

How Nonprofits Approach Outcomes

Do you know the difference between a benchmark, an indicator, a goal, an objective, an outcome, a result, an impact? So many words used differently in different frameworks. The consequence is that many nonprofits now see outcome frameworks as simply another form of procedural compliance. Tell us what to say and we'll say it.

How sad! If an outcome framework is to become the way you live to achieve – with energy and even joy – it has to be about more than fund-raising and reporting. It has to be about success for those you help.

Forget the funder. Our view is that a nonprofit group has an outcome framework in place if it can answer for all of its programs these three questions:

- 1. How do you define success - meaning results from your services?**
- 2. How do you know for sure when success has been achieved?**
- 3. Half way through your program, how do you know that you have enough time and money left to get to the success you have defined?**

The first question asks you to be clear about results - not just activity and process. This means you can tell investors and stockholders what result you are committed to achieve. The second question asks for clarity on the evidence to be used to confirm success. You now know how to verify. By answering the third question, you have a way of tracking progress not just against budget categories and work plans but against participant progress to the gain they are to achieve.

And yes, you can make a more compelling case to your funders!