THEORY OF CHANGE

Scale Toolkit

better purpose

The contents and templates included in this toolkit were developed in collaboration with **Better Purpose**.

WHAT IS IT?

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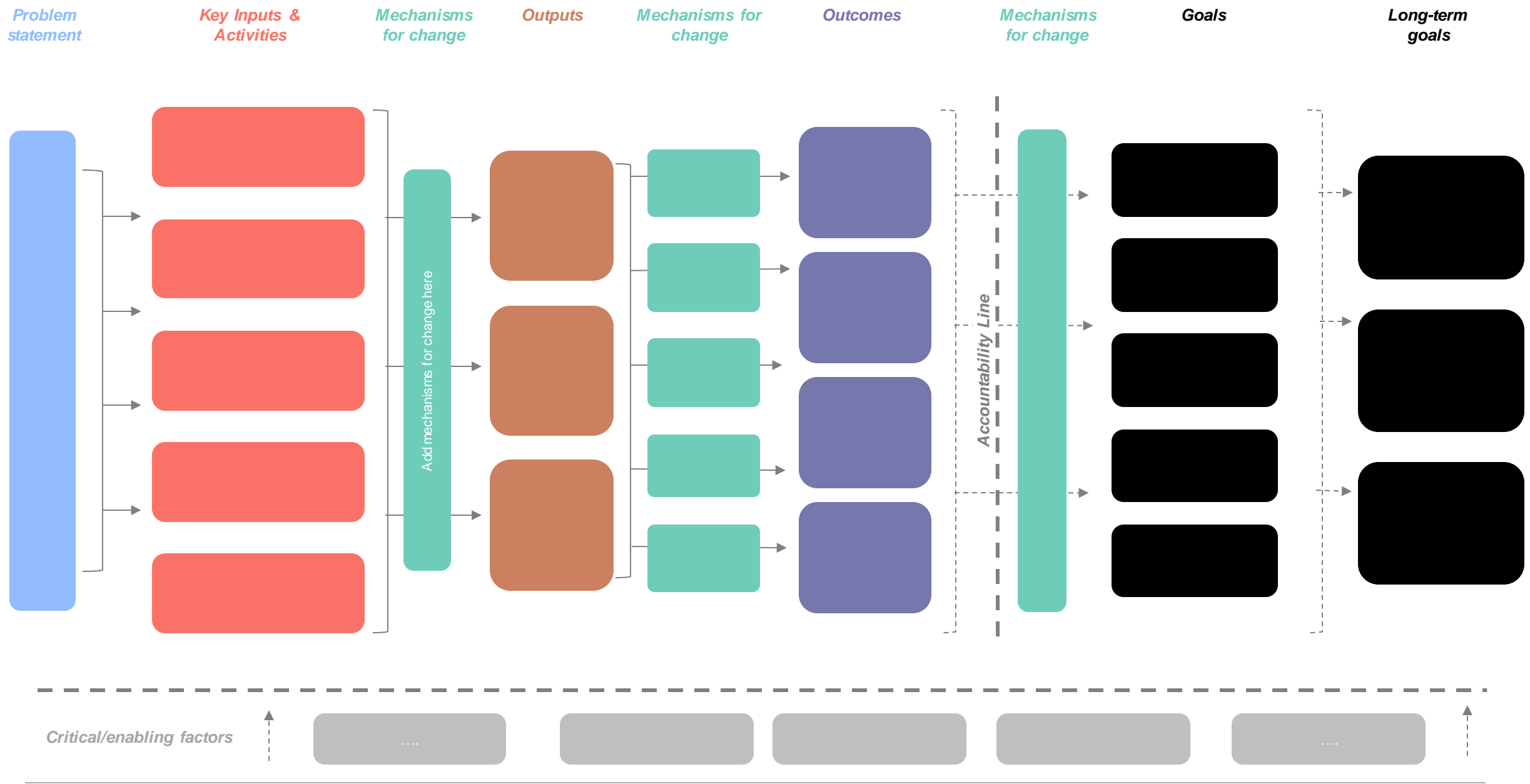SCHOOLS
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We all want to create change.

A theory of change describes how we
believe that change could be made to happen
and outlines the main elements for that change.
It helps us understand our goals, plan our
actions, communicate our change, and evaluate
our impact. This presentation will guide your
development of a theory of change step-by-
step.

A theory of change helps us to understand our programme, identify missing components, communicate our approach and measure our impact.

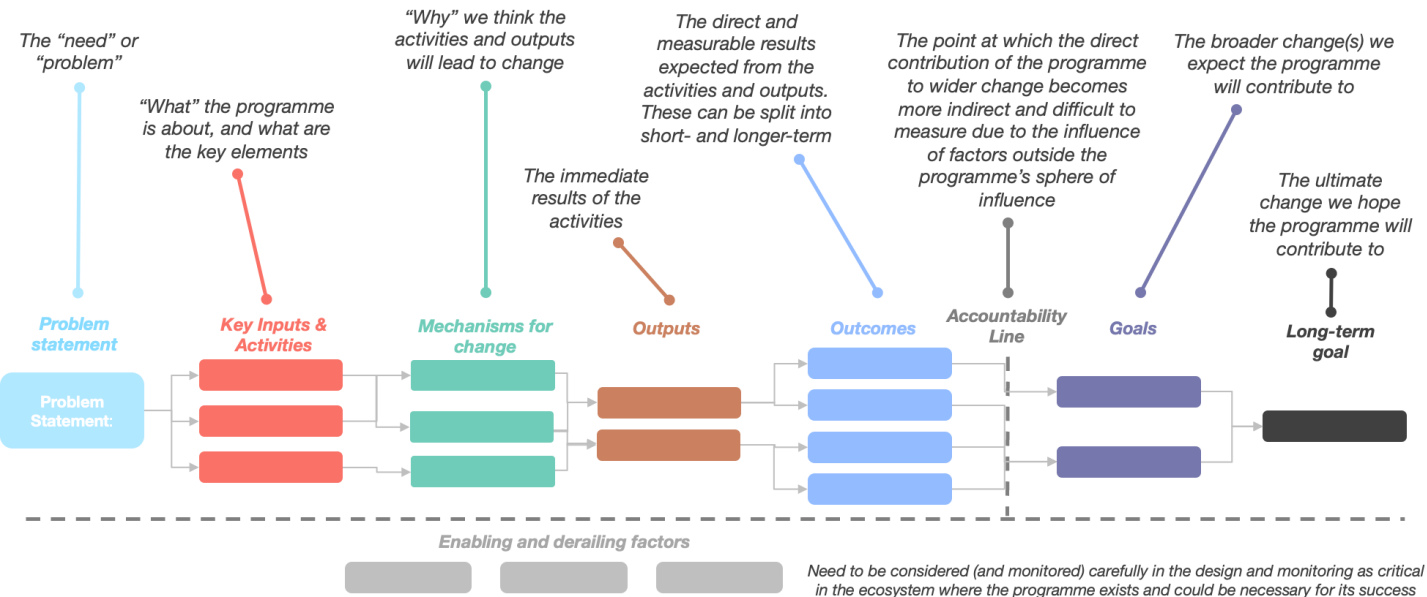It can be particularly useful for:

- **Strategic Planning**: At the onset of designing a new educational programme or revising existing ones, a ToC helps in setting clear objectives and strategies.
- **Fundraising & Grant Applications**: Donors and supporters often seek clarity on how their contributions will lead to change. A ToC provides this clarity, enhancing the NGO's credibility.
- **Stakeholder Communication**: When introducing the NGO's mission to new stakeholders or re-engaging with existing ones, a ToC serves as a visual and narrative tool to convey the organisation's impact journey.
- **Review & Reflection**: Periodically, NGOs should revisit their ToC to assess if they're on track or if adjustments are needed based on changing educational landscapes.

HOW TO DEVELOP THE THEORY OF CHANGE

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COMPONENTS OF A THEORY OF CHANGE

The "need" or "problem"

"What" the programme is about, and what are the key elements

"Why" we think the activities and outputs will lead to change

The direct and measurable results expected from the activities and outputs. These can be split into short- and longer-term

The immediate results of the activities

The point at which the direct contribution of the programme to wider change becomes more indirect and difficult to measure due to the influence of factors outside the programme's sphere of influence

The broader change(s) we expect the programme will contribute to

The ultimate change we hope the programme will contribute to

Problem statement

Key Inputs & Activities

Mechanisms for change

Outputs

Outcomes

Accountability Line

Goals

Long-term goal

Problem Statement:

Enabling and derailing factors

Need to be considered (and monitored) carefully in the design and monitoring as critical in the ecosystem where the programme exists and could be necessary for its success

Credit: Theory of change template developed by Better Purpose
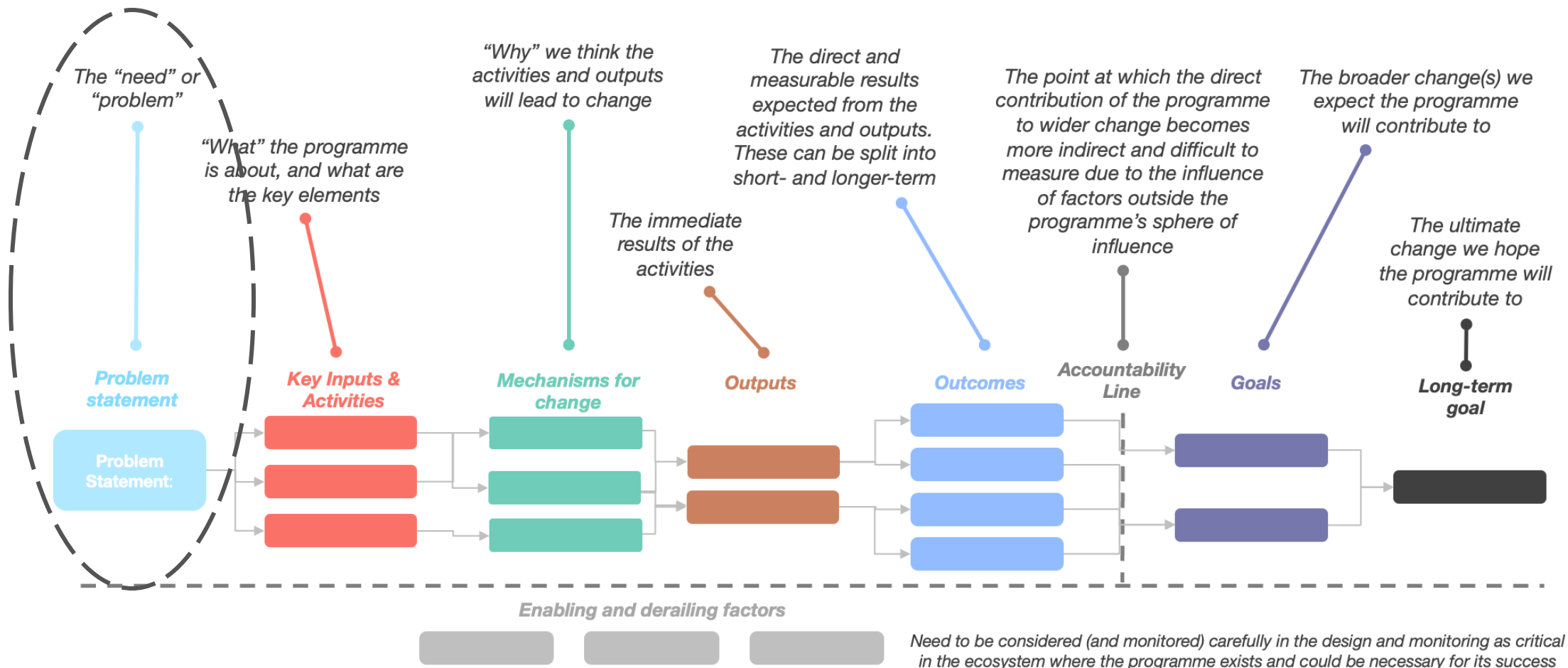
Components of a Theory of Change

Whether you are creating a theory of change for your organisation or for a programme within it, you will need to think about a number of components.

Working through each of the components will help you understand how your key activities will contribute towards your ultimate goals of tackling your problem statement.

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The "need" or "problem"

Guidance box

What problem does the programme seek to solve?

- The problem statement describes the "need" or "problem" that the programme aims to address.

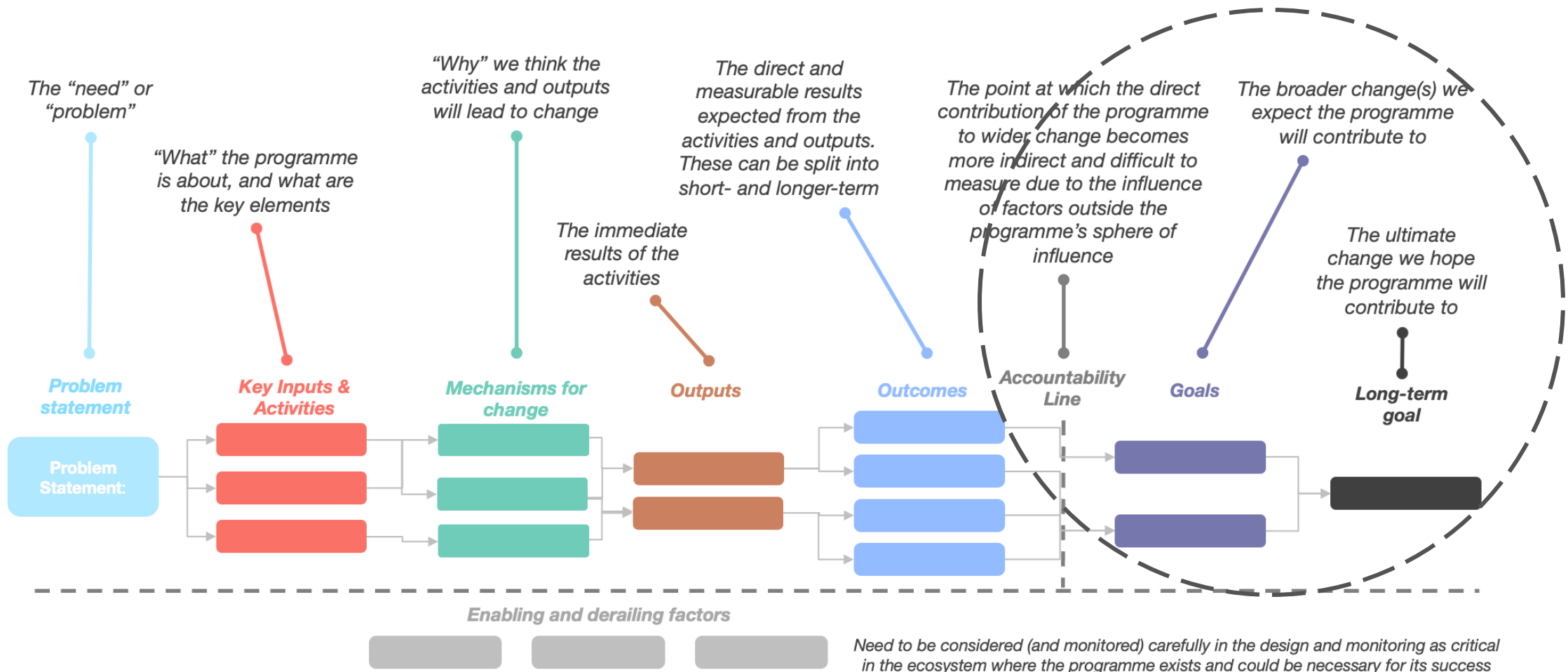- The Problem Tree will be a useful tool.

Problem statement

Problem Statement:

Input the problem statement that you developed using the problem tree exercise.

This is the main problem you want to solve.
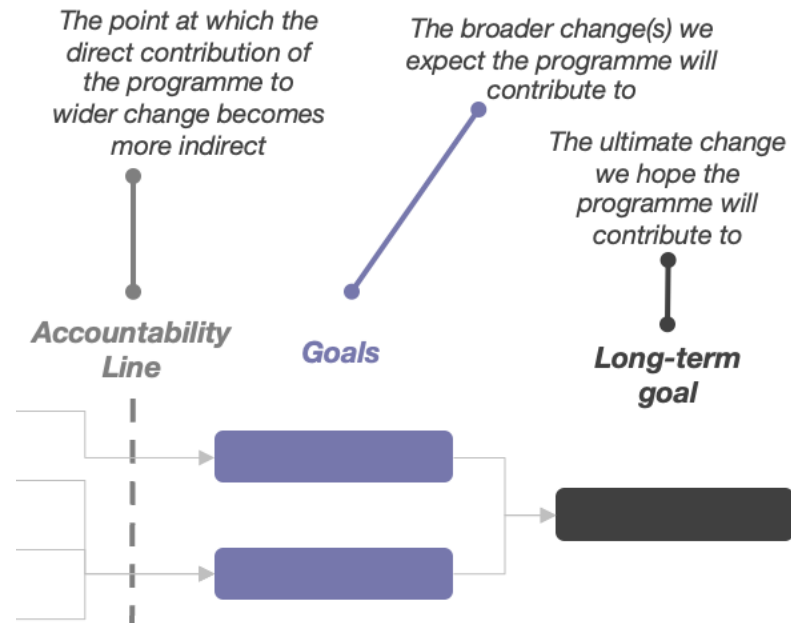
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Step 2: Long-Term Goals

Guidance box

What longer-term goals does the programme aim to contribute to?

- You can ask yourself: What is the pace of change we expect to see? When do we expect to be able to measure it?

- It can be helpful to consider which goals are 'beyond the accountability line' or outside the sphere of control of the programme.

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Identify your long-term goals. These are the larger changes you hope to contribute to in the long run. To figure out your long-term goals, ask, "What big changes do we want to see in the future as a result of our work?"

Here are some factors your long-term goals should consider:

- **Big but Reachable**: Your goals should be ambitious, inspiring your team to strive for substantial impact. But they should also be achievable, so your team doesn't get discouraged. Your long-term goals, should push your organisation to stretch beyond its current capabilities and achieve more.

- **Aligned with Your Mission**: The goals must match up with your organisation's core purpose. They should be a natural extension of your mission and vision.

- **Measurable:** It should be possible to track these goals with measurable indicators, though as we will see later, these long-term goals may be influenced by factors outside your control.

A Note on Accountability

As an organization, you have a responsibility to your beneficiaries, community, donors, and yourself to use your resources effectively and achieve your goals. This is where accountability comes in.

Accountability in this context means regularly checking and showing that you are making progress toward your goals. This involves:

Monitoring: Keep track of your activities, outputs, and outcomes. Are you doing what you planned? Are you seeing the changes you hoped for?

Evaluation: Take time to review and understand the data you collect through monitoring. What's working well? What needs to change?
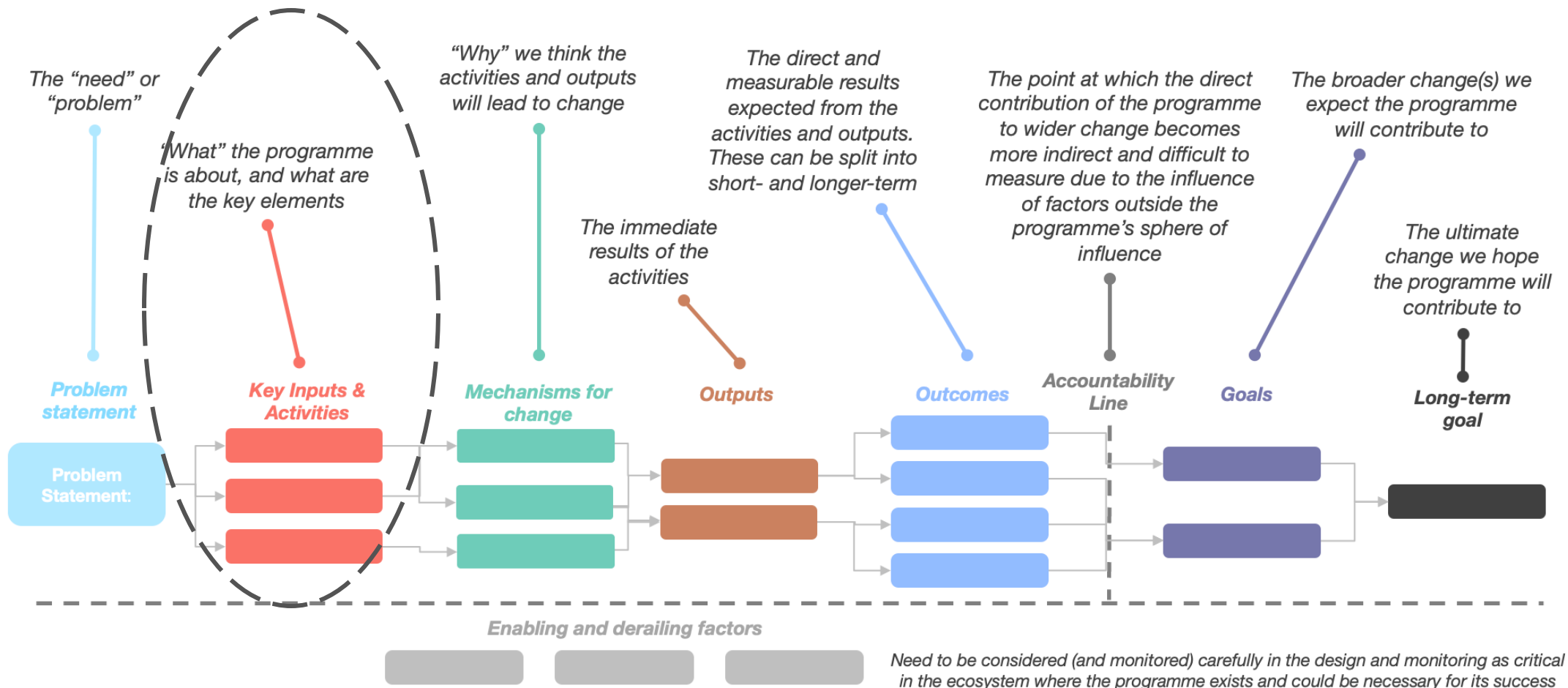
Communication: Share your progress and learnings with your team, beneficiaries, donors, and other stakeholders. This can help build trust and support for your work.

The **accountability line** shows where your program's direct impact starts to mix with effects from other things outside your programme. Beyond this line, it gets harder to tell exactly how much change your programme is causing because there are many other factors at play.

It is important to reflect on where you feel your programme can reasonably be held directly accountable for the results. Monitoring usually measures indicators to the left of the accountability line only, while evaluations are aimed at measuring the impact of the programme on both sides of the accountability line. Evaluations acknowledge that that the impact on the elements of the ToC that are on the right side of the line are more indirect (and referred to as contribution rather than attribution).

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Guidance box

What are the key activities of the programme?

- The programme is multi-faceted and made up of multiple different but related components. Think about using the arrows to show how these components may contribute to different outputs and achieve different outcomes.

"What" the programme is about, and what are the key elements
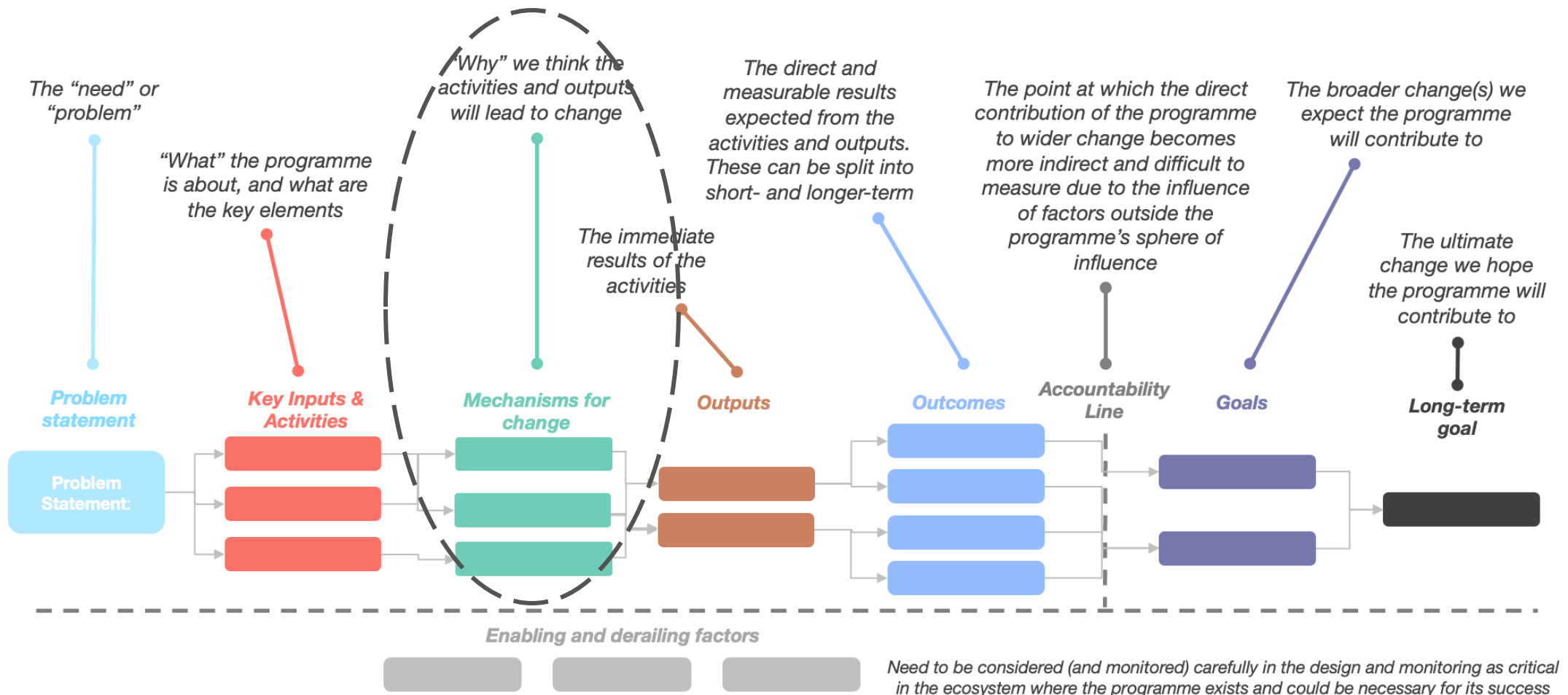
Key Inputs & Activities

Activities are the actions you will take to solve the problem. To figure them out, ask, "What actions can we take to address the root causes of the problem?" The answers become your activities.

It is important to find the right level of detail here. Remember, it is not about listing every single activity that is part of your programme, but rather stepping back and thinking about what are the "core" elements of your intervention. What makes your intervention as distinct from others? How would you describe it to external people?

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Guidance box

What qualities are needed for the programme to achieve the intended impact?

- Ask yourself: What is it about these specific activities that will enable change?

- If you are targeting changes in behaviour, it may be useful to consider what leads to behaviour change. Better Purpose has developed a _Behavioural Sciences Report_ which explores this very question.

"Why" we think the activities and outputs will lead to change

Mechanisms for change
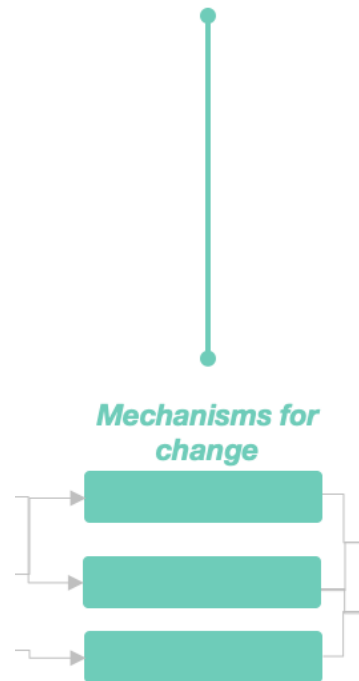
This step is about understanding and explaining how and why your activities will lead to the change you want to see.
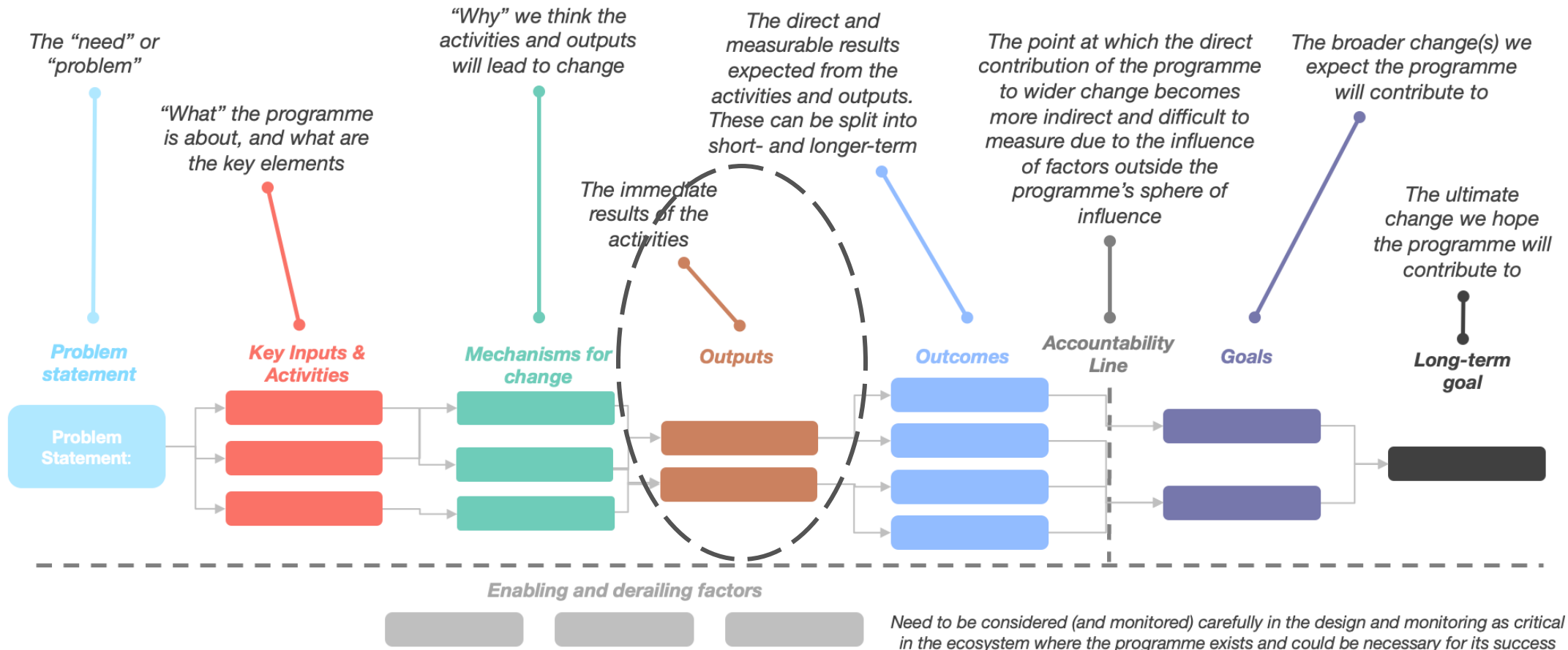
Ask, "How do we think our activities will bring about the desired change?" This is your mechanism for change, sometimes also called your 'intervention logic'.

Your mechanism for change is created when you can fill in the blanks below:

- By doing these things (activities)....

- In such a way that (mechanisms)....

- The will lead to the following results (outputs)....

- And eventually to the following impact (outcomes)

- And contribute to this change (goals).

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Guidance box

What are the immediate effects that the programme should achieve (if the mechanisms of change are present)?

- The keyword is immediate – the outputs are likely to relate directly to the recipients of your programme; this could include participation in training, the use of programme resources, or immediate changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour.

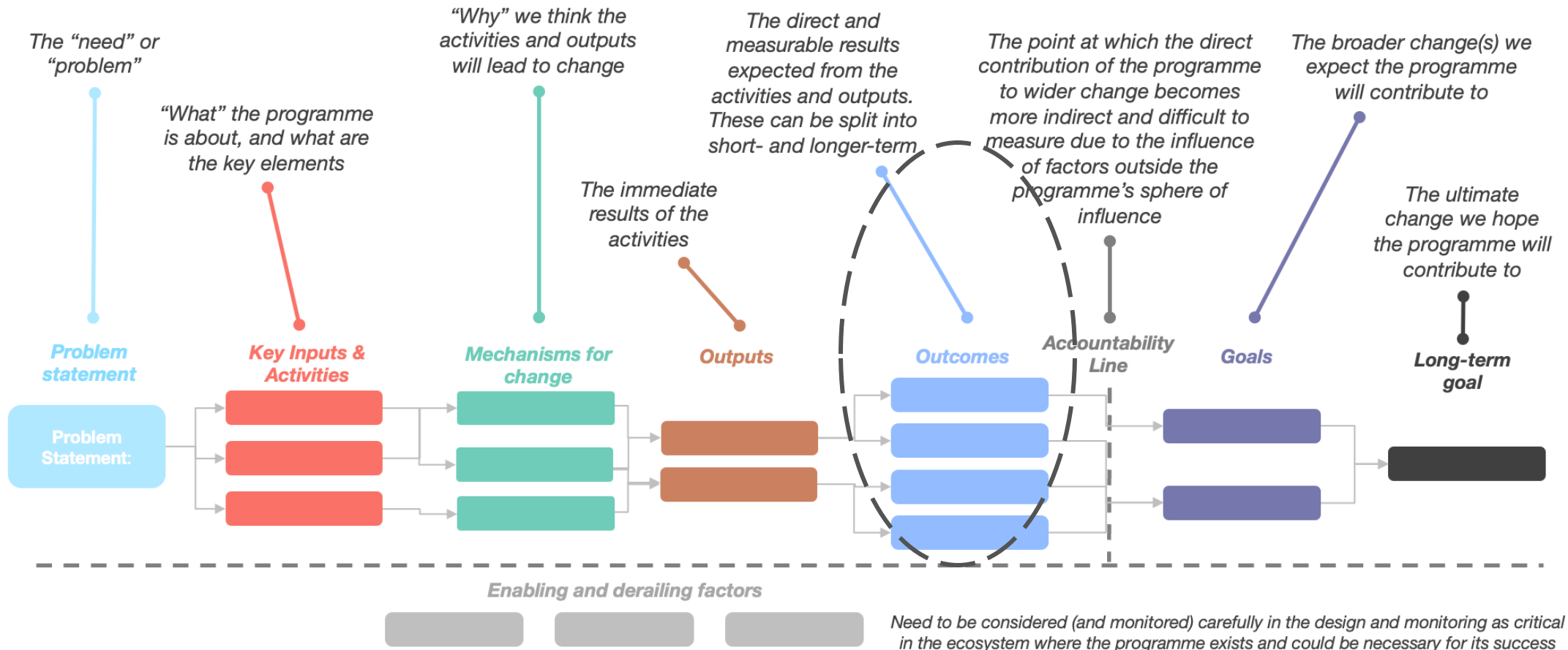*The immediate results of the activities*

Outputs

Outputs are the immediate, tangible results of your activities.

To identify your outputs, ask, "What will we directly achieve by carrying out our activities?"

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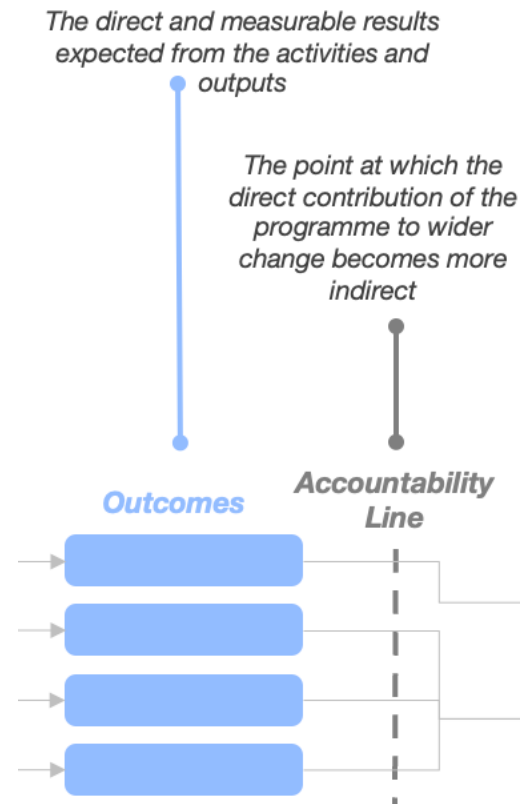
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Guidance box

What short- and medium-term outcomes does this programme aim to bring about?

- Some of these outcomes may be sequential with some outcomes contributing to others. It can be useful to think about the possible solution and dependencies between them and to split them into short- and medium-term.

- Ask yourself: What is the pace of change you expect to see? When do you expect to be able to measure it?

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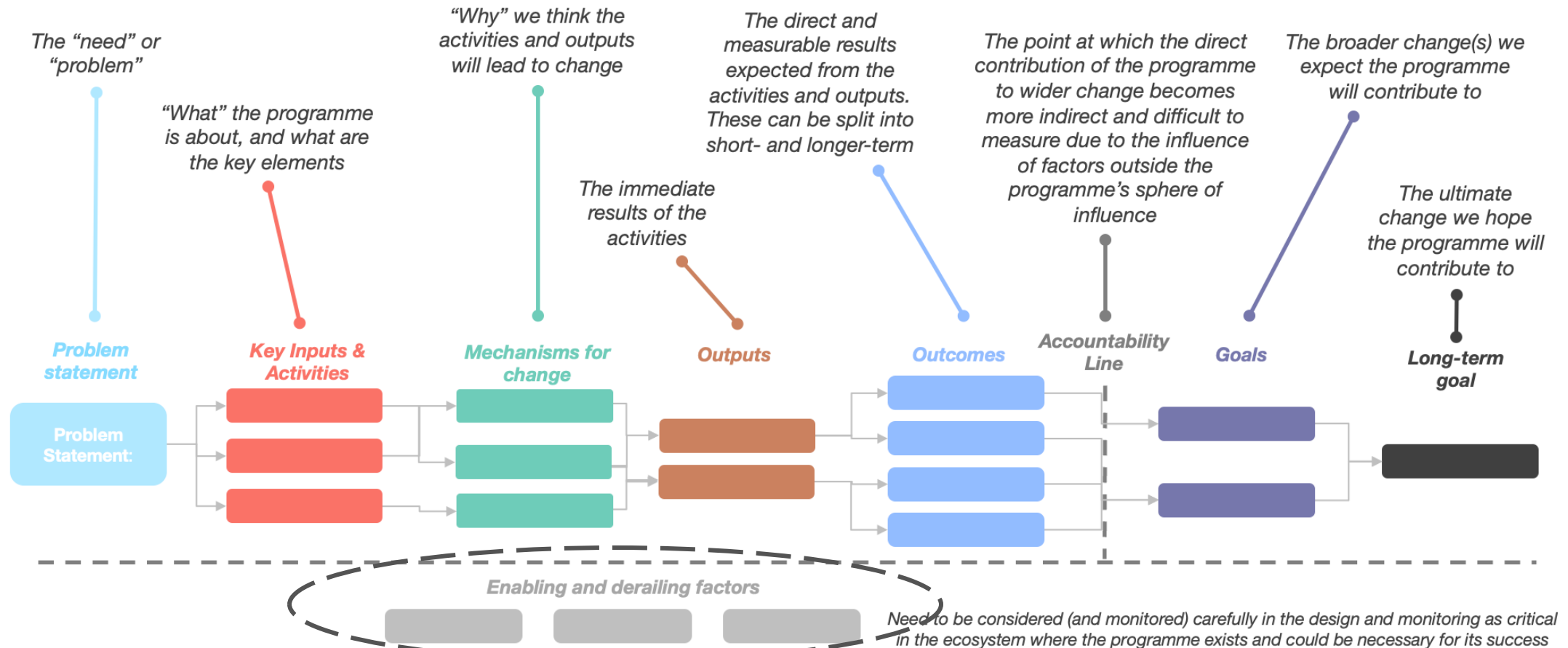
Outcomes   **Accountability Line**

Outcomes are the short- and medium-term changes that happen as a result of your programme. They are a steppingstone between the outputs of our programme and the long-term goals.

They're often changes in knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, or conditions. Identifying outcomes allows us to set a achievable metrics to work towards.

To identify outcomes, ask, "What changes or benefits do we expect to see because of our work?".

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Considering Critical Factors

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Enabling Factors

These are elements that support and promote the successful implementation of your activities and achievement of your goals. They propel your work forward and make it easier to accomplish your objectives.

Example enabling factors can include:

- Community Support: The backing and involvement of the local community can significantly improve the success of your initiatives.
- Skilled Staff: A capable and motivated team can execute activities more effectively.
- Funding: Sufficient financial resources can ensure smooth operations.
- Partnerships: Collaborating with other organizations can boost your capacity and impact.
- Government Policies: Favorable rules and regulations can facilitate your work.

Derailing Factors

On the other hand, derailing factors can hinder your progress and make it harder to reach your goals. They can throw your plans off track if not adequately managed.

Example derailing factors can include:

- Limited Resources: Lack of adequate funding, personnel, or materials can constrain your activities.
- Sociocultural Barriers: Prejudices, cultural norms, or biases in the community can interfere with the acceptance and success of your initiatives.
- Political Instability: Changes in leadership, conflict, or laws can disrupt your operations.
- Global Crises: COVID-19, for example!

As we consider the journey from problem to goal, we must also consider critical factors which may enable or derail your programme.

Identifying these enabling and derailing factors in the planning stage can help you harness the positives and prepare for possible obstacles.

This awareness can lead to a more robust and resilient Theory of Change.

It also allows you to be proactive in monitoring these factors, thereby enhancing your adaptability, effectiveness and impact.

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