Contribution analysis in a multi-level, multi-actor strategy

Carlyn Orians
We need to accept the fact that what we are doing is measuring with the aim of reducing the uncertainty about the contribution made, not proving the contribution made.

John Mayne, 1999
**Typical steps** in contribution analysis

1. Clearly describe the attribution problem
Typical steps in contribution analysis

1. Clearly describe the attribution problem

2. Develop a theory of change (TOC)
Typical steps in contribution analysis

1. Clearly describe the attribution problem
2. Develop a theory of change (TOC)
3. Gather the evidence using the results chain in the TOC
Typical steps in contribution analysis

1. Clearly describe the attribution problem
2. Develop a theory of change (TOC)
3. Gather the evidence using the results chain in the TOC
4. Assemble the contribution story (and challenges to story)
Typical steps in contribution analysis

1. Clearly describe the attribution problem
2. Develop a theory of change (TOC)
3. Gather the evidence using the results chain in the TOC
4. Assemble the contribution story (and challenges to story)
5. Seek additional evidence as needed
Typical steps in contribution analysis

1. Clearly describe the attribution problem
2. Develop a theory of change (TOC)
3. Gather the evidence using the results chain in the TOC
4. Assemble the contribution story (and challenges to story)
5. Seek additional evidence as needed
6. Revise and strengthen the contribution story
Many partners
Multiple strategies

Many partners
+ Multiple levels

+ Multiple strategies

+ Many partners
Dynamic environment
Multiple levels
Multiple strategies
Many partners
Dynamic environment
Multiple levels
Multiple strategies
Many partners

Contribution Challenge!

Icons by: Wilson Joseph, Lloyd Humphreys, Evan Shuster, Thomas Helbig, Synkied Synk, and Berkay Sagr from Noun Project
Alliance for Early Success
Advancing State Policies for Young Children
Framing the evaluation

Boundary Setting

Include *all* activities and strategies by Alliance and partners

Exclude related activities in which partners not engaged
**Framing** the evaluation

**Boundary Setting**
- Include *all* activities and strategies by Alliance and partners
- Exclude related activities in which partners not engaged

**Question Framing**
- Check plausibility of results chain
- Link activities/strategies to results
- Explore alternative explanations
Collecting the data

Verification

Verify state policies and budgets
Confirm with interviewees
Collecting the data

Verification
- Verify state policies and budgets
- Confirm with interviewees

Sample
- Select focus states
- Select partners and bellwethers
Collecting the data

Verification
- Verify state policies and budgets
- Confirm with interviewees

Sample
- Select focus states
- Select partners and bellwethers

Context
- What else is happening federally?
- Locally?
Assembling the contribution story

Assemble

Build evidence chain
Assembling the contribution story

Assemble
- Build evidence chain

Test
- Test with stakeholders
- Explore alternative explanations
- Collect more evidence
**Assembling the contribution story**

- **Assemble**: Build evidence chain
- **Test**: Test with stakeholders, Explore alternative explanations, Collect more evidence
- **Strengthen**: Revising the contribution story, acknowledging limitations

[ORSIMPACT.COM]
Call me when you're 100% certain

Well I wouldn't wait by the phone if I were you

freshspectrum.com
Fit for Purpose:

*When is contribution analysis the right choice?*

**Good fit for purpose: Alliance**

- Confirm choice of partners
- Elucidate trends and directionality
- Identify strategies that are working/not working

Icons by: Tom Inglebretsen from Noun Project
Fit for Purpose:

*When is contribution analysis the right choice?*

**Good fit for purpose: Alliance**
- Confirm choice of partners
- Elucidate trends and directionality
- Identify strategies that are working/not working

**What if purpose is to….**
- Prove contribution of particular strategy?
- Quantify level of contribution?

Contact information: corians@orsimpact.com

Icons by: Tom Inglebretsen from Noun Project