

Outcome Mapping

Outcome mapping is an M&E tool developed by IDRC (see: www.idrc.ca). It focuses on the following key words:

- *Behavioural change*: Outcomes are defined as changes in the behaviour, relationships, activities, or actions of the people, groups, and organisations with whom a programme works directly. These outcomes can be logically linked to a program's activities, although they are not necessarily directly caused by them.
- *Boundary partners*: Those individuals, groups, and organisations with whom the programme interacts directly and with whom the programme anticipates opportunities for influence. Most activities will involve multiple outcomes because they have multiple boundary partners.
- *Contributions*: By using Outcome Mapping, a programme is not claiming the achievement of development impacts; rather, the focus is on its contributions to outcomes. These outcomes, in turn, enhance the possibility of development impacts – but the relationship is not necessarily a direct one of cause and effect.

As development is essentially about people relating to each other and their environments, the focus of Outcome Mapping is on people. The originality of the methodology is its shift away from assessing the development impact of a programme (defined as changes in state – for example, policy relevance, poverty alleviation, or reduced conflict) and toward changes in the behaviours, relationships, actions or activities of the people, groups, and organisations with whom a development programme works directly. This shift significantly alters the way a programme understands its goals and assesses its performance and results. Outcome Mapping establishes a vision of the human, social, and environmental betterment to which the programme hopes to contribute and then focuses monitoring and evaluation on factors and actors within that program's direct sphere of influence. The program's contributions to development are planned and assessed based on its influence on the partners with whom it is working to effect change. At its essence, development is accomplished by, and for, people. Therefore, this is the central concept of Outcome Mapping. Outcome Mapping does not belittle the importance of changes in state (such as cleaner water or a stronger economy) but instead argues that for each change in state there are correlating changes in behaviour.

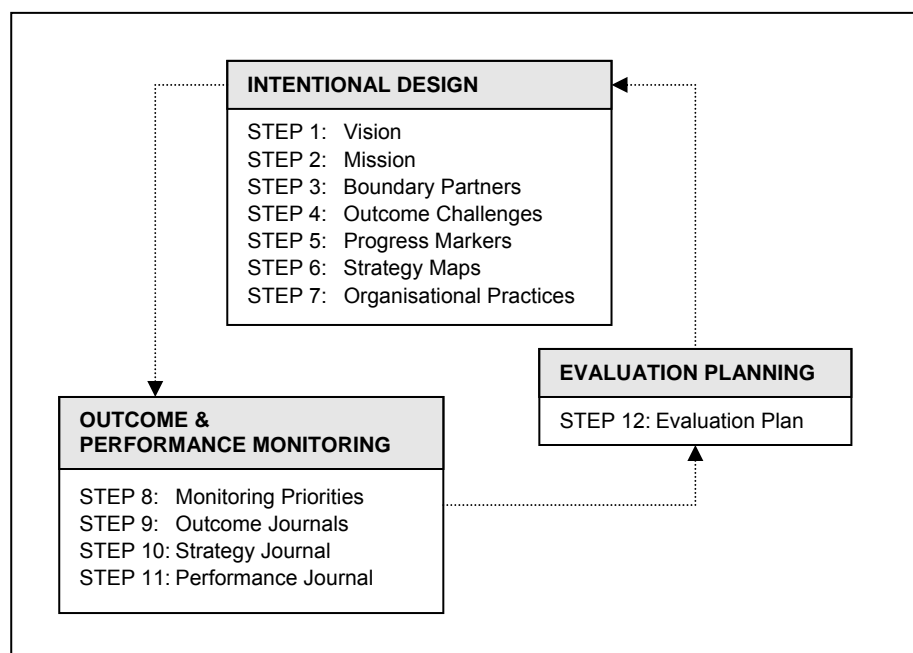
An example

For example, a program's objective may be to provide communities with access to cleaner water by installing purification filters. Traditionally, the method of evaluating the results of this programme would be to count the number of filters installed and measure changes in the level of contaminants in the water before and after the filters were installed. A focus on changes in behaviour begins instead from the premise that water does not remain clean without people being able to maintain its quality over time. The program's outcomes are therefore evaluated in terms of whether those responsible for water purity in the communities not only have, but use, the appropriate tools, skills, and knowledge to monitor the contaminant levels, change filters, or bring in experts when required. Outcome Mapping provides a method for development programs to plan for and assess the capacities that they are helping to build in the people, groups, and organisations who will ultimately be responsible for improving the well-being of their communities. Outcome Mapping does not attempt to replace the more traditional forms of evaluation, which focus on changes in conditions or in the state of well-being. Instead, Outcome Mapping supplements other forms of evaluation by focusing specifically on related behavioural change.

The three stages of Outcome Mapping

1. The first stage, Intentional Design, helps a programme establish consensus on the macro level changes it will help to bring about and plan the strategies it will use. It helps answer four questions: Why? (What is the vision to which the programme wants to contribute?); Who? (Who are the program's boundary partners?); What? (What are the changes that are being sought?); and How? (How will the programme contribute to the change process?).
2. The second stage, Outcome and Performance Monitoring, provides a framework for the ongoing monitoring of the program's actions and the boundary partners' progress toward the achievement of outcomes. It is based largely on systematised self-assessment. It provides the following data collection tools for elements identified in the Intentional Design stage: an Outcome Journal' (progress markers); a Strategy Journal' (strategy maps); and a 'Performance Journal' (organisational practices).
3. The third stage, Evaluation Planning, helps the programme identify evaluation priorities and develop an evaluation plan. Figure 7 illustrates the three stages of Outcome Mapping.

Figure 7: The three stages of Outcome Mapping



The process for identifying the macro-level changes and designing the monitoring framework and evaluation plan is intended to be participatory and, wherever feasible, can involve the full range of stakeholders, including boundary partners. Outcome Mapping is based on principles of participation and purposefully includes those implementing the programme in the design and data collection so as to encourage ownership and use of findings. It is intended to be used as a consciousness-raising, consensus-building, and empowerment tool for those working directly in the development program.

Outcome Mapping introduces monitoring and evaluation considerations at the planning stage of a program. Outcome Mapping moves away from the notion that monitoring and evaluation are done to a program, and, instead, actively engages the team in the design of a monitoring framework and evaluation plan and promotes self-assessment.

Source

- Earl, Sarah, Fred Carden and Terry Smutylo (2001) *Outcome Mapping; Building Learning and Reflection into Development Programs*, International Development Research Centre (IDRC), see: www.idrc.ca/en/ev-9330-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html.