



Applying the NSW Human Services Outcomes Framework in Communities and Justice

Glossary of key terms

Activity	The actions taken to respond to an identified issue or need or aspiration of a particular cohort. Activities might include the delivery of one or more programs or services, or activities delivered as part of a program or service.
Attribution	Attribution is the identification of the source or cause of an observed change. Attribution refers to the extent to which an observed change resulted from a specific activity.
Baseline	Information collected before or at the start of an intervention that provides a basis for assessing program progress and outcomes.
Capability Approach	The capability approach (also referred to as the capabilities approach) is an economic theory developed by Nobel prize winning economist Amartya Sen. The capability approach suggests that improving people's wellbeing is dependent on improving their functional capabilities (i.e. what they are able to do) instead of subjective measures of happiness or wellbeing.
Causal pathway	The process by which an outcome is achieved.
Causality	Causality connects a program activity with an outcome – where an outcome is achieved because of the activity.
Client	DCJ's clients are a diverse range of individuals, children, families and communities. Our clients include those who use our services now and those who may use our services in the future. While we work closely with service providers, NGOs and peak bodies, they are our partners rather than our clients.
Client cohort	A group of people with shared vulnerabilities, needs and characteristics.

Client needs	A description of what is missing or acts as a barrier to reach a state of wellbeing or aspiration.
Data	Qualitative and/or quantitative information that has been gathered together for reference or analysis. It is used to help assess or evaluate.
Effectiveness	The extent to which an intervention achieves its desired outcomes.
Evaluation	A rigorous, systematic and objective process to assess the effectiveness, efficiency, appropriateness and sustainability of interventions.
Evidence	Evidence is factual information used as proof to support a claim or belief.
Evidence & Gap Map (EGM)	An evidence and gap map is a systematic, visual presentation of all available evidence for a specific sector or subsector (e.g. children living in out-of-home-care, homelessness, housing).
Evidence Review	An evidence review is a summary and analysis of the best and most relevant research evidence on a given topic. Evidence reviews can reveal the state of research on a given topic, i.e. what evidences exists and where the gaps are. Evidence reviews can also assess the quality of the research on a given topic.
Gold Standard	A method, procedure or measurement that is widely accepted as being the best available, against which new developments should be compared.
Grey literature	Materials and research produced by organisations that have not undergone a review by independent experts through a strictly governed process. Government reports and policy documents are examples of grey literature.
Impact Pathways	Impact pathways link the seven domains of the Outcomes Framework. They are embedded in evidence and show the causal pathway between two different domains. They demonstrate how improving an outcome in one domain can influence and help achieve outcomes in other domains.
Inputs	The resources that are required to conduct a program or intervention, e.g. funds, staff, time, facilities, equipment, etc.
Intervention	An intervention is the implementation of an activity or a program of activities that seeks to improve client outcomes.
Mechanism of change	A rationale for why a proposed intervention is expected to achieve the desired outcomes. The mechanism of change will challenge those designing new programs (or refining existing programs) to be clear about the outcomes each program component is trying to achieve. This may also be referred to as the 'theory of change'.

Needs assessment	A systematic method of identifying risk factors and/or needs experienced by a population. The process involves using evidence to make an assessment of the most important and urgent needs that should be targeted with an intervention to improve a client’s outcomes.
Outcome	<p>The changes that occur for individuals, groups, families or communities during or after participation in a program or intervention. Outcomes can be a change in attitudes, values, behaviours or conditions.</p> <p>Outcomes can be short-, medium- or long-term:</p> <p><i>Short-term outcomes</i> – primarily attributed to the program. Typically steps toward achieving medium- or long-term outcomes.</p> <p><i>Medium-term outcomes</i> – partly attributed to the program. Beginning of shared attribution. Link an intervention’s short- and long-term outcomes.</p> <p><i>Long-term outcomes</i> – result from achieving short- and medium-term outcomes, often beyond the timeframe of an intervention. Shared attribution across agencies and organisations.</p>
Outcome domains	Categories that facilitate the organisation of similar outcomes into common subject matter groupings. The Outcome Framework specifies seven outcome domains: social and community, empowerment, safety, home, education and skills, economic, health.
Outcome Indicators	Indicators are used to measure outcomes. They are measureable markers that show whether progress is being made on a certain condition or circumstance, i.e. whether an outcome has been achieved or is in the process of being achieved.
Outcome measures	Outcome measures provide values for an outcome indicator. Outcome measures are the tools/mechanisms used to track indicators.
Outputs	The direct and measurable products, goods and services which are produced by a program or intervention.
Peer-reviewed literature	Peer-reviewed literature is literature (e.g. journal article) that has undergone the peer-review process. That is, it has been evaluated by relevant independent experts who have recommended it for publication.
Program	A set of activities managed together over a sustained period of time that aims to deliver outcomes for clients.
Program logic	<p>A program logic is a tool used to support the design of a program or intervention that seeks to effect change. A program logic illustrates the links between the problem a program is seeking to address, the program activities, their outputs and the desired outcomes.</p> <p>This is also referred to as: logic model, program theory, theory of change, causal model, outcomes hierarchy, results chain, and intervention logic.</p>

Protective Factors	Protective factors are attributes or conditions which can mitigate risk or adversity and promote healthy development and enhance wellbeing.
Qualitative methods	Qualitative methods are used to gain greater insight into a problem and to develop a deep understanding of the experiences, opinions and motivations of clients, program staff and other stakeholders. The most common qualitative methods are interviews, focus groups and observations. Qualitative data is essential for contextualising outcomes and can be used to develop a greater understanding of quantitative data.
Quantitative methods	Quantitative methods are used to quantify a problem by generating numerical data that can be statistically analysed. The most common quantitative methods are questionnaires and the analysis of pre-existing data (e.g. data collected on client cohorts).
Research	Research is the systematic process of the collection and analysis of data and information, in order to generate new knowledge, to answer a specific question or to test a hypothesis. In this context, research is usually undertaken to examine relevant issues and yield evidence for better program and policy advice.
Risk Factors	Risk factors are attributes or conditions that can contribute to a person's vulnerability and increase the probability that they will have poor outcomes in the future.
Sphere of influence	The area that a stakeholder can influence in order to bring about a change in outcomes for clients. Determines which stakeholder contributed to change for an individual and which stakeholder is accountable for change.
Stakeholder	Any group or individual who can affect or is affected by an organisation or its activities.
Trajectory change	Trajectory change refers to what life outcomes are expected over time for a person based on their initial conditions. For example, if a child is born into a household that is economically disadvantaged, they are likely to have poorer educational outcomes. However, with effective interventions, it is possible to change this expected life course.
Wellbeing	The extent to which a person has a high quality of life, can achieve desired outcomes in life and can contribute to society. Wellbeing is multidimensional, capturing all important aspects of life: mental and physical health, economic and social wellbeing and liveability.

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