Inland Empire United Way

A Guide to Assessing Program Outcomes

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Inland Empire United Way

ASSESSING A PROGRAM LOGIC MODEL

A logic model is a visual presentation of how your organization or program does its work. It contains the theory and assumptions underlying the program. It shows relationships among the resources you have/need to operate your program, the activities you plan to do, and the results you hope to achieve.

Just by looking at this document, you as a reviewer should know what the program does, why it does it, who it is directed towards and what benefits the program participants are expected to gain. Each component of a logic model is linked to the next in a conditional logic "If-Then" relationship.

The advantage of a logic model is that it provides a snapshot that explains the comprehensive plan for the program. The agency mission and program goal should be included on the logic model. The program goal should link to the organization's mission statement and describe the main goals(s) of the program. It describes the "why" of the program.

Inputs

Inputs are the resources that are dedicated to or consumed by the program – the things that are needed to run the program. Constraints on inputs are things that limit the use of the program resources. They might be laws, regulations, funder requirements, community attitudes, etc.

Look for:

- A comprehensive listing of the resources needed to run the program: staff, funding sources, facilities/program setting, equipment, volunteers, curriculum, technology, referral sources, collaborations, participants, etc.
- Resources should match the type of program. For example, a counseling program should include some type of counseling staff; the facility should match the type of activities the program provides.
- Constraints on the program: funder's requirements, legal restrictions, eligibility limitations, etc.

Common mistakes include:

- Giving too much information for each input. For example, "Program Director, MSW social worker, 2 certified teachers" is sufficient versus a complete resume of staff.
- Forgetting to include constraints on the inputs

Activities

Activities are the major services that the program provides. For example, a parenting program might "Provide weekly parent support groups to parents," which may include: Information on child development, how to set boundaries with children, guest speakers, etc.

Look for:
- A listing of 1-5 key program activities
- If necessary, the major activity can be broken down into its component parts (see example above)

Common mistakes include:
- Not listing a major activity that is necessary for the program to achieve its outcome
- Providing too much detailed information about the activity

Outputs

Outputs are the direct products of the program activity – the important items that can be counted.

Look for:
- Items that can be tracked and counted when the activity occurs (may be listed with an actual number or the "#" sign). Could be # of participants, # of sessions held, # of materials distributed, etc.
- Number of participants, number of all activities, intensity of the activities, duration of the activities

Common mistakes include:
- Not listing obvious items that could be counted as part of that particular activity
- Listing items that do not appear as part of an activity
- The intensity and/or duration of the activities are not appropriate for the type of participants

Outcomes

Outcomes are the benefits that program participants gain during or immediately after participation in the program.

Look for:
- Outcomes that match IEUW funding outcomes (see Program Grants Guide)
- Outcomes that are recognizable and meaningful to the average person
- Outcome statements that are focused on the participants, i.e., "Youth will …," "Clients have …," "Parents gain …," "Patients learn …"
- Outcomes that logically flow from the activity
- Outcomes that are consistent with the inputs, activities, and outputs
- Outcomes that reflect progress steps that participants make toward longer-term goals.
- Outcomes that address a change in condition, knowledge, perception, attitude, skills, or behavior.
- Outcomes that are written as change statements – things will increase, decrease, or stay the same.

- Outcomes that are related to the "core business" of the program
- Outcomes that are within the program's control to influence these outcomes. (It is fair to hold the program "accountable" to these outcomes.)
- Outcomes that are realistic and attainable
- Outcomes that are achievable within the funding and reporting periods

Common mistakes include:
- Outcomes that are not focused on the program participants
- Statements that go well beyond the scope of the local program
- Outcomes that do not flow out in a logical sequence – results identified may be too "grand" too quickly.
- Outcomes that cannot be measured
- Including "client satisfaction" with the program as an outcome
- Listing an output as an outcome

ASSESSING A PROGRAM EVALUATION PLAN

Indicators

Indicators are specific and measurable items or pieces of information that will show that the outcome is occurring. This will be shown as collective data gathered on a group of individual participants.

Look for:
- Indicators that make sense in relation to the outcomes they are intended to measure. Indicators should be directly related to the outcome. Indicators should define the outcome.
- Specific information that shows the outcome has been achieved
- Real numbers and percentages for a completed plan OR the symbols "# & % of participants who…" for a proposed plan.
- Indicators that are measurable, observable, specific (Can they be seen, heard, or read?)

Common mistakes include:
- Not being specific. For example, "# & % of parents who understand parenting better …" is clearer as "# & % of parents who can list 2 developmental needs of their 3 year old."
- Indicators that the agency cannot reasonably collect data on. (Can the agency collect data on these indicators within the time frame? Does the agency have the resources to collect data on these indicators?)
- Confusing outcomes with indicators

Data Source

The data source is where or from whom the agency gets the data for each indicator. This is where the data originates from.

Look for:

- A specific individual (participant, parent, teacher)
- A written record (report card, hospital record, program record)
- A mechanical test (scale, other mechanical device)
- A trained observer.

Common mistakes include:

- Not being specific
- Confusing the data source with the method or tool

Data Collection Method

The data collection method is how the agency obtains the data from the source(s).

The data collection method will be one or more of the following:

- Self-administered questionnaire or survey
- Review of program records
- Interview
- Rating by trained observer

Common mistakes include:

- Confusing the data collection method with the source or tool
- Using a method that is not appropriate for the outcomes and indicators selected
- Using a method that is not appropriate for the participant. For example, very young children cannot complete a self-administered questionnaire. Homeless clients cannot be expected to complete and return a mailed survey.

Data Collection Tool

The data collection tool is the actual instrument used to collect the data.

The data collection tool will most likely be one (or both) of the following:

- Questionnaire or survey
- Checklist (to track trained observation or record review)

Common mistakes include:

- Confusing the data collection tool with the source or method
- Using a tool that does not address the program outcomes and indicators

- Using a tool that is not culturally relevant
- Using a tool that is difficult to understand

Frequency

The data collection frequency refers to how often the agency collects the outcomes data.

Look for:

- Frequency of data collection that matches time points when realistic progress can be expected for participants. Does the data collection schedule reflect a time point(s) which follows completion of services or program activities? For programs which provide ongoing and continuous care, does data collection occur at regular intervals when progress can be expected?
- Frequency that matches outcomes reporting deadlines
- Frequency of data collection matches the level of contact with participants (greater frequency with greater level of contact).

Common mistakes include:

- Not conducting pre-testing to establish a base line and post-testing to measure the change that has occurred after completion of the program, or at any other point in time. This is particularly important for more subjective outcomes such as “increased self-esteem.”

Sample Size

The sample size is the number of participants included in the sample for data collection.

Look for:

- A sample size that is appropriate for the total number of participants. If the program serves less than 100 participants, all participants should be included in the sample. If the program serves more than 100 participants, the sample should include at least 100 in the sample.
- A decent return rate on the sample. 20% of all sampled is acceptable.

Common mistakes include:

- Using a sample that is not representative of the whole, either in number or in composition. For example, for a program that serves children and adults, you cannot sample only the adults and get a fair representation. For a program that serves 10,000 participants, you cannot sample only 20 participants and get a fair representation.

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LOGIC MODEL

Agency Name: ______________________________ Program Name: ______________________

Program goal: ____
(Use this space to list overall goal for the program and how it relates to agency mission)

Inputs Inputs are resources a program uses to achieve program objectives.	**Activities** Activities are the services a program provides.	**Outputs** Outputs are the products of a program's activities (units of service).	**Outcomes** Outcomes are the benefits for participants during or after their involvement with a program.
Examples: **Resources** • Money/funding • Staff • Volunteers • Equipment & Supplies • Participants • Facility • Collaborations **Constraints** • Laws • Regulations • Funders' requirements	Examples: **Services** • Shelter • Training • Education • Counseling • Served meals • Mentoring	Examples: **Products** • # of classes taught • # of counseling sessions conducted • # of educational materials distributed • # of meals provided • # of hours of service delivered • # of participants served	Examples: **Benefits for people** • New knowledge • Increased skills • Changed attitudes or values • Modified behavior • Improved condition • Altered status

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EVALUATION (MEASUREMENT) PLAN

Agency Name: ______________________ Program Name: ______________________

Outcome	Indicators	Data Source	Data Collection Method	Data Collection Tool	Data Collection Frequency/Schedule	Sample Size
List each outcome from your logic model	Indicators are the specific observable, measurable characteristic or change that represents achievement of the outcome. (How you know you've achieved the stated outcome.) Your indicators should begin with "# and % of participants who…" There may be more than one indicator per outcome.	Where do you get the data for each indicator?	What method do you use to obtain the data from these sources?	What is the actual tool used to collect the data?	How often do you collect the data?	How many are used in your sample? As a general rule, if you have less than 100 participants, you should sample all.
Example: • Families increase self-sufficiency	**Examples:** • # & % of participants who are gainfully employed after 6 months • # & % of participants who maintain permanent housing for at least 6 months	**Examples:** • Specific individual (participant, parent, teacher) • Written record (report card, hospital record, program records) • Mechanical test (scale, other devices) • Trained observer	Your method will be one (or more) of the following: • Self-administered questionnaire/ survey • Review of program records • Interview • Rating by trained observer	Your data collection tool will most likely be one (or both) of the following: • Questionnaire or survey • Checklist (to track trained observation or record review)	**Examples:** • Pre and post tests done before and after program session • Quarterly (for an ongoing or year-long schedule)	