

What to Know about Outcomes (Measures of Success) at the Longwood Foundation

We've found that articulating outcomes as part of developing a grant request may be challenging, thus the purpose of this document is to provide support and clarity for organizations with points to consider when drafting outcomes.

- 1. What are outcomes?** Outcomes are ways to articulate and measure what your organization is trying to accomplish over the next few years with the support of the proposed grant. They consider what is important to your organization and how you propose to measure success. Outcomes illustrate how you'll achieve your desired organizational endeavors. They describe what will grow, strengthen, and/or improve because of your work. They can also be thought of as *SMART* goals; Specific, Measured, Actionable, Relevant and Timebound measures of success.

Outcomes are:

*Specific, clear and concise, articulate what will be done and how, as well as who will take action
Measurable, quantifiable, and help determine progress and its timing
Actionable, achievable and realistic measures of feasibility within the scope of your work/project
Relevant and meaningful to your work
Timebound and include a specific, pre-defined timeline*

- 2. Why do we ask for quantitative outcomes? Why are they important?** Outcome measures speak to the specific ambition and measurable impact of your work and become an important way for us to distinguish where our dollars will be most impactful. We recognize that your organization understands its value in many ways, including through stories and experiences shared, which is also important to how we think about your impact. These aspects are shared with our Trustees through the narrative part of your application, coupled with outcome measures.
- 3. How do outcomes align with Longwood's mission?** As a catalytic funder, Longwood's dollars are intended to help your organization grow, change, strengthen, and/or improve in service of your mission. Therefore, we look to you to define success, and to quantitatively know how you've achieved it through the lens of your mission. The outcomes you share are your organization's way of explicitly stating what is growing, strengthening, and improving.
- 4. How many outcomes does Longwood ask for? Why?** Your outcomes help to tell a story. You may have several things you're measuring that speak to your impact. We're looking for you to identify 2-4 specific measures that are most impactful for you and, that help to tell that story. We limit the number of outcomes because any more than this leaves us wondering what's your highest priority. Additionally, we'll hold you accountable to meeting all of them – so striking a balance here is important.

5. What are the components of an outcome? Each outcome is composed of five pieces of information, and they follow the SMART goals guidelines. They are a quantitative reflection of what you intend to improve upon and should include baseline data. They are formatted like the example below and concisely describe the following:

- WHO will complete the output or be the beneficiary of the outcome?
- WHAT is the activity or result expected to be achieved?
- BY WHEN will it occur?
- HOW MUCH will be done or accomplished (i.e., how many or what percent)?
- HOW WILL YOU KNOW the result was achieved?
- BASELINE/IS THIS A NEW measure of data? If not, what's the projected change for your current performance?

Example outcome: By _____ (WHEN), _____ (HOW MUCH) of _____ (WHO) will _____ (WILL DO WHAT), as measured by _____ (HOW YOU KNOW). *(When possible, include the current/baseline for this measure)*

*Extracted from the Barr Foundation Grantee Resource on Developing Outputs and Outcomes

6. What types of outcomes are there? Outcomes typically fall into three categories: quantity, quality, and/or financial and are typically leading indicators of how you know you'll achieve success. Leading indicators are short-term signals that highlight that you're on track to achieve the long-term success you're aiming for. Quantity may demonstrate a numerical growth in service (e.g., growing the number of people served), quality may demonstrate improving the strength of what you do (e.g., improving how you serve), and financial may demonstrate some positive change to your organization's financials or fundraising endeavors.

7. What should organizations consider when thinking about the timeline of outcomes? Outcomes are timebound – meaning you're telling us when you'll be evaluating and expect success on each of them. We've seen that many organizations regularly underestimate how long it will take to achieve what they've set their sights on, and that their outcomes may have different timelines. Therefore, be thoughtful with the timing proposed. Make sure that you factor in things like ramp up and hiring timelines when you're projecting your outcomes. If you come back to us and you have not yet accomplished the outcomes of your last grant, we are likely to suggest you continue working towards them before you return.

It's important to note that we'll ask that you not return to Longwood with another request until the outcomes of your last grant are known. If you're planning a Spring 2025 grant application, and funded on our typical timeline, you'd be eligible to reapply to Longwood as soon as Spring 2027. We'd suggest an outcome timeline ending no later than December 31, 2026 (enabling you to return as soon as Spring 2027).

You should suggest the timespan for outcomes that makes the most sense for your project and pace of change (which may be longer than two years). An important note about timing: in our most recent round of grant closeout meetings (where we visit organizations at the end of their grant period), we discovered that only 35% of grantees were nearing completion of their outcomes. It may be harder to deliver the outcomes you propose than you anticipate. You will likely feel pressure, some of it from us, to increase the scale or pace of your outcomes. Please do so with caution. If you ask us in 18-20 months if you can come back for your next request and you have not achieved the outcomes in your last one, you will not start the process from the strongest position. It will not be impossible to receive another grant award, but since most applicants are worthy of a grant, your chances are not as strong.

8. What if the outcomes I'm working towards will take longer than two years to achieve? Historically, our grants have typically spanned two years. Recently most average closer to two-and-a-half or three years, with organizations selecting a timeline that better aligns to their plans and context. We understand that change takes time, and your plans and goals may run significantly longer than our

funding timeline. Share that with us as part of the process. If you're seeking program or operating funding, we will likely suggest that you pick an earlier milestone on the way to your longer-term outcomes.

- 9. What if your organization is presenting a capital request? How should you think about outcomes?** If you're submitting a capital request – say you're requesting funding for a new roof – we want to hear about and understand what's happening in your building underneath the roof. Share with us those measures of success most important to your organization over the period of the capital project, the operating or programmatic outcomes most impactful for you. If you're seeking capital funding, and the timing of construction runs past our grant period, have a conversation with us about the best way to structure your outcomes. For example, if you're opening a new building, which will allow you to grow the number of people you're serving and strengthens the quality of your programming, we may suggest that you choose an outcome timeline that coincides with after the building opens that would allow you to measure the improved quality and growth in number of individuals served.
- 10. How should your organizations balance ambition with being realistic?** It is important to recognize the tension between ambition and what's realistic for your organization in the timeframe specified. While ambition sets you apart, you should remain intentional about what outcomes you agree to. When thinking about your outcomes, you're working to establish a balance that demonstrates your ambition and represents what can realistically be accomplished in the time of the grant. The ambition helps provides mutual understanding of the potential impact of your work in ways that may make your request more compelling. While we want to see and understand your ambition, we will ultimately be holding you accountable to the outcomes you propose. One of our founder's values – and thus our values – is *Be Responsible and Accountable*. Through our grantmaking, your performance on these outcomes is one way we think about whether a grant was successful. We'll ask you about them in your Final Report, which you'll prepare and submit at the end of your grant period. Therefore, it's important to understand that past performance of a grant impacts how we think about any future request.
- 11. Should your organization create or start measuring an outcome just for a Longwood grant?** Your organization should name what's most important to you and should not feel pressured to change your priorities to align to what you think Longwood would want to see. Therefore, we'd never want you to create or propose outcomes just for us that are not important for you. These should speak to and resonate with how you think about what success looks like – and represent measures that are important for you. For this reason, many times we find that organizations are strongly positioned to provide these for us when they can lift them directly out of their strategic plan and what your Board of Directors is already holding you accountable to.
- 12. What happens to outcomes after a grant is awarded?** We intentionally keep grant reporting requirements to a minimum. The Longwood Foundation will ask organizations that receive funds to provide an update on the project via an online Final Report (through the Portal) to address whether or not the project has been completed on schedule and if the outcomes agreed upon in the Grant Agreement were met. Upon successful completion of the final report, The Longwood Foundation will close out the grant. Depending on the timeline of your progress, your eligibility to return to Longwood with a future request may be adjusted.