

23 THEORY OF CHANGE FOR TRACING THE PATH TO IMPACT



2h 00m



PLENUM AND
SMALL GROUPS

DESCRIPTION

It is not always obvious how an organization's activities lead to social change. This exercise helps you to think through and clarify how your organization's activities are connected to the big impact identified in your vision statement.

This will help you determine whether your activities are making steps towards the ideal future you envision and whether or not there are other activities you may want to pursue.



PREPARATION

Prepare a clear vision and mission statement and review **Background Paper: Theory of Change (15)**



MATERIALS

- Scotch Tape
- Moderation Cards
- Markers



TOOLS

- **Background Paper:**
Theory of Change (15)



SUMMIT



STRATEGY

STEP 1 **IN PLENUM:** Divide the room into four parallel sections by putting scotch tape on the floor (the sections shouldn't be quadrants, but rather each scotch tape line should be parallel to the others). Going clockwise, label the first section "*Input*," the second "*Output*," the third "*Outcome*," and the fourth "*Impact*". [05 MIN]

STEP 2 **IN SMALL GROUPS:**

A. Think about what your long-term goals are as an organization:

- i. According to your vision, what is your success scenario for society?
- ii. What long-term goals would mark this success scenario? (These should describe a state of affairs and not a process. Name the actors involved.)
- iii. Note each of these long-term goals down on moderation cards and place them in the section called "*Impact*". [30 MIN]

B. Next, think about what would have to happen first in order for your long-term goals to be a success and draw or note each down on moderation cards. These preconditions should (1) happen right before the success of the long-term goal, (2) describe a state of affairs and not a process, and (3) name actors. These are called your "*Outcomes*". Place these moderation cards in the section "*Outcomes*". [25 MIN]

C. Then, think about what would have to happen to produce the outcomes you already wrote down. These are called your "*Outputs*", and are usually the direct result of your organization's activities. Write down each of these things on moderation cards, and then put the cards in the "*Output*" section. [20 MIN]

D. Lastly, think about what would be needed to produce the outputs that you wrote before. These things are your "*Inputs*" and are usually the actual activities which your organization is already engaging in. Write the inputs on moderation cards and place them in the "*Input*" section. [20 MIN]

STEP 3 **IN PLENUM:** Each small group organizes their moderation cards into a causal chain, and then takes turns explaining their chains to the rest of the group. For each chain, discuss (1) Does it make logical sense? Will the input really lead to the intended impact? Could you explain it to people outside your organization? (2) Are you currently engaged in this path, and if so, do you want to continue it? (3) Is this a new path you would like to implement, and do you have the means, passion, and funds to do so? [20 MIN]



FOLLOW UP

A working group should be created to document, evaluate, refine, and plan the implementation of the pathways of change (causal chains) that were created.