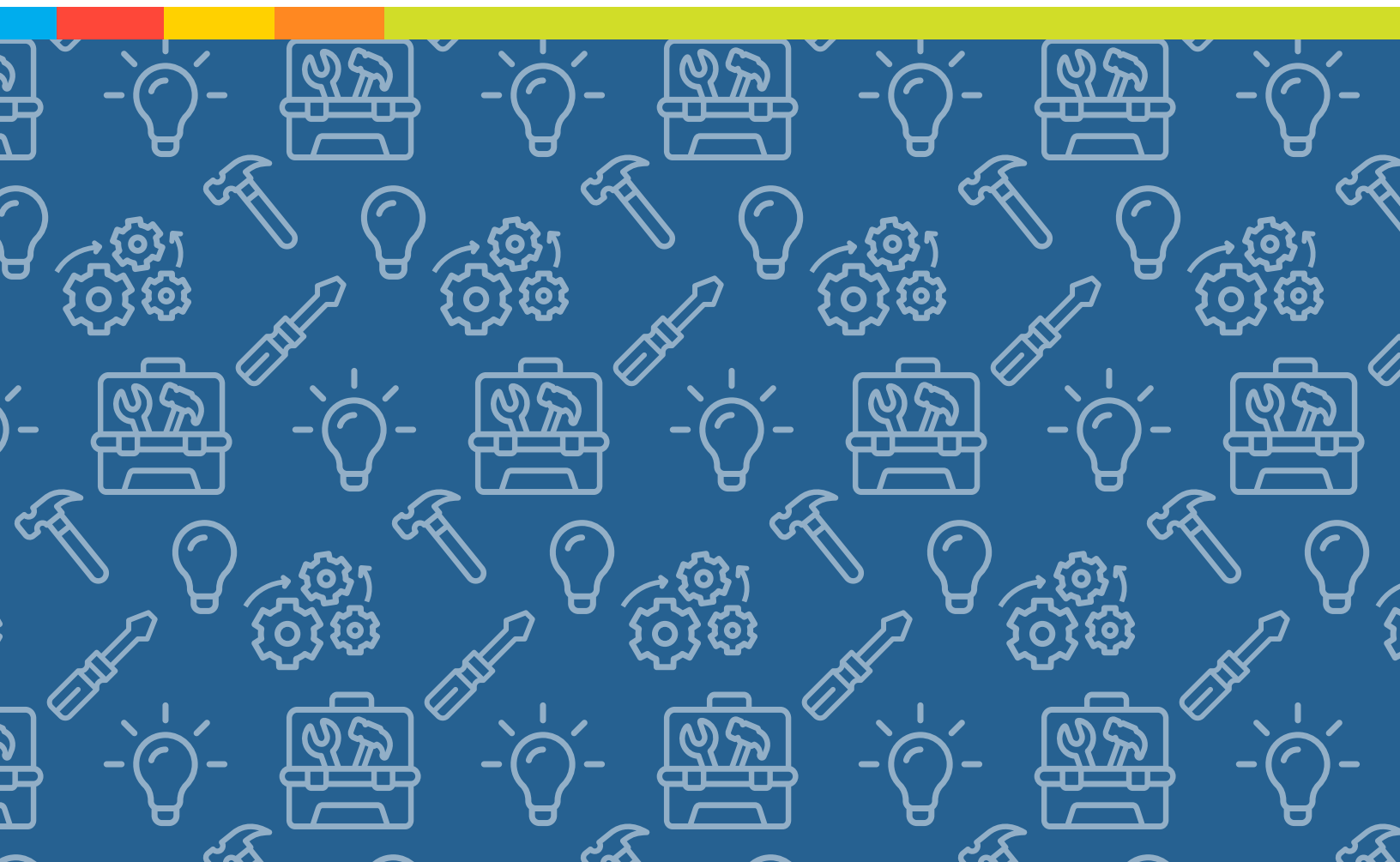


# Outcome Harvesting Methods Memo



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We would like to thank the team responsible for developing the content within this Methods Memo, including: Rebecca Herrington, Chelsie Kuhn, and Alison Harrell. If there are further questions, please feel free to reach out to us at [info@headlightconsultingservices.com](mailto:info@headlightconsultingservices.com).

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Rebecca Herrington is a monitoring, evaluation, and learning technical specialist with 15 years' experience focused on evidence-based strategy design, systems thinking, and collaborative learning. She is an expert and thought leader in complexity-aware collaborating, learning, adapting, monitoring, and evaluation (CLAME) and in [qualitative methods and rigor](#), including but not limited to Developmental Evaluation, Process Tracing, Outcome Harvesting, and Positive Deviance. Ms. Herrington's work focuses on international development and conflict, specifically complexity programming, with a keen ability to facilitate evidence to action and provide strategic communications. Ms. Herrington has field and academic experience throughout Central America, MENA, and East Africa, with over 5 years living and working abroad in rural, conflict-affected, and transitional communities. Her experience is further grounded in a Masters of Sustainable International Development and a Masters in Coexistence and Conflict Management, both from Brandeis University. Some highlights from her accomplishments from the past two years (2020 - 2021) include, but are not limited to, developing the theory of change and MEL Plan with continued learning advisory support to the USAID Digital Strategy, building an evidence base and CLAME system for GSMA's Mobile for Development programs, supporting integrated [Systems and Evidence Based Theory of Change](#) and Learning Agendas for USAID/Ethiopia across their emergency response, disaster risk management, and resilience portfolios, conducting [Learning Reviews](#) for GSMA, USAID/ Bosnia and Herzegovina, USAID/Ethiopia, and designing a meta-analysis to support evidentiary revisions of the USAID/Resilience and Food Security Institutional Architecture Framework, leading the positive deviance evaluative effort for USAID/Digital Finance Team's evidence-building around USAID's engagement with global alliances, and designing and providing senior technical direction to a 5-year Developmental Evaluation for USAID/Ethiopia's disaster risk management portfolio.

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Chelsie Kuhn is a dedicated professional with 6 years of experience in supporting efficient, effective, and evidence-based operations both with NGOs and in academia. She brings a strong background in managing large groups of diverse stakeholders and a data-driven mindset to project management. Prior to joining Headlight, Ms. Kuhn was responsible for assisting more than 20 offices at a large 4-year public university with assessing program outcomes, developing and coordinating strategic plans, meeting annual reporting deadlines, and working toward continuous improvement through collaborative learning efforts. Since joining Headlight, she has contributed to qualitative data analysis and report writing to develop a Learning Review for USAID/Bosnia and Herzegovina and for USAID/Ethiopia's Disaster Risk Management (DRM) portfolio, drafted MEL Frameworks and designed MEL tools for GSMA's Mobile for Development (M4D) programs, and distilled how-to oriented learnings for MEL practitioners of all levels. As a result of her work with GSMA's M4D teams, the client has been empowered to implement Emergent Outcome Harvesting to better understand Advocacy work, streamline annual reporting processes with a centralized Indicator Tracking Tool, and support Innovation Fund grantees to develop better MEL Frameworks and practices of their own. As a result of her work co-leading a multi-faceted qualitative coding and data analysis team effort to produce the first Learning Review of disaster risk management and resilience implementation in Ethiopia, various stakeholders have been able to identify and plan for adaptations to improve their work and best serve the most vulnerable Ethiopians. She is currently working on providing technical direction and additional support to a 5-year Developmental Evaluation for USAID/Ethiopia's DRM portfolio. Her experience is grounded with both a Master's and Bachelor's degree in Conflict Analysis and Resolution from George Mason University.

## Acronyms

<b>AEA</b>	American Evaluation Association
<b>CLA</b>	Collaborating, Learning, Adapting
<b>CLAME</b>	Collaborating, Learning, Adapting, Monitoring, and Evaluation
<b>DE</b>	Developmental Evaluation
<b>DEPA-MERL</b>	USAID's Developmental Evaluation Pilot Activity-Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learning Activity
<b>DFS</b>	USAID's Digital Financial Services team
<b>FCDO</b>	The UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Development Organization
<b>FGDs</b>	Focus Group Discussions
<b>GLAM</b>	Global Learning for Adaptive Management
<b>KIIs</b>	Key Informant Interviews
<b>LOE</b>	Level of Effort
<b>POC</b>	Point of Contact
<b>PPL</b>	USAID's Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning
<b>M4D</b>	GSMA's Mobile for Development teams
<b>MEL</b>	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
<b>Q&amp;A</b>	Question and Answer
<b>RACI</b>	Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, and Informed
<b>SDRM-SI</b>	USAID/Ethiopia's Strengthening Disaster Risk Management Systems and Institutions Project
<b>SMART</b>	Specific, Measurable, Attainable/Achievable, Realistic/Relevant, and Time-bound
<b>TOR</b>	Terms of Reference
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>VfM</b>	Value for Money

## Glossary

<b>Change Agent</b>	the person or entity whose actions caused the change identified.
<b>Complexity</b>	situations that have a low degree of certainty of an outcome occurring stemming from a low degree of agreement among stakeholders, significant interdependencies across stakeholders for the desired change to occur, levels of integration in a particular system, and/or a need for sequencing, layering, and differing interventions by location or other influencing factors.
<b>Contribution</b>	a verifiable explanation of how the change agent caused or substantially influenced a change to occur.
<b>Emergent Outcome</b>	the very beginning signs of an outcome taking place; the outcome is not fully formed, but change is starting to occur, as demonstrated by verifiable knowledge gain, attitude change, advocacy for new knowledge, and/or experimentation of a behavior.
<b>Method</b>	structured processes and/or frameworks that help to best answer evaluative questions or capture the information needed.
<b>Outcome</b>	a change in the behavior, relationships, activities, policies, or practices of an individual, group, community, organization, or institution. <sup>1</sup>
<b>Ripe Outcome</b>	an outcome that is ready to be substantiated, which is determined by seeing a sustained change in behavior, new or significantly modified relationships, activities, policies, or practices in the target population; <i>distinct from an identified emergent outcome</i> where the evaluators and actors may only see the start of a more significant change, such as attitude change, asking for additional support, or improved understanding of a topic.
<b>Sampling</b>	the process of identifying from whom the evaluators will collect data and how; it is important that the chosen sampling method is appropriate for the evaluation questions that have been identified, the type(s) of information the evaluators need, and any limitations they might face in data collection.
<b>Sampling Saturation</b>	the point when incoming data produces little to no new information ( <a href="#">Guest et al., 2006</a> ; <a href="#">Guest and MacQueen, 2008</a> ); There is a <a href="#">wide range of existing research</a> on this topic, and most sources agree that at least six interviews of a homogeneous group (as defined by the evaluative effort sampling structure) will cover 70% or more of the findings that will emerge from further data collection ( <a href="#">Guest et al., 2006</a> ). According to Guest et al., 12 interviews will increase that coverage to 92%.
<b>Substantiation</b>	the process by which an outcome and its description are verified and validated. This requires <i>at a minimum triangulation</i> , but more data points help to provide a better-detailed description of the outcome and how a change agent contributed.
<b>Systems</b>	a group of interrelated parts that come together to form a more complex, functioning whole that serves a specific purpose.
<b>Systems Thinking</b>	a way of looking holistically at the bigger picture of how systems fit into people's day-to-day lives, how the systems behave, and how to manage them.
<b>Triangulation</b>	when three or more sources confirm that something has occurred; triangulation allows for quality assurance around the rigor of data and findings.
<b>Validation</b>	the process of checking the accuracy of a statement or data point through comparison to other data sources and probing for sufficient alignment of details.
<b>Verification</b>	along with substantiation, this is the process where an evaluator works with beneficiaries or co-contributors to ground truth and understand if an outcome happened as described, and if not, what other nuance they may be able to add to enlighten the evaluator.

1 Wilson-Grau, R. and Britt, H., 2012. Outcome Harvesting. Ford Foundation. Available at <<https://outcomeharvesting.net/outcome-harvesting-brief/>>

## MODULE I:

# What is Outcome Harvesting?

## About us

Headlight Consulting Services (Headlight) is a women-owned, small US business that delivers data-driven decision-making through systematic design support; in-depth monitoring, evaluation, and learning technical services; and facilitated organizational change processes, including helping clients design and integrate evidence-based collaboration and learning efforts, focusing on the structures and systems that will enable sustainable solutions. Headlight currently manages eight projects across seven countries, including three projects in Ethiopia. Clients include the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Missions, USAID Washington, private sector actors, and more. In all of its efforts, Headlight takes a local-first approach, striving to sustainably leverage local talent while providing exemplary quality assurance from Headquarters to ensure cost-effective and high-quality services.

## Definition Check

**Method:** structured processes and/or frameworks that help to best answer evaluative questions or capture the information needed.

## Introduction

Headlight seeks to strengthen international development outcomes in sustainable and locally-owned ways, and one of our contributions towards this systems-level objective is the provision of tools, techniques, and capacity-building efforts for Collaborating, Learning, Adapting, Monitoring, and Evaluation (CLAME). Our hope is that with more access to easy-to-use tools, training, and mentorship in CLAME, practitioners can improve their data-driven decision-making practices. This Methods Memo is the first in a series of products intended to provide guidance for professionals of all levels to implement stronger CLAME practices. This particular memo's goal is to provide evaluators practical guidance for implementing the Outcome Harvesting evaluation method, as well as the Emergent iteration on the method. Its contents may also be relevant to organizations who are looking to establish and improve rapid feedback loops to better understand complex strategies or interventions and articulate any resulting outcomes. The subsections below are designed as use-focused modules, so some orienting information will be duplicated from earlier sections to enable easier access for practitioners avoiding the need to flip back and forth. We hope that this note will help inspire evaluators, project leaders, and donors alike to start or continue applying the Outcome Harvesting method where appropriate and to fuel further innovation, rigor, and adaptation in their work.

## What is Outcome Harvesting?

Outcome Harvesting is an evaluation method developed by Ricardo Wilson-Grau and colleagues to help identify, verify, substantiate, and make sense of outcomes that may be otherwise unclear or unidentified.<sup>2</sup> Since many of the social problems practitioners are working on require input from multiple stakeholders and actors, this method leverages actors' knowledge of each other and their work to uncover and validate what the work has led to, who has contributed, and what has been achieved. While Outcome Harvesting will not always fully detail the "how" of implementation, it will help uncover what changed and evidence of how particular actions contributed.

2 Barbara Klugman, Claudia Fontes, David Wilson-Sánchez, Fe Briones Garcia, Gabriela Sánchez, Goele Scheers, Heather Britt, Jennifer Vincent, Julie Lafreniere, Juliette Majot, Marcie Mersky, Martha Nuñez, Mary Jane Real, Natalia Ortiz, and Wolfgang Richert; Wilson-Grau, R. and Britt, H., 2012. Outcome Harvesting. Ford Foundation. Available at: <<https://outcomeharvesting.net/outcome-harvesting-brief/>>



As it was originally conceived, Outcome Harvesting was intended for use in different circumstances and was further refined over many years for monitoring and evaluation (including developmental, formative, or summative evaluation) of interventions ([BetterEvaluation, n.d.](#)). This method has typically been applied retrospectively as a way to discover *and* validate outcomes at the close of a program, allowing for implementers to evidence what they have contributed to for their and their donors' accountability and learning. Practitioners have certainly attempted periodic Outcome Harvesting as a formative effort at a project's mid-line, but the need for even more rapid learning and adaptation has emerged over the past few years as seen by USAID's focus on [CLA](#), and USAID and FCDO's joint effort on [the GLAM initiative](#). This paradigm shift to more developmental evaluative approaches has helped to fuel the rise of Emergent Outcome Harvesting. Headlight and other actors in the development and development-adjacent fields have been applying this method to track outcomes and build more rapid feedback loops in real-time as they emerge to enable adaptive management—more on this below in the [Emergent Outcome Harvesting section](#). In outlining both the original approach (referred to herein as Retrospective) and Emergent Outcome Harvesting, we hope to differentiate the implications for use and how to implement both approaches effectively.

Evaluators can leverage this method to look at immediate, intermediate, and long-term outcomes based on the behavior change spectrum.



Depending on when Retrospective or Emergent Outcome Harvesting are implemented, both approaches should be able to identify immediate outcomes and some intermediate outcomes. But, evaluative efforts may or may not identify or substantiate long-term outcomes until sufficient time has passed since implementation for larger systems-level outcomes to have come to fruition.

## WHY SHOULD AN EVALUATOR USE OUTCOME HARVESTING?

Understanding the outcomes of implementers' and donors' work in the development and adjacent fields is important for a few reasons:

- 1 *donors have limited resources, so implementers need to be able to use them wisely to make an impact,*
- 2 *the more implementers understand what leads to outcomes, the better they can plan for future work, and*
- 3 *if implementers are expecting to achieve certain outcomes but are failing to do so, they need to understand the cause and effect relationships of their work so that they can adapt accordingly to keep moving towards their goals.*

While many projects and programs establish theories of change at the outset to outline how their actions/interventions will achieve the desired results, they also need to establish that the theory of change is born out in reality. Especially with complex interventions, those implemented in complex environments, and/or innovative approaches, it is essential to understand if the outcomes stemming from the work achieve the desired goal and if there are unplanned effects. Interventions do not happen in a vacuum, so understanding both intended and unintended outcomes can help implementers better coordinate with complementary actors in the system in which they work, mitigate undesirable outcomes and prevent harm, and refine and replicate positive changes.

Overall, the Outcome Harvesting approach is most useful when outcomes are unknown or complex but can be identified and evidenced. In addition to understanding anticipated or unanticipated, and positive or negative outcomes, Outcome Harvesting can also help actors to understand how much contribution they can rightfully claim to changes happening at a systems or ecosystem level. See the Contribution Rating subsections below (in [Retrospective Outcome Harvesting](#) and in [Emergent Outcome Harvesting](#)) for more information on how this happens in the substantiation process.

## WHEN SHOULD AN EVALUATOR USE OUTCOME HARVESTING?

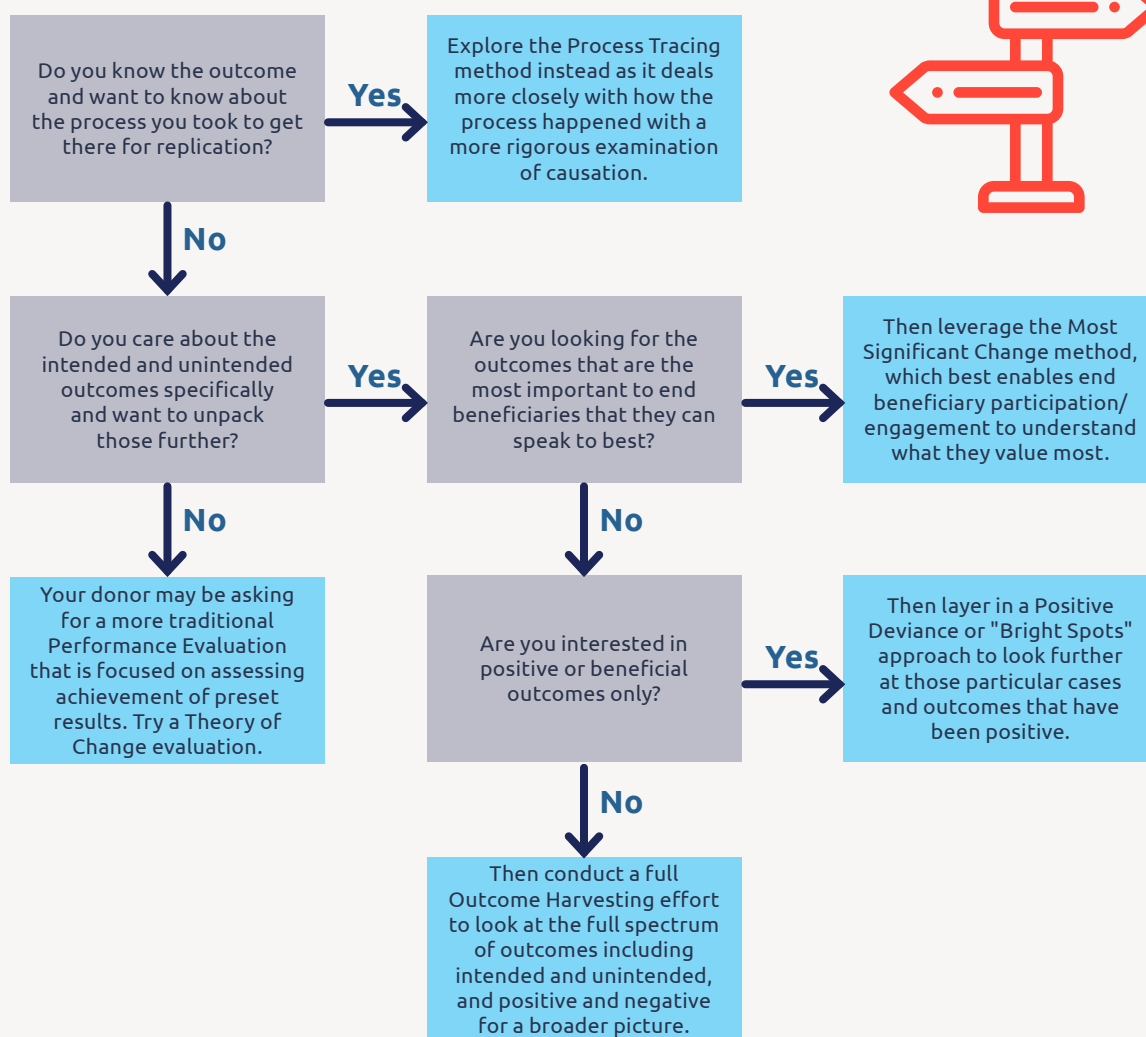
When an implementing organization is designing an evaluation, it is important to not just think immediately of the data collection approaches the evaluator might take (e.g., mixed methods including both quantitative and qualitative data) and sampling strategies (e.g., purposive, snowball, stratified random, cluster, etc.), but to first find the evaluation method that will best help structure the effort to appropriately answer the evaluation questions. Outcome Harvesting is not a one-size-fits-all evaluation method and should only be chosen if it will meet the desired aims of the evaluation.

First and foremost, Outcome Harvesting can be used as both a goal-oriented and goal-free evaluation method, but is a more learning-oriented approach than others and requires looking for both unintended effects, as well as those that may be intended. Outcome Harvesting can be more exploratory in nature and is a good initial evaluation method for understanding and working out a theory of change for new, innovative, or complex activities. Additionally, if the implementing organization is looking to understand what they have contributed to, then Outcome Harvesting may be the right evaluative method.

Alternatively, if the organization is looking to understand and test the causal pathway of how a known outcome was achieved, we would direct them to look into [Process Tracing](#) instead, as Outcome

Harvesting cannot substantiate causal inference to the necessary level of detail.<sup>3</sup> If they are looking to understand the activity as a whole instead of just the outcomes, then we would recommend exploring [Developmental Evaluation](#), [Realist Evaluation](#), or other more exploratory methods. If the implementing organization already understands the outcomes that have occurred as a result of their activity and are only looking to understand and claim contribution, then we would recommend exploring [Contribution Analysis](#).<sup>4</sup> Headlight has provided a quick Evaluation Methods Decision Tree below to help provide a glimpse into the decision-making factors in determining the right-fit evaluation method for the implementer's questions. This Decision Tree is not exhaustive and we would encourage anyone making this decision to read up on evaluation methods on [BetterEvaluation.org](#), through various texts available on individual methods, or through our forthcoming practical application Methods Memos.

## Methods Decision Tree



3 Process Tracing is a qualitative analysis method that works to establish whether and how a potential cause or causes influenced a specified change or set of changes ([Intrac, 2017](#)).

4 Contribution Analysis offers a step-by-step approach designed to help implementers arrive at conclusions about the contribution their program has made (or is currently making) to particular outcomes ([BetterEvaluation, n.d.](#)).

Sometimes breaking down an evaluation question can be difficult. It may not be worded clearly, the motivations behind the question may be complex, or there may be too many seemingly appropriate evaluation methods to choose from. However, sometimes an example or case study can help implementing organizations make the connections differently and better understand the intended use and potential of a particular approach. We have provided three scenarios below for which Outcome Harvesting was the right fit, detailing both the context as well as the rationale for choosing Outcome Harvesting. Additional examples of Outcome Harvesting applications in the real world can be found on [OutcomeHarvesting.net](http://OutcomeHarvesting.net).

<b>Scenarios to Use Outcome Harvesting</b>			
	<b>Scenario 1: Pilot Program Performance Evaluation</b>	<b>Scenario 2: Midline Evaluation for Decision-Making</b>	<b>Scenario 3: Ongoing Complex Implementation Decisions</b>
<b>Context</b>	A donor is looking for a performance evaluation on a pilot program. It is unknown if the program met the high-level outcomes it was aiming towards, and the donor is interested in secondary and unintended outcomes to learn if this intervention strategy has other benefits.	Donors and implementers have been funding and working on a project for two and a half years out of a full five-year period of performance. At the midline, both parties are increasingly curious if their inputs and outputs are starting to contribute to some of the desired medium-to-long-term policy change outcomes and to what degree they are contributing to the changes.	Donors have decided to engage implementers in an adaptive award mechanism to best respond to rapid context shifts. In addition to being open to creative approaches for programming and strategic support, they want to be able to understand on an ongoing basis whether their investment in this type of mechanism is worthwhile and what outcomes are possible despite the evolving context.
<b>Example Evaluation Questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What were the results of the pilot program?</li> <li>• Did the pilot achieve its desired outcomes?</li> <li>• What were the unintended outcomes, if any, of the pilot on the beneficiaries and their community?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the program on the right track in terms of contributing to early outcomes that are likely to positively affect policy change?</li> <li>• What progress has been achieved towards policy change to date?</li> <li>• Are the partners' actions directly contributing to any policy change achieved?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What outcomes are emerging from the activity?</li> <li>• For the outcomes achieved, what enabling factors contributed? What challenges had to be overcome?</li> <li>• Are there any negative, unintended effects that might do harm given the current context?</li> </ul>

## Scenarios to Use Outcome Harvesting

	Scenario 1: ▶ Pilot Program Performance Evaluation	Scenario 2: ▶ Midline Evaluation for Decision-Making	Scenario 3: ▶ Ongoing Complex Implementation Decisions
Rationale	<p>Outcome Harvesting is the right method to use in this instance because of the unknown nature of outcomes achieved and the desire to uncover both intended and unintended outcomes. What the evaluator may find could help resolve questions that the donor has and be used to determine if the pilot program should continue and how where it may need to be refined.</p>	<p>Outcome Harvesting is an appropriate method to use in this instance because the results that evaluators may glean can help implementers and the donor validate what medium-term results have been achieved towards a long-term goal and understand if other actors in the system perceive the contribution of the project's interventions.</p>	<p><a href="#"><u>Emergent Outcome Harvesting</u></a> is well-suited to use in this instance because it can track outcomes despite shifts in implementation strategies, and ongoing documentation/ outcome tracking can provide more nuanced insight into influencing factors. Additionally, establishing this approach at the beginning of award implementation will allow partners to regularly track and monitor which outcomes, if any, they are contributing.</p>

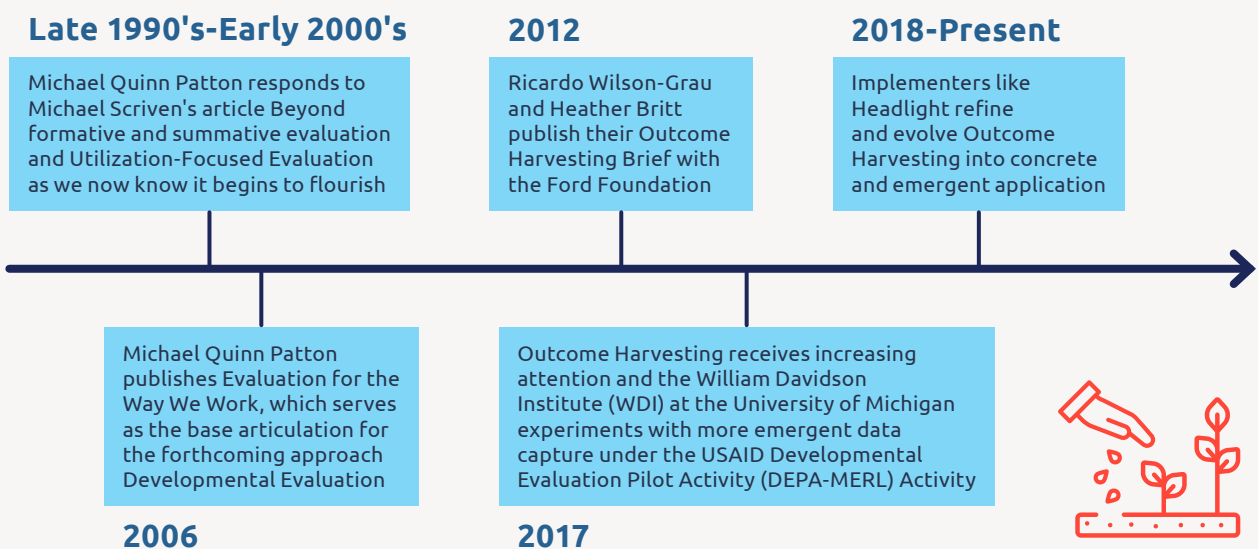
## MODULE II:

# What Version of Outcome Harvesting Should an Evaluator Use?

Retrospective and Emergent Outcome Harvesting enable different possibilities for learning and use of evaluative findings. It is important to understand the nuances, implications, and limitations of each approach when determining what might be the best fit for the implementing organization's needs. In brief, Emergent Outcome Harvesting enables more feedback loops for quicker learning but also requires the capacity and time resources for organizations to manage ongoing data collection and implement adaptations stemming from the learning. Retrospective Outcome Harvesting is a good choice for those who need an evaluation on a complex activity or are considering a follow-on or extension of the project but want to have a better idea of what they have contributed to during the original implementation for future strategic planning. This module provides an overview of the evolution of the newer variations of Outcome Harvesting, a comparison among the different approaches, and guidance for choosing which approach is right for an implementer's particular learning and evaluation needs.

## THE EMERGENCE OF ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT AND EVOLUTION OF OUTCOME HARVESTING

### Timeline: Origins to Uses



As the International Development field continues to shift and incorporate more elements of adaptive management and principles of Developmental Evaluation like utilization-focus and systems thinking, new methods and iterations on existing methods like Emergent Outcome Harvesting have been needed to best deal with adaptation and complexity. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Michael Quinn Patton and others began to think about evaluation as something beyond formative and summative exercises in program implementation. As Patton describes, “Evaluation serves other purposes [beyond formative and summative] including, but not limited to, the following: generating general knowledge about and principles of program effectiveness, developing programs and organizations, focusing management efforts, creating learning organizations; empowering participants, directly supporting and enhancing program interventions (by fully integrating evaluation into the intervention), and stimulating critical reflection on the path to more enlightened practice” (Patton, 1996). Along this same line of thinking, Developmental Evaluation became increasingly popular as a way to “nurture developmental, emergent, innovative, and transformative processes...[to help people learn to] think and act evaluatively [so they] can have an ongoing impact... [towards] continuous improvement, adaptation, and intentional change” (Patton, 2006).

Furthermore, in 2012, USAID’s Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning (PPL) introduced the concept of Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) at USAID to operationalize adaptive management throughout a program’s lifecycle as program implementation grew increasingly and necessarily complex and scaled. Additionally, the UK’s Foreign and Commonwealth Development Organization (FCDO, formerly known as the Department for International Development (DFID)) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) established the Global Learning for Adaptive Management (GLAM) initiative in 2018 as a globally-networked learning alliance to actively identify, operationalize, and promote rigorous evidence-based approaches to adaptive management. According to a 2018 GLAM report, “Across both DFID and USAID, and for a range of large development [organizations], there [was] a common reflection that [adaptive management] approaches ‘make sense’ when working in complex environments, but that there [were] gaps in terms of how to put them into practice,” hence the four-year initiative to focus in on what works (Wild & Ramalingam, 2018). The value in adaptive management helps to ensure that investments are worthwhile as they create more feedback loops and opportunities for implementers to pivot their approaches. But in order to do this, a Program Lead needs consistent access to data for decision-making along the way, which is where Emergent Outcome Harvesting comes into play. It is under these larger context shifts that Outcome Harvesting made its way into the evaluation world.

Starting in 2002 until his passing in December 2018, Ricardo Wilson-Grau worked with multiple collaborators and co-evaluators seeking an alternative to conventional monitoring and evaluation practices to meet the needs of managers, donors, and evaluators of innovative interventions attempting to solve intractable problems or new, unexpected challenges in development and social change ([Outcome Harvesting Forum, n.d.](#); Wilson-Grau, 2019, p. 189-199). In 2012, he and Heather Britt worked with the Ford Foundation to publish the first brief to introduce the method and inspire evaluators, project managers, and others to use this approach in their work as a way to help capture intended and unintended contributions towards social impact outcomes when working in complexity ([Ricardo Wilson-Grau & Heather Britt, 2012](#)). After that, the method took off as actors like the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) evaluation office, the World Bank Institute, and USAID

all highlighted it as a promising and innovative practice and implemented it across interventions to meet the needs for complexity-oriented programming ([Outcome Harvesting Forum, n.d.](#)). In 2017, the William Davidson Institute at the University of Michigan led experimentation with capturing and substantiating emergent outcomes under USAID’s Developmental Evaluation Pilot Activity-Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learning (DEPA-MERL), an effort comparing three Developmental Evaluation (DE) pilots across contexts ([Baylor, R., Fatehi Y. K., & Esper, H., 2020](#)). Presently, many evaluators, including Headlight, continue to use both the retrospective method and adapt it to meet more emergent monitoring, evaluation, and learning needs.

## WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES AMONG OUTCOME HARVESTING APPROACHES?

Based on distinguishing uses, there are three main versions of Outcome Harvesting being applied in the field today. While we have mentioned Retrospective and Emergent Outcome Harvesting, there is also a middle option, which consists of applying Retrospective Outcome Harvesting a few times over an extended period to provide snapshots of outcomes achieved over the course of implementation of an activity [Formative/Midline Outcome Harvesting]. The table below details the differences among the three approaches and their uses.

	Summative/ Retrospective	Formative/Midline	Developmental/ Emergent
<b>Purpose</b>	Identifies the results of an intervention	Provides insight on progress	Enables adaptation and refinement of an intervention
<b>Implementation Timing</b>	After interventions have been completed	At key moments during an intervention	In real-time while the intervention is being implemented
<b>Substantiation Timing</b>	All at once after implementation	Whenever evaluative efforts are conducted during implementation	On a continuous basis
<b>Use for Design</b>	Can be used only in future intervention design	Can be used in midpoint-forward adaptation and future intervention adjustments	Can be used in present-forward adaptation and iterative design
<b>Limitations</b>	Subject to <a href="#">recall bias</a>	Subject to social desirability bias	Subject to <a href="#">confirmation bias</a>
<b>Skillset Required</b>	Requires an evaluator with a Performance Evaluation skillset	Benefits from an evaluator with a Developmental Evaluation/Adaptive Management skillset to be useful for adaptation otherwise functions as a Performance Evaluation	Requires an evaluator with a Developmental Evaluation/Adaptive Management skillset to manage learning systems and rapid feedback implementation



## When Should an Evaluator Choose Which Version Of Outcome Harvesting?

There are a few different circumstantial indications that will help determine which Outcome Harvesting approach is best to meet an implementing organization's needs and is aligned with available resources and the capacity for all involved stakeholders. We recommend starting with a conversation to cover the following questions to find the right approach:

- What are the objectives of the evaluative effort? Are the objectives to support adaptive learning?
- When is the implementer starting the evaluation? Is there enough time left in implementation for iterative adaptations?
- Does the implementer have enough time and resources to incorporate additional data collection on an ongoing basis?
- Is there stakeholder buy-in to adapt interventions in the midst of implementation?
- Does the implementer have sufficient access to people with high [evaluative capacity](#) on a regular basis?

Once the interests, adaptive buy-in, and limitations are clear, we would advise the following:

- If a client/implementer needs to understand what the outcomes were of a particular intervention, has a limited amount of funds, and is looking to learn for future implementation but not change any current projects OR is near the end of project implementation, then **we would recommend Retrospective Outcome Harvesting** because it will help to balance expanding and substantiating outcomes while also not exceeding the level of resources and capacity that a client has to meet their evaluative needs.
- If a client/implementer needs to incorporate real-time adaptive management into their work, they are sufficiently resourced to fund an ongoing effort, most if not all stakeholders have the capacity and are willing to get involved for learning, and there is time left in implementation to adapt, then **we would recommend Emergent Outcome Harvesting** because it adds more feedback loops that implementers can adjust a program or activity in real-time. If the client/implementer is pursuing Emergent Outcome Harvesting, they should be sure to **talk to their donor at the start of the evaluative effort** to ensure that it meets any evaluation requirements as some donors are less familiar with newer methods.

Though Headlight hopes to help encourage adaptive management behaviors in the long run, not all organizations have the capacity or resources to adapt more frequently through data-driven decision-making yet. Retrospective Outcome Harvesting is still a good use of resources for any organization looking to better understand the outcomes to which their intervention(s) contributed.

## MODULE III:

# Implementing an Original Outcome Harvesting Evaluation (Retrospective)

## OVERVIEW

As a method, Retrospective or Summative Outcome Harvesting is applied at the end of activity or program implementation to understand overall outcomes, both intended and unintended. Depending on the number of outcomes and the extent to which contribution can be pursued, the effort can take anywhere between 3-9 months. While some clients may be hesitant to contact stakeholders too long after a project has been completed, there is immense value in reaching back out to enhance the understanding of the sustainability and true impact of outcomes and to share those findings with stakeholders who may be carrying forward the efforts once the project has ended.

## CONSIDERATIONS BEFORE STARTING

Though each Outcome Harvesting evaluation will be different, there are a few components that organizations or evaluators implementing this method will want to consider when building out a budget:

- Planning early to ensure there is, at a bare minimum, a three month timeframe for the evaluation to take place after contracting has completed (if hiring an external evaluator);
- Allocating [a sufficient level of effort \(LOE\)](#) to ensure that outcomes selected can be fully substantiated within the available time. For substantiation to be sufficiently rigorous, it often requires additional data collection than is traditionally budgeted due to poor qualitative rigor standards in the field; and,
- Setting and maintaining a reasonable Scope so that the number of outcomes being substantiated does not balloon beyond what is feasible.

## 1 PROCURE AN EXTERNAL EVALUATOR

Once a decision has been made that Retrospective Outcome Harvesting is the right fit for the stakeholders' learning needs (See [Choosing the Right Version](#) above), the client will need to procure an external evaluator. Retrospective Outcome Harvesting requires an evaluator with a Performance Evaluation [skillset](#), which includes the ability to understand contribution, distinguish outputs from outcomes and appropriately link them to the activity's theory of change, and manage traditional qualitative data collection and analysis processes. Procurement should start early to enable enough

## Definition Check

**Outputs:** products, capital goods, and services resulting in changes relevant to outcomes ([Development Results, 2013](#)). These are within a client's Sphere of Control and are often the predecessor to Outcomes like an evaluation or report generating data or evidence that supports or contradicts a particular approach or intervention.

**Outcomes:** a change in the behavior, relationships, activities, policies, or practices of an individual, group, community, organization, or institution. Outcomes are a step beyond Outputs moving towards the desired results or impact of an intervention or service. An organization can directly or indirectly influence outcomes but not control them entirely.

time for the evaluator or firm to conduct the evaluation after being selected (3 - 9 months depending on the complexity and scope of the activity), as well as look for evaluators who have used Outcome Harvesting before, can articulate specifics around sampling saturation and analysis methods, have an ability to distinguish outcomes from contribution, and have sufficient context and/or sectoral knowledge.

## 2 WRITE THE EVALUATION DESIGN

Once the evaluator has been procured, the client and evaluation team need to identify the primary intended users and uses of the evaluative effort. The evaluation team can then facilitate conversations with the client and the evaluation users to agree on the scope of outcomes that are of interest (full exploration, intended and some unintended related to a snowball sample, more a focus on unintended, a focus on those with the highest likelihood of strong contribution, etc.). The evaluator/evaluation team should then write useful, actionable evaluation questions to guide the effort. For example, a useful question may be: *What has been the collective effect of grantees' engagement in policy-making on the national government's approach to inclusion?* Then, evaluation users and the evaluator(s) agree on what information is to be collected and from whom in order to answer the questions. At a minimum, this involves obtaining

information about the changes in social actors, their behaviors, and how the intervention influenced them. Finally, the evaluator should include any evaluation limitations to include what questions will not be answered, lack of generalizability with this method, time of evaluation implementation from original implementation, and its impact on the ability to interview those involved to clarify the outcomes (recall bias), etc., and an analysis plan for how the data will be analyzed (e.g., thematic analysis, comparative analysis, time series analysis, etc.). We have included instructions on [Outcome Substantiation](#) in this Methods Memo, but any additional clarifications on approaches should be clarified in the original evaluation design.

## 3 DECIDE WHO WILL HELP IDENTIFY OUTCOMES – SAMPLING PART A

The evaluator will need to decide who needs to be involved for representation across implementers and recipients to identify outcomes to substantiate. This selection is crucial as some stakeholders will have different perspectives or vantage points into what a program was working to achieve, intended or otherwise, and what is valued as an outcome by those for whom the activity was intended to support. Sampling saturation can be beneficial for a more extensive Outcome Harvesting effort at this stage for a more cohesive and representative capture of both intended and unintended outcomes; however, it is not necessary.<sup>5</sup> The evaluator should work with the client to identify stakeholder groups that

<sup>5</sup> Sampling saturation refers to the point when incoming data produces little to no new information ([Guest et al., 2006](#); Guest and MacQueen, 2008). There is a wide range of existing research on this topic and most sources agree that at least 6 interviews of a homogeneous group (as defined by the evaluative effort sampling structure) will cover 70% or more of the findings that will emerge from further data collection ([Guest et al., 2006](#)). For more on this, see [Headlight's Designing Rigorous Qualitative Practice \(part 1\) Blog Post](#) from July 2020.

should be consulted, and then simple random, stratified random, systematic, or cluster sampling may be applied to select primary interviewees.<sup>6</sup>

#### 4 REVIEW ANY DOCUMENTATION AND DRAFT INITIAL OUTCOMES

The evaluator will then collect any relevant documentation from the implementing organization to strengthen the understanding of the implementation of the intervention and to start to identify outcomes. Using the [Outcome Description Template](#), the evaluator will capture the identified potential outcomes providing as much information as possible to be confirmed by the implementing organization and evaluation users during validation, verification, and substantiation. In the process of drafting these potential outcomes, evaluators should remember and work towards SMART outcome descriptions—Specific, Measurable, Attainable/Achievable, Realistic/Relevant, and Time-bound—that way, those involved in the secondary interviews will have as much to respond to as possible for clarification and refinement. Evaluators need to ensure that they are **writing descriptions for things truly at the outcome level, not at the output level**, to get to the greater “So What” of implementation. Remember, document analysis is only the first step in the process, so evaluators should not be disheartened if the documents provided by the client do not contain all of the information they need to accurately understand the outcomes, their significance, and information about contribution.

#### 5 IMPLEMENT OUTCOME HARVESTING PRIMARY INTERVIEWS

In addition to reviewing documents, the evaluator should also speak with activity stakeholders to identify outcomes that are most important to those engaging with and receiving benefits from the activity. An [interview protocol](#) should still be developed to facilitate conversations with the primary interviewees even though these initial conversations are exploratory in nature. The protocol should focus on:

##### Top Tips



For outcome identification, remember to look for sustained medium to long-term changes in behavior, the ecosystem, or from key stakeholders. Outcomes will not include the number of people trained or even trainees uptake of a solution, but, for example, how uptake by trainees influenced policy change, achieving commercial viability of a social good digital solution, or another desirable goal.

- The background history of the intervention (what was the intervention, when was it implemented, how, under what conditions);
- Identification of outcomes from the intervention (who did what, when, and **what happened as a result**);
- Identification of any barriers and enablers that affected the realization of the various outcomes (discuss outcome-by-outcome);
- Identification of how the outcomes were solidified and how they are being sustained; and,
- Identification of additional supporting documentation and others who should be interviewed.

Once the primary interview protocol is designed, contextualized, and ready for use, interviews with the primary interviewees can be scheduled.

<sup>6</sup> For more on sampling, see [the R&E for Evidence post “Emojis convey language, why not a sampling lesson too?” here](#).

## 6 AGGREGATE OUTCOMES AND CONDUCT OUTCOME PRIORITIZATION

The evaluator needs to take the outcomes identified from the document review, as well as information provided during the primary interviews, and combine and reframe the content into outcome descriptions for each unique outcome identified. Once outcomes are condensed, the evaluator should conduct a first pass review to remove any that do not qualify as true “outcomes.” The passing outcome descriptions can then be shared with evaluation users who should prioritize which of the outcomes are the most important to substantiate to make the best use of the evaluator’s time. The evaluator can share preliminary assessments regarding the strength and contribution of outcomes to assist in the prioritization process. It is also helpful for the evaluator to set limitations (e.g., give a number of total outcomes that can be substantiated) in order to ensure the scope of what is prioritized aligns with the evaluation timeline and budget.

## 7 DECIDE ON WHO CAN SUBSTANTIATE IDENTIFIED OUTCOMES – SAMPLING PART B

Next, the evaluator decides on sampling methods for substantiating outcomes. Substantiation should employ a combination of purposive and snowball sampling methods in order to ensure outcome details are verified through saturation and triangulation. If there are not enough known actors associated with a particular outcome, snowball sampling can help expand the sample to meet the saturation threshold.

- The initial purposive sample should be selected based on who was most closely involved in the identified outcome and associated intervention. This is likely to be the implementer point of contact (POC) for the intervention, as well as those most actively engaged from the primary stakeholder(s).
  - Key primary interviewees may include people who have changed positions since the project was initiated. It will be important to try and access these contacts through other stakeholders and networks.
- Additional interviewees can be identified from these initial points of contact (snowball sampling) connected to each outcome. It is important to identify a variety of individuals. Interviewees should include individuals who *did not* implement the intervention itself and individuals from different perspectives (i.e., three of the six people interviewed should not be implementing organization team members) to avoid potential biases and ensure the ability to validate findings.
- Secondary interviewees (identified through either the purposive or snowball sample) may also identify tertiary interviewees who are able to provide additional substantiation and nuance concerning prioritized outcomes.

## 8 IMPLEMENT OUTCOME SUBSTANTIATION

Any outcomes that have been articulated and captured in the Outcome Harvesting process need to be substantiated. Substantiation serves to verify through evidence gathering whether outcomes have occurred, what their significance is, and what the organization's contribution is to these outcomes. Evidence is gathered directly from individuals impacted by the work to extend beyond the implementer's lens. Findings from the substantiation process will help build the evidence base around work being implemented and will help refine any related assumptions and theories of change.

Once outcomes have been prioritized, the evaluator will refine any contextualized interview protocols (see [Annex C](#) for an example) for interviews with independent sources. We have included a sample interview protocol below designed for a more rigorous substantiation process, but it is important to note that each evaluation will need the interview protocol to be aligned within that evaluation's context. Next, conduct secondary, and where applicable, tertiary interviews with stakeholders with direct knowledge of the outcomes in question for substantiation. Remember, the goal of these interviews is different than the Primary Interviews; here, the evaluator is looking for verification that outcomes happened the way that the intended users said it did (accuracy), any additional details that they can provide about the outcome itself, and for additional external information about whether the intended users were a major actor in bringing about the change (contribution). Not all outcomes that have been drafted will be substantiated, and while the intended users may not be pleased that outcomes have not panned out, this evidence can still be used to help stakeholders learn and adapt in the future.

## 9 ANALYZE THE FINDINGS

Once all the data is collected, the evaluator can then conduct an analysis of the outcomes, taking the additional information from the secondary and tertiary interviewees and any additional documentation to further flush out the outcome descriptions. Through this process, the evaluator will highlight pieces of the description and associated details that are only mentioned by one person or in one document and therefore cannot be substantiated as the threshold for triangulation has not been reached. While the standards for substantiation can be altered depending on use and needs, it is important that at a minimum information is triangulated (see more below in the [Troubleshooting Outcomes Substantiation](#) section for a few more substantiation options). For outcomes that can be substantiated, the evaluator will need to connect and articulate what data and evidence support the description, draw any resulting conclusions (e.g., Evidence Ratings, Contribution Ratings, identification of enabling/inhibiting factors, etc.) and potentially make recommendations where they see fit.

### Evidence Rating

Based on the data sources, use the Evidence Weight Scale below to rate each component of the outcome description and provide an overall weighting of how strong the evidence supports that the outcome occurred. Only outcomes that achieve at least a medium rating should be reported because those meet the minimum of triangulation.

## Outcome Evidence Weight Scale

<b>Preliminary</b>	Medium confidence level (trustworthy data; should be triangulated) for emergent outcomes identified at the time of the study, but insufficient evidence concerning solidification of long-term changes. The differentiation between a preliminary and medium rating is that the finding has not achieved full outcome status, but may be a solidified early indication that there is an emergent outcome at the time the study is conducted.
<b>Unclear</b>	Unable to triangulate, contradictory evidence, or indirect sources for an outcome.
<b>Weak</b>	Unable to triangulate outcome, but information is from a direct, trustworthy source or backed up by documentation.
<b>Medium</b>	The outcome is triangulated and information is from direct sources.
<b>Strong</b>	The outcome is triangulated, information is from direct sources, AND there is minimal variance in the outcome details from the originator and substantiators for how something happened.

### Contribution Rating

In addition to evidence weighting, the evaluator should also assign a Contribution Rating to indicate the degree to which the implementer was involved in affecting the outcomes or changes. Use the Contribution Rating Scale below to rate each outcome.

## Contribution Rating Scale

<b>Weak</b>	The change agent was already thinking about action/behavior/policy change before working with the implementer and they do not identify the implementer as the reason they took any action.
<b>Medium</b>	The change agent was already thinking about action/behavior/policy change before a conversation with the implementer, but they identify the implementer as the reason they took a particular action that enabled broader behavior or policy change.
<b>Strong</b>	The change agent started thinking about action/behavior/policy change as a result of a conversation with or participation in an intervention from the implementer, and they identify the implementer as the reason they took a particular action that enabled behavior or policy change.

Once this has been done, the evaluator will then need to take what they have produced and go back to answer the original evaluation questions by connecting the knowledge of what has been achieved, why, and how with anticipated performance and/or learning objectives.

## 10 SHARE FINAL DELIVERABLES AND SUPPORT UPTAKE

All completed analysis should be compiled for final, tailored deliverables that are shared with the client, implementer, those involved in outcome identification and substantiation, and any other identified users. While the evaluator's scope may be technically complete once the report or supporting documents are delivered, the more they can position the materials for uptake and incorporation into decision-making, the better. This may include suggesting or facilitating an Evaluation Follow-Up workshop or Strategic Learning Debrief to help stakeholders reflect on the results, conclusions, and lessons learned, and plan for adaptive actions to ensure that information is put to good use. Through this, the evaluator can motivate next steps, including who should take action, how, and why. For more tips on supporting the use of findings, see Chapter 6: Post-Harvest Support for Use in Ricardo Wilson-Grau's *Outcome Harvesting: Principles, Steps, and Evaluation Applications* and Module 9: Engaging Stakeholders with Developmental Evaluation Results in USAID's [Implementing Developmental Evaluation: A Practical Guide For Evaluators And Administrators](#).



## MODULE IV:

# Emergent Outcome Harvesting

## OVERVIEW

As a method, Emergent Outcome Harvesting is applied on an ongoing basis during activity or program implementation to establish regular feedback loops as outcomes (both intended and unintended) are developing instead of at the end of implementation when things cannot be changed. While some clients may be hesitant to contact stakeholders as things are emerging, there is immense value in reaching out to further strengthen a relationship, building a mutual understanding of intervention benefits, and creating more inclusive learning spaces— all benefits that an Emergent Outcome Harvesting effort brings along. This approach helps prevent getting to the end of a project only to find out that the desired outcomes were never achieved, experienced challenges that could have been mitigated, or caused harm.

## CONSIDERATIONS BEFORE STARTING

Though each Outcome Harvesting evaluation will be different, there are a few components that organizations or evaluators implementing this method will want to consider when designing an Emergent Outcome Harvesting evaluation:

- Identifying an evaluator/evaluation team or organizational Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) person and an organizational programming point of contact who have the availability for continued, long-term engagement to support the Emergent Outcome Harvesting effort
- Deciding on the scope of the effort, in particular the relative range of outcomes the implementing organization wants substantiated, so that they can budget for sufficient staffing of the evaluation team (this includes sufficient budget for the level of experience and expertise the evaluator should have - see [Module VI](#) for a sample evaluator terms of reference)
- Allocating a sufficient level of effort (LOE) to ensure that ongoing identification, “ripeness” determination, and substantiation can be done to a consistent quality standard
- Maintaining scope so that the number and type of outcomes being substantiated does not balloon beyond what is feasible and needed to answer prioritized learning/evaluation questions
- Determining key decision points to help inform when learning synthesis and outcome substantiation will be most beneficial to ensure use-focused workplanning of the effort

## 1 CLARIFY THE EVALUATION SCOPE

Once a decision has been made that Emergent Outcome Harvesting is the right fit for the stakeholders' learning needs (See [Choosing the Right Version](#) above), the Project Manager or those responsible for monitoring and evaluation on a project should help define the parameters of what they are looking to better understand. This should include:

**Background and Purpose:** The scope should include information about the context that the evaluation (and the resulting project) is operating in and what the evaluation hopes to accomplish. For example, an evaluation may be operating in coordination with the public or private sector and seek to respond to knowledge gaps like *How does a client's work influence climate policy? Or How does a Collective Impact approach influence the sustainability of various child protection interventions under this activity?*

**Objectives and Guiding Questions:** The scope should outline no more than three learning or evaluation questions that serve as the overarching focus for what the evaluation is seeking to understand. These questions will serve as a cross-check to guide the way through the rest of the evaluation process and ensure use-focused final deliverables. We have found that including any more than three core evaluation questions becomes very difficult to manage under one evaluation and often creates findings that are less nuanced and useful for learning.

**Extent of the Effort:** The scope should also outline the types of outcomes the activity is seeking to understand (e.g., predominantly intended, predominantly unintended, outcomes for a particular beneficiary group, etc.), as well as an approximate range of outcomes that are expected to be substantiated (e.g., 5-7, 10-12, or any will a higher likelihood for substantiating strong contribution, etc.). Setting these expectations clearly at the beginning aligns resources with the level of effort needed to complete the evaluation.

**Roles and Responsibilities:** The scope should identify who any major actors are and their roles and responsibilities within the evaluation effort to clarify who is doing what. For example, in an Emergent Outcome Harvesting effort where the Program Manager is the owner of the outcome tracking process, that person would be listed as Responsible for that sub-task/sub-component of the process.

**Resources:** The scope should also provide some indication of the available resources, including both the financial resources available to conduct the evaluation, the amount of time a focal point of contact will be able to devote to coordinating with the evaluation, and the time others at the implementing organizations may be willing to set aside to answer questions and engage with the evaluation's data collection and follow-up.

**Existing Documentation:** The scope should identify any resources that the evaluator knows of to be incorporated in the process, either as materials that will be reviewed during data collection, processes to be leveraged, or information that will be referenced to guide the evaluation. This way, the organization doing the contracting can have these components all in one place, and the contracted evaluator can ensure that they have helpful documentation to fall back upon if there are questions along the way.

Having a clear scope can help best set up the effort for success and ensure all of the resources, systems, and processes are properly aligned.

## 2 SETTING UP THE PROCESS, SYSTEMS, AND TOOLS

There are a few processes and roles that need to be set up for success to occur. First, the organization needs to identify how they will conduct tracking of any emergent outcomes and who is responsible for doing this. Are there designated MEL staff at the organization who can assist with setting up and facilitating the process? Or does an implementing team need to build this into their process without dedicated MEL help? Either approach can work, but there needs to be a clear understanding of the organization's resources, expectations, and relationship and embedding of any external evaluation support. Typically, those most knowledgeable about potential programming updates will need to dedicate some amount of time to discuss emergent outcomes approximately once a month, in addition to the main process owner. Once a clear owner and other roles and responsibilities are established, then a system will need to be built to manage the process.

### The Intervention Tracker and RACI Workplan

An Intervention Tracker serves to capture any developments that may turn into emergent outcomes. This tracker should include information about the intervention, who the originating source for the intervention was, contact information, an assigned lead for follow up, any actions taken or information shared in response, a status dropdown (to track if things are moving forward, delayed, etc.), any prioritization information about how closely the organization would like to follow the outcome, and information about the end state of the intervention for tracking or full outcome substantiation needs. Compared to a Retrospective Outcome Harvesting, this tracker takes away part of the need for anyone to remember an outcome or process by instead capturing things in real-time to establish tighter feedback loops. Whoever owns the process should set a recurring calendar invite for every month or every other month to regularly update the tracker and capture changes in a timely fashion.

While separate from the Intervention Tracker itself, we also recommend initiating or integrating this process into a living workplan with information about who is Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, and Informed (RACI). A workplan with a RACI should detail major tasks or subtasks for coordination assigned to each actor and can serve as the go-to hub for updates and follow-up. If the organization or team already has a living workplan, then this process can and should be integrated accordingly to streamline project management. Having a living workplan is especially important as Emergent Outcome Harvesting is a longer-term, continuous effort with multiple pieces moving simultaneously. More information about RACI workplans and useful templates can be found on [the Digital Project Manager website here](#).

## 3 IMPLEMENT EMERGENT OUTCOME TRACKING

Once the implementation team has their systems in place, they begin tracking! Changes that meet the threshold for potential emergent outcomes should be identified from any and all interactions with programming beneficiaries, stakeholders, and program staff observations. The threshold for potential emergent outcomes should align with the intervention's theory of change for intended outcomes, focusing on changes that occur beyond immediate expected outputs from activities (e.g., when experimentation of new behaviors is seen after a training, not just confirmation of knowledge gain

which would be too much of an output to qualify as a potential emergent outcome). For unintended potential emergent outcomes, the threshold is often a bit trickier, but should focus on changes that demonstrate a shift in behavior (e.g., shift of a position on a topic such that they speak up or share evidence to support their new position, increased engagement through community meetings or speaking up with new groups of people, experimentation with new behaviors, etc.). The implementation team should discuss the anticipated thresholds and some possible examples of qualifying emergent outcomes during the process and systems set-up, so that the process owner is easily able to identify potential emergent outcomes worth tracking as the evaluative effort begins implementation.

When a change meets the threshold to become an Emergent Outcome that practitioners would like to track, then implementers will move into filling out a standard Emergent Outcome Harvesting Tracker for both new outcomes and for updating existing outcomes. To track emergent outcomes, we recommend setting up a Google Form or a Google Sheet to help facilitate and automate the capture process. Information to track includes:

1. a description of the emergent outcome identified,
2. who was involved in the outcome,
3. who caused the change,
4. who the change affected,
5. the significance of the outcome,
6. how the change agent contributed to the change,
7. what influence the group thinks the organization had,
8. what evidence exists (and how to find it later to submit),
9. a project point of contact (POC), and
10. a reference name so that implementers can find this outcome again later.

This information needs to be tracked regularly for new outcomes and for previously identified outcomes alike, and both processes are described in further detail below.

It is also important to note that there may be emergent outcomes identified and tracked that fade away and never turn into outcomes, but that also provides useful learnings for adaptation around what does and does not work programmatically. It is better to have tracked potential emergent outcomes that become irrelevant than to not capture something that turns into an outcome—Headlight recommends teams err on the side of logging things more closely to ensure as many potential outcomes as possible are identified and tracked early and often, depending on the scope and available level of effort.

### Tracking New Outcomes

When identifying and initiating tracking on new potential emergent outcomes, we recommend using the following questions to capture important details, learnings, and the appropriate originating information to support tracking and substantiation later in the process.

## Tracking for New Outcomes

Question	Rationale
<b>Was this effort planned or unplanned?</b>	This question helps clarify whether an effort was planned or unplanned. A planned effort would be something that the team intended to happen, an outcome that is anticipated from the initiating activity; an unplanned effort would be a change or action that emerged unexpectedly from a team activity.
<b>Provide a description of the potential emergent outcome the team has identified that is associated with the implementation of the team's efforts.</b>	The amount of detail included should be enough for the Evaluation Lead to understand and articulate what the identified outcome is without asking for further clarification from the team.
<b>Who was involved in the potential emergent outcome? Who caused the change? Who did the change affect?</b>	Include all of the different stakeholders that are known. If the team knows a stakeholder is involved but are not sure who the exact actor is, then a generic label will work initially (e.g., a government ministry office or organizational unit), but the team will need to provide a POC or entry point for follow-up.
<b>What is the significance of the potential emergent outcome?</b>	Document why this particular potential outcome matters and how it is related to the team's intervention. Sharing the significance of the change will help give a better sense of the outcome's potential impact and whether that connects to the organization's larger themes and goals. Even if the team's initial impression of the change effected is incorrect upon substantiation, documenting these impressions can help to serve as evidence about why certain decisions to allocate resources were made.
<b>How did the change agent contribute to this potential emergent outcome?</b>	Providing a high-level of detail to this question, in particular regarding the organization's efforts, will better enable verification of contribution. Citing who caused the change and how the change agent contributed can be complicated as the client's team may not have the full picture of the causal mechanisms, but the implementer's contribution to change needs to be articulated in as much detail as possible to best enable follow-up before it can be tested or reframed for more accuracy.
<b>What evidence does the team have that this potential emergent outcome has taken place? Where is the evidence being stored? [Alternative: Upload button option]</b>	Collecting evidence along the way will help reduce the level of effort and any difficulty in finding the materials when it comes time to substantiate outcomes. For potential emergent outcomes, this can include emails, notes from calls, and other more informal documentation, as well as more formal evidence which is more likely to be available the longer the potential outcome is tracked. Some teams may not want to upload evidence directly into this tool for confidentiality reasons. This gives them an option to detail where this confidential data exists in the instance that follow-up and verification is needed.
<b>Who is the best point of contact if additional information is needed concerning this potential emergent outcome?</b>	The implementing organization's project point of contact included in the outcome entry will be the first stop for any necessary clarification of evidence solicitation by the evaluation lead or substantiator. This will be important, especially if a team member needs to get in touch for other questions or supplementary data collection.
<b>Please provide a three-word name to reference this potential emergent outcome should there be any updates in the future.</b>	The three-word combination for teams to identify the outcome will streamline any data entry and tracking over time. If the evaluation lead or substantiator needs to help the teams remember what they termed an outcome reference/identifier, then they can refer to the tool's specific Tracker and Form Response sheet to share.

Each of these questions should be answered for each of the different emergent outcomes identified with as much detail as is feasible since this data will be further analyzed and substantiated later.

## Updating Previously Identified Outcomes

Once all of the new outcomes are identified, the process lead will have the group shift to previously identified outcomes and capture a round of updates. For updates, the facilitator will want to make sure to capture any of the questions outlined in the tool: any information about how the outcome has evolved since last reported, if there are any new change agents involved, if the significance of the outcome has changed, details about how the organization has continued to contribute to the development of this outcome, and additional supporting evidence or documentation (and how to find it to submit), and if the project point of contact has changed. Depending on the type of work being evaluated, identified emergent outcomes may not have updates at every check-in period. More on each of these questions is included below.

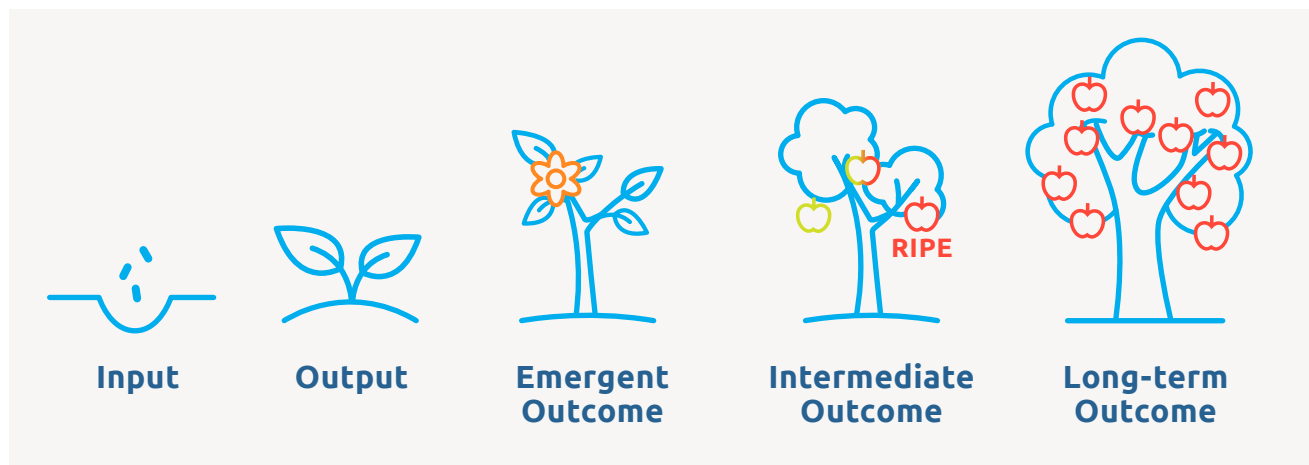
Tracking for Previously Identified Outcomes	
Question	Rationale
<b>What is the reference name of the outcome the team has an update for?</b>	Using the same consistent reference name for the outcome will allow the evaluator to keep the data as clean as possible.
<b>Please provide a detailed description of how this outcome has evolved since the team last reported on it.</b>	Documenting any changes since the group last gave an update on a previously identified outcome will serve to track progress towards a verifiable outcome over time. Individuals often forget this level of detail when asked at the end of a project, so ongoing tracking will seek to avoid this as much as possible and help provide a clear path to substantiate contribution.
<b>Are there any new change agents? If so, who?</b>	Identifying additional change agents and actors involved in an emergent outcome as the change progresses widens the pool of candidates for key informant interviews to substantiate the outcome and helps create a more realistic view of how and by whom change is affected over time.
<b>Has the significance changed at all? If so, how?</b>	A new change agent getting involved can have major effects on the potential significance of an outcome in a very short time depending on how their engagement drives the change to the next level. As an outcome progresses, the significance should ideally increase, and it is important to capture this shift and determine if the emergent outcome is leading towards an intended outcome (desired results captured in the team's theory of change) or an unintended outcome.
<b>Can the team share any additional details about how Organization X's work has contributed to the development of this outcome?</b>	Additional detail on how the implementing organization is contributing to the outcome's development will help verification and substantiation later on. As the evidence base on this is being generated, it can also help test or realign any assumptions made about how the process works. After outcomes have come to fruition, an analysis can be done on the data to better understand where in the process the organization has the most room for impact so that resources can be allocated accordingly.
<b>Does the team have any new evidence to share that helps confirm this outcome has taken place? Where is the evidence being stored? [Alternative: Upload button option]</b>	Collecting evidence along the way will help reduce the level of effort and any difficulty in finding the materials when it comes time to substantiate outcomes.
<b>Has there been any change to the outcome POC?</b>	The implementing organization's project point of contact included in the outcome entry will be the first stop for any necessary clarification of evidence solicitation by the evaluation lead. This will be important, especially if a team member needs to get in touch for other questions or supplementary data collection.

Updates, whether general or detailed about specifics of contribution, on how the outcome has evolved will give a good trail of details for future data analysis and follow-up. If nothing else, being sure to capture additional supporting documentation and changes in points of contact will be crucial for the substantiation team to analyze the evidence efficiently. This process should be completed for each existing outcome that was previously identified, so there are regular records of any changes or developments that might be occurring. Once updates have been completed and logged in the chosen tracking system, that concludes the tracking updates for a given period.

#### 4 DETERMINE RIPE OUTCOMES AND CONDUCT SUBSTANTIATION

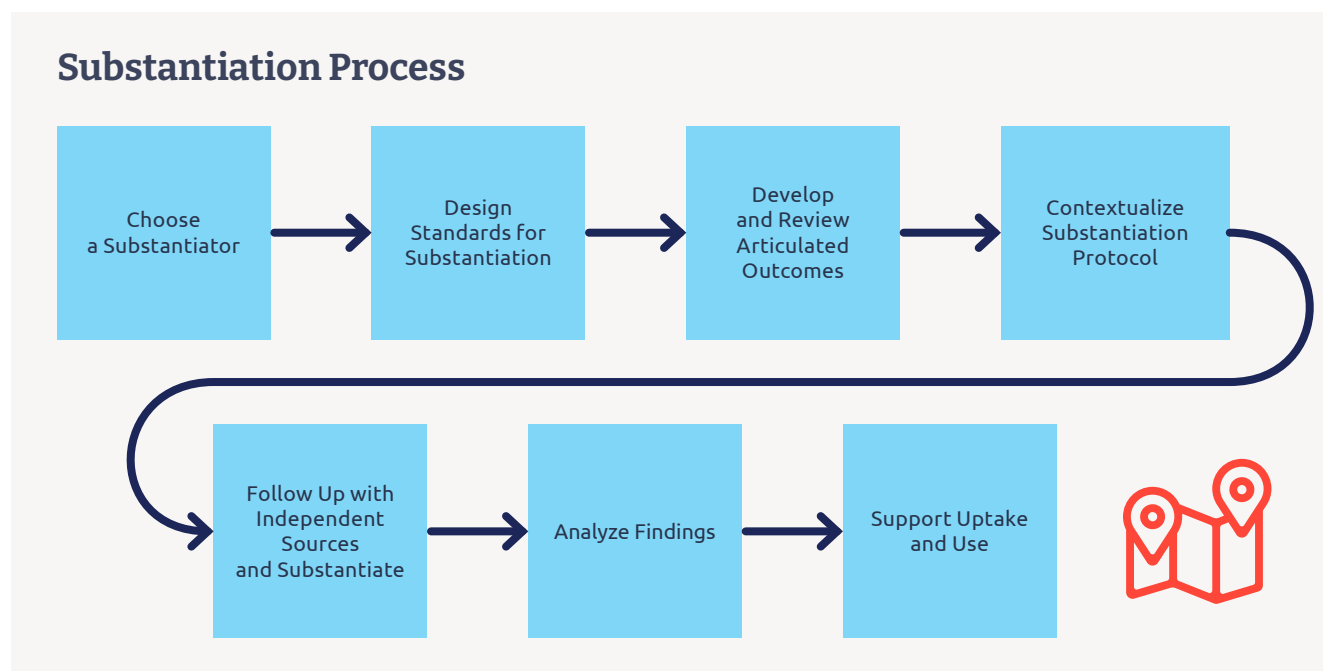
One of the benefits of Emergent Outcome Harvesting is that the implementation of the Intervention Tracker serves to cover the first few steps of a more traditional Retrospective Outcome Harvesting (e.g., the reviewing of historical documents and outcome identification) since it captures similar information in real time. After the intervention tracking process has been established and has some emergent outcomes captured, the evaluator should then work with the implementing organization to determine whether outcomes are “ripe” for substantiation.

Outcome ripeness is determined by seeing a sustained change in behavior, new or significantly modified relationships, activities, policies, or practices in the target population. This is often a more systemic level change and should answer the “so, what?” around why the implementing organization undertakes specific activities. Ripe outcomes are distinct from an identified emergent outcome where the team may only see the start of a more significant change, such as attitude change, asking for additional support, or improved understanding of a topic. Outcomes deemed to be ripe should move into the substantiation phase, while the others remain in the tracking process as they continue to grow and build. Headlight recommends that evaluators revisit emergent outcomes for ripeness semi-annually or quarterly so that substantiation can be implemented on a rolling basis while also allowing for time to follow an intervention from earlier on in the process.



**Substantiation serves to verify through evidence gathering whether outcomes have occurred, what their significance is, and what the organization’s contribution is to these outcomes.** Evidence is gathered directly from individuals impacted by the work to extend beyond the implementer’s lens. Findings from the substantiation process will help build the evidence base around work being implemented and will help refine any related assumptions and theories of change.

The substantiation process has multiple steps, outlined below. The evaluation lead and organization will need to decide how frequently substantiation will be conducted—often either semi-annually or annually—for prioritized outcomes that are “ripe.” Conducting the substantiation process more frequently yields more rapid feedback to be incorporated into adaptive action and lowers the burden on data collection at a singular point in time. However, we acknowledge that sometimes behavior change, especially on more systems-level outcomes, takes more time to develop, and the implementing organization may not have proper bandwidth to make changes more regularly, so a minimum frequency of once a year would be sufficient.



### Choose a Substantiator

To begin the substantiation and verification process, the organization implementing the Outcome Harvesting evaluative effort will need to decide who they want to act as the substantiator. Is there an internal staff member who has sufficient time and technical knowledge to act as the lead? Or does the organization need to solicit an external substantiator? Unlike the Retrospective Outcome Harvesting needs, for the Emergent Outcome Harvesting effort, the substantiator needs to have a [background in Adaptive Management and Learning](#) to enable the results to have the best chance of being used, and if an external evaluator is not helping with the ongoing tracking already, then the evaluator or evaluation team selected for substantiation would need to be available for future rounds of substantiation as well. See the table below for more considerations.



	Pro	Con
Internal Substantiator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Substantiator is already familiar with the topical area of the work</li> <li>• Do not need to solicit and procure an external evaluator</li> <li>• May have more capacity to push for evaluation uptake and use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of technical knowledge on data collection best practices and the analysis needed to fully substantiate outcomes</li> <li>• Substantiation is subject to bias</li> <li>• Evaluative effort can be interrupted by other emergent project work inside of the organization</li> <li>• The level of effort to do proper substantiation may be a significant burden</li> <li>• Interviewees may not answer honestly, especially on questions of substantiation, due to the interviewers affiliation</li> </ul>
External Substantiator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be identified to have precisely the technical background needed, including explicit experience with Outcome Harvesting if desired</li> <li>• Substantiator can give an external perspective detached from the outcome, which may be perceived as more credible, especially from interviewees</li> <li>• If contracted for a specific scope of work, can avoid any interference of other related projected work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential limited availability of technically qualified evaluators</li> <li>• Time-consuming nature of contracting and procurement</li> <li>• May be removed from the uptake and use of findings if a sufficient level of effort is not contracted</li> </ul>

Once a substantiator has been chosen and any necessary contracting and onboarding completed, the substantiation process can officially begin.

### Determine the Sample for Each Identified Outcome

Next, the evaluator decides on sampling methods for substantiating outcomes. Substantiation should employ a combination of purposive and snowball sampling methods in order to ensure outcome details are verified through saturation (when possible) and triangulation.<sup>7</sup> If there are not enough known actors associated with a particular outcome, snowball sampling can help expand the sample to meet the saturation threshold.

- The initial purposive sample should be selected based on who was most closely involved in the identified outcome and associated intervention. This is likely to be the implementer POC for the intervention, the identified change agents from the tracking, as well as those most actively engaged from the primary stakeholder(s).
  - Key primary interviewees may include people who have changed positions since the project was initiated. It will be important to try and access these contacts through other stakeholders and networks.

<sup>7</sup> Sampling saturation refers to the point when incoming data produces little to no new information ([Guest et al., 2006](#); Guest and MacQueen, 2008). There is a wide range of existing research on this topic and most sources agree that at least 6 interviews of a homogeneous group (as defined by the evaluative effort sampling structure) will cover 70% or more of the findings that will emerge from further data collection ([Guest et al., 2006](#)). For more on this, see [Headlight's Designing Rigorous Qualitative Practice \(part 1\) Blog Post](#) from July 2020 and the [R&E for Evidence post "Emojis convey language, why not a sampling lesson too?"](#) [here](#).

- Additional interviewees can be identified from these initial points of contact (snowball sampling) connected to each outcome. It is important to identify a variety of individuals. Interviewees should include individuals who *did not* implement the intervention itself and individuals from different perspectives to avoid potential biases and ensure the ability to validate findings.
- Secondary interviewees (identified through either the purposive or snowball sample) may also identify tertiary interviewees who are able to provide additional substantiation and nuance concerning prioritized outcomes.

## Develop and Review Articulated Outcomes

Once the protocol for substantiation has been designed, the substantiator can begin reviewing the articulated outcomes and associated data that has been collected during the Emergent Outcome Harvest tracking. With pre-articulated outcomes, the substantiator can combine and reframe any of the existing outcomes as needed, review evidence that has already been uploaded, and ask clarification questions to the team responsible for updating the tracker. Because the tracking process was designed to capture outcomes as they emerged, this step should be more streamlined than a Retrospective Outcome Harvesting in that the substantiator will already have various descriptions of the emergent outcome over time to combine into one cohesive description.

### Top Tips



As the substantiator is reviewing and reframing the existing outcomes, they can also add any new outcomes that have yet to be articulated from the current collection of data. It is crucial that the substantiator is able to delineate between outcomes that are interrelated but separate as both will need to be substantiated through the interviews independently. The substantiation of interrelated outcomes can be done within the same interview, but all pieces of each outcome need to be evidenced.

## Contextualize the Substantiation Protocol

The substantiator will share a list of pre-formed outcomes with the implementing organization's team to confirm any framing and edits prior to the substantiation beginning. Once this is complete, the substantiator will refine any contextualized interview protocols for interviews with independent sources. For each of the outcomes listed, the implementing organization's team will also need to share any relevant contact information for independent sources or stakeholders involved so that the substantiator can reach out to schedule interviews. We have included a sample substantiation interview protocol in [Annex C](#) designed for a more rigorous substantiation process, but it is important to note that each Outcome Harvesting will need the interview protocol to be aligned within that evaluation's context.

While traditional outcome harvesting processes generally guide the evaluator to send the pre-formed outcomes to independent sources to substantiate ahead of or in addition to the interviews, Headlight would recommend a different approach to allow for a bit of added rigor. Instead of sharing the pre-formed outcome

to independent sources, we would recommend soliciting the description of their interaction with the implementing organization during the interviews to avoid biasing the outcome description. Outcome descriptions would then be written from the analysis of the feedback from this section of the interviews and a subset of interviewees can be chosen to conduct a final email-based validation of the outcome descriptions as a last quality control check on the interpretation of the analysis in the substantiation process.

It is important to note that not all outcomes that have been drafted will be substantiated, and while the intended users may not be pleased that outcomes have not panned out, this evidence can still be used to help stakeholders learn and adapt in the future.

## 5 ANALYZE FINDINGS

Once all the data is collected, the evaluator can then conduct analysis of the outcomes, taking the additional information from the subsequent rounds of interviewees and any additional documentation to further flush out the outcome descriptions. Through this process, the evaluator will highlight pieces of the description and associated details that are only mentioned by one person or in one document and therefore cannot be substantiated as the threshold for triangulation has not been reached. While the standards for substantiation can be altered depending on use and needs, it is important that, at a minimum, information is triangulated (see more below in the [Overcoming Substantiation Challenges section](#) for a few more substantiation options). For outcomes that can be substantiated, the evaluator will need to connect and articulate what data and evidence support the description, draw any resulting conclusions (e.g., Evidence Ratings, Contribution Ratings, identification of enabling/inhibiting factors, etc.), and potentially make recommendations where they see fit.

### Evidence Rating

Based on the data sources, use the Evidence Weight Scale below to rate each component of the outcome description and provide an overall weighting of how strong the evidence supports that the outcome occurred and occurred as described. Only outcomes that achieve at least a medium rating should be reported because those meet the minimum of triangulation.

Outcome Evidence Weight Scale	
Preliminary	Medium confidence level (trustworthy data; should be triangulated) for emergent outcomes identified at the time of the study, but insufficient evidence concerning solidification of long-term changes. The differentiation between a preliminary and medium rating is that the finding has not achieved full outcome status, but may be a solidified early indication that there is an emergent outcome at the time the study is conducted. For Emergent Outcome Harvesting, preliminary outcomes should be flagged in the tracker for continued capture to see if the outcome matures.
Unclear	Unable to triangulate, contradictory evidence, or indirect sources for an outcome.
Weak	Unable to triangulate outcome, but the information is from a direct, trustworthy source or backed up by documentation. <i>*The evaluator may be able to revisit this outcome during a later substantiation to improve the evidence</i>
Medium	The outcome is triangulated, and information is from direct sources.
Strong	The outcome is triangulated, information is from direct sources, AND there is minimal variance in the outcome details from the originator and substantiators for how something happened.

## Contribution Rating

In addition to evidence weighting, the evaluator should also assign a Contribution Rating to indicate the degree to which the implementer was involved in affecting the outcomes or changes. Use the Contribution Rating Scale below to rate each outcome.

Contribution Rating Scale	
<b>Weak</b>	The change agent was already thinking about action/behavior/policy change before working with the implementer, and they do not identify the implementer as the reason they took any action.
<b>Medium</b>	The change agent was already thinking about action/behavior/policy change before engagement with the implementer or intervention participation, but they identify the implementer as the reason they took a particular action that enabled broader behavior change.
<b>Strong</b>	The change agent started thinking about action/behavior/policy change as a result of a conversation with or participation in an intervention from the implementer, and they identify the implementer as the reason they took a particular action that enabled behavior or policy change.

### Top Tips



If the implementing organization is willing to set aside the time, it is often helpful to conduct an initial findings sharing and Question and Answer (Q&A) session, followed by a more interactive working session to prioritize any recommendations and decide on adaptive actions. This dual working session approach allows ample time for those engaged to digest the evidence and then pivot and dive deeper into possible next steps.

## 6 SHARE FINAL DELIVERABLES

Once all analysis is complete, the evaluator will then need to take what they have produced and go back to answer the original evaluation questions by connecting the knowledge of what has been achieved, why, and how with learning objectives. The findings should be compiled in use-focused deliverables for the various audiences, which could include a final report, shorter briefings, a slide deck, and other creative ways to share information. Final deliverables should be shared out both with the organization commissioning the Outcome Harvesting effort and those involved in outcome identification and substantiation for their learning and use.

## 7 SUPPORT THE ORGANIZATION TO MAKE DECISIONS AND ADAPT ACCORDINGLY

Unlike in Retrospective Outcome Harvesting, in Emergent Outcome Harvesting, the evaluation team plays an important role as a Learning

Advisor to support the uptake and use of the Outcome Harvesting findings on a more long-term basis. Whomever is conducting the evaluation (internal or external actors), it will be essential for them to follow up with the implementing organization in particular and provide facilitation support, working sessions, and other reflective learning spaces to think through the implications of each round of substantiation. With Emergent Outcome Harvesting, this support often includes helping make theory of change adaptations based on new evidence of interventions outcomes, facilitating

discussions to adjust programming in response to negative unintended outcomes, helping think through other action plans to implement recommendations, and refining learning questions for subsequent substantiate to target emergent outcomes that focus on the most significant remaining unknowns. As an accountability partner, the evaluation lead is rarely responsible for implementing adaptations themselves, allowing them to serve as a motivator and adaptive management support for identified actions.

## MODULE V:

# Evaluator Competencies for Outcome Harvesting

The following table describes Headlight’s top five recommended skills and topical areas of expertise for an evaluator who will be contracted to conduct an Outcome Harvesting effort.

Competency Needed	Retrospective or Emergent?	Rationale	How to Assess
<b>Skill: Ensuring Qualitative Rigor</b>	Foundational for both	Outcome Harvesting relies on qualitative data collection via key informant interviews and focus group discussions. In order to ensure the findings are trustworthy and reliable, the qualitative practices must be implemented with rigor. An evaluator who understands ways to incorporate qualitative rigor can help the implementing organization and other stakeholders appropriately contextualize the evaluation design, understand the ways to ensure that findings are appropriately substantiated, triangulated, representative, and get to a degree of nuance that quantitative data collection cannot replicate. Qualitative rigor requires familiarity with the data collection methods (key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs)) but also sampling saturation, designing comparative protocols, coding and analysis best practices, and much more.	<p>If the implementing organization is contracting an evaluator, ask for past methods designs, provide an evaluative exercise during the recruitment process, or ask about the following:</p> <p>A clear rationale for the use of Outcome Harvesting that aligns with the evaluation objectives and questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mentions of sampling saturation rates and rationale for sampling methods</li><li>• Descriptions of substantiation processes in the analysis plan, including but not limited to triangulation</li></ul> <p>Please reference our <a href="#">blog series</a> and <a href="#">AEA2020 presentation</a> on Qualitative Rigor for additional resources.</p>

Competency Needed	Retrospective or Emergent?	Rationale	How to Assess
<b>Topic Area Expertise: Change Management and Behavior Change</b>	Necessary for Emergent; Beneficial for Retrospective	<p>Outcomes are often results of a behavior change pathway themselves. Evaluators need to be able to distinguish where along the behavior change spectrum an emergent/immediate, intermediate, or long-term outcome is and facilitate the client's understanding as well. For example, say an emergent capacity building outcome came back from substantiation indicating that awareness was raised, but improved capacities were not established. While the client may feel frustrated, the evaluator can help support the achievement of future outcomes by understanding and explaining the full spectrum of steps required.</p> <p>In order to be able to use the findings from any Emergent Outcome Harvesting, the evaluator(s) needs to be able to understand how to guide behavior change at the individual and organizational level. When clients decide to act on recommendations and adapt based on the Emergent Outcome Harvesting findings, the evaluator needs to be able to facilitate conversations to help translate evidence to action looking at both direct behavior changes, as well as the enabling environment shifts that may also be needed to enact the adaptation.</p>	<p>Include a question in the interview asking the evaluator to unpack the different phases of capacity building.</p> <p>Conduct an exercise during evaluator recruitment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the scenario that a client working towards capacity building was found to only be conducting trainings with no knowledge being retained or used, what might you do? What questions would you ask, and what recommendations would you make to help explain the missing pieces needed to achieve the level of behavior change desired?</li> </ul>
<b>Skill: Facilitating Evidence-to-Action for Adaptive Management</b>	Necessary for Emergent	<p>Being able to conduct an evaluation is one set of skills, but helping motivate clients and stakeholders to take action is another. When valuable resources are being spent gathering and analyzing the data, the evaluator needs to be able to take the information and work with clients through processing those findings, conclusions, and recommendations and then facilitating that energy to help attendees identify and commit to taking concrete action. Otherwise, the report will be another evaluation that sits in a corner somewhere and gathers dust instead of an opportunity where the evaluator can get people to act upon new information.</p>	<p>Include behavioral interview questions while contracting an evaluator, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tell me about a time when you helped someone digest findings and information and then act upon it? What did you do, and what was the result?</li> <li>Under a scenario like XYZ, how would you help stakeholders plan for mitigating or adaptive actions? What would you focus on, why, and how?</li> </ul>

Competency Needed	Retrospective or Emergent?	Rationale	How to Assess
<b>Skill: Navigating Undesirable Findings</b>	Necessary for Emergent; Beneficial for Retrospective	Sometimes outcomes that get substantiated, intended or unintended, will be negative or not what the client wanted to hear. This could come in the form of not being able to substantiate an intended or desired outcome, substantiating unintended outcomes that had negative impacts on activity partners, disagreement among stakeholders of how something happened, or the level of contribution the client can claim. Being able to proactively frame things as an opportunity to learn and improve can help the client focus on creating a solution/adaptive action instead of getting caught up in shame and blame. Not everything implementers are going to try will work, and that is ok so long as they can act on evidence to support continuous learning and activity improvements.	Include behavioral interview questions while contracting an evaluator, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tell me about a time when you had to lead a client through information or evaluation results that they disliked or found undesirable. What strategies did you use to convey the information?</li> </ul>
<b>Topical Area Expertise: Systems Thinking</b>	Beneficial for both	Without being able to see the bigger picture, evaluators cannot help to articulate the causal mechanisms behind a client's work and why it is crucial for a particular outcome to be accomplished (e.g., an outcome on XYZ unlocks other steps further down the line). Being able to think at the systems level can help the evaluator connect outcomes being substantiated to the program or activity's theory of change. Additionally, without this competency, evaluators may struggle to ensure that clients are prioritizing the right adaptive actions based on context factors, access to resources, and dependencies on other stakeholders needed for successful implementation. This is especially important in Emergent Outcome Harvesting because if the evaluator is not attentive to the environment and circumstances influencing the client and the activity (i.e., decision-making deadlines, other activities being designed, major context shifts), then they cannot best articulate recommendations that advocate for what is needed to further improve the system.	Conduct an exercise during evaluator recruitment that asks the candidate to detail out all the assumptions, context factors, and possible actor dependencies to a real or imaginary theory of change, insofar as they can with limited contextual/sectoral knowledge.



## MODULE VI:

# Top Tips for Outcome Harvesting

In this module, we have included a few of our top tips for the evaluator to keep in mind as they are designing and implementing an Outcome Harvesting evaluation.

### BALANCE DIFFERENT LEVELS OF OUTCOMES

Often, implementing organizations and donors will be interested in identifying and substantiating outcomes at multiple levels (i.e., immediate, intermediate, long-term/ecosystem, and even around implementation quality). Evaluators need to take this into consideration when designing interview protocols and in selecting interviewees. For example, if the evaluator is being asked to look at long-term or ecosystem-level outcomes, then interviews need to be scheduled accordingly with those knowledgeable about the ecosystem, and the evaluator should plan for increased limitations due to a finite number of stakeholders who may have sufficient knowledge of all the components of how the outcome came about at such a high-level. For implementation quality outcomes, the evaluator cannot only interview external people as those doing the implementing would be important informants to help round out a full understanding of how decisions were made that ultimately affected how something was implemented. Determination of the appropriate level(s) of outcomes for identification and substantiation should come from the Evaluation Objectives, Questions, and Project Background—if the evaluation is looking to understand the longer-term changes that an organization may have contributed to, then it is likely that ecosystem and intermediate outcomes would be most appropriate.

To avoid challenges during implementation of the evaluative effort, incorporate an assessment of the desired and *feasible* levels at which outcomes are likely to be identified for the strategy/program/activity in question. It is valuable to check again on alignment of the desired level(s) versus preliminary identified outcomes before beginning substantiation. As outcomes are prioritized in the Aggregate Outcomes and Conduct Outcome Prioritization phase, does the array of level of outcomes balance with the desired split into the evaluation questions and the scope of how many outcomes will be substantiated? If not, then step back, communicate with the implementing organization or donor, and adapt accordingly.

## ENSURE AN ADEQUATE LEVEL OF EFFORT

While Level of Effort (LOE) will need to be contextualized for each effort, generally, we recommend thinking about allocating time in a phased approach:

**Phase 1:** Evaluation Design

**Phase 2:** Documentation Review

**Phase 3:** Primary Interviews and Outcome Identification

**Phase 4:** Outcome Substantiation

**Phase 5:** Coding and Analysis

**Phase 6:** Final Deliverables Development and Dissemination

**Phase 7:** Uptake and Adaptation Support

Remember that the more complex the evaluation questions and project being evaluated, the more time it will take to complete each phase. The more outcomes the implementing organization would like substantiated, the more level of effort it will require to do so. If the dedicated point of contact for the evaluator is not well-versed in monitoring and evaluation, then plan for extra time especially in the initial phases, as additional coordination and explanation are likely. If there is a desire for the process to be more participatory (e.g., multiple rounds of stakeholder outcome identification or prioritization for substantiation, multiple validation workshops, etc.) then additional effort is needed, but it can well be worth it for more locally-owned evidence. Lastly, while data collection is often given the most amount of time in a workplan, coding and analysis require the greatest level of effort. Typically two to three times the original interview time is needed to clean and code documents and a similar amount of time is then needed for meaningful analysis. We recommend the evaluator **ensure that the amount of time allocated for coding is also the same amount of time allocated for analysis**—analysis to get to the right level of nuance for rigorous and useful qualitative data is a multi-step process that cannot be rushed.

## FOCUS ON THE DETAILS

One of the most valuable aspects of the Outcome Harvesting method is the amount of detail that it can help evaluators solicit from other organizations about what occurred, who is responsible for influencing the change, how the change process happened, and when the outcome may have evolved in relation to the intervention implementation. Though the effort may feel intensive when interviewing stakeholders for outcome identification and verification, the more information that the evaluator can solicit to get a full understanding of the outcome, the better. And remember, stakeholders can often use the information gathered for their own learning, to strengthen any partnerships, or for co-implementation, so the process is not solely extractive if the implementing organization is willing to share what they learned in return for the time dedicated by stakeholders to answer questions. With this in mind, **do not be afraid to leverage a 5 Whys facilitation approach or ask a series of follow up questions that may not be in the original protocol to get sufficiently nuanced information.** Also, it is important for the evaluator to do ongoing synthesis on information received for different outcomes to continue to understand the gaps that remain. After each interview, the evaluator needs to take into consideration which gaps have been filled and what gaps remain, especially as the process

moves closer to substantiation. This can save time for both the evaluator and interviewees, ensuring that once particular aspects of an outcome are triangulated, subsequent data collection can narrow in on the missing pieces.

## LEVERAGE KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Though practitioners have done Outcome Harvesting before via surveys, Headlight strongly recommends that evaluators conduct key informant interviews (KIIs) to get the most nuanced information possible. Evaluators should push back on clients who are not willing to devote enough effort and resources to Outcome Harvesting as **high-quality key informant interviews and qualitative data analysis take time**. Sometimes surveys are used to expedite the timeline of an evaluative effort, but it does negatively affect Outcome Harvesting by not allowing for clarifying questions to dig into a respondent's answers to verify substantiation or contribution. Remember, without an actionable level of detail, knowing only whether or not an outcome happened is often insufficient for an organization to act upon in the future to produce the same or better results.

## DO NOT OVER-EMPHASIZE NON-OUTCOMES

Oftentimes interviewees may focus on or mention outputs as what they have been able to produce or see during their time working on a specific project instead of the broader change an organization was working to affect. It is important for the evaluator to keep in mind the distinction and line between outputs and outcomes—despite outputs often being the predecessor to outcomes, the purpose of Outcome Harvesting is to focus on the larger implications or the “So What” of implementation. If there is not enough evidence to substantiate an outcome, **do not pretend or over-inflate the resulting information into something that it is not**. For example, if an individual or organization can cite that they produced a policy-influencing report, but the policy has not yet changed with stakeholders citing explicitly that the organization's report played a role, that outcome cannot be substantiated. Despite not being a substantiated outcome, this information can still be useful to the implementing organization to help propel them into exploring why change has not yet happened, if they can take any additional actions, or if they need to reassess their assumptions about their work and its ability to influence other stakeholders.

## DO NOT FORGET ABOUT ENABLING AND INHIBITING FACTORS

**Enabling and Inhibiting Factors are just as important as the outcomes themselves** because they are the system forces at play influencing the context in which implementation occurs. Without an enabling environment, the journey to making effective change becomes more difficult for organizations looking to make a collective impact. In substantiating an outcome, evaluators need to ensure that they identify any influencing factors that helped the outcomes develop (e.g., proper resourcing, whether or not political will or supportive leadership, freedom of movement or lack thereof, etc.). For example, if there are too many inhibiting factors or not enough enabling factors beyond the control of a single organization, that could help give insight into how assumptions or approaches need to change in order for an organization's efforts to be more effective.

## TROUBLESHOOTING OUTCOME HARVESTING

### Overcoming Substantiation Challenges

One of the challenges we have faced in substantiation is **a client's hesitation in reaching out to other stakeholders or those affected by the change**. While they may have reasonable rationale behind this hesitation (e.g., they want to reserve social/relationship capital for a specific effort), it is the evaluator's job to remind the client of the substantiation standards and understand how changing the substantiation limits what can be said about contribution and level of evidence. For more detail, we have included the substantiation standards/options table below.

Standard Level	Options for Engagement	Rationale
<b>Standard Best Practice</b>	Substantiation is done by semi-structured interviews where participants have the chance to expand upon outcomes with great detail and nuance.	We would always recommend this option as having a dialogue allows the interviewer to probe for further clarity as needed. This option also allows participants to be facilitated through some of their own connections and how this may relate to their work in ways outside of the intended user's understanding.
<b>Alternatives if resources do not allow for Standard Best Practice (assuming Sampling Saturation or Triangulation are still met)</b>	Substantiation is done by email, where participants may have some space to add nuance but are restricted by what they can feasibly type and the amount of follow up that is reasonable from the evaluator.	When conducting semi-structured interviews is not possible, then evaluators can leverage emails to ask for more nuance on outcome descriptions, the accuracy of intended users' descriptions, and contribution.
	Substantiation is done by survey, where participants are asked binary questions if an outcome occurred the way the intended users said it did and are asked to rank the level of contribution they would allot to the intended user from their perspective.	Although we understand that some evaluators may prize efficiency or a quantitative approach, like a survey, for substantiation as there may be many stakeholders to reach out to for an effort, Headlight <b>highly discourages</b> this option. We only support evaluators using it as the last resort since it does not enable the method to achieve its desired effect and may critically undermine receiving an actionable level of detail on outcomes. Under this option, the intended users would only understand perceptions based on participant responses without the nuance behind those responses to make effective adaptations.

## Access to Stakeholders

Getting access to stakeholders may be complicated by different factors. For Retrospective Outcome Harvesting, the longer the amount of time that has passed since the project was implemented, the more likely that those who were present during implementation have moved on from the organization after the project closed. While staff turnover is not always the case, it can provide challenges to outcome substantiation and should be treated as a potential limitation in the evaluation design by reaching out to additional stakeholders, spending additional time in early coordination to locate stakeholder contact information, or incorporation of other mitigating actions.

## Scope Creep in Substantiation

Finally, evaluators should be wary of scope creep in the number of outcomes to be substantiated. Because Outcome Harvesting allows evaluators to discover both intended and unintended outcomes, it should come as no surprise that more outcomes were identified than originally anticipated in the beginning and then can be reasonably substantiated. Not all outcomes that are uncovered need to be substantiated, so when the number of outcomes a client desires exceeds the number of outcomes scoped for, have the client prioritize based on recommendations from the evaluator for interesting findings, balancing intended and unintended, or for what has the likelihood for strongest contribution. This will enable the evaluator to stick to the scope while also giving the implementing organization an opportunity to give input on what information is most valuable for them to have substantiated for decision-making.

## MODULE VII:

# Examples of the Use of Outcome Harvesting

### Case 1:

#### Strengthening Disaster Risk Management Systems and Institutions Developmental Evaluation with USAID/Ethiopia

##### Context

As Headlight implements a five-year-long Developmental Evaluation for USAID/Ethiopia's Strengthening Disaster Risk Management Systems and Institutions (SDRM-SI) Project, we have begun tracking our Activity's emergent outcomes through the use of an Emergent Outcome Harvesting tracker. The integration of this approach allows us to feed into our regular monitoring processes and leverage emergent learning as this DE is the first of its kind in the Disaster Risk Management space, a sub-field faced with a highly dynamic, complex, and conflict-prone environment. Additionally, to our knowledge, this is the first Project-level DE, encompassing multiple different USAID Activities being implemented, meaning that this effort is charged to keep a Project-level perspective at the systems-level, as well as provide support to individual Activities—with this in mind, there is a need to capture outcomes at multiple levels, and doing so on an ongoing basis instead of retrospectively ensure that the DE can support adaptations in near real-time.

##### Adaptations and Results

Because DEs at the Project-level are such a large lift to get started, and we had an elongated [Learning Review](#) process, we are still on the early side of tracking emergent outcomes. During the first year of implementation, we identified six emergent outcomes at various stages of maturity, ranging from improvements to knowledge management systems and behaviors to enhanced abilities to use evidence for data-driven decision-making amongst the DE stakeholders. Operationally, the DE Administrators are responsible for conducting interviews related to outcome identification and substantiation to provide a degree of separation from the embedded work and allow the DE Evaluators to maximize attention paid to the implementation of evaluative efforts and adaptation support with IPs.

### Case 2:

#### USAID Digital Finance Team's Global Alliances Bright Spot as Retrospective Outcome Harvesting

##### Context

Headlight has supported USAID's Digital Financial Services (DFS) Team since 2017 to build and facilitate the incorporation of evidence into strategy design. The DFS Team's vision is to support secure,

inclusive, and sustainable digital ecosystems in USAID partner countries, and the DFS Team pursues this vision by focusing on two objectives: (1) integrating DFS into USAID programs, to accelerate development and humanitarian objectives, and (2) broadening sector- and program-specific efforts to foster inclusive enabling environments, private sector investment, and demand for inclusive financial services.

In 2021, as part of ongoing bright spot case study evaluative efforts, Headlight worked with the DFS Team to examine the outcomes from USAID's participation in global alliances (e.g., [CGAP](#), [BTCA](#), etc.) and the value of global alliances in contributing to the Agency's goals. While the benefits of alliance work were felt by those who had more direct engagement, an understanding of the outcomes and value for money of sometimes expensive, ongoing engagements were unclear to the Agency more broadly. Retrospective Outcome Harvesting was the best fit to identify both intended and unintended outcomes and the DFS Team's level of contribution to the achievement of those outcomes since some of these global alliance engagements had finished and others had been ongoing for a number of years.

### Adaptations and Results

The differences in the global alliance engagements required mixed sampling (purposive and snowball to hit saturation for each alliance and triangulation for outcomes substantiation) and data collection approaches (KIIs versus FGDs used distinctly for different alliances). The evaluative effort resulted in a clear and evidenced articulation of the benefits of engaging in global alliances for the Agency and a well-received case that alliances have shared to promote their value. The full case study, [Partnering with Global Alliances: USAID's Contributions to Ecosystem Outcomes](#), can be found on Headlight's resources page.

### Case 3:

#### GSMA's Emergent Outcome Harvesting for Advocacy

##### Context

Since January 2021, Headlight has been helping the private-sector digital development actor, GSMA, set up an Emergent Outcome Harvesting process to better understand the outcomes resulting from their Mobile for Development (M4D) teams' advocacy work around issues of digital inclusion, digital utilities, and climate technology work.<sup>8</sup> The need for Outcome Harvesting emerged as team members were working to articulate new systems-based strategy implementation plans, and they were having difficulty pinpointing exactly how their inputs into advocacy work led to tangible outcomes with their partner organizations and those they are seeking to influence. The GSMA teams have been capturing inputs and outputs for some time but wanted to better understand the full extent of their influence so that they can best leverage available resources. Additionally, advocacy and policy-influencing work is a medium-to-long-term objective with many dependencies on other actors, meaning that GSMA needs to find some way to understand if what they are doing is effective now instead of 3-4 years from now as part of a summative evaluative effort. Given these informational needs, Emergent Outcome Harvesting was identified as a tool that could easily be integrated into their regular working environment to provide use-focused feedback loops on an ongoing basis.

<sup>8</sup> This is part of Headlight's overarching M&E Thought Partnership with GSMA Mobile for Development (2019-2024).

Headlight developed tools and provided trainings and capacity-building support to ensure the program teams and GSMA MEL staff could carry this effort forward on their own. Through monthly check-ins with internal MEL staff, teams record any updates, changes, or additions to their intervention tracker. Once that update is complete, internal MEL staff then lead the teams through the designated Emergent Outcome Harvesting process to articulate new emergent outcomes or add new details to previously identified outcomes. The initial process took 1-2 months to get in place and train staff on the purpose and utility of Emergent Outcome Harvesting. With the process having been in place for about 8 months as of November 2021, we are just now starting to see emergent outcomes ripen and be ready for substantiation. During this next phase, Headlight will continue to support GSMA in our capacity as a Thought Partner and Learning Advisor to build capacity around the substantiation process and work with teams on leveraging the new evidence in their annual reporting and business planning cycles.

### Adaptations and Results

One of the main challenges that we faced in getting the Emergent Outcome Harvesting properly setup has been supporting the program teams to **identify the right level of tracking of their outreach and advocacy engagement efforts**. There are many team members working across multiple different efforts, so the team was concerned about adding additional steps for tracking outside of their pre-existing processes and the time that would take. We worked together to develop a few different options with explanations and rationale for what level of tracking would be sufficient enough to enable many outcomes to be caught while ensuring the additional level of effort needed was manageable for ongoing implementation.

The other main challenge that we have faced is a **hesitance to reach out to stakeholders for outcome verification**. Especially around advocacy efforts, contacting stakeholders has been a sensitive process that has required thoughtfulness and intentionality as contacts are generally busy and outreach requires using relationship capital that GSMA may not want to spend on evaluative efforts versus other interventions they are seeking to implement. Though not ideal for substantiation, one team has been able to verify outcomes with stakeholders via email instead of by semi-structured interviews (see [the Overcoming Substantiation Challenges](#) table above). The downside of this approach to substantiation is that it limits the amount of detail that evaluators/substantiators are able to attain as compared to a semi-structured interview.

Despite these adaptations, the M4D team has been able to substantiate and verify some of the outcomes related to the advocacy work that they had been implementing regarding digital inclusion policy in Sub-Saharan Africa as part of a pilot of this approach. Now, three different M4D teams are implementing both an Ad Hoc Request Tracker and the full Emergent Outcome Harvesting process. Implementation is continuing, and once outcomes are “ripe,” substantiation will be conducted. The process is ongoing but has been notably appreciated by GSMA leadership and donors, both to better evidence their work and also to help others understand their roles and contributions to the process too.



## MODULE VIII:

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Finally, based on Headlight's presentation on *The Evolution of a Method: Emergent Outcome Harvesting* at the American Evaluation Association's 2021 Annual Conference, and on conversations we have recently had with other evaluators in the field, we have included a few frequently asked questions below.

### METHODS SELECTION

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**Q Can an evaluator use a combination of methods, for example incorporating Most Significant Change as well as Outcome Harvesting for their work?**

**A** YES! Evaluators can (and should) use the combination of evaluation methods that best meet the needs and complexity of the questions being asked. For more on integrating methods, see our [Methods Decision Tree](#).

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**Q What if clients only know one outcome but are aware that there may be many others to explore? Would Outcome Harvesting be useful when beforehand the client only knows one anticipated outcome or goal? This method is traditionally a goal-free evaluation model, but it sounds like it has been used where there are anticipated outcomes as well, and does not only look for those, but also looks for unintended outcomes.**

**A** Yes, evaluators can certainly use this method if there are some anticipated and/or known outcomes, but they want a better understanding of all the outcomes achieved. The important piece here is that they are open and willing to capture all the outcomes (both intended and unintended).

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**Q Are there any particular recommendations for using this approach for an internal evaluation team?**

**A** Emergent Outcome Harvesting in particular works really well for an internal evaluation team as internal teams have a better chance of knowing the significance of a particular effort, implementation details, and are already embedded to capture changes as they emerge.

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**Q How are the barriers/enablers to Outcome Harvesting any different from other process-oriented evaluation approaches?**

**A** They are not wildly different. Process-oriented evaluations face a lot of the same struggles and require the same enablers to be truly successful. However, Emergent Outcome Harvesting may have a multiplier effect in how much these barriers/enablers influence the effectiveness of application due to how heavily dependent its success is on adaptation and continuous learning.

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**Q What does a “continuous basis” for Emergent Outcome Harvesting really mean? Does this mean just more frequently conducting Outcome Harvesting at regular intervals (e.g., if it is a 3 year project, every 6 months; or if it is 7 years, every 1 year), or is it an “open door” process where the documents for tracking outcomes are always available and updated whenever a new outcome is identified? How much time should an evaluator spend with their clients in the continuous engagement? Every week...every month? How do evaluators consult with clients who are at some physical distance?**

**A** We recommend/collaborate with our clients on at least a monthly basis virtually to ensure any ongoing work is accurately captured and tracked, we support them with proper identification of emergent outcomes (vs. outputs), and we can reach out to stakeholders on any “ripe” outcomes in a timely fashion (see the definition in the [Glossary](#) and notes in the Substantiation section above). We are tracking emerging outcomes all the time in this way, but then go through substantiation at certain intervals when we have enough “ripe” outcomes to dig into. This is typically when we have three or more “ripe” outcomes, and the frequency of these deep dives depends on the maturity of the activity—outcomes ripen less frequently in the first year of implementation versus the third.

## SUBSTANTIATION

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**Q What, if anything, has Headlight learned about how substantiation plays out as a function of outcomes from the more distant past versus recent ones?**

**A** There is a lot of recall bias on more distant outcomes, and people can really struggle to get to a level of nuance on who did what and the sequence of events, which is important to capture if the evaluator is trying to support adaptation (either replication or mitigating actions). They may need to speak with more stakeholders (more KIIs) for more distant outcomes to get the same level of substantiation and clarity around the outcome versus with more recent outcomes.

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**Q Can evaluators ever do substantiation / data validation using secondary sources?**

**A** They can, but it is not recommended unless the secondary sources are overwhelming. Evaluators really do want the detail and nuance to substantiate outcomes that give stakeholders a voice and improve the understanding of any complexities—especially to support adaptations that would come from the findings.

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**Q How should evaluators conduct substantiation to ensure that it is not just people “marking their own homework” which can be a problem if the evaluation relies on people’s perceptions of change?**

**A** Substantiation is usually where the method can go a little “wonky” and a key place where we emphasize qualitative rigor. See the step-by-step guidance for [Substantiation](#) and [notes on adaptations](#).

## NAVIGATING THE PROCESS AND ASSOCIATED DIFFICULTIES

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**Q What does the “Ad Hoc Request Tracker” capture and how does it help the Emergent Outcome Harvesting process?**

**A** This is a tracker that we have built and have [mentioned above](#) to capture any outputs/developments that may turn into emergent outcomes. It helps to ensure that things are captured in real-time instead of waiting until after everything has happened. This can make the outcome identification process much more streamlined and efficient since the step-by-step process from intervention to outcome is likely already captured, hopefully with supporting documentation.

**Q In terms of budgeting, does Outcome Harvesting require a significant MEL budget that would leave room for it to be used iteratively/continuously? It seems like it might be helpful to consider internal evaluators in those cases. How can internal Outcome Harvesting practitioners factor into this?**

**A** This is a GREAT question, and is crucial to having a successful Outcome Harvesting. Yes, Emergent Outcome Harvesting requires a healthy MEL budget, but should be tailored to the needs, scope, and available resources. Please see the Considerations Before Starting sub-sections of [Module III](#) and [Module IV](#), and the [Top Tip](#) around Level of Effort for more.

**Q It seems that Outcome Harvesting inherently addresses cultural and equity issues. Is that true?**

**A** Cultural and equity issues are only addressed if the evaluator is taking an inclusive sampling strategy and substantiation approach insofar as they are giving voice to multiple perspectives and experiences of an intervention and potential outcome. The evaluator is validating the outcome outside of just the implementer or donor’s perspective or opinion. Outcome Harvesting also focuses on capturing unintended outcomes or consequences, so it is a feedback loop that can help identify potential harm or negative secondary effects on communities that implementers and donors work with.

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**Q** What are the underlying evaluation competencies needed for Emergent Outcome Harvesting? How would an implementer assess (or an evaluator self-assess) that an evaluator is prepared to responsibly plan, implement, and adapt the process for an evaluation client? Also, if it is important to have evaluators with expertise for causal mechanisms, how does an evaluator acquire this expertise? Are there many evaluators that can claim this expertise?

**A** There are few different core competencies for Outcome Harvesting: change management/behavior change, facilitating evidence to action/adaptive management, systems thinking, and core understanding of qualitative rigor. We can assess this by digging for examples of facilitating adaptation with previous clients in recruitment processes, and at Headlight, we do a lot of training/capacity building internally on supporting behavior change and upholding standards of qualitative rigor. See the modules on [Evaluator Competencies](#) and a [Sample TOR](#) for more.

Typically, evaluators who have done some broader MEL and program design work will have some exposure to understanding causal mechanisms (and/or that is how an evaluator can build it). Supporting the design of theories of change and then conducting theory of change evaluations are the most practical way to build the experience and to understand the patterns and key pathways typically seen in causal mechanisms in the social impact space. This skillset is useful in using any evaluation method but is particularly important when the implementer is trying to identify progress emergently or to assess contribution in the midst of complex processes/interventions.

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**Q** What are some of the strategies to encourage implementing organization buy-in?

**A** Oddly enough for such an emergent approach, we have found that the recent push with FCDO and USAID around Value for Money (VfM) is a decent talking point. Always much better to know in the near term if something is not working or is having many unintended consequences than 2, 3, or 5 years from the start if something worked or did not work. Especially with Private Sector as well, the VfM to know what is working and to pivot, and push around CLA towards Adaptive Management that has been growing for the past 8 years are effective motivators. Also, active organizational change efforts can serve as effective entry points as well.

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**Q** What recommendations does Headlight have to help clients navigate negative unintended outcomes?

**A** It takes a lot of trust and relationship building. Sometimes we help clients work through by modeling and being vulnerable about where Headlight's work has had negative unintended outcomes and how we have adapted. We are human, we are not going to get things perfectly right in our initial implementation, it is an unreasonable assumption. The real key is how we are working to learn, know better, and do better. There is some helpful guidance on this in [the Implementing Developmental Evaluation Guide](#).

## Annex A:

# Outcome Description Template

This template is designed to be used to gather all the necessary details for a sufficiently detailed outcome description. Once completed as part of Review Any Documentation and Draft Outcomes for Substantiation stage, the evaluator can then use any completed outcome descriptions for primary and secondary interviews with those affected.

<b>Outcome #X:</b>	[Outcome Name]
<b>Outcome Description:</b>	<b>Change Agent(s):</b> <b>What Changed?:</b> [ONE SENTENCE SUMMARY] e.g., The [CHANGE AGENT] did [SOMETHING] which caused [AN OUTCOME] <b>When:</b> [MONTH/YEAR] <b>Sources:</b> [PROVIDE NAME OF RELATED AND USEFUL SOURCES OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION] <b>Context:</b> [UNDER WHAT CONDITIONS OR CIRCUMSTANCES DID THE OUTCOME EMERGE]
<b>Significance:</b> Why was the outcome important? How did it change the enabling environment?	
<b>Contribution:</b> How did the change agent contribute to this outcome? What influence did the team have?	
<b>Alternate Explanations:</b> What/who else could have contributed to the outcome?	

## Annex B:

# Outcome Identification– Sample Primary Interview Protocol

Because Primary Interviews are often working to identify the initial intended and unintended outcomes in a particular context, it is hard to fully build out a sample protocol as a template. We have included some general suggestions below, but the aim of Primary Interviews is to get an overview of how any known outcomes may have evolved and identify any potential unintended outcomes.

Outcome Harvesting Interview	
First Round: Outcome Identification	
Name of the Effort:	
Sample Group:	
Interviewee:	
Relevant Interviewee Demographic Information:	
Date of Interview:	

1. Can you describe your role and/or engagement with the [Implementing Organization]?
2. How did you first come to work with the implementer?
3. What key outcomes have come from the [Implementing Organization] [Name of Project] over the past few years?

### PER OUTCOME MENTIONED IN #3:

1. Who was involved in the outcome?
  - a. Who caused the change?
  - b. Who did the change affect?
2. What was the implementing organization's explicit contribution? Do you think the outcome would have happened if [Implementing Organization] was not involved?
3. What is the significance of the outcome? How will the outcome contribute to broader ecosystem change, goals, or organization priorities?
4. What evidence do you have that this outcome has taken place? (reports, files, emails, meeting notes, evaluations, etc.) Can you share them with us?
5. Are there any other reflections you would like to share with us? Things the implementer could do better? Any other people we should speak with?

## Annex C:

# Sample Substantiation– Secondary and Tertiary Interview Protocol

Because Secondary/Tertiary Interviews are often working to fill gaps, it is hard to fully build out a sample protocol as a template. We have included some general suggestions below, but the aim of Secondary and Tertiary Interviews is to increasingly unpack the more ambiguous or obtuse details of the outcome(s) identified in previous steps, so some inter What has been the collective effect of grantees' engagement in policy-making on the national government's approach to inclusion? views might be very targeted, while others, depending on what has already been clarified, might be more reaffirming of the process taken to achieve the outcome or its benefits.

## Outcome Harvesting Interview

### Second/Third Round: Outcome Substantiation

Name of the Effort:	
Sample Group:	
Interviewee:	
Relevant Interviewee Demographic Information:	
Date of Interview:	

1. How did the relationship between you and [Implementing Organization] evolve?
2. What was the motivating factor for engagement?
3. What was the output from the original engagement?
4. Over what period of time did the engagement occur?

### PER OUTCOME

1. How did [brief description of outcome in question] start?
2. How did [Implementing Organization] contribute to the outcome?
  - a. Who else was necessary in making the outcome come to fruition?
3. *\*Additional questions should ask specifically about missing or contradictory information concerning the outcome in question that would help build a more complete understanding of what the outcome was and how it came to be.*

## Annex D:

# Evaluator Terms of Reference Outline

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### Organization Background

*Provide an overview of the implementing organization, complementing the project background.*

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### Relevant Project Background

*This section should include a description of the problem the project seeks to address and the project's narrative or visual theory of change.*

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### Scope of Work:

*Provide an overview of the intended scope of the evaluative effort. What are the core expected tasks for the consultant or evaluation team? Will they be responsible for design, implementation, and adaptation support? Who will they be primarily working with at the implementing organization? Who do they need to coordinate with? How much support are they expected to provide outside the data collection and analysis (i.e., is the Outcome Harvesting evaluative effort Retrospective or Emergent)? A very brief example of a scope overview is provided below.*

*The consultant will design and implement an Outcome Harvesting evaluation approach to capture the results of the activity/program/strategy. This will include identifying potential outcomes via relevant data sources; facilitating agreement on outcomes to be substantiated with relevant stakeholders, including implementing organization staff and the donor; and substantiating those outcomes with other stakeholders (to be identified by the consultant in collaboration with staff and recommendation owners).*

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### Expected Period of Performance

*Provide the length of time the evaluative effort and support is expected to last, as well as any other engagement implications (such as a regular, but non-continuous engagement cycle for Emergent Outcome Harvesting). As a reminder, Retrospective Outcome Harvesting should be given at least three months to be conducted after contracting.*



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## Resources

*Provide an overview of the funds and/or level of effort anticipated for the evaluative effort.*

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## Anticipated Tasks & Responsibilities:

*Make sure to include a more detailed description of the anticipated tasks and responsibilities for the consultant so that they can appropriately match skills, knowledge, and availability with the desired service delivery. This section should include early estimates of the outcomes range for identification and substantiation, the level of collaboration desired throughout, and any special support needs. This is also an excellent section to include more details about the amount of support needed after the evaluation is complete. For a more limited Retrospective Outcome Harvesting evaluation, the implementing organization should highlight if they want a working session to prioritize and action plan recommendations. For Emergent Outcome Harvesting, the implementing organization should highlight what type of tracking support responsibilities are required, how often they want substantiation cycles, and how much facilitation support is desired for adaptations.*

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## Deliverables:

*Include any early expectations around the type of deliverables that are needed and will be most useful from the evaluation. This should include any evaluation design deliverables, tracking/monitoring tools needed for Emergent Outcome Harvesting, and final deliverables and support for all necessary audiences.*

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## Qualifications:

*It is also valuable to include qualifications to ensure appropriate candidates submit proposals. We have provided some sample qualifications below.*

- Master's Degree and 8 years' relevant experience OR Ph.D. and 6 years' experience;
- 5 years' experience in international development;
- Experience with [INSERT DONOR];
- Ability to gather evidence and present analysis in a competent and engaging manner;
- Excellent written and oral communication skills;
- Ability to work collaboratively within and across teams;
- Experience in examining large amounts of data and extracting relevant information for a summary;
- Experience in stakeholder engagement and facilitation.
- Previous experience in the Outcome Harvesting approach

## Annex E:

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