

Outcomes

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Outcomes give us a shared understanding of the change we want to make in Fife and the steps involved in making it happen. They help us to focus on outcomes for local communities by clarifying what activities and initiatives are intended to achieve.

What are the key characteristics of an outcomes approach?

- Results focused
- Evidence-based
- Client centred
- Joined-up
- Focused on early intervention / prevention

How might you go about mapping outcomes?

- Focus on the change you want to make
- Set out steps to make it happen i.e. diagram
- Provide framework within which to think about and simplify the big issues
- Provide coherence across complex tasks
- See links between steps to explain why the intervention will work
- By setting out your theory of change you can be clear about whether it will have an impact, and how you will know if the change has been successful

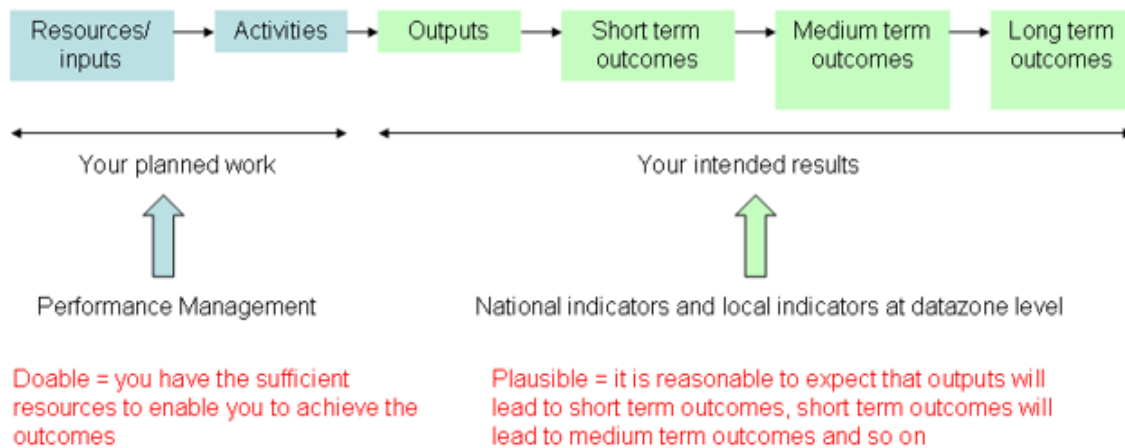
What are the benefits of such an approach?

- Provides a common language
- Guides and helps focus work
- Helps to understand **why** we do **what we do**
- Provides coherence across complex tasks
- See if activities make sense given our goals
- Guides prioritisation and resource allocation
- Helps to identify what's important to measure

What are the steps in creating a theory of change?

1. Identify a realistic and definite goal / long term outcome
2. Work backwards to intermediate outcomes
3. Establish links between outcomes (cause-effect)
4. Work out which activities lead to which outcomes
5. Identify what else is needed for the intervention to work

What you do vs What you get

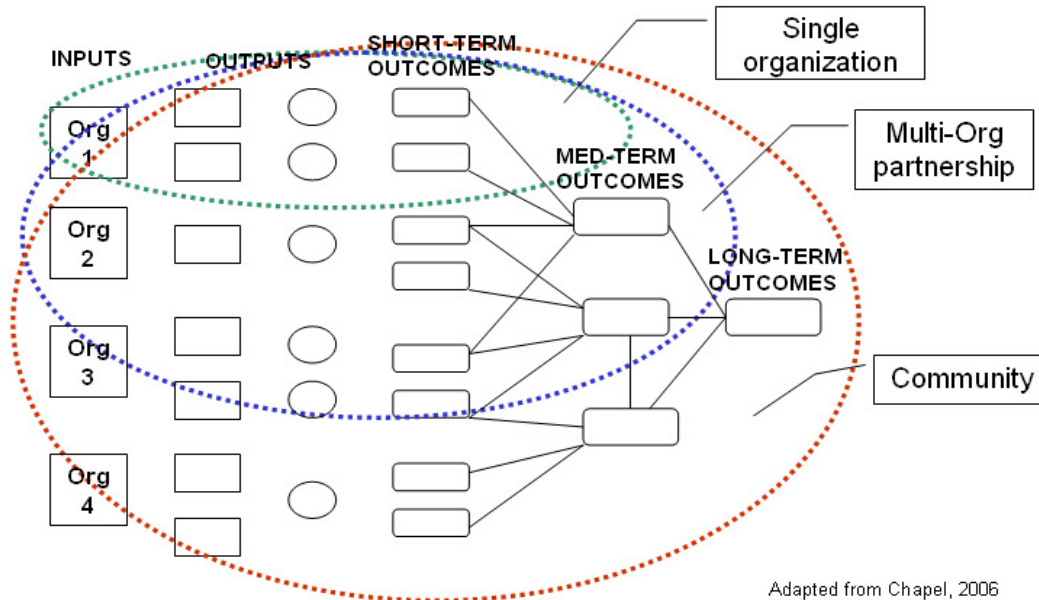


| Step | Explanation |
|----------------------|--|
| Resources / Inputs | Staff and budgets aligned to this work |
| Activities | Projects and programmes on the ground which are expected to contribute to priority outcomes |
| Reach | Who will this impact on? Does the activity involve targeting to improve outcomes for particular groups or areas? |
| Outputs | The results that follow from activities, projects or programmes |
| Short term outcomes | These are short term outcomes which we expect to contribute to priority outcomes in the medium to longer term |
| Medium term outcomes | These are medium term outcomes which we expect to contribute to the longer term priority outcomes. They would often involve behavioural change |
| Long term outcomes | These are the priority outcomes over the long term (ie 10 years) often reflected in strategic plans |
| Indicators | What you will monitor and measure that will help you to know whether you are making a difference and achieving the outcome |

Collaborating for outcomes

It should be possible to see how the work of different organisations can come together to achieve outcomes across partners and improved outcomes for local communities.

Programs as “systems” within the community setting



Adapted from Chapel, 2006

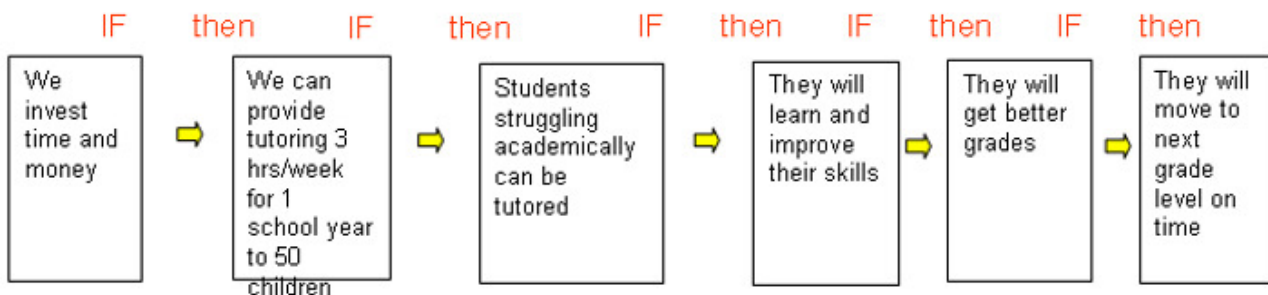
This helps to show the **contribution** of the activity of a single service to wider organisational and partnership goals.

It also helps with the issue of **attribution**, to what extent that the change over the short, medium or long-term can be attributed to particular activities or initiatives.

Test out the logic of your plans

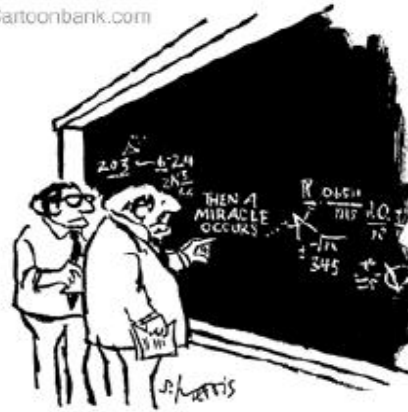
It is important to develop a clear understanding of how activities will lead to desired outcomes. It should be possible to follow a logical path based on a series of if-then relationships.

Tutoring Program Example



Any theory of change is based on underlying assumptions. Be explicit about the assumptions that you are making

Look out for the 'miracle zone', where there is a magic leap from activity to outcomes.



"I think you should be more explicit here in step two."

Use the Acid test

Can you follow this through from local projects to high level outcomes, without there being gaps in the logic?

| Activity | Output | Short Term Outcome | Medium Term Outcome | Long Term Outcome | High level Outcome |
|--|--|--|--|--|---------------------------------|
| If Employability and Skills Provision in Levenmouth is reviewed | Then what? If | Then what? If | Then Workforce is highly skilled to meet employer need If | Then Employment and Skills Opportunities are extended If | Then Employment is increased |
| If A brief is created for the Power Station Site development | Then Development can be quickly progressed when the time is right If | Then Larger strategic sites are available for inward investment and key sectors If | Then Regeneration areas are seen as attractive and succeeding by residents, businesses and visitors If | Then Communities are stronger through regeneration If | Then Employment is increased |

Summary

An outcomes approach helps us to focus on the long-term change that we are looking to effect through our activity. It shows that a common language and a shared theory can help us to collaborate to achieve that change.

It allows us to review our planned activity and test our assumptions about whether the activity will make an effective contribution to achieving short, medium and long term outcomes.

Further information

Evaluation Support Scotland, Getting started with Evaluation
<http://www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/evaluation/stage-1-getting-started/>