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. 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.

6 **Don't siloize your models.** Don't force lower-level steps to link to a single higher-level step. (DoView lets any step link to any other step or outcome using the DoView link endpoint 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 you aim for important outcomes, not just the currently measurable.

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.** In models that have the highest level outcomes at the top (as in DoView), use the following rule. Step A should be above 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 'slices'.** Don't arbitrarily limit your model to a single page. Divide larger models up into 'slices' 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 slices (pages) within models which can be as large as you like).