

Airdrie FCSS Definitions

Definitions for some terms commonly used by Airdrie FCSS.

Term	Definition
Activity	What a program does to achieve its goal, including the services provided or actions undertaken. For example, a series of workshops could be considered an activity. An individual session can also be an activity, if it stands alone and is not connected to other sessions. See 'program.'
Assumptions	Every Theory of Change includes some assumptions. These might include assumptions about the connection between strategies and outcomes, the connection between short, intermediate and long-term outcomes, and the conditions needed for the success of a program. Assumptions should be made explicit in a Theory of Change, so they can be thoughtfully considered and revisited as needed. See 'Theory of Change.'
Best Practices	In FCSS, best practices refer to programs, or activities within programs, that are accepted in the research literature as being those most effective at achieving protective factors or decreasing risk factors. See 'promising practices.'
Causal Pathway	In Theories of Change, a causal pathway draws the connection from the steps in the program activities to the short, intermediate, and long-term goals. It is the pathway to change, from outputs through to outcomes.
Direct Service Delivery Model	FCSS municipalities that provide direct preventive services and where there is direct engagement between the municipality and clients. Airdrie FCSS does not follow a direct service delivery model. See also 'non-direct service delivery model.'
Evaluation	The continuous review of a program to understand how well it is achieving its outcomes. It is a cyclical process of planning, doing, analyzing, and reflecting on strengths and weaknesses to continuously improve a program. Evaluation is valuable because it can increase the effectiveness of a program over time.
Evidence-Based Practices	In FCSS, 'evidence-based' refers to practices that use a combination of researched methods and contextually-sensitive practices that are understood to be locally and culturally preferred, to guide the particular approach of a program or activity.

Family	In Airdrie FCSS mid-year and final reports, a family unit is self-defined and can contain multiple generations and configurations. This includes biological or adoptive parents, extended family members, other relatives who are providing direct care to children, and so on.
Goal	In a Theory of Change, the goal is the long-term ideal outcome the program wishes to achieve. A good goal articulates a single aim or solution. An example goal offered by the United Way is, “All girls grow up to be strong, healthy, empowered women.”
Group Activities	In Airdrie FCSS mid-year and final reports, group activities are activities offered over a calendar year in a program, such as therapeutic groups, educational workshops and training sessions (e.g. a parenting workshop consisting of six sessions is counted as one group activity offered six times).
Indicators	In FCSS, these are characteristics that suggest (<i>indicate</i>) that a long-term outcome is likely to be achieved. Often in FCSS, indicators may reflect short-term outcomes (like increased self-esteem, social engagement, and resilience). In FCSS, indicators are generally evaluated using a cluster of measures (survey questions). For example, “I generally feel positive about myself” may, in combination with other related questions, measure self-esteem. Higher self-esteem, in turn, may be an indicator of personal well-being (the outcome). See ‘measures’ and ‘outcomes.’
Individuals	In Airdrie FCSS mid-year and final reports, individuals are those who receive direct service through funded programs and for whom there is a direct impact. Each individual is counted only once in a reporting period per program (if service is provided to a family unit, all individuals for whom there is a direct impact should be recorded as individuals).
Information Activity	In Airdrie FCSS mid-year and final reports, an information activity is an activity that results in information being publicly shared about the program or that helps to achieve a program’s specific goals. For example, if a program campaign aims to build public education/awareness of a particular community issue, then this campaign counts as an information activity. Information activities include, but are not limited to, newsletters, information sessions, online social media posts, and awareness campaigns.

Information and Referral Contact	In Airdrie FCSS mid-year and final reports, this is the number of communication contacts with clients who require social supports. For example, a contact may be a single phone conversation or a communication by email.
Inputs	In a Program Logic Model, inputs refer to the resources needed to conduct a program. Funding, staff, time, venue and materials are all inputs.
Measurement Tools	The methods used to measure the outcomes and impact of a program, including surveys, focus groups, individual interviews and other methods.
Measures	In FCSS, 'measures' are survey questions: they help measure whether a program is achieving particular indicators of longer-term outcomes. Measures help evaluate how programs make a difference in the lives of individuals, families and the community. See 'indicators' and 'outcomes.'
Multi-year funding	FCSS generally follows a three-year funding model, where programs are funded on a three-year cycle. Program reporting still generally follows a calendar-year reporting period, where programs are required to report at each calendar in the mid-year, as well as the end of each calendar year. See 'reporting period.'
Need	In a Theory of Change, the need lays out the evidence that this program is necessary in the context of interest. Evidence may be brought forward from the research literature, local research, agency experience and knowledge, and other sources.
Non-Direct Service Delivery Model	FCSS municipalities that do not provide direct preventive services and where there is no direct engagement between the municipality and clients. Airdrie FCSS follows a non-direct service delivery model. See also 'direct service delivery model.'
Outcome Measurement	Outcome measurement is the method of determining the benefits, results and impact a program has for its participants and the community as a whole.

Outcomes	<p>The benefits or changes for individuals, families or communities that result from participating in program activities. For FCSS purposes, outcomes relate to changes in knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, behaviour, condition, status or other attributes.</p> <p>For a particular program, typically there are identified short-term outcomes (what FCSS sometimes calls ‘indicators’) leading to medium and long-term outcomes. For example, a youth in a mentoring program who interacts one-on-one with a positive role model may improve their self-esteem and strengthen their social supports (short- and medium-term outcomes), which can lead over time to improved social well-being for that individual (long-term outcome).</p> <p>In general, short-term outcomes may occur within one year, medium-term outcomes may take several years, and long-term outcomes may take a decade or longer. However, the determination of the time frame for the outcomes depends on the program. See ‘measures’ and ‘indicators.’</p>
Outputs	<p>The direct products of program activities. Outputs usually describe the volume of work accomplished; for example, the number of classes taught, counselling sessions conducted, educational materials distributed, and participants served. Outputs have little inherent value in themselves, but are important to record because they indicate the nature and extent of the program’s activities.</p>
Participants	<p>Individuals who engage in the activity of a program.</p>
Prevention	<p>Prevention supports individuals, families or communities in achieving social well-being and prevents the development of social problems at the earliest opportunity. Prevention occurs by reducing risk factors and increasing protective factors. See ‘risk factors’ and ‘protective factors.’</p>
Program	<p>A preventive social service that local municipalities or agencies deliver or support through FCSS funding. A program consists of one or more activities that achieve a common goal (see ‘activity’).</p>
Program Assessment	<p>A review of a program to help strengthen its outcomes in the future. Examples of program assessments include the Airdrie FCSS mid-year and final reports, reporting of successes and identification of areas for improvement. The Province may also conduct program assessments in the form of audits.</p>

Program Logic Model	A tool commonly used in the social sector to help plan, implement and evaluate a social program and convey a program's internal processes and logic. A program logic model (or PLM) is a visual depiction of the logical relationships between inputs (what resources go into the program), outputs (what is produced) and outcomes (the impact of the program).
Promising Practices	In FCSS, 'promising practices' refer to programs, or activities within programs, that have been identified in at least one context as being effective at achieving protective factors or decreasing risk factors, or where a very similar program was shown to be effective. See also 'best practices.'
Protective Factors	Conditions or characteristics associated with lower likelihood of problem outcomes or that reduce the negative impact of risk factors. Common protective factors operate as two broad sets of developmental strengths: internal factors such as empowerment, self-control, cultural sensitivity, self-concept and social sensitivity; and external factors such as family, peers, school and community.
Rationale	In the Theory of Change, the rationale is the evidence that supports and justifies why the program strategies will be the most effective to achieve the goal. The rationale may be based on research, agency experience and best or most promising practices in the program activities. A good rationale speaks to the unique needs of the target population.
Reporting Period	The period of time for which FCSS agencies report to their FCSS funding body (for mid-year reporting, usually the period from January 1 st to June 30 th ; for final reporting, usually the whole one-year period from January 1 st to December 31 st). In multi-year funding agreements, the reporting period still usually follows each calendar year. See 'multi-year funding.'
Resilience	The capability of individuals and systems (families, groups and communities) to cope with significant adversity or stress in ways that are not only effective, but tend to result in an increased ability to constructively respond to future adversity.
Risk Factors	Risk factors are conditions or characteristics associated with a higher likelihood of problem outcomes. Risk factors can be internal (within the person) or external (involving the family, school/work, and community).
Social Context	The social setting in which people live and in which something (for example, a social program) develops. Social context is shaped by sociocultural dimensions, including cultural, historical, political, legal and personal dimensions.

Social Inclusion	For FCSS purposes, “social inclusion” refers to the ability to fully participate in, contribute to, and benefit from all aspects of society.
Social Well-Being	A state of positive social relationships in a community. This state is characterized by social acceptance (a willingness to respect difference in others), social contribution (a desire to give back to society), social inclusion (a sense of belonging), social support (close relationships with others), and social capital (the means, knowledge, and relationships required to access resources).
Strategies	In a Theory of Change, strategies are the specific methods and approaches the program will use to achieve its goal. Strategies cover what, who, where, when, how, and how often, and should be described as specifically as possible.
Target Groups	In the Airdrie FCSS application, target groups are the population(s) the program is intended to serve (for example, adults, children/youth, families, seniors and volunteers).
Theory of Change	A Theory of Change is a framework for understanding how and why a desired change is expected to happen to deal with a complex problem. It begins with articulating a need, setting a goal to respond to that need, laying out strategies to establish the conditions necessary to achieve that goal, and articulating the rationale for why these strategies will be most effective. There are several good resources online. See also: ‘need,’ ‘goal,’ ‘strategies’ and ‘rationale.’
Theory of Change Statement	A Theory of Change statement outlines the outcomes the program wishes to achieve and how the program aims to achieve its goal.
Volunteer	An individual who provides support for a program or service and is willing to work without the expectation of pay or other tangible gain.
Volunteer Hours	In Airdrie FCSS mid-year and final reports, volunteer hours are the total number of hours volunteers have worked on behalf of a program during the reporting period.

