

Theory of change

A roadmap to a successful NSDS

Definition

Theory of change is a rigorous yet participatory process whereby groups and stakeholders in a planning process articulate their long-term goals and identify the conditions they believe have to unfold for those goals to be met. These conditions are modelled as **desired outcomes**, arranged graphically in a **causal framework**.

What does a theory of change for the NSDS offer:

- Offers a strategy to test hypotheses and assumptions about what actions will best produce the outcomes in the NSDS
- Plans and structures the outcomes and envisioned activities along one coherent strategy
- Enables coherent monitoring and evaluation to show whether changes are taking place as forecast or not

Recommendations – How to arrive at a theory of change

Logistical details

- Organise a meeting with the most important stakeholders
- Provide sufficient material to conduct a mapping exercise [with sticky notes on wallpaper](#)

The theory of change process

- Identify the outcomes and goals of the **NSDS process** (Step 4.2)
- Describe the types of interventions **or activities** (within the scope of the NSDS) that bring about the outcomes
- Start a **backwards mapping** from the long-term goals by working out the preconditions or requirements necessary to achieve that goal
- Think about **alternative scenarios** by modelling the desired outcome to the input available (e.g. financial resources, human resources, IT capacity)
- Explain why one activity is needed to achieve certain outcomes
- Weight and choose the strategic interventions to bring about your desired change.
- Choose indicators to build the results framework and customize them to your particular context to assess the outcomes in the process of implementation (Step 5.4)
- Review your theory of change and answer three basic questions: Is your theory 1) plausible, 2) “doable” (or feasible), and 3) testable?
- Write a written narrative about the pathway you collectively decided on

Further informative links

http://www.theoryofchange.org/wp-content/uploads/toco_library/pdf/ToCBasics.pdf

<https://www.annmurraybrown.com/single-post/2019/07/03/how-to-develop-a-theory-of-change>

<https://www.theoryofchange.org/what-is-theory-of-change/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VtMRMKFmDm4>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6zRre_gB6A4

Theory of change illustration

