

APPLYING THE LOGIC MODEL PROCESS
TO EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMING

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ABSTRACT

Logic Models are a program development and evaluation process that evolved in the latter half of the 20th century. As well as having the capacity to be a planning tool, Logic Models also allow for an in depth, multi-layered examination of an existing program. This article outlines the purpose, historic development, and strengths and weaknesses of this contemporary evaluation approach that has been increasingly utilized in the social services. An example of how the Logic Model evaluation process can be applied to an Employee Assistance Program is also provided.

Key words: Logic Model, Employee Assistance Program, Evaluation

INTRODUCTION

Program evaluation has been a historic theme that has been regularly discussed in the Employee Assistance Programming (EAP) literature (Csiernik, 1995; French, Zarkin, & Bray, 1995; Holosko, 1988; Jerrell & Rightmyer, 1982). While not extensive there has been a steady flow of published EAP evaluations though the majority remain more basic case studies (Csiernik, 2005; 2011). Peer-reviewed studies have used a vast array of data collection techniques ranging from self-report telephone surveys (Masi & Jacobson, 2003) to purposive samples of supervisors (Orren & Terblanche, 2009) to matched cohort studies (Hughes, Elkin, & Epstein, 2004; Thompson Kyes, Cheadle, Bombardier, Jacobsen, Stewart et al., 2005). While this illustrates the creativity of those conducting EAP evaluations there is also value in having a degree of consistency when conducting program evaluation within a field. What continues to remain unknown is the number of internal EAP evaluations that are conducted and which methodological approaches they favor. One systemic approach that has empirical merit (Knowlton, & Phillips, 2009; United Way of America, 1996), can be readily and effectively utilized both for internal and published evaluations of either new or existing programs (Csiernik, Chaulk, & McQuaid, 2012), but that has received little formal attention in the EAP literature is the Logic Model approach. This article examines the nature of Logic Models, how to construct a Logic Model, as well as its strengths and limits. A sample Logic Model template for a specific EAP is also provided as an example along with a discussion on how it can be applied in evaluating primary, secondary and administrative dimensions of an Employee Assistance Program.

WHAT IS A LOGIC MODEL?

Logic Models are tools used to both develop and evaluate programs in a systemic manner (Alter & Murty, 1997). They are visual depictions outlining resources required, services to be delivered, the target groups that may be surveyed or interviewed, and the intended outcomes a program proposes to achieve in both the short-term and the long-term (Cooksy, Gill, & Kelly, 2001; Knowlton, & Phillips, 2009; Renger, & Titcomb, 2002; Savaya, & Waysman, 2005). The origins of Logic Models can be traced back to the 1970s and Carole Weiss' (1997) discussion of theory-based evaluation. Academics from a range of social science disciplines contributed to the body of knowledge surrounding Logic Models throughout the 1980s (Finlay, Forsey, & Wilson, 1988; Kimbrough, & Lee, 1988; Nelson, & Smith Fowler, 1987). The use of logic models in evaluation began to become more prominent and receive greater recognition in the social services after the United Way of America published *Measuring Program Outcomes* in 1996 (Knowlton, & Phillips, 2009). Since then an estimated 450 United Way agencies have supported nearly 20,000 non-profit agencies across the United States to formally measure their outcomes using a more logically designed evaluation process (Hendricks, Plantz, & Pritchard, 2008). In 2001 the W.K. Kellogg Foundation published the Logic Model Development Guide that made the process of creating and using logic models even more accessible to organizations, program developers and program evaluators.

The intent of a Logic Model is to identify an issue and present a proposed program or service to address that issue while supporting the development of an evaluation framework through which to measure the program outcome. A Logic Model facilitates understanding for evaluators, program creators, funders, and front-line staff regarding how a service is delivered and what it hopes to achieve as well as what is needed in order to offer the service. Logic Models

provide an effective means of examining the applicability and generalizability of programs to other settings and populations and have been employed in fields ranging from education to marketing (Savaya, & Waysman, 2005). The Logic Model process, because it is so explicitly illustrated, while still offering options of what to actually do, can be extremely helpful to a program's entire range of stakeholders as virtually anyone examining a Logic Model can gain a concrete understanding of how a program is being offered, and what the intended outcomes are. A Logic Model process can be equally useful in the planning of an evaluation to demonstrate the effectiveness or limitations of the program be it just beginning or be it firmly entrenched. A properly designed Logic Model offers a clear pathway on how to evaluate what a program was intended to address. A Logic Model can be presented to program funders to illustrate the logistical breakdown of the program, as well as helping to articulate the theory supporting the program by deconstructing it into simple and concrete categories while it also serves as the mechanism through which to evaluate short and long term outcomes (Savaya, & Waysman, 2005).

There are varied formats of Logic Models that may be used for different purposes. Logic Models are designed to typically be read either from top to bottom or from left to right and consist of a series of text boxes and arrows in order to demonstrate a 'this then that' relationship between activities and outcomes. For example, with this amount of funding we can then offer that program, when this program is attended by the target group then that knowledge is gained, and these are the intended long-term outcomes to be produced (Knowlton, & Phillips, 2009).

DEVELOPING A LOGIC MODEL

Logic Models can be created for a variety of service levels or purposes. Micro level models have been created for specific programs run through an agency such as a single teen mother's infant parenting group. A Logic Model can just as easily be developed to depict how an agency allocates its money into different areas to work towards fulfilling its vision and mandate. On a macro scale, a Logic Model can be broken down into several layers of smaller Logic Models to display how several departments in a city function to create a seamless and effective service infrastructure (Taylor-Powell, & Henert, 2008).

The process of generating a Logic Model forces organizations and program creators to be very purposeful in deciding how a program will function and what they hope to achieve through implementing it. Ideally, it allows all levels of an organization to be involved so that expertise from a variety of different areas can be accessed (Knowlton, & Phillips, 2009). When a group begins to create a Logic Model, the opening question is very simple: 'What is the problem?' Gathering research and information about the problem, gleaning information from other programs that have been successful or ineffective in addressing the issue, and establishing the desired outcome are all crucial to determine prior to beginning the Logic Model development and evaluation process. After this supporting information is gathered, stakeholders work backwards from identifying the problem to attempting to determine what reasons contribute to the particular issue that they can help alleviate through program creation. Questions posed can include 'What are the environmental factors that lead to this issue?', 'What are the precipitating factors or contributing conditions often known to be present before this issue occurs?', 'Who is most at risk of experiencing this issue?', 'Who will directly and indirectly benefit from the program?'. The next step is to create activities that will address the key questions outlining

exactly how the program will be delivered and evaluated and the resources required to do so (Porteous, Sheldrick, & Stewart, 1997).

The development of a Logic Model helps make it explicitly clear what issue is being addressed, who is responsible for addressing it, how they will do so, and what the desired changes will be. It aids all concerned stakeholders to ascertain clearly divided roles for all parties involved and provides a concrete illustration of the predicted costs associated with running the program (Savaya, & Waysman, 2005).

STRENGTHS AND LIMITS

Logic Models can open the lines of communication between all stakeholders involved in program creation, implementation, and evaluation. They can also contribute to creating a common language for a diverse group of stakeholders to effectively discuss a target issue and possible routes to its solution and knowing that the solution has been successfully achieved (Knowlton, & Phillips, 2009; Porteous, et al, 1997; Savaya, & Waysman, 2005). This in turn can better ensure stakeholders agree on what works and why.

Logic Models can also aid in the creation of an evaluation structure that is embedded throughout the program, as opposed to developing a program and attempting to evaluate it once it is complete, which is too often the case, especially in Employee Assistance Programming. Common use of Logic Models in evaluation can ensure that front line staff are spending their time collecting appropriate data that their sponsors and stakeholders are most concerned with from the onset of the program rather than only retrospectively, though this too is a common use of Logic Model evaluation. Aside from determining what will be measured for evaluation purposes, Logic Models can also assist in the process of creating evaluation tools to properly

collect data on what needs to be measured. Working on an evaluation plan before a program is initiated will allow stakeholders to determine if and how they can concretely gather the data they wish to, such as through surveys, observed changes, interviews, or even standardized instruments. As an example, to properly show changes in a participant through a survey, instead of gathering subjective opinions on the usefulness of a program at its end, a pre and post survey would show more statistically useful effects the actual change created by participating in a counselling program. However, Logic Models are sufficiently flexible that they can be applied in terms of evaluation once a program has been developed and implemented and are routinely used in this manner.

Through forcing a program to be laid out concretely, Logic Models can be used in determining the exact parts of a program that did not work, where problems were found to arise, or what worked exceptionally well. This can lead to effective changes being made to programs for continuous improvement rather than only at specific points in time. Logic Models can also allow professionals and evaluators to compare several different programs or interventions in relation to one issue by creating a common framework for evaluation (Cooksy, Gill, & Kelly, 2001).

However, creating a Logic Model can be a lengthy process depending upon the number of stakeholders involved. As well, because a Logic Model can become very explicit and thorough conducting an evaluation using this approach can be more costly than other evaluative frameworks. The upside to the expenditure is being able to better determine the actual utility of a program and even more importantly not continuing to deliver ineffective programs that do not meet their intended goals (Cooksy, et al, 2001). Despite this, at the onset Logic Models can be abandoned before they are executed if organizations do not always feel they have the time or

staffing required to create and implement the evaluation effectively. This is where external consultants specializing in this form of program development and evaluation can be introduced but this then again adds an additional cost. As well, if a Logic Model is poorly developed, it like any other form of evaluation, will be at risk for inadequately and even inaccurately assessing the program (Renger, 2006).

Finally, due to the exacting nature of a Logic Model, there is a risk of organizations feeling they must rigidly follow the development and evaluation plan even if it is evident the program is not meeting the intended goals (Cooksy, et al, 2001). Contrarily a Logic Model can be abandoned prematurely believing the process was a failure. However, what some organizations consider program failure, can actually be program feedback and can be used to help create a more effective program instead of starting from scratch (Renger, 2006).

AN EAP LOGIC MODEL

Figure 1 illustrates the structure and specific cell components of a sample Logic Model design that could be utilized to evaluate an Employee Assistance Program. Key to Logic Models are program components, which are simply a group of closely related activities (Porteus, et al, 2002). In the example, three very specific program components have been identified for detailed examination: the confidential counselling component of the EAP, its prevention focus (group education and wellness sessions) and the program's promotion and governance. For each of the three program components specific evaluation activities are identified, the target populations to be included in the evaluation are clearly specified, the desired outputs are plainly indicated with the expected short-term and long-term outcomes explicitly stated.

In the sample EAP Logic Model, seven specific activities are identified that are associated with the counselling component of the program. This logically begins at the point of first contact with EAP, the initial phone call. The first cell acknowledges that a request for assistance through the EAP from either an employee or family member, may pertain to either direct service or indirect service; when the caller wishes to discuss an issue regarding a third party in the workplace, such as a co-worker or a superior. The next step in EAP after first contact is assessment and thus this appears as the next activity to evaluate, followed by counselling, including which of three possible formats to employ (face-to-face, telephone or e-counselling) and how that is ascertained or if the employee's concern is beyond the scope of the EAP and a professional or community-based referral is required. The activities cell for confidential counselling also includes ensuring the counselling professionals employed by the EAP have adequate skills and supervision to carry out their responsibilities. Finally, given the initial program component specifies that the primary focus is confidential counselling, the last activity in the cell mirrors this by specifying that the process to maintain confidentiality must be part of the development process and thus part of the evaluation process.

The second step after the activities for the specified program components are identified is determining the target population. This cell lists all the possible users of the EAP and here too the explicit nature of the evaluation can be seen by indicating the limits on family members who can use the program and thus who should be part of the evaluation process. The output section while dominated by quantitative data collection; number of clients assessed, number of clients provided counselling, number of clients referred, types of inquiries also acknowledges and thus includes a qualitative component, the process pertaining to confidentiality and privacy practices and not merely the number of training sessions supervisors received but their specific nature.

Finally the short and long term outcomes are presented. Short term outcomes are directly related to the activities; relevance of service provision to employees, ease of access, linkage of counselling to work as this is an EAP and not a community-based counselling resource and again the level of confidentiality of the program. The two stated long-term outcomes are more global and are assessed by determining the short-term outcomes of all three program components individually and collectively.

In the sample Logic Model, six activities have been identified for the primary prevention program component, group education and wellness sessions, which is the secondary focus of the EAP being evaluated. As with the primary focus, the secondary focus is also client driven and thus the EAP is evaluated upon how it responds to requests. However, the independent development of education and wellness sessions by EAP counsellors based upon the observed company problem profile is also added as an element in order to assess the state of proactive work being done by EAP staff. Regardless of how the training was initiated the evaluation component includes examining the development of the sessions and their delivery. There are two targets for this program component and thus the Logic Model illustrates that both employees and supervisors can be part of the data collection process, though during the development of the process a decision could be made to include either one or the other only or even neither.

Outputs here too have both a quantitative and qualitative dimension. Quantitatively the number of requested sessions, the number independently initiated and the total number delivered and to how many employees would be collected during the course of the evaluation. In conjunction with this, the qualitative data collection process entails discovering each session's content and the material distributed to those who attend which can then be compared to both the most common and also best practice pertaining to the subject matter presented.

Four short-term outcomes are identified for the group education and wellness sessions. First, were the participants satisfied, which can be done through a simple end of session evaluation form containing both open and closed ended questions again to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. However, more important outcomes follow in the cell which necessitate not only asking if participants enjoyed the session but determining what was learned and how it is being used to promote wellness. This program component, just as the first did, feeds into the long-term outcomes of contributing to the total well-being of employees, regardless of position in the organization, as well as contributing to creating a productive and satisfied workforce.

The third and final program component in the sample Logic Model, one that is not typically included when evaluating EAPs, pertains to administrative factors. Along with program promotion this includes program governance which is becoming an increasing important theme now that a majority of North American EAPS are being delivered by third party providers. While developing and implementing strategies to increase awareness is a key activity in this third area of programming the focus of the Logic Model presented in Figure 1 is primarily upon governance. Regular meetings of the EAP advisory committee are viewed as critical as are developing and reviewing the guidelines that direct the program. The target population are representatives of the key stakeholder groups, management, labor and service providers but the Logic Model also indicates that here too supervisors and employees should be part of the evaluation process. Outputs range from those that can be ascertained through a simple input analysis such as ensuring the guidelines are actually in place, the EAP advisory committee meets as specified in the EAP policy and that EAP orientation sessions are actually held to assessing

the success of the strategies being used to raise awareness and the process of reviewing the guidelines including ensuring all stakeholders have the opportunity to participate.

The short term outcomes for promotion and governance speak to the formalization of the EAP as a structure within the broader organization rather than only a benefit no different than dental or chiropractic care. The outputs distinguish EAP as something unique in an organization's culture as it determines if the Advisory Committee's role has been clearly defined, if formal agreements have been reached and ratified, if the critical path is in place and if guidelines to revise the program have been agreed upon and are being followed by all stakeholder groups. The need for awareness among not only all employees but also eligible family members is also highlighted in the short term outcome cell of promotion and governance. Thus the Logic Model acknowledges and institutionalizes through a formal evaluative process the importance of sound administrative practice in ensuring the wellness and productivity of the workforce.

It concluding it should be noted that two common program components often found in Logic Models were not incorporated into Figure 1 due to the existing complexity of the model. Program resources and their direct link to the scope of the evaluation and what can be feasibly completed is often a first step in Logic Model design. Likewise, it is common to directly link a Logic Model to an organization's or department's goals, something not done in this example.

CONCLUSION

Employee Assistance Programs of the 21st century have evolved considerably since James Wrich first coined that term EAP to contextualize this new field of helping. The importance of evaluation in the EAP field has always been recognized but has not always been well done if done at all. An evaluation tool that can aid in increasing the rigor of EAP evaluation

is the Logic Model approach. This method has been demonstrated to have utility in both program development and program evaluation. Its implementation allows for a systemic analysis of a program permitting a detailed examination of both practice and administrative components of an EAP. A Logic Model's process provides a well-constructed frame with allows choices to be made in examining in depth through both qualitative and quantitative means a range of activities, target populations, outputs and outcomes. Logic Models are a tool that can be readily applied to Employee Assistance Programming and can be an asset in program evaluation to ensure that the EAP is both contributing to creating a productive workforce but also one that contributes to worker wellness.

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