



# Definitions

## Program Activities

- Program activities (or simply “activities”) describe what is done (tasks, interactions, etc) by staff or volunteers on a day-to-day basis.
- A “Program” is most often broader in meaning than a “Program Activity”.
- Activities are worded with active verbs (e.g., to provide, to create, to disseminate, etc.).
- Activities are usually based on the kinds of things that are done for/with clients in order to produce positive change, rather than on administrative tasks. Activities should not contain outcome-based language. For example, avoid terms like “prevent”, “increase”, or “improve” because these are changes that are a *consequence* of the activities. Identify the things your program does that *leads* to prevention, increases, or improvements
- Activities should not be too “micro” in nature. For example, it is unnecessary to specify a separate activity for each chapter or module of a set of educational sessions. It is simpler to say something more general, like “To provide prenatal education sessions”.
- Activities can often be clustered based on how similar the behaviours of the activity are and their intended impacts.

## Short-term & Long-term Outcome Objectives

- Short-term outcome objectives are the immediate benefits or changes that the target groups are anticipated to experience or display as a result of the program activities. Short-term means that change happens in the short-term and does *not* mean temporary change.
- 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 more relative than absolute: there is no specific time limit on achievement of these outcomes. Rather, short-term outcome objectives in a given program are designated as such because they a) are the first meaningful changes that follow directly from an activity and b) come before a series of other, longer-term outcomes.
- Long-term outcome objectives are the more distant benefits or changes that the target groups are anticipated to experience or display as a result of the initiative. These are sometimes called “impacts” in order to convey the idea that they often have broader and more durable significance than short-term outcome objectives.
- Generally, long-term outcome objectives are the second-order changes that result from successful achievement of short-term outcomes over time. When a longer chain of events is expected, “intermediate outcome objectives” may be added as another layer between short and long-term.
- Sometimes it is not practical or feasible to measure long-term objectives and may have to be inferred from attainment of short-term and intermediate outcome objectives.
- Outcome objectives should use measurable, objective language where possible. “Increased” and “Improved” are common. Avoid “fuzzy” language such as “Enhanced” or “Better”, etc.

## Goals

- Goals are the longest term, broad vision of your program. Typically, goals are not measured directly (but in large, longitudinal projects, they might be). An example may be “Improved quality of life of community members” or “Eliminate family violence”.

## Using the Logic Model Template

General purpose: Using small sticky notes (for boxes) & dry-erase markers (for arrows), you can create a logic model of your own program. Building a good model will require some instruction from someone who has done this type of work before. It will also require familiarity with the terms (see Definitions, at left).

- 1) The reverse side depicts the main elements of a standard logic model. The boxes and arrows are only meant to indicate the general area where you construct each part of the model. You can place your sticky notes anywhere in the corresponding area.
- 2) Begin with the activities. Write out all the things your agency does on an day to day basis within the program and place them over top of “Program Activities”. Think about how you keep track of the services you deliver (e.g., “number of sessions”). Insert these over top of “Outputs”.
- 3) Think about how your activities impact on people in the short term and write each distinct outcome objective on your sticky notes. Place them over the area marked “Short Term Outcome Objectives”
- 4) Using a dry erase marker, draw the logical linkages between the activities and short-term objectives
- 5) Think about what changes would be expected to occur in the longer term and as result of shorter term changes. Write these outcome objectives down on sticky notes and place them over “Long term Outcome Objectives”
- 6) Using a dry erase marker, draw the logical linkages between the short-term and long term outcome objectives.
- 7) Finally, write down one or two “goals” and make the final connections to the long term outcome objectives.

### A note on terminology:

In the field of program evaluation it is very common for different terms to be used to refer to the same concept and the same terms to be used differently. For example:

- the terms “outcomes”, “objectives”, and “outcome objectives” are often used interchangeably, which is inappropriate. We use the term “outcome objectives” because they are things that have not yet happened (as is the case with all objectives we aspire to). “Outcome”, by itself, suggests that the change has already occurred and that we have data regarding this change. In building logic models, we are usually at the stage of specifying what we *want* to happen – our “outcome objectives”.
- “Goals”, “Impacts”, or “Results” are often used in place of “Outcome Objectives” (e.g., short-term *goals*). The decision on which term to use fairly arbitrary. Currently, however, many people use “goals” to refer to the very long term accomplishments or vision of the program. We have also seen “ultimate outcome objective” as another term to represent very broad, long term changes.
- sometimes “immediate” will replace “short-term”. “Intermediate” may be added when a set of outcomes are neither short-term nor long-term will replace “long-term”,
- Bottom line: These are just some of the definitional curiosities in the field. Whichever lexicon you choose, ensure that your definitions are clear and consistent, and understood amongst all important stakeholders.