

Change and Implementation at a Glance

Theory of Change



A theory of change serves as a valuable tool to illustrate a series of changes that must occur to address a problem or need. Without a theory of change, agencies may move down the wrong path when trying to solve a problem.

Key Takeaways

A well-constructed theory of change:

- ◆ Serves as a roadmap that illustrates the needed steps to move from a problem to a desired outcome
- ◆ Sets the foundation for selecting an appropriate intervention
- ◆ Helps partners and stakeholders get on the same page about what needs to happen to reach shared goals
- ◆ Guides strategic planning and later evaluation

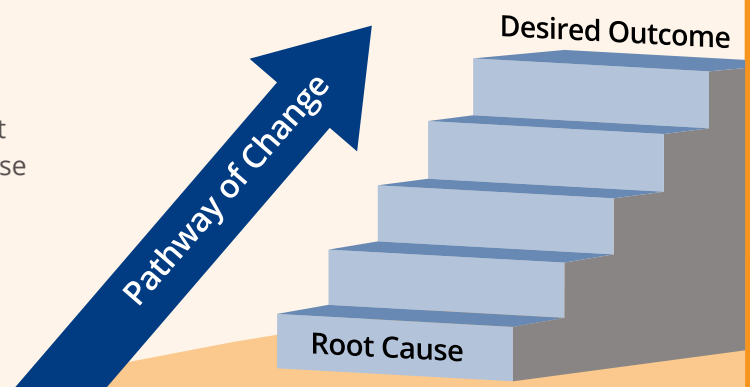
Data, critical thinking, and meaningful stakeholder input contribute to the development of a sound theory of change.

What It Takes to Get It Done

- Gather information on the problem statement, root cause(s), and target population.
- Identify a long-term outcome.
- Develop the pathway(s) of change (series of causal links).
- Define actions that could bring about needed changes.
- Document assumptions and rationale.

Theory of Change

A **theory of change** includes a series of **causal links** (conditions, changes, short-term outcomes) that must unfold to achieve the desired outcome. Together, these links make up the **pathway of change** from the root cause(s) of the problem to the long-term outcome.



A theory of change and logic model are related but different tools.

Theory of Change

- ◆ Illustrates the pathway from the root cause(s) of the problem to the desired outcome
- ◆ Helps explain how and why change will occur
- ◆ Is generally developed before selecting a specific program or strategy
- ◆ Supports intervention selection

Logic Model

- ◆ Presents program inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes in a structured, linear way
- ◆ Helps teams understand expected results
- ◆ Is generally developed after selecting a specific program or strategy
- ◆ Supports monitoring and evaluation

Theory of Change Milestones

- ◆ Development and documentation of a theory of change that reflects:
 - The root cause(s) of the problem
 - A credible pathway to move from the problem to the desired, long-term outcome

The creation of a theory of change helps prepare agencies for intervention selection and design/intervention

Need more information on creating a theory of change?

Detailed resources are available on the **Change and Implementation in Practice** website at <https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/focus-areas/cqi/change-implementation/theory-of-change/>



In-depth **brief** offers step-by-step guidance. Learn the details of how to create a well-supported theory of change and see examples.

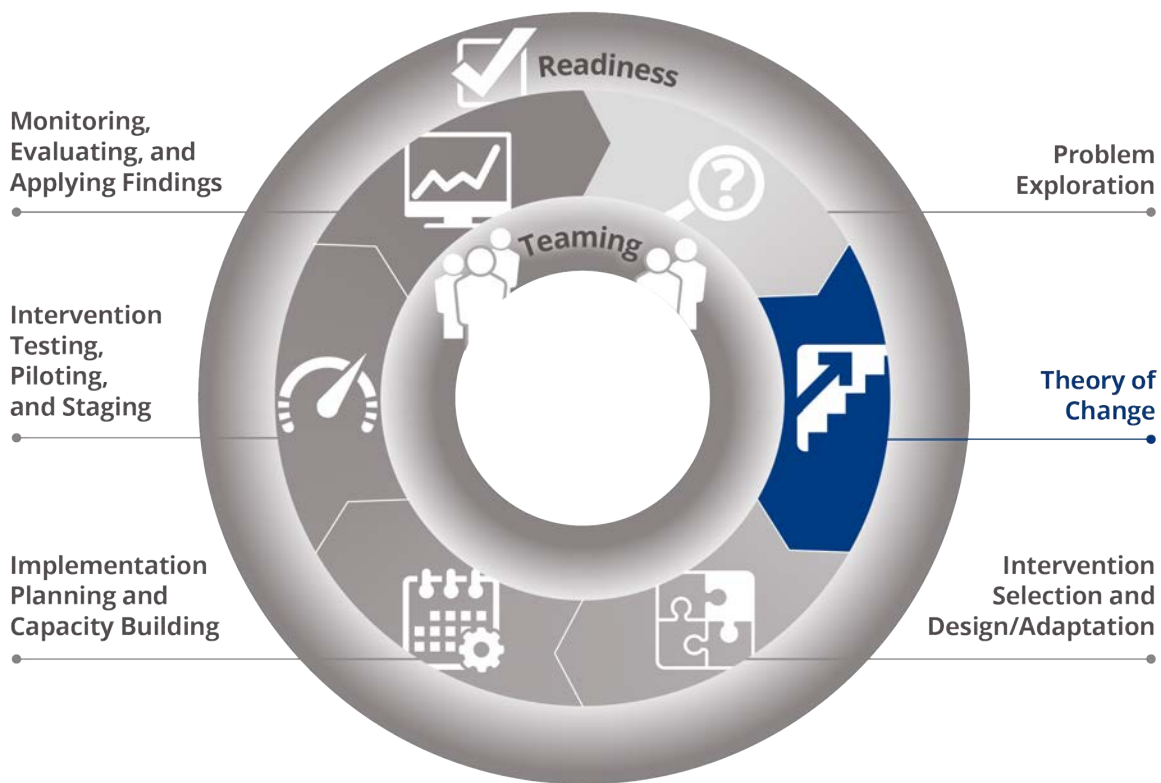


Short **videos** and a workbook reinforce key concepts. Use for training and to start thinking about application in your agency.



Recorded **webinars** feature real world examples. Hear lessons learned and tips from experts and peers.

Key Change and Implementation Topics



 For resources on other **Change and Implementation** topics, visit <https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/focus-areas/cqi/change-implementation/>

