

# Outcomes Training

## Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services *May 2011*

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# Overview of Training

- Outcomes overview
- Elements of logic model
- Using data as a management tool
- Plan for supervisor training



How do you know when your agency is successful with clients?



# What are outcomes?

- The “so what” of services provided
- Demonstrate that resources are producing results
- A non-scientific way to approach reporting and tracking

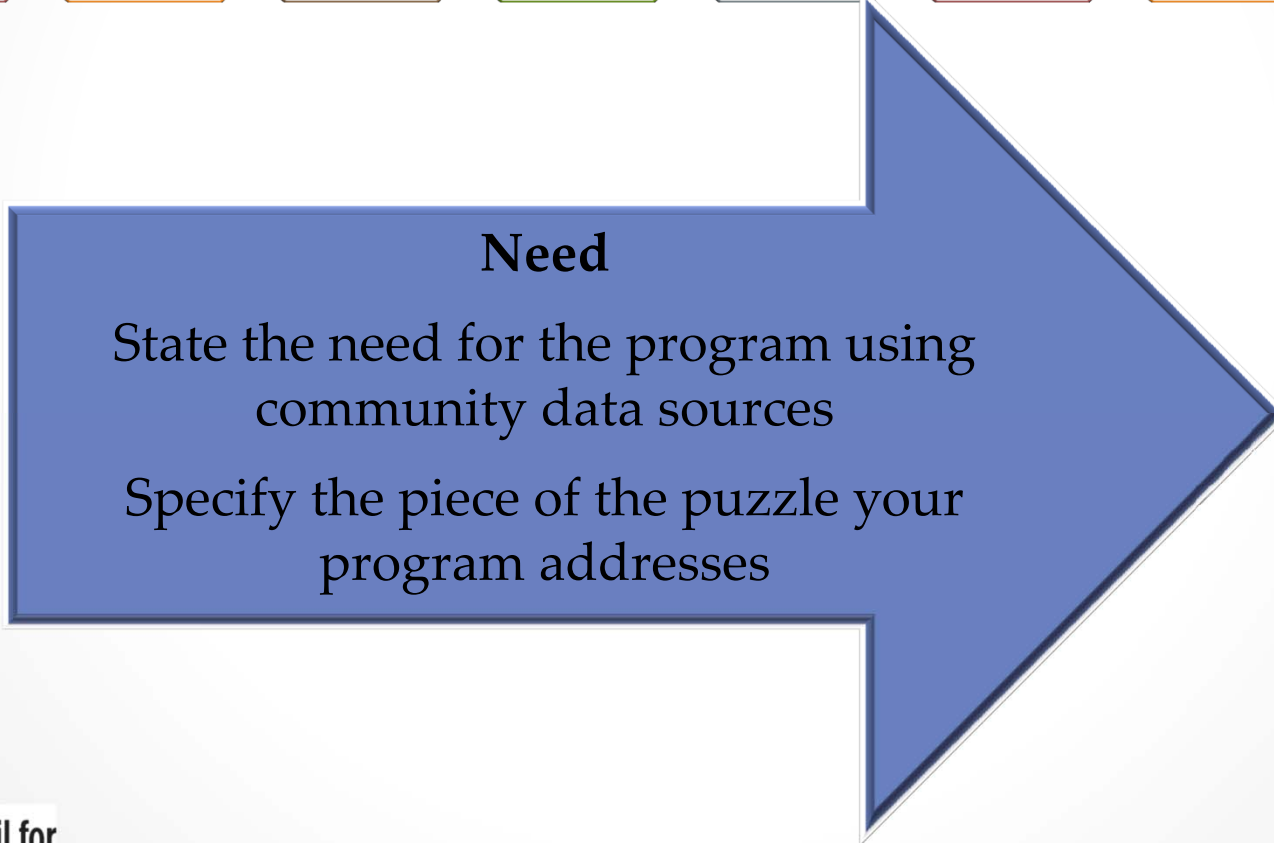


# Why measure outcomes?

- Strengthen existing services
- Target effective services for expansion
- Identify staff training needs
- Develop and justify budgets
- Prepare long-range plans



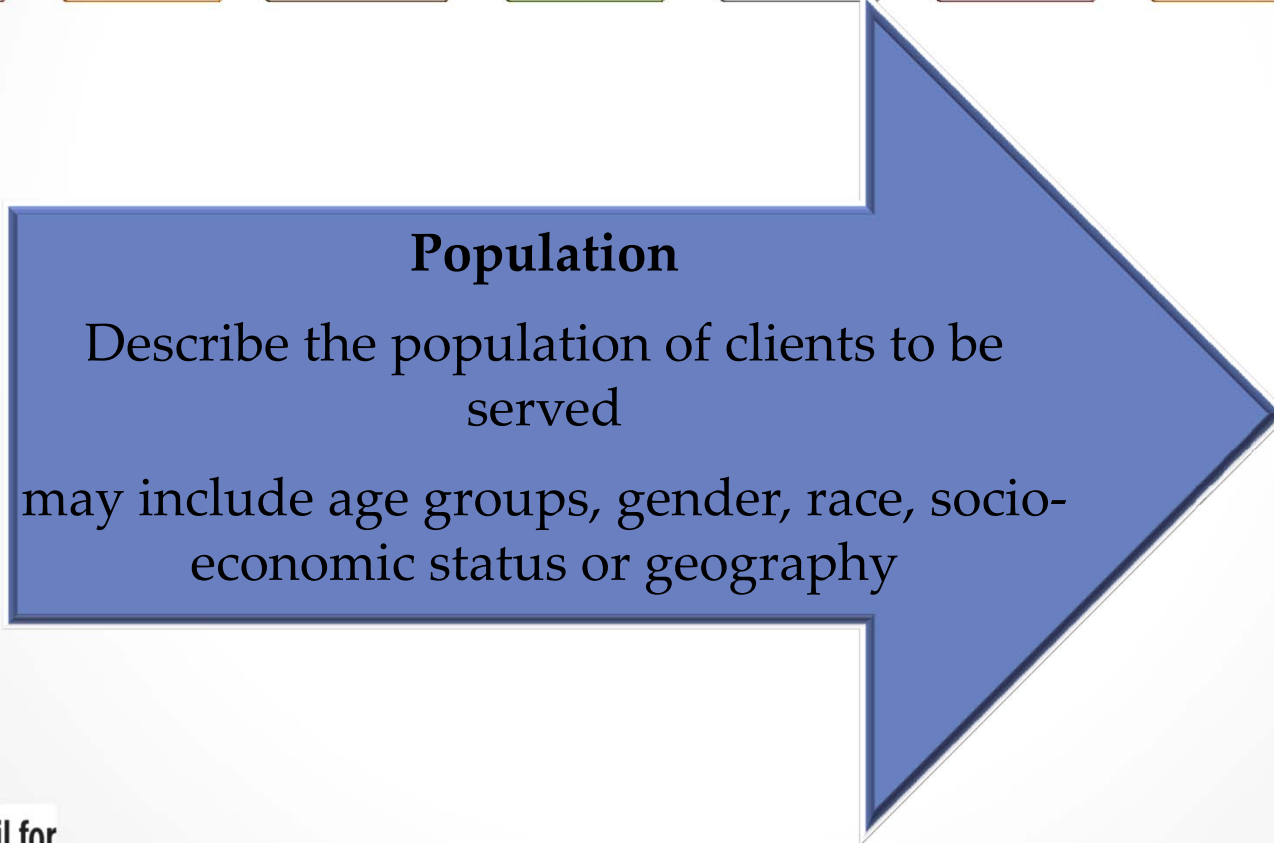
# Logic Model Conceptual Chain



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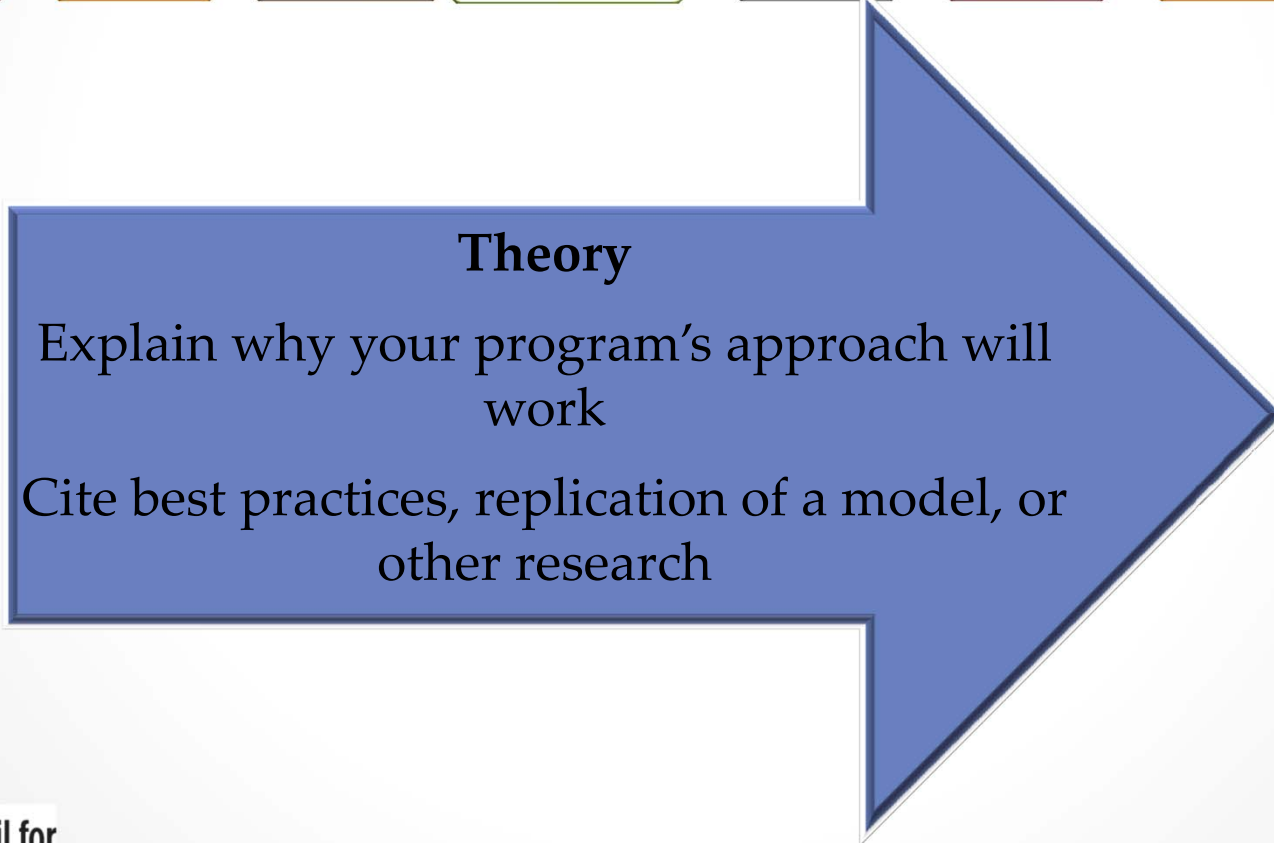


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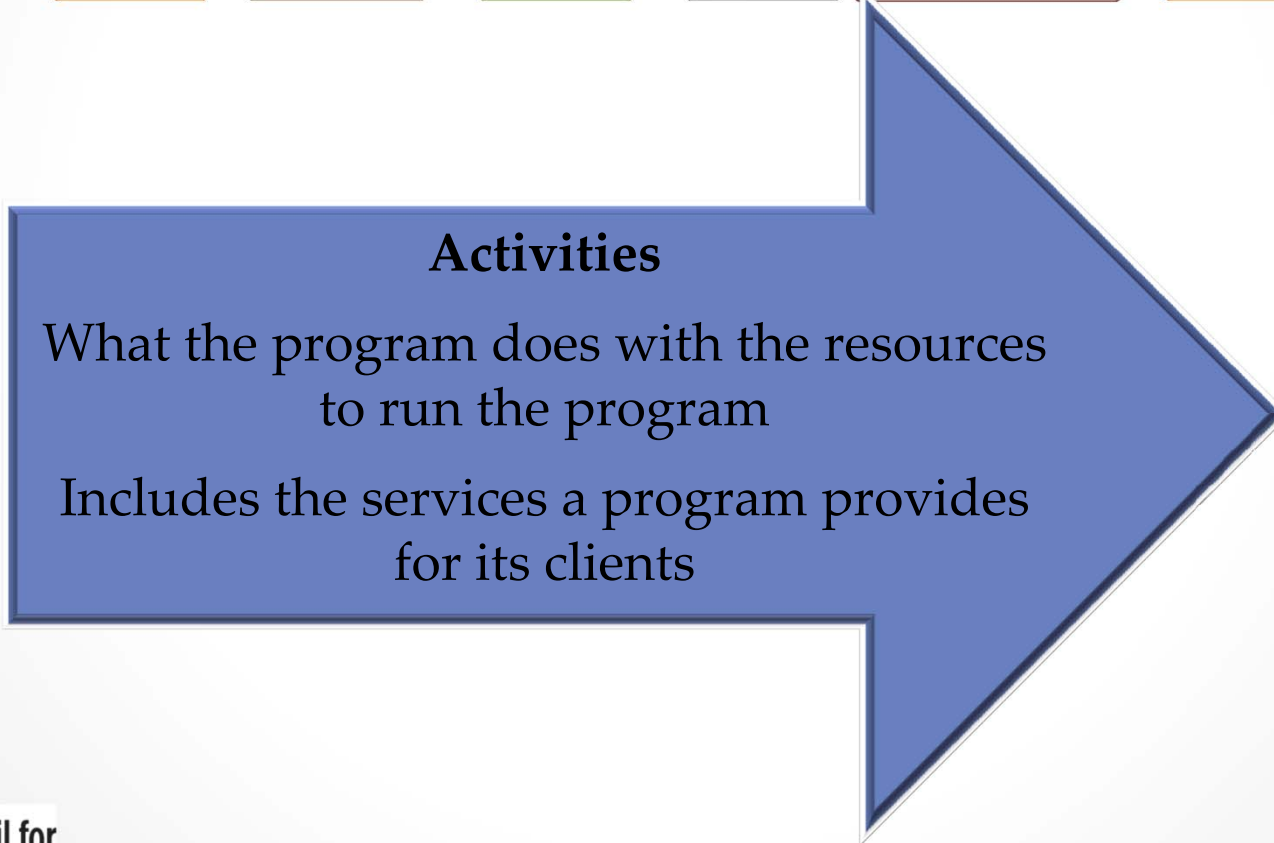
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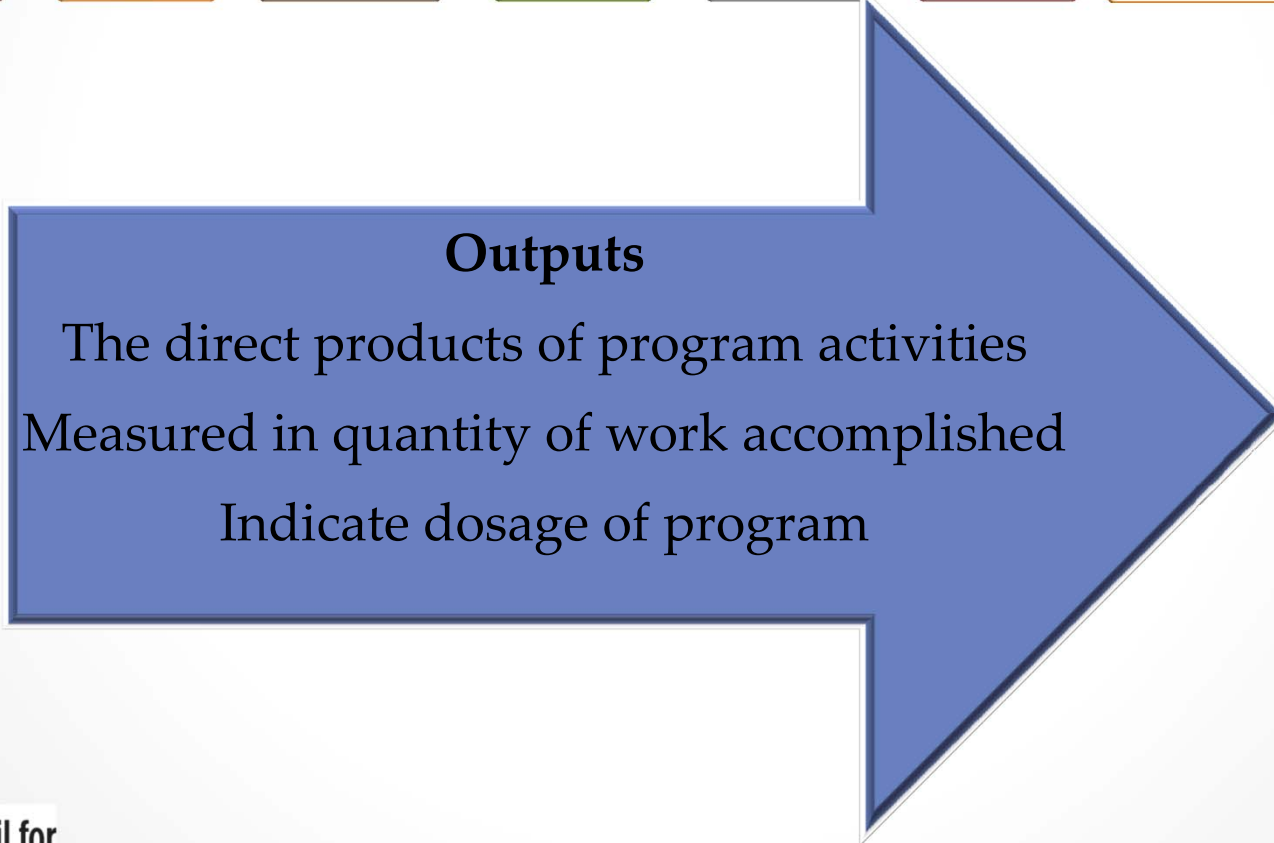
## Inputs (Resources)

Resources needed to run the program  
Staff, volunteers, facilities, equipment & supplies

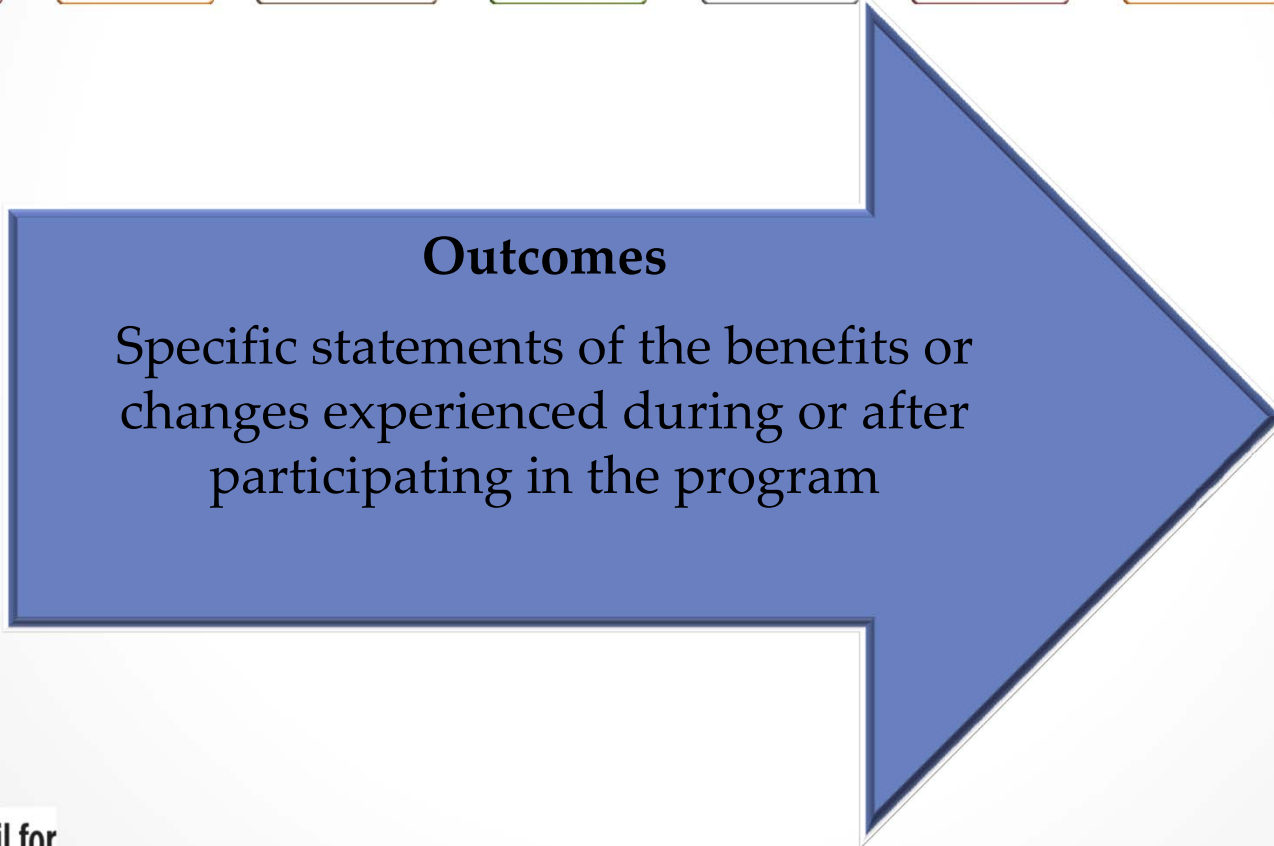
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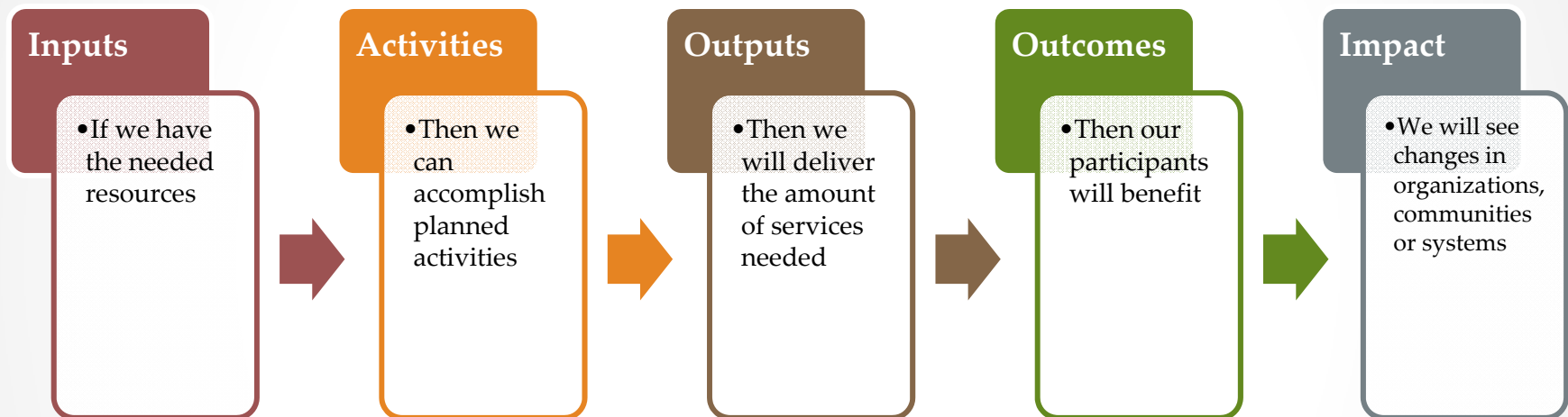


# Logic Model Conceptual Chain



# If....Then....

## Theory



# Types of Outcomes

## Initial

First benefits  
or changes  
participants  
experience  
Knowledge  
change or  
skills learned



## Intermediate

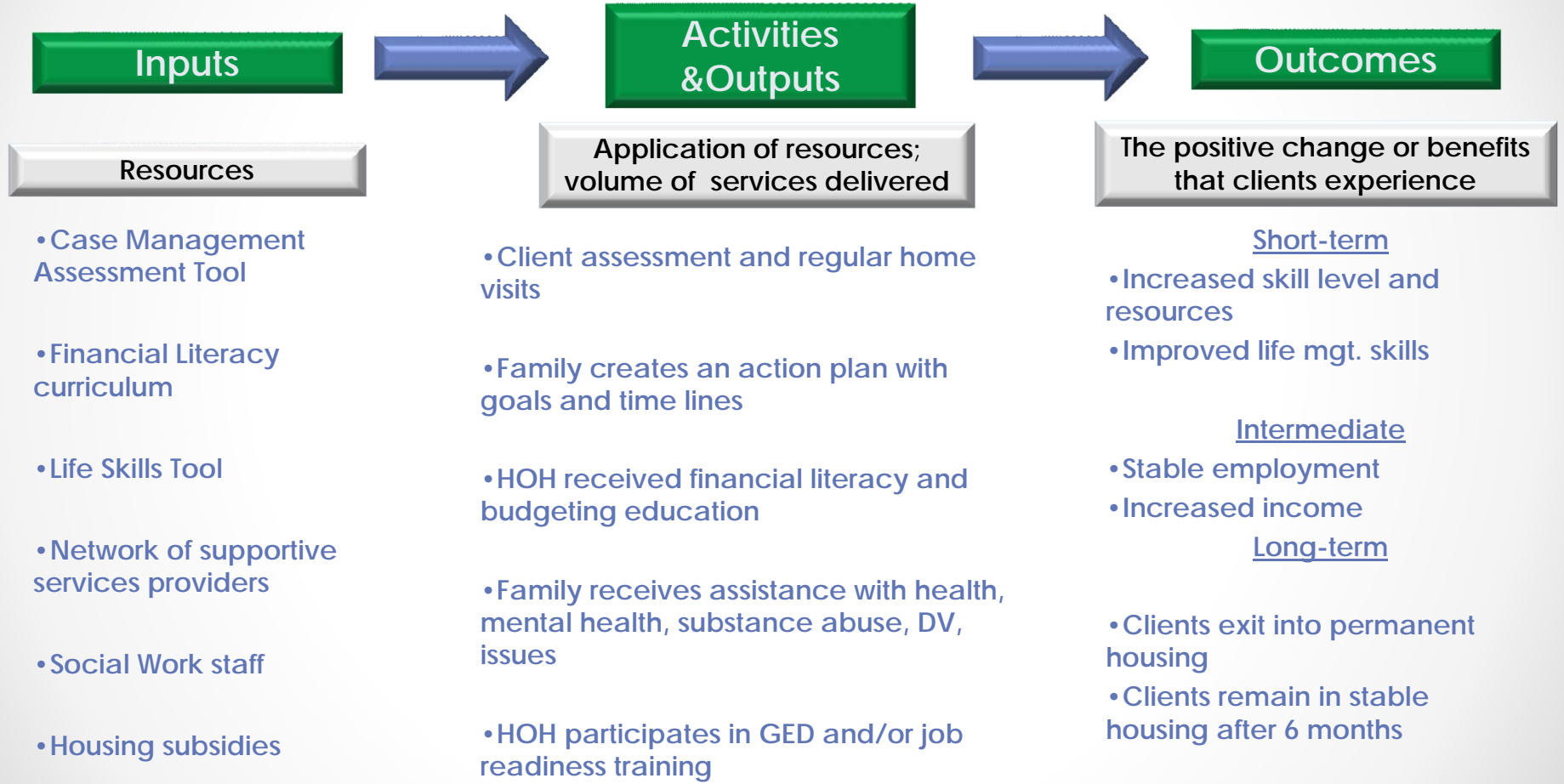
Changes in  
behavior that  
results from  
new  
knowledge,  
attitudes or  
skills



## Long-Term

Meaningful  
changes for  
participants in  
their condition  
or status

# Example Logic Model: *DSS Housing Program*





# Outcome Indicators

- Specific Items of data that are tracked to measure how well a program is achieving an outcome
- Outcome indicators are the observable pieces of information that represent the observable facts

# Outcome Indicators

S - Specific

M - Measureable

A - Attainable

R - Realistic

T - Timebound

U - Unambiguous

# Outcome Indicators:

## *Common Mistakes*

- Vague Indicators
- Not written measurably
- Listing measurement plans or documents
- Listing activities or outputs
- Listing outcomes
- Not associated with outcome



# Data Collection

- Baseline data
- During implementation
- End of program
- Monthly, quarterly, annually
- After program is completed



# We have the data....*Now what?*

- Where have we done well and why?
- Where are we not doing well and why?
- What can we do to improve the results?
- Are we using the right measurement techniques?
- How can we use to data as a management tool?



# We have the data....*Now what?*

## Internal Uses for Outcome Data

- Provide direction for staff
- identify training and technical assistance needs
- Identify program improvement needs & strategies
- Guide budgets
- Support long-range planning



# We have the data....*Now what?*

## External Uses for Outcome Data

- Explain value of program
- Justify resource allocation
- Enhance public image of program
- Identify collaborative partners



# We have the data....*Now what?*

## Strategies for Comparing Data

- Compare outcomes for different participants
- Compare outcomes for different units, locations or geographies
- Compare outcomes for different service delivery strategies
- Compare outcomes across years
- Compare outcomes with goals





# Create a Learning Culture

- Use data to engage staff in discussions about program improvements
- Frame findings in terms of improvements
- Treat findings as tentative indicators, not final answers
- Keep evaluation on the organization's agenda



# Successful Evaluation

- Work on practical questions
- Address feasible issues
- Avoid data addiction
- Make reports accessible
- Encourage use of evaluation as a learning tool
- Patience



# Obstacles to Utilization

- Organizational constraints
- Value conflicts among stakeholders
- Misapplied methodology
- Evaluation at arm's length

# Limitations

- If outcome data shows that participants are not experiencing the desired effect, the data itself does not necessarily tell you where the problem lies
- Outcome findings cannot prove that the program alone caused the outcome
- Data cannot answer a questions that wasn't asked
- Places an additional burden on staff

