

**Finally–
Outcome
Measurement
Strategies
Anyone Can Understand**

Second Edition

**Straightforward explanations, recommendations, and
user-friendly exercises to help your organization
increase its impact**

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Introduction

Dependent variables... statistically significant findings... have your eyes glazed over yet? Well, relax - you are not alone. My guess is that most of the world would be perfectly content to live their lives devoid of any and all data collection or analysis.

But as a nonprofit professional living in the age of outcome measurement, you no longer have that luxury. For you, data collection and analysis has become a necessity. To secure funding from both government and private donors, you must now convey much more than how many people you serve. You must demonstrate how and to what extent your program makes a concrete difference in the lives of its participants. In short, you must measure your outcomes.

Yes, you're thinking. I know these realities all too well. I don't need to be convinced of the merits of outcome measurement. What I need is a practical explanation that will help me develop my own outcome measurement plan. Well, you've finally found it.

Thanks to my academic background in social research and (more importantly) my real-life experience working for nonprofits of all shapes and sizes, I have found ways to “translate” outcome measurement concepts in a way that is accessible. From my clients in rural Georgia to those in New York City and abroad, I have consistently received the same feedback: My approach to teaching outcome measurement is practical. It resonates. It clearly conveys concepts that were previously elusive.

So after a bit of prodding from colleagues and clients, I have decided to put these concepts down on paper. As suggested by the title, ***Finally – Outcome Measurement Strategies Anyone Can Understand*** is a to-the-point guidebook designed specifically for those who are not evaluation-inclined. There is no eye-glazing research terminology contained within – just straightforward explanations, recommendations, and exercises developed through years of work with real nonprofit professionals.

Believe it or not, you don’t need to hold a research degree or have an evaluator on payroll to develop an effective outcome measurement plan. The many practitioners who have successfully implemented the recommendations laid out in this book are living proof of that.

So drop your preconceived notions about outcome measurement and read the following chapters with an open mind. Consider how the explanations contained within apply to your organization. Complete the corresponding exercises. Get other people in your organization involved. And (dare I say?) have some fun!

Part 1: Logic Models

Logic Models Are Like Recipes



The ingredients can make the meal.



Part 1: Logic Models

Logic Models Are Like Recipes

Outcome measurement is the regular, systematic tracking of the extent to which participants experience the intended program benefits. Said more simply, it's how to determine whether your program is having the desired impact on your target population.

Typically, people who are aspiring to develop an outcome measurement process jump right over the “outcome” and into the “measurement”. Eager to get to the much-needed data, they start planning survey questions before they even know what they want to learn. Resist this urge. Before you develop a system for tracking your program’s benefits, you have to first determine what those benefits are.

Enter the **Program Logic Model**.

Based in “if... then...” logic, this tool is used to illustrate how a program affects its clients. Through a logical progression, it demonstrates how a program’s resources (*inputs*) are used to provide specific services (*activities/outputs*), and how those services benefit participants (*outcomes*).

The sequence of the program logic model looks like this:

Inputs ➡ **Activities** ➡ **Outputs** ➡ **Outcomes**

Now, I didn’t invent the program logic model. I am just a big fan. Through the years, I have found that its relative simplicity allows organizations to get a handle on their work. Essentially a flow chart for communicating how an agency operates and what it is seeking to accomplish, it has value far beyond outcome measurement: in planning, marketing, staff training, and much more.

If you are unfamiliar with the **Program Logic Model**, rest assured that you can learn to use it very quickly. Its format is actually very similar to a much more common tool – a recipe.