# WHAT A LOGIC MODEL CAN DO FOR YOU

## *Tips for conducting program evaluation*

**A logic model is a diagram that illustrates your program theory—that is, how the services you provide will lead to the results you want to achieve.**

Taking your program theory to the next level of logic model can help you summarize your theory and make it understandable to others. A logic model usually looks like a flow chart. The bubbles on the chart represent four basic concepts:

■ **Inputs:** The resources or materials used by your program to provide services (money, staff, volunteers, facilities, equipment, supplies, etc.).

■ **Activities:** The services or treatments your program provides.

■ **Outputs:** Measurable counts of what you do (number of classes taught, number of people served, amount of materials distributed, hours of service delivered, etc.).

■ **Outcomes:** The impacts or changes that you expect to see as a result of the services you provide.

## Three kinds of outcomes

Because many programs aim for more than one level of impact, your logic model might have several different categories of outcomes. These are usually sequential— that is, each level of impact grows out of the previous one. For example, immediate impacts would lead to intermediate impacts, which in turn would lead ultimately to long-term impacts.

Building this distinction between different levels of outcome into the logic model helps your program to articulate your beliefs about the way that deeper, more long-term changes occur—for instance, as a chain reaction or ripple effect.

Here are the three most common levels of outcomes to consider for your logic model. Of course, not every program will have

more than one type, and some might have more than these three. However, many programs find these three categories useful:

■ **Immediate** impacts typically refer to changes in *knowledge or awareness*, because these types of changes typically precede changes in behavior or practice.

■ **Intermediate** outcomes usually refer to *behavioral changes* that follow the changes in knowledge and awareness. Note that as you move from immediate to intermediate outcomes, your program's direct impact and accountability will decrease. The deeper or broader the change, the more factors that need to come together in order to make it happen. Not all of these factors will be within the control of your program.

*Outcomes, continued*

- **Long-term outcomes** usually refer to more *global changes*—either they affect more people than those you directly serve, or they involve more profound and lasting changes in your clients than your services can directly influence. Again, at this level the direct impact and accountability of your program decrease even more, but these long-term outcomes enable you to express a vision for the ultimate impact your program will have on individuals, families, neighborhoods, communities, issues, etc.

## Why do I want a logic model?

The logic model is not just an interesting visual to put in the appendix of a proposal or report. If developed thoughtfully, it can help you:

- Describe your program to current or potential funders.

- Illustrate the important features of your approach to others, such as participants, collaborating agencies, or legislators.

- Train new staff about your program theory and approach—help them understand how the program works and their role in promoting the desired impacts and results.

- Control "program drift"—reviewing the model periodically to ensure that the services you provide are still consistent with the program's intended purpose and approach.

- Develop an evaluation design—decide which participant outcomes are most important to measure.

- Manage the program—plan your services and identify the resources or inputs that are needed to arrive at the desired outcomes.

## Frequently asked questions from crime victim service programs

**Q: Our program only provides immediate crisis support. Are we really accountable for long-term changes in our client or our community?**
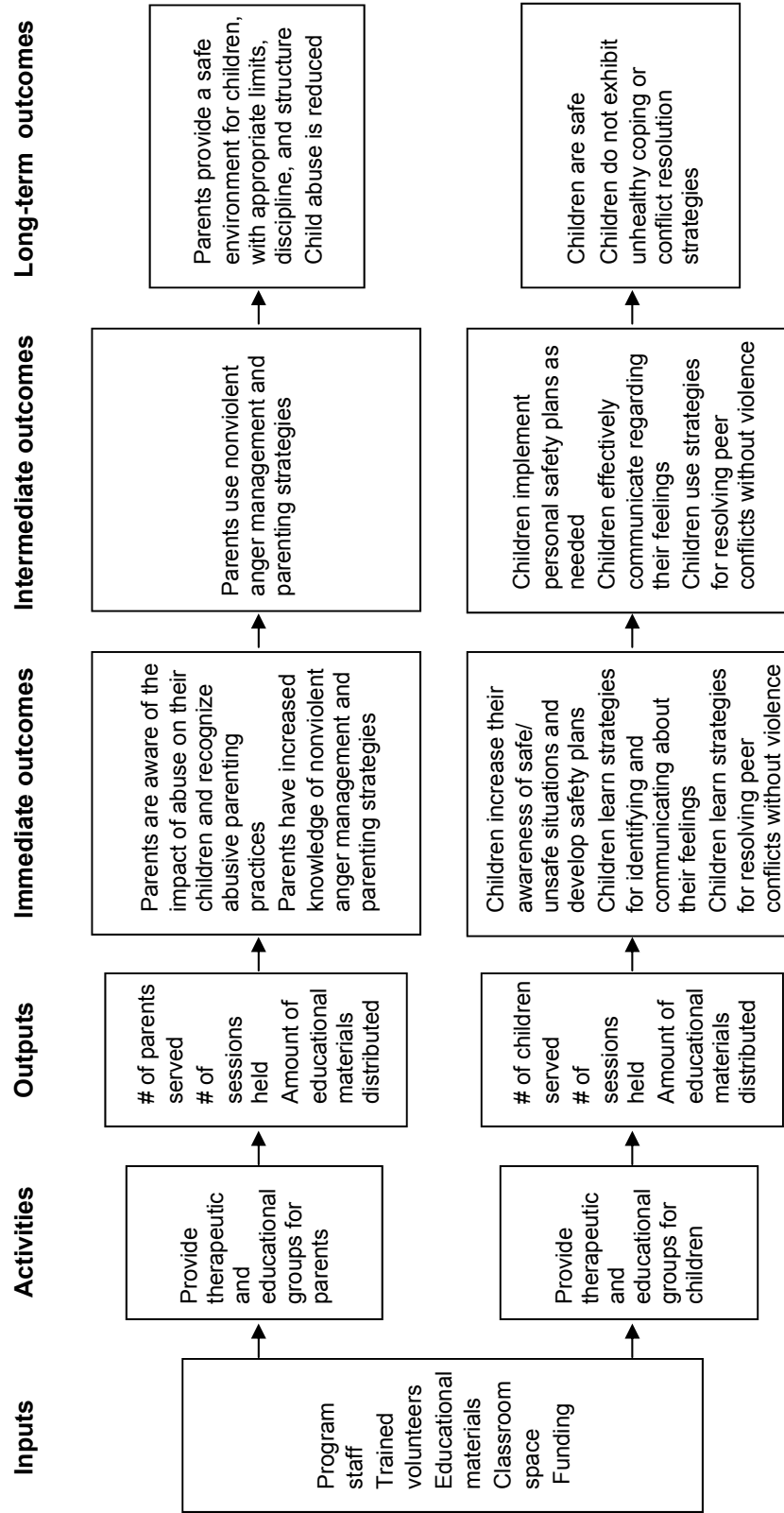
**A:** It can be challenging to show longer-term outcomes when a program provides very brief or limited services. Your logic model should not include outcomes that are not reasonable. However, even short-term services are often associated with longer-term benefits for clients. For example, a program providing immediate support after a domestic or sexual assault might also provide referrals to longer-term services. A client who receives emotional support and appropriate referrals might be more likely to follow up on those referrals. While your agency is not directly accountable for the benefits that result from the additional services, you program was a critical link in the process. It would be appropriate for your logic model to show the role of immediate crisis support as one step in the healing process, because if your work is successful, it promotes ongoing support for the client.

# Sample logic model

This logic model describes a program that provides services following reports of child abuse. The program offers services to both the parents who have perpetrated the abuse and to the children who have been victimized. The ultimate goals of the program are to work with parents to reduce the subsequent occurrence of abuse and to work with children to reduce the negative impact of the abuse, by increasing their sense of safety and reducing the likelihood of subsequent behavioral concerns.

| Inputs | Activities | Outputs | Immediate outcomes | Intermediate outcomes | Long-term outcomes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Program staff<br>Trained volunteers<br>Educational materials<br>Classroom space<br>Funding | Provide therapeutic and educational groups for parents | # of parents served<br># of sessions held<br>Amount of educational materials distributed | Parents are aware of the impact of abuse on their children and recognize abusive parenting practices<br>Parents have increased knowledge of nonviolent anger management and parenting strategies | Parents use nonviolent anger management and parenting strategies | Parents provide a safe environment for children, with appropriate limits, discipline, and structure<br>Child abuse is reduced |
| | Provide therapeutic and educational groups for children | # of children served<br># of sessions held<br>Amount of educational materials distributed | Children increase their awareness of safe/ unsafe situations and develop safety plans<br>Children learn strategies for identifying and communicating about their feelings<br>Children learn strategies for resolving peer conflicts without violence | Children implement personal safety plans as needed<br>Children effectively communicate regarding their feelings<br>Children use strategies for resolving peer conflicts without violence | Children are safe<br>Children do not exhibit unhealthy coping or conflict resolution strategies |

*Questions, continued*

**Q: The goal of our program is to keep people safe. What kind of outcome is this— immediate, intermediate, or long-term?**

**A:** Many victim service programs share a goal of promoting safety. The place of this goal in the logic model depends on your underlying theory. For example, if your program provides actual protection (such as a safe place to stay), safety might be an immediate outcome. On the other hand, if you are working with victims of crime to help them make other life changes (such as avoiding or leaving unsafe relationships), safety might appear relatively late in the logic model.

**Q: Our goal is to prevent victimization. How can a logic model show that something did not happen?**

**A:** Prevention goals are perfectly reasonable to include in logic models. The trick is to think carefully about the connection between the immediate, intermediate, and long-term outcomes. To prevent a future event (such as an assault), what immediate or intermediate changes have to occur first? As long as each step in your logic model is a logical connection, you can include outcomes that you hope will happen as well as those you hope will be avoided.

## Quick links to more information

***The logic model for program planning and evaluation*** (University of Idaho Extension Service)
www.uidaho.edu/extension/LogicModel.pdf

***Everything you wanted to know about logic models but were afraid to ask***
www.insites.org/documents/logmod.htm

***Sample logic model for the evaluation framework of the Victims of Crime Initiative***
http://canada.justice.gc.ca/en/ps/eval/reports/01/vicccdr/logic.html

## In future tip sheets

Building a logic model

Prioritizing evaluation questions

Developing data collection plans

Find previous tip sheets on the web: www.ojp.state.mn.us/grants/index.htm or www.wilderresearch.org.