

Results-Based Management Tip Sheet No. 3.2

Outcomes, Indicators, Baseline, Targets and Actual Data: What's the Difference?

This information is a companion to the Results-Based Management (RBM) for International Assistance Programming at Global Affairs Canada: A How-to Guide.

It provides an overview so that you can see the difference between outcomes, indicators, baseline, targets and actual data. This information provides an example of how these RBM components can be used in project reports.

Expected outcomes:

- Results are the same as outcomes.
- An outcome is a describable or measurable change that is derived from an initiative's outputs or lower level outcomes.
- Outcomes are qualified as immediate, intermediate or ultimate. Outputs contribute to immediate outcomes. Immediate outcomes contribute to intermediate outcomes, and intermediate outcomes contribute to ultimate outcomes. Outcomes are not entirely within the control of a single organization, policy, program or project. Instead they are within the area of the organization's influence.
- Outcomes are structured in a specific way. They start with an adjective describing the direction of change, followed by what will change, who will be affected by the change, and where¹ it will happen.

Indicators (performance indicators):

- Are a means of measuring actual outcomes and outputs to gauge performance of a project, program, etc.
- Can be qualitative or quantitative.
- Are composed of three elements: unit of measure, unit of analysis and context.
- Are neutral; they neither indicate direction of change, nor embed a target.
- Need to be disaggregated by sex, age, socio-economic status or any other category relevant to the indicator.
- Global Affairs Canada recommends a maximum of two indicators per output and 2-3 per outcome; ideally, at least one indicator should be quantitative and one qualitative.
 - ❖ *Note:* The unit of measure should include the notion of proportionality, i.e., have both a numerator and a denominator, for example: *"#/total"* or *"%/total"*.

Baseline data:

- Provides a specific value for an indicator at the outset of a project, program, etc.
- Should be disaggregated in the same way as its indicator.
- Is collected at one point in time and used as a point of reference.
- Is the basis upon which progress on or toward outcomes is measured or assessed.
- Is the foundation for setting realistic targets.

Targets:

- Specify a particular value, or range of values, for an indicator to be reached by a specific date in the future.
- Are projections or estimates; a target should be disaggregated in the same way as its indicator.
- As a set, illustrate what the project would like to achieve within a certain period of time in relation to one of its expected outcomes or outputs.
- Add further specificity and provide an end state to outputs and outcomes from the logic model (or result framework).
- Provide tangible and meaningful points of discussion for implementers with stakeholders.
- Belong only in the performance measurement framework: they should not appear in the expected outcome and output statements.
- Are not necessarily a single numerical value; in some cases, they can state a range.

Actual data:

- Is collected on the indicators identified in the performance measurement framework (or results framework) by the responsible person/organization, from a specific source, at a set frequency using the data collection method. These are all specified in the performance measurement framework (or results framework).
- Is used for analyzing the progress on or toward the expected outcomes, in comparison to baseline data and targets.

¹ **NOTE:** In the context of a logic model, the "where" (or location), must be identified at the ultimate and intermediate outcome level. If the location is different at the immediate outcome level (e.g. specific village within the province or country identified in the ultimate or intermediate outcome) it should be included in the statement. If it is not different or the location is implicit in the "who" it can be left out

- Is used as evidence of progress towards or on the expected outcome, in the narrative of performance reports.

Example No. 1: Pulling it all Together² - A snapshot using one outcome and indicator from a five-year education project

Planning Stage Selected Elements/Columns of a Performance Measurement Framework				Reporting Stage (3 rd year of a 5-year project)
Expected Outcomes	Indicators ³	Baseline Data	End of Project Targets	Actual Data
Intermediate Outcome Level				
Improved proficiency in math by girls and boys in primary school in District Y in country X	%/total of District Y Grade V children (girls/boys) tested, who score a minimum 60/100 on a standardized math test.	40% of District Y Grade V girls (out of 1,123 girls) tested, scored a minimum 60/100 on a standardized math test in 2010.	70% of District Y Grade V girls (out of total number of girls) tested, scored a minimum 60/100 on a standardized math test in 2015.	50% of District Y Grade V girls (out of 1,215 girls) tested, scored a minimum 60/100 on a standardized math test in 2013
		50% of District Y Grade V boys (out of 1,245 of boys) tested, scored a minimum 60/100 on a standardized math test in 2010.	70% of District Y Grade V boys (out of total number of boys) tested, scored a minimum 60/100 on a standardized math test in 2015.	60% of District Y Grade V boys (out of 1,312 boys) tested, scored a minimum 60/100 on a standardized math test in 2013

Example No. 2: Using data collected on the indicators as evidence of progress toward the expected outcome in a narrative report

Since the start of the project three years ago, there has been a significant improvement in math proficiency for both girls and boys in primary school in District Y in Country X. Out of **1,215** female Grade V students tested in 2013, **50%** scored a minimum 60/100 in math. This is an increase of **25%** from the baseline of **40%** in 2010. Likewise, out of **1,312** male Grade V students tested in 2013, **60%** scored a minimum 60/100 in math. This is an increase of **20%** from the baseline of **50%**. This means that more Grade V students are passing the standardized math test than was the case at the beginning of the project. This also means that there is a greater possibility that students will transition to lower secondary-school after successfully completing primary school.

Note: This is a five-year project. The improved proficiency in math by the Grade V girls and boys (intermediate outcome) stems from other results in this project's logic model, such as improvement in teachers' gender-sensitive pedagogical skills (immediate outcome) and their better use of the new, improved math textbooks and other teaching learning materials (intermediate outcome). While the girls' improvement is greater than that of their male counterparts (**25%** versus **20%** improvement in the math test pass rate of 60/100), the project will be challenged to ensure the girls catch up with the boys by the end of the project.

Updated: July 2017

These tools will be updated annually as required. Enquiries or feedback on this tip sheet should be directed to:

Results-Based Management Centre of Excellence
Operational Direction and Coherence, International Assistance Operations Bureau
Global Affairs Canada
Email: gar.rbm@international.gc.ca

² These examples were developed jointly with the Global Affairs Canada Education specialists in 2015.

³ This is an example of one indicator disaggregated according to boys and girls. There are usually at least two indicators per outcome.