

2025 Strategy: How will WFF determine whether we've been successful?

December 2021



What do we mean by ‘success’?

Success is when **we make a significant contribution** to achieving **key outcome goals aligned with Strat25 plans**, as demonstrated by **relevant, credible evidence**.

- 1** **We make a significant contribution***: How essential were we to the change? Were we a pivotal player, or might the goal have been met without us?
- 2** **To achieving key outcome goals aligned with Strat25 plans**: How large or significant is the change? There may also be important outcome goals in which an organization played a small, but necessary, role.
- 3** **As demonstrated by relevant, credible evidence**: How clear and unequivocal is the evidence tying our actions to the change? How defensible is our claim of contribution?

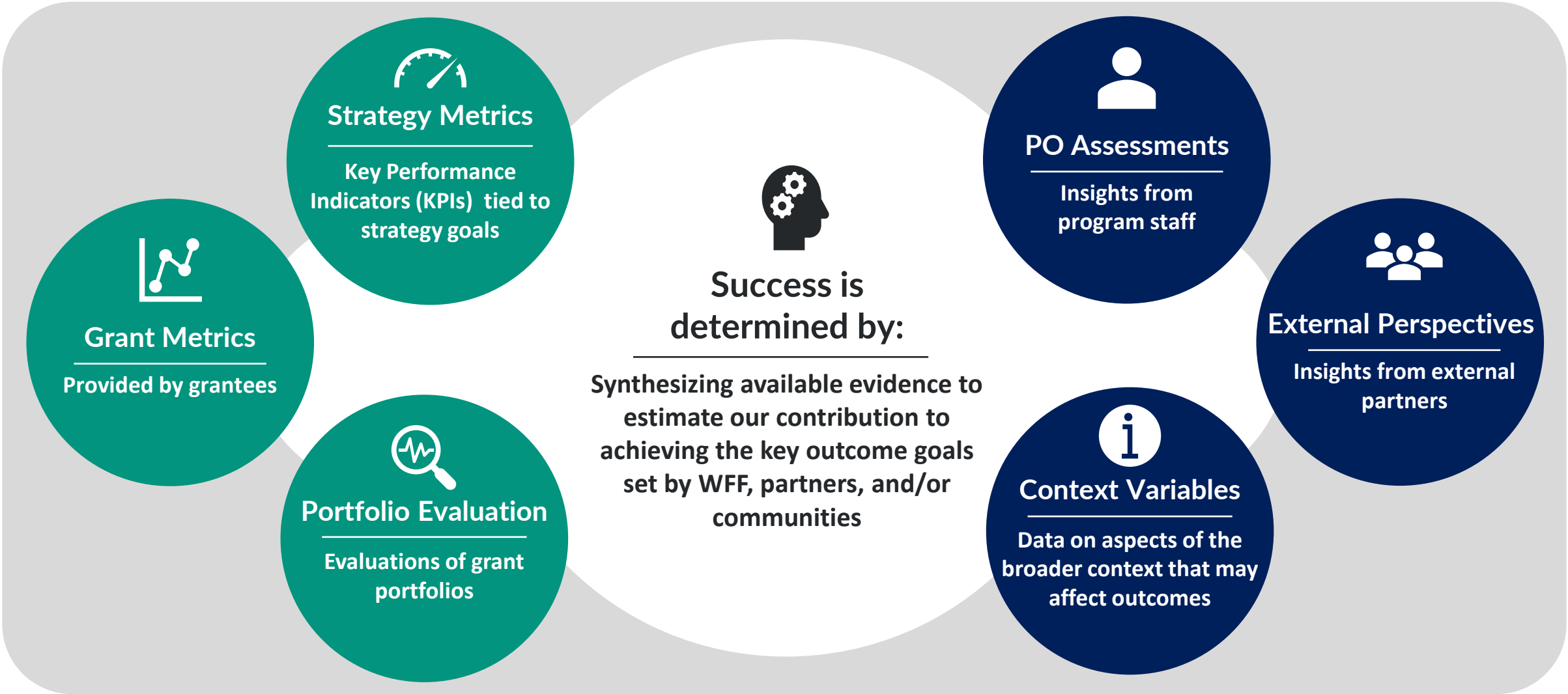
*We focus on contribution because the bigger or more remote the key outcome goal, the more challenging it becomes to identify specific causal links to any individual actor or organization.

What do we mean by ‘evidence’?

Evidence is information relevant to a decision. Key questions about what evidence to collect may vary by program stage and focus.

Stage	Focus	Sample Questions
Planning	The Problem	What are people experiencing? What inequities exist? What are the causes of the problem and are there alternative framings to consider?
	The Context	What are the characteristics of the community with whom we are working to solve the problem? What perspectives do different groups have about the problem? What have made other efforts (un)successful in this community?
	Potential Solutions	How well do existing programmatic efforts fit? What has been learned from past interventions?
Implementation	Implementation	What have we done? How does it compare to what we planned? What accounts for the difference between what we planned and what we did?
	Consequences	How have people responded to implementation? What broader effect has implementation had? What unintended consequences have occurred (+/-)?
	Impact	What changes in outcomes have occurred, and how substantial are they? What changes in inequities have occurred, and how substantial are they? How strong is the evidence that the intervention contributed to these changes?

What sources of evidence will we use?

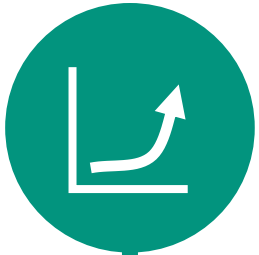


Detail: Evidence for determining success

Evidence Type	Description	Cadence & Collection	Role in Determining Success
PO Assessments	Insights from program staff through monitoring and conversations with grantees, other external experts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More frequent and ongoing • Knowledge resides with program officer – in information artifacts (notes, email, docs) and memory 	<p>These data are often sufficient to determine if a single grant was successful at accomplishing its outcomes.</p> <p>These data are informative to suggest possible impacts supported by WFF but insufficient to make defensible claims of impact.</p>
Grant Metrics	Data on outputs and outcomes provided by grantees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally collected 1x per year in grant reports • SLED grant evaluations 	
External Perspectives	Insights from external partners – grantees, community members, and other key stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Somewhat frequent and ongoing • Knowledge resides with staff – in information artifacts (notes, email, docs) and memory 	
Portfolio Evaluation	Conduct periodic evaluations of grant portfolios to identify trends and patterns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less often – many active grants are not part of an active portfolio evaluation • Findings summarized in annual or final reports 	<p>These data can enhance our understanding of the significance of the outcome, level of WFF's contribution, and strength of the evidence.</p> <p>These data are usually necessary to make a defensible claim of impact.</p>
Strategy Metrics	A small set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) tied to the goals for each program area strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally collected 1x per year – time of collection varies by data source • Captured in program dashboards and primarily used for Annual Review / program committee reporting 	
Context Variables	Collect data on aspects of the broader context – systems, structures, and macro trends – that may also affect outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequency would vary based on the strategy and timing of KPI data collection • Not currently captured systematically (TBD) 	

How do we gauge contribution?

Our claims about contribution focus on three things:



Significance of the outcome: The number of people who benefitted and the magnitude of the change in their lives



Level of Confidence: The extent to which we believe the goal would not have happened in the same way without our efforts



Strength of the evidence: The available evidence meets our standards for rigor and validity, and shows a strong connection to the outcome goal

Detail: Claims about contribution

Dimension	Low	Medium	High
Significance	<i>Few people are believed to benefit from the change. Those that do benefit will benefit very little, and various people may also lose out or be negatively affected.</i>	<i>It's important for a reasonable number of people. Or some people may have benefitted a great deal.</i>	<i>It's newsworthy. Many people are believed to benefit from the change. And/or a large number of people are believed to benefit a lot.</i>
Level of Confidence	<i>The outcome would have probably happened anyway.</i>	<i>You made a substantial contribution to a key part of the outcome, and you believe it would not have happened in the same way without your efforts. Other actors also played a substantial contribution to the outcome.</i>	<i>The outcome could not have happened without your actions.</i>
Strength of Evidence	<i>The evidence is not a good description of the component and shows no clear connection between actions and the outcome.</i>	<i>The evidence is an OK fit for the description of the component. You need this evidence but it's not decisive. It shows some connection with the outcome, but it is quite possible other actors' efforts are also a reasonable fit for the component and have a comparably good connection to the outcome.</i>	<i>The evidence is an excellent fit for the description of the component and shows a strong connection with the outcome. It's very unique to your explanation, and it would be very hard to explain the evidence unless your hypothesis is correct.</i>

Increasing defensibility of impact claims



Appendix



Key terms

- **Success:** Making progress toward, meeting, and exceeding key outcome goals, including those established as performance measures
 - Can also include identifying unintended positive results that are still aligned to S25 goals
- **Goals:** These are the statements of the change we hope to see, and are articulated for each initiative and strategy in the S25 plans
 - E.g. “Draw best-in-class startups and talent to NWA”, “Scale volume of sustainable supply from farmers and fishers to meet demand”, “The adoption and implementation of policies that enable students to access high-quality educational options”
- **Output goal:** These are statements of change that focus more on products, programs, and services that have been delivered; outputs are important, but our emphasis in S25 will primarily be on tracking outcome goals
 - E.g. Number of participants, number of seats created
- **Outcome goal:** These are statements of change that focus more on the trajectory of populations and systems at scale
 - E.g. Quality of life for residents in NWA, the quality of schools in a city, improved water ecosystem health in a region
- **Impact:** Often used as a synonym for ‘goals’ and ‘outcomes’; the technical definition is a causal analysis of whether a particular outcome goal was achieved

Key terms (continued)

- **Rigor:** The trustworthiness of the findings resulting from a particular empirical analysis (quantitative or qualitative); in particular, ensuring the appropriate methodology has been used given the nature of the question being explored
- **Validity:** The extent to which the findings resulting from a particular empirical analysis accurately capture what they are supposed to be measuring
- **Attribution:** An assessment of whether an intervention directly caused a change in an observed outcome measure; the standard for rigor is very high for claims of attribution
- **Contribution:** An assessment of the extent to which an intervention played a role in an observed outcome measure; the standard for rigor is much more flexible for claims of contribution