GOLDILOCKS RESOURCE

Theory of Change and Program Design

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Goldilocks has compiled this set of resources on the theory of change and its relationship to program design. They take readers from needs assessments and the importance of the theory of change, through practical discussions of how to develop a theory of change and identify assumptions.

These resources cover the following topics:
- importance of a theory of change
- needs assessment
- developing a theory of change
- identifying assumptions
- using a theory of change in program design and monitoring
- theory of change for donors and grantees

A solid theory of change is the foundation of strong program design and a sound monitoring and evaluation strategy. These resources go into the depth necessary to build a theory of change and link it to a CART monitoring strategy.

Title	Type	Topic	Audience	Level	What it is
Understanding 'Theory of Change' in International Development: A Review of Existing Knowledge Danielle Stein, and Craig Valters. (2012). Working Paper. TheoryofChange.org	Article	Theory of Change	Practitioners Evaluators Donors	Basic understanding of theory of change	This paper offers a comprehensive review of theories of change, from what a theory of change is to how it is used in M&E. It identifies the four main purposes of ToC—strategic planning, description, monitoring and evaluation and learning—and clarifies misconceptions and terminological confusion about theories of change. The review covers more than 200 documents from major donors, development organizations, and expert practitioners.
New Approaches to Evaluating Community Initiatives: Concepts, Methods and Contexts. Carol Weiss et al. (1995). Roundtable on Community Change, The Aspen Institute.	Book	Theory of Change	Practitioners Evaluators	Basic understanding of theory of change	This book discusses the theory of a change as a foundation for program evaluation. The author argues that theories of change serve four main purposes: to focus evaluation resources on where they are needed the most; to make assumptions explicit; to synthesize knowledge based on evidence; and to offer greater potential to influence popular opinion and policy. It also argues that theories should be supported by evidence from past studies; if overwhelming support exists for a theory, evaluating it may be less important. These ideas resonate with CART's Responsibility and Transportability principles.

Working with Assumptions in a Theory of Change Process Irene Gujit. (2013). TOC Reflections Notes 3. Theory of Change Portal.	Guide	Theory of Change	Practitioners Evaluators	Basic understanding of theory of change	This paper discusses the role of assumptions in theories of change. It covers what assumptions are, why they matter, and how to work with them—helping readers identify the most important assumptions in their theories of change and decide which should be tracked.
The Power of Theories of Change Paul Brest. (2010). *Stanford Social Innovation Review.*	Article	Theory of Change	Donors	Basic understanding of theory of change	The article highlights the role of the theory of change in the relationship between donors and grantees. It discusses differing perspectives on the value of theories of change, and makes the case that having a solid theory of change serves both donor and grantee interests.
Center for the Theory of Change	Website	Theory of Change	Donors, Practitioners Evaluators	Introductory through advanced	This website contains a wealth of resources on the theory of change, including a free software that enables users to build their own theory of change.
The Logic Model Guidebook: Better Strategies for Great Results – 2nd ed. Lisa Wyatt Knowlton, and Cynthia C. Phillips. (2013). Thousand Oaks California: Sage Publications.	Book	Program Design	Practitioners Evaluators	Basic understanding of program design	The book is a comprehensive and accessible guide to creating and using logic models in a range of contexts. The initial chapters define what a theory-of-change is and discuss its key components. Later chapters focus on applying logic models in a variety of situations. Throughout the book, authors refer to the actual logic models. The text includes visual learning guides (sample models, checklists, exercises, worksheets). Each chapter concludes with a useful list of supplemental materials and additional resources for further reading.

Design and Monitoring Framework Asian Development Bank. (2007). ADB Project Performance Management System, 2ed.	Guide	Program design	Practitioners	Basic understanding of program design	The document is a step-by step guide to developing a design and monitoring framework. The design stage covers: (i) situation analysis, including stakeholder analysis and problem analysis; and (ii) the project identification phase, which consists of objectives analysis and the analysis of alternatives. Each stage has step-by-step explanations and useful tips. To illustrate the application of the tools in practice, the guidelines use a simplified example from the transport sector. The document also offers guidance on translating the results of the design process into the design and monitoring framework.
From Needs Assessment to Action: Transforming Needs into Solution Strategies. James W. Altschuld, and Belle Ruth Witkin. (1999). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.	Book	Needs assessment / program design	Practitioners	Basic understanding of program design	This book provides a comprehensive overview of the needs assessment process, developing a three-phase model that lays out the main operational steps and management considerations of doing needs assessment. It then discusses core activities to transform the needs into solution strategies and to develop an action plan. The book covers multiple methods of needs assessments and presents several case studies that demonstrate their application.