

# Getting funding and planning successful projects



## Big Lottery Fund guide to outcomes



## Getting funding and planning successful projects: Big Lottery Fund's guide to outcomes

### Further copies available from:

Email [general.enquiries@biglotteryfund.org.uk](mailto:general.enquiries@biglotteryfund.org.uk)  
Phone 0845 4 10 20 30  
Textphone 0845 6 02 16 59 (for those with a hearing impairment)  
Our website [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk)

### Accessibility

Please contact us to discuss any particular communication needs you may have.

### Our equality principles

Promoting accessibility; valuing cultural diversity; promoting participation; promoting equality of opportunity; promoting inclusive communities; reducing disadvantage and exclusion. Please visit our website for more information.

### We care about the environment

The Big Lottery Fund seeks to minimise its negative environmental impact and only uses proper sustainable resources.

### Our mission

We are committed to bringing real improvements to communities and the lives of people most in need.

### Our values

We have identified three values that underpin our work: being supportive and helpful, making best use of Lottery money and using knowledge and evidence.

You can find out more about us, our values and the funding programmes we run by visiting our website [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk)

The Big Lottery Fund is committed to valuing diversity and promoting equality of opportunity, both as a grantmaker and employer. The Big Lottery Fund will aim to adopt an inclusive approach to ensure grant applicants and recipients, stakeholders, job applicants and employees are treated fairly.

March 2012

### Credits

This guidance has been written by Janice Needham and Ann Sanders, and builds on our previous materials on this subject:

'Explaining the difference your project makes' by Sara Burns and Joy MacKeith at Triangle Consulting, 2006.

'Your project and its outcomes' by Sally Cupitt with Jean Ellis at Charities Evaluation Services, 2003.

Both Triangle Consulting and Charities Evaluation Services have contributed to this updated guidance.

# BIG's guide to outcomes

## Introduction

Big Lottery Fund is an outcomes funder and is driven by the difference its funding makes for individuals and communities. We have recently revised our approach to outcomes and have produced the website 'Getting Funding and Planning Successful Projects' for organisations applying for a Big Lottery Fund grant from 1st November 2010. You can access this resource at [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/funding](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/funding)

This guide is a **summarised** version of the material on the website. It provides a simple step-by-step introduction to the concepts and principles that you will need to know about if you are going to apply for funding from us. Please take some time to explore this website – it will increase your chances of getting funding, and of making a difference once you do.

This guide covers:

- ▶ **Section 1: Need**
- ▶ **Section 2: Aims and outcomes**
- ▶ **Section 3: Tracking progress**
- ▶ **Section 4: Activities**

Getting Funding and Planning Successful Projects is part of a set of essential materials for our applicants. If you are applying to us for funding **you must also read:**

- ▶ The **programme guidance** – which will include specific details about programme outcomes.
- ▶ The **application form** – which will also set out clearly all the information you need to provide.
- ▶ **'Equality Matters'** – which will help you to consider and manage the equality issues associated with your project before you apply to BIG. Visit [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/equalitymatters.pdf](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/equalitymatters.pdf)



The website has more information to help you, including:

- eight worked examples
- help for each of the key areas of identifying need, aims and outcomes and tracking progress, including exercises you can work through
- guidance on learning from the experience of running your project
- details of other resources and organisations that may be useful.

# 1. Need

## Introduction

The starting point for any project is to be clear on the needs it is addressing. Need is the term we use to describe a problem or issue, or situation where something needs to change to make things better, for a person, a group of people, an environment or an organisation.

## Why is it important?

Because:

- having a **clear vision** of what your project will tackle is fundamental to designing your project's approach
- being clear about the need helps you decide **how best to address it** or how to complement other projects
- it keeps everyone involved in the project **focused on the priorities**
- it helps you **revise and adapt** your project if necessary
- **funders** want to know that you have good reasons for your project.

## More about need

### Need: What's the problem?

If you have a good idea why you want funding, you will be aware of problems or unmet needs as a result of your own experience, through research or through being involved with an organisation or a group. When you plan a project, it is an easy mistake to make to start by describing who you want to work with and what you want to do without first being clear about the need you are addressing. Careful analysis of the need is an **important first step** in project planning.

One approach to defining need is to view those in need as lacking particular resources or facing certain barriers in accessing the support, information or care they need. For instance individuals or groups may have needs because they cannot readily access or negotiate services (perhaps due to a lack of language or communication skills) or because they do not live close to the services they need or lack transport. People may have needs because of barriers to accessing help or because of cultural barriers, discrimination, or a lack of trust in statutory organisations.

Some groups have needs that are more hidden than others. For example, many people with a learning disability who have high support needs also have needs related to connected problems, such as poverty, unemployment, social isolation and discrimination.

Those most in need include people with multiple, severe needs or those who have fallen through the net of support systems such as statutory services, family, or voluntary and community or private sectors.

It may be appropriate for a project to address several needs or to focus on one or two, depending on the organisation's size or specialist area.

Be as realistic and specific as possible about the needs you are addressing. There may be many unmet needs, so focus on the main need(s) you have identified and draw up a clear statement. This helps to ensure that other people involved in your project share an understanding, but also that we and other funders understand what you are trying to do. You may not be entirely sure or clear at the start, but working through this guidance may help you.

## Evidence: So how do you know?

How do you know the unmet need exists and why? You will have to provide some recent and relevant evidence. This can come from a combination of sources, such as:

- asking people with experience of the need
- your own experience
- research into the scale of the need
- local statistics about the population in the area or levels of deprivation (such as from the census or other more recent surveys) or other statistics.
- local authority initiatives or partnership strategies between statutory and voluntary sector services that are in place because the need is already well known and evidenced.

In general, the time you spend researching need will be in proportion to the size of your project. For example, larger projects will need to demonstrate how their project fits with local, regional or national strategies and the evidence underpinning them.

When analysing the needs you are aiming to address, it is important to keep asking the question “why?” There may be a number of underlying problems and probing the reasons can help clarify which needs you will address and which you will not, and the best approach to designing your project.

## Need – key points checklist

- ▶ What is the problem or issue you want to address with your project?
- ▶ What evidence is there that this need exists?
- ▶ What are the reasons for the need?
- ▶ Have you carried out any research?
- ▶ Why have you prioritised this need?
- ▶ Why is your project an appropriate response to the need?
- ▶ Have you consulted with the people your project will benefit and other relevant stakeholders?
- ▶ Do you know about relevant local strategies or initiatives, or other projects working in this field and how your project will fit in?

## What BIG will ask

This is general guidance on what we are likely to ask for in applications for funding. However, we sometimes ask for specific information for different funding programmes so **you should always** refer to and follow the guidance notes and application form for the specific programme to which you are applying.

We will ask you in your application about:

- the **need** that your project is trying to meet and **evidence** you have about it
- the **types of people who will benefit** from your project, evidence that you have about their need and the level of that need
- why you think your project is the **right approach** to meeting the need.



## Example: Older people and isolation

**Need:** Minority ethnic older people in the borough need more accessible, local and affordable daytime opportunities for social integration to address problems of isolation.

### Evidence

- ▶ The 2010 and 2011 reports by the local Age Concern have highlighted: increased isolation felt by older people from minority ethnic communities whose first language is not English, high levels of deprivation amongst these communities and insufficient services and facilities to support them.
- ▶ A consultation meeting organised last year by the ABC Active Communities Association, and attended by 25 minority ethnic older people, identified that they would welcome more opportunities for social contact and activities outside the home to improve their mental and physical well-being.
- ▶ 15 potential volunteers from local BME communities were consulted by the ABC Active Communities Association in autumn 2011 about their motivations for volunteering and what they would like to get out of the project. This showed they wanted work experience and the opportunity to gain skills and confidence.
- ▶ Six months before this application a survey was conducted by Top Survey UK Ltd with minority ethnic older people who are not already a part of a regular social group to compile information on what kinds of services they need and the barriers that prevent them from accessing services. The survey was sent to 70 households of older people and was printed in relevant languages and the response rate was 50%. Findings from this indicated people wanted more social activities but experienced language and cultural barriers to accessing services.
- ▶ Westminster Council's consultation in 2011 with 10 local stakeholders showed that other local organisations were struggling to engage older people from ethnic minority backgrounds as they could not provide the support required to overcome cultural and language barriers
- ▶ The most recent population projections from Westminster local authority show a higher than national average percentage of BME older people in the area.
- ▶ The latest local authority action plan (dated 2011/12) includes a priority of helping older people remain independent and in their own homes.

For larger projects, we are likely to want to know about local, regional or national strategies and how your project fits with them and the evidence that they have gathered.

We will want to know that you have consulted appropriately and recently so it is important to ensure that you hear from people who can represent the whole range of beneficiaries.

There are seven other examples on the website.

### Help in defining need

On the website you will find further help in defining need, including an exercise you can work through with other people involved with your project.

Visit: [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/funding](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/funding)

## 2. Aims and Outcomes

### Introduction

The **aim** is a brief statement of the overall purpose of your project.

The **outcomes** are the specific changes that result from your project.

### Why are they important?

Aims and outcomes:

- help focus everything that you do
- explain the changes your project will bring about to meet the needs you have identified
- explain why your project should be funded.

### More about aims and outcomes

#### What changes do you want to make?

Once you understand the need for your project there are two important parts to describing the difference you want to make:

1. Your overall aim – a brief statement of the overall purpose of your project.
2. Your intended outcomes – the specific changes that you want to result from your project.

#### Aim

The overall aim sums up the purpose of your project and the effect it will have. It helps focus everything that you do. It should be one sentence and describe something that you can achieve or at least influence strongly over the course of your project, for example: "To engage young people positively in the community". The needs that you have identified should help you to write your aim.

#### Outcomes

Outcomes are the changes that your project can make over time to address the need(s) you have identified. They are the result of what you do, rather than the activities or services you provide. For people, this might be things like improved health, new skills, more confidence or getting a job.

Outcomes are best described using words of change, such as: more, better, less, improved.

Depending on your project, outcomes can occur at different levels, including:

- Individuals and families, for example fathers improve their parenting skills resulting in stronger family relationships
- Communities, for example fewer young people are involved in criminal or anti-social behaviour as a result of participating in a range of positive activities
- The environment, for example improvements in local habitats will lead to higher levels of species biodiversity
- Organisations, for example charities have greater skills and capacity to meet local needs
- Systems and structures, for example a decrease in congestion city-wide from an increase in cycle routes

A single project may identify outcomes at a number of levels. For example: a family centre may identify outcomes for children, their families and for local schools.

Even in very small or highly targeted projects with only one or two outcomes it is still possible to differentiate between the aim and the outcome. For example, a small benefits advice project for lone parents could still have as its overall aim "to address poverty among unemployed lone parents in the area" with an outcome of "increased financial security amongst lone parents leading to reduced stress and anxiety".

#### Aims and outcomes – key points checklist

- ▶ Does your aim reflect the need you have identified and sum up the overall purpose of your project in one sentence?
- ▶ Have you used words of change (for example: 'more', 'better', 'less', 'improved') to describe your outcomes, to say what will be different by the end of the project?
- ▶ Do your outcomes link logically to the need you have identified?
- ▶ Do your outcomes describe clear, specific and realistic changes?
- ▶ Have you limited your outcomes to a manageable number?

## What BIG will ask

This is general guidance on what we are likely to ask for in applications for funding. However, we sometimes ask for specific information for different funding programmes so **you should always** refer to and follow the guidance notes and application form for the specific programme to which you are applying. For example, in Scotland our forms do not have a separate question about your project aim, but it is still important to understand your overall aim and you can tell us about this in your project summary.

We will ask you to be clear about the aim and the outcomes that you intend to achieve. What you say is an important part of the decision about which projects we fund and of the way we will monitor your grant.

When you apply to us, you will be asked for **up to four outcomes**. They should not be too detailed and should focus on the most important changes you want your project to make. You will also need to explain how your project outcomes support the **overall programme outcomes** that will be described in the programme guidance notes. While you can identify up to four outcomes, your project may be effective by focusing on fewer outcomes than this (and in some cases, a programme may require a specific number of outcomes).

## Example: Older people and isolation

### Overall aim:

To improve the social integration of minority ethnic older people in the borough by reducing isolation and enabling them to maintain their independence.

### Outcome(s):

- ▶ Minority ethnic older people report feeling less isolated as a result of accessing a range of social activities
- ▶ Minority ethnic older people in the borough experience improved psychological and physical wellbeing that will help to maintain their independence
- ▶ Project volunteers will gain confidence and new skills that will increase their ability to take up new training, educational or employment opportunities
- ▶ Local statutory and voluntary agencies will increase their awareness of the cultural and language barriers of BME older people to help them plan and deliver more appropriate daytime services

There are seven other examples on the website.

### Help with aims and outcomes

On the website you will find more help in defining aims and outcomes, including an exercise you can work through with other people involved with your project.

Some people find the CES Planning triangle useful in defining aims, outcomes and activities. You will find information on this on the website, including a worked example. Visit [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/funding](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/funding)



# 3. Tracking progress

## Introduction

Once you are clear about your aim and outcomes, you need to work out how you will show the change your project is achieving over time.

There are two key steps to this process:

- understanding and identifying the signs of change (using 'indicators')
- measuring the extent of change that is happening (tracking progress)

## Why is it important?

Because it will help you to:

- know if your project is **making the difference** you intended
- understand **what's working and what isn't** and help you make changes to your project, if you need to
- **track progress** and provide information to your funder(s)
- **learn** from your project.

## More about tracking progress

### Indicators

Indicators help us understand the signs of change and track progress towards achieving that change.

An indicator is a sign that the outcome, or change, is happening. Indicators are often expressed as:

- the extent of...
- the ability to...
- the amount of...

In order to know whether you are making progress towards achieving outcomes, you need to set **at least one indicator** for each outcome. Your indicators and their level will help you know whether a particular change is happening, and to what extent a particular outcome is being achieved over the life of the project.

When you have identified the change that you wish to make (your outcomes), the indicator is the answer to the question: "if a change is happening, how will we know?" It's helpful to think of this question first, before thinking about how to measure it.



For example:

Outcome	Indicator (How will we know?)
Minority ethnic older people report feeling less isolated as a result of accessing a range of social activities	The number of minority ethnic older people feeling less isolated

## Measuring progress

You will also need to establish:

- the **scale or level of the change** you wish to make, such as how many people overall will experience the outcomes from your project, and
- **how you will measure the change** so that you can tell how much progress you are making towards achieving your outcomes.

Outcome indicators can be expressed in terms of **numbers** (for example a reduction in the amount of pollution), or in terms of **words** (for example where you assess people's views or experiences, such as young people's feelings of self-confidence, or parents' ability to cope with their children).

A way of thinking about measuring progress is to imagine meeting one of your beneficiaries for the first time and then again after a week, month or year:

- What are they doing when you first meet? What might they be saying?

- How would you answer these questions in the middle of the project, or at the end of their involvement with your project? What will be different for them in terms of their skills, attitude or knowledge?

For each indicator you use for measuring progress, you will need to show how much progress you have made **year on year**. This will mean estimating levels and timescales for your indicators, for example “200 local residents will have a more positive attitude towards young people by the **end of the second year**”. You could lay out this information in a similar way to the following example:



Outcome	Indicator	Indicator Level	Timescale
Minority ethnic older people report feeling less isolated as a result of accessing a range of social activities	The number of minority ethnic older people feeling less isolated	50 minority ethnic elders are accessing new social activities	By the end of each year
		65 minority ethnic older people state they have made new friends and connections	By the end of each year
		A total of 150 minority ethnic elders in the borough state that they feel less isolated	By the end of the project

In some projects, there may be intermediate outcomes i.e. the step changes that happen before the ultimate desired outcome is reached. If that is the case, you can identify and fill in the steps on the journey, describing how you know that beneficiaries have moved through a stage – see the exercise in **help with tracking progress** on the website for an example of this.

In some projects, such as helping people to eat more healthily, the real benefits – such as reduced heart disease and other types of illness – may only emerge in years or decades to come. In this case, it will be more realistic and practical to measure changes in things like knowledge, attitudes and behaviour: steps along the way.

### Tracking progress – key points checklist

- ▶ Have you identified at least one indicator for each outcome?
- ▶ Do your indicators describe the signs that will tell you if a change is happening?
- ▶ Have you described the scale or level of the change you wish to achieve at key points during the project, and by the end of the project?
- ▶ What methods will you use to track your indicators?
- ▶ Are your indicators realistic?

## What BIG will ask

This is general guidance on what we are likely to ask for in applications for funding. However, we sometimes ask for specific information for different funding programmes so you should always refer to and follow the guidance notes and application form for the specific programme to which you are applying. For example, in Scotland we do not ask you to state indicator levels separately in application forms: the level of change should be included in the indicator.

We will ask you to set **outcomes, indicators**, and where requested **indicator levels** and **timescales** for your project, and will use these as part of your grant agreement, so it is important that you are realistic and confident about your project planning. This should not stop you from being ambitious when you plan and set out your project. Our staff may be able to discuss your outcomes and indicators with you during the assessment of your application.

Unless the programme guidance notes indicate otherwise, we will ask you to set outcomes, indicators and indicator levels that you can achieve **within the lifetime of your grant**. In some programmes we will only fund the first part of your project, but may still ask you to identify your outcomes after funding ends if, for example, we have funded building work that then enables you to run a range of services, we will be interested in how the building is used and whether it improves life for its users.

For each outcome, each indicator must include a **final indicator level** that shows the total change that will have happened by the end of our funding.

We ask about your plans for tracking progress as part of your application. This means that you will have to:

- explain in your application the **level of the change** you hope to achieve (how many, how much etc) and your **indicators for measuring progress** towards it year on year
- explain what methods you will use to collect information and track changes over time. This should involve collecting baseline information to record the level of an outcome at the beginning of the project (eg, beneficiaries' level of confidence) and at regular intervals to track progress between the beginning and end of the project
- report on how far you are meeting the outcomes at regular intervals, usually every year
- tell us about any problems you have in meeting your outcomes and if necessary, work with us to overcome them or revise your approach.

We understand that circumstances change, and that you may need to adapt how you measure your indicators as your project progresses. We are happy to discuss changes like this with you during the lifetime of your project.

## Example: Older people and isolation

Outcome	Indicator	Indicator level	Timescale
Minority ethnic older people report feeling less isolated as a result of accessing a range of social activities	The number of minority ethnic older people feeling less isolated	50 minority ethnic elders are accessing new social activities	By the end of each year
		65 minority ethnic older people state they have made new friends and connections	By the end of each year
		A total of 150 minority ethnic elders in the borough state that they feel less isolated	By the end of the project
Minority ethnic older people in the borough experience improved psychological and physical well-being that will help to maintain their independence	The change in minority ethnic older people's feelings of psychological and physical well-being	10 in year one and 25 in years two and three demonstrate improved health through increased participation in health and fitness activities	By the end of each project year
		25 older people attend day trips and state they feel more independent and confident going out and using transport	By the end of each project year
		A total of 85 minority ethnic older people state that they feel happier and more motivated	By the end of the project
Project volunteers will gain confidence and new skills that will increase their ability to take up new training, educational or employment opportunities.	Skills and confidence acquired by volunteers	10 volunteers will demonstrate improved basic skills such as planning, communication and IT through attending volunteer training sessions	By the end of each project year
		10 volunteers demonstrate improved confidence through facilitating activity sessions for older beneficiaries	By the end of each project year
		30 volunteers have taken up new training, education and/or employment opportunities	By the end of the project
Local statutory and voluntary agencies will increase their awareness of the barriers experienced by BME older people to help them plan and deliver more appropriate daytime services	Number of new culturally appropriate services developed	5 new culturally appropriate services developed	By the end of each project year
		7 agencies report a better understanding of the barriers experienced by BME older people	By the end of the project

There are seven other examples on the website.

## Help with tracking progress

On the website you will find more advice on tracking progress, including an exercise you can work through with other people involved with your project. Visit [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/funding](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/funding)

# 4. Activities

## Introduction

Activities are the **tasks, actions or services** that take place in your project to achieve its outcomes.

## Why are they important?

Activities:

- specify **what** will be done, **how** it will be done, **who** will do it and **when** in order to achieve your outcomes
- form the main content of your **project planning**
- determine the **resources and budget** that you need to run your project.

## More about activities

Having identified the changes you want to achieve, you can now plan how to make it happen. Activities are best described using words of action to describe what those working on the project will actually do, such as: to provide, run, organise, or produce.

At the initial planning stage of a project, activities are best identified at a broad level by considering how best to achieve the outcomes, before moving on to specify activity levels and timescales. When you get to the detailed project planning stage (for example before you prepare your application for funding), the activities should be **specific** and **measurable**, so rather than simply stating “talks at the community centre”, you should specify something like “one talk at the community centre each month for two years, each attracting an average of 30 young people”. The more specific the activities are, the more accurate you will be able to be in setting your budget and planning your resources.

## Activities – key points checklist

- ▶ Does each activity have a **direct link** to one or more of your outcomes?
- ▶ Have you used **words of action** to describe your activities?
- ▶ From your activities, can you develop a **project plan** showing what you will do, how and by when in order to achieve the outcomes?

## What BIG will ask

This is general guidance on what we are likely to ask for in applications for funding. However, we sometimes ask for specific information for different funding programmes so you should always refer to and follow the guidance notes and application form for the specific programme to which you are applying.

Your application will need to set out the **main activities** that you will carry out in order to achieve your outcomes, along with an explanation about who will perform the activities and the timescales involved. There is more detailed information on this in our programme guidance notes. For some programmes, we require you to provide a detailed business plan and we will explain our requirements fully in the relevant programme guidance notes.

## Example: Older people and isolation

### Activities:

- ▶ Older people receive at least one visit from a befriending volunteer a week
- ▶ Hold weekly lunch club for at least 30 beneficiaries
- ▶ 20 beneficiaries to attend exercise and computing classes every week
- ▶ Recruitment, training and development of 15 volunteers, the majority of whom will be able to speak a relevant additional language
- ▶ Hold four cultural awareness events/workshops for local statutory and voluntary sector daytime service providers

There are seven other examples on the website.

## Help with activities

On the website you will find more help in defining activities, including an exercise you can work through with other people involved with your project. Visit: [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/funding](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/funding)

Some people find the CES Planning triangle useful in defining aims, outcomes and activities. You will find information on this on the website, including a worked example.



# 5. Where to find out more

The Big Lottery Fund wants to support applicants in making successful applications to us - and to other funders. This guide summarises the detailed information provided on the website at **[www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/funding](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/funding)**.

This online resource also includes extra sections to help you learn from your project, and to help you find other support.



