



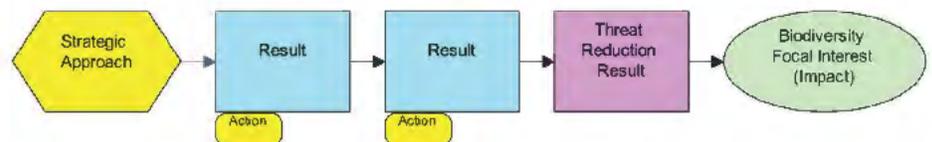
Using Results Chains to Depict Theories of Change in USAID Biodiversity Programming

Biodiversity How-To Guide 2 describes the results chains tool, how to build results chains, and the benefits of developing results chains to support biodiversity conservation programming. This second How-To Guide builds off the situation models guide to help design teams develop results chains that clearly state the expected results and assumptions behind the proposed strategic approaches that make up the program's theory of change. Results chains are useful tools for biodiversity program design teams because they help them discuss, refine, and make their programmatic assumptions explicit; measure the effectiveness of their strategic approaches; and develop a common framework for cross-program learning among programs using similar strategic approaches.

BUILDING A RESULTS CHAIN

- Step 1: Define the purpose and sub-purpose(s) statements
- Step 2: Select & separate relevant components from the situation model
- Step 3: Add key missing drivers (if needed)
- Step 4: Brainstorm strategic approaches
- Step 5: Prioritize and select draft strategic approaches
- Step 6: Select and separate prioritized strategic approach components
- Step 7: Convert selected strategic approach components into desired results
- Step 8: Rethink results logic and add important missing results
- Step 9: Add illustrative actions (as needed)
- Step 10: Verify the results chain meets the criteria of a good results chain
- Step 11: Link to other strategic approaches to clarify logic (as needed)
- Step 12: (Optional) Add critical assumptions and risks
- Step 13: Consider whether these are the right strategic approaches

CORE COMPONENTS



Biodiversity Focal Interest (Impact): The desired state of the biodiversity focal interest that a program seeks to achieve.

Threat Reduction Result: The desired reduction in a specific threat that a program seeks to achieve.

Result: Preliminary or short-term results needed to achieve a threat reduction result and ultimately the biodiversity focal interest impact.

Strategic Approach: A set of actions with a common focus that work together to achieve a series of results in a results chain.

Action: Specific interventions or sets of tasks undertaken in order to reach one or more results. An action must be linked to a result.

KEY TERMS

A **development hypothesis** describes the theory of change, logic, and causal relationships among the building blocks needed to achieve or contribute to a long-term result

A **theory of change** is a description of the logical causal relationships among a strategic approach and multiple levels of conditions or preliminary results needed to achieve a long-term result. It can be presented in text or diagrammatic form, or both. This How-To Guide presents theories of change in a box and arrow logic model known as a results chain.

A **results chain** is a diagram or graphic representation of a theory of change. It is a type of logic model.

RESULTS CHAINS SUPPORT THE PROGRAM CYCLE

USAID requires the use of a logic model to depict a project's theory of change. This Guide describes how results chains can be used as the logic model of choice for such purpose at the project and activity design levels. Results Chains help teams:



- Brainstorm and prioritize strategic approaches with a focus on results, not actions
- Articulate the theory of change
- Document assumptions
- Define the expected results at multiple levels (purpose, sub-purpose, etc.)
- Define realistic timeframes
- Provide a framework for collaborating, learning, and adapting
- Identify the conditions under which strategic approaches work, do not work, and why

CRITERIA FOR A GOOD RESULTS CHAIN

1. **Results-oriented:** Boxes contain desired results (e.g., reduction of hunting) and not actions (e.g., conduct a study).
2. **Causally linked:** There are clear if-then connections between each pair of successive boxes.
3. **Demonstrates change:** Each box describes how a design team hopes the relevant factor will change (e.g., improve, increase, or decrease).
4. **Reasonably complete:** There are sufficient boxes to construct logical connections but not so many that the results chain becomes overly complex.
5. **Simple:** There is only one result per box.

TYPES OF ASSUMPTIONS

In USAID programming, the term “assumption” can have a different connotation than the assumptions addressed and clarified in this How-To Guide.

Assumptions in a results chain refer to the causal (if-then) results a design team assumes will come from implementing a strategic approach. They are tied to the project or activity strategic approach(es) and are represented by arrows in the diagrams. They may also be called programmatic assumptions.

Critical Assumptions and Risks refer to the most critical uncertainties and risk factors beyond USAID's influence or control that could affect achievement of the program's planned results. Design teams should identify project critical assumptions ([ADS 201](#)). These are important assumptions that could influence a program's success, but they are not directly related to the causal results achieved from implementing the program.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[How-To Guide 1: Developing Situation Models in USAID Biodiversity Programming](#)

[How-To Guide 2: Using Results Chains to Depict Theories of Change in USAID Biodiversity Programming](#)

[How-To Guide 3: Defining Outcomes and Indicators for Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning in USAID Biodiversity Programming](#)

[USAID Biodiversity Policy \(2014\)](#)

[USAID ADS Chapter 201: Program Cycle Operational Policy \(2016\)](#)

[USAID Biodiversity Handbook \(2015\)](#)

Conservation Measures Partnership: www.conservationmeasures.org

Miradi: www.miradi.org