



A Primer on Outcomes-Based Evaluation for Elder Abuse Projects, Programs, and Training

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A partner organization of the
National Center on Elder Abuse
Washington, DC

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A publication of the

National Center on Elder Abuse

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The National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA) serves as a national resource for elder rights advocates, law enforcement and legal professionals, public policy leaders, researchers, and citizens. It is the mission of the NCEA to promote understanding, knowledge sharing, and action on elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation. The NCEA is administered under the auspices of the National Association of State Units on Aging.

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A PRIMER ON OUTCOMES-BASED EVALUATION FOR ELDER ABUSE PROJECTS, PROGRAMS, AND TRAINING

PART 1: INTRODUCTION TO OUTCOMES-BASED EVALUATION

The Time is Right for Us to Engage in Outcomes-Based Evaluation

The National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA), over the years, has funded a number of small grants to organizations to conduct elder abuse related projects, programs, and training sessions.¹ For each grant, the grantees were required to conduct an evaluation of their program's effectiveness. As we worked with grantees and read final reports, questions arose: Is it enough to say that you set out to do a training program and you did it, so mission accomplished? Is it enough to say that 300 people attended the program, so therefore you had a significant impact on increasing awareness? Some projects indicated program objectives like "increased trust." Is that something that we somehow know has happened because of reported personal interactions, or is that something that has to be measured? And is it even possible to measure something like "trust"? What was unclear in these evaluation reports was whether or not the programs really had an impact on the lives of the participants, resulting in them changing their practices or behaviors.

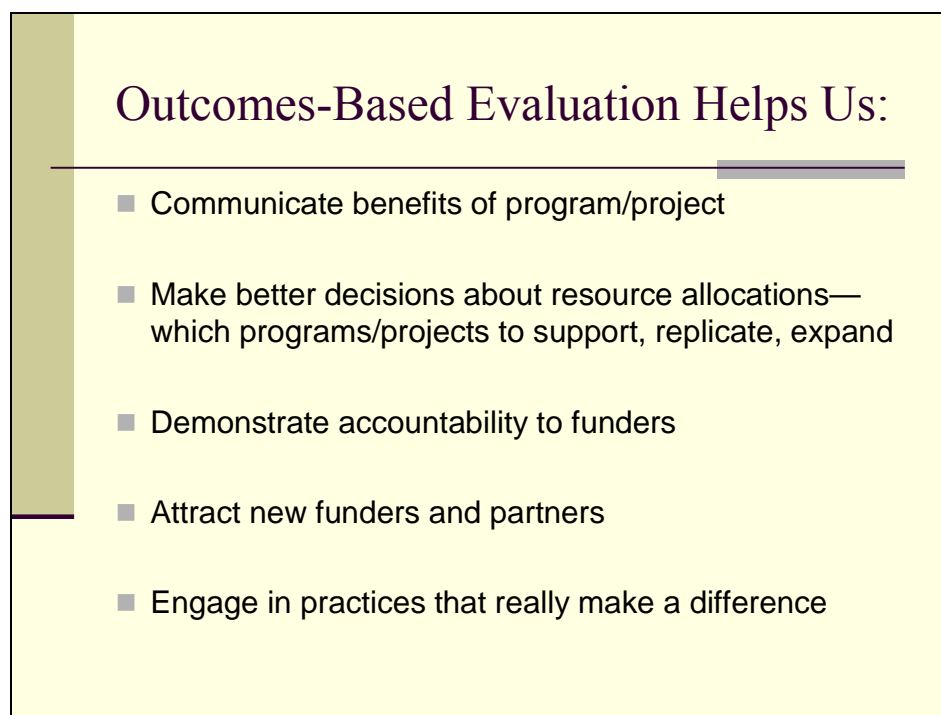
The time is right to engage ourselves in determining whether our efforts are making an impact and effecting change. We all know that there are limited or decreasing funds available to address elder mistreatment. At the same time, there is increasing need for our assistance. Many funders are requiring that we document that our scarce resources are being put to their most effective use, by conducting something called "outcomes-based evaluation." Outcomes-based evaluation is a tool we can use to *let us know if what we're doing is really making a difference. Outcomes-based evaluation is a step-by-step process that allows us to test the effectiveness of an intervention.*

It's important to state up-front that in these times of so much need with never the ideal amount of resources, conducting outcomes-based evaluation is not so much a burden—or something else we now need to get done that takes us away from our real job—as it is a process that can bring us real material benefits. If our work is making important and real change in our communities, outcomes-based evaluation lets us tell that story in compelling ways. It changes the script from "what we feel" to "what we know." It allows us to communicate the benefits of our work to funders and partners in meaningful ways that resonate in times of scarce and competing resources. Internally, it allows us to make better decisions about how we will use the resources we do have to get the most bang for our bucks. Lastly, it is important to remember that because

¹ For the remainder of this primer, we may refer to projects or to programs or to training—or simply to activities. Keep in mind that we are using the terms broadly and inclusively.

outcomes-based evaluation identifies effective strategies, we can engage in practices that, based on documented evidence, really make a difference in the lives of those we are trying to help.

Figure 1: Benefits of Outcomes-Based Evaluation



Myths or "Why I Can't Do This!"

If outcomes-based evaluation is so good for us, how come so few of us really do it—or, for that matter, do *any* kind of evaluation? Let's briefly look at some myths and see if we can demystify the evaluation process.²

Myth 1: I don't have the time to learn how to do evaluation—and it's too hard anyway.

Evaluation can be as complex—or as simple—as you want it to be. There's no need to make it a complex process because it works just fine with simple designs. The process we're going to be describing later in this primer is just that—a step by step logical process.

Myth 2: I don't have the resources to conduct a serious evaluation.

Actually, most projects do have an evaluation component already. But, the evaluation may not be revealing the type of information you really need to move your organization ahead. It's far better to use those same resources to conduct an evaluation that will be instrumental in making better

² Adapted from: Carter McNamara, *Basic Guide to Outcomes-based Evaluation for Non-profit Organizations with Very Limited Resources*, Free Management Library located at <http://www.managementhelp.org>.

arguments for new or expanded funding—or at least will let you know how you should be spending future resources.

Myth 3: I already know what my clients need and, besides, I already know how to deliver a good program.

Carter McNamara, a program evaluation expert, said, “You don’t always know what you don’t know about the needs of your clients.” And even a well-received program—one where you get a lot of feedback that says things like “I learned a lot” or “excellent session”—doesn’t tell you anything about whether your program has anything more than a momentary effect on those participating. Outcomes-based evaluation will “test” what you think you know.

Myth 4: Evaluation is something to do at the end of your program or project—or after you already know what’s happened.

Actually, your evaluation plan should be developed very early in your program planning stage. If you don’t know what you want to have happen as a result of your program, how do you know how to design your program?

Myth 5: Evaluation is about success or failure.

This is perhaps the most misunderstood aspect of evaluation—or perhaps the worst way evaluation is misused. Evaluation is not about success or failure. It’s about getting information that’s important to you and your constituencies so that you can make better evidence-based decisions that result in programmatic or organizational improvements.

Getting Started with Outcomes-Based Evaluation: The NCEA Primer

The NCEA has developed this primer as a basic introduction to outcomes-based evaluation. It is designed for beginners, and written in a personal style. It will help you understand and learn the basic steps of conducting an outcomes-based evaluation, so that your proposals and projects are not only more viable, but you are better able to communicate to funders and your communities the value of your projects, programs, and training.

A few caveats are in order. First, outcomes-based evaluation can seem complex, with unfamiliar terms. This primer is going to boil it down to the essentials, and consistently use the language that you will encounter in outcomes-based assessment. Boiling it down to the essentials, and keeping this at the beginner level, also means that we won’t be covering any topic in detail, but we will offer sources of information for those who want to learn more at the intermediate or advanced levels.

Second, the primer will introduce a number of concepts at the beginning that may seem incomplete to you. We’ll spend a considerable amount of time on what outcomes-based evaluation is designed to do, why it is important, its components, and how its components fit together. You may find yourself asking, “Why do I need to know these concepts? What do I do with them?” But, as you move through the primer, you will find that later sections and examples will build upon the information in the early sections. We will move from the conceptual elements

to the more practical, applied aspects, starting with how to write effective outcomes statements, moving on to data sources and methods, and ending with some words about organizing evaluation reports. By the end of this primer, you should have enough basic information that you can begin to incorporate outcomes-based evaluation in your next project!

Beginning to Understand the Language: Differences among Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes

Many of us have been using the terms “goals” and “objectives” for a very long time—and sometimes interchangeably referring to the very same thing as either a program goal or a program objective. For example, we might say that either the goal or the objective of a particular program is to provide six training sessions for physician assistants on identifying signs of potential elder abuse and neglect. Sometimes, we might even use the term “outcomes” to mean the same thing as “goal” or “objective”—but just using the past tense: “The outcome of our program was that we provided six training sessions for physician assistants on identifying signs of potential elder abuse and neglect.”

However, in outcomes-based evaluation, these three terms have very different meanings. Goals are not objectives, and objectives are not outcomes. So, in beginning to think about a program evaluation, you want to establish the big picture—your goal. Then, you want to state what you expect your participants to walk away with—your objectives. *And then you want to be explicit about what changes you want to occur because of your program—these are your intended outcomes.* (See Figure 2.)

Here’s an example of using those terms to describe our goals, objectives, and desired outcomes for this primer.

Example:

GOAL

- ◆ Provide an introduction to outcomes-based evaluation for field programs, projects, and training.

OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Readers will understand the reasons to conduct an outcomes-based evaluation.
- ◆ Readers will become familiar with the components of outcomes-based evaluation.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

- ◆ 25% of the readers will practice writing a measurable outcome statement, using the form found at the end of this primer.
- ◆ Within six months after reading this primer, 30% of the readers will refer back to it and identify a project/program/training to evaluate using the methods described in this primer.

Figure 2: Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes

Goals, Objectives and Outcomes— They're Different!

- Program goals
 - The big picture: what is the program all about?
- Objectives
 - What do you want your participants to walk away with?
- Outcomes
 - What changes will occur because of this program?

Thinking about Outcomes: Can we know an outcome when we see it?

There are many ways of thinking about outcomes. But there are a few questions you can ask yourself to make sure you're on the right track for describing an outcome, rather than a program objective or activity that doesn't necessarily lead to change:

- ◆ How has this program/training/project *made a difference* in the lives of the participants?
- ◆ How has this program/training/project *changed behaviors/practices*?
- ◆ How do we know that what we're *doing is really making a difference*?
- ◆ How do we know if we've *succeeded*?

Asking—and then answering—those types of questions is the essence of outcomes-based evaluation. And, it is very different from other types of evaluations that focus on numbers or whether or not something was accomplished. For example, a typical final report describing the effectiveness of a field project might say something like:

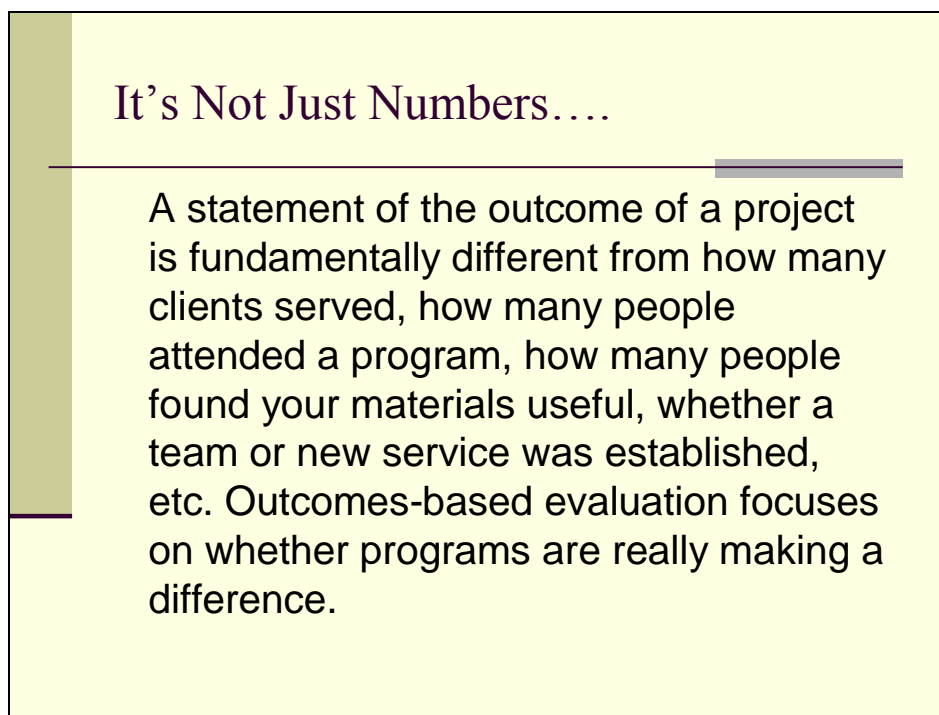
- ◆ We distributed 150 how-to manuals to neighborhood watch groups.
- ◆ Our message was received by over 200 law enforcement officers who attended the in-house training session.
- ◆ We surveyed 50 participants, who reported that our public education brochure provided useful information.
- ◆ We established a new hot-line service.

But these kinds of results don't tell us if anything actually happened after the manuals were distributed, or the training was attended, or the brochure was read, or the new service was put into place.

On the other hand, outcomes-based evaluation *will* tell us if anything actually happened after the manuals were distributed, or the training was attended, or the brochure was read, or the new service was put into place.

The focus of this type of evaluation is whether what we are doing—the interventions we are offering—really make a difference to the clients or people we're targeting with our programs (See figure 3).

Figure 3: Outcomes-Based Evaluation Emphasizes the Difference a Program Makes



It's Not Just Numbers....

A statement of the outcome of a project is fundamentally different from how many clients served, how many people attended a program, how many people found your materials useful, whether a team or new service was established, etc. Outcomes-based evaluation focuses on whether programs are really making a difference.

PART 2: THE OUTCOMES-BASED EVALUATION MODEL

The Four Components of an Outcomes-Based Evaluation Plan

In its simplest and most useful form, outcomes-based evaluation is a plan that you can implement to determine if a user-centered program has achieved its goals and objectives. After identifying your goals—or the reasons for the program—we can look at it as a model that has four basic parts.³

The first component is **inputs**. Inputs are materials or resources that are needed to develop and conduct the project. Some examples include personnel, facilities rent, equipment, materials and supplies, volunteers, research, and software. This step, identifying the inputs, is pretty easy.

The second component is **activities and services**. Activities and services are the things you do to plan and conduct the program. Some examples include recruiting participants, administering budgets, creating materials, conducting workshops, and putting on Webcasts.

The third component is **outputs**. Outputs, the direct program products, are the elements many of us are most used to reporting as an “evaluation” of our programs: how many people attended and/or completed a workshop, how many materials were developed, how many informational placemats were distributed. Outputs are generally reported as numbers, although an output can simply be the product of an activity or service. *While giving us valuable information, **outputs do not indicate how effective a program was in producing measurable change in the intended beneficiaries of the program. They account for the activities that occurred, but not whether those activities had any impact.***

Outcomes are the fourth ingredient of an outcomes-based evaluation model. They are what you want to happen to a participant in, or beneficiary of, your program. Outcomes represent a change that has occurred because of what you’ve done. There are several types of outcomes that may occur over time. In the short term—maybe up to 6 months after the program ends—outcomes are most likely to be changes in knowledge, skills or abilities, and attitudes. In the medium term—maybe up to 9 months after your program ends—outcomes are most likely to be changes in behaviors, actions, or decisions. In the long-term—perhaps 12 months or more after your program ends—outcomes are most likely to be changes in conditions or status. These time periods are, of course, fluid. Think of them as guides to help you decide what kinds of changes are reasonable to expect.

There are two subcomponents of outcomes: **targets and indicators**. Your target outcome is the number or percent of participants that you want to achieve your outcome. It’s a measure of what represents “success” to you and your organization—it’s the realization that you can’t and won’t bring about change for every participant. Indicators are the measurable “milestones” towards

³ The material in this section is adapted from: Carter McNamara, *Basic Guide to Outcomes-based Evaluation for Non-profit Organizations with Very Limited Resources*, Free Management Library located at <http://www.managementhelp.org> .

reaching your target outcome. They let you know if you're likely to reach your target—and give you time and opportunity to intervene or follow-up if you seem to be “off-schedule.”

These last two concepts—outcomes targets and indicators—may be a little confusing, but we'll be coming back to them later in this primer with actual examples of how to formulate them.

As Figure 4 indicates, there are important differences between *outputs* and *outcomes*:

- ◆ Outputs are usually numbers that don't say anything at all about change in your targeted audience.
- ◆ Outcomes indicate desired changes in your targeted audience.
- ◆ Outcome targets tell us how much of your outcome you hope to realistically achieve.

Outcome indicators are just that—they are data taken at a period of time that indicate whether or not you're making progress towards achieving your outcome target.

Figure 4: Outputs vs. Outcomes

IMPORTANT DIFFERENCES

- Outputs—activities or numbers, no change
- Outcomes—indicate change in participants and/or end users brought about by your program
- Outcome targets—how many participants/users you want to achieve your outcome (your idea of what indicates “success)”
- Outcome indicators—data that show if you're making progress toward your outcome target

Adapted from: Carter McNamara, “Basic Guide to Outcomes-based Evaluation for Non-profit Organizations with Very Limited Resources” Free Management Library located at <http://www.managementhelp.org>

The Logic Model of Outcomes-Based Evaluation

We often use models to help us think about the best ways to get something done, or to serve as a blueprint for future actions. Outcomes-based evaluation can also be “modeled” to help us better understand how these four components (inputs, activities and services, outputs, and outcomes) fit together.

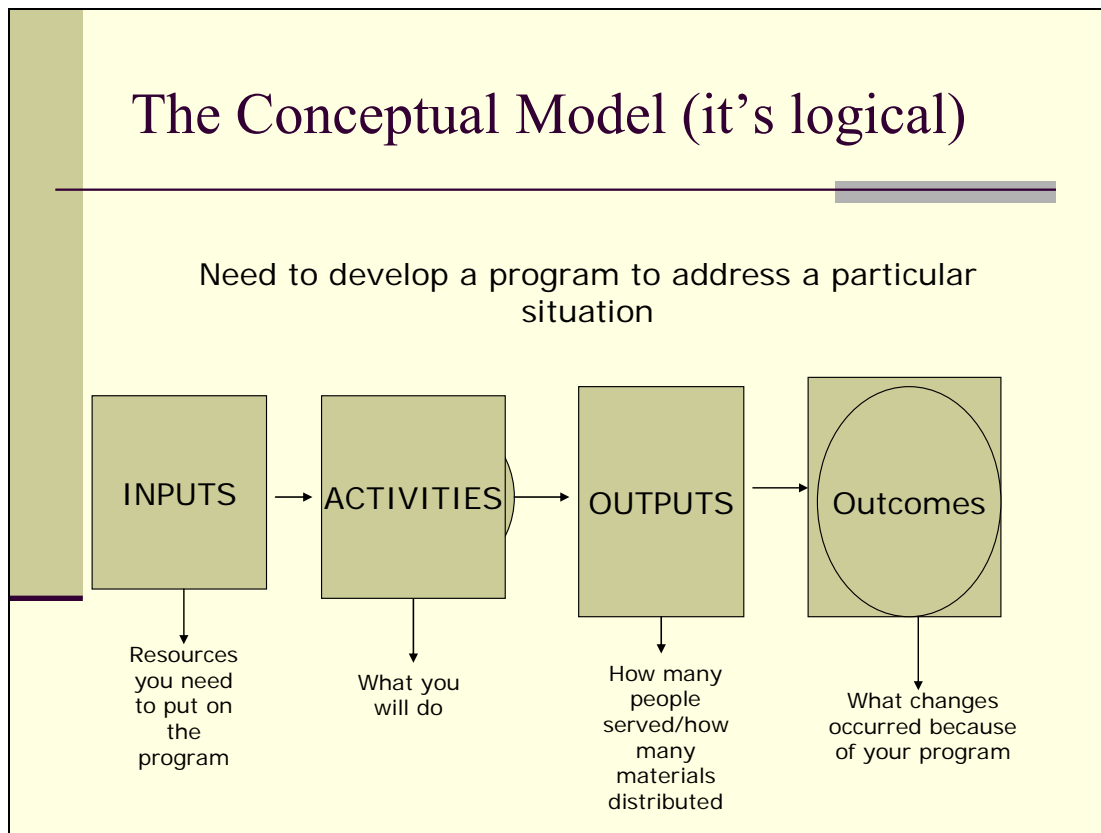
- ◆ First, you have a situation that you want to develop a program or project to address.
- ◆ To address the situation, you identify, gather and use inputs which are needed to develop, organize and implement activities and services.
- ◆ The outputs of these activities and services are quantifiable work products and participants, like one curriculum guide or 100 attendees.
- ◆ Your outcomes are the positive changes that occur in these participants because of your program.

We call this a logic model of outcomes-based evaluation, because, as shown in Figure 5, the parts of the model are logically linked, with

audience needs leading to → program activities leading to → expected outcomes.

And, really, that’s all that outcomes-based evaluation is; it’s a pretty simple process to design.

Figure 5: The Conceptual Logic Model of Outcomes-Based Evaluation



Theory to Practice: A Simplified Illustrated Example of the Logic Model of Outcomes-Based Evaluation

In Figure 6, we illustrate this logical flow that leads from inputs to outcomes through a simplified example of a program. (DISCLAIMER TIME: Look at this merely as an example of the model. It's not representative of what might really happen or even of good program design, but it does represent a logical flow that leads to measurable outcomes.)

Problem identified.

It has come to the attention of your multidisciplinary team that some families are having problems because they don't know how to take care of their aging parents' needs; this is resulting in an increase in non-intentional neglect, and damaged family relationships.

Means selected to address problem.

Your team decides to put on a series of informational programs, with the goal of reducing non-intentional neglect by increasing the caregiving knowledge and skills of affected family members in the community.

Inputs.

Following our model, we set forth what we need to put into the program—our inputs of staff, money, and research.

We use these inputs to conduct certain activities and services. In no particular order, these include developing curriculum, developing programs, facilitating support groups, and recruiting participants.

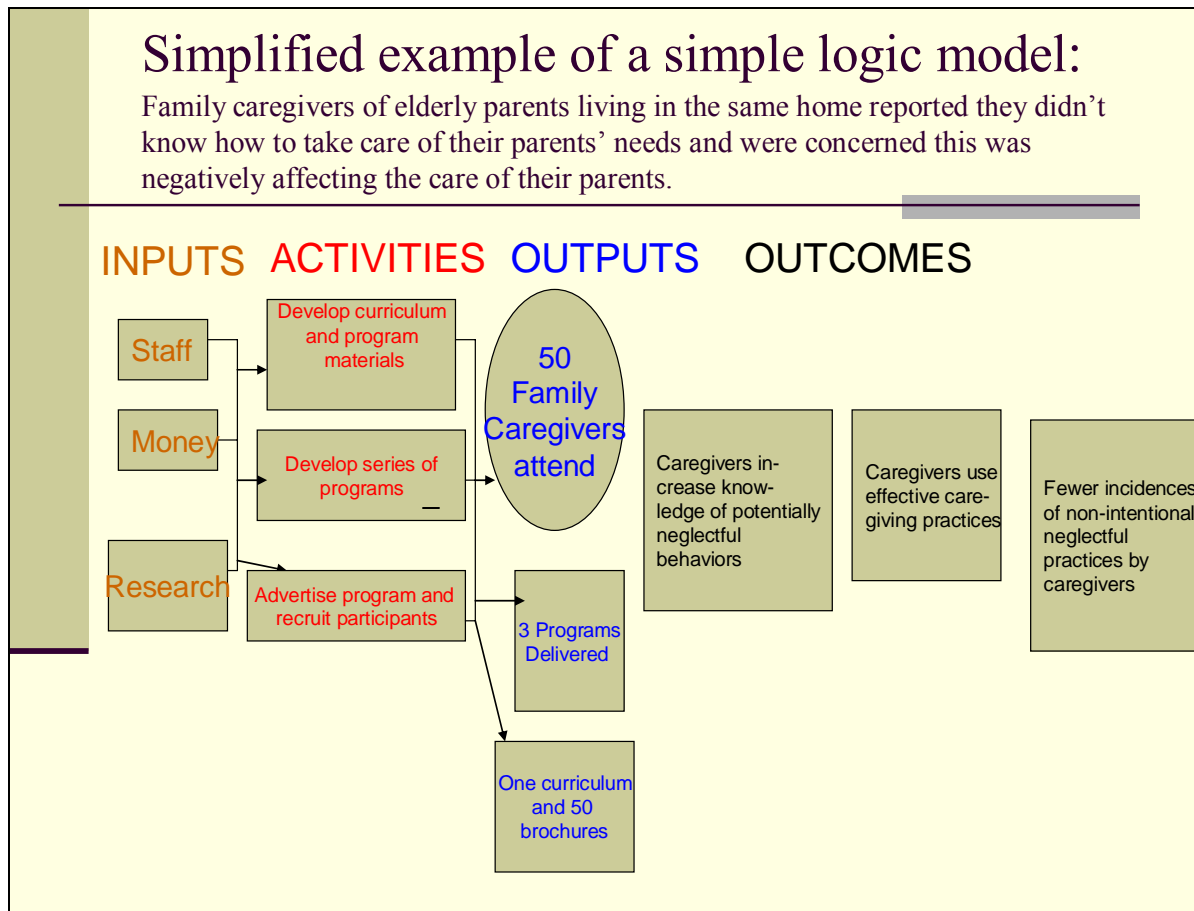
Outputs.

As a result of our activities, we have a number of outputs. We deliver a series of 3 programs to 50 family caregivers, and we produce 50 brochures.

Outcomes.

But these outputs don't tell us anything about the changes we desire to see in our targeted audience—the outcomes of our efforts. The three columns of boxes at the right represent a set of outcomes. The first column of outcomes (caregivers increase their knowledge of potentially neglectful behaviors) is an example of a change in knowledge—a short term outcome we expect in the near future. The second column of outcomes (caregivers use effective caregiving practices) is an example of changes in behavior and action—a medium-term outcome. The final column of outcomes (a reduction in non-intentional neglect) is an example of a change in condition—a long-term outcome that might take some time to accomplish.

Figure 6: Simplified example of a logic model



Theory to Practice: A Text Example of the Logic Model of Outcomes-Based Evaluation

While a diagram is useful to show the links among the components of the model, don't be put off if you're a non-visual type! You can also use the model simply by listing the components. Using this primer as an example, we'll go through the steps of using the logic model to plan an outcomes-based evaluation. However, this time, we'll also go a step further by including outcome targets and outcome indicators.

Problem identified.

The situation is that funding agencies are asking that organizations working in the elder abuse and neglect arenas document the differences their programs are making in their communities. This calls for the organizations to conduct outcomes-based evaluations, but few are prepared to do this. As a first step, they need to become acquainted with outcomes-based evaluation in its most simple form.

Means selected to address problem.

NCEA decides to conduct a Web-based presentation (Webinar) that provides an introduction to outcomes-based evaluation for projects, programs, and training (a goal designed to meet a perceived audience need).

Inputs—resources and activities

But it takes something to do something. So we have **inputs**—what we use to produce this Webinar. Those inputs are:

- ◆ NCEA partners and staff time and energy
- ◆ Money to fund the Webinar and the supporting written materials
- ◆ Research to provide the information contained in the Webinar
- ◆ Technical support

In order to produce the Webinar, we also have to engage in a number of **activities** both leading up to and following the Webinar:

- ◆ Publicize Webinar and recruit participants
- ◆ Develop visuals and script
- ◆ Coordinate NCEA staff, Webinar speaker, technical support
- ◆ Conduct Webinar to provide training
- ◆ Develop feedback form and collect responses
- ◆ Collate feedback responses
- ◆ Use feedback to improve written primer

Outputs

As a result of our activities, we have four **outputs**:

- ◆ A visual presentation for the Webinar
- ◆ Number of people tuned into the Webinar who listened “live”
- ◆ Archived presentation available for those not listening “live” to the Webinar
- ◆ Written primer, based on the Webinar

Outcomes

But, we don’t confuse outputs with outcomes. It’s not enough to say we produced a product--our Webinar—that was listened to by 100 people either live or later. That doesn’t tell us if our product had any effect on those who participated. So, we have a number of desired outcomes. (NOTE: The examples of desired outcomes we’re about to list are exaggerated—we certainly wouldn’t expect these kinds of outcomes—particularly the medium term and long term ones--after this one brief exposure to the topic.)

Outcome Targets

First, we have **short-term outcomes with targets**; these usually involve changes in knowledge or skills. So we hope that:

- ◆ 100% of the participants will be able to list the components of the outcomes evaluation logic model by the end of the Webinar; and that
- ◆ 50% of the participants will write a measurable outcome statement by the end of the week after the Webinar.

Outcome Indicators

Besides the more immediate results, we also want to set some intermediate **outcome indicators**. We will consider our program a success if:

- ◆ Within 1 month after the Webinar, 25% of the participants identify an upcoming project to evaluate using the methods learned in the Webinar;
- ◆ Within 3 months after the Webinar, 20% of the participants develop a complete logic model for planning an outcomes-based evaluation of an upcoming project or program;
- ◆ Within 9 months after the Webinar, 20% of the participants actually conduct an outcomes-based evaluation of at least one program.

Note that we've included indicators of our progress over time, and that there is a logical progression of activities from identification to development to action. We also anticipate that there will be some drop-out over time, and we've set our indicators to allow for that, while still setting a standard of success of 20%.

This may seem somewhat cumbersome, but the design of the logic model of outcomes-based evaluation can also be expressed by this thought (See Figure 7):

We aim to do what (our goals and objectives)

...for whom (our targeted audience)

...using what (inputs)

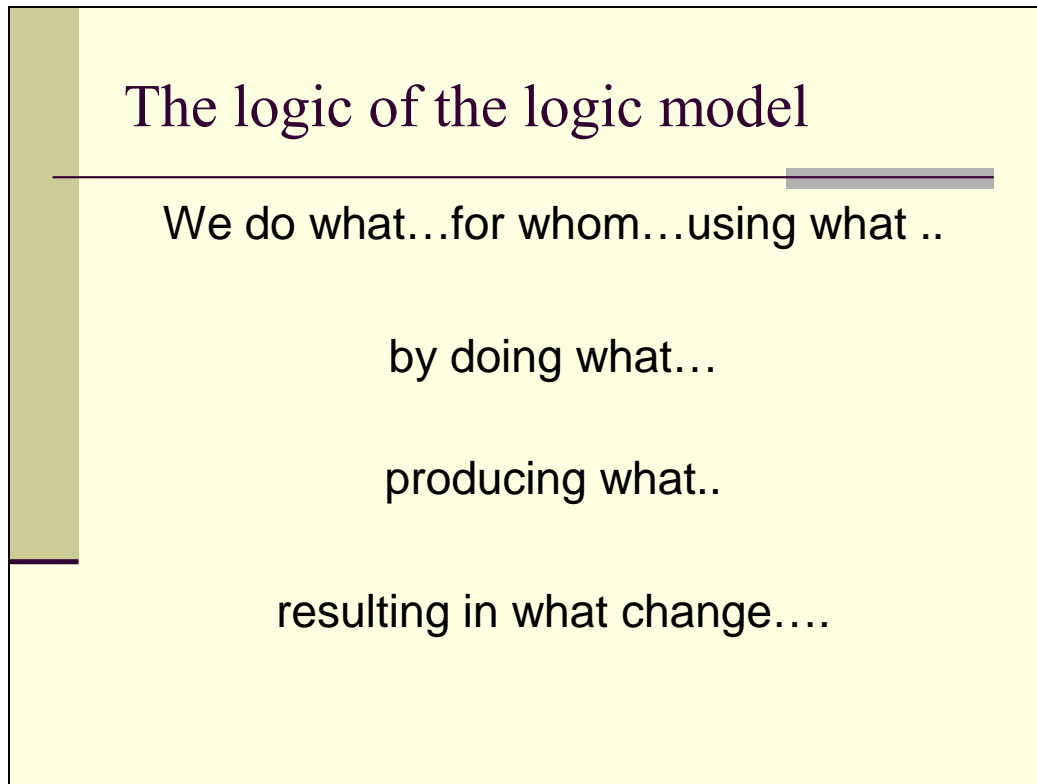
...by doing what (our activities and services)

...producing what (outputs)

...resulting in what change (our outcomes).

If you look at that statement, it really is not that much more than what most organizations and agencies are doing right now when you examine your projects and programs. So, outcomes-based evaluation is really only adding one more step—measuring the change that occurred in your target audience because of their participation in your program.

Figure 7: How to remember the design of the logic model

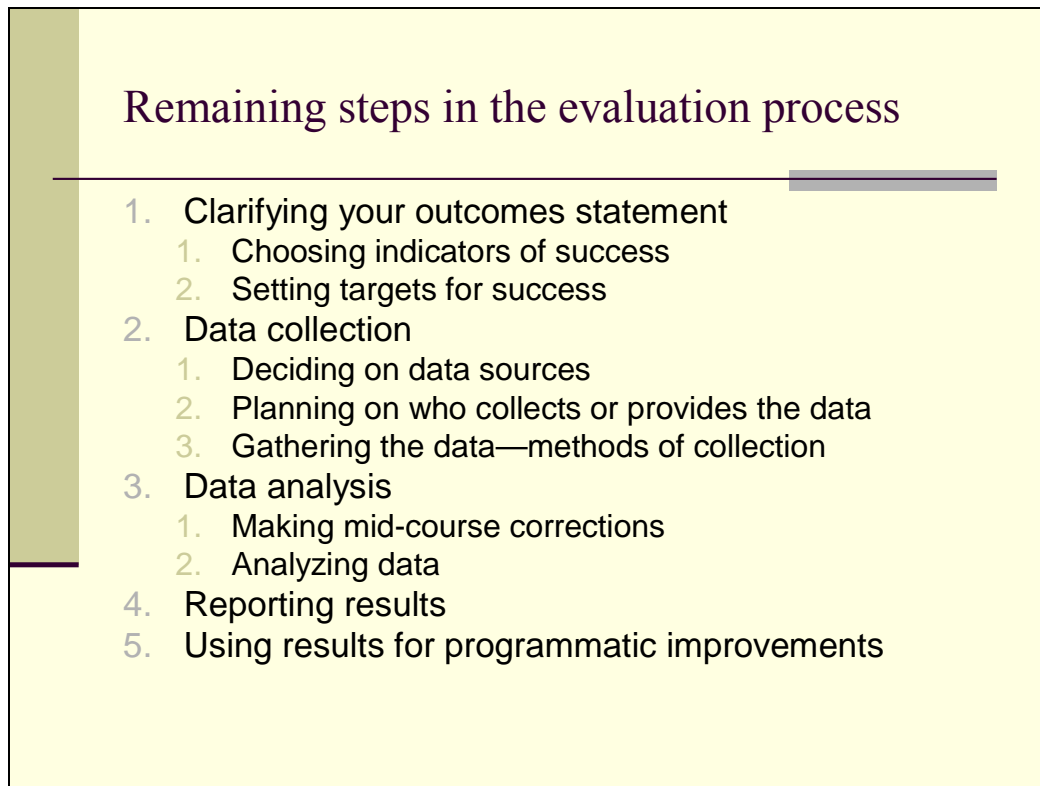


PART 3: BEYOND THE MODEL: CONDUCTING THE OUTCOMES-BASED EVALUATION

We now have a conceptual picture of how to put together an outcomes-based evaluation. But now it's time to become more concrete. In Part 3 of this primer, you will be introduced to the remaining steps of the outcomes-based evaluation process. As you can see in Figure 8, there are five major steps:

- ◆ The first step calls for you to “check” your outcomes statement so that it is clear, observable, and measurable.
- ◆ The second step deals with the actual data collection; the methodology you will use to measure your progress on achieving your outcome.
- ◆ The third step in the process calls for you to analyze the data you have collected,
- ◆ The fourth step is writing an evaluation report.
- ◆ The fifth step is actually the most important—since it calls for you to reflect upon the meaning of your evaluation and what the implications are for programmatic quality and improvements.

Figure 8: After the model



Most people tend to think that the data steps are the most important, but actually they are not. *The most important—and the most difficult— step in the process is writing measurable outcomes statements.* If you don't start out with an outcome that is easily understood and measurable—if you don't start out defining your standard for knowing when you've achieved your outcome (outcomes indicators and targets)—then you will probably collect the wrong data. You could still end up with a very nice report, but it won't give you the information you need to know to see if you're conducting the right activities to bring about needed benefits for your clients.

Step 1: Writing Effective Outcomes Statements

There are two keys to conducting a good outcomes-based assessment:

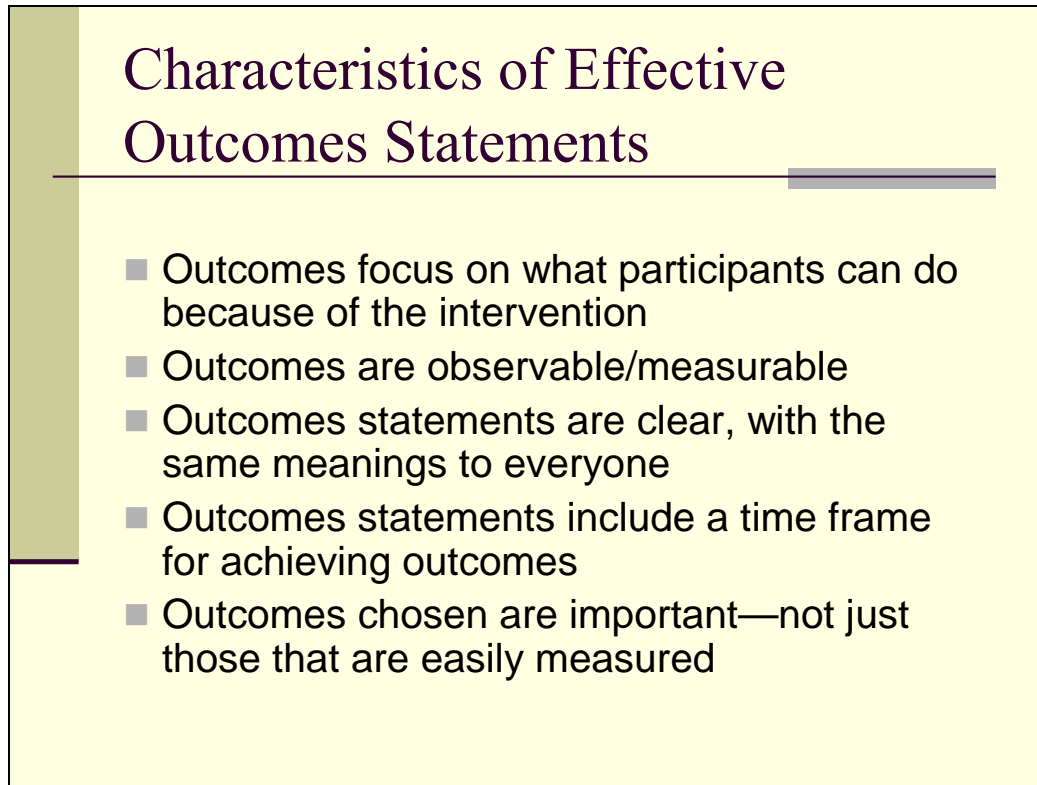
- 1) Writing outcomes statements that are measurable and clear; and
- 2) Choosing indicators and targets of success and incorporating them into outcomes statements.

In this section, we'll take you sequentially through the process of writing effective outcomes statements.

Characteristics of Effective Outcomes Statements

Effective outcomes statements share five characteristics (See Figure 9). All of these characteristics are equally important, and *all should be present in any outcomes statements you develop*. As you begin to write outcomes statements, the following guidelines should help you.

Figure 9: Five Characteristics of Effective Outcomes Statements



Characteristics of Effective Outcomes Statements

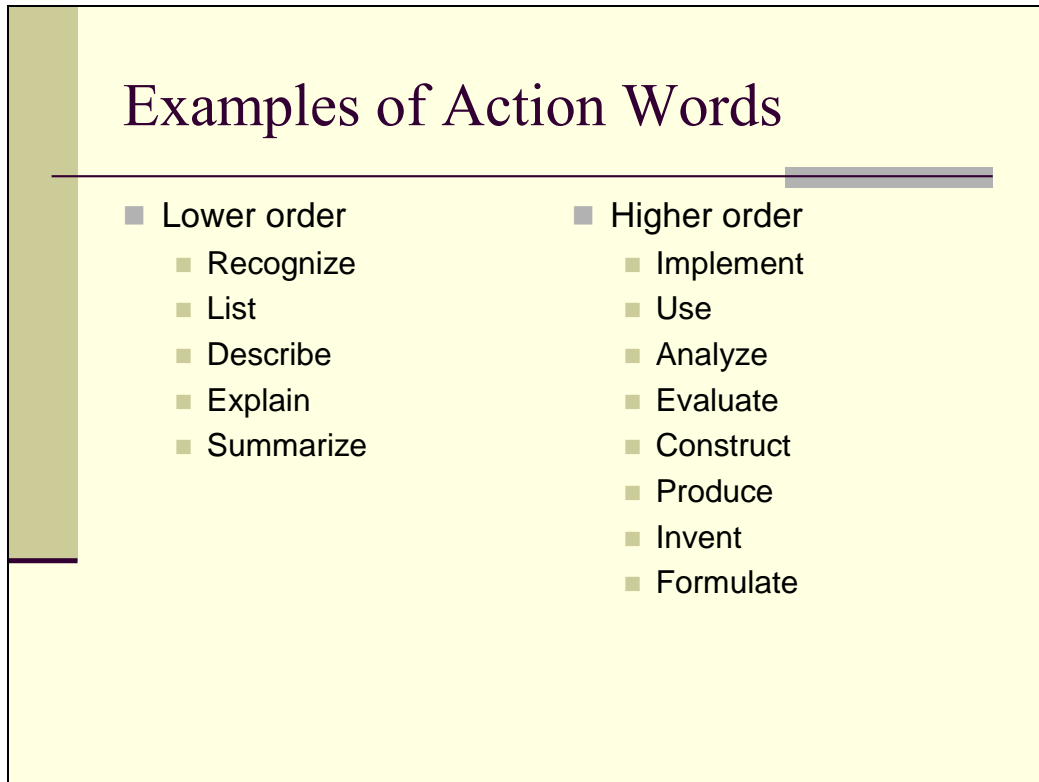
- Outcomes focus on what participants can do because of the intervention
- Outcomes are observable/measurable
- Outcomes statements are clear, with the same meanings to everyone
- Outcomes statements include a time frame for achieving outcomes
- Outcomes chosen are important—not just those that are easily measured

First, focus on what your participants or target group *should/will do as a result of your program or project or training*. This will ensure that you’ll really be concentrating on outcomes, and not on outputs. For most people, this is actually the most difficult part of writing an effective statement; we are much more used to writing about outputs than outcomes. For example, a typical program objective for training programs is that “participants undergoing the training will have a working knowledge of” (and you can fill in the blank.) But that doesn’t get at the really important question of “*will they do anything with their working knowledge?*” That’s really the question that an outcomes evaluation helps you answer—if you write the statement that leads you to collect the right data.

Similarly, a common program statement in the elder abuse arena is that “participants will develop greater trust between....” (and, again, fill in the blank). There’s nothing wrong with wanting your target group to have increased trust, but WHY do you want them to have increased trust? What is the behavior you hope they’ll exhibit or what are the actions you hope they’ll take if they have increased trust? Those behaviors and actions are what your outcome statement should be about.

Second, make sure you can actually measure your outcome. One of the strategies to help you here is to use action verbs as part of your outcome statement (See Figure 10 for examples). Of course, this supports the first bullet point which is focusing on what people can do.

Figure 10: Action Words from Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy



Third, make sure your statement is unambiguous and that your terms are clear (which means they are also measurable). So, for example, if you say your participants will demonstrate increased knowledge—what does that really mean? What kind of knowledge is important? How long should they retain it? If you have an immediate post-test and they remember enough to answer a question right then and there, but have forgotten the information by the time they’ve gone to their cars, does that really tell you what you want to know?

Fourth, indicate the time frame for achieving your desired outcome. If you focus on what participants should be able to do, when do you want them to do it? Is this a short-term, medium-term or long-term outcome? If you can put the time frame into your outcomes statement, then it gives you clarity about when to collect your data. It’s also important to note that, while we all probably desire that our interventions have long-term effects, we live in a world of limited resources and so it probably makes most sense to concentrate on short and medium-term goals.

Fifth, make sure that you are measuring something that is important to you; something that you really want to know. Only you can decide what outcomes are the most vital to your mission. Only you can decide what you need to know in order to move your programs to the next level of quality. If you're measuring outcomes that have little meaning to you just because they're the ones that are easy to measure—and there's no way you're really going to use that information to help you make future decisions—then outcomes-based evaluation really will be little more than an empty exercise.

As was mentioned in the beginning of this primer, the National Center on Elder Abuse funded a number of small elder abuse field projects that were required to conduct an evaluation of their effectiveness. Let's put the five characteristics just explained to work, as we evaluate some actual examples of program outcomes statements that were submitted. In essence, we'll look at the original statement, and then formulate a more effective statement that could be used in an outcomes-based evaluation.

Outcomes Statements From the Field: Change in Knowledge

In our first example, we examine a program outcome statement developed by the organizers of a conference aimed at improving the skills of those working with chronic clutterers. According to the evaluation report submitted by the organizers, the desired program outcome—the change they wanted to bring about in participants who attended the conference—was that

“Participants will feel more able to formulate a strategy to work with a chronic clutterer”
(than they felt before this conference).

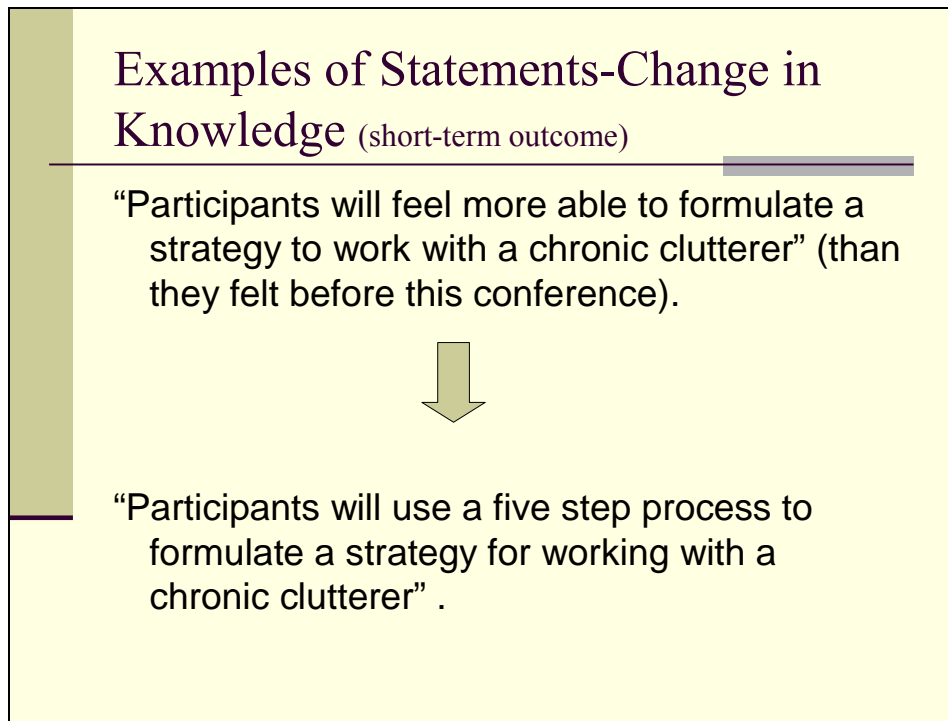
But, you should be able to tell by now that this is *not* an effective outcomes statement. It doesn't indicate that the participants should now be able *to do* anything new because they attended the conference. Instead, it concentrates on how the participants should *feel*. From that, we can't even test that they internalized any knowledge, or even if they did that they'll be able to do anything with the knowledge they gained.

The arrows in Figure 11 indicate a revision of the statement so that it is outcomes-based. The revised statement tells us what the participants should be able to do—in a measurable/testable way—now that they've attended this meeting. The statement,

“Participants will use a five step process to formulate a strategy for working with a chronic clutterer”

represents an immediate (short-term) change in knowledge: they know the steps to formulate a strategy and they know how to use those steps to formulate a strategy.

Figure 11: Rewriting an Outcomes Statement to Show a Change in Knowledge



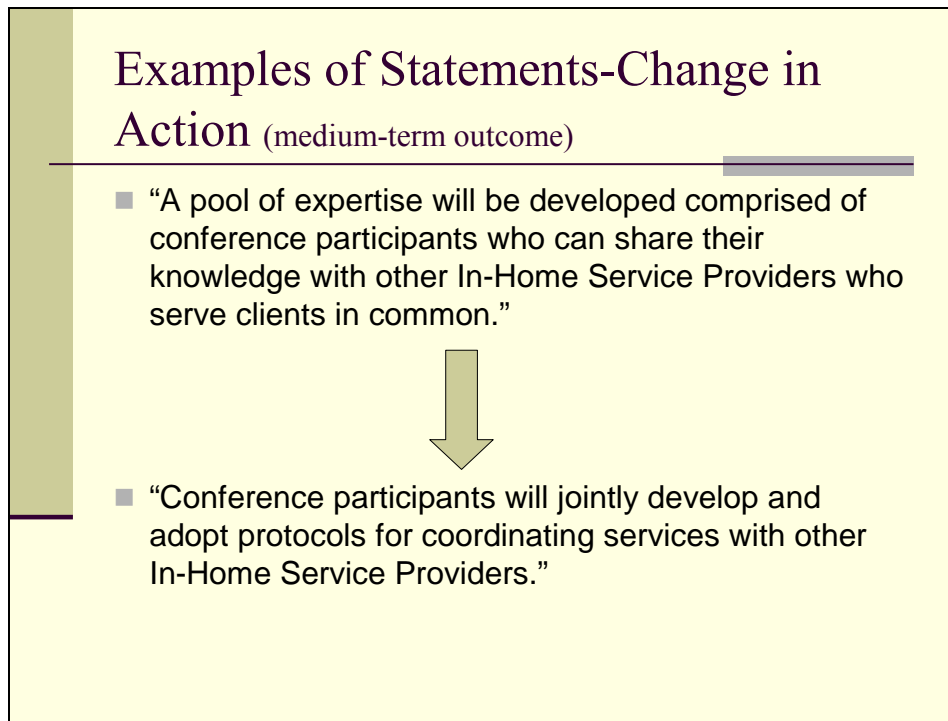
Outcomes Statements From the Field: Change in Action

This example, from the same program as above, shows a desired change in action. The first statement,

“A pool of expertise will be developed comprised of conference participants who can share their knowledge with other In-Home Service Providers who serve clients in common”

is very static. You have a pool of expertise, but then what? Why do you have this pool of expertise? Participants may share their knowledge, but what actions—or outcomes—do you want to happen because they are doing this? The revised statement, shown in Figure 12, answers that question. The expected outcome is that the participants will develop and use protocols for coordinating services with other in-home service providers. Because it might take some weeks or months for that to occur, it is a medium-term outcome. The pool of expertise—the shared knowledge—is merely a means to that end.

Figure 12: Rewriting an Outcomes Statement to Show a Change in Action



Outcomes Statements From the Field: Change in Decision-Making and Behavior


This field project proposed to develop and implement an organizational payee program for tribal members living on an American Indian reservation. Their evaluation plan was simple: either they developed and implemented the program, or they didn't. But, in our outcomes-based model, establishing the program would be an output, not an outcome. So, again, to get to the outcome, we would have to ask ourselves some questions: What do they want to have happen if they do implement the organizational payee program? What kind of change in their targeted audience are they looking for because now such a program exists?

Figure 13 illustrates how that outcome could be rewritten to be a more effective statement that measures change in the targeted population: "Tribal members living on the Reservation identified as victims or potential victims of financial exploitation or who otherwise need help managing their financial resources will voluntarily use the services of the organizational payee program." This would be a medium-term outcome that indicates a change in both decision-making (the decision to voluntarily use the service) and a change in behavior (using the services) by the target population.

Figure 13: Rewriting an Outcomes Statement to Show a Change in Decision-Making and Behavior

Examples of Statements-Change in Decision-Making & Behavior (medium-term)

- “The outcome of this proposal..is to develop and implement an Organizational Payee Program to protect our elders and their finances.”



- “Tribal members living on the Reservation identified as victims or potential victims of financial exploitation or who otherwise need help managing their financial resources will voluntarily use the services of the organizational payee program.”

Outcomes Indicators and Outcomes Targets

Although we previously brought up the concepts of outcomes indicators and outcomes targets, none of the statements we just revised included indicators or targets. Basically indicators and targets answer three questions:

- ◆ What change in your participants would indicate success?
- ◆ When do you measure it?
- ◆ How do you know “how-much” change equals success?

Let’s consider the Organizational Payee Program example and see how, by addressing the three questions above, outcomes indicators and targets could be incorporated into a more advanced outcomes statement.

Remember that the outcomes indicator gives us a “progress report” on how well we’re currently doing and gives us some insight into how likely it is that we’ll achieve our target “on-time.” In

Figure 14, we'll rewrite our outcomes statement to include our **target outcome (what we eventually hope to achieve)**:

We will consider the program a success if 60% of tribal members identified as victims or potential victims of financial exploitation or who otherwise need help managing their financial resources (the target audience), voluntarily use the services of the Organizational Payee Program within 12 months of the Program's establishment.

But, we don't want to wait until the 12 months is up to see how we're doing. So, we also have an **indicator** outcome in which:

We expect that 25% of our target audience will use the services of the Organizational Payee Program within four months of the Program's establishment.

If we find that we're way behind on our indicator, we have some time to make some mid-course corrections and interventions. Ask questions like: What didn't happen that should have? Is it fixable? What did happen that shouldn't have? Is it avoidable?

Figure 14: Writing Outcomes Statements with Targets and Indicators

Targets and Indicators: Example

Outcome: "Tribal members living on the Reservation identified as victims or potential victims of financial exploitation or who otherwise need help managing their financial resources (the target audience) will voluntarily use the services of the Organizational Payee Program."

Outcome Target: "Within 12 months of the establishment of the Organizational Payee Program, 60% of the target audience will voluntarily use its services."

Outcome Indicator: "Within 4 months of the establishment of the Organizational Payee Program, 25% of the target audience will voluntarily use its services."

Step 2: Data Collection and Analysis

When you are satisfied with your outcome statements that include indicators and targets, the next step is to devise your data methodology. It's best to do this up-front, and best to have a written plan. In your plan, you'll want to answer some basic questions. For each outcome indicator (your program may have more than one), determine:

- ◆ What data/information will be collected?
- ◆ Who will collect it?
- ◆ How will you collect it?
- ◆ When will you collect it?
- ◆ What will you do with it?

Sources of Data

There are many different sources of data. What's important to note is that any one source is not necessarily better than any other source. Your common sense and knowledge of the situation will be your best guides in thinking about what kind of data will effectively measure your progress in achieving your desired outcome. Figure 15 lists common sources of data. Each has its advantages and disadvantages.⁴

Anecdotes. Many field reports include anecdotes (short stories about something that happened; or, more usually, participant comments about the value of the program). However, in most cases, anecdotes are not the strongest indicators of change. You can glean information about attitudinal change, but you tend to get comments mostly from very happy people or very unhappy people. They're not very good measures of changes in skills, since people will tend to talk about what they're already good at and you have no real objective indication of their skill level. But they are great for one thing in particular: they may reveal outcomes that you hadn't anticipated.

Surveys and feedback forms. Surveys and/or feedback forms are another very commonly used method often seen in reports of projects and programs. Because these depend on participant self-reporting, they're not objective measures of skill levels or behaviors. They are useful tools, though, for changes in attitudes and knowledge, since the questions can include quantifiable ratings scales.

⁴ The discussion of advantages and disadvantages of each source of data is closely adapted from: Elizabeth Kryder-Reid, Director, Museum Studies, IUPUI and Principal Investigator, *Shaping Outcomes Curriculum, Data Sources* www.shapingoutcomes.org/course/evaluate/d9.htm .

Observation. Observation is also a source of data, though we tend not to think of it that frequently. One example of using this methodology would be to have a colleague watch participants—during your training, for example—and document objectively whether skills or behaviors have actually changed—at least in the short run. Of course, this pre-supposes that your training or program includes opportunities for the participants to do something that can be observed, such as role-playing. And it pre-supposes that your observer has a checklist of desired skills or behaviors that can be used to document what is happening in your session.

Participant projects. Closely related to observation are participant projects as a source of data. You can get some rich data about changes in skills and some behaviors or actions, but it won't reveal too much about attitudinal changes. Using our prior example of the training workshop for those who work with chronic clutterers, we had a desired outcome of workshop participants developing and using protocols for coordinating services. You can write indicator and target outcomes statements that rely on whether and when the participants actually developed and used protocols for coordinating services as a primary source of data.

Using information from other organizations. In evaluating long-term outcomes, it's sometimes very useful to be able to use other organizations' records or information as a source of your data. Let's go back to our Organizational Payee Program example. We didn't write a long-term outcome for it, but consider an outcome that emphasizes a change in condition or status such as:

“Two years after the implementation of the Organizational Payee Program, there will be a 50% decrease in the number of at-risk tribal members who were financially exploited, compared to the two years prior to implementation of the program.”

In order to evaluate whether this decrease actually occurred, it would be helpful to ask for data from the relevant reporting and investigation agencies. Certainly there are other variables that would and could affect the reporting rates. If there were a decrease, appropriate statistical techniques could be used to determine how much of this decrease was due to participation in the Organizational Payee Program.

Figure 15: Sources of Data

Where can you find data to collect so you can measure each outcome?

- Anecdotes
- Surveys/feedback forms/questionnaires
- Observation
- Participant projects
- Records/information from other organizations

Source: Elizabeth Kryder-Reid, Director, Museum Studies, Indiana University IUPUI campus and Principal Investigator, Shaping Outcomes Curriculum
www.shapingoutcomes.org/course/evaluate/d9.htm

Consider the Practical Aspects of Collecting and Using Data

In addition to evaluating what's the best source of data, you'll also want to ask—and make sure you answer, again preferably in writing so you have a record—questions about practicality (See Figure 16). You'll have to balance practicality—what you can reasonably expect to do well—against the best way to gather the information you need. Collect only enough information to figure out if your program is successful, which means you need your outcome indicators and targets. If you have lots of participants or a very large target audience, consider random sampling. If you make decisions upfront about cost, who will do what, what kind of time commitment is necessary for the evaluation, and when you're going to collect the data, your evaluation will be within your available resource base.

You'll also want to think about how you're going to organize your data when it's time to report your results. Don't worry about questions of reliability and validity or complex analytical methods. You're not writing a dissertation or conducting a scientific experiment. Simple methods of analyzing numerical data—such as tabulating means and frequencies for each question—is usually sufficient. In organizing qualitative data (such as comments or observations), consider labeling categories or themes and identifying patterns or relationships among them.

Whether your data is numerical or qualitative, one thing to keep in mind is particularly important for outcomes-based evaluation. Because you want to use the information to help you determine

how to better serve your clients—not just to show how well your programs are received, or how many services or materials you’re providing or how many people you’re reaching—it doesn’t help to only highlight certain aspects to insure that the picture you present is one of complete success. Accountability to funders is important—but what funders really want to know is whether or not you’re designing and delivering your programs so that they have a measurable impact on people’s lives. You need accurate analysis of data to help you determine changes and improvements in your programs that will best serve your clientele.

Figure 16: Points to Consider when Collecting Data

**Balance methodology with practicality
when collecting and using data**

- Cost?
- Who will do it?
- What kind of time commitment can you free up?
- When does it make sense for each outcome?
 - Before/after program?
 - 6 months later?
 - 12 months later?
- How will you organize your results?

Step 3: Organizing the Final Report

You have your outcomes statements so you know what you wanted to measure, and now you also have your measurement data. What’s left to do is actually report your results. If you took the initial step of developing a logic model, you’ve already recorded much of the information that is typically included in a good final report. You’ll be able to describe:

- ◆ Program goals and objectives (the need you identified that gave rise to your program)
- ◆ Inputs (what you used, spent, and consumed in delivering your program)
- ◆ Activities and services for your target audience (what you did)
- ◆ Outputs (the work/materials/products produced/how many people participated or were reached)
- ◆ Outcomes and indicators (what you achieved for the target audience; if you met your targets for indicating success)

The very last step is organizing all the information from your logic model and incorporating the data you've collected into your final report. Some people go through all the work, and then get paralyzed by the thought of having to organize it all into some sort of written report. But, the final report is really very simple. In essence, the report should answer four questions.

First, what did you want to accomplish with this field project or program or training? What were your goals, objectives, and desired outcomes? What needs were you addressing in developing the project or program or training? You already know this from your logic model.

Second, what did you actually do? You already have this practically written from your logic model that considers inputs, activities and services, and outputs.

Third, you need to answer the “so what” question: Did your project or training or services make any difference? Again, this is an easy question to address, because you've already stated your outcomes with indicators and targets, and now you simply have to back-it up with your findings from your analysis of data. Although answering the “so what” question is at the heart of the outcomes-based evaluation, this section needn't be very long; in many cases, you can answer this question in a paragraph or one page.

Fourth, you need to consider WHY you went through all the trouble of conducting an outcomes-based evaluation by answering: What decisions or improvements will you make based upon your evaluation?

Final Word. This last question—what improvements or decisions will you make—is extremely important. Many times, people spend a lot of time on the first three questions, and then give relatively little thought to what it all means and how they will use what they've just learned. But, without this kind of thoughtful reflection about how to actually use your findings for programmatic improvements, outcomes-based assessment becomes a pretty empty exercise. So, keep your energy up until the end, and you will find a robustness to your work and a new sense of excitement because you can now prove the difference you're making!

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APPENDIX-USEFUL RESOURCES

THE LOGIC MODEL

- ◆ **The University of Missouri Cooperative Extension** has produced a detailed, but still easy to read and use, example of the logic model. Included are PDF files of the model that can be printed and laminated as a reference reminder of the ingredients of the model.
<http://outreach.missouri.edu/staff/programdev/plm/>
- ◆ **The University of Wisconsin-Extension** has an extensive site offering examples of logic models that are easy to read and use. Included is a very useful visual illustration of the logic model, that includes word examples of inputs, activities, participants, outputs and outcomes (short-term, medium-term, and long-term). These word examples can be useful in stimulating ideas about formulating one's own logic model. The site also includes an extensive list of resources about logic modeling for outcomes evaluation.
<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/evaluation/evallogicmodel.html>
- ◆ **The United Way** offers examples of how to write outcome and indicator statements for various types of programs and goal. While none of these are specific to elder abuse, the examples are very useful for illustrating that statements of outcomes and indicators don't have to be complex.
<http://national.unitedway.org/outcomes/resources/mpo/examples.cfm>
- ◆ **Framework for a Basic Outcomes-Based Evaluation Plan.** Written by [Carter McNamara, MBA, PhD, Authenticity Consulting, LLC](#). Copyright 1997-2006. Adapted from the [Field Guide to Nonprofit Program Design, Marketing and Evaluation](#). This is a chart that can be printed out and filled in to complete a basic outcomes-based evaluation plan using the elements of the logic model.
http://www.managementhelp.org/evaluatn/out_plan.htm

DATA

- ◆ **Basic Guide to Program Evaluation.** Written by [Carter McNamara, MBA, PhD, Authenticity Consulting, LLC](#). Copyright 1997-2006. Adapted from the [Field Guide to Nonprofit Program Design, Marketing and Evaluation](#). This is a detailed, but easy to use chart of the various ways to collect data, and their relative advantages and disadvantages. Scrolling down will bring you more details about how to present data, and how to write a complete evaluation report than is given in this Primer.
http://www.managementhelp.org/evaluatn/fnl_eval.htm#anchor1585345

- ◆ **The University of Washington has produced an Outcomes Toolkit** was designed for evaluating library projects, but the information is easily adaptable for use by any field project or program. This is primarily about collecting and using data with four sections: getting started; collecting data; analyzing data; and using what you found. Included are examples of surveys, which point out the strengths and weaknesses of each.
<http://ibec.ischool.washington.edu/ibecCat.aspx?subCat=Outcome%20Toolkit&cat=Tools%20and%20Resources>

- ◆ **Pennsylvania State University Cooperative Extension Service has produced a series of 84 Tip Sheets** that offer very specific advice about effective and efficient methods for designing surveys and evaluating data for program evaluations. The tips range from how to ask for potentially sensitive information (age, race, etc.) to increasing the effectiveness of certain kinds of questions, to how to reduce bias in your questions, to how to analyze and report “sticky” data, to how to use and present your data to best represent the impacts of your program. Each tip sheet is available as a PDF file. This is a very complete and usable collection.
<http://www.extension.psu.edu/evaluation/titles.html>

- ◆ **University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension has produced a series of Quick Tips** designed to help organizations conduct better program evaluations. Quick Tip #9, “Ways to Improve the Quality of Your Program Evaluation” considers factors of program usefulness to the target audience, practicality of the proposed program evaluation, appropriateness of the proposed program evaluation, and accuracy of the program evaluation. Taken as a whole, the information on Quick Tip #9 can also be used as a guide for writing the evaluation report. Quick Tip #24 offers “Six Steps to Take for Easier Follow-Up Evaluations—Before You Teach Your Program.” Quick Tip # 6, “Avoid These Mistakes in Your Program Evaluation,” offers seven ways to insure that the data you collect will *not* be useful to you.
<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/resources/pdf/Tipsheet9.pdf>
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