Shared Outcomes Framework Overview

This document provides an overview of the Shared Outcomes Framework, covering why it has been developed, what it is and how it is intended to be used.

The framework has been developed for projects funded by the Church of England's Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board (SMMIB) to support the measurement of project outcomes, to enable learning and therefore strengthening the impact of the investment programmes and the Church's mission overall.

CONTENTS

Why was the Shared Outcomes Framework developed?
How was the Shared Outcomes Framework developed?
What is the Shared Outcomes Framework?
How should the Shared Outcomes Framework be used?
How will the data from the Shared Outcomes Framework be used?
Frequently asked questions

Why was the Shared Outcomes Framework developed?

From when the Strategic Development Funding was first introduced as pilots in 2014 and then more broadly from 2017, churches, dioceses and funders have been on a journey together of developing understanding of the place of outcomes and measurement in developing new mission. As the number and diversity of projects grew over the years and more experience was gained around the value of measurement, the approach of each project using entirely locally defined measurement led to three main challenges for the programme as a whole.

The first was the effort involved for dioceses in defining indicators, collection tools and ways of analysing measurement data for projects each time a new project was developed. This could result in having similar but slightly different indicators across projects in a diocese, requiring slightly different definitions, collection and analysis, leading to a very complex picture of measurement. Given this challenge and lack of experience of churches and dioceses in measurement in general, not only did it take considerable time and effort, it also meant at times outcomes

without clearly defined indicators that led to later confusion, sometimes having to repeat the whole exercise of defining indicators part way through a project. It was also difficult to identify a right sized set of indicators, where frequency and number were sometimes too few and other times far too many, both resulting in significant measurement headaches for projects.

The second is that with each project using different definitions and indicators (well over 1000 indicators were developed over time), learning between projects was a more difficult task. It was often difficult therefore to interpret what another project had seen in terms of it's outcomes in comparison to ones own and likewise difficult to easily share 'what was working' or the relative strengths and challenges of different approaches. Although learning within the specific environment of one project was still possible, being able to learn from those elsewhere and compare approaches for relative fruitfulness was much harder. The third was the challenge of being able to understand and talk about the overall impact of the funding programme as a whole. This was in part for those responsible for directing and administering the funding to understand what difference it was making, but also for communicating to wider stakeholders in the Church of England, who were understandably keen to know to what degree the approach was bearing fruit.

Although efforts were made to attempt to group together measurement data for impact in a general sense, inevitably these were collecting together rather different definitions and so they were of limited value and at times ended up being misleading or misused, potentially undermining the trust in the system.

Given these challenges, it was decided that there was a need for a framework that would provide some degree of consistency of indicators used across projects and so this not inconsiderable task was started by the national church.

How was the Shared Outcomes Framework developed?

Given the challenge of developing a shared set of outcomes with common definitions to be used across the breadth and diversity of approaches, theology and practice in the Church of England, it was clear from the outset that this would not be a simple or quick process. The Vision & Strategy (V&S) team commissioned Eido Research to support the development of the framework. An initial exploration phase was undertaken with interviews, surveys and workshops with over 300 stakeholders at national, diocesan, project and local level to understand what outcomes are important and what people value from measurement. This

exploration phase identified a number of themes that were applied to the development of the framework. These included:

• Developing a simple set of indicators, that were understandable to those using them.

• As far as possible use what's already in place for measurement (such as Statistics for Mission and Return of Parish Finance)

• Allow for local contextualisation whilst being consistent across projects

• Balance providing both learning and accountability.

These findings amongst others were then used to develop the framework with Eido Research and V&S team working together on proposals, with input from a steering group and diocesan programme managers in various workshops. The specific indicators to be used for the suite of outcomes identified were developed in different phases, again in workshops with groups representing diocesan, national church and local church roles, comprising of clergy, project and programme managers, mission advisors and subject matter specialists. Picking the specific indicators to use for each outcome area was often not obvious given the variety of options. The approach was to choose indicators that,

• Are acceptable to most projects and churches, in order to get as many as possible to take part and enable accountability of the funding programme

• Enable some level of comparability between projects and churches, to facilitate learning

• Are clear, well-defined, and practical for the contexts which are undertaking measurement

• Provide insight to those collecting the data and commissioning projects and relates to the objectives they most care about.

The outcome areas definitions, indicators and tools were developed and reviewed through workshops, feedback from dioceses and practical application by dioceses.

What is the Shared Outcomes Framework?

The Shared Outcomes Framework is a menu of 12 outcome areas covering those most commonly sought outcomes from projects funded by the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board (SMMIB). Each outcome area has one or more

indicators with clear definitions, tools and methodologies to enable consistent measurement across different projects around the country. The aim of the framework is to provide projects with measurement data that gives insight not only to the impact of that project but on a comparable basis with other projects, whilst allowing the impact of the funding programme as a whole to be understood and communicated to wider stakeholders. It also provides projects with clearly defined indicators that can be consistently applied, along with guidance and tools to support churches and dioceses measure simply and efficiently.

The 12 outcome areas that form part of the framework are shown below. The outcomes in green have standardised approaches to collection, using shared tools. The outcomes in amber have tools available, but can be measured using alternative tools. The final two outcome areas (in grey) have approaches available, but need to be tailored to the circumstances.



Further information about each of the individual outcome areas can be found on the Church Support Hub website at https://churchsupporthub.org/all-resources/shared-outcomes framework. The focus of the framework is on quantitative (i.e. numerical) measurement to enable simple comparison and aggregation, however it does also include some qualitative elements (i.e. non-numerical). The framework does not cover all aspects of measuring or identifying the impact of a project. It is expected that all projects will have some areas where additional indicators (i.e. not already included in the framework) and means of understanding project impact (such as stories and other qualitative means) are required.

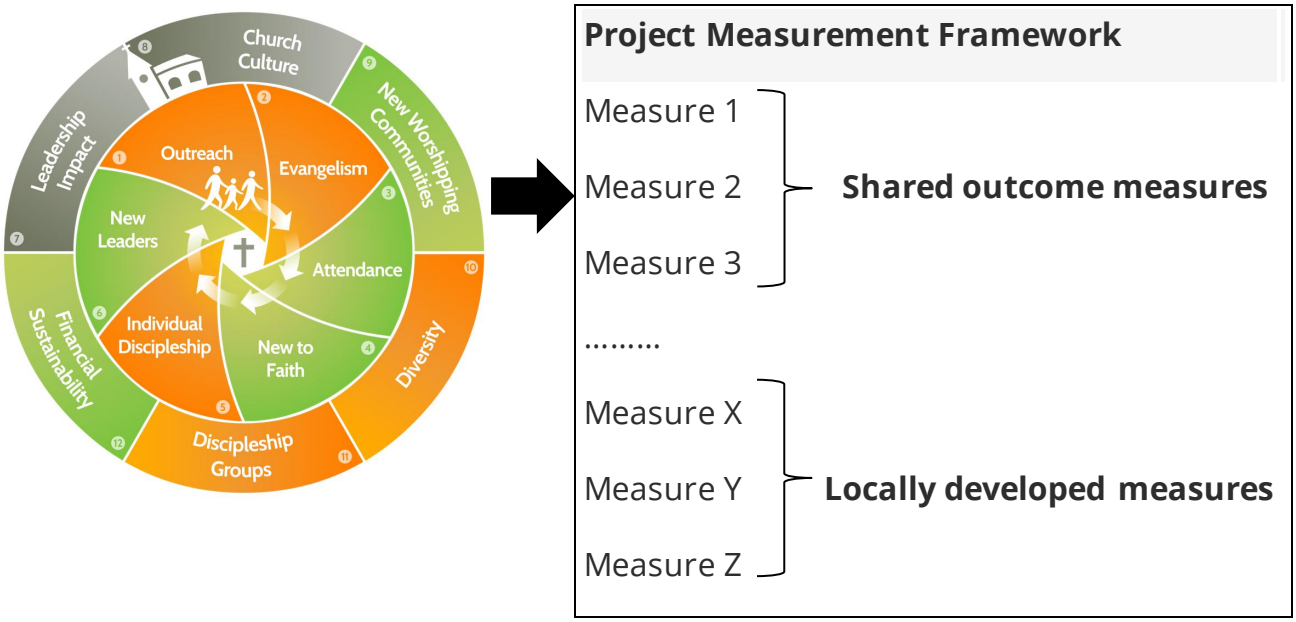
The framework is about enabling quality measurement rather than setting aims and objectives for mission, or saying what is valuable. The indicators are not an attempt to define what good looks like for mission, nor favouring one particular approach, rather they are simply a set of measurable indicators of change and impact. Given that they are indicators, they are by necessity a limited picture of the impact in any given area, but one that can be consistently applied across a wide variety of projects. As with any measurement, they have to be understood in context and considered intelligently, including understanding their limitations. The framework is not used for determining which projects are funded. Funding decisions are focused around delivering the Vision and Strategy and particularly the 6 bold outcomes.

How should the Shared Outcomes Framework be used?

The Shared Outcomes Framework has been developed specifically for projects funded by the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board (SMMIB), including Diocesan Investment Programme (DIP) and existing Strategic Development Funding (SDF) projects. Whilst the material and tools are available for the use of any churches and projects that wish to use them whether or not they are in receipt of funding, it is only funded projects for whom the use of the framework is required and not the whole of the Church of England.

For new applications seeking funding, during the project design phase, when the missional design has been developed, those developing the project should look at the 12 outcome areas within the framework and identify which of them are relevant to what the project is looking to achieve and straightforward to measure

in it. The relevant indicators should be included in a measurement framework for the project or programme. Where an outcome area in the shared framework is not relevant to what a particular project is looking to see change in, it can be left out. Most projects will have some outcome areas where the indicators in the shared framework are insufficient for them to understand the impact of the project. For these areas, additional locally developed outcomes and/or indicators should be added to the project's measurement framework. This is likely to include some outputs (eg training completed) as well as outcomes (changes in people's lives).



The Shared Outcomes Framework will therefore not replace a project's own measurement framework, rather it is a menu of first choice, from which the relevant outcome area can provide ready defined indicators that the project can adopt and add into its own measurement framework. The outcome framework for the programme should include the all of the outcome areas it plans to use during the project (including the details of measurement such as frequency of measurement and so on), with annual targets.

During the project delivery, the project will implement the measurement and gather the data for each indicator. Projects will in the first instance use the data for their own purposes of understanding project progress and impact as it goes along, supporting decision making about mission and how to best deliver the project. Measurement data will also be reported in annual review with the Diocesan Support Team consultant.

How is the data from the Shared Outcomes Framework used?

Collecting Shared Outcome data will be valuable in a number of ways to generate and share learning about mission. Any data collected will only be used in an agreed way with projects and sensitively, considering the audience and sharing only appropriate details. The data will be used to inform understanding of how to support the aims of the funding programmes and therefore encourage more fruitful and impactful mission across the Church of England. Research will also identify shared outcomes where appropriate, so that this can be used by dioceses and partners.

For example, this could include areas such as;

- Summarising data across the funding programme as a whole, within themes, types of project, or geographic areas, will provide a sense of the overall impact of the programme in these different ways.
- Providing benchmarks for the trajectory of outcomes in different types of project, e.g. this has been completed for church planting and grafting, showing typical ranges for worshipping community and financial sustainability. This can support diocesan outcome planning and options analysis.
- Analysis of different approaches to mission to a particular demographic, such as to children and young people.

This will support learning about what approaches have shown to have greatest impact in particular contexts, or common challenges faced. By using a range of indicators, the framework can start to identify the strengths and weaknesses of different types of interventions – e.g. models which are strong at finding new disciples, but require financial support, or which generate leaders without generating growth. This will help dioceses build a portfolio of initiatives to meet their needs. Analysis of the ongoing financial needs of starting or continuing new mission to a particular context, such as in deprived areas.

Frequently asked questions

Why do projects need to do measurement anyway?

Measurement is a useful tool to help understanding of what is happening within a particular area of work. Being able to track change over time can help to show

what is working and where challenges lie, which can help inform decisions about the mission that can help increase it's impact. Without measurement although those inside a project may have a sense of what is happening, it can be difficult to be objective and it is very difficult to share the story with those outside who don't get to regularly see everything that is happening on the ground. Having measurement that others outside the work can understand, particularly when having common definitions they are familiar with, can help share learning that can be put into practice elsewhere and communicate the impact the project is having.

How many outcomes from the shared outcomes framework are expected to be used? Is there a minimum number?

There is no particular number in mind for projects to use, as each project is different and will have different focus and aims and so needs to be assessed on an individual basis. Some of the outcome areas involve capturing indicators that churches already routinely measure and care about anyway, so would be expected to be included in all projects. The framework has been developed deliberately covering the most common outcome areas that projects are seeking and therefore there is expected to be good overlap with most projects aims.

Why doesn't it cover other areas important to churches, such as buildings or environmental impact?

There are many areas of church and diocesan life that are important. The Shared Outcomes Framework isn't seeking to define what these are, but merely cover the areas for measurement most common in projects, which are in turn focused on the aims of the funding. In the consultation exercises, dioceses and churches made it clear they wanted a simple set of outcomes, so although there are many other areas that could be covered, it was decided to keep the number to a minimum, which resulted in the 12 that have been selected.

Do we still need to think about outcomes and indicators for a project? Can't we just use the framework on its own?

Each project will have a different emphasis or focus to its aims and approach, even if trying to achieve the same thing overall and will operate in a context which will also vary, sometimes very significantly. Although the shared outcome framework indicators will give a good foundational level, there will be areas where it is insufficient for measuring a particular change a project is looking to see. All projects should therefore think about what changes they want to see, and how

they will know to what extent those changes are being achieved. Where the changes are sufficiently measured by the indicators in the shared outcomes framework, there may not be any need for further measurement in that area, but where the change isn't covered sufficiently to understand if the project's approach is working in a particular area, other indicators of change will need to be designed. Therefore merely adopting the shared outcome framework indicators without thinking more broadly about what changes need to be measured, would leave gaps in understanding of the impact a project is having as it goes along.

Can we use Average Weekly Attendance as our preferred indicator of attendance change (or any other indicator)?

For any outcome, projects are free to use any indicator they wish as their preferred indicator, whether it is in the shared outcomes framework or not (assuming there are good reasons for choosing it). This includes for any purpose of measurement such as for decision making in the project, identifying targets for outcomes and measuring impact. Provided the shared outcome framework indicators are also measured (and done so effectively) in addition to any other indicators chosen an outcome area, such as Average Weekly Attendance, any can be used by the project as a preferred indicator.