EVALUATING OUR WAY TO SMARTER ORGANIZATIONS

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Evaluating What Matters

Nonprofit organizations continually make significant investments in a range of social priorities at the national level and in communities, in many areas including education, health, the environment, and others. These important "social investors" are interested in evaluation for many reasons, including accountability to their boards and the public, learning and performance improvement, making smarter investment decisions, and advocacy.

Investing in evaluation takes financial resources and time both for funders and implementers. It is, therefore, important to commission evaluations that contribute to the overall goals of the funding organization, and that are used for improving the effectiveness of social programs.

This paper advocates for the creation of an overall evaluation plan— or "evaluation system"[1] — for all nonprofit organization programs. Such an evaluation plan would aim to build the capacity of nonprofit organizations implementing social programs by enabling them to learn from their experience, strengthen partnerships, and promote strategic thinking in their organizations. Through evaluation, organizations implementing social programs can become more effective in their own work, and also present clearer and more persuasive evidence of their effectiveness ("tell their story") for solving social problems. By embedding evaluation in the work of nonprofit organizations, social programs will become more effective in serving the public, and bringing about social benefits, social empowerment, equity and gender equality, protection of the environment, and other social change goals.

This paper outlines a step-by-step process for designing evaluations that bring value-for-money, ensure that funders are evaluating what matters, clarify desired outcomes of strategies and program designs, and are embedded in social sector organizations.

[1] See an overview of the sections of an evaluation system in *Reframing Evaluation Through Appreciative Inquiry* by Preskill and Catsambas (Sage: 2006), pp. 101-107.

Bringing Program Language into Evaluation and Facilitating Evaluative Thinking: Developing a Theory of Change

Good evaluation benefits organizations and programs from the first moment of engagement, even before any data collection, analysis, or assessment has begun. A first step for any evaluation is to understand a program's or organization's theory of change. A theory of change explicitly articulates the ideas that program funders and implementers have about how the program or intervention should create the desired results.

Often, an organization's theory of change is implicit or spread throughout a range of documents. Thus, evaluation can make an important contribution to a client organization by helping to translate the organization's business onto a clear, organized map. This "reframing" occurs as the evaluator facilitates discussions to uncover the *theory of change* of a social organization's program(s). In this task, the evaluator asks the organization to articulate the targeted high-level outcomes of the program(s), the changes that will signal the program(s) has been successful, and the link between those changes and the activities of the organization. In other words, the organization answers the question:

> *Through what pathways do we believe our activities will lead to the change(s) we are working toward?*

Answering this question reveals the expectations, assumptions, and strategies of the organization, as well as level of agreement (or divergence) among key stakeholders.

Clues about an organization's theory of change can be found on its website, founding documents, and annual reports. The real contribution of evaluation, however, is to facilitate a dialogue within the organization that enables people to revisit the narrative that describes their organization's mission and business, explore different perceptions and perspectives, and discover common ground and newfound clarity in their collective purpose and work.

Evaluators use many techniques to facilitate this thinking, including those that build on storytelling and participatory processes.[2] The evaluator becomes a neutral facilitator who helps explain and populate the outline of the theory of change—also called "logic model"—and in a process of Outcome Mapping. The facilitator asks questions that help the group get ever clearer about goals, definitions, boundaries, and meaning.

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[2] For example, see how to develop an evaluation system using Appreciative Inquiry in *Reframing Evaluation Through Appreciative Inquiry* by Preskill and Catsambas (Sage: 2006), pp. 107-118.

Creating a Map of Outcomes

This section presents a step-by-step methodology for reframing a social sector organization's "core business" using an Outcome Mapping frame. The illustrative example accompanying the guided steps below was inspired by CECIP – Centro de Criação de Imagem Popular. CECIP is a civil society, nonprofit and nonpartisan organization dedicated, since 1986, to strengthening citizenship through education and communication.[3]

For each step presented, we will show an application of how to reframe a social sector organization's "core business" using an *Outcome Mapping*[4,5] frame. For the social sector, this is a useful way to articulate the theory of change because Outcome Mapping: (1) recognizes the importance of partnership in the social sector because social change goals tend to be larger than any one organization or program can achieve by itself, (2) lends itself to using familiar program language to lay out a program's design in an evaluation-friendly structure, and (3) offers a frame that links easily with an organization's advocacy strategy.

Outcome Mapping identifies partners, distinguishes the role of each one, and enables the organization to articulate partner-level outcomes—ways in which it wants to influence key partners, called "boundary partners" in Outcome Mapping. By placing partners clearly on the map, an *Outcome Mapping Frame* enables organizations to reflect on their unique added value among partners, their comparative advantage, their "brand," and their potential catalytic role in influencing change. Organizations also see easy links between this framing of their core business and their advocacy strategy.

Outcome Mapping differentiates the concepts of spheres of control, influence, and interest as follows:

- **Sphere of Control:** What an organization has control over (what it does)
- **Sphere of Influence:** What it can and tries to influence (behaviors and actions of others due to what the organization does)
- **Sphere of Interest:** What it is ultimately trying to achieve.

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[3] CICIP has provided permission for its organization to serve as an example.
[4] Jones, H. and S. Hearn. 2009. *Outcome mapping: a realistic alternative for planning, monitoring, and evaluation*. Overseas Development Institute. Accessible at: http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/5058.pdf
[5] Outcome Mapping is a project progress measurement system that was designed by the grant-making organization International Development Research Centre (IDRC). Outcome Mapping experts will recognize what is presented here as an adaption of the early steps of the approach, with similarities and differences from the original methodology.

Key Steps in Mapping a Theory of Change in the Social Sector

This section presents a five-step process developed and used by EnCompass LLC[6] for outlining an organization's theory of change. This process can also be used by evaluators in their own development of a client organization's theory of change, or of a project or program's theory of change. While the steps are listed in an order, this is actually an iterative process – where reflections at one part of the theory of change lead to refinements in other parts.

Figure 1: Overview of using an Outcome Mapping Frame in evaluation

Step	Definition	Suggested Methods	Resulting Benefit
1. Clarify high-level outcomes or impacts	Identify three to five high-level outcomes that, if achieved, would fulfill the organization's mission Place these at the top of the map[7]	Review documents, including project documents, annual report, website, and brochures -AND- Engage in storytelling and visioning with implementers and other key stakeholders	High-level outcomes that represent common ground between documented mission and goals, and different stakeholder perspectives
2. Articulate types of key areas of activities	Identify what the organization does to make the high-level outcomes happen or contribute to their happening, and place them in like groups—e.g., all workshops may be placed under "training" Place these at the bottom of the map	Using a participatory process, identify the types of activities the organization does, e.g., providing social services, training, convening, education, advocacy, etc.	An overview of the main types of activities that make up the core mission of the organization
3. Identify key stakeholders and partners	Identify groups or entities that the organization aims to influence through its actions, or that it uses as supporters to achieve results Place those above the activities on the map	For each action area, identify the key partners and stakeholders	Recognition of the importance of partners in achieving the organization's mission, and sense of priority of different partners
4. Articulate the targeted behavior changes in stakeholders and partners	Identify specific actions or behaviors the organization aims to promote in key stakeholders and partners (that will, in turn, point to the ultimate, high-level outcomes) Sometimes, there is more than one level of partner or stakeholder. Some organizations work through other groups that, in turn, influence the beneficiary directly (e.g., an	This activity is the most effective when there is an opportunity to involve different stakeholders or "partners" in discussions about their role, perceptions, and needs. This allows for deeper thinking about the strategies the organization uses to achieve its goals	Recognition that "success" for the organization is also defined (in an intermediate way at least) as changes at the level of "partner"

[6] EnCompass LLC is an evaluation and training organization best known for its strengths-based approach and whole-systems perspective, especially the use of Appreciative Inquiry. More information is available at: www.encompassworld.com.

[7] Note that the map can also run horizontally, with the outcomes being placed at the right-hand side.

Step	Definition	Suggested Methods	Resulting Benefit
	organization works to influence a health ministry, which then influences the behaviors of health workers who serve the beneficiaries) Place those above each corresponding partner	Review the program strategy and goals of the organization Ask: In what way does achieving these partner-level outcomes help us move closer to our ultimate, high-level outcomes?	
5. Test and prioritize stakeholder outcomes	Apply the "five tests" to all outcomes on the map – desirability, realism, ease, strategy, and capacity Agree on the top priority outcomes	Answer the questions: What are the three to five most important things we do that move us in the direction of our high-level outcomes? Given our time and financial resources, what are three to five reasonable partner-level outcomes that we want to achieve?	A sharper focus on our added value in moving toward our high-level goals Focusing time and financial resources in activities and partners where the organization can make the most difference

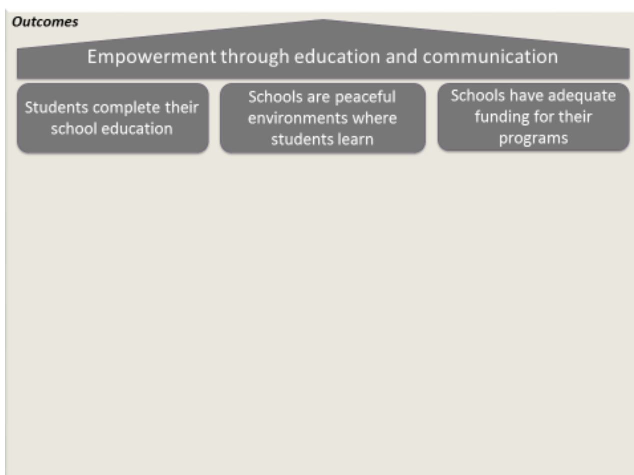
Developing a Theory of Change: An Example of Using the Five Steps

In this section, we will take the example of a social sector organization, and develop its theory of change in an Outcome Mapping Frame using the steps described in the previous section.

Step 1: Identifying High-Level Outcomes (Top of the Map)

In its mission statement on its website, CECIP states it aims to achieve "empowerment through education and communication." A first step for evaluation using an Outcome Mapping Frame is to "unpack" this broad statement into more concrete terms. In other words, identify high-level changes which, if achieved, would fulfill the larger organizational or project mission. The evaluator must work with the social sector organization to come up with these "pillars" or larger desirable outcomes in dialogue with its stakeholders using well-structured participatory approaches. These high-level outcomes are placed in what is called the *Sphere of Interest* in Outcome Mapping; these are outcomes that the organization cannot achieve by itself, but wants to make possible ultimately through its good work.

Figure 2: Example of three high-level outcomes derived from an organization's mission



In the example in **Figure 2**, we chose the following three most important outcomes:

- Students complete their school education

- Schools are peaceful environments where students learn
- Schools have adequate funding for their programs.

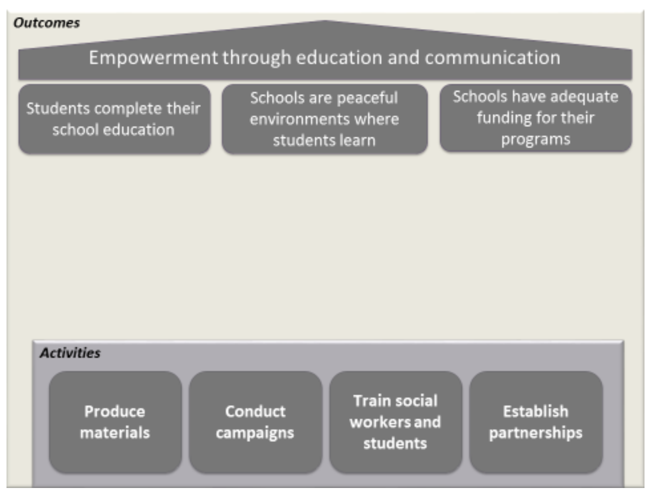
There are many high-level outcomes that could fit the overall mission of "empowerment through education and communication." For example, we could have said "schools have adequate funding for **after-school** programs." It all depends on what the organization really thinks is needed by the community to move toward the overall goal.

How these three high-level outcomes were derived is critical. Initially, we look for what is written in project documents, on the website, or in annual reports. It is always important, however, to provide an opportunity to implementers and stakeholders to revisit and revise any explicit (written) desired program outcomes, adding their own understanding and experiences. Often, statements in documents are very broad, and this conversation is critical to unpacking what is behind the written word. This step works best when it engages as many stakeholders as possible in contributing to the dialogue, for example through Appreciative Inquiry or other storytelling technique. Participants deepen their understanding of their own programs, surprise each other by their different perspectives, and appreciate the discovery of common ground among their views.

Step 2: Articulating Key Areas of Action (Bottom of the Map)

This is usually the easiest step to complete. Organizations are generally able to articulate their main activities and programs easily. To do this step, it is important to reflect on how people and teams in the organization spend their time to do "the work." Once an organization develops a list of activities, it is helpful to combine them under broader categories or areas of action. For example, if the organization conducts different kinds of training or capacity building as part of its activities, these different training activities should be placed in one category called "training."

Figure 3: Example of adding an organization's activities at the bottom of the map



This "bottom" part of the map where we place the organization's activities is called the *Sphere of Control* because it represents activities that are "under the control" of the organization. On its website, CECIP says that they:

- Produce audiovisual and printed materials
- Design public campaigns
- Offer training to social workers and young people
- Operate in the management of educational and cultural spaces
- Build community partnerships
- Invest in child participation

- Promote conflict resolution at school.

For purposes of illustration, these are summarized in **Figure 3** as follows: produce materials, conduct campaigns, train social workers and students, and establish partnerships. The actual groupings of activities needs to be developed collaboratively and in dialogue between members of the organization, participating communities, and other stakeholders.

Step 3: Identifying Partners (Filling in the Middle)

No single organization, by itself, can accomplish the high social goals it aims to achieve. For example, if the goal is to "make schools peaceful environments where students learn," a nonprofit organization does not have the authority to go into a school and dictate changes, nor does it have the resources to go into every school. Rather, this organization will likely work with some schools to introduce new programs and practices that promote the goal of making them more peaceful environments, and then may publish about what works, and try to influence other nonprofits and schools to establish the types of programs that work best. Therefore, "schools" are a key partner for the nonprofit; the nonprofit aims to *influence schools* and achieve intermediate outcomes (that will, in turn, lead to the long-term goal of schools being peaceful environments).

Social sector organizations know this instinctively, and are skilled at brokering partnerships and building coalitions. What is now important to recognize is that these "partners" also represent "targets of change." Because the nonprofit organization does not directly control the changes it is trying to create in these partners, we consider these partners to be in the nonprofit's *Sphere of Influence*.

Clarifying this level of the map—the partners that the nonprofit is trying to influence—is very important because it is really at this level that evaluation can provide useful feedback about the organization's performance and effectiveness. These partners are in an organization's path toward achieving its ultimate, larger outcomes and, as such, the organization needs to be clear about the changes it aims to achieve in each of them.

Figure 4: Placing partners on the map

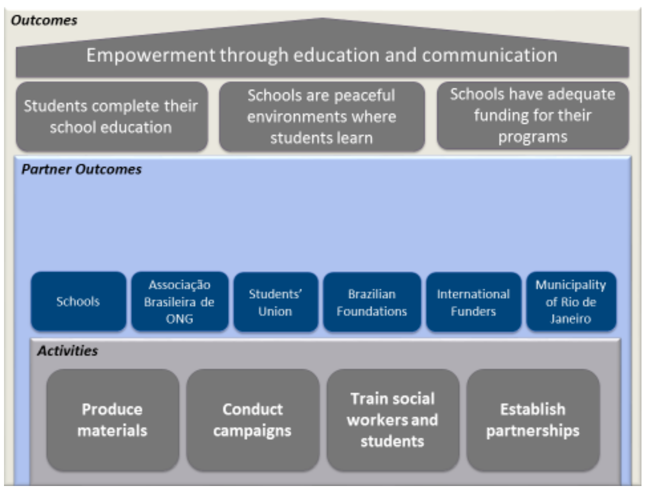


Figure 4 presents the Boundary Partners of CECIP, our example organization as we practice the developing an outcome map. For CECIP, and its goals around empowerment through education and communication, we have identified six boundary partners: schools, the Brazilian Nonprofit Association, student unions, Brazilian foundations, international funders, and the Municipality of Rio de Janeiro.

Step 4: Identifying Partner-level Outcomes (the Ignored Middle)

For each partner, we now need to agree on the specific outcomes we are targeting. Here we are focusing on the actions or behaviors we want our partners to take to achieve the high-level outcomes. And we have to be strategic about it. Let's take "schools" for example. CECIP might like to see many changes take place in schools, such as:

- Every school hires a mediation advisor
- Every school ensures it is freshly painted and has green spaces
- Every school offers mediation and student empowerment programs.

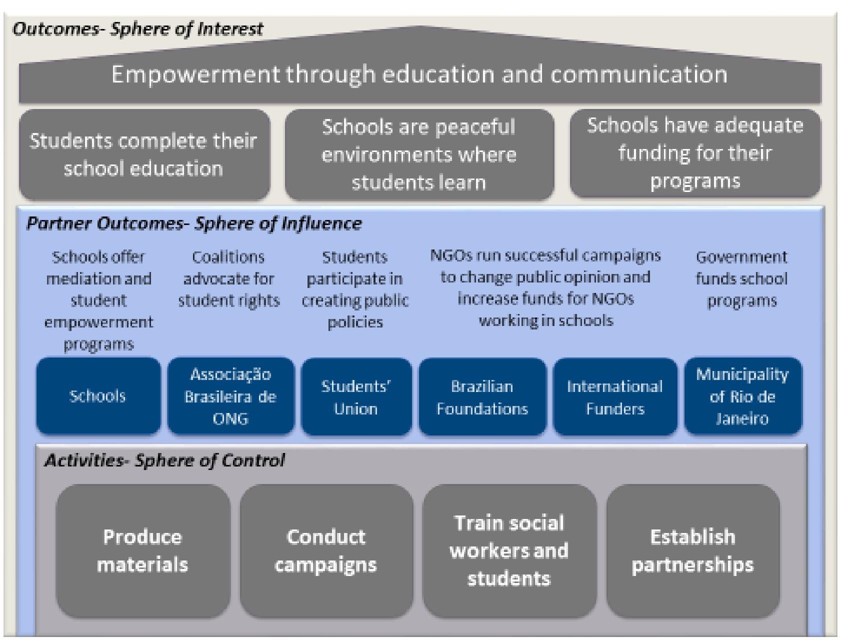
CECIP, however, must be realistic and practical, and ask itself:

> *What changes in schools will make the most difference to our goals? What can we realistically convince schools to do? What can schools sustain even if CECIP does not have funding for every school every year?*

After considering these questions, CECIP may conclude that, even though it would be great to advocate for a mediation advisor, the funds are insufficient to do so, and there might be legal complications with who would hire and supervise the mediation advisor, etc. CECIP might further conclude that, even though a freshly painted school would be good, it might be futile given the culture of graffiti that exists in many schools. Consequently, CECIP might decide that promoting mediation and student empowerment programs is the critical change that would influence schools to be more stable and peaceful environments, and CECIP can help provide these training programs periodically. That is a realistic and desirable outcome. The changes do not need to be limited to a single one, but each action/behavior should be feasible.

Continuing this line of questioning for every partner listed, the completed map is seen in **Figure 5**.

Figure 5: Complete map of outcome levels for CECIP



Step 5: Setting Priorities (The Five Tests)

Before finalizing the map of outcomes, whether it is being used for evaluation or planning or both, there is one important concluding step—testing. In testing, we consider five issues: **desirability, realism, ease, strategy, and capacity**. This is not an evaluation test, but a "common sense" test, because evaluation (and planning) must fit local realities, and the "experts" on "local realities" are the implementers, communities, and other key stakeholders who interact with the program every day.

The five questions are designed to test assumptions. All theories of change are built on assumptions, which need to be articulated, understood, and tested. This testing benefits the organization by ensuring that plans are well targeted and well laid out, and at the same time, position the organization for more realistic and useful investments in evaluation that will help inform its good work.

In evaluation, using these five questions with stakeholders helps uncover values and issues early on. For example, some aspects of a program might be easy to achieve and some might be more difficult (and the evaluation would then explore the enablers and obstacles to the program to better understand these); or the capacity test will uncover areas of preparedness and gaps; and so forth. By answering these questions in relation to the outcomes map, early warning indicators can be revealed to an evaluator and program implementers and funders.

Desirability

Sometimes, we get carried away with filling out our map of outcomes, and we make up outcomes that we really do not want. To weed those out, we need to ask:

> *If we were successful in achieving all these outcomes, would we want this new reality?*

For example, let's imagine that one of our colleagues said, "We want every school to involve every member of the student body in all decisions." If we were successful in making this outcome a reality, schools would never make decisions because it would take too long. Furthermore, students would be involved in decisions where they have no interest or expertise. Therefore, if we rethink this outcome, we may decide that it is actually not something we want to do and we need to rewrite it.

Having an outcome we really do not want to achieve on the map risks wasting resources and moving in the wrong direction. Checking on desirability is a way to pause and check with each other to make sure we mean what we said. It may also reveal a forgotten stakeholder who might be worse off by the new reality.

Realism

The second test of realism offers a chance to think about how ambitious we have been. We ask:

> *How likely are we to achieve the outcome we are targeting?*

If we were betting on our chances to achieve this outcome, what are the chances we will succeed? And would we take the bet?

For example, one of our colleagues might have said, "We want the municipality to give 50 percent of its education budget to peace-building training programs." Upon reflection, we would conclude that this is not realistic because there are many other priorities for the municipality.

Unrealistic outcomes are demoralizing for the organization because they typically cannot be achieved. They also result in disappointing evaluation findings. Checking on realism is a way to pause and make sure our outcomes attainable.

Ease

The third test focuses our attention on the relative effort required to achieve each of our outcomes. We ask:

> *How hard is it to achieve each of these outcomes?*

We want to have a balance of outcomes that are relatively easy to achieve—they are low-hanging fruit we can harvest without much effort—and some that require more investment.

Not having some easy targets or not having some ambitious targets can be disappointing to staff. We want to have some early and easy successes, and also work toward a few more ambitious goals.

For easy targets, an evaluator might ask: *Is the program cost-effective? Are there lower investment ways to get these outcomes?* For more difficult targets, an evaluator might ask: *Are there resources or key partners missing from program implementation that would make the achievement of these outcomes easier?*

Strategy

The fourth test addresses the importance of each outcome for moving us along the path of the larger outcome. We ask:

> *If our organization had to pick three things to work toward in the next year, what would they be? Which of the outcomes listed move us closer to our goal? Which move us faster?*

These questions give an opportunity to reflect on our assumptions. We assume that doing the things reflected in our map will move us closer to the larger desired outcomes; yet this may not be so. If we fail to answer this question, we risk working on things that may not be the most important, and may be less likely than other options to help us and society achieve our overall goals. The strategy test helps us focus on making the biggest difference toward our goals.

In evaluation, the strategy test helps us focus evaluation questions and resources on those that most benefit the key strategies, and are likely to be the most useful for an organization's success.

Capacity

The fifth test is about our own ability to carry out activities that will lead to our desired outcomes. We ask:

> *Do we have the capabilities to undertake this work? Whom else might we work with to achieve our desire?*

This question will force the organization to prioritize what is most important and set priorities based on its value added to the overall goals. This question also asks organizations to think strategically about their coalitions and the value added of other coalition members. If we fail the capacity test, we need to reconsider the scope of our effort. The capacity test will ensure that we have funds and volunteers to implement our plan.

Answers to this question provide an evaluator with early warning about capacity issues and indication about possible missing partners.

A Note About the Process

Going through the above guidance and the CECIP example may have made this process sound like a paper exercise. Well, it is not. If you do it as a paper exercise, you will likely clarify your own thinking, but will probably make up stories about what is really going on. *Whom* you engage in this process and *how* you engage them is critical. This organizational or programmatic outcome map will be the most useful if it is a result of facilitated, interactive, and collaborative deliberations and conversations. We recommend engaging a wide number of individuals and stakeholders: staff, communities, partners, funders, and advisors. Developing this plan is a benefit in itself because it gets the whole organization thinking strategically, creatively, and evaluatively.

We encourage nonprofit organizations to develop inclusive, interactive, and collaborative processes, and to be creative in how they engage people to come up with their outcome map. We further encourage those commissioning evaluations to require multi-stakeholder engagement at every phase of the evaluation. Being serious about engagement in participatory approaches means thinking about how to ensure access to every type of stakeholder. For example, when working with illiterate groups, you can use images to symbolize each core outcome and make this a map of images. Ultimately, the outcome map needs to reflect the organization’s culture and brand. Looking at the outcome map, an organization should feel excited and be proud to share it.

Developing an Evaluation Plan

By now, you must feel inspired and excited to have this organized and strategic presentation of the organization's work. You can use this mapping of outcomes in many ways, such as to:

- Make plans and decisions on strategies and directions
- Include in outreach materials to convey the vision and passion of the organization
- Prioritize and deepen partnerships to achieve goals
- Match staffing and competencies to tasks in ways that move the organization closer to the targeted outcomes
- Assess the organization's performance and impact in moving closer to outcomes at different levels.

This section lays out how the mapping of outcomes can help you use monitoring and evaluation to track your own progress, learn from your experiences, communicate your story, and improve strategies and programs as you work to realize the outcomes you are targeting.

Considering the Value of Evaluation

Investing in monitoring and evaluation makes sense only if it is useful. As the father of Total Quality Management, Dr. W. Edwards Deming,[8] tells us that collecting data and analyzing them to answer questions is expensive. We only want to monitor and evaluate if we know what we are going to do with the results. Therefore, do not place anything on the monitoring and evaluation plan because "it would be nice to know;" only include questions for which you plan to use the answers.

What are appropriate uses of monitoring and evaluation? Michael Quinn Patton talks about several possible uses of evaluation:[9]

- Make decisions and improve programs and strategies (*instrumental use*)
- Learn or inform plans, strategies, and designs (*conceptual use*)
- Inform the public, and contribute to public knowledge and awareness (*reflective use*)
- Promote accountability, expand or close down a program (*persuasive use*)
- Empower participation, understand stakeholder perspectives, promote organizational capacity development, and catalyze organizational change (*process use*)
- Comply with an evaluation requirement and show support for a project (*symbolic use*).

Thinking about use and assessing the value of evaluation is the most important criterion in developing your evaluation plan.

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[8] Orsini, J.N. 2013. *The Essential Deming: Leadership Principles from the Father of Quality*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill
[9] Patton, M.Q. 2008. *Utilization-Focused Evaluation, 4th Edition*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, pp. 112-113

Monitoring and Evaluation at Different Levels of the Map of Outcomes

Organizations may say that they cannot invest time and resources in evaluation because they are too busy implementing programs. Yet, what if what they are doing is having little or no impact? What if some of their programs are making a significant difference in the lives of communities, while others are not? Why would anyone want to continue doing something ineffective, especially if a significant part of the organization's budget and volunteer time is invested in it? We would venture to say that every organization should consider it essential to know what part of its work is effective in serving its beneficiaries, and what part of its work is not. If it knew what worked and what did not, that organization would use it immediately to modify its actions.

This section lays out essential uses of monitoring and evaluation in the nonprofit sector and in public social programs, based on a mapping of outcomes. **Figure 6** presents the essential uses of monitoring and evaluation for social sector organizations.

Figure 6: Essential uses of monitoring and evaluation in the social sector

Level	Monitoring and Evaluation Types	Use	Frequency
Activities (sphere of control)	Participant feedback monitoring, e.g., through exit surveys or periodic observation, or other methods Quality assessment of core services Performance assessment of service delivery	The good things organizations are doing need to be done well—monitoring and evaluation helps organizations ensure good performance and intervene in a timely way to correct problems and improve quality.	Regularly through monitoring systems Annually for each core service
Partner outcomes (sphere of influence)	Customer/stakeholder feedback assessments—e.g., through surveys, individual interviews, or group meetings to assess the performance and reputation of the organization Evaluation to assess organizational or individual-level outcomes, and explore causal links between the interventions of the organization and these results	Evaluation at this level can be very beneficial for an organization or program. Evaluation results are used to improve services and programs. The process of evaluation is used to promote learning across different levels of the organization, strengthen ties with key partners, and engage in advocacy.	Annually
High-level outcomes (sphere of interest)	Typically large scale, impact evaluation Usually at "portfolio level" or a regional or national level Usually undertaken by the government or larger research universities and institutes Also at "beneficiary level," for example in the school system—reviewing what is actually happening at the schools served	Individual funders and implementers can benefit from participating in these larger evaluations to help add to the evidence in their areas. The private social sector should use these evaluations to align organizational and programmatic strategies to include the latest research findings on what works in social programs.	Organizations generally do not undertake these alone

Social sector organizations should focus on three levels of outcomes for evaluation: (1) partner level outcomes, (2) quality of activities, and (3) program level. Evaluating partner-level outcomes offers a chance to influence and strengthen key partnerships and to target advocacy, while activity-level evaluation offers an opportunity to enhance quality and keep engaging in activities that are making a difference. Evaluation of partner-level outcomes benefits social sector organizations because it can enhance advocacy strategies, and clarify their role and brand among partners. Program-level outcomes helps organizations assess whether they are making a difference for those they intend to serve, and whether they are achieving the key outcomes. Results from evaluation of program-level outcomes can inform the overall strategy of an organization or program, and also be used in an organization's public education or advocacy materials to communicate the story of what it looks like to be successful in serving people through the program.

Conclusion

Nonprofit organizations funding and delivering social programs are doing important work toward broad social goals, and as such, they can only achieve those board goals by influencing other organizations and social systems. Evaluation is an essential strategy for the public and nonprofit sector because it enables organizations to clarify their thinking, learn from their experience, and use data to work more effectively. By using an Outcome Mapping Frame, social sector organizations can engage in dialogue with staff and stakeholders to identify outcomes that stem from their mission and vision statements (in the *sphere of interest*), outcomes at the level of partners (*sphere of influence*), and outcomes related to the effectiveness and quality of activities and services they may be providing (*sphere of control*). In developing this map of outcomes, social sector organizations reveal their beliefs and assumptions about the way they intend to bring about the social changes they desire (*theory of change*).

Monitoring and evaluation requires investments of funding and people's time. Thus, it is important to undertake it where it will add value. Once organizations are clear about the outcomes they aim to achieve, they are ready to consider what they want to learn from monitoring and evaluation, and how they plan to use findings and recommendations. Three areas social program funders and implementers should target in their evaluations are: partner-level outcomes; effectiveness and quality of core activities and services; and program outcomes.