

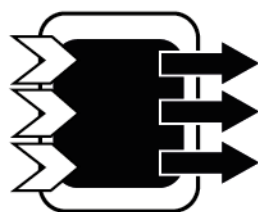


Outputs, outcomes and impact reporting

The key terms your charity needs to know for successful grant applications.

Grant funders are increasingly interested in outputs, outcomes and impact to help them understand what your charity does and the difference their donation could make. Understanding the terminology is key to writing clear funding applications, as well as helping you to improve the work you do. This guidance explains key terminology in funding applications, and provides insights from grant funder, Allchurches Trust, highlighting why impact reporting is so key.

So what do funders mean when they talk about outputs, outcomes and impact? We have provided an explanation below, as well as other key terms you may find in funding applications.



Inputs

People, objects and resources you use to deliver your project or activities



Outputs

The services or good that are delivered



Outcome

The difference the output will make



Monitoring

The routine, systematic collection and recording of data about a project



Evaluation

Using monitoring and other data you collect to make judgements about your project or organisation

The difference between outputs and outcomes

If you can clearly articulate your project outputs and outcomes, your application is more likely to be understood by a potential funder. In turn, this can make them more inclined to support your project.

Some funders such as the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) base their entire grant-making criteria (and therefore grant committee decision-making) around outcomes. How well a proposed project can articulate its outcomes will influence the success or failure of an application. NLHF also expects to see clearly defined outputs.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund website has useful guidance on how to meet their outcomes criteria (<https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/outcomes>). The guidance is relevant when applying to all potential funders.

An output is the services or goods that are delivered. An outcome is the difference the output will make. The examples on the next page provide a quick and easy way to remember the difference between an output and an outcome:

- Your charity may run a sports club for young people. The output of this project is free 90 minute training sessions for 50 young people at your after school football club. The outcome is that more young people have increased health and wellbeing and improved social skills.
- The output of your charity's activity may be that you provide 100 bereaved people each year free counselling services. The outcome is that more people have improved mental health and feel less alone.

A common mistake is to confuse outputs and outcomes with inputs. Inputs are the people, objects and resources you use to deliver your project or activities. For example, an educational charity may use teachers to deliver training. Here, the number of students receiving training is the output, as they benefit from the activity, and the teachers are the input, as they are helping to deliver the activity.

Demonstrating impact – why it's important from a funder's perspective

Measuring and reporting your impact is increasingly important when applying for grants. Jeremy Noles, Head of Grants and Relationships at Allchurches Trust, explains from a funder's perspective, why this is the case 1:

Grant funders receive many more funding applications than they can support. That's why it's vital that your application stands out and that you make every word count. Funders really want to know what the **impact** of your planned project will be on your community and how will it change people's lives.

The most frustrating forms to read are those when you get to the end and you're still not entirely clear what the applicant is asking for money for! What we, as funders, really want to know is what the **impact** of your planned project will be on your community and how will it change people's lives; not so much that you had a new boiler installed in 1982.

Just like every other charity, your grant-giver needs to demonstrate the impact of its funding, and you can help them out by showing them what yours will be if you get the money, and how you will measure and evidence that impact. But it's important not to think of monitoring and evaluation as a fad, or a tick-box exercise just to please funders.

Good impact evaluation will help you refine your vision, motivate your team, generate stories of transformation, and ultimately improve the work you do to benefit others.

We encourage applicants to clearly focus on the impact they want to achieve first and foremost when planning a project and set out in their application how they will go about achieving and measuring the outcomes that will evidence that impact.

That will help us, as funders, to understand what they are trying to achieve and the sort of story they (and, by association as funder, we) will be able to tell about it in the longer term. Sourcing quotes from people who will benefit really helps bring your project to life for us.

It also helps us to know that your project will fulfil a real, rather than simply a perceived, need. Sharing the results of a survey of your local community or the people you help can be a great way of supplying that evidence and showing the likely reach of your project. Evidence that you have explored the potential of partnerships, and learned from the experiences of others, is also a strong persuader.

To want to make a change in the world is admirable, but to evidence that you have, and be able to tell stories of the transformation you've enabled, that's powerful. And if you need more money to keep up the good work, and to ask for more time and resources from your volunteers, that evidence will be essential!

Allchurches trust have further tools to help with impact reporting on their advice and resources hub (<https://www.allchurches.co.uk/advice-and-resources/>), which aims to support charities to develop, implement and sustain successful projects, and to help them evaluate the impact of those projects.

1 Jeremy Noles, Head of Grants and Relationships at Allchurches Trust – 27th July 2020