Community Food Project Evaluation Handbook

COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY COALITION

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First Edition, 2003
Second Edition, 2004
Third Edition, 2006

The *Community Food Project Evaluation Handbook* was written by National Research Center, Inc. Some content within this handbook was adapted from previously written handbooks authored by NRC including *Outcome Handbook for City of Boulder Human Service Providers* (January 1999) and *After School Initiative Evaluation Handbook* sponsored by The Colorado Trust (2001-2002).

Chapter 2. Mapping Your Project Using a Logic Model

The evaluation planning stage ideally coincides with project planning. It begins at the conception phase when developing a new project, applying for a new grant or revising a program's action plan. With evaluation, however, it is best to "begin with the end in mind." What do you want your end result to be? In this chapter, we will first consider a project's overarching mission and goals as these should always be in the forefront of planning efforts. They will form the backbone of your evaluation system. Then with these goals in mind we will embark on the logic modeling process, a way of mapping your project from start to finish, showing how these goals will be achieved.

Revisiting Your Project Goals

It will be impossible to identify meaningful outcomes in the absence of clearly stated goals that are understood by everyone connected with and, in fact, interested in your program. Whether your community food project is new or has been in existence for many years, taking a careful look at your goals is an essential first step in identifying the outcomes you would like to monitor. Keeping in mind the goals of your CFP, you might ask yourselves questions such as these:

Questions to Revisit Your Goals
• Are our goals consistent with and supportive of our mission?
• Are our goals realistic in view of the resources we have to address community needs?
• Are our goals broad enough to be useful and motivating to staff?
• Are our goals focused and specific enough to be translated into measurable outcomes?
• Are our goals reflective of the diverse needs of the various cultural groups served by our programs?
• Are our goals designed to develop and foster authentic partnerships with growers, recipients and/or other stakeholders?
• Do our goals include strategies to sustain our project, retain staff, find replacement funding and maximize other available resources?

Goals that do not meet your underlying criteria should be revised or replaced. As you consider the activities of your project, and the resources you have devoted to achieving your goals, you may find you either wish to revise the goals of your program to be in closer alignment with the services you actually provide, or you may wish to redesign your project so that goals important to your project can be attained.

Linking Program Activities to Goals: Introduction to the Logic Model

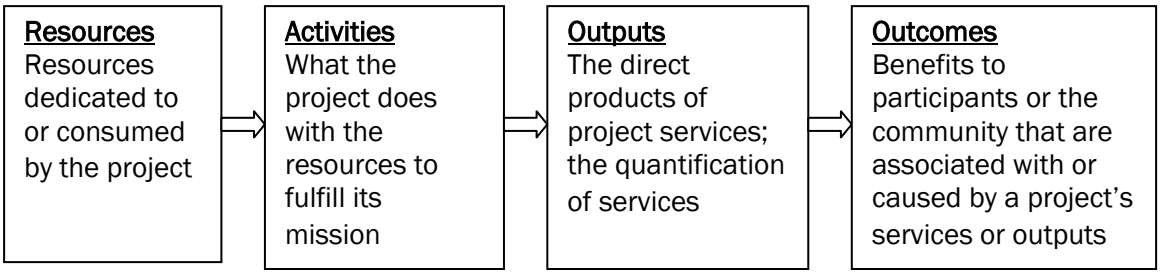
A logic model is a tool often used to tie a program to its evaluation. A logic model is a picture showing what you hope to achieve and how you plan to do it. It is comprised of "if-then" statements that describe a program's theory of change, showing how day-to-day activities connect to the outcomes the program is trying to achieve. Similar to a flowchart, the logic model shows how program activities and outcomes connect with one another. [1] The logic model has been likened to "a roadmap of your program highlighting how it is expected to work" [2] or "the basis for telling a convincing story of a human service program's expected performance."[3]

The logic model and its precursors have been used to understand the relationship between activities and results for the past two decades. Although the logic model was originally developed and used by evaluators, it has gained recent popularity for its use by program managers, program staff and funders. Some of the advantages of using a logic model are presented in the box below:

Benefits of Using a Logic Model
• It builds a common understanding of the program and expectations for its resources, activities and results, thus is good for sharing ideas, identifying assumptions, team building and communication. • It is helpful for program design or improvement, identifying activities that are critical to goal attainment, redundant or have inconsistent or implausible linkages among program elements. • It points to "a balanced set of key performance measurement points and evaluation issues, thus improves data collection and usefulness."[4] • It ensures that a program's process is not overlooked in an evaluation. The model makes it easier to look at both program process and outcomes. • It enhances the process of learning through evaluation. "As data are collected, the logic model can be used to put the data in perspective, examine the theory that underlies the program and make program mid-course corrections if needed."[5]

The Basic Logic Model

There is no one prescribed way to map a logic model; the specific elements of the model may vary in terms of complexity and the language used to define concepts. For community food projects, we have decided to begin with a basic logic model, one similar to that proposed by United Way of America. [6] The basic logic model is comprised of four components: resources (or inputs), activities, outputs and outcomes. [7] The basic logic model, along with definitions, is described in the figure on the following page:

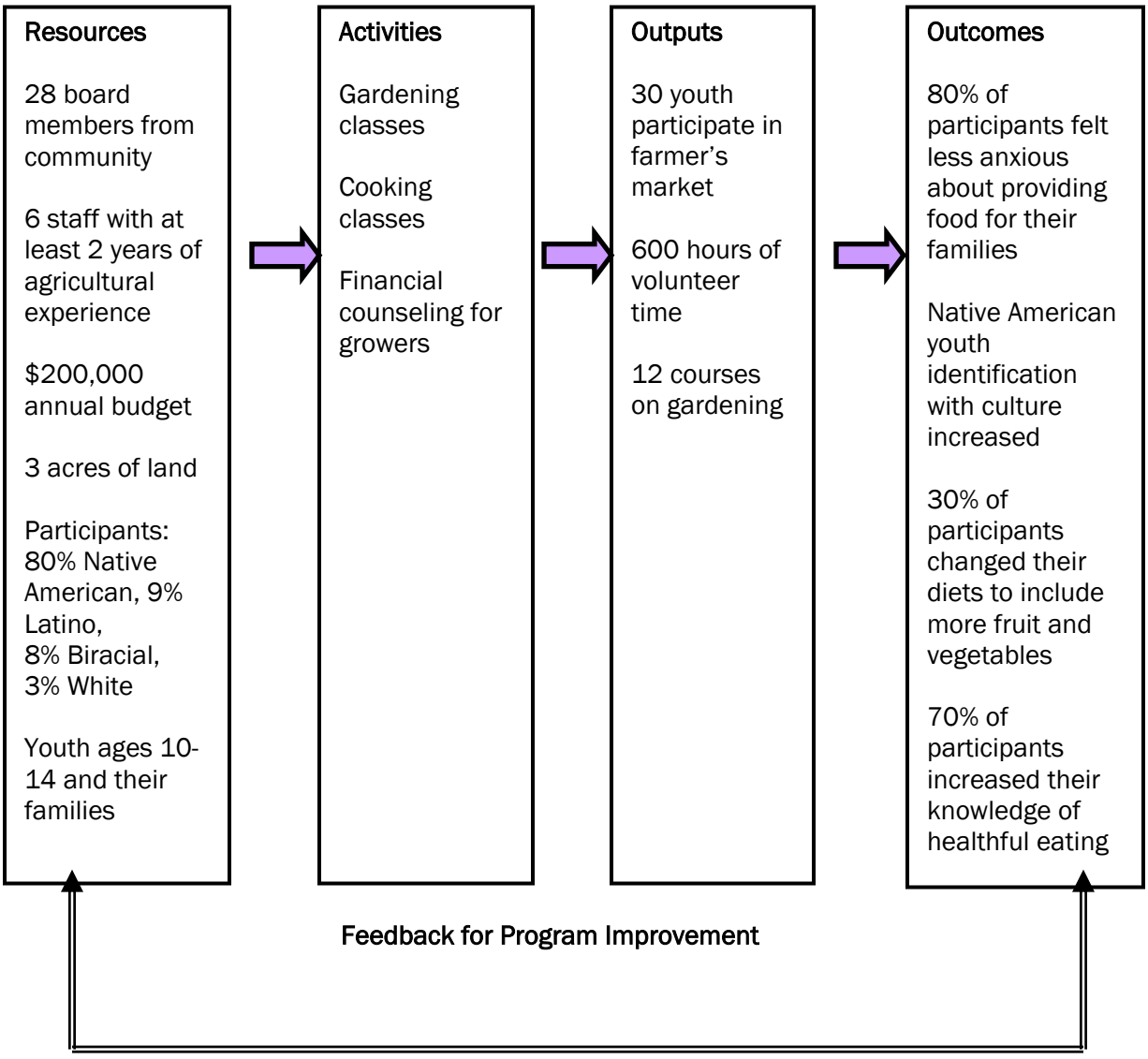


Examples of each component are presented in the table below. The next page displays a basic logic model from a fictitious community food project.

Examples of Basic Elements of the Logic Model

Resources	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
• Money • Staff • Volunteers • Equipment • Supplies	• Mentoring • Technical assistance • Education • Nutrition counseling • Skill building activities • Policy advocacy • Provision of food	• Hours of service delivered • Number of participants • Amount of materials distributed • Number of policies initiated • Number of organizations recruited • Pounds of food distributed	• Increased knowledge • Changes in attitudes and values • Increased skills • Modified behavior • Improved condition • Altered physical and social environments

Sample Basic Logic Model



The Steps to Developing a Basic Logic Model

There is no right or wrong way to begin developing a logic model, the sequence of the steps presented below is only a suggestion. A worksheet on the following page is provided to help you develop your projects' basic logic model.

While we recommend starting with the end in mind – the goals of your program – information about constructing and choosing outcome measures is provided in the next chapter. As you read through these steps, and begin filling in the worksheet, you might want to leave the outcome square blank, or fill it in with your current ideas, and revise them after going through Chapter 3.

Step 1. Establish your **outcomes**. Begin with one of your project's goals. Translate this goal into one or more outcomes using Worksheet #3 from Chapter 3. Remember that outcomes are specific changes in project participants' behaviors, knowledge, skills, status and level of functioning[8] directly resulting from a project's activities. Place these outcomes in the Outcomes column of the table on Worksheet #1. If you have completed Worksheet #3 and have decided on your outcome indicators and performance standards, you can also add these to the box.

Step 2. Enter your **resources**. Resources are those items dedicated to or consumed by the project (e.g., staff, facilities, funding, equipment, etc.). Place all the resources associated with your goal in the Resources column of the table of Worksheet #1.

Step 3. Enter your **activities**. Activities are what the program does with the resources to fulfill its mission. They are processes, tools, events, technology and actions[9] used to directly serve your participants. Place the activities for your goal in the Activities column of the table of Worksheet #1.

Step 4. Enter your anticipated **outputs**. Outputs are the direct products of program activities; they are the quantification of activities (e.g., number of participants served, number of hours of service provided, etc.). Place the outputs associated with your goal in the Outputs column of the table of Worksheet #1.

Step 5. Repeat steps 1-4 for each of your program goals.

Worksheet 1: Developing Your Project's Basic Logic Model

Resources	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes*

** see Chapter 3 for more information*

1 Coffman J. (1999). Learning from Logic Models: An Example of a Family/School Partnership Program. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Program.
2 Logic model guide. (October 2000). W.K. Kellogg Foundation.
3 McLaughlin JA and Jordan GB. (July 1998). A Tool for Telling Your Program's Performance Story. US Department of Energy, Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy.
4 McLaughlin JA and Jordan GB. (July 1998). A Tool for Telling Your Program's Performance Story. US Department of Energy, Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy.
5 Building a Successful Prevention Program. Western Regional Center for the Application of Prevention Technologies. Center for Substance Abuse Prevention.
6 Measuring Program Outcomes: A Practical Approach. (1996). United Way of America,
7 United Way breaks outcomes into 3 categories: initial, intermediate and long-term.
8 Adapted from: Logic model guide. (October 2000). W.K. Kellogg Foundation.
9 Adapted from: Logic model guide. (October 2000) W.K. Kellogg Foundation.