

Using a Logic Model to Build a Strong Evaluation Plan

Part 2: Logic Models 101

Center to Improve Program & Project Performance (CIPP)
Part 2 Transcript

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[0:00:01-0:01:18]

Welcome to the four-part training series on using a logic model to build a strong evaluation plan. This series is presented by the Center to Improve Program and Project Performance.

The objectives of this training series include

- To understand the benefits of using a logic model to create an evaluation plan,
- To develop a strong logic model that shows how inputs, activities and outputs are expected to lead to meaningful short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes,
- with the ultimate purpose in aligning an evaluation data collection and analysis to critical components within the logic model.

This is part 2. Offering a very basic introduction to logic models.

[0:01:22-0:02:35]

Hello, my name is Nancy Hartman from the Center to Improve Program and Project Performance and I'm here to present part 2 of our training series on using a logic model to build a strong evaluation plan. In this session, I'll be sharing the fundamental elements of a logic model and showing how those elements work together to inform program decision-making.

So, you've been told your organization needs a logic model. A logic model, you ask? What on Earth is that? Because you live in the tech generation, you grab your cell phone and you do a web search for logic model and you only get 16 million hits, but like every other searcher you start by just clicking on the Wikipedia entry. Just stop there. We've made this video, so you don't have to click through 16 million websites or through Wikipedia to learn about logic models. We are here to give you all the information you need to get started.

Logic models are just a graphical representation... no, not that kind of graphic [image of a school building]. Let's try again...[image of a logic model table appears]... all right, yes! Okay, now a logic model is a graphic representation of your program...from the resources, which are inputs, and activities that will take place, to the deliverables which are outputs, and goals which are outcomes that the program will produce.

[0:02:36-0:04:00]

The graphic usually takes the form of a table, so the information can be filled in. When developing a new program or trying to figure out what aspects of an existing program need to be evaluated, a logic model may be helpful in showing the various components, activities, and goals of the program. There are three main reasons to consider developing a logic model. First, program stakeholders are requesting details about your measurable goals and objectives and you're looking for ways to visually display that information. Second, a funder or grantor will require a logic model as a part of an evaluation plan in your proposal. So a logic model is on always important for the funding agency. Third, you want to see a quick snapshot of how your program operates and what it intends to accomplish. To further clarify the significance and components of a logic model, let's walk through an example which will break-out each component separately and finish with the complete logic model.

[0:04:00-0:05:24]

Here's our scenario. Your District or school has a strategic goal to offer improved services to students with disabilities as well as their families especially deeply involving parents in those opportunities.

Let's get started with the first element in the logic model, inputs. Just as it says, inputs are what goes into a program. When trying to determine your program inputs, consider critical resources that are required to make your program successful. For example, partners, project team members, advisory groups, volunteers, facilities, or equipment. For our scenario, we definitely want families. We need funding. We need parent training and information center staff, technical assistance providers, and educational staff.

The next core element in a logic model is activities. Many programs and projects have a plan or timeline in place that outlines the high-level activity areas and tasks. When thinking about what activities to include in the logic model, reference those high-level activity areas. For example, if one of the outcomes for your program is to increase parental understanding and involvement in their child's special education program, your activity column may include, "Provide online and in-person training for parents." You're not necessarily going to go into something as specific as, "Schedule parent training sessions twice per semester."

[0:05:24-0:06:39]

Scheduling meetings is a task that will be reflected in your detailed plan and the providing of online and in-person training is the high-level activity that encompasses those tasks. It's more appropriate for the activity column of a logic model.

Here's a tip. Since inputs are directly related to the activities of your program, it's really helpful to develop an initial list of inputs, then fill in your activities, then go back to the inputs to make sure that you didn't miss any resources you need to achieve those activities. Logic models are not meant to replace a detailed project plan, they are just a way to link your resources to your activities and then link those to your goals, in a succinct manner.

[0:06:40-0:08:06]

The third critical element of a logic model are the outputs. After you have consensus on the inputs and activities of a program, think about the direct measurable results of those activities. Those are going to become your program outputs. Outputs can come in a variety of forms. Your project may be producing marketing or awareness materials, which can be simply stated in the output column. In our scenario, the output would simply be the number of online and in-person training sessions or the number of parents participating in the training. Outputs are the direct results of project activities, including project products and programs. Most outputs can easily be counted or quantified. They include tallies of numbers of products in programs or counts of the participant contacts with those programs and products. Outcomes are often what participants learn or do as a result of the outputs produced by the project. They're the result that fulfills the project's goals and lead to changes in conditions, such as gaining a fully

qualified workforce, achieving high academic performance, or implementing the wide-scale use of accessible technologies. Outputs, short-term outcomes and medium-term outcomes all contribute to the achievement of the long-term outcomes.

[0:08:07-0:09:40]

The final core element of a logic model are the outcomes, but it's important to note the outcomes are typically represented broken into three types of outcomes: short-term, medium-term, and long-term outcomes. As expected, short, mid, and long-term outcomes differ by the timespan in which we expect to achieve them. Typically, the short-term outcomes are more specific and are more directly measured, and then the mid and long-term outcomes are broader. For example, when looking at learning-focused outcomes, short to mid-term outcomes can be characterized by an increase in knowledge, skills, and abilities when participating in activities. Then a gradual shift in behavior or performance occurs. That's mid-term. Followed by a complete change in behavior or actions, which is long-term.

If we look at our scenario, our short, mid, and long-term outcomes would look something like this [image of completed logic model]. Our short-term outcome might say, "Increased parental knowledge of their rights under IDEA, or the individuals with Disabilities Education Act." Our medium-term outcome might say, "Increased parental ability to help their child succeed," and the long-term outcome might say, "Parents and educators collaborate to provide support services to children with disabilities."

[0:09:40-0:11:15]

Here's another tip. Since outcomes are often learning-focused, they can, many times, be evaluated using quantifiable data, such as retention rates of special education teachers or graduation and employment rates of students with disabilities and so forth. However, the outcomes might not be quantifiably measured. Even so, there are ways for an evaluation process to capture perceptions, feelings, beliefs, and reactions of stakeholders. By gathering these qualitative data, evaluators can gain an understanding of whether or not the outcome goals have been met.

When talking about outcomes within the logic model, it's critically important to align your activities and your intended outcomes, then during the evaluation process, data collection systems will align to both the activities and the outcomes, thereby connecting everything within the logic model.

This has been part 2, offering a very basic introduction to logic models.

This series is provided by the Center to Improve Program and Project Performance. For additional information, please visit our website at www.cippsite.org.

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