Using a Logic Model to Build a Strong Evaluation Plan

Part 1: Why Link the Evaluation Plan to a Logic Model?

Center to Improve Program & Project Performance (CIPP)

Part 1 Transcript

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Welcome to the four-part training series on using a logic model to build a strong evaluation plan. This series is presented by the Center to Improve Program and Project Performance. The purpose of this training is to help participants understand the benefits of using a logic model to create an evaluation plan, develop a strong logic model that shows how inputs and activities are expected to lead to meaningful short-term, medium-term, and long-term outcomes; with the ultimate purpose in being to align an evaluation plan and analysis to critical components within the logic model. This is part 1, exploring why organizations should link their evaluation plan to a logic model.

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Hello, my name is Debbie shaver I'm from the Center to Improve Program and Project Performance. I'm here to present part one of our training series on using a logic model to build a strong evaluation plan. In this session, we answer the question, "Why link the evaluation plan to the logic model. The objectives for this session are that participants will
Increase understanding of the purpose of a logic model,
The purpose of an evaluation plan, and
The benefits of linking the evaluation plan to the logic model.

A logic model is a road map for a project. It's a way to graphically illustrate project investments or inputs, the activities that are planned and the outcomes that are expected. It also illustrates hypotheses about how the inputs and activities are expected to lead to short-term, then medium-term, then long-term outcomes. A logic model is a road map for planning and implementation and can provide the foundation or blueprint for the evaluation plan.

An evaluation plan is a written articulation of the methods that will be used to conduct the evaluation, including plans for data collection, analysis and reporting. This plan documents the methods for assessing how project implementation is going and assessing the extent to which the project is achieving expected outcomes. The plan should include methods for providing timely, formative feedback to help the project improve as it's being implemented and for providing summative information about achievements across the project life span.

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A typical evaluation plan includes the questions the evaluation is trying to answer, the outcomes the project is trying to achieve, as well as performance targets, which are benchmarks that are set to indicate whether specific outcomes have been achieved. The plan will also include detailed information about the methods that will be used to collect and analyze data and it will provide clear timelines and indications of who is responsible for each part of the plan. Aligning the evaluation plan to the logic model is beneficial for several reasons. First, the logic model indicates what to measure. For example, if there is an outcome on the logic model, ideally the evaluation plan would include a measure of that outcome to provide information on whether the outcome was achieved. By aligning evaluation activities with components in the logic model, evaluation resources are used efficiently, because they are focused on the essential inputs, activities, and outcomes of the project.

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The logic model can also help determine the sequence of evaluation activities. For example, measurement of short-term outcomes would generally occur before measurement of longer-term outcomes. Linking the evaluation to the logic model can also help with the identification of critical interim outcomes that should be assessed for understanding whether the project is on-track. For instance, if the acquisition of knowledge is a key short-term outcome required before a medium-term outcome would be expected, such as a change in adult behavior, the project could set of target for the short-term outcome and use evaluation results to determine if the project is on-track to achieve longer-term outcomes. Finally, if the evaluation is aligned with the logic model, evaluation results can support the examination of the hypothesized relationships depicted in the logic model. For example, if you have results showing that the project activities were implemented as intended and your results show that outcomes were achieved, this provides evidence supporting the logic model's underlying theories, that implementation of the project strategies and activities will lead to the desired outcomes.

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Results like these give project leader some confidence that the investment of resources and activities are worthwhile. On the other hand, if you have evaluation data revealing that activities are being implemented as planned but outcomes are not being realized, this warrants further investigation and may lead to project adjustments or to revisiting the logic model's theories and assumptions. In summary, a logic model is a graphical representation of the project's inputs, activities, and outcomes. The logic model can form the foundation for developing a strong evaluation plan and can help projects target evaluation resources to the specific outcomes the project is aiming to achieve.

This has been part 1, exploring why organizations should link their evaluation plan to a logic model. This series is provided by the Center to Improve Program and Project Performance. For additional information, please visit our website at www.cippsite.org.