



SVP Denver Theory of Change Cohort Scope

Project Scope and Description

SVP Denver is leading this initiative so that a cohort of organizations who might normally be unable to afford professional consultation can develop a Theory of Change. A [Theory of Change](#) is both a process and a product that helps nonprofits tell the story of who they serve, what they do and the impact they intend to help others achieve. By the end of this cohort, each organization will have created both a narrative version and a graphic version of their Theory of Change.

There will be 4-6 nonprofits in this Cohort, which will last roughly 8-weeks. Each nonprofit will also be assigned a co-learning coach from SVP to help them wrestle with common Theory of Change challenges.

Organizations will meet virtually every other week in a 60-90 minute lesson to discuss the core concepts involved in a Theory of Change. In between lessons, organizations will be asked to convene one 60-90 minute meeting with their coach and core design team to work on a homework assignment, and will be asked to submit their results prior to the next lesson. **After the first 3 sessions, organizations will have a draft Theory of Change, and will be asked to collect feedback on it from other key stakeholders before the final meeting.**

In addition to the product itself, we hope this participatory approach will leave each organization with a deep understanding of program design and evaluation concepts, which they can use to further refine their Theory of Change over time.

Project Participants and Roles

Each participating nonprofit needs to establish a core internal “Theory of Change Design” team. This team will collaboratively define their organization’s Theory of Change in this cohort, following the guidance of the facilitator. Each team will also have one coach, an SVP Member, who will serve as a third-party reviewer and thought partner through this process. Here is a bit more about The role SVP Members will play in this cohort:

- **SVP Facilitator:** Is responsible for designing the curriculum for this cohort, and facilitating bi-weekly workshops. The purpose of these workshops is to help cohort members understand important Theory of Change concepts, and set cohort members up to self-facilitate their own Theory of Change drafting process. Drafting will occur as “homework” between the sessions. The SVP Facilitator will also provide feedback on Theory of Change drafts created through this process.
- **SVP Coach:** Each participating organization will be paired with one SVP Member to serve as their Coach. The SVP Coach is a volunteer with extensive professional experience who makes a positive change in the community by using their professional experience to provide pro bono technical assistance projects to



nonprofits. The coach is expected to participate in all “homework” meetings, and will also provide feedback on drafts created through this process. The feedback from the Facilitator and Coach is intended to be independent - both will have ideas or suggestions for your drafts, and ultimately it's up to each organization to decide which suggestions to take.

Prior to beginning this cohort, we suggest you determine as a team who will serve in the following roles:

- **Internal Project Lead:** One of the design team members should be the Theory of Change project lead. This person will be the internal facilitator of their organization’s Theory of Change process. Most likely this person will also be creating initial drafts of the organization’s Theory of Change narrative and graphic that other team members and your coach can review. The internal project lead may delegate facilitation or drafting responsibilities, but is ultimately accountable for making progress on this project. This person should have 2 - 5 hours per week to commit over the duration of the cohort.
- **Core Design Team Members:** This should be a group of 3 - 6 individuals. It is important that all core design team members can participate in every Theory of Change design session, which will be held in between our bi-weekly cohort meetings. While it is important that this team works well together, diversity of perspective is also important. We recommend engaging different staff levels (e.g., not just the executive team) as well as at least one person who is not on your staff (e.g., a board member or committed volunteer) in this group. Each member of this group should have 1 - 3 hours per week to commit to this project over the duration of the cohort.
- **Other Stakeholders to Consult:** During this process you will be asked to share a draft of your Theory of Change with at least 3 other individuals who are not part of your organization but can provide helpful feedback. Start thinking about who these individuals might be now. Again, diversity in perspective is important for this group.

Project Outputs

By the end of this project your organization will have:

1. A Theory of Change describing your organization’s outcomes, activities, inputs, target population, and assumptions. This will be documented in both a narrative form (for inclusion in grant applications) and graphic form (for presentation).
2. A list of next steps your organization will be taking to put your Theory of Change to use.



Project Outcomes

Engaging in this project should provide your organization some of the following benefits:

- Increased knowledge of what a Theory of Change is and how it helps inform key program design concepts
- Time to critically reflect on how your day-to-day activities contribute to achieving your mission
- The beginning of an organizational understanding of your TOC and an opportunity to get staff and executive buy-in on your TOC

Project Intended Impact

Ultimately, participation in this cohort should influence the following impacts:

- Greater team alignment on your organization's who, what, why, and how
- Greater team understanding of what pieces of data are important to monitor your organization's performance
- Potential for better decisions on how to allocate resources to different program areas
- Potential for innovative new activities to fill weaknesses in programming
- Stronger tools for communicating what your organization hopes to achieve with funders

Scope Exclusions

Things that we cannot accomplish within this scope:

- **Revisiting Mission / Vision:** This process assumes that your organization is aligned on its overall mission and vision. A Theory of Change will help you describe how your day-to-day activities are contributing to achieving your mission. However, if there is significant disagreement on what the mission or vision should be, creating a Theory of Change may be difficult.
- **Graphic Design:** SVP Denver will suggest approaches to graphically representing your organization's Theory of Change. However, we are unable to provide graphic design services as part of this cohort. In lieu of that, we will recommend ways to find graphic design support that organizations can pursue if they are not satisfied with the final graphic representation of their Theory of Change.
- **Literature Review:** While it is important that every nonprofit's Theory of Change be supported by research where possible, we are not able to coach organizations through performing a literature review to support their Theory of Change within this cohort. We recommend each organization cites research that supports their approach when drafting their Theory of Change narrative.
- **Measurement Strategy:** A Theory of Change suggests indicators organizations should monitor on a regular basis. However, there will be additional work needed after this cohort to determine exactly how to measure each of the important outputs and outcomes listed in your organization's Theory of Change



Timeline

The group sessions are scheduled to meet as outlined below though this schedule is subject to change based on participant availability. Group session exact date/times will be set at the start of the program, according to participant availability.

Your organization’s design team will meet with your partner coach on the “off” week in between group sessions; you will set that schedule directly with your coach.

Date	Event
Week 1	Group Session 1 (90 minutes)
Week 3	Group Session 2 (60 minutes)
Week 6	Group Session 3 (60 minutes)
Week 8	Group Session 4 (90 minutes)

Agreement to Proceed

I approve the project as described above and authorize the team to proceed:

Name/Organization/Title

Signature

Date