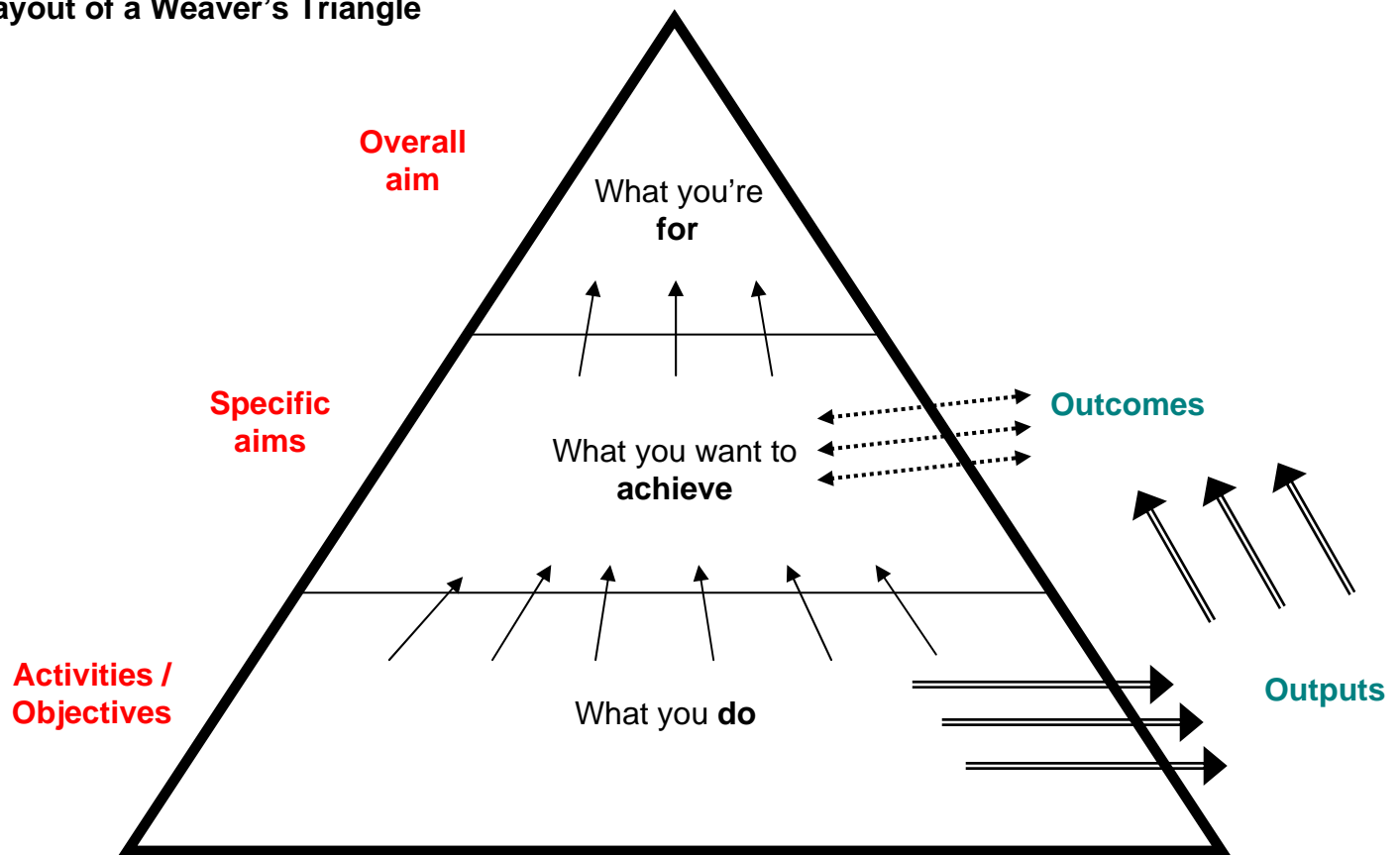


Commissioning for VCS groups: Using the Weaver's Triangle



Layout of a Weaver's Triangle



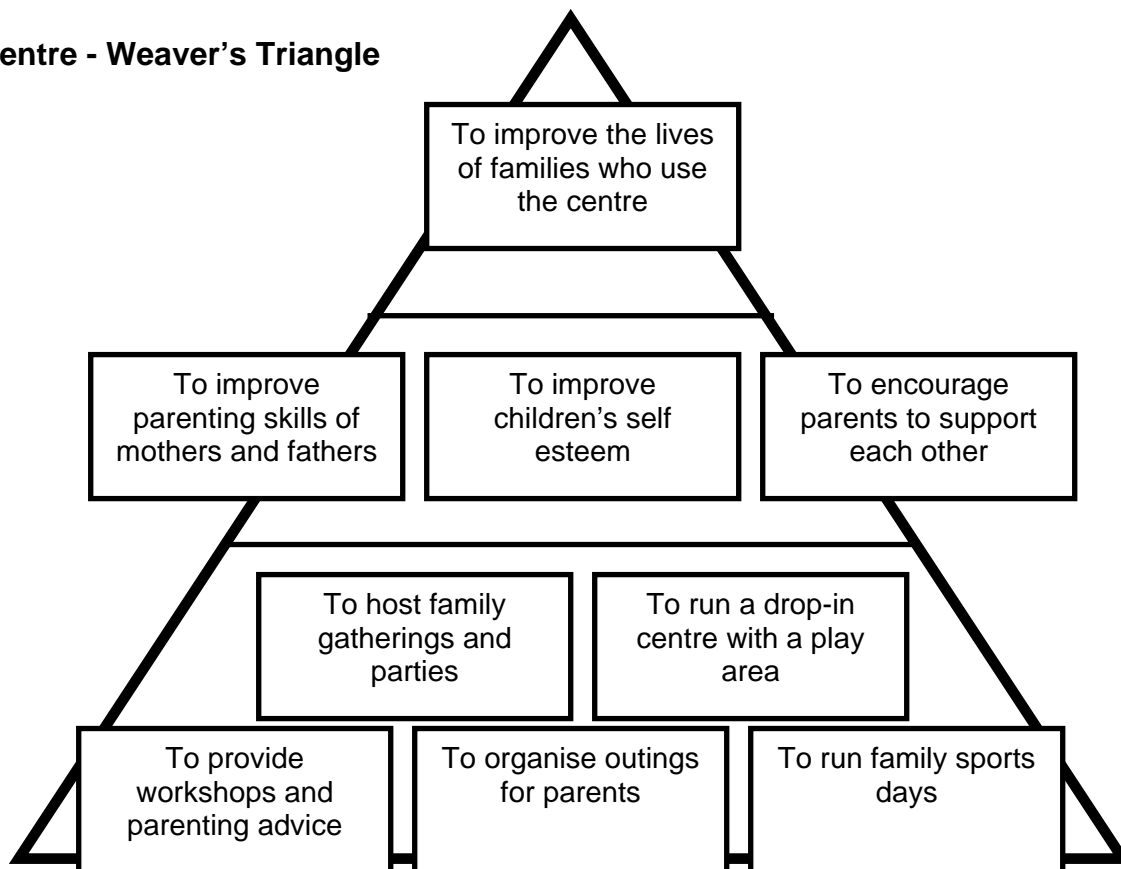
The Weaver's Triangle is a simple tool for helping organisations evaluate the services they are offering to their users. It is divided into three tiers, with the uppermost level being constant (always the same). This does not change and reflects the **overall aim** (mission) of your organisation. It is good practice to refer to your own Weaver's Triangle, as this will remind all staff and governing personnel of the reason why you exist as an organisation. The middle tier demonstrates your more **specific aims**, where you should check these against the *qualitative* **outcomes** that can be drawn from your *quantitative* **outputs** e.g. you provided 30 freshly cooked dinners (output) which helped service users achieve better nutritional health (outcome). Your organisation's specific aims may change, depending on your current activities, but must always be unified by the overall aim. The bottom tier details the service provision you deliver at present, which covers the frontline activities you do with your users. It is here that your organisation will determine its outputs, based on the monitoring of your users that attend sessions, classes, events and so on. The service provision you deliver will be the aspect that changes the most, but like your specific aims, your **activities** must all be unified under the overall aim. If your outcomes match up with your specific aims, then your activities are a good fit for your organisation.

The Weaver's Triangle visually portrays your organisation and works from the bottom up, with the lowest tier feeding into the middle tier which in turn feeds into the upper tier. There is a danger of organisations not adhering to their own Weaver's Triangle, especially with the Commissioning Agenda becoming more commonplace with contracting

authorities like Hounslow Council. Although it may be tempting to change your aims in an attempt to match that of a tender, it is advisable not to alter your specific aims too much and **never** to change the overall aim, as this will not reflect well with your organisation's identity. Changing the overall aim will require a constitutional change and agreement from the majority of your board. Organisations that do not have their aims and desired outcomes match up with those from a commissioned tender may result in **mission drift** (when an organisation's activities cause it to move away from its overall aim / mission). This can demotivate your staff, governing personnel, users and other stakeholders alike, as well as conflict with your constitution. Only bid for a tender if there is minimal conflict between what your organisation wants to achieve and what commissioners want to see achieved.

Taking the Family Centre Weaver's Triangle as an example, try and make a Weaver's Triangle for your own organisation. This will help clarify your identity and present it in a simple layout.

Family Centre - Weaver's Triangle



The Weaver's triangle can also be adapted for a partnership (consortium) of organisations that wish to work together towards a common goal / purpose. Such a partnership can have its own Weaver's Triangle, where each organisation would list its activities that would help achieve its specific aims of the, in turn, these would be unified by the overall aim / mission of the partnership. All the groups / organisations of the partnership must agree to the content and structure of the triangle and can refer to it as a guide that prevents them from mission drift.