

OUTPUTS VS OUTCOMES

GRANT WRITING

Outputs vs Outcomes: A Simple Explainer for Grant Writing

Grant applications often ask you to explain your **outputs** and **outcomes**. These terms can feel like jargon, but once you understand them, they can make your application clearer and more compelling.

This guide breaks them down in an easy way—so you can confidently describe the difference your project will make.

1. What are outputs?

Outputs are the activities or services your project will deliver.

They are usually quantifiable, easy to count, and describe what you will do.

Real examples from funded projects:

- A sports club provides free 90-minute training sessions for 50 young people.
- A family support service delivers 100 free counselling sessions per year.
- An aid organisation provides 80 food vouchers to 40 families over 6 months.

2. What are the outcomes?

Outcomes are the changes or benefits that happen because of your outputs.

They describe *why your project matters*—the improvements in people's lives or the community.

Real examples from the same projects:

- Young people who attend sports training have improved health, wellbeing, and social skills
- People receiving counselling experience improved mental health and reduced loneliness.
- Food voucher support leads to reduced hardship for vulnerable families.

Outcomes are “the difference the outputs will make”—the real-world change.

Grant funders often want to understand the real-world change, not just how many activities you ran.

3. Quick way to remember the difference

- Output = What you do
- Outcome = Why it matters

You run the activity (output) so people's lives can improve in a specific way (outcome).

4. Simple ways to measure outcomes

Measuring outcomes doesn't have to be complicated. Grant funders know that community groups have limited time and resources — they just want evidence that your project is making a difference.

A. Ask people about their experience

Many outcome areas (confidence, connection, skills, wellbeing) are best understood by asking participants.

You can use:

- Short surveys (before and after your activity)
- Simple feedback forms
- Quick check-ins or conversations written up as notes

B. Track observable changes

Sometimes outcomes are visible without formal surveys.

Examples:

- More people attending regularly
- Participants trying new activities
- Parents reporting improvements at home
- Community spaces being used more often

C. Use Numbers *and* Stories

Good outcome reporting includes both:

- Numbers (e.g., 70% of participants report feeling more confident)
- Stories (e.g., “A participant told us they now garden at home with their kids”)

Using multiple types of evidence aligns with outcomes-focused grantmaking principles in Australia.

5. Tips for writing outcomes clearly

Try starting with:

- “As a result of this project...”
- “Participants will experience...”
- “This will lead to...”

Example:

- Output: Run 30 weekly drop-in sessions for young people.
- Outcome: Young people feel safer, more connected, and more supported.