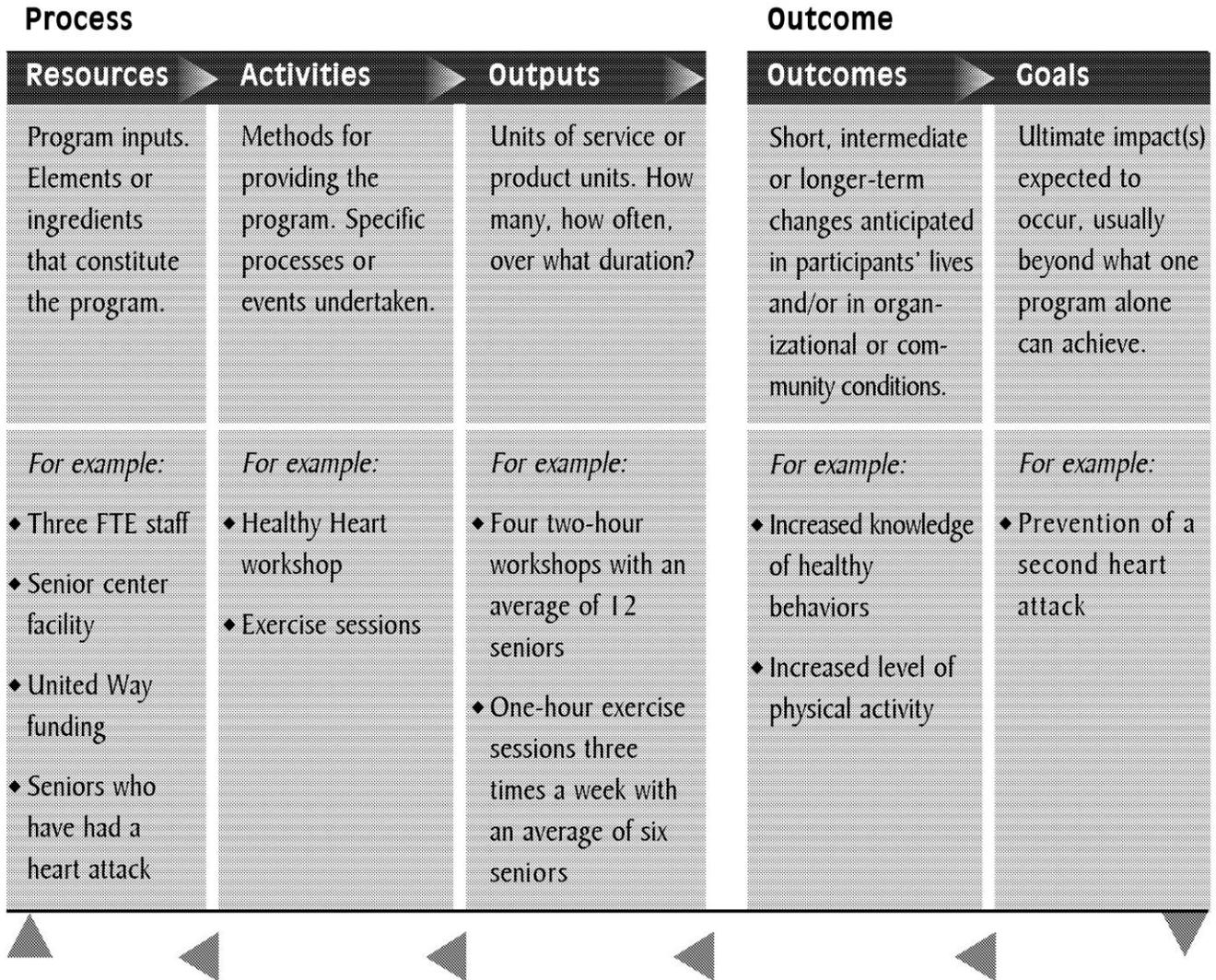
This list gives an idea of how results can be quantified into metrics and indicators of impact. Remember that realized outcomes track changes as a result of the program and are typically communicated as percentages.

Sample Quality of Place Metrics and Indicators		
Satisfaction surveys	Pollution levels	# of new clients for program
Innovation Index	Miles of connected trails	Degree residents feel welcome
Walkability Score	# of public Wi-Fi spots	Degree of social connectedness
# of places enhanced	# of IDEM orders removed	Access to utilities
# of buildings saved	Home property values	# of artistic events
# of partnerships formed	# of new businesses	Healthcare quality and access
% of community satisfied with amenities, programs	# of homes in community with broadband access	# of local restaurants
Crime rate and changes to	Median household income	# of entertainment options
Average distance from community gathering place	Educational attainment (% of students enrolling in post-secondary edu)	# of residents that can access public outdoor space by walking 10 min or less
Health scores	Utilization of parks and trails	Net migration flow
# of Positive reactions to local units of government	Vacancy rates	# of programs using the facility, site, or county
# of stakeholders who engage w/ comm. vision	Street and sidewalk quality, scored by prof or by survey	# of children enrolled in career prep opportunities
Dollars invested in area	# of childcare providers	Age distribution
# of job vacancies, unemployment #s	# of children in after school programming	Diversity (cultural, ethnic, of employers)
# of residents who report they would like to stay in county after graduation	Aesthetic quality of downtown (by survey)	# of residents w/o severe housing burden (over 30% of income on housing)
# of residents who move away from community	Poverty levels, # of A.L.I.C.E. households	Volunteerism statistics (esp. w/ younger residents)





Developing a Program Logic Model¹



1 This model based on program theory model developed and amplified by Joseph Wholey and others.