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GLOSSARY

Context Shift
A key shift in the larger social, political, economic context.

Fork in the Road
A key shift in strategy.

Learning Moment
A moment where we learn something about the challenge we are trying to address, the system in which it is embedded, or our own strategy or capacity.

Milestone
A key event or development in the work.

Outcome
A behaviour shift of a key actor that indicates ‘progress’ towards goal or vision.

Outcome Harvesting
A developmental evaluation tool where outcomes are defined as a change in the behaviour – actions, activities, relationships, policies, practices or even political statements – by societal actors who are key to achieving a larger impact.

Primary User(s)
These are people or organisations who will use evaluation feedback to make decisions that directly affect the design and implementation of the work.

Social Innovator or Evaluator
A person that makes a judgment or assesses the value, importance, quality, outcome, impact of a project or something similar that is trying to tackle a social or environmental challenge.

User Profiles
A visual display of information associated with a specific user that helps to analyse how the evaluation assessment should be conducted.
I. INTRODUCTION TO OUTCOME HARVESTING

What is it?

Outcome Harvesting is one of the newest approaches to evaluating efforts of social innovators trying to tackle intractable social, economic and environmental problems.\(^1\)

In Outcome Harvesting, “outcomes” are defined as a change in the behaviour - actions, activities, relationships, policies, practices or even political statements - by societal actors that are key to achieving some larger “impact”.

In this process, the evaluator or social innovator (the harvester) (a) identifies demonstrated, verifiable changes in behaviour influenced by an intervention (a project, program, initiative), (b) determines the ‘significance’ of those outcomes in relation to the mission of the social innovator, and (c) seeks to develop a rough estimate of the intervention’s contribution to those outcomes.

How is it useful?

Outcome Harvesting is a very useful tool in complex change initiatives where traditional evaluation methods prove to be difficult to use. This complexity comes in part from the number and nature of the social actors, the challenging development problems addressed and the uncertain solutions to these problems. It is often difficult to monitor processes because of the multiple actors involved and unclear results, but they offer an opportunity for experimentation to gather new lessons.

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\(^1\) See http://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/outcome_harvesting
The intent of traditional Outcome Harvesting is to develop, test and upgrade descriptions of outcomes in three distinct steps:

1. **Draft outcome descriptions based on data from their program files and their own perceptions of what has emerged;**
2. **Test these original descriptions with other parties that have participated in the outcome, and**
3. **Substantiate the outcome with third parties who are aware of the outcome, but not part of the social innovator group.**

The value of this approach is triangulation. Describing a development from the perspectives of three different parties not only often improves the richness and accuracy of the statements (i.e. its validity in evaluation terms), but increases the credibility of the assessment findings amongst stakeholders and evaluation users. However, inclusion of third party stakeholders in the process can make it difficult to share outcomes or other developments that are more sensitive or controversial.

Civil society organizations, research institutes, and government agencies globally have adopted Outcome Harvesting and related outcome mapping concepts to understand large-scale complex programs. International development organisations (such as World Bank, Ford Foundation, UK Department for International Development (DFID), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Oxfam and Open Society Institute) have also used Outcome Harvesting and/or outcome mapping as a tool to monitor outcomes and systematically learn from complex projects.
How do we harvest outcomes?

We track five key developments: outcomes, learning moments, context shifts, milestones and forks in the road. The table below illustrates these with examples taken from the work of the Future Cities Canada Urban Data and Governance Lab.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example: Future Cities Urban Data Governance Lab</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes</td>
<td>Shifts in the behaviour of key actors that indicate progress towards a desired outcome.</td>
<td>Evergreen and Future Cities Canada take up a leadership role to advance the need for an urban data strategy for Canada.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Moments</td>
<td>A critical event(s) where innovators learn more about the nature of the challenge they are trying to address or the strengths or limitations of their approach.</td>
<td>Future Cities Canada and Evergreen’s leadership begin to shift emphasis from a lab process to the concept of establishing a Commission.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context Shifts</td>
<td>Important developments in the context in which social innovators work that influence their efforts in a positive, negative or ambiguous way.</td>
<td>Minister Navdeep Bains, ISED (Innovation, Science and Economic Development); recently said, “We’re coming forward with a data strategy”, and will announce a consultation plan “in the coming months”; expressing the interest of the government on the subject.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forks in the Road</td>
<td>Moments in which social innovators make important adjustments in their strategy.</td>
<td>The federal government representatives’ signalled value in exploring a concept for a ‘Data Commission’ that would comprise of diverse stakeholders at the senior most level to develop specific insights and recommendations to help inform federal policy related to Urban Data Governance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milestone</td>
<td>A key event or development in the unfolding of the work being evaluated.</td>
<td>Evergreen hosted a convening in Ottawa on June 18, 2018 to introduce a draft concept and mandate for an Urban Data Governance Commission</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tracking these five developments in a change process provides social innovators with a more complete picture of the unfolding of the work and allow them to better understand the bigger picture.
Extrapolating outcome statements

Outcome statements are more fulsome descriptions of the key developments (as identified in the previous section), that provide greater detail on the nature of the development and highlight their significance in the initiative. The statements highlight change in a social innovator’s behavior, relationship, activities, actions, policies or practice that the initiative has influenced in some way.

Below is one such example from our Future Cities Smart Cities Challenge work:

**Influencing the Smart Cities Challenge (SCC) program design**

Infrastructure Canada on different occasions has engaged a diverse group of stakeholders to effectively design and deliver the Smart Cities Challenge and identify set priorities. During the process, Evergreen and McConnell Foundation emerged as key players in driving the inclusion of ‘citizen engagement’ in the program, delivered in collaboration with the community and tailored to the community’s interests and capacities. It was suggested that the engagement process must reach out beyond the “usual suspects” involved in smart city discussions to connect with Indigenous communities, marginalized social groups, and the “silent majority” to make the program more inclusive and collaborative in its approach.

Through Future Cities Canada, Evergreen initially proposed a wide range of multi-faceted citizen engagement activities to INFC aimed at publicising the Smart Cities Challenge and engaging interested communities, linking with local design groups across the country to organize smart city design jams, engaging school boards to organize a smart cities ideas day; organizing a one day national 100In1Day SCC event enabling citizen-led prototypes and experiments related to smart growth. Even though the unsolicited proposal didn’t come through, INFC continued to express interest in working together through a different strategic process to support the capacity building and advisory components of the Challenge. Through a subsequent RFP process launched by INFC in June 2018, Evergreen (with its FCC partners) and OpenNorth received funding from the Smart Cities Community Support Program to provide specialised advisory and capacity building support to communities on smart cities approaches.

The outcome statements can be further expanded to include two elements of ‘contribution’ and ‘significance’ of the outcome. For more, you can refer to http://outcomeharvesting.net/outcome-harvesting-brief/
Dos and Don’ts for tracking outcomes

Below are some important points to keep in mind while tracking outcomes and analysing key developments of the work for successful evaluation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DO</th>
<th>DON’T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Describe not what you did, but the impact, influence or outcome that was created through your activity.</td>
<td>Don’t describe a project activity as an outcome, such as, “We organized a conference or prepared tool X.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mention all the key changes that unfolded in the process, whether directly or indirectly related to a specific activity. An activity might have been completed last year but the outcome may only have become visible this year.</td>
<td>Don’t force yourself to find direct relationships between all the key developments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mention outcomes that might be negative, unintended or unexpected. These can be identified as pivot points and provide opportunities for learning to help explain why a process of change took a new direction.</td>
<td>Don’t report only positive outcomes or intended outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe the outcome information in simplified language but briefly so that it can be verified by third parties (if need arises).</td>
<td>Don’t give incomplete or vague descriptions of the change that happened.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use descriptive language to explain the reasoning as to why the outcome is valuable, worthy, or successful at that point in time, with additional resources or illustrative examples, where possible.</td>
<td>Don’t use words that exaggerate the potential impact of an outcome. Eg: persistent.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
II. STEP- BY-STEP GUIDE

The process of Outcome Harvesting is organized around seven steps:

1. **Design**: identify the primary users of the evaluation, develop the evaluation questions, and develop methods to answer the questions.

2. **Monitor**: an ongoing process of identifying and briefly documenting key development as they emerge, gathering and assembling supporting data and documentation where possible.

3. **Draft**: a period in time where social innovators review the results of their monitoring effort to draft initial statements on outcome, context shifts, lessons and decisions.

4. **Engage**: interview informants who are involved in the initiative to review, revise and expand the initial outcome descriptions based on their experience and perspectives.

5. **Substantiate**: verify the outcome descriptions with people independent of the intervention but knowledgeable about the outcome and adjust the outcome description based on their input.

6. **Interpret**: classify all outcomes, usually in consultation with informants, according to question and/or surface emerging themes.

7. **Facilitate**: facilitate discussions with the social innovators about the implications of the Harvest for future interventions.
These steps are distinct, but almost always iterative. After engaging with informants, for example, social innovators will almost always need to upgrade their draft outcome statements. Similarly, when analyzing developments, they may uncover key learnings, forks, outcomes or shifts that also need to be described and tested with fellow colleagues.

Figure 1: Step-by-step guiding process for Outcome Harvesting
### III. GUIDING PROCESS AND REFERENCE TEMPLATES

#### 1. Building User Profiles to identify the goal of harvesting outcomes

One of the central challenges for any evaluation is to get a strong grasp of the primary ‘objective’ of the harvest, what the primary user of the assessment wants to explore and how the evaluators can conduct the evaluation so that it’s most useful for them. The user profile worksheet, as seen below, attempts to explore the primary users’ questions, what kinds of decisions they will make with the answers to the questions, their preferences for how the assessment should be conducted, and when they need the evaluation feedback.

Steps involved in the process:

- Confirm the names, organisation and role of the primary users of the evaluation (who are the lead on the projects being evaluated)
- Interview each primary user using the questions in the worksheet below
- These questions will inform the design and evaluation scope of the work and relevant evaluation tactics to be acted upon

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRIMARY USER</th>
<th>QUESTIONS</th>
<th>USE</th>
<th>PREFERENCES</th>
<th>WINDOWS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name:</td>
<td>What are your evaluation questions related to the project?</td>
<td>What kinds of decisions will you make with the answers to these questions?</td>
<td>What are your preferences in designing the evaluation or communicating its findings?</td>
<td>When do you need the evaluation findings?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name:</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization:</td>
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<td>Role:</td>
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<td>Name:</td>
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<td>Organization:</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
2. Documenting outcomes retrospectively or ‘ongoing’ monitoring

Outcome Harvesting traditionally employs a retrospective approach to assessment. Social innovators decide to ‘harvest’ the outcomes, and then “work backwards” to surface, make sense and document their outcomes, before substantiating and validating them with their partners.

On the other hand, Outcome Harvesting employs the same steps, but introduces a process for the ‘ongoing’ monitoring of developments. This ensures that social innovators do not have to rely solely on memory or an eclectic mix of program documents to recreate their story, but rather maintain a more detailed account of developments as they emerge. This can be simply done using a monitoring tool, as seen below or even use software designed explicitly for this process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>DEVELOPMENT</th>
<th>HARVESTER</th>
<th>SUMMARY</th>
<th>SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION</th>
<th>SIGNIFICANCES/NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outcome, Learning Moment, Context Shift, Fork in the Road, Milestone²</td>
<td></td>
<td>Briefly explain in 1-2 sentences</td>
<td>Refer to memos, meeting minutes, press releases, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Visually Map Outcomes to Date

This entails a graphical representation of all the key developments identified in the monitoring tool (as mentioned above) for an initiative over a specified period of time. It aims to visually display the developments coded as milestones, outcomes, forks in the road, learnings and context shifts. It acts as a very helpful tool for evaluation users to get a ‘birds-eye’ view on the initiative and how it all unfolded.

Figure 2 represents an example of a visualization of ‘outcomes’ that emerged out of an Outcome Harvest for a Future Cities Canada project.

² See Glossary for definitions of types of developments.
Figure 2: Mapping outcomes that display changes and developments over the past two years in relation to a Future Cities Canada Project.
4. Outcome Harvesting Report Format

There is no standard template for reporting the results of Outcome Harvesting. Social innovators, evaluators and communication specialists are free to share their findings in a way that is complete, accurate, timely and engaging for the primary audience of the evaluation.

They are many available options on how to do this including traditional written reports, short videos, graphic stories, like cartoons and posters etc. The Better Evaluation website has a section that provides even more examples and ideas to share evaluation findings. But in terms of Future Cities Canada, we adapted the following template to suit the needs of the program.

**Context**
Briefly explain in 3-4 paragraphs, the contextual background of the initiative or project.

**Strategy**
Explain how the story unfolded in detail through some of its key elements, activities and decisions (maximum 1 page).

**Visualisation of Key Milestones**
Representation of a graphical visual summary, highlighting key developments of the initiative and colour coding its outcomes, milestones, learnings, forks in the road and context shifts (maximum 1 page).

**Outcomes**
Elaborate outcome statements that highlight the significance and impact of the initiative (maximum 2 pages).

**Conclusion & Next Steps***
Mention in 1-2 paragraphs, the way forward and next steps that are in planning or implementation stage as a part of the initiative.

*There can be an added section on ‘Learnings, Opportunities and Challenges’ before the last section, depending on the initiative and the need to reflect it.*
5. Testing its Usefulness

The production of Outcome Harvesting is meant to create an efficient process of documenting and making sense of milestones, outcomes and learnings of key initiatives. This is a foundational practice in monitoring and evaluating complex change initiative.

There are multiple ways in which this evaluation tool can be tested for usefulness:

- Innovator Coherence – facilitating project leads to get further clarity on the key outcomes, learnings and milestones for their projects.
- Internal Communication – letting internal stakeholders know what is going on across projects.
- Routine Reporting – informing and complementing report writing to funders or partners.
- External Communication – providing content for media, messaging, editorials, newsletters etc.
- Strategy Making – informing innovators’ ongoing adaptation of strategy.

From the work of Future Cities Canada, a team exercise was conducted to test the usefulness of Outcome Harvesting and how it influenced some of the key decisions driving each of the initiatives. The testing exercise was conducted with the Project Leads, Internal Programming team, Evergreen’s Communications and Executive team, who are the key people driving this program. The overall objective was simply to understand the value of the outcome harvest process and the extent to which it actually informed/influenced some of the key decisions/activities in the process of this complex change initiative.

Below is a sample template of the overall process with some findings of the Future Cities Canada work, based on a predefined Likert scale (1 – Strongly disagree, 2 – Disagree, 3 – Neither agree or disagree, 4 – Agree, 5 – Strongly agree).
| **Innovator Coherence** | To what extent has producing the OH helped the initiative lead become clearer on milestones, outcomes, learnings? What could help it add more value? | The Project Lead for each initiative where an Outcome Harvest was performed. | Response from a conversation with the Project Lead. **Eg. FCC Hubs project:**  
4 - Agree  
I found the Outcome Harvest tool very useful in terms of having a structure and process to record and collect learning, milestones moments and outcomes thought the delivery.  
I also find it a useful tool for team reflection with the partner. What I felt we missed the point of the whole process is to use it as a learning tool for the broader team and linking the lessons learnt into actionable items in the next quarter. |
| **Internal Communication** | To what extent has the OH helped internal Evergreen and Future Cities get a quick grasp of the intent, activities and results of OH described initiatives? What could help it add more value? | Internal Evergreen and Future Cities stakeholders. | Response from internal stakeholders and partner groups after sharing project reports. **Eg: Urban Data Governance Lab**  
4 – Agree  
It gives a very quick overview of the key components of the project/initiative for someone who is not directly involved in the implementation of the process. |
| **Routine Report** | To what extent did the OH ‘add value’ to the efficiency of writing and/or quality of the report to funder(s)? What could help it add more value? | Includes both:  
- The Evergreen team producing the report.  
- Those receiving the report (i.e., the funder). | Responses from the internal team producing the OH report and/or with the funder of the project. **Eg: For internal reporting purposes.**  
4—Agree  
It definitely added value in articulating the key outputs and outcomes for each of the projects but it would also be useful to draw connections through each of the three programmatic streams more broadly. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>External Communication</strong></th>
<th>To what extent does the OH ‘add value’ to your communications teams work with external communication? What could help it add more value?</th>
<th>The Evergreen communications team.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Response from the internal communications team.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eg: FCC OH reports</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>4 - Agree</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>The content of the OH report is useful for external communication through blogs, newsletters, and advertorials. Probably the granularity of the report does not add as much value but the content in terms of the outcomes are most useful. Some recommendations:</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Improving the ‘timeliness’, instead of sharing the OH report once it is completed, it is more useful to know what’s coming and probably sharing a summary of what is being evaluated. This makes us aware of the context and topic and if it is news worthy capture it at the right moment to share with an external audience. Not necessary to know the outcomes at that moment, considering that process is more time-consuming and they need to be harvested.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Highlighting relevant profiles/case studies as a part of the project being evaluated and flagging it ‘during’ the process of Outcome Harvesting is more useful, so they can be used for a particular story or get embedded into an existing story.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Strategy Making</strong></th>
<th>To what extent has the OH ‘added value’ in making decisions about strategy? What could help it add more value?</th>
<th>The strategy-makers for the initiative, eg. Evergreen Executive team.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Response from the strategy-makers for more informed decision-making.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eg: FCC OH reports</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>3—Neither agree or disagree</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OH is a very effective and detail-oriented tool to reflect our learnings and outcomes, but has not been used for strategy-making. There should be a clear intention/objective for it to inform strategy. Eg: Writing the report from the lens of (i) informing executive leadership and strategy, (ii) informing overall strategy and (iii) how it would be more useful from a funders/perspective. A clear process, if identified would be of great help to make this work more useful. Eg: Having a quarterly evaluation report to the executive committee to inform targeted decision-making.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
III. EXTERNAL RESOURCES


- http://outcomeharvesting.net/outcome-harvesting-brief/

- https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/20015