



# Theory of Change

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## Purpose

This session will

- ❖ **Explain** how the ToC has become an essential part of RBM planning processes.
- ❖ **Offer** more insights on determining and stating a ToC.

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## Theory of Change: Theory and practice

- A **theory of change** is a set of **assumptions** (based on if and then logic), risks, and external factors that describes how and why the program [or project] is intended to work. This theory connects the program's [or project's] activities with its [expected ultimate outcome]. It is inherent in the program [or project] design and is often based on **knowledge** and **experience** of the program [or project design team], research, evaluations, best practices and lessons learned.
- Theory of change is a **rigorous** yet **participatory** process whereby groups and stakeholders in a planning process articulate their long-term goals and identify the conditions they believe have to unfold for those goals to be met. These conditions are modeled as desired outcomes, arranged graphically in a causal framework, i.e. the different types of logical models.

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## What benefits can emerge from a solid ToC?

“Realizing broad, ambitious social **change** is a complex undertaking that can take a long time. There is too much at stake to be unclear, vague or random in the pursuit of a better and more equitable society or a healthy planet. Though it can be challenging to make visible collective thinking about what is expected to change — along with when, how and why it will change — many organizations, teams and partnerships have benefitted from engaging in this effort. Theory of change development can help groups to:

- experience significant breakthroughs in their thinking;
- increase their agreement and alignment about how change will happen;
- better acknowledge and address power differences between those involved;
- promote equity in their pursuit of goals;
- better understand the roles and expectations of different contributors;
- better understand where to invest time and resources; and
- better measure their strategies.”

Source: The Annie E. Casey Foundation. Developing a Theory of Change: Practical Guidance. Part 1.

## Suggested steps to developing a ToC

Step 1: Identify goals and assumptions  
Step 2: Identify strategies and activities  
Step 3: Clarify the "messy middle": link strategies to outcomes and goals  
Step 4: Step back and reflect on the whole picture

Source: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.  
Developing a Theory of Change: Practical Guidance. Part 2.

Step 1: Situation analysis  
Step 2: Target groups  
Step 3: Impact  
Step 4: Outcomes  
Step 5: Activities  
Step 6: Change mechanisms  
Step 7: Sequencing  
Step 8: Your theory of change diagram  
Step 9: Stakeholders and 'enabling factors'  
Step 10: Assumptions

Source: James Noble. Theory of change in ten steps. NPC

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## More concise set of steps

- 1. Identify a long-term **goal**.
- 2. Conduct "backwards mapping" to identify the **preconditions** necessary to achieve that goal.
- 3. Identify the **interventions** that your initiative will perform to create these preconditions.
- 4. Develop **indicators** for each precondition that will be used to assess the performance of the interventions.
- 5. Write a **narrative** that can be used to summarize the various moving parts in your theory
- Source: Erin Harris. An Introduction to Theory of Change. Harvard Family Research Project

• “ **BAYARLALAA** ”





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