

# Capacity Institute

## Glossary of terms for nonprofit performance management

**Performance management system:** A system of organizational practices designed to improve an organization's effectiveness. For many nonprofits this can be defined as increasing participant outcomes.

**(Nonprofit) Strategy:** A clear statement about an organization's approach to creating social value in relation to its context. This statement will include the organization's mission statement, broad organizational goals, and measurable objectives.

**Theory of Change:** A clearly articulated approach to creating social value that links strategy to program operations. This theory will include target population, outcomes, codified program, indicators, measurement tools, and uses of data.

**Outcomes:** Measurable, meaningful changes in the lives of an organization's participants (clients/constituents) that are logically influenced by their experience in its program. Outcomes begin with internal, initial outcomes (understanding, skills, values, attitudes), which lead to intermediate outcomes (change in behavior, milestones), which, in turn, lead to long-term outcomes (new life condition).

**Target population:** Group of people (or entities) an organization is accountable to help achieve outcomes, according to its mission. The definition of this population includes clear demographics and circumstances describing the target population's need for support.

**Service population:** Broader group of people (or entities), clearly defined by demographics and circumstances, that an organization decides to serve for practical reasons, but is not accountable for outcomes.

**Logic Model:** One page conceptual map showing how a program helps participants achieve outcomes, with a description of participants, inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes.

**Participant:** The population of individuals a program is designed to help achieve outcomes, defined by demographics and circumstances.

**Outputs:** The quantity of program service provided, usually defined as the number of participants enrolled, attending, and completing a program (number of slots).

**Inputs:** Resources dedicated to or consumed by a program to produce outcomes in the target and service populations. Inputs include staff, volunteers, program supplies, curricula, finances, administration, facilities, partnerships, staff training and support.

**Codified program activities:** The dosage and duration of program activities and relationships needed to engage participants and help them achieve outcomes, including enrollment, program requirements, and any necessary quality standards.

**Outcome measurement plan:** Work plan assigning specific staff specific duties to gather measurable data indicating whether participants have achieved success on priority outcomes. The work plan includes the timeframe, measurement tools, and prescribed process for gathering data.

**Indicator:** Measurable data that tells whether individual participants have achieved success on a priority outcome.

**Measurement tool:** Written or electronic source of measurable indicator data. Examples include surveys, interview protocol, pick-list scales, measurement logs, to be completed in accordance with outcome measurement plan.