

Guidelines to Developing Outcomes A Program Logic Model Approach

Introduction

This guide uses a program logic model to determine individual, service and community level outcomes.

A program logic model can be used to structure discussions with key stakeholders and to communicate with decision makers. The process of developing a program logic model should be consultative and collaborative, working with a range of stakeholders to draw on their understanding of the service and its desired outcomes/impacts.

This guide promotes a planned and structured approach to developing a program logic model.

Note: The program logic model does not replace a community services procurement plan, it informs the procurement planning, implementation, review and evaluation process. The program logic model may be reviewed and updated at different times throughout the process.

What is a Program Logic Model?

A program logic model tells a story of how services will be delivered. It can be used as a simplified theory of change tool to set out the flow of ideas that demonstrate how using specified resources to deliver specified services will result in specified outcomes for a particular target group. The logic model helps to iteratively work through the identified need (individual and community); the inputs; processes/activities to be undertaken; and outputs required over time to (achieve) individual outcomes, service outcomes and ultimately, community outcomes.

Logic models show relationships between:

- Inputs (resources) – what you have (or what resources a service provider has).
- Activities – what you do.
- Outputs – what you produce.
- Outcomes – the impact, change or benefit.

Why develop a Program Logic Model?

The benefits of developing a program logic model include:

A program logic model supports a systematic and integrated approach to service planning, implementation and evaluation.

A program logic model is a useful tool for engaging all stakeholders. By involving all relevant stakeholders early in the planning process, and clarifying and agreeing activities

Outcomes based program logic model

and intended outcomes, a logic model can build a shared understanding of how the service will be delivered.

A program logic model illustrates the change processes underlying the service program.

A program logic model makes service program assumptions explicit and ensures testing of these assumptions is supported by evidence.

When to develop a Program Logic Model

A program logic model should be developed at the procurement planning stage. It enables stakeholders to consider what they hope to achieve and what they need to do to effectively and efficiently achieve the desired outcomes. It helps stakeholders articulate the desired community outcomes and impacts, and clarify how the intervention will achieve these.

Backcasting or back mapping is a useful approach that involves starting with the intended individual, service and community long-term outcomes and mapping backwards to identify the necessary prior conditions and steps required to achieve results at each of these levels.

Components of a Program Logic Model

Situation

Understand why the service or program is needed. Define what the problem is. Ask questions such as: what causes the problem? Who is affected by the problem? Who cares whether or not the problem is solved? What does existing research and experience tell us about how to solve the problem?

Inputs

What inputs (resources) are needed to conduct the activities? (e.g. funds, staff, premises, planning time, knowledge base, expertise, equipment, partners etc.)

Activities

What are the essential actions or activities to be undertaken to deliver the outputs? (e.g. identify and engage service users, prepare service user records, develop fact sheets, workshop material, project plans, train – use action words etc.)

Outputs

What products or services need to be delivered to achieve the outcomes? (e.g. conduct workshops, create workshop materials, etc.) Who will we reach? (e.g. program participants etc.)

Output Indicators

What will you measure to demonstrate the services were delivered? (e.g. number of workshops, number of workshop attendees etc.)

Outcomes

Community Outcome – Desired Impact, Change or Benefit

Identify and agree on the target service user group for the service and the overall long-term change, benefit, learning or effect that your agency wants to achieve for this individual or the community as a result of the service delivery. Consider:

- What short-term impacts are required to achieve intermediate impacts?
- What intermediate impacts need to occur before long-term community outcomes are reached?

“Public Authorities must have regard to their strategic objectives, the desired impact or change they are seeking to achieve within the community and must work towards collaboratively defining and articulating the community outcome.” – DCSP Policy, page 11.

Service Outcomes

What is the impact, change or benefit that occurs for service users?

Helpful tip: Be clear about who the service user group is for each outcome. This will almost certainly be a more narrowly defined group than for the community outcome. Describe what it would be like if the target service user group participated successfully in all aspects of the service.

Service Outcome Indicators

What will you measure to demonstrate the change that has occurred?

Ensure the indicators are relevant, measurable and realistic.

Helpful tip: Only collect data that will be used to assess the service provider’s performance in achieving the outcomes.

Individual Outcomes

What is the impact, change or benefit that occurs for an individual service user?

Helpful tip: Be clear about who the individual service user is for each outcome, and describe what it would be like if the individual participated successfully in all aspects of the service.

Individual Outcome Indicators

What will you measure to demonstrate the change has occurred?

Ensure the indicators are relevant, measurable and realistic.

Helpful tip: Only collect data that will be used to inform future needs analysis, service planning and co-design processes, and to assess the service provider's performance in achieving the outcome, without increasing the administrative burden on service providers.

“Public Authorities must adopt transparent and consultative needs analysis processes, consistent with the Partnership Principles and Behaviours. Relevant stakeholders (including Organisations and service users) and relevant data should be accessed on the needs and social drivers for the relevant service within the community, as well as the nature and mix of possible service response strategies.” – DCSP Policy, page 11.

Assumptions and External Factors

Assumptions include beliefs about the service, how it will work and service users characteristics (e.g. how service users learn, how service users behave, how service users' chances of employment have improved, and service users' motivations).

- On completing the program logic model, stakeholders can be asked to review the logic behind the activities and outcomes. For instance:
- What assumptions are made about the link between inputs and activities/processes? Are these assumptions supported by evidence?
- What assumptions are made about the link between activities and outputs? Are these assumptions supported by evidence?
- What assumptions are made about the link between outputs and individual or service-level outcomes? Are these assumptions supported by evidence?
- What assumptions are made about the link between individual and service-level outcomes and community outcomes? Are these assumptions supported by evidence?

External factors that may impact the achievement of outcomes should be considered and included in the logic model, for example:

- a change or changes in government objectives;
- social conditions;
- geographic constraints; and
- external policies and initiatives.

Helpful tip: External factors may include risks that need to be managed through a risk register or risk management plan.