

## Developing a Theory-of Change Logic Model For Your Program

*Drawing a picture of why your program should succeed*

**W**hether you are a grantseeker developing a proposal for start-up funds or a grantee with a program already in operation, developing a logic model can strengthen your program. Logic models help identify the factors that will impact your program and enable you to anticipate the data and resources you will need to achieve success. As you engage in the process of creating your program logic model, your organization will systematically address these important program planning and evaluation issues:

- Description of the change strategy that your program supports.
- Definition of the problem you are attempting to address.
- Quantification of the scope of the needs or assets that make the case for your selection of the problem you address.
- Acknowledgement of the factors that may influence your ability to create change in your community.
- Application of best practice research that supports plausible solution strategies for identified problem area.
- Statement of your assumptions about why your selected strategies will work in your community in the ways you described.

**Exercise 3: Program Planning constructs a program theory.** Successful programs create change and are built on a solid knowledge of what works—your program’s theory. Exercise 3 guides you through a series of six steps that diagram the fundamental theory that supports your program. This supports and builds upon the basic logic model. In most cases, if you are developing a new program, this step should come first to inform your preliminary thinking. We have placed it after basic logic models because it is a slightly more complex exercise.

## THEORY-OF-CHANGE

## Exercise 3 – Constructing a Program Theory

### Program Planning

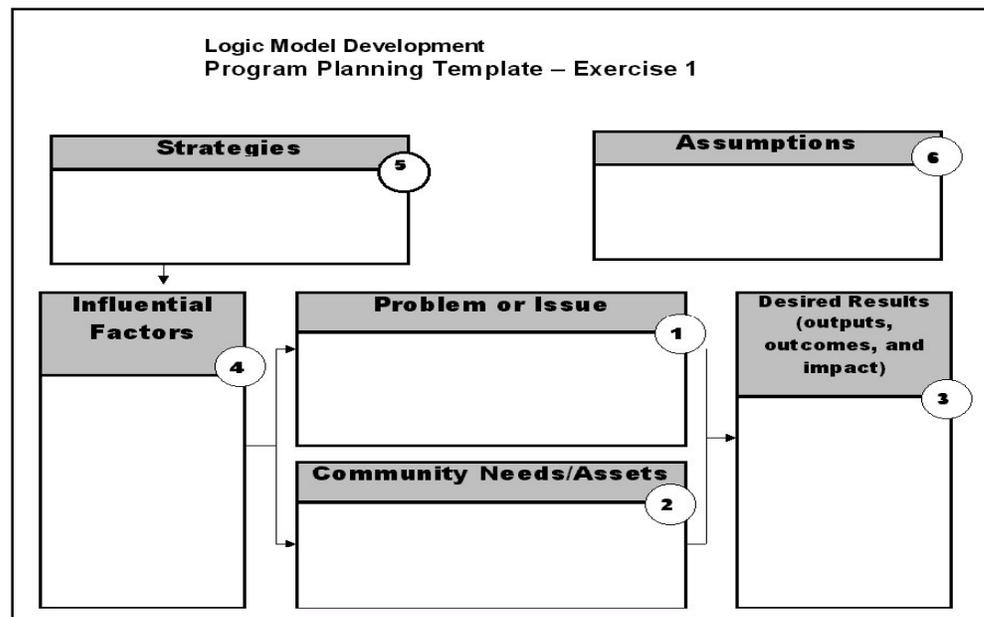
#### The Importance of Framing Your Problem (s) or Issue(s) with Sound Program Theory

Imagine you work for a funding organization. Each quarter you review a mountain of grant proposals from worthy organizations doing good work. All of them need money. What information would you require to determine which programs to fund? Funders tell us they look for organizations that have done their homework by clearly defining the problem they plan to address, describing the reasons behind their approach, and outlining how they anticipate measuring their achievements. Funding decisions are more favorable if you can demonstrate clearly how and why they will succeed. Logic models help you do just that.

Most grantees know what they want to do in their communities; Exercise 1 makes a sound case for *how* and *why* funders should invest in your program.

*It is crucial to begin program design with the basics.* Funders encourage grantees to start by clearly and succinctly explaining the problem(s) they plan to address. Completing Exercise 1 describes the issue(s) your program will address, identifies the needs and assets of your community that are related to your issue(s), and specifies why certain results are desired. Funders and donors generally limit their investments to certain areas of interest, so if your program addresses several issues, you may want to construct a logic model for each one.

#### Exercise 3 Uses The Theory-of-Change Template



## T H E O R Y - O F - C H A N G E

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Exercise 3 will use the Theory-of-Change Template. In particular, you will use the information presented in the gray text boxes that follow about the Mytown example program to determine what theory-of-change was used to design and develop this program. Example information about influential factors, the problem, community needs/assets, strategies, and assumptions are provided. You will fill in the blank Theory-of-Change Template provided in the Forms Index (p. 56) to illustrate the program theory for the Mytown example. You can then look at the completed template on page 34 to compare your interpretation with that produced by the Mytown folks.

**What problem(s) are you attempting to solve or what issue(s) are you striving to address?** A well-constructed program theory points toward your program's eventual effectiveness. Begin your problem statement explaining concisely the issue you will address, stating the issue either as a community problem or asset. Your theory-of-change logic model will be built upon this statement, which illustrates how the program will function and what it expects to achieve in your community. It is smart to refer to research about your program's problem or issue in your statement; Internet searches can provide other successful program or "best practice" information.

**PROBLEM STATEMENT EXAMPLE:** There are increasing numbers of uninsured male workers, aged 40-55, in Mytown, USA due to local plant closings. As the bottom line of hospitals shrink, the costs of uninsured care in local emergency rooms are negatively impacting local health systems. To meet the human and financial needs of Mytown, USA, an accessible, free medical home must be created to offer medical care and health education for Mytown's uninsured residents.

*Insert Mytown's Problem or Issue in the Problem or Issue box of the Theory-of-Change Template*

**What needs or assets led you to address this issue?** If a community needs assessment has been conducted or if you have prioritized community needs and capacity, data exist that make your case stronger and more specific by identifying and targeting your program's participants and activities. Documentation of community needs and assets also helps your evaluation plan later on. It can become a baseline providing indicators that measure progress made by your program over time. (Discussed in more detail in Chapter 4)

**DOCUMENTED NEEDS/ASSETS EXAMPLE:** Memorial Hospital's Annual Report states that 28% of uninsured male patients, aged 40-55, received emergency room care in the previous year. Last year's United Way Community Needs Assessment identified health care for the uninsured as the #1 community healthcare issue. The Medical Society and Memorial Hospital's Task Force on the Uninsured is researching ways to address the needs of the uninsured AND reduce costly, inappropriate ER use.

*Insert Mytown's community needs/assets in the Community Needs/Assets box of the Theory-of-Change Template.*

## T H E O R Y - O F - C H A N G E

**What are your desired results?** Identify what you expect your program to achieve in the near and longer term. These become your outputs, outcomes and impact.

**DESIRED RESULTS EXAMPLE:** Increase accessible, affordable healthcare for the uninsured and reduce the incidence of un-reimbursed care provided in emergency rooms. Create a free clinic that combines an appropriate, accessible, free medical home and patient education to reduce the numbers of uninsured males, aged 40-55, seeking care in emergency rooms. Anticipate a 15% increase in males, aged 40-55, with a free medical home and a 25% decrease in the incidence of uninsured men seeking care in the ER within 5 years.

*Insert Mytown's desired results (notice these are targeting men which is more specific than in the basic logic model example) in Desired Results box of the Theory-of-Change Template.*

**What influential factors (protective and/or risk) could influence change in your community?** What are the potential barriers and/or supports that might impact the change you hope for? Are there policies or other factors that could affect your program?

**INFLUENTIAL FACTOR EXAMPLE:** There is documented need for a free clinic. In its *Report for the New Millenium*, the Mytown Chamber of Commerce projects a 35% increase in the number of small businesses unable to afford employee healthcare benefits over the next five years. There is strong community support for a free clinic. At the request of Mytown United Way, Memorial Hospital and The Medical Society have created a joint task force to explore the creation of a free clinic.

*Insert Mytown's influential factors in the Influential Factors box of the Theory-of-Change Template.*

**THEORY-OF-CHANGE**

### Program Planning—Clarifying Program Theory

- ① **PROBLEM or ISSUE STATEMENT**

Describe the problem(s) your program is attempting to solve or the issue(s) your program will address.
- ② **COMMUNITY NEEDS/ASSETS**

Specify the needs and/or assets of your community that led your program to address the problem(s) or issue(s).
- ③ **DESIRED RESULTS (OUTPUTS, OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS)**

Identify your desired results, or vision of the future, by describing what you expect to achieve, near- or long-term, if your program is funded.
- ④ **INFLUENTIAL FACTORS**

List the factors (e.g., protective or risk factors, existing policy environment, or other factors) you believe will influence change in your community.
- ⑤ **STRATEGIES**

List general, successful strategies or “best practices” your research identified that have helped communities like yours achieve the kinds of results your program promises.
- ⑥ **ASSUMPTIONS**

State the assumptions behind *how* and *why* the identified change strategies will work in your community (e.g., principles, beliefs, ideas).

**Flowchart for Exercise 3**

## THEORY-OF-CHANGE

**Why do you believe your program will work?** Look for strong rationale based on “best practice” research that connects what you plan to do with *why* your approach will succeed. Funders are eager for evidence that supports why you propose the solutions you do. It’s a good idea to relate your approach to similar change strategies that have proven effective in communities like yours. Reviewing literature and past evaluation reports from other programs (or your own work) will provide you with ample information to construct your program rationale. The Internet makes it easier to research effective program strategies.

**PROGRAM STRATEGY EXAMPLE:** A clinic using volunteer medical professionals reduced emergency room care visits in Anothertown, USA in 1997 by 25%. A free clinic in Mytown, USA using volunteer medical professionals could provide crucial, affordable medical homes for growing numbers of uninsured residents preventing costly, inappropriate emergency room use by males 40-55 experiencing coronary emergencies.

*Insert Mytown’s strategies in the Strategies box of the Theory-of-Change Template.*

**Why will your approach be effective?** After you “make the case” for selecting a specific strategy from among the alternatives you researched, state “out loud” why this strategy is needed and why it will work in your community. It is important early on to document instances that describe the general condition of public reaction to your problem/issue and possible solutions.

You should draw direct conclusions about the statement of need and capacities in your community in your assumption. In addition, it should be quite apparent how your program intends to function as an intervention –to solve identified problems or build existing assets.

We list assumptions last in this exercise because in this abstracted learning format, the logic modeler has the benefit of all the information that supports assumptions. They are easier to spot and articulate with all the facts in front of you. In real-world conditions, assumption are best stated up-front—much earlier in the logic model development process—many basic logic models we have seen include a supporting page with the diagram that lists the assumptions that belie the model drawn.

**ASSUMPTION EXAMPLE:** As proven in Anothertown, access to affordable medical care reduces the incidence of emergency visits by providing appropriate, preventive primary care. A free medical clinic should prove successful in Mytown, because of its history of extraordinary volunteerism. Mytown’s Medical Society officially encourages its 400 medical professional members to volunteer 20 hours each year to help medically underserved community residents. Mytown’s Nursing Association is also interested in collaborating with a free clinic. Memorial Hospital has agreed to assist in planning and funding a free clinic. There is precedence for lending free facilities to medical projects serving those in need. Mytown’s technical college donates space for Mytown’s volunteer dental clinic. Mytown’s Free Clinic will be strongly supported by the people, businesses and institutions of Mytown, USA.

*Insert Mytown’s assumptions in the Assumptions box of the Theory-of-Change Template.*

## T H E O R Y - O F - C H A N G E

**Exercise 3 Checklist:** After completing Exercise 3 and constructing your program theory, you can use the following checklist to assess the quality of your draft. It's helpful if someone other than the model's creators reviews the first program draft and completes the checklist, too.

### Exercise 3 Check-list



| Exercise Three Checklist |  | Yes                      | Not Yet                  | Comments/Revisions |
|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| 1.                       | The problem(s) to be solved/or issue(s) to be addressed by the planned program is/are clearly stated.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |                    |
| 2.                       | There is a specific, clear connection between the identified community needs/assets and the problem(s) to be solved (or issue(s) to be addressed). | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |                    |
| 3.                       | The breadth of community needs/assets has been identified by expert/practitioner wisdom, a needs assessment and/or asset mapping process.          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |                    |
| 4.                       | The desired results/changes in the community and/or vision for the future ultimately sought by program developers are specific.                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |                    |
| 5.                       | Influential factors have been identified and cited from expert/practitioner wisdom and/or a literature review.                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |                    |
| 6.                       | Change strategies are identified and cited from expert/practitioner wisdom and/or literature review.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |                    |
| 7.                       | The connection among known influential factors and broad change strategies has been identified.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |                    |
| 8.                       | The assumptions held for how and why identified change strategies should work in the community are clear.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |                    |
| 9.                       | There is consensus among stakeholders that the model accurately describes the proposed program and its intended results.                           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |                    |

**THEORY-OF-CHANGE**

**Logic Model Development Program Planning Template – Exercise 3**

