What’s This Thing Called “Theory of Change?”
Learning Objectives

- Participants will understand what a Theory of Change is
- Participants will understand how a Theory of Change can be used at their agency
- Participants will be able to create their own Theory of Change
Overview of ESP

VISION
Eliminate Systemic Poverty
Overview of ESP

MISSION
Eliminate poverty through education, services and partnerships.
Overview of ESP
What Do You Think About?
What is a Theory of Change?

- Product
- Process
Product

Graphic representation of ideas about the change you are working towards
Process

- How change is expected to occur
- A pathway through which a specific goal can be achieved
- Depicts how and why an intervention will lead to change
What Does a Theory of Change Do?

- Helps to identify barriers/inhibitors
- Helps to avoid reputational risks
- Defines the population that an agency will be serving and clarifies the strategies and services that will lead to long term outcomes
What Does a Theory of Change Do?

- Defines exactly what the agency will be working toward
- Visually depicts the mission
- Communicates the assumptions and role of the agency
Components of a Theory of Change

- Results – What are you trying to achieve
- Activities and Strategies – What you need to do in order to achieve results
- Assumptions – What has to be true for the activities to lead to results
- Context – What environment you work in that affects these activities/current situation
What Are Assumptions?
Why Did ESP Create a Theory of Change?

- Transformation and Change
- Alignment of our focus
- Intentionality
- Clarity (Operations, Assumptions and Big Picture)
Why Did ESP Create a Theory of Change?

- Create a Shared Understanding
- Respond to the Community Action Partnership’s Request
- Continuous Improvement
ESP’s Expanded Theory of Change

Capacity
- Families have the capacity to overcome disparities
  - Families have the principles/practices to be successful in life
  - Families need to understand how to navigate through “systems”

Basic Needs
- Families have basic needs
  - Families have appropriate clothing
  - Customers have housing (for 12 months)
  - Customers have basic utilities

Education
- Customers have a HS Diploma or GED
  - Customers attend abbreviated version of Getting Ahead™
  - Customers are engaged in their children’s educational services

Employment
- Customers have transportation to job
  - Customers have child care
  - Customers have capital (marketable) job skills

Self-Sufficiency Theory
- Families have sustainable income
- Customers maintain employment
  - Customers have technical skills
  - Customers have child care
  - Customers have transportation to job
  - Customers have basic education
  - Customers develop positive relationships and networks
  - Customers have the capacity to overcome the fear/stigma of poverty
  - Customers have emotional support
  - Customers receive support from mentor families (“circles”)
  - Customers receive support from peers mentors
  - Customers have basic site skills
  - Customers have a vision and plan for their “future story”
  - Customers have a desire and commitment to move to SS
  - Customers attend classes to reduce fear/stigma, and about gain poverty

Note: "Customers have an individualized pathway out of poverty"
ESP's Theory of Change

Customers have an individualized pathway out of poverty.
Activity
Examples of Theories of Change
The National Community Action Network Theory of Change

**Community Action Goals**
- Individuals and families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security.
- Communities where people with low incomes live are healthy and offer economic opportunity.
- People with low incomes are engaged and active in building opportunities in communities.

**Services and Strategies**
(some examples from the network)
- Health Assessment
- Housing Placement
- Family Support Services
- Employment Coaching
- Educational Programs
- Policy Change
- Community Development
- Partnerships
- Collective Impact
- Advocacy

**Community Action Core Principles**
- Recognize the complexity of the issues of poverty
- Build local solutions specific to local needs
- Support family stability as a foundation for economic security
- Pursue positive individual, family, and community level change
- Maximize involvement of people with low incomes
- Engage local community partners and citizens in solutions
- Leverage state, federal and community resources
- Advocate for systemic change

**Performance Management**

How Well Does the Network Operate?
- Network Excellence
  - Local Organizational Standards
  - State and Federal Accountability Measures
  - Results Oriented Management and Accountability System

What Difference Does the Network Make?
- Robust Results
  - National Performance Indicators for Individuals and Families
  - National Performance Indicators for Communities

A national network of over 1,000 high-performing Community Action Agencies, State Associations, State offices, and Federal partners supported by the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) to mobilize communities to fight poverty.

To learn more, check out the Community Action Theory of Change Report.  [www.nascsp.org](http://www.nascsp.org)
Appendix D: Local Theory of Change Template

Local Community Action Theory of Change

**Assumptions**
What Matters to your CAA?
- Early child care and parent education move 2G families towards Self-Sufficiency
- Access to culturally competent services that holistically address needs improves the wellbeing of diverse, low income families
- Low income residents often lack access to the services and resources they need, or face barriers to obtain them

**Strategies**
What will the agency do?
- Information sessions, benefits assistance & referral to services
- Early childhood/parent education through on-site Judy Center, access to Head Start and child care
- Senior Support group/civic engagement
- Partnerships with public/private agencies to provide services - Legal services, ESOL, Health Care, Food, clothing, SNAP, Summer Meals etc.
- VITA, asset development
- Staff, Board and Partners will engage with community to understand needs and recommend services and policies

**Outcomes**
What will change?
Describe the Change:
Residents will acquire knowledge and access resources to meet critical needs; children will be better prepared for school and their parents will be engaged in their learning, improving employment; Vulnerable people/seniors will be less isolated. Community members/partners will be engaged and work together. Systems serving the community will be more responsive.

How will you know?
- Satisfaction Surveys; eICM data;
- Demographic Data; Taxlayer data;
- partner and contractor reports; manual counts of referrals

What will you measure?
- # of participants, # of completion;
- # referrals; $ amount of tax refunds/credits;
- # meals served; skills assessment;
- volunteer hrs. & their hours;
- demographics,

What NPIs will you use to report? Community & Individual/Family

**Self-Sufficiency**
Revitalized Communities

Connect your outcomes to the long-term goals to be achieved.
Low income residents served by the Center will move towards self sufficiency; through civic engagement will share their knowledge with others;
Services will become

**Data Analysis & Reflection:**
Describe how you will put the data to use. The data will be used to advocacy for the needs of low income families in the County and the funding needs of the agency.
What is the Benefit of a Theory of Change?

- Clarifies the agency’s message
- Visually depicts the strategy for the mission
How Agencies Can Use a Theory of Change

- Track milestones and guard against mission drift
- Improve and align existing programs
- Funding requests and reporting
- Evaluating progress and impact
How Agencies Can Use a Theory of Change

- Planning
- Monitoring
- Scaling up
- Learning
Creating a Theory of Change

- Begin with the result
- Work backwards
- Define the activities
- Add intermediate outcomes
- Test the Theory
- Ask for feedback
It’s Time To Practice!
Questions
Let’s Recap
Resources


www.theoryofchange.org/what-is-theory-of-change

diytoolkit.org/tools/theory-of-change

www.aecf.org/resources/theory-of-change
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