

# Considering suicide to Hope Evaluation and Research?

*LivingWorks believes that evaluation and research play a vital role in the ongoing development and improvement of its programs and in building empirical support for their effectiveness. The independence of this work is essential to its integrity. Our commitment is to ensure that those conducting evaluation and research have access to documents that clearly articulate the purpose, scope, and rationale for our programs. This paper on suicide to Hope is part of a series that provides this background on each program. It includes a Program Logic framework that describes the program's formative influences, learning processes, intended outcomes, and anticipated impacts.*

## Program Overview

### Description

*suicide to Hope* is a one-day, skills-based workshop that prepares helpers to aid recovery and growth in persons with suicide experiences. Participants learn a model, the *Pathway to Hope (PaTH)*, designed to create hope by aiding recovery and growth. The model provides a pathway for setting recovery and growth goals derived from the person's suicide experiences and developing a plan to achieve them. The threshold for applying the model is that the person they are helping is currently safe from suicide and committed to working on recovery and growth.

Participants learn conceptual frameworks and skills relevant to applying *PaTH*. They are also introduced to a Helper Qualities framework that invites them to reflect upon how their attitudes, aptitudes, and values impact the helping process. The framework can become a professional development tool.

The training facilitates an interactive adult learning process that invites participants to learn new skills in a safe learning environment. The workshop design acknowledges that participants bring their own experiences with suicide into the training and their helping relationships, potentially enhancing their appreciation of recovery and growth work. Being mindful of these influences, and seeking support as needed, are encouraged within the workshop and in subsequent intervention practice.

*suicide to Hope* is for clinicians and professional workers who are, or would like to be, involved in ongoing suicide care with people once they are safe from suicide. It assumes that participants are familiar with suicide intervention and can provide suicide first aid. Workshop learning can readily be incorporated into and enhance practitioners' current approaches to suicide care.

### Rationale

*suicide to Hope* is positioned as a program for helpers who are providing ongoing care for persons with suicide experiences once they are safe. The key intervention question is: "Once they are safe, what then?" The foundational assumption for *suicide to Hope* is that suicide experiences can be life-changing for those who keep safe and choose to live. It provides a way of working with people to help them translate the choice to engage in recovery and growth into achievable goals that could make safety sustainable and improve their quality of life.

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The *PaTH* model helps people learn from their suicide experiences and draw on their enhanced understanding to formulate and work toward recovery and growth goals. While recovery and growth are widely applied in medicine, mental health, trauma, and grief, they have yet to be systematically applied to suicide care. *suicide to Hope* is an invitation to explore the possibilities for viewing suicide from a recovery and growth perspective. A literature review<sup>1</sup> on the rationale for *suicide to Hope* and its key concepts is available on the LivingWorks website at [www.livingworks.net](http://www.livingworks.net).

# Mapping Evaluation and Research

## Theory of Change

The key features of *suicide to Hope* and the rationale behind them are grounded in a theory of change.<sup>2</sup> The working assumption is that *suicide to Hope* training will help participants develop suicide first-aid competencies that enable them to increase the immediate safety of individuals considering suicide. The anticipated outcome for *suicide to Hope* participants is that they will develop a working knowledge of the *PaTH* model and that those they help will begin to recover and grow through their suicide experiences. Sustainable safety, improved quality of life, and increased hope are anticipated impacts.

A significant challenge for evaluation and research is that the people whom the training is ultimately designed to benefit are not themselves in the training. Accordingly, factors influencing the program's ultimate impact on persons with thoughts of suicide are identified and described so they can be accurately measured or explored. The relationship between or among these factors is also of research and evaluation interest.

Since Program Logic<sup>3</sup> is a widely accepted way of mapping these influences and relationships, LivingWorks has developed a logic framework for *suicide to Hope*. We have identified the development process, the personal and material resources, the learning experience, the learning outcomes, participants' performance in applying learning, and the impact on those receiving help as key domains of interest.

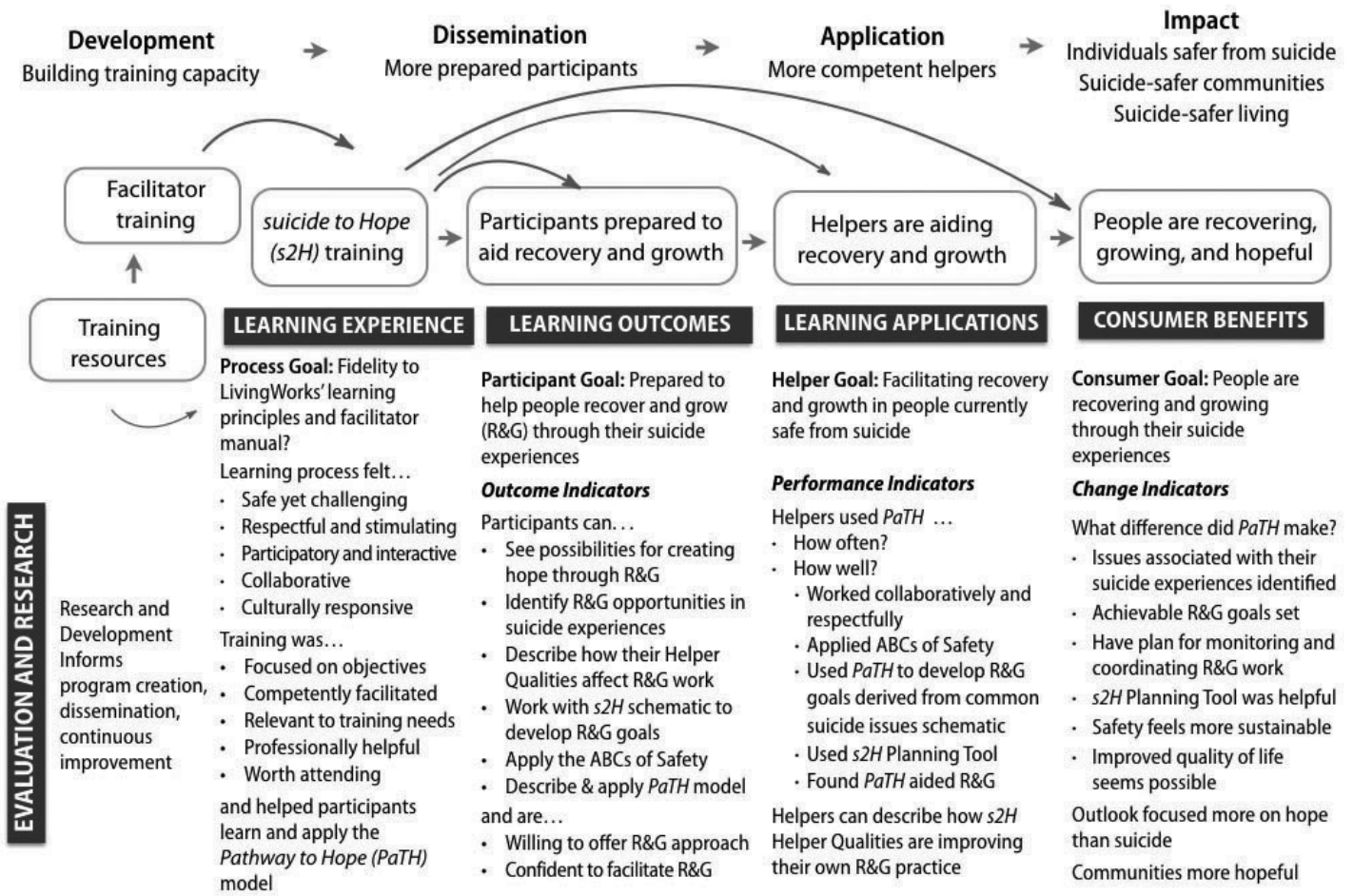
## suicide to Hope Program Logic

Key elements of the *suicide to Hope* Program Logic are described below and mapped into the graphic that follows.

- **Inputs** such as training materials and trainers' training are designed to provide a consistent, quality learning experience aligned with the program's values and objectives. The *suicide to Hope* literature review<sup>1</sup> outlines conceptual inputs informing program development. Rothman's<sup>4</sup> research and development framework has guided the development of all LivingWorks training programs.
- **The learning experience** reflects the quality and safety of the workshop environment. Evaluations elicit feedback on whether the training was competently facilitated, reflected adult learning principles, resulted in a clear understanding of core concepts, was perceived as worthwhile, and helped develop a working knowledge of *PaTH*.
- **Learning outcomes** focus on what participants learned and whether the program's learning objectives were met. The overarching goal of *suicide to Hope* is that participants can help people recover and grow through their suicide experiences. Participants' willingness, confidence, and preparedness to apply *PaTH* are key outcomes of interest.
- **Learning applications** explore how participants applied program learning. They ask how often and how effectively helpers used *PaTH* in their professional practice. They invite helpers to share their experiences of using the model and how it influenced their work. It would also help to know what features of the model were most helpful and how the Helper Qualities framework is being used.
- **The impact** of these interventions (and indirectly the training) is what matters most. Provider, consumer, and observer perspectives all contribute to understanding impact. The fundamental question is whether people who experienced a *PaTH* intervention can identify ways they are recovering and growing through their suicide experiences and whether the intervention helped them focus more on hope than suicide. Further, since helpers may incorporate *PaTH* into a multi-faceted therapy and treatment plan, providers and consumers could offer feedback on how the recovery and growth approach added value.

The *suicide to Hope* Program Logic graphic proposes some indicators for each of the domains of interest that are aligned with design intentions. We invite feedback from evaluators and researchers on how the potential range of these indicators can be expanded. Training follow-up may also affect outcomes, such as whether organizations hosting training provide subsequent support for *suicide to Hope*-trained helpers through their intervention policies and practices. The graphic aims to illustrate the range of possible areas for research and evaluation focus, as discussed above, rather than limit or conclusively define them.

## LivingWorks suicide to Hope - Program Logic Evaluation Framework



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## The Contributions of Evaluation and Research

There will be overlap between evaluation and research. However, we anticipate that evaluations will focus more on program effectiveness and improvements—assessing whether, and to what extent, *suicide to Hope* offers value and benefits consistent with its objectives. Results will help improve program quality, fidelity, and effectiveness. Value for money and social return on investment may also feature along with comparing the unique contributions of *suicide to Hope* with alternative training programs. A document<sup>5</sup> mapping *suicide to Hope* to the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention's workforce training guidelines may be accessed on the LivingWorks website. We expect research to investigate the working assumptions, concepts, and predicted consumer impacts of *suicide to Hope* and examine factors affecting implementation fidelity following workshop attendance. Research will determine the level of empirical support for the program's theory of change and its intended benefits. It will also contribute to knowledge about what works in suicide intervention training and which factors are most strongly associated with good outcomes and impacts.

# Diverse Methodologies

LivingWorks encourages a diverse range of methodologies in conducting evaluation and research on its programs. Quantitative methodologies will build a growing body of research evidence that collectively supports robust findings about whether and how effectively the training supports outcomes and impacts consistent with its objectives. We hope these investigations will be complemented by phenomenological qualitative inquiries, such as case studies, that illustrate how training is experienced and applied and provide a nuanced understanding of the impact of *suicide to Hope* interventions on those who provide and receive them. Mixed methods strategies will be able to tap into the potential of both approaches. A paper on LivingWorks' website outlines some of our aspirations for developing a broad view of evidence featuring quantitative and qualitative approaches.<sup>6</sup> A document<sup>7</sup> on LivingWorks' core beliefs summarizes our guiding values.

The *suicide to Hope* Program Logic aims to provide a sufficiently broad framework within which evaluators and researchers can identify their specific contributions and compare their findings with those of others. We also hope that it stimulates ideas about additional avenues of research and evaluation inquiry. Hopefully, it creates a forum for dialogue about what works, what the critical success factors are, how training can be improved, and which areas require further investigation. Our best guidance will come from those who participate in our training programs, and ultimately from the persons with thoughts of suicide whom they seek to help.

While assembling a repertoire of well-validated existing measures relevant to the program, we also intend to develop, trial, and validate research measures specifically aligned with the program's concepts, model, processes, and objectives.

We encourage anyone researching or evaluating any of our training programs to contact us at [research@livingworks.net](mailto:research@livingworks.net). We can provide relevant background on our values and programs, share information about work already done, offer thoughts on work yet to be done and, where possible, connect people with others who are evaluating or researching our programs. Beyond this collaborative role, we believe it is important to respect the independence of the work being done and the reporting of key findings.

## References

1. LivingWorks. (2016). *suicide to Hope literature review*. Retrieved February 15, 2018, from <https://www.livingworks.net/resources-and-support/research-and-evaluation/>
2. The rationale and methodology for this approach have been articulated in many settings. See, for example, Rogers, P. (2014). *Theory of change: Methodological briefs - Impact evaluation no. 2*, Florence, Italy: UNICEF Office of Research.
3. Many variations of Program Logic frameworks are available. For one such comprehensive guide, see: <https://www.wkkf.org/resource-directory/resource/2006/02/wk-kellogg-foundation-logic-model-development-guide>
4. Rothman, J. (1980). *Social R&D: Research and development in human services*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
5. LivingWorks. (2017). *suicide to Hope and the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention clinical workforce preparedness training guidelines*. Retrieved February 15, 2018, from <https://www.livingworks.net/dmsdocument/675>
6. LivingWorks. (2018). *LivingWorks' perspectives on evaluation and research of suicide intervention training*. Manuscript in Preparation.
7. LivingWorks. (2018). *LivingWorks' core beliefs: A suicide-safer world*. Manuscript in preparation