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Working Definitions for Applicants and Grantees

The John Rex Endowment has assembled the following working definitions and tips as guidance for applicants and grantees. Given our recognition that various fields of practice may use terminology differently, in order for all of us to be clear, we outline how we define the specific terms listed, and, in some cases, how to develop these components in your written materials. This document is to be used as a reference document when completing John Rex Endowment grant applications and forms, required project plans, required evaluation plans and grant reports.

Please see pgs. 4 to 6 of this document for an extensive look at how to develop outcomes and activities for John Rex Endowment grant applications, project plans, or evaluation plans.

Activities: See pg. 6 for a detailed outlining of this term.

Data Collection Methods: The ways that information is gathered through observations, surveys, interviews, records review, etc. Using more than one method is, typically, the strongest approach. For example, while pre- and post-surveys may be useful, conducting interviews often adds to your understanding of your project and your ultimate population target or your intervention target/s and provides you with compelling stories.

Evaluation Plan: The outlining of the specific approach to and design of a project evaluation. This plan provides the roadmap for conducting the evaluation (both outcome-related and process-related).

Evaluation Questions: The questions that the evaluation is aimed at answering both during project implementation and by the end of the project or grant period.

Evidence-based Approach: Taking into account the most relevant and high-quality findings in research and combining it with: 1) practical experience and learning, or widely accepted best practice standards; 2) knowledge of Wake County and the setting/s where prevention efforts will take place; and 3) an understanding of who's affected, who's contributing to the problem, and who can help.

Indicator: A specific, measurable, observable condition, characteristic, or action that shows whether an intended change has happened. An indicator responds to the question: *What will tell us or indicate to us that we have achieved this outcome?* Outcomes are often measured by more than one indicator.

Instruments: The specific tools (e.g., interview guide, questionnaire, observation checklist) used to collect data.

Intervention Target: "Who" and/or "what" is primarily targeted to change as a direct result of the project so that – by the close of the grant or after – there are improvements in the health and well-being of the ultimate population target. An intervention target guides development of the strategy.

Examples of intervention targets include: *key policy makers or key policies, public opinion, key organization leaders, organization behavior, data systems, etc.*

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Organizational Capacity: Organizations having (and making use of) the commitment, infrastructure, and resources necessary for a particular activity, function, area of work, etc.

- Organizations demonstrate their commitment to beliefs, values, approaches, etc. in a variety of ways. Examples include an organization's mission, goals, or strategic plans.
- Organizations also need the right infrastructure (e.g., policies, protocols, physical space, staffing models, organizational learning systems) in order to be effective.
- Resources make the work possible and include things like in-kind contributions from volunteers or partners and the network of relationships an organization has in the community.

People's Capacity: Individuals (e.g., staff, board members, volunteers affiliated with the organization) have (and are making use of) the knowledge, commitment, skills, and tools necessary for a particular activity, function, area of work, etc.

- Ensuring people have the knowledge and skills they need to carry out their work is a good place to start. Training, coaching and opportunities to practice are some of the ways knowledge and skills are developed.
- It is equally important to foster people's commitment to do things in a new way. Positive attitudes and holding the belief that an approach is beneficial are critical to motivate people to start and maintain new ways of working.
- Tools can also be useful, and are sometimes necessary, in supporting people in their work. Tools are things like reminder cues, decision trees, checklists or even technology supports that aid people in carrying out specific functions.

Outcome Evaluation: Broadly speaking, the systematic assessment of a project's accomplishments and effects to determine the degree to which the project is accomplishing what it intended. Outcome evaluation also may examine other areas such as the relationship of project activities to intended and unintended project effects. The other most common type of evaluation is process evaluation.

Outcome: See pgs. 4 and 5 for a detailed outlining of this term.

Process Evaluation: The systematic assessment of how a project is implemented and operates to determine if the project is being implemented as planned; whether deliverables are produced as planned; and how project processes, etc. can be improved. The other most common type of evaluation is outcome evaluation.

Project Evaluation: The systematic assembly and analysis of information about: project activities and participants, project characteristics, and project outcomes to:

- Come to conclusions about the current success and value of the project
- Strengthen the project
- Make decisions about the project, related resources, etc.
- Learn, more generally

Note: For the John Rex Endowment, project evaluation will focus on both process and outcomes. Components of project evaluation include developing an evaluation plan, implementing (or conducting) the evaluation, and learning from evaluation findings in order to strengthen the project.

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Project Purpose: The overarching aim of the project. This statement often “rolls up” the longer-term outcomes to summarize why this project is important in terms of what it is designed to change (or, occasionally, maintain) and for whom.

Strategy: The overarching “how” outcomes will be achieved. Strategies answer the question: “how will we get from where we are now to our intended outcomes?” Strategy examples: “*advocating for policy change around...*” or “*increasing skills in...*” Strategies do not outline specifics around who will do what, when, etc. Projects often use more than one strategy. And strategies often require more than one project activity.

Ultimate Population Target: The specific population for whom, ultimately, a project aims to improve health and well-being. For the John Rex Endowment, typically, this ultimate population target will be some sub-set of vulnerable children (ages birth to 18) and/or their families.

Examples of an ultimate population target include: *Latino children living in Wake County, children living with disabilities in Cary, adolescents from families living at low-income in Rolesville, or children and families accessing Wake County Human Services*

Note: In some projects, improvements in the health and well-being of the ultimate population target will be achieved by the close of the grant. In other projects, the health and well-being of the ultimate population target will not be impacted until after the grant is completed.

OUTCOMES AND ACTIVITIES

We include this detailed description of outcomes and activities and our expectations about formulating outcomes for projects supported by the John Rex Endowment because outcomes are the cornerstone of your project and activities support your overall efforts.

1. Outcomes

Outcomes are what will **change or be different (increase, decrease, etc.)** because of your efforts. Occasionally, an outcome will be about maintaining something positive that might otherwise disappear or decline.

Developing your outcomes:

- General examples of changes (longer-term and shorter-term) that outcomes might focus on:

Decreased injury rates, decreased weight, increased physical activity, improved nutrition, increased pro-social behavior, increased use of safety practices, improved access to services or resources, increased self-efficacy, increased communication skills, heightened belief about the importance of an issue, enhanced built environment, improved policies/regulations/laws, increased influence to effect policy change, increased buy-in to taking a leadership role, increased collaboration, maintained commitment to an organizational practice, maintained funding stream (if funding was threatened).

- Outcomes should make clear “who” or “what” is changing (e.g., organizations, community members, laws/policies, built environment, etc.) and can focus on intervention target/s (most typical) and/or the ultimate population target depending on the nature of the project. (See definitions: “Intervention Target” and “Ultimate Population Target.”)
- Your outcomes do not have to be phrased as the examples are below.
- Please review your outcomes to check that they are not project activities or things you “do.”

An important note about quantifying outcomes: The John Rex Endowment recognizes that quantifying some outcomes is challenging. If an outcome lends itself to being examined only qualitatively (e.g., through focus group dialogue), that is appropriate. If an outcome lends itself to being examined quantitatively (or both), the quantification should be grounded in: what is known from research, what has been learned within the organization from conducting this project or similar projects and/or from working with intervention target/s, etc. If none of that information is available for developing a meaningful method for quantifying outcomes, then an outcome should not be quantified. Under such circumstances, grantees are still encouraged to plan for collecting baseline information (including, where appropriate, quantitative and qualitative information) to track change over time.

Below is some more specific information about longer-term and shorter-term outcomes.

Longer-term Outcomes: The outcomes (or changes) a grantee intends to accomplish by the end of the grant.

- Longer-term outcomes often focus on changes in:
 - people’s behavior, life circumstance, health status, etc.
 - organizations’ or systems’ focus, culture, resources, infrastructure, behavior, etc.
 - laws, regulations, policies, funding streams, programs, etc.
 - built environment
 - family or community norms (expectations or standards around behavior, etc.)
 - etc.

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Examples of longer-term outcomes:

- *25% more mothers breastfeed their babies on-site at targeted child care centers.*
- *50% of targeted child care centers have put in place high-quality breastfeeding-friendly policies.*

- Longer-term outcomes should match the type of work being done and the impact expected to be achieved by the end of the grant. For example, an implementation project focused on organizations as the intervention target will almost always have longer-term outcomes related to changes in those organizations – not changes in, for example, children’s health, which might be the ultimate/post-this-grant outcome). (See definitions: “Intervention Target” and “Ultimate Population Target.”)
- Longer-term outcomes should generally be quantified to reflect the “quantity” of change you are anticipating bringing about. (See example above and note below.)

Shorter-term Outcomes: The outcomes (or changes) that are the stepping stone outcomes toward achieving one or more longer-term outcome.

- Shorter-term outcomes often focus on changes in:
 - people’s knowledge, attitudes, skills, behaviors
 - people’s access to resources and tools
 - people’s immediate health or well-being status
 - organizations’ capacity
 - organizations’ buy-in/participation
 - etc.

Examples of shorter-term outcomes:

- *70% of administrators at targeted child care centers have increased confidence in their ability to lead their centers to be more breastfeeding-friendly.*
- *All administrators increase their skills in how to make their facilities more breastfeeding-friendly.*

- Shorter-term outcomes are the stepping stones on the way to achieving each longer-term outcome. So, for example – and generally speaking -- achieving shorter-term outcomes 1A+1B+1C+1D should lead to the achievement of longer-term outcome 1, and so on.
- **Where appropriate and where it is feasible to measure change in a quantitative way**, shorter-term outcomes should be quantified to reflect the “quantity” of change you are anticipating bringing about. However, quantification is not required for all shorter-term outcomes. See “An important note about quantifying outcomes” on pg. 4.
- Shorter-term outcomes may directly relate to more than one longer-term outcome and, if so, should be listed more than once.

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2. Activities

Activities are the actions, processes, etc. that are key to conducting the project.

Developing your activities:

- Unlike outcomes, activity-related sentences often start with a “doing” verb (“develop,” “conduct,” “train,” “convene,” etc.).
- Activities that directly contribute to more than one outcome should be listed more than once.

Below is some more specific information about major project activities and major administrative activities.

Major project activities, when completed successfully, should facilitate achieving one or more shorter-term outcomes – or, from time to time, a longer-term outcome directly.

Examples of a major project activity:

- *Recruit child care centers to participate in training series.*
- *Develop tailored strategies for cultivating policymaker allies.*

Examples of more minor project activities not to include:

- *Mail “Save the Date” reminder.*
- *Develop training series registration packet.*

Major administrative activities are those that are not directly aimed at reaching outcomes but are directly related to conducting the project. Indirect support activities, such as bookkeeping, should not be included.

Examples of a major administrative activity:

- *Hire Project Coordinator.*
- *Research and purchase database.*

Examples of more minor project activities not to include:

- *Distribute job announcement.*
- *Conduct candidate interviews.*