A Guide to SSIP Evaluation Planning

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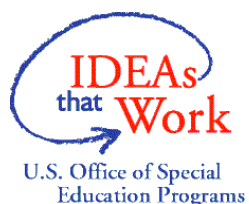
Table of Contents

Introduction

The *IDEA* Data Center (IDC) Evaluation Workgroup developed this document as a guide for IDC technical assistance (TA) providers to use when assisting state staff and other stakeholders in planning State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) Evaluation. We did not develop this document or the corresponding worksheets with the intent of providing standalone guidance to states. Instead, we view them as tools for TA providers to use in partnership with state staff. We recognize, however, that some state staff and non-IDC TA providers may find them useful as well, which is why we are pleased to make them available for download. For direct, individualized TA, contact your IDC State Liaison or Tamara Nimkoff (TamaraNimkoff@westat.com) who will connect you with an Evaluation TA Specialist.

The OSEP Guidance and Review Tools for Part B and C indicate that a state's SSIP Phase II evaluation plan should specify:

- How the evaluation plan aligns to the theory of action and other components of the SSIP (e.g., data analysis, infrastructure analysis) [See Component 3(a)];
- How the evaluation includes stakeholders and how information from the evaluation will be disseminated to stakeholders [See Component 3(b)];
- The methods that will be used to collect and analyze data on the implementation and outcomes of the SSIP and the progress toward achieving intended improvements in the SiMR [See Component 3(c)]; and
- How the evaluation data will be used to examine the effectiveness of the implementation and progress toward achieving intended improvements and to make modifications to the SSIP as necessary [See Component 3(d)].

Below are nine steps with considerations for how to incorporate each of the elements into a well-thought-out plan for evaluating an SSIP.

1. Understand Phase II evaluation plan in relation to Phase I
2. Identify the evaluation team
3. Link activities to outputs and outcomes (e.g., by creating an evaluation logic model)
4. Develop evaluation questions
5. Select an evaluation design
6. Identify data collection strategies
7. Develop plans for data analysis
8. Plan to share and use evaluation results along the way
9. Develop a timeline

Steps in Planning an SSIP Evaluation

Step 1. Understand Phase II Evaluation Plan in Relation to Phase I

- Consider how evaluation planning developed in Phase II aligns with, and in many ways, is an extension of the work conducted during Phase 1. The SSIP evaluation will:
    - Build off of the data analysis.
        - Are useful data available?
    - Be informed by the infrastructure analysis.
        - What infrastructure is in place—strengths and challenges?
    - Expand and test the theory of action.
        - Is the program logic sound?
    - Inform the coherent improvement strategies.
        - What specific actions must the state take to help teachers/providers/practitioners implement effective practice?
- Think broadly about what you want to accomplish with your evaluation. To begin developing or further specifying your evaluation plan, start by thinking broadly about what your evaluation may involve.
    - What questions do you want and need to answer?
    - What data do you need to evaluate implementation and outcomes of the SSIP and the progress toward achieving intended improvements in the SiMR?
    - Make plans for asking stakeholders what they may want to learn from the evaluation.
    - Consider your reporting requirements and the associated timelines.
    - What resources does the state have to devote to the evaluation?
    - What TA support is needed to plan or implement the evaluation?
- Once you begin to form a general framework of your evaluation's purposes and goals, you can start planning the evaluation activities in a more detailed manner.

Step 2. Identify the Evaluation Team

- Identify the resources you have to conduct the evaluation.
    - After previewing what you seek to accomplish with your evaluation,
        - Consider whether you have the expertise in place to plan and conduct the evaluation.
        - Consider what evaluation needs your state may have and how you will seek and access evaluation technical assistance as needed.
        - Think about whether you will be working with an internal evaluator, external evaluator, or a combination.
        - If different staff are filling various roles, including an external evaluator, consider how the work will be parceled out among multiple evaluator roles.
        - Include individual stakeholders and organizations that will be affected by the evaluation in your evaluation planning and possibly on the evaluation team.
    - Identify the major evaluation activities you will be conducting (e.g., engaging stakeholders, framing the questions, data collection, data analysis) and the expertise and materials that will be required.
        - What resources (e.g., staff, monies, OSEP TA Centers) are available for conducting the evaluation?
        - Are there resource constraints that may require you to adjust your evaluation plans?
        - Are there alternatives that will allow you to carry out the evaluation activities as needed?
        - Are there resources you haven't tapped into, or are there ways to further maximize your existing resources?

- Select the team and define roles.
  - Select team members to maximize resources, expertise, and diversity in perspectives (e.g., local agency staff, stakeholders).
  - Seek external assistance as needed (e.g., external evaluator, technical assistance).

Step 3. Link Activities to Outputs and Outcomes (e.g., by Creating an Evaluation Logic Model)

As you plan your evaluation activities, keep your evaluation questions, data collection plans, and analysis plans closely tied to your theory of action to ensure you're collecting the data you need. An evaluation logic model can help with planning your evaluation activities up front and can help guide the evaluation activities during the duration of the project. While OSEP is not requiring that states include a logic model in their SSIP Phase II plan, an evaluation logic model can be very useful in evaluation planning as it shows important activities that lead to outputs that can be counted and outcomes that can be measured. [See SSIP Evaluation Worksheets 1-4]

- Consider these questions to help you create an evaluation logic model.
  - What are your resources that go into the program (e.g., fiscal and other investments, project staff, organizational partners, stakeholders, technology, evidence-based practices related to intervention and implementation)? [Inputs]
  - What are the broad approaches you have for realizing the theory of action and addressing the goals? [Strategies]
  - What are the specific actions planned to implement those strategies? [Activities]
  - What are the immediate results of the project activities? [Outputs]
  - What are the direct results of the activities and their outputs? [Short-term Outcomes]
  - What are the changes in the actions or behaviors based on knowledge or skills acquired through outputs [Intermediate Outcomes]
  - What are the results you anticipate that fulfill the SSIP's goals? [Long-term Outcomes]
  - What is the measurable evidence for achieving each outcome? What are the criteria for successful implementation of each outcome? [Performance Indicators/Measures]
- Refer to your evaluation logic model often as a tool for ensuring that the specified data collection and other evaluation activities are occurring and staying on track. [See SSIP Evaluation Worksheet 9]
  - Are all sources of data specified in the logic model being collected according to their respective timelines?
- As adjustments to the program or the evaluation are made during the course of the project, revise and update the evaluation logic model as needed.

Step 4. Develop Evaluation Questions

Review the project goals, activities, and intended outcomes from the logic model. From these, you can begin to identify evaluation questions.

- Think about what you want to learn from the evaluation. Questions should address both process and outcomes.
  - Process—How's it going?
    - Are we clear about what we are doing? (gaining clarity)
    - Are we successfully accomplishing our activities? Are we doing what we intended to do? (monitoring progress by measuring outputs and direct outcomes)
    - To what extent were milestones in implementation (e.g., # of sites, # of implementers trained to criterion, proficiency on fidelity measures, # of coaches employed) reached on schedule? (gauging progress in implementation of activities)
    - Are we doing things the right way? (measuring fidelity)
    - Can we improve what we are doing? What can we do to fix what is not working? (focusing on improvement)

- o Outcomes—What good did it do?
  - § What are the results? Are we making a difference? Did we accomplish our goals? (examining impact)
  - § Can we show that what we did was responsible for the accomplishments? (linking activities to outcomes)
  - § How have the state and local infrastructure improved as a result of the SSIP implementation? (determining systems change)
- With consideration of the questions posed above, think through each significant strategy/activity and its related outputs and outcomes to develop a list of evaluation questions specific to the planned intervention and the ultimate outcome of interest. [See SSIP Evaluation Worksheet 5]
- Consider how stakeholders can participate in creating the evaluation questions to be asked and in judging the acceptability of the strategies to be used and the value of outcomes to be achieved.
- Look at your list of evaluation questions and fine-tune your questions, perhaps narrowing the list.
  - o Will the evaluation question
    - § Be of interest to primary intended users?
    - § Provide information that addresses the intended use for the evaluation results?
    - § Contribute information that is not already known?
    - § Be feasible to address, in terms of time, money, resources, and the evaluation team's skills?
- Develop specific indicators of progress based on the evaluation questions and linked outcomes. [See SSIP Evaluation Worksheet 6]
  - o Indicators are observable measures of the outcome at the child, family, provider, school, local program, or district level. For example, what will it look like if the outcome is achieved?
  - o The indicators of progress point to what data you will need to collect and analyze.
    - § They may begin with words such as number of, percent of, ratio of, proportion of, mean of, etc.

Step 5. Select an Evaluation Design

With your evaluation questions in mind, you can proceed to determining the evaluation design or framework, you'll use to guide your data collection and analysis plans. [See SSIP Evaluation Worksheet 7]

- Below are some questions to consider in order to determine your evaluation design.
  - o What are the objectives of the evaluation?
    - § Determine the information needed to make decisions about your SSIP and coherent improvement strategies, as well as other information you'll need to know and report.
  - o What comparisons will be made to demonstrate the effectiveness of the coherent improvement strategies? For example:
    - § Are you interested in change over time among students/systems (e.g., pre/post or longitudinal)?
    - § Are you interested in comparing outcomes for groups of students, infants and toddlers, or families to outcomes for others?
  - o What evaluation design will constitute sufficient evidence for what you need to know? For example:
    - § Pre/post data versus longitudinal data with more than two time points?
    - § Participants/groups serving as their own control, rather than using other individuals/groups?
    - § In-depth, detailed description of the improvement strategies' implementation and outcomes?
    - § Comparison of the outcomes of improvement strategies for one or more groups with groups that are similar in terms of their demographic and socioeconomic characteristics but may differ in ways not measured?
    - § Random assignment to compare the outcomes of improvement strategies for one or more groups with an equivalent group or groups that did not receive the improvement strategies?

- If using comparison group data, how will you obtain those data?
  - Are there comparable groups that won't be exposed to the improvement strategies?
    - Are the data you need already routinely collected for this population/comparison group, or would data collection plans need to be developed for this group?
  - If individuals or groups will be exposed to the improvement strategies at different times, will it be possible to collect data from a comparison group before they are exposed to the strategy?
- As you consider your evaluation design, keep in mind the following:
  - The resources available for data collection, management, and analysis;
  - The availability and feasibility of comparison groups; and
  - The availability of data to measure outcomes.

Step 6. Identify Data Collection Strategies

Specify the methods that the state will use to collect data to evaluate implementation and outcomes of the SSIP and the progress toward achieving intended improvements in the SiMR. [See SSIP Evaluation Worksheets 8 and 9]

- Consider how each type of evaluation question will be approached.
  - How will you measure implementation fidelity?
  - What data will need to be collected to assess whether the coherent improvement strategies are associated with changes in outcomes? (test your theory of action)
  - How will the evaluation measure state infrastructure changes needed to better align current initiatives identified in the infrastructure analysis conducted in Phase I? (measure infrastructure development)
  - How will you evaluate the effectiveness of the support/professional development for local education agency/early intervention services (LEA/EIS) programs and providers' implementation of evidence-based practices (EBPs)?
- Consider what data sources and evaluation tools could be used.
  - Think about the extent to which information can be collected and analyzed in a low-cost and practical manner.
  - Identify existing data sources.
    - Consider use of data that are already routinely collected.
    - Consider whether someone is available to assist you in accessing data you need.
    - Consider program documents such as logs, records, minutes of meetings.
  - Think about whether there are already developed instruments that fit your needs.
    - If so, consider what steps need to be taken to obtain permission to use the instruments.
    - Think about what adjustments may be needed.
  - Determine what instruments need to be developed.
    - What value might there be in developing your own tools?
    - Is tool development feasible in terms of time, money, and evaluation team skills?
- Consider which data-gathering strategies would be best received and most productive.
  - Consider the district, school, or local program culture.
  - Think about who will be your sources of information (e.g., participants, non-participants, parents, program staff, administrators) and how you can maximize their buy-in.
  - Will respondents conform to the methods? For example, will they fill out questionnaires carefully, engage in interviews or focus groups, allow observations to be done, etc.?
  - Will the information appear as credible to decisionmakers (e.g., funders or policymakers)?
  - Who can administer the data collection tools? Is training required?
- Determine your schedule for data collection.
  - What collection schedule is needed to answer the evaluation questions?
  - Are data to be collected as pre/post or at regular intervals?

- Consider whether you will be conducting a sample, such as a sample of the target children/infants and toddlers with disabilities or a sample of districts, schools, or local programs.
  - If so, how will you ensure that the sample is representative of all of the children/infants and toddlers exposed to the coherent improvement strategies?

Step 7. Develop Plans for Data Analysis

Specify the methods that the state will use to analyze data to evaluate implementation and outcomes of the SSIP and the progress toward achieving intended improvements in the SiMR.

- Think about data analysis strategies. [See SSIP Evaluation Worksheet 10]
  - Consider potential analyses and how they need to be taken into account as you plan your data collection activities (e.g., planning for pre/post or comparison group designs).
  - Consider analysis expertise and resources (e.g., available software).
- Consider whether the timelines for data collection and analysis fit well with your monitoring and reporting needs. [See SSIP Evaluation Worksheets 9 and 11]
  - Are you aware of lags or delays that may affect the availability of certain data?

Step 8. Plan to Share and Use Evaluation Results Along the Way

When you develop your evaluation plan, think ahead about how you will share the results and how you expect/hope the results will be used. In order to maximize your efficiency and learning, also consider how you, as a team, will communicate along the way. [See SSIP Evaluation Worksheet 11]

- Think about what will make the evaluation useful for yourselves and your stakeholders.
- Inform and involve people with the organizational authority and power to act on data once it is generated.
- Consider how often the data will be reviewed for progress monitoring and program improvement.
  - What will this review involve?
  - Who will participate in the review?
- Consider how stakeholders will continue to be informed and provided opportunities to weigh in on the ongoing implementation of the evaluation.
- Specify how the state will use the evaluation data to examine the effectiveness of implementation, to assess the progress toward achieving intended improvements, and to modify the SSIP as necessary.
- Determine how changes will be made to the implementation and improvement strategies as a result of the data reviews.
- Determine the process that will be used to modify the SSIP, including the SiMR, as necessary.

Step 9. Develop a Timeline

Develop a timeline that identifies important dates based on the evaluation questions you have identified, the general evaluation design, your plans for data collection and analysis, and plans for sharing and using results of the evaluation along the way.

Corresponding Worksheets

SSIP Evaluation Worksheet 1: Definitions

Term	Definition
Theory of Action	An illustration of a program that starts with a vision statement and presents, through if-then statements, a series of strategies that will result in the accomplishment of the vision.
Logic Model	A graphical representation that puts specificity to a theory of action by showing components that are systematically connected to accomplish desired results. A **Logic Model for Evaluation** depicts the key activities, countable outputs, and measurable outcomes on which an evaluation will focus.
Inputs	Resources that go into the program • Fiscal and other investments • Stakeholders • Project staff • Technology • Organizational partners • Evidence-based practices related to intervention and implementation Examples: Combining initiative with SPDG, Using internal department evaluation specialist
Strategies	Broad approaches to realizing the theory of action and addressing the goals • Infrastructure development • Scale-up and sustainability • Improvement in practices • Analysis and reporting Example: Implementation of evidence-based literacy practices using the Reading at School and Home program
Activities	Specific actions that implement strategies • Actionable plans based on the program's theory of action • Flesh out strategies through concrete events and products Example: Establish family partnerships to support student literacy
Outputs	Immediate results of the project activities • Project accomplishments • Description and number of intervention products/events • Customer contacts with products and events • Reports of implementation and results • Fidelity of implementation of activities Examples: 3 trainings were held, 107 service providers attended the trainings

SSIP Evaluation Worksheet 1: Definitions (continued)

Term	Definition
Short-term Outcomes	Direct results of the activities and their outputs • What customers/clients learn as a result of outputs • What awareness, attitudes, or skills customers/clients develop Example: Parents learn how to monitor child's reading
Intermediate Outcomes	Changes in the actions or behaviors based on knowledge or skills acquired through outputs • Changes in adult actions or behaviors based on knowledge or skills acquired • Fidelity of the intervention • Improved organizational functioning • Improved infrastructure and system functioning Example: Increase in number of times parents read with children
Long-term Outcomes	The results that fulfill the SSIP's goals • Broadest program outcomes • Results that fulfill the project's goals • Impact on children or families • Program scale-up and sustainability Example: Increase in student literacy levels
Performance Indicators	Statement that shows that an outcome is being partially or totally achieved • Specific, observable, and measurable piece of information • Concrete evidence that the program has had an impact on a desired outcome • Evidence can be qualitative or quantitative • Usually begins with words such as number of, percent of, ratio of, proportion of, mean, or similar phrases Examples: 95 percent of teachers measure student reading progress twice a week using (name the measure), 90 percent of families adopt at least one in-home approach to read to their child

SSIP Evaluation Worksheet 2: Logic Model-Chart Format

SiMR: _____

Inputs	Strategies/Activities		Outputs	Outcomes
1. 2. 3. 4.	**A.**	(1) (2) (3)	• • •	**Short-term:** • • • •
	B.	(4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)	• • • • •	**Intermediate:** • • •
	C.	(10) (11)	• • •	•
	D.	(12) (13) (14)	• •	**Long-term:** • •
	E.	(15) (16) (17) (18) (19)	• • • •	

SSIP Evaluation Worksheet 3: Logic Model-Graphical Format (No Arrows)

SiMR

Inputs	Strategies/Activities	Outputs	Outcomes		
			Short-term	Intermediate	Long-term

-
-
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A.

B.

C.

D.

E.

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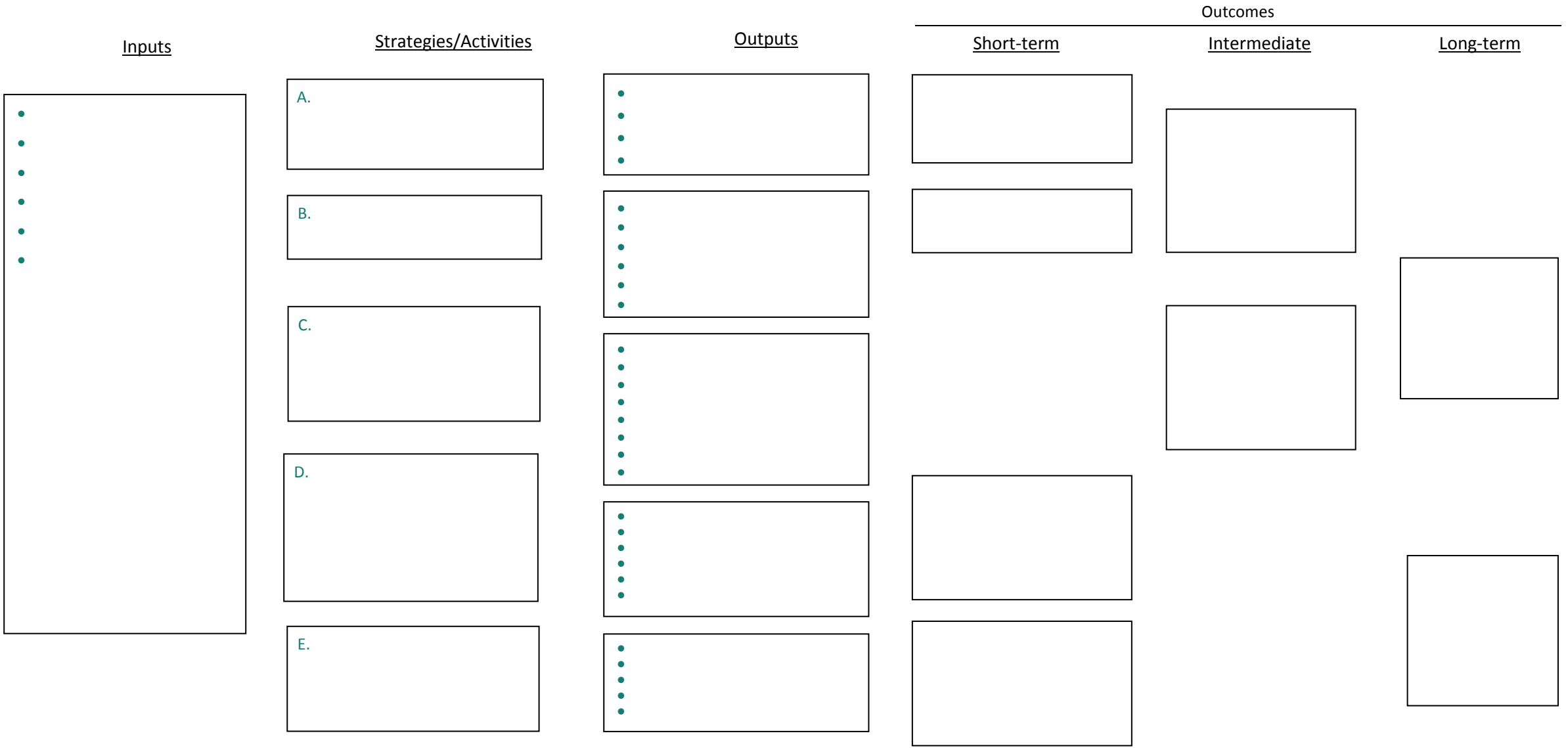
SSIP Evaluation Worksheet 4: Logic Model-Graphical Format (Illustrating the Use of Arrows)

SiMR

Inputs	Strategies/Activities	Outputs	Outcomes		
			Short-term	Intermediate	Long-term
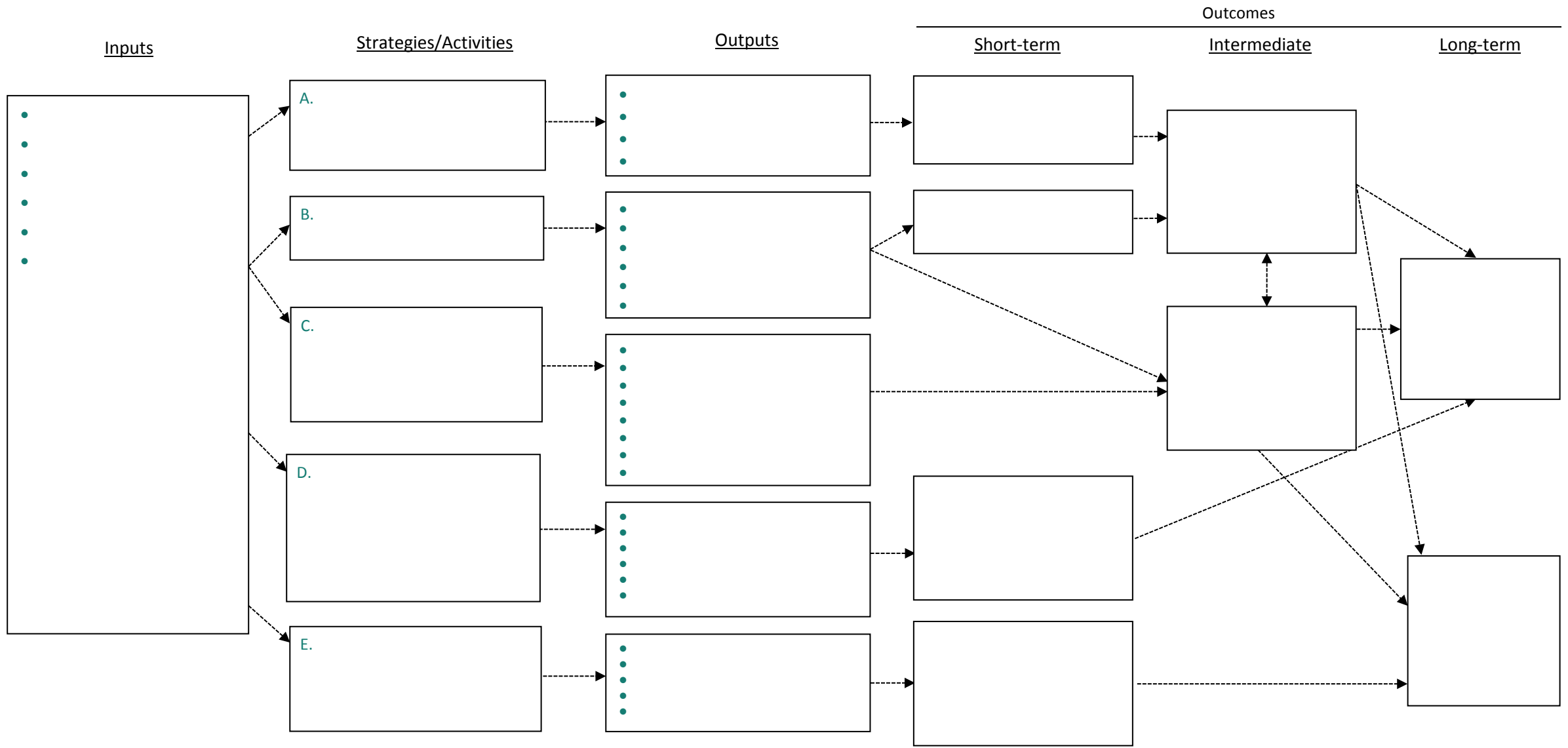
SSIP Evaluation Worksheet 5: Outcomes in Relation to Evaluation Questions

Strategies/Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Evaluation Questions
A. 　1. 　2.	• • •	**Short-term**	
		•	**A1.**
		•	**A2.**
		•	**A3.**
		Intermediate	
		•	**A4.**
		•	**A5.**
		•	**A6.**
		Long-term	
		•	**A7.**
		•	**A8.**
B. 　1. 　2.	• • •	**Short-term**	
		•	**B1.**
		•	**B2.**
		•	**B3.**
		Intermediate	
		•	**B4.**
		•	**B5.**
		•	**B6.**
		•	**B7.**

SSIP Evaluation Worksheet 5: Outcomes in Relation to Evaluation Questions (continued)

Strategies/Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Evaluation Questions
B.		**Long-term**	
		•	B8.
		•	B9.

C.
   1.
   2.
	•
	•
	•
		Short-term	

		•	C1.
		•	C2.
		•	C3.
		•	C4.
		Intermediate	
		•	C5.
		•	C6.
		•	C7.
		Long-term	
		•	C8.
		•	C9.
		•	C10.

SSIP Evaluation Worksheet 6: Outcomes by Evaluation Question and Performance Indicator

Outcome [Short-term, Intermediate, Long-term]	Evaluation Question	Performance Indicator

SIPP Evaluation Worksheet 7: Evaluation Questions in Relation to Performance Indicators, Comparisons Planned, and Evaluation Design

Evaluation Question	Performance Indicator	Comparisons Planned											Related Evaluation Design							
		Performance Relative to Other						Change Over Time												
		Objective standard	Comparison group—convenience	Comparison group—matched	Comparison group—randomized	Comparison only to self (individual or group)	Other: _____	Pre-Post	Longitudinal	Single case	None (post measure only)	Other: _____	Pre-post w/comparison group	Longitudinal w/comparison group	Pre-post w/o comparison group	Longitudinal w/o comparison group	Single case	Post only w/comparison group	Comparison to standard	Other: _____
A1.	•												A1.							
	•																			
	•																			
A2.	•																			
	•																			
B1.	•																			
	•																			
	•																			

SIPP Evaluation Worksheet 8: Evaluation Questions in Relation to Performance Indicators, Evaluation Design, Data Collection Method, and Tools

Evaluation Question	Performance Indicator	Evaluation Design	Data Collection Method	Data Collection Tools (Instrument/Protocol)
A1.	•			
	•			
	•			
A2.	•			
	•			
B1.	•			
	•			

SSIP Evaluation Worksheet 9: Evaluation Data Collection Schedule

Evaluation Question #	Instrument/Protocol	Status of Instrument/ Protocol: E=exists UD=under development TBD= to be developed	Frequency of Collection	First Data Collection	Additional Data Collections

SSIP Evaluation Worksheet 10: Evaluation Analysis Plans by Evaluation Question, Performance Indicator, and Instrument

Evaluation Question #	Performance Indicator	Data Collection Tool (Instrument/Protocol)	Planned Analysis
	•	•	•
	•	•	•
	•	•	•

SSIP Evaluation Worksheet 11: Plan for Data Use and Dissemination by Analysis Results

Planned Analysis	Process for Use for Program Improvement	Possible Implications for Ongoing Evaluation	Plans for Disseminating Results to Stakeholders
A1.	•	•	•
A2.	•	•	•
B1.	•	•	•