



Program Design Logic Models

“Doing the Right Things”

“Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things.”—Peter Drucker

Introduction

In [The Basics of Program Design](#), we discussed the need for programs to “do the right things,” particularly as they relate to program design. It’s time to switch gears and begin discussing “doing things right.” In this article, we lay the foundation for a program that does what it needs to (what is necessary) and no more (what is sufficient) so that we can achieve our outcomes. Specifically, we will use a tool—a logic model—to determine what activities we believe are both necessary and sufficient to achieve outcomes.

How do we decide what is necessary to meet our outcomes?

Many faith-based and community organizations operate under tremendous pressures: their missions are both inspiring and daunting, resources are scarce, priorities are often conflicting, and staff members almost always need to operate at peak performance levels. Failing to rise to these challenges can reduce not only the quality of service but also the number of people whom the program positively affects.

These realities require faith-based and community organizations (FBCOs) to make tough choices about what is necessary and sufficient for them to achieve success. In other words, organizational leaders must separate the “have to’s” from the “want to’s,” and prioritize resources accordingly.

Many nonprofit providers, including FBCOs, use logic models as a tool to reflect the program theory underlying their programs. Presented in a clear, graphic format with precise language, the program logic model is a representation of the linkages between program activities and the changes those activities will produce.¹ It provides greater clarity about your activities and helps you decide what you need to do to achieve your outcomes and to identify activities that are necessary to your program’s success.

“If you give people enough support and time to think through how they can personalize it (outcome measurement) to their program, it is a strong program development tool. It requires them to really think about whether the activities they are offering lead to the outcomes they care about most.”

—Faith in Action Initiative
United Way of Massachusetts Bay

What can a logic model do for my organization?

A logic model is a great way to “tell your story.” It describes the resources you need, the activities you plan to carry out, the products of those activities, and the resulting impact you intend to achieve. It can be a powerful program planning or design tool. When used effectively, you can boil your program down to its irreducible core and explain, succinctly and in plainspoken language, what you do and why it works.

¹ Evaluation Forum. *Outcomes For Success!*, Seattle, WA: Organizational Research Services, Inc. and Clegg & Associates, Inc., 2000, p.28.

In addition to being used to explain program theory, logic models are often used to help develop program management plans, or to help design both implementation (also called “effort” or “process” evaluation) and outcome measurement plans. Logic models are a core component of the Program Development toolkits available on ccfgrantees.org.

Where should I get information to complete my logic model?

It is important that your program theory is more than just your theory. There is a great deal of research available regarding the best practices in achieving different types of social service outcomes, many of them commissioned by the professional organizations that are most closely related to your program and scientifically proven to work. Using these practices can help ensure a sound program theory. However, if your approach is so innovative that it is missed in these collections of “best practices,” you may want to implement it and see if you demonstrate results. This could lead to the development of a new “promising practice,” a set of activities that seems to work, but need to be replicated and measured for you to be sure.

What does a logic model look like?

We’ve talked about what logic models are and what they can do. Below, you can see what one actually is.

SAMPLE LOGIC MODEL

Inputs/Resources	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Indicators
List the resources available to your program (such as money, expertise, time, etc.) that allow and support program implementation.	List the procedures through which your program tries to cause changes in the target population.	List the amount of product or unit of service provided (such as number of clients served or number of hours of service provided).	List the changes that occur for faith-based and community organizations, as a result of the technical assistance provided.	List the specific, observable conditions that are evidence that your program is having the intended results and achieving its outcomes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CCF grant ▪ 20 hours a week of social worker time ▪ 5 certified teachers ▪ 20 college student volunteers ▪ Social/emotional learning curriculum ▪ USTA partnership that provides 4 tennis coaches ▪ Books ▪ 1 guidance counselor making referrals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One-on-one tutoring ▪ Academic skill-building courses ▪ Team building activities ▪ Sports ▪ Individual choice reading ▪ Parent conferences and contact ▪ Problem solving coaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of one-on-one tutoring sessions ▪ Number of hours of tutoring ▪ Number of extracurricular workshops ▪ Number of after-school sessions attended (rate) ▪ Number of parent phone calls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improved academic skills ▪ Improved social skills ▪ Improved resiliency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improved grades ▪ Improved attendance rate ▪ Fewer discipline referrals ▪ Positive changes in teacher survey results ▪ Children observed with improved problem solving skills

The story of this program might be as follows:

We know that middle school children who succeed display, among other qualities, strong academic and social skills as well as resiliency: the ability to handle adversity. Anytown believes that if we provide students with a good curriculum, trained volunteers, and meaningful activities after school, then students will participate in the after school program. We also know that providing coaching on both social skills and in a sport can help students develop coping skills and resiliency. Furthermore, one-on-one tutoring is considered the most effective form of tutoring, and will improve academic success.

How can I make sure I complete my logic model?

Look at the elements that make up the logic model and use the questions below to help you define the elements of your technical assistance program:

- **Inputs/Resources:** What inputs or ingredients do you need to operate your program? How many staff? How large a budget?
- **Activities:** What will you do? What methods will you use to deliver your after school program? What content areas will you cover? What level of intervention will you provide (e.g., two hours a day of tutoring or one hour of tutoring and one hour of social-emotional learning through team activities)?
- **Outputs:** What will be the tangible products of your assistance? To how many FBCOs will you provide coaching? How many sets of financial policy guidelines will you produce? How many hours of training will you provide? How many people will you train?
- **Outcomes:** What impact will your technical assistance have on your FBCO clients? What is reasonable to expect in the way of change?
- **Indicators:** What, specifically, can you see and measure that might prove that your activities are changing the behavior of your clients?

How can I avoid common logic model pitfalls?

Resist the temptation to create logic models that show a one-to-one relationship between each resource, activity, output, and outcome. It may be true that you can create a single output related to each activity, but it generally requires a comprehensive array of resources in order to deliver the activities, and it may take several or all of the activities to produce the outcomes.

For example, you could create this logic model:

child + tutor + book = literacy

Tips for Creating a Logic Model

- Similar to the development of outcome chains, creating logic models works well as a group activity.
- Take large pieces of newsprint and hang them on the wall.
- Write down one component of the logic model on each sheet (i.e., resources, activities, outputs, outcomes) in the logic model's order.

However, is this true? No, it's overly simplified. In reality, the tutor receives curricula and training in a variety of areas, from social/emotional learning to an understanding of phonics, and the tools to interact with the child being tutored. Furthermore, inputs such as a comfortable space to read, a partnership with the library, and other resources to support the child at home may be in place. All of these inputs are important and effective, but do not have a direct causal link in the value chain. Would this work?

child + book + leaky basement + broken chair + tutor = literacy

Perhaps it would for some children, but the point has been made: the differing quality of some of your inputs can adversely affect your program, and you should acknowledge this reality in the logic model itself.

A more realistic representation may be this:

child + book + tutor
+ tutor + curriculum + social/emotional learning training
+ warm, inviting space + choice of books
+ parental support

= literacy gains

Always begin with the outcomes first; it's important to decide what you want to achieve in the way of enduring community changes (often called impacts in program design and evaluation literature) before you define what and how much of your program activities will be necessary to accomplish them.

Remember this axiom from economics as you begin planning: the only thing we know for sure about the future is that all our predictions will be wrong somehow. View your program logic models as working documents that are subject to change as you learn more about what works. You'll find the logic model to be a useful program planning tool in incorporating changes and improving your program over time.

A helpful *Logic Model Checklist* and *Logic Model Template* are both available below and on ccfgrantees.org.

Logic Model Checklist

- Include all of the inputs/resources you will need.
Are the following items listed?
 - Service providers: staff, volunteers
 - Program setting: community settings, agency facilities
 - “Service technologies”: curriculum/class material, treatment plans
 - Funding sources: private or public funding, donations, fee for service
 - Participants: client organizations
- Are all of the activities included and described in some detail?
(e.g., number and length of coaching sessions, types of computer training)
- Have you described an output, product, or unit of service for each activity?
(e.g., number of clients served, hours of service provided, type of service, etc.)
- Have the participants been counted and described in your output column?
(e.g., 9 staff, 54 children, 88 community members, etc.)
- Is the intensity appropriate for the organization with whom you are working?
Clients with greater needs require more assistance. Consider the job of a physical therapist. A sprained ankle is likely to require less treatment than a knee replacement, even though both desire the outcome “patient has a healthy leg.”

Note: You will need to develop your outcomes before you can answer this question; that’s one reason to create the outcomes first. If you don’t know your clients’ needs or abilities at the outset, you may not know the answer to this question and will have to come back to it later.
- Are your outcomes directly related to your activities?
(Is it possible to achieve the results you have listed with the type and amount of activities you are planning to deliver?)
- Do the indicators show specific, observable traits that show changes in knowledge, perceptions, attitude, skills, or behavior?

LOGIC MODEL TEMPLATE

Inputs/Resources List the resources available to your program (such as money, expertise, time, etc.) that allow and support program implementation	Activities List the procedures through which your program tries to cause changes in the target population	Outputs List the amount of product or unit of service provided (such as number of clients served or number of hours of service provided)	Outcomes List the changes that occur for faith-based and community organizations, as a result of the technical assistance provided	Indicators List the specific, observable conditions that are evidence that your program is having the intended results and achieving its outcomes