

# ZEVOLI

GROWTH PARTNERS

A photograph of two construction workers at a construction site. The worker on the left is wearing a white hard hat and a yellow safety vest, looking at a tablet. The worker on the right is wearing a blue hard hat and an orange safety vest, looking towards the camera. In the background, there is a large construction site with scaffolding and a yellow crane under a blue sky with white clouds.

## From Vision to Impact: A Roadmap through Theories of Change

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This paper explores the concept and significance of a Theory of Change within the context of Enterprise and Supplier Development (ESD) programmes. It highlights the transformative journey of Zevoli Growth Partners from a for-profit entity to a purpose-driven social enterprise through the development of a Theory of Change. It aims to provide insights into the benefits of implementing a Theory of Change and outlines a comprehensive methodology to assist organizations in planning, implementing, and evaluating initiatives for social change.

Zevoli's experience in developing its Theory of Change has facilitated the clear definition of social impact goals, establishment of a strong connection between plans and outcomes, identification of necessary activities and resources, and the setting of clear goals for successful ESD programme execution. The article underscores the role of a Theory of Change in enhancing the impact of SME capacity building programmes and local procurement objectives.

It outlines a six-step methodology for defining a compelling Theory of Change, highlighting the importance of identifying root causes, setting measurable goals, defining outcomes and outputs, mapping activities, and assessing assumptions. The insights and analysis section emphasizes

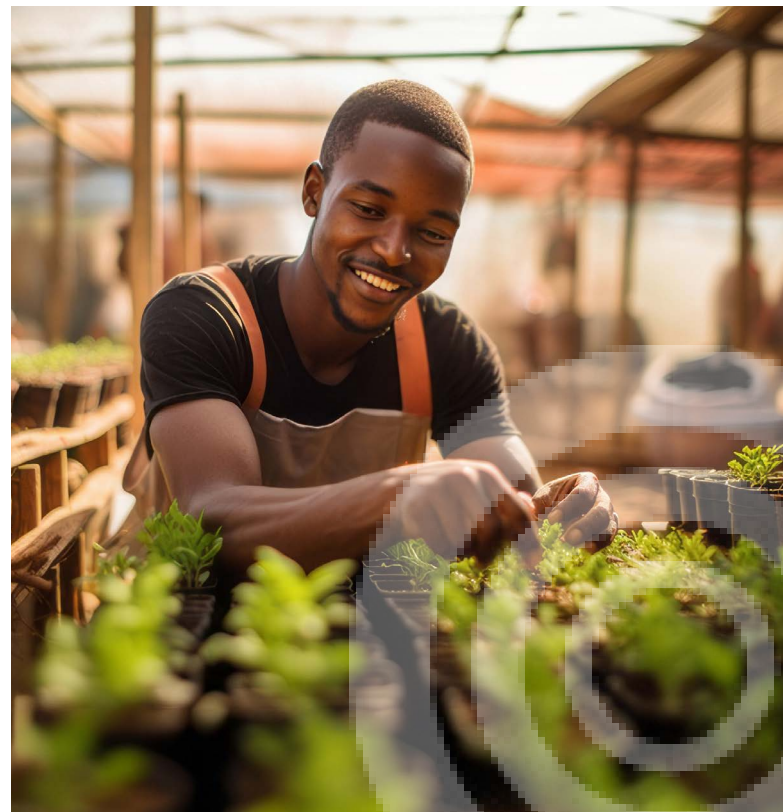
embracing complexity, incorporating diverse perspectives, using stories, continuous learning and adaptation, and prioritizing an evidence-based approach in the development of a Theory of Change.

As a trusted partner, Zevoli stands ready to assist clients in developing their unique Theories of Change based on our experience and expertise. By adopting this approach, organizations can enhance the effectiveness of their ESD strategies and achieve targeted, measurable impacts.

## How should I measure impact?

In the world of the “S” in ESG, Sustainability, Socio-economic Development and Enterprise and Supplier Development (ESD), a Theory of Change serves as a crucial tool to bridge the gap between programme activities and desired social impact. However, the significant role that a Theory of Change plays in cascading the development related strategic objectives into measurable outcomes is often not highlighted enough.

At Zevoli, our recent transformative journey of developing a Theory of Change, gathering the data for and publishing our inaugural Impact Report demonstrated the critical role that a Theory of Change plays in providing us the ability to measure the extent to which we achieved our intended impact, and how to course correct to ensure that we improve the achieved result. The objective of this paper is to accentuate the importance and benefits of developing and adopting a Theory of Change as a tool to enable the tangible measurement of the achievement of your strategic objectives, and serve as a call to action for organizations to adopt and implement a Theory of Change.





# What is a Theory of Change?

A Theory of Change provides a comprehensive illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to occur within a specific context. The process of developing one enabled us to clearly articulate our long-term goals, identify measurable indicators of success, and formulate actions to achieve our envisaged social impact. The benefits derived from this journey include:

1. a well-defined social impact vision,
2. a strong connection between our plans and outcomes,
3. clarity on the required activities and resources, and
4. the effective management of changes that arise.

This proved to be an exceptionally important stepping stone to the bridge the gap between what an ESD programme or initiative does (activities and outputs) and how this leads to a desired goals being achieved (outcomes). We believe that this is an important question to answer not only as an Entrepreneur Support Organisation (ESO) but also as a corporate that is committed to cascade their ESD strategy to a measurable impact statement. If the strategy represents the “what”, the Theory of Change represents the “how” and the implementation plan emphasizes the “when” and “who”.

While our clients have benefited from our assistance in developing their respective ESD strategies, complimenting this with a Theory of Change helps the team to focus on and stay the course to achieving the organisation’s purpose and overall goal. It creates closer alignment between what activities the team engages in daily, the “how” and how that rolls up to the “what”. It creates the link between the Theory of Change and a company’s ESD strategy, and the conditions necessary for achieving the set long-term goals. A Theory of Change encourages reflective dialogue, ensuring clarity, understanding, and alignment to the set goals.



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# How do I develop a Theory of Change?

The Theory of Change is a robust framework for planning, implementing, and evaluating initiatives. Its key steps provide a systematic guide to defining problems, setting end-goals, identifying outcomes, mapping activities, addressing assumptions, and crafting a narrative. This methodology ensures a focused and evidence-based approach, setting the foundation for impactful social change. Defining a Theory of Change requires of a team to workshop and complete the following steps:

1. Articulate the issue by outlining the identified root causes and stakeholders,
2. Specify the intended end-goal or impact,
3. Outline the outcome and output results necessary to attain the desired end-goal,
4. Chart activities that may yield short- and long-term results,
5. Recognize the primary assumptions and assess their validity or uncertainty, and
6. Summarize the process through the creation of a narrative.

Your end goal is to complete the statement in the left column:

|                   |                     |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| If we...          | Inputs              |
| by...             | Activities          |
| it will...        | Outputs             |
| leading to...     | Short-term outcomes |
| and ultimately... | Long-term outcomes  |

## Conclusion

A well-crafted Theory of Change is not just a document; it's a dynamic tool that empowers organizations to drive impactful social change. We invite our clients to embark on this transformative journey with us, leveraging our experience and expertise to co-design a Theory of Change that align with their ESD strategy vision and goals. The value lies not only in having a strategy but in understanding the pathways to success and ensuring a measurable and sustainable impact. Let us collaboratively shape a future where ESD programmes lead to meaningful societal transformation.

# About Zevoli Growth Partners:

Zevoli Growth Partners is a pioneering entrepreneurship support organization (ESO). Since 2014, the organization has been actively involved in developing and implementing Enterprise and Supplier Development programmes and initiatives to empower black-owned small businesses, particularly those in rural and peri-urban areas. Our mission is to bridge the gap between corporates and SMEs, contributing to a world where supplier diversity is the standard, while achieving and maintaining financial sustainability as a social enterprise. Our Theory of Change is “We seek to improve the livelihoods of people within a rural and peri-urban environment through the development of small and micro businesses by bridging the gap between them and their markets by creating access to opportunities. This Theory of Change supports the achievement of our purpose statement (mission, purpose, vision), “Our mission is to bridge the gaps between corporates and SMEs to improve the standards of living through providing access to opportunities as we build a world where supplier diversity is business as usual.”



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