

Community Priorities Grant Measurement Resource Guide

Introduction

The City of Guelph's Community Priorities Grant Program is designed to support the work of local not-for-profits, charities, and grassroots groups that address [the Community Investment Strategy priorities](#).

As part of the Community Priorities Grant program, we are asking you to measure the impact of your grant by selecting one short and one medium-term indicator. These indicators are a part of the Community Priorities Grant Measurement Framework, which measures the intended outcomes of the program for Guelph residents. This resource guide is to support applicants and recipients in understanding the measurement framework, how to select their indicators, and how to implement measurement within their organization and services.

Why Measure?

In Community Investment, we are committed to better understanding and demonstrating how Community Priorities Grant recipients are addressing the Community Investment Strategy priorities through the measurement framework. The goal of the framework is to:

- Improve how we demonstrate the value and impact of the Community Priorities Grant.
- Help show how your work and contributions are supporting broader Guelph community priorities and goals.
- Better tell the story of all the great work happening in the community that is funded by the City.
- Compile data and community insights to inform future decision-making and investment priorities across the local non-profit sector, City departments, leadership, and Council in alignment with the priorities.

We recognize that organizations are at different stages in their measurement journey. Some organizations may already have established evaluation practices, while others may have none. This guide will help you at any stage in your journey deepen your measurement practice while supporting the framework.

How To Use the Guide

This guide should be used throughout your involvement in the Community Priorities Grant program.

This guide was designed in mind for organizations who are likely new to measurement. You do not need to be a measurement expert to apply for the Community Priorities Grant nor use this guide.

We encourage you to read through the entire guide and reach out if you have questions at communityprioritiesgrant@guelph.ca

Section 1: Understanding The Community Priorities Grant Measurement Framework

The Community Priorities Grant Measurement Framework is an outcome-focused model that captures the changes that result for Guelph residents within each of the Community Investment Strategy priorities because of the work you do. The framework can be found at the [Community Priorities Grant webpage](#). We anticipate the framework being updated in the future to reflect lessons learned. The following is a list of terms used in the framework to help develop a shared understanding.

1. **Activities:** Activities are programs, services, events, supports, and/or initiatives your organization delivers. Examples could include workshops, events, training sessions, outreach activities, support groups, and direct services.
2. **Outputs:** Outputs are what directly results from your activities. They describe what was delivered and who participated.
3. **Outcomes:** Outcomes describe what changes for Guelph residents because of your activities. Within the measurement framework, there are three outcome categories:
 - a. **Short-Term Outcomes:** Changes participants in your activities experience shortly after. These often focus on changes in knowledge, awareness, skills, or access levels.
 - b. **Medium-Term Outcomes:** Changes that occur over a longer period as participants apply what they have learned and/or experienced because of their involvement in your activities. These often are changes in behaviour, confidence, emotional wellbeing, sense of belonging, and relationships.
 - c. **Long-Term Outcomes:** Changes that occur usually at a system level and as a result take a significant amount of time to capture. These include examples like: Decrease in food insecurity, reduction in hate crimes, and greater community resilience. Note that while long-term outcomes are important to understanding broader changes, the outcomes are often beyond ability of a single organization to change and report on.
4. **Indicators:** Indicators are specific measures used to determine whether an outcome has been achieved. Indicators help organizations measure and report on the changes that result of their funded work. In the context of the Community Priorities Grant:
 - a. **Short-Term Indicators:** Recipients could provide data at least annually.
 - b. **Medium-Term Indicators:** Recipients could provide data at least by the end of the grant.

Activities, outputs, outcomes, and indicators can all be connected through a 'result chain' to show the relationship between activities and longer-term outcomes. The following table is an example of a result chain that would be found in a measurement framework.

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Table 1: Result Chain Example

Result Chain Item	Description
Activity	Organization delivers a newcomer support workshop
Output	1 workshop is delivered; 25 participants attended
Short-Term Outcome	Newcomer participants increased their knowledge about available community resources in Guelph.
Short Term Indicator	Percentage of participants report increase in knowledge about available community resources.
Medium-Term Outcome	Newcomer participants actively contribute to the Guelph community.
Medium-Term Indicator	Percentage of newcomer participants reporting being actively involved in volunteering in the Guelph community.
Long-Term Outcome	Newcomers feel more welcomed and included in Guelph.
Long-Term Indicator	Percentage of newcomers reporting feeling welcomed in Guelph.

Section 2: Preparing To Measure & Select Your Indicators

Selecting your Community Priorities Grant indicators may spark a conversation about measurement and its role within your organization. Establishing a measurement practice will benefit you overall by demonstrating the value and impact of your work back to the City, other potential funders/donors, and the community. Some questions that can help you begin to think about the role of measurement in your organization:

- What change do you hope to see? What do participants learn, think, feel, and/or do differently because of your work?
- What do you deliver? Do staff and volunteers share a clear understanding of your programs and services? Are your programs and services documented?
- What information do you already collect? Consider what data, feedback, or records (attendance tracking, volunteer time sheets, etc.) you currently gather and how they are recorded.
- What can you realistically measure? What data collection activities are feasible given your organization's capacity? It's encouraged to start small (1-2 indicators) and grow your capacity rather than build a full measurement system from the very start. Are there opportunities within existing activities to gather information easily and fit within your capacity to do so? Which role in your organization makes sense to oversee your measurement?
- Which groups (participants, volunteers, partners, etc.) can provide the information you need? How will you engage them, and what challenges might you face?
- How will you use the information? How can the data help you improve programs, services, and decision-making?
- Are you hearing from the right people? Are you collecting feedback from the people you intend to support? Who may be underrepresented, and what barriers might prevent them from sharing their experiences?

Section 3: How To Measure

Once you've selected your indicators, the next step is to decide how you will collect the information needed. There is no single 'right' way to measure and no exact tool for each indicator. Different organizations will have varied resources, capacity, and relationships with participants – this means that how measurement is collected will look different for each. The most important thing is to choose options that are realistic, can be consistently maintained, and are appropriate for your organization and your measurement needs.

Common Measurement Tools

Surveys

Surveys are one of the most common measurement tools used by non-profits. They can be completed on paper, online, or verbally. Most today use them to understand short-term indicators (change in knowledge, satisfaction, access); however, they can also be used to capture medium-term indicators like confidence, sense of belonging, and other behavioural changes. As a result, surveys can be used at various stages in a participant's journey with an organization – from immediately after utilizing a service to annual surveys. See Appendix 1 and 3 for best practices on surveys.

Conversations, Interviews, Focus Group

Capturing information that comes through conversations with participants, or more formal structures like interviews and focus groups, is another common tool that non-profits use. For some, this can be the most accessible format as relationships are inherent to the work, so naturally capturing information from such conversations can be an easier fit when starting out with measurement. Utilizing conversations and interviews works well when you want to understand what participants found valuable, their experience with a program, their thoughts on key issues your organization is addressing, and stories of change and impact. Focus Groups can also be a useful tool particularly when wanting to have a large discussion with a key audience. Some organizations particularly like to use this format for medium-term indicators to check-in on past participants to see where they have progressed since their involvement in a program/service. See Appendix 2 for best practices on interviews and focus groups.

Administrative Records

For many organizations, administrative records are the primary data collection tool they have and may not be utilized for measurement purposes. These records are often best for capturing outputs. They can include things like: attendance tracking, volunteer records, service usage, program registrations, waitlists, and referrals.

Social Media Engagement

As social media analytics become increasingly accessible, many organizations use them to understand the reach of their work. While these metrics can be valuable, they do not always tell you whether meaningful change has occurred for your participants. If your organization uses social media metrics, consider the following:

- Does this metric measure reach, engagement, or impact?
- What does this metric tell us about our intended outcome?
- Does this data reflect the people we are trying to reach?

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- Can we pair this information with other data, such as surveys, registrations, or participant feedback?
- Social media metrics can be useful measures of awareness and engagement, but they are often most meaningful when combined with another data collection tool.

The following table provides an overview of different measurement tools by common outcomes.

Table 2: Measurement Options by Outcome

Outcome	Result Chain Level	Tool Suggestion
Immediate Learning and Program Satisfaction	Short-Term	Survey
Confidence, Sense of Belonging, Emotional Well-being	Medium-Term	Conversation, Interviews, or Focus Groups Survey paired with at least one other method mentioned above
Participation Attendance, Retention rates, Service Delivery Insights	Short or Medium-Term	Administrative Records
Reach and Awareness	Short-Term	Social Media Analytics paired with other measurement methods

Privacy and Confidentiality

When collecting measurement data, it is important to consider how personal information will be collected, stored, used, and shared. Organizations should collect only the information they need and be transparent about why they are collecting it. As you develop your measurement approach, consider:

- What information is necessary? Collect only the information required to answer your measurement questions.
- Have participants been informed? Include at the start of any measurement tool (survey, interview, etc.) Explain why information is being collected and how it will be used.
- Can responses be anonymous? In some cases, anonymous surveys or feedback methods may encourage more honest responses. Although it can be tempting to know who said what, it often leads to richer insights when anonymity is an option, especially on more difficult topics.
- How will information be stored securely? Consider where data will be stored and how you will prevent unauthorized access.
- Are there additional considerations for equity-deserving communities? Take steps to ensure participants feel safe and comfortable providing feedback.

Setting Up a Measurement System

For most organizations, a measurement system does not need to be a complex tool; rather, a spreadsheet often is a great place to start as it grows. There are other options available through a web search that may better suit your organization's needs.

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Establishing A Measurement Role in Your Organization

As you develop your measurement approach, it's helpful to identify who will be responsible for managing it. This will look different for every organization, whether you are volunteer-run or have paid staff. Regardless of size, it's recommended that one person has overall responsibility for measurement. Key responsibilities may include:

- Managing the measurement system: Keeping data organized, accurate, and up to date.
- Coordinating data collection: Using measurement tools directly or supporting staff and volunteers who do.
- Training staff and volunteers: Ensuring everyone understands how to collect data consistently.
- Reviewing and reporting results: Analyzing data, identifying key learnings, and sharing findings with relevant audiences.

Some organizations have dedicated measurement staff, while others include these responsibilities within existing roles, such as program delivery staff. There is no right or wrong approach. The best option depends on your organization's size, capacity, and resources. If measurement is part of an existing role, it should be assigned to someone who is familiar with your programs and can easily answer questions about outcomes and impact.

The amount of time required will vary. Building a measurement approach often takes more effort upfront but becomes easier to manage once systems are in place. The Community Priorities Grant framework was designed to use common indicators and measurement tools that many non-profit organizations already use, align with funder expectations, and are supported by free resources and guidance.

Section 4: Using And Reporting Your Measurement Data

While measurement data is most often associated with grant writing and reporting to funders, it is significantly helpful with supporting your organization overall. It can help you:

- Improve programs and services by identifying what is working well and where changes may be needed.
- Responding to emerging community needs, barriers, or service gaps.
- Strengthen funding applications and reports by demonstrating impact.
- Celebrate successes and share achievements with the community.

To get the most value from your data, make reviewing findings a regular part of your organization's workflows. When discussing results, consider:

- Who needs to see the findings? Share information with the people best positioned to act on it.
- How should it be shared? Choose a format that is useful, accessible, and appropriate for the audience.
- How often should it be reviewed? The right frequency depends on the type of data and how it will be used.

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- What decisions or actions could result? Focus discussions on how findings can inform improvements.

Some examples of this include:

- A youth leadership program conducted interviews with recent participants and found that while many reported increased confidence in their leadership skills, fewer were aware of resources available to help turn their ideas into action. In response, the organization provided a resource guide to participants. Subsequent participant surveys showed an increase in awareness of community resources and more graduated participants acting on community needs.
- A basic needs program noticed through service utilization records that participation was consistently lower on certain days. A short survey of participants revealed that program hours conflicted with work schedules. The organization adjusted its operating hours and subsequently observed increased service utilization.
- An environmental organization interviewed volunteers to learn what environmental actions they had taken after volunteering. Many reported independently picking up litter during their daily walks. Seeing an opportunity to build on this behaviour, the organization created a community walking and litter clean-up program.

Funder Reporting Tips & Tricks

No two funders have the same reporting requirements, but many look for similar information. A strong measurement system can help you respond more effectively by providing evidence of your impact and helping you tell a clear story about the difference your work is making. When incorporating measurement data into funder reports, consider the following tips:

- **Talk About Outcomes:** Funders increasingly want to understand not only what you did, but what changed because of your work. Whenever possible, connect your activities to the outcomes they helped achieve.
- **Provide Context:** Numbers alone do not tell the whole story. Explain any important factors, challenges, opportunities, or lessons learned that help readers understand the results and how they are informing your work.
- **Tailor Your Focus:** It can be tempting to include all the data you have collected, especially when you are proud of the results. Instead, focus on the findings that are most relevant to the funder's priorities and reporting requirements.
- **Be Honest About Challenges:** Not every initiative will achieve all its intended results. Being transparent about challenges, unexpected findings, and lessons learned demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement and helps build credibility with funders.

Strong reports help funders understand the difference your work is making, the challenges being addressed, and how you are using what you learn to strengthen programs and services over time. A sample of strong reporting has been provided in the Appendix.

Appendix

Appendix 1 – Survey Design and Delivery Best Practices

Surveys can be a useful way to gather feedback, measure outcomes, and better understand participant experiences. Before conducting your survey, consider:

Planning Your Survey

- Who are your participants?
- What information do you need to collect?
- How will you use the information?
- What barriers might participants face when completing the survey (e.g., language, literacy, access to technology, and/or time)?
- What information do participants need to know to successfully complete your questions?

Designing and Delivering Your Survey

- Start with a brief introduction explaining: Why the survey is being conducted, how the results will be used, privacy/confidentiality, and who to contact with questions.
- Keep it short and focused: Aim for no more than 6 to 8 questions and a completion time of less than 10 minutes.
- Use clear, plain language and avoid jargon or technical terms. AI can be useful as a review tool; asking it to edit the survey for plain language and jargon.
- Ask one question at a time and avoid questions that may lead participants toward a particular answer.
- Use a balanced mix of question types, such as multiple choice, checkboxes, rating scales, and short-answer questions. A simple check is if you're only using that formatted question once, it likely could be swapped for another option you already have in the survey. If you deliver the survey in-person, aim for less short answers as you will have less time available for the participant to complete.
- Place more sensitive or personal questions midway through the survey after participants have had an opportunity to build comfort and trust.
- End with an open-ended question, such as, "Is there anything else you would like to share?" This can provide valuable insights and stories that structured questions may miss.
- Test the survey with at least two people who are not involved in creating it. They may identify confusing wording and/or missing information. If you are delivering the survey in-person, test it out in that scenario, not just online.
- Most respondents will complete a survey within 24 hours of receiving it. It is helpful to send a reminder within three days of sending the survey to encourage more responses.
- Generally, a 10 per cent to 30 per cent response rate is considered a successful survey; however, it can significantly vary depending on your audience and how you distribute.

Appendix 2 – Focus Group and Interviews Design and Delivery Best Practices

Interviews and focus groups are useful when you want more detailed information about participants' experiences, perspectives, and ideas; however, each offer different value to your measurement approach.

Interviews are particularly useful when your measurement indicates you'd like to better understand a participant's specific experience regarding using your services/programs. It can also be useful when understanding more sensitive aspects of your work that a participant may not feel comfortable sharing in written form like a survey or in a group setting.

Focus Groups typically are best for when your measurement approach wants to understand a range of perspectives on a key issue your organization addresses. For example, you may find it useful if you want to understand how participants following a training on community building took action to generate more social connection in their neighbourhoods.

Preparing and Facilitating Your Interview or Focus Group

- Prepare your opening statement: Aim for less than 5 minutes to provide context on why the interview is taking place, the goal of the discussion, how the information will be used, and any privacy/confidentiality considerations.
- Aim for no more than 8 questions regardless of whether it is an interview or focus group. For each question, have a follow-up prepared.
- Start with questions that are not as sensitive in nature to generate the discussion. From there, build into more sensitive topics if applicable to what you need.
- Allow for silence. Silence can help a participant generate a richer response. It does not mean that the interview or focus group is falling short of your goals/outcomes. Give participants time to generate their responses and allow for lulls in conversation where appropriate.
- Follow-ups can be structured questions and should be prepared in advance in case; however, they can also be as simple as asking a participant to tell you more about their response.
- Provide a 5-minute warning when reaching near the end of the interview or focus group if needed to ensure there is time to wrap up.
- Always ask at the end if there are any last thoughts before concluding.
- It may be helpful to have someone attend the interview/focus group with you to take notes so you can focus on facilitating.
- After completing the interview or focus group, review your notes and look for trends, key themes, and insights into the responses. As you review, look at how the data is engaging with your indicators.
- Note which quotes you'd like to keep or use and be prepared to follow up with participants to confirm consent to do so.
- Remove any identifiable information from the notes.
- Ensure notes are stored in a secure location.

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Appendix 3 – Funder Reporting Sample

The following is an example generated representing a food security organization delivering an affordable cooking program:

During the reporting period, our organization delivered six budget-conscious cooking workshops, reaching 100 participants. The workshops focused on grocery budgeting and preparing affordable, nutritious meals.

Participant surveys showed that 45 per cent of our participants reported feeling more confident managing their household grocery budgets after attending the workshops. Our participants also reported greater awareness of affordable food resources available in the community.

While we met our participation targets, survey feedback indicated that some participants found it difficult to attend weekday sessions due to work schedules. In response, we piloted an evening workshop, which was fully subscribed to and attracted several first-time participants. We plan to continue offering a mix of daytime and evening sessions moving forward. One participant shared:

"Before the workshop, I was struggling to make my grocery budget last the month. The meal planning tips helped me spend less and feel more confident about feeding my family."

These findings demonstrate that the program helps participants build practical skills that support food security and affordability. They have also helped inform improvements to program scheduling, ensuring workshops are more accessible to community members.