



## Introduction to Impact, outcomes and planning tools

This is a short and simple guide about Social Impact which includes some basic information about outcomes and planning tools. There is a wealth of material available on this subject, so we have selected the points we think most useful to help community groups.

### What is Social Impact?

Impact is the long-term aim or goal you want to achieve. It can also be described as the long-term outcome that defines success for your organisation.

**Social impact** is the broad social change an organisation is trying to achieve.

### Why is Social Impact important?

There is increasing pressure on organisations to demonstrate that their services are delivering the desired results. Funders are looking to maximise the effect of limited resources by funding projects that create proven impact rather than only by measuring outputs. For example, for a health project:

the **impact** or long-term outcome of a health project might be to give people an increased sense of control over their lives

an **output** might be the number of people who receive one to one support.

**Glossary of terms (if you are working with a funder it always worth checking what they mean when they use these terms as they do differ)**

Social impact	Broad social change an organisation is trying to achieve
Impact	The broad and /or long-term effects of an organisation's activity after taking into account what would have happened anyway
Outcomes	The changes, benefits, learning or other effects that result from what the organisation makes, offers or provides. Expressed using the language of change.
Outputs/Activities	Activities, services or facilities that result from an organisation's activity
Indicators	The things that help you to determine whether you have made the differences that you hope to make.
Inputs	The resources that go into the project that a team or organisation needs to be able to carry out its activities.

(Adapted from NPC's four pillar approach & Creating Your own Theory of Change

## Outcomes – the difference you make towards achieving impact

- Should link need and activities
- Can be soft - subjective relate to perceptions/attitudes/feelings
- Can be hard - physically measurable

Who – people or organisations who will benefit	How - should relate to change or difference	What – what is changing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Young people</li> <li>▶ Lone parents</li> <li>▶ People with mental health difficulties</li> <li>▶ Older people who are experiencing loss of mobility.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ improve</li> <li>▶ increase</li> <li>▶ reduce</li> <li>▶ expand</li> <li>▶ develop</li> <li>▶ sustain</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ confidence</li> <li>▶ skills</li> <li>▶ environment</li> <li>▶ access to services</li> <li>▶ relationships</li> <li>▶ opportunities</li> </ul>
<i>For example: 40 people with mental health difficulties have</i>	<i>increased</i>	<i>confidence by the end of the project.</i>

Adapted from:

[http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/pub\\_outcomes\\_factsheet.pdf](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/pub_outcomes_factsheet.pdf)

[http://www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/media/uploads/resources/ess\\_sg1\\_-\\_setting\\_outcomes\\_\(final\).pdf](http://www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/media/uploads/resources/ess_sg1_-_setting_outcomes_(final).pdf)

## Outcome indicators – what needs to happen to demonstrate the outcome has been achieved

- Should be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time based)

Outcome	Milestones – progress of activities	Milestones – outcome indicator
40 people with ongoing mental health difficulties have increased confidence by the end of the project	40 service users attended discussion meetings by month 6. 20 people take part in shopping trips with befriender by month 8.	40 people able to take part in discussion. 20 people report feeling less nervous about going out in public.

Adapted from : [http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/pub\\_outcomes\\_factsheet.pdf](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/pub_outcomes_factsheet.pdf)

## Using a planning tools to demonstrate social impact?

Planning tools describe the key aspects that make a project work and need to be clear and logical. to give a structure to identify impact, outcomes and link them to activities/outputs/ inputs. The tools feed into strategy and review what to measure and what to communicate. There are many different types of planning tool we have chosen to look at three of them.

### CES planning triangle

Developed by Charities Evaluation Service this is most useful for less complicated projects.

Useful link <https://knowhownonprofit.org/how-to/@@search?search=create+a+planning+triangle>

### Logic Model

Allows more detail about activities e.g. processes to build relationships/outputs and services delivered and expressed usually as numbers. It is descriptive whereas the Theory of Change model explained below is explanatory

Useful link

<http://www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/media/uploads/resources/supportguide1.2logicmodelsjul09.pdf>

### Theory of Change Model (sometimes called an outcome chain)

This outlines all the things that a programme does for of its beneficiaries, the ultimate impact that it aims to have on them, and all the separate outcomes that lead or contribute to that impact.

It is usual to produce a summary diagram but it can be a written narrative providing situation analysis, articulating assumptions and enablers, evidence and explanations of activities and how any why they will contribute to the outcomes. Focus on changes you expect to occur as a result of what you do. Keep it clear, meaningful, doable and plausible.

Useful link <https://knowhownonprofit.org/how-to/@@search?search=build+a+theory+of+change>

If you require help on the subject, or want to talk through your impact ideas contact [enquiries@cambridgecvcs.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@cambridgecvcs.org.uk)

**The starting point for all planning tools is to consult as widely as possible with everyone with an interest in your organisation (your stakeholders) and to review all the existing evidence.**

### **Consult stakeholders to find out:**

- What are the most important changes we facilitate?
- How do we know they are happening?
- Are there more important changes we should be working towards?
- How could we make these changes happen?
- How could we involve you so you understand the value we create in the future?

### Review existing evidence to identify:

- Evidence of need and demand (desk research)
- What resources do we have?
- Who else operates in this area?
- What are the gaps in provision

### Using planning tools to create a monitoring & evaluation framework

Take care not to design your project around what can be measured. Instead use a planning tool to identify:

- Outcomes you want to measure
- Indicators of these outcomes (what will show they are achieved)
- Sources of data of the indicators (where it comes from)

To select tools ask

- What type of data is needed
- What is achievable given resources and nature of project
- What does the intended audience need to see

<http://www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/evaluation/>

### For more information

A good starting point is *Measuring Up*, an on-line resource for smaller organisations.

<https://www.inspiringimpact.org/measuring-up/measuring-up-for-small-organisations/>

CCVS are available to offer help and advice contact [enquiries@cambridgecvs.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@cambridgecvs.org.uk)