



“What else test”

A basic tool for strengthening contribution claims

1.1. Background to this tool

In many situations it is not possible, nor necessary to prove that your program (on its own) caused an outcome. In this situation we recommend seeking out contribution, rather than attribution. This is especially important when you are working in a situation where there are multiple factors likely to have caused the observed change in addition to your work. Examples include when you are working as one part of a coalition for change, or one partner in a collective impact process. Or perhaps you are working in a crowded space with many actors also contributing to the same outcome. In this case we recommend you seek to ***understand the contribution*** your work had in achieving the change.

See Figure 12 for a visual depiction of the difference between attribution and contribution – where only one of the outputs is produced by your work.

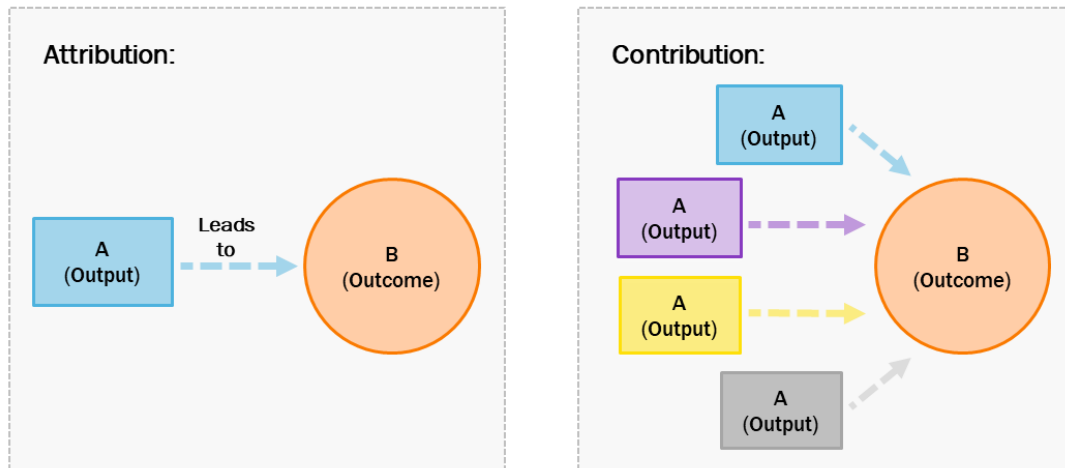


Figure 1: Difference between attribution and contribution

If the outcomes you are aiming for do show changes and want to claim these as results of your work it is really important to analyze why these changes have occurred, and whether they would have happened anyway. This is where evaluation can start to get quite tricky. For this reason we provide three levels of rigor, each requiring more evaluation expertise and resourcing. We encourage everyone, at a minimum, to use at least the basic level (such as is described in this tool) when making a claim about results.



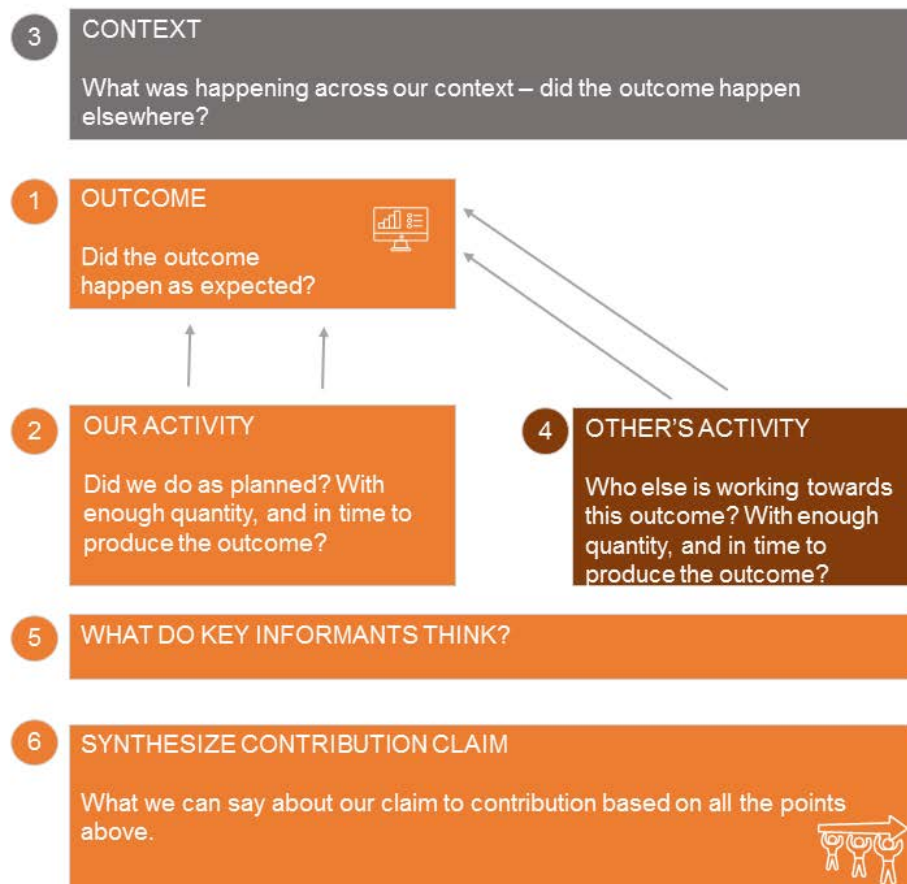
Level	Approach to contribution
High ●●●	An external evaluation with examines contribution through a process such as (quasi-experimental design (pre-post + control)), or externally conducted process tracing + strength of evidence rating
Medium ●●○	An external, or internally conducted process that involves analysis gaining consensus with triangulated evidence of contribution during either: A workshop setting or “expert panel/(can be an Indigenous expert panel, if appropriate, or citizen’s jury)”: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine results – e.g. trend data • Explore LOPC (list of plausible causes) • Provide evidence, e.g. timelines to eliminate alternatives and include alternatives • Agree on contribution conclusion • Provide strength of evidence rating.
Basic/ Minimum ●○○	Use at least two lines of evidence. One line of evidence should include asking a range of informants whether they think the PBA caused the change. Make it clear if there are alternative plausible explanation for the result, and make your case. For example use the “ what else test ”.

In this note we provide a description of the “what else tool” – a basic guide for non-evaluators to strengthen their contribution claims. We suggest this tool can be seen as a minimum requirement for making contribution claims.

1.2. The what else test

With a small sample size and a modest budget, it may not be feasible to conduct a rigorous contribution analysis. But there are things you can do to reduce bias and strengthen your impact claims. We suggest that you follow 6 steps as shown in figure below.





1. **OUTCOMES.** Check to see if the outcomes have been achieved. Ideally apply at least one form of data triangulation to cross-check whether your outcomes have really been achieved. Triangulation involves minimizing bias by looking at the results from different angles. There are a number of ways you can do this. You can triangulate by source (for example: interview participants as well as checking their results in a test).
2. **OUR ACTIVITY.** Check that you implemented was sufficient to make an impact claim (dose). Check that your implementation did happen sufficiently well to make a reasonable claim that you contributed to the results, it also needs to have happened in timeframes that make sense to have contributed to the results.
3. **CONTEXT.** Consider the context to check the results same results aren't happening everywhere Check to see whether the outcome is also showing up in places you are not working. This might be done by interviewing people not involved in your program or collecting data for similar situations where the program was not delivered (e.g. school attendance rates in the similar schools to the one you are working in).
4. **OTHER'S ACTIVITY.** Consider who else may have contributed . Consider who else has been working in the same place and look to see if you can eliminate these as plausible explanations. For example, it may be that there was another organisation working in the same school, but that they haven't been there in the last two years. Or perhaps they have contributed to the claim and you need to acknowledge their work as well as your own.



5. **KEY INFORMANT OPINION.** Conducting some interviews to test your claim with key informants adds to your case. In these interviews, pose questions about the counterfactual (what they think would have happened without the intervention). Do this with a small number (1-5) of strategic informants who have no vested interest in your program. Record these comments as quotes and include in your claim.
6. **SYNTHESIZE YOUR CONTRIBUTION CLAIM.** In the report, compile all the evidence from 1 to 5 to make a case about whether its is probable that your program contributed to the results. It is fine to say that your program was one small part of what was necessary.

Additionally, we recommend that whatever method you use, be transparent in your report by including a description of the methods and acknowledge your potential biases.

Example of a basic contribution claim using the basic method

(1) In 2015 year 12 completion rate at Queenstown high school was 70% - this is a substantial increase compared to the previous years (50% in 2014, and 49% in 2013). (2) The *Greatteam* have been working with Queenstown high school to improve student engagement for over 5 years. They have been providing tailored mentoring and alternative classes for pupils at risk of dropping out. They have provided this service for 5 years to 30 pupils who commenced year 8 in 2010. In 2015 the cohort graduated. Of the 30 kids in the program, 80% graduated. (3) School attainment rates in the local area have increased only marginally (2%) over the same period, but only Queenstown high school has shown this impressive improvement. (4) There were a few other programs operating in the school at the same time also working on school attainment. The Loddon Foundation provided work experience to 10 students in the cohort and some specialist programs. It is plausible that they contributed to the outcome to some degree. There was also an exceptional Principal at Queenstown high school who has been implementing a range of measures to engage students in learning. (5) The principal stated that the school recognizes the great work of the greatteam and believes the increase in school attainment would not have been possible without this support. (6) In conclusion, there is a strong case to that the Greatteam contributed to the uplift in school completion to a major extent.

