

## Tip Sheet

### Translating Outcome Lingo

#### What's the difference between SMART Objectives, United Way Targets, and ABCDE Outcomes?

An outcome statement is a sentence that states a specific effect that a program is designed to achieve. Outcome statements are more specific than goals and are sometimes referred to as “objectives.”

Although different funders use different terminology when they refer to outcome statements, most are really looking for the same thing. Funders typically want to see programs that can:

1. Clearly state the *impact* of what they do (outcome vs. process)
2. Be as *specific* as possible when stating what they hope to accomplish (measurable changes in participant’s knowledge/attitudes/behavior/skills during a specific period of time)

The Centers for Disease Control’s (CDC) PIES framework (Planning, Implementation, Evaluation, and Sustainability) uses the “ABCDE” format for developing outcome statements. This format is very similar to two other formats that are commonly used: “SMART” objectives and United Way’s “indicators” and “targets.” Don’t let the different acronyms confuse you! These frameworks have essentially the same components. The table below will help you to “translate” between the different models.

SMART	ABCDE	United Way
<b>Specific:</b> Who and what will change	<b>Audience:</b> Who will change? <b>Behavior:</b> What will change? (specific knowledge, attitude, skill, behavior, etc.)	<b>Indicator:</b> Specific items of information that track a program’s success on outcomes. Observable and measurable characteristics.
<b>Measurable:</b> Amount of change	<b>Degree:</b> By how much?	<b>Target:</b> Numerical objectives for a program’s level of achievement on its outcomes. (number or percent)
<b>Achievable:</b> Attainable within given time frame and resources		
<b>Realistic:</b> Can realistically happen given the scope of the program and the intensity of the problem(s)		
<b>Time-specific:</b> Date (by when)	<b>Condition:</b> By when?	<b>Time frame:</b> Time period the target will be achieved.
	<b>Evidence:</b> How will the change be measured (name of evaluation tool)	

Here are three examples of the same outcome statement in the three different formats:

**SMART:** By the end of the program in May 2011, at least 80% of participants will report that they are “somewhat” or “very” confident in their ability to control their temper when they are angry or frustrated with their partner.

**ABCDE:** By the end of the program in May 2011, at least 80% of participants will report that they are “somewhat” or “very” confident in their ability to control their temper when they are angry or frustrated with their partner, as measured by the Expect Respect post-test survey.

**United Way:** Indicator= Percent of participants who report improved ability to control their temper when angry or frustrated with their partner (“somewhat” or “very” confident). Target: 80%. Time frame: By the end of the program (May 2011).

### Translating other outcome terms

It is important to distinguish between the outcomes that your program *hopes* to achieve, and the outcomes your program has *actually* achieved. The table below displays different terms you may encounter.

Planning Phase	Evaluation Results Reporting Phase
Projected Outcomes	Actual Outcomes
Expected Outcomes	Outcome Results
Desired Outcomes	Results
Proposed Outcomes	Outcomes
Targets	Impact
Benchmarks	

Some logic model frameworks simply refer to “outcomes,” while others distinguish between “short-term,” “medium-term” (or, “intermediate-term”), and “long-term outcomes.” There are no universally accepted definitions of these terms.

Outcome Term	General Guidelines on Timeframe	Examples of Outcome Types and Evaluation Methods Used
Short-term Outcome	Typically achieved during the program or at the end of a program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Typically awareness, knowledge, attitude, skill, and behavioral intention outcomes</li> <li>Can be assessed with pre/post-test, post-test-only, or retrospective pre-then-post tools</li> </ul>
Medium-term Outcome or Intermediate-term Outcome	May refer to outcomes achieved at the end of a program, or after a follow-up period of one month to one year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Typically refers to behavior or skill application outcomes, but could also include knowledge, attitude, or status/condition</li> <li>Can be assessed with the above tools, or with a post-program follow-up</li> </ul>
Long-term Outcome	May refer to outcomes achieved in one to five years, or longer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Typically refers to behavior or status/condition outcomes at the individual level, or to capacity, structural, policy, or social norm changes at the community or societal levels</li> </ul>

Outcome Term	General Guidelines on Timeframe	Examples of Outcome Types and Evaluation Methods Used
Long-term Outcome, continued		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Difficult for local programs to evaluate, and may be monitored with secondary data (such as statistics reported by government agencies)</li> </ul>
Impact	CDC defines impact as “The broader changes in the prevalence and incidence of IPV/SV or risk and/or protective factors associated with IPV” that the strategy is working toward, and suggests that the time frame for measuring impact is seven or more years.	

Sources: *Writing SMART Objectives, Evaluation TA: Evaluation Briefs*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009.

*Measuring Program Outcomes: A Practical Approach*, United Way of America, 1996.

*DELTA CCR Monitoring/Summative Evaluation Report*, GTO 10 Step Checklist logic model definitions, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2010

**Setting measurable amounts, targets, or degrees**

The SMART, ABCDE, and United Way outcome statement frameworks all prompt you to be very specific about identifying the *amount* of change or impact your program aims to achieve. This amount is typically expressed as a number or a percent, such as “80% of participants.” During the first year of a new program it can be difficult to identify a specific amount that is feasible and meaningful. However, funders may ask you to project a specific amount before the program has begun, possibly causing you to feel like you are closing your eyes and throwing a dart. The following decision tree may help you to set meaningful and realistic amounts.

