



Logic Models: What they are and how to prepare one

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This guide has been published by Onate Press, an imprint of Eaton International Consulting Inc. Its purpose is to provide researchers, proposal writers and practitioners with an understanding of what logic models are and how to prepare one.

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What is a logic model?

In simple terms a logic model is a way to organize information about the elements of a project or program, and the relationships between those elements in a visual way. You can think of it as a kind of road map. It answers questions like: Where are we going? What resources do we have to use along the way? How do we get there? How will we know when we've arrived?

Logic models, or variations of them are sometimes called "progress models" or "results chain". They all do similar things. Basically, a logic model provides a way for a project team to plan their activities, to articulate what resources they're going to use and how they're going to use them and finally, how they'll measure the results of their activities.

Logic models are based on what's called the "theory of change". Basically, this is the logical reasoning behind why the team believes that the project is important, what difference the project intends to make and what impact it is meant to have. The model is a visual demonstration of these various elements, showing how they are linked together and the relationships between them.

What are the characteristics of a logic model?

Developed by a team

In general, logic models are developed by teams, not by individuals. This helps to ensure that everyone has the same idea of where you are going, how you plan to get there and what resources you have to use. While a small group may guide the process, ideally, all team members, managers and stake holders are engaged in the process and have input. Logic models are a collaborative endeavour, not “rolled out from the top down”.

Developed at or near the beginning of a project

Logic models are most effective when they are put together at the beginning of a whole project or the start of a new phase of a large project. Though they can be considered a “living document” that can change if necessary, they offer a framework to follow throughout the entire life of the project.

Bound by time

Logic models are bound by the length of the project. They show specific activities and outcomes within a given time frame. Often this time frame is determined by funding.

Visual

Logic models are often constructed either as tables or horizontal flow charts that use boxes and arrows to link each box. They combine graphics and words to convey the ideas. Most often they fit onto a single page.

Organized

Logic models differ from mind maps and other visual methods of capturing important information. They generally follow a natural progression from one section to another that could also be explained as “If A, then B.” By their nature, logic models are well-organized, straight forward and, well, logical.

Clear language

Logic models are written in clear, concise language. They are best understood when they are free of jargon but instead, use precise words that are easy to understand.

Simple presentation

Logic models often use bullet points instead of lengthy prose.

What are logic models used for?

To help the team think through the process

Focus on what's most important. Make sure everyone is on the same page and has the same understanding. This helps to build the team and other stake holders to become engaged with the process. It also creates "buy in" and increase commitment to the various elements of the project.



To identify key elements and expectations of your project

During the process of constructing the logic model the team will have discussion about what the expectations of the project are, as well as the various phases. Sometimes team members may have different ideas about where things fit on your logic model (Is it an output or an outcome?) Identifying these from the beginning is an important part of the process.

To indicate what resources you have to use and show how you will use them

A logic model identifies what resources you have to achieve your goals. These resources may include people (project staff, managers), expert or technical knowledge, time, money, materials, equipment, space, facilities and other resources needed to meet your goals.

To clarify and state assumptions

It is normal that different team members have different understandings of key words, ideas or deliverables. A logic model helps the team tease out these differences, talk about your assumptions and arrive at a common understanding. This is an important part of the process that can help prevent major misunderstandings later in the project.

To link various elements of a project

The goals of a project should have a direct relationship to its results and impact. The activities you undertake to achieve your goal should have concrete outcomes that also relate to the final results. A logic model helps to link all of the elements of the project in a clear and straightforward fashion.

To promote understanding

Logic models help staff, management and other stake holders understand the who, what, when, why and how of your program. Logic models can also be shared with funders and other stake holders to demonstrate that the project team members have thought through the process and have a clear understanding of what they are doing, why they are doing it and how they plan to use precious and limited resources for maximum impact.

To guide progress and help you stay on track

Chances are, unexpected things will happen as you move from the planning stages through the implementation stages. Having a logic model provides all the team members and stake holders with a way to check on your progress.

A logic model provides a preventative means to check that you are on track on a regular basis and take corrective action before the project derails.

To provide a framework to plan, implement monitor and evaluate your project

The hard part of a logic model is creating it. It requires time, collaboration, and thinking through all the steps methodically. Once you've done all this, you essentially have constructed a framework that will help you:

- 🎯 plan what you will do and how you will do it
- 🎯 what you expect to happen as a result

This makes it easier to evaluate your project. You can ask yourself, "Did we do what we said we were going to do?". A logic model should facilitate answers to this question.

What are the elements of a logic model?

Logic models vary in what they include. The words used to describe certain elements can be different, too. Here are some general categories that are often used:

Goals / Objectives

This section identifies the goals of your project. It answers the questions, “What are our goals?” or “What do we want to achieve?” When writing this section it may be helpful to start each point with verbs such as:

- 🎯 To help...
- 🎯 To provide...
- 🎯 To ensure...
- 🎯 To establish...
- 🎯 To develop...
- 🎯 To encourage...

The goals or objectives should have a direct link to the outcomes. The measures or qualifiers can be cross-checked against the goals to ensure that the objectives of your project are met.

Inputs / Resources

Inputs are what the team has at hand in order to achieve the identified goals. It answers the question, “What resources do we have available to us?”

Resources may include:

- 🎯 project team (staff, managers, project volunteers)
- 🎯 partners (external organizations, consultants, volunteer advisors)
- 🎯 expert or technical knowledge, experience wisdom
- 🎯 time
- 🎯 money (funding)
- 🎯 materials, equipment and tools
- 🎯 space and facilities
- 🎯 other resources available

It is important to note the difference between “What do we need to make this happen?” and “What do we already have to make this project a success?” This section of the logic model is not about what you would ideally like to have. Resources are typically more limited than anyone would like. This section is about examining all that is currently and realistically available to help you achieve your goals. Talking through this is an excellent opportunity to think outside the box and identify resources such as expert knowledge, or previous field experience of team members.

Activities / Strategies

Activities and strategies outlines concrete actions team members will take. It answers the question, “What are we going to do to achieve our goals?” When writing this section it may be helpful to start each point with a verb. Examples are:

- 🎯 Identify (needs, target population, opportunities, program areas, etc.)
- 🎯 Develop (program, web page, etc.)
- 🎯 Establish (contacts, relationships, etc.)
- 🎯 Collect data
- 🎯 Attend (conferences, meetings, etc.)
- 🎯 Give presentations
- 🎯 Organize and host (meeting, symposium, etc.)

This section may also include research activities, though research rarely comprises the bulk of the project.

Activities relate to outputs. You should be able to cross-reference all the points in these two sections and find concrete links between them.

Outputs / Short-term results

Outputs and short-term results are the direct results of your activities. It answers the question, “What are the short-term results of our work?” These are often, though not necessarily, expressed in numerical ways.

Some examples of numerical results are:

- 🎯 Number of meetings held, classes taught, workshops delivered, presentations given, etc.
- 🎯 Number of partnerships developed, agreements signed, contracts negotiated.
- 🎯 Number of information requests answered.

In order to ensure that the results are met, it will be necessary to track the results and record them. If this step is missed, you will not be able to demonstrate these results. This tracking is an important project activity in and of itself. With that in mind, some examples of non-numerical short-term results would be:

- 🎯 Establish a resource centre.
- 🎯 Track results
- 🎯 Dialogue, interact, collaborate regularly (this can be further defined as “at least once a week”, “twice a month”, etc.)
- 🎯 Increase knowledge and/or skill in the target population (as linked to activities)

Outcomes / Individual success indicators

Sometimes outcomes and impacts are combined. It may be useful to keep them separate though, as they can be considered different steps of the process. Outcomes are often expressed as indicators of success at an individual level. This includes individuals who have been impacted by the project, such as a workshop participant, an attendee at a seminar or other beneficiaries of the activities done during the project.

Outcomes and success indicators answer the question, “How will people change their activities, behaviour and knowledge as a result of this project?”.

Another way to identify project outcomes is by finishing the sentence, “We will know this project has been successful when people...” Examples of outcomes might include such things as:

- 🎯 “Program participants have increased skills in the area of...”
- 🎯 “Program participants better understand how and why X is important”
- 🎯 “Community members are aware of...”
- 🎯 “Individuals develop confidence with...”
- 🎯 “Individuals in the community increase their practice of...”

Impacts / Large-scale success indicators

Impacts are also indicators of success, but on a larger scale. They show what changes have occurred at the community or organizational or system level, rather than the individual level. This is where indicators of project sustainability are indicated, too. This section answers the question: “What impacts did this project have on a community or organizational level?”

Words and phrases that might be used in this section of the logic model include:

- 🎯 Build capacity (indicates increased skills and knowledge on a large scale)
- 🎯 Community development in the area of.... (indicates empowerment through increased skills, knowledge and engagement on a large scale)
- 🎯 “X will be widely regarded as relevant, useful, and important” (indicates a change in belief)
- 🎯 Community driven initiatives are developed and implemented as a result
- 🎯 The work undertaken by this project is well-known, highly regarded and respected.

Impacts may include factors external to the project team’s activities. They may include such things as:

- 🎯 A self-sustaining network is developed by community members.
- 🎯 Local hospital or school receives increased funding to continue or expand upon the work of the project.

Measures / Qualifiers

This is where you indicate or prove how the situation has changed or improved as a result of the project. The measures or qualifiers should be

cross-checked against your goals. You want to ensure that you have done what you have said you would do and that you have a way to demonstrate that. A question to ask when identifying the qualifiers or measures is, “How do we demonstrate or prove that we have been successful?”

This aspect is often left out of a logic model because it can be difficult to “prove success”. It is an important part of the process though, as it demonstrates that you achieved the goals laid out at the beginning. The measures and qualifiers can contribute directly the project evaluation, too. Words and phrases used in this section might include:



- 🌐 Participant feedback, survey or evaluations demonstrate that...
- 🌐 Number and name of collaborations, and partnerships that are likely to continue include
- 🌐 Duration and sustainability of partnerships, project activities, etc.
- 🌐 Increased amount of clients, participants and individuals whose lives are impacted.
- 🌐 Number of opportunities or activities that will happen 1-3 years following the end of the project
- 🌐 Number of requests for services, website hits, etc.
- 🌐 Continued or new funding
- 🌐 Testimonials from project beneficiaries
- 🌐 Project beneficiaries evolve into project volunteers, leaders and change agents.

How are logic models prepared?

Team development

It is normal for the project team to develop a logic model. This can be done in a variety of ways. Some examples include:

- 🎧 having the process guided by an external facilitator
- 🎧 having a team-member experienced in logic models guide the process
- 🎧 the whole team learn as they go

A logic model can be developed at a half-day workshop or by having various team members work on it, circulating electronic or written drafts over a period of days.

Ideally, a logic model shouldn't take months to prepare. Most projects don't have such a time luxury. Working on it until there is enough consensus that it is ready for feedback from other stakeholders is normal. There should be one person charged with the responsibility of ensuring a draft is finalized in a timely manner.

Other stakeholder input

The logic model is delivered to all stakeholders for feedback and input. It is important for all stakeholders to be engaged in this part of the process and take the time to review it thoughtfully. Having stakeholders engaged in the process will increase the chances for success, as it helps to ensure that there is a common understanding at all phases of the project.

Revisions

After all stakeholders have had a chance to read, reflect upon and give feedback on the logic model, it can be revised to take relevant feedback and suggestions into account.

How are logic models used during a project?

During the planning stage

Ideally, the logic model is constructed at the beginning of a project or during the planning stage of a major phase of the project. They are a tool that help team members and stake holders think through the process, clarify their assumptions and achieve a common understanding of what is going to be done, how it will be done and what the expectations and intended results are.

The creation of a logic model is an opportunity to team build, generate consensus and develop momentum through a clear plan of action.

During the implementation stage

The logic model can guide your activities throughout the life of the project. It is tool to guide activities and a mechanism to ensure that the project stays on track. Team members and stake holders can refer back to the logic model for guidance and reminders about what was agreed upon at the beginning.

As part of your monitoring and tracking process

Logic models help clarify what needs to be tracked. The activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts can all be monitored. Tracking is most easily done on a regular basis, but sometimes this isn't possible due to time constraints. The logic model provides a way to backtrack without considerable difficulty so the blanks can be filled in later. It offers a framework that will help you gather qualitative and quantitative data to inform your assessment or evaluation.

To guide project assessment and evaluation

The logic model provides a way to guide, or at least contribute to, the project assessment. There are many different ways to evaluate projects. Many of them include demonstrating that the project has been successful according to its objectives. The logic model offers a point of reference, and a means to generate discussions and feedback that can contribute to the evaluation.

Tips for preparing a logic model

- 🎧 Get input from as many stakeholders as possible. Logic models are most effective when they are a collaborative effort.
- 🎧 Keep the language simple and clear.
- 🎧 Lay out your page in landscape (horizontal) format, rather than vertical. This will give you more space to work with.
- 🎧 If you have legal-size paper available (8.5" x 14"), you may want to use that because it will give you even more space to work with. Legal size paper is also easy enlarged to fit onto 11" x 17" paper, which can make it much easier to read.

Logic model template

Simple Logic Model Template

A logic model shows the relationships between various elements of a project in a visual way that uses words and graphics, such as this table.

Goals or Objectives	Inputs or Resources	Activities or Strategies	Outputs or Short-term Results	Outcomes or Individual Success Indicators	Impacts or Large Scale Success Indicators	Measures or Qualifiers
<p>What are our goals?</p> <p>What do we want to achieve?</p>	<p>What resources do we have available to us?</p>	<p>What are we going to do to achieve our goals?</p>	<p>What are the short-term results of our activities?</p>	<p>How will individuals change their actions, behaviours, attitudes and knowledge as a result of this project?</p>	<p>What impact did this project have at a community or organization level?</p>	<p>How do we demonstrate or prove that we have been successful?</p>

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