MENTAL HEALTH THEORY OF CHANGE

articulating the logic model behind your project to identify clear measures of success

mental health theory of change

You may be familiar with a theory of change chart in the context of your organization as a whole. In essence, a theory of change helps you identify exactly how, from inputs to impact, you construct the logic behind your strategy and evaluation. It also helps you examine the assumptions that support your reasoning for why your initiative or program will have the effects you seek. If you want to make change happen, this process is critical.

This process is also critical for any new initiatives or program elements you create. So for the particular mental health project or program you design, a theory of change will help you map out exactly what resources or support you need, how you will use them, and how they will directly bring social change. Remember that it is just as important to identify the contents of each section (inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, impact) as it is to identify the assumptions that link one section to the next. Your assumptions will be key to testing the effectiveness of your model as a whole.

instructions

Step 1: Once you've written down the clear pain point or mental health challenge your project will address, start on the furthest left column and move toward the right (from inputs to impact). Allow the questions in each section to guide you.

Step 2: After completing each column, identify the logical assumptions that connect one column to the next. How do you know that by gathering these specific inputs, the activities will happen? How do you know that certain outputs will lead to certain outcomes?

Step 3: Discuss and reflect on your Project Theory of Change with your team. Do you feel confident about what you've created, and do you have evidence that it will work? If not, what key pieces of evidence will give you more confidence that your Theory of Change is true? Is there anything you need to change about the scope or components of your project to increase the likelihood of success?

related tools: evaluation basics & planning workbook, mental health systems planning, mental health model canvas

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Our project will address:

Inputs: what resources, time, and funds will be used in your project?	Activities: what will be done with your inputs?	Outputs: how will you treat, train, resource, or educate people?	Outcomes: what will the outputs produce? Which evaluation methods might be helpful?	Impact: what changes do you hope to see more broadly? How will solving this problem look in your participant's life? In the life of the community?

Assumptions from inputs to activities:	Assumptions from activities to outputs:	Assumptions from outputs to outcomes:	Assumptions from outcomes to impact: