

# Outcome Harvesting + Attitude Change:

A Brief for Evaluation Commissioners

---

**APRIL 2026**



# Outcome Harvesting + Attitude Change:

## A BRIEF FOR EVALUATION COMMISSIONERS

Your social change programs aim to influence complex, fast-changing systems. If your evaluation methods struggle to keep up, you may wish to consider Outcome Harvesting (OH), possibly combined with Attitude Change. OH is a practitioner-friendly, qualitative approach that flips the script on traditional evaluative thinking. Rather than looking for a narrow set of predicted outcomes, OH casts a wide net to identify social change outcomes after they occur. This process reveals both expected and unexpected outcomes, a strong foundation for assessing effectiveness. OH centers on observable behavior change to which the intervention has contributed, while the Outcome Harvesting + Attitude Change adaptation adds the consideration of intangibles.

[Outcome Harvesting](#) was developed in the early 2000s by Ricardo Wilson-Grau and colleagues. It has been widely used by international funders (e.g. the World Bank, the United Nations Development Program and the Ford Foundation), nonprofits (e.g. Oxfam) and networks (e.g. the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict). US-focused applications are also picking up pace. Three factors combine to make OH unique:

- **Practitioners at the center:** OH is a utilization-focused approach that deeply engages practitioners, who have a front row seat to identify outcomes within their program’s sphere of influence. This requires the organization to devote time to OH. In return, OH honors local knowledge, develops capacities and facilitates application.
- **Retrospective logic:** OH looks backward to identify outcomes as they emerge, and then investigates what changed, and how the program contributed. Retrospective logic is a good fit in [complex contexts](#), where it is difficult to meaningfully predict outcomes in advance. Additionally, this departure from linear predictive planning, a Westernized paradigm, can open up space for [cultural responsiveness](#) in evaluation.
- **Behavior change:** OH defines an outcome as an observable change in the behavior of a social actor other than the implementing organization itself. This definition powerfully shifts our thinking beyond “*what*” the program did, to “*so what?*” in terms of how a program influences other people.

### Why add Attitude Change to Outcome Harvesting?

[Ripple Peace Research & Consulting](#) and partners have been innovating [Outcome Harvesting + Attitude Change \(OH+AC\)](#) since 2018. While behavior data is essential, it is not always sufficient to fulfill an evaluation’s purpose. There are some programs in which attitudes matter a great deal. In programs that build cooperation across lines of difference, or advance gender equity, or promote climate action, shifts in attitude can be pivotal to unlocking change. When attitudes are central to a program’s theory of change, ignoring them—or making unfounded assumptions about them—can leave a gaping hole in evaluation.



“Attitude Change” is a broad umbrella term referring to shifts in perceptions, emotions, opinions, assumptions, beliefs, values, spirituality, worldview, etc. This term is borrowed from [social psychology](#), where it is used for exploring how behaviors and attitudes mutually influence each other within processes of change. In OH+AC, an Attitude Change is *not* considered an outcome; it is simply a valuable added component within the data set.

**HOW OH+AC DATA IS STRUCTURED**

OUTCOME HARVESTING				+ ATTITUDE CHANGE
Description of <b>Behavior Change</b>	<b>Significance</b> of Behavior Change	<b>Contribution of program</b> to Behavior Change	<b>Contribution of others</b> to Behavior Change (optional)	Description of <b>related Attitude Change</b>

**What questions does OH+AC help to answer?**

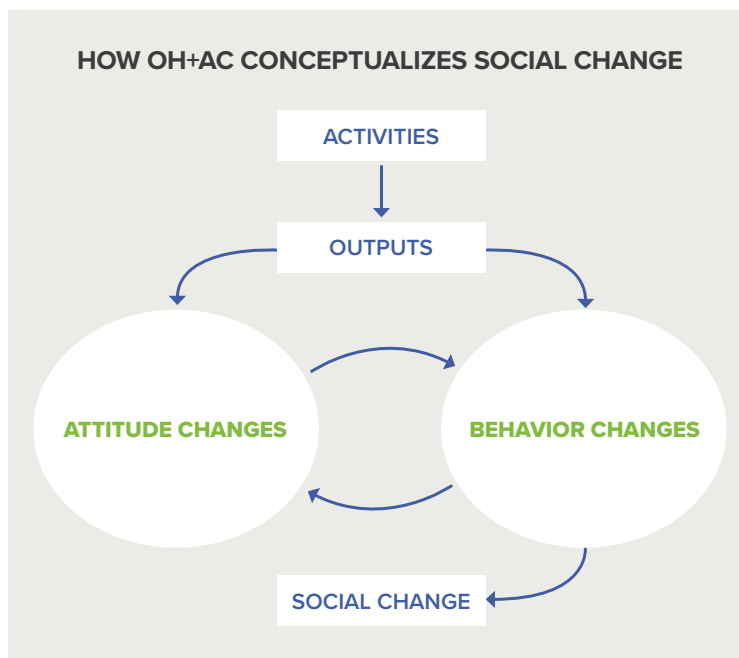
OH+AC data analysis uses qualitative categorization to help reveal:

- What types of **expected changes** have taken place? Which ones are the most frequent?
- What types of **unexpected changes** have taken place? Is action needed to mitigate or amplify them?
- To what extent does this indicate **progress toward our aims**? Where do we see small outcomes building over time toward potentially large outcomes?
- How are **behaviors and attitudes interacting** within the change process?
- How is our program **influencing** change, and under what conditions?
- How are other **actors or factors** within the context also influencing change?
- What are the implications for **refining our strategy or theory of change**?

## What makes OH+AC credible?

OH+AC features the same credibility factors as OH.

- **Behavior focus:** Observable behavior change can be objectively verified.
- **Contribution claims:** In complex contexts, most changes have multiple causes. OH+AC does not attribute any change wholly to a single program. Instead, it identifies what the program contributed toward that change. If desired, contribution assessment can be strengthened through [process tracing](#) or [contribution analysis](#).
- **Substantiation:** OH+AC emphasizes collaboratively refining change data, ensuring that each change is specific enough to be verified. This approach also pursues substantiation, which involves verification of the change by an independent observer. These steps can be scaled up or down to align with user needs.



## What are the practicalities of using OH+AC?

- **Purpose:** Like OH, OH+AC works best in social and systems change initiatives – not service delivery programs. These approaches shine in complex contexts where outcomes are difficult or impossible to predict.
- **Leadership:** When used for internal learning, OH+AC can be facilitated by an internal evaluator with support from an OH+AC trainer. When findings are intended for external audiences, the process should be facilitated by an external OH+AC evaluator. All OH+AC evaluators should have prior OH experience and strong qualitative analysis skills.
- **Time:** OH+AC is flexible, so every process is unique. A medium-sized end-of-project evaluation might require 2-3 months. On the other hand, a progress monitoring exercise might run at low intensity for the entire duration of the project.
- **Money:** OH+AC involves moderate costs. It is more expensive than off-the-shelf surveys or light interviews, yet far cheaper than large custom surveys or quasi-experimental designs, making it accessible to most organizations.

## Where can I get more information?

- On OH, the [Outcome Harvesting Community](#) is the go-to resource.
- On OH+AC, reach out to [Ripple Peace Research & Consulting](#) or a member of the OH+AC Working Group. We can also help connect you to OH evaluators.