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HOW TO USE A LOGIC MODEL FOR PLANNING NEW INJURY PREVENTION PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

BACKGROUND:

Evaluators in Canada have been recommending the use of program logic models for the purpose of evaluation planning since the mid 1980s (Corbeil, 1986; Rush & Ogbourne, 1991). However, more recently, logic models have come to be seen as an important tool for assisting with the planning of new programs or projects (Wong-Rieger & David, 1995; Porteous, Sheldrick & Stewart, 1997).

As of early 2007, the use of program logic models as a tool for program planning is still not common. However, the development of a logic model for a new program or project can be an extremely valuable step in planning. Using logic models in the planning of new programs and projects result in improved clarity of the program or project's description, reduced inconsistencies between planned activities and intended outcomes and the increased evaluability of the new programs or projects. A number of recommendations with regard to the process of developing logic models for program planning are presented below.

ISSUES IN CREATING LOGIC MODELS FOR USE IN PROGRAM PLANNING

When using the logic model as a tool for program planning there are a number of recommendations with regard to the development process for program logic models that are important to consider.

First, the development of the logic model should take place as early as possible in the process of program or project planning. Attempting to specify the intended outcomes to be produced by program or project activities is an extremely useful process for planners. It forces the planners of programs and projects to ensure that their logic is sound and that it is logically possible and feasible for the planned program or project to perform as intended in producing intended short-term and long-term outcomes for its' targets (e.g. clients, trainees).

Second, we have found that logic models are most accurate and useful when they are developed by a team of program personnel that include both management and line staff that have benefited from the group facilitation and logic model creation skills of a trained and experienced evaluator. The facilitation of the group process of logic model development by a skilled evaluator that is experienced in the development of logic models will ensure that intended outcomes of the program are specified in ways that can be evaluated.

Third, as noted by Rush and Ogbourne (1991), the process of developing a logic model is iterative. Following their group meeting, a rough draft is produced by the evaluator that is then reviewed by program planners. The second, revised draft, is then produced and again reviewed. This process goes on for as many repetitions as required until the program planners are satisfied with the final product.

Fourth, it is our experience that it is best to keep it simple when it comes to which structure of program logic models is used for program planning. Specifically, it is recommended that the logic model be comprised of the following elements: components, activities, targets, short-term outcomes and, long-term outcomes. This structure is the one advocated by Porteous et al. (1997) in their toolkit.¹

Fifth, it is our experience that it is best if three separate group sessions with program planners are used to create a logic model for a new program or project. One group session should be used to identify and document the program's planned components, activities and targets. A second group meeting should be used to draft and document the intended program outcomes, both short-term and long-term of each planned activity with each target. After the evaluator or a staff member that is skilled in the use of software for figure construction (e.g. Visio, Adobe Illustrator, OmniGraffle) produces the draft of the visual logic model a third session with program planners is held that results in finalization of the logic model.

Sixth, in creating logic models for programs or projects that are still in the planning stages, the order in which the major sections of the logic model should be altered from the process used in creating logic models for existing programs or projects. Specifically, the intended targets (e.g. clients) of the program should be identified and the intended changes that the program or project wishes to produce in clients (e.g. short-term outcomes, long-term outcomes) should be specified. Finally, the major program components and the specific activities within each component that could feasibly produce each intended outcome are specified.

Seventh, it should be emphasized that program logic models are not written in stone. Programs evolve from the original structures designed at the planning stage, and as a result, it is recommended that a logic model that was created for a new program or project be reviewed annually in order to capture new program developments and resultant changes in intended outcomes.

In summary, a number of process recommendations have been made for the development of program logic models to be used for the purpose of program planning. Following these recommendations will result in an important contribution to the process of program planning and the development of programs that are able to be evaluated when needed..

REFERENCES

Corbeil, R. C. (1989). Improving federal evaluation planning. Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation, Vol. 4, No. 2, 23-38.

Porteous, N.; Sheldrick, B. & Stewart, P. (1997). A Program Evaluation Toolkit: A Blueprint for Public Health Management. Ottawa-Carleton Public Health Unit, Ottawa, ON.

Rush, B. & Ogbourne, A. (1991). Program logic models: Expanding their role and structure for program planning and evaluation. Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation, Vol. 6, No. 2, 95-106.

Wong-Rieger, D. & David, L. (1995). Using program logic models to evaluate education and prevention programs. In Love, A. (Editor), Evaluation Methods Sourcebook II, Canadian Evaluation Society, Ottawa, ON.

ⁱ The purchase of this toolkit is also recommended as it contains an excellent description of the development process, contains other useful information on program planning, comes with a computer diskette that has two useful worksheets for logic model creation and is available from the Ottawa Public Health Unit for around \$20.