

Developing a Theory of Change: Documentation Templates

As you advance through each step of creating a theory of change, you can use these templates to document the following:

- **UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS**, whether they relate to a single component, several components or the theory of change as a whole.
- **THEORY OF CHANGE COMPONENTS** (strategies, activities, outcomes and goals). Documenting your work allows you to see all the components in one place and explore how they relate to each other. This components template is organized with the strategies at the top, followed by outcomes and goals to read as a logical sequence: *We take these **actions** in hopes of making these **outcomes** possible to help reach our **goal**.*

There are many ways to document your work; these templates are optional and not meant to imply a specific format is best. For the theory of change components, you may choose to flip the order so that the goal is at the top, since starting with a shared goal can help build alignment with a broad set of stakeholders. The templates for documenting assumptions are designed to be more open ended than prescriptive.



These templates are a companion to **PART 2** of *Developing a Theory of Change*, which offers a four-step approach to developing a theory of change. The templates for Step 4 also include references to page numbers in the guide.

Taking the time to document your work will enable your group to create an effective visual theory of change product. The section “Communicating Your Work” in the guide offers tips, considerations, diagrams and examples to help with this process.

Notes about overarching assumptions that relate to the theory of change as a whole

Use this space to document any key assumptions or beliefs that cut across multiple components of your theory of change. See discussion questions on page 28 of Part 2 of the guide.

NOTES

ASSUMPTIONS OR BELIEFS

Notes about key audiences, external context and conditions in which our work takes place

See discussion questions on page 31 of the guide.

NOTES	
Audiences: Who are the main audiences of this theory of change? Who do we want to be sure reads it, uses it or interacts with it in some way?	
Current external context, conditions or forces affecting our work	
Future changes to external context, conditions or forces that would be helpful or ideal for our work	
Future changes to external context, forces or conditions that would be a barrier to our work	

Template for documenting components of your theory of change

This template provides space for documenting up to four strategies. There is no requirement to have four. If your group has more than four strategies, continue this process in a separate document.

		STRATEGY 1	STRATEGY 2
STEP 2	STRATEGY NAME		
	ACTIVITIES		
STEP 3 (the "messy middle")	SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES (resulting from each strategy)		
	INTERIM OUTCOMES	OFTEN THE RESULT OF MORE THAN ONE STRATEGY; OUTCOME PATHWAYS MAY BEGIN TO CONVERGE ON THE WAY TO THE GOAL.	
	LONG-TERM OUTCOMES		
	GOALS		

	STRATEGY 3	STRATEGY 4
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	STRATEGY NAME	
	ACTIVITIES	
	 SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES (resulting from each strategy)	
	 INTERIM OUTCOMES	OFTEN THE RESULT OF MORE THAN ONE STRATEGY; OUTCOME PATHWAYS MAY BEGIN TO CONVERGE ON THE WAY TO THE GOAL
	 LONG-TERM OUTCOMES	
	 GOALS	

Documenting Assumptions and Context

Step 4 in the guide offers discussion prompts to help groups:

- review and document the key assumptions they hold about their theory of change;
- identify specifics about the context in which their work takes place; and
- strengthen their understanding of what conditions must be true for their theory of change to be realized.

As you work through the discussion prompts and reach clarity and agreement, you may use the templates in this section to document key assumptions and notes about context and external conditions. Such documentation helps serve as a common reference point, and groups can return to these notes and update them as they continue to refine their theory of change. It may also help groups more clearly communicate about their theory of change with audiences that are less familiar with their work.

Assumptions related to goals

See discussion questions on page 29 of Part 2 of the guide.

GOALS	UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS

Assumptions related to strategies and activities

See discussion questions on page 30 of Part 2 of the guide. If your group has more than four strategies, continue this process in a separate document.

STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES	UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS
<p>STRATEGY 1: NAME OR DESCRIPTION</p> <p>Activities</p>	
<p>STRATEGY 2: NAME OR DESCRIPTION</p> <p>Activities</p>	
<p>STRATEGY 3: NAME OR DESCRIPTION</p> <p>Activities</p>	
<p>STRATEGY 4: NAME OR DESCRIPTION</p> <p>Activities</p>	

Assumptions related to short-term, interim and long-term outcomes (the “messy middle”)

See discussion questions on page 30 of Part 2 of the guide.

OUTCOMES	UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS
SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES	
INTERIM OUTCOMES	
LONG-TERM OUTCOMES	