Scale of Community Outreach

"As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world."

John 17:18

Overview

This outcome looks at how churches serve their local communities through activities that meet social, emotional and practical needs.

Examples include:

- Community meals
- Food banks
- Toddler groups
- Youth activities with an outreach focus
- Other community-based projects

This page explains how to measure community engagement using simple attendance figures alongside stories that help show the difference these activities are making. Any measurement should be proportionate to the scale of work and the way that the figures and stories are used.

*For work funded through SMMI (Strategic Ministry and Mission Investment), this is an "Amber shared outcome", which means that where this is an integral part of funded work, the below tools **or** alternative tools can be used to measure this.*

Support with the Shared Outcomes can be requested through Contact Us.

What you'll find in this document

- A recommended way to record attendance
- Tools (two options) for collecting and reporting data
- Guidance on gathering stories of change
- Frequently asked questions
- Links to related Shared Outcomes

Recommended approach

1. **Track attendance numbers** at community activities.
2. **Collect stories of change** from participants and volunteers.

3. **Reflect, pray and discuss these** to understand what is working and where further support may be needed.

What is measured?

Attendance at community activities

✓ Include activities run by the church or where the church plays a significant role

✓ Count people each time they attend an activity.

✗ This is not an estimate of how many unique individuals have attended over a year.

✗ Do not include volunteers in the figures.

Tools and templates

Option 1: Participation Tracker

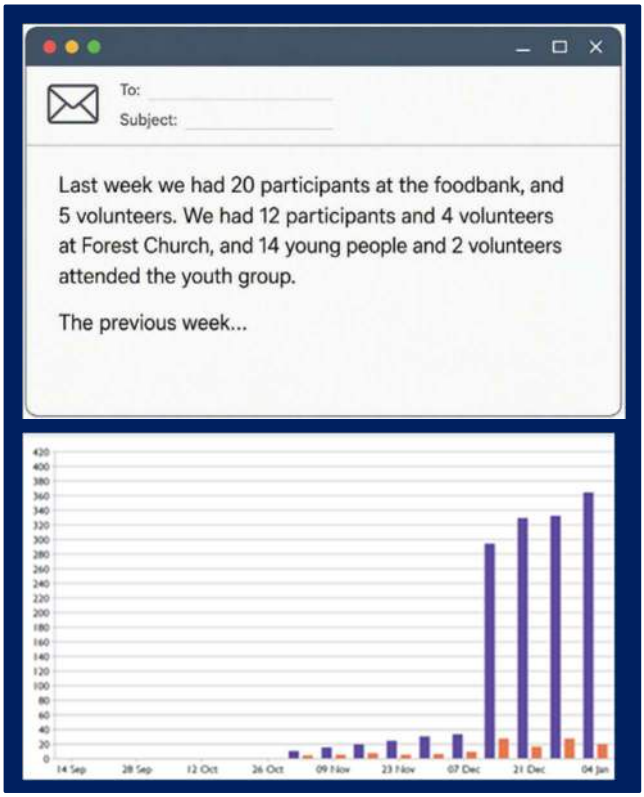
For churches that want to record attendance regularly throughout the year.

The Participation Tracker is available through Online Parish Returns (on request).

Churches can:

- Enter figures directly online
- Respond to automated email reminders
- Track participation over time
- View charts and trends
- Compare activity levels across initiatives

This approach works well for activities that run frequently and where regular monitoring is useful.



Option 2: Quarterly reporting

Where less frequent reporting is more appropriate.

Record attendance figures once each quarter and share them with the diocese alongside any other agreed figures.

Use the attendance from the most recent session of the activity rather than estimating an average.

For example:

Activity name	Community Outreach Activity	Frequency	Q1 # events	Q1 # participants (last event of the	Q1 total
Woodford Everyone Fed	Food bank	Weekly (13 per quarter)	13	46	598
Tea and Tots @ St Marks	Parent and Toddler group	Weekly (13 per quarter)	12	23	276

If annual targets have been set, add a column for this after the fourth quarter. Targets may be set across multiple activities, rather than individually.

Stories and learning

Understanding the difference activities make

Participation figures tell you how many people are engaging. Stories help explain what has changed because of that engagement.

A useful approach is Most Significant Change, a structured way of gathering and reflecting on stories.

Participants share:

- What changed
- Why it mattered
- What contributed to the change

Churches and programmes then discuss the stories together and use the learning to inform future decisions.

Visit the Monitoring and Evaluation page for guidance about Most Significant Change.

Frequently asked questions

How do we access the Participation Tracker?

Dioceses can request access and make it available through Online Parish Returns.

Can the Participation Tracker be used on a mobile phone?

Yes. Data can be entered using a mobile phone, although there is currently no mobile app.

Can data be entered offline?

No. An internet connection is needed to enter data.

Is the Participation Tracker only for Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board (SMMIB) funded programmes?

No. Any church can use it. Some churches keep these records in order for fundraising.

Who decides how often reminders are sent?

Each diocese can set reminder schedules in discussion with churches.

Who creates activities within the tracker?

Dioceses can create activities and share them with churches. Churches can also create their own activities.

Link with other Shared Outcomes

- Scale of evangelism

This can use a very similar message for participation in evangelism events.

To access information about this, and the Shared Outcomes as a whole, see the page on Church Support Hub.