

Developing a Basic Logic Model

A logic model is a tool that helps nonprofit leaders clearly define their intentions as well as the desired outcomes they want to achieve through specific activities. Not all grant applications require a logic model. However, it's a necessary tool to communicate to funders, volunteers, board members, and staff what your organization is trying to accomplish. Prior to seeking grant funding, it's advisable to complete a logic model.

Purpose of a Logic Model

A logic model is a top-level depiction of the flow of materials and processes to produce the results desired by the organization or program. The model can be very useful to organize planning and analysis of the organization and its programs or when designing outcomes-based evaluations of programs.

What to Include and What Not to Include

Logic models can be developed in regard to various applications but it's often best to use logic models to depict major, recurring items in the organization or programs rather than one-time items. For example, you might not choose to do a logic model for the one-time, initial activities to build an organization or program (constructing the building, registering with state and federal authorities, etc.).

Size and Level of Detail

The logic model should be one or at most two pages long and contain sufficient detail for the reader to grasp the major items that go into an organization or program, what occurs to those inputs, the various outputs that results and the overall benefits/impacts (or outcomes) that occur and to which groups of people.

Definitions of Basic Terms

Logic models typically depict the inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes associated with an organization and its programs. Don't be concerned about your grasping the "correct" definition of each of the following terms. It's more important to have some sense of what they mean -- and even more important to be consistent in your use of the terms.

Resources/Inputs

These are materials that the organization or program takes in and then processes to produce the results desired by the organization. Types of inputs are people, money, equipment, facilities, supplies, people's ideas, people's time, etc. Inputs can also be major forces that influence the organization or programs. For example, the inputs to a nonprofit program that provides training to clients might include learners, training materials, teachers, classrooms, funding, paper and pencils, etc. Various laws and regulations effect how the program is conducted, for example, safety regulations, Equal Opportunity Employment guidelines, etc. Inputs are often associated with a cost to obtain and use the item -- budgets are listings of inputs and the costs to obtain and/or use them.

Processes/Activities (Strategies or Methods)

Processes are used by the organization or program to manipulate and arrange items to produce the results desired by the organization or program. Processes can range from putting a piece of paper on a desk to manufacturing a space shuttle. However, logic models are usually only concerned with the major recurring processes associated with producing the results desired by

the organization or program. For example, the major processes used by a nonprofit program that provides training to clients might include recruitment of learners, pretesting of learners, training, post-testing and certification. A well written process objective is SMART:

- **Specific:** Indicates who (priority population) and what (action or activity); contains an action verb
- **Measurable:** Outlines how much change is expected and how will that change will be measured
- **Achievable:** Can be realistically accomplished given current resources and constraints
- **Realistic:** Addresses the scope of the health program and proposes reasonable programmatic steps toward goals
- **Time-Phased:** Provides a timeline for meeting objectives.

Outputs

Outputs are usually the tangible results of the major processes in the organization. They are usually accounted for by their number, for example, the number of students who failed or passed a test, courses taught, tests taken, teachers used, etc. Outputs are frequently misunderstood to indicate success of an organization or program. However, if the outputs aren't directly associated with achieving the benefits desired for clients, then the outputs are poor indicators of the success of the organization and its programs. You can use many teachers, but that won't mean that many clients were successfully trained.

Outcomes

Outcomes are the (hopefully positive) impacts on those people whom the organization wanted to benefit with its programs. Outcomes are usually specified in terms of:

- a) Learning, including enhancements to knowledge, understanding/perceptions/attitudes, and behaviors
- b) Skills (behaviors to accomplish results, or capabilities)
- c) Conditions (increased security, stability, pride, etc.)

Impact

This is simply what we want to change on the societal level. These could be changes in the society's social or economic conditions, for example. Impacts always refer to a part of society, for example the population in an urban district or a region.

Narrative Description:

Once a model is created, confirm that the model is 'logical.' Check this by conducting the 'if-then' test. Ask, "If we use all our resources/inputs and do these activities, then will we achieve our short-term outcomes? If we achieve our short-term outcomes and continue our activities then should we achieve all our intermediate outcomes?" For each activity, ask why it is being done and if it is absolutely necessary. Make sure there are no logical gaps – that all required inputs and activities are included. Finally, explain the logic model in a narrative. A logic model should convey its information on a single page. It is intended to be a quick snapshot. The narrative provides the detail including the process and outcome objectives discussed above. It also describes how inputs and activities will lead to intended outcomes. It often lays out the theory of change.

Sources:

American Grant Writers' Association (<http://www.agwa.us/>)

Georgia Center for Nonprofits (<https://www.gcn.org/>)

Free Management Library (<https://managementhelp.org/>)

Organization Name:				Date:	
Statement of Need:					
Resources/Inputs	Processes/Activities	Outputs	Indicators/Tools	Outcomes	Impact
What is needed in order to accomplish the activities, i.e., human, financial, organizational, and community resources?	Actions or events needed to take place to bring about a program's intended change or results.	Tangible results of the major processes of the organization, i.e., number of students who passed/failed a test, number of courses taught, etc.	Specific, observable, and measurable accomplishment or change that shows progress, i.e., participation rates, attitudes, individual behaviors, incidence, and prevalence.	Positive impacts on those people whom the organization seeks to benefit, i.e., learning, skills, conditions like increased security	What do you want to change on the societal level, either social or economic conditions? *Test Logic Model with the "if-then" test.