

Using a Logic Model to Build a Strong Evaluation Plan

Part 4: How to Link the Evaluation Plan to the Logic Model

Center to Improve Program & Project Performance (CIPP)
Part 4 Transcript

Authors:

Jennifer Schaaf, Ph.D.

Margaret Gillis, Ph.D.

Debra Shaver, Ph.D.

Nancy Hartman, Ph.D.

Project C0-Directors:

Jill Lammert, Ph.D.

Elaine Carlson, Ph.D.

[0:00:01-0:01:14]

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 objectives of this training series include to help participants understand the benefits of using a logic model to create an evaluation plan, to develop a strong logic model that shows how inputs, activities and outputs are expected to lead to meaningful short, medium, and long-term outcomes; with the ultimate purpose in aligning an evaluation data collection and analysis to critical components within the logic model.

This is part 4. Offering practical application and practice in linking evaluation plans to a logic model.

[0:01:15-0:02:27]

Hello, my name is name is Margaret Gillis from the Center to Improve Program and Project Performance and I'm here to present part 4 of our training series on using a logic model to build a strong evaluation plan. In this session, we will be discussing how to link the evaluation plan to the logic model. In viewing this video, participants will gain an understanding of how to select what to evaluate, how to align evaluation questions, data sources, and methods with the logic model, and how to ensure language in the evaluation plan and logic model are aligned. When developing your evaluation plan, start with the logic model. If an element is important enough to be in the logic model as an activity, output, or outcome, consider including it in the evaluation. It may not be possible to evaluate everything in the logic model. Consider the scope of the evaluation, the resources, including funding available and what is practical. Consider the evaluation timeline. Your logic model may include long-term outcomes that are not expected to occur within the timeline of the project. These outcomes may not be measurable. Prioritize which logic model elements will be included in the evaluation plan. You may not need to evaluate every activity or output listed.

[0:02:28-0:03:54]

In prioritizing what to evaluate, focus on identifying the essential information needed to inform continuous improvement and demonstrate project results. Consider the activities, outputs, and outcomes that are essential to understanding how the project is being implemented, if the project is meeting expected benchmarks, and whether the project is having the intended impact. Ask these questions:

- What are the most critical elements of the logic model?
- Which outcomes are most important to the project, funders and other stakeholders?
- Which logic model elements are easy to measure?
- What existing data sources can help to evaluate logic model elements?
- What are the resources and expertise available for the evaluation?

The next step is to determine the methods for evaluating each element. Components of the evaluation plan include:

- Evaluation questions,
- Data sources,
- Measures,
- Data collection procedures, and
- Analysis procedures.

Let's look at this sample logic model [image of sample logic model is displayed]. As discussed in other parts of the training series, the inputs describe what is invested in the project. The activities describe what the project will do. The outputs identify what the project will produce. The outcomes address the impact of the project and build on one another.

[0:03:54-0:05:09]

Short-term outcomes often address learning that is essential to impacting action, which may be represented in the medium-term outcome. Long-term outcomes require short and medium-term outcomes to be achieved in order to accomplish the ultimate impact of the project on systemic conditions. Let's look at an example of how to align the evaluation questions to the logic model. This example shows a portion of the logic model for a parent training and information center. Consider the questions you might ask to evaluate the inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes of this project. Let's look at some examples. To evaluate how the project is being implemented, evaluation questions about the inputs and activities may include:

- What is the total monetary investment in the project?
- What is the total staff FTE applied to the project?
- What technical assistance (TA) activities are implemented, changed, and or added? and
- What successes and challenges are experienced?
- How many online and in-person training sessions are held? and
- How many parents participate in online and in-person training sessions and individual technical assistance?

[0:05:09-0:06:25]

To evaluate whether the program is having the intended impact, evaluation questions related to the intended outcomes may include:

- What percentage of participating parents have increased knowledge of the nature of their children disabilities, their rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and special education systems?
- What percentage of participating parents are better able to help their children succeed, navigate special education systems, and use effective modes of collaboration with educators?
- What percentage of participating parents collaborate with teachers to provide improved services for children with disabilities?

Now, let's take that example a step further to look at aligning data sources and measures to the evaluation questions and a logic model. Here we see the evaluation questions that are aligned with the sample logic model. Let's identify some data sources and methods that could be used

to address each question. To address questions about the inputs, we might look at the budget and financial reports and staff FTE reports.

[0:06:25-0:07:39]

To evaluate the activities, we may look at a list of project activities that were planned, completed and changed, and we may conduct focus groups of staff members and parents. To evaluate the outputs, we may look at a list of online and in-person trainings that were completed, training attendance sheets, and a list of parents receiving individual technical assistance. To address the short-term outcomes, we may look at a parent survey or interviews with a subset of participating parents. To address the medium-term outcomes, we may use a parent survey and interviews with a subset of participating parents as well. And to address the long-term outcomes, we may use a parent survey on parent-teacher collaboration administered at the first training or technical assistance nine months later. In evaluating the medium-term and long-term outcomes, consider opportunity to use comparisons to increase the rigor of the evaluation. For example, you might compare survey responses from parents who participated in the project activities to responses from parents who did not. When identifying the data sources and methods to use for the evaluation, consider how you may be able to promote efficiencies within the evaluation.

[0:07:39-0:08:52]

You want to make the most of your evaluation, so it is useful for continuous improvement.

Some things to think about include:

- What data sources already exist?
- What new data needs to be collected?
- Will the method or data source be feasible?
- Will it produce valid and reliable information? and
- Will it provide timely and relevant information for decision-making?
- In addition, can the data be collected and analyzed often enough to inform project progress?

It is important to ensure the language in the evaluation plan is aligned with the language in the logic model. If your logic model outcome is about parent use of a strategy, the evaluation plan should address use of the strategy as well, not knowledge about the strategy or confidence using the strategy. Let's look at some examples. Here, we see outcomes from the logic model with associated evaluation questions and performance indicators. The performance indicator identifies the level at which it is determined the outcome has been met. Let's start with the first line. We have the short-term outcome of parents will increase their understanding of strategies to support their child's development. [graphic below contains before and after corrections have been made for both examples]:

[0:08:53-0:10:25]

Is the question and performance indicator aligned with the outcome? [pause in audio]

Here we see a correct example. The bolded “understanding” has been updated to better align with the outcome. Let’s look at another example. Are the evaluation question and performance indicator aligned with this outcome? Here we see the medium-term outcome, “Parents will use a variety of strategies to support their child's development.” How could you change the evaluation question and performance indicator to better align with the outcome? [Pause in audio --see example above] Here we see a new version with the wording updated to “using a variety of strategies” to better align with the outcome. Using observations assessments of strategy use rather than just asking for self-report data will help you make your evaluation more rigorous.

Before corrections:

Outcome	Evaluation Question	Performance Indicator
Short-term: Parents will increase their understanding of strategies to support their child’s development.	Do parents increase their awareness of strategies to support their child’s development after engaging with Parent Center resources?	80% of parents who engage with Parent Center resources report increasing their awareness of strategies to support their child’s development.
Medium-term: Parents will use a variety of strategies to support their child’s development.	Do parents have skills to support their child’s development after working with Parent Center staff?	80% of parents report having skills to support their child’s development after working with Parent Center staff.

After Corrections:

Outcome	Evaluation Question	Performance Indicator
Short-term: Parents will increase their understanding of strategies to support their child’s development.	Do parents increase their understanding of strategies to support their child’s development after engaging with Parent Center resources?	80% of parents who engage with Parent Center resources report increasing their understanding of strategies to support their child’s development.
Medium-term: Parents will use a variety of strategies to support their child’s development.	Do parents use a variety of strategies to support their child’s development after working with Parent Center staff?	80% of parents report using a variety of strategies to support their child’s development after working with Parent Center staff.

[0:10:25-0:12:06]

Now let's look at a few examples of alignment between logic model elements and data sources.

	Logic Model Element1	Which Data Source Is Aligned?
Exercise 1	Output: Number of trainings provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ratings of quality of the training ▪ List of trainings provided ▪ Pre-post assessment of knowledge on training content
Exercise 2	Short-term Outcome: Participants in training increase their knowledge of the content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ratings of quality of the training ▪ Training attendance ▪ Pre-post assessment of knowledge on training content
Exercise 3	Mid-term Outcome: Parents report feeling better able to navigate the special education system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parent focus groups ▪ Website analytics ▪ Observation of parents implementing strategies

Here we see the output, “number of training provided.” Which of these data sources is aligned? [Pause in audio] The data source, “list of trainings provided” aligns with the logic model element, “number of trainings provided.”

In this example, we have a short-term outcome, “parents and training increase their knowledge of the content.” Which of these three data sources is aligned? [Pause in video] In this example, the “pre-post assessment of knowledge on the training content” is the data source that is aligned with the logic model.

In this example, we have a midterm outcome, “parents report feeling better able to navigate the special education system.” Which of the data sources is aligned? [Pause] Here we see the “parent focus groups” are the data source aligned with “parents report feeling better able to navigate special education system.”

In summary, the logic model identifies what to evaluate, the evaluation questions, data sources, and methods should be aligned with the logic model and the language in the evaluation plan should be aligned with the logic model.

[0:12:07-0:12:12]

This has been part 4 for offering practical application and practice in linking evaluation plans 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.

Disclaimer: The Center to Improve Program and Project Performance has been funded with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs,

under contract number ED-ESE15-A-0016/0004. The Project Officer is Dr. Kristen Rhoads. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

Copyright: CIPP, 2021