
Are We Making a Difference? Evaluating Community-Based Programs

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Lecture Overview

- Definitions and Common Understandings
 - Topic Areas:
 - Framing an Evaluation Question
 - Designing an Evaluation Plan
 - Using Appropriate Methods
 - Analyzing and Reporting Results
 - Open Discussion/Q&A
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Research in the Sciences vs. Research in Education²

- “Hard” knowledge
 - Produce findings that are replicable
 - Validated and accepted as definitive (i.e., what we know)
 - Knowledge builds upon itself– “skyscrapers of knowledge”
 - Oriented toward the construction and refinement of theory
- “Soft” knowledge
 - Findings based in specific contexts
 - Difficult to replicate
 - Cannot make causal claims due to willful human action
 - Short-term effort of intellectual accumulation– “village huts”
 - Oriented toward practical application in specific contexts
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Social Science or Education

Research vs. Evaluation

- “...is restricted to empirical research, and bases its conclusions only on factual results—that is, observed, measured, or calculated data.”
 - “...doesn’t establish standards or values and integrate them with factual results to reach evaluative conclusions.”⁶
 - “...determines the merit, worth, or value of things. The evaluation process identifies relevant values or standards that apply to what is being evaluated, performs empirical investigation using techniques from the social sciences, and then integrates conclusions with the standards into an overall evaluation or set of evaluations.”⁷
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What is Evaluation?

Evaluation is the application of social science research to determine the worth, value and/or impact of program activities on participants.

-CMP

Definitions, p. 2-3

- Activities
 - Formative evaluation
 - Impacts
 - Instrument
 - Logic Model
 - Mixed-method evaluation
 - Outcomes
 - Summative evaluation
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Partnership Principles, p. 4

- Serve common purpose, goals evolve
 - Agreed upon mission, values, goals, outcomes
 - Mutual trust, respect, genuineness, commitment
 - Identified strengths and assets, address needs and increase capacity
 - Balances power, shares resources
 - Clear and open communication
 - Principles and processes are established
 - Feedback is sought
 - Partners share benefits of accomplishments
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**Programs are designed to
solve problems.**

The bane of evaluation is a poorly designed program.

-Ricardo Millett, Director
WKKF Evaluation Unit

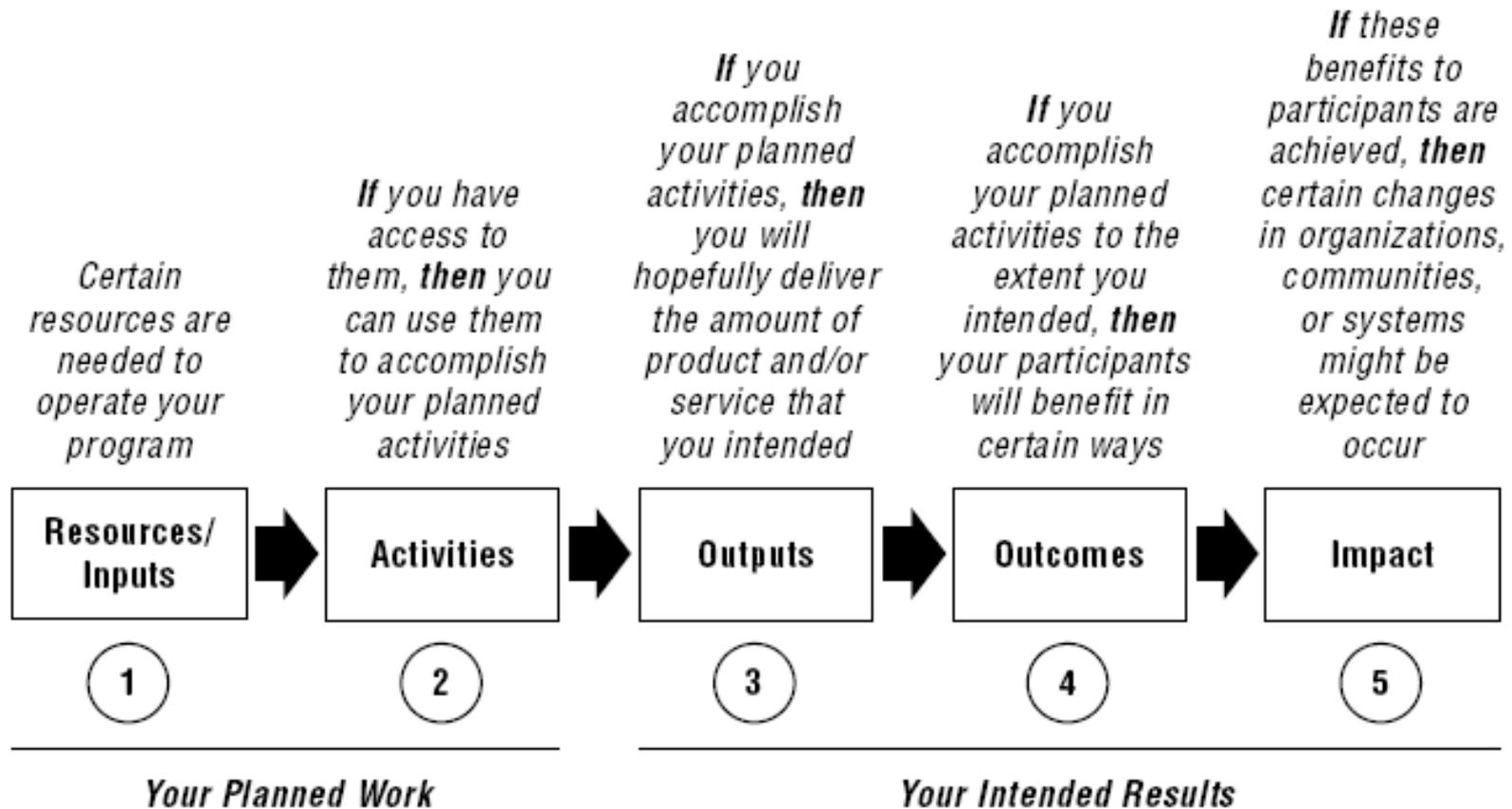
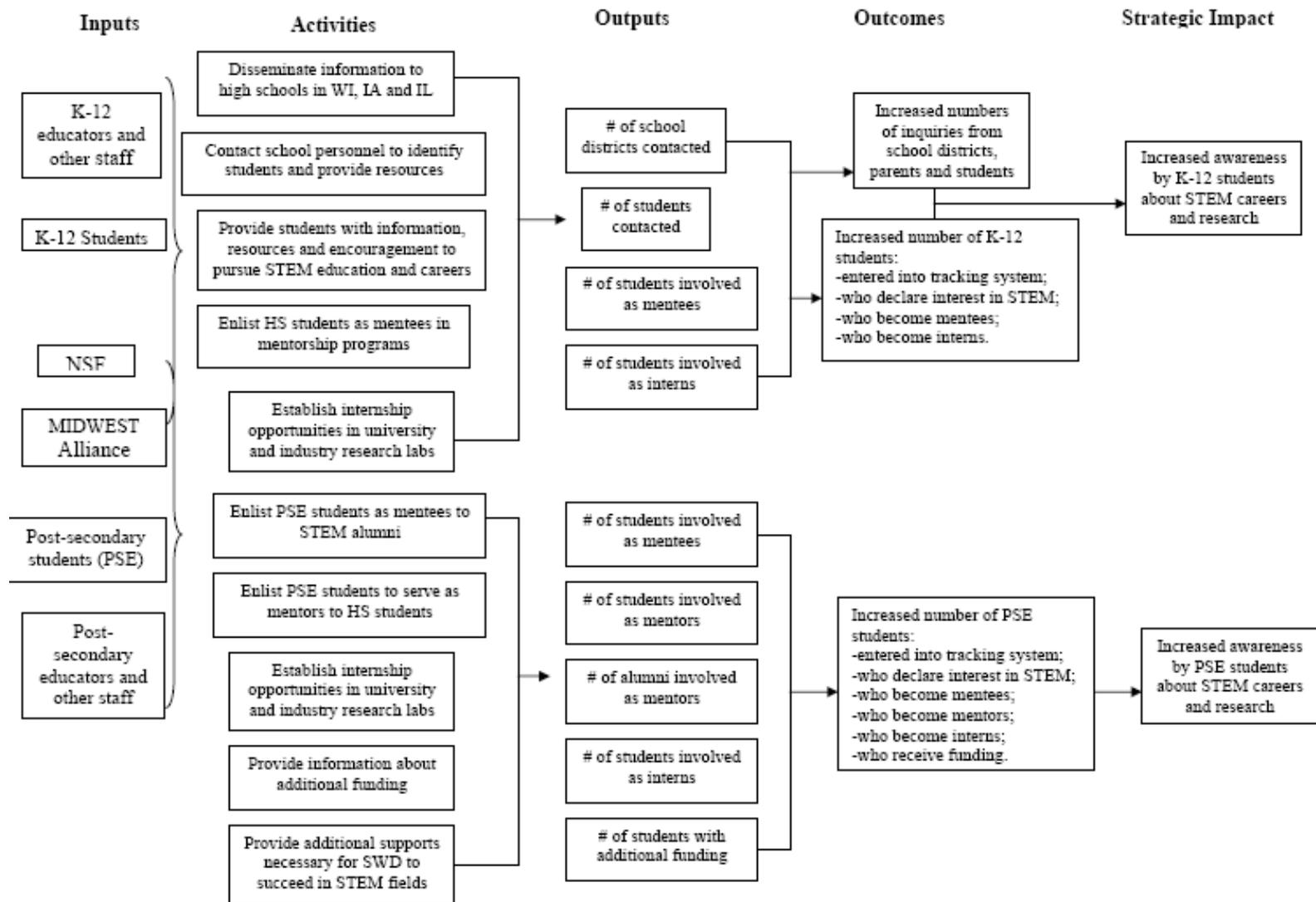


Figure 2. How to Read a Logic Model.

The “logic” behind a Logic Model, p. 5



Examples of Outcomes⁵

- Know the daily nutritional requirements for a pregnant woman (knowledge)
 - Recognize that school achievement is necessary to future success (attitude)
 - Believe that cheating on a test is wrong (value)
 - Are able to read at a 6th grade level (skill)
 - Use verbal rather than physical means to resolve conflict (behavior)
 - Have improved health (condition)
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Your goal, in evaluating a program, is to determine if and how well your outputs and outcomes are met.

Resources	Activities	Outputs	Short- and Long-term Outcomes	Impact
<p><i>In order to accomplish our set of activities, we will need the following:</i></p>	<p><i>In order to address our problem, we will accomplish the following activities:</i></p>	<p><i>We expect that once accomplished, these activities will produce the following evidence of service delivery:</i></p>	<p><i>We expect that if accomplished, these activities will lead to the following changes in less than 3 years and then 4-6 years:</i></p>	<p><i>We expect that if accomplished, these activities will lead to the following changes in 7-10 years:</i></p>

Framing Evaluation Questions

Framing Evaluation Questions:

What do you want to know?

- Answer based on:
 - ❑ Overall goal or purpose of the grant
 - ❑ Objectives or intended outcomes of the grant
 - ❑ How data needs to be reported to the funding agency
 - ❑ What the results will be used for
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Levels of Evaluation⁹

- Participation
 - Satisfaction
 - Learning or Gains
 - Application
 - Impact
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Questions at Each Level

- Who attends the workshop? Who uses the services? Who is not visiting the agency or is not coming back? Why not?
 - Do the participants enjoy the workshop? Are participants getting the services they need? Do they enjoy visiting the agency?
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Questions at Each Level

- What knowledge or skills did the participants learn immediately? What are the immediate effects of what the participants received or the services they used?
- How has the information been applied in their daily life? Are the skills or behaviors used in various settings?
- How does their participation impact or address the original issue problem?

What do I want to know?	At which level am I evaluating the program?

Levels of Evaluation Activity, p. 7

Designing an Evaluation Plan

Evaluation Plans

- Consist of:
 - Evaluation questions
 - Methods to answer questions
 - Data collection techniques, instruments
 - Data Sources
 - Timeline
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Mixed-methods Design¹

- Uses both qualitative and quantitative methods
 - Can use both methods at the same time (parallel) or at different points in time (sequential).
 - Data are used for various purposes:
 - Confirmatory
 - Exploratory
 - Instrument-building
 - Complementary
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Example: You run a community agency that runs educational programs for people of all ages. Lately, you notice that your participation numbers are down.

Your research question is this:

What are people's perceptions of our agency and how can we improve our programs?

You run a focus group and analyze data (qualitative). These themes are turned into survey questions, which is sent to all previous participants (quantitative).

Using Appropriate Methods, p. 8

From whom and how will I collect data?

- Demographic or participant databases
 - Assessments— tests, rubrics
 - Surveys
 - Focus Groups
 - Individual Interviews
 - (Participant) Observations
 - Document Analysis
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Goal of Focus Group⁸: *What are community resident's perceptions about our educational programs and what could be improved?*

- What educational programs have you attended? Why did you attend them?
 - Did they meet your expectations? Why or why not?
 - What are some of the things you look for when choosing a class?
 - When is the best time of day to offer them?
 - Have you referred others to our program?
 - What changes could we make in the content of the programs to make them more interesting to you?
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To what degree was your organization involved in:			
	Very much	Somewhat	Not at all
Defining the project?	14 78%	4 22%	0 0%
Developing the grant proposal?	5 28%	8 44%	5 28%
Affecting the project's direction?	12 67%	6 33%	0 0%
Addressing challenges or issues as they arose?	13 72%	3 17%	2 11%
Assessing the project's effectiveness?	13 72%	4 22%	1 6%
Deciding on next steps beyond the grant period?	9 50%	8 44%	1 6%

Please identify the primary objectives that you were trying to achieve due to this partnership.

Please identify the 1-2 most significant outcomes achieved due to this project.

Please identify 1-2 unanticipated outcomes due to this project.

In what ways did your campus partner(s) contribute to or detract from meeting your project objectives?

What impact has this project had on your organization's ability to carry out its mission?

Coding Qualitative Responses Activity, p. 16-17

- Read through the participant responses to the question: *What impact has this project had on your organization's ability to carry out its mission?*
 - Interpret each comment: What is the overarching “impact” reflected in this comment?
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Massachusetts Family Self-Sufficiency Scales and Ladders Assessment Form

HEALTH SCALE AND INDICATORS

CLIENT NAME: _____ ASSESSMENT DATE: _____

LADDERS↓	HEALTH COVERAGE	AFFORDABILITY	FAMILY HEALTH	SUBSTANCE/ ALCOHOL ABUSE	MENTAL/ BEHAVIORAL HEALTH	Number of boxes checked
THRIVING	Family has full coverage, which includes, primary, preventative, mental, dental, vision, and prescription. <input type="checkbox"/>	Co-payments are affordable. Family has capacity to access health services. <input type="checkbox"/>	Family members are in good health and/or accessing health services. <input type="checkbox"/>	Absence of substance/alcohol abuse or long-term (at-least one year) sobriety. <input type="checkbox"/>	Ability to meet and identify one's mental health and behavioral needs. <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/>
STABLE	Family has full health coverage, which includes primary care & prevention but, 1 or more not covered: mental, dental, vision, and prescription. <input type="checkbox"/>	Co-payments are affordable. <input type="checkbox"/>	Family members are in good health and/or accessing health services. <input type="checkbox"/>	Continuance of sobriety. <input type="checkbox"/>	Working to meet mental health and behavior needs. <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/>
SAFE	Health care available with a subsidy. <input type="checkbox"/>	Inconsistent use of health care system. <input type="checkbox"/>	Preventative care. <input type="checkbox"/>	Completed treatment. <input type="checkbox"/>	Ability to cope with unmet mental health and behavior needs. <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/>
AT-RISK	Limited access to medical care with no primary care provider. <input type="checkbox"/>	Inappropriate use of the health care system. <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsound basic health/hygiene. <input type="checkbox"/>	Current treatment for substance or alcohol abuse. <input type="checkbox"/>	Unmet mental health and behavior needs. <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/>
IN CRISIS	No health coverage. <input type="checkbox"/>	No/very limited access to free care. <input type="checkbox"/>	Family member(s) have critical untreated health problems; and/or medical disability. Poor basic health/hygiene. <input type="checkbox"/>	Active substance abuse/ addiction. <input type="checkbox"/>	Unable to get treatment for unmet mental health and behavior problems. <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/>

Question	Data Collection Method	Data Sources	Timeline

Evaluation Plan Activity, p. 14

Ensure “validity” and “reliability” in your study

- Triangulate your data whenever possible.
 - Ask others to review your design methodology, observations, data, analysis, and interpretations.
 - Ensure there is a fit between your data and what occurs in the setting under study.
 - Rely on your study participants to “member check” your findings.
 - Note limitations of your study.
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Reporting Results³

- Simplify language so that readers without backgrounds in research or statistics can readily understand the content of a report.
 - Create simple tabular material that readers can more easily interpret than dense statistical tables sometimes found in scholarly research journals.
 - Incorporate inviting graphics into materials intended for general audiences. These tend to encourage reading and help reader understanding of the material.
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Reporting Results

- Enlist the aid of journalists and other communicators who can help both in designing the information for mass consumption and in placing the information in media that the general reader will see.
 - Publish on the Internet, an extraordinarily powerful tool for making information accessible to a wide audience.
 - Make certain that the research supports your conclusions, that the work contributes to advancing the level of education, and that a critical eye was used to examine the purpose, the objectivity, and the methodology behind the study.
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Human Subjects Research

- Two issues with ethics:
 - Informed Consent
 - Protection of subjects from harm
- Go through Human Subject's Institutional Review Board(s) if necessary
- Be cautious with:
 - Power relationships between you and your research participants
 - Breaking confidentiality or anonymity
- Bottom line— do no harm!

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