

Paulina Arce-Casillas

Becoming an Outcomes Champion



CES Outcomes Champions receive comprehensive training from our expert performance consultants to gain the knowledge and skills to train others in taking an outcomes approach to monitoring and evaluation. Once qualified, they share their knowledge with frontline organisations over a two-day course to help them demonstrate their effectiveness and the value they add.

Paulina has just completed her training and become a CES Outcomes Champion; she spoke with us recently to share her experiences of the process. We hope that her story will help show what becoming an Outcomes Champion can mean, both for you, and for the organisations you support.

Paulina is an organisational development officer with Voluntary Action Westminster, and has been in her current position for a year. With over five years experience in the voluntary and community sector, she currently supports groups with capacity building. Working with a wide range of organisations, she assists with fundraising, governance, and monitoring and evaluation.

Why an Outcomes Champion?

Knowing how to assess and demonstrate outcomes can be an important step in helping organisations show their impact and prove their worth. Using an outcomes based approach can allow organisations to report their work to funders in a more meaningful way.

Paulina decided to become an Outcomes Champion to give the groups she supports confidence and knowledge in identifying and reporting on outcomes. Having already attended another CES course in monitoring and evaluation, she knew that 'not everyone is aware of the need for outcomes' and wanted to have the expertise to guide groups in adopting an outcomes approach. She recognised that outcomes were becoming important for funders and other stakeholders, and wanted the organisations she works with to have confidence in their knowledge of outcomes monitoring. As an Outcomes Champion, Paulina felt that she would have more to offer in terms of the level and the type of knowledge she held.

The benefits...

Now that Paulina is an Outcomes Champion, and has been delivering training sessions and working with groups using her new knowledge, she is happy to admit 'I feel one step ahead from other organisations'. She believes that having an external facilitator like an Outcomes Champion to work with is the key to helping groups clarify their core message, learn about what they are doing, and keep on track. While it is important for her to help organisations to be realistic, she knows that she is helping them work towards a successful future.

'I do feel more confident' says Paulina, when asked about the CES training she received. Paulina had wanted to gain a comprehensive level of knowledge within a small timeframe, so CES' intensive four-day Outcomes Champion training suited her well. With CES 'training materials [that] were clear and comprehensive' and mentoring support on hand from our performance consultants, this aim has been achieved. For Paulina, the fact that she 'felt confident to call and gain support' has been one of the most positive aspects of the experience, allowing her to speak with trainers who she feels know the sector, and have relevant and experience-based knowledge.

...And the challenges

It has not always been plain sailing, and Paulina says that, as ever, 'the biggest challenge has been time'. With a busy schedule, it can be difficult to find the time to learn. However, Paulina found that because the programme was well structured, and expectations were clearly set out at the start, she was able to plan so that finding time became less of an issue.

She also found that it could be difficult working with groups who are hoping for a quick solution, and explaining that an outcomes approach is not a 'quick fix', but an ongoing process. This can be frustrating for groups and may take some time to set up, so it is important to help them understand the importance of the process.

Advice

Paulina's advice to others would be to assess where you are and where it is you want to go before you embark on becoming an Outcomes Champion. It is a process of continuous learning, and it is important to have a passion for sharing knowledge. For Paulina, the rewards are great when you are able to put the time into developing your skills. Knowing that she has helped organisations clarify their purpose and develop a clear plan for achieving it makes her work worthwhile.

Going forward

In the upcoming year, Paulina has a busy schedule. She is planning to deliver a series of outcomes training sessions, and to continue supporting the individual organisations she works in with in implementing their learning. As well as all this, she will be the outcomes lead within Voluntary Action Westminster, and will be writing articles on outcomes to be shared internally.

For Paulina, it will be important to discover the long term benefits for groups of moving to an outcomes-based approach. She will be working closely with groups to assess how they develop, their successes and their challenges. As a result of this work, Paulina hopes to learn more about their needs, and hopes to translate this into making the services she offers even more relevant.