



Outcome Definitions Explained

Confused about the language that people and funders use to talk about their work regarding to outcomes? Here is a handy definition of key terms:

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. 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.