

Audrey Cooper, M.P.H.
R.N., Team Lead

Margaret Klug
M.A. Candidate, Public Policy

Erin Spurgeon
M.A. Candidate, Public Policy

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Laying the Foundation of Evidence





Executive Summary

Since 2004, Saranam continues to provide a place of refuge for families experiencing homelessness, operating with the mission to “empower families to end their homelessness and poverty.” The organization follows a two-generational (2Gen) approach, fostering a supportive community in which families are provided housing and education to aid them in overcoming generational poverty.

The purpose of this year’s evaluation was to build the tools and theoretical framework for Saranam to assess the effectiveness of their program in empowering families to end their homelessness. This process also served to identify the most appropriate study design for Saranam to use in the future to test their program’s effectiveness in pursuit of external validation.

The main question that guided this evaluation was:

When looking at the overall data picture generated by Saranam’s theoretical basis and current measures of success, what is needed to assess their program’s effectiveness in empowering families to end their homelessness?

To answer this question, the UNM Evaluation Team conducted in-depth, methodological semi-structured interviews with Saranam leadership mapping out Saranam’s theory of change, assessing the theory and rationale behind outcomes and program components. Based on the findings from the semi-structured interviews, the UNM Evaluation Team then reviewed the literature on the theoretical foundations of Saranam’s programs and outcomes.

We found that Saranam’s program components have a multitude of evidence, but much of the evidence is not specific to the population that Saranam serves– homeless families with children. Therefore, we expanded the search criteria to include proxy populations and a larger timeframe. In total, we cited 39 sources as evidence for the 32 theories and concepts identified through interviews.

We also researched and explored study designs Saranam could use in the future to gain external validation. After consulting with epidemiologists, we concluded that a mixed methods cohort study with a pre/post/post tool best fits Saranam’s circumstances and therefore recommend this next step to measure outcomes over time. Saranam could also partner with organizations serving similar populations with similar underlying theories to establish evidence supporting those theories as a next step. Finally, we recommend that Saranam create a clear measure of success and indicator for the community outcome in their logical framework.



Introduction

Saranam is a not-for-profit organization in Albuquerque, New Mexico that seeks to “empower families to end their homelessness and poverty through housing, education, and supportive community.” Since 2004, they provided safe, stable housing for families experiencing homelessness. This concept is reflected in their name, Saranam, meaning “refuge” in Sanskrit. Saranam implements a two-generational (2Gen) approach to address homelessness and poverty. Each year, they welcome a cohort of 10 new families, each comprised of at least one parent and one child. By working with parents and their children, the program intends to strengthen familial bonds and build the foundation necessary for stable, healthy lives. Their program provides housing, education, and supportive communities with the belief that these three pillars will stop the cycle of homelessness and poverty.

According to internal data, Saranam has served 172 families over the years, with a 77% success rate of families exiting their program that meet at least three out of their six measures of success. These measures relate to whether the family has stable housing, improved their level of education, is employed, improved their life management skills, improved their parenting skills, and whether they have addressed major barriers to their stability. Saranam is hoping to double their capacity by spring 2024 upon the completion of their new community compound on Albuquerque’s West Side — providing 25 additional homes for families.

The purpose of this year’s evaluation was to build the tools and theoretical framework for Saranam to assess the effectiveness of their program in empowering families to end their homelessness. Using a participatory evaluation approach, the evaluation team identified the goal to demonstrate Saranam’s theoretical underpinning, identify gaps in the theory and evidence supporting their outcomes and programs, to create a basis for further evaluation of program effectiveness. This served to generate evidence for the program’s components and program as a whole. This process built towards the creation of a study design to further establish Saranam as an evidence-informed program.

The questions that guided this evaluation were:

When looking at the overall data picture generated by Saranam’s theoretical basis and current measures of success, what is needed to assess their program’s effectiveness in empowering families to end their homelessness and poverty?

- *How do Saranam’s theoretical basis and current measures of success capture their program’s effectiveness in empowering families to end their homelessness and poverty?*
- *What is missing from the current measures of success and theoretical basis to capture program effectiveness?*
- *What are the merits of select study designs to capture program effectiveness?*

The Evaluation Team was comprised of:

Audrey Cooper, Associate Director of the UNM Evaluation Lab, Team Lead
Erin Spurgeon, UNM Evaluation Lab Fellow
Maggie Klug, UNM Evaluation Lab Fellow
Tracy Weaver, Saranam, Executive Director
Jennifer Mullen, Saranam, Program Director
Ellen Shepherd, M.B.A., Saranam, Director of Continuous Improvement
Rachel Zepper, M.S.W., Saranam, Alumni Coordinator

The UNM Evaluation Lab Team is appreciative of all the hard work Saranam staff put into the evaluation and their dedication to the evaluation process.



Work Performed

To meet the evaluation goals, the Evaluation Team reviewed each of Saranam’s program components and the underlying theories using a map of their logic model, where each of the four pillars of the program — housing, education, community, and resilience — are analyzed. Mapping out the theory of change helped to build evidence for Saranam’s complete program by identifying any unarticulated theories and by intentionally laying out the justification for each program component through a review of the evidence base. The Evaluation Team also assessed Saranam’s measures of success to determine their appropriateness and see how they could be improved to better capture their intended outcomes, thus allowing for a more accurate data collection tool to be built in the future. The mapping of the theory of change and measures of success took place during weekly meetings with the collective Saranam Evaluation Team. Saranam’s evaluation team served as the interview subjects.

The team created an organizational tool (see Figure 1) for this process based on Saranam’s logic model. We worked through the tool, pillar by pillar, beginning by asking what the measures of success for each outcome are. Once this was established, we moved to the specific activities and asked about the rationale and theoretical basis for providing each program element. For instance, under the first housing pillar (see figure 2), we began by asking how they are measuring “increased family autonomy in securing and managing housing.” Then, under the first output of “families provided with safe, stable housing for two years,” we asked why Saranam provides a fully furnished apartment. We then followed the “5 Whys” technique and continued to ask “why” until the underlying reasoning for that aspect of their program and the theories that support it were identified (American Society for Quality, N.d.a). During this process, as evaluators with interdisciplinary experiences, we contributed our own understanding, identifying theories and determining if those theories match what Saranam is doing in practice. This process is informed by the “fishbone” method of root cause analysis (see Figure 2). Using a fishbone diagram tool begins with deciding on a

main problem statement listed at the fish's mouth. Then, the group decides upon the main cause categories, listing them as branches from the main arrow. As possible contributing causes are brainstormed, they are added as a branch, or the smaller “bones” of the fish, within the most appropriate category. For each cause, the facilitator asks, “why does this happen,” and continues to probe with “why” to identify the root causes. Sub-causes can be written as branches coming off the causal “bones” (Minnesota Department of Health, 2022). For this evaluation, we used a modified version of the fishbone diagram, with each program component taking the place of the problem statement. Then, the major underlying theories were identified, serving as our cause categories, and as we continued to probe into Saranam’s rationale, we discerned the root justifications and data their program components are based on (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, N.d.b.).

Figure 1.
Process Map for Theory of Change

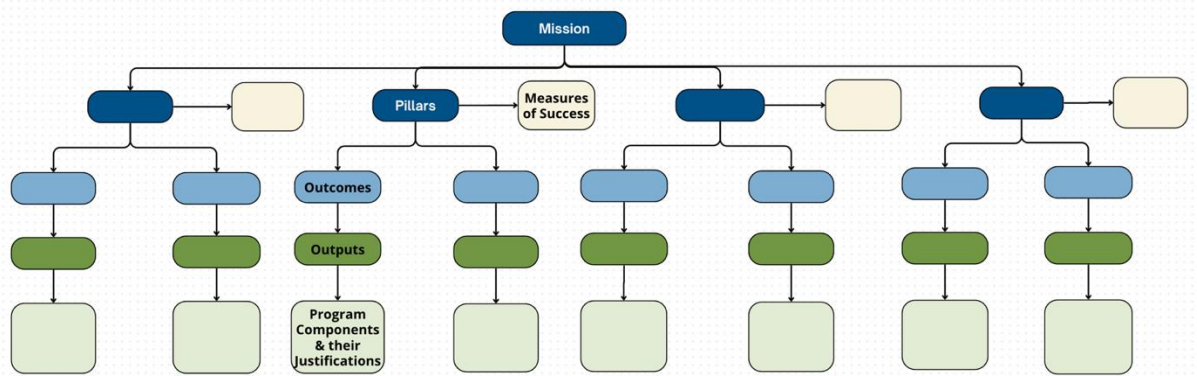
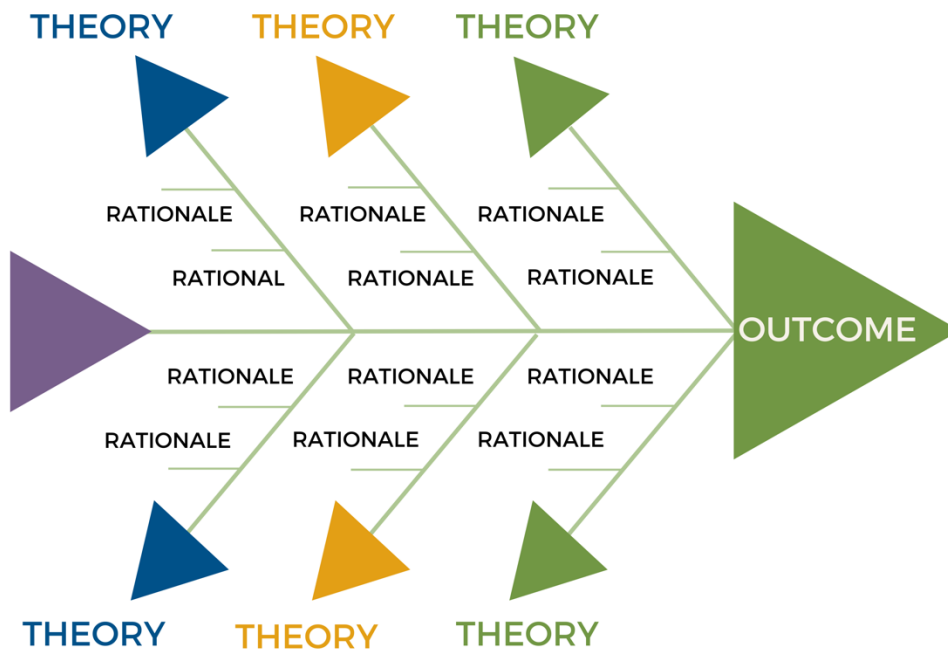


Figure 2.
Fishbone Diagram



For these data collection sessions with Saranam, we developed a qualitative protocol based on a semi-structured interview protocol created by RAND (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). Figure 3 shows how we approached discussing each of Saranam’s program components, beginning with housing. With each component, we asked multiple questions aimed at getting to the heart of why each component is part of their program.

Figure 3.

Data Collection Protocol: Modified 5 Whys and Fishbone Diagram

<p>Topic 1</p>	<p><i>Topic #1: Housing: Each probe is subject to the 5 Whys and Fishbone method of digging deeper into the root theories. Each probe asks about theory and evidence base.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. First, please describe the measures of success used to assess housing outcomes. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. PROBE: Why are families provided with stable housing for 2 years? C b. PROBE: Why is it important that families increase knowledge and experience of household management? c. PROBE: How do financial literacy and life skills contribute to securing stable housing?
<p>Topic 2</p>	<p><i>Topic #2: Education and Housing: Each probe is subject to the 5 Whys and Fishbone method of digging deeper into the root theories. Each probe asks about theory and evidence base.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Next, explain the measures of success for education and employment. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. PROBE: Why is job skill training important to the program and family outcomes? b. PROBE: Why is it important that family members increase formal education?

	<p>c. PROBE: Do outcomes vary based on what kind of formal education is pursued by the family member?</p> <p>3. How does education factor into the 2Gen model that Saranam’s project utilizes?</p>
Topic 3	<p>Topic #3: Community: <i>Each probe is subject to the 5 Whys and Fishbone method of digging deeper into the root theories. Each probe asks about theory and evidence base.</i></p> <p>4. Describe the measures of success used to assess community.</p> <p>a. PROBE: How do support networks help families end their homelessness?</p> <p>5. How does increasing awareness of homelessness in Albuquerque improve support for homeless families?</p>
Topic 4	<p>Topic #4: Resiliency: <i>Each probe is subject to the 5 Whys and Fishbone method of digging deeper into the root theories. Each probe asks about theory and evidence base.</i></p> <p>6. Why is resiliency part of Saranam’s logic model?</p> <p>a. PROBE: How is resiliency measured?</p>
Final Thoughts	<p>7. Do you have any final thoughts that you would like to share?</p>

Informed by [RAND](#) Training Manual

Using the results of the semi-structured interviews, the Evaluation Team conducted a review of the literature using the theories that were mentioned and discussed as the keywords in our search criteria to assess the theoretical justifications of Saranam’s program and identify gaps in the theoretical framework. Our primary methodology was based on the PRISMA Checklist in which we carefully documented our searches, including the eligibility criteria, our information sources, our keywords and search indexes, and when the searches took place so that our searches are replicable (Levett, 2023). See Appendix A for an outline of our search criteria.

To inform our literature review process, we consulted with Research Science Librarians Dr. Gale Hannigan and Amy Weig Pickering from the UNM Health Sciences Library. They provided valuable information on how to target our searches, to evaluate a source’s evidence, and to use proxy populations to widen our searches. We scheduled a follow-up meeting in which Dr. Hannigan walked us through the search process using an example, showing us the types of sources that would be appropriate for us to use. We discovered that traditional database searches might not produce the information we are looking for, but rather that we should use Google Scholar to find government reports and other kinds of evidence that might not be within traditional databases.

To document this literature review, we created a table, organized with the following columns:

- Related Saranam Component(s)
- Conceptual/Theoretical Framework
- Author(s), Year
- Title

- Type of Source
- Purpose
- Method & Design
- Sample/Population
- Main Findings
- Strength & Limitations

The Evaluation Team also explored study designs that could be used to further examine Saranam’s program. While a randomized control trial is desirable for the high level of evidence it produces, the team had concerns regarding the ethics and feasibility of such a study design, particularly pertaining to creating a control group and having a large enough sample design. Particularly, Saranam articulated that the study design needed to use all or most of their program components to demonstrate that the very specific way Saranam does its work is evidence based. As part of this process to ascertain what type of study would produce the highest level of evidence but be most appropriate for Saranam’s context, we consulted with two UNM epidemiologists, Dr. Andrew Roland and Dr. Sam Swift. See Appendix B for our detailed notes from this consultation. They confirmed that a randomized control trial would not be feasible and suggested a mixed-methods study design in which qualitative interviews of Saranam clients and staff are used to develop a survey tool to standardize Saranam’s tools of measurement and track cohort outcomes over time. Cohort studies follow a group of individuals with similar characteristics over time to track program outcomes. In Saranam’s case, the cohort study would track Saranam’s families during their residency and afterwards to examine the effectiveness of the program. Qualitative data from interviews and focus groups would be used to inform the creation of a pre/post/post survey tool to collect quantitative data about cohorts over time. The tool would be administered prior to families start in the program, at exit from the program, and then at a set amount of time following their exit and would have standardized questions to be able to track outcomes.

This mixed-methods cohort study falls within the middle of the hierarchy of study designs in terms of the quality of evidence they produce as shown in the figure below, adapted from Johns Hopkins (Jennings, N.d.). This study design is the highest on the chart we would recommend given the limited available sample size and would be the most ethical given Saranam’s population, particularly pertaining to creating a control group. We believe a cohort study strikes a balance between Saranam’s desire to produce the highest level of evidence to gain validation while also remaining true to their circumstances. See Appendix C for a visual depiction of how we came to this conclusion.

Figure 4.
Hierarchy of Study Designs in Terms of Quality of Evidence



Source: Adapted from John Hopkins Epidemiologic Study Designs Presentation

This literature review will be used internally as an evidence base for their program. As they continue to study their program, researchers can reference the catalog of evidence included in the literature review.



Data Analysis

After completing our semi-structured interviews with Saranam to map out the theory of change, we wrote narrative summaries of our findings that are included below. For each pillar, we included the measures of success and then a brief overview of the theories and rationale behind each component of the program. See Appendix D for figures of our raw notes and results.

Housing

To measure increased autonomy in securing and managing housing, Saranam records how long families live at the program and whether they have housing after they exit the program. While in the program, their clients also set their own goals which makes measuring success across individuals a bit more complex.

Saranam families are provided with a fully furnished apartment at no cost to fulfill their most basic needs, allowing them to focus on attaining better life skills, education, and building a community. This practice aligns with Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs which dictates that necessities are essential to achieve self-actualization. Another aspect of this measure is ensuring that parents are not using illegal drugs. This is to help create a safe community and environment for all and ensures participants are more prepared to end their homelessness after the program.

Since Saranam families are not allowed to work during their time in the program, Saranam provides them with a cash allowance. They can spend their money however they like, giving them the dignity of making their own decisions. Financial literacy is a key part of Saranam's program. They have classes and guest speakers meant to educate clients on the basics of banking, saving, and budgeting. As the 2Gen theory assumes, the parents will be able to pass their financial knowledge on to their children and increase their autonomy. Financial training is meant to prepare families for the reality of budgeting and saving when they exit the program. This concept is outlined in Future Orientation Theory.

The program aims to make Saranam parents employable after exiting. Financial planning and budgeting prompts them to make routines and allocate resources judiciously.

Education & Employment

To measure whether family members have an increased ability to procure and maintain gainful employment, Saranam measures at exit, whether or not family members are employed. It does not matter what type of job it is, just that there is some form of employment. They do discourage "under the table" employment due to the propensity for exploitation of workers. They then look down the line at the quality of job, using indicators such as whether there are opportunities for advancement, what benefits are provided, what the pay is and whether it is enough to cover expenses. They also assess the stability of the job, and whether it is likely to continue, a factor that became quite important in the context of the uncertainty produced by the Covid-19 pandemic. To measure increases in education, Saranam looks at whether individuals obtained their GED. They also have families set individualized goals for this, recognizing that everyone has their own level of education and goal ; whether an individual has started an educational program could be a measure of success. When clients arrive, Saranam uses the Accuplacer and is looking into using it when clients leave. For another measure of education, they also assess attendance and engagement in their skills classes throughout the semester.

Saranam provides targeted job skills and training through an assessment of adults for vocational capacities and interests and by providing employability training. Underlying this is the theory of self-determination. Saranam focuses on giving families autonomy and building their confidence, so when it comes to job skills, they help clients find out what they are good at and what they are interested in, with the thinking that this interest will make them more likely to stay in the job. Saranam also believes that providing employability training helps build resilience that is key in managing job searches.

Saranam also facilitates a significant increase in formal education. This is done in part by providing computer and internet access, the thinking being that it is necessary for one's education and has become a basic need in today's world. They also provide tutoring for children and adults. The underlying rationale of providing tutoring for both children and adults is rooted in the 2Gen theory – they want parents and kids to motivate each other and bond over the shared experience. Saranam also believes that tutoring creates a space for protected relationship building and developing community. They teach academic and study skills to prepare clients for advancing their education and taking classes, recognizing that

everyone has different education levels and skills. Saranam believes that education is a human right and provides educational scholarships for vocational/post-secondary training. This is done in part so that families don't have to take student loans, as they don't want families starting in the financial negatives. Underlying all these activities is the fundamental assumption that more education leads to more income, thus helping families out of poverty.

Community

Saranam does not currently have a set measure of success for the community outcome. They do look at whether families have relationships that are positive and supportive in times of need and about community involvement and supportive social networks in their alumni survey, which is informed by the stability scale from the Family Stability Scale. Often the community aspect ties into measures of resilience.

Saranam seeks to increase families' capacity to assist families experiencing homelessness through a trauma informed approach, to train on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES), and to provide a forum for community speakers to talk. They do this to create a protective, supportive environment in which healthy behaviors are modeled, learned, and practiced so that they may be implemented in the future. The thought behind providing a forum for community speakers is that the exposure to the speakers will lead to the utilization of services and increased awareness of services and resources available to families experiencing homelessness.

For the outcome of increased awareness of the homeless problem in Albuquerque, Saranam is not currently engaging in any supporting activities.

To see that the size and quality of the relational network of families who have experienced homelessness has increased, Saranam engages in a number of activities with a variety of supporting rationale. First, they provide opportunities for families to create meaningful, supportive relationships with their cohort and Saranam staff/volunteers in order to build families' social capital and provide opportunities for role modeling. They also create regular opportunities for interaction and relationship building with the surrounding community to connect clients with businesses that are relevant to their needs, to connect knowledge to action, and to destigmatize homelessness in the community. They introduce adults and children to other community-based organizations that can provide support in order to create a community safety net and make it so these new experiences aren't so intimidating. Saranam coaches families on how and when to reach out for help appropriately to move families towards independence and self-sufficiency - to learn how to advocate for themselves. This also further serves as a means to strengthen ties to others. They provide opportunities for continued engagement and follow-up with alumni to provide encouragement, support, and connect families with resources when needed. Internal data suggests that those who did not leave "successfully" but are in touch with Saranam tend to do better. Additionally, Saranam facilitates relationships between children and several safe, trained adults who can provide support in order to build resilience and provide the opportunity to practice socializing and experience safe, stable relationships. Lastly, Saranam assists families to participate in community events, activities, and groups to connect families

to the community. They provide funds for extracurricular, fun activities, and parents are required to volunteer in community groups to help them intentionally start to expand their connection to the greater community, find meaning, and build connections to possible employment.

Resilience

To measure increased resilience in families, Saranam looks at a variety of factors including whether families have a support system they can rely on in times of need, if any relapses in homelessness are shorter periods than before, and families' ability to absorb adversity without it being catastrophic to their lives. In their stability tracking, Saranam reports having more indicators rather than measures of success.

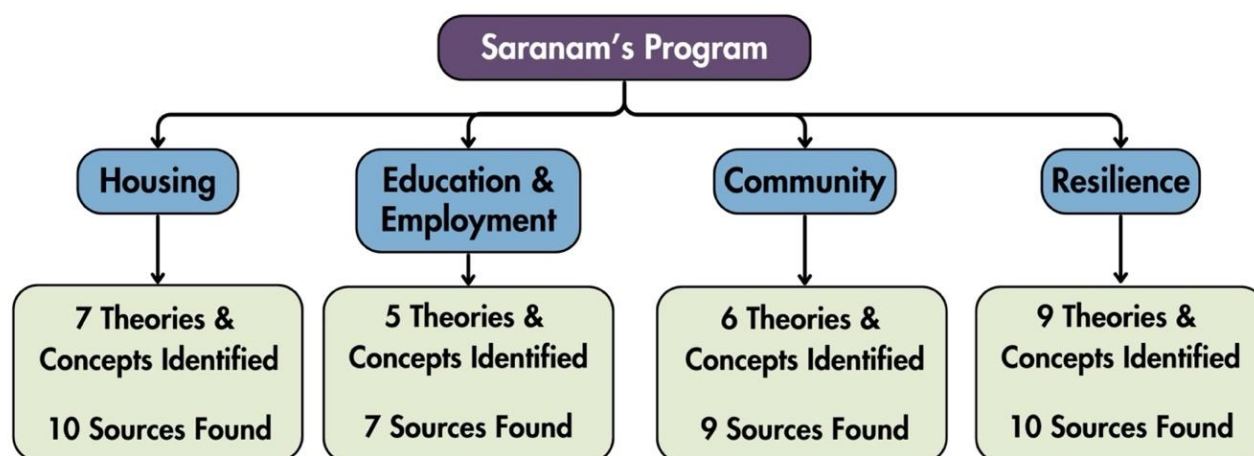
Saranam seeks to increase families' confidence and hope by building their capacities and abilities and shifting their mindset. This is in line with future orientation theory in which Saranam attempts to help families out of a crisis mindset and encourage them to think long term. Experiential learning theory also underlies Saranam's efforts to build hope and confidence.

Saranam helps families develop coping skills to deal with mental and emotional trauma through case managers that provide support and encouragement during the healing process, helping families to adopt new strategies for coping. Saranam does this so that families have someone in their corner for them, offering support and accountability to set goals, while also respecting the autonomy of the family. Additionally, Saranam connects families with outside resources for mental health and counseling to remove the barriers to getting help and leverage community resources. Community based program theory underlies this. Saranam also provides the space and time for reflection and healing, addressing the big worries like homelessness and poverty so that families can focus on mental and emotional issues that can be just as important as physical. Narrative theory also underlies this. Saranam provides life skills classes for children and adults, in line with 2Gen theory, because when you know better, you can do better. 2Gen theory also underlies why Saranam teaches parenting classes and provides opportunities to practice new skills so that they can take action and learn to advocate rather than just hope for a better future. A part of this is empowerment and advocacy theory. Lastly, Saranam encourages and supports families as they adopt new behaviors and beliefs because growth is never a linear process and it's hard to challenge norms.

After collecting this data, we designed a literature review table to document the evidence we found for each theory and concept and how it was related to Saranam's program. We generally found that Saranam's program components have a multitude of evidence, however because of Saranam's specific population, unhoused families experiencing homelessness with at least one child, we had to use proxy populations, such as low-income families, and expand our time frame in order to find sufficient evidence.

Overall, we found 39 sources for the 32 different theories and concepts we found through our interviews. The diagram below depicts a breakdown of the number of theories and concepts with the number of sources we found for each program component.

Figure 5.
Evidence from Literature Review by Program Component



We created the table as an organizational tool for the external evidence we found supporting Saranam’s underlying theories and rationale for their program components. We looked for sources that were recent (less than ~5 years old) and studied populations comparable to Saranam’s clientele – families that are housing unstable with at least one parent and one child. Due to the population being so narrow, we expanded our search to older sources and less specific populations.

The literature built a structure of support for Saranam’s programming and we designed a table so that the organization could easily access and use the information. We created a table for the literature review for the utility of Saranam, with the table divided into pillars just like their program. For a literature review so large, a table allows the organization to easily sort through sources by program component.

In our literature review, we identified several theories that supported the inclusion of all four of their pillars as part of a comprehensive program. Maslov’s Hierarchy of Needs underscores the importance of focusing on fulfilling basic needs first, which Saranam does by providing housing, cash assistance, education opportunities, and parenting help. Future Orientation Theory, Self Determination Theory, and Social Learning Theory all underscored the importance of external support and internal motivation.

We found a variety of evidence that supports their approach to housing. A 2009 study found that drug testing and accountability resulted in better housing outcomes, supporting Saranam’s practice of drug testing their clients (North *et al.*, 2009). Saranam emphasizes asset building and household management as necessary skills, and the literature suggests that these skills are associated with improved housing stability.

There was literature supporting the assumption that furthering education leads to more income and better employment prospects (National Center for Education Statistics). It’s not only by education that something is gained, but also by the studying and tutoring process where both parents and children can learn study skills and role modeling.

Multiple articles demonstrated the importance of community and building relationships. Creating positive experiences for children, ensuring that clients have people they can depend on, and developing social capital are all demonstratable instrumental in obtaining housing and breaking the cycle of poverty.

Resiliency, as Saranam defines it, is incredibly important to their clients’ success. The power of hope and goal setting was demonstrated in studies (Synder, 2002 & SAMSHA), suggesting that families that look forward to the future will be more able to adapt to inevitable challenges.

These sources provide powerful support for Saranam’s programming because they are centered and related specifically to the population Saranam serves. This external evidence is extremely valuable in relation to the theory of change because it provides support the mechanisms behind each of Saranam’s program components – the why behind what they do.

For the purposes of this report, we divided our table into two summary tables – one with our main findings, the other with the strength of evidence of the sources. Our main findings are depicted below. See Appendix E for the strength of evidence.

Overall, we found that a degree of support for Saranam’s programming does exist in the literature, however the literature is limited when it comes to Saranam’s specific population. Thus, there is an opportunity for future research as described in our recommendations.

Table 1.
Main Findings

Related Saranam Component	Conceptual Framework	Title, Author, Year	Main Findings of Source
Housing, Community, Resilience, Education & Employment	Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs	“Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs” (Mcleod, 2024)	Maslow's hierarchy of needs posits a five-tier, generally hierarchical organization, of human needs, typically arranged in a pyramid. The five levels of the hierarchy (beginning at the bottom) are physiological, safety, love/belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. The theory states that lower needs, like physiological, must be met before higher needs can be fulfilled - though the order of the levels is not completely fixed, people can weigh their needs differently.

Housing, Community, Resilience, Education & Employment	Social Capital	“States Leading the Way: Practical Solutions that Lift up Children and Families” (While <i>et al.</i> , 2018).	Social capital builds on the strength and resilience of families and can help move families outside of poverty. Engagement in service delivery and design often builds social capital in the process. Social capital is based on the belief that people will do better, in part, because they establish larger, more supportive, and useful networks. Social capital is a powerful predictor of economic development, well-working schools, safe neighborhoods, responsive governments, and people’s health and happiness
Housing, Community, Resilience, Education & Employment	Future Orientation Theory	“The Impact of Psychosocial Factors on Subjective Well-being among Homeless Young Adults” (Barczyk <i>et al.</i> , 2014).	Findings suggest that homeless males who were future oriented, had optimistic views of the future, rejected fatalistic perspectives, or had greater social support had higher levels of subjective well-being.
Housing, Community, Resilience, Education & Employment	Self Determination Theory	“Rethinking narratives about youth experiencing homelessness: The influence of self-determined motivation and peer relations on coping” (Napoleon <i>et al.</i> , 2023).	Found a significant relationship between autonomous motivation and adaptive coping, as well as controlled motivation and maladaptive coping in their population. Peer relationships were highlighted as a key aspect of young homeless people's lives. Their analyses found a significant effect on adaptive coping by peer attachment.
Housing, Community, Resilience, Education & Employment	Experiential Learning	WHAT IS EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING? (James Gentry, 1990).	Experiential learning happens when a participant cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally processes knowledge, skills, and/or attitudes in a learning situation characterized by a high level of active involvement. Experientially-based

			approaches involve 4 phases: Design, conduct, evaluation, and feedback.
Housing, Community, Resilience, Education & Employment	Social Learning Theory	“Outcomes of a Life Skills Intervention for Homeless Adults with Mental Illness” (Christine Helfrich, 2007).	The results of this study showed that participants demonstrated improvements to life skills after invention. The Room and Self Care Module were the most impactful, followed by Safe Community Participation.
Housing, Community, Resilience, Education & Employment	Self-sufficiency	“An Exploration of the Factors contributing to Self-Sufficiency Post-Homelessness: A Detailed Look at Commonalities and Barriers” (Ellie Cornett, 2019).	The study found that no factors were statistically significant in explaining high levels of self-sufficiency. The sample size is too small to draw any conclusions. Participants were able to pay more of their rent after they exited the program. Additionally, the participants ranked better on the vulnerability index. The authors note that the Rapid Re-Housing program seems to be successful in its goal of self-sufficiency.
Housing	Drug testing for support & accountability	“A Prospective Study of Substance Abuse and Housing Stability in a Homeless Population” (North et al., 2009).	This study found that substance abuse was associated with worse housing outcomes, with only 22% of participants successfully obtaining housing in 2 years. Cocaine use was widely associated with worse housing outcomes. While alcohol use was prevalent among participants (more common than cocaine), it did not predict prospective housing outcomes.
Housing	Financial Management	“Future 2Gen Programming in Indianapolis” (Roxann Lawrence, 2021).	The financial coaching and employment services were reported to be impactful by participants. The Indiana University Public Policy Institute emphasizes the need for additional supports in a 2Gen program — namely rent assistance, help with utilities, and transportation.
Housing	Cash	“Cash Benefits	The researchers found a statistically

	assistance programs	are Associated with Lower Risk Behavior Among the Homeless and Marginally Housed in San Francisco” (Elise et al., 1999).	significant inverse relationship between cash supports and risky behavior. With income increased, the odds of drug use, sleeping on the street, and incarceration all decreased.
Housing	Financial benefits from educational attainment	“Income Sustainability through Educational Attainment” (McChesney & Carlson, 2014).	The analysis validated the assumption that higher levels of educational attainment correspond with higher income. Additionally, the authors found that the wealth gap related to educational attainment is growing.
Education & Employment	More education leads to more income assumption	“Annual Earnings by Educational Attainment” (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023)	Higher educational attainment was associated with higher median earning for 25–34-year-olds who worked full time. This has been a consistent pattern. For example, in 2021, the median earnings of those with a master’s or higher degree were \$74,600, some 21 percent higher than the earnings of those with a bachelor’s degree (\$61,600). In the same year, the median earnings of those with a bachelor’s degree were 55 percent higher than the earnings of those who completed high school (\$39,700).
Education & Employment	Center for Working Families Model	“Future 2GEN Programming in Indianapolis” (Indiana University, 2021)	Financial and employment coaching were the most popular services among participants. Ninety percent of subgrantees felt financial coaching was effective. Eighty-four percent of subgrantees said the employment coaching they received was effective. Sixty-two percent of subgrantees agreed that income support was effective.
Community	Trauma informed approach	“Trauma-Informed Social Work Practice” (Jill Levenson,	Trauma-informed care enables providers to respond to clients with compassion and understanding, ultimately promoting social justice.

		(2017)	
Community	Adverse childhood experience	“Adverse Childhood Experiences” (O’Neill et al., 2021).	Findings reaffirm how adverse experiences during childhood have negative effects on the individual. These effects can have life-long effects, with health outcomes being worse for those who experienced maltreatment as a child. Evidence shows that the effects on childhood maltreatment can be reduced with community support.
Community	Role modeling	“The Motivational Theory of Role Modeling” (Morgenroth et al., 2015).	Role modeling theory dictates the importance of intra-generational relationships, common goal setting, and community building.
Community	Social Capital & Community safety net	Ayed et al., 2021).	Homeless individuals are able to form strong bonds with other homeless people due to the likelihood of shared experiences and situations. However, the authors also find that these similar circumstances can lead to conflict and further marginalization.
Community	Stable relationships	Essentials for childhood: Creating Safe, Stable, Nurturing Relationships and Environments for All Children” (CDC, 2023).	Safe, stable relationships between child and parent are more conducive to healthy childhood development and long-term health outcomes.
Resilience	Hope	Hope Theory: Rainbows in the Mind” (Snyder, 2002).	Hope is defined as “the perceived capability to derive pathways to desired goals and motivate oneself via agency thinking to use those pathways.” Higher hope is consistently related to better outcomes in academics, athletics, physical health, psychological adjustment, and psychotherapy.

Resilience	SMART goals	“Setting Goals and Developing Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound Objectives” (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Accessed 2024).	Stands for specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound. Specific - objective clearly states, so anyone reading it can understand what will be done and who will do it. Measurable - Objective includes how the action will be measured, helping you to determine if you are on track and making progress. Achievable - Objective is realistic given the realities faced. Relevant - a relevant objective makes sense, that is, it fits the purpose. Time bound - Every objective has a specific timeline for completion.
Resilience	Community Based Program Theory	“The theory of community based health and safety programs: a critical examination” (Nilsen, 2006).	Community based program theory emphasizes the importance of an ecological perspective, with multiple interventions delivered at multiple levels and in multiple settings within the community. The findings thus far offer “only marginal evidence” that community involvement yields health status changes, and the results are “insufficient to make strong conclusions about the effects of partnerships on population-level outcomes.”
Resilience	Narrative Theory	“The Lived Experience of Homeless Youth: A Narrative Approach” (Toolis & Hammack, 2015).	Narrative engagement refers to a process through which youth make meaning of inherited meaning systems and either appropriate or challenge the status quo through their own personal narrative construction. Agency and resilience help construct redemptive narratives.
Resilience	2Gen as related to parenting classes	“Moving Families Forward: Initial Findings from a two-generational program in Bangor, Maine” (Popkin et al,	After 24 months of involvement with Families Forward, a 2Gen program in Maine, cohort 1 families saw an 18 percent increase in their “family/social relations” score, which measures the support family members receive from one another and external networks. Cohort 1 families also experienced an 11 percent increase in their “parenting skills” score

		2020).	during the two years.
Resilience	Empowering Mental Health Feature	“Empowering Features and Outcomes of Homeless Interventions: A Systemic Review” (Shaughnessy and Greenwood, 2020).	Empowering mental health settings are: collaborative, flexible, individualized, and strengths-based, promote and develop support, and focus on competency-building.
Resilience	Social Norms Theory	“An Overview of the Social Norms Approach” (Berkowitz, 2005)	Social norms theory describes situations in which individuals incorrectly perceive the attitudes and/or behaviors of peers and other community members to be different from their own when in fact they are not.



Recommendations & Next Steps

Our work during the course of the evaluation led us to several recommendations. These are the result of our interviews with Saranam staff, epidemiologists, and public health researchers. The purpose of these recommendations is to inform Saranam on the most appropriate next steps to generate evidence for their program effectiveness.

1. In the near future, we recommend that Saranam create clear measures of success for the community program outcome. Community is a broad idea, so it would be beneficial for Saranam to define what community means to participants in the program. Since all other pillars of Saranam’s program have measures of success, this indicator would support the importance of community as one of the main pillars of the program.
2. Since participants join the program with different needs and individual aspirations, Saranam allows them to create their own goals. We suggest some mechanism of standardization for these goals so that achievements can be tracked and assessed. One way of doing this would be to require participants to make a goal in a specified area, like parenting skills or household management.

3. We also suggest that Saranam work with researchers to conduct a mixed-methods cohort study to expand their evidence base further. As discussed earlier in the report, a cohort study would be generate the strongest evidence while taking into account ethical considerations and limitations to sample size.
4. To further generate evidence, we recommend that they partner with organizations with similar goals that serve comparable populations. Partnering with organizations like McKinney-Vento would open up new opportunities for research



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Appendix A – Replicable Search Criteria

Guiding Question: What is the theoretical background and evidence base of the components of Saranam’s theory of change? How do these theories contribute to Saranam’s mission of empowering families to end their homelessness?

Objective: To have a representative summary of the theoretical components and evidence base of Saranam.

Inclusion Criteria: families experiencing homelessness, homeless individuals, homeless adults, homeless children, current and former unhoused individuals

Exclusion Criteria: studies before 1999, studies published in a language other than English

Databases/Search Engines Used: Google Scholar, Google

Proxy Populations Used: low income families with a history of homelessness, low income children, low income adults, low SES children/family/adults, housing programs, government program qualifiers, Medicaid population, SNAP population, HUD housing public population, New Mexico, Southwest, public schools in low SES communities, CYFD type organizations



Appendix B – Epidemiologist Meeting Notes

Advising Meeting with Epidemiologists

October 31, 2023

11:00am - 11:30am

Zoom

Epidemiologists: Dr. Sam Swift & Andrew Rowland (via phone) from the UNM College of Population Health

Evaluation Lab Team: Audrey, Erin, and Maggie

Meeting Purpose: To gain insights from epidemiologists into possible study designs for Saranam to establish an evidence base.

Primary Question: What community-based study designs would be well suited to generate evidence within the confines or abilities of Saranam?

Background: Erin and Maggie are both first-year MPP students. Audrey is the Team Lead/PI and is a graduate of the COPH MPH program and the Associate Director of the Evaluation Lab. Erin, Maggie, and Audrey work with a community nonprofit in Albuquerque called Saranam. Saranam works to empower families to end their homelessness through a multi-year housing and education program geared toward building resilience, teaching families life skills, and providing educational opportunities. Our team's work is situated in a two-semester evaluation project, and the organization's goal is to work toward demonstrating internal and external validity in their program. Our team is working toward helping them down that path.

Main Points & Suggestions: In order to generate the kind of evidence Saranam is looking for, they would have to compare people within the program to those who have not completed the program. Dr. Rowland suggested instead as a first step to look at variations within the program and compare participants. Dr. Swift suggested looking at similar organizations to partner up in order to increase sample sizes. They confirmed that the control group would have to be as previously discussed, of those who could be accepted into the program but are not enrolled.

Dr. Rowland emphasized the need for standardized measures and suggested looking to preexisting standardized forms/surveys on mental health, for instance. He also mentioned comparing engagement in the program with the demographics of the participants.

Dr. Swift brought up ethical concerns regarding randomizing people into a control group that is not receiving the intervention. They suggested looking at current patterns to see what has been done before moving onto producing proof. The idea of a pre, mid, post, post study was supported and suggested as a starting point, focusing on standardizing the tools of measurement. A qualitative study to interview participants and create a survey could also be a good first step, using national measures as anchors. Dr. Rowland stated he believes a qualitative study would be convincing to foundations. Dr. Rowland and Dr. Swift's final recommendation moving forward would be a mixed methods study. They stated they would be happy to look at any materials or tools we produce and to help down the line should we need it.

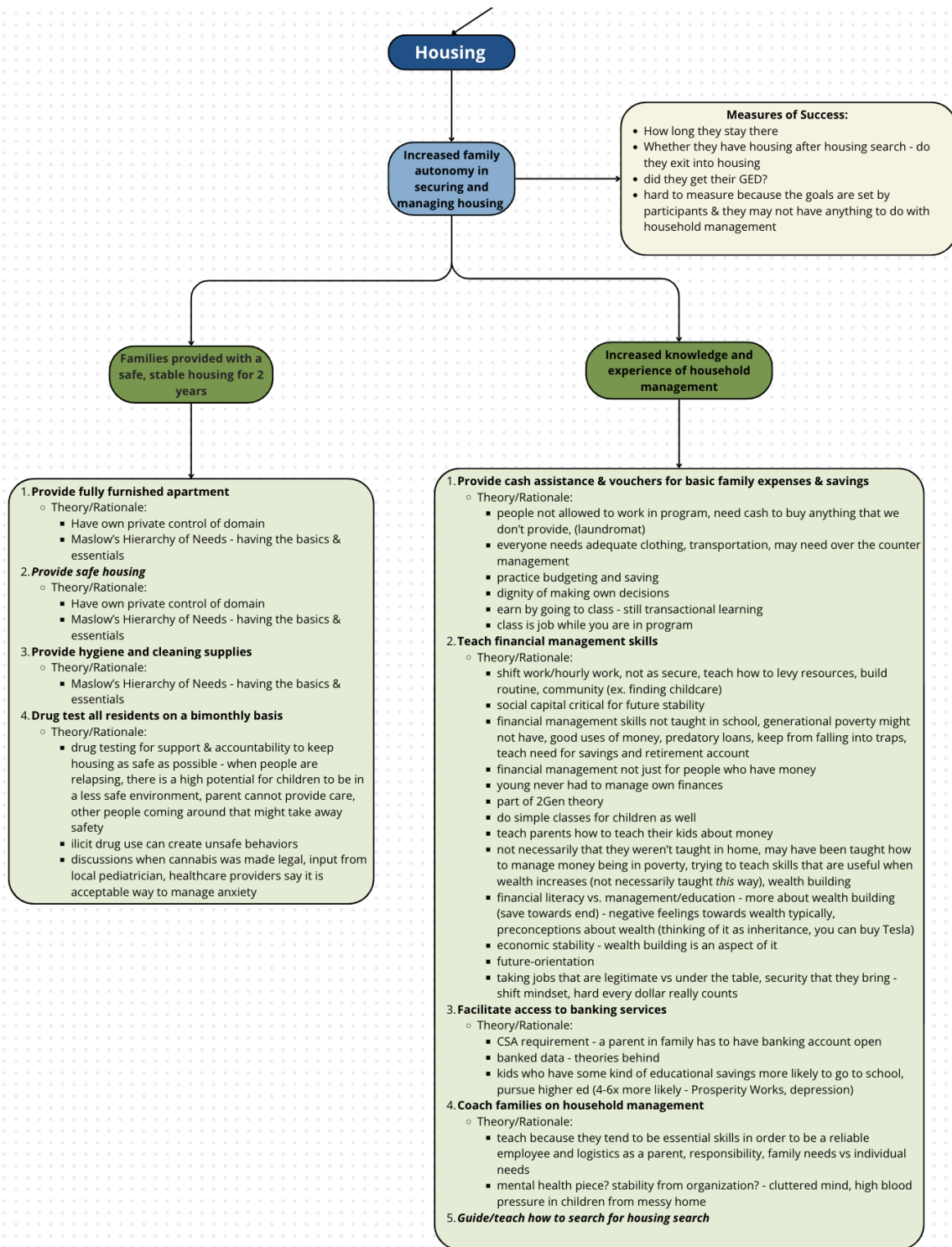


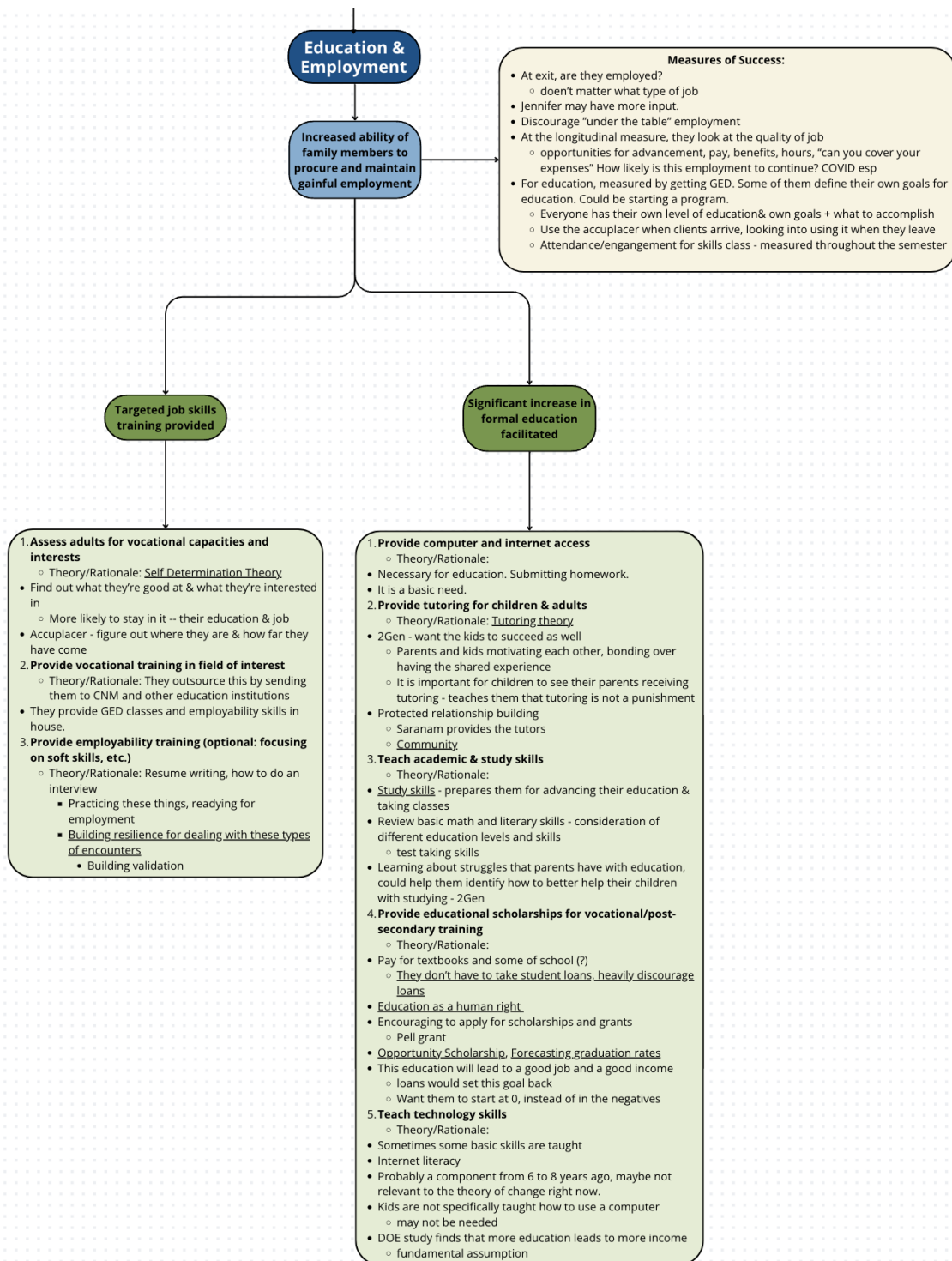
Appendix C – Study Design Table

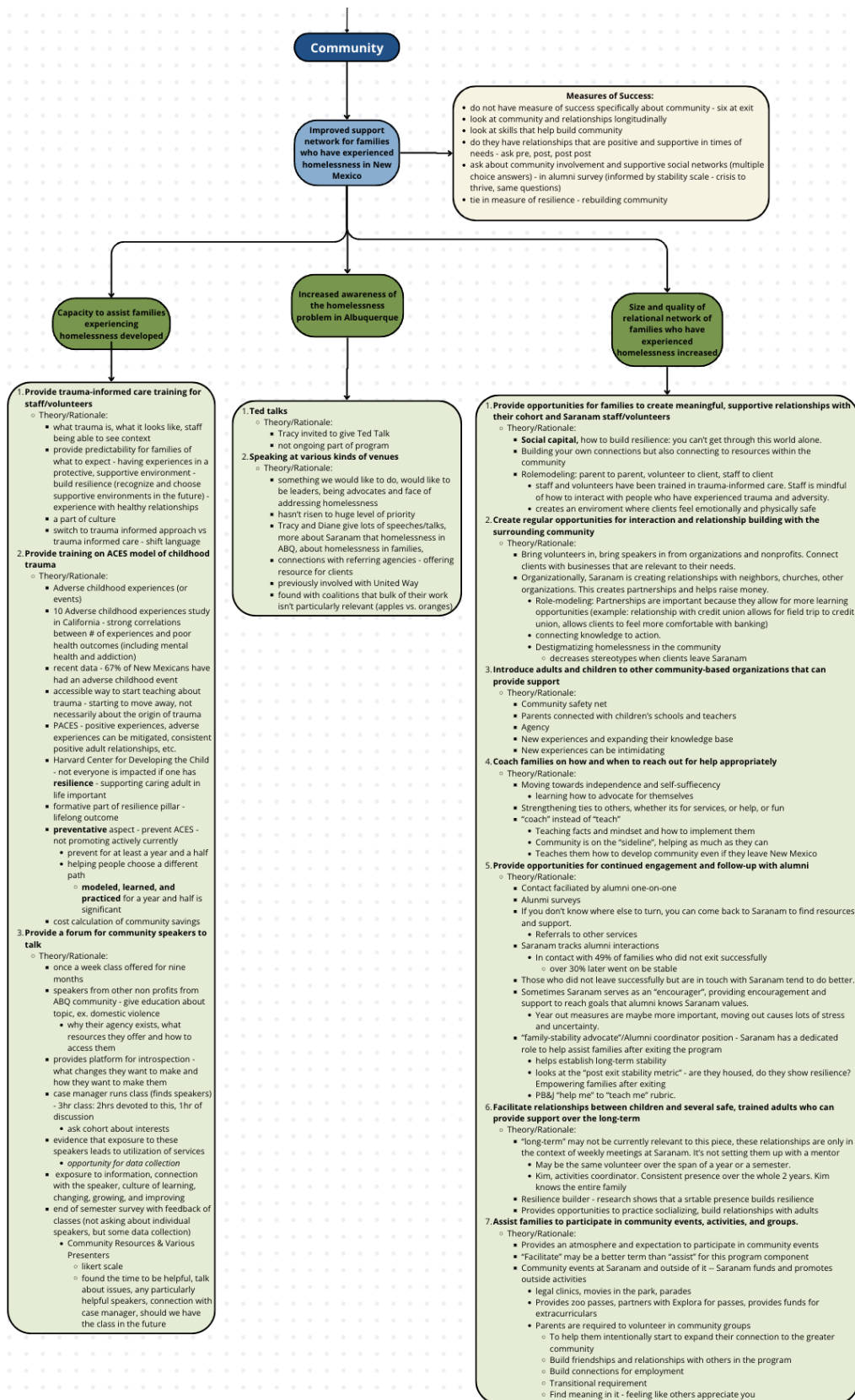
Study Design	Description	Pros	Cons
Systematic Review	Comprehensive analysis of evidence pertaining to a specific research question. Includes criteria for inclusion and exclusion. Goal of systematic review is to provide extensive evidence to answer the question.	Replicable, good for specific questions, good for comparing conflicting evidence	Requires a lot of evidence to review, time consuming, narrow in focus
Randomized Control Trial	Uses test subjects that are randomly placed in a control group or a test group. Test group subjects receive the tested intervention, and control subjects do not. Randomization eliminates bias.	Rigorous, eliminates bias, findings are trustworthy, replicable	Expensive, subject to ethical gray areas, requires large study populations
Cohort Study	Groups test subjects based on outcome of interest. Test subjects do not have the outcome of interest at the start of the study but are monitored for the development of the outcome over time.	Reduces bias by having a control group, great for outcome of interest	Suffers from loss to follow up, can be expensive to follow people over time
Case-Control	Focuses on subjects who are already experiencing the outcome of interest. More efficient than cohort study.	Cost efficient, direct	Greater possibility of bias
Cross-Sectional	Point in time study. Uses data from a specified population to determine prevalence of a disease or an outcome.	Low cost, efficient, specific	Prevalence only, no incidence. Does not determine causes
Case Report	Case reports correspond to a single patient and contain descriptive medical data and demographic. Data from multiple patients can be combined into a Case Series.	Generous individual data, greater for starting a research question	Not causal, no indicators, can be time consuming

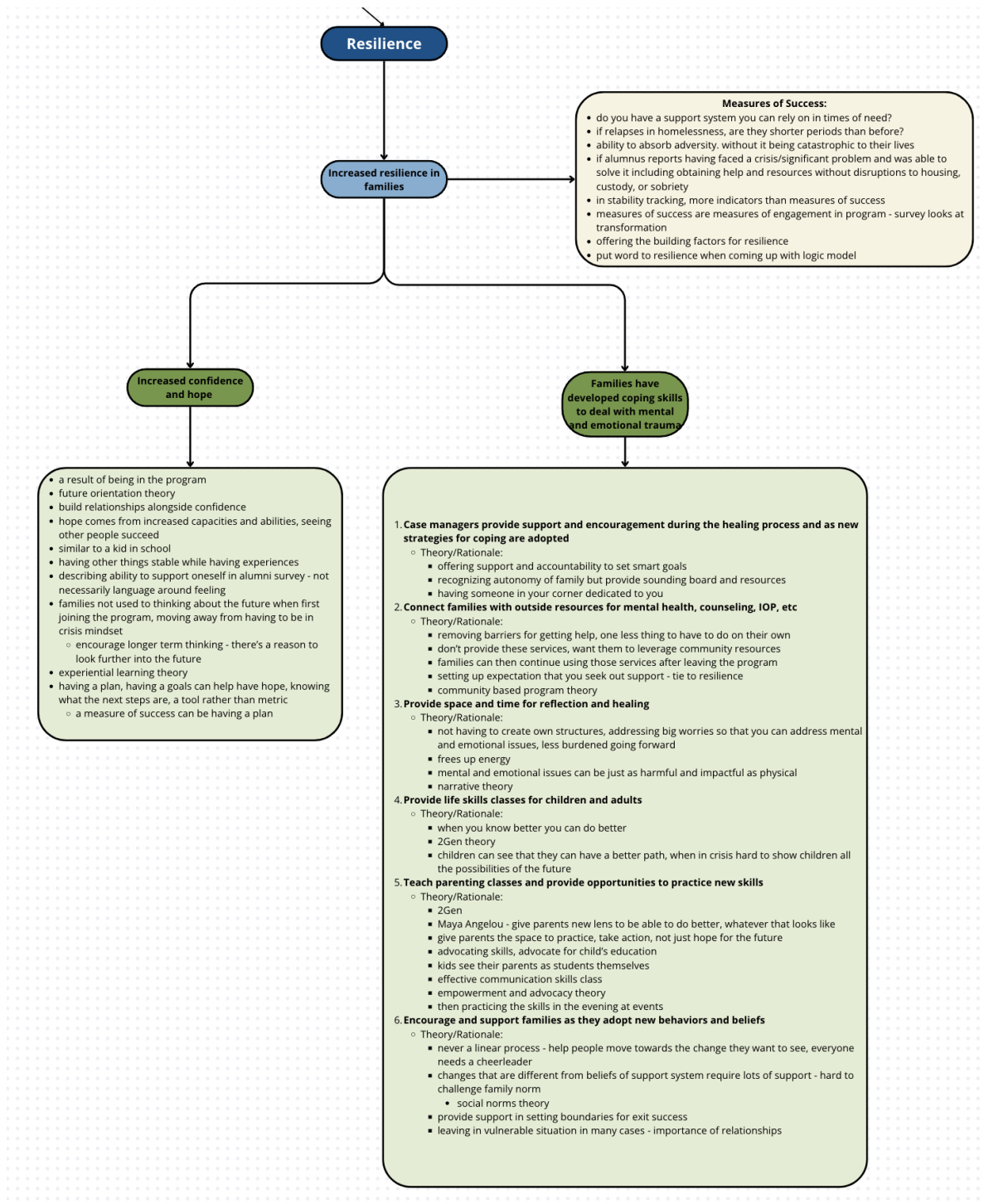


Appendix D – Subsections of Organizational Tool for Theory of Change Mapping











Appendix E – Strength of Evidence Literature Review Subsection Table

Table 2.
Methods and Strength of Evidence

Related Saranam Component	Conceptual Framework	Title, Author, Year	Methods and Design	Sample Population
Housing, Community, Resilience, Education & Employment	Future Orientation Theory	“The Impact of Psychosocial Factors on Subjective Well-being among Homeless Young Adults (Barczy et al., 2014)		185 homeless young people in Texas, ages 18-23, and known to use alcohol or drugs
Housing, Community, Resilience, Education & Employment	Future Orientation Theory & Self Efficacy	“Escaping Homelessness: The Influences of Self-Efficacy and Time Perspective on Coping with Homelessness” (Epel et al., 1999).	Five interviewers administered the self-efficacy and time-perspective scales and a survey of background information to participants at the beginning of the participants' stay at the shelter, administered in both Spanish and English. Before participants permanently left the shelter, they completed a pre-exit survey.	82 homeless adults residing at one of four family shelters in northern California Bay area - eligibility for shelters include having at least one child, no drug use, and attending weekly house meetings.
Housing, Community, Resilience,	Self Determination Theory	“Rethinking narratives about youth	Several assessments were administered to participants to	102 youth aged between 16 and 24 experiencing

Education & Employment		experiencing homelessness: The influence of self-determined motivation and peer relations on coping” (Napoleon et al., 2023).	understand their level of self-determined motivation and peer relations and how those attributes affect coping. The Brief COPE was one survey administered to understand the coping methods of these youths better.	homelessness in Montreal, Canada.
Housing, Community, Resilience, Education & Employment	Social Learning Theory (Modeling)	“Outcomes of a Life Skills Intervention for Homeless Adults with Mental Illness” (Christine Helfrich, 2007).	This study used a longitudinal design with variable exposure to life skills interventions. Participants were administered a practical skills test (PST) directly after completing the module, and then 3 and 6 months after the invention.	51 homeless adults in the Midwest with mental illness living in emergency or single room housing.
Housing, Community, Resilience, Education & Employment	Self-sufficiency	“An Exploration of the Factors contributing to Self-Sufficiency Post-Homelessness: A Detailed Look at Commonalities and Barriers” (Ellie Cornett, 2019).	This exploratory and descriptive study used data measured using the Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool. Participant experiences were assessed based on 5 themes: Trauma, Substance Use, Behavioral, Health and Wellness, and Social Support.	10 individuals that are experiencing homelessness in Texas.
Housing	Drug Testing & Accountability	“A Prospective Study of Substance Abuse and Housing	Self-reported surveys and urine testing were administered over a period of 2	400 homeless people living in shelters and on the street in St.

		Stability in a Homeless Population” (North et al., 2009).	years to determine how substance use affected housing prospects.	Louis, Missouri.
Housing	Cash assistance programs	“Cash Benefits are Associated with Lower Risk Behavior Among the Homeless and Marginally Housed in San Francisco” (Riley et al., 1999).	Over the course of a about a year, researchers recruited a sample of 1,156 adults transitioning in and out of homelessness and conducted an interview and questionnaire about socioeconomic demographic characteristics, drug use, and incarceration.	1,156 adults experiencing homelessness in San Francisco, California.
	Social Capital & Community safety net	“Community Profiling: Exploring Homelessness Through a Social Capital Lens” (Ayed et al., 2021).	Focus groups were used to ask homeless individuals about their experiences. Then, thematic analysis was performed.	23 adult individuals experiencing homelessness in London, UK.
Community	Narrative Theory	“The Lived Experience of Homeless Youth: A Narrative Approach” (Toolis & Hammack, 2015).	A narrative analysis of 4 case studies, drawn from in-depth life story interviews	11 Unhoused Youth in the United States.
Resilience	2Gen as related to parenting classes	“Moving Families Forward: Initial Findings from a two-generational program in Bangor, Maine” (Popkin et al., 2020).	Families Forward participants are a subset of 75 families who live in public housing and are enrolled in Bangor Housing's Family Self-Sufficiency Program	Families Forward participants are a subset of 75 families who live in public housing and are enrolled in Bangor Housing's Family

			and include families whose children receive services through the Boys & Girls Club of Bangor.	Self-Sufficiency Program and include families whose children receive services through the Boys & Girls Club of Bangor.
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