The Craft of Writing Outcome Statements

As you began the project planning phase, you defined your goal(s) for the active learning space, service, or programs you want to implement at your library. The **goal statement** incorporates the community need(s) you will be addressing with this project and imagines what success will look like in fulfilling that need when the project is delivered.

♦ Find your goal statement and keep it in view as you develop your outcome statements.

About Outcomes

An outcome statement describes a specific benefit that your community members will receive as a result of participating in your new "smart space." An outcome is a change in a target audience's skills, attitudes, knowledge, behaviors, status, or life condition brought about by experiencing a library space, service, or program.

Outcomes can develop over different periods of time.
♦ **Short-term** outcomes are likely to be changes in skills, attitudes, and knowledge
♦ **Medium-term** outcomes often include changes in behavior and decision-making
♦ **Long-term** outcomes may involve changes in status or life conditions.

Consider these examples:

SKILLS
Girl Scouts can identify local birds by sight and name.

BEHAVIOR
Children read for pleasure over three hours per week.

ATTITUDES
Girl Scouts no longer think science is boring.

STATUS
At-risk students using educational materials on library computers earn GED and improve salary and job prospects.

KNOWLEDGE
Girl Scouts know what local birds eat and what predators they face.

LIFE CONDITIONS
West Dakota residents stop smoking after using improved access to reliable, under-standable medical information.

Writing Outcome Statements

It is common to confuse *outputs* and *outcomes*. As Will Reynolds explains in [The Hidden Danger of Confusing Outputs for Outcomes](#), "Building a water system is an output. People being healthy is an outcome." In library terms, the differentiation might be: "Providing classes for girls in how to code is an output. Girls increasing their coding skills and boosting their confidence in themselves are outcomes."

Based on your Goal Statement about what success will look like, define the intended outcomes.
♦ What will participants learn? What skills or knowledge will they acquire? How will their attitudes change?
♦ How will this service make a difference in their lives? How might it positively impact the wider community?
♦ Are there short-term changes that might lead to longer-term impacts?

It helps to be specific about the outcomes that your project is intended to achieve. Consider the short-term, medium-term, and longer-term impacts that might result from your efforts. There's no prescription for the number of outcomes –two or three is fine.

Outcomes: Check each statement: are you sure it's not an *output* rather than an *outcome*?	
Outcome Statement	Short, medium or long-term?
For example: By using and exploring new technologies, community teens will acquire digital literacy skills, as well as teaching skills as they help their peers.	Short-term