

NPC GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

THEORY OF CHANGE

Having a common language is important when developing a theory of change, so we have included a glossary of the terms we use at NPC. It is worth noting that some of the definitions are contested, and it is not essential that you adopt them precisely. The most important thing is that you understand what we mean in this guide and that when you are developing a theory of change for your organisation or project, everyone shares a common understanding.

Final goal: The broader social change a project or organisation is trying to achieve.

Intermediate outcomes: The short-term changes, benefits, learning or other effects that result from what a project or organisation does. These short-term steps will contribute to a final goal and may include changes in users' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviour. A useful way to think about intermediate outcomes is the outcomes achieved after the project—what service users take away from it.

Activities: The things that an organisation or project does or the way it chooses to deliver a project day-to-day. Activities are within an organisation or project's control.

Inputs: The resources that go into the project that a team or organisation needs to be able to carry out its activities.

Outputs: Products, services or facilities that result from an organisation or project's activities. These are often expressed quantitatively; for example, number of users, how many sessions they receive and the amount of contact they had with a project.

Enablers: Conditions or factors that need to be present or absent to allow an organisation or project's work to succeed. The presence or absence of enablers can help or hinder a project. There are two kinds of enablers:

- Internal enablers need to exist inside an organisation for a theory of change to work, and are mostly within an organisation or project's control. Internal enablers describe the mechanisms by which an organisation delivers its work (such as the quality of services, relationships and the values and attitudes of staff).
- External enablers need to exist in the external environment for a theory of change to work, and are often beyond an organisation or project's immediate control. External enablers describe the context in which an organisation works (such as social, cultural, economic and political factors, laws, regulations, and working with other organisations).

Evidence: Information that you already have or plan to collect that is relevant to supporting or testing a theory of change.

Assumptions: The underlying beliefs about how a project will work, the people involved and the context. These are sometimes implicit in a logic model or theory of change, but it can be useful to state them explicitly.

Finally, two useful resources on terminology are:

- <http://www.jargonbusters.org.uk/>
- <http://www.theoryofchange.org/what-is-theory-of-change/how-does-theory-of-change-work/glossary/#2>