BASIC DEFINITIONS

Theory of Change—how we effect change

The overarching set of formal relationships presumed to exist for a defined population, the intended outcomes that are the focus of the organization's work, and the logic model for producing the intended outcomes. A theory of change should be meaningful to stakeholders, plausible in that it conforms to common sense, doable with available resources, and measurable.

Logic Model—what we do and how

The logically related parts of a program, showing the links between program objectives, program activities (efforts applied coherently and reliably over a sustained time), and expected program outcomes. A logic model makes clear who will be served, what should be accomplished, and specifically how it will be done (i.e., written cause-and-effect statements for a given program design).

Inputs—what resources are committed

The resources—money, time, staff, expertise, methods, and facilities—that an organization commits to a program to produce the intended outputs, outcomes, and impact.

Outputs—what we count

The volume of a program's actions, such as products created or delivered, number of people served, and activities and services carried out.

Outcomes—what we wish to achieve

Socially meaningful changes for those served by a program, generally defined in terms of expected changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes, behavior, condition, or status. These changes should be measured, be monitored as part of an organization's work, link directly to the efforts of the program, and serve as the basis for accountability.

Indicators—what we use to stay on course

Specific, observable, and measurable characteristics, actions, or conditions that demonstrate whether a desired change has happened toward the intended outcome. Also called "outcome indicators" or "predictive indicators."

Impact—what we aim to effect

To slightly oversimplify, the results that can be directly attributed to the outcomes of a given program or collective of programs, as determined by evaluations that are capable of factoring out (at a high level of statistical probability) other explanations for how these results came to be.

Editorial Note: These definitions were adapted from the Glossary of Terms *of the Shaping Outcomes Initiative of the Institute of Museum and Library Services, Indiana University and Purdue University Indianapolis;* The Nonprofit Outcomes Toolbox: A Complete Guide to Program Effectiveness, Performance Measurement, and Results *by Robert Penna; and the* Framework for Managing Programme Performance Information *of the South African government. The definitions were informed by distinguished reviewers who provided valuable insights.*