

Theory of Change

Writing and Critiquing Your Theory of Change

Key Points

An **Intervention** is a set of activities that you have chosen as a means to address the need, based on evidence that a similar approach has worked in the past or elsewhere.

Outcome is the change in attitude, knowledge, behavior, or condition that the intervention generates.

A **theory of change** defines a cause-and-effect relationship between a specific intervention, or service activity, and an intended outcome.

Community problem is the specific need in the community you have chosen to address through your program/project.

Data documenting the need are statistics that document the extent and severity of the community problem or need your program/project will address. The best data come from reputable primary sources, (such as government agencies, institutes, foundations, and universities that have conducted their own research), are as current (up to date) as possible, and are as locally relevant, as possible. News reports are NOT primary sources. Data from multiple (reputable) sources increase reliability.

Evidence is information from performance measurement results or evaluation/research findings that inform your understanding of why the intervention you have selected will result in the change identified as the outcome.

Theory of Change Checklist

Use the following checklist to help you determine if the theory of change for your program/project has all needed components and is in alignment.

Element	Criteria	Status	Ideas for improvement
Community Need	1. Makes clear statement of the problem or issue the program will focus on	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
	2. Provides statistics to document the problem:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
	From a reputable source	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
	Current (if not within past few years provides explanation)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
	Local (Relevant to the proposed service locations)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Intervention	3. Provides a clear description of the activities volunteers / members will provide (design)		
	4. Clearly describes the dosage:		
	Frequency		
	Intensity		
	Duration		
Evidence	5. Intervention directly addresses the identified need		
	6. Demonstrates high likelihood intervention will achieve intended outcome	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
	7. Provides directly relevant performance measurement, evaluation and/or research results	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
	8. Data used appears to be high quality and collected using rigorous methodology.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
	9. From a program with similar design	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Outcome	10. From a program with similar dosage	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
	11. Change likely to occur based on proposed intervention		
	12. Relates to community need		
	13. Is achievable within one year		
Overall	14. All elements are in alignment.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
	15. Clearly shows cause and effect relationships	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	