



## Discussion Summary

**Topic:** What “Ingredients” help OM to change practice?

**Discussion:** Jan 2018

**Summary:** March 2018

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### Discussion Starter by Mariam Smith

While I was working in an action research project in Cambodia among indigenous people there, I saw how Outcome Mapping became a useful tool and an approach to change the way programme staff worked. While they had always been great staff with strong connections to the communities they were working in, there was a shift from seeing themselves as "NGO experts" running programmes addressing some great literacy and food security needs to staff starting to engage with community members and government staff in a way that also recognised their expertise. They started to learn from relationships with them in a way they had not done in the past.

I have seen similar things take place in various organisations, but I have found that these changes do not happen automatically. While Outcome Mapping is designed to support adaptation through a focus on outcomes, there are still further "ingredients" required to help the step between collection of evidence (around experiences, observed changed behaviour and perspectives) and changed practice.

Some of the added "ingredients" that I have personally seen important are:

- 1- rigidly keeping "holy" large chunks of time for regular reflection, generally encouraging lots of conversation in different constellations (Matching cycles of reflection to the rate of change and to the extent that you interact with the boundary partners)
- 2- using lots of drawings to share how we (staff and boundary partners) believe change has happened and is happening
- 3- restructuring teams to work more focused on boundary partners rather than on themes or technical roles
- 4- giving project staff closest to the boundary partners decision making authority over their parts of the budget
- 5- blurring boundaries between office hours and not, between work locations and not (for example encouraging staff to try out concepts in their own home communities to gain personal experiences and credibility with the methods they were encouraging)

I understand that these "ingredients" might not be appropriate in some of your contexts. It would be very interesting to hear some of the things that you have "added" to allow Outcome Mapping to affect the way you and your teams work!



## Summary of Responses

The discussion prompted active debate, with 17 replies. The responses are summarized in the mind-map diagram attached below. An online interactive version is also available at: <https://www.kumu.io/Mariam/omlc-discussion#omlc-discussion>

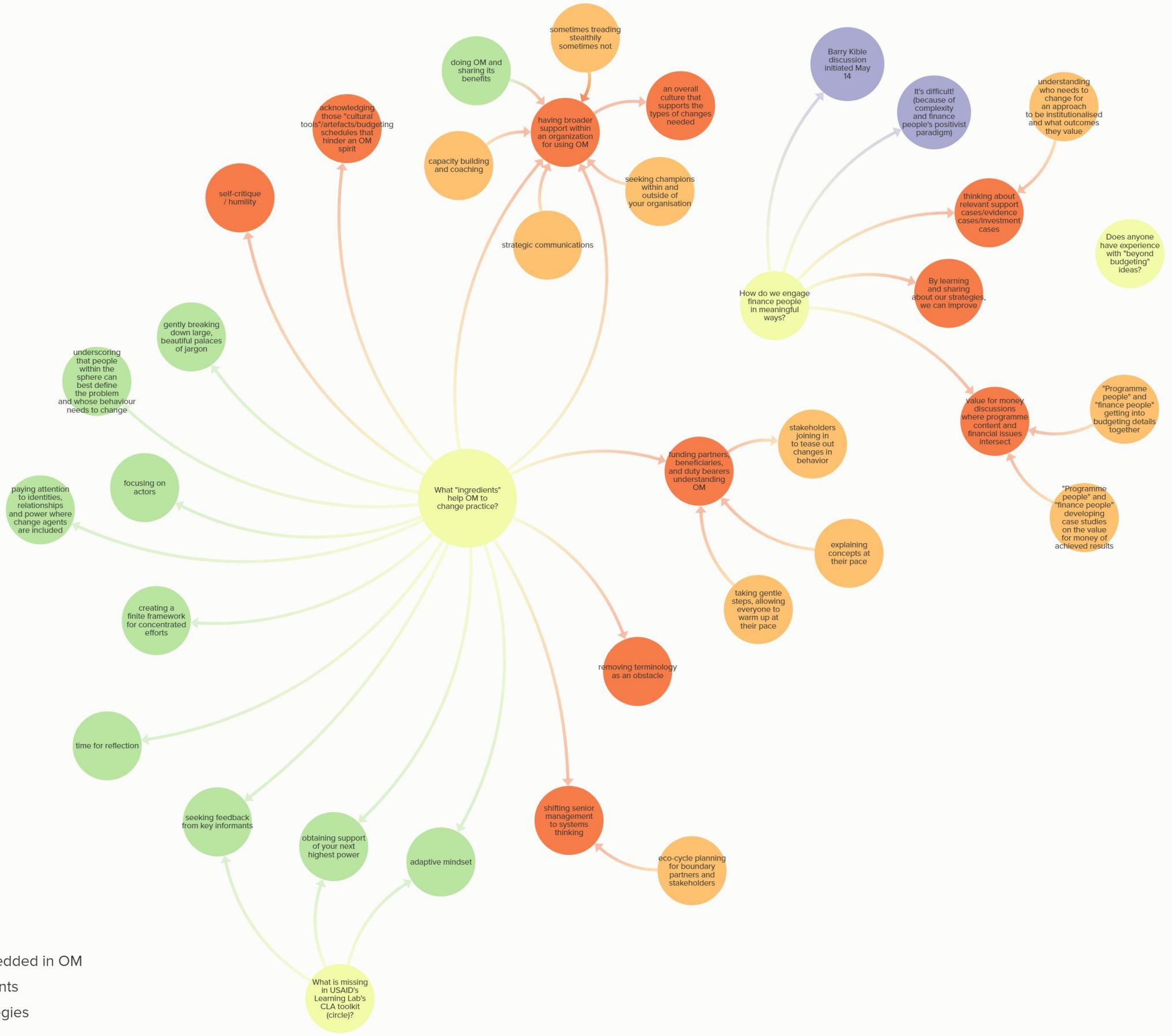
The central question of the discussion can be summarised as "What ingredients help Outcome Mapping (OM) to change practice?" (in the big yellow circle in the diagram below). In the discussion that followed, we confirmed that some of the "ingredients" to allow OM to change practice inherently take place through the use of OM (see the green circles). The tool itself fosters an adaptive mindset where reflection and meaning-making are necessary. It provides finite frameworks where the roles and views of the people "in the sphere(s)" are seen as crucial. Also, unlike other frameworks, the organisational practices provide specific "reality checks", such as seeking feedback from key informants, obtaining support of your next highest power and sharing your best wisdom with the world.

One of the "ingredients" mentioned as needing to be added (dark orange circles) was that of 'having broader support within an organisation to create an overall culture that supports the types of changes needed. A set of diverse strategies (light orange circles) were mentioned as possible ways to achieve this overall culture, such as seeking champions within and outside of the organisation, communicating strategically, building capacity, coaching, sometimes treading stealthily and sometimes not. Also within organisations, senior management shifting to systems thinking was mentioned as an "ingredient", with eco-system planning for boundary partners and stakeholders as a practical suggestion. A couple other related "ingredients" related to organisational culture was the foundational need for self-critique and humility and the need to acknowledge cultural tools/artefacts/budgeting schedules that hinder an OM spirit.

The "ingredient" of helping funding partners, beneficiaries and duty bearers understand OM also came with some practical suggestions how to achieve this understanding, such as stakeholders joining in to tease out changes in behaviour, explaining concepts at their pace, and taking gentle steps, allowing everyone to warm up at their pace. Removing terminology as an obstacle was mentioned as a separate ingredient, and could relate both to organisational culture and to the wider context.

Stemming from the question (to the right, in yellow) of how to engage finance people meaningfully, were comments (in purple) on this being difficult and that we have covered some ground on this in previous discussions. Still, there was an affirmation ('ingredient') that we need to learn and share about our strategies so that we can improve. Value for money discussions can be seen as space where programme content and financial issues intersect, and where it can help with strategies (in light orange) of getting programme and finance people together to develop case studies and looking at details. Related to this was also the idea/strategy (in light orange) of understanding who needs to change for an approach to be institutionalised and what outcomes they value so that you can think about relevant support cases/evidence cases/investment cases.

In conclusion, there seems to be a need to support senior management and engage power brokers in various ways if Outcome Mapping is going to change practice. This might be an area we want to explore more. Is it enough with our Organisational Practices or is it helpful to apply OM to ourselves here to make it more concrete? In regards, to the finances, there also seems to be more that we can explore and learn in regards to how to create space for Outcome Mapping to change practice.



- Legend**
- Opposite
  - Main Question
  - Question
  - Ingredients embedded in OM
  - "Added" ingredients
  - Supporting strategies
  - Other