

Program Outputs and Participant Outcomes

Outputs are for programs. Outcomes are for people.

OUTPUTS ≠ OUTCOMES

OUTPUTS are the products of program activities, or the result of program processes. They are the deliverables. Some even use the term interchangeably with “activities.” Outputs can be identified by answering questions such as:

- *What will the program produce?*
- *What will the program accomplish*
- *What activities will be completed?*
- *How many participants will the program serve?*
- *How many sessions will be held?*
- *What will program participants receive?*

OUTCOMES are changes in program participants or recipients (i.e., the target population). They can be identified by answer the question:

- *How will program participants change as a result of their participation in the program?*

In other words, *What will program participants know, understand, acquire, or be able to do?*

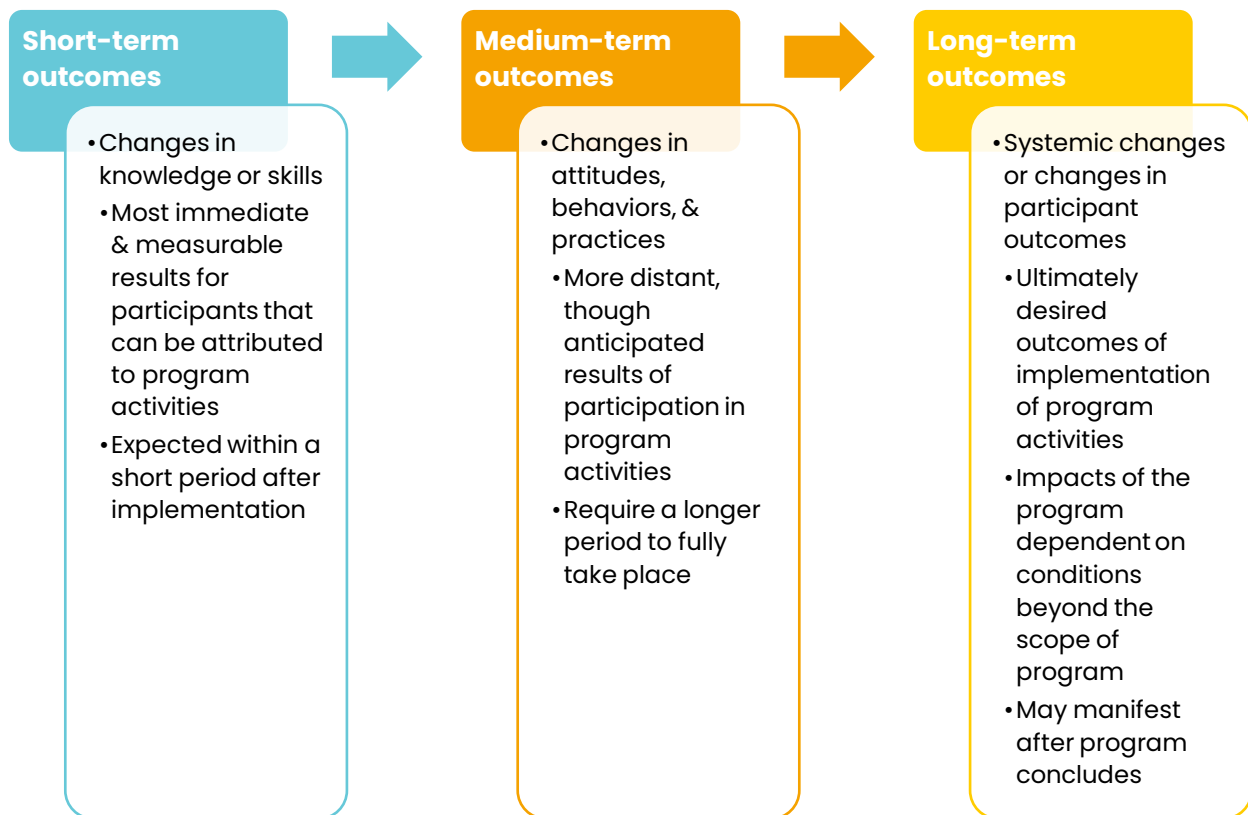
Change can occur for participants in the form of new or different levels of:

- Awareness
- Understanding
- Learning
- Knowledge
- Skills
- Abilities
- Behaviors
- Attributes

Remember, we can directly control outputs, but not outcomes. We can control how many sessions we hold., how many people we accept into the program, how many brochures we produce, etc. However, we can only hope to *influence* outcomes.

Outputs can be valuable to measure, but they don't go far enough in helping us answer the types of evaluation questions (e.g., To what degree did participants change? How valuable or important is that degree of change? How well did the program do with regard to facilitating change in participants?) we need to make programmatic decisions for continuous improvement.

Outcomes are much more difficult to identify and articulate, but well worth the effort, and best done during the program design and evaluation planning process. When identifying which outcomes to measure for your evaluation, consider the timeline of anticipated outcomes:





Note. This handout was adapted from the following source:

Outputs are for programs. Outcomes are for people, by S. B. Robinson

<https://www.sheilabrobinson.com/outputs-are-for-programs-outcomes-are-for-people/>