



Measuring What Matters

Creating A Meaningful Outcomes Framework Across 150 Programs

2025 Speakers Series Webinars, OMSSA



eden.williams@toronto.ca

Strategic Measures

meg@strategicmeasures.ca

www.strategicmeasures.ca

Social Development Division, City of Toronto

The Social Development division drives transformative change to achieve stronger, safer, and more resilient communities and neighbourhoods in Toronto.

Services include

- Community and neighbourhood development
- Community safety and wellbeing
- Community partnership investment programs
- Social policy and planning
- Human service integration

Eden Williams, MHE, Policy Development Officer



Strategic Measures

Empowering organizations with the information needed to build solid foundations and track progress towards achieving goals.

Boutique consultancy providing services in

- Strategy
- Performance Measurement
- Evaluation and Research
- Certified Diverse Supplier (WBE Canada)

Meg Gassanov, Ph.D., Founder and Principal Consultant


- Credentialed Evaluator
- Strategy Planning Professional



Agenda



1. Background to the Divisional Outcomes Framework
2. Our process
3. Our deliverables
4. Bringing it home
5. Discussion

The background features a collage of a corkboard with various items pinned to it, including a white sheet of paper, a pink note with a red arrow, a red string with beads, and a yellow paperclip. The collage is framed by white and orange geometric shapes. In the top right corner, there is a 4x4 grid of light green dots. In the bottom left corner, there is a 4x4 grid of light blue dots.

Divisional Outcomes Framework

Divisional Outcomes Framework (DOF)

- A **shared measurement** system with a **centralized menu of indicators**
- Helps programs choose **meaningful** and **valid** indicators
- Builds a **shared language** across programs to tell a consistent, division-wide story
- Applies to **any set of coordinated work**—programs, services, projects, units, or initiatives

Foundational Work



M&E Needs Assessment Scan

2021

What M&E support would the division benefit from?

- A division-wide M&E strategy
- More internal staff resources with M&E skillset
- More M&E infrastructure (e.g., frameworks, databases, templates)
- Increased evaluative culture

Foundational Work

Manager Team	Title of Program/Service	Title of formal SDPA strategy document that mandates this program/service, if applicable	Which category type best describes what your staff do for this program/service?	Type - Other, please describe	What is the issue/gap that this program/service addresses?	Who are the program/service partners?	City of
Business Success Support Unit	Overnight Business & Strategic Support, Overland Business Functions for the Director and CEO/COO Office	City of Toronto Corporate Policies are followed i.e. People & Equity, Collective Agreements, City Clerk's Legislative Process, Access and	C: A program/service that works to identify priorities, conduct planning, develop, and implement strategic solutions	SDPA Employee Management	The Business Support Unit work addresses the following areas: Recruitment, Payroll, Compensation, Organizational Design Changes,	People and Equity, Payroll, Employee Benefits, Office of Emergency Management, Corporate Services, Facilities Management,	City of
Business Success Support Unit	Provision Strategic and Technical Development Services	City of Toronto Corporate Policies are followed i.e. People & Equity	C: A program/service that works to identify priorities, conduct planning, develop, and implement strategic solutions	SDPA Employee Management	Overseeing all recruitment including Expressions of Interest, providing	People and Equity, Payroll, Employee Benefits, City Clerk's Office	City of
Business Success Support Unit	Coordination/Operational Lead of Corporate Programs	City of Toronto Corporate Policies are followed i.e. People & Equity, Training & Development, City Clerk's Legislative	C: A program/service that works to identify priorities, conduct planning, develop, and implement strategic solutions	SDPA Employee Management	Compliance with Corporate Policies i.e. People & Equity, City Clerk's Legislative Process, Access and	City Manager's Office, CEO/COO Office, Manager's Office, City Clerk, People and Equity, Facilities Management,	City of
Business Success Support Unit	Administrative Support and Coordination for the Executive Director's Office and SDPA Division	Administrative oversight in the office of the Executive Director	C: A program/service that works to identify priorities, conduct planning, develop, and implement strategic solutions	SDPA Employee Management	Senior administrative support to the Executive Director and staff in the SDPA division, including coordination, development of administrative tools	City Manager's Office, CEO/COO Office, Manager's Office, Other City Divisions, Mayor's Office, City Council's Office, other government agencies	City of
Business Success Support Unit	Technical Staffing Recruitment and People Services support to the Division	City of Toronto Corporate Policies are followed i.e. People & Equity, Collective Agreements, Labour	C: A program/service that works to identify priorities, conduct planning, develop, and implement strategic solutions	Type A: A hybrid program/service delivered by SDPA staff	Supports the vision on all recruitment and compensation matters, creating staff regulations, reviewing	People and Equity, Payroll, Employee Benefits	City of
Business Success Support Unit	Payroll support	Payroll oversight by the SDPA Division	C: A program/service that works to identify priorities, conduct planning, develop, and implement strategic solutions	SDPA Employee Management	Providing support with respect to Payroll, Payroll and Employee	Payroll, Payroll and Employee Benefits	City of

Program and Service Inventory

2022+ (ever-green)

Detailed description of all programs (~150)

- What, why, how, and with whom Social Development works
- Existing outcomes
- Existing indicators

Provisional grouping of outcome areas

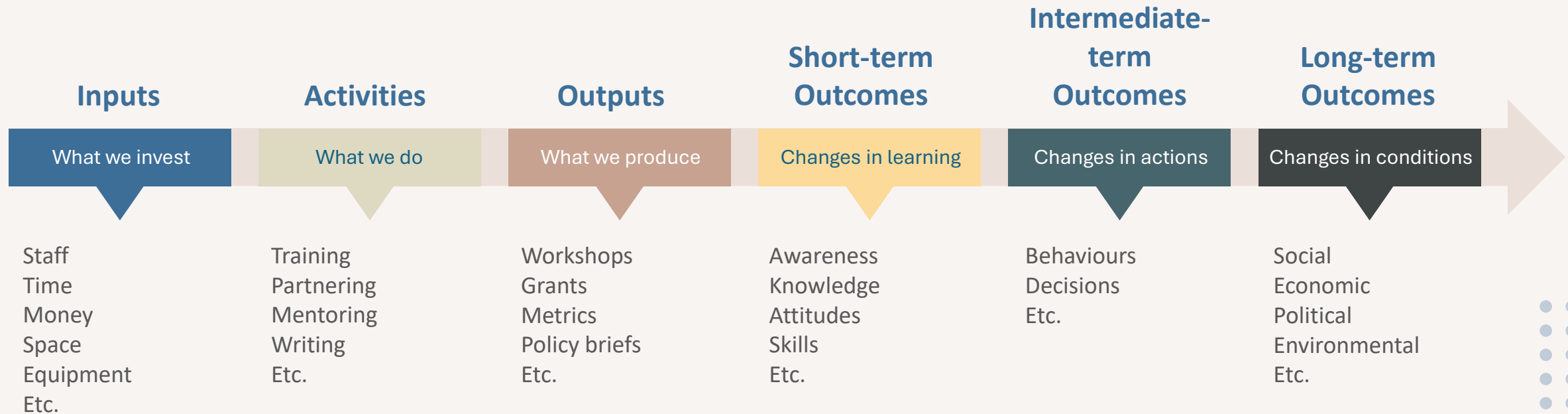
Our Process



How are we doing this?



How A Program Works (logic model)



All indicators answer one of three questions (Results-Based Accountability)

How much did we do?

of customers served
of services / activities delivered

Examples:

of referrals made
of partnership events
of workshops conducted

How well did we do it?

% of services / activities
performed well

Examples:

% of partners who are satisfied
% of clients receiving timely service
% of participants who completed
the activity

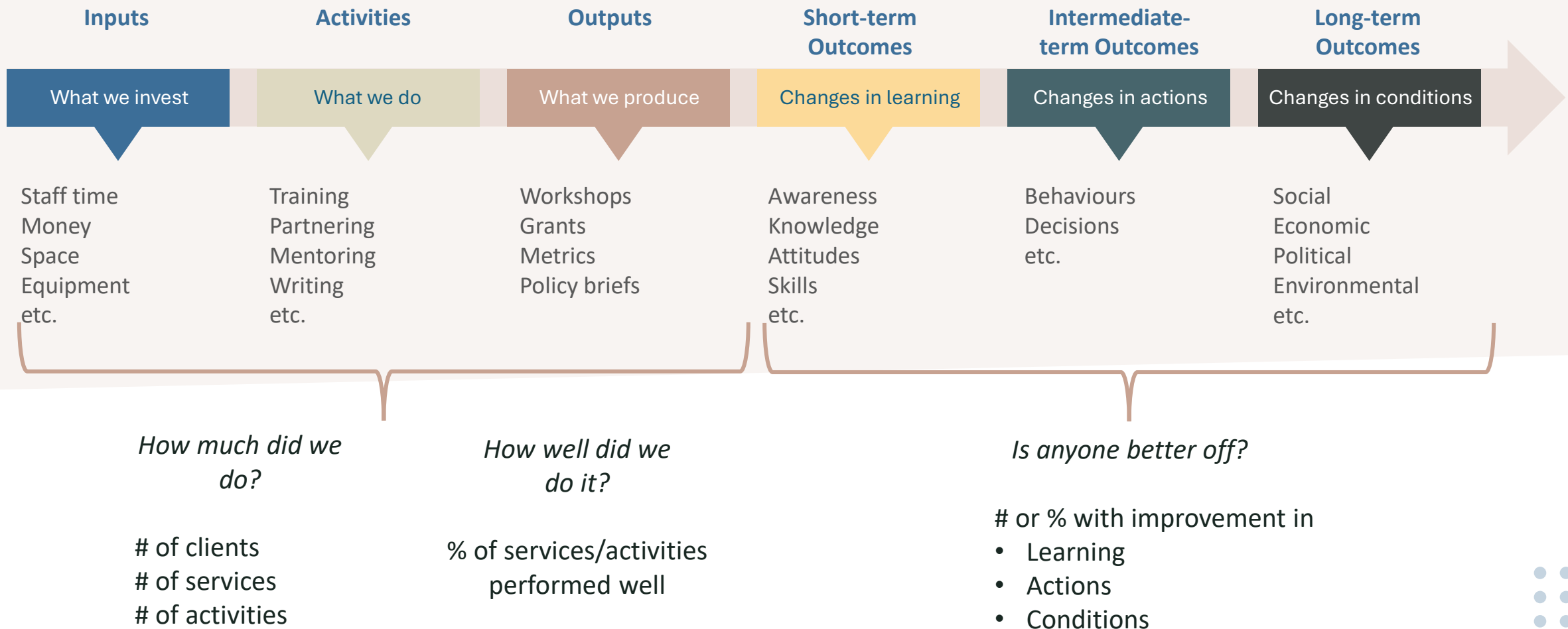
Is anyone better off?

or % with improvement in
learning, actions, or conditions

Examples:

% of clients who showed
change in awareness
% increase in number of
contracts that include diverse
suppliers

Joining RBA + Logic Model



Criteria for Good Indicators

These criteria are fundamental



Meaningful

Does the indicator address the most important aspects of the program?



Valid

Does the indicator measure the intended outcome accurately? Is the indicator technically sound?



Reliable

Will it produce accurate results or regular feedback on a repeatable basis?



Sensitive to Change

Will this indicator detect changes over time, especially small or gradual ones?



Understandable

Will it be easily understood and interpretable by your key stakeholders?



Feasible

Can the indicator be realistically measured?

Criteria for Good Indicators



Useful

Will this indicator provide information that can be used for decision-making?



Aligned with Customary Practice and Prior Usage

Is this indicator consistent with current and previous practice?



Applicable in Different Contexts

Does the indicator apply to a variety to settings?



Appropriate for the Population

Is this indicator culturally-responsive, trauma-informed, and otherwise appropriate in terms of content, focus, and plans for data collection?

These criteria are for a set of indicators as a whole



Comprehensive Set of Indicators

Does the total set of indicators provide information about all aspects or dimensions of the program / service?



Value within a Set

Does this indicator add meaning to the total set of indicators?

Hypothetical Scenario

Imagine your city has just funded a project to increase community members' leadership in civic engagement activities.

What is one performance measure that you could use to assess the project's outcomes?

TS

Res.

LAYERS

ual

- Health, Wellb.
- Personal and Int.
- Social and Commu
- Education and Emplo
- Basic Needs Security

- External Organizational Capac
- Internal Organizational Cap

nity

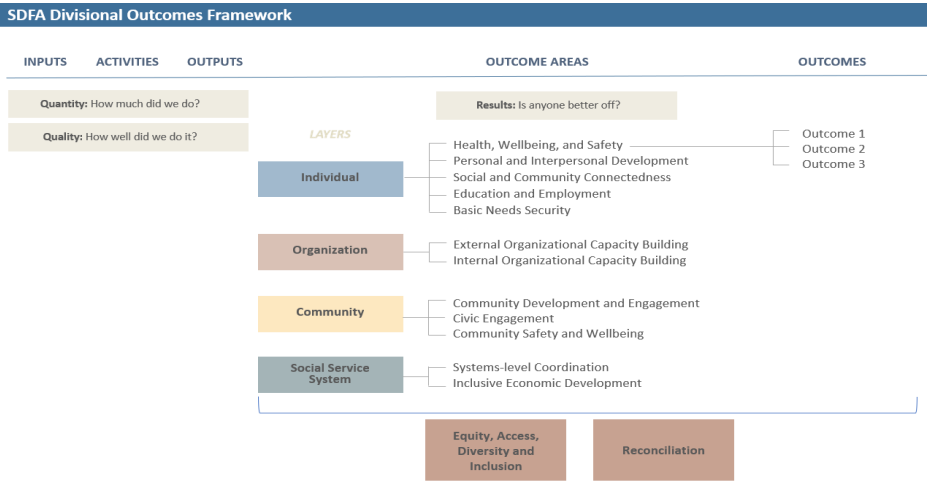
- Community Develop
- Civic Engagement
- Community Safe

System

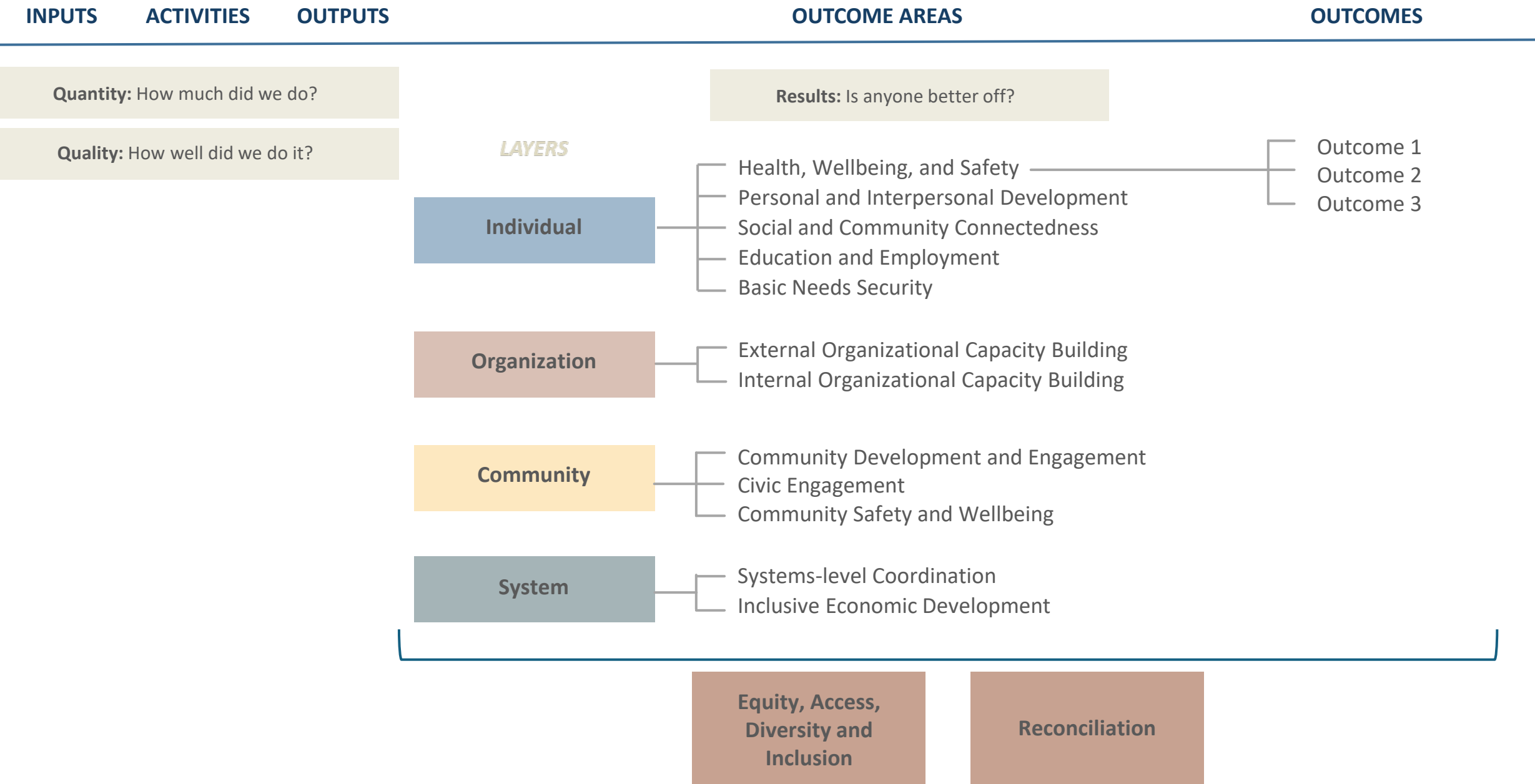
- Systems-le
- Inclusiv

Our Deliverables

The DOF and its Accompanying Resources



Divisional Outcomes Framework



152 unique outcomes in DOF



34% of outcomes describe changes for
Individuals



20% of outcomes describe changes for
Organizations



19% of outcomes describe changes for
Communities



20% of outcomes describe changes for
Systems



9% of outcomes describe changes for
Equity, Access, Diversity, and Inclusion

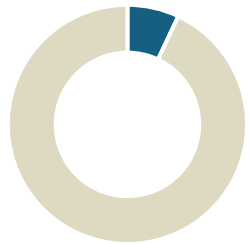


1,366 unique indicators in DOF

Indicators are organized across 6 categories that are commonly found in a logic model and answer the RBA questions



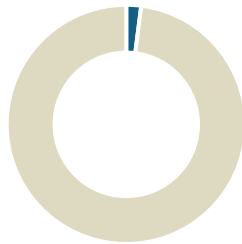
Context



7%

What are the measurable external factors?

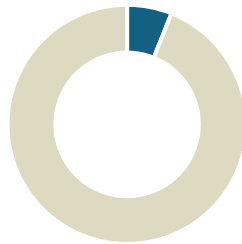
Inputs



2%

How many inputs did we invest?

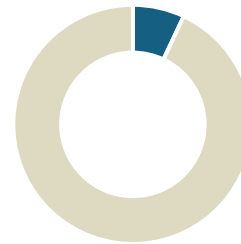
Activities



6%

How many activities did we do?

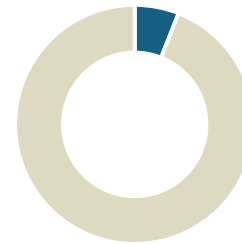
Outputs



6%

How many products or services did we deliver?

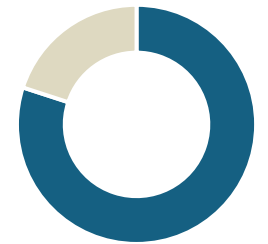
Quality



7%

How well did we do it?

Outcomes



72%

Is anyone better off?



DOF Question Bank

- Excel-based tool for indicator selection
- Covers all components of the DOF
- Includes detailed guidance on indicators and measurement, i.e.,
 - Data source / data collection method
 - Population / scope covered
 - Timeframe
 - For surveys: question wording, response type, response options
 - Analysis method
 - Analysis notes



Q: How does the DOF accommodate differences among Social Development's programs?

A: Many indicators use **angle brackets** (e.g., < >) or **placeholders** (e.g., topic X) to allow programs to tailor the wording to their specific context.

The Implementation Guide

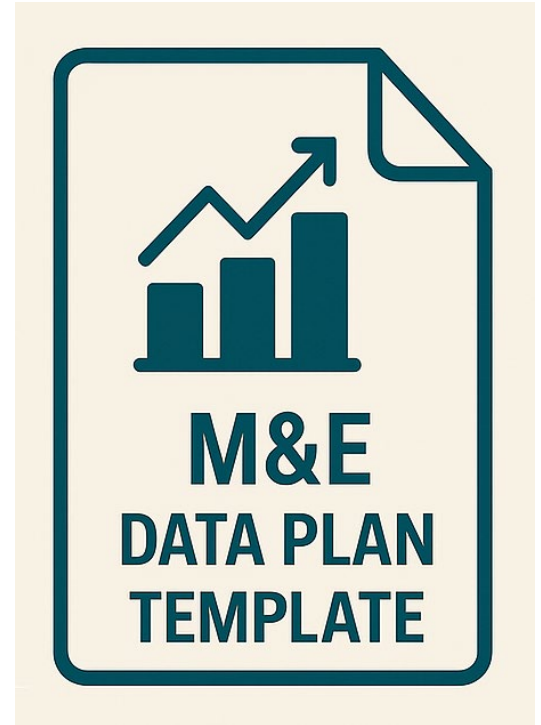
- How to use the DOF Question Bank and the M&E Template
- FAQs
- Multi-step process to create a M&E framework



M&E Data Plan Template

Excel-based tool that guides users to document their answers to the M&E development process

- Identify and plan for parties interested in or affected by M&E activities
- Document the program's logic model
- Build out indicators and organize the details needed
- Plan for new data collection through surveys or focus groups
- Plan for collecting new administrative data
- Anticipate potential risks to M&E activities and outline strategies to address them



Bringing it home



Quick Self-Check: How ready are you for outcomes measurement?

Take a moment to mentally note which of these you currently have in place:

- ✓ **Clear program objectives or logic models**
You have documented goals, outcomes, and program activities.
- ✓ **Existing data sources**
You regularly collect administrative data or client surveys.
- ✓ **Staff capacity**
Staff have the skills and time to engage with outcomes measurement processes.
- ✓ **Leadership support**
Managers or elected officials understand the value of measuring outcomes and actively support it.
- ✓ **Basic measurement infrastructure**
You have simple systems or tools (e.g., Excel) to collect and analyze data.

Measuring across diverse programs: seeing the forest, not just the trees

Key strategies

- **Appoint the right lead:** Choose someone with a bird's-eye view—such as a strategist, evaluator, or senior manager. (An external consultant can also bring fresh perspective.)
- **Start with a document review:** Analyze program inventories, service descriptions, and program mandates to map out the full landscape. Treat it like creating a department-wide logic model.
- **Engage the right participants:** In consultations, involve people who can see across programs (often management, not frontline staff) to identify shared, higher-level outcomes.
- **Group programs strategically:** Organize workshops by "level" of service—not by team. (E.g., group programs serving individuals, organizations, or communities separately.)

Measuring across diverse programs: seeing the forest, not just the trees

Key strategies

- **Capture the details—then step back:** Allow participants to explore the "trees" (specific activities) using tools like sticky notes—but have a central lead synthesize patterns and connections.
- **Validate with program teams:** Bring the draft framework back to frontline teams to ensure it resonates and reflects real work on the ground.
- **Anchor to strategic priorities:** Connect outcomes to broader strategies, plans, or mandates (e.g., Poverty Reduction, Community Safety Plans) to maintain alignment.
- **Prioritize shared outcomes first:** Identify outcomes that multiple programs contribute to before addressing unique or specialized program outcomes—this strengthens division-wide storytelling.

How can this approach be replicated, more simply?

- **Simplify the framework:** Try a scaled-back version of the DOF—e.g., fewer layers or outcome areas.
- **Leverage existing indicators:** Start by mapping the performance measures you currently track.
- **Use readily available data sources:** Develop new indicators from data you're already collecting (e.g., administrative records).
- **Prioritize indicators:** Identify a few key, impactful indicators to avoid overwhelming limited staff and resources.



Practical tips: Making it manageable

- **Pilot projects:** Start small, focusing initially on high-priority or high-impact areas before scaling up.
- **Capacity building:** Use simple, informal ways to build capacity on outcomes measurement, such as Lunch and Learns, peer-to-peer learning, or free webinars.
- **Collaboration:** Pool resources across departments working towards similar outcomes. By working together, you might find you have sufficient internal capacity or combined funding to access additional expertise—internally or externally—to support your outcomes measurement efforts.
- **Iterative process:** “Progress over perfection”—it’s about small steps and incremental improvement.

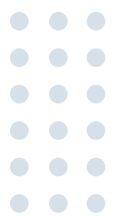


Getting started



Key resources and tools

- Public Health Ontario: [*Logic model – A planning and evaluation tool*](#)
- Better Evaluation <https://www.betterevaluation.org/>
- SMART Indicators in M&E <https://www.evalcommunity.com/career-center/smart-indicators/>
- Social Impact Toolbox <https://www.socialimpacttoolbox.com/>



Commit to action

What's one simple thing you could do next week to advance outcomes measurement in your municipality?

Thank you!



eden.williams@toronto.ca

**Strategic
Measures**

meg@strategicmeasures.ca

www.strategicmeasures.ca

www.linkedin.com/in/meg-gassanov