



Benefits

Benefits are trickier to define. Making a strong case to the community or decision-makers about the benefits the library provides requires careful thought and analysis so that the case is deemed credible. In other words, you want to define the benefits provided and how you value them in a way that doesn't appear to be exaggerated.

Benefit: A positive effect or savings of time or money; something that promotes well-being or that is useful or profitable.

Direct: Positive effects from a transaction or activity that accrue to those individuals who engage immediately in the activity. For example, borrowing library materials is a direct benefit to the person who checks out books and DVDs because she doesn't have to buy them or wait for them.

Economic: Positive effects that can be measured in dollars and cents.

Indirect: General positive effects that impact individuals, groups or the community at large. For example, children who develop good reading skills are likely to do better in school, graduate, and get better jobs. Those who don't may drop out, get involved with gangs or drugs and alcohol, becoming threats to community safety or recipients of costly social services or incarceration. Much more difficult to identify and measure than direct benefits.

Intangible: Positive effects that are conceptually impossible or impracticable to quantify.

Social: Positive effects that have impact beyond the individual. The social benefits or impacts of a public library could be defined as the meaning of the library to the community it serves. For example, social benefits might include the literacy services, the provision of after-school activities for children, the provision of leisure materials to seniors in a residential care facility, the library as a neutral place in the community, etc.

Tangible: Positive effects that are conceptually identifiable and quantifiable.