Basic Steps in Conducting an Evaluation – Logic Model Prework
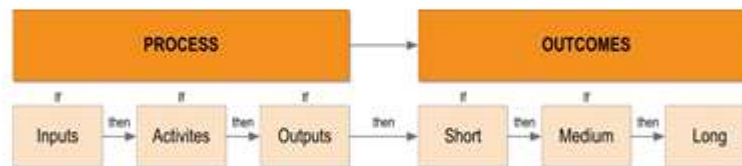

As you begin to plan for an evaluation of your program or intervention, it is essential that there be a clear and comprehensive mapping of the program or intervention itself. Thus, a useful first step in planning an evaluation should be to clarify and confirm your program's operations or processes and intended outcomes by developing a logic model. If your program has already developed a logic model, then you might only need to review the existing model and possibly update or refine it to reflect your current program operations and goals.

A program logic model is a detailed visual representation of your program and its theory of change that communicates how your program works, the resources you have to operate your program, the activities you carry out, and the outcomes you hope to achieve. Your program logic model should clearly communicate how your program works by depicting the intended relationships among program components. Key program components consist of:

- *Inputs or resources* - which are considered essential for a program's activities to occur. They may include any combination of human, financial, organizational, and community-based resources that are available to a program and used to carry out a program's activities.
- *Activities* – which are the specific actions that make up your program or intervention. They reflect processes, tools, events, and other actions that are used to bring about your program's desired changes or results.
- *Outputs* – what a program's specific activities will create or produce, providing evidence of service delivery.
- *Outcomes* - the specific changes that may result from a program's activities or intervention. A program's outcomes fall along a continuum, ranging from short- to long-term results.

Logic models are typically read from left to right, employing an if-then sequence among key components. A generic example is shown here. It reads: if your program has these inputs or resources, then it can carry out these activities. If your program carries out these activities, then it can produce these outputs. If your program has produced these outputs, then it will achieve these outcomes.

In addition, a logic model has two "sides." The **process** side focuses on a program's implementation or its planned work – inputs/resources, activities, and outputs (direct products). The **outcomes** side of the logic model describes the expected sequence of changes that the program hopes to accomplish, which can be short-term, medium-term, and/or long-term changes. The outcomes side reflects what difference the program intends to make.

Example Logic Model:

Process			Outcomes		
INPUTS	**ACTIVITIES**	**OUTPUTS**	**Short-Term**	**Medium-Term**	**Long-Term**
What we invest	What we do	Direct products from program activities	Changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes, opinions	Changes in behavior or action that result from participants' new knowledge	Meaningful changes, often in their condition or status in life
Funding Staff 100 AmeriCorps State and National members 50 non-AmeriCorps volunteers Research	Conduct job readiness workshops Provide job search assistance Provide peer counseling services Provide referrals to transitioning services Educate potential employers	# individuals participating in workshops # individuals receiving job search assistance # individuals receiving counseling services # families receiving referrals # employers receiving education	Increased confidence in gaining employment Increase in job readiness skills Increased knowledge of effective job search strategies Increased knowledge of community services Increased employer knowledge of hiring benefits	Increase in job placement Increased capacity of families to manage transition from military to civilian work and family life Increased adoption of military-friendly practices by employers	Individuals maintain stable employment Increased family well-being Employers routinely hire veterans and military spouses

This hypothetical program is designed to address the disproportionately high rates of unemployment that veterans and their spouses often face compared to their civilian counterparts as well as significant challenges they encounter in transitioning into civilian work and community life. Barriers include the inability to translate military accomplishments into civilian terms, the lack of knowledge regarding available community supports, and employers' lack of understanding of the unique strengths of veterans as well as tax credits available for their hiring. To combat veteran unemployment, this hypothetical AmeriCorps program supports job readiness and job search skills, transitioning services for families, and education and outreach to potential employers. The logic model presented here is a visual summary of the veterans program.

On the left side are the program's investments, referred to as inputs or resources. For this veterans' program, this includes:
- Funding
- Staff
- AmeriCorps members
- Volunteers
- Research

Moving to the next column, if this program has these inputs, then it can carry out a set of its planned activities which include the following:
- Job readiness workshops focusing on such areas as resume preparation and mock interviewing
- Job search assistance
- Peer-to-peer career counseling services provided by other veterans

- Referrals to transitioning services to families, which may include referrals to support groups or mentoring programs
- Outreach and education to potential employers

These activities will create or produce the following outputs, which are products or evidence that these activities were carried out:
- \# individuals participating in workshops
- \# individuals receiving job search assistance
- \# individuals receiving career counseling services
- \# families receiving transitioning service referrals
- \# employers receiving education

As a result of the program's activities, several changes are expected to occur. In the short-term, individuals are expected to increase their confidence in gaining employment, job readiness skills, and knowledge of effective job strategies. Families are expected to increase their knowledge of available community services. For employers, outreach and education activities are expected to result in increased knowledge of the unique strengths and employer benefits of hiring veterans.

These changes in knowledge, attitudes, and skills are expected to lead to increased job placement for veterans and their spouses, the increased capacity of families to manage the transition from military to civilian work and family life, and the increased adoption of military-friendly practices by employers. These behavioral changes represent medium-term outcomes which, in turn, are expected to lead to the long-term outcomes of stable employment and family life for veterans as well as continued hiring of veterans and their spouses on the part of employers.

Note that logic models come in many sizes and shapes and also vary in level of detail, ranging from basic/simple to complex. There is no one or "right" way to develop a logic model. It often depends upon your purpose, how you will use the logic model, who will use the logic model, and what your program entails. The logic model shown here follows the CNCS template.

Developing a logic model has many potential uses for programs. It may be the case that you develop one logic model for your program that serves more than one purpose, or it may be necessary for you to create different versions of a logic model that are tailored for different aims. For example, the logic model you develop for your daily program operations (including performance management and evaluation activities) may be different than the logic model you develop for your AmeriCorps application.

Here are just a few examples of how logic models can be used:
- Logic models can be used to ensure that stakeholders have a clear and shared understanding of how a program is intended to work. This can be beneficial in generating a collective sense of responsibility and accountability among staff and also to those external to the program.
- Logic models can be used to support program planning and improvement efforts. For example, logic models can be a tool to help you determine how to allocate resources effectively.
- Logic models can serve as a foundation for evaluation. Logic models can be particularly helpful during the planning stages of an evaluation by helping programs determine when and what to evaluate, so that evaluation resources are used effectively and efficiently.

For more information on developing a program logic model, please see the webinar on How to Develop a Program Logic Model located on the National Service Knowledge Network.