GUIDE FOR GRANT HOLDERS

Measuring Impact: what funders want to see

BERKSHIRE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
Local Giving. Lasting Impact.

This guide is intended to help those who manage grant funded programmes consider the impact of their work and to understand how the results should be communicated to the funders who pay for the work that they deliver.

Key point: funders are always looking for demonstrable evidence to show the impact of the work they are funding, and how their money helps to change and improve the lives of those that they want to help.

Terms

Funders tend to refer to the people who use the project as either service users or beneficiaries.

Quality over quantity

Funders almost always prefer to see quality over quantity. This means they are unlikely to be impressed if the project supports many more people than stated in the original grant application. They will be much more impressed by the change and difference that the project has made to the people supported. Put another way, they would prefer to support a project which has made a significant impact with a few people, rather than a little impact with many. *(Do remember however that funders will expect the project to support the number of beneficiaries proposed in the original project proposal: if your project is falling short they will want to know why.)*

Honesty

As strange as it sounds, funders really like hearing about things that didn't work or go to plan. They are always looking to learn from projects so that this can be used when funding new initiatives in the future. They do not want to hear that everything worked brilliantly and went absolutely to plan (they are realists!); they want to learn what didn't, and more importantly how the problem was addressed and what changes were made. They will want to know what evidence you collected to support your theory that a different method of working was needed to achieve the intended results, and how this was implemented.

Outputs, targets and outcomes

Outputs

The **activities or actions** undertaken to achieve the aim. Outputs should be thought of as the activities or the steps to achieve the overall aim.

Targets

The agreed number of **beneficiaries and/or outputs** which the funder is expecting the project to deliver, measurable within a specific period agreed with the funder.

Outcomes

The **change or difference** that the project is making. For funders, outcomes are the most important aspect of the measurement of the work.

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Outputs

Funders will expect to understand what outputs have been undertaken to achieve the aim. So if the aim of the work is to improve the lives of families with seriously-ill and life-limited children the output is the **activities or actions** undertaken to make this happen. Examples of outputs will vary, depending on the specific project, but here are a few examples:

- Workshop explaining personalisation
- budgets One-to-one support sessions
- Activity day
- Easter egg hunt
- Attendance at 'support meetings'
- Therapy session
- Youth Council meeting
- Peer support session
- Development of a Support
- Plan Activity session

Outputs are also quantifiable, as funders will often want to know how many outputs have been delivered. This is usually outlined in the original project proposal and when the work is being monitored by the funder, they will be looking to see if the project has delivered the agreed number of outputs. If not, they will be seeking to understand why. So as an example:

- 10 workshops delivered
- 12 music therapy sessions achieved
- 3 activity days provided
- 45 hours of one-to-one sessions provided
- 12 sessions of supported play

Targets

Leading on from outputs are targets. These are the agreed number of beneficiaries and/or outputs which the funder is expecting the project to deliver. Targets are also measurable within a specific period which is agreed with the funder. Again, it is OK to change these as the project progresses, but you will need to evidence why the change is needed. So, for example, you might be expected to:

- Provide one-to-one support to 100 adults with learning disabilities each
- year Provide 12 workshops each year targeted at families with an autistic
- child Provide one-to-one support to 100 siblings of autistic children
- Develop 12 applications for welfare support each month

Outcomes

For funders outcomes are the most important aspect of the measurement of the work. Outcomes are the change and/or difference that the project is making. You need to be able to show how and why your approach is working, and how the outputs you are delivering are helping to improve the lives of the people that you care for. The outcome is the result of the work and evidence to show that the project is meeting this is vital to securing continued support. Examples of outcomes include:

- Improved mental health
- Improved physical health and wellbeing
- Reduced feelings of social isolation
- Improved awareness of benefit
- entitlement Improved family relationships
- Reduction in the dependence on alcohol
- Improvement in behaviour
- Improved skills and access to information
- Improved trust in the child's health care team
- Improved feelings of empowerment and influence over decisions affecting the child
- Improved financial position
- Improved relationship with the child's school
- Improvement in the relationship between siblings

Monitoring and evaluating the work

To funders the most important aspect of financing a project is understanding that what they are funding is making a difference. All funders have criteria for deciding whom they want to support and will support applications from charities whose work is in line with their objectives.

Here are some examples of the types of interests funders hold. You must demonstrate to funders how your project fits their category for support; remember it will change from funder to funder!

- Support vulnerable families
- Support children with disabilities
- Support families from disadvantaged communities
- Support children who are life-limited
- Support families on low income
- Support fathers in need
- Support families from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities
- Support families who are bereaved

Returning to outcomes, it is not enough to tell funders that you are achieving positive outcomes: you need to evidence it. This also means showing that those who are benefiting from the work fit into the agreed criteria for support. To do this you need to collect evidence. This can be in the form of formal evaluations where beneficiaries rate the service, through to smiley face forms where beneficiaries record how they are feeling at the beginning of the sessions, and then again at the end.

The monitoring will also include basic information such as age, class, gender, disability, specific need, and social class which helps to show that the work is targeting the agreed beneficiaries. Furthermore, the monitoring also needs to be age-appropriate so that as well as evidencing the change that you are making to the direct beneficiary you can also evidence wider impact, for instance to family or community.

Once the evidence is collected, it will be collated and should start to look something like this. In this example, we are reporting on the results of the evaluation and showing how the output has affected the outcome, which is ultimately what funders are looking to understand:

87%

attendedthe'Personalisation Budgets' workshop and reported a better understanding of the system; 90% had a disabled child

82%

received one-to-one support from Outreach Worker andreported improved mental wellbeing; 100% had a disabled child

92%

attendedthe peersupport session and reported reducedfeelings of social isolation; 100% had a disabled child

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76%

attended the Dads' Activity Day and reported improved mental wellbeing; 100% were fathers or carers of a disabled child

93%

of siblingssupported by the Youth SupportWorker reported improved mental wellbeing; 95% were aged 19 or under

78%

supported by the FinancialInclusion Programme reportedreduced stress and anxiety; 40% came from Black and minority ethnic community groups

Grant reporting

Every funder wants to know that the project in which they are investing is having an impact and is making a difference to the people it wants to help. Therefore, they will require regular reports (and often monitoring visits) to reassure them that the money is being spent in accordance with the grant application. Funders will commit to a project of between 1 and 5 years. What this means is that money is allocated to the project but only released if the grant reports and updates they receive are satisfactory.

Pictures and case studies

Funders love them! Remember many funders also need to secure funding to deliver their own work. Being able to bring the project or programme to life through the eyes of those who have benefited is vital. Funders often need evidence of change and impact, which they can demonstrate to their own funders. It is important to note that many Grant Officers manage a large portfolio of grants; therefore, being able to capture the information in a format which is emotive makes your project or programme stand out. In addition, funders are human; they like knowing that their investment is making a difference. Stats are all very well and good but real case studies and pictures highlight the personal, individual and emotional impact of the work and help to bring it to life.

Final thought

Remember most funders are really nice! They want your project to succeed and they are not there to catch you out or trip you up. They want to help and learn from your experiences so that your work, if successful, can be replicated. More than anything else, they appreciate honesty as they are entrusting us with significant amounts of money to deliver work of real importance. Therefore, if you spot a difference between the original proposal and what is being delivered contact the funder so that they are aware.

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