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GOLDILOCKS TOOLKIT

# Theory of Change: Laying the Foundation for Right-Fit Data Collection



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## Goldilocks Toolkit: Theory of Change

### Theory of Change: Laying the Foundation for Right-Fit Data Collection

The first step in designing a right-fit data collection strategy is to create a solid theory of change. A theory of change is a clear visual map that represents how a program will make an impact on the world. It illustrates what goes into a program, what gets done, and how the world is expected to change as a result.

A theory of change supports right-fit data collection in several ways: by pointing organizations to the elements of the program they need to track to ensure it is operating as planned; by providing a foundation for impact measurement by differentiating the outputs to be tracked from the outcomes to be measured using a credible counterfactual; and by generating credible research questions.

The Goldilocks Initiative does not offer a complete manual on building a theory of change—many resources exist for that—but here we break down the basics of creating a

theory of change and explain how a clear theory, together with the CART principles, can provide the foundation for a strong, right-fit system of data collection.

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