MARC

MOBILIZING ACTION
FOR RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

Do-It-Yourself Strategies for Network Reflection and Evaluation

OVERVIEW

Networks addressing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), trauma, and resilience can benefit from self-reflection and evaluation. The ever-changing nature and distributed work of networks requires continual feedback on who their members are, how they are engaged with one another, what work is ongoing, and the impact of that work. The Mobilizing Action for Resilient Communities (MARC) Initiative comprised 14 established ACEs, trauma, and resilience (ATR) networks dedicated to building stronger and more equitable communities. From the MARC evaluation experiences, several do-it-yourself tools for strengthening networks were developed.

Tools to help networks reflect on progress include:

- logic models and evaluability assessment to help assess the extent to which the network has agreed-upon goals and is positioned to achieve them;
- network analysis to take a close look at the network's composition and how the organizations and individuals within it are collaborating; and
- outcome harvesting to take stock of what the network has accomplished.

This toolkit offers strategies that network members can use to help evaluate their efforts. For each tool, we provide a definition and description, guidance on how to use it, and recommended participants. We offer a few key tips from the MARC Initiative and resources to further guide the work.
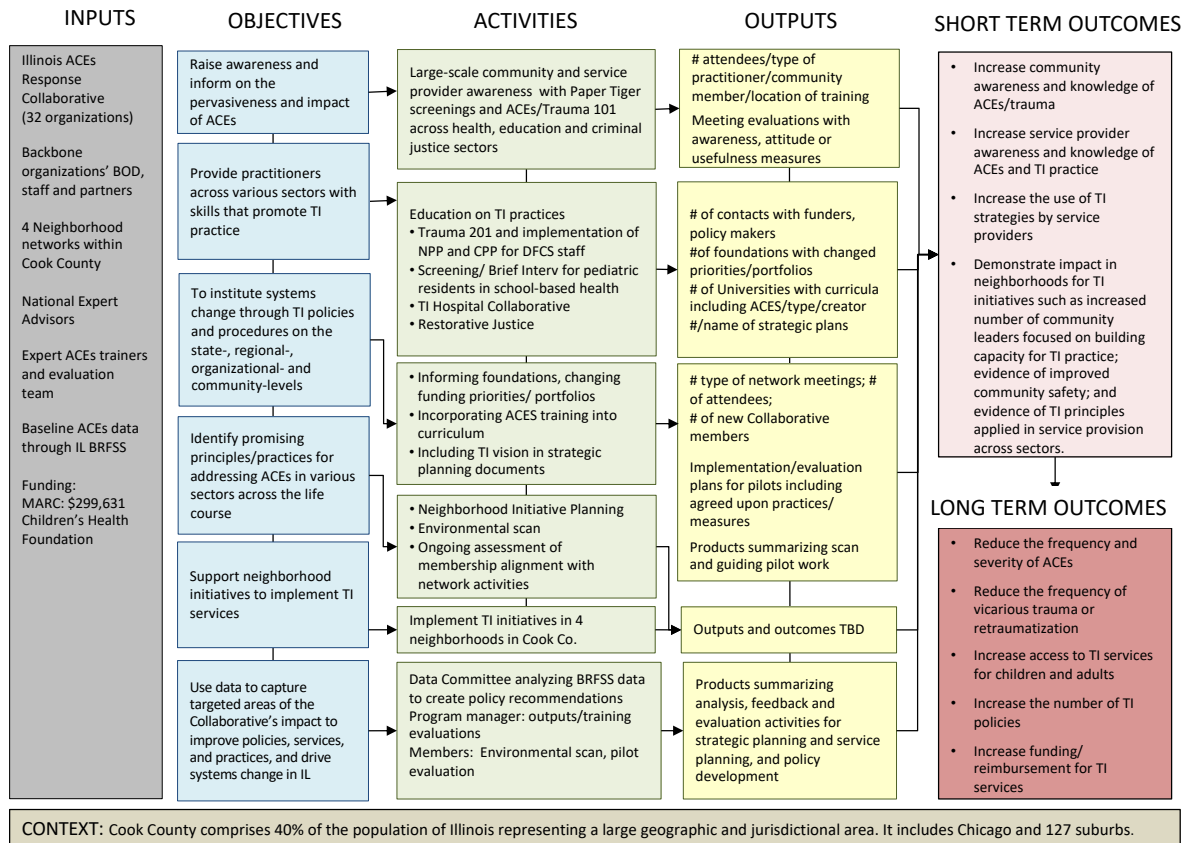
Logic Models and Evaluability Assessment

What: A logic model provides a visual blueprint for a network (see Exhibit 1). It depicts the resources or "inputs" that a network has, the overall goals and objectives that drive the network, the portfolio of strategies or activities being conducted, and the desired short-term and longer-term outcomes. Logic models can be useful in and of themselves in describing a network and detailing how the various activities and other components link to accomplishments and desired outcomes. Evaluability assessment is a methodology that uses a logic model to assess whether the network's activities, as implemented, are on course for achieving the desired outcomes. Each MARC community, together with the evaluators, developed or refined a logic model to reflect the network's work and engaged in an evaluability assessment.

Why: Logic models portray the underlying "logic" of a network, displaying and connecting a network's resources, goals, activities, and outcomes. Because the efforts of networks can be organic and not prescribed, logic models can include feedback loops and other elements to display the iterative, nonlinear nature of the work. A logic model also offers a tool for coalescing members' perspectives on the general focus and direction of the network, the types of activities they believe fall within its scope, and what they believe the network can accomplish and impact. Evaluability assessment uses the logic model as an analytic tool to determine whether the work of the network aligns with the model and whether the outcomes are plausible to achieve given the work underway. The assessment is typically conducted to determine if an outcome evaluation of the network can produce results that would be credible, reliable, and useful.

Exhibit 1. Sample Network Logic Model

Illinois, 7/7/16

GOAL: *The Illinois ACEs Response Collaborative seeks to build capacity to foster a movement around ACEs and resilience in Cook County.*

INPUTS	OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	SHORT TERM OUTCOMES
Illinois ACEs Response Collaborative (32 organizations) Backbone organizations' BOD, staff and partners 4 Neighborhood networks within Cook County National Expert Advisors Expert ACEs trainers and evaluation team Baseline ACEs data through IL BRFSS Funding: MARC: $299,631 Children's Health Foundation	Raise awareness and inform on the pervasiveness and impact of ACEs Provide practitioners across various sectors with skills that promote TI practice To institute systems change through TI policies and procedures on the state-, regional-, organizational- and community-levels Identify promising principles/practices for addressing ACEs in various sectors across the life course Support neighborhood initiatives to implement TI services Use data to capture targeted areas of the Collaborative's impact to improve policies, services, and practices, and drive systems change in IL	Large-scale community and service provider awareness with Paper Tiger screenings and ACEs/Trauma 101 across health, education and criminal justice sectors Education on TI practices • Trauma 201 and implementation of NPP and CPP for DFCS staff • Screening/ Brief Interv for pediatric residents in school-based health • TI Hospital Collaborative • Restorative Justice • Informing foundations, changing funding priorities/ portfolios • Incorporating ACES training into curriculum • Including TI vision in strategic planning documents • Neighborhood Initiative Planning • Environmental scan • Ongoing assessment of membership alignment with network activities Implement TI initiatives in 4 neighborhoods in Cook Co. Data Committee analyzing BRFSS data to create policy recommendations Program manager: outputs/training evaluations Members: Environmental scan, pilot evaluation	# attendees/type of practitioner/community member/location of training Meeting evaluations with awareness, attitude or usefulness measures # of contacts with funders, policy makers #of foundations with changed priorities/portfolios # of Universities with curricula including ACEs/type/creator #/name of strategic plans # type of network meetings; # of attendees; # of new Collaborative members Implementation/evaluation plans for pilots including agreed upon practices/ measures Products summarizing scan and guiding pilot work Outputs and outcomes TBD Products summarizing analysis, feedback and evaluation activities for strategic planning and service planning, and policy development	• Increase community awareness and knowledge of ACEs/trauma • Increase service provider awareness and knowledge of ACEs and TI practice • Increase the use of TI strategies by service providers • Demonstrate impact in neighborhoods for TI initiatives such as increased number of community leaders focused on building capacity for TI practice; evidence of improved community safety; and evidence of TI principles applied in service provision across sectors.

LONG TERM OUTCOMES

- Reduce the frequency and severity of ACEs
- Reduce the frequency of vicarious trauma or retraumatization
- Increase access to TI services for children and adults
- Increase the number of TI policies
- Increase funding/ reimbursement for TI services

CONTEXT: Cook County comprises 40% of the population of Illinois representing a large geographic and jurisdictional area. It includes Chicago and 127 suburbs.

When: Logic models are best developed at the outset of a network to help it determine the goals members have for its work, the types of activities it could engage in, and the changes it hopes to contribute to or create. They can, however, be developed at any stage of a network to provide a visual understanding of the underlying logic of the network. Similarly, though evaluability assessment may be best conducted once a network is underway in conducting activities, the process can be useful at any time in a network's life course. It may be especially helpful to engage in an evaluability assessment when a network is pivoting in its work or when changes in the membership or the context are occurring and affecting the network's work and what it can accomplish.

Who: Developing logic models and conducting evaluability assessments are activities that benefit from engaging as many key members of the network as possible. The process of logic model development, for example, could be facilitated by an individual member, a small group or committee of members, or an outside consultant with broad-based support and input from the network.

How: Logic models can be developed in a variety of ways. A small group can do the initial work and prepare it for review by the entire network or the initial work can be done by the entire network, refined by a small group, and then reviewed, revised and validated by the entire network. The initial work involves first developing lists of the network's resources, goals and objectives, key strategies and sets of activities, and outputs and outcomes expected from specific activities as well as those expected from the cluster of activities. These lists are often developed through a review of documents.

Once the lists are completed, the network determines how these different elements link together. Using an "if then" logic (i.e., if we do this activity in this way, then we expect this output, which should lead to this outcome or outcomes) can facilitate drawing connections among the different elements. Drawing the models can be a dynamic process and may be best done initially by a small group, which then checks in with the larger network. Using the listing of items, the group can build the logic model either using post-it notes with each item written on a note to have flexibility in positioning the different elements, or drawing on white-boards visible to all. The process can take several hours and may be best completed in stages, depending on the complexity of the network, differences in what members believe are the goals and objectives, the different ways in which the activities can lead to outcomes, and so forth. In some situations, a facilitator can be brought in to provide all members in the group an opportunity to participate. A variety of software packages are available for developing models, from using basic Microsoft Word or PowerPoint to more specialized tools (https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/evaluation-options/TOC_software).

Once the logic model is developed, it can guide the development of data collection and analysis protocols for the evaluability assessment. Data are collected from a broad array of network members and other key stakeholders to assess how they perceive the goals of the network, the objectives and implementation of specific activities, and the outcomes they expect to be accomplished from specific activities and by the network as a whole.

The analysis is guided by the questions outlined in the box below. The main focus of the analysis is to determine if the network's activities and strategies, as implemented, can achieve the desired outcomes. The assessment focuses on whether the work underway aligns sufficiently with expectations and, if not, how the activities need to be changed or enhanced, or how outcomes need to be adjusted to be more aligned with the activities in place.

Although an evaluability assessment is often conducted by an outside organization, network members can also conduct it. It is likely best for a small committee to conduct the assessment and then have it reviewed by the larger network. The evaluability assessment process and its results can help the network review and revise its work to be most effective.

Analyzing the Logic Model

Are the goals clearly specified and agreed upon?

Are the network resources (e.g., funding, staffing, partnerships) sufficient to implement the activities as intended?

Are activities implemented in a way that aligns with the types of outcomes that are desired (e.g., are they reaching enough people? Are they reaching enough of the intended audience? Are they involving the expected participants and organizations?)

Are the outcomes specific enough to be measurable and meaningful?

Are the linkages between the activities and outcomes plausible given the level of implementation, resources, and context?

Key tips:

- Logic models can be developed at different levels of detail, from groups of activities within the network to each organization's specific activities. If the network is large and complex, the model developers might consider trying to develop a high-level picture of the network first and then develop more detailed models of strategies or sets of activities if desired.

- Developing, reviewing, and revising the logic models in iterative sprints can be useful in providing manageable sets of activities and time for reflection, rather than trying to produce the "perfect" model in one cycle of development.

- Logic models and evaluability assessment also are best done when the views of all network members are considered. This diversity of views may make it more difficult to reconcile differences and reach a consensus, but will ultimately result in a more representative and accurate depiction of the network.

Additional resources:

Logic Models

https://www.slideshare.net/InnoNet_Eval/doityourself-logic- models
https://www.innonet.org/media/logic_model_workbook_0.pdf

McLaughlin, J. A. & Jordan, G. B. (2010). Using logic models. In Wholey, J. S., Hatry, H. P., & Newcomer, K. E. (Eds.), Handbook of practical program evaluation. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Evaluability Assessment

https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/themes/evaluability_assessment

DFID (2013). Planning Evaluability Assessments: A Synthesis of the Literature with Recommendations. Working Paper 40.

Template for a MARC ACEs, Trauma, and Resilience Network Evaluability Assessment Report

Westat Evaluation reports: Mobilizing Action for Resilient Communities (MARC) Initiative

Social Network Analysis

What: Social network analysis (SNA) is a technique to examine the relationships between members participating in a network. It can measure both the quality and types of relationships members have with one another. Although the formal SNA method can be highly technical and require the expertise of a researcher trained in analyzing social network data, a less technical approach can be used by networks themselves to understand the extent to which network members relate to one another.

Why: SNA helps a network examine which members work with whom in a network and the extent to which they connect with one another, especially across sectors. This information can help a network understand where more work is needed in facilitating linkages among network members, which members are at the hub of interactions among members, and which members need to be integrated more into the network.

When: SNA can be conducted at any point the network wants to have an understanding of the relationships among members. It also can be done at multiple points in time to observe changes in the network over time, either in response to specific efforts or to look at evolution in the network. In MARC, we conducted two SNAs with each community to show both the level of collaboration at two given time points as well as the change in collaboration over time.

Exhibit 2: Example of a network map showing different levels of collaboration

Who: All organizations that participate in a network should be involved in the analysis. The analysis could be conducted by the "backbone organization"[1] or a small committee of network members.

How: The formal SNA method involves conducting a survey of all network members and having members rate their or their organizations' relationships with all other organizations/members in the network. The rating could be the extent of collaboration overall or could be about specific types of collaboration (e.g., working together on activities; sharing staff, etc.). The data are then analyzed with specific software, producing "pictures" of the networks (see Exhibit 2) as well as metrics on the average number of unique connections among members and network density (the number of connections among members relative to the total number possible in the network), among others. These type of measures tell us something about the connectivity among members.

Formal SNA requires the assistance of a professional researcher. However, networks can engage in other methods to understand the interconnectivity, communication, and relationships among members. For example, during a meeting or retreat for the network, an individual network member or subcommittee can facilitate a process in which members examine the extent to which networking is occurring. One way could be to have an interactive session in which each organization is represented on a wall with a different colored circle (see Exhibit 3). A representative from each organization then draws a line from their circle to each other organization's circle with which they have worked together or exchanged information. Those running the exercise would pose a specific collaboration question that can be answered. For example, it may be that the network is most interested in learning about any contacts that have occurred within the last week or contacts that involve joint work (as opposed to solely information exchange).

[1] Butterfoss, F. (2007) Coalitions and Partnerships in Community Health, San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Or, it may be that the network is interested in examining how frequently members work with one another. If there are concerns of highlighting individual members that might have little involvement with others or those that may be highly involved with many others, members could be grouped by sector so the process is examining interactions between sectors. Alternatively, the question of collaboration could be focused on high levels of collaboration that would highlight key subsets of members, with no risk of leaving out only one or two members.

Virtual meetings might also provide an opportunity to conduct an interactive network analysis in an anonymous and real-time manner. On the Zoom virtual platform, for example, stamps (e.g., a star, a checkmark, etc.) are available in the annotation tool and can be used by participants to endorse something on the screen. As depicted below, a meeting facilitator could show slides with several members on the screen at a time and ask participants to place a stamp on those with whom they collaborate or collaborate a great deal or some other version of a collaboration question. Participants within each sector might be asked to use the same stamp (such as the star for education, the checkmark for mental health, and so forth) so that the visual display would show not only the extent of collaboration but the sectors with whom they collaborate (See Exhibit 4.) Putting up a few members at a time might also minimize the opportunity of a member standing out as having few or no collaborations. Although the exercise itself will provide a sense of the nature of the interactions, the data from the process can be analyzed and summarized more completely after the meeting.

Exhibit 3: Example of a social network analysis developed through a group process

Photo credit: Elevate Montana Helena Affiliate

Exhibit 4: Example of a version of social networks produced in Zoom meeting

Which members do you collaborate with once a month or more?
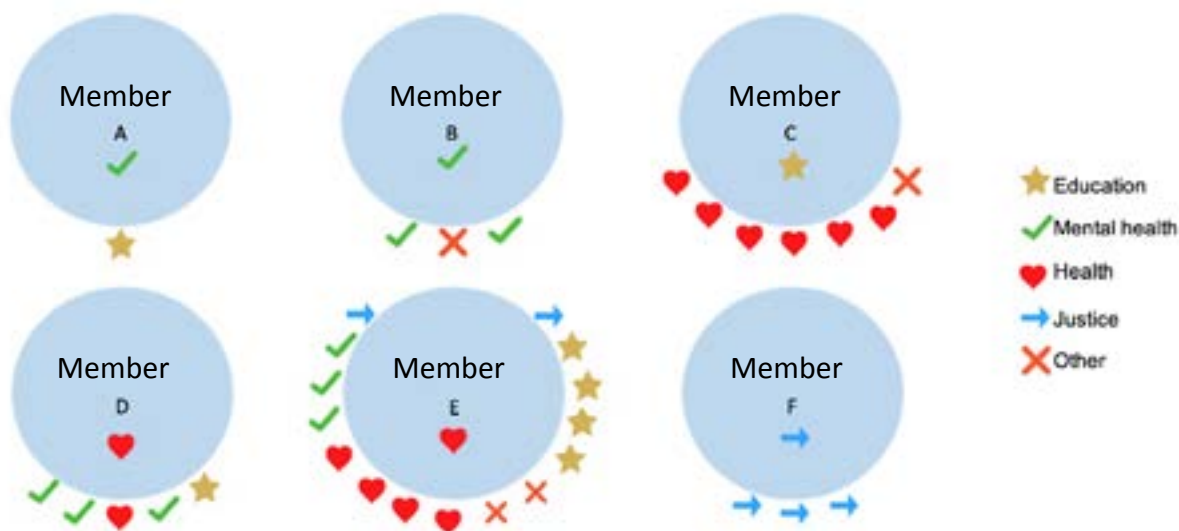
Key tips: A network's approach to this exercise would ideally be guided by the type of information needed to understand the networking in place.

• If the network is interested in the interactions between member representatives of different sectors, the team can set up the data collection in that way, masking the identity of specific members.

• If the network is interested in only high level or more intensive levels of collaboration, the team would want to frame the questions accordingly.

• If the network is interested in understanding hubs of activity or from where information flows, that interest would suggest a different set of questions. For example, rather than ask each member about its interaction with each other member, the facilitator would inquire about the five members with which they collaborate most. The information from this inquiry could then provide a picture of the interactions that are happening most often and offer some guidance in how to broaden the work.

Additional resources:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/491572/socnet_howto.pdf

Outcome Harvesting

What: Outcome harvesting is an evaluation method that networks can use to collect evidence on changes ("outcomes") they have helped create in a community and/or in organizations. Outcomes include any changes in the behavior, relationships, actions, activities, policies, or practices of an individual, group, community, organization, or institution[2]. An outcome can be positive or negative, intended or unintended, as long as the link between the network activities and the outcome is verifiable and the outcome itself is verifiable.

Why: Although networks can use logic models to summarize their expected and intended outcomes, it is also true that a range of spontaneous outcomes can occur due to the multi-sector nature of the networks, the multiplicity of activities that can take place under the network, and changes in the context that can shape network efforts. Outcome harvesting is particularly well-suited to assessing the work of networks as it permits examination of both planned and unplanned outcomes and outcomes generated through the ripple effects of members and through more opportunistic ways.

When: Outcome harvesting is most appropriate to use with networks that are somewhat well-established, are well underway in conducting activities, and can expect to see some accomplishments. A network may want to consider using the process to take stock of a network's progress after a set of specific activities, inform strategic planning, or guide the network at a time when it expects to pivot or revise its course. In MARC, networks engaged in a collaborative outcome harvesting process near the completion of the MARC funding period.

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[2] https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/outcome_harvesting

Who: The backbone organization of the network and other key network members can conduct the process. A small group of the network can operate as the "outcome harvesting" team and identify other key informants who can speak to the occurrence of each outcome.

How: The basic method involves collecting evidence of outcomes that have occurred and working backward to trace whether and how the network contributed to the change. It involves gleaning outcomes from multiple sources (documents, websites, interviews, data), and then examining the network's influence on each outcome. The method was designed to be highly participatory and provides an opportunity for network members to learn about a network's accomplishments.

The process begins by developing an initial listing of outcomes, working with the backbone organization and key network members. In parallel, the outcome harvesting team can identify additional outcomes through documents, reports, or websites. If the list is long, outcomes to trace can be prioritized to those that are most significant in their impact.

It is ideal is to have a clear statement for each outcome, noting when the outcome occurred, the concrete change that occurred (in active voice and active verb), and the actors involved in bringing about the change. We provide an example of this below. For each outcome, the outcome harvesting team seeks out key informants and other sources to verify that the outcome occurred and obtain a description of how it was accomplished and the extent to which the network contributed to it. Data from key sources can come from in person or telephone interviews and email exchanges. The data collection includes examining the processes and sequence of events by which each outcome unfolded over time, and tracing back and analyzing the way in which the network, as well as other factors, played a role in the occurrence of the outcome.

Below is an example of an outcome and the process leading up to it. The set of outcomes encompasses the Albany Police Department's ACEs-informed program and policies in dealing with the public and internal staff, and requires all officers and staff to be trained in ACEs. The outcomes are traced back to the activity in orange, showing that the Albany Police Department was brought in as a member and partner of the HEARTS network and trained on ACEs and trauma. Other network activities include the collaboration between the police department and Osborne Association that together led to additional trauma-informed policy changes, including Handle with Care, which was adopted based on a model developed in West Virginia.

Exhibit 5. Example of process tracing with a 'harvested' outcome
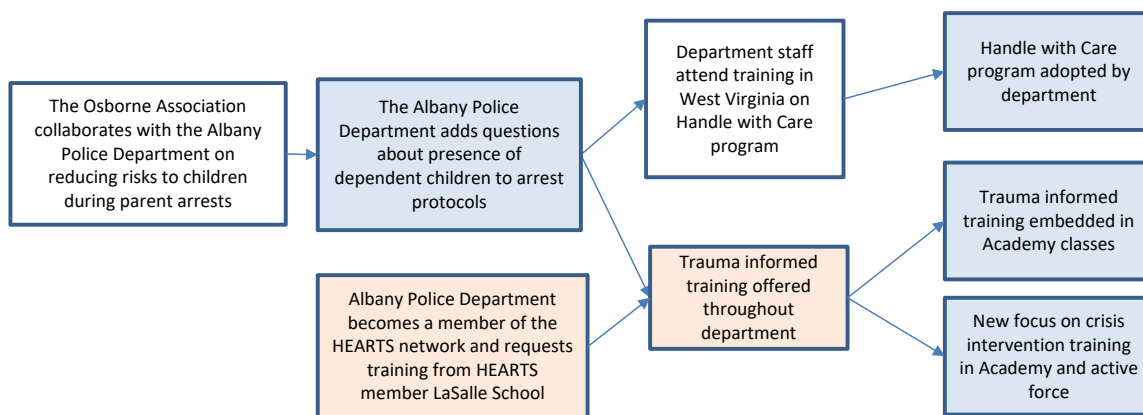
The questions below lay out the information needed to define and analyze each outcome. These attributes include:

THE OUTCOME:

- **WHAT** happened? What or who changed? What changed in behaviors, relationships, activities, actions, policies or practices? Is the change qualitative and/or quantitative?

- What evidence substantiates the change? What are the sources for the information?

THE ACTORS

- **WHO** (individual or group) was involved in making the change? **WHO** made this happen?

TIMING and LOCATION

- **WHEN** and **WHERE** did the change take place?

SIGNIFICANCE

- **WHY** is the change relevant/significant/important? Does it address a problem or need in the community? What is the reach and scope of the outcome?

CONTRIBUTION

- **HOW** did the network contribute to the change? How did network activities/outputs contribute to the change (e.g., was it a direct cause; a large contribution as a catalyst or tipping point?) How did others (unrelated to your network) contribute to the change?

Key tips:

- Each outcome should have multiple sources, ideally self-reported outcomes corroborated with some documentary or data-based evidence.

- Some outcomes may overlap or interrelate; the interconnectivity of outcomes can provide a full picture of what changes have taken place. It is possible, for example, that one outcome has led to another within the list, or that there was yet another result of an outcome that was overlooked.

- It may also be that a few of the network activities lead to multiple outcomes, and some of the outcomes can have multiple activities contributing to it.

- Keep the focus on behavior changes. Changes in awareness are important but are not considered outcomes until they lead to some verifiable change in action.

- Engaging a broad array of network members in the harvesting helps to identify the outcomes that occur through the ripple effects of members' efforts.

Additional Resources:

https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/Outome%20Harvesting%20Brief%20FINAL%202012-05-2-1.pdf

https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/outcome_harvesting

Wison-Grau, R. (2018). Outcome Harvesting: Principles, Steps, and Evaluation Applications. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Conclusion

This brief highlights accessible "do-it-yourself" evaluation tools, but it never hurts to have members with formal evaluation experience as part of your network. These individuals can help guide the design of this work and build the capacity of others in implementing the tools, analyzing the data, and interpreting the findings.

For more information about MARC, please visit **https://marc.healthfederation.org**

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