



Using Frameworks to Plan for and Evaluate Conservation Psychology Outcomes

A Conservation Psychology Webinar – presented 12/9/2020

Q&A Responses:

Q: What are ways to get nonprofit Board members excited and engaged with this planning and mapping?

A: This is an excellent question. Non-profit board members are definitely an important stakeholder to involve in the process. Recently we engaged board members in an exercise to help articulate impact for an organization and to identify how (and with whom) the organization could partner to help accomplish these impacts. This type of brainstorming gets the board members engaged and taps into their networks. Ultimately this helps inform the final framework you're creating as well.

Q: Can you say more about the underlying theories and change and what work you did to elicit people's thinking about how these results/outcomes/impacts actually come about. That is: can you bring more attention to the arrows rather than the boxes in your frameworks. Thanks

A: While some of the examples we highlighted focus primarily or exclusively on outcomes, we do also encourage organizations to use tools such as logic models and theories of change, which do help to explain how results/outcomes/impacts actually come about. In the case study for The Marine Mammal Center, for example, their outcomes map did include strategies they use to bring about change. Sometimes, however, frameworks are purposely high level, and supplemental documentation or information is required to get at the level of detail you reference.

Q: I apologize if I missed this, the Houston Edu Dept one took 2 years, how long did the Marine Mammal Center's take?

A: The development of the framework of outcomes for the Conservation Education department at the zoo took about 6-9 months--BUT the evaluation capacity building to subsequently use it was about 2 years. For the Marine Mammal Center, it was about the same--9 months to develop the outcomes map and they are still in process of doing evaluation capacity building. The pandemic and other obstacles have slowed down the process a bit.

Q: My experience is that the Leadership is excited about this stuff and front line people are resistant to it....they just want to do their programs. Did the Marine Mammal Center find this to be true?

A: At the beginning of an outcomes framework development process, we strongly recommend talking about how to engage stakeholders across the entire organization, and how to build their interest and excitement for this work. We find that the more inclusive the process is, the greater the likelihood that it will find support throughout the organization.

Q: What Department/Entity owns implementation of these plans in each of the institutions highlighted? How is broad buy in maintained after these plans are created?

A: Owning/implementing the plan depends on how it originated. Ideally, the more broad-based, inter-departmental buy in you can get the better. But typically, there is one champion of sorts who steers these processes. Usually that comes from within an education department, but can also stem from leadership, etc. As for maintaining buy-in, the best way is to use the tools! Actively integrate them into strategic plans, department goals, regular team meetings, and communications. In Joy's previous experience at Shedd Aquarium, each member of the Learning Group had their framework of outcomes laminated at their desks and whenever program development/planning began, the framework came out! Integrating evaluation into the program development process is another way to ensure the frameworks are utilized.

Q: Any tools for environmental advocacy issues?

A: The messaging framework example we shared may be relevant to advocacy issues. But to be transparent, our use of outcomes frameworks has focused more on learning and conservation outcomes.

Q: Thank you, Joy and Brian for this presentation. Perhaps this is beyond the scope of this presentation, but I'm particularly interested in thinking about linking outcomes with impacts. Many of these frameworks seem to be tailored to outcomes, but at a glance it seems a bit fuzzy in terms of generating (and evaluating) impacts from a counterfactual perspective. Can you briefly comment on planning for this outcome to impact pathway?

A: Good question. There are a few things to consider. First, we didn't mention this, but you could consider building any of these tools with a "backwards design" approach. By this, we mean to identify the impacts FIRST, and then work your way backward to what you as an organization/department/team need to do to contribute to those impacts. Secondly, impacts are really much broader and more aspirational than what any one organization will likely accomplish on their own. Rather, your organization contributes and influences the impacts along with other organizations who have similar aspirations.

Impacts are measured much further out in time and scale as well. Picture the outcomes as stepping stones on the path to impacts. Lastly, some like to think of outcomes chains, how outcomes -- and impacts -- are related to each other. In one resource I found, it described short term outcomes as "expect to see", medium term outcomes as "want to see" and long-term outcomes (which are sometimes replaced with impacts) as "hope to see".

Q: Do you have suggestions for tools or measures that can be used to assess outcomes with community members? I'm particularly interested in measuring impacts on individuals who are not directly participating in a program (e.g., high-schoolers do the program; do they make an impact on their parents or siblings?).

A: Our first question would be, "Is it an intended outcome of the program or intervention to impact families or siblings?" If it is, then we would probably look at how the program intends to do that, and from there make methodological choices. Anytime you aim to measure outcomes and impacts that are one or more steps removed from the intervention participant, it gets more difficult to measure! We would recommend, however, that data about families and siblings come from the families and siblings themselves. That's a much heavier lift and likely much more logistically challenging to coordinate, but will provide more reliable data. There is a small body of literature out there on the intergenerational effects of environmental education. This blog post from NAAEE gives a nice overview of intergenerational EE.

<https://naaee.org/eeopro/blog/intergenerational-education>. Jan Packer and Roy Ballantyne have also done some good research in this area.

Resources referenced during webinar:

Open Standards for Conservation Practice

<https://cmp-openstandards.org/>

AZA Social Science Research Agenda

https://assets.speakcdn.com/assets/2332/aza_2020_socsciresearchagenda.pdf

NAAEE Guidelines for Excellence

<https://naaee.org/eeopro/publication/guidelines-excellence-series-set>

Practitioner Guide to Assessing Connection to Nature

<https://naaee.org/eeopro/blog/practitioner-guide-assessing-connection>

*For examples of the frameworks shared, please contact Brian or Joy directly as these are products for those organizations and would prefer to share one-on-one (brian@informeval.com or joy@informeval.com)