

 There are no pending text suggestions from your readers

# Definitions used in outcomes theory

## Part of the Outcomes Theory Knowledge Base

**This is the comprehensive set of definitions used in outcomes theory. This is an article in the Outcomes Theory Knowledge Base.**

---

**outcomes theory**   
outcomes theory knowledge base   
[Introduction to outcomes theory](#)  
[List of outcomes theory articles](#)  
[PDF of this article](#)  
[Subscribe to author's e-newsletter](#)  
[Author's Outcomes Blog](#)  
[Author on Twitter](#)

[Note: This set of definitions has only just been put up into the Outcomes Theory Knowledge Base. Cross-reference hyperlinks to other definitions within this list of definitions DO NOT ALL YET WORK, they will be made to work and cross-reference links inserted throughout the rest of this definitions article in due course. In addition, several of the diagrams in this article need to be redrawn. If you have any comments regarding improving the definitions below, please contact the author - paul [at] parkerduignan.com, or post a comment at the end of the article].

### A

#### **Accountability level.**

Definition: An accountability level is the level within an [outcomes model](#) at which an intervention organization is being held [accountable](#) for improving indicators. It should be noted that this level may be higher in different parts of an outcomes model. This is because (under two of the three possible types of [contracting](#) arrangement) it depends on the level within the model, or part of the model, to which [attribution](#) of improvements to an [indicator](#) can be taken. Under the third type of contracting, not fully [controllable steps or outcomes](#) can be contracted for and these can reach higher up an outcomes model, or part of an outcomes model, beyond the level of attribution. An [audience stakeholder](#) may attempt to hold an [intervention organization](#) accountable at other (higher or lower) levels of the intervention organization's outcomes model than the accountability level. [Provisional only].

#### **Accountability specification/Contracting.**

Definition: Specifying a [set of indicators/measurable outcomes](#) for which a [control organization](#) is going to hold an intervention organization [accountable](#). Used for: contracting.  
(First developed 2005: Revised 2006]

#### **Accountable.**

Definition: An [indicator](#) is [accountable](#) in those cases where if it changes, there is a subsequent change in the rewards or punishments (sanctions) an intervention organization receives from its control organization(s).

**Accountable indicator.**

Definition: An [indicator](#) is an accountable indicator in those cases where a change in it results in a subsequent change in the rewards or punishments an [intervention organization](#) receives from its [control organization\(s\)](#).

**Accountable outcome.**

Definition: An [outcome](#) for which an [intervention organization](#) will receive positive or negative sanctions from its control organization when specified changes occur in indicators associated with that outcome.

(First developed 2005: Revised 2006)

**Accountable step or outcome.**

Definition: A step or outcome for which an [intervention organization](#) will receive positive or negative sanctions from its [control organization\(s\)](#) when specified changes occur in the [indicators](#) associated with that [outcome](#).

(First developed 2005: Revised 2007)

**Alternative outcomes model transition point.**

Definition: The point in time when a particular [outcomes model's](#) [community of users](#) crossover to using an alternative outcomes model (or sub-model) because of new evidence or analysis. The community of users does this because they believe the new model (or sub-model) better represents the "cascading set of causes in the real world" underlying the area they are focused on.

(First developed 2005: Revised 2006) Possible other names: Alternative outcomes model cross-over point; Alternative scenario cross-over point; Alternative scenario cross-over time; Alternative outcomes model transition.

**Assumption step or outcome.**

Definition: An assumption step or outcome is a step or an outcome which is not influenceable by the intervention organization but which influences one or more steps or outcomes within an outcomes model. In some forms of outcomes models (tabular program logics) a column is dedicated to assumptions.

**Attributable.**

Definition: An outcome or indicator for which an outcomes model community of users agree changes in can be accepted as having been caused by a specified lower-level step or by an intervention organization.

**Attributable indicator.**

Definition: An attributable indicator is a routinely collected outcome measurement that shows changes in outcomes which are attributable to a specific intervention.

See also: Not-necessarily attributable indicator, Reliable indicator, Valid indicator.

**Attribution/demonstrable attribution.**

Definition: Being able to demonstrate to the satisfaction of a community of users of an outcomes model that a change in an indicator has been caused by a program or intervention.

**Audience stakeholder.**

Definition: An audience stakeholder is a stakeholder which has an interest in reports of evidence

and analysis in regard to an outcomes model(O), indicator measurement (I[n-att] and I[att], whole-intervention high-level outcome attribution evaluations (W) or additional lower-level evaluation (A) in regard to an outcomes system and which may or may not apply formal or informal system positive and/or negative sanction consequences as a result.

## B

### **Benchmark.**

Definition: A benchmark is a level on an indicator which is used (by either a control organization, an intervention organization or an audience stakeholder) to compare relative performance in regard to an attempt to intervene in similar outcomes models. The interventions can have been undertaken by: 1) two different intervention organizations; 2) the same intervention organization at different points in time; or 3) the same intervention organization in regard to the similar outcomes models in different settings or situations.

(First developed 2005: Revised 2007]

## C

### **Community of users.**

Definition: A community of users of an outcomes model is the group of people who need to agree on: 1) the completeness of the model as a representation of the real world; 2) an implicit or explicit set of criteria for establishing whether a causal link has been established within an outcomes model; and 3) other aspects of such a model or working with such a model.

### **Community of users validity and reliability criteria.**

Definition: A community of users validity and reliability criteria are the rules such a community has about the level of validity and reliability an indicator within an outcomes system needs to meet.

### **Compound step, outcome or indicator.**

Definition: A *step*, *outcome* or *indicator* which includes within it both an *end* and a *means*. This is often revealed by the inclusion of words such as *by*, *to*, *through*, and *in order to*. While this usually occurs in regard to a step or outcome, it can also sometimes be seen occurring in indicator. This is contrasted with the recommended approach within outcomes theory of using *singular steps, outcomes or indicators*.

Example: *Increased knowledge through producing a pamphlet.*

See also: [Singular step, outcome or indicator](#).

### **Contracting/accountability specification.**

See: [Accountability specification](#).

### **Control organization.**

Definition: A control organization is a player (person, organization etc) which has some sort of formal power relationship (in addition to any informal power relationship) with an intervention organization in relation to intervening in one or more outcomes models. Often also a [funder](#).

### **Control organization's overall outcomes model.**

Definition: A control organization's overall outcomes model is the outcomes model which contains at its highest-level all of the outcomes which the control organization is interested in achieving.

Control organizations often delegate the achievement of specific portions of this overall outcomes model(outcomes sub-model) to different intervention organizations and/or intervene directly in some outcomes sub-model (in which case they are also acting as an intervention organization in respect of that outcomes sub-model).

**Controllable.**

Definition: One of the features steps or outcomes can differ on. A step or outcome is controllable by another step or outcome or intervention organization if it the other step, outcome or intervention organization is the only thing that influences it.

**Controllable step/outcome.**

Definition: A first step/outcome is a controllable step/outcome of a second step/outcome if the occurrence of the second step/outcome is sufficient to result in the first step/outcome occurring.

**D****Delegation.**

See: Accountability specification/contracting.

**Demonstrable attribution.**

See: Attribution/demonstrable attribution.

**E****Evidence-based step/outcomes link justification.**

Definition: Evidence-based outcomes link justification is where the justification for a causal link between two or more outcomes is based on specific evidence aquired through empirical research that one outcome causes another. This type of justification is contrasted with a reasoning-based outcomes link justification.

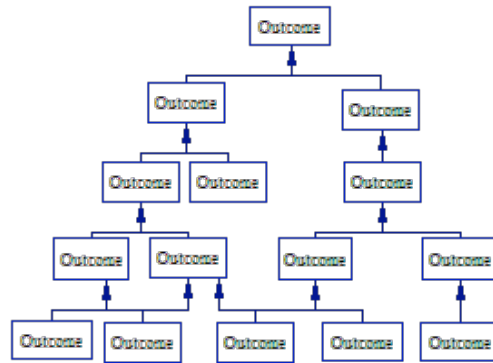
[First developed 2007]

**Exhaustive outcomes model.**

Definition: An exhaustive outcomes hierarchy is one which includes all relevant "causes in the real world" regardless of whether or not they are feasibly measurable and/or attributable in a particular context. The diagram below shows an exhaustive outcomes hierarchy where the outcomes shaded in light blue are not feasibly measurable and/or attributable but are still included within the outcomes hierarchy. [Name provisional - consider Complete outcomes model]

Figure: The Figure below shows the inclusion of the green outcomes in the model. These are not-necessarily feasibly measurable or demonstrably attributable to a particular program, but are, nonetheless, included in an exhaustive outcomes model.

### Exhaustive outcomes model: includes not-necessarily feasibly measurable or attributable outcomes



© 2005 [WWW.OUTCOMESTHEORY.ORG](http://WWW.OUTCOMESTHEORY.ORG) Duignan P #D45-2

Figure: Exhaustive outcomes model which includes not-necessarily feasibly measurable or attributable outcomes (the green ones)

#### Extraordinary factors.

Definition: Extraordinary factors are internal or external factors which are set out in formal or informal sanction reward rules as reducing the accountability of an intervention organization for influencing outcomes measurements (e.g. an example could be a major economic downturn (external factor) or the restructuring of a government organization (internal factor)).

F

#### Features of outcomes/steps.

Definition: The attributes of outcomes or steps which can be used to provide formal definitions of outcomes or steps. The five main features are whether an outcome or step is: influencable, controllable, measurable, attributable and/or accountable.

#### Final outcome/long-term outcome.

Often used in outcomes systems to differentiate between immediate, intermediate and final outcomes. The corresponding term in outcomes theory is high-level outcomes.

#### Formal and informal system positive and/or negative sanction consequences.

Definition: Formal and informal system positive and/or negative sanction consequences are the sanctions which may result for a intervention organization as a result of the control organization applying formal system sanction rules; applying informal sanctions; or of audience stakeholders applying their own sanctions as a result of formal or informal reports of evidence and analysis in regard to an outcomes hierarchy (O), indicator measurement (I[n-att] and I[att]), whole-intervention high-level outcome attribution evaluations (W) or additional lower-level evaluation (A).

#### Formal system positive and/or negative sanction rules.

Definition: Formal system sanction and reward rules describe the set of formal rules regarding what sanctions or rewards can be applied to an intervention organization by a control agency, including those resulting from reports of evidence and analysis in regard to an outcomes hierarchy (O), indicator measurement (I[n-att] and I[att]), whole-intervention high-level outcome attribution

evaluations (W) or additional lower-level evaluation (A).

**Formative evaluation.**

Definition; Type of evaluation intended to maximize the chance of a program, organization, policy, collaboration etc being implemented well and achieving its outcomes. Often formative evaluation will be non-outcome evaluation. However, in the case of piloting, an outcome evaluation may be undertaken in order to inform full roll-out of a program. Formative evaluation is also known as developmental and implementation evaluation.

**Full intervention roll-out.**

Definition: Implementation of an intervention across the full timeframe, participant groups, geographical localities etc. for which it is finally intended as opposed to just a trial/pilot limited in time, participants groups, geographical localities etc.

**Funder/ Funder organization.**

Definition: A funder organization is an organization (e.g. an organization, a group of organizations acting jointly for this purpose, or an individual person within an organization) which provides funding or other resources for an intervention organization (see definition below) to intervene to attempt to change some outcomes within an outcomes hierarchy under the control of a control organization (see definition above). A single organization can function as a funder, controller and intervention organization at the same time or all three can be separate organizations or individuals.

**Hawthorne effect.**

Definition: The Hawthorne effect is the effect on high-level outcomes produced by participant stakeholders just knowing that they are receiving an intervention.

**High-level outcomes.**

Definition: Outcomes at the top of an outcomes model which are influenced by lower-level steps. It should be noted that because outcomes models can be nested within outcomes models, a high-level outcome within one model can be a lower-level step within another. Also known as a Higher-level outcome.

**High-level outcomes intervention response time.**

Definition: A high-level outcomes intervention response time is the amount of time it takes for high-level outcomes within an outcomes hierarchy to change in response to a particular intervention. There can be a different high-level outcomes intervention response time for each possible intervention in an outcomes model.

Figure: The Figure below illustrates an outcomes model response time.

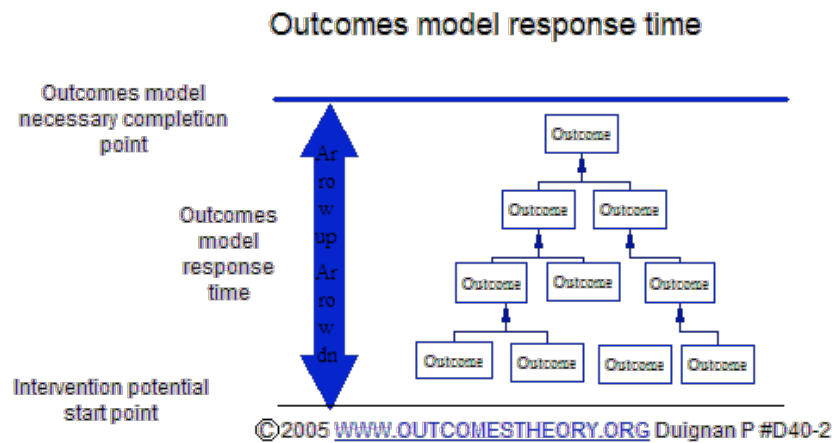


Figure: The outcomes model response time

### Higher-level outcome.

See: High-level outcome

### Horizontal indicator outcomes model reach.

Definition: Horizontal indicator outcomes model reach is the extent to which an [[indicator set](either attributable indicators or not-necessarily attributable indicators) reaches across all of the high-level outcomes in an outcomes model.

## I

### Immediate outcome/short-term outcome.

This term is not an essential term within outcomes theory as it is difficult to precisely define. It refers to those steps and outcomes in an outcomes model which are between higher-level outcomes and lower-level outcomes. It is often contrasted with intermediate and final outcomes.

### Indicator.

Definition: A measure of an outcome or step. Sometimes rather than talking in terms of indicators, the term measurable outcomes may be used. By definition these are outcomes for which there are indicators (i.e. for which measures are available)

See Also: Valid indicator, Reliable indicator  
[Modified 2009]

### Indicator outcomes model reach.

Definition: Indicator outcomes model reach is the extent to which an indicator set (either I[n-att] or I[att] provides measures for all of the outcomes within an outcomes hierarchy. [See also Horizontal indicator outcomes model reach and Vertical indicator outcomes model reach].

### Indicator set.

Indicator set: The set of indicators which exist for measuring the steps and outcomes in an outcomes model. See also: [Structured indicator set](#)

### Influence between outcomes.

Definition: Influence between outcomes can be of three types: 1) a positive influence; 2) no influence; 3) a negative influence. Whether or not an outcomes influences another outcome is an

entirely separate question from whether one can know if it has actually influenced the other outcome. This second, separate, issue is called attribution of one outcome to another outcome (output, organization, policy, individual etc).  
[First posted 2007]

**Influencer/Influencability.**

Definition: An influencer of a step or outcome is a step which either singly, or together with other steps, causes another outcome or step to change.

**Influencing step set completeness.**

Definition: Influencing outcome set completeness is the extent to which the set of influencing outcomes in an outcomes hierarchy is the full set of outcomes which influence another outcome under normal circumstances.

**Intermediate outcome/medium-term outcomes.**

This term is not an essential term within outcomes theory as it is difficult to precisely define. It refers to those steps and outcomes in an outcomes model which are between higher-level outcomes and lower-level outcomes. It is often used in an attempt to get people to identify steps and outcomes further up an outcomes model, but not at the very top. Sometimes there may be the suggestion that such intermediate outcomes should be demonstrably attributable to a specific program. If it is insisted that such intermediate outcomes also not be outputs then in some instances it may not be possible to identify any such intermediate outcomes. Within outcomes theory the term intermediate outcomes is not needed as people are encouraged to simply draw an outcomes model running from lower-level steps to higher-level outcomes. The issue of steps or outcomes being demonstrably attributable to a specific program is best dealt with by stating that steps or outcomes which need to meet this criteria. [See: [Features of Steps and Outcomes Within Outcomes Models](#)].

**Intervention.**

Definition: An intervention is a group of outcomes (causes) within any outcomes model which are initiated by one or more intervention organizations to change higher-level outcomes in an outcomes model. These outcomes (causes) are of such a nature that for a given quotient of resources they can be definitively allocated between these outcomes (causes). They tend to be at the bottom of the outcomes model in which they are located, however, there is no reason why one outcomes model cannot be an influencer at the bottom of another model. Interventions often go by names such as: programs, policies, organizations, treatments, projects, schemes, activity groups, units, corporate bodies, or individuals. [Provisional only].

**Intervention actual start time.**

Definition: The time when an intervention actually starts.  
(First developed 2005: Revised 2006)

**Intervention autonomy delegation.**

Definition: Intervention autonomy delegation is where a control organization has, in certain instances, delegated its decision-making powers about which interventions to use to intervene in an outcomes model. [Provisional only].

**Intervention duration.**

Definition: The intervention duration is the length of time it takes for an intervention to be

completed. It is the length of time between the intervention potential start point and the earliest time the intervention could be completed if it was commenced at its potential start point.

Figure: The Figure shows the intervention duration (the box with horizontal lines in it).

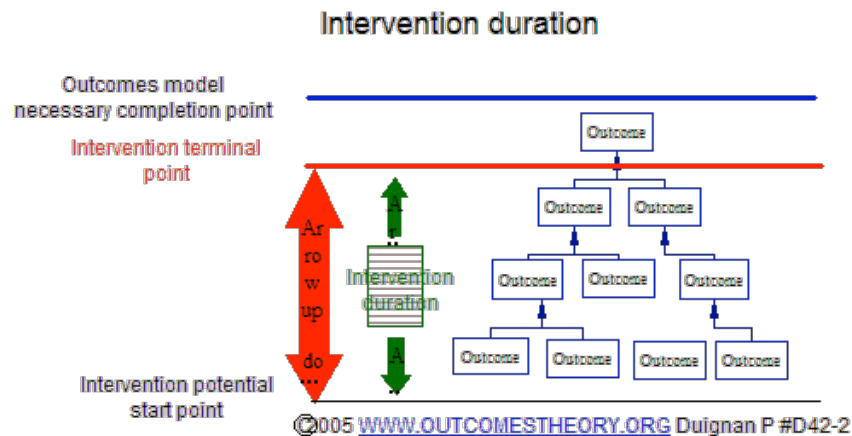


Figure: The intervention duration (the box with vertical lines in it)

### **Intervention modification time-span.**

Definition: The intervention modification time-span is the amount of time available to modify an intervention on the basis of feedback regarding the results of outcomes above it in an outcomes hierarchy before the intervention terminal point (ceiling) is reached. [Provisional only]

### **Intervention organization (intervener/influencer).**

Definition: An intervention organization is a unit (person, organization, collaboration, policy etc) that attempts to do something within an outcomes model which in order to change high-level outcomes. In the case of an intervention organization working with a control (funder) organization, the intervention organization attempts to make changes to an outcomes model and is controlled or funded to do this by a control or funding organization. Used for: Provider.

### **Intervention response window.**

Definition: An intervention response window is the time period between an intervention potential start point (floor) and the outcomes irreversibility intervention completion point (ceiling) for a particular outcomes hierarchy.

Figure: See the figure below Intervention terminal point

### **Intervention terminal point.**

Definition: The intervention terminal point is the point in time at which an intervention has to be completed in order to achieve the outcomes model necessary completion point (i.e. the time by which the highest-level outcomes need to be achieved).

Figure: The intervention terminal point can be seen in the Figure below.

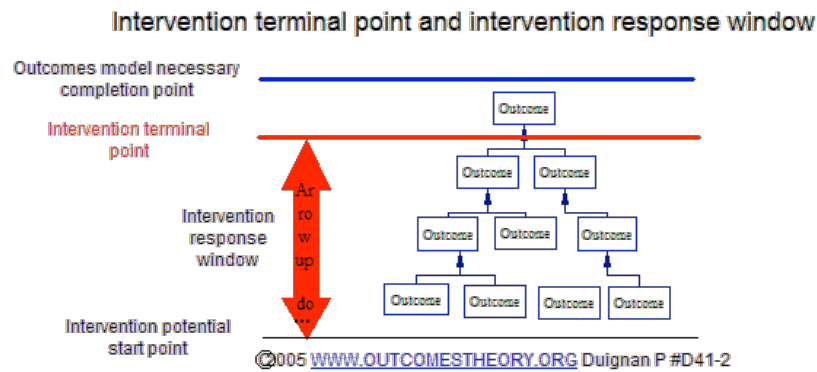


Figure: Intervention terminal point and intervention response window

**Intervention terminal point overshoot.**

Definition: An intervention terminal point overshoot occurs where an intervention has been started too late to change high-level outcomes. This happens where the intervention actual start point is left too late because the intervention duration means that there is not enough time for the intervention to be completed before the intervention terminal point is reached.

Figure: The Figure below shows the intervention terminal point overshoot.

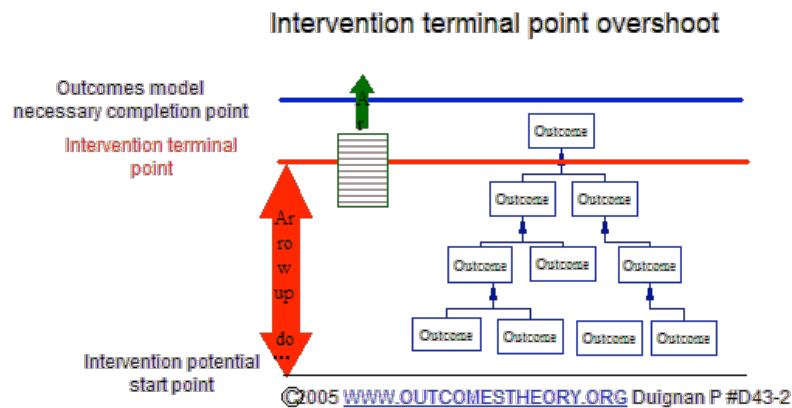


Figure: Intervention terminal point overshoot

**Intervention-related activity.**

Definition: Intervention-related activity (e.g. provision of funding, coordination, production of goods and services, policy or statutory change) is activity undertaken by an intervention organization with the purpose of changing, or holding constant, some of the outcomes within an outcomes model.

**L**

**Level of certainty of evidence and analysis.**

Definition: The degree to which a stakeholder accepts that there is sufficient evidence or analysis to act as though a particular outcomes model represents what is happening in the outside world. (First developed 2007)

**Long-term outcome.**

See final outcome.

**Lower-level step.**

Lower-level step: A cause which lies at a lower-level within an outcomes model and causes higher-level outcomes to occur. It should be noted that because outcomes models can be nested within outcomes models, a lower-level step in one model can be a higher-level outcome in a model which is 'below' it.

**M****Measurable.**

Definition: An indicator exists for a step or outcome (or an indicator can be envisaged) which is accepted by an outcomes model's community of users as being a sufficiently valid indicator and a reliable indicator for that step or outcome.

**Measurable outcome/step.**

Definition: An outcome/step is measurable if it has one or more indicators which meet a community of users validity and reliability criteria.

**Monitoring and evaluation model.**

Definition: The specific combination of outcomes system blocks used in the overall monitoring and evaluation strategy for an intervention.

**N****Non-outcome evaluation.**

Definition: Evaluation that is not undertaken in an attempt to establish that a change in a high-level outcome can be attributed to a specific intervention. Non-outcome evaluation includes formative evaluation - to optimize the development of a program and process evaluation - describing the course and context of a program. It can be contrasted with outcome evaluation. Non-outcome evaluation is one of the five outcomes system building blocks.

**Normal circumstances.**

Definition: Normal circumstances are when an outcomes model occurs without any extraordinary factors having occurred. [Provisional only].

**Not-necessarily attributable indicator.**

Definition: Not-necessarily attributable indicator: A routinely collected measure of an outcome which has the characteristic that if it changes, such a change may or may not be attributable to a specific step, outcome or intervention organization.

**O****Objective.**

Definition: A term used in some outcomes systems to describe what it is that is being sought by a program or intervention. In outcomes theory terms, *objectives* are best viewed as high-level outcomes within an outcomes model. In some outcomes systems, constraints are put on what can, and what cannot, be an objective (e.g. it is sometimes claimed that it must be measurable,

demonstrably attributable, accountable etc.). These constraints are captured in the notion used in some outcomes systems of objectives having to be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timebound). These five aspects are important to include at various stages within an outcomes systems as a whole, but within outcomes theory it is considered a mistake to limit oneself when specifying outcomes (the highest-level of an outcomes model) to just the measurable, demonstrably attributable or accountable. [See [The Features of Steps and Outcomes Appearing Within Outcomes Models](#)].

**Other relevant stakeholders.**

Definition: Other relevant stakeholders are stakeholders apart from the control organization and intervention organization which have an interest in some, or all, of the reported indicator measurements from an outcomes system. [Provisional only].

**Outcome.**

Definition: An outcome is something which is caused (or prevented) by a lower level step within an outcomes model.

**Outcomes characteristics.**

Definition: An outcome characteristic is specific value that a particular outcome has on one of its dimensions. By analogy, physical objects can vary on their colour dimension through being red, yellow or green. Similarly, outcomes can differ on their measurability dimension by being easy, moderately or hard to measure.

**Outcome dimension.**

Definition: An outcome dimension describes a way in which outcomes can vary from each other. By analogy, physical objects can vary on the dimensions of: height, weight, colour, texture etc. The dimensions on which outcomes management system elements can vary include: relevance, influencibility, controllability, measurability, attributability, accountability, reversibility, response consistency (vs tipping-point) and lag.

**Outcome evaluation.**

Definition: Evaluation that is undertaken in an attempt to establish that a change in a high-level outcome can be attributed to a specific intervention. Outcome evaluation is one of the five outcomes system building blocks.

**Outcome response lag.**

Definition: An outcome response lag is the length of time between a lower level outcome occurring and the outcome it affects occurring. It may range from zero to many years. [Provisional only].

**Outcomes hierarchy.**

See: Outcomes model.

**Outcomes model.**

Definition: An outcomes model is a 'cascading set of causes in the real world'. It contains causes and effects which may be referred to as steps or the outcomes such steps cause to happen. These causes may either cause something to happen or can be 'negative causes' in the sense of preventing higher-level outcomes occurring.

**Outcomes model delegation.**

Definition: Outcomes model delegation is the act by which a control organization hands responsibility for attempting to achieve an outcomes model to an intervention organization. Separate from such delegation is the issue of which outcomes or steps within the outcomes model the intervention organization will be held accountable for achieving.

**Outcomes model indicator completeness.**

Definition: The extent to which steps or outcomes in an [[outcomes model] have indicators.

**Outcomes model necessary completion point.**

Definition: An outcomes model necessary completion point is the point in time by which the highest-level outcomes within the outcomes model need to be achieved.

**Outcomes sub-model.**

Definition: An outcomes sub-model is sub-section of a control organization's overall outcomes model.

**Outcomes sub-model full set.**

Outcomes sub-model full set: The full set of outcomes sub-models that need to be achieved in order to achieve the outcomes model a control organization wants to intervene in.

**Outcomes system.**

Outcomes system: Any system in which the attempt is made to intervene in a causal process in the real world in order to change higher-level outcomes. Such systems may involve a single player, or may involve control organizations delegating intervention in outcomes models to intervention organizations and control organizations and/or audience stakeholders holding intervention organizations to account for changes in indicators measuring outcomes of interest. Such systems are known by a variety of names such as: performance management systems, managing for outcomes systems, results based systems etc.

**Outcomes system building blocks.**

Outcomes system building blocks: The set of five building blocks which lie beneath any outcomes system. These are: 1) an outcomes model; 2) not-necessarily attributable indicators; 3) attributable indicators; 4) outcome evaluation; and 5) non-outcome evaluation.

**Output.**

Definition: Goods or services produced by an intervention organization as part of one of its interventions. In terms of the features of outcomes/steps, outputs are: relevant, influenceable, controllable, measurable, attributable and accountable. Demanding that the term output be mutually exclusive of the term outcome in an outcomes system creates a problem for an outcome which also has the above list of features.

**P****Placebo.**

Definition: A placebo is a surrogate for an intervention which creates the same participant expectations as the intervention without having any additional effect on high-level outcomes over an above the expectancy effect. [Provisional only]

**Priority.**

Definition: One or more outcomes or steps on which it is believed a player should focus in order to bring about improvements in high-level outcomes.

**Provider.**

Same as [intervention organization](#).

**Pseudo-outcome evaluation.**

Definition: Outcome evaluation which is undertaken where it is not appropriate, feasible and/or affordable and which therefore produces an outcome evaluation which does not actually establish that a higher-level outcome(s) is attributable to a lower-level step or intervention organization.

**R****Reasonable autonomy in intervention activity selection.**

Definition: An intervention organization has reasonable autonomy in intervention activity selection when its control organization allows it a reasonable amount of autonomy in the selection of the intervention activities it undertakes. Some intervention organizations have very little discretion in the interventions they can undertake (for instance for resourcing, political, statutory or public relations reasons). On the other hand, some intervention organizations have a great deal of discretion in the range of intervention actions they can select from in their attempts to influence outcomes.

**Reasoning--based outcomes link justification.**

Definition: A reasoning-based outcomes link justification is where the justification for a causal link between two or more outcomes is based on mounting a reasoned logical argument that one outcome causes another. This type of justification is contrasted with an evidence-based outcomes link justification. [Provisional]  
[First posted 2007]

**Reliable indicator.**

Definition: An indicator measuring a step or outcome which, in an instance where the step or outcome remains at the same level or in the same state, provides similar levels of measurement when measured at different points in time and/or by different observers.

See also: Valid indicator, Attributable indicator, Not-necessarily attributable indicator.

**Response time for outcomes.**

Definition: The time it takes an outcome to change following a change in one of the steps which influences that outcome.

**Reversible outcome.**

Definition: An outcome is reversible if a change in it which is produced by a change in a lower level step is reversible when the lower level step reverts to its original level.

**Risk set or outcome.**

Risk step or outcome: A risk step or outcome is a step or an outcome which is not controllable by the intervention organization but which negatively influences one or more steps or outcomes within an outcomes model. In some forms of outcomes models (tabular program logics) a column is dedicated to risks.

[Developed 2008]

## S

### **Siloing.**

Definition: Where a lower level step in an outcomes model is only allowed to be linked to a single higher-level outcome. This is a problem which often occurs because of the technology of representation of an outcomes model (i.e. the way in which causal links are able to be represented in a table or visual diagram).

### **Singular step, outcome or indicator.**

Definition: A step, outcome or indicator which only includes a single element. In outcomes theory this is preferred to *compound steps, outcomes or indicators* which include both an *end* and a *means*.

Example: Increased knowledge.

See also: [Compound step, outcome or indicator](#).

### **Step.**

Definition: A cause within an outcomes model which has one or more effects (often referred to as outcomes) above it in the model. Steps can be either positive causes (increasing or causing higher-level steps or outcomes to occur) or negative causes (reducing or preventing higher-level steps or outcomes to occur).

### **Steps or outcomes.**

Definition: A general name for the elements which go into an outcomes model. Steps are at lower-levels within such models and outcomes are the things which are caused by steps and at the top of an outcomes model. Because outcomes models are located within hierarchies of outcomes, it can be the case that what is at the top of an outcomes model used by one particular program or intervention (which might be thought of as its *outcomes* may be the *steps* of another higher-level outcomes model).

[Developed 2009].

### **Short-term outcome/immediate outcome.**

See immediate outcome.

### **Structured indicator set.**

An indicator set which is divided into discrete sections in order to help ensure that it provides a comprehensive coverage of the range of possible indicators which could be measured in regard to an outcomes model.

## T

### **Target.**

Definition: A level on a measurement of an outcome or step (an indicator).

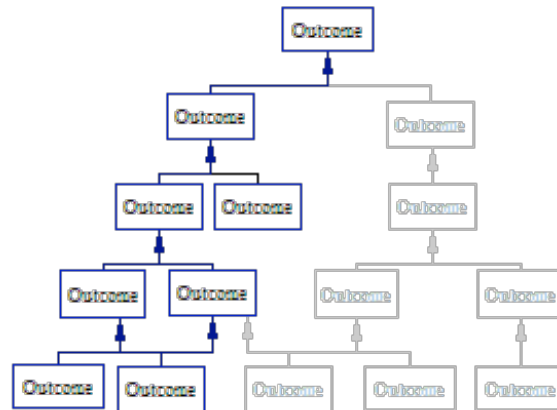
### **Truncated outcomes model.**

Definition: A truncated outcomes model is one which only includes feasibly measurable and/or attributable outcomes as in diagram below where only the non-grayed-out outcomes would be

included in the truncated outcomes model.

Figure: The Figure below shows a truncated outcomes model  
[Developed 2007]

### Truncated outcomes model: restricted to feasibly measurable and attributable outcomes



© 2005 [WWW.OUTCOMESTHEORY.ORG](http://WWW.OUTCOMESTHEORY.ORG) Duignan P #D46-2

Figure: Truncated outcomes model: restricted to feasibly measurable and attributable outcomes

## V

### Valid indicator.

Definition: An indicator which is accepted by an outcomes model's community of users as providing an accurate measure of a particular outcome.

See also: Reliable indicator, Attributable indicator, Not-necessarily attributable indicat

### Vertical indicator outcomes model reach.

Definition: Vertical indicator outcomes model reach: The 'high' to which an indicator set (either attributable indicators or not-necessarily attributable indicators) reaches up towards high-level outcomes in an outcomes model.

**Please comment on this article**

This article is based on the developing area of outcomes theory which is still in a relatively early stage of development. Please critique any of the argument laid out in this article so that they can be improved through critical examination and reflection.

### Citing this article

Duignan, P. (2009). *Definitions used in outcomes theory*. *Outcomes Theory Knowledge Base Article No. 231*. <http://knol.google.com/k/paul-duignan-phd/definitions-used-in-outcomes-theory/2m7zd68aaz774/59>.

[If you are reading this in a PDF or printed copy, the web page version may have been updated].

[Outcome Theory Article #231]

## Comments

[Write New Comment ▼](#)