How are logic models and program evaluation related?

While a logic model can involve various terms and various graphic depictions, one aspect is central: a logic model describes a sequence of change through logically-linked elements. For an educational program like those in Extension, a logic model describes how the program moves from “what is” (the current situation) to “what will be” (desired outcomes or impacts). Logic models are useful in program planning, implementation, communication, as well as evaluation. Though the terms may vary, logic models typically include:

- **Inputs** – Resources, contributions, investments that go into the program, including staff and time
- **Outputs** – Activities, services, products that reach target audiences and encourage participation
- **Outcomes** – Specific changes in program participants’ behavior, knowledge, skills, status, level of functioning
- **External influences** – Assumptions and environmental factors that interact with the program

So, how does evaluation fit in? While the logic model describes the program, evaluation helps you determine how well a program actually works. On the one hand, the logic model can help you determine what to evaluate, appropriate questions for evaluation, indicators or evidence to look for, when to collect data, and what methods to use to collect data. A strong logic model can also help ensure a well-planned and implemented program – a program you would want to evaluate and demonstrate its impacts. Evaluation - by determining what works, under what conditions, and why - can inform the logic model to identify needed or desired modifications, and thus, improve the program.

Evaluation can take place at various points throughout the logic model. If you are interested in process or formative evaluation, you may focus your evaluation on the **inputs** and **outputs** of the model and seek to answer such questions as “Were the staff and funds adequate for the program,” “Has the program successfully reached targeted audiences?” or “Has the program been implemented as planned?” If you are interested in summative evaluation, including outcome and impact evaluation, you may look to the **outcomes** of the logic model to develop evaluation questions like “What knowledge did participants gain from participating in the program?” and “Did participants change targeted behaviors after participation in the program?”

After an evaluation, the results you find can feed back into the logic model and improve the design and implementation of your program. For example, if you learned from a process evaluation that your program successfully reached children but not their parents, another key targeted audience, you may revise your marketing activities in the next version of the logic model. Alternatively, if you learned from an outcome evaluation that participants did not retain some important information from the program, you may decide to revise your logic model to change the format or time spent in educational activities related to this content.
AN INTRODUCTION TO LOGIC MODELS

Resources/Inputs

Resources needed to operate your program.

Activities

The processes, techniques, tools, events, technology, and actions of the planned program.

Outputs

The direct results of the size and scope of the products and services delivered by the program.

Outcomes

The specific changes in attitudes, behaviors, knowledge, skills, etc. as a result of the program.

Impact

The changes in system, organization, or community as a result of the program.

Logic models provide stakeholders with a road map describing the sequence of related events connecting the need for the planned program's desired results.

Logic models are useful in strategic planning because they:

1. Describe programs in clear and specific language.
2. Focus attention and resources on priority programs and key results.
3. Develop targeted communication and marketing.

Clear, well-organized ideas strengthen the case for program investment.

In program implementation, a logic model forms the core for a focused management plan that helps you identify and collect the needed data to monitor and improve programming.

In program design and planning, a logic model serves as a planning tool to develop program strategy and explain and illustrate program concepts.

For program evaluation and strategic reporting, a logic model presents program information and progress toward goals.
3 Approaches to Logic Models

Theory Approach
Emphasize change influencing program design. They are big picture and emphasize the reasons for beginning to explore an idea for a program. This model links theoretical ideas to explain underlying assumptions.

Outcome Approach
Focus on early program planning and connect the resources and/or activities with the desired results. These models often divide into short, mid, and long term. This model highlights activities and program implementation as well as the causal linkages between program components.

Activities Approach
Pay attention to the specifics of implementation. These models show what you will do if you get funded. This model connects program resources and activities making it a good model to track outcomes.