What is a theory of change?

A process for **thinking about** and **describing** strategies, programmes, projects or organisations

- Strategy: helps clarify your strategy, makes you more effective, helps identify and open up blocks / blind spots in thinking
- Gaining a common understanding: a way to identify and negotiate different perspectives (increasing clarity and consistency)
- **Tell our story:** communicates your aims and your value add, giving a narrative of your impact and how you achieve change
- Data collection: a blueprint for identifying what needs to be measured and research priorities
- A useful tool not an ideology: a way of testing thinking and logic, and constructively critiquing assumptions
- A living document: capturing your present thinking, to be reviewed and adapted as you progress and adapt your approach



Theory of change: basic components

Rationale

The issues or problems you are trying to address

The reasons and evidence behind your project or area of work

Inputs

The resources
you put into your
project - this
includes any
funding/
investment but
also any other
'costs' such as
staff time not
accounted for in
the budget

Activities

The actual activities you are delivering or plan to deliver through your project or area of work

Outputs

The direct results of your work - these are usually things that can be quantified, such as number of people who attended a training course

Outcomes

The short, medium or long term changes you expect to see as a result of your activities

Outcomes can be for different stakeholders

Impact

The longer term changes you expect to contribute towards through your activities - these are the ultimate goals of your project or area of work



Your intended results

We've used a simpler framework and added mechanisms of change

Activities

The actual activities you are delivering or plan to deliver through your project or area of work



How you want people to engage with your activities; the kind of relationships you establish; and the thought processes you want them to go through in order to achieve the outcomes and impact you want

Outcomes

The short, medium or long term changes you expect to see as a result of your activities

Outcomes can be for different stakeholders

Impact

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