

Small Steps, Big Impact: Practical Program Evaluation for Nonprofits

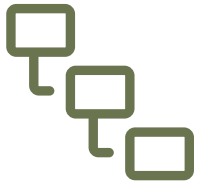
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Why bother with evaluation?



How We Will Spend Our Time Together



Program logic and evaluation



Outputs, outcomes, and
indicators



Evaluation questions, evaluation
planning, and methods

True or False



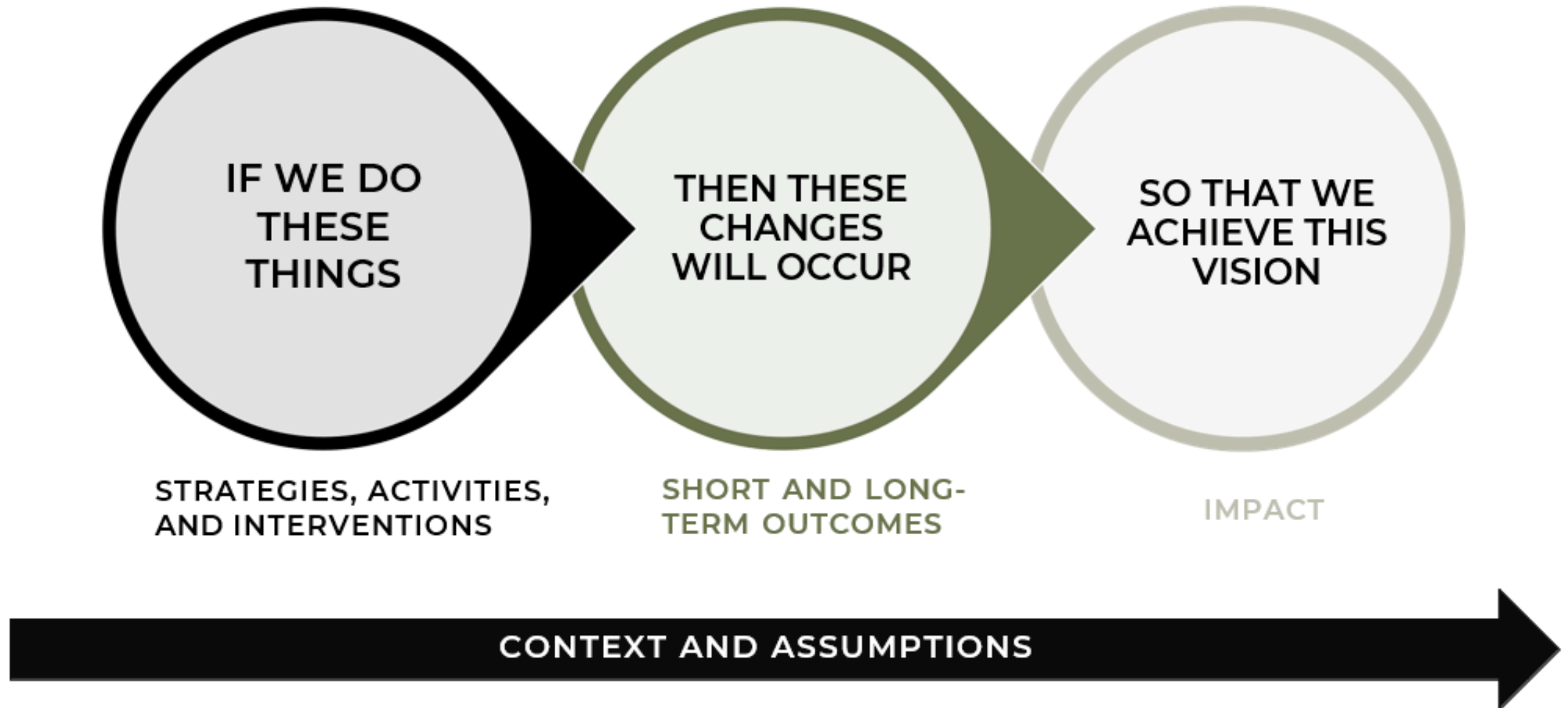
1. Only highly skilled evaluators should conduct program evaluations.

2. You have to use quantitative data to answer evaluation questions.

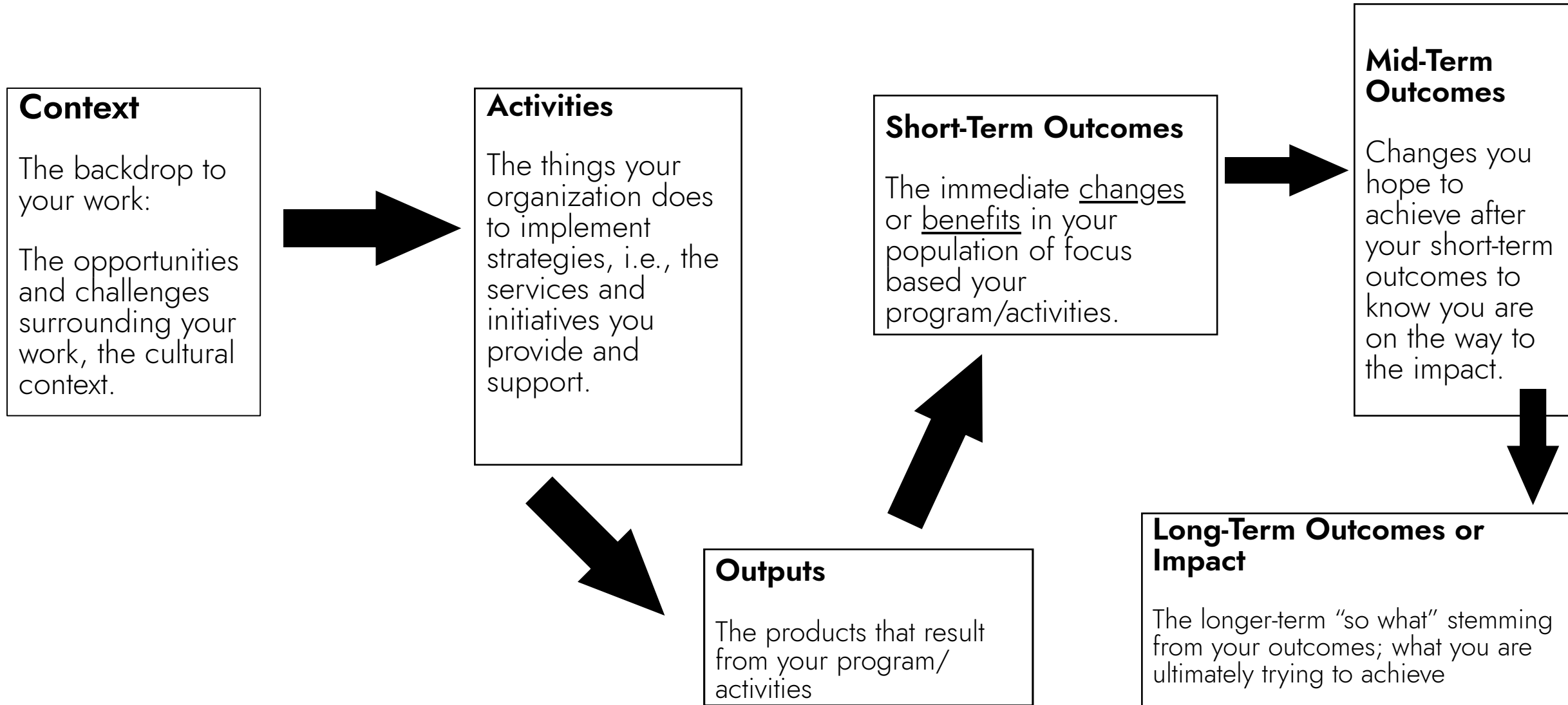
3. You need a control group or experimental design to claim you have a good program.

4. Outputs are the direct products of program activities (like number of training sessions held).

How Program Logic Flows



Program Logic in More Detail



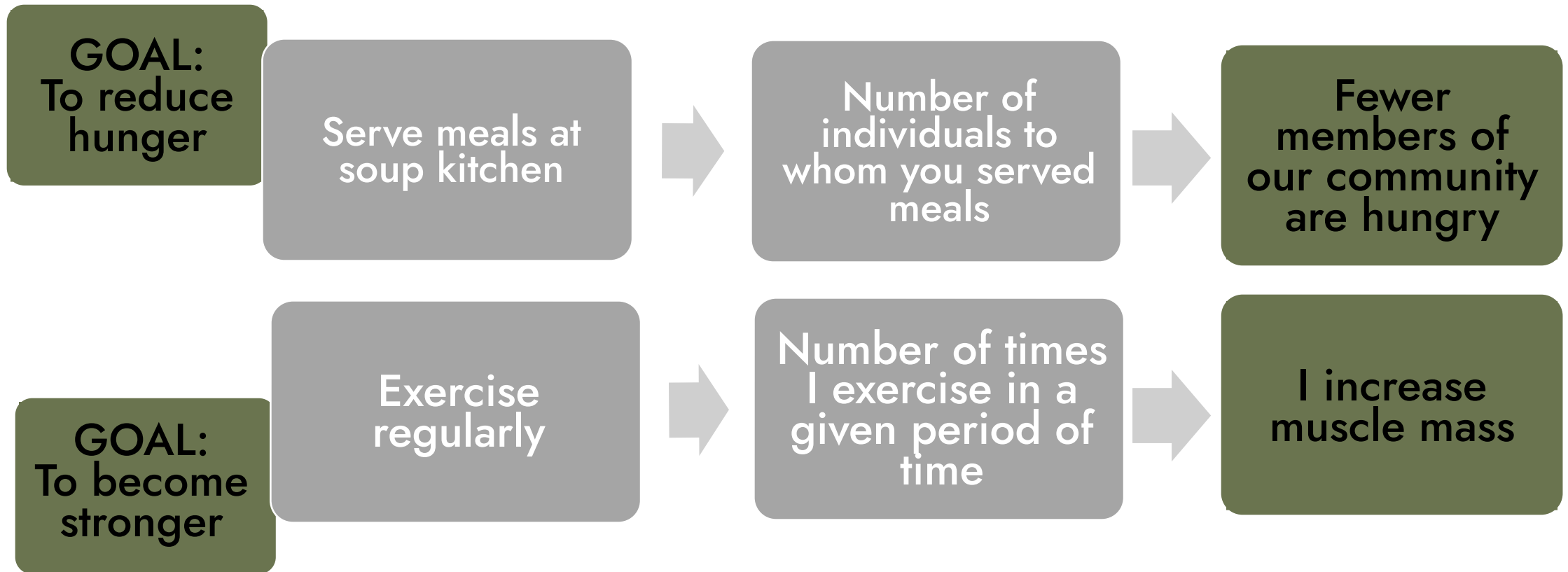
What are Outputs?

Quantifiable measures of your activities. Outputs tell the story of what you did or produced. They do NOT address the value or impact of your work but can help determine if the work is progressing as expected.



What are Outcomes?

Outcomes are changes in the world that result from your services, activities, or products. Outcomes are the benefits to your target population.



The "What" – Establishing and Writing Outcomes

Think about what you intend to change. Changes can occur in people or systems.

- **In participants:**

- Behaviors and actions
- Beliefs, feelings, and attitudes
- Situations and conditions
- Health and well-being
- Skills
- Knowledge

- **In systems:**

- Groups and networks
- Policies
- Service provision
- Culture
- Norms
- Social conditions

Outcomes should specify the group, condition, or process a group is trying to change **and** what the group hopes to change about it:

- Residents in Greater Hartford (subject) have consistent access to food (intent).

The “When” – Expecting Outcomes

- How long should it take to see results?
- What type of capacity is the organization starting with?
- What contextual factors may influence the organization’s ability to reach this outcome in the timeframe?
- Does this depend just on this organization? Does it rely on others doing their part? Does it likely come after something else happens?

	Individual outcomes	Policy and systems change outcomes
SHORT-TERM	Within one year	Within two years
MID-TERM	One to three years	Two to five years
LONG-TERM	More than three years	More than five years

Short-term vs Intermediate vs Long-term outcomes

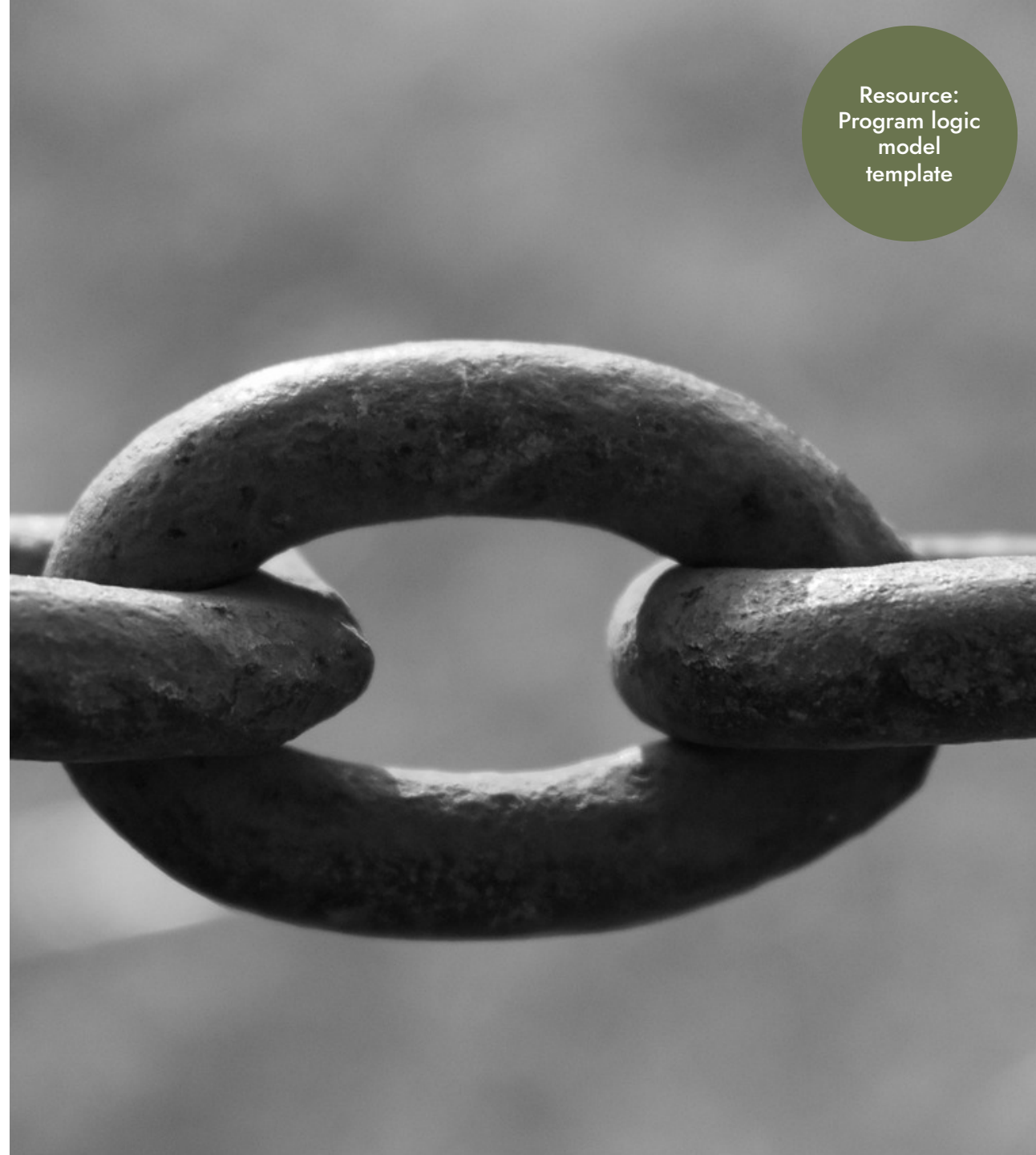
- Short term come (nearly) directly from your activities.
- Intermediate come from short-term and some additional assumptions.
- Long-term come from intermediate and even more assumptions.
- Short and intermediate outcomes are logical precursors of longer-term outcomes.

Identifying the Links

Activities and Outcomes

Think about your program(s) or offering(s).

1. Write down the key strategies or activities (what you do).
2. What output(s) result from these activities?
3. What short-term outcome(s)? When?
4. What long-term outcome(s)? When?



Indicators - The "How"

Indicators tell us how we will know we have achieved an outcome



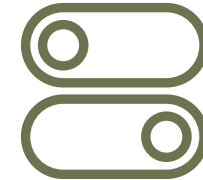
They are observable

Indicators can be seen, heard, or read



They are measurable

There is a way to assess whether they have happened (this can be qualitative!)



They reflect change

With an indicator, there is the presence of something that wasn't there before or the absence of something that was

Identifying Indicators

The "I'll Know It When I See It" Rule is a principle used for establishing indicators

Example 1: Reach of services

I'll know more immigrants are aware of the services available to them

when I see a greater number of inquiries for services at our three partner agencies serving this population

Example 2: Sustainable project

I'll know that a community revitalization project is finally sustainable

when I see it has diverse and consistent revenue streams from private and public sources

Example 3: Your own!

I'll know that this outcome has been achieved

when I see

Program evaluation is the thoughtful, systematic process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data to assess the effectiveness, efficiency, and impact of a program or intervention.

When Program Logic Meets Evaluation

Program logic utilizes evaluation to:

Inform the design of new initiatives, strategies, and directions

Help understand what is working well, for who, and why to ultimately improve practice and outcomes

Make the case to current and future supporters for sustainability and growth

Types of Program Evaluations



Monitoring

Tracking progress through regular reporting. Usually focused on activities and/or expenditures



Developmental (or formative) evaluation

Carried out while a project is underway. Often focuses on process and implementation and/or on more immediate or intermediate outcomes



Outcomes (or summative) evaluation

Assesses the overall outcomes or impact of a project or initiative after it ends

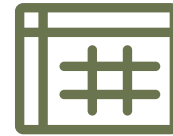
To Conduct Evaluation



Specify evaluation
question(s)



Develop an evaluation
design



Collect and analyze
data



Summarize, share, and
use findings

Developing Good Evaluation Questions

Evaluation questions focus and drive the evaluation. They should be agreed upon before engaging in the evaluation. Creating a good evaluation question is applied and not philosophical.

That's what **SMARTIE** questions let us do. Ask yourself:



Is it Specific?

Is the language clear enough that someone reading this question could identify who, what, where, and when?



Is it Relevant?

Can the answers inform some decision or action I can take?



Is it Inclusive?

Is the question framed in a way that invites perspectives and experiences from all participants?



Is it Measurable?

Am I reasonably confident that I could answer this with data?



Is it Timely?

Is the learning question related to a concrete and opportune time period? Can I use the answers when I need to make decisions?



Is it Equitable?

Does your question make room for systemic and cultural context?



Is it Attainable?

Is the question answerable with the resources I have available?

Good, Better, Best Evaluation Questions

Good: What do participants get out of our workshops?

Better: How do adult participants experience our financial literacy workshops?

Best: What concrete knowledge do adults (aged 25-55) retain from our workshops after three months?

FOR YOUR WORK

**Develop an evaluation
question of interest.**

To Conduct Evaluation



Start With What You Have

- **What do you already have that you can build from and dig deeper into?**

Attendance records

Assessment results

Emails

Anecdotes

Surveys

AND SO MANY MORE

Data Collection Methods



Record (secondary data) review

Reviewing existing internal or external documents, records, and artifacts to gather context.



Surveys

A series of structured questions, often with discrete choices



Observations

Watching participants to understand behaviors or characteristics of a setting.



Interviews

One-on-one discussions with participants to understand their experiences and perspectives.



Focus groups

Facilitated discussions with a small group of participants to uncover insights.

**All of the above methods have benefits and limitations.
Each requires time to design, test, administer, and analyze.**

To Conduct Evaluation



Ensure your measures align with your evaluation question, design, and existing/available resources.

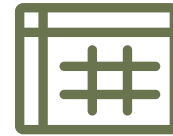
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Collect and analyze
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Summarize, share, and
use findings

1) Identify key points, 2) Use clear language, 3) Organize the information, and 4) Use visuals and stories



**"Tell me the facts, and I'll learn.
Tell me the truth, and I'll believe.
But tell me a story, and it will live
in my heart forever."**

NATIVE AMERICAN PROVERB

True or False



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2. You have to use quantitative data to answer evaluation questions.

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Next Steps

Where do you go from here?

Reflect on what we covered regarding program logic and evaluation. Answer these questions:

1. What do you want your organization to have accomplished **one year from now** regarding evaluation?
2. What will be different **in six months** to show you're on pace to achieve that goal?
3. What will you do **in the next four weeks** to move this forward?





Thank you!

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