DESIGNING
FOR IMPACT
WITH THEORIES OF CHANGE

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SESSION STRUCTURE

1 Understanding Theories of Change

2 Linking desired long-term outcomes to new service concepts
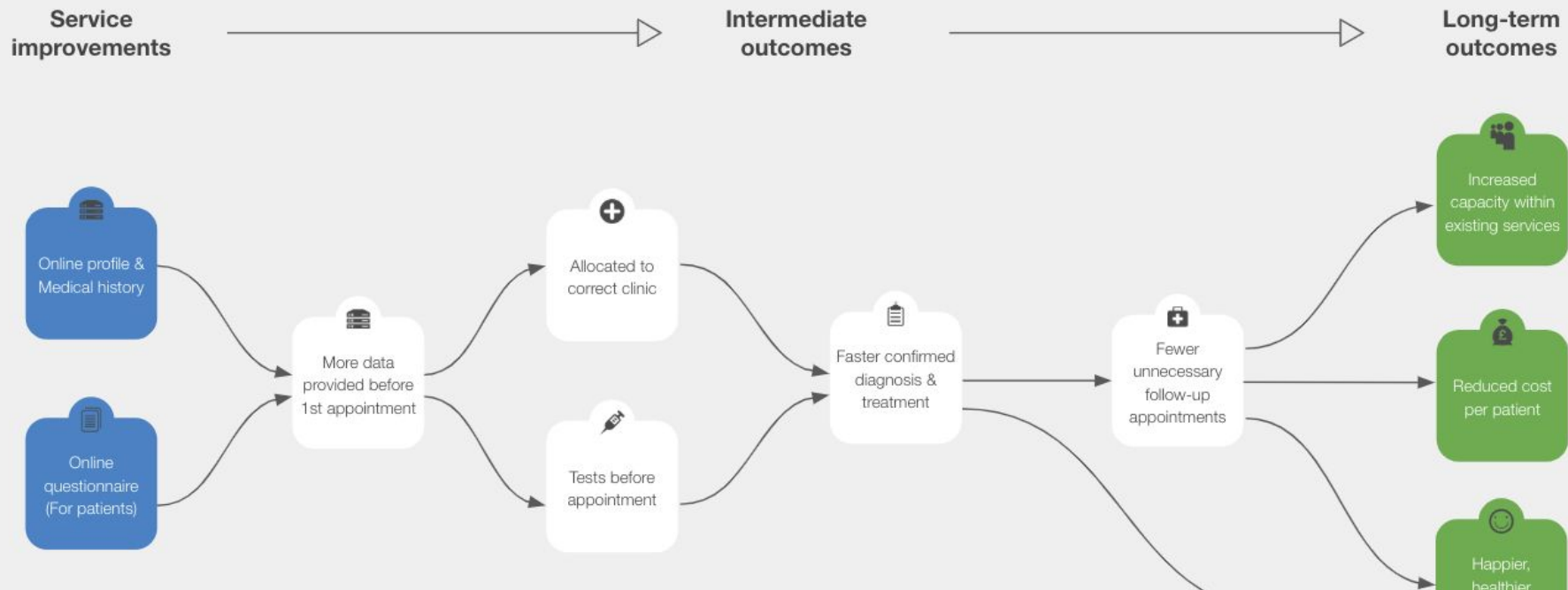
(your own Theory of Change)

3 Prototyping and validating potential impact

UNDERSTANDING THEORIES OF CHANGE

Visual tool (logic model) that makes explicit the steps needed to bring about change.

But a Theory of Change is more than a static logic model:

- **Participatory** and **iterative** process (evolutionary)

- **Starts with the desired long-term outcome** and work backwards towards needed interventions

- Makes explicit the **underlying assupmtions**

- **Explores complex processes** that underlie social and societal change
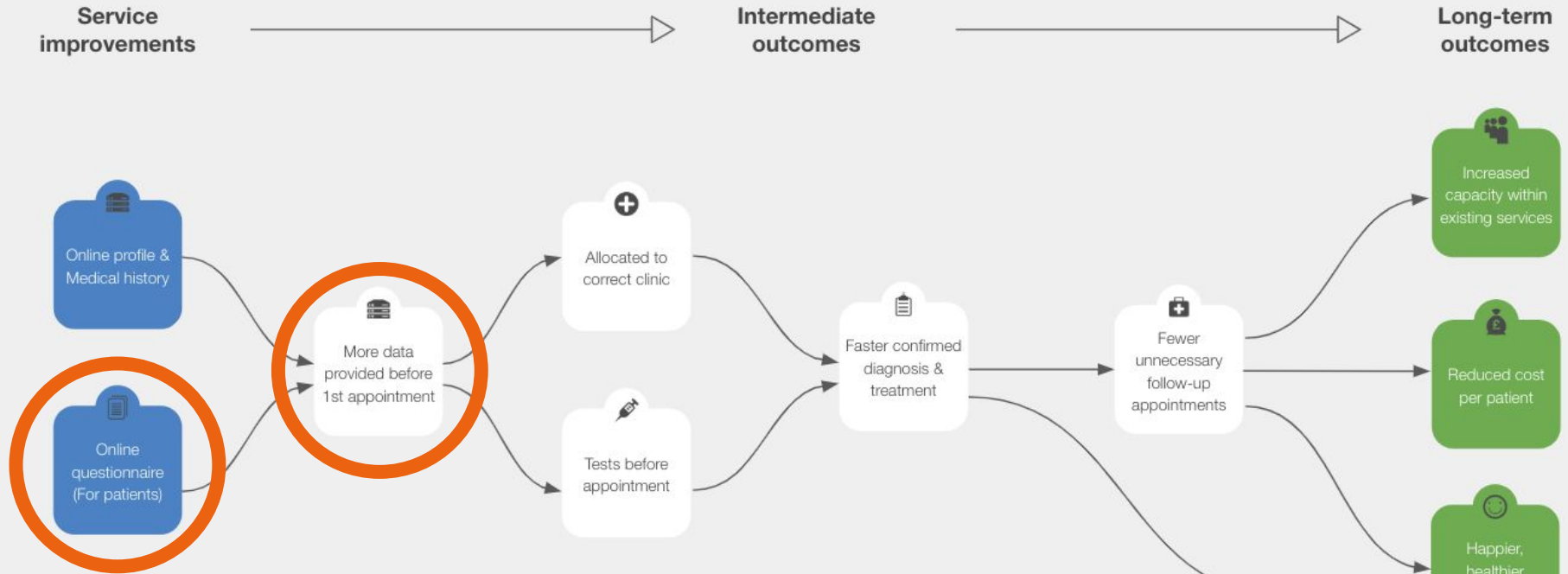(social, economic, political and institutional)

'Theory of change is an on-going process of reflection to explore change and how it happens and what that means for the part we play in a particular context.'

— James, C. (2011) "Theory of Change Review. A report commissioned by Comic Relief"
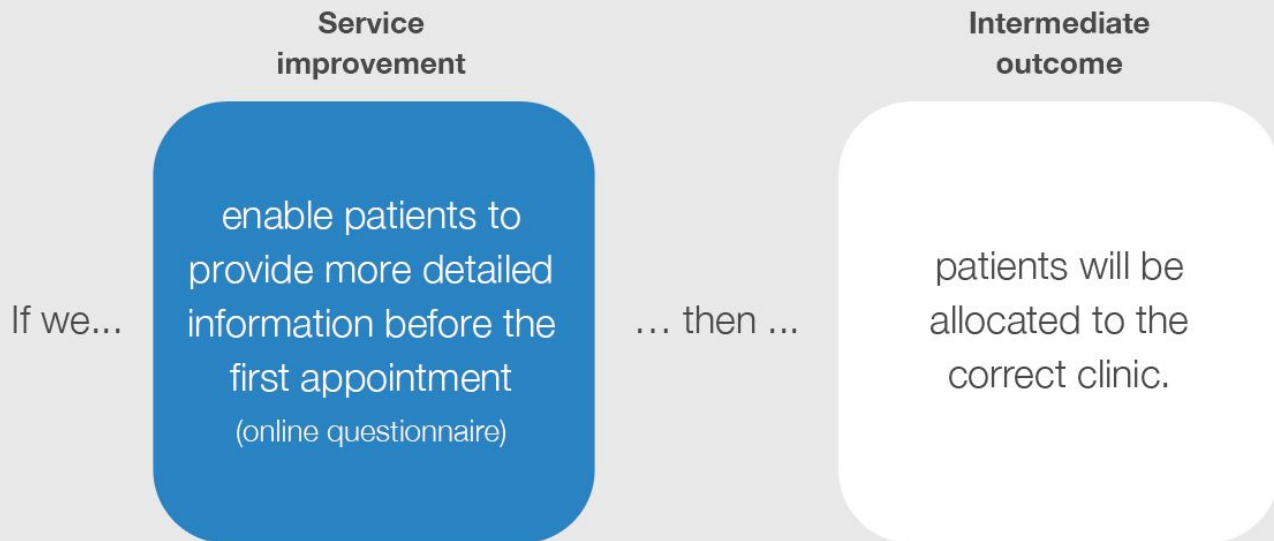
Service designers can use Theory of Change for:

- **Ideation** – use intermediate outcomes as triggers for creative thinking

- **Prototyping and validation** – design tests to provide evidence for impact of proposed service conepts

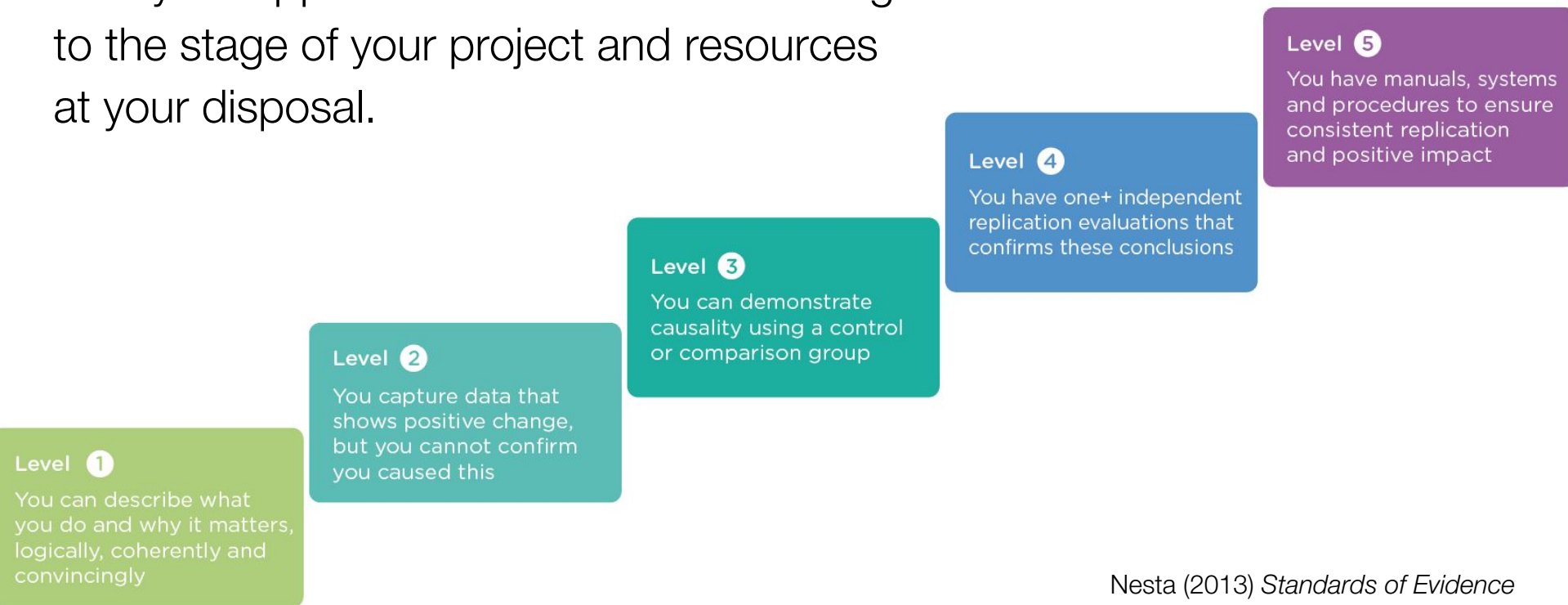- **Collaboration** – identify others that are working towards similar long-term outcomes

Example **service concept to prototype** and the **outcome to validate**

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Service improvement

Intermediate outcome

If we...

enable patients to provide more detailed information before the first appointment
(online questionnaire)

... then ...

patients will be allocated to the correct clinic.

Plan your approach to validation according to the stage of your project and resources at your disposal.

Level 5
You have manuals, systems and procedures to ensure consistent replication and positive impact

Level 4
You have one+ independent replication evaluations that confirms these conclusions

Level 3
You can demonstrate causality using a control or comparison group

Level 2
You capture data that shows positive change, but you cannot confirm you caused this

Level 1
You can describe what you do and why it matters, logically, coherently and convincingly

Nesta (2013) *Standards of Evidence*
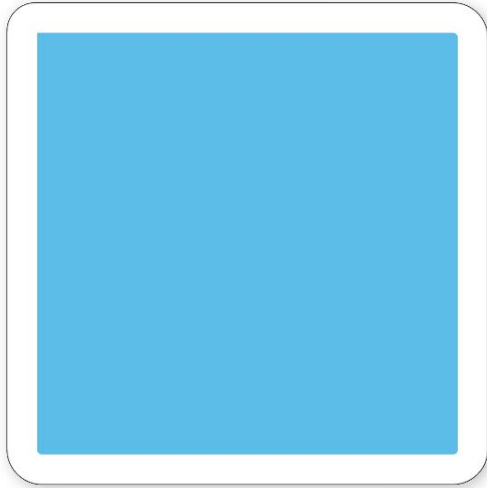
ACTIVITY 1:

LINKING DESIRED LONG-TERM OUTCOMES TO NEW SERVICE CONCEPTS

- Form **groups** with 3–5 people

- Each group to choose **one case study** and matching '**example outcomes' pack** to work with for the next exercise
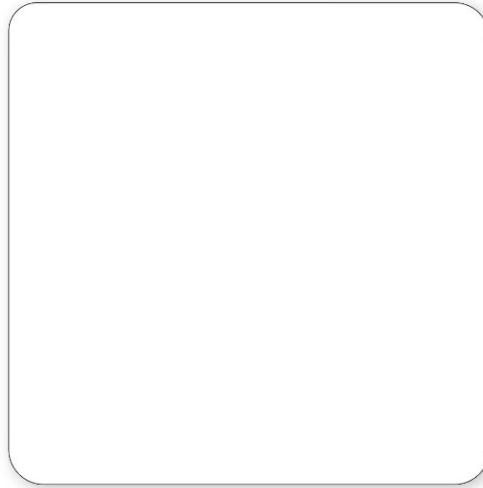
- Prepare the **'Theory of Change' template**
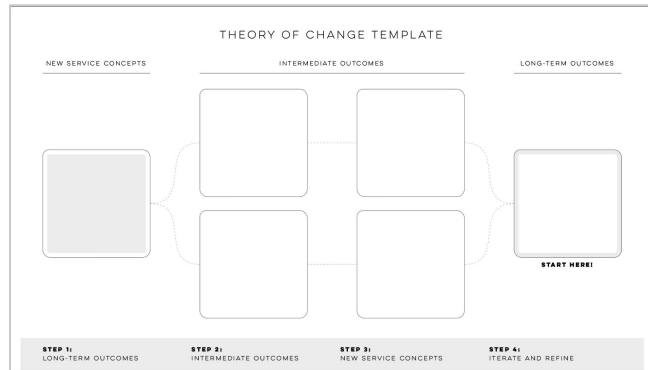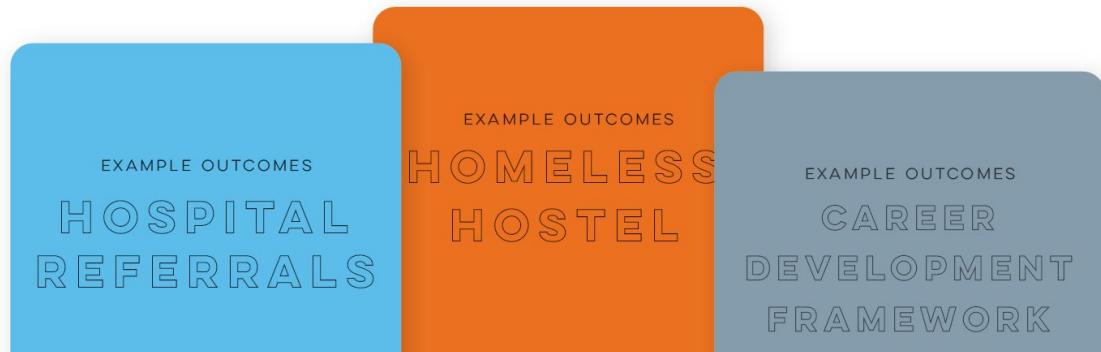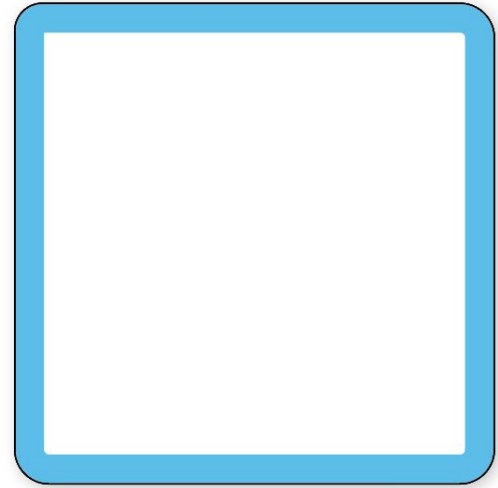
SERVICE
CONCEPT
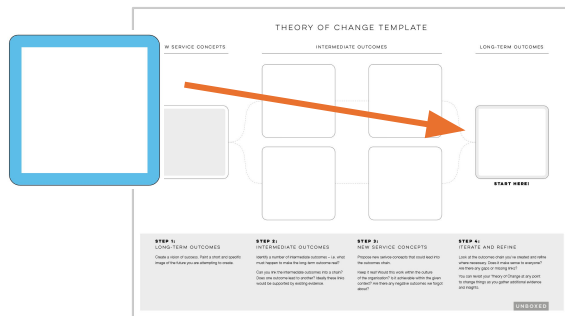
INTERMEDIATE
OUTCOME

LONG-TERM
OUTCOME

1. Chose **one** of the **long-term outcomes** cards (your intended impact) and place it on the template.

2. Now **work backwards** from the long-term outcome.
Identify a number of **intermediate outcomes** that might lead to the long-term outcome and arrange them in a logical sequence.

(take time to discuss and feel free to deviate from the template if needed)

3. See if any of the **'new service concept**' cards fits your intermediate outcomes and place them on the template (or propose your own!).

4. **Discuss and refine**. Look at the outcomes chain you've created:

- Does it make sense to everyone in the group?

- Are there any gaps or missing links?

- Would this be achievable within the culture of the organisationand the given context?

- Are there any negative outcomes we forgot about?

ACTIVITY 2:

PROTOTYPING AND VALIDATING POTENTIAL IMPACT

PROTOTYPING AND VALIDATION CARDS / TEMPLATE

- Prepare the **'Prototyping and validation' template** and **cards**

PLANNING PROTOTYPING AND VALIDATION **(15 min)**

1. Formulate the assumption you aim to validate (or disprove): take the **service concept** and one of its **intermediate outcomes**, and place them on the template, forming an 'if … then' statement

2. Discuss and define a way to **measure the outcome**

- What is the best measurable indicator for the chosen outcome (e.g. number of calls, self-reported user experience, …)?

- Is this measure really indicative of this outcome or could it be indicating something else (e.g. counting homeless example)?

3. Use the **'prototyping'** and **'validation'** cards to refine your approach. Consider different options and their pros/cons.

4. Discuss **conditions** for your test; what will you need to prepare for everything to run smoothly and to get good results?

5. What would be a **successful** result? What kind of result would validate (or disprove) your initial assumption?

QUESTIONS / FEEDBACK?

WWW.PROTOTYPINGFORIMPACT.COM

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