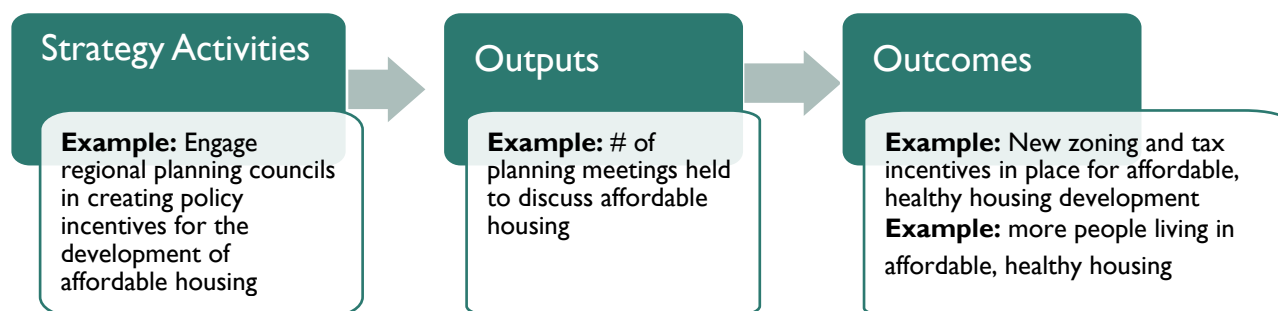# Defining Outcomes

An outcome is a change resulting from your efforts. Outcomes tell you whether, and how much, your change goals have shifted.

Identify outcomes you hope to achieve as a result of your strategies. Then, plan out how to gather rapid feedback to see if your strategies are *starting* to make a difference in these outcomes. Use this feedback to guide your decision-making about whether to continue, adapt, or scale up your efforts.

Strategy Activities	→	Outputs	→	Outcomes
Example: Engage regional planning councils in creating policy incentives for the development of affordable housing		**Example:** # of planning meetings held to discuss affordable housing		**Example:** New zoning and tax incentives in place for affordable, healthy housing development **Example:** more people living in affordable, healthy housing

TIP: consider different types of outcomes

Outcomes can relate to people or place conditions, and your efforts will most likely bring about both types of outcomes as described below.

PEOPLE OUTCOMES include shifts in the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and/or the state of psychological and physical wellbeing of individuals.

Examples:
- **Knowledge**: more residents understand resources available to meet their needs.
- **Skills**: more residents have skills to effectively engage in formal decision-making processes.
- **Behaviors**: more residents engage in healthy eating behaviors.
  Status: more babies born with a healthy birth weight

PLACE OUTCOMES include shifts in conditions within the community system (e.g., neighborhood, service delivery system, city, county, or region)

Examples:
- **Policies**: More affordable housing zoning codes in place within the region.
- **Community resources**: More convenience stores selling affordable, healthy food options
- **Mindsets**: More organizations prioritize goals around promoting equity in wellbeing
- **Connections:** Stronger referral network for young mothers between health settings and other local services and supports.
- **Service components:** Local programs locations are easy for residents to access.
- **Power dynamics:** More organizations engaging local residents in their decision-making processes.

TIP: Define outcomes over time

Outcomes will emerge over time as a result of your strategies. The following is one way to think about outcomes over time:

- **Short term outcomes** are changes occurring in the **beginning** of your effort.
- **Mid-term outcomes** are changes occurring in the **middle** of your effort.
- **Long-term outcomes** are changes occurring **by the end** of your effort.
- **Impact** is the **ultimate change** you want to bring about for people or the community.

TIP: Define Equity Outcomes

Use disaggregated data to identify and prioritize outcome disparities (e.g., one group is experiencing worse outcomes compared to other groups) related to any combination of the following demographics:

- ☐ Age
- ☐ Race/Ethnicity
- ☐ Gender/Gender Identity
- ☐ Sexual Orientation
- ☐ Religion
- ☐ Education Level
- ☐ Household Composition
- ☐ Geographic Area/Neighborhood
- ☐ English Language Proficiency
- ☐ National Origin
- ☐ Documentation Status
- ☐ Disability Status
- ☐ Employment Status
- ☐ Income
- ☐ Connection to Services/Supports
- ☐ Other

Define equity outcomes related to these disparities using what is called a *disparity ratio*. This measure gives you the ratio of groups with the worst outcomes to groups with the best outcomes. Your goal is to reduce this ratio as a result of your change efforts.

> EXAMPLE:
> Take the outcome of babies born at an unhealthy birthweight. A disparity ratio could measure the ratio of Black infants born with unhealthy birthweights compared to White infants born with unhealthy birthweights. For example, a value of 2.0 means that the Black babies are born at unhealthy birthweights at twice the rate of White babies.

Additional tips for defining outcomes

- Look at your commuity's Shared Vision to identify potential outcomes (most likely long term)
- Review community assessment questions related to different social determinants of health for potential outcomes
- Explore evaluation reports on similar efforts
- Identify potential outcomes by flipping your root causes into the positive

Gather rapid feedback on outcomes

Consider different methods (see examples below) for gathering rapid feedback on whether strategies are starting to bring about your outcomes.

Consider which methods are most feasible and relevant, and work with stakeholders to share data on an ongoing basis to help the collaborative learn and adapt quickly.

TIP: Engage organizations and stakeholders across the collaborative in helping to gather rapid feedback on the strategies.

TIP: Take advantage of existing meetings and interactions to gather feedback data

Methods for Gathering Rapid Feedback	Examples:
Conversations Use when you need in-depth, detailed information, or when you need to describe your questions to help respondents answer	Ask questions in/during: • regular meetings, gatherings • service interactions • Small (focus) group conversation • One-on-one interviews • Photovoice
Surveys Use when you need numbers/counts or statistical analysis to answer your questions	• Resident surveys given through direct service interactions • Questions added to intake forms • Staff surveys • Questions added into planned community surveys • Questions on social media
Observations Use if what you are trying to learn about can be easily observed, and/or if people may not be able to accurately describe the change because they want your approval or are biased in other ways.	• Community audit to track conditions of physical structures (grocery stores, fast-food restaurants, playgrounds with broken swings) and/or patterns of individual behaviors (e.g., people engaging in physical activity, driving cars, interacting with neighbors, etc.). • Immersion in stakeholder activities
Impact Assessments Use to learn whether/how current efforts or polices are impacting health equity outcomes	• Health Impact Assessments • Health Equity Impact Assessment • Racial Equity Impact Assessment
Existing Data Sources Use if you have or can access data that already exists to answer your question	• Datasets, open data sources • Policy records • Meeting minutes • News media content • Evaluation reports • Website analytics

Assess Shifts in Equity Outcomes

Track whether your efforts are starting to close the gap between groups with the best and worst outcomes.

Example Facilitation Questions:

- To what extent are we seeing the gap between groups with the best and worst outcomes getting small over time?

- To what extent are our efforts (and relevant changes in community conditions) contributing to these changes?

TIP: Use disaggregated line graphs to track progress on equity

Longitudinal line graphs can be a useful tool for understanding these changes over time.

Example:

The graph below shows an outcome over time for three demographic groups (blue line = White, red line = African American, green line = Hispanic). The black line shows when the intervention started.

- **What we can observe:** White residents started with best outcomes in 2013 compared to African American and Hispanic groups. After the intervention in 2015, all three groups improved their outcomes, although the Hispanic group improved faster than the other groups. The African American group improved the least over time compared to the other groups.

- **What conclusions can we draw?** The outcome gap between the Hispanic group and White group has narrowed over time. However, there still remains a large outcome disparity gap between the African American group and the other groups.

- **Next Critical Questions:** Why did the Hispanic group's outcomes improve more compared to other groups? Why did the African American group's outcomes improve less than other groups?