Theory of Change

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What this document will cover:

- defining Theory of Change
- why Theory of Change is important
- components of a Theory of Change
- using a Theory of Change to *select* evaluation methods and data collection tools
- using a Theory of Change to *design* data collection tools

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What is a Theory of Change?

A visual representation of how a programme's activities contribute to the intended outcomes and impact

- allows you to understand how **different aspects** of your programme **fit together** to **achieve your final goal**
- it **takes into account contexts, assumptions and risks of the programme**
- **collaborative process** involving **wide range of stakeholders**

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Why is it important?

- helps **define 'success'** and **how to get to it**
- helps **inform** and **structure** a programme by providing a **road map** of **how it is expected to work and in what situations**
- it's a powerful tool for **explaining your work to others**, helping them understand **why the programmes matters**
- it's a **planning process** that is important in **evaluation design**

Although it may take time to develop a Theory of Change, it often brings out valuable insights for programmes. Each step needs to be clearly stated and agreed so goals are reviewed and articulated.

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When should I develop a Theory of Change?

1. Evaluation planning
2. Evaluation design
3. Data collection
4. Data analysis
5. Dissemination and learning

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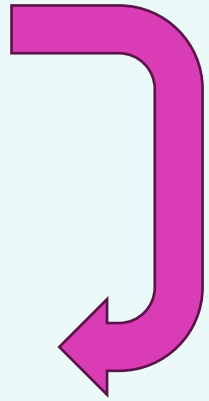
Developing a Theory of Change

When developing a Theory of Change we work backwards:

1. **Situation and aims**
   The current context, problem you're trying to solve, and goal the programme is trying to achieve
2. **Impact**
   The end goal!
3. **Outcomes**
   Changes we want to see from the programme
4. **Outputs**
   Deliverables resulting from the initiative
5. **Activities**
   Activities and actions that take place as part of your programme or activity
6. **Inputs**
   Resources, people, skills, money and time needed for the programme or activity



1) Situation and aims

The core problem statement is crucial as it will help to guide the overall purpose of your programme:

- what is the current context or situation?
- what problem is the programme trying to address or resolve?
- what goal or objective is the programme trying to achieve?
- what is your solution to the problem described in the situation/context? This should be linked to the overarching strategy.

2) Impact

The end goal! This should be ambitious, relevant to the needs of your target group and to some extent linked to your programme:

- what is the long-term goal which relates to the ‘problem’ you defined in the situation section?
- when the programme finishes, what should have changed in the participants, organisation or process?
- what will result from the removal of the problem?

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3) Outcomes

Outcomes refer to the changes you want to make through your programme that contribute towards achieving your end goal! Outcomes should be necessary to achieve this goal

- **Short-term outcomes**: early consequential changes from the programme which will lead to intermediate-term outcomes
- **Intermediate-term outcomes**: transitional outcomes needed to get to long-term outcomes
- **Long-term outcomes**: these lead to the end goal (impact)

4) Outputs

Deliverables that happen because of the programme:

- what are the results (milestones, products or services) of the activity relevant to the achievement of your outcomes?
- what will the activities deliver to their targeted audiences?

5) Activities

Activities and actions that take place as part of your programme or activity:

- what things need to be done to achieve the desired outcomes?
- how will the programme be delivered?
- who needs to lead these activities?
- who else needs to be involved in these activities?

6) Inputs

Resources, people, skills, money and time needed for the programme or activity. These can be tangible (e.g., money) or intangible (e.g., time, buy-in from senior leadership):

- what do you have already?
- what are the resources needed to deliver the activities and outputs?

Rationale and assumptions

Assumptions explain the contextual underpinnings of the Theory of Change and are conditions necessary for the success of the programme, and rationale explains why one outcome is needed to achieve another

- why is one outcome needed to achieve another?
- what conditions are necessary for the programme to be implemented successfully?
- is there research to support this rationale?
- what is the delivery process, targeting, and quality requirements?

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Top tips when developing and using a Theory of Change

- take your time, it relies on critical thinking, reflection and collaboration
- draw on what you know
- collaborate with other teams and stakeholders
- integrate it cross departmentally
- continue to review and update it – it's a *live* resource and should always incorporate changes to a programme or insights from the evaluation

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Using Theory of Change to plan and design your evaluation

1. Evaluation planning
2. Evaluation design
3. Data collection
4. Data analysis
5. Dissemination and learning

- Evaluation planning → Selecting evaluation methods
- Evaluation planning → Selecting data collection tools
- Evaluation design → Designing data collection tools

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Key takeways!

- Theory of Change is a powerful tool for designing programmes and evaluation plans – it provides a foundation for learning, improvement and accountability

- developing a Theory of Change takes some time, is never ‘finished’ and is best done with input from a range of stakeholders

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Resources

Building Theory of Changes

- EngineeringUK's impact framework (mentions the COM-B model)
- EngineeringUK's 2022 Theory of Change webinar
- Theory of Change examples
- TASO's Theory of Change core template and enhanced template

Evaluation methods

- EngineeringUK's evaluating using qualitative methods
- EngineeringUK's proportionate evaluation
- EngineeringUK's evaluation approaches and causality

Designing data collection tools

- EngineeringUK's evaluating using surveys
- EngineeringUK's measures bank-

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