

RUBRIC

Outcomes Indicator Framework

What this is	Eight to twelve indicators with written definitions, data sources, calculation rules, owners, and reporting cadence — plus the data dictionary that keeps every report agreeing.
It assumes	You are asked for outcomes and currently report activity.
Change before use	The indicators themselves. The structure transfers; the content does not.

THE DEFINITIONS LIVE IN THE SPREADSHEET

This document explains how to choose indicators and what a definition has to settle. **The set itself is the accompanying spreadsheet** — twelve rows, and every column is a field of the definition, so filling a row is defining the indicator. It also carries the reporting calendar and the record of definition changes, which is what keeps two years of data comparable.

The problem this fixes

An organization asked for outcomes usually has three versions of every number: the one in the funder report, the one in the board packet, and the one staff believe. They differ not because anyone is careless but because nobody wrote down the definition — which cases count, as of what date, calculated how. The framework fixes that once: a small set of indicators, each with a written definition every report draws from.

Choosing the set

1. **Eight to twelve indicators, total.** Beyond that, nothing is watched. Resist every addition that does not replace something.
2. **Mix three kinds:** access and timeliness (how fast people reach service), quality of delivery (is the work done to standard), and outcome (did the intended change occur). All-outputs is the failure this replaces; all-outcomes is unmeasurable month to month.
3. **Only indicators someone will act on.** The test for each: name the decision that changes if this number moves. No decision, no indicator.
4. **Prefer numbers your systems already produce** or can produce with one added field. An indicator that requires a new data-collection burden will be resented and then abandoned.

The indicator definition sheet

One sheet per indicator. This is the core artifact — the definition is the indicator.

Field	Entry (worked example shown)
Indicator name	Time from inquiry to first appointment
Kind	Access / timeliness
Definition	Calendar days from the date an inquiry is first recorded to the date of the first held appointment, for inquiries that reach an appointment.
Numerator / denominator or formula	Median of (first appointment date – inquiry date) across all inquiries with a held appointment in the period
Counting rules — the edge cases	Inquiry date = first contact recorded in [system], whichever channel. Re-referrals within 90 days count as the original inquiry. Canceled-and-rebooked counts the held date.
Data source	[System], inquiry module, fields X and Y
Exclusions	Information-only contacts; inquiries withdrawn before scheduling (reported separately as a count)
Period and cadence	Calendar month; reported monthly, trailing 12 months shown
Owner	[Name] produces it; [name] is accountable for the underlying process
Target or reference	[e.g. median ≤ 10 days; last year's median for comparison]
Appears in	Board pack p.6 • [funder] quarterly report • program dashboard

The data dictionary rule

Every report — funder, board, internal — cites the indicator by name and uses the sheet's definition. When a funder requires a different definition, the report says so on its face ("as defined by [funder]; differs from our standard indicator in [way]") rather than silently substituting. One person owns reconciliation: any two reports showing the same-named number must match, and a mismatch is a finding, not a shrug.

Reporting form

- Small multiples over time beat single big numbers: show each indicator as its trailing twelve months, current value emphasized, target line where one exists.
- Tabular numerals, one hue, no gauges, no traffic lights — a movement worth discussing gets a written sentence, not a color.
- Every figure carries its denominator. Percentages without an N are not findings.

The annual review

Once a year, the set itself is reviewed: which indicators drove a decision this year, which were never discussed, and what has changed in programs or contracts. Indicators are retired and added by that review — with the change dated, so trend lines across the change are read honestly.

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