ROMA NEXT GENERATION CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

Theory of Change Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Theory of Change?

- Describes a process of social change - from the assumptions that guide its design to the long-term goals it hopes to achieve.
- Shows the connections among activities and outcomes and long term goals.
- Helps explain the relationship between the problems being addressed and the strategies being used to get the work done.

How is it similar to a Logic Model?

- The TOC is like the ROMA logic model in that it is a way of presenting a series of interrelated concepts so that they can be understood as a "big picture."
- It connects the identified need, the agency response, and the changes that are projected and actually accomplished. It ties all these to the agency's mission.

How is it different than a Logic Model?

- It's broader than a Logic Model. It adds a focus on the articulation of assumptions and learning from what has happened as a result of actions taken.
- The ROMA logic model has been used primarily at the local level. A TOC can be useful for setting goals, strategic planning, and performance management at the national, state, regional as well as local level.
- It prompts review of the actual results identified at the end of a service period. It provides the framework for data reflection related to how services were provided and how/what outcome data was collected.
- There's a consideration of external factors and the preconditions related to the achievement of results. This context helps the agency identify what is in their control and what is not.
- It adds to the planning process by using backwards mapping to define the indicators that are appropriate to measure/document the changes that occur.
- It is a product that illustrates the process needed to achieve long-term goals.

What is the process for creating a Theory of Change?

1) Set long term goal
2) Think about all outcomes or preconditions needed to meet the long term goal.
3) Develop indicators for each outcome. Who and what changes? By how much? Over what period of time?
4) Define the programs, strategies, or interventions to be undertaken.
5) Review the TOC and articulate the assumptions made.
6) Answer the questions: Is this TOC plausible? Is it feasible? Is it testable?