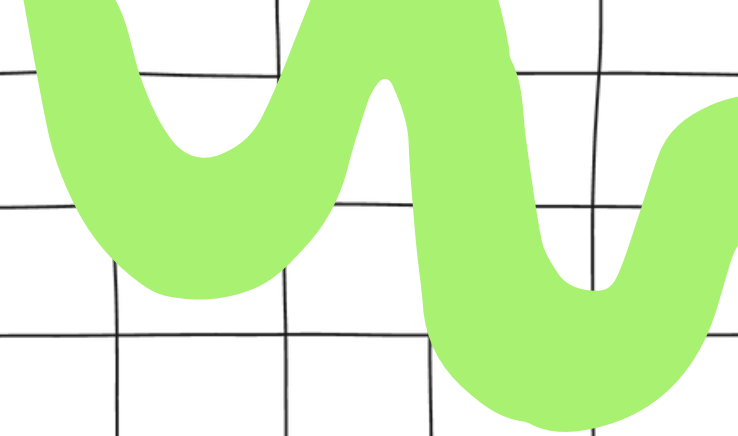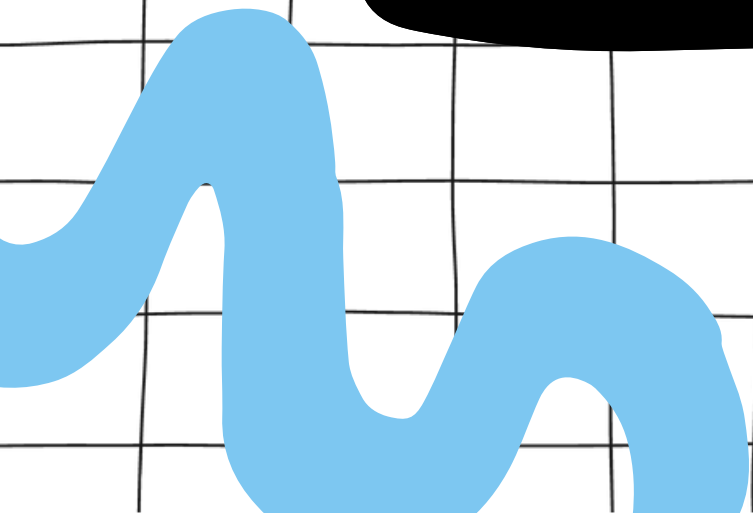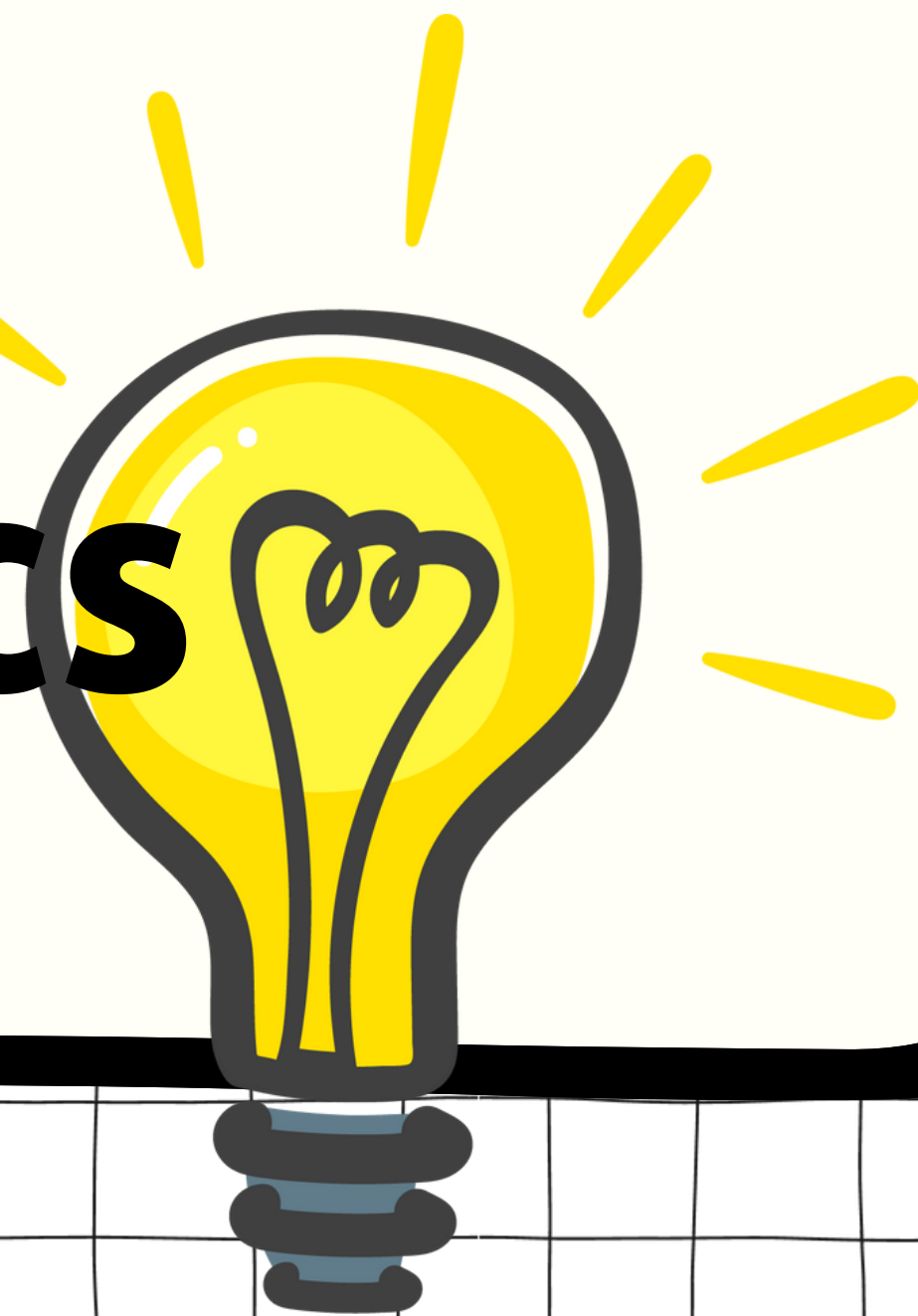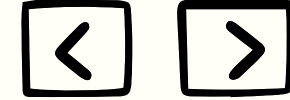# Impact Practice Basics

Introduction to Theory of Change

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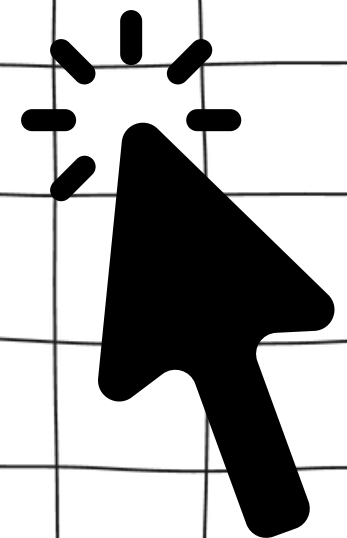ToC fundamentals

05

ToC Process

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Questions

Introduction

The definition of **impact** they use at NLF is:
Any effects arising from an intervention. This includes immediate short-term outcomes as well as broader and longer–term effects. These can be positive or negative, planned or unforeseen.

Impact Practice: the activities that an organisation does to focus on its impact. This can include planning desired impact, planning how to measure it, collecting information about it, making sense of that information, communicating it and learning from it.

Jargon Buster

Inevitably, Impact Management Practice has gathered a lot of different jargon terms that it is helpful to understand

Activity
A specific action or process undertaken over a specific period of time by an organisation to convert resources to products/services to achieve results

Assumptions
A proposition that is taken for granted, as if it were true. For project management, assumptions are hypotheses about causal linkages or factors that could affect the progress or success of an intervention.

Baseline
Information collected before or at the start of a project or program that provides a basis for planning and/or assessing subsequent progress and impact.
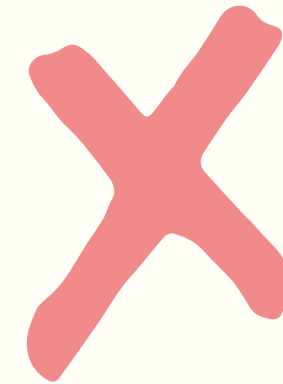
Beneficiary

The individuals, groups, or organisations that benefit from an intervention, project, or program.

Data

Information collected by a researcher. Data gathered during an evaluation are manipulated and analysed to yield findings that serve as the basis for conclusions and recommendations

Case Study

Case Study: A systematic description and analysis of a single project, program, or activity.

Goal

The higher-order objective to which a project, program, or policy is intended to contribute. .

Casuality

The relationship between one event (the cause) and another event (the effect) which is the direct consequence (result) of the first.

Indicator

Quantitative or qualitative variable that provides reliable means to measure a particular phenomenon or attribute.

Inputs

Resources provided for programme implementation. Examples are money, staff, time, facilities, equipment, etc.

Objective

A statement of the condition or state one expects to achieve.

Intervention

An action or entity that is introduced into a system to achieve some result. In the programme evaluation context, an intervention refers to an activity, project or programme that is introduced or changed (amended, expanded, etc).
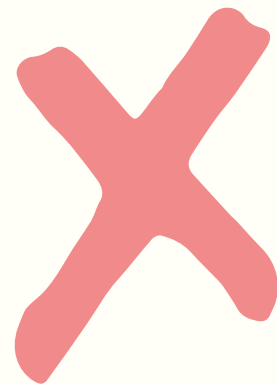
Outcome

A results or effect that is caused by or attributable to the project, programme or policy. Outcome is often used to refer to more immediate and intended effects. Related terms: result, effect.

Measurement

A procedure for assigning a number to an observed object or event

Outputs

The products, goods, and services which result from an intervention.

Logic Model V ToC

Logic Model
- 30 year history
- Clear identification of goals (outcomes)
- First widespread attempt to depict programme components so that activities matched outcomes

.

Theory of Change
- Popularised in the 1990s to capture complex initiatives
- Outcome based
- Causal model
- Articulate underlying assumptions

- Terms often used interchangeably
- Confusion by some funders and grantees about expectations
- Both can greatly improve programme design and evaluation (but in different ways)
- Logic Model – United Way format is most widespread
- Theory of change – less standardised, but has core components

What's the difference?

Logic models usually start with a programme and illustrate its components. Theories of Change may start with a programme, but are best when starting with a goal, before deciding what programmatic approaches are needed.

Logic Models

require identifying programme components, so you can see at a glance if outcomes are out of sync with inputs and activities, but they don't show why activities are expected to produce outcomes
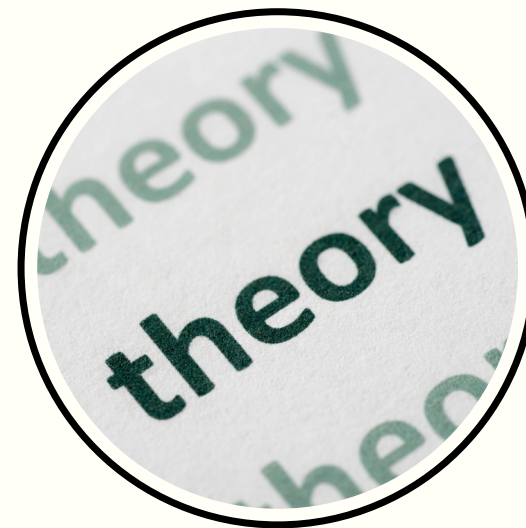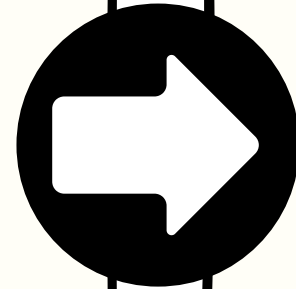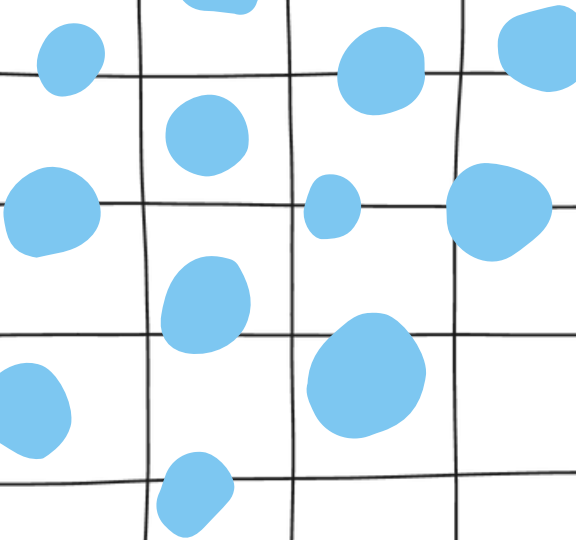
Theory of Change

Theories of Change also require justifications at each step – you have to articulate the hypothesis about why something will cause something else (it's a causal model, remember!)

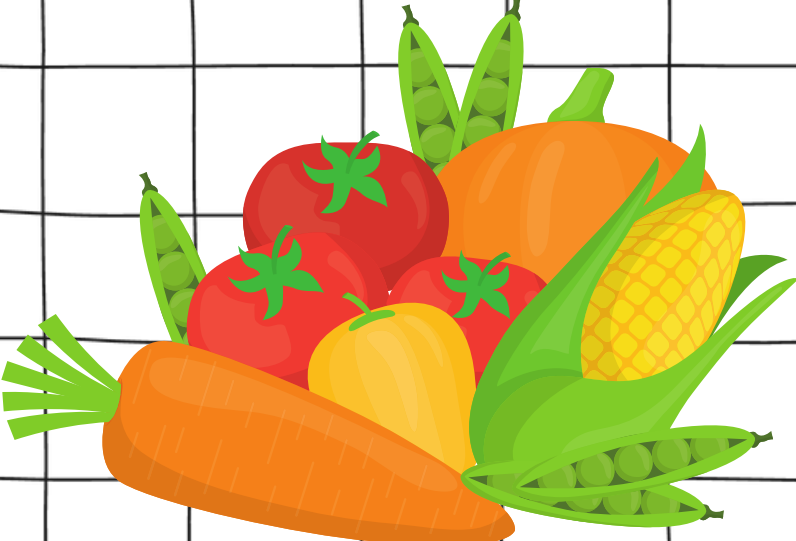It's basically a visualisation of the day to day activities of an organisation and how they relate to their overall mission or long term goals in terms of outcomes for the areas they work in
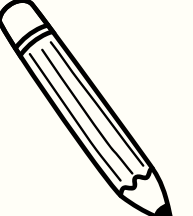
Theory of Change
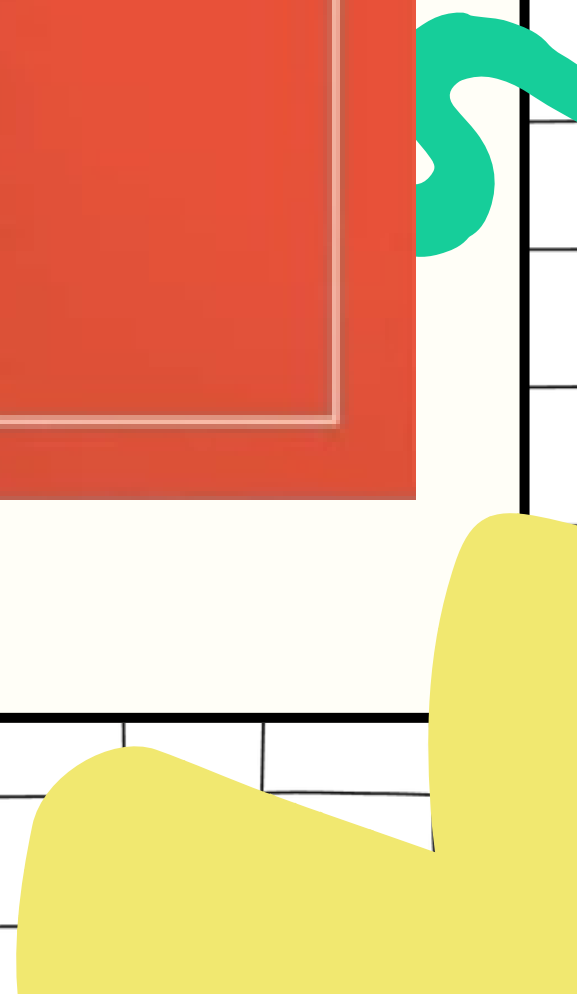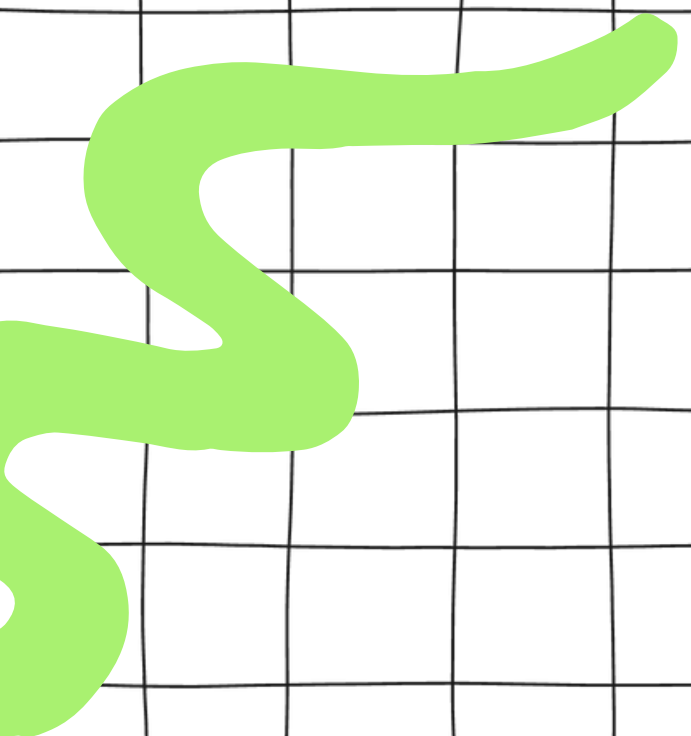
Green Fingers

Community Garden Project

Green fingers is an initial 12 month project whose aim is to give local people the opportunity to...
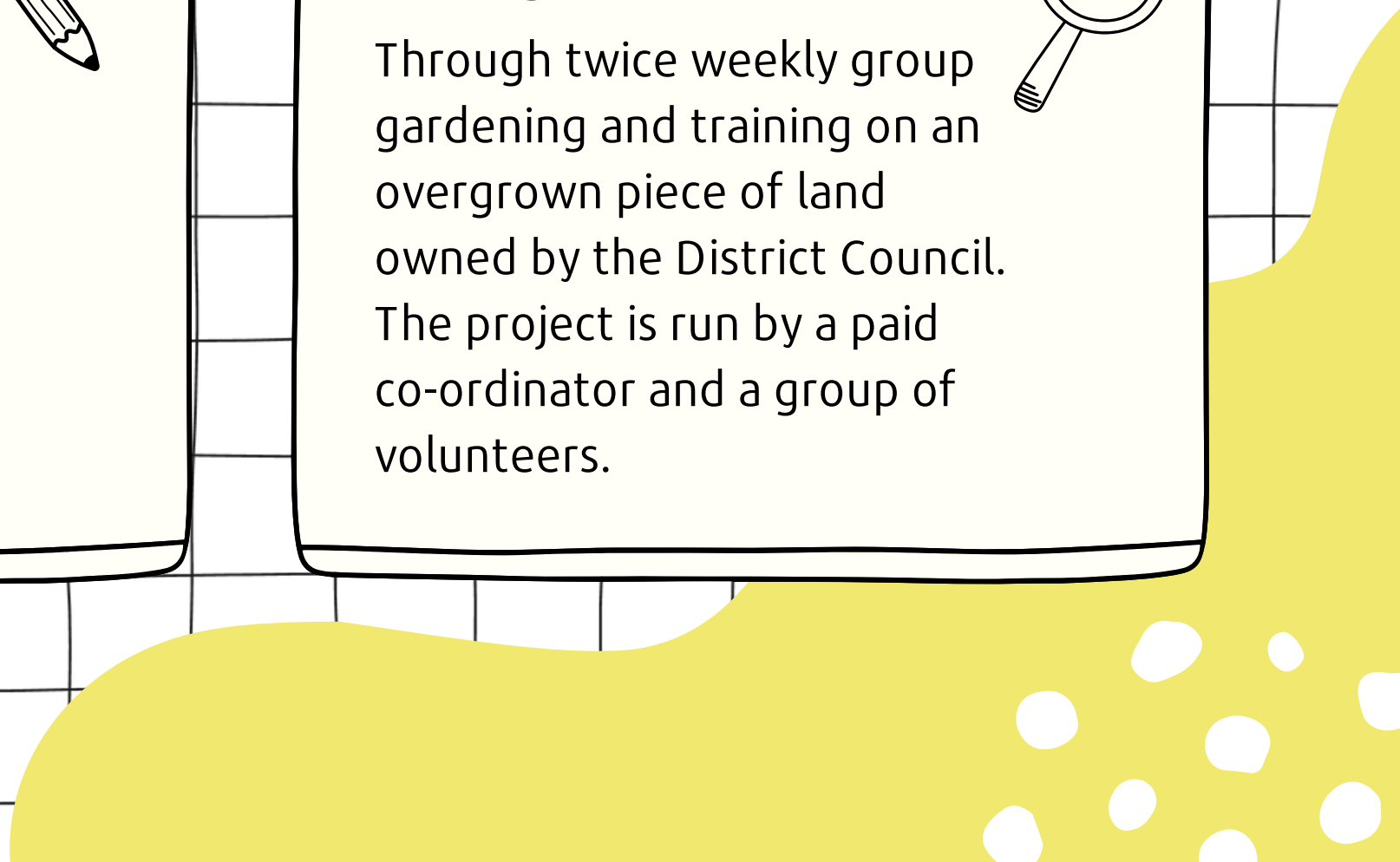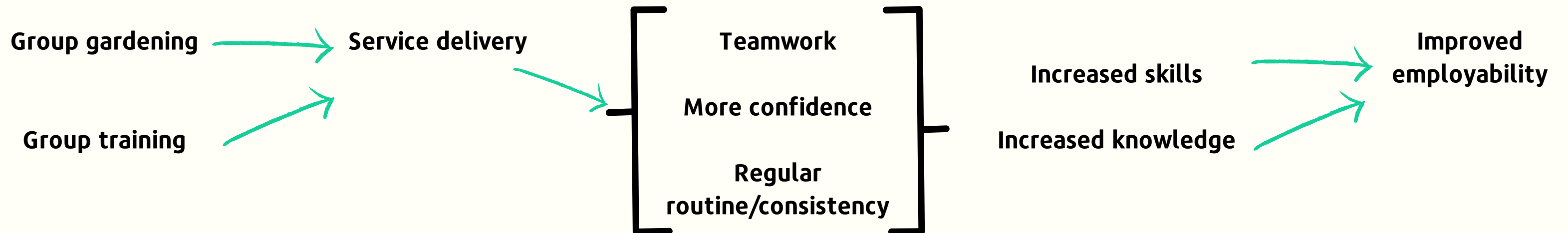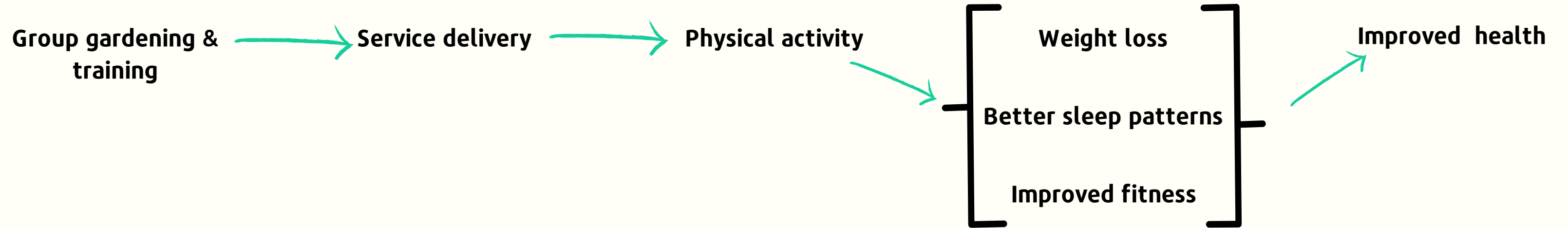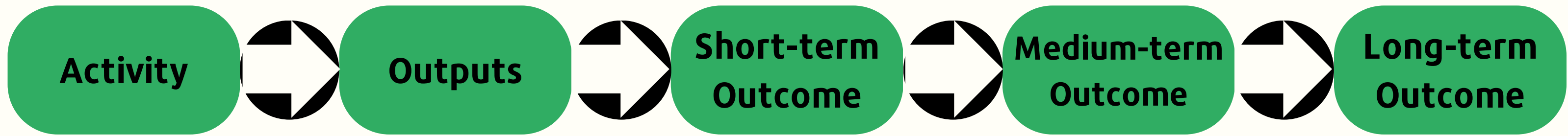
Outcomes

- Learn new skills
- Improve their health
- Improve their wellbeing

Background

Through twice weekly group gardening and training on an overgrown piece of land owned by the District Council. The project is run by a paid co-ordinator and a group of volunteers.

| Activity | ➡️ | Outputs | ➡️ | Short-term Outcome | ➡️ | Medium-term Outcome | ➡️ | Long-term Outcome |

Group gardening & training → Service delivery → Physical activity →

[
Weight loss

Better sleep patterns

Improved fitness
]
→ Improved health

Group gardening → Service delivery

Group training →

[
Teamwork

More confidence

Regular routine/consistency
]

Increased skills → Improved employability

Increased knowledge →

Activity		Outputs		Short-term Outcome		Medium-term Outcome		Long-term Outcome

Group gardening →

Group training → Service delivery →

[Regular social contact

More confidence

Feeling fitter] → Feeling more connected → Improved wellbeing

Being outdoors more → Improved fitness

Volunteering at group gardening sessions →

Volunteering at group training sessions → Service delivery →

[Increased sense of belonging

Increased sense of purpose] → Increased community participation → Increased volunteering

Thank you

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