**Program Planning and Evaluation Using a Logic Model**

**What Is a Logic Model and Why Use One?**

Mary Virginia Merrick famously said, “Find a need and fill it.” Sometimes identifying a need is much easier than knowing that the program created, the work done and the resources expended are actually filling that need. This is true not only of Christ Child programs but in the broader social work arena. As such, the social work profession has developed what is now a well-established approach to planning and evaluating programs that helps assure the need is actually being filled. In the profession, this widely-used approach is known as a logic model.

**A logic model is a** visual representation of a program's activities, outputs, and expected outcomes. In other words, graphic roadmap of the relationships among the resources you can deploy in support of your program, the planned activities, and the hoped-for results.

Ideally created while planning the program, the model can give those engaged in the program a common understanding of where the chapter wants to go and how. The two critical components are “logic”, meaning systematic, thoughtful and complete analysis, and a “model”, meaning some kind of a graphical representation of the key elements of the program and their relationship.

The model should clearly set forth the outcomes expected as a result of the program and how they will be measured. In this way, all involved will know precisely what data or anecdotal information will need to be collected -- and when--in order to measure impact. This makes program evaluation a more objective exercise, reducing risks of “revisionist history.” More objective evaluations in turn make it easier to make decisions to add resources, change partners, make adjustments or, where appropriate, close down a program.

The guidelines below are intended to make it easier for chapters of all sizes and experience both to use “logic” and to represent their analysis in a “model” that will be useful for planning, evaluating, raising funds for, as well as communicating about, their programs. Don’t be taken aback by some of the detailed examples; not all will apply to any given program; make sure you can thoroughly tick through the ones that do apply.

**Creating a Logic Model**

Program planning is the ideal time to create a logic model because it will help the chapter to systematically think through the elements of the program. Before doing that, it is critical that a need or problem be identified, one that can be articulated in the form of a specific **problem or issue statement** that the program can help address. Next, take these three steps to develop the logic model:

**Break your program down into segments reflecting the plan to do and intended outcome.** For example:

*What you plan to do and why . . . ? What you intend to achieve . . .?*

**Provide detail about each program segment and list information in an organized way within each segment.** This can be done via an outline. The important thing is addressing all key elements in a systematic way, gaining input from all partners in the effort. For example:

**Inputs: Who** will the program serve? *(Be complete).*

* Children? What age/grade/sex/interest, need or challenge?
* Their families?
* What local demographics?
* A school or other institution?
* School or institution’s employees (such as teachers or after-school program directors?)

**Resources:** **What** resources will be needed to do the planned activities?

* Participating children or families whom the program is intended to serve
* NCCS volunteers (and their capabilities/training, if appropriate)
* Other volunteers
* Professional personnel (social workers, librarians, teachers, etc.)
* Budget (see Financial Situation in Section C, page 13)
* Curriculum or learning aids
* Materials
* Physical space
* Specified time

**Assumptions:** What are the assumptions about what is planned? What is believed to be true about the endeavor and the participants? Here are some examples that might apply to a reading program:

* Developing a love for reading in a child will facilitate her literacy
* Developing a love for reading in a child will aid her performance in all school subjects
* Children will willingly participate in the reading program
* Children will benefit from experiential learning through this hands-on reading project
* CCS has volunteers who can be trained and are motivated to participate in this program
* Parents, teachers and school administrators will encourage children to participate in this program
* High quality materials positively affect children’s motivation to read.

*Note:* Some assumptions can be verified or supported by third party research, while others are situation-specific. Both types are important to identify in the context of this specific program because assumptions are at the root of the expectations of the program’s outcomes and impacts. When later evaluating the program, the chapter can isolate what role the earlier assumptions may have had on the program’s success. If experience demonstrates the key assumptions were faulty, decisions can be made about whether even a well-operated program is worth continuing or whether resources can more effectively be deployed to meet the same or another objective based upon more certain assumptions.

**Activities:** In order to operate this program **what will the chapter need to do?** Start out by reviewing information about Cultural Awareness and Poverty, and then make sure to think through not only tasks necessary to starting the program but to its operation and evaluation. Here are some sample activities that could apply to any program:

* Gaining needed permissions from parents, entities, administrators, governments
* Coordinating with partner entities and their employees
* Determining roles and responsibilities for liaisons with partners, managing volunteers, creating materials, evaluating programs, etc.
* Recruiting volunteers
* Obtaining funding for program materials
* Purchasing and/or preparing program materials
* Conducting program (when, how frequently, where and with how many volunteers/participants)
* Communicating to parents about the program and encouraging parental support/involvement
* Working with partners to evaluate program impact
* Reporting on program progress to CCS and other key partners
* Public relations regarding program, including photographs and testimonials

**Outputs:** Once the activities are under way, what will be the evidence of the services delivered? **What data will be collected** as that evidence? Here are some examples of the types of evidence which might be relevant to any Christ Child program:

* Number of volunteer hours to prepare/coordinate program
* Number children or families served
* Number of hours of programming
* Number of CCS volunteers for prep and programming
* Number of projects completed (books read, drawings completed, layettes packed)
* Number of items provided (layettes, books, stuff bags, clothing, coats, shoes, etc. . . .)
* Number of schools/entities supported
* Number of dollars expended on program (and components)
* Evaluation and Survey responses (from children, parents, partners, teachers, administrators, donors, community leaders or volunteers)
* Existing grades/evaluations regularly used by the partner school or organization

**Outcomes and Impact:**What are the short- and long-term changes that will take place as a result of your program activities? Over the next 1-3 years? Over the next 1-6 years? Over 7-10 years? Work within the framework the partner school or organization uses to think through realistic outcomes, impact and timeframes.

Examples of desired outcomes and impacts from a variety of types of programs follow:

*Short-term impact (1-3 years):*

* Improved respect for teacher and classroom dynamic within 2 months following self-esteem program
* Increased library cards/reading at home by book club participants
* Reduced rough handling of infants due to shaken baby education
* Improved educational performance as a result of vision tests and proper eyewear
* Improved social interaction/attention span/academic performance by disabled children as a result of gardening program
* Children who receive new coats and clothing develop better self esteem

*Long-term impact (1-6 years):*

* Children who participated in reading/literacy programs continue to perform average or above average in school subjects or skills tests
* Book club children continue to read for fun
* Children who participated in gardening program are more curious about nature, science and the outdoors
* Parents who participated in parenting programs use the learning with their subsequent infants and children

*Impact (1-10 years):*

* Book club children continue to read for fun and disproportionately complete high school
* Parents who participated in parenting programs are better able to handle day to day stresses and maintain more nurturing home environments for their children as a result.
* Children who build a library with donated books become lifelong readers

Although some of the above outcomes and impacts may seem lofty, a program that does not provide any long-term change or impact may not be worth the resources devoted to it.

Try to articulate the change that the chapter hopes to achieve over time, connect with partners, contemporary research and literature.

Some programs truly only have short-term outcomes, which may in themselves be very important. Where this is the case, be clear about what the outcome is and its duration, so the program can be evaluated in relation to the effort put into it.

Remember, sometimes when evaluating programs based upon the inputs that have been identified, unforeseen outcomes and impacts may appear that cause adjustments to the logic model.

**Draw and fill in the model.** The goal here is to show a common-sense relationship between the information lined up under each segment to the other segments. It can be as simple as a chart, matrix, or filling in a column under each segment and summarizing the information in bullet points to fit within a chart. The idea is to have a visual depiction, not just words, that appear on a single page which you can use to explain why program exists and what has to be achieved. Reviewing the **Sample Logic Model**  (link to Sample Logic Model) created by the Pasadena Chapter may be helpful before initiating the process.

Such a single, clear page can demonstrate to anyone, including partners, donors, and volunteers, the key elements of the program and how they fit into it. Funders and partners will have more confidence in the program if they can see the thought and rigor behind it and will be more likely to view it as a worthwhile investment of their resources.