



The Annie E. Casey Foundation

## Getting Started:

A Self-Directed Guide to Outcome Map Development

**GUIDE, EXERCISES and EXAMPLES**

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August 2009

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And the following KIDS COUNT Grantees for helping to inform the  
content of this guide: Action for Children North Carolina, Children First  
For Oregon, Connecticut Association of Human Services, Georgia Family  
Connection Partnership, Kentucky Youth Advocates, Voices for Illinois  
Children, Voices For Vermont's Children and the Human Services Policy  
Center/Washington KIDS COUNT.

## INTRODUCTION

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,” 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.

### Context

ORS 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 developed for the Foundation in 2007 in collaboration with Tom Kelly, Director of Evaluation and Don Crary, Director of KIDS COUNT.<sup>1</sup> The intent of individualized grantee capacity building has been a multi-way learning enterprise—to both test the ideas described in the Guide in real-life advocacy settings as well as to fine-tune these lessons. A number of these lessons are captured in a recently published ORS brief (2009).<sup>2</sup>

Going forward, ORS and Casey 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.

### Purpose and Format of the Guide

*Getting Started* offers step-by-step guidance and tools that can help KIDS COUNT grantees and other advocacy organizations who are 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 theory of change through an outcome map.

The guide lays out steps associated with three main aspects of outcome map development:

**Part One:** Identify Approach for Developing a Theory of Change Outcome Map, including defining the opportunity, 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 companion, *Getting Started Exercises*, includes exercises and tools to support documentation of decisions and specific components of an outcome map.

<sup>1</sup> *A Guide for Evaluation of Advocacy and Policy*. (2007) Organizational Research Services on behalf of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Available at: [www.organizationalresearch.com](http://www.organizationalresearch.com) and [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org).

<sup>2</sup> *Ten Considerations for Advocacy Evaluation Planning: Lessons Learned from KIDS COUNT Grantee Experiences* (2009). Organizational Research Services on behalf of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Available at: [www.organizationalresearch.com](http://www.organizationalresearch.com) and [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org).

## Defining STRATEGIES, OUTCOMES and GOALS

While these terms are often used differently by different groups or fields, ORS 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.

continued...

**Getting Started** is intended to be an easy-to-use resource for advocacy organizations that seek to develop and use 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) and to help them think about how and what to evaluate. In addition, we expect that use of this guide will offer more multi-way learning opportunities regarding how theory of change is developed and used in advocacy settings.

## Background

As noted above, 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 the interim *structural change outcomes* (e.g. changes in institutions, systems, beliefs, commitments) on the one hand and the *policy change outcomes* on the other hand. Both are essential to advocacy and policy change work but the former has been under-emphasized and the latter over-emphasized 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. (Several examples of advocacy organizations’ outcome maps are included in the Exercises that accompany this guide.)

Advocacy organizations that have worked to develop a theory of change outcome map have found both the process and the 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

...continued

**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.

*“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’ 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, **Getting Started** 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. (See **Getting Started Exercises**.) 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 and will ultimately help advocates enhance communication and engage in evaluation planning to document results of their work. However, *there are no “right” answers*. Answers to guiding questions will likely be different for each advocacy organizations 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 tease out the logic and assumptions that are inherent in your thinking.

## CHECKPOINTS



It is not uncommon that development of an outcome map can surface issues 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 its 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 there are different ideas 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 results expectations that are realistic and in line with an organization’s resources and capacity.

## PART ONE

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

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#### STEP 1

**Define the current opportunity and questions 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 question:** *Why are we embarking on this process now? What is our goal and purpose for creating an outcome map?*

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#### STEP 2

**Determine 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' 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 has seen work well; these are described in *Getting Started Exercises, Part One*. 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:** *What timeframe will be appropriate for our process?*

## STEP 3

**Determine stakeholders in the outcome map design process — e.g., staff only, staff and others (e.g., board), broader partners / stakeholder input and feedback, designated work group.**

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 planning or 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 one campaign or strategy in broader planning efforts. 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 a 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 that if an organization is about to develop, revise or revisit its strategic plan or do other significant planning work, or if advocates are heading into the busiest times of the year (e.g., legislative session) 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 “out of hide,” that is, in addition to all other efforts and without any additional resources, it will be best accomplished if there is leadership to keep the process moving.

**Answer the Question:** *Who will lead/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. 4).



## EXERCISES

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

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#### EXERCISE 1

Define the current opportunity or question and why this is the right time to develop a

#### Examples include:

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- An organization is just beginning or has just finished strategic planning and is hoping to lift up and be able to communicate important aspects of its work.
- There has been a recent leadership transition and an outcome map could help clarify the organization's current and/or future work and focus areas.
- The organization wishes to learn how it might strengthen its capacity to influence policy and budget decisions at the state or local level.
- The organization is moving towards evaluation of 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.

#### Example: 3-6 month outcome map development process.

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- 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]. Work group should include facilitators, representatives of the organization's executive/management team, some with solid knowledge of strategies and implementation, a variety of perspectives.
- 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.

#### Example: 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 key stakeholders [ typically accomplished via multiple meetings or work sessions that occur over a 1-3 month time frame]
- Input regarding stakeholders' input/initial outcome map development is summarized.

**Example: 6—12 month outcome map development process.**

- A small work group is identified (5-8 people).
- Based on input from key stakeholders, the work group prepares a draft outcome map [typically accomplished in 1-3 work sessions; 2-4 hours each]. Work group should include some of those who participated in the broad input gathering process.
- Draft outcome map is shared back with those stakeholders who provided initial input. Feedback is collected and documented.
- Draft outcome map is refined by work group based on feedback received [typically accomplished in 1-2 work sessions, 2-3 hours each]
- Second draft is shared for feedback.
- Second draft outcome map is refined by work group based on feedback received [typically accomplished in 1-2 work sessions, 2-3 hours each]
- Third draft is shared for minor comments and adoption.
- Formal adoption following minor revisions (revisions at this point are primarily to clarify or amplify)

**EXERCISE 3**

**Determine stakeholders in the outcome map design process— e.g., staff only, staff and others (e.g., board), broader partner/ stakeholder input and feedback, designated work group.**

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**Identify who will lead/contribute to the process of developing your theory of change outcome map.**

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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

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#### STEP 1

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

**Answer the Question:** *Who are the main audiences with whom you will communicate your work via an outcome map?*

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. If so, you might consider that these are **target audience(s)** for your outcome map. When creating the outcome map, it will be important to clarify to what extent the outcome map will address a particular audience's needs and interests in relationship to either the interests of other audiences or a more general picture of your work.

**Answer the Question:** *Who is your target audience for a theory of change outcome map?*

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#### 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 towards and achieve a long-term goal, typically a policy-related goal or a change in population or environmental conditions. This view would likely include multiple efforts of different partners that contribute towards the long-term goal and is most useful when seeking to describe work happening in 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 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 could be most useful if an organization is seeking to define its particular role or contribution within a broad effort (i.e. what the organization itself bring 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 would be most useful if an organization is involved in evaluation planning, or trying to get a picture of what is like to happen/change in a distinct near-term time period (e.g. next 1-2 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 this work.

**Answer the Question:** *What vantage point(s) will allow you to best communicate your work and intended results to your target audience(s)?*

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.

### STEP 3

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

Think about what your target audience(s) cares most. 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 do good media advocacy, policy wins, the health/well-being of a particular population).

Considerations:

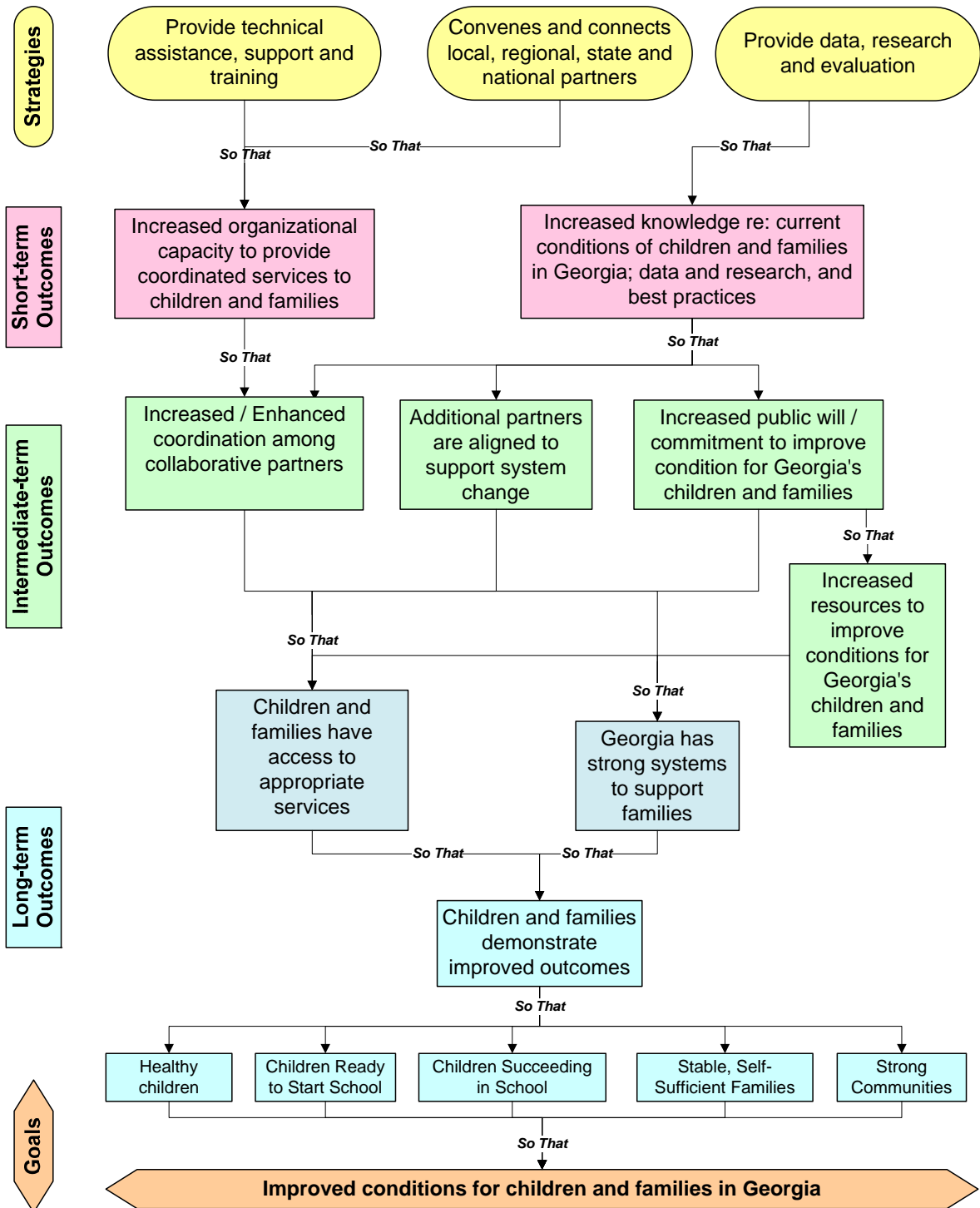
- Some audiences' interests may be related to your organization's **operations** (e.g. organizational capacity, types of actions and the quantity/breadth of actions). Some audiences' interests may be more related to **effectiveness** of your actions (e.g. the quality, results or outcomes of your actions). 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 get a clearer understanding of your organization's current work, or to get 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:** *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. 4).

### Example Outcome Map Georgia Family Connection Partnership Outcome Map



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

Below is a table that may be useful to complete as you think about Exercises below

### Identify Audiences and Their Interests

Main audiences for your work	You are successful if... What are the primary interests/needs of the audience?	Do audiences' interests align most with a: 30,000 foot view 10,000 foot view or 1,000 foot view of your work?	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.**

#### Considerations:

- When creating the outcome map, it will be important to clarify to what extent the outcome map will address a particular audience's needs and interests in relationship to either the interests of other audiences or a more general picture of your work.
- If you have identified lots of 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/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 vantage point(s) for depicting a theory of change outcome map.

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#### Your vantage point.

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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>1</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 examples: Connecticut Association for Human Services, Children First For Oregon: "Fostering Success"

- 10,000 foot view**
- Your organization engages in multiple strategies directed towards 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/outcomes.
  - You want your outcome map to help express your organization's particular role or contribution within a broader effort

See examples: Georgia Family Connection Partnership, 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 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 examples: Children First for Oregon Fostering Success Strategic Communications Campaign, Georgia Family Connection Partnership – Strategy 1 Map .

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<sup>1</sup>For more description of 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.

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

**Identify Target Audiences and Relevant Headline(s)**

Target Audiences	Relevant Headline(s)

**EXERCISE 3**

**Prioritize relevant strategies and outcome areas to highlight in your outcome map.**

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

The headline could address...

**What work you have done**

Type of activities

**Examples**

- Development of data products
- Development of media spots/press releases
- Provide training/technical assistance
- Sponsor/facilitate meetings and events
- Conduct research/evaluation
- Legislative advocacy
- Identify strategies and tactics for Universal Pre-K campaign

**OR**

**What you have accomplished as a result of your work**

How much have you done?

**Examples**

- # of hits on CLIks
- # of downloads of policy/ issue briefs/newsletter
- # of public and nonprofit organizations receiving products
- # and types of attendees at conferences/ meetings
- Open rate of our KC news alert email message
- # of policy makers who received the data book
- # 3 press releases sent to daily newspaper, TV stations, radio stations

<b>What you have accomplished as a result of your work</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Organizational capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The amount of capacity your organization has to implement or engage in certain strategies or activities.</li> </ul>
Effectiveness (outcomes) of your work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Legislative report tracking policy changes</li> <li>■ Public citation of use of KC products by policymakers</li> <li>■ # of instances where products are cited in policy debates (legislative record search)</li> <li>■ Evidence of policymaker engagement (i.e. press releases, citations in bill language)</li> <li>■ # of child advocacy groups that use data/ products (State Child Advocate Survey)</li> <li>■ # of research proven initiatives used in state</li> </ul>
Strategic accomplishments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Selected message to frame key issue</li> <li>■ Selected topic/frame/approach for development of data products</li> <li>■ Selected approaches to disseminate messages/data products</li> </ul>

## PART THREE

### Design a Useful Theory of Change Outcome Map

Advocacy organizations are generally clear on their strategies and tactics and their end goals. End goals are often expressed as policy changes, or changes in population or environmental conditions. Developing 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?

#### STEP 1

Start at the **END** by clarifying the goal(s).

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 or the like.

**OR**

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

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

**Answer the Question:** *What is the ultimate goal of your work? Or 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/partnership will implement towards 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:** *What work will we do to reach our ultimate goal?*

### STEP 3

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

The length of time identified will suggest the types of outcomes that will likely make up “the middle” of the theory of change (see Step 3).

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”?

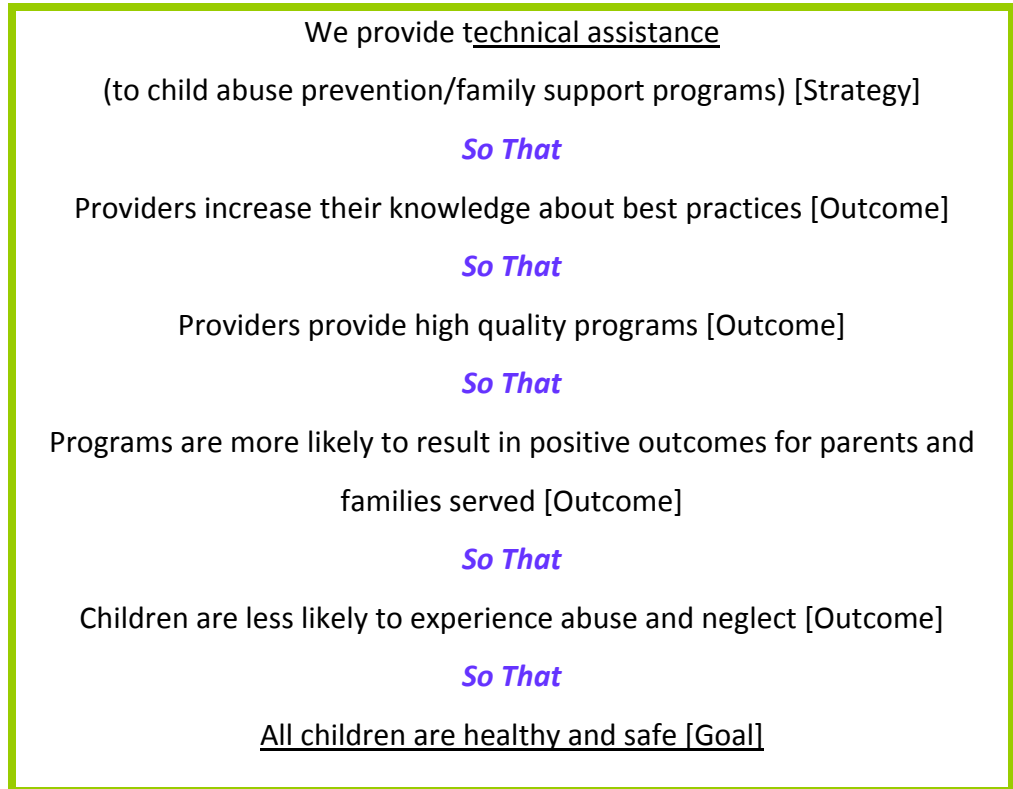
**Answer the Question:** *When will you likely to achieve desired outcomes and goals? What kinds of things might need to happen first or “on the way”?*

### 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:**

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 table included with Part Three Exercises. This table describes several outcome areas likely to be related to advocacy. Consider that you will likely need to characterize both the **structural changes** (e.g. changes in institutions, beliefs, commitments) that happen on the way to the **policy changes** which you are seeking.

## 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:** *Are there logical linkages between strategies, outcomes and the goal? Are the most relevant outcomes included (i.e. those that are of highest interest/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. 4)

### 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 implementation of evaluation efforts.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</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.

## EXERCISES

### Design a Useful Theory of Change Outcome Map

#### EXERCISE 1

Start at the END:  
Clarify goal(s).

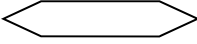
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#### Considering the following:

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- Purpose of outcome map
- Needs/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/impact** in the "Goal"  shape at the bottom of the "Outcome Map Template" on page 15.

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 goal(s) are broad enough to make everyone feel comfortable, included and inspired.

#### EXERCISE 2

Identify the main strategies that your organization/partnership will implement towards the goal(s).

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#### Consider:

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

Identify the specific **strategies** which 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:

- Media campaign
- Facilitate Alliance for Education
- Community organizing
- Provide technical assistance
- Conduct research and program evaluation
- Develop data products

### EXERCISE 3

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

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#### Consider:

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- Needs/interests of your target audience(s)
- The vantage point you identified for your outcome map (e.g., 30K foot, 10K foot, 1K 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 timeframe 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).

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#### Create "So That" Chains.

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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.

**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 half sheets of paper to write strategies and outcomes, and these sheets can be arranged sequentially on the wall to reflect the connection between strategies and outcomes, as well as the flow of outcomes towards the ultimate goal. A worksheet template follows.

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 15.

See below for an example So-That chain. Also see below for additional information about the types of outcomes likely to be associated with advocacy and policy work.

### “So That” Chain Worksheet

We implement STRATEGY/ ACTIVITY	
So That ↓	
OUTCOME	
So That ↓	
OUTCOME	
So That ↓	
OUTCOME	

#### TYPES OF OUTCOMES ASSOCIATED WITH ADVOCACY AND POLICY CHANGE WORK

In *A Guide To Measuring Advocacy and Policy*, ORS identified several outcome areas that represent the interim steps and infrastructure that 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 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>2</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 changes in recognition of the importance of aligning advocacy and policy goals with **core and enduring social values and behaviors.**

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<sup>2</sup>Descriptions of Outcome Areas and the Table on pages 5-7 excerpted from: *A Guide to Measuring Advocacy and Policy*. (2007) Organizational Research Services on behalf of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Available at: [www.organizationalresearch.com](http://www.organizationalresearch.com) and [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org).

**2. STRENGTHENED ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY**

Description: the skill set, staffing and leadership, organizational structure and systems, finances, and strategic planning among of non-profit organizations and formal coalitions that plan and carry out advocacy and policy work. The development of these core capacities is critical **organizational conditions** to the 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 insuring 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 the 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. They would be important to monitor and evaluate in those 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 table below presents these outcome categories along with samples of outcomes and the strategies that are associated with these broad outcomes. Please note that the order of outcomes is not intended to represent their importance or priority.

### Menu of Outcomes for Advocacy and Policy Work Table

<b>1. SHIFT IN SOCIAL NORMS</b>	
Examples of Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Changes in awareness</li> <li>■ Increased agreement of the definition of a problem (e.g., 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>
Examples of Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Media campaign</li> <li>■ Message development (e.g., defining the problem, framing, naming)</li> <li>■ Development of trusted messengers and champions</li> </ul>
Unit of Analysis (e.g. 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>

<b>2. STRENGTHENED ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY</b>	
Examples of Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Improved organizational capacity of organizations involved with advocacy and policy work (e.g., non-profit management, strategic abilities; capacity to communicate and promote advocacy messages; stability)</li> <li>■ Increased ability of coalitions working toward policy change to identify policy change process (e.g., venue of policy change, steps of policy change based on strong understanding of the issue and barriers, jurisdiction of policy change)</li> </ul>
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>
Unit of Analysis (e.g. Who or What Changes?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Advocacy organizations</li> <li>■ Not-for profit organizations</li> <li>■ Advocacy coalitions</li> <li>■ Community organizers, leaders</li> </ul>

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

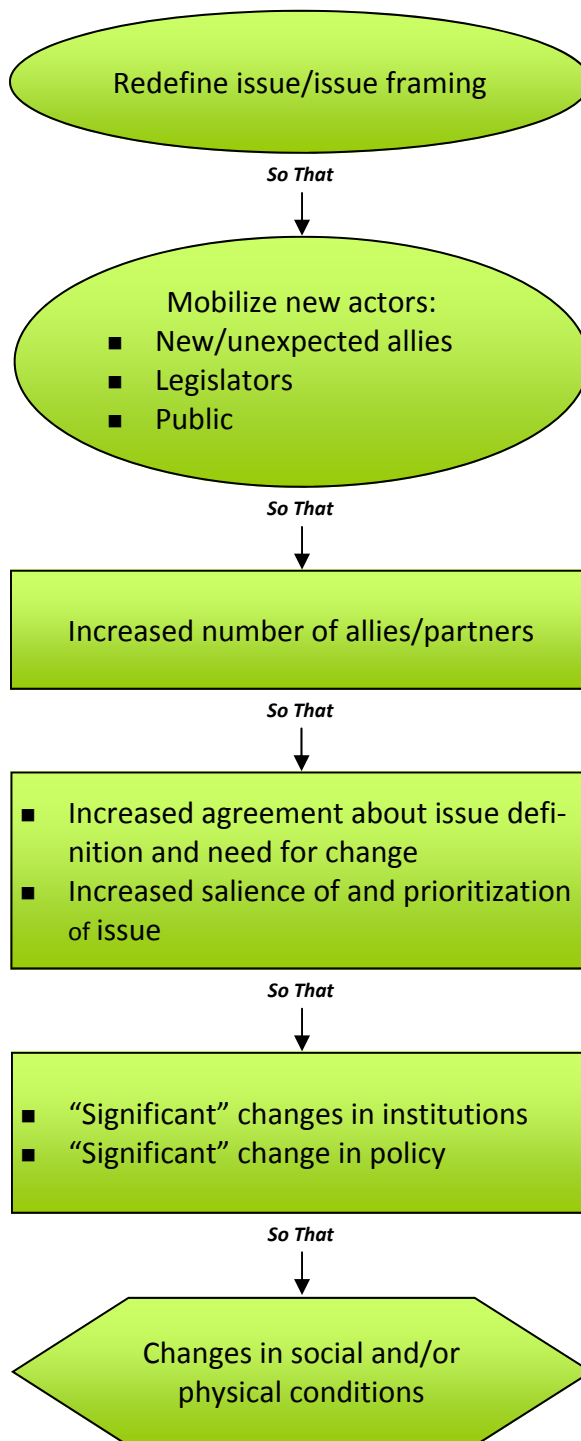
4. STRENGTHENED BASE OF SUPPORT	
Examples of Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increased public involvement in an issue</li> <li>■ Increased level of actions taken by champions of an issue</li> <li>■ Increased voter registration</li> <li>■ Changes in voting behavior</li> <li>■ Increased breadth of partners supporting an issue (e.g., number of “unlikely allies” supporting an issue)</li> <li>■ Increased media coverage (e.g., quantity, prioritization, extent of coverage, variety of media “beats,” message echoing)</li> <li>■ Increased awareness of campaign principles and messages among selected groups, e.g., policy makers, general public, opinion leaders)</li> <li>■ Increased visibility of the campaign message (e.g., engagement in debate, presence of campaign message in the media)</li> <li>■ Changes in public will</li> </ul>
Examples of Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Community organizing</li> <li>■ Media campaigns</li> <li>■ Outreach</li> <li>■ Public/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>
Unit of Analysis (e.g. Who or What Changes?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Individuals</li> <li>■ Groups</li> <li>■ Organizations</li> <li>■ Institutions</li> </ul>

5. IMPROVED POLICIES	
Examples of Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Policy Development</li> <li>■ Policy Adoption (e.g., ordinance, ballot measure, legislation, legally-binding agreements)</li> <li>■ Policy Implementation (e.g., equity, adequate funding and other resources for implementing policy)</li> <li>■ Policy Enforcement (e.g., holding the line on bedrock legislation)</li> </ul>
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/Demonstration programs</li> <li>■ Educational briefings of legislators</li> <li>■ Watchdog function</li> </ul>
Unit of Analysis (e.g. Who or What Changes?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Policy planners</li> <li>■ Administrators</li> <li>■ Policy makers</li> <li>■ Legislation/laws/formal policies</li> </ul>

6. CHANGES IN IMPACT	
Examples of Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Improved social and physical conditions (e.g., poverty, habitat diversity, health, equality, democracy)</li> </ul>
Examples of Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Combination of direct service and systems-changing strategies</li> </ul>
Unit of Analysis (e.g., 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.”

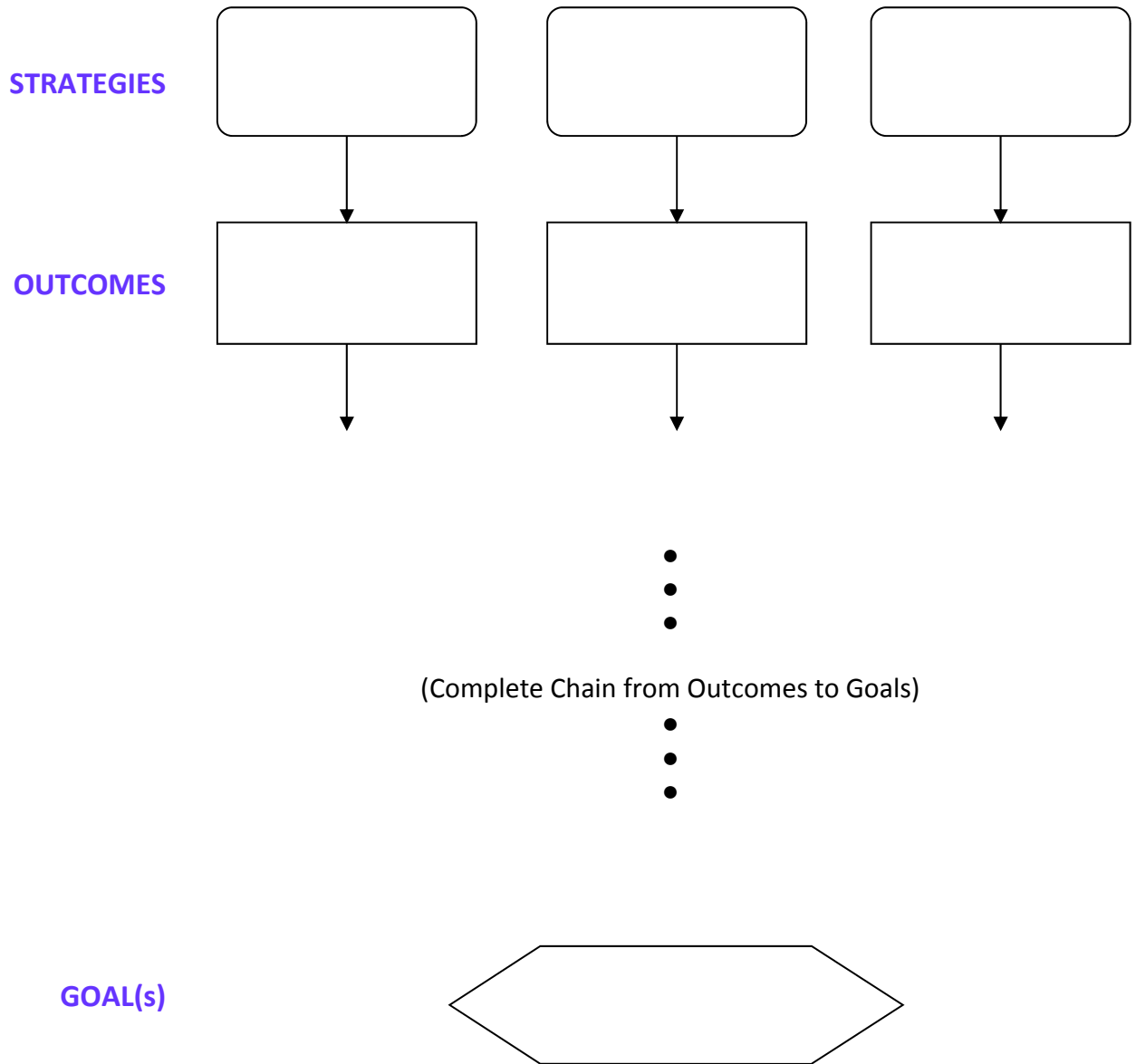
### “So That” Chain Examples: “Large Leaps” Approach to Policy Change\*



\*From Pathways for Change: 6 Theories about How Policy change Happens. (2007) S. Stachowiak, Organizational Research Services. Available at: [www.organizationalresearch.com](http://www.organizationalresearch.com).

Discuss your organization's outcomes as they fit into the areas described in the table on pages 11-13, and add relevant outcomes to the map below.

### Exercise: Outcome Map Template



## EXERCISE 5

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

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### Logic and relevance test:

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

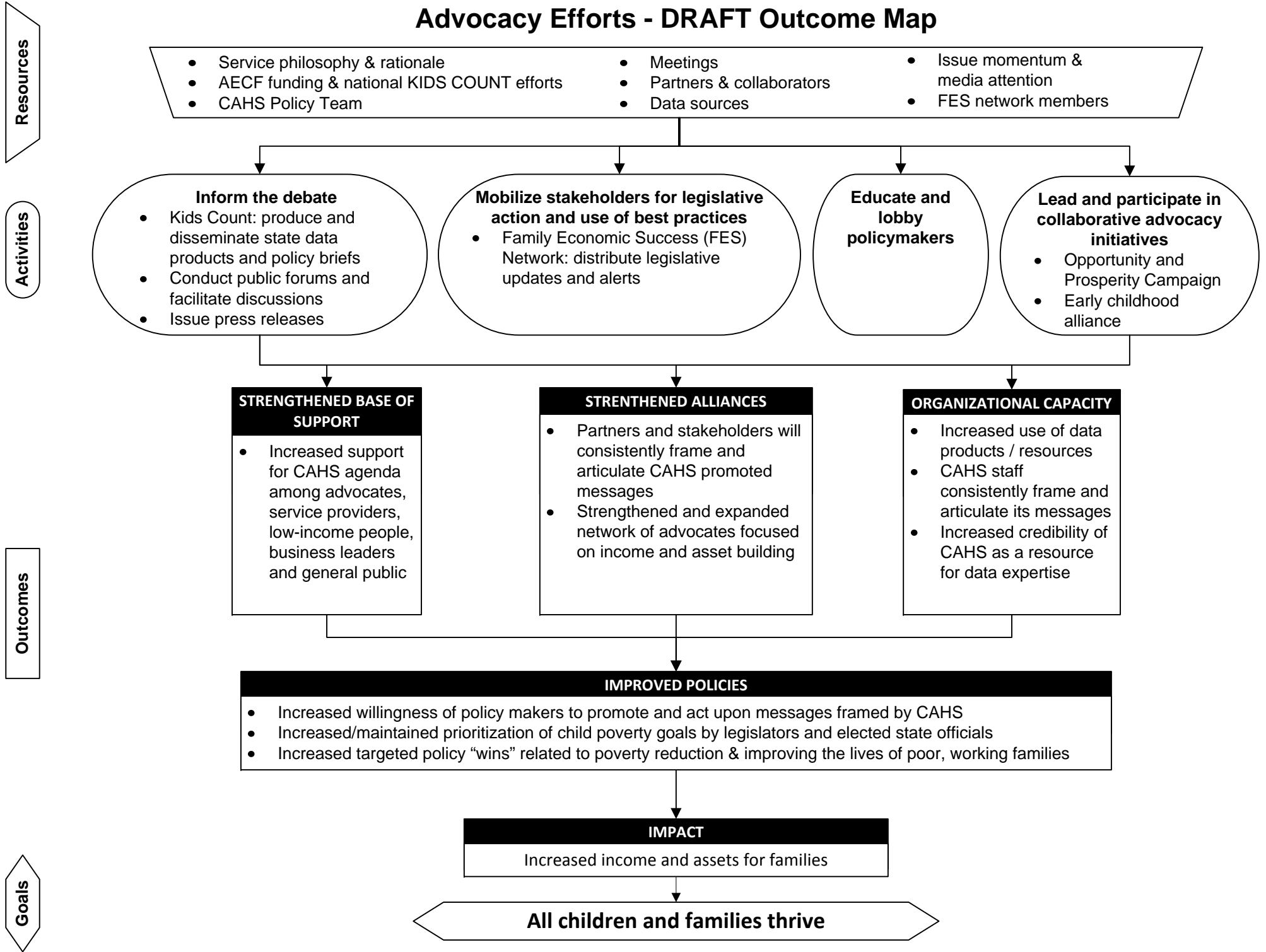
- Do the strategies reflect aspects of your organization’s core work?
- Do short-term outcomes logically flow from identified strategies? Are short-term outcomes appearing in the map the changes that are most likely to happen first?
- Does the sequence of outcomes flow logically? Can you reasonably expect 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 (*Getting Started Guide*, page 4).

## OUTCOME MAP EXAMPLES



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



Resources

Activities

Outcomes

Goals

- Service philosophy & rationale
- AECF funding & national KIDS COUNT efforts
- CAHS Policy Team

- Meetings
- Partners & collaborators
- Data sources

- Issue momentum & media attention
- FES network members

### Inform the debate

- Kids Count: produce and disseminate state data products and policy briefs
- Conduct public forums and facilitate discussions
- Issue press releases

### Mobilize stakeholders for legislative action and use of best practices

- Family Economic Success (FES) Network: distribute legislative updates and alerts

### Educate and lobby policymakers

### Lead and participate in collaborative advocacy initiatives

- Opportunity and Prosperity Campaign
- Early childhood alliance

### STRENGTHENED BASE OF SUPPORT

- Increased support for CAHS agenda among advocates, service providers, low-income people, business leaders and general public

### STRENGTHENED ALLIANCES

- Partners and stakeholders will consistently frame and articulate CAHS promoted messages
- Strengthened and expanded network of advocates focused on income and asset building

### ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

- Increased use of data products / resources
- CAHS staff consistently frame and articulate its messages
- Increased credibility of CAHS as a resource for data expertise

### IMPROVED POLICIES

- Increased willingness of policy makers to promote and act upon messages framed by CAHS
- Increased/maintained prioritization of child poverty goals by legislators and elected state officials
- Increased targeted policy "wins" related to poverty reduction & improving the lives of poor, working families

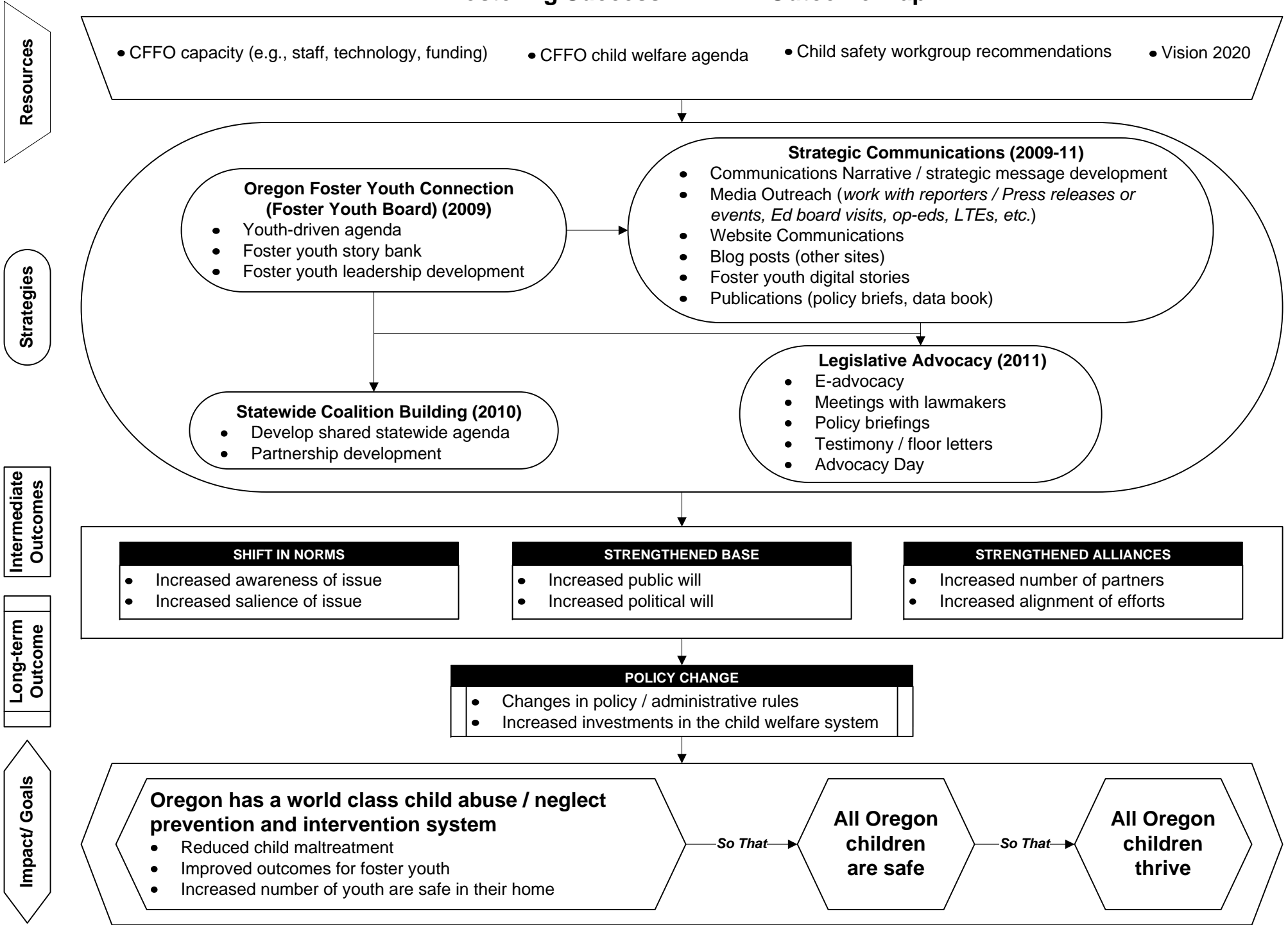
### IMPACT

Increased income and assets for families

All children and families thrive

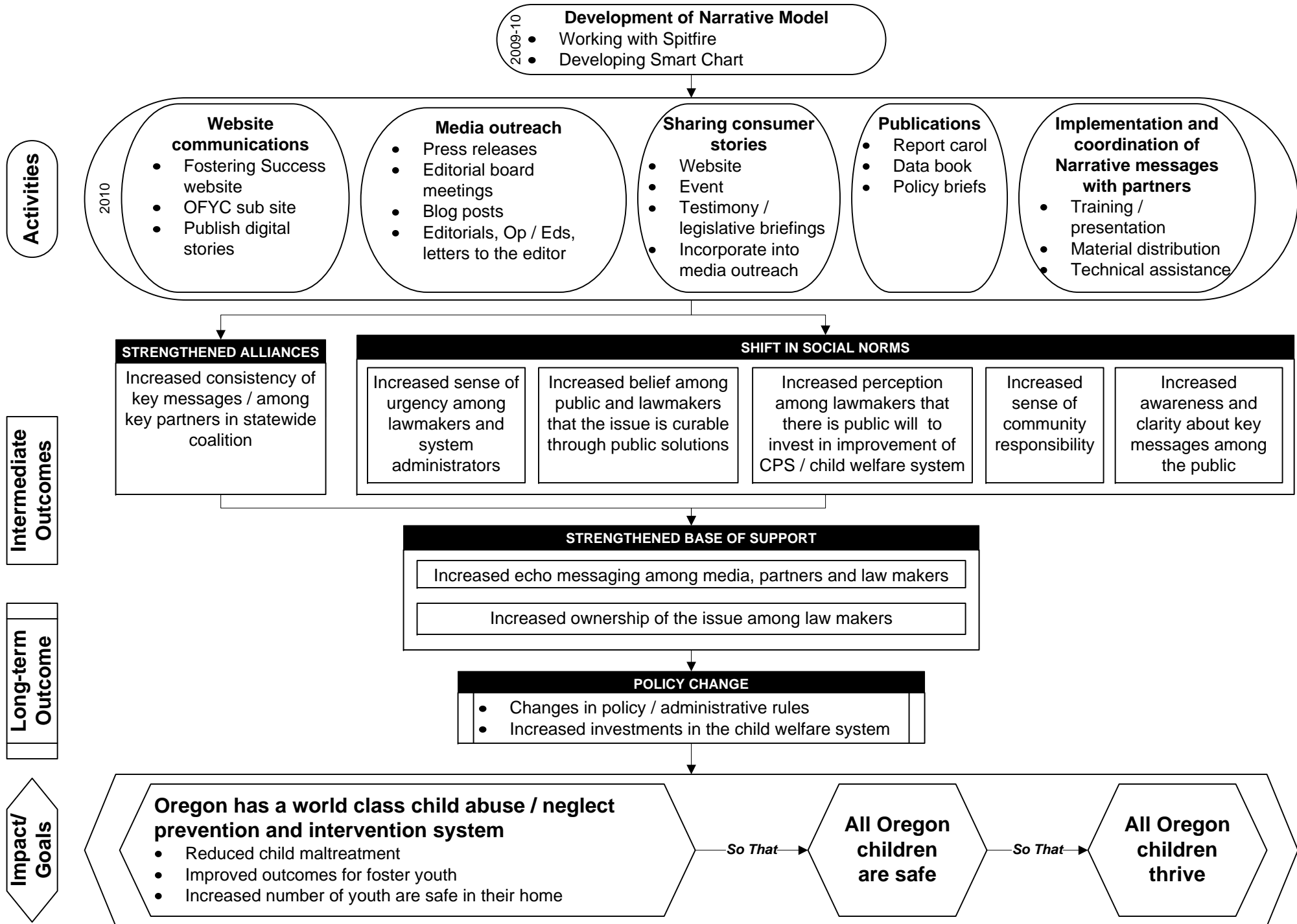


# Children First for Oregon “Fostering Success” DRAFT Outcome Map



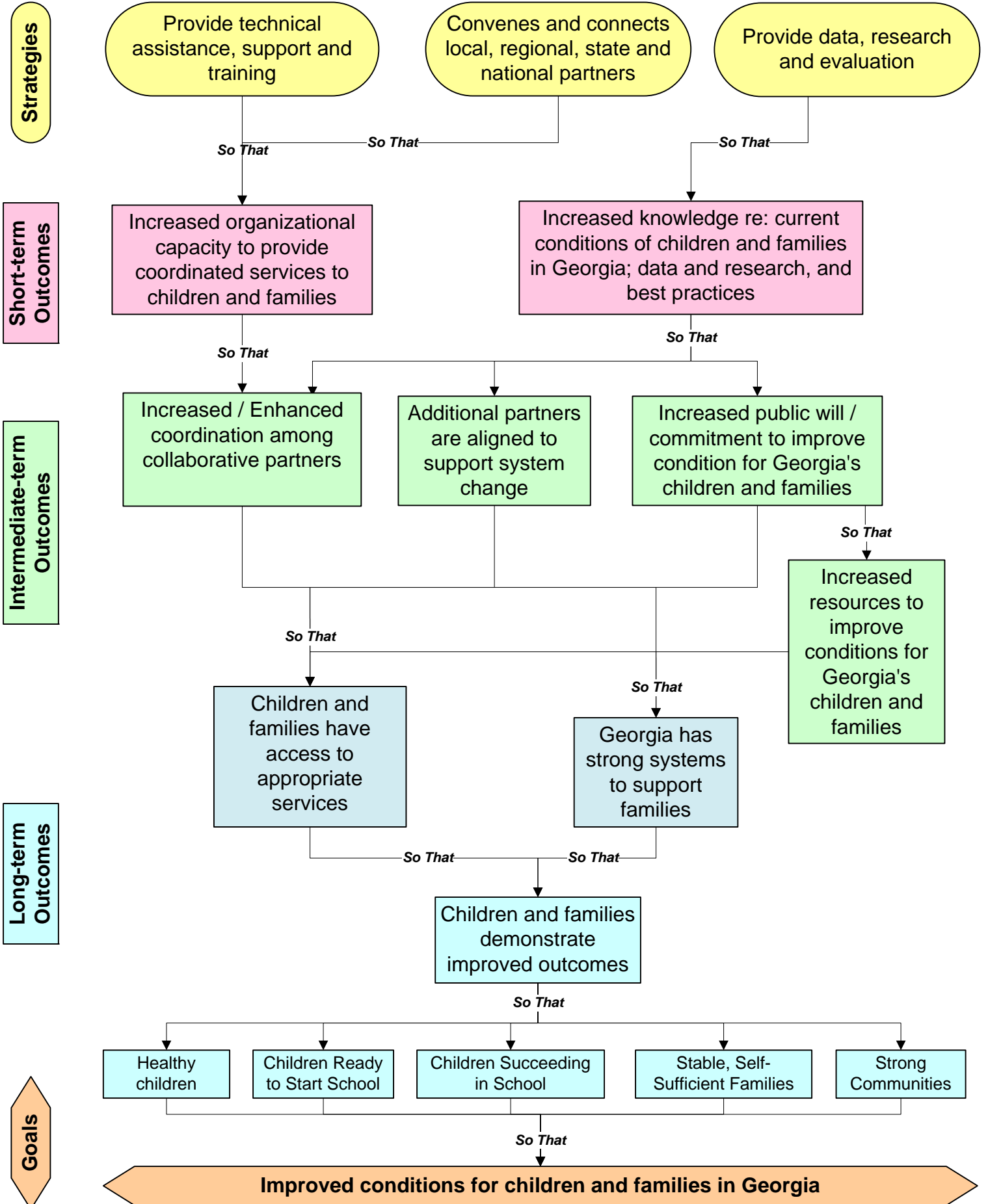


# Children First for Oregon “Fostering Success” Strategic Communications DRAFT Outcome Map



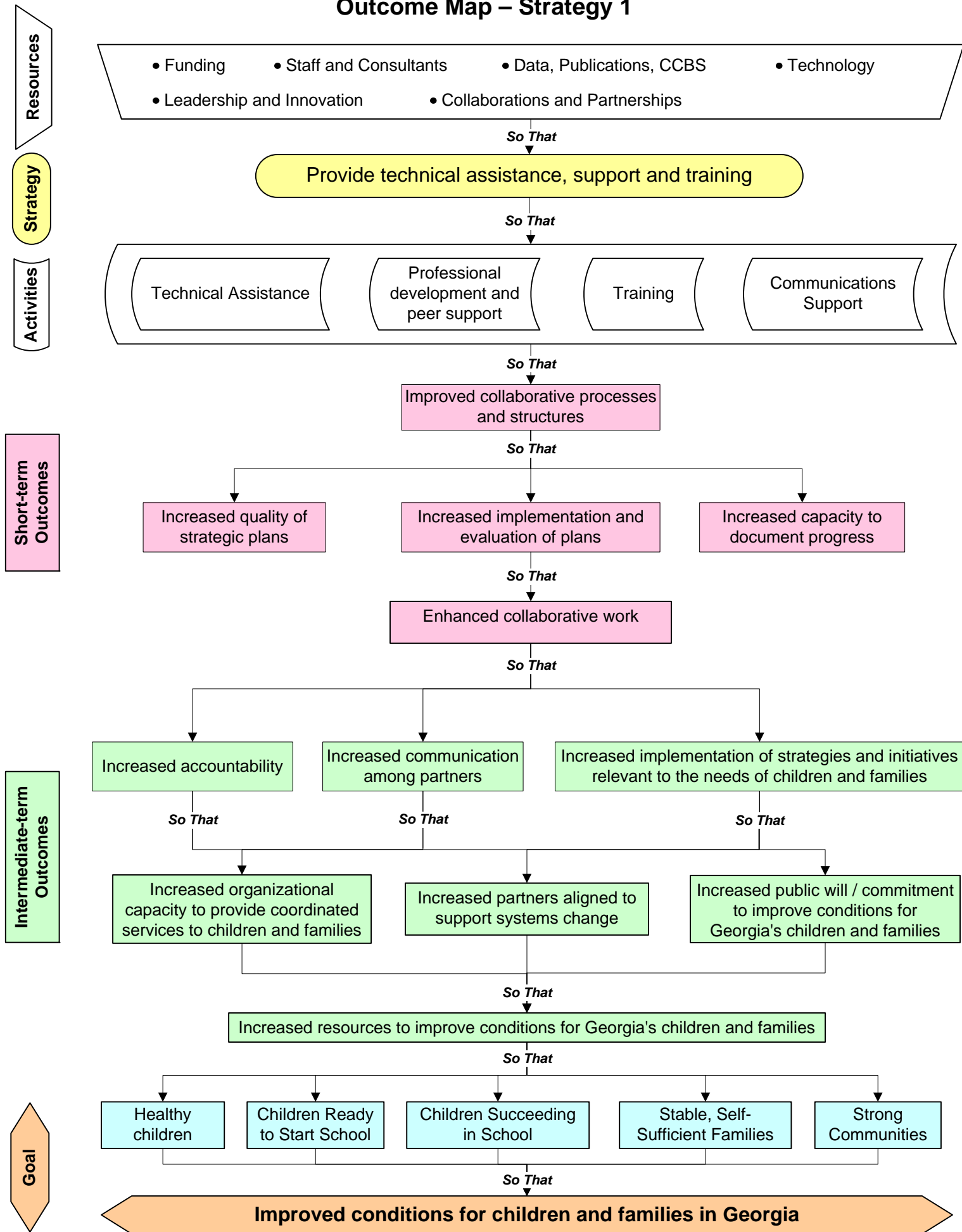


# Georgia Family Connection Partnership Outcome Map



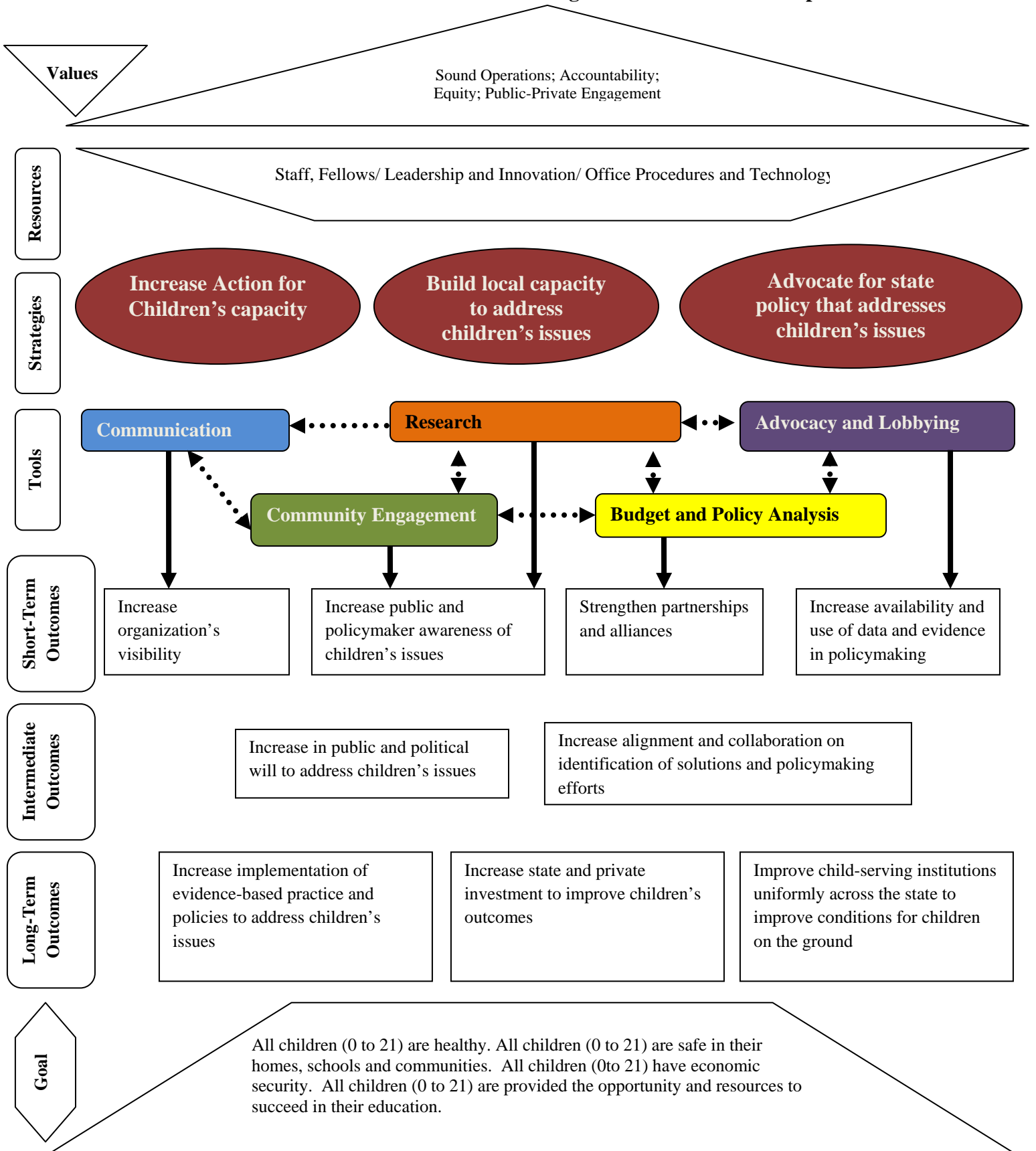


# Georgia Family Connection Partnership Outcome Map – Strategy 1





# Action for Children North Carolina Organizational Outcome Map



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