

Common Impact Data Standard and Common Data Model for Nonprofits (“CDM”) Architecture

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Introduction

This document presents current and potential alignment between the Common Impact Data Standard and the Common Data Model for Nonprofits (“CDM”). The document identifies similarities and notes differences between their underlying data models. The analysis was undertaken by Mark Fox, on behalf of the Common Approach and Dan Lamot, on behalf of threshold.world, a contributor to the CDM and Microsoft Tech for Social Impact partner.

The analysis shows that the two data models are compatible: they model different kinds of data in complementary ways. Both groups see value in bringing the models into closer alignment. The team will propose to CDM to adopt elements of the Common Impact Data Standard into the CDM, and the Common Impact Data Standard will evolve to more closely mirror the CDM.

Common Approach to Impact Measurement (Common Approach)

The Common Approach is an initiative that is working to improve impact measurement for social purpose organizations. Its approach is rooted in a “flexible standard” that is composed of four related community-driven standards: Common Foundations, Common Framework, Common Form, and Common Impact Data Standard. This document pertains to the fourth standard: The Common Impact Data Standard. To assist in framing standards that are truly flexible, the Common Approach is developing relationships with key stakeholders, including software developers.

Microsoft Corporation (Microsoft)

Microsoft is a major technology company. Microsoft is dedicated to working with nonprofits and partners to develop solutions based on entities and attributes that nonprofits commonly use for constituent management, fundraising, awards, program delivery, and impact tracking. The Common Data Model for Nonprofits and Dynamics 365 Nonprofit Accelerator (NFP Accelerator) aim to help organizations eliminate data silos, enabling powerful insights into their data. Microsoft uses the CDM and the NFP Accelerator in their purpose-built Microsoft Cloud for Nonprofit, a suite of applications focused on core scenarios common to many organizations operating in the social sector.

Common Data Model for Nonprofits (CDM)

The Nonprofit Common Data Model (CDM) is a data structure created to help organizations eliminate data silos, enabling powerful insights into their data. The core data model has been developed based on entities and attributes that nonprofits commonly use for constituent management, fundraising, awards, program delivery, and impact tracking. These entities include donor commitments, designations, transactions, awards, disbursements, delivery frameworks, results, indicators, benefit recipients, and more. (Credit to Nonprofit CDM Community.)

threshold.world

threshold.world is a growth-stage software company leveraging the world's most innovative technology to improve the efficiency and transparency of nonprofit impact. Put more simply, we partner with nonprofits, foundations, and social impact organizations to reimagine technology's role in the sector. As a Microsoft Tech for Social Impact Partner, we are proud to be a contributor to the Common Data Model for Nonprofits (CDM for Nonprofits) and Microsoft Dynamics 365 Nonprofit Accelerator (Nonprofit Accelerator). We are a NetHope Corporate Partner, committed to racial justice and equity for all people and have pledged to maintain carbon-negative operations for the life of our company.

Analysis of Microsoft Nonprofit Accelerator Architecture

Figure 1 (below) shows a table of contents from the [NFP Accelerator 3.0 Nonprofit ERD and How To Guide](#), which identifies the primary topics covered by the NFP Accelerator. Importantly, the NFP Accelerator is a manifestation of the CDM in Microsoft technologies. This list shows that most of these topics focus on operations of a nonprofit and financial information. The most relevant to the Common Impact Data Standard are "Program Delivery & Results" and "Project Management and Program Design."

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Figure 1: Extract from How To Guide shows that few topics are impact-related.

The Common Impact Data Standard is intended to represent *impact*. It does so by using the Impact Management Project's five dimensions of impact (What, Who, How Much, Contribution and Risk) plus a sixth dimension (How), which represents the impact model or theory of change.

The following table identifies the corresponding Common Impact Data Standard and NFP Accelerator entities. For much of the Impact Management Project Norms (five dimensions of impact), NFP Accelerator does not have a corresponding entity. While well developed for nonprofit operations and financial information, NFP Accelerator represents a generic abstraction layer that can benefit from an Impact Management data standard. Thus the NFP Accelerator and the Common Impact Data Standard (which lacks operations and financial information) complement each other.

Dimension	Common Impact Data Standard Entity	Microsoft NonProfit Entity	Comment
What	Outcome	Result	Results include Type = Output, Outcome, Impact
	Stakeholder Outcome	Benefit Recipient	Not currently linked to Result (could be added). Standard link is to Delivery Framework and/or Measurement Item.
	Indicator	Indicator	MSNP Work Items have Indicators. Missing quality properties, threshold, outcome it is associated with
	Indicator Standard	Measurement Item	Measurement Item is linked via Measurement Item Relationship to Indicator.
	Impact Report		
Who	Stakeholder	Stakeholder/ Contact/Account/ Resource Catalog	MSNP missing characteristics, catchment. Linked via Benefit Recipient
	Beneficiary Stakeholder	Beneficiary/ contact	MSNP has some Stakeholder properties but is missing characteristics, catchment
	Contributing Stakeholder	Account and/or Contact ("Donor")	Not directly linked in MSNP
How Much	Impact Report		Not available in MSNP v3.0.3
	Impact Depth		Not available in MSNP v3.0.3
	Impact Duration		Not available in MSNP v3.0.3
	Impact Scale		Not available in MSNP v3.0.3
Contribution	Impact Depth Counterfactual		Not available in MSNP v3.0.3
	Impact Duration Counterfactual		Not available in MSNP v3.0.3
Risk	Impact Risk	Program Item	Program Item with Type = Risk. Linked via Program Item Relationship
	Risk Type	Program Item field = Sub Type	
	Risk Level	Program Item field = Rating	
How	Program	Objective or Delivery Framework	Dependent upon use

	Service	Delivery Framework	
	Activity	Delivery Framework	
	Input	Program Item	
	Output	Result	
Other	Organization	Organization	No Impact properties
	Impact Model	Theory of Change, Delivery Framework	MSNP missing any Impact Model related properties – only a description

Visually the difference can be seen this way: The NFP Accelerator Version 3.0 has a single item called “Delivery Framework” and a simplistic representation of “indicator” (see Figure 2 and 3 below)

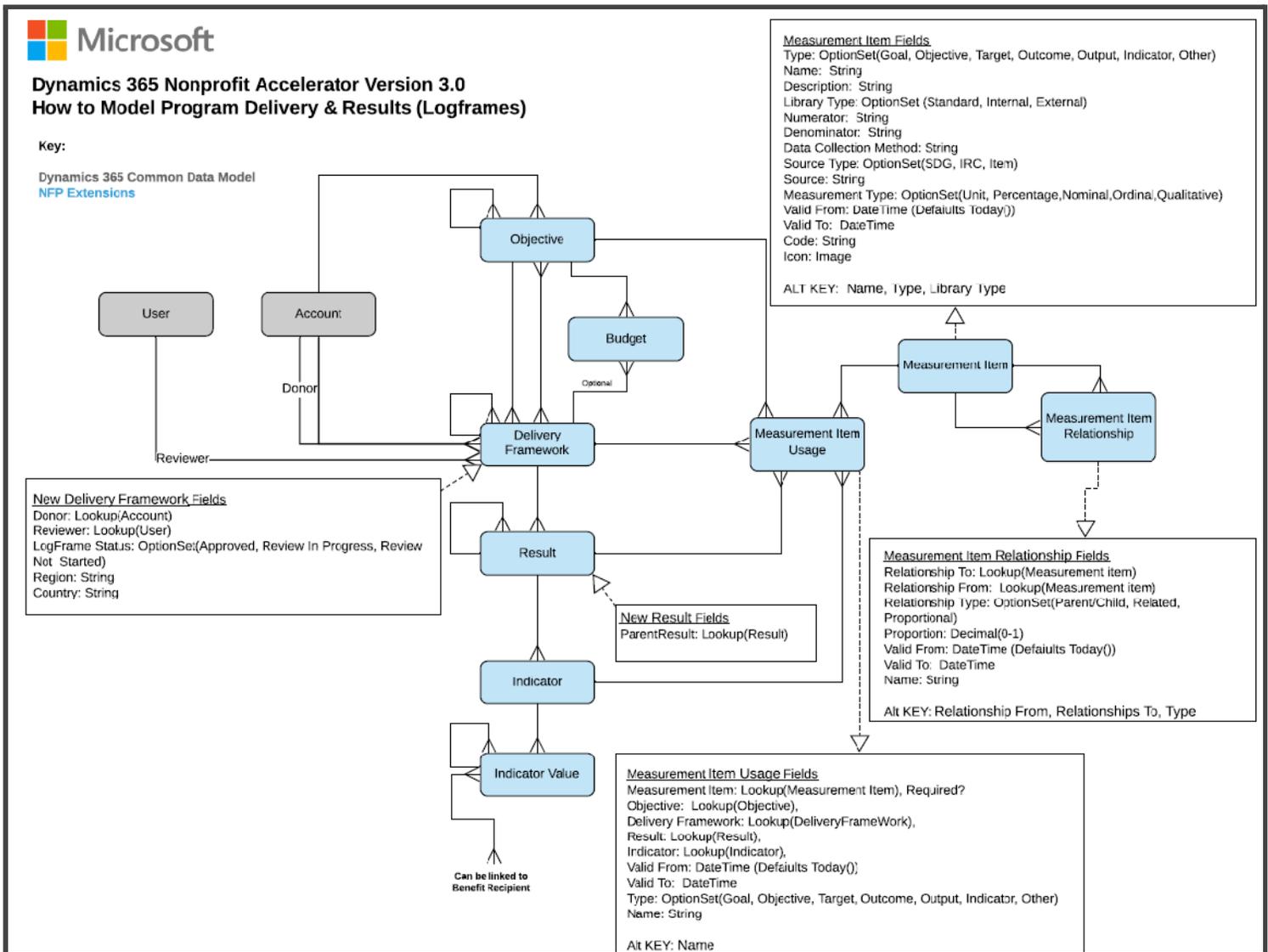


Figure 2: Dynamics 365 Nonprofit Accelerator Version 3.0 - How to Model Program Delivery & Results (To view larger in browser, click [here.](#))

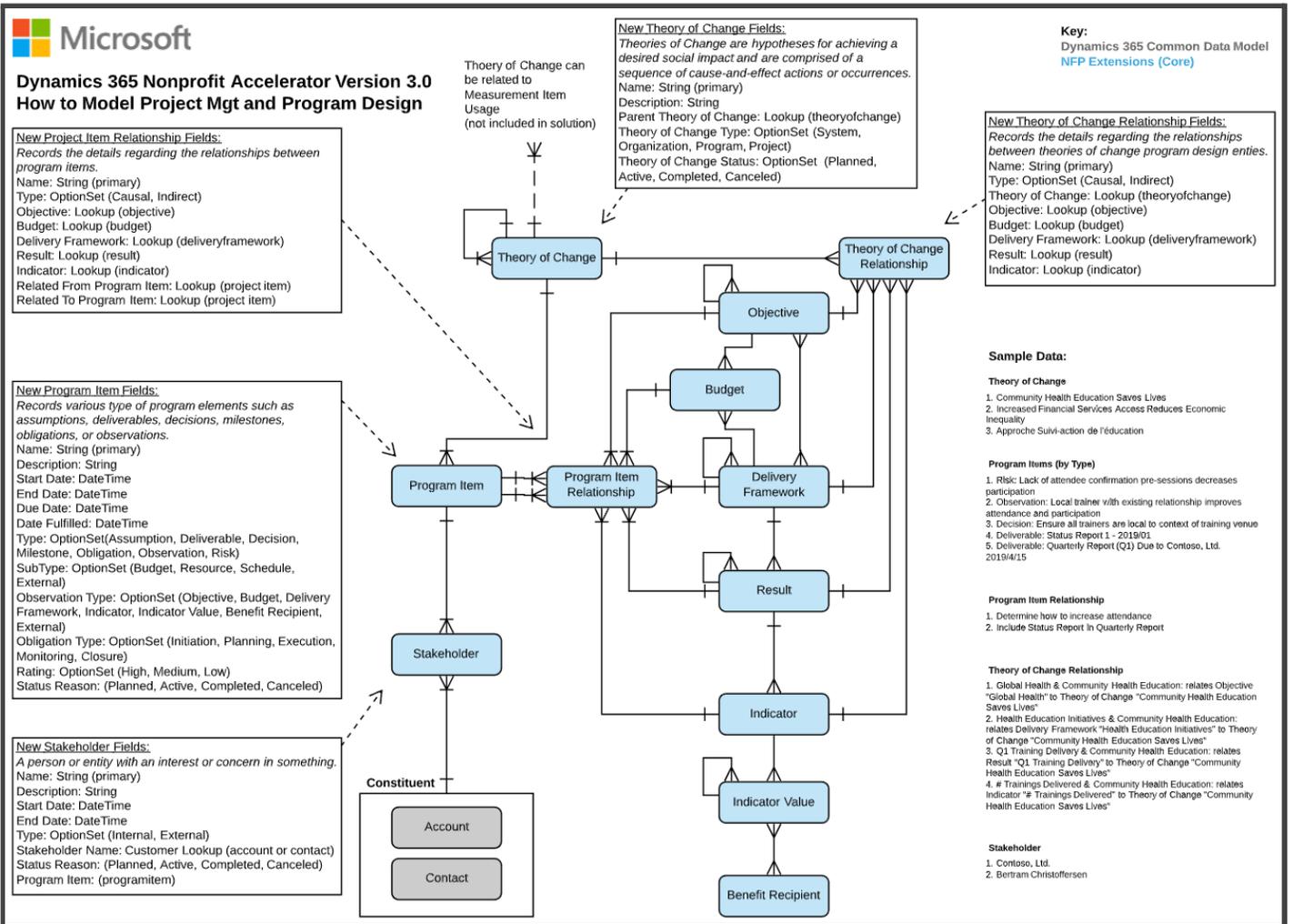


Figure 3: Dynamics 365 Nonprofit Accelerator Version 3.0 - How to Model Project Management and Program Design (To view larger in browser, click [here.](#))

The Common Impact Data Standard allows a full understanding of the “Delivery Model” and a rich understanding of impact including items like scale, depth, duration, counterfactual and threshold.

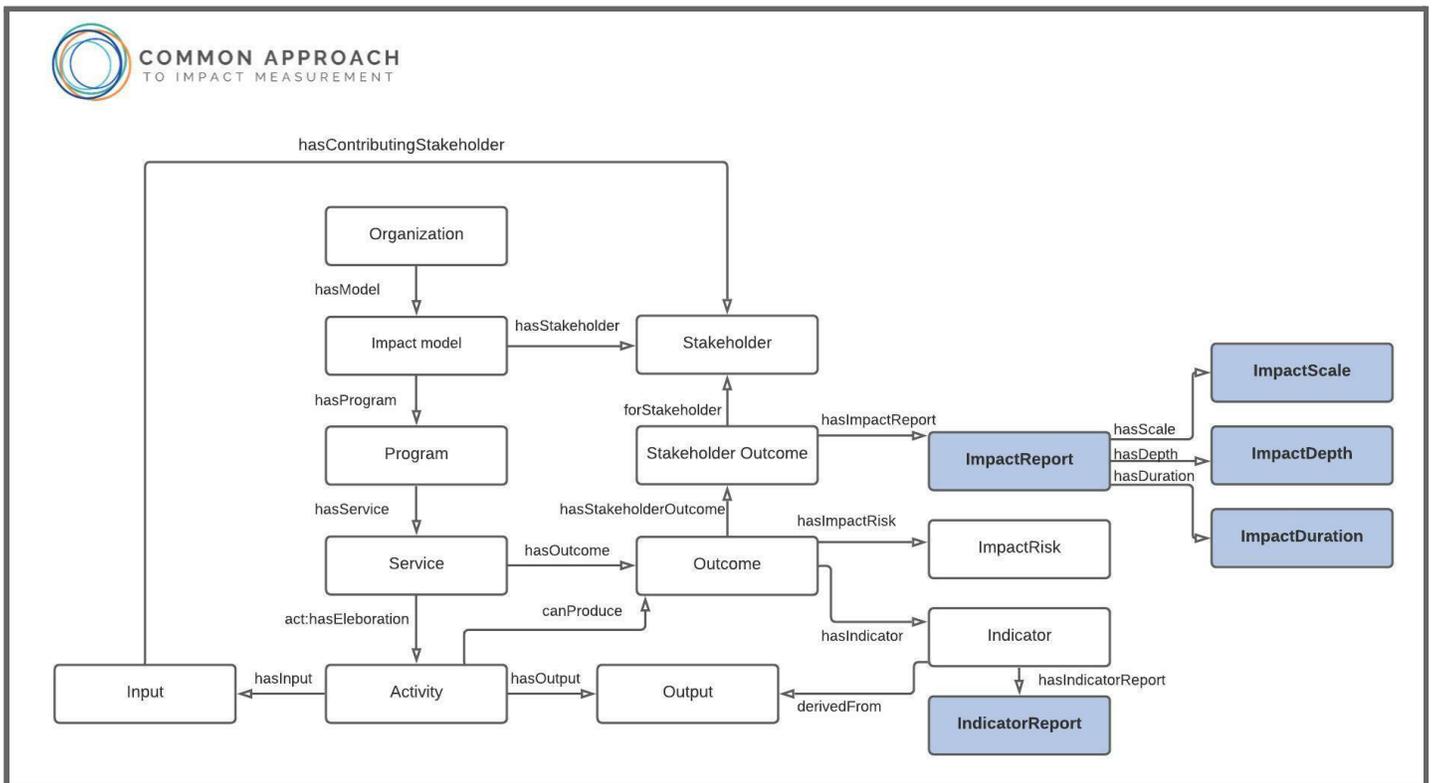


Figure 4: Detail of the impact representation specified in the Common Impact Data Standard. (To view larger in browser, click [here](#).)

Conclusion

This analysis was a first step in supporting alignment between the Common Impact Data Standard and the Common Data Model for Nonprofits and Dynamics 365 Nonprofit Accelerator. Common Approach will continue collaborating with Microsoft and partners to further align these models. Common Approach and Microsoft both welcome the opportunity to more closely align with the Common Foundations, Common Framework and Common Form as appropriate.