

# Theory of Change

**Nurturing Developing Minds**  
**Thursday, February 22, 2023**

**i(cs)**

INSTITUTE for CHILD SUCCESS



**EC PRISM**

---

Early Childhood Precision, Innovation,  
and Shared Measurement

# Welcome!



**Dr. Aimée Drouin Duncan**  
**Vice President Impact and Practice**  
**[Aduncan@instituteforchildsuccess.org](mailto:Aduncan@instituteforchildsuccess.org)**

# IMPACT Measures Tool<sup>®</sup>

**IMPACT:** Integrated Measurement, Program Assessment, and Collaboration Tools

***“A free database of early childhood & parenting measures”***

- Search, compare, access measures scored on four key dimensions.
- Find high-quality measures that work for different communities and contexts.
- Learn about measurement with educational resources.

# IMPACT Measures Tool®

<https://ecmeasures.instituteforchildsucces.org/>

The screenshot displays the IMPACT Measures Tool website interface. At the top, the navigation bar includes the logo, menu items (Home, Measures, About Us, Scoring, Learn, My Favorites), and user options (Sign In, Join). A red banner at the top left prompts users to take a 2-minute survey to provide feedback, with a yellow arrow pointing to the 'Learn' menu item. Below this is a purple search bar with the text 'Find and compare' and a search icon. The main content area is divided into several sections: 'Measures' (with a red diamond icon and a link to 'Explore measures'), 'Scoring' (with an orange diamond icon and a link to 'How scoring works'), 'Resources' (featuring 'The Impact of IMPACT: 2022 Achievements' with a link to 'Our Summary'), and a grid of resource cards. The grid includes cards for 'Social-Emotional Development Measurement Guide' (Our Guide), 'Early Relational Health for Primary Care Providers' (Our Resource), 'Developmental Screening Tools in Home Visiting Programs' (Fact Sheet), 'Measuring What Matters: Harnessing Early Childhood Measurement to Help Children Thrive' (Our Slides), 'The Importance of Culturally Relevant Measurement: Experts Offer Insights to Address this Crucial Need' (Our Summary), 'Developmental Screening Tools in Head Start & Early Head Start Programs' (Fact Sheet), 'Defining Cultural Relevance in Early Childhood Measurement' (Our Report), and a flowchart titled 'Your Process, Our Support' (Quick Guide). A yellow star icon is positioned in the bottom right corner of the grid.

# Agenda

- IDEAS Impact Framework
- Theory of Change
  - Strategies, Targets, Outcomes
  - Case example: Brainy Babies
- Applied Exercise
- Q&A



EC PRISM

i(cs)

# IDEAS Impact Framework

- A framework for early childhood innovators
- Housed at Harvard's Center on the Developing Child
- Much of today's Theory of Change information is based on the Framework
- Free toolkit on the IDEAS Impact Framework here:

<https://ideas.developingchild.harvard.edu/>

# What do these words mean to you?

Evidence

Measurement

Evaluation

For all of these definitions, you **need** a theory of change!



EC PRISM

i(cs)

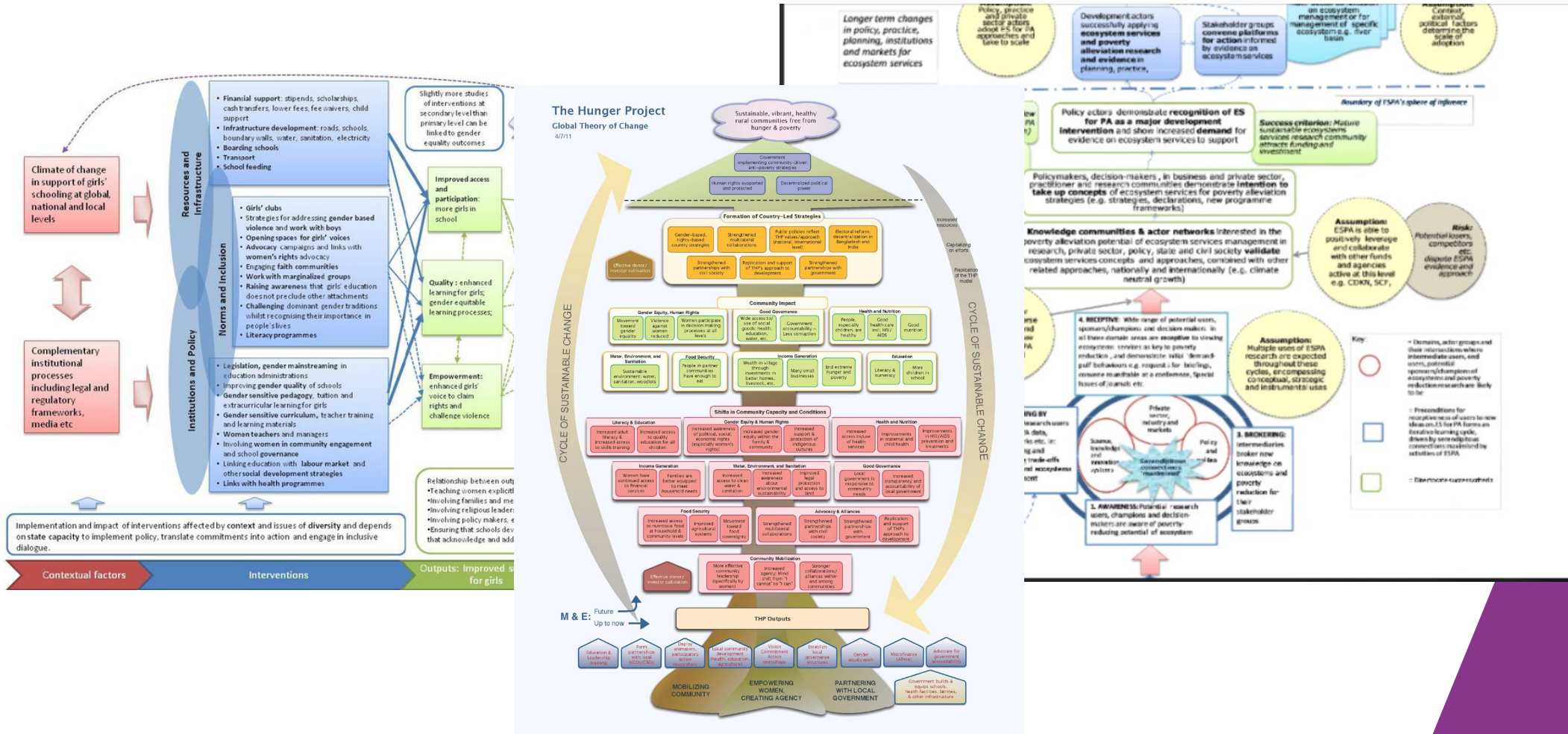
# What is a Theory of Change?

- A Theory of Change (TOC) is a detailed set of beliefs or hypotheses about **specific observable changes** that you expect to result from your program or policy
- Made up of **Strategies, Targets, Outcomes**, and **Moderators**
- Focus on **program impact**, not organizational impact

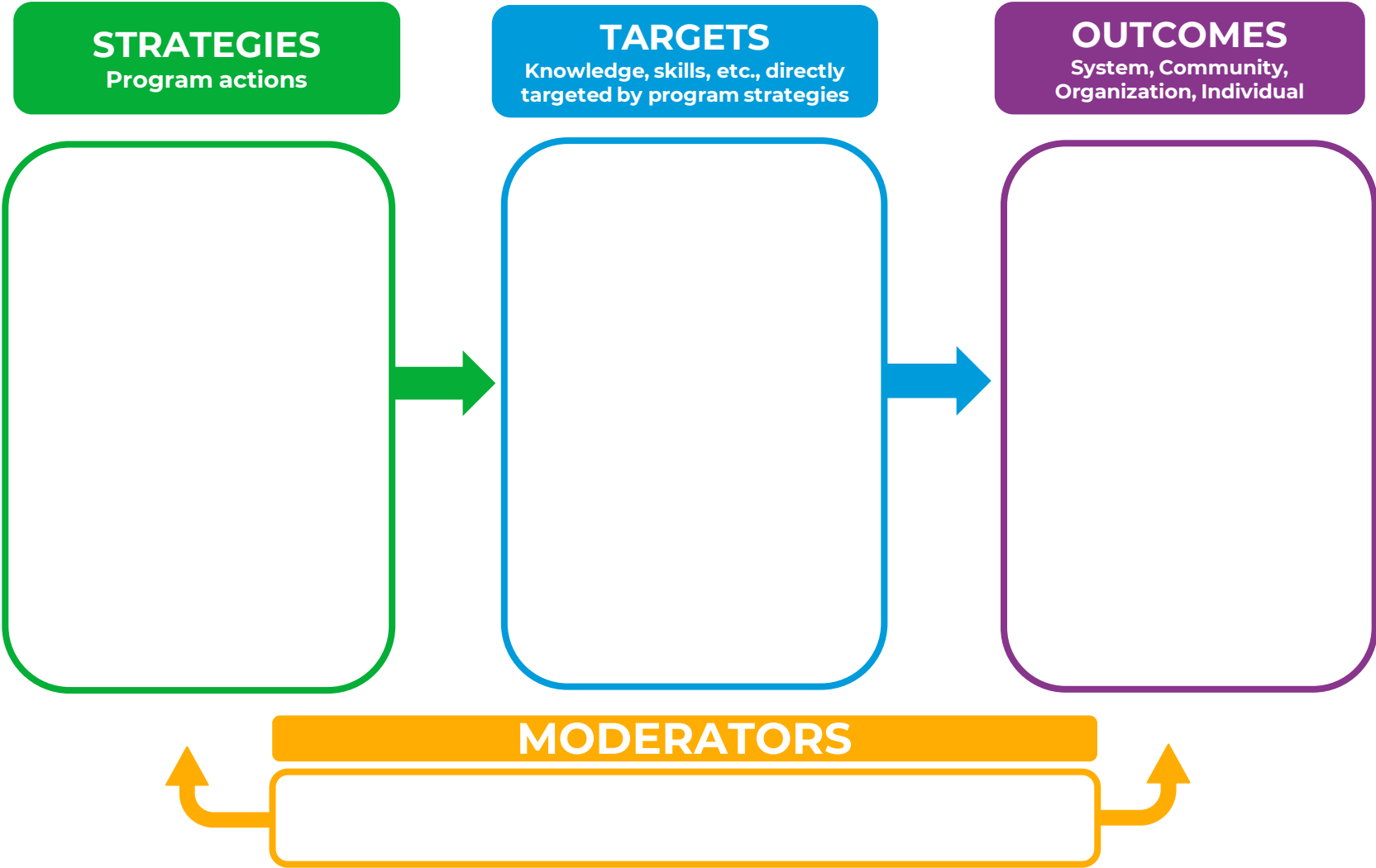




# The Status Quo: Complex Models



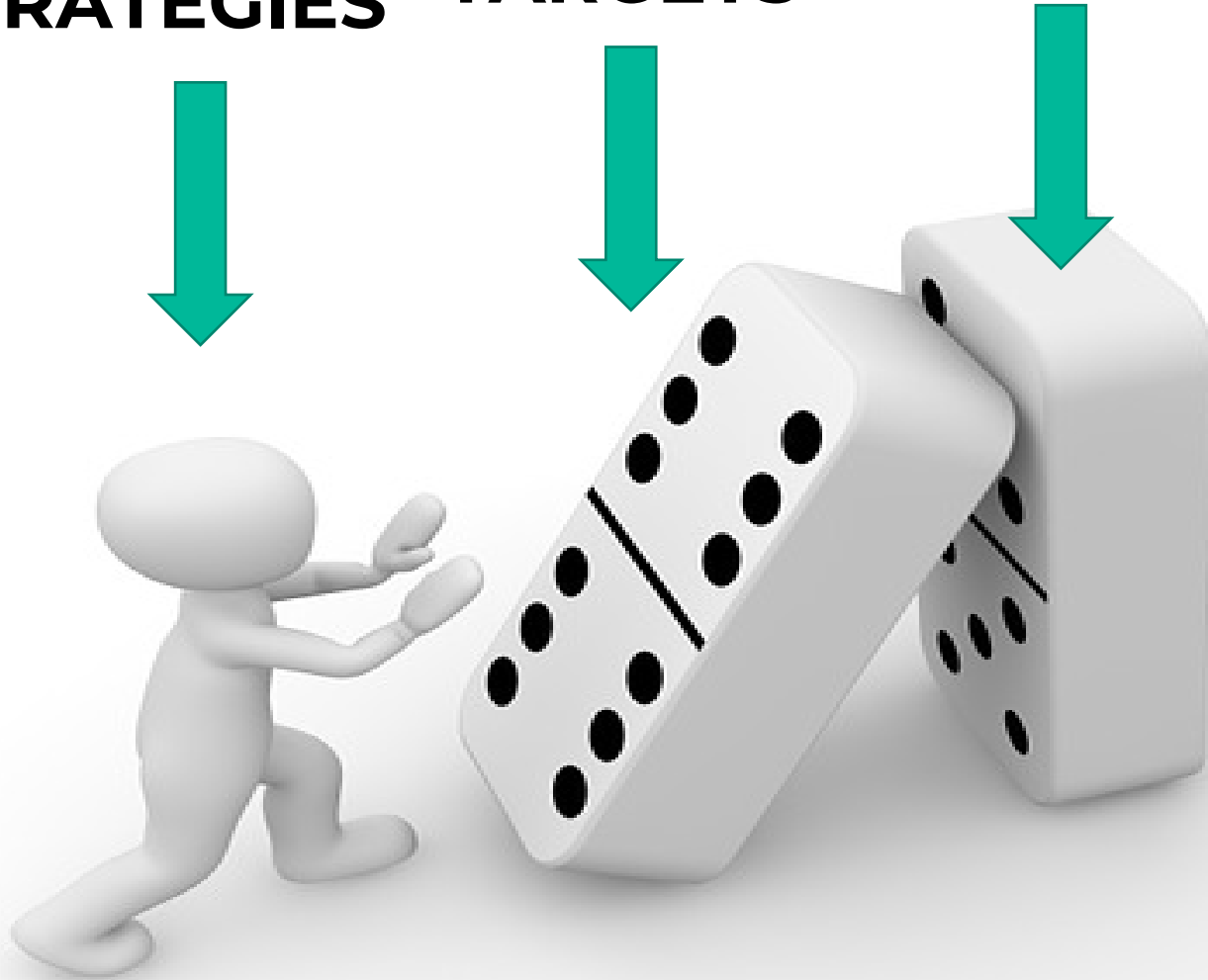
# Theory of Change



**STRATEGIES**

**TARGETS**

**OUTCOMES**

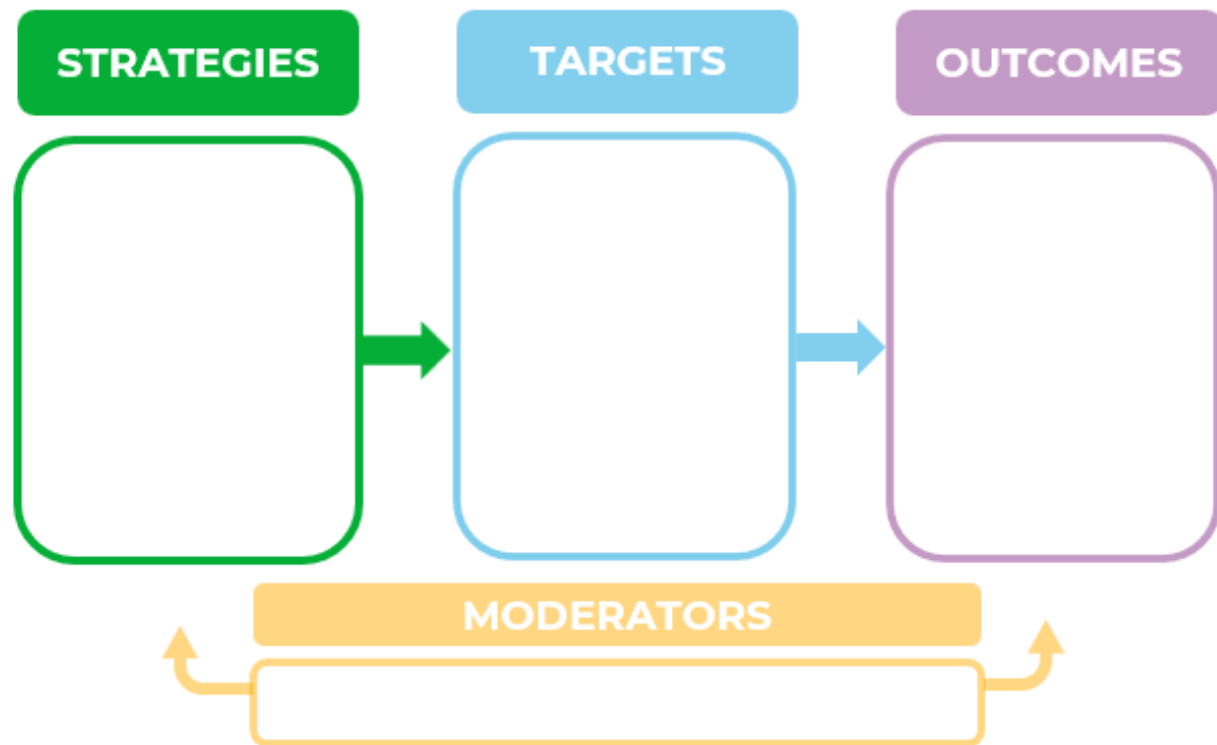


**EC PRISM**

**i(cs)**

# Program Strategies

- **Program strategies** are the **actions** your program takes to achieve desired changes.



# Strategies

- Are the **actions taken** by the program.
- Can be **person-based, place-based, technological, or other** types of actions.
- Are **described in the program materials**.
- Are **important for documenting the program's fidelity**.
- Move us from asking “does it work” to “**what about it works?**”

# Example TOC: Brainy Babies at BPL



## STRATEGIES

Program actions

- Implement a 1-hour story time
- Model early literacy practices and other brain-building techniques
- Provide early literacy and brain-building tips
- Provide opportunities for caregivers to share and reflect
- Facilitate open play time
- Connect families to accessible community resources

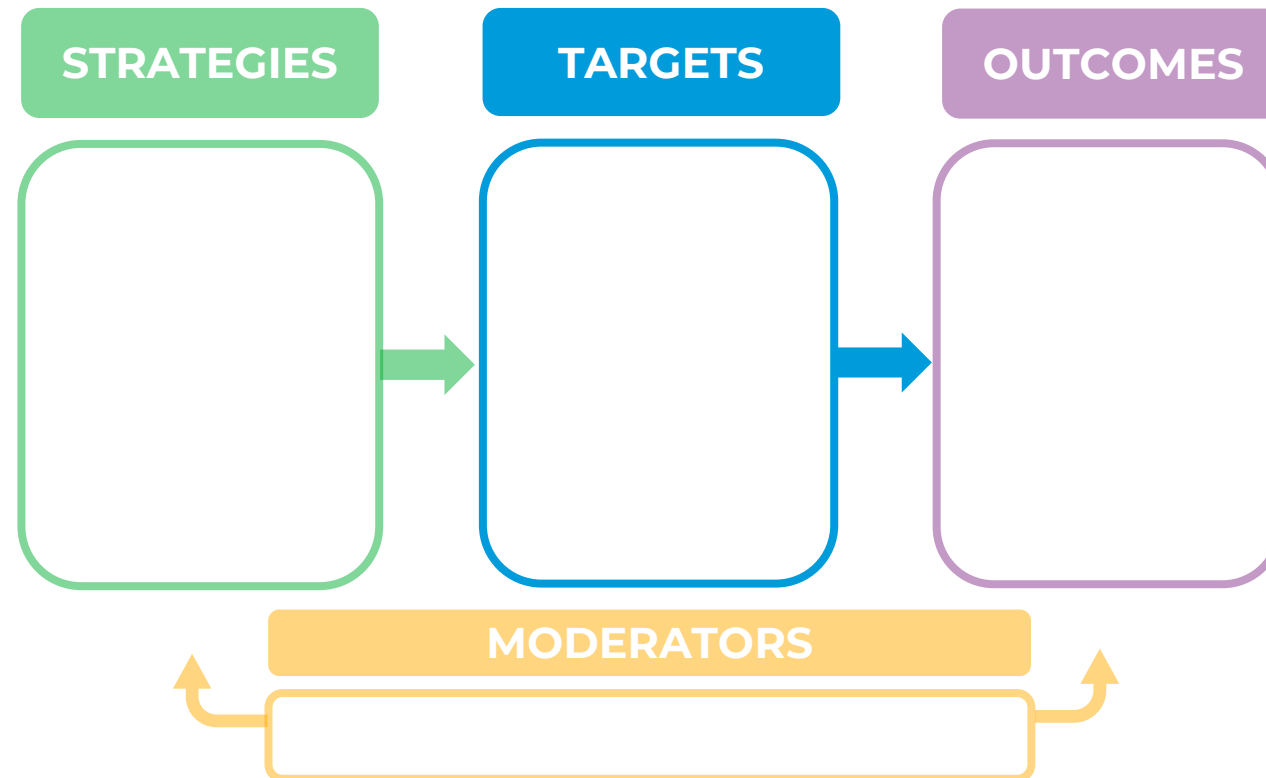


EC PRISM

i(cs)

# Program Targets

- **Program targets** are the **skills, behaviors, beliefs, attitudes, and/or knowledge** that the program strategies are **directly aimed at changing** in caregivers, children, and/or dyads.



# Targets...

- Are **directly targeted** by program strategies.
- Typically **link to activities and ideas described in program materials.**
- Are things you would **expect to see immediate and large impacts** on.
- Are important for confirming the intervention strategy's **“active ingredients.”**
- Move us from asking “does it work” to **“how does it work?”**



EC PRISM

i(cs)



# Example TOC: Brainy Babies at BPL



## STRATEGIES Program actions

- Implement a 1-hour story time
- Model early literacy practices and other brain-building techniques
- Provide early literacy and brain-building tips
- Provide opportunities for caregivers to share and reflect
- Facilitate open play time
- Connect families to accessible community resources

## TARGETS

Knowledge, skills, etc., directly targeted by program strategies

### Caregiver:

Increased awareness of

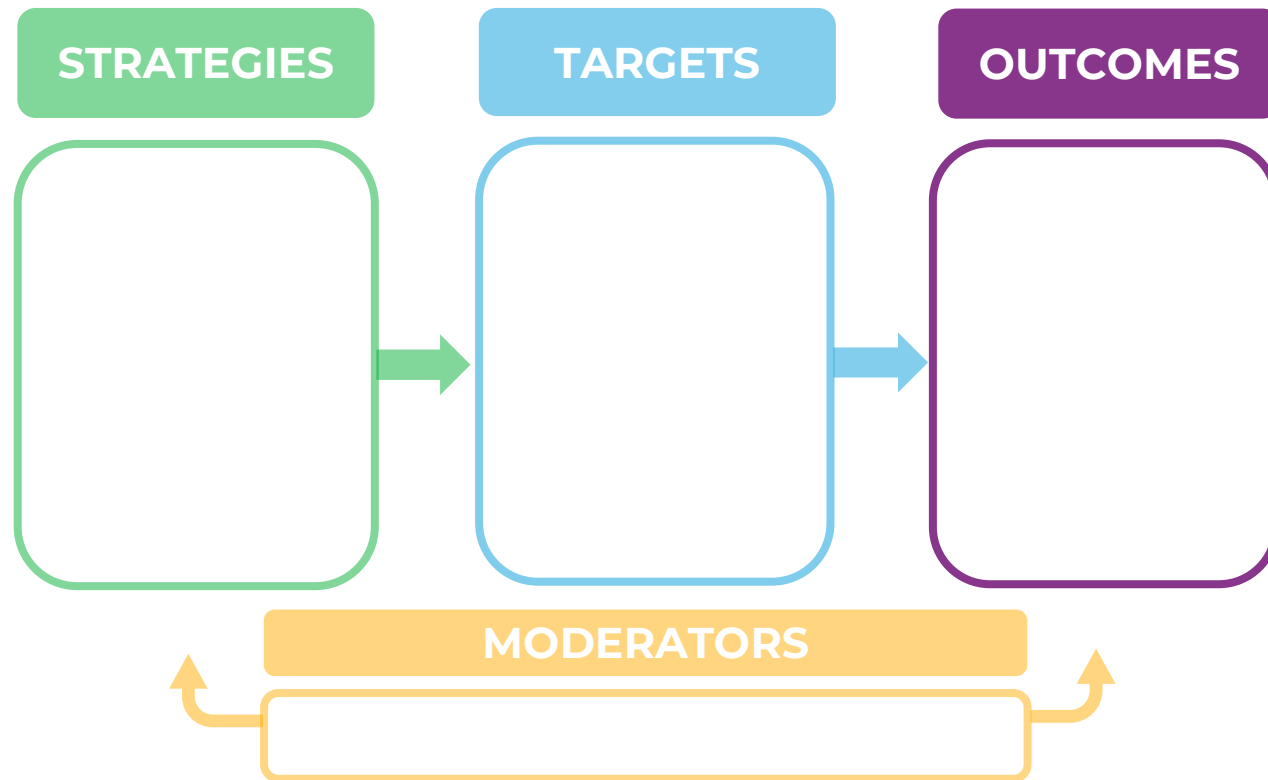
- early literacy practices and positive parenting techniques
- programs & services in the library and community
- parent support and wellness techniques
- Increased social engagement with other caregivers

### Child:

- Increased engagement in Brainy Babies activities & routine

# Program Outcomes

- **Outcomes** are the changes that the program hopes to **ultimately impact** in caregivers, children, and/or the dyad.



# Outcomes...

- May encompass both **short-term and long-term** outcomes.
- Are meaningful changes in **functioning**.
- Are **important in and of themselves**—they are not just a step toward another, more important goal.
- Result from changes in program targets and/or **downstream impact** of other outcomes.



EC PRISM

i(cs)

# Example TOC: Brainy Babies at BPL



## STRATEGIES

Program actions

- Implement a 1-hour story time
- Model early literacy practices and other brain-building techniques
- Provide early literacy and brain-building tips
- Provide opportunities for caregivers to share and reflect
- Facilitate open play time
- Connect families to accessible community resources

## TARGETS

Knowledge, skills, etc., directly targeted by program strategies

### Caregiver:

- Increased awareness & use of early literacy practices and positive parenting techniques
- Increased awareness of programs & services in the library and community
- Increased knowledge of parent support and wellness techniques
- Increased social engagement with other caregivers

### Child:

- Increased engagement in Brainy Babies activities & routine

## OUTCOMES

System, Community, Organization, Individual

### Caregiver:

- Increased regular use of early literacy practices and positive parenting techniques
- Library and community programs & services
- Reduced parenting stress and feelings of isolation

### Child:

- Increased language and literacy skills
- social skills

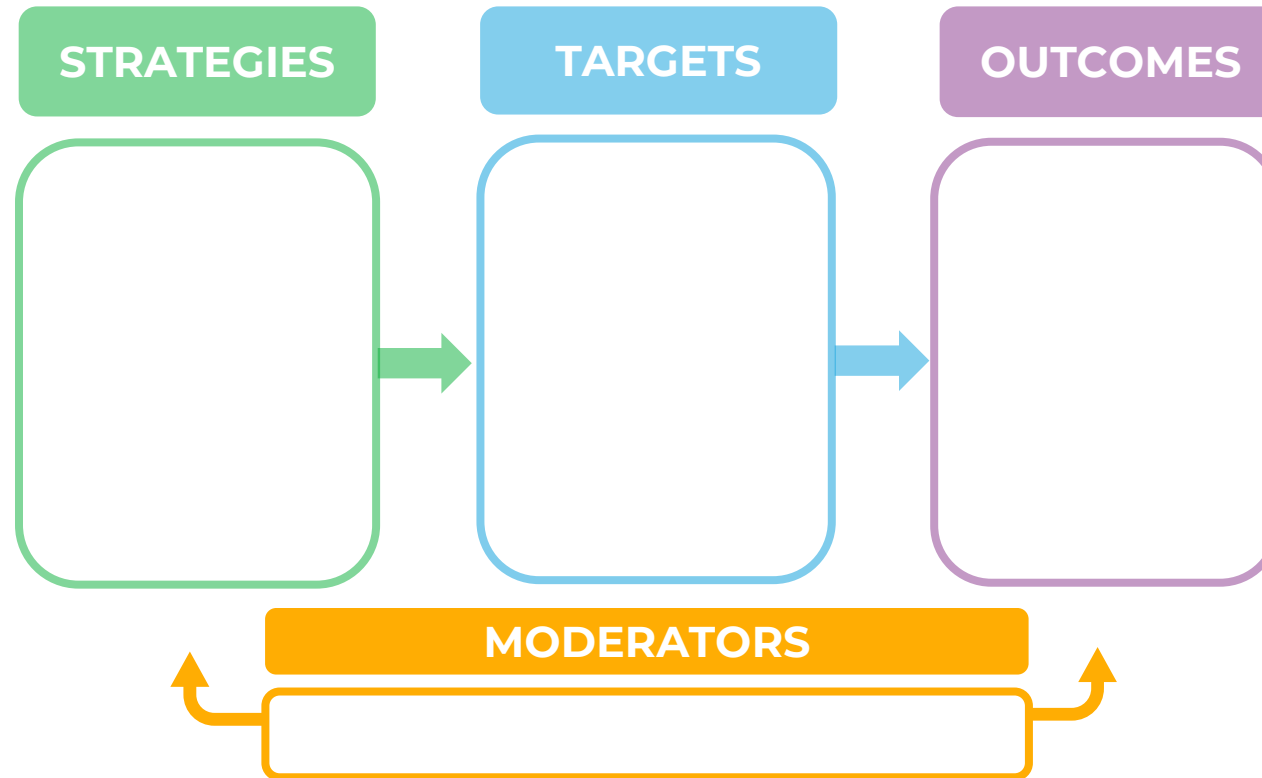


EC PRISM

i(cs)

# Program Moderators

- **Moderators** are person- or place-based factors that a project team hypothesizes **could affect** which participants benefit more from a program and which participants benefit less or not at all.



# Moderators...

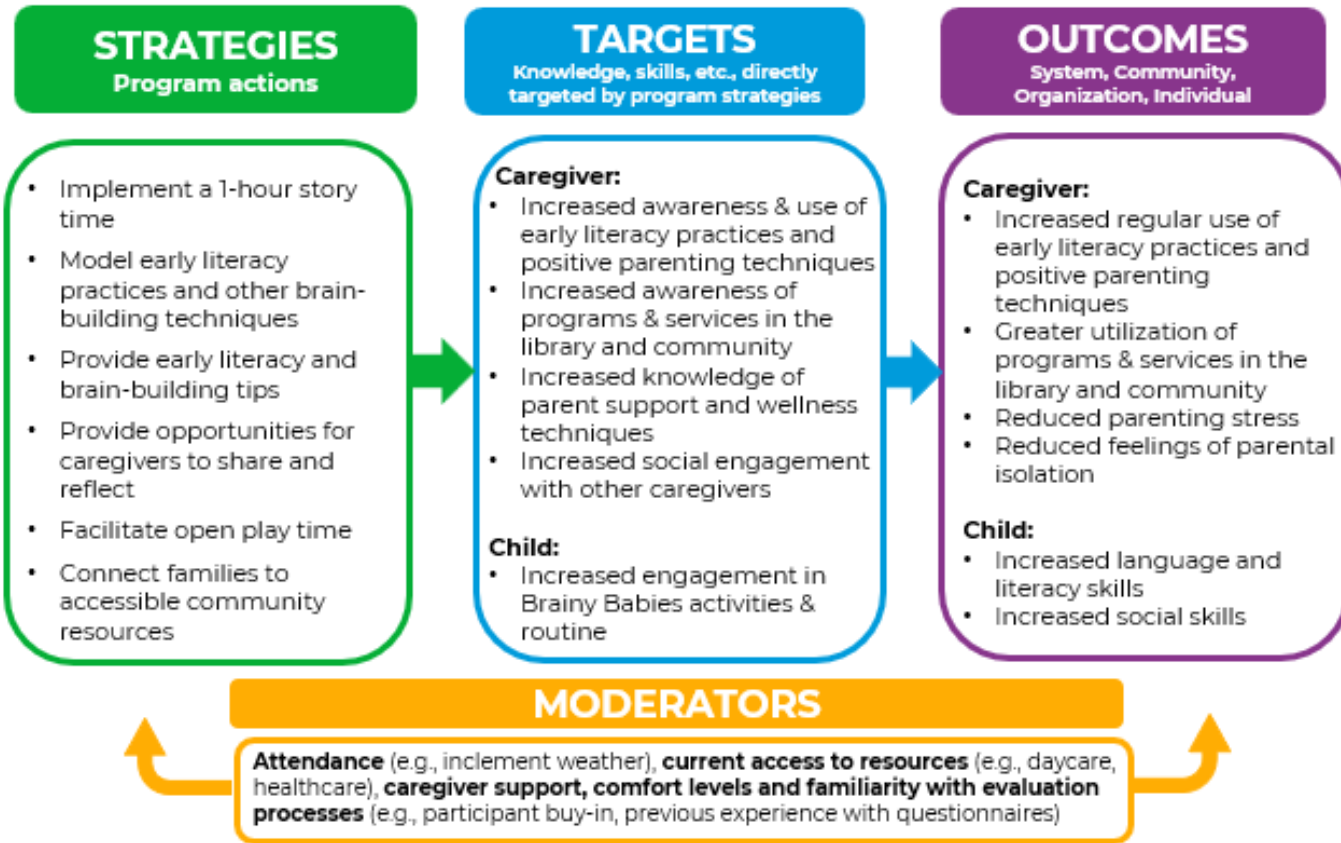
- Help us identify **who benefits most** from an intervention—to inform scaling.
- And **who benefits least** or not at all— to prompt a search for new ideas.
- Help **explain individual differences** in response to a program.
- Move us from the question “does it work?” to **“for whom does it work or not work?”**



EC PRISM

i(cs)

# Example TOI: Brainy Babies at BPL



# How do you use a TOC?

- Are our program strategies **feasible and acceptable**?
- Do our program strategies result in expected **changes in our program targets**?
- Do our program strategies result in expected **changes in outcomes**?
- Do changes in our program **targets predict expected changes in outcomes**?
- Do the moderators we identified help explain **who benefits most and who benefits least**?

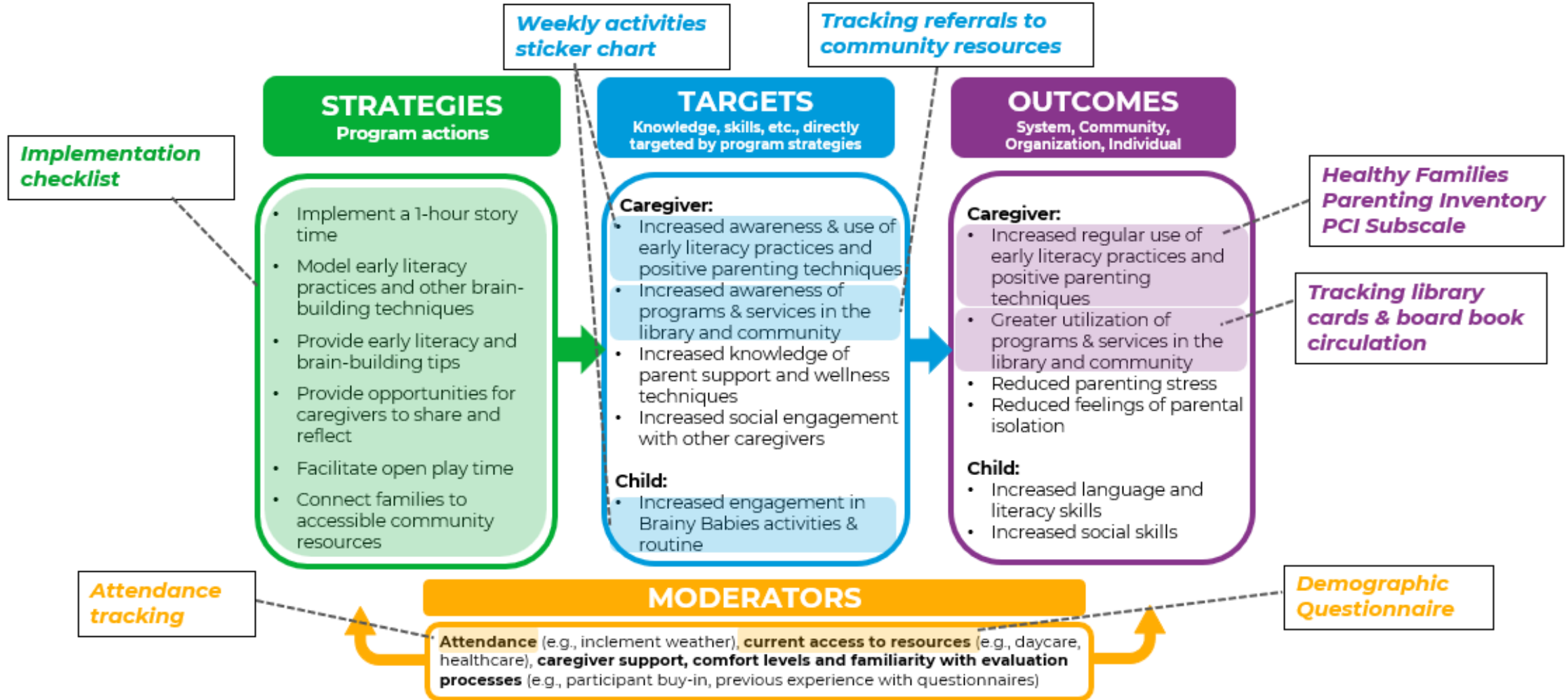


EC PRISM

i(cs)



# Mapping Measures to a TOC



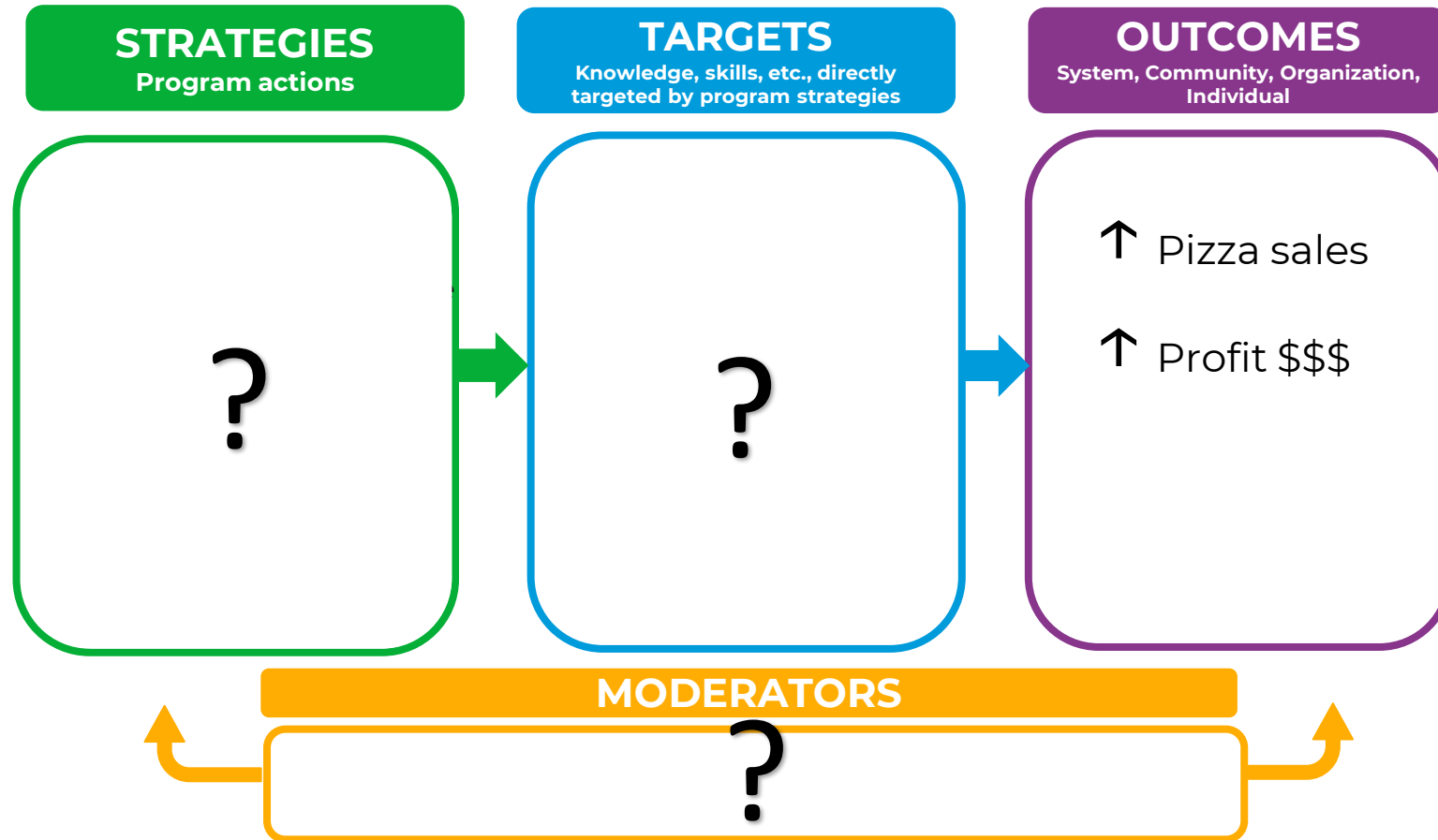
# Practice Theory of Change

- Example: A struggling pizza restaurant is trying to make a comeback

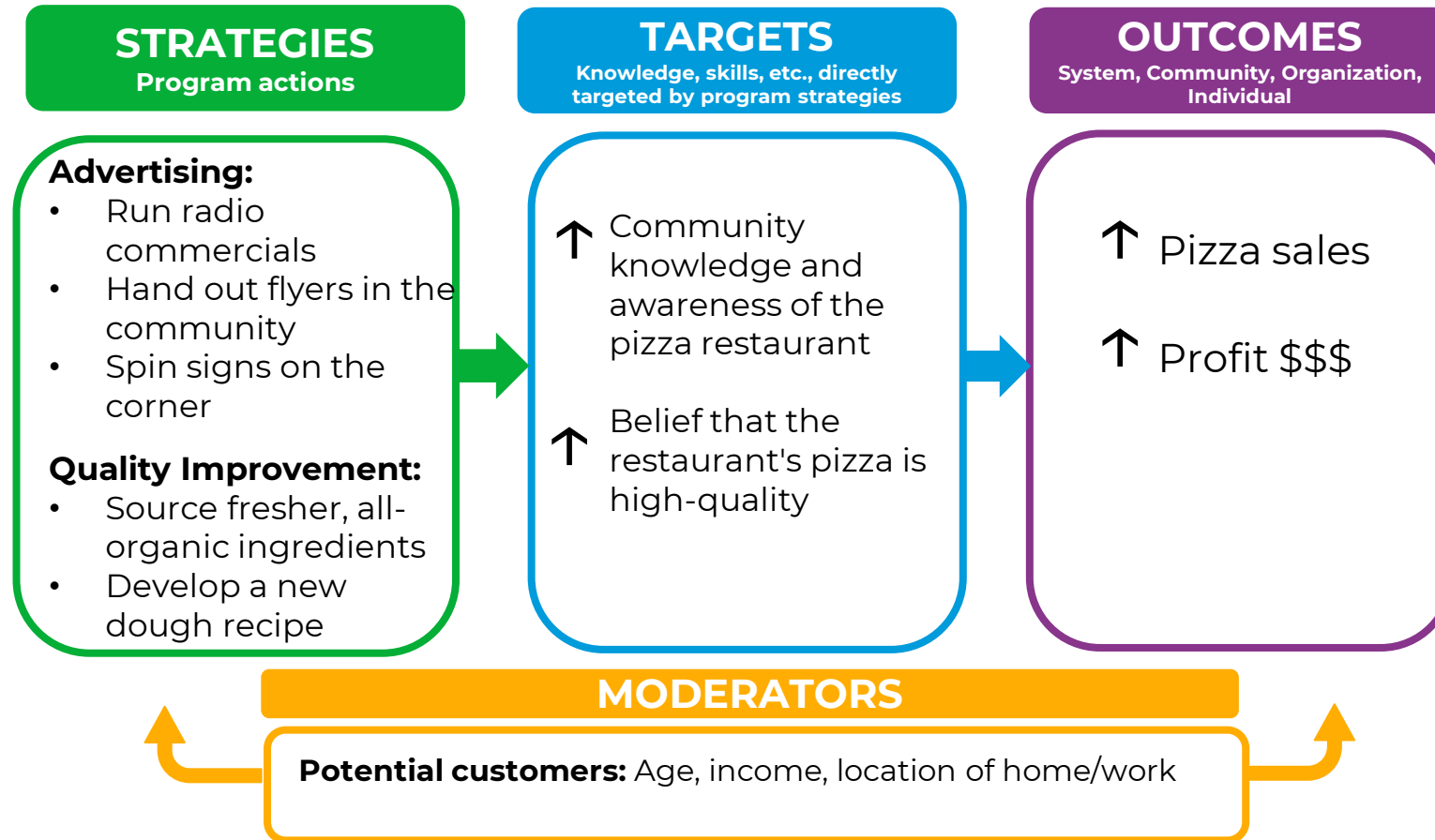




# Practice Identifying Strategies



# Complete Pizza TOC



***"We value  
what we measure,  
and we measure  
what we value."***



# Connect With Us!

Visit the IMPACT Measures Tool website at:  
<https://ecmeasures.instituteforchildsuccess.org/>

Join our mailing list to receive updates:  
<https://ecmeasures.instituteforchildsuccess.org/join>

Email us at:  
[ecprism@instituteforchildsuccess.org](mailto:ecprism@instituteforchildsuccess.org)

Find us on social media @ec\_prism



# Thank you for all you do!

Please  
complete  
our brief  
survey!

