Outcomes for heritage, buildings or the environment

If your work is about heritage, buildings, or the environment, it can be tricky to know what your outcomes should be. Outcomes are the *changes* or *differences* we hope to make as a result of the work we do, and, when we think about outcomes, we usually think about **who** would experience the change (which individuals or communities), as well as **what** is changing and **how** it's changing.

Here's an example of an outcome:

'*Older people will be less socially isolated*'.

Who is changing? = Older people
What is changing? = How socially isolated they are
How is it changing? It's becoming less

Those whose work is about improving or preserving heritage, buildings, or the environment often find it harder to know what their outcomes should be. Can a building experience change or difference? Can the environment?

A good place to start is to think about what **difference(s)** are you trying to make by doing the work you do.

An example of an outcome you might have is…
'Our historical building is better preserved'.

But **so what?!** Preserving the building is what you may be *doing* (your **activity**), but why is it important that the building is preserved? Usually outcomes are about the difference that your work will make to individuals or communities, rather than to inanimate objects like buildings.

If you think about your project's activities and ask yourself the 'so what?' question, you might arrive at some different outcome ideas.

Let's use the example of the historical building being preserved.
So what?! Why is this important?

We want to preserve the building **so that…** *Local people have an increased sense of community / Visitors have a better understanding of the area's heritage / Volunteers have increased practical skills…*

If you're unsure about what your outcomes should be, it can be useful to refer back to the **need** for your work. What's the problem you're trying to solve by doing what you do? If, for example, the problem is that local people lack a sense of community, then you might be doing some **activities** (such as preserving a historical building that local people can use, involving them in its preservation, providing social events in the building, etc) in order to mitigate this problem and achieve the **outcome** of, '*Local people have an increased sense of community*'.

You'll also want to make sure your outcomes are realistic and within your power to achieve. If you're still finding it tricky to figure out your project's outcomes, have a go at completing the table below and see if that helps bring you some clarity.

	Your answers
What is the **need** for your work? (In other words, what would the problem be if you didn't do this work?)	
What do you/will you **do** (your **activities**) in order to address the need and mitigate the problem?	
So what?! What **difference** will these activities make? (In other words, what **outcomes** do you hope to achieve?) *We recommend 3-5 outcomes per project.*	• • • • •

Another way to help you figure out what your outcomes should be is to think about what things would **indicate** that you'd successfully made the changes (i.e. achieved the outcomes). If **indicators** would include things like...

- Number of local volunteers involved in preserving the building
- How included local people feel in the community
- Local people's willingness to help each other out
- Local people's feelings of pride about the community

... then these could all **indicate** an outcome like, '*Local people have an increased sense of community*'.

However, if indicators of success included things like…
- Number of repairs needed each week
- How structurally sound the building is
- How much rainwater gets in
- Amount of moss growing on the walls
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… then these may **indicate** an outcome like, '*Our historical building is better preserved*'.

Some people find it helpful to think about **indicators** of success and then use these to define what their **outcomes** are. Use the table below to have a think about this.

Your ideas
What things would **indicate** to you that you'd made the difference(s) you wanted to make?   -   -   -   -   -   -   -   -
The **outcome(s)** these indicate are…   •   •   •   •   •

Indicators are the things you'll measure to find out if you're achieving your outcomes.

Still need help? A number of funders support heritage-related work and may be able to give you further advice. **Get in touch with us** for support on how to write outcomes, set and measure indicators, or any other evaluation challenge!