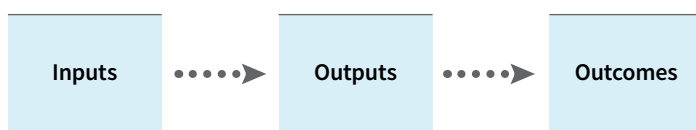# EVALUATING PROJECT IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

Proper project evaluation is one of the most significant aspects of delivering a quality program. The use of the right measurement tools, coupled with an understanding of the varying degrees of outcome-assessment, will prove to be an integral part of your team's success. Enactus encourages teams to invest ample time studying this forthcoming content, as it will prove valuable in your endeavors.
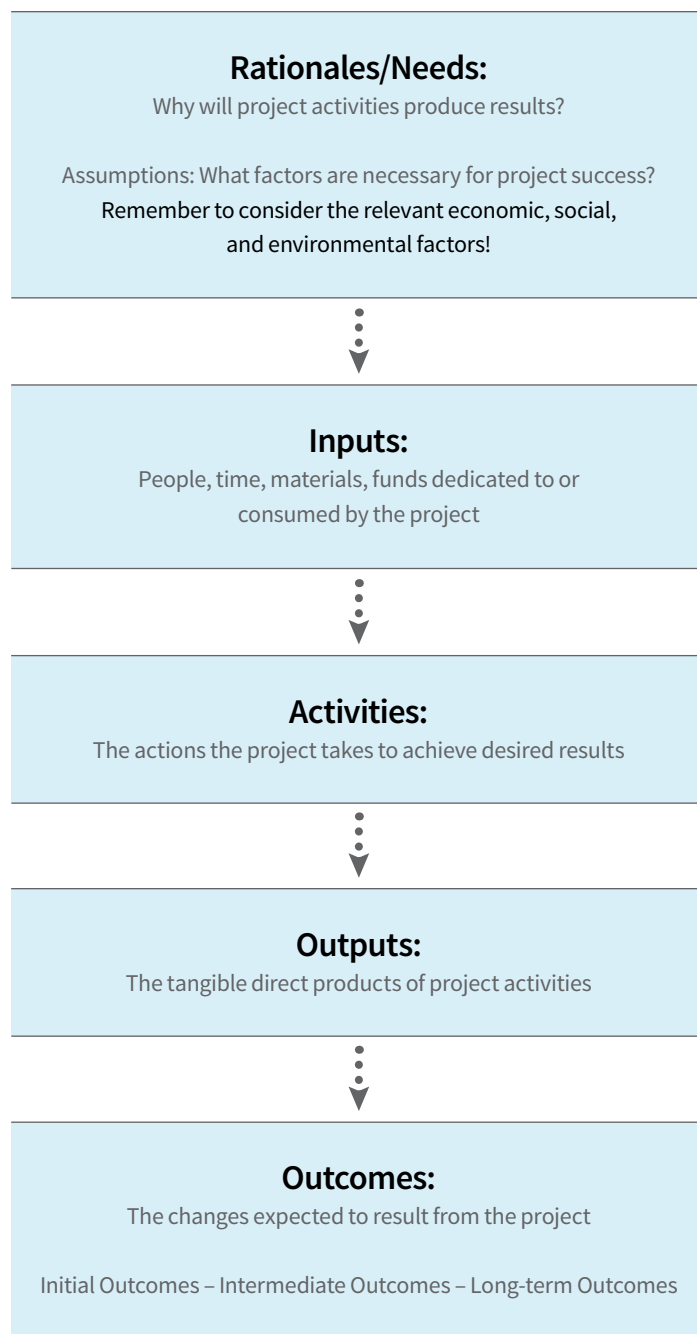
## Focus on Outcomes[i]



Sometimes, teams present only inputs and outputs as the basis for a successful project. While this type of information is helpful and noteworthy, Enactus is not necessarily focused on the inputs or outputs. Rather, you should focus on the high-quality and meaningful outcomes of your projects. You will find here definitions of these three terms:

- **Inputs** include resources dedicated to or consumed by the program. Examples include: money, students, time, volunteers, facilities, equipment and supplies.
- **Outputs** are the direct product of program activities and are usually measured in terms of volume or work accomplished – for example, the number of classes taught, counseling sessions conducted, materials distributed and participants served.
- **Outcomes** are benefits or changes for individuals or populations during or after participating in program activities. They are influenced by a program's outputs. Outcomes may relate to behavior, skills, knowledge, attitudes, values, condition, status, or other attributes. They are what participants know, think or can do; or how they behave; or what their condition is, that is different following the program.

There are three levels of outcomes: initial, intermediate and long-term. Initial outcomes are the first benefits or changes participants experience; often these are related to changes in participants' knowledge, attitudes or skills. Intermediate outcomes are often changes in behavior that result from the participants' new knowledge, attitudes or skills. Long-term outcomes are the meaningful changes for participants, often in their condition or status.

The following illustration showcases a project logic model to employ as you consider new projects:



**Rationales/Needs:**
Why will project activities produce results?

Assumptions: What factors are necessary for project success?
Remember to consider the relevant economic, social, and environmental factors!

**Inputs:**
People, time, materials, funds dedicated to or consumed by the project

**Activities:**
The actions the project takes to achieve desired results

**Outputs:**
The tangible direct products of project activities

**Outcomes:**
The changes expected to result from the project

Initial Outcomes – Intermediate Outcomes – Long-term Outcomes

An additional project logic model and a sample worksheet to help you organize your evaluation strategy and outcomes are available in the Appendix.

[i]*United Way of America. Measuring Program Outcomes: A Practical Approach. 1996. Print.*

## Understanding Livelihoods

A livelihood is the means and activities involved in sustaining an individual's life. Livelihoods are fueled by what are known as livelihood assets.   These assets represent the wide variety of capital used in obtaining desired outcomes.

# EVALUATING PROJECT IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

## Livelihood Assets

### Financial Assets
Financial assets are the financial resources available to an individual. Financial assets can be built through access to jobs or creation of income generating activities, but also through individuals gaining access to financial services such as banks or micro-lending. They include (but are not limited to):
- Cash, savings or liquid assets
- Stocks and other financial accounts
- Earned income
- Job creation
- Micro-lending
- Business creation

### Social Assets
Social assets are the networks, groups and relationships people develop.  Developing social assets lowers the opportunity cost of other livelihood assets, as trust and respect make working together easier. Social networks facilitate innovation, improved management of public goods and economic relations. Examples include:
- Community building
- Networking
- Relationships

### Natural Assets
Natural assets are the natural resources used and consumed in creating livelihood.  Projects supporting natural asset development should focus not only on building up natural resources, but take a broader view of how those resources are used, and the transforming structures in place.
- Natural resources (land, air, water, etc.)
- Waste management
- Biodiversity

### Physical Assets
Physical assets comprise the basic infrastructure and goods necessary to support a livelihood. The opportunity cost of not having access to physical assets often affects other areas of livelihood assets such as education and financial assets.
- Shelter
- Transportation
- Water supply and sanitation
- Clean energy
- Access to consumer needs

### Human Assets:
Human assets are the skills, knowledge and ability to work and pursue different livelihood strategies. This asset is required for the individual to make use of any of the other assets. Supporting the development of human assets will only work with buy-in from the people affected – if people are willing to invest in themselves through training sessions, schooling, and professional/personal development.
- Job skills
- Education
- Leadership development

## Measurement Tools
When actually measuring project impact, you can choose to design methods that provide a qualitative or a quantitative evaluation. The evaluation methods you use for each project should be decided during the planning process, before the project has actually started.

**Qualitative measurements** are rooted in direct contact with individuals involved in the program. They might include items such as interviews or testimonials from project participants, Business Advisory Board members or other community partners involved.

**Quantitative measurements** translate experience into units that can be counted, compared, measured and expressed statistically. They might include items such as pre- and post-exams, goal achievement and documentation, or observation guides/ratings.

Using a mix of qualitative and quantitative measurements, each team should be able to answer the question, "Was this project successful?" and prove it. It is critical that you prove how you have empowered people in need to improve their livelihoods.

If for example, the results of a survey prove positive change in the target audience's knowledge or skill set, then the question you should ask is... what then? How did these people apply that knowledge to improve their own lives, and how can it be measured effectively?

Keep in mind that longer-term outcomes are the more meaningful changes for participants. Therefore, it is important for teams to continue to measure the impact of a project even after it is completed.