

# Outcome Mapping<sup>1</sup>

*A learning approach to planning, monitoring and evaluation*

## *Brief History*

In the late 1990's, Canada's [IDRC](#) recognized a consistent problem in its development efforts: Donors wanting to support large scale systemic change led by people in communities but expecting quick linear results while engaging in complex systems.

IDRC began working with Dr. Barry Kibel of the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation and community-based organizations in Senegal, India, and Canada to develop a methodology for planning, process, outcome, and organizational evaluation that:

- puts people at the centre
- defines outcomes as changes in behaviour
- helps measure contribution to complex change processes
- supports learning and “getting findings used”

## *Theory*

Most evaluation systems are based on logical frameworks (cause and effect). This significantly limits the potential of an organization or program to *contribute to impact* by forcing a link of each activity causally to a measurable result.

- OM is based in complexity theory and systems thinking
- OM embraces that change process is complex, non-controllable, and non-linear
- OM requires attentive awareness - a focus on reality, social change, and active curiosity in what is happening
- OM never separates change from context
- OM supports identification of contributions to impact, rather than attribution (taking credit)

## *Methodology: Three Stages in working with Outcome Mapping*

1. Intentional Design: Establishing consensus on the macro level changes the organization or network will help bring about and the strategies it will use. Answers four questions:

- Why? What is the vision to which the program wants to contribute
- Who? Who are the key partners?
- What? What are the changes that are being sought?
- How? How will the program contribute to the change process?

2. Outcome and Performance Monitoring: A framework is developed for monitoring the program's actions and its “partners in change” progress toward desired outcomes. Largely based on self-assessment. Provides three key data collection tools:

- Outcome Journal: identify partner changes and impacts
- Strategy Journal: effectiveness of and learning from program actions
- Performance Journal: assessment of organizational practices

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<sup>1</sup> Primary resource for Outcome Mapping is [www.outcomemapping.ca](http://www.outcomemapping.ca)

3. Evaluation Planning and Implementation: Identifies evaluation priorities and develops an evaluation plan and practices to implement all stages.

#### *Applications*

OM is being used in economic and community development projects across the globe and has been for fourteen years. In the last five years the methodology has gained additional attention within the fields of Capacity Development, Education, and amongst research and evaluation experts looking for a better way to monitor and evaluate complex systems change projects.

[Outcome Harvesting](#)<sup>2</sup> is a complementary approach to OM that is utilisation-focused, highly participatory and enables evaluators, grant makers, and managers to identify, formulate, verify, and make sense of outcomes they have influenced when relationships of cause-effect are unknown. Outcome Harvesting does not measure progress towards predetermined outcomes or objectives, but rather collects evidence of what has been achieved, and works backward to determine whether and how the project or intervention contributed to the change.

This [diagnostic chart](#)<sup>3</sup> names some of the needed conditions for a successful application of OM and can assist in determining when Outcome Mapping is not suitable.

#### **Resources and Links:**

- [Four page brief on Outcome Mapping](#)
- [10-minute video presentation on OM by Sarah Earl](#) (old but good)
- [A 30-minute introductory video](#) by Scott Nine on key concepts
- [Outcome Mapping Facilitation Manual](#)
- [A guide to "complexity aware" monitoring and evaluation approaches](#)

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<sup>2</sup> paper by [Ricardo Wilson-Grau](#), [Heather Britt](#)

<sup>3</sup> created by [Kaia Ambrose](#)