THE SALVATION ARMY

Canada and Bermuda Territory

Evaluation Toolkit

SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Program Development and Evaluation

Bradley Harris
Social Services Department
Territorial Headquarters
Canada and Bermuda
2 Overlea Blvd. Toronto, ON M4H 1P4
bradley_harris@can.salvationarmy.org

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Program Development and Evaluation

I have never let my schooling interfere with my education.
– Mark Twain

P rogram evaluation is a key component in successful program delivery. Evaluation provides feedback on whether or not a program is effective in achieving what it was designed to accomplish. It is part of the process of program development: **planning, implementation and evaluation**. The process is a circular one which begins with the evaluation of the client needs. A program plan is developed to address the needs and then implemented in the delivery of service. Evaluation follows to determine the effectiveness of the plan. This feedback is used for future planning.

Generally speaking, there are one or more reasons that an evaluation will be conducted by programs. One reason is to make management decisions. Data from program evaluation helps make internal management decisions about what is and what is not working, where improvement is needed, and how resources can best be allocated. The second reason is to demonstrate accountability. Data from program evaluation can be used to demonstrate to current funders that their investment is yielding the intended results. The results can also be used in marketing tools, such as brochures or published reports that help promote a program to potential participants and potential funders. And the third reason for program evaluation is that it can be used to build sustainability. The results from evaluation can be used to show the impact a program has had on an individual, family or community and thereby secure funding for sustainability.

The initial steps in program evaluation are to define program goals and how services aim to meet them. Bringing together stakeholders for the program and clarifying goals together helps all stakeholders, including staff, identify program content and intentions.

A useful approach to goal setting is the development of a logic model. A logic model is a concise way to show how a program is designed and can make a difference for a program's participants and community. A logic model summarizes the key elements of a program,

reveals the rationale behind the program's service delivery approach, articulates the intended results of the program and how they can be measured, and shows the cause-and-effect relationships between the program and its intended results. Whether or not a program chooses to develop a logic model, it is crucial that it has clearly articulated goals and objectives in order to determine the purpose of its program evaluation. Evaluation provides a continuous flow of useful information. A logic model can be a valuable tool to help plan your program and to identify what information will be useful.

A logic model is both a method for planning and a visual way to organize and communicate the connections between parts of a program. It helps you to picture an entire system and the resources that you will use. Generally speaking, logic models are used to describe programs clearly and in detail to support understanding and evaluation, draw logical connections between program resources and targeted key results to support learning and program improvement and promote a participatory communication process. Using a logic model throughout your program helps organize and systematize program planning, implementation and evaluation functions.

In program **planning**, a logic model serves as a planning tool to develop program strategy and enhance your ability to clearly explain and illustrate program concepts and approach for key stakeholders, including funders. Logic models can help create structure and organization for program design and build in self-evaluation based on shared understanding of what is to take place. During the planning phase, developing a logic model requires stakeholders to examine best practice research and practitioner experience in light of the strategies and activities selected to achieve results.

In program **implementation**, a logic model forms the basis for a management plan that is focused and helps you identify and collect the data needed to improve programming. Using the logic model during program implementation and management requires you to focus on achieving and documenting results. Logic models help you to consider and prioritize the program aspects most critical for tracking and reporting and make adjustments as necessary.

For program **evaluation**, a logic model presents program information and progress toward objectives and goals in ways that inform, advocate for a particular program approach and teach program stakeholders.

Basically, a logic model is a framework that organizes a program and shows planned results. It helps programs to stay on target and recognize whether they are off course. Logic models generally lead to more effective programs, greater learning among stakeholders and a clearer understanding about what does and does not work. Planning and monitoring your progress with a logic model is an important way of systematically evaluating your steps along the way and producing measurable impact.

Developing a Program Logic Model

The beginning of knowledge is the discovery of something we do not understand. – Frank Herbert

I n designing an evaluation, it is important to be clear about the goals of the program and to be realistic about the expectations for which it can be held accountable. A logic model is a useful tool to assist programs in defining their goals and determining the focus of their evaluation. Many organizations rely on logic models to help guide planning and program improvement efforts. Using a logic model also helps create a framework for evaluation by identifying questions for each component. These improve the usefulness and clarity of the evaluation by focusing on questions that produce answers of real value for all stakeholders. Getting the right questions will help produce data that is the most useful. This part of the guide describes how to develop a logic model.

Logic models can be helpful as they improve understanding of program components or activities by clarifying what is actually done by staff on a day to day basis, by distinguishing between administrative activities and activities designed to create change and by highlighting those activities that share common objectives. Furthermore, logic models can be helpful as they lead to high quality evaluation by suggesting key relationships to be tested, highlighting important research design considerations and suggesting appropriate measurement strategies.
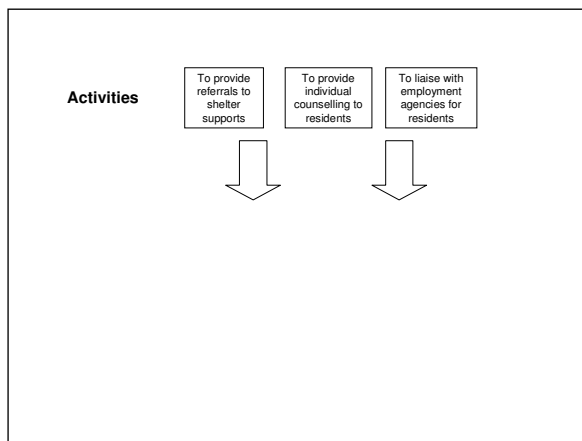
Activities

To provide referrals to shelter supports

To provide individual counselling to residents

To liaise with employment agencies for residents

The first component of a basic logic model is program activities. Program activities, or simply activities, describe what is done by staff on a daily basis. These are the daily tasks and interactions that the program staff are involved with. When we talk about a

program, it is most often broader in meaning than a program activity. For building logic models, activities should be based on the kinds of things that are done with program participants in order to produce positive change rather than on such things as administrative tasks.

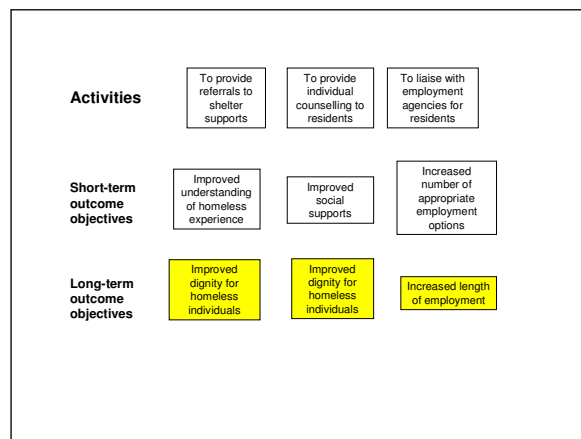It is expected that once completed or underway, activities will produce evidence of service delivery. These are what are referred to as outputs. Outputs are direct measures or products of service delivery. These can be things such as the number of classes offered or the number of attendees. Outputs are often used to answer questions such as "did the activities occur as planned?" or "are our services being used to their full potential?" This is typical of process evaluations. Outputs are sometimes referred to as "benchmarks", especially when a particular increase in quantity or change in quality is described. You could then measure to see if you reached that benchmark. You need to associate outputs with activities. Outputs are often written into logic models.

Activities	To provide referrals to shelter supports	To provide individual counselling to residents	To liaise with employment agencies for residents
Outputs	# of referrals to shelter supports	# of counselling sessions	# of agencies met with
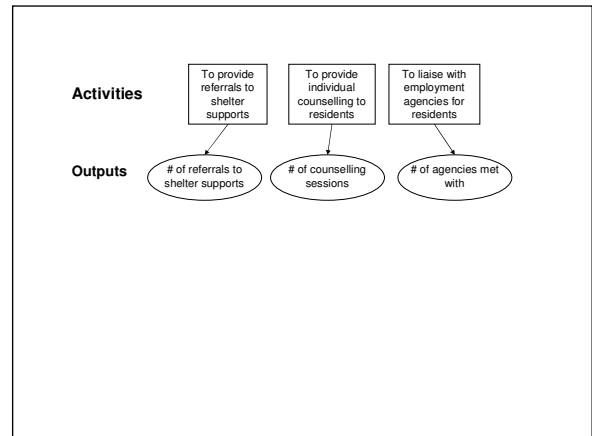
The next layer of the logic model is short-term outcome objectives. Short-term outcome objectives are the immediate benefits or changes that are expected as a result of the program activities. Outcome objectives should, where possible, refer to some sort of change and direction to change. Words that lack objectivity such as "empower", "enhance" and "encourage" should 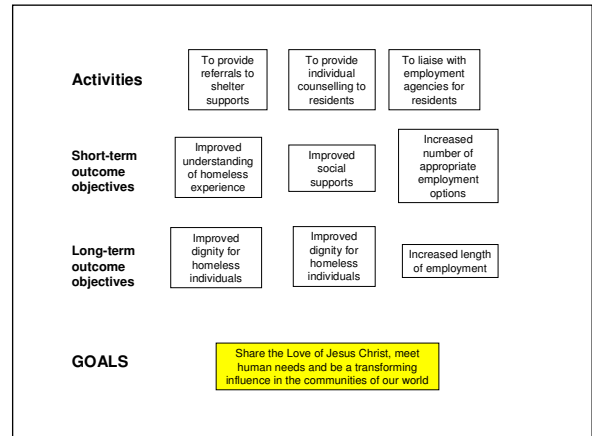be avoided. The most common words to use are "increase" and "improve". It should be possible to identify a clear, direct intended causal link between at least one program activity and each identified short-term outcome objective. "Short term" is a relative term rather than absolute term as there may be no specific time limit on achievement of outcomes.

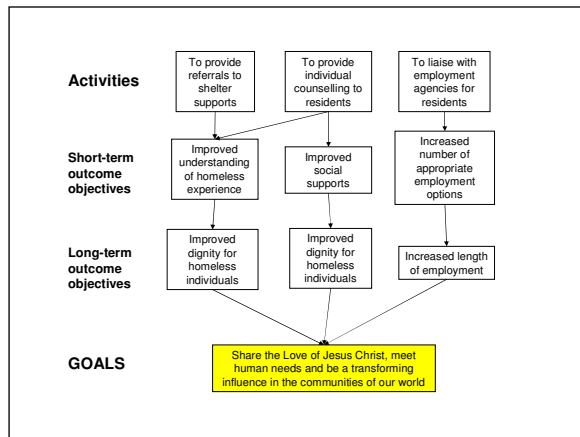|			
Activities	To provide referrals to shelter supports	To provide individual counselling to residents	To liaise with employment agencies for residents
Short-term outcome objectives	Improved understanding of homeless experience	Improved social supports	Increased number of appropriate employment options
Long-term outcome objectives	Improved dignity for homeless individuals	Improved dignity for homeless individuals	Increased length of employment

Following short-term objectives in the logic model is long-term outcome objectives. These are the more distant benefits or changes that the target groups are anticipated to experience or display as a result of the initiative. Long-term objectives are sometimes called "impacts" conveying the idea that they have broader significance than short-term outcomes. Generally, long-term outcome objectives are the second-order changes that result from successful achievement of short-term outcomes over time. Sometimes it is not practical or feasible to measure long-term objectives and may have

to be inferred from attainment of short-term objectives. As with short-term objectives, try to use objective wording that refers to change.

The last layer on our logic model is program goals. Goals are the longest term, broad vision of your program. They are often a reflection of an organization's mission statement or mandate. Typically goals are measured directly. Long-term objectives should all lead to a program goal. An example of a program goal is "Improved quality of life of community members" or "Eliminate family violence".

Activities — To provide referrals to shelter supports | To provide individual counselling to residents | To liaise with employment agencies for residents

Short-term outcome objectives — Improved understanding of homeless experience | Improved social supports | Increased number of appropriate employment options

Long-term outcome objectives — Improved dignity for homeless individuals | Improved dignity for homeless individuals | Increased length of employment

GOALS — Share the Love of Jesus Christ, meet human needs and be a transforming influence in the communities of our world

The final step for the logic model is in connecting the boxes and creating program logic. This is done through the use of arrows on your model. Whenever you draw an arrow from an activity to a short-term outcome objective or between outcome objectives you are making a statement about the theory and logic of your program . Your arrows can be thought of as your "validity assumptions" or the assumptions you make about "what causes what, and why" within your program. These assumptions also refer to the necessary conditions that need to be present for the link to be considered valid. Validity assumptions can be determined from: research literature, knowledge of best practices in the field, personal experience and common sense and logic.

Activities — To provide referrals to shelter supports | To provide individual counselling to residents | To liaise with employment agencies for residents

Short-term outcome objectives — Improved understanding of homeless experience | Improved social supports | Increased number of appropriate employment options

Long-term outcome objectives — Improved dignity for homeless individuals | Improved dignity for homeless individuals | Increased length of employment

GOALS — Share the Love of Jesus Christ, meet human needs and be a transforming influence in the communities of our world

There are two key outcomes of the logic model exercises. The first is a clear statement about the purpose of the intervention. These can be modified over time. The other is a supporting rationale that is grounded in the appropriate literature and a sense of the logical context. This reflection is a good start for understanding your program.

Logic models come in many different formats. There is no "correct" way to format models. However, as a rule, models are more useful if they clearly present logical linkages. A logic model is not an outcome but a process. You can expect to go through many iterations of your model. It is only useful in so far as it is used.

Program Logic Model Exercises

Program logic models are a tool that help you to map the relationships between what you actually do in your program, and what outcomes you hope to achieve. It's called a logic model because it's a way of laying out the logic and reasoning or rationale that your program is based on. The basic steps in developing a logic model are described in these three exercises. A logic model template is included at the end of this chapter.

Exercise 1: Describing your Activities

In this exercise, you will begin creating a logic model by constructing the first layer – your program activities. First, pick a program. Then think about the day to day activities of your program, what your staff and/or volunteers do on a day to day basis in as concrete terms as possible. Then focus on activities that involve contact with clients or the community.

Staff are often "doing things", like "providing", "teaching", "raising awareness", "creating", etc. so try to use these types of active verbs. List as many activities as you can and try to be as honest as you can about what you actually do.

Try and put your activities into "clusters" if they are similar on a behavioural level. Another way to make this judgment is to ask yourself if the two activities have the same intended short-term outcome objectives? If so, they can probably be combined.

Some of the things to avoid are putting "outcome" language into your activities. For example, avoid terms like "prevent", "increase", or "improve". Identify the things that happen that *lead* to prevention, increases, or improvements.

Avoid "double barreled" activities (e.g., "provide education and personal support"). This is especially important as these might result in different outcomes. Separate them if possible.

While administrative tasks are important and vital (e.g., team meetings, hiring functions, etc.), it is unnecessary to include them in the logic model because they do not directly impact program objectives. You can safely leave these out.

Exercise 2: Identifying the Outcome Objectives for your Program

Now we would like to develop the 2nd and 3rd layers of the logic model – the short-term & long-term objectives. You will be working with the logic model which will now already contain your activities.

Develop a list of objectives that describe what your program is intended to achieve. Include as many objectives as you can. At this point do not worry too much about lining up your outcome objectives with your activities. You will make these connections later. However, thinking about the impacts of your activities will help generate your outcome objectives. You might also think about your mission, marketing materials, grant proposals, and your own reasons for doing your job.

Focus on how the program makes a difference or change in your clients or the community. For example, if an objective of the program is to give people someone to talk to, ask yourself how this may help an individual.

Write your objectives in a way that refers to change that can be measured. For example, it is easier to start thinking about measuring an outcome objective if it involves an "increase" in something (e.g. in knowledge, or social support, etc.). Measurement is less straightforward if it involves "enhancing" something.

Write your short-term outcomes and your long-term outcomes in the corresponding areas on the template. Think about sequence. Logically, some outcomes will necessarily precede others. Try to arrange them temporally from top to bottom.

Exercise 3: Putting it all Together

This final exercise involves making the logical connections between activities and outcome objectives. This will result in a preliminary (but fairly complete) draft of your program logic model.

First, write the goal or goals of your program. These are broad, often lofty statements about the mission of your organization. There should only be a few (and often only one) and they should be very long-term. They should read like outcome objectives but can be more ambitious (e.g., to eliminate poverty in the country).

Begin to draw the connections between the activities and your short-term objectives and between your short-term objectives and your long-term objectives. Keep in mind the following:
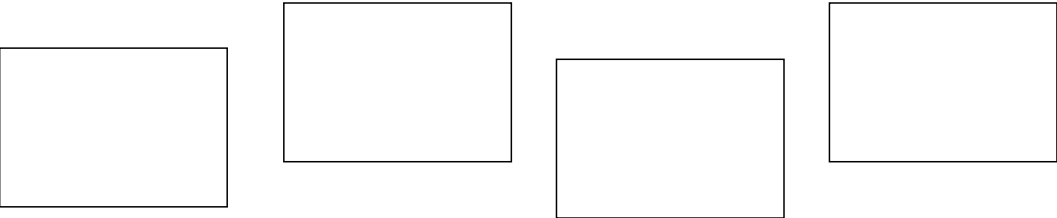
All short-term objectives should be linked to at least one activity; all activities should be linked to at least one short-term objective. All long-term objectives should be linked to at least one short-term objective; all short-term objectives should be linked to at least one long-term objective.

Logic Model Template

Activities

Short-term outcome objectives

Long-term outcome objectives

GOALS

Outcome Measurement

That is what learning is. You suddenly understand something you've understood all your life, but in a new way. – Doris Lessing

T hinking through program evaluation questions in terms of the logic model components you have developed can provide the framework for your evaluation plan. Having a framework increases your evaluation's effectiveness by focusing in on questions that have real value for your stakeholders. Prioritization of where to invest in the evaluation activities will contribute the most useful information for program stakeholders.

Outcome measurement assesses the degree to which a particular intervention made a difference. Outcome measurement is different from other types of research such as process evaluation, needs assessment and original research. These are not strictly speaking outcome measurement. Why do these distinctions matter for outcome measurement? Because outcome measurement needs to link broad community outcomes (e.g., reduced poverty) to more immediate and short-term program outcomes in order to measure logical associations. Many interventions make only subtle, gradual or indirect changes.

Outcome measurement is the regular, systematic tracking of the degree to which program participants experience the benefits or changes intended. It is the ability to measure whether a program makes a difference in the lives of participants. Measurement has to do with detecting change.

In preparing for measurement, there are some basic steps to take into consideration. Program logic clarifies activities, outcome objectives, and the relationships among them. For each outcome objective, decide what questions need to be answered. These are the evaluation questions you will need to know. For each evaluation question, there will be indicators that determine what specific, observable and accessible bits of information will help provide an answer. You should plan your evaluations thoroughly. People often move to data collection but get data that might not be as beneficial. First clarify the program logic. Then decide what you want to know about the objectives. And the think about what indicators can help you measure outcomes.

In order to make the most of data collection, decide who you need to get information from and how you might get it. The method you are going to use to assess the degree and direction of change will provide your form of measurement. Your design will be based on the evaluation questions, indicators, and logistical or ethical constraints and determine the best research approach to use. Data analysis will assist you as you think ahead about how you will make sense of the data once you have it. Think about how you are you going to get the data. Then where are you going to get the data from. Plan ahead in order to get the most out of your evaluation

There is a framework for outcome measurement that we will be using. The evaluation planning worksheet can be used as a template.

Objective	Research Questions	Indicators	Where will we get the information?	What data collection tools will we use?	Data Analysis
Outcome objective from logic model	May refer to success in meeting objectives (from your logic model) or other questions stakeholders feel the evaluation should address.	Things you can you observe that will help you to answer this question.	Who will you speak to? How would you access existing information?	Given what is written in columns to the left, what method or methods are most efficient and effective?	How are you going to make sense of the data you collect?

The key measurement question pertains to what you can observe that will help to test or better understand the assertions from your logic model. In referring back to the logic model, activities are intended to lead to short-term objectives and long-term objectives. What can you observe that will help you understand the claims your program has put forth? The purpose of an evaluation question is to find out what you really want to know, why you want the answers and what you will do with the answers.

Outcome measurement questions are the questions we need to ask to assess the accomplishment of each outcome objective and the most central question is most often a rewording of the outcome objective. For example, if the objective is *increased social support among participants* then the evaluation question might be *do clients experience an increase in social support as a result of participating in this program?* Sometimes you might ask different kinds of questions about an objective. Other evaluation questions you may ask about might deal with the specific inputs or outputs, how the program was implemented, what problems were encountered, lessons learned and changes made in the process of program implementation. For example, *do clients come to the program in order to get a sense of support from other residents, or for other reasons?* The types of evaluation questions will depend on the stage of the program.

Objectives and evaluation questions lead to a variety of indicators. Indicators are observable bits of information that are used to determine how you will know whether the outcome objectives are being achieved. They are measurable approximations of the outcomes you are trying to achieve. A good indicator is empirical in nature, practical and is as close as you can get to the reality that you are interested in measuring. A good indicator will help to further

operationalize an objective and help to get into the finer points as to what you mean by that. It leads to good measurement and methodology.

Some of the sources for indicators that you might consider are research literature, data already gathered for other purposes, observations, perceptions of key informants (including program participants and staff) and standardized measurement tools. The main message about indicators is that good measurement is often an act of creative compromise and balance. Indicators are centrally important to our process, but it isn't easy to come up with hard and fast rules about how to do them well. Good measurement is most often achieved with a strategic combination of 2 or 3 imperfect indicators.

Once you have some clear questions and some good indicators for each of your questions, the next step is to develop a plan for gathering the information. Design involves balancing two competing demands: practicality and rigour. What is meant by having a rigourous design is that you are able to decide whether the intended change was even needed and whether it was important to begin with. You should be able to decide how much individuals have changed, be able to compare the change that has taken place and determine if it is a meaningful change. In order to make outcome measurement "rigourous", there should be a well established "audit trail" to track exactly what information was used to reach conclusions. Outcomes should be tied to a logic model or clear program description and statement of objectives.

There are some easy ways to make your design more practical and efficient. First of all, narrow your focus with research questions. Then, compare the return on different measurement choices. You can use indicator lists to minimize the length and intrusiveness of surveys. Only gather data that you intend to use. And get input from stakeholders at each stage. It is important to spend time on getting stakeholders to buy into the process. Spend time on ownership.

The final stage for outcome measurement is data analysis. As the data is collected, how are you going to analyze the data? A collection of rocks does not make a house. Neither does a collection of facts make an evaluation. It is important to read all of the data and basically try to organize it where possible. Remind yourself that you were only trying to gather certain things. Review your original questions and refresh your memory about the questions you originally planned to answer through the study. This will help you stay focused when the data seems overwhelming. Begin summarizing and coding your data. Be conscious of research questions, but be open to emerging patterns. Generate themes. Begin writing. Plan the structure of the report, using both original research questions and your set of themes. Use narratives or case study examples to bring light to important context. And finally, provide and receive feedback. Share your findings with stakeholders, in order to ensure that the findings reflect their experiences accurately.

Evaluation Design Planning Chart - template

Objective	Research Questions	Indicators	Where will we get the information?	What data collection tools will we use?	Data Analysis
Outcome objective from logic model	*May refer to success in meeting objectives (from your logic model) or other questions stakeholders feel the evaluation should address.*	*Things you can you observe that will help you to answer this question.*	*Who will you speak to? How would you access existing information?*	*Given what is written in columns to the left, what method or methods are most efficient and effective?*	*How are you going to make sense of the data you collect?*

Adapted from the Centre for Research and Education in Human Services

Communicating Your Findings

Think like a wise man but communicate in the language of the people.
– W.B. Yates

T he program evaluation is not complete until the findings are communicated. It is important to consider key stakeholder audiences such as program participants, staff, administrators, director and board, local policymakers, community leaders, and key media when writing an evaluation report.

When reporting findings, keep in mind the various audiences that are interested in the outcome of the evaluation efforts. Some funders want extensive discussion of major and minor findings, while others are interested in only a summary of major findings. In either case, it is important to ensure the clarity of the presentation of findings by reporting findings one at a time. The performance measure related to the finding, the outcome of the information collected, how the finding relates to the overall goal of the program and, if available, other research in the field related to the same topic should be clearly discussed. And think about the implications of findings for practice and possibly public policy. Some evaluations lend themselves to a discussion of recommendations that might assist other practitioners who want to design a similar program.

In addition to including the information necessary to meet funder and other stakeholder expectations, the readability of the report can be enhanced by including illustrative examples that bring the data to life. During the course of the evaluation, programs usually collect data from multiple sources and in a variety of formats—not only facts and figures, but case examples and feedback from participants. Incorporating this information into the final evaluation report can make the report more user-friendly to multiple stakeholder audiences.

Glossary of Selected Terms

(taken from United Way of Greater Toronto PEOD)

Outcome Measurement is a process of regular monitoring of the results of a program for its participants or organization against agreed-upon goals and objectives.

A **Program Logic Model** is a tool that supports program planning and outcome measurement design by helping organizations recognize the relationship between program activities and changes expected to occur as a result of these activities. The relationship is typically illustrated by a flow chart. Components of the program logic model include inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and indicators.

Inputs are resources dedicated to achieving program outcomes and are used in the delivery of a service.

Activities describe what an agency does or what services it provides to run a program that will help the agency meet its mission.

Outputs are the direct products of program activities, usually measured in terms of the volume of work accomplished. A program's outputs should produce desired outcomes for the program's participants.

Outcomes are the benefits or changes for participants during or after their involvement with a program or service. For a particular program, there can be various levels of outcomes, with initial outcomes leading to longer-term ones.

Indicators are specific items of information that track a program's success. They describe observable, measurable characteristics or changes that represent achievement of an outcome and they help to define what information must be collected to answer evaluation questions.

A **Goal** expresses the vision or purpose of a program, stated as the intended benefits or changes for participants of the community as a whole. A goal should specify one long-term outcome that is measurable, and ideally should state a timeframe and target level for its achievement.

Objectives define specific shorter-term outcomes that contribute to reaching the goals of a program. They can be conceptualized as markers along the way to a goal. While goals are broad and may be achieved over one or more years, objectives are clear, measurable and can be achieved in much shorter time periods.

An **Evaluation** encompasses activities that enable judgement of the worth or merit of an evaluation object such as programs, policies, organizations, products or individuals.

A **Program** is a specific service (or set of services) provided by an organization. It includes all of the work necessary to bring about the service(s).

References and Resources

Caledon Institute for Social Policy
(http://www.caledoninst.org)

Canadian Outcomes Research Initiative
(http://www.hmrp.net/CanadianOutcomesInstitute)

Centre for Research and Education in Human Services
(http://www.crehs.on.ca)

Harvard Family Research Project
(http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/index.html)

Tamarack Community
(http://tamarackcommunity.ca)

United Way of Greater Toronto Outcome Evaluation
(http://www.unitedwaytoronto.com)

University of Wisconsin – Extension
(http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande)

W.K. Kellogg Foundation
(http://www.wkkf.org)