

In collaboration with



Theory of Change
GLOSSARY

Terms	Definitions
Theory of Change	A theory of change articulates the assumptions about the processes through which intended changes will occur and the organizational capacities to manage such processes; further, it specifies the ways in which short-term outcomes drive to intermediate outcomes, and how intermediate outcomes create the conditions that make long-term outcomes likely. It is the “bridge” that links an organization’s concrete, daily operations with its mission.
Mission	A statement about why an organization exists, making explicit what changes it seeks to achieve in the community it serves. Also known as an organization’s “value proposition.”
Target Population	The individuals, families, groups, communities or domain(s) that an organization serves in its core programming, and to which the organization holds itself accountable for the achievement of specified outcomes.
Service Population	The individuals, families, groups or community members that an organization serves, but does so without expecting outcomes.

Service Domain	The individuals, families, groups, or communities (including neighborhoods) with whom, or within which, an organization works.
Target Work (also known as core programming)	Programs, services and/or activities for which an outcome is intended.
Service Work	Programs, services and/or activities for which an outcome is NOT intended.
Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A socially significant, relatively lasting change • That is linked to an organization’s intentional efforts • That is measured and monitored • That is used to hold the organization and its staff accountable • That is used as continuous feedback to adjust efforts
Long-term Outcomes	The changes that can be traced back (if only indirectly) to an organization’s short-term and intermediate outcomes, which indicate that an organization is succeeding in accomplishing its mission.
Intermediate Outcomes	The change(s) that participants demonstrate periodically while in a program, at the end of the program, or soon after they have left the program; these changes are the preconditions necessary for getting to the long-term outcomes.
Short-term Outcomes	The change(s) that participants achieve incrementally while participating in a program that lead directly to the achievement of intermediate outcomes.
“So That” Chain	A tool used to depict the progressive results of initiatives, strategies, activities, and programmatic efforts; i.e., from short-term to intermediate to long-term outcomes.

Service Delivery Philosophy	The assumptions and principles underlying the way the organization manages and delivers its work.
Organizational Strategies	Given limited resources, the decisions an organization makes about how to align time, talent and resources with those activities that produce the best outcomes.
Program Strategies	The priorities an organization assigns to the design and delivery of its programs and services – in terms of target populations served, the evidence for program effectiveness that is required, the client outcomes for which the organization holds itself accountable, the capacities it deems essential, and the competencies on which it relies to drive to intended results.
Indicators	The categories of data that an organization deems essential to measure and monitor. These generally include specific outcome data, but also should include enrollment data (that supports for the delivery of core services to target population members), and measurements that serve to monitor and manage program/service quality.
Outcomes Measures	The quantitative or qualitative measures that show whether an outcome indicator has been accomplished.
Intake-related Risk Factors	The criteria that help organizations define who will be given priority in the organization's programs, in addition to other demographics.
Outcome-related Risk Factors	Conditions that an organization's programs aim to change for the client/participant.
Organizational Performance Management	The systematic means for using measurement and monitoring data in "real time" for implementing and maintaining high quality operations in alignment with an organization's theory of change and in support of day-to-day decision making.

Individual Performance Management	The systematic means for evaluating staff performance against organizational objectives and client outcome expectations, and for identifying competencies that individual staff members need to improve – and then providing targeted professional development opportunities to improve those competencies.
Goals	Based on an organization’s strategy, the key things that the organization must accomplish within a limited time span (often five years) if it is to succeed in its mission. Typical areas for which goals are set include programming, fundraising, staffing, board capacity, space, and information systems, and other resources .
Objectives	The specific milestones that must be met in order for an organization to keep on course to achieve its goals.