

# Child & Youth Well-Being Outcomes Framework



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# Spotlight on child and youth well-being

When children and youth are well, they have what they need to thrive now and prepare for tomorrow. They can grow up feeling healthy, safe, and supported; connected to family, community, culture, language, and land. They can build the confidence and skills to learn, make decisions, and shape the world around them.

To achieve this vision, we need a clear understanding of the outcomes that

signal well-being and how they are achieved. The Child and Youth Well-Being Outcomes Framework (the Outcomes Framework) provides that foundation by describing what well-being looks like for children and youth in British Columbia, how it can be measured, and how it is systematically shaped. This foundation enables:

- 1. Shared accountability for outcomes** so efforts across sectors are aligned and measured around real improvements in well-being. To make sure we are accountable for results that matter, we need to ask:

**Do we have a shared picture of how children and youth are doing across the province?**

- 2. Evaluation of progress against outcomes** so decisions are guided by evidence of what is making a difference in well-being. To know if our actions are working, we need to ask:

**Are the steps government is taking actually improving outcomes for children and youth?**

- 3. Analysis of what matters most, how it matters, and how much it matters** so investments focus on the levers most likely to create meaningful improvements in well-being. To guide decisions and investments, we need to ask:

**Where should we focus to make the biggest difference?**

Together, these capabilities create a disciplined, repeatable cycle: formulate shared outcomes (*accountability*); assess actions against those outcomes (*evaluation*); and analyze to understand where efforts will have the greatest impact (*analysis*). This cycle

will be applied to the key actions of the Child and Youth Well-Being Action Plan to measure progress, identify what's working, and guide investments toward the actions where they will make the greatest difference for children and youth.

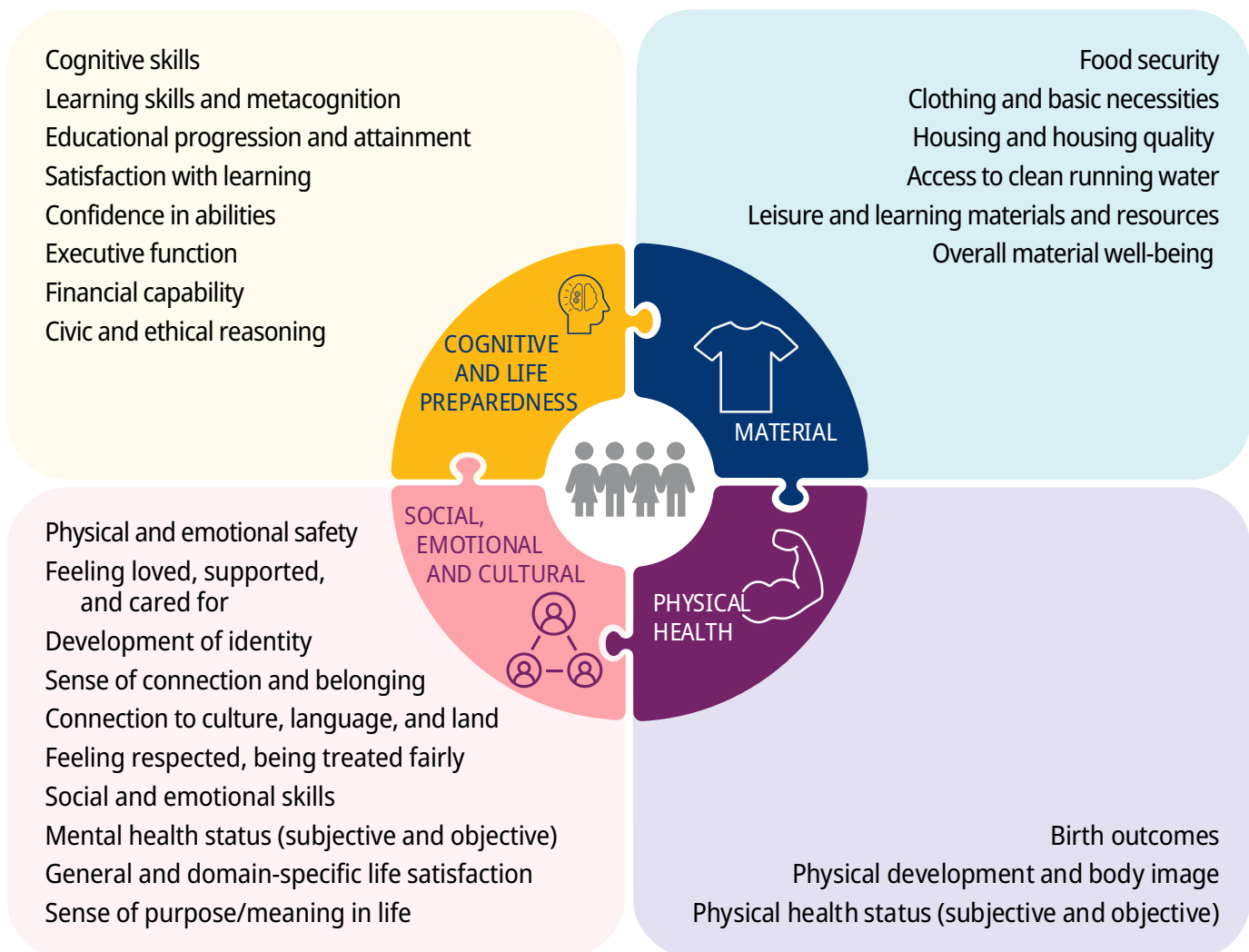
## What well-being looks like

We have typically measured success by tracking *outputs* (e.g., dollars spent, number of programs delivered, or number of children seen). Outputs may lead to long-term outcomes, but they don't tell us whether children and youth are actually better off. The Outcomes Framework shifts the focus to **outcomes** that matter for children and youth.

There is no single way to define or measure the outcomes associated with child and youth well-being. Over time, a range of frameworks have emerged across jurisdictions, each

reflecting different priorities, populations, and understandings of how well-being is fostered. Despite these variations, most frameworks share a similar structure: They organize well-being into several domains and identify a set of dimensions within each domain. These dimensions may reflect observable conditions (e.g., physical health or educational achievement) or lived experiences (e.g., feeling safe or having a sense of belonging). The BC Child and Youth Well-Being Outcomes Framework reflects this approach.

**Visual 1:** Draft Domains and Dimensions of the BC Child and Youth Well-Being Outcomes Framework



This work builds on existing efforts and draws on international research conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), particularly the 2021 publication [\*Measuring What Matters for Child Well-being and Policies\*](#).

To ensure the proposed domains and dimensions reflect B.C.'s context, we reviewed a wide range of sources beyond the OECD framework, including B.C.-based measurement efforts (e.g., *Is "Good", Good Enough?* report by the Office of the Provincial Health Officer), Indigenous-led measurement frameworks<sup>1</sup>, national and international policy frameworks, and academic research on child well-being. These sources were selected for their relevance to B.C., especially in relation to Indigenous children and youth.

The Outcomes Framework is guided by B.C.'s legislative commitments under the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act and the Anti-Racism Data Act. These commitments shape what we measure and how we work, including respect for Indigenous data sovereignty, a distinctions-based approach, culturally grounded measurement, and equity-oriented data practices that make inequities visible and actionable.

In parallel, work is underway through a tripartite initiative between the Ministry of Children and Family Development, Indigenous Services Canada, and the First Nations Leadership Council to develop a Tripartite Child and Family Services Outcomes Framework. This initiative builds on commitments in the *Declaration on*

*the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan* to advance the social, cultural, and economic well-being of Indigenous peoples in the Province. The Tripartite Framework will enable the measurement of progress toward select commitments—including the resumption of jurisdiction over child and family services—and assess their impact on the well-being of Indigenous children and families. The intention is for these two frameworks to be complementary: The Tripartite Framework will provide insights that will inform and strengthen the provincial Outcomes Framework, ensuring Indigenous ways of understanding and fostering well-being are embedded.

We will continue working with ministries and external partners (including Indigenous partners, the Office of the Provincial Health Officer, and the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth) to shape the next phase of this work.

The current draft is intended as a **starting point for conversation, not the final word**. It will continue to evolve through engagement and collaboration, inviting feedback from partners and communities to ensure the Outcomes Framework reflects shared priorities and lived experiences and lays the groundwork for a whole-of-government approach to measuring and improving child and youth wellbeing. **The Outcomes Framework is intended to support all children and youth in B.C.—not only those who are vulnerable—and is designed to be relevant across ministries and sectors that influence their lives.**

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1 Examples include *Gathering Wisdom XIII: 10-Year Strategy on the Social Determinants of Health* by the First Nations Health Council; *First Nations Population Health and Wellness Agenda – Interim Update* by the First Nations Health Authority and the Office of the Provincial Health Officer; and *Culture is Healing: An Indigenous Child & Youth Mental Wellness Framework* by the Indigenous Child and Family Services Directors – Our Children Our Way.

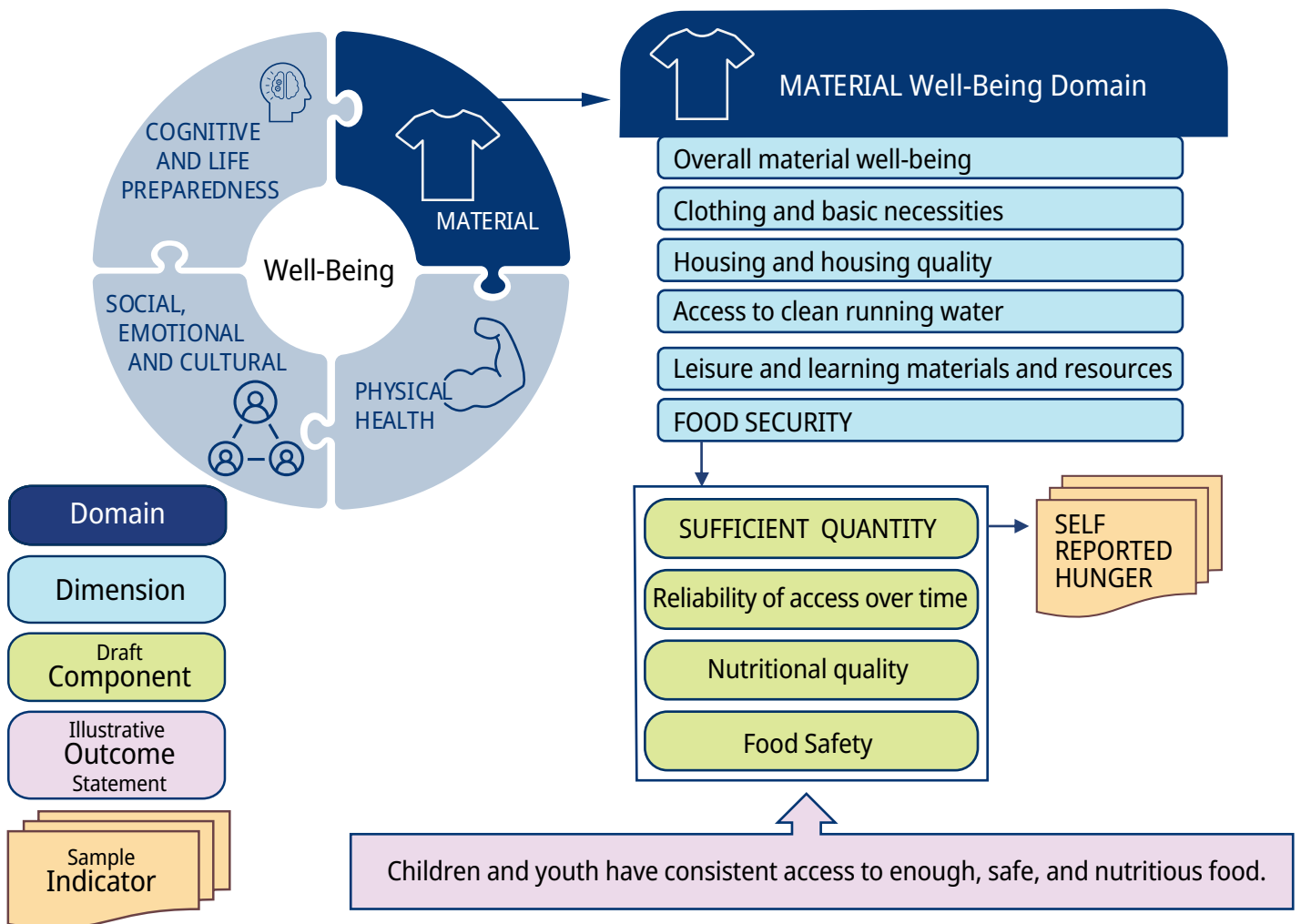
# How to measure well-being

While dimensions define the key aspects of well-being, they are not specific enough for measurement. To monitor progress, the Outcomes Framework unpacks each dimension into smaller, distinct components. For example, under the material well-being domain, the food security dimension could include components such as sufficient quantity, nutritional quality, food safety, and reliability of access over time. Each component can then be measured via one or more indicators. For instance, for BC children and youth, sufficiency of food could be

measured by the percentage of students who report never or almost never feeling hungry because there was not enough food to eat, based on data from the Student Learning Survey.

This structure—domains, dimensions, and components—provides the foundation for developing outcome statements that describe what children and youth should experience or achieve. For example: *Children and youth have consistent access to enough, safe, and nutritious food.*

**Visual 2:** BC Child and Youth Well-Being Outcomes Framework, Preliminary Measurement Structure (Draft for Discussion)



A draft measurement structure has been developed and will evolve through engagement. Through continued collaboration with partners, both within the BC government and external, this structure will be further developed to address information gaps and reflect diverse perspectives on what matters for the well-being of children and youth in the Province.

## What factors influence well-being and how?

Well-being outcomes help us focus on what matters, while indicators show how children and youth are doing in relation to those outcomes. But to meaningfully improve well-being, it is equally important to understand how the various factors in a child's life, good and bad (including government interventions) contribute to or hinder well-being. Only then can there be an evidence-based way to prioritize what helps children the most.

For example, connection to culture, land, and language is an outcome that signals well-being. Among the factors that shape this outcome are inherent rights to self-determination and the resumption of jurisdiction over child welfare, which Indigenous communities consider inextricably linked to the well-being of their children. The accompanying measurement structure provides a starting point for monitoring outcomes such as cultural and language connection, and it will be further developed to reflect shared priorities and diverse perspectives.

The proposed next phase of work will provide an evidence-based account of how these outcomes are achieved and sustained. To do this, the Outcomes Framework will be further developed to examine the influence of three levels of factors on well-being:

- Children's activities, behaviours, and relationships (e.g., friendships, healthy habits, and how they use technology);
- The environments in which they grow, including their family and home environment, early learning and child care centres, schools, and communities (e.g., the stability and safety of where they live, learning and living environments that foster belonging and actively counter racism and discrimination); and
- Public policies, programs, benefits, and services that impact their daily lives (e.g., housing programs, income supports, education policies, and health services).

**Visual 3:** Sample Factors Influencing Child and Youth Well-Being, by Level (Child, Environment, Policy)  
*Adapted from: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2021), Measuring What Matters for Child Well-being and Policies, OECD Publishing, Paris.*

		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activities with parents and family</li> <li>• Child parent and family relationships</li> <li>• Protective health behaviours</li> <li>• Risky health behaviours</li> <li>• Social and leisure activities</li> <li>• Civic and voluntary activities</li> <li>• Friendships, peer relationships, and social support</li> <li>• School and Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) activities, attitudes and behaviours</li> <li>• Child teacher and classmate relationships</li> <li>• Learning motivation and aspirations</li> <li>• Home and out-of-school learning activities</li> <li>• Digital activities and behaviours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family financial resources and work arrangements</li> <li>• Family living and custody arrangements</li> <li>• Family relationships</li> <li>• Family support networks</li> <li>• Family physical and mental health</li> <li>• Family violence and abuse</li> <li>• School and ECEC climate</li> <li>• School and teacher relationships</li> <li>• School and ECEC-provided material supports and activities</li> <li>• Crime and violence</li> <li>• Noise, pollution and air quality</li> <li>• Local green spaces</li> <li>• Local cultural and learning services/facilities</li> <li>• Local play and leisure services/facilities</li> <li>• Community material support services and activities</li> <li>• Community social support services and activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family financial support policies</li> <li>• Family employment-related support policies</li> <li>• Family and parenting support service policies</li> <li>• Child support regulations</li> <li>• Public family housing support policies</li> <li>• Housing and built environment regulations and policies</li> <li>• Physical and mental health policies</li> <li>• ECEC regulations and policies</li> <li>• Education regulations and policies</li> <li>• Environmental quality regulations and policies</li> </ul>

The goal is to **map and measure the pathways** that link factors to well-being outcomes in the B.C. context:

- **Mapping** means identifying the factors that matter most, understanding how they influence well-being—e.g., whether by reducing harm (protective factors) or increasing vulnerability (risk factors)—and determining where they enter the change process: as

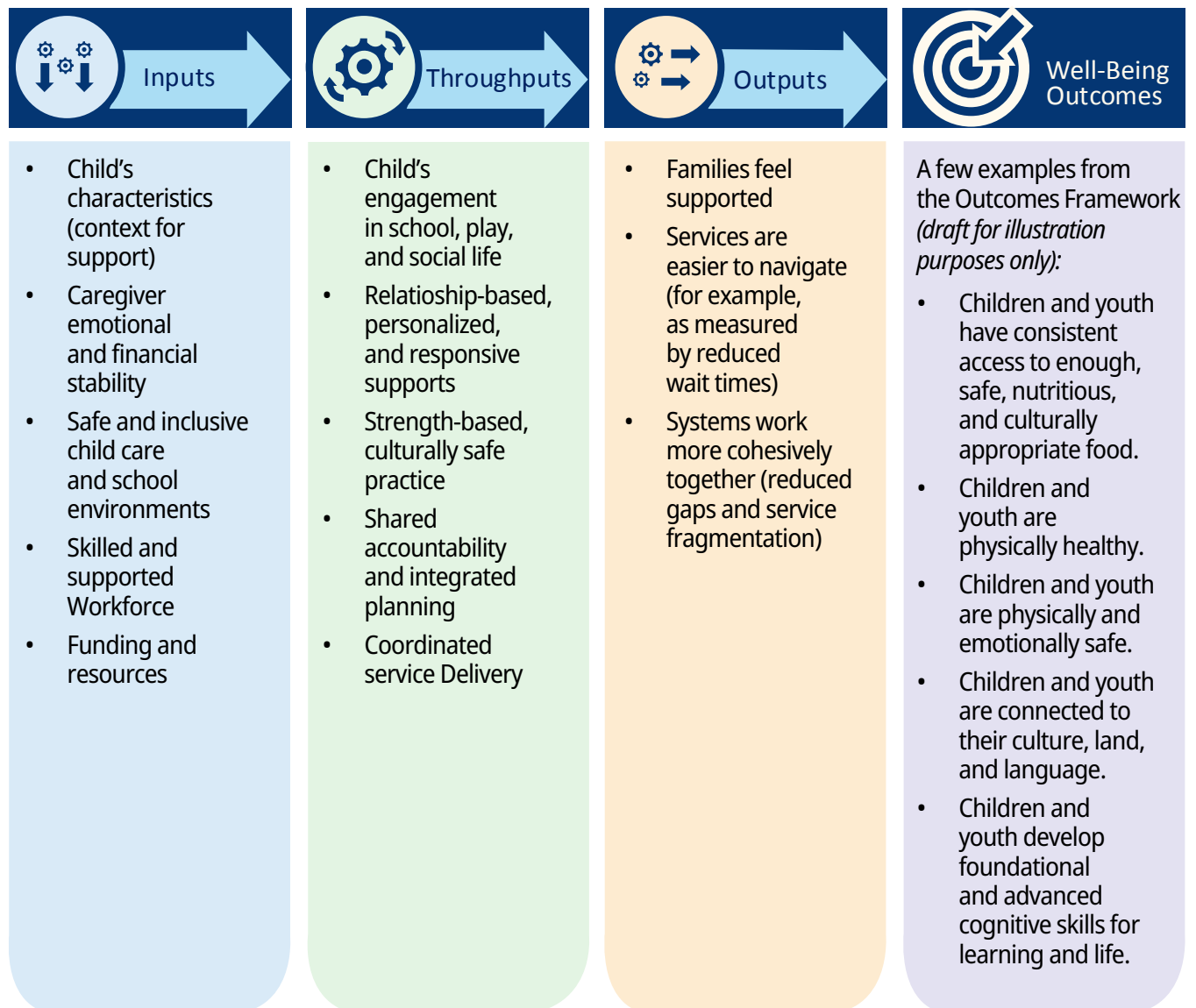
**a) Inputs:** The initial conditions, resources, or capacities;

**b) Throughputs:** The work we do with inputs. These are the interactions, processes, and actions carried out; or

**c) Outputs:** The immediate results that come directly from the work we do. They show what was produced or delivered, not whether it made a difference yet.

- **Measuring** involves using B.C. data and research evidence to assess the strength of these pathways, so we can understand not only what matters, but how it makes a difference and the extent of its impact.

**Visual 4:** Sample Factors Influencing Child and Youth Well-Being, by Stage (Input, Throughput, Output)



To achieve this, the Outcomes Framework will draw on the following sources of evidence:

- Analysis of B.C. administrative and survey data to understand how factors are linked to outcomes in our context;
- Meta-analyses and systematic reviews that summarize what is known from broader research; and
- Ministry logic models that describe how services and programs are expected to influence child and youth outcomes.

This mapping and measurement will help us explain how well-being is achieved so that government and partners can prioritize the most effective points of action.

The next phase of work will include expanding the draft measurement structure to strengthen outcomes and indicators and add the factors that shape well-being. This means mapping and measuring how system-level changes such as jurisdiction, along with environments and everyday experiences, influence outcomes. Expanding the measurement structure in this way will ensure the Outcomes Framework captures **both the outcomes** that matter most for children and youth **and the conditions and pathways** that make them possible.

## From actions to outcomes: An application example

The Child and Youth Well-Being Action Plan sets out a roadmap to improve outcomes for children, youth, and families in B.C. Included in this roadmap are actions that improve timely access to assessments and support services for parents and caregivers of children and youth with complex needs. The proposed Outcomes Framework provides a methodology to measure exactly how and by how much potential investments improve the well-being of this cohort. This is done by mapping and measuring the factors and interconnected pathways that lead to change; starting with inputs and activities, through immediate outputs, and ultimately to the well-being outcomes.

- **Inputs:** initial conditions, resources, or capacities (e.g., current funding and staffing)
- **Throughputs:** interactions, processes, or activities (e.g., timely referral, service coordination, and family supports)
- **Outputs:** the immediate results of the work we did (e.g., increased service access, reduced wait times, stronger caregiver confidence, reduced caregiver stress, and increased child participation)
- **Outcomes:** changes in child and youth well-being (e.g., developmental progress, improved emotional and behavioral regulation, and stronger engagement in daily life)



Through mapping and measuring the change pathways (Inputs → Throughputs → Outputs → Outcomes), this approach will provide an understanding of which factors, and in what ways, most help children and families. The results, in turn, enable more effective allocation of resources and program design.



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