

Theory of Change



A theory of change is a roadmap for your path to creating measurable social change. Applied to #GivingTuesday, your theory of change will allow you to be specific about the impact you want to have with your gift and the activities you can support to achieve that impact. Although developing a theory of change can take some time, and may require multiple revisions, you will use this plan to drive the decision-making process.

review the components of theory of change

A complete theory of change includes the components below.

1. **Assumptions** - The facts, state of affairs and situations that are assumed and will be necessary considerations in achieving success.
2. **Inputs** – The people, time, materials and resources that you and others need to invest to achieve your goals.
3. **Activities** – The programs, services and actions you or the nonprofit will implement.
4. **Outputs** – The amount, type or degree of service(s) the program provides to its beneficiaries.
5. **Outcomes** – The specific changes in our participants' behavior, knowledge, skills, status and capacity.
6. **Impact** – The organizational, community, social and systemic changes that result from the program (intended or unintended).
7. **External Conditions** –The current environment in which you desire to achieve impact. This includes the factors beyond control of the program (economic, political, social, cultural, etc.) that will influence results and outcomes.



example 1

Assumptions:

Students need personalized reading instruction and schools need volunteers to meet this need



Inputs:

Four hours of free time a week for a trimester



Activities:

Volunteering as a reading tutor at a local elementary school



Outputs:

Two kids exceed their grade's reading level



Outcomes:

Improve literacy in a local elementary school



Impact:

Students achieve higher learning outcomes and have expanded access to opportunity

External Conditions:

Student language proficiency, student reading level, student interest in reading, space in the school for pull-out groups/tutoring sessions, student nutrition and health, family's commitment to reading, access to books and internet at home and classroom materials.

example 2

Assumptions:

Mentoring programs help students achieve academic and professional growth



Inputs:

\$150 on #GivingTuesday



Activities:

Support organization that mentors first-gen Latinx college students



Outputs:

First-gen Latinx students receive mentoring on adjusting to college life, study skills and career prep



Outcomes:

Increase graduation rates and job placement among first-gen Latinx students



Impact:

Increase earned income and overall quality of life of first-gen Latinx students and their families

External Conditions:

Student schedules, student responsibilities at home (financial and emotional), student commitment to program, financial supports of college or university, professional goals of students, student employment restrictions and language proficiency of students.



create your own theory of change

Now, build your own theory of change for #GivingTuesday! This activity will allow you to identify the types of activities and programs you will consider funding to achieve your intended impact. Reference our examples for guidance.

Assumptions:

Inputs:

Activities:

Outputs:

Outcomes:

Impact:



External Conditions:

apply theory of change to the nonprofits you research

While it is important that philanthropists map a personal theory of change in order to inform their own philanthropic strategy, theory of change can also be used to assess nonprofit strategy. Consult the [Logic Model Guide](#) to learn more about how you can use theory of change to assess the nonprofits you will consider for funding on #GivingTuesday.