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| **EMBEDDING EVALUATION INTO EVERYDAY PRACTICE: TEMPLATES TO SUPPORT BETTER PRACTICE EVALUATION ACROSS THE COMMONWEALTH**The [Commonwealth Evaluation Toolkit](https://evaluation.gov.au/toolkit/commonwealth-evaluation-toolkit) is designed to support people to determine fit for purpose approaches to evaluate, measure, assess and report on the performance of Commonwealth programs and activities.There are many evaluation templates, tools and resources used across the Commonwealth, and in other jurisdictions, that may assist at different stages of an evaluation. While the set of templates available here are in line with better practice, the application and use of any one tool, template or example for the evaluation of a specific program or activity is ultimately at the discretion of the manager responsible for the successful delivery of results.The templates can be used to document how you plan to conduct an evaluation, or to strengthen routine performance measurement approaches. They are organised around the three stages typically involved in an evaluative activity:* Planning and budgeting (steps 1, 2 & 3)
* Measuring and assessing (steps 4, 5 & 6)
* Reporting and being accountable (steps 7 & 8)

More information about the stages and steps involved in an evaluative activity is available on the "[How to evaluate](https://evaluation.gov.au/toolkit/how-evaluate)" page in the Toolkit. Evaluation findings and other performance information should support continuous improvement, accountability and decision-making.The [tools and additional resources](https://evaluation.gov.au/toolkit/templates-tools-and-resources) available in the Toolkit also provide further guidance and examples on how to complete specific evaluative activities and tasks.[ REMEMBER TO DELETE THESE REFERENCE NOTES BEFORE FINALISING YOUR DOCUMENT ] |

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| **TEMPLATE 1: Theory of Change (Outcome Mapping)****Template Overview:** The aim of a theory of change/outcome map is to capture all of the essential elements necessary to understand how a program or activity will achieve the intended outcomes. A theory of change is best developed by a group with diverse skills and perspectives. People need to have knowledge of the topic and setting where a program/activity will be implemented. |
| **A comprehensive set of templates is available in the Commonwealth Evaluation Toolkit:** These [templates](https://www.finance.gov.au/government/managing-commonwealth-resources/planning-and-reporting/commonwealth-performance-framework/evaluation-commonwealth-rmg-130/templates-tools-and-additional-resources) can be used to document how you plan to evaluate, measure, assess and report on the effectiveness, efficiency and/or appropriateness of government programs and activities. Use of these templates is NOT mandatory.* **Planning and budgeting**
	+ Template 1 | Theory of change (outcome mapping)
	+ Template 2 | Program logic
	+ Template 3 | Evaluation framework (program)
	+ Template 4 | Evaluation terms of reference
	+ Template 5 | Evaluation plan
	+ Template 6 | Identifying stakeholders and their roles in an evaluation
* **Measuring and assessing**
	+ Template 7 | Data evaluation matrix
	+ Template 8 | Data sharing agreement  (Sourced from ONDC: Data sharing agreement ONDC (datacommissioner.gov.au))
* **Reporting and being accountable**
	+ Template 9 | Evaluation report
	+ Template 10 | Evaluation action plan
	+ Template 11 | Evaluation closure report

[ REMEMBER TO DELETE THESE REFERENCE NOTES BEFORE FINALISING YOUR DOCUMENT ] |

**TEMPLATE 1**

# Completing a theory of change/Outcomes mapping[[1]](#footnote-2)

This template is provided as guidance only – The use of this tool or template is not mandatory. The appropriate application and use of any one tool, template or example for the evaluation of a specific program or activity is ultimately at the discretion of the manager responsible for the successful delivery of results.

A theory of change is best developed by a group with diverse skills and perspectives (e.g. technical knowledge and lived experience). People need to have knowledge of the topic and setting where it will be implemented (e.g. geographic community, school).

The aim of a theory of change/outcome map is to capture all of the essential elements necessary to understand how a program or activity will achieve the intended outcomes. It should outline any interim outputs or short-term outcomes/changes that may be necessary before long-term outcomes can be achieved. Information should be expressed in a way that is useful and clear to the program stakeholders.

Before you get started decide who will facilitate the process of developing your theory of change. You may want to bring someone in to facilitate so all participants can all fully contribute.

## **Task one** – identify the long term outcome

* Bring your group together and dedicate a whole session to agreeing what the problem is and developing the long-term outcome/s your program or activity is aiming at. It may take more than one session.
* Don’t assume that because you have been working together on an initiative that people have the same understanding of the long-term goal.
* Be as specific as possible.

## **Task two** – develop your pathway of change or outcomes map

Scroll down to see an example of a pathway of change map.

* This part of the process takes time, as it is the core of your theory of change.
* The map shows outcomes not interventions.
* Start the process of “backwards mapping” this means working backwards from your long-term goal to the earlier outcomes that must be achieved before it is possible to achieve this outcome.
* For many programs, the theory of change can be represented by an outcomes chain, which shows the causal linkages between program elements.
* For other programs, the theory of change may have multiple causal pathways and may be better represented using systems mapping techniques or a more illustrative type of diagram.
* Some theories of change may be a narrative description only – it is important to choose an approach that is fit-for-purpose in a particular context.

## **Task three** – evaluation planning

* For each outcome you need to answer the question “What evidence will we use to show that this outcome has been achieved?” This evidence becomes your indicators. Developing indicators can be a demanding part of the process.
* First figure out what would be the best indicator, *then* figure out how to measure this. Don’t be limited by the data you currently have available, think outside the square. You may need to have a data development agenda.
* Think about the threshold for each indicator and how much change is required to achieve this outcome. This will allow you to move on to the next outcome.
* How long do you think it might take to achieve this goal? Document this.

## **Task four** – define interventions – program design

* Decide what interventions or activities are needed to achieve each outcome.
* Don’t get too focused on the detail of the interventions – that comes later when you start implementing your theory of change.
* Remember this is a pathway of change, one step leads to the next, so interventions are specific to that step on the pathway of change, not the whole pathway.

## **Task five** – articulate assumptions

* Document your assumptions and why you think that one outcome will lead to the next (e.g. Theory, research, expert consensus)
* Why is each outcome necessary in the pathway of change?
* Why have you decided on particular interventions? Bring the evidence and best-practice in here.
* Is your theory of change plausible, testable and feasible?
* What is the context/ environment your project is operating within? Document how this informs your theory of change, e.g. existing programs/ services, social conditions, community norms.

## Reality checks

Throughout the process stop for reality checks:

* Has your theory of change got too big to be realistic?
* Does it logically flow?
* Does it make sense to people not involved in the process?

## Presenting your theory of change

Below is an example of a pathway of change map (completed and as a skeleton), which forms the core of your theory of change.

Alongside this, you will also need to document your indicators, assumptions and any specific activities that will be undertaken (described in tasks 3, 4 and 5).

The diagram presented below is very simple. If you require something a little more complex or creative, simply search the web for "theory of change", and click to images or go to “Program Logic Template”.

**Youth at “Cool School” have healthy, safe relationships**

**Students understand healthy
and safe relationships**

**Experience practising health and relationship skills**

Long-term outcome

Short-term outcomes

Medium-term outcomes

**Students know the benefits of healthy and safe relationships**

**Youth input on effective supports**

**Effective, youth-focused school and community supports in place**

**Students model healthy and safe relationship skills**

**Students know how to help**

**Staff model healthy and safe relationships**

**Staff engaged in
the project**

**Students engaged in
the project**

**Natural
helpers
identified**

**Services re-focused for youth**

**Training and education provided**

**Staff have knowledge of healthy and safe relationships**

**Students supported to give and receive help**

**School culture supports healthy and safe relationships**

**Vision / long-term outcome**

**Long-term outcome**

**Short-term outcomes**

Long-term outcome

Short-term outcomes

**Short-term outcomes**

**Short-term outcomes**

**Medium-term outcomes**

**Medium-term outcomes**

**Medium-term outcomes**

Medium-term outcomes

**Short-term outcomes**

**Medium-term outcomes**

**Medium-term outcomes**

**Short-term outcomes**

**Short-term outcomes**

**Short-term outcomes**

**Short-term outcomes**

**Long-term outcome**

**Long-term outcome**

1. This guidance has been adapted from the [Sexual Violence Primary Prevention Toolkit](https://web.archive.org/web/20180127174211/https%3A/svpptoolkit.nz/) developed in September 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)