MDH Minnesota Department of Health
CENTER FOR HEALTH EQUITY

Logic Model Tip Sheet

Building a Logic Model

A logic model is a brief (usually one-page) document that shows how your EHDI program works, what you will use, what you will do, what you will create, and what you will achieve.

A logic model can be viewed as a roadmap or blueprint for how your program will roll out in order to reach the intended outcomes and overall goals. In traveling from city A to city D, what resources or inputs will you need? A driver, a working car, money for gas, and directions on how to get there. And what can happen along the way? Reach city B, then city C, and perhaps other stops along the way, following your roadmap with an eye towards your final destination, city D.

As any commuter knows, challenges may emerge along the way that could change your intended journey. Perhaps there is a detour, or a road mishap that slows down traffic, or you discover an alternate route that would get you there faster. Thus, think of your logic model as something dynamic, a living document that is subject to revisions as you go through your journey.

Just what is a logic model?

There are different types of logic models. Since your evaluation is outcomes-focused, we recommend that you use an **outcomes model** format. This type of logic model displays inter-relationships among project goals, inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes. The emphasis is on developing outcomes as a way to monitor progress towards your long-term goal. By creating a logic model that connects short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes, you will be able to better evaluate progress and success, and locate gaps and weaknesses in your program. While MDH has provided a logic model template for EHDI, you may want to look at other examples in the resources listed at the end of this tip sheet.

How will your EHDI program benefit from creating a logic model?

A logic model has multiple benefits. One, if you use a group process in developing your logic model, it will bring key stakeholders together to clarify the underlying rationale for the program and the conditions under which success is most likely to be achieved. The logic model itself provides a focal point for discussion, debate, and consensus-building.

Two, having a logic model strengthens your program because everyone involved – program staff, participants, and other stakeholders – has a shared understanding of what the outcomes are, and the key activities and processes that need to occur for these outcomes to be achieved. Along the way, you can "check in" to see if things are going as planned or if adaptations need to be made.

Three, a logic model will help you stay focused as you work toward gathering data on key program components to determine their effectiveness.

What comprises a logic model?

A logic model has the following components:

Inputs: Resources dedicated to or used by your program. Examples include: funding, staff and staff time, volunteer and volunteer time, facilities, supplies, and equipment. Inputs can also act as constraints on the program that must be factored in, for example, state regulations or requirements on use of program funds.

Activities: What you do with your inputs. Activities include strategies, techniques, and interventions that direct your actions. Sometimes activities are referred to as approaches. Examples of activities are recruitment, education, outreach, advocacy, coalition building, creating healthy environments, communication, training, and expanding or launching programs.

Outputs: The direct products of program activities that are usually measured in terms of the volume of work accomplished ("Number of …."). These would be things like number of participants, number of graduates, number of classes, number of screenings, or number of immunization clinics. Oftentimes programs set targets for the volume of work that must occur for a subsequent outcome to be achieved. For example, 50 participants must complete 10 sessions of a diabetes prevention class in order to graduate from the program.

Outcomes: The benefits or changes for the individuals or groups of individuals in your program. These changes may not happen all at the same time. Changes that you can observe and measure immediately after an intervention or the end of your program are *short-term* outcomes, for example, improvements in knowledge or skills; those that happen several months or a few years down the road are *intermediate* outcomes such as changes in behavior or health status; lastly, changes that take place several years after your program ends are *long-term* outcomes or *impacts*, for example, changes in values, norms, conditions, and organizational or system-wide policies and structure. Outcomes may also include performance targets which are numerical targets. For example: "80 percent of participants demonstrate an increase in knowledge of diabetes risk factors."

Assumptions: Assumptions are your underlying beliefs about how your program will work. Inaccurate or overlooked assumptions can impact how the success of your program is viewed. To form assumptions, tap into your own experience, local wisdom, research, or best practice. For example, for your Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program to work well, you are assuming that the following things hold true:

- Program resources are adequate and available (funding, classrooms, transportation, etc.)
- A culturally appropriate curriculum will be developed and implemented effectively
- A health educator certified in the curriculum can be found and will deliver it
- Teens recruited into the program will attend after-school classes
- The teens' parents will give their permission for them to participate in the program
- Knowledge change will lead to behavior change

External Factors: These are conditions in the environment in which the program exists over which you have little control, but they can influence the program's success. For example: the political climate; social, economic and demographic changes that may affect recruitment and participation in your program; media coverage; local or national events that may influence public support for your program, changes in city, county, state, or federal laws; changes in your organization's or the funding organization's policies and priorities; or, changes in leadership.

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How do we get started in developing our logic model?

The process of developing a logic model will vary depending on available resources and capacity. But an important thing to remember is that no one individual should create a logic model on their own because the program is more than just one individual. At the very least, staff responsible for implementing the logic model must be involved.

A good start would be to assemble information from multiple sources such as:

- Original proposal
- Community needs assessment results
- Organizational mission statement and strategic plan
- Conversations with staff and volunteers who are directly involved in the work
- Conversations with members of your board or relevant committees
- Conversations with community members
- Examples of programs that are similar in focus or scope
- Published reports or statistics on your priority health area

Engage your stakeholders in a logic model exercise. Make sure the process is inclusive but not burdensome, and that it is fun and engaging. Try to eliminate jargon and make sure that everyone involved understands the various logic model components. An example of how this logic model exercise will take place is as follows:

Step 1. Assemble a work group. Before the meeting, ask members to review all the relevant documents.

Step 2. At the meeting, hang sheets of flipchart paper on the wall with a sheet each for Inputs, Activities, Outputs, Short-term, Intermediate, and Long-term Outcomes, and label them accordingly.

Step 3. Provide work group members with large post-it notes. Ask them to write ideas for inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes on the post-it notes, one idea per post-it note, and to stick their idea post-it notes on the appropriate flip chart sheet. Alternatively, they can start with outcomes and work backwards when writing down their ideas.

Step 4. Start organizing the idea post-it notes. Move them around, group them, or draw arrows between them to create “if-then” chains showing the logical sequence from inputs to outcomes.

Step 5. Create a first draft of your logic model and review them with the work group. It may take a couple of meetings—one focused on brainstorming, the next on refinement – before you will arrive at a final logic model. And remember, it is advisable to revisit your logic model periodically to make sure it accurately captures the essence of your program.

Step 6. Share your logic model!!! It won’t be of much use to you if it’s stashed away. Print out colored copies, enlarge it, laminate it, post it, however you want to disseminate it, but make sure you give a copy to program staff and key stakeholders. It can serve as a communication tool when describing your program to others.

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How will we know when our logic model is "good to go?"

Take a step back and review your draft. Invite stakeholders to provide their input. Invite individuals who know your program but did not participate in the development of the logic model to review it. Or ask someone who might be unfamiliar with your work such as a relative or neighbor. A logic model must be understood by a wide range of stakeholders. Questions you may ask them to address in their review are:

Does the logic model:

1. Include all the important activities and outputs?
2. Have clear outcomes?
3. Make the appropriate connections between inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes?

Are the outcomes in the logic model:

1. Relevant and important to the overall goals of the program? Of EHDI?
2. Those that the program can influence in a significant way?
3. The results for which the program should be held accountable?
4. Clearly defining the intended scope of the program's influence?
5. Effectively communicating the benefits of the program?

What common pitfalls should we avoid as we create our logic model?

1. *Spending too much time and resources on trying to create the perfect logic model.* Avoid striving for perfection or you will not have enough resources left to actually implement the steps in your logic model. See #3 below about logic model revisions.

2. *Creating a logic model that is too linear.* Logic models do not always follow a temporal sequence or a linear progression. You want a simple model, but you do not have to force it to be linear. Reality might dictate that you have loops, cycles, iterations, or interactions between logic model components.

3. *Being overly rigid in thinking you have to use the same logic model throughout the funding period.* The logic model is a dynamic tool. Things beyond your control will happen. If your initial assumptions are no longer relevant, do not hesitate to make changes. Adjusting and updating the logic model over time is part of the process. At the same time, however, be careful not to delete certain outcomes or lower performance targets just because things did not go well. Poor performance is not an excuse for logic model revision. If the challenge can be addressed, keep working toward your chosen outcomes and performance targets.

4. *Getting bogged down in the detail.* If creating a logic model seems too overwhelming, consider working from right to left. Some people find it easier to begin with their expected long-term outcomes, then work backwards to determine what activities and resources will be needed to achieve these outcomes. You can also go back and forth between logic model components. The important thing is to not get stuck.

5. *Making logic model creation an exclusive activity.* Your program management team should drive and lead the creation of a logic model. But, it is also important to include other partners and front line

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staff who are in contact with your program's intended beneficiaries, as well as the beneficiaries themselves. They would be in a good position to say if your outcomes are realistic given the conditions in the field. And, direct beneficiaries can provide feedback on whether the outcomes represent changes that are important to them.

6. *Trying to achieve all outcomes at the same time.* First, think in terms of the logical sequence that you expect outcomes to be achieved: short-term, intermediate, and long-term. Then, think of the time frame in which you expect these outcomes to emerge. It is possible that you will not be able to achieve your long-term outcomes within the grant period. It is helpful, however, for everyone to agree that these are the changes you want to see long-term, and in order to get there you first have to achieve your short-term and intermediate outcomes.

7. *Failing to re-examine your context.* Context is another term used to describe External Factors. These are issues or events outside your initiative's control that may affect the achievement of your outcomes. For example, you are trying to convince local grocers to offer more fresh produce in their stores, but a change in the city's health priorities made available grants to open a new farmers market and to fund neighborhood community gardens. Or, your efforts to increase physical activity among community residents may be influenced by the opening of a new YMCA. Or, elimination of a bus service in your area would impact program participation. Such contexts have to be monitored and documented over the life of your program.

Need help?

EHDI staff is available to provide assistance in developing logic models and evaluation plans. Please contact Mia Robillos at Mia.Robillos@state.mn.us or 651-201-5406.

Online resources you may find helpful:

- *Logic Model Development Guide* from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Can also request a free CD. This guide has a whole section on sample logic models. http://www.wkkf.org/resource-directory/resource/2006/02/wk-kellogg-foundation-logic-model-development-guide

- *Enhancing Program Performance with Logic Models*. This is an online module developed by University of Wisconsin Extension, Program Development and Evaluation. https://fyi.uwex.edu/programdevelopment/files/2016/03/lmcourseall.pdf

- *Measuring Program Outcomes: A Practical Approach* by the United Way of America includes a section on the use of logic models in clarifying and communicating outcomes. http://www.nrpa.org/uploadedFiles/nrpa.org/Professional_Development/Accreditation/COAPRT/Measuring_Program_Outcomes-UW.pdf

- *Developing a Logic Model or Theory of Change* from the Community Tool Box prepared by the Work Group for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/overview/models-for-community-health-and-development/logic-model-development/main

- Drawing software: Logic models can be drawn using any type of drawing software such as Microsoft's Visio (http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/visio/). For $13 to $15.50 per month, it can be added to your Microsoft 365 subscription.

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- Logic model builders: A number of logic model builders are available online, for example:

  Logic model software from DoView. A free trial is available. http://www.doview.com/logicmodels.html.

  Logic model builder from the Child Welfare Information Gateway. It will take you step-by-step through the process of developing a logic model, then you can download the logic model to a Microsoft Word program and customize, reformat, or add additional information to it. It's free but you need to create an account. https://toolkit.childwelfare.gov/toolkit/

  Innovation Network logic model builder. You enter the components of the logic model then it will generate the entire logic model. Go to http://www.innonet.org/ and go to the Evaluation Tools and Resources section. Registration is required but free.

  With True Impact you also enter components of the logic model. There is a fee depending on whether you need a Basic, Professional or Enterprise version, but is free for a single user with no archiving capability. http://www.trueimpact.com/logic-model

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