

Reading Outcomes Framework Project Overview

Introduction

[The Reading Agency](#) is working with Arts Council England, Association of Senior Children's and Education Librarians, Book Trust, Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, Education Endowment Foundation, National Literacy Trust, Publishers Association, Scottish Library and Information Council and the Society of Chief Librarians to develop a robust overarching outcomes framework to help us evaluate the impact of the work we all do to encourage reading for pleasure and empowerment.

The aim is to move beyond programme-by-programme evaluation, to think more strategically about evaluation and to develop a more comparable evidence base about the impact of all of our work. This project is generously funded by the Peter Sowerby Foundation.

Project outputs

We intend to develop a reading outcomes framework and a corresponding evaluation toolkit that is suitable for a wide range of organisations working in this field to use to measure the impact of their activity to encourage reading for pleasure and empowerment. The key outputs will be:

1. A framework of the outcomes of reading for pleasure and empowerment
2. An evaluation toolkit to measure the impact of activity to encourage reading

Key definitions

What do we mean by 'reading'?

- The project is focused on reading for pleasure and empowerment, which takes place through choice.
 - Reading for pleasure refers to reading texts as a way to spend time and for entertainment.
 - Reading for empowerment refers to reading texts as a means of self-cultivation and self-development beyond literacy – this might include self-help reading, for example.
 - Reading through choice means being able to select when or what you read: it is reading that is self-directed and voluntary.
- The framework is focused on reading that happens outside of core education or employment. It is not focused on the literacy outcomes of reading, or reading that takes place for the sole purpose of improving literacy skills.
- We take a broad definition of the form that reading activity may take, which includes (but is not limited to) reading any of the following: fiction, non-fiction, digital materials, print materials, picture books, comics, newspapers, audio books, listening to others read and shared reading.

What are outcomes?

- The changes, benefits, learning or other effects that result from what a project, programme or organisation does. Short-term outcomes will contribute to a final, long-term outcome or goal



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and may include changes in users' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviour. (Definition adapted from *Creating your theory of change: NPC's practical guide*, November 2014).

What will the toolkit measure?

- The toolkit will provide tools to measure:
 - whether programmes and activities that aim to encourage reading for pleasure and empowerment have an impact on reading behaviour and attitudes
 - whether changes to reading behaviour and attitudes that result from reading programmes have wider impacts on the outcome areas identified in the reading outcomes framework

Will the project cover all audiences?

- The outcomes framework will include outcomes of reading for all audiences (e.g. different age groups, target groups such as parents, adults with additional health needs etc) and the toolkit will include separate, linked, measures for children and adults.
- The measures will be flexible so they can be used in different contexts and with different audiences and will use language that is simple and accessible to as wide an audience as possible.

Progress to date and next steps

- We have established a core steering group to drive the project forward and a wider advisory group of experts to provide additional guidance. We have spoken about the work at a number of conferences and discussions have shown the need for the project.
- We commissioned and published a [literature review about the impact of reading for pleasure and empowerment](#). The review includes a map of the outcomes of reading for pleasure and empowerment which will be the foundation for the development of the outcomes framework.
- We have commissioned an expert partner, OPM, to work with us between December 2015 and August 2016 to develop the framework and toolkit, a process that will involve:
 - Reviewing the existing evidence and drawing the learning together into a coherent, accessible and outward facing draft outcomes framework, which is mapped against local and national policy objectives.
 - Carrying out consultation with the sector across the UK to investigate whether these are the right outcomes to measure and refining and revising the list following this consultation.
 - Developing an evaluation toolkit which can be used to measure a core set of these outcomes, agreed upon by the steering group. The measures will build on tools already in use by relevant organisation and draw together existing validated measures.
 - Publishing the resultant outcomes framework and evaluation toolkit.