

# Getting Started: A Self-directed Guide to Outcome Map Development

*Features a guide with exercises and examples*



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# Getting Started: A Self-directed Guide to Outcome Map Development

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# Introduction

## Context

ORS Impact<sup>1</sup> has been providing ongoing evaluation consultation to the Annie E. Casey Foundation KIDS COUNT Initiative since 2007. The focus of evaluation support has been individualized capacity building and guidance to KIDS COUNT grantees related to development of a theory of change, identifying interim outcomes, developing data collection processes and tools, and using data to strengthen advocacy efforts.

Much of this work has been based on *A Guide to Measuring Advocacy and Policy* which ORS Impact developed for the Foundation in 2007 in collaboration with Tom Kelly, Director of Evaluation, and Don Crary, Director of KIDS COUNT.<sup>2</sup> The intent of individualized grantee capacity building has been to both test the ideas described in the guide in real-life advocacy settings, as well as to finely tune these lessons. A number of these lessons are also captured in an ORS Impact brief entitled, *Ten Considerations for Advocacy Evaluation Planning: Lessons Learned from KIDS COUNT Grantee Experiences* (2009).<sup>3</sup>

Going forward, ORS Impact and the Annie E. Casey Foundation are attempting to find ways to advance the knowledge and application of advocacy evaluation approaches in broader and more accessible ways—including the use of webinars, trainings, and resource materials. The *Getting Started Guide* is part of this approach.

A **Theory of Change** clearly expresses the relationships between actions and hoped-for results. It provides an explanation of belief systems (e.g., assumptions, best practices, or experiences) that make positive change in the lives of individuals and the community. A Theory of Change can be articulated as a visual diagram, such as an Outcome Map, that depicts the sequential relationships between initiatives, strategies, and intended outcomes and goals.

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1 While the work was completed under the name of Organizational Research Services, in this document we will refer to the new name, ORS Impact. Organizational Research Services was changed to a DBA of ORS Impact in 2013.

2 *A Guide to Measuring Advocacy and Policy*. (2007). Organizational Research Services on behalf of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Available at: [orsimpact.com](http://orsimpact.com) and [aecf.org](http://aecf.org).

3 *Ten Considerations for Advocacy Evaluation Planning: Lessons Learned from KIDS COUNT Grantee Experiences* (2009). ORS Impact on behalf of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Available at: [orsimpact.com](http://orsimpact.com) and [aecf.org](http://aecf.org).

# Purpose and Format of the Guide

The Getting Started guide offers step-by-step guidance and tools that can help KIDS COUNT grantees and other advocacy organizations interested in expressing their theory of change to enhance communication and serve as a framework for evaluation planning. This guide offers a template for advocates to express their theory of change through an outcome map. The guide lays out steps associated with three main aspects of outcome map development.

- .....➤ **Part One:** Identify an approach for developing a theory of change outcome map, including defining the opportunity and determining the timeframe and stakeholders to involve in the process.
- .....➤ **Part Two:** Identify needs, purposes, frames for communication and evaluation, including identifying audiences, vantage point(s), and priorities to highlight.
- .....➤ **Part Three:** Design a useful theory of change outcome map, including identifying goals, strategies, and interim outcomes.

Each part includes the relevant steps along with considerations and key questions to answer.

The Getting Started guide is intended to be an easy-to-use resource for advocacy organizations that seek to develop a theory of change outcome map to simply articulate and effectively communicate their work to a variety of audiences (e.g., Board members, staff, funders, constituents, donors, partners, or other stakeholders). It can also help them think about how and what to evaluate. In addition, we expect that use of this guide will offer multiple learning opportunities regarding how theories of change are developed and used in advocacy settings.

## Background

As noted previously, one way to express a theory of change is via an outcome map; we have found this visual product to be particularly useful for advocacy organizations. Simply put, an outcome map is a roadmap or a blueprint for articulating strategies and their relationship to outcomes. It provides a focused view of the landscape for advocacy activities, as well as the progression of outcomes that describe how you get from “here” to “there.” In the context of advocacy, this roadmap is especially important.

While the focus of advocacy work is often on policy wins and improved conditions for populations and the environment, much of the progress occurs in the landscape along the way. We characterize advocacy outcomes as either interim *structural change outcomes* (e.g., changes in institutions, systems, beliefs, commitments) or



*policy change outcomes.* Both are essential to advocacy and policy change work but the former has been underemphasized and the latter overemphasized in planning, funding, and evaluation of advocacy efforts. Changes in public will, political will, base of support, capacity of advocacy organizations, and strengthened alliances are the crucial structural changes that must happen on the way to policy wins. These interim changes are equally crucial for “holding the line” and defending bedrock legislation.

An outcome map lifts up the importance of advocacy’s interim outcomes at the same time that it sharpens the focus on the type of policy changes of greatest interest and relevance.

Advocacy organizations that have worked to develop a theory of change outcome map have found both the process and the end product to be useful. The process allows advocates and their partners to clarify thinking and build consensus about how strategies are expected to lead to desired outcomes. The outcome map product is a useful tool to help advocates communicate about their efforts.

*“Development of a theory of change [outcome map] has moved our work forward significantly. The process of defining our strategies, outcomes, and goals gave our team a framework for discussing the values and direction of our organization in the coming years. We are better positioned to advocate for a system that effectively serves children.”*

—Director of Policy and Research, Action for Children, NC

*“We worked to develop an organizational theory of change [outcome map] and so far, the payoff has been wonderful. Not knowing that we would be facing a major state budget crisis this year, it was absolutely the right and most timely thing we could have done! We are able to clearly show, describe, and defend our work with our funders, the legislature, our partners, and our board. People say ‘Oh, now I really get it. I see what you do.’”*

—Executive Director, Georgia Family Connection Partnership

ORS Impact’s experience working with KIDS COUNT grantees and other advocates shows that there is not a neat, linear one-size-fits-all set of steps that results in a completed outcome map. To help advocates, the Getting Started guide outlines basic guiding questions that support outcome map development, as well as accompanying exercises and tools to support documentation of decisions and the specific components of an outcome map. Movement through the guide’s steps and questions related to three main aspects of outcome map development will help grantees better articulate their strategies and their relationships to outcomes. Ultimately, it help advocates enhance their communication and engage in evaluation planning to document results of their work. There are no “right” answers. Answers to guiding questions will likely be different for each advocacy organization depending on numerous contextual factors.

The guide is intended to be self directed, though occasionally organizations may benefit from having an outside consultant work with them through some of the steps of articulating their theory of change. Having an outside perspective can sometimes help clarify the logic and assumptions that are inherent in your thinking.

## Defining Strategies, Outcomes, and Goals

While these terms are often used differently by different groups or fields, ORS Impact defines strategies, outcomes, and goals as follows:

- Strategies** .....> A related set of activities, e.g., those connected with implementation of a program, a campaign, or a collaborative effort.
- Outcomes** .....> Short-, intermediate-, or long-term changes that can occur among individuals, families, communities, organizations, or systems. Individual, family, and community outcomes can include changes in knowledge, attitudes, skills, behaviors, health, or conditions. Organizational and system outcomes can include changes in institutional structures, capacity, service delivery systems, regulations, service practices, issue visibility, norms, partnerships, public will, and policies.
- Goals** .....> Sizeable, lasting, positive long-term changes.



# Checkpoints

It is common during development of an outcome map to have issues surface related to consensus, compatibility, and capacity. While these issues can be challenging at times, further exploration can result in enhanced clarity and agreement about what an advocacy organization is seeking to accomplish, as well as what might be realistically required to get there. As advocates work through each part of outcome map development and the related steps and questions, it may help to periodically consider the following questions as checkpoints.

## 1. To what degree is there clarity and consensus among key stakeholders regarding beliefs and assumptions, audiences, models of change, strategies, and key outcome areas?

Addressing some of the guide's questions may expose places where different ideas are held about an organization's work or how it leads to expected changes. Sometimes differences can be easily resolved. However, if different assumptions are exposed about how the advocacy work happens, it can sometimes be challenging to find agreement.

If it is hard to achieve consensus or arrive at answers to particular questions, it may be best to make a brief note of what the differences or challenges are and simply move on. Questions can always be revisited later in the process. Depending on the situation, it may be helpful to work with an outside facilitator to sort out issues standing in the way of agreement or consensus.

## 2. To what degree is the emerging picture of change compatible with the organization's beliefs, approaches, and overall culture (e.g., need for confidentiality, beliefs about how change happens, timeframe represented, implied roles, and relationships)?

It is a good idea to make sure that the outcome map reflects a view of change that is consistent with an organization's strategic plan, overall beliefs, and philosophies (e.g., community engagement, grassroots democracy).

## 3. To what degree does the emerging theory of change have implications for organizational capacity, roles, and resources dedicated to advancing the theory of change (e.g., does the organization have adequate capacity to fully implement key strategies)?

It is a good idea to make sure that the outcome map reflects an amount of work and expectations about results that are realistic and in line with an organization's resources and capacity.

## Part One

# Identify an Approach for Developing a Theory of Change Outcome Map

Step 1: Define the current opportunity or question and why this is the right time to develop a theory of change outcome map.

There are times when an organization is in the best position to begin this process. (See examples in the Part One Exercises.) Organizations should be strategic about when and why they engage in outcome map development.

**Answer the questions** —————> 1) *Why are we embarking on this process now?*  
2) *What is our goal and purpose for creating an outcome map?*

Step 2: Determine the timeframe for development of a theory of change outcome map.

While the purpose of a theory of change outcome map is similar for most advocacy groups—to define and communicate how strategies will lead to expected changes—ORS Impact’s experience shows that the process for building an outcome map will vary across groups. Variations are partly due to differences in the contexts, timing, organizational culture, and leadership present across organizations. However, even with variations, there are two basic processes that ORS Impact has seen work well; these are described in Part One Exercises on page 8.

One process will work best if an organization is developing its outcome map in a 3-6 month timeframe. This is a likely process if there is a limited appetite for planning, and the preferred approach involves having a few key representatives do most of the work, with vetting and review by a broader group of stakeholders.

The second process described is likely to be effective in a 6-12 month outcome map development process. This is the likely process when it is determined that an outcome map must be created based on the direct input of many stakeholders and partners.

**Answer the question** —————> 1) *What timeframe will be appropriate for our process?*

Step 3: Determine which stakeholders will participate in the outcome map design process to provide input and feedback, and form a designated work group (e.g., staff only, staff and others such as the board, or broader partners).

All of these factors will need to be considered together in order to select the process that will work best for your situation:

- **Appetite for planning among staff and stakeholders.** Much advocacy work occurs through partnerships across different organizations, sectors, and sometimes—in the cases of unlikely allies—across political or other lines. While involving partners in theory of change development processes can lead to the creation of a more complete picture of how desired goals may be achieved, it may be prohibitive or difficult to involve all partners aligned around a campaign or strategy. Instead, it may be best to consult partners as interim outcomes and/or priority measures are identified. This could be especially important if support or cooperation from partners is needed to implement strategies that are directed at certain outcomes, or if there is a need to rely on partners to help with documentation about outcome achievement.
- **Who must be at the table?** Sometimes there is a strategic reason for involving certain parties in the planning process, e.g., to further ownership and buy-in, to build good will, or to deepen relationships or partnerships.
- **Time available.** Advocates operate in a fast-paced, dynamic environment with intense periods of hectic activity. This can make finding regular time to meet and plan challenging. Taking steps to conceptualize a theory of change is more than a one-day event. It can be challenging, but advocacy organizations need to determine how they can dedicate the needed time and bandwidth to this activity. Also, it is important to consider if an organization is about to undergo significant change such as develop, revise, or revisit its strategic plan; do other significant planning work; or if advocates are heading into the busiest times of the year (e.g., legislative session). If so, it may be best to put theory of change development on hold.
- **Leadership.** Because development of a theory of change outcome map will typically be done in addition to all other efforts and without any additional resources, it is best accomplished if there is leadership to keep the process moving.

**Answer the Question** → 1) *Who will lead or contribute to the process of developing your theory of change outcome map?*



**CHECKPOINT** Before moving on, it may be useful to reflect on questions related to clarity and consensus (see Checkpoints, p. 5).

# Part One: Exercises

Exercise 1: Define the current opportunity or question and why this is the right time to develop a theory of change outcome map.

## .....➤ *Possible Scenarios*

- An organization is just beginning or has just finished strategic planning and is hoping to highlight and communicate important aspects of its work.
  - There has been a recent leadership transition and an outcome map could help clarify an organization's current and/or future work and focus areas.
  - An organization wishes to learn how it might strengthen its capacity to influence policy and budget decisions at the state or local level.
  - An organization is planning to evaluate some or all of its efforts and needs to more specifically articulate relationships between strategies and outcomes.
- 

Exercise 2: Determine a timeframe for development of an outcome map.

## .....➤ *Scenario 1: 3-6 Month Outcome Map Development Process*

- 1-2 individuals identified to facilitate the process.
- Staff or another identified small (5-8 person) work group develop an initial draft outcome map (typically accomplished in 2-5 work sessions; 2-4 hours each). The work group should include a variety of perspectives, facilitators, and representatives of the organization's executive management team, some with solid knowledge of strategies and implementation.
- The draft outcome map is shared and vetted with a broader group of stakeholders (e.g., other staff, board, partners, funders) and feedback is collected and documented.

## .....➤ *Scenario 2: 6-12 Month Outcome Map Development Process*

- 1-2 individuals identified to facilitate the process.
- A list of all key stakeholders is developed, and input regarding elements of the outcome map is sought from those identified. This is typically accomplished through multiple meetings or work sessions that occur over a 1-3 month time frame.
- Input regarding stakeholders' initial outcome map development is summarized.
- A small work group is identified (5-8 people).

- Based on input from key stakeholders, the work group prepares a draft outcome map. This is typically accomplished in 1-3 work sessions of 2-4 hours each. The work group should include some of those who participated in the broader input gathering process.
  - The draft outcome map is shared back with those stakeholders who provided initial input. Feedback is again collected and documented.
  - The draft outcome map is refined by the work group based on feedback received. This is typically accomplished in 1-2 work sessions of 2-3 hours each.
  - A second draft is shared for feedback.
  - The second draft outcome map is refined by the work group based on feedback received. This is typically accomplished in 1-2 work sessions of 2-3 hours each.
  - A third draft is shared for minor comments and adoption.
  - Formal adoption of the outcome map follows minor revisions (revisions at this point are primarily to clarify or amplify).
- 

### Exercise 3: Identify who will lead or contribute to the process of developing your theory of change outcome map.

#### .....➔ *Things to Consider*

- Appetite for planning
- Strategic choices: Who *must* be at the table?
- Time available
- Leadership

## Part Two

# Identify Needs, Purposes, and Frames for Communication and Evaluation

Step 1: Brainstorm relevant audiences for a theory of change outcome map and identify their needs and interests.

Possible audiences include: funders, board, staff, constituents, partners and donors. Identifying your organization's **main audiences** and their interests regarding your work can help you determine how best to communicate about your work, what areas to emphasize, and how you may approach documentation and evaluation of your work.

Some audiences have strong or specific interests and needs to which your organization may want to or need to respond. You might consider these as **target audiences** for your outcome map. When creating the outcome map, it is important to clarify whether you are providing a general picture of your work or addressing a particular audience. If the latter, you will need to weigh the advantages of addressing one particular audience's needs and interests versus those of others.

**Answer the questions** .....→ 1) *Who are the **main audiences** to whom you will communicate your work via an outcome map?*  
2) *Who is your **target audience** for an outcome map?*

Step 2: Determine the best vantage point(s) for depicting a theory of change outcome map.

Different audiences may view your work from different perspectives or vantage points. Before articulating the strategies and outcomes that you want to make clear and prominent in your map, it will be helpful to determine the vantage point which can best communicate your theory of change.

- *30,000 foot vantage point.* An outcome map from this high-level vantage point is a zoomed out view, like looking out of an airplane window. This view point shows the broad landscape of what is being done to advance toward and achieve a long-term goal, typically a policy-related goal or a change in population or environmental condition. This view will likely include multiple efforts of different partners that contribute to the long-term goal and is most



useful when describing work within a long-term time frame (e.g., multiple partners are implementing a broad set of efforts directed at different areas leading to change in the health/well being of all children birth to age 18).

**This vantage point may be most relevant for general communication with multiple funders, partner alignment, and for those who care about long-term results.**

- **10,000 foot vantage point.** An outcome map from this vantage point shows a slightly lower-to-the-ground view and would likely encompass the breadth of work of one organization. This vantage point is most useful if an organization is seeking to define its particular role or contribution within a broad effort (i.e. what the organization itself brings to a partnership effort), or if an organization wishes to express how its own mix of internal strategies and outcomes are related and connected. **This vantage point may be most relevant for board members, staff teams, close-in partners, and funders.**
- **1,000 foot vantage point.** An outcome map from this vantage point is like a view from the roof of a small building and would likely illustrate the activities and intended results connected with a singular strategy or related set of actions. This view is most useful if an organization is involved in evaluation planning, or trying to get a picture of what is likely to happen or change in a distinct near-term time period (e.g., the next one-to-two years). **This vantage point may be most relevant for close in partners, staff teams, or constituents.**

Another option is to create several nested outcome maps that show different views of strategies within a multi-faceted campaign or broad effort. This option can be quite useful, but makes most sense if the organization has the time, appetite, and leadership for doing the work.

When selecting a vantage point for your outcome map, consider that there is no right answer. Answering this question for your organization will involve thinking about what is important to your target audiences, your strategies and what your organization ultimately hopes to achieve, and the degree to which your work happens in the context of collaboration and partnership with others who share similar goals.

**Answer the question** .....> *1) What vantage point(s) will allow you to best communicate your work and intended results to your target audience(s)?*

### Step 3: Prioritize relevant strategies and outcome areas to highlight in your theory of change outcome map.

Think of what your target audience(s) cares most about. This, along with your identified vantage point, can help you determine what needs to be clear or prominent in your theory of change. Some audiences may care most about implementation of certain activities (e.g., media advocacy/communications, lobbying, community education and outreach, data and research). Some audiences may care most about achieving certain outcomes (e.g., increased organizational capacity to engage in good media advocacy, policy wins, the health or well-being of a particular population).

#### *Considerations:*

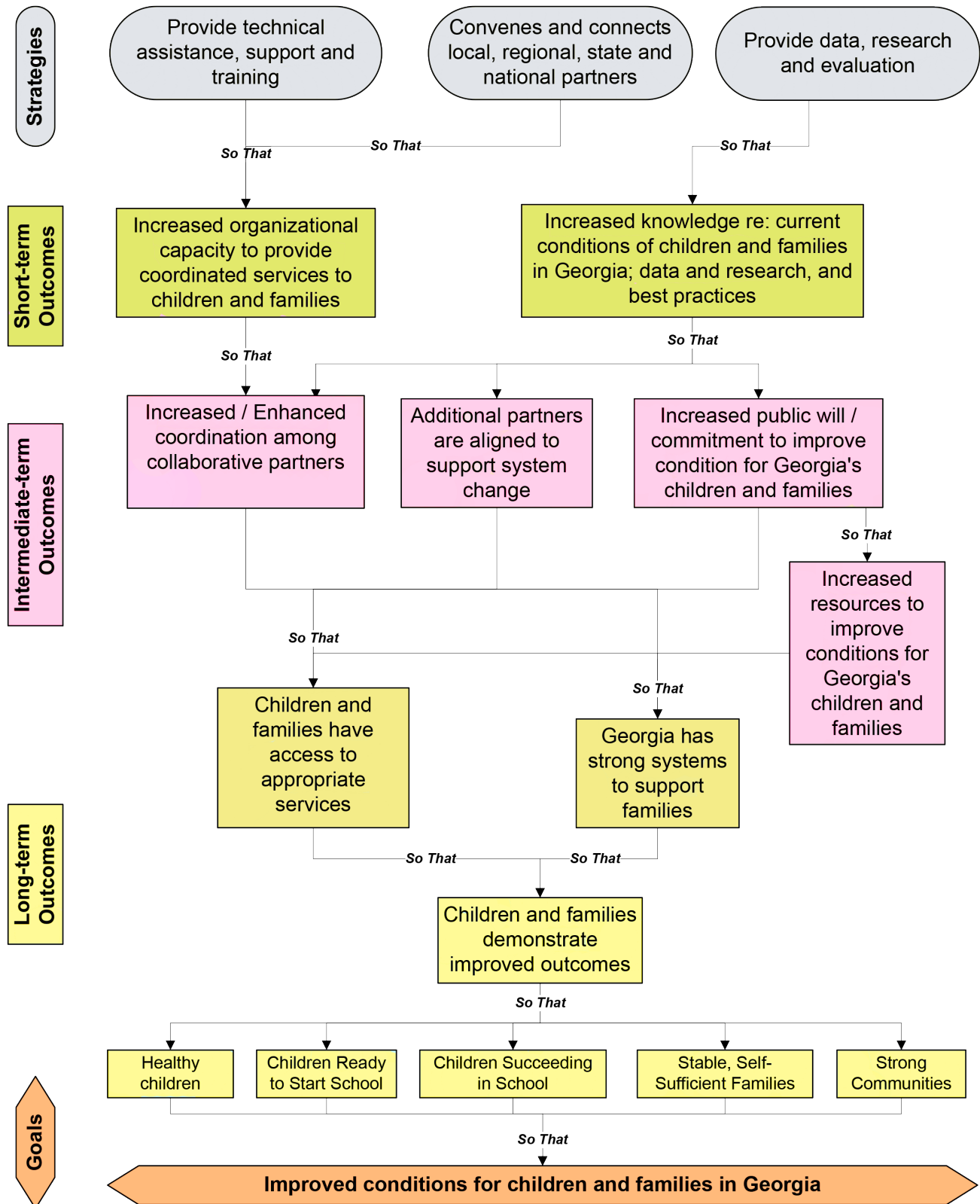
- Some audiences' interests may be related to your organization's operations (e.g., organizational capacity, types of actions, and the quantity/breadth of actions). Some audiences' interests may be more related to the effectiveness of your actions (e.g., the quality, results, or outcomes of your actions). And, some audiences may have strategic interests (e.g., how your organization's efforts contribute to broad outcome areas or goals).
- Organizational capacity, types of actions, effectiveness, and strategic interests are particularly important to consider and reflect as part of your outcome map. Often, information about the quantity or breadth of actions fit better into a work plan or implementation plan.
- Audiences' interests may either be to achieve a clearer understanding of your organization's current work, or to obtain a clearer view of what your organization's work could look like in the future. It is important to be as clear as possible in determining whether the outcome map will present a picture of "what is" or "what could be."

**Answer the question** → 1) *What activities or outcomes does your target audience(s) care most about?*



**Checkpoint** Before moving on, it may be useful to reflect on questions related to clarity and consensus (see Checkpoints, p. 5).

### Georgia Family Connection Partnership Outcome Map



# Part Two: Exercises

## Identify Audiences and Their Interests

Below is a table that may be useful to complete as you think about Exercises 1 and 2.

Who are the main audiences for your work	You are successful if . . . <i>What are the primary interests or needs of the audience?</i>	What vantage point of your work does audience interest most align with?	Target audience for outcome map? (Y/N)

Exercise 1: Brainstorm relevant audiences for a theory of change outcome map and identify their needs and interests.

.....➤ *Things to Consider*

- When creating the outcome map, it is important to clarify whether you are providing a general picture of your work or addressing a particular audience. If the latter, you will need to weigh the advantages of addressing one particular audience's needs and interests versus those of others.
- If you have identified many target audiences, where are their interests the same? Where are they different?
- If the interests of identified target audiences are significantly different, it may be helpful to narrow your focus.
- Are the target audiences' needs or interests likely to be addressed in the short-term or long-term? Are they likely to be addressed by your organization alone or by many organizations, groups, and efforts working in partnership?

## Exercise 2: Determine the vantage point(s) for depicting a theory of change outcome map.

This could be your vantage point if SOME or ALL of the following are true.

### .....➤ 30,000 foot view

- Your organization is working toward impact or has a social change model.<sup>4</sup>
- Your organization typically works in a context of collaboration and partnership to achieve shared goals.
- You want your outcome map to show how your organization's strategies connect with those of other groups, and with a broad, long-term goal. (See the following examples in the Outcome Maps section of this guide: Connecticut Association for Human Services and Children First For Oregon: "Fostering Success")

### .....➤ 10,000 foot view

- Your organization engages in multiple strategies directed toward a broad, long-term goal (e.g., a policy-related goal).
- Your organization has adopted a social change or a policy-change model (see footnote).
- You want your outcome map to portray the strategies and expected outcomes reflected by the whole of your organization's work, and the connections among strategies and outcomes.
- You want your outcome map to help express your organization's particular role or contribution within a broader effort. (See the following examples: Georgia Family Connection Partnership and Action for Children North Carolina.)

### .....➤ 1,000 foot view

- Your organization is engaged in a specific strategy directed at a specific policy-related goal.
- Your organization is interested in the results of specific advocacy tactics.
- You want your outcome map to portray the set of related activities that are encompassed within a particular strategy and the resulting short- and intermediate-term outcomes. (See the following examples: Children First for Oregon's "Fostering Success" Strategic Communications Campaign and Georgia Family Connection Partnership – Strategy 1 Map.)

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<sup>4</sup> For additional description of the social change model and models of change in advocacy and policy work, see: *The Challenge of Assessing Policy and Advocacy Activities: Strategies for a Prospective Evaluation Approach*. Blueprint Research & Design, Inc. (2005). Prepared for the California Endowment.

### Exercise 3: Prioritize relevant strategies and outcome areas to highlight in your outcome map.

Below is a table that could be useful to complete as you think about Exercise 3.

Target Audiences	Relevant Headline(s)

A major news source is putting together a summary of your past year of work. Thinking about both your target audiences' needs and interests, what is the headline that would best communicate success? What would your target audience most want to read or hear?

.....➔ *Some Examples: The headline could address...*

#### What work you have done?

##### *Types of activities:*

- Develop data products
- Develop media spots/press releases
- Provide training or technical assistance
- Sponsor or facilitate meetings and events
- Conduct research or evaluation
- Engage in legislative advocacy
- Identify strategies and tactics for universal pre-K campaign

#### What you have accomplished as a result of your work?

##### *Outputs of your work (how much you have done):*

- # of hits on website
- # of downloads of policy or issue briefs, newsletters
- # of public and nonprofit organizations receiving products
- # and types of attendees at conferences or meetings
- Open rate of news alert email messages
- # of policy makers who received a publication
- # of press releases sent to daily newspaper, TV stations, radio stations

***Organizational capacity:***

- The amount of capacity your organization has to implement or engage in certain strategies or activities

***Effectiveness or outcomes of your work:***

- Legislative report tracking policy changes
- Public citation of use of products by policy makers
- # of instances where products are cited in policy debates (legislative record search)
- Evidence of policy maker engagement (i.e. press releases, citations in bill language)
- # of child advocacy groups that use data or products (e.g., State Child Advocate Survey)
- # of research-proven initiatives used in state

***Strategic accomplishments:***

- Selected message to frame key issue
- Selected topic, frame, or approach for development of data products
- Selected approaches to disseminate messages or data products

# Part Three Design a Useful Theory of Change Outcome Map

## STEP 1: Start at the END by clarifying the goal(s).

Advocacy organizations are generally clear on their strategies and tactics, as well as their end goals. End goals are often expressed as policy changes, or changes in population or environmental conditions. Developing a meaningful evaluation of advocacy and policy efforts requires definition of the “middle”: what happens between the implementation of strategies and tactics, and the ultimate policy impact.

The goal(s) is the “bottom line” of your outcome map. For KIDS COUNT grantees, this ultimate change will generally be:

**A policy-related change.** In other words, results of strategies and activities may include policy development, new or revised policy, policy agendas, policy adoption or policy blocking, policy monitoring, policy enforcement, etc.

OR

**An impact statement.** Results of strategies may lead to a specific condition for individuals, families, a particular population, neighborhood(s), or community. For example:

- Children in our state are healthy.
- All families are strong and self-sufficient.
- Communities are prosperous.

**Answer the questions** → 1) *What is the ultimate goal of your work?*  
2) *If you are working with partners, what is your overall common goal? Where is there mission congruence?*



## STEP 2: Identify the main strategies that your organization or partnership will implement toward the goal(s).

Consider specific strategies that address your ultimate goal. Strategies are related sets of activities and can include public awareness efforts, capacity-building efforts, or community mobilization efforts. Strategies can describe programs, campaigns, initiatives, or collaborations.

**Answer the question** .....> *1) What work will we do to reach our ultimate goal?*

## STEP 3: Determine the length of time that will be depicted in your outcome map between strategy implementation and outcome achievement.

The length of time identified will suggest the types of outcomes that will likely make up the middle of the theory of change.

### *Considerations*

- Think about your activities. For how long are current activities likely to be sustained? Your map should reflect a view of your work that you feel relatively certain about.
- Think about your approach. For example, if you have a social change approach, your outcome map will likely present quite a long-term view. However, if your approach is advocacy in order to bring about strategic alliances around a particular issue, the time frame for achievement may be much shorter. If you have a policy change approach, where are you in the policy process? How long will it take to achieve desired policy wins?

**Answer the questions** .....> *1) When will you likely achieve desired outcomes and goals?*  
*2) What kinds of things might need to happen first or on the way?*

## STEP 4: Begin filling in the middle. Identify meaningful interim outcomes that are likely to occur on the way to the goal(s).

One very effective approach is to develop “so-that chains.” So-that chains help connect strategies to the ultimate goal through a series of logical, sequential changes. Creating so-that chains for each strategy can allow for effective articulation and communication of expected changes resulting from each strategy, and how the strategies together contribute to ultimate goals. In developing an outcome map, however, it is important to note that multiple strategies are also likely to lead to common intermediate outcomes on the pathway to ultimate goals.

Fill in the Statement:

We do \_\_\_\_\_ [Strategy]

*So That*

\_\_\_\_\_ [Outcome/Change] results.

*Example:*

We provide technical assistance to child abuse prevention/  
family support programs

←..... Strategy

*So That*

Providers increase their knowledge about best practices

←..... Outcome

*So That*

Providers provide high quality programs

←..... Outcome

*So That*

Programs are more likely to result in positive outcomes for  
parents and families served

←..... Outcome

*So That*

Children are less likely to experience abuse and neglect

←..... Outcome

*So That*

All children are healthy and safe

←..... Goal

Notice that this chain of statements moved from knowledge to behavior of providers and from health status of children in programs to health status of children in the community. Each link is a logical sequence of events showing how implementation of a specific strategy contributes to broad changes.

For tips about constructing so-that chains and ideas about interim outcomes, see the tables included in Part Three Exercises. These tables describe several outcome areas likely to be related to advocacy. Consider that you will likely need to characterize both the *policy changes* which you are seeking and the *structural changes* (e.g., changes in institutions, beliefs, commitments) that happen on the way.

## Step 5: Prepare to share, refine, and/or adopt your theory of change outcome map

Once so-that chains are completed and a draft outcome map has been created, it is a good idea to test logic and relevance.

**Answer the questions** → 1) *Are there logical linkages between strategies, outcomes, and the goal?*  
2) *Are the most relevant outcomes included (i.e. those that are of highest interest or importance to target audiences)?*

Revisit Part Two, Step 1 to review your audience(s) needs and interests, and consider whether the outcome map is sufficiently addressing these.



**Checkpoint** As you prepare to share or adopt your outcome map, it may be helpful to reflect on questions related to compatibility and capacity (see Checkpoints, p. 5).

### Next Steps

Outcome maps can be incredibly useful for advocates; many have found outcome maps to be valuable for effective communication about advocacy work and as a fundamental part of evaluation planning. This guide presents an approach and specific steps to support KIDS COUNT grantees and other advocates as they think about and create a theory of change outcome map. Those who follow the steps and engage in the associated exercises should have a good understanding of how to clearly articulate their theory of change via a graphic outcome map. Those who use the guide will also add to ongoing learning about what it takes to plan and undertake evaluation efforts in advocacy settings.

Once groups have worked through the steps and exercises in this guide, they can draw on their thinking as well as the outcome map itself to inform communication and messages about the organization's work. Organizations may also periodically refer to the questions presented in this guide to reflect on the ongoing logic and relevance of their theory of change map or to support planning efforts.

Organizations can also use the outcome map as a platform for more detailed evaluation planning. Moving ahead with evaluation would involve identification of priority areas for measurement, selection of an appropriate evaluation design and measurement approaches, development of a comprehensive evaluation plan, and finally, implementation of evaluation efforts.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> For more information about steps involved in evaluation planning, see: *A User's Guide to Advocacy Evaluation Planning*. (2009). Harvard Family Research Project with support from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation.




# Part Three: Exercises

## Exercise 1: Start at the END and clarify goal(s).

### .....> Considerations

- Purpose of outcome map
- Needs and interests of your target audience(s)
- Your organization's core work

What is the bottom line or ultimate goal of your work? List the ultimate goal or impact in the "Goal"  shape at the bottom of the outcome map template on page 30.

Examples of goals include:

- **Policy-related changes:** policy development, new or revised policy, agenda setting, policy adoption or policy blocking, policy monitoring, policy enforcement.
- **Impact statement:** A specific condition for individuals, families, a particular population, neighborhood(s), or community.

It is important to achieve consensus about this goal. Typically goals are broad enough to make everyone feel comfortable, included, and inspired.

## Exercise 2: Identify the main strategies that your organization or partnership will implement toward the goal(s).

### .....> Considerations

- The needs and interests of your target audience(s)
- Your organization's core work

Identify the specific strategies that address your ultimate impact. These strategies may include program strategies, campaigns, initiatives, collaborations, public awareness efforts, capacity-building efforts, community mobilization efforts, and so on. Here are some examples:

- Execute a media campaign
- Facilitate an alliance for education
- Engage in community organizing
- Provide technical assistance
- Conduct research and program evaluation
- Develop data products

Exercise 3: Determine the length of time that will be depicted in the outcome map between strategy implementation and outcome achievement.

.....> *Considerations*

- Needs and interests of your target audience(s)
- The vantage point you identified for your outcome map (e.g., 30,000 foot, 10,000 foot, or 1,000 foot view)
- Your organization's capacity or partnerships

How long will it take to implement the strategies and/or achieve the range of desired accomplishments, outcomes, and goal(s)? Is it likely to take 1-3 years? 3-5 years? 5-10 years? 10 years or more?

What implications does your working time frame have in terms of the particular strategies and activities that will be implemented and/or the sequence of outcomes (changes, results) that will be achieved in the short term, intermediate term and longer term?

Exercise 4: Begin filling in the middle. Identify meaningful interim outcomes that are likely to occur on the way to the goal(s).

.....> *Create So-that Chains*

Take the first strategy identified on your outcome map and create a so-that chain based on the following question:

*"We do [strategy] so that \_\_\_\_\_ results for individuals, families, organizations, or communities"*

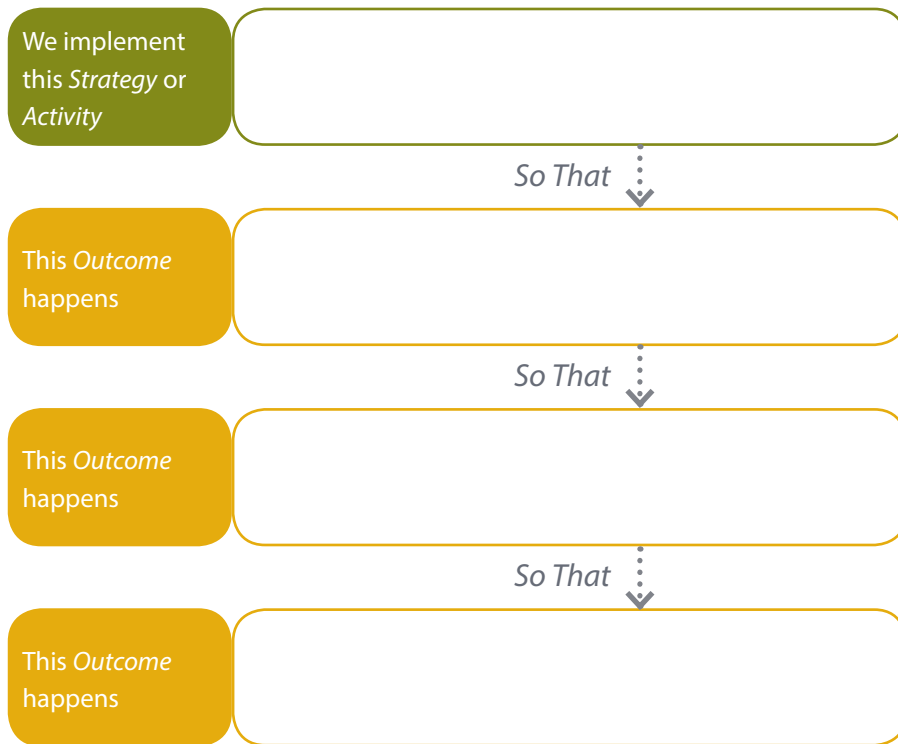
The answer should be the direct change, result, or outcome of the strategy. Repeat this question until you have linked each strategy to your goal.

Once you have begun to craft so-that chains, you can begin to fill in the "Outcomes" rectangles in the middle part of the Outcome Map Template on page 30.

See the following page for a so-that chain exercise and additional information about the types of outcomes likely to be associated with advocacy and policy work.

*Tip:* It is helpful to create so-that chains and begin assembling the picture of your theory of change outcome map on a large wall. You can use colored, sticky half sheets of paper to write strategies and outcomes. These sheets can be arranged sequentially on the wall to reflect the connection between strategies and outcomes, as well as the flow of outcomes toward the ultimate goal.

.....> *So-that Chain Exercise*



.....> *Types of Outcomes Associated with Advocacy and Policy Change Work*

In the publication, *A Guide To Measuring Advocacy and Policy*, ORS Impact identified several outcome areas that represent the interim steps and infrastructure to create the conditions for changes in society and the environment, as well as outcome areas that reflect the end-game: policy adoption, funding, or enforcement in various jurisdictions (e.g., local, state, federal). ORS Impact then distilled these outcomes into six distinct categories representing the essential changes in lives, community conditions, institutions, and systems that result from advocacy and policy work. These outcome categories are as follows.<sup>6</sup>

**1. Shift in Social Norms**

*Description:* the knowledge, attitudes, values and behaviors that comprise the normative structure of culture and society. Advocacy and policy work has become increasingly focused on this area of change in recognition of the importance of aligning advocacy and policy goals with core and enduring social values and behaviors.

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<sup>6</sup> Descriptions of Outcome Areas and the Table on pages 24-28 taken from: *A Guide to Measuring Advocacy and Policy*. (2007). ORS Impact on behalf of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Available at [orsimpact.com](http://orsimpact.com) and [aecf.org](http://aecf.org).

## 2. Strengthened Organizational Capacity

*Description:* the skill set, staffing and leadership, organizational structure and systems, finances, and strategic planning among nonprofit organizations and formal coalitions that plan and carry out advocacy and policy work. The development of these core capacities within the organization is critical to its ability to implement and sustain advocacy and policy change efforts.

## 3. Strengthened Alliances

*Description:* the level of coordination, collaboration, and mission alignment among community and system partners—including nontraditional alliances (e.g., bipartisan alliances; unlikely allies). These structural changes in community and institutional relationships and alliances have become essential forces in presenting common messages, pursuit of common goals, enforcement of policy changes, and ensuring the protection of policy wins in the event that they are threatened.

## 4. Strengthened Base of Support

*Description:* the grassroots, leadership, and institutional support for particular policy changes. The breadth and depth of support among the general public, interest groups, and opinion leaders for particular issues provides a major structural condition for supporting changes in policies. This outcome category spans many layers of culture and societal engagement including increases in civic participation and activism, allied voices among informal and formal groups, the coalescence of dissimilar interest groups, actions of opinion leader champions, and positive media attention.

## 5. Improved Policies

*Description:* the stages of policy change in the public policy arena. These stages include policy development, adoption, implementation, and funding. This has frequently been a past focus of measuring the success of advocacy and policy work. It is certainly the major focus of such work but is rarely achieved without changes in the preconditions to policy change identified in the other outcome categories.

## 6. Changes in Impact

*Description:* the ultimate changes in social and physical lives and conditions (i.e. changes in individuals, populations and physical environments, that motivate policy change efforts). Changes in impacts are long-term outcomes and goals. These would be important to monitor and evaluate in funding situations in which grant makers and advocacy organizations view themselves as partners in social change. These types of changes are influenced by policy change but typically involve far more strategies—including direct interventions, community support, personal and family behaviors—than policy change alone.

The following tables present samples of strategies and outcomes that are associated with these broad outcome categories. Please note that the order of outcomes is not intended to represent their importance or priority.

.....➤ *Menu of Outcomes for Advocacy and Policy Work*

1. Shift in Social Norms	
Examples of Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media campaigns</li> <li>• Message development (defining the problem, framing, naming, etc.)</li> <li>• Development of trusted messengers and champions</li> </ul>
Examples of Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes in awareness</li> <li>• Increased agreement around the definition of a problem (common language)</li> <li>• Changes in beliefs</li> <li>• Changes in attitudes</li> <li>• Changes in values</li> <li>• Changes in the salience of an issue</li> <li>• Increased alignment of campaign goal with core societal values</li> <li>• Changes in public behavior</li> </ul>
Unit of Analysis (who or what changes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals at large</li> <li>• Specific groups of individuals</li> <li>• Population groups</li> </ul>

2. Strengthened Organizational Capacity	
Examples of Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership development</li> <li>• Organizational capacity building</li> <li>• Communication skill building</li> <li>• Strategic planning</li> </ul>
Examples of Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved organizational capacity of those involved in advocacy and policy work (nonprofit management, strategic abilities, capacity to communicate and promote advocacy messages, stability)</li> <li>• Increased ability of coalitions working toward policy change to identify the policy change process (venue of policy change, steps of policy change based on strong understanding of the issue and barriers, jurisdiction of policy change)</li> </ul>
Unit of Analysis (who or what changes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocacy organizations</li> <li>• Nonprofit organizations</li> <li>• Advocacy coalitions</li> <li>• Community organizers and leaders</li> </ul>



3. Strengthened Alliances	
Examples of Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnership development</li> <li>• Coalition development</li> </ul>
Examples of Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased number of partners supporting an issue</li> <li>• Increased level of collaboration or coordination</li> <li>• Improved alignment of partnership efforts (shared priorities, shared goals, common accountability system)</li> <li>• Strategic alliances with important partners (stronger, more powerful relationships and alliances)</li> </ul>
Unit of Analysis (who or what changes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals</li> <li>• Organizations</li> <li>• Groups</li> <li>• Institutions</li> </ul>

4. Strengthened Base of Support	
Examples of Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community organizing</li> <li>• Media campaigns</li> <li>• Outreach</li> <li>• Public or grassroots engagement campaign</li> <li>• Voter registration campaign</li> <li>• Coalition development</li> <li>• Development of trusted messengers and champions</li> <li>• Policy analysis and debate</li> <li>• Policy impact statements</li> </ul>
Examples of Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased public involvement in an issue</li> <li>• Increased level of actions taken by champions of an issue</li> <li>• Increased voter registration</li> <li>• Changes in voting behavior</li> <li>• Increased breadth of partners supporting an issue (number of unlikely allies supporting an issue)</li> <li>• Increased media coverage (quantity, prioritization, extent of coverage, variety of media beats, message echoing)</li> <li>• Increased awareness of campaign principles and messages among selected groups, (policy makers, general public, opinion leaders)</li> <li>• Increased visibility of the campaign message (engagement in debate, presence of campaign message in the media)</li> <li>• Changes in public will</li> </ul>
Unit of Analysis (who or what changes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals</li> <li>• Organizations</li> <li>• Groups</li> <li>• Institutions</li> </ul>

## 5. Improved Policies

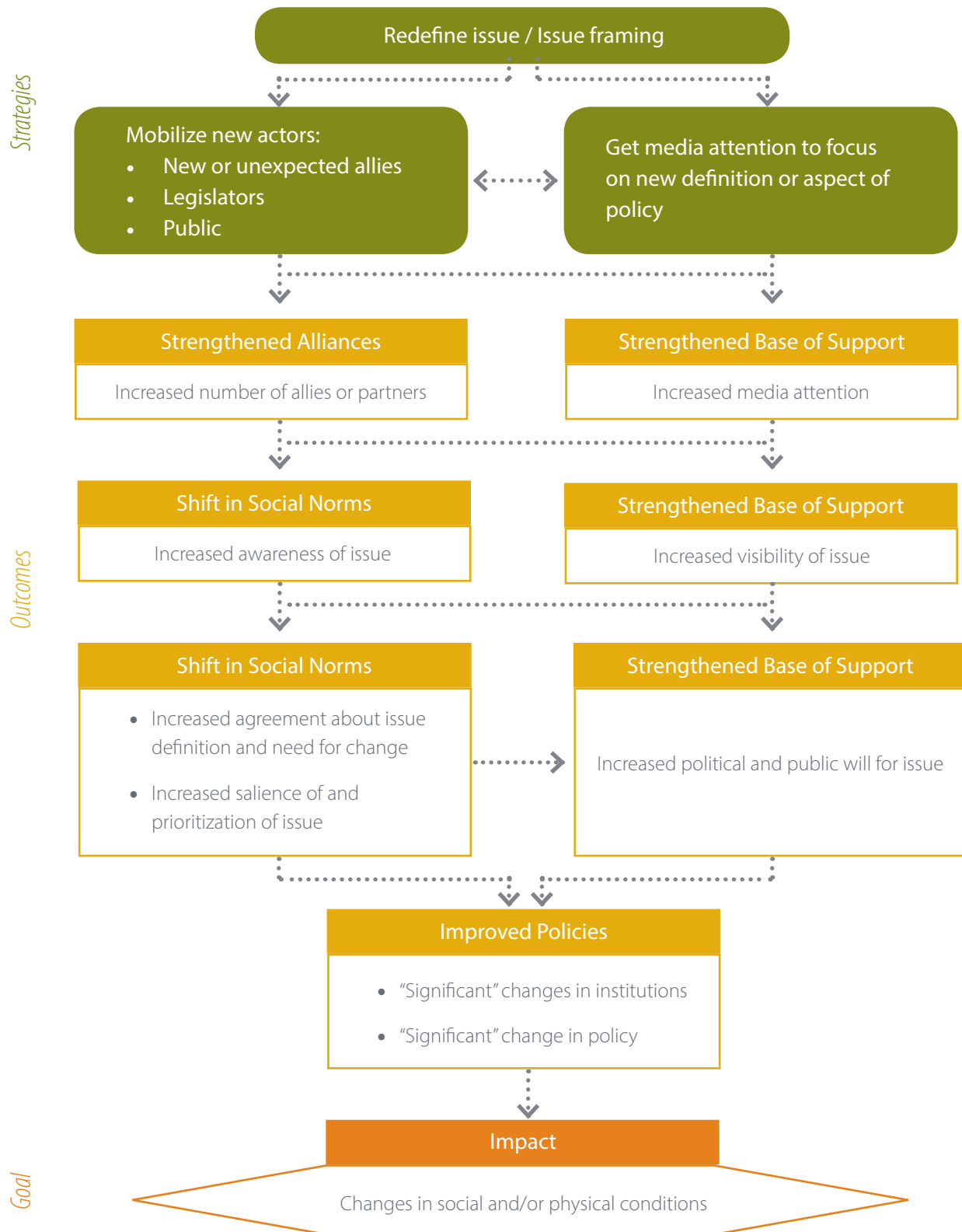
Examples of Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Scientific research</li><li>• Development of white papers</li><li>• Development of policy proposals</li><li>• Pilots and demonstration programs</li><li>• Educational briefings of legislators</li><li>• Watchdog function</li></ul>
Examples of Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Policy development</li><li>• Policy adoption (ordinance, ballot measure, legislation, legally-binding agreements)</li><li>• Policy implementation (equity, adequate funding and other resources for implementing policy)</li><li>• Policy enforcement (holding the line on bedrock legislation)</li></ul>
Unit of Analysis (who or what changes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Policy planners</li><li>• Administrators</li><li>• Policy makers</li><li>• Legislation, laws, or formal policies</li></ul>

## 6. Changes in Impact

Examples of Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Combination of direct service and systems-changing strategies</li></ul>
Examples of Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improved social and physical conditions (poverty, habitat diversity, health, equality, democracy)</li></ul>
Unit of Analysis (who or what changes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Population</li><li>• Ecosystem</li></ul>

Definition of outcomes is a crucial step of your evaluation design. We suggest that advocacy and policy efforts can be viewed in the context of one or more of these broad outcome categories, or outcome rectangles.

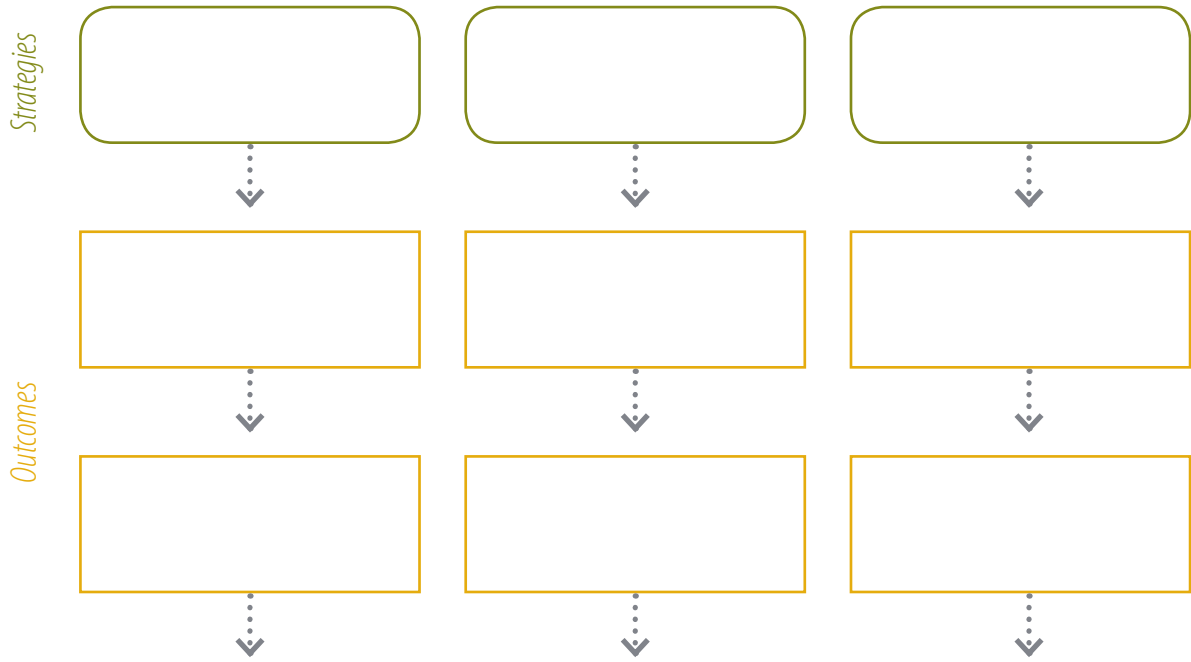
.....➤ So-that Chain Example: Large Leaps Approach to Policy Change<sup>7</sup>



<sup>7</sup> From *Pathways for Change: 10 Theories to Inform Advocacy and Policy Change Efforts*. (2013). S. Stachowiak, ORS Impact. Available at: [orsimpact.com](http://orsimpact.com).

Discuss your organization's outcomes as they fit into the areas described in the table on pages 26-28, and add relevant outcomes to the map below.

.....> Outcome Map Template Exercise



\*\*\* Complete chain from outcomes to goals \*\*\*



## Exercise 5: Prepare to share, refine, and/or adopt your theory of change outcome map.

### .....> *Logic and Relevance Test*

Once you have completed so-that chains or a draft outcome map, conduct a logic and relevance test by addressing the following questions:

- Do the strategies reflect aspects of your organization's core work?
- Do short-term outcomes logically flow from identified strategies? Are short-term outcomes appearing in the map the changes that are most likely to happen first?
- Does the sequence of outcomes flow logically? Can you reasonably expect that things will change as shown in the map?
- Are the outcomes realistic and reasonable? Does it seem logical to assert that the identified strategies will influence the outcomes shown in the map?
- Are the strategies and outcomes shown on the map meaningful and compelling to your target audience(s)?
- Are your target audience's needs and interests sufficiently addressed?

If the answer to any of these questions is "No," or if you are uncertain, it may be useful to review the steps in Parts Two and Three, as well as the Checkpoints on page 5.



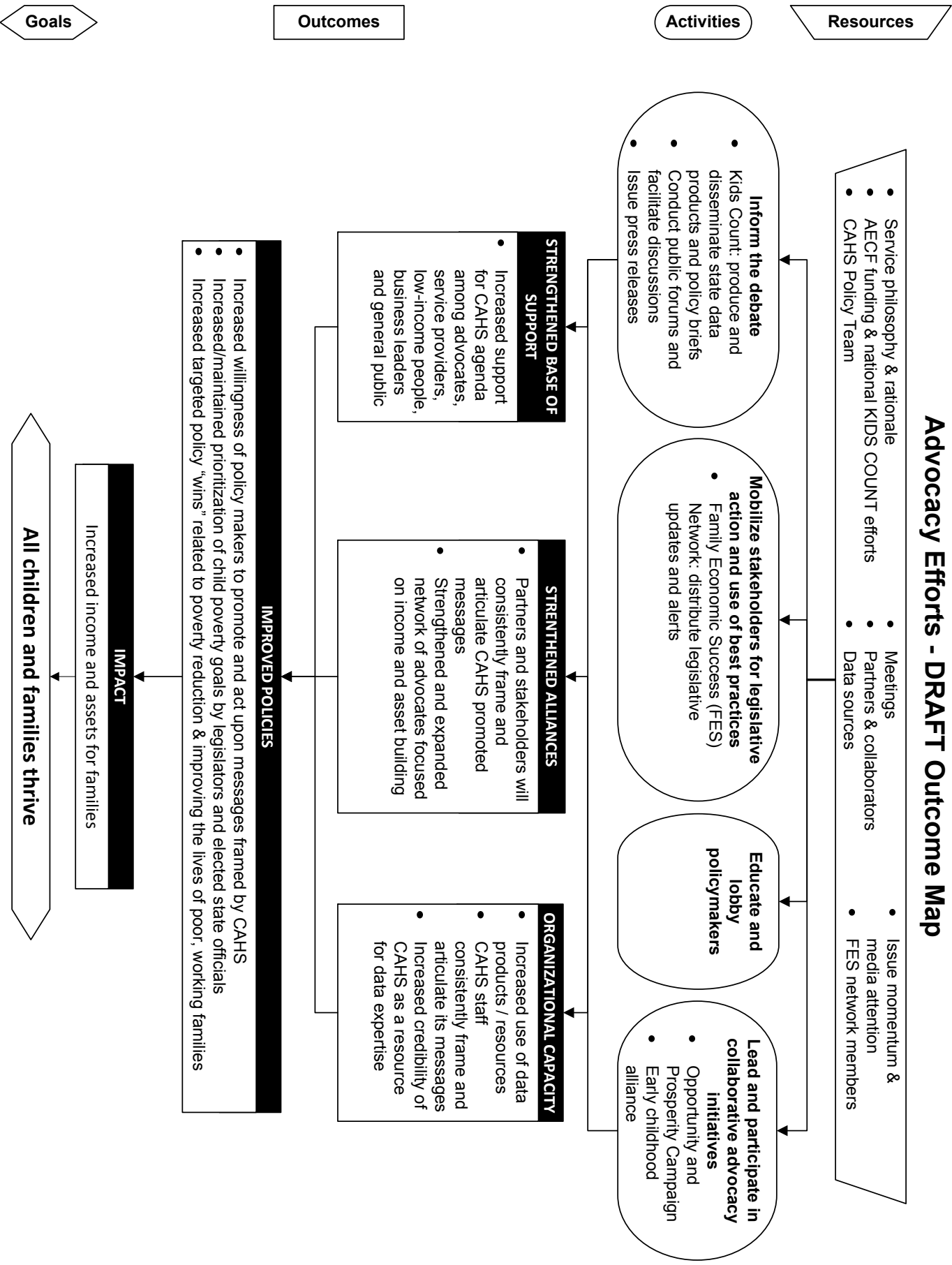
The background is a solid orange color with several large, overlapping rounded rectangular shapes in the same color, creating a layered, abstract pattern.

# Outcome Map Examples

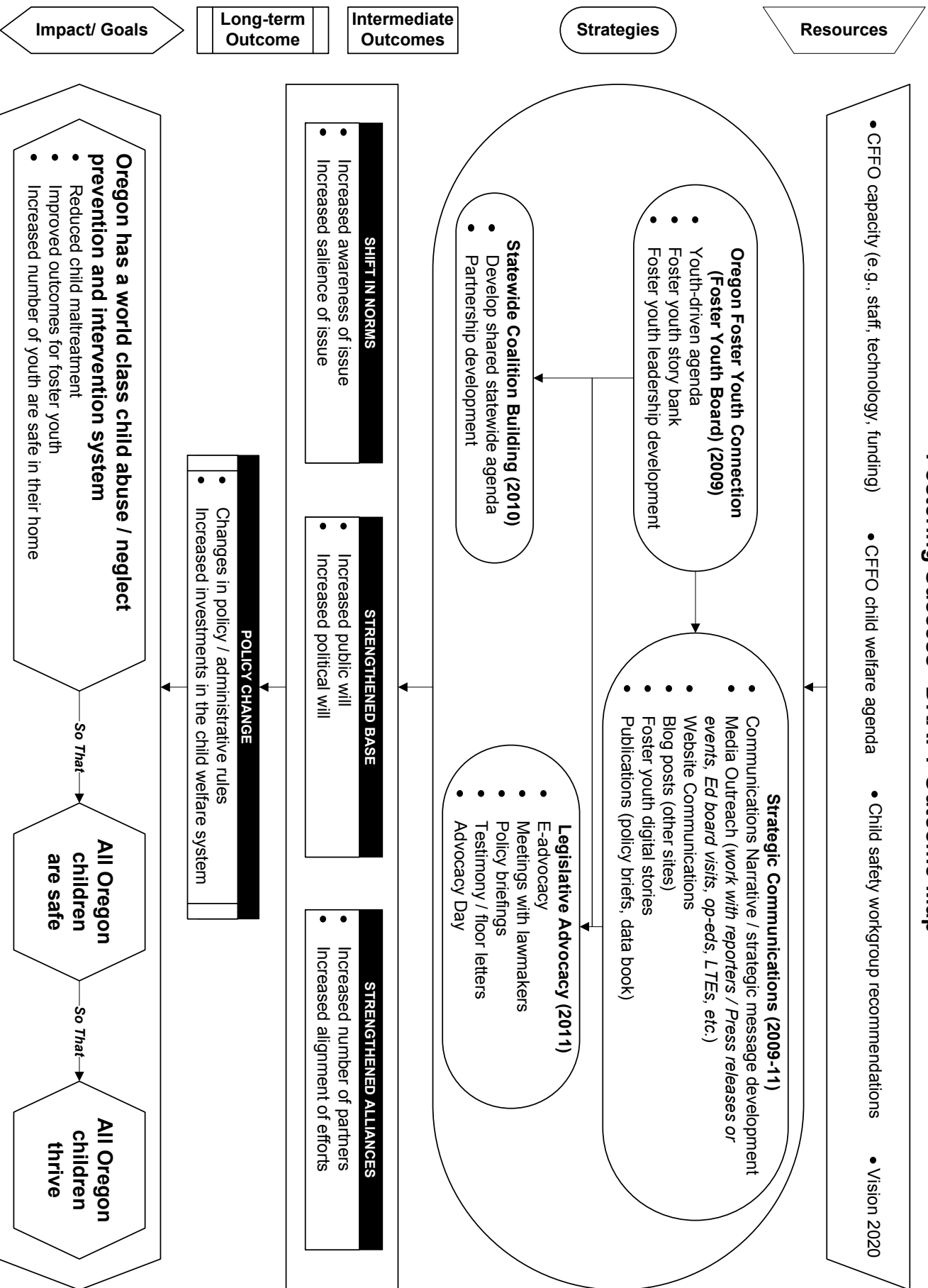




## Connecticut Association for Human Services Advocacy Efforts - DRAFT Outcome Map



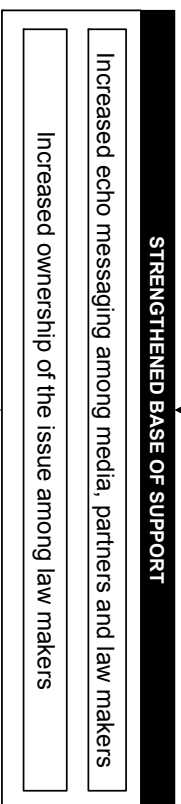
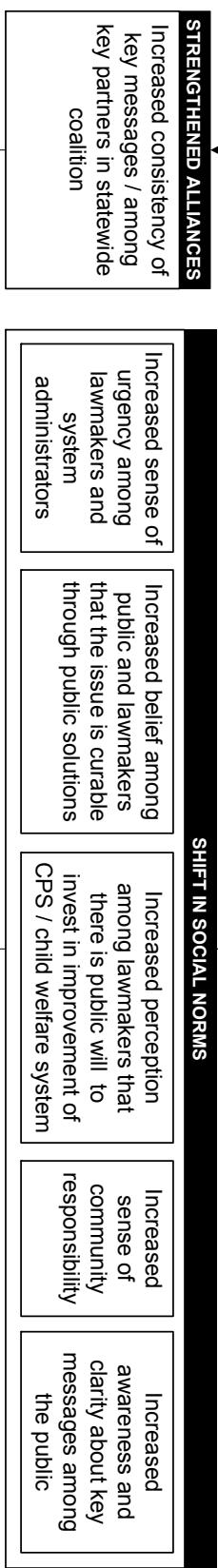
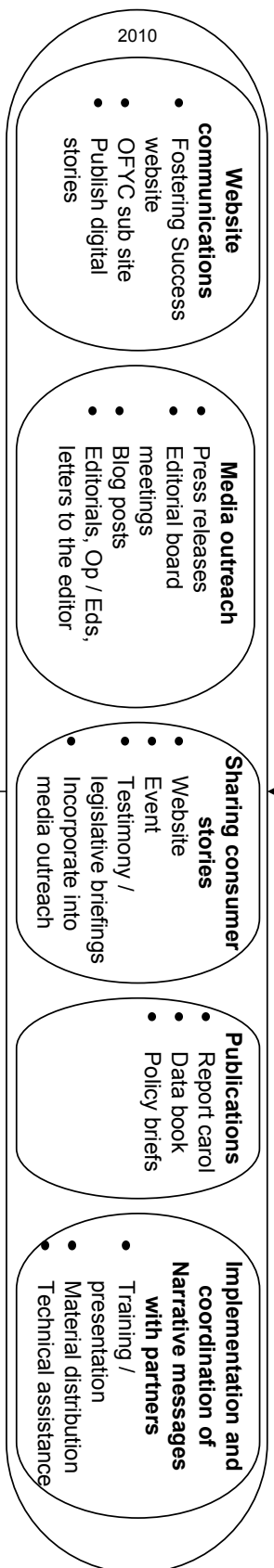
## Children First for Oregon "Fostering Success" DRAFT Outcome Map



# Children First for Oregon "Fostering Success" Strategic Communications DRAFT Outcome Map

- 2009-10
- Development of Narrative Model
  - Working with Spiffire
  - Developing Smart Chart

## Activities

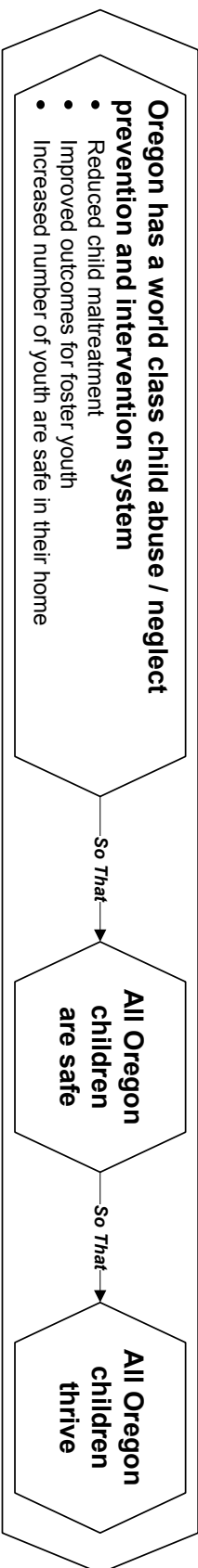


## Long-term Outcome

- Changes in policy / administrative rules
- Increased investments in the child welfare system

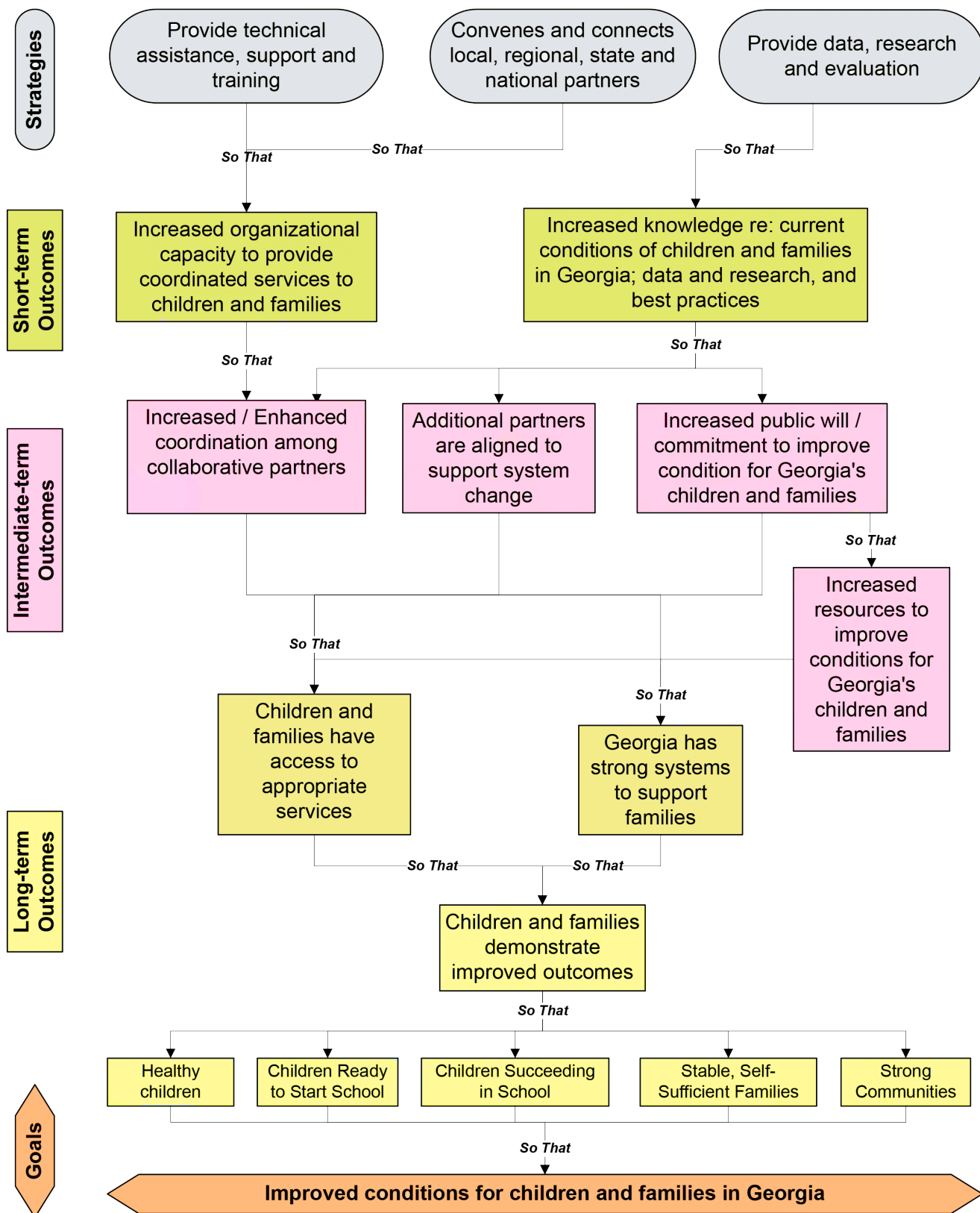
## Intermediate Outcomes

## Impact/Goals



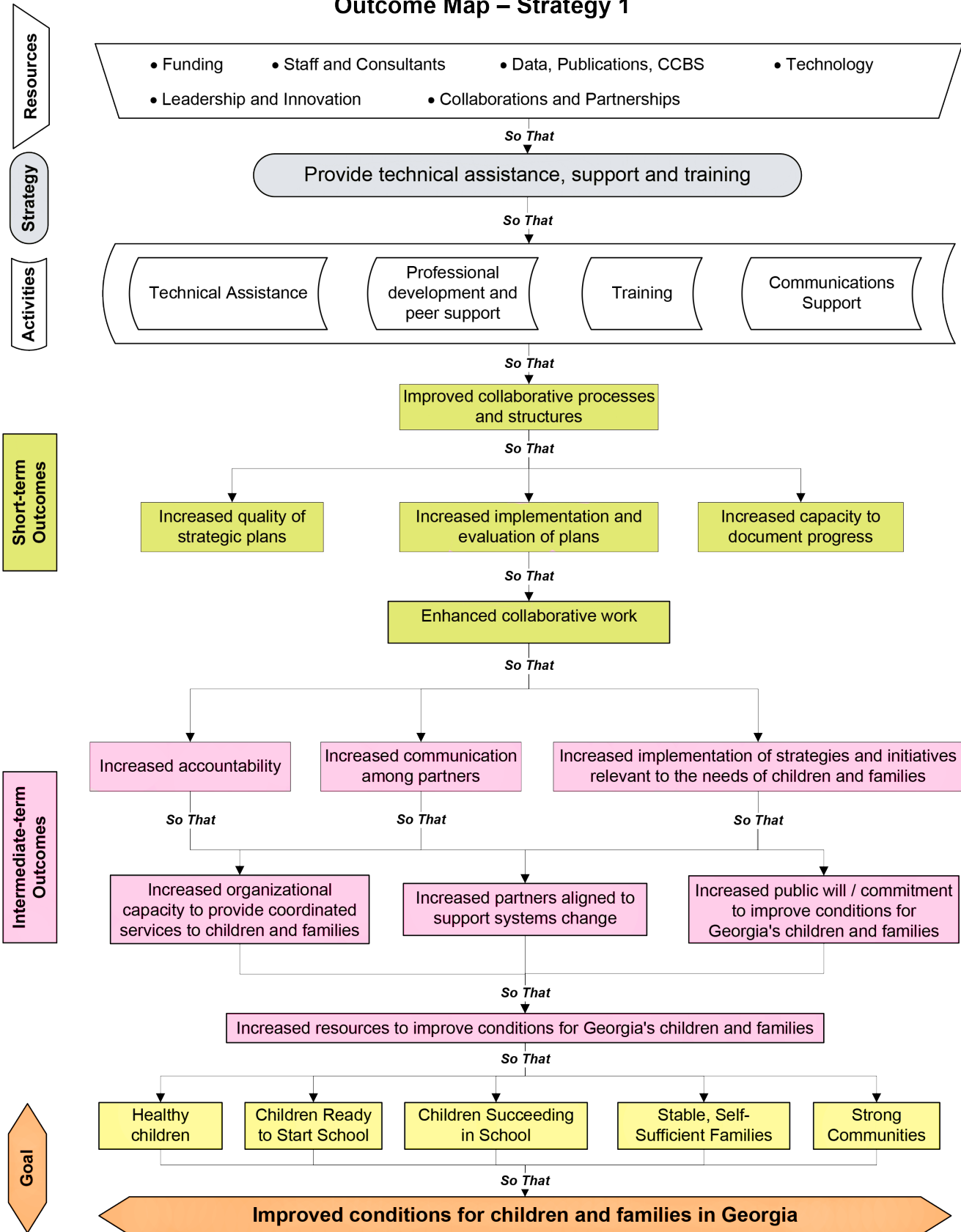
10,000 Foot View Outcome Map

Georgia Family Connection Partnership Outcome Map



# 1,000 Foot View Outcome Map

## Georgia Family Connection Partnership Outcome Map – Strategy 1



10,000 Foot View Outcome Map

Action for Children North Carolina Organizational Outcome Map

