

Theory of change

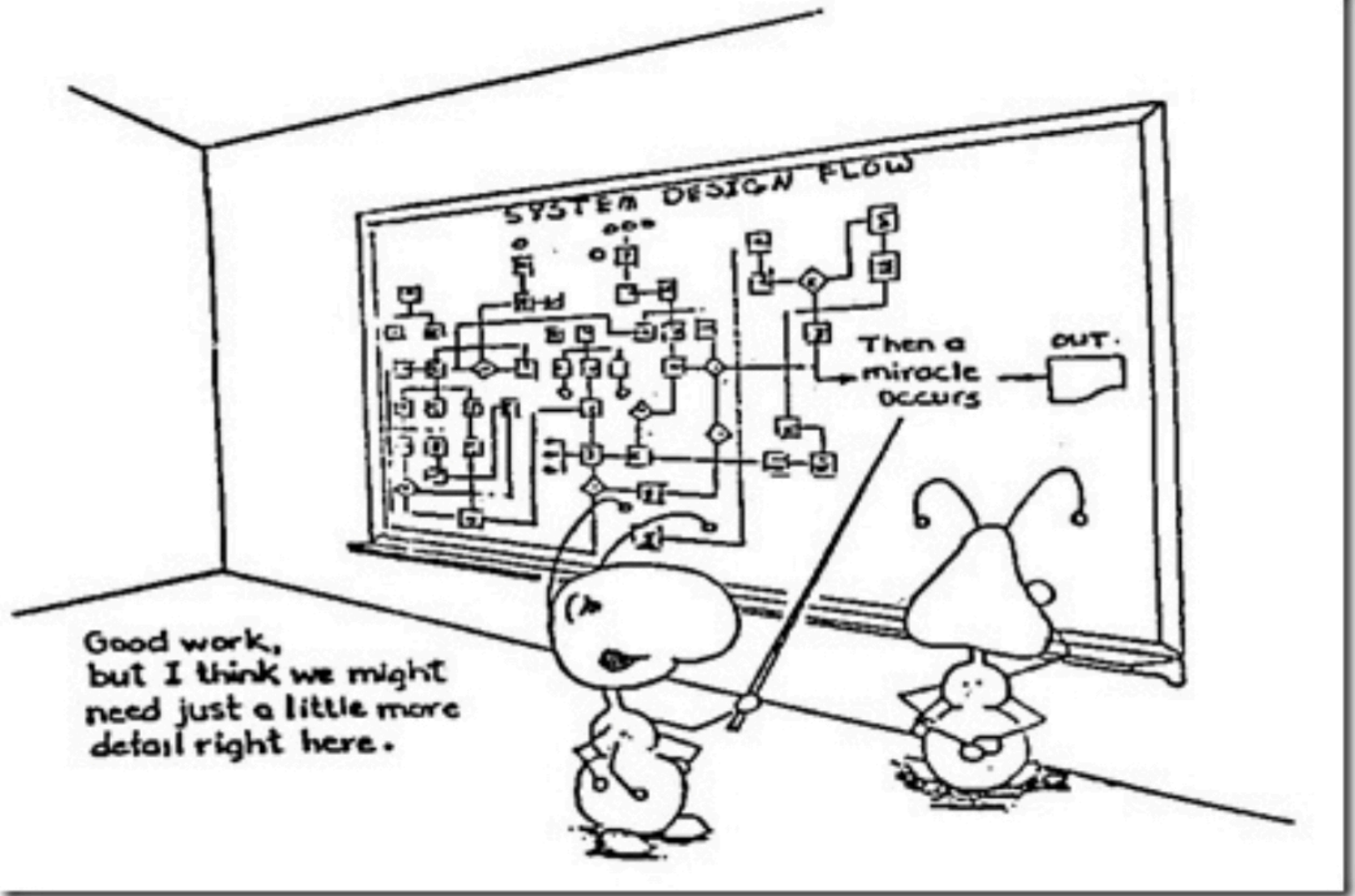
How it supports impact measurement

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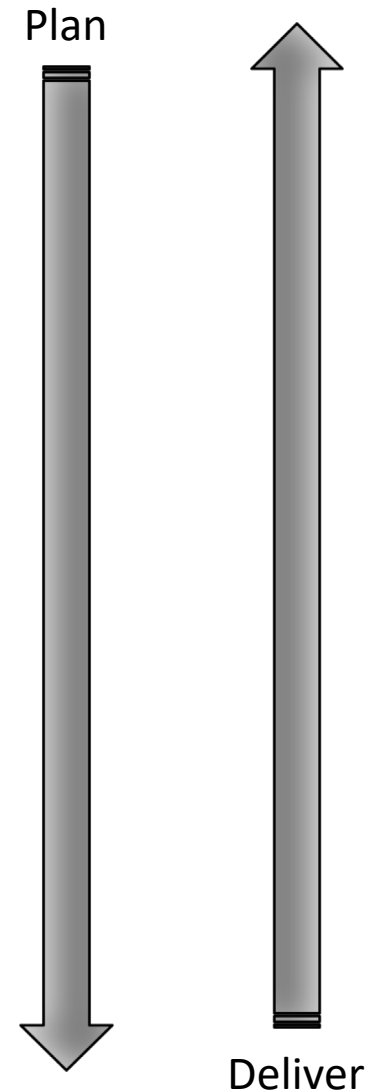
What is a Theory of Change?

“In simple terms a theory of change is like a map that sets out clearly, step-by-step, how you are going to achieve the change your charity is striving to make. (Guardian, April 2012)

A Theory of Change avoids ...



What's in a Theory of Change



Why a Theory of Change?

For strategy and planning...

- Helps answer the ‘So what?’
- Starts with ‘what do you want to change’ NOT ‘what you are going to do’ – there is a ‘logical’ relationship between each stage.
- Shows which activities are contributing to that change – and which are not!
- Helps teams develop a clear understanding of the change and their role in helping achieve it.
- Reveals people’s assumptions about approaches and helps develop shared understanding of most effective ones.

Linking Theory of Change to Impact

- We need to know whether we are making a difference.
- We need to know how to invest time and resources wisely so that we can do better over time.
- Theory of Change sets out to connect what a charity/programme does (the activities) and its desired changes (the impact).



From Theory of Change to Impact

Theory of Change

- Desired changes.
- Products and services you are counting.
- Activities.
- Resources (time, people, money, systems).

Have I achieved what I planned?

- Qualitative and quantitative ways to measure change - indicators.
- Choose level of detail.
- Choose methods and tools.

Impact

- Analyse indicators (numbers and stories) to see progress towards achieving changes.
- Think both short-term and long-term.

To give an example...

Output

- 100 year 11s taking part
- Programme running in 4 London schools

Outcome

- More young people with better literacy levels.

Indicators

- # teenagers passing GCSE English at level 6+ (quant).
- # teenagers reporting enjoying reading more (qual).

Impact

- Collect baseline data.
- Analyse indicators to see whether progress is made.
- Triangulate with other data to understand your effectiveness.

Why a Theory of Change?

For impact measurement....

- Answers the question – am I achieving my plan?
- Helps you agree what needs to be measured – and what does not!
- Your activities already have a logical relationship to your intended changes so your monitoring and evaluation is structured – no ad hoc.
- If activities aren't delivering the outputs and leading to desired changes - you can change the activities.
- A Theory of Change should be a dynamic document that changes as you try things, learn lessons and as your environment and resources/partners/actors change.

Where the Rubber Meets the Road: Theory of Change in Practice

What are your real world organisational challenges?

- Chronically underestimating time/resources?
- Prioritisation?
- People don't like the planning bit
- Anything else?

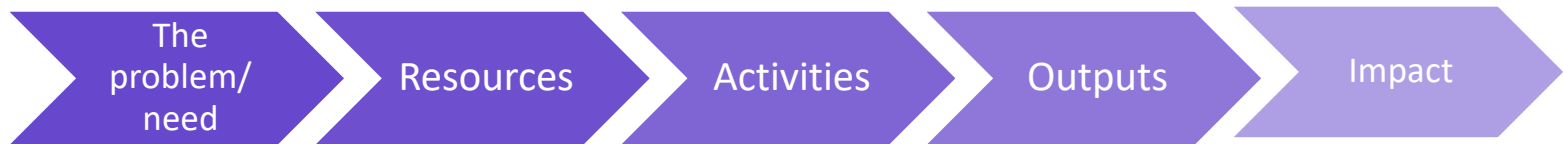
Case Study: Parkinson's UK

Really successful fundraising outfit:

2010 - £20.9M 2016 - £32.8M

- A fundraising culture of strategic vision and siloed detailed operational planning
- Narrative 5 year strategy document
- Very successful in income terms
- Hectic, busy teams trying to collaborate and innovate to meet the vision
- Planning traditionally income focused

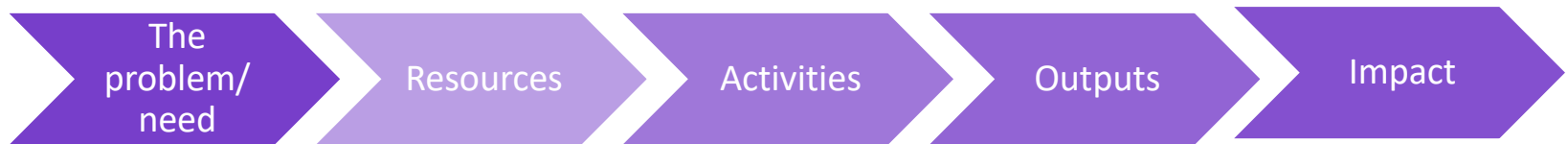
Case Study: Parkinson's UK



The instinct is to plan in this direction >>



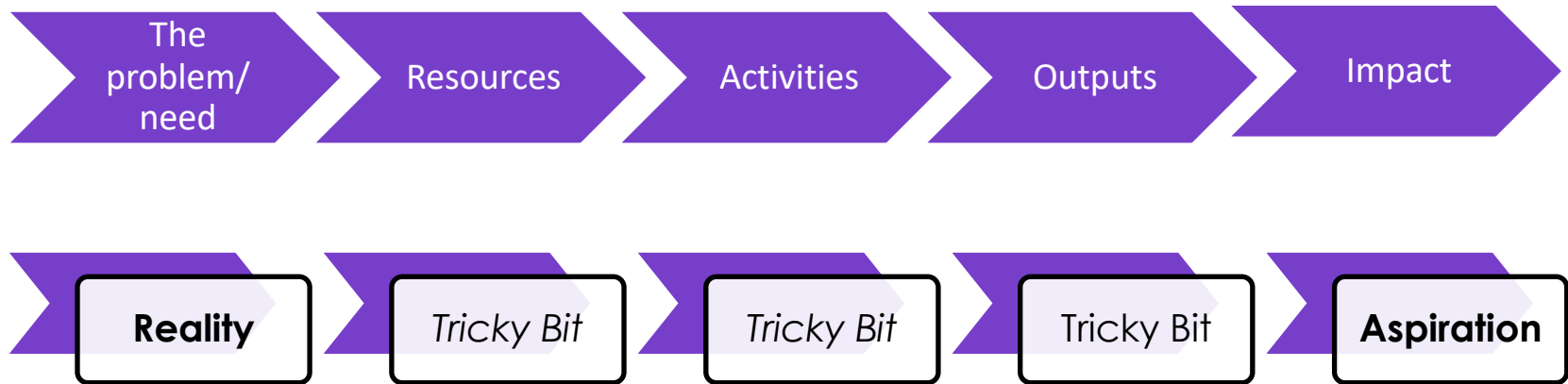
Case Study: Parkinson's UK



Better to think about articulating the need, then the change you want to make. The rest follows.



Case Study: Parkinson's UK



Use the tricky bit to:

- Articulate assumptions
- Articulate risks

Case Study: Parkinson's UK

How did we make this happen?

- Tailored to our team style – not heavily populated with detail people
- Held planning meetings that did not have the little boxes to fill in
- Pitched it as a way to address some of the challenges we already were clear were on our minds – solutions focused
- Took existing info from narrative strategy and used ToC to de-dupe, prioritise and develop outline strategic level outputs and impact measures

Case Study: Parkinson's UK

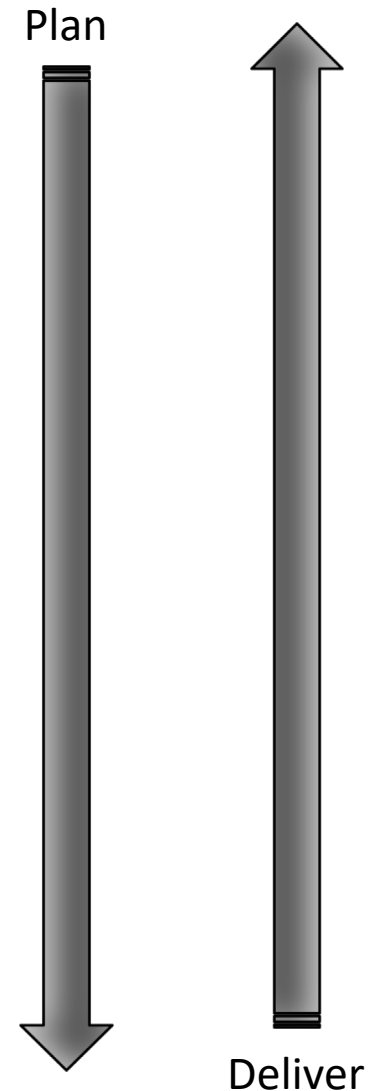
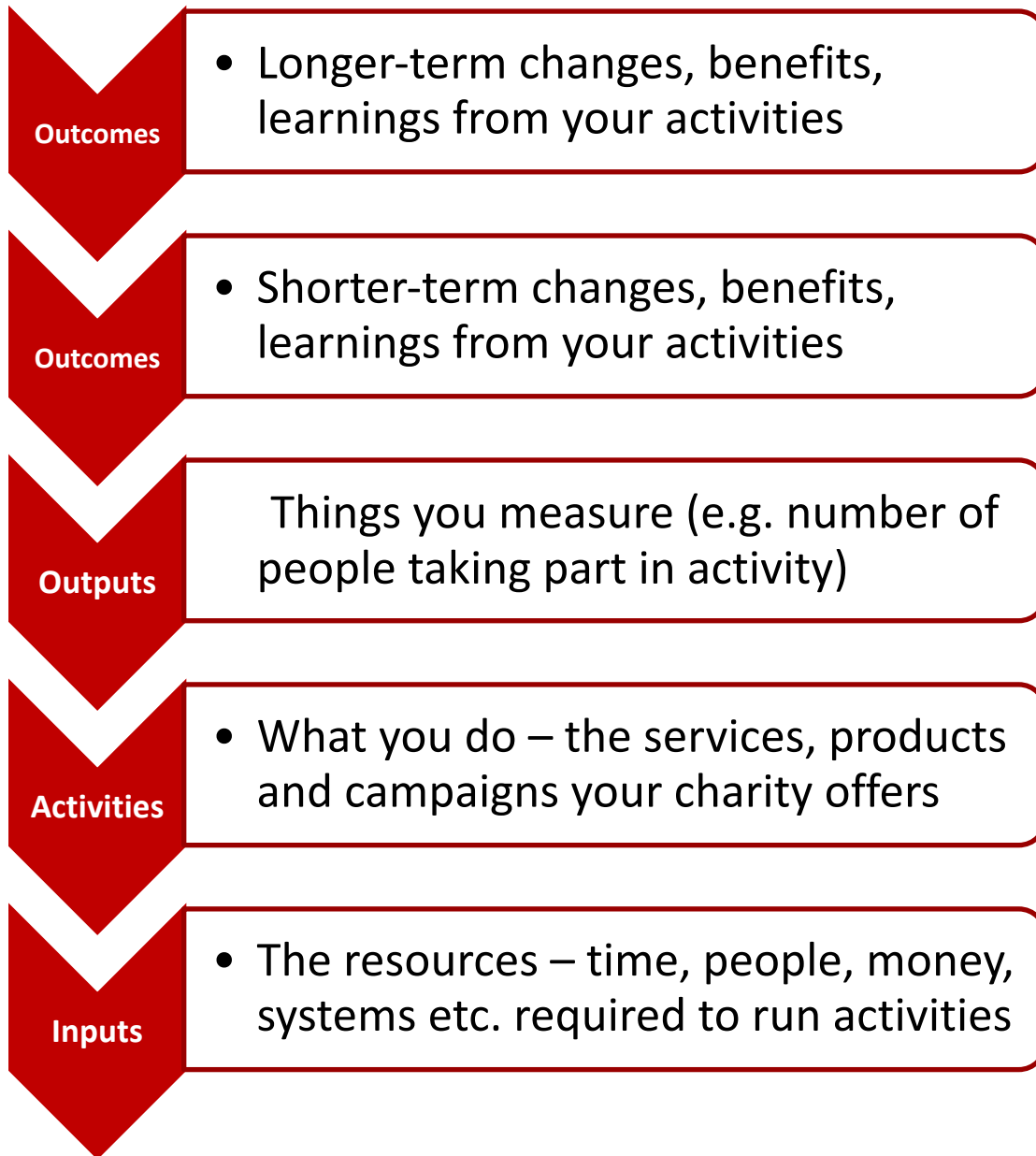
Results:

- 3 priorities for FMT to cascade consistently to managers to empower them in their planning
- Motivated and excited teams
- Gave everyone a licence to say no
- Created development opportunities for managers and took pressure off
- Enabled good decisions to be made downstream – visibility of projects, templates for planning, light touch governance and support from FMT

Over to you...

- We are going to tell you three stories.
- In groups of three. Pick the one that most resonates with you and start to plot a theory of change for that scenario.
- We will regroup in about 15 mins to see where you have got to and for final Q&As.

What's in a Theory of Change



Where to find out more

- **Centre for Theory of Change** – theoryofchange.org
- **KnowHowNonProfit** – knowhownonprofit.org/how-to/how-to-build-a-theory-of-change
- **Department for International Development** – dfid.gov.uk
- **W.K Kellogg Foundation** – Logic Model Development guide – wkkf.org
- **Making Connections: using theory of change to develop planning and evaluation** by Jean Ellis et al. – Charity Evaluation Services
- *The Power of Theories of Change* by Paul Brest – Stanford Innovation Review

Staying in touch

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