

Setting Outcomes 1

This workbook was created by Evaluation Support Scotland to help organisations plan and evaluate their work and it has been adapted by Youth Scotland for use by youth groups and organisations. Some people find that they can use the workbook on its own without coming to workshops so it has been made available as a standalone resource. However, if you have any questions or would like help to make sense of things please contact either Youth Scotland or Evaluation Support Scotland.

Further copies of these workbooks and copies of blank templates and forms can be found at www.youthworkessentials.org



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Setting Outcomes

Evaluation can be confusing

Especially if all you want to do is make a difference in the real world. Evaluation can seem like a distraction or a waste of time...and paper!

But evaluation can help you to -

- Focus on the difference you want to make (your 'outcomes')
- Find out what you've achieved
- Tell other people about your success (like funders, staff and volunteers)

This workbook will help you to be clear on

- What you do (sometimes called 'outputs').
- The difference you want to make ('outcomes').

The workbook is organised in three main steps

If you follow each step, two things will happen –

- 1.** You will have clear plans that can help you focus your work, enthuse others and even apply for funding.
- 2.** Once you have clear plans, you will know what to evaluate. This makes evaluation more straightforward...and less scary!

Give it a go!

Throughout the workbook you'll have the chance to work on examples from your own project or organisation. Look out for the **'give it a go'** sections. Feel free to write in the workbook, or to use a separate piece of paper if you prefer.

Before we start

This triangle tells you quite a lot about a local project. Have a look and see what you think. How easy is it for you to tell what the project is all about?

Bonnytown Youth Project

Aim

The Bonnytown Youth Project aims to improve the quality of life of young people living in the Bonnytown area

Outcomes

- Increase the personal and social development opportunities for young people
- Increase young people's confidence
- Reduce anti-social behaviour in Bonnytown
- Sustain a positive image of young people in Bonnytown
- Improve young people's sexual health

Outputs

- Tuesday night junior youth club
 - Peer education project
 - Friday night drop in
 - Girls' group
- Bonnytown junior football team
 - Sexual health clinic
 - Careers clinic
- Bonnytown Youth Forum
- Battle of the bands event

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Step 1 - Have a clear aim

Your overall **aim** tells everyone why your organisation or project exists. It can describe the long term impact you want to have on the lives of the people and communities you work with.

Example 1:

'The Bonnytown Youth Project aims to improve the quality of life of young people living in the Bonnytown area.'

Your aim should be brief and focused, saying what you want to achieve. It's not about the work you do, but the long term difference you hope to make.

Example 2:

'The Girls on the Move project aims to increase physical activity levels among girls and young women in Scotland.'

This is a good example. It says what Girls on the Move wants to achieve. It's a big aim, but it helps everyone understand why the project exists.

Example 3:

'The Big Noise aims to provide music tuition for young people.'

This example is missing something. Why do they provide music tuition? What difference will it make? **The aim should focus on the long term difference, not just what they do.**

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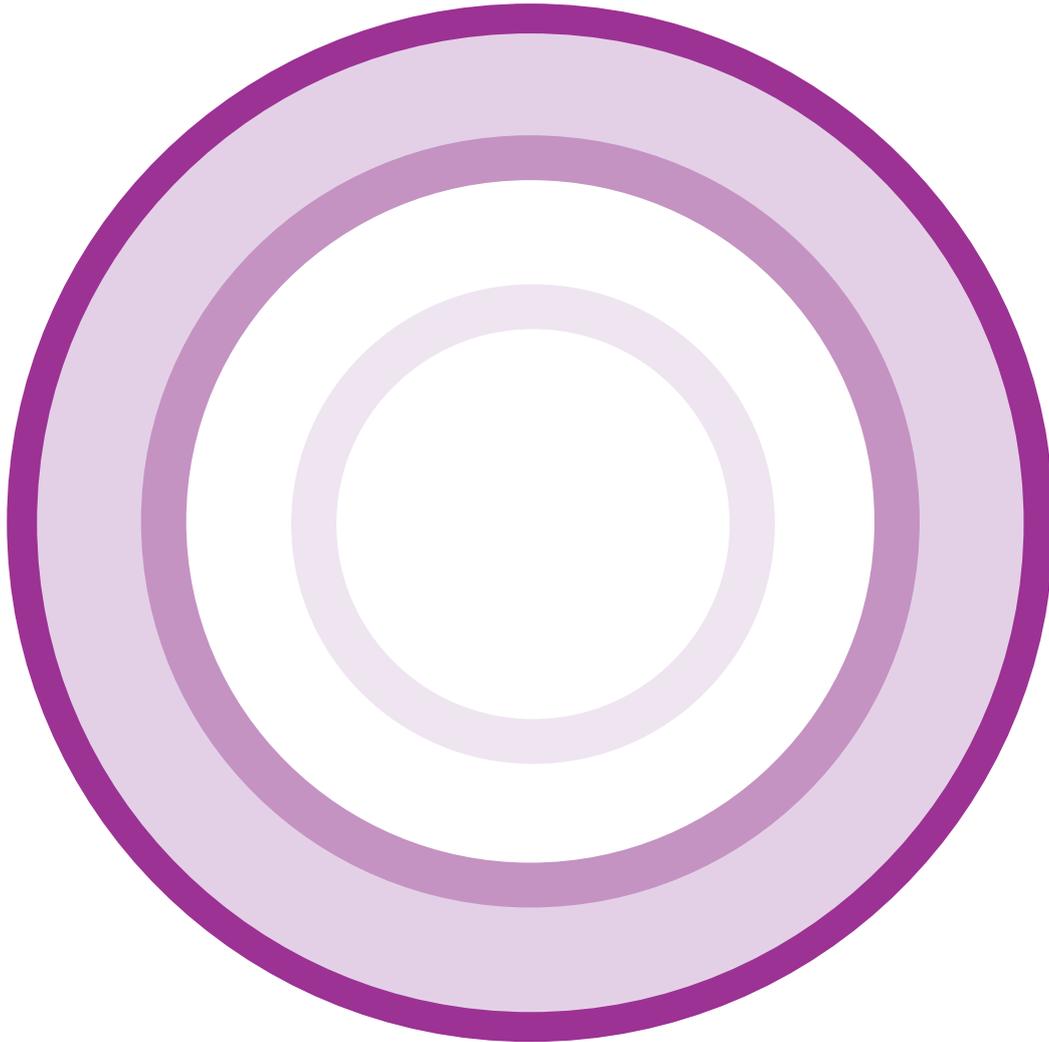
Give it a go!

How good is your aim?

Why does your organisation exist?

Write this aim in the target.

Name of organisation or project



STOP! Before you go on, have a quick check. Does this really describe your main aim and your long term goals?

Would someone who doesn't know your project understand what you're all about?

If you're not sure, why not ask someone else what they think of your aim?

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Step 2 - Be clear on your activities (outputs)

Now you know what you want to achieve how are you going to get there? Time to think about your activities or services. Some people (for example funders) call these **'outputs'** – the things you deliver, the work you do.

Example 1:

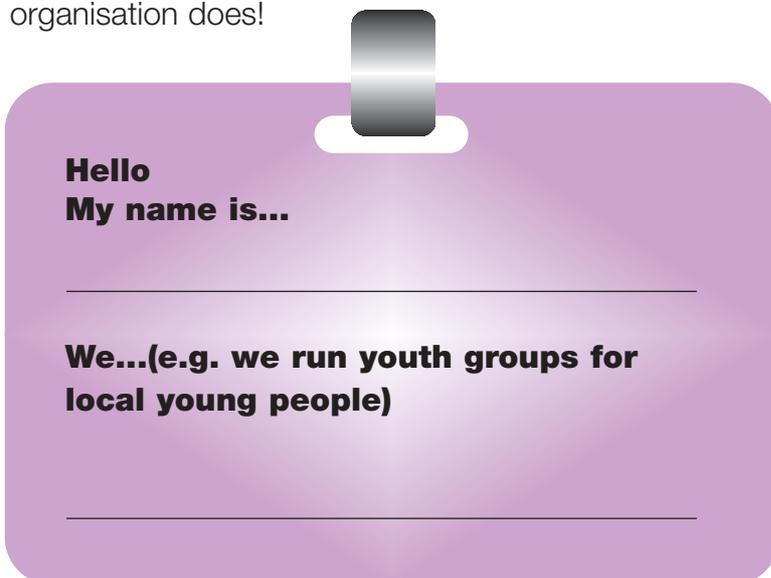
'Bonnytown Youth Project provides personal and social development opportunities for young people. We run youth groups, a youth forum, a junior football team, battle of the bands events and clinics for sexual health and careers.'

This is a simple description of the youth project's outputs—in other words, the things they **do**.

Give it a go!

Imagine you are at a community event representing your youth project. A young person comes to your stall and asks what you do. What would you say?

Make a name badge to wear at the event, so everyone knows who you are and what your organisation does!



Hello
My name is...

We...(e.g. we run youth groups for local young people)

Reminder: your **aim** is a statement of the things you want to achieve.

Your activities, sometimes called **outputs**, are the work you do towards your aim. Now you've written your aim and your outputs. You're going to need these to help set your outcomes.

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Step 3 - Be clear on the difference you want to make (outcomes)

How will your activities or services change the lives of the people and communities who take part? These changes are called **'outcomes'** - they are what 'comes out' of your work.

Example:

'Bonnytown Youth Project will increase the confidence of young people living in Bonnytown.'

Note—It can be quite hard to decide on outcomes and to word them clearly. So, before we do, let's think about why we bother!

Outcomes matter... for lots of reasons

- 1.** You need to know what you are trying to achieve before you can evaluate to see if you have made a difference. Outcomes keep you focused.
- 2.** The people who use your services need to know what to expect from you.
- 3.** Staff and volunteer satisfaction is increased when they know they make a difference.
- 4.** Many funders want to fund or 'invest in' outcomes. They want to know what difference their money makes and how it helps people have a better life.

Give it a go!

Think about how your activities will change or influence the people you work with.

Jot down the changes you think are important.

Example: more knowledge, increased confidence, improved social skills, reduced offending, improved health etc.

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We are now going to try writing outcomes in a clear way so that everyone can understand what your project is about, and so you can evaluate the difference you make.

First, some tips on writing outcomes.

Tip 1. Use words that are about change. For example...

Increase, Sustain, More, Decrease, Reduce, Expand, Improve, Better

Example: 'Improve the sexual health of young people.'

Tip 2. Look for 'Who, what and how' in your outcomes.

In the example above you can see **WHO** is changing (young people), **WHAT** is changing (the sexual health) and **HOW** it's changing (improved). Remember to avoid 'doing words'.

Example: 'Our youth project will offer young people a sexual health clinic'. This is not an outcome. What if no-one benefits from the clinic? In fact, it's tempting to ask... 'So what?'

Tip 3. Ask 'So what?'

If you're not sure if you're looking at an outcome or an output, asking 'So what?' should help. Go on, be rude...

Bonnytown Youth Project runs a Friday night drop in — **SO WHAT?**

30 young people attend each week — **SO WHAT?**

These are important, but they're not **OUTCOMES**.

So...what will come out of the drop in session?

The young people improve their social skills — **OUTCOME!**

They reduce their anti-social behaviour — **OUTCOME!**

Their relationship with friends and family improves — **OUTCOME!**

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Give it a go – Spot the outcomes!

The Bonnytown Youth Project supports young people into work by running a careers clinic. Use the tips on the previous page to spot the outcomes from the list below.

1. We have raised £10,000 in funding.
2. We use volunteers to run the careers clinic.
3. Volunteers say they enjoy the experience.
4. As a result, young people have improved work skills.
5. 20 young people attended our job search classes.
6. 10 young people found a job thanks to our help.

(Answers on page 10.)



Tip 4. Keep it simple

Once you have an idea of the changes that come out of your services (**outcomes**), the trick is finding the right ones for you. Don't set too many—remember you'll need to evaluate whether you've achieved each outcome you set. Between three to five outcomes are enough for most projects or organisations. If you have more, you should focus on the ones that are most relevant to your overall aim.

Alternatively, ask yourself 'What need am I trying to address?' This will help you set outcomes. For example, if the need is that people do not have access to services, the outcome might be 'People have increased access to services.'

One more thing...

At this stage it's important not to worry about how you'll measure your outcomes. That comes later. For now, concentrate on being clear on your outcomes.

Definitions – a reminder:

- **Aims** – Why you exist, your long term goals
- **Outcomes** – The changes or differences your work makes
- **Outputs** – What you do, your activities or services

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Bringing it all together

We saw this tool earlier. It's called the **Weaver's Triangle**. (It was created by Jane Weaver of Charities Evaluation Service.) It's a good way to explain what you do on just one piece of paper. A funder could ask for a Weaver's Triangle when you apply for funding.

You now have all the information you need to complete the Weaver's Triangle for your project.

Aim
(see page 4)

Outcomes
(changes or differences, see page 7) Who, what, how? So What?
The difference your outputs make

Outputs
(Activities, see page 5) Services; activities; what you do

If you'd prefer a typed version, you can download an electronic copy of the triangle from **www.youthworkessentials.org**



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