

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS FOR RESULTS ORIENTED MANAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY (ROMA)

Activity

Activities are what a program does with its inputs—the services it provides—to fulfill its mission. Examples are sheltering homeless families, educating the public about signs of child abuse, and providing adult mentors for youth. Program activities result in outputs. (United Way)

Benchmarks

Performance data that are used for comparative purposes. A program can use its own data as a baseline benchmark against which to compare future performance. It also can use data from another program as a benchmark. In the latter case, the other program often is chosen because it is exemplary and its data are used as a target to strive for, rather than as a baseline. (United Way)

Impact

The direct or indirect effects or consequences of achieving program goals. (OMB)

Indicator

(Outcome) indicators are the specific items of information that track a program's success on outcomes. They describe observable, measurable characteristics or changes that represent achievement of an outcome. For example, a program whose desired outcome is that participants pursue a healthy lifestyle could define "healthy lifestyle" as not smoking; maintaining a recommended weight, blood pressure, and cholesterol level; getting at least two hours of exercise each week; and wearing seat belts consistently. The number and percent of program participants who demonstrate these behaviors then is an *indicator* of how well the program is doing with respect to the outcome. (United Way)

Input

Inputs are resources a program uses to achieve program objectives. Examples are staff, volunteers, facilities, equipment, curricula, and money. A program uses *inputs* to support *activities*. (United Way)

Measure

The means used for assessing the achievement of objectives. Measures may be quantitative or qualitative, objective or subjective. The particular form of measurement used is dependent on the objective to be measured, the availability of opportunities for measurement and the cost of the measurement process. (United Way of Cincinnati)

Milestones

Key accomplishments or threshold points through which project participants must pass if it is to be successful. (Williams, Webb & Phillips)

Outcome

The benefits or changes for clients, households, or a community that are produced during or after participation in program activities. (Tennessee)

Outcome indicator

Specific items of information that track a program's successes on outcomes. They describe observable, measurable characteristics or changes that represent achievement of an outcome. (United Way)

Outcome measure

An assessment of the results, effects or impact of a program activity compared to its intended purpose. (OMB)

Outcome target

(Outcome) targets are numerical objectives for a program's level of achievement on its outcomes. After a program has had experience with measuring outcomes, it can use its findings to set targets for the number and percent of participants expected to achieve desired outcomes in the next reporting period. It also can set targets for the amount of change it expects participants to experience. (United Way)

Output

Products of a program's activities, such as the number of meals provided, classes taught, brochures distributed, or participants served. Another term for "outputs" is "units of service." A program's *outputs* should produce desired *outcomes* for the program's participants. (United Way)

Output measure

A tabulation, calculation or recording of activity or effort that can be expressed in a quantitative or qualitative manner (OMB)

Performance

The accomplishment of actions that transform inputs (through a process) to outputs and outcomes. (OMB)

Performance Indicator

A particular value or characteristic used to measure outputs or outcomes. (OMB)

Scale

An instrument that is used to measure an outcome on a continuum. It is used to show incremental progress, stabilization, or decline. (Tennessee)

DEFINITION SOURCES

These definitions came from the following sources:

OMB Primer on Performance Management, 2/2/95.

Tennessee: The Guide to Implementing ROMA for CSBG Agencies in Tennessee, Tennessee Department of Human Services.

Williams, Web & Phillips: Outcome Funding: A New Approach to Targeted Grantmaking.

Utah: Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, November 1993.

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

Martin and Kettner: Measuring the Performance of Human Service Programs (1996).