

13 Tips for Building Great Outcomes Models (Intervention Logics)

Outcomes models (also called logic models, intervention logics, program logics, program theories, results-chains and ends-means diagrams) set out all of the steps that need to occur to achieve high-level outcomes. These tips show how to draw 'world-centric' rather than 'program-centric' models which can be used for a range of purposes from strategic planning, to monitoring/evaluation, through to contracting. You can see how these models can be used at EasyOutcomes.org. You are also free to look through and borrow from the free-to-use models available at OutcomesModels.org. DoView software for drawing such models and creating web page models from them is available at DoView.com.

Easy to read

- 1 Keep your outcomes as short as possible.** e.g. 'a fully developed sense of well-being in all areas of a young person's life' should read, 'increased well-being' (use the record attached to each step in DoView to put in more information).
- 2 Use outcomes not activities (or processes).** Just change the wording, e.g. from 'increasing stakeholder support' to 'increased stakeholder support'.
- 3 Use singular not compound outcomes.** e.g. 'increased seat-belt use through tougher laws' should be two steps rather than one. Words like 'through', or 'by' show a compound rather than a singular outcome.

'World-centric' not 'program centric'

- 4 Include all steps and high-level outcomes.** Don't just include steps and outcomes that are measurable or which you can absolutely prove you changed (attributable to you). You can deal with these issues later in the process. You can also include risks (write these in a positive form as steps you want to occur – e.g. 'sufficient available staff') and assumptions (written as steps).
- 5 Build freeform not 'layered' models.** Don't bother forcing your model into a limited number of prescribed horizontal 'layers' (e.g. outputs, intermediate outcomes, final outcomes). Allow as many levels as you need to accurately model the world in a way that your stakeholders can understand it.
- 6 Don't 'silozie' your models.** Don't force lower-level steps to link to a single higher-level step or outcome. (DoView lets any step link to any other step or outcome using the DoView link icon).
- 7 Keep measurement separate.** After you've drawn your 'world-centric' model, map measures (e.g. by inserting DoView indicators) onto your model. This will show what you can and cannot measure

and help make sure you're focused on important outcomes, not just on those which you can currently measure.

- 8 Don't just build models of your current priorities.** 'World-centric' models should be the most accurate picture of the world you can currently draw. Once it is drawn, map your high-level decision makers' priorities onto your model so that your model does not have to change every time priorities change.
- 9 Don't assume an organization needs a single high-level outcome.** If your organization has been assigned a number of outcomes in different sectors, don't artificially force them to come together into a single high-level outcome. Use separate models of the parts of the world in which you are intervening because this will make more sense when you talk to external stakeholders in those sectors.

Well structured

- 10 Put outcomes into hierarchical order.** work out the hierarchical order of steps in your model with the simple rule that Step A is higher up the hierarchy than Step B where, if you could magically achieve step a, you would not bother doing step b. So 'world peace' would go above 'peace-keeping forces'.
- 11 Include all relevant necessary steps at each level.** Ask yourself at each level if you have all of the relevant necessary steps to achieve the step or outcome at the level above.
- 12 Put a descriptor in front of steps or outcomes where needed.** Use a descriptor like suitable, *sufficient*, *adequate*, or *effective* in front of steps and outcomes (e.g. 'adequate caseworker support') when you are building the model. Working out what adequate means can become a project when you are elaborating the outcomes model later.
- 13 Make your model as large as you like by dividing it up into Sub-Pages.** Don't arbitrarily limit your model to a single page. Divide larger models up into sub-pages that are a group of steps and outcomes in a related area. E.g. in many programs there is a *national*, *regional*, *organizational* and *individual* level. (DoView lets you quickly create and navigate between sub-pages within models which can be as large as you like).

For comprehensive instructions go to EasyOutcomes.org (including a full workbook) or DoView.com. Sample outcomes models from which you can build on are available at OutcomesModels.org, and short instructional videos can be found at OutcomesCentral.org.

A free trial version of DoView software is available over the internet and a full permanent per user license costs US\$39.95. Free licenses are available to some International Development Projects in Developing Countries (see DoView.Com).

This tip sheet available from <http://www.outcomescentral.org/materials/tipsheet266.pdf>

Get more information and guidance from:

www.doview.com and www.easyoutcomes.org and www.outcomesmodels.org and www.outcomescentral.org



Based on Duignan, P. (2008). Standards for drawing outcomes models. Outcomes Theory Knowledge Base Article No. 210. (<http://knol.google.com/k/paul-duignan-phd/standards-for-drawing-outcomes-models/2m7zd68aaz774/28>)