# Logic Models: A Beginner's Guide

A logic model is an organized and visual way to display your understanding of the relationships among the resources you have to operate your program, the activities you plan, and the changes or results you hope to achieve. Logic models are sometimes referred to as "road maps" for the organization. They help to illustrate how the program is going to work, and what the program will do to achieve the desired results

Making a logic model for your organization can be helpful in a number of ways. Some of the best reasons to invest the time needed to create a logic model are that it:

→ makes your assumptions explicit; allowing you to challenge and examine them
→ helps to build shared understanding and expectations of your program among staff and other stake-holders
→ helps you identify the data you need to collect so that you can monitor and improve programming
→ tells stakeholders the problem the program focuses on and how the program is qualified to address it
→ helps to identify what evaluation questions should be asked and why
→ is often required by funders

Basic format of a logic model:

Inputs → Activities → Outputs → Outcomes
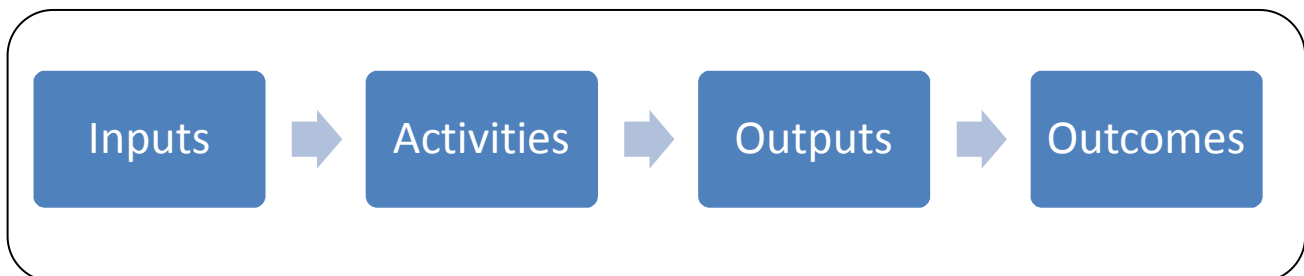
A logic model contains four components: inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes.

Inputs: What the organization invests in the program. (Examples: money, staff, volunteers, time, equipment, materials, technology, partners, etc.)

Activities: What the program does. (Examples: tutor, teach financial literacy, serve meals, mentor, etc.)

Outputs: The direct results of the program activities. How much/many activities provided (number of youth matched with a mentor, number of tutoring sessions, number of youth served, etc.)

Outcomes: The benefits realized in the population served by the program. Answers the question – "So what difference does the program make?" (new skills, change in behavior, change in attitudes, new knowledge, etc.)

People often mistakenly describe the outputs of their organization as the outcome. For example, a youth club may state that the outcome of their organization is that they "serve 50 youth a year, providing them a safe place to go after school." Their statement is describing something that they did, not the change in the population served as a result, meaning that their statement is actually an *output*. An example of an outcome could be – "youth participating in the program are 50% less likely to use drugs than their peers."

Tip

Output v. Outcome

Don't mistake what your organization does with the change that results in those you serve. Funders want to know what difference your organization is making, not simply that you are doing something. Outputs are what you *DO*. Outcomes are the *CHANGE* in the population served. An easy way to remember this is that:

C is for Change → Out**c**omes = **c**hange.

Here are some more examples to get you thinking about the difference between outputs and outcomes:

Program	Output (what it does)	Out**c**ome (the **c**hange as a result)
Free medical clinic	Fifty low-income individuals are provided free doctor visits	50% decrease in emergency room visits by population served in the year following initial contact
Math tutoring program	Seventy youth receive math tutoring twice a week during the school year	100% of youth served improve their ISTEP scores in math from the start of the school year compared to the spring test
Youth mentoring	Thirty youth are matched with an adult mentor for the year	80% of youth served report increased self esteem following one year of mentoring
Dropout prevention	Forty youth at risk of dropping out receive weekly case management services	85% of youth in program for one year or longer graduate high school in four years

Outcomes

A helpful guide for developing outcomes for your program is the acronym **SMART**. Outcomes for your program should be:

Specific - target the population you serve and the issue you are concerned with
Measurable - expressed in a way that can be measured
Action-oriented – something that the organization can act on and impact
Realistic and **r**elevant – something that is within the realm of possibility for your organization, and
        related to the problem the program addresses
Timed – indicate when the outcome will be achieved

Outcomes are often divided up into three categories: Initial, intermediate, and long-term.
Initial: Change in knowledge, attitude, or skills
Intermediate: Change in behavior or action resulting from new knowledge
Long-term: Change in life condition and/or status

Tip   Categories of Outcomes

To make it easy to remember, you can think of it as ABC – **A**ttitude (initial), **B**ehavior (intermediate), **C**ondition (long-term). Just remember that attitude also includes knowledge/skills.

Looking again at the examples of outcomes, we can further break down the outcomes into these three categories. The outcomes given previously are in bold.

Program	Initial Outcome (**a**ttitude)	Intermediate Outcome (**b**ehavior)	Long-term Outcome (**c**ondition)
Free medical clinic	Recipients learn how to better manage their health and where to access community resources	**50% decrease in emergency room visits by population served in the year following initial contact**	Those served have a higher quality of life and longer life expectancy
Math tutoring program	**100% of youth served improve their ISTEP scores in math from the start of the school year compared to the spring test**	90% of youth served are able to move on to the next grade	Youth graduate high school
Youth mentoring	**80% of youth served report increased self esteem following one year of mentoring**	Youth served for one year are 40% less likely to use drugs compared to their peers.	Youth avoid delinquent behaviors and become responsible citizens
Dropout prevention	100% of youth served understand the economic impact of dropping out of school	90% of youth served will advance to the next grade	**85% of youth in program for one year or longer will graduate high school in four years**

Practice

Think about your organization, or one you are familiar with, and list the outputs and outcomes of two programs. Make sure they are **SMART**.

Programs	Output (What it does)	Out**c**ome (the **c**hange as a result)

Now using the same programs, break down the outcomes into the following categories.

Program	Initial Outcome (A)	Intermediate Outcome (B)	Long-term Outcome(C)

"If-Then"

The logic model is a depiction of "if-then" relationships. *If* we invest these inputs/resources, *then* the activities can take place; *if* the activities take place, *then* the outputs will result; *if* the outputs result, *then* the outcomes will be achieved.

If………………. then………..….if…………………then…………..…….if……………....then……….if…then…if…then
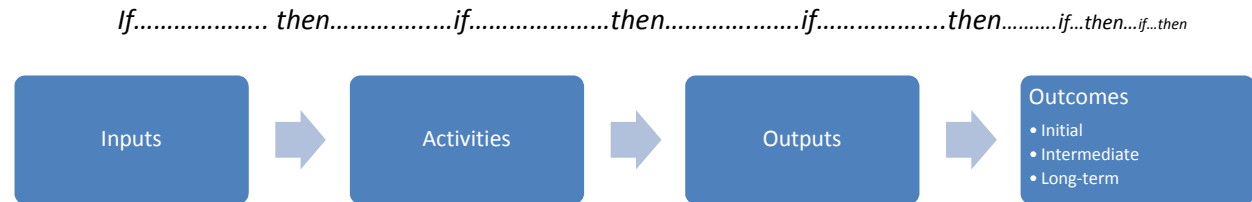
Now that we have a basic understanding of what a logic model is, how it can be useful, and the difference between outputs and outcomes; let's start the process of building a logic model for your organization.

Developing a logic model

The foundation for a logic model rests on the problem that the program is responding to. To effectively develop a logic model, you must first be aware of what problem the program will be addressing.

Take some time to examine the need for your program. Here are some questions to think about regarding the need your program seeks to address:
- How can you document the need for your program (data)?
- How large is the problem (numbers)?
- Who are you trying to impact with the program (specific populations)?
- Is the program reasonable in light of the need?

Some other things to consider as you prepare to draft your logic model:
- Who will use the logic model/ what purpose will it serve?
- Who should be involved in helping to make it?
- What have other organizations done to address the need your program is targeting?

Next, we will look at writing out your logic model step-by-step. Read through each of the steps, then use the Logic model table following the step-by-step outline to create one for your program.

Step 1: Identify the long-term outcomes of your program

Long-term outcomes are the changes in life state experienced by the population served as a result of the program.

Examples: At-risk youth will graduate high school; pregnant teens will give birth to healthy babies

Tip

- Be sure that the client is the focus of the goal, not your organization
- Make the outcome active. The long-term outcome should be something the client will do/achieve, not what will be done/provided to them
- Some good questions to ask yourself: What are we trying to achieve with our clients? What does success look like for our clients? If the program is a success, how will our clients' lives be changed?

Step 2: Identify the initial and intermediate outcomes of your program

Initial outcomes (**a**ttidude) are what impact the program has on the attitudes, skills, and knowledge of the population served by your program.

Examples: youth will understand the consequences of dropping out of school; pregnant teens increase knowledge of proper nutrition

Intermediate outcomes (**b**ehavior) are the changes in behavior exhibited by the population the program serves as a result of their increase in knowledge.

Examples: youth have fewer than ten unexcused absences from school; pregnant teens consume a healthier diet

Step 3: Identify the activities that will take place

You have identified the initial and intermediate outcomes needed so that the population served will reach the long-term goal of the program, now you need to identify the activities that will take place so that clients gain the knowledge and skills identified in your initial outcomes. Remember the "if-then" relationship. *If* these activities take place, *then* clients will gain the knowledge and skills you listed in the initial outcomes section.

Examples: youth meet with case manager on a weekly basis; pregnant teens receive training on healthy diet

Step 4: Identify the <u>inputs</u> needed

Looking at the activities you identified in step three, what inputs/resources are needed to make those happen?

Examples: volunteers, staff, building, curriculum materials, etc.

Step 5: Identify the <u>outputs</u>

As a result of the activities you listed in step three, what will be delivered? Remember our discussion earlier of the difference of outputs vs outcomes. Outputs are what you do. Your outputs should answer questions like how many, how much, or for how long?

Examples: number of youth at-risk of dropping out of school who will receive weekly case-management services; number of nutrition counseling sessions provided to pregnant teens

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Your turn →
Now turn to the next page to begin filling out your program's logic model.

It may be helpful to refer back to these steps and examples as you work your way through it. Also, keep in mind the outcomes and outputs you came up with in the earlier practice section.

Take note that the order is not chronological. We start at the end with long-term outcomes because that is why your program exists - to accomplish that certain goal. Starting with the end in mind helps you to ensure that all of your activities, outputs, and resources are aligned with the mission/goal of your program.

Practice **Logic Model**

Long-term Outcome	**Step 1: Identify the <u>long-term outcomes</u> of your program**
Intermediate Outcomes	**Step 2b:** Identify the <u>intermediate outcomes</u> of your program
Initial Outcomes	**Step 2a:** Identify the <u>initial outcomes</u> of your program
Outputs	**Step 5:** Identify the <u>outputs</u>
Activities	**Step 3:** Identify the <u>activities</u> that will take place
Inputs	**Step 4:** Identify the <u>inputs</u> needed

Congrats! You've crafted a logic model for your program!

That wasn't so bad, was it? You may be thinking- So now what do I do with it? Here are some next steps you can take to ensure that your logic model can benefit your organization in the ways we listed at the start:

- First, **review your logic model** by asking some basic questions – Is it meaningful? Does it make sense? Are the outcomes for the program realistic? Do you have the resources you need? Can you verify your logic model by collecting data on your outcomes?

- Get feedback from the stakeholders of your program – clients, staff, funders, volunteers.

- Use it with staff and volunteers to **build a shared understanding of your program** and its goals.

- Use it with grant proposals or other appeals for funding to help clearly **communicate your programs goals and how it will accomplish them.**

- Make your logic model a **starting point for evaluating your program**.

Evaluation – it doesn't have to be scary

If you don't have experience evaluating your program it can often seem overwhelming at first. A good place to start is checking out two of Indiana Youth Institute's (IYI) Issue Briefs - Using Data to Show Impact and Turning Data into Dollars

If you think your program could use some additional help with developing a logic model, evaluating your program, or both, IYI has free and/or greatly reduced price services available for youth-serving organizations in Indiana. Check out these resources and spread the word!

- **Beginner's evaluation and logic model assistance**: IYI has an Americorps VISTA volunteering with them for the July 2011- June 2012 year. Basic face-to-face consulting is available free of charge to youth-serving nonprofits in Indiana.

- **Help Line:** Call IYI's Youth Service Help Line for assistance on grant prospect research, fundraising assistance, legal advice, and more. Contact the Help Line at 1-877-IYI-TIPS. For more information, see http://www.iyi.org/consulting-services/help-line.aspx

- **Consulting:** IYI has more than 50 professional consultants with a broad range of expertise located throughout the state and ready to serve you. The consultants are carefully screened based on interviews, education, past experience with nonprofits, recommendations from clients, style, the ability to communicate clearly, and a heart for helping nonprofits. Consulting is subsidized by IYI and available for $30/hour, well below the market rate which is often more than $100/hr.

This tool was developed by the Indiana Youth Institute.
If you are interested in receiving free or reduced rate consulting in Indiana, please contact:
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