CHAPTER 5

Logic Models for Evaluation Literacy

This chapter focuses on using logic models as the architecture for deeper engagement of stakeholders in discussion about evaluation design. Logic models inform the development of several elements of evaluation design. Logic models are powerful even if they have not been used for program planning. This chapter covers selected concepts useful to an evaluation consumer.

Learner Objectives

- Describe the contributions logic models can make to evaluation design
- Use a logic model to focus on evaluation information needs
- Use a logic model to provoke dialogue on both process and results indicators
- Identify how logic models can be used to inform effectiveness

Getting More Out of Evaluation

Connecting Management With Measurement

So far, logic models in Chapters 2 through 4 have been shown as significant tools to assist in improving the thinking behind the design and/or planning of your efforts. At this point, remember that the model is just an illustration. A model at the program planning stage functions much like the map an explorer would use to guide a journey—to chart new direction. It highlights the portions of program operations as well as the pathways and milestones you believe are most critical to achieving desired results. The assumptions that were used to construct the model
during program planning need to be put to the test. As your program is implemented, there are ample opportunities to observe and collect information about what works and what does not. Evaluation, whether informal and anecdotal or formal and highly technical, supplies that vital information.

Evaluation is not just performed by evaluators. All day long, people determine (and use) information about processes and connect it to results. They do this to assess progress and for the purpose of improvement. We all have at least once in our lives looked in the mirror, gasped, and made some adjustment, either right then or at some future point. In this situation, the result could be how we or others perceive our image. The process would be any of those actions we take to achieve the image we desire (haircut, wardrobe, grooming, etc). Any change in our actual appearance will be reflected in the mirror. Evaluation in isolation will not improve effectiveness—it is just an activity.

Funders, program staff, and participants are typically referred to in evaluation circles as stakeholders. We use this term in earlier chapters when explaining their role in logic model development during program planning. During program design, funders and program staff serve as the program architects and content experts, with participants as the experts in community context and benefit. However, when the time comes to use logic models for evaluation, the stakeholder role changes somewhat. During evaluation, stakeholders also play a key role as information users although they are not often experts at evaluation. This is why we refer to them as evaluation consumers in this chapter. Evaluation must be understood, appreciated, and used by evaluation consumers if it is to have any influence on improvement. It is only when evaluation consumers take a more active role in connecting what they do with what they get that they can benefit from their evaluation investment.

The logic model serves as the focal point for discussion about evaluation because it displays when, where, and how to look for the information most needed to manage the program and determine its effectiveness. Although this chapter focuses on using logic models to inform evaluation design, they can be used in a number of other ways to benefit programs as well. Because logic models show the key elements of your program, they can also be employed for focusing your internal communication or external dissemination messages, audiences, and products. In addition, logic models point out the categories of data sources, expertise, and documents essential to include when developing knowledge management systems to support program operations.

When the model of your program is used to guide evaluation it then becomes more of a navigational aid (informs direction) and dashboard (informs data collection and gauges progress). The crucial step in improving effectiveness, however, is to ensure the evaluation provides appropriate and timely feedback to management. It follows then that management is sufficiently evaluation literate and takes the time to reflect on the meaning and significance of evaluation data. For evaluation to be truly useful, its findings must be relevant, understood, and applied by program staff. Logic modeling enables evaluators, program staff, and funders to develop shared understanding about what the evaluation will cover, its purposes, and how the information collected will be used. The way to get more out of evaluation is to plan for its use right from the beginning.
Evaluation typically includes the collection, analysis, interpretation, and reporting of data needed to inform the decisions of those who fund, provide, or administer programs. Anytime assessment occurs, there is opportunity to apply the information gathered to improve the effectiveness of programs, policies, personnel, products, and organizations. We believe that one key to effectiveness is to couple program design and implementation with evaluation. Logic models help accomplish this because they provide a set of clear, measurable, and realistic program processes and outcomes. If these are overly optimistic or are not measurable, the program may neither be able to operate as planned nor demonstrate that it has been effective.

A decade ago, logic models were used almost exclusively to plan and execute evaluations. Over time, evaluators and program staff have learned that there are benefits to building the evaluative thinking that the logic model process brings right from the start. A logic model for evaluation is like the “bookend” or mirror image of one for planning and implementation. They both display the same content. By using a logic model to inform evaluation design program staff, funders, and evaluators can have a clearer picture of what their evaluation will measure and produce.

This chapter does not prepare you to conduct an evaluation. Instead, it points out the key areas where a logic model can support program staff, funders, and evaluators during evaluation design. They do this by focusing decisions on what the evaluation will include and by planning for the use of evaluation information to support learning and program improvement. This chapter shows how the architecture of logic models can be used as the platform to guide discussions about for whom, why, where, and when evaluation activities should occur to generate maximum utility. Through evaluative thinking and enhanced awareness about evaluation, models can support a more active role for program staff and funders in shaping evaluation to better meet their learning and accountability needs.

**Evaluation for Effectiveness**

In simple terms, evaluation often involves a critical review of the strategies and activities (the “doing”) selected, and their implementation and results (the “getting”). There are two basic types of evaluation: summative and formative evaluation. The following metaphor is widely used to illustrate the difference between these two types of evaluation. When the cook tastes the soup, that is formative evaluation, but when the guests taste the soup, that is summative evaluation.

A summative evaluation is typically done for the purpose of accountability and determines whether intended results were achieved. It generally responds to the question: What difference did we make? So this type tends to emphasize the “getting” or outcomes and impact side of the model. Summative evaluation tends to be retrospective in that it usually occurs at the conclusion of a program. For example, the summative evaluation of an educational initiative might focus solely on student achievement. Or a summative policy evaluation might look only for changes in specific legislation.

A formative evaluation is most often used for the purposes of learning about what works and/or program improvement. It generally responds to the question: How can we be more effective? Formative evaluation focuses prospectively on
improvement by looking at both the “doing” and the “getting” side of the model. It looks at the relationship or “logical” connection between processes and outcomes throughout the program duration. Building on the educational initiative example above, a formative evaluation might also examine and address the quality of instruction, curriculum, and/or assessment. Similarly, a formative policy evaluation might examine the quality of the policy maker education efforts and look for changes in attitudes or knowledge as essential first steps toward legislative action. Evaluation findings might show program leadership and staff that their message is not persuasive enough, that their contact is too brief, or that too few policy makers are reached and might suggest that they change their approach accordingly.

These two types are complementary but the lines of distinction between the two are often highly contextual and blurred. The information both approaches can produce is needed to improve results. Regrettably, most evaluations are conducted for compliance with requirements set by funding sources, including governments and grantmakers. Many times, such evaluations are not used by program managers, funders, or other stakeholders. Typically, these evaluations are focused on verification that dollars were spent in approved categories and that target audiences received services in the numbers anticipated; very little focus is on the difference made. So, these evaluations often capture and codify information already known by the program staff. Sometimes they are highly technical, academic, and explore aspects that have little relevance to the day-to-day operation of a specific program.

Improved effectiveness requires that evaluation consumers have the information they need. Achieving that requires some degree of engagement by evaluation consumers in the evaluation design process. Logic models facilitate communication between evaluation experts and the consumers they serve. They communicate the essence of a program as envisioned to inform evaluation. Conversely, they also communicate the essence of the evaluation to inform program.

**Evaluation Design Basics**

**Where Consumers Add Value**

Typically, evaluators rely on an evaluation plan to communicate the details of what they propose to do. Evaluation consumers frequently use the evaluation plan as the starting point for evaluation contracting. An evaluation plan should describe what information it will secure, what purpose it will serve, and for whom. In addition, it often includes methods for data collection, a schedule for tasks (or a timeline), personnel qualifications, reporting, and cost. There is often quite a bit of negotiation from the original request for proposals, initial proposal, and final evaluation plan. It is during this back and forth between the evaluation experts and consumers that evaluation-literate consumers can best take action to focus their evaluation investment on effectiveness. Readers interested in detailed information on evaluation are referred to the Supplemental Readings list at the end of this chapter.
Figure 5.1 shows the basic elements of an evaluation design. Reading from left to right, an evaluation design first and foremost needs to specify the purpose of the evaluation. Purpose includes the intended use and who will use it. As you recall, formative evaluation serves program improvement and summative serves the purpose of accountability. However, both types of evaluation have the same design elements. After that, the design should describe the information needed to address the questions inferred by the expressed purpose. Next, the indicators that further specify the quality and quantity of information are developed. From the indicators, the range of methods and types of appropriate analyses can be determined. Indicators also inform the schedule and type of reporting because they show when data might be available and how best to communicate results.

This chapter is limited to information needs, questions, and indicators because this is where evaluation consumers are most able to add value. These three elements define the core content the evaluation needs to address if the evaluation is to be used as intended. Evaluation consumers are the program experts and can inform evaluation design in ways that keep the purpose the evaluation must serve in the forefront. With this focus, those charged with conducting the evaluation (whether external consultants or internal staff) are better able to select appropriate methods to capture pertinent information and work with consumers to agree on reporting style and timing. Those conducting the evaluation are counted on to provide methodological and communication expertise.

Evaluation has some of the same limitations that program design, planning, and implementation face: time, talent, and money. These limits mean that there are important choices to make relative to information needs and processes to secure information. Questions like the following become the foundation for evaluation design:

- What are the priority areas for inquiry?
- What are the key questions about those areas that we need to answer?
- What is “fair” to expect in outcomes given resources and effort in the program?
- What will be used as indicators of sufficient effort (process) and progress (outcomes)?

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**Figure 5.1** Evaluation Design Elements
The evaluation design process pursues answers to these (and other) questions. So, how does the use of logic models support evaluation consumers in advocating for their interests during design?

**Where Logic Models Add Value**

Because a logic model (whether a theory of change or a program model) illustrates the relationship between planned or actual work and results, it supports evaluation through commonly understood visual architecture. This architecture assists in the formulation of key questions and indicators about the program and its effects over time. It does this in ways that encourage evaluation use that targets improved effectiveness. Subsequently, appropriate data collection methods and other aspects of the full evaluation plan can be identified. All too often, groups are eager to rush into measurement without first determining what should be measured and why.

Because only limited resources are usually available for the evaluation, it is important to identify who the evaluation users are and determine what they need to know. Generally, there is lots of discussion about what they want to know or could know. Evaluations are rarely allocated resources that provide for a thorough examination of all program elements and their relationships as expressed in a model. Logic models and modeling (which display versions or aspects in greater detail) can help explore options and point to the most strategic choices for evaluation investment. Sometimes the evolution of an evaluation design is a long dance.

At the outset, clear determinations of users and their uses are important considerations. Knowing your audiences and their information needs will support good choices and focus your evaluation so that it has optimal utility. In practice, the functional objective is to specify what information is essential and secure an evaluation that discovers and delivers in response to that need. The logic model and modeling process provide the architecture against which evaluation experts and consumers can decide. The power of evaluation is harnessed when the findings and analysis generated are applied to the work examined. With logic models as the framework for design decisions, evaluation can provide critical feedback loops about the progress of a strategy, program, initiative, or organization toward its desired results.

Evaluation consumer participation in the logic model development process (whether during program planning, evaluation, or both) helps to ensure that the evaluation services they procure address their needs. The tools and processes of logic modeling provide the opportunity to build common language and understanding with their evaluation partners about what will be included in the evaluation and how the information will be used. Stakeholders, in the role of evaluation consumers, need to know enough about the evaluation design process to have input on the questions to be addressed and the evidence that will be used to determine success. Given that the logic model is the graphic representation of the program’s
key processes and outcomes, consumers can then easily identify and advocate for those aspects of the model most important from their perspective to manage and measure.

While the reasons and expectations for evaluation can vary, we are predisposed to utility. This requires a clear determination of who needs to know what about the program and to what end? Without logic models to portray a shared understanding of the evaluation, it may serve some or none of your audiences. For evaluation to make its full contribution to performance management and effectiveness, it is important to design the evaluation as a resource that can support the learning of those for whom its use is intended.

A Design Example

Two Kinds of Learning

We use theory of change and program logic models to plan programs and their evaluations because together they better stimulate conversations and subsequently learning about those aspects of a program most essential to success. One important concept frequently overlooked is that in order to use evaluation to improve effectiveness, you need to engage in learning.

Organizational learning and development experts often speak of two types of learning that are needed to improve program effectiveness. The first type of learning examines the current program and uses evaluation information to improve the program as it was originally envisioned. This type of learning, technically referred to as “single loop,” does not question the assumptions and evidence that underlie the program design. The original thinking is a given and is not examined. This type of learning is focused on simple changes in the quality and quantity of activities directed toward producing increasingly better versions of what you originally intended. In this case, evaluation is used to test and improve the “logic” behind implementation. Effectiveness is improved incrementally.

The second type of learning examines whether the original program design is sound. This type of “double loop” learning can transform an effort into something dramatically different from what was initially intended. Here when activities do not seem to produce intended results, the strategies themselves or the likely outcomes may be questioned and altered. Evaluation that serves this type of learning is used to test the theory of change (connection between strategies and results) and improve the logic behind the design and/or model that drives implementation. For readers interested in more information about single and double loop learning, see the Supplemental Readings list provided at the end of this chapter.

In this section, we use the general Community Leadership Academy (CLA) program logic model example introduced earlier to show how models can be used to develop and communicate evaluation design that serve both types of learning.
Key Evaluation Questions

In Chapter 1, using the example of the CLA program, we introduced model types: theory of change, program, and evaluation. Before we review those models it is important to understand that key evaluation questions develop from simple questions. These questions are, “What did we do?” and “What did we get?” They are asked at the level of the theory of change for the program as shown in Figure 5.2. Evaluation helps us examine the links in the logic underneath the planned work and its connection to desired results. By this link, we mean “testing” whether or not the theory of change as originally modeled actually described what happened. Does the original thinking that asserted, “If we do X, Y, and Z, we will get the results we want,” hold true? Here the model serves double loop learning by helping focus attention on the bigger picture. Before any effort is invested in improving the program as it is currently designed, the question of whether it was the “right” thing to do should be determined. By this, we mean two things. First, relative to goal attainment, we would ask, “Is it aligned with broader organizational goals?” Second, relative to the activities selected, “Were they among the best choices we could have made to achieve our desired ends?” This is particularly important in those instances where logic modeling was not used during program design.

The CLA theory of change model (Figure 5.2) helps us explore potential areas for focused discovery and learning. The basic “do” and “get” questions help to shape the information the evaluation can deliver. Recall, this program had two strategies: curriculum and experiences.

In the CLA example, key evaluation questions were co-constructed with the client, who sought external evaluation services. This client, a foundation, had sponsored the program for almost 20 years. It and other stakeholders wanted to know what difference this effort had made and ways the program could be improved. The program design is simple. It assumes participants (as an input) and provides greater detail about the two strategies named in the theory of change: leadership curricula and experiences. An obvious first question (see Figure 5.2) is whether or not leadership curriculum and experiences are the right strategies in a leadership program aimed at community development. It is important to focus evaluation on testing this basic assumption (or “link”) about the “right work” because it is the foundation for the program design. Figure 1.3 shows this first question on the program logic model for the purposes of introductory explanation. Here, because it is “testing” at the strategy level, we place it on the theory of change.

It is also important to note that the CLA, as well as other projects, initiatives, and organizations, operates in a larger system. For the CLA, it is a specific community. Organizations operate in other layers of reality besides geography. This might be a sector or a country. These contexts certainly have issues, both barriers and facilitators that can exert tremendous influence on impact. In the CLA example, it may be the abundance or lack of participants. Or perhaps it is a culture reluctant to invite program graduates into community work. Organizations are subject to many other kinds of influences in their external environment, like labor practices, taxes, or consumer whims. It is worth mentioning here because sometimes evaluations aim at discovery relative to barriers and facilitators and these are not always specifically stated
in a theory of change model. When it is possible to include the examination of these influences in evaluation, they can support improvement and/or help explain results.

In Figure 5.3, the program logic model is used to determine the other key questions central to evaluation design. In this display we indicate those key questions that test the implementation logic. This information can be used to determine areas for improvement and to increase the likelihood or magnitude of effect. The key questions are placed near links of logic (areas of the model) that specify where deeper discovery about implementation might yield relevant information. It is important to note that the questions about outcome and impact need to be addressed for both types of learning. Both theory of change and program logic models show the same information, just in different detail as well as for different purposes.

Ultimately, the evaluation design for the CLA addressed these five key questions:

1. **Is the Academy doing the right things?**
   Question 1 is about the “recipe” for the program. It seeks information about program content (strategies as well as the resources, activities, and outputs). It attends to discovery about these, their interaction and contribution to results. This exact query is placed on the theory of change model (see Figure 5.2). The question is hidden in the program logic model where the program view has considerably more detail.

2. **Is the Academy doing things right?**
   Question 2 is about the implementation quality or execution of the selected program content.
Figure 5.3  Community Leadership Academy Program Logic Model With Key Implementation Questions

- **Resources**
  - Curriculum and materials
  - Faculty
  - Participants
  - Host and facility
  - Marketing/Communication Campaign
  - Sponsors ($)

- **Activities**
  - Leadership Curriculum
    - Content
    - # and type of participants
    - Completion rate
    - Participant satisfaction
  - Leadership Experiences

- **Outputs**
  - Short-Term
    - New leadership attitudes, knowledge skills, and behaviors
    - Increased community awareness and action bias
  - Intermediate/Long-Term
    - Graduates use knowledge and skills obtained through the program to strengthen the community

- **Impact**
  - Community development

**Key Implementation Questions**

1. Is the CLA doing things right?
2. What difference has the CLA made among participants?
3. What difference has the CLA made across the community?
4. What are the ways that community needs can and should be addressed by the CLA?
3. What difference has the Academy made for participants?
   Question 3 focuses on how individuals may have changed because of their Academy experience.

4. What difference has the Academy made across the community?
   Question 4 examines the changes that could be attributed to the community because of the program.

5. What are the different ways community needs can and should be addressed by the Academy?
   Question 5 seeks other information that can help inform a better or improved program. This might be by improving strategy and/or implementation.

   These questions are very typical but highly general program evaluation questions. In some form, they may even have universal application because they represent common areas of interest about any program, project, or initiative. These questions can also be the basis for more precise inquiry or sub-questions in each area. Subsequently, data are collected to respond to questions.

   Theory of change and program models for this effort share the same intended impact: “community development.” Before evaluation and during planning, it could be useful to ensure shared understanding of what “community development” means and what it would look like if the program were successful. Does “community development” mean full employment, a vibrant arts culture, effective schools, all of these, or something else? Similarly, on the CLA theory of change model note that the outcome of “more, better leaders” precedes this desired impact. Assuming that “more and better” means an increased number of designated leaders with skills, then we could infer skill changes among Academy graduates. Arriving at shared understanding of what the terms used in the models actually mean helps determine how they can be measured.

   The next place where evaluation consumers can provide insight into evaluation design is in the development of indicators. Program logic models, in particular, can be used to develop and display quite specific definitions of the evidence that evaluation experts and consumers agree is needed to “indicate” progress from strategy to results during implementation. To inform effectiveness, indicators of strategy and results are needed.

**Indicators**

We all need indicators to help us understand whether we are making progress. However, as most change does not occur instantly, it is important to have gauges that show progression over time. Indicators, when placed on the model, are the gauges that show how the program will demonstrate progress. An evaluation will typically focus primarily on the output and outcome elements when specifying indicators. Indicators are the evidence that will verify progress (or lack of) for a given output or outcome. Both kinds of indicators, outputs and outcomes, provide confirming or disconfirming information about progress toward impact. In this
text, process indicator refers to those indicators selected to gauge progress against the outputs. The process indicators are the evidence you will collect to show what you “did.” We use the term outcome indicator to distinguish those indicators of progress toward results (may include outcomes and impact). The outcome indicators are the evidence that you will collect to show what you “got.”

For example, in a model about mine safety, you would need indicators of your efforts to achieve mine safety (“do,” the process) and indicators that safety has been achieved (“get,” the outcome). You might use a live (or dead canary) as an indicator of air quality (one of the many outputs needed to achieve mine safety). Here, the canary in a cage would be a process indicator. Alternatively, if we are focusing on mine safety as an outcome, accident reduction could be among the many outcome indicators selected. Similarly, if great hitters are important in winning baseball games, then batting averages are an output. Here, things like batting averages and type of hits would be process indicators. Games won would be an outcome indicator. In the text that follows, we will explain the concepts of process and outcome indicators using the CLA example. We take the CLA program logic model (Figure 5.3) and split it into process (Figure 5.4) and outcome (Figure 5.5) portions. In turn, we focus on the development of the more detailed process and then on outcome indicators needed to inform evaluation design.

On the program logic model, outputs serve as the indicators of whether or not the activities occurred as intended. For a program to achieve its intended results, it is important to have information about both the quantity and quality of the activities as well as the availability of resources to support the work. This is important because the concept of “dose” has a direct influence on effectiveness and your ability to improve your programs, if you think of your program as a treatment or intervention, much like a vaccination might be. How much of your program is actually delivered, who and how many participate, over what period of time, how “good” each activity is—all play a role in whether a program makes progress toward its intended outcomes and impact.

This information, if collected, can be used to monitor the program to ensure appropriate dose and to explain why progress toward desired results is or is not made. Outputs are concrete aspects of your program that you can adjust, as needed, to amplify your progress. The FIT acronym introduced earlier applies here as well. Establishing process indicators of the frequency (how often), intensity (quality and duration), and targets (with whom) for your activities can go a long way to giving you the leverage you need to boost program performance. In the case of the policy example we used earlier, it is easy to see that a brochure left in the state house lunchroom is less likely to produce results than a series of lunchtime conversations, one-on-one with the key house leaders. The brochure is a relatively weak dose of policy maker education (i.e., single shot, indirect delivery, no follow-up) compared to a more comprehensive relationship building strategy.

When we apply these concepts to the activities in the CLA example, it is important to specify further the expected outputs. The following formative questions, applied to Figure 5.3, may prompt your thinking about this model. They can be tailored and used with groups to explore the process indicators for models you develop:
• What outputs would you expect or need to see from the curriculum?
• What outputs would you expect or need to see from experiences?
• What outputs must occur to support subsequent outcomes?

Figure 5.4 shows the range of process indicators the CLA evaluation identified as measures of the output or “dose” of the CLA curriculum and experience. Notice that they specify the quality of curriculum and experiences in addition to listing the

![Diagram showing Community Leadership Academy Process Indicators]

**Figure 5.4** Community Leadership Academy Process Indicators
typical participant counts and satisfaction. Logic models used for evaluation typically display much more detailed information than those used during program design. Based on your thoughts about the questions above, what might be missing from this set of process indicators? What questions about implementation dose or fidelity might the CLA program not be able to address?

Recall that outcomes reflect the majority of the “getting” side of the logic model. Outcomes are also time sensitive. They occur in a typically fairly ordered sequence. This sequence or outcome chain illustrates the likely steps between “do” and “get.” How tight or loose the order is will depend on the type of program being modeled. Sometimes the model might or might not show the specific connections from a given activity to each particular outcome. Some programs lend themselves to the description of distinct pathways from activities to outcomes while others are more holistic and show all activities leading to all outcomes. The degree to which interdependencies are strictly defined and clear entry points are predetermined can vary considerably. Most models represent a cluster of outcomes that occur at a number of levels (individuals, organizations, systems) from a combination of efforts. In any case, short-, intermediate-, and long-term outcomes inform evaluation design because they indicate when and where to look for evidence. This is particularly true when the program is very complex. What is likely to happen first, and then what? Sometimes the outcomes are sufficiently specified in the program logic model to guide measurement and other times the model needs to be adapted to serve evaluation design.

Developing evidence that would support your claims that an outcome has been achieved is among perhaps the most important steps in teasing out the specifics of your evaluation design. In individuals, changes in awareness, knowledge, skills, and behavior are a common, expected sequence of outcomes. In organizations or systems, the outcome sequence might include changes in context (the environment or external influences on the program), conditions (policies that govern practice, communication, and networks that spread it), and/or culture (relationships, norms and values). In some organizations, however, like those in public health, system and organizational changes are necessary precursors to change in behavior at the population level. It is important to understand and display these distinctions when developing models.

Turning our attention back to the CLA example, Figure 5.5 shows the set of initial outcome indicators identified for the CLA evaluation. Notice that the evaluation design does not state the community development impact with any specificity. The evaluation focused on short- and intermediate-term outcomes, in that these outcomes were more closely connected to the program itself as a training initiative as well as the limited budget and time frame available to conduct the evaluation. The CLA evaluation did not intend to test the theory of change beyond the contribution of its curriculum and experiences to more and better leaders. This level of specificity was sufficient to garner agreement from evaluation consumers on the broad categories of outcomes the evaluation would address. In addition, it is important to note how these outcomes meet the SMART criteria for outcomes described in earlier chapters. They are specific in that they name what will and can be measured. They are action oriented and realistic by pointing to attributes that
**Figure 5.5** Community Leadership Academy Outcome Indicators

demonstrate accomplishments that could occur. They are timed in that they show the order in which they are likely to occur.

In the CLA example (Figure 1.3), the model does not include data collection methods, although evaluation logic models sometimes do. The questions stimulate deeper conversation about evaluation design. In particular, the questions lead to discussion of possible data collection, analysis, and reporting issues. Coverage of evaluation issues beyond the development of basic design questions and indicators is outside the scope of this text.
Data collection methods also influence costs, rigor, and limitations. So, be aware that it is important to take evaluation budget and capacity into account when posing the evaluation questions. In moving from the questions to specifying the methods, it becomes obvious, for most programs, that multiple sources and approaches will be needed to secure information. A short list of the most common data collection methods includes document review, surveys, interviews, focus groups, and observation. Specifying methods in the model helps reinforce the integrated information needs your data collection tools will need to serve. This gives evaluation consumers an opportunity to consider the “burden” they are willing to have their program bear to support the planned evaluation (cost and their time). It also provides insight to the evaluation team on how best to approach data collection in the context of the program and its participants.

The construction of tools (e.g., survey questions, interview protocols) and data analysis can require special expertise. It is important to realize that the placement of questions on the model implies content they will address. In that way, there can be agreement on the outline of what the evaluation will cover and how it will accomplish its purpose. The specific details of measurement and analysis that follow evaluation design are beyond the expertise of most consumers. Thus, the use of logic models to inform these later steps is beyond the scope of this chapter. Readers interested in more detail on evaluation practice (e.g., theory, planning, implementation, and reporting) are referred to the Supplemental Readings list provided at the end of this chapter.

Indicators and Alignment

This model shows what sequence of changes in awareness, knowledge, skills, and behaviors might need to occur to secure the intended impact at some point in the future. It draws on a frequently utilized feature of logic models. Program design and planning with models use a left-to-right, if–then logic; this allows the developers to prospectively examine the pathways whereby their efforts will achieve success. Evaluation, however, can be diagnostic and more retrospective. This is particularly true when evaluation is conducted for the purpose of program improvement. Here, analytic and reflective thinking processes are used to examine and reconstruct the chain of evidence from right to left. It tests the preceding content relative to embedded and named expectations.

There is an additional value to using logic models in evaluation. If you can demonstrate successful achievement of short-term outcomes, you can then use the “logic” described in the model to reasonably assert that your program could make a contribution to outcomes and impact that take longer or that are too fuzzy to evaluate on a tight budget. What was chosen for display and included in the CLA evaluation telegraphs volumes about some of the assumptions underlying the program design and its evaluation. How might the emphases chosen limit the use of evaluation information to improve the program?

Picking appropriate indicators is important. Selecting indicators has meaning relative to the output or outcome each reflects. For example, weight loss could be a process or outcome indicator of improved health—if obesity is a health challenge.
In other circumstances, weight loss may actually be an indicator of health concerns. If student achievement is the outcome sought by a school district, then increased enrollment may not be a good indicator (process or outcome). It could suggest something about the district’s financial health, but it may not be the best indicator of student achievement.

The CLA example demonstrates alignment of indicators in that it includes a relatively robust set of process (output) indicators, fairly comprehensive short-term indicators, and a few indicators of outcomes farther out but on the path to community development. Notice that Figure 5.4 (process indicators) and Figure 5.5 (outcome indicators) look different from the logic model shown in Figure 5.3. These two figures illustrate the areas that the evaluation would focus on, not the universe of all possible indicators. This is a display of the information that stakeholders agreed would suffice as evidence of their programs’ performance. Typically, in evaluation, another level of detail would show the specific measures that would be used to unpack each indicator. Many times, a table or matrix is used to better manage display because complexity and level of detail can quickly escalate at this stage.

Sometimes indicators are selected and used to communicate progress, but they are not directly or completely, as in the case of the CLA example, connected with intended impact. These “Trojan horses” can be useful for positioning or marketing, but they can confuse authentic evaluation. It is important to make a critical review of the alignment (direct connection, or link) between a selected process or outcome indicator and the path you assert leads to eventual impact.

Results Require Choices

Performance Standards

If expectations (or standards) for performance have been cited, then outputs are an easy place to look for both fidelity (how close to plan) and level (dose) of performance. Sometimes expectations are more detailed and qualified. These are called performance standards. Securing better health may require a particular quantity and quality of exercise. The number of hours and type of exercise can be recorded for any given participant. In mature fields, like education and health, we have considerable knowledge about what works under what conditions. Sometimes our knowledge is precise enough that performance standards have been established. As work is planned and evaluated, standards can be helpful in the pursuit of desired results. The CLA example did not set performance standards initially, but once the evaluation design was complete and data were collected, the group would have the information needed to set expectations for the next round of evaluation.

In the CLA example, new or improved skills among participants are indicators of progress toward outcomes. They are one choice on which to focus inquiry. This deliberate choice about focus can occur because the program is displayed graphically. It is easier to see and choose among areas that have explanatory potential when they are named and displayed in a model (instead of narrative). Evaluation could determine whether or not individuals gained new skills.
At any point of time during the program implementation, inquiry could yield many possibilities. Perhaps, in the case of the CLA evaluation, one discovers no new skills were learned or the skills learned weren’t relevant to community development. Maybe skill development for individuals happened but the individuals were never engaged in any community projects. Each of these findings would have implications for program improvement. Alternatively, evaluation could look at curriculum content or even at the list of inputs: participants, faculty, marketing, or other areas. To manage cost and effort in evaluation, choices must be made about where to focus the inquiry.

Quality Evaluation Designs

We believe a quality evaluation design should respond clearly to evaluation consumers and their information needs. In other words, the questions named have utility. As you consider evaluation through the architecture of a logic model, the following questions reflect quality considerations. With colleagues, you might develop additional questions relevant to your workplace, project processes, or content. It is important in evaluation to recall that any model is only one way to represent work. It is a view. During evaluation design it is good to be aware of the many options vying for attention. The same hazards (blind spots, myths, and cultural concerns) that influence circumstances during program design and planning may also present themselves in evaluation. Think about ways to conduct discovery that will identify and resolve these hazards. Multiple models or modeling in service to evaluation provides opportunities to make choices and focus inquiry.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Questions for Evaluation Design</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Are users of the evaluation specified and ranked relative to priority?</td>
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<td>2. Have the information needs of users been specified? What assures use?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Will the evaluation improve the work, determine its results, or both?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Will the evaluation’s key questions meet information needs?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Have process indicators been specified and selected for the evaluation?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Are there any performance standards established for programs of this type that can assist evaluation?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Have outcome indicators been specified and selected for the evaluation?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Are the selected outcomes reasonable to expect relative to time and other resources invested in the effort to date?</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Does the model inform data collection methods?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Are stakeholders engaged adequately in the evaluation process (participating when and if appropriate during design, implementation, interpretation) to encourage their use of the findings?</td>
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A Quality Framework

Figure 5.6 shows a framework for program and evaluation quality. It assembles the key points from the book’s first five chapters. Previously, we described two important standards for model quality: plausibility (theory of change and “could it work”) and feasibility (program logic and “will it work under your specific conditions”). The quality characteristics for theory of change models are noted (as in Chapter 2) where the focus is on the relationship between strategies and results.

The quality characteristics for program logic models focus on the strength of the relationship between activities and outcomes. The employ FIT (frequency, intensity, and targets) and SMART (specific, measurable, action oriented, realistic, and timed) principles (see Chapter 4). We suggest that logic models for evaluation design be useful. This means they meet the information needs of identified users. It also suggests information gathered is used in the pursuit of performance management and greater effectiveness. We think a program, project, or organization is more likely to achieve impact if relative theory of change models are plausible, program logic models are feasible, and the evaluation models that test the underlying assumptions of each are designed for practical use.

In Summary

In the first half of this book, we posited three questions about effectiveness:

- Are you doing the right work?
- Can you make better decisions?
- Are you getting superior results?
All of these questions, including the third one, require some evaluation literacy. This chapter describes the evaluative thinking and processes logic models can support when effectiveness is given deliberate attention during evaluation. We hope readers will use logic models to contribute to the design of evaluations that will answer these vital questions. They are significantly different from: “Are we busy?” These questions focus attention on effectiveness rather than on efficiency or the accomplishment of a laundry list of activities.

Both formative (improve) and summative (prove) evaluations are useful for many reasons. Both of these approaches can help build understanding about what works under what conditions. Because evaluation is a key function in managing for results, this chapter explains how logic models can assist evaluation design directed toward that end. Models help with decisions about the most relevant information and its use. Identifying and choosing among information needs and users focuses evaluation resources where they are most needed to influence effectiveness. These steps are crucial in creating a useful evaluation. Program evaluation and planning are “bookends” that reflect the same thinking and thus share a common theory of change and very similar program logic model views. Specifically, outputs and outcomes can be very helpful gauges for monitoring and improving the status of your work.

Learning Resources

Reflection

1. What are the strengths and limitations for evaluation when the logic modeling process has already occurred during program development? What about when it occurs after the program is under way?

2. What are the various ways that a theory of change and/or logic model can be used to inform the development of an evaluation design?

3. How might the information needs of funders, grantees, evaluators, and participants be different?

4. What relationships exist among evaluation, logic models, performance management, and effectiveness?

Exercises

1. Based on the program, project, or idea you mapped out in Chapter 4, design the key questions and indicators for its evaluation.

2. Using the health improvement example in Figure 3.4, display your version of key evaluation questions. Cite some process and outcome indicators. Compare your approach to your colleagues’.
3. If the evaluation for the CLA (see Figures 5.4 and 5.5) focuses on two strategies and the impact, what items are completely overlooked and could yield some important information?

References and Supplemental Readings

Texts


Journal Articles


**Internet Resources**

