

Outcome Mapping

Introduction

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 which 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 programme's direct sphere of influence. The programme'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. This is, then, 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.

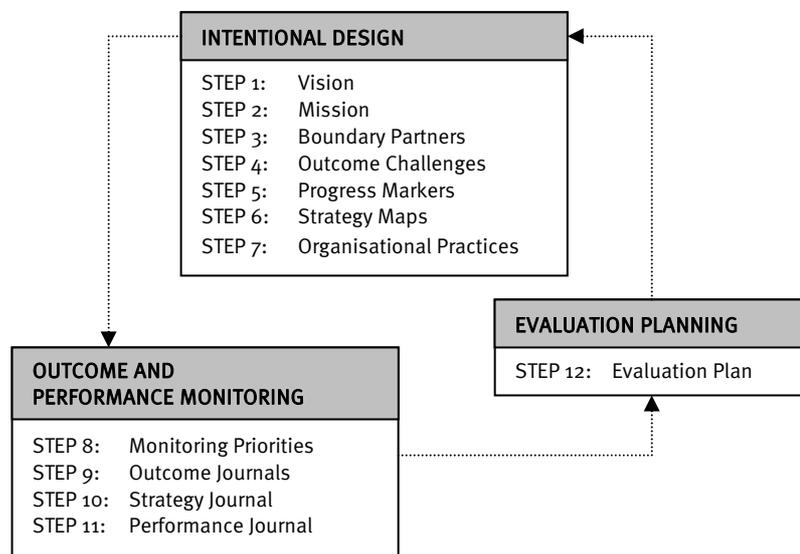
Detailed description of the process

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 programme's boundary partners?); What? (What are the changes that are being sought?); and How? (How will the programme contribute to the change process?).

Outcome and Performance Monitoring provides a framework for the ongoing monitoring of the programme'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).

Evaluation Planning helps the programme identify evaluation priorities and develop an evaluation plan. Figure 3 illustrates the three stages of outcome mapping.

Figure 3: 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 programme. Outcome mapping introduces monitoring and evaluation considerations at the planning stage of a programme, and moves away from the notion that monitoring and evaluation are done *to* a programme. Instead, it actively engages groups and teams in the design of a learning-oriented plan, with self-reflection as a core principle.

Key points/practical tips

Outcome mapping is a planning, monitoring and evaluation tool developed by IDRC of Canada (www.idrc.ca). It focuses on the following key points:

- **Behavioural change:** Outcomes are defined as changes in the behaviour, relationships, activities, or actions of the people, groups and organisations with which a programme works directly. These outcomes can be logically linked to a programme's activities, although they are not necessarily directly caused by them.
- **Boundary partners:** Those individuals, groups and organisations with which the programme interacts directly and with which 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.

Example: Knowledge sharing programme

For example, a knowledge sharing programme's objective may be to provide communities with access to better information by means of an intranet system. Traditionally, the method of evaluating the results of this programme would be to count the number of potential users of the system, and to measure changes in the level of access after the system is installed. A focus on changes in behaviour begins instead from the premise that the intranet is a focal point for staff knowledge sharing behaviours, and that it will not be used without people perceiving there to be quality information available. The programme's outcomes are therefore evaluated in terms of whether those responsible for knowledge sharing not only have, but also use, the appropriate tools, skills and knowledge to update and review information on the intranet. Outcome mapping provides a method for knowledge and learning programmes to plan for and assess the capacities that they are helping to build in people, groups and organisations. Outcome mapping does not attempt to replace the more traditional forms of planning, monitoring and evaluation, which focus on changes in condition or in the state of wellbeing. Instead, outcome mapping supplements these other forms by focusing specifically on related behavioural change.

Sources and further reading

- Earl, S., F. Carden, and T. 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.
- Hovland, I. (2005) *Successful Communication: A Toolkit for Researchers and Civil Society Organisations*, ODI Working Paper 227, London: ODI.
- The website for a dedicated community of practice for users of outcome mapping worldwide is currently being finalised: www.outcomemapping.ca.