

Measuring Outcomes

Measuring outcomes is a cornerstone of grantmaking from Coweta Community Foundation. Each grant applicant is asked to identify up to three outcomes and to specify the measurable indicators that will be used to determine whether the outcomes have been achieved, including a target for each indicator. Organizations that are awarded grants will also be required to report on outcomes at the conclusion of the project as part of the Grant Evaluation Report (<https://forms.gle/WAxRdhqxAWMVdZeR8>).

Some organizations have a lot of experience with outcomes. But for others, measuring outcomes is relatively new—and can feel intimidating. While it takes some thought and planning, designing and measuring outcomes doesn't have to be rocket science. Take some time to read through our explanations and suggestions below to get an overview of the process.

If after reading through this information and writing outcomes for your project, you'd like some feedback or guidance, we're happy to help as time permits. Contact us with your questions or with a draft of your outcomes.

What is an Outcome?

Outcomes is a simple way to say “your final goal or final results.” Outcomes demonstrate how your program brings about changes for participants. They are benefits that individuals or groups receive after participating in your activities. They show higher level impact.

Sometimes it's easier to think in terms of what outcomes are not. Outcomes are not materials that go into a program. Those are inputs and might include staff time, volunteer hours, and supplies. Outcomes are also not the volume of work accomplished or produced. Those are outputs and could include number of classes taught, pounds of food distributed or number of people who completed a counseling program.

Here are some examples:

Program	Input	Output	Outcome
Art in the Park sculpture display	Material for sculptures, hours creating and installing art	# of sculptures placed in the park	Increase in community pride and sense of ownership
Tutoring for low income youth	Volunteer hours, books, desks	# of participating kids	Students improve academic performance

Prairie restoration program	Volunteer hours, seeds, purchased native plants, tools	# of acres of prairie restored	Increased natural beauty, increased sense of open space and relaxation for visitors
Rides for seniors (to doctor appointments, grocery stores and social events) program	Volunteer driver hours, vehicles	# of rides given, # of seniors receiving rides	Seniors experience better physical and emotional health
Parenting skills classes	Staff hours, room, distributed handouts	# of classes, # of parents participating	Parents feel more confident and provide better care for their children

Why Outcomes Matter

Why should you measure outcomes? Here are two of the most important reasons:

- 1) Funders expect measurable outcomes. Coweta Community Foundation is one of many grantmaking organizations that require nonprofits to design and measure outcomes as part of the grant process. Funders are looking for accountability in where their financial support goes. They want to make sure your program delivers on what it says it's going to do.
- 2) Measuring outcomes helps your organization stay on track and focus on what really matters—bringing about positive change. By measuring outcomes, you can more clearly see if the work you are doing is accomplishing the goals you intend it to accomplish. If you find out it's not, you can make changes to your program. This helps make your programs as effective as possible.

Designing and Measuring Outcomes

So now that you understand what outcomes are and why they're important, it's time to figure out how to create some for your program and how to measure them. Remember that measuring outcomes will require resources such as staff time. Be sure to plan for that.

Also as you are designing outcomes, keep in mind that there are different levels of outcomes: initial, intermediate and long-term. Some changes in participants could take place right away, while others may require a more significant amount of time to achieve. As a short-term funder, CCF acknowledges that the outcomes you propose for our grants are likely to be initial or intermediate in nature. Long-term outcomes will generally be beyond the scope of evaluation for a CCF grant.

Here are some simple steps for designing measurable outcomes for your grant project:

1. Decide which outcomes are important. Think about what your goals are with your program. What changes do you hope to bring about in your target population? (Remember, outcomes aren't a number of people you want to serve. They're changes in behavior of some type.)

2. Figure out how you will know if you achieved your outcomes. In other words, set outcomes indicators. Outcome indicators are specific items of information (data) that track a project’s success. They describe observable, measurable characteristics or changes that represent achievement of an outcome. In your grant, you should also include target indicators—numbers and/or percentages to show what change threshold you aim to achieve with the project during the grant period.

Using the same examples as in the table above, here are some sample indicators and targets.

Program	Outcome	Indicator(s)	Target(s)
Art in the Park sculpture display	Increase in community pride and	# of new graffiti paintings, # of visitors	50% reduction in new graffiti, 20% increase
Tutoring for low income youth	Students improve academic	# of students reading at grade level after the	60% more students will read at grade
Prairie restoration program	Increased natural beauty, increased	# of people who report feeling more relaxed	100 visitors in one-month period report
Rides for seniors programs	Seniors experience better physical and emotional health	# of seniors who report higher levels of physically and	100 more seniors report higher levels of physical and
Parenting skills classes	Parents feel more confident and provide better care for their	# of parents who report feeling more confident and	50% more parents report feeling more confident and

3. Design a measurement system or way to track your indicators. Figure out how you will collect the data described in your indicators. This might mean coming up with a measurement system yourself such as creating a survey that you give at the start and conclusion of the program. Indicators like this could work in the parenting skills example above.

Finding a way to track your indicators might also mean taking advantage of data that is already being gathered. In the tutoring example above, you could ask participants to share results of standardized tests before and after the program.

You must complete these first three steps in order to complete your CCF grant application. A well-designed measurable outcome in a CCF grant proposal will outline proposed outcomes as well as specify measurable indicators you will use to determine whether each outcome has been achieved, including a target for each indicator. If appropriate, an outcome could have more than one indicator with a target. A successful grant will also describe how you will collect the needed data.

If your grant is awarded and your program is funded, you must then complete the evaluation process. Track your data as indicated in your grant application and report on your results. Learn from what went well—and what didn’t—so that next time your program can meet the participants’ needs even better.

More Help:

We've provided an overview here. If you'd like to dive deeper, there are some great online resources to help you do that:

[*The Basic Guide to Outcomes-Based Evaluation for Nonprofit Organizations with Very Limited Resources, by Carter McNamara.](#)

[*Strengthening Nonprofits: A Capacity Builder's Resources Library. Measuring Outcomes \[PDF\]](#)

[*Measuring Program Outcomes: A Practical Approach by United Way of America \[PDF\]](#)

Grant Evaluation Report

Please complete the following information here: <https://forms.gle/WAxRdhqxAWMVdZeR8>. The questions below are the same questions you will find on the google form. Once you begin filling out the document, you will not be able to stop/start.

A. Organizational and Grant Information, including all of the following:

- Organization Name, FEIN
- Mailing Address
- Contact Name, Phone Number and Email
- List Other Organizations the Grant will Collaborate with, please include Agency Name, FEIN, Address & Phone Number
- Type of Report: *Initial Grant Final Report / Renewal*

B. Project Summary for Renewal - *only complete if you are applying for a renewal of your application*

- The purpose of the project (*if your project is the same as first round, please copy and paste from original application, if you had made adjustments for the renewal please indicate*)
- The intended demographic profile of people that were to benefit from the project renewal
- The intended number of people that were to benefit from the project renewal
- How will you track your outcome indicators (*Figure out how you will collect the data described in your indicators. This might mean coming up with a measurement system yourself such as creating a survey that you give at the start and conclusion of the program.*)?
- The key activities of the project (*this can be very basic*)
- Timeframe of Outcome - *Initial, Intermediate, Long- Term*

C. Outcomes - "Results" - Remember this your final results from initial grant - *your answers can be a sentence (If appropriate, an outcome could have more than one indicator with a target)*

- The actual demographic profile of people that benefited from the project as described in the initial grant proposal (*1st grant you received*)
- The actual number of people that benefited from the project as described in the grant proposal of initial proposal (*1st grant you received*)
- List the intended outcomes of the program (from initial proposal). * *Remember outcome indicators are specific items of information/data that tracks the program's success. These should be observable, measurable characteristics, or changes that represent achievement of an outcome. These should include #s or %*
- Provide evidence from the data collected to support whether outcomes were achieved (quantitative and qualitative impact) - refer to example above "Target(s)"
- If any intended outcomes were not achieved, indicate the reasons
- Indicate any unintended outcomes which were achieved (positive and negative).

D. Conclusions - *These just need a brief description, please limit to one or two paragraphs*

- Describe how the program could be altered to improve its results.
- Describe any future plans for the program
- Describe plans to fund the project in the future.

E. Budget

- Resubmit a copy of the original project budget from the grant proposal, including an additional column entitled "actual expenses." *Please email this "Board@cowetafoundation.org" - Subject line should say Organization Name, Grant Renewal Budget*
- List additional funders and amounts (both secured and attempted).