

Fact Sheet 1

What is Outcomes Measurement?

The business dictionary defines outcomes measurement as the:

'Determination and evaluation of the results of an activity, plan, process, or program and their comparison with the intended or projected results.'

What does this really mean?

Outcomes measurement only occurs once we determine the outcome that is to be achieved. So it is important first of all that we understand what an outcome is.

An outcome is the desired result to be achieved of an action or process. For example a change in circumstance, situation, skills/knowledge, behaviour or attitude.

The desired outcome of a service or program will be different for each service/program and is based on your target group and the objective of the service/program that you provide.

Once we are clear as to the outcome that is to be measured, then and only then are we able to determine whether that outcome has either been achieved or if movement towards its achievement has occurred. ***Therefore outcomes measurement tells us whether or not we have achieved the desired outcome.***

Outcome measurement is used to measure the success of a system, program, activity or event. It enables organisations to demonstrate the work that they do with their consumers (clients, service users, children and families). When thinking about outcomes measurement it is important that you consider what is it that will tell you whether or not that outcome has either been achieved or how your organisation is performing in relation to achieving it.

Some crucial questions answered in outcomes measurement are:

- How are the service users better off as a result of their participation in your service/program?
- What has changed in the lives of children, families, organisation and the community as a whole due to the program or services offered?
- Has the service or program made a difference?

Why measure outcomes?

Outcomes measurement is not an excuse to collect more data, it is a reason to collect the right data that tells you more than the number of activities that you deliver (output data). Outcomes measurement tells us if the work we are doing is really making a difference in the lives of the people we are working with. Greater than this, outcomes measurement allows organisations to:

- Clearly articulate the impact of the work that they do with their service users;
- Secure funding through demonstration of outcomes not just the outputs of their service, leading to increased sustainability;
- Identify areas in which they can improve the service they deliver through quality improvement;
- Change the culture of organisations to have a focus on the overall outcome that is to be achieved;
- To identify partners your organisation can work with to improve the outcomes for children and families.

How does outcomes measurement benefit our practice?

Outcomes measurement has many benefits to our practice, these will be explored here in relation to the client, organisation and community benefits.

Client/service users benefits of outcomes measurement:

- Stronger idea of what has been achieved as a result of their participation or engagement in your service/s.
- Assists them to understand the options that are available to them and the purpose of those services and the value therein.

Our practice and organisation benefits from outcomes measurement:

- As we are able to better monitor and reflect on our work through evaluation of what has been achieved.
- It enables us to be able to clearly articulate the work that we are doing with our clients and our contribution to our community.
- Allows us to clearly demonstrate the outcomes we are achieving with our clients leading to increased opportunities for funding and greater sustainability of the organisation.

Community benefits from outcomes measurement:

- Communities are able to advocate for additional resources through the use of outcomes measurement across collaborative (collective) initiatives.
- Alignment of the work of many different organisations and services contributing to a common target group within a community.