

OUTCOMES (reference document for breakout session #1)

Aim for ambitious AND realistic.

- In general, the most compelling outcomes address changes in behavior or conditions (although short-term outcomes might address a change in attitude or knowledge). However, what makes a change compelling is not just the type of change but the magnitude or amount of change. And, of course, the change should reflect the activity's intended purpose.
- **The magnitude of the outcome:** How much change can you expect among those served? Not only are you looking for a change, but you will also want to consider the level of change. Is the outcome target you identified worth the effort? Are your national service participants spending a great deal of time and effort working for this change? Or, are they doing something else more important?
- **Evidence:** Does the evidence for the intervention support your choice of outcome? Remember from the theory of change, your choice of intervention should be supported by evidence that shows a cause-and-effect relationship between the intervention and the intended outcome.

Is your selected outcome too modest? *It's possible to aim too low.*

- The outcome should be ambitious enough to address the problem. It should produce a discernible improvement in the problem or condition that gave rise to the intervention. Be careful not to choose an outcome because it is easy to measure but does not reflect the important change your program seeks.
- The following story of a person looking for her keys exemplifies this error: A woman is looking under a street lamp when another woman offers to help with the key search. After spending some time looking without success, the Good Samaritan asks where the woman thinks she lost her keys. She replies, "I think I lost them down the block but it's dark down there so I'm looking under this street lamp." We can all see the absurdity of this strategy. She focuses her attention on where it is easiest to look, not where it is relevant to look.
- A common program misstep is to focus on an outcome that appears more convenient but that is not compelling. You might end up trying to "look for" or measure an outcome that is easy but has little relevance to the identified need and planned intervention.
- The performance measure outcome should reflect what you hope to see at the end of the intervention.

Is your selected outcome unrealistic or unachievable? *It's possible to aim too high.*

- An outcome selection should consider the program timeframe. The outcome needs to be measurable within the annual grant period. For example, a new community health education campaign may not result in measurable health improvements in heart disease within the annual grant period. However the project may be able to select another outcome, increased healthy living practices, which would likely contribute to lowered heart disease in the future and be measurable within one year.

Taken from <https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/resource/high-quality-pm-powerpoint.ppt>