



THE COMMON IMPACT DATA STANDARD

Basic tier definitions (Version 2.1)

The Common Impact Data Standard is **a standardized way to represent an organization's impact model and five dimensions of impact**. It allows social purpose organizations (SPOs) to store and report on impact data and accommodate the reporting needs of diverse funders. To store and report this data, SPOs don't need a technical understanding of the Data Standard; they just need to use **an aligned software**. In this document, we define what we mean by the terms used in the Data Standard so that SPOs can better understand what data an aligned software can store and report at the Basic Tier.

If you're looking for a fundamental understanding of the fields used in the Basic tier of the Common Impact Data Standard—without having to dig through the **full technical document**—this document is for you!

The Basic tier of the Common Impact Data Standard contains five main classes. These "classes" are larger data categories represented by "properties", which are the spaces (or fields) where information can be entered.

The examples are based on the fictional organization Zero Waste Meal Kits. They provide a use-case for the definitions and aid in understanding the terms. They do not represent "ideal" examples of using the Data Standard! The Common Impact Data Standard is flexible and will be used differently by different organizations.

Class	Definition	Example
Organization	The organization class represents an organization's essential identifying information. At the Basic tier, the only organization information required is the organization's legal name.	Zero Waste Meal Kits provided their full legal name, "Zero Waste Meal Kits".

Class	Definition	Example
Theme	A theme is a shared high-level goal pursued by one or many organizations. These can be defined internally by your organization, externally by stakeholders such as funders or networks, or by existing standards such as UNSDGs or IRIS+. At the Basic tier, organizations provide a name for each theme.	Zero Waste Meal Kits named two themes: “SDG 12: Responsible Production and Consumption” to represent the existing UNSDG standard, and “More sustainable food systems,” which represents a goal they were asked to track by an investor.
Outcome	An outcome is what stakeholders experience as a result of an organization’s activities. Outcomes can be positive or negative, intended or unintended. Each outcome can be linked to one or more themes and should be linked to one or more indicators. At the Basic tier, organizations provide a name and description for each outcome.	Zero Waste Meal Kits named one of their outcomes “Reduced Waste”, which they describe as “reducing waste through reduced food and water waste in kitchen and purchasing operations, through a low-waste product compared to competitors.” This outcome is linked to their theme “SDG 12 Responsible Production and Consumption” and will give concrete data on how effectively they can contribute to waste reduction.
Indicator	An indicator is a specific and measurable step taken toward achieving an outcome. Each indicator is assigned to one or more outcomes and will have value over time. At the Basic tier, organizations provide a name and description for each indicator.	Zero Waste Meal Kits named one of their indicators “Food waste avoided”, which they describe as “the amount of food waste that is redirected from landfills”. Redirecting food waste from landfills contributes to the outcome “Reduced waste”.

Class	Definition	Example
Indicator Report	The indicator report shows an indicator's value, which represents its success in achieving its assigned outcome. At the Basic tier, organizations can provide a name and value for each report, and there is a section to provide additional comments.	Zero Waste Meal Kits named one of their indicator reports "Indicator Report - Food Waste Avoided", and provided the value of 50. In a comment, they said, "This report represents how much food waste (in pounds) was avoided in Quarter 1 of 2023".

The terms in this document reflect those used in the **Basic Tier** of the Common Impact Data Standard. While these are widely used terms in impact management software, some systems or software may employ different labels.

For more technical information and details, including ontologies and code, see the [Common Impact Data Standard 2.1 document](#).

Don't know where to start with the Data Standard?

[Introduction to the Common Impact Data Standard](#) provides an introductory definition and context for the Standard. For more information and resources, including a list of aligned software, visit the [Common Impact Data Standard page](#) on our website.

Questions about the Common Impact Data Standard? Contact us at info@commonapproach.org

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