

Measuring Community Impact with the Contribution to Change Framework

The Contribution to Change (C2C) Framework was developed by Collective Action to assist community, and peer-based organisations measure, and demonstrate their impact.

A defining characteristic of community organisations is that they aim to contribute to positive changes in their community. When it comes to demonstrating their contribution to these changes, however, many organisations fall short. With the C2C Framework, organisations can demonstrate the accumulative impact of their programs and activities and track their progress towards their vision.

The Contribution to Change Framework

The C2C Framework is founded on the recognition that social change is a dynamic and complicated process, and it is therefore not realistic to attempt to attribute social change to any one program, or organisation. Rather than trying to demonstrate a causal link from a program to community-level outcomes, the C2C Framework demonstrates how the accumulative outcomes achieved by an organisation's services and programs contribute to positive changes at the community-level the long-term. To do this, Collective Action works with organisations through a co-design process to develop a theory of change, or a map of the pathway from the organisation's services, programs and activities to the desired community-level outcomes. We then draw on social research to validate the change pathway. By utilising social research in this way, we can say with confidence that if an organisation's programs are successful in achieving the desired short-term outcomes, they will contribute towards the associated community-level outcomes over the long-term.

Evaluating program outcomes

The C2C Framework utilises the Socialsuite Impact Measurement Platform to simplify data collection and analysis. Many community organisations struggle with the problem of 'too much data' – particularly those that deliver a range of one-off or short-term activities such as community events and workshops. It's common for staff members to develop a separate survey for each activity, resulting in separate datasets that staff rarely have time to compile and analyse.

The C2C Framework addresses these challenges by creating outcomes, indicators and survey questions that are aligned to the theory of change, and preprogramming these into Socialsuite. Staff can draw on these questions to create new surveys or they can utilise predeveloped surveys through a customised homepage. These surveys are used in an ongoing way to collect consistent data that accumulates over time. Data is collected electronically, and it automatically populates reporting dashboards, removing the need for any data entry or analysis. Reporting dashboards are available in real-time, enabling staff to continuously monitor and improve their programs to ensure that they are of the highest quality and achieving the desired outcomes.

Moving from program outcomes to community impact

The C2C Framework is a whole-of-organisation monitoring system. This means that in addition to evaluating the outcomes of services and programs as distinct activities, it evaluates the contribution of these outcomes to organisational objectives and priorities – and ultimately to an organisation's vision.

The C2C Framework works across an organisation to identify common indicators across services, programs and activities and align these to the organisation's objectives or strategic priorities. Data from across these activities is automatically aggregated in Socialsuite and presented in reporting dashboards under the organisation's strategic priorities. The dashboards are available in real-time and equip senior leaders and Board members to monitor the organisations' progress towards its vision. These strategic-level dashboards can also be created to compile data under the objectives of funding agreements, or government priorities.

Implementing the Contribution to Change Framework

7 Demonstrate Impact

We combine the evaluation results with the evidence derived from social research to demonstrate the organisation's contribution to community impact.



1

Develop a theory of change

We engage staff, volunteers, community members and other stakeholders in a co-design process to identify the pathway through which programs contribute to community-level impact.



2

Amalgamate activities

We analyse workshop data to identify activities with similar theories of change and combine these together to consolidate data.



3

Validate the theory of change

We undertake extensive research to identify the causal factors that contribute towards the desired outcomes in order to validate, or revise, the theory of change.



6

Monitor organisational impact

Senior leaders and Board members monitor progress towards the strategic priorities to guide strategic decisions.



5

Continuous improvement

Staff monitor evaluation data in real-time and continuously improve their programs.



4

Evaluate programs and activities

We regularly survey beneficiaries, staff and other stakeholders to measure the extent to which programs are achieving the intended immediate outcomes.



collectiveaction
the social impact specialists

Contact Alison Barclay at Collective Action at alison@alisonbarclay.com, for more information about how the C2C Framework can assist your organisation to demonstrate your impact.