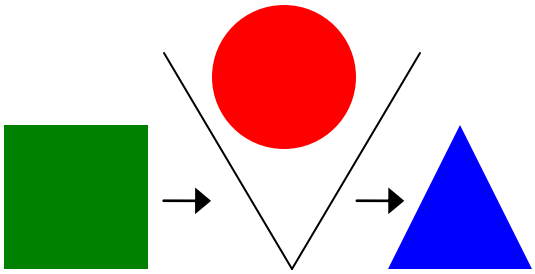


Build Reach into Your Logic Model

Steve Montague

February 1998

Analysts have frequently noted the importance of constructing logic models (a.k.a. logic charts, causal models, logical frameworks, and most recently performance frameworks - among other names) to explain the causal theory of a program or initiative before attempting to monitor, measure, or assess performance. While logic models have long been a fundamental part of program evaluation, the use of a logic model has also recently been found to be very useful in performance measurement initiatives at the project, program (see for example Focusing on Results: A Guide to Performance Measurement, Robert McDonald, Industry Canada) and even government-wide level. (See for example, Joseph S. Wholey, *"Clarifying Goals, Reporting Results,"* Progress and Future Directions in Evaluation: Perspectives on Theory, Practice, and Methods, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, Winter 1997, Number 76, p 100. Also see John Mayne, mimeo, 1998. See 1997 Report of the Auditor General, Chapter 5, Exhibit 5.1 for a simplified logic model example.)

A key limitation to the logic models of the 1980s, as well as many of those in current use, has been their tendency to focus predominantly on causal chains without reference to who and where the action was taking place. This has caused three key problems:

1. ***Lack of sensitivity to the impacts on different participant groups.*** Logic models which do not include participants or *'reach'* tend to narrowly define the impacts chain. For example, in a community economic development program we recently examined, their preliminary (traditional) logic model did not explicitly include reach and therefore only noted results for small business in the causal chain. Once the small working group included a reach category in their logic model, they came up with a myriad of other key results relating to community capacity building, collaboration, and benefits to specific stakeholder groups like youth.

2. ***Potential to confuse outputs and outcomes.*** The inclusion of reach in logic models allows people to clearly distinguish events which happen as part of program processes - normally called outputs (e.g., # of publications, events, interventions, and other tangible things under the control of a program) from outcomes or impacts which relate to the reaction, satisfaction, knowledge gain, behaviour changes, and benefits occurring in target groups. Without the distinct reach of an initiative being defined, we have often found confusion in terms of what people mean by *'improved access'* (e.g., do we mean available? or do we mean usage by target groups?), *'service quality'* (e.g., do we mean

Copyright © Performance Management Network Inc.

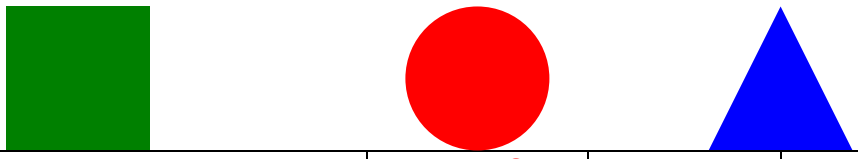
conformity to a process standard? or do we mean the satisfaction of user needs?), or similar performance concepts. *'Reach'* helps to sort outputs from outcomes.

3. ***No reach versus results trade-off recognition.*** Without an explicit reach consideration, analysts and managers (particularly senior managers) may get a simplified notion of the ease with which results will occur. Similarly, they will often develop a false notion of accountability - not recognizing the multiple co-dependencies in a given policy, program, or initiative.

For example, in most areas of social, economic, safety, and environmental policy, there is a multitude of jurisdictions and institutional actors involved for any given objective. Generally, the more the co-dependence, the greater the time involved and the greater the *'causal complexity'* of the results chain. (For example, early results may simply involve the improvement of collaboration among co-delivery partners for many programs; this needs to be recognized in the causal chain.)

Furthermore, the explicit inclusion of reach allows for strategic insight on the trade-offs between reach and results. (See The Three Rs of Performance: Core concepts for planning, measurement, and management, Part 2, Section 2 for a further discussion.) On several occasions, we have found that work groups have come to realize that their results expectations were unrealistic given their targeted reach and their given resources.

A performance framework such as that contained in the exhibit below can help to explicitly address the problems noted above.

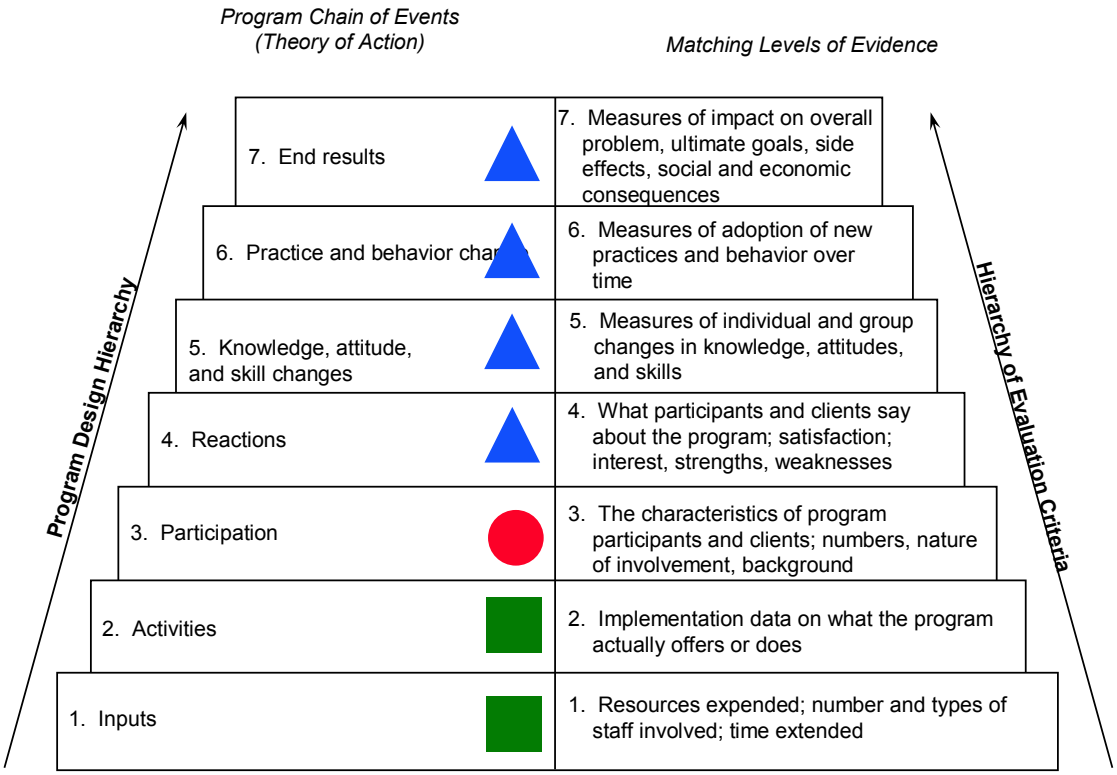


How?			Who? Where?	What do we want?	Why?
Resources			Reach	Results	
Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Users/clients/ co-deliverers/ beneficiaries	Direct outcomes	Ultimate impacts

This model can serve planners as well as evaluators. (See Refocus Your Questions for Better Business Planning.)

A more traditional logic modelling approach which included reach was noted by Michael Quinn Patton in his most recent version of Utilization-Focused Evaluation, 1997. This

model dates back to the 1970s in the analysis of educational initiatives. The approach is described below:



Source: Adapted from Claude Bennett 1979. Taken from Michael Quinn Patton, Utilization-Focused Evaluation: The New Century Text, Thousand Oaks, California, 1997, p 235. 2

In summary, the inclusion of reach in your logic models can improve your organization's strategic focus while at the same time rendering the model more practical in terms of real world managers. For examples which include reach in their logic models, or for information on an approach to developing performance frameworks, contact Steve Montague. (Also see, The Three Rs of Performance: Core concepts for planning, measurement, and management, Performance Management Network Inc., 1997, Appendix B)

©1998 Performance Management Network