



PROGRAM MAPPING

What it is, why it's valuable, and
how we make it happen.



WHAT IS A PROGRAM MAP?



PROGRAM MAPPING is a qualitative strategic planning exercise that helps us visualize

- where we are today,
- where we want to be,
- the steps we need to take to get there, and
- the obstacles we're likely to encounter along the way.

Program mapping takes many forms, from a linear LOGIC MODEL to a context-rich THEORY OF CHANGE to a complex SYSTEM MODEL with multiple feedback loops and contingencies. We choose the visualization tool that makes the most sense to the people running the program and their goals.

WHY DO WE NEED ONE?



A road trip requires both a big plan (what's our destination?) and a turn-by-turn plan for how to reach the destination. A good road trip plan also includes contingencies. Is there traffic? A change in weather? How will we adapt our methods to keep ourselves on track and safe? Program mapping helps us do these things for our organization's programming. By creating our program map, we can better anticipate challenges and adapt along the way. We can also imagine whom we will encounter along the way and seek support and partnerships to reach our objectives.

HOW DO WE SELECT ONE?



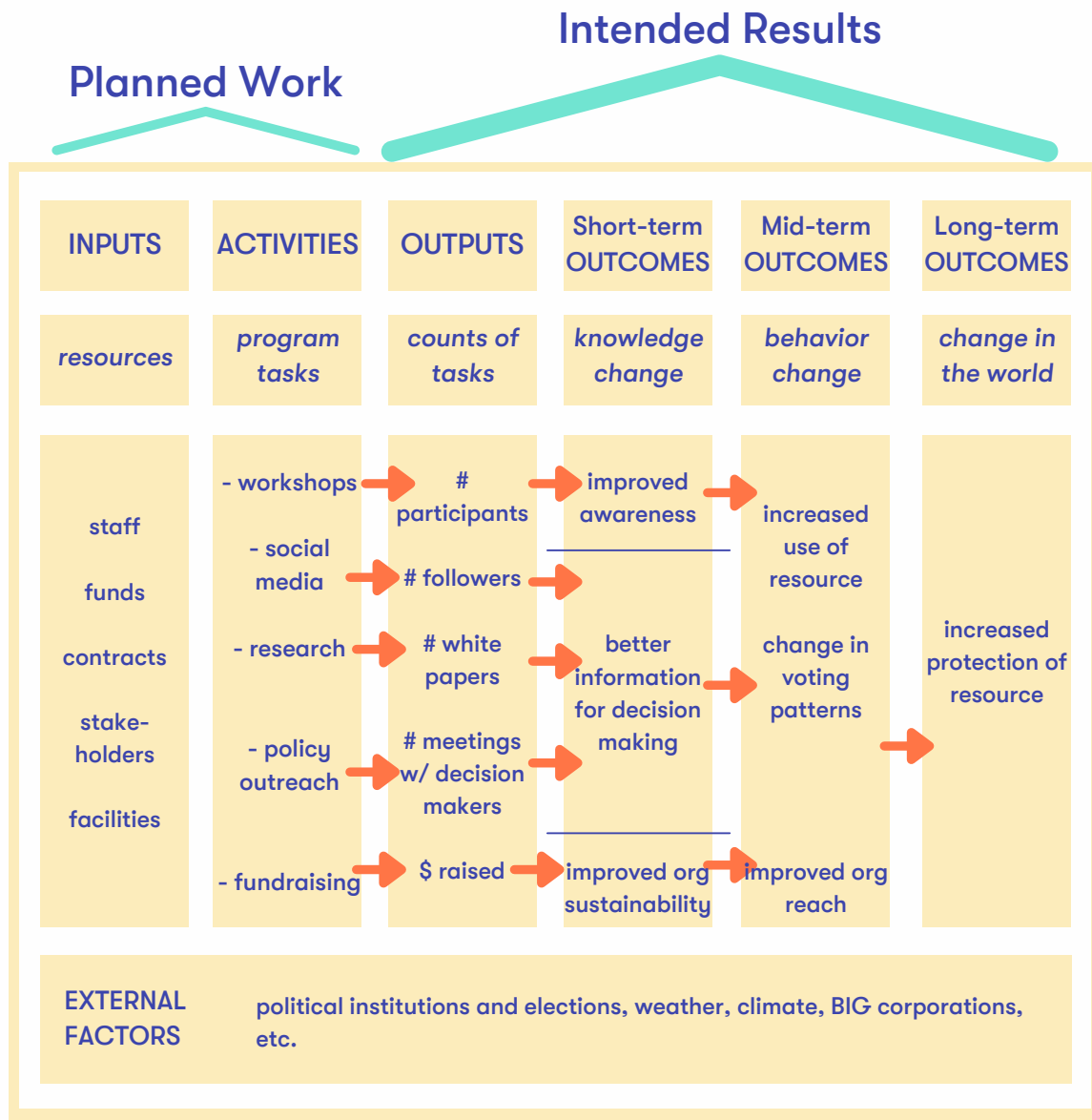
The three program models we provide in this document are not the only options. They are examples of ways to depict what you want to achieve and how you hope to get there. A few key points to consider are these:

- What types of information speak clearest to your organization and stakeholders? If you work with engineers, they may like a system model approach. If you work with educators, they may like a logic model approach. If you work in international development, people may expect something that looks like a theory of change.
- How complex is this program? We recommend using the simplest depiction possible. If it's relatively straightforward, a logic model may work just fine.
- Who is going to see the model? Some funders specify the type of model they prefer -- usually logic models or theories of change.

EXAMPLE PROGRAM MAPS

Logic Model

Logic Models provide linear descriptions of how we expect an organization's **ACTIVITIES** will lead to accomplishing their goals or long-term **OUTCOMES**. We read logic models from left to right but design them from right to left, beginning with the intended goals or outcomes. *

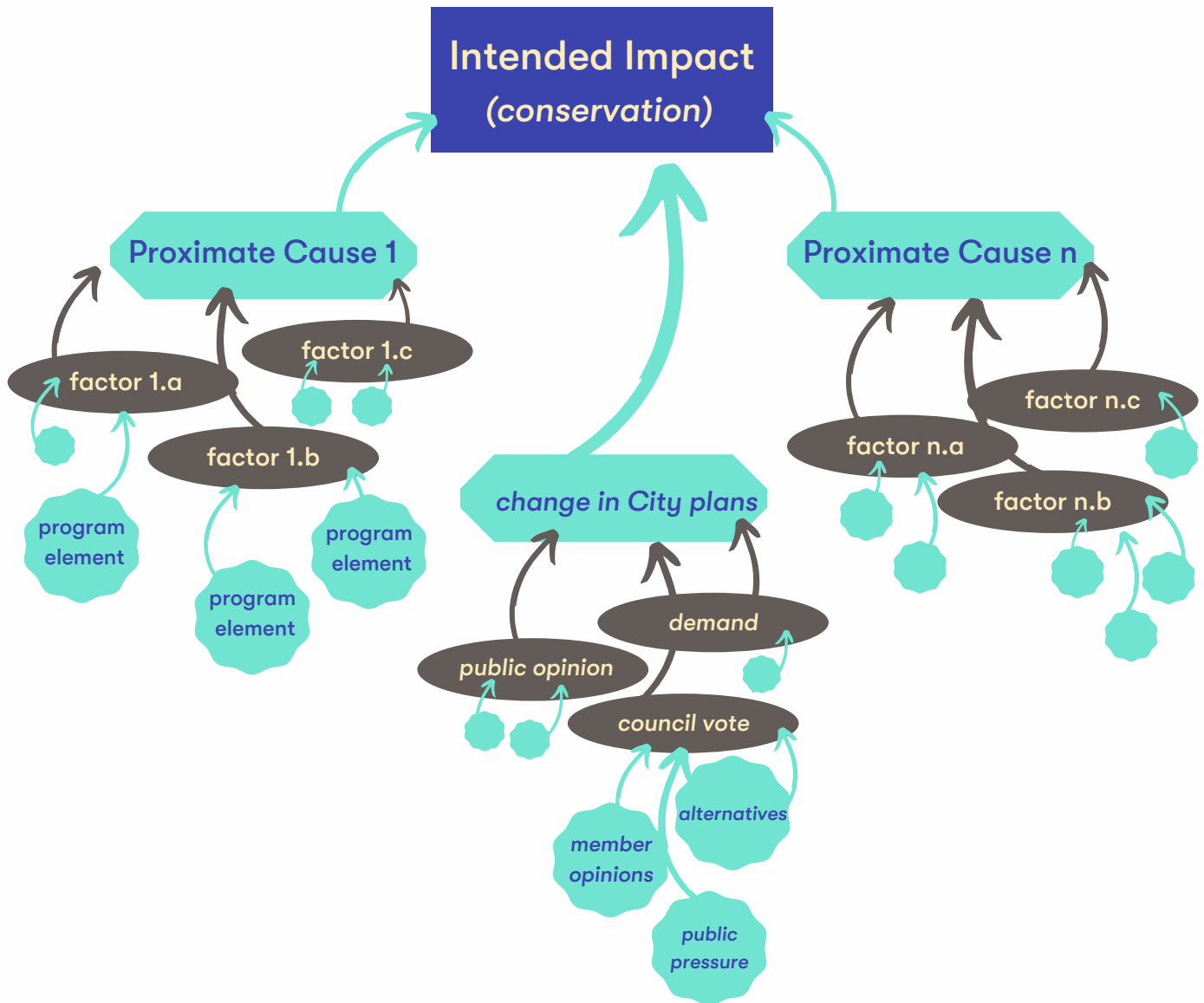


* Initially developed by Joseph Wholey: Wholey, J.S. (1983). Evaluation and Effective Public Management. Boston: Little, Brown. Popularized by Kellogg Foundation: W.K. Kellogg Foundation (1998, 2004). Logic Model Development Guide: Using Logic Models to Bring Together Planning, Evaluation, and Action.

EXAMPLE PROGRAM MAPS

Theory of Change

In contrast to Logic Models, Theories of Change provide more context for external influences and challenges. We view Theories of Change from the top-down and develop them from the top-down. Each level, or proximate cause, can be described using the term "but for," as in "but for public pressure, City Council will not vote in favor of preserving the SRF, and but for a Council vote, the City will not change its plans. A Theory of Change can include as many proximate causes as appropriate and desired -- from 1 to n in the example below.*

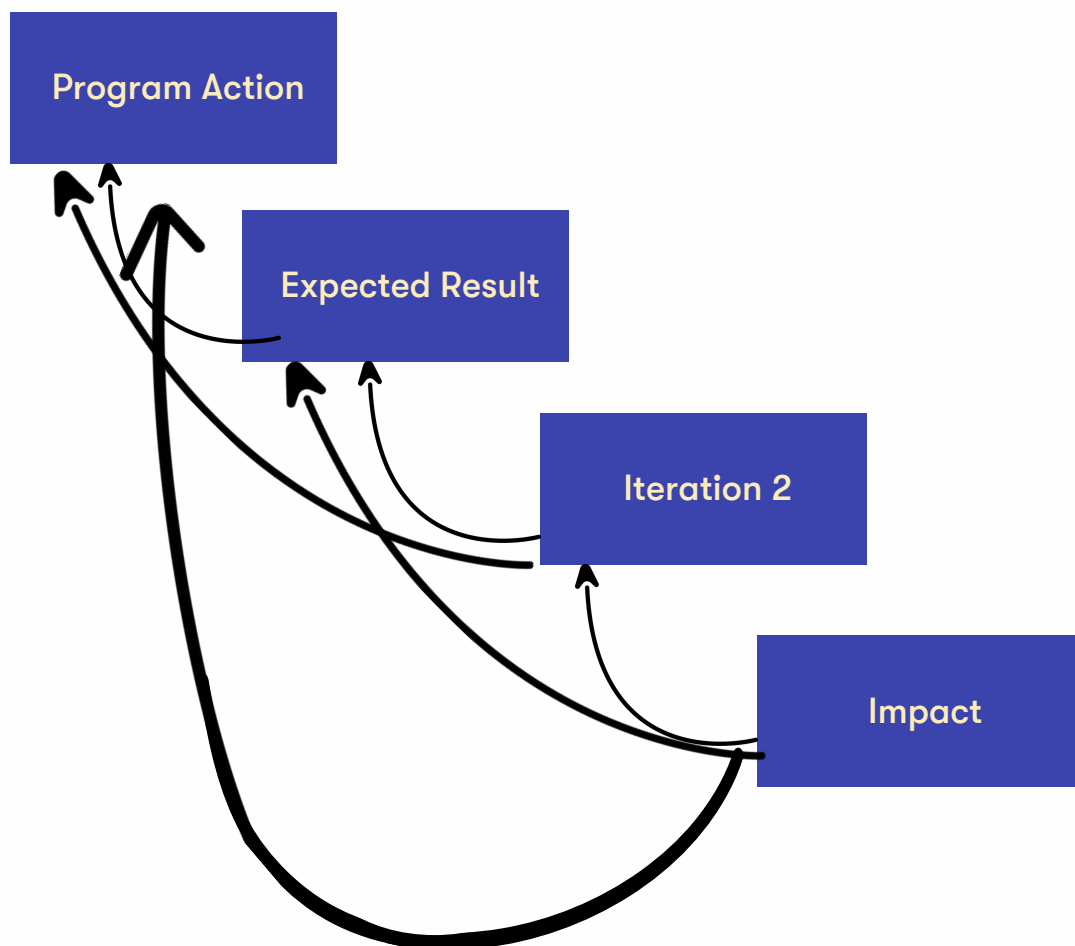


* Initially developed in the 1990s as a means to model and evaluate comprehensive community initiatives within the Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change. Anderson, A.A. (2009) The Community Builder’s Approach to Theory of Change: A Practical Guide to Theory Development. Aspen Institute.

EXAMPLE PROGRAM MAPS

System Diagram/Model

System diagrams or models come from engineering and ecosystem science disciplines, where it is essential to understand positive and negative feedback loops to know how a system operates. These program maps are multi-directional (non-linear) and can become extraordinarily complex. For example, systems diagrams are beneficial when attempting to achieve an environmental outcome, like ecosystem restoration, because they can demonstrate how external environmental conditions may positively or negatively impact restoration success. *



* See, for example, Dyehouse, Melissa, Deborah Bennett, Jon Harbor, Amy Childress, and Melissa Dark. (2009) "A Comparison of Linear and Systems Thinking Approaches for Program Evaluation Illustrated Using the Indiana Interdisciplinary GK-12." *Evaluation and Program Planning* 32, no. 3: 187-96, and Gilliland, Martha W., and Paul G. Risser. (1977) "The Use of Systems Diagrams for Environmental Impact Assessment: Procedures and an Application." *Ecological Modelling* 3, no. 3: 183-209.

NEXT STEPS

I'VE SELECTED A MODEL...



GREAT work! Now that you've selected a model type that you think will work for you, your organization, and your program, the real work begins.

1) First, we revisit our mission, vision, and values to know where we're headed and what is out of bounds. We talk about our existing strategies, partners and stakeholders, and their advantages and challenges.

2) Next, we brainstorm. We visualize our journey and think creatively. What new strategies could we use? What pitfalls may lurk around the next bend in the river? (If meeting in person, this would include a lot of drawing and hand gestures!)

3) Next, we chart our course. We sketch out our map, review, revise, and then finalize.

4) Last, we put our map into service. As we continue our journey, we refer to our map, anticipate challenges, adjust our course, and keep moving closer to our destination.

**If this all seems like a LOT, don't fret! Give us a call.
We are here to help you save the Earth faster.**