YOUR EVALUATOR TOLD YOU

You need a

theory of change

What is it? Why should you care?

A FLOWERY EXAMPLE FROM THE CENTER FOR RESEARCH EVALUATION

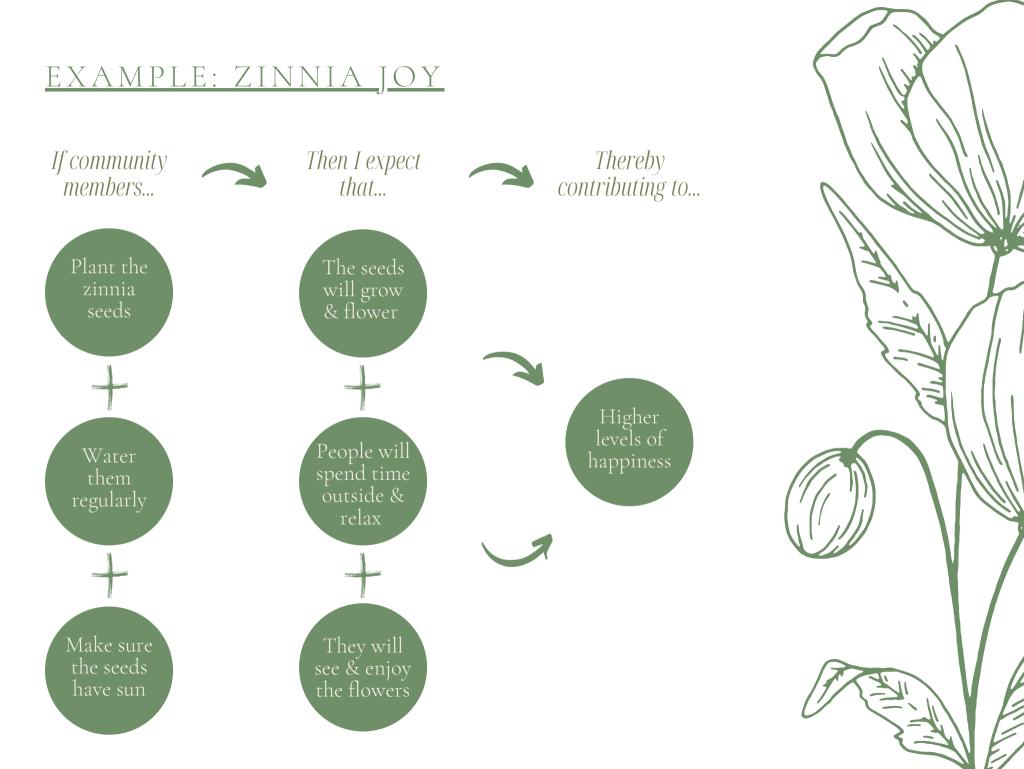


## EXAMPLE

LET'S SAY I BELIEVE PLANTING FLOWERS LEADS TO GREATER HAPPINESS.

I GET FUNDING FOR A PROGRAM THAT DISTRIBUTES <u>ZINNIA</u> <u>SEEDS</u> TO MEMBERS OF MY COMMUNITY.

MY (SIMPLE) THEORY OF CHANGE IS AS FOLLOWS:



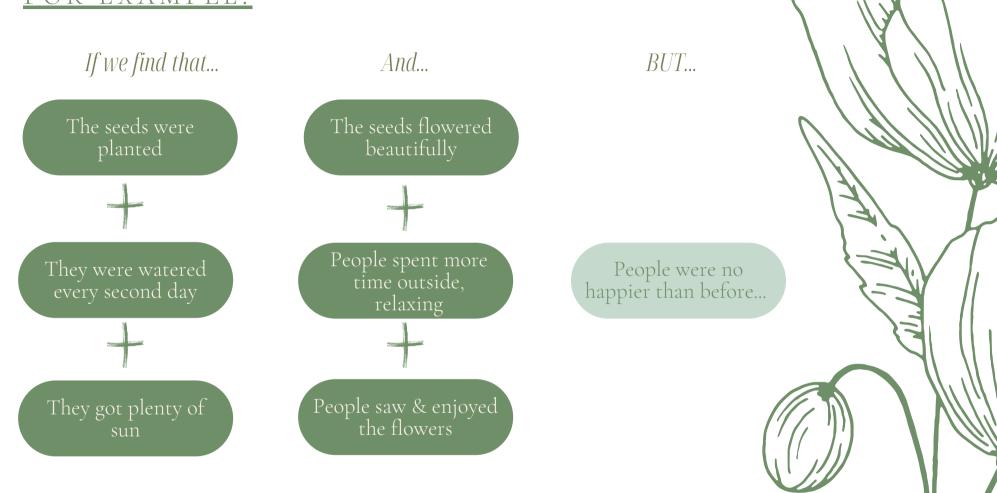
# EVALUATORS WILL COLLECT DATA ON EACH PART OF THE THEORY OF CHANGE:



WERE THERE POSITIVE OUTCOMES? AND (2) DOES THE DATA SUPPORT YOUR THEORY ABOUT THE PROGRAM DESIGN?



#### For example:

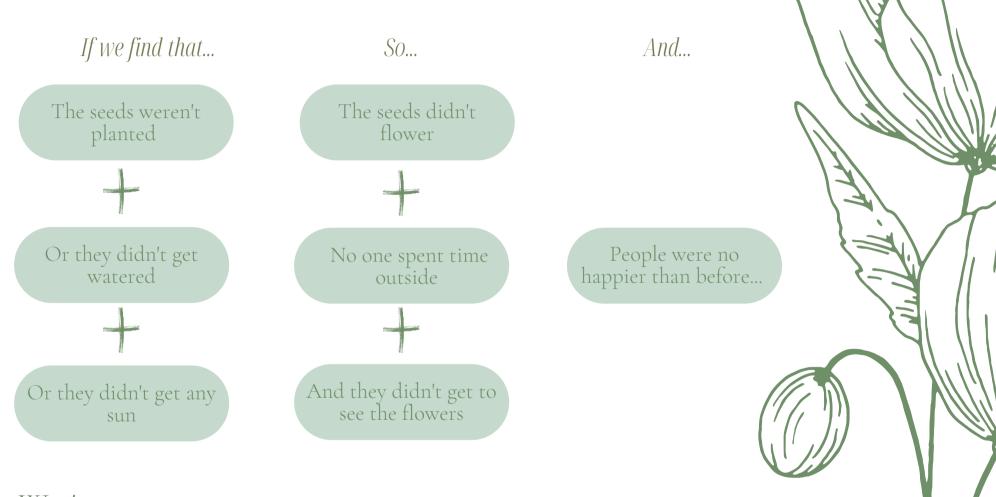


## WE'LL KNOW THERE WAS A PROBLEM WITH THE PROGRAM DESIGN.

Maybe the world is more complex than we think? Maybe there are other things that also need to change to influence overall happiness. The results tell us the program design needs a re-think.



#### ON THE OTHER HAND:



## WE'LL KNOW THERE WAS A PROBLEM WITH PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION.

We'll need to look at strategies for re-jigging the program roll-out. Maybe people don't have time to plant the seeds? Maybe they need better instructions? These results tell us the theory behind the program design *might still work* but we need to improve implementation.



### <u>Alternatively:</u>



remove unnecessary components.

THESE ARE JUST THREE POSSIBLE OUTCOME CONFIGURATIONS.

EACH DIFFERENT CONFIGURATION HELPS US PINPOINT: WHAT'S WORKING? WHAT'S NOT? <u>WHERE DO WE</u> <u>NEED TO FOCUS OUR</u> <u>ATTENTION?</u>

IT'S THIS DIAGNOSTIC CAPABILITY THAT KEEPS US EVALUATORS COMING BACK TO THE PHRASE:

You need a theory of change.

Developed by the Center for Research Evaluation at the University of Mississippi <u>cere.olemiss.edu</u>