



Community Star™

Outcomes Evaluation Toolkit

feeling safe

getting to
know people

Not for use
Sample for information only

Want to use this tool?

Visit www.outcomesstar.org.uk

Contact info@triangleconsulting.co.uk

or 020 7272 8765



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Please contact info@triangleconsulting.co.uk to enquire about buying a licence and training.

Licences are also available for those wishing to translate the document into other languages.

The Outcomes Star™

This Star is part of a family of Outcomes Star tools. Each tool includes a Star Chart, User Guide or Quiz and guidance on implementation and some have visual and other resources. For other versions of the Outcomes Star, good practice and further information see www.outcomesstar.org.uk.

Acknowledgements

Many people have contributed to the development of the Outcomes Star over its long evolution and we would like to thank all the clients, workers, managers, funders, academics and commissioners who have generously given their time and expertise.

The original commission for an outcome measurement system came from St Mungo's, with financial support from the London Housing Foundation, and Triangle recognises their vital roles in the development of the Outcomes Star. We would also like to acknowledge Kate Graham's important contribution to the development of the suite of Stars, both as a founding partner of Triangle and as co-author of the original Outcomes Star (now called the Outcomes Star for Homelessness).

We would particularly like to thank the following people and organisations for their contribution to this version of the Star:

- The 17 Groundwork Trusts around the UK who contributed to the development of the Star and other tools, tested drafts and gave invaluable feedback
- Marks & Spencer for providing the necessary funding through their Greener Living Programme, financed through the sale of plastic bags in all M&S shops.

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1 Introduction

What is the Community Star™ Outcomes Evaluation Toolkit?

The Community Star Outcomes Evaluation Toolkit enables community groups and organisations to measure and report on the success of community involvement projects. It consists of two outcome measurement tools, one of which is a version of the Outcomes Star.

The two measurement tools can be used together or individually, depending on the aims of the community project.

How it was developed

The Community Star and other tools in this Toolkit have been created through a thorough, bottom-up process of development involving 17 Groundwork Trusts. These trusts were running projects as part of the first wave of the Greener Living Programme, funded by Marks and Spencer through the sale of plastic bags in their stores and involving local store workers and customers wherever possible.

The development process included project workers and managers describing the changes they set out to make through community projects and the steps needed in order to achieve that change. We call this process the Journey of Change. Based on this, Triangle drafted the Star and other measurement tools. These were thoroughly tested with project volunteers, other participants and community members from the area around each of the projects before the Toolkit was finalised.

Although developed within the Greener Living Programme, the intention has always been that the Community Star and other tools would have a broad relevance within community involvement projects, both within Groundwork and other community groups and organisations that share similar aims.

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2 Community involvement outcomes

Community projects often focus on both:

- a) Improvements in a local area** Improving the environment and facilities for everyone in the community so that it is a safer, friendlier, more attractive, more environmentally sustainable, more cohesive and more interesting place to live. This may include strengthening or creating local community groups to make these changes sustainable and take forward new initiatives in the future.
- b) Changes for individuals** Helping the individuals involved in a project or activity to feel more at home, to get to know people and make a difference in their area. Some community activities also aim to help people develop healthier lifestyles, learn new skills, and become more environmentally aware.

Six outcome areas for both the local area and individuals within the community have been defined through consultation:

- 1 Physical safety features and people feeling safe (Feeling Safe)
- 2 People having contact with each other locally (Getting to Know People)
- 3 Individuals making a difference and community pride (Making a Difference)
- 4 Healthy lifestyles (Building a Healthy Lifestyle)
- 5 Individuals making greener choices (Making Greener Choices)
- 6 People learning new skills and trying new activities (Learning and New Activities).

These six outcome areas provide a consistent framework, which is used across the Toolkit.

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3 The tools and guidance for use

The two tools are:

- 1 Community Survey Postcard** This is a brief questionnaire designed as a postcard to be completed by people who live in the community and to provide a measure of improvements in the local area as perceived by them.
- 2 Community Star (with Quiz and Scales)** This is a tool for people who are directly involved in the project or activity. They complete it at the beginning of their involvement to help them assess how they feel in their community and what they want to change and again at the end of a major project or every one to two years to measure change.

The outcome measurement tools can be used separately or together. For major projects, the tools can be completed at the end of the project and, in the case of the Star, at the start to provide a baseline. However, in communities where there are a number of small projects unlikely to effect a substantial change individually, it is recommended that the tools are used at regular intervals of every one to two years, to allow time for changes to become evident.

Overall pointers for making maximum use of the Toolkit are:

- Take every opportunity to use the tools to engage people in discussion – if people are not sure of their response, for instance, use that as an opportunity to encourage them to talk about that area of their community or lifestyle, including where they want to make changes
- Some people may be reluctant to give low readings, feeling that this would be being critical of their community. Others may want to give positive responses to show the project in a good light. Encourage people to be realistic and honest in their choice of response – that is how you and they can learn about what is happening.

Using the Community Survey Postcard

The Postcard is for completion by people in the wider community who are intended to benefit from a project but have not necessarily been involved in the design or delivery.

As with any survey, you can use one or more of a variety of methods to encourage people to complete the Postcard and gather responses, including:

- Workers or volunteers spending time at the project site and asking people to complete the Postcard on the spot
- Volunteers or workers going door to door encouraging people to complete it on the doorstep
- Handing it out at community meetings, or a celebration event for the project if there is one, and gathering in completed Postcards at the end of the meeting
- Adding a reply address on the front of the Postcard in the space provided and putting it though letterboxes in the area likely to be affected by the project
- Leaving it next to a display about the project in a local library or community centre, with a box for completed Postcards.

The Community Survey Postcard is designed so that individual organisations can add their logos and project name and print as many as they need for distribution.¹ Depending on the project, it may be advisable to include a leaflet about the project with the Postcard if it is to be put through letterboxes.

“People really liked the Postcard – especially children and young people.”

Project worker

“The Postcard looks attractive – better than the usual survey.”

Project worker

Using the Community Star™

The Community Star is for longer-term volunteers, community group members and/or others directly involved in a project. It is a tool to show what changes for individuals during the course of their involvement with the project(s) – their own personal journey.

The Star can be a useful tool to prompt reflection as well as measure change over time. However, some people may not have thought about their involvement with a community project in terms of personal change, so it can be important to explain this and introduce the Star before people complete it. You could draw on the following phrases suggested by community workers to introduce or explain the Star:

- This is a tool to help us understand what you think of the area at the start of the project and how that has changed at the end of the project
- It is about making sure the project is benefiting people and that we are spending the money in the right way, on your priorities
- It will tell us if we made a difference at the end of the project
- We are really interested in finding out what you think about your community, so please take your time and answer honestly
- You know those quizzes you get in magazines? This is very similar.

The Star is based on a model of the stages that people go through – from not being involved or feeling at home in their local community to being active and happy where they live. To explain the Star, it is important to be familiar with these five stages, described in the table on the next page.

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¹Groundwork Trusts running projects within the M&S Greener Living programme could opt to use pre-printed postcards produced by Groundwork UK.