

## Working With Stakeholders to Develop Logic Models

This document is abstracted from a TechTeam workshop.

Topics covered in the workshop are:

- Uses of logic models across the entire evaluation life cycle
- Evaluation conditions under which logic models are, and are not, useful
- The relationship between logic models, measurement, and methodology
- How to work with stakeholders and advisors in developing a logic model
- The essential nature of a “model,” including its strengths and weaknesses
- Value of using multiple forms and scales of the same logic model for the same evaluation
- Principles of good graphic design for logic models, and the relationship between design and information density

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### Respect what you know and sponsors don’t, or are likely to forget

Evaluation logic model building exercises can be engaging and exciting for participants. They may get carried away with enthusiasm and move the activity in a direction that increases the scope or complexity of the evaluation. As a tactic it may be worthwhile to allow this process to continue for a while. But ultimately the evaluator must ground the exercise in reality. Stakeholders might forget, but we know that:

- Scope, budget, timelines, and purpose must be respected.
- Every element in a logic model represents a hypothesis about program theory that could be wrong. Error has a nasty way of piling up.
- Models need to address issues that are important to evaluators, but may be foreign or uninteresting to stakeholders – metrics and methodology.

### Evolution over time

Logic models can change over time either because the programs being evaluated have changed, or because data show the original model to be incorrect, or because the detection of unintended consequences forces stakeholders to rethink their program. While revision is necessary, there are two reasons why older generation models should be kept. First, the changes themselves constitute important evaluation information. Second, there may be contractual or ethical demands to evaluate relative to the original model. Several tactics can be invoked to assure that logic models stay relevant over time.

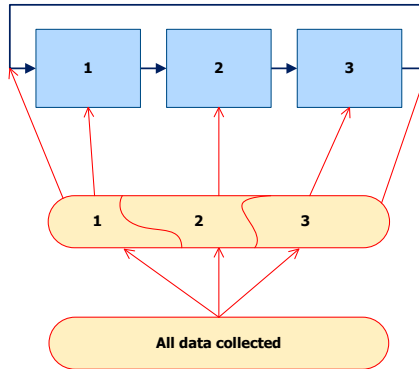
- Set fixed times for revision, e.g. when new phases of programs begin, or when interim evaluation reports are due.
- Be vigilant for unanticipated change in program operations or outcomes that may require new metrics or methodologies, or which may challenge established program theory.
- Match the tempo of revision to the stability of the program being evaluated. Frequent revision may be needed to assist in the formative evaluation of a developing program, while infrequent revision may be appropriate for a stable program that is being evaluated for long term outcomes.

## Links between logic models and analysis

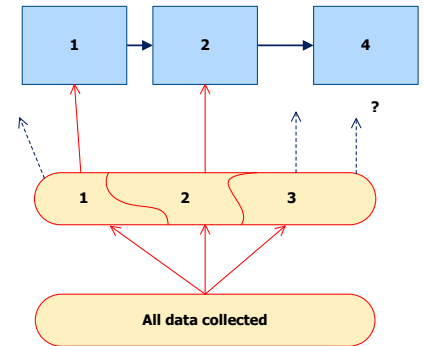
It can be useful to maintain an index between elements in a logic model and the data that is collected. Doing so provides a guide as to where data collection may be weak, and whether data collection schedules are being met. Also, indexing can assist in the process of knowledge use by helping stakeholders to understand the implications of the data for the logic model that they themselves have developed. However, caution is needed because if radical changes in the model are necessary, the indexing will “break”. Reconstituting those linkages can be difficult and time consuming. The problem is illustrated in Figure 1. A useful tactic for lessening this danger while still indexing data to the logic model is to index to a reasonably high level model. It is far more likely that the model will change at a detailed level than at a higher level of detail.

Index Logic Model → Data → Analysis

- Powerful
- Elegant
- Useful



But think of the rework when the model changes



## Sources of input to a logic model

There are three sources of input to a logic model, each with its unique advantages and disadvantages:

- Stakeholders
- Evaluation team
- Non-stakeholders familiar with similar programs, and/or appropriate research literature

To assure a logic model that is unbiased and which captures a range of possibly conflicting information, at least two of these sources should be used. All three are preferable. The advantages and disadvantages of each source are summarized in Table 1.

Source	Strength	Weakness
Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Appreciation of context</li> <li>▪ Knowledge of program detail</li> <li>▪ Vested interest in participation</li> <li>▪ Sets groundwork for evaluation implementation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of perspective, may have strong + or - feelings about program</li> <li>▪ Vested interest</li> <li>▪ Not likely to have insight from comparable efforts or from research literature</li> </ul>
Evaluation team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Experience with other programs, understand dynamics</li> <li>▪ Sensitivity to implications for methodology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of domain knowledge</li> </ul>
Non-stakeholders familiar with similar programs, & research literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Objective</li> <li>▪ Knowledge not known to stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Blind to context and specifics</li> </ul>

## Choosing group members

Each additional stakeholder involved in a logic model building exercise represents added cost and complexity to the logic model building process. Considerations as to who should be included are:

- Who is able to influence program operations or future planning? These are the “decision makers” that immediately come to mind when thoughts of logic models are entertained.
- Who can influence the evaluation? Evaluators often have to defend the integrity of their designs and their access to data. Powerful allies help in these fights, and one way to develop allies is to develop evaluation champions by including them in the logic model building process.
- Operational concerns: 1) Given constraints on time and budget, who should be drawn into the logic model building exercise? 2) Will candidates put in the work asked of them?
- Is sampling possible? In some cases participants can be representative of a population, e.g. it may not matter which teachers are involved as long as a few are. On the other hand there is only one Secretary of Education.
- Values – who has the “right” to influence an evaluation? While the above considerations are practical, this issue touches on the ethical aspects of the role of evaluation relative to the program that is being evaluated.

### **Possibilities for working with stakeholders**

There are many tactics that can work in drawing information from participants in a logic model building exercise. Possibilities include:

- Work with all (or at least most) of the stakeholders in a large group.
- Begin with a small group of people who are familiar with logic models. Work with them to develop a model at an intermediate level of detail. Use the draft to get feedback from others.
- Draw a rough model yourself and send it out for feedback. This method is especially useful for mid-term corrections in cases where the evaluator has a good working relationship with the stakeholders.
- Chat with stakeholders about the program. Sketch the logic they are verbalizing. Then put the burden on yourself. Ask: “This is what I understand you are telling me about the program. Did I get it right”?
- Build a complete but overly complex model that includes everyone’s input. Then ask them questions. 1) Some of these elements must be more important than others. Which are the important ones? 2) Can we measure those important ones? 3) If we only had data on the few important elements that we can measure, would you be satisfied with the evaluation?

The choice of tactics depends on stakeholders’

- Availability
- Experience with logic models
- Existing working relationships

### **Group process**

Evaluators have choices in interacting with informants that vary along two dimensions: 1) individual contact versus working with groups, and 2) face to face versus remote communication (e.g. via phone conference or collaboration applications). The situation is depicted in Table 2. When choosing tactics the following issues are important.

	1:1 – Evaluator to Respondent	1: Many – Group Meeting
Face to face		
Phone, video, Internet		

- Time pressure. Getting groups of people together in one place is time consuming. Coordinating their schedules for distance interaction is easier because it decreases the need for travel. Still, even without the burden of travel, synchronous communication may be hard to set up.
- Opportunity for multiple rounds of deliberation. If one is working with a motivated group it may be possible to interact with them over multiple rounds of logic model building. In this situation combining face to face and asynchronous communication may be useful to increase interaction.
- Potential for conflict among stakeholders. The greater the potential for conflict, the more appealing it may be not to bring the stakeholders face to face in large group meetings. A series of smaller meetings might work, followed by an exercise in resolving remaining disagreements. Or, remote interaction may be useful in avoiding conflict. If the potential for conflict is high among a large number of people, a Delphi approach conducted remotely over time may be helpful.

### Get people to question assumptions about program theory

Logic models embody program theory. Both program and evaluation suffer from incorrect or incomplete theory. Figure 2 illustrates the problem. How could the evaluation explain program success or failure without measuring change implementation? Absent questioning assumptions the link between “solutions” and “improved safety” would have been left out.

