

THEORIES OF CHANGE: WHY AND HOW

gLOCAL

Evaluation Week 2022

May 31, 2022

Center for Research Evaluation

OUR WORK



We work with organizations to find out if their work is having a positive impact.

WHAT WE DO

Evaluation APPROACHES



- Theory-Driven Evaluations
- Developmental Evaluations
- Outcome & Impact Evaluations
- Process Evaluations
- Needs Assessments

Evaluation DESIGNS



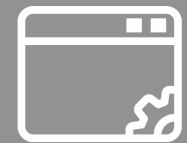
- Non-Experimental Designs
- Quasi-Experimental Designs
- Quantitative Experimental Designs
- Qualitative Designs
- Mixed Methods Designs

Data Collection & ANALYSIS



- Statistical Data Analyses
- Survey & Instrument Development
- Qualitative Data Collection & Analysis
- Performance Monitoring & Longitudinal Tracking

Evaluation SYSTEMS



- Evaluation Grant Writing
- Program Logics & Program Theories
- Evaluation Policies & Learning Agendas
- Monitoring & Evaluation Frameworks

WHO WE ARE



- Rachel Scott

Center for Research Evaluation Evaluation Associate

Rachel Scott is an evaluation associate at the Center for Research Evaluation (CERE) at the University of Mississippi. Rachel' focus at CERE is working with education clients to help them determine if their work is having a positive impact.

- Olivia Melvin

Center for Research Evaluation Project Coordinator

Olivia Melvin works on multi-year health- and ed-related evaluation projects, regionally and internationally. Being bilingual in Mandarin and English, she collects and analyzes data in both languages. She has a B.A. in International Studies and Mandarin and is pursuing an M.A. in Political Science.

- Moira Ragan

Center for Research Evaluation Senior Evaluation Associate

Moira Ragan is a Senior Evaluation Associate specializing in research and evaluation, research design, measurement and statistics. Moira's focus includes psychometrics and instrument development, international educational systems and evaluating U.S. Department of Education-funded research.

PURPOSE

We want you to leave today's workshop with:

- An understanding of the why and how behind theories of change
- Draft theory of change for current initiative you are working on

JAMBOARD LINK FOR ACTIVITIES
https://jamboard.google.com/d/1KitGhjsgqhSw3_WUcxUG6gcBI0uHM7IL0I12_xclS0Q/edit?usp=sharing

TODAY

1

Mini-Lesson on Theories of Change

2

Theory of Change Work Time

3

Feedback



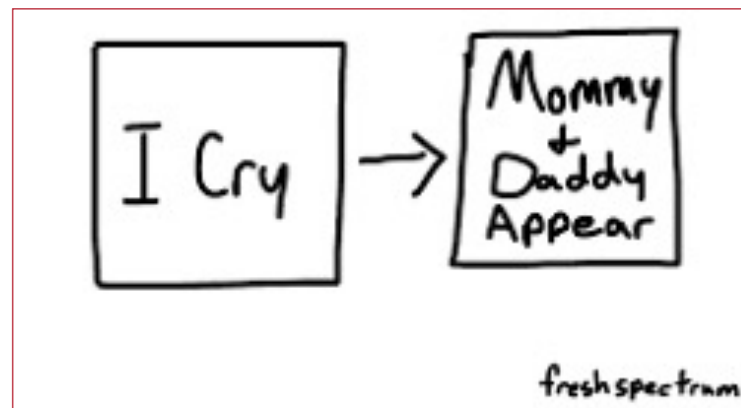
PROGRAM THEORY

What are three words that come to mind when you hear the term “program theory?”

- See Jamboard Slide 2 for responses

WHAT IS A PROGRAM THEORY?

A program theory (also known as theory of change) is a **visual model** that shows how an intervention's **activities** are expected to lead to its **impacts**.



HOW IS IT DIFFERENT FROM A LOGIC MODEL?

- A **logic model** describes a logical sequence showing what the intervention's intended outcomes are—*If we provide X, the result will be Y.*
- A **theory of change** includes causal mechanisms to show why each intervention component is expected to result in the intended outcomes—*If we provide X, A will support (or hinder) a result of Y.*

IF-THEN STATEMENTS

They are a series of **'if-then' statements** that illustrate the **chain of results** that underpin the logic and rationale for an intervention.



EXAMPLE

LET'S SAY I BELIEVE
PLANTING FLOWERS
LEADS TO GREATER
HAPPINESS.



I GET FUNDING FOR A
PROGRAM THAT
DISTRIBUTES ZINNIA
SEEDS TO MEMBERS OF MY
COMMUNITY.

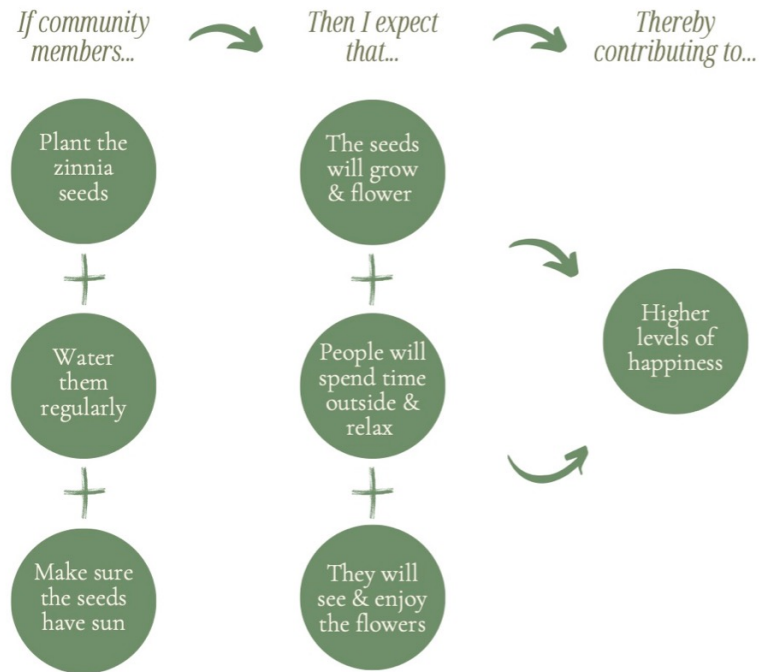


MY (SIMPLE) THEORY OF
CHANGE IS AS FOLLOWS:

IF-THEN STATEMENTS

They are a series of **'if-then' statements** that illustrate the **chain of results** that underpin the logic and rationale for an intervention.

EXAMPLE: ZINNIA JOY



WHY WE CARE

EVALUATORS WILL COLLECT DATA ON EACH PART OF THE THEORY OF CHANGE:

We'll collect data on...

Did the seeds get planted?

+

How often were they watered?

+

Did the seeds get enough sun?

And...

Did the seeds grow & flower?

+

Did people spend time outside? Did they relax?

+

Did anyone see & enjoy the flowers?

And ultimately...

Do people report higher levels of happiness?

#1

Program theories guide evaluation data collection

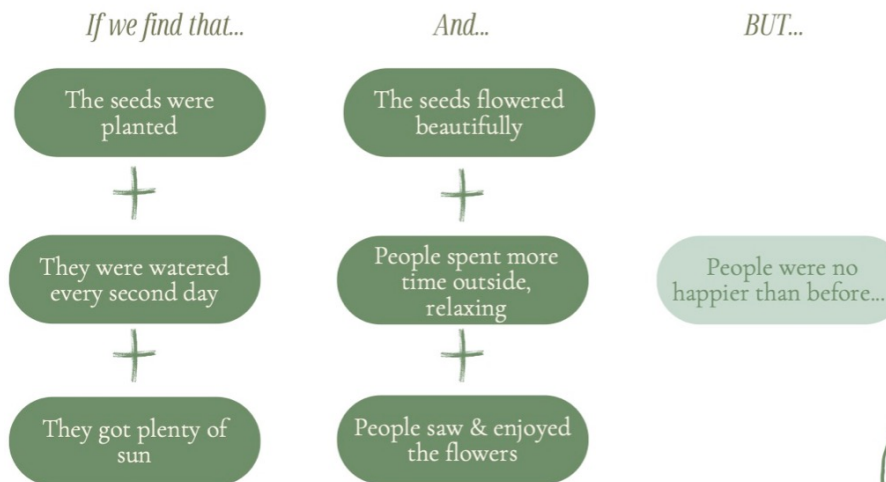
WITH THESE DATA, WE'LL EXPLORE: (1) WERE THERE POSITIVE OUTCOMES? AND (2) DOES THE DATA SUPPORT YOUR THEORY ABOUT THE PROGRAM DESIGN?



WHY WE CARE

#2
Program theories guide
interpretation of the data

FOR EXAMPLE:



WE'LL KNOW THERE WAS A PROBLEM WITH THE PROGRAM DESIGN.

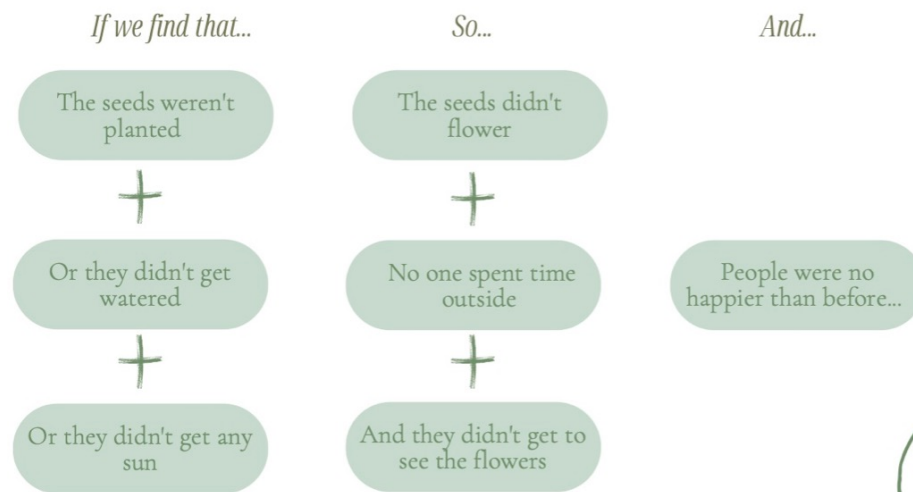
Maybe the world is more complex than we think? Maybe there are other things that also need to change to influence overall happiness. The results tell us the program design needs a re-think.



WHY WE CARE

#2
Program theories guide
interpretation of the data

ON THE OTHER HAND:



WE'LL KNOW THERE WAS A PROBLEM WITH
PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION.

We'll need to look at strategies for re-jigging the program roll-out. Maybe people don't have time to plant the seeds? Maybe they need better instructions? These results tell us the theory behind the program design *might still work* but we need to improve implementation.



PRACTICE EXAMPLE A

Eating right

- *If* you eat right and exercise daily,
- *Then*, you expect that...

Chat examples:

- If you eat right and exercise, then you can expect to live longer.

PRACTICE EXAMPLE B

Literacy Intervention

- *If* you train teachers on evidence-based reading interventions in a ToT model,
- *Then*, you expect that...

Chat examples:

- Then teachers will be able to share with their colleagues.
- Then teachers will improve teaching practices.
- Then you expect that students reading scores will increase.
- Then you expect that students will have improved reading skills.

*Students improved skills would be a bit longer term if teachers don't practice what they learned. Students might not be able to improve so the intermediate would be teachers improving.

PRACTICE EXAMPLE C

Teacher efficacy (confidence, ability)

- *If* you...
- *Then*, you expect that teachers would report higher efficacy

Chat examples:

- If you provide paid training, plentiful resources and small class sizes...
- If you identify the gaps in teachers' abilities and skills and build their capacities based on gaps...
- If you provide teachers with enabling environments for learning and development...
- If you make sure that the teacher will have all the implements to work with...

BREAKOUT ROOMS

- Take 2 minutes to reflect on your project's objective(s)/intended intervention(s)

_____ [Write name of project]
is an initiative that _____ [Write brief description of what the project does]
with/to _____ [Write statement on who you work with]
so that _____ [Write description of what changes as a result].

PROTOCOL 1: CRITICAL FRIENDS/ GALLERY WALK

PRESENTATION Presenters explain their project; Audience listens. (This has already occurred).	8 min
CLARIFICATION Audience asks short clarifying questions; Presenters respond.	3 min
ASSESSMENT Audience quietly assesses project; Presenters wait.	3 min
"I LIKE..." Audience shares what they liked (Best Practices); Presenters listen.	4 min
"I WONDER..." Audience shares concerns (Lacks Features or Needs Development); Presenters listen.	4 min
REFLECTION Presenters reflect on useful feedback; Audience listens.	4 min
"I HAVE..." Audience shares ideas & resources for the project; Presenters may respond.	4 min

RESOURCES

- <https://cere.olemiss.edu/logic-models-vs-theories-of-change/>
- <https://cere.olemiss.edu/whats-the-point-of-a-theory-of-change/>
- [https://www.theoryofchange.org/wp-content/uploads/toco_library/pdf/TOCs and Logic Models forAEA.pdf](https://www.theoryofchange.org/wp-content/uploads/toco_library/pdf/TOCs_and_Logic_Models_forAEA.pdf)
- <https://www.annmurraybrown.com/single-post/2016/03/20/theory-of-change-vsthe-logic-model-never-be-confused-again>

Zoom Chat Recap:

- Good software for developing ToC?
 - <https://www.lucidchart.com/pages/>
 - <https://www.canva.com>
 - <https://www.mural.co>
 - <https://app.diagrams.net>
 - <https://miro.com>
- Factoring context and assumptions in the development of ToC, how do you navigate the process of a ToC that is always changing as the program is being implemented?
 - We treat it as a living document and adapt/revise evaluation plans and tools to reflect programmatic changes.
- I have a question about activities that lead to outcomes - sometimes activities lead to outputs not necessarily to outcomes no?

REACH OUT



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