

## Prospect & Pitch Guide to the Theory of Change

Prospect & Pitch recommends that charities and nonprofits develop a Theory of Change to clearly articulate the difference they want to make and the steps they will take to achieve it. This helps ensure that activities are aligned around shared goals and that progress can be measured in a meaningful way. A Theory of Change provides a solid foundation for fundraising and helps organisations tell a clear, evidence-based story about why their work matters.

### What is a Theory of Change?

There is no single definition of a Theory of Change. NCVO describes it as “a specific and measurable description of a social change that forms the basis for planning, ongoing decision-making and evaluation.” In simple terms, a Theory of Change is your charity’s roadmap to making impact. It shows the connection between what you do and the difference it makes, and helps you decide how to track and evidence your impact.

Developing a Theory of Change encourages you to reflect on your goals, plans and priorities. You start with your overall vision and work backwards to identify the outcomes and outputs you want to achieve, and then the activities and resources needed to make this happen. Once complete, the Theory of Change describes the chain of cause and effect that links your activities to your intended impact, helping you understand what to measure and how to evidence the change you are creating.

A Theory of Change can be a simple step-by-step outline that tells the story of how your work leads to impact, or a more detailed framework based on recognised impact evaluation methods. The more complex it is, the more time it takes to develop, but the more robust and useful it becomes.

NCVO has a comprehensive guide to developing your Theory of Change:

<https://www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/strategy-and-impact/strategy-and-business-planning/theory-of-change/>

### Examples of Theory of Change

- **Book Aid International:** <https://bookaid.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Book-Aid-International-Theory-of-Change.pdf>
- **Family Holiday Charity:** <https://familyholidaycharity.org.uk/our-story/theory-change>
- **YES Outdoors:** <http://yesoutdoors.org.uk/theory-of-change/>

## Theory of Change template

Inputs (What resources do we need?)	Activities (What are we doing?)	Outputs (What are we producing? How do we measure these?)	Intermediate outcomes (How do these link to our activities? How do we evidence these?)	Long term outcomes / impacts (How do these link to our outcomes? How do we evidence these?)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Funding</i></li> <li><i>Staff and volunteers</i></li> <li><i>Space and facilities</i></li> <li><i>Volunteer and staff training and development</i></li> <li><i>Partnerships and networks</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Delivering services, programmes or activities</i></li> <li><i>Providing information, advice or support</i></li> <li><i>Community outreach and participation</i></li> <li><i>Advocacy or awareness-raising</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Number of sessions, events or services delivered</i></li> <li><i>Number and profile of people engaged</i></li> <li><i>Resources produced or distributed</i></li> <li><i>Volunteer hours contributed</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Measured through monitoring data, attendance records, feedback forms</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Improved knowledge, skills or confidence</i></li> <li><i>Increased access to services or support</i></li> <li><i>Improved wellbeing or social connection</i></li> <li><i>Greater engagement or participation</i></li> <li><i>Changes in attitudes or behaviour</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Evidenced through surveys, case studies, evaluations, testimonials</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Improved educational outcomes</i></li> <li><i>Improved wellbeing and social inclusion</i></li> <li><i>Increased local economic development</i></li> <li><i>Increased sense of community identity and pride</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Evidenced through longitudinal data, external research, partner data, repeat evaluations</i></p>