



🔗 [4.1 Facilitate implementation](#)

4.2 Evaluate impact and improve solution

🔗 [4.3 Communicate benefits in order to scale](#)

What?

An impact evaluation provides information about the impacts produced by an intervention and tests the assumptions made about an innovation’s potential impact.

Impacts can be defined as positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by an intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.

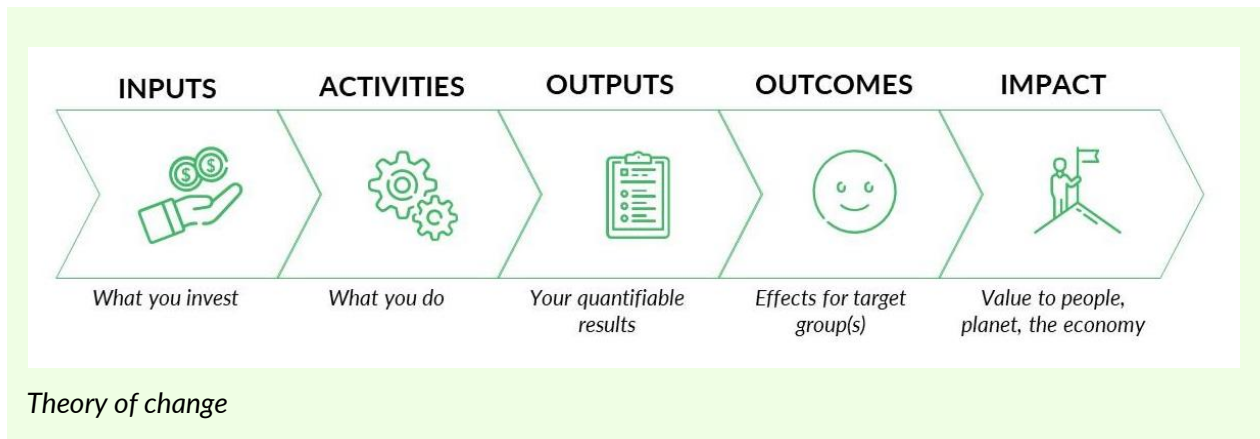
Why?

As mentioned in tool [2.3 Plan for impact management](#) there are many good reasons to why you should measure and evaluate if your innovation is leading to desired benefits for users and other stakeholders, and to expected impact on a societal level. The payer of your innovation, no matter if it’s a public health care clinic, a private organisation, an individual or an investor, will most probably want to know if your product/service is leading to desired effects. Impact evaluation is also needed to:

- Make sure that your innovation really solves the challenges that you want to address.
- Give you and your team members valuable insights on what works, and what doesn’t, to inform decisions about whether to continue, discontinue, replicate or scale up your innovation.
- Attract funders and investors and allocate resources.

How?

This tool takes it’s starting point in the Theory of Change that you developed in [2.3 Plan for impact management](#). A good theory of change explains a possible causal chain of value creation, from Activities and Outputs to Outcomes and Impact. In this tool you will decide on what data to collect in relation to your impact goals, how to collect it, how to analyse it and not least how to communicate findings in order to follow up and improve your solution.



Step by Step!

It is recommended to plan for an impact evaluation early, allowing for the collection of baseline data and, where appropriate, the creation of a control group or comparison group or the use of other strategies to investigate causal attribution. Early impact evaluation (even in a pilot phase) can be used to improve implementation into a broader setting. It is important to measure impact over time, to make sure that the causality between your activities and desired outcomes are not under- or overstated - some effects might not last over time, while other might take time to develop.

1. Update your Theory of Change (if needed)

When it's time for impact evaluation, make sure that your Theory of Change is updated according to potential new insights or new paths your project has taken, so that it doesn't have gaps or unrealistic assumptions.

2. Decide on indicators of change and what data to collect

Decide on what outcome and impact goals to focus on in your Theory of Change. These are then broken down into indicators of change. The desired outcome "improved health" could for example be broken down to both quantitative and qualitative, subjective and objective indicators such as "lowered levels of infection", "a feeling of better ability to move", "fewer healthcare clinic visits".

There might be intermediate outcomes that can be used as markers of success, in situations where the impacts of interest will occur after the evaluation time frame.

3. Decide on methods to collect your data

There is a range of data collection methods for answering the question "how have things changed?" This includes:

- ✓ **Interviews, questionnaires, or specialized methods** such as dotmocracy, hierarchical card sorting, seasonal calendars, projective techniques and stories.
In many cases there are standardised questionnaires and frameworks to use within your specific area. Use these if possible, instead of reinventing the wheel.
- ✓ **Observations:** structured or non-structured; participant or non-participant; recorded through notes, photos or video; participatory or non-participatory.
- ✓ **Physical measurements:** biophysical measurements or geographical information.
- ✓ **Existing documents and data:** including existing data sets, official statistics, project records and social media data.

In most cases, an effective combination of quantitative and qualitative data will provide a more comprehensive picture of what has happened.

It is also important to investigate to what extent the change is due to the innovation/intervention being evaluated? Causal questions ask whether or not, and to what extent, observed changes are due to the intervention being evaluated rather than to other factors. There are three design options that address causal attribution:

- ✓ **Experimental designs** – which construct a control group through random assignment.
- ✓ **Quasi-experimental designs** – which construct a comparison group through matching, regression discontinuity, propensity scores or another means.
- ✓ **Non-experimental designs** – which look systematically at whether the evidence is consistent with what would be expected if the intervention was producing the impacts, and also whether other factors could provide an alternative explanation.

4. Review data quality

The most fundamental aspects that could be good to consider when verifying the quality of your data are:

- ✓ **Validity** – did the data measure what they were intended to measure?
- ✓ **Reliability** – are the data measured and collected consistently and will the results be the same when measurements are repeated?
- ✓ **Completeness** – are the data sufficiently free of gaps?
- ✓ **Precision** – is there enough detail and specificity?
- ✓ **Integrity** – are data collected free from deliberate bias or manipulation?
- ✓ **Timeliness** – are the data up-to-date and available on time?

5. Analyse your data

In any impact evaluation, it is important to define what is meant by 'success' (quality, value) and how different effects (positive and potentially negative) are rated in relation to each other, to reach defensible conclusions about the worth of the innovation/intervention. It is also important to consider sustainability in terms of the probability of continued long-term benefits, after major implementation assistance has ceased.

Below are some good questions to ask yourself in relation to your Theory of Change, if you're not seeing the desired effects:

For Inputs:

How are my inputs (time, money, team, etc.) affecting our impact? Am I effectively using each resource? Do I need to move resources to different activities? Do I need more of a certain resource? Why? What will I use it for?

For Activities:

Are our activities leading to the impact we want to have, or have there been less-than-stellar results? Should we get rid of something, scale up the one thing that is working, or try out a brand new idea?

For Outputs:

What am I/my team creating and delivering on a weekly and monthly basis? Are these actually producing results? What can we cut out? What should we add?

For Outcomes:

What are all the little effects we are seeing with our beneficiaries? How has their situation changed over time? How often are we checking in with them? Do we need more time to measure effects?

For Impact:

Have we moved the needle? What were the main things that led us there? What do we need to change and why?

Failure to achieve the final intended impacts could be due to theory failure rather than implementation failure. This has important implications for the recommendations that come out of an evaluation. In cases of implementation failure, it is reasonable to recommend actions to improve the quality of implementation; in cases of theory failure, it is necessary to rethink the whole strategy for achieving impacts.

6. Communicate findings and improve solution

Keep your most important and active stakeholders (see [stakeholder map in tool 1.3](#)) engaged in the improvement of your innovation by communicating impact evaluation results in a clear and transparent manner with a focus on key areas of interest for each stakeholder. You might have to develop different theories of change to explain how the intervention works directly with the main target group (f.ex. a patient) compared to how it will work with secondary target groups (such as family members or health care staff). In upstream policy work, multiple theories of change will be needed to address the changes that are intended at different levels – for example, with staff, managers, policymakers and community organizations.

Communication and close interactions with stakeholders will improve the product/service and may lead to achievement of the intended outcomes in the long run. Decide on the frequency of the communication and how often you will want to receive feedback as you improve the product. Don't forget to identify and plan for any sensitivities or risks around your dissemination such as intellectual property and regulatory issues.

Resources/Sources:

https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/resources/guide/overview_data_collection_and_analysis_methods_in_impact_evaluation

https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/brief_2_theoryofchange_eng.pdf

<https://rankandfilemag.com/issue-10/theory-of-change-guide-for-social-impact-modeling/>

https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/brief_1_overview_eng.pdf

<https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/755-overview-data-collection-and-analysis-methods-in-impact-evaluation-methodological.html>

<https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

← 4.1 Facilitate implementation

4.3 Communicate benefits in order to scale →