

Know It Show It

Theory of Change

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Evelyn Rodrigues

Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets



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Course objectives

- Increased awareness of how to use the Theory of Change (ToC) model
- Increased understanding of the benefits of the ToC model for your organisation
- Started to create a ToC model which can be shared with colleagues within your organisation/used for other projects
- Identified the next steps required to put the process into action

Agenda

- What is a Theory of Change? components, examples
- What are you doing already, potential challenges
- Key stages in developing a ToC
 - project's aims
 - outcomes
 - activities
 - causal links
 - assumptions
- Measuring outcomes / indicators
- Action planning
- Further resources



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What is a Theory of Change?

- Diagram to show how your project has an impact on the people you are working with, from the beneficiaries' point of view
- Practical model which enables you to explain how you will achieve your aims
- Helps you to plan from the bottom up & be realistic
- Clarifies assumptions you are making
- Does not include operational details

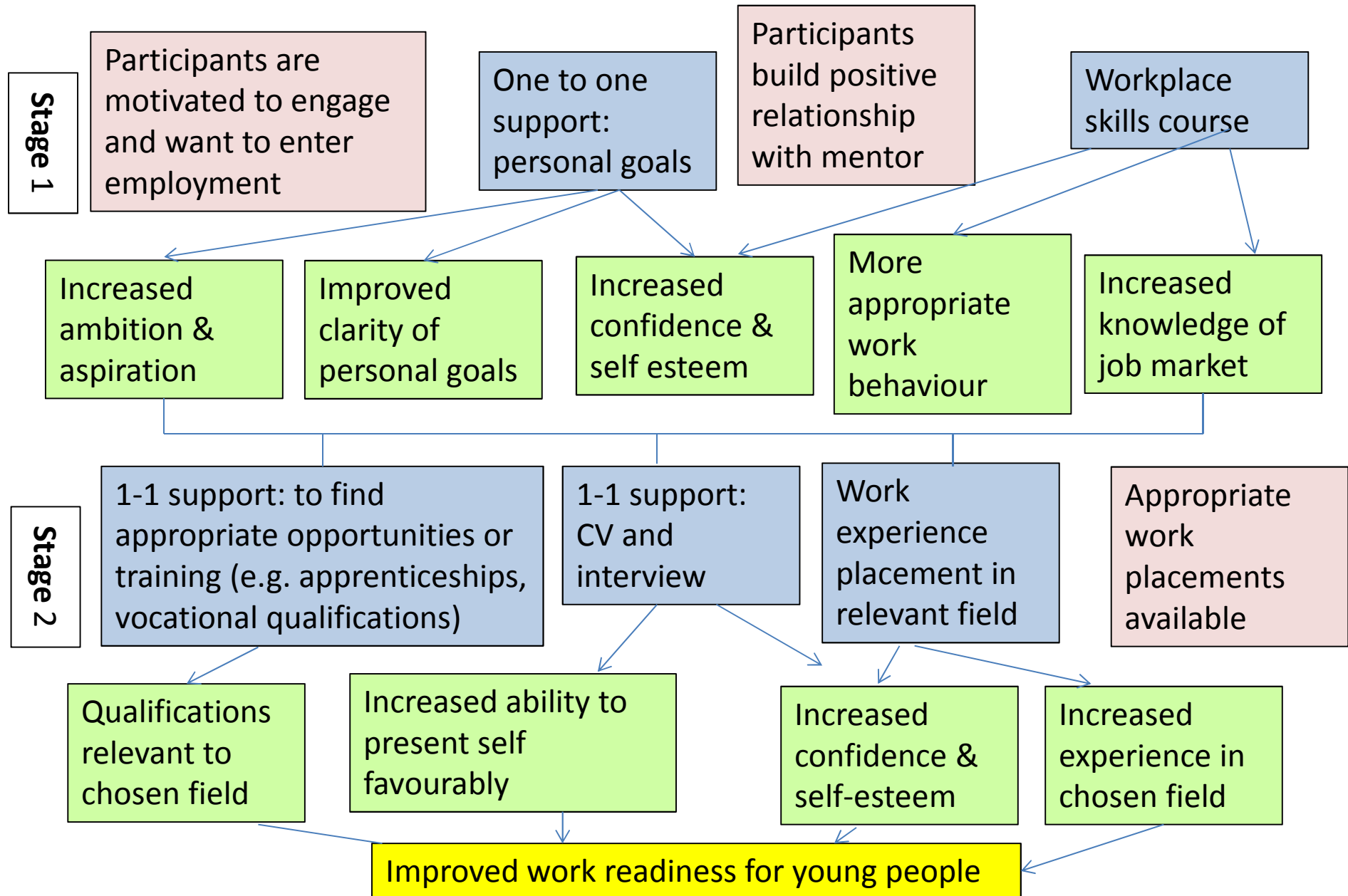
Core elements/processes of a ToC

- Identifying your ultimate **aims** - primary impact that your programme aims to have on its beneficiaries
- Identifying your intermediate **outcomes** - all the separate changes in the beneficiaries that lead to the ultimate goal
- Identifying your **activities** - all the things that a programme does directly for its beneficiaries, or that the beneficiaries do as part of the programme

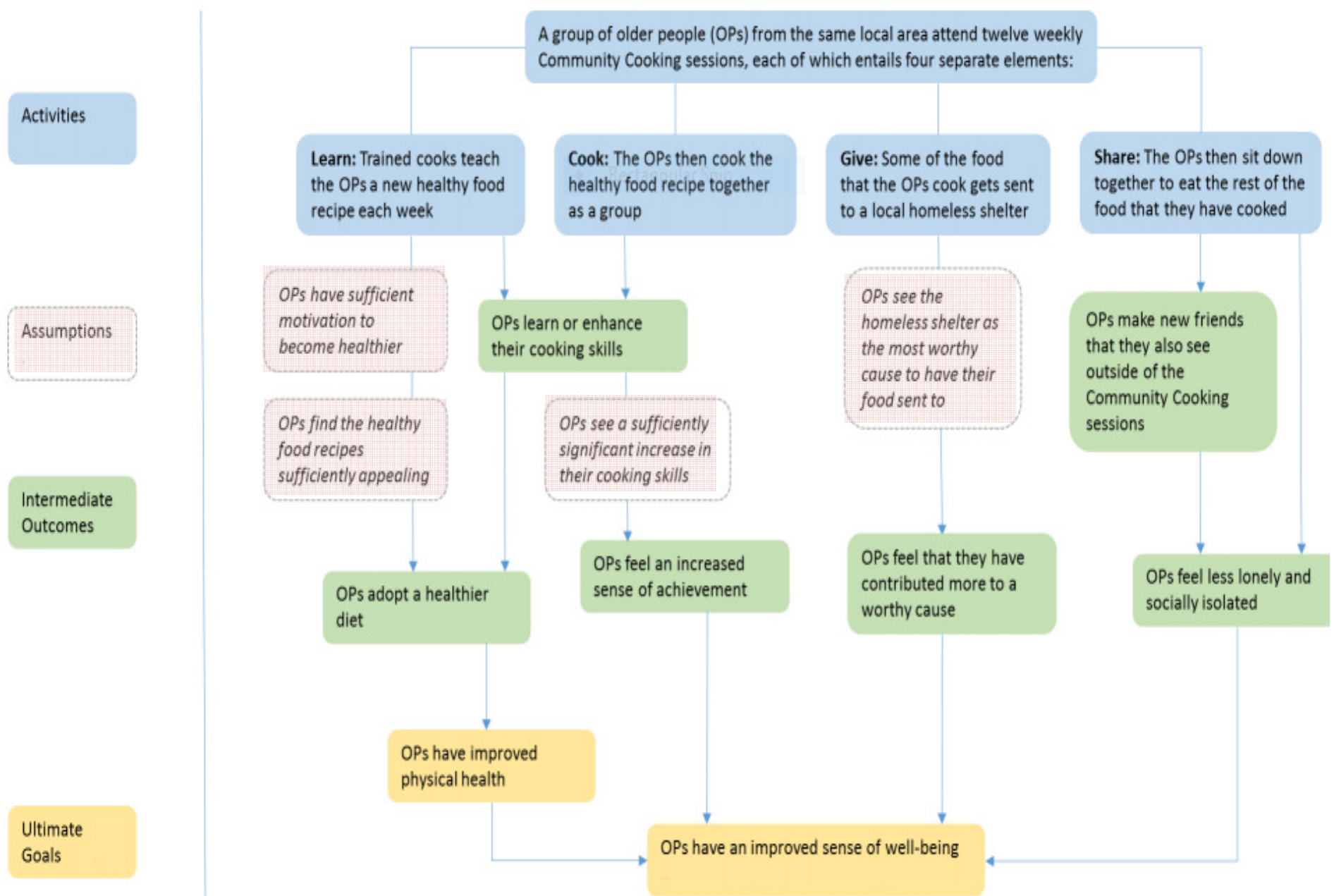
Core elements/processes of a ToC (2)

- Showing the **causal links** - arrows that explain the causality of your programme
- Examining your **assumptions** - the assumptions that underpin each causal link

Young people's work readiness project Aim Outcome Activity Assumption



Example Theory of Change – Community Cooking



What are you doing already?

- How might this type of ToC model help your organisation?
- What are you doing already?
- What could be problematic/difficult? What are the areas for development for your organisation? (Note these in your 'action plan' handout)



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Why is a ToC useful?

Improve strategy

Shared understanding

Effectiveness

Service design

Communication

Identification of aims

Thinking about outcomes

Better reporting

Partnership working

Working to same agenda

Motivating

Role clarity

Evaluation

Know what to measure

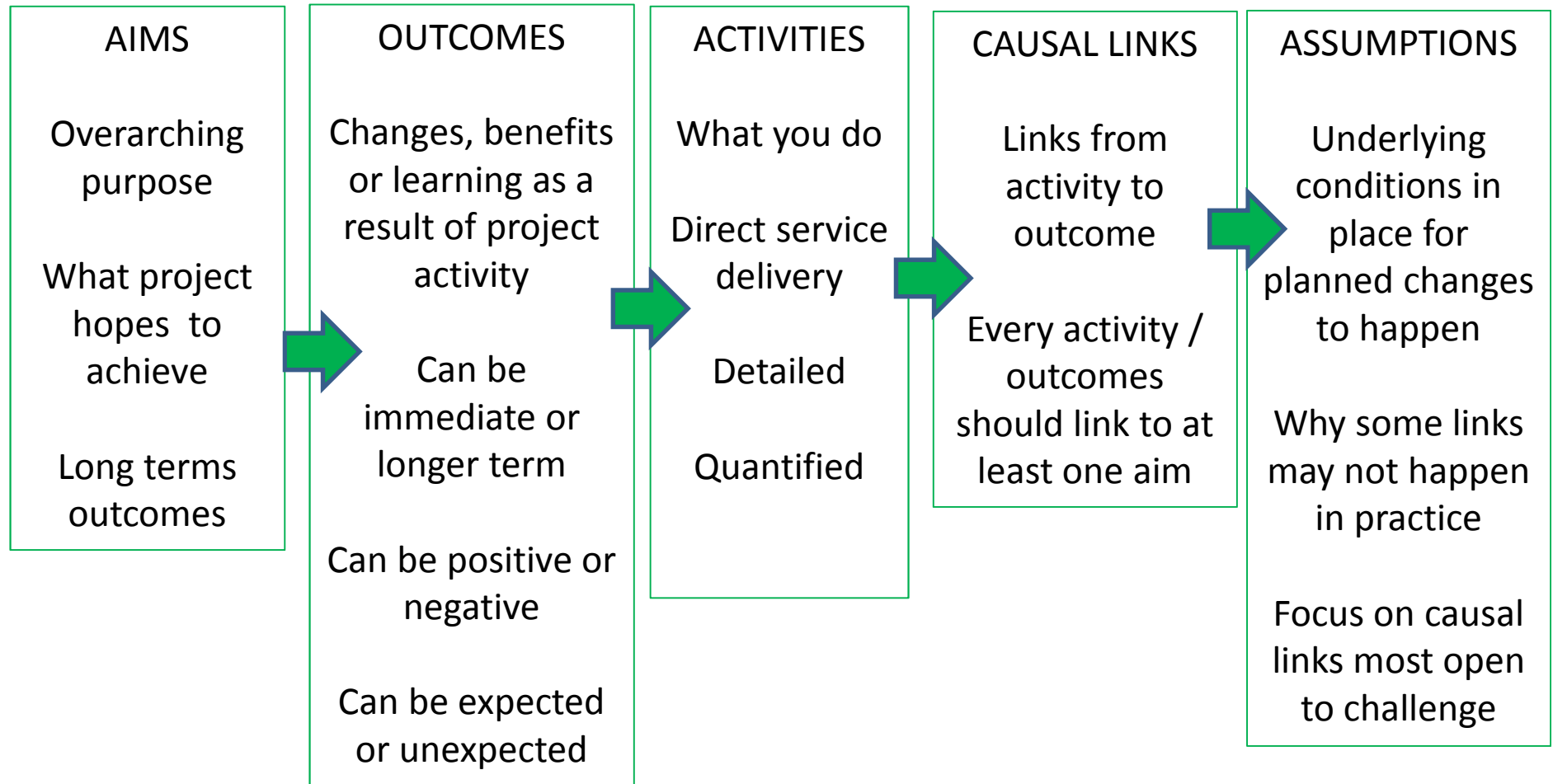
Work with evidence base

What works well/
improve

Developing your Theory of Change

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Key stages in developing a ToC

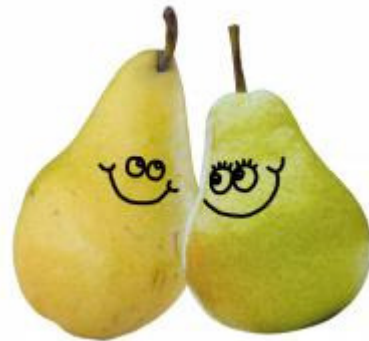


Checklist for developing ToC

- As a group, involve staff, stakeholders, clients
- Title includes name of the project
- Include aims, outcomes, activities, show causal links, examine assumptions
- Each of above colour coded and labelled
- Clarity about target client/customer group
- Describe 'dosage' – how much of each activity a client gets
- Avoid referring to the scale of your programme
- Avoid reference to operational activity (e.g. programme set up, recruitment, marketing)

Developing our Theories of Change

Let's get into pairs / groups



Developing your project's aims

Tips on identifying aims:

- Normally 1 or 2 aims, rarely more than 3
- Should be measurable
- One sentence
- Something that you can achieve or at least influence strongly
- Should be the **direct and immediate impact of the programme**, rather than the more long-term impact that happens because of it
- The aim should respond to a need

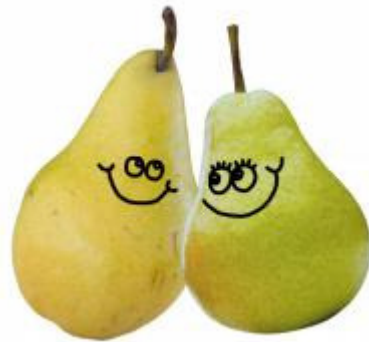
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Examples of aims

- Improved work readiness for young people
- OPs have improved physical health
- OPs have improved sense of well-being
- Young people positively engaged in the community

Developing your project's aims

- In your groups, identify one project **aim** for each organisation



Identifying outcomes

Tips on identifying outcomes:

- Don't promise what you can't deliver
- Should be measurable
- Changes, benefits or learning for beneficiaries as a *result* of activities
- Specific changes for the beneficiaries that you want to result from the project
- Consider the root issues or problems
- May have to link to what outcomes funders want

Outcome levels

Outcomes can apply on single or multiple levels to:

- individuals (children/young people/parents/family units)
- communities
- environments
- organisations
- systems and structures

and can be short term or long term

Hard vs soft outcomes

- **Hard outcomes** are changes that are clear and obvious, or that involve an external change in people's behaviour or circumstances.
- For example, the number of people who give up smoking for at least six months after finishing a non-smoking group
- **Soft outcomes** are the changes that are less easy to observe or measure; or
- which involve some form of change inside people, such as change in attitude or a change in the way they see themselves (for example, increased self-confidence).

Words of change

Outcomes are best described using words of change

For example:

more

better

new

fewer

They can also keep a situation stable

For example:

maintain

persist

keep

sustain

Or stop it from getting worse

Examples of outcomes

- Fathers improve their parenting skills resulting in stronger family relationships
- Fewer young people are involved in criminal or anti-social behaviour
- Young people have increased knowledge of the job market
- OPs have increased or enhanced cooking skills

Difference between outcomes and outputs

Outputs are the interventions you make to bring about achievements – your products, services, facilities.

Outputs: reading courses you offer
 a session in a reading course you offer

The outcomes might be:

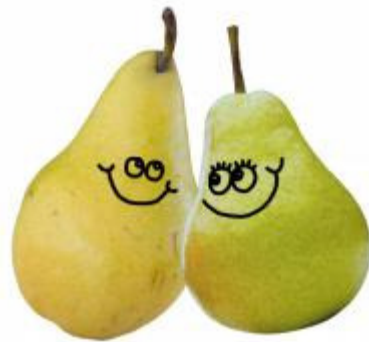
People who attend our reading courses:

- Are more confident at reading
- Read better
- Read outside our classes well enough to have independent lives
- Have improved self confidence all round

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Outcomes

In your groups, identify **two outcomes** that contribute to the project aim that you identified earlier



Feedback



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Identifying activities

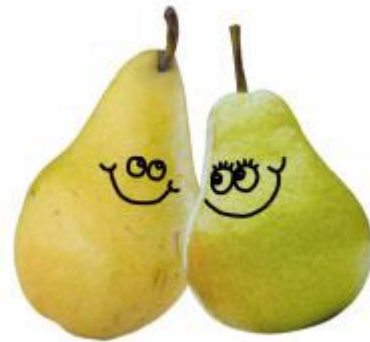
Tips on identifying activities:

- Identify the specific services you deliver
- Sufficiently detailed, so that someone unfamiliar with the programme can understand
- Quantified to explain 'dosage' i.e. how much of the activities each beneficiary receives
- Directly linked to achieving aims - flexibility in development – back and forth process
- Don't include process activities e.g. staff training and recruitment, referral process, marketing

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Activities

In your groups, identify **activities** that contribute to one of the project outcomes that you identified earlier



Identifying causal links

Tips:

Show links between activities and outcomes

Between different outcomes

Which outcomes lead to which aim

Show complexity

Balance complexity with clarity – should be easy to follow

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Clarifying assumptions

Tips:

- What assumptions have been made in linking activities to outcomes?
- What are the underlying conditions that have to be in place for change to happen?
- What are the reasons that they causal links may not be true in practice
- Focus on the causal links most likely to be challenged as being less plausible or convincing.
- The very last step in creating your Theory of Change.
- Sit on top of a specific causal link, rather than 'floating' elsewhere on the diagram.

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Examples of assumptions

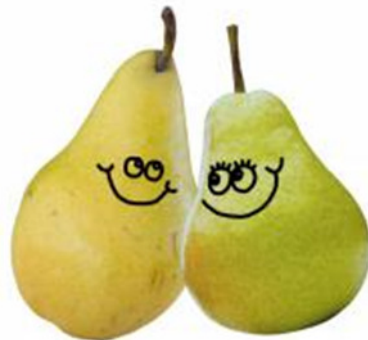
Participants are motivated to engage and want to enter employment

OPs see a sufficiently significant increase in their cooking skills

Causal links and assumptions

In your groups, identify the causal links that link the activities to **one of your outcomes**

For those causal links, what are the **assumptions** that you are making?



Feedback



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Measuring outcomes / indicators

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Tips on outcomes measurement

- Indicators are the basis of outcomes monitoring
- Usually collect same information at least twice to compare results
- Methods?
 - Self assessment by clients
 - Interviews
 - Observation
 - Record keeping

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What are indicators?

- Indicators are things you use to monitor whether the expected outcomes are happening
- Clues to show what has happened
- Quantitative or qualitative
- Each outcome has at least one indicator, some outcomes may have many possible indicators

Some examples of outcome indicators

Project	Expected outcome	Example outcome indicator
Young people's work readiness project	Increased confidence and self esteem	Scores on self esteem questionnaire Scores at mock interview Feedback from mentors Feedback from work experience supervisor
Community cooking for older people	OPs learn or enhance their cooking skills	Feedback from OPs on cooking skills Number of recipes learned

Tips on collecting information

Basic principles	Collect only what you need Keep it simple One system for all needs Same information at least twice
Methods	Pilot Use scales where possible Sampling and/or snapshots Flexibility to record unexpected outcomes Multiple methods where possible
People issues	User friendly Who, when, how and why Be honest with clients Give feedback

Tips on reporting on outcomes

- What are the audience's information needs?
- Different formats for different audiences
- Explain methods briefly (possibly put tools in appendix)
- Include your view of the honesty of responses and accuracy of data
- Put information in context
- Explain number or scale points
- Interpret key information – clarify fact from fiction
- Include a few specific realistic recommendations

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Example 'outcomes monitoring framework' template

Specific aims	Outcomes	Outcome indicators	Information collection methods	When and by whom	How to report and use
Aim 1					
Aim 2					
Aim 3					

Action planning

What actions will you take as a result of this training?



Common mistakes to avoid

- Don't start with a completely blank slate
- Top down, not fully owned
- Bad outcomes
- Too big a leap
- Overcomplicated diagram
- A dusty document

Further ToC resources

NPC:

<https://www.thinknpc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Creating-your-theory-of-change1.pdf>

NCVO:

<https://knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/how-to/how-to-build-a-theory-of-change>

Nesta:

[https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/theory_of_change_guidance_for_applicants .pdf](https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/theory_of_change_guidance_for_applicants.pdf)

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Next steps

&

Evaluation forms

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