

THEORY OF CHANGE

Theories of change describe how interventions can bring about long-term improvements in community and individual health through a logical sequence of intermediate outcomes. They are used to design and measure the impact of public health programs through monitoring and evaluation.

The social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. These circumstances are shaped by the distribution of resources between communities. The social determinants of health are the main cause of health inequality in Australia - the unfair and avoidable differences in health status in rural and remote communities.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation estimates that only 20 percent of health outcomes can be attributed to access to health and medical care. Upstream social determinants of health account for the other 80 percent, including socioeconomic factors (40 percent), environmental (10 percent), and behaviours (30 percent).

Research has shown that targeted interventions to address social determinants at a local level can significantly improve health outcomes in rural and remote communities, reduce preventable illness and reduce the economic burden of increasing hospital and aged care costs resulting from higher levels of chronic disease.

For example, people with poor health literacy are between 1.5 and 3 times more likely to experience an adverse health outcome; walking 30 minutes a day reduces the burden of disease by 26 percent according to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare; quitting smoking before 40 years of age will reduce the risk of dying of a smoking related illness by 90 percent after 10 years.

Improving health and well-being requires engagement not just by health organisations, but by a range of community and human services.

Successful change can only occur through engagement with local communities in planning for their own health futures encouraging improved health literacy, greater community awareness of the causes of poor health and better coordination of existing resources and services.

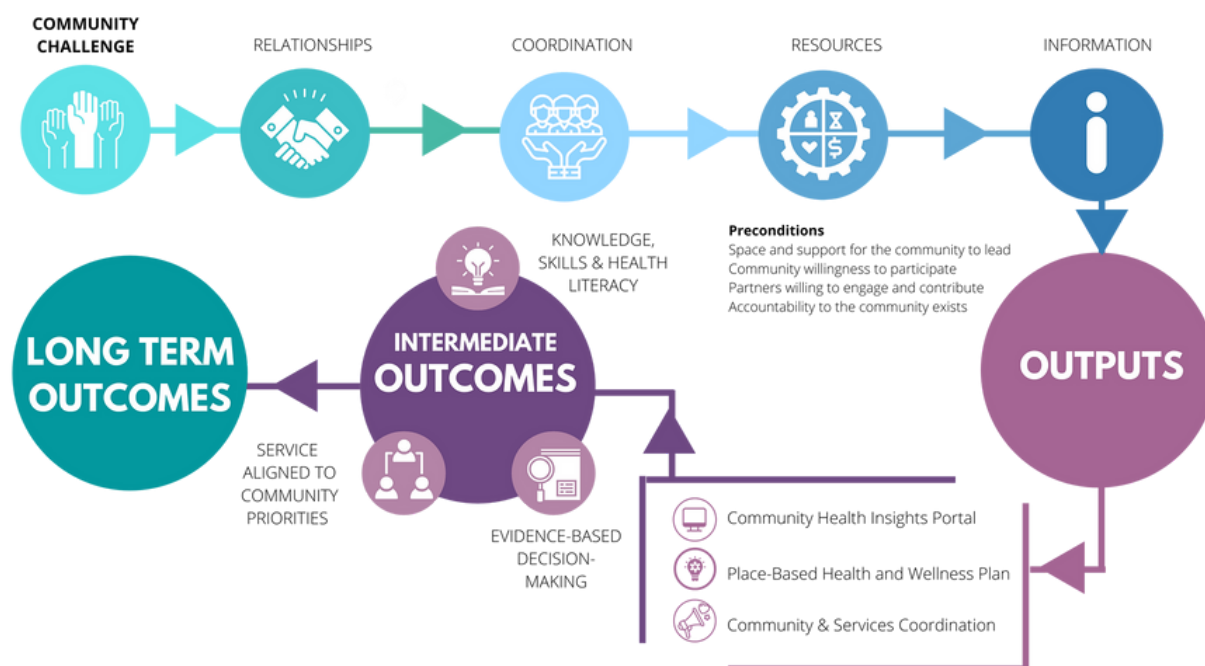
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Underpinning the Foundation's Theory of Change is a number of assumptions:

- While disadvantage communities often share common health characteristics, each community is unique in terms of its voice, culture, history, experiences and decision making processes
- All communities are equal and their unique voices deserve to be heard
- Individuals can change with the right information, skills and support
- Systems and institutions can become more responsive to communities by developing a common language and shared aims.



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FOR MORE INFORMATION

To discuss your community needs, email or call us.

📞 02 4062 8900

✉ info@thcfa.org.au