Kansas Health Foundation Learning Conference

Guiding Your Organization with a Theory of Change: Strategies, Outcomes and Impact

April 6th, 2017

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Welcome!

Individual introductions, please share your:

- Name
- Organization
- Role

Focus for Today

- Gain a deep understanding of Theory of Change and how it can be the foundation for your organization's success
- Learn the essential steps to developing a Theory of Change outcome map that will outline the linkages between your strategies, outcomes and ultimate impact
- Explore the steps needed to more fully develop your strategies and review potential frameworks that can be used to provide structure to your organization’s thinking and planning

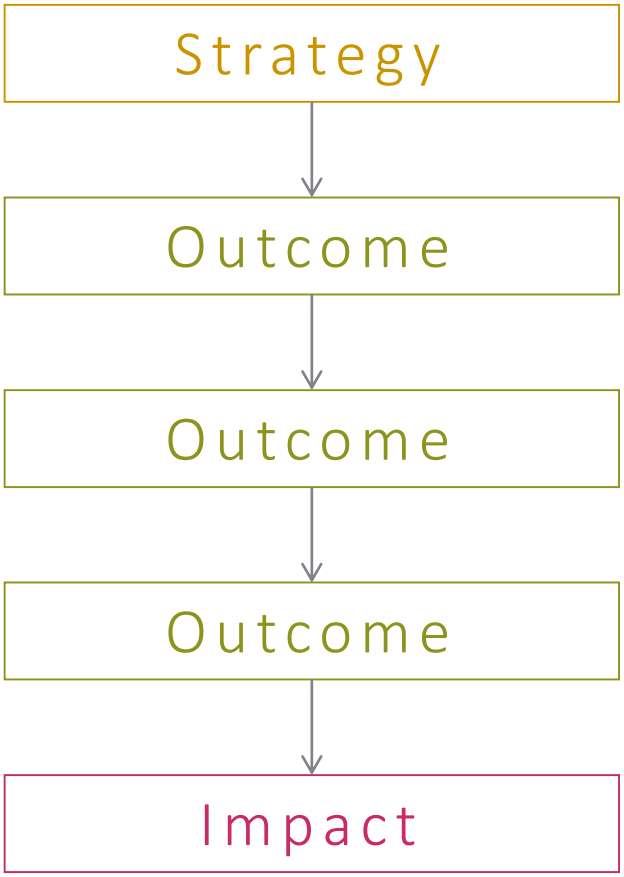
THEORY OF CHANGE

Overview & Examples

Theory of Change Overview

- A Theory of Change is a conceptual model that articulates the **linkages between strategies and hoped-for outcomes** that support a mission or vision for achieving social impact
- Recognized tool in evaluation as a way to identify key interim outcomes for learning and accountability

Ground Your Work in a Theory of Change



A Theory of Change is a model that links your **strategies** (what you do) to your hoped-for **outcomes** for arriving at social **impact**

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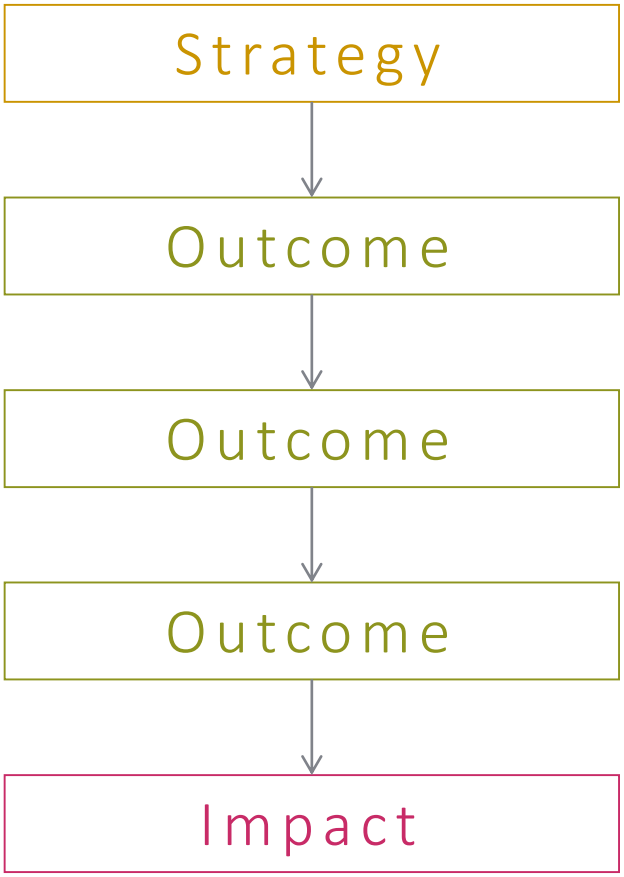
Ground Your Work in a Theory of Change



The specific **activities** and/or events you undertake to carry out the work

The **changes** that you expect to occur among individuals, families, communities, organizations, or systems as a result of your work

Sizable, lasting, positive, long-term, aspirational **vision or goal**

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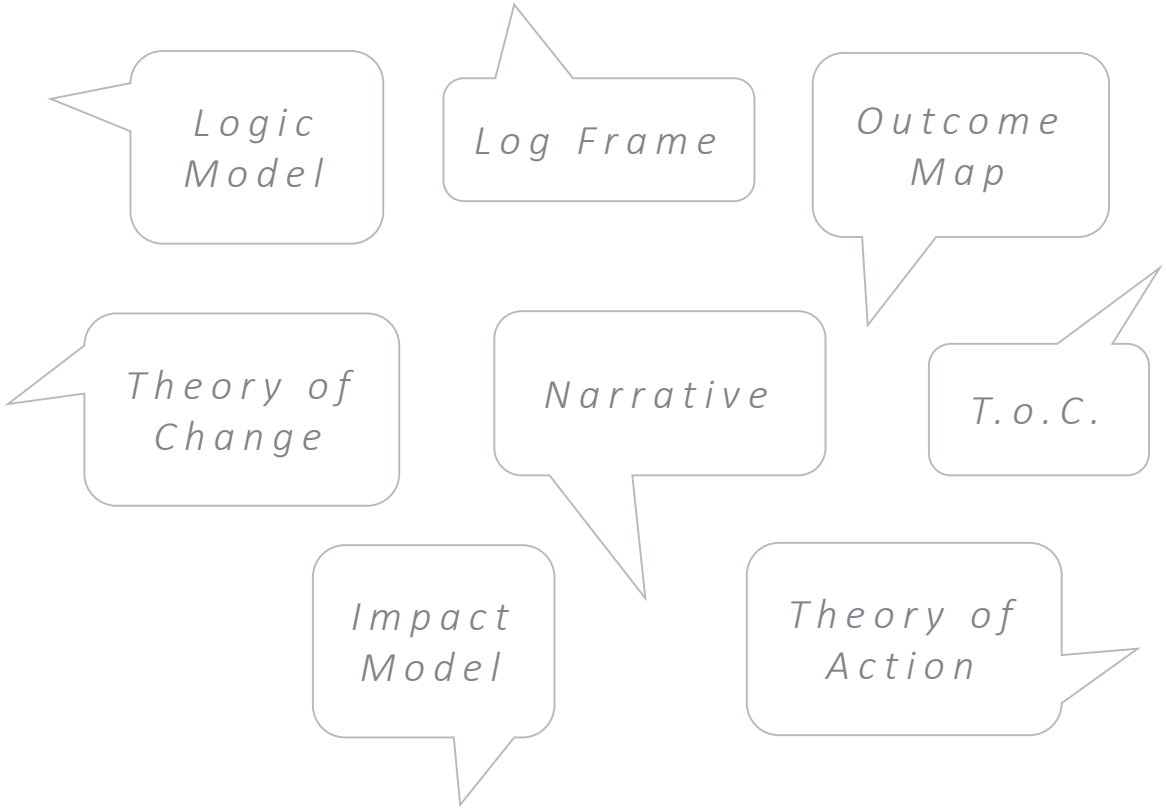
Ground Your Work in a Theory of Change



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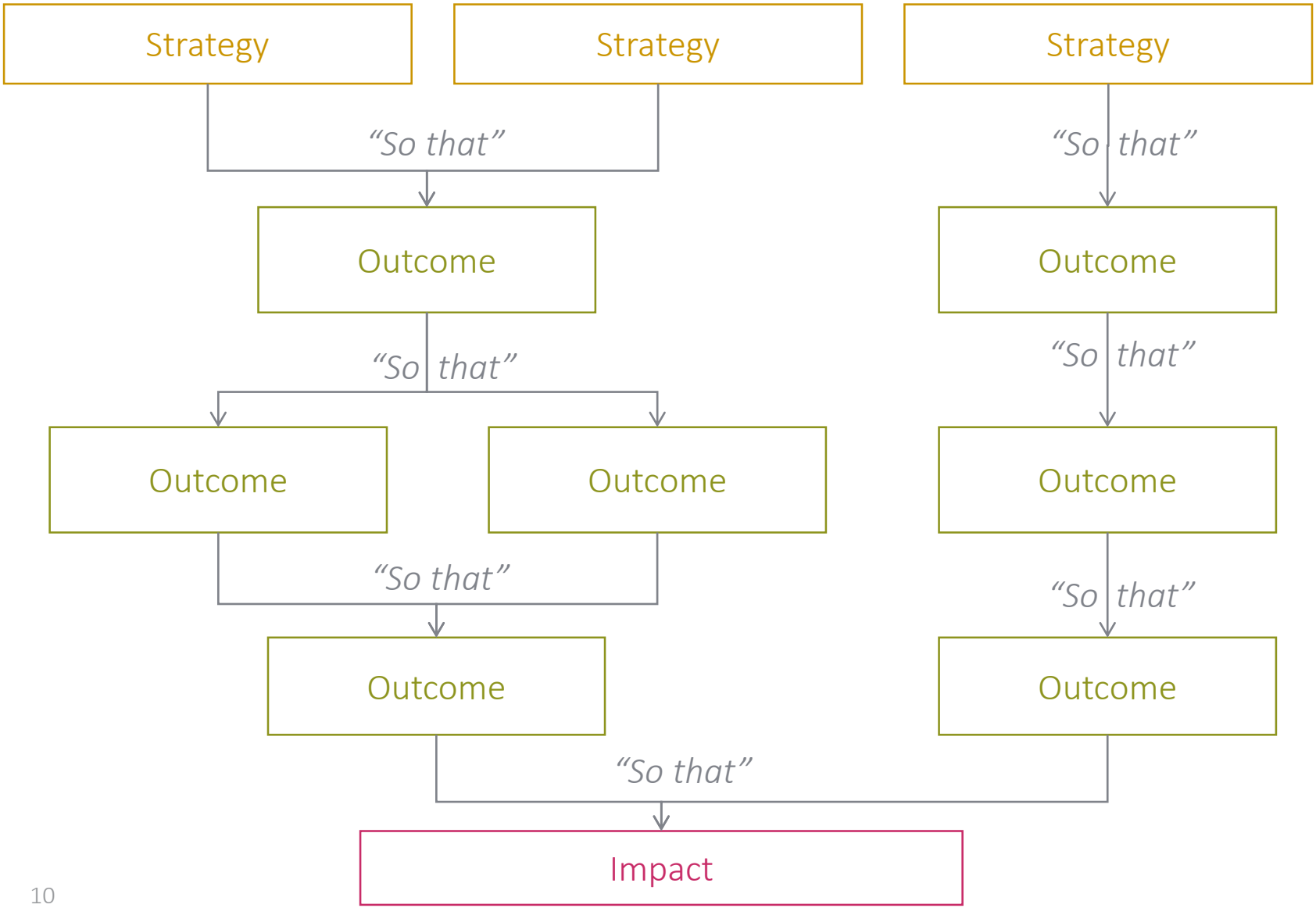
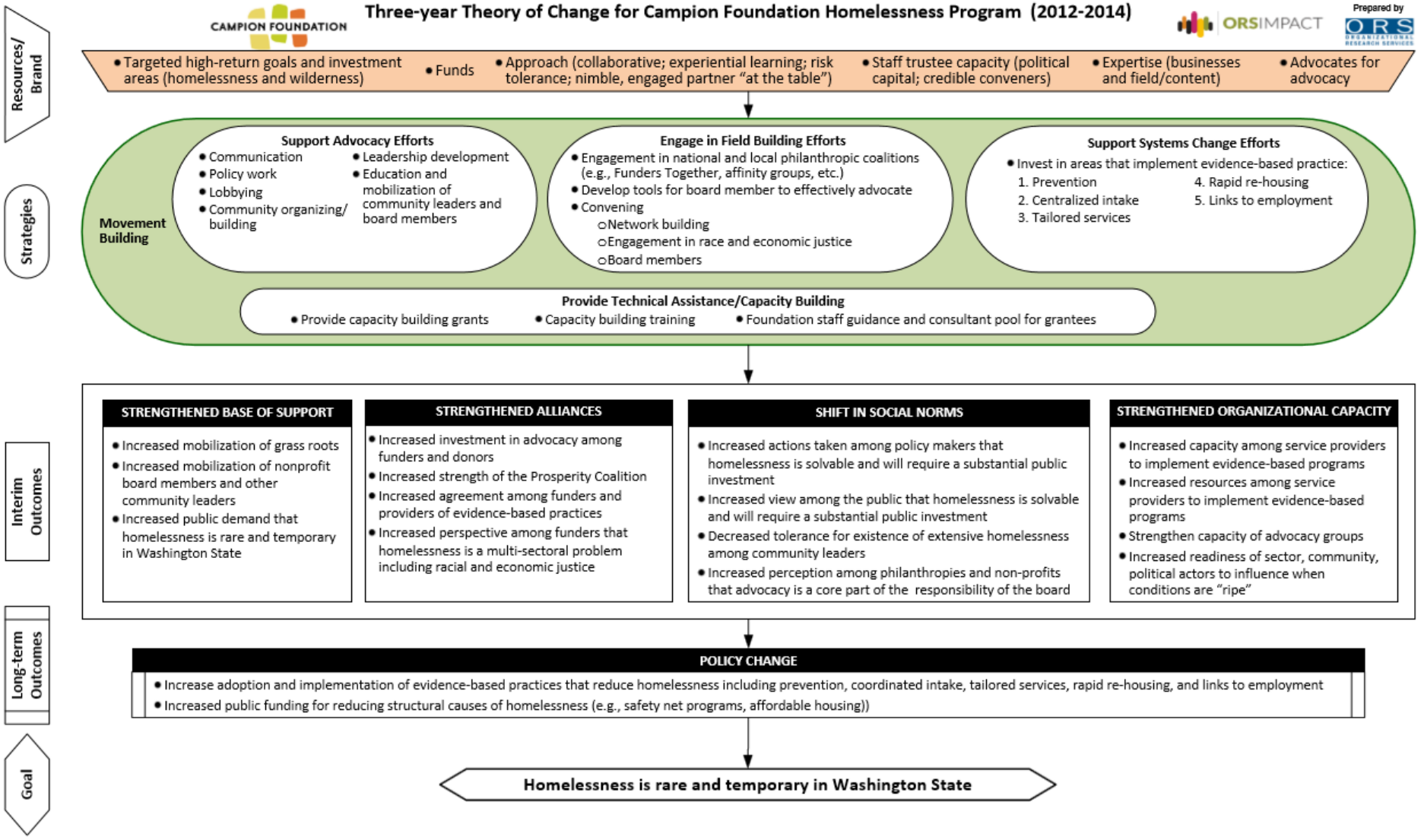
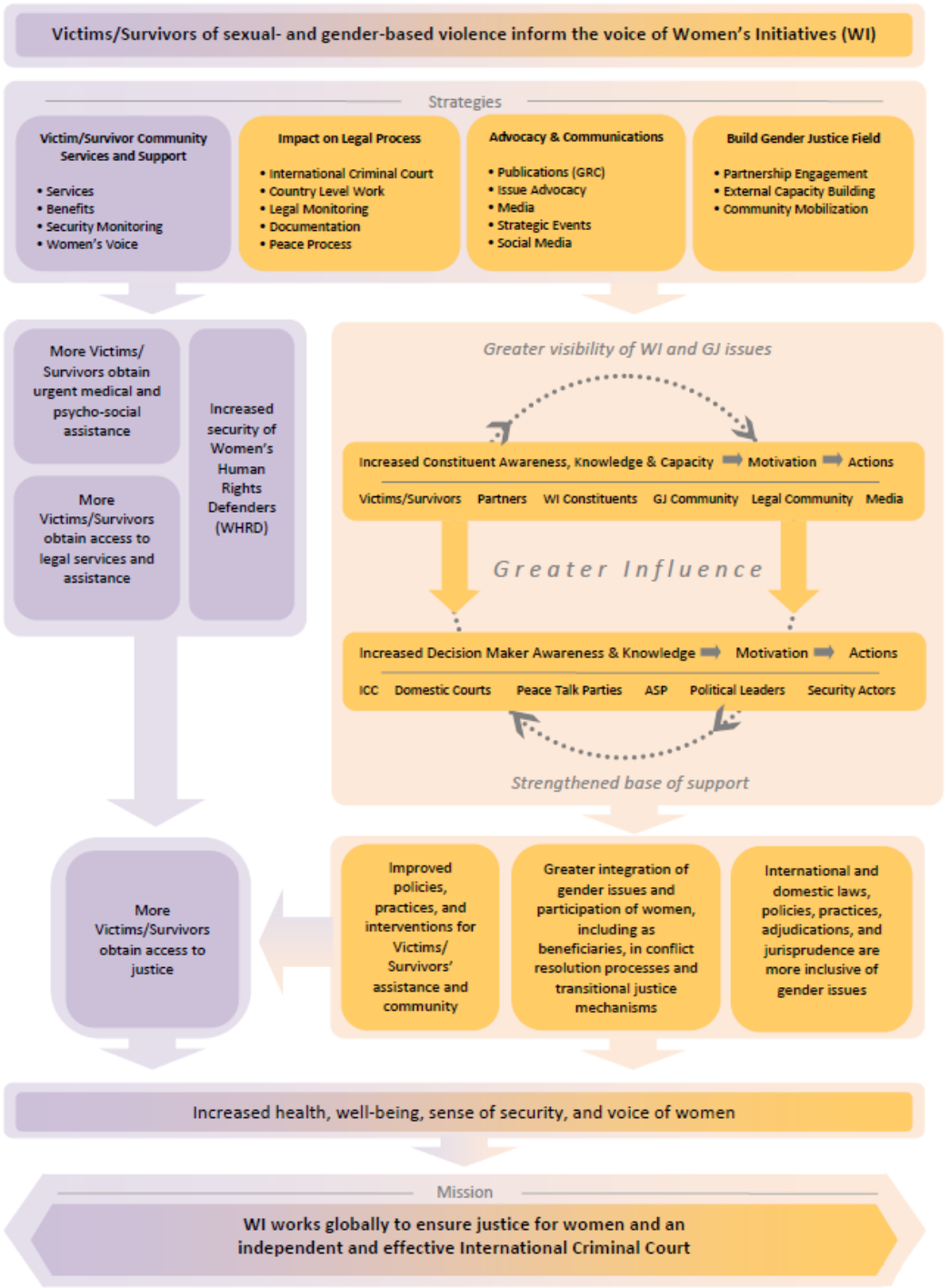
Outcome Maps

- **Organizations** tend to express their Theory of Change through an outcome map tool
- An outcome map visually articulates a set of strategies and their relationship to intended outcomes and impact
- It describes how you get from “here” to “there,” but is less linear (allows for complexity)

Theory of Change Outcome Map Diagram




Three-year Theory of Change for Campion Foundation Homelessness Program (2012-2014)
CAMPION FOUNDATION
ORSIMPACT
Prepared by ORS
Resources/ Brand
• Targeted high-return goals and investment areas (homelessness and wilderness)
• Funds
• Approach (collaborative; experiential learning; risk tolerance; nimble, engaged partner "at the table")
• Staff trustee capacity (political capital; credible conveners)
• Expertise (businesses and field/content)
• Advocates for advocacy
Strategies
Movement Building
Support Advocacy Efforts
• Communication
• Policy work
• Lobbying
• Community organizing/ building
• Leadership development
• Education and mobilization of community leaders and board members
Engage in Field Building Efforts
• Engagement in national and local philanthropic coalitions (e.g., Funders Together, affinity groups, etc.)
• Develop tools for board member to effectively advocate
• Convening
○Network building
○Engagement in race and economic justice
○Board members
Support Systems Change Efforts
• Invest in areas that implement evidence-based practice:
1. Prevention
2. Centralized intake
3. Tailored services
4. Rapid re-housing
5. Links to employment
Provide Technical Assistance/Capacity Building
• Provide capacity building grants
• Capacity building training
• Foundation staff guidance and consultant pool for grantees
Interim Outcomes
STRENGTHENED BASE OF SUPPORT
• Increased mobilization of grass roots
• Increased mobilization of nonprofit board members and other community leaders
• Increased public demand that homelessness is rare and temporary in Washington State
STRENGTHENED ALLIANCES
• Increased investment in advocacy among funders and donors
• Increased strength of the Prosperity Coalition
• Increased agreement among funders and providers of evidence-based practices
• Increased perspective among funders that homelessness is a multi-sectoral problem including racial and economic justice
SHIFT IN SOCIAL NORMS
• Increased actions taken among policy makers that homelessness is solvable and will require a substantial public investment
• Increased view among the public that homelessness is solvable and will require a substantial public investment
• Decreased tolerance for existence of extensive homelessness among community leaders
• Increased perception among philanthropies and non-profits that advocacy is a core part of the responsibility of the board
STRENGTHENED ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY
• Increased capacity among service providers to implement evidence-based programs
• Increased resources among service providers to implement evidence-based programs
• Strengthen capacity of advocacy groups
• Increased readiness of sector, community, political actors to influence when conditions are "ripe"
Long-term Outcomes
POLICY CHANGE
• Increase adoption and implementation of evidence-based practices that reduce homelessness including prevention, coordinated intake, tailored services, rapid re-housing, and links to employment
• Increased public funding for reducing structural causes of homelessness (e.g., safety net programs, affordable housing))
Goal
Homelessness is rare and temporary in Washington State


Victims/Survivors of sexual- and gender-based violence inform the voice of Women's Initiatives (WI)
Strategies
Victim/Survivor Community Services and Support
• Services
• Benefits
• Security Monitoring
• Women's Voice
Impact on Legal Process
• International Criminal Court
• Country Level Work
• Legal Monitoring
• Documentation
• Peace Process
Advocacy & Communications
• Publications (GRC)
• Issue Advocacy
• Media
• Strategic Events
• Social Media
Build Gender Justice Field
• Partnership Engagement
• External Capacity Building
• Community Mobilization
More Victims/ Survivors obtain urgent medical and psycho-social assistance
More Victims/Survivors obtain access to legal services and assistance
Increased security of Women's Human Rights Defenders (WHRD)
Greater visibility of WI and GJ issues
Increased Constituent Awareness, Knowledge & Capacity
Motivation
Actions
Victims/Survivors
Partners
WI Constituents
GJ Community
Legal Community
Media
Greater Influence
Increased Decision Maker Awareness & Knowledge
Motivation
Actions
ICC
Domestic Courts
Peace Talk Parties
ASP
Political Leaders
Security Actors
Strengthened base of support
More Victims/Survivors obtain access to justice
Improved policies, practices, and interventions for Victims/ Survivors' assistance and community
Greater integration of gender issues and participation of women, including as beneficiaries, in conflict resolution processes and transitional justice mechanisms
International and domestic laws, policies, practices, adjudications, and jurisprudence are more inclusive of gender issues
Increased health, well-being, sense of security, and voice of women
Mission
WI works globally to ensure justice for women and an independent and effective International Criminal Court

THEORY OF CHANGE

Applications and Benefits

Applications

- A Theory of Change serves as a **living resource** to guide strategic decisions and actions
- A well-articulated Theory of Change is an **effective communications tool** to promote shared understanding of program, policy and advocacy, and/or systems change efforts
- Critical to a number of organizational processes, Theory of Change lays the foundation for:
  - Strategy Development
  - Measurement, Learning, and Evaluation (MLE) Planning
  - Evaluation Design

Benefits

- **Strengthens** the **alignment** of work across teams/departments
  - Enhances clarity among teams/departments with regard to accountability for prioritized outcomes
  - Sharpens your focus on learnings about progress toward outcomes
  - Increases access to a common language and a common framework among teams/departments
- Although a Theory of Change results in a concrete product, the **process** for developing the Theory of Change is equally as valuable as the product itself

Benefits

- Guides **strategic** decisions and actions
- **Improves** the quality of **decision-making** about actions, investments, and resource allocation
  - Are you doing…
    - Enough?
    - The right things?
    - Unnecessary things?
- **Communicates** an organization's story with funders and other stakeholders

Have you ever developed a Theory of Change?

Did you find the process and/or product beneficial? Why or why not?

What can a Theory of Change do for you? What might be strengths or limitations to the tool?

THEORY OF CHANGE

Definitions

Strategies are the set of activities which you undertake to carry out your work

Examples of General Strategies

- Advocacy
- Legal monitoring
- Marketing/Communications
- Capacity building
- Convenings

Outcomes are anticipated changes that can occur among individuals, families, communities, organizations, or systems

Examples of Outcomes

- Increased knowledge of healthy behaviors
- Improved English-language skills among program participants
- Stable employment of residents
- More 11th-grade students have a plan beyond high school
- Strengthened partnerships between youth providers
- Increased coverage of key messages by traditional media
- Increased capacity of youth organizers enrolled in program

Components of an Outcome Statement

CHANGE OR DESIRED EFFECT?

e.g., increased, decreased, maintained, improved, greater, fewer

IN WHAT?

e.g., awareness, attitudes, knowledge, skills, behaviors, norms, health, policies

AMONG WHOM?

e.g., individuals, program participants, community, organization, system

Questions to Help Identify Outcomes

- Which outcomes are most…
  - Compelling?
  - Meaningful?
  - Useful?
  - Reasonable?
  - Measurable?

- Which interim outcomes lead to ultimate outcomes?

Impact is the ultimate vision or goal of the organization;
it is generally aspirational or beyond what one organization can achieve alone

Examples of Impact Statements

- All children are safe, healthy, and ready for school
- Reduction in child abuse and neglect
- Improved conditions for families in Atlanta
- Homelessness is rare and temporary in California
- Improved health for families affected by HIV/AIDS
- Increased health, well-being, sense of security, and voice of women

THEORY OF CHANGE
Considerations for Development

Internal Readiness

- Clarify **why** you are embarking on the Theory of Change development process
  - What is the purpose of the Theory of Change?
- **Opportune times** to engage in a Theory of Change process include:
  - As a key part of strategic visioning and strategy development
  - During a change in leadership
  - In the midst of movement toward outcome-based evaluation or development of a Measurement, Learning, and Evaluation (MLE) Plan

Timeframe

- The horizon of commitment and the level of turbulence in which the change effort occurs can vary widely
  - What is the timeframe for your Theory of Change?
- It is important to **intentionally set a timeframe** (e.g., 3 years, 5 years, 10 years)—typically one that aligns with your strategic planning or visioning
  - This timeframe will affect the elevation—and therefore the level of detail—included in your Theory of Change

Who Should be Involved

- Balance completeness (more people) with expediency/need (less people)
- Consult a small "**work group**" of staff and/or partners
- Who *must* be at the table?
  - A leader/champion to keep the process moving
  - Key actors (with cross-section representation) that can contribute, own, and buy-into the process and tool
- Involve additional staff and partners as interim outcomes and priority measures are identified

Audience(s)

- Determine the **main audiences** to whom you will communicate your work via an outcome map
- Possible audiences include:
  - Funders and donors
  - Board
  - Leadership
  - Staff
  - Constituents
  - Partners
- It is important to clarify whether you are providing a general picture of your work or addressing a particular **target audience**

Consider your Audience(s): *Exercise*

Who are the **main audiences** for your work?	You are successful if… What are the primary **interests** or **needs** of the audience?	What **vantage point** of your work does audience interest most align with?	**Target audience** for outcome map (Y/N)?

Consider your Audience(s):
Exercise Report Out

Who are the main audiences with whom you will communicate your work via an outcome map?

Who is your target audience for an outcome map?

What vantage point will allow you to best communicate your work and intended results to your target audience?

What activities or outcomes does your target audience care most about?

Vantage

- Different audiences may view your work from different vantage points
- Before you articulate the strategies and outcomes that you want to make clear and prominent in your map
    - Consider the vantage point, or **elevation**, which to best communicate your Theory of Change

Vantage

50,000 ft.	30,000 ft.	10,000 ft.	1,000 ft.
• Broad-stroke Theory of Change • Organization level • Primarily directional and visionary • For communication with board members, donors, targeted public • Organizational strategy	• Zoomed-out, high-level Theory of Change • Organization, strategy, or initiative level • Shows the broad landscape of what is being done • For communication with funders, partners, or those who care about long-term results • Organizational or initiative strategy	• A view that is slightly lower-to-the-ground • Program or initiative level • For communication with leadership, staff, and close-in partners	• A view that is close-to-the-ground • Department or team level • Focus is on implementation of specific activities (tactical) • For communication with internal management and staff teams • Sometimes referred to as **Theory of Action**

Stages of Strategy Development

- Identifying the stage of development for each strategy is important. Consider the following:
  - **Ongoing**: Currently implemented with resources, staffing, and strategic direction firmly in place
  - **Emerging**: New areas of work for the organization. Some resources may be dedicated, but systems are still in the refinement process and the strategy (or component of a strategy) hasn't necessarily been formally recognized
  - **Aspirational**: Work that is of strategic interest for an organization but does not have identified resources in place
- All tied to **prioritized outcomes**

External Factors

- Consider contextual and environmental factors that may impact the social change effort:
  - Political conditions
  - Resource and leverage opportunities and barriers
  - Traction and momentum of issues
  - Complexity, dynamism, and/or predictability of the context
  - Relationships between key players and stakeholders

What are some challenges to consider for your organization?

What might be some pitfalls to avoid?

THEORY OF CHANGE

Development

Confirm Your Mission/Goal

- The goal or mission is the bottom line of your outcome map
- This ultimate change is generally a policy-related change or an impact statement

Does the mission reflect the ultimate goal of your work?

Develop/Confirm the Main Strategies Your Organization Will Implement toward the Goal

- Confirm the specific strategies that address your ultimate impact
  - These may include program strategies, campaigns, initiatives, collaborations, public awareness efforts, capacity-building efforts, community mobilization efforts, etc.
  - Strategies can be ongoing, emerging, and/or aspirational

Do the strategies reflect aspects of your organization's core work?

THEORY OF CHANGE
Generating Outcomes: Who or What Changes

Who or What Changes: *Exercise*

- Pair up with someone from outside of your organization
- **Take 20 minutes:** With a concrete initiative/campaign in mind, generate an exhaustive list of the "who" or "what" your organization's work is trying to change
  - The **"who"** can be individuals, staff, decision makers, community groups, among other populations
  - The **"what"** can be organizations, systems, communities, or policies
- Switch off after 10 minutes
- **Report out**

What was it like for you generating outcomes using this technique?

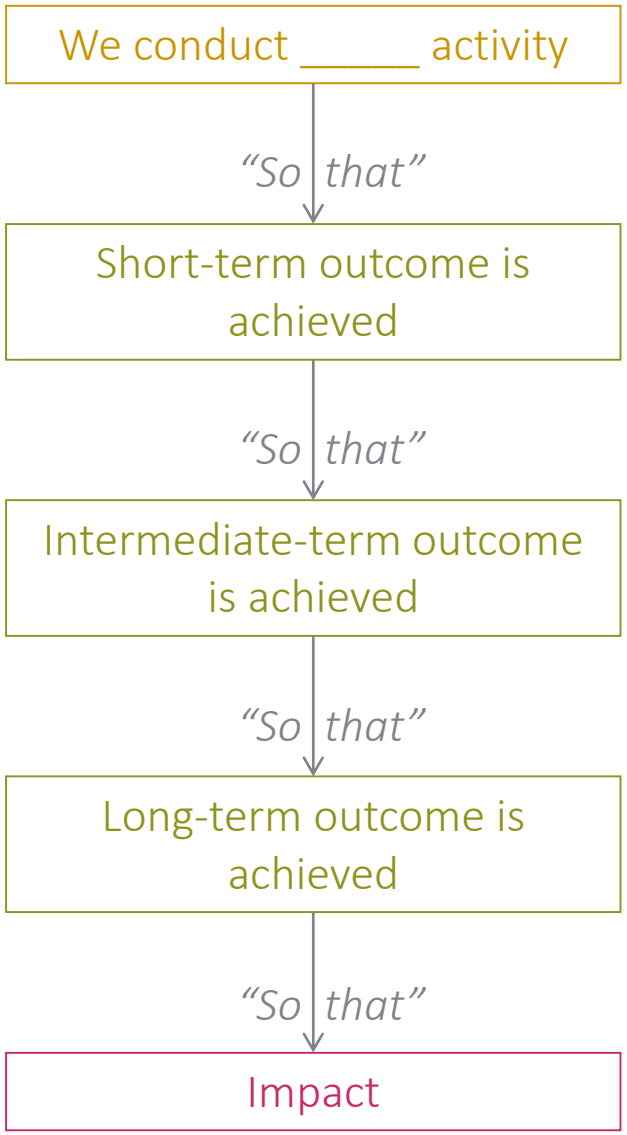
When/How might you imagine using this technique?

THEORY OF CHANGE
Generating Outcomes: So That Chains

“So-That” Chains

- “So-that” chains help connect your strategies to your ultimate goal or mission through a series of logical, sequential outcomes
- Creating “so-that” chains for *each strategy* can allow for effective articulation and communication of expected changes resulting from each strategy, and how the strategies together contribute to ultimate goal(s) or mission
    - It is important to note that multiple strategies are also likely to lead to common intermediate outcomes on the pathway to ultimate goals

“So-That” Chain Example



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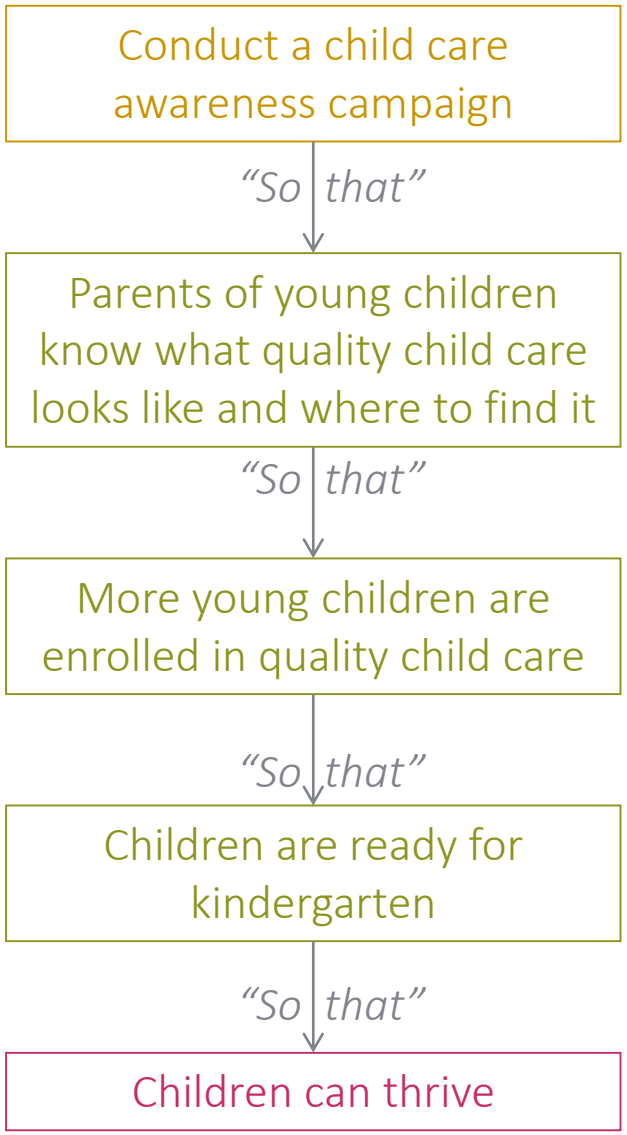
"So-That" Chain Example



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"So-That" Chains: *Exercise*

- Pair up with someone (from your organization if possible)
- **Take 15 minutes**: Identify one activity your organization is working on. Practice generating outcomes that result from that activity using the "so-that" chains technique:
  - Fill in the blank: "*we do [activity/strategy] so that ____ results,"* generating all of the possible outcomes
  - Organize the outcomes into a logical sequence

What was it like for you generating outcomes using this technique?

How did you like this technique relative to Who or What Changes?

THEORY OF CHANGE
Prioritizing Outcomes

Prioritizing Outcomes to Guide Strategy

- Your strategies and activities should be focused on achieving your prioritized outcomes
- Up until now, your strategies have been captured at a high level
- Going forward, you will be able to more deeply explore the strategy areas and their associated activities

Sample Criteria for Prioritizing Outcomes

- Which outcomes are the most critical for driving toward impact?
- Which outcomes are mission-aligned and central to your organization's work?
- Which outcomes incite other changes? (e.g., without this outcome, other outcomes are unlikely to happen)
- Which outcomes are most compelling to your priority audience?
- Which outcomes would provide the most useful information for program/strategy reflection?
- Which outcomes are most reasonable to achieve within a corresponding timeframe?

Note: This typology is not exhaustive

Sticker Voting

- Sticker voting can help a group take a pulse or make a decision on what to prioritize
- Each group member begins with 1-5 stickers and sticks them next to the outcomes they feel are the most critical for driving toward the organization's intended impact
- Number of stickers varies on the size of the group, the number of outcomes to prioritize, and the degree to which prioritizing is easy or difficult for a group

THEORY OF CHANGE
Organizing Frameworks

Organizing Frameworks

- There are a few key frameworks that ORS Impact uses to help inform Theory of Change development, especially focused on identifying outcomes:
  - **Advocacy Buckets** (from A Guide to Measuring Advocacy and Policy)
  - **Impact, Influence, Leverage and Learning** (I2L2)
  - **Pathways for Change**

Advocacy Buckets

- The **Advocacy Buckets framework** can help to inform development of outcomes for strategies that are specifically focused on advocacy
- Historically, advocacy evaluation has been measured by changes in policy. The Advocacy Buckets framework provides a rubric to identify and measure **interim outcomes**—shorter-term, incremental changes in structures that create the conditions for ultimate impacts

A Guide to Measuring Advocacy and Policy

Advocacy Buckets

Improved policies occur in stages, including policy development, proposals, sponsorship, adoption, funding, and implementation

Changes in impact are the ultimate long-term changes in social and physical lives and conditions (e.g., individuals, populations, the environment)

Advocacy Buckets

Shift in social norms are the knowledge, attitudes, values, and behaviors that comprise the normative structure of culture and society

Strengthened alliances among advocacy partners or "unlikely allies" can be essential to presenting common messages, pursuing common goals, enforcing policy changes, and protecting policy "wins"

Strengthened base of support among the general public, interest groups, and opinion leaders for particular issues are a major structural condition for supporting policy changes

Strengthened organizational capacity is another term for the skill-set, staffing, leadership, organizational structure and systems, finances, and strategic planning of nonprofits and formal coalitions that do advocacy and policy work

Impact, Influence, Leverage and Learning (I2L2)

- **Community and systems change** initiatives seek to produce sizable changes in the lives of people and the communities in which they live
- This framework names and defines **interim outcomes** on the way to impact to support intentionality and accountability

Impact = Influence + Leverage + Learning (I2L2)

Terminology within the I2L2 Framework

Impact relates to changes in the lives of individuals and among populations in a specific community, geographic area or ecosystem

Influence reflects a wide range of systems-level changes that may happen among or within organizations, institutions, networks, partnerships, policies, practices, or community norms

Leverage refers to changes in the commitment of resources

Learning is about field-building and advancing knowledge

How do the Parts of the I2L2 Framework Relate?

- There is a hierarchy to the framework
- Impact is at the heart of accountability
  - The “prize” that everyone keeps their eyes on
- Influence, leverage and learning occur in service of impact

I2L2: Example **Impact** Outcomes

- Youth have increased belief that they will have a positive future
- Increased knowledge of parents/caregivers about child development milestones
- Families maintain a stable residence
- Families can provide for the basic needs of its members
- Reduction in the incidence of lead poisoning
- Decreased number of endangered marine species exposed to environmental threats in Monterey Bay

I2L2: Example **Influence** Outcomes

- Service providers increase their linguistic competence
- Businesses change recruiting practices to attract a more diverse pool of qualified applicants
- Community decreases tolerance for polluted streams
- Community members are motivated to take action on an issue
- Policymakers adopt common language in policies and regulations
- Partners strengthen alignment

I2L2: Example **Leverage** Outcomes

- Foundation funding practices (RFP process, selection criteria) change to increase availability of funds for community priorities
- Private investments for housing development increase
- New funding methods (pooled, matched, blended) increase monetary resources to support community priorities
- Increased alignment of funding among funders in an issue area

I2L2: Example **Learning** Outcomes

- Improved access to organizational learning opportunities
- Improved application of lessons learned in strategy development
- Increased engagement in a community of practice to explore new solutions and solve problems
- Increase access to data relevant to the respective community
- Improved processes for data-sharing across partnerships
- Increased “actionable knowledge,” i.e. knowledge that informs decisions and behaviors

10 Pathways for Change

10 Theories of Change Related to Advocacy and Policy Change Efforts

- **Global theories** are theories that explain how policy change occurs more broadly
- **Tactical theories** are theories from various social science disciplines that apply to common advocacy tactics that are likely part of broader advocacy efforts or campaigns

Pathways for Change: 10 Theories to Inform Advocacy and Policy Change Efforts

Global Theories

- “Large Leaps” or Punctuated Equilibrium theory
- “Policy Windows” or Agenda-Setting theory
- “Coalition” theory or Advocacy Coalition Framework
- “Power Politics” or Power Elites theory
- “Regime” theory

Tactical Theories

- “Messaging and Frameworks” theory
- “Media Influence” or Agenda-Setting theory
- “Grassroots” or Community Organizing theory
- “Group Formation” or Self-Categorization theory
- “Diffusion” theory or Diffusion of Innovations

THEORY OF CHANGE

Final Thoughts

Final Thoughts

- Theory of Change is a fundamental approach for developing strategy
- Keep the ultimate goal of strategy development in mind during all phases of Theory of Change development
- The next steps involve expanding each strategy within the outcome map

Ultimately enabling you to use your Theory of Change to answer strategic questions and determine the next steps for your organization

Discuss

How have you seen Theory of Change used to think strategically?

How might your organization keep its Theory of Change front and center?

What challenges do you anticipate when it comes to strategy development based on Theory of Change?

Questions?

Additional Resources

Getting Started: A Self-Directed Guide to Outcome Map Development

- Preparing for Theory of Change development
- Exercises for developing an outcome map

A Guide to Measuring Advocacy and Policy

- Advocacy buckets are included in this guide

Impact = Influence + Leverage + Learning (I2L2)

- The I2L2 framework, a formula for change

Pathways for Change: 10 Theories to Inform Advocacy and Policy Change Efforts

- 10 social science theories of change relevant to advocacy and policy change efforts

Thank You!

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Missions Accomplished

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